

OVERLAND

NUMBER ELEVEN, SUMMER 1958

TWO SHILLINGS AND SIXPENCE



Waterfront Veterans: Sydney

Harry Reade

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PLEASE PUT A PENNY

OVERLAND wasn't exactly surprised recently when the Commonwealth Literary Fund turned down our application for a modest amount of financial assistance.

Five magazines applied last year for a crumb or two from the overflowing governmental table. The two already getting help (Southernly and Meanjin) went up from £600 to £1,000 each.

(On £1,000 a year, Overland could be distributed free. But we don't begrudge our senior contemporaries their rise.)

Of the three new-comer applicants, Australian Letters (its second issue was published recently) hasn't yet commented.

Quadrant (No. 5) is editorially indignant that they were knocked back because, the C.L.F. claims, they are "not essentially literary in aim and content."

But, fortunately, they are already receiving a whacking subsidy from big business, and are confident that Quadrant will continue to bloom.

Overland—no government aid and no big business handouts—will continue to battle along, still with, we hope, the biggest circulation of them all.

The Fund told us that our literary standard wasn't high enough to justify a hand-out. For ourselves, we don't mind the crack. But we feel we ought to enter a word of protest on behalf of our contributors—and our readers.

For encouragement, may we quote a recent unsolicited testimonial: in Adult Education for December, Melbourne publisher and litterateur Andrew Fabinyi describes us as "an intriguing publication" and "an essential organ of our literary life."

Personally, we think it a good idea to have a magazine where professors and slaughtermen, wharves and politicians and professional writers can all have a go, providing its temper is democratic, its bias Australian, and that it is interesting. If not always "literary", it's usually lively, and that's the way we like it.

We can only say how sorry we are that we can't tell our readers not to worry about us any more, that the government's looking after us.

We'll try again in 1958, but, in the meantime, as we remain Australia's only non-subsidised literary magazine, we're afraid you'll have to keep on trying to sell a few extra copies, and kick in with a pound or so to see us go.

We were not surprised Overland, which meets all the formal requirements for a C.L.F. subsidy, was not granted one. But we were staggered that the Fund resisted the temptation to give Laurence Collinson's "The Moods of Love", published by Overland, a helping hand.

Of course, there were good reasons. Collinson's poetry is uneven, says the Fund. It has some bad lines.

The reasoning sounds good—provided you haven't read the other books of poetry supported by the Fund. There are one or two bad poems in them, too.

Of course these books should have been supported—but then so should Collinson's.

So we're on our own again—and we have to sell more books. If you haven't already, what about buying one?

The Commonwealth Literary Fund could do with two things:

- ★ Twice as much money as it's at present handling; the nation could well afford £25,000 a year to sustain its literature. The Labor Party has promised twice that.
- ★ A return to the pre-1956 no-political-discrimination policy in the granting of fellowships.

Writers' organisations and everyone interested in Australian literature could do a useful job by letting Parliament and the Government know that they would like something done about it.

AXEMAN, SPARE THAT TREE

While we're whinging about the hardness of our lot, there are a few other things we'll be having a look at:

★ Changes in the Australian Broadcasting Commission's book review policy, which are reported to have resulted in less attention to Australian books.

★ Failure of most of the daily press even to acknowledge the existence of Australian writing.

★ Inadequate representation of Australian books in school courses.

★ Possibility of some sort of subsidy somewhere along the line to ease the burden on Australian book publishers.

More information in future issues.

POINTING THE BONE

It goes against the grain to tear a strip off a fellow quarterly, but, let's face it, Quadrant's last issue is asking for it.

As well as a poisonous article by M. H. Ellis on Evatt's "Rum Rebellion" (referred to elsewhere), a review by a Mr. F. Knoepfmacher of Victor H. Wallace's (edited) book, "Paths to Peace," does the most unpleasant finger job on a couple of Melbourne academics that we've ever seen in an Australian literary journal, or just about anywhere else for that matter.

That Quadrant should editorially chide those who are "helping to unpick the fabric of our civilisation" by criticising the Royal Family (they should read what the Bulletin said about royalty 60 years ago!), that Dr. Lloyd Ross should contribute a word or two on the Australian Railways Union to Quadrant's industrial round-up, that the magazine should be urging a return to a 16th century Italian style of hand-writing, that it should contain twelve pages of big business "prestige" advertising—these are all to be expected, and can be argued out. (Although we don't really think that our time would be well spent in trying to persuade B.H.P., Caltex Oil, Ampol, General Motors, British Australia Tobacco, C.S.R. and the Bank of New South Wales to advertise in Overland.)

But Messrs. Ellis and Knoepfmacher have introduced a note, and a method of debate, into the Australian literary scene that we could very well do without.

Fortunately, Australian writers and readers are notorious for their healthy dislike of top-off men. Even if editor McAuley's medievalism doesn't do the job, the effect of Messrs. Ellis and Knoepfmacher should soon be felt in Quadrant's circulation graph.

YOUNG GENT., QUIET, REFINED

by Noel Hilliard

SONNY Foster is one of a crowd of us, all single and under 25, who want to see a bit of the country before we settle down and therefore prefer seasonal work to a steady job. We put in a few months at the freezing works, then whip off up country to dig spuds or work a fencing contract, then turn up back in Auckland driving a truck or doing a month or two on the wharf until the killing starts again. You might find us unloading trucks in the railway yards or oiling journal-boxes in the tramway workshops at the beginning of spring; but we'd all turn up in the shed as soon as the season got under way, and there'd be handshakes all round, and talk of doubles struck, and parties at which so-and-so passed out, and dances and girls.

We hadn't seen Sonny for over a year. My mate Clarrie Fisher and I were with a sub-contractor on the city tram-tracks, punching a jack-hammer all day. On Friday after work we did what we always do: went home to Mrs. Morton's, had a shave and a cold bath, put on clean shirts and pressed pants, and hooked off down town. We generally went into the billiard room for a game of snooker, then into the bar next door for a few beers, and afterwards stood around outside checking up on all the boys. If there was a party going we'd hear about it and be in. If there wasn't, we'd wander off for a grill and then go to the pictures or a dance.

This day we were in the saloon prodding away at the balls when Sonny came in and flopped down on the seat along with all the old pensioners who sit around filling in time. Sonny had sports clothes on but I noticed he still wore his cap with the black celluloid peak. You could pick Sonny a furlong away by that cap.

"Giddyay, Sonny!" Handshakes.

"How's tricks? Where you doing it now? Where you dossed in? Where's Tom? Seen the boys?"

Sonny smiled his big smile and settled back in the seat. "I have to read my paper," he said.

"Seeing what's good for Saturday?"

"No, seeing where's a good place to put my bones."

"Grab another bat and we'll stack them up again," Clarrie invited.

"Nemmine. It's no good with three playing, anyway."

"Come on, be in." Clarrie put his matchbox on top of the scoreboard to make up the three.

"Nemmine." Sonny opened his paper and studied the classified advertisements. Clarrie shrugged.

I thought I had the game in the bag until Clarrie sank the pink and came back on the black so that he couldn't miss.

"Talk about Horace Lindrum," he said. "Just watch him."

"I never saw him play."

"You're seeing him now, sport," Down went the black on top of a heap of reds in a middle pocket.

"All the way," Clarrie said.

"Going to shout, Horace?"

Clarrie pulled out some change. "Coming next door for a drop of the doings, Sonny?" Sonny folded up his paper. "I don't mind."

As we wandered towards the door, Clarrie tripped over the braced back leg of a young fellow at the next table. He glared at Clarrie but said nothing.

We'd seen him before. There he was, a half-bottle of gin sticking out of his hip pocket, a cigarette on his lip making his eyes water, hat on the back of his head, shirt open at the front, trousers wet down the leg—there he was, half shicker, trying to play snooker. He aimed with great seriousness and concentration, his eyes bunched up because of the smoke (but of course he wouldn't look the part without that cigarette), let go with a sudden jab . . . and missed by a mile. He glared at Clarrie again, as if he were to blame.

"Come on," I said.

Things were tense at the corner pool table; big money was to change hands. Number one shaped up while the shrewdies kidded him: "Here's just the boy to get one off the break!" The balls scattered, clicking. One by one the players stooped over the table; the odd ball rumbled down the wooden chute to the marker's end. A nervous player put the butt of the rake on the hook, the other end fell across the floor; the next player, circling, tripped over it and swore. They were all chewing chuddy, smoking, tramping butts into the litter on the floor. "Fourth player!" snarled the marker. "Fourth player, for Christ's sake pull his finger out!" It was the young fellow we'd seen at the snooker table. He blundered over and lined up on the ball. The shrewdies all grinned. He thought he could play, and maybe he could, too—sober. Of course they're not going to tell him he can't; his conceit is money in their pockets. He pulled back and let go: a mis-cue. Away he went, mumbling. Then one of the pros got set. He had to knock over just about everything on the table to get to his ball. He went to it no trouble, while the others stood around looking gloomy. Down went their balls, one, two, three. The pro knew when he was on a good thing; Friday, pay day, he can pick a mug a mile off. Then came the kill: the cue-ball bounced off the cushion and down went the five so neat you wished you had the patience to learn to play like that.

"Beauty," breathed Clarrie.

"Here, take the bat," said the nervous player, offering his cue. "I've done all my change."

"Go on, be in, Horace," I chipped.

"Not now," Clarrie said. "It's Mr. Lindrum's boozing time now. How about you, Sonny?"

"Not me. I'm running short."

The player looked mournful and wandered away.

In the bar Clarrie set them up while I passed around the tobacco. The place was filling; there were big clumps of drinkers, and now and then someone we knew would come in and give us a nod.

"Stay out of the big schools," Clarrie said. "No big schools for me."

"Me too," said Sonny. "Cost a man four, five bob a round by six." He sipped his beer slowly and leaned his arm on the rail along the wall.

"Seen Mule Train yet?" Clarrie asked.

Sonny grinned. "Never seen him," he said.

"I had to laugh, last season," Clarrie explained. "We had this joker out there, everyone called him Mule Train. He's as slow as they come. Some of them reckon he's not all there. Make no mistake,

he's all there, all right, but all the parts don't work all the time. Well, the boys were talking racing. 'My old man owns a lot of racehorses,' says Mule Train. 'Go on!' says Joe Blake. 'Are they any good?—that's the big question.' 'Course they're good,' says the Train, very indignant—'Beauties!' 'Have they been winning much lately?' Joe wants to know. 'I'll say they have,' says the Train. 'They've won cups . . . won plenty cups!' 'Go on!' says Joe. 'What cups, now, for instance?' The Train has to think, for a while. 'Well,' he says 'the Davis Cup . . .'

Clarrie cackled, coughed and choked. He's murder to laugh at his own jokes.

"This smoking's doing me no good," he said. "I'll have to turn it up."

I pushed through to buy another round. Cyril the barman was red in the face and sweating. Arms were pushing glasses at him from all directions. I reckon they ought to get treble time for Friday nights.

So there we all stood, up against the wall, drinking our beer, looking around to see who'd come in.

"What's the trouble, anyway, Sonny?" Clarrie asked. "You've very quiet today."

Sonny pulled a face. "Funny thing happened to me this afternoon."

It appears that he had arrived on the train from the East Coast the evening before and had spent the night at Jack Sweeny's in Thorndon. There's always a bed for the night at Jack's; we always elect him delegate and he's one of the best you'll ever meet. In the morning Sonny took a tram out to Miramar and got a job stoking at the gas works, to start next day. He was back in town in time to buy the early edition of the afternoon paper. There was a single room advertised, handy to the railway station, which he thought would just suit him. He showed us the ad. in the paper: "Young gent, quiet, refined . . ." and the phone number. He was on the blower right away. "Yes," said the woman, "it's a very nice little room, gets the sun all day, and it's right at the back of the house, no noise from traffic. I bring you a tray in the morning, tea and toast and marmalade. I don't do the washing, but there's a washing machine here in the laundry; just new, you can do your own."

"Well," said Sonny, "in case there's a rush, you can put my name down, and I'll come straight up." She took his name and gave him the address. He jumped on a tram to the Cenotaph and then walked up the hill past where they're building the new church. The place he was looking for was an old two-storey joint painted grey. He knocked on the door. Out came the old girl, and I can just picture her, too. Fat, wheezy, a grog-blossom in the cheeks, false teeth, permed hair fried and frizzled. She gave him the once-over.

"Sorry," she said. "The room's been taken."

"But I just rang," Sonny said. "I gave you my name, Sonny Foster, and you said it'd be all right. You said you'd put me down for it."

She peered at him. "Are you sure you're the boy who rang?"

"Course I am."

"Well, you see," she said, "it's like this. You didn't tell me when you rang that you were a Maori. We don't mind having Maoris here, but some of our permanent boarders don't like it."

"What's it got to do with me what they don't like? You've got a room and I want one."

"I know, son. But we've had some very noisy ones here from time to time. Once, the neighbors



—Max Bollinger

complained to the police. We don't want the place to get a bad name."

"Is the room going or isn't it?"

She thought for a minute. "Yes, the room's going," she said. "But not to you, I'm sorry to say." With that, she banged the door in his face. He was so mad he could have kicked the walls down.

"So what do I do now?" he wanted to know.

"Never mind," I said. "They're not all like that."

"Come up and stay with us," Clarrie invited. "Old Mrs. Morton's a good stick, she'll let you bunk in with us."

"I don't know about that," I said. "She knocked Sid Barnes back."

"So would anyone who had their head screwed on right," said Clarrie. He reached for the tobacco. "By God, these rooming joints are a racket. They fill the place with immigrants and whack in the rent as hard as they like. A Kiwi'd never look at the prices some of them want."

"A European been in the country five minutes got a far better show than me," said Sonny.

"I suppose the poor sods just off the boat have to have somewhere to live," I said.

"Sure they do," said Clarrie. "That's not the issue. See what a good thing they make out of it? That's what I'm getting at. This old tart of Sonny's, now: she'll get some migrant up there and she'll settle for half his pay every week, and he won't do anything about it because he's scared of being deported."

THE THREE AURORAS

Lit, as by footlights, in the south
Hang high the curtains of auroral lights,
And we have tarried in expectant awe,
Waiting for them to part, these last three nights.

Before the back-drop of the stars,
Revealed as some sublime producer nods,
We wait the first performance of the high
Transcendent drama of the timeless gods.

And yet each night, while in the swamp,
The frogs tune up bass fiddles, vibrant, deep,
The lights have faded and the curtains gone,
The play deferred—and nothing left but sleep.

And in that sleep the nightmare comes—
Reversed the play-house, stalls and circle packed,
The audience the everlasting stars,
And Man, beginner in the final act.

The play goes on, at headlong pace,
With ranting speeches, braggart boastings loud,
Then Fate comes on—the act draws to its end—
As falls the curtain—on a mushroom cloud.

JACK HYETT

★

WATCH THIS SPACE

Us parents take some awful knocks.
We've "had" the Show, we've "had" Guy Fawkes,
We've "had" the annual birthday "do",
And (whisper it) "had" Christmas too.
But may we rest? How Fate must hate us,
Just to remind us of our status
Out we tumble every night
To watch the Russian Satellite.

But Christmas comes just once a year
Birthdays and Bonfires too, don't fear.
The Show, I'm thankful to remind us
Is, this year at least, behind us.
But, poor us, tomorrow night
Comes, once again, The Satellite.
And will the next, the next and next
Nor can I think of a pretext
And what is more, I must admit
I'm just as kicked at seeing it.

I would say this for Father Time.
I'm thankful Presley's past his prime,
And Davy Crockett's hairy crust
Is deep into the limbo thrust;
Poor Uncle Sam has done his block
And sold his socks in Little Rock;
For all the kids on my herbaceous
Have their minds on matter spaceous.
And I would rather crick my sight
To watch my children's dreams ignite
As all their future sweeps the night
Riding a Russian Satellite.

B. DEVITT

"This isn't getting Sonny a room," I said.
"Get a room, hell," said Sonny, grinning. "Get
a beer, more like it." He picked up the glasses
and pushed through. There was a roar of con-
versation, now, no spare space at all around the
bar, and men shoving past looking for mates.
Clarrie peered around in disgust.

"This place gets worse every time I come in,"
he said. "What say we shoot through to the private
bar?"

Next second he was in a referee's hold with a
chap who'd just slipped past the school next to us.
They spun around, pummelling each other, then
stood up panting and grinning, pumping hands.

"How the hell are yous all," shouted the new-
comer.

"Tom!" I grabbed his hand. "Sonny never said
you came down with him."

"I didn't. I been in Masterton, just got in after
dinner."

"Sonny!" shouted Clarrie. "You're in the chair.
Buy the man a beer."

So there were the four of us, jammed up against
the wall while all the boozers crowded past and
more coming in all the time.

"Got a job yet?" Clarrie asked.

"Not yet," said Tom. "Plenty time tomorrow."

Sonny passed him a glass. He drained it at one
tilt.

"Where you staying?" I asked.

"I was lucky," Tom said. "I nicked up to the
office straight off the bus and got the early paper.
I got a good little room up in Thorndon. Left my
bag there and came straight down here. Thought
I might run into some of the gang . . ."

Sonny said: "Where's this place you got?"

"I told you, up in Thorndon. Right handy to
the station. You go up past the new church there
. . . old grey two-storey joint."

We looked at each other.

"It just shows you, eh?" said Clarrie.

"Beats the band, all right," I said.

Sonny cleared his mouth and spat on the floor.

"What's the mystery?" Tom wanted to know.
Clarrie told him.

"Same old tart knocked Sonny back because
he's a Maori," I said.

"I'll be damned."

You could sense a bit of tension in the air now,
in spite of the noise. Sonny glared at Tom as if
he was going to poke him one. Tom didn't seem
to know what to do. Clarrie looked from Sonny
to Tom and back to Sonny."

"Still, you know," he said. "Nobody 'd pick
you two for brothers."

It was true. Sonny was light brown and had
the real Maori features; you could never mistake
him for anything else. But Tom was a white man
and no two ways about it. It was like that with
the rest of the Foster family, too, the girls and
all—I've seen photos of them. Some were white,
some dark. They had a pakeha father, an Irish-
man from County Carlow, and a half-caste mother.
It's the same with any family: some take after the
father, some the mother.

There it was, anyway, and I was a bit concerned
about how Sonny would take it. He was looking
at Clarrie as if he didn't like him much.

"It's true," Clarrie said again. "Nobody that
didn't know 'd ever pick it."

Sonny looked fierce. Then he broke into a big
grin and reached for a beer.

"Better not let the old man hear you say that,"
he said. "He might get the wrong idea."

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THE CROOKEST RAFFLE EVER RUN . . .

(as told by Billy Borker in the Redfern Hotel)

by Frank Hardy

"DID I ever tell yer about the crookest raffle ever run in Australia?"
"No, but you told me about the only fair dinkum one."

"Ah, that's a different raffle all together. That's the one I ran at Dee Why during the depression."

"You'd better have a drink."

"Don't mind if I do. Well, this here raffle I'm talking about was run in a place in Victoria called Benson's Valley. It was run by a fella called Trigger MacIntosh. Don't know how he got that nickname but I know he had thirteen kids. Little fella. Bald as a billiard ball. There was six raffles in the case, really."

"Six. You said there was only one."

"Well, in a manner of speaking there was. Yer see, he raffled the same pumpkin six times in the same pub."

"But people wouldn't buy a ticket in a raffle for a pumpkin surely."

"Australians will buy a raffle ticket in anything. They got into the habit during the depression. Buying raffle tickets is like goin' to church or

drinking beer, once you get into the habit. Anyway, this was a special pumpkin. The biggest pumpkin ever grown in the history of the world. It was so big it took six men six hours to dig it out of the ground."

"But pumpkins don't grow under the ground."

"I know that, but this one was so heavy it sunk into the ground till yer couldn't see it."

"Yer don't say."

"If yer don't believe me you can ask Trigger MacIntosh. He grew that pumpkin, brother. I'm tellin' yer: it took six men six hours to dig . . ."

