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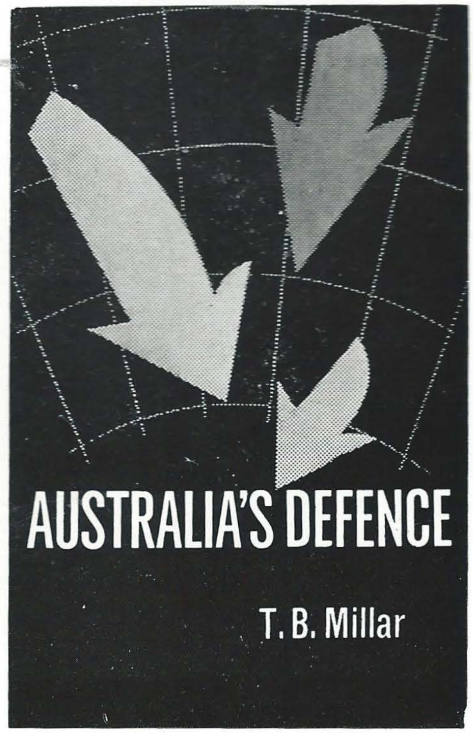

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NUMBER 32 SPRING 1965

OVERLAND

Temper democratic, bias Australian

AN OVERLAND MUSTER

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Edited by Stephen Murray-Smith

This is a collection of the most memorable contributions published over the last ten years in Overland, the Australian literary magazine that has broken through the culture-barrier.

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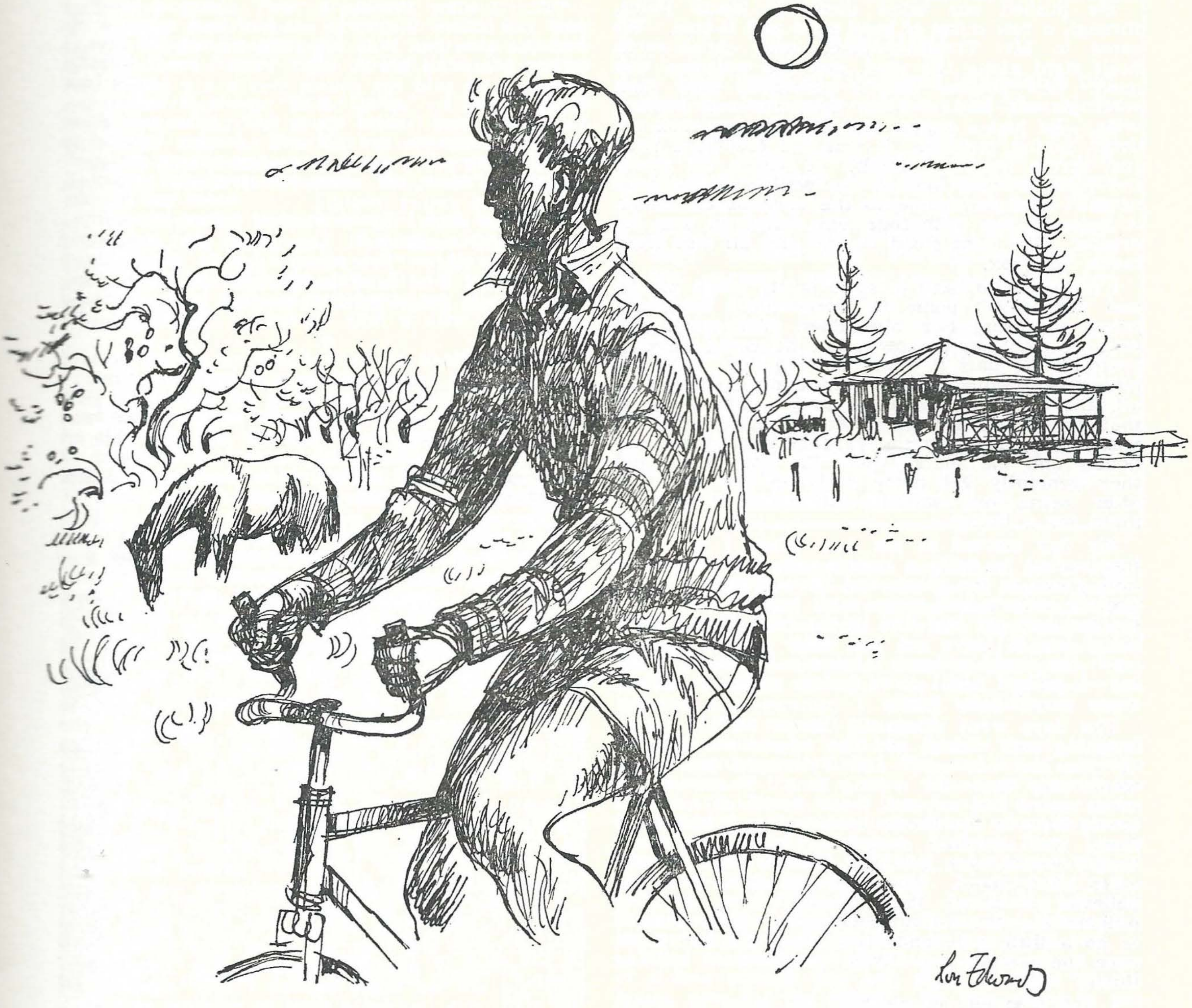
FROM ALL GOOD BOOKSHOPS



SOME STAR OF COURAGE

Merv. Lilley

THE old man made a blue when he gave me a cow to sell to buy a pair of working-boots.

I sold that big red Illawarra for three quid to the Habana butcher, bought myself a pair of bluchers and walked off in the bastards.

I should have worked in the Sensitive Weed around the headlands with them, but I knew they were the most I would ever get out of that cane-farm that had more wallabies than sticks of cane, and I'd better find a place where I'd be able to replace them.

"Well, I got you a job, Mervy." That was my big brother, Ossie. He came in on his racing cycle, with this job for me with a poultry farmer. I was in need of a job; there was only relief-work money coming into the house, apart from the landlady being a very fast dressmaker.

I was nearly sixteen years old and I'd ridden a lot of miles around the sugar-cane farms looking for field work, but there was none. So now I got a small swag together while Ossie told me about this job.

"It's a quid a week and tucker, finished every Friday night, Mervy."

That was good conditions; the last few jobs I had never finished, any part of the week. There was a note of urgency in Ossie's voice too—he was on relief work.

We pushed our bikes down to Slade Point, through a few miles of sand road and ti-tree. We came to Mr. Treloar's place with chook-yards built right along the road, and the welcome was good. Mr. Treloar was a plumpish, jolly man with glasses, and a little thin, nervous smiling wife. We had a cuppa, and Mr. Treloar took me down to the quarters. It was the fowl-feed shed just across from the fowls. It was a bit small, the bunk wedged against the wall, and the bags of fowl-feed just came to the edge of the bunk. A kerosene box with four legs nailed on was the dresser. The light stood on top and all else went inside the box.

I reckoned I'd been in some pretty tough places, and this wasn't going to worry me. What did worry me were two blue dogs. The small one was all right on his own, but he could develop hysteria and pass it on to the big dog. The big blue was a killer with no sense of friendship at all, and I needed protection to get in and out of that place, or even to walk up and down the yard. They slept in the yard between the fowl-houses and the shack where the boss lived, and they generally got home early in the mornings after being out wallaby-hunting most of the night for a living.

My day started at six a.m. when I went for the bucket to milk a couple of cows, take the milk down to the shack and have breakfast. Mrs. Treloar wasn't bad, poor soul, but she reckoned the last boy got less dirt in the milk than I, so I asked her to leave out hot water and a cloth to wash the cows' udders. I knew a bit about milking—I milked eight cows before going to school every morning for years.

The days went pleasantly there, feeding fowls, laughing and joking; and the missus even hinted "I was like her son," and I thought perhaps I would stay there for a long time. There was so much more life around these beautiful northern towns than in the lonely bush-setting I had come from, and certainly a quid a week was more than I would ever get from Dad on his thousand acres of freehold. The Treloars didn't seem to believe me about the thousand acres, the fifty milkers and the milking-machines. They seemed to go a little pale and tight when I'd tell them, once he asked me, "Why aren't you milking them?"

I didn't know, except that the price of cream had dropped to sixpence a pound and it didn't seem to be enough reason to take it off the calves.

Every night I helped wipe up for Mrs. Treloar, and then she would give me the lantern to go up the yard; he would stand outside to control the dogs until I got into the hut. I'd always say, "Goodnight, Mr. Treloar, Goodnight, Mrs. Treloar," then go to bed and read, or write home. Boys away from home spend at lot of time reading, or writing home: it helps to fill a great empty void in the heart.

*

Ossie came out now and then, and one afternoon we took our rifles and went down to the duck-swamp bordering Mr. T.'s place. It was a big paperbark swamp and the ducks were quacking all over it, swimming in and out amongst the trees. They moved over too far for us to shoot at, and we weren't going to go wading in water we didn't know, so we went back. There were plenty of crocs. in that country.

That was the first time I noticed any displeasure in Mr. T. The table was silent that night until I mentioned the swamp.

"That swamp belongs to my cousin. I'd rather you and Ossie didn't go down there again," he told me shortly. This cousin didn't allow anyone to shoot around his swamp. Then in an effort at lightness he said his cousin was a big fellow and would liven us up a bit if he caught us there. I grinned and said: "Ossie is the welterweight champion of North Queensland—and the only bloke that's got a chance of beating him is me."

I didn't have, of course; but that's how you think when you're young!

Just the same, my employers answered my respectful "Goodnights." They liked that part, and all was well on the morrow—until the midday meal when Mr. T. was later home than usual, and Mrs. T. suggested that he had been spending some time with a lady customer. "Making love," she said.

A mild attack of chain-lightning played around Mr. Treloar's face, and he said hotly he "wasn't going to have his movements questioned." Mrs. T. managed an apologetic smile and said she was "only joking," but I didn't think she was and he didn't seem to either; but he got a bit calmer. I knew he wouldn't have minded so much if she hadn't said it in front of the boy.

Afterwards as we walked up the yard he said not to take any notice of these blow-ups, he soon cooled down again; yet I knew it worried him that he had made a show in front of me.

We began talking about ploughing. He wanted to put in some quick crops, like water-melons, to boost things along. He had about ten acres ready for the plough, that he and others had grubbed over the last few years. I was to do the ploughing.

We started to plough that afternoon, just to work the horses into the collar, stake out the furrows, and go a few rounds so that I could go on ploughing in the mornings. I was on the ploughing then for some days, until things went wrong. Treloar put a mare and a big bay horse in the disc-plough. I thought, and said, that it would be too heavy for two horses, but he allowed no argument. That was Dad's way, too. He wouldn't let boys argue with him.

I ploughed on, taking the horses slowly into the work. It was sandy soil, so that two horses could pull the disc-plough. But we were getting down to the side of the swamp, and the soil became gluepot. What would I do? "Plough it all," he told me.

So I put them into it; the chains groaned, the horses were astonished. As they came to the end of each furrow, I let them have a spell before moving into it again. I watched anxiously, because my reputation hung on this, and that big bay appeared to be a highly sensitive horse. I let them work slowly and spoke cautiously, only when I needed to. A horse like that would stop if you spoke to it in the wrong tone of voice.

Mr. Treloar must have watched me spelling those horses when he got back from the egg-run. He came down.

"Keep them moving." He was looking very business-like.

"The ground's pretty hard," I suggested as mildly as I could.

"Just keep them moving. I want this ploughing finished."

He spoke sharply to the horses, and we moved off. They wanted to stop at the end of the furrow. I flicked the plough-rein across their rumps. They moved into the collar reluctantly; the big bay brought his ears close together, and we came to the headland where Mr. Treloar's glasses shone in the sun.

"Keep them moving," he ordered.

They stopped. Their shoulders were trembling. A teamster had told me always to watch for that: it was the danger-sign; the limit had been reached. Steady those horses right down until the quiver had gone.

I called to them. "Don. Dolly." I flicked them with the reins. The mare leaned into the collar, a faithful animal. The big bay sensitively backed over his chains and stood there. He was insulted. I knew this was the end. He wasn't going to plough any more.

"No use trying to push him," I had to tell him.

"Righto, let them go. He's done this before. He might plough tomorrow." Mr. T. looked around at the unploughed land in a baffled way, and visions of early crops died in his face.

*

Next morning it was the same. That big bay had jacked up for good. Mr. Treloar couldn't see that much "good horseflesh" going to waste. He would put him in the one-horse swing-plough and see if he could get him working. But it made no difference to Don if he was harnessed to a swing or a merry-go-round, he was stopping still.

"It's kill or cure. Belt him," yelled Mr. T.

I doubled a rope around Don, and thought of convicts and professional floggers. "I need some star of courage from his firmament, a bar against surrenders," I quoted. I felt a kinship with this horse—we were both working for Mr. Treloar. He looked dubiously at me as I ended the quote, picked up the swinglebar and hit Don with it, took off each chain and threw it at him.

"Let him go!"

I took Don, patted him, and offered to lead him away. He followed with head held high, ears pricked, and his whole attitude said, "This is the end. I will never work again."

The dogs watched me until I had unharnessed Don. As I walked down the yard the smallest blue leaped into the air as though he hadn't seen me before, barked frantically, and made an egging rush in my direction. He wanted the big fellow to tear me down. I grabbed an apple-tree sucker with a big knob-root on the end, swung upwards and grazed him with the tip. He dived around stiff-legged, tail jammed, barking hoarsely, with no courage. But I needed some for the big blue —he was walking in with a wicked grin—but Mr. Treloar was yelling and we all stopped. If the boss didn't want me eaten just then, why bother? The big blue walked away disdainfully. He'd eat me another time. For my part I thought to meet him on the swamp—with a rifle.

"Don't ever do that to those dogs, they're dangerous. I keep them for anyone with ideas about taking fowls. You can tell anyone I've got a shotgun there as well; and I'll use it."

A shotgun! That fired my interest. I knew a lad who'd suggested going into the runs at the back, from the apple-suckers, but I felt that it would be wrong, because the Treloars were battlers. Now his statement about dogs and guns had a suggestion, to my mind, that I could be about to do some fowl-thieving. My interest in the gun overrode the resentment, and I walked straight into the room he pointed to, to see the gun. But all I saw was a neatly-made double bed in the corner of the dirt-floor room, and a wardrobe with pictures on it, all very tidy, but no gun; and after I stared a minute, I knew I had done something wrong, and couldn't retreat. I came out and said into the uncomfortable silence, "Where's the gun? I didn't see one."

They were outraged, and kept silent for a while, then he told me, "Don't ever go in there again."

I had a feeling this was the end. I could play their symphony records, of which they had many, I could be like their son, but . . . I had invaded their privacy, seen into their special place; the horses wouldn't plough; we had invaded the private duck-swamp; I might even be a fowl-thief. Things weren't too good.

After smoko he said to forget about it, and could I grup out stumps? She said what a strong boy I was, as big as a man. She even stroked me on the arm. Being but a boy, I said I'd done a lot of grubbing, and went into detail about lantana-grubbing I'd done at home. I didn't deny I was strong; but I wasn't. I'd had a long starving on the cane-farm that didn't pay. I was rapidly developing a hernia, too, but I didn't tell the Treloars these things: they are not the things you tell an employer if you want to stay employed.

What he wanted was about quarter of an acre of ti-tree stumps dug out, right in front of the house, also for the plough. He was going to use the small mare in the swing-plough. He had to get in a crop of melons at least, to pay my wages, he said.

I got into that grubbing, using mattock, shovel and axe; awkward and hard, a hot job in the sun. Yet I felt the eyes watching me, more than the sun's rays, out there in that pitiless white patch of dead stumps. The hernia slipped right through into the scrotum; I'd lie straight out on my back to return it into place, then cut on as hard as I could, to the wonderment of man and wife. Both were pleased with my work and said so. When I looked around at the skeletons of giant paper-barks, all grubbed by Mr. Treloar to put his fowl-run down, I was glad it wasn't I who had done it, and I wondered how this soft, plump fellow with glasses had driven himself to do all that work. But as he said, he had a home now, so I suppose it had been worth it, to them. He had a secret trade, too, mending talking-dolls, and he wouldn't tell his secrets to anyone, ever —except a son who was away. As his father had passed this secret down to him, so he would pass it on to his son. I thought that if I could learn it I, too, could perhaps make a living mending talking-dolls, but—I wasn't his son.

Binding

This issue of Overland completes our fourth volume, numbers 25-32. Subscribers who wish their own copies bound must send them to the Editor by 31st October, 1965 (no binding orders can be accepted after this date). The cost will be £2, including return postage. Subscribers' incomplete sets of the current volume can be completed at an additional cost of 4/- a copy.

Complete bound volumes of the fourth volume may be obtained by ordering before 31st October at £3/10/- a volume. Title pages are available and will be supplied gratis on application.

Complete bound volumes of volume three (numbers 17-24) are also available on order for £3/10/- each.

He was so proud of it all, the farm carved out of the scrub, the secret trade; and so was his consumptive-looking little woman, all timidity, but looking with pride on her self-satisfied husband. At times they were both sad, wistful as though a constant strain, a little greater than living, had come to stay for ever. It was because their son had fallen victim to infantile paralysis.

I sometimes felt that Mrs. Treloar looked at me as though it should be her son she was looking at; and once she ran her hands over me, felt my hair, shoulders and arms, and said what a good boy I was. She was strained for lack of love, I thought, and remembered her words to Mr. Treloar: "You've been making love to one of your lady customers."

A little like my mother, too, a gaunt bushwoman; and yet, not like my mother . . . and not seeing me as her son. She had a hungry smile, a desperate gleam in her eyes.

I was embarrassed, repelled. I said I must get on with the job and finish it, and moved away. Her hunger followed me, receded to disappointment. A boy has only refuge and privacy in masturbation, in the years of growing and apprenticeship before he can share with a woman. "All trials are less than rain-blacked wind tells of that old distress."

There came a day when the grubbing was almost finished. Mr. Treloar had a large slice of sand ploughed with the small swing-plough. It wouldn't be long before water-melon vines ran their race over sandy chocolate soil, each trailer vying with the other to grow me my wages, and a contented smile hung around Mr. Treloar's eyes. As I rode away for my usual week-end off, I felt that I should be helping them a little more to get ahead, instead of spending my week-ends going to the movies, helping Ossie with the Sunday cycle-racing, racing around the river with boys of my own age. This week-end Ossie was getting ready for the possum season. There was said to be plenty of possums over Nebo. The thought of possuming sang in my wild blood: I could smell the possum gum-leaf smell like freedom down the wind; freedom from the smallness of fowls and poultry farmers. Yet I felt some allegiance to the Treloars. I thought I should stay with them. It didn't seem as though other boys had stayed with them, or would in future, and they needed help. I remembered how it used to break my heart when some lad Dad had working for him used to leave. I'd run after them saying, "When will you come back? You will come back, won't you Fred?" And Fred or Eric would always say, "I'll come back for Christmas." But they never came back, though I waited and hoped for years, till I knew I would have to go and find them.

I went back to the poultry-farm on the Monday morning. The blue dogs met me with savage chorus at the gate, and my hair stood on end; but the voice of the boss shepherded me in. There were only a few stumps to go to finish the grubbing, and I worked with even greater urgency. By midday the heat was pouring down, and it let me know I had forgotten my hat, so hard had I been thinking about this problem. I slipped away through the dinner-hour, and was riding furiously back when I got a puncture, and finished up an hour late. There was a big bloke with riding breeches and whip, standing at the head of his horse with the reins linked across his arm, talking to Mr. Treloar. This was the cousin who owned the swamp, and a lot more land around that area. This was the bloke who would belt Ossie and me if he caught us on his property. He looked a likely enough bloke, and the whole rig got me in. After all, I was a farmer's son; I'd like to talk to him about cattle and horses. The blue dogs were standing around him, being very friendly. I walked over, and nodded.

"G'day," I said, smiling boyishly, all set to follow on with some ready talk.

He stared down at me contemptuously, and kept staring. I saw all the arrogance I had always seen in landowners' eyes, yet I could not go back. I had come too far.

"Nice horse." I nodded to his horse, trying to brazen it out.

Mr. Treloar's face and neck went blood-red, and his face-muscles stood out as he yelled, "Well, now that you're back, get over there and do some work!"

I slunk away, expecting the dogs to tear me down from behind. I wouldn't have expected any help from Mr. Treloar at that moment.

I finished the grubbing, and he let me finish the ploughing with the little mare in the single plough, all in a strained atmosphere we both tried to dispel, but couldn't. He said again that his blow-ups never lasted long, and not to take any notice of it. I could have a permanent job there if I wanted it.

*

That week I wiped up as usual, said goodnight to each, and they responded with gratification. I got my pound on Friday night, and moved towards the door. This was the usual time I went to town for the week-end. I didn't know how to say what I was going to say . . . and anyway, I had the pound, so did it matter what I said? They waited for me to say goodnight, but I didn't. I moved slowly along the yard.

"Goodnight, Mervyn?" they called to me, in turn, and I said, "Goodbye Mr. Treloar, Goodbye Mrs. Treloar."

As I passed the first paddock I saw Don standing dimly in the moonlight, looking enlarged and indomitable. There was a horse, now! That big bay and I would get on all right mooching around the hills possuming at night, very leisurely, and I'd be able to pack him, too; he'd carry all the camp-gear without feeling it, for a mate.

Well, no use standing here looking at Don; he would stay behind and silently say the things I felt, every time Mr. Treloar looked at him. He would be the pride and dignity of labour, without which there would be no labour.

I rode noiselessly away through the applesuckers.

GENERALS

The generous concern of generals
Can be seen at wreath-sowing time
When their tears fall like dandruff
In the dust around the cenotaph.

"Sow a wreath and reap a mushroom cloud!"
An amputee declaimed amidst the crowd.

"I," cried the general, "commanded God
To take their souls." (He knew God personally,
They had been schoolboys together before the war.)

And as his hands of ivory manicure
Took the faultless bunch of bloodless wattle
Pronounced the words of succor and regret,
I saw two yellow tears start from his eye,
And from the other shoulder out a nightingale
That spattered ruby eye-balls all about.

The general coughed and gutturalled "Please excuse"
And taking bird in thumb and fingertip,
He squashed it gently, turned on swivel-hip
To wipe his fingers clean on the head
Of the flaxen-haired standing beside him
And then intoned this poem to the dead:

"They were young once, now they are dung,
From their dried blood-cells many crops are sprung
And harvests of flesh, fat cheeks and elbows,
They who were white of mind and blue of eye
Who made the blow-flies sing like larks to see them die
Are gone, gone, but the melody lingers on,

Who can gainsay that that was the only way?
Who can deny that they were glad to die?
O glory to those who died and are not dead
To those who are not dead!" the general stamped and said.

"Sow a wreath and reap a mushroom cloud!"
An amputee declaimed amidst the crowd.

DENIS KEVANS

HOW DID IT BEGIN?

By R. Brasch

Life is full of customs and superstitions; but do we know why we observe them? This book explains their origin and is packed with fascinating information. These and many more intriguing origins are explained in detail. "How Did It Begin?" is suitable for adults and young people alike. In fact anyone with a curious mind and a thirst for information, spiced with a little mystery, will enjoy reading this book and wish to own a copy as an indispensable and entertaining work of reference.

Rabbi Dr. R. Brasch is the Chief Minister of Temple Emanuel, Sydney, and a member of the Governing Body of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. Broadcaster, telecaster and contributor to numerous magazines and journals here and overseas, Dr. Brasch was guest lecturer in Hebrew at St. Andrew's College, Sydney University, 1952-53.

CASED EDITION: 49/6 ($4.95) Aust.

"How Did It Begin?" gives the

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- ★ The halo
- ★ The magic carpet
- ★ Playing cards
- ★ The slit in the lapel
- ★ The quiz
- ★ The doctor's red lamp, etc.

WHY

- ★ The bride wears a veil
- ★ Men and women button their garments in different directions
- ★ We shake hands
- ★ We clink glasses
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WHEN THE BOUGH BREAKS

Roma O'Brien

A STILL, cold winter night. A Tuesday, just after 1 a.m. I am in the room which was to have been the nursery, folding nightgowns into the case I am taking to the hospital. I have talked with the doctor on the telephone. He has spoken to me kindly and advised me to get myself to the hospital right away.

Yet I cannot feel a need to hurry. There is in me no joy, no excitement. Only pain. And, for the time being, pain is of small account. The child is dead. I have known since last week that the child is dead. I have cried, many tears: but I am not crying now. I am folding nightgowns. Putting them into the suitcase. Preparing to go to the hospital to give birth to a dead child.

I could wish that there was some other way. That there was in this city, somewhere, a dark corner where I might lie to give birth to this child. But I know that there isn't—anywhere. And that, anyhow, even if there were—some place, that place would be denied me. I will need help. I will need all the help I can get.

So I fold the nightgowns. Put them in the suitcase.

From time to time I am aware of the pain. At ten minute intervals the pain comes, trickling through my groin: as the current that trickles through the filament of a lamp before the power takes hold and the lamp is full of light.

