

# OVERLAND

NUMBER FIVE, SPRING 1955

ONE SHILLING



Building Worker.

Pen drawing by David Armfield.

## WRITING BY:

Arthur Phillips, Eric La Motte, Gwen Kelly, Dr. H. V. Evatt, John Manifold, Frank Dalby Davison, Flora Eldershaw, Alan Marshall, Gerry Grant, Vance Palmer, Walter Kaufmann, Russel Ward, A. D. Hope, David Martin, Allan Morris and others.

# OUR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

By Dr. H. V. Evatt

WE must observe closely the practice of using anti-communist slogans to conceal fascist methods. The development is comparatively new. Stefan Zweig triumphantly declaimed in 1936 that the notion of liberty, liberty of individuals and of thought, is now accepted as an "inalienable" maxim by the civilised world. Indeed, the historian, Bury, wrote similarly in 1913 that the fight was won, that the battle for freedom was over . . .

The truth is that the battle for freedom of expression is never won. It has to be fought in every generation. We must win the battle again and again, for we cannot assume that any victory is final.

And freedom of expression is attacked in many ways. The object of such attacks is at times not only to injure the person attacked, but to deter him and others in similar positions from speaking when they believe it to be their duty to speak. Therein lies a special danger to freedom. The result is often to silence critics of the government or of certain activities of government or of individuals. It is so much easier to say nothing. But this result is an evil that no democracy can tolerate. It means that the exercise of the freedom of expression will be stifled, not by any suggestion of breach of law, but by making it known that heterodox opinions will—truly or falsely—be reported and documented and secretly or savagely attacked under protection of privilege . . .

I would like to remind you of two or three sentences from Socrates in his final speech to the judges. After his conviction he had the privilege of choosing the penalty of banishment, rather than death, provided he was willing to give up his right to express his opinions and criticism on matters of public concern. But Socrates rejected all thought of being silenced and chose death rather than silence. "The greatest good of man," he said, "is daily to converse about virtue and all those things concerning which you hear me examining myself and others. The life that is unexamined is not worth living." His final decision was that if he could not be free to debate important public questions affecting the citizens or the state, life would be unendurable. And so he went to his death.

This, then, is the fundamental charter of conduct for all free men. It is not enough that the legal right of criticism theoretically exists. The right must be exercised or true freedom will become atrophied. Interference with freedom by bearing down on dissent, and by monopolising the organs of mass communication, has increased, is increasing and ought to be diminished. The teacher at Sydney University, who refused to become an informer against his colleagues, and who publicised the attempt to seduce him, showed courage. University teachers everywhere should cease to speak of freedom as an abstract legal right. They should speak up and

speak fearlessly. Courage is the thing. And only courage in exercising freedom of expression will save that fundamental right . . .

I wish to stress again that there is no law of the land which prevents the free expression of opinion. The principle is that truth and falsehood must grapple and, as Milton so optimistically maintained, truth should not be worsted in a "free and open" encounter. But the encounter must be both "free"—and "open." I return to the point that the free life of a democratic nation is endangered when, for one reason or another, people become disinclined to speak up and speak out. The plain fact is that public abuses can only be remedied by courageous speaking out.

Let us never forget Castellio's heroic intervention against Calvin after the judicial murder of Servetus. Every humanist and every scholar knew that Castellio was right. They knew that Calvin had committed a crime against humanity, an intolerable injustice, and the humanists and scholars of the age foresaw that disaster must arise from the brutal suppression of ideas. Yet they dared not themselves openly fight for the truth. According to Zweig they exchanged touching and admirably written letters. But they did not come into the open to fight. "Erasmus ventured now and again to shoot a few arrows from his ambush; Rabelais used fierce laughter as a scourge; Montaigne wrote eloquently of the matter; but none struck open blows to prevent infamous persecutions and executions. Rendered cautious by experience, they said that a sage could find a better occupation than attempting to control a mad dog; it was the sensible man's part to keep in the background lest he himself should become a victim." Self-censorship of that kind has no place in our free society and it should be severely censured if it arises. Injustice must be uncovered by open and frank discussion, which is the very foundation of our hard-won freedom.