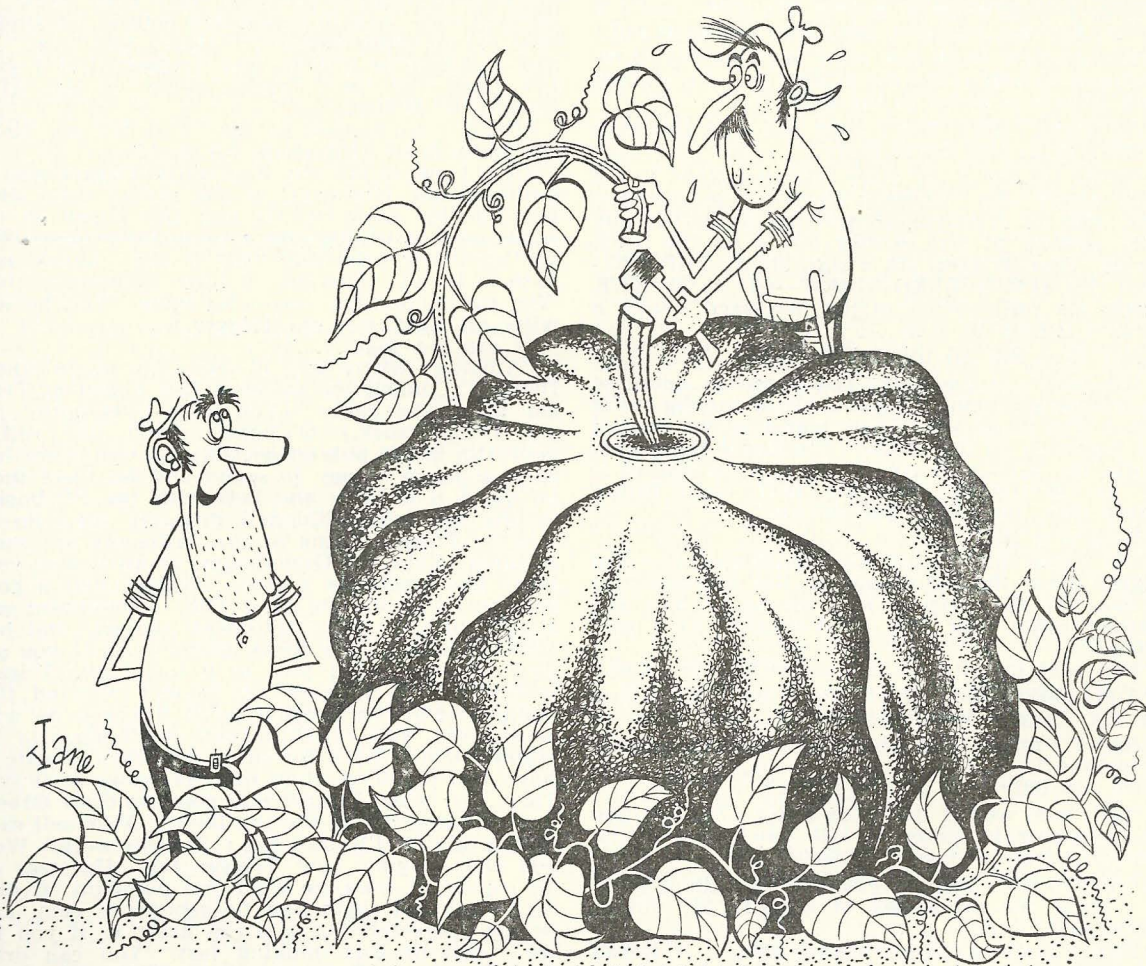
"You told me that."

"Yeh, but it took the same six men another six hours to roll it up six planks onto a six-ton truck to take it to the pub to be raffled."

"And it was raffled six times . . ."

"Yes, but that's getting ahead of the story. Never get ahead of the story, that's what my father always told me. First, I must tell you how they came to grow this here pumpkin."

"They. But you said this bloke grew it himself. What did you say his name was?"



"Trigger MacIntosh. Matter of fact, Trigger didn't grow this pumpkin at all. He owned it in partnership with another fella—name of Greenfingers Stratton. Old Greenfingers could grow a crop of show orchids on a concrete footpath, so my father reckoned. Well, one day Trigger said to Greenfingers: 'I know where I can borra a block of land and start a market garden.' Fancy mentioning a block of land, to old Greenfingers—always saying 'if only I had a block of land, I'd grow somethin', I can tell yer'. Funny how people never fulfil their ambitions. I knew a violinist once who wanted to be a League footballer . . ."

"You've told me about him. Have another drink and get on with your story . . ."

"Well, it turned out that Trigger had talked an old cocky with more money than sense into lending him some land on the river bank. Very rich soil from the floods that happened every few years. A good magsman was Trigger; would have made a fortune in Parliament, I can tell yer. Well, they decided to grow pumpkins, for some reason, and Greenfingers went to work. Pretty soon pumpkin vines began to crawl all over the property, across the creek, over some paddocks of lucerne, up the side of the cocky's house and down the road towards the pub. Well, anyhow, Trigger and Greenfingers waited for the pumpkins to bud but nothing happened until one day one solitary pumpkin began to grow right in the middle of the paddock. It grew so fast you could see it bulging. It became so heavy it began to sink into the ground. And eventually it took six men . . ."

"Yes, I know, six men, six hours to dig it out."

"That's right, and the same six men another six hours to roll it up six planks on to a six-ton truck to take it down to the pub."

"All right. Why didn't they sell the pumpkin or enter it in the Royal Show?"

"What? Made a lot more money rafflin' it six times—that's why! Anyway down to the pub they went with it. A'course, it wouldn't fit in the pub door, needless to say, so they left it on the truck outside. And Trigger put a sign on it: THE BIGGEST PUMPKIN EVER GREW—6d. A TICKET. Bought six raffle books at the newsagent's with a hundred tickets in each . . ."

"Did they sell all the tickets?"

"For sure! In the pub. The pumpkin being so big and people being in the habit of buying raffle tickets, like I told yer. There was a crowd around that pumpkin all day outside the Royal Hotel and, during the afternoon six blokes got on top of it and sat in the sun drinking beer. Just before closing time, the raffle was drawn."

"Who won it?"

"Old Greenfingers himself, natcherally, seeing Trigger drew the ticket out of the kerosene tin he had for the purpose and seeing it was the crookiest raffle ever run in Australia, as I said before."

"You said that pumpkin was raffled six times."

"And that's a fact. If you don't believe me you can ask Trigger MacIntosh . . ."

"And I suppose this bloke Greenfingers won it every time."

"No, he only won it five times."

"Well, who won it the other time? One of these days someone is going to kill you right in the middle of one of your stories."

"Trouble with you is, you try to ruin a story by making me get ahead of myself. My father always said . . ."

"Yeh, I know what he always said . . . Here's your beer."

"Thanks. Well, now, to tell the story properly. Greenfingers Stratton won the first raffle on account of Trigger MacIntosh had a ticket with a secret mark on it. Anyway, the next Saturday they brought the pumpkin back to the pub again."

"Be a bit awkward wouldn't it? Raffling the biggest pumpkin ever grew more than once."

"Mattera'fact, they changed the sign to read 'the second biggest pumpkin ever grew,' sold six hundred tickets again and old Greenfingers won it. The next Saturday, they raffled the third biggest pumpkin ever grew, and so on, until they arrived at the pub one Saturday morning with the sixth biggest pumpkin ever grew."

"You don't mean to say . . ."

"If you don't believe me, you can ask . . ."

"I believe you but thousands wouldn't. Go on; who won it the sixth time?"

"I'm coming to that. Needless to say, that there pumpkin was becoming a bit the worse for wear what with rolling it on and off the truck and people climbing up onto it to drink their beer. It was bruised and battered, so my father reckoned. Trigger MacIntosh said afterwards it seemed to have a face and usta snarl at him when he walked past it. Now, for some reason certain people, wowers and the like, started to say the raffles wasn't fair dinkum."

"You don't tell me."

"It's a fact. There's no pleasin' some people. Anyhow, my father reckoned that Danny O'Connell the publican said to Trigger: 'Listen, that there sixth biggest pumpkin that ever grew. I seem to have seen it somewhere before.' 'A simple case of mistaken identity,' Trigger told him. He was as quick as a flash, was Trigger. Did I ever tell about the time Trigger came in late at a concert in Melbourne?"

"No, I don't think you did. Just tell me about the sixth raffle. I'll settle for that."

"But I got to tell yer how witty Trigger was to build up his character, as the saying goes. He's late for this here concert and the singer on the stage stops warbling and says sarcastic line: 'The gentleman with the bald head is late.' Quick as a flash without thinking, Trigger answered him 'You can go and get ——— for mine'. Yer, he was witty all right, was old Trigger."

"I can see that . . ."

"Anyhow, where was I? Ah, yes, up to where Danny O'Connell the publican had a shot at Trigger about the raffle. (You keep interruptin' me and I lose track.) O'Connell didn't like raffles bein' run in his pub on account his customers had only so much money to spend and he liked them to spend it on beer and bets with the SP bookie in the bar who O'Connell financed, see. So he says to Trigger 'Some of my customers are complaining. They say Greenfingers Stratton won your raffle five weeks in a row.' Trigger had a good answer, as usual. He said: 'Old Greenfingers was always lucky.' 'Yeh,' O'Connell replied, 'and he's working with a very lucky partner too, if you ask me.' 'No one asked you, as it turns out,' Trigger told him, 'but at least we haven't watered that pumpkin and put a collar on it like you do with your beer.' You couldn't beat old Trigger in an argument and that's for sure. Anyway, in spite of some bad publicity, they sold six books of tickets. Then, just when Trigger was going to draw Greenfingers' ticket out of the tin, Danny O'Connell said: 'Just a minute, I'll draw the raffle this week.' Well, you can imagine how Trigger felt. He loses all his capital, if someone wins that pumpkin off him. So he says: 'I don't like no aspersions bein' cast on my character, but you can draw it, if you insist.' And he was thinking fast. 'You can draw it at five to six'." (Cont. next column)

Girls Were Made To Love And Kiss

by Gordon Adler

THERE was only the one case booked for that afternoon. It was a spine graft under local anaesthetic, so there was no anaesthetist to be notified. In the morning I went round to see Mary to make sure she was all right. She was lying on her back as usual, with the plaster jacket sawn down the side to make it easy to lift her out of it when the time came. The mirror over her head was tilted so she could see what was going on in front of the ward. That morning a ship had gone past, coming closer in than most, and Mary had made a pencil sketch of it. It was a collier, she told me; it had that rugged, sturdy look about it. As it went past all the girls in the ward kept looking at it because it was so close in; at first the teacher was annoyed because nobody was listening to the lesson. Then in the end she declared a five-minute break until the ship had gone.

But Mary did not have to follow the lesson that morning. You were let off school for four days if you had a spine graft, and you did not have to do any homework for a week. So that morning Mary made a sketch of the ship. She was quite good at it for thirteen. She was fond of sketching, and most of her spare time was spent drawing in pencil. A good deal of it was fanciful, whenever the whim directed. It gave her more scope than model drawings. It was always difficult to put something in a place where she could see it in the mirror and where it would stay for long.

"It isn't much good," she said, when I asked her to show me the sketch. "I've made the ship too dark."

(from previous column)

"What difference did it make when he drew it?"

"A lot of difference. Trigger calls Greenfingers aside. 'Here,' he says, 'here's six more raffle books. Go and lock yourself in the dunny and fill out every ticket in my name'."

"So old Trigger won the sixth raffle himself?"

"As a matter of fact, a bloke named Sniffy Connors won the raffle with the only ticket he ever bought in his life. Greenfingers got writer's cramp filling in six hundred butts with his name. He had half of the tickets but, as luck would have it, O'Connell drew out the one Sniffy Connors bought."

"And what did Sniffy do with the pumpkin? Eat it?"

"No, Sniffy was living in a tent at the time, so he blew a hole in the side of the pumpkin with a stick of gelignite and made a house out of it. Lived in it for six years with his wife and six kids . . ."

"You don't mean to say!"

"It's a fact. I could take you to the spot and show you the house except he got burnt out in the bushfires in 1936."

"You win. Have another beer."

"Not me. I'm busy today. Running a raffle. The biggest turkey ever bred in Australia. Two bob a time. How many tickets do you want?"

"Maybe there was less sun when you saw it than there is now. It is very real, anyhow."

"I hurried it a bit."

"Oh, well . . ."

"It went past so quickly."

"I suppose it did."

"When another ship comes past I'll try again."

"What are you going to do with this one?"

"I'll draw on the back of it. It's good paper."

She took up her pencil again and began filling in more detail. The class was having a lesson in algebra, and I had to tread softly to get out of the ward without disturbing them. I went down to the theatre by way of the lawn. That way the sun was warm, without any shadows to interrupt, and it shone on the green grass and on the sea which was quietly lapping on the beach that morning, and on the few seagulls that hovered over the water looking for fish.

I had to hurry because in a hospital there is always something to be done, even if it is only the staff sick parade. Down in the treatment block the staff sister had the usual line up. One of the kitchen maids had cut her finger, a nurse had fallen off a horse the day before, a gardener had a splinter under a fingernail, and another nurse had a sore throat. I said the second nurse ought to go off duty for three days. When I saw the sister open her mouth to protest I became very busy with the next case. I knew they were short staffed, but it was not my job to run the hospital.

At two o'clock I went back to the theatre to put the x-ray films up on the plate glass window where they could be seen during the operation, and I drew a mark across the certibrae that marked the upper and lower levels of the operation. As I put them up I saw a magpie standing on a tree stump outside, watching every movement I made. I looked out to the sea again, and saw the warm blue of the water and the ground glass surface glittering in the sunlight. I thought it would be a pleasant thing to wander down to the beach instead of assisting at an operation that would take hours.

Inside, the sister was already scrubbed up; she was laying out the instruments on the trolley, counting her artery forceps and taking them off the clip. We'll need dozens of those things, I thought. The kid will bleed like a stuck pig. I've got four pints of blood; that ought to be enough, surely. She is not very big.

"Lovely weather for July, Sister," I said, leaning on my elbows.

"I hope it lasts. I'm on day-off tomorrow."

"What are you going to do?"

"Swim."

"What, here?"

"Of course not. Sorrento."

"Watch out for the sharks." I thought of the nurse who was going off sick for three days, and I wondered whether the sister really would get her day off.

"What are they doing this operation for?" she said after screwing up her nose at the bone chisel that had a chip in it.

"To make her back straight."

"Yes, I know that, but what good is it going to do; it won't stay straight will it?"

I shrugged my shoulders.

"It will never get any better by leaving it alone."

"Why don't you give her a proper anaesthetic?"

"She wouldn't stand it. There is a big enough risk as it is."

"Why don't you just let her die in peace then if you know it won't do any good?"

"It might do some good."

The sister sighed, took a last look at the instrument trolley, then covered it with the sterile towel and stood waiting with her gloved hands clasped in front of her. The only part of her face visible over the mask was her eyes.

"We had better bring her in now, Sister. Mr. Bowen should be here in a few minutes. I think I heard his car coming down the hill."

The sister nodded to the orderly who had the door open. He pushed in the trolley with Mary lying face down, and her right arm on a board with a saline transfusion going. She was still wearing her glasses.

"Better give your glasses to Mr. Clifford, Mary. You don't want to get them broken."

"No, thanks, doctor. I'd like to keep them on. I want to see what's happening."

"OK. You won't see much, all the same. Are you all right?"

"Yes, I am all right, thank you, doctor."

"Well, we are going to take you out of that plaster jacket. You will be glad of that, won't you?"

"Yes. I've been waiting for that."

We lifted the top part of the plaster jacket away, using the saw in parts to separate bits that had escaped the first cut down, until finally the top half of the plaster was off, and the curve of the spine could be seen covered with a fine dust from the sawing. I blew on it and the dust cleared and we sponged her back with moist towels. Then we lifted her on to the operating table, and she made herself comfortable with her left arm supporting her head and her right arm stretched out on the board with the transfusion. Her face was placid.

"You'll have to have a couple of days off drawing, Mary, until we have finished with your arm."

"Oh, I can draw with my left hand, too, so it won't matter."

"Would you put up the first bottle of blood now. We are about to start," I said to the second sister. "Here is Mr. Bowen."

We exchanged good afternoons, and he changed into his white overalls and sandshoes, put on his cap and mask and began to scrub while I told him about the details of the case. He had given the bone he had brought in a little tin to the theatre sister, who was putting it on the trolley with sterile lifters.

Then we were under way with the blood running out of the first cut where it started just under my scratch on the skin at the level of the upper vertebrae, the sucker gurgling as it sucked up the blood, and Bowen working his way down the spine, feeling for each spinous process with his gloved hand. The sister held out the artery forceps in rapid succession as I clamped them on the bleeders.

Once a spurter made a sprinkle of tiny red droplets over the surgeon's face and mask before I got my forceps on to the bleeding point, and Bowen said it was time to start cooking them. The

sister passed the electro-cautery needle over to me, and I touched it against each pair of forceps as Bowen held them up. I smelt the sickly, acrid smell that was so like fried chicken as I pressed my foot on the switch and heard the sizzling sound as each artery was cauterised.

After that was done I looked at the assistant superintendent, who was managing the medical side of the case, and I asked him how Mary was standing up to it.

"How is she, John?"

"I think she is all right. Are you all right, Mary?"

"Yes. I am all right."

"She is all right. We are having a talk up here. Don't disturb us."

"All right."

Bowen took the chisel from the sister. He began to pare the muscles away from the vertebrae. As he drove the chisel down I could see droplets of sweat standing out on his brow, and his face wrinkled as he twisted the chisel. I was busy pressing hot packs down into the wound and keeping my fingers out of the way of the chisel. Bowen kept paring away, sometimes hitting the chisel with the mallet, sometimes pressing down with his fingers to feel whether there was much more to clean away, and sometimes standing up straight to relieve the ache in his back. Then he started swearing softly, under his breath at first, then aloud as he became lost in the job in hand.

"Get your fingers out of the road, damn you. How can I see with that great hand in the wound?"

I moved my hand over a bit.

"Sister, when are you going to get a bone nibbler that cuts. This bloody thing has been blunt for weeks."

"That's a new pair," muttered the sister, but Bowen did not seem to hear.

He was cutting big chips off the vertebrae to make a space where the chips of the graft could be pressed into position. With each blow of the mallet there was a sinking down of the little girl's back, but she made no sound. Although I noticed that she had stopped talking to John. John was holding her left hand in his. He looked up at the blood bottle to see how much was left. Then he rose from his chair and walked around to my side to speak softly in my ear.

"It's knocking the stuffing out of her," he said. "You'd better lay off for a few minutes."

"OK," I said. Then I leaned over to Bowen. "We'll have to wait. John says she is getting shocked."

The surgeon looked up and paused in his hammering. He glanced at the back of the girl's head, with its curly brown hair, then took a hot pack, and pressed it gently over the raw wound. I looked out of the big window as we waited, and I saw the sun getting lower in the later afternoon sky. The waves had white caps now as the tide was building up. I reflected that it was unusual weather for July. In the South Channel I could see a ship coming up the bay. By the time the ship drew level we would be ready to go on with the operation.

"How is she now?" asked Bowen after ten minutes.

"I think she should be right now," said John. "How are you, Mary, are you all right?"

"Yes," she said. "I am all right."

I glanced up just then, and I saw that the sister was crying.

ONE BIG HAPPY FAMILY

by Hilda Smith

EVERYBODY in the East End of London during the depression knew the "Parliament" at the corner of Great Garden Street and White-chapel Road. The out-of-work tailors used to congregate there and discuss the slack, politics and anything else that would pass away the few hours between signing on at the Labor Exchange and going home about four o'clock.

The union was around the corner and if there were any jobs going, an official would come along and let the men know. The girls in the trade weren't organised and got their jobs by going around the district looking for the welcome sign "Machinists and Felling Hands Wanted".

Like everyone else I would work for a while and then sign on to draw my few shillings a week until another job turned up. One day as I was passing the "Parliament" a boy I knew called out. "Hello Miriam, want a job?"

"Of course," I replied. "When do I start?"

"Right away," he said, and off we went.

On the way I remembered that his name was Syd, and he told me that his boss only wanted a girl to stitch linings and do the little boring jobs that go into the making of a lady's coat. I almost turned back but, as anything was better than signing on, I climbed the three flights of stairs to the workshop. I was determined to stay only until something better turned up.

The business was run by Mr. Gross, who was the cutter, foreman, book-keeper and traveller. A tall, thin, worried-looking man of fifty-nine who was always smoothing his thin hair across his head to try and conceal a shiny skating-rink. His three sons had worked for him ever since they left school. Hymie, who sat at the machine opposite me, was the eldest and enormously fat. It was just as well that his arms were long, otherwise he would not have been able to reach the machine as his corporation kept him a good eight inches away from the bench. He suffered with gout and on bad days would chain smoke, so that there was a deep black dent beside his machine from years of leaving cigarettes to burn out.

Lewis, the youngest, had the machine next to me. He hated the work and in 1938 volunteered as a first-aid helper. He would spend the dinner hour bandaging the presser's sleeve board, and after a few months of sitting next to him I felt that I could have set, splinted and bandaged a compound fracture blindfolded. Like the others, he was married, but was unable to have the children he dearly wanted.

