

OVERLAND

NUMBER THREE, AUTUMN, 1955

ONE SHILLING



*"He stuck up the Beechworth mail coach, and robbed Judge MacEvoy,
Who trembled and gave up his gold to the Wild Colonial Boy."*

Lino cut by Ron Edwards.

WRITING BY:

*Ted Harrington, John Manifold, Frank Hardy, Max
Bollinger, Vance Palmer, Roland Robinson, Ian Turner,
Helen Palmer, Hugh Anderson, Merv Lilley, David
Martin, David Forrest, Rex Mortimer, Jim Crawford,
Dave Smith, Ironbark and others.*

A STEP BACK?

We have received many letters praising the vigor and initiative of **Overland**.

We have kept faith with our readers by increasing size and cramming as much reading as possible into each issue.

Overland's readers now receive over 20,000 words of reading matter in each issue—for a fraction of the price of other literary magazines.

Furthermore, we need the space, for our contributors have original and important things to say.

Next issue, however, we will revert to 16 pages if our support does not become more evident.

This can only be seen as a backward step. We regret it.

The main troubles are these:

- Readers of **Overland** are not showing the magazine to their friends and workmates, are not talking about it and popularising it.
- Those who do read it are often not supporting it with their subscriptions. Any magazine must rely on subscriptions—only a fraction of the price is received from copies sold in shops. In the whole of Sydney, for instance, there are still only 13 subscribers to **Overland**.
- We are proud to be selling 1500 copies of each issue, but this is still not enough to make much impact on the initial heavy charges for setting and composing. Cost of producing of the magazine is about 1/3 an issue, and shop sales, free copies and current subscriptions all reduce the cash return.
- Well-wishers are not helping with donations, large or small.
- Those groups of writers throughout Australia who support **Overland**, and whose work **Overland** largely exists to forward, have yet to look upon the magazine as their own property, and to make it their task to popularise it imaginatively and enthusiastically.

We know we have a big future as a magazine—a job we are just settling down into.

Already the very existence of **Overland** has acted as a stimulus to writing, reading and research.

It's up to you whether it continues to go forward, or takes a step to the rear.

CULTURE?—THAT'S RED!

Any thoughts lingering in anyone's mind that McCarthyism in Australia would know when to stop should be dispelled by the recent pointless appearance before the Royal Commission of such respected cultural figures as Clem Christensen and Clive Turnbull, and the mentioning of Colin Simpson.

In addition we must note that the much-criticised passport ban has now been applied to Frank Hardy, writer, and to Miss Nell Old, poetess, school teacher, and **Overland** contributor.

The latest information from the U.S.A. shows where the situation could get to in Australia.

Thoreau's **Walden** is the latest book withdrawn from the United States Information Agency's overseas library service. "This action comes in the nick of time," comments **Masses and Mainstream**, "when you remember that a lot of Americans have this year been celebrating the hundredth anniversary of Thoreau's assault on our way of life."

The checklists of the U.S.I.A. contain over 7000 names of authors, artists and composers. Among those whose works are banned from American libraries overseas are Professor Henry Seidel Canby, Aaron Copland, Julian Huxley, Frederick L. Schuman, Edgar Snow and Dorothy Parker.

The complete list of banned cultural figures, comments **Masses and Mainstream**, "reads like a 'Who's Who' in the realm of American culture."

Ernest Hemingway was also on the list, but was hurriedly dropped from it when he was recently awarded the Nobel Prize. This saved an embarrassing headline splash—NOBEL PRIZE WINNER BLACKLISTED BY UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY.

The notorious Roy Cohn, McCarthy's counsel, when asked about the choice of speakers for a television program, said: "Any author is out."

Those Australian more-or-less-public figures dallying with the Keons, Wentworths and the potential witch-hunters of the "Congress for Cultural Freedom" might well reflect on this clear proof that the "anti-Communist" crusade is aimed at all independent thought, all democratic ideas: it is a noose for liberty.

EDWARD HARRINGTON

by Frank Hardy

EDWARD HARRINGTON once described himself to me as a literary throw-back. There is some truth in his contention and this in part explains the unique position Harrington holds in Australian literature.

The majority of his ballads are written in the tradition of Lawson and the other writers of the 'nineties school; more than that, they would seem to refer to the period mainly dealt with in, say, Lawson's work, the 'seventies, 'eighties and 'nineties of which Harrington saw only the taper-end in the early years of this century.

Take, for example, "My Old Black Billy," Harrington's most popular ballad. Written in 1938, it clearly pictures the old swagmen of the last century; certainly it has little reference to the modern swagmen, migratory workers and bagmen who swarmed over Australia looking for work in the hungry 'thirties.

I have carried my swag on the parched Paroo
Where water is scarce few, and the houses few,
On many a track, in the great Out Back
Where the heat would drive you silly,
I've carried my sensible,
Indispensable,
Old black billy.

Yet "My Old Black Billy" seems already assured of immortality. It is the hit tune of the musical show "Reedy River" which ran for nine months in Sydney and nearly as long in Melbourne. In fifteen years it established itself as a folk song; a most unusual feat in these days of plugged hit tunes and weeping crooners.

How the song came to get into "Reedy River" throws light on its remarkable folk quality. A former shearer sang "My Old Black Billy" at a party in Melbourne when "Reedy River" was at the rehearsal stage. The singer said he had learned it in the shearing sheds; impressed, Dick Diamond immediately wrote a new character, Bob the Swaggie, into the play to sing the song. After I saw "Reedy River" for the first time I met Harrington in Johnny Connell's pub in Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, and told him his song was in the snow, but that the producers had believed it to be an anonymous folk song.

A study of Ted Harrington's work shows that the old life, the old themes, recur again and again: "The Drover's Song," "The Old Blade Shed," "The Kerrigan Boys," "The Fossicker," "A Little Bit of Land," "Lassiter's Last Long Ride," "The Bush-rangers" and many more including the other song of the sundowners, "The Swagman's Song." The last-named is a swaggie of the old school, too. Note:

The squatters may frown and the cooks may abuse

But I pitch my camp wherever I choose.
For I must have grub, and baccy, and beer,
And I'm always handy when night is near.

Old Ted has more than once told me that writers often draw their subject matter from the period of their childhood, of the previous generation, and it is clear that he often harked back to the old days when the Australian tradition was formed knowing that his skill and perception gives him something new to say about the old subjects.

This aspect of Edward Harrington justifies his styling himself a literary throw-back—but there is something more to be found in his work.

He has published three books of verse. *Songs of War and Peace* (1920), *Boundary Bend* (1936),



and *The Kerrigan Boys* (1944). Other poems and ballads are to be found in the files of the *Bulletin*, *Labor Call* and *Bohemia*, some in the old suitcase under his bed in North Melbourne, and a few, I fear, will never be found.

What is to be found as well as the old themes in this body of work?

There is the contemporary ballad heart-beating with humanism and restrained social comment, such as "The Girl with the Pram" and "The Derelicts."

To quote from the rather lengthy "Girl with the Pram" would approach sacrilege but it was a poet's vision that led Harrington to see her when he set out to write a poem about the bustling Victoria Market.

Where are the stanzas in the English language to surpass the stark simplicity of "The Derelicts"? A lonely, hungry, homeless, embittered man—a derelict wanders forth into the cold, friendless night:

. . . When out of the shadows, uncouth and lame,

A homeless dog from the darkness came.
He stopped beside me and wagged his tail
And looked at me in a wistful way

With a look so human I could not fail
To understand what he meant to say:
"There's a bond of mateship between us two.
I am a derelict, so are you."

They have many adventures during that bitter night:

Policemen paused as we passed them by
And eyed us both with a searching glance,
For the law is ever alert to scan
A homeless dog or a homeless man.

The restaurants are crammed with food but no one asks them to go inside. Jewelled ladies, "pampered pets of the social clan" pass them by and . . .

The door of the chapel before us shone,
A priest was preaching of vice and sin,
But we seemed to feel that our chance had gone,

And no one asked us to enter in.
What hope had we at the Pearly Gate—
A homeless dog and his homeless mate?

They lost each other next day and the man searches for his derelict mate but the city has swallowed him up again. On his way the man meets an old friend who cheers him up and pulls him through. . . . The poet muses that the dog must long since have died and gone where "none may enter to stone or flog or scold or harass a hungry dog" and that reposing in the dogs' heaven would have long forgotten his old-time mate. . . .

But I'll remember till life shall end,
The night, the silence, the drifting fog,
That bitter night when I found a friend,
And I learned this much from a homeless dog:

To tend and shelter when'er I can
A homeless dog or a homeless man.

Then there are those ballads brim-full of Australasian humor, at the same time hilarious and sardonic, like "Casey's Beer" and "O'Brien's Leap."

Tim Casey, a thirsty soul who loved his beer so much he couldn't afford not to borrow large pipefuls of tobacco, dropped into Dan Magee's hotel (after hours) for a few noggins. . . .

It might have been an accident; a stranger standing near—

A chimpanzee in human form—knocked over Casey's beer.

A swagman fainted, the stranger fled and a dreadful muffled moan came from Casey's chest. . . .

The look of pain on Casey's face it pierced us to the core,

As with a last despairing moan he sank upon the floor.

We stooped to hear his last faint words—we knew the end was near.

He closed one eye and gave a sigh: "E spilt me pot of beer!"

And in case anyone doubts the story there's a tombstone in the cemetery opposite: "Here lies Tim Casey; R.I.P. A stranger spilt his beer."

If you must talk of jumping feats then remember when Mick O'Brien, sleeping it off in the cemetery, got disturbed by a ghost. . . .

That night he jumped the graveyard fence—a leap of eight foot clear—

Weighed down by flamin' blucher boots and full of Guinan's beer!"

Then there are the poems written during and immediately after the First World War in which Edward Harrington served in the Light Horse overseas. I have never been able to get hold of a copy of *Songs of War and Peace* but I have read, and heard Ted recite, some of the verses from it.

Memorable is that savage indictment of war, "The Dead Come Home." Savor the bitterness of it. . . .

"We deemed that from our sacrifice a brighter world would rise,

Purged of the lust of greed and gain, a world more just and wise;

That Peace would reign forever more between the warring powers,

And happiness would smile again on this fair land of ours.

Till all your pledges to the dead are honored and fulfilled

You're traitors to the faith we held whatever shrines you build!"

Among the war poems is the theme of the bond of mateship wrought by fear and suffering, yet in "The Mother Speaks" Harrington comments most effectively on war and reaches one of his perhaps rare stormings of the ecstatic heights of sheer poetry.

And finally there are what Ted himself calls his "radical poems" which were mainly written in the 'thirties when he was unemployed, and published in the old *Labor Call*. These have never been published in book form but he wrote several of them out for me when last year he spent a week or two with us in Sydney (he has an astonishing memory for his own verse). An extract from one of which he is especially fond, "Gentlemen, The Press," will indicate the tone of these:

. . . It's always on the rich man's side, it makes my blood run cold

To think of all the harm it's done and all the lies it's told.

It never tries to bring reform or mitigate distress

It fools the people all the time, the bitter tory press.

When times are bad and work is scarce and hunger stalks the town

The press is always to the fore to drag the workers down. . . .

Strangely enough, although Edward Harrington's political convictions have grown more radical, deeper and more socialistic in recent years, they have found no expression in his verse. In fact, he has written little in the past decade; perhaps a couple of ballads a year in the *Bulletin* would be almost the extent of it.

And what of Edward Harrington the man? The man parallels the poet: he is kindly and wise with a keen sense of mateship and a dry sense of humor. And he tends towards nostalgia for the old days and the old mates. A quarter of a century ago he was already tending to look backwards on life when he wrote the verses "Thirty Five" ("We've very few illusions left when we are thirty-five..").

Harrington was born in Shepparton in 1895. He later attended the Wanalta State School near Rushworth, the same school that Joseph Furphy immortalised in "The Schoolhouse on the Plain." He was already writing verse at the age of twelve.

Ted "went broke" on a Mallee farm after the war and, during the depression years, was often a member of the army of unemployed. For many years until recently he worked in the canteen at the C.A.C. factory at Fishermen's Bend. He is now a recipient of a T.P.I. pension.

Never one to seek literary limelight, he has faded further from view in recent years. You might see him occasionally at a Bread and Cheese Club or Australasian Book Society function, otherwise you must seek him in one of his favorite pubs with his old mates, usually working men and returned diggers.

Ted's closest friends among the writers of the last generation were John Shaw Neilson and Ted Brady (both older men than he). He paid glorious poetic tribute to them on the occasion of their deaths. The Neilson "in memoriam" poem called "The Weaver of Dreams" is amongst his finest work. When A. B. Paterson died, Harrington wrote a poem called "Banjo" for the *Bulletin*. One day he said to me: "I got two pound ten for the one on Banjo and only twelve and six for the one on Brady. Old E.J. wouldn't have been too pleased about that, would he?"

That dry humor is typical of Harrington. He and Cec Grivas (who sang "My Old Black Billy" in the Sydney production of "Reedy River") and myself came out of a pub in North Sydney only to find a policeman standing guard over my car which was parked on a bus stop. The policeman and I were soon involved in a testy argument. Old

Ted intervened with subtle diplomacy and saved me a fine. As we drove away he said slyly: "Frank, it is the beginnings of wisdom never to argue with a policeman."

On another occasion, he and Cec and I were discussing the Kelly country. "That country was never any good for anything but bushranging," Ted said. "They ruined a developing industry when they hung Ned Kelly."

Ted lives the very spirit of Australian mateship. For him there are no bad people except that generalisation, the capitalists. He will find an excuse for the deepest villain or hypocrite. The phrases "he's not a bad fellow," "he's had a lot of trouble one way and another" or "there's a lot of good in poor old so-and-so" come readily from him; and he will patch up a quarrel between friends by reciting Lawson's "A Mate Can Do No Wrong."

