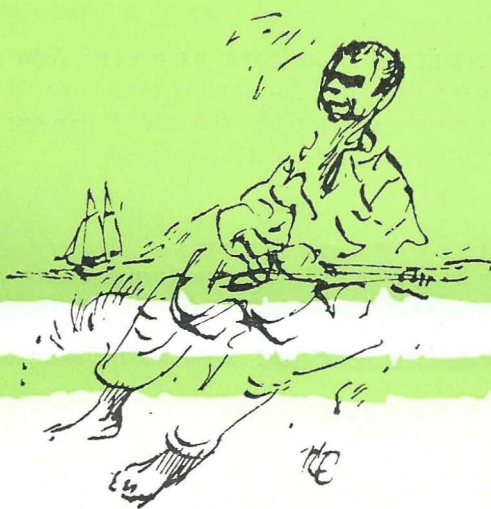


Overland

NUMBER 15

TWO AND SIX



QUEENSLAND CENTENARY ISSUE

BRENDAN BEHAN

AN EXTRACT FROM "BORSTAL BOY"

DAVID FORREST—THAT BARAMBAH MOB

VANCE PALMER ON STEELE RUDD

STORIES
FEATURES
POETRY
REVIEWS

Temper democratic, bias Australian

PUBLISHED
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OVERLAND

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Overland is a quarterly Australian literary magazine. The subscription rate is ten shillings a year (four issues), and the price of each copy is two shillings and sixpence. Manuscripts are welcomed, but will only be returned if a stamped, addressed envelope is attached. Please add exchange to cheques. All correspondence should be addressed:

EDITOR, OVERLAND, G.P.O. BOX 98a, MELBOURNE, C.I.

READERS, contributors and editors of Overland mourn the death of Vance Palmer and remember him as an inspirer and a friend.

To us he was something of a symbol, embodying in his work and person the calm and rational optimism and faith in life which is the foundation of humanism and the link between its various traditions. As a biographer and essayist, past and present met in him; as a critic he interpreted to us the great novelists of Europe and as a novelist and short story writer he taught us how one could be objective and still have a warm heart beating in the right place. He was a good radical, a good Australian, a good writer and a good man.

Yes: objectivity and commitment: that was Vance Palmer. He was too strong a man to need illusions, either about this country or any other—he was not a romanticist. Therefore his allegiances could not be disappointed and shaken and therefore the ageing despair of the romantic is absent in the last years of his creativeness. The realism of his end was the same as the realism of his beginning, very close to the living and with eyes open. He was hardy.

Everybody knows that Vance Palmer helped many young writers. But the group around Overland stood to him in a special relationship, enjoyed his special and generous interest and owes him special gratitude. The socially conscious Australianism which unites so many around Overland was dear to him, and by thought and instinct he shared our international outlook just as fully. He not only helped us individually, he also helped the magazine directly. His influence was always constructive. He liked the direction in which we are going and, only quite recently, encouraged us to keep a long perspective and not to be deflected by too much controversy. He himself was an example of the long view, of spiritual values as practical things.

This issue celebrates the Queensland Centenary. Vance Palmer was a great Queensland—perhaps the greatest. We salute his name and send affectionate greetings to Nettie Palmer. We are certain that what he created and what he stood for remains alive and fertile among us.



THE LAST FRONTIER

QUEENSLAND was the frontier.

The title belongs elsewhere, now—to Western Australia, possibly; or more likely, to the Territory.

In the wide and sprawling land inside the Queensland border, the pioneering days are over. The trail-blazers are dead, and their modern counterparts have gone on across the Border.

It is one hundred years since twenty-four thousand people set out to build a state on what is almost one quarter of the Australian mainland.

★

There is the West, and the North, and what might be called the South-East.

★

The West is the land of the rolling Aboriginal names of Ambathalla and Thargomindah, Eromanga, Cunnamulla and Nockatunga. There, the Aboriginals lost their land to the squatters. The meteoric rise of the Australian Labor Party began there, in the West. Down in that far corner of Queensland and across the border into South Australia, Flynn of the Inland and his helpers launched the Flying Doctor across the face of the land.

It was in the West, at Barcaldine, that the struggle between the squatters and the Union came close to civil war. In that same country, three men flew the first aeroplane of the Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Service, the QANTAS that today encircles the world.

There in the West, five years ago, died General Lee, the last of the Afghan cameleers.

★

The North was the land of the Kanaka plantations and the gold-rushes. The plantations and the gold have gone, leaving ghost cities in the scrub, leaving the occasional person of Chinese descent, leaving the old ones of the South Sea Islanders who elected to stay in Australia. The last of them are scattered along the coast where the sugar grew.

When the gold went, the gold towns went. Only Charters Towers remains, the high-school city of the North; and far to the south, Gympie remains, the site of the first gold find in Queensland.

The plantations went, as they had to go, for they stood in the way of people who wanted the land. When the plantations went, their trappings went with them—the landed estates, the colored labor, the Blackbirders who laid waste to the Southern Pacific.

It was a long road to this white civilisation in the tropics of Australia. It is easy to ascribe courage and a sense of destiny to the white farmers and the Union who travelled the road; but courage is to be distinguished from doing things of necessity, and a sense of destiny implies a wide horizon which can have belonged to few people who had to struggle with necessity.

Indeed, the battle with the land was long in Queensland. It drove in the horizon around a man, as war drives it in around a soldier; and the wonder is not that southern intellectuals find a land of philistines in the northern state, but that they fail to see the cause of it.

★

The South-East was the land of the free settler. He struggled with the squatting advocates of convictism, and later with the brigalow scrub inland, and later with the rain forest of the coast—and later again, with the pear.

It was a polyglot army—Scotch, Irish, German, and sometimes, English.

The original inhabitants had long lost out to everybody.

★

The banana became the colloquial emblem of Queensland, and so it remains, long after the emblem has ceased to have any validity.

It is thirty years since bunchy-top destroyed the banana in Queensland, and for all that time it has been New South Wales that is the Bananaland of Australia.

★

There are two kinds of Australians—the first talks about “prickly pear”; the second talks about “the pear”. The latter come from a piece of Queensland the size and shape of the state of Victoria. For thirty years, one-third of that piece of Queensland was trafficable only to snakes and lizards. The other two-thirds was variably habitable, and all the pear country was spreading in size and density at the speed of fifteen hundred square miles each year.

Long after the Union had struggled in the West for wages, and long after the gold had gone, and the Kanaka plantations disappeared, the silent war with the pear went on over ninety thousand square miles of the richest land in Queensland.

No-one will ever assess the damage in farms gone, lives altered, horizons driven in, dreams vanished, history retarded, human potential lost, the economy of the State stunted. And when the economy is stunted, all the things that grow up from an economy are stunted—education, material progress, culture, relieved occasionally by the flash of a Steele Rudd or a Randolph Bedford.

The only immune quality is the mind of man. Stunted it will be in education, opportunity, outlet, refinement, but in the end not stunted at the heart of the matter, for the human mind develops compensations for the endless war with the land, develops a relatively uncomplicated road to laughter and tears and courage. The mind develops an outlook that has to cope with the unbearable, an outlook with its attendant humor calculated to cut the unbearable down to size.

It is truly a state of mind, to be seen not statically, but in motion. With it went a disconcerting ability to distinguish the dinkum from the fake, to distinguish the cultured illiterate from the educated illiterate. It suspected the fake, and not unnaturally, then suspected the fake's wares. And still does.

It is the state of mind that eventually coined the phrase “pseudo-intellectual”. As a diagnosis, it was accurate and deadly, and it still has bite in it. It declared spoken war on fakery and rejected those who are incapable of coming to terms with the world about them.

★

Well, the pioneering days in Queensland are over.

In those first few years that followed the Second World War, Queensland laid the foundation of the years to come. New areas of the State began to go under closer settlement. Industry spread, even to the North-West. On New Year's Day, 1948, the last prickly pear lease disappeared from the face of Queensland.

The rise of an industrial state has begun, and with it have come the problems of industry, old pastoral problems returning in a new guise—the relations of unionist and capitalist, the relations of man and man, the stresses of industrial and urban living.

Most Queenslanders stand with a foot in the past and the other in the future. The men and women in banks and factories and shops and commerce number among their parents engine-drivers, farmers, stock inspectors, navvies and industrial workers.

If cultural and intellectual life is to have any sensible meaning, it is from these people that that life must spring, rising from the life of the clerks and the factory-hands, from their parents of the shearing-sheds and the cane gangs and the farms. To have any sensible meaning, older cultural and intellectual values have to be tested, reconciled and incorporated into life as Queenslanders know it.

If this is to be Philistine (the new elegant term for “peasant”), we joyfully thank history for our fate, we do not apologise for what we are because of the pear and the land and those who brought us convict and kanaka, we take a liberal view of outsiders providing they remain civil, and we go to sort out our problems of this industrial age. Some of us are even trying to write about the men and women and children in this land in transition.

If you do not want to meet us on these terms, you know what you can do.

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BOUGAINVILLE

AND THE

BUNYIP

John Manifold



THE year was 1768. The place was the outer edge of the Great Barrier Reef, on the latitude of Cooktown. At a mile's remove to the east lay a three-masted vessel under French colors, evidently the home of the jollyboat now moored to a niggerhead of coral in the foreground.

The captain, sitting on the forward thwart, was deep in conversation with someone ashore. Behind his back the sailors rested on their oars with commendably little sign of impatience or curiosity.

"I should be lacking no less in the politeness of a gentleman than in the spirit of inquiry which becomes a philosopher", the captain was saying, "if I omitted to ask your name".

"Call me what you please," replied his interlocutor. "The natives have various names for me." Nothing seemed more probable. The speaker had something the build of a sea-lion except about the hands, which were human; and his hide was perfectly smooth and iridescent. He supported himself on hip and elbow, but even so he overtopped the captain by two or three feet. "By the way," he went on, "would you mind repeating your own name, captain?"

"Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, at your service," said the captain, with a slight inclination of his powdered head.

"Bougainville?" The other frowned thoughtfully. "I had an idea it was to be a shorter name. No matter. But, captain, am I mistaken in thinking that our instructions must have become somewhat garbled in transmission? Quite likely I am wrong; but I have not yet observed the transit of Venus which was to announce the imminence of your arrival; and, unless I am entirely mistaken, you were to approach from the south, not the east, and inside, not outside, the Reef."

"I am at a loss, sir," said the captain, "to know to what instructions you refer. Mine are from His Most Christian Majesty King Louis—God bless him—and they make no mention of the transit of Venus. A great pity, I must concede. Who knows how long it may be before such another chance occurs of observing this rare phenomenon?"

"Well, I know, of course," said the Bunyip. "They always warn me of the transit of Venus. Though I dare say, if I had the leisure to devote to it, I

could work out the times for myself. That, as you must have had occasion to remark, captain, is one of the inconveniences of a detached command: the mass of petty local detail impedes the study of larger matters. Tied as I am to administering the future of this continent, I feel myself dwindling from a philosopher into a mechanic."

"Putting aside for a moment the general considerations to which you allude," said Bougainville, sitting bolt upright, "Do I understand you to speak of a continent here in the Pacific?"

"Certainly". The Bunyip nodded towards the south, south-west and west, with a rotary motion of his powerful head and whiskers. "Quite an agreeable size, compact, and full of interest in a provincial way, but still in a very early stage of its development."

"Bless my soul!" cried the captain. "So Vaugondy was right! At this moment perhaps I am only a few leagues from what he entitled, in his superstitious way, the Land of the Holy . . ." He broke off, and glanced with incredulity into the Bunyip's face. "No, no," he muttered to himself, "that's impossible!"

"You were about to remark?" asked the Bunyip.

"Oh, please excuse me," said Captain Bougainville. "It was nothing but an irrational fancy. Tell me, all the same, do you ever adopt the outward appearance of a dove?"

"Something appears to be worrying you," said the Bunyip. "It is probably of the same order as the doubts I expressed a few moments ago. Clearly both of us have received garbled instructions. You expected me to resemble a pigeon, and I expected you, somehow, to have a monosyllabic and less elegant name. No, I do not often change my shape. As you see me now, so I have been for ages past, and so I shall be when your nation has colonised my little continent, and altered the face of it beyond recognition."

Bewilderment struggled with delight in Captain Bougainville's expression. "Sir," he said, "a philosopher should never be astonished at anything. Still, the most enlightened minds of this age agree that the future is known to God alone, and that no other being can foretell it. Monsieur de Voltaire, whose fame must by now have pene-

trated even as far as this, has exposed his view of the subject in an admirable poem. Thus, when you refer with apparent certainty to events so remote, and indeed so improbable, as a French colonisation of the Land of the (hrrm!) Holy Ghost, then you arouse in me a scepticism which I freely concede to be impolite, while desiring you to admit that it may not be unreasonable."

"Far from considering your scientific caution unreasonable, my dear sir," said the Bunyip, "I am sometimes inclined to regard my own powers of divination in that light. They are, of course, specialised powers—and the trend of modern thought is towards overestimating the value of specialisation, as I think you will agree. I can foretell nothing but the future of the continent for which I am responsible; and even in that department there are occurrences like your apparently premature arrival from the wrong point of the compass, which challenge the validity of my general conclusions."

"You speak so reasonably," said the captain, relieved, "that I am inclined to classify you with the supernatural agents who sometimes occur in the fictions of M. de Voltaire himself. Could you favour me with some of the general conclusions of your divinatory art?"

"Willingly," said the Bunyip. "It will be some time after your return home that the ministers of your King, examining your charts and log with great care, will conclude that my continent is suited for nothing so much as to be made a repository for criminals."

"Criminals?" asked Bougainville. "It was not thus that we settled Canada."

"Some of these criminals," pursued the Bunyip, "will extend their activity, on arrival, to the acquisition of immense landed estates. Conscious of the contrast to their rapacity offered by the black inhabitants of the country (who are communists), the settlers will endeavor to exterminate them."

"This much, alas! is reasonable," said Bougainville. "M. de Voltaire has alluded to the possibility. And, if I am not mistaken, an English voyager named Gulliver has called these rapacious colonists Yahoos—only he seems to have situated the principal colony in the southern part of the continent. Tell me, do horses figure at all in your general conclusions?"

"You do not lack the power of divination yourself, my dear sir," said the Bunyip benevolently. "The Yahoos—to adopt that convenient name—will introduce the horse. But, to counteract this inadvertent wisdom, they will also introduce the rabbit, the sparrow, the starling, the fruit-fly, the sheep, the prickly pear, and other pests as bad as themselves. They will denude the hills of trees in order to make country accessible to sheep. The valleys will choke with mud in consequence of the denudation of the hills. The floods caused by this means will do something, but not enough, towards keeping the population in check. Possibly to counteract the floods, the Yahoos will cause bush-fires to rage with great vigor every summer."

"But if the humans are so vile," cried Bougainville, pale with emotion, "cannot the philosophic horses of Monsieur Gulliver keep them in subjection?"

"At the very limits of my vision," replied the Bunyip, "I can just perceive a succession of great horses. Would the names interest you? I perceive one named The Banjo, who attains fame as a poet. Then one Carbine. Then, later, a nameless **light horse**, a very able warrior; also a number of **dark**

Fairest Isle?

Purcell Tercentenary Poem
1659-1959

If Venus wanted to forsake
Her Cyprian Groves for just a while
To choose a different domicile,
Would she have thought it wise to make
England her home—for pleasure's sake?
Where generally the weather's vile
And people only reconcile
Pleasure and sex as her mistake?

Is England Cupid's favorite nation?
Has he freed the land from care
And envy, practised his vocation
With especial vigor there?
But Venus must have known temptation
When she first heard Purcell's air.

RODNEY HALL

horses. Then comes a certain Phar Lap, killed by Americans; another military leader, I conjecture. All these horses will command an almost religious veneration from the better sort of Yahoo, being worshipped particularly on Saturdays."

Poor Bougainville sat very crestfallen and silent for a while. Then he said: "Superstition, destruction, ignorance and warfare. Is there nothing else to be seen in the future of this continent?"

"Now, now," said the Bunyip. "A philosopher should not yield to despair. There are brighter sides, doubtless; all I know is that they are less in evidence than what I have described. And in any case my reign here is brief. Eventually—**eventually**, mind you—when man controls his own future, there will be no more work for me, and I shall be able to retire."

"You are not very encouraging," said Bougainville. "I think I see more hope for our colonies in the two Indies than you will allow me for this one. But I have another question to ask. French colonists will need wine and coffee for their sustenance. Will those grow here?"

"They'll grow all right," said the Bunyip; "but the legislators will endeavor to make the former prohibitively costly; and the merchants will take care to suppress the growth of coffee in order to draw exorbitant profits from importing it."

"Then this will never be a French colony!" cried Bougainville. "I defy your prognostications! I shall delete the last few pages of my log, and sail due north. You cannot **make** me discover the place if I refuse to!" He snapped out an order, and presently was rowed back to his ship.

"A strange sort of interview," said the Bunyip to himself. "He didn't behave at all as I expected." He scanned the sky. "Venus must be very late; or did I get that over very early? Oh well, I shall be able to get a little sleep before anyone worries me again." He crossed the coral island, dropped into the water behind it, and swam rapidly back to his nest on the mainland.

Captain Cook, who arrived two years later, having observed the transit of Venus at Tahiti, never managed to set eyes on a Bunyip.

THE HERO

"FIND out what you can about him. Did he get married? How many kids? That sort of thing." The editor snarled genially. "Make it good enough for the funnies and I'll give you a byline. Human interest stuff. Something for the week-end magazine." Sounded easy enough. Might even get a series out of it. Our Wartime Heroes. How have they settled down to peacetime occupations. Ten Years On.

You find the story in the files without much trouble. Able Seaman keeps his gun firing while ship sinks under him. Medals, a nine-day wonder. Dull photographs of a dull-looking man with curly hair in a sailor suit. You read it all carefully. You need to, you have no recollection of it at all. So much for fame.

The address gives you more trouble, but it's there in the electoral rolls. He's still in town at least. You drive carefully through the streets of the dingy industrial suburb, easing your ageing car carefully around the sharp abrupt corners, and among the gapped teeth of picket fences with palings gone and never replaced. Dusk closes in around chimney and factory; lamplight glints dully from dim bulbs through kitchen windows. Timed it just right. Catch him relaxed with a full belly after tea and he'll talk better. Psychology is the half of reporting. You have to use your head. You brake gently to a stop outside a shop, dimlit and not too clean. The dissipated woman, wilted as her cabbages, says: "Yes. Five houses down, on the other side of the street." You buy some cigarettes, knowing they will be stale; but it keeps you in good and it stops the inquisitive eye she is raking you with as she slops behind the counter. (Maybe you are a plainclothes copper!)

Up the front steps now. Careful how you knock. Deprecating but confident. Noisy inside, there's some kids for the boss anyhow. Silence after the knock, then the small fat woman peering up at you and the four children listening curiously until she chases them all back to the kitchen. Could I see Mr. Casey? The one who was in the Navy? At work! But it's six o'clock!

"He works shiftwork," complains the woman. You can hear it in her voice, the long nagging at a man who works at night, leaving her alone; a man who growls when the children wake him in the daytime (and it's only natural for them to be noisy). Who demands meals at odd hours and demands breakfast when other people, normal respectable people, are having their tea. You can hear the resentment of the dull street, the grimy chimneys and blind high bricks of the encircling factories. Pity. She was pretty once, till the children stole it from her. Probably Miss National Savings of 1944, and married the conquering hero; and the dreams went out quietly one by one, and she isn't resigned to it yet. You sigh inside, though

your face smiles as you ask the same old questions. How many children? Does your husband march on Anzac Day? Do the children know their father is a hero? She puts up a front, primping pathetically at her hair, smiling emptily at the nice young man, gloating secretly at the prospect of condescending to the neighbors; and maybe even her photo in the paper like it was that time back in 1944, weren't those the days? Exciting times they were, though a shame people had to get killed in a war, because everyone seemed to have more money those days.

"And he's around the corner. He's on the boiler at the glassworks. He won't be home till midnight, but the watchman will let you in if you are a reporter—"

Clutch the brief glory, lady. I'd never heard of your hero till the boss told me to bring him to make the customers smile. Ah, well; lay it on thick, they love it.

"Thanks, Mrs. Casey, I'll call round there straight away—" (Make them think you are busy, got a big deal on, back to the car, wish I could afford a new one, shut the door carefully, drive off slowly.)

Here's the gates. Eight feet high, corrugated iron; wicket door with a slide window beside the gate. Knock and wait. The window slips aside, a gnome peers through.

"Who? Casey? That's be Smoky, the bloke on the boiler. No! He can't come! You can't leave a boiler alone, it'd blow up. No, you can't come in, it's company orders. I don't care who you are, it's company orders. All right I'll ring the manager, then, and see what he says—"

The window slams shut. Two policemen walk majestically past across the street. A dog slinks by, he knows where he's going, travelling fast and sure. The night has a nip to it, it haloes round the street lamps. Here's the Grand Loyal Warden back. What's the password, noble Brother? I'm in, there goes the bolt.

"Around the corner past the ashheap, mind the barrow there; I'd take you up but I can't leave the gate—" And his voice fades behind you, muffled in the velvet of darkness and the clank and hum and pound of nearing machinery. Then you are round the corner and suddenly flaring white and cherry red a door flies open and lights your path. There's a blocky figure there, swinging a bar into that inferno, a sprinkle of ash and the door is shut again. The bar is leaned against the wall, one end white and fiery, sparks play on the metal like fireflies. You stumble into the lighted room.

There are two men there, singlets, bib-and-brace overalls slack at the waist and faded from much washing, heavy boots. Six feet two and skinny as a clothes prop, that's not my man. Five

foot eight, wide as a door, bald (why do bald men usually have such hairy chests?) that's Casey.

"Mr. Casey?"

Lanky laughs. That's a joke, of course.

"You mean Smoky. The bloke they wrote the song about, 'On top of old Smoky, there's nothing but skin——'"

Casey laughs easily anyway. That's good.

"Yeh. What do you want?"

So I tell it all again. Casey looks puzzled. Over in one corner a pump of some sort wheezes gently. The place smells like a railway station. Lofty (of course he would be Lofty!) picks up a shovel, negligently opens the door again. The heat that flies out would blind you, but he doesn't seem to notice. He can swing a shovel, anyway. Doesn't seem to look, but the coal flies neatly through the tiny door and spreads evenly over the fire. Sweat pricks on your skin. He shuts the door, picks up a broom, sweeps carefully. Only a few tiny pieces of coal.

"You keep the floor clean."

Lofty grins. "Slide on a bit of coal and you might fall onto the door," he remarks. You feel cold at the thought.

"Mr. Casey, can you tell me the story of how you happened to keep on firing when the ship was sinking under you?"

Funny, that didn't seem a silly question before, but with the bulk of the man in front of you he doesn't really have to answer. He will finish what he starts, this man. He's good, right through, this Casey with the frame of a bull and the quiet eyes.

"I don't remember much about it now," he says. "I forget. It's all such a long time ago and it doesn't seem important."

"But what happened? What was it you thought that made you decide it was worth it to stay on though the others were dead or gone? You were told to go. Why did you stay?" Of course you don't ask this aloud, but the story suddenly becomes very important as you stand there silently with the questions asking themselves in your head. Casey is thinking now. He's going to speak.

"After the second bomb hit, my mate Johnny was killed on the after Oerlikon. I was wild about that. But it wasn't that, it just seemed that it was the best thing to do, the right thing. You've got to do the right thing——"

The pump in the corner has gradually changed its even rhythm, you don't notice until Casey crosses and adjusts it. There is the inferno again as Lofty throws more coal in and lifts an enormous glinting clinker out balanced on the end of his massive bar. Looking at it now you realise the bar alone must weigh nearly a half a hundred-weight, yet these two handle it easily enough. You feel vaguely dissatisfied with your own muscles and make indefinite resolutions to visit a gymnasium or something. Though you know you never will. There is something very competent about these two that you have rarely seen in your compatriots—a contained quiet confidence in themselves.

"Do you march on Anzac Day?"

Well, do you? Do you put on that little bit of ribbon, on the pocket of your one good suit? That ribbon means you can be a big shot again, if only for a few hours. People would take off their hats to it, and you who were wearing it——

"We mostly work Anzac Day, you know. We're on a roster shift here. But I don't think I'd bother anyway. I don't get much time with the kids——"

Then the pair of them moving quickly off to attend to something.

Well, there's your story. You have enough now, your imagination can fill in the holes, you can do a good article and you know it will make the funnies, and help some bored people pass Sunday morning. You stumble back to the car, and drive slowly home, being careful with the second gear because it is so worn it jumps out if you rev the motor too suddenly. And when you have typed it out you know you'll get your first by-line and, eventually, the new car.

Somehow you feel you've missed the real story, and you'd like to write it—but it eludes you.

Listen, My Children

Come, child of our industrial age, and stand,
Here by my knee, put your small trusting hand
In mine, and let me have your guileless mind
To mould to the pattern fashioned by mankind.
By precept first: be kind and love your brother,
For you and he are members of each other,
Be modest, truthful generous and meek,
And if one strike you, turn the other cheek.

So much for precept, now learn by example:
Be rich, successful, power-thirsting; trample
The weak and humble if they clog your path;
Be ruthless on your road, the aftermath
Of influence and wealth and power shall be
The measure of your intrepidity.
Scorn softness, pity, mercy, truth and love,
Worship the eagle, not the gentle dove,
Practise deceit, coin convincing lies;
These are the currency of "free enterprise".

LARRY DRAKE

THE WILLOW ON THE DOWNS

Five men came across the Downs,
Walking on the edge of the bitumen,
Walking in the Indian summer of their youth.

The wind blew from the north,
Across the edge of their youth,
And three of them thought there was cordite on
the wind.

They came to the white bridge where the willow
grew
By the river on the Downs:
In the land of eternal spring
Between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two;
Between Killarney and the southern subdivision
Of Canning Downs.