Alf, the tailor, was a good-looking man, completely wrapped up in his pretty wife and two sons. Whenever a row was on he tried to act the role of peacemaker, but would end up by shouting louder than anyone else: "I'm not going to stay in this bloody madhouse any longer!" Down would go the work on the floor and up would run the mother calling: "Alfie, Alfie, come back. Don't take any notice of these lunatics."

He never got any further than the first flight of stairs and it was no use speaking to Alf after one of these exits, for he would stand with his back to the room, muttering under his breath, until it was time to go home to his understanding family.

I first realised that it was indeed a bloody madhouse when I asked Syd, the basting hand, how the big dent in my machine bench came to be there.

"Oh that, the old man threw a machine at Hymie one day."

Now, these machines were heavy industrial ones and I thought that Syd, as usual, was pulling my leg. But during one row I had to duck smartly as a big pair of cutting shears came whizzing past my ear. I was thankful that there were no spare machines around.

Hardly a day passed without one of these rows and they were always over a fault in the work. Not that anyone was a botch worker; but with orders so scarce and competition so keen, every coat had to be perfect. An almost invisible ripple would call down the wrath of heaven on the old presser, a man with arms like a blacksmith and a hoarse voice, who could wheeze back as good as he got.

If the abuse was directed at Lewis for putting on a pocket an eighth of an inch out, he would shout back: "Don't you think I've been cursed enough!" Then it would be on, and I would rummage on the floor until work started again.

When the old man put a finished coat on the stand, we held our breath while he went over every inch of it. It got so that we slowed up in order not to finish them too quickly. Then all hell would break loose because the factory was ringing up asking for delivery and we would go like mad hoping that there wouldn't be time for the microscopical going over. There always was.

I stayed there for two years and learned every curse and swear word in English, Polish, Lithuanian, and Yiddish. Unfortunately I cannot remember them now but they seemed more expressive than the ones used today.

Work began to get more plentiful at the beginning of 1939 and we started working an hour overtime each night. The strain began to tell on me, so one morning my mother insisted that I stay in bed for the day. I was soon awakened by her calling that there was a taxi at the door. Taxis were only used by people in books so I jumped up to look out of the window just in time to see fat Hymie knock at the door.

Apparently there had been pandemonium in the workshop when I didn't turn up. The old man had accused Hymie of using bad language in front of me. Hymie had reciprocated by accusing the old man of the same thing. Lewis had shouted that no decent girl would stay in this rotten trade and Alf had muttered something about a bloody madhouse. The old man had then picked up the tailor's dummy and thrown it at Alf who actually got down to the front door when Hymie stunned everyone by rushing down the stairs two at a time. On one of his bad days too.

Of course Hymie didn't tell my mother this when he asked where I was, but she made a shrewd guess and said: "Well, I reckon Miriam was working too hard so I've got her another job with more money and less hours."

"How much is she getting?" asked Hymie, wiping his face with a piece of lining.

MARK TWAIN IN AUSTRALIA

SIXTY years ago Mark Twain visited Australia on a lecture tour and recorded his travels in "More Tramps Abroad". This is one of Twain's lesser-known books and was probably written to help drive away a very large wolf from the door. Mark had gone bankrupt soon before this trip and called on his successful lecture-tour technique to help re-establish his name and credit. He did send back several hundred pounds from his Australian tour but it was probably a mighty effort for the ageing writer. "More Tramps Abroad" is a sizeable volume; about a third of it deals with Australasia and the balance with India and South Africa. There are pages of anecdotes, sedate descriptions of Australian cities, and the most spirited writing of all comes in pieces about Australian Aborigines and Maoris.

The quaint story of the Tichbourne claimant, that ex-butcher from Wagga who nearly won through a famous series of lawsuits to gain an English title and estate, is quite a readable study. The reference to events at Eureka as "the finest thing in Australasian history" is balm for the Australian democrat. Melbourne as the "mitred Metropolitan of the horse-racing cult" shows the easy wit of the man. But it is fairly obvious that the Australian Aborigines really captured his interest and sympathy. Twain read up this subject and brings out quite a lot of material in rebuttal of the alleged "low intelligence" of the Aborigines; he concludes that "it must have been race aversion that put upon them a good deal of the low-rate intellectual reputation which they bear . . ."

His irony in judging the extermination of Queensland natives by the use of poisoned food is

(Cont. from previous page)

My mother added a pound to what I was getting with the overtime.

"Tell her to come in tomorrow. I'll see that she gets the same and she can finish at six in future. Will that be all right?"

I was welcomed back next morning like a long lost child and stayed there until the bombing started and my mother took us out of London. But it was never the same. I like to think that it was because of me they toned down the rows and the swearing but of course it wasn't. Orders were pouring in and men were being called up. The "Parliament" disappeared and the father, instead of being an ogre, suddenly looked like a tired old man who had struggled for years to support his family.

Lewis became a full-time first-aid warden and adopted a little Viennese girl whose parents had been killed in a concentration camp.

War-time diet took pounds off Hymie and doctors' warnings made him cut down on his smoking. The gout rarely bothered him and he opened a little shop in the seaside town where I lived after the war.

I never heard any more of Alf who disappeared into a world of his own abroad. But I met the old man once when he came to spend a holiday with Hymie. He spent a long time reminding me of the good old days.

"Just like one big happy family, weren't we?" he said over and over again.

one of the hardest verdicts against colonists, in Australia or elsewhere. Starting from Mrs. Campbell Praed's description of a particularly vicious case of poisoning, Twain gives two full pages in refutation of her condemnation of the poisoner, claiming that compared with traditional treatments of savages this act was humane but liable to attract attention, through its novelty, to our civilising methods, and thus only an indiscreet act. At the end comes the analysis that "among the many humorous things of the world . . . is the white man's notion that he is less savage than other savages".

In New Zealand Mark Twain was revolted by the inscriptions on monuments at Wanganui commemorating the white and brown men who died in the local warfare. The monument to white men was inscribed with a reference to their valiant fight against "fanaticism and barbarism". That to the small group of Maoris who turned on their own people mentions "these brave men". Twain's disgust with these phrases gave rise to a page of ethics on patriotism and warfare. The commemoration of the few Maoris is judged as an invitation to treachery, disloyalty, and unpatriotism.

There is no conclusive championing of the native, colonial people in Australia, New Zealand, India or South Africa. It is on record that Twain supported in general the revolt of the oppressed and did much to aid particular causes. He stood by Maxim Gorki during his visit to the United States, even when scandal stories about Gorki scared away other writers. He defended Dreyfus, and his sympathy for the Chinese "Boxers" was so unusual that some thought Twain was only joking. But his attitude to the American Negro is not unequivocal and it may be that this cautious, undeclared approach to the local under-dog colors his remarks on colonial people in the Southern hemisphere. Mark Twain grew up in the world of slavery. As a child he witnessed the callous slaughter of a Negro slave and knew it to be the master's right to do away with his own property, yet he had misgivings over the barbarity of the act. Stephen Leacock claimed that Twain "grew to dislike it (slavery), and then to hate even the memory of it and the references to it in his books are all the more scathing from his matter-of-fact realism."

If Mark Twain was not a declared opponent of slavery he was at least a passionate fighter of sham, cant, and inhumanity, so influential that some of his books have earned the abuse of American inquisitors.

The great American writer had a friendly word for the Australian literature he found, and a realistic forecast of its vigor:

"Australia is fertile in writers whose books are faithful mirrors of the life of the country and of its history. The materials were surprisingly rich, both in quality and mass, and Marcus Clarke, Ralph Boldrewood, Gordon, Kendall and the others have built out of them a brilliant and vigorous literature and one which must endure. Materials—there is no end to them!"

DICK BLACKBURN

Overland, January 1958

JUDAH WATEN

TWO little stories as a beginning:

Judah Waten and I were both members of the Frank Hardy Defence Committee in the days when that young writer, as a consequence of his novel "Power Without Glory," was faced with a libel action brought by the late John Wren. And I remember Judah one night, after dwelling at some length on the fact that issues far bigger than the personal liberty of a fellow-writer were involved, tapping me on the chest and saying: "Mind you, John, that isn't all of it. Frank's a friend of mine, and I'll fight for a friend. I'd fight for you if you were in trouble."

The other story concerns a time more recently, when Judah, taken by an illness which could permanently have lost him the use of his legs, was about to undergo a serious operation. I'm informed that in the last moments of preparation he got into a discussion with the surgeon on the work of Balzac, and passed out under the chloroform still happily babbling the name of one of his literary idols.

In those two anecdotes you have what I believe to be Judah Waten's chief characteristics: an undeviating loyalty to his friends, and an almost fanatical devotion to good literature. I haven't yet needed Judah to fight for me, but have never doubted that he would be there. And other writers—and many who are not writers—will bear me out when I say that there is no more selfless man to take a problem to, whether it be literary or personal. In the wider field of organisational work on behalf of writers in general he is the only one of the younger brigade who is showing anything like the qualities of such veterans as Vance and Nettie Palmer, Katharine Prichard and Flora Eldershaw.

As regards his devotion to literature, I myself find him too much of a purist, too exacting, inclined to lay down standards that exclude far too many things for which I have an affection. We clash frequently on what I believe to be matters of taste, and which he maintains are matters of fact, but I'm ready to admit also that with his extensive reading and critical approach none of our arguments—and they are forthright enough—have been without some profit to me. He has a memory I envy, appears to miss nothing in contemporary writing, and is full of surprises in his knowledge of what has been done in the more obscure byways of Australian writing.

Judah Waten was born in Russia in 1911, came to Australia with his family when only three years old, lived first in West Australia and, after a bit of running around here and overseas, settled in Victoria. He makes no bones of the fact that his father was, for long periods, hawker and bottle-oh. In his second book, "The Unbending" ("Alien Son" was the first) we have a warm and detailed picture of this father, gentle and easy-going, and full of a simple dignity that never fails to lift him above his wandering old horse and cart loaded



up with cheap goods or empty bottles. In the same book there is the mother, The Unbending herself, capable and resolute, bewildered by a country in which she can pick up none of the threads of her lost Russian-Jewish culture and customs, but calmly determined that her children will have nothing but the best of whatever is to take its place.

As for Judah Waten's appearance—Nettie Palmer has referred to him, quite affectionately, as "that big bear". He IS big, a good "doer", as we say here, fond of eating and drinking, and delightfully free from petty inhibitions and complexes. He has a robust and thoroughly Australian sense of humor, a hearty laugh, heavy but mobile features that can on occasions be deceptively villainous, and a throaty chuckle that never fails to remind me of Roy Rene, our own "Mo" of blessed memory.

He is a terrific talker, magnificently confident of his opinions, and hard to toss even on those few occasions when you feel sure you've got him on one leg. There may be times when you feel he is unduly stubborn, but never tedious and never lacking in courtesy.

Politics are his second great enthusiasm. His information is as up-to-the-minute as can be in these days of garbled news, and a retentive memory enables him to fit everything as it happens into that pattern which so many of us long ago ceased to have any doubts about. He believes in the future of socialism as firmly as he believes in the inherent decency of men and women, and has never

to my knowledge refused to identify himself with any movement which had as its aim an improvement in the living standards of the less-privileged or the preservation of peace and of civic liberties. He admits with some pride that he once served a short term in Wormwood Scrubs Prison for taking part in an unemployed demonstration in London.

With it all go some of those amusing little quirks and contradictions that lie at the root of our affection for all really big people. He has no real interest in horticulture, but gets a whale of a kick out of cultivating, in a garden full of weeds and nonentities, such exotic novelties as frangipanni, poinsettia, and beloporone. He'll expound the virtues of the pedigreed bulldog for as long as you're prepared to listen, yet pampers and communes with a big black mongrel which has nothing to recommend it except a very understandable devotion to the Waten household. He told me once that a writer is damned once he begins to listen to the critics, yet remains humanly sensitive to everything that is said of his own work. He loves the Bush—when he is in the City; when actually in the Bush he can rarely be prevailed on to keep silent on Flaubert or the situation in the Middle East long enough for you to hear what the Bush itself is saying. Some philosopher once remarked that "the trees and fields will teach me nothing; men in the City do." That, although he will be reluctant to admit it, is Judah Waten, and I for one am thankful for it in an age when we need lovers of men far more urgently than we need lovers of nature.

His home at Box Hill is a cheerful place to visit. It is altogether a lively home. One of those rare places where you never know who'll walk in next, whether you'll get a serious discussion or just a good yarn, where you can buy into an argument without fear of rancor, and where, in any event, you can be sure of sharing a good laugh.

And now here's hoping Judah will forgive me the greatest crime a friend can commit—I've insulted his dog.

—John Morrison.

Double Vision

Replete with love, the human wit
grows beans, and cities, and a tree
friendly with philosophy,
and knows there is no end to it.

The human fool, of love bereft,
grows beans, and cities, but a weed
murders each resurgent seed
and warps the world; and what is left?

LAURENCE COLLINSON



A Moment

I leaned upon a willow tree
In summer, when the stream was low.
I saw a swallow darting by;
I turned my head and watched it go.
I stood upon the verge of bliss
Nor knew it, such my dullard wit.
A moment like a swallow came,
And I stood staring after it.

H. B. BEES

THE DRAGON OF BENDIGO*

And so a whole people may vanish the day,
They came and they dug and were banished away,
The dragon of Bendigo, where has it gone?
They came and they dug and they cradled the gold,
But there is no voice that may tell what they told,
The dragon of Bendigo, where has it gone?
Their fences have fallen, their gods have decayed,
And scarcely a tablet to show that they prayed,
The dragon of Bendigo, where has it gone?
At Parkes and at Myrtleford children will boast
That they saw in the night an old Chinaman's
ghost,
The dragon of Bendigo, where has it gone?
That they saw Johnny's ghost with a pick in his
hand,
With a rope round his neck and a mouthful of sand,
The dragon of Bendigo, where has it gone?
And once at broad noon on the old Chewton road,
I too saw a Chinaman carry his load,
The dragon of Bendigo, where has it gone?
A basket of herbs and a basket of fruit,
Not a speck of red gold dust that clung to his boot,
The dragon of Bendigo, where has it gone?
I think that the river, the rain and the rocks
Remember the herdsman who pastured no flocks,
The dragon of Bendigo, where has it gone?
I think that the earth and the mountain still keeps
The name of the grave where the dragon now
sleeps,
The dragon of Bendigo, where has it gone?

DAVID MARTIN

* Title poem of David Martin's new collection of verse to be published shortly by Edwards & Shaw.



SUNDAY SILHOUETTE

The church choir waits its introductory chord—
Then voices Sabbath righteousness abroad,
And Christian soldiers fight their weekly war
As tone on tone climbs to the evermore.
A Sunday sound, that somehow stirs the soul—
As does all music—but an aureole
Of praise that lingers there
Hangs like a benediction in the air.
Strong tones of tenors, baritones and bass
Chase one another in a fugal race,
As with weak altos and sopranos they
Cast off the common sins of every day.
Through five or six days, forty hours a week,
They tread the paths the righteous do not seek—
As businessmen, with mammon as their aim,
Or laborers, who need it just the same;
Clerk, typists, shop-assistants, lawyers, wives—
All wearing out their vastly different lives.
On Sundays—they are Worshippers. One creed
To fit the contours of their varied need.
Then afterwards, the few who meditate
With true concern about their after-fate,
Join with the footpath congregation in
Discussion of more pleasant things than sin—
While firmly on the mighty and the meek,
The stewards shut God's house up for the week.

JOAN KATHERINE SEPPINGS

BARBARA BAYNTON

by Vance Palmer



Photo by courtesy
of Lady Gullett.

ONE of the most talented and original of our writers was Barbara Baynton, who created something of a sensation among readers by the daring and vigor of her "Bush Studies" at the beginning of the century. I very well remember the discussion aroused by her story, "The Chosen Vessel", which A. G. Stephens printed in his anthology, "The Bulletin Story Book". It told of a woman left alone with her child on a remote selection and the night of horror she experienced when a crazy swagman appeared at sundown. The story was quietly told, but full of power, and reached its climax when the terrified woman escaped from her hut near morning and made through the dark bush to the road, throwing herself on the mercy of a solitary horseman coming home from the township. But this man, a superstitious fellow with a sense of guilt, had been drowsing half-drunkenly in his saddle; when he awoke to see the white-robed woman and her child he imagined it was a vision of the Madonna and galloped away in a panic, leaving her to her fate.

Other stories of Barbara Baynton's at the time were even more ruthless in their realism, but some had a robust masculine humor. How attractive and true to the spirit of the outback was that picture of the old hermit-shepherd apologising subtly to his dog for letting the ewe and lamb into the hut they shared. It was not the sort of writing you expected of a woman—especially in those days, when women were supposed to be concerned with little dramas of the drawing-room and the home. There was a good deal of curiosity about Barbara Baynton. What sort of a woman was she people asked? Was she as mannish as her stories sounded? How had she gained her experience of this tough, primitive life which cut more deeply into the bone than anything written by Lawson?

My own curiosity was stimulated by a chance encounter with another boy a little older than myself, Bob Frater. We had been playing cricket in a little country town; we had missed the train home. And, sitting in a deserted park near the station, putting in time as best we could, we suddenly began talking about writing; or rather about the Bohemian world of Sydney which seemed a very dazzling place then to young people. Puffing at his cherrywood pipe (he was about eighteen) my companion spoke about it with a casual familiarity that took my breath away. He knew all about it; he had already had paragraphs in the Bulletin; people like A. G. Stephens and Albert Dorrington had been calling in at the family home since he was a youngster. There was a doggy assurance about him when he told anecdotes of such men that made me feel terribly envious; he seemed to have been brought up in a world quite different from my own.

I had always been interested in writing, but had never met any writers. How had this Bob Frater managed to become familiar with so many of them? Well (it came out without any particular boastfulness on his part), his mother was a writer. She was, in fact, Barbara Baynton.

It was this fillip of personal contact that led me to make a special study of Barbara Baynton's

stories, I didn't like them at first; there was something savage and remorseless about them; and yet they fascinated me by their unshrinking honesty. Such a woman, I felt, would never be daunted by anything.

Three or four years later when I was in London, trying to earn a living by free-lancing, casting about for things that might interest editors, I wrote an article about Barbara Baynton's work, and though it was really about as unlikely a subject as could be imagined, it happened to gain publication in the Book Monthly, a journal that had some literary prestige at the time. One surprising result was an impulsive letter, written in a large, imposing hand that allowed very few words to a page.

"Who are you that you know my work so well?" it asked challengingly. "Where do you come from? All the time I've been over here I've never had such encouragement. Won't you come and have dinner with me at my club?"

It was an exciting letter for me to get in my little back room in Bloomsbury—exciting, but more than a little embarrassing. Could I screw my courage up to accept this warm invitation? How would this woman who talked of getting "encouragement" from me re-act when she found I wasn't a distinguished critic but a rather shy boy of twenty, battling for a few guineas? I thought of going to some obscure place and posting an answer from there, saying I was unable to come to London. I thought of a dozen desperate schemes for avoiding the invitation. But in the end I took my fate in my hands and went.

And I was glad I did, for Barbara Baynton was a large, generous woman who wasn't at all likely to humiliate a boy. In that fashionable club she still seemed like a bushwoman; there was an atmosphere of abundance about her. I was able to get on easy terms with her by talking about Bob Frater, that son of hers by her first husband. Her second husband, Dr. Baynton, had also died a few years before, but had left her a controlling interest in a law-book company that made her independent of writing as a means of earning a living; it was just as well, for her down-to-earth stories had had rather a chilly reception in England. She told me she had hawked her first book, "Bush Studies", from one publisher to another and had had so many refusals that she thought of putting it in the fire.

"English readers are only interested in a background they know," she said, "and Australia to them is more remote than Abyssinia. That's what I told the writers in Melbourne when I was home last. Don't come here. Stay at home where you can write about what you know for the people you know."

But luckily her stories had caught the eye of Edward Garnett, that very discerning critic who did so much for Conrad, Galsworthy, and D. H. Lawrence, and he persuaded Duckworth's to pub-

By courtesy of the Australian Broadcasting Commission.

lish them. He also showed them to his friend, R. B. Cunninghame Graham, who pointed to them in rebuttal when some critic had written disparagingly of Australian writing; Barbara Baynton's stories bore comparison, Graham asserted, with the early work of Gorky. There was real penetration in this, for Barbara admitted to me that her models had been Russian and Scandinavian writers. She felt that the human condition in those countries was much the same as in our own; and that their peoples faced the same problems. She admired their starkness and simplicity. Most of the fashionable English writing of the day she regarded as mere confectionery.