Modesty about his own literary achievements is a marked quality of Edward Harrington. Instance his association with "Reedy River": though it ran for several weeks in Melbourne after I told him his song was in the show he didn't get round to seeing it. Eventually I prevailed upon him to come to Sydney for the final night of its record-breaking run there.

Reluctantly he made an appearance before the footlights after the show with a few well chosen words about the need to foster Australian literature and art. He remarked to me afterwards: "It's a pity old Louis Lavater didn't live to see this" (Lavater had two songs in the show). On the way home he said: "You know that is the first time I've heard 'My Old Black Billy' sung since Edith Harry sung it for me in Allan's in 1938." Edith Harry composed the music for "My Old Black Billy" a few days after Ted wrote the words.

About Edward Harrington the question remains: is he capable of further development as a writer? His health is very poorly, but now that he has the time and relative security of the pension I for one believe he will find a new lease of creative life. Last time I was in Melbourne he told me he was writing a series of short stories about his late uncle "Brieno" (one of the greatest bush yarn-spinners and liars who ever drank a glass of beer).

In any event, many of Ted's songs and verses will live on through the years to come. Some would contest this, certainly Ted himself would—but then neither Edward Harrington nor his "cultured critics" will decide the issue, future generations of Australians will.



Insomnia

There's something wrong with my brain tonight,
Though I've drawn the blinds and I've quenched the
light;

I can't for the life of me sleep a wink,
I lie in the dark and think; and think.
While the hours creep by and the clock ticks loud,
Like the steady tramp of a marching crowd;
And the forms and faces of men long dead,
Peer and cluster about my bed.
I watch them come and I watch them go,
And they nudge each other and whisper low,
Though the doors are locked and the windows too,
Now: What In Hell Is A Man To Do?

Hello! Curran, you damned old scamp,
First of the mates I met in camp;
If I had a bottle we'd drink a toast,
To old Romani and Tusson's Post.
But I know you are only an empty ghost,
When last we met we were far away,
That was at Raffa on Christmas Day;
On Christmas Day, but we had no spread,
But plenty of bullets and bombs instead.
And in lieu of whisky and beers and wines,
A gust of shrapnel and five point nines.
Christmas cheer from the Moslem lines.

We had marched all day: We were parched with
thirst,
Savage and hungry, and how we cursed;
When we swung in line for the last attack,
But we stormed the trenches and drove them back.
And I saw you later spread-eagled out,
Face up in front of the first redoubt.
With most of your brains in your old slouch hat,
But what is the good of a dream like that?

Heads a "fiver": Who's got the kip?
Shamrock Ryan, you take my tip;
He'll head 'em once: He'll head 'em twice,
He's just the same with the cards and dice.
Don't set the centre, that's my advice,
He might do five and he might do ten,
Up they go and they're heads again.
Always smiling and always cool,
He won't let up till he breaks the school.
Fifty he heads 'em: who wants a bet?
Fair to spinner: the centre's set;
And he's done another: I knew he would,
He was always lucky: but what's the good?

Lying there with his face all wan,
And one leg shattered, and one arm gone;
While his heart is pumping his life blood out,
Like water pumped from a two-inch spout.
And he draws his breath with a gurgling hiss,
But: what's the good of a dream like this?

Night and noise in a Cairo den,
Naked women and drunken men;
An acrid smell like a sacrifice,
Offered up to the gods of Vice.
Someone fumbling the broken keys,
Of an old piano with windy wheeze;
An oath, a scuffle, a crash, a yell,
Drink and women don't mix too well;
Make for the stairway: grab the stool,
The "Jacks" are coming: put out the lights.
What's gone wrong with the drunken fool?
I'm sick to death of those drunken fights;
Crash of furniture: oaths and screams.
Oh! I'm sick to death of those ugly dreams.

Take me somewhere and sink me deep,
 Into a fathomless gulf of sleep;
 With Sealed up eyes and with padlocked ears,
 And let me slumber for years and years.
 With sealed up eyes and with padlocked ears,
 That will be heaven enough for me;
 I want no angels or jasper throne,
 I only want to be left alone;
 For I'm sick to death of lying awake,
 Waiting and watching for dawn to break.
 While the hours creep by and I hear them strike,
 Till I've almost forgotten what sleep is like.
 And I'm sick of the figures that crowd the gloom,
 And flit and chuckle about the room.
 Till dawn's cold light on the window gleams,
 And puts an end to those ugly dreams.

EDWARD HARRINGTON

Nemesis

I rode away in the morning light when the sky
 was blue and clear,
 The hills were wrapped in a golden haze and the
 corn was in the ear.
 A beggar called me beside the way, but I did not
 choose to hear.

How could I think of a hungry man! with the air
 so pure and sweet,
 With the skylarks singing above my head and the
 spring-wind in the wheat;
 How could I think of a hungry man, with the
 flowers at my feet?

I journeyed on through the morning light and on
 through the hush of noon,
 I never noticed the way I came, and the darkness
 fell so soon. . . .
 Night and the storm are upon me now . . . there
 is now star nor moon.

Oh, fool was I to wander so far on a desolate,
 lonely track,
 With never a friend to cheer my heart, or a light
 to guide me back.
 Never was wood so dense as this, never was night
 so black!

I cannot cry in this awful place, for the echoes
 would mock my fear,
 I cannot pray to God for aid for I know God
 would hear.
 I should have prayed in the morning light when
 The skies were blue and clear!

Surely someone will think of me, surely a friend
 unknown
 Will leave a light in the window-niche to guide a
 wanderer lone.
 God! did I ever think to place a candle in mine
 own?

I rode too far in the morning light: I should have
 returned at noon,
 But how did I know the storm would come or the
 darkness fall so soon.
 Oh, for the voice of the beggar now . . . there is
 no star nor moon!

EDWARD HARRINGTON

Ted Harrington's booklet, *The Kerrigan Boys*, which contains 32 of his better-known poems, is obtainable from Will Andrade, 276 Collins St., Melbourne, price 1/6 (3d, postage).

THE SWAGLESS SWAGGIE

This happened in the years gone by before the
 bush was cleared,

When every man was six foot high and wore a
 heavy beard;

One very hot and windy day along the old coach
 road,

Towards Joe Murphy's wayside pub a bearded
 stranger strode,

He was a huge and hairy man well over six foot
 high,

An old slouch hat was on his head and murder in
 his eye;

No billycan was in his hand, no heavy swag he
 bore,

But deep and awful were the oaths that swagless
 swaggie swore.

They were a rough and ready lot, the bushmen
 gathered there,

But every man was stricken dumb to hear that
 stranger swear;

He cursed the bush, he cursed mankind and all
 the universe,

It froze their very blood to hear that swagless
 swaggie curse.

"I met the Ben Hall gang," he said, "the bastards
 stuck me up,

They pinched me billy, pinched me swag, they
 pinched me flamin' pup;

They turned me pockets inside out and took me
 only quid,

I never thought they'd pinch me pipe, but s'elp me
 God they did.

"I never done the gang no harm, I thought 'em
 decent chaps,

But now I wouldn't raise a hand to save 'em from
 the traps;

I'm done forever with the bush, I'm makin' for
 the town,

Where they won't stick a swaggie up and take a
 swaggie down."

The bushmen were a decent lot, as bushmen mostly
 are,

They filled the stranger up with beer, the hat
 went round the bar;

The shearers threw some blankets in to make
 another swag,

The rousers gave a billycan and brand new tucker-
 bag.

Joe Murphy gave a briar pipe he hadn't smoked
 for years,

The stranger was too full for words, his eyes were
 dim with tears;

The ringer shouted drinks all round, and then to
 top it up,

The shearers' cook, the babbling brook, gave him a
 kelpie pup.

Next day an hour before the dawn, the stranger
 took the track,

Complete with pup and billycan, his swag upon
 his back;

Along the most forsaken roads, intent on dodging
 graft,

He headed for the great north-west, and laughed
 and laughed and laughed.

EDWARD HARRINGTON

BREAK IN THE CHAIN

by Rex Mortimer

THE first whistle blew. Screwing up his lunch-bag tight, Joe threw it into the council tin and walked across the lawn to the road. The gulls wheeled and screamed as their lunch-time also came to an end.

From all directions a sombre line of workers in grey and black clumped to the factory gate.

They walked beneath the effigy of the sparrow, household symbol of a famous name in biscuits. As each man passed the gate he was scrutinised by the company supervisor, "Creep." Watch in hand, the supervisor waited eagerly for the tick of twelve thirty-five, when the gate would crash shut and the straggler be fined.

Once inside the imposing facade, each man turned towards his workshop, tumble-down structures of rotting wood and rusting iron. Joe moved to the right into the home of the "Oval Crunchy" . . .

Big Bill, six feet four in his socks, with silver grey hair cut in the convict style, was throwing flour bags round like powderpuffs, powerful muscles bulging through his "chesty bond." Big Bill was well known as a militant, and accordingly an excuse had been found to change his lunch hour and prevent him talking to the other men. He only kept his job due to his enormous strength, so essential in a plant whose very ovens bore the legend "Manchester, 1885."

Jim was rushing from machine to machine, oiling and dusting with gusto. Jim was foreman. "That is," Bill said, "he gets five bob extra to drive everyone else and do a job no one else in his right senses would do." This job was to stoke the fires. Every two hours Jim would descend below the ovens and shovel coke into the hungry furnaces. Then, gasping and choking and his body on fire, he would lay fighting for air on a pile of rags. Jim had a bad heart.

Cec. stood by his dough roller, talking to his packer girl friend. Cec was never anxious to start work. He feared that loosely guarded roller as an old man fears death. Only two months earlier his mate had caught his hand. He was just back on the job, displaying the mangled sinews and muscles of his upper arm.

As Joe walked towards his machine Jim called him over. With him was a newcomer, a towheaded youngster with a freckled face.

"Joe," said Jim, "this here's Tom. He's going to pick up trays to-day. To-morrow we might give him a go on your job, so's you can go on the rollers with Cec."

Joe looked the boy over carefully, almost jealously. He could not have been more than fourteen. He was short, but strongly built. Thin nose in a square, taut face. His eyes stared past Joe—bright blue, floating in pools. They gave his face an air of intense sadness.

"That's O.K. by me," Joe said.

"Right," said Jim. Turning to the boy he commanded, "I'll show you where you work."

The boy showed no signs of having heard. Standing clasping a battered old leather case, he continued to gaze into the distance as Jim walked away.

"Off you go," said Joe, and shoved him in the direction the foreman had taken. Still with the same vacant stare he shuffled off after Jim.

Joe scratched his head and sat down on his box to wait for the grinding of the machine. . .

The grimy, sweaty afternoon dragged on. Almost without respite Joe reached for the trays wheeled to him, bent over, and swung them into the stamping machine. There they locked on the moving chain and pressed on to receive their load of uncooked biscuits. Stretch, bend, swing, stretch, bend, swing to the rhythm of Bing Crosby crooning through the haze of heat and dust from the high-mounted amplifiers.

Once Joe glanced across to where the boy Tom stood at the end of the packing line, taking off the empty trays and placing them in the car which, when full, was wheeled to Joe. His careless glance froze. With popping eyes he saw the boy, taking advantage of a break in the line of trays, put his hand under the bench and pull out a hidden book, which he began to read greedily.

Cripes, Joe thought, if Jim doesn't see him, Creep will, and then there'll be hell to pay. He thought of the time Creep had kicked open the door of the lavatory where he sat smoking.

While Joe watched, throwing his trays in blindly, he saw the empty trays on Tom's line begin to lumber towards him once more. Why doesn't he look up, Joe thought. The bouncing army of trays came nearer, nearer. Joe stared, fascinated, while the silent reader stood as if reading a sermon to the packing girls fifty feet further down his line.

Then came the crash, bursting over the throb of the machines as one tray after another tipped on to the concrete floor. Tom staggered under the shock, and the book flew from his hand. Like a flash Jim was on the scene, his eyes darting everywhere and taking in the picture. Ugly oaths burst from his lips in a torrent.

"What do you think this is, a bloody library!" he roared. "Pick up them bloody trays."

The whole line was held up while the boy, without a word, bent and retrieved the hot iron sheets.

The foreman stormed away, raging at mothers who bore such unspeakable monstrosities. . .

Next morning, on the way from the station, Joe described the event to Big Bill, bringing out what now seemed the comical aspects of the situation. To him, Tom was a shingle short. Joe was disappointed when all Bill said was, "Go easy on him, Joey. He's a sick boy."

During the morning, at every opportunity, Joe stole glances at the odd youngster. He was not disappointed. Whenever there was a break in the line, the book would reappear with a stealthy movement. Joe saw that Jim, too, had observed; but held his peace. His anxiety and displeasure was vented on the rest of the men in irritable outbursts. With the stifling heat in the shop, everyone felt moody and on edge.

At lunch, Joe sat once more on the grassy fore-shore, watching the busy life of the port. Presently, Tom sat down near him and immediately opened a book, stuffing sandwiches into his mouth without once raising his eyes from the pages.

Joe could not restrain his curiosity and asked him: "What are you reading, sport?"

Slowly, his eyes lifted towards and beyond Joe. His mouth moved, but without words. After a pause, he turned the book's cover outwards. Joe squinted and read, "Smoking Guns." A fair-haired youngster with cruel eyes and twisted mouth was facing him, spurting bursts of flame from twin

revolvers. The author's name was obscured by Tom's hand.

"Fond of Westerns?" Joe followed up.

But he was already back in the book, and only nodded abstractedly. This made Joe all the more determined to try and fathom him, and he searched for questions to draw out the boy.

"How many books do you read in a week?"

Tom drew a pointed sigh and looked up.

"About fourteen," he answered. His eyes flicked back to the pages.

"Cost you a few bob," Joe said. "Don't your parents go crook?"

