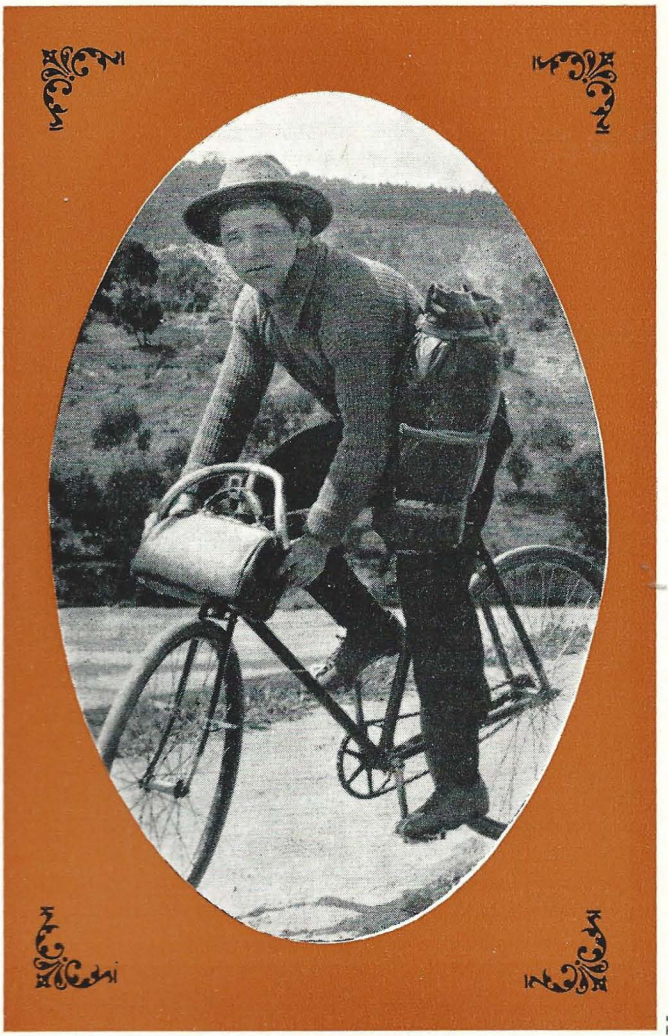
Inside: Frank Anstey's Memoirs

OVERLAND



Vane

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stories
features
poetry

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stories

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SHE LET THEM KNOW

Kay Brown

My brother Stuart and me met Mrs. Rigby our first day at Copper-Top. She was digging in the bed of the Leichhardt when we went down there to explore. The bank was high just there, and we saw this square sort of old woman digging against the side where the rocks leaned over and the sand was shaded. She had a deep hole dug and the sides were wet-looking.

Stu has real nice manners, and he's clever, too. He said "Good-day. Can we help you dig?" He went near her to take the shovel, but she moved away sharply from him and said: "Who're yous boys?" and peered at us with hard, shiny black eyes, like little winking marbles.

She had on an old felt hat, a man's sort—very shapeless. And her dress was a faded blue color of strong stuff and **square.** Her body moved around inside it like someone in a tent. And while she was looking at us and waiting for our answer, she pushed the hat back off her hair, which was streaky grey and short like a man's, too.

Stu told her our names, and that we were the new station-master's boys, and just come to have a look round the place while Mum and Sis were fixing things up at the house like they have to every time Dad gets a transfer to a new place.

She said, "I'm Mrs. Rigby," and held out her hand to us both, and we shook it. Then she handed Stu the shovel to dig, and sat on a rock to fan herself with the hat. She said: "Like I told you, I'm Mrs. Rigby. Not old Ma Rigby, and mindjoo, if ever I catches either of yous boys calling me that, I'll let you know. See?" She looked pretty fierce then and I wanted to go, but Stu said "Yes", and dug on for a bit.

I said: "What is the hole for?"

"That's me soak."

Stu and me hadn't seen a soak before. After a bit, she took the shovel from Stu and dug a bit more, very quickly, so the wet sand flew out zunk! zunk! in thuds like heavy rain falling. Then she stood back and said: "There. See?" pointing, and we looked down into the hole kneeling carefully so's not to push the sides in. It was lovely! The water oozed in and filled the bottom gently like the tide at the sea coming in. It was a real little toy well.

Mrs. Rigby handed us an enamel pint, and Stu scooped the clear water up in it for us to drink. It was cool, too, and tasted nice.

Then she got a wooden case and lined the sides so the sand wouldn't fall in and then put an old sheet of iron over it and told us to fetch some big stones and put on top—to hold it down in the wind, I thought, but she said: "That's to keep them 'roos and goats off-uv it."

Stu had filled the big, black old billy-can and he carried it up the bank and I took the shovel for her. A little way from the river was a low, iron humpy sort of building. It had a good strong fence around it, of rusted barb wire, and the walls were white-washed.

"That's me place," she told us, and we went in the gate.

An old blue-black dog came to meet us, very fat and with big dark dugs, its baggy body hanging shapeless and floppy from its backbone.

Mrs. Rigby said: "This here's Lucy." And the dog nodded, sort of, and went off again to lie down under some shade.

It was dark inside the place, till she went over and pushed up a shutter with a stick. There was a red ant bed floor, and, in the corner, a bag bunk with blankets on one end and some cases round the walls with newspapers spread on top, and in the middle, a scrubbed deal table.

She made us strong tea in a billy and told us she was a champeen rider and could drive a team as good as her Dad. We weren't too sure about teams—only football and cricket ones. She said her Dad came up from the Cooper with teams.

"They're all gone now. But he was a champeen those days." She sighed then, remembering him.

We had to go then, but we thanked her for the tea and she said: "Yous seem decent boys and mindjoo I don't like anything less it's proper. None of the 'Old Ma Rigby' stuff, or I'll let yous know!"

Mum and Sis didn't bother too much where we'd been. They were tired from the fixing. We had to start school then, and only on Saturdays for sure, and sometimes other afternoons or after dinner, Sundays, we could call on Mrs. Rigby. We found about the "Old Ma Rigby" she didn't like too. The Sergeant and his wife and the people from the hotel, and stockmen who came to the Railway Office for things, all told Dad and Mum about her.

"Old Ma Rigby's a Holy Terror," they'd say. "You wait till she goes for you." Everyone seemed to think she would just call one day and "Go" for Dad and Mum.

Stu and me never said about being friends with her—Stu is clever and he said best not. The yellow kids at school used to tell about chasing her and giving cheek, but Stu said: "Bet I know who does the chasing—not you." So they shut up skiting.

She told us lots of stories about what they used to do "on the roads" with the teams. Some days she'd be cross about something or someone, and tell us how she'd "let them know".

At home we'd hear the sergeant's wife tell Mum: "Old Ma Rigby went off at so-and-so today." They all used to laugh a lot about that. Once when we were coming from school for lunch we saw her coming out of Daley's store backwards, and yelling out bad names at the storekeeper. As we passed, we could see him standing well back against the store wall and Jim, the yellow boy who helped him, ran out the back.

When she saw us she dropped two gibbers from her hand. Big ones. She wiped her hands on her dress and came over to where we were walking. I felt scared. But Stu raised his hat and said: "Good-day, Mrs. Rigby."

"Good-day Stoot," she said, and nodded at me. Then she stepped up close and peered into our faces. I felt her breath, and wanted to run, but I could see Stu wasn't scared; then she said, still peering into our faces and nodding her head from one to the other: "Yous boys been good at school today, hey?"

Stu said: "Yes, Mrs. Rigby," and then she looked real pleased and said: "That's all right, well," and turned away towards her place.

Everyone at the store and the hotel had been standing still and watching, and Mum hurried to the gate to meet us coming in, and said: "What did that old thing say to you two?"

"Were we good at school today," Stu said, and went in to dinner.

Mum and Sis took deep breaths and then laughed and looked at each other and Mum said: "Well, can you beat that?"

Then, after dinner, she said: "If that old woman ever speaks to you boys any time, you both be polite and answer nicely. Some of the boys tease her. She's dangerous. Now, do you hear me?"

We said "Yes."

*

Some Saturdays we learned to sew leather and put rivets in. She showed us a little flowery plant that made good yeast, and we went looking for it for her along the river banks. She would bake lovely bread in a big camp oven, and the days we knew she had set it we would hurry down after school and watch her knead it up, and wait till she baked it. She never used the table to work on like women do, but cut open a clean flour-bag and knelt in front of it to roll and knead the dough, round and round, and in on itself. She showed us how to make the hole for the big old iron camp oven "that me Dad had on the roads," and we would carry shovels full of coals or ashes and put them carefully on the top. We had to be careful and do everything proper too, my word; if we didn't do a tidy job she'd let us know, she said.

On Widowers and Burned Houses

Where one man's life has died—or, let us say,
where a tall house burned—though welcoming
all the bereaved slope stretches in the sun
and halfwild dripping shrubs delight you on
don't let the ashdrunk gardens lure you groping
around with new foundations—you will find
that where a life or house falls or decays
most dangerous are the last things left behind.

I don't mean just the snakes coiled in the bell
of the old brick oven, the poisonworts and banes,
but all the fine and husbanded remains
from springs of domestic passions—what I mean
are where the vintaged and the pure have been:
the savage gaps of cellars and of wells.

NORMAN TALBOT

We ate as much of the crisp bread as we wanted to. I don't think she really needed to make it. She just liked to do it, and we liked her to. I expect she got a bit lonely for her own boys, too. There were ten of them, she said, "but they's all gorn over now."

We weren't too sure about that, but anyway she didn't seem to expect them back. Sometimes, Mum worried when we didn't want much tea on bread days, but Stu just said: "We had some pieces." Mum thought it would be at a boy's place.

After Christmas the river came down and the sergeant called for us all and took us up in his car to see the floods. There were a lot up there. Everyone was out to see the river running, and I saw Mrs. Rigby watching too, but she turned away when she saw us with the sergeant. We went to her place next day and she told us she'd seen us. She said she didn't go much on Them Fellers. One of them had taken her old man orf. She never said where to, and we didn't ask. We walked down to the river's edge with her and stood watching the water rushing along. It filled the deep hole between the high banks where the soak was, and was up over the end of the town too, and over the railway bridge. "But this wasn't nothing"—she said of the roaring waters—"Yous boys should've seen her the time my Harry went over her."

Harry, she said, was a good boy. She looked at us very fiercely here, and seemed to be waiting for us to say he wasn't. "Harry never done anything wrong," she went on, "just had a lot of spirit in him. Time the river come down that year, Them Fellers had him locked up. There was a lot of thunder about that night, a real big storm, and My Harry kicked his way out—fancy, eh? kicked down the door."

She looked away into the distance as if she could see Harry back, then: "Strong! My word that Harry was strong!" she said, "he come and got tucker and borrowed a horse and swum 'er." She nodded at the swollen river.

"Did he? In all that flood?" Stu asked, and I stared at the tumbling whitey-brown water rushing along, and the boughs of trees and old logs bobbing in it, and sticks and leafy bushes, and I thought of Strong Harry swimming in that with his borrowed horse, and I suppose pushing aside the boughs and that out of his road with his strong arms.

"Yes," Mrs. Rigby answered Stu, "—Just acrorst there." She pointed at the low bank further along and we waited to hear more. But she seemed to have gone away somewhere for awhile, then. So we all watched the patterns of the rushing water and thought of Strong Harry in it in the night.

"Did he go far?" Stu asked.

"No," she said. "No, not Harry. He done a fool thing—borrowed the wrong horse. Corse, mind-joo, it was real black that night, but I reckon I never got over Harry to mistake a horse like that."

"Why—did the horse buck him off?" Stu asked then.

"No. Drowned itself. Not a swimmer—lot of horses like that. Look here now—" She bent down and put a small twig at the edge of the water. "Yous boys always wants to do that, see? Then watch the water and you'll know if she's rising or falling, see?"

We said "Yes," we would remember what she told us. She'd left Strong Harry, we could see, and it didn't seem proper to ask any more.

*

Once at breakfast Mum and Sis were talking about her, and Mum said: "I feel a bit sorry for her though, poor old thing. She's had a lot of trouble—and losing all those children . . ."

Dad said: "Has she lost them, though? I heard a yarn or two about a few of them beating the police to the Territory border." So we hoped Strong Harry never drowned with that wrong horse after all.

Then Mr. Harris left on transfer, and a new sergeant came. We didn't see as much of him as we did of the Harris's. Dad told Mum he was a New Broom when she asked about him.

We were nearly finished lunch that day when Dad came in and said to Mum: "Hear the sergeant took old Ma Rigby up last night."

"Goodness," Mum said, "Whatever's happened?"

"Oh, nothing, I don't think. He's just cleaning up. Hear he's going to ship her to Brisbane on today's train with young Fletcher. Not waiting for the mail, in case she gets troublesome, I suppose."

We went out quick, without eating any more, and I asked Stu: "Where will they take her?"

"Dunno." The bottom of my stomach felt like when I've told Mum a lie. The yeller kids at school said they knew where she was getting taken to but we wouldn't tell them we believed it. And Stu was real silly in lessons all afternoon.

The slow train got in at four. We hurried and got through the fence for a short cut instead of going home first and being stopped by anything. We stood up the end of the dirt platform—it was red ant-bed, a bit higher than the other ground. We knew Dad would be in his office till the train came in, and Jelly Neil the porter wouldn't mind us.

The new sarge (Mum said it was disrespectful to say "sarge", but I was always going to now, and so was Stu; we made it up at school that day)

well, the new sarge and Constable Fletcher were standing at the door of the waiting shed. We walked along quietly and saw Mrs. Rigby sitting on the bench inside.

We wouldn't have known her. She had on a black dress with a lot of lace stuff at the throat and a big brooch with yellow glass stones in it, pinned on the neck, very high, and as she swallowed it moved up and down and wobbled a bit. There were black cotton gloves on her hands, and a shiny black hat with a funny broken grape on one side of a ribbon band sat on her head. On her lap she had a small basket, very neatly strapped with one of the strong leather ones we'd seen her make. Then I saw it was the one I put the rivets in too, and I just wished her Strong Harry would ride up then and hit that new sarge.

We went in the waiting room, and it was dark after outside. Mrs. Rigby was looking away like she did after Harry that day. Then she looked at us, peering how she did, and Stu said: "Hullo Mrs. Rigby. Is there anything you'd like us to do while you are away?" Gee! Stu is game.

She sat up straight then, from where she had been kind of slumped and tired-looking, and the sun came in and I saw that the black hat and her clothes were really a kind of greeny-color.

"Well, good-day yous boys," she said, real strong and loud for that old sarge to hear too. "Yes now, there is a few things." Her voice got much stronger as she went on, real like the old Ma Rigby they were all afraid of.

"Look after my soak now. Don't let none of Them Fellers near it!" I thought of the water rushing along over it but didn't say. "—And let no one near my place neither, Stoot. Any Them Fellers goes near it, my word I'll let 'em know!"

The train whistle sounded at the bend. Mrs. Rigby got up and handed Stu the basket and me a little box from under the seat. You could see she felt a lot better now. But not the sarge and the constable . . . They came close to the waiting shed and looked at us hard. Mrs. Rigby bustled us down the step and shouldered the two of them aside as we passed. The slow goods pulled up and Dad came out of his office. The train guard got down, and seeing Mrs. Rigby, said, "Where to, lady?"

Stu said, real quick, before that old sarge could say anything, "Brisbane—and a good seat facing the engine, please."

The guard grinned and handed Mrs. Rigby in and found her a good seat where she could talk to us from the window while Neil and he unloaded some stuff from the van. We stood close to the window and Stu talked about Brisbane to her. I felt someone touch my shoulder. It was the sarge, and he was handing two shillings to me.

"Go and get your friend some soft drink for the train," he said, "—you've got time."

I looked at Stu and he nodded. I ran fast to the store for it. On the way I thought, "Oh, I never asked her what sort." But I got lemonade because I like that and anyway she mightn't have known the names of soft drinks. I never saw her have any. I reckon they only had tea on the roads. But I bet she'd like lemonade. When I got back with the soft-drink Dad was talking to Mrs. Rigby and smiling. She looked real well and proud too—her head kept turning to the other people in the carriage, and she called Dad "Station Master".

"You got two sensible sorts of boys here, Station Master." She nodded at us. "Mindjoo boys get out of hand—you got ter let them know you want things done proper."

I didn't give the cold bottle to Stu to give her, either. I reached up to her myself. "Here's some lemonade for the journey, Mrs. Rigby," I said.

Journey sounded more proper than just train.

She took the bottle and showed it to the other passengers.

"See, eh? Thank yous, boys." Then the whistle had gone and the train was moving before I had time to tell her it wasn't us that bought it for her.

We waved till the train went round the bend, and Stu looked at me so's we'd go through the short cut again and miss Dad and them, and we went quick.

My stomach felt better than at dinner-time. You bet there wasn't anything to worry about. Mrs. Rigby wouldn't let anyone get HER down at any old looney house like the yellow kids had said. Not her. She'd let them know, you bet. And I'm going to say "The Sergeant" again, now. I bet Stu does, too.

Old Man in a Boarding House

"I woke at four fifteen," he said,
remembering the hand that crept
across the white face of his watch,
while minutes drained away like blood
and sapped his life of time, the night
of dark. Yet still the stars refused to fade,
he could but wait and wait and wait.

"I could not sleep again," he said,
"but I was good and stayed in bed."
His voice, low and discreet, he thought
drummed on the ears of sleepy men
who turned to disapprove of him.
But he, oblivious of them,
smiled at his child of fifty-three
and slowly sipped his cup of tea.

IRENE M. SUMMY

BALLAD OF POOR TOM WOLFE

A stone, a leaf, an open door,
Gulliver died in Baltimore.
The raven quoth he, "Nevermore
Will Tom Wolfe come to Baltimore."
Carolina's blind with rain,
Tom Wolfe will never come home again.

There wasn't a coffin in Baltimore
Big enough to bury poor Tom Wolfe.

Great Gant stood roaring by the fire,
Braggart and hero, gull and liar.
Eliza Gant sat counting gold,
Ben lay upstairs dying in the cold.
Poor Tom's acold, poor Tom's acold.
Liza's real estate is sold.

There wasn't a coffin in Baltimore
Big enough to bury poor Tom Wolfe.

Look homeward Angel, in the gloom
Ben coughs up blood in the black, back room,
Now Gant's great frame grows spindle thin,
The cancer eats him up like sin.
O neighbor, neighbor cast the stone
That tells Tom Wolfe he can't come home.

There wasn't a coffin in Baltimore
Big enough to bury poor Tom Wolfe.

The train goes rocking through the night,
Manhattan's towers are reeling white.
Wrapped in newspapers men sit free
On the shithouse seats in the Bowery.
"O the streets are black and the stars blind white,
I will go roaring past black midnight,
I wrote ten thousand words tonight."

Who will open the door, unlatch the gate,
Say "Where are you going Tom Wolfe so late?
Have you come to bring America joy,
In your seven league boots, you roaring boy?"

"I am going across America,
I am going on a long journey that will end
In a narrow white bed in Baltimore
With a scalpel wound in my head.
I will forget the crowds and the rain,
The underground bursting out of my brain,
The shoving, the pushing, the shoulders, the cries,
America dying as Tom Wolfe dies."
And the angel spoke in a voice of stone:
"Tom Wolfe, Tom Wolfe, you can never go home."

"I am going across America
In a roaring train.
Wherever men walk and talk
I will come home again.
The bursting notebooks shrivel and die in my head,
So much to write, and my hand falls dead on the bed."
Gargantua out of the South, O the burning eyed!
The undertakers all grizzled when Tom Wolfe died:

"There isn't a coffin in Baltimore,
Big enough to bury poor Tom Wolfe."

DOROTHY HEWETT

THE SWAN

Myra Morris

THEY sat by the kidney-shaped pond the three of them, Vicky, Mrs. Bloomfield and Cousin Ada in her battered wheel-chair. Two of the women were elderly, carrying the tell-tale signs of age in their faces and figures—the crepey eye-lids, the blurred chin-lines, the clumsy contours of flesh that emphasised the youth of the girl so that she looked with her boney shoulders and small innocent face less than her twenty-two years.

She sat stiffly on the ground, feeling her hair pale as a primrose, fine as a spider's thread, lifting in the wind, watching the wind take shape in the patch of shivery grass, leaving dents in its surface as a person leaves dents in a feather-bed. It's lovely here, she thought dreamily, and saw the black-brown waters of the pond freckled with frogspawn and the irises breaking their silvery sheaths at the edge. High above the pampas plumes of the island there hung a trembling cloud of gold.

"The wattle's early," she said in a flat, colorless voice.

"It isn't," retorted Cousin Ada. "It's just that people get into the habit of saying that year after year."

"Well, blowies are," said Mrs. Bloomfield triumphantly. "Put one out this morning. Hole in the fly-wire door."

They looked at one another and laughed their gusty, crackling laughter. It was astonishing how easily they laughed, the two old dears—Cousin Ada with her gnarled arthritic fingers and legs like twisted ti-tree, and Mrs. Bloomfield who looked with her raddled face and bronze-green mossy hair more like a pantomime Dame than the vicar's widow she professed to be.

But there was something warm and comforting about that laughter. It had reassured Vicky when she had come two years before to make her home with Ada, her father's cousin. She had come because it was the only thing to do, because her stepmother had remarried and gone to Queensland, because she was with her sketchy Convent education, her lack of specialised training, lack of confidence and ambition, unfitted for anything better in the way of a job. No typing, no cleverness with figures, no beauty of face or form to put her on the quick road to success, only the memory of life in a dreary little township with an ailing father who had died almost penniless, and a long, drawn-out friendship with a plain good-natured girl (Mabel, left over from Convent-days) who had tried in vain to help her.

The easiest way out had lain with Cousin Ada, frightening at first with her get-up of sooty eyebrows and clown-like mouth, and deliberate vulgarities ("If I'm rude it's because I want to be rude, not because I don't know better") but kindly, and not tyrannical like the elderly people in novels who happened to be relatives and employers at one and the same time. And there was as well as the kindness, those little tributes to her youth that were so gratifying.

"But lovey, you're young," Cousin Ada would say, nuzzling her deformed hands together. "It's divine to be young." "You're young, my dear, you can do it," Mrs. Bloomfield would shout, watching her edge the wheel-chair over the gutters without making any offers of help.

Every afternoon when it was fine Vicky would push the wheel-chair across the tiled veranda, up the cracked asphalt path out into the road, and Mrs. Bloomfield, emerging from a cottage lower down punctually and precisely like a cuckoo from a clock, would join them. It was a pleasant walk to the Public Gardens past sleeping little houses sunken deep in piled-up flower-plots, past leaning backyard fences and the grassy vacant allotment where there were swings and slides, and except in winter time an old-fashioned merry-go-round with wide-nostrilled, painted horses that hung disconsolately, their arching hooves transfixed eternally in air.

The gardens, neglected now by the people of the sprawling country town, were entered through a once imposing gateway that still bore, rain-blurred and tattered, the printed notices from some long-gone local improvement society, but deep inside was an enchanted place of fine tall grasses that were pricked with black-headed soldiers and milkmaids as the sky is pricked with stars; great, shaggy pines that dropped their incense-smelling needles, and narrow flower-beds flung like flounces of chintz along the sides of the pond.

It was the pond that inevitably drew the three women day after day, day after day. Here the fat little ducks dived nimbly under the ribbon-weed, and the single black swan drifted soundlessly like a ghost swan in a dream, a creature of grace and beauty in the water with its curving breast and ruffled wings, but clumsy and grotesque on the bank, waddling on its ill-paced legs like an ungainly, pregnant woman.

Vicky wooed the swan with a dogged patience but it resisted her overtures, and always moved away contemptuously from the scraps of bread she offered, so that she envied the gardener's friendly association with the bird.

Today the swan, red-eyed and angry, hissed and flapped his great wings when Silly Sid, the gardener, left his mower and urged it towards the water. He was a massive-shouldered, middle-aged man with a strong neck that ran straight up to crown of his skull, and a large, flat face that wore, except in those moments when he smiled a sweet, fumbling smile, a look of vacancy.

Now he tipped his hat further over his forehead and shambled back to the antiquated hand-mower on the lawn.

"Swan's cross," he said simply like a mother excusing a spoilt child. He pointed vaguely to the empty sky. "There's been going-ons at night now the moon's at the full. Cor blimey, I hear them passing over and back, wild swans down

from the north, squawking and fighting and trying to get her to go."

Vicky nodded. Often she talked to Silly Sid, who told her in his slurred, hesitating speech about the swans. Royal birds, he said they were, kings' birds, both black and white. And it was something to see a swan's reedy nest floating like a bitty island on the water. And it was something to hear them flying high at night, far up, honk-honk-honk, flying away to the swamps by the sea for food. There were some that went and some that stayed comfortable-like at home—like her on the water now. She'd never went—not like the others . . . not yet—

He stood there leaning on the handle of his mower, drawing the two elderly women as well as Vicky into his rambling talk.

"But it's spring—it's the urge making her restless now. It's the urge."

"Tom cats," said Mrs. Bloomfield cryptically.

"Men," said Cousin Ada with a snort of laughter. It was a slightly obscene laughter, and it made Vicky blush until her sharp little nose went pink at the tip. She watched Silly Sid lumbering off with the mower.

"He's not so silly," she said.

"An old felt hat and sleeves too long would make even a university professor look cuckoo," Aunt Ada said briskly. She pulled the Afghan up over her knees, and adjusted her woollen scarves with a tinkle of bracelets and brooches that made Vicky remember the Chinese joy-bells that hung at Cousin Ada's front door. "Let's go! I'm hungry as a maggot."

They went out through the gateway and Vicky, pushing the chair that ran easily on its rubber-tyred wheels, thinking back to the gardens settling down now into a rising tide of shadow, mauve and umber and purplish black under the great shaggy pines, felt a weariness dragging at her feet. I'm sick of it here, she thought, I've been sick of it for a long, long time. She looked at the back of Cousin Ada's head nodding now as the wheels of the chair wobbled over a stony patch, and was touched by a feeling of guilt. Some day she would leave Cousin Ada. Quite soon, perhaps, she would abandon Cousin Ada and the comforts of the solid white stone house snug behind its screen of crisp pittosporum trees. There was only the matter of making up her mind. There was only the matter of that letter to write, the letter she had almost written a dozen times in the past, secret-haunted week, the letter to Mabel with every word shaped and ready, only waiting to be put down—

> Dear Mabel, I hope I'm not too late, but this is to say definitely that I'm taking your advice and coming to the city next week to apply for that job in the warehouse you mentioned. Now that Ellie has got married, I could, as you say, have her room and board with your family for a start. You have always been so kind to me—

Yes, she had always been kind, poor old Mabel with her long sheep's face and commonsense advice that was based on experience, but it was hard not to cringe away from the thought of Mabel's awful background, that grey industrial Melbourne suburb, that airless little back bedroom that she had once for a week shared with Ellie, now happily married—not to cringe away from the thought of a job with strangers who would find her inept, slow, terrified—

"Stop!" boomed Mrs. Bloomfield, breaking into her muddled thoughts as they approached the vacant allotment. "Look, the merry-go-round's going."