The willow grew in the ageless spring
Beyond the footings of the white bridge.
The Major walked from his car and said, "G'day,"
And leaned on the railing, beside the five men.

"They say there is a ghost here," said the Major
And cast a pebble into the Condamine
At the foot of the willow.
"Two swaggies on the road attacked each other
Underneath this bridge.
And one of them died in Boggo Road,
For the other died beneath the willow."
And the willow sighed in the wind.

Snug in the eternal fortress of the spring,
Johnson shrugged at the Major and made his note,
"The road to Loch Lomond and Killarney
Lies on a bearing of ninety-eight degrees
magnetic."
He marked the willow on his map,
And spat into the Condamine.
There was a distant rumble, of thunder
Or of a crumpling of the edge of spring.

And Strandquist smelt the odor on the breeze
And heard the eight rounds gunfire in Papua.
The spring tanned his bare arms
On the white railing of the bridge.
He came from beyond the Warrego,
Where the lovely land is mostly in books.
He stared at the fallow
And the green willow, and he said this
To himself, in the eternal spring,
"I must believe that I will walk this way again,
Someday.
How many thousand miles are there from Kokoda
To Tokio?"

McEwen found a splinter in the railing of the
bridge.
A patch of nettles grew beyond the willow.
The bitumen finished at the bridge. Beyond was
dust.
He never saw the willow,
Or the Downs.

Heathwood saw beyond the willow,
"It would be a poor lookout, my friend,
If you couldn't bag forty to the acre."
He thought a crow cawed on the wind,
Or perhaps it was a bugle in Papua.
He wondered why bigger and stronger men than he
Would bag the forty to the acre,
While he went to shoot the man
Behind the bugle.

Erricson wrote on the back of his map
And transcribed it, afterwards,
On her heart.
Today, my darling, I saw a willow
On the Downs.
Eternal, like God.
A photograph of eternity;
Young and lithe and slender,
Lovelier than all
The lovely land,
Queen of the Downs.
Head of glory, in the sun and in the breeze,
All creation, risen from the Earth,
Singing in the wind, waving her veil
Across the thunder, cleaning the air of cordite.
What is stronger? A willow or a gun?
A willow cannot destroy a gun.
But if the gun would destroy the willow,
It must destroy me also, and you;
For you and I and the willow on the Downs
Are one,
My darling.

The five young soldiers walked on,
Left the Major to his own odd world
By the willow on the Downs,
Stepped over the edge of their youth,
Out of the eternal spring,
To glory, or so it was said,
But three of them knew better
Even then.

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A WONDERFUL LIFE

Jean Devanny

SHE sat on a box beneath a shaddick tree in front of a tiny iron house that stood at the junction of forest and beach. Her heavy body was slumped over the grand-child she cradled in her lap. Her feet were bare; the toes dug into the sand. Her skin was sun-tanned but clear and shining with good health. Her blue eyes were serene and guileless. Her abundant greying hair was tied by a string at the nape of the neck and snaked far down her back. I knew she was part Afghan, but the only evidence of it lay in the daintiness of bony structure underlying the weighty flesh and in the narrowness of her features. Her hands, gnarled with work, were astonishingly small in view of the tale she had to tell.

She was born in Georgetown, North Queensland. Her father was teamster and miner in the hilly forested country between Cloncurry and the Gulf of Carpentaria. Sometimes he worked in tin but mostly in gold. She was the only girl among six boys and their way of life was her's. At sixteen years of age she had "got out on her own" and taken a job cooking for a gang of woodcutters. Five shillings weekly a man she was paid. "Good money in those days, you know," she said, in a tone meant to impress me, "but cooking by camp oven it was worth it."

At twenty she had come east to the coast. "At that time," she said, beginning vigorously to rock the child, "the main trunk railway was going through from Brisbane to Cairns and big bodies of workmen were living in calico towns along the route. I wanted to get a job cooking for one of these gangs, down near Babinda—you know Babinda?" she broke off to ask.

"I know it," I replied. "A nice little sugar town, one of the prettiest in the north."

"It is now," she continued, "but in those days it was only a hotel and a spread of tents. Well, to get there I had to swim the Russell River with my bluey, a tin trunk. I had been carrying the trunk on my shoulder, with a rope tied round it because the lock was broken. The river was in flood, worse luck, about a quarter of a mile wide, and the current was pretty swift. I sat on the bank and looked at it. No trouble to make it on my own, I reckoned; I always had plenty of power in my arms and legs and I could swim well. The trouble was the trunk. And I would have to swim in my clothes because a gang of workmen were camped on the other side. Anyhow, I tied the trunk to my waist with the rope, waded in and pulled it after me as I swam. Before I was halfway across the men cottoned on that I was coming and shouted and waved to me and urged me on. They told me afterwards that some of them had made bets on whether I would make it.

"I made it all right. And the clothes in the trunk kept pretty dry. The men gave me a meal of bully



—CLEM MILLWARD

beef and damper and black tea and a bed for that night. Treated me real good, they did. Said that if I was broke they'd stake me. But I wouldn't take their money. I've never taken a penny from anybody in my life unless I've earned it.

"Next morning I walked on to Babinda and got a job in the hotel. I stayed for six months. Then one of my brothers turned up with a bullock team. He took me to Brisbane with him and there I worked in a factory for nine months, mending corn sacks at threepence a bag. Doesn't seem much, threepence, but I earned £170, saved five pounds out of it and then lit out back again to North Queensland. Here I landed a job cooking for a gang who were making a big cane farm at Bartle Frere.

"The block was in big timber country on the bank of the Upper Russell and to get to it I had to pad for miles along a bridle track through the

jungle. It was raining hard and before I got there I was nearly eaten alive by jumper ants and leeches. The ants left big lumps on my skin; and you know what leeches are like in heavy scrub country in the rain: they drop on you out of the trees, wriggle onto any bare places they can find and fasten on. You only know they are there by finding yourself running with blood. It was getting dark when I reached the camp and the boss was just sending out two men to look for me. Afraid? I have never been afraid of anything in my life.

"I stayed in that job two years, cooking in camp ovens and billy cans for 32 Hindus and 22 white men. Some were old, some young. I had an iron galley to cook in and a big fly for a diningroom. The Hindus et at one end of it and the whites at the other. Every single meal for the whole two years I cooked curry and rice for those Hindus, breakfast, dinner and tea, but for the whites I had to cook everything. I liked the Hindus best. They were the most respectable body of men I ever met with; and the best-mannered. Of course the whites were respectful to me, too. By cripes, they had to be. To begin with, I told the boss: one word of disrespect out of a man in my hearing and it would be either him or me for the track.

"Most nights I got to bed at twelve and I always had to be up at four because the men started work at daylight. But I managed to snatch a snooze during the day. I got the usual 5/- weekly a man. Would pull my cheque every six months and go up to Cairns and blow it."

Here she shook her head and clicked her tongue as if deprecating and regretful of that youthful extravagance. Then her eyebrows went up. She shrugged. "Young and silly," she opined. "Oh, well——" A few moments silence and rocking of the child, and she proceeded.

"I liked that job. It was long hours and hard work and it rained nearly all the time but by cripes I liked it. The men felled in the rain. Every fine day they would burn off and then, rain or shine, they would cultivate. No ploughing. The paddocks were all stumps. For first planting they dug an oblong hole from six to eight inches deep and shoved in the seed stick by hand. The virgin soil gave a wonderful crop.

"Yes, a good life, that. On Sundays the men would swim and read and there would be plenty of music. Violins, flutes, clarionets and accordions. Some of those men played well. This radio stuff we get nowadays never sounds as good as that singing and playing with the quiet bush all round.

"But what I liked best was the cassowaries. You hardly ever see one now but those days they were all over the place. Terrible cheeky things, they were. Would come right into my cooking galley and steal the food from under my nose. Flick their heads over my shoulder when I was cutting up the stew meat and pinch it. I shot hundreds of water rats, flaming great things, and fed them to the cassowaries. The birds would go mad with excitement if they saw me with a dead rat. Would stand in front of me with their necks stretched straight up and their beaks wide open. I would drop the rat into their gullet and down it would slide, without a move of the long neck. Funny, it was, to see it.

"I shot a lot of scrub turkey and scrub hens, too, in the bush round that camp. Shot them for food. And I would take the eggs out of the boomer nests they built round the roots of the trees, in the hollows between the flange. Up to forty eggs

to a nest: enough for a couple of meals for the white men. They tasted like hens' eggs, only richer."

"Rather a shame to take them, don't you think?" I ventured mildly.

"Shame? I suppose it was but in those days we had an open go at the hens and turkeys. Nowadays, they tell me, they're protected. But I never took the chicks, though I could have run them down easily if I'd had a mind to. Terrible dirty, the chickens were, when they came out of the hot steamy nests. Fully feathered, but it took them a while to learn to fly.

"But two of my brothers came to fell timber near Babinda so I left and went to cook for them. And it was then that I started to bushwhack. Between cooking I would go out and brush for the men and from that I got to helping them fell the timber. In no time I was climbing up onto the springboard up the trunk and putting in the belly cut while one of them put in the back cut. Straightway, I could swing the axe as well as they could. I began it as a pastime and found I liked it, as work. We cut every variety of soft and hard woods growing in that country and then stacked and burnt them. Yes, we burnt hundreds of trees of these here fancy veneer woods, as they call them these days. A log was a log to us. All we thought of was clearing the ground to grow vanilla.

"The vanilla an orchid, you say? All I know is: it's a creeper. We got the seedlings from a nursery down south and stuck them into holes about three feet apart.

"Then I met Harry. He asked me to go shooting with him one day and six weeks later we were married. He was nine stone and I was twelve stone but I loved him and he loved me. We honeymooned in Cairns and then went on the road looking for work. And by cripes, it was some time before we found it. Soon we were flat broke. We lived for days on some pumpkin and condensed milk an Italian farmer gave us. Then Harry got a job chipping cane and I worked on the hoe with him. But he fell sick with sunstroke and had to go into hospital.

"While I was alone I cut some bush timber, scrounged some iron and built a hut. We lived in it for three years, woodcutting on contract, the two of us together. The first year I had a child but I took it in my stride. You know," her brow wrinkled, "I never could understand why women make such a fuss about childbearing. I cut timber up to two weeks before my babies were born. Hurt me? Cripes, no. It's lots easier than the washing I do now for a living. Out of choice, mind you," she added swiftly. "My kids are always at me to cut it out and live with them but I'm one that likes my independence, like. Where was I? Yes. We worked a twelve-hour day, Harry and me, a six-day week, and sometimes we got stuck into it on Sundays. We always had more orders than we could handle. It was a great life. We had nothing to worry us; nothing to think about but how many lengths we could get out of a tree. When cutting shortlengths for the stove I would wonder: how many blocks will go to the load? Sometimes, when cutting mangrove, we would be up to our waists in swamp water. But cutting mangrove was kid's play; the wood's so brittle that it nearly broke under the axe.

"Four children came along and all of them came into the timber with us. In the dry months we'd take blankets for them to lie on and mosquito nets

Autumn Fires

Old flower-stems turn to sticks in autumn,
clutter the garden, need
the discipline of scateurs.
Choked overplus, straggle of weed,
cold souring strangling webs of root,
I pile the barrow with the lot.
Snapped twig that forgets flower and fruit,
thornbranch too hard to rot,
I stack you high for a last rite.

When twigs are built and match is set,
your death springs up like life; its flare
crowns and consumes the ended year.
Corruption changes to desire
that sears the pure and wavering air,
and death goes skyward, like a prayer.

JUDITH WRIGHT

to protect them from the sandflies. In the wet season we'd raise them off the ground and prop an umbrella over them.

"Nurse them myself? You bet. If the baby cried when I was into a tree I threw down the axe and went to feed it. But of course they thrived!" She gave me a look of surprise. "Why shouldn't they? They never had a day's illness beyond a bit of a cold and of course the measles. After work at night I would clean the house, do the washing and cook for next day.

"But Harry went and died, and it took the stuffing out of me, sort of. I cut on my own for a time but I couldn't keep the wood up to the orders. Yes, the orders kept on coming in. The blokes we cut for—bakers, they were—knew I was good on the axe. They kept at me to take another partner but I couldn't put anybody in the old man's place. I gave it up myself." She fell silent, rocking the child and dwelling, plainly upon her memories.

Shortly, with a deep sigh and a shrug of resignation, she resumed. "Yes, I liked the bush life. Your mind is set on one thing and you're contented."

Another silence. I looked at the mass of tousled greying hair, at the well-formed bare feet, ingrained with dirt from continual contact with the soil, at the refined features, the expression of steadfastness and strength, and thought of the reputation she enjoyed for generosity and good neighborliness. The child put up a hand and plastered grimy marks upon her cheek; at which she cuddled him to her and gave me a slightly-apologetic smile.

"I wouldn't like you to think I'm grizzling about things as they are," she said hesitantly. "I've got a lot to be thankful for. I've had a wonderful life."

The Explorer

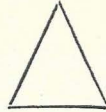
If to walk by barren stalk and bare tree I have no remembered dreams of a green land known in verdant summers, what chance have I of difficult ascent beyond the sand into the barrier hills? For a man must carry such good cheer with him, or all is lost. Those ills proven, shaken off like dust at his journey's end, are but the certain cost of going about. So, now, the hard miles grip my feet, and I am not troubled except that the flesh, pressed by the spirit on this trip, has suffered. Common enough with this inept material which explorers put on before one is gazed at in city parks, a lifetime later, cut in flattering stone, immense—that is if theory works, or, if it doesn't, providing failure hits home a lesson which wakes the vision of weaker men, alive still, learning it's a brave fool went on such a profitless mission.

But this is the anxiety of the flesh; its footprints warped back from their arc by the compass arm to the physical aspect. There is a sea glints which is no mirage, a vista to charm men with the psychic good of grapes and honey of a promised land; promised, once spoken of; where, a sea to cross, the giant spiny sea of spinifex is sufficient proof of travails to come, bringing assured peace at the journey's end should my flesh survive, and, if it perish, the perpetual lease of space on a map where names live. Strange, too, that a man respects a name, if he's a man. Well I can remember—memory's so sky-clear here—a game played in childhood, when I was a number only, while the game flowed, and, then, at the end, pretence dropped, there was the evidence of a name, and not a number, told each friend, and the game replayed in reminiscence.

That it's a kinder death that's remembered I, for one, dispute: yet a brute might bellow, knowing it will be devoured, but die resignedly through drought to fallow following pastures which feed its kin. This I've observed. This I, now, explore—the resort to a journey is the common call of men who miss knowledge though born in its recipient port. Here, the sky is a common eye for all, where a tall man or a midget might see himself life-size in the desert; small, minute by day, nothing but thought at night; not gigantic as, in a hovel, his fist might smash a plate frightening with hate his family. Thus, while such thoughts persist I must go forward certain of my fate. Though the desert claims my bones, I'll not dispute the lesson learnt in childhood; and believe my name, like the slow, mouldering carcass of some brute, may fallow fields to feed a greener fame.

JOHN BLIGHT

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THAT BARAMBAH MOB

"EDDIE Gilbert?" said the publican at Murgon. He polished a glass for a moment and eyed us very carefully.

"Henry Stulpnagel's your man," he said.

We went and found Henry Stulpnagel.

We had followed a long trail to find out about Gilbert, and we eyed our new source of information very carefully before we sat down. Mr. Stulpnagel somehow reminded us of dairy-farms; and where most people would perspire, we thought that Mr. Stulpnagel would sweat. He was a big, dopey-looking kind of bloke with a couple of front teeth missing, and not very much hair left on top of his head. When we found him, he was sitting on the post-office steps and staring down the Cherbourg Road across the Barambah flats. We said it was a good day, sat down on the steps, and stared across the Barambah flats.

He eyed us very carefully, said that the train was in but that the mail hadn't come over yet. He didn't say what he thought of the day. When he saw our note-book, we knew he was a dairy-farmer, because his eyes classified us with drought, fire, the pear, flood and Noogoora burr.

It appeared he thought we were from the Taxation Department.

"You got the lot last time," said Mr. Stulpnagel gloomily.

We said we had come to find out about Eddie Gilbert, and for a moment Mr. Stulpnagel transferred his gaze from the distant line of trees on the Barambah and looked us up and down. Amongst other things, his gaze noted that we would not sweat, but perspire.

"What would you know about Gilbert?"

We said that was the point. We didn't know anything about Gilbert, but we understood that Mr. Stulpnagel was an authority on the black and white streak from Barambah.

Mr. Stulpnagel said, "Come from Queensland, eh?"

He went to collect his mail, leaving us to stare down the Cherbourg Road. When he came back, we asked whether it was really true that Mr. Stulpnagel had once hit a six into the Barambah from the Murgon Showground. His gaze followed ours, down the Cherbourg Road, out of the town, across the Barambah flats, over several farms and stopped at the line of trees. It was pleasant standing in the sun.

Mr. Stulpnagel said, "The beer come up on the train, too."

We went back to visit the publican. Mr. Stulpnagel had a glass of Four X and switched over to Green Death.

We asked whether it was true that he was the first white man ever to take strike to the bowling of Gilbert.

He surveyed our city clothes and said he believed so.

We wrote that down.

We wanted to know whether Eddie Gilbert was as fast as they said, and Mr. Stulpnagel's lip curled as though his beer might have been flat.

"He got Bradman for a duck, didn't he?"

We agreed very hastily that that was so. We made a new approach.

"Speaking of Bradman, Mr. Stulpnagel, they say you were no mean slouch with a bat yourself."

He took the top off his beer.

"I was openin' bat for the district for seven years. Take the shine off the new ball. That was my job."

Mr. Stulpnagel had flogged new-ball bowlers from Kilkivan to Nanango. We wondered whether this was the reason the touring M.C.C. omitted the South Burnett from its itinerary.

"Ah, there'd be more to it than that," said Mr. Stulpnagel. He rolled a cigarette.

"Mind you," he said, "I was pretty fit in them days. Milkin' fifty cows single-handed, twice a day."

He licked the cigarette and spared us a glance.

"And no machines," he added.

From his mental eminence, he surveyed our capacity for milking cows, and was reassured of his perspectives.

We drank our beer and pursed our lips. This sixer of Mr. Stulpnagel's . . . it really did go into the Barambah, did it?

"Well," said Mr. Stulpnagel, "That was what the bloke said who had t' go an' fox it."

We ordered beer all round.

"While he was away," said Mr. Stulpnagel, "we took lunch. Some of the Goomeri blokes belly-ached about the way I was slowin' up the game, but I made up for it when the ball came back. I carried me bat right through, and after the shine was off the ball I give their spinners somethin' to belly-ache about."

We wrote that down.

"I didn't have the polish of a bloke like Bradman," said Mr. Stulpnagel and sipped at his beer, "But I was quick on me feet. What you call agile."

Mr. Stulpnagel was very agile for a dairy-farmer. He got that way keeping out of the way of bumpers on concrete wickets. Later on, when he had begun to slow up, he took to discarding his cap and parting his hair in the middle so that he didn't have to duck so far.

"But it don't make for polish," said Mr. Stulpnagel.

We wrote that down.

We said Rex Rogers was a bit of a slogger, but he had been lucky enough to make the Shield.

That was so, but it wasn't luck that did the trick. It was circumstances.

"It was Gilbert," said Mr. Stulpnagel gloomily, "Concrete wickets an' Gilbert. Rogers never had t' handle that combination."

Mr. Stulpnagel had never got to play Shield. "Later on," he said, "we used t' go down t' Brisbane t' see Gilbert slippin' into Bradman."

We straightened up with a bit of a jerk and poised our pencil.

We wondered, with bated breath, whether Mr. Stulpnagel had actually seen Gilbert bowl the ball that turned Shield cricket upside down.

He had, indeed!

"Bowled him for a duck!" boomed Mr. Stulpnagel, "They say it wasn't one of Bradman's days, but don't let them kid y'. He got him fair and square, and that's in the book for everybody to see."

We scribbled furiously.

What sort of a ball was it that got him?

"It was a full toss. Bradman played all over it like a school-kid. Fair on his off-stump. The 'keeper took it inside the fence. Just as well they had a fence."

We finished writing.

We said, "A bloke in Brisbane said it swerved as it came in."

"Some blokes'll tell you anything," said Mr. Stulpnagel curtly, "Did he see that ball bowled?"

"He said he did."

"Yeh," said Mr. Stulpnagel.

We didn't tell him about the man in Ipswich who said it was an out-swing: nor about the bloke in Toogoolawah who said it was a yorker, right up in the block-hole.

"Look," said Mr. Stulpnagel, "Gilbert never swung the ball. Straight up and down."

We scribbled very fast.

"He didn't have t' swing the ball," said Mr. Stulpnagel, "He was the fastest bowler the world's ever seen. And when you're that fast, why muck about with the fancy stuff?"

We said that was a good question.

We said that a Mr. Meisenhelter had claimed to have batted against swing bowling from Gilbert. "Meisenhelter?" said Mr. Stulpnagel slowly and took another beer.

"You mean old Norm?" he said and shook his head, "Gilbert was over the hill then. Probably down t' Larwood's standards."

We said cautiously that some people reckoned Larwood was fast, faster maybe than Miller and Lindwall and the Demon.

Mr. Stulpnagel said that these things were relative.

We wrote that down.

Mr. Stulpnagel rolled up his left sleeve over his biceps and we examined the corrugated and dotted scar imprinted there by the seam of a cricket-ball.

Mr. Stulpnagel said, "It wasn't Larwood done that."

He inclined his head and we studied the scar on the top of his head. The mark was old and brown and still recognisably a diamond in shape. Enclosed in the diamond, in reverse, were the words, ". . . nufactured in Austra . . ."

Mr. Stulpnagel straightened up and said gloomily, "Larwood never done that, neither."

"Gilbert?" we whispered.

"Thirty years ago this summer," said Mr. Stulpnagel.

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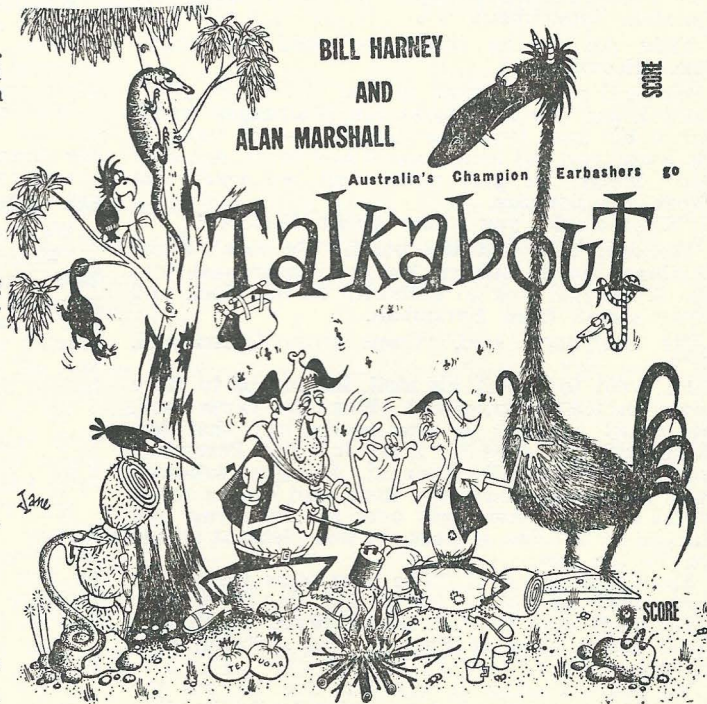
Written, Directed and Told by **Barry Humphries**.

1-7" E.P., POL 014, 19/3.

- N.B.—WILD LIFE IN SUBURBIA—VOL. 2. is in preparation.

Peter Mann Recordings

3 ESTELLA STREET, GLEN IRIS, VIC. BL 2461



We reached for our beer and changed direction and wrote down what we had been told.

We wanted to know whether all that damage was done in one innings.

Mr. Stulpnagel grimaced at our intellect.

"You should try gettin' hold of the idea that Gilbert only bowled one ball t' you in an innings."

There was a little silence.

We said, "Just how fast was Gilbert?"

Mr. Stulpnagel reckoned it was a hundred mile an hour.

We said that was faster than Larwood and Demon Spofforth and Lindwall and Miller.

Mr. Stulpnagel said, "We've been into that already."

We stopped writing and asked him how he knew it was a hundred mile an hour.

"You could tell," said Mr. Stulpnagel, "Mind you, I don't know about them turf wickets, but on the concrete, you could tell."

"How?"

Mr. Stulpnagel said, "You seen tyres smoke on the bitumen when they stand on the brakes?"

We had.

"When that ball hit the concrete," said Mr. Stulpnagel, "she'd smoke."

He measured with his finger and thumb, "You'd see this little wisp of smoke when she come at y', comin' like the hammers o' hell. Hundred mile an hour."

We wrote that down and supposed that some blokes tried to get out of the way.

"Oh, they tried," said Mr. Stulpnagel.

We wrote that down.

"Mind you," said Mr. Stulpnagel, "blokes like that shouldn't take the game up."

We wanted to know whether Gilbert had scared him at all.

"Not the first time," said Mr. Stulpnagel, "That come afterwards. When you'd see the draw for the season, and see you was down for the first match against Barambah. Bill Ritter who used t' live out on the Winderera Road, he was my openin' partner, he sold up an' bought a farm over in Barambah."

"Just to get away from the black and white streak?"

"Mind you, he didn't put it that way," said Mr. Stulpnagel, "but he played for Barambah that year."

If Mr. Stulpnagel wasn't scared the first time he met Gilbert, just how did he feel.

"Queer," said Mr. Stulpnagel and ordered a glass.

"They batted first that day," he said, "They was always bottom in the points table, and then Bill Ritter an' me, we went out t' belt a few sixes off them."

He drank some of his beer.

"We didn't take much notice of the black bloke, because that Barambah always was a queer mob."

He drank the rest of his beer.