"No parents," he said without emotion. "I live with my aunt."

"Is she a good sort?"

The blue eyes blazed. The hands clutching the book tightened.

"I hate her guts. She turns off the light and pinches my torch."

"Why don't you nick off?" Joe asked.

The eyes lost their fire, and filmed over with disillusion. His head dropped.

"I did once," he mourned softly. "I got a job in a stable. I wanted to be a jockey. The trainer took a whip to me when he caught me reading. I tried to kill him with a brick."

He broke off, and tense seconds ticked by. A wave of shame swept over Joe as he thought of the contempt he had felt towards this boy.

The whistle went. Unable to think of anything to say, Joe muttered gruffly. "Don't let Creep catch you reading," and walked off into the factory.

As he entered the shop, Jim called out and Joe crossed to where he stood, screwdriver in hand.

"I think we'll take that Tom off the empties," he said. "We'll put him on your job. You go over with Cec."

Joe looked at him without answering, and walked away. He knew what was in Jim's mind. He wanted to make it impossible for the boy to read. Joe didn't like it. He had a feeling trouble lay ahead.

He quickly showed Tom how to throw the trays so that they would lock in the chain, without jamming. The boy took over and Joe watched him for a few minutes. His hands were clumsy, and he sweated heavily as he toiled to straighten the trays before the chain carried them out of reach. Joe noted with relief that Jim had the machine dead slow.

After a while, Joe joined Cec at the rollers. He kneaded the dough, and pressed the heavy mass into the wringer-like machine. He kept looking towards the box where Tom sat.

Slowly the time ebbed away. Suddenly Joe paused in his rolling. There was a change in the pulse of the shop. Some element in the complex rhythm of sounds had changed in pitch. He looked towards Tom. Sure enough, they had speeded up the machine. He was leaning over frantically grasping the trays and hurling them on to the clattering chain. Joe could tell by his fevered motions that he was falling behind. The crazy fools!

The crisis came quickly. A hastily-flung tray missed the locks and jammed in the machine. The chain rattled and strained, but could not move. The biscuit dough, gently borne down by the canvas belt above, could find no support and fell with a plop on to the floor.

Why doesn't he call out, Joe thought?

But the boy sat, as if turned to stone, watching the growing pile of dough at his feet.

Joe looked for Jim. He was oiling the machine,

MY CHILDREN

Will they live their lives in dole days,

In the under-fed and cold days,

Will they be conscripted soldiers

Or conscripted soldiers' wives?

Will they have to hump the bluey,

Will they listen to the hooey

As the politicians promise

While they smash a billion lives?

Will they walk their soles from under

Hunting jobs—or hear the thunder

Of an atom bomb exploding

In a million melted ears?

Will they be fear-fevered people,

Fearing bank, war-office, steeple;

Will they curse the womb that bore them

To a world of blood and tears?

Will our lads be taught at killing,

Will the times see people willing

To watch the hoards of profit mount

While Death and Pillage roam?

Will our daughters stand for hire,

Take our jobs of toil and tire

As labor cheap in industry

And drudges in the home?

NO! The world will grow much wider:

Muscovite and Sydneysider;

Black and White and Brown and Yellow then

In hope's enlisted horde,

And my children's future splendid

With their children's future blended

Will be ensured forever

As we rout the last war lord.

DAVE SMITH

oblivious of the scene only a few yards from where he stood.

Joe started to shout, unable to leave his rolling dough.

Still the raw biscuits piled up, already knee high. At last Jim heard the shout and followed Joe's darting finger.

He gazed, dumbfounded, at the rising mound of dough and the petrified boy. He seemed unable to believe his eyes.

At last, after an eternity, the spell broke and he turned on Tom. Obscene oaths rained on the bowed head. Maddened by the boy's silence, he started to clout him over the head, dancing and shouting with rage.

The boy neither moved nor spoke.

Someone shut off the machine, and in the sudden hush Jim's voice echoed through the shop. Workers were drawn to the machine and stood around, watching in bewilderment.

Then the boy's shoulders began to shake. Sobs choked from his throat, and streams of tears ran down his face. He cried, laughed and sobbed in wild hysterics. He fell from the box and lay shrieking on the floor.

At that moment, a huge figure burst through the throng. With sure arms Big Bill lifted the sobbing lad and began to croon to him like a mother.

"Never mind, my boy. It's all over now. Let's get out of this stinking place. You can stay with me. I've got lots of books for you. There now, ease up, everything's jake."

Still whispering to the boy, he pushed through the crowd and walked slowly out the door.

Arandjera

David Forrest

TH**ERE** is a tale told of Arandjera, of the Northland, man square of shoulder and proud of head. An ageing man, graced in the person with a sweep of grey curly beard, a man in whom was writ large the dignity of the human being. Friend of all, brother of men, who in the absence of hurt from another gave little by hand or mind. A man in whose bearing was personified the culture of ten thousand years.

In a phrase, an ignorant boong.

Upon one he looked with grave intent, as do all men who are met upon an equal. With eyes which were old, which had gazed upon mysteries and portents that were ancient when Julius Caesar came over the sea from Gaul. Old and wise, knowing all things which are known from now until the days before the Dreamtime. Eyes which estimate a man's worth, for if they may read the falling of a feather or the mating of the jabiru, how elementary to read the meaning of a man.

The cunning bastard. You never know what he's thinking.

A proud old man, the product of wind and sun and fire and all the other furies of the world. An ageing man, who knew what it meant for one to lead his tribe over two hundred miles of desert in the years when the yam shrivelled in the ground under the fury of the sun, and the emu and the kangaroo had departed to the Eastland, leaving behind them in the wilderness the starkness of their droppings. A proud old man, who knew what is meant by the relative ballistics of spear and bullet.

In a word, a treacherous dingo.

But there came one, a brother, who said, "Look you, the king is naked." And gave him a shirt. But the shirt was chafing upon the skin and the sweat made the fabric to stink, so that he took the shirt and burnt it, and the heat of the fire warmed him in the chillness of the night.

The bloody ungrateful mongrel.

Man of dignity, upon whose word waited women and children and grown men, so that one knew that here was a statesman of mountain and desert and sea.

And another gave him a shilling, for services rendered when the woolly beasts would have perished, and he beat the shilling into a spear's head.

In a phrase, a useless waster.

One who was teacher of children and guide of the grown ones. Who knew all the forty-seven songs that one can know in the Northland. Man who was father and saviour, custodian and leader.

Towards the end there came one who said, "My brother, we are children of God. Go ye in peace." And he answered him, "It is done."

And terror befell the Northland, so that men died of a bleeding of the breath, and women sickened of a devilry in the womb, so that children came forth blind, and others sick of the head.

To coin a phrase, a hot-bed of disease.

Then his brothers came with stockwhip and bullet, because he had shared a portion of meat, as it is law that brothers may do. And the beasts that provided the meat ate the grass and drove off the emu and kangaroo and bush rat and his brothers cut down the trees which nurture the soil.

A bludging, shiftless lot.

And this is the tale of Arandjera, of the Northland, whose wisdom and learning sought an answer in the desert, and upon the plains, and in the mountains . . . and found none.

An old, old man, who, when all else was gone, turned to that awful Place Where No Man May Walk, and died there of a broken heart. There, where the Sun God came down in the Dreamtime upon the Mountain That Glows By Night and brought the marvel of man to the face of the Earth.

Then he who was owner of four thousand square miles of the Northland turned aside for a moment to say, "I wonder what brought the old codger up here?"

It was an excellent question.

And he who lay upon the Mountain That Glows By Night said not a word.

MISSION STATION NORTH QUEENSLAND

Yes, they mean well. They love the "simple black." (I love my cat, that wayward, little creature!) With humble pride they point to every feature: Drainage is good. We're pulling down the shack. We've stamped out hook-worm, promiscuity: And would do more, but—such a shiftless pack. . .

How thankless, then these children! Talking back! Should they not blithely go to church and pray, Hand over quietly half their weekly pay? If they went free—the squatter's whip would crack! Here is: protection. Here's a haven, peace. What, fickle generation, dost thou lack?

Oh, look about: the leader and the led! Who built this launch, and what remains his fee? Who fathered better captains, they or he? Who are the lambs, I ask, and who the fed? "We teach them virtue, self-respect and thrift." Yea, self-respect! Where have thy blushes fled?

The tale is wearing thinner shred by shred. The dear black children lift their dear black eyes, But not to heaven—to the Queensland skies! They square their shoulders, all subservience shed: What banner shall we carry when we come? Not white or black, but like the sunrise—red.

DAVID MARTIN

THE BOTTLE

JIM CRAWFORD

"GIVE me a bottle of rum for the road," said the drovers' cook.

"I sell rum," said the publican. "I don't give it away."

"You've sold me ninety quids' worth in the last ten days," rejoined the cook. "At any rate, YOU reckon you have. The fairies must have been in here, drinking with me."

"You can't play the Captain for ten days for nothing," retorted the publican. "And they were no fairies . . . the bagmen you had in here—boozing and singing and keeping me up till midnight every night."

He mopped the bar with the air of a martyr.

"I'll get the money as soon's I get back to the plant," said the cook. "I'll send you a quid back with the first bloke that's heading this way. Two quid, if you like."

The publican turned his back and re-arranged a bottle on the bar shelf.

The cook spread both hands on the bar, as if about to climb it.

"D'you think I'm going bush, after a ten-day bender, without a bottle to see me through to-night?"

The publican turned and faced him. Martyrdom gave way to paternalism.

"If you don't start chasing that droving plant soon, they'll have picked up their mob and be half way down the Georgina before you catch 'em. I yarded your mare this morning, and give her a feed of corn. . . ."

" . . . As soon as you knew I was flat," sneered the cook.

The air of martyrdom returned.

"I'll give you a cup of soup, to see you on the road," offered the publican.

The cook, never over-fond of shanty keepers, exploded. "Give me a bottle, you mongrel, or I'll come over there and take one."

It was an expected climax. The publican gazed calmly at the cook, and thought it over.

He ran his railhead pub . . . or shanty . . . to make as much as possible, as quickly as possible. He wanted to get out of it. He loathed the back country, and was contemptuous of his customers. He had visions of himself as a bookmaker, touring the larger Western meetings. You got the mug money quicker, that way. He thought that he could fix a licence very soon now, and he had an inflexible determination to make a prisoner out of every pound he got his hands on.

But a bushwhacker, sober, standing on his dig and demanding his blasted traditional "rights" was different from a patron in the bar, splashing up after months in the scrub . . . still, a bottle of rum was worth at least one pound.

He looked at the cook again. There was no doubt that that worthy meant business, and was, in fact, on the verge of climbing the bar. Suddenly, the publican made up his mind.

"I'll give you a bottle," he said. "But if you drink it here and try to bail me up again I'll ring through to Mareelan for the john to come up."

The cook gave him a long, level look.

"Where's my mare?" he asked.

"In the small yard near the blacksmith's shop. There's a tank behind the shop. You can fill your neck bags there. Don't go emptying my bags, on the verandah."

"I wouldn't do that," replied the cook. "There's always too much salt in the water bags around this place . . . keeps the customers droughty, doesn't it?"

He exited on this line. A little later he rode up to the pub verandah astride a ewe-necked, evil-eyed brown mare.

Two pear-shaped water bags, strapped on each side of the mare's neck, and a split cornsack over her crupper, containing tucker and odds and ends, comprised his baggage.

"Where's your swag?" asked the publican, who was standing on the verandah. He wanted to be sure the cook was really leaving.

"Gone on with the plant," said the cook, briefly. "I'm ready for the road. Give me the bottle."

The publican handed him the bottle, and he slipped it inside his grey flannel shirt. "I'll send you a quid for this," he told the publican. "ONE quid. You talked yourself out of the second one."

Without another word, he swung the mare's head and rode away.

The mare was an equine assassin. She would rear, shy, bite and cow-kick. She was doubly dangerous because she never did any of these things until she got tired. A child could catch and mount her, but no horseman was safe on her when she had covered fifteen or twenty miles.

She had been sold to the droving plant (very cheaply) by a station manager after he had had a conversation with one of his station hands.

The ringer had led her back to the homestead in mid-afternoon, badly bruised. He had told the manager that the next time he was given the mare to ride he would knock her down with the nearest waddy, and cut her throat with his stock-knife.

There was no malice in his statement . . . it was merely that of a man who had to use horses as tools of trade.

The horsetailer of the droving plant, who had left the mare at the pub for the cook to ride, was unaware of her history.

At three o'clock in the afternoon the cook pulled the mare up. He intended to dismount and fill his quart pot from the neck bags.

The mare had travelled far enough to make her niggley. She felt the reins slacken, and her rider's body relax.

She knew this was her chance. She cow-kicked viciously, her off-hind hoof curving forwards and upwards to strike the cook's right ankle as the foot rested in the stirrup iron.

The next moment, squealing with spite, she bucked forward. The buck wasn't really necessary. Sick with sudden shock and pain, the cook was rolling over her wither as she left the ground.

After another, milder, pig jump, the mare stopped, turned and stood quietly, looking at the inert body of the cook. The split bag lay a few yards away from him. The strapped neck bags were still around the mare's neck. She walked quietly away.

The first thing that made the cook move was the burn of the sandy soil on his bare fore-arms. Then the grind of the shattered bones in his leg and ankle flattened him again.

After some painful wriggling around, he found that he could push himself along backwards more

From Miranda's Song Book

easily. He thought that, with a couple of long splints fashioned from bush timber, he could push himself over the four miles which, he calculated, separated him from the north-south rail line.

The fettlers, riding mechanical 'cases,' patrolled the line frequently, and if he could make the railway before the heat of the next day, and find or rig a shade, he had a more-than-even chance of survival.

After a painful scanning of his limited horizon he started off, backwards, for the nearest clump of timber!