Sure enough it was, for a man with grease on his face was pushing it strongly, his heels leaving holes in the grass, and a faint, choked, wheezy melody stuttered from somewhere under the roof. There was no one in the scallop-like carriages, no one riding the painted horses who had gone into motion, their bridles hanging uselessly, and the man with the grease on his face leered hopefully at the standing trio.

"Want a ride, ladies, sixpence a ticket."

Vicky stayed unmoving, her arms crossed over her thin immature chest, her skirt flapping about her ankles.

"No," she cried aghast. "No, no thank you!"

"I've never been on a round-about since I was a child," said Cousin Ada wistfully. "Do you think it could be managed if we got Silly Sid across to give me a bit of a heave—"

"No, no," repeated Vicky, who thought it could be managed quite well if Cousin Ada wanted it sufficiently, since Cousin Ada could hobble round the house comfortably, and used the chair for going out only because it was simpler to be pushed than to walk. But those two grotesques capering around on a round-about, those two whom she must humor, pander to as if they were children—"No," she cried again sick with shame, "it's late, and the wind's getting fearfully cold."

"Cold as a fish dearie," shouted Mrs. Bloomfield. "Cold-blooded as a fish you young girls," She waved energetically to the disappointed man. The hurdy-gurdy music came to a stop with one long sobbing sigh, and the three moved on. "I once saw a wagon piled with merry-go-round horses," added Mrs. Bloomfield with an enchanted backward look. "Funniest sight in the world! All those faces looking over the sides, grinning. Like a bit of Dante's Inferno made into a comic strip. I laughed till I was sick."

The two women began to laugh gustily, and Vicky, pushing the chair roughly across the gutter, felt a surge of sickening hatred. Those two old fools, she thought. Always laughing. She was tired of the laughter that had in the beginning delighted her. You have to be old to laugh, she thought with a piercing clarity. I am too young.

*

By the time she had edged Mrs. Bloomfield into her garden she knew that she had made her decision. By the time she had opened the front door of Cousin Ada's house and set the joy-bells tinkling in the draught, she knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that she would write the letter that night and post it in the evening mail.

The house had settled down into a cold, breathless silence before she bent to her task. There had been the tea to get—only a snack since Mrs. Scobie, the daily woman, always served up a substantial midday dinner—the fires to be seen to, and Cousin Ada to be shuffled off to bed in the front room opposite her own. There was no sound at all but the refrigerator treading a gay little tune on the kitchen tiles, and the pittosporum branches scratching against the windows.

Vicky sat at the little table under her window, her back to the bed that was draped with one of Cousin Ada's endless Afghans. There was something oppressive about the chilly room that smelled of lavender and mothballs, and it seemed that time itself had stopped and the clock on the dressing-table, ticking away in a stealthy, hurrying murmur, had nothing at all to do with time.

A straggle of pale, straight hair fell over the girl's forehead as she reached for her Biro pen, and she pushed it back impatiently.

The Composer

The black-shouldered kite
Comes in like a snowstorm.
He has eighty-nine starlings
In the cage of a snowgum.

Like the sweep of a baton
The hawk from his hover
Steadies and wheels them
When terror breaks cover.

Black wings drum and turn.
Beneath their cruel angles
The starlings are singing
Like a company of angels;

And the tree like an orchestra
Bends with the weather
And its strings and the starlings
Make music together.

High up the hawk dreams
In his nest on the wind
While the symphony forms
In the trance of his mind.

DAVID CAMPBELL

"Dear Mabel," she wrote in her childish script, "I hope I'm not too late, but this is to say that I'm taking your advice at last and coming to the city next week to apply for that job that you—"

Then pen wandered off the paper and Vicky sat staring into the mysterious moonwashed night beyond the window-glass, thinking of Cousin Ada in her room across the passage with her glass of milk ("And a little something in it, dearie, to keep me warm!"), thinking of Cousin Ada, her kindness, her robust fun, the comfortable house, the games of cribbage, the good books from the library, the easy food on the table, the walks to the gardens—the days that slipped away quietly, peacefully like beads slipping over a string . . .

I'll have to hurry, she thought, and looked at the ticking clock, her eyes slewed sideways. To get the letter written in time and posted at the corner pillar-box—to put the milk bottles out before she forgot them altogether, Perhaps she'd do that first—in case—

With a feeling of escape she tip-toed down to the kitchen and came back clutching the milk bottles in her arms. One, two, three, to be put down on the asphalt just inside the gate.

The night was brighter now outside, brighter and at the same time darker, the road marbled with black and silver, the sky like a depthless polar sea strewn with floating icebergs. And something was happening in the sky that had suddenly found a voice. Birds were flying over backwards and forwards and backwards again. There was a crying and a fluting high up, a thin unearthly singing on the wind, and the rush of beating feathers.

Vicky stood breathing fast, her hands at her throat. Sid's birds, she thought. Sid's birds, "wild swans from the north, squawking and fighting and trying to get her to go." Terror touched her. The whole windy, moonlit, jangled night was charged with menace. With her hands over her ears she hurried inside and shut the door of her room. She was safe here, enclosed, away from the evil of the dark unknown. With a fierce gesture she swept her unfinished letter to the floor and stamped it under her heels.

The gardens next day were bright with sun. Mrs. Bloomfield and Cousin Ada knitted far back in the shade, but Vicky sat at the edge of the pond, staring with glassy eyes. The pond was empty. There was no swan there. But, of course, she told herself half angrily, she had known that it was gone. Gone in the night . . .

And then she saw it drifting slowly from behind the papery island-stems, a black swan drifting idly in a dream, and Silly Sid shambling along the edge, clicking a pair of shears in his fat, unshapely hands.

"The swan," said Vicky pointing. "The swan! I thought it had gone in the night."

Silly Sid smiled his sweet, fumbling smile.

"Not her. She'll stay. She takes no count of going-ons! She likes her little place. She's happy captive-like."

Vicky looked at the swan. It rested motionless on the water, head bent over, seeing its reflection above the underworld that wasn't there. The swan a happy captive caught in its own dim dream . . .

I am the swan, thought Vicky and she scrambled to her feet. I'll never write that letter, she thought, not that one or any other.

WE CONTINUE OUR PATRICK WHITE DEBATE WITH A COMMENT FROM RUSSEL WARD AND A REVIEW FROM ANDREW TAYLOR

COLONIALISM AND CULTURE

Russel Ward

WHEN some Germanic tribes conquered most of Britain in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. they naturally brought with them their own cultural luggage. At first there could have been no such thing as English, or even Anglo-Saxon, culture but only a segment of Germanic culture transplanted to a fog-bound island in the North Sea. Gradually however, inter-action between the colonists and their new environment caused their culture to diverge from the parent stem. Inevitably, if imperceptibly, Anglo-Saxon or English culture became a thing-in-itself, obviously different from German or Norwegian or Dutch or any other culture sprung, linguistically speaking, from the common Germanic root. Yet even if we had complete knowledge of the history of all the Germanic peoples between, say, 400 and 900 A.D., it would be impossible to say at exactly what point in time, perhaps even during which century, the decisive change—that is, the birth of a new, independent culture—occurred.

This is all rather trite. It would not be worth saying if the nature of equivalent processes, taking place in our own time, were equally obvious to us and roused as little passion. Should Australian and Canadian writing, for instance, be considered provincial segments of English literature or are they now separate literatures in their own right, influenced more by native trends than by what is written in England itself? Most United States citizens have no doubt that American literature has long since become independent: yet Henry James and T. S. Eliot, at least by their own practice, dissent weightily from the majority view. Indian culture was ancient when the first illiterate Englishmen arrived in Britain: yet are we certain that even modern Indian literature written in English, as so much of it is, owes more to the genius loci than to British cultural influences?

Here it is not my purpose to seek an answer to these questions but merely to suggest—what is often passionately denied—that the very existence of this tension between indigenous and overseas-traditional influences has a major vitalising effect on the emerging cultures, and to illustrate this contention by looking briefly at four major Australian novelists—Joseph Furphy, Henry Handel Richardson, Martin Boyd and Patrick White. Of these the first is, and will probably always remain, incomparably the doyen of the Australian nationalist school. The others are sometimes held to have "transcended" national limits and so to belong to English literature as a whole; but it is clear that each in his own way has been fundamentally concerned with the artistic problem of divided allegiance.

In Australia up till the 1890s it was generally taken for granted that culture, in the narrower sense, was something which could be acquired only in or from the mother country. The greatest "Australian" novel was held to be Henry Kingsley's "Geoffry Hamlyn". A brother of the more famous Charles Kingsley, Henry spent some years in Australia as a young man and later wrote two novels based on his colonial experiences—"Geoffry Hamlyn" and "The Hillyars and the Burtons". They are good light novels, but almost nothing about them is Australian except the setting, and that only in a formal or superficial sense. The main characters, like their creator, are English upper middle-class people sampling for a period the exotic colonial landscape and taking it for granted that they will return "Home" as soon as possible. The books are written entirely with an English audience in mind. "Geoffry Hamlyn"

was published in 1869 but Marcus Clarke and Rolf Boldrewood, who published in the two following decades and who did address themselves to Australian characters and themes, still had English readers and English assumptions in mind as they wrote. Naturally.

In 1861 a majority of the Australian population had been born in the British Isles: but by 1901 eighty per cent. of the people had been born and bred in Australia so that they knew England, if at all, only at second hand through books, or travellers' tales or old people's reminiscences. Thus there came about the nationalist awakening of the 1890s which issued in national unity on the political plane with the federation of the Commonwealth in 1901, and in the sudden spate of self-consciously Australian national writing at about the same period. It is not too much to say that then, for the first time, it occurred to many literate Australians that it was possible to write directly from their own experience, and so primarily for an audience of their countrymen. No wonder the discovery went to their heads. So we find Furphy and most other writers of the period coping with the problem of a dual cultural allegiance by reacting, often violently and brashly, against the preceding trend. Furphy referred to his great novel, "Such Is Life", with the well known warning that the book is in "temper democratic, bias offensively Australian". So he sets his scene in "that central point of the universe, Riverina proper", in, that is, what may be fairly termed the spiritual centre of gravity of the Australian bush: and so he witheringly denounces what he saw as the effete English values which had been celebrated by Kingsley in the latter's portrait of the immigrant squatter, Sam Buckley—one of those

> slender-witted, virgin-souled, overgrown school boys who fill Henry Kingsley's exceedingly trashy and misleading novel with their insufferable twaddle. There was a squatter of the Sam Buckley type, but he, in the strictest sense of the word, went to beggary; and, being too plump of body and exalted of soul for barrow-work and too comprehensively witless for anything else, he was shifted by the angels to a better world—a world where the Christian gentleman is duly recognised, and where Socialistic carpenters, vulgar fishermen, and all manner of undesirable people, do the washing-up.

It was great fun while it lasted and certainly less foolish than the slavish imitation of English models which had gone before, but it was hardly a balanced or mature solution to the problem. It protests much too much.

*

While Furphy was writing "Such Is Life" a young girl, who was later to take the pen-name "Henry Handel Richardson", was growing up in Melbourne. Her father was an immigrant English (or Anglo-Irish) medico who, like many upper middle-class immigrants, found it impossible to settle down easily in Australia. Having left England partly because of what seemed to him the too great weight of tradition and the too great rigidity of the class structure, he found himself at least equally oppressed by the crudeness, the "materialism" and the levelling egalitarianism of Australian life. So he returned to England only to find that Australia had changed him subtly, even in spite of himself. And the "Old Country" seemed to have changed too. English life was no longer, if it ever had been, quite as his yearning imagination had painted it during the years of exile. He did not fit in there either. So he returned to Australia, more spiritually divided and troubled than ever, went mad and died. All this is imaginatively reflected in Richardson's great trilogy, "The Fortunes of Richard Mahony". It is, by any standards, a very moving work of art.

Some critics have hailed it as a great tragic masterpiece. Others feel that it is considerably less than this because the progress of an organic mental disease, however sad or pathetic, cannot constitute the stuff of tragedy in which the hero's downfall should proceed from some fatal **spiritual** weakness. Mahony's degeneration and collapse, these critics argue, is intimately connected with a Hamlet-like inability to act decisively; but this weakness in character springs in turn from a progressive mental disease the symptoms of which, as described in the book, show that, clinically speaking, Mahony's actions are finally involuntary in a sense that a man's are not. For many Australian readers the book falls short of greatness for a quite different reason. Being so thoroughly at home in the Australian environment themselves, they find it almost impossibly difficult to sympathise with Mahony's dilemma. Intellectually they may be able to understand it, but only from the outside as it were. At a deeper emotional level they cannot but feel his downfall to be the result of a weak, even perverse and stupid, vanity rather than of a true tragic dilemma. Hadn't he the sense to know when he was well off at the end of his first Australian sojourn? He earned his unhappiness!

*

Martin Boyd, like Richardson, spent long periods living in both England and Australia. Unlike her, however, his family have been domiciled mainly in Australia for some generations, though they derive from an English family which was old and well known long before Australia was discovered. Perhaps partly for these reasons Boyd's novels present a more balanced and, it seems to me, a more mature approach to the provincial artist's problem of divided allegiance—which is not to say that his work is therefore "greater" than Richardson's. In "The Cardboard Crown", "The Montforts", and indeed throughout his novels, he deals with the problem ironically and humorously—and so disarms the "Australian" reaction described in the above paragraph. In this spirit he makes fun, for instance, of the crudities of the standard Australian cuisine with its ubiquitous tomato-sauce bottle standing like a tribal god in the middle of every bush dining table. But he can also present an adolescent Australian lad, born into a good family in the second half of the last century, and faced with the problem of being packed off to England for his education. I quote (certainly inaccurately) from memory:

> Son: "I should like to go to Melbourne Grammar School, Father. I am an Australian!"
> Father: "An Australian? What is an Australian? A convict? A bushranger? No, my boy: you shall go to England to be educated as a gentleman should!"

Here of course, at least to most Australian readers, the irony is pointed at English attitudes at least as much as at Australian ones. The passage also helps, incidentally, to show that this cultural schizophrenia may persist in some well-to-do Australian families even after several generations spent in the new country.

It seems to me that the novels of Furphy, Richardson and Boyd exemplify three stages in the approach to some sort of cultural maturity: first the violent reaction which, to allay its own inner

doubts, asserts too stridently the existence of an Australian identity and its infinite superiority to all things English; second the frank, even anguished, recognition of the problem; third its treatment by means of deft but light-hearted irony and humor—a long step towards unforced acceptance of Australian identity and of its difference from that of England. Meanwhile the mainstream of Australian fiction has followed basically the Furphy tradition, though with less over-compensation, more ease and acceptance, as time passed. I have glanced at the three writers in chronological order which, of course, corresponds with the logical order of shifts in attitude which we are considering: but this is not to imply of course that they should necessarily be ranked in the same ascending order of achievement as artists. Personally I should be inclined to rank them, from this point of view, in just the reverse order; but I think Patrick White certainly the greatest Australian novelist to date partly **because** his chronological position at the end of the series has helped him to a mature solution of the problem considered in this article.

*

Some critics have damned Patrick White with faint praise because, at bottom, they feel that his work is un-Australian or even anti-Australian, though they rarely state their motivation openly and perhaps are not always conscious of it. Yet White's first novel to achieve widespread recognition, "The Tree of Man", appears from one point of view as a deliberate exercise in the working-out of traditionally "Australian" themes: a common working man and woman grow in stature through their struggle with Australian nature, with drought, flood and bush-fire and, yes, with encroaching suburbs and its corrupting "city" values too. "Voss", at a new level of profundity, explores the underlying pre-occupation of so much Australian writing —the spiritual effect on its inhabitants of the vast, dry, empty interior of the continent. And "Riders in the Chariot", with consummate artistry, considers movingly another basic Australian problem, one which has always been there but which has become much more acute since World War II., the position in a levelling, egalitarian, homogeneous society devoted to a middling way of life for all, of the "different" man or woman, the outsider—symbolised by the Jewish intellectual immigrant Himmelfarb, the sensitive but eccentric, even "mad", Miss Hare, the dispossessed Aboriginal painter who happens to be a genius, and the simple, unselfconsciously saintly child of God, Mrs. Godbold.

I am very far from suggesting that White necessarily is, or ought to be, consciously concerned with this traditionally Australian orientation of his work, still further from holding it the most important aspect of his achievement. On the contrary, I think that at last we have a great Australian novelist precisely because he is first a novelist and only incidentally an Australian. This may be put in another way by saying that Australian literature (and society) are now beginning to be mature enough to make it possible for a really gifted writer to take his Australian-ness for granted instead of worrying about it in one way or another. I feel that some critics are belatedly barking after the caravan has moved on. They have become so conditioned to delimiting Australian territory, so obsessed (like our writers) with the problem of divided allegiance that, when confronted with works which are so much **more** than truly Australian, they become confused. Most, however, are getting their bearings again as it becomes clearer that White's writing has itself already considerably modified the whole context in which Australians have been accustomed to look at their literature.

Tolstoi is no less profoundly Russian, and Hardy no less profoundly English for dealing with universal themes in their national settings. Indeed they are "universal" partly because they belong so wholly and naturally to their own cultures. Secure and unself-conscious acceptance of their own nationality is one of the prime conditions of their universality. In the same way, White's themes are both national and universal. Mass "culture" increasingly threatens valuable "differences" everywhere, and not only in Australia; though this is not necessarily to imply that such an embryonic culture as ours has already produced a genius of world stature. But I think we may feel that Patrick White's achievement to date makes it seem for the first time a future possibility.

WHITE'S SHORT STORIES

Andrew Taylor

PATRICK White is central to Australian literature just in so far as he chooses to remain at odds with its society. To say that he is one of our sharpest and best social critics is stating a commonplace. The "suburban" world of Sarsaparilla and Barranugli receive about as much sympathy as they offer love. But one of his strengths is the ability not only to make us feel strongly about the mess we have created, but also to make us feel that it's worth feeling strongly about. For barren, ugly, or sweet and sickly though it may be, it is still the breeding ground of human lives. And where human lives are being bred, there are always some who will, perhaps even only part-consciously, grope towards the fullness of living that can be sensed among a mass of flowers and foliage.

In this volume of short stories, "The Burnt Ones" (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 25/-), White, as in "The Aunt's Story" and "Riders in the Chariot," can turn his attention to Europe without diverting it from Australia. Four of the eleven stories here reprinted are set in the Greek Mediterranean. There is, it is true, a Greece of pines and temples on headlands, but there are also Hasselblads, and aunts who are professors in Paris, and new apartments and tinned dolmadakia. Romantic though he is, for White the Greek Mediterranean is just another place he happens to know well, where he can see taking place the same basic conflict that is taking place in Australia.

Still, it is hard to feel happy about the end of that otherwise fine "Being Kind to Titina". It is not for nothing that the girl, the pines, the Saronic

Gulf and "the man with the accordian . . . playing his five or six notes, as gentle and persuasive as wood-pigeons" are seen through the eyes of an adolescent. But one wonders if they are seen sufficiently through any other eyes as well. What kind of self-realisation is it that expresses itself in these terms: "As I leant out of the window, and held up my throat to receive the knife, nothing happened . . . and I realised that my own extended throat was itself a stiff sword"?

But the main contrast in one of the best stories, "The Woman who wasn't Allowed to Keep Cats," set in Athens, is not between the Greeks and their Americanised visitors, but between an indulgent and smothering sensuality that bores, tires or irritates, and the sharp feline sexuality that succeeds it. The Americans don't escape White's characteristic censure (" 'Some people are like animals!' she gasped; it was too hateful"). But it is not just Cadillacs and cameras that smother vitality. White would probably agree that good sensuality is good for one, but not all sensuality is good.

The funniest story in the collection is one in which this is seen in an intensely comic light. "Miss Slattery and her Demon Lover" is a satirical delight. It is Miss Slattery, usual and Aussie, who becomes the demon, and Tibby, that monstrous Hungarian, bewitched by her dexterity with the stockwhip, becomes, despite his feline name, a spaniel to his own perversion. Tibby, rather than qualifying for sympathy as one of the burnt ones of the title, comes in for a little humorous roasting.

But White does not always find life so amusing, nor is he always so kind to it. The majority of these stories have that odd mixture of luxuriance and grimness that we now expect of him. Among the rich smell of leaves and decay there is the shrill cry of the neighbor and the bony pricking of brooches. Unwanted relatives have to be buried out of sight, businesses run and acquaintances kept going. We live in a suburban society, and it has to be kept up because it keeps us up. Consequently, there are always little bits left over that, if they can't be thrown out, can at best be ignored, at worst shunned with contempt. These are the "burnt ones" of the title.

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To call these oddities outcasts, rejects or outsiders is inaccurate. They are none of these. They are rather misfits, often struggling almost tragically to retain sheer normality. Some don't even realise their difference. Their difference is that they accept suffering, rather than pretend to ignore its existence. This itself sets them apart from the world of washing machines and neighbors in which normal humanity shuts itself. And, White implies, if a soul shuts itself from suffering, it must also shut itself from love. One recalls the dying Voss, and Theodora Goodman and Mrs. Godbole. But what White means by love is no simple thing. There is something of charity, and self-denial, but there is also sensuality and self-fulfilment, and a sensuous apprehension of objects by which love can and ought to extend itself to the inanimate or non-human. White's language is almost bumpy in its concreteness, and Meg Hogben, feeling "the furry darkness, as the semi-trailer roared and bucked, its skeleton of coloured lights," ("Down at the Dump") is on the same road as Miss Hare crawling through her friendly jungle.

It is in "Clay," in my opinion the best here, and in "The Letters," both very fine stories, that White examines most closely the basic problems he diagnoses. Clay himself is a pathetic, unplaced creature who withdraws increasingly from the suburban world which has inappropriately claimed him. He fashions a reality of his own, finally christening her Lova. She is the love and fulfilment he has never experienced and can only amateurishly copy, after the models he has. He is a seer with nothing outside himself to see. He creates Lova in total isolation, and as isolated women tend to do, she becomes bitchy. Instead of providing the white bridal boat in which he can sail to Avalon, she ends by beating him to death with a stiletto heel. Despite the acute satirical surface and Clay's near ludicrous patheticness ("At last my ryvita has turned to velveeta life is no longer a toastrack") White succeeds in amalgamating an astonishing variety. Clay's unpunctuated mother, both responsible and incapable, is a masterpiece of minor tragedescence.

If "Clay" is uncompromising, almost affronting, "The Letters" appears even bleaker, stripped as it is of much of the comedy. Here the satire is harsher; Mrs. Polkinghorn, the mother, responsible and not incapable, gets no sympathy. Her son Charles, like Clay, is "in withdrawal". But whereas Clay has withdrawn to look, Charles is in retreat, hiding from threat. Among poultry catalogues he is safe; the letters locked in the box cannot threaten him. It is his sudden desire to be finally rid of threat that impells him to release the letters. And in doing so, he also releases fear: "packages contain the worst dangers, threatening the lives of politicians, diplomats . . ." There is only one refuge, and he is hurled from that with elderly middle-class disgust. Charles has locked himself into hell with the same key with which he opened his Pandora's box and faced fear. For he did not shut it in time to keep Hope with him.

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In both of these stories, as in "The Aunt's Story" and "Riders," White takes us over the edge of madness in an unmistakably sane manner. He makes us face a kind of morality of injustice; he makes us see that certain states of madness are in fact a state of truth and exposure that just can't cope with its own reality. The victims of this state don't become saints or heroes; their martyrdom is only partly, almost negligibly imposed on them by society, which prefers on the whole to leave them alone. It is imposed by their own condition. They are part burning bush, lights for us, and part minor and unintentional Ulysses, turned, as in Dante, into flame and suffering 'e dentro dalla lor fiamma si geme.'

None the less, White seldom ceases his muscular attack on contemporary society. Some of it is very funny. Most of it is accurate. His devastating utilisation of the phraseology and rhythms of Australian speech and inarticulateness carries his attack into the heart of the enemy, and modulates without strain into the most personal dialogue. But his satire sometimes penetrates to the point of indiscriminacy or sheer destructiveness. It's such accurate observations as his that makes his targets more than mere targets. Yet the unmitigated attack that observation furnishes leaves me with the feeling that White himself sometimes lacks the charity he is condemning them for lacking. He evaluates his "heroes" by their subjective experience. Yet condemns the hypocrisy of the majority while seeming frightened to allow his sympathy to look too closely into their own subjective life. Could they all be found to be burnt ones?

These strictures apply mostly to the poorer stories in the volume. The stories are, like any

Discontent

October 6, 1868, and June 24, 1870

"I do not fancy (I'm scarce fit to ride)
That luck will ride with me on Saturday.
I'm loathe to **look** at horses now, old friend;
And since that fall of mine
I drink to kill the pain.
I get so awfully low . . .
A sleeping draught with strength enough
To send me to a sleep I'd never break
Would break this misery . . .
Old fellow, I do not exaggerate."

So Gordon wrote to Riddoch. But he lived
Two years, then saw ambition melt
Like lawyers' wax upon his melancholy will.
He lived on fallowed discontent, then dared
The earth to leap from him at Brighton as he lay to drill
The mind which fitfully had signalled his despair.

Among the trees at Brighton, Gordon died,
Pipe, shilling and hat placed neatly by his side;
The branch of ti-tree which he used to press
The trigger of the rifle on his breast
Was forked like lightning, lightning-swift his end;
An instant's clamor cleft him from those men
Whom he would love and speak most kindly of.

Death, the "mournful meaning of the undersong"
As Kendall wrote in his memorial poem,
Came to Gordon like a known
Conclusion; no other race
But that to death could place
Him surely as he passed the post; he died
Knowing the certain victory of his last short ride.