I allow this pain to happen in me. In me. Not yet—to **me**. I move and, as it were, from a mirror I watch this me who has the pain folding nightgowns; putting them into the suitcase; preparing to go to the hospital to give birth to a dead child.

"Can't I do any of this for you?" my husband is saying.

"No thank you," I reply. "I can manage."

With care—with more than care, I fold the nightgowns, put them in the suitcase. I check my blood-group card, the contents of my sponge bag . . .

Having neglected to buy a new one, I get my toothbrush from the bathroom; an unopened packet of tissues from the cupboard in the hall. These I put in the suitcase.

Then I remember that I have not been into this room which was to have been the nursery since that day last week when the doctor told me that the baby was dead.

From the suitcase I remove the pack of baby clothes.

"I won't need these."

"How do you know you won't need them?"

"I won't, that's all." My husband does not know what is in the pack.

"Are they still coming?" He is referring to the contractions—the pains.

"Yes."

"Hadn't we better hurry?"

"No. There's plenty of time."

"Are you quite sure there's nothing I can do?"

"Quite sure."

I close the case; put on my new dressing gown; my new slippers. The gown is a lovely thing—long and full and dark, dark blue with a soft scarf that I knot at the neck.

I kiss the child I gave birth to, fourteen years ago. "Bye-bye darling," I say. "Mother's going to the hospital now."

She stirs but does not waken.

"Did you hear me, darling? . . . I'm going to the hospital now."

"Yes," she murmurs, "I heard you. Bye-bye."

I kiss her sleep-warm forehead and walk out into the still, cold night to the car.

"Drive slowly. I don't want to get there too soon. I might have to walk up and down."

"What would you have to do that for?"

"I don't know. Sometimes they make you walk up and down."

We have the road to ourselves down the dark High Street but there are several cars at the Junction waiting for the lights. Still I feel no panic. Only an ice-cold calm. A willingness to submit myself to the sacrificial fires. I think that if I can make a friend of pain, it may—perhaps—treat me more kindly so that it won't be the way it was that other time.

Not having made the dummy run to the hospital we get a little lost in the dark back streets in the unfamiliar, inner suburb and it is past two o'clock when we reach the hospital.

I throw my half-smoked cigarette on to the freshly-dug earth under standard roses, newly-pruned, and proceed to the large glass doors and ring the night bell. I open the door and enter the dim vestibule.

My husband follows with the suitcase: "Hadn't we better wait?"

"We'll wait here. It's cold outside."

A nurse comes. She is short, plump, pinkly-pretty in her blue uniform. She takes us along darkened corridors, through pales of pale light. One foot up and one foot down, our feet flap on the thick floor. People sleep or suffer behind closed rooms. I am not talking and I don't hear any conversation. I am alone. I am telling myself that it couldn't possibly be as bad as last time. That this girl looks kind. That she will help me. She won't be like that other one. She, who fourteen years ago . . . (Forget about her. Leave her to heaven) . . . This girl, little more than a child, she will help me. I must believe this, otherwise . . .

Young, slight, cool and crisp the white-uniformed sister sits at her desk in an alcove in a wider part of the corridor. My husband waits there at the desk to supply "some particulars." I go with the nurse into the lying-in room.

It is a large room. In it, there are five beds, arranged in a three and a two. Unbleached twill curtains partition the beds. The windows are high on the narrower walls. Blue walls. A clock.

Short, plump, pinkly-pretty, the little nurse comes to me as I stand where I can see the clock. She asks the question that she has been instructed to ask. I know this because she does not manage to sound matter-of-fact or to conceal the some small embarrassment she feels at having to ask one to share what must surely be a most private secret: "Why have you come?" she asks.

Then, because my reply is slow in coming, she uses the second string to her bow: "Have the waters broken?"

I hate to disappoint her but I tell her no. no they haven't. It isn't that. Actually, it's just that the contractions are coming every eight to ten minutes and there is some discharge. But I do hope for all our sakes that it isn't a false alarm. I would feel very foolish, I say, if I have to be sent home in the morning. She assures me that it's better to come. Better to be sure than sorry. She asks if this is my first baby and pops a thermometer in my mouth. Afterwards I tell her that there is not going to be a baby anyway; that the baby is dead; it will be all for nothing after all. She looks her grief. Then alarmed, she asks who my doctor is. I tell her. She is glad: "Oh. that's good," she says. "He'll make it nice and easy for you."

Gently she leads me over and turns down a bed. I lie down and she wraps the blood pressure cuff about my forearm.

The side curtain of the next bed, the one on my left, doesn't come right to the wall. The shape of a woman occupies the bed but the woman herself is far away in some other world; a rosy place into which pain penetrates only from time to time and is acknowledged with a muffled groan. Her hair is a mess of chestnut curl on the pillow. Her face is flushed and her eyes are closed. She is a fortunate woman. Although she cannot feel it stirring, her baby is alive and she is further along than I am. It will be over sooner for her.

*

When my pain comes I count silently, slowly and watch the digits pass . . . one, two, three, four, et cetera up to thirty odd. Pinkly-pretty, nurse asks me if that was one and I say it was. She has noted my blood pressure and tells me that my husband can come in now to say goodbye. After he has gone she will "prep" me. Then sister will see if there is anything happening. I ask for her name and she tells me. I ask for sister's name and she tells me that, too. Sister Armstead.

My husband comes in. He sits on a straight, wooden chair and I tell him not to worry about me that I'll be quite all right. The nurse is very pleasant and I'm sure they'll look after me. I tell him what food there is in the refrigerator and where to find clean socks. He sits there holding my hand and telling me that he loves me.

From far away on drifts from the drugged dream, the low groaning from the flushed woman punctuates our conversation. My husband's eyes are watchful and shine like glass in moonlight. It is as if he is glued to the chair and he holds my hand as if he will never let it go.

Twenty minutes to three. Tight little pincers pull and tug in my groin. One, two, three, four . . . He must go. He mustn't be here when it gets too bad. I am embarrassed for the woman in the next bed and I don't want him to see me —or to hear me—if I . . . I want to give him some of the strength he has given me. To sustain him, I am gay. He must not worry about me. In the morning he will probably have to come and take me home. It's probably nothing at all. Just a false alarm.

He kisses me. He goes.

As she scrapes with the razor, the plump little nurse tells me the name of the country town she comes from. I've not been there but I know the country and I hear the roosters crow to greet the wide dawn around the rolling hills and I see her walk with her friends down a rough lane, green at the edges, to school on winter mornings. She buys groceries for her mother on the way home from school. Rolled oats and plum jam.

She tells me that she trained at the district hospital and has done eighteen months' mid-wifery training, here—in the city—at this hospital. She asks me if I've been a nurse and is surprised that I haven't because, she says, I use all the right names for things. I tell her that I learnt a little Latin at school and, because the sounds aren't strange to me, if I see the words or hear them, I remember them. She thinks I must have more education than she. She wishes she had studied harder at school. She is studying now at a coaching college in her spare time. I am lucky she thinks to have so much education. I will let her know, won't I, when the contractions come?

The "prep" goes on and we time the contractions together. When she was sixteen she had her appendix out. She had all this done to her. It was awful. She hated it.

She is sweet. I can't think that she will be heedless of me if the torment takes me and hurls me off into the maelstrom. "Was that one?" she asks. I nod. The tight little pincers rip and tear; have prickles like hot thorns. One, two, three, four . . . I won't be going home in the morning.

"Are you all right," she says. "You will let me know, won't you, if it gets too bad, so that I can get sister to give you something?"

The clock shows nearly three-fifteen when she takes my towel and sponge bag from my case and leads me to the shower. She gives me some help to adjust the water temperature and leaves me in blessed privacy to wash.

Three-thirty. Clean, I am back in bed. Nurse is taking the dressings. the cotton wool, the antiseptic and my blood-group card from my case. Sister is standing slight, cool and crisp in her white uniform, calling me "Tuppence" and asking me if I'm all right.

I tell her that, while the contractions are quite pronounced, there is nothing that I can't cope with at the moment. She says to be sure to let her know if I want any help.

She leaves me to speak to the woman with the flushed face, turning now and tossing on the pillow. The drugged dream which had taken her away to quieter seas is returning her to shore. She is murmuring that "it's getting pretty bad" and she is taken from the warm world of sheets and blankets and wheeled away.

Three-thirty-five. One, two, three, four, five, six . . . I count more quickly now. It takes little time to reach thirty and there's more to come.

Three-thirty-nine. And a pink drink for me so that I can get some sleep before I start my labor. God, I've had something like a pink drink before. Was it really so long ago since I was given something like a pink drink? A passport to hell. I argue about the pink drink but finally take it. Three-forty-two.

Sleep comes and for five, ten minutes takes me away to its nothingness, nowhere. But pain is stubborn; can't—won't—be cheated. The swift, tight pincers are white-hot now, insisting on the penalty. One, two, three, four, five . . . the digits gather speed. jostle and jumble and fall together into chaotic heaps. I can't go on like this. The

Her Time

Her time to be a corpse has come.
Late summer now lays bare the ground
That once was waving wild with grass.
Dead stars will travel, spring come round

And other eyes see others pass.
The spent drops to the creek return,
The creek still flashes into moonstones,
And we who breathe have time to learn

Death, too, is life and has its season,
Though earth be all its rhyme and reason.

ROBERT CLARK

---

strands are separating; the rope will break under the strain. The cool, white sister, crisp at her desk in the corridor, she thinks I'm asleep. She doesn't know that there are these greedy, grasping white-hot claws.

I slide my toes into my new slippers, using them like scuffs. There isn't much time, only a minute or two. I put on my dressing gown but don't button it. I wait while the white-hot claws seize again. I go.

She is sitting there—writing; the cool, white sister. She herself has never known pain. All her life she has been pain-free, cool and contained. She comes from a tidy house with a tidy garden. Roses, larkspurs, zinnias. Daddy is proud of her and she is mummy's darling too. Always she uses a lace-edged handkerchief even when she has a cold and she wears pearls with a cashmere sweater around the house on Saturday afternoons. What she is writing on the page at the lighted desk will be ordered. Like herself. At school she always got full marks for neatness and, on her report card, her conduct was invariably marked "Excellent."

She finishes what she is writing and looks up at me from enquiring hazel eyes.

"These contractions are much stronger now, sister," I say. "And closer together. I don't think I can cope with them much longer."

She regards me, this change-daily girl. She who wakes fresh to the morning after long, dreamless nights. She, who has never known pain.

"Pop back into bed, Tuppence," she says. "I'll be in to see you in a minute and bring you an injection."

Four-twenty-five. God, I hope she hurries! No, she won't hurry. She has never hurried. From a tidy bed, she rises in ample time to select correct garments, to bathe, to dress with care. She is ready for breakfast before breakfast is ready for her! She kisses mummy and walks in business-like fashion to the bus. Whilst she waits for the bus she smoothes her skirt and checks her hair to make certain that no strand has been displaced. On windy days she wears a close-fitting hat . . . God, I wish she'd hurry.

The pincers are giant clamps now of heat too high to measure. The white beds, the white ceilings, the blue walls, the clock, the darkness, the little pools of light, the high barred windows, the prison, the pain.

Four-thirty-five or thereabouts. She stands by my bed. She folds back the covers. O God, she hasn't brought the injection! She doesn't know . . .

She presses cold hands; long, elegantly manicured, apricot-coloured finger nails on and about my pelvis. She doesn't speak.

Something has happened. There is a tight band, a circle inside me: "I want to go to the bathroom."

She doubts this. "Are you sure? You don't feel it would help you to bear down with the . . ."

"No," I say, miserably. "No."

She stands there, not speaking, assessing the situation. Cold hand; long elegantly manicured, apricot-colored finger nails search again for answers.

"O, I don't know. Perhaps I should want to, I don't know. I remember last time when I said I wanted to go to the bathroom they said I didn't that I wanted to push and they wouldn't let me go to the bathroom . . ."

"Just a minute," she says.

She has a name! An organised, no-nonsense name. Ann? Elizabeth? Patricia? The dark door admits light from the corridor before it swings to behind her and stays at rest. Under the dark door the light from the corridor is a harsh, bright line. She will hurry, won't she? She does understand, doesn't she? She's not like that other one: she, who—those long years ago—came back with the magazines and sat by my bed turning glossy pages while I went threshingly mad. She is getting the injection, isn't she?

She is with me again. turning down the covers and the plump little nurse stands beside her. "Come on," she—Ann Elizabeth—is saying.

I put on my slippers, again as if they were scuffs. The backs will be broken. They will be ruined.

The plump little nurse holds the door open and we go out into the silent corridor. The pain is a tight fist as hard as iron; pressing, expanding. The plump little nurse makes soothing noises.

We are children, she and I. She is the elder—eleven to my five. She is Kathy! Kathy Kay—the girl who used to call to take me to school. Soft, ample Kathy Kay in a too-small gingham frock split under the armpits. Kathy Kay! Her father was a fettler. They had a plum tree. In summer the plums rotted on the ground under the tree and we dug holes in its shade and grovelled in the earth playing marbles after school. Sometimes she let me win. There were rabbit skins drying blood-side out on the fence. Stretched, taut on wires bent into hair-pin shapes. Rabbit skins, drying. Blood-side out.

We are not going to the bathroom. The room we enter is enormous; high-ceilinged; flood-lit. I am led into the arena, up to the stage—the high, hard, white couch. I lean, supporting myself, holding on to the side, whilst I shed my slippers and the plump little nurse (Kathy Kay) puts a step in position and helps me to rise.

"How is that lady . . . the one who was . . . in there . . . when I came in?"

"She's all right!" Ann Elizabeth smiles her reply. "It's going to be a race now between you and her!"

I wonder if, perhaps, Ann Elizabeth has not been told that my baby is dead.

The couch is cold. Cold and hard and the pain is hard too. From a yellow capsule, Ann Elizabeth prepares to fill a hypodermic syringe. Against the wall, under clerestory windows, two faded pink bunny rugs are placed neatly side by side to warm on radiator pipes and some distance out from the wall there is a tiny white cot.

The cot won't be needed, will it? O, I don't know; maybe it will. Do they put dead babies into cots or do they just take them away in buckets or swaddle them in a sheet or something? What do they do with dead babies, newly-born?

The couch is cold. Cold and hard. And the pain is hard too—as hard as steel. The sound I make comes to me as the voice of another, a sound between a sob and a moan.

"Can you," Ann Elizabeth asks. "breathe in deeply to inflate your abdomen?"

"No," I say. "No, I can't. I'm sorry but I . . . I . . . just can't do anything."

She is not cross. It is my failure, not her's. God help her, she is trying to hurry. She holds the hypodermic, needle-side up to expel the air. Bubbles like bright wine spill from it and slide down the needle. God, I wish she'd hurry. She is trying to hurry, isn't she? She is doing her best. But it has all happened so suddenly! Birth, like death, has crept up and caught us unawares. Like death, we have been expecting it but we had thought there would be more time. Hadn't we? Hadn't we?

Am I crying? I don't know.

"Do you want to scrub up, Doctor . . .?"

When I turn, I see him at the sink, leaning over washing his hands in a gush of steaming water from the tap. He won't want to scrub up? He wouldn't want to scrub up. would he, not when . . .? No.

"No," he says. "I'm going to rupture the membrane."

Ann Elizabeth turns on taps at the cylinder and, with her spare hand, thrusts a heavy black rubber mask into my hands.

"Here." she says, "use this. Just breathe in deeply . . ."

I put the mask over my face, eager for it, but it falls away.

Am I crying? I don't know. I only know that pain has set me apart from these people. That here on a dark night, in a room full of light, on a high, hard bed, I am alone. I am alone because there is nothing they can do to help me because now it's too late! I didn't know it would come on so quickly . . . I didn't know . . .

Ann Elizabeth dabs with the ice-cold spirit and injects the fluid. Too late. It can't help now! The little it can do won't be enough.

She retrieves the mask; holds my hands over it it and tells me to press down firmly. Pain shifts its awful bulk like some earth-bound creature straining for the sky. The mask falls away. I can't hold it.

The doctor is tying on his apron. It is a Sunday afternoon. He is preparing to carve the roast or to grill the chops for the barbecue. He wears a blue jumper and grey slacks. Birth is no novelty to him. Next, please.

"I think I will have the other one, sister," he says, removing the apron, exchanging it for the bigger one Ann Elizabeth is waiting with, just in case.

Where is Kathy Kay? Can't she come and put out the fire?

Ann Elizabeth holds the mask over my face and again presses my hands firmly over it. I try to breathe the way she is telling me to breathe, but my breath is as the stroking of an exhausted swimmer, awash in an angry sea.

"Get this out of the way!" It is a newish nightgown so it doesn't rip. From some great height the flat of a positive hand descends on my naked abdomen. I clutch at the mask but it falls again. O God, O God is this all they can do?

Ann Elizabeth has taken up her position on the other side of the couch. She stands there at attention. Where is Kathy Kay? The man with the white apron over the blue jumper and the grey slacks holds the mask to me now. "Breathe like this," he is saying. "Through your mouth: Huh-Hah, Huh-Hah," he is demonstrating. "No, no, don't close your eyes. Keep your eyes open! Huh-Hah, Huh-Hah, Right?"

I must try. I must try. I am the performer alone in the stage. These are the spectators and they are demanding action. I am the dwarf thrust into the arena to wrestle with the daemon. I must put up a fight. For myself? For them? For whom?

No. no, I can't let go. Ann Elizabeth is calling me Tuppence and urging me on. Her voice carries an unfamiliar excitement. I am breaking apart. Does she know that I am breaking apart? Breaking as the apple breaks when its flesh is torn? Has she ever broken an apple?. Torn its flesh and sinews and left it to bleed—white blood? Huh-Hah. Huh-Hah. "Keep it up, keep it up, you're doing awfully well." Overtones of pity in a voice I've not heard before from the doctor.

They are pleased with me. Pleased with my lone performance on the flood-lit stage. They are excited by the dance I perform with death: Huh-Hah, Huh-Hah, Huh-Hah.

And I, naked under the awful glare of the naked lights, I cry from my heart to this monster, pain, I cleave to the mask, gulping—Huh; thrusting—Hah, at this ferocity in my loins. I cleave; gulp—Huh; thrust—Hah; frantic because I must, must, must, not—Huh . . . Hah; Huh—Hah, scream.

Not scream not scream not scream. A leaf in torrent, a speck in the tide; hold on, hold on, hold . . . on. Huh-Hah, Huh,Hah. Huh-Hah. No, no, don't, don't, don't . . . let go! Gulp, Huh—thrust, Hah; but don't—don't—don't—let—go! Hold on! Don't let go! Huh. Hah. Huh. Hah. Don't . . . let . . . go! Huh—I am wrenched, wide—open. Hah. Cleft. Ice under the axe. Splitting. Huh-Hah. Huh-Hah. Not much. O, surely not much, not much, not much—more. Splitting. Huh. Hah. Huh. Hah. Now? Now? O. please now! Huh. Hah. Now? Now? Now? O, please. Huh; please, Hah . . . Now? Huh. Hah. Now? Now: hot lava and the shape of the child passing out of my body. The form, the shape of the child my body has rejected; is—huh, hah—rejecting. The form, the shape of the child . . . round little head . . . closing to soft little neck . . . expanding again for shoulders . . . little arms . . .

Ann Elizabeth has been supporting my leg. It has no weight and she places it back on the couch—gently, as if it were a feather.

"Stitches, Doctor . . .?" she breathes.

(Wind and water have beached the tired craft. She is being inspected now to see if there has been damage.)

"No. No . . . stitches!" A small triumph here. Then a silence.

A careful silence in the room from which pain has gone. Syllables in the silence. Gutturals. Drops in the ocean of defeat. The man who is the doctor, does—what he has to do.

Then: "Get . . ." A pause. "Thank you, sister."

And silence again.

Is she taking what was to have been my baby away? How? Where is she taking it? There is no answer in the silence. Here there is only the calm after the storm. The quiet after the conflict. The mopping-up. The victim quietly bleeding.

Conversationally, as he works, the doctor's voice: "What has she had?"

Ann Elizabeth has done whatever it was she had to do because I hear her answering: "Just the pethedine, doctor . . . I didn't have time to give her anything else."

I say nothing. I would like to say that this has not been Ann Elizabeth's fault but I say nothing. I feel very small in the big room. Limp. Being attended to. Exposed as on a mountain top in a wide, cold world.

After a time, the doctor speaks: "Well! I think a little amatyl now! Might be kind! Don't you think?"

To me, he says: "Are you with us?"

I hear my voice, a whisper: "Yes."

"The baby was a little girl," he says. "Actually, it was . . . as I thought . . ." He finds these words hard to say. He is a kind man. He has left his wife, his comfortable bed to come to me on a winter morning. He is trying to find simple words that I might understand.

Yet these words drop like stones on my heart. And I don't understand. I don't understand at all.

Ann Elizabeth takes my arm and injects the amatyl. She puts water in a jug and a glass on a table within my reach. Outside on her desk in the corridor the telephone is ringing. Ann Elizabeth goes promptly to answer it.

The doctor is washing his hands at the sink.

*

It is morning. Ten to six by the clock. The arena is deserted. Swabbed and bandaged I am alone on the stage. The two faded pink bunny rugs, undisturbed, rest neatly side by side on the radiator pipes. I don't look for the cot. I attempt to pour water from the jug into the glass. Some of the water slops on the table and drips down on to the floor. I feel at the sleeve of my nightgown for a tissue. But don't find one. Ann Elizabeth bustles in.

"Sorry, Tuppence," she says. "I'll have to move you. We might need this room. We have a patient coming in. Her husband doesn't speak very good English so I couldn't find out what stage she's at. They're still using the other room —otherwise you could have stayed here for a while. You don't mind, do you?"

I shake my head. I don't care. I don't care what she does with me.

I am on a trolley. Passing the desk I hear the doctor at the telephone. "Mr. . . .?" He speaks my husband's name. His own name. "I've just delivered your wife. The baby was . . ."

Ann Elizabeth opens a door and I am back in the room, in the bed I vacated only a little more than an hour ago. The lights are out and the grey morning is insinuating itself about the blue walls.

I am alone. Alone in the big room with the four empty beds. Three of these seem to me to be souls waiting for bodies. The fourth—the one on my left—the body from which the soul has gone.

Someone I've not seen before comes in with water to wash me. Two strangers come in quietly to strip the bed on my left. One takes the used linen. The other smoothes fresh sheets and goes out empty-handed. Time stands still.

*

My husband is with me. He has come as soon as he could, he says. On his way in he has had to wait to speak to the charge sister about . . . about . . . the arrangements. He hadn't known what I would want to be done about the . . . the . . . remains. We hadn't discussed it, had we? However, it seems that the usual thing is for them to be buried in groups—according to religion —in a cemetery, somewhere. Unless you happen to want cremation? Anyhow, the hospital will make the arrangements with the undertakers. He has settled for burial in a cemetery—somewhere. That way we'll never know where it is, but—if I wish—he can see sister again, and . . .

Someone comes in with a bright smile and a breakfast tray. "Cold today," she shivers. "Bed's the best place on a day like this, isn't it?" She doesn't wait for an answer. She is in a hurry.

"That's all right then, is it? That arrangement. I can alter it if you like?"

"No. That's all right."

"How are you anyway, sweetheart?" Drawing up a chair, taking my hand: "Are you sure you're all right, sweetheart? Could I get anything for you? What about some of this tea? You'd like that, wouldn't you? The doctor said you were wonderful. I think you're wonderful too, sweetheart. There you are. that's not too strong, is it? Just say if it's too strong, there's some . . ."

They . . . bury them in groups . . . according to religion . . . in a cemetery—somewhere. That way . . . we'll never know where it is. The hospital . . . will make the arrangements with the undertakers.

"Darling, can you sit up a little? I'll fix your pillows, you don't look comfortable, sweetheart. Sweetheart."

Undertakers. Undertakers? I know nothing about undertakers.

Do they . . .?

Will they . . .?

They wouldn't just . . .?

O God. I hope they handle her gently, my little girl. I hope they treat her with respect.

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The material by Frank Anstey in our last issue was so well received that we here accede to requests to publish more. This time the pieces are prefaced by F. C. Green, former Clerk to the House of Representatives.

FRANK ANSTEY—THE MAN I KNEW

F. C. Green

OF all the parliamentarians I knew in four decades the man who interested and attracted me most was Frank Anstey. I liked him because he was generous and tolerant. There was nothing petty or devious in his make-up. He was governed by neither fear nor desire, and you could believe what he said. He interested me because he never ceased to fight for the cause in which he believed, in spite of the fact that he was always frustrated and defeated by forces beyond his control. Probably as a successful man he would have no longer been interesting; as Masefield reminds us—

For the conqueror's prize is dust and lost endeavour;
But the beaten man remains a story for ever.

I never heard a more brilliant and convincing speaker in debate, who marshalled his facts and put his case with fascinating clarity, and could then tear all the opposing arguments to pieces. His speeches are well worthy of collection and publication.