As he heaved himself up, and back, he felt the tug of the bottle in the front of his flannel shirt. The thick, dark glass had survived the fall.

He sank down on his uninjured side, drew out the bottle, and laid it on the ground beside him.

Alcohol and a temperature of 110 had sucked the moisture from his body, and the glint of liquid behind the cool dark green of the glass was maddening.

He was well aware of the dangers of even looking at the bottle. If ever a man needed a drink, he did . . . but what he needed was water.

He would have given a hundred bottles of rum for one of the neck bags the mare was now carrying through the bush to her native country.

The contents of a neck bag, or even half of it, would ensure his safe arrival at the railway line. But rum . . . and sun . . . applied to an already parched body.

He shook the bottle, watching the swill of the liquid around the neck, and said to himself: "It dries up the moisture in you. That's why you wake in the middle of the night with a mouth like the bottom of a red-hot bird cage."

He had a horrid vision of a naked, sun-scarred remnant of a man scrabbling crazily in the dust, his throat choked by a black sponge of a tongue.

Looking down the line of his thigh and leg he could see a stony patch of gibbers a hundred yards away. It lay on his toilsome route to the railway line. He clutched the bottle, eased himself on to his stomach and started a crablike advance towards the gibber patch.

When he reached it, he lay on his side again beside a jumbled patch of stones and tilted the bottle to watch the play of the liquid in the neck.

"I'm going to do something I've never done in my life before," he told the bottle. "I'm going to have one nip . . . just one little nip, and then I'm going to pick up a gooley and smash a bottle of rum."

He laid a sizeable stone beside him, uncorked the bottle, and put it to his lips.

About sundown the same day the publican was yarning to his yardman.

"That drover's cook must have gone through," said the yardman. "I haven't seen him about all day."

"He left this morning," said the publican. "Stuck me up for a bottle of rum before he went. He was going to drag me on if I didn't part up with it. Well, I gave him a bottle . . . a rum bottle it was, too . . . but I'd like to see his face when he opens it and finds it full of good clean tank water."

About six weeks later the publican was surprised to receive a bush letter.

It consisted of a pound note pinned to a scrap of butter paper. Three words were written on the paper: "Thanks, you bastard."

The Australian National Library must be complimented on the efficiency of its Annual Catalogue and of its other publication, **Australian Books, 1953**, select reading and reference list. A lighter side to its current Catalogue is the note that H. G. Lamond's **Big Red**, published by Faber in London, has been published in New York with the title changed to **Kangaroo!**

I.

Coots eat waterbeetles,
Rats eat cheese,
Goats eat anything they
Darned well please.

Goats eat flowers,
Goats eat fruits,
Small girls' pinafores and
Dad's old boots.

II.

The Queensland nut
Is tightly shut;
I cannot crack the pecan.
I'll take them to the blacksmith, but
I rather doubt if he can.

III.

Shovel and hoe!
Trouble and woe!
Nothing on earth will make strawberries grow!

IV.

Cobbler's pegs are hard on legs,
And so are those lantanas,
But if we didn't grub them out
We wouldn't have bananas.

V.

The Friar-bird's a dire bird, and one of his faults
is
To sit in a tree singing old-fashioned waltzes.
Um-cha-cha, quark! Um-cha-cha, quark!
He practises daily from morning till dark.

VI.

Throughout the tribe of Bustard-Quail
The female's larger than the male.
The male looks petulant and flustered,
As well he might, poor little Bustard.

VII.

Spangled drongo lets his song go
From the mango tree;
Drongo can go round the mango
Catching grubs for tea.
You can have the grubs, old fellow,
Black and white and green and yellow;
Leave the fruit for me.

VIII.

Hushaby, baby, you bellow too much!
Father will give you a kick in the crutch;
Sister will give you a poke in the nose;
Hushaby, baby, and take your repose.

IX.

Miss Jones had a canary,
She fed it with grounsel;
It lived in the dairy,
And gave her good counsel:
"Oh, a door needs a lock,
And a cock needs a hen,
And a hen needs a cock,
Hallelujah, Amen!"

X.

The great black shags with straining necks
Beat up against the gale,
The breakers froth above the wrecks,
The motor-boats turn tail;
God help the crabbers in the bay
With paltry sail and oar
Whom poverty drives out to sea
And cyclones drive ashore.

J. S. MANIFOLD

Swag

Hugh Anderson, the indefatigable research worker whose article on Charles Thatcher in this and the last *Overland* is virtually the first published material ever to appear on that important figure, is now preparing a full-length study of Thatcher. He has made some fascinating and important discoveries in the course of searching through old newspapers and conducting a world-wide correspondence. Three other books by Hugh Anderson will appear in 1955—a bibliography and critical study of Frank Wilmot (to be published by the Melbourne University Press), a book of *Colonial Ballads*, collected and edited in conjunction with Ron Edwards, and to be published by the Ram's Skull Press, and a bibliography of John Shaw Neilson (this being "Australian Bibliographical Studies" No. 3, published by Walter W. Stone).

The Sydney Fellowship of Australian Writers organised a concert to celebrate the Eureka Centenary. The main speaker was Dr. H. V. Evatt. Mr. Eric Lambert, author of *The Five Bright Stars*, also spoke, and the musical program included goldfields' ballads by the Bushwhackers' Band, songs and poems by Mr. Leonard Thiele of the A.B.C., Lawson poems recited by Miss Jean Blue, and some Australian songs by Mr. "Smoky" Dawson. Proceeds went to the F.A.W. fund for the establishment of literary prizes. The Fellowship, through its Eureka Stockade Centenary Celebrations Committee, also produced *Eureka in Song and Story*, a valuable souvenir of the Centenary compiled by R. D. Walshe.

The special Eureka Stockade Centenary Number of *Overland* was well received at Ballarat during the celebrations, over 200 copies being sold. The celebrations proved moving and colorful, a powerful reminder of a heritage we are in debt to. A few copies of the official souvenir of the Eureka celebrations were obtained for readers of *Overland* by the Editor, and may be had free on application (3d. postage). This important brochure contains an eight-page statement on the Eureka Stockade edited by Mr. Clive Turnbull, Dr. Geoffrey Serle, and Rev. Fr. J. G. Murtagh.

Dame Mary Gilmore's famous poem on Eureka has been set to music by the well-known folk-song collector, Dr. Percy Jones of Melbourne. It is published in *Men of Eureka and other Australian Songs* by Allan & Co. at 4/-. The song-book also contains fine settings by Dr. Jones of James Devaney's "The Bunyip," C. J. Dennis' "The Traveller," and E. J. Brady's "Sea Shanty."

Also published in honor of the Eureka Centenary is a series of fourteen lino-cuts, put out in the folio *Eureka, 1854-1954*, by ten artists, members of the Melbourne Popular Art Group. Artists represented in these vigorous depictions of life on the goldfields are Ray Wenban, Noel Counihan, Pat O'Connor, Peter Miller, Ailsa O'Connor, Len Gale, Ernie McFarlane, Maurie Carter, Naomi Shipp and Mary Zuvella. The price is 7/6. One of the most monumental individual contributions to the Eureka Centenary was Noel Counihan's great canvas, depicting the burning of the licences at Eureka. The painting was called "epic" by the art critic of the Melbourne Age, who considered it the most important historical painting executed in Australia for years. At present the canvas is on exhibition at Ballarat.

★
NOTABLE BIRTHDAYS: Flora Eldershaw (March 16), William Hatfield (March 18). We also remember: Bernard O'Dowd's birthday (April 11, 1866), A. B. Paterson's birthday (February 17, 1864), and his death (February 5, 1941), A. G. Stephens' death (April 15, 1933).

★
"Six Plays in Search of their Authors" was the title of the entertainment presented to the December meeting of the Fellowship of Australian Writers in Melbourne. "Ghost writer" Ron Campbell (Editor of the *Australian Journal*) perpetrated "Catching Her Unbending," by Judah Waten; "A Close Finish," by Robert S. Close; "Passion Under the Asterisks" by Vance Palmer; "These Are My Pupils" by Alan Marshall; "Angry Poppuns" by Ern Malley and "Cripes!" by Steele Rudd. Chairman Jean Campbell's famous role as Chlorophyllis in the Greek drama, "Ariadne and Halitosis," unfortunately failed to materialise. . . Miss Campbell, notwithstanding, was re-elected Chairman, and Mrs. Warne-Smith was elected Secretary.

★
A London correspondent reports that the B.B.C. broadcast Dymphna Cusack's *Stand Still Time* (broadcast in Australia as *Eternal Now*) on Boxing Night, with a largely Australian cast. One of the biggest English repertories, at Kidderminster, is producing Miss Cusack's *The Golden Girls* in the spring. Unity Theatre, London, has produced Dick Diamond's *Reedy River*.

★
DONATIONS: Our editorial in this issue makes the desperate need for increased donations clear; failing a ready response to this appeal, we will have to revert to a smaller size. We acknowledge with many thanks: S.Z., £5; X.G., £2; I.H.F., £1; B.M., £1; B.I., 17/6; J.D., 15/-; M.H., 14/-; M.L., 10/-; N.O., 10/-; W.K., 5/-; V.D., 5/-; L.E., 5/-; J.M., 2/-.

★
The Realist Writers in Perth have decided to circularise every trade union paper in Australia, urging serious thought on the importance of creative writers in fighting for the aims of the labor movement, and the necessity of encouraging them by the publication of short stories in union journals.

The full translation of Konstantin Simonov's long and critical review of Ilya Ehrenburg's recent short novel, *The Thaw*, together with Ehrenburg's reply, has now been published by the Society for Cultural Relations with the U.S.S.R. (Britain). This material, together with the discussions which have ensued at the Second All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers (just over) is the most interesting material to emerge on the relations of Soviet literature and society for many years. *The Thaw* has recently been republished in the U.S.S.R., and has appeared in an English edition (Harvill, 12/6 sterling).

★

Seven hundred and eighty writers attended the Soviet Writers' Congress as delegates, as well as 100 foreign writers from 39 countries. The wide scope of discussion made the Congress one which commanded world-wide interest. Constant references to the great masters of foreign literatures made for the authentic exchange of cultural values in the light of which the problems of Soviet literature had to be studied. Special attention was paid to the problems of translation from other literatures. The congress gave its full support to the World Congress of Writers which it is proposed to hold later this year, to be widely representative of men of letters of all countries and to bring these representatives together on a platform of peace and culture.

★

An interesting statistical survey of Russian publishing since the Revolution is contained in *Soviet Literature*, No. 11, 1954. Writers whose works have been published in ten million or more copies are (in order) Alexei Tolstoy, Mikhail Sholokhov, Konstantin Simonov, Valentin Katayev, Alexandr Fadeyev and Alexandr Serafimovich. Others in the same category are five children's writers and Jack London. Twelve of James Aldridge's works have appeared, in 421,000 copies and four languages; six of Katharine Prichard's, in 135,000 copies and three languages; two of Henry Lawson's, in 45,000 copies and two languages; and one of Frank Hardy's in 90,000 copies.

★

Eric Lambert's *The Twenty Thousand Thieves* (surely one of the most often mis-quoted titles in the history of publishing, variants including "The Forty Thousand Thieves" and "The Twenty Thousand Horsemen") has now sold over 100,000 copies, largely on the British market. Mr. Lambert's new novel, *The Veterans*, has already sold over 12,000 copies in Britain. Meanwhile his *The Five Bright Stars* (reviewed in this issue) has almost sold out a local edition of 5000, and is being translated into the French. Mr. Lambert is well into the writing of his new novel on Australian coastal shipping life, to be called *Watermen*.

★

In the last issue of *Overland* obituaries of Miles Franklin by David Martin and Jean Devanny were printed. It has now been revealed that Miles Franklin left her estate amounting to over £8,000 for the establishment of Australian literary prizes. Details will be announced shortly.

Good colors are being panned in research work by Marje Pizer (Mrs. Muir Holburn), of Sydney. Miss Pizer, who was responsible for uncovering the interesting Lawson letter we published in our last issue, edited that recent unique anthology of Australian poetry, *Freedom on the Wallaby*. Important discoveries she has made concerning the work of Henry Lawson will be incorporated in a Lawson volume she is preparing for publication by the Australasian Book Society. Other research work being done in Sydney includes preparation of a volume of the poems of the early Australian poet, Charles Harpur, by Muir Holburn; and Joan Clarke and John Meredith are doing research into the life and legend of Bold Jack Donahoo, for a play which they are writing.

★

Walter Kaufmann writes from Sydney that his novel of the assimilation of two migrants into Australian life is almost complete. The final section, now being written, deals with the support Sydney seamen and watersiders gave to the Indonesian struggle for independence in the early post-war years. Parts of Mr. Kaufmann's recent novel, *Voices in the Storm*, have been translated for publication in the German Democratic Republic, and East German publishers have also asked him for a book of creative reportage on Fiji, which he recently visited.

★

We also learn from Sydney that Mona Brand is completing a musical comedy, Frank Hardy is writing a series of short stories on contemporary Australian life (and is planning a comprehensive biographical novel on Henry Lawson), Steve Cooper is completing a novel on the Sydney waterfront, and Archer Crawford, "Ironbark" Singleton and others, are busy on various projects.

★

WANTED: Short epigrammatic verse, four lines or so, satirising aspects of the current social, political, literary or international scene. A copy of Eric Lambert's new novel *The Veterans* to the author of the best received by April 15.

★

WORLD CULTURAL ANNIVERSARIES: Anniversaries of international cultural figures which will be celebrated in most parts of the world during 1955 comprise Schiller (Germany), 150th anniversary of his death; Mickiewicz (Poland), 100th anniversary of his death; Montesquieu (France), 200th anniversary of his death; Hans Christian Andersen (Denmark), 150th anniversary of his birth; Cervantes (Spain), 350th anniversary of the publication of *Don Quixote*; and Walt Whitman (U.S.A.), 100th anniversary of the publication of *Leaves of Grass*. Celebration of the anniversaries has been recommended by the World Council of Peace.