In essence, for all the taste for high life she later acquired, she was a simple woman—gusty, forthright, robust—like Miles Franklin, but with more weight behind her. She had been brought up on the Hunter River when it was a more primitive place than it is now, and her mind was full of vivid little dramas of loneliness and people a little unhinged by isolation. Sometimes her writing rasped the nerves with its sheer violence, as in her description of a railway-train in plain country:

“Suddenly the engine cleared its throat in shrill welcome to two iron tanks, hoisted twenty feet, and blazing like evil eyes in a vanished face. Besides them it squatted on its hunkers, placed a blackened thumb on its pipe, and hissed through its closed teeth like a snared wild cat, while gulping yards of water.”

But her conversation had a humor and a devastating wit—as instanced by her nickname, “Dingo Dell”, for a certain Anglo-Australian club haunted by the sort of people who aped English habits and yet couldn't help emphasising their origins by cooing to one another across Regent Street. Dingo Dell! What a perfect combination of words for that hybrid place.

She and her daughter Jenny (now Lady Gullett) were figures in the Anglo-Australian world during and after the first World War, and I remember seeing her, in 1919, entertaining W. M. Hughes in her box at the theatre, looking a most imposing dowager. But she had given up writing; perhaps because her novel, “Human Toll”, into which she had put a good deal of herself, had no obvious success; perhaps because the harsh realities of the Bush that had nourished her talent were growing fainter in her mind. The life she was now leading—the life of country houses and great occasions—was not the sort she cared to write about, and I doubt whether she would have had the technique to cope with it. Anyone who reads the first page of “Human Toll” will see how far her imaginative world was removed from Vanity Fair. But she still cared deeply for literature. I remember her talking to me enthusiastically in 1919 about Knut Hamsun's “Hunger”; Knut Hamsun was then a new writer whom few people had read. And I remember her at the same gathering listening to an elderly Anglo-Australian journalist who, because she was a writer, thought she would be interested in discussing the fashionable novel of the day. She listened, staring at him in what could only be called an explosive silence, till suddenly she let go:

“Man! Why do you waste your brains by troubling to read such stuff? It's not for grown-up men and women; it's for poor creatures who take just what's given them by the girl at the library.”

The breath of vigor in her deep voice nearly blew him out of the window.

It was difficult to connect her robust realism with the airy artificialities of the society in which she moved. In her literary aspect she seemed as

Land Just Built On

Some loved the ti-trees' grey soft cloak

Over my gentle hills; they came in spring
To see the white stars of its million flowers,
To find a wren's nest, hear a thrush. Then hands

Tore out the trees, a horse plodded a long

Straight line, and I was glad again
When apples blushed and birds came back. Now

Fences stifle me, a garbage truck

Lurches in mud, two women vacant-faced
Stare at a concrete-mixer, smile and say,
“Isn't it lovely how the street fills up?”

NANCE BLACKMAN

★

Pelicans Near Mannum

Denuded hillsides,
a drab house,
a plant or two of tobacco bush,
swamps held off from the stream
by dull levees:
is this the river
of which you have read so much?

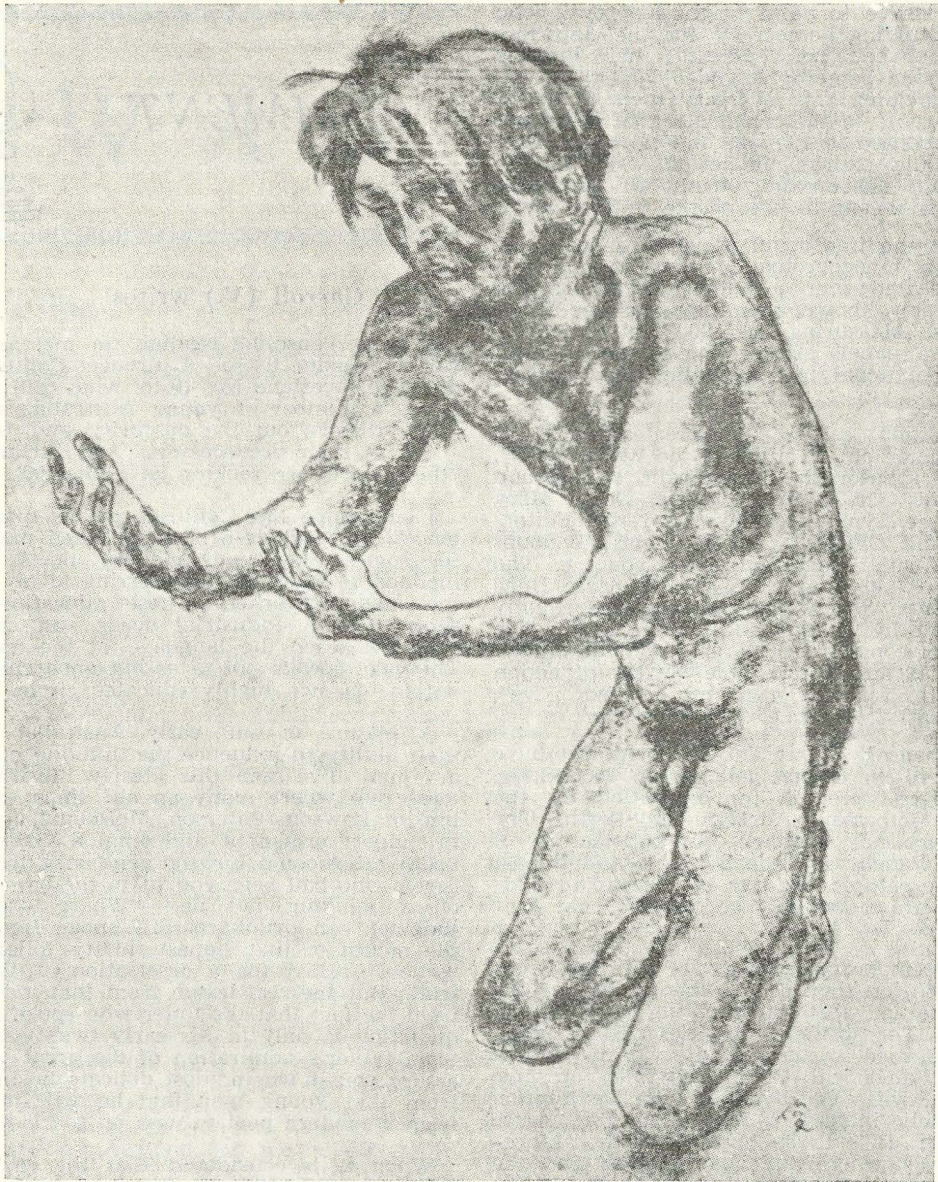
Then, suddenly, the pelicans;
and then
hundreds of pages
break free from the books,
float solemnly,
high above
the unbroken surface
of the broad river.

IAN MUDIE

solid and substantial as one of the ironbark posts that fenced the selections of her native Hunter River. She was so fiercely determined to reveal the truth about life, no matter how bitter or brutal it might be. I often wondered if her society friends ever read her sketches, such as the one about “Squeaker's Mate”, the battered bushwoman in clothes made of sacking, or that other sketch about the grotesque midwife who was called a “rabbit-catcher”.

In 1921, she married Lord Headley, an English peer who had become a Moslem, and nine years later she died in Melbourne.

There are very few literary records of her, which is a pity. She wrote sparingly; she left, I believe, hardly any letters behind. But I treasure highly one in her big, round hand that she sent nearly fifty years ago to a boy who had, as she said, “given her encouragement” to go on writing.



The Hiroshima Panels

THE city was still burning. Some of the wounded who had escaped to the outskirts lay in the shelter of ruined houses or under trees. A mother was standing on the scorched road watching over her daughter. The dying girl was blocking the passage, which had been narrowed by fallen masonry. She lay there motionless, her whole body bleeding and only her vacantly open eyes showing that she was still alive. Country people entering the city to search for their relatives and friends, and city people who were escaping to the countryside, had to pass the girl. The mother kept repeating one thing: "It's my daughter. Please step over her." She repeated it to each passer-by, and each time she bowed

politely. The passers bowed slightly in return, murmured "Excuse me", and, stepping over the girl, hurried on . . .

So a vignette of Hiroshima.

Among the killed were the father and several relations of Iri Maruki. He and his wife entered the city almost immediately after the bombing. Up to that time Maruki and Toshiko Akamatsu, his wife, had belonged to the surrealist group of painters; but in the circumstances prevailing after the war, when destruction and despair drove so many realist painters into the surrealist camp, Maruki and Akamatsu began to formulate for themselves a new approach to realism.

First they strove to paint bright and optimistic pictures of building democracy for the Japanese people, but between their eyes and their brushes the scenes of the bombing intruded, and the fore-shadows of another war overcast their thoughts. Finally they came to the conclusion that no happy future was possible for Japan, and no real peace, until they could express, in terms of art as the ultimate means of revealing truth, all that they felt Hiroshima meant to the people of the world.

Working in the traditional Japanese medium of pen and wash, monochromatic except in one section, they created over a number of years the masterpiece now known to millions as the Hiroshima Panels. Measuring over 200 feet in length, eight of these panels are coming to Australia in March, for a national tour extending over several months.

This exhibition, called "the greatest work of art that has come out of either of the World Wars", is under the sponsorship in Australia of a group which includes Mr. William Dargie, Dame Mary Gilmore, Dame Sybil Thorndike and the Editors of *Meanjin* and *Overland*. There seems no doubt that it will create a sensation in this country. The style of the Panels, says the English critic Hans Hess, represents "a new pictorial language, equally understandable by the East and by the West." The subject matter consists very largely of nude human figures, seen in an inconceivable variety of action and agony, in a series of panels entitled "Fire", "Flood", "Ghosts", "Rescue" and so on.

These immensely significant works of art have been offered to the official galleries in each State, and have been accepted for exhibition by the galleries in Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth. The Sydney gallery has declined the opportunity of showing the Panels, and the Brisbane and Hobart galleries have refused for lack of space. The Sydney Trustees are reported to be reconsidering their decision.

These contemporary works are of the very breath of art, for they are of the essence of the matters of life and death surrounding every human being today. The aesthetic qualities of the Panels have been affirmed by many of the world's leading critics. The Panels will be in Australia for some months and will be available for exhibition wherever public interest is high enough to ensure they are seen. It is to be hoped that the authorities, in places where the chance to exhibit the Panels has been declined, will come to realise the enormous significance for art and life of these works, and will, wherever possible, revise their decisions accordingly.

S. MURRAY-SMITH

★

"The creative writer, in depicting an animal's behavior, is under no greater obligation to keep within the bounds of exact truth than is the painter or the sculptor in shaping an animal's likeness. But all three artists must regard it as their most sacred duty to be properly instructed regarding those particulars in which they deviate from the actual facts. They must indeed be even better informed on these details than on others which they render in a manner true to nature. There is no greater sin against the spirit of true art, no more contemptible diletantism than to use artistic licence as a specious cover for ignorance of fact."

Konrad Lorenz: "King Solomon's Ring"

★ COMMENT



J. P. Carroll (V.) writes:

It made consoling reading for me, as a manual working man, to see Laurence Collinson's summary, in *Overland* No. 10, of what can be expected from "a number of young Australian poets" who have "thrown out the obscurity and formlessness . . ." of their predecessors. And further, he says, "these poets are seeking an audience".

I only hope Mr. Collinson means that the "audience" will include a long neglected majority who, for some reason, our modern poets have been inclined to snub. I am referring to my own kind; the manual workers whose education has been shorn to suit industrial needs and consequently does not teach the language of the modern poet. This poet speaks not to us but apparently to those within his own highly educated circle.

A feature of our early Australian poets was their ability to influence the thinking of the ordinary man. I've seen this clearly illustrated in the local pub where many an old timer can quote a line of Lawson, Paterson, McDougall and the like to support argument and opinion. Only last Saturday afternoon a Lawson gem came from a gravel carter who had been caught in the bar at 6.20 p.m. on a stinking hot day—"Where drunkards in judgment on drunkards sit" spoke Henry through the mouth of that honest thirsty toiler when the "school" asked for a description of the place of trial. But the real lesson from that incident comes from the fact that the toiler who spoke the Lawson quotation is only in his early twenties; he had it from father's admiration of the great poet. I can assure you it was a most delicate business to gain from that young man that he will have no line from a modern poet to pass on to his offspring.

When it is considered that the early poets in this country could not only encourage the under-privileged but touch the conscience and sympathy of those in power also, I think it should be a challenge to modern poets to retrace the history of poetic expression and find out where the ordinary reader was left stranded. The force of poetry seems to have contributed greatly to every event of social emancipation by inspiring unity and clarity of purpose in common men. For the common man today there is no unity and no poetry.

There are numerous trade union journals which are the only avenue for workers to learn the distortions of the popular press. Yet whilst these journals strive to keep the worker informed there is lacking that vital literary fire to keep him inspired. Here is virgin territory for the poet to recreate an important phase of Australian literature.

★

A number of comments on our Lawson issue have had to be held over until next issue.

S W A G

An Editor's Plea

If you don't like the opinions expressed in Overland, don't tell us we should have banned them; instead, tell us what **you** think on the subject concerned.

Music for Australians

The chance of hearing such magnificent musicians as the Czechoslovak Smetana Quartet in their recent Australian tour is now happening more frequently—but still not frequently enough. Certainly far more than this is required if any headway is to be made against the steady deadening of musical taste in young people by the cheap, nasty and superficial imported music which has so effectively removed a whole world and intense delight and understanding from millions of Australians.

How can this be offset, particularly in the schools?

Almost certainly the reason why so many magnificent musicians are to be found in the Communist countries (for instance Oistrakh, whom the A.B.C. has invited to Australia this year) is the high level of musical education in their schools. The Melbourne Herald printed recently an interview with Miss Fanny Waten, sister of novelist Judah Waten, who is herself a music teacher and who has recently visited the U.S.S.R. Miss Waten pointed out how in the U.S.S.R. special schools likely to make talented musicians cater for children from 7 to 17 years of age. As children cannot enter the Conservatorium until 18, "they have ten years' solid musical training before embarking on more advanced study," Miss Waten said.

Mrs. Margot Milner, who lives in Czechoslovakia but hails from New Zealand and was closely associated with the visit of the Smetana Quartet there, has written of the appreciation of good music the Smetana Quartet found in New Zealand. (The Quartet had an extraordinarily hectic itinerary, and several people objected that it was really too much to include in it the little town of Otorohanga. The Quartet's reply was characteristic: "Do you know that the population of Otorohanga is 1,500 and the Chamber Music Society there has 450 members? We must play for people like that!")

"One of the reasons for this very high level of appreciation of music in New Zealand," writes Mrs. Milner, "is the extraordinarily high level of systematic musical appreciation courses in the schools. A very large sum of money is set aside for a special department of the Education Ministry for the collection of long-playing records and film strips and their distribution to schools throughout the country so that the youngest children in the most rural areas have opportunities of hearing and getting to know the master musicians and the master-pieces of great music. It is probably one of the most remarkable free organisations of its kind in the world. There are also facilities provided in all secondary schools for

training orchestras—if there is sufficient interest on the part of the music master—including the free use of instruments and free instruction in the playing of them. I personally have heard a performance of Beethoven's 7th Symphony by pupils of a State Secondary School."

I suppose there's nothing to compare with this in Australia, but the work being done by Overland Associate Editor John Manifold in Queensland should at least be known. John Manifold has been broadcasting over the A.B.C. in Queensland a weekly session known as "The Beginners' Band". The ideas behind it are to get school children **doing** something musically, instead of the constant passive listening that the present stress is on; and to give a sufficient impetus to the very simplest type of instrumental music in schools, particularly out-back one-teacher schools, to allow the school to carry on when the broadcasts finish.

The session broadcasts very simple tunes, and also instructions for making instruments to join in with. "Billy-lids as cymbals. Fencing-wire triangle. Cake-tin drum. Bones. Lagerphone. [The A.B.C. insists for reasons of propriety that the lagerphone be called 'Jingling Johnny!'] Pan-pipes. Elementary string instruments of plywood and fishing-line. Every week there is something more to **make**, as well as something more to play. And every week a different school provides a little 'studio orchestra' of six kids for the broadcast."

"Studio performances of 'Ach, du lieber Augustin', 'Click Go the Shears' and other songs have already produced not only noise," says John, "but some very sound and musicianly playing. It all goes to substantiate my theory that most kids are musical until education gets hold of them and dulls their natural wits."

The incidentals must be fun. John Manifold draws attention to the unique triangle, "apparently made from a young crowbar", sported by the Saint Stephen's Convent girls. "They declare that it is the only contrabass triangle in the world," he reports. And he adds, in perplexity, and of another school: "I cannot quite account for the way in which the bottle-player's pigtailed stand out horizontal when she blows fortissimo!"

Meanwhile space doesn't allow me to do more than mention Dorian Le Gallienne's important article in the Age Literary Supplement (Melbourne) on January 25, in which he says: "There is no doubt that the position of the Australian composer is improving. There must be, in Melbourne, nearly half a dozen writers of serious music who, from performance royalties, are able to pay for the manuscript paper they use, and still have a few pounds over each year."

Le Gallienne analyses the role of the A.B.C. in encouraging Australian music, and on the whole is appreciative of it. But the only satisfactory solution, he feels, is for the serious Australian composer to have the opportunity of receiving grants akin to those awarded to writers by the Commonwealth Literary Fund. Failing the existence in Australia of private foundations like the U.S.A.'s Ford Foundation, which has just granted three-quarters of a million dollars to encourage the arts in general and music in particular, he feels that "the State and Commonwealth Governments must contribute. Not only do such grants "allow the composer freedom to concentrate on his work and do it exactly as he feels best, but they also provide him with a place in the community—a heartening feeling that his work is worthwhile because there is a demand for it," says Mr. Le Gallienne.

And that's all I've got to report on the music front for the moment, except for one announcement. John Manifold asks me if there's anyone

in need of a balalaika, a ukelele, a small guitar or a child-sized double-bass. John is a proficient maker of these instruments and is prepared to make some to sell as a fund-raiser for Overland.

★

Book Reviews and the A.B.C.

That witty and wicked satire-sheet, *Mary's Own Paper*, recently raised some questions concerning the A.B.C. Book Review session on Sunday mornings which included several I had heard raised in several quarters and which it seemed desirable to check the A.B.C.'s attitude on. I wrote a letter that, characteristically, was perhaps not as polite as it might have been, and received a courteous reply from Mr. Alan Carmichael, A.B.C. Director of Talks. The questions and answers are summarised below: owing to lack of space we regret our inability to print Mr. Carmichael's replies in full, as he requested. We invite comments from Overland readers.

Question:

Could you let us know whether or not reviewers receive assorted bundles of books with little or no specific regard to the subjects in which they are interested or qualified?

Answer:

Our aim in the book review session has been to cover as wide and representative a selection as possible of what new books are available to the reading public. A glance at any library list will show quite clearly that there is an extraordinary variety of books being published today, and it is to some extent inevitable that this variety will be reflected in book review programs over the air or in the book review pages of newspapers. I hope that our reviewers are chosen for the breadth of their interests, and for their ability to comment intelligently on any book, whether it happens to be a novel, or a collection of poems, or a popular scientific treatise. Our session is, after all, a book review session; it does not pretend to be anything more than that. In particular, we do not try to make it a review of current literature in the strict sense; we feel that this job can be much more competently handled by strictly literary reviews like *Meanjin*, *Southerly* and *Overland*. "Today's Books" could perhaps be explained as the radio equivalent of the book review pages of a newspaper. By contrast, we leave strictly literary matters to be discussed in other programs.

Question:

Did one or more of your reviewers resign recently when their exercise of some freedom of choice was curtailed?

Answer:

Without wishing to evade the question, a matter of ethics is involved: I feel it would be improper for the A.B.C. to take the initiative in making public statements regarding its relations with contributors to any of its programs.

Question:

Do you feel it practicable to assess whether, as has been alleged, Australian books, specifically current literature and poetry, and current literary periodicals, are now being less reviewed than before, when for instance Vance Palmer and A. A. Phillips dealt with them quite regularly?

Answer:

I am quite sure that we are reviewing just as many Australian books as we always were, and perhaps even more. For example, just before your letter was received we sent a Victorian reviewer eight Australian books to review . . . In our experience, Australian books do not generally come in such big batches. The books sent to the reviewer

I have instanced included the latest "Australian Poetry" and the latest *Southerly*. I do not think, therefore, that we can be accused of neglecting Australian literature. I must make it clear, however, that normally we only review books which are sent from publishers to our Federal Reference Library.