ROGER McDONALD

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collection, a mixed bag, and the worst of them, "Willy-Wagtails by Moonlight" is very slight, and creakily engineered. Some display the chronic weaknesses of the short story and White—obviousness, facile symbolism, crudeness of conception—which the expansive novels tend to eliminate. But at their best, these stories are fine, penetrating, courageous and illuminating in their economy.

NETTIE PALMER–SOME PERSONAL MEMORIES

Jessie McLeod

I CAME under Nettie Palmer's influence a dozen years before I met her. In a small Wimmera town, where, on the outskirts, the Mallee scrub retreated before the great wheat paddocks, and the sparrows squabbled as they dust-bathed in the hot sand under the pepper trees, a school girl turned every Saturday to Nettie Palmer's column in the Argus. The hard clear sunlight gave way to the cool misty blue of the Dandenongs; from damp gullies came the smells of tree-ferns, dog wood, sassafras, and hardenbergia; mountain ash pierced the sky and at dawn bird song was deafening.

I can still recall Nettie's description of a walk through the dark from Croydon to Kalorama. She had missed the last bus, and, after a tiring day in the city, was faced with the long uphill climb. I doubt if searching out the original article in the newspaper files of the Public Library would sharpen the memories that come back; the moon rising over the dark hills, the damp mist in the gullies, the sleepy twitter of birds, the strange bumps and thumps of nocturnal animals.

Later on came "All About Books". Was it a publisher's catalog? I have forgotten. It cost threepence and was a red-letter day every month to a lonely teenage girl (except that teenages hadn't been invented then) in a one-teacher school deep in the mountains. Nettie Palmer's reviews and comments were a guide and inspiration opening up a new world. She gave all her space in one issue to an almost lyrical review of Holbrook Jackson's "Anatomy of Bibliomania". The price in those depression days was enormous, more than £4, almost a fortnight's pay, but it was a bedside book for years and an experience for which I shall always be grateful.

A copy of "Modern Australian Literature," retrieved from a secondhand bookstall simply because one bought anything written by Nettie Palmer, introduced new names to be sought out. Lawson and Paterson one knew, but Shaw Neilson, Louis Stone, Bernard O'Dowd and so many others were almost unknown to a generation fed from early schooldays on a solid diet of the stories and poetry of the English writers.

I met Vance and Nettie Palmer in London. Their flat in Grays Inn Road was a meeting place for students, writers and would-be writers, and homesick Australians. One of those students, an Indian who now holds a high and honored position in his own country, in a letter to Nettie some months ago recalled how he had valued the long, leisurely conversations on art, literature and politics, and how much he had appreciated the friendly meals offered to a very poverty-stricken hungry young man.

When the Palmers returned to Australia in the late thirties the threats of war were growing in Europe. They had seen the strength of fascism and Nazism and knew that the civil conflict in Spain was being used by the dictators as a testing ground for future war. Australia was recovering from the wounds of the depression and few heeded what was happening in countries far away. It could never happen here. Because they had seen so much, both Vance and Nettie felt they had a duty to tell what was happening and to help those who were already in the front line. Nettie worked on committees for Spanish Relief and spoke from every variety of platform from church to trade unions. Public speaking was always an ordeal for her; she dreaded the return of a childhood nervous stammer overcome by years of painful effort. In one of her essays in "Talking it Over," she describes herself as the little five-year-old girl who discovered that it was so much easier and pleasanter to wield a pen than to use her tongue. She was happiest with pen in hand, but if speaking was the only way to get her message to people, then speak she must. Melbourne University students of that time remember her debating the Spanish War before a packed audience in the Public Lecture Theatre. A large section of students was hostile and determined that no notions of chivalry should hinder their vociferous opposition. It was for Nettie a most painful experience, but many in that audience recall the gentle dignity and courage that won her a hearing.

When the first refugees from the Hitler terror came to Melbourne they were greeted for the most part with the traditional Australian suspicion and hostility towards the foreigner. Much of this has been swept away by the weight of migrant numbers but in 1938 it was very strong. Nettie was a foundation member of V.I.R.E.C., a committee set up to assist refugees. She spoke and wrote fluently in the major European languages and had a working knowledge of others. For several years she took classes in English for the newcomers. The basis of her teaching was Australian literature. She insisted that if her students were to become a part of their adopted country they could best learn and understand it through its literature.

On the outbreak of World War II. most of the refugees were interned or under surveillance as enemy aliens. Her work increased—translating documents, helping people to find their way through a maze of government departments, interpreting and trying to give coherence to the flood of often contradictory regulations concerning aliens that came forth almost daily; helping in the tragic search to trace families lost in Europe, and when nothing else could be done giving human sympathy and kindness.

Nettie Palmer never refused to support a cause because it was unpopular. She was an active member of the Council for Civil Liberties and took part in many campaigns. Her lifelong struggle for the recognition of Australian writers was carried on for years in spite of public apathy, indifference and sometimes hostility. That Henry Handel Richardson received belated recognition in her own country was due to the efforts of Nettie. Although she herself read widely the classics of the past and the modern literature of many countries in several languages, she never wavered in her belief that only through a love and knowledge of their own literature could Australians understand themselves. In her essay "Colonial Wares" (1932) she opposed the colonial attitude in our national life: "It is marked by a certain rawness of judgment, a timidity of thought, as of people not fully confident of their power and authority to act as complete human beings. Three or four generations have not been enough to allow us to get thoroughly rooted in the soil. Waves of uncertainty sweep over us. Is this continent really our home, or are we just migrants from another civilisation, growing wool and piercing the ground for metals, doomed to be dependent for our intellectual and aesthetic nourishment—our books, our interpretations of art, theories of the social order—on what is brought to us by every mail from overseas? . . . All our vital writing has been done by people who have taken their status as complete human beings for granted and found a spiritual home in their environment."

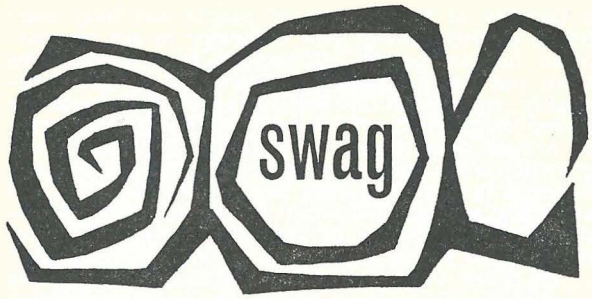
*

Vance and Nettie Palmer were professional writers who took great pride in the craft of writing; they sought to instil the same pride in all the writers, particularly the young ones, who turned to them for assistance and advice. They gave freely and generously of what was most precious to them—their time. An apprentice writer full of confidence and ambition would receive patient counsel and encouragement; a distinguished scholar from overseas, a child seeking help on a school project was given the same courteous and undivided attention. Nettie was delighted to see the love of literature developing in children, and retained this interest to the last weeks of her life.

After the death of Vance Palmer in 1959, Nettie wanted to continue her work. She planned to write a sequel to "Fourteen Years" which would be a tribute to her partner and a record of the literary and cultural life of Australia which had grown so strongly in their lifetime. Her health failed rapidly and the vast store of knowledge which she had accumulated in her papers and diaries will now be a harvest for others.

Although in the last months of her life the hand refused to respond to the pen, and speech and communication were difficult, Nettie's mind remained active. Her bed was surrounded by books and papers which she kept ready to consult. Only a few months ago she handed me a book to read—a thick volume of a journalist's account of the modern American scene. When I next saw her and made some comments on the book it was plain that my response was not the one she wanted. I went back to the book and found, in the middle of a closely written chapter, a sentence which had recalled to her a private joke we had shared a long time ago. I had missed it but Nettie's quick brain had not. Her smile of almost mischievous glee when I told her I had found the reference is one of my last and abiding memories of Nettie. When she could no longer read she listened with obvious pleasure to those who read or sang to her—particularly so when the poem or song was in her favorite language, German. A week before her death I showed her the latest copy of Overland. She looked for a long time at the Norman Lindsay cartoons and returned to them several times. The memories they brought back were happy ones. She died in her sleep a few nights later.

An era closed with the death of Nettie Palmer. In her long lifetime she had seen the growth of Australian writing from its timid colonial beginnings to a recognised literature. The contribution made by Vance and Nettie Palmer to that growth cannot be assessed only by their written words. Their influence spread far beyond the printed pages. Future generations will honor them through the work they left. Those of us who knew and remember them are the privileged.



The death of Nettie Palmer last October meant not only the loss of a very dear woman, but also the end of the truest professional partnership that Australian literature has seen. Perhaps that it will ever see, for—as I said at the funeral—so-called professional life in art and literature is now taking on so many of the superficial overtones of commercial and academic life, is so much a matter now of commodity production in one form or another, that serenity and unselfconscious engagement seem likely to become the remote signature of another age.

*

A great many fine and moving things have been said about Vance and Nettie Palmer in recent years, especially in the issue of Meanjin devoted to their life and work, and also since their deaths. Some day a rich biography will be written of the Palmers, based on the wealth of private papers that Nettie left. I don't need to add to the encomiums at the moment, but I would like to suggest that here are some enigmas of unusual complexity waiting to be resolved. Why did the Palmers subdue their personalities and adopt an almost mannered reticence in their work? Nettie's early verse was passionate and warm, yet later she wrote that the best way of writing was "the quiet, the unemphatic". So much of Vance's own work is deliberately subfusc; he explained this as reaction against the commercial writing he had done in his youth, and once told me that he thought he may have reacted too strongly.

*

There is no frivolity in anything Vance and Nettie wrote. No doubt dignity of craft was a necessary attitude in the circumstances in which the writers of the twenties set about the re-building of an Australian literature; outside the magic circle the hosts of Midian were prowling about even more menacingly than they do today. Writers like the Palmers and Katharine Prichard felt strongly that it was no part of the writer's responsibility to reveal himself; I know how strongly Katharine Susannah is out of sympathy with, for instance, Hal Porter's recent autobiography. These factors help to explain the phenomenon, but I suspect there were deeper, personal issues too. And I don't feel it in bad taste, or dishonoring the memory of two great human beings, to ask such questions. Rather it is a tribute to the cause of truth in life which artists like the Palmers necessarily dedicated themselves to.

*

Almost without exception the public libraries of the various states of Australia are in a pitiably run-down condition that would excite the contempt of our nineteenth-century forerunners who thought that books and ideas were important. The state of the historical collections are a scandal, and the academic historians of the last forty years and of today must assume a great deal of the blame for this irresponsible neglect. Librarians and archivists are all too often powerless against official sloth and public apathy. Most of these "great" libraries don't even have xerox machines, an essential prerequisite for research. When one library, like the South Australian, shows a flash of imagination and launches a program of facsimile reprints of basic Australiana, librarians from other states don't even bother to inquire about the process.

*

Decades of neglect and low salaries have also depreciated the Australian library profession, despite some outstanding men and women you find in it. One would have thought the Australian Library Association, which you would have imagined would be keen on raising standards, would be aware of the value of public relations. Yet when Overland expressed interest in the struggle for better Australian libraries recently, and suggested that we exchange Overland for the Library Journal, we were knocked back! Prissiness and bureaucracy apparently goes deep, and hardly augurs well for a vigorous grassroots campaign to revive our public collections.

*

Which foregoing remarks were largely inspired by the extraordinary discovery the other day that the State Library of Victoria, the Palmers' own state, doesn't own copies of what are perhaps Nettie Palmer's two most important books, "Fourteen Years" and "Henry Bournes Higgins"! What the hell have they been doing over the last forty years?

*

As Clem Christesen pointed out in a letter to the Melbourne Age, the deaths of Nettie Palmer and Morris Miller recently passed almost unnoticed in the public press. I should not myself like to see Morris Miller's death pass without paying tribute to him as humanist, bibliographer, litterateur and a good friend over many years to Overland. He encouraged us at a time when few people of his eminence showed the slightest interest.

*

A splendid day's cricket on March 7 culminated in Overland's winning the seventh annual Meanjin-Overland test by twenty runs. Our score, at 182, was the highest yet recorded in the series. Both magazines have now won three matches; there was one draw.

*

We have dramatically acquired two copies of Overland No. 1, spares of which issue we never expected to see again. We are offering these to any interested readers who care to make a donation of five guineas to Overland.

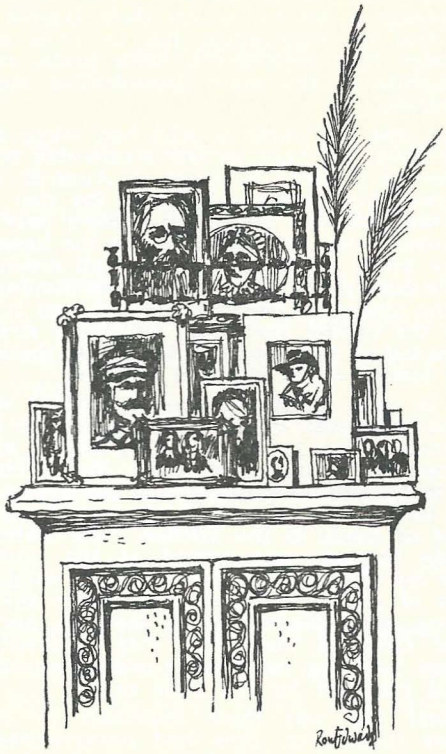
*

The young man on the bicycle in our cover photograph is, of course, Frank Anstey. The picture was taken during an organising tour Anstey undertook with Charles McGrath for the labor movement in Gippsland in 1912. We are obliged to the National Library for the print.

*

"She Let Them Know", Kay Brown's story in this issue, has just won the Victorian State Government's £100 Moomba Award for a short story.

S. MURRAY-SMITH



Gwen Kelly

MY FATHER'S FAMILY

MY father's family represent my Australian heritage. I doubt if they have thought of England as home since 1850. I can recall no delight greater than listening to my grandmother's never-failing recollections of the past. Born in the year of the Crimean War, she had, as a girl, known the Tank Stream. Her own grandmother—or was it great aunt?—had some sort of personal connection with Oxley. Through her uncles, she had contacts with early Melbourne, while certain branches of her husband's family were, in the field of education, to become part of the history of New South Wales.

My grandmother was the first member in Sydney of the Newtown Baptist Church, and as a little girl she frequently joined her parents at the wharves to welcome Baptist migrants to their new homeland. But it was not the contact with the past that gave her and her family their character. It was the fact that they took it for granted, by the latter half of the last century, that they were Australian. They thought not in terms of relatives left behind elsewhere but in terms of brothers and sisters, cousins and uncles and great aunts, scattered throughout the two major cities.

There were by birth eleven in my father's own family, but the decimating infant death rate of the preceding century had reduced them to seven, six boys and one girl. They lived in two-storied houses in suburbs like Stanmore and Camperdown, and in spite of dark rooms and inadequate ventilation, they were very comfortable, close to the heart of the city with plenty of land still to spare for an odd game of cricket after school.

Their father was a painter and their uncle was a builder. He specialised in decorated mantelpieces, and in homes throughout Sydney there are still plenty of these towering monuments to perpetuate his memory. What a fantasy of glass they were; elaborately-wrought shelves rising above the mantel in diminishing glory to the ornamental carved headpieces, shelves balancing on little vertical columns that looked as if they had been filched from a timber wedding cake. And the wonder of it was enhanced by the reflection of the entire edifice in the numerous mirrors that formed the background.

My father's family would have been much less exciting if they had not inherited from the painter a furious and violent temper. This temper was undoubtedly a sin for which their Baptist Bible could find no vindication; but in spite of this knowledge they regarded it with pride, relating the exploits of the more uncontrolled members with relish.

There was old Uncle S. who had taken all the cutlery down the yard on one memorable occasion and thrown it piece by piece at Aunt E. as she reproached him ineffectually from the step above. There was the day when my father's only sister had broken every piece of china in the house, and the day when, exasperated beyond all measure by her own family, she had removed the Sunday roast from the platter in front of her and sent it bouncing to the ceiling and back, its juices streaming like the tail of a comet behind it, while the hungry family looked on in stupified wonder.

But in spite of the seasonal storms, it was an orderly household. The Victorians have, in my generation, come in for a lot of abuse, but the well-regulated pattern of their lives contained much that could be admired, and my grandmother was a model Victorian. There was no hasty dishing out of meals in the kitchen. The main meal, properly blessed, was served at the table and neither my grandfather nor my father would have dreamt of asking their wives to carve the joint. The long, sharp-bladed knives, the thin, perfectly-grained slices of meat that they removed from the joint with the delicacy of artists, was part of a ritual reserved for the male sex.

Typical too was their approach to charity. Workers themselves, they had nevertheless been blessed with food and shelter by the Lord. It was part of their duty to God to minister to those poorer than themselves. There were no doubt those who carried out these duties with coldness of heart and meanness of spirit. Their generation has been accused of cold charity, but, personally, I do not know. I only know that my grandmother threw herself into her Christian duties with all the sweetness and warmth of which she was capable. Sunday afternoon was pensioner's afternoon. Somewhere between cooking and caring for seven children, invariable eleven o'clock service, Sunday dinner and Sunday school, my grandmother managed by 4 p.m. to load her table with home-made scones and cakes around which every pensioner in their neighborhood gathered every week. And no doubt the boys of the house gathered round and rolled out the part-songs of Alexander and Sankey, the melodies and harmonies of which they knew by heart, for above all things they **loved to sing.**

*

I think I loved every one of my father's brothers. Being a younger member of my own family, I never knew them as a complete family group, but even in middle age they had charm. They never forgot that children liked pennies and sweets and the dentists had not yet arisen to dampen the joy of sampling the contents of their well stocked pockets. Entering the labor market at eleven or twelve they worked hard, but they also enjoyed themselves. On Saturday, impeccable in cream pants and blazers, they played cricket with the church clubs and on Sunday they sang in the choirs. Perhaps an almost forgotten Welsh ancestor gave these young Australians their love of song, their pleasant voices. They certainly used them freely, both for their own enjoyment and that of others. For years Uncle H. spent his lunch hours singing hymns to the children of crowded Sydney. No doubt his evangelical spirit was partly responsible, but knowing my Uncle H. I think the main reason was simply that he enjoyed both singing and children for their own sake.

Yet these same Christians who served tea and cake unstintingly to the old of their world were capable of punishing a child in a way which to our more modern outlook seems nothing short of cruel. My eldest sister, who knew the old house well and who lived with my grandmother for a short period at the age of five, remembers still the horror of being shut up in total darkness in a cupboard beneath the stairs. It is true that my sister was so well versed in mischief that a local storekeeper is said to have declared he would rather see the devil come into his shop than little Clara; but no mischief seems quite to justify the terrifying aspect of this treatment. It was not, moreover, an empty cupboard. The darkness was deepened by overcoats which to a sensitive, imaginative child, became bat-like monsters. Yet this type of imprisonment was apparently quite common in these households, and my grandmother was an exceedingly kind woman.

One of my uncle's greatest amusements was an occasional trip to Melbourne. According to them nothing good ever came out of the southern capital except perhaps Ponsford, but they condescended to visit their relatives in that quarter with apparent enjoyment over a number of years. On return, their conversation usually ran like this.

"I said to Jim, 'Haven't you got any decent suburbs down this way yet? We know you can't help the Yarra, but you'd think you'd have a decent house or two by this time.' And Jim said, 'Wait until you see Toorak.' Well, I went to see this place and honest, it was no better than Homebush."

Every time he went down there my Uncle L. never failed to visit the greengrocer simply to ask for a yard of bananas. These were the days before Sydney had even thought of selling fruit by the pound, and the Victorian system always reduced my uncle to mirth. The somewhat unsuccessful attempt to introduce this system to N.S.W. must have been a sad blow to him.

My Melbourne cousins must have been exceedingly patient people, but I have no doubt they had their revenge when they visited Sydney. I only know that Great Aunt Mary Ann, who at the age of ninety knew every horse and rider in Melbourne, and spent every Saturday afternoon with her ear glued to the wireless, on one occasion grinned maliciously at my sisters who refused to join in the traditional arguments. Pointing to our second cousin who disapproved of racing and endured the Saturday afternoon programme under protest, she said sadly, "Poor old E. She was raised by my Sydney relatives of course. They stuffed her with all this religious nonsense."

*

While I never myself knew the family in its full glory, many of the old traditions existed in my own youth. Even in the late twenties the open dressers survived with the clear shining cups banded with gold, hanging unprotected from the hooks. The only concession to flies was the strip of sticky paper hung from the ceiling on whose mucous surface dozens of them died daily.

They served no Chinese meals nor Italian spaghetti, even though their curries were so hot they may well have originated in India, but they were experts at dealing with traditional British fare,

Junior Girls

Restrained no longer in those cramping clothes
Whose frontiers were the ankle, wrist and chin
My junior girls all briefly clad in blue
A score of cream-white women-soon-to-be
Resenting wooden desks and starved for motion
Come swooping out to sport like birds new-freed.
Absorbed they play their ball-games with abandon
Their minds wrung dry of beauty, fashion, chic—
Slim fairies with a touch of Amazon—
Slender princesses with a spice of savage.
They strike and speed away, they catch and throw
With skill their muscled brothers must admit.

Here in this sheltered clearing of their lives
Twenty gazelles frolic and leap and play
While from the jungle patient tigers watch.

A. G. DAWS

enriched by a lavishness of ingredients not possible for most of their class outside the new continents. The plum puddings came to the table rich in eggs and fruit, the meats were tender and succulent, the peas fresh and green. In the heat of midsummer, they produced an upper class English Christmas dinner in a working-class home.

Nothing was reheated. My grandmother rose at 4 a.m. every Christmas morning so that the pudding could be mixed and boiled a full six hours before appearing on the table, a purity of approach my father never lost. At the age of fifty, in a world beset by war, he refused at lunchtime to eat any old steak. Every day he visited the best butcher near his office and arrived at the restaurant accompanied by the steak of his choice, raw. It says a great deal for his innate charm that they always cooked it for him immediately.

My father's family were not sophisticated people. They served no wine at their table on principle, yet they were imbued with their own past and a joy in the new history they were creating. Pious and charming, charitable and violent. Perhaps there were pioneer qualities there. Anyway, they were memorable. When my father died, amidst all the neatly expressed feelings of grief, my father's sister's approach was unique. We opened the door. For one second she stood there stiffly, ill at ease. Then she burst into tears on my sister's shoulder.

"He was my favorite brother," she said. "I remember when I threw the washing up water over him."

She had no need to say any more. We understood.

MORETON BAYS

In silver greys and sooty greys
Those elephants the Moreton Bays
On this green hill have stopped to graze.

They do not move, none ever moves,
They've grown, I see, too many hooves
And got them stuck in earthy grooves.

With their great flanks and massive girth
They soon could pull themselves from earth
When soft winds call them from the north,

And vast and slow they'd all be gone
Like sailing ships, like clouds at noon,
To India or green Ceylon,

But three big feet before, behind,
And three on either side, I find,
It must bewilder them in mind,

They cannot visit their connections,
They cannot move in all directions
Or they would split in several sections.

This comes of standing still too long
And too much thought, it puts them wrong.
Though they can hear the starlings' song

Or locked in some tall Indian vision
Reject the world and its confusion
They must abide by their decision;

They cannot move but huge and still,
Too many feet, too little will,
They must stand fast on this green hill,

Content to dream, content to be
With wrinkled hide and stony knee
Half elephant and half a tree.

DOUGLAS STEWART

THE RHINOCEROS—A Reply to David Martin

Dear David, I agree
That poets may oppress
With themes they overdo.
Alternatives you stress

Appall me even more.
A nun is easy meat,
But often those who mock
Will redden into heat

If we rebuke Fidel
Or other saints. The crude
Is nearest to their wit
And yet they won't go nude—

That joke would be too much.
I must describe for you
A creature more than apt,
Whose deeds are never new.

The dull rhinoceros
Will charge the slightest thing.
The hide is very thick;
The instincts have their fling

With little sense or hope.
He is, of course, purblind,
And so we let him charge
And vanish out of mind.

R. A. SIMPSON

David Martin *Hinterland*

POETS, AND OTHER TROUBLES

A LITTLE flyting is all in the day's work, and if Ron Simpson wants to break a lance (or my neck) in defence of the poet's right to harken to his inner voice, I can't object, especially if it is done so neatly. But a question remains.

What happens to poetry if the voice keeps burbling away incessantly and monotonously on the theme of personal anguish? However finely it is accomplished, how much of it can people stand? Some poets would answer that it does not matter two hoots; what "people" think concerns them not while there are sensitive readers who understand what it is all about. Indeed, this is true, up to a point: doomed is the poet who would glance over his shoulder at an imaginary public. On the other hand, if only a few hundred sensitives are left in his company—three-hundred copies sold is the best most books of verse now achieve —the position of poets and of poetry becomes pretty desperate. In fact, I think it is desperate.

There are a thousand reasons for the anguish, and we need not go into them here. Possibly, poets have lost the power of universalising their suffering. Or they mistake their own for the world's, forgetting that pain, without which there is no art, is a beginning and not the end. The level of sheer skill in Australian verse is higher than ever, but what results seems less important than ever; a kind of sharply focussed and often brilliant internalised acrobatics, or an almost unduly precise demarcation of some small plot of ground. With so much individuation the feeling of sameness is still overwhelming.

Though I shall be kicked out of the union for saying it, the more stylish they are the less worth reading many of these poems prove, at any rate in contemporary judgment. A sense of weariness grips me as I scan them in the journals. Scan? Yes—too often courage falters and one turns to other pages.

*

At the next national election the largest voting group will be, for the first time, the under thirties. Excluding miracles, in which I don't believe, the Labor Party has Buckley's chance of capturing it.

Can a political organisation become so utterly worn out that, like a person, it begins to die on its feet? It starts to look like it. No public rela-

tions consultant can ghost up an image (hateful word) to cover ideological nudity; no gynaecologist can cure political sterility after the menopause. There are three or four parties within the A.L.P., each fossilising, each self-engrossed and each one shuffling in circles. There is no program, no estimate of what the future holds for this part of the globe, and no faith in the relevance of solutions half-heartedly offered. There is nothing but boredom all round.

What is the alternative? I doubt whether it will come from inside the A.L.P., or that it must take the form of a political party as hitherto known, unless, perhaps, the Republican Party, which has one good idea but hugs it obsessively, can be galvanised into something more vital. Socialism, to make sense in a country like ours, has to be given fresh content. That's not a matter of tailoring it to the shifting tastes of advancing sections, but of conceiving it in a new mould. It must address itself to the aspirations, economic, social and cultural, but increasingly the latter, of a society that has outlived old patterns and no longer responds to old stimuli in the predicted way.