I saw Frank Anstey on 11 November 1920 for the first time. He was then aged 55, and was addressing the House of Representatives on a motion by Prime Minister Hughes to expel the Hon. Hugh Mahon, member for Kalgoorlie, from the House. Mahon had been a minister in Hughes' Labor Government, but when Hughes left Labor in 1917 on the conscription issue and formed what was called a Nationalist government, his friend Mahon had refused to follow him, and Hughes had revenge by obtaining his expulsion from parliament. It was a time of great tension over civil war in Ireland and the activities there of British troops and police, known as "the Black and Tans". At a Sunday afternoon gathering at Richmond (Vic.) of the Irish League, Mahon, who was born in Ireland and had been a political prisoner with Parnell in Kilmainham Gaol in 1881-2, speaking of the death in British custody of the Lord Mayor of the City of Cork, was reported to have expressed the hope that "the sob of the widow on the coffin would one day shake the foundations of this accursed Empire." Hughes raised the matter in the House and moved for Mahon's expulsion; he was accordingly expelled on a party vote. Hughes and Mahon had been friends and close associates, but in moving for the expulsion Hughes made a personal attack on the character and conduct of Mahon. Anstey, who was last to speak on the motion, fascinated me by his debating strength, his burning eloquence on the right to freedom of speech, and his contempt for Hughes.

The Prime Minister has told the House that the member for Kalgoorlie is a cold, calculating person who has subordinated his religion, his country, his party and everything else to his pocket. He tells us that while in the Labor party he voted on every occasion with this cold, calculating person, but never against him. If I were in the position of the Member for Kalgoorlie I would have said—"I am the man he says I am; behold my companion and associate."

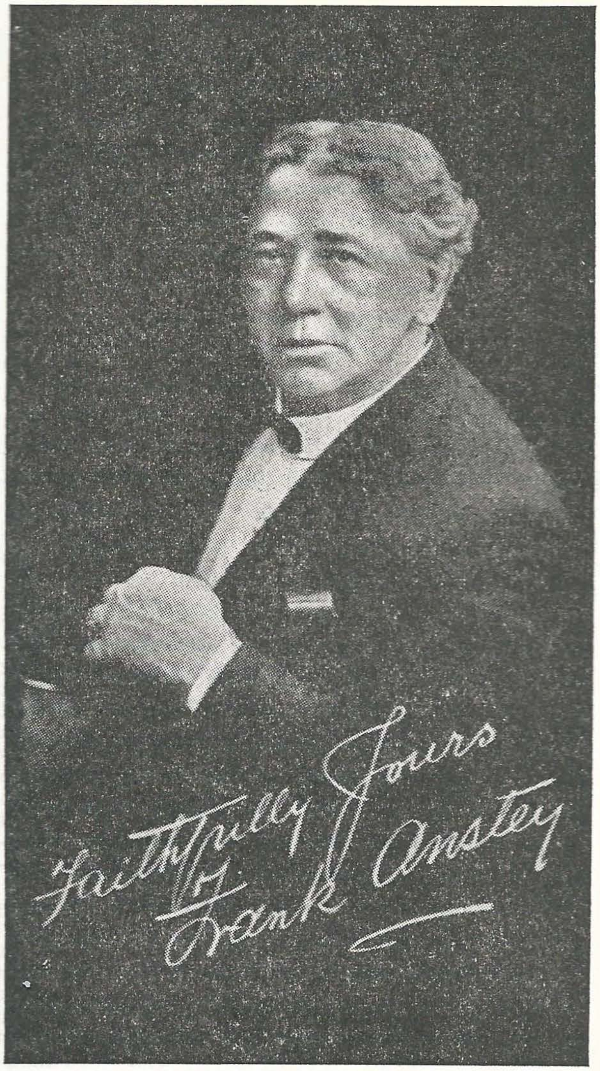
I did not meet Anstey until 1923, when the Bruce Government appointed a Royal Commission consisting of members from each party in the parliament to investigate the effect of the Navigation Act of 1921 on our trade and industry. This enquiry came about because of claims by the Country Party in Western Australia that this new Act, prohibiting the inter-state carriage of passengers and cargo by overseas ships, was detrimental to the development of that state. Anstey was a member of the Commission and I was the secretary. I soon found that he was the only member dedicated to establishing the facts. Of the other members those from the Nationalist party had already decided to support the Act, while those from the Country party wanted the Act repealed and overseas ships with semi-slave labor back in the inter-state trade. So Anstey and I worked together; for the others it was a trip round Australia and no evidence from expert witnesses would influence them. We began in Western Australia, where I met John Curtin for the first time. He was then editor of the Westralian Worker, an impressive weekly journal. He had lunch with Anstey and me every day, and I noticed that he was a total abstainer from alcohol. I learned that Anstey had in the early years of this century conducted a political school for young men at Brunswick (Vic.), that Curtin had been a pupil and had later assisted Anstey in his campaign against conscription. After the war Curtin began to drink heavily, and Anstey, believing that work and responsibility was the cure, took him to Western Australia and had him appointed editor of the Labor journal to which he brought prestige and public support. He remained there as editor until his election to the House of Representatives in 1928. The bond of friendship between Anstey and Curtin was broken only by death.

During our Navigation Act enquiry we visited the ports of Cairns and Townsville, where Anstey knew the waterfront and its history, but it was at Mackay that he told me of his life on a schooner trading to the Pacific Islands and bringing back kanakas for the sugar plantations. It all came back to his memory when we saw a "pub" facing on what was known at Mackay as "the Creek"—a small tidal stream. In his time the schooner on which he worked was owned by the proprietor of this "pub," under the roof of which was a brothel. When the crew came ashore they received their pay on these premises, so that most of the wages eventually came back to the owner through the good offices of Bacchus and Venus.

In Sydney we worked together for some weeks, and slept in a converted garage facing east from the cliffs overlooking Manly beach. When the sun came up from the sea we went down into the surf; then to the city to work, and back in the evening to Manly to sit on the beach in the moonlight and talk. The subject could be religion, socialism, literature, his youth in England, his adventures at sea, or Melbourne at the turn of the century. He had almost a photographic memory of what he had read, and one night he recited with emotion a chapter of Dostoyevsky's "The Brothers Karamazov," in which Christ returns to Earth and is discovered by the Grand Inquisitor. I also remember him telling me of his journey on foot from Sydney to Melbourne via the south coast and Gippsland. While in Sydney he had written an article on life in the Sydney "Rocks," which was accepted and published by the Bulletin. While on the road to Melbourne he wrote another article and submitted it to the same journal, giving his address a small village in Gippsland where he was camped under a bridge. Two weeks passed without acknowledgment from the Bulletin, so with his last sixpence he bought a copy of the current issue, where he found in "Answers to Correspondents" the following:—"F.A. Your screed is as long as a Rabbi's curse and twice as dreary." He regarded this as the best lesson he ever had in the art of writing English. By the time he wrote his "Red Europe" and "The Kingdom of Shylock" he had become a master of the short, staccato sentence. Later, about 1923, he became editor of Labor's Melbourne weekly, The Call.

The establishment of a public park in the Melbourne suburb of Brunswick may not be a matter of national interest, but in the story of this man it serves to describe something more of his make-up. W. A. Watt (later Treasurer and Acting Prime Minister of the Commonwealth) was a contemporary of Anstey both in the Victorian and Commonwealth Parliaments. Anstey went to the House of Representatives in 1910, and Watt did the same in 1914. In the State House Anstey represented Brunswick, then a growing industrial suburb where the needs of industry and housing had taken all vacant land without any provision for a public park. For years Anstey had been campaigning for a park without result, but he never let up, and his campaign became notorious. Shortly after Sir Thomas Bent, a Conservative, became Premier of Victoria, he was attacked during a debate by the bright young Liberal, W. A. Watt. It was a vigorous offensive by a most capable attacker, and Bent was shaken. None of his Conservative followers seemed capable of a counterattack, but help came from an unexpected quarter when Anstey rose to speak. He had entered the debate for no reason except that Watt had left his own defence wide open, and just "for the hell of it" Anstey jumped in and flayed him, as only Anstey could. The House became excited while he was on his feet, but when he sat down the the atmosphere became quieter, and Bent beckoned to Anstey to come over, indicating that he wanted to speak to him. Anstey crossed the floor and sat beside the Premier, who leaned over and murmured—"You can have that park for Brunswick."

When Anstey left the chamber the first person he saw was Watt, whom he took aside and explained that he had been carried away by a spirit of fun to make merry at Watt's expense, but out of it good had come to Brunswick in the form of a public park. Watt was amused and claimed that the park was the result of their joint effort. Then Watt said—"Frank, let us make a pact. You and I are good friends. Let us help one another when we can and refrain from the pleasure of attacking each other in the future." And so the pact was made and kept. In the House of Representatives their personal friendship for each other was well known, and it had one important result. During the Conscription campaign of Prime Minister Hughes in 1917 his outstanding opponent throughout Australia was Anstey, so he decided to get him out of the way. He produced and quoted from a letter written by Anstey some years before the war as evidence of disloyalty; the next day Anstey learned that a warrant had been issued for his arrest. He caught the next train for South Australia, and shipped aboard a tramp steamer from Port Lincoln to the U.S.A. as a member of the crew. After many weeks he arrived in England where he was "detained" by Scotland Yard. The British Government cabled the Australian Government that Anstey was being held pending instructions. Hughes was on the high seas on the way to England and Watt was Acting Prime Minister. He authorised Anstey's immediate release and at the same time cabled him an invitation to join an Australian press delegation about to visit the Western Front. Anstey accepted, and when the delegation reached France it learned that it was there for the purpose of indoctrination with a view to putting newspaper pressure on the Australian Government to permit the death penalty to be carried out on Australian soldiers sentenced to death by court martial. From the moment the A.I.F. reached France in 1916 the British Commander-in-Chief (Haig) wanted the death penalty for desertion by Australian soldiers, and raised the matter with the Australian Government, which replied that "it regretted it was unable to agree." To impose a death penalty on men who had gone voluntarily to fight at the other end of the world in a cause not primarily their own was unthinkable, but with Haig it remained an obsession, and he even ordered the promulgation among Australian troops of Army orders recording the carrying out of the death penalty on individual British soldiers, a procedure which, according to our official historian (Dr. Bean), aroused in the Australians only a sullen apathy and a fierce pride that their own people were strong enough to refuse this instrument to its rulers. Still Haig persevered, and this Australian delegation of newspaper men was



taken to his headquarters to be told by him that in the interests of discipline he must have authority to put Australian soldiers guilty of desertion in front of a firing squad. He read to the delegation his case for the death penalty which had obviously been prepared for him by one of his staff. I later obtained from another member of the delegation an account of what happened. He said that as soon as Haig finished reading his "piece" Anstey stepped forward and addressed Haig with forceful fluency—respectful but uncompromising. He told Haig he did not propose to argue the matter, but he could assure him that any government which authorised the shooting of one Australian soldier sentenced to death by court martial would be immediately swept out of office by the people. There was no further discussion. My informant said that Haig seemed incapable of reply; he mumbled incoherently and walked out of the room. I can understand this now in the light of the dictum of Major-General Fuller, Chief of Staff of the Tank Corps, who in recent years described Haig in these terms: "In character he was stubborn and intolerant, in speech inarticulate, in argument dumb."

When the Bruce-Page coalition government was defeated at the polls in 1929 Labor came into office with Scullin as Prime Minister; Anstey was in the Cabinet as Minister for Health and Repatriation, but to him the advent of Labor to the Treasury benches after twelve years in the political wilderness was no triumph; it was still bitter frustration. Labor was in office but not in power. The 1929 elections had been extraordinary and did not involve the Senate, where there was a large conservative majority. The Treasury was empty, the country was in the grip of deep economic depression, and the government was powerless because of the anti-Labor Senate. Anstey saw only one possible source—an immediate appeal to the electors for power to put into effect Labor's economic policy in the national emergency. The Nationalist-Country Party coalition government had failed the people; a Labor government must be given authority for a complete take-over. At the first meeting of the new Cabinet, Anstey, as the oldest and most experienced member, pointed out to the Prime Minister and his colleagues that they could not govern unless they had a majority in both Houses. They must force an immediate double dissolution, and go to the country at once; for Labor this was the moment of destiny.

The rise and fall of the Scullin government is a long story. With the rejection of Anstey's plea for a double dissolution and an appeal to the people the decline began, and with the hostile Senate in power the government went from one ignominy to another until it finally crashed. During the descent Scullin and his ministerial friends went to the right while Anstey remained on the left, resisting Cabinet moves for wages and pensions reduction until Scullin reconstructed his ministry for the sole purpose of dropping Anstey, who retired to a back bench from where he never failed to show his contempt for his former colleagues in clinging to office. His statement when he was virtually expelled from the ministry is worth recording. He said:

> The Scullin-Theodore cabinet tolerated me and my absurdities much longer than I should have tolerated it and its wisdom. My disappearance from the Cabinet means the restoration of public confidence, the squaring of budgets and the supply of unlimited credit. The associated banks and the public will now have a confidence in the honesty of Mr. Theodore, Mr. Scullin and their associates which they never had in me. So I am thankful.

At the next election, at which Labor was defeated and humiliated, Anstey was returned by a mere handful of votes for the seat of Bourke (Vic.) which he had held with large majorities for over twenty years. At the declaration of the poll he announced that his political life was ended and that he would retire. On that announcement I wrote him the kind of letter men exchange when they know and understand each other. I quote the end of his letter in reply: "The night I was leaving Canberra for ever the past rose before me like a dream. I could see that beach at Manly, the rolling surf and the star-lit sky, and the two of us, and wished we could roll back the years. Now, what is left? That awful Dead House, that habitation of decayed souls. That glorious old ranter Ezekiel bellowed—'I will take out of you your hearts of dung and give you hearts of flesh.' He is wanted now."

Frank Anstey

THE VICEROY

STANLEY BRUCE, an English gentleman, born in Australia—as other Englishmen are born in China, India or Timbuctoo—moved in the best society, and in the soundest financial and commercial circles of Britain. He was a good looker, with a trained body, a pelmanist brain, a Slavic Jewish face, and a mental alertness hidden by his nonchalance. Graduate of a famous English University, he acquired the correct pose and accent. He was "Brains, Breeding and Business" and a quick change artist to suit every hour and audience.

To save civilisation from the Germans he joined a crack British regiment, was wounded, and retired. As he was chief director of an English corporation with branches in Australia he went there to recuperate. The holder of a Nationalist stronghold conveniently resigned for a better-paid position and the visitor took his place as a Federal member. Then he returned to Britain and represented Australia at the League of Nations—over the head of the High Commissioner. When he was ready he re-visited Australia and was made Treasurer to the Government of William Morris Hughes.

Then came the elections of 1922. Hughes had been Prime Minister for seven years. His arch-enemy was Earle Page, leader of the "Country Party"—a party whose support of a Government depended on the volume of distributed emoluments. Page had denounced Bruce as a "balance-sheet fakir," and Bruce described Page as a "paralysed mentality." Bruce would never associate with Page—NEVER. He would never desert Hughes—NEVER. A fortnight later Bruce and Page became partners and Hughes was made to walk the plank.

Bruce became Prime Minister and Earle Page his Treasurer.

The new Saviour was urbanity personified. Nothing was permitted to ruffle the calm of his superiority. No insult could draw from him the slightest protest—only a gaze of curiosity, such as an entomologist might give to a bug. He had unswerving purpose, serene audacity, and a half concealed contempt for all around him. He would look at the ceiling for hours while the insects buzzed their anger, and exhibit all the time a lofty courtesy and untiring patience. He permitted motions of "no confidence" in his government as he pleased. When he did not he placed them at the bottom of the notice paper and there they remained. All the tricks of the Parliamentary game and the arts of mob deception were as natural to him as the ocean to the porpoise.

In political campaigns he broke all records in physical endurance, rapidity of movement, distance covered, meetings held, variety of socks, shirts, spats, suits, ties and hats worn per day, and emerged from a contest as fresh and debonair as when he started. He delighted the masses with his unlimited promises, and the wealthy by the fact that he never fulfilled them. He said what he meant, but it was never what his dupes thought he meant. In the skin game of politics and as a perfect model of the sartorial art he won the admiration of the crowds.

For seven years (1922-29) he ruled Australia as an Imperial Viceroy executing, with fidelity and mass support, his imperial mandate. He commenced his career as Prime Minister by promising to put Australia on a basis of prosperity that would "endure for ever," and his "for ever" lasted just so long as loans were unlimited, and revenues were abundant. When revenues fell and loans ceased to flow his "brains and breeding" failed to function for a remedy. In early 1929 he commenced to speak on platforms and in Parliament of collapsing industries, declining revenues, growing deficits, increasing unemployment and cessation of overseas loans.

Everywhere he spoke he portrayed the coming disaster, but this matchless brainy man made no proposal to cope with the looming crisis. On the contrary he presented to Parliament a measure that was sure to free him of responsibility. He proposed to close the Federal Arbitration Court to nine-tenths of those under its jurisdiction. That brought against him and his party scores of thousands of trades unionists—inside and outside the public services—who, with their families, had been the secret supporters of his authority. The fear of the loss of that support broke the unity of the Nationalist Party and the breakaways helped to defeat his bill.

That was all Bruce wanted. He made the mutiny of a few a reason for sending the Representatives—not the Senators—to the country. He made little effort to win but the swing against him went so far that he lost his own seat. He caught the first boat for Britain and in his most courteous manner gave Australia a sailor's farewell. As a departing Imperial Viceroy he left the Nationalist Senate and the Commonwealth Bank Board holding the fort for the Nationalist Party, and the Labor Party he left sitting on the eggs of the serpent—a clever, far-seeing man was Stanley Bruce.

Two years later the mob tide turned and swept the Nationalist Party back to power. Bruce, in Britain, was nominated for his old seat, was elected, went to Australia, was made a member of the new Government, and took the first boat back to Britain. Twelve months later for a larger salary he became High Commissioner and that office he conducted as he did every other—with ease and distinction. Before long he became chairman of the Council of the League of Nations and presided at the Montreux Conference (1936). He returned to London to attend a send off to Lord Hartington and said to him, "Do not waste your time preparing speeches for Australians—they want merely to look at you."

In 1939 Bruce visited Australia and as the winter approached departed to greet the Californian spring and the summer-time of Old England. During the voyage the Australian Prime Minister, Joseph Lyons, passed away and Bruce was inundated with wireless messages pleading with him to return and save the Nationalist-Country Party coalition from disruption. Patriot politicians offered him their seats. Nationalist newspapers united their prayers, but to every call he found a dozen reasons why it would be wrong for him to accept. Australia was foremost in his thoughts and for it he would willingly accept the smaller pay of an Australian Prime Minister, but there were so many men in Australia abler than himself. It would be wrong to deprive them of the honor. So what Bruce refused was given to Mr. Robert Menzies.

"RED NED"

EDWARD G. THEODORE in his early manhood was an organiser for the Australian Workers' Union—and one of the best. He became a member of the Queensland Parliament, a Minister in the Cabinet of the brilliant and genial Tom Ryan, and on the retirement of Ryan, became Queensland Premier (1919).

In physical structure, mentality and temperament, Theodore was the turn of Stanley Bruce. They were big, masterly men, with the same orderly manner of delivery and the same confidence in their superiority to the worms around them. They were co-experts in the art of self-suppression, because—to gentlemen as to gangsters—even a flush on the face is a sign of weakness. Their only visible differences was that Theodore had more bulbous lips, more hair on the back of his hands, more on his head and indulged, at times, in a cold, calculated vituperation the other would scorn.

Bruce started from where the bread is well buttered; Theodore from where the struggle was for bread. Bruce was schooled by the best empire—and cash—could provide; Theodore schooled his talents as he went along. Both were pipe smokers, solitude thinkers, planners, plotters, "cool, calm, collected" and nothing hastened their steps or changed the tempo or tonal volume of their words. They worked with ease—like motors with abundant power—and no task put them to exertion. As Ministers they were super efficient, towers of strength to the factions they led, and when they decided on a course they beat no drums, they sought no mandates—they did it.

What Theodore did as Premier of Queensland depends on the angle of vision. For years the Tory papers denounced him as the personification of "Ruin," just as they had for years screamed "Ryan means Ruin," yet every year the prosperity of the State increased. To the squatters and financiers Theodore was "Red Ned"; to the Communists he was a black reactionary; to the majority of people he was a good radical and his power increased. As Premier he went to the 1921 Labor conference and came face to face with James Scullin on a question of Labor policy. At that time James was not in Parliament, so he came fresh and gloriously red from an inter-state trade union conference to demand that it be Labor policy that all the great industries be nationalised and each such industry be subject to worker control per medium of a "Supreme Economic Council." Theodore trounced the proposal from many angles. One was that the scheme could not work without prior control of the monetary system. A sane Labor Party, he said, should take first things first and the first step in any effective plan of economic reconstruction was a nation-owned and controlled banking system, with exclusive power to create the instruments of credit. If they concentrated their efforts on ownership and control of banking, insurance, and credit they would go a long way to achieve the platform, and control of the banking and credit systems could be utilised to extend operations in other directions. He was red but not red enough. He was defeated, the "Supreme economic council" was carried— but, as one by one its chief advocates became aspirants for parliament, the "Supreme economic council" was conveniently dropped into the gutter of abandoned policies.

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The main point of that 1921 Labor conference —in the light of later developments—was that Theodore on banking and credit questions was an outstanding radical, but not radical enough for his out of Parliament red opponent James Scullin.

The Trade Union conference (June 1921) was called—prior to the political Labor conference—to "put ginger into the political sluggards." John Kean—Scullin's brother-in-law—moved that

> "The first essential of a reconstructed Australia is the rapid expansion of the Commonwealth Bank until it embraces the entire credit system of Australia."

That was not vast enough, or fast enough, for the assembled militants. They decided the nation should "take over" all banks and all principal industries—to be controlled by workers in the industry under a "Supreme economic council." All craft unions were to be discarded as obsolete and the conference decided "to bind together in one organisation wage workers in every industry." The conference appointed a "Council of action" consisting of twelve men. The Council perished from extreme anaemia, but its twelve apostles became noted for their growing respectability. The only thing extreme about them was their moderation. One of them appeared as a witness in a court case and the following dialogue took place:

Q.—Are your views the same as in 1920?
A.—They have developed.

Q.—Are they stronger or weaker?
A.—They are more sane and practical.
Q.—Did you say that without revolution progress was impossible?
A.—I meant evolution.
Q.—Do you use the word "evolution" as a substitute for "revolution"?
A.—Yes.
Q.—Did you say you were in favor of complete socialisation?
A.—Not complete.
Q.—What is the difference between complete socialisation and "socialisation"?

The witness was silent and the Judge said, "You had better not answer"—and he did not. Later on that witness, with others of the Twelve Apostles, became members of Parliament — and alike noted for the softness of their purr.

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Theodore went on his way as Premier of Queensland and demonstrated his audacity by abolishing the Upper House after a referendum had voted for its continuance. He resigned his Premiership to stand for a Federal seat and was defeated. Two years later a Federal Labor member resigned in New South Wales and Theodore became his successor—just as Sir William Irvine resigned Flinders for a Chief Justiceship and Bruce became his successor. Many members have given up safe seats to take up more lucrative non-political positions. John Gunn gave up his place as Labor Premier of South Australia and Bruce gave him a position worth £3000 a year—three times his previous salary. In Theodore's case it was alleged his predecessor had received compensation for his resignation and Bruce professed to be so shocked that he ordered a Royal Commission to try to discover some evidence. It reported that the retired member had increased his bank account, but by what means was not discoverable—so an excuse to expel Theodore from the Federal Parliament was not provided.

The Federal Labor leader was Matthew Charlton and for five years I had been his deputy. They were not years of conspicuous successes, but they were years of good fellowship inside the Caucus. It was unfortunate that soon after Theodore appeared (1927) whispers went round that Mat was too stodgy, that under him the Party could never hope to win and siren voices murmured that I was the man to save the world. I told Charlton and suggested we resign, leaving the dirt workers to show what they could do. He decided to stay on. but I resigned. To my vacated post James Scullin was appointed—the red hero of the "Supreme economic council" of 1921.

There was no sign to implicate Theodore in any effort to dislodge Charlton. He sat at his table facing a window reading, writing, smoking, affable to any who spoke to him, but never obtruding himself upon the party attention. Yet, whenever the party met, one of his admirers would rise to dig a spur into Charlton and another would pour caustic on the wound. Then came the day when the maddened Charlton accused Theodore of being the inspirer of internal discords and prophesied he would yet bring ruin on the party. Theodore treated the outburst with contempt. He said "Bah," "Rubbish," and went on with his scribbling. Before long the position became intolerable to Charlton so he resigned his leadership.

Scullin was appointed leader. A majority of the party had approached Theodore, urged his acceptance of the deputy leadership and promised support. He was nominated and everybody clapped. Then somebody nominated Blakeley but nobody clapped. Apparently he was a thousand to one chance but he won. That defeat was an act of vengeance for the treatment of Charlton. I could see no good for a movement when its leaders steeped themselves in conspiracies against each other, and I said so. Blakeley had been Theodore's bridge partner, but that night on the train to Sydney Theodore passed him with a contempt beyond all words. Who else to pass with contempt he did not know because three-fourths of the men in the Caucus had shaken his hand and urged him to stand and then betrayed him to the jibes of the enemy press. After the general elections (1928) Theodore—with the aid of the usual crop of twisters—turned the tables on Blakeley and became deputy. Blakeley promptly "lay up to the strength" and was forgiven. Once more he became Theodore's fellow fisherman.

