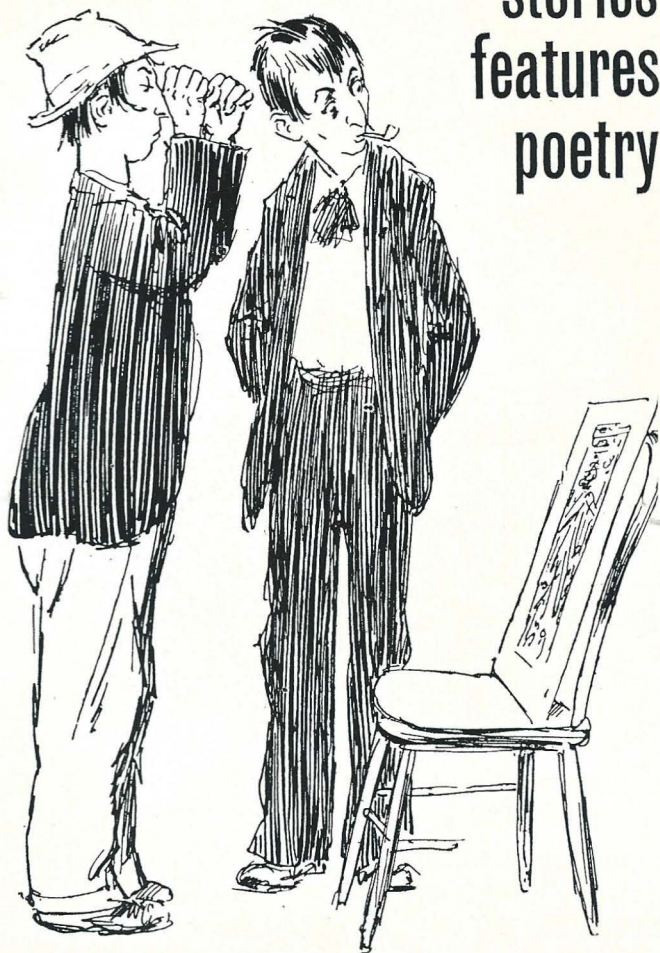


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Overland is a quarterly Australian literary magazine. The subscription rate is sixteen shillings a year (four issues), and the price of each copy is four shillings. Manuscripts are welcomed, but will be returned only if a stamped, addressed envelope is attached.

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OVERLAND

Temper democratic, bias Australian





Tadeusz Sobolewski

DEATH IN THE NETTLEBUSH

FOR MARY PACKER HARRIS

WIDE, dusty village road, with a little shop owned by a Jew called Motyo on the opposite side, where I went sometimes to buy sweets and sunflower seeds; early mornings, remembered by the mooing of cows and the shoutings of shepherds who gathered cattle all over the village and drove them to pastures; afternoons, marked by the joyful noise caused by boys swimming in the big pond glistening behind the trees surrounding Motyo's shop; evenings with the cows returning, and with all the feverish activities in the backyards. And nights—those nights of grim expectation, with machine gun fire often tearing the curtain of the darkness into shreds, with troops invading the village, pounding on doors, giving orders, demanding bread and lard. This was my world when I was about five years old, and extremely interested in all the happenings brought about by the Russian revolution which descended on our quiet village like a stormy gale.

Yesterday, I ran with the older boys to the outskirts of the village to have a look at bodies of killed men. They were naked and only covered with some branches.

"All those bloody Bolsheviks should be murdered on the spot like these ones," said Bronek, kicking a leg protruding from under the branches.

"Don't kick him," shouted Stefan, excitedly, "he had a mother, too. Maybe he left his children somewhere, too."

"Silly, aren't you?" retorted Bronek. "Bolsheviks are pests. They've got to be shot because they are against God."

"I'm not for the Bolsheviks, me," said Stefan, looking aside, "but you must be good even to your enemies. That's what the priest said last Sunday."

"The priest!" sneered Bronek. "If he's such a fool I wonder how long will it take the Bolsheviks to kill him. That's what they do to the priests. And don't you know that even if he has to talk rubbish about being good to your enemies, he is a great help in finding the Bolsheviks and killing them? Talk is talk, and life is life."

Stefan did not reply. We gazed at the naked bodies, and someone lifted the branches—there it was, a blood-splashed corpse, with wide open eyes looking towards the skies. We ran away and stopped, panting heavily, in our vegetable garden. There we discovered a quite beautiful hole made by an artillery shell; we carefully collected the jagged fragments and ran back to the bodies. With our new courage we were about to explore further when an old peasant with a long beard appeared, as if from nowhere. His voice was trembling when he told us to leave those bodies in peace. It is a sin, he said, to look at dead bodies and to touch them; all we can do is to pray for their souls.

"For the souls of the Bolsheviks?" exclaimed Bronek, "but they have no souls."

"You are still too young," said the old man in a quiet voice, "but later on you will learn a lot. God's will must be fulfilled, and how it is done, we do not know, because we are all blind like new-born kittens. We live in darkness, that's how we live. Do not judge others, and hate nobody. Pray for other people's souls, and do justice. This is the way left to us by God who creates us and takes away our lives to fulfil his inscrutable will."

Bronek chuckled and we went towards the lower part of the village where several houses had been destroyed by artillery fire two days ago. Whose artillery it was, no one knew; and it wasn't important. From time to time, shells whistled above and exploded in the middle of the village, killing people and animals, burying children under the debris of burnt-out huts. We met old Valentina sitting in the dust of the road and wailing loudly; she still could not understand why her old hut was destroyed, and her daughter killed with a little child at her breast; she was now alone in this crazy world, left to beg for every piece of bread. When we stood in front of her, gazing at her dirty face twisted in an ugly grimace, she told us that it was obviously the end of the world.

"They came and took my man and my sons and put them in uniforms and told them to die for our batyushka Czar; they left us, women, and kids, alone to fend for ourselves, to dig potatoes and sow rye. But then the fire destroyed our field, and where did it come from? Who knows? God sends fire and rain and everything else. And the devil fights God, and God fights the devil, and we are suffering all this because we did not repent for our sins. When we repent for our sins, we will die in peace and all this will end. But we are stupid and our sins are coming down from the skies as a fire, and God Almighty kills us

like flies because we spurn his charity. God the charitable kills little children because he does not want them to look at this crazy, sinful world. We must pray and repent for our sins. Oh, oh, my little Catherine, where are you now?"

As the old woman buried her face in the dust of the road and wailed and sobbed, we ran on to a group of riders who had just appeared at the end of the road. They rode, shouting and laughing noisily, their rifles hanging down on long belts. One of them, with a Cossack sabre attached to his saddle, and with a Cossack fur cap hanging off his right ear—at least it appeared to be hanging on his right ear, probably to show his hair combed in a beautiful bundle, Cossack style—stopped his horse and shouted: "Hey, boys, how far is it from here to Jarmolince?"

"Not far," said Bronek, looking with obvious admiration at the gleaming sabre, "you just follow this road to the other end of the village, and you'll see a big old gate made of red brick. There the road to Jarmolince starts, and it is only seven versts away."

"Good, my boy. And what is the name of this here village?"

"Antoniny."

"Is it? And this here nice mansion in that park, who lives there?"

"Count Potocki. But he is not here now. He fled to Petersburg when the Bolsheviks wanted to attack this village."

"The pests," murmured the Cossack, "we must kill them all."

"Who?" asked Bronek, cautiously.

"The Bolsheviks, of course. We are from General Denikin's forces, and we are followed by thousands of soldiers. So the Bolsheviks had better think twice before attacking us."

He told this obviously to impress us, and to make sure that nobody would think that they were just a lost small detachment not knowing where to go. His companions did not share his self-assurance, and appeared to be in a most depressed mood.

"Any Bolsheviks in this here village?" asked one of them.

"Not one left," said Bronek, "we have an excellent militia chief here. He knows how to destroy them."

"Good," sighed the Cossack, "although we do not mind meeting those bastards. We killed them in hundreds."

He laughed loudly as if trying to reassure his companions, and himself, and to show his courage. They went into gallop and disappeared at the end of the road in a cloud of dust.

*

That was yesterday. Every day brought something new and exciting, and it was never quiet. The duller days were when the old people sat in front of their houses listening to the distant rumbling of artillery.

The population of the village could be roughly divided into three different classes. The top layer consisted of the Polish intelligentsia, living around the residence of Count Potocki, a member of one of the richest, oldest and most influential families in Europe. Then there were some Russian clerks and officials, the most powerful among them the chief of the local militia; and the Ukrainian peasants made the third, the poorest layer of local society. This village was situated in a border area disputed for centuries by Poland and Russia; it had become a part of Russia after Poland was subdued and divided between Russia, Germany and Austria in the eighteenth century.

Word of Love

No speech for love, save one light song.
For this the tongue's too ruled a member.
The blossoming tree, at touch of steel,
Falls into timber.

The bodies' fusion thunders out
An anthem—not of love alone.
The Ego beats hard wings and crows
The antiphon.

The after-peace, that sinks to sleep,
Glow with pronouncements, grave and rich;
But these are dumb, deep tides beneath
The sprays of speech.

The pity felt by each for other
Is a golden ring, the binding token.
Yet pity must find no words; it will
Sunder if spoken.

But laugh together, swift, unsought-for—
No meaning stays the flashing wing.
In this, profundities of love
Most clearly sing.

A. A. PHILLIPS

of the village, then temporarily occupied by a detachment of anti-revolutionary, White Russian troops. They discovered a Red officer hidden in a cellar beneath a peasant hut; he was brought to the square in front of the Potocki manor and briefly sentenced to death by the mob. I saw him standing among the milling mob of excited soldiers who obviously wanted to tear him to pieces; the boy was young, his uniform in rags; unshaven and already soundly beaten, he stood silent and apparently composed knowing that this was his last day.

I did not understand much of the proceedings, but was impressed by his heroic attitude. When listening to tales about great heroes, I always imagined them clad in beautiful garments, and walking loftily before the silly, dirty, noisy mob; here, the hero was dirty, humiliated, and dwarfed; a small, fragile boy among fiercely shouting giants armed with pistols, guns and sabres.

"Hey! Look there," shouted someone, "here he comes, the executioner."

We saw a group of riders slowly approaching us, surrounding a huge figure of a man dressed in red and sitting on an enormous, black horse. They proceeded in a most dignified manner, and stopped in the middle of the square. The giant, who was wrapped in a long, purple cloth and wore a similarly-colored cap of fantastic shape, barked orders. The whole crowd rushed down the road leading over the pond towards the dark-blue shadow of the forest closing up the horizon. I was not allowed to follow them, but the older boys told me that the prisoner was duly hanged by the man in red, and left with a placard prophesying a similar fate for every Bolshevik attached to his chest.

*

But the day I will never be able to erase from my memory came in as the full dress of spring ripened into the succulent, Ukrainian summer. There was some commotion in the village during the night, but nobody was unduly surprised by shoutings and single shots; early in the morning I heard servants in the kitchen talking excitedly about a man caught and brought to the militia post next door. Later I heard some cries and sounds of beating, but, not being allowed to go out, had to rely on skimpy information given to me by Oleksa, a Ukrainian boy who served as a stable hand in my grandfather's yard. He told me excitedly that a well known Bolshevik who had fought against the Czarist troops had come back to the village disguised as a beggar to see his wife and children; denounced, was now awaiting the outcome of an energetic investigation led by the militia chief.

When I found out that something very exciting was going on in the street in front of the militia house, I climbed out of the window and sneaked towards the corner of the orchard. There, crouching among the dense raspberries, I had a good view of part of the road as I looked through the space between the fence palings.

A man was lying on the road, his legs and hands bound, face down. Militiamen, perhaps six of them, stood around and swung their sabres up and down, hitting the man all over his body. They hit him with the flat of their sabres, otherwise he would already have been cut to ribbons. However, they obviously aimed at not killing him outright; the whole show was put on for the benefit of the population, and obviously had to be deliberately extended so as to enable everybody to draw the lesson from it.

A group of weeping women stood at a distance, crying and begging mercy for their man. But nothing could move the red-haired militia chief.

This frontier country possessed a special charm for any conqueror mainly because of the fertility of the soil. It bore excellent wheat, rye, corn, melons without any fertilisers or new-fangled machines. The main occupation of the inhabitants was to plough, sow and harvest; even in the days of the revolution I cannot remember any food shortage, except salt. Various passing troops requisitioned food or just took it, and yet there was always something to eat. I cannot forget those pig-killing events in my grand-parents' place: a peasant butcher called with his son, they grabbed the fattest swine and murdered it in the backyard, then for two days and as many nights an uninterrupted processing took place—there was cooking, smoking, boiling, the preparing of sausages, hams, jellies, and many other specialities to fill up the spacious larder and the cellar. Three or four maids and two stable hands worked in long shifts, sleeping only for short periods, and waking up again ready for this rewarding and attractive job, for there was no limit on food eaten during the proceedings. No city rat can imagine what a monstrous wealth of various foodstuffs can be extracted from one big pig; lard was measured and described as having the thickness of three, four or five fingers—that is, the width of the hand. But, as you cannot live on pork alone, a Jew called Yankel called regularly bringing amazing amounts of beef and veal; he always scribbled his account on the wall at the kitchen door and, being paid after long and ardent bargaining, erased the figures by spitting on them and rubbing them with his finger.

*

On one of those memorable days we witnessed an execution which took place on the outskirts

who stood on the steps of the verandah, smoking his enormous pipe and obviously enjoying the whole thing. He took out his pipe and shouted to the weeping women: "Now you'll know, you bloody pests, what we are going to do to your red bandits."

The groanings of the beaten man grew weaker, and finally he appeared to be completely motionless. The red-haired chief barked an order and, when his men stopped their sinister job, he stepped down to the road and examined the body. Then I saw two militiamen lifting the victim and carrying his body towards a corner between the gate and the fence, where there was a growth of huge nettlebushes; they swung the body twice and let it fall into the bushes.

"Why do they throw him there?" I whispered to Oleksa, who crouched beside me.

"To revive him, of course."

"So they want him to live? They are not bad people, are they?"

Oleksa nearly burst with laughing, and answered when his hilarity subsided: "They throw him in the nettles to revive him, see. Otherwise he wouldn't feel that beating, see? And what is the use and pleasure of a beating which isn't felt by the beaten bastard? This is how justice works, see?"

One of the weeping women tried to approach the nettlebushes, but the red-haired guardian of the social order shouted mightily: "Come on, come on, get closer and we'll chop your head off."

The militiamen were resting and smoking; groups of peasants stood in the distance grimly looking at what was going on; Motyo was angrily calling his children back home. And the red-haired chief was reigning over all this world, spread on a bench on his verandah, smoking his pipe and stroking his side-whiskers. The group of women in the middle of the road stood motionless. Only their sobs proved that they were not a monument made of clay and accidentally left on the dusty road.

"He is groaning again," whispered Oleksa. "Look, they are going to start the whole thing again."

The man had been revived by the stings, and the militiamen cautiously extracted his rag-covered, blood-splashed body from the bushes. They laid him down at the same spot and started beating him again with new energy after their rest.

The women were now kneeling and praying loudly, their arms extended towards the skies. Weeping and praying, they alternately bowed deeply, touching the dust with their foreheads, or threw their arms up to call God to their assistance.

"So you are praying now, eh," sneered the chief from his towering position in the verandah, "and you think that God will help you, when you go against the Czar? Eh, you svolotch!"

From which I clearly understood that God was on the side of the militia chief and his henchmen. I thought that God was wise in this for otherwise he also would be spread out on the road and given a sound bashing.

The beaten man this time stopped groaning for good, and the chief was obviously disappointed with the proceedings.

"You stupid bastards," he addressed his subordinates, "you still don't know how to do your job properly. You must beat strongly, but not furiously, get me? It should be spread over two or three hours, and you, silly brutes, end the whole thing in an hour. Have God in heart, be humane, and if you want this bastard to be forgiven his sins by God, you must give him much longer torture, see? Otherwise he hasn't any hope

for salvation, do you know that, you stupid rough-necks? You must think of his soul; and his body . . . naplevat on his body, get me? Now, in the nettlebush with him, quick."

The mass of bloody flesh, already shapeless, was again lifted and swung into the thick nettles. The women stopped praying and looked tensely towards the bushes; and the sunshine, unashamed, poured down its warmth and golden light.

I didn't see the end of the proceedings as my absence was discovered and I was called home. Everybody at home was so badly shaken that I escaped any punishment for my unauthorised excursion, and for looking at the execution. I learned later that the man died and was left in the bushes overnight. The militiamen guarded his body and didn't let his family take it until convinced that he was dead.

*

"But what is going to happen to us all if those Reds take over one day?" I heard my grandmother asking the militia chief, who gallantly called the same evening for a neighborly chat and for tea. It was not advisable to deny him hospitality, all the more in that we, as Poles, were foreigners in these parts.

The king of the village laughed heartily: "And how, may I ask you, barynia, can they ever take over if we chase them like mad dogs and kill them like rabbits? No, don't worry, barynia, there is no such possibility at all."

But not so long after this conversation the dreaded Reds came. We were all terrified when, after a short battle somewhere near the neighboring village, the Czarist troops fled, together with the militia chief, and a column of ragged, unshaven men in most fantastic uniforms appeared at the end of the village road; red ribbons were attached to their rifles. Oleksa jumped out to the road and shouted with joy: "Long live revolution! Down with the Czar!"

I couldn't exactly understand this enthusiasm, as I knew Oleksa as most ardent anti-Bolshevik. Later I found that he was also, according to occasion, an ardent follower of the Ukrainian ataman Petlura, his political opponent ataman Skoropadski, and of the Polish general Haller.

The shaggy Reds ran towards the houses, demanding food and sometimes clothes. Two came into our yard, and they made a discovery: there were pigs in the stable! But I saw my grandmother appearing in the yard and facing those two in rags.

"What do you want?" she asked, not exactly politely.

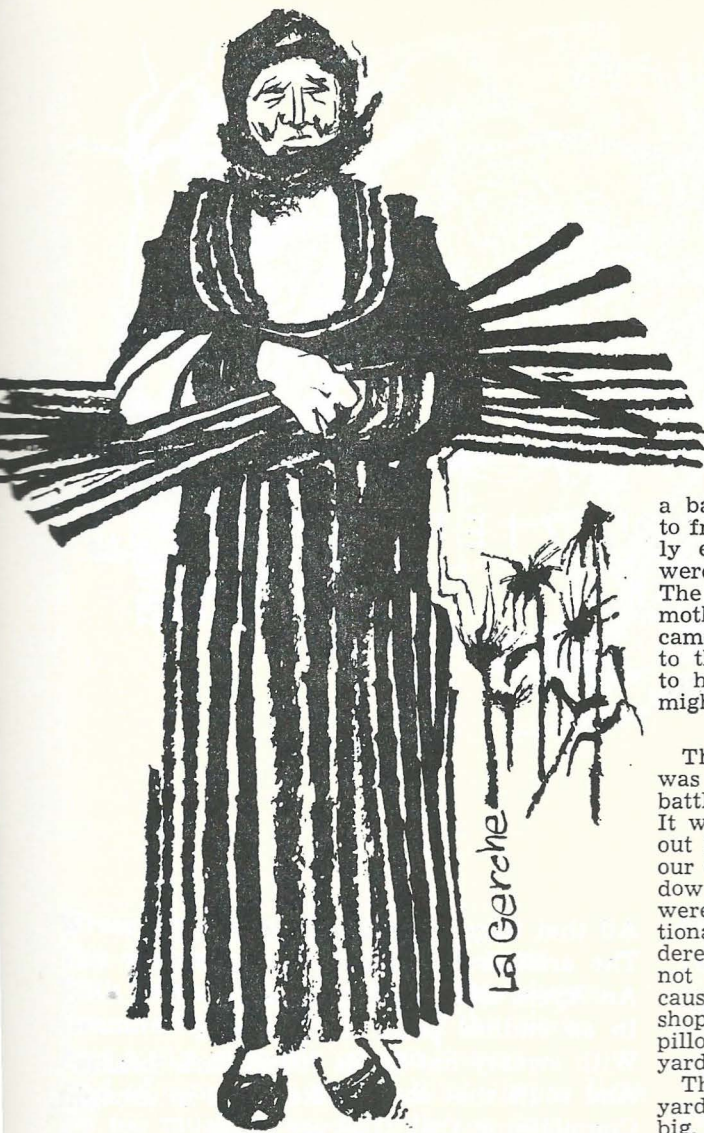
"You have pigs. We want them. I am Commissar Czertov. Our troops want food, and we will give you a receipt."

"A receipt. Can I feed it to my many kids?" she asked, when I appeared from behind the door. There was an embarrassed silence and the commissar, obviously inexperienced, did not act as swiftly and energetically as commissars are expected to act.

"If you refuse to exchange your pig against the official receipt, you may be arrested and tried before the Revolutionary Tribunal."

Here the commissar was obviously more and more in confusion. It would have been much easier just to grab a pig or two and not to mention that silly receipt; however, this ragged and unshaven man was certainly an idealist, and most surely a city dweller, perhaps even from the intelligentsia.

"So! You are going then to arrest an old woman, who is already so close to her death? What a disgrace!"



This dialogue ended in compromise: my grandmother gave the Reds a nice piece of lard and a big loaf of rye bread. They left, running after the rest of the detachment which was marching on.

My grandmother was triumphant.

"Now just you leave them to me," she told the whole family as they emerged from their hideouts, "they can be handled too, and I know the one thing every Russian fears: the old hag, with a big mouth, just like me. Remember, whenever they call again, you all vanish and let me handle those beggars. A receipt! His receipt isn't worth the paper it's written on!"

*

I saw my grandmother many times handling "those beggars," welcoming them with her face made deliberately dirty, in ragged clothes, with a small tomahawk under her apron. Mostly she stood guard at the gate, and the soldiers passed by with little hope of something to find in our yard. They spoke to her, called her "matooshka," but after a few words preferred to invade our neighbors' homes. Once, when someone stole a pair of pants drying on the line, I saw grandmother grab a Bolshevik officer by his belt, shake him like

a bag of hay. He mumbled something, and tried to free himself from the old woman's grip; obviously embarrassed, he was aware that his soldiers were watching this unusual scene with interest. The pair of trousers was not returned, but grandmother became a sort of terror, and many people came to her for help when anything happened to them. She risked a lot, but nothing happened to her, and our pigs were safe. Some Bolsheviks might rape, but none would kill a woman.

*

The times grew more dangerous, the revolution was spreading like fire, and we often saw fierce battles raging around the village and in the streets. It was always risky to talk to new invaders without knowing exactly who they were. We slept in our clothes, always ready to jump out of the window in case of artillery fire; the timber homes were never safe. One day a band of anti-revolutionary troops surrounded Motyo's shop and murdered all his family. Convinced that Jews were not only supporters of communism, but also the cause of all the world's troubles, they robbed the shop, raped the women, smothered old Motyo with pillows and bayoneted his children. The backyard was strewn with corpses, horribly mutilated.

The militia house was empty, and in the backyard, among the neglected fruit trees, there was a big, monstrous growth of nettlebushes. People passing by looked with a sort of morbid interest into the windows, most of which were broken. Quite often lights were seen inside, in the dead of the night; perhaps some hoodlums were sleeping there. But the whisper went around among the village people that this is the soul of the man bashed to death and tossed in the nettlebush. Strangely enough, just in the place where he died, the nettlebushes were highest—they grew madly, and the more superstitious people maintained that the first one who dared to cut this growth must inevitably die a violent death on the very spot.

So the house was left neglected, and deeply religious villagers avoided even looking in its direction. But I remember that, before we left this village, a group of young people took the house, cleaned the yard and started cultivating the soil. The villagers looked at them with a kind of horror, because these young people didn't go to church and laughed when told the superstitions about the house. These boys and girls were living in a state of sin, I heard older people whispering; God's blessing was denied to them. But I think that it was good that those young, new people cut down all the nettlebushes and planted potatoes instead.

OUR GRAZIERS

Geoffrey Dutton

All that they were now comes to this:
The aristocracy no one wants,
An Ayers Rock of prejudice
In an endless plain of ignorance.
With sweaty hat-bands round their brains
And souls that shrink like dams in drought,
Complaining that it never rains,
Or rains too much, luck's always out.
They grow more like what they love most,
With jowl of bull, forehead of ram,
Great breeders, as they love to boast,
But less of children than of lamb.
(Their sons they treat just like their stock,
They grow best when you fence them in;
Book-learning is a lot of cock
And universities lead to sin.)
They still believe in Ptolemy
For when they stand on their own earth
The centre of their astronomy
Is right within their beery girth.
The satellites that whirl about them
Know the marks of night and day;
Though station hands may sometimes flout
them



Wives and dogs always obey.
The womenfolk have one dark room
With china plates and cups from shows,
Grandfather's books to share the gloom
And a pile of music no one knows;
And of course the garden, that always licks
Up too much water, but fills her day,
No knowledge amongst the fruit she picks,
No serpent in the C.W.A.
She cooks the food he wants to eat,
Like mutton, boiled, with caper sauce,
And seeping swedes around the meat
And sago for the second course.
Grandfather's cellar, large and cool,
Is used for whisky and for beer;
Though cups of tea are the general rule,
Buyers and classers must have their cheer.
The one amusement is the horse
But the greatest gamble of the year
Is the price of wool, that no off-course
Bets can influence, striking fear
Into the stoutest overdraft,
Tangled with international plots

And economics that are daft.
That sturdy bank of patriots
For whom the word "synthetics" hurts
Are shrinking like their woollen socks,
(Besides, they all wear nylon shirts).
The grazier's furtherest boundary fence
Is always in the auction room,
The world beyond may be immense
But none will tinker with his doom.
Their ancestors were pioneers
Who filled new countries in the maps;
These entertain the darkest fears
Of Russians, Germans or the Japs
(Although they buy their greasy wool).
Ignore the lot, the Australian way,
But the irony is beautiful:
Some Commo wears their A.A.A.
Tomorrow fresh dams, and pastures new,
Ram to the ewes, and bores to sink,
But when Lake Eyre turns fresh as dew
Our graziers will begin to think.

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MELBOURNE

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PIONEERS

John Morrison

HE was a farmer in a lonely out-of-the-way stretch of country between—let's say—Dinsdale and Weebah in Central Victoria.

I got bogged on an unmade road outside his boundary fence one wretched winter evening. I should have loved every hair of his head from the beginning, because he represented my only chance of getting out that night, or even possibly the next day. It does me little credit, I know, but the truth is that I was angry with him before we came together.

His house wasn't far away. I could see it plainly, with its clustered outbuildings and a few trees, only a few hundred yards away across the darkening paddocks. Once, when several noisy bursts on the engine had only taken me in deeper, I looked over and thought I saw a figure on the verandah. But by the time he did decide to investigate I was well and truly planted, and in no humor to give him the kind of welcome he was entitled to expect. His own manner also didn't improve matters.