"They give Charlie Schultz the new ball, and we run a couple o' twos and a single. And so I come about t' face the other opener. Everybody started t' walk off, and I thought it must be drinks, so I started t' walk off, too."

He rolled a cigarette.

"The black bloke was standin' there in his whites, he said to me, he said, 'No, not you. You stay here'. I said, 'What's goin' on here?' And

he said t' me, he said, 'I am going to bowl to you, Mr. Stulpnagel'."

We ordered Mr. Stulpnagel a pot of Green Death.

"I stood there an' I looked around, and by golly it made you feel queer. There was only the black bloke and the umpire in front of me. Ernie Vogel, he was their 'keeper, he was bunched up in front of the grandstand . . . and the rest o' them were scattered about on the fence. Everybody in the stand was as quiet as anything. They were feelin' queer, too. Wonderin' what it was all about. Except a couple of the Barambah women folk who were shiftin' along the stand out of the line o' wicket.

"It was so quiet you could hear the foot-steps of the deep third walkin' up Taylor Street towards the Powerhouse."

We felt a bit queer ourselves. We ordered Green Death.

"Then," said Mr. Stulpnagel, "you couldn't hear them foot-steps anymore."

He sank some of his beer.

"Then he give it to me," said Mr. Stulpnagel, "He only run about five yards and I suppose that put me off a bit. But in that last yard or two he went all streaky an' I knew I had real trouble on me hands."

We wanted to know whether he sighted it well. Mr. Stulpnagel looked at us doubtfully.

He heard it.

"It whistled," said Mr. Stulpnagel, "You could hear it comin'."

He measured with his finger and thumb, "And there was this little wisp o' smoke when she come off the mat. That's when he give me this."

He inclined his head and we examined the tip of his ear. There was a scar there but the letters were indecipherable.

"I'm a bit deaf in that ear," said Mr. Stulpnagel.

We thought he was lucky he wasn't clean-bowled first ball.

"It depends on what y' call luck," said Mr. Stulpnagel gloomily, "He went back his five yards and give me the next one."

Did it whistle?

"Maybe," said Mr. Stulpnagel, "I dunno. I didn't hear nothin'. I didn't see too much, neither. I was still waitin' to play it when something cracked behind me . . . and all that Barambah mob started yellin' Howsat."

We wrote that down.

"They took one bail at deep fine leg and there was me middle stump flat on the ground. In two bits, and some splinters."

He was silent for a while and we wondered what happened to the other bail.

"You hear yarns," said Mr. Stulpnagel slowly . . . he shook his head, "I dunno what happened to it. Fred Kleinschmidt always reckoned the deep third took it in front of the Powerhouse."

Was that possible?

"Oh, it was possible," said Mr. Stulpnagel, "but you don't want t' take too much notice of anything old Fred ever tells you."

We supposed that his averages went to pot after that.

At the end of that season, Mr. Stulpnagel didn't have an average.

We said sympathetically that this must have made him feel crook.

A Man Without Wilderness

"It did and it didn't," said Mr. Stulpnagel, "It was a bit hard t' take for a while. But then he made that trip to Brisbane t' clean up Bradman, and then Bradman's average didn't look so hot itself. So when you felt miserable you was in good company t' be miserable with."

"It was all right when he made his trips to Brisbane. But then you'd come into town one day and a bloke'd say t' you, 'Gilbert come home on the train this mornin'. And you wouldn't sleep so well as the fixture come up."

Mr. Stulpnagel toyed with his glass.

"That was when it got bad. There you'd be standin' out there. All by y'rself an' only the umpire an' the black bloke in front of y'. And the other umpire a bit toey out there at square leg. And your partner down the other end prayin' t' God you wouldn't hit a single."

We ordered Mr. Stulpnagel another beer.

"And Ernie Vogel, he was their 'keeper, he'd pat you on the shoulder and say good luck, Henry, and then you were on your own."

There was a little silence.

We wanted to know whether it was Gilbert who had removed Mr. Stulpnagel's front teeth.

"That was the tractor," said Mr. Stulpnagel, "Startin' handle come back at me."

We wrote that down.

He leaned forward and tapped the bar with his glass, "The truth about Gilbert is that in his openin' overs there wasn't a batsman he met ever saw one of his deliveries. It was Gilbert or the game . . . somethin' had t' give. Write that down."

We wrote that down.

"They had plenty to go on," said Mr. Stulpnagel. "He made an ape of Bradman, and he was black, and he was born in Queensland, and they didn't like the look o' that whippy wrist of his. They reckoned he wasn't bowlin'."

We wrote that down.

"They'd have fixed him for keeps, only someone took a slow-motion film and that was that."

"Yes?" we said.

"He was bowling all right," said Mr. Stulpnagel, "It's all right about them blokes who was makin' the fuss. They knew the day was comin' when they'd have t' stand out there, an' Ernie Vogel pattin' them on the shoulder before he buried himself under the fence."

We fetched another beer.

"Not that I blame Ernie, mind you," said Mr. Stulpnagel, "He had a wife an' six kids t' think about and none of them was old enough t' help with the milkin'."

We wrote that down.

We wondered what else Mr. Stulpnagel could tell us about Edward Gilbert.

He thought about it while he drank his pot.

He shook his head slowly, "No, I don't think so. There's a bloke out on the Redgate Road might be able t' help y'. Old Augie Schulte. Although I suppose most o' what he knows he got from that Barambah mob and they always was a queer lot."

We had one for the road with Mr. Stulpnagel and he drove off to Boat Mountain to get stuck into the milkin'.

We got ourselves lost in the main street while we were looking for the Brisbane Road and enquired of a policeman.

As an afterthought, we wanted to know whether he knew anything about Gilbert.

A man without wilderness to challenge him
Is a strong blade rusting in a corner.
His thighs are curved to fit a saddle,
His hands are shaped to hold a harness-rein;
A man without miles of brush to clear
Is a field that gives no grain.

There must be peril imminent about him;
He must hear water, restless and rebellious;
He must see thorns beyond his window sill,
Sharp to bring his blood.
A man without mountains on his horizon
Is an axe that cleaves no wood.

A man without brambles to tear his fingers
Before he can sow a stretch of earth with seed,
Is a plow that crumbles in a farmyard.
His mind must think in terms of harvest-yield,
His ear listen to axeless turning
His eyes compute the stacked sheaves to a field.

JUDITH GIBBINS

The policeman put his foot on our mudguard and said that as a matter of fact he had seen Gilbert bowl Bradman for a duck.

"He snicked it," said the policeman, "It was a shooter."

We didn't tell him about the bloke in Brisbane who said it swung in, nor about the man in Ipswich who said it swung out. We didn't mention the bloke in Toogoolawah who said it was a yorker, right up in the block-hole; nor Mr. Stulpnagel who said it was a full toss.

Policemen are reliable witnesses. We wrote it down that it was a shooter.

A black bloke walking down the street said, "G'day."

The policeman said, "G'day, Mr. Gilbert."

We scribbled at a tremendous rate of knots.

The policeman took his foot off our mudguard and said, "Hey, Eddie. Just a minute."

We met Mr. Gilbert. We don't really remember what he looked like.

We wondered whether he would be kind enough to describe the ball that got Bradman for a duck.

Mr. Gilbert looked at us very carefully for a while.

"I don't really know," he said apologetically, "When I let it go I didn't see it again till the 'keeper threw it up in the air."

He looked rather embarrassed.

He said, "You'd have t' ask someone who was watchin'."

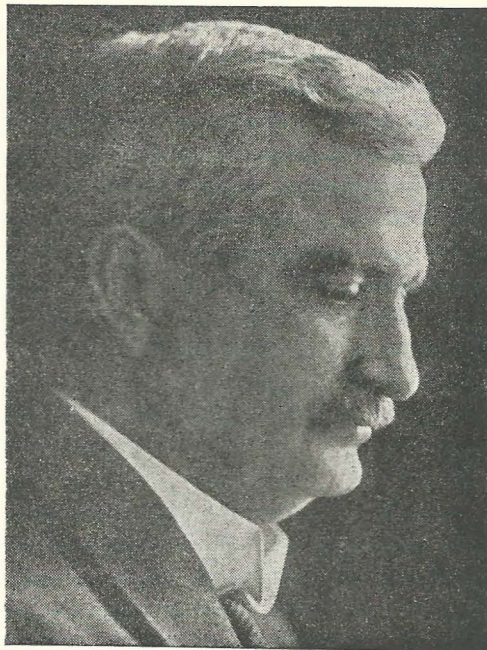
We looked at Mr. Gilbert very carefully for a while.

Then we said good-afternoon to Mr. Gilbert, we said good-afternoon to the policeman, and we drove wildly back to Brisbane, anywhere, to get away from that Barambah mob. We ran out of petrol coming through Toogoolawah, but we had the pace, and we'd have got home all right if it hadn't been for that sharp turn out of Ipswich Road at the 'Gabba.

That stopped us.

STEELE RUDD

by Vance Palmer



THE hearty figure of Steele Rudd's "Dad" has been distorted into so many grotesque shapes that the humorous freshness of the original figure has been forgotten. Dad has become a butt, an aged clown, his one expression a rather witless grin and his features lost in a fuzz of white whiskers. Sometimes he is even dressed in a top hat and spats, his links with the soil cut entirely, and in general he is so wrapped in an atmosphere of crude, knockabout farce that it is difficult to suggest how living he seemed when he first appeared nearly sixty years ago.

My first acquaintance with him was at boarding-school when, after the evening meal, the master on duty would read up a chapter of "On Our Selection," then just published. It was a revelation to us of the humors of cocky life, which most of the boys knew from the distance of the station homestead; and it is hard to explain how interesting it suddenly made that world of ragged fences and ramshackle living. The interest gathered round one of my schoolfellows when he later announced that his uncle knew Steele Rudd and played polo with him in Brisbane.

It was two or three years later that Steele Rudd's Magazine came out, and by then I was working in a Brisbane office and beginning, in leisure hours, the long task of learning to write. Some facts about Steele Rudd (or Arthur Hoey Davis) had drifted in to me. He had been brought up on a selection on the Darling Downs, I learnt, and had picked up odd jobs on stations in his teens, finally getting a position in the civil service as under-sheriff. Then when a certain government felt the need to retrench, the axe had fallen on him.

At the time it was argued that it would be no great hardship for him—wasn't his "On Our Selection" being read everywhere? And wasn't he well on his way to make a fortune by his writing? the New South Wales Bookstall Company had given him five hundred pounds down for that first book, and there were others coming along. To be retrenched from the civil service could mean nothing to him.

Such talk was a matter for bitter mockery to Steele Rudd, as I found afterwards. The money that anyone could make by writing in Australia was even scantier then than it is now, and he was running his new magazine on a shoestring, worried by a family liability that made it hard for him to keep his head above water. My first contact with him was when, greatly daring, I sent him an article about the creation of a national art. Except for a couple of paragraphs in the Bulletin, I had never in a stoical, good-tempered way and not stress the had anything in print and my heart turned over when one morning I got a strange letter, the

envelope half-covered with a fantastic Aboriginal design by Ashton Murphy; it was from Steele Rudd, saying he had enjoyed the article and would like to talk it over. Would I come in and see him?

Well . . . perhaps boys nowadays aren't as conscious of the deep gulf separating them from the notorieties of the day as they were then. I was about seventeen, working as an invoice-clerk in an obscure warehouse; Steele Rudd was at least twice my age, with a reputation already made. He seemed to me to be living in a gay, bohemian world, with the ball at his feet and people circling round him to roar with laughter at his lightest word.

The office of his magazine was in a racketty building in a side-street; I remember waiting rather timorously on a landing outside the door when a dark, shy-looking man in shirt sleeves and riding-breeches came up the stairs and greeted me. He had been stabling his horse somewhere after a game of polo; he looked a bit dusty and dishevelled. In a little while, to my astonishment, we were chatting familiarly from the depths of two leather chairs and he was telling me his hopes for the magazine.

Steele Rudd was not at all the large, exuberant humorist I expected. He was a modest, quiet-spoken fellow, with a way of fixing his brown, reflective eyes on you as if what you were saying was quite new to him and very important. He was a little sardonic about the role of funny man that had been forced on him. He hadn't intended his Dad to be regarded as a comic figure in the beginning; he had merely set out to describe the experiences of a typical cockie family from the point of view of one of them. And he meant to rub in to townspeople how hard life on the land was. His idea of doing that was to take things as they came pathetic note. But the artists who illustrated his sketches had increased the pace for him now, he complained; they had to have poor old Dad falling over a bucket every time he moved from his seat.

"I don't think comedy's my line," he said, "If I let myself go I'd be gloomier than Lawson at his worst."



At the end of that talk, which rambled all round our small writing world, he said he had a proposition to make to me. There were plans to extend the magazine and bring in fresh capital; if they succeeded would I come in as sub-editor?

It isn't easy to suggest how intoxicating that prospect was to me. It didn't merely mean escaping from the warehouse in which I was immured; it meant getting in on the ground-floor of a new, delightful world. Most of the artists and writers of the day contributed to Steele Rudd's Magazine—Bedford, Edward and Will Dyson, Mahony and Souter; I would be handling their work and perhaps mixing with them. I didn't sleep that night or for many nights afterwards.

But the happy transfer never came off. Time after time in the lunch-hour I dropped in expectantly on Steele Rudd, only to hear him say dolefully that he hadn't managed it yet. He was deep in difficulties. The magazine itself was becoming a weight around his neck; he wanted to get away from it. He was even thinking of giving up writing and going back to the land. In the end I accepted his view that Australia was no place for a writer and pinned all my hopes of escape on London.

Steele Rudd, I remember, was optimistic about my chances of making some contacts for him with publishers there, and asked me to act as his agent, to which I consented very readily. But I had neither the experience nor the assurance for such a task. The publishers I approached looked at the pictured Dad with a sour and supercilious eye.

"Is Dad part of your folklore?" one asked me with an ironic accent on the word. "I'm afraid his exploits aren't the sort of thing our public would find amusing."

And so he never got an overseas public.

Yet, strangely enough, it was as folklore he appealed, years afterward to a German professor of English—Professor Hubener of Bonn. Dad, Professor Hubener insisted, had it in him to be as great an international figure as Til Eulenspiegel. He had some of the qualities of Everyman; he was the comic Adam, the homely figure of the soil, continually meeting with disaster, continually being brought down with a crash, but just as continually bouncing up again, refreshed by the earth on which he fell.

The trouble was that, though there might have been something of this in Steele Rudd's original conception of him, his own homespun figure had got away from him. Or rather he was forced by his own necessities to exploit Dad in any way that he could. In each succeeding book, Dad became a more farcical figure. When he was brought to town he lost most of his earthy reality; when he was groomed for the stage he lost even more. And when he came to the screen and the radio there was hardly a vestige left of the sturdy cocky-farmer who, for all his fantasies, was made out of good honest homespun.

I don't think Steele Rudd was happy about the transformation of Dad; in fact, I know he was not. It only brought a deeper gloom to him when, riding in a tram and thinking of some new scheme for keeping things going, he saw Dad in one of his grotesque postures, grinning down at him, Dennis probably felt the same about the exploitation of his Sentimental Bloke, a few years later. The outlines of the original figure were preserved, but there was practically nothing left of its inner workings, the capacity for human feeling that gave it significance.

And with the emphasis on the comic Dad, and the dispersal of his family, the possibilities of that delightful imp, Joe, were lost or forgotten. Joe, with his humor and his affected innocence, was a real creation, as original a figure and as possible of development as Mark Twain's Huck Finn. What a wonderful picaresque novel might have been made by setting him, as a boy in his teens, on just such a trip through the outback as Huck had





down the Mississippi, or as Steele Rudd himself probably had when he first left home in search of work.

Steele Rudd might have done something with him if he hadn't had an impulse to get away from all the associations of this Dad who was no longer his own. There were other experiences he wanted to write about—experiences as Under-Sheriff (such as his trip down from the country with Butler, the swagman accused of the notorious Gatton murder); there were domestic comedies, serious stories of life on the land.

But, in a sense, he was in the traditional position of the clown who wants to play Hamlet. A man who has first come before the public as a humorist finds that a straightjacket has been put upon him. A horse's collar, was Mark Twain's image for it. Mark Twain complained of being forced to grin through one; though if it hadn't been for his bankruptcy he might have been able to do as he pleased. As it was, he had to keep the authorship of his book on St. Joan secret. It was the book he had written with the most pleasure; the one he took most pride in; yet his publishers assured him that if he acknowledged the authorship of it the great public that depended on him for their laughter would be confused and would drift away. Perhaps from a purely commercial point of view they were right.

Steele Rudd was in a much worse position than Mark Twain. Although his name was known from one end of the country he was always struggling, never able to get his head completely above water. And he could never quite understand why this was so. He was exasperated, in his insecurity, by stories of the immense sums that popular authors made in other countries. He did not know whether his own comparative poverty was due to his lack of business instinct or to the sharpness of the people he had to deal with.

I didn't see much of him in his later years, but from a letter I had from him just before his death, I fancy he felt that life had let him down. Whenever I think of him now, it is of that brown-eyed friendly young fellow in riding-breeches who gave me my first start over fifty years ago. And I have an idea that when all the grotesqueries that now surround his Dad have worn away the human old cocky will come to life again and be accepted as one of our founding fathers.

Tantalus

I board the train and hitch myself,
Reluctant, to the luggage rack;
The iron wheels begin to clash
On joints that break the iron track.

Jam-packed the worker's bodies sway,
Colliding as the points are crossed;
A tired, bored, unhappy mass
In which identity is lost.

Beneath an upraised arm I see,
Framed by a pair of sad profiles,
The only open paddock land
Among these built-up city miles.

And, there, new-freed from baker's cart,
A sweating, solid, skewbald horse
Rejoicing, his day's slaving done,
Pig-roots and bucks with joyous force.

Some day the turning point will come—
Our mettle gain the strength it lacks—
We'll break free in the skewbald's style
And buck the harness from our backs.

JACK HYETT

★

Epigrams

I.

PREACHINGS

The wayside pulpit preached at me:
"Alcohol is your first, worst enemy".
But another preached around the bend:
"Make your worst enemy your friend".

II.

CENSORSHIP

Jones worked hard at it year by year,
Polished each chapter, published and
Went broke, despaired and ended queer:
His luck! The novel was not banned.

III.

FLIGHT TO THE FRONT

With the eyes of all upon them and the going
grown too tough,
Many would be arrant cowards if they were brave
enough.

IV.

WHITE AUSTRALIA POLICY

(The Two Bronze Statues in Centennial Park,
Brisbane)
Here are the twain I thought when I was little
Were Aborigines:
Byrnes, T. J.*, and Rabbie, the Scots' poet,
Perennial as the trees.
The children of this generation, however,
Are not misled by sight:
The doves, the sparrows and the myriad pigeons
Have made both statues white.

MARTIN HALEY

* Premier of Queensland in the 1890's.

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BUSH WITH ROBBO

THERE was very little difference between prices for work pre-war, and immediately after the war, as I found when Robbo took me on my first big fencing job in '44. I remembered that we, at home, had a bull-paddock built for 1/3 a post in the thirties, and here we were in '44, fencing for 1/9 a post, split posts at that.

I had not long left the army when I met Robbo, big, heavy-browed, black-haired (just greying), stoop in the shoulders, a kind of roundness that seems a part of fellows who don't take time to straighten up. I had not thought that a man fifteen years my senior could wheel me in my prime. At twenty-five, six foot, twelve and a half stone, I was to receive a working lesson from not one, but a number of men from the out-back contracting field, that was to teach me that I yet had to learn to work at contract pace, to absorb the lessons of the tally God, supreme ruler of piece work.

Now I come to think of it, there was another job to be done first, an eight day job. We had to retimber a well for a dairy cocky.

When we discussed the job, Ted said to me: "Lad, there's a few easy quid to be picked up here, a well to be retimbered at thirty bob a foot." I was listening to an unusual voice; this chap spoke in a rich kind of roar, with elocutionary overtones. It was the voice of the bush reciter, the man who loves the roving balladry of other days.

I knew a bit about cleaning out and timbering wells. After all, a farmer's son has to do a bit of all things. I knew that class of country, too, where the well was, around Mt. Larcombe. I also knew that all good timber had been cut out before I was born, and I said to Ted Robbo, I said: "E.R., what about timber, where are we going to get timber?"

"There is plenty of timber there, right on the job. The old fellow said so in his letter." Robbo assured me solemnly.

That was all right with me. I thought that this must be one of those old blokes who had preserved a paddock of timber for posterity, against all the log haulers. Such a thing was possible, but that paddock had to have been owned from away back, a long time ago.

There was a third man in the party, a dour Scotsman, known as Cous., pronounced Cuz.

Cuz was not hard to place, except on his back. He amused himself occasionally by giving me various kinds of jolts and slaps. I went as far as gouging his eyes with my thumb; as it did not cause him even to blink. I was somewhat at a loss, and had to suffer his playfulness.

Robbo and I and Cuz arrived at the job. We put up the tent, and also, because it was the height of summer, a bough shed—that great mound of green leaves which completely blocks out the

sun and gives a blessed cool shade, to sit in at smoko and meal times, and revive on mugs of hot tea. (I have often pondered on this drinking hot tea on hot days, while trying to cool off, and mostly while I was sucking the last of the tea out of the tea-leaves. . . The only conclusion I have reached so far is another mug of tea.)

We took the tools out of the back of the old Oakland car, and looked around for the timber to split. All around were gaunt, bent and cross-grained old iron-barks, and we walked towards them curiously. Ted cleared his throat a couple of times, which I was to learn was the forerunner of action, and he said to me, "Can you pick a splitter, lad?" I looked around a bit more. "Yes," I said, "when there is one to pick."

Cuz was gazing around too, and presently said, "Here's one, this'll do." We gazed at it critically.

"Come on, were not here for a year," said Cuz, and approached with the cross-cut.

To test it for hollowness, Ted hit the tree with the back of the axe. There was no drummy sound, and he looked forbodingly at Cuz and me. This, I found out, was one of his characteristics, whether there was anything wrong or not. He braced himself, and began to ringbark the tree for the cross-cut.

The bark of that iron-bark was iron, all right, and Ted swung into it, grunting, pulling the axe out, putting the bottom cuts in, and driving in and levering out from the top cut, to burst the bark off. The sap was not running, the bark was sticking, and I watched with interest Ted's efforts. I hadn't thought that Ted would be much of a chopper, whereas I rather thought that I swung a pretty blade myself; after a couple of minutes I enquired: "Do you want a blow?"

Ted chopped on, and I fancied I heard him saying slowly to himself, in between chops, "Stinkin' rotten mongrel. Want a spell. Dirty stinkin' mongrel."

The bark off, Cuz grabbed the cross-cut, and addressed me through his teeth: "Come on Tiny." We started to saw down that first tree. The cross-cut jumped and whizzed up and down that rung-barked spot, as Cuz and I labored to begin the cut. Ted stood back and watched, as though he were seeing something funny.

Cuz issued me some orders. "Look Tiny, just pull it straight." I said, "Don't double it round the tree, and I will." Ted cleared his throat a couple of times, and advised us to have a blow. "Just shift that saw out of the road a sec," he said as he approached and drove the axe into the tree. "Now just rest the saw on the axe-head, and saw," so we sawed. The saw lodged in one of the gashes we had made, and began to bite in as Cuz and I scratch-pulled on that saw, as it jammed, jerked

LETTER TO TED ROBERTSON

What can I say so the world will see you with the same kind of vision that always I do? Not broken and bugged where life was too hard, building crossings and fences and a bush cattle yard—while your thoughts were afar in a cultural flow with a world on the make that was moving too slow.

Your thoughts and your visions, you trusted to few (not many will travel a track that is new)—but I've seen your thoughts stand in a long line of posts as you patted and placed them as though they were hosts to preserve all your dreams for another life's span—for the glory and greatness and triumph of man.

The lust for achievement of the best from us all was there in your axework, the swing of the mall, as you turned to creations of symbols yet new from sandalwood, beefwood and split budgeru. And the hills that are barren and the earth that is black held your faith for Australia when you worked far outback.

And if you have suffered and felt a slow dread—did I help just a bit when I shared your camp bread? In camps by the roadside, in waterless camps, in camps by great rivers, and overnight

camps—with the axe and the bar, how we claimed we were champs!

And at night when we argued long over our meal about who was the faster!—until we could feel how the tallies we'd made had claimed us for rest. The trial was tomorrow—and you proved to be best.

Does this bring a twinge to your old memory scar—the fierce satisfying of the shovel and bar, with its infinite torture through baked earth and stones, and the sun a great campfire to boil down our bones? Remember the dam on Coorarah that stank—which the scrubbers rushed through, where pigs rolled and dogs drank? and when boiled down for drinking, remember, old chum, how the billy would fill with the green slimy scum? Yes, it was hard living and they paid us, at most, our corned beef and water, and two bob a post.

Ted, I wanted to write a short line or two, to say a few words that are long overdue; and as you well know it is not right to use a set tune or persuasion to start up the muse—so this, though delayed by a few years or so, puts, I hope, into words a few things that we know.

MERV. LILLEY

and started. But Cuz was the stronger, and I began to follow him around the tree, as a compromise.

When Cuz was three parts around the tree, he hissed, "You nearly through yet, Tiny?" I said, "Not quite through yet Cuz," and kept following him, until he had circled right around and met the beginning of one of the early cuts.

"Well, it ought to fall," reckoned Cuz, looking up at the top to see if there was any movement. But there was none, and he suddenly glared at me menacingly, probably because I was grinning. "What's wrong," he snarled. "You tired or something, can't you pull your end of the saw? You long puzzled cow, you, get hold of that saw, and saw."

Ted cleared his throat impressively. "You fellers better have a blow," he said. "It's time to eat." It seemed to me that he was being sarcastic.

For a couple of days we sawed and split with the indefatigable Cuz, who had taken the role of relaying us on the end of the saw, and seemed able to cripple us both without turning a bead of sweat. Neither Ted nor I shall ever forget sawing with Cuz, or the events that followed.