★

Excitingly rapid development by young writers is the tenor of reports from the live-wire Realist Writers' Group of Brisbane. Active new members include carpenters, meatworkers, office workers, a poultry farmer, a shearer, and a pensioner-newspaper seller. "Two astonishingly good novices at the short story have sprung up at short notice, and some of the veterans are showing a fine turn of speed," reports President John Manifold. Queenslanders represented in this issue of *Overland* are David Forrest, Jim Crawford, John Manifold, and Merv Lilley.

Swag

Bert Vickers, chairman of the W.A. Fellowship of Writers, will be visiting eastern states in March and April. The Australasian Book Society, which will shortly publish his first novel, *The Mirage*, a story of Aboriginal and half-caste life in his home state, has arranged meetings for Mr Vickers in Sydney and Melbourne.

★

Another early A.B.S. selection is to be a new collection of John Morrison's stories, *Black Cargo*. Two new long-short stories, the title story and "The Battle of Flowers," are to be published for the first time. (Mr. Morrison's novel, *Port of Call*, has recently been accepted for publication in Poland; this follows publication of a selection of his short short stories there.)

★

"A Hero has been Slain" was the title of a fine half-hour radio program broadcast by the A.B.C. on January 7. It dealt with ballads and songs commemorating the lives and deaths of brave Ben Hall, Johnny Gilbert, Gardiner and the Kelly Gang—the bushranger mythology of Australia. Nancy Keesing was responsible for the program, most imaginatively presented with the help of Leonard Thele, Cec Grivas, John Meredith, the Bushwhackers' Band, and other artists. Congratulations are due to all concerned, and to the A.B.C. for presenting this type of program.

★

The departure in February of Guy Howarth, for a decade and a half Editor of *Southerly*, to take up a professorial chair at Capetown will be a serious blow to Australian literary development. Under Mr. Howarth's direction *Southerly* became the leading medium for research into Australian literature and for contemporary expressions of it. Many will look for an explanation of the events that have led to Mr. Howarth's resignation from Sydney University, and will echo the *Bulletin* in asking why suitable recognition was not available to Mr. Howarth in Australia. The best wishes of all with the welfare of our Australian literature at heart will go with Mr. Howarth—as will their thanks. Before his departure Mr. Howarth completed the editorial work on several future *Southerlys*.

★

The recent Australian anthology *Australia Writes* gave rise to some spirited comment in the pages of *Overland*. Now a further collection is also to be compiled by the Canberra division of the Fellowship of Australian Writers. The theme is to be set by the 1956 Olympic Games, and MSS. should be sent to Mrs. L. F. Rees, 50 Booroondara Street, Reid, Canberra, by April 30 next.

★

"Calypso Isle," a musical play by West Indian writer Ralph de Boissiere (now resident in Australia), opens at Melbourne's New Theatre on March 12. The story of the play is that of a young calypso singer fighting to win a girl and a home during the war-time American occupation of the West Indies.

★

Nettie Palmer's many friends will be pleased to know she is well again after a recent operation in Brisbane. She and Vance Palmer have recently been at the Council of Adult Education's Summer School at Hobart, speaking on creative writing.

"In the Parliament of World Literature, she is the Member for Australia; and we are proud of our representative," wrote Professor Walter Murdoch in greeting the 71st birthday of Katharine Susannah Prichard. Hundreds of greetings were received from all over Australia and over one hundred attended the party tendered to her in Perth in December, where Professor Alan Edwards (Professor of English at the University of W.A.) and Mr. Bert Vickers, President of the Fellowship of Australian Writers (W.A.), spoke in Katharine Susannah Prichard's honor. Among the many writers present were Lyndall Hadow, Molly Skinner, Ben Kidd, Max Brown, Mary Durack Miller, Helen Wilson and Donald Stuart. Among those who sent greetings were Mr. Reg. Broadby, Secretary, Australian Council of Trade Unions; Mr. Jim Healy, General Secretary, Waterside Workers' Federation; eighteen other trade union leaders; the Fellowship of Australian Writers in Perth, Melbourne and Sydney; Realist Writers' Groups in Perth, Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne; "Meet Your Writers," Melbourne; P.E.N., Melbourne; Henry Lawson Society and Australian Poetry Lovers (Melbourne); the Editors of *Meanjin*, *Southerly* and *Overland*; Aboriginal, Women's and Communist Party organisations; and publishers Jonathan Cape, Angus and Robertson, and the Australasian Book Society.

★

Readers in the Melbourne area might care to take advantage of an Adult Education course in creative writing which begins on Friday, March 25, at the Adult Education Centre in Flinders Street. The course embraces 20 classes, once weekly, and will be tutored by David Martin. Details from C.A.E.

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Pay Day

Max Bollinger

THE slaughterboard was noisier than usual. The normal quiet constrained by the physical effort necessary to keep pace with the remorseless motion of the chain, to dress carcasses swinging past at a speed of seven a minute, had given way to a babel of happy anticipation.

Over the hum of machinery and the clatter of hooks and gambrels the sound of laughter, whistled melody, song and shouted banter echoed between the concrete walls.

Mid-day approached and the din softened to a low buzz of expectancy; eyes turned more frequently towards the clock.

The stickers appeared from "blood alley" and busted themselves at the washtubs cleaning the thick coagulated blood from rubber aprons and boots. Along the chains men cast glances in the direction of the foreman's office and seemed to strain more eagerly into the work. The last throat of the morning had been cut.

Only twenty minutes to go. Down the line of toiling men a hefty Maori brisquet puncher stepped back from the chain to call, "Hey, delegate! How much do we get, delegate?"

On the legging table the delegate straightened from his work to answer. "Nearly a score for the full week, nineteen pound eighteen. Two-day-a-week men like you get about eight quid!"

"Don't be cheeky," the brisquet puncher roared back over his shoulder as he heaved into the next brisquet, "bout time we got a Maori delegate, eh?"

This touched off a renewed uproar. "Call out the Mau Mau," someone jokingly suggested. Insults flew back and forth. Everyone was happy at the prospect of a big pay. The five days of back breaking toil required to earn the "big pay" were forgotten now in anticipation of spending.

At last the white-coated foreman appeared in company with a clerk carrying a tray of pay envelopes.

"Dish her out!—Dish her out!"

"Come on, Yorkie, I've spent it already, let's have it!" raucous greetings welcomed the advent of the wages.

"See that squint-eyed egg with the money," the man chopping brisquets commented to his mate, a newcomer to the shed. "The little bastard was up on the chain here doing a bit of quiet scabbing on us during the big blue. You want to watch him, he's a dead mug, and a topper. Topped one of the cooler boys off last season and got him the sack for borrowing a fillet-steak from the boning room."

"Did he, eh? The mongrel."

Every man regarded the ferrety pay-clerk with an open hostility that even the pleasure of being paid failed to hide.

The foreman was handing out the envelopes at the end of the chain.

"The last shall be first," he smirked as he paid the washers-down, the "scrubbing brush" butchers whose operation completes the slaughtering process. Then to the pluckie removing lungs and wind-pipe, and the guttie smeared with muck and intestinal fat.

The guttie on number one chain was definitely a character. He had never yet received his pay without entering an emphatic protest. Fat, about sixteen or seventeen stone, big Joe Paku could compress his features into the most diabolical expression of angry indignation imaginable, rolling his protruding eyes in a really frightening manner. He had aptly been nicknamed the Image, for his face in repose bore a striking resemblance to that on the brass images of an Asian diety. To-day

he lived up to expectations with his usual protest, his dark eyes almost starting from his head.

"Hey, Yorkie—sack that half-witted pay clerk. This pay's not right again! How d'you expect me to pay the maintenance to all my wives, how'm I going to pay my income tax, if you fellers don't give me the right money?"

The Image dropped a paunch, and tossed the separated liver towards the chute, which it missed, landing in a dirty puddle at the feet of the pay-clerk with a splash. A muck-stained brown hand held the offending wage packet under the foreman's nose. "I suppose the company's down to their last ten million and can't afford to give Joe Paku his right money!"

"See me about it after, Joe—it's nearly ten to twelve."

"Hey, delegate! Stop the chain! The bloody pay-clerk robbed me again. You look out, Yorkie." He warned the foreman solemnly, his eyes the size of billiard balls. "I'll get the tribal committee to declare you a Melanesian so you can't go to any more tangi!"

"Aw! Shut-up! Never mind the delegate, see me after."

Hurriedly the foreman moved on distributing pay to the pelters, flankers, the ripper-down and the trotter man.

Behind him Joe Paku was commenting to his mate at the top of his voice that a pay-clerk who had so little principle as to drive a cab at night after his forty hours pay-clerking at the works finished would probably think nothing of pinching a poor old Maori's pay.

The pay-clerk looked back, his face puce, a nasty glitter in his little eyes, but did not risk a reply.

As the precious packets were given out men thrust them into pants pockets beneath rubber aprons, glanced swiftly at the written amount on the cover, and a few even found time to check the contents.

The brisquet chopper too created a diversion.

"Shove it in me arse kick, Yorkie—a man's that busy on this bloody job he hasn't even got time to get paid—of course if I was paid what I'm worth I could have retired ten seasons back."

"Listen to the moaning hua" came prompt answer.

"No wonder the boss has to put his pay in his kick for him—his dook would tremble too much to take it!"

"Yeah, how'd he be? Never done an honest day's toil in his life."

"Righto, righto, you take the bloody hammer and chopper if yer think the job's easy. Come on—have a go."

"Go on. A schoolgirl could do it. Why don't you go on the pension, you poor old sod?"

Someone began singing the Marlene Dietrich hit, "Too Old."

The foreman had by now reached the legging table; not many lambs remained to do and the delegate jumped down from the table to investigate the inevitable spate of queries and protests over the pay.

Then the pay-clerk walked back down the board and, while he stepped delicately between two pools on the floor, a large piece of mucky intestine wrapped itself wetly round his neck. His beady eyes darted indignantly in all directions, but by then the last carcass was sliding off the chain and as the men hurried to clean up and get to lunch the culprit was impossible to discern.

"Come in." Stocky Des Ebert the brisket chopper stepped into the dusty circle, "Auckland or the bush!" he announced, and all eyes strained skyward as he sent the pennies hurtling in the air. Des squinted in the bright summer light, the sun reflecting on his bald skull as he watched the pennies plop in the dust. Hardly had the noon whistle sounded when the pay day game was under way behind the sheep pens.

"Monkey! Tails it is!"

Des gustedly threw the kip to the next spinner. Casually the Image stepped to the centre of the ring and threw a fistful of crumpled pound notes to the banker.

"I want five. A spin in the centre—a fiver to see him go!"

Ten bob notes, pound notes fluttered down. A darting glance noted each bettor and the separate wagers were laid out pinned beneath small pebbles. Quickly the fiver was covered.

"A dollar to see him go—come one, one Oxford scholar wanted—a dollar somewhere—thanks, Bert—all set!"

Two half-crowns thudded down beside the bank. Then the ringie took over. "Are you all set on the side?"

Right around the big circle were little heaps of money—the side bets. Some kept notes pinned to the ground by planting a heavy booted foot on them, others placed their money carefully beneath stones—there were many heaps of bright florins and half-crowns.

"All set on the side?" Reverently the Ringie placed three pennies tails up on the extended kip. "Righto! Come in, Joe! Let the angels see them!"

With ferocious facial contortions, and protruding tongue, the Image bent his great bulk nearly double and brought the kip up from a few inches off the ground in a tremendous sweep.

The pennies spun up, up, the sun glinting on the spinning surfaces.

"Cop the follow through!" called the Image, but the crowd had eyes only for the coins.

Then they thudded down.

"He's done 'em. He's done 'em. Heads are right."

And away it went again.

"I want a tenner in the guts. A tenner to see the old colored gentleman perform once more!"

Big Joe Paku stood in the dusty ring polishing the kip on the seat of his pants, eyes cast down, a slight frown on his brow now bedewed with sweat.

On the outskirts of the crowd the slaughterboard delegate with a book of green union tickets in hand. Nearly all paid up without a murmur. One man showed a momentary reluctance but was quickly shamed by comments all round. "Get your ticket, sport, why even the clobber and boots you're wearing, which is something the union got off the boss, is worth three times the price of your ticket."

"Yes, get into him, delegate. Make him pay up, same as the rest of us!"

"And heads are right again."

"You beauty, Joe, you beauty," yelled an excited side bettor who'd backed Joe in.

"A score in the guts, gentlemen! I want twenty fiddies. Come on you tail punters, twenty quid in the centre!"

The Image, confident now, was practising his golf style follow through to the evident enjoyment of the onlookers.

The crowd around the ring grew as more departments knocked off for lunch and those eccentrics who bothered to eat on pay day came up from the cafeteria. A serious man in freezer gear, thick jersey, balaclava, feet swathed in sacking, pushed through the throng with a bundle of papers under his arm.

"'People's Voice.' Who wants the workers' paper?"



'People's Voice.' Here y'are, Dick. Here's your paper, Miha. Thanks, mate."

"OK, mate, I'll have one." Men turned from the game to get a paper.

"Here you are, Molotov, give us one of your rags, a man's got to read something."

"Socialism could give you security, more than two-up will ever do."

"All right, give us the paper, never mind the lecture."

"'People's Voice.' Here y'are Tom. How's the Union tickets going? Good oh, Lofty, how's things in the gut house? Want a paper, Bob?"

"Shove it up yer jersey, sport. A pound he heads 'em. Quid a head!"

"Righto, Joe boy, come in."

Again eyes strained skyward.

"And they're there again. Heads it is."

"I want forty quid in the centre. Forty fiddly-dids."

The bank took progressively longer to cover. Five times the Image did heads, backing himself on the side as his conviction increased that he really was on a winning streak.