Radicalism will have to grow into something more profound and embracing than it is now. It must take account of collective drives, gradually defining, for a richer life, material as well as aesthetic . . . the factor always underestimated by a leadership which cannot lead because, relatively backward educationally and otherwise, it has been overtaken by its potential followers. It can never articulate their vision, which is as yet vague. This is the real meaning of the gap between the generations, particularly deep outside the wealthy suburbs. ("The One Day of the Year" held a hint of this.) Those who articulate the vision will find others who will organise the movement.

Answers will have to be formulated, but probably not with much help from the A.L.P., to the three critical problems of our period, interlinked to form a threat to man's evolution: overpopulation, nuclear war and automation, which will proliferate goods as it discards the producer who could buy them.

*

The folk of Moree, N.S.W., whose fury vented itself on students peacefully demonstrating against segregation, have at least accomplished one thing positive. They and their rotten tomatoes have shattered the legend that racialism is not deeply woven into the Australian fabric.

The Sydney Bulletin claims, however, that "this is above all not a race problem, but a slum clearance problem." Odd reasoning, I think. Would Aboriginals live in rural shanty slums if they were not Aboriginals? It's their race which has landed them there in the first place; hence it is a race problem. Furthermore, many whites in Australia live in filthy conditions, but they are not barred from swimming pools.

The Melbourne Age argues that the action of the students makes it harder to help these unfortunates. And what is this but the tune with the more "respectable" Southern reactionaries sing for the benefit of America's freedom riders?

Some say apathy is the root of the evil. But if an equal number of white Australians had openly to contend with similar handicaps there would be a national outcry. Therefore this so-called apathy also has a racial bias. It is as well to know the truth.

*

These two objects, on the foreshore at Warrnambool, are under National Trust protection. The councillor who arranged them and who approved the inscription, a leading protagonist of the Modern Australian School, has been invited to head the Municipal Sub-Committee of the Peace Congress.

The Floating Fund

Overland still subsists, if that is the right word, on a very slender diet. In other words, but for our friends who think the magazine worth a few bob more than they have to pay for it, we'd have to fold up. Many thanks to those who have contributed £177/11/6 since the publication of our last issue:

NG £50; P & JH £10; NC £5/5/0; DD WW JW £5; BR £4/4/0; ER £4; HD £3; ES HC FB GW NK £2/4/0; TI-M JA BI HG £2; BG JW £1/12/0; NR DI £1/6/0; RM JP RL TH GMcI PF JMcL WM CE GS IP HW BD DG £1/4/0; CH BB BM JB OW NM TB £1; JS FM 16/-; AL RD ER CT-S FL HB JB MF SA FS FR AS RR 14/-; AM 12/-; HS PC PF PB RG 10/-; BM GS FR LW HF ND RB 9/-;HF RS DD ME GA 8/-; EB IB 6/-; PR FA DM CW-C BR RD GH PMcC 5/-; NG 4/6; JD KS EL JP EW WW DT MB SA AK NK SB KMcE SM WH MR CS OL RD EL RG JE CG DK RF EM JC HC JD HD MM KQ IF JH KD KM KM SMcC JC JE DA RR TR IG ML WMcRR CR EG CP LG IS HB DMcL HF RS DG WB TH DK CS WG DC DA MR IG MO'B LL RB BM JS DL EN KC LW CB DB JJ JV 4/-;JC 3/-.

David Potts

THE MAKING OF AN AUSTRALIAN RADICAL

THE following sketches by Frank Anstey, one of the most passionate and independent Labor politicians in Australian history, have not before appeared in print—in fact, until now, these first two chapters of a proposed autobiography have been known to only half a dozen people. Anstey died in 1940 without completing his book, and the little he had done passed into the hands of a journalist friend, Hec Tonkin, who a few years ago, before he too died, allowed them to be copied by the archivist of the Australian National University, Bruce Shields. In his turn, Bruce Shields has made a section of these memoirs available to Overland.

The sketches are not overtly political; in them Anstey does not go beyond his boyhood experiences. But they do show some of Anstey's qualities as a radical which made even the backbenchers sit up: a vivid control of detail, a clipped restless energy and sardonic humor, and a deep-felt awareness of the values created and destroyed in man's struggle against poverty.

Frank Anstey, like Eddie Ward after him, stands out as one of the great "men of the people" in the A.L.P. In 1876, at the age of 11, he fled unmerrie England by stowing away on a ship bound for Australia's northern islands. After years of hardship at sea he gradually built himself up to the presidency of the Seamen's Union. He entered federal politics as the member for Bourke in 1910, and later became Deputy Leader of the A.L.P. in the 1920's and Minister for Health in Scullin's ill-starred depression government.

Unlike several other politicians who crept from poverty to the top rungs of Labor government, such as Billy Hughes and George Pearce, he bitterly resisted all demands for compromise with his chosen enemies. A brilliant orator, one of the clearest exponents of Labor principles, and certainly the most colorful figure in the parliaments of his time, he nevertheless failed as a practical politician. Anstey's basic flaw was that he remained too unbending in his principles to manage the give and take of welding people of different ideas and personal ambitions into an effective party. But where he lost as a politician he often gained as a man.

The earliest available papers of Anstey's show him at first to have had a romantic affinity with the socialist Utopians and revolutionaries of the late nineteenth century. During the 1880s (Anstey was born in 1865) he systematically collected and transcribed poetry such as Shelley's "Ode to the Men of England". Seldom did he include the more subdued comments that appear in prose. His collection presents a vision of men of the land and factory rising as one, shoulder to shoulder, to bring about the Kingdom of God on Earth: "With one bold stroke," said one of the poets whose writings he copied out, "these groaning millions may be free." From the poets, whom he scanned and analysed for their control of language, Anstey learnt the techniques of appealing to people's deepest hopes; while from his early adversities he had felt what those hopes were.

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One of Anstey's special concerns, possibly because several of his family had married into the Catholic Church, was to attack religious teachings where they supported the status quo. He became increasingly aware of the contrast between the words and deeds of the church. He collected poems in which the writers' muse "But for Thy aid Religion . . . what a world grand and bright this might have been", poems wherein priests stood condemned for hypocrisy and were held partly responsible for the miseries of the poor. He wrote pamphlets such as "Labour's Bible Lessons", in which he used the Word of God to lash the Conservatives and to sound clarion calls to battle for a new life.

In his attitude to religion, and in general to what he considered to be the citadels of privilege and exploitation, Anstey asserted a healthy anger. From his earliest writings, however, one can see a gradually increasing political acerbity. And the causes of this did not lie in the nature of those people or institutions with whom he disagreed. Before his entry into formal politics he had begun to soberly contrast his romantic vision with a bitter awareness of human fallibility. He saw that unhumanity existed amongst the very men who should be shoulder to shoulder for their common good. Inevitably he developed a type of Platonic belief in an educated elite in the labor movement, who could formulate the correct goals and, most important at this hazy stage of A.L.P. thinking, the means of reaching them. This hope died quickly. A brief burst of state politics coupled with his experiences in the top ranks of industrial unionism shook his faith in the principles of many of the leaders of the working class. He did not change his own goals; but he began to grow suspicious of his chances of reaching them with those people with whom he had to work. He felt himself a lone dog. And that, perhaps, above all else gave him that desperate drive that sent his enemies, and sometimes even his friends, scuttling for cover. He attacked the Conservative governments of Deakin, Hughes and Bruce with all the pitiless cynicism of a man who wishes to expose and

wound his enemies because he has lost the confidence that he can beat them. This may not have been how he immediately felt. The mood showed itself in waves of increasing duration.

Once he had entered the arena of the House of Representatives in 1910, Anstey obeyed no rules that he could ignore. He played politics fiercely and personally. Wherever a man broke faith with his followers or compromised his principles Anstey drove home the point with overwhelming sarcasm, returning again and again to twist the knife, perhaps for years to come. Never did he let Bruce forget that he had taken the Prime Ministership in 1923 after promising Billy Hughes that he would never desert him; again and again he baited Earle Page for abandoning the New States' movement in his eagerness to secure the Treasurership; and it was Anstey, incidentally, who first made the comment that the outbreak of the First World War deprived the Commonwealth of its greatest military leader, R. G. Menzies. At another time he mused that it was most remarkable that Pratten's conversion to tariff protection occurred at the same time as his promotion to the Nationalist Cabinet; he called Cook of Indi "a stupid and foolish old man", labelled the House of Representatives the Comic Opera House of Politics, accused the honor-proud Maxwell of doing anything if his palm were oiled, and in constant satires of Bruce he made such remarks as "He delighted the masses with his unlimited promises and the wealthy by the fact that he never fulfilled them". One of his favorite tricks was to read completely fictitious letters to the house in question time and ask if they were true.

All this, however, was not just pointless monkey-play. Though he enraged politicians into interjections and counterattack, though his own party members sometimes deplored the personal punch of Anstey's comments because it made private chumminess with the conservatives very awkward, though he went beyond the facts in implying motives, no one doubted his sincerity. Even Bruce, who called him a "libertine of words", nevertheless felt obliged to add, when he recovered some of that famed composure which only Anstey could ruffle, that "His enthusiasm, I believe, is genuine, but I feel that at times it carries him away". Bruce feared Anstey's ability to "inflame the minds of the people".

During the depression years N.S.W. premier Lang made the following comment on a speech at Queanbeyan in which Anstey attacked the Labor Party's compromise agreement to reduce wages: "It was one of the most emotional speeches that I have heard in my life. The tears coursed down his cheeks . . . From anyone else it would have been a sign of weakness. In Anstey it was typical of the man. He was utterly sincere . . . He was weeping for the starving people who were being abandoned by the people whom they trusted. As the words poured from his heart I realised that he was the Great Commoner, all too rare in Labor politics."

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Anstey evolved no startling political philosophies. His power lay in that he would not compromise his beliefs for expediency in party politics though he would change them if he believed them to have been found wanting in themselves. Much of what he advocated could be summed up as the general left-wing humanism of the time. He awaited no leads to condemn conscription, attacking it vigorously not only as a service to imperialistic market grabbing but as an infringement of personal liberties. Throughout the twenties he opposed large-scale defence expenditure. And he always appeared in the forefront of those condemning the Bruce-Page Government for class bias in its legislation. He skilfully pointed out instances of double-think which the Government had probably not been initially aware of and which often caused it acute embarrassment.

The key-point of his parliamentary career, however, was not his watchdog activities but his very positive money policy. In the A.L.P. official aim to control the means of production, distribution and exchange, Anstey saw exchange as the most important of the three. He had been one of the most outspoken in favor of the Commonwealth Bank Act passed by the Fisher Government. During the war he had been outraged that while men came back crippled for life (if they came back at all) money returned fatter than ever. On the other hand, he believed, through nationalisation of the banks, making them directly responsible to Parliament rather than to a Bank Board, an A.L.P. Government could redirect the total energies of society in the best interests of all. He wrote several books on finance which were highly respected in his time.

Anstey was not a revolutionary. He anticipated that he could work through the existing parliamentary system, starting from banking and then gradually extending state enterprise while concurrently protecting the workers' organisations from class prejudice in law and government. To him, it was not his enemies unfairly using the forces of law and army that crushed his hope, but his supporters, by their vacillations.

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Despite the lip-service paid to his ideas, Anstey found he lacked the power to work those ideas whole through the grinders of party politics. He continually backed out in circumstances where a little compromise might ultimately have won him what he wanted. At each defeat his disillusionment grew stronger. During the war he had actually resigned from the A.L.P. because it toyed with the idea of conscription; then when Hughes split the party and it came out against conscription he rejoined it. That had not proved fatal. But at his peak opportunity he failed. In the late 1920s Theodore wound his way from Queensland State politics into the House of Representatives, and an underground movement began against Mat Charlton's leadership. Several people approached Anstey, then Deputy Leader of the Opposition, to sound out the possibilities of his moving up the scale. Anstey later claimed "I could see no good for a movement when its leaders steeped themselves in conspiracies against each other". He went straight to Charlton to urge him to abandon the "dirt workers", and he himself resigned his deputy leadership. Charlton held on a little while, but ultimately gave in, leaving the leadership to Scullin and the deputy leadership, after some juggling, to Theodore.

These events destroyed Anstey's political confidence for all time. He came back fighting in the depression, but with an energy born of despair. Even while attacking the Bruce-Page Government, before Labor had taken office, signs of his disillusionment bubbled up. His attacks on the Nationalists became petty and venomous, and he began to snipe at his own party. On the Transport Workers' Bill he remarked, "I only hope that when Labor next gets into office in this Parliament it will have sufficient guts to enforce its policy as ruthlessly and as fearlessly as this Government is doing." Sometimes he was openly critical. In 1928 he told the House that Labor's weakness intellectually lay in that "it does not seek to probe the problems of modern life, but is satisfied with the surface appearance of things".

When Labor gained power in 1929 Anstey accepted the Cabinet position of Minister for Health. He answered E. J. Brady's congratulations by accusing the Scullin Government of being "the pickers-up of unconsidered trifles" and continued, "I should be happy, and some day I will be—when I'm dead". Other Cabinet members ridiculed him when he advocated an extensive program of government works, to be financed by paper currency; and they condemned him for arguing that there was no reason why the English bondholders should be paid back immediately their loans matured. Yet ultimately the Labor Party adopted his main ideas. But it did so only in unruly retreat from its first principles, in various desperate attempts to deal with the growing rush of unemployment and economic collapse. Scullin's Cabinet invoked Anstey's most passionate condemnation by accepting the advice of Sir Otto Neimeyer who, in Anstey's eyes, represented the very class which had precipitated the depression; and for whose ability, let alone motives, he had no respect.

Anstey, loudest of all, called for a double dissolution so that Labor could gain control of the Senate and from there take control of the Commonwealth Bank. But nothing was done. Divisions within the Labor Party widened. Anstey later wrote: "Rather than suspend repayment of bondholders Scully said he would 'tax Australians to the last penny'. If that was Labor, then I was anti-Labor and my expulsion was overdue." The expulsion from Cabinet soon came. Anstey refused to support the Premiers' Plan to reduce wages; and he refused to condemn the Langites, who preferred to economise by reducing interest payments to bondholders.

Summing up his experiences during the depression Anstey wrote: "The worldly hopes I had set my heart upon had turned to ashes and everything was sour in the mouth. There was no prospect that if Labor returned to office, with all-requisite power, it would be any different to its competitors. It was only the difference between Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Both sides, when out of power, promised what they never meant to perform when in power." He retired from politics in 1934, having lowered his sights to commenting "all I can do while on the map is put out a few facts that may be useful to others in preparedness". In October 1940 he died.

Meanwhile, another star was rising. John Curtin had modelled his platform speaking and many of his political mannerisms on Anstey. He had accepted his personal help in his first election campaigns and together they had written several pamphlets. Though Curtin did not slavishly follow Anstey's teachings, he claimed to have been more influenced by him than by any other Labor leader. This debt he always proudly acknowledged.

Frank Anstey

NOW I AM DEAD

ON the Devon side of Exmoor is the site of the Roman "Anestiga" and it was so inscribed in the Domesday Book. Today there are two dots of human existence known as east and west Anstey.

In 1858 Mary Anstey wrote to a friend that she had reached 78 years, her husband dead, her sons scattered, her daughters married and far away, her home too large, her lonesomeness excessive—would her dear friend come and stay with her to the end. Two years later she died and her estate went under the hammer at Witheridge. The auctioneers notice described the property as consisting of three "farmlets" each with house, barn, coppice, close, orchard, meadowland and croppage of potatoes, oats and "dredge corn".

I was born in London 1865, five months after my father's death, but my memory of life was one of those farmlets acquired by a niece of the dead Mary. We drove around in a little phaeton drawn by Cymon ponies, and one day we drove on to the moor to see the hounds in their palatial kennels; on the homeward way "Auntie" directed my attention to what she said was the Anstey "barrows", burrows or burial places some million years ago.

On market days we went to Witheridge or Dulverton and sometimes to the Witheridge churchyard where all the stones seemed "Anstey" or "Edworthy".

Then came a strange lady and I was told to call her mother. She must have stayed some months because we visited many relatives in many places —Exeter, Barnstaple, Chudleigh, Chumleigh, Rackenford and Dulverton, and everything was lovely. One day there was much crying and kissing and many farewells and the mother and I were driven to a large town stepped out of a carriage, on rails, pulled by a "puff puff". We passed villages, towns, cities, rivers, fields, and changed from train to train. Day turned into night and the warmth of Devon, but increasing icy coldness. Darkness deepened, the cold intensified, the train stopped once more and this time a voice said "Here's your place, Marm". We got out into an almost touchable blackness and in the distance there was one little flickering light.

A man's voice said he was there to meet us because John was so busy it was impossible for him to get away. We followed him and our boxes and ourselves went into a dray, and the voice said "Geeup Sarah". And the dray began to move. We jolted over tracks that seemed all ruts, drove over ridges where the freezing wind caught us, and through gorges filled with goblins, ghosts and devils. Cold numbed the limbs and terror paralysed speech. Distance seemed never ending and

Editor's Note: Except for some very minor attention to punctuation and spelling, this article is presented as it stands from a typescript copy of originals now destroyed.

time and eternity. At last, long last, the horse stopped, the driver shouted, a door opened, a light gleamed and in the gleam the figure of a man. He gathered my mother into his arms and kissed her. She was too stiff to walk—he carried her. The driver carried me, brought in the luggage, and departed.

The place was a gloomy immensity. From a rafter in the obscurity there was suspended a paraffin lamp. There was a table, some chairs, and on the floor, in a corner, a bed. Along one side was a stack of loaded bags, the upper tiers lost in the darkness. Up and down these bags scampered little squeaking animals, with glittering eyes. I looked at mother. She was clutching her breast, her lips twitching, and she gasped "Oh John," and he said "My dear, I begged you not to come, I told you it was too rough." They said more but I fell asleep, and became unconscious on the little bed on the table.

The door was open, the sun was shining. The man was outside at a fire. Afterwards I was to learn that mother moved around that table all night, too terrified to sleep, too fearful of what might happen to me. And the man, to keep her company, talked until daylight. Then came men, horses and drays. The bags of horsefeed were carried away and the rats followed the feed. Other men knocked holes in the walls, put in windows and a fireplace, whitewashed the walls, and constructed a bedroom of timber and tarred felt. A rough bedstead was made; a box with a door was placed on a stand—that was a cupboard. Sacks sewed together became a carpet—the barn became a home. Boxes arrived from London. They contained clothes, linen, bed and table covers, crockery, glassware, and curious candlesticks. When the night fire danced on the distant walls I saw ghostly figures stalking in the shadows.

Some time after—it may have been years after —I learned that the man in the house was mother's second husband. Long sickness and loss of occupation had followed the marriage until the only father I ever knew found work on the railway extension from Pettle (?) to Carlisle. In spite of his warnings his wife decided to join him. Her place of arrival was the lay-out of a new camp in the Cumbrian hills and the men were erecting stables for horses and shacks for incoming gangs. On that section mother was the first woman, and the toughness staggered her.

The second father was stable boss and in it were stalls for 80 horses. He was five feet nine inches, had a clean shaved face, kindly grey eyes and a whimsical half smile on his lips. If he had anything to say he said it quietly. If he was ever angry he successfully hid the fact. He had a mass of jet black hair, glistening from natural lustre. He combed it straight back and seldom wore a hat. On Sundays and holidays he wore a suit of dark, rich cloth, white shirt, upturned collar, and round it a knotted shimmering silk handkerchief. On those days he wore a broad-rimmed dark felt hat and gave it a rakish tilt. I never heard him talk about himself but I heard mother say he had been in Africa and "somewhere in America". Somewhere he had lost a leg and wore a wooden substitute.

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The principle sports were dog fights, cock fights, man fights and "rassling". Men bet on whose dog could kill a specified number of rats in a pit in the quickest time, whose steel-spurred rooster was best warrior, and father's hobby was the game cock business. Mother said it was a brutal, debasing sport, made more so by the use of steel spurs. Dad said it occupied the same lofty plane as the Christians who poked steel into the bowels of other men to make the Empire safe—he was making his contribution with roosters.

In man-fighting it was the all-in game—head, feet, knees, elbows, "rassling", butting, gouging—anything to win the war, and nothing above the ground was below the belt. In a fight for a wager everything not barred was permitted. Some men thought dad's leg minus was a handicap and the mildness of his manner an inferior complex. One day a man struck him and then discovered rough-house at its worst, with science attached and tricks he never knew. The stump of dad's leg fitted into a steel rimmed wooden cup. The offside of the cup extended up the lower side of the body, the cup was held in its place with a harness of belts and braces. Into the bottom of the cup was screwed the hardwood, steel-shod leg. When dad dragged his man to the ground civilisation was on its way out. The cup, with its steel buckles, used with body pressure, was a rib cracker; between the legs it was war beyond words, and on shins and ankles the steel-shod leg played like a pick-handle. In the maintenance of law and order it was as effective as a machine gun on a mob of low class malcontents.

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Cock fighting, the wooden leg, and misconduct to the Higher Up undid the family fortune. Dad had a young gamester that turned out to be a champion. It defeated birds at Appleby, Whitehaven and Morecombe. In prizes and wagers it augmented the wage fund and multiplied the savings of a frugal wife. It was the family capital, paid good dividends, and was as much a man's property as the horses and houses of his employer. The Superintendent of Construction bought a bird with a championship record and challenged all comers. Dad accepted, and there was much wagering. In the end the Superintendent's bird was killed and he lost much money.

One Sunday morning—some weeks after that fight—I rose early and went outside. There was a crowd along the tracks and curiosity carried me to it. Two birds were fighting, and one was dad's. I ran home shook him from his sleep, and told him the story. He donned his armor and away to the fight, with myself at his side. A whisperer told him that a man at the Superintendent's request had broken the lock on our pen and taken the bird to head office quarters, where the Superintendent had let loose on our unarmed bird a newly acquired steel-armed gamester. When we arrived our bird was blind in one eye, but still fighting. Dad grabbed it, gave it to me and said to the master: "Do you, Sir, think it fair to put your armored bird against an unarmed bird, and ruin my property?" Master replied "It is good Sunday sport, John." Dad said "So is this"—and with his steel-shod leg kicked master on the ankle, and while he was gasping, knocked him down, fell on him and throttled him. It was all over. Then dad called for the man who had taken the bird from its pen and he came with a rush. Dad swept him to the ground and again he won the war. When they rose to their feet dad bashed him full in the mouth and said "That's one from the rooster". Nobody objected—it was Rafferty rules.

Then we went home and told mother, and because it meant no more work, and once more a broken home, she cried bitterly. Next day we sold some of our household goods to neighbouring families and the balance we packed and sent to Appleby. Then we walked away.

We walked for many days and passed many places. The ground was hard, with a cruel frost;

the days were raw, the nights bitter, and nobody wanted a one-legged man. Then came early spring and one day we walked through gates, along wide, clean streets with pretty cottages, garden plots, and playgrounds, and a large building surrounded by lawns and flower beds. Father said the building was a factory and the place Saltaire—a model village established by Titus Salt, one of the few employers who thought their factory cattle should be housed better than their pigs. We were invited into the factory dining hall and shown over the factory, but there was no available work for us. In Leeds, place of narrow lanes and hovels, we watched an unemployed procession, moaning as it passed "We're all poor laborers out of work" and begging "an apenny or a farthing or a crust of bread" from bystanders, almost as poverty stricken as themselves. Those were the days when Britain was the unchallenged mistress of the world. We left Leeds on the trudge for York. In the fields were sleek horses and fat cows—and on the roads half-starved humans. We must have had money. We always had food and shelter and I am sure we never begged. From York we went northward to Ripon and eastward to Middleborough, where father got a few weeks' work. When that was finished we hiked it southward, along the east coast. At Scarborough we shared a home with a fisherman—right on the sands—and spent delightful lazy days.

I remember the day we left Scarborough—the fishing boats, the sea birds and the cliffs. We climbed to the uplands. It was glorious summer weather. The larks were singing in the sky. Blackbirds, thrushes, linnets and finchs were in full song and the land was carpeted with flowers. We strolled up a steadily rising road until we reached the ridge of a vast natural saucer, and as far as the eye could see was a panorama of country England in its most gorgeous garb. At a turn of the road on the ridge was a cluster of habitations. A quarter of a mile away in a green field were the poppet heads of a mine.

It was an ironstone mine and in it dad secured work to look after the pit ponies. The miners were housed in the company-owned habitation and they consisted of several rows of two storied barracks, divided into boxes back to back. The only light, ventilation and entrance were from the front. There was no water in the cubicles but a water pipe with several taps was in the lane between the buildings. At the top of the lanes was a cross-section of sanitary conveniences, in appearance like sentry boxes. Behind the boxes was an area cut into as many vegetable plots as there were domiciles. The rents were deducted from the wages and when a miner lost his job he lost the right of local shelter. Yet that village was a bright contrast to the camp in the Cumbrian hills. There were no rat pits, no dog fights or cock fights. And if there was a man fight I never knew of it. The principle game was iron quoits, and the nearest pub or church or school was two miles away. Dad worked his garden patch to the limit and took on another that was not in use. He secured a sow and soon there were young pigs. Then came the killing of a pig, the curing of it, the ham and the flitches. There were some vegetables in the garden, stored potatoes and mother made the bread. There were glorious summer days as well as winter, and if the domicile was a rabbit hutch there was a landscape of far-reaching beauty, green fields and singing birds—and we were happy.

But upon the peace and content of the little community fell the blow of the Master of Destiny. The company notified a reduction in the price to be paid for toil—the rations for the two-legged cattle had to be reduced. The men said that when the company had deducted its charges for shelter, explosives, candles and tool sharpening, decent existence was only possible with the aid of their gardens and pigs. They would never work at the reduced rates—never—so work stopped and the ponies were pulled to the surface. The Vicar came from Brotton, reproved the men for their folly, and hot words passed. That was where I heard

> The parson he preach, and tell me to pray,
> To think of my work, and not ask for more pay,
> If I haven't got meat, to be thankful for bread
> And thank the good God it ain't turnips instead.

The Methodist priest arrived. He expressed regret for the unfortunate incident, but no opinions. He was straddling the fence and the wicked said he was a silent worker for the largest contributor.