We rapidly grew to know each others weaknesses, and played on them. Ted and Cuz had worked together before, and both were my seniors; hence my wits were strained to meet the nightly and mealtime slinging-off. This seemed to me to be a bit overdone on New Year's day, when the cocky brought down a watermelon, which made us all sick.

I lay prostrate in the tent, feeling that a doctor would now be useless, so badly had I been poisoned. Ted put the billy on, brought me over a mug of tea and said in his most kindly manner: "Have a drink of tea. It just might do you some good." I rolled over onto my stomach, and groaned. Ted pressed the hot spoon he had been stirring the tea with onto the back of my neck.

I was on my feet very quickly, yelling threats, and carrying my left in the right position for vengeance. Ted was howling with a high falsetto laugh. Cuz was grinning appreciatively, and saying: "Just settle down Tiny." So I settled down, with a tirade of abuse. Ted said: "You seem to be all right now, Tiny, that mug of tea must of done you some good."

"Yes, Ted, we better get on with the job now that Tiny is all right," Cuz reckoned, so we all walked out to the job again. We were preparing the sets to go down the well.

Preparing the sets meant cutting the slabs to fit into the square of the well, so that they sat, one set on top of the other from the bottom up. They thus stop the sides of the well from falling in. Ted was chief cutter-out, and Cuz decided that he would go down the well to pull the old timber out and put the new sets in.

There wasn't much use arguing with Cuz. He just went ahead and did what he wanted to. I could see that Ted wanted to do that part of the job too, but he didn't trust either of us to cut the sets out, and I learned that this was another characteristic of Ted's. He wanted to do all exacting work himself.

Ted soon got ahead with the sets, and decided to go below to help Cuz. I had the very important job of braceman, and therefore of being treated to the best of the scathing remarks those two worthies could think up, as I lowered gear down to them. Cuz was anxious to get back home to his wife, who had only twenty-seven shillings left in the house when Cuz left.

I wasn't too happy about not being able to go below, but there was little I could do except rankle, and think up replies to taunts and orders from Cuz. I was awakened from one of my reveries by sudden yells from Ted. "Hey the bucket, send down the bucket, hurry up!"

That annoyed me. What the hell was all this rush about! I wasn't in that much of a hurry, even

S W A G

When critics say, as critics will:
"Your magazine's appeal is nil—
Three years ago you were just fine,
But now you're really off the line"—
I wonder who is standing still.

★

I have had, I suppose, well over a hundred letters about the last issue of *Overland*, praising or condemning or most often a bit of both. It's only fair to say that the overwhelming majority were in full support of the magazine's policy and practice in general, and of the last issue in particular. I wish there were space and money to print extracts from them all—it's really one of the compensations of editing, to compare and contrast the reactions and set them against your own previous forecasts of what people would say. One small item in last issue, incidentally, really does seem to have raised blood-pressures sky-high—one subscriber cancelled his sub.! That was Donald Maynard's cryptically titled "13½ Hours"—a riddle of a poem, inserted by us with mischievous intent, which could hardly make sense, I agree, unless you tumbled straight away onto the fact that it referred to the Melbourne-Sydney Daylight Express. A bit unfair, I admit, for the other States!

★

I was surprised however that almost none of my correspondents took up the challenge I had made in my editorial: to discuss the traditional hostility towards ideas in general and the intel-

if these married men were in a hurry to get home. In a rage I yelled down, "The bucket eh? Jump up and get it."

"The well. Hey! it's fallin' in. Hey, hey, send down the bucket."

I looked down and sure enough there are slabs shooting down, and criss-crossing in the well, and Ted is trying to climb over them, and I fancy that Cuz was weaving about on the platform, dodging the slabs with a cheerful grin on his phiz. Still, it didn't look real dangerous to me. I thought Ted was doing pretty good, so I advised him: "Keep climbing, you're making good progress."

"Hey, this isn't a joke, send that bucket down. The whole well is going to fall in." I lowered the bucket and pulled Ted out. He looked at me searchingly, with the mud and slime hanging over him, and enquired: "Are you drunk?"

Cuz didn't want to come up. He had to get the job finished, and finished it was, in very short time. When the cocky came up to measure up and to square up a rope was lowered down the well, until it was on the bottom, and a knot placed in the rope at the top. Cuz was down the well, putting the rope on the bottom, and the cocky on top. Then the cocky had to go below, to see that the well was just right on the bottom, and that Cuz wasn't cribbing a couple of feet. As I lowered the cocky down, Cuz came up, and, on account of the tough splitters, worked the knot up the rope three feet, a foot each bonus for us. That way the job just paid us wages, and a man has to make wages, doesn't he?

lectual in particular in the Australian labor movement. I did receive one interesting letter from a Communist trade unionist, however, which threw light on at least one of the issues my editorial raised. "The anti-intellectual bias of the labor movement in Australia, and also in the other English-speaking countries," he wrote, "is partly due to the fact that, in these countries, owing to peculiar development of capitalism there, the trade unions developed as workers' defence organisations before the Labor Party was founded; in fact the unions and the organised working class of the time acted as the midwife to the Labor Party."

★

"The result of this," my correspondent went on to say, "is that the trade unions and labor movement, who have always maintained a strong bargaining position in Australia—because of chronic labor shortage, etc.—have been able to function without the assistance of other classes. On the continent, however, in Russia and Austria, for instance, it was the socialist parties, led by intellectuals, that organised the trade union movements, and because of this, and because of the weakness of these movements compared with organised capital, the working class in those countries has been forced to step outside the confines of economism, seek for allies in and from other classes, and insist on intellectual, theoretical and political leadership. As Lenin said, in his well-known quotation, 'The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade-union consciousness.' Congratulations, at any rate, on raising publicly one of the 'king-has-no-clothes' questions."

★

Of major importance to the future of the arts in Australia is the Australian Arts Enquiry, which has the support of a splendidly representative list of persons concerned with the arts, who are now meeting to set up regional committees in the various capital cities. The Melbourne meeting, attended by about 150 prominent figures in the cultural world, set up a committee on August 2nd. The Australian Arts Enquiry seeks a Government commission of enquiry into the state of the arts in Australia. This movement shows every sign of becoming the most important single step ever taken in support of the arts in Australia.

"The dearth of assistance available to the arts from successive Commonwealth Governments" was the subject of a recent letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* by Mr. Hal Missingham, Director of the Art Gallery of N.S.W.

"There is rarely any lack of funds when, say, a new gunsight or atomic trigger needs developing, but in the perspective of history it would seem that encouragement of the arts is perhaps a more worthwhile form of patronage," he stated.

In Great Britain this year Government assistance to art museums has been increased by some £400,000. The National Gallery now gets £100,000, the Tate Gallery £40,000 and the British Museum £100,000. Compared to these, figures for Australian galleries make interesting reading.

In the year 1956-57 the Art Gallery of Western Australia spent £2,075 on art purchases. The National Gallery of S.A. spent £8,064 in 1957-58 (£2,771 of this on the purchase of Australian works of art, and £414 on the purchase of contemporary Australian works of art).

The Art Gallery of N.S.W. spent £2,886 in 1957-58 on the purchase of works of art, but, as

with other galleries except Adelaide, cannot provide a separate account of Australian works.

The National Gallery of Victoria, of course, is in a very special position. In 1957-58 it received a vote of £5,000 from the Government for the purchase of works of art, but the trustees can also of course draw on the Felton Bequest.

The Felton Bequest Committee (which is separate from the Gallery trustees although the Chairman of the trustees is on the Felton Bequest Committee) is reticent about the amount of money it makes available to the Melbourne Gallery. The income of the Committee is not known, although a return of five per cent. on its present capital of £1,500,000 would bring it in £75,000 a year. It is believed that the sum granted to the Gallery varies from year to year, according to requests received from the Gallery trustees, but would average some £45,000.

Assuming this is so we then find that the Melbourne Gallery has about £50,000 a year for purchases: which would account for its status as the finest gallery in the Commonwealth outside London. The income from the Bequest, however, should not relieve the Victorian Government of responsibility from increasing its grant to the Gallery and for other cultural objects.

As for the other States, the position is certainly lamentable. I had the opportunity last year of visiting all the main Australian galleries, and the wonder is that so much is being done with such slender resources. Particularly praiseworthy, too, is the way that the individual galleries are tending more and more to specialise: Queensland with its growing international sculpture collection, Adelaide with its contemporary European paintings, sculpture and prints, and N.S.W. with its representative collection of Australian work, its interest in the British school, and its recent tendency to increase the oriental and Aboriginal sections.

Melbourne and Brisbane are, of course, to have new buildings erected for them in the next few years. Until this comes to pass—and let us hope that it isn't delayed as long as Melbourne's Latrobe Library has been—my own personal predilection among the galleries is for Adelaide's attractive, airy building—the very antithesis of the gloomy, prison-like atmosphere that keeps the public away from gallery buildings of the older type.

★

Dr. Jock Marshall and Russell Drysdale's articles on their recent trip through northern Australia, which have been a "hit" in the London Observer, are to be expanded and made into a book. The idea for the articles emanated from John Pringle, author of "Australian Accent", who is now co-editor of the Observer after editing the Sydney Morning Herald for several years. Mr. Pringle's book, together with Russel Ward's "The Australian Legend", will be discussed by Mr. Ian Turner in a coming issue of *Overland*.

★

Dr. Marshall, formerly of Sydney University, spent some years before the war in the New Hebrides, where he worked with a young English ethnologist called Tom Harrisson. Harrisson subsequently published that remarkable book "Savage Civilisation" (which many may remember as a Left Book Club choice) which combined enormous zest and enthusiasm for his subject—the people of the New Hebrides—with a scathing indictment of colonialism in the Pacific.

Now Tom Harrisson is Director of the Museum at Kuching, Sarawak, and is in charge of the fascinating Niah Caves excavations which are tracing the pre-history of south-east Asia back 40,000 years. He has just published another absorbing book, "World Within—A Borneo Story", which is primarily an account of the customs and outlook of the Kelabit people of inland Borneo, among whom he was parachuted during the last war to organise resistance to the Japanese. He also describes these operations—Harrisson was a major in the top-secret "Z" Special Unit—in detail, with some astute comments on the Australians he worked with in this extraordinary exploit.

★

One shouldn't overlook, amid the tensions of the international political scene, the sensational growth in cultural exchanges between Russia and the west. Perhaps it's not the great interflow most would like to see, but nevertheless the ramifications have grown enormously in recent years. Soviet tourists are visiting western Europe, and a small number even the U.S.A. Films, television programs, specialist delegations are being exchanged. The previous Soviet ban on the export of specialist books and magazines has been lifted. Inter-library exchanges are growing (the university department of Hebrew culture in New York received copies last year of 4,000 Hebraic documents from Soviet libraries). The Russians are to see the film "Oklahoma", among many other U.S. productions. Last year 33 Soviet specialist delegations visited the U.S.A., and 38 similar U.S. groups the U.S.S.R. The American ice show "Holiday on Ice" spent April and May in Moscow and Leningrad. Many musicians have exchanged visits—Marian Anderson is to give a series of Russian concerts later this year—and of course the fabulous exchange of official exhibitions has just finished, with the Russian exhibition drawing crowds in New York. "The Family of Man" photographic exhibition (see *Overland* No. 14) opened in Moscow on July 4. Ten thousand Americans are expected to visit the Soviet Union during 1959. Twenty American graduate students are at Russian universities, and 17 Soviet students in American universities. Two Russian race horses took part in a famous race in Maryland recently, and many other exchanges in the sporting, scientific and political field have taken place or are about to.

★

The Perth Fellowship of Australian Writers have shown how to do a job in the field of bringing writers to the public. So far they have had four public functions, drawing up to 700 people—and, incidentally, swelling the funds for the preservation of Tom Collins House, their headquarters. The latest of these functions, held at the end of May, took the form of an evening of songs, ballads and poetry. The program was drawn up by Mary Durack, and, says F. B. Vickers, "was in the form of a dip in the poetry bag, showing how the living poets of today derive something from the past."

★

I hope everyone knows that they can obtain excellent 16 mm. prints of the films "The Sentimental Bloke" and "On Our Selection" from the Commonwealth Film Library in Canberra simply for the asking. These classic films of Raymond Longford's, made forty years ago, breathe the spirit of the original books and are a priceless

asset to the nation. Groups should apply for loans of the films through their own State film centre, if one exists.

★

There are some hopeful signs that the Australian Labor Party is at long last about to do some detailed work on matters of cultural interest. The Federal Conference has set up a Press, Radio and Television Committee with an ambitious "terms of reference", and the Victorian A.L.P. is setting up a number of committees, including one rather remarkably entitled "Sport, Theatre and Art Lovers". All interested in the health of Australian life will hope that these projects don't fall by the wayside.

★

Readers will note with interest Mr. Arthur Calwell's statement in this issue that he believes that the Commonwealth Literary Fund grant should be raised from £12,000 to £60,000. At the moment the C.L.F. aids two magazines (£1,000 each), grants two Fellowships (£1,000 each), and spends the rest of its money on lecture tours, subsidies to publication of books, and pensions.

Take pensions. There are 21 pensions being paid, some at £5 a week, some at £3/17/6! Such are the rewards of cultural endeavor. By contrast the Norwegian Government pays to some fifty writers, musicians, painters, sculptors and actors a life-time "artist's salary" of £560 a year.

★

Welcome though the decision of the Government to supply 38,000 copies of Australian books to Indonesian schools will be, there will be some head-scratching over the rationale of the selection of the 19 titles involved. Some are obviously excellent choices, at any rate. Here is the list of the books involved in this pioneer project:

- Australian Handbook.
- "Dusty": F. D. Davison.
- "The Family at Willow Bend": Helen Fowler.
- "The Valley in the North": Margaret Paice.
- "Australia, the Great South Land": J. Novak Niemala.
- "The Silver City": Ion Idriess.
- "The Dreadnought of the Darling": C. E. W. Bean.
- "Beyond Australia's Cities": Bill Beatty.
- "David and his Australian Friends": Enid Bell.
- "Starland of the South": W. A. McNair.
- "Australia's Child": M. Weatherby.
- "Australia Since 1606": G. V. Portus.
- "Far Away Tales": E. Wilson.
- "Action and Adventure": E. Moodie Heddle.
- "Australian Pageant": F. R. Smith.
- "The First Hundred Years": Helen G. Palmer and Jessie MacLeod.
- "Penguin Road": M. Dalziel.
- "Man Shy": F. D. Davison.
- "Good Luck to the Rider": J. Phipson.

★

The average age of Australian writers on the whole seems to be getting older, though there are one or two names, such as Randolph Stow's, to show that literary talent can still burgeon young. Overland doesn't often receive publishable mss. from writers under 21, however—which is one of

the reasons we are pleased to publish Mr. Mervyn Jacobson's poem in this issue. Mr. Jacobson is 16. He protests indignantly in a letter over a statement I made in Swag some time ago, to the effect that the last war means nothing to anyone under the age of about 20. "I resent such criticisms against all modern youth," writes Mr. Jacobson.

★



From the Cover
of the
Tribute Program

About £400 was raised at the Gavin Casey tribute held in Perth in July as a tribute to the well-known writer and journalist who is now recovering from tuberculosis at the Hollywood Repatriation Hospital. Conceived by Gavin Casey's artist friends who were dismayed by his illness, the tribute took the form of an exhibition and auction of paintings and drawings donated by an impressive, and Australia-wide, group of artists. Henrietta Drake Brockman chaired the function, Mr. Bert Vickers read from Casey's work, and Mr. Paul Rigby, the cartoonist, acted as auctioneer. Mr. Max Brown was secretary to the Tribute. Gavin Casey is making progress on the road back to health and is now allowed to write for a very brief period each day. He would like to hear from friends. Address: Ward 17, Repatriation General Hospital, Hollywood, Perth, W.A.

—S. Murray-Smith

★

Donations

A record breaking total of £54/6/6 received since last issue for the sustaining fund! This is good news and gives us real hope of keeping up our policy of more and bigger issues. Many thanks to: K.W.F. £5; A.G.S. £4/10/0; T.W.R.K. £4; A.B. £3; A.J.C. £2/12/6; E.M.N. £2/10/0; C.H., J.R. £2/2/0; W.W.M. £2; E.H., C.M.H.C. £1/10/0; I.M.H. £1/1/0; N.G., R.W.R., J.S., M.M., F.G., W.F.W., all £1; D.M. 15/-; R.T.J. 12/6; D.E. 11/6; J.R.L. 11/-; A.E.K., R.J.B., P.L., M.M., F.O., S.H., D.J.D., R.McN., H.J.P.McM., Z.G., W.R., R.G.C., L.S., P.A.T., K.C., J.R.S., J.H., M.L., B.R., I.B., R.K., C.T.S., P.T.W., S.A., all 10/-; R.R.M. 7/6; R.E.B., J.B., E.M. 5/-; I.J. 2/6.

IN BRIEF

A course in Australian literature has been started this year at Melbourne University, under the direction of Mr. Vincent Buckley. A seminar course, it rates only as an honors subject and is restricted to the English school.

★
Comment by Robert Graves on the Penguin Anthology of Australian Verse: "I find these Australian poets keep closer to the point, and have more of the root of the matter in them, than all but a very few of their British counterparts."

★
Henry Lawson has been included on the syllabus of N.S.W. Secondary Schools for the first time. A selection of his short stories, recently edited by Dr. Colin Roderick, is an "optional" for Intermediate study.

★
Nearly a hundred films were shown at Melbourne's film festival in June. This festival is rapidly assuming an importance commensurate with that of the big overseas festivals, and the packed houses of thousands of interested film-goers must have given the commercial distributors something to think about, now that cinemas are being demolished all over Australia. "The festival," commented the Age critic Colin Bennett, "squeezed into its three weeks more art, interest, instruction and first-class entertainment than we will see commercially in the rest of the year." Mr. Bennett adds: "This is the repertory cinema as we should have it for 52 weeks of the year, not three," and forecasts that we will eventually get such a permanent repertory cinema.

★
Admirers of Miles Franklin are asked to send to the Sydney Fellowship of Australian Writers a donation to aid the purchase of a chair in her memory at the Elizabethan Theatre. Money can be sent to the newly-elected President of the F.A.W., Mrs. Dorothy Catts, at the Fellowship rooms, 38 Clarence Street, Sydney. Mrs. Catts is the second woman president of the Sydney F.A.W.—the first was Flora Eldershaw, 16 years ago.

★
Dymphna Cusack's "Chinese Women Speak" (reviewed in this issue) has been given a Book Society recommendation in England, and the Kemsley chain of newspapers serialised sections of the book throughout Britain. Miss Cusack has for some time been staying in Albania.

★
Australian James Aldridge is the most popular foreign author in the U.S.S.R., Moscow radio said recently. During 1958 over a million copies of his books were sold. Aldridge's books indicate perhaps the most sustained attempt ever made to express Marxist philosophical ideas in the form of the novel and, considering the pitfalls for the didactic writer, have been outstandingly successful. His most recent books are "Heroes of the Empty View" and "I Wish He Would Not Die". Like "The Diplomat" both deal with the Middle East and its contemporary politics—the area which absorbs most of Aldridge's interest. He is also a keen spear-fisherman, and has written "Underwater Hunting for the Inexperienced Englishman".

"There is not a single trump in this pack; but it does all the same confirm a sneaking suspicion that the short story, like other sectors of Australian literature, is now thriving in a way which makes some recent English efforts, with their ingrowing hypersensibilities and relish for things 'nasty', look rather feeble."—The Times Literary Supplement reviewing the latest "Coast to Coast".

★
The Queensland Centenary Pocket Songbook will be published shortly by Edwards and Shaw. Compiled by Mr. John Manifold for the Federation of Bush Music Groups (Brisbane), it contains thirty songs. Variants are included (both words and music) and the price is expected to be 10/-. There are annotations on most of the songs, giving the source, history where known, derivation of tune where known, and other sidelights. The foreword, and some of the harmonisations, are by Dr. Robert Dalley-Scarlett.

★
A strong appeal for legislation to help equalise the cost of producing Australian art, literature and music was made by Dr. Colin Roderick, visiting Geelong in June as the guest speaker at Geelong Teachers' College, fifth annual Australian Literature Day. Pointing out that, of the 17 novels entered in 1958 for the Miles Franklin Award, only five were published in Australia, Dr. Roderick recommended a Government bounty system related to royalties paid by Australian publishers to Australian writers and artists. Dr. Roderick also spoke at the ambitious Henry Lawson Festival at Grenfell in June.

★
John Morrison's story "Christ, the Devil, and the Lunatic" appeared in the Chinese periodical *Shijie Wenxue* for April 1959, together with notes about the writer. Other recent overseas publications include the appearance in the U.S.S.R. of Alan Marshall's "I Can Jump Puddles" and "People of the Dreamtime".

★
The first collection of New Zealand stories (by one author) to be published in England for many years will be Maurice Shadbolt's "The New Zealanders", scheduled to appear under the Gollancz imprint in September. Mr. Shadbolt, whose comments on "Dr. Zhivago" in the last *Overland* aroused much interest, is preparing a collection of New Zealand stories which is to appear in the U.S.S.R. He and other New Zealand writers in England have recently written at length to the *New Statesman*, asking for support for a campaign of protests at the refusal of the New Zealand Government to interfere over the exclusion of Maoris from the N.Z. rugby team to tour South Africa next year.

★
Mr. Randolph Stow has won the 1959 £500 Miles Franklin Award for his novel "To the Islands", and Mr. Geoffrey Dutton the 1958 £100 Grace Leven prize for poetry. Mr. Dutton's winning volume was his recent book, "Antipodes in Shoes".

★
Competitions:
£500 for a television play. Closing date November 30. Details from Journalists' Club, 36 Chalmers Street, Sydney.

£500 for a novel, plus prizes for general works and children's books. Closing date December 31. Details Rigby Ltd., 22 James Place, Adelaide.

ONE IN, ALL IN

THE essential theme of this story is, of course, social tragedy. On the stage of Life however. Tragedy often has its bottom pinched by Farce. So it happened on this occasion.

It was the Year of the Opening of the Bridge, and the travelling unemployed were flocking to Sydney from all States and directions.

Seven hundred thousand Australian wage earners or "heads of families" (in the statistician's term) were living on less than one pound a week. Scores of thousands of "travellers"—who generally called themselves "bagmen"—were scouring the roads and railway lines in search of travelling rations.

In New South Wales, ex-Premier Bevin's policy of sending male workless bush with rabbit traps had been succeeded by Premier Lang's rallying cry of "Live on the Dole, and Die on the Pension."

As the opening of the Bridge drew near the Lang Government saw the converging streams of bagmen heading for Sydney and the big occasion as masses of two-legged locusts, to be stopped or diverted at all costs.

For this reason Sergeant Davenport, a Sydney plainclothesman, was interviewing applicants for travelling rations at a largish town on the north-west border of New South Wales. He was on special duty—that of turning back the bagmen at the border.

He sat behind a desk in the police station. The dole queue filed before him. As each man entered the room the door was closed and the Sergeant interviewed him personally.

"You want travelling rations?"

"Yes."

"Are you a resident of this state?"

"Yes."

"You know it's a police offence to try and obtain rations by false statements, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Are you sure you're a resident of this state?"

"Yes."

"What part do you come from?"

At this stage, as the Sergeant anticipated, nearly every traveller who didn't come from New South Wales said, "Sydney." Sydney was big and vague. A number of applicants named Sydney quite truthfully.

When this reply eventuated the Sergeant would say, with an air of friendly interest:

"Oh? . . . What part of Sydney?"

The non-Sydney bagman, emboldened by the Sergeant's casual air, would name any number in any street in any part of Sydney he could think of. The Sydney applicant, on the usual grounds that a bloke wasn't going to trade his family affairs and address for six bob's worth of rations, would give a fictitious address.

The Sergeant, humming a little tune, would produce from beneath his desk a Sydney City Directory.

"This," he would explain, "is a Sydney City Directory. What was your address, again?"

The applicant, gulping, would repeat it. The Sergeant would check.

"Were you, or your parents, the householder at that address? Or did you lodge there? If you lodged there, what was the name of the householder? Who owned the house or business next door? (The jovial tone would vanish, to be replaced by menace). You lodged there, hey? You don't know who lived next door? Your landlady's name was Mrs. Jones, was it? I don't think so—this address has been occupied for years by a firm of dry cleaners . . ."

The Sergeant's technique varied according to the answers he received, but he nearly always had the last word:

"You're lying! I ought to arrest you, but I'll give you a chance. You'd better get back to your own state. I'll send your name and description to all ration stations between here and Sydney and if you come at this again you will be arrested."

The applicant would leave—smartly—and the Sergeant, with a satisfied smile, would replace the directory beneath the desk and wait for the next victim.

There was no doubt (he would tell himself) that a little Organisation and Authority would always defeat the Mob.

The Mob thought differently. News of the Sergeant's tactics soon drifted back to the dole queue and a couple of Sydneysiders suggested the counter:

"Tell him you've been out of work for years. Tell him you were sent bush and got Barcoo Rot chasing Bevin's rabbits. After that you dossed for two years at the Mansion of Aching Hearts in Pymont. It's the Joyous Tidings City Mission. There's a flour mill on one side and the harbor on the other. That'll toss the cow!"

After that the ration battle swung in the bagmen's favor. They knew more about soup kitchens than the Sergeant did. His skilful, probing questions seemed to lose their penetration and were generally swamped in a flood of luridly-phrased replies.

The Sergeant had to give out a lot of ration tickets. The travellers he did defeat were invited to share with the successful ones and at a meeting in the bagmen's camp that night the whole team decided to travel en masse to Sydney.

The ration battle had bred solidarity and it was unanimously agreed that all hands would ride the next south-bound goods train on a "One In, All In, Pinch One, Pinch the Lot" basis.

It was anticipated that Authority would ring down the railway line, arranging arrests at some large town suitably equipped with lock-up or jail accommodation. But the team was determined it would be a mass arrest, with a mass demonstration and lots of plain talking. It would probably have turned out thus—but for the keen sense of duty of a station master at a small watering tank town about a hundred miles down the line.