Question:

Has the A.B.C. any policy regarding precedence to contemporary Australian literature on its book review sessions?

Answer:

Within the limits of the rule I have just referred to, regarding the forwarding of publications to our library, we have always tried to review every worthwhile Australian book that is published. We have always done everything possible in our short story and serial programs to make Australian authors and Australian books more widely known. Some time ago we decided that, in our 8.45 a.m. (A.E.T.) straight serial reading, we would use only Australian novels. We have been forced to change this decision occasionally, but only because there are simply not enough contemporary Australian novels, suitable for a morning program, to keep up with our output.

Question:

Is it true that your reviewers are not allowed to keep copies of books, and why if so?

Answer:

My curiosity is piqued as to the origin of this question. However, the answer is yes, the A.B.C. does retain review copies. I am aware that review copies have been widely regarded as a reviewer's perk, but, as far as the A.B.C. is concerned, I can see no reason why this should be. The issue would seem to reduce itself to this. In the interests of efficiency, the A.B.C. requires as large a library of current books and periodicals as possible, and the present library facilities are being most usefully expanded by the review copies flowing in from publishers. If the books did not come from this free source, the A.B.C. would have to buy them—and thus divert money from the programs which are the reason for its existence.

★

The Next Overland

Our next issue will be devoted in large part to the contribution of Katharine Susannah Prichard to Australian life and letters. We are also planning to run some comments on the important Russian novel, "Not By Bread Alone". A discussion series on contemporary Australian literature and its problems will also commence, with contributions to come from Vance Palmer, Max Harris, Jack Beasley and others.

★

Donations

We are very happy to acknowledge the following donations, but would like to point out that they are falling off—and were never enough to keep us level in any case. Can you help? Received: P.E.W. £1, K.H. £1, H.F.B. 14/-, W.J.C. and Z.R.G. 13/-; V.K.O'D., E.V.S., R.McN., J.C., S.W., W.E.D., B.R., W.W., M.A., J.H., M.A., S.A., L.R., M.W. and F.T.A., all 10/-; C.W.C., M.P.M., F.C.R. and J.P.O'C., all 5/-; P.S., A.P. and D.G., 3/- each.

Around the Little Magazines

Meanjin, No. 4, 1957, contains T. Inglis Moore on "The Rise and Fall of Henry Lawson", Gwen Kelly's interesting sociological study "Portrait of a New Community", and an acid reply by A. A. Phillips to the earlier article on the Commonwealth Literary Fund by Dr. Grenfell Price, its Chairman. Southerly, No. 3, 1957, is a Brennan Anniversary Number, but contains, as well as Brennan items, a charming essay by Brian Elliott on the myth of birds being songless and flowers scentless in Australia, and an extract omitted from the published version of Tom Ronan's novel "Vision Splendid". Australian Letters, November 1957, contains a provoking symposium on Australian humor, an important comment on Australian literature as it appears to an outsider by the young English writer John Wain, and an exotic article on camels by old-timer H. M. Barker. This magazine is obviously going to have further teething troubles over the problem of "jell".

★

Singabout for September 1957 continues its good work by printing six folk songs with melody, including a contemporary one—"Sleeper Cutting in Baradine Bar". From New Zealand comes Landfall, December 1957, which contains an editorial comment on Australian painter Sidney Nolan, a number of New Zealand stories and poems and an Australian Letter by T. Inglis Moore. Also from Maoriland is Mate, No. 1, which includes a sketch by Frank Sargeson. Historical Studies for November 1957 retains its high level of general interest with articles on who *did* discover Australia, problems of editing Cook's journals and other articles. Also received are Drylight (Teachers' College, Sydney) and Diogenes (Literary Society of the University of Tasmania).

★

Dymphna Cusack

Few Australian writers' themes have ranged as wide as Dymphna Cusack's, which have varied from the American occupation of Sydney to the color problem in London to atomic tests on Pacific islands and now to the position of the women of China. When I met her in Peking last year Dymphna was kind enough to take time off from her travels and interviews to show me ecstatically the Antique Street and Silk Street of Peking; and her enthusiasm for the wares of old China was only surpassed by her absorption in the life of the women of new China. While I was there she brought off a coup by interviewing the Prime Minister's wife, Mrs. Chou En-lai; and I remember she held me spell-bound with her account of her talks with an old lady she knew, former lady-in-waiting to the Empress Dowager! Dymphna is now back in Australia on a visit, and is busy being televised, broadcasting and speaking to divers audiences.

★

Writers wire Macmillan

A group of Melbourne writers (and others) wired British Prime Minister Macmillan while he was staying at Government House, Melbourne, stressing their support for an early Summit meeting. Signatories to the telegram included Leonard Mann, Alan Marshall, Nettie Palmer, Margaret Sutherland, Professor R. Douglas Wright, Professor Ian Maxwell, John Hetherington, John Morrison, C. B. Christesen, Bill Wannan, Judah Waten and Brian Fitzpatrick.

Suffer Little Children? . . .

In an unscrupulous piece of political deceit which for a change took it out of the little kids instead of their parents, minor tragedies by the thousand were enacted all over the State of Victoria on February 4.

Premier Bolte had announced that children aged 4½ would be admitted to the State schools. This was not a sign that the Victorian Government has miraculously solved its educational problems, but that Premier Bolte and his party are faced with an election in May and want to create a little bit of sly propaganda for the voters.

Of course when the kids turned up to school for the first day, in their new school clothes and with all the momentous expectations such a day brings, most of them were summarily sent home again by head teachers desperately seeking for accommodation for classes already over-swollen.

It's things like this that we would like to have more stories or reportage about in Overland. Meanwhile we roundly hope that Mr. Bolte, despite the good publicity his cheap gesture made in the newspapers, hears plenty of what decent people, not least parents, think of his dishonesty.

★

Here and There

Chris Wallace-Crabb's first book of poems, "The Music of Division", has just been accepted for publication by Angus & Robertson . . . Next publication of the Australasian Book Society is A. A. Phillips' eagerly-awaited book of essays, "The Australian Tradition".

The Polish monthly magazine "World Youth" asks for pen-friends for its readers. Letters, which should be addressed "Młodzież Swiata", Warszawa 43, Smolna 40, Poland, should specify interests, age, sex, languages known, etc.

★

A group of imaginative and public-spirited citizens of Bendigo (V.) are sending round the hat to put up a statue to Lawson's literary character Bob Brothers, hero of his story "Send Round the Hat". (Incidentally, a volume of Lawson's stories has recently been published in Russia under this title.) Brothers hailed from Bendigo, and it is estimated that a monument to him would cost £3,000. Donations may be sent C/o. Mayor of Bendigo.

★

Within a day of each other two important competitions for writers have recently been announced: a £300 prize competition for a stage play for the Elizabethan Theatre Trust, and a £3,000 prize for a television play. Overland can supply some details if needed. We also remind writers of the Dame Mary Gilmore novel competition for which we can also supply details. This latter competition is sponsored by the Combined May Day Committees.

★

The well-known short-story writer Dal Stevens is editing the 1957-58 edition of the short story collection "Coast to Coast"; this will be the thirteenth issue of the volume. Contributions for the collection are invited, and should be sent to Mr. Stevens, C/o. Angus & Robertson Ltd., 89 Castlereagh Street, Sydney.

S. Murray-Smith.

V. Gordon Childe

TALL, gangling, his posture loose to lean against a wall, Professor V. Gordon Childe demanded your startled attention because of the queer conformation of his head. His face was small and folded, much of it covered by a wide moustache. Nearly all of it was situate above the eyes, as perhaps was proper in a Fellow of the British Academy, a pioneer who remained in the first flight of archaeologists and prehistorians, in his last decade professor of prehistoric European archaeology in the University of London and director of the Institute of Archaeology there, and for the previous twenty years professor of pre-historic archaeology in the University of Edinburgh. His rationalist, socialist convictions well became the great populariser of the story of man's evolution, as his dry humor and modest expectations of the performance of modern man well became the young Australian scholar who in the 1920s wrote "How Labor Governs". This was the first scholarly interpretation, sympathetic and balanced, of the labor movement, political and industrial, in Australia, and in the third of a century since publication it has not been superseded. It may not be obtrusive to remark now, as I did when I made a little speech in praise of Childe last September, that Dr. Evatt and I are proud to find ourselves placed in Childe's company, when detractors of the labor movement and its historians offer their M.A. and Ph.D. theses on labor to university examiners.

Childe was 65 when, on October 19, he fell to his death from Govett's Leap in the Blue Mountains of his native State of New South Wales. A month before, back in Australia after thirty-six years abroad, he had drawled some of his impressions to a Melbourne gathering in his honor. He chose as his pole of comparison Iceland, where recently he had spent some time.

"They have 280,000 people. You—well, we—have more than nine million. Did we ever produce a Nobel Prizewinner? **They** have. Do our learned works find ready local publication, and eager readers? **Theirs** do . . ."

After the speeches, Childe told me that he intended to return, two months thence, to Europe. He had done all he intended to do on prehistory (eight books, from "The Dawn of European Civilisation" to "The Prehistory of Scotland"), and on popularising it ("Man Makes Himself" and "What Happened in History"). He said, "Now I am going back to my first love, epistemology. I took a 'Greats' degree in Oxford in 1916, and though I wasn't much of a hand at the languages of classical antiquity I was fascinated by its philosophy: the problem of Knowledge and the meaning of things. Now I shall see whether I am still capable of thinking about Thinking".

The Melbourne dailies did not publish any obituary of Childe. I think he ranks with Grafton Elliot Smith, Gilbert Murray and Samuel Alexander ("Space, Time and Deity") among the greatest Australians, men who made substantial contributions to knowledge.

BRIAN FITZPATRICK

Nikos Kazantzakis

BACK in July 1956 in Vienna, a tall thin man with an ascetic face, sharp nose and sparkling small eyes was presented with an International Peace Prize. A Greek. His name, Nikos Kazantzakis, was familiar to most Europeans, but to the rest of the world he was unknown.

Nikos Kazantzakis was born in 1885 on the island of Crete. He died in Copenhagen on 30 October 1957. In the years between he became the leading Greek writer of his time, writing many novels, such as "Zorba the Greek", "Freedom and Death", and "Christ Recrucified". His poem, "Odyssey", is a long epic of 33,333 lines. He travelled a great deal all over the world, visiting China, Japan, India, Africa, Russia, England, Germany, and the United States of America, writing many books about the countries he visited.

Kazantzakis wrote and spoke several languages. For two years he worked for UNESCO in Paris, translating European classics into several languages. Some of his own books were written in French, some in Greek and his final book, "The Last Temptation" was written first in German and later in Greek.

What distinguishes Nikos Kazantzakis is his love for humanity, his struggle for the freedom of the individual and his Christian ethics. In his "Credo" he outlines his philosophy of life and religion. He believed in the philosophy of Christianity, the true one of "love one another" and "help each other" which is embodied in the ethics of Christianity. For that he was persecuted by the Roman and Greek Orthodox Catholic Churches. And because of it he was not admitted to the Royal Academy of Greece. But Kazantzakis remained to the last a fighter for the freedom to live and for the freedom of expression. In his work justice and freedom are the two fundamental themes.

His remarks on receiving the Peace Prize should serve as a guide and inspiration to us and future generations.

"If we do not want the world to be annihilated we must set free the love imprisoned in the human heart as we have liberated the hidden forces of matter. Atomic power must serve the atomic heart.

"Let us not forget that freedom and peace are outside the framework of nature. Both are daughters of man, born in sweat and tears. As long as man breathes on this earth they will be there, in the vanguard, faithful companions; but they are incessantly threatened. We must constantly mobilise all our strength to defend them, we must always remain standing at their side."

His remains, by his request, are buried in his beloved Crete, but his ideals, embodied in his large output of books, are read by millions throughout the world.

JAMES GALANIS

Overland, January 1958

New Fashions In Australian History

"AUSTRALIAN economic history is the major part of all Australian history," says S. J. Butlin in the opening sentence of his "Foundations of the Australian Monetary System." "From the beginning economic factors have dominated development in a way that should gladden the heart of any Marxist."

It does seem true that the relation between the way in which Australians have produced their livelihood, and the political structure and cultural patterns they have created, is clearer than in the case of the older countries of capitalism.

In Australia, the private capitalist economy came into existence while New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land were still penal colonies, ruled absolutely by their governors. And when the free colonists came to create their own political institutions, they were not burdened by any carry-over of traditions and practices from an earlier society; they found those forms which suited best the economy they were building.

But interested Australians would find little to support Butlin's comment in most of the recently published books of Australian history, and in recent discussions on the writing of Australian history.

Writing about Australia falls into three fairly well-defined periods. First, there were the accounts of the men who participated in the events they described, men like David Collins, John Dunmore Lang, Henry Parkes.

Then came the narrative historians like G. W. Rusden and H. G. Turner, those who wrote down the story of the events as they occurred, usually with little attempt to find patterns in the events.

Only after these writers had done their work could the "explainers"—those who sought to draw general conclusions about the development of Australian society—start in on the job. Among this group were a number who, influenced by Marx's materialist conception of history, began to trace the links between the developing economy and Australian politics and social attitudes. Most prominent of these was Brian Fitzpatrick, whose two pre-war books "British Imperialism and Australia" and "The British Empire in Australia" remain the starting point for so much Australian historical research and writing.

Lately, there has been some demand for a change. Thus, C. Hartley Grattan in *Quadrant* No. 2 (1957):

"I suspect that the unlucky tendency for Australian history to become a monochromatic demonstration of economic determinism is less a reflection of ineluctable reality than a consequence of a fashion of thinking among historians. If the fashion should change, wayfaring readers would be surprised how fascinating the nation's history really is."

Grattan is an American scholar; his reputation is that of a democrat, a keen social critic. His book

"Australia, A Social and Political History," ed. Gordon Greenwood. (Angus & Robertson, 45/-.)

"The Australian Commonwealth, A Picture of the Community, 1901-1955," by Brian Fitzpatrick. (F. W. Cheshire, 30/-.)

"Sources of Australian History," selected and edited by M. Clark. (Oxford University Press, 14/-.)

"Introducing Australia" is one of the best general books about Australia to have appeared. But age, or the intellectual climate of the United States, seems to have tempered his earlier radicalism, and in *Quadrant* he urges in particular the study of the role of private capitalism and the middle class as major factors in Australian growth.

This is, of course, a peculiarly appropriate theory for *Quadrant* to espouse. Its editor James McAuley—himself a repentent radical—writes in *Quadrant* No. 5 (1958), commenting on the rejection of his magazine's application for a subsidy from the Commonwealth Literary Fund: "We are therefore all the more grateful to the support given us by the business firms whose advertising we carry, without which we could not survive . . ."

To some extent, Grattan's suggestion has already been adopted: the fashion has changed. But whether this has produced more fascinating history is open to doubt; and, in any case, the job of history is not to fascinate, but to illuminate and to elucidate.

Take, for example, "Australia: A Social and Political History," edited by Professor George Greenwood.

The Best Yet

Greenwood states that the purpose of the book is "to write a political and social history of the Australian society which would show the many-sided nature of its development at any given time."

Its eight chapters are written by six contributors, each a distinguished historian. The result is the best general history of Australia yet produced—a readable, knowledgeable account, neither lacking in nor over-loaded with detail, and informed by a liberal approach, in which, in Greenwood's words, "each writer has attempted to reveal the essential spirit of the society at different stages of its growth, to show what were its dominant characteristics, and what gathering forces transmuted the existing society into another, different in outlook and constitution."

But it is just this conception of the book which produces its weaknesses. The six contributors have their own ideas about history, about what are the determining causes of a nation's development. The majority would probably agree with Greenwood that "by definition general history is synoptic. Whatever seems significant . . . must emerge in the pattern. What is more, the organic relationships of these components should, if possible, be discovered and demonstrated."

This view of history seems to imply an open mind on what is the predominant, the finally determining factor in producing social change. And so the writers produce different sorts of explanations of their periods, not because of any essential differences within the society they are writing about, but because of their different approaches. And so there is in this book, for all its great merits, a lack of consistent consideration of the changes in the nation's economy—the growth of industry, and the consequent relations of the various social classes.

The technique of historical research has developed rapidly in the last hundred years; the study of the past from "primary sources" (the written documents of the day) has become the first concern of all serious historians. Yet there is such a wealth of documents available to the historians (especially in Australia, a young community), that historians are growing more and more wary of making any sizeable generalisations about the development of human society. Always there is plenty of documentary evidence available to challenge any generalisation they might be bold enough to make.

So most historians, sharing an understandable human reluctance to expose one's flanks and rear, are inclined to dodge the biggest questions their study throws up to them: what sort of society are we studying? Where did it come from? Why did it develop as it did? And where is it going to?

Many, like Grattan, question the possibility of a science of society—and therefore of a scientific history. And indeed the general questions about the nature of society are only important for those who believe that the purpose of the study of history, the past, is to provide an understanding which can help to make possible meaningful action in the present.

For such people, Greenwood's history of Australia leaves a slight after-taste of dissatisfaction, for all that it is the best general history yet available, one which all Australians interested in their history should read and learn from.

And this is especially so of the later chapters, those dealing with the post-1918 Australia; for this period, the supply of documents is much more prolific, and the generalisations correspondingly more hesitant.

Strangely, Brian Fitzpatrick's "The Australian Commonwealth, A Picture of the Community 1901-1905" is open to the same objection.

Fitzpatrick's work on economic history (or, perhaps more accurately, his materialist view of Australian history) is of tremendous importance to the study of Australian history, and is so recognised by almost all Australian historians. (A notable exception is M. H. Ellis, whose prejudice is so great as to disqualify him as a serious commentator on the study of Australian history.)

"The Australian Commonwealth" is a fascinating book; it is witty, urbane, yet angry, wide in its range of interests, and maintaining a strong emphasis on labor and democratic struggles. In 200 sparkling pages, Fitzpatrick comments on arbitration and the Aborigines, liquor and literature, parliamentarians and punters, and much else of interest to all Australians.

Extended notes on a variety of legal, civil liberties and cultural matters of importance, together with brief biographies of some 300 prominent Australians, increase the book's value.

"The Australian Commonwealth" is a book with plenty of guts—but it is lacking in backbone. What is missing is an account of the vast changes in the Australian economy during the Commonwealth years, a pattern of development which is necessary to an understanding of the social conflicts and changes that Fitzpatrick describes.

His picture is one of contending forces—broadly, capital and labor. The Commonwealth years saw secondary industry replace agricultural and pastoral interests as the major force in Australian economic life; they saw a rapid accumulation of local capital, a large-scale importation of British capital, in recent years a rapid rise in the proportion of American capital in the country. Fitzpatrick, who has described himself (Meanjin, No.

2, 1955, in a comment on "The Contentious Eureka Legend") as "a coldhearted 'Marxist' sort of historian myself", would surely see these changes as the frame within which the picture of the Australian community must be painted, if his essential thesis, that Australia's history can be most meaningfully explained in terms of the conflict between capital and labor, is to be fully convincing.

"The Australian people made heroes of none, and raised no idols, except perhaps an outlaw, Ned Kelly, and Carbine, a horse. But, generation of them after generation, they fought with beasts at Ephesus—blight and drought, fire and flood; their own taskmasters and the covetous alien—and, suffering their setbacks, still made of Australia a home good enough for men of modest report to live in, calling their souls their own."

It is a proud statement of the considerable achievement of the Australian democracy with which Fitzpatrick ends his book. And it is just this sympathy for the democracy which fired M. H. Ellis' dishonest, witch-hunting attack on Fitzpatrick in *Quadrant* No. 2 (1957).

Classes v. Masses

Ellis would probably not deny that conflict between social classes has been a powerful factor in Australian social development; it is merely that, in these conflicts, he is invariably and wholeheartedly with the classes against the masses—a position which fits him admirably for the situation which has apparently been created for him as *Quadrant's* staff contributor on Australian historical writing.

The review, for instance, by Ellis of Dr. H. V. Evatt's "Rum Rebellion" in *Quadrant* No. 5 (1958) demonstrates this sufficiently—and with sufficient venom to accommodate the McCarthyite atmosphere that *Quadrant* has uniquely introduced into the Australian little magazine.

The method is one well-known to the paranoid fringes of contemporary politics, but it scarcely does credit to an aspiring historian. By an attempted refutation of two minor points in Evatt's major work ("I propose to take two completely typical chapters—no more nor less inaccurate than the rest"), Ellis seeks to discredit Evatt's estimate of Governor Bligh, John Macarthur and the Rum Rebellion, and thereby Evatt's reputation as an historian. On one of the points, he is possibly correct, on the other—on his own evidence—almost certainly wrong; but neither are of any significance to the general conclusion Evatt expresses in "Rum Rebellion."