Dad stepped out to look for work elsewhere. Some days later the company agent ordered mother to vacate her domicile. A neighbour gave her accommodation and another with a large family took me to their care. There were eight boys and girls between nine and nineteen, and we all slept in one room. The beds of straw were spread on the floor at night and stacked against the wall in the daytime. That room opened to me a new page in the book of knowledge.

With their pigs, potatoes, green vegetables and salads the miners could have sat tight for life, but the company held the joker. It gave notice to resume work on a given date or find residence elsewhere. Those who would not were evicted and scattered. Mother and I travelled per wagon to York. From there we went to Nottingham, where father had secured work.

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The river Trent rolled by near where we lived. It was broad, shallow, sparkling. I was so enamored of that clear, sweet river Trent, its clean beaches and its fishing, that I have no memory of bird or flowers—not even of the place in which we lived. It was not how much you see or hear, but how much impresses itself indelibly upon the mind. There was an orchard near the river, and in it luscious, green-skinned, almost egg-shaped apples, and never, wherever in the world I travelled, did I taste apple but my mind reverted in comparison with the flavor of those apples bonused from the orchard by the river Trent.

Dad worked in a palace for horses. It must have been some kind of a club or training school. Gentlemen came in vehicles or on horses, changed their clothes, mounted fresh horses and rode away. When they returned they took a shower, donned their original suits and departed. One day a gentleman complained that his homeward nag was not efficiently groomed. Dad said the horse and gear were without blemish and beyond reasonable grievance. So the gentleman struck him for his impudence. Dad kicked his feet from under him, fell on him, picked him up, threw him into the manure box, rubbed his face in the filth, came home and packed a few things and departed. When the police arrived the bird had flown.

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The Lords of Industry went down the river Thames into the Essex Marshes, and there established factories, operating in sugar, iron, gutta percha, rubber goods and deep sea cables. In proximity to the factories were long, drab lines of jerry-built tenements, in which were domiciled the cattle of the factories. Around that glorious suburbia were the drainage channels of the marsh.

JOHN HOPE OF HOVERTON:

No venturing out tonight. The wind's perilous;
a bad night for the old and the bony restless;
do you think of them at all, John Hope of Hoverton?
You may huddle as the poor huddle, but you do pleasurably
and wander like a marquis in the silk of the rain,
free-marauding, gold, indestructible
for all your stained shirt and the weather at your knuckle.

What with yarning, and litigation never rights itself,
and scraps to sign, and your old brunt of sleeplessness
I'd say you'd full hands, John Hope of Hoverton.
It's not your spending and occasional thirst at grudge:
I don't confuse the shirker with a passionate man
whose job's his first indulgence and his wholesome vanity,
too lean for sloth, too pitiless for leisure.

The words you bellow, the colloquial blithe breeze
that sits you like a halo, earned in docking-places
and the blood-slippery yards, John Hope of Hoverton:
because you've shared in, and renounced, a hard community
and kept the simulacrum of an outlook and a way
and it suits you well, does that soothe measurably
any hurt, or mellow any canker but your own?

That delightful residential area was known as Silverton.

Amid the marshes there had been commenced the scooping of a new dock—the Royal Albert. There dad found work and we lived on the corner of a street abutting on the marsh. I was sent to Board school, Sunday school and Church. In the Church choir I wailed "Oh ye hills and Valleys", "Oh Cherubim and Seraphim". In Sunday school they gave a ticket for a recitation of three Bible verses and a larger ticket, worth a penny, for ten small tickets. I selected the Songs of Solomon, Ecclesiasties and the Psalms because the verses were the shortest and easier to memorise. The Board school taught more Bible than grammar, more fear of hell than earthly geography, more crawlsome obedience to one's "betters" than knowledge of how to fight the battle of life. The Church and the Vicar were over it all, and the objective was to make worms, not men.

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In the East India docks was a barque-rigged vessel waiting for the tide. I went aboard and hid under a bunk in the fo'castle. Hours later the ship began to rise and fall and I was sick. I rushed out on deck and was promptly hauled up. We were off Deal but the pilot had not yet left the ship so I was sent ashore in his boat, put on a train for London and told to go home. I crossed London Bridge, walked the eight miles to Silverton, over the side wall of the back yard, and softly to the kitchen window. I could hear mother crying and father trying to console her. He said, "Carrie there's no deed to worry—he'll come home when he is hungry." I was hungry and very tired, but I went over the wall again. And the hour was late, and why I went I do not know. I went to the Victoria Docks—the nearest—gave the name of a ship, was let in, crawled on top of a wheat stack under a shed and fell asleep. Some agonising pain brought me to life, and I screamed. I was surrounded by rats and for many a year dreams of rats disturbed my slumbers. I fell off that stack, and in a cosy corner I found a four wheeled truck. I tried to sleep but rats ran up the handle and bit me.

TO A UNION SECRETARY FROM AN OLD MATE

Do you recall our first metropolis?
When loading in the grimy arches of a railyard
we spelled awhile, John Hope of Hoverton?
you said you'd rather be on the plains hammering
the posts for fencewire at a tenth of the wage
than yet be spotted with this civic sunlessness
of purchase and emolument and pap-of-the-cradle:

What did you say, and point me out by recollection?
That the gift of anonymity is sure sleep:
and is there no boon to fame, John Hope of Hoverton?
Sometimes I lie, in my ears steam restlessly
those shattered freights we rode; and a bit before sleeping
I'd choose your full cellar and the banqueting table;
sometimes I wonder at it and cannot sleep at all.

You've wealth now, and news space, and a hand in the levying;
and were we to halloo you on this stormy evening
would you turn your eyes down, John Hope of Hoverton?
And if, say by chance and say by reckoning,
we ventured on the moment of a new fraternity
and clothed the peerless antlers in their velvet again . . .
Well, you're far from us now . . . would you come back to Hoverton?

IAN BEDFORD

I went aboard a steamer and told the watchman my tale of woe. He gave me hot coffee and biscuits and the next I remember was daylight. I had fallen asleep on my feet and the watchman had made me a shakedown on the galley floor. I had a wash, some coffee, a biscuit, a parcel of food and went ashore. For several nights that galley was my dining and bedroom.

There was a full-rigged ship in the East India Dock—the latest creation. It was not of wood, like the majority of ships of the day, but a thing of iron, about to make her second voyage with a full list of passengers. I gave the steward another tale of woe and wishes, and he arranged with a sailor to stow me away in a snug corner. I was given food, a bottle of water and told not to show my nose until he gave the word. When he did we were far down the Channel with a running sea and a spread of canvas reaching, it seemed, to the sky. I was questioned and cursed and given to the boatswain. I cleaned his cabin and carried his meals, was taught knots and splices, climbed the rigging—every day a little bit more—until roll and surge of ship and inward rolling seas lost all their terrors.

We reached Melbourne—low lying dismal flats, with the city in the distance. The passengers before departure made up a litle purse for me but the skipper gave orders that I was to stop on the ship and return to London.

On the other side of the wharf was a collier loading potatoes for Sydney on her return trip to Newcastle. Some of her firemen came aboard to have a look at the latest in sailing craft, and with them I became very friendly. I went aboard their ship and told them my story. I did not wish to go back to England. Would they take me to Sydney? Next day one of them said "Yes". So when she was ready for sea I slipped aboard, lived in the firemen's quarters, reached Sydney and there one of them gave me to the care of his cousin, a boarding-house keeper in Harrington Street, Miller's Point. Behind me was the crammed history of eleven years of life.

A LIFE ON THE OCEAN WAVE

I became a cabin boy in a barquentine bound for the Islands. She was owned by a syndicate of Island traders and her home port was Noumea. We sailed to trading stations in the Loyalties and Hebrides, occasionally as far as Tahiti. Sometimes, after discharging stores in the Hebrides, we recruited Kanakas for Queensland—mostly into Mackay—took in sugar for the Sydney refinery, and ran back to Noumea with coal or general cargo. For me the ship was a home and the skipper all that a good father could be. He was an Australian; his kindly wife French, and in their house I was their boy.

I stayed with them three years and then came the yearning for something new. Wanderlust affects not only silly boys, but full grown men. They throw security and comfort to the winds for an uncertain future and their folly, or their wisdom, is measured by their luck. To the captain and his lady the mere indication of my desire for change was an expression of ingratitude, so they let me go. Years later, when I returned, they were very nice, but from their scheme of life I had passed out. I did not blame them.

I left Noumea in a ship bound for Japan. We went to the Carolines, to Nagasaki, Hiogo, Yokohama, across to Shanghai, and into the coolie carrier trade between Amoy and Singapore. The ship was a "mofridite"—half sail, half steam. She was barque-rigged, carried a main royal and flying jib, and as she always kept on a steamer course, there was more work up and down rigging, letting out or taking in canvas, than an actual sailing ship. The skipper and mate seemed to take a fiendish delight in making it a hell ship, and from it there was no escape except by mutiny or desertion. I was "boatswain's boy" and he was my protector, but one day when a sailor was working aloft the lanyard of a marling spike he was using broke, and the spike plunged to the deck through the heart of the boatswain. He was buried at sea and, after that, I was everyone's kick.

There was for'ard deck house for sailors and firemen and a deck saloon aft for the officers. Behind the saloon was a wheelhouse, used as armoury for guns, bayonets and cutlasses. On the bridge were two small cannon and under it the cook's galley, engineer's rooms and alleyways between the for'ard and after decks. In front of the bridge as deck cargo we carried 800 to 1000 coolies. When the seas rolled inboard some of them would be swept overboard and others—especially in the winter trips—would perish from exposure, but there was always a percentage allowed for loss of live stock. My job, with another boy, was to throw the dead overboard, or if the carcase was too heavy, to drag it to a porthole and push it through. On Sundays the skipper read prayers in the saloon and if we failed to attend we got the rope and punishment.

When the mate was not flogging or slapping, he was kicking. One day he was kicking me through the alleyway and on a block near the galley was a pie, ready for the oven. I threw it into his face and the pie broke, the paste clung to his beard, red fruit ran down his white suit and hundreds of coolies roared with glee. He swung me over his head and dashed me into the scuppers. When I came to life again I was in one of the bridge boats and the ship was running out of Hongkong. I was bruised and matted with blood—nobody had troubled, or dared to wash it off. The mate came to look at me and said "You little bastard, I'll throw you overboard". I said something rude so he squeezed my throat and I again went to sleep. The night before the ship left Singapore I deserted. I had wanted a change. I was getting it.

Singapore was not a bad place for a beachcomber. If the whites regarded you as vermin, there were Malays and Chows and dogs to share their lot with you. The climate was warm and scanty clothing all-sufficient. There were millions in the world in the same plight in worse places.

Did you ever read the story of Henri Charpentier? He was born in southern France, commenced hotel work before he was ten, and before he was thirteen had been page boy to the Duchess of Rutland, the Empress of Austria and the ex-Empress Eugenie of France. Then he left the bird in the hand for the bird in the bush and in 1893—when he was thirteen years of age—he went to London and fell to the lowest depths. In the dead of winter he was crouching under Waterloo Bridge and sleeping beneath a seat. He said "Scraps of food I found; I washed in a fountain and swallowed—I, who have shared the bon bons of an Empress". He became too weak to forage and a dog fed him. One night, when he was dying from hunger and exposure, the dog howled so long that a policeman came and sent the boy off in an ambulance. Next day the doctor said "Ah! that dog. I have him safe at home." A few weeks later the recovered Henri was back in Monte Carlo, waiting on King Edward and Pierpont Morgan.

Two years later Henri tried London again and met a similar fate. He shared a room with seven others. They were all starving and he said "We starved in the midst of the world's greatest concentration of wealth and people as absolutely as if we were in a desert". He secured a dinner job at the Savoy and nearly collapsed from the sight and smell of food he was passing to Bishops, Dukes and Princes. The Savoy kept guards and searchers to prevent stealing but Henri escaped, wearing around his body slices of meat like a shirt, and his starving room mates picked him to pieces whilst he stripped. He could make no headway in London, but in America he made a fortune. It is not only talent and courage that are needed, but the luck to be within sight of the right place at the right time, and in America, Charpentier had Pierpont for his best friend and customer.

Not until I read Charpentier's book—fifty years after Singapore—did I console myself that it was warmer and easier on the Singapore beach than under the river bridges of London in the winter.

I watched the shores of Malaya fade away from the deck of a Belgian tramp bound for Newcastle, N.S.W., via Java ports. Back in Australia I shipped on a Queensland-registered and Kanaka-licensed schooner. We loaded plantation stores and trade goods for the islands and from them recruited Kanakas for Queensland ports.

This trade was started by Bobbie Towns (?) owner of ships and wharves and plantations, director of the Bank of N.S.W. and financial rock of the Methodist Church. He engaged as his chief recruiter Ross Lewin, who Commodore Goodenough

described as the "most cruel and unscrupulous man-stealer that ever came out of the Pacific." Towns gave Lewin letters of introduction to various missionaries in the islands, expressing his anxiety to secure Kanakas and give them the blessings of civilisation on his Queensland properties, and concluded by saying "I will be obliged if you will kindly assist us in this truly Christian mission". Lewin was not long at his Christian work when he seized the daughter of the chief of Tanna, carried her aboard his ship, tied her hands to a ringbolt on the deck and in the presence of ninety persons—black and white—ravished her. There was such a noise about it that Lewin was put on trial in Sydney—and discharged. The Governor, in a report to Earl Grey, said "Apparently even murder may be committed with impunity."

By the early nineties, continental European papers began to feature the Kanaka trade as a new name for slavery, and finally the British Government called for a report from Commodore Wilson, then in command of the naval squadron operating in Australia and island waters. He replied (1882) that "the Queensland Government makes no effort to secure convictions, the Churches are silent, and the only protestors are a few working class associations, weak in numbers and without influence". Thereupon the British Government instituted a Royal Commission and it reported (Oct. 1883) that the Kanaka trade "was one long record of deceit, cruel treachery and cold blooded murders".

The British Government informed the Queensland Government that if it did not intervene the British Government must, and the Queensland Government whitewashed the trade with regulations and restrictions that every man on board was expected to ignore. If the ship did not get recruits, the captain or recruiter, or both, found themselves without a ship, and if anybody was prosecuted it might be the crew—it was never the owner of the ship. One regulation declared that children under fourteen years of age were not to be recruited, but girls were wanted on the sugar fields to keep the men contented, and the only judges of age were the doctors. At the port of entry the girls were lined up on the deck, sailors * * *, the doctor * * * * * *, said "Pass" and the law was satisfied. The pubic hairs between the girls' legs were said to betoken their age. The Kanaka trade of girls and boys, with its Christian impetus and civilising tendencies, was an easy and pleasant life as a sailor's life went in those days. It was infinitely better than being kicked and flogged on a coolie carrier, but when I had a nice little banking account I hungered for a change and once more I got it.

*

I went to Sydney, but the times were bad and my luck was similar. I was reckless and my savings vanished. I pawned my clothes, piece by piece, and drifted to a threepenny doss-house in Sussex Street—a gloomy "thieves kitchen" of desperate and despairing derelicts. Then I had nothing—not even a threepence—so I moved to the open sky and from a corner of Observatory Hill—down near the rails— I watched the beauties of the night and the glory of the moon.

Over in Pyrmont a vessel from Puget Sound was about to discharge timber. I was one of the hands picked for the job. It was near Christmas and a hot sun poured on a newly tarred wharf and I was weak with hunger. I manned one end of a string of timber, trotted to a stack to get rid of it, trotted back for more, and the man who did not trot fast enough trotted off the job. I trotted until the last stick was out, but only my needs kept me going. Those were the days when employers paid every man according to his worth and seldom found a man worth anything they could avoid paying.

I joined a fore-and-aft coal schooner in the trade and went to Newcastle. We put the vessel under a chute, coal poured in, and the crew of two went below to trim it. When full we went on deck, let go, drifted down stream, put on hatches, up canvas, and to sea. When loaded any sort of sea swept over us, the chance of cooking food was mostly nil, and the trip might occupy a few hours or days according to wind and weather. In Sydney it was off hatches, shovel coal or man a winch. To turn a handle with 150 lbs. of coal on the end of a rope, raise it 20 or 30 feet to a wharf, do it for ten hours a day, and when finished put to sea for more coal and be perpetually wet with sweat, or rain, or sea, and sleep in a dismal hole in the forepeak—that's the sort of a job to hold down. The man who vacates a good position makes room for another. Only the pegs in the holes are changed. Some wise guy had left this hole for me and with equal generosity I passed it to someone else.

*

I joined the brig for Tahiti and the first day at sea we ran into a gale. Then we knew things. She was rotten from stem to stern, above and below. Her sails were all patches—and we added to their number. A footrope broke and a man received a bad crash. Her inner "skin" was broken and she had at some time carried sand ballast. It had worked through the broken skin into the bilges, and every jump and roll of the ship worked more sand into the pump hole and choked the pump. Then block and tackle had to be used to lift the plungers. In a heavy sea the repeated choking of the pump made it hard to keep her afloat. Every time she rose and fell, her bow seams opened and shut like a concertina and squirted water into the bunks. Such vessels were given certificates as fit for sea. If a man left before his six months' articles expired, he lost his wages.

We returned from Tahiti to Noumea to load flour for Auckland—flour returned by the French Government as unfit for convicts and, before we reached Auckland, we were living on it too. We ran before a raging gale and mountain seas to the North Cape in four days. Then the wind suddenly dropped and left us wallowing and rolling until the seas flattened. It was nearly a fortnight before a wind came to blow us on our way.

The skipper was a quiet, soft-spoken man, always confident that God would answer his prayers for a quick trip to save expenses and please the owner. The mate was a big shrimp. The second mate was a mad dog. He was very tough and always looking for something to kill. In Auckland, the cook went ashore for food, the captain went to the customs, the mate conveyed an injured man to the hospital and only the second mate and myself were left on board. When I was not looking he laid me out with a belaying pin and not until next day did I come out of my sleep. Six weeks later, we chanced to be in a New Zealand port, when our articles expired, and the crew refused to go further. We were paid off and the brig sailed away, but not with the second mate. Somebody caught him ashore and left him a case for the local hospital. Ten years later, he was hangman in the Melbourne gaol. He carried around the collection box at a near-by church, and was given four years' imprisonment for a sex offence. When he had served his life sentence, he joined the spiritualists and finally committed suicide.

IN REVIEWS OF THREE RECENT BOOKS ON THE LABOR MOVEMENT D. W. A. BAKER AND IAN BEDFORD DISCUSS ISSUES RELATED TO FRANK ANSTEY'S LIFE AND TIMES

The Decay of Labor

"An almost inevitable corollary of poverty," said Tom Collins, "is the violent itching to get rid of it at any price." So in 1891, when Australian workers were impoverished by depression and smarting from defeat in the maritime strike, one of their leaders in the newly formed New South Wales Labor Party told the Legislature that Labor wanted "a little more of the world's pleasure, leisure and treasure."

But the early Labor movement also had wider aims. There was a search for "that master-province of the Kingdom of God which we call Socialism". Henry Lawson had a vision of the time when

> . . . the curse of class distinction from our shoulders shall be hurled,
> An' the sense of Human Kinship revolutionise the world.

William Lane attempted to make this vision real when he led his followers, "the finest men in the world," to Paraguay to found a New Australia. The less adventurous drew inspiration from Edward Bellamy's "Looking Backward". But we notice in this novel the inaccessability of the utopia, for Bellamy's characters reach it only by conveniently falling asleep and still more conveniently dreaming that they wake up in the year 2000 A.D.

There were, then, no realistic plans for reaching the promised land. But there was unbounded optimism in the virtue of the people. "Every child begins life as an actual democrat and potential Socialist." So the Labor Party was to be a new sort of party; not one controlled by politicians for whom the workers might vote if they saw fit, but one which the workers would themselves control, the politicians being but servants of the masses.

Vere Gordon Childe's sad, bitter and brilliant book "How Labour Governs" (M.U.P., 35/-), first published forty years ago, is an account of how this ideal was frustrated by Labor politicians and trade unionists. Too many politicians abandoned their ideals and absorbed bourgeois values of self advancement. "I see the sight that dazzle/The pleasing sounds I hear" might well have been sung by many besides Holman. To guard against such seductions the A.L.P. developed complicated machinery of pledge, caucus and conference. As Mat Reid in his presidential address to the 1907 Conference said: "Once you allow the politician to boss the show, he will give away everything to save himself, because he believes himself indispensable to the show, and in fact ends by becoming the show himself, and making a holy show of the rest of us".

Childe judged that the control over the leaders sufficiently checked their selfish and cowardly opportunism to preserve the solidarity of the party through many crises, but that the organisation broke down when it attempted to force the politicians to carry out the platform and realise Labor ideals. In such endeavors "Conferences and Executives and Caucus have only been able to produce revolts and splits which have exposed the workers, enervated by spoon-feeding from Labour Ministries, to the tender mercies of bitterly capitalistic Governments".

But the corruption of the politicians is not the whole story. In an analysis of the heterogeneous elements within the party and the diverse electorate to which it must appeal Childe shows how unlikely it is that the A.L.P. could ever follow a genuinely revolutionary policy even were its leaders as shrewd as Lenin and as incorruptible as Robespierre. Democrats and nationalists, small farmers and prospectors, shop-keepers and other small business men, the Roman Catholic Church and the liquor trade—all have to be catered for. "To avoid giving offence to middle-class supporters Labour Governments have followed a vacillating policy and have tried to govern in the interests of all classes instead of standing up bodly in defence of the one class which put them in power."

So the politicians are tried and found wanting; and the trade unionists, in Childe's view, are little better. Writing before the formation of the A.C.T.U., Childe saw as their basic weakness a failure to develop any unity among differing unions. Thus any extended strike action could not be adequately directed and was almost inevitably doomed to failure. The movement for the One Big Union never got off the ground. The Australian Workers' Union had seemed briefly between 1914 and 1916 to be the body which might absorb other unions into a common organisation. But the A.W.U. also failed—except in its unavowed but important purpose of getting its leading officials into Parliament and Cabinet. For this union, the largest in Australia, if not guilty of some of the more extreme charges laid against it, was conservative, bureaucratic and run more for the officials than for the rank and file.

The one working class organisation which seems to have aroused Childe's admiration, as well as his criticisms, was the Industrial Workers of the World. He liked the members' energetic enthusiasm and insight into proletarian psychology. He obviously shared their dislike of the politicians. He admired, above all, their acceptance of a coherent and genuinely revolutionary theory. But Childe was not blind to their weaknesses. Most Australian workers at least **believed** they had more than their chains to lose. Australian capitalists never fought the class war with the same ruthless violence that produced pitched battles and massacres in America. The great popularity of I.W.W. doctrines in Australia therefore never really displaced the unreflecting eclecticism of most trade unionists, and in 1917 W. M. Hughes, by special legislation and some trumped up evidence, was able to crush the movement by incarcerating its leaders.

Some of Childe's reactions to this whole sorry story are mysterious. His disappointment and anger are obvious; his intellectual beliefs are not. His book is written on the avowed assumption

that "the present organisation of society involves some sort of exploitation and enslavement of the workers" and that the purpose of the Labor Movement must be to end this. But the results of the book, he says, "may be regarded as the most serious criticism of that whole position". Did Childe abandon his Marxist position? If so there is little to indicate it in his later renowned career in Britain as archaeologist and pre-historian. Despite his denial in the book's last sentence, was it perhaps in Australia that he lost faith? For after leaving his homeland he returned here in 1957 only to meet his death in the Blue Mountains. These questions probably admit no answer, but we can be sure that "How Labour Governs" was the work of Australia's angriest young man.

D. W. A. BAKER

Billy

One of the more important mistakes of W. M. Hughes' long life may well turn out to have been his choice of Mr. L. F. Fitzhardinge as his biographer, for Fitzhardinge is too competent and honest an historian to disguise or mitigate the many faults and weaknesses of his subject. He writes in his preface to the first volume of "William Morris Hughes: A Political Biography" (Angus & Robertson, 63/-): "I have not been concerned to defend or attack him, but have tried, as well as I could, to display him in action in the context of his time and circumstances, leaving the reader to judge for himself". The evidence Fitzhardinge presents creates some puzzles for the mind and often leaves a nasty taste in the mouth.

One may readily pass over the shifty tricks Hughes was forced into in the early days to earn a few shillings. More serious is the apparent lack of principle in Hughes the politician. This biography is almost entirely confined to politics. But it is even narrower than this statement suggests, for Fitzhardinge never feels it necessary even to mention such Australian leaders of radical opinion as Henry Lawson, William Lane, or Tom Collins, presumably because Hughes was in no way influenced by them. Apart from a desultory flirtation with the somewhat unsatisfying ideas of Henry George, Hughes would seem to be the prototype of the socialist without doctrines.

Lacking principles by which he might judge his own political activity, Hughes was inevitably forced to use the sole criterion of success, considered crudely in an electoral or organisational sense. He once said that the difference between himself and Harry Holland was that he had been successful while Holland was a failure. So success was the aim. Accordingly, in 1898 Hughes, together with Holman and others, left the Socialist League when its demands for nationalisation, with an election in the offering, were calculated to be embarrassing. Similarly, a decade later, in his Daily Telegraph articles under the title "The Case for Labor", one notices the vulgar eclecticism by which Hughes tried to combine the idea of the inevitability of socialism with the idea of its gradualism—a gradualism so pronounced that none would be frightened by its inevitability. But equally, of course, none would thereby be inspired.

But the problem of deciding between principle and expediency, as every politician knows, is not a simple one, and the plain practical man out for tangible results has a case. In 1896, when Holman complained that the Labor Party had just been pottering along for the last two years, Hughes replied: "Potter! Great God!! **Potter!!** Let us see what we **have** done in that time. We've passed a Land and Income Tax: Navigation Act. Electoral Act: got the referendum principle accepted by Reid for next election on fiscal issue; Factory Act; Coal Mines Regulation Bill; Public Health Bill, etc., etc., and about 30 other Acts many of them of great importance."

In trade union affairs a similar tension is apparent between the immediate demands for effective organisation and improvement of working conditions on the one hand, and the long term aims of working-class struggle on the other. Hughes was always what the Americans would call a pork-chop unionist, and a very cautious and capable one too. He was prominent not only in re-building the Sydney Wharf Laborers' Union, shattered after the great maritime strike, and in the establishment of the subsequent Waterside Workers' Federation, but also in organising cabmen, marble workers, fishermen and shoremen. In addition he was probably as important to the Trolley, Draymen and Carters' Union as he was to the waterside workers.