Railway officials, as well as police, had been instructed to stem the invasion of Sydney and the station master was determined to obey orders and Get On.

He always saw to it that the local policeman, Senior-Constable Campbell, met all trains. Campbell was a bush policeman with old fashioned ideas about his work. He disliked arresting travellers and had no serious expectations of taking poddy-dodgers or absconding bank managers off a goods train. Also, when (at the station master's insistence) he arrested travellers, his wife had to cook for them. This caused a certain amount of domestic friction.

He was at his post as usual when a goods train bearing some seventy bagmen panted into the tank town station.

It would take a book to describe the characters and backgrounds of the men aboard the train. The ones essential to this story were Snowy, an unemployed seaman who had been on the beach so long he complained of barnacles on his backside; Carlton, so-called because he came from that interesting suburb and talked incessantly about its football team . . . and Pop and the Mong.

Pop, past sixty, had been trained in the school of the big strikes of the 1890's. He was a Wobbly and an ardent advocate of One Big Union . . . and that's enough to give you his character. The Mong—his dog—was a smart little foxie, as good a bagman as any on two legs.

The Mong had never been known to "shelt" a fellow-traveller on a goods train by barking, scratching or whining. Once aboard a train, he would lie motionless under a tarpaulin until the train pulled out and Pop gave him the all-clear to pursue his canine occasions.

Snowy had been elected spokesman for the team at the meeting the previous night. As the train pulled in he occupied a vantage spot—the spring seat of a harvesting machine loaded in the middle of the train.

None of the other 69 bagmen were making the slightest attempt to conceal themselves. To the outraged gaze of the station master they seemed to cling to the train like a swarm of flying ants.

His reactions weren't helped by the antics of half-a-dozen bagmen riding in an empty sheep truck. They went down on all fours and baa'd at him, while a wag at the back, playing the part of the dog, nipped their heels, woofed and scratched himself.

The station master's attitude to bagmen was well known and the absurd pretence at camouflage was for his special benefit.

He stared, petrified. The policeman took one look, and turned his back.

Snowy sat quietly, watching events. Carlton, at the urge of nature, hopped out of his truck and started to relieve himself against a wheel.

This action seemed to infuriate the station master still more. He stalked over to Carlton and demanded:

"What do you think you're doing?"

To Carlton, the answer was so obvious that he thought the question must be rhetorical. He stared uneasily at the station master. Carlton had all the average worker's horror of usurping the function of any duly-elected spokesman and he feared the station master's question was the opening gambit in an organisational and diplomatic discussion.

He said nothing and glanced at Snowy.

The station master, with his mind on promotion and the upper classes, didn't understand his fellow workers very well. He interpreted Carlton's uneasiness as a proper sense of guilt and contrition. His tone was a little louder, a little more hectoring, as he followed up:

"Didn't you hear me speak to you, you lout?"

The "lout" (while it rankled) reassured Carlton. This, he saw, was no conversational gambit—only a bit of abuse. He relaxed and said:

"Arr—go and hop in the creek, you stuttering mug."

The station master recoiled with a dent in his dignity.

Constable!" he cried, "Arrest that man—I insist that you arrest that man!"

Campbell strolled over and said, in a disgusted sort of way: "You'll have to come with me, young feller."

Instantly the nearest bagman shouted: "They've pinched Carlton!"

Snowy had seen what passed. "Righto, you blokes!" he boomed. "They've pinched Carlton! One in, all in!"

The stationary train erupted a shower of swags, rags and tucker bags. The owners followed and ringed the station master and policeman.

Inevitably, someone called the station master a b——. Another bagman refuted the statement. The station master (he argued) couldn't be a b——as he had never been born in the normal way. Someone had left a blanket in the sun and he had hatched.

Pop dared the station master to lift his shirt and prove he hadn't got feet on his belly.

Carlton (the "lout" still rankling) seized the official by the arm and directed his attention to a poster on the ticket office wall. It said: "Use The Railways—You Own Them".

Senior-Constable Campbell thought it time to intervene. He waved his hand in the general direction of Carlton, said: "All right, young feller . . . you come with me," and moved off. Carlton followed him. The other 69 bagmen followed Carlton. The policeman looked back, and then started walking so fast the bagmen had to run to keep up with him.

Half an hour later he laid down his pen, stretched his cramped fingers and stared gloomily around his office. It was littered with swags and tucker bags.

His charge book was full of Ponsfords and Woodfulls, Pikes and Munroes, Darcys and Kellys. Forty-seven bagmen had asked him for a smoke. Thirty-nine had asked him for a match. When he had refused all requests, two had asked him, in a sarcastic sort of way, if he would please tell them the time.

He could sense waves of resentment floating out of the laundry, where Mrs. Campbell was cleaning the family copper in readiness for masses of corned beef and potatoes. She was humming in an ominous, high-pitched and entirely artificial tone. Campbell knew that when the bagmen had gone he



would clean that copper carefully, meticulously, endlessly, before it again received the family wash.

He knew, also, that the bagmen would leave quickly. Old Brown, the local J.P., wouldn't want 70 prisoners in a town whose lock-up held two.

He foresaw the "Rising of the Court" for the travellers the next day and a mass exodus on a goods train. He remembered that he had stock returns to collect . . . 40 miles away.

The humming in the laundry became louder and shriller. Campbell thought of the station master, and cursed. Other terms descriptive of the station master flocked into his mind and closing his eyes he leaned back in his chair and recited a stream of language which would have made a bullocky blush.

He was interrupted by the arrival of Pop and the Mong. The Mong came first. He had never lived on private property and it meant nothing to him. Without waiting for an invitation he bounced happily into Campbell's office, flopped his hind-quarters on the floor and sat staring intently at the smouldering policeman.

He was waiting for the stranger to do the right thing and toss him a hunk of meat . . . or bread and fat, at least.

Pop was in a fever of anxiety when he entered the office a moment later. He was scared he was too late to be arrested.

He had stayed behind to instruct the station master in the habits, outlook and traditions of the normal railwayman. After copping Pop's eloquence for a while, the station master had bolted into his office and locked the door.

Pop had been forced to finish his lecture through the ticket window. This, with his gammy legs and huge swag, had seriously delayed him.

He hustled into Campbell's office, added his swag to the nearest heap and asserted his right to be arrested in a hammering, vehement tone that nearly drove Campbell mad.

"You'll have to arrest me too, Sergeant," shouted Pop. "I was on the train with the rest of the boys I couldn't keep up with you, my legs aren't as good as they used to be, but I was on the train, Sergeant, you must have seen me there, you'll have to arrest me, too . . ."

The Mong gathered his two-legged mate was trying to make a point. He encouraged him. He chipped in with a piercing, ear-splitting yelp and the overstrained nerves of Senior-Constable Campbell snapped like a frayed bowstring.

"You old b——!" he roared at Pop. "I'll see you get six months!"

The Court sat very early the next morning. The sleeping bagmen, curled up in a large circle around the beleaguered police station, were routed out of their blankets and Waggas by the long-suffering Campbell in time to front the local J.P., and be sentenced to the "rising of the Court."

After this sentence had been passed the Court itself rose rapidly. The J.P. retired to his butcher shop and locked the door. The baker had already taken similar precautions.

Senior-Constable Campbell headed out for a remote station to interview the owner about stock returns.

The station master, leaving the junior porter in charge of the station, went to his private residence and phoned a vibrating account of the whole affair down the line to his superiors.

While he was doing this a long freight train, bristling with half-empty trucks and other "good jumps", pulled into the station.

It was Sydney-bound, and the departure of the Company of Bagman aboard it was almost without incident. Almost, but not quite.

A slight altercation occurred between the guard and Pop when Pop insisted on letting down the side of a truck so that he could hoist the Mong aboard more easily.

Strangely enough the bagmen met with no further official impediments to their journey before they dropped off the train some thirty miles outside Sydney.

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PRIESTLY, ANAND TO

PEACE CONGRESS

Mr. J. B. Priestley, the famous English playwright and novelist, and Mr. Mulik Raj Anand, the Indian novelist and author of "Coolie", will attend the Australian and New Zealand Congress for International Co-operation and Disarmament, to be held in Melbourne, November 7-14. Associated with the Congress is a Festival of the Arts.

Mrs. Priestley, the well-known writer Jacqueline Hawkes, will also attend.

Other distinguished overseas visitors will be Dr. Linus Pauling, Nobel Prize winner and world renowned chemist (from the U.S.A.) and Professor Joseph Rotblatt, of London, who is Vice-President of the British Association of Atomic Scientists.

Art as the living expression of peace will be the essence of the Festival of the Arts, Chairman of the Congress, Rev. A. M. Dickie, says: "It is my hope that from the Congress and through the interchange and display of the arts, the language of the cold war may be forgotten and positive findings on the subject matter of the Congress may come to the people of Australia and New Zealand, offering them a hope for peace in the not-distant future."

The Congress and Festival are sponsored by noted Australian painters, writers and musicians.

Apart from the numerous exhibitions and displays, which include national arts from several Asian countries, a feature of the Festival will be the competitions for art, literature, music and posters.

The literary competition is for the best novel, play, book of poems or collection of short stories, for all of which the adjudicators will be Messrs. Alan Nicholls, A. A. Phillips and Wal Cherry. (Mr. Vance Palmer was also to have been a judge.)

Because the conventional money awards were felt to be inadequate for the Festival competitions, the three main prize-winners will receive an eight weeks' tour of India, Japan, China and Indonesia, including hospitality and entertainment arranged by associations of artists in those countries.

Sponsors of the Congress and Festival include many distinguished Australians from all walks of life.

Judith Wright writes that the congress ". . . will, I am sure, be a very important step for Australia and New Zealand to have taken; and I wish it success with all my heart."

Dame Mary Gilmore writes: "As one of the sponsors my heart is with every effort to bring peace about and especially in connection with the movement in my own country, behind which the Australian people must surely stand, not only for themselves, but for humanity everywhere."

Katharine Susannah Prichard sought to ensure that ". . . this Congress . . . will be an effective expression of the will of the Australian and New Zealand peoples for Peace, so that we may unite with peoples of the world who are moving in their millions to stop this cold war madness."

Address of the honorary secretary of the Congress and Festival is Mr. S. Goldbloom, A.N.Z. Congress for I.C.D., 94 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne.

Ode to No End

A sandy wilderness stretching to the horizon . . .
bare,

But for a lone tall tower. At its base a black cable
Wriggles snakelike for a mile to a small blot on
the map—

The dugouts: where slabs of concrete jut
To defend the ants—workers, soldiers and planners
Who call themselves men.

The countdown whistle sounds—beware. The nest
swarms.

"Eyes on the clock—the countdown to zero."

Tension. The clock ticks—Ten.

Nine . . . eight . . . seven . . . six . . . five . . .
four . . . three . . .

Two. Crouch lower—tremble—lower!

One. Lower!

Zero!

The heavens flash then darken as shudders of shock
Tremble the earth with fear,
Thunder . . . and the dying rumble of rising cloud.

A mile away we smile success. But is it success
To measure destruction in megatons of death—
To develop a dictatorship of machine over man
As we bow slaves to our creation, and bend
To its power as we bend from its force?

Man is mortal—his days are few:

Let him live to love, and not choke despairing
at the distrust

We attack on Sundays but practise on Mondays.

Awaken! Arise and act—

Or we likewise end in shudders of shock

On this trembling earth to die in fear,

Thunder . . . and the dying rumble of rising cloud.

MERVYN JACOBSON

POEMS OF AUSTRALIA AND ASIA

"Gumleaves and Bamboo"

These poems by Len Fox aren't as learned and obscure as much modern verse, but might possibly have more meaning. (We hope so, anyway!) They range from rhymed verse to free, from a song for an Aborigine who died in jail to a lullaby for an Asian child, from portraits of Blimps lamenting lost empires to a defence of the famous racehorse Drongo and a fantasy on Sydney's statues.

Obtainable from progressive bookshops, Australasian Book Society, or direct from the author at 13 Dickson Street, Waverley, N.S.W., at 2/- a copy plus postage.

THREE QUEENSLAND SKETCHES

I.

The Wise Rooster

THIS story was told me in the tram between Bulimba and Brisbane. The man who recounted it had once been a farmer in the North. He is no longer a farmer.

"When I started up with eggs, I knew little about the business: I was learning as I went along. For a start, I got myself a rooster and a few hens.

"He was a marvellous rooster . . . very bold and beautiful, and he ruled his hens like a Sultan. A remarkably fine bird.

"After a while, I decided that it was time to expand breeding a bit—one rooster is not enough. So I got myself a few young cocks and put them in with him.

"Well, the old rooster didn't like it. Wouldn't put up with it. As soon as any of the new chums so much as glanced at a hen, he'd go for him, spurs and all. He was a powerful chap, too, and, what with one thing and another, the new fellows didn't get much of a show at all. He would be stalking round the coop all day, guarding his property.

"The inevitable happened at last. All the other young cocks ganged up on him and gave him a terrible thrashing. But it was terrible—you can take my word for it. They nearly killed him. In fact, I thought they had killed him, when I picked him up first. He was bleeding all over and was quite limp. But I saw that there was still a spark in him. So I took him out of the run. By now I had got quite fond of him. He was game!

"For two or three days he didn't do much: just tried not to peg out altogether. At last it began to look as if he might have a chance. He got up on to some perch as best as he could, out of harm's reach. He would only drink at night. Gradually he began to forage again for tucker—very cautiously: a grain here, a grain there. And always keeping one eye cocked.

"I used to watch him: as soon as he got what he wanted, back he would go on his perch—some old beam—and rest. By degrees he built up his strength again. After a few weeks he looked his old self once more: fleshy comb, clever, roving eye, plumage and everything. So I restored him to the coop.

"He took his time. He wasn't quite as bossy as he used to be. But you could almost see he had a plan. Divide and rule! He fought every one of his competitors one by one. How he did it—don't ask me. But he managed it somehow—never again gave them a chance to gang up on him. He gave them all, each one individually, the hiding of their lives. Soon he was master of them all.

"But there was a difference: he had learned diplomacy. He no longer tried to monopolise the hens. If one of the other roosters started to pay

his attentions, he would make out he did not notice. Looked the other way. As long as they didn't encroach too much . . . He probably guessed that it was only a matter of time before they would unite again, and he didn't wish to encourage them.

"Anyhow, one day he disappeared. Just vanished without a trace. I had no idea what had happened: whether he had been pinched, or whether a fox had got him, or what . . . He didn't come back and I stopped wondering about it. Wrote him off.

"Then one day, a distant neighbor came along—really distant—and told me a strange rooster had got among his hens. Well, I went to enquire and, sure enough, there was the old sinner. But the hens he had got himself in with weren't ordinary hens in an ordinary coop. They were bad layers, and they were all being fattened for the pot, you see. No other cocks in with them. My rooster had gone to retire in comfort among the old ladies."

II.

The Making of A Revolutionary

THIS story was told me in Cairns, by a political militant. I took my time over asking questions, and he over answering them; what follows is only a summary.

"We were quite young fellows then, just beginning to look for work. It was in the thirties, at the height of the depression, and we made inland, away from the coast. If you went far enough you could find *something*, with a bit of luck, and if not work, at least you wouldn't starve. We went out beyond Longreach and came to a certain town.

"Was she tough! The cockies looked on us as if we were thieves. (We were two, you see: a mate and I.) Doors were shut into our faces, dogs sooled on us. I don't know why they were like that—maybe there was a reason. Or perhaps they were just a mean lot. Anyhow, we were going to jump the rattler to South Queensland.

"But we hadn't got far, when a cop picked us up. Next day we were produced before the Magistrate. No visible means of support. The Magistrate, he looked us over, and when we said we couldn't get work, he said he didn't believe us. There was plenty of work with the farmers if one really looked for it.

"I told him we couldn't find anything, all the same.

"Well, he said, if we refused work, we were ordinary tramps and he would deal with us accordingly. He'd give us a choice. He knew a place where there was work for two strong young chaps—if we would accept it.

"I asked where it was and what was the work and what was the pay.

"Plenty of good food, he said, and perhaps some pocket money. If we showed we could make an honest effort.

"A job without wages! The old Dad's been a Labor man all his life . . . it was impossible. My mate, he also refused it, and so he gave us two weeks to be served in Boggo Road.

"On the train we were handcuffed to a policeman. The good old custom; like murderers. But the policeman was a decent bloke. We got talking.

"Do you know who owns that farm where the Magistrate was going to send you to?"

"No, we said, who?"

"And then the policeman told us that the man who owned that place where the food was good was the Magistrate's brother. Fact!

"In Boggo Road Gaol my education was taken a step further. Two weeks—because you wanted wages, even in a depression! It nearly drove the old man mad. But when I came out, he went to see a friend of his about a job for me. A Labor M.P. He got me a job, all right; in a brewery he was tied up with. But when I got there, I discovered that my benefactor expected a kick-back: one week's pay.

"Of course—experiences like that, without anything else, would only have made a rebel out of me. However, they taught me to look at life from a new view-point. And that was the beginning."

III.

A Scar at Christmas

IN Innisfail—the most charming town in Australia—in a pub overlooking the South Johnston river, I got into conversation with a Thursday Islander. He was a partner, with another Islander, in a pearl-shell fishing lugger. He was an exceedingly good-natured man. An unusual thing about him—unusual in Innisfail—was that he stopped drinking after a few glasses: did not much care for the stuff.

He had a scar running across his forehead, and I asked him how he had come by it. He laughed, and explained that it was due to his not drinking:

"During the war, I was working in the Islands with the army. Road construction. There were Australians and Americans there.

"Christmas time we had a little party; some boys from T.I. and some Aussies. But as I had to work next morning, I left rather early to go back to my tent—couple of miles off. On the way some Americans came past in a truck and asked, did I want a lift? Very nice! So I said, yes, thanks.

"We drove a bit till we came to a bridge, and there they stopped for some reason, and got out bottles. Christmas, you see. They had a whole sugar bag full. The driver was a sergeant. He offered me a bottle and asked me to have a drink. Friendly like.

"I said no, thanks; I've had enough; just been at a party. Drink don't agree with me so much. 'Aw, go on,' he said, 'Christmas comes but once a year.'

"Well, you can't insult people. I drank the bottle, and handed it back. Then I got off. I could see they were set for a proper do, and I had to be up at half-past five, and wanted to turn in.

A Man

He was always far ahead of life and held
Communion with clouds over the brink of dreams
And with the stars, as if a high place claimed him.
The children circled his gully hut with laughter
And the traffic puzzled him, and laws, and men,
And he died a fool.

This dark pine is his satiric monument—
But under it (some say) you hear his heart,
Which found little in death it did not know in life,
And feel that in the simplicity of the grave
He is better understood.

DAVID ROWBOTHAM

★

Refuge

For Barrie Reid

Counsel you gave me from the heart,
taught wretchedness a kind of rest:
I had no choice of best or worst
but from the worst must choose the best.

Whether the withered bud survives
to rage the cynic with its flower;
or whether the dream rots on the stem,
the dreamer dies, the seasons sour;

I with my damaged freedom glimpsed
your stubborn stronghold, love the stone,
and shelter there tenaciously,
sieged bitterly, but not alone.

LAURENCE COLLINSON

"But they wouldn't let me go. 'Come on. Don't be a drip. Have a drink!'"

"I had made up my mind I wouldn't. I explained, and started walking away. Then the sergeant suddenly got out. He came running after me and yelled: 'We aren't good enough to drink with you, are we, you bloody nigger?' I stopped and turned round—I was surprised, you bet—and he hit me with the bottle.

"I hit back. I kicked him down the bank, and something happened. He broke an arm. And then all his buddies went for me."

He looked at the river, shook his head and laughed:

"Never mind, boy! That sort of thing doesn't happen here!"

Epitaphs

I.

Destroyer of the gift of God
For shame within the dark earth hide!
If we had caught you in the act
Of this outrageous suicide,
We would have hung you by the neck—
You atheist—until you died!

II.

I think it's most unfair that here—
Enjoying consecrated ground
Among the faithful flock—the grave
Of Poptov, communist, is found.
But rest assured that underneath that stone
The Godless man has decomposed alone!

RODNEY HALL

★

Land that I Love

Land that I love you require preparation
Mostly in regard to sanitation
Intoxication
And suchlike means of edification
If you're to be made
Fit for the tourist trade.

It's a pity
But most men from the city
Can't quite face the country
Without a place to get full
or a chain to pull.

Australians may perhaps be reconciled
To a wilderness left wild
the Yanks won't be coming
Except to liquor
And plumbing.

R. G. HAY

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temporary Soviet novels continually arriving.
Call and browse during lunch-hour.

The Gift

Like children upon Christmas day we go,
Seeking a hand in which to lay our present,
But every hand already holds its present,
And every hand denies us and says no.

In deepest woe we cry to every hand:
O take from us this riches, our burden.
But every hand already has its burden,
And like poor misers we are left to stand

Until our gift becomes the heavy stone
Of a wide world of love we mutely carry.
Out of the grief a voice calls: All must carry
Their stone of love, and carry it alone.

Out of the grief a voice cries: Understand
How each is martyred by his bitter longing.
Will you not comfort someone's bitter longing,
Yield your own gift and open wide your hand?

And we make answer: How shall we be free
If none will save us from this fierce compassion?
If every hand must guard its fierce compassion—
As they are their own prisoners, so are we.

Then there is laughter in the core of grief:
Find your own judgment in your mind-made riddle.
The unborn grave is keeper of your riddle.
Is there a rose that does not love its leaf?

No hand will take your present and forgive,
For each would be the giver of its hunger.
Sweeter than death, this self-devouring hunger.
O love the stone in your own hand, and live.

DAVID MARTIN

★

A Broken Pot

Far over, light came to take the hill
Where the potter mounted on his wheel
Kicked barefoot in the reddening sun
To speed the last pot of all to be spun.

This pot, the needed shard of its time,
To mean to ages our age's prime,
Followed his fingers with its slender neck
Till thin as before it became a wreck.

He had seen pots based on the Grecian plan,
On the Hittite and the Roman man
But the pot that was apt for his day
He found he could not sense in the clay.

At last it dawned as darkness came
That his fingers knew, were not to blame;
They had indeed repeatedly made
The very image his times displayed.

NOEL MACAINSH

SMOKO!

The consequences of talking to three engineers, a nurse, two bank officers, and a carpenter.

The helmet of a railway station-master can be a very dignified affair. It has a button-knob on top, a round crown, and a sloping brim.

The station-master at this particular station was very short and almost invisible side on.

He was known on the foot-plates as The Lead-Headed Nail.

Up in the sugar country there is said to be a sign, GENTLEMEN ARE REQUESTED TO WEAR THEIR SINGLET'S IN THIS BAR.

But in Brisbane, where parking space is at a premium, there certainly is a sign on the freight entrance of a hotel in King George Square, PLEASE DO NOT PARK OVER THIS DOORWAY.

You remember Jack. He was firing the second loco on that Army store train the night the signalman piled the Sunshine Express into her.

They got Jack up in the box and asked him what happened.

Jack said, "Ernie was leaning out the cab when the Sunshine come over on the loop at us. Ernie said to me, 'We're in strife, mate', and I looked up and saw her coming."

"What happened then?" they asked Jack.

And Jack said, "I dunno. I was two paddocks and a fence away."

Every bank has its Grand Inquisitor for third-degreeing customers who don't keep up with their mortgage payments, and in our bank the Grand Inquisitor is Okka, a terse and mournful voice of doom. Okka's old man was a school-inspector, like father, like son.

They all come the same to Okka.

He got a bloke in there one day—happy chappy. Knew all the answers.

"Listen," he says to Okka, "End of every month, I put all me bills in a hat and draw out three. Them I pay. Just you be terribly careful or you won't go in the hat."

Okka yawns and says, "Just you be terribly careful or you won't have a hat."

The following writers represented in this issue are either resident in or associated with Queensland: J. S. Manifold, Rodney Hall, W. N. Scott, Larry Drake, David Forrest, Jean Devanny, Judith Wright, John Blight, Vance Palmer, Martin Haley, Merv. Lilley, Jim Crawford, David Rowbotham, Laurence Colinson, R. G. Hay, James Devaney, Joyce Bacon and Win Callaghan.

★ COMMENT



Hon. Arthur A. Calwell (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) writes:

The "Program for Australian Arts", published in Overland No. 14 under its various headings of Literature, Music, Art, Drama, Film, Television and Other Fields is a very modest one and should have the support of all people who believe that Australia has a distinctive culture. The development of our distinctive culture must be encouraged and supported by Parliaments and people. I see nothing in the program that I could not support wholeheartedly, and very little that I have not already supported and advocated in one way or another.

I once said, and I repeat it now, that the £12,000 a year granted to the Commonwealth Literary Fund is quite inadequate and should be raised to £60,000; and even then I am not sure that we would be doing enough. On several occasions in the past, also, I have suggested that every thesis accepted by any Australian University for a Master of Arts degree, and I would add now, for any higher degree, should be printed by the Commonwealth Literary Fund with the co-operation of the universities concerned. The benefits to the community, as well as to undergraduates, would be great, and well worth the expenditure involved. The concern of Overland, however, is with the development of literature and the arts and not with university life as such. Any effort to promote the increase of knowledge in the cultural life of the nation, whether through books, paintings, music, drama or films, will have my support, and I hope to take an opportunity during the August sittings of the national Parliament to repeat what I have written in this statement.

BRISBANE REALIST WRITER'S GROUP

As from and including Wednesday, 2nd September, 1959, the meetings of the Realist Writers' Group will be held at the U.A.W. Rooms, First Floor, 459 Ann Street, Brisbane. The location is one door from the Hotel Orient which stands on the corner of Ann Street and Petrie Bight.

One alteration has been made to the programme of the Group as set out in the last issue of Overland. The READERS' NIGHT in November has been brought forward from the customary Wednesday to Tuesday, 24th November, 1959.