Eagerness and satisfaction fairly oozed out of him as he lumbered up and laid his great arms casually along the top wire. He was easy to read: he wanted company. Traditional bush hospitality is based on this need as much as it is on kindness. I understood that, but this fellow was just a little too uninhibited about it. He made no move to duck through the fence to take a proper look at the situation. He didn't even bother to sympathise with me. I was bogged, and I was his for the night. He made me feel less like a rescued mariner than a struggling fly for which the spider has just arrived.

"Too close to dark now, Mister, but we'll have you out of that in two-ups in the morning."

He gave me to understand he had a horse that would walk off without even knowing there was a car on the end of the chains.

I hoped he was right. For the rest, there was nothing to do but thank him, express the hope that his wife wouldn't be inconvenienced, and go along.

If a neurotic is a person totally obsessed with self then I suppose he was a neurotic. But at least he was a cheerful one. He must have been closing seventy. There was a tell-tale stiffness in all his movements, but his energy was terrific. In spite of the raw evening he was wearing only a flannel shirt with the sleeves cut out at the shoulders, like a League footballer. He worked his arms like paddles, and had the long reaching stride of a countryman, setting his big boots down as if he were crushing something at every step. He just couldn't get me to the house quick enough. The exertion was making him blow a bit, but it didn't stop him from talking. Everything he said was a complaint, but whenever he turned his great bomb of a head towards me I could see the small eyes twinkling below the flopping brim of his hat. His face was coarse, ruddy, and big-boned. He had a trick of twisting his mouth to one side that called to mind a snarling dog. All in all he went well with the bleak landscape and falling night. His property was flat and almost treeless, limited on one side by a low range of fading hills and on all the others by walls of grey-box forest.

By the time we reached the homestead I felt I had the measure of him, and was wondering how I was going to last the night without quarrelling. Three times in less than ten minutes he'd put me right in my place.

The first time was when I offered him a cigarette, and he told me he'd never smoked in his life.

"I never could see what any man gets out of it. Spare me days, you go and toil your guts out to get some money, you take it into a shop, you buy a bit of dried herbs wrapped up in a tissue, and—you come outside and stick a match to it! It never made sense to me, Mister."

The second time was when, a minute later, I ventured to suggest that the weather might be taking up.

"Taking up?" He strode on for several paces in silence, giving himself time to digest this further evidence of my folly. "It'll take up at the end of the month, not before. The moon come in on its back. If you've been watching the weather as long as I have, Mister, you'll know what that means."

The third time was when, not far from the house, we came to two eagles crucified on the fence-wires. I'd got the whiff of the stinking carcasses as we approached.

"Wedgetails," he announced laconically as he undid a gate. "I got four of 'em last week."

To have spoken my mind would have been provocative, and therefore rude in the circumstances, so I just nodded.

He was too sharp, though, and after closing the gate behind me and going only a couple of steps he suddenly swung his head at me again.

"You wouldn't be one of them naturalist blokes, would you?"

"Naturalist? No, I'm not a naturalist."

"I thought you was a bit quiet about them eagles."

"I don't like to see dead eagles."

"I don't like to see dead lambs!"

"What about dead rabbits? Young rabbits. Eagles . . ."

"The myxo'll look after the rabbits. Tell you what, Mister, you could walk right across this property and never see a rabbit."

"Since the myxo?"

"Since the myxo. Them C.S.I.R.O. blokes did a good job there."

Yes, I thought, but when the same people tell you to spare the eagles you won't listen to them.

Dignity, however, was satisfied, and I let it ride there. I'd become irritated by his persistent "Mister".

"Anyway," I said, "it's time we got around to names. I'm Bob Johnson."

He came to a dead stop and thrust out his hand. He had the grip of a wrestler. "Bob Johnson, eh? A good plain name, like mine. I'll settle for the Bob if you don't mind. I'm Roy Davison—Roy to you. Anybody round here'll tell you all about me. They say they'd know my hide in a tannery." He pushed his face close to mine. He had the smell of a strong and healthy man. "Mind you, Bob, I'm not offering you much. We live plain, just me and the Missus."

"I've never lived any other way. I'm a stranger, and you're taking me into your home."

"That's it!" He gave my hand a last powerful pump before letting it go. "No man can do more than share what he's got."

He started off again, and a few seconds later we were at the homestead.

I'd been watching it all the way from the road, looking in vain for lights. I hadn't expected electricity, but was a bit chilled now by the faint glow that came from one lonely window. I was, indeed, taken aback by the entire aspect of the place. He left me for a minute or two to "lock up the chooks," so that I had time to take stock.

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From a distance it had seemed just an average small farmer's homestead, most of it obscured by a few trees left for shelter. I remember that the first impression it made on me, on close inspection, was of deadness. It was like looking at a miniature ghost-town setting for a Western film. In the half-light it was eerie. Just the usual conglomeration of outbuildings and yards grown up over the years in the slapdash tradition of the Australian bush. But too tidy, too clean, too silent. A dog was barking as we came in, but had stopped at a sharp word from its master. Now there wasn't a sound. I'd have welcomed the snuffle of a feeding horse, the squabbling of fowls settling down for the night, or the sight of some vehicle standing in the yard. There was nothing. I felt myself surrounded by the sad and unmistakable quietness of old age, of exhaustion, of labor completed. And

of decay. A working homestead should be full of rich odors: fresh milk, cow-dung, dry feed, hempen bags. Here there was nothing like it. The prevailing smell was one of stagnation, of dust and rust and moulding leather. The odor of things no longer used creeping out beneath doors no longer opened.

More depressing than any other part of the scene was the house itself. It was the smallest and most primitive I'd ever come across on an old-established farm. What kind of woman was it, I wondered, who had never attempted to create a garden? What kind of man who, even in this dry country, had never enclosed a small piece of ground for her to do so?

It was little more than a skillion-roofed shack. Double-fronted, with a doorway set fair in the middle, and four naked posts supporting a verandah from which you stepped down only six inches on to the trodden earth. The kind of shelter a selector would rush up in the first bitter years of struggle. I knew the plan of it without going inside; the bush is full of them. Four rooms, the two front ones cut by a tiny passage leading into a living-room. Perhaps a back verandah with a sheeted wash-house at one end—perhaps. It was in one of the rear rooms that the lamp was burning. One window at the far end of an otherwise dreary wall. It stared straight out at the equally dreary wall of the barn only a few yards away.

He came back. No doubt he guessed I'd been doing a bit of sizing-up and decided he had better help me get my ideas into order before going inside.

"There's nothing much goes on here these days, Bob. But I tell you what"—head thrust forward again, eyes narrowed, and the dogmatic voice coming out of the distorted hole in his face—"this used to be one of the best farms in this district."

"Did you select it?"

"Yes, I did. I suppose I'm what you'd call a pioneer. I broke it in myself." He put out his hands, palms upwards. Long years of heavy toil had given all the fingers a permanent inwards curve so that I could have laid a pick-handle in them just as they were. "With these two hands. When we come here first all this was grey-box forest. It was just being thrown open."

"And no bull-dozer in those days!"

He gave me a pleased slap on the shoulder. "No bull-dozer! Axe, monkey-grubber, and trawalla-jack—and fire. Head down and bum up and go for your life from dawn till dark. Young blokes these days don't know what work is. No wonder they've got no guts."

"You're pretty well retired now?"

"You can call it retired. I'll never stop as long as I'm on my feet. All the same I don't do much. Years ago all this was under wheat, with a little dairy herd on the side. I just run a few sheep now to give me something to do."

"No cows?"

"No cows. Just one for the house. I've got a son-in-law only a few miles away. He's a bit of a no-hoper, but he sees we've always got a milker."

"Your family has all gone?"

"Three daughters. All married and gone. There's just me and the Missus left. She never threw me a bull calf."

There was a note of bitterness in this last bit that he seemed to regret as soon as it was out. He was in the act of leading off towards the house, but he pulled up again.

"Not that I'm saying she could help that. She's a bit crook these days. Not wearing as well as I am, if you know what I mean. I'm beginning to have to look after her a bit. Get up and get me

own breakfast of a morning, and that kind of thing. Nothing fresh to me—I've had women on me back all me married life." He had begun to walk again as he talked. "Look out for the step, and keep right behind me as we go in."

*

Four rooms—the two front ones cut by a passage leading into the living-room—

The woman turned out to be commonplace enough, but my first sight of her was not without impact. Lamplight dramatises things that electricity only illuminates. I was struck first by her smallness; it was in such contrast to her great bear of a husband. Waiting for us to appear in the doorway, she was standing quite motionless on the far side of a table on which an ancient pedestal lamp was burning. Stooped, grey-haired, and with a pinched worried little face, she looked much older than Roy. She was slightly flushed and breathing heavily as if she'd just been exerting herself. I had no means of knowing how she usually kept herself, but guessed that she had been hurrying to titivate herself up. She was wearing a dress of some dusty hue that could have been either green or blue in that weak light. It seemed to be well-cut and of good material, but sat on her in the crumpled and slovenly way of a garment that has just been dragged out of the bottom drawer. Her freshly-brushed, glistening hair explained the faint odor of coconut-oil that hung in the room. An odor that mingled appropriately with the mustiness of a wooden house built too close to the ground and beginning to go in its foundations.

In all this, however, there was nothing particularly surprising. What did disconcert me was the way in which she was looking at her husband. Head lifted, eyes widened, lips set in that tight straight line that betrays clenched teeth, she was staring at him as if he'd just done something altogether outrageous. By bringing me in? I saw it for only a split second. She didn't realise how close I was behind Roy. She knew I'd caught her, because she was thrown into confusion when the introduction came.

Whatever was behind it, Roy showed no reaction. Rather maliciously, I thought, he added to her embarrassment by remarking on her toilet: "Spare me days, Ada, you didn't have to go doing yourself up! We've got a visitor for the night—Mr. Johnson. This is my wife, Bob."

She smiled instantly, but it wasn't very successful. The smile of a woman who is not only upset, but is unaccustomed to meeting strangers. It was I who had to go round the table. Her hand was thin and dry, but it held mine firmly and held on.

"We was listening to you," she said in a faltering old woman's voice. "We could tell somebody was in trouble."

I expressed the hope that she wouldn't go to much bother over me. She began to make excuses for the poor fare I'd have to accept, but Roy didn't give her a chance to finish.

"I've told him all about that. Good gracious me, he knows we wasn't expecting him! Tell you what, Bob—it might be plain, but it'll be good. We'll give you the best bit of cold lamb you ever sat down to."

"You'd better make him comfortable first, hadn't you?" Her smile had vanished. "He'll want a wash . . ."

"Of course he'll want to wash. Come on, Bob. I'll show you where everything is."

I'd been prepared for a bit of polite conversation, but he brushed her off with less consideration than one would give a housekeeper. He'd lighted a hurricane lamp, and as we moved away I could

only excuse myself and throw her a glance that I hoped she would find sympathetic.

Roy's great bulk, and the poor illumination shed by the lamp, emphasised the smallness of the place. In the space of a few minutes I was shown passage, living-room, front bedroom, and bathroom; it was like moving about in a partitioned box. I kept thinking of the three girls who had been raised here.

Up to four feet the walls of the bedroom were stained lining-boards, as was the ceiling. The upper part of the walls was papered in one of those pretty-pretty floral designs that went out with antimacassars and button-up boots, and now faded and smoky. On the floor was a worn linoleum, with a fringed drugget mat alongside a brass-knobbed iron bed. There was a wardrobe, a dressing-table, a wicker chair, and a cretonne-covered stool which might have been a cut-down barrel. Nothing matched. Over the bed hung a framed text: "I am the Light of the World". There were two photographs. One, of a family group, was on the wall facing the head of the bed. The other, a bust of a young woman, stood on the dressing-table, with a small polished casket, and an oyster shell in which was an assortment of pins and brooches.

Everything indicated that I'd been given the main bedroom, but when I protested to Roy he brushed me off with that finality which I knew by now to be characteristic.

"You leave me to worry about that, Bob. We're all right. We're only too glad of a bit of company. Did you ever sleep on a featherbed?"

"Never."

He reached out and patted it. "Then let me tell you you're in for a treat. I wouldn't give you five bob for them kapok things. I'll just light this other lamp and then show you the bathroom."

He'd apologised for the modesty of his hospitality, but it was amusingly evident that he didn't really see it that way. He was thoroughly enjoying himself.

"You wouldn't have had much to do with these things either, I'll bet." He was bending over a little tin lamp on the dressing-table, adjusting the flame in the fiddling and exacting way of old people.

"Very little, Roy. They're just an emergency in town."

"No wonder they're all nerves and spectacles down there. You know what, I wouldn't have that electricity on, not if they was to bring it to my very gate."

"There's more to it than just lights."

"And that's the very thing that turned me off it! Years ago I very nearly put in a little generator of me own. I was thinking of a milking plant. The girls was leaving, and Ada and me was beginning to find it a bit hard. And d'you know what? The minute I mentioned it she started on me. First she thought it was going to be nice having an electric iron. Next it was an electric jug—it was going to be beaut. not having to light a fire in a morning just for a cup of tea. Then it was a toaster. Lights outside, back and front, so we wouldn't have to creep about with lamps after it was dark. Nothing big, mind you. Not a word about stoves or fridges. Just a few little things to make life easier." Roy picked up the hurricane lamp again, ready to lead off. His eyes were narrowed to wrinkled little slits. And the lips were snarling. "You know what—that's what's wrong with the whole world today. They're making it too easy. People's getting that way they don't know what to do to fill the time in. Anyway, I saw the writing on the wall, and I put my foot

down. No electricity—no arguments. I settled for a little petrol engine for the dairy. That got her out of the milking, anyway. I was able to do it all on my own. She still moans about it, though—you know what women are.”

Yes, I thought, and I know what men are.

I took a few toilet things out of the small bag I'd brought from the car, and followed him out again. We had to go through the living-room, but Ada didn't speak. She just looked round to give me a shy smile from where she was busy at the stove. The table was laid, and there was an appetizing smell of hot scones.

It turned out that the bathroom opened off this room. It was so small that Roy had to go in first, place the lamp on a bracket evidently there for the purpose, and come out again before I could go in. There was no pedestal basin and no tap. A bucket of water stood on the floor, and out of this he filled a tin dish standing in a galvanised-iron bath from which white lacquer was flaking. Everything, however, was scrupulously clean, including a towel that smelled of moth-balls. I kept thinking: three daughters were reared in this house—where did they sleep? And where now are the signs that they ever were here?

Roy returned to the other room while I washed, uncomfortably bent over the side of the bath. I could hear him and his wife talking only a few feet away:

“Aren't you going to give him some hot water? There's plenty of it.”

“For goodness sake, Ada, stop fussing. He doesn't want hot water to take a bit of mud off his hands.”

“It would be decent to ask him, anyway. It's a cold night.”

“He's young. Stop worrying.”

“What time is he leaving in the morning?”

“Soon as we get the car out. He wants to be in Melbourne by noon.”

“Will you be able to get it out?”

“It'd better come out once I hook Captain on to it! He'll pull it in two.”

“D'you know where Captain is? It'll be dark.”

“Spot'll flush him out for me. Where'd you put that linctus?”

“It's still on the back step where you left it this morning.”

All this dialogue was carried on on a surly note, in the way of two people who don't really want to talk but have to keep essentials moving.

A sudden silence fell just as I re-entered the room. I found both of them frozen in an attitude of intent listening, facing each other but completely concentrated on something else. You could have heard a pin drop. From far away on the main road—the road I should never have left—there came the faint hum of a truck.

“Sounds like the Carsons,” said Ada thoughtfully.

“The Carsons went through an hour ago,” declared Roy.

“It might be George Mills coming back. He went in this morning.”

“That isn't the Bedford. Sounds more like Andy Ferguson to me.”

“The Jensens!” Ada snapped the words triumphantly, and to make it clear that as far as she was concerned the subject was closed, she turned again to the stove, adding in a flat voice: “Shirley was saying they all had to go in some day this week.”

Roy became aware of me standing there, and promptly urged me to come through. “You know your room now, Bob. Give yourself a brush-up or whatever you want and then come right in here. We're all ready to sit down.”

Halfway Song

Once it was needing more than bread
And getting as much as a wise boy eats;
Learning how and in what to fit.
It was killing seas and a saving grace
That led onto losing in the streets;
Storms that meant ending of the world
And lightning that had one's name in it.
Because that was the reason why,
Because this is the wherefore.

Then sadly, strangely, actually
The dearly loved and long desired
Partner in this and that became
The foul guts-hating enemy.
The opposite of love transpired
In space of a lone growth-stunting day
To snuff the soft and inward flame
Because that was the reason why,
Because this is the wherefore.

Now, wandering the shrunken streets
Of childhood's end or crossing by
The ineffectual seas of wrack
To cities full of other selves,
The heart rebels and gives the lie:
Speaks louder and in praise of those
Whose love meant neither gain nor lack
Because that was the reason why,
Because this is the wherefore.

BRUCE BEAVER

No secrets in that box of a house. The minute I was gone Roy returned to the subject of the passing truck. Every word came to me clearly.

“Did Shirley say what they was going in for?”

“I couldn't make it out. The line hasn't been too good lately, you know that.”

“Who was she talking to?”

“May Rodney. She was telling May not to go over this afternoon because they was all going out . . .”

“Shirley wouldn't say much anyway if she thought there was somebody listening in.”

Eavesdropping over a “party-line”, probably the only real contact they had with the outside world. I seemed to have come a long way from my car.

I was looking at the family photograph on the wall. It fascinated me. Six men, three seated and three standing, outside a slab hut against a background of tall timber. Everything in it dated and strictly formal: the composition of the picture, the theatrical attitudes of the subjects, their attire. All dressed up in their Sunday best: blue suits with short jackets and narrow-cuffed creaseless trousers, shirts buttoned at the necks, bowler hats. Bushmen to a man, and tough. I don't think I ever saw a tougher-looking bunch. Not a hint of a smile among them. Six closed mouths, six jutting jaws, six pairs of cold eyes staring sternly at the camera. It was like facing a firing-

squad. They were all big men, and all similarly featured. Brothers. I held the lamp up for a closer inspection, but couldn't pick Roy.

Straight from this formidable gang I picked up the photograph on the dressing-table. And this, I thought, is the woman I just heard say: "You can start cutting the meat".

It was a most successful picture of a very charming girl. She was wearing a blouse, or frock, of what appeared to be black velveteen, cut well out on the shoulders—I think "scoop-cut" is the word—and totally devoid of collar or other adornment. The angle of view was inspired. I'd like to have seen another photograph of the same girl in profile and looking upwards. Such a portrait would have emphasised dramatically the lines of a neck rising with unusual length and grace from the exposed shoulders. It would, no doubt, have caught an expression of dreamy innocence, of youthful anticipation. But it would missed something better. As it was she was looking down at you, and turned just sufficiently to show both eyes. The expression captured was a delightful blending of surprise and friendliness, as if she'd just realised you were there and had instantly taken to you. Eyes widened, brows slightly lifted, lips barely touching in the beginnings of a smile. Every feature childishly rounded, like those of a doll. But there was something in the firm little chin that pointed straight to Ada. She would be led, but not driven, defeated but never quite vanquished.

What was it Roy had said? She never threw me a bull calf . . .

Without realising I had moved, I found myself looking down at the bed. Where she had "thrown" the three heifers. Three times she had lain here in this stuffy room while Roy went out into the night for doctor or midwife. What must it have been like at each announcement that it was a daughter? That firing-squad of brothers glaring down from the wall . . .

I could hear her now, still battling on in the kitchen: "Aren't you going to put a shirt on?"

And his arrogant, low-voiced reply: "You just get the tea ready, Ada. Just get the tea ready. I'll look after my shirt."

*

She did her best, and it was a good meal, but there was no getting away from him. And little I could do about it. He began to talk about horses as soon as we sat down, and kept on them.

The best bit of cold lamb I'd ever tasted, green tomato pickles and chutney, good bread, good butter, hot scones, and—Captain.

"The best horse I ever had, and that's saying something. Know anything about the prices of horses, Bob?"

"Very little, I'm afraid."

"I gave ten pounds for him. Ten pounds at a time when any buggy horse would fetch up to thirty."

"What was the catch?"

"Badly broken, that's all. And in the hands of a bloke that didn't know the first thing about horses." Roy chewed a little faster, then gulped. "I'm in the Main Street of Weebah one day when I see this fellow holding the horse outside a store. Fair dinkum, standing at its head like a new-chum, and there's a good rail alongside that everybody tied up on. It sort of got me in, because this thing looked as if all it wanted to do was go to sleep on its feet. It wasn't even fidgetting. I was a bit curious, so I went over and chatted the bloke. And he told me it wouldn't stand. And it wouldn't tie up. It was what we call a pull-back. I'd seen them before. You can tie them up all right, but

as soon as you go near them again they just lie out on the rope or reins so tight you can't get them loose. No struggling, mind you. They just stretch back as far as their necks'll go and prop like that. One of them things you just come across now and then in horses. Anyway, I finished up buying this one. The bloke had had a gutsful of him . . ."

There was a lot more before Roy got to the point. He was sitting facing me, with Ada on the end of the table between us. Her eyes were on her plate, her expression one of bleak resignation. But for her I think I would have enjoyed the anecdote. Roy had a good sense of narrative, despite the note of egotism that ran through it all. At least I knew it was true, and he finished up by evoking a scene that was as Australian as it was amusing.

"I fixed him. I fixed him for keeps in less than thirty minutes." He stopped while he cut a few pieces of meat and collected them one by one on his fork. "About half-a-mile up the creek there's a greasy clay bank with a gum-tree set back just a bit from the edge. Well, I put a good halter on this horse and I walked him out there, and I tied him to that tree with his back to the creek. There was just enough level ground for his four feet. I walked away a few yards, turned round, and come back to him. Sure enough, out he stretches. He's a big lump of a horse, but there was plenty of tree too! Pull?—so help me God, you could have laid a ruler from the tip of his nose right down to his tail. Fore-legs away out in front, hind-legs slanted forward under his guts, and his backside hanging out over the creek. All you could see was the whites of his eyes. You could have strummed a tune on that rope. Well, I had a sharp knife handy, and I let him stop like that till he had every ounce of his weight in. Then—one quick slash . . ."

I was glad of something to chuckle over, but Roy's eyes didn't as much as flicker.

"Bob, may I never move from this table if that horse didn't turn right over three times before he hit the water. He must have thought he'd pulled the tree on top of him. He wasn't even game to come out on my side. He went clear across the creek and didn't stop till he was fetched up by the first fence. By cripes, that cured him! You know what, you could have hitched that horse to a baby's pram after that."

No doubt.

There followed more horse stories. Captain—Cigar—Tug—Ginger—

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Good stories. They could have made pleasant entertainment if only he had allowed his wife to come in. It was her life, too, that he was talking about, but there was hardly a mention of her, never a shared smile, never once a comradely appeal for verification. As far as he was concerned there were just the two of us. She, on her part, made no attempt to intrude. She was evidently conditioned to it. But there was always dignity in her isolation, a subtle scorn in the lowered face. I felt she was drawing strength from me, knowing that I understood and was on her side. I recalled Roy's words: "Axe, monkey-grubber, trawalla-jack, and fire."

And Ada? When WE first came here—

I got interested in Roy's knife and fork. The one, long-pronged and handled in black bone, might have been a worn-down carving fork. The other was a skinning-knife, the handle neatly bound with string and only a little pointed triangle left of the blade. He must have been using them

all his married life. A careful man, who would look after things, the obvious things. I didn't like the thorough way he mopped his plate with a piece of dry bread, pushed it away from him, straightened himself up in his chair, squared his shoulders, and scanned the table for what was next. It was all too possessive and self-satisfied.

For an old woman Ada also ate heartily. A trifle noisily, perhaps, but with a certain fumbling daintiness.

More than once I tried to bring her into the conversation—if conversation it could be called—but each time Roy headed her off. I congratulated her on her scones, and received a melting glance of gratification. But before we could make talk on the subject he shouldered both of us out of the way.

"You know what, Bob—they scones have taken prizes at every show from Weebah to Dinsdale. And where it wasn't her scones it was my cattle. Only a small herd, mind you, but it was a good one. I had a jersey bull . . ."

Once, though well aware that I was taking chances, I seized an opportunity to ask her about the daughters.

"Yes, they're all married and away," she said quietly.

"Grandchildren?" I smiled, searching for a safe line of enquiry. I didn't look at Roy, but knew he was watching her.

"We've got eleven," she replied, "but we don't see much of them." She was going to add something to that, but again Roy took it away from her.

"There's only one of the girls in the district, Bob. The other two went to live in town. I never hear from them." There was no emphasis on the I, but it was significant.

"You did say there was a son-in-law not far away." I spoke quite without design, just to keep things moving. It was all so difficult. Something was lurking between them—

Ada picked up her empty plate and left the table. Roy flicked the cloth in front of him with the backs of his fingers.

"To tell the truth, Bob, he's not much chop. Too fond of bending the elbow, if you know what I mean. There's two things I've got no time for, that's boozers and drones. This fellow's both. Always either in the pub or hanging over a fence stopping another bloke from getting on with his work. I don't know, I can't make him out."

"Everything in moderation," I said cautiously. "I take a drink myself . . ."

"I never tasted it. Wouldn't know what it was if you was to blindfold me . . ."

"I know some good men who like a beer!"

"And I know some good men who don't! Beer and race-horses—they've been the curse of this country."

"I say! We haven't done so badly . . ." it was time to challenge him, but I was startled at the way he took me up .

"We haven't done so badly?" The wrinkles around his narrowed eyes were quivering. "You fair dinkum? I broke in six hundred acres of good land—on me own. And I've met blokes that never swung an axe all their lives. This country—look, Bob, can you tell me how it is that in a country like this men go about looking for work?"

"Oh yes . . ."

"You reckon they want to find it?"

"My word they do!"

He fixed me with an exasperated stare. Ada had sat down again and was buttering a scone. He seemed at a loss to know where to begin on the

Fish Recipes

When Ole cooked a fish, the dish was delectable.

That his whiting in milk was choicest was roundly detectable,

although some glutton would plump for his diamond-scale mullet

—but seeming with scales on his eyes, and a pelican's gullet.

Ole's failer's best smoked, cod baked in its oil in an oven;

barramundi for grills; salmon, too, it was proven

—a tang of anchovy this latter, if laced with lemon.

But he'd never, oh never, spoil fish by frying a salmon.

Fry bream in a batter, brush lemon and pepper on him.

Try mackerel raw, cubed, and immersed in lime.

That's the fruit, not the chemical. "Immersed" should be read.

Cook your reef fish before they are barely dead;

never snap-frozen. Mermaids are all you could wish

to try, after you'd eaten Ole's fish.

JOHN BLIGHT

Four Generations

In black silk on the left, the matriarch

The sharp aggressive Jewish woman who

Though dead can never die. She thrusts a dark

Defensive flashing of her eyes into

The burning wheel of day. To right, veiling

An arrogance, her daughter with a tight

Half smile, climbs in her loneliness to bring

Her faith in power to annointed height.