By the middle of 1929 the bottom was beginning to fall out of prosperity and Bruce was preparing with his Jeremiahs to hand over the onus and odium of depression to the Labor Party. There was only one man who combined the knowledge, courage and dominating power over the Caucus to effectively meet the looming crisis —that was Theodore. One night in the quadrangle of the Hotel Canberra I put it to him that it was time the Party got together and made up its mind what it would do as soon as it became a government—not wait until loaded with responsibility and then wrangle about what to do. He expressed no opinion, but wished to know what I would do if I were a government. That trick of turning the issue is as old as sin but I made no objection. I reminded him of his speech at the 1921 conference, that the first step in any plan of economic reconstruction was control of the monetary system. He suggested that I put my proposals to the Caucus and I reminded him that for many years they were his proposals—would he support them in the Caucus? He could not say. It would depend on developments. My hope of "audacity by new ways and means" had been in Theodore and I had drawn a blank.

CHRIS MASTERMAN: A MEMOIR

I FIRST got to know Chris Masterman in 1960. I was working in the Talks Department at Radio Australia; he had just arrived in Melbourne after a messed-up first year at Canberra University College. I told him we needed some talks from freelance writers and he agreed to put some in. Very much to my surprise, I got a sheaf of them from him only a week later. This was the first unusual thing I was to discover about him: his talent for follow-through. Very often when articles or work or activity of any kind involving a little lonely toil are promised, they never turn up. Chris enjoyed the lonely toil, and his material always did turn up.

The second thing I found was that he liked criticism. If his offerings were attacked and his prose atrociously amended in a way other people might have rejected as malicious interference, he was simply interested. He asked for copies of his talks as sub-edited, and set to work changing his style. This was at the time startling, because he gave at first meeting the impression of being self-conscious, mannered, even egotistical; not at all the kind of person to take criticism well.

It is usually idle to catalogue the virtues of a friend who has recently died, but about Chris two things must immediately be said: he was exceptionally intelligent, and exceptionally good-natured. He combined these qualities with a sort of adolescent social gaucherie which was very engaging. He was generous, and he would often embarrass his friends with praise for their work and little stacks of overseas journals he felt would interest them. He loved an argument, and would often take his supper parties late into the night and watch his guests talking. He was an unfailingly hospitable person, not merely in his outward offerings, but in a dependable sympathy and considerateness which many will sorely miss. He had felt the strains of a precocious childhood, and seemed always a little surprised that he was so generally liked. It was, in fact, unexpectedly touching to discover how much he appreciated affection and friendship.

He took a variety of jobs while he did a part-time Arts course at Melbourne, and came at them all with the same mixture of detachment and lively curiosity; first as a junior in an advertising office; then on the floor at Cheshire's; an executive copy-writer at another advertising agency; and finally, to his great satisfaction, an education programmes producer at Channel Two. In earlier times he wrote prolifically for the University newspaper and magazine. He developed a waspish writing manner which at first seemed to represent no special viewpoint, and which was reflected in the title of his regular column in Farrago, "Iconoclast." Later, he was converted to a socialist perspective and became an associate editor of Overland. He submitted to the ironies and agonies of membership of a local branch of the A.L.P., and successfully rejuvenated the South Yarra branch of the Young Labor Association.

This conversion was no light matter for Chris, but it never meant commitment to a specific collection of party policies and a platform. This refusal to be taken for a ride reflected the quality which I should single out as his most impressive: the drive to think out the most effective policy or social arrangement which would give expression to the principles in which he believed, regardless of any collision with conventional thinking. This was the finest and most useful outcome of his youthful iconoclasm: an impatience with stereotypes and cliches and a detestation of intellectual laziness and dishonesty. It emerged sometimes in frivolous ways, as when he wished for a politician who would at last declare himself unalterably opposed to God, Queen, Country and Family; and often in practical ways, in what he wrote on state aid to schools, or consumer protection, or new controls on advertising in the public interest. In the year or so before he died he had acquired a capacity for laying out detailed schemes for improvement, especially in the last field, which he knew well, which would have made him invaluable in a radical movement. He had become a member of the A.L.P.'s publicity committee and his talents were beginning to be widely recognised.

Successful politicians are frequently disingenuous, and Chris was probably too honest, perhaps too estranged from obedience to conventions, to have become one. But he certainly had the lucidity and intelligence required in a first-rate academic scholar. He had indeed achieved some brilliant successes after taking up Political Science as an Honors course, and had just entered his third year of it.

Now he is dead at 26, killed some three miles out of Canberra in an inexplicable car accident on Easter Friday. It seems almost too painful to bear, and I can think of nothing to lighten this, except perhaps that for the time he lived, he lived well and fully, and created a secure and special place in the affections of nearly everyone who knew him. Our very deepest sympathy is due to his parents and his sister.

ALAN HUGHES.

swag

Alan Hughes writes on the preceding page of Chris Masterman's death, and once again, reading the proofs of his article, I am appalled at the mockery of it all—at the death of a young man and woman (Cecile Parrish, a gifted young tutor at Monash University, was killed with Chris) whose talents were just beginning to be deployed widely and effectively. When I asked Chris to become an advisory editor of Overland I was looking for someone who would laugh at the poses and the dogmatics of my own generation of the intellectual left, yet would have sufficient empathy to come half-way to bridging the gap between us—the gap, not only of age, but also of ways of looking at things. Chris was marvellously qualified for this role; I hoped that in due time he would be one of several like himself who would, so to speak, take over this magazine and give it a life beyond life. Apart from this, all I can add to Alan Hughes's memoir is the memory I shall always have of Chris's irreverent wit, and his marvellous eccentricities in the cause of rationality. (That sounds paradoxical, but so was Chris.) His dead-pan way, for instance, of writing to the commercial banks, one by one, and saying to each that he was sure that it was the best bank, and was about to give it his business, but would it first mind explaining just how, in our free economy, it offered competitive advantages over its rivals. Or his feud with the biscuit manufacturer whose advertising picture showed more cream oozing from his biscuit than was to be found in the real thing! Chris could put on an air of outraged innocence (it was half genuine) which would have deceived a saint.

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The incidence of fashion in literary life always irritates me, especially as it is so seldom acknowledged by the intellectuals themselves. That's why it is so pleasant, for instance, to see A. D. Hope having a crack at modern verse, the "vegetation of the arid steppe," in his recent book of essays, "The Cave and the Spring". And it reminds me that I have often felt like starting a Department of Neglected Australian Books of the Day. Ray Parkin would certainly be in it, with his magnificent "Into the Smother". And so would Kevin Hartshorne's "Czechoslovakia: From the New World". Hartshorne is an Australian teacher who has spent several years in eastern Europe, learning the Czech language and living and working as a Czechslovak—in a factory, in fact. His account of his day to day experiences, published by Macgibbon and Kee, is a very rare example of reportage in depth, and is also distinguished by its literary quality. In a different category, but certainly worthy of note by those many Overland readers who were moved by the article "Some Country People of India," by Allan and Wendy Scarfe in a recent Overland, is Wendy Scarfe's booklet of poems inspired by her experiences in an Indian village. It can be obtained for a few shillings from Robert Thompson's bookshop, Fairy Street, Warrnambool, Victoria.

The Floating Fund

Maybe our readers think that Overland shares in the general affluence. Or maybe there isn't any general affluence, and our readers are getting poorer! Anyway, this quarter's contributions are rather less than usual. All the same, this issue wouldn't have appeared without 'em, and we are very grateful to those who have contributed £105/15/9:

KJS £10; FM KCM £9/4/0; VL £5/5/0; DD RC £5; AH £4/9/0; AS £4/4/0; JB £2/7/0; JH HMcD £2/4/0; DM JB £2/2/0; HG £2; JW £1/12/0; KT SC £1/6/0; KMcC £1/5/0; TT DG HS HW TS AE GB DD £1/4/0; BI RB £1; HG 18/-; RR 16/-; AH LB DB PT DP JR 14/-; JC 11/-; JZ 10/9; AB PT LP 10/-; WG LK JA 9/-; GK RGT GJ 8/-; EMcL EA JB WK RMcL 5/-; VB DG ML EM JJR OR KB VK JW CH HLHS JF RS LB LW CS RW BC JB JT MM LG AL JN DW LR JD EK ED HDB GM MW LK GL FD AF SC ON MB MB TS CS KS WT NC ES IF MO'G EB BP DK HM KS PC DD LO'D 4/-.

*

A number of Australian writers recently responded to an appeal to join in a letter to the Prime Minister about the miserable situation in Vietnam. We pointed out to Sir Robert Menzies that the increased participation of Australian forces in that country adds to the risk of wider international conflict, and we drew attention to the desirability of Australia's emphasising to the people of Asia a policy of peace-making and negotiation through the United Nations. Those signing included Dal Stivens, Katharine Susannah Prichard, Nancy Cato, Clem Christesen, Myra Morris, Ivan Southall, Leonard Mann, John Morrison and Alan Marshall.

*

Marje Pizer, otherwise known to many of you as Mrs. Muir Holburn, and editor of "Freedom on the Wallaby" and "Creeve Roe," is anxious to obtain any information anyone can supply her with about Lesbia Harford (who is referred to by Guido Baracchi in his article in this issue). Lesbia Harford, who did law at Melbourne University at the same time as Sir Robert Menzies, joined the Industrial Workers of the World, worked as a factory operative and became a notable though neglected poet. Anyone who can help Mrs. Holburn should write to her at 6 Oaks Avenue, Cremorne, N.S.W.

*

John Barnes, of the Department of English, University of Western Australia, is also seeking information. He would be grateful for any background on Desmond Byrne, author of the little-known but interesting book "Australian Writers," published by Bentley in London in 1896.

*

An embarrassing situation. I sold a loyal subscriber numbers 2 and 3 of Overland, only to find I didn't have them! Can any reader help to keep me out of prison by donating these rare issues to me? S. MURRAY-SMITH.

Pat Mackie

THE MOUNT ISA STORY

WHILE the nation's press gleefully and no doubt dutifully reports that the Mt. Isa "strike" is over and that the mine workers are whistling their way home with much enlarged pay packets, a true picture would portray Mt. Isa as nothing other than a forced labor camp. Sullen and morose workers, driven back to work on the Company's terms by the Nicklin Government's police state legislation, are far from whistling. They are seething with rage and resentment as evidence reveals the bitter truth that only a few of the original contract miners are henceforth to be permitted to work on contract. This means, for the majority, a resultant cut of more than fifty per cent. in take-home pay.

Working conditions have worsened in more ways than one. Young and inexperienced shift-bosses and foremen have been given freedom to handle their men just how they please and are hastening to impress on the workers their supreme power. Threats of dismissal, victimisation and pin-pricking attitudes are the order of the day. Experienced miners are pushed into menial jobs, to keep them reminded of the boss's displeasure, caused by the eight-months-long solid stand taken by the employes in their struggle for wage justice. Contract work is now available only to those who signify by their subservience that they have learned their lesson and will not take part in any future work stoppages.

As a chastisement, most contract miners are kept on wages, which amount to a mere £3/10/2 a day. The £8 a week bonus and the newly won £3 a week "prosperity loading" bring the daily wages up to a princely £5/14/2 for stumbling around in the bowels of the earth, choking on impure air and staggering under the burden of heavy work in extreme temperatures. Before the 1961 lock-out contract miners were able to make from £8 to £12 a day, but since their loss in that dispute, the Mt. Isa Mines Company has relentlessly whittled away at contract prices so that, immediately prior to the 1964 dispute, the same miners were flat out to make £6/10/- a day plus the £1/12/- bonus. Many and varied are the devices of this rapacious employer to show the workers who has the upper hand. The most meagre petty amenities have been withdrawn and all dealings with employes are now measured on a "since the dispute" basis.

The refusal to allow men to return to contract work is the worst form of victimisation imposed by the Company, in view of the fact that Mt. Isa's cost of living is one of the highest in Australia. Exorbitant rents (ten guineas and upwards for sub-standard unfurnished shacks, with outside toilets and prehistoric washing and bathing facilities), together with all sorts of hire purchase commitments undertaken by the workers when they were making enough money to afford those millstones, keep most Mt. Isa people constantly struggling to remain abreast of economic encumbrances. One might go on and give a comparative list of food prices, but suffice it to point out that the weary heartless old lettuce, costing 3/- and more, is a luxury item. "Who eats lettuce anyway?"

Overland is pleased to publish Pat Mackie's retrospect on the 1964/65 Mount Isa dispute, the most serious single outburst of industrial unrest in Australia in the last fifteen years. We do not usually publish material as immediately "political" as this, but the strike itself was so dramatic and unusual, and the leadership of Pat Mackie so dynamic, that both will provide material for sociological and political analysis for decades to come. In addition, the recent warnings by the Deputy Prime Minister of the dangerous inroads of foreign capital have a relevance as poignant in the field of Australian cultural life as in industries like Mount Isa.

Despite the crowing of Company spokesmen, the Mt. Isa labor picture is far from healthy and another industrial upheaval must erupt, just as soon as the miners get their breath back, after warding off the wolves of their immediate economic commitments. The pre-1961 contract rates were low enough, even in the opinion of the Brisbane Courier Mail, which said of Mt. Isa: "It is a Company mining town, similar to thousands of company mining towns all over the world, smoke stack and slag heap dominating a township of shabby houses, unspeakable hotels, and inordinately expensive shops. Toss in Mt. Isa's individual distinctions—a wretched summer, fearsome insect plagues, and great isolation—and it stands forth as a black prince among mining towns."

Those who live in homes which they bought from the Company (average cost about £4,500, but more nearly £9,000 when interest and charges are met), pay off the price at an average rent of £4/10/- to £5/10/- a week, plus £65 annual rates. During the dispute rents could not be paid, so workers are now obliged to make up the extra payments. With all these burdens the situation is that Mt. Isa workers are living in economic slavery. If the workers inside the gates do not bend to the Company's vicious discipline they are reminded of the 39 married men still outside the gates, so they knuckle down and remember that the great white master, with Government patronage, has the whips well and truly in hand.

Many persons may ask "Why, if conditions are so bad in Mt. Isa, do people stay on there?" The answer is that they are forced to stay against their will. The majority of people left in the town are old-timers who decided years ago to settle down there and raise their children. They did not forsee the new trends, either in mining operations or in the Company's attitude towards its employes. As well as being tied by growing families and being caught up in the net of hire purchase payments, in most cases they have Company-built homes half paid for. To sell a home in Mt. Isa at any time poses enough of a problem, but under present conditions it is virtually impossible. Homes purchased from the Company are real hot potatoes. They cannot be let by the buyer and they can be sold only to a person approved by the Company. With the air of uncertainty presently enveloping Mt. Isa, nobody in his right mind would consider buying himself into a similar dilemma with a Company home.

"But," some people may say, "I read that they are making good money at Mt. Isa." The anti-worker Courier Mail, through its Mt. Isa-based reporter, has indeed claimed that contented workers at Mt. Isa are now earning huge pay cheques under the "new" contract system. What happened was that, when work resumed on a limited scale, the Company hand-picked a special stooge element, employed these men on a few contracts with prices well above the previous level, and in places where, because of the easy breaking nature of the ground, the most inexperienced miner could not help but make good money. The Company then saw to it that their good ally, the Courier Mail, made much publicity about such well-filled "Demo" model pay envelopes.

There were two reasons for this action. First, it made the right type of reading in the anti-worker press for the miners' enemies, and secondly it was good "P.R." for the Company in snaring a complete new work force, for some years a cherished dream of the management of Mt. Isa Mines, whose Wall Street owners work on the common American assumption that old employes get too hard in the head and know too much about bargaining for their rights under the contract system. A new bunch of faces every year or so is what outfits like Mt. Isa Mines desire. Production continues to rise despite a 52 per cent. annual labor turnover. With new men, who do not have the benefit of long years of horse-trading experience with their foremen, it is an easy matter for the Company's minions to trim off a sizeable chunk of the annual wages bill—an ability in their staff not exactly frowned on by M.I.M. directors, and which goes far to explain how the American Smelting and Refining Corporation's 1953 shareholding of £3.1 million has grown in ten years to be worth £117.7 million and earned them £9 million in cash as well!

Radically New

Workers at Mt. Isa fall into three different categories; wages, contract, and bonus employes. All work performed on the surface, in the mill, smelters, powerhouse, transport section and open cut operations, is paid for on a wages basis. In underground workings all unproductive laboring work is done on wages. Mining is mainly done on contract, as is pipefitting, platelaying (laying railway tracks) and timbering. Men working on the transporting of broken ore are paid wages plus a bonus for the amount of ore shifted. Tradesmen (electricians, mechanical fitters, etc.) are paid State award wages, and their only incentive for working underground is the possibility of overtime, which the Company hands out on a "You've been a good boy basis."

Whereas in the past the Company depended on its production of ore by the incentive system of contract work, the profitable movement for them now is away from a contract system, hence the Company's recent attacks against the miners' contract conditions and rates. With the introduction of diesel machinery into underground mining, bigger operations are now possible, which makes contract mining as we knew it as outdated as high button shoes. The new methods of mining now include huge earthmoving equipment and diesel-driven boring machines which do not require any specialised knowledge. Any unskilled laborer can learn to operate these machines in a matter of a couple of hours. Huge incline drives take the place of small vertical rises and great endloaders, resembling huge lumbering tanks, race along bigger drives large enough to accommodate four street cars side by side. Mt. Isa Mines Company have currently on order over £3 million worth of heavy equipment for underground operations.

The dramatic transition from the old-style contract mining system to the new highly mechanised method is taking place while the unions are weak and defeated. Thus, instead of organised labor being able to participate in drawing up the yardstick of wages and conditions for these radically new-type operations, the Company is able to impose all its own conditions with no voice from the workers whatsoever. The possibility of the miners walking out if the Company puts too much heat on does not worry the management one iota. In fact, it would suit the American owners right down to the ground. Curtailment of Mt. Isa copper production means a rise in the world price and more profits for the yankee owners of the huge American stockpiles.

It is the boast of the underground manager that he will have the underground workings operating as cheaply as the open cut. (The open cut is worked on a wages basis.) And it is no secret that the Company plans soon to do away with all contract work. This is the present basis of their relentless attack against the men's wages and conditions.

Along with their other methods of victimisation the Company uses the open cut as a sort of punitive "Siberia." Fractious miners who refuse to bow down to Company discipline are placed in the open cut on a "take it or leave it" basis, with the admonition, "If you behave yourself for three months we will consider you for underground employment." It is a nice way for red-blooded Australians to be treated in their own standing by a foreign employer isn't it? And with Nicklin's police standing by with handcuffs there is little that can be done about it—at this time!

Selective Re-employment

Meanwhile, what of those whom the Company refused to re-employ, after the Nicklin Government and the A.W.U. hierarchy jointly allowed M.I.M. to institute the practice of "selective re-employment"? Fifty families are victimised. One hundred and thirty children, most of them born in the town, are made to suffer because their fathers asked for a fair go. The 39 married men refused employment have 306 years of service between them with the Company, but moral obligations are completely ignored by this rapacious employer. The Nicklin Government takes the side of the employer by not intervening. In some proven cases, men have been refused re-employment who were not even in the town during the trouble. The Company's terms of re-employment have given them the chance to weed out men they didn't want, mostly miners who have been, from their experience, too capable in bargaining for their rightful contract rates. These men have been refused unemployment benefits by the Menzies' Government and have to be cared for by friendly trade unionists. At the present time their case is being taken to the Industrial Court by the Queensland Trades and Labor Council, but the whole experience of the workings of the Industrial Court during the dispute showed this body up as nothing more than an instrument of the Government, and little hope is held out for the return of these men. The State government's present attitude is in notable contrast to its previous stands, in 1961, and again in 1964, when the back-to-work order stipulated, as a condition, the return of all employes who had been on the Company's books immediately prior to the dispute.

It is interesting to note also contrasts in the press's attitude. During the dispute the nation's newspapers spewed out a daily barrage of lies and vilifications, in block headlines, against the Mt. Isa workers, and blamed them for the loss to the nation of £1 million a week in export earnings. At the same time they omitted to mention, much less to headline, the fact that copper production was stopped solely by the Company's closing down of their smelter for repairs. They now picture the Mt. Isa workers as a happy, well-paid, contented bunch of good citizens. Quite a change from the communistic gangsters and rabble the very same people were portrayed as, a few months ago! And now as then, the papers are not making anything of the fact that, despite the return to work, the Company is still doing all in its power to keep the production of copper from reaching its full intensity, which could have occurred within a few days of resuming operations. A return to full production would assist a fall in the copper price, with consequently less profits.

The press blamed the workers for the loss of copper production when in fact it was Mt. Isa Mines who curtailed all blister copper production by the closing of their copper smelters. For the previous two years the copper smelter had worked at full blast and time was not even allowed for maintenance, with the result that in November, 1964, it was either a case of shutting it down or having it fall down—another instance of the dispute suiting Mt. Isa Mines' program.

The Great Confidence Trick

It is more than feasible that the entire Mt. Isa dispute was a planned conspiracy. In it, I believe, the Wall Street owners of Mt. Isa Mines, assisted by the Nicklin Government and its farcical Industrial Courts, perpetrated the greatest confidence trick of this decade upon the Australian public—and all condoned by "Dollars-for-Diggers" Menzies. Thanks, pre-eminently, to the aid given them by (or bought from them), the Government and the nation's press, the American Smelting and Refining Corporation were enabled to pull the wool over the public's eyes while the Guggenheim crew of Wall Street plucked millions in extra profits from the pockets of Australian taxpayers. During the dispute the price of copper soared to over £650 a ton, compared with £326 a ton before the trouble! The Nicklin Government, many of whose members are shareholders in the fabulously rich Mt. Isa mines, must be considered a guilty partner in the trickery, since it made no genuine effort to compel the Company to negoiate in a decent manner with its employes. Throughout a dozen "compulsory conferences" Company officials maintained an arrogant, intransigent stand. Their attitude throughout the entire dispute showed that they were in fact desirous of prolonging the stoppage.

The Menzies' Government did nothing to prevent the loss to the nation of export earnings. Sir Robert Menzies was pre-occupied with his sunbaking on a Pacific cruise while the Postmaster-General's Department was paying over £200 a ton extra for copper purchased from the American stockpile owned by American Smelting and Refining Corporation, and no doubt containing some of the Mt. Isa-produced copper. As though to emphasise the Federal Government's lack of concern with, or its studied blindness to, the Mt. Isa disaster, only one Federal politician passed through Mt. Isa during the dispute, and then only on return from a holiday. His opinion, that the M. Isa affair was a legitimate industrial dispute, was in contrast to that of Minister for Labor McMahon, who parroted the press headlines that the Mt. Isa dispute was a communist-organised affair run by Pat Mackie, "an international gangster and hoodlum." (Mr. McMahon did not visit Mt. Isa during the dispute.)

To assist in the conspiracy, and throw the unsuspecting public off the scent of the truth, newspaper editors leaned over backwards to portray the Mt. Isa struggle as a communist-inspired strike run by gangsters and stand-over men. In order to bring the Mt. Isa workers into disrepute, they singled out one individual as the target for a lying campaign of character assassination. Pat Mackie, who was the first to be sacked and victimised by the Company because he emerged as one of the leaders, became the object of a ruthless, unrelenting, indeed unparalleled smear attack by the press (and by many of the Queensland churches). When it became apparent that the Australian trade union movement was not going to stand idly by while a union representative was being victimised, the attack become more intense. Politicians, from the haven of their coward's castle, spewed forth great streams of vilification.

One particular individual in the Queensland Parliament, a shareholder in Mt. Isa, who was particularly vehement, later admitted that he had not attended any one of the twelve Industrial Court hearings; nor was he able to say that he had read and understood any of the recorded proceedings of any of those hearings!

The press persisted in labelling the Mt. Isa affair a "strike" though in fact it was a lockout. The workers at Mt. Isa were at no time on strike. They continued to report for work but refused to work on a contract basis. This action was a mild and perfectly legal form of protest, within the confines of their union award, which gave them the explicit right to work either on contract or on wages. An attempt by the Company to have the action labelled as "go-slow-strike" was not sustained by a three-man commission who subsequently voted two to one against declaring it a strike. The regrettable fact that the president of the Industrial Court, when appealed to by the Company, saw fit to reverse the commission decision, and gave an opinion that the dispute was a "go-slow-strike," merely goes to show the depths to which even judges may sink in the service of foreign cartels.

The press (and some sections of the clergy) called the Mt. Isa dispute a communist-run strike fomented by a handful of irresponsible "dissidents." The controlling body which made all policy decisions in Mt. Isa was the Mt. Isa Trades and Labor Council, which represented twelve unions in the field and was at all times guided by the wishes of the membership of each union affiliated to it. No less than ten committees made up the organisation which formulated and conducted policy on the dispute. Not one communist was represented on any of these committees! Pat Mackie, blamed for the continuation of the dispute, was third down the ladder of officials in the Mt. Isa T.L.C., holding the position of Assistant Secretary. He had very much less to say than either the Chairman or Secretary of the Council and certainly had no more than one vote among many hundreds when decisions were made. As for his being a communist, no suggestion could be more ludicrous, especially in view of the fact that he belongs to lodges and clubs which certainly would not have allowed him membership had he been even suspected of communist leanings. A member of the Australian Workers' Union, Mackie was elected chairman of the monthly meetings, an honorary position. As chairman, he did not even vote on any recommendations or motions carried by the membership, being required by parliamentary rules of debate to be strictly impartial in all matters. However, it was the duty of the press to ensure that the Mackie image was poisoned, since the whole trade union movement of Australia was up in arms over his victimisation.