ELEANOR DARK

TWENTY years ago, a homesick student abroad, I found that the best antidote to the foreignness and the sub-Arctic climate of England was to crouch over the gas-fire with "Sun Across The Sky" or "Prelude to Christopher". In the course of assuaging my own nostalgia, I found too that I was losing my sense of inferiority in the face of English literature.

It was not principally for their human characters that I used to read and re-read these early novels of Eleanor Dark, but for the feel of sunlight and the smell of boronia. The characters were living such intensely inward lives, so wrapped in reminiscence and self-analysis, that I didn't find them very good company. Their actions, rare in any case and impelled by a powerful head of emotional steam, were too premeditated, violent and tragic to strike me as real. But the landscape, the Australianism of the background, that was dinkum!

Then the war came, and while I was in Africa I remember my wife writing to say that she had read a wonderful novel, "The Timeless Land": did I know it, and should she send it to me? I didn't, but there was no room for more books in my haversack, so I thought I would wait. It was worth waiting for.

What astonished me in "The Timeless Land" was to find that the inner and the outer worlds had come to terms. Action was no longer merely a precipitant of violent changes in personal relationships, but a normal mode of existence. Hamlet had embraced Fortinbras. Yet it was the same Eleanor Dark; there was a continuity. The midnight struggle with the mountain in "Return to Coolami", which acts as a solvent on the personal tangles of the participants, reappears in "The Timeless Land" and its two sequels as the struggle with the land itself, turning personal problems outwards into national problems. Action is the solvent; real mountains make molehills of imaginary ones.

"The Timeless Land" trilogy is the nearest thing we have to a national epic. All our early history glows there with the mysterious life of poetry; historical characters and fictional characters are equally vivid. There is every excuse for the schoolboy who wrote: "the most important people who arrived with the First Fleet were Johnny Prentice and Governor Phillip". No matter what his name was in dry fact, Prentice is our Aeneas, our common great-great-grandfather.

It seems appropriate that the Darks should have lived, until recently, on a mountain. You went up from the bora-ground country, you crossed gullies that are protruding tongues of ancient rain-forest, you girdled hillsides like Cunningham's Gap, and emerged on the roof of the world. Children on horseback waved to you, and everyone could tell you where the Darks' farm was.



The struggle with the mountain continues on the plane of actuality; having probed the past and the present, the Darks are reconnoitring the future. In a way that reminds one of Louis Bromfield, they took over an almost derelict farm, regenerated its soil, and raised some crops that point the way to new rural industries. Doctor Dark showed us Queensland nuts weighing an ounce apiece, and Mrs. Dark told us a wonderful way of devilling them to eat.

Our kind host and hostess recommended an alternative route back to Brisbane, running along what must be the geometrical line of the watershed itself. Westward, all Queensland stretches away to the sunset; eastward, the rich coastal slopes step down to the Pacific. Leconte de Lisle's condor would feel at home here; he could probably see New Caledonia on a clear day. It is a beautiful, dignified, satisfying landscape. Earlier white settlers found it empty and monotonous, but for us it has been humanised by the poets and the novelists; not least by Eleanor Dark herself.

JOHN MANIFOLD

PEOPLE are used to getting from popular music dishonesty, technicolor rainbows around their shoulders, and large quantities of slushy goo. If anything real ever happens to find a place in popular music, it is so dressed up as to be beyond recognition. Concert baritones heave away on ropes, and try to sound like deck-hands on a wind-jammer. Neapolitan tenors do their best as gun shearers. And—the end—coloratura sopranos pretend to be gin-sodden whores.

Sadly, but naturally, we like what we know, and, particularly in music, the statement "I like that" most often means "I know that."

All of which thoughts are prompted by playing a series of folk-song records to an audience whose only musical food is the Hit Parade, and who would much rather have been listening to "Tan Shoes and Pink Shoe-laces."

Among these records was A. L. Lloyd's collection of Australian bush songs, "Across the Western Plains" (Wattle 12" l.p.).

For my money, this is an excellent record. The songs in this collection are more rollicking, have simpler tunes, than those on Wattle's earlier Lloyd disc; there are no long, sad tales of bushrangers set to difficult and dirgey themes. The songs are easy to pick up, which is a help, and the accompaniment (banjo—Peggy Seeger, mandolin and mouth organ) is generally excellent, sometimes brilliant, and only falls down in a couple of places—one a delicate music-box banjo backing to a sea-shanty.

Lloyd's artistry as an interpreter of folk-song is the most impressive thing about this record. Even the old "Click Go the Shears" (with as banal a tune as was ever thumped out on a parish-hall piano), which has been sung so often by so many, sounds fresh and has a new interest when Lloyd gets hold of it.

Unfortunately, he hasn't got a good voice, but this only emphasises his artistry. If he can do so well with not much voice . . . Listen to "Lachlan Tigers," "South Australia" (which has a nicely harmonised chorus), almost any of the other tracks—everything that there is to be got out of the words and the rather dull Australian tunes, Lloyd gets.

The title-piece is an off-beat interpretation of a fine boozey ditty, which to my mind is a good performance but a bad thing. I prefer to beef out "Oh for me grog, me jolly, jolly grog" in the approved manner.

Edgar Waters' record notes are, as is Wattle's wont, first class.

For those who like their music documentary, Wattle's other major recent release—a 12" l.p. of "Music of New Guinea"—is essential listening. This is the first commercial recording of the songs of the indigenous inhabitants of Australia's Own Empire. I find primitive music interesting, even though I don't know anything about it, and collector Ray Sheridan's informative and detailed notes were a big help in picking my way through the record. And there, fair in the middle of the record, was a New Guinea singer who sounded exactly like A. L. Lloyd.

Other Wattle releases: "Billygoat Overland" (7" l.p.). I'm not being superior when I say that all the children I've played this Queensland disc to have enjoyed it immensely. They like particularly "The Hut that's Upside Down," "Maggie May"

Vance Palmer's last public speech was his contribution made at an evening held in Melbourne by the Australasian Book Society early in July. The occasion was a tribute to Katharine Susannah Prichard and the appearance of her latest book, "N'goola and Other Stories." About 160 people were present, and as well as Vance Palmer—who reminisced on his early associations with K.S.P.—Arthur Calwell, M.P., spoke on Katharine Prichard's greatness as an author, and Leslie Haylen spoke on the subject of a "fair deal" for Australian writers.

In a special message Dr. H. V. Evatt said:

"Katharine Susannah Prichard is more than a great writer. Splendid though her contribution has been to Australia's literary output, and recognising that she is one of the outstanding Australian women of our generation, her true greatness derives from the nobility of her character and the true patriotism which shines through her creative work.

"It was Katharine Susannah Prichard who was among the first of the Australians endowed with the power of the pen to use this gift in the service of our much ill-treated Australian Aborigines.

"It was Katharine Susannah Prichard who spoke with clarity, embellished by touches of rare humor and breadth of vision, in her stories which dealt with Australia's life as a constant struggle against economic and social adversities as conditioning factors of human conduct.

"We place on record our affection for Katharine Susannah Prichard because in her we see a gentle soul who, through the symbolism of her writing and her deep and warm love for humankind, has written an indelible page in Australian life and letters."

and "I'm a Rambler, I'm a Gambler, I'm a Long Way from Home," and the pleasant voices—especially that of Stan Arthur. And so do I. There is no outstanding singing, but there are no radio cowboys. A pleasant disc (a Queensland Centenary job?).

"The Old Bark Hut" and "Waltzing Matilda" (7" l.p.). Two releases by The Ramblers, a splinter group of the original Bushwhackers. Some new songs, some bush-dance tunes played by Harry Kay on the mouth-organ. Sample and see.

★

FOLK MUSIC RECORD CLUB: The idea: pay 7/6 to become a member; nominate (from the Club's list) those records you want to buy; when the Club gets enough orders, the record is issued—you pay 45/6 for a 12" disc, 36/6 for a 10". Of the discs on the first selection list, John Greenway's "Talking Blues," Colyn Davies' "Cockney Music Hall Songs and Recitations," Paddy Galvin's "Irish Rebel Songs" and Ewan MacColl's "Shuttle and Cage" are all, without exaggeration, terrific. Information from Folk Music Record Club, 131 Cathedral Street, Sydney. Highly recommended.

A.H.

AN EXTRACT FROM "BORSTAL BOY"

I GOT paper for the purpose of preparing my defence and wrote on it:

"My lord and gentlemen, it is my privilege and honor today, to stand, as so many of my countrymen have done, in an English court, to testify to the unyielding determination of the Irish people to regain every inch of our national territory and to give expression to the noble aspirations for which so much Irish blood has been shed, so many brave and manly hearts have been broken, and for which so many of my comrades are now lying in your jails."

Outside the doctor's one morning I met another Irishman. He was from Monaghan and I am ashamed to say that he might have been from the moon as from Monaghan for all I had in common with him, outside of being for Ireland, against England. By God he was that, all right. Callan was his name and he was a mad Republican. Not that he was in over the I.R.A., but was in over his own business, which was stealing an overcoat from Sir Harry Lauder's car outside the Maghull Alhambra. He gave out to me from between set lips about the two men that were under sentence of death in Birmingham.

But in two months Walton Jail had made me very anxious for a truce with the British. I had come to the conclusion, not only that everything I had ever read or heard in history about them was true, but that they were bigger and crueller bastards than I had taken them for, lately. Because with tyrants all over Europe, I had begun to think that maybe they weren't the worst after all but, by Jesus, now I knew they were and I was not defiant of them but frightened.

Pay them back, blow for blow, give them back
woe for woe,
Out and make way for the Bold Fenian Men.

Yes, but for Christ's sake not here. Not here where they could get you kicked to death for a Woodbine, or an extra bit of bread, if they didn't want the trouble of doing you in more officially.

This goddamned Callan though nearly seemed to like the idea of being a martyr. He had been to the great annual procession to Wolfe Tone's grave at Bodenstown, County Kildare. I had marched there myself, first as a Fianna boy, since I was able to walk, and later in the I.R.A., and more often than Callan, but I had to admit that he had the order of the parade and the drill off all right. Except that he gave a whole impression of the procession while we were walking round the exercise yard, I'd have enjoyed it.

He was able to roar in a whisper. When we'd go on the exercise yard, he'd start: "First Cork Brigade, fall in, by the left. Belfast Number One Brigade! Quick march Third Tipperary Brigade, by the left! Third Battalion, Dublin Brigade, South

County Battalion, Dublin Number Two, dress by the right, eyes left Clan na Gael contingent Camp Number One, New York City . . ." By the time the screw was standing on the steps and scratching his head and wondering where the muttered roars were coming from, Callan had finished drilling the entire Irish Republican movement from the thirty-two counties of Ireland, Boston, New York, Liverpool, and London and had them on the march to Tone's grave, to the stirring scream of the war-pipes, proceeding from the side of his mouth.

He did it so well that the others started marching round the exercise yard in step to his piping, even despite themselves.

Proudly the note of the trumpet is sounding,
Loudly the war cry arise on the gale,
Swiftly the steed by Lough Swilly is bounding,
To join the thick squadrons by Saimear's green
Vale,
On! every mountaineer, stranger to fright and
fear!
Rush to the standard of dauntless Red Hugh!
Bonnoght and gallowglass, rush from your
mountain pass,
On for old Erin, O'Donnell abu!

He didn't sing the words of course but made a noise like the pipes playing them that went like this:

Burp burp buh burp burp bee burp burp beh
burp burp, ur ur uh hur hur deh bur dur
duh dur,
Birp birp bih birp birp bir birp birp bih
birp birp.

which went just to a steady sensible marching noise, till he got to a frazzled screech of the pipes at the end.

. . . Miaow aow aow aow aow aow, miaow
yaow yaow aow haow yaow,
Yaow aow aow aow aow, yaow aow haow
yaow yaow!

For a time the screw stood on the steps in amazement looking round and straining his ears to catch the faint but rhythmic and persistent drone of Callan's piping. Then he screwed up his eyes and spoke through his teeth.

"Oo's making that bleedin' noise, eh?"

We all looked around to show him our mouths and to show it wasn't us. Callan did too, and I was the only one to know that it was him was making the noise, and I wouldn't have known it but I'd already heard his preliminary drilling and ordering of the troops.

The other prisoners were terrified of getting into trouble over the noise and would have stopped whoever was doing it double quick, and Callan or me quicker than anyone, but his mouth never

“BORSTAL BOY” —

IN a society that coined the word “wowsler”, and where people see no hypocrisy in voting for six o’clock closing with one hand (as the majority did recently in Victoria) and demanding increased penalties for drunken driving with the other, we should not really be surprised that we have a censorship in operation which makes us a world laughing stock.

After certain organisational changes in the censorship set-up early in 1958, and the drastic reduction of the list of banned books (together with the publication of the names of those books still banned), there were real grounds for hope that, however much of an ass the law was, it would at least be operated with discretion.

Such hopes will be shaken by the decision to ban Brendan Behan’s radical, sensitive, exuberant autobiography “Borstal Boy”. The only other country that bans this Irish classic is the Republic of Ireland.

The book tells the story of that section of Behan’s life that runs from his arrest in Liverpool at the age of 16—within a few hours of his arrival from Ireland on an I.R.A. mission with explosives in his suitcase—to his release from a Borstal Institute some two years later and his return to Ireland.

“Passport, travel permit or identity document, please,” said the immigration man beside me.

I handed him the expulsion order.

He read it looked at it and handed it back to me. He had a long educated countryman’s sad face, like a teacher, and took my hand.

‘Cead mile failte sa bhaile romhat.’

‘A hundred thousand welcomes home to you.’”

It was wartime, and other I.R.A. men were being hung by the British. Behan, as he himself is the first to admit, got off lightly. First

he describes a spell in one of H.M. prisons, and then his experiences at Hollesley Bay, the “open” Borstal to which he was sent.

(One of the surprising aspects of “Borstal Boy” is how well Borstal comes out of it. Behan’s sharp and at times moving descriptions of his life there indicate that not only was the discipline, organisation and rigor of everyday life rather more liberal and humane than that at many a public school, but also that the institutions do a pretty good job with young offenders.)

Critics have disagreed over the literary evaluation of “Borstal Boy”. On the basis of the book a New York Times reviewer calls Behan “a highly conscious, craftsmanlike, accomplished writer—a type never more needed than today.” Cyril Connolly in the Sunday Times, though critical of the weaknesses of the book, calls Behan a “natural writer”. Coming nearer home, Mr. David Martin in Newsday says that “Borstal Boy” is “as valid a contribution to English letters as is another prison book by another Irishman—‘The Ballad of Reading Gaol.’” One thing all critics are agreed on is that the book is a serious contribution to letters.

Yet Australians are not allowed to read the book. Some time ago the Editor of Overland sent to England for a copy, which was intercepted by the Customs. Now it was pointed out in the press, at the time of the publication of the revised banned list in April 1958, that the publication of the list “clears the way for any citizen to challenge individual bans . . . Under the Customs Act, anyone who wants to import one of the books listed as banned can appeal to a court against the ban. The court will then make a decision that will be final . . .”

No individual, however, has made such an appeal against the banning of a book. We were

moved. It’s ventriloquism Callan should have gone in for, in place of patriotism and overcoat-robbing.

The others did not know in the name of God where the noise was coming from, and were getting as worried about it as the screw.

He was doing his nut, standing up there on the steps. He stared at each face in turn, in a quiet frenzy, but still the piping went on. He came down off his steps and stood on the edge of the ring as we pass him, and looked into each face.

Callan came up in his turn and just stared quietly and passed on after the others. I was following and opened my mouth so that at least he’d be certain it wasn’t me. . . The piping had ceased, and the screw went back on his steps, and the piping started again, resolute, though quiet. The screw stared about him, and cocked his ears to see if he was imagining the noise, and then nodded his head slowly and looked about him in horror. We looked at him in horror, Callan looking at him in horror, even while he went on with the march.

Then the screw fixed his eyes on one of us. I hoped to the dear Christ it wasn’t me. He took a run down the steps, and Callan stopped his music. The screw came forward and I ducked with the rest. He made a dive on a boy from Glasgow that had hardly ever been heard to open his mouth in the place, even to ask you to pass the wax-end at labour.

“Aaarh, you Scotch bastard. Want to play your bleedin’ bagpipes, do you?”

He caught a hold of poor Jack and beat him up the steps, to the gate, where he shouted through the bars for the screw on duty inside in the wing to come and take control of Jock.

“Playing the bleedin’ bagpipes through ’is bleedin’ teeth, ’e was.”

The other screw gave the usual reproachful look one screw gave when you were accused of having talked or broken any rule while in charge of another screw. As much as to ask how could you find it in your heart to do anything that would make life more difficult for such a good kind man. Then he gave Jock a routine blow into the face

AND THE CENSORS

to find out why as we made enquiries as to how we should proceed.

The first step was to deliver to the Collector of Customs a notice that we claimed "one copy of the publication 'Borstal Boy' which you have purported to seize pursuant to Notice of Seizure from you. I claim such publication on the grounds that it is my property, that you have no right to seize the same and the same is not a prohibited import within the meaning of . . . the . . . regulations."

The authorities then give the individual who is challenging the ban several months in which to act. As this is a Commonwealth matter action has to be taken in the Supreme Court or the High Court. At this stage the matter of cost versus principle becomes a major factor.

In discussion with a number of persons interested in civil liberties and disturbed at the vagaries of the censorship it soon became obvious that any such case would command some public support. A number of people promised money; Vance Palmer and other well known literary figures agreed to give evidence against the banning of the book, after they were loaned copies of the book already in the country. Despite this ready fund of goodwill and support, legal opinion soon made it apparent that the so-called "right of the individual" resides only on paper. It was not so much the cost of launching an action against the Commonwealth; we may have been able to keep costs down to a few hundred pounds (assuming a four or five day hearing). The raising of this sum of money may have been possible (though few "individuals" are in a position to risk it).

What really makes a challenge to a miscarriage of censorship impossible, except perhaps for very wealthy publishers themselves, is the

fact that, if the plaintiff loses the case, the Commonwealth is likely to press costs against him. If the Commonwealth considers the issue one of important principle itself, and employs a couple of QC's, and if the case lasts a week, the unfortunate plaintiff could find himself landed not only with his own costs but with a thousand pounds or more of the Commonwealth's costs too.

The result of course is that, no matter how nearly certain you are of winning such a case, no individual—and for that matter no group of aggrieved citizens—can seriously consider taking advantage of the democratic loophole kindly left for him in our censorship regulations.

This is all the more unfortunate insofar as even one court challenge, in a case such as "Borstal Boy", would have a salutary effect on those responsible for imposing censorship. Whether or not the case were successful, it would certainly make the censors doubly careful before imposing future bans.

Under these circumstances the most effective protest that Overland can make is to publish an extract from the book itself (we thank Messrs. Hutchinson's for their permission) and to urge that all those concerned should protest to the Minister for Customs (Senator Henty). Organisations should also be urged to protest.

Overland is interested in the setting up of a committee, or committees, against censorship in Australia, to fight such cases as "Borstal Boy". We should be glad to hear of those who would co-operate.

Finally, an appeal to Senator Henty to lift the ban on "Borstal Boy" was despatched by the Australian Council for Civil Liberties. It was rejected.

S. MURRAY-SMITH

and took him by the scruff of the neck, and nodded reassuringly to the exercise screw as much as to say that he wouldn't let these bastards take advantage of his good nature.

When Jock had been dragged off to his cell to await the Governor, the screw came from the gate and stood on the steps, shaking his head with satisfaction, while we all, myself included, more shame to me, breathed easier, and plodded round in our less martial and more resigned gait.

And then, in despair, because we couldn't help it, our steps tramped in unison and our backs straightened and our heads went up. Callan was at it again. This time it was drums and trumpets that blared discreetly out of the side of his mouth, as he crashed into the old Republican march with a warning roll of the drums:

Burump de dumpiddy dum, burump de dumpiddy, dum,
Step together, boldly tread, firm each foot,
erect each head,
Fixed in front be every glance, forward! at
the word advance!

Noise befits neither hall nor cramp,
Eagles soar on silent feather,
Proud sight, left! right! steady boys, steady
boys! and step together!
Steady boys! and step together!
Bardiddly bardiddly bar bar bar, bar.

The screw looked down at us and said the exercise was over and all inside, and up to our cells. While we passed him on the steps into the wing, he kept his ears cocked to each prisoner's face. But Callan was not as green as he was Irish and we broke off and went into our cells without his musical accompaniment, though I thought when we halted in the Y.P. wing before falling out that he was going to shout in a whisper, "Irish Republican Army, dismiss!"

Safely in the cell I was pleased with Callan's performance. I had never seen anyone get the better of the screws before. It was hard luck on poor Jock, though. If it had been one of the English bastards I wouldn't have cared a God's curse, except for Charlie or Ginger, of course.



A Great Peacetime Demonstration

I ARRIVED back in London on Easter Sunday and early on the Monday morning travelled out to Chiswick to join the last stage of the four-day, 57-mile Aldermaston-London march, organised by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. It was a most thrilling experience. People from all trades and professions marched in threes. They were absolutely orderly. I stood by the roadside and watched for 1½ hours while the marchers passed by, before I saw the international section and fell in behind the Australian banner. Representatives from Sweden, France, Germany, Poland, India, Pakistan, Israel, Greece, New Zealand, South Africa, U.S.A., Japan, Cyprus, Tanganyika and Nyasaland were there. Perhaps there were more contingents than these, I could only take note of the banners I could see from my position. I am sorry to say that, of the tens of thousands of Australians in London, a meagre twenty marched.

This was a parade of workmen and poets; scientists and calypso drummers; men in kilts and girls in slacks and young people by the thousand. As was to be expected, the press made much of the presence of the "Chelsea Set" with their unwashed, uncut hair, duffle-coats and sulky faces.

Two incidents I recall most vividly. The first occurred when a man jumped out from a side street, yelling at the quiet crowd and waving a placard, in a frenzy of fanaticism, which read: "Down with the N.D. traitors," or something of the sort. One of the motorcycle escorts accelerated and, in passing him, lifted the sign out of his hands and waggled it triumphantly right down the length of the footsore, cheering column. The second occurrence came just after we left St. James' Park. A dumpy, apple-faced priest was standing on the pavement, bouncing up and down, calling out endlessly "Hooray, hooray, hooray" and clapping and waving and nudging those either side of him, as if to galvanise them into something like his own enthusiasm.

By the time we reached Trafalgar Square, there were 15,000 of us! And that whole great area was jammed from side to side and right back to the steps and portico of the National Gallery. I believe an estimated four to five thousand people were awaiting our arrival, making a grand total of 20,000. The leaders then made brief speeches, from the foot of Nelson's Column, which were most illuminating. From one: we would like "to say this to our American friends, we have a fundamental objection to being an occupied country." And, from Mr. Willis—T.U.C. Chairman—who was called up from the crowd to speak: "I can't help thinking that if the procession had been of another character, the arrangements would have been different. The authorities did very little to control the traffic. If we have to have demonstrations of this sort again, I hope the authorities will take note that a protest procession against mass suicide is as important as a procession with gilded carriages."

Although the powers-that-be were criticised "for allowing the traffic to break up the demonstration" all along its route, tributes were paid to the individual policemen for the way they handled the whole difficult procession so ably and kindly. The chief of police returned the compliment, saying, that it was the best behaved demonstration he had seen, there having been no "incidents" at all. The most telling compliment, perhaps, was the lack of material evidence the anti-disarmament newspapers could find for criticism. They used most of their space for photographs of the "Chelsea Set" and Teddy Boy participants. The Daily Express event went so far as to print a huge heading BIG MARCH ENDS IN ROW followed by a brief note about the numbers in the march and sentences here and there from the speeches, but no mention at all of what the row was! However, even Cyril Aynsley, their reporter, could not remain indifferent to the climax of the Trafalgar Square gathering. "Then Canon John Collins of St. Paul's (who led the march) called for a one-minute silence. A moving moment as the great crowd stood, motionless, silent, banners lowered . . ."

RODNEY HALL



Ballad Night Eve

EXTRACT from circular:—

"Ballad Night '59 will be held on June 27 . . . Traditional songs, recitations, dances, are all in order; and so are composed pieces closely based on traditional material. Since this is Centenary Year, the organisers hope that every team will try to include at least one item of purely Queensland growth."

Further extract from circular:—

"Newcomers will realise that Ballad Night is not an eisteddfod. It is one night a year when bands can meet, study each other's style, pick up ideas, criticise, swap songs, and talk shop unimpeded by onlookers."

All the circulars have gone out: eighteen to individual bands or teams, three to adjudicators, others to the organising and quartermaster staff. Eighteen bands, each playing a ten-minute program, means three hours of bush music. So much is off my hands. But after the trophies are awarded the competitors are brigaded into one large orchestra, to read, rehearse, and perform a new work arranged for the occasion. And it is my responsibility to see that every player gets a part to read. I'm not a musician, but I write a good clear hand.

Violins, viola, violoncello, flute, clarinet, bassoon—straightforward enough. Recorders, accordions, guitars, can be scored-for by rule of thumb. But what about the mouth-organs in different keys? Blow, suck, move to the right, suck, move to the left, blow? And gum-leaf? How does one write a part for the gum-leaf player?

Hopeless to search for an answer in Berlioz or Gordon Jacob! What do they know of the Paddy-melon Guitar and its soprano equivalent the Rumbottle? of the Calabash Fiddle, variably tuned in fourths and bowed underhand? even of the diatonic bamboo Pan-pipes?

Hopeless, too, to ask a professional musician. In an atmosphere where leading-notes point downwards, plagal cadences outnumber the ordinary kind, and bass-parts skip around in ninths and sevenths to exploit the open strings, the ex-student of counterpoint is more lost than I am.

The veteran bush-musicians, of course, take everything for granted. Difficulties which occur merely on paper mean nothing to them. Most of them, in any case, will pick up the parts by ear, or extemporise them through a process of telepathy with the guitarist.