Next is my mother finding no pretext

For anything: her gift of flesh too strong.

In this fierce company she stands perplexed.

My fates I still sit easily among.

Of summers nine or ten, under my skin

Are those dark grounds these women hunted

in.

LOLA JACKSON

great mountain of my stupidity. I was wondering how far I could go when he made up his mind.

"Hold on, Mister, I'll tell you a story. I get them coming through here, you know—these blokes looking for the lost axe. And scared stiff they might find it. Well, I'm out there along the track one day doing a bit of fencing when one of them slouches up. I'd had me eye on him all the way in from the road, and I know the form before he ever opened his mouth.

"Good-day, boss!" he sings out, cheerful as you like. "Any chance of a job?"

"There's plenty of work," I says, "but no job."

"What d'you mean?" he wants to know.

"I'm not an employer," I tell him. "A farm like this doesn't run to paid labor. But I'll tell you what—I'll give you a bit of work for your tucker."

"And his head come up—believe me, you'd think I'd made an indecent suggestion to him.

"No wages?" he asks.

"No wages," I say.

"Stone the crows, mate," he says, "I'll give YOU a better job than that. You come along with me and carry me swag and open the gates, and I'll feed YOU!"

I began to chuckle, but Roy was in deadly earnest.

"You can laugh, Bob, but that's the form, take my word for it. Mind you, he wasn't boasting. He looked as if he was living off the fat of the land."

However, the story had taken some of the nip out of the air, and one way or another he got back to his horses. When Ada got up to clear the table he also rose. I asked if I might smoke, and she immediately placed a saucer in front of me.

"We don't have any ash-trays, Mr. Johnson." The shy smile that went with this was a secret little message.

"Never been such a thing in the house," added Roy with manifest pride.

He went out and brought in a bucket of water, from which he refilled the kettles on the stove. Then, to my astonishment, he took up a position alongside Ada at the sink and began to dry the dishes. It was done so casually that it must have been routine. No doubt one of a number of little things by which he preserved an image of himself as a thoughtful husband. Not so casual was his remark on the fact that no water was laid on to the house. It had been too long in coming, it sounded defensive.

"I bet it isn't often you get into a house where you can't turn a tap on, Bob?"

"As a matter of fact this is the first." To make sure he got the point, I added: "And I get around the bush quite a lot."

A movement of the woman's head was arrested just in time. I think she was going to give me a glance of approval.

"I know, they will have their little taps." An undisguised sneer. "And they squeal like stuck pigs when a dry spell sets in and their tanks run out. You know what—I've never once run out of water all the years we've been here. That right, Ada?"

"Yes, that's right." I couldn't see her face, but she might as well have added: You damned fool!

I couldn't tell how, but we had begun to communicate with each other, and Roy was quite unaware of it.

"Carry your water in as you want it, and you'll treat it with respect, that's what I say. Taps make it too easy. You forget about the tank outside. But you go out and stand there waiting for the bucket to fill, and you'll think of it then! It be-

comes an instinct to reach out and tap it. I was brought up in the Mallee . . ."

He was getting the dishes away as fast as she put them out. Every article in its appointed place in a cheap open-fronted dresser. Plates standing edge to edge along the backs of the shelves, cups swinging from hooks underneath. Knives, forks, spoons—each in its narrow cell forever laid—he seemed to be counting them. The context in which I was seeing it made it fiddling and childish. If only Ada had been allowed to talk—

*

She never was. When all was done we sat down again. I knew by the way he checked the trim of the lamp that there was to be a session. One might have thought he was setting the stage for a high-stakes card game or a seance. It was, indeed, becoming more and more unreal as the minutes passed. Not a sound came to us from outside. There wasn't even a breeze to make the house creak. I'd have given much for a homely sound such as the purring of a cat.

Ada brought out some knitting, and I made what was to be my final effort to draw her into the company.

"For the grand-children?" I asked her.

"One of Moira's," she replied, looking at me with smiling eyes. "There's always something wanted, and things are so dear to buy."

"And never as good! There's nothing to beat a hand-knitted article. I'd say that's for a girl!"

She held it up. "A boy would look funny in it, wouldn't he?"

But at this point Roy decided she'd had a fair go. Leaning over the table to make sure he got me away from her, he pointed a thick forefinger at the knitting. "Bob, I'm never done telling her she's a fool. Night after night she sits there straining her eyes, and they're all a darn sight better off than we are. They don't even thank her for it."

"You know as well as I do they're thankful," she said sharply.

"They don't go far out of their way to show it!"

"What d'you want them to do?"

"Come over and see us sometimes, Ada. That's all, just come over and see us."

She was going to say something else, but changed her mind. She just lifted her head, gave him a defiant stare, and went back to her knitting. It looked like a brave effort to keep the family skeleton in the cupboard, but Roy wouldn't meet her.

He sighed, puffed, shifted the saucer ash-tray out to the middle of the table then back again, licked his lips—all the bogus fidgetings of a patient man driven beyond endurance.

"Look, Bob," he got out at last, "it's a sore point, this matter of the daughters . . ."

"Let it ride, Roy," I urged. "Every family . . ."

"Every family hasn't! Mine are all women. D'you know what—two of them girls has never set foot in this house since the day they left. Moira comes once in a blue moon. She wouldn't come at all if she didn't have troubles."

"The husband who drinks?"

"It isn't only the drink. His old man left him a good farm, and he's letting it go down the drain. He doesn't know the first thing about horses, to begin with."

The temptation to point out that we had moved into the age of the tractor almost got the better of me, but I controlled myself, satisfied that the talk was drifting into a safer channel. All his attention was on me again.

"D'you know what that man did on me once? I'll tell you. I had a horse here I used to use for breaking-in. A little bay mare with black points.

One of the best deals I ever made. Picked her up for next to nothing. Another one of them blokes that couldn't solve his own problems. She'd been badly mouthed, and he couldn't do anything with her. Well, I got her, and I went to work on her, and she turned out a beauty. There wasn't much of her, mind you, but she was as game as Ned Kelly. And she had brains, I used to talk to her. I had her so she'd come to me at a whistle no matter where she was. And she'd hold anything in the brake. One day I had a colt tied on the side, and it reared up and come down with both forefeet inside the shaft. Work that out for a mess! And she got me out of it with only a bit of paint scratched off."

There was a lot more before he got to the heart of the story.

"I wouldn't have taken eighty quid for that mare. And d'you know what happened? That bright son-in-law—he wasn't the son-in-law then—he foundered her on me! Killed her just as surely as if he'd taken an axe and knocked her brains out. He borrowed her to go in to Weebah. I wasn't in the habit of lending my horses—I don't believe in it—but I was having a bit of trouble with the girls at the time," Roy shot a swift glance at Ada, still placidly knitting, "and I let him have it for peace's sake. And d'you know what that half-wit did? He drove that mare full bat for fifteen miles on a stinking hot day, turned her loose in the paddock of a bloke he hardly knew, and went off to the boozier!"

He knew very well that I hadn't yet got the point, and, good story-teller that he was, he waited, giving me time to do a bit of futile guessing and build up for the shock that was to come. His prolonged stare made me uncomfortable.

"He just couldn't get to that pub quick enough. I'm not saying it didn't enter his head that my little mare might be thirsty too. He thought of it all right. But he didn't think far enough. He just decided he'd have a few beers and then come back and give her a drink when she'd cooled down. It never entered his head that my little mare might go looking for a drink herself. Any man with any heart for a horse at all would have gone over that paddock and made sure she couldn't get it, the state she was in. Well, I suppose you can guess the rest. She found water all right. There was a dam down at the far end of that paddock, and she got to it and give herself a gutful. By the time he got back there was nothing anybody could do for her. And people wonder why I'm crooked on the boozie. I loved that mare."

*

I could have liked him for that were it not for Ada. Still knitting, head bowed, the faintest of smiles on her face. I thought of that son-in-law-to-be coming back to tell Roy what had happened. Or had that grim task fallen to her? And how many other times? With three grown girls on the place there must have been a lot of coming and going of young men. What scenes must have been witnessed here! What bullyings and thwartings and intrigues and diplomacies! Something new was coming into the lined face over the knitting. Not malice, smugness rather. It took me back to the girl in the velvet blouse. Strength in the chin—

"Now then, Bob, do you blame me for being hostile on the boozie?"

I nodded, cautiously. I wanted to get him back to horses, and keep him there. "Horses are like children, I suppose. Only they don't grow up. We've always got to do a lot of the thinking for them."

"Unless you get one like that little mare!" He thought for a moment, absorbing my idea. "Yes, I think you've got something there. We've got to keep on watching them, putting things out of their way."

A short silence fell. Then, as he began to speak again, I realised that he hadn't really been following me. He'd been deliberately leading into another apt recollection, digging again into the past. Another little tragedy, another stupid suitor, another daughter, more lost horses.

"Right in the middle of harvest it was. I had to put a man on for a few weeks, and this fellow was . . ." another sidelong glance at Ada, "hanging around. I thought I might as well use him. One morning I sent him out to run the team in. And, mind you, it WAS a team! There wasn't a better one for miles around. Pull? I've seen them go down on their knees like bullocks. All right, out this bloke goes. It's a big paddock, and they wasn't in sight from the house, so I told him to jump on an old grey pony that was in the yard.

"Next thing I know—so help me God—he's got that team coming in at a gallop! At a gallop—heavy draughts! I was in the barn when I heard them, and out I rushed just as they come round the bend in the creek, hell for lick. I suppose he wanted to show off for Agnes. All the girls was up in the cow-yard at the time. I couldn't see him and the pony, they was away back in the dust somewhere. I dropped everything and started to run down to have a piece of him as he come in. But it was nothing to what was coming. D'you know what a Mallee gate is, Bob?"

"Yes, it's a short loose panel, just droppers and wires."

"That's right, you foot 'em into loops on the posts. Well, that's what I had on this paddock. Now the one thing you never do when you open one of these so-called gates is—leave it lying on the ground. If you're going away and want to leave it open—as this bloke did, so he could run the horses through—you carry it right round in a half-circle and stand it along the fence-line. I've seen more stock crippled through getting tangled in a Mallee gate left lying on the ground—anyhow, you know what I'm talking about . . ."

"He ran the team over it?"

"He put the whole team over it! I had a big wall-eyed chestnut as mob leader, and a bit of a rogue when he was off the bit. There wouldn't have been any trouble at all if they'd been brought in quietly. But you know how it is when you push a mob of horses—something gets into them. And this Red, out he goes in the lead, thumping along like a big rocking-horse. I'm watching him, and I know he's going to break. You get that way you can read horses' minds. I knew what Red was thinking, the way he was slewing off-course and back again and throwing his head about. He was feeling good—to Hell with work this morning! Out he lights for the creek again, and the whole mob after him.

"Well, that still didn't break any bones. They wasn't exactly race-horses, and the grey had no trouble turning them. But by the time they're headed for home again they're not lined up for the opening, they're coming down the fence-line."

"And the gate on the ground . . ."

"The gate on the ground. I could see it lying there, but I'm too far off to do anything except give a mad yell. I'm helpless." Roy closed his eyes and shuddered. For the first time he had my full sympathy. "Four wires—all barbed! Fair dinkum, I couldn't bear to look. I shut my eyes. I only opened them again when I heard the first thump, and a scream, and them wires twanging

Fallen Poets

To stand with naked soul before all men
Has always been our trade, at least in part,
But where's the law to say that we must
then
Surround ourselves with mirrors like a tart?

It may be fun to get a six-fold view
Of infant guilt in all its youthful glare
—Or would be if it offered something new,
Some fresh experience, pitiful and rare.

But not this wearisomely self-same glut
Of loneliness, this all-pervasive reek
Of musty conscience... "Meet me in my hut,
And be my love in Alienation Week".

Who wants to kiss, admire and enfold
Electra's sagging titties every night,
While fat Narcissus shivers to behold
Once more the fundamental out of sight?

Who cares to see us, like a ruttish monk
With jupe uplifted, reaching for the scourge?
If we must suffer, let us take to plonk
And sublimate the masochistic urge.

Pain helps to make the poet, I admit,
But there are other things in life, besides
A permanent neurosis blunts the wit,
As daily floggings warp our tender hides.

Are there no words than those that rhyme
on fear,
No other caves beyond the womb and hell?
The bells are tolling, but not all we hear
Toll for a death, as Parson Donne could tell.

A peal for dying and a peal to sing
The bridegroom to his immemorial jousts;
Yet we, poor sextons, cannot mark the ring
That chimes for Gretchen from the boom
of Faust's.

It's a hard age, material, vulgar, brash,
When fools alone sleep easy in their sheets,
Unapprehensive of the sudden flash
That would lay heaven straight upon the
streets.

A time in which it's sickness to be whole
Makes the heroic brasses sound like tin,
But who will cure the leper with a mole
Confounds the public with his private sin.

If we have nothing better to donate
Than faint despair to fill the empty box,
Why rail at the stupidity of fate
That keeps us lonely? Pox begets a pox.

They reap no storm who only sow the wind
Of constipation in a stagnant sump:
Posterity shall say we bared and grinned
As the last reader staggered to the pump.

DAVID MARTIN

like fiddle-strings. Red's in them, plunging on, and every plunge brings them bloody wires further up his legs. And the rest of the team jostling up in a tight bunch. Two more went down, two others trampled over the top of them, only one cunning old mare managed to sheer off in time." Roy stood up in his excitement. "Bob, you got no idea what it was like. By the time I got over there one of them was up again and running round in circles, blood streaming from it backside to breakfast. The other two just kicked and tore themselves to bits. Four barbs—it was like a butcher's block. First thing I did was sing out for somebody to fetch me a gun. I had to shoot them both, and the other one as soon as I'd had a look at him. I never got a team like it together again."

He sat down again. He was trembling.

"And the young bloke?" I asked.

"Lit out for the scrub. Turned the grey loose in the last paddock and kept going. He knew I had a gun. He left the district, and it was two years before he came back again. I heard he was around, but before I could do anything the constable come out from Weebah and told me he was watching me. Everybody else was too!"

He fell silent. Only the ticking of the clock and the clicking of the knitting needles. It would have helped just then if the needles had stopped.

They seemed to be mocking him—a bit of trouble with the girls at the time—I had to put a man on for a few weeks—showing off in front of Agnes. Never threw me a bull calf—everything came back to that, and all three of us sitting there were aware of it.

There was something to be said for Roy this time.

"I suppose you needed the warning, Roy, for your own sake."

He gave me a bitter smile. "Needed it? Yes, I needed it. He didn't stop long. Three weeks, and he was off again. Agnes went with him. Did a moonlight. He'd been writing to her all the time. I knew nothing about it. We've never seen either of them since."

A few difficult minutes followed, but I managed to get him going again, watching the clock, and wondering how long it would be before somebody suggested turning in.

Ada looked as if she was prepared to knit all night. I realised by now that with her also a grievance had eaten in like a cancer. They were fighting over me, had been from the instant I walked in, and for the time being my sympathies had swung a little towards Roy. Ada's sustained silence was becoming suspect. She believed that Roy was digging his own grave with me. The timing of the occasional glances she threw at me was always significant.

Moira—Agnes—what of the other daughter? What did these two talk about when they were alone together and no sound came to them from the road?

Hoping for better luck this time, I asked Roy how many of the horses had recovered, how long it was before they worked again, and how he had treated them. It turned out a good line of enquiry, because he gradually calmed down and became absorbed in something he prided himself on, the healing of sick animals. Every farmer had to be his own vet in those days, but, as in all things, it appeared that Roy excelled. He told me how he had solved not only his own problems, but those of his less capable neighbors also.

"Send for Roy Davison, they say when they're in strife. By cripes, I've had some queer cases, Bob."

He brought out a set of veterinary surgeon's charts. Beautifully-printed in several colors, and with an ingenious arrangement of sliding panels representing the various organs, there was one for each domestic animal. They were worn with handling and obviously very old, but still in useable condition.

"I got them off an old German bloke years ago, he brought them out with him. D'you know what, that man could take a cow to pieces and put her together again, just looking at these cards."

Perhaps he could, too. They showed where everything belonged.

"A fellow sent for me once to come and have a look at a cow with a blind tit. Now that's nothing very unusual, Bob. But this one . . ."

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For over an hour I listened to stories of his veterinary exploits. I couldn't always follow them anatomically, but they were fascinating in their revelations of human struggle and resourcefulness. Animals were bread and butter in days when bread and butter were all that a small selector could expect out of life. An incapacitated animal could jeopardise so much. There were unforgettable pictures of anxious families fathered around lame horses, of "staked" sheep-dogs, of Roy riding through the night to a complicated delivery in a cow-paddock.

And never, except once, a sound from the woman. That once was when a click of her tongue silenced Roy and set all three of us listening to the hum of a truck on the road. Apparently this was the only excitement shared by man and woman, the only game they played together. Roy won this time.

"George Mills getting back," he announced solemnly.

Ada gave it a further moment's consideration, then nodded grudgingly and went back to her knitting.

Roy, looking well satisfied, took up again the tale of his sick animals. He was relating his efforts to save a "sanded" colt, and he told the story with all the simple earthiness of a countryman. He had explained to me how a horse in drought country, nuzzling hungrily in the withered stubble, kept taking in sand. And how sometimes the sand failed to evacuate, and kept building up in the bowel.

"Tell you what, Bob, that colt had a lump on his belly like a football." His hands described a circle. "You could move it about, and it was as hard as this board." He thumped the table with his knuckles. "He was down when I got there. Fair dinkum, you wouldn't have given two bob for him. One look at him, and I knew that whatever I did had to be drastic—and quick. Well,

there was two big trees growing just a few yards from where he was lying, and somehow or other we managed to drag him over to them. I sang out for some ropes, and we slung that colt from them trees with his back on the ground and his four legs sticking straight up in the air. Then I told the woman of the house to go in and fetch me a rolling-pin. They all wanted to know what for, but I told them they'd better do just what I said and leave all the thinking to me. So out comes the rolling-pin. Ever heard of anybody doing this before, Bob?"

"Never!"

"Neither had I—but it worked! Down I got, and I rolled that lump, that football, just like it was a big chunk of dough. Every bit of weight I could put into it. It took a long time, mind you, but once it started to break up I knew I was on the right track. Grunt? He grunted all right, but there wasn't anything he could do about it, with his four legs up in the air. I kept it up till the lump was all gone, broken up and sort of dispersed in his bowels. Then, while he was still upside down, I give him the biggest drench I've ever put into any horse, and kept him there till it had time to work. Then we let him get up. That fetched it!"

All the earthiness of the countryman, and no holds barred. I don't think Ada minded, though. Another nail in Roy's coffin. She knew I was watching her and wouldn't miss the disgusted way she wrinkled her nose and tightened her lips.

"Tell you what, Bob, that colt was working next day. D'you reckon one of them vets. would have thought of that?"

"I doubt it, Roy."

"And even if he'd thought of it, would he have done it? Them blokes don't like getting their hands dirty, you know."

I let the libel pass, and was instantly sorry, for Roy's next words took him straight back to the daughters.

"And all I got out of it was a burned haystack."

I could have let that go also, for it was said in the way of a man capping off a story, not beginning a new one. But before I could gather my wits it was out: "A what?"

"A burned haystack."

I kept silent, waiting for a clue. Roy's eyes were on his fingers, nervously drumming the table. Ada was watching him, the peaked little face full of eagerness. She didn't want him to stop. She'd forgotten her knitting, and the sudden cessation of the clicking needles added much to the tenseness of the atmosphere.

"I know that can be a death-blow to a farmer, Roy," I observed. Somebody had to say something.

"Death-blow?" He drew in a long breath. "Some things is so bad it hurts to talk about them."

"Then don't." I looked at the clock on the mantelpiece, then at each of them in turn. "I don't know what time you good people are in the habit of going to bed . . ."

"You might as well tell him now you've started," said Ada suddenly. She put down her knitting, lying with the transparency of a child: "To tell the truth, I was beginning to feel a bit sleepy, Mr. Johnson. Would you mind if I turned in?"

Roy remained seated as the two of us stood up. I had already gathered from something he'd said that Ada was accustomed to going to bed earlier than he, but there was nothing routine about it tonight. His readiness to keep on talking was as obvious as her determination to give him the opportunity. But the little war between them was maintained to the bitter end. She began to

say something to me about being up in the morning to make breakfast, and he instantly roused himself.

"Breakfast, what's special about tomorrow morning? I always get the breakfast, don't I?"

"But there's Mr. Johnson . . ."

"I'll look after Mr. Johnson, Ada . . ."

As the bone of contention, it was easy for me to take over this time. I did it as gently as possible, and I thought she took it fairly well, but her disappointment came through. Perhaps she'd been looking forward to a short session with me in private while Roy got through some early morning chores.

Her parting smile was loaded with appeal, as was the grasp of her dry old hand. She held on to me.

"It's been nice to have a visitor. It isn't often anybody comes here."

"You've been very kind, Mrs. Davison . . ."

"I hope you get your car out all right in the morning. If ever you're passing this way again . . ."

I promised. I'd made up my mind to send her some little gift, perhaps something to brighten that poor little dressing-table. But the promise was one of those one has to make, regardless of any likelihood of it being kept. I didn't ever expect to see her again. She went out, and all I heard of her afterwards was the scratch of a match as she lighted a lamp.

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Nothing could have been more unexpected than Roy's first words when we were left alone.

"You know, Bob, she's not looking too well tonight."

I was astonished, because the remark seemed to have been made with real concern.

"I suppose it's past her usual bed-time," I replied. "She did look tired."

He shook his head. "That wouldn't hurt her." But, rather too casually, he added: "She wouldn't have gone, anyway, if I hadn't mentioned that haystack. It always upsets her."

He pondered, giving me time to throw the ball back to him. Second thoughts seemed to indicate that his anxiety over his wife was merely another device to lead me back to the haystack. It was hard to tell. Odd relationships grow up between two people who live together for a long time. Roy and Ada had probably become as essential to each other, though in a different way, as Darby and Joan.

"Perhaps you shouldn't wake it up," I suggested.

"Wake it up?" he scowled. "As far as I'm concerned it never went to sleep. A hundred and fifty tons of hay!—at a time when there wasn't a skerrick of grass in the paddocks. Seven horses to feed, and not a cracker to my name. By jeeze, I've gone through it if ever a man did! And d'you know who did that?"

"The fellow who owned the colt?"

"The bloke who owned the colt. And d'you know why he did it?"

I shook my head.

"Because I ran him off the place with a shotgun, as I was entitled to. It was long after I fixed the colt, mind you. To tell the truth, it wasn't his horse, it was his old man's. But he used to ride it, and it was him that come tearing over here one morning, begging me to come and help him. He was a big lump of a bloke, but only seventeen at the time, and I took pity on him. Dropped everything I was doing—you know how it is with a boy and his horse. Well, I saved it for him, like I told you, and the next week-end he rode it over here to thank me. He got asked in to

On Growing Old

I.

The grim surprise of growing old
Is not the drift wood heap of years,
Nor dreariness when limbs go slow,
When aging flesh no longer rears,

Nor in the weary frequency
With which the body needs repairs,
Nor joys gone flat, nor any thing
But this—the heart no longer cares:

Can gaze with strange indifference on
The shapes that once absorbed the hours,
Can take with equal unconcern
The sunshine, moonlight, wind and showers.

II.

A gentle providence ordains
The heart should not endure desires
The body can no longer serve,
To put ashore a man requires

So little gear. The fear of land
That haunts all seamen and ensures
The offing where their safety lies
Haunts him no more. The land wind lures

Him now with warmth of herb and scrub.
Alone, approaching untried shores,
His dinghy poised to catch the flood,
He waits there, resting on his oars.

ROBERT CLARK

dinner, and that was the beginning of it. He got shook on Rose, that's my youngest daughter."

Roy stopped suddenly, and turned his head towards the door through which Ada had gone. I also thought I'd heard a sound. He hadn't bothered to lower his voice, and must have known as well as I did that she was listening. But all he did was give me a conspiratorial wink and nod—never mind her!—and get on with his tale.

"She was only seventeen, Bob. And I was still sweating it out over Agnes, she'd only been gone a year. What would any father have done?"

"What kind of fellow was he?"

"No good! Irresponsible. His own Dad was having trouble with him. I found out he wasn't as green as he was supposed to be. He'd been away picking-up in the shearing sheds, and he'd learned a bit too much for a boy his age. D'you know what he did one day—but listen, I'll tell you what happened here first. You'll see for yourself what kind of bloke he was. I began by warning him, and I warned Rose. She was as silly as a wheel, too, but a man's got to do what he can to protect his daughters once he's stuck with them. The trouble is I was always kicking against the wind." Another wink, another significant nod at the bedroom door. "It was a battle of wits, believe me. They kept on beating me, no matter how I watched them. I'm not going to go into details, you're old enough to know how it is. One night

I caught him. Mind you, I'm not saying they was up to anything real bad, but it was hours after she was supposed to be in her bed. I ran him off the place. I had the gun with me, and I put a charge of shot into the ground behind him as he lit out across the yard. Next night up went my haystack."

"Are you sure it was him?"

"Am I sure it was him—right afterwards he shot himself!"

"Killed himself?"

"Killed himself. Put a bullet through his head. I suppose he hadn't properly realised what he'd done till it was too late. And he'd got scared. He knew I'd be out looking for him. So he beat me to it, very nearly blew his head right off. We found his body days afterwards in one of the back paddocks. You could even see how he'd done it. He's lying along side the log he'd sat on, and a bit of stick still across the trigger. We'd never have found him if it hadn't been for the smell."

"And Rose?"

"Cleared out. We got a wire from Agnes down town saying she'd turned up there. She stopped with Agnes. Got herself a job and finished up marrying a bloke with the Board of Works. I believe they're living in Geelong now."

I don't think Roy realised what sadness there was in those two words: "I believe". It would have been difficult to tell what his feelings were just then. All the steam had gone out of him. He was sitting with knitted brows, casting back. Moira, —Agnes—Rose—and Ada, who wasn't looking so well tonight. It made a cohesive picture, but how he interpreted it I couldn't guess. His face might have been chiselled out of stone.

"You've upset yourself talking about these things, Roy," I said gently. "Why not turn in?"

"I suppose you're right." He stirred himself. "I better go in and see how the wife is."

There were no more stories, and it was left to Ada to round the night off.

At the last minute Roy lit a hurricane lamp and went out, saying he wanted to have a look at a sick sheep. His footfalls had barely died away before I heard a sound behind me and turned to see Ada beckoning me from the barely-open bedroom door.

"Mr. Johnson—sssh!"

I went over to her, and she instantly reached out and seized my wrist. She was wearing an overcoat over her nightdress and had nothing on her feet. The smell of coconut-oil was strong. Her eyes were bright with anger.

"Mr. Johnson, that was a good boy! You hear me—he was a good boy!" She was shaking my wrist in rhythm with what she was saying, dining it into me.