What is wanted in Australia today is not so much the sublime self-sacrifice of men like Servetus and Castellio as the simple manliness to speak up and speak out whenever there is injustice or oppression.

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## DAME MARY GILMORE

For New Australia, sixty years gone by,  
You battled in the wilds of Paraguay;  
And still today your undefeated pen  
Renews Australia in the hearts of men.

J. S. MANIFOLD.



She—whom we love—she has lived for ninety years,  
She shall live **more!**—for wisdom and for song.  
Poets whom the gods love die with early tears;  
Those whom the people love live rich and long.

MUIR HOLBURN.

# THE LUNCH HOUR

by Eric La Motte

THE lunch whistle's deafening blast penetrates every corner of the building job. But, for once, no one claps his hands over his ears to protect them. Its harsh scream is welcomed, for it heralds relief from a morning so hot that several of the laborers have blistered their hands on the girders. The carpenters carefully put their tools down and the first are on their way down the stairs before the whistle has finished blowing. Everyone is eager either to get up to the pub or have a cup of tea in the lunch room.

Danny is last, as always. When he reaches the stairs he looks back to find out what is keeping the laborers and sees them still concreting. Plugger Wilson, the leading hand, has taken advantage of none of them having a watch and brought over another load at two minutes to twelve. Bits of concrete spray everywhere from their hurrying shovels and there is not one who does not silently curse him.

Danny has lived through three depressions, served in one war and lost a son in the other. At 74 the only reminder of what he was once like are his soft, twinkling eyes which are accentuated by a tired, drooping mouth and the weather marks on his face. He sings out to Big Jim, one of the concrete gang, "Big pay this week! You chaps can't stop hogging that overtime, can you?"

But Big Jim, always as temperamental as a prima donna, is not in the mood for banter just now. He stops prodding with his shovel for a moment, wipes the sweat from his eyes, spits out a mixture of saliva and concrete from his mouth and promptly growls back: "Get off me shadow, you old bastard! I've already got Plugger standing there and you're crowding him." He then savagely attacks the job in front of him and, shortly, they are finished.

The laborers rush off but the leading hand remains behind to do unnecessary tidying up. He is flattered that the men think him a slave driver and, when the foreman walks over, he tells him the story. The foreman laughs appreciatively and Plugger purrs with pleasure.

The foreman, taking advantage of the situation, puts his arm around Plugger's shoulder and adopts a matey attitude.

"I'd like you to concrete as far as the fourth column this afternoon instead of the third. Do you reckon we might be able to go that far, Jack?" he asks, softly pronouncing his first name.

"Easily, Bill," he replies. "I can easily do that much extra."

"I knew I could rely on you, Jack. You're my best leading hand. Not like that other bloke on the pathological block," he continues in a sneering tone of voice. "You can't leave him alone without he's putting the stairs in upside down or bolting a girder up to the crane box."

Plugger laughs at the joke and the foreman smiles. He has suddenly remembered having said exactly the same thing about Plugger to the "other bloke" only last week. "But it always brings results," he thinks to himself, not without pride.

Plugger feels in his pocket to see if there is enough money there to invite Bill down for a drink. There is, and they go off together.

Every man has his own private posy in the lunch room. There is very little trespassing, for

each is used to his neighbors and the view from his seat, and would feel peculiar sitting anywhere else.

Everyone has just settled down when Tom enters. No billy boy can ever brew his tea exactly right, so he prefers to make it himself. He goes to take up his usual seat on the far side of the table, but the previously arrived carpenters have blocked it off. In his larrikin days Tom would have simply tramped across the table, oblivious of the wet concrete on his boots, but being shop steward on this and several other jobs has sobered him down a lot. Instead he eases his bullock-sized body through the narrow space between the carpenters and the wall, all the while chyacking them about the space they take up and how fat they're getting. When he gets to his seat his first action is to pour himself a cup of tea, strong and unswweetened like himself. He follows this up with a second and a third.