Ellis' own record as historian ill fits him for such an attack. His attitude to historical evidence, as revealed by his two books on the Australian labor movement, does him no credit. His use of history to support his work as political and military commentator for the *Sydney Bulletin* is distinguished only by the almost ludicrous inaccuracy of the results it produced.

Thus, in 1934, he thought that "most of the outcry" against Japanese aggression was "nonsense"; he supported the handing over of the Sudeten lands to Hitler; he had an "open mind" on the absorption of Czechoslovakia by the Third Reich; he concluded, on the evidence, that conditions in the Changi P.O.W. camp were "satisfactory". (See evidence to Royal Commission on Communism, Victoria, 1949, before which Ellis was produced by the Crown as an "expert witness".)

The Lost Scholars

These who have spent their days
Patient before a desk
Have lost the meaning of their ways:
Fugitive, Chaplinesque.

Lonely as oval mirrors
Without faces inside,
They step each day in a different river
And still the waters divide.

In those dry tortuous creek-beds
And the land of the looking-glass,
The magic they carry in their heads
Can bring nothing to pass.

And a chill wind blows across
The provinces they knew;
Their heroes are skilled at double-cross;
Their lovers are all untrue.

Lacking the taut clear vision
That knows the heart of man,
They take a sort of rough compassion
As their only plan,

And fence their loneliness
About with verbal skill:
Around their world the featureless
Shadows are gathering still.

CHRIS WALLACE-CRABBE

Certainly, even a casual reading of the documents relating to the Rum Rebellion will support Evatt's general thesis that at the heart of the argument was the conflict between Bligh's "legal dictatorship", which was exercised in favor of the agriculturists and poor settlers, and the economic and military power and pretensions of Macarthur and the Rum Corps.

Several of the relevant documents are conveniently supplied in Professor Manning Clark's latest collection, "Sources of Australian History". This is a lively, interesting and most useful book, which needs to be treated with some caution.

Many readers of a book of documents must be impressed by the conclusions it suggests, just because the book is made up of documents. "Here is the raw material of history—see for yourself what it says": that is the implied suggestion of all editors of such books.

However, since there is an infinity of documents available to editors, what goes into each book is determined by each editor's own idea of what is important, the particular thesis he wants to establish.

Manning Clark is an admirable historian; his two previous books of documents are indispensable for anyone who is seriously studying Australian history. His term as lecturer in Australian history at Melbourne University interested a whole generation of students (including two of Overland's editorial committee) in the history of their own country. He is now at the Australian National University.

What Pattern?

"Sources of Australian History" outlines, in 600 pages of documents, the course of Australian history from the first European voyages in southern waters through to the end of World War I. It does this in an unusual way, which works well: Clark has selected a limited number of documents, and printed them fully or at great length, rather than selecting small extracts from a large number of documents.

What pattern of Australian history is Clark seeking to establish in his book? Some of his ideas are contained in an article, "Rewriting Australian History", in "Australian Signpost" (F. W. Cheshire, 1956):

"History, to be great as history, must have a point of view on the direction of society. It must also have something to say—that, for example, the era of bourgeois liberalism, of democracy, and belief in material progress is over, and that those who defend such a creed are the reactionaries of today . . . The historians should come back to the great themes they abandoned when they joined in the vain search for a science of society."

He suggests that certain conceptions commonly held by Australian historians should be abandoned, among them the idea "that our past has irrevocably condemned us to the role of cultural barbarians"; "the comforter about our convict origins . . . created to heal the wounds about the 'birth stain'"; "the great Australian illusion—the idea that we were pioneers in democracy."

And what are we to put in place of these ideas? "The whole answer has so far eluded me." However, Clark says, the answer won't come from the universities—"the most persistent defenders of the bankrupt liberal ideal"—or from "the radicals of this generation, because they are tethered to an erstwhile great but now excessively rigid creed."

In "Sources of Australian History", Clark's answer seems clear enough: there are three great ideologies which came to Australia with the convict system, and which comprise the mainspring of

Australian historical development—Protestantism, Catholicism, and the ideas of the Enlightenment. It is in terms of this conflict of ideas that the growth of Australian society is described in the notes which introduce each of the six chapters of the book. It is Clark's belief in the significance of this conflict which has determined his selection of documents.

Those who use this book of documents (as everyone interested in Australian history should do) need to bear this in mind: that documents selected to develop a particular theory about history do not in themselves prove that the theory is correct. Other books of documents could equally well be selected to support other and very different theories. With that reservation, however, Clark's "Sources of Australian History" is a most valuable contribution to our knowledge.

It seems as if there is some response among Australian historians to Grattan's appeal for a new look at Australian history—a response which takes varied forms: the inconsistencies of Greenwood's book, the suggested explanation in terms of ideological conflict of Clark, the outspoken reaction of Ellis.

It is true, as Clark suggests, that many Australian "radicals" have applied their ideas of history rigidly, have sought to force Australian realities into patterns which have grown out of the study of European history. But this is scarcely enough in itself to absolve historians from the need to apply a scientific method to the study of the growth of Australian society, the need to seek for a "science of society."

"Capital v. labor" remains a dominant theme in Australian history, no less than in that of the older capitalist countries, although the terms and the ways in which the conflict is carried through have had, and will have, their unique characteristics, which Australians ignore at their peril.

This dominant theme remains the most productive way of looking at our history for all those who believe that men make their own history, and that, in order that the making of their present and their future may accord with their will, they must first know their past.

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The speaker was Vance Palmer, the occasion the first public showing in Melbourne of the portrait of Mary Gilmore by William Dobell, commissioned by the Australasian Book Society.

Vance Palmer went on: "It was noticeable when she appeared on the stage of the Sydney Town Hall, at the Peace Convention two years ago . . ."

Everyone who remembers that occasion, as I do myself, must agree with him.

"She moved with a kind of majesty. With the pride of having come through a long, difficult and complex life with honor . . ."

"Her image is associated with our deepest and most profound thoughts, hopes and aspirations about our country . . .

"In her poetry, the celebration of the fact of human courage is the note she sounds best . . .

"In her work and even more in her life, she is 'as a red flowering gum in hard soil, thrusting its roots in deep'.

"This symbolic quality in her, Dobell's portrait will preserve".

Thus, Vance Palmer characterised Dobell's portrait of Mary Gilmore, very properly, I think, in its imaginative essence.

Dobell's achievement in this painting is to have envisioned, in terms of human and aesthetic understanding equal to the task, a profoundly exacting subject: a living individual, an extraordinary character, a great personality, who is also a national, historical figure.

Coming into the presence of the portrait, in the agreeable South Yarra reception rooms of the English Speaking Union, I was at once absolutely convinced in imagination of Mary Gilmore's presence.

There she was, an old woman of immense dignity and strength, tall, gaunt, frail, upright, with her shrewd, humorous, beady eyes and determined, sensitive mouth. Her dress of some dark, greenish-black swathed taffeta stuff had a white ruffled lacy front, and a lace collar caught in by a black velvet ribbon fastened with a cameo brooch. She also wore on a long cord a pendant ornament. Her sleeves, falling in voluminous billowing folds, terminated in cuffs of black net with chenille spots of bright yellow-green, and these cuffs lay back revealing her hands, resting one each side on the dark red arms of the chair, their strong, sinewy, gnarled expressiveness intensified rather than concealed by elegant white kid gloves which shone with pale green reflections from the dress.

TO THE AUSTRALASIAN BOOK SOCIETY

Life lent to me a house,
(I wrote of this before.)
I set, to pay my rent,
A rose beside the door.

Today the house is old,
But yet, as you may see,
The rose is still a rose,
And pollened for the bee.

So in this verse I send
A bud that bloomed today;
Its heart is full and warm—
A rent to you I pay.

For you a house gave me,
And there, as long as time
My name remembered keeps,
My rose will climb.

MARY GILMORE

The special stress on the hands, each side at the base of the composition, together with the pre-eminent stress on the face, at the apex, as it were, of a pyramid, serves simultaneously to establish strongly the formal structure of the painting and to do so in a way which concretely embodies the very essence of the subject: the essence of strength of character, of great age and experience, of courage in struggle and aspiration, of the oneness and inseparability, in reality, of the material and spiritual aspects of human experience.

Similarly, the use of elongation in various of the forms and in the design as a whole serves Dobell—as it has served El Greco and many another painter working on spiritual themes, from the Byzantine schools to moderns such as the expressionist Soutine, to whose work something of Dobell's is akin—as an effective means of embodying the particular kind of emotional intensity characteristic of his subject.

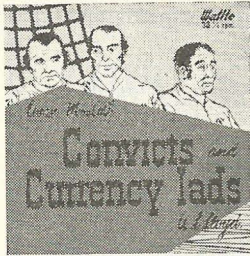
Mary Gilmore is in fact an exceptionally tall woman. Described at twenty or so by William Lane, in his "Working Man's Paradise", under the thin disguise of his heroine Nell, "She was tall and slender, but well formed . . . dressed" (as she was to be for Dobell's portrait seventy years later!) "in a severely plain dress of black stuff with a white collar . . . brown hair drawn back . . . a pale sad face . . . stamped on every feature a determined will . . . a person of character . . . womanly, severe".

Her tallness, her determination, her severity, have always been inseparable characteristics, it seems, to those who have known her. And now in her great old age these qualities are intensified. She is tall and gaunt and of incorruptible upreaching spirit; and her severity and sadness is tempered with humor and humanity.

Dobell's image of her made these things imaginatively visible and palpable to me.

It was only after I had been compelled by the portrait in this way to know the presence of Mary Gilmore that I was able to make a conscious effort to disengage my imagination and to look coldly and analytically at "how the thing was done".

The more I looked the more I saw reason to confirm by spontaneous reaction, and to agree with the evaluation made the same evening by Barnard Smith, in an admirably just account of Dobell's art, to the effect that this portrait is



Two New Australian Records

(Wattle Records are obtainable from dealers or direct from Wattle Recordings, 131 Cathedral Street, East Sydney, who will gladly send further details of their catalog.)



Old Bush Songs

Wattle Recordings are to be congratulated on their first ten-inch, long-playing record (C4), "The Banks of the Condamine and Other Bush Songs". The "others" are "A Thousand Miles Away", "The Wild Colonial Boy", "Flash Jack from Gundagai", "Brisbane Ladies", "The Overlander", "The Cockies of Bungaree", "The Derby Ram", and "Bold Jack Donahue".

The singer is A. L. Lloyd, an Englishman who came to Australia at the age of fifteen. Finding that he could not get station work because squatters assumed that an Englishman would naturally be no good at it, he cultivated a pretty good Australian accent and then worked in the western station country for nine years in the 1920's. The words and tunes of many of the songs on this disc were collected by him then. He has since collected many more folksongs in South America, the Carib-

(Cont. from previous page)

bean and on board Antarctic whalers. He is the author of an admirable little book on British folksongs, "The Singing Englishman", and a frequent broadcaster on the B.B.C.

bean and on board Antarctic whalers. He is the author of an admirable little book on British folksongs, "The Singing Englishman", and a frequent broadcaster on the B.B.C.

If one did not know this, one could almost accept the recordings as some taken down on the spot from a bush singer with an unusually pleasing voice. As it is, one is reminded that accent and intonation are synthetic only once or twice, as when he pronounces "new" as "noo".

Max Harris, Peter Sainthill and others apparently find Lloyd's recordings somewhat less tuneful than is pleasant to a cultivated musical ear. I find it hard to imagine how they could be improved upon. Even if one has never heard the songs before, one can catch almost every word at the first hearing. And what is more important, they emit a penetrating and authentic smell of greasy wool and gum-leaves, entirely uncluttered with the more polite odors of the concert platform.

The cost of the record is 43/-. RUSSEL WARD

Convicts and Currency Lads

Wattle Recordings continues its release of traditional Australian songs with "Convicts and Currency Lads", five songs by the English singers Ewan McColl and A. L. Lloyd (seven-inch long-play, 19/6).

Wattle's policy is to issue traditional songs performed in the traditional manner. Seemingly, they have not yet discovered an Australian singer who meets their requirement of a singing quality which is authentically "folk", and at the same time acceptable to people for whom folk-song is a new experience.

Of these two singers, McColl is the more accomplished by concert standards. Two of his songs, "The Black Velvet Band" and "Van Diemen's Land", are representative of the transportation ballads which were widely sung in England in the 18th and 19th centuries. "Van Diemen's Land" is the earlier and more interesting song; "The Black Velvet Band" is a relatively late street ballad. Both are pleasantly and clearly presented.

McColl's third song, "Jim Jones at Botany Bay", is reputedly Australia's first home-grown folk song. It is defiant rather than melancholy in spirit, and McColl seems less sure of this song than of the others—perhaps because it is a Currency product, and he lacks the first-hand experience.

Certainly, A. L. Lloyd is quite at home with his two bush songs, "Eubalong Ball" and "The Lime Juice Tub." These are among the many Australian songs Lloyd learnt as a lad in Australia thirty years ago. His singing on this disc is less polished, but more interesting, than McColl's; his style grows on you.

"Eubalong Ball" is a gem: a dry comment on bush manners as revealed at the annual hop. "The Lime Juice Tub" is a fairly amiable crack at the new-chum shearer. Both have attractive tunes, and should be widely sung.

This disc is an essential buy for anyone who owns a gramophone and likes Australian songs.

I.T.

remarkable, technically as well as artistically, as a major work by an Australian painter of the first rank by international standards of the highest quality.

In the Mary Gilmore portrait is Dobell's special power to observe and to absorb impressions, the ability to submit to the otherness of the subject, the quiet but firm grasp and conception of it. It is a mine of artistic historical references in its whole design and its use of color, especially in its daring and brilliant of monochrome (the choice of the predominance of the strong and horribly difficult prussian blues and greens, at that) with a few light touches, such as the greenish whites of the hair and the lace, the dots of yellow in the cuffs, one splash of orange in the ruffle, purple lights in the nearly black sleeves; and also in the brushwork which is free and flowing or delicate and refined as necessary; and in the overall use and control of contrast, in light and dark passages, in plain and textured areas, and so on.

All of these devices are employed in a way that is deliberate and meaningful in contributing to the meaning of the work as a whole, which is something different from and more than the sum of its parts; and which is to be apprehended, as I have tried to convey, not by the kind of act of intellection necessary to lay hold of the relations of the work in technical respects, but by the act of exercising imagination upon the material that is given us.

Dobell's portrait of Mary Gilmore is, I think, one of the best works (ranking with his portraits of Brian Penton, Joshua Smith, The Cypriot, Billy Boy and others of that period), of one of the really important portrait painters of the twentieth century, who also happens to be an Australian artist.

The Australasian Book Society is to be congratulated on its vision in commissioning it, and on its good fortune in having acquired for the nation a Dobell of surpassing quality.

ELIZABETH VASSILIEFF

We print this statement by Laurence Collinson not only because it throws light on his new book "The Moods of Love" but because it is an important definition of a poet's standpoint. The statement is a shortened form of a speech by the poet to a recent Melbourne gathering to celebrate the publication of "The Moods of Love".

MY POETRY

THERE are so many people and things that should be honored in our daily life and are not, and the author of a first book of poems must come pretty low down on any list for that purpose. There are innumerable people in the community who sacrifice themselves hourly for the general good, people who struggle for such ordinary things as the rights of pensioners, for better working conditions, for better housing, for libraries; people who try to improve the educational system, people who put on plays that haven't the remotest chance of making a profit, people who attempt in all practical ways to convince the community that our lives can be enhanced by the art of our own day, other and far more mature and worthy writers—and all these people are so rarely honored in any way. They have the respect of the few that know what they are doing, but nothing else.

On the other hand there are a great many people honored, and honored very highly, whose lives are comparatively irrelevant in terms of communal good, and might even be considered by a seditious few as being completely anti-social. Rich people who don't buy books, property owners who charge exorbitant rents, film and football stars, jockeys, huge manufacturers of useless products, many knights, politicians and councillors—all these people whose most trivial activities are recorded at length in the breathless pages of our dailies and weeklies. And I reflected that a first book of poems (even of bad poems—which I don't concede for a moment that mine is—even if there is a lot of evidence in it to the contrary), according to my sense of values, comes fairly high on the scale of honor because, in a world duped and doped by commercialism, dulled by education (such as we know it), broken by war and oppression, a world made sad by millions of unnecessary deaths and the prospect of terrible destruction, even a minor act of creation is important because it is, to use a well-worn but accurate phrase, an affirmation of life. And if all creative acts, minor and major, were so honored, it would indicate that a change is coming about in men.

Why did I give "The Moods of Love" that name? Not simply because an important section of the book bears that title, but because I believe that the other two sections, People and Feelings, are also part of the moods of love. It's unfortunate that there are no other words in the language to replace the word "love"; its perpetual repetition because of this lack is a loathsome and often very sticky matter. But what else to do? I gave the book its title because it seems to me that any act which denotes sympathy with, understanding of, compassion for other human beings, comes under the heading of "love".

I've been writing poetry for fifteen or sixteen years. In that time I've published a great deal and discarded a very great deal more. Except for two or three poems possibly of more personal or sentimental value than literary merit, most of the poems in "The Moods of Love" were written in the last three or four years, and of those that remain that were published before being put into book form, the majority first appeared in the pages of *Overland*, though I must here acknowledge with gratitude the encouragement given me by other journals, in particular *Meanjin* and the *Bulletin*.

Criticism and abuse

But it was the work in *Overland*, or rather, the response to it that first set me thinking about my own poetry. By that I don't mean that previously I had just sat down and let the poems flow through my pen from my unconscious to the paper (as I believe some poets are able to do)—I had thought quite a lot about each poem before and when I was writing it. But now I found it necessary to consider what my aims as a poet were, or whether I had any aims at all.

The immediate reason for this introspection were some highly-critical, in fact abusive, letters that Stephen Murray-Smith received about a poem of mine that he published. I re-read the poem concerned and it seemed to me that it had been misinterpreted in some cases, and in others it was the subject matter that had provoked rather violent objections. It had not occurred to me up to then that my subject matter might be controversial; I'm not widely-read, but even a cursory reading of the English classics—Chaucer, Shakespeare, Donne, the Elizabethan and later poets, and many contemporary writers, not to mention the Greek and Roman classics in translation, convinces me that no subject is taboo, nor any approach to that subject, nor that pornography, obscenity and the other rude-sounding words can be easily defined, or that they ought to be. Or in fact that any subject is sacred. My only qualification is against writing of any kind that is deliberately designed to hurt those who cannot choose to be other than they are: for instance Jews, Negroes, cripples.

A further reason for introspection came a little later when *Overland* conducted an enquiry into readers' tastes. Among the questions asked were these: What do you like best in *Overland*? What do you like least? What those who replied liked least—a majority of them at any rate—turned out to be my poems. But I was flattered, rightly or wrongly, when they gave the same reply to the question: What do you remember best from your reading of *Overland*?

Did I, I asked myself, write poems in order to annoy people, in order, as an anonymous reader from the Commonwealth Literary Fund has suggested I do, to shock the bourgeois, in order to make a forceful impression, or even in order that people may say what a good (or bad) poet I am? I don't think that any of this consciously comes into the process, though some of it certainly follows after. When I'm writing a poem I don't consider my audience, though I certainly do when the poem is finished. I write from a need to write, and I write as well as my knowledge of present and past techniques, as well as my talent or lack of it, allows me. I'm under the influence of other poets—I think that's inevitable though I try to avoid it. As far as technique is concerned, one struggles to force one's ideas into poetic expression—sometimes one is successful, often one is not. But there are a couple of things I try to do that some of my critics have attempted to equate with poverty of technique and triteness of expression—that is, I deliberately seek certain effects, though I don't always get them; clarity, an effect of spontaneity, a nearness to everyday speech, as direct an expression as possible of the emotion that caused me to write the poem. These aims do not coincide with the current practice and theory of a large and influential group of Australian poets and critics. Their poetic statements are indirect, allusive, oblique; they seek a perfection of sound and of rhythm—I frankly am too impatient to say what I have to say to struggle for that kind of felicity when it distorts or makes obscure my meaning—though it seems to me sometimes that it takes me as long to shape a poem as it could possibly take anyone. Their poems are full of classical allusions and depend on a knowledge of Greek and Roman literature for full significance. I rarely allude to anything outside contemporary everyday experience. Poetry such as theirs has its place, and a very important one it is, in literature. I don't claim that such poetry is superior or inferior to my own. But I raise the matter because several of my critics have castigated my poetry because it is not written in this manner which, for want of a better word, I call academic. But I can't write in this way, and have no desire to; and those who prefer the academic manner have a large range of poets to choose from, and I would rather they criticised me, if they want to, on my own ground, than for something I don't attempt to do.