"Yes, Mrs. Davison . . ."

"And there was nothing wrong going on. I looked after my girls!"

"You don't have to tell me that." I was trying all the time to disengage myself, terrified that Roy would come back and catch us talking.

"They were all glad to get out of the house."

"I understand . . ."

A gate clashed somewhere across the yard, and I pulled free. She shook a trembling finger at me before closing the door.

"He killed that boy!"

A few minutes later I was lying in the feather-bed, staring over the black iron rail at the firing-squad on the wall. The brothers Davison.

I don't know which of those two people haunts me most, Roy or Ada.

ART AND EDUCATION

By SIR HERBERT READ

The texts of the four "Chancellors Lectures" on art delivered by Sir Herbert Read at the Victorian University of Wellington, New Zealand. In these essays we see the author's breadth of vision and fundamental knowledge of psychology, philosophy, science and education as he deals with the problems confronting the teaching of art—in its fullest and most creative sense—in education today.

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ART AND LIFE

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SYDNEY

GAVIN CASEY—THE MAN I KNEW

F. B. Vickers

THE first time I ever remember hearing the name of Gavin Casey mentioned was in the war-time army—by that most unlikely spreader of anything likely to interest me, a sergeant-major. This fellow had evidently found out that I read books, and one day he bailed me up and said: "Did you ever read a bloke named Gavin Casey?" I shied off—thinking that this Casey fellow must have been some bloke who had written an army manual. Then to my surprise this sergeant-major bloke says: "I'll lend you a coupla books of his, you'll like 'em." I had my doubts. But anyway he brings along a couple of paper-backs that had been fingered a lot if not read. They were pretty battered—like Gavin himself toward the end. One of them was called "It's Harder for Girls", which same I thought must have been about the A.W.A.S., and the other one was "Birds of a Feather"—which same I couldn't place in army terms.

Now by birth I am an insular Pommy, and up to that time I didn't know that Australia had a literature—though I had been living in Gavin's state, the West, for close on twenty years. Mind you I had heard of Ned Kelly—and met some of his descendants many times in two-up games and poker schools and wayside pubs like the Coongan and the "Ironclad" in Marble Bar and in most of the bars of Kalgoorlie. I also knew a few snatches of Henry Lawson and "Banjo" Paterson as I had heard them spoken by shearing shed reciters when we had sat over the camp fires at night beneath the wondrous glory of the everlasting stars; and I think it was "The Sentimental Bloke"—seen on the screen in a penny flea joint in the Black Country of England—that caused me to migrate to Australia rather than Canada when I was in need of a job.

Anyway I started to read Gavin Casey. I found he was writing about the sort of men I had lived and worked with, and showing them to me in another dimension—with all the humor and the pathos that goes with human beings anywhere if only you've got the humility in you to look inside them and see them as men and women in their little world. When I handed those dog-eared paper-backs back to the sergeant-major, he said: "He's a good bloke, Casey". I've heard that said about Gavin many times since—which reminds me. I knew a bloke who died in a shearing shed—with a royal flush in his hand; he just slumped over the mess table and went out like the hurricane lamp he knocked over. We buried him under a spindly gum on an out-back station hundreds of miles from anywhere. We put up a stone on his grave, and there was a lot of argument as to

what we should put on it. And at last one fellow said: "Just put on it 'He was a good bloke'—and forget the bloody rest." Not a bad epitaph for Gavin.

Some years later, when I had got my own name in print with a few short stories, I was invited to join the Western Australian Fellowship of Writers. And at almost every meeting someone would mention Gavin Casey, Gavin said this, Gavin would have done that. Gavin wrote the first constitution of the W.A. Fellowship, I understand, and from my reading of it—I wonder where it is now—it was a very humorous and human document—the sort of constitution I would like to see drawn up for a world government governing for humanity, black, white and brindle, Protestant and Roman, communist and capitalist and the mass of unbelievers in anything but in good blokes. As I remember it, that document would permit all men to meet and contend in good fellowship over a flagon or a jar in a civilised—not sophisticated, Gavin would have nothing to do with that harlot—in a civilised community of interest. Not always in peace, but in the harmony that comes with respect for another man and his views.

Gavin was a man who could rub along with all manner of men. Oh, he would refer to a man as a poor stupid b——. But I never heard him express words of hatred against anyone. I think this easy-going, forgiving tolerance shines out in his writings and—if I might add a critical note—is the very strength of his short stories that becomes a weakness in his novels. Not that Gavin's tolerance was of the face- and shoulder-shrugging kind which so often is the mask of contempt at its worst and indifference at its best: but, in my book, he was not the passionate fighter. He was the good bloke who supports all those good causes which he believed would go to the making of a better world for good blokes to live in. Where this better world was to be found I do not know. But I think for Gavin Casey it was somewhere along the line between Walkabit—that place of goats in his short story "Nobody's Goat"—and the local where good blokes yarn over a beer.

I met him first at Sydney's Central Station when he came to meet my wife and I as we stepped off the train. I got a bit of a shock to see a portly, sober-looking gentleman in a dark suit with an umbrella. I was shocked when last I saw him a few days before he died. We had a bit of a laugh—but by god it was hard.

But I shall remember him best in his short stories, and as the bloke yarning over a beer—both of us in our shirt sleeves, and Gavin, every now and then, pausing to pour a drop of the medicine out of his glass into poor old Pleurisy's bowl. I don't know what Pleurisy's breeding was. He was old and fat and found it hard to hobble when I met the old fellow. He had some aristocrat in him. But either his mum or his dad—I think his mother—was that bedraggled little dog that hangs round the corner looking for a friend with a kindly hand to lick.

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THE COUNTRY NEXT DOOR

New Zealand Newsletter

MANY thousands of Australians live and work in New Zealand. Some have become naturalised New Zealanders and have made outstanding contributions to the political and business life of the country. In a more humble way Australians are making a considerable contribution to the New Zealand tourist drive by staffing Tourist Corporation hotels on a working holiday basis. Yet others have quietly filtered into the industrial life. Americans have been known to protest about the high cost of living and blame it on a taxation system that provides cradle to the grave social security. I've yet to hear of the Aussie who packs and heads back across the Tasman proclaiming loudly he's been sold a pup. The newcomer from Australia might tend to be nationalistic, but if he stays a while he will fit easily into the New Zealand scene. After all the country next door isn't so different. There's more rain and life's a little slower on the whole, that's all.

Apart from the Auckland Star, which runs a weekly column from Nigel Palethorpe, New Zealand newspapers devote little space to Australian news. A casual reader might assume Australian events to consist mainly of murders and Sydney Opera House scandals. The closest contact New Zealand has with Australia is, of course, in rugby, where there is a regular exchange of teams. Next, I would say, comes theatre. During the twelve years since I crossed the Tasman Australian touring companies and entertainers have made intermittent visits. Australian opera and ballet have made their impact. Books are another thing altogether. Australian publications are hard to find in the plentiful and well-stocked bookshops displaying the latest works by British and American writers. In fact, New Zealanders probably know more about the United Kingdom and the United States than they do about their next door neighbor.

*

I've been reading John A. Lee's latest book "Shiner Slattery"—a collection of yarns about a well-known Otago-Canterbury-Southland swagger. Judging from these yarns diggers who made the Tasman crossing around the turn of the century swapped more yarns about the two countries than we do today. It is out of the golden past of Otago and the pioneering days of New Zealand's richest farming area of Canterbury that John Lee, a 75-year-old Auckland bookseller and probably the country's most controversial political and literary figure, has resurrected the character of the Shiner. Last year Lee published "Simple on a Soapbox", his recollections of a stormy political career in

the New Zealand Labor Party. Ironically, it was a firm of English publishers who backed Lee in his successful comeback. They also backed him in a venture into New Zealand paperbacks in which he re-published his "Children of the Poor", "Civilian into Soldier" and "The Hunted"—recollections of his own life as a ward of the state in his youth. Lee recalled to me recently that at the time "Children of the Poor" was first published it rated half-a-column in the Times Literary Supplement, good coverage in the New York Herald Tribune and five lines in the Auckland Star. On the floor of Parliament House a note was passed to him: "It'll be a classic John, but you'll have to wait till you're dead". That was in the thirties. John A. Lee isn't dead yet and behind his bright, impish eyes his mind is ticking away on a biography that should explode some legends of earlier days in Auckland.

*

Lee's origins may have been in the South Island, but, like most New Zealand writers, he lives and works in the North. The Otago University in Dunedin, with its establishment of the Burns Literary Fellowship requiring the holder to live in Dunedin, hoped to correct this. The southern city has so far won only Auckland poet R. A. K. Mason as a permanent resident. Prose writers Ian Cross, Maurice Duggan, John Casselberg and last year's fellow, Maurice Shadbolt, all headed north as soon as their term was up. It seems the golden days of Otago are over, and one feels the bite of the wind from the great southern ocean too keenly. But then, not only writers find it cheaper to live in the north. Much southern newspaper space is taken up lamenting about the industrial drift to the north.

The fact that Lee's first—and some say his best—literary effort should rate only five lines in a major New Zealand paper isn't surprising. The same thing could and does happen here today. Writers with an international reputation like Janet Frame and Marilyn Duckworth, for instance, are constantly ignored by the press here. Quite often in matters of art conservative New Zealand journalism chooses to remain silent. There are signs that this is changing. Even so, some papers still reprint syndicated English reviews of books without in any way relating them to the local scene.

The New Zealand Literary Fund is a very poor relation to its Commonwealth opposite number. It administers £2,000 apart from the annual State Scholarship worth £1,000. Almost nothing goes to creative writers directly. Most of it goes to publishers to ensure payment of royalties and to keep down the retail price of approved books. Four hundred pounds goes annually to the literary quarterly Landfall, which concerns itself these days mostly with social comment, academic criticism, black-and-white photographs of paintings, poetry and the odd short story. The biggest literary controversy last year was when the Fund discontinued its annual grant, made over the past

ten years to "Poetry Yearbook". Editor Louis Johnson was told the grant would be made only if poems by three poets were removed. The request was not made on a purely literary basis: The removal of the poems was required because they might be distasteful to the taxpayers whose money was supporting the publication. Johnson accused the committee of censorship and newspapers pointed out that its chairman, Professor Ian Gordon of Wellington's Victoria University, was also chairman of the censorship committee. Christchurch publisher Albion Wright, who first published Janet Frame's novels, was adamant that the "Yearbook" should appear as it was, with or without the grant. In the end, of course, it was the poets who suffered. They agreed to forego any payment they might have received. When the "Yearbook" finally appeared it hardly seemed worth the sacrifice. It again provided a platform for undistinguished, unpublished poems rather than the best New Zealand had to offer.

Since then the censorship committee has been abolished in favor of a Censorship Tribunal attached to the Justice Department, but we are no better off. Only the Customs Department seems to know what books should be banned. The Department issues a list as a guide to booksellers and some importers. Since the list has been the subject of a Parliamentary debate and Minister of Justice Hannan has declared it has no legal validity, Customs has become shy about it and plan restricting it to departmental officers. Booksellers, on the other hand, have whole shipments held up if they contain one suspicious title. Many of them don't consider it's worth the risk to import anything listed in Section Six of the Customs list. The machinery of the Censorship Tribunal is such that it considers only what is referred to it by Customs or John Citizen, and there are considerable delays between meetings. Unless Customs bans a book altogether from entering the country pending a Tribunal decision, hundreds of copies can be sold before a ruling is given. This happened before the Tribunal met to consider James Baldwin's "Another Country". The expensive hardcover edition of this has been released by the Tribunal, but the more recent paperback is included in Section Six of the Customs list, so most booksellers aren't risking its importation. Everything so far points to a liberal-minded Tribunal, but this could change with its personnel. The Act itself contains some very loose clauses. Argument about these became so heated when it went before the House that P.E.N. membership split on the issue. P.E.N. officially supported the Act, so many of New Zealand's best-known writers, including Allen Curnow, E. H. McCormick, Ian Cross, and Maurice Shadbolt sent in their resignations.

*

During the time I've lived in New Zealand there's been a growing national consciousness. An increasing number of books are published locally each year, and the exciting thing is that people are talking and arguing about them. Judging by the number of volumes published this year, there's also a boom in poetry. There's a growing confidence in the country's writers, and it is becoming almost possible for a writer to live on his earnings as a writer. Only last year, however, Olaf Ruhen was surprised by just how few full-time writers there were in New Zealand. He contrasted the country unfavorably with Western Australia, for instance.

Theatre, too, shows promise. Much sweat and loving labor goes into amateur theatre, ensuring a particularly high standard. Perhaps it was director Richard Campion's refusal to recognise

World Without Strangers?

Poems by AILEEN PALMER

Overland has pleasure in announcing the early publication of this first collection of poems by Aileen Palmer. The volume will be produced by the leading printing house of Edwards & Shaw; it will be bound in hard covers, and will sell at 15/- a copy.

Aileen Palmer served for two years as interpreter in Spain (1936-38) and visited Hiroshima in 1957, and these experiences among others are reflected in these poems. "World Without Strangers?" includes translations from Pushkin, Heine, Aragon and the leading contemporary Cuban poet, Nicolas Guillen.

Printing poetry is not these days a profit-making business, and it would assist us to meet costs if intending readers would order copies in advance, forwarding their 15/- to this journal at G.P.O. Box 98A, Melb., C.I.

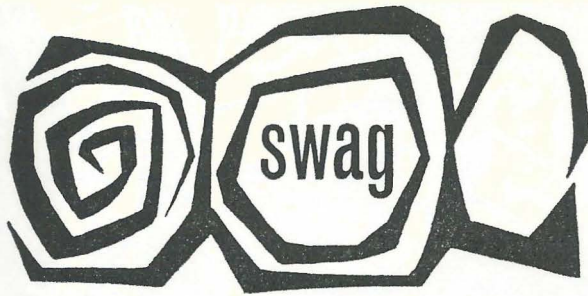
this that caused the demise of the New Zealand Players. He scorned intimate theatre in favor of lush, extravagant West End successes and hauled them from the proverbial "North Cape to Bluff", incurring impossible expenses. Now a small nucleus of enthusiasts, led by actor Tim Elliot and poet Peter Bland, is setting up shop in Wellington. Wellington is the logical site for a permanent, professional, residential theatre, but business and political circles have been slow to realise the potential and they probably still need a lot of prodding.

Musically New Zealand has always been well off, thanks to the Associated Chamber Music Society and the National Orchestra, and opera is well established, with huge business interests underwriting evening performances in the interests of advertising.

Art is yet to be discovered by most New Zealanders although good little galleries are opening up in Auckland and Wellington. There are hints that Australian art collectors are turning their eyes this way. But there are few, if any, worthwhile commissions and only one annual art prize for landscape painting, worth £1,000. Auckland Art Gallery is the only New Zealand gallery taking any real interest in collecting local works by contemporary painters. Some artists, however, have hopes in a new Art Centre set up recently under the directorship of prominent painter Eric Lee Johnson in the ex-goldmining, now semi-industrial town of Waihi.

*

While I've been writing this, Australian footballers have been preparing for their first match of the 1964 tour in Wanganui. Not so long ago there were trade talks between our two countries and some agreement seems likely. I've even heard rumors that some Australians talk of a union of the two countries. This just shows how much more Australians need to know about the independent character of the man who lives in the country next door.



Some readers will not yet have heard on the bush telegraph that John Morrison, whose remarkable story "Pioneers" we publish in this issue, had a heart attack some months ago and will not be able to perform physical labor again. An appeal backed by Alan Marshall, Judah Waten, David Martin, Clem Christesen and myself has so far raised about £650 to help John in his forced retirement; he is only sixty, and we all hope that he has a great many years of writing life before him yet. Further donations may be sent to Mrs. Jean Melzer, Hon. Treasurer, John Morrison Appeal Fund, 4 Grace Street, Camberwell, Victoria, or to this magazine.

*

A new co-operative association in the field of the performing arts has recently been formed in Sydney. PACT Co-operative aims to bring together producers, authors, composers and performers to create new dramatic and musical works, to promote experimentation and to handle business matters. Further information from PACT'S Executive Officer, Mr. Robert L. Allnutt, P.O. Box 309, Potts Point, Sydney.

*

Various announcements: A Writers' Forum will be held in conjunction with the Warringah (N.S.W.) Summer Arts Festival, February 8-13, 1965. Information from Dr. J. M. Couper at the School of English, University of New South Wales. Mrs. Doris Wattleworth, of Lady Barron, Flinders Island, Tasmania, has an idyllically situated but rough shack she would be happy to rent for peanuts to writers and others looking for somewhere to think and work undisturbed. The Union of Australian Women is running a short story competition, first prize £10, closing date 30th October, 1964 (write to 64a Druitt Street, Sydney). A Centenary Mary Gilmore novel award of at least £500 is offered by the Mary Gilmore Award committee, Box 32, Trades Hall, Sydney (closes 1st February, 1965).

*

Overland has, from way back, a very few off-prints on art paper of the fine portrait of Dame Mary Gilmore on the cover of Overland No. 4 which was drawn by Herbert McClintock. These were personally signed by both McClintock and Mary Gilmore, and are for sale to assist Overland's funds at £3/3/0 apiece. We also have had donated to us two copies of the notorious and unobtainable issue of the Sydney Bulletin (5th August, 1961) which contained a rude acrostic poem about editors. Price £2/2/- each.

*

Overland has just had its tenth birthday, and to celebrate the event Jacaranda Press are publishing "The Overland Reader". It's been a hard job to select the most memorable of many fine items over the years, but the agonising task has been finished and the manuscript is now with the publishers. The publication of this book will be unique

The Floating Fund

Well, at last the Commonwealth Literary Fund has come to the party. After eight years or so, we have now been granted £250 a year subsidy (or, more exactly, £62/10/0 an issue)—a big help, but not enough either to sustain us or to suborn us. Which, all in all, is a happy outcome.

The sixty-two quid hardly covers the costs of our blocks alone, so the message for readers, if we may make so bold, is that we hope your help, which has continued so wonderfully over these last ten years, continues.

Meanwhile, many thanks to the following for the fine total of £370/17/6:

Anon £150; GS JS £10; IM £5/5/0; DD RC £5; MM PO'C DS KF AD JS RM £4/4/0; HH £3/10/0; RS GM £3/8/0; CL £3/5/0; FR YT £3/4/0; GW JMCC £3/3/0; AB RG £3; VH MM £2/10/0; KT MM OR £2/4/0; LR £2; FR £1/18/0; JW £1/8/0; DC £1/14/0; HH £1/10/0; JMCL JN LS EMCL PM £1/6/0.

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in Australian literary annals, and will serve as a fascinating retrospect both for those who have come recently to this magazine and for those who have been with us right through a stormy and tormented decade.

*

We should like to acknowledge the courtesy of Mr. Peter Hastings and of the Bulletin in allowing us to reproduce certain of the Norman Lindsay joke-blocks in this issue.

S. MURRAY-SMITH



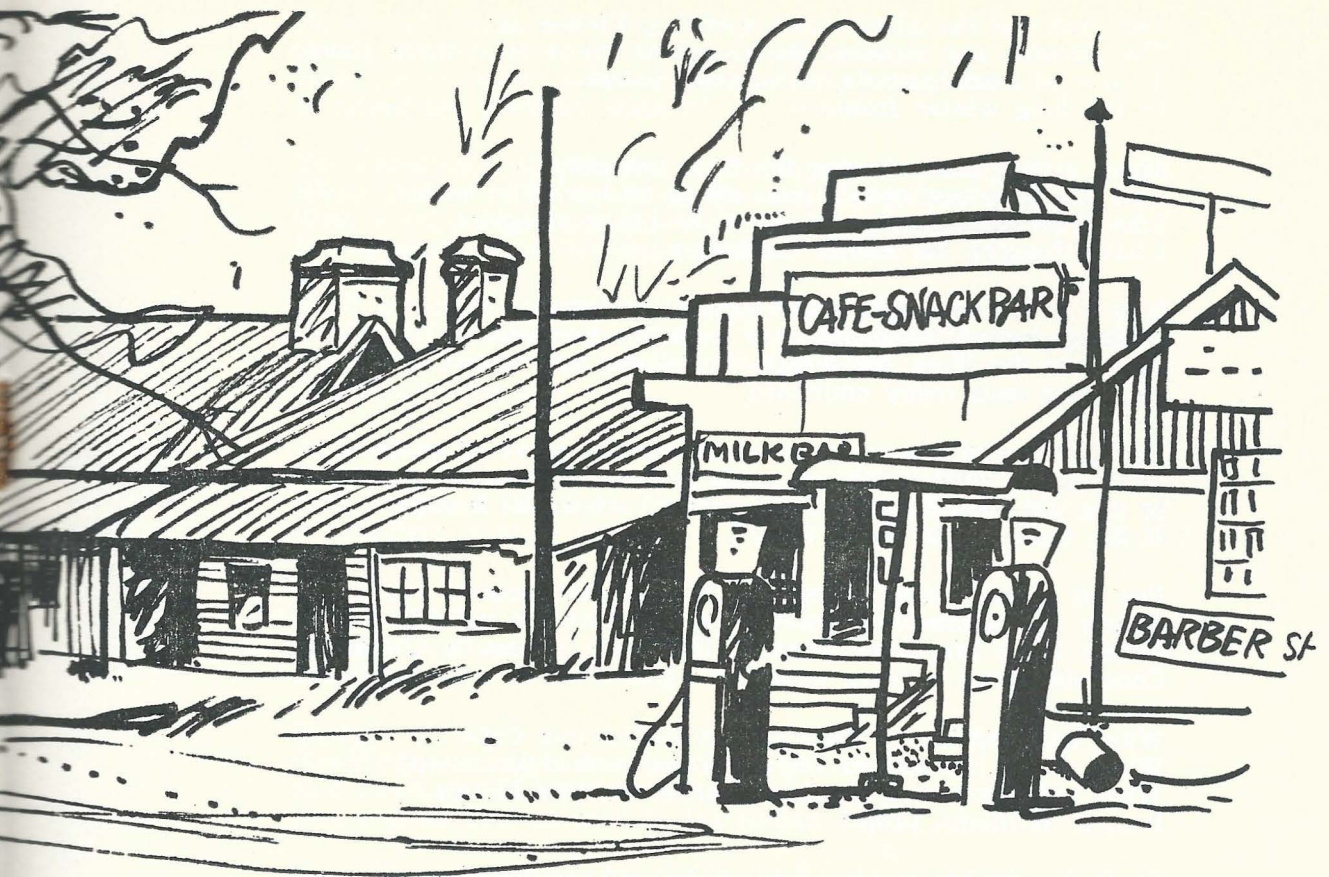
FAREWELL TO JINDABYNE

Douglas Stewart

Let us lament for Jindabyne, it is going to be drowned,
Let us shed tears, as many as the occasion warrants;
The Snowy, the Thredbo and the Eucumbene engulf it,
Combining their copious torrents.

Progress of course is necessary, progress is admirable,
But let us not march to the future without due charity;
Pray for poor Jindabyne gripped in the steely fingers
Of the Snowy Mountains Authority.

True, many a time imprisoned in this hot pocket
While oily men in overalls, powerful and easy,
Banged at some client's tractor, ignoring the anguish
Of stranger's engine or chassis,



Many a time thus freed in a cloud of flies
To contemplate all that Jindabyne has to offer
Awake or asleep in its hollow between the hills
And the somewhat polluted river—

The scars of snow still gleaming on blue Kosciusko,
The caravan camp where citizens far from home
Daring the dangerous mountains but taking no chances
Crowd in a comforting slum,

The souvenir shop with its stuffed koala bears
(Not manufactured in any local forest),
The two small cafes, the three enormous garages
Serving the hasting tourist,

The acres of junkyard where mangled and rusting cars
Dwindling to meet the river with other effluvia
Bear witness to mighty sprees of the lonely workers
From Poland and Yugoslavia,

The dust and the glare and the stifling lifeless air,
The ancient and ruinous shacks where those who have chosen
To live in Jindabyne do, in summer baked,
In the long winter frozen—

Many a time thus viewing the total township
And thinking how soon it was all to be buried in water
Like drowned Atlantis and never be heard of again,
I have thought: the sooner the better.

It is a town, one feels, that foresaw its doom;
Nothing, except the hotel, was built for permanence;
And over the fibro, the weatherboard and corrugated iron,
Crowding each rocky eminence,

The green wild briars march down like an army of outlaws
That, armed with its thorns, with banners of blossom gladdened,
In one last leap from the hills would have taken it soon
If the clean bright water hadn't.

But let us not therefore refrain from lamentation.
Surely one mourns when a town goes under the water?
Surely there are secret charms, there are virtues in Jindabyne
Concealed from a mere outsider?

What will become of Hans at the Kookaburra Cafe
When water has wetted the salad and soaked the chop?
What will become of Rankin's and Jindabyne Motors,
Ivan J. Williams, prop.?

Shall the eligible maiden behind the milkbar counter
Be eligible only to eels? Shall Leo A. Hore
In the wooden annexe to the pub be licensed to sell
Spirituous liquors no more?

I fear for the lean grey cat that lurks near the butcher's,
And the bantam hen and the six Black Orpington chickens,
And the fox and the rabbits at play among the rocks
All covered with grey-green lichens.

I fear for the General Store; I fear for E. Kluger:
Shall he be sunk with his famous salami sausages?
I fear for the old folk peering like bony goannas
Out of the doors of their cottages.

Rest. Be at peace. There is nothing to weep for here.
The rabbits will prudently retreat before the waters.
Benevolent authority will remove the ancient inhabitants,
Their cats and their sons and daughters.

Already New Jindabyne, shining with modern amenities,
Astonishes the Hereford cattle on higher ground,
From where like uncomfortable eagles the old folks shall stare
Down on their nests that are drowned.

They shall have new brick bungalows, electric stoves,
Refrigerators, toilets, more than they dreamed or wished;
How can we make lamentation when the whole town
Is raised up, purified, washed?

Yet something still lingers in Jindabyne, something that walks,
While the cat's fur stands on end and the kelpie whines,
With a cobwebbed beard around the old pise hotel
In the shade of its towering pines.

Shall we make lament for the far brave pioneers?
Gold-rush? Stage-coach? Cattle brought down from the snow?
Whatever it was that walked in Jindabyne
It died too long ago,

And left no more for the water to cover now
Than a vague sense of some purpose gone to waste
And, lingering still with the ghosts in the old hotel,
A steadfast, abiding thirst.

Let us not weep at all, then, let us rejoice
With a suitable noise like turbines, silently humming;
Whether it thirsts for purpose or merely for liquid
Jindabyne now is brimming;

Straight through the mountains marches the S.M.A.,
Sparkling with light and pouring with irrigation,
And down go the towns in its path and up go the pylons,
And a great deal of good to the nation.