There is silence for a while, broken only by the sounds of eating and drinking, and soon you can begin to hear the birds in the park across the road. But the quiet is too unnatural to last for long. Noise and rowdiness are more a part of this room than the roof.

"By cripes," says one of the carpenters a few minutes later, "Plugger really sweated you laborers this morning. You'd never dream the old coot was only a battler like the rest of us. He must have shares in the firm, or something."

On hearing Plugger's name, Big Jim drops his cup with a crash and pushes his sandwiches away from him. "Now you've spoilt me dinner for me," he groans.

There is something of the child about Big Jim which makes him express himself in extremes like this. Rumor amongst the men has it that he got one punch too many in his boxing days. Jim strides to militant heights while talking but, when it comes to deeds, he is weak, helpless, pitiable and more like a child than ever. He is liked by the men however, who forgive the bad in him because of his wit and frequent large-heartedness.

Tom glances up from his Sporting Globe after this outburst of Jim's and says with deceptive innocence: "I thought you two were mates?"

"Well, you know I'm always the last person to roast anyone," replies Jim self-righteously, "but . . ."

Jim then spends five minutes giving his opinion of Plugger. He winds up by saying: "There are only twelve bastards in this world and he's all twelve of them!" He spits out this last twelve as if it is a curse.

The men greet Jim's anger with cries of delight, the more so because all of them, except Snooperman (so called because he is a third ear for the boss), agree with every word he has said.

Snooperman goes to take another bite from the plate lunch which he has brought from home and carefully warmed up in the pie heater, but, on hearing Plugger being thus abused, he quickly puts it down and rushes to his defence.

"Plugger's still one of the best leading hands in the game though," he protests. "I wouldn't have his job on for the lousy extra thirty bob he gets."

"Huh," snorts Big Jim. "Considering the little he does I'd take it on for thirty bob a week less."

That Plugger's about as useful as a publican without beer."

The men laugh, and, warming to his audience, Jim continues. "One of these days that old coot's going to stand on my shadow once too often and then so help me I'll . . ."

"What's wrong with this afternoon?" butts in one of the laborers, goading him on.

"Right!" says Big Jim. "Right! If he steps out of line once this afternoon I'll job him one. Just once, that's all. I will," he affirms, sensing the good humored scepticism of the men.

Danny, previously quiet, now speaks for the first time. "You know," he says, "I was a leading hand carpenter on the first building job Plugger ever did. He was only 22 or so at the time." His words come slowly. He has so many memories, most of them half-forgotten, that he has difficulty in untangling one thread from all the rest.

"You know how you sometimes take an instinctive dislike to someone?" he asks after a while.

There are a chorus of "Yes's" and "I'll says" in answer, mingled with a few quick, sharp glances thrown at Snooperman.

"Well," he says, "it was just like that with Plugger. Even then he had that sneaky look on his face that always seems to contradict what his mouth says. On top of that he was dirty and unwashed."

Danny's tired, sagging mouth suddenly smiles and, for a second, it matches the youthfulness of his eyes. He has just found the memory he has been searching for.

"Once there," he reminisces, "he came to me and dobed in one of the carpenters for talking. Later he pimped on an old laborer for pinching firewood. Gradually he got worse. Then, when he found out I'd told the shop steward all about him, do you know what he went and did?"

"What do you think we are, mind readers?" asks Big Jim impatiently. They all strain forward eagerly to hear the rest.

"He bunged me into the foreman for being too light on the men." His voice becomes excited. "When I found out I picked him up with one hand and un-ended him into a hopper full of water." He looks at his frail, wrinkled hands. "I used to be a champion athlete in those days."

The men laugh at Plugger's fate and Big Jim roars appreciatively. "You old bastard! I wish I could have seen it," he states with relish.