Between the extremes of pure academic and pure bush, however, stands the small group of amphibians, at home in either element. A happy position, but only to be reached by an exasperatingly devious route! Take the competing string trio, for instance: two sisters and a brother, playing two violins and 'cello. Trained from childhood in severely orthodox style, they had never played together, or in any sort of ensemble, until they discovered "bush music". Now, with guilty delight, they are taking time off from the eternal solo-solo-solo of educational orthodoxy, to show us what they can do (as a team, and purely for enjoyment) with "Bound for South Australia" and "Joe Dempsey's Hornpipe."

I can't tell who will be the more astonished by this string trio: the real old-timers who have never heard pure three-part writing before, or the young new-timers from the Con who have heard nothing but *Tonreihen* for the last few years.

But it would be unfair to burden them with my technical troubles; at this stage anyhow. In a few years, these young things will be taking the problems in their stride, and orchestrating by instinct. I have particular hopes of one young man who plays a home-made viola da gamba, and spends his spare time whistling bits of the Trout Quintet and bits of "Flash Jack from Gundagai"; but he's only eight.

So on with the rule of thumb! It's surprising how many problems get solved in practice, when you have to solve them. And it's encouraging to look back on the problems that have quite simply solved themselves in the last few years. Once upon a time there was an imposing array of questions like these to answer: Granted that bush music exists, can it hold the interest of the young? Granted that the tradition continues, can it be taken further? Can the level be found at which bush music "clicks" with the professional musician? Is the gulf between the good and the popular in music bridgeable in the present decay of civilisation?

Well, presently I shall be going out to welcome the people who answered those questions. The little dark boy with the home-made guitar, the grey-haired accordionist carpenter, the students with clarinet and bassoon, the newspaper-seller with his mouth-organ, the Wickham Terrace doctor with his clear tenor voice, the young Chinese, the bearded irrepressible baritone from the B.W.I.U., the schoolgirl singers, the team from the Pensioners' League, the critic from the (shh! the Press!), the theatre people, the meatworkers . . . and fifty or sixty more.

Fifty or sixty more, God help us! and I have copied parts for only nineteen-and-a-half at this minute!

Fresh from some wrestle with Brahms or Bliss, young Albert Landa once asked me, in pure inno-

cence, "Why do you go in for all this folk-music?" I couldn't answer, I just gaped like a goldfish; and I don't think I can answer now with any exactitude. I have no qualifications for the job, I'm not a musician; I think I'm a mug. But someone has to be the mug. Perhaps I should have shown him the circular I quoted at the beginning of this article: "It is on the foundation of what we can teach the professional musicians, and what they can teach us, that a truly national Australian school of music will one day arise."

J. S. MANIFOLD

★

★
Lawson
with
Differences



★

HERE was a Henry Lawson Festival with two important differences—an accent on youth, and the possibility of developing literary contests which could become for Australia what the Oscars are for Hollywood.

That was the opinion of four members of the Fellowship of Australian Writers in Sydney who attended the Lawson Festival at Grenfell (where Lawson was born in 1867) from June 12 to 15.

On our arrival we found that the President of the Lawson Festival Committee is the Mayor, Ald. N. Sweetnam, noted for his interest in youth. (It is largely a result of his enthusiasm that Grenfell has one of the finest Boys' Club halls in Australia.)

And the Committee's Secretary, Mr. H. J. Goodwin, is headmaster of the high school, where he has introduced a major experiment in educational method. This is the core curriculum in which a large part of the children's time is devoted to team projects where the youngsters explore and think out for themselves local and topical problems such as "Road Safety" and "Is Our Culture Still Following the Direction Given by Henry Lawson?"

Out of such projects, for instance, has already come a striking road safety sign recently erected on Grenfell's outskirts.

Accent on youth—it was everywhere, with children singing, playing, reciting Australian writers from Lawson and Paterson to Dennis and Roland Robinson, painting "The Loaded Dog", or writing their own verse:—

He lived away from smoke and smog—
Wrote for the benefit of the underdog.

And in their eyes the spirit of the line of Lawson that was printed on all the Festival literature and

that set the keynote for the celebrations: "I have seen so long in the land I love what the land I love might be."

Costume ball, concert, art competition, parade, Chips Rafferty as Lawson, Leonard Thiele's fine verse-speaking, Terence Hunt's folk singing, a special A.B.C. programme produced by Leslie Rees—it was too big to describe in full. The only point we have space to mention is that the organisers, in true Lawson spirit, are dreaming of the 1960 Festival having a big impact on the whole nation, with nation-wide competitions in art, music, sculpture, literature, drama, poetry and film.

At a discussion on this, Leonard Thiele stressed the important impact that such contests could have, and suggested they could become local "Oscars" with national prestige.

Is this dreaming too high? Already cultural bodies are expressing their support, and a big Sydney firm has offered its patronage and support. Can this thing spread? Could it develop into a nationwide Lawson renaissance?

As we left Grenfell the ground was white with frost. In our heads and hearts were snatches we had heard and read during the week-end:—

"We believe that Lawson spoke for all Australians at the turn of the century in his stories and verse, and that he has become a symbol of all that is real and vital in the emerging pattern of our way of life . . ."

"This Festival is stimulating interest not only in Lawson, but in Australian culture in general and the Australian spirit."

"Carry the spirit of Lawson into everyday life—I'm sure our people can do exactly that."

Well, Grenfell's doing it—what about the rest of us?

MARY ADAMSON, JOAN CLARKE,
MONA BRAND and LEN FOX.



Visit to the U.S.S.R.

THE visit to the U.S.S.R. by three Australian writers late last year came about through the Union of Soviet Writers in Moscow sending an invitation to the Fellowship of Australian Writers to send three of its members on a "cultural visit", to meet writers over there, exchange views and see their way of life. Professor Manning Clark of Canberra, novelist Judah Waten of Melbourne and I were chosen by vote of all State branches of the F.A.W.

Like everyone else in Australia I knew the constant welter of propaganda on both sides which makes it so hard to get the truth about Russia. I went with an open mind. The Russians themselves have a proverb: "Better to see once than to be told a hundred times." On returning to Australia I find that many friends and others expect and want only an attack upon everything Russian. Some speak as though that were one's duty, under pain of being a sort of renegade, or at least a feeble fool whom the cunning Communists have taken in. This is the closed mind, the prejudice which is the curse of all international relationships.

The new order in Russia has repudiated religion, and I am a Catholic, not a Communist, who believe that only spiritual values and verities give full meaning to human life. At the same time a man has not to bear false witness against his neighbor. The ancient Greeks were pagans but that does not

make me hate them. I saw no sign anywhere of the fear, regimentation and "police State" conditions we have read about.

I found that phenomenon among modern countries, a classless community, with the snobbery, caste and privilege of old Czarist days altogether gone. I found a cheerful, lovable and certainly contented people, people like ourselves, very keen for their own national economy, proud of their achievement in two short generations. They cannot understand this antagonism and enmity from outside.

At Moscow we found the skyline dominated by immense blocks of flats, scores and scores of them, housing literally millions of people. The population of this city is now about 8,000,000.

We were not mere tourists or sightseers. Every day and every evening was filled. We spoke over the air a good few times in Moscow and Leningrad, including one arranged discussion with three selected Russian "intellectuals". I was asked to write a poem on Leningrad for the radio there, and did so. We gave addresses to groups of students, clubs, literary associations. We were interviewed by newspapers, visited universities, libraries, publishing houses and schools, galleries and museums, as well as private homes. Everywhere we asked many questions and were asked as many in return, often through an interpreter. We ourselves chose where we would go and what we wanted to see. In the evenings there were seats for us at the famous Russian ballet, the opera, or to hear classical or modern music. The theatres were always packed and the enthusiasm remarkable. At times the audience would go swarming down the aisles towards the stage to applaud at the end of an act.

There is no Sunday as we know it. The shops, schools, theatres and so on are open on Sundays and construction works go on as usual. The three great cathedrals by the Red Square are now museums. You can buy vodka and such drinks in cafes and various shops and there are no drinking bars anywhere, even in hotels. It is not the custom for men to congregate in hotels for drinking together.

There are no advertisements in Russia, since there is no private ownership and consequent competition. Even the taxis are State-owned, and they have a heating system like the homes and even the railway stations. All the cars are Russian-made. There are no parking problems, because the streets do not swarm with private cars as with us. Instead, for transport in Moscow and Leningrad there is the amazing Underground, each like a city under a city. There are no rows of shops with street fronts displaying their goods as in our towns, but once you go inside you are in huge emporiums, all crowded. There you can shop from 8 till 8, and some food shops are open for the whole 24 hours. School hours are from 9 till 2, six days a week. Most homes, even small ones in the country areas, have television.

The Russians are great organisers, thorough in planning and in practice, as we saw in the schools, cultural activities and all community interests. They work well together as groups, as we saw in the welfare clubs and on the great collective farms. It gives one the impression of a quite striking national unity, which means national strength as well as efficiency.

If I were asked what impressed me most in the U.S.S.R. I would say the general intellectual standard, the enthusiasm for education, knowledge, culture. And I do not mean merely among the minority of the intelligentsia. The "common people" as a whole have this noticeable keenness for books, lectures, intellectual discussions, things of the mind, and for the arts as well as the sciences and crafts.

JAMES DEVANEY

BOOKS

Women to the Front

There are never many poets who are also writers of good, creative prose. Their compromise, "poetic prose," is often a synonym for emotionally heightened language which does not lend itself to the analytical approach of effective characterisation.

Judith Wright is a striking exception. "The Generations of Men" (Oxford, 45/-) makes me think that, had she chosen to, she could have become almost as good a novelist as she is a poet. True, "The Generations of Men" is not a work of fiction but a biography of her grandparents, and its themes—time, roots, ancestors, Australia and domestic love—are also the themes of her poetry. There are, however, biographies which are in every respect inventive: authentic but original. And while, in a sense, the subject matter is not new to Judith Wright, she treats it in a completely different way and with the most tactful respect for her medium. Obviously, there is an underlying unity of her poetry and her prose. But it lies in this: her poetry, for all its lyricism, has a quality of objectivity and of "weight"; it is maternal but "material", substantial and earthy. She is our least intellectual and most intelligent poet. Just the kind of poet who would write strong prose.

This is not to say that "The Generations of Men" is flawless. The first part, which deals with her paternal grandmother's childhood in the Hunter Valley in the 'fifties, is a little unsure and scrappy; she naturally finds it easier to identify herself with May and Albert Wright in the better-documented period of their maturity. In fact Judith Wright is, on the whole, more successful in the portrayal of her grandfather.

He was a courageous, honorable and unhappy man whose pioneer labors in New South Wales, central and northern Queensland forced him to repress the strong feminine element in his nature. He had to renounce childhood too soon.

"It was from this undeveloped part of himself that his bitter melancholy moods welled up, in which the struggle of living seemed not worth while; in which he doubted himself and the gaiety which had imposed itself upon him seemed a kind of bright bubble enclosing nothing. At such times the real world seemed to him to lie hidden under the surface of things, a perpetual three o'clock in the morning, with curlews weeping in the dark and dingoes waiting to slip into the sheepfold."

Here the mingling of Australian and universal images is almost perfect in its simplicity. Judith Wright is thoroughly Australian and on the side of optimism. The people whose lives she so lovingly recounts are too busy fighting foot-rot, droughts, fires and debts to introvert excessively. May Wright, widowed early, achieves a final triumph, concrete yet symbolic, at the Armidale Show. But the melancholy is always there—the sensitive awareness. It reaches great heights indeed in the description of Albert's death, in Rockhampton. In his dying phantasy he sees the son he lost as a boy but cannot reach out to the child's mother; she eludes him. He wakes up, at the very instant of death, to find May sitting by his side. She is the dead child's mother and, symbolically,

that part of him which, as a man, he could never grasp.

Much of Miss Wright's poetry has been concerned with the same thing.

"The Generations of Men" is not at all a work of mysticism. It is a family record of an unusually penetrating kind and it is a realistic contribution to the Australian saga, to the story of the opening-up, spanning fifty years of Australian life. Fortunately it is not conceived on the ambitious scale. It may find a place in our literature but it has a more immediate importance. It should be studied by our writers on the literary right for what it has to teach about the integration of ideas with reality, of the subjective with objective elements in Art. For similar reasons it should be studied by our writers of the left.

The point is, of course, that Judith Wright is in no sense a revolutionary. Her direct ancestors were mainly struggling station owners, pioneers and freelances at the outskirts of native land-ownership. The story is full of interesting social implications; it once again shows, among other things, how narrow was the frontier between classes (and men) at a certain period in Australian history, and how rapid was often the change from bankruptcy to wealth.

★

It is unlucky for any new writer to be reviewed together with Judith Wright. I know Margaret Trist only for her stories and as a contributor to women's magazines. For a first novel, if it is a first novel, her "Morning in Queensland"* (W. H. Allen, 18/9) is most refreshing and skilful. The heroine (rather a heavy word in this case) is Tansy, a lass growing up in a small South Queensland town. Her father has deserted the family, or what there is of it. In the first few pages the story threatens to be facetious, but it turns out differently.

Tansy's relationship with Meredith, her mother, whom she soon outgrows, and with the various uncles and aunts who look after her periodically, is very well handled. I should guess there's a good deal of auto-biography in all this. Many episodes are delightfully funny; perhaps the best is Tansy's instruction in the facts of life at the hands of a school friend, Dolores. That's a real beauty!

One would like more space to do better justice to a novel which is not quite as light as it looks, and which introduces us to a novelist who will have something to say. It is certainly the most entertaining thing out of Queensland for many a warm day.

★

"February Dark," by Anne von Bertouch (Constable, 22/6), is misdescribed as a novel; unless a few random love-making incidents can turn reportage into fiction. (I don't see that they can.) But "February Dark" is excellent reportage. It tells with enthusiasm and sincerity, and with sympathy for common humanity, how a young couple, school-teachers, became fruit farmers on a lone and stony hill-top on the New South Wales north coast. Actually, fruit farmers is only what they wanted to become. What they really became was prawn fishers.

Anne von Bertouch is good at writing about work, the atmosphere of a specific working community, and about "nature". She is fairly success-

* Which won an "honorable mention" in the recent Mary Gilmore Novel Competition. (Ed.)

ful as well in dealing with more intimate human relationships, though at times she comes close to the naive, without however quite crossing the line. This is an optimistic and readable and, on the whole, rather unusual book. One hopes the author will write some more.

DAVID MARTIN

★

A 'Peasantly' Poet

"Inland," poems by David Rowbotham (Angus & Robertson, 16/-).

Rowbotham develops in a smooth natural line of his own. He has been overwhelmed by no -isms, academic or Montparnassian, since he published "Ploughman and Poet"; he has simply seen a bit of the West, and gone on writing in his own way.

He has a lot of the qualities that I must apologise for calling "peasantly": the good eye for country and weather, the distrust for town-bred fashions, the refusal to be panicked or to show more emotion than is called for. Not that he is either a balladist or a camera-man: his head and his heart take equal share with his eyes in short poems like "The Town" and "The New Farm," which are felt and thought as aptly as they are seen.

In some of the more ambitious poems, notably in "Red Gums at Nightfall," and in parts of "Below Capricorn," it seems to me that the feeling outruns his power to express it; the verse struggles to grasp something just outside its reach; and the diction relapses into abstract nouns like "beauty", "memory", "vision", "dream" or "flight". This last, particularly, is a word he overworks.

Is this occasional capitulation to the abstract something he has learnt from Judith Wright? I don't think so. Rowbotham is quite firm enough on his technical legs to be independent of casual "influences". His musical sense is his own, as different from Wright's as Britten's from Benjamin's; his very skilful use of half-rhyme shows that clearly.

I fancy there is a connection between this "capitulation" and the occasional unsteadiness of his rhythms. Not metre; rhythm is a different thing, much more personal. But there is plenty of evidence that Rowbotham is gaining strength as he goes on. There is very good stuff in this book and there will be still more in the next.

J.S.M.

★

Girl with a Monkey

It is this reviewer's theory, and not an original one either, that it is the individuality of his style that distinguishes the writer from the mere sentence-builder. I am not by this defending eccentricity, which often leads merely to incomprehensibility. But I believe that in the best imaginative writing, one of the chief interests of the reader lies in the temperament of the author as revealed through his manner of narration; much of our delight in the great prose writers—Austen, Dickens,

Forster, for example—derives from what they indirectly tell us about themselves almost as much as from their descriptions of people and incidents. This being so, a great deal of current Australian fiction reveals itself as less imaginative than journalistic. I am not decrying journalism, which has its own artists, but a good piece of reporting simply gives the necessary answers to the questions that arise in relation to certain real-life incidents (vide the film "Teacher's Pet") without the intrusion of the reporter's personality. Much of our so-called "fiction" falls into this category: the material is well-observed, the treatment sincere, and in many cases all the answers are made only too manifest. The result is undistinguished and indistinguishable; a prose-writing machine might have been its origin. A large proportion of the stories published in *Overland* are of this impersonal type. How many of them are memorable in any way!

The reason for this state of affairs seems to me to lie with the contemporary conception of "realism" in Australian writing. There is no space here to go into detail, but many of our writers, particularly the younger ones, apparently consider they are writing in the tradition of Lawson and Furphy, the "democratic tradition", when in fact what they are turning out is a form of reportage. They seem to be possessed by a fear of appearing in any way "out of the ordinary". Although their subjects are in many cases socially and politically nonconformist, their manner of expression is commonplace and conformist. When we actually analyse the prose of Lawson and Furphy, or of the true exponents of that tradition—Alan Marshall and Miles Franklin, for example—we find an intense individuality, a prose glowing with the traits of its creators: humor, irony, tenderness, and anger; a prose also complete with what I have been told at discussion groups is an unforgivable sin in fiction writing: personal comment! A writer of course does not deliberately go out of his way to express his personality; on the other hand he is not afraid to let it show through.

That is why I found it so refreshing to read Thea Astley's "Girl With A Monkey" (Angus & Robertson, 13/6). It is not a "great" novel, as most of the other reviewers have been at pains to point out, but it is an excellent first novel, written with originality and gusto. Its theme is the relationship between a young schoolteacher and a laborer in a North Queensland town; and although the "We come from different worlds" idea is no new one, it becomes unorthodox here because of the humorously ironic treatment of the girl, and the detachment with which she, as narrator, observes her proletarian "lover" whom for once we recognise as a human being rather than a sentimentalised projection of an author's political outlook. Miss Astley has no fear of letting her temperament shine through her prose: her language is sometimes extravagant, and now and then reveals too strong an influence of Joyce, but she is never dull; her phrases and imagery are often extremely perceptive, and she has an extraordinary facility with words. Her faults are the faults of enthusiasm—which to my mind is more creditable than otherwise in a young writer. "Girl With A Monkey" shows Miss Astley struggling towards a style which will be totally her own; her next novel will undoubtedly achieve it.

LAURENCE COLLINSON

Overland, July 1959

Kokoda to Wau

"South-West Pacific Area First Year—Kokoda to Wau" by Dudley McCarthy (Australian War Memorial, 30/-).

The "South-West Pacific Area" is the land across the water from the Queensland Coast, mostly New Guinea. The "First Year" was 1942, the year that left so many blood-stained question-marks on Australia's collective mind.

Mr. McCarthy in his official history has set about answering them, or most of them. I wish he had dug deeper, not for the post-mortems on tactics so much as for the fundamental factors—not for the political and/or military "errors" of the day, but for political and military abrogation of commonsense. This abrogation of commonsense has its peacetime equivalent—hence its importance. The theorising from afar which killed men and "bust" field officers is recognisable in civvy street in the administration, say, of stores, banks, radio stations, etc. The consequences in peacetime are less dramatic, but equally long-lasting.

Mr. McCarthy can plead, of course, that a book can only be just so big and that he had a lot to pack into it.

And pack it in he has, and answered many questions.

Generals MacArthur and Blamey are here, something less than perfect; the Brisbane Line is here, at last in its proper perspective; even the Battle of Brisbane is here; and also Who Won the War, so there goes another subject of bar conversation; everybody is here, officers and privates, Australian and Yank, dead, missing, wounded, and living—in Papua, on Guadalcanal, Timor and round about.

One odd fact that emerges from this book, on my reading of it, is that Queensland, with one-eighth of Australia's population, contributed one-third of the Australian troops who went to the Battle of Papua.

Even the Choko War is officially terminated, after all these years.

And thank you, Mr. McCarthy, for the glimpses you give us of commonsense walking about in the shape of Lieutenant-Colonel Honner, a gentleman who seems to have kept his theory and practice well integrated. Perhaps that is all that commonsense is, which would explain its rarity.

There is, indeed, something in this book for everybody.

I must warn you, but, a lot of this book is dry reading—dates, names, places, etc., of immediate interest only to those who survived, say, Goroni, or Eora Creek, or Wandumi.

But persevere with it, and from time to time you will come to what war is all about, when events, I fancy, get slightly the better of Mr. McCarthy in his dry role of historian. As he states in his preface, he steeped himself "in the records of their deeds to such an extent . . . that the contemplation of them indeed changed the whole basis of my approach to the problems of living and dying . . ."

Persevere with this book, and you'll find out what goes on in the shooting gallery, hither and yon in passing, but never so much as in Mr. McCarthy's accounts of the storming of Gona, and of the attack down the Sanananda Track on 7th December, 1952, a day that readers of this book might find stuck in their skulls for a long time to come.

Oddly enough, such revealing events as these mostly concern the Australian Militia. Beside some of these moments, the 18th Brigade's legendary assault on Cape Endiaderre makes rather tame reading! Which might simply prove that war is irrational and best done without.

Finally, I can't resist quoting here Footnote One to the Battle of Brisbane. "It is probably a fair generalisation to say that in the United States the display of batons and firearms in the hands of police is an effective way of quelling a riot, whereas in Australia it is an effective way of starting one."

DUM EK

★

Into the Morning

"Into the Morning" (Heinemann 20/-), Elizabeth Webb's second published novel, is a skilfully written story about a part Aboriginal named Toddy Vine. Use of Australian idiom, economic but apt description and clear character portrayal convey a sense of familiarity to the extent of belonging to the book. We certainly all belong to the subject, which is color prejudice.

Toddy Vine's struggle against this prejudice is unfolded with great sensitivity. His conflicts develop and his aspirations change as a result of education—an education encouraged by his white father; a school teacher; and Anna Paraz, the white woman he loved.

Toddy's situations are so adroitly manoeuvred throughout that, except for color prejudice, Elizabeth Webb has avoided bringing him to grips with most of the real social and economic difficulties that have existed, certainly during the last two decades, for mixed bloods.

While no-one should detract from the fine qualities of character that Toddy develops, the example of his success must seem like an unattainable dream to people who are "protected" from it.

An interlude of about six months in the bush, with the remnants of a full-blood tribe trying to avoid Government protection, endows Toddy with a little streak of spontaneity when he falls in love with a young Aboriginal girl; but, for the rest, he is very justifiably calculating what is good for Toddy.

A reading of "Into the Morning" must surely induce a deeper interest in our dark-skinned people, and stimulate a search for enlightenment on a state of affairs which has been condoned by voting citizens of this country—condoned perhaps in ignorance, and condoned by default.

In this light, this book should be classed as a valuable contribution, even although active color discrimination is not fully revealed.

It can be hoped that this book will serve the purpose of opening hearts and minds. A study of the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—particularly those which **do not** yet apply to the Aboriginal—will, if compared with their own conception of democracy, be a shock for many white people.

In the conversation of two opposing anthropologists, the theory of "breeding out the color" is introduced in the book. This is the baldest admission of color prejudice I've come across.

Elizabeth Webb gives this theory an ironic twist by having Toddy himself give utterance to such ideas. Though the suggestion is there as a subtle solution to the color problem, it merely attempts to remove the problem, rather than to solve it.

Be this as it may, of the qualities this book best offers, I choose the appeal for recognition of dignity of the person.

"Into the Morning" won second place in the Miles Franklin Award. Elizabeth Webb's knowledgeable effort should take an award for stimulating thought.

JOYCE F. BACON

★

Anatomy of Demagogy

In his "Wild Men of Sydney" (Allen, 20/-), Mr. Cyril Pearl has given us an extraordinary, fascinating, horrific, enlightening, exquisitely witty and at the same time profoundly serious and moral book.

It is an altogether astonishing work, both in its historical substance and inasmuch as its literary style and intellectual quality brilliantly belie the sensationalist tone of the blurb on the jacket.

This facile and shallow characterisation of the book—as a sort of gratuitous if not mischievous piece of muckracking—has been reinforced by references to the book in parliamentary debates provoked by the dubious action of the N.S.W. Government in legislating, with its recent notoriously unpopular Defamation Bill, so as to prevent the sale and to intimidate or penalise the author of such a book, on the grounds that its content (regardless of historicity) is defamatory of living persons who are relatives of the dead persons concerned.

For "Wild Men of Sydney" is an anything-but-irresponsible publication.

To the contrary it is a drastic indictment of a brand of irresponsibility concerning public affairs that has been quite a feature of our national history and which has been manifested alike by the public and by public men.

What is most sensational in Mr. Pearl's history of the period is not so much the scandalous substance of the particular historical affairs and intrigues which he describes with a delightfully detached and delicate artistic relish of their ironical, curious and farcical aspects. It is not, as such, the villainies of Messrs. Norton, Crick and Willis as M.P.'s, and "licensed larrikins." Rather it is the fantastically perverse evaluation of such villainies, and the naive, even witless adulation that has been given to such evident rogues by the general public, equally by "leaders of thought" as by the masses, and all in the name of our cherished national ideals of non-conformist egalitarianism: electors who despite all kinds of shocking revelations returned them again and again to parliament; judges and juries who in the face of their proven guilt only nominally penalised them or failed to convict them at all; governments and ministers who took no action to prevent their skipping the country to evade justice or to bring them back; or who extradited them but allowed them to keep their loot.