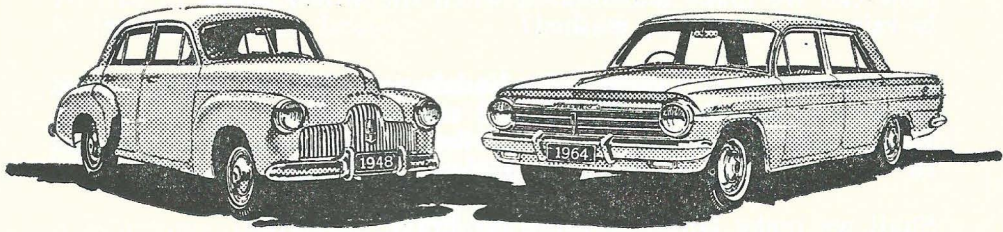
But still while progress and water advance on the town
And the dams fill high, yes even while we rejoice,
Jindabyne calls us, for reasons best known to itself,
In a very small wet voice.

And so for the far brave beards of the pioneers,
For the old hotel and the pine-tree drowned for ever,
For someone who once was young here and once made love
On the banks of the Snowy River,

For something still fainter and far away back in time,
The shy dark shadowy Aboriginal race
Always like creatures in water, who left one word
And melted without a trace,

Or finally for the mystery and the pathos
That seep from earth and bubble out from water
In any place where men have lived and bred
And feuded with each other,

Let one dim bell, from either of the rival churches,
When deep lie the spires in water and deep the pine,
Sometimes be heard on soft warm summer evenings
Lamenting Jindabyne.



In Australian content

HOLDEN LEADS THE WAY

(and has since birth)

Even when it first saw the light of day in 1948 Holden's Australian content was higher than any other car — 89%. Ever since then that percentage has steadily increased. In fact, for many years it has been in excess of 95% — the target in the Government plan recently announced. Not all the things that go into Holden are made at GMH plants alone. In 16 years GMH have paid out more than £650,000,000 to more than 4,000 suppliers employing many thousands of Australians. They, plus the 23,000 who work in GMH plants, have contributed to the 1,240,000 Holdens that have been produced.

Australian in concept, Australian in design, Australian in content — that has always been the measure of Holden — Australia's own car.

GMH-THE LOOK OF LEADERSHIP

Vane Lindesay



THE COMIC ART OF NORMAN LINDSAY

THE writer and novelist G. K. Chesterton once wrote: "It would be commonly regarded as a deficiency in humor to search for a definition of humor". But this rueful notion, wise though it is, should not discourage observations on this admittedly complex subject. Traditionally, humor is based on the assault on dignity: under the veneer is the wounding intent; this is the universal view. Again, humor depends largely on known stereotypes and easily recognised situations. It is at the same time the most nationalistic thing in the world; that is, when it reveals character, not clichés.

Indigenous Australian humor, which in the past strongly reflected traditional national attitudes, characteristics and behavior patterns, has a reputation of being reflective, irreverent, wry, and often cruel, but never bitter or sadistic.

In this country, the largest body of humorous work has been done by our graphic humorists, and an artist who reigned in this field for forty years was Norman Lindsay.

*

Norman Alfred Lindsay first came into national prominence at the age of 21 in 1901, the year he joined the *Bulletin* staff as an artist, at the invitation of its editor, J. F. Archibald.

This offer came as a result of an outstanding series of Lindsay's pen drawings illustrating "The Decameron" of Boccaccio, which were exhibited in Sydney at the N.S.W. Society of Artists, and reviewed by A. G. Stephens on the Red Page in the *Bulletin*.

What was remarkable for an artist so young, and self-taught, was that these pen drawings were recognised as the finest of their kind yet produced in Australia, since there had been no great classic traditions behind this particular medium. Pen drawing was an art peculiar to the nineteenth century and came about through the replacement of wood, steel and copper engraving by the new photo-engraving technique of reproduction.

Norman Lindsay started his career in journalism when he was sixteen years old. From Creswick, a little township twelve miles from Ballarat, where he was born in 1879, he joined his brother Lionel to share a studio in Melbourne.

The young Lindsay, it appears, was a humorist from the start. His first paying work was drawing Sunday-school texts at half-a-crown each for a religious-minded printer. These texts were not only varied, but irreverently startling. For St. Paul was represented in his evangelistic calling wearing a black bell-topper hat, whilst Abraham was de-

picted somewhat sportingly in long check trousers. Bowler hats, bowyngs and carpet bags were some of the other assorted anachronisms furnishing these texts. Soon Lindsay was engaged on his first press work for the "Hawklett", a Melbourne publication devoted to the illustrating of crime, the doubtful and seamy side of life, and any public events that justified the exhibition of feminine calves. Later, at the age of nineteen, he worked on lithographic posters for the firm of Ferguson in Melbourne, then followed a period as art editor for the short lived magazine *The Rambler*. These occupations allowed him to make a living while he pursued his passionate dedication to the development of technical skill in drawing.

After his discovery by A. G. Stephens (who, curiously, turned his literary coat ten years later and attacked his prodigy) Lindsay moved on to Sydney, and to the *Bulletin* at the old offices at 214 George Street, to become within a few years an internationally-known pen draughtsman. Before he had served twelve months he was given the distinction of drawing a full-page cartoon every week, although, before his association with the *Bulletin*, Lindsay had never had any drawings published in that journal and only one in the now extinct *Melbourne Punch*.

The sustained moral heckling of Norman Lindsay has rather highlighted a one-sided aspect of this amazingly versatile artist: so much so in fact, that it is almost forgotten that for many years a feature of the *Bulletin* was his excellent joke and comic drawings.

At the turn of the century, when Lindsay started working on the *Bulletin*, Australia was still an infant nation. But at least our humor had come of age, and had, by then, form, character and distinction. Several factors contributed to this, and were reflected in Australian graphic humor. By this date native-born Australians had long since outnumbered immigrants and many "attitudes" had crystallised. Secondly, national characteristics were established to the point where, for example, the "romantic" up-country bushman was already a legendary figure, for more than two-thirds of the Australian population lived in towns and cities. The final factor was that Australian humor was inspired by the weekly *Bulletin*, which paid special attention to the encouragement and fostering of national talent.

As the immediate past, and some of the present of the Australia of the time was largely rural, so consequently much of Lindsay's black-and-white humor dealt with bush types and rural situations. His early joke drawings did much to establish what is, today, a legendary outback pattern, which originated pictorially with the graphic humorists, including Lindsay himself, George Lambert, Alf Vincent, Frank Mahony and others. Indeed the whiskers, the waistcoats and bowyangs of present-day Australian rural comic strips and joke drawings are direct legacies from artists like Norman Lindsay.

But by no means was all Lindsay's emphasis on backblocks humor. Lindsay, like Phil May and other artists before him, drew his main inspiration from the city. His characters—the larrikins, city tramps, the rabbit-ohs, slum urchins, his "Saturdee" boys and Jiggerty Janes—were all subjects for his superb observation and raillery.

*

In the three decades preceding 1900, black-and-white art was regarded seriously as one of the most difficult of all mediums, and admirable work was produced on the Continent, and in England and America. Because of this, technical efficiency and the close observation of human character, with all its idiosyncratic variations of type and class, was a major obsession with Norman Lindsay. He met the eighteen year old Will Dyson in 1898, and Dyson became his closest friend. They went about the streets following likely types to draw, and jotting down salient characteristics. "For myself," Lindsay stated recently, "I took the joke drawing as a serious contribution to art, and always used models for it, supplying of course, the facial character the subject demanded."

This credo is typical of the humorous and satirical artists of the past and was responsible for the tradition of Australian black-and-white comic art, which at the time was already notable for its fine draughtsmanship and characterisation. It made Australia in the late nineteenth century one of the most important centres of black-and-white art in the world. Norman Lindsay reinforced this tradition with his striking originality. Wit and character were blended into faultless figure grouping by his craftsmanship with the pen. Except for the occasional use of wash, and sometimes crayon (media he usually reserved for political cartoons), Lindsay favored the pen for his drawings. His beautifully-relaxed pen strokes, drawn with a skill rarely seen today, were the result of constant practice. In fact, Lindsay acquired a unique and most remarkable facility in that he could use a pen at arm's length, and control it by direct, unsupported contact with the paper.

Even under the pressure of journalism, Lindsay's skill was such that his drawings were never

altered or corrected with process-white paint or paste-on patches, expedient devices found repeatedly in the drawings of many artists working to journalism's deadlines. Unlike most artists he never inked-in black masses in his drawings. Dark areas were built up with individual strokes and lines to a state perfect in tonal balance—truly a form of pen painting.

Lindsay has produced many thousands of items for journalism, but what is not widely known is that an original and pioneering contribution was made by him to Australian humorous art in the field of the comic-strip. The first established (and longest running) Australian comic strip, "The Potts", was first drawn by Stan Cross for *Smith's Weekly* (under the title "You and Me") in 1919. The fact is worth stating if only because of the quaint fable that Norman Lindsay played no part in the development of the comic-strip in Australia. The truth, of course, is that Lindsay was drawing strip jokes as early as 1907 for the *Lone Hand*, and he continued to do so over the years, developing in particular his animal characters for the comic-strip.

Of all Lindsay's published work, strip jokes, humorous illustrations, joke drawings and political cartoons, it is his frolicsome animals that have brought him the most admiration, praise and fame. For these drawings of native bears, wombats, bandicoots—and of course the animal characters of "The Magic Pudding" (1918)—have made his name a household one in Australia for the last forty years. A collection of Norman Lindsay's gay comedies of the pen, his native bears, inquisitive dogs and drunken roosters, is now being prepared for publication under the title "The Animal Comedy".

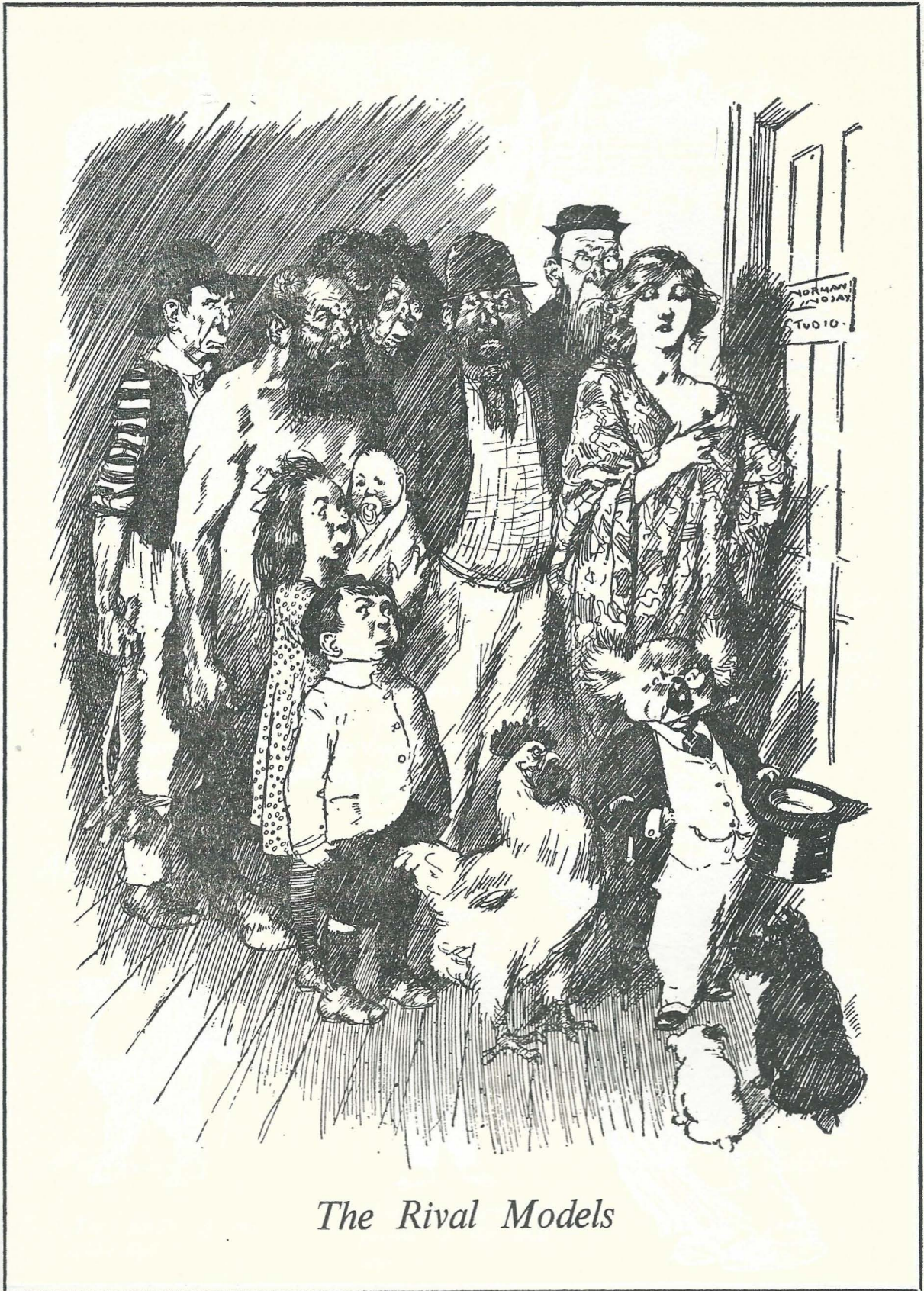
Animals have always fascinated Norman Lindsay, who acknowledges the German-born Heinrich Kley as the master of anthropomorphic art. Lindsay, in declaring his admiration for Kley, also gives us some insight into his own method of drawing animals. Of Kley he says: "There is one drawing of Kley's of an elephant suffering from the gout, and the expression of human anguish on its fantastically designed elephant face is a staggering feat of performing the impossible. And the free and flexible penwork in it gives the impression of having carried the whole drawing through with ease and assurance. What we do not see in it is all the careful pencil work that built it up, the constant rubbing out and redrawing that went on till Kley had got the precise alignment of human and animal formations to create that masterly fantasy of an elephant and an old man in one combination enduring an attack of gout."

"I know all about that preliminary pencil work," says Lindsay, "for I've sweated over it myself, when it came to such problems of drawing a drunken rooster, and having to make him act like a human drunk, or putting two tomcats through a drama of jealousy over a flirtatious she cat."

"And I will add," he remarks, "that I got a lot of fun out of my animal comedy. There is nothing like having a lark with one's work as a relief from all the serious tension it enforces on one."

*

The witty, lively mind and accomplished drawing of Norman Lindsay has contributed greatly to the Australian achievement and tradition of black-and-white art. Such artists as he have revealed in their past work much of what today is our conception of ourselves. It would be well to mark such achievements in the current increasing interest in national self-assessment.



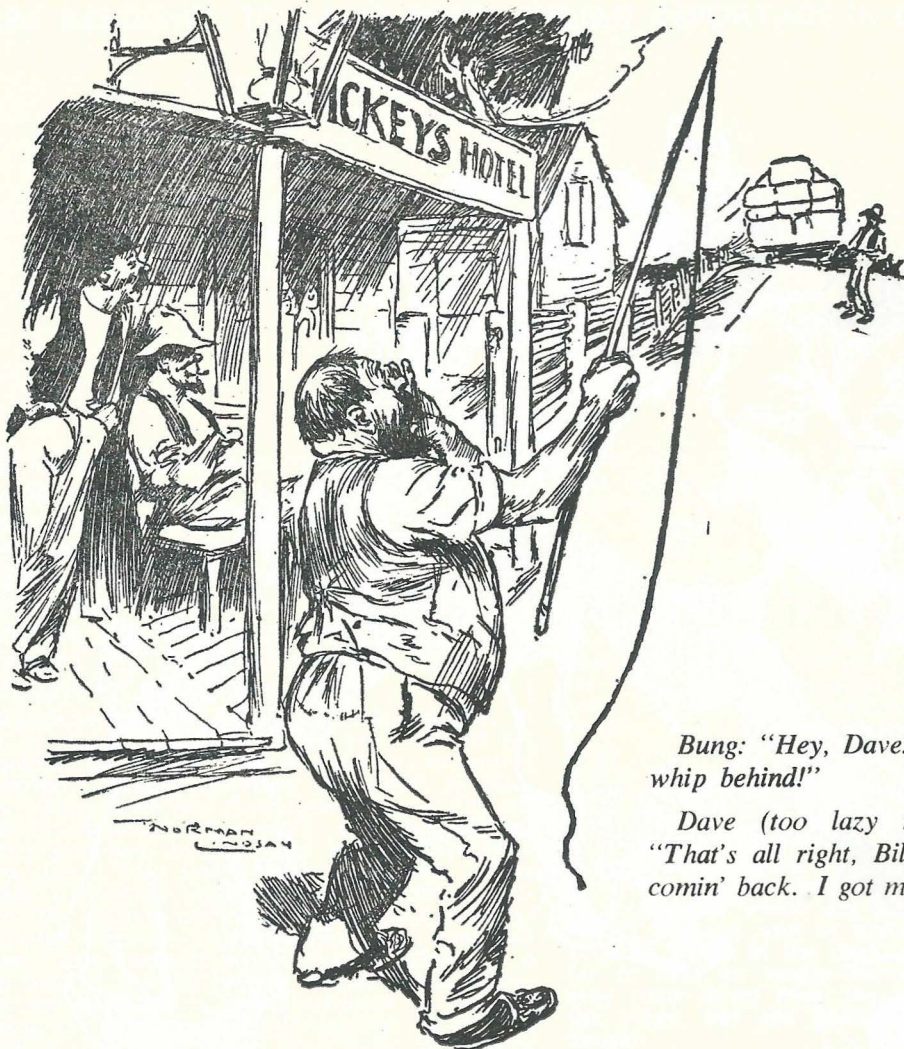
The Rival Models



Swaggie: "Any chance of a bit of meat, boss?"

Cocky: "Well, I can't spare any meat, but I'm going to kill a pumpkin tonight, an' you can have the innards!"





Bung: "Hey, Dave! Ye've left yer whip behind!"

Dave (too lazy to walk back): "That's all right, Bill. I'll call f'r't comin' back. I got me langwidge."

An Election Speech



"The purity of my public life!"



"Let me inform that person in the audience —"



"... !!! - - !!!"



NORMAN LINDSAY

Bill: "Here, I say, if you go on like this now, what will you do after we are married?"

SOME COUNTRY PEOPLE OF INDIA

Allan and Wendy Scarfe

THE village Sokhodeora, where we worked until recently for three years, lies in a remote corner of Bihar State, in the congested middle part of India, the Indo-Gangetic Plains. Northward is the Himalayan region where belief in polygamy and witchcraft still lingers in elderly folk, and southward lies the Southern Plateau where Hindustani is not spoken.

Sokhodeora is one of the 600,000 villages in India in which live some eighty per cent. of the population. In general these villages are congested and without streets, drainage, sanitation or electricity. They have few fruit trees and no flowers. Water is obtained from wells and carried, for cooking purposes, to the mud houses. The fuel is cow dung. Two meals a day are eaten. There is often a division between caste residential sectors of the village, and almost no regular association either between castes or between men and women. The majority are illiterate. There is a tragic lack of medical, dental, hospital and educational facilities and a high incidence of disease. Farming is archaic and unproductive. A mirror, bicycle or furniture, other than beds, is rare; a village radio even rarer; a clock non-existent.

Sokhodeora's population of two thousand are of the lowest Hindu castes, and although the houses or house-yards adjoin, the people have separated themselves into sectors. The Harijan sector, which is distinguishable from the fact that the families keep pigs, is itself separated into two halves, the shoemakers and the wood-cutters. Among this poorest group some have only one-roomed houses.

In front of the Harijans live the potters; beside these the shopkeepers adjacent to the "farmers", some of whose families have been wealthy enough in the past to build a private well inside their closed courtyard. Their houses cluster about the derelict mansion of the feudal landlord whose rights were abolished after Independence. Across a lane lives a group of Moslem families. Some three hundred yards away are two hamlets. Sokho consists of Moslem families and includes the home of Mahommet Sherfu Din who, being a master builder, is the village's highest paid laborer; he earns 7/- a day. Sipur consists of "farmers" and Harijans, one woman with leprosy who lives with her family, and a mad woman who lives alone in a hut like a kennel and often carries a white kid about in her arms.

The term "Harijan", meaning "Beloved of God", was originated by Gandhi and has replaced the ugly word "Untouchable". Harijans do the "menial" work and will eat meat, including pig.

Sokhodeora is at the end of a rough dirt road which connects dozens of villages to the outside world only in the dry season. Beyond is a jungled range of hills. For cities and towns the jungle provides timber, bamboo scaffolding and baskets, leaf-plates and leaves for wrapping betel nut; for the villagers it gives all these and grazing for cows and buffaloes, firewood, leaves for tanning leather, and for the wrapping of cheap cigarettes, juice for home-brew, edible berries and fruits, and a running battle with the guards of the Forestry Department. For their preservation of the wild life means loss of crops from the depredations of deer and wild pigs.

So to protect their ripening crops from animals and theft, land-owners build temporary perches in their fields which are manned by the children during the day and at night by the men. Some sing for hours in the darkness, while others prefer to beat an empty kerosene tin. Few tigers ever come down from the jungle on this side of the ridge, but the black bears are a constant danger.

*

Akloo and Bunwari Manjhi perhaps consider themselves fortunate, for their incomes are rather above the level of under £5 a year which fifteen per cent. of their fellow-countrymen in this region have to subsist on.

Akloo, a landless laborer, was crippled early in life, possibly either by poliomyelitis or rickets. One of his feet is turned sideways and he limps on this wasted leg; but he is always so cheerful that one does not notice his disability. His wife has a wild attractiveness and they have five children. But they have no house and have lived for the past five years in a room or a corner of a verandah of a hospitable caste-member's home, periodically moving to other temporary quarters when their host needs the space they had occupied. The ragged clothes each wears and some earthen cooking pots are all they possess.

Whenever Akloo can find work it is at the prevailing rate of two shillings for a day longer than eight hours. His wife and eldest daughter, Bhagia, about fourteen, are also able to find occasional jobs carrying bricks, eight a time on top of their heads from kiln to building site. Immediately after her fifth baby's birth, Akloo's wife was em-

ployed in the building of a dairy. She laid the baby on a pile of straw near her and covered him with a small, grimy scrap of cotton to protect him from the flies, as many village women do. Bimula, about seven, attended our school for a few months, but left for a job minding cows, a job paying a few pence a month. Basanti, three, attended our kindergarten only fitfully, for she played nursemaid to her two-year-old sister.

It is not for lack of ability that this family can find no way out of their circumstances, for Bhagia, the same two-year-old sister on her hip, learned to read in our adult literacy classes to something like third grade standard in eighteen evening lessons. But she had to drop such a luxury through pressures of employment, housework and her approaching marriage.

When we left India only Bimula was employed. Akloo was being allowed to take home the left-over rice in return for his services in cleaning the pots in the community kitchen of one of the Gandhian Movement institutions. There is no unemployment benefit from a welfare state in India. Nevertheless, he arrived willingly to donate two days of voluntary labor to the building of our night-class and community centre as some 250 other people, slightly better off than he, had done. His generosity was more than we could accept and we paid him wages under the lap.

One day as Akloo was laying tiles, at the skilled laborer's rate of 4/- a day, he remarked on a pain in his chest. We suggested he consult the government doctor, but Akloo had already done so, and was hoping we could help instead.

"The doctor told me," he said, "it would cost thirty shillings to cure me. But how can I save up thirty shillings?"

There is no answer to that for Akloo. If he has some fatal illness that will be the price of his life.

*

Not a hundred yards from Akloo's verandah corner, along a narrow, zigzag, undrained alley, Bunwari Manjhi has his home. He too is landless. His two straw-thatched mud rooms and house yard together would fit into many an Australian lounge room. He is tall and thin, with angular cheek bones, heavy lips and a haunted, feverish expression in his eyes. Unlike Akloo, he sometimes catches a rabbit or porcupine in the jungle and so tastes meat.

Bunwari's daughter, Angni, had come to our school for a few days, but had soon disappeared, to earn a pittance herding goats and also out of fear, because we wanted to treat her trachoma. Although education is compulsory by law, only one child in four attends school in the area.

We had not seen Bunwari for over a month when his wife, Chinta Devi, called Allan to look at him. She was a tiny woman, looking twenty years older than her age, with a habit of rocking her head sideways in a gesture of indescribable hopelessness. Bunwari had become a skeleton, unable to move from his string-strung bed. The family had not been eating for perhaps a fortnight, and had no relatives to help them.

We found food for them and temporary employment for the fourteen-year-old son, Manjhu, at 2/6 a day. To begin with the responsibility was too heavy for him and he would run away after a morning's labor to go fishing with other children for the afternoon. Bunwari Manjhi we brought to a bend in the dirt road where the doctor's jeep was due to pass, and he diagnosed T.B. So we brought the ampoules from the government hospital and found a person to give Bunwari the shots. This, too, was at the time of our departure.

Bunwari Manjhi may still be alive, and Angni may not yet be blind, and Manjhu may be employed. But we are not hopeful.

*

Midway between Akloo's and Bunwari Manjhi's homes lives Saudagar Manjhi, a young landless laborer with two small children. He is almost totally blind, probably from a lack of vitamin A in his childhood, and can only do limited kinds of work. We once saw him buy three tiny potatoes like bantam's eggs—they fitted into one hand—for his and his wife's evening meal. Malnutrition sores were common in our kindergarten and the mother of one boy, Bachu, said that she fed him only rice and potatoes. Bachu took months to respond to treatment.

Our closest and most loyal friends in Sokhodeora were the members of Paro Mochi's family; the parents, their three married sons and wives, their three other children and three toddling grandchildren, who live according to the joint family system which is typical of at least three-quarters of India's families.

The family lives as an economic unit; their property is held by the father to whom all owe respect and obedience. On his death the responsibility will pass to the eldest son, Bindeswar. If one is unemployed, as the third son, Mahadev, has been for the past year, he shares in what the others earn. Paro, the father, tans leather, makes, repairs and sells shoes and works his plots of land, one of which is four miles from his house. (Land is distributed very unevenly among the village families, the average being half an acre per person throughout the area.) Meghu and Mahadev worked as servants, Bindeswar helped on their land, made shoes, and attended a State Handicraft Training Centre for a stipend of £2 a month, and the wives did much of the farm work. The children Surji, Chamiliwa and Kaisurawa, cared for their cow, buffalo and goat.

Together, at the best of times, this family earns ten shillings a day, which feeds the fourteen of them. There are times, however, when the wages of the sons are two months overdue, when they have no food in the house and harvest their crops green.

Mahadev has a long, thin face, broad, flattish nose, a square jaw and protruding ears. Until we provided for him, his barefootedness was painful for him as he picked his way gingerly, numb over stones, on winter mornings. And in his thin cotton dhoti or lungi, singlet and scarf, which were his summer wear also, he shivered and looked blue all day until we bought him some clothes. Winter is cruel for most country people in India. On one such day our suggestion that the school children play soccer to get warm drew down a well-merited reproach: "You have woollen clothes you can put on after playing. The children have nothing and will catch pneumonia." We could only serve hot (powdered) milk and dismiss them to sit by their home fires.