Personal philosophy

Moreover, a large proportion of the work of these poets is taken up with the expression of their personal philosophy—which may be religious, or mystical, or social (or, even, in some cases, anti-social). Many of their poems are fragments of philosophy in poetic form. This is legitimate, and in fact a large proportion of English poetry is of this nature. But my poetry has been criticised because I don't or very rarely write philosophical poetry—and I think this is unjust. I have a philosophy, as everyone who stays alive beyond adolescence necessarily must have—but I'm still groping, and my ideas are very tenuous. Insofar as it can be pinned down, it states my belief that a great deal of human suffering is unnecessary suffering caused by the thoughtlessness or callousness or prejudice of one person or group towards another person or group, or by the circumstances of social living; and that this kind of suffering could be very largely eliminated by the creation of a rational society. It seems from the evidence of scientists that the earth can grow enough food

and produce enough goods to satisfy the needs of all the people on it. If this is so, then planning and rational living are necessary. People must be educated to realise that wars and prejudices are not essential ingredients of life. This is very baldly expressed, but I think you can see that my philosophy, such as it is, contains certain moral and ethical values, and that I am not dogmatic nor bound to an unrelenting political theory. I believe in reason. At the same time I can't see how certain aspects of human suffering can be eliminated. For example, the physical suffering caused by diseases which are at present beyond the knowledge of science, or the mental sufferings caused by personal relationships. I believe that in all our activities there is a certain irrational content; but this is not necessarily evil and can be used to advantage if circumstances are propitious, if the rational society gives it an outlet. This then is something of my philosophy, but I have no desire to attempt to mould it as such into a poem. What happens is that I am attracted by certain subjects, and my poems on these subjects have my philosophy implicit in them. I am interested for instance in persecuted minorities—Jews, Negroes, Aborigines; in people supposedly inferior in some way—old maids, women as a class; in marginal people, that is people who live on the edge of society—pensioners, homosexuals, cripples; as a teacher I'm especially interested in children because I feel that our educational system is a vast hypocrisy designed to perpetuate ignorance and selfish motivation—though it does increasingly show many positive aspects. Children are the most defenceless section of the human race, and this fact is forever being taken advantage of.

Activity from feeling

In all these things and in my love poems I am interested most in conveying the emotion that I feel and that my characters feel, because I believe that the heart must be touched before the mind, and that activity springs more from feeling than from duty.

I suppose my poetry could be roughly classified into two sections: the personal and the social. When Vin Buckley some years ago wrote his essay on the left-wing poets he put forward the theory that poets of the left wrote two kinds of poetry—that which they wanted to write and that which they felt they ought to write, and that both kinds of poetry suffered as a consequence of the conflict thus engendered. That theory, applied to my own poetry, was correct—at that time. It is not correct now. I write no poetry that I am not impelled to write by my own feelings, and this applies to most of the poetry in "The Moods of Love". Both my personal and my social poetry seem to me to be aspects of the same subject: the need for love between human beings.

When I complete a poem, what then? Provided I'm satisfied with it, I want it to be read. At this stage the poem may be said to have two principal intentions—first, to be enjoyed; second, with a social poem that it may cause the reader to consider and perhaps act on the kind of situation that forced me to write the poem; with a personal poem, that I may share my emotion with those who have undergone a similar experience, that they may realise that they are not isolated in their feelings; I want to be articulate for **them**.

My poems have been declared slight, amateurish, jingly, trite, sentimental, banal. The Commonwealth Literary Fund, in refusing my book a guarantee against loss, accused me of clichés and bad rhymes. I don't doubt that all these faults can be found in my poems, especially if one dislikes their themes. My ideas are mundane enough; they relate to everyday living; and I can't dress up my triteness with erudition or esoteric symbols. Nevertheless I do strive for a kind of poetry. And as far as I can judge it seems that my book is meeting with a creditable response. My social poems arouse interest, discussion, and, so I am told, controversy of quite an angry nature—both for their form and content, and it seems to me better to be argued about than to be accepted as a fine poet and left forever after on the bookshelf.

LAURENCE COLLINSON

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BOOKS

To Sing the Living

"The Moods of Love" (Overland, 18/9), first book to be published by Overland, comes to us in superb format designed and produced by Edwards & Shaw. It is probably the most satisfying collection of largely "personal" poetry to appear in Australia for many years.

The capabilities of the poet, Laurence Collinson, have long been recognised, and his book is much overdue. Many of us will remember Barjai, a lively magazine of creative youth founded and co-edited by the eighteen-year-old Collinson, together with the even younger Barrie Reid. A brilliant all-rounder, Collinson lovingly guided and encouraged his teenage contributors (Walter Kaufmann, Thea Astley, Jill Hellyer and Brian Medlin were among them). He wrote poems, stories, criticism and good actable plays, and produced and acted in his own plays and many others. He painted, too, with a rare note of gaiety and social satire, but poetry has remained his best-loved, most effective medium.

From this first book, Laurence Collinson emerges as an adult, urbane and deeply sensitive writer—a poet of love in an age when love, in certain literary circles, seems somehow less acceptable as a theme than is the kind of subject matter which you can compound from the fancier ceremonials of orthodox religion or the "eternal verities" glossed over with our own brand of mid-century mysticism.

The title-piece is a sequence of fifty-two moving, finely moulded, sonnets that literally glow with personal feeling and experience. Two individual lovers occupy the stage, but the poem is really about every man and his capacity for loving. For Collinson, love is the deepest awareness of affinity that we can have, and the mainspring of the kind of life that is really worth living:

... he who does not love or is not loved
cannot know hate or happiness or grief,
or move the world, or by the world be moved.

We have had some admirable love sonnetry in Australia, from Charles Harpur, Zora Cross, Baylebridge, McCrae, Louis Lavater and others, but Collinson speaks with a new voice, at once passionate and yet strangely objective, earthy yet sophisticated. From the viewpoint of a realist, he praises the **human** qualities of the beloved; there is little unrestrained adulation:

I'm not another of those poets whose
syllables of adoration clang
conceitedly, hyperbole on the loose,
adjectives of love that bang bang bang.

And he rejoices in the sheer fact of his lover's material existence:

and you are **real**. It must be rare to find
so bright a substance conjured from the mind.

This mood reminds us that the sonnets are not Shakespearean in form alone. There may be something of Dorothy Parker in the dry wit, but pervasive throughout the sequence that extols "my oddly human angel" is something of that spirit most directly expressed in Shakespeare's 130th sonnet. Here the great dramatist assures us that his mistress' eyes "are nothing like the sun, if

hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head", but goes on to assert:

and yet by heaven I think my love as rare
as any she belied with false compare.

So Collinson's "Today is Something Special" is in kindred mood:

And artist's brush and poet's word
express mere rude banality—
their brilliant days are bleak, absurd
beside my bright reality.

Again recalling Dorothy Parker, Collinson's "Moods" are rich in aphorism:

a friend is one who uncorrupted lends
compassion in a time of loneliness.

* * *

tell me you have a gentle need of me
that I may need you not so violently.

This poet combines a human tenderness with a unique and penetrating knowledge of the real day-to-day psychology of sex. Worlds of meaning are compressed within the beautiful sonnet, "Argument":

I suppose when passion's done you like to walk
away. Or (at your best) you grunt and puff
and fall asleep and that's the end of that.
But if you **loved**, you'd lie awake and talk.

The true experience of love appears at its most desirable in lines as memorable as:

When you are gone from me I feel your lips
mutter on mine their moist and merry talents.

But such lines can come only from a poet who looks **beyond** the play and the sorrow of an individual **duet**, conscious of love's meaning for man in the widest sense:

Wonder is the vision of that day
when life will grope for pattern like a flower;
the vehement symmetry will shout a way
for each man's dormant love and waiting
power.

Wonder is the wild lilt of my heart
which sings of your return each time we part.

Love is not all a matter of soaring wings and exaltation. Collinson can see it in the simplest, most humorous and **domestic** terms. "The Room" and "Housework" are two of the funniest and most touching poems we have in the language, and those of us who may be disposed to ask "how sentimental can one get about a half-smoked cigarette?" should read that truly delightful and nostalgic poem called "The Victim" on page 62.

Collinson is one of those poets who may help us to find an Australian synthesis of the personal and social moods of poetry, for it is in his work that one feels that much of this widely-publicised dichotomy is false. He is a poet of understanding and sympathy in the most genuine sense. The ghost of Frederick Macartney's "Commercium" lives again (and more prosperously) in Collinson's "The Clerk's Prayer" and "Advice to a Clerk":

If "Honesty and Purpose" is your aim,
if you aspire to a nobler life,
then I advise that clerking's not your game,
at least while private enterprise is rife.
Go then and be a miner—though it's dusty
the silicosis-perfumed air is pure
beside this genteel atmosphere . . .

He knows the problem of a man of genius (and there are so many of them!) forced to work at a meaningless task. As a former mail-sorter he questions:

. . . I'm tickled by the thought satiric
why waste existence scanning mail
when I can better scan a lyric?

* * *

They let me out at six past five
just for the night—a gracious act!

Love, ultimately, works for human survival, and this is Collinson's essential theme, whether it be the survival of spinsters, as in that gentlest of poems with its Brennesque opening "Old Maid in a Late Tram":

Old maid, old maid, the rudimentary jest,
protagonist of a thousand meagre jokes,
butt of the unthinking . . .

or the burning issue of man's emergence despite the threat of atomic destruction. Nowhere is the problem of peace and war better confronted than in the terse and laconic prize-winning poem "Definition":

What is war, my lord?
War is empire.

What is war, general?
War is manhood.

What is war, teacher?
War is inevitable.

Mother what is war?
War is three undiscovered graves.

The ultimate and absolute incompatibility of love and war is the raw material for a whole literature of truisms. Collinson has made of it a courageous and inspiring poem that must be quoted in full or not at all, "The Lover, on Returning from the Wars":

The girl I had the night before I left
told me I had a body like a tree:
a sapling gum, she said, her fingers deft
as she tugged and tickled the hairy bark of me.
My flesh was toned just like that gum—the one
that stretched itself, she said, in her back-
yard—
white, with just a smiling sweep of sun,
and not by time, or man, or weather marred.
That was before the war they said was mine . .
and pocked my skin, and turned my green
to grey,
and lopped my twig of sex, and seared my
spine,
and stifled my song of manhood—in just a day.
Frail now, stunted, I joke each time I fall;
and girls have nothing to say to me at all.

Collinson gives utterance to a social and personal philosophy that demands a life in the sun for every one of us. "Promenade" explores his anxiety and disquiet about the lost and apathetic people who unwittingly stifle the living. It is a poem singularly reminiscent of Shaw Neilson's "The Poor can Feed the Birds":

I often see the aged rich
on promenade about the church
that honors John, evangelist,
on Toorak's green and pleasant perch.

* * *

The aged rich have bred their kind,
the aged poor bred you and me . . .
our boots are torn from tramping far
but we too have nobility

Though little time to promenade;
our lives run swift to catch deceit;
our clock tight wound to reason's hour
ticks to the beat of marching feet.

Art is not the servant or the "weapon" of those who seek a fuller and happier life for humankind. Art is, in fact, the wise, genial and loving companion of the *seekers*, and its purpose is to make seekers of each and all of us. Collinson confers a lasting and wonderful reality upon this concept in his "Song for Miss Sager". As a poet he is at times diffuse, discursive, intoxicated with words, especially when working without the restraint of a fixed form. Yet he is a poet to be cherished, for he is a man who knows that it is possible to make a marriage of poetry, current reality and the human dream. This is a wedding most splendidly envisaged in the final stanza of the Peggy Sager poem:

Her body's every gesture shapes
the simple substance of the heart;
the silent soul in flesh escapes
to sing the living: this is art.

MUIR HOLBURN

Shares in Murder

The Japanese say that China ink, which is black, has five colours—the shades of grey. The world of Judah Waten's "Shares in Murder" (Australasian Book Society, 17/6) has this subtle spectrum, too. If it has no heroes it has no total villains; there are different degrees of lack of virtue.

The murder of a woman sets in train an inquiry which involves not only the police as principal actors, but outsiders of various degrees of spivery and significance. Pride, pigheadedness, greed and lust influence these characters. Bribery and corruption win in the end though the policeman who doesn't try hard enough consoles himself with the thought that the immediate victim is no lily-white either.

Mr. Waten observes this seedy and depressing scene with great shrewdness. He is not concerned with the conventional moves of the whodunit; this is a psychological study or a bit of social reporting, if you care to call it that. On its own level it is very well done.

Some readers will feel perhaps that Mr. Waten can, when he chooses, say much more to us on other levels; one hopes that he will return to a more comprehensive picture of life in which there is room for compassion. One's interest may be held but one's emotions are not aroused by a clinical study in which all the characters are moral nothings. The French have made many highly skilful films of this kind (one thinks of "Les Compagnons de la Nuit"), the total effect of which is extreme depression; if all life were like this it would not be worth living.

Perhaps one is falling into the error of criticising Mr. Waten for not doing something which he did not attempt to do here. "Shares in Murder" is very successful so far as it goes, the work of a highly intelligent writer. But it is because we know that Mr. Waten can go much farther that we should like him to return to a larger picture of life.

—C.T.

Men who Made Australia

Henry Lawson is a writer who is known, criticised, praised, damned, and judged by much less than half of his total literary output. This is a strange state of affairs in a country which claims him as part of the national heritage. Yet much of his work remains hidden in the files of various journals and newspapers.

For those of us who have known of this material and have, from time to time, suggested to reluctant publishers, and equally reluctant editors, too, that the time had come for a definitive edition of Lawson's work minus the editorial tinkering so well attested in the last issue of *Overland*, there have been always the same trite excuses: what else was needed when the best of his work had been already culled by the editors of the "standard" editions of his prose and verse? In some circles it is fashionable to airily declare that Lawson never wrote anything worth preserving after his return from London. Of course, if one became insistent that this was not the case, then there were vague references to copyright and other problems.

But of late there have been signs of a more positive approach being made to Lawson as a writer and it is an open secret that Mr. Cecil Mann of the *Bulletin* is at work on an edition which will include a great deal of Lawson's hitherto uncollected prose.

In the meantime there has come to hand "The Men Who Made Australia" (Australasian Book Society, 17/6), a volume of Lawson stories, sketches and poems edited by Marjorie Pizer. Miss Pizer will be remembered for her anthology "Freedom on the Wallaby" and for "Creeve Roe", a volume devoted to the uncollected poems of Victor Daley.

"The Men Who Made Australia" contains much that is new to readers who know only the "Prose Works" and "Collected Poems" (the "standard editions" referred to above); but a great many of the verses and a number of the stories have previously appeared in book form. Miss Pizer points out in her preface that she has taken her material from "the files of long-defunct newspapers and periodicals, from the pages of the *Sydney Bulletin*, and from some of the small editions issued during the poet's life time and now virtually unobtainable." No-one will cavil at the inclusion of "A Child in the Dark" and "Drifting Apart", two stories in the best Lawson manner—both appeared in "Triangles of Life", published in 1915 by T. C. Lothian. It seems perfectly safe to assume that they were omitted from the "standard" edition of his prose for copyright reasons.

There is ample new material to justify the claim that some of the stories in this volume are worthy to stand in any collection of Lawson's work. "Early Days—A Fragment of Autobiography" is a fascinating document which reveals in many ways how much Lawson drew on incidents in his own life for so many of his finest pieces of writing. There are also the three stories from the "Elderman's Lane" series which appeared in the *Bulletin* over a long period. The last two of the series—not reprinted in this book—were published after Lawson's death. "The Australian Cinematograph" is not only a fine piece of Lawson writing but shows something of his grasp of literary forms.

It is good, too, to have such poems as "A Song of Southern Writers" rescued from the obscurity of the very limited edition in which it first appeared, and more than one reader will share Lawson's pleasure when he himself incorporates "A Song of the Republic" into his autobiographical sketch

with the note: "I give it here, not because of any literary merit, but because it was my first song and sincere." As for the name-piece of the book, "The Men Who Made Australia", it was not published in 1950 as a book, a point erroneously made by another reviewer; it appeared as a political leaflet in that year and has already become a collector's piece.

And if there is some regret in the minds of Lawson students that Miss Pizer has not made more use of the "uncollected" material in the files this book is, at any rate, a good cross-section of Lawson's work, published in a reasonable format, considering the price, with an interesting sketch of Lawson on the dustjacket, made by Ron Edwards from a photograph of Lawson as a young man.

WALTER STONE

Wicked and the Fair

Certain writers of historical novels long ago evolved a formula which is easy enough to follow: let there be an abundance of movement and throat-slitting in which the hero proves more successful than all-comers, thereby earning the favour of important historical personages and of the shapely heroine. A sprinkle of "Prithee", "By the Holy Rood", or "Dost Thou?" according to period provides the historical flavor. The aim is to sell copies, and, joy of joys, to sell the film rights to Hollywood.

Others have written, and verified, and cross-checked rather stodgy historical documents which are very correct but emotionally unappealing.

Henrietta Drake-Brockman places herself very positively among the select few who really write historical novels. Starting with the grisly story of the wreck of the *Batavia* on the Houtman Rocks she has, in "The Wicked and the Fair" (Angus & Robertson, 22/6), with industry and talent, conceived a most powerful and passionate novel.

It is a truly historical novel. In it the past takes life, we find ourselves living with, and understanding, a people separated from us by 300 years of time, a people marked off by differences in speech and culture and religion.

If the book grips you as it did me you will take some of these people to your heart: others you will hate with dark despairing hatred. Yet though I took sides and became increasingly involved I could sense behind the action the wise warm humanity of the author.

The characters are men and women of their time—yet how modern they seem. Gysbert Bastiaens, Calvinist Minister, knows a rule and a text for every situation and uses his clerical artillery on all save himself and those too powerful to be safely corrected. Indeed, not only Bastiaens but also his friend the Provost, the Commandeur, the lusty Skipper, and the subtle Under-merchant Jeronimus, feel within the force of ambition, self-interest, greed, or lust for power struggling for mastery over self-control and even sanity.

This novel, let it be stressed, is brutal, savage, harsh. And it is tender and compassionate. Set against the lust and slaughter is the love story of Pelsaert and Lucretia, thrown into relief like a stroke of cool blue against a bold pattern of black and red. One of the lasting impressions of the book is the immense loneliness of these two people.

The central figure is, of course, Jeronimus. For much of the book his character, in order to maintain the dramatic tension, must remain something of an enigma. And what is the creature who finally stands before us? Monster, or pigmy? Something of both?

Among all my praise a minor adverse criticism will not go amiss. The dust-jacket is deceptive. Readers unacquainted with the author may reject it—or buy it—as just another tale of buccaneers, broadswords and bosoms.

In all, this is a mature and rewarding book, one which should be widely read, and which notches another achievement in Australian literature.

What a film this book would make!

J. A. GALE

Kendall

Only Tom Inglis Moore with his "Selected Poems of Henry Kendall" (Angus & Robertson, 17/6) could, I think, have made me pick up Kendall again. A long time ago I put away my copy of the edition of 1886, satisfied that I had sufficiently absorbed everything in it of value to me as art or useful as general knowledge. My generation—Mr. Moore was perhaps an exception—did not like Kendall who had been pushed at us by elders as the one Australian-born poet worth considering. We found him thin, conventional, sentimental. Mr. Moore concedes all that, but feels that it does less than justice; and this he sets out to show by a new selection and a new grouping of the poems, together with an introductory essay in which he examines their claims on our attention.

Certainly a new edition was overdue. If only for historical reasons Kendall is important enough not to be let go permanently out of print; and there has been no substantial reprinting of his verses since the 'twenties. That the omission should be filled now by a selection rather than a definitive edition is to the good; for if we are to dip into Kendall again it is well to have the stream clarified for us; and collected editions heretofore have been cluttered up with admittedly inferior verses. My 1886 version, published only four years after its author's death and containing 100 poems, is probably as good as any, since it confines itself chiefly to what the poet himself had considered worth putting into book form and omits at least 124 other pieces which Bertram Stevens and others got hold of.

Mr. Moore, too, has gone mainly to the books Kendall brought out himself; and he has further purified the stream—muddied apparently by unauthorised emendations—by tapping it at the source and accepting only versions that appeared in Kendall's lifetime, or as altered in his own hand. But he has not been able to resist entirely the scholar's temptation to produce something fresh out of the hat; or else (to be more generous to him) he has felt it his duty to indicate the poor quality of what pieces still remain uncollected in book form; an eight-line scrap, "To Fanny", is the unimpressive result. He has also grouped for the first time a number of Kendall's political and satirical pieces with the object of showing another and more robust side of Kendall's abilities than that best known to us. I doubt if in this he has done the poet a service. We can certainly, on the strength of these verses, accept Kendall as a more varied singer than we thought; but the pieces themselves are topical and transitory: good journalism of their date, no more even then, and of little interest now except as curios. With the political verses, however, Mr. Moore groups ballads and sketches, worthy of their place and undoubted forerunners of a more vigorous school.