A Great Conspiracy?

And why did Mt. Isa Mines Company allow the re-employment of Pat Mackie to become an issue while the nation was losing over £1 million a week? Would it not have been cheaper to send Mackie off to Tahiti on a salary of ten thousand pounds a year to look after their agency there? Or could they not have put him back to work in some nasty forgotten corner of the mines and so provoked him into leaving voluntarily? The Australian economy may have lost over £36 million through the Mt. Isa stoppage, but the owners of Mt. Isa Mines, the American Smelting and Refining Corporation, made more profits while the gates were closed than when they were open. Sir Robert Menzies and Mr. Nicklin knew of these facts but were not in the least perturbed. In face of such damage to the Australian economy, should not either of them have ordered the Company to re-employ Mackie? Since they did not, one may well conclude that they were quite aware of the conspiracy.

I conclude by quoting passages of a letter sent to Mr. Nicklin by the Queensland Trades and Labor Council which states: "Recently we sought the assistance of Mr. R. G. Palmer, Senior Lecturer in Economic Statistics at the University of Queensland, and that gentleman has undertaken considerable research into various aspects of the dispute. For your consideration we set out hereunder certain information and opinions based upon Mr. Palmer's researches and advices to us. Our basic contention is that the full significance of the situation at Mt. Isa cannot be understood if attention is focussed solely on events in that town or elsewhere in Australia. A careful appraisal of a number of matters involving international markets and other countries must also be undertaken. Such an appraisal may be of special importance in explaining the remarkable reluctance of Mt. Isa Mines Limited to enter into negotiations with its employes during the course of the dispute. In the first place a majority of shares (approximately 54%) in Mt. Isa Mines Ltd. is held by an overseas corporation, "The American Smelting and Refining Corporation." This company has large copper producing mines in the United States and Peru and is closely associated with other American mining companies having substantial copper mining activities in North and South America. Mt. Isa Mines is a very important investment for this company and it has been estimated (see Nation, February 6, 1965) that 45 per cent. of its income is derived from its Australian subsidiary. Secondly, it should be borne in mind that to a large extent world copper prices and production policies are determined by agreement between the major copper producing companies of the world. The great influence of the world copper cartel is illustrated by the fact that between July, 1961, and January, 1964, copper producers, by restricting sales and production, were able to ensure that the price of copper was maintained constant at £236 sterling a ton in spite of wide fluctuations in demand and supply conditions, and the existence of considerable over-capacity in the industry.

"It is evident therefore that the actions of the local management of Mt. Isa Mines Limited must be heavily influenced by the world copper market and the international copper producers' cartel along with the directives and interests of the American "parent" company. It is well known to economists that any group of producers acting in concert can achieve a position of profit maximisation by restricting sales and thereby achieving higher prices than would emerge in a purely competitive situation. Various means of restricting sales may be used. Production may be continued at the same level but some of the supplies are withheld from the market and stockpiles are built up. Alternatively production may simply be reduced by closing down plant and sacking or laying-off members of the labour force. However, neither of these expedients are likely to be looked upon very favourably by governments, the

A THIRD DIVISION CLERK RECALLS HIS YOUTH

In my mother's deferential heaven
all the successful angels
wore white collars, ties and a patent-leather
shine to their shoes.

Their finger-nails were clean, their manner of speaking
respectful and peppered liberally with Sirs;
they trembled with joy to hear they had been chosen
to work back at stock-taking time without pay.

In my mother's heaven humility
was simply a long-sighted way of looking down
on others, while, in the manager's presence, what one saw was,
beyond the man, the vacant chair beckoning.

And I, being of angelic mould in my mother's sight,
stood forever poised with my foot on the threshold
of infinite possibilities—any pen-scratching
minute could well turn out to be the moment of truth,

Could be the time of recompense, the pay-off,
the divinely-rigged jackpot when the silver
would cascade into her elderly lap to make amends
for all the cramped and drab penurious years . . .

O mother, turn the lamp down, shade it with your hand,
your grey-haired wonder-boy, your son (whose soaring
upward through the starlit status-sphere
long since became a downward plummeting)

Is heading homeward—one more superannuated
Icarus, out-at-elbows, nervously scanning
the Commonwealth Gazette for a way to break his fall:
the only place I shone was the seat of my pants.

BRUCE DAWE.

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public or users of the particular commodity. On the other hand if employees can be "induced" to strike, for example, by a refusal of reasonable wage claims or other means, the companies can achieve the same result and at the same time endeavour to lay the blame at the foot of their employees. By a strange coincidence, at about the same time in mid-1964 when Mt. Isa Mines Limited's failure to grant higher bonus payments (in spite of a very greatly increased profit level) had led to the miners' refusal to work on contract, a series of strikes and industrial disputes were also taking place in the largest U.S. copper mines and in the American-owned mines in Chile, over exactly the same issue. What is even more surprising is that a number of commentators on the world copper market several months previously were able to predict that these disputes would take place. Thus the London Economist, a well-informed, though scarcely radical, journal, had stated on April 11, 1964, that the temporary increase in the price of copper reflected in part additional purchases, prompted by the likelihood of strikes, etc., later in the year. It went on to say that "any resultant interruption of supplies would mainly swell the incomes of stockholders and speculators: Rhodesian and other suppliers might also benefit from the price increases so generated."

These extraordinarily prescient observations of the London Economist were made during April, 1964. The Mt. Isa miners were refused a reasonable request and "induced" to take some action on 24th August, 1964!

Truly, "The Great Copper Conspiracy"!

WAR MEMORIAL, CANBERRA: NOCTURNE

Like a great pearl on Ainslie's brow
The full moon floats, and seems to pause
As through the tracery of trees
A white dome gleams below,

Whose rounded shape remembers these,
The many dead; the many dead
Who came not home, but lie today
In distant fields or seas,

While now the sun at Alamein
Glitters upon the sandhills, white
As frozen foam; and islands float
In moonlit peace again.

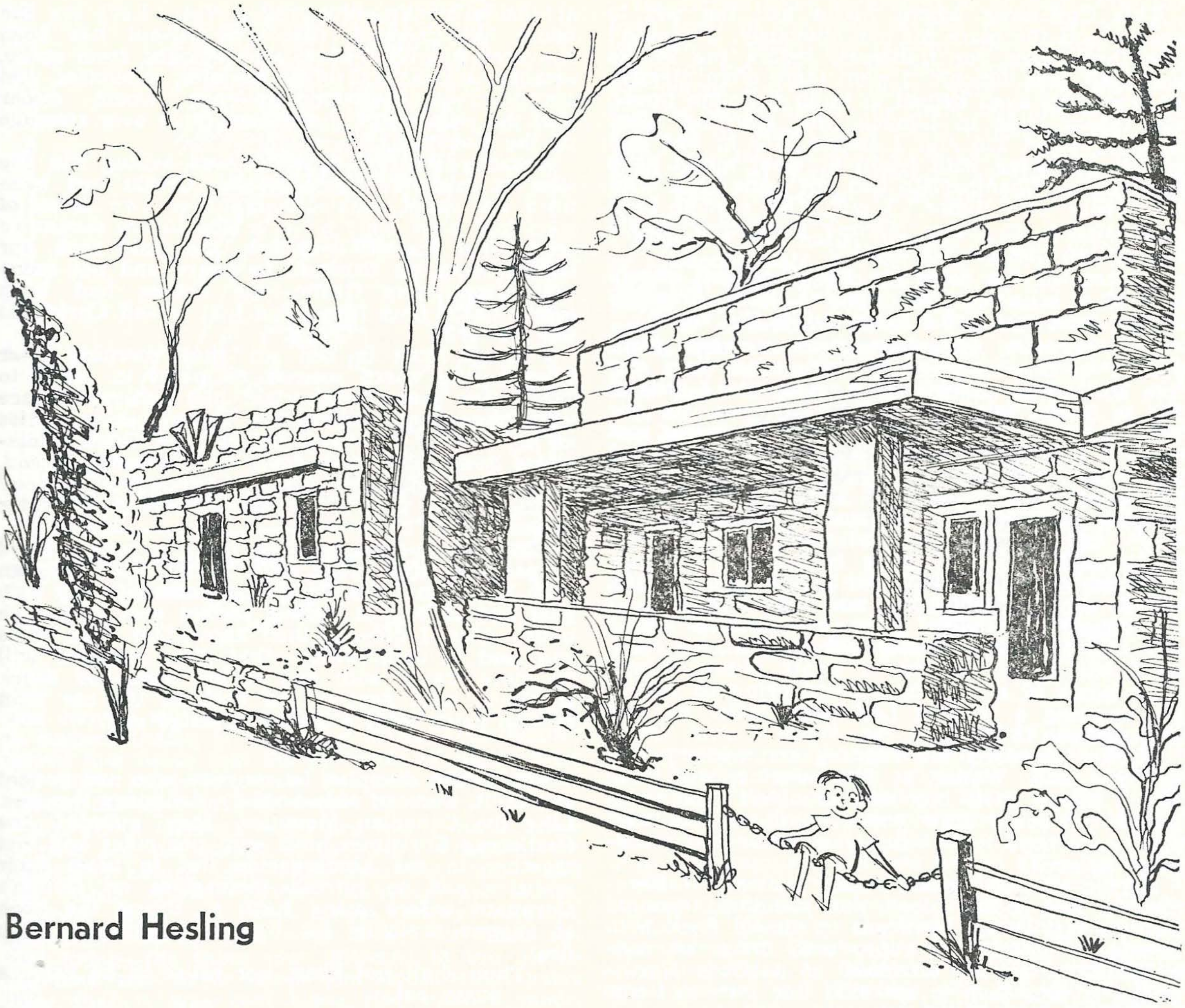
I crush the curving shells of bark
And smell the bluegums' scented leaves,
But never sight or scent of home
Can reach their endless dark.

Outside, upon the floodlit stone
("Their name shall live for evermore"),
The moths and beetles madly dance,
But each one dies alone.

Below the vast impressive wall,
The sculpted arches and the dome,
Beyond the arc of radiance,
An empty beercan on the lawn,
A bottle with a twisted straw . . .

Ripeness, they say, is all.

NANCY CATO



Bernard Hesling

LIVING WITH BURLEY GRIFFIN

I KNEW I wanted to live in Castlecrag the minute I saw that Oscar Asche was anchored there. It was Christmas 1929. I had been met by Wally Brutta in one of Burley Griffin's Canadian canoes at Spit Bridge. We paddled to Castlecrag and just off-shore saw the great actor, all eighteen stone of him, cooking his Christmas turkey in a proper oven up on the poop deck. Wally knew him, for Oscar was partial to art and good-looking lads. Usually Wally spent his time running away from people who liked him, but there wasn't much room for nonsense in a boat. We went aboard, sipped a few glasses of Madeira (a tipple quite new to me) and then paddled ashore and hiked up the hill to Pakie McDougal's shack and the Griffin's Christmas Party.

I don't suppose Oscar Asche ever came ashore at Castlecrag—he just sat at anchor scoffing his dinner, but to me he was the spirit of the place. Don't forget I was twenty-two and it was like having Richard Burton or a Beatle in your boat, for no famous folk ever visited Australia unless they hailed from here, like Oscar Asche or Melba.

All evening as I squatted on my boulder on Pakie's lawn spooning some sort of marzipan with soy gravy as an entree, drinking fresh beetroot juice, which is good for you, and watching with half an eye Marion Griffin, all of fifty and half-Cherokee Indian, doing a hula in a horse blanket, I saw with the rest of my eye the lights of Asche's boat. We were too far off to smell the cooking, but we could hear laughter and see an occasional shadow whenever someone hauled aboard another bottle from the cool depths of the bay.

This Castlecrag where Asche had the wit to anchor was the place for me, obviously. I couldn't live there then, for transport, before the bridge was built, was difficult. I went there often, though. At weekends even helped to build a Griffin house, and years later in London, the morning after Munich, when Flo and I stayed late in bed and got up shivering with fright at what might have happened if Chamberlain had not come back with his "Peace with Honor," I said, "We will go back to Australia, to Oscar Asche's Castlecrag before this Hitler changes his mind."

I recreated the place for Flo, the great sugar-loaf of a hillside close covered with broccoli-topped trees and rising sheer out of the water.

To a pommie, Australian gums resemble giant-parsley or broccoli gone to seed rather than any tree the village smithy stood under and I wanted Flo to know this difference in advance, for the tatty undusted look of Australian foliage has sent many a migrant scampering back home. I wanted Flo also to understand Castlecrag. She knew Hampstead and Letchworth and we'd stayed at off-beat places like the communist colony "Whiteway" but these were so much bigger than Castlecrag.

Griffin, of course, intended the Crag to be big, but it would be big with an unseen bigness. I remember Mr. Griffin (even his disciples didn't call him Walter) standing with Marion, his wife, on Castle Rock. He was a small, plump, happy atom bomb of a man in a broad-brimmed beaver hat wearing a flowing Left-Bank artist tie like an American in Paris.

Marion provided the running commentary and sold the land. Walter, at first meeting, was more like a happy little boy who wouldn't talk about school, but could draw you a house—and as with most such boys it was rarely a house you recognised as such!

Marion—fifteen years older than Walter—claimed Red Indian blood, and standing, mounted like the last of the Mohicans on Castle Rock with tomahawk profile and ropey arm flung out contemptuously in the direction of paleface Northbridge it was easy to see that her maiden name could have been Pocohontas.

"Wahlter an' I wanna keep the Crag voigin bush," she would drool on in a sort of Boston-Indian.

She would urge whatever prospective land buyers happened to be around to ascend the rock "but be careful not to step on that flannel-flower now," "mind the boronia (or native rose). It takes years to grow . . . don't haul yourself up by the banksia. It has more right here than we have . . ."

Once ascended she would point to the rash of red roofs at Northbridge. "It's horrabul! horrabul!" she'd say. And then she'd urge you to go to Northbridge to stand at Bond's Corner and look towards Castlecrag where you'd see nothing but voigin bush. In ten years and a thousand Griffin houses you'd still see only bush, for Griffin's dream was not Wren's dream or Harry Seidler's dream—for don't forget his formative years had been spent with Lloyd Wright at the height of the latter's Aztec period: a period when your architecture was designed to be discovered slowly beneath the cool moss and you didn't disturb the snakes for the Sun God loved them and placed them in the cracks of your random wall especially to be photographed.

Today I often wonder what Griffin's dream, if spread over all the small plots of Castlecrag, would have been like. There are, at most, a dozen Griffin ruins on the Crag today: but imagine a hillside of miniature Angor Wats. Let's say the bomb has dropped, that the fall-out has been hoovered up. Why, some archaeologist from space, scrabbling around Griffin's dunnies, oubliettes, and sacrificial-altar-type-chimney-pots, would swear that the race which lived there came over steerage on the Kon-tiki.

Actually, in 1938 when I was selling Flo the idea of migrating to Australia, Griffin had been dead six years, and although over two miles of road had been built to serve the future dream (a road often blasted deep into the solid rock, for Griffin liked his roads to be heard and not seen) only three more Griffin-type houses had been added to the ones I knew on that far-off Christmas day in 1929.

I recall lying in bed on that morning after Munich (for there seemed no point in going to work now that Chamberlain had achieved peace with honor) and telling Flo Uncle Remus stories of my life on the Crag and of how Griffin's disciples lived with their goats on wholemeal bread, home-made yoghourt, and something called Bees' Wine, which was a sort of fermented tapwater in jam jars.

Standing on your morning head in yoga seemed so peaceful after what we'd nearly been through with Hitler that the thought of possessing my own goat and maybe in time a second goat became a must. Alas, I did not then know that even goats can lead to delinquency—that your teenager will no more travel with dad to his week-end shack if placed with goat in the back of the car than he will today wear a double-breasted suit.

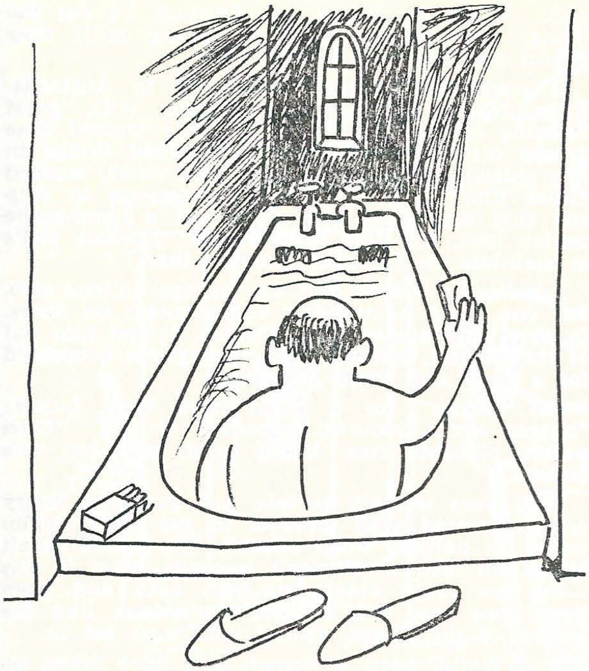
*

The Griffin disciples, i.e., anyone who had bought and built, were (if able-bodied) Voluntary Rangers. Like the Canadian Mounties, they guarded the Castlecrag Christmas bush with pea rifles and met together in the kindergarten hut to blow their whistles and to refresh themselves on Griffin's Covenant before going forth to throw the book at anyone dredging for bait or lighting a camp fire:

> Thou shalt not keep, nor cause to be kept, a pussy cat.
>
> Thou shalt not erect a paling fence, build house of brick or roof of tile.
>
> Thou shalt not block anyone's view of the Harbor nor skittle a bottle-brush if it blocks your view.
>
> Thou shalt not cut, bend, dig up, or otherwise interfere with native fauna nor reprimand any roo, wallaby, wombat or possum for feeding on same.

Griffin's commandments (set down here from memory) are not exaggerated very much, so it makes you wonder why in hell I would want to return to Castlecrag, especially when the pong of Oscar Asche's Christmas turkey had long since gone. Friends (or enemies) have said I returned because the Crag and Griffin is such a good story to eat out on, and certainly now when Walter's been canonised, or at least has a lake or a mosquito named after him, it is pleasant to take the mickey out of egghead architects, who see W.B.G. as the man who rose to the heights by making his houses look all of six feet tall when you could find 'em. Griffin believed in building from the natural stone, i.e., you found a stone that hadn't a tea-tree growing on it, moved it carefully so's not to touch the native portulaca (pigface to you), chiselled it into a natural shape and Bob's your uncle.

Well, he **did** use natural stone and it looked wonderful, but once when I tried to knock a doorway through one of his stone walls I found it



was cement and so beautifully faked that I began to suspect Griffin of belonging to the architectural school that holds that the pyramids of Egypt were not built stone by stone but are just Portland cement dusted over with desert sand.

Not all of Griffin's walls are faked but I know of two, and the garage of the Guys' house in the Bastion I helped him with. Rob Guy and I did the home work. Griffin modelled the stones, finished them off with some sticky solution, sprinkled colored sand over them, and then the real touch—the thing that glittered in the morning dew and never made you doubt even years later that it was real stone like mother made, was pounded quartz and carborundum powder.

Canberra knows today via the chain of lakes what a wizard Griffin was with water, but his schooling in this medium was obtained in Castlecrag. Griffin it was who introduced to Australia those pendant electric moons of pallid opaque white glass which hang from a conduit stalk. Everyone has them now, but the moons in our Griffin house at Castlecrag actually waxed and waned due to a special system Griffin had of directing the rain from the flat roof down the electric light conduits.

Mr. Griffin never lived to build his lakes, but he got great fun with fish tanks and the water in bathrooms. The dining room at the Kremlin (so called because a Mr. Kerensky lived there) was a wonderful drawing. Into the flat roof was let a huge glass goldfish tank. The sun blazed down and the fish, cool in their sludge and ribbon week, darted happily here and yon, casting their dive-bombing shadows on your entree. Mr. Kerensky put up with this, but after the humidity of the first summer, with moisture condensing on the cool glass and dropping like the gentle rain from heaven in your soup, he got the local builder to chuck some wire mesh in the glass tank, filled it up with cement and painted the glass bottom pumpkin yellow stippled with gold (a favorite Griffin color scheme) to tone with the orange walls.

Mr. Griffin liked bathrooms to be cosy, with the bath sunk in the floor so you could lie on your stomach to clean the bottom. The whole population of the Crag in the early days were said to be nudists due to Tommy Aker being glimpsed digging his garden in the nude, but that is a libel. Most of us wore boots. And Griffin himself was quite a prude, for he always gave you an opaque glass door on your bathroom so that you could drag your clothes in there and get dressed unobserved if anybody called.

Many of the early Cragites were Theosophists or Theoposophists, I'm not sure which, but it's the mob that believes you are born on the earth as a beetle, and when you died you came back next time as something better. I think Griffin must have been one of these, for an irate tenant told him once that maybe next time he was on earth he'd come back as an architect. This little row was also over one of Griffin's water effects, to wit, the Juliet's Tomb bathroom he built. Imagine the long sides of your bath going straight up to form the walls of the room. When in the bath, happy in your sarcophagus, embalmed in steam, it was very relaxing on a wet day with the daylight filtering the color of wine dregs and ink stains through the stained glass chapel window above the taps, to just lie in peace, but a man must come out of the wet sometime, and to get his watch afterwards which he'd hung on the tap there was no way but to stand in the bath.

*

Flo and I didn't get our Griffin house until early 1940, but although Griffin was dead by then and Marion gone, the disciples still presented Morality Plays and Nativity Plays in the Griffin open air theatre (now overgrown) and clattered around the Bulwark, Bastion, Redoubt, Sortie Port and Rampart. (Streets named after parts of a castle.) My old friend Claridge now lived at "Long Griffin." Treleaven lived at the "Abode-of-Love," Kerensky at "The Kremlin" and argumentative Bill Cheeter the dentist at "Red Gums." I steered clear of Cheeter. We were out fishing the bay once with Claridge, who got into an argument with Bill. "I'm not sitting here listening to your nonsense," said Bill, as fully dressed and pipe in mouth he slipped over the side and swam the half mile to shore; the sharks didn't catch him but you could see them bloody trying.

Each Sunday crowds of folk came to point at our strange houses (which were really very comfortable) and to hear the legend of Walter Burley Griffin.

There was a tale of Guido Baracchi's library—a lovely room, circular and all hewn stone with a deep fireplace where Guido could sit in his inglenook nodding over Karl Marx, but the trouble was he couldn't.

The day the house was finished Griffin lit the first fire. He knelt like a platelayer at the entrance to a railway tunnel and just disappeared in the smoke.

"We'll call this the smoke room," laughed Griffin when he'd done spluttering.

There was a time he was walking from the bus in heavy rain. Eric Nichols and I were with him. On that occasion the rain was stabbing down, when a new tenant with a great umbrella was sighted pushing a big duet pram in front of him.

"Taking the twins for a walk to keep them dry?" chuckled Walter.

That was the most delightful thing about Griffin, he could laugh—not at his own mistakes, Griffin didn't make mistakes, but at his clients' inability to understand Architecture. All architects have weak spots in their—or your—armor, and Griffin's weak point was ceilings—he could never get them to stay up. I think the best ceiling legend is the big dome at "Long Griffin." Claridge has it anchored like a barrage balloon now, but the tenant it was originally built for didn't understand domes and so it descended in pique one day quite neatly, right away up, and all in one piece like an igloo, imprisoning as it fell four children who were playing gin-rummy.

Griffin, who lived next door, hearing the crash and the muffled din from under the igloo, finished his egg and came straight across.

"There now," he said, "what did I tell you! This room called for a dome. Where would these kids have been without one, eh?"

It was a mystery to most folk why Castlecrag, within five miles of the Sydney G.P.O., was so long developing, but then it was not everybody who could understand Griffin.

I recall John Guyatt buying a plot of land and enquiring about an architect.

"Oh! Mr. Griffin's our architect for the estate," said the agent.

"He probably has a plan all ready for this plot . . ."

And so he had: a round house, completely circular.

"I've called it 'Martello Towers,' mused Mr. Griffin, "fits in with the Castle idea."

But John Guyatt was half-way to the garden gate—I mean the gap in the bottle brush. John was a striped-pants type. He couldn't see himself squatting in a stone tower.

*

Although it was impossible to budge Griffin once he'd done the drawings, it was possible if you made your plea right at the first cup of Kwic-bru (a sort of coffee made from roasted maize) to get consideration. Frank Duncan had the sense to demand a window in his bathroom and so he got one—a skylight.