For a seventeen-year-old Mahadev was both thin and naive. His thinness arose from the fact that, like most others in the area, he had been brought up on about threepence worth of food daily throughout his childhood. He ate little, if any, fruit, vegetables, meat, sugar, oils or fats, and could not remember when he had eaten an egg or drunk milk. Every day he took only rice and red lentils with spices and drank water.

Mahadev's mind had been formed on a diet of myths inadequately "taught" to about grade 4 standard, a course which had failed to trench even the spelling of his name. We encouraged

Monuments

At last we came to some island.

We bobbed and bowed up to the shore.
There were trees, strange statues, a city
against the sky and a parrot, screeching.
We had no wish to explore.

Our hands were limp, caused nothing harm—
sand sifting through fingers, grown careless.
All seemed at ease. Bleaching, laid bare,
we burst in heat. Our eyes looked calm;

were empty. Salt wind peeled bones, hot
sand

and sun worked ribs; in death still lent them
energy. They opened like some claw, or a
hand

grasping; became our final monument;

more easily made than those before.

RICHARD MILNER

him to study, and he felt very proud when he could write his signature instead of having to make a thumb-print. His understanding of cause and effect, particularly in matters of pain and illness, was tragically limited; his inability to draw sound conclusions from his observations resembled the thought processes of Europeans before the development of scientific thought.

Mahadev felt anxiety at the recurrence of the thirteen year period when Nag, the great serpent, causer of earthquakes, walked the earth, and he did not know what to think about the news that Holy Men were gathering in Delhi predicting the imminent end of the world. The owl's hoot in the dusk frightened him, for if it called his name catastrophe would strike him. He had no way of knowing that an unscrupulous quack was less reliable than a university-trained doctor, or of realising that the quack's diagnosis and medicines were meaningless when he did not bother to see the patient.

When Mahadev first listened to a radio he asked what could be done to prevent the announcer telling lies, for the man had stated that it would rain but no rain had fallen. He was certain that women were men's inferiors and that educating girls was stupid. Like most village people he had travelled only to neighboring villages, and was consequently terrified when we first took him to a city and when we first put him on a train, experiences, but for us, he probably would not have had.

When he was about eighteen—village people usually do not know their age—Mahadev's "second marriage" was arranged. His first marriage, or betrothal, had taken place when he had been about ten. He could remember having been taken to his future bride's house, fed sweets, made much of briefly and then having been chased out to play in the street so that he would not see her.

Now Paro Mochi, Mahadev's father, borrowed money—perhaps as much as ten pounds—from a sympathetic shopkeeper and bought wheat and rice and chenar, yellow lentils and red lentils and ghee.

Mahadev and the men of his caste had the first wedding feast, then Mahadev walked the fourteen miles to his bride's village to the tremendous beat of his friend Mahavir's drum. It was a trunk of a tree, half as high as a man, hollowed out with deft care. The ends were taut pigskin, and hundreds of peacock feathers were embedded in a thick ocean richness encircling the middle and the ends. There was no such drum for miles around.

In Pakri Brawan, a sadhu officiating, Mahadev was married, and his small brother, Surju, was betrothed to the bride's younger sister. Again the men feasted and on the following day the marriage party set out for Sokhodeora. Through the warm afternoon on the dirt road half a dozen youths straggled along, each with something of his garments yellow, and Mahadev and Surju with new yellow dhotis. A hundred yards behind them trailed the sixteen-year-old wife, and some paces behind her sister came. Their new saris were pulled over their hair covering their faces, their heads hung and they only saw the dust of the track as it squirted through their toes.

About six miles from their new home the women lagged further and further behind. Betrayed from his proper male role by sympathy, Mahadev let the youths go on and encouraged the girl whose name he did not know and would never speak. He even demeaned himself so far as to carry her little parcel of belongings. The way was uneven over the irrigation banks of small rice plots. She was slow and he spoke angrily to her. She cried, and her sister too. They were frightened. Mahadev felt angrier and confused and sorry and miserable. It was long after dark that the bride finally came to the mud-walled house roofed with potter's tiles, with the low, windowless rooms forming a closed rectangle around a tiny inner courtyard, where the hen clucked after her chickens and the smoke rose from the small mud stove on the ground. According to custom, it was about two months after the wedding that Mahadev concerned himself with having a bed made.

*

Akloo, Bunwari Manjhi, Mahadev, and sixty-three thousand other Biharis amongst whom we lived had an average income of 6/4 a week, or £16/10/- a year. Laborers received 2/- a day, but this could not be multiplied by six or seven to calculate the weekly wage, because few indeed could find regular employment. And payment of wages was not necessarily prompt: we knew laborers who had not been paid after four months of work, whose only recourse was to plead with their employer and appeal to his sympathy. Primary teachers earned £6 a month, secondary teachers about £10 a month, and the government doctor £20 a month. Rice was sixpence a pound.

The average of these villagers was, and still is, lower than the Bihar State average income. The average income of the forty million Biharis is lower than the all-India average. Official Government of India statistics state that the annual income per person of India's 440 million people, millionaires and beggars included, is about £33. That is about 13/9 per person per week, Rupees 7 in Indian money, and double the income of the Sokhodeora people.

In the last issue of *Overland*, David Potts concluded his article about India with the figures that "over 99 per cent." of Indian people earn "less than £7 a week". It would seem that this may have been a mis-print for Rupees 7. With the present mismanagement of human society, Mahadev is unlikely to earn £7 a month in his life.

MISCELLANY

London Surface: Notes from an Alien

Laurence Collinson

I. DYING ABSTRACT?

Piccadilly and the jostling crowds outside in the hot noon rain; inside, I sit in the hot rainbow darkness with about twenty others: we appear to be praying silently, or in contemplation. The gallery of the Ceylon Tea Centre seems to have transformed itself into a place of worship; those of us inhabiting it are undergoing a new experience. Superficially, what we are watching are the luminous pictures of John Healey, a seventy-year-old scientist; but it occurs to me that perhaps we are witnessing the death of abstract painting, or maybe its rebirth in a new form.

A few weeks ago I visited the Institute of Contemporary Arts, which had advertised an exhibition of the paintings of the American Ad Reinhardt. I glanced at the walls, which were white, interestingly broken up with huge black panels, and I said to the attendant: "Oh, you haven't hung the Reinhardts yet." He tried to appear unshocked by my philistinism. "Yes, we have," he answered. I slunk over to the nearest black oblong and, peering closely, found that it was not entirely colorless, but contained rectangular greyish variations which, however, were lost to the eye at a distance of more than a few feet. Abstract art, I thought, has reached its ultimate. Yet Reinhardt was taken seriously by some London critics. Even David Sylvester wrote for the *New Statesman* a rhapsodic piece ("The matt black surface starts to sing") that might well stand republishing some time as a parody of current art criticism, though I presume he meant us to take it seriously.

Reinhardt has in fact been bypassed by Healey's luminous pictures. So, I suspect, have all abstract artists who work directly by applying paint (or other material) to a still surface, because there is nothing that any abstract artist of whatever school (even action painting) can do that cannot be done more *intensely* by these pictures. Except perhaps

for textural effect, and even that may eventually succumb.

It may be difficult to understand what luminous pictures are without seeing them. Yet the idea behind them is not new and their ancestry is even dubious. They are pictures in the two dimensions of length and width (and no doubt a three-dimensional form will be created) and they exist also in time. The image moves. Their progenitors are abstract film cartoons (exemplified by sections of Disney's "Fantasia") and that old cinema gimmick, which was still, when I left Melbourne, extant at the Odeon and the Grosvenor, of projecting moving, usually ghastly, patterns of color on the screen or the curtains during interval. The same basic elements of area and time are involved. The luminous pictures on display took from twenty-five minutes to forty-eight hours to return to their starting point, and their sizes (they were all rectangular) varied from living-room conventional to two or three times a man's height. The color is brilliant—fireworks in the night is the nearest comparison I can think of; and the forms are anything their creator (artist? technician?) wants them to be, from the pure and geometrical to the most romantic and evocative shapes. Projection is the method: behind each image on its flat plastic screen is the pyramidal shape of a shallow rear projector. According to the catalogue, the images (which answer to such inscrutable titles as "Box 3 No. 2", "Unit D eleven", "Facets 255") can be projected to any size from postcard to skyscraper wall. The possibilities are exciting and endless. The catalogue says also that Healey spends from two months to a year on producing a single work. I can well believe it: I found his pictures tremendously moving.

II. RANDOM NOTES

What strikes a stranger? London's exotic population (exotic to an insular Australian, that is). The pavements of the main centres thronged with Indians, West Indians, African, boys with long hair. Overhearing the lovely accents of Irishmen, Welshmen, West Indians, Londoners. The numerous Rolls Royces and Jags. The hardness of London's water; the lack of showers. The poor-quality meals in the medium-priced restaurants; the dirtiness of many food shops. The high price of meat and fruit, the comparatively low prices of theatre and cinema tickets (Australian theatre managers are veering from the facts in claiming the lowest-priced tickets in the English-speaking world). The young lovers embracing on the Underground escalators. The efficiency of actual Underground travel,

and the inefficiency at the station points. The high quality of television and radio (again, this is how it appears to an Australian; the local critics are always complaining about the low quality).

And the dogs! Excreta everywhere, despite innumerable notices warning the public of the penalties it can expect if its dogs foul the footpaths. You have, literally, to watch your step. Everywhere you go, including buses, the Underground, art galleries, and, most definitely, food shops, there are dogs in the most healthy and well-groomed condition, led or carried by their master or mistress. Are Londoners so hard up for objects on which they can bestow affection (the latest issue of 20th Century, devoted to people who live alone and apart, would suggest that they are not)? Or is wanting a dog, a national instinct? Or is a dog a status symbol? I begin to suspect that the many parks which grace London are maintained, not for human delight, but to give the dog population a chance to run around without a leash.

One very real pleasure of living in London is that one is able to read so many books that one couldn't read in Australia—without breaking the law, that is. Freely available in the bookshops are "The Hundred Dollar Misunderstanding", "The Trial of Lady Chatterley" (and her lover), "Fanny Hill" (faintly abridged), "The Ginger Man", "The Kama Sutra, and many others including "The Carpetbaggers" (unemasculated version) and the like. These are all paperbacks. If you can't afford the hard-covered books such as the works of Henry Miller and William Burroughs, "Cain's Book", "City by Night", "Another Country", you can borrow them free and freely from your local library. It is surprising the sense of freedom one has just from knowing that these books are available if one wants to read them. Similarly, films. I have been able at last to see "Viridiana", "The Silence", "The Connection", "Breathless", "The Balcony", "The Servant", "The Leather Boys", and "Les Liaisons Dangereuses", most, if not all of which, are banned in good old, free old Aussie. I don't think I've been corrupted by contact with these books or films (at least no more so than I already was in the homeland); and, looking around me, I doubt if many Londoners have either. The newspapers, journals, and radio and television stations also possess a freedom of expression (especially in the fields of politics, criticism of government and private organisations, and sex) that is astonishing to an Australian visitor; one begins to wonder to what degree the Australian mass media impose censorship on themselves . . . Australia may not be a police state (yet?), but as soon as one is away from the backwater, one realises just how stodgy and restrictive it is—in its mores as well as its laws.

III. AN UNWANTED FILM

Another real pleasure of living in London is that it is like having the Melbourne Film Festival running all the time (all praise to that magnificent institution!). Although the film critics complain that not nearly enough foreign films are released here, I find that it is as much as I can do to keep up with what is shown. The distributors of foreign films in Australia (for "Australia", read perhaps "Melbourne and Sydney") do a pretty good job, generally speaking, but the fact that they are running a business that entails the outlay of a large amount of capital militates against their choosing films that carry a financial risk. Neither the producers of films nor the Australian customs department take into account the possibility that a fine

Rock Paintings—N.S.W.

Initials painted on the cliffs
with demanding vivid brutal brush
are six-inch letters for inch-high minds.

M.R.P. CAME HERE TO FISH.

In yellow white and red or lilac
a massive stippling on patient stone,
less names and dates than symbols abstracts:

L. & W. '61.

For how many civilisations hence
will archeologists delight
in puzzling out these jagged cyphers?

RANDY JACK THE BRISBANE-ITE.

How many years will pass before
they declare this once a hallowed shore,
the ancient paintings masterworks?

JOE'S A BASTARD, YOU'RE A WHORE.

RODNEY HALL

film can easily lose money through poor publicity, public disinterest, or simply because it is a film made specifically for a minority audience. I raise this matter because there is one "minority" film doing the rounds in London that has been rejected by at least one distributor because he fears it will bore Australian audiences. He may well be right (though he could just as well be wrong); there may be no large audience for it; but why must a film's capacity for making a profit be a criterion for its entering the country?

The film is Louis Malle's "Le Feu Follet" (English title: "A Time To Live And A Time To Die"). Malle is the "new wave" director, still in his early thirties, whose films so far shown in Australia—to my knowledge—have been the remarkable and censor-mangled "Les Amants", and the glowing "Vie Privee"; one of his others, "Zazie dans le Metro", is, I believe, banned. Far from being boring, "Le Feu Follet", to at least one viewer, is totally absorbing. Of recent films showing in London, only Fellini's "8½" and Jack Clayton's "The Pumpkin Eater" seem to me to provide an equivalent cinematic experience. The plot is a slight one; it recounts the last day or so in the life of a man who intends to commit suicide. Cured of alcoholism, he can now find no reason for remaining alive. From a sanatorium he revisits the friends and places of his former life in a search for purpose, but can find none. Maurice Ronnet, who is not, I think, well known in Australia, gives a disturbing and completely believable portrayal of this "existential" man; he is the film; nevertheless, the supporting actors all give performances in keeping with his excellence; if I say that Jeanne Moreau plays a small part you will comprehend

the high acting level of the cast. The subject is certainly not one that is likely to meet with widespread acclamation. No "optimistic" solution is offered; the drama attaches responsibility more to individuals than to society. Yet by any standards that I know of, it is an extremely honest film. I left the theatre in that sweat of exaltation that the cinema (or, indeed, any art form) rarely provides, but which is easily recognisable when it does occur. If Australians are not given the opportunity to see "Le Feu Follet", it will be a sad omission; the profit-merchants will have achieved another victory and the purveyors of so-called pop-culture can go on smiling happily in their sleep.

Criena Rohan

June Factor

TO many people interested in Australian literature, it must have come as a shock to read the post-script on the back of Criena Rohan's last book, telling of her sudden and untimely death at the age of thirty-five. Though the author of only two novels, "The Delinquents" and "Down by the Dockside," she was already acknowledged, both in England and Australia, as an accomplished and sensitive writer, with shining literary vistas ahead. Her death has deprived us of a fine talent.

To find out about Criena Rohan as a person one must go to Alan Marshall, who was a friend and mentor from her girlhood years. He tells us of her enormous zest for life, her great enthusiasm, her conflicting mixture of Irish romanticism, Catholic mysticism, and intermittent rebelliousness. Whilst still a pupil at the Mornington Convent she would send him sketches and stories for criticism. Marshall believed even then that she showed outstanding promise as a writer. When she was thirteen he predicted that she would one day be famous.

She grew up a turbulent woman, emotionally very close to the heroine of her last book. Like Lisha she worked in night-clubs, taught ballroom dancing, and married a sailor. Like Lisha, she too alternated between a strong allegiance to her religion and an equally powerful defiance of all social restrictions, including those of the Church. She seemed at the end to be gradually stabilising her life, and one can only guess at what she might have attained if she had lived longer.

Her achievement, as it stands, is of no mean order. She comes as sweet rain on parched soil for all those critics who bewail the lack of modern urban writing in Australia. Criena Rohan was a city girl from way back, and from the inside looking out. Her heroes and heroines are young, they are on the poor side of the economic ledger, and whatever early dreams they might have of rich princes or bejewelled princesses they cheerfully discard for someone from their own class more pleasantly immediate. Her young couples (very young by our standards) are slangy, rough, and good-hearted. Their parents, relatives and friends are as colorful, lively and authentic a crowd of workers as can be found nowhere else in Australian writing outside of Louis Stone's much earlier "Jonah". Criena Rohan knew well and

Surveyor

Down the dead perspectives of your eye
march the anonymous faces of the lost,
which you, Surveyor, duly classify,
scraping the answer in your window's frost.

The ironic camera also tells your lie,
shows the grey backs of monsters turned for
flight
clutching the shadows they've been frightened by,
freezes the abject gesture of our plight.

We may be pumpkins carved for halloween,
hideous faces for the children's lights,
nobody knowing quite what we may mean
though our expressive flickering delights,

but though we can't reject the masks we wear,

the white flame from the core must still show through:

we touch each other when most unaware
and make-believe continually comes true.

FRANK KELLAWAY

loved warmly the young who live in the slums of Brisbane and the dockside of Melbourne; she was bitterly hostile to their ugly, depriving environment, to the circumstances and prejudices that caged their freedom, stifled their individuality and cut down their happiness. Her writing is earthy, her sentiment lyrical, her language colloquial. She is akin to Dorothy Hewitt ("Bobbin Up") and Mena Calthorpe ("The Dyehouse"), but to this writer at least she seems more accomplished, more sensitive and acute than either of these two fine novelists. As a novelist she remains in the front ranks of present-day writers.

Patrick White's New Plays

Audrey Sides

IN Patrick White's two latest plays, "The Cheery Soul" and "Night on Bald Mountain", I have felt so much of his tremendous sympathy for people whom the world dismisses as uninteresting that I can only conclude that this must be a woman's reaction and that the masculine critics have missed the point. Indulging in personal innuendo which they have drawn from the characters Mr. White has created, they are saying in their different way, and in hundreds of words, "I don't understand him. He must be sick". Perhaps he's extraordinarily well. But, doing their job for their daily bread, the critics have forgotten to say "This is unusual theatre. Give it a go".

Patrick White, despising the pigeon-holes and labels which society uses so avidly, prods me into sympathy, irritation, amusement, or scorn. But never boredom, although he can create bores. The Cheery Soul herself is a bore. It would be superficial to regard her as a menace. Bored usually find their own levels but Miss Docker never does, and to Mr. White this is her tragedy. Her instincts are practical, but she's become a product of the snobbism which makes people label themselves intellectuals, and she says she "likes a good metaphysical discussion on things". But she hammers everyone to an exhausted pulp, lacking the education which might have channelled her thoughts into reason. Isn't that a very common and unfunny situation?

The play opens on a set which is a sort of Barry Humphries' dream in laminated plastic—the living room where childless Mr. and Mrs. Custance cook and eat and live and talk about their happiness until Mrs. Custance guiltily wants to do something good for someone, and invites Miss Docker to live in the spare room. Mrs. Custance admits to being nearly forty-seven and says "We're rather book-worms, you know", but it's a wistful statement and doesn't prevent her trying to mould the garrulous Miss Docker into a plastic lodger. Miss Docker meddles unbearably with the Custance routine of Sunday roast and proud garden so she has to leave, and Mr. Custance skulks off to look at his tomatoes, leaving the women to sort out the problem. This is resolved by Miss Docker being painfully organised into an old peoples' home.

In the home we meet the old women, although they'd probably expect to be called elderly ladies, dressed in black clutters of shawls and draperies in a uniformity of gloom. But each in her brief limelight swiftly becomes an individual, the cynical, the hearty, the waiting-for-the-end, the playful, the pathetic. In crashes Miss Docker, startling in her ginger-brown ensemble, hunting as ever for those receding affinities. She hurls her recognition at old Mrs. Lilley, frail, papery, aloof, and as Mrs. Lilley remembers her past we see, in misty backstage, the young Mr. and Mrs. Lilley meet, dance, and fall in love. But it's an unrealistic dream of ball-gowns and kisses—nothing else—so that when Miss Docker enters their lives in old age, and organises them into unfortunate action, one feels that this has happened only because of Mrs. Lilley's absorption with trivialities.

Drifting through the old peoples' home is the parson, Mr. Wakeman, hand-washing, inarticulate, packed with platitudes, desperate to be kind—but helpless. I felt the parson's fear in the same way that I have felt fear in the characters of Pinter and Ionescu and Becket, not from any pretentious symbolism but from the staccato lunacy of their spoutings of pure fear—and what could be more lunatic than a parson praying aloud for the fears which grip a nuclear world while his congregation prays for good crops and success in business and ice cream for lunch? And Miss Docker fractures any possible union between the incoherent parson and his meandering flock.

In each of the three widely contrasting outlooks of this play the Cheery Soul is in conflict with uncertain people; the first woman offering pity but no compassion, the second woman having sifted trivialities from her long life, and the parson sheltering in his own nightmares. Miss Docker is a little like Mrs. Godbold in "Riders in the Chariot"—"She could have offered more love than was acceptable"—but she has none of Mrs. Godbold's wonderful silence.

"Night on Bald Mountain" is not divided into separate outlooks and, with a smaller cast, is a much more complicated study of character. I found this very successful. We are given character-forming events which lead four people to their crises. For the twenty-four hours of the play their lives are interwoven, but each is in reality living on a lonely parallel with little hope of convergence. In "The Cheery Soul" Miss Docker, living with gregarious sociability, could have found affinities, but did not. With this isolated four, who, in remaining remote from the minor characters in the play remain remote from each other, lasting affinities would be impossible.

Mr. White sees the battered farm on Bald Mountain "beyond Sydney" where lives Miss Quoding, eccentric, lovable and certainly smelly, discoursing on "life" to her herd of goats and loving a tragic landscape, with the same loneliness as might Russell Drysdale. When a girl, innocent in movement and voice, wanders on to the farm the two women talk, and Miss Quoding's comments are deep and pertinent; one knows she has not always lived so aloofly. "You gotta die so as you can be born" she believes, and the contrast of the two women packs this scene with vitality and promise of drama.

The day moves into the nearby house of Professor Sword. The girl, Stella, has been engaged as a nurse for the Professor's wife, and in the five days since her arrival, earned the trust of her patient, the interest of a young university lecturer, Craig, staying at the house, and the unpleasant clinical attention of the Professor.

Stella is a pleasant and efficient young woman but her professional poise is being undermined by the professor's intellectualism. One begins to feel that the professor knows this and makes no concessions, and that hint is verified in the wife's story. Her illness is dipsomania. Mrs. Sword's humiliation is knowing that the man she has married for love regards her as a fool. Once she had tried to write, but the professor had laughed.

The drama is rising. Mrs. Sword, contriving a supply of whisky and alone in the house, is joined on her second bottle by Miss Quoding and they lower the level of the whisky while they sink into individual monologues, Mrs. Sword's lonely, futile, Miss Quoding's philosophical.

The professor returns from a mountain walk and drive with Stella and Craig, and their younger energy has driven him to weary anger which rises to fury when he finds his wife drunk. Later that night he goes to Stella's room where she is writing one of her long, detailed letters to her father. The professor makes a rather archaic declaration of passion and she, astonished, rejects him. In mounting rage he sees that she regards him as a father-type, and he makes the vicious accusation that her love for her father is abnormal. Stella, horrified, rushes out to tragedy in the night.

There are two technical weaknesses which prevent the climax from being a real Night on Bald Mountain, and bring it too close to melodrama. The young man, Craig, has been a stooge throughout the play—not even as significant as a Greek chorus—and Stella, who is not a fool, has now behaved like one. Are we asked to believe that the professor's accusation is well-founded? Stella's incessant talk about her father, when in nursing her life would have been crowded with people,

makes it seem possible. But I don't feel it was true. Rushing to tragedy she becomes only a puppet to point a final note of hope for the professor and his wife. Human beings do use each other, but one should not see the strings being pulled on the stage.

Miss Quodling, who has the final say that something might grow again in a world thought desolated, is one of Patrick White's familiar elderly spinsters, over-sheltered at first, battlers later. Theodora, Miss Hare, Miss Docker, Miss Quodling—perhaps these women are becoming a little out of date. Elderly spinsters and widows now seem to have had careers and saved their money and cavot round the world. Yet in different ways each of these women is an illustration of what Geoffrey Dutton has called Patrick White's "great sympathy for the lonely and clumsy". These two plays are both personal as the author wonders, cogitates, explores. We are drawn into his own uncertainty; can our emotional and material securities be destroyed so easily and only our small personal achievements really last?

Men often object to a play which tries to draw them into this kind of human uncertainty. Women rather enjoy such plays. Women have great sympathy for the misfits; it may sometimes be a misplaced sympathy, and often merely emotional, but it is very strong. Men, on the other hand, are embarrassed by oddity, particularly female oddity. Patrick White creates leading characters like Miss Quodling—the only person in this play who has any real perception of modern fears—because he seems to believe that the world misses the potential value of such people. I think this is the point which the male critics have overlooked.

Cursing the Press

E. W. Irwin

CURSING the press is something of a ritual in all open societies, and in Australia the practice is first recorded promptly after the appearance of our first newspaper, the Sydney Gazette. "Inane twaddle" was one generalisation used to describe the contents of that newspaper, which suggests that standards of the press—or of popular criticism of the press—have not greatly changed since 1803.

For let it be said that while the Australian press—meaning here the metropolitan dailies and Sundays—may be found wanting in many respects, much criticism of the press can also be described as inane twaddle, stemming from ignorance, prejudice or political opportunism.

Some criticism of the press—some pamphlets, some memoirs and biographies, including Cyril Pearl's "Wild Men of Sydney"—have thrown light on the subject. One may be grateful too for the perceptive articles of Ken Inglis in *Nation*, and for infrequent studies in books such as "Press, Radio and World Affairs", edited by Professor W. MacMahon Ball and published as long ago as 1938. But the corpus of useful criticism of the press is slight. All the more to be regretted, therefore, is the non-publication of two able theses on the press written at the University of Melbourne.

Like all institutions, the newspapers need the corrective of frequent criticism, a benefit they confer on others. The Australian Broadcasting Commission might well undertake that duty. Critical appraisals of the press are broadcast in other countries, and such programs are doubly necessary here, where independent platforms for such criticisms are rare. Obligated by statute to consider the interests of the community, the A.B.C. would appear to show lack of courage in failing to tackle the press, which uniquely escapes informed criticism though it is one of the most important factors in moulding our intellectual, cultural and political life.

In view of the dearth of critical appraisal, Henry Mayer's book "The Press in Australia" (Lansdowne, 75/-) deserves an especially warm welcome (though some newspapers have yet to review it). Here at last is a scholarly, detached evaluation of the Australian press as it is today, a study based on a reasoned weighing of the evidence and supported by studious documentation. The conclusions, most cautiously expressed—for the book is tentative rather than dogmatic—will disappoint ardent spirits of the Left and Right who see the press as a kind of hate symbol. But it should be required reading for all; and if some pet suspicions are shown to be baseless, or at any rate unsupported by the available evidence, we can at least find solace in Marx's statement that knowledge never hurt anyone.