Then it happened. From beyond the sheep pens an excited figure approached, vaulting fences.

"Break her up, Blue. Break her up. The johns! That slimy little pay-clerk's heading up the yard with three dirty great johns in tow."

It was like a steam hose on snow. The crowd,

Long Service Leave

the money, even the banker's jam case seat, just vanished.

Only a few men sitting quietly in the sun—and the Image in earnest conversation with the paper-seller.

"Give us one of those books, boy. There goes all our game. Just when I'm coming right. That dirty little pay-clerk ring up the coppers, I expect."

"Yes, he's a dead topper for certain, still he's saved a few quid for someone's missus and kids. You looked to be having a big win Joe, how about a donation for the Party?"

"All right, here." A note changed hands, and the Image strolled off to settle up with the banker as three frustrated policemen rounded the corner to find nothing resembling a common gaming house, or an illegal game of chance.

The beer that night tasted better than ever to was rounding up the laggards for their union dues. throats parched from an afternoon's hot toil, and the sustained and awful colonial cursing that had been heaped on the villainous pay-clerk who had moved to new depths of infamy as a police informer.

Bald-headed Des Ebert, the Image, and a group of other slaughtermen used beer as fuel for their indignation and between five o'clock when they reached the pub and five-thirty achieved a steady crescendo of hate. However by the time the barmen yelled "Time, Gentlemen" at six o'clock even the Image had mellowed—after all he might have spun out if the game had not stopped.

They strolled reluctantly to the pavement outside the bar, the Image clutching a bulky parcel and three bottles of beer in a stout brown paper bag.

"Good-night Des, go home and give the wahine the wages!"

"Cheerio, Joe, Mac! Hooray, fellers, we'll see you in the morning."

Des swung abroad a south-bound tram.

The Image and Mrs. Paku were entertaining at home to-night; there would be stud poker or sing tai loo and plenty of beer and singing and guitar music.

"Come on, boys, we'll get the taxi home—there's plenty of tucker for all of you—pig bones and puha to-night."

The four of them made off for the taxi stand, the Image waddling in front, the other three, each lumping a carton of a dozen beer, straggling along behind.

There was quite a mob at the stand so they sat on the cartons and sang softly, harmonising beautifully, until it seemed their turn. As they rose to take their cab, the Image caused a gust of laughter by a lusty comment on the physical charms of a hard-faced young woman passing on the footpath. They had the beer in the boot and were in the taxi before Big Joe realised who the driver was—the notorious ferret-faced pay-clerk!

"Hullo, chaps, where to?" Ferret-face was gushing conciliation and wondering just what sort of blue his now ominously hostile fare would precipitate.

"The Paku residence, driver." The Image's tone was authoritative as he gave an address in a suburb about six miles distant.

Only once did the driver attempt to start a conversation with his passengers. "The weather," he said, "has been pretty decent since Christmas, hasn't it?" But no answer came, and a menacing glare from Joe Paku withered his attempted smile.

The rest of the quarter-hour drive was accomplished in the most awful silence except for one pontical utterance from Joe that "Prob'ly pakeha pay clerks couldn't help being apes" after all they had all been washed up on the beach in mussel

Down in the low-roofed tunnel I crouch,
Hacking coal from the rough-hewn seam,
Part of my mind on its labor bent,
Part of it lost in a dream.

What do I dream of down on my knees,
Wielding pick at a rhythmical pace,
Breathing the dust with each twisted blow
I strike at the black coal-face?

White-crested waves on a vast blue sea
Whipped along by a southerly breeze;
Noon-day calm in the gum-scented bush:
Sun-loving, peace-giving trees.

Mountain tracks to the top of a world
That is distant and spacious and blue;
Three wonderful months to spend as I please,
On freedom and love and you.

Quiet in the hospital cot I lie
Like a raft washed up by the tide.
Why don't they tell me what I should know?
What is it they try to hide?

When shall I clamber up mountain track?
Ride the waves on a wind-lashed sea?
And the gum-scented bush of my native land,
Will it ever belong to me?

For twenty years I have hewn the coal,
For a man has to earn his crust;
And now "long service reward" has come—
The doctors have called it "dust."

Nothing is left but your hand in mine
Of the dreams of my yesterday.
Ah, freedom forsook me long, long ago,
But love has come all the way.

JOAN HENDRY

shells and been thrown on the sand as unfit for human consumption by the discerning Maori.

At last they reached their destination.

"Er. that's ten and six, boys, thanks—ooh, don't slam the door, please."

The Image thrust his large face in at the driver's window as the lads unloaded the beer. "Ten and six, eh? Well, we had a pretty poor pay to-day, but I'll give you something."

A wet, bloody liver, damp pieces of newspaper adhering to it, plopped into the driver's lap.

"Keep the change, driver." There was a patter of running feet and the pavement was deserted. Pig bones and puha is much better freshly served and piping hot, and no one wanted to be late for the party.

Pay day only comes once a week.

• COMMENT •

Roland Robinson writes:

William Hatfield's comments on my story "Mary Lindsay" in his review of *Coast to Coast, 1953-4*, in the latest *Overland*, have just come to my notice. I have picked up two or three of Mr Hatfield's stones and I would like to see if my aim is any better in returning them.

Firstly, my "melodrama" does not say that Lindsay ran a holding as large as the area covered in the story. It says that Lindsay ran his cattle over such an area. There is a difference. Does your reviewer know how large the area was over which Kidman's cattle roamed? Considerably larger than my story states. Does not Mr Hatfield know that the big holdings are still unfenced? There are fences on the big holdings, but they are certainly not boundary fences. Also, Mr Hatfield conveniently ignores that the story is related by "an ear-basher and a known liar." Apparently your reviewer has no relish for the heroic enlargements contained in all sagas, legends and folk-tales. Perhaps he is ignorant of such peaks of literature.

Secondly, Mr Hatfield should acquaint himself with the social gulf between the whites and the Aborigines that is still impassable in the Northern Territory. It was, and still is, inconceivable that an Aborigine could be anything other than a servant and a menial. The penalty for being anything else is that which my story states. Also my story does not say, or suggest, that Lindsay's daughter was "dragged up in the blacks' camp." This is only more of Mr Hatfield's misrepresentation. Is it that Mr Hatfield is a representative of the white man's "superior" attitude to the natives that is so inhuman and virulent in the Territory to-day? Truth to tell, this story, and my previous *Coast to Coast* story, were directed wholeheartedly at such an attitude.

Lastly, the authenticity of this story is well known, and such subjects are avoided in the Territory to-day. My story has been confirmed by two prominent Northern Territory writers. One, a man who has lived and worked all his life on cattle-stations and whose prize-winning novel was published by an overseas publisher. As for myself, from the age of fourteen I have worked and knocked about the outback at every kind of stock and laboring jobs in four different states, including years in the Territory.

In spite of, and in contrast to your reviewer, I happen to write about the life I know and have experienced. In good plain "Australian," I think that Mr Hatfield ought to "pull his head in."

Clive Turnbull writes:

For *Overland* I should say from my own experience that you will need a fairly large body of people each of whom will do some specific task—not the attractive ones but the tedious ones. Frankly I think you should keep off some of the well-tilled ground and not have too many of the old stand-bys as contributors. For instance, I personally feel that I have read enough articles about Henry Handel Richardson (and Tom Collins) to last me for ever; but I should be quite interested to read something about say Barbara Baynton, or Louis Stone or even Louis Becke.

Again as a purely personal view I hope that the current bucolic cult will not be embraced too heartily. All this Speewa stuff, beginning as an entirely legitimate interest, seems to be in danger of passing into a never-never land of romantic

removal—the folkways of Little Bourke Street and Woolloomooloo are much closer to me, and I should think to the majority of Australians, than the country of the jumbucks which is about as remote as the Wild West. Some years ago I pointed out that in a current anthology of Australian short stories one story ended with a man cutting the throat of a sheep and the next began with a man cutting the throat of a sheep. I feel that we have had more than enough of this minority phase of Australian life, which is dead and done for anyway. We don't want a school of people like the Powys's, Coppards, etc., who cultivate the English yokel while 45 million other people march the other way.

If any thought emerges from this it is that the Australian character does not spring fresh cooked from the billy-can and the damper ashes but is as much or more a product of The Rocks and The Narrows. I suppose if I had been born in Gundagai I should think otherwise; but comparatively few people have been born in Gundagai.

Eleanor Wheeler writes (from Prague):

Ehrenburg and Sholokhov, as you no doubt know, were among the stormy petrels of the recent Soviet Writers' Congress, but not in a way that would imply repudiation of the Soviet system or a rejection of Soviet literature, as some tried to make it out. Sholokhov, in fact, I think phrased best a Soviet writer's devotion to his homeland and the leading party in it: "Writers in the west say we write according to the dictates of the Party. We write according to the dictates of our heart, and our heart belongs to our Party and our people." Otherwise he and Ehrenburg were guilty of wise-cracking and rather unworthy personal sniping—Sholokhov saying that Simonov writes as if he were a schoolboy trying real hard to get "B" on his composition and Ehrenburg sidestepping the serious criticism of his latest novelette *The Thaw*. But they both made valid criticisms of the relaxing of artistic standards in judging the work of an established writer or of one who had "covered the subject" adequately. They both criticised the bureaucracy in the Union of Writers (the woman writer Ketlinskaia was wittier and more to the point when she said that the writers themselves were to blame for setting up a Ministry of Writing instead of a Union, had put poets and playwrights in administrative posts and then had scolded them if they didn't do that kind of work well!) and the neglect of manuscripts of young writers as well as lack of attention paid to writers on the "periphery" (the Siberians putting up the biggest squawk). In his closing speech Simonov accepted criticism of that type, but reproached both Sholokhov and Ehrenburg for their style of criticism. The final resolution of the Congress took account of most of the criticisms and suggestions that had been voiced in the ten days of conferring. It stated that the method of socialist realism presupposes a rich variety in the writers' individuality, in their style, in the competition of various creative tendencies, the seeking of new artistic forms. They promised to train up the new literary generation better than hitherto. And they concluded that the defence of peace is the chief task of Soviet writers, as it is of every progressive person. The new constitution embodied the same principles as the final statement, and includes an important point that the entrance requirements are to be raised, with regard to literary competence, with more responsibility fixed on those who recommend new members of the Union.

Stefan Heym was received with applause when he said he was speaking for progressive American writers, in English because he did not consider the language the property of Dulles and McCarthy, but of Jefferson, Lincoln, Mark Twain and Dreiser. He explained that, although he was at the Con-

gress as a correspondent, he was asked by Polevoi to speak in the name of progressive American writers who had been invited but not allowed to attend.

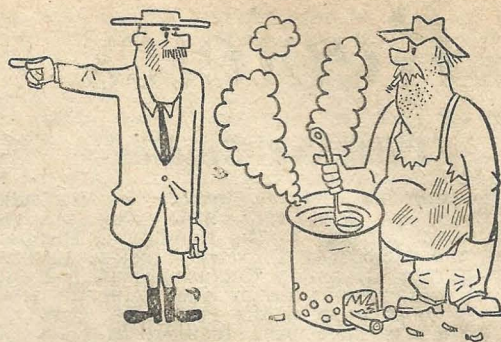
The book by Ehrenburg which has been severely criticised for "objectivism" may not be familiar to you. It is about a hack artist who paints pictures he knows are no good, but feels cynically that that is what the galleries want and who is contrasted to an ivory-tower and neglected artist who paints really good pictures. Various other cynical characters lead the reader to feel that Ehrenburg takes a shoulder-shrugging view of Soviet art and literature and theatre. Ehrenburg denies this, saying that his views on art and on Soviet society are in many articles and available to the public. It is pointed out that in a Chekhov tale there is no doubt that the author sympathises with his over-worked men of science who are drudges for frivolous wives or with neglected children or with the victims of the horrible Czarist prison system. And so, say the critics, if Ehrenburg leaves his reader in doubt of the author's standpoint, he has not solved his problem even artistically. That's all of my report, not all of the Congress.

Joseph Waters writes:

I get the impression that Judah Waten's novel *The Unbending* is being received with much less warmth by its friends than its enemies. So far as its enemies are concerned they attack it at tremendous length and from every possible angle but the proper one of literary justification. But the friends of the book are different; for one thing they are kinder. They do praise the book, gently it is true, nevertheless they do praise it. No propaganda in it for them; no dangerous ideas; no misuse of public funds; just a nice book—as nice as anything F. J. Thwaites could write. Frankly I prefer the viciousness of the hack reviewers. Because in these days when the distorting mirror is the chief tool of the hack writer and reviewer they must see *The Unbending* as a piece of propaganda. A story of ordinary decent people trying to live ordinary decent lives; worried by war and the struggle for existence; its pages warmed by the heat of life itself; this must surely be propaganda to the men of easy virtue who treat the twisted, morbid and abnormal as the true picture of life.

The importance of this novel is being sadly under-rated. All the weaknesses, minor faults are searched for and studied as if our bookshops were filled with masterpieces of social realism and the presses pouring them out like daily newspapers. *The Unbending* is a pioneer in our literature. Hannah Kochansky, George Feathers, Michael Killeen and the rest will take their places in this world and eventually become endeared to many thousands of readers. Here we have ordinary people living as social beings, taking an interest in politics like millions more are doing; some organising against war and some going to war to die or be maimed. We have politics as a part of daily life developing naturally and truthfully. Senator Don Cameron's tribute to the book is a sincere one; he lived in those times; met those people and now identifies them with Feathers, Killeen, Johnson and the others.

It is high time we took a more responsible attitude towards books like *The Unbending* and made greater efforts to put them into the hands of more readers. The surest reply to the flood of foreign trash about which so many of us are constantly complaining are books like *The Unbending*. Personally I would feel decidedly happier about the future of serious Australian writing if I saw such books hailed with greater enthusiasm.