Mrs. J. J. Hilder, who willingly gave Griffin carte blanche, but went on her knees for hanging space for ten of her late husband's water colors, got space for sixty. It was a lovely house, the Hilders', or rather a lovely drawing, like a bandstand in a park. No walls at all, just an octagonal slab roof, upheld on sewer pipes, with windows between the pipes.

"But my paintings, Walter, my paintings?"

"Ah! I've thought of them, Julia."

And, my God, he had: "You see, Julia, people don't look at paintings **all** the time. It's been worked out that less than ten per cent. of each twenty-four hours is . . ."

He broke off here to fetch the smelling salts, so Julia never heard the exact mathematics of time-picture-study, but his idea was brilliant. The water colors were to be liked pressed ferns in a botany lab., pivoting from the sewer pipes. He'd worked it out that you got six water colors to a column, and if you wished to look at one you flicked them over like pages in a book.

The Hilder home was never erected on Castlecrag. Bim Hilder, aged seventeen, built it just eighty feet beyond Griffin territory, but with walls instead of pipes.

Flo and I had a Griffin house—until we built our own—designed originally for Robert and Beth Guy. It was a gem, very comfortable, and although commanding a tremendous view it could not itself be seen. In really damp weather it was rather like living beneath a stone. When it was being built the branches of certain trees overhung the site. Griffin would not cut these, but tied them back. When the house was finished, he cut the string, and lo—the branches sprang until they almost met over the house.

It contained features quite new to Australia. Huge double sinks in the kitchen with great draining racks on the wall. Nobody wasted time drying dishes in the Crag, or stacked things in silly china cupboards. You slid your newly washed dishes into clean water, hung them up to drip and that was that. The sinks had a hand-made dented look, for they were copper. (Double sinks in stainless steel weren't known then.)

Admittedly Walter had his strange notions also. For one thing he couldn't abide hinges on doors. In time his partner, Eric Nichols, talked him out of this phobia, but **we** were a hingeless household for a time and pretty miserable.

"In Thebes" (or it could have been Luxor) "hinges were unknown," spouted Griffin. "Each portal pivoted from basalt pins: one top, one bottom."

Well ours weren't portals, but doors of flimsy oregon treated with creosote to get what Griffin called "a natural wood effect." We hadn't basalt either—in fact, we weren't too sure what it was—but we could obtain six-inch nails and from these, one top, one bottom, our doors, like the Valley of the Kings, swung until rust set in.

Had Walter been a woman he'd have taken up crochet-work but, as he wasn't, he knitted things in stone. He also in his decorated period played very funny tricks with his windows. Our house was **plain** Griffin. I knew not his "decorated" style and this got me into terrible strife the time Ned Sparrow—a neighbor in a "decorated" Griffin—was injured at work and I had to break into his house to find addresses and get things for the hospital.

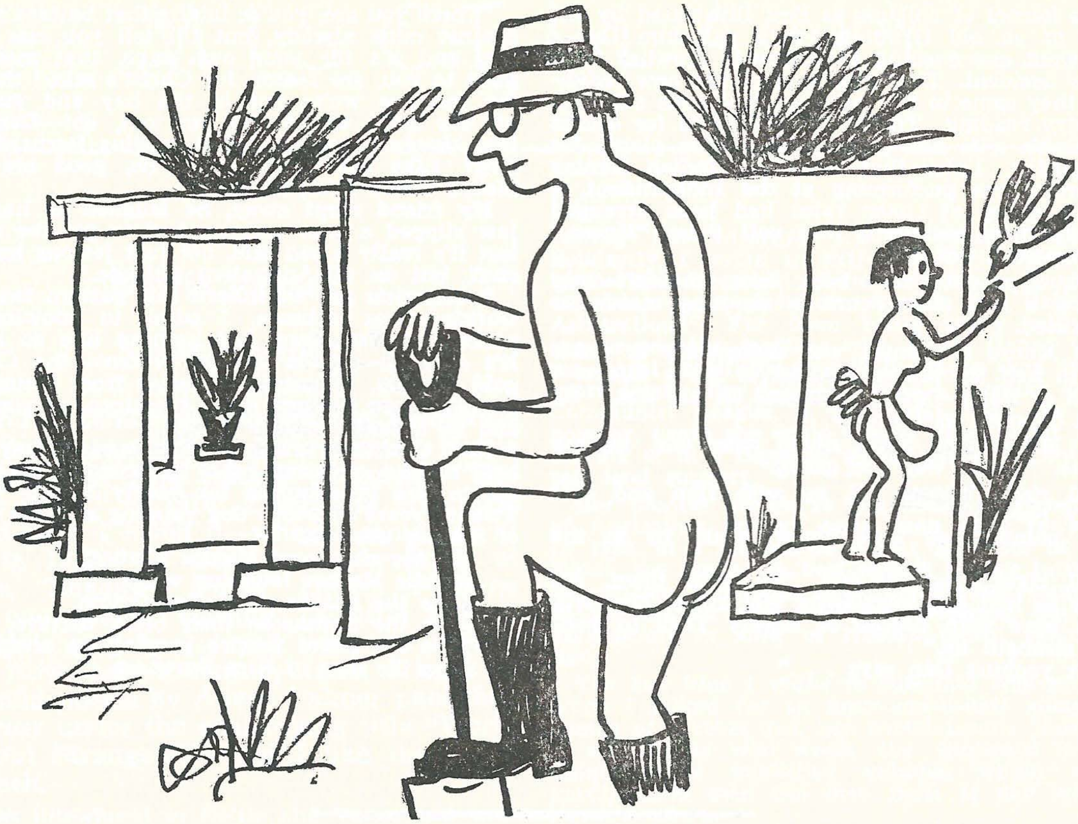
Griffin introduced the big picture window to Australia. We had two as big as Woolworth's, but whereas ours were just oblong panes of plate glass, Sparrow's, being a decorated house, had small triangular windows in each corner of the big one. This was just what the doctor ordered, for I could take my brick, break a small triangle window, reach my hand in and undo the door catch. I struck . . . Bong!

There was a crack like doom. Great knives of crystal six feet long speared around me. Hell! It was all one window. The triangular windows were the corners of the one big pane, with wooden beads superimposed on the glass to make them **look** like separate windows!

*

Griffin's disciples, while not so exciting as the master, were at least alive. They read books, subscribed to the New Statesman and Observer, ran an open air theatre and a discussion group. There was also, quite early in the piece, a kindergarten. This boon to mothers was just **off** the Crag, and run by people who, whilst kind to animals, etc., still felt that there are **some** activities which (if children practise them, which decent children don't) are best not noticed and certainly not mentioned.

We have come a long way since this far off day (or perhaps we haven't). Anyhow, a parents' meeting was being held to decide (a) should the children have a piece of fruit as a finisher at lunch, or should they have a pudding; (b) should children sleep after lunch—which meant buying stretchers—or should they just play around and then come home early.



"I don't wish my boy to go to bed," said one rather prim lady.

"Don't you think the sleep would do him good?" asked the kindergarten teacher.

"If he slept, yes," said the parent, "but the little bastard just lies around masturbating."

"Not in **this** house!" admonished the empire voice of the man whose house the school was in.

"Poor little bugger!" spoke Griffin's eldest disciple, "first you stop 'is pudd'n. Then you stop him pull'n 'is bloody pudd'n! Where will Castlecrag end?"

*

It ended with a rush, as soon as war finished. Even in 1941 when **we** built, non-Griffin homes were going up, but, by 1950, we were just an ordinary suburb.

Although the old Griffinites were pretty sad at the surge of new residents I was entirely happy about it; the flannel flowers would doubtless go, but flourishing instead would be a large community which, picking the eyes out of Griffin's philosophy, would become a stronghold.

The hundred-odd residents who called themselves "the Crag" (many lived just **off** the estate) may sound peculiar, but then sense always sounds peculiar and the germ was present. Soon a larger brotherhood would form—but it didn't, it just didn't. Our lectures, plays, monthly debates petered out.

When the Archbishop of Sydney spoke at our evenings or a hypnotist or some Brylcreemed actor, we still got a bumper turnout. We got an even better gate for Normain Haire on sex for beginners—but only once.

The new residents found for instance that you couldn't talk about sex without mentioning what it was. There was also that huge lovable mumbling Swede, a great cherub of a man who at question times used cuss words that your wife mightn't have heard before.

He was also suspect, this man, because he wouldn't vote against the "Expressway" which was to cut right through his lounge.

"It has to go somewhere," he said at the protest meeting, "why should I say it's wrong to put a bloody footpath through my lounge and right to put it through some other poor bastard's."

The big Swede as he was called (he was Australian born) wasn't in the armed forces but in Beatle talk he was "a mighty man."

Those who lay down their lives for their friends are very rare, but men who lay down their lounge for an expressway are non-existent. There was much the new residents couldn't understand. You not only **voted** but you **talked** politics and not only Lab. and Lib. but warlike subjects such as peace. You fought for a sewerage system in a remote future, but were against bribery to get you a septic tank in the immediate present. Actually, Castlecrag is almost solid rock and until it was sewered (which it was, after a child had died of typhoid from the septic tanks) each new home had a great monolith rearing out of the lawn, like the base of an equestrian statue, in front of it.

The newcomers gradually found also that there was far too much music and poetry about; it's good, even beaut., to ask folk in to hear gramophone records but there were, about the Crag, music lovers married to non-music lovers. People who left the latter at home. Why if you weren't careful you could find yourself baby-sitting and your missus sharing an incestuous bus seat with someone to a Town Hall concert.

The kernel of collapse is best illustrated by the story of an old Griffinite—we'll call him Dan—who went one evening to borrow a crowbar from a new resident. Dan was fond of his new neighbors, they came to the meetings, had even attended a poetry reading. They'd asked Dan in for drinks and Dan's wife had given them native plants for the garden. Later that week the Indian Dancer Shivoram was performing at the Independent, a theatre group at cheap rates had been arranged and the new residents, let's call them "Moose," had bought a ticket.

Dan, appoaching the back door, couldn't help hearing a first class domestic shouting match, so he paused.

Bill Moose it seemed was demanding to know why in hell his missus **wanted** to see a dancer—Indian or Dago—"perving around on his toes." He hated dancers, so did she.

Liz Moose said she'd never seen one, neither had he. "That's why I'm going."

"All right, bugger off, go with Dan and that bloody Swede."

Liz pointed out that wives would be in the party.

"All right," roared Bill, "go with them, get matey as hell and next thing you know, Dan will be in here with bottles of bloody Yoga to keep your strength up."

"It's yoghurt Dan says . . ."

"There you are, you're taking that bastard's word against mine already, but I'll tell you one thing, Liz, and it's for your own sake, that mob's no good to you, see reason for Christ's sake! Suppose for instance we're out in the bay and you fell off the boat, who'd fish you out, eh!—Dan? Or that bloody Swede? Or that sodding Bernard Hesling? Like hell they would, no, good old Billy Moose would fish you out."

My friend crept away, he laughed so hard his jaw slipped a gear and we had to get the quack. But it's really a sad tale, not just jealous husband stuff, but an all-Australian attitude.

Sociologists say we inherit this pattern from our working-class forbears. I admit to knowing this pattern in Yorkshire, but nothing like so strong. It's oriental—maybe we get it from the Chinese gold diggers. Wherever it comes from though, we are far more Eastern than American or pommies, and an oriental suburb is hell.

Just think! A whiff of Christmas turkey in a boat and an anchored actor hamming it up caused me to live in suburbia for nearly twenty years! Twenty years of pooch dog yapping and the shriek of Sunday mowers.

On the shores of Middle Harbor,
Middle Harbor laughing water,
Live the shades of Burley-Griffin,
Live the Smiths in their brick texture,
Live the Jones they're keeping up with,
Live the sons of Hire Purchase . . .

THE QUIET OF THE BEACH

I woke to the dunny men, and then the dawn.
Under my window carrying the can
they chatted pleasantly as man to man.
Sleep, night, and the poetry of trade were gone.

For the dawn was hard at their heels: the clattering jackass,
imminent swallowings in the throat of the sea,
the milkman, cloud retracting, traffic in the bay—
and all touched off by a couple of handy knackers.

Dung hasn't got this georgic side in cities.
Two million mortals farting about for money
vent one sober unity in noise.

Day and night happen with impunity.
Discordance is the one harmonious voice.
I'd say it's a thousand pities. It isn't funny.

J. M. COUPER

MISCELLANY

Nettie Palmer

Guido Baracchi

WHAT a family of writers the Palmers—four members, four writers! Nettie published her first volume of poems, "The South Wind," in 1914: it was the first book I read—and I loved it—when I came out of gaol in 1918. Of her second volume of poems, "Shadowy Paths" (1915), I know only one poem, "Unsung," a little perfect love-lyric that has stayed with me to this day. Now, half a century later, I have in my hand poems by Aileen Palmer published last year under the challenging title "World Without Strangers?"—and I like them just as much.

I was introduced to Nettie and Vance and one-year-old Aileen in 1916 by Katharine Prichard and quickly became good friends with the Palmers, the friendship slowly deepening through the years. They supported me, not uncritically, when I was at odds with Melbourne University authorities and then governmental authorities over the first war. During 1917 I spent some unforgettable week-ends at the famous little country cottage at Emerald in the Dandenongs the Palmers occupied at this time, where other writers came and, before going, pencilled impromptu verses on the bathroom door. Like these:

To make a poem out of fire
was my desire,
to have the lighting shine
in every line;
but lacking flint and wanting steel
I feel
that it is good
to make a poem out of wood.

At the end of 1917 I celebrated the defeat of conscription with a grand party in Melbourne. Vance was there and was supposed to return to Emerald the same night. But he got properly drunk; I took him to my room in Bourke Street, put him to bed in my bed with his boots on and slept on the floor. When he arrived home next day, the worse for wear, I think Nettie was truly shocked, but with characteristic generosity and ready sympathy she quickly understood and then instantly forgave me.

John Anderson has argued that mind is feeling. Nettie's gift of sympathy many times brought her bright mind to unerring understanding of things quite remote from her own attitudes. When I was editing the latterday I.W.W. paper, Industrial Solidarity, I wrote an extremely rude open letter to the then President of the Arbitration Court, her esteemed uncle, under the caption "To Hell With Arbitration!" Far from being angry with me, she proposed a meeting with Uncle Henry where we might fruitfully discuss it. More than twenty years later, after I had become a member of the Communist League, a Trotzkyist body far from popular, again she could clearly grasp what I was driving at in a cause to which she could not herself lend support.

Her pioneer efforts in the cause of recognition of Australian writers have been duly rewarded. In 1935. at a Melbourne dinner in honor of Egon Kisch, she made the best speech I have heard on this theme, including some penetrating comments on the convict stories of Price Warung, the more appropriate in view of Kisch's recent incarceration.

The last time I spoke in this hall was in 1941, when I talked for an hour-and-a-half about the poetry of a rebel girl, my friend Lesbia Harford.* It was Nettie who wrote the foreword to her unique little published volume, which would hardly have seen the then light of day without Nettie's efforts.

Her same gifts of mind-feeling enabled her properly to appreciate and so greatly encourage a poet, in my judgment the most distinguished in Australia and certainly amongst the most neglected. One might not, perhaps, imagine Bertram Higgins, the good Catholic, and Nettie Palmer, having so much in common, yet the later version of his major poem is dedicated to her.

Before the first war, Vance had associated with a group of writers who produced the New Age, at the time the outstanding English review. Week by week its brilliant editor, A. R. Orage, expounded guild socialism and wrote illuminating literary critiques. But it was Nettie who had discerned all the youthful promise of Ruth Pitter's poems in the New Age long before she became one of the best known English poets of her day.

In the field of literary criticism, I found Nettie hard to beat. During the second war, I went to an evening at the Cross where she was present. A chance remark inspired her to give us. quite spontaneously, the finest contrasting critique of Henry Handel Richardson and Christina Stead I have ever heard or read. For the rest of the evening we simply hung on her words.

I have mentioned her poems. Of her other very considerable writings, to me, as to A. D. Hope, two books make a special appeal. If you want to learn how delightfully a short economic history of a district can be written, read "The Dandenongs". And if you want to be beautifully introduced to modern literature up to 1939, read the extracts from her journal published under the title "Fourteen Years". Also, if you want to read a short story or sketch or whatever you prefer to call it, perfect of its kind, then read "The Sardine King". But Helen Palmer will have to tell you how you may now be able to find it.

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* Guido Baracchi delivered this address at the Nettie Palmer memorial meeting of the Fellowship of Australian Writers, Sydney, in March, 1965.

Two last words about my friend. Her brother, Esmond Higgins, once said to me: "Melbourne is bad for Nettie," having in mind, I suppose, the inveterate provincialism of our native town. But however that may have been, Nettie has been mighty good not only for Melbourne, but all Australia. In "Fourteen Years" she has written "I have a feeling that Ruth Pitter's most revealing phrases are instinctive, and that she herself might take them out afterwards with surprise at their meaning:

> Grief for the quick, love for the dead . . .
> Daring, a paradox and true."

For her friends who survive. true, too, in the case of Nettie.

Our Freedom Ride

Beth Hauser

BY 7 a.m. on Tuesday 16 February the bus had already been on the road for nearly an hour. Inside were thirty university students in varying states of awakeness. Some of us dazedly recalling the events of the last 72 hours or so and trying to attach some meaning to them.

On midnight Friday we'd set out from Sydney, talking, joking and singing—thirty individuals brought together as members of Student Action for Aborigines (S.A.F.A.). It would be almost impossible to discover all the motives behind each decision to come on the bus trip—some students were regular "good cause" joiners; for others this was their first experience of any organisation; a few had some idea of what to expect of the conditions Aboriginal people were living in; but most had never even seen a shanty town where the fringe-dwellers live and their interest had come mostly from books and conversations; all were keen to find out "What was really going on."

Our aims weren't so diffuse. They were to conduct a survey of Aboriginal problems in health, housing and education and to demonstrate where we found cases of racial discrimination.

Now we were wondering what we had let ourselves in for. Last night we could have been killed! An open truck had, on its third attempt, succeeded in forcing us off the asphalt and over the steep shoulder of the road. We hardly dared think what could have happened without a quick-thinking driver.

Jarred by this thought the previous day's events became clearer. We'd carried out our survey work in the morning—dutifully noting down answers to questions on everything from the number of people living in a shanty dwelling to the comments of town council officials on integration suggestions.

By lunch-time some of our group had found a place where discrimination against Aboriginals existed. For six hot, dry hours of that day we stood there holding signs, discussing and arguing with local residents. As the sun sank lower it shone directly in our eyes so that we had to hold the posters higher to protect our faces from the burning heat. With sunset came a welcome rest —but not for long, as we had suddenly to pack up and leave the church hall where we'd stayed the previous night. By 10 p.m. we were off on the road again—not much singing this time as we were all too tired, although our spirits were high after our first attempt at demonstrating and street-corner debating.

Cars followed us out of town. We didn't know who were in them—whether they were friendly well-wishers or not. Suddenly two headlights swerved out to pass our bus but coming rather close to us. The road was narrow and we thought little of the closeness until the same vehicle slowed down, allowed us to pass, and repeated the performance. This time we realised with amazement that the vehicle—a table-top truck—was actually trying to hit us. On its third attempt it succeeded and the bus careered off the road.

As it lurched over the shoulder there were a couple of screams and crashes as various pieces of luggage fell down from the roof racks. We came to a half. There was a moment of stunned silence before someone called out, "Is anyone hurt?" Apart from shock, nobody was.

While friends in the other cars drove back to town for the police we stood around in the glare of headlights trying to realise what had happened and why . . . Nine hours later we were still puzzling over it.

Surely the truck driver must have been drunk or slightly mad. We didn't like to admit openly the possibility that he may have been sober. If he had acted deliberately we felt we must have touched on a very sore point when we chose to demonstrate against racial discrimination.

The road we were on seemed about as rough as we expected to find on the trip. Surely things could only get better.

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First impressions always seem to be the most vivid. The first sight of a settlement of Aboriginal people on the outskirts of a prosperous town is no exception. There beside a rather muddy river were scattered about twenty or thirty dwellings —mostly put together with just plain sheets of galvanised iron. (One exception was the "church". A barbed-wire fence ran round some benches under an open-sided wooden shelter. In a prominent position was the sign: "Christ died for our sins".)

This was a drought-stricken area. There was hardly a blade of grass and what vegetation there was went almost unnoticed because of the dust.

The houses were usually in groups of three or more. Four houses nearby had the makings of small gardens, but nothing was growing there. There was not even one tap for all these people.

Several houses had a shade shelter constructed outside the door—something like a car-port but with dead leaves and branches for the roof. Others had nothing but a roof, four walls and one or two doorways. In one such house, about 10 by 20 feet, we talked to the mother of five children. A family of four shared the house with them. The only furniture in the room we saw was a table and two beds. Another stretcher was placed outside the house. Just as well it was the dry season!

Despite the dust, despite the heavy atmosphere of depression and hopelessness, this woman had everything set neatly in its place. I wondered how many people would bother in such circumstances. She may have had visions of better things to come for her children—perhaps even a "town-house" one day.

Another woman, who hoped for better opportunities for her children, lived on a "mission station" run by the government. This particular reserve had been built nine miles out of town 26 years ago. It looked as if it had been forgotten by the world 26 years ago. Here was the anomaly of green lawns and flowers in the grounds of the manager's house, while, outside the fence, the ground was dried out and cracked. I did see one tap outside his land and that was in the schoolhouse grounds. I was told that the river was only a few hundred yards away!

These houses were much the same as those of the previous settlement except that they were of unlined weatherboard. One woman had requested a bathroom for her house five years ago. A concrete floor had been laid down but the job had gone no further. We were told this situation was an exception to the general rule — most houses hadn't reached the concrete-floor stage!

In another home there were gaping cracks between the weatherboards. An attempt had been made to plug up most but there were just too many. The floor-boards were swept clean, the house was neat and tidy, although it gave the impression it was about to collapse. Despite repeated requests to the reserve authorities no repairs had been carried out here since the house had been built. There had been an answer to one request several years ago but apparently money ran out before this reserve was reached..

In striking contrast to these were seven new houses we visited later. The paint was still its bright, original color. There hadn't even been time for the sun to fade it. Here, we were told, was the shining example of how the white community had helped some Aboriginal people in the assimilation process. The government had built the houses for those lucky few families and the townspeople proudly proclaimed, "There's no discrimination in our town! Go and have a look at those houses we were telling you about."

We took their advice. They were a pleasant sight . . . but our initial enthusiasm for such "progress" took a sharp slide downhill. To reach the houses we had to cross the town boundary! The good townspeople had held protest meetings just two years ago and had succeeded in preventing the government building the homes within the town area.

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At the entrance to the municipal baths were six Aboriginal children and the thirty students. Outside a hastily constructed barrier a crowd of about 200 was becoming increasingly heated.

Some were angry at missing their swim; some seemed concerned at our anti-discriminatory actions and voiced their feelings loudly; others were there just for some Saturday afternoon entertainment and showed their sporting interest by tossing eggs and tomatoes—not even rotten.

I noticed one supporter after he'd been dumped in the gutter.

Accustomed to hearing city police say: "Get a move on" in that we've-seen-it-all-before voice, it was a refreshing change to find ourselves being really protected by the law enforcers. The police actually came out on our side and were more concerned in "moving on" the locals.

Despite their protection, as we stood at the pool entrance, we felt more than a little apprehensive —just how far would the crowd go? None of us had ever before been in the unenviable position of facing a predominantly hostile crowd. Though we hoped the man who yelled "String 'em up" had been joking, it conjured up ideas of lynchings.

These feelings were reinforced when we heard the experiences of two of our group who were caught up in the crowd. One had an egg smashed on the back of his head and some cigarette burns on his arms where someone had "accidentally" brushed against him; the other was rubbing a bruised chin and holding broken glasses after being knocked to the ground.

This opposition consolidated our members. We felt we had to see it through whatever the consequences.

We felt deeply about people so concerned to maintain their precious few privileges, that they would rouse themselves from their usual apathy to actively oppose anyone else gaining the simple right to use a public facility. We had constantly to remind ourselves of our pledge to remain passive in our demonstration so there was a very real danger of violence.

In the midst of all this the town clerk arrived with a pile of official books—presumably to find legal means of ridding the town of such nuisances. However, the police appeared most unwilling to arrest us—although by this time we were quite prepared to become "martyrs to the cause"!

*

One outcome of this incident was that several Aboriginal mothers were prepared to take their children to the pool the next day . . . and the next . . . until they were let in. After years of knockbacks they were willing to try once more. This same determination showed through in an attractive sixteen-year-old girl as she waited outside a small town picture theatre. Inside the building was a four-foot-high partition to separate Aboriginal from non-Aboriginal people.

Some of us had suntans darker than the skins of those forced to sit in the front stalls, but they had somehow been "made dirty" because of their membership of a particular race.

Outside the theatre were three groups—the students, about a hundred local whites and the local Aboriginals. We couldn't estimate how many of these last were there as, without knowing personal histories, we couldn't identify them all.

While we held up our usual picket signs the white crowd gathered closer. At first they laughed derisively at us, but were silenced when challenged to discuss the issue of the partition. Silenced at least momentarily until one woman protested at our being in the town and added defensively: "Anyhow, what's wrong with our town? The darkies have been allowed to go to the white school for ages."