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First, a word about the author. An academic, senior lecturer in Government at the University of Sydney, Mr. Mayer was educated in Germany, Italy, Switzerland and England, and is a graduate of the University of Melbourne. His book on the press, the product of several years of painstaking research, is not a descriptive work such as the American Professor Sprague Holden's "Australia Goes to Press" (1963); it seeks rather to analyse the press in the light of the many indictments against it. These familiar indictments include political bias, inaccurate reporting, sensationalism, frivolity, vulgarity, irresponsibility, venality, and failure to uplift the public in cultural and political matters. The accusation which gets the most attention in Australia is of bias, said to stem from the capitalist nature of the press, or from the pressure of advertisers or other interests. Henry Mayer devotes a large part of his book to this question.

Many people measure press bias by some bias of their own; so charges of slanting, distortion and suppression by the press come from all quarters. But if Left and Right alike complain of being victimised by bias, it does not necessarily follow that the press is impartial. Nor does Mr. Mayer draw that conclusion. He suggests that, taking the press as a whole and over a longish period, its normal bias is against Labor: "It would be hard to find a single book on Australia by an overseas visitor which does not repeat that most of our papers are anti-Labour in the news columns. From my own research . . . I cannot but agree, if that means the normal partisanship in Australia runs mainly in one direction. But it has varied a great deal over the years, both within the same paper and as between different papers."

But while expressing the opinion that "Labour has an excellent case" against the press, he does not support the standard case presented from the Left. Partisanship in the press seems to him to result from "a whole host of factors", and not "solely" from private ownership. He finds bias

inevitable in newspapers; and Labor's case therefore "is not that the Press is capitalist, nor that it is 'biased', but that it is essentially part of the political machinery of society, and that Labour's particular partisanship is heavily under-represented".

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In accusing the press of bias, some critics take an a priori view of the functions of newspapers and then accuse them of not living up to that prescription. We are told, for example, that newspapers should be more responsible. Responsible to whom? To humanity? To the nation? To its readers? All those interests can conflict, and there can be conflict of opinion within each one of those categories. There can be no stable conception of the functions of newspapers in a society of conflicting values.

Critics also fail to take into account many complex influences inherent in the shaping of news—its subjective character, for example, which means that "news" differs in its appeal from man to man, from place to place and from time to time. News, too, is inevitably episodic and incomplete, especially when presented in newspapers as compared with periodicals. Differential cable rates affect the coverage of events happening overseas, so that some areas appear to be under-represented.

Factors of speed and space are also among the technical reasons why news stories may be inaccurate, over- or under-emphasised, or otherwise "slanted". With newspapers constantly racing against the clock, there is a basic conflict between the latest and "hottest" news and attempts to be accurate and truthful. The demands of readability influence the way stories are written and presented. And in cases of "suppression" it is worth remembering that news stories perish wholesale in newspaper offices. On the Melbourne Herald, for example, the overall use of cables might be no more than a quarter of those received. In 1950, the New York Times received a million words a day and printed 145,000.

But such considerations—which mean that readers with strong views are disappointed, affronted and rendered suspicious—do not explain the overall bias against Labor. Here additional factors are involved, one of them—largely unrecognised—being the accessibility of news sources. Newsmen naturally enough tend to give weight to authority, and the social status of the communicator becomes important. Again, news about internal differences within the A.L.P. is more accessible than such news about the Liberal Party, because the structure of the A.L.P. lends itself to it. Often, too, one section of Labor is ready to "use" the press by leaking news disadvantageous to another section.

In the reporting of strikes and industrial disturbances, the importance of middle-class attitudes within the press is a factor. Mr. Mayer is bored, like all of us, by the repetitious and one-sided editorials which the Press seems to reserve for strikes and trade unions; but on the news side he finds bias not so much a question of deliberate policy but "rather of the complete inability of reporters, possibly shared by most middle-class people, even to begin to grasp what goes on in the minds of factory-workers."

Thus much of the bias against Labor in the news columns is unintentional, not originating as a matter of policy, but reflecting an institutional conservatism and other influences within society. Henry Mayer follows the British Royal Commission on the Press (1949) in drawing a distinction between this type of bias, "normal" bias, and the

kind of bias, "excessive" bias, which leads to deliberate selection and coloring of the news. The distinction is fruitful for any serious discussion of press partisanship.

What of the influence of private ownership? On this question Mr. Mayer may fail to satisfy many. He demonstrates fairly enough that (a) papers not owned by capitalists can be biased against Labor; (b) not all papers owned by capitalists are biased, or biased equally, against Labor; (c) some capitalist papers have, at times, supported Labor, and in England—but not in Australia—have done so for long periods; and (d) capitalists can and do at times own and run pro-Labor papers. All that is true. But from the further reaches of the Left will be heard the objection that Labor is pro-capitalist anyway.

Perhaps the question is not simply one of ownership or even of its relation to the class structure. It is worth arguing, surely, that the press must ultimately reflect all the mores of our acquisitive, tradition-influenced society; a society of conflicting economic interests and social values; a changing society in a world rent by deep ideological struggle. But such large considerations are outside the scope and method of Mr. Mayer's book, though he refers briefly to some of them.

In weighing bias in the press, account must be taken of the bias of the observer. Sophisticated techniques, worked out in the United States, have not been employed here. Yet if newspapers are to be tested on their treatment of political issues, the selection of issues becomes important. In Australia, the press reporting of elections and referenda has been measured. More sensitive themes suggest themselves—such as the handling of news about television programmes and interests, or about the composition and aspirations of the "Vietcong".

What then of the bias of the author of "The Press in Australia"? Mr. Mayer, while striving to be fair-minded, would be the last to claim a godlike impartiality. His approach is libertarian. His few sharp criticisms are reserved mostly for that great majority of Australian intellectuals who are not interested in newspapers except as whipping boys.

"The capitalist press" is to Mr. Mayer a cliché; and so, too, is the indictment of owners as arch-villains who corrupt the press in single-minded pursuit of power and profits. (Arthur Calwell also sees them or their newspapers as "the tamecats of monopoly capitalism".) Mayer agrees that the personality of owners is important, but "depending on your example, you can prove almost anything you like about 'the lords of the press'. The only safe generalisation is the platitude that some primarily want money, some prestige, some personal power, some the kick inherent in the enterprise, and most a little of each".

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Perhaps as a reaction to current demonology, Mr. Mayer's handling of this aspect of the press is rather thin. The managerial evolution as affecting the press is not discussed. Surprisingly there is no mention of such a commanding figure as Sir John Williams. Mayer is better on the question of advertisers and their influence. Most of the wild charges made in England, he points out, collapsed badly before the 1949 Royal Commission on the Press, and the 1962 Commission reiterated and endorsed the 1949 findings. He quotes cases of conflict between Australian newspapers and advertisers—notably unsuccessful efforts to prevent newspapers from showing up the suffering of the great depression, instead of promoting that "sane optimism" which would be better for business.

The most serious criticism of advertising influence, Mayer notes, comes from the J. B. Priestley school of thought attacking admiss values. The argument runs that the chief interest of advertisers is in the mass, in the quantity; and that most newspapers, seeking mass circulation and depending highly on advertising, will likewise tend to emphasise mass-quantity values and discourage minority-qualitative ones. This in turn will strengthen the trend to conformity.

That argument Mr. Mayer finds not proven. One may deplore both mass and advertising values, he says, but "it is only if one can believe in a critical, non-conformist mass somehow corrupted and seduced by advertising that this type of approach will carry conviction".

Conformity, mass values, mass influence and more power for "the press barons" are also seen as inherent in the trend towards monopoly, a trend that alarms everybody, not only the Left. Mr. Mayer notes: "While economists differ considerably about the pros and cons of monopoly in other fields, neither they nor newspaper proprietors have yet made a case for its being a good thing in the sphere of communications". Indeed, some newspaper proprietors and managements share the alarm—for broad political reasons, and not just for fear of being gobbled up. The Herald and Weekly Times Ltd. would not want to see the Age go, even if it had no shares in it.

At the same time, Mayer points out that very few people have asked what actual differences monopoly makes to policy, news values and news selection. "As an argument about potentialities," he says, "the monopoly-means-less-variety contention is sound. But whether this actually happens in Australia or anywhere else will not be known until some hard and tedious research is done."

So effective is Mr. Mayer in challenging the stereotyped criticisms of the press that some may see him in the role of press apologist. But it would be fairer to say that his criticisms are restricted by his method of approach—empirical and inductive, an attempt to see the press as it is and not as it should be. This technique is excellent as far as it goes—but does it not tend to sanctify things as they are? When problems are reduced to sociology and technology, does this not evade discussion of radical institutional changes? And does it not rationalise middle-class conservatism and overlook problems of humanity and purpose?

Yet within his chosen framework Henry Mayer contributes much. His book will, it is to be hoped, lift criticism of the press to a new level. And while scientific integrity equal to Mr. Mayer's must be observed, the new criticism will need to avoid sterile scepticism and accept the duty to investigate desirable directions in which the press as a social institution may be changed, in the Australian society of today and the future.

Clash

A show-off lad
In a fancy hide
With a fall-out of sloth
And insolent pride.

We watch each other
With care intense.
Hate grows between us
Like a fence.

My tongue is a whip
That tears his skin.
I'm striking at
The boy within.

What's for you
In the workaday mart?
Only one job—
On the sanitary cart!

I bleed words:
His anger bleeds blood.
The bleeding does
Both of us good.

Sultriness passes:
Fresh air a-stir.
Good morning, McCluskey.
Good morning, sir.

A. G. DAWS

Homage to Town Planners

I await the day when Sydney bridge
gavottes its pylon clogs,
when Martin Place corroborees
and ostentatious business houses
curtsy on their knees.

The time will come when big hotels
a pointe upon their corners,
pirouette through Luna Park
and pas de deux with ferris wheels
and scream the upward arc.

I like the thought of Sydney Heads
shutting off the harbor,
joining hands to jig across
the crazy town to Chippendale,
or jive around King's Cross.

I'm sure it won't be long before
St. Mary's cuts a caper
up and down Taronga Zoo:
masonic choreography—
plans to change the 'Loo.

RODNEY HALL

THE FORCES OF DARKNESS

I HAVE never been able to bring myself to believe that mankind would blow itself off the face of this planet. In spite of all the warnings from scientists and other experts I have clung to the conviction that man's rationality would prevail over the forces of darkness. It is nothing more than a kind of residual optimism which is shared by millions of others who, although not blind to the terrible danger, cannot take it completely seriously. The crisis over Cuba shook this faith, but there were signs that gradually, slowly, the human race was moving away from the abyss. Perhaps it was only that we were beginning to learn how to live on its brink. If you are exposed to the same risk for a long time it eventually loses some of its horror. The pull of normalcy is too strong, the need to get on with the job of living and to cope with the demands of our daily struggles.

But the truth can no longer be evaded. Those who, like myself, saw the rise of fascism from close up in Germany understand the augury which is now so starkly presented in America. If Goldwater wins the presidential election—and there is growing evidence that he may—not much reason for hope will be left. Basically he stands for everything Hitler stood for, with the difference that the destructive means at his disposal are immeasurably greater. There has always been an unstable core of violence at the heart of American society, a hidden bomb awaiting release of the trigger. We are closer to its being released than we ever were.

Fascism is many things. It is a political creed, a combination of economic factors, a state of mind and a mass-pathological reflex. But first and last it is the expression of colossal frustrations. It arises when a community is confronted with problems which it cannot resolve by "normal" methods and falls back on desperate expedients. The people of the United States are, or are being pushed, into such a position. The most affluent and one of the most attractive nations in the world has not managed to master the conflicts that are tearing it to pieces.

At home it still fights an unfinished civil war: the further the Negro advances from slavery the more furious becomes the counter-revolution. Without a white working class, organised to transform the Negro struggle into a general social one and to emancipate it into a broad advance towards a juster order, there is no possibility of a constructive way out. The middle class, disorientated and corrupted by unchecked acquisitive drives, and without counterbalancing moral supports, is finding allies among significant sections of workers, both south and north. The antics of Scranton and Rockefeller have shown how easy it is to entangle the old, conservative elements. Eisenhower is already playing the classical role of a Hugenberg and tomorrow will play the role of a Hindenburg. He is the wooden-faced father who gives respectability to the political gangsters and legitimate authority to the partisans of total solutions for total problems.

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The writing has been on the wall for some time, but with Kennedy's murder it became plain to read. The parallel is with the burning of the Reichstag. The assassination did not produce a revulsion of decency. The millions who sat glued to their television sets during the Ruby trial were watching like chickens fascinated by a hawk. Without protest they permitted this obscene farce to be enacted for their own titillation. From Dallas to the Cow Palace the road was shorter than anyone could have foreseen. The curtain had hardly rung down on the great show at Arlington Cemetery when it went up again on a performance that was in most respects similar to the famous Nuremberg rallies, a blend of hysteria, intimidation and platitudinous oratory. It has always been said that when fascism comes to America it will be called democracy—at San Francisco the technique was demonstrated. Already, in near and far places, the cry is heard that communism must be stopped and that Goldwater is the boy to do it.

Abroad, America stands committed to policies which, in the fullest sense, are impractical and impossible. It is seeking military solutions to issues to which no military solutions exist. What Washington wants to achieve in the lands of the Mekong cannot be achieved. This is not a question of tactics nor of ideology. Step up or extend the war as it will, shift and manoeuvre as it may, the battle for the minds and loyalties of the poor rice farmers has been irrevocably lost, and only the blind cannot see it. The temptation to explode the puzzle will grow in geometrical progression as it becomes more intractable day by day. They are deluding themselves who imagine that Russia can stay out because of her harsh differences with China. She may be able to keep aloof for a while, but sooner or later, whether Krushchev wants it or not, she will be drawn into the fight.

On the face of it, the American situation is not identical with Germany's in the early 'thirties. There is no world economic crisis. But, even so, more than five per cent. of the American working population has remained unemployed in recent years. Yet it is not economic frustration alone which can breed despair. The American public has allowed itself to be convinced that its historic mission is the destruction of communism. Everywhere it has had to put up with compromises and retreats. It will not swallow the bitter pill of Cuba, identifying itself with the will of its

most irresponsible captains. Where Hitler appealed to the Teutonic blood, the Goldwaters are appealing to the spirit of Yankee individualism, and the appeal is just as powerful. The Negroes are the Jews of America and the spectre of communism, if not from Moscow then from Peking, is the same which it always was. The stage is being set. As surely as Hitler made World War II inevitable, as surely would Goldwaterism make World War III inevitable.

What a prospect, dear friends! Apart from many other things mankind needs a modicum of luck. But we could be unlucky, we could have to enter the crisis of the 'sixties in the shadow of Sir Douglas Home, Barry Goldwater and Sir Robert Menzies, men impelled by the narrowest class interest—a class interest, moreover, which they no longer know how to serve intelligently. If that were to happen the odds on survival would be short: too short to warrant a large bet.

Like sheep the Australian newspapers are bleating in the wake of doom. The Vietnam crisis of August was remarkable for the length to which they were prepared to go to stifle the apprehensions of the country. One national daily alone was ready to admit that it was swamped by letters of warning and protest; the rest simply threw them into wastepaper baskets. These are the baskets in which we will be carried to the knock-

ers. Every superficially persuasive argument that can be used to dull our responses has been and will continue to be trotted out, and some, taken in isolation, have a certain, short-term, validity. But they sum up to surrender. The fundamental issue is not being faced.

What can be done? Only a little, I think, but this little could still be important. We must make it clear, as others are doing, that if fascism comes to America, in whatever disguise, America will stand deserted. We must insist on not signing blank cheques in advance, we must scrutinise every inch of the road and make our own decisions. The most hopeful sign is the stirring of independence throughout what we call the Western world, and for that matter also in the other camp. Australia, which is moving towards the centre of events, is bemused but it is not impotent. Whatever our misguided leaders claim, we can opt out of the whole insanity without endangering our national existence—indeed it is the only way of preserving it.

Democratic processes are still at our disposal. We must use them to impress on our Government, and likewise on its cowardly and mesmerised opposition, that we are not going to march down the Texas trail. It's worth a try. At worst we shall be innocent victims.

LITTLE RED FOX

Run, little red fox,
Run, run, run,
Run, little red fox, run.

My daddy didn't live with us,
He lived out in a shed,
Cooked his own potato chips,
Lonely went to bed.

He was handsome with high cheek-bones,
His eyes were steel-blue,
The stories he told were mostly lies
But he made you wish them true.

He had a little red fox cub
And kept it on a chain
—It ran around in circles all day long.
Pain, pain, pain.

Run, little red fox,
Run, run, run,
Run, little red fox, run.

He'd sit it upon his shoulder
And walk around the place,
And even mamma couldn't keep
A smile from her face.

One day he winked at me and said:
"We all want to be free
—The wild birds, the tame birds,
That young fox cub and me."

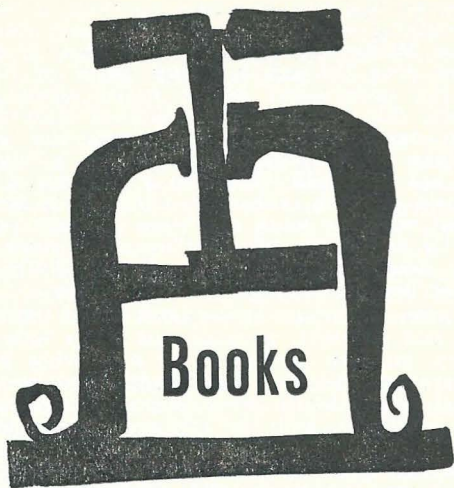
He took the chain from around its neck,
"You're on your own," he said;
The fox cub ran and ran around in circles,
Then finally dropped dead.

Run, little red fox,
Run, run, run,
Run, little red fox, run.

Lord, how he wept as he picked it up!
Lord, how he broke down then!
"See how it is, son, see how it is
With foxes and with men!"

Run, little red fox,
Run, run, run,
Run, little red fox, run.

BRUCE DAWE



Snakes

Between 450 and 500 of the world's 6,000 described species of reptiles occur in Australia. However, as herpetology (the study of reptiles and amphibians) has been rather neglected in this country until recently, the final count could exceed 700 species. Thus Australia has a relatively rich reptilian fauna, which, like most of its other faunal elements, is well represented in some groups, but entirely lacking in others common overseas. For example, Australia has over 75 species of the snake family Elapidae, which includes all the dangerous land snakes (Tiger Snake, Death Adder, Taipan, etc.), but lacks representatives of the families Viperidae (Vipers and Adders) and Crotalidae (Pit Vipers and Rattlesnakes) common in other countries. The venom of elapid snakes affects the nervous system rather than the vascular system (as with viperids and crotalids) and, consequently, the numerous Australian elapid snakes include some of the world's most deadly species in their ranks.

The deadliness of Australian snakes, and the fact that all regions on the mainland and Tasmania, from the mountains to the deserts and seashores, possess at least one dangerous species, has drawn attention to the reptiles generally since early times. The strength of public interest is well illustrated by the fact that a large number of snake showmen toured Australia in the 1920s and 1930s, making a living even during the depression years. In this period as many as five snake sideshows could be operating simultaneously at the same showground. The showmen themselves were mainly exhibitionists with little knowledge of snakes. To help draw crowds they adopted such exotic titles as "Professor" Fred Fox, "That Man" Gray, "Vagabond Jim", "Pambo" Eades, "Pegleg" Davis and "Psycho" Kimbel. Many peddled snakebite "antidotes" and died while attempting to prove to an unbelieving public just how effective these "cures" were. The high incidence of untimely deaths amongst showmen (usually from Tiger Snake bite) led to the banning of snake sideshows in N.S.W. and prompted the early experiments to develop

antivenenes. Today, snakebite deaths rarely exceed four a year owing to the development of very effective antivenenes.

In spite of the strong public interest, there has not to date been an adequate book on Australian reptiles. The snakes received a reasonable coverage in Kinghorn's "Snakes of Australia" and two states, Western Australia and South Australia, have good individual publications, the former having Glauert's handbooks on the lizards and snakes of West Australia, and the latter Waite's rather out of date "Reptiles and Amphibians of South Australia" (published in 1929). This fact has prompted Eric Worrell of the Australian Reptile Park, Gosford (N.S.W.), to write "Reptiles of Australia" (Angus & Robertson, 57/6). Eric Worrell is Australia's top field collector of reptiles, a job he first started at the age of six. He has travelled and collected over most of Australia, and knows more about the habits and variations of Australian reptiles than any other worker. His other publications include "The Dangerous Snakes of Australia and New Guinea", and "Song of the Snake"—a selection of stories of his many collecting trips. Worrell states that his aim in writing the book is "to describe all species (of reptiles) found in Australia". As this is the first time that it has been attempted, the book should become a valuable addition to the literature on Australian fauna.

In a seven-page introduction, Worrell briefly lists the characteristics of members of the Class Reptilia, their origins, the place reptiles have in mythology, and common fallacies about them. The introduction is followed by five chapters, one for each order of reptiles found in Australia. Each chapter starts with a brief account of the members of the order, including feeding habits, reproduction and general structure, followed by a description of the families, genera and species found in the order concerned. In all, 447 species and subspecies are described in the five chapters (not 480 as claimed on the dust jacket). The descriptions and photographs are adequate in most cases for identification purposes, the most notable exception being the small species of skink lizards (listed as members of the genus *Lygosoma*). Here the treatment of the subgenera and species is sketchy, leaving the impression that Worrell is not as familiar with this group as he is with most of the others. All technical terms used in the definitions and descriptions of genera and species are explained by the use of excellent line illustrations of scale structures and skulls, and a glossary of 118 terms. The most comprehensive bibliography ever published on Australian reptiles completes the book.

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Keeping in mind that the book is a popular account of the Australian reptiles, it is perhaps marred by a number of features. Ten of the plates are numbered wrongly in the text, and others bear the wrong species name. The other points of criticism are of greater importance. First, the lack of keys for all groups, except the Blind Snakes, makes the identification of specimens a very slow process due to the need to scan every species in a group to find which fits correctly. A second point is that the coverage of different groups varies drastically. For example, there are 2½ pages devoted to 21 species of Blind Snakes (about 8 species per page), 78 pages to 288 species of lizards (about 4 species per page), and 41 pages to 74 species of elapid snakes (about 2 species per page); this perhaps reflects the author's own interests. Also, the treatment of individual species

varies—type localities are missing, without explanation, from 73 of the species descriptions, and the distributions of many are vague (e.g. "Australia generally"). In the identification of snakes, scale counts are important, but here Worrell has departed from the usual practice of giving ranges of variation (e.g. ventrals 162-185). For most he gives counts based on one or, rarely, two or three specimens. As an example of how this can affect identifications, the case of the Little Whip Snake *Cryptophis* (= *Denisonia*) flagellum can be considered. From counts of a single specimen, Worrell lists this species as having 22 subcaudal scales, while in actual fact, the range for females is 22-30 and for males 32-42.

Publication of the book has created quite an amount of controversy amongst interested parties, the reason being that Worrell has used a revised system of genera for the elapid snakes. Many workers refuse to accept the author's taxonomic changes, and it is unfortunate he used them in a popular account of reptiles until more work has been done on the subject. On the other hand, Worrell's ideas on the taxonomic status of many species, based on extensive field work, can be extremely valuable to research workers dealing with these groups.

To sum up, this book is a valuable addition to the literature on the Australian fauna, but its usefulness is somewhat marred by a lack of consistency in the presentation of data, a lack of keys for identifications, and the inclusion of taxonomic changes which have not yet even started to gain acceptance.

P. A. RAWLINSON

The Depression — and Beyond

As the twentieth century swings on through its second half, there seems more and more public interest in its earlier years. Overseas readers are avidly snapping up new books on the first world war, but in Australia our interest seems rather concentrated on the great depression. Many explanations have been offered for this phenomenon, but the most obvious would seem to be that these are the periods which have shaped the modern consciousness. In Europe, the war marked the end of the age of empire; in Australia, the depression marked the beginning of the age of urban consciousness. Earlier, bush-shaped traditions of proletarian and even universal mateship were given an edge by the class struggle in the cities, and at the same time the world-wide nature of the calamity gave an international and ideological depth to the discussions. This was the period which shaped the thinking of our present political leaders, but unfortunately there is little evidence, at least on the left, of any development since then. One of the results of affluence has been the separation of academics from workers which has led to the growth of a politically apathetic class of blue-collar workers, a politically disoriented class of white-collar workers, and a small number of idealists pursuing piece-meal social reforms without any over-riding social understanding or purpose.

Amongst the writers who have recently been grappling with this time in Australia's history the warmest evocation of the period is that of Criena Rohan, whose "Down By The Docksides" (Gollancz, 26/-) is a racy, humane, sentimental story of a girl growing up during the depression and maturing through a wartime romance and marriage.

However this first love and marriage is too gay and youthful to last; her husband, one laughing Andrew Michael Kelly from Liverpool, is killed, and we drag through a weary series of liaisons amid the underworld before Lisha again meets her face, this time a golden-skinned Bass Straits seaman named Joe. This bald summary sounds like some sob-sister's romance from a woman's paper, but it is told with such a mixture of gusto and down-to-earth realism that the whole becomes invested with the truth of Criena Rohan's personality. Or nearly the whole. The arid stretch from Andy's death to the coming of Joe would have been excised by a more mature writer.

Yet after we have put the book down the unreal pimps and perverts, gunmen and touts fade from memory, and we are left with a glowing gallery of characters in the nineteenth century style, although individually they belong unmistakably to the twentieth, with the gusty, tearaway love of the first marriage and with the slowly-ripening love of the second. Above all, we are left with such sharply observed and movingly portrayed scenes as that in the public hospital, where a woman's baby dies in her arms while the arrogant young assistant shouts at the patients to cover his own inadequacy.

The question which has worried reviewers of this book has been the passages of pure sentimentality. It is true that the writer is completely committed, to the exclusion of that other fashionable modern stance, irony, and that she unashamedly takes sides with the people in her story. Yet they are closely observed and painted warts and all. Despite the sentiment, the novel is saved from sentimentality by the device of the fictional narrator, which distances the sentiment just sufficiently for it to be seen as an ingredient of the life portrayed without obscuring the realities of this life from the reader.

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Another writer who does not hesitate to offer his own comments on his narrative is Alan Marshall. "In Mine Own Heart" (Cheshire, 27/6) carries the story of his life through the depression years. At first he is merely a bystander. Although he has his own personal struggles to learn to write and to gain acceptance as a normal human being, the substance of his book is the people he meets and observes. This, too, has worried the critics, who feel that he should have looked more closely at himself in a work which is ostensibly autobiography.