THE CHEF

It's only old Bill "Ironbark"
That's what the mob call me,
A pretty tough old moniker
Most people will agree.

I'm heading for a fancy pub,
Where only big shots dwell,
Those blokes you know, who do themselves,
So royally and well.

I was searching for some yakker,
I was broke, and out of breath,
When I asked a passing waiter—
He referred me to the Chef.

Now that Chef was pretty decent,
He was really a swell guy,
For he fed me, good and plenty,
On some most delicious pie.

Then he eyes me, for a moment,
With a scrutinious kind of look,
Then he says, "Look here, old timer,
Have you ever been a cook?"

"Yes, with certain reservations,"
I gingerly replied,
"I once cooked for a piggery,
At a slaughter house in Ryde.

"I'll tell you how I lost the job,
One day the boss got shirty,
And sacked me there upon the spot,
He said I was too dirty."

"You're just the man I'm looking for,"
The Chef then said to me,
"So here's your gear, get busy mate,
And cook their bloody tea.

"I've always said," the Chef went on,
"Wherever these sort browse,
That any man can cook for pigs,
Can cook for these fat cows."

IRONBARK

Reviews

Historical Studies

Apart from Dr. Evatt's preface to Raffaello's book, there has been very little cool, informed writing about Eureka, so the impulse of **Historical Studies**, the Melbourne University review, to bring out an Eureka Centenary Supplement (6s.) dealing with the affair was a happy one. And the result proves to be as good as the intention. Until now sober historians have been inclined to pooh-poo the importance of Eureka. There was, in the beginning, that crusty conservative, Rusden, who dredged the gutter for adjectives and epithets to apply to Lalor and his followers. The rising, he affirmed, was a mere plot against law and order by subversive elements, chiefly foreigners, and he described it in this way:

"Nursed in intrigue, the foreigners, who had been members of secret societies in Europe, were conspiring with the worst class of the Irish on the goldfields, and no vile act was wanting among the desperadoes whom Italy, Germany, and France had yielded to the Australian mines."

A choice example of passion and prejudice controlling the pen; but even Sir Ernest Scott, who did some good work in encouraging research into early Australian history, was eager to prove that Eureka had little importance and that it had nothing to do with the parallel attainment of self-government. It was left to the balladists—like Henry Lawson and Victor Daley—to warm the popular imagination by showing it as a turning-point in our history.

This centenary number of **Historical Studies** shows a changed attitude towards the affair by responsible historians, and puts the whole conflict into clear perspective. A number of separate articles (by Geoffrey Serle, John A. Feely, L. G. Churchward, Hume Dow and R. D. Walshe) view it from different angles. The bedrock truth of the matter seems to be that the ruling powers of the time did not think of the diggers as citizens of a free country, but as a mob to be governed, if necessary by force. The finances of Victoria were in bad shape, and the Colonial Office expected Hotham to put them in order by getting a larger share of taxation from the diggers; they even anticipated, his secretary testified, that this couldn't be done without a row! Hotham, for his part (in spite of the reception he was given by the diggers on the fields) saw the situation in military terms as soon as he was pressed.

"The surest way to prevent a conflict," he wrote to Sir George Grey, "is to arm in time."

A phrase we have heard with deadly iteration since, and one that might just as appropriately have been used by Peter Lalor and those behind him!

As for Commissioner Rede, who has often been whitewashed as a mere agent of the powers in control, it is plain that he was spoiling for a fight. On the Saturday before the outbreak, he wrote of the possibility of "crushing the democratic agitation at one blow."

So much for the impeccable guardians of law and order! The contributors to this supplement have brought out the salient facts admirably and arranged them in a scholarly way. A particular word of praise is due to R. D. Walshe for his "Bibliography of Eureka," which extends to eleven pages of small print. It would seem as if his studious eye must have pounced on every reference made to Eureka in the last hundred years.

—Vance Palmer.

A Living Poet

It is in the nature of poets that they die young, whether like Shelley, they are swept under by the wave of the world, or whether, the lyric impulse of their youth spent, they become novelists or respectable members of society.

And, for those poets who go on living, their lives are a series of spiritual deaths and rebirths, as an examination of the work of one of the greatest moderns, W. B. Yeats, will reveal. The emergent poet is unrecognisable, he is stripped of his youthful poetic cloak "covered with old mythologies from heel to throat" and he stands forth as an ascetic proclaiming that "Now I may wither into the truth."

Something of this ascetic quality, and certainly the bare, cutting force of a poet who has gone on living to the end of her life, is in Mary Gilmore's last volume, **Fourteen Men** (Angus and Robertson, 15s.).

For the present writer the essence and the best of Mary Gilmore's poetry has been in such lyrics as "Nurse no long grief," and "Never admit the pain." In such utterances the poet is reliving and re-creating the significance and revelation of experience. The statements and descriptive phrases of prose have been burned away in the crucible of her art and only the gold is left.

This reaction to Mary Gilmore's work holds good in this her latest and perhaps last book. Here again are those bare ascetic lyrics, reminding one of Yeats' last book, such as "The Sword," "Nationality," "The Source," etc.

If the best of Mary Gilmore's work bears, in its own right a resemblance to Yeats, then there are other influences apparent also. The poem "Old Forthright," which is really a short story, or the significant germ of a short story in verse, is an echo, and I think this echo will be recognised as coming from the work of one who is probably our greatest contemporary woman poet, Judith Wright. And the manner of those simple four verse, seemingly naive stanzas, where do they come from if not from Neilson, a lyricist I have often heard Mary Gilmore praise? Again, there is an echo of Blake in many of her epigrammatic couplets and isolated stanzas such as "The Road," and "The Loom." To say this is not to detract from her work, for genius has been defined as the ability to absorb, and surely it is in the history of all art that development results from the impact of outside influences.

In this last book of Mary Gilmore's is a section devoted to, and named, "Aboriginal Versions." Although the material of this section is handled with Mary Gilmore's usual artistry, it can only be regretted that the poems are based on such fragmentary and exoteric information. And indeed, such information is all that is left of what was once an inconceivably rich mythology, ritual and art of those Aborigines unfortunate enough to experience the annihilating inroads of our first settlers and pioneers. Certainly it is to Mary Gilmore's credit that her sympathy and intuitive powers have helped her to re-create for us these fragments of a once rich Aboriginal culture and art that is now irrecoverably lost.

—Roland Robinson.



Perspective on History

The study of history is not what it was: the story of Australia is no longer told in simple terms of the events in the lives of its explorers, its governors and its governments. The last twenty years have brought forward historians who see Australian historical development as arising from the movement of masses of people rather than from the whims of individuals—a movement which, their

work suggests, is determined ultimately by the change in the Australian economy from yeoman farming to industrial capitalism.

Vance Palmer's *National Portraits* (third edition, Melbourne University Press, 1954, 15/-) is a portrait gallery of twenty-five "significant figures in our history," ranging from John Macarthur, who arrived in Australia in 1790, to Joseph Benedict Chifley, who died in 1950. Here are political and industrial leaders of both capitalist and working classes; natural and social scientists; men of the church, the law and the arts. It is a tribute to Mr. Palmer's historical insight that those Australians he has chosen for his studies ("either because of their representative character, or because they seemed to me true pioneers, originating ideas and tapping springs that were later to enrich the national life") appear as worthy of distinction not primarily because of their individual qualities but because they realised, and expressed in their lives, the needs of their classes and their times.

In his essays on the earlier figures—Macarthur, W. C. Wentworth, Governor Macquarie, John Dunmore Lang—Mr Palmer presents a view that has now been accepted by most Australian historians: the conflict between the demands of the British Colonial Office for a small-farmer subsistence economy, and the logic of expanding capitalism; the determination of the new Australian squatter-capitalists to run their own affairs; and their alarm when the more radical artisans and small settlers demanded a share in the process of government.

It is in his sketches of the representative men of the 1880s and '90s that Mr Palmer breaks most new ground—ground which he has ploughed more deeply in his recently published *The Legend of the Nineties*.

From these, there begins to emerge the picture of a nation. The social cleavage foreshadowed in the economic revolution accomplished by the woolking, John Macarthur, hardens in the persons of the pastoralist Christison, the industrialist H. V. McKay, and the Shearers' Union leader, W. G. Spence. But the spirit of democracy, social equality and independence is in the air, infecting Higinbotham, the judge, and Archibald, first editor of the *Bulletin*. The awakening nation looks at itself through the eyes of the painter Buvelot and the writer Lawson, and finds what it sees to be good.

Yet strangely Mr. Palmer's picture of Lawson seems to me to be less satisfying than most of his sketches. Lawson's genius as interpreter is analysed; but his power to move great numbers of people is not explored. Perhaps this is because Mr Palmer shares with most men of letters the view that "verse was not Lawson's true medium," while, for his contemporaries (and probably for most of us to-day), Lawson was pre-eminently the "People's Poet"—a title he was proud to own.

Using as his starting-point some of the big figures of Australia's 170 years, Vance Palmer, through the lives of these men, has succeeded in illuminating their times. Another Palmer, Helen, presents a complementary picture in two recently published books: *The First Hundred Years* (in collaboration with Jessie McLeod, Longmans, 1954, 17/6) and *Beneath the Southern Cross* (F. W. Cheshire, 1954, 8/6). Vance Palmer's book is elevation, Helen Palmer's are plan, of the design of Australian social history.

The First Hundred Years is an account of what life was like for ordinary Australians, the men and women whose names were unknown except to family and friends, during our first century. It is a clear and attractively-told story of convicts and soldiers, masters and servants, gold-diggers and goldfields police, squatters and selectors, pastoral-

ists, industrialists and the men of the trade unions. The story unfolds largely in the words of the people themselves; these carefully selected extracts from contemporary journals and books of reminiscence bring to vivid life not only the major events of our early history, but also the way the working people who lived through these events felt about them. The pattern of Australian attitudes which is discernible is essentially the same as that which Vance Palmer presents in *National Portraits*.

Written with an eye to interesting teen-age readers in their country's beginnings, *The First Hundred Years* is a book which adult Australians will read with enjoyment and considerable profit. Harold Freedman's excellent illustrations (the later ones evidently based on a close study of such contemporary photographs as the Holtermann collection) fit fluently into the spirit of the book.

In *Beneath the Southern Cross*, Miss Palmer does for the Eureka Stockade what Geoffrey Trease has done for the Chartist movement and other high-points in the history of the British people: presents a simple and exciting yarn of a decisive and popular democratic agitation, as seen through a child's eyes, for child readers. Miss Palmer's method is thoroughly effective for her purpose: her book is a straight-forward welding together and dramatisation of contemporary memoirs of goldfields' life and accounts of the movement which culminated in the fighting at the Stockade. The close following of the documents has ensured historical accuracy (although I doubt whether Whiskers and David could have sung *The Wild Colonial Boy*, who had only commenced his wild career seven years after Eureka); Miss Palmer's skill has added the life and excitement which had made *Beneath the Southern Cross* popular among children, both as a book and when it was recently dramatised by the A.B.C. Children's Session.

In one of his portraits, Vance Palmer speaks of the "different perspective" which historians of a century hence will have on George Higinbotham. Equally his comment applies to the whole range of the history of Australia and its people. In these three books, Vance and Helen Palmer and Jessie McLeod have made a grand contribution towards removing the distortions which have marked the historical sketching of many earlier tellers of the Australian story.

—Ian Turner.



Five Bright Stars

The Five Bright Stars (Australasian Book Society, 18/6), is not Eric Lambert at full stretch. It is not, in fact, a full-scale novel, either in extent or in the sense of *The Twenty Thousand Thieves* or, I imagine, *The Veterans*. Lambert has set out to sketch the outline of what happened—in the Melbourne streets, on the fields at Bendigo, in miners' tents on Ballarat, in the Governor's reception room—between the discovery of gold in 1851, and the last round of shot inside the Eureka stockade in 1854.

His eye moves like a camera from shot to shot. He unfolds the story by picking out incidents and scenes, catching snatches of conversation, listening for a moment to a speech.

The book's unity is provided not so much by the theme of gold as by the lives of a group of men who seek it. Jonathan Blake, the Chartist; Alpin McBain, Scots bard and friend of murdered miner James Scobie; Patrick Shanahan, Irish rebel—these embody some of the strands that went into the making of Eureka and of ourselves. In the course of experience, the Chartist acquires a belief in action; the rebel discovers that independence need

not mean isolation; the bard breaks his guitar and dedicates himself to avenge his mate.

These key figures move among a jostling crowd of mid-century people—those who have power firmly in their hands; those who have nothing but a hatred of authority and a thirst for freedom; and those who have wryly compromised with the law ("We have to behave ourselves in this country for a certainty. It's the bottom of the world, and there's nowhere else to go if we run into trouble again.")

These people are both as lively and as lightly-sketched as Ambrose Dyson's first-rate illustrations to the book. We make their acquaintance and recognise them for what they are; before we have got to know them from the inside, the swirl of humanity and the rush of events has swept us past.

For myself, I am satisfied that Lambert has chosen this treatment. **The Five Bright Stars** is a chronicle, and has no pretensions beyond that. The conscious re-creation of a period in our history presents many pitfalls, almost all of which Lambert has avoided. On second reading I was not happy, it is true, with the introduction of Red Kelly in order that he may speak of his unborn son—"And his name shall be Edward"; or with the rather flamboyant gesture of having Shanahan's wife make the Eureka flag from her gentian blue silk gown. But such contrived scenes are few, and not many historical writers manage to avoid them: Eleanor Dark has the young Wentworth, in his early teens, turning away from his playfellows to gaze in fascination at the distant barrier of the Blue Mountains.

Not that the chief virtues of **The Five Bright Stars** are negative ones. It will be widely read, and will deserve to be, by thousands of Australians anxious to "look back and understand the world we have gained" in order to "look forward and perceive the worlds we have yet to win."