We explained we weren't complaining about the school and were about to bring back the conversation to the partition when we were dramatically interrupted by a young Aboriginal girl. She stepped forward into the light and walked directly up to the woman who had spoken. There was a hush as everyone strained to hear her soft voice explaining how just a few years ago her aunt had tried to enrol her cousin at the school and had been refused. (This surprised even us as we usually pointed to the Education Department as the most progressive in its policy of integration.)

Just one quietly-spoken girl had broken through the hidden intensity of feelings. It was so much more effective that someone from the same town —an Aboriginal girl—had done this. This immediately opened the way for discussion which could only lead to improvement of racial relationships.

"What do you think you can do in two weeks? You're just here to make trouble, that's all!"

"I've lived her for thirty years and what do you city fellas know about anything out here?"

"University students! They're a pack of ratbags! Why don't you go out and do a decent day's work?"

That's who we were—idealistic, trouble-making university students from the big city! We could understand criticisms of our youth (average age was only 19½), inexperience in debating, ungenerousness and occasional lack of manners, as these were basically true. We did become tired of the endless comments on our clothing, about us "making trouble," being "self-seeking publicity hunters" or just plain "tourists". If only our impeccable critics would come down to real questions concerning Aboriginal health, housing and education.

Why weren't Aboriginals allowed freely into public facilities? The most common rationalisations used were based on health. Well, if there is a health problem why does a healthy town tolerate this situation?

However, the children are allowed to swim in the public pool during school hours. It is hard to understand how they suddenly become dirty and unhealthy after half past three! Special exemptions from the Council's law may be granted after written application. In an analogous situation, "innocent until proved guilty" becomes "dirty until proved clean" (for Aboriginals), when the town council takes over.

What is the government doing about the reserves, with their temporary dwellings expected to stand up without repair work for 25 years?

And how are children to do homework when they live in overcrowded, falling-down homes, often with no electric light. What incentive is there to go on with their education when they are treated as second-rate citizens?

There is more than a lazy, apathetic acceptance of these deplorable conditions. When deep-down emotions were forced to the surface the "typical," happy-go-lucky Australian becomes surprisingly vociferous, expressing suppressive or, at best, paternalistic attitudes to Aboriginals.

*

Members of Aboriginal welfare committees were often among those most strongly opposed to us. They seemed to prefer order and the maintenance of the status quo, and were frightened of the inevitable changes after we left. There were signs that Aboriginals were impatient of whites who thought they could control the timetable of progress for another people. With just that small amount of support that we could give, Aboriginals—especially the younger ones—were coming forward to present their own cases.

The white moderates' usual comment was: "Things were all right till you came here. Now look at all the prejudice!" This latter statement was quite true—there was a lot of prejudice—but they seemed to believe we had created the prejudice overnight! What we had done was to force it on to the surface, out in the open, where it could be dealt with honestly.

We created tension — constructive tension— which could no longer be ignored, and had to be resolved.

The events of the S.A.F.A. trip were reported to the world through the international press. It would be far better for Australia to solve her problem now than to find herself under pressure from international sources in the future.

Some towns have made noticeable progress. Committees with equal Aboriginal representation have been set up attempting to treat the cause of their problems instead of patching up the effects.

We are aware of the incredible complexity of this problem but Australians must accept this as a challenge and not use it as an excuse for inactivity.

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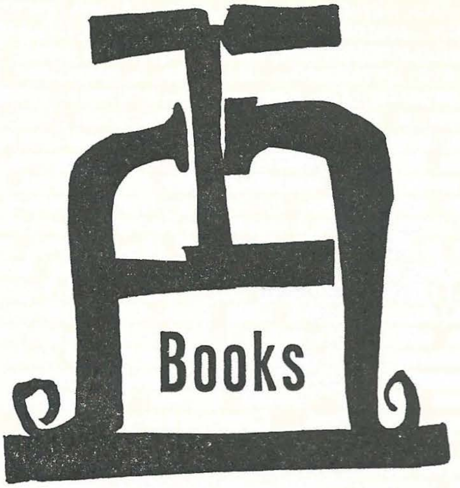

Absolute Ruler

"Reminiscences," by Douglas MacArthur (Heinemann, 85/-).

I recall in detail my first meeting with General MacArthur. It was in Tokyo in April, 1946. As Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, General MacArthur was the nearly absolute ruler of 80 million people. I was the joint representative of the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and India on the Allied Council for Japan.

I expected that, at this first meeting, General MacArthur would talk to me about the great and complex political problems that faced the Occupation, about what he had himself learned about the Japanese political situation during the eight months since the surrender. I was, therefore, surprised that he did not want to talk about Japan as Japan at all, but about the activities of the Soviet Mission in Japan. He told me that his staff had informed him that General Derevyanko, the Head of the Soviet Mission, had made three trips to the airport to meet me. (In fact, he had not met me since my aircraft had been repeatedly delayed.) He felt that this was deeply significant and disquieting, and returned to it several times. He thought that Derevyanko must have had hopes of subverting me from the moment of my arrival, and that he would try to persuade me to join him in criticising General MacArthur's policies and achievements. Later I made a note in my diary that I reckoned General MacArthur had talked for fifty-five minutes of the hour, and I for five, which was quite reasonable since I had gone to learn and listen, and that he had spent fifty of these minutes warning me about the Russian Mission.

I mention this first interview because, unhappily, it seemed to set the tone of my future relations with General MacArthur's Headquarters through 1946 and 1947. I soon learned that any attempt, however restrained or tentative, to question the complete rightness of any act or statement by the Supreme Commander, was hotly resented at G.H.Q. It was more than that, it was "playing the Russian game". The argument ran like this, "What you say can be construed as a reflection on the way the General handled this issue, or the way he publicly pronounced upon it. Any such reflection tends to diminish his prestige, and therefore his influence, and this is what the Russians are trying to do. Therefore, I regret to say that, however unwittingly, you are playing the Russian game."

It is true, of course, that the Russians were trying, generally in a circumspect way, to discredit General MacArthur and the Occupation, yet the American reaction to this seemed out of all proportion to the danger it represented. The Japanese communists were not formidable, and Russia was certainly not then a military danger. Indeed, right up to April, 1950, MacArthur was urging Japan to remain neutral and disarmed. In these circumstances it was hard to see how the situation demanded continuous adulation of all that MacArthur said or did, yet anything less than adulation was unacceptable.

Sometimes even silence, or the failure to endorse some statement of MacArthur's, was regarded as sinister. And he made some astonishing statements. Perhaps the most notable was on 2nd September, 1946, the anniversary of the surrender.

> The American combat soldier came, with his fine sense of self-respect, self-confidence and self-control. They [the Japanese] saw and felt his spiritual quality—a spiritual quality which truly reflects the highest training of the American home . . . A spiritual revolution ensued almost overnight . . . It reflects an unparalleled convulsion in the social history of the world.

It was hard to endorse this sort of thing when every literate person in Japan knew that it had no relation to reality.

I had thought that, in the calm of retirement, with political ambition over, General MacArthur might give in his reminiscences a more measured and real account of the Occupation period. It was known in 1945 how deeply he resented the Far Eastern Commission in Washington, and the Allied Council in Japan, but I had thought that on later reflection he might have conceded that occasionally some members of these bodies had contributed useful ideas. But I was wrong.

> Not one constructive idea to help with the reorientation and reconstruction of Japan ever came from the Far Eastern Commission or its satellite, the Allied Council. This latter body was, by its terms of reference, solely advisory and consultative, but it was neither the one nor the other. Its sole contribution being that of nuisance and defamation.

I am puzzled that General MacArthur, nearly twenty years after, should persist in giving a profoundly misleading account of his relations with the Japanese Government and people. He continues to insist that the new constitution expressed the free will of the Japanese Government and people, and that with "some assistance" in drafting by his staff, it was only adopted after the fullest debate. MacArthur writes that, "with no censorship any longer, the people discussed and debated the new constitution on every street corner, in every newspaper, and in every home." This was, of course, the official fiction in Japan in 1947, but in 1950 it was admitted in the official publication produced by the Government Section of G.H.Q.—"Political Reorientation of Japan"—that the draft of the Constitution was written in English in seven days in G.H.Q. General Whitney, the Head of the Government Section, in his book, "MacArthur—His Rendezvous with Destiny," has described the extreme pressure put on the Japanese Government to get the draft adopted without any amendment of substance, and without delay. Newspaper editors of the time have since explained how the American military censors suppressed all except laudatory comments in the

Japanese press. At this time all newspaper copy had to be submitted twice, in galley and in page proof, to the American censors before it could be published.

I am not here concerned with the very hard question whether, on balance, the Occupation was a success. Nor am I concerned to make any overall assessment of MacArthur's stature and achievements. I accept the view that he was a very distinguished soldier. I am only concerned with the reliability of what he has written about the Occupation. It is fantastically unreliable. I have no confident explanation of this. I know that many great men have been very vain. I can only think that when an exorbitant vanity takes full possession of a man, it makes him unable, on questions where his own prestige is at stake, to recognise what is true and what false, or even to recognise that other people may know what is true or false.

W. MACMAHON BALL.

Our Defence

The designer of the dust jacket of T. B. Millar's "Australia's Defence" (M.U.P., 35/- and 20/-) got the message of this book all right, for the cover consists of three bold arrows striking from the north of a grid of lines of longitude and latitude towards the south; one arrow is colored red, and the other two brown. This device accurately symbolises the assumptions on which the book is based.

Defence is a function of foreign policy, which in turn is based on an interpretation of the reality of the international situation in so far as it affects the country in question. Dr. Millar is aware of this, of course, but he does not really question the "official" interpretation of reality which sees the current political, social and economic revolution in Asia as a communist threat to Australia. He accepts it, and tells us that "This book is mainly about the physical defence of Australia in circumstances where diplomacy has not been able to avoid the need for direct defence measures." This is a most question-begging phrase, especially for a country whose diplomacy for a decade and a half has been little more than an echo of that of its great and powerful friends.

Dr. Millar is not entirely happy about adopting the assumptions on which the official "line" is based, for he uses such qualifying phrases as "a 'Communist menace,' not easily defined but **apparently** a single threat, subtle and powerful" (p. 2); ". . . an American barrier against the threat we envisaged—**correctly or not**—of six or seven hundred million Chinese Communists expanding southwards" (p. 2). On pp. 49-50 occurs the sentence: "At its nearest point, the territory of the Chinese People's Republic is over two thousand miles from the Australian mainland, **and there is no evidence** that the seven hundred million people of China are about to burst their boundaries and flood southwards across land and sea to engulf Australia. Yet it is quite clear that, since 1950, or soon thereafter, the principal fear of the Australian Government, with regard to security, has stemmed from the politics of Communist China." (My emphasis.) The discussion of the so-called Chinese threat ends with the general conclusion that China has at present neither the desire nor the power to launch an invasion of Australia, but at some future time it "would not be beyond the bounds of possibility" that it might think in these terms, especially if it controlled South-east Asia. So much for the red arrow.

As far as the brown arrows are concerned, we are told on p. 66 that: "For all forces, Indonesia lacks the reservoir of highly trained technicians and the essential back-up of a sophisticated industrial complex, and it will be some years before they are developed. It lacks a maritime transport capacity for any major overseas operations. Without a vast supply system from the Soviet Union, Indonesia is thus not in a position at present to fight an extended war with anyone. It is in a position to launch a very sharp blow at any of its neighbours, including New Guinea, and could drop a few bombs on Sydney if so desired. **There is little indication that the present government does so desire.**" (My emphasis in last sentence.) The discussion of the so-called Indonesian threat ends on the note that nevertheless Indonesian aggression against Malaysia is contrary to our interests and our commitments, the Indonesian government will not always be rational, the greatest danger "would appear to come from a Chinese-dominated, Communist-controlled Indonesia," and a right-wing military regime would "cause least apprehension for Australia." So one brown arrow should really have been coloured red also.

The other threats to Australia which are envisaged come about, according to Millar, primarily because of the alliances or defence arrangements which have been entered into "not solely in the interests of Australia." In the event of war between the Western Alliance and the Soviet bloc, which would almost certainly escalate into a nuclear war, the main reason why the Soviet Union would want to attack us is apparently to knock out the communications station at North-West Cape, or the Woomera rocket range base; or, we might become involved in other wars through such defence agreements as ANZAM in the Malayan area, ANZUS in the Pacific area, or SEATO in S.E. Asia. These entanglements are seen as Australia's payments of "club fees," enabling her to belong to the Anglo-American anti-communist club.

So, all the menacing arrows on the cover should really have been red. But on Millar's own admission, there is no evidence of a clear and present danger to Australia from either China or Indonesia; he says there is only a **possibility** (not even a **probability** which might be estimated) that at some future date (which is unspecified, except in the vaguest of terms) these countries might be a threat. Yet he goes on to argue that in order to "insure" against this possibility, Australia should step up its defence programme, be willing to fight communism in anybody else's backyard (even though it may be two thousand miles from our shores), and if our powerful friends are not prepared to guarantee some assistance with nuclear weapons "in the face of a nuclear threat to Australia," then we must develop our own.

This is an extraordinary treatment of evidence in a supposedly scholarly work; the whole of the argument of the rest of the book is built up on this flimsy basis. If scholars in other disciplines built up their arguments in direct contradiction of their own evidence, they would be laughed out of court. It is also an extraordinary basis on which to predicate a defence policy; it is a recipe for aggression, and is exactly the basis on which Indonesia is rightly castigated for its attacks on Malaysian territory. If all the countries in Asia and S.E. Asia were to operate on this basis there would be a conflagration tomorrow; **on the same argument** China would be justified in attacking the American bases with which she is ringed, and Indonesia would be justified in attacking the British base in Singapore and the Australian bases in New Guinea.

One expects a scholar in the discipline of international relations to take at least some account of the effect of one country's defence posture on others. From the evidence—or rather lack of it—that Millar produces concerning the threats to Australia, a scholar would be equally justified in concluding that such possibilities are remote, and that the prudent thing to do would be to strengthen Australia's internal defences designed to protect its own territory, and to conduct its foreign policy in such a way as not to provoke attack, instead of indulging in military adventures thousands of miles from its shores. These may be expected to increase the possibility that some countries might develop into a threat to Australia, precisely because such actions make us appear as a threat to **them.** (Presumably the practitioners of international relations have heard of dialectical relationships.)

Australia has of course, entered into these military adventures as a result of defence arrangements which, as Millar observes, "are not solely in the interests of Australia . . . and which may limit our freedom of action or increase the likelihood of our being involved in hostilities." The rationale of these agreements is that, by going along with Britain and America, as the case may be, they will come to our aid if we are attacked. A close reading of chapter four, dealing with these arrangements, indicates that this intended result is by no means clear cut; British power is clearly on the wane, and dependent on that of the U.S.A., and Millar writes that: "There is no complete guarantee of American protection, however much we spend on our own defence. There is little likelihood we would receive it if we did nothing for ourselves, or gave nothing in return." Yet he does not adequately examine whether what we give in return is worth what we think we are getting; he does not critically examine the proposition that by committing ourselves to these entanglements we antagonise key forces in Asia, and do not in fact add much in material terms to the anti-communist crusade of our allies. (He admits in his postscript that our commitment in Vietnam is purely political, and in the text of the book, that the influence exerted by our allies on us is far greater than the reverse.) On the basis of Millar's own discussion of these defence arrangements, one would be justified in taking the opposite position, i.e., that they **increase** the possibility of threats to Australian security, rather than decrease them. This in fact is the conclusion that an English scholar, Dr. Caldwell, arrived at in a recent publication of the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

The most astonishing statement in "Australia's Defence" is that "The experience since World War II of working with allies in peacetime, or taking part in high military councils . . . has helped develop—perhaps as yet inadequately—a distinctive Australian emphasis in strategy and foreign policy." This is the exact opposite of the truth: the Australian Government has swallowed the American interpretation of reality, hook, line and sinker; there is nothing specifically Australian about its policy whatsoever. There has been no assessment of Australia's place in the world, and how it might live and accommodate itself to the political, social and economic revolution occurring in Asia. The Australian response has been the sterile "stop the comms" attitude of the Americans; Australia is now clearly willing to do anything the Americans want in the hope that they will protect us. This posture is based on the simple equation: nationalism plus communism equals foreign communist aggression, an equation that some governments may be expected to accept, but not scholars working in the complex field of international relations. The charitable view to take is that Dr. Millar has been exposed to too many State Department and External Affairs handouts; if this is so, it is a pity that he has let his judgment be unduly influenced by them. Apparently the cold war produces casualties in the field of scholarship also.

E. L. WHEELWRIGHT.

New Novels

The interesting novels this quarter are all the products of young writers. It is, of course, a hopeful sign for the future, but it is also disappointing that none of our established novelists seems to be exploring our situation in this long night of trivial affluence. It seems to be another indication of the gap between the generations that the young novelist is not just a promising junior, but a voice of his time who seems to speak from a different world from that inhabited by his elders.

This world is most obvious in the book by Suzanne Holly Jones, "Harry's Child" (Jacaranda, 20/-). This quite short book reads like a prolonged day-dream of identity. There is neither story, setting nor characterisation as we know it, yet the book is definitely a novel, a narrative account of developing human nature. Unlike the anti-novelists, the author affirms that life is meaningful and worth living, but she departs from most of her contemporaries by suggesting that it is much more elusive than we admit. This elusiveness extends to the character of the narrator, who shows us the world not through her eyes but through her consciousness. Her actual relationship to her guardian is only implied, and is never fully explained, for its technical nature is unimportant compared to her emotional relationship with him. Her own name, ultimate symbol of identity, is never revealed. as though to do so would be to give too great a pledge to the unknown and potentially hostile. The name she does throw away when pressed is patently a false one.

The book commences when the narrator is just "the Child," and her guardian is "my one man," or simply "One." The first half of the novel is written about childhood, or rather about a child. At first she and the world are one, with only a man in the centre around whom all else revolves. But this idyllic unity is broken from the outside. First there is Dog, an elderly and queer vagrant. His queerness is noted, but does not disturb, and his simplicity, while setting him apart from normal people, allows him to enter simply into Child's special world, half-dream, half-real. But other intrusions are not so easily absorbed. People camping by the creek suggest an alien but attractive world, but one in which the One would have no place. More seriously, James arrives and establishes a relationship with One in which Child has no part.

The second part of the book is set in later adolescence, while Child is at the university. Through encounters with girl-friends, and later with boy-friends, she starts to find confidence, which is to say she starts to realise herself as an individual being. The universe is no longer one. Significantly, just as her only real friendship in the first half is with Dog, a semi-wit, in the second half her easiest relationships are with a spastic child and a spastic youth. Instead of fighting these people to preserve her own identity she relaxes with them, enjoys observing them as separate people, and thus enhances her understanding of herself. With normal people, she is constantly on the defensive, conscious of inferiority. At the same time, she is jealous of other people's relations with One, whom we now know as Harry. He forms an attachment first with a handsome youth and later with a girlfriend of Child. At the close of the book, however, he and Child discover each other not as father figure and daughter but as lovers.

This ending could appear merely incestuous and disgusting, but the mood and style of the book are such that we are scarcely conscious of these elements. Harry exists in Child's consciousness as ideal rather than as a creature of flesh and blood, and so the reunion at the end of the book becomes a symbol of realised adulthood. The child no longer lives with the One at the centre of an undifferentiated universe, she now meets her man and they come together as separate individuals welcoming each other as a matter of free choice. The book which started with the freedom of consciousness, a freedom which is only made secure by the acknowledgement of dependence.

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"Wild Cat Falling," by Colin Johnson (Angus & Robertson, 22/6) also deals with adolescence, but in this case the narrator, a part-Aboriginal just out of gaol, discovers himself only when the logic of the path he has chosen leads him to attempt murder. Just before he is captured by the police, he falls in again with an old Aboriginal trapper who points him again to the path of his racial destiny which his mother had rejected for him in his childhood. This rejection had forced him into the role of an outcast on the fringe of white society, an outcast who could only assert himself by attacking a society which rejected him. For a while a group of university students offer him acceptance for himself, but the weight of his own past, with its consequent sense of inadequacy, together with the patronising falsity of some of the student group, drives him out again.

The close of the novel begs a number of important questions. After the convincing picture the author has drawn earlier of the way the penal system works both in the courts and in the gaols, we wonder what chance there is of his newly-discovered mission either lasting through another spell in gaol or finding an opportunity for its accomplishment afterwards.

The theme of this novel is not original, but the writer brings it to life with a vivid realisation of the outlook of the adolescents whom society forces to look on from outside. Yet the pillars of the establishment who point out that these people fail to take advantage of the opportunities they are given are also right, for Johnson makes it quite clear that what he sees of society offers nothing which attracts him. This realisation is a more significant feature of the book than either its account of the place of an Aboriginal in a white community or its depiction of the making of an adolescent, effective as these are.

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The most ambitious of these novels is also by the most experienced author, yet its ambition is to some extent a measure of its failure. Christopher Koch's "Across the Sea Wall" (Heinemann, 27/6) is another first-person narration, this time telling of a twenty-three year old who flies from a respectable job and marriage in a dull society to find life and excitement abroad. Instead, he finds Ilsa Kalnins, a European flitting from a marriage and child in Australia. She is not only romantic and, at first sight, beautiful, she is also exhaustingly amorous, although her recent pregnancy supplies her for an astoundingly long time with refreshments for her wearied lover. Eventually, wearied by her flesh and driven jealous by her return to strip-tease employment. he abandons her and eventually flies back home. In one final episode he diagnoses her eternal vagabondage and unsatisfiable yearning for a home, and rejects her forever. This story is traced through two hundred and thirty odd pages, and interlaced with consciously poetic descriptions of India, Marine Parade, St. Kilda, Java, dusk, and other places significant to the writer's imagination.

Yet the book cannot be dismissed as a complete failure. In its ruin are the traces of a sensitive and mature novelist. His description of Sunder Singh, the Indian engineer returning home, is particularly effective. We see him first as a gay young man on the ship, Westernized to such an extent that the narrator at first takes him for Spanish. But when we reach India his manner changes subtly—he becomes uneasy and apologetic. By the time the narrator leaves his home, where he and Ilsa have been house-guests, Sunder has moved away from them completely. In contrast to every other major character in the book he is now a useful member of society with a job to do.

The author is also successful in making us believe in the life on the ship, in his reactions to India, even in Ilsa Kalnins. His failure seems to be with the character of his narrator, who is too absorbed in himself to reveal himself. We are told everything about him, his feelings, his background, his actions. but at the end of the book we cannot beileve that he has changed or learnt anything. Perhaps the fault lies in the tough and cynical modern fashion the author effects, a hardness of manner which refuses to believe in anything, so that finally the reader refuses to believe in the book.

Yet we can trace the reasons for failure even deeper. The clue perhaps lies in the title, "Across the Sea Wall". The theme of the book is the way the young man runs away, but the author also runs away from the problems he creates. Two women are deserted, the narrator finishes up in a more futile job than he started from, yet all he can tell us is that that part of his life is finished, and that he feels life has also finished for him. The meaning of the book may be that this particular character has missed his opportunity to live, but there is no suggestion that he could have behaved otherwise, or, if he had, that the result would have been any different. On the other hand, there is no distancing or objectivity about the treatment of the narrator which would enable us to place in his context as a symptom or a symbol of a sick society which offers nothing better to its members. In the end, we are left with a feeling of late adolescent disgust with a life which has broken its promises, but without any enhanced understanding or more accurate placing of this disgust.

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In "Mayor's Nest" (Jacaranda, 22/6) Tony Morphett certainly shows a distaste for certain elements of modern life, particularly politicians and their military and gubernatorial offsiders, but this distaste is the product of so whole-hearted a love of commonplace life and ordinary individuals that his book is more romp than satire. He is not concerned so much with diagnosing the ills of society as with deflating its pomposities and delineating its more ridiculous pretensions, so that few egos are likely to be bruised by his book. But at the same time few people in public places would be able to take themselves quite as seriously if they read it, and they might even be persuaded to desert their platitudes for an occasional excursion into commonsense, although Morphett warns them that such attempts could well prove disastrous. He writes in the tradition of "Here's Luck," but with a greater belief in the possibilities of sanity than is shown by the author of that inimitable work. This does not mean that there is much evidence of sanity when two governors, three military chiefs and two parliamentary leaders, together with a mixed bag of international spies, descend on the Mayor of Parramatta after his unexpected elevation to the mayoralty of Australia. But the Mayor himself displays a mixture of good sense and sangfroid which would appear to be a rare quality among either the invaders of Parramatta or their actual prototypes. However, the Major's commendable qualities of conduct only serve to add oil to the flames of affronted dignity and accelerated ambition which rage about his head, and finally he has to hand his powers back to less responsible but more orthodox hands. Apart from this unhappy ending, the book can be recommended as good reading to anyone who enjoys a zestful imagination combined with a fine ability to capture personality in words.

Apart from its insight into the realities and limitations of the world of politics, the book lives in the riotous scenes of disorder in the junior school or boozing in the art gallery. The encounter between the unsophisticated Eskimo and the unworldly gallery director is a set piece which will probably commend itself to future anthologists, and the crazy logic of the entrances and exits through the hydrangeas and the mayor's window is itself a definitive comment on the realms of diplomacy and higher espionage. Above all, the book should be commended because it is completely Australian without being parochial.