Yet as the book progresses we feel its author being dragged out of his posture as observer and into the mainstream of life. Instead of just watching and recording, as in the second book of this series, "This Is The Grass," he attempts to share the life of his fellows. He is driven to eat in the cheap depression cafes, and, when he puts aside a plate of chewed meat which has proved indigestible, he is approached by another man for these very scraps. At another time he joins a queue of down-and-outs waiting for the garbage scraps from a hotel, and finally turns away in revulsion from the sickening meal. At his boarding house and, later, on the road, he attempts, unsuccessfully, to help others in coping with the problems of their lives. In all these episodes we see the developing character of the author, not directly, but reflected in the lives he encounters.

In a talk last year Alan Marshall described the work of a writer in this fashion: "A writer lives two lives. He goes on living like anyone else, and then he comes to a peak. He looks around and everything is lovely. Then he goes back and

writes about what he has seen, and he lives it again. When you have finished it for the second time, you are ready to go on. On the journey you might stub your toe against a stone. But that's not what you write about. You write about the peaks."

Only a very remarkable man would regard a request for chewed up scraps of meat as a peak, yet for Marshall and his readers it is, because it is in such moments that he sees the greatness of human life. He does not dwell on the sordid or the unpleasant for their own sake, but rather through them he conveys his own suffering with the victims, and his own admiration for the men who live fully in the very teeth of suffering.

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George Johnston, in "My Brother Jack" (Collins, 28/6), also takes a pilgrimage back to his youth between two wars. The book opens with a troopship of returning heroes and with the crutches and artificial limbs of the returned. These seem an apt symbol for the broken lives left in the wake of the war, and perhaps even for the lame spirit of the author, which relies through childhood and young manhood on the sturdy figure of his brother Jack as a mental prop for his own disabilities. Yet in the long run it is David who grows out of the chrysalis of respectable illusion and becomes a spiritual support for Jack, who has been denied the apotheosis of his own nature during the second war by a combination of ill-luck and the unexpected renaissance of a boyhood enmity. In a way strangely reminiscent of Golding's "Free Fall", the hero becomes a symbol of success to others in direct proportion to his growing awareness of his own inner failure as a person.

This book attempts greater things than either of the others. The two brothers can be seen as the incarnations of hostile yet mutually dependent strains in the Australian character. The deserts of pre-war suburbia are not only an accidental environment, nor even just a determining influence on the boys growing up in their midst, but a symbol of a whole dreary middle-class culture of respectability and desperation. The family is not the warm nest of Criena Rohan but a battleground of jealousy and thwarted pride and a launching place for fresh assaults on achievement. Whereas Rohan's docksiders are beaten by society but retain their spirit, Johnston's are beaten by their own sense of inadequacy in a changed and narrow world and return home, not to a haven, but to the one place where they can exercise their petty spite and jealousy.

Yet the picture is not one-sided. We sense the potential growth in these people as well as the actual bitterness. Jack, in particular, comes close to making something of himself, only to fail because he fails to see what he has and prefers instead to hide his injured vanity behind the cloak of respectable lies.

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In Peter Cowan's "Summer" (Angus & Robertson, 21/-) we leave behind both the depression and suburbia to flee with a failed businessman to a silo in the wheat country, where he finds both peace and a fresh love. Henry Simpson (although you have to look back through the book to discover his name, for the characters are normally mentioned anonymously as "the man" or "the woman") has not failed financially but in marriage, and the new relationship he makes is not really love, but just the understanding between two quite adult people.

The story is told in the sparse, unemotional prose with which we have become familiar through

Cowan's short stories. The characters are just people, living their own lives, doing what their natures compel them to do, and hurting each other in the process. The unexpected violence at the end of the book is narrated in the same deadpan tone and seems in retrospect to sink into the same monotony as the rest of the novel. Just as Voss seems to belong to the burning desert and dancing mirages of the interior, so Cowan's people seem to fit naturally into a landscape of level plains, hard-baked soil and dull grey trees, where the interest and variety of nature can only be discovered by long and patient observation. The murder at the end of the book is just like the death struggle of two ants in the middle of a clay plain—brief, absorbing, absurdly dramatic but cosmically insignificant. The weakness of the book is that our attention is allowed to stray from the plain to the fight for too long.

Where do these novels take us? None is, by itself, tremendously exciting, yet all of them are well above the ruck of competence and interest. Between them, they probe the Australian consciousness at a number of levels. All of them are realistic in surface detail, yet they all probe further in awareness of the contradictions of human experience. None attempts to make a final statement, and in this modesty of purpose, together with their honesty of statement, perhaps lies their greatest achievement.

JOHN McLAREN

Higinbotham

Gwyneth Dow's "George Higinbotham: Church and State" (Pitman, 42/-) is a useful contribution to an argument which has been going on for the past ten years or so amongst academic Victorians in Melbourne. The subject of the argument is why Victoria introduced secular education in 1872. But whereas all previous writers have taken up a partisan position, Gwen Dow is more concerned to illuminate and understand than to judge and vilify. For here there are no villains, no wicked men who have sold their souls to the devil, or their birthright for a mess of potage, but human beings groping for the truth and defending it with all their might and power.

Mrs. Dow's method is to take a man who played a major role in the history of the secular clauses, George Higinbotham, examine his character with sympathy and insight, and to follow him as he kicks his way through the forest of the education controversy. She shows how every serious educated man in Victoria in the 1860s had to answer two questions: should the church or the state be in charge of education? If the state is in charge of education, then what religion, if any, should be taught to the children in the schools of the state?

Her sympathetic analysis of the public career of Higinbotham allows her to introduce the other groups and personalities who participated in the great debate. With a commendable breadth of vision she helps the reader to understand the point of view of the Anglicans, the Catholics, the Presbyterians, and the Wesleyans, the Jews, and the secularists. From time to time she pauses to paint pictures of the leading figures such as Goold, Perry and Bromby, and also of the minor characters who strutted and fretted briefly across the pages of Victorian history when native born and immigrants, the descendants of the bond, and the descendants of the free were facing up to a problem of universal significance, and the older faiths were crumbling in men's minds.

Perhaps one regrets that Gwen Dow conceived the book as a contribution to an argument amongst academic Victorians rather than as a biography of Higinbotham or a history of the secularisation of education. For in this book she displays a refreshing freedom from malice and spite towards those with whom she disagrees: she displays here a reverence for all human beings, a feeling for human dignity and a sense of the mystery at the heart of things. One senses too her own faith, which she shares with Higinbotham, that if that mystery were ever to be revealed then there would be light rather than darkness, tenderness rather than hatred and mockery. These qualities, when informed, as they are in her case, by fair-mindedness, should encourage her to drop the academic argument, and become a historian of education.

MANNING CLARK

Old Days, Old Ways

"This is a gorgeous book!" began John Galsworthy in his introduction to "Trader Horn". One of those odd little things which, for no apparent reason, sticks in the mind for years afterwards. It came back to me again today as I reached the end of "Old Days, Old Ways" (Angus & Robertson, 15/6), a reprint of a book which I hope will never be allowed to go out of print again. A gorgeous book.

Mary Gilmore has always received full recognition as a poet, but I feel now, as I did not long ago, when I read her "More Recollections", that her prose work has been unduly overshadowed.

What a long and rich experience Mary Gilmore had! What an alert mind—what a memory—and how well she writes! All the charm and wisdom and wistful warmth of Robert Gibbings probing back into vanished rural England. With Mary Gilmore holding the advantage of telling of things she herself had seen. "Old Days, Old Ways" isn't only fascinating reading, it's an invaluable historical legacy. Old Australia evoked with the intimacy of an acute observer who missed nothing large or small, and in the kind of clear and leisurely prose that is so rarely written these days. Most of the familiar highlights are here: bushfires and bushrangers, massacres of the blacks, colonial politics. But so many things also that could have been lost forever because they aren't highlights, yet without which a complete picture of the times would be impossible. Look at some of the chapter-headings: "When butter was sixpence a pound", "When hoods were hats", "When capes were gentlemen's wear", "Native sanctuaries", "When baby had a red morocco trunk". With such a wealth of finely-detailed information the Great Australian Novel of our early days could still be written by an author fired with the enthusiasm.

And what a tremendous love of country comes through it all! Love of humanity at large dominated all Mary Gilmore's life, but no one could ever doubt where her heart lay. The final chapter to this book must be one of the loveliest tributes yet paid to the natural beauties of Australia:

Once Australia smelt like the Spice Islands.
The winds stopped as they passed because
of her blossoms, ships knew her before they
came to her.

"We are near Australia," said the seamen.
"Can't you smell the flowers?"

And people raised their heads and breathed
in perfume as it were out of Heaven, for the
land was still invisible.

Why is Mary Gilmore not acknowledged also as a short story writer? I've just looked through several likely anthologies without once finding her name. A short story doesn't have to be fiction. Nor does it have to be unrelated to a larger work. "The Whiff", a chapter in "More Recollections", is surely one of the most moving little tales of racial persecution ever told. Do we want to forget it? And in "Old Days, Old Ways" there are at least three more worthy of an anthologist's attention: "Fire", "Then she turned and rode away", and "He was a Yarmouth Man".

JOHN MORRISON

Eight Poets

"Eight by Eight" (Jacaranda, 17/6) is excellent value. It contains plenty of enjoyable, varied poetry, and it is handsomely designed and produced. Such a collection, eight poets contributing eight poems each, presents problems for the reviewer. Comparisons between them—even so far as this is possible—would serve little purpose. Each section demands separate treatment, however brief; consequently "good" for one will indicate quite different values from "good" for another. The main difficulty occurs in dealing both with poets who think in terms of poetry (who are saying things that could be expressed through no other medium) and those who don't. Buckley, Simpson and Wallace-Crabbe belong to the first group. But all five poets in the second group have their own qualities to offer.

Laurence Collinson contributes seven lightweight verses and one longish poem, "Legend". His subjects are often political and his intention is a clean arrangement of the material, with a sting in the last lines. He reaches his peak in "Will Power", a heart-rending little poem closing with one lover's confession to the other, "I'm false. And I want to be true!" Alexander Craig seems to be saying "Look at where I am and what I'm doing here". It is worthwhile reading him to find out. His attitudes and subjects, use of language, and pace of thinking carry a strong American influence. Alliteration and assonance sometimes obstruct the meaning, but in most cases his voice comes through clearly and he is considerate in the pains he takes to bring the reader into the picture.

One doesn't have to refer to the biographies to know that Max Dunn is the veteran among these poets. His attitudes are so much more set, providing him with more of a platform, more rigidity, than the others. He is concerned with testing various theories of salvation—of ways to "paradises of our time"—against his own experience and belief. Even with this material Dunn manages to maintain a strong personal feeling and a closeness to nature, using animals, shells and flowers in his imagery.

Noel Macainsh speaks in a civilised, relevant way. "The Suicide" is an interesting poem, in which his dispassionate approach feels its own inadequacy beside the dark compulsions of the suicide. His syntax is generally lucid and his sentences brief and clear: assets not to be slighted. But "William Blake in Australia" strikes me as a forced, pretentious piece. Who can say what Blake (or anyone else) would have thought if he'd seen something he never did see? Nevertheless, Macainsh's ideas are carefully rounded and developed and this gives most of his work a professional finish. David Martin is a witty satirical writer, at his best with subjects that allow him room for sniping goodnaturedly at plenty of kinds

of people and institutions. "On the Poetic Prevalence of Nuns" is an admirable example. One of his three personal poems, "Her Country", is most moving; and refreshing after the occasional verses, such as the one about Gordon Childe. He is often long-winded and pedestrian, but his voice carries the overtones of a great past—both of events and cultures. This is not a fault with Martin; his polyglot influence is welcome on the Australian scene.

Now to a far more complex matter, to poetry that is not a pastime but a compulsion, poetry rich with the effort of striving to identify or clarify meanings, experiences. After the agreeable reading of the others, the best of Buckley, Simpson, or Wallace-Crabbe explode in the reader's face, or catch fire somewhere inside him.

Vincent Buckley has become a very good poet indeed. All the way from the skittishness of "Puritan Poet Reel" to the brutality of "Secret Policeman" he fastens the reader's attention to his purpose and won't let go. "Parents" is a touching poem, more in what it tacitly betrays than in its declared meanings. After a long absence, the author is listening to his parents and their local gossip: "I nod, but the names, perils, dates mean nothing; and where that's true, the deepest bonds are lost". The poem as a whole refutes this statement, yet derives so much of its tenderness from the fact that it was said. But most of the time Buckley seems to brood on terrible events and suffering, as if exercising the muscles of his creative imagination to build some protection for himself.

It is true that there are jerky developments in R. A. Simpson's poetry, but there are also major achievements even in this short selection. "To a Man Dying of Cancer" is the outstanding poem of the entire volume, powerful and superbly formed. And "The Botanist" is a tour-de-force, reconciling the poet's meanings with a development of language, so that in the end some touch of von Mueller's own magniloquence is present, without jarring or interfering with what the poet himself has to say. Chris Wallace-Crabbe opens his group with a beautiful piece, "Down at the River". His assurance of touch is a great pleasure. Admittedly in a few poems this assurance degenerates into rhetoric, and is all but lost in the sad contrivance of "The Excuse", but he sustains his longer poems very successfully, a skill that is becoming uncommon in Australia. The triumph of his section is a lovely lyric "Wind and Change", words dancing with sunlight, even surpassing his more typical work that rings so true in "Every Night About This Time"; a sophisticated voice, disillusioned yet compassionate.

RODNEY HALL

Primitive Song

Sir Maurice Bowra's most recent book, "Primitive Song" (Mentor, 9/9), could well be the most important literary enquiry of recent years. He has attempted, as he writes in the opening sentences of a preface, "to break into a field which has not, so far as I know, been explored in any history of literature and yet is surely an integral part of any such study. The beginnings of the art of words are hidden in a dateless past, but something about its first processes and developments may be gathered by comparative study from what is known about the poetry of the most primitive peoples still surviving in the world. By

examining what is known of their songs and their other attempts to put words into a rhythmical order we may establish some illuminating conclusions about the earliest types of literature." Bowra has made a pioneer exploration into the time-covered foundations of literature; he has begun the clearing where others may have attempted to look.

Bowra has studied the available songs and poems of the Australian and extinct Tasmanian Aborigines; of the African pygmies, bushmen and Dama; of the Semang of Malaya, the Veddas of Ceylon and the Andamanese; the Arctic Eskimos and the near extinct Selknam and Yamana of Tierra del Fuego. His separate guides are well listed. They are, in the case of Arnhem Land and Aranda people of Australia, Dr. and Mrs. Berndt and Dr. Strehlow respectively.

The opening chapter, "Primitive Man, Ancient and Modern" is packed with general information of the primitive peoples listed above. Tasmanian Aborigines, for example, are mentioned on eighteen separate occasions in the twenty-four pages of the chapter. The succeeding nine chapters examine the living and lingering poetry which is "born from what are in most respects Palaeolithic conditions and bears many marks of them." Composition and Performance, Technique, Manner and Method, Songs of Action, The Natural Scene, The Human Cycle, Primitive Imagination, Myth and Symbol are rounded off in the final chapter with Some Conclusions.

This is a book for Australians, particularly teachers at various levels. It will, I hope, be mentioned on suggested reading lists for such subjects as English literature and music in our universities. I would hope, too, that conservatoria and teachers' colleges might seriously consider listing the book for reading by all their students. Too many student teachers still talk of the "black man without manners" when giving lessons on the Aborigines to children. They mean well, but they need guidance, and such a book as "Primitive Song" could, even if the first chapter only were read and re-read, give students and teachers a more detailed and sensitive understanding of the richness of primitive culture.

Bowra is a creative scholar who writes with warm sensitivity and affection for the primitive poetry he discusses. Here is a song-poem of a north-east Arnhem Land woman who cries in words the loss of her small grand-daughter. Her words have a simple piercing strength:

The fire is burning at Birginbirgin and Gamwardla and Nuga,
 Burning out the wallaby and the kangaroo.
 Ah, my daughter, my brother, my nephew, my grandchild, my cousins,
 We came here from our home, my daughter, my grandchild.
 We travelled and hither we came,
 We came to this unfriendly place, my daughter, my grandchild.
 My baby died here!
 Both of us came with our child, here we found sickness.
 My country is far away, hither we came,
 Travelling from place to place, my brother, my brother's child.
 Crying I carried him sick.
 Who is watching and staring while father cries?
 Ah, my daughter, my daughter, my grandchild!

REX HOBROFT

Roaring Rascals

After all these years, and after all the tomes that have been filled with their deeds, it is still difficult to make up one's mind about Australia's bushrangers. Only three or four had, in any sense, the attributes of romantic heroes. I suppose Martin Cash would best qualify for the title, and had he lived later he might have become as famous as Ned Kelly. There is a strange ambivalence even about the latter, and it could be asked whether fate did not do him a service when it caught up with him at Glenrowan. Had he succeeded in derailing the police train, and destroyed a score of troopers in the process, he might have gone down not as a symbol of courage but of villainy. Yet that's uncertain, too: there will be some who think that it would have cemented his fame like nothing else.

And then, again, can it really be said that our outlaws were genuinely popular? They have inspired ballads and stories and they had their helpers and sympathisers, but, while they embodied certain attitudes many bushmen thought admirable, they had no "following" like their counterparts in Andalusia, Calabria and Mexico. Probably from as early as 1845 on they were socially an anachronism. What is lacking, and obviously for good reason, in the literature about them is a novel like "Mateo Falcone". Stewart's "Ned Kelly" still comes nearest to providing for the hero a chorus of the people. But in general the full psychological interplay is lacking; the population consisted essentially of onlookers. The whole business is more reminiscent of a kind of sport—for all that it was gory—than of warfare. Could it be that these men, after the end of convictism, represented the most backward element in society, a society which was hardly ever sufficiently stagnant-stable to afford them nurture? The high proportion of Irish among bushrangers, and their inability to form cohesive bands, seems to point in this direction. The diggers hated them.

Bill Wannan, in "Tell 'em I died Game", a quotation which, it turns out, has nothing to do with Kelly, has brought together an amazingly wide range of material on almost all aspects of the adventure (Lansdowne Press, 42/-). He is a first-rate anthologist in that he lets facts speak for themselves, though, of course, his approach is often in line with the universally accepted view. This is a more readable and more urbane, also a more handsomely produced book than any that have yet appeared on the subject, and it is excellently illustrated. Connoisseurs of the gruesome will particularly appreciate pictures such as the one which shows Joe Byrne strung up outside Seymour Police Station for the benefit of photographers, alongside several others which lend an acceptable touch of penny-dreadfulness to this modern survey.

The volume is organised into six parts; the first three being devoted to the main historic bush-ranging periods, the fourth to Lore and Legends, the fifth (among the most useful) to Firearms of the Bushranging Era, and the last to a reasonably full bibliography for the laymen, with some notes on the ballads. The whole will serve both as a work of reference and a well-written entertainment in its own right.

Perhaps bushranging looms large in the Australian consciousness because Australia's own story is so short, and because only lately have writers and historians been able to get dramatic value out of other facets of the colonial past. It is our con-

tribution to the world-wide surge of nationalism. A hundred years from now it may be found that the chapter has shrunk a good deal in relative importance.

MARTIN DAVIS

New Guinea

"New Guinea: The Last Unknown" by Gavin Souter (Angus & Robertson, 42/-) is a handsomely produced volume which pleases because painstaking care has obviously been taken at every step of its composition and publication. Mr. Souter's approach is scholarly, his information detailed, his facts accurate, his style unaffected and clear. Despite these considerable merits, one lays aside the volume feeling dissatisfied: New Guinea remains unknown. Souter does not analyse his material to present a thesis; no individual viewpoint is expressed; no particular theme unifies the book. Geographical exploration, given in great detail, links the first three parts of the book, but the last section, with chapters outlining the Netherlands-Indonesian dispute over West Irian, and political developments in Papua-New Guinea since the second world war, breaks even that tenuous thread. It is hard to imagine what purpose Souter had when he wrote. He makes no original contribution to knowledge, so it cannot have been an academic exercise; the author's detachment is so complete the work reads like a handbook, yet plainly it is directed to a wider public than specialists already interested in Papua-New Guinea.

"Mountains in the Clouds" by Olaf Ruhen (Rigby, 30/-) has a much less scholarly approach to its subject than Souter's book. Nor is it a "prestige" publication in the same way as the other volume, and the illustrations bear little relevance to the text. One feels they are simply chosen at random from Mr. Ruhen's personal collection; but for that very reason they evoke his attachment to New Guinea's peoples.

The most striking difference between the two volumes is the relation of the author to the subject: Souter detached to the point of anonymity, Ruhen passionately involved. Both books may be regarded as additions to the literature of imperialism in the Pacific and read as outlines of European contact with New Guinea: each covers white exploration, missionary activity, European settlement and economic endeavor, and political annexation and administrative procedures. Judged as such, neither work is a major contribution to the subject, although "Mountains in the Clouds" is inferior to "New Guinea: The Last Unknown" because it is factually less accurate. One example illustrates. Both deal with the first permanent settlement of white women in New Guinea. Ruhen, p. 46, simply states: "Mrs. W. C. Lawes was probably the first white woman in New Guinea. She landed with her husband in 1876 . . ." Souter, p. 27, in a footnote to the statement that the Reverend W. G. Lawes and his wife arrived at Port Moresby in December 1874 says: "Mrs. Lawes was not the first white woman to live in New Guinea. The unfortunate women who lived and died at Fort du Bus may have included some Europeans, and an unidentified white woman arrived at Dorei Bay mission station in 1858". Yet although Ruhen is inaccurate his statement is made in relation to a particular theme: the value to the indigenous community of the general mission contribution, and the part women missionaries played in this. Souter,

stating facts correctly, makes no attempt to analyse the situation here or anywhere else in his book. An exception perhaps is his treatment of cargo cults, but the relevant judgments are those of anthropologists, as Souter would be the first to acknowledge.

Souter's book never goes beyond accurate reportage, but "Mountains in the Clouds" is, in the final analysis, a "cri-de-coeur" for a re-appraisal by Europeans of their mistaken attitudes towards New Guinea's inhabitants. As such it is an intimate presentation of Ruhen's love for the indigenes, which, besides moving the reader emotionally, gives a clearer vision of the land and its people than Souter's book.

MARGRIET ROE

Book Chronicle

GENERAL HISTORY

One of the most unusual historical works to have been published for some time is Frederick E. Zeuner's **A History of Domesticated Animals** (Hutchinson, 127/-), which is authoritative, comprehensive and deeply interesting even to the lay reader. The origins and development of some forty species of domestic animals are discussed, with a wealth of archaeological, palaeontological and biological evidence. With great skill the author presents the developing mutual relationship between man and the animals he has used to lighten his toil and to provide his clothing and food. This would be a basic item in any library from school-size upwards.

Fiction for the Working Men by Louis James (O.U.P., 57/6) is a study of the cheap literature published between 1830 and 1850, at the time when cheap paper and mechanised printing techniques made possible a revolution in reading habits on an unprecedented scale. The author's claim that his work, by throwing "new light on the lower levels of literature . . . inevitably shifts the perspective of the total scene", is justified, and new appraisals become necessary of the popular impact of Dickens and of the contemporary significance of the Romantics, for instance. This is well-written and well-illustrated, and can be read with pleasure in conjunction with Richard Hoggart's "The Uses of Literacy".

New Statesmanship, selected by Edward Hyams and published by Longmans at 31/-, is a skilfully chosen selection of pieces of lasting interest from the *New Statesman*, which recently celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. A companion work is Hyams' **The New Statesman** (Longmans, 43/6), a delightfully written history of this most influential journal over the same period. Hyams, who has had the fullest access to files and personalities involved, has written a personal and intimate history that carries authority because it clearly hides no skeletons in cupboards. Both these books are important contributions to the social history of our times.

Henry Pelling's **A History of British Trade Unionism** (Macmillan, 65/-) is the first attempt for 35 years to write a comprehensive account of the development of this section of the British labor movement. Pelling grapples competently with his difficulties of space and material, to give us guidelines through a structure which has been compared with "an ancient city full of architecture of different styles and periods". He incorporates new research material and brings the story down to the 1960s.

To the joy of a great many readers Cecil Woodham-Smith has produced a work to stand by her deeply-praised "Florence Nightgale" and "The

Reason Why". In **The Great Hunger** (Hamilton, 37/3) she writes with all her usual mastery of style and organisation of the terrible Irish famines of 1845-49. Few writers living can so present scholarship to the reader as a matter of living moment.

In **Ancient Voyagers in the Pacific** (Angus & Robertson, 28/-) Andrew Sharp brings up to date his Pelican book of similar title published some years ago, answering his critics and producing new evidence to support his thesis that the Polynesian islands were settled, not by deliberate migration, but by accidental circumstances.

After Imperialism, by Michael Barratt Brown (Heinemann, 71/3), is a brilliant and provocative work by a British left-wing thinker on the decline of the British Empire and the new relationships that are, and that can, develop between Britain and developing countries overseas. There is a great deal of significance in this book—the discussion, for instance, of how it was in the nineteenth century that some colonial lands went ahead and developed into industrial countries while others marked time.

Raymond Aron's **Introduction to the Philosophy of History** (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 44/9) is a discussion by the distinguished French sociologist of the limits and conditions of historical knowledge. The author, in this far from light book, analyses with great thoroughness the assumptions we make in thinking about the past.

L. Hirschfeld-Mack's **The Bauhaus** (Longmans, 15/-) is a short, illustrated account of the development of this influential school of architecture and design, written by a well-known Australian teacher who was himself associated with the movement.

In **Memoirs of a Revolutionary 1901-1941** (O.U.P., 65/-), Victor Serge has written one of the great political autobiographies of our time: a strong, compassionate, principled book which throws more light on the story of the Russian Revolution and its aftermath than all the volumes of the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia, and which is required reading for those who seek to understand the history of the Soviet Union.

AUSTRALIAN BIOGRAPHY, EXPERIENCE AND RECOLLECTION

A charming addition to the Miles Franklin canon is **Childhood at Brindabella** (Angus & Robertson, 25/-), Miles Franklin's story of her first ten years of life. It is an interesting story of up-country life at the time, and a book that fills in something of the background we already know from "My Brilliant Career" and "My Career Goes Bung".

Bill Harney's last book, **To Ayers Rock and Beyond** (Hale, 26/-), is an engrossing guide book in the authentic Harney idiom on the whole background and surroundings, human and physical, of the Ayers Rock area. The book is likely to remain a standard work of its kind, for much of the material that Bill gathered will never be gathered again; as with so much of his writing, there is here a mixture of regret at change and recognition of its inevitability which is one of his most poignant strengths as a writer.

Sixty Years in Queensland Schools by Thomas Hanger (Wentworth, 30/-) is a type of work we have all too few of: a detailed and sensitive account of the daily experiences in the educational field, from 1887 onwards, of a practising Queensland teacher. This type of source book is of greater potential value to the social historian than many more pretentious works.

Published by S. Murray-Smith, Mount Eliza, Victoria; and printed by "Richmond Chronicle," 3 Shakespeare Street, Richmond, E.I, Vic.



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