Because of our present needs we will be looking for more such books; so, for writers and readers, it's worth asking, how can an author give the feel of the past? In Lambert's panoramic view there is the real stuff of history, almost none of the crinoline-and-starch. In this he is immeasurably helped by his flair for dialogue; he gets a great deal said, as an historical writer must, by spare and pungent speech. His writing is clean and economical, leaving room for the imagination to move.

In the process of national awakening, our past must first be worked over by the historians, the social critics, the economists, the investigators; then the creative artists can begin. These steps have already been taken with the years of early settlement; now the 'fifties are taking shape for us, like a photographic print emerging from the developer. Much of the rest of our 160 years remains to be charted. It seems clear, though, that its gradual re-creation is adding an essential new dimension to our idea of ourselves and of our country.

The Five Bright Stars helps clear a path; using its landmarks, others will in time move more freely, penetrate more deeply, being able to take for granted much that Lambert's work has pioneered.
—Helen G. Palmer.

★

No Stone Unturned

When Angus and Robertson published George Mackaness' **Annotated Bibliography of Henry Lawson** with a flourish for the first full-length bibliography of an Australian writer. Undoubtedly it was an important event.

Now bibliographer Walter W. Stone of Sydney has published **A Chronological Checklist of Henry Lawson's Contributions to the Bulletin** (1887-1924). His only resources have been knowledge and a foolhardy readiness to risk his few pounds on a venture that should have been part of Dr. Mackaness' earlier work. In spite of the long name, Mr.

Stone's book is of some 21 clearly duplicated pages, including an introductory note and a select list of references to Lawson, man and writer, that have appeared (prior to 1928) in the **Bulletin**.

In the things that really count in furthering any individual study of Henry Lawson—at least, with reference to the **Bulletin**—Stone's work must take precedence. This may be better understood in the light of the facts.

The checklist contains the date of first publication of 430 stories, poems, and articles, together with 55 biographical or critical references.

One of the first things that struck me about Lawson's **Bulletin** appearances was (taking stories as our example), only about 40 were reprinted in book form. Yet Mackaness indexes 159 stories from Lawson's books (pp. 85-92). Listed by Mr. Stone are two series of prose material that will bear reprinting. One of them, generally titled, "Amongst My Own People," is more in the nature of reminiscence of the late 'eighties, of Gulgong diggings and selectors, of his train trips to Mudgee, and a late visit to Jim Grahame at Leeton. The tone is mostly sombre:

So this is the end of Log Paddock, of the early settling days, the "roaring" days and the farming days. The 'possums have gone, the magpies, the bell-birds, the butcher birds, the rosellas—all the native birds. Even the scents of the bush. And my own people are going too.

An interesting comparison is possible between Jim Grahame's article, "Back to the Bush" (31st December, 1925), and Lawson's own musing on the same happenings in "By the Banks of the Murrumbidgee" (18th May, 1916). Here one should point out that Mr. Stone has omitted to mark several items as prose belonging to this series. On this page alone (p. 16) "Travellin'" "By the Banks, etc.," "Madame Bong Fong," should have been so marked.

Of the "Elderman's Lane" series, some of which were never indicated as belonging to the series when printed in the **Bulletin**, there is sufficient to make a very interesting book. Several of the stories are of a high standard and refute the view that Lawson was written out.

On page 7 of Stone's checklist under 1897 there is a slight mix-up. My own **Bulletin** notes for the 11th December run as follows:

Lays of Shearing (general title)
The Greenhand Rouseabout, p. 29.
When the Ladies, etc.
The Boss Over the Board

The other items for that date run, in order of appearance:

Lights of Cobb & Co., p. 7
Mitchell and Matrimony, p. 21
Lays of Shearing, p. 29
The Jolly Dead March, p. 39.

When a checklist appears, I always look to see what is included relating to what might be termed biography and criticism. Mr. Stone has provided quite an extensive list of **Bulletin** items dealing either with Lawson as a man, or articles and reviews of his books. Strangely enough he ends this list in 1928. There might be some eight or nine further references to Lawson in the **Bulletin** after that date; up to 1934, I know, can be added:

12/12/1928: N.E.H.: Lawson's West
2/1/1929: J.E.: Lawson's West
20/1/1930: D.: Lawson, the Man
19/2/1930: W. Hamilton: Lawson and Steele Rudd
26/11/1930: C. Mann: Lawson's Autobiography
5/12/1934: R. Kaleski: Henry Lawson's Statue.

Mann's article introduces two important extracts from Lawson's autobiography. It is the fullest version yet printed, much nearer completion than the **Lone Hand** resume. These two extracts appeared in the **Bulletin**, 3rd and 3rd December, 1930, but are not listed by Mr. Stone.

—Hugh Anderson.

COLONIAL MINSTREL

by Hugh Anderson

(Concluded)

II

WHEN the "roaring fifties" drew to a close, Thatcher moved on to New Zealand. It may be significant that the alluvial fields in New Zealand were just opening up at this period, while on Bendigo it was becoming less and less possible for the individual digger to exist, and the mining companies were taking over.

Thatcher's manner of leaving Bendigo was typically dramatic. He and Madame Vitelli, who had also been appearing at the Shamrock, suddenly departed together from Bendigo and sailed for New Zealand. "An Inimitable Flight" the Bendigo Advertiser captioned the story of the scandal.

Although Thatcher still made his comments on the "Gold Fever in the Southern Provinces" and "The Rush to Okitiki," the majority of his New Zealand songs are satirical treatments of local personages with a definite tendency to politics. This, no doubt, was due to the changed circumstances of colonial life in the sixties.

Walking down Manse Street, Otago, on a Saturday night in March, 1862, one could easily think back to the Victorian gold towns. On our left is a brightly lit opening proclaiming Farley's Arcade. Every evening the arcade is thronged by people but on Saturday night the din of voices and the clash of interests becomes almost intolerable. The first shop is a cafe, while next door is an "aromatic" cigar shop pouring out clouds of smoke through its doors. There are clothing shops advertising "coat, trousers and vest" and emporiums displaying the latest in "deerstalkers." Crowded oyster saloons jostle with jeweller shops displaying brooches and rings of pure "colonial gold" and Morocco reticules.

At nine o'clock the criers begin shouting their news. One, passionately ringing his bell, announces Tom Fawcett's entertainment in the public room of the Commercial Hotel. A second, with even larger bell, proclaims in stentorian voice the bill of fare at the Theatre Royal. Thatcher made his first appearance at the Commercial on 1st March, 1862, in conjunction with Madame Vitelli.

From Otago Thatcher went to Dunedin where he performed at the Theatre Royal (May, 1862) and later at the Corinthian Hall. A newspaper correspondent writes of—

The "Inimitable Thatcher," as he delights to style himself, has been as usual amusing the good people of Dunedin night after night with a continued succession of novelties in the way of comic local songs. He has installed himself as the Pasquin of Dunedin, and in that capacity fears nobody with his wicked wit. His latest effort is a song about the Testimonial Dinner to Captain McLean, in which he lays about him pretty freely, every body catches it from the chairman downwards.

The Rev. James Buller remembers Charles Thatcher in his memoirs of *Forty Years in New Zealand*. His description of the Corinthian is helpful in visualising the background of Thatcher's songs:

The only place I could get to breach in was a large room without floor, or windows, or seats, called the "Corinthian Hall." It had a platform with some tawdry scenery; and here Mr. Thatcher, a humorist, held forth every night of the week, for the entertainment of the diggers, at a shilling a piece. The only

entrance was through the bar of the hotel, with which it was connected. Mr. Thatcher had an harmonium, and very kindly offered to lend it, and also use it, in the conduct of the singing.

The next town visited was Canterbury; the *Canterbury Songster* marks his passing. Thatcher arrived in Christchurch on 19th July, 1862, and immediately opened at the Town Hall. He stayed in Christchurch till October, in the meantime making a quick visit to the Thames goldfield and to Hokitika. The newspaper solemnly reported that "the accompaniments to the songs were well played by Mr. Oakey, who had the advantage of possessing one of Broadwood's grand pianofortes, a choice instrument, which had been furnished by Mr. Darby."

During his years in Bendigo Thatcher was a regular visitor to the court, as he says in one of his songs,

Whenever I feel dull
And want a little sport
At ten o'clock I walk into
The Municipal Court.

When in Wellington, it was Parliament that attracted him.

On arriving in Wellington, Thatcher paid an early visit to the House of Representatives, and betook himself to the reporter's gallery, as the spot most suitable for "taking notes." Admission to this gallery can only properly be claimed by gentlemen attached to the press, and for which an order must be obtained from the clerk of the House; but this rule is not, we are told, very rigorously observed. No sooner however was Thatcher seen, pencil in hand, among the reporters, than some of the members became fidgety, and after a little while he was waited upon by an officer, with an inquiry of the name of the paper for which Mr. Thatcher was acting as reporter. The "Inimitable," no way taken aback, answered promptly, the *Hokitika Bouncer*. After a sufficient time had elapsed to carry the name of this newly-established West Coast journal to the Speaker, the officer returned, and informed Thatcher that he must leave the reporters' gallery.

The next evening he entertained his audience with some very pointed remarks on the politics of the persons responsible for having him removed. The first few lines run as follows—

I'm filled with grief, and great discontent!
I've lost my seat in this great parliament.
I went up to take notes the other night,
And honorable members got in such a fright.
Went to the Speaker, pointing out the danger,
As well as pointing out th' obnoxious stranger;
And over-ruled by what they said, Monroe
Reluctantly sent up word I must go.

In 1863, during the strike of the Lancashire cotton spinners, Thatcher gave a benefit performance which raised over £60 for a New Zealand distress fund.

Thatcher's work in New Zealand has been adequately summed up by Johannes Andersen. Andersen says that Thatcher

composed his own songs and sang them to well-known tunes; he "had a tongue with a tang," and his songs were extremely popular because he took off well-known people, first

BANARD BLACK

enquiring into the history, chiefly the disreputable history, of prominent individuals in the towns he visited, and then making songs thereon, singing them in public to the great disgust of the victims and the equally great delight of the rest of the audience. . . He would have had many a pommelling, only he was handy with his fists as well as with his tongue, and a sizeable man to boot—too sizeable in fact.

Things becoming settled in New Zealand by the middle sixties, Thatcher decided upon a return tour of Victoria. He had a panorama of the life on the diggings painted, and by narration and song showed the life gone by as he had seen it at Bendigo and Ballarat. In 1866 Thatcher was raising tempers in the correspondence columns of the Launceston newspapers during his Tasmanian visit. A little later he made a visit to Adelaide.

Charles Thatcher set up in business in the West End of London in 1870. Shortly after the Franco-Prussian War he was sighted on the continent buying merchandise. Andersen quotes a friend of his as having seen Thatcher in the "settlement" at Shanghai in 1882 buying chinaware and other goods with a £5000 draft on Baring Brothers. He is supposed to have died there of cholera, but this is only hearsay.

The goldfields are known to us almost entirely from the drawings of Gill. A second source, which has been constantly neglected, is the songs of Thatcher. In many of the later collections of traditional songs, in the campfire songbooks, a number of Thatcher's songs make their appearance. Even in the early nineties, Thatcher songs were sung and were popular. In several descriptive works of the goldfield era high tribute is also paid to Thatcher. These songs were indeed, as the author himself claimed, of the people.

"The greatest novelists, dramatists, and poets, the students of life, perceive that somehow, in totality, good just keeps evil in control—otherwise the world could not go on but would collapse in ruin, as is threatened now. Every man's problem in the management of his own affairs is a moral problem. But only the inartistic recorder and interpreter of humanity points the moral; the better writer allows for the significance to speak for itself."

R. G. Howarth.

OVERLAND

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Way back in the settlers' days, when teamsters
crawled along,
Folks tell of a spirited mare, who heard the free-
dom song;
Though the spurs had cut her hide, where the
stockmen cruelly rake,
No-one in the whole wide land could force her
heart to break.

The black mare left a drover's team in the depth
of the silkwood scrubs,
She had forded many an inland stream, had flinched
where the saddle rubs—
Always the call for free days and the fretting urge
for home;
She sped forever from men's ways, and she sniffed
the wind-blown foam.

Softly the scrub had whispered as she slipped
through the morning fog,
"You won't escape from the drover, girl, for you're
followed by his dog."
On many a cold grey morning as she thought how
freedom feels,
She started onward with the fright of the blue
dog at her heels.

Inland tracks were closed to her, though they
travel the coastline round,
And though she jog forever, still the heeler sniffs
the ground,
Now up and down the beach she runs, she snorts
and paws the sand,
Bush children see her breast the waves as she
swims off from the land.

Twin spots on the horizon are lonely Banard Isles,
The barren one has water, on one the herbage
smiles,
Each evening as the sun sinks low, sweep in across
the sea
White pigeons of the Torres Strait to seek their
sanctuary.

For many years, the people tell, the black mare
worked the tide;
As she swam across the channel, the sharks swam
by her side.
She shone beautiful in freedom, and great of hoof
she grew
As she paddled through the channel to drink the
Banard dew.

Futile escape to solitude, from life you cannot flee;
In death she rested on the rocks, still facing out
to sea.
From the hand of man she fled, from the hand
of man she died;
But for a treasured idol lost, the country children
cried.

Then a storm came up while the demons laughed,
their task to balance the scales—
They smashed on the rock the killer's craft, sent
him down to the slugs and snails.
Now the ghost of the killer calls for help as it
fights in the boiling sea,
While the ghost of the mare goes swimming by,
and the sharks grin merrily.

MERV LILLEY.

Seaman Merv Lilley writes that this ballad is a reply to the aspersions on the intelligence of the horse which were made (in a quotation from A. B. Paterson) in John Manifold's article, "The Banjo" (Overland, No. 1).