Danny has lost track of the conversation by now. He is reliving the past again and the other men might as well not be there. "Young Plugger never had a chance," he says, more to himself than anyone. "His father was a drunkard." His voice rises in a crescendo of fury. "He scabbed on my father in 1886, the rat!"

Danny is feeling very weary. He goes over to the impossibly narrow seat behind the door and curls up there as comfortable as the stifling heat and his own long, lanky form will allow. Two of the apprentices begin to torment him by eternally banging the door, but Big Jim, who likes the old chap in his own way, soon fixes them.

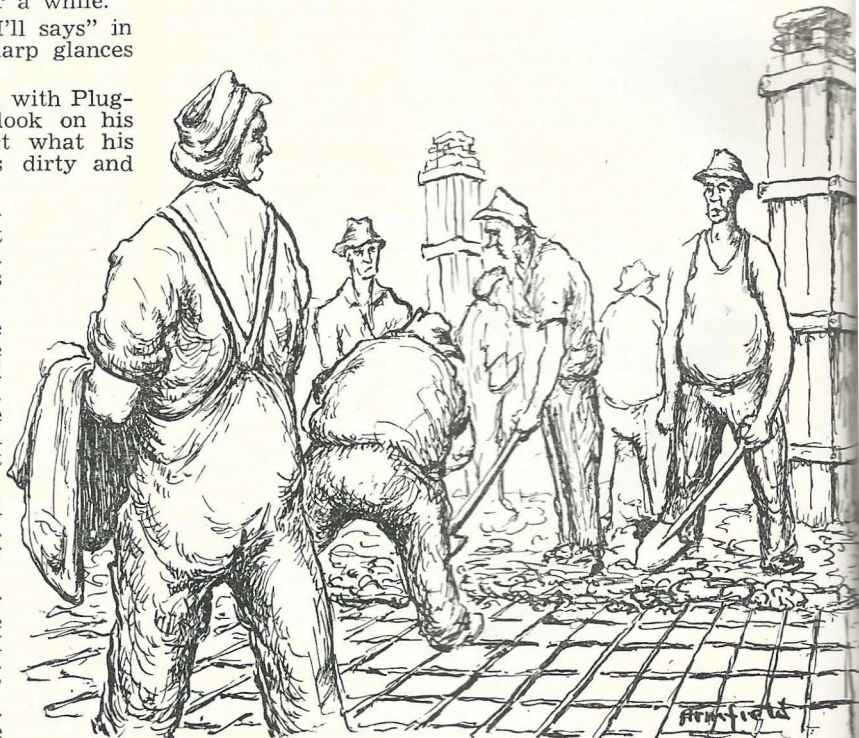
"Anyone," bellows he, after standing up so that his dominant six foot two becomes frighteningly apparent, "Anyone who offends Danny offends me. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Jim," say the two apprentices.

No other word is necessary. They get such a shock they immediately leave the hut under the pretence of going to the lavatory.

Danny's gentlemanly snore now becomes constant and melts into all the other noises in the room. Some of the men start discussing their gardens and another group begin arguing heatedly about the favorite's chances next Saturday but, when Tom speaks, all this conversation stops. He commands this respect because his leadership has gained the men several victories. His being the best laborer on the job also helps.

"I was part of a mob that turned up in answer to an ad. on one of Plugger's jobs during the depression," he says. "We were just cattle to him. He looked at our muscles and picked out the six strongest who didn't belong to the union. I was one of those six," he says shamefacedly. "He put us on to wheeling concrete."



Tom prefers talking to someone definite instead of a crowd, so he turns his attention to the youngster beside him. "You know, young'n," he says, "I can still see Plugger standing there with a little bag of silver in his hand." His voice becomes bitter as he remembers the humiliation. "Every time we pushed the barrows past him he'd jingle that money under our noses. 'Right, youse bludgers!' he'd roar in our ears, 'if you don't want to work I've got your money right here.' He didn't miss shaking that bag once. I longed to take a sock at him, but this was my first job in six months and I had the family to think of. We were the mice beneath his cat's paw. He'd taunt us by singing out, 'There are plenty more eager to take your place if you don't want to work'."