Kendall had an eye for natural beauty—the natural beauty of the New South Wales mountain and coastal belt—and considerable powers of description; and he had a gift for smooth, fluid, melodious verse; but these are not enough:—

From the rainy hill-heads where, in starts and
in spasms,
Leaps wild the white torrent from chasms to
chasms—
From the home of bold echoes whose voices
of wonder
Fly out of blind caverns struck black by high
thunder—
Through gorges august in whose nether re-
cesses
Is heard the far psalm of unseen wildernesses—
Like a dominant spirit, a strong-handed sharer
Of a spoil with the tempest, comes down the
Narrara.

Mr. Moore rightly points out that Kendall is at his best in purely objective verse like that; though he would put in the same bracket for commendation the poems on classical themes which, for my part, I find just derivative. More convincing is his defence of this early Australian-born poet's use of terms which seem exotic to Australians of today when describing Australian scenes from an otherwise indigenous enough viewpoint. Not in the above example, but elsewhere, we get glens, dells, woods and so on. These were, Mr. Moore claims, natural terms in the age in which Kendall lived and in the poetic tradition in which he was writing. Small doubt that is true: one might compare Kendall's landscapes in words with those in paint of the early artist, Piguinit, Tasmanian-born and self taught, whose pictures, magnificent in concept and true in detail to his own scenery, are filled with English, rather than the yet undiscovered Australian light. It is when Kendall ventures into what his admirers seem to have considered his true vein, romantic lyricism, that the real weaknesses become apparent. To quote Mr. Moore: "His sensibilities lay too close to the surface, and fluttered too easily, so that his emotional expression often becomes facile and superficial . . . His poems of the affections are often sentimental, often trite, and even insipid."

It is the superficiality more than the sentimentality which is at fault. Sentiment is a human enough quality. One can stand a certain amount of sentiment: there is no sure line between it and emotional stress; and one can even enjoy:—

I wonder if the leaves that screen
The rock-pool of the past
Are yet as soft and cool and green
As when we saw them last!
I wonder if that tender thing,
The moss, has overgrown
The letters by the limpid spring—
Our names upon the stone!

But there is no sustaining power in mere landscape and melody and sensibilities. What these could give Kendall they gave him early, and were exhausted; thereafter there was little change or progress. Both subjects and styles became repetitions of themselves. Even phrases were repeated or re-shuffled. In this limited selection alone I count three separate references to "the fate austere that waits upon the main of letters here" and similar recurrences of the trick or very words of the initially effective "hills of wet".

Kendall did break new ground, a fact we are apt not to give him credit for, because of the conventions and dictions of his verse. Yet these were of his time, and he certainly did adapt them to his place. We are past the sneering at Tenny-

son, I hope, who developed those dictions, or even at Longfellow in whom I personally find much that is really admirable. Kendall, handicapped by the verse-language of their day, unsuited to his own environment, was perhaps wordsworthy of more serviceable tools. Mr. Moore is convinced of it.

On the whole Mr. Moore has given me a higher opinion of Kendall's poetry than I had, and certainly, by means of his admirable introduction, a much higher opinion of Kendall the man, whom I had pictured rather in terms of the weaker, more tearful and self-pitying of his verses. As always in his critical work Mr. Moore avoids the false modern fashion of elaborating learned theory at the expense of his subject-matter; and with true critical integrity writes with his eye fixedly on his mark. Briefly, concisely, lucidly, he covers Kendall's history and his work and their inter-relationships; and if no one will agree entirely with his evaluations, they are convincingly enough put forward to make any of us examine and probably modify our own.

ROBERT D. FITZGERALD

The Rainbow Bird

Professor Allan Edward's selection of Vance Palmer's short stories, "The Rainbow Bird" (Angus & Robertson, 13/6) contains not only the most thoroughly satisfying material for a reader seeking merely to enjoy his reading, but perfect examples of all facets of short-story writing for the student.

In Appendix I. of this collection, the author himself gives an analysis of these various facets, from the old accepted formula in which the plot is "as easily extracted as the backbone of a fish" to these more practised by the serious short-story writer today—the dream, a dialogue, a character study, or a reverie, and in "The Rainbow Bird" we have them all.

"Mameluke"—that sardonic piece of writing, with the plot nicely "set", the climax as satisfactorily unexpected as an O. Henry; the poignant dreamlike quality of "The Foal"; "Home Front"—all the more biting as a commentary on war because of what is left unsaid—yet little more than a monologue; the nostalgic whimsicality of "Branscombe Sisters", in its way a reverie; a mature man's evocation of youth; the deliciously wicked "Josie", in which ourselves when young are recreated surely for all of us by the weaving of an "atmosphere".

Both in the title story itself and the final one "Matheson's Wife"—already recognised as one of his finest—Vance Palmer again demonstrates this extraordinary gift of his for recapturing and comprehending the heart and mind of youth.

One is as grateful to Professor Edward for selecting these stories as one is to the author for writing them.

JEAN CAMPBELL

Mann's Poems

Leonard Mann is known to us all as a novelist of our town, our country, and our time. He is known also as a poet, in which kind he now comes forward, for the fourth time, in a collection called "Elegiac and Other Poems" (Cheshire, 17/6). Perhaps he is primarily a poet, for while his prose is sometimes stiff and labored, he uses poetry as if it were his natural voice. An extraordinary

variety of subjects is covered easily in this book, from an accident at work to a conception of Dante as a figure of our day. It seems as if Leonard Mann's poetic faculty can be set moving by any subject that touches his feeling.

The first and longest poem in the book is called "Elegy for Furnley Maurice". This is written in Furnley's own idiom, especially the idiom of "Melbourne Odes"—that series of long poems written during the depression of the thirties in what was then called the modern manner. When these appeared with their open-eyed realism, there was a warning of satire in the very title, "Odes" for a modern industrial city! There is rather the same overtone now in Leonard Mann's title, and with extraordinary insight and sympathy he captures the various aspects of Furnley Maurice's life and thought:

The sardonic humor of our race
Grins now on his pallid face;
He turns derisive eyes
On make-believe and imitation;
Grandiose lies
Stutter under his gaze.
Who are the exalted of the nation?
What is hid by the ornate facade?
He casts an iconoclastic shade
On the gaudy advertisement lights
As he goes his queering ways
Beneath verandahs through glistening lights.

This is too much to quote, perhaps, but the poem with its subtle observations and ironic beauty is central, and conveys a manifesto for Mann's contentions throughout the book. He casts an iconoclastic shade—he, too. That shade, like a dark revelation, lies over the poems that follow, especially on those laid in evil holes and corners of the city or in age-old mysteries of man's mind. In the city there is that poem, "The Criminals", beginning with the purest lyricism and moving to the wretched pair of criminals lying in wait for the bookmaker with his roll of notes. Yes, they wait,

Their eyes holding down the prey
As dingoes' eyes patient all day . . .

Or there is that figure—the strip-tease dancer—presented not from outside but only through her own angry, bitter thoughts. More openly compassionate is "Death on the Job", where the man is bending over his mate who has fallen forty feet on to the concrete from the swinging beam:

Blood dribbled from mouth and nose,
We dared not move him,
I could only love him,
Saying soft words,
"There now Jack, take it easy".
Him looking up at me,
Him asking the last question
Through the blooded eyes.

The iconoclastic shade is thereafter in abeyance while the poet writes a serenely idyllic piece in long stanzas meditating on his wife's garden in the hills.

Leonard Mann's poems have a unity both of style and vision. Through his style he can raise ordinary colloquial speech to a high intensity of utterance, and through his vision he can steep the random figures of everyday life in a warm compassion. It is a humanist poetry, now and then a little too casual in rhythm for full effectiveness, but never empty of content, never trivial in approach, and always keeping movingly close to the bone of life.

NETTIE PALMER

Red Hot Bargains

Interested in Russian literature, both past and present? Even if you think you are not, self-interest would dictate that you have a second look at some of the classical and contemporary Russian books now available in English in Australia, and available at a fraction the price of locally produced books of similar quality.

First among the classics is Gorky, and his "Childhood", "My Universities" and "My Apprenticeship" are now available for a few shillings each. These three books constitute the story of Gorky's early life. Two further Gorky books are also available, the famous novel "Mother" and "Foma Gordeyev", a pleasantly-produced and well-illustrated book, much sought after but only just available after many years, which depicts the trade and traffic of pre-revolutionary Russia in terms of a story of humanity and passion.

Turgenev's "A Hunter's Sketches" are good value at 10/-. A number of Dostoyevsky books are scheduled to appear, and the short novel "Poor Folk" is already available. Saltykov-Shchedrin's famous "Tales", sharply pointed allegories, are well worth having if they are still available when this review appears. So are Tolstoy's "The Cossacks", and "Childhood, Boyhood, Youth," his autobiographical novel.

How many, I wonder, remember Novikov Priboi's masterly war novel "Tsushima, Grave of a Floating City"? This great story of the Russo-Japanese war is not available again, unfortunately, but his collection of short novels and stories, "The Sea Beckons" is. Novikov-Priboi has not been one of the most "boosted" of the Soviet writers, but among those who know a good craftsman and a fine book, his name has always been respected.

Does the appearance of Sholokhov's "Virgin Soil Upturned" betoken the appearance in cheap, Soviet-printed editions of his two other great novels too? It seems a good omen. No Soviet writer, of course, has so much to teach the would-be realist writer as Sholokhov. The manner in which his stature has continued to grow in the U.S.S.R., so that today no contemporary writer approaches his prestige, is proof of that.

Dmitri Furmanov's "Chapayev" is again back in print, that famous story of the legendary commander of the Red Guards during the Civil War whose leadership was so inspiring that folk-songs about him are still circulating in the Soviet Union.

During the war Penguins published Yuri Krymov's "The Tanker Derbent". It's back again in a hard-covered edition which costs little more than a Penguin does, these days. This exciting story of a rescue at sea has stood up well to the test of the last twenty years.

Since the end of the War Vera Panova's name has also stood for that of a Soviet writer with sensibility and courage, ready to write honestly and objectively even when she was liable to be criticised or condemned for it. "Looking Ahead", an attractive book which costs only 6/-, is one of her earlier post-war novels dealing, in her own highly individual way, with factory life.

Finally we have from Lawrence and Wishart a re-print of Leonid Solovyev's popular story of hilarious adventure in the bazaars of Old Bukhara, "Adventures in Bukhara". This book, unlike the rest mentioned in this review, is not printed in the U.S.S.R., but in England. This seems to be a growing habit with Soviet publishers, and one hopes it will be extended. It may sound silly, but I am sure that many people find a book that feels,

smells, looks and handles in a familiar way to them much more readable than one printed in a respectable, but outlandish manner.

All the books mentioned in this review comprise only a small selection of Soviet literature now available to the Australian reader. In this reviewer's opinion they represent the pick of the newer books available. The literary traditions of the U.S.S.R. and Australia have much in common and there can hardly be too much stress on the desirability of the exchange of literary production. Soviet books available here are often of uneven quality but there is a great wealth of them and they now form an important part of world literature available in Australia.

—M.B.

Black Bull Chapbooks

Ron Edward's delightful Rams Skull Press has produced a number of attractive chapbooks over the last year or two. These are in a uniform format and are beautifully produced, as anyone acquainted with the work of that Press would expect. The chapbooks to hand are as follows, and are obtainable at the prices quoted from bookshops or from the Rams Skull Press, Lording Street, Lower Ferntree Gully, Victoria:

"**Botany Bay Broad-sides**" by Hugh Anderson, 9/-, contains three of the best known songs called "Botany Bay", with informative notes by Anderson and characteristic decorations by Ron Edwards. There is an interesting comment on the well known song that begins "Farewell to old England for ever". As the chapbook itself says, the songs may be welcomed as "curious and expressive memorials of the past". The melody line of the songs is printed.

"**Songs of Billy Barlow**" by Hugh Anderson, 9/-, traces the story of the song of "Billy Barlow in Australia" through its several versions.

"**Three Street Ballads**" by Russel Ward, 9/-, gives the words and background of three Australian ballads of the type which the author remarks "strongly influenced the tone of formal literary work when a self-consciously national form of writing emerged towards the end of last century." The ballads are "Adieu to Old England", "The Fight on George's River Ground" ("probably the most popular street-ballad ever written and sung in Australia") and "The Ballad of 'The Catalpa'". The latter ballad, apparently one of the few yet known with a West Australian background, suggests a connection between Irish nationalism in Australia and the growth of Australian nationalism.

"**The Violin, the Banjo and the Bones**" by J. S. Manifold, 9/-, is an essay on bush musical instruments informed by John Manifold's wit and considerable learning both of the Australian bush and of music. This booklet is probably the first and only published work on its subject. The literary evidence produced is widely based, and charming and accurate drawings illustrate the text.

"**Australian Song Index**" by Hugh Anderson, 18/-, is a valuable list of 375 bush ballads published between the days of transportation and 1956, produced by one of Australia's most indefatigable bibliographers, and showing where the printed versions of the songs may be found. It will be invaluable to those increasing numbers now delving into folk-song as part of the Australian story.

—A.P.L.

Watermen

Eric Lambert's new novel, "Watermen" (Shakespeare Head, 17/-) has been awaited with great interest for some time. Lambert has always been one of our best craftsmen.

Despite Lambert's reputation, or perhaps because of it, "Watermen" is a disappointment. Not because of what it achieves, but because of the potential within the story and within the writer that seems to have been frittered away.

Lambert set out to write a book about the life of fishermen in a Victorian coast port that might be Queenscliff or might be Barwon Heads or might be both, or an amalgam of many coastal fishing towns in Australia. It was a good idea. If there is one kind of writing that the traditions of Australian literature make possible, and that the conditions of the day make necessary, it is writing about the lives and work of Australians as groups and as individuals, as miners and bee-keepers and stockmen and sock-machine mechanics and bank-clerks and lawyers and spec. builders and G.M.H. employees . . . and fishermen.

And Lambert creates his scene and writes about his characters cleanly. His pen is an economical one; and his ability to write with clarity and precision does not cheapen or shallow his writing one iota, but rather the reverse.

So we have Hugh Curtis, the sailor who quits the sea, gets all mucked-up over a girl, and goes bush. Only he doesn't go bush, he goes coastwise instead.

And down at Whale Heads he meets a collection of fishermen and middle-men and pub keepers and a Labor Party politician (a superb sketch, this last) and others and gets accepted by them. He also meets Axel M'Ginnis who is the familiar tight-lipped "strong" man with a bit of an aura around him that seems to crop up in each of Eric Lambert's books.

The fishermen are copping the prawn from the middlemen and start discussing a co-operative, to be organised with the help of a State Government grant.

Lambert should be, and to some extent is, in his element here. The contradictions among the fishermen themselves, and between the fishermen and "the others", are cleverly depicted. Taken deeper, more drawn-out, Lambert had the chance and the glimpse here to make this a really outstanding novel.

One of the most important ways he would have done this would have been to spin a fabric, a tapestry, out of the warp and woof of the daily labor of the fishermen.

His failure to do this, to me, is Lambert's chief sin, and it would be less a sin if he were not clearly capable of doing better. What do we learn of what it feels like to be a fisherman all your life? What do we learn of how a man thinks when he's months and years and decades out there on the heaving sea, by himself or with a couple of mates? What of the coasts and the skies? What about his boats and his nets? What kind of lobster pots are best (remember "Phantom Lobster"?)? What's it like to be a fisherman's wife, or a fisherman's kids?

It would be over-stating the case to say that Lambert is not aware of these things or does not try to cope with them. He does, but not deeply enough. Instead of the depth that could be put into this, we get a tizzy love affair . . . and, of course, the unnecessary death of the "strong"

man, Axel, as Axel dies in "The Twenty Thousand Thieves" and in "The Veterans".

I am overstating the case against "Watermen" simply because hope deferred maketh the heart sick, and there are many points in the book where it seems to be about to blossom into something more than the very-acceptable lending-library book it now is. But it's a lazy book.

But let no-one mistake the book's real merits. There is hardly a dull page. There are several sequences of fun and farce as good as anything A. G. Macdonell ever wrote. The salt air does waft the pages over as you hold the book in your hands. The fishermen do stand up and walk; and the story of their struggles is as moving as the story of their lives is human. It's a good book, even if we do get the Communist Secretary of the Seamen's Union dragged in by the scruff of his neck—and even if it could have been a better one.

—S.M.S.

Song and Dance

"Song and Dance" by Ray Mathew (Lyre-Bird Writers, 7/6) is a book of city lyrics. Some of the thirty-four poems are carelessly written, several seem to be insincere in attitude, but most of them are the spontaneous, joyful, and poetic expression of true feelings, and as such possess a quality not too common in Australian poetry at present. Ray Mathew is more than the young poet of promise that some critics of this book have deprecatingly alleged: he is a genuine lyricist, and his poems are pleasures that move and refresh.

—L.C.

Other Notices

"A Guide to the Pronunciation of Australian Place Names", compiled by the A.B.C. (Angus & Robertson, 30/-). Just the book to settle those arguments over "Tallangatta", "Jincumbilly" or "Dandongadale". This useful publication has a lucid and interesting foreword by Professor A. G. Mitchell.

"If I Were the Artist King of the World" by Frank Brophy and "Alice Springs" by Ted Harrington are both published by Harry Hastings Pearce, and each contains a sketch of the author by him. Both are small, limited-edition pamphlets of single poems.

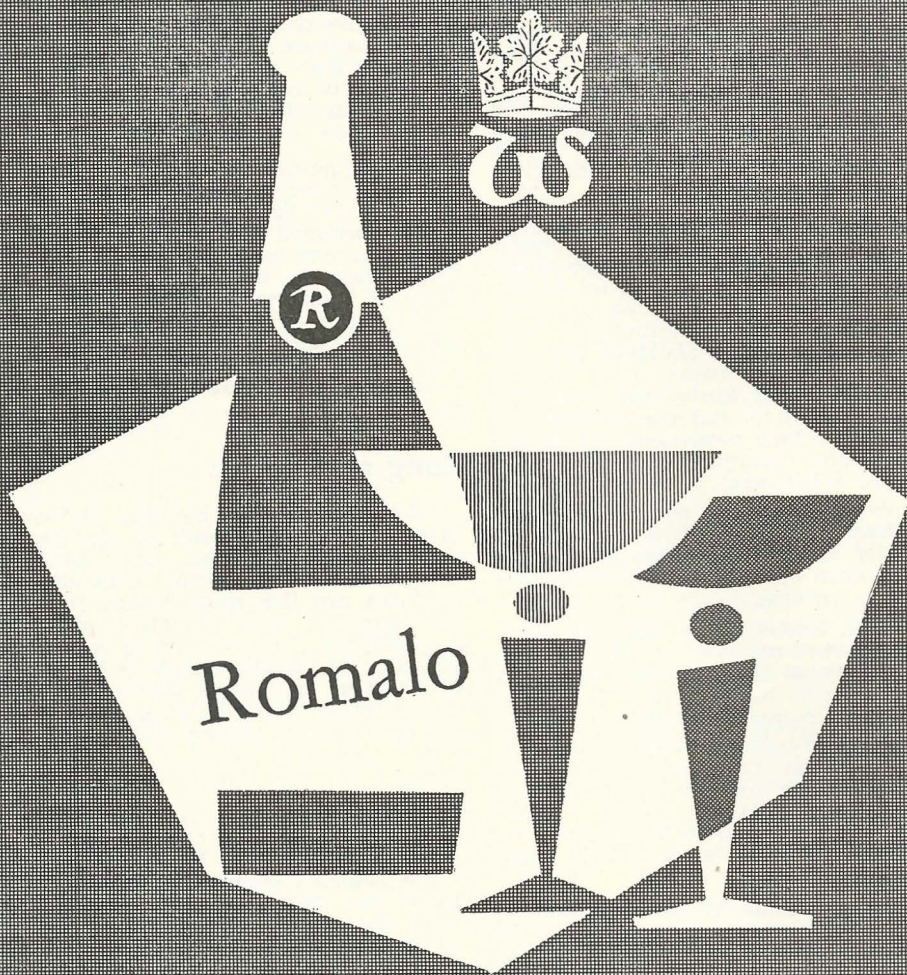
OVERLAND

"Temper democratic, bias Australian"

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