In this union too he retained office till 1916. As a unionist Hughes was always on the right wing. He favored arbitration; he hoped for legislation to improve working conditions; he always stressed the need for negotiations with employers and conducted such negotiations very skilfully; he always attempted to avoid strikes, and if these were inevitable then he sought to limit them to the smallest arena possible. And once again, of course, the right wing unionist has a case. By the first years of this century Hughes could rightly be proud of the great improvement in waterside workers' conditions, achieved without a strike and virtually without expense.

Yet Hughes' conduct during the 1909 coal strike seemed to many people hard to justify from a working class point of view. Fitzhardinge's account of this is a good deal more revealing than those published by Gollan and O'Farrell. The increasing influence of the I.W.W. among Australian workers was a threat to Hughes' industrial policy of negotiation and arbitration, and a threat, too, to Hughes the politician at a time when the Federal A.L.P. could sense its coming approach to power. Consequently Hughes used his very great influence to limit the extent of the strike and produce negotiations with the owners. Throughout the strike his relations appear to have been more cordial with the reactionary Premier, Gregory Wade, than with the miners' leader, Peter Bowling. When it was all over, the strikers beaten and Bowling dragged off to gaol in leg-irons, Hughes received congratulations from tory politicians and union-hating industrialists like William Sandford. But Harry Holland branded him "Blackleg. Traitor. Sweater".

And then Hughes was a liar. In the election and referendum campaign of 1913 Hughes repeatedly and publicly proclaimed that the coal vend had been prosecuted under an anti-trust act of 1910 and not that of 1907. This was an untruth and

Hughes knew it. The point was a technical one, but of great political importance because Hughes, wishing for increased Commonwealth powers, hoped to show that even the relatively far reaching 1910 act was insufficient to deal with monopolies. One of Hughes' critics, whom Fitzhardinge quotes, hoped that the public would in future "place no confidence in Mr. Hughes' statements, no matter how emphatically they are made, or how often they are repeated". One wonders how he got away with it, but understands more readily the suspicions entertained a few years later about Hughes' statements on the need for conscription.

The few principles which can be discerned in this man's career were chauvinist. He was consistant over the years in urging the necessity of compulsory and universal military training. In 1905 he was a foundation member of the N.S.W. branch of the Australian National Defence League and so flocked with birds of a pretty conservative and militarist feather. His attitude towards questions of race is equally well known. He looked on the Chinese and Japanese as a "leprous curse" and objected to them "because of their vices, and of their immorality, and because of a hundred things which we can only hint at".

One important question remains: how was it possible for such a man to achieve what he did? Partly, of course, because his opinions and attitudes were fairly widely shared in the community; partly because of his skill as debater and negotiator to which Fitzhardinge draws attention; but partly his success was due to some charismatic quality of personality or leadership which does not emerge from Fitzhardinge's careful account of his political life. Mr. Gullet has written that Hughes was without doubt "the most gifted, vital and fascinating human being" he had ever met. And one can believe this. Otherwise his career is inexplicable.

D. W. A. BAKER

Politics and frustration

The life of Harry Holland, the New South Wales labor agitator who served two terms of imprisonment on political charges, left Australia on the eve of a heroic period of trade-union militancy, and was incarcerated for a further twenty years in the New Zealand Labour Party, provides a unique subject for biography: of all millenarian socialists, in Australia or New Zealand, who remained so for the whole of their lives, Holland enjoyed the greatest success as a political figure. He was chairman of the N.Z.L.P. from 1919 till his death in 1933, and leader of the parliamentary opposition for some of that time. But, on the evidence of P. J. O'Farrell's book, "Harry Holland" (A.N.U., 49/6), this relative success was far from a personal triumph for Holland, who lacked most of the qualities—which he scarcely found enviable —of the politician. O'Farrell stresses Holland's remoteness of demeanor, and sees him as something of a mystery, to be puzzled about; while his own prose style, which lacks vigor, prohibits the illusion of intimacy with his subject. Yet this book is a sympathetic and, in the final chapter, a moving account of Holland's career and frustrations. Holland's life, ending as it does short of governmental office, would seem depleted as narrative, and illustrative of too little; yet the best part of the book is the description of his last days. The irascible old man, stiff in one leg, by-passed in the councils of the parliamentary party, disillusioned, reading the autobiography of Trotsky, lives through the onset of the Depression, which stirs his energies but about which he can do nothing. "He noted in his diary during the 1933 N.Z.L.P. conference 'At night there was a dance—a welcome to the delegates; but it appeared to me as time waster'. A couple of nights later, when he went to a film, he wrote, 'This was time waster too' . . . In the House, the slow rate of proceedings exasperated him". This was the Holland, weary and in a sense defeated, moved with compassion for suffering which he was unable to relieve, who had long been regarded by sections of the industrial labor movement as a renegade.

One of the weaknesses of O'Farrell's book is the small consideration that he allows to this question of renegacy. He devotes a lot of space to what he regards as a conflict between religious conviction and the philosophy of materialism, which must needs be troubling Holland, and of which he asks: "Why did he make no real effort to face or resolve these problems?" But the conflict arising out of Holland's pursuit of his career on the one hand, and his aspiration to serve the working class on the other, is nowhere dealt with save between the lines. An inclination towards political action was, as O'Farrell shows, always present in Holland, even in his Broken Hill days; but his evolution from an industrial agitator to what appears to be a standfast political spokesman, pointing to the fatuity of strikes and requiring of trade unions that, in the name of working-class militancy, they should swing behind the political party and make a fight of it in the legislature, is nowhere satisfactorily described. O'Farrell accepts this rather incoherent attitude at its face value, remarking that Holland was a muddled man, but seeking no portent in this particular muddle. Reasons are given in terms of New Zealand society and history —for example, the failure of successive strikes— and Holland's turning to political action is shown as a bowing to circumstances; but Holland's internal history on this matter is not attempted— perhaps there is too little evidence—and the question of careerism, for example, is not debated in a book which often takes an argumentative form, of a teasing out of possibilities. Moreover, O'Farrell's own remarks on militant socialism are tentative.

This remains a book well worth reading; sympathy, more often missing than not, in academic biographies, and a deep involvement with the subject matter, make up for what might be regarded as some quirks of emphasis. O'Farrell is by no means easy on Holland; his judgments appear pessimistic on a number of issues. Many of his interpretative arguments, such as on the emotionality of Holland's character ("theorist" though he may be), seem to me well proved.

IAN BEDFORD

MISCELLANY

Trends in Aboriginal Research– Three Recent Books

Ian Turner

WHATEVER complaints may be made about governmental neglect of the Aboriginals, it would be hard to suggest that they receive insufficient attention from writers and scholars. A rough count of current books listed in the 1964 Australian Book Week catalogue shows that six of seventy-two general works, two of twenty-four novels, two of ten works on art and architecture, the only play, one of four books of poetry, and no less than seven of twenty-eight children's books deal exclusively or predominantly with Aboriginal life. (Many others, of course, refer incidentally to the Aboriginals.)

On the academic front over the last few years, an Institute of Aboriginal Studies has been founded (with financial support from the Commonwealth) to stimulate research into traditional Aboriginal society and culture; the Social Sciences Research Council is backing (with the help of Myer Foundation funds) a general survey of the present socio-economic situation of Aboriginals and part-Aboriginals; Sydney anthropologists have sponsored an Aboriginal centre in that city; Melbourne academics are planning a research centre for the study of contemporary Aboriginal affairs. All in all, the Aboriginals are more studied, talked about, written about today than at any time since the first years of settlement, when personal observation and physical conflict forced the indigenous population into the awareness of every colonist. Unfortunately, there is no record of how the objects of this fascinated scrutiny feel about their limelight—nor, indeed, whether many of them are even aware of it. As always, the Aboriginals are more acted upon than acting.

Why is this concern with the Aboriginals so evident today? The motives are mixed. Among writers, "Jindyworobak" is no longer a live issue: there are none any more who feel that Australia's identity can only be established in terms of an Aboriginal imagery which expresses uniquely the Australian environment. But, for many, tribal life provides a welcome exotic diversion from the drabness of urban life, and their work finds a ready market. For others, the present plight of the Aboriginals (and particularly the mixed bloods) is a challenge to conscience, and they write to make their readers aware of the common humanity of Aboriginal and European.

Among the anthropologists there is a strong sense of urgency: there is little time left, perhaps only the life-time of the present generation, to study the traditional society and culture. Only a few groups remain who live largely outside the influence of European culture, and this cannot last for long. The number of anthropologists has grown, too, as new university departments have opened up; more systematic investigation of the situation of Aboriginals in various stages of contact with the white community has led to new understandings, to new challenges to old conceptions and policies, which the anthropologists want to disseminate.

In the community generally, as prosperity and security spreads over the majority of of the population, radical and humanitarian concern concentrates on the depressed minorities. Governments are aware of the pressure—and perhaps more importantly of the growing international criticism (exemplified recently by Mr. Tom Mboya) of the continued existence in advanced nations of underprivileged racial minorities—so that funds are made available for investigation and long-standing policies are thrown open for debate and change.

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Inevitably, the most informed discussion, the most cogent criticism, the most sensible suggestions for change, have come from the anthropologists; not even the most sympathetic laymen can approach their insights into Aboriginal culture, from which they derive the practical recommendations which they feel it their duty to make. Australian anthropology has advanced greatly from the brilliant individual work of men like Baldwin Spencer and Roth, 70 years ago, to the much more extensive, varied and better organised field research of today, but at all times the specialists have felt a responsibility towards the people they have studied as well as to the studies themselves.

The present state of knowledge of Aboriginal life has perhaps been best summarised in the papers and discussion of a 1961 research conference study, from prehistorians to sociologists; these have now been published in "Australian Aboriginal Studies" (O.U.P., for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 75/-) with an introduction by Dr. W. E. H. Stanner, the chairman of the Conference.

This volume does not set out to present a comprehensive account of all aspects of Aboriginal life as do, for example A. P. Elkin's "The Australian Aborigines" or R.M. and C. H. Berndt's "The World of the First Australians" (the latter has just been published). Rather it summarises in ten chapters the present understanding of the most important aspects of Aboriginal life, and highlights the present controversies. The areas discussed are the development of anthropology, prehistory, physical anthropology, linguistics, material culture, social organisation, religion, art, music, the position of women, and the contemporary situation. The list of contributors includes almost every leading scholar who has been concerned with Aboriginal studies. The volume concludes with the proposals of Professor R. M. Berndt and Mr. T. G. H. Strehlow for future urgent research.

For an historian, the most exciting aspect of this collection is the hints it throws out (and the methodology it reveals) for the establishment of an accurate historical record of the Aboriginal

settlement of Australia. The archaeologists—notably D. J. Mulvaney—are working towards an approximate date and location of the first occupation of the continent, and an account of the spread of settlement. Their work is complemented by the comparative studies of language, art, mythology, ritual, custom, and social organisation, from which inferences can be drawn about the tribal division of the Aboriginals and the development and diffusion of their culture. In the course of their discussions, the specialists in these various fields canvass the most controversial questions at present dividing anthropologists: whence and when did the Aboriginals arrive in Australia? Is it possible to establish any progressive evolution of Aboriginal culture? Are the wide variations in culture to be explained by fragmentation and independent development, or by a series of migrations? The questions are endless; the answers are just beginning to be made.

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But the historical question is not the one that most interests most anthropologists; they are more concerned, as Dr. Stanner says, "to bring together, as best we can, our new respect for the native Australians and the preservation for posterity—theirs and ours—of a true and competent record of their way of life." Anthropology as such, although it uses a great deal of material from the past, is primarily interested in establishing a truthful picture of Aboriginal society as a going concern, in examining the interaction of environment, material culture, social organisation, ritual and belief. Specialists discuss all these matters. Of particular note is the suggestion of a shift in the approach of social anthropologists. Until quite recently, researchers in this field were concerned largely with sorting out the complicated kinship structure of Aboriginal society; today the emphasis seems to be moving towards the Aboriginal economy and the structure of authority in tribal society.

A continuing interest, from the earliest days, has been the visual art of the Aboriginals. Dr. Catherine Berndt, in her contribution to the Canberra Symposium, indeed suggests that this has been "the major exception to [the] predominantly rejecting approach to Aboriginal culture." This has not always been so. Early observers, accustomed to the naturalism of 19th century European art, found Aboriginal drawing impossibly crude. But the artists of the Paris school, and especially Picasso, have taught people of our time to recognise the extraordinary graphic quality of "primitive" art.

This is of course an aesthetic response; the obverse of this, as Dr. Brendt points out, is the failure of many collectors of Aboriginal art to go beyond the works themselves and to seek from their creators an explanation of their significance.

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The potential conflict of approach suggested here is brought out strongly in the contributions of Mr. J. A. Tuckson and Professor R. M. Berndt in the splendid "Australian Aboriginal Art" (edited by Professor Berndt and published by Ure Smith, 117/6). Mr. Tuckson, the Deputy Director of the Art Gallery of N.S.W., argues strongly for the universality of artistic forms and for an intuitive response to all art works; the underlying assumption is that aesthetic appreciation is a thing in itself, common to all men and outside time and place. Professor Berndt, on the other hand, argues just as strongly that art works cannot be fully understood outside the culture from which they have sprung, and specifically that Aboriginal art must be understood in relation to the religious beliefs, the myths and the rituals which provide it with its symbols. This is partly, as Berndt says, just the different approach of the anthropologist and the art critic; but beyond this there is an important question as to the nature and function of art. Does the artist recreate his own vision and emotion in the viewer, or does the viewer create a unique experience from the work of art?

Reading this magnificently produced book (it was designed by Hal Missingham, Director of the N.S.W. Gallery) it is possible to see both points of view. Among the 73 color plates are many which have a very direct and immediate impact, in a great diversity of styles and themes, ranging from the mysterious spirit figures of the Kimberleys to the live and vigorous hunting and ritual scenes from Oenpelli and the gloriously decorative designs of eastern Arnhem Land. But to pair the works themselves with the most informative notes by Professor Berndt is to enter much more deeply into the artists' world, and thereby to enrich one's experience of their work.

The authors of this book (Professor A. P. Elkin, Messrs. C. P. Mountford, F. D. McCarthy and T. G. H. Strehlow as well as Professor Berndt and Mr. Tuckson) are understandably much happier about the past of Aboriginal art than its future. They are all convinced that the traditional art will die as the culture which has sustained it disappears. They deplore the effect of the growing market for traditional-style bark paintings; production for the market results in mechanical, repetitive and uninspired work. They have no great liking for the work of the Namatjira school; Mr. Tuckson suggests that Namatjira himself "gained greater recognition than any of the others, because in western eyes his work was the least Aboriginal". Most of them are against the use of the "strange and exotic symbols" of Aboriginal art in commercial decoration; this destroys the meaning and integrity of the symbols. Mr. Tuckson, however, believes that the forms of Aboriginal art can have relevance for non-Aboriginal painters, and instances the work of Margaret Preston, Ian Fairweather and John Olsen. What these comments have in common is a laudable but perhaps utopian rejection of commercialism. The Aboriginals are being assimilated to a capitalist society, and there seems little hope that the market-place will not debase their art.

But this book will stand as a lasting tribute to the visual excitement, the superb graphic quality, and the rich and complex symbolism of traditional Aboriginal art.

It is clear from the plates (and this point is discussed in the text) that, despite the ritual character of much Aboriginal art, stylistic innovation does occur, and that contact with other cultures does influence the subject matter of at least the secular, descriptive painting. But in so far as traditional works have survived, they can be studied in their pure form, and conclusions as to the unadulterated Aboriginal beliefs and myths can be drawn. It is not so easy when the anthropologists come to deal with intangibles such as social organisation. The first contact with a non-Aboriginal culture may modify this subtly; the presence of the observer-interviewer creates a non-traditional response.

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The most vigorous argument at the Canberra Symposium arouse over the proposition of Dr. M. J. Meggitt that the process of culture-contact had already gone so far—even with the most remote tribes—that it was already impossible to create an accurate picture of Aboriginal social organisation; that what anthropologists should be doing

is "investigating the structure of the social phenomenon that has almost completely replaced the traditional society—that is, the plural society of Aborigines, Europeans, Asians and people of mixed ethnic origins." This was clearly not the position of most of the participants in the symposium, and Professor Berndt challenged Meggitt strongly. But however the anthropologists may resolve this dispute, the conference itself revealed that very limited attention has been paid by scholars to the question Meggitt posed. This is quite understandable; every year diminishes the stock of traditional culture (even as refracted through European contact) available for study; while the problems arising out of culture-contact will be available for study for a long time yet. Nevertheless, the culture-contact situation is, as Meggitt says, the one that now confronts us, and it is disappointing that so little systematic scientific invesigation has been made.

At the conference short but valuable papers by Dr. Fay Gale (on South Australia generally), the late Mrs. Judy Inglis (on Adelaide), and Dr. J. H. Bell (on Sydney) discussed these questions. Dr. Gale's paper summarised her lengthy doctoral dissertation, "A Study of Assimilation: Part-Aborigines in South Australia," which has now been published in xerographic form by the Libraries Board of South Australia (80/-). A number of other scholars have written theses on similar subjects; but this is the most extensive treatment generally available, and everyone interested in the present situation of the Aboriginals will be most grateful to the S.A. Library for publishing it.

Like most theses, this is not written for easy reading. The evidence is closely packed, and the argument is exhaustive, sometimes to the point of pedantry. But the facts are there, and they lead Dr. Gale towards a set of very sensible conclusions.

After a straight-forward discussion of the origins of racial prejudice, which has little new to say, Dr. Gale gives a brief historical sketch of S.A. government policies towards the Aboriginals. These changed from an initial policy of assimulation ("We wish to make you happy," Governor Gawler told the Aboriginals of Adelaide in 1838, "but you cannot be happy unless you imitate good white men") to a policy of segregation (administered largely by the Christian missions) and back to assimilation.

These policies were applied to people of mixed blood as well as to full Aboriginals; the central argument of this book is that the situation of various categories of Aboriginals and part-Aboriginals are so different that to attempt to apply one policy to all leads to confusion and defeat.

The largest concentrations of mixed-blood population in South Australia are in the two government stations at Port Pearce and Port McLeay; recent administrators inherited these economically non-viable trouble spots from the previous policy of segregation. Dr. Gale points sharply to the central problem: while these stations are vivid representations of the underprivileged position of most part-Aboriginals, they are also "home", offering some sort of emotional sustenance against what appears to be a hostile world.

There are many difficulties in the way of assimilation, and these are not all on the side of white prejudice. Dr. Gale's investigations show that heavy drinking, gambling, and sexual promiscuity are widespread among part-Aboriginals; that the children are irregular in school attendance (though certainly not mentally inferior to white children); that the adults are often not "steady workers". These may all be traced to insecurity, underprivilege, and the consequent lack of strong motivation; but there is a vicious circle, with the weaknesses of each side feeding the other.

Dr. Gale suggests that the remedy for this situation rests primarily on the governments and the white majority; she argues for Commonwealth determination of Aboriginal policy for the whole of Australia, for detailed investigation of and planning for the diverse situations in which Aboriginals and part-Aboriginals are to be found, for substantial increases in funds and trained personnel. She sees the desirable end of this policy as freeing the Aboriginal people from dependence on handouts and subjection to government and mission paternalism. However—and this is a point which many of the younger anthropologists would contest—she foresees a continuing period of tutelage during which the Aboriginals are prepared for new responsibilities.

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This is good sense, but it leaves out a major question, which will perhaps become **the** major question as the present disabilities of the Aborigines are removed: is assimilation in any case desirable or possible? Dr. Gale states the two meanings of assimilation: the integration on equal status of the Aboriginal sub-culture into a plural Australian culture; or the total cultural and genetic assimilation of the Aboriginal minority by the white majority. But she does not make clear her own position.

Present government policy is directed towards the second of these definitions, but there is considerable evidence (see the paper by Mrs. Inglis to the Canberra conference, and the subsequent discussion) to suggest that the Aboriginals themselves are not happy about the total destruction of their culure and the loss of their separate identity. Until this conflict is resolved, whatever policies are implemented will appear to be paternalistic or authoritarian manipulation of the Aboriginals from above.

Opinion among anthropologists seems to be hardening against assimilation. On the one hand they are reluctant to see a culture they have come to understand and admire cease to exist; on the other their investigations suggest a feeling of group-identity among Aboriginals which is a basis for hope and self-respect. One hopes, with Dr. Stanner, that the knowledge gained by the anthropologists of the richness of traditional Aboriginal culture will not only enrich our general understanding of man and society, but will increasingly provide the Aboriginals themselves with a firm and proud foundation on which they may establish their just place in Australian society.

Frankfurt—Book Fair 1964

Nicholas Hudson

THE paunchy Bulgarian in an undersized double-breasted pin-stripe suit was deep in conversation with the vast bald Argentinian with pince-nez. "We will make our own text," said the Bulgarian, "but we will use your cliches." This more or less summed up the Fair.

Firstly, Bulgarians do not often get a chance to talk to Argentinians. The Fair, however, was as truly international as any such only a gathering of this size could be. East as well as West Germany was there; the Rumanians grinned across the gangway at the South Africans, and Red

China was only a few paces from the United States. And it didn't seem odd—but a natural and professional arrangement.

Secondly, these two spoke in English. English dominated everything—the books themselves and the discussions about them. Certainly there was a lot of conversation in other languages going on; indeed, to walk down the centre of the main international hall was rather like twiddling the knob on a short-wave radio set. But English dominated. Whenever minority language groups met, the chances were that their best common language would be English. The Russians addressed everybody in English, as did the English, the Americans and the Red Chinese. I tried German a bit, but found that though I could easily get a ticket allowing me to use two trams for the price of one, I couldn't get five per cent. discount on sixty days credit. And English dominated the exhibits, too. First, of course, there were the vast stands of the British and American publishers and the smaller stands of other English-language countries, including Australia. But on top of this was the vast range of English-language publishing in other countries, particularly in the academic and technical fields. In virtually every developing and/or minority language country, English is either the medium of instruction at these levels or at least an absolute prerequisite to success, and the books on display reflected this trend.

Thirdly, the subject of the conversation in question was international co-operation on a specific publishing project. "Cliche" is the German/French/lingua-franca word for stereotype block. The Bulgarian was negotiating for translation rights on the book, one of the conditions of sale being a share of block costs.

In fact, the display of published books at the Fair is nothing more than a facade behind which the real work is carried out. Generally, by the time a book reaches publication, all the major negotiations will be over. Sale of overseas, translation and subsidiary rights, sharing of block costs and editorial expenses, and the arranging, where possible, of polyglot editions, are all accepted ways in which publishers decrease their own risks and costs, and most of the advantage is lost if it is only done after publication.

By careful negotiation a publisher can, in fact, not merely cut his risks but guarantee himself a profit before he invests a penny in type. Forceful selling rights is one way he does it. One man explained to me how he had split his block costs fifty-fifty with five other publishers; each of them got their blocks at half price, while he got his free and made over 100% profit.

I suppose somebody, somewhere, was discussing literary trends and matters aesthetic, but if so he certainly spoke quietly.

However, facade or no, it was the dazzling display of published books that made the real impact on me. One hears a great deal about the statistics of international publishing, the thousands upon thousands of new titles pouring out every year. But, like the national debt, it is hard to visualise —until one gets to Frankfurt.

I remembered De Quincey's description of one of the neuroses he suffered after taking laudanum. He said he couldn't go into a library without weeping at the thought that, even if he devoted the rest of his life to it, he couldn't read all the books. The sight of Frankfurt would have deepened his despair.

The exhibition is housed in a series of enormous halls, each so large that the whole vast British section occupied only a part of one hall. The immediate effect is overwhelming. It was as if one had gone to the Royal Melbourne Show and found each Large White Pig and muck-spreader replaced by a hundred books on the subject.

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Besides the national groupings there were subject sections. The major art publishers, for example, were grouped together in a single glittering hall. This was, incidentally, the place where there was less talk of art and more of commerce than anywhere else, an instructive aspect of this enfant terrible of post-war publishing.

The educational section was relatively disappointing. There seemed to be little there I had not already seen. This, perhaps, reflects the liveliness of Australian education and its related publishing rather than anything else.

By contrast, the children's section was full of surprises. Recent Czechoslovak books, for example, appeared to be imbued with that spirit of delight, fantasy and magic all too lacking in our oversophisticated "juvenile" publishing.

Once I had got the measure of the layout, the exhibition fell into perspective. I could opt out of less interesting parts and concentrate on others, and trauma gave way to exhilaration. I pitied the conscientious bookseller, who couldn't opt out of anything. If he was a real top-ranker, he might be able to stock a fraction of one per cent. of the books shown. But he really had to go right round the exhibition to make sure he wasn't missing anything.

And where did Australia stand?

Our display had a wonderful position, just at the entrance to the main international hall. It was pleasantly mounted, and the Angus and Robertson London people, who had made the arrangements, had recruited the most attractive pair of interpreters on any stand. They, and the books, succeeded in stopping the passing traffic.

But I still felt we were out on a limb. I have said previously that the displays were generally only the facade behind which the real work was going on. On the Australian stand there was a relatively modest facade with practically nothing behind it at all. This is because Australian publishing is simply not geared to the Frankfurt (i.e. international) way of doing things.

It was good to be there, if only as a migrant information office. This we certainly were. The pamphlets on Australia placed with us by the Department of Immigration were going off as fast as the catalogs. But this wasn't what we had paid for.

Again, we were doing business. On public days we were getting a lot of enquiries about how to buy this or that book, particularly on Australian wild life. And I have no doubt that we will sell the odd overseas rights as a result of the enquiries made at the Fair.

But it was rather as if we had bought tickets for a dinner-dance although we couldn't dance. We could put on our dinner jackets and scoff the caviare, but we couldn't take part in the cosy business on the dance floor. It is only going to be worth while to buy tickets for this particular show if we teach ourselves the procedures of modern international publishing. Frankfurt is not a shop window, it is a workshop. We must give our representatives there the kind of raw material that is understood in Frankfurt—schemes, manuscripts, proposals, cost estimates—and we will then be able to reap the benefits of membership. And if the Fair taught no other lesson, it taught that the benefits of membership were immense—that, in fact, a whole new vista would open up for Australian publishing if we were prepared to make the effort.