"And," continues Tom, "he was dead right."

"We cleaned up that concreting before 9 a.m. only to get the arse just as Plugger had intended from the first. He told us that if we cared to come back next week, there might be another couple of hours' work going."

"None of us knocked him down for tricking us," he adds apologetically. "Who knew whether those extra few hours mightn't be our only chance to give the nippers a break from porridge and bread-and-dripping?"

At this moment Plugger enters. "Phwww! she's hot outside!" he exclaims. "I've just had a chicken counter lunch and a couple of pots up at the pub." He looks at Tom's billy. "Got any left?" he asks.

Before Tom can pour out a cup, Plugger has taken the billy and is drinking from it. Little streams spill over the edges and run down his face and clothes. Tom, who still hasn't calmed down after reliving his depression experiences, grabs the billy back. He opens his mouth to let out a stream of curses but, by a supreme effort, controls himself. As shop steward he can't afford to let Plugger provoke him. "Hey! I've got to use that," he says instead.

Tom picks up a cup, still greasy and covered with noodles from the packet soup it had contained yesterday, and gives it to him. "Drink out of this," he says.

Plugger wipes the cup against his sweaty elbow and fills it with tea which he polishes off with great zest. Afterwards, like a bolt from the blue, he says: "Bill wants us to concrete as far as the fourth column this afternoon."

He notices the stunned expression this brings to the concrete gang's faces. Tom is smiling as if he understands his duplicity. This smile of Tom's never ceases to surprise him for, despite his scabby past, he fondly believes that he is popular with the men.

"I'm just as hopping mad as you blokes are," he protests. "I told him straight! That's more than we can do," I said. "But it didn't do any good. I wanted to shoot through early this afternoon, too."

Plugger lies convincingly and, but for his eyes, which shy away from the men's faces as if they are the sun, he would have been believed. He tries to think up some way of popularising the foreman's demand, but cannot.

"Well," he says, dropping his facade and adopting instead the blustering tone he generally does when he hasn't got a leg to stand on. "Well, you'll just have to pull your socks up, that's all. The fourth column's not that far."

"We can get it done easily," he concludes with a magnificent disregard for probability.

The start whistle shrieks down from the amplifier up in the girders and Plugger is out of the door almost before it has begun. This time the whistle seems to blow twice as long and hard. To the men it is a symbol and each privately vents against it his feelings about the foreman, Plugger and the long afternoon ahead. The whistle finally stops, but the men can still hear it in their ears ten or fifteen seconds later.

The carpenters gather their lunch utensils together, stretching out every little action in the process, even inventing new ones; doing anything that will serve to ward off, for a few seconds more, the hot, cruel, dragging afternoon that lies ahead. But, at last, no more excuses remain so they depart, waking up and taking Danny with them as they go.

The concrete gang go to throng out, too, but seeing Tom stretch his legs under the table and shift his body to a more comfortable position, they hesitate questioningly.

"Park your khybers," Tom says. "Plugger rung that last load in on us before lunch. We've got another seven minutes coming to us yet."

Snooperman stands for a moment, undecided who to support, and then walks out defiantly. He is already afraid of being connected with the dinner hour's conversation and is not going to further endanger his chances of a position on the perm-

ament staff. Big Jim also wavers and looks at the men to see where the strength lies. But the men, who know his form from previous experiences, tell him what he'd better do if he knows what's good for him, and he sits down too.

No one cares for the couple of minutes, but lately the laborers have been straining at the leash to have a go at Plugger and, now their opportunity has come, they are like schoolboys at a picnic. But underneath flows a torrent of bull-headed protest. The room is charged with suspense as the laborers await the leading hand's reaction.

Plugger storms back into the hut like a tornado ready to cut down all before it. Snooperman follows at his heels but stays outside the door so that Plugger will stand as a barrier between him and his workmates. Before he has entered the room the leading hand is shouting at the men.