JOHN McLAREN.

World without Strangers?

I believe that "World Without Strangers?" a recent Overland publication of poems by Aileen Palmer (15/-), could become a kind of bible for the young people of Australia; those wise young people who find an outlet for their strong anti-war feelings in the positive folk songs of our day.

For this is a book of peace, a book that expresses the hopes of those who want a peaceful world, who see the potentialities of peace, who look at the horrors of war and see, in everyday things, the strong and vigorous beauty of living.

The young should also respond to the almost "beat" quality in much of Miss Palmer's work, even if it might jar a little on older readers and some critics. This "beatness," however, is no cover-up for lack of skill. The poems are controlled and mature, as befits work of one of the few Australians who manages to be a full-time working poet.

Born into the "first" literary family of Australia, bred in the belief that the writing of fine literature can be a life in itself, Aileen Palmer has managed to develop a way of life that allows her to spend every day doing not only what she best loves doing, but what she does supremely well.

And yet very little of her poetry has been published. Some sensitive and delightful translations from the Vietnamese language published in Hanoi, and occasional poems published in periodicals are all one has been able to see of her work in print. Overland is one of the few periodicals to show an awareness of the quality of her work.

There is a remarkable universality in the poems. Who could read "The Invisible Woman," for instance, and not become more aware of the importance and significance of Henry Moore's sculpture? This sensitive yet vigorous poem expresses more than most columns of art criticism, just as "Notes on a Chinese Painting" shows an exquisite awareness of both the delicacy and savagery of Chinese art.

The "continuing courage of the heart" that Aileen Palmer sings in "A Sort of Beauty"—her tribute to the Hiroshima Panels—is very much her own. In fact, this very courage may be the reason why Aileen Palmer's verse does not find more general acceptance among publishers. She is most concerned with the great problems of today, and the courage that sent her to the Spanish War and made her volunteer to sail into an atomic bomb-testing area a few years ago is the same courage that makes her express her views so strongly in her poems.

Aileen Palmer is a prolific poet, and the choice of poems for this book must have presented many problems for poet and publisher alike. I think the choice is good and, apart from the enjoyment one gets from each poem, as one reads one becomes aware of two important things about Aileen Palmer. First, she is a poet whose Australian character is revealed without any self-consciousness. Gum trees, and even bunyips and boronia do not detract from her awareness of the world or narrow her poetry in any way. How many other Australian poets, by the way, could produce such delightful translations from the Russian, Spanish, French and German? Secondly, she is utterly modern. I remember that another neglected Australian poet, Lesbia Harford, complained that into our poems "new words came slowly," but this is not so with Aileen Palmer. Are "typewriter" or "tractor" poetic words? They are, when she uses them.

My own favorite poems from this collection are, first, "My Country," the poet's own country and a far cry from the sunburnt country of Dorothea McKellar, and from this same section of the book her wise and understanding tribute to Leonardo da Vinci, "The Two-Handed Artist". From the second section of "World Without Strangers?" probably "Deidre Went Out Riding" will appeal most as a tender version of the Desdemona story, but "The Silent Land" carries its own doom-filled and tragic beauty for those who will face the realities of this atomic-threatened age.

In the third section, titled "Arrows of Barley," Aileen Palmer's own positive belief in humanity comes out clearly and without sentimentality.

Probably one of the most important poems for today here, and certainly one that appeals strongly to me, is "Lines Painted on the Wall of a Death Cell". If the Americans in Vietnam today could understand the courage of a man learning to read and write while awaiting execution, they might apprehend more clearly why they are losing their war in the south of that country.

Probably the "Variations to a Legend," which constitute the final nine pages of the book, contain the poems of the greatest stature, and from these one can glimpse the outline of the great verse play that we hope Aileen Palmer will one day compete. In the meantime we can grasp something of the profundity and compassion, combined with poetic skill, which make the publication of this book of Aileen Palmer's a real event.

LORRAINE SALMON.

Snaffles and Bib

Whilst warily remembering the sting of John Thompson's epitaph for book reviewers, "Ass after ass into assassin swells," a gully did seem to open up in much of last year's Australian poetry; on one side "the snaffle and bit" boys, on the other side Roy Campbell's bloody horse ridden to a standstill.

The age is thick with Commonwealth Literary Fund poets, a flood of thin volumes in beautiful dust jackets, particularly the jacket of "I Hate and I Love," by John Thompson (Cheshire, 27/6), design Robin Wallace-Crabbe, and Peter Hopegood's "Snake's-eye View of a Serial Story" (Edwards and Shaw, 21/-).

Francis Webb has always spurred the bloody horse. In "The Ghost of the Cock" (Angus & Robertson, 17/6) he has been accused of obscurity and confusion, yet of all the poets it is Webb who has the fire in his belly and the flint on his tongue; the young man of whom Judith Wright once said "He is a true poet," and Herbert Read that "He is the most exciting poet at present writing in English".

Francis Webb is exciting. His world "rocks on the easel" like Van Gogh's landscapes. "We are hopeful, we are afraid," is his dichotomy. Granted his obscurity of reference, his confused, chaotic world in which we are often left floundering. This is the price one must pay, perhaps, for his depiction of the struggling mind in a landscape ("Around Contessy" and "Ward Two"), the excitement of language used with poetic skill and muscular grace, the lack of timidity that forces him to leap straight into the matrix of life, accepting everything, from wild comedy, through burlesque and irony, to tragedy.

He has a vision of a world in words. It is little wonder then that his language spins, his analogies push to the edge of grotesquerie, his haste is a kind of breathless shorthand. "The Tower," the sixth poem in a sequence of fourteen titled "Around Contessy," is a wonderful example of the pull and stress of Webb's lines, the struggle of word, rhythm and meaning . . .

> The sun, tree, river, all distorted, straining
> With lever and pulley; the dead gutted bird
> Lolloping in the wind; the mad process gaining:
> I could not stand and feel, nor write a word.

Out of quicksand, anarchy, ruin and waste leaps the dialectic. The truce is a ghostly thing, bare in its power as faith, indestructible as "this old tower"—a distant relation to Yeat's tower, perhaps.

For his moments of apocalyptic vision, his cut through to the matrix of the wind, I would forgive Francis Webb "the glass facade of metaphor" he raises between us and his work. For he is capable of the simplest joy and the tenderest compassion, as "I blunder through intimate bird-call, marvelling" ("Good Friday, Norfolk"), and

> In all your agonies O spare compassion
> For me, the well lined and articulate fool
> Who knows he tears you . . .
> ("Back Street in Calcutta.")

In the sequence of eight poems, "Ward Two," his complete, appalling identification with the deviates and derelicts of the world mark him as the man without a second skin. Webb can never share "a thin hurried magnanimity" of institutional life because the homosexual weeps—

> and all mankind,
> Which is the face, the glass even, weeps with him.
> ("Homosexual.")

Harry the moron, "a pudgy Christ," painstakingly writes his letter to "the old shape of Mary," directing it to the "House of no known address," the old timer with the "hanged face of time," who melts "before his hopeful words of address." Webb has considerable self-knowledge as a poet. He sees his mission "to sing the posture of reality, amid the scuttling designs of chaos." His "In Memoriam: Anthony Sandys, 1806-1883," might have been written about himself and James McAuley.

> Let my ungainly icicled pencil search
> Down below zero: you are temperate risen.
> Your canny brush stroke and beatitude
> And hallowed second, bravely out of fashion.

*

McAuley echoes this concept in the Proem to Part II of his "condensed epic," "Captain Quiros" (Angus & Robertson, 18/6), the story of a metaphysical voyage into the unknown.

> Therefore I have less care who shall approve;
> For poems in this kind are out of fashion,
> Together with the faith, the will, the love,
> The energy of intellectual passion . . .

Unfortunately it is simply an intellectual passion that does not sustain the poem or the form he has chosen. It is a disappointing poem, thin, flat, pedestrian with passages of thin rhetoric in oceans of dullness. Only occasionally a passage will quicken to the tight, springy, passionate argument of McAuley at his best. The poem is divided into three parts, each part, and the sections of each part, showing great discrepancies in quality and odd variations in decorum. The language for the most part is like old coins rubbed with use. They flick through the mind, or drop heavily, without a tremor.

The proem of the second part has some moments when the mind leaps to his vision, particularly in his exaltations of nature. which have an allegorical weight and excitement he cannot give his human voyagers. The final section of Part III, which is designed to give a prophetic vision of the future, succeeds only in transmitting a peevishness with modern life, an egotism contrasting strangely with Quiros' vision of a selfless life.

A more honest appraisal of McAuley's problem is contained in the lines . . .

To chart in verse the voyage that I took
In youth and hope to seek the Great South Land;
To shut the sounding Ocean in a book
By verbal spells; charm to an ampersand
Each curling seahorse; teach rough waves the dance
Of formal metre—might one not sooner chance
To draw out huge Leviathan with a hook?

McAuley, baiting his hook to catch a Leviathan, drew up a mackerel.

*

Alexander Craig, "The Living Sky" (Angus & Robertson, 17/6) and R. A. Simpson, "This Real Pompeii" (Jacaranda, 22/6) have snaffle and curb well in evidence. Sophisticated, inventive, taut, the verse is stiff, decorous and somewhat posed. The fire and flexibility is lacking. Simpson is best, I feel, in his very short, more personal poems, where we can hear an urgent voice speaking to us, such as "Words for our Daughter."

Yet if they could, my words would say "believe"
For there all comfort lies, and thorns and nails
Will never cause you agony and death,
Unless you doubt and then the points are real.

Alexander Craig has a much wider range and more assured technique than Simpson. "The Ceiling" is, for me, the poem in this collection that springs alive with a kind of tight violence. "Survey," with its laconic cynicism and controlled despair, says a lot about young modern poets in general, and Craig in particular.

Poets increase.
They live their lives out in a desperate fiction,
Or hide their fear by polished sophistries.

Charles Brasch, the New Zealand poet, editor and founder of the literary quarterly, Landfall, has some affinities with the decorum and constraint of Craig and Simpson, mixed with a derivative romanticism, full of literary echoes. They make uneasy bedfellows in his fourth collection, "Ambulando" (Caxton Press, 15/-), but sometimes the juxtaposition gives his work old-fashioned warmth the younger poets lack.

Particularly in his love poems, such as "Break and Go," and the first and last poems in the book, "Ambulando" and "Cry Mercy," with their quiet mature lines, we warm to a vision of life

That lays down no law
For myself or my neighbour.

*

John Thompson, in "I Hate and I Love," is a romantic everyman; intelligent, warm-hearted, humorous, deeply engaged with men and the worlds. The best of his poems are what I would call public utterances, or occasional poetry. The personality that comes through these poems gives them life, warmth, and a certain pedestrian ordinariness that is sometimes charming. But oh! how he needs that snaffle and bit in the long rambling poems where sentimentality and lushness run riot. These contrast with poems like his delightful satire, "Ars Critica," the form disciplining him, his wit allowed full play, as in the great public poets of English literature.

Another minor romantic is Peter Hopegood, with a new collection, his first since 1947, "Snake's-eye View of a Serial Story." I would call him a kind of perverse romantic, who still likes rhyming couplets, and in the name of rhyme pushes his verse around with a brutal hand. He writes a light, rather eccentric verse, using myth from Australian ballad to Maori legend and Scotch pibroch.

David Rowbotham is a more serious man, a kind of neo-romantic, a strider between two worlds: the urban and the countryside, the old and the new. This gives him the staccato uneasy, sometimes faltering, voice of the romantic in the modern world. In his third collection, "All the Room" (Jacaranda, 22/6) his favorite form is still the lyric and he still finds his liberation in the countryside, as evidenced by the success of "The Country Man," and "Lunch-time in Harvest." When his utterance is simple, precise and clear the the poem comes across with a quiet, wry tenderness; when he embroiders it falls away at the moment of revelation.

*

Finally, "Australian Poetry, 1964" (Angus & Robertson, 15/-), edited last year by Randolph Stow.

There has been much discussion as to whether poetry anthologies achieve any purpose in Australia.

Stow's selection seems to me to be about as good as a collection could be, taking the measure of Australian poetry fairly and truly. Some reviewers seem to have expected marvels of a brilliant young man. His wide interests, his sensitivity and catholic tastes have meant an anthology that draws more young poets into its range than is common. Both urban and pastoral are well represented, as I would expect, because Stow is both countryman and urbanised, and much in sympathy with the point of view of the young urban poets. He is also a lover of folk song, and a satirist of great ability. Therefore, both satire and a kind of ballade find their place in this anthology.

Geoffrey Lehmann. Thomas Shapcott, Rodney Hall, Bruce Dawe, Chris Wallace-Crabbe, Charles Osborne, Bruce Beaver, Les Murray; all the young poets with their wry urban voices are there. Gwen Harwood, for whose work he has a great admiration, is also represented under her alter ego, Francis Geyer, with two marvellous poems. The established poets add maturity and leaven.

There is absolutely no attempt to impose an arbitrary pattern, but the pattern of Australia in 1964 emerges as clearly in J. R. Rowland's "Melbourne for a Visitor" as in Stow's own mythical desert, "the hungry waiting country" of "Ishmael" (and, incidentally, "Tourmaline").

Such a synthesis seems to me to argue for maturity.

DOROTHY HEWETT.

Soviet Jewry

I was taken along, in Moscow in 1957, to see a production at the theatre of the famous puppeteer Obratsov. Though I cannot speak Russian, it became clear to me during the performance of one sketch, satirising American businessmen, that the villian was a caricature of a Jew and was speaking with an offensively Yiddish-type accent.

On my return to my hotel room I composed a letter to Obratsov in which I expressed my distaste, and I asked my hosts, the Soviet Peace Committee, to pass it on. My hosts demurred. I must understand, they said, that the Soviet Union was untainted with racialism. I had misinterpreted what Obratsov was doing—I didn't realise how Russians liked satirising each other! If they passed my letter to Obratsov, it would kill him

. . . Finally, I received some heavy visitations from leading Jews in the literary world to convince me of my error.

I am not sure whether it was just before or just after this incident that I was speaking to a very representative and rather distinguished audience of Moscow intellectuals under the chairmanship of the secretary of the Soviet Peace Committee. In reply to a question I counselled them to pay attention to the Jewish question, for they were already getting a bad press on this in Australia and other capitalist countries. The chairman rose. "It is impermissable," he declared, "to suggest that our policies towards the Jewish people are incorrect in the Soviet Union". To which my reply was: "Please do not think me so naive as not to be aware of many incidents and happenings in your country over the past ten years or more". I was thinking, of course, of the extermination of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, the Jewish doctors' 'plot,' and much else. The whole meeting fell silent, and we proceeded to another topic.

Any discussion of Soviet anti-semitism needs to be conducted in the context of how at one and the same time Soviet citizens can be objectively lending their support to anti-semitism and yet sincerely revolted at the idea that they are anti-semitic. For certainly the ancient seeds of this sickness still sprout in the U.S.S.R.

In "Soviet Jewry and Human Rights" Isi Leibler gives us a carefully balanced and rational description of the background of the Jewish question in the Soviet Union, an analysis of the nature of the discrimination still existing, and an account of the confused but increasingly indignant reaction of communists and left-wingers throughout the world to the increasing awareness of the deep-rooted nature of anti-semitism in the U.S.S.R. He also suggests useful courses of action in the present situation. Even though Leibler does not consider it his duty in the present work to move into the field of social psychopathology which I suggest in the paragraph above, he provides an excellent basis for an adequate discussion of the sad and serious issues which all of us who admire the Soviet Union in many respects are faced with.

The most frightening thing about the Russians is their insulation, not only from outside pressure, but even from a basic knowledge of the facts about themselves. To me the big battle that 'progressives' everywhere face, in their relations with the Soviet Union and the communist countries, is the battle for ideological co-existence; anathema to Khrushchev, it is nevertheless more and more widely supported these days among Soviet intellectuals themselves. (By co-existence I mean, of course, the right to know what each other is saying, so it can be examined and disputed—NOT a static acceptance for ever of a status quo.)

Isi Leibler deserves great credit for publishing "Soviet Jewry and Human Rights," and for publishing it in a form which makes it possible to build constructively on the evidence it presents. As many people know, the Communist Party of Australia has not been unmoved by the situation Leibler presents, as we may see by reading between the lines of its pamphlet: "Soviet Jewry—A reply to I. Leibler". (Notice, incidentally, "I. Leibler," not "Isi Leibler"—a small but quite significant example of the way Australian communists still feel impelled to follow Russian "style.")

These two publications are pioneer texts in the field of real "ideological co-existence," and we should be proud that they emerged in Australia. We can only hope that they will be the spark that lights the fire.

S. MURRAY-SMITH.

["Soviet Jewry and Human Rights," by Isi Leibler, 10/6, from Human Rights Publications, 116 Kooyong Road, Caulfield, S.E.7, Victoria. "Soviet Jewry—A reply to I. Leibler," 2/-, from International Bookshop, 17 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, Victoria.]

The Lonely Hero

"Ned Kelly: 27 Paintings by Sidney Nolan" (Thames & Hudson, 46/-.)

It is, of course, irrational; but when I look at Sidney Nolan's first Kelly painting, and that stark, strong symbol, the two rectangles which stand for Kelly, the hair bristles on the back of my neck—just as it does when I hear someone sing with fire, " 'I'll fight but I won't surrender,' said the Wild Colonial Boy."

The irrationality would not worry Nolan. A work of art is not something to be understood; it has to be felt. It is the immediate, intuitive response that counts. "When I paint, my object is to show what I have found and not what I am looking for," said Picasso. "A poem should not mean but be," said (I think) Archibald MacLeish. Either you respond to that black slab of iron, with its hollow slit, a symbol as simple and dramatic as the Christian's cross, which is Kelly's head. Or you do not. Personally, I feel just as does Robert Melville (in his introductory comments to the paintings) that "it might yet be chalked on the walls of the cities of the world as a sign for Freedom." Maybe it's wildly romantic, but there it is.

This is more a literary than an "painterly" response. One cannot know whether Nolan anticipated this. His earlier painting (for example, the St. Kilda paintings in the large Thames and Hudson collection) asked only to be seen. This first Kelly series bears no obvious mark of the calculated creation of a saga. But looking back at it, that is what it was. Almost all those who have written about these paintings have spoken of Nolan originating or giving new reality and depth to an Australian myth; and a myth is something that is expressed in words, a story that belongs to the past and to the future. Nolan felt the visual drama of Kelly, but gave people more perhaps than he had imagined.

The symbol which unifies the series is one of integrity and aloneness. It towers over its environment, exuding indifference rather than defiance. Its impersonality is emphasised by the emptiness sometimes where the eyes should be. The Kelly symbol is the tragic hero, sufficient to himself, his own savior and his own destroyer. It is intriguing that Australians, whose ethos promotes solidarity, should have responded to his lonely figure (for Dan, Joe Byrne and Steve Hart do not count much in Nolan's version). Two possibilities occur. Perhaps the externalised mateship is cover for spiritual loneliness: two ones make two, not one. Perhaps intellectuals, who are the articulate part of Nolan's audience, find his Kelly a wish-fulfilling symbol of themselves.

Now it is possible to look at these twenty-seven pictures as separate and distinct works, to draft a scale of response. My own feeling is that the initial "Ned Kelly," the three Stringybark Creek pictures, and the last heroic moment at the trial work best; that the drama is lost in some of the more tangled landscapes like "The Burning Tree" and "First Class Marksman." But, at the same time they were first painted, these pictures—along with Nolan's earlier work and the paintings of Boyd, Vassilieff, Tucker, Counihan, Bergner, Perceval—were as much manifesto as myth.

These were the years of war and post-war reconstruction, when socialism (and for many communism) promised liberation from the insanities of 1929 and 1939, when the new painting and literature promised liberation from the cliche-ridden conservatism of the academics. It did not last long, and there has been nothing so exciting since. Unhappily, what seemed a many-faceted revolutionary front was shattered by bitter ideological dispute between the communist "realists" on the one hand and the painters and writers of Angry Penguins and the Contemporary Art Society on the others. Looking back on this episode, it was as misconceived as it was distasteful. The co-existence of social and personal rebellion was broken, so that the former came to lack humanity and the latter to lack conscience.

Nolan saw Kelly as man alone, self-sufficient in his assertion and rebellion, a pre-Camusian outsider. Beyond this, his act of painting Kelly was, and was seen to be, revolt. These works have meaning as painting, as myth, and as history, and it is good to have them available to us and so handsomely presented.

IAN TURNER.

Book Chronicle

As it is not possible to review at length all the books sent to us, we print below for the guidance of librarians and overseas institutions, as well as the common reader, brief commentaries on a select list of the most important books to which our attention has been drawn in recent months.

HISTORICAL REPRINTS

In a category all by themselves are the splendid facsimile reprints of rare Australiana, published by the Library Board of South Australia. In the last year or so the technical standards of these books have been taking large steps forward, and the selection of texts has shown increasing signs of originality.

Perhaps the most attractive of the recent issues is the quarto edition of John Oxley's **Journals of Two Expeditions into the Interior of New South Wales.** It seems astonishing that a small edition of a book like this can be done, with colored plates and folding maps, for only £3/10/-, but then the remarkable thing about these publications is that they are sold at cost price. Other explorers' texts include George Grey's **Journals of Two Expeditions of Discovery in North-west and Western Australia** (two vols., £5/5/-); Edward John Eyre's **Journals of Expeditions of Discovery into Central Australia** (two vols., £5/5/-); Ernest Giles' **Australia Twice Traversed** (two vols., £5/5/-); Charles Sturt's **Narrative of an Expedition into Central Australia** (two volumes, with separate volume of maps, £5/5/-); and Thomas Mitchell's **Three Expeditions into the Interior of Eastern Australia** (two vols., £5/5/-).

Many of the explorers' books are not excessively rare, but Matthew Flinders' **Observations on the Coast of Van Diemen's Land** (£1/10/-) is an exceedingly scarce and interesting work which it is a joy to have available again. Other recent publications in this series include W. Bland's **Journey of Discovery to Port Phillip, New South Wales; by Messrs. W. H. Hovell, and Hamilton Hume: in 1825** (£1/10/-); William Carron's **Narrative of an Expedition . . .** which deals with the Kennedy expedition into northern Queensland (£1/10/-); and George Dale's scarce and important book, **The Industrial History of Broken Hill** (£1/10/-).

GENERAL HISTORY

Christopher Hill's **Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England** (Secker & Warburg, 71/3) is a work of fundamental importance for seventeenth century English history. In it one of England's most distinguished contemporary historians suggests that there were non-theological reasons for Puritan theological beliefs, and throws much light on the origins of the Civil War.

In **A History of Chemistry** (Macmillan, 286/8), the fourth volume of an immense work of scholarship, J. R. Partington deals with the development of all branches of chemistry in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The first part of the work deals with the contributions of particular chemists, from Davy to Kekule; the second part with the history of physical chemistry, and the third with inorganic chemistry. The final part of the book concerns radioactivity and atomic structure.

Science in Archaeology (Thames & Hudson, 122/6) is edited by Don Brothwell and Eric Higgs, and is the most comprehensive survey published of the application of scientific disciplines to archaeological method and technique. Dealing with topics as various as basalt dating, the study of mummified tissues and the analysis of deep-sea cores, this work is fascinating reading for the layman as well as the specialist.

K. William Kapp's **Hindu Culture Economic Development and Economic Planning in India** (Asia Publishing House, 45/- sterling) is probably the most single important basic text on the structure and problems of contemporary India. The effect of Hindu tradition on economic growth is discussed in a particularly enlightening manner.

AUSTRALIAN CRITICISM

Some of the most important contemporary Australian criticism is appearing in Lansdowne Press' "Australian Writers and their Work" series at 8/6 a volume. Recent additions to the series include Max Harris' **Kenneth Slessor,** Judith Wright's **Charles Harpur,** James McAuley's **C. J. Brennan,** Ray Mathew's **Miles Franklin,** John Barnes' **Joseph Furphy,** Kathleen Fitzpatrick's **Martin Boyd** and Rosemary Wighton's **Early Australian Children's Literature.**

The newly-formed Australian Documentary Facsimile Society has issued as its first production **Foreshadowings,** a facsimile reproduction of an early article by (Sir) John Ferguson on Henry Kendall. The book also contains an introduction and useful bibliographical appendices on Kendall. Details from the Society at G.P.O. Box 864, Sydney.

The gallant private Wattle Grove Press of Newnham, Tasmania, has produced a remarkable book, semi-oriental in form, entitled **Eastward.** It consists of poems by Albin Eiger, some dating back to 1931.

A story from Overland is included amongst a small selection of racy yarns written and privately published by Bill Sutton, of Brisbane. Copies of **Leave the Heads on 'Em** (2/-) may be obtained from the People's Bookshop, 205 Brunswick Street, Valley, Brisbane.

A. E. Mander's **The Christian God and Life after Death** (Rationalist Association, 7/6) is a quietly-argued discussion of Christian history and Christian dogma designed to pose some searching questions for persons who have taken their religion for granted.

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