HEAD FOR THE HILLS

"Head for the hills!" And before you could say "Whose shout?"
The pubs were empty, sentences hung in mid-air,
Bar-flies, not even bothering to wipe the froth from their whiskers,
Were out of the door and running;
Old age forgotten, to see them cover the ground
Was, if nothing more, an inspiring example to youngsters.

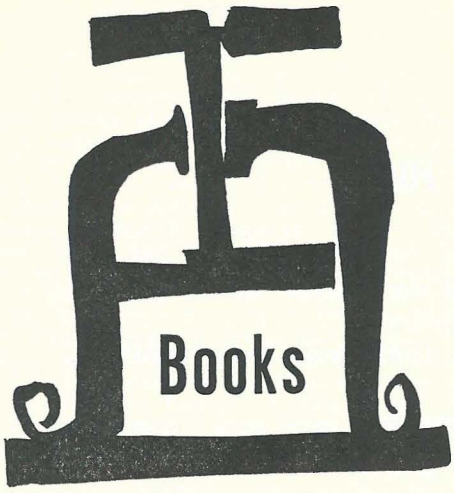
"Head for the hills!" And the member for Yackandandah,
Who, one would have said, had lost his sense of direction
Long years ago, leapt up from his doze in the Chamber,
Ignoring for once all precedent to the contrary,
Having no regard whatsoever for party procedure
Was up and away without even seconding the motion.

"Head for the hills!" At the race-course, ten winning punters
Made for the exits without even waiting to lose;
A jockey who heard the commotion
Forgot to switch on his battery; a visiting singer,
Upset by the noise on the wharves, abandoned all pretence and said:
"I think you all stink—but your money's as good as the next."

"Head for the hills!" A Yarra Bank prophet of doomsday,
Dropping his placard, cried as he ran, looking upward:
"Why wasn't I told? He keeps nothing from me as a rule!"
Three sizeable bunches of bodgies
Stopped booting their victims, revved up their cycles and went
Scorching away down the road with jackets unzipped.

"Head for the hills!" And head for the hills they then did
—Men, women and kids wheeling sore-footed dogs in old prams . . .
You would have sworn, to see the turn-out that streamed
Up to the hills that all of their lives had been only
A sort of rehearsal for this, that everything else
Had been just a way of filling in time before heading out.

BRUCE DAWE



Dobell

"William Dobell," by James Gleeson (Thames and Hudson, £7/7/-), is a valuable, luxurious book. It is splendidly designed and produced. Discussion of the work is directed to specific plates and is linked to them by a helpful system of marginal references. James Gleeson's biographical narrative is well-written and informative. His style is worthy of his subject, admirably direct and free from critical jargon. He is most illuminating when he speaks of the technical means of Dobell's art.

I agree, however, with Bernard Smith that "despite its sensibility where individual works are concerned, Gleeson's criticism fails to elucidate the quality of Dobell's art as a whole and for its time" (Age, 1 August 1964).

Gleeson's assertions that "Dobell's contribution is of a kind that will not affect the subsequent course of art," and is "without influence on the present generation of artists," his insistence on the "traditionalist" aspect of Dobell's art, and the view that it "should have been painted a century ago," "was painted later than it should have been," are judgments that are arbitrary and indefensible. They follow from Gleeson's identification of avant-garde trends in art, which may be merely fashionable, with what is truly modern in essence.

Moreover sometimes, in interpreting individual works, Gleeson is observant and yet obtuse. He reads into paintings literary meanings, which go far beyond the evidence in the work before us, and which may be naive and even shallow, serving to narrow the significance of the work instead of enlarging it, as they should.

This follows from Gleeson's mistaken insistence that "Dobell is not primarily concerned about the way people look, he is primarily concerned with what they are". I think the reverse is the case.

With Dobell's, as with all great portraiture, the painting is essentially enigmatic in all but a visual sense. What it tells us, definitely, of human character, is not what people are, but no more and no less than how, at a given moment, they look. The subject of all the works is the vital force itself and how it may appear, not what it is, in its nature.

Gleeson speaks of "telling gestures and significant movements" which he says reveal the specific characteristics—"the true nature"—of the sitters. Thus, he tells us novelistically, a lively baby is "a little monster, satyr-like, wickedly knowing, an infant Nero"! "Billy Boy" is revealed to us as "work-shy", "The Cement-Worker" as "shrewd and racy". This, when what Dobell is saying to us is: "Look! Vitality assumes this form and aspect, and this, and again this!"

Describing "The Dead Landlord," Gleeson says "Beyond the inert body, in the shadows, the distrait widow brushes her hair mechanically, without thinking of what she is doing . . . only the strictest control prevents collapse into hysteria . . . how clearly the composition echoes the woman's feelings!"

This is to over-simplify and delimit the meaning of this painting absurdly. It is not necessarily about a widow at all, let alone a "distrait" one. It is a dramatic juxtaposition of compelling images, of death and of life. A fat man wearing pyjama pants lies grossly dead. A sumptuous nude woman, her back turned to him, stands before a wash-basin brushing her hair. She may be wife, mistress, tenant, or casual bed-fellow. She may have arisen from his lovemaking that very night. She is sensuously alive. She might be making her toilette (who knows), already with thoughts of going forth to meet another man! The landlord is dead, the woman alive. That is all we know from the painting, and we can make it mean anything we care to read into it; and thus we may reconcile the contradictions of life and death, as the painting reconciles them in and by its art.

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Conversely, Gleeson sometimes quite fails to grasp what a painting is "about", in its most evident literary sense, and delimits its meaning by characterising it as some sort of technical exercise. For example, "Emergency Loading at Night," he says, "tells us nothing about the men involved in the operation . . . the real theme of the painting is the flood of artificial light casting a strange luminosity".

It is not. The theme of the painting is no more and no less than is stated in its title: it is a magnificent spectacle of **men**, watersiders, **working** in an **emergency**, at **night**. It is full of the strained urgency of wartime operations, and of wonder at the fact of impersonal, co-operative, human effort, its vital spirit and its desperate drive to achievement. To reduce this work to an exercise in artificial lighting is entirely to miss its points.

Yet again, Gleeson sometimes narrows the meaning of a painting by treating it exclusively as a "genre" work, a documentary of an occupation. Thus, of the portrait of Dr. E. G. McMahon, he remarks that even if the sitter "were not dressed in the antiseptic robes of the operating theatre we would probably still place this man as a doctor: it is an icon of a doctor—a symbol of a profession".

My own immediate and persisting impression of this painting was that the "antiseptic" robes were clerical ones, and that the sitter was a Doctor of Divinity! It is a portrait of a man who appears to be an embodiment of human benignity, worldly wisdom and professional intellectuality. This is its essence, not the precise nature of the sitter's occupation.

There is one very curious omission in Gleeson's commentaries on the plates. He has not a single word to say about Dobell's painting, for the cover

of Time (4/4/60), of Prime Minister Menzies. In evading the task of assessing this work, Gleeson has not the courageous integrity of Dobell in the work.

For once, Gleeson does not rush to tell us at length what is "the true nature" of the sitter as "revealed" in the painting. If he did, he might have said that the painting reinforces the characterisation of the subject recently served up to us by the veteran journalist Don Whitington, in "The Rulers". That is, that it depicts a man of impatience, intolerance, ambition, snobbishness and gluttony, stressing an extraordinary contrast between hardness in the upper half and flabbiness in the lower half of the face.

Which brings me to a fascinating speculation about the last of the color plates in this book: "Lydia with hair in pins" (1963).

"Lydia is a figment of Dobell's imagination," says Gleeson. " 'Her name', according to her creator 'is Lydia Dustbin, and she is very fond of gods' . . . She is fussily sleazy. She would make sure her hair was curled and probably forget to wash . . . she worries about the wrong things and forgets the really important things . . . No one modelled for her."

But is it so? Look again at the face, at the angle of the head, the shape of the eyebrows, the beady eyes, the fleshy nose, the set of the mouth. Take away her hairpins and give her a balding pate, take away the elongated neck and body and give her heavy jowls and thickened trunk, take away the dog in her lap and give her the Australian Coat-of-Arms, and if Lydia Dustbin isn't the painting of the Prime Minister done over again, I will eat the beautiful dust-jacket of this interesting book.

ELIZABETH VASSILIEFF WOLF

Australian in Battle

Perhaps not merely to meet a demand made of curiosity, historians and biographers are again busy about the First World War, old scraps of movies are now made up for television, some books are being revived. Among the few books in novel form produced by members of the lower ranks in the combatant armies, there was only one, or one noticeable, from the British, and that by an Australian—Frederic Manning's "Her Privates We," now republished by Peter Davies at 27/6.

Come of a well-known New South Wales family and sent to England to complete his education, Frederic Manning was still there, in his early thirties, when war broke out. Although it is certain enough that, as one of the caste to which English society assigned him, he could almost immediately have obtained a commission, he chose to enlist and serve as a private in the infantry.

In addition to the war novel he published a couple of small volumes of poems, and one other work in prose, "Scenes and Portraits". A description of it as "exquisite' is in itself true enough, but does small or no justice to the learning behind it (for Manning was a classical scholar of note) and to the strength of the mind at work in it. Everything he produced, the smallness of its quantity due no doubt to ill health, persistent until his death when about forty, had a high personal distinction, such that it brought him the friendship of eminent men in British scholarship, letters and affairs. Lawrence of Arabia was one of them, who said of the book under review, "I am sure it is the book of books so far as the British Army is concerned".

The period is the First Somme campaign, the British offensive during the latter half of 1916, in which the British casualties were near half a million, a wholesale destruction of most of the flower of British manhood, paralleled only in the Third Ypres a year later when the loss was a little less but compressed into a somewhat shorter time. In both, the Australian Army, too, suffered most grievously.

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Manning appears always to have been conscious, even rather proud, he was Australian. Here and there in the book he mentions the Australians. Bourne, the private through whom he observes, feels, speaks and acts, and operates the story, is an Australian. On that account, and not merely because he was a man already mature, of superior education, assigned to an upper English class, was something of a "dandy", in the Baudelairean sense, he appeared to the ordinary British soldiers as "different". Yet, in a seeming paradox, it was his very Australianism that enabled him to be one of them. It is curious that British reviewers have made little or nothing of this; perhaps because they have not wanted to make anything.

There came to Bourne a deep understanding of and a great, almost humble, respect for the men by whose side he worked, fought and endured, with whom he lived, drank, found such small amusements and scrapes as time and place allowed, and for those officers too whom his perceptive, equalizing eye found efficient, worthy, of the good heart. But for the men a feeling more profound also. Little Martlow and Shem, a Jew, were his particular mates. Shem is wounded and disappears, crawling on hands and knees, back towards Blighty. The death of Little Martlow wracks Bourne with bitter agony. His own death ends the book: ". . . the sergeant-major looked at the dead body propped against the side of the trench . . . Bourne was sitting: his head back, his face plastered with mud, and blood drying thickly about his mouth and chin, while the glazed eyes stared up at the moon". There are no types in this book. Bourne and the others are individuals, all living men—or dead ones. It is significant that Manning has taken not only the title but the heading of each chapter from Shakespeare, that the greatness of English literature might pay tribute to these ordinary men.

In the texture and whole cloth of the book, the warf is the narrative of events, what is said and done, what, little or big, goes on: the weft, Bourne's thought about it and about himself, a kind of running commentary, his cogitations and speculations on war, on life and death, on man, the men and himself, for example, on the difference between friendship and comradeship, a question well worth our consideration today. At times he may moralise a bit and occasionally then, as in all moralisation, become conventional; here and there a few lines sound off key. What of it? Almost at once he breaks out of it, as if immediately aware how ill moralisation or any fulsomeness becomes him, the more ill when it concerns these men.

The late Peter Davies, in a foreword written in 1943, remarked what was not appreciated by other English and seems not to be regarded in England, now: " 'Her Privates We' is also a profoundly democratic book. It is significant that so high a tribute should be paid by a man intellectually mature, acutely observant and deeply critical, to the sound sense, morale and philosophy of

the populace which, in peace as in war, has most of civilisation's dirty work to do". Surely Manning's Australianism had a part in that deep feeling for democracy and for humanity, which enabled him to speak and act for the men; to be, as it were, their representative and their voice; by his very being among them appearing for them, saying what they could not clearly say themselves? Their superiors might well be uneasy under, or resent, that cool, appraising eye. He expressed the two-fold nature of discipline: in which the ultimately determinant part arises from good men commanded to the commanders worthy of command, that compounds courage and fear into a peculiar, unnamed emotion in the soul solitary in battle, and holds the self firm and the group together, so "time and the hour runs through the roughest day".

LEONARD MANN

B. H. P.

Broken Hill Proprietary has for several decades been criticised and vilified by socialists, and even its best friends admit that it sweats. The reluctance of B.H.P. to answer critics' charges of monopoly, exploitation and the pursuit of profit at the public expense, or even to provide adequate information of its finances and organisation, has allowed emotive allegations to flourish unchecked. It has been left to an outsider to write a scholarly and readable history of the iron and steel industry in Australia, in which hard fact displaces conjecture and informed criticism displaces abuse. Paradoxically, although Helen Hughes in her "The Australian Iron and Steel Industry, 1848-1962" (M.U.P., 50/-) makes strong criticisms of B.H.P., she has done the Company a great service in consigning the grosser criticisms to the garbage can.

From 1848, when iron smelting was first attempted at Mittagong in New South Wales, to 1911 when B.H.P. decided to construct a large smelting works at Newcastle, iron and steel production was small and intermittent and unprofitable, despite the best efforts of persistent entrepreneurs. Enoch Hughes, James Rutherford (the Cobb and Co. partner) and William Sandford are the sorts of heroes Australians like—they were always willing to have a go despite the odds of inadequate finance and cheap imports against them; and, like Ned Kelly, they failed.

Good resources of coal, iron ore and limestone for flux were available. The big problem that defeated the early ironmasters but gave success and eventual monopoly to B.H.P. was that iron and steel production required then, as today, a large initial investment to build a large-scale works. B.H.P. got the finance from its rich silver-lead-zinc mines and when it went into production during the World War the market was big enough. Once established under vigorous management B.H.P. became almost inevitably a monopoly. Smaller firms could not compete and bigger output for B.H.P. meant cheaper costs and higher profits. In recent times B.H.P. has sensibly maintained its monopoly, developed ore resources only when forced to by the smaller states like South and Western Australia, and has geared its output to what can be safely absorbed by the local market. Australia needs industrial exports, but B.H.P. is not a benevolent institution and will not venture into export markets unless the Federal Government forces it—and it won't.

B.H.P., like all large and ageing bureaucratic machines, is now showing signs of hardening of the arteries. It lags badly behind Japanese producers in steel technology. Its recruitment of senior staff remains conservative and niggardly and the present directors are stodgy compared to the founders. It is maintaining its bad record of industrial relations, granting better working conditions with as little grace as possible; and one is not surprised to read that 70 per cent. of the new iron and steel workers recruited during the 1950s were New Australians.

The case for government control over the industry is strong and fully documented by Helen Hughes; but the author in her determination to be fair to B.H.P., whose history she has written from outside sources only, remains to the last paragraph an historian and not a preacher—preaching being the job of reviewers. If Australians want a capitalistic society, B.H.P. is as good as they deserve and as good as they are likely to get. B.H.P. is a worthy and representative Australian institution.

J. W. McCARTY

Recent Novels

Fiction should be divided into novels and tales. The first attempt to study human problems by studying people in action, while the latter are content to take the reader through a connected sequence of events which will be their own justification.

Russell Braddon's "Year of the Angry Rabbit" (Heinemann, 23/6) is an example of the latter. Although it invites comparison with the science fiction of Wyndham or the prophecy of Orwell, the main result of the author's speculation about what might happen if the scientists produce a race of giant and carnivorous rabbits is a daringly-conceived series of consequences which enable the author to take sundry pot-shot at politicians, general and scientists. But the characters remain too thin and the effects are related to too few people for either the satire to hurt or the prophecy to frighten.

"It's This Way," by Dan Reidy (Heinemann, 23/6) is another example of the tale, this time set firmly in the present. The narrator is sent to the small town of Tabuggaree to take charge of the one-teacher school. He has the usual encounters with the District Inspector, the President of the school committee, local characters and a disturbing cleavage displayed by one of the sixth-grade girls. The book is often loose in construction and style, possibly deliberately, but from it emerges a clear portrait of the narrator, an effective send-up of the narrowness of education departments and their teachers, and a genuine affection for the people and countryside, as well as a genuine concern for the real task of education. Above all, the book is lit by a largely unforced sense of humor which keeps people and events in their proper place.

Judah Waten's "Distant Land" (Cheshire, 25/-) is, on the other hand, a serious novel about the development of Joshua Kuperschmidt from a child in a Polish village to a widower in a Victorian country town. In the process, he abandons his academic ambitions and his Jewish religion, and significantly becomes known as Josh Cooper.

The book gives an effective picture of Jewish life and attitudes in pre-war Poland and in contemporary Australia, and is marked by a striking study of Joshua's wife, Shoshanah, who develops from a submissive girl to a driving businesswoman whose financial success leaves Joshua almost as an appendage in his own household. Yet her drive is motivated by her determination to give her husband the opportunity to fill his own destiny without being distracted by material worries. His failure is due to his own uncertainty rather than to his wife's dominating personality.

In this book Waten recaptures some strengths of his earlier books which were so strangely missing from "Time of Conflict". Here we see again his ability to portray the living organism of a community, and then to focus in on the struggling individuals caught in its body. Apart from Joshua's reaction to the war, ideological questions are implicit rather than explicit, and at the end of the book Joshua is the same searching individual we see at its beginning. Yet the style of the book, with its chapters sometimes less than a page in length, is gratingly staccato, and the reader wishes that Waten would pause a moment to trace more clearly the relationships between the small groups of people we meet, instead of hurrying on to the next biographical episode.

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The following two books commendably combine story telling with novel writing. Each takes a dramatic incident as an opportunity to study human personality. Both succeed at least on the level of the story.

"The Man in the Jungle," by David Rowbotham (Angus & Robertson, 18/9), starts with the search for a lost aeroplane, but as the searchers penetrate further into the jungle so they seem to loose the surface veneer of civilisation and engage in a fierce struggle for survival and domination on both the physical and the psychological levels. The climatic events are crowded, violent, dramatic, unlikely, but the author's skill in creating the atmosphere and in tightening our nerves makes us accept them.

But from another aspect the book is unconvincing. The characters have too much of that cold, cruel isolation which belongs to the hard-faced genre of modern novels. Finally, their personalities are hollow even although their pasts are crowded, and this hollowness makes it hard for us to accept the reality of the love affair which runs as a complicating thread through the story, and therefore of the jealousies and hates which explain the story. Rowbotham's technical control just robs the story of its final success by depriving it of that element of human unpredictability which is more convincing than the most surprising events.

"The Place at Whitton," by Thomas Keneally (Cassell, 24/6), has probably attracted as lavish praise as any Australian first novel since the war. It is first of all a fast-moving and gripping murder mystery. But the novelist is not concerned so much with solving the crime as with watching its impact on those touched in some way by it. Certainly, he throws out false scents in traditional manner, and the reader is undoubtedly held by his desire to find the culprit. But the murderer is finally discovered not by detective methods but by his own admission, and, again unlike the conventional detective story, this does not bring the book to an immediate conclusion. Instead, we are invited to share the experience of the killer as he follows out the consequences of his crime.

Yet these differences do not account for the attention the book has attracted. In its construction it reveals some of the usual faults of a first novel—scenes are developed for their own sake without reference to the overall unity of the book, several characters are studied at length only to be forgotten again as the story unfolds, the style is undistinguished. The plot itself is ingenious but conventional, although it is given life by the complete realisation of each of the people who comes into it. But its distinctive quality is its metaphysical concern, which makes it unique among Australian novels.

For it is not a concern, as in Patrick White, with the ultimate meaning of existence, but with the very simple but very real problem of good and evil. The plot is spun between the twin poles of a Catholic seminary and a priestess of evil, black mass and all. A bad priest is caught between the two, but he is caught more because of his conscience than because of any inherent evil. He is a victim, not a villain.

But although this awareness of the spiritual condition of man sets the book apart from the general run of Australian fiction, it leaves the reader wondering just how far this awareness takes us. Its very novelty may make the achievement appear more impressive than it actually is. It shares with most mystery stories the weakness that once the culprit is found and disposed of there is nothing much left. But that is not quite the case, for "The Place at Whitton" does leave the reader with a very clearly defined and symmetrical pattern. He may wonder whether the pattern is not a little too clear, but it will undoubtedly remain in his mind to disturb him for long after he has closed the book.

JOHN McLAREN

Two Outbacks

It could be that North-Western Australia is too vast to be contained: it could be that a formidable memory retains too much so that the important things become lost in a mass of detail . . . whatever it is, Tom Ronan's "Packhorse and Pearling Boat" (Cassell, 32/6) is too dry and discursive to be really palatable. It lacks definition, is too full and too long. Though those familiar with the north will welcome familiar names, places and aspects of life, it falls a little flat on the stranger.

"Packhorse and Pearling Boat", a sequel to "Deep is the Sky", covers the first twenty years of the author's life in the first quarter of this century. In territory ranging from Derby to Darwin, with an interlude for schooling at the Christian Brothers' College in Perth, Ronan relates his wandering by horse, mule and pearling lugger, yet incredibly enough one finishes the book not quite recalling where he went, and when and why; there is so much talk, so much detail in between.

The pearling episodes, in the four years when the author was aged sixteen to twenty, are by far the most interesting. "Let them see," said Conrad, and one does see the luggers, blunt-nosed, squat ketches, about forty-five feet in length, twelve in the beam, each with a crew of seven, one diver, one tender and five deck hands. Cooking was done in a fireplace set into the open hold, and crowded quarters made lifetime friends or enemies. There were times when life on board was so boring that a young helmsman had to read the only books on board, a dictionary and Marie Corelli's "The Life Everlasting". Not being able to stomach this he learnt to read it upside down, an art which wiled away many empty hours when the lugger was on

the mud flats, and later, in his droving days, when his father always travelled with Froude's "History of the Tudors".

Tom Ronan's earliest childhood was spent in Derby; the five-year-old joys were to outswear a cocky or tease a brolga, and he knew by the age of six that people, books, and horses were all that mattered. His mother's life was hard, as was the life of all white women in the north-west at that time. She was a woman of courage and laughter with a fine capacity for mimickry, and took for granted the long hours of cooking in the incredible heat over a wood stove in an unlined corrugated iron kitchen. The refrigeration was a Coolgardie safe into whose water tray, in the summer time, swarmed the mosquitoes. "The frogs came looking for them and the snakes came looking for the frogs." However, the Derby housewives baked uncomplainingly for the social and theatrical events and Mrs. Ronan, Snr., called a spade a spade, or mimicked anyone pompous, sometimes to her own detriment. Alas, she died too soon, and Tom Ronan, though later in the book confessing his dislike of women as shared by many Australian men, also like many others makes an exception of his mother. After Mrs. Ronan died, the life went out of the family, father and son taking to the cross country treking with pack horses.

One learns the familiar things of the north, the travelling with what is known as the "plant", the collection of horses, gear and rations. One learns a little of the author's low regard for Aboriginal labor, in caustic, unpopular-making comments, explaining why the Queensland stations are more efficient than those in the Top End of the Territory, because they operate with white labor. "I leave the interpretation of Aboriginal behaviour to that mob of half-baked anthropologists who attend all protest meetings in Melbourne." One learns of Cock-Eyed Bobs, the localised cyclones, of Chinese cooks that worked on most northern stations before the First World War, and of their incredible hours, and of the vegetable gardens they kept. One learns that when the famous line pushing down from Darwin to Pine Creek was extended further south, there were fewer trains. "How much further have they got to extend that bloody line before we get no trains at all?"

With the abundance of good material in this book, one wonders why it fails to satisfy and leaves one empty. The book seems to lack heart, an affirmation of life. "This is how things were, take it or leave it," Ronan seems to say. All the paragraphs of good, honest and occasionally poetic prose are lost in a vast aridity. One hungers for Ernestine Hill's effusiveness in "The Great Australian Loneliness," for Mrs. Gunn's enthusiasm, for Herbert Barker's singular viewpoint in "Camels and the Outback," for Douglas Lockwood's warmth and compassion. What is a book with neither heart nor hope? Or is it that I am a woman, and wouldn't understand anyway this particular expression of a particularly masculine world?

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But Patsy Adam Smith in "Hear the Train Blow" (Ure Smith, 25/-) has written a simple, appealing book full of family warmth.

With her father a fettler and her mother a station-mistress, she grew up right beside the railway track in small towns in Victoria—in such places as Waaia, pronounced Way-Eye, and Quambatook. In general, the family moved every two years, and took their two weeks' vacation travelling anywhere on the trains. The author and her sister talked about the strike, the Casey, and the rattler as other girls would talk about their rolls.

Waaia was north of Shepparton, in the Goulburn Valley, centre of a wheat-growing region, dispatch station for hundreds of thousands of bushels of wheat each year. Between working from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. each day (a station mistress during the Depression earned 15/- a week and a rent-free house; the combined wages were £4 a week), Mrs. Smith turned out meals that made the girls "the best fed children in the district," and the best turned out.

Devout Catholics, they turned up for church in the jinker, driving sometimes on cleared firebreaks beside the railway track to Numurkah, and once a month going to the little "bush" church five miles from Waaia. "It was a square room in the middle of the golden land. It held twenty people on a few long backless stools," but the congregation shared simplicity, belief and hope.

People wanting to know about country life in many parts of Australia could learn much from this book. Into it come the local picnic races and dances, the women baking for days, and then dressing in their best and travelling often, in that time, by cart or jinker through the dust. One learns of the simple games played by children in the "good old days" of train travelling, crossing your fingers when you saw a white horse, only uncrossing them when you saw a white dog. ("Mick travelled from Shepparaton to Spencer Street with her fingers crossed, and Mum only persuaded her to uncross them by saying she could begin at daylight the next day.")

In these affluent sixties it is chastening to read of the Depression that lasted till the war, of suicides and bankruptcies even in Waaia, and of how the author's future brother-in-law lost his finger purposely in a sawmill accident, so he could get the £90 compensation on which to get married. But there is no overly sentimental presentation of the facts, no dwelling on adversity; this is a technically able book, properly tailored; a glad book which tells how you can get an education if you fight and work for it hard enough; and a book of personal loyalty, first to parents and grandparents, then, with the advent of war, to the country.