That is to say, the book in its essential nature is an anatomy of demagogy itself, considered as a modern social phenomenon, as it has appeared in some concrete aspects in Australia. It is an exposure and a solemn warning of some of the weaknesses and contradictions that inhere in the very nature and conditions of our bourgeois democracy.

This is not at all to suggest that Mr. Pearl writes from an anti-democratic or authoritarian attitude.

Far from it. His position is that of an enlightened, rational and realistic democrat, who submits to us some historical material selected and evaluated by him so as to provide a healthy corrective to democratic attitudes of the excessively sentimental order which exalts "the judgment of the people" as judgment which is in some mysterious way infallible, or at least inspired with some sort of higher wisdom.

He dredges up from the history of our recent past, and therein instructs us for the future, episodes revealing some of the nasty pitfalls of democracy, examples of some astonishing mistakes of judgment made by the great electorate, and made as readily by the elite, the experts and scholars, as by the majority.

In urbane tones of sophisticated reminiscence Mr. Pearl reminds us, in the teeth of the prevailing dogma according to which the majority is always right, that the majority has often been not only sadly but often quite ridiculously wrong.

His object in doing so is certainly not maliciously to try to deflate our characteristic Australian pride in our egalitarian contempt for the authority of Establishment and of a hereditary elite. It is to show that we should not allow ourselves in the name of these natural and proper Australian attitudes to be so easily fooled or misguided as we have often been in the past. Our proneness to be so fooled, or to indulge, by iconoclasm, our frustrations or our ignoble dislikes of the really superior, is the other side of the egalitarian penny that is our national virtue.

We need to take particular care correctly to distinguish between public men who are genuinely animated by principle, or public controversies in which democratic principles are genuinely involved, and situations in which ruthless or fanatical men are grossly exploiting our democratic proclivities, or legitimate grievances, for the purpose of gaining personal or party of sectarian advantage.

That this lesson of Mr. Pearl's book is no truism, but a salutary reminder of the individual self-discipline which is essential to the proper functioning and to avoid the malfunctioning of a democracy, was brought home to me in my own attitude as I read the book. I recognised a considerable degree of sympathy with the republicanism, the anti-clericalism and the audacious iconoclasm of a Norton, as well as a degree of admiration for not-infrequent, witty-if-outrageous relivities in his alliterative style, which made me feel from time to time that Mr. Pearl's strictures concerning him were perhaps rather intolerant and too severe. Yet it was clear to me on further reflection that Mr. Pearl's evaluation of the man's life and works, considered in its fullness and in its total context, is really valid.

Mr. Pearl's attitude and manner as historian and writer is understanding of human frailties and follies yet not reluctant to pronounce judgments on them. His book is essentially didactic in nature and satirical in form. His style is a variant of the conversational-ironic. He is a master equally of the highly "literary" witty euphemism and of the absurd dead-pan colloquial understatement.

Mr. Pearl appears to me as an exceedingly able scholar and commentator and a remarkable comic artist, and his "Wild Men of Sydney" as a valuable and most enjoyable contribution to Australian letters.

ELIZABETH VASSILIEFF

Chinese Women Speak

A few years ago, Dymphna Cusack asked the woman manager of a North China flax mill, "Did the men object to your appointment?" "Object? why should they object?" "No reason," she explained, "except that men in the West . . ." "You sound like the member of parliament from West Germany who came to inspect the mill," retorted Kuo Tsin-yuan. "He was very much upset when he found me in charge. 'How will men obey women?' he kept saying. I thought that was his particular hang-over from the teachings of Hitler, but you ask the same question. Surely in British countries where women have been free so long . . .?"

It would be hard to etch more sharply the snail-pace progress of women's rights in the advanced industrial countries. We still have standard jokes about women in parliament, and baulk at the appointment of women to senior administrative posts in the public service or as heads of mixed-staff schools. Not only has equal pay not arrived: the principle is still being debated. Yet within a decade the women of China, and to some extent of India, have emerged from semi-feudal to full and equal citizen status, and have been immediately prominent in government, administration and industry. How does it come about? Is the mere provision of equality before the law all that is needed? Is the rest merely a facade of prejudice that crumbles the moment the economic and legal foundations are removed?

Dymphna Cusack in "Chinese Women Speak" (Angus & Robertson, 25/-) does not claim to have given the complete answer; she suggests at the end that "perhaps only a Chinese woman who has herself experienced the transformation can explain." Perhaps Simone de Beauvoir, whose recent major study of China I have not read, throws light on a theme that is her own. The Chinese women who speak in Dymphna Cusack's book are so much swept along by the tide of events and involved in their new lives that they barely see the problem. They marvel at what has happened: "Would you believe it," recalls one, "that if someone came to the door and asked if anyone was at home, I would answer, 'No', since I didn't count as anyone?" "Now that is all over," another says, thrusting aside foot-binding, prostitution, child marriage and arranged marriages; already they belong to the past. For the younger women, as the author says, their equality is part of the air they breathe.

Dymphna Cusack's subjects include some women of astonishing character by any standards. There is one of the ladies-in-waiting to the Empress Dowager, a princess of Manchu blood, a dancer, scholar and linguist, familiar with half the capitals of Europe ("One thing I cannot get," she remarks looking at herself critically in the mirror, "is a really good hair-set.") There is the wife of Chou En-lai, who went with her husband on the Long March, travelling for four months of it on a stretcher, half-alive, because of TB. There is the leading actress in the classical film known here as "The Butterfly Lovers"—a pioneer of opera reform long before the present regime.

But more significant are the nameless ones—the housewives, grandmothers, young married women, peasants; for the test of real advance is not the number of women in prominent positions but the change in the lives of those who are not. Through them emerges some of the best material in the book; for they are all articulate in their own ways, and the author's reporting is alert and sensitive. These women have thought about their

lives, and been encouraged to do so by national campaigns for re-education in the new society and its morality. If what they say is a little repetitive at times (the inevitable comparison of things "before Liberation" and "after Liberation"), that is a pattern shaped by turning over in the mind. There is nothing stereotyped about the raw material of their lives, or the verve and gusto with which they thrust forward. So many of them feel deeply involved in the fabric of society and identify themselves wholly with it. There is no limit to their reserves of character and resource, and as the Chinese say "creativity". Dymphna Cusack's book reads like a token of gratitude from the author for the experience of knowing such people; and it is none the worse for that.

HELEN PALMER

*

To the Islands

Randolph Stow's "To The Islands" (Macdonald, 17/-) isn't a fully successful novel—and that is all to the good; if it were possible for a novelist in his early twenties to bring off a full success, the game wouldn't be worth the candle. It is nonetheless a thoroughly interesting and imaginatively living work of potential value in the development of the Australian novel. Stow devotes the right degree of intentness to the problems of technique. He is not preciously preoccupied with considerations of form, but he is not a sloppy workman. Would that some "maturer" Australian novelists could say the same.

In the last ten years Australian poetry has become intelligently conscientious in technique without degenerating into slavish acceptance of overseas fashion; but the Australian novel has lingered in the old "near enough is good enough" tradition. Stow escapes that slack-mouthed indolence. His writing has a tautness of line which vibrates to the touch of his imagination. He pares down his material to the minimum needed to convey his conception. He appreciates the truth of the saying, "A full waste-paper basket makes a full novel."

Stow plainly knows his Aboriginal mission station, and sensitively grasps its problems, the crisis which today faces its work. He avoids the cheap or doctrinaire temptation to jeer at the missionaries, but he understands—with sympathy—the degree of their failure.

Perhaps he might with advantage have spent more creative energy on imagining his minor characters into fullness of life; but the central figure of Herriot both lives and convinces, at least for the first two-thirds of the book.

There has been a good deal of rather jeering attack on the symbolic method which Stow chooses to employ, and it seems to me misdirected. David Martin (Meanjin, April 1959) rightly declares that symbolism is misused when "the symbolism does not flow from character and action, but character and action are vessels to hold a symbolism." I believe he is wrong, however, when he holds that Stow is guilty of this fault.

Stow presents us with a realistic and significant situation built about the living figure of Herriot. That situation conveys the dilemma of existing black and white relations in Australia, and Stow's

belief that they reflect the deeper problem of the failings of a society rooted in the violence of competition. He wants to assert his conviction that a cure for the black-and-white disaster is dependent on "putting the black in a position where he can forgive the white—the position which he has never occupied," and he implies a parallel need if the guilt of our violent civilisation is to be purged. Holding this conviction, Stow wants to show his belief in the spiritual course which can redeem this guilt. He cannot show it realistically, for in the relations of black and white in Australia it has nowhere been achieved. So he has recourse to the device of sending Herriot out on his symbolic journey—a guilty man's search for death which becomes an achievement of reconciliation. I do not see how Stow could have achieved his purpose without recourse to some such symbolic device.

Why, then, does the book fail in its last third—where the structural plan demanded greatest strength? Simply, I believe, because Stow is here tackling a problem beyond his powers. To render Herriot's symbolic journey effectively needed a power to see vividly the most intimate movements of an old man's mind. Stow just hasn't lived long enough to be able to do it. So—save for a couple of vividly imagined scenes—the book's earlier solidity here melts, not because the treatment becomes symbolic, but because it becomes vague.

Stow has, in fact, bitten off a bit more than he can chew. I don't regret that. A novelist who doesn't bite off more than he can chew at twenty-three is likely to have no teeth left when he is thirty-five.

ARTHUR PHILLIPS

★

Hell's Compassionate Cerberus

"Alexander Maconochie of Norfolk Island, A Study of a Pioneer in Penal Reform," by the Honorable J. V. Barry, Q.C., Justice of the Supreme Court of Victoria, Chairman of the Department of Criminology in the University of Melbourne, Chairman of the Parole Board for Victoria; Oxford University Press, 50/-.

WHEN on May 25, 1840, the young Queen Victoria's birthday was celebrated in palace and guildhall, church and chancellery, then in those great goals for an Empire—New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land—the gallows and the triangle still took their customary toll. But in one prison settlement, which in men's minds stood for Hell when Botany Bay was mere Purgatory—

Never was Norfolk Island so gay, or its inhabitants so joyful . . . A proclamation had been issued by [Superintendent] Maconochie, describing the pleasure and festivities he contemplated. On this occasion he resolved to forget the distinction between good and bad, and to make no exception from the general indulgence . . . The signal colors floated from the staff, crowned with the Union Jack; twenty-one guns . . . fired a Royal Salute. The gates were thrown open, and eighteen hundred prisoners were set free . . . joined in various amusements . . . sat down to dinner

. . . drank health to the Queen and Maconochie . . . At the termination, no accident had occurred; the gaol was entirely unoccupied; no theft or disorder disgraced the day; and thus the notion of Maconochie seemed to be illustrated by the experiment . . .

"The notion of Maconochie," put into effect as far as Authority permitted, when he administered Norfolk Island in 1840-44, was that even convicts were human. He found they would respond to decent treatment, show themselves capable of being restored to citizenship in the workaday free world.

This notion was revolutionary, in ex-Navy Commander Maconochie's day. Now, it is given lip-service nearly universally, but in modern Australia and elsewhere is but indifferently practised. Mr. Justice Barry is of those few among us who advocate and practise a humane penology. His hero was almost alone, a century ago, in this faith and performance. Maconochie was, as a cloud of witnesses testify in Barry's pages, the pioneer humanist in a prison world of vice and repression, violence and terror. But his vindication was to come; as Professor Glueck writes in a Foreword to "Alexander Maconochie":—

There is hardly a reform in the correctional field in our epoch which cannot be traced, at least partially, to the fertile imagination of Maconochie. Nor, as Justice Barry shows, is there a single basic idea of the standard minimum rules adopted in 1955 by the First United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, which had not been anticipated by Maconochie more than a century earlier . . . his place in the history of penology will remain a uniquely important one, and the influence of his ideas has extended throughout the world . . .

You are introduced by these observations to an engrossing "human-interest" story which is also, in my estimation, an important contribution to the body of learning on the history alike of penal Australia and of penal reform. The book is an addition to the Humanities (using the word in its two senses of scholarship, and advancement of human welfare). It is an original contribution to knowledge; and I think it germane to remark that its author is not an academic except incidentally. Like most of the few Australians who have recreated our past, he owes nothing to the industrious Faculty which since Wood's time in Sydney and Scott's in Melbourne, a generation and more ago, has immensely aggrandised its staff and material resources, and its annual output of bachelors, masters and doctors. Its professors have brought forth, too, more than one book of documents, and an edition of more than one forgotten pamphlet by a Colonial statesman. Meantime, beyond the academic pale, creative historical writing has been done by Evatt and O'Brien, interpretive biography by Evatt, Walter Murdoch, Nettie Palmer; a little of each, by Vance Palmer. Now add Barry's name to both short lists . . .

Probably no academic person could be found with the qualifications pre-requisite to assessing Maconochie: knowledge of law, penology, Australian history, and, together with these specialities, a lively, sympathetic, informed interest in human beings and their possibilities. It is fortunate that Barry has these endowments and that, as he acknowledges, "two distinguished Australians, Vance and Nettie Palmer . . . awakened [his]

interest in Alexander Maconochie". Further, his writing is plain and yet passionate enough to bring actors to life in successive chapters: Sailor and Scholar (1787-1836), Van Diemen's Land (1837-1839), The Mark System of Prison Discipline, Norfolk Island (1840-1844), and so on. Before Barry, we had little illuminating work on penal Australia (1788-1867), and as the author's friend and in inconsequential ways collaborator in pre-publication discussion, proof-reading and the like, I took pleasure in learning as he went.†

Prejudiced as my own evaluation may be, I think the shade of Remy de Gourmont would agree that Barry's book satisfies two requirements of a literary work, namely, that what the author set out to do should be well done, and that it should have been worth doing. It must be added that the publishers did a competent piece of bookmaking but set a discouraging price on the volume. It is to be hoped that the second edition will be priced without so pessimistic a calculation of the number of likely buyers and hence of total sales return to O.U.P.

BRIAN FITZPATRICK

† Professors, Readers, Research Fellows, Research Assistants and the like may be interested to learn that the most contentious of those preparatory discussions concerned the degree of denigration which was proper and expedient to be attached to learned authors who had not read Maconochie's voluminous writings but had passed judgment upon him.

★

Four-legged Lottery

The post office clerk looked at me earnestly over the counter as he handed the book back to me.

"My word, he's scared me off it! I reckon he knows what he's talking about. Thanks a lot for lending it to me—and I've told the other chaps about it too."

The book? Frank Hardy's "The Four-Legged Lottery" (Werner Laurie, 17/6).

I had been trying to defraud the P.M.G.'s Department with insufficient postage and out of this developed with the sympathetic clerk a discussion of fraud on a grander scale. He "knew a chap who thought he'd struck a system for winning at the races"—but he hadn't. I knew "a chap who'd written a book on that very theme"—and I lent it to the clerk.

Well, if a book so well fulfils what presumably is its purpose, it must be regarded as a successful book—and from the point of view of telling a story with a moral and ramming home that moral effectively, Frank Hardy has succeeded.

In my opinion he has done more: He has managed to imbue his characters and the working out of their destinies with something of the elements of Greek tragedy in miniature, as it were—as if a tiger had been tamed to the requirements of a backyard.

But—the style!

Those who don't know Frank Hardy would be justified in supposing that his reading had stopped short at "East Lynn". He apostrophises the reader, he exclaims to God, and generally does all sorts of things beloved of Mrs. Henry Wood. And in his final paragraphs he excels her. What was intended to be awe-full is merely awful.

The author might possibly seek to excuse himself on the grounds that he uses as his mouthpiece a character who avowedly has had no experience in writing a book. One hopes, however, he won't, but that in his next book will have improved his style equally as much as in this book he has so vastly improved his telling of a story since the days of "Power Without Glory".

JEAN CAMPBELL

★

N'goola

The stories in Katharine Susannah Prichard's "N'goola" (Australasian Book Society, 17/6) force the reader to assess them in the spirit in which they are written. I have heard Katharine Susannah Prichard's stories variously described as sketchy, too intense, lacking in humor, by the critics of today. I cannot agree. These stories were created in their own period out of her observations of the waste and distortion of human beings which followed the settlement of this country, and which occurred during the depression and the two wars. They are set in the goldfields, the mines, and the outback as it was, and they portray the people who lived in those times.

They are stories into which the measurements and calculations of the cold war and the confusions of Australians in the uneasy age of pseudo-prosperity and development of education have not penetrated. Class consciousness here is a moral force, not a degraded and bitter red herring used pretentiously and unreasonably to prejudice man against man. In plainer words, snobbery, mental and material, is non-existent. Freud, that trap for the unwary, who has discolored so much of our writing, is also disdained. Katharine Susannah Prichard's intelligence and knowledge reach higher than that artificiality.

The result is a collection of stories, often misleadingly simply written, which yet contain, I believe, the very essence of goodness. Read, for instance, "The Rabbit Trapper's Wife," or "His Dog," with its delightful inverted humor. Read "N'goola," a beautifully told story of dispossessed Aboriginals, assess it carefully, and discover that this story contains within it the material for a whole novel. Knowledge, intuition and skill fuse it into a short story.

"Josephina Anna Maria," a story previously published in *Overland*, is another example of this art. It is a story of conscience in another's need. The great modern hospital system and the development of medical science grew out of this human requirement. One realises that in organisation the motive is often lost—acceptance and acquisition bring stilling of conscience. The great value of this story is that it returns one's values to a true perspective. One wishes that politicians would read it.

In "Yoirimba" we have Miss Priscilla in her wildflower haven, with Katharine Susannah Prichard tossing the old parents' environmental conditioning against their daughter's lifelong ambition. Miss Prichard mildly but with great observation of human understanding has her little lady merely remove a nameplate. Freud could have entered here, but didn't.

"Hero of the Mines," a story which is technically little more than reportage, still contains that true touch, in the contrasts of the rights of a young man to live against the shameless neglect of safety conditions in an essential industry.

In "White Turkey," we have a theme which is reiterant in this set of stories—that of a man's frustration manifesting itself in a love of animals. Here it ends in tragedy. It is a horrifying story of a man grown to ugliness, but amply shows the cause to be distorted childhood.

One might say that Miss Prichard has too much of benignity and generosity, that she is often too uncritical of her human material. But I think it is because she searches, not for motives, but for reasons.

WIN CALLAGHAN

★

Two Learned Journals

Australia now has two publications occupying themselves with serious research into Australian history and politics—the old-established *Historical Studies* (University of Melbourne, twice yearly, 21/- a year) and *Politics and History* (University of Queensland, twice yearly, 21/- a year), which is more recently established.

Probably the most important single piece of research in the latest two issues of *Historical Studies* (Nos. 30-31) is D. W. A. Baker's "The Origin of Robertson's Land Acts". Dealing with a key period of political struggle in the 19th century, Baker remarks that the land acts were not (as has often been suggested) the result "of an 'enlightened' squatter legislating for the good of the whole community. Rather, they were an essential stage by which middle-class liberals—led by a few wealthy landowners and supported by the poorer workers—established their society beyond challenge from the squatters."

Baker further asserts: "The real question to ask of a land law enacted in an expanding capitalist society is not: how many people did it settle on the land? but rather: by what methods were people prevented from obtaining independence through land ownership?"

Other important studies in these two issues of *Historical Studies* are "The Australian Socialist League and the Labor Movement 1887-91" by P. J. O'Farrell, "Catholic Historiography in Australia" by K. S. Inglis, and "The Australian Aborigines 1606-1929: Opinion and Fieldwork" by D. J. Mulvaney. But there is a wealth of interesting detail on other topics also.

The November 1958 issue of *Politics and History* contains two articles of special interest: James Jupp on "Socialist 'Rethinking' in Britain and Australia" (the attitudes to the working out of new policies by the British and Australian Labor Parties in recent years) and Don Rawson's "Politics and 'Responsibility' in Australian Trade Unions", in which Dr. Rawson discusses the attitudes of the Australian trade unions to "making capitalism work."

S.M.S.

★

A New Tauchnitz?

I have often wondered, especially when exploring the grimy recesses of Central European second-hand bookshops, just on what the reputation of the Tauchnitz editions rested. So familiar to the pre-war traveller on the Continent, they seemed to be re-prints of so much that was second-rate in English-language writing; and in a pretty repulsive format at that.

No-one could shoot these darts at a new series of English-language books now being published in East Germany, and apparently designed to usurp the former Tauchnitz market. An important difference, however, is that these "Panther" books are readily available in the English-speaking

countries themselves, which Tauchnitz, presumably for copyright reasons, never were.

Because of the stature of most of these books it would be presumptuous to do more than list those that have been received by this journal; except to say that they are beautifully produced in Leipzig, the world's number one printing city, that they are paper-backs that could almost pass for hard-bound books, that they are available in Australia, and that the prices vary between 4/6 and 7/6.

These are some recent titles: "Crown Jewel", by Ralph de Boissiere; "Power Without Glory," by Frank J. Hardy (two volumes); "The Octopus" (U.S. monopoly growth at the turn of the century), by Frank Norris; "The Volunteers" (Spanish Civil War—one of the finest of many fine books on this subject), by Steve Nelson; "All Things Betray Thee" (a story of nineteenth century Welsh iron-masters), by one of England's most imaginative left-wing writers, Gwyn Thomas; "I Knock at the Door" (the story of his childhood), by the great dramatist Sean O'Casey; "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court", by Mark Twain; "Silas Marner", by George Eliot; "A Lantern for Jeremy" (lyrical story of childhood in a Polish Ghetto in 1905), by V. J. Jerome; "Coolie", by Mulk Raj Anand; "The Scarlet Letter", by Nathaniel Hawthorne; "Jane Eyre", by Charlotte Bronte; "Pride and Prejudice", by Jane Austen.

—S.M.S.

★

Gumleaves and Bamboo

Undoubtedly one of the most modest publications of recent months, but certainly not the least significant, is Len Fox's slim volume of verse, "Gumleaves and Bamboo" (2/-).

Hallo!

This is me,

The common bloke . . .

the author explains in his first "gumleaf"—and indeed in the gentle, casual rhythm of his verses one can recognise not only the vocabulary and imagery of everyday Australian speech, but that subtle intonation, that rhythm, that one hears every day in the streets, on the job, in the pubs:

This poem's no stained-glass window,
This poem's no circlet of laurel,
It's a scrawled "We will remember"
Chalked on a piece of packing-case
Nailed to a branch from a gum-tree
Silently stuck on your grave.

For this reason, when Mr. Fox introduces "Bamboo" (those poems written during a two-year visit to Asia), he expresses what would be the thoughts and sentiments of most Australians if they too were to visit the same countries. There is no poetic ecstasy of the "color and mystery of the East," but instead a genuine compassion for humanity.

Dark-eyed smiling child
Greeting me in Hanoi street,
I see in your mischievous face
A lad I love in Australia.

Sentimental? Nostalgic? of course. But if the critics snort and turn their attention to more subtle versifiers, there are many who will find genuine pleasure just for the reading of "Gumleaves and Bamboo".

J.L.C.

Published by S. Murray-Smith, Mt. Eliza, Victoria; printed by "Richmond Chronicle," Shakespeare Street, Richmond, E.1.

MY FAIR LADY



ALAN JAY LERNER

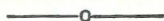


*The book of the most outstanding
Musical Comedy of modern times*

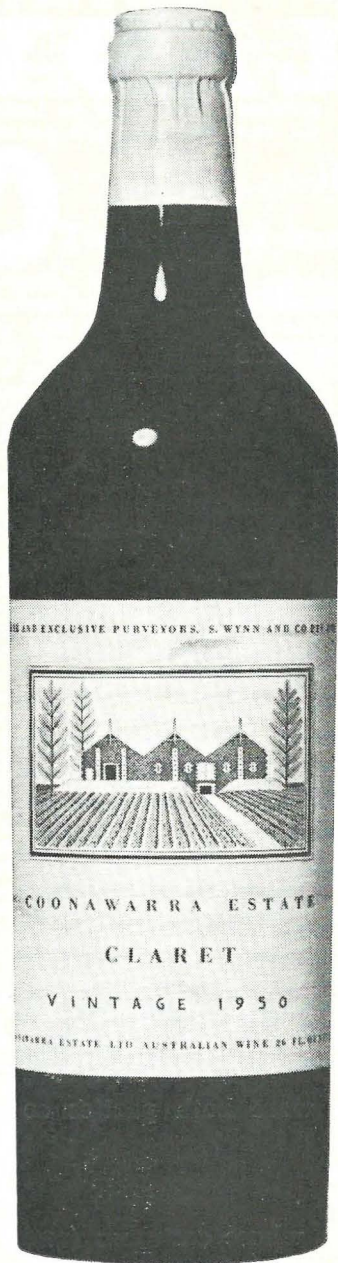


When the idea of a musical based on Shaw's *Pygmalion* first got abroad, most true Shavian hearts were aghast. And the more hard-headed denizens of the theatre world raised their eyebrows at the sheer unlikelihood of making money out of popularising Shaw. Why were both parties so wrong?

Partly because they reckoned without Cecil Beaton, whose costumes (and there are eight pages of terrific Beaton photographs here) made the whole show so smart and sophisticated. And partly because of the skill with which the book and lyrics were written: it is fascinating to compare Alan Jay Lerner's flawless script for a musical with Shaw's immortal but erratic masterpiece.



PENGUIN BOOKS, WHITEHORSE RD., MITCHAM, VIC.



WC143



In South Australia, just beyond the Victorian border, there is a unique area—Coonawarra—where soil and climate duplicate the claret-growing regions of France. Here, hundreds of miles from other Australian vineyards, Cabernet and Shiraz vines are tended by a colony of European winegrowers, steeped in the old-world traditions of wine-making. Here, too, as in Bordeaux, the wines are stored in oak casks for a full three years before being laid down in bottles for further ageing. Coonawarra Estate Claret (the qualifying word Estate is important) has been paid numerous tributes in exhibitions in London, Paris and Australia since 1891—it is limited in quantity and the discriminating diner would be well advised to seek it out.

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