NEILMA SIDNEY

A Reactionary and a Rascal

For fourteen years after 1822 James Mudie was a substantial landowner in the Hunter Valley of New South Wales. He prospered, was made a magistrate, and became notable for his views on the assignment of convicts and their place, when pardoned, in a society of free men. A self-confessed disciplinarian, Mudie believed in the threefold purpose of transportation: it should punish the convict, it should be profitable to the master and the colony; it should reclaim the convict through "moral restraint and religious impression".

Unfortunately, in Mudie's eyes, the colonial gentry's role as agents for a conservative but vigorous, avenging Christianity, was being subverted by political, social and religious liberalism. Governor Bourke and Chief Justice Forbes were the fountainheads of this dangerous spirit. After Mudie's convicts revolted in 1833 and five of their leaders were hung, the outcry was so great that Bourke ordered an enquiry. Mudie was exonerated

from the charge of cruelty, but the enquiry could not clear him in the popular mind of treating his convict servants and regarding his ex-convict fellow colonists in ways which were out of step with the new spirit: laissez-faire, egalitarian and proto-nationalist. The convicts, replied Mudie, "are even full of high notions of their own dignity". Not more so, however, than Mudie himself, who now pursued his supposed accusers through the courts and in self-righteous pamphlets. Finally, in 1836, Bourke removed his name, with others, from the list of magistrates.

Such was the genesis of Mudie's book "The Felonry of New South Wales" (Lansdowne, 42/-). It was written in England in 1837 as an attack on Governor Bourke's administration which, by encouraging convict insubordination, had "injured his pecuniary interest" and forced him from the colony. Historians know the conflict in which Mudie was involved as the struggle between the emancipists and the exclusives. The publication of Mudie's book should remind us that the fight for the civil and political rights of the ex-convicts was regarded by men on both sides as just a test case. What was at issue was whether "the principles of Reform" which were shaking Britain should be extended to the colony. Mudie, a doctrinaire conservative, was determined that they should not, and in his book he came close to developing an ideology for those in the colonial gentry who agreed with him.

Mudie saw "party politics" arising in the colony. The "liberal faction" endangered both property and respectability because its social base combined free men with the "felonry". This latter term Mudie felt obliged to invent, to distinguish "an **order** or class of persons" including both convicts and emancipists. The interests of the members of the felonry were not as those of other colonists, but were levelling and anti-transportation. Thus their presence in the colony proved the necessity for a sort of colonial exceptionalism. Mudie's argument ran like this: England, although divided into classes, constitutes one society. In New South Wales, on the contrary, as formerly in the West Indian colonies, there exist two castes within the one society. Whereas in the homogeneous English society all classes are subject to the same laws, in a slave or penal colony a separate system of legal restraints must operate to preserve its slave or penal character and its economic advantages for the slave owner or assignee. Further, the legal and other limitations imposed on the slaves or felons presuppose restrictions of a different kind on their masters. As Mudie said: "things which would be unconstitutional in England, are strictly, essentially, and inevitably constitutional in the colony . . . [The] present disposition to the enlargement of popular rights and privileges" could find, therefore, no place in New South Wales.

It should be clear, then, that Mudie's book is not just another in the genre of reminiscences of colonial experiences. Nor, as some reviewers have imagined, is it exclusively concerned with our scandalous convict past. Its real merit as an important statement in a political debate usually treated in non-ideological terms demands an edition in which the editor's introduction and other apparatus will clarify the nature of that debate. The present editor, Mr. Walter Stone, has a less ambitious understanding of his role. He demeans the book by treating it with a mixture of bibliographical and Bill Beattyish relish in his six-page introduction. Further, he appends with the briefest of comments the marginalia which several of those attacked by Mudie (including Bourke) wrote in their copies of his book. This reduces what might be valuable evidence on the attitudes of Bourke, and others, to cryptic curiosities. Finally, there are too many careless misprints in the text.

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In contrast, Noel McLachlan, the editor of "The Memoirs of James Hardy Vaux" (Heinemann, 47/6) has given us a model of how to present early Australiana. Sixty pages of introduction, copious explanatory notes, a chronological outline and some illustrations do adequate justice to Vaux. It is the quality, of course, of Dr. McLachlan's editing which counts; indeed, his introduction could stand on its own as an essay in the change in popular attitudes to criminality in the nineteenth century. His learning is carried with grace and at no time does it overshadow the memoirs themselves. These, with Dr. McLachlan's help, are revealed as a creative work in the picaresque tradition, an imaginative but nearly always factually accurate autobiography, and an important document on the life of the criminal element in Britain and in New South Wales during the industrial revolution.

In a fanciful mood, James Mudie had imagined "Sir Hardy Vaux" as the member for Moreton Bay in the first elected legislature if the felonry triumphed. Poor Vaux never reached or aspired to such eminence (although other emancipists, like William Bland, did). Indeed, according to Dr. McLachlan's evidence, Vaux disappeared from sight after he left prison in Sydney in 1841. (He had first been imprisoned in 1800.) But he had been transported to the colony three times, and in 1817, during his second spell in the colony, had written his memoirs, which were published in England in 1819. If these accomplishments were not unique enough to bring Vaux to Mudie's censorious attention, no doubt he remembered how, in 1827, the editor of the Monitor had used Vaux's dismissal from government service (because ex-convicts were no longer to be tolerated as clerks) to attack the policies of Governor Darling.

But, enough of history: Vaux's memoirs, unlike Mudie's polemics, can be read with pleasure as literature. The absence of excessive moralising sentiment helps in this regard, for Vaux had a remarkably neutral approach to his own career as a petty thief. This throws the story, with its detail of criminal habits and its wide geographical sweep, into greater relief. The conversation and tone of address of the officials and masters with whom Vaux unhappily came into contact is captured, one feels, with some satisfaction.

"A Vocabulary of the Flash Language," compiled by Vaux in 1812 is appended to the memoirs in this edition.

T. H. IRVING

John Manifold—Two Books

John Manifold, widely known as a musician and lecturer, is unsurpassed in his power to awaken in others an interest in the Australian songs. His recent book "Who Wrote the Ballads?" (Australasian Book Society, 25/-) will certainly attract many people, and equally certainly will provoke others to discussion and argument. One may not share all Manifold's opinions, but it is nearly impossible not to be fired by his devotion to the songs and his concern that they remain living

things. In his tales of singers, local and overseas, Manifold makes us vividly aware that our folk-songs belong to everyday life. They are not primarily the preserve of intellectuals, source material for scholars and historians, or even items for concept programs, but rather good companions for the fireside, the walking trip and the car journey. Although Manifold mentions, with a certain amount of sympathy, a jealous and possessive attitude on the part of some traditional singers towards their songs, most people will feel, with confidence, that the ballads belong to all of us, and will hope they become more and more a part of our daily life. The traditional musicians I have met rejoice that the songs and tunes, which nearly died out, are being adopted and revived, even if it is by a generation very different from those who created them.

Often in the book—as I read, for instance, that Harry Power bullied women for meals and told the police where Kelly was hiding—I found myself asking "What is the authority for this?" Only occasionally does Manifold give his source. The publishers claim this book is in line with Russel Ward's "The Australian Legend," but it has none of the careful references and detailed bibliography of the earlier work. Probably Manifold himself did not intend a scholarly but rather a personal approach to his subject. He is a gifted and appreciative musician, who has led a varied life. He may differ from other writers in some of his historical facts; his account of the rise of the ballad form is skimpy and confusing, but when he tells of his own experiences he is rewarding company. The station hands he knew in his childhood in Western Victoria, African villagers singing as they hoed their fields, Russian musicians playing for an exuberant dance for cotton farmers in Uzbekistan are among those who have influenced his outlook and opinions. He is more than a fascinating spinner of tales, though. In his final chapter he discusses popular music and the folk song revival in Australia and also in America, the British Isles, Russia and China, and he says much that is critical and thought-provoking. Shortly after the Russian revolution there was an attempt made to call a proletarian culture into existence by decree; it was a self-conscious move and was not a success. There is lesson here for Australians; speaking of a recent song-writing competition organised by the Sydney branch of the Waterside Workers' Federation, Manifold asks "Is there any guarantee that the rank-and-file of the W.W.F. will endorse the panel's decision? Will anyone give me odds for or against the winning song achieving the status of folksong among the wharfies themselves?" While sympathising with their desire for their own songs, he doubts whether this is the way to get them.

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Surely one way of helping people to create their own music is to see that the best of the past is readily available, and if there is modern work in line with it to make this available too. If enough people play and sing, we will grow the composers. As editor of "The Penguin Australian Song Book" (Penguin Books, 9/6) John Manifold does give us both the old and the new. There are about eighty songs, ranging from those of the convict days to modern ballads by Stan Wakefield and others. Some are newly printed, and others are widely available for the first time. For all the large number of songs the book is handy in size and a practical one for the musician; guitar chords are given throughout. There are several versions of some of the songs. I wonder in a hundred years time whether one of the two tunes for "Waltzing Matilda" will have ousted the other from popular favor or whether by then there will be three or four to choose from. It is a pity that songs like "Barbara Allen" and "The Golden Vanity," of overseas origin but preserved here for over a hundred years, are not yet deemed part of our heritage. The Americans take a broader view of their background.

There are some things in this song-book which I hope will be altered in subsequent editions. It is confusing to have the notes to the songs scattered through the book—they would be handier all together at the end. And could they not be more consistent in detail? For instance, "Moreton Bay" is given a full background and credited to its singer and district, but the whole note to "My Name is Edward Kelly" reads "Collected by the Queensland Folklore Society and published for the first time in the Queensland Pocket Song Book" (where the singer's name is given—but the book is out of print).

MARYJEAN OFFICER

New Zealand Fiction

Australia recently seems to have been paying more attention to New Zealand. First, there was the proposal for a customs union, inspired by the British attempt to enter the common market. Since then, trade talks have taken place, and various newspapers have favored us with New Zealand reports. Not to be outdone, the last Overland published an article asserting New Zealand's sturdy independence, while meanwhile a number of New Zealand books have appeared in local bookshops and under local publishers' imprints.

The best known of the New Zealand writers in this batch is Maurice Shadbolt, whose "Summer Fires and Winter Country" (Eyre and Spottiswoode, 26/6) confirms his reputation. The nine long short stories which make up this collection gently explore the gap between human aspiration and human achievement. The reader sees how "those who through selfishness were incapable of finding peace and beauty would always, in their ugliness, destroy what they could not have," but he is also forced to realise that just as often people destroy their own chances of happiness by their false standards, by their lack of courage, or merely through their inability to face honestly up to what life offers and what it withholds. "If you go after one thing you're always liable to finish up with something else altogether," to quote from the same story.

Yet in attempting to summarise what Shadbolt says we inevitably do him an injustice, for his work is marked by an awareness of the nuances and complexities of human beings which means that the last word can never be said about the most trivial incident. Shadbolt's characters are people whose lives, despite their most determined attempts, will always be ordinary; but although his subject is so often frustration, and although one of his stories is dedicated to Patrick White, he leaves us with the feeling that ultimately there is a value to be found in the ordinary substance of life. His weakness could be that he seeks for this value only in the solitary life of the individual, and society remains an alien and hostile force by which man may be shaped but in whose shaping he has no part. Nevertheless, Shadbolt's is a quiet, honest and above all compassionate talent which moves easily within its chosen limits.

Noel Hilliard, in "A Piece of Land" (Robert Hale, 16/-), displays a similar outlook, although he is perhaps more ready to laugh at life's perversities, more interested in the Maoris, more conscious of society, less concerned with digging down through events until the measure of a man's life is revealed and more concerned with the quick profile which tells us completely one thing about him. His story "Quiet Gent, Refined," will already be familiar to Overland readers, and is illustrative of his talent for the revealing situation. Some of the sketches are little more than a few paragraphs to set the scene and a deft turn at the end to round it off, but the longest, "Friday Nights Are Best," is a sympathetic portrait of two men which also has a lot to say about its author's values. The second part of the book consists of a number of glimpses of Maori life which are entertaining and sympathetic, but go little further than reporting.

But the most original talent to come from the twin islands is Ronald Hugh Morrieson. His first novel, "The Scarecrow," could be dismissed as a picaresque yarn about strange doings in a small town, with the awakening love life and internecine gang warfare of younger adolescents thrown in as background. The story moves with pace and the boys have something of the earthy amorality of the juvenile horrors in Norman Lindsay's "Saturdee". Morrieson even affects the same flash epigrammatic style favored by Lindsay, and a first reading of "The Scarecrow" is likely to leave the impression that it is a book to be enjoyed and then forgotten.

But Morrieson's second novel, "Came A Hot Friday" (Angus & Robertson, 22/6), shows that Morrieson could develop into a major writer. His work has the advantage of entertaining as well as saying something, and so bridges two cultures far more dangerously apart than Snow's. If his first book was his equivalent of "Saturdee," this is "Redheap," but with a far more varied plot and a frank delight in amorous, alcoholic and criminal pastimes in place of the bitter desire to shock the prudish which animates Lindsay's book. The characters are neatly observed but will probably be forgotten by the reader long before the enebriated midnight race in an ancient Packard or the disturbingly truthful account of the progress of a two-day binge. The author manages a complicated plot spread through three different towns, but the finale is perhaps melodramatic and leaves too many ends untied.

The question remains of how much a distinctively New Zealand character can be found in these books. The answer, disappointing to some no doubt, must be, very little. New Zealanders, judged from this sample, seem to share the attitudes of Australians in general to such things as hypocrisy, scabs, the police, booze, women and gambling. There is a similar conflict between city and country, and a similar feeling that the respectable middle class miss out somewhere along the line. On the other hand, there is a more matter-of-fact and human understanding of the Maoris than any Australian writer has shown to the Aboriginals, and an almost poetic feeling for the land, as distinct from the common dream of life on the land, which possibly owes its origin to an environment less hostile to human settlement. An extension of this feeling is the frequent suggestion of a life inherited from and continuous with that of the Maori predecessors. This suggests more about the truth of integration than does the more obvious but more superficial evidence of discrimination and prejudice which can also be seen through these books. In today's world, it is a most hopeful suggestion.

JOHN McLAREN

Book Chronicle

AUSTRALIAN BIOGRAPHY, EXPERIENCE AND RECOLLECTION

John Bechervaise's **Blizzard and Fire** (Angus & Robertson, 27/6) is the first major work to emerge from the Australian Antarctic expeditions of recent years. Told in the form of a series of letters to various friends, the story has the interest of detail and at the same time holds a sense of breadth and beauty.

Other works: Douglas Lockwood's **Crocodiles and Other People** (Rigby, 27/6), a collection of anecdotes of Northern Territory experience; R. H. Conquest's **The Spurs are Rusty Now** (Ure Smith, 22/6), a cross between a biography and a novel, is an account of the life of "the last of the recognised great Queensland horsemen"; Jane F. Harley's **Mantle of Safety** (Hale, 22/6), an account of the Flying Doctor Service by a woman who once worked as a nurse with the Service; and Francis Ratcliffe's **Flying Fox and Drifting Sand** (Angus & Robertson, 25/-), a reprint of one of the enduring classics of Australian experience.

AUSTRALIAN POETRY

The little "Australian Poets" series now being published by Angus & Robertson deserves every encouragement. Each paperback volume contains a selection of the work of a leading poet of the present or past, together with an introduction, biography and bibliography. The whole series has been edited on a high level of competence, and should prove invaluable to the student and to the general reader. Published volumes include (editor's name in brackets): **James McAuley** (author, 6/6); **Mary Gilmore** (Robert D. FitzGerald, 8/6); **Victor Daley** (H. J. Oliver, 8/6); **Judith Wright** (author, 8/6); **Shaw Neilson** (Judith Wright, 8/6); **Bernard O'Dowd** (A. A. Phillips, 7/6).

Ian Mudie's **Favourite Australian Poems** (Rigby, 21/-) is a personal selection of many well-known and well-loved Australian poems which many will be pleased to find between the same covers.

AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

There have been many notable new works and reprints in this field in recent months. An outstanding general survey of the whole south-west Pacific area, with much space devoted to Australia, is C. Hartley Grattan's two-volume work, **The Southwest Pacific to 1900** and **The Southwest Pacific since 1900.** Grattan, an American, has long been recognised as a percipient and informed student of the contemporary Australian scene and its historical setting; his work (published by the University of Michigan at 60/- and 80/-) encompasses a vigorous new general history of Australia, among other things, with many fresh insights and emphases. It also contains valuable bibliographies.

Important documentary material is contained in John Cobley's **Sydney Cove 1789-1790** (Angus & Robertson, 50/-), the "diary of a starving settlement"—a day by day account from contemporary

evidence of the fortunes of the young colony; in Lachlan Macquarie's **Journal of his tours in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land 1810-1822** (Public Library of N.S.W., £4/10/0); and in **Thatcher's Colonial Songs** (S.A. Public Library, 25/-), a reprint of some of the rare and enlivening songbooks of the famous "goldfields minstrel". Two other important reprints are **Settlers and Convicts** (M.U.P., 32/6), the most interesting of all the pioneering books (although his foreword is updated, Professor Manning Clark still perversely queries—by a question mark on the title page—Alexander Harris' authorship of this book); and A. C. V. Melbourne's **Early Constitutional Development in Australia** (University of Queensland, 72/-), a remarkable basic work of Australian scholarship which remains standard in its field though it was first published thirty years ago.

Two competent and interesting local histories remind us how much useful work is now being done in this field. Geoffrey Blainey's **A History of Camberwell** (Jacaranda, 27/6) is a charmingly written story of Melbourne's great middle-class residential suburb; its adroit selection and arrangement of factual material stands in contrasts to W. H. Bossence's **Kyabram** (Hawthorn Press, 42/-), a more stolid and detailed book stuffed full of memorabilia, which make it a work of record rather than interpretation.

Books of more specialised interest include Colin Forster's important study in a neglected corner of Australian economic history, **Industrial Development in Australia 1920-1930** (A.N.U., 45/-); A. T. Yarwood's very timely academic study of White Australia up to 1923, **Asian Migration to Australia** (M.U.P., 55/-); and the third of Gavin Long's contributions to the official war history, **The Final Campaigns** (Australian War Memorial, 35/-).

On a more popular level are Rex and Thea Rienits' **Early Artists of Australia** (Angus & Robertson, £5/5/0), an extensively illustrated account of the professional and amateur artists who have left us such a fine pictorial record of early Australia; Alexandra Hasluck's most pleasantly produced edition of a colonial governor's wife's letters to her son, **Remembered with Affection** (O.U.P., 35/-); Gavin Casey and Ted Mayman's warm and readable history of Kalgoorlie, **The Mile that Midas Touched** (Rigby, 32/6); Henrietta Drake-Brockman's **Voyage to Disaster** (Angus & Robertson, 42/-), the ably written factual background to the same author's novel "The Wicked and the Fair," dealing with the life of Francisco Pelsaert and the wreck of the Batavia on the West Australian coast; **Priceless Heritage** (Platypus Publications, Hobart, 70/-), a charming and inexpensive collection of photographs of many of the old buildings that are Tasmania's glory; and L. J. Blake's **Lost in the Bush** (Whitcombe & Tombs, 7/-), a retelling of the famous story of the children lost for a week in the bush near Horsham (Vic.) one hundred years ago, together with an account of the incident's aftermath.

The Pattern of Australian Culture, edited by an American scholar, A. L. McLeod, sets out to explain "the nature of Australia's cultural ethos" to the world. For this purpose Australian scholars have been asked to write on language, philosophy, science, law and many other subjects. Considering the inherent difficulties in books of this nature, the result is remarkably even. John M. Ward, for instance, has a most useful contribution on "Historiography," in which the major contributions to Australian historical writing over the last 150 years are discussed—for the first time, so far as I know. Russel Ward on "The Social Fabric," John A. Passmore on "Philosophy," Cecil Hadgraft on "Literature" and Edgar Waters on "Recreation" all present material that it is most useful to have available in relatively small compass. While there is a tendency to eschew "judgments" in some cases (in G. W. Bassett's section on "Education," for instance) the collection does have vigor and a useful picture of our contemporary cultural society emerges. **The Pattern of Australian Culture** is published by Oxford University Press and Cornell University Press and costs a modest 60/-.

Also to be noted: George Blaikie's **Scandals of Australia's Strange Past** (Rigby, 29/6), a book of historical reportages strung together from newspaper columns which is not as cheap as its title makes it sound—it lacks any literary graces but is good fun and apparently quite accurate; further items in the O.U.P. series of 'Great Australians' booklets, which include Hazel King on **Richard Bourke** and Michael Roe on **Philip Gidley King** (5/- each); further items in the same firm's "Australian Exporers' series, including Renee Erdos on **Ludwig Leichhardt**, Jean Prest on **Hume and Hovell**, and Louis Green on **Ernest Giles** (4/6 each).

AUSTRALIAN BIOGRAPHY

One of the most notable recent Australian biographies is also one of the smallest—Alan Martin's moving sketch of the character and career of **Henry Parkes** in Oxford's little "Great Australians" series. Other titles (all at 5/-) include Clive Turnbull on Essington Lewis and R. K. Forward on Samuel Griffith, as well as biographies of Tom Roberts, James Stirling, Lawrence Hargrave and others.

Although **Walter Burley Griffin** (University of Queensland, 105/-) was not an Australian, he was closely identified with this country and his biography has now been written by James Birrell. This attractive and well-illustrated book covers Griffin's American practice and his domestic and public work in Australia as well, of course, as the genesis of Canberra.

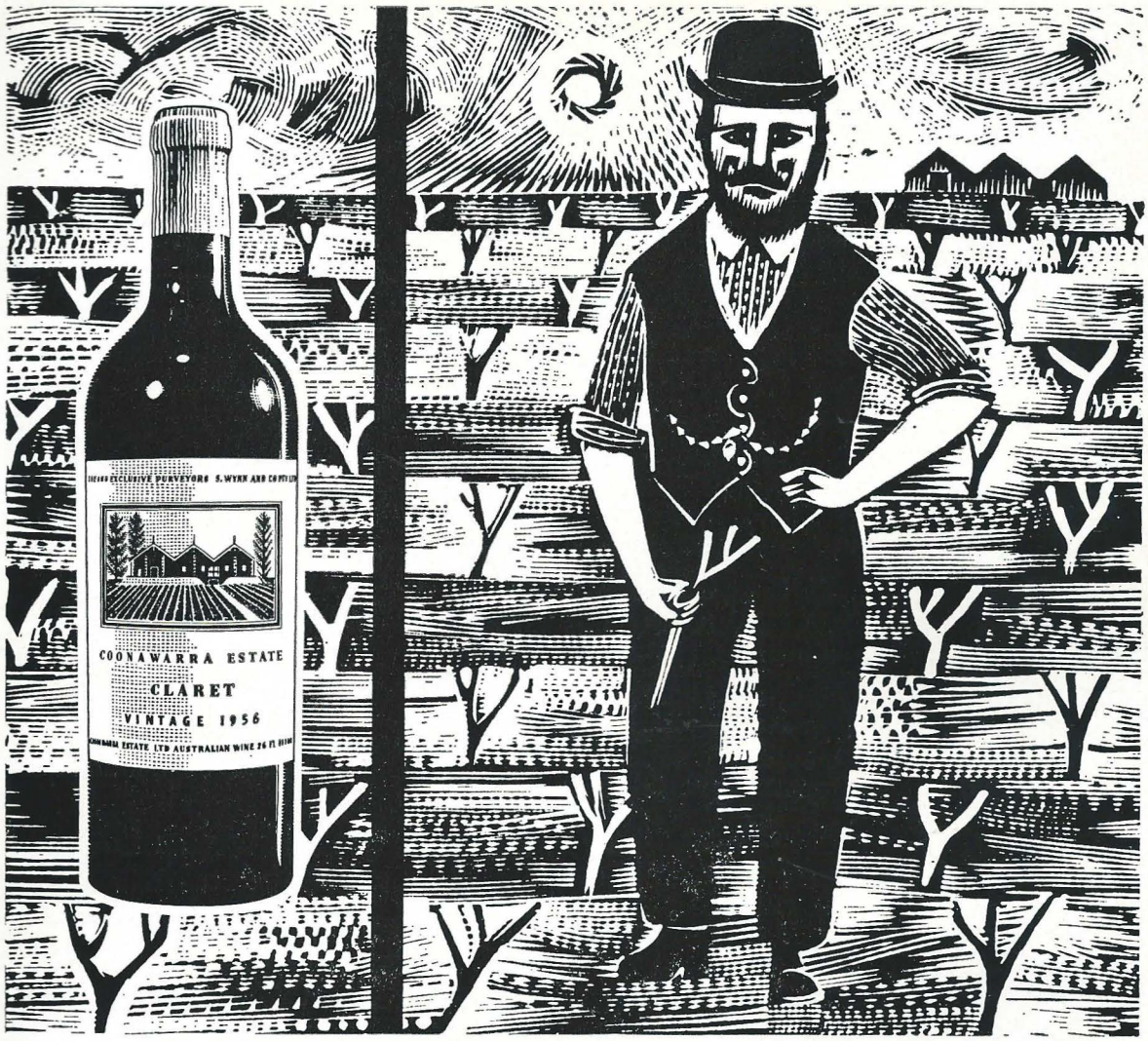
John Hetherington, in **Australian Painters** (Cheshire, 40/-) gives us forty personal sketches, based on interviews, of the lives of contemporary Australian painters; extremely valuable for the detail and documentation they contain, though Hetherington is necessarily guarded as to judgment.

Two valuable research guides in this field are Hugh Anderson's annotated bibliography of **Bernard O'Dowd** (Wentworth Books, 25/-) and Harry F. Chaplin's **A Neilson Collection** (Wentworth Books, 22/6), an annotated catalogue of his extensive collection of printed and manuscript items dealing with the life of John Shaw Neilson.

AUSTRALIAN REPRINTS

Penguin Books have recently published three important books: Martin Boyd's **The Cardboard Crown** (6/-), Robin Boyd's **The Australian Ugliness** (8/6) and Patrick White's **The Aunt's Story** (7/-). Heinemann have reissued Henry Handel Richardson's revealing autobiographical fragment, **Myself when Young** (22/6).

Published by S. Murray-Smith, Mount Eliza, Victoria; and printed by "Richmond Chronicle," 3 Shakespeare Street, Richmond, E.1, Vic.



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