"Hey, get a move on! That's a long stretch we've got to do this afternoon." His mouth twists to utter a threat, but his eyes catch Tom's expression and they shy up to the ceiling. Though rumor has it that Tom has quietened down since the day he got three months for socking a foreman, Plugger is not so sure.

He looks around at the men's firm, resolute faces. "The trouble with you laborers is you're too damn independent!" he rants. "I wish I had you back under me in the depression days. My God, I'd make you work! There's not one of you worth a pinch of salt, not one of you." He checks himself, however, not wishing to lose such a good concrete gang.

"All right, take your seven minutes," he blusters. "But don't make a welter of it," he adds as a face-saver and departs.

Snooperman, whose heart has sunk like lead to his boots after seeing the men's loathing for him, quickly follows after the leading hand.

Big Jim, eager to draw attention away from his recent wavering, solemnly pipes in with an unprintable witticism casting doubt on Plugger's parentage. The tension that has been building up now eases. The men rock with mirth at Jim's joke and, above the laughter, of which Jim's is the loudest, someone says: "I say, Tom, Plugger's certainly changed since you worked for him during the depression."

The conversation is sharply cut into by a second blast from the whistle, thus preventing Tom from replying. The men look at one another in surprise.

"Plugger's taking no chances on our overstaying our seven minutes," laughs Tom.

They leave the hut and, as they pass the timekeeper's office, Tom notices the clock which shows not quite five past. Plugger has got the timekeeper to blow the whistle early. The men, seeing Plugger still inside the office, angrily crowd around the door eager for a showdown with him. When the foreman sees them he starts blustering to cover up for his being caught red-handed.

He has never tried to adjust himself to the fact that these are no longer the depression days and now he finds it almost impossible. This time, however, he has no choice and unwillingly he stops his abuse. There is going to be enough trouble during the afternoon over the amount of concreting required without making more. He glowers at the men, but their look of strength and unity hurts his eyes, forcing him to turn his head away. He rushes past the laborers and up the stairs, a mixture of frustration and pent-up fury.

Tom turns to the man who was speaking to him previously and says: "Yeah. Yeah, Plugger's changed."

"But only because we've made him," he adds and sits down to await the passing of the next two minutes.

# NETTIE and VANCE PALMER

## NETTIE PALMER

As with Vance, Nettie Palmer celebrated her seventieth birthday last August, and she wears her years as lightly as possible. They have brought her a mature wisdom and judgment, an amazing knowledge of Australian writing and writers, but they have not in any way dimmed her enthusiasm, her wit, her zest for the rich feast of life.

For countless people Nettie Palmer has been a constant source of help and encouragement. Her pen has been busy to welcome a newcomer to the literary world, and her generous words always brought reassurance and fresh encouragement. I remember to this day the warm glow her first letter, written when our first book appeared, brought me. Nettie has kindled such a glow in many hearts. Young people, in whom her sympathetic and discerning eye detects promise for the future, are the particular beneficiaries of her interest. Exiles from Continental Europe have been helped to feel at home in Australia without having to relinquish their own cultural heritage. Nettie's familiarity with many languages and literatures have made her eager and quick to respond to their special needs.

Her published books show something of the variety of her interests, but rather in the fashion of a great iceberg of which the part above the surface is only about an eighth of the immense mass below the waterline. People who love her and cherish her gifts often try to save her from the incessant calls on her time, but it is an impossible task. She responds so readily and fully to demands on her for a talk or speech or for her presence at commemorative or other occasions that her time is filled to overflowing.

Nettie Palmer's direct contributions to Australian writing tot up to a considerable bulk. Her book on Henry Handel Richardson is a notable piece of understanding literary criticism, as is her **Bernard O'Dowd**, but they are only a part of her contribution to these writers' impact on Australian life and letters. They emerge not from a special ad hoc study but from an intimate knowledge born of long association and understanding. Her writings include the long biographical study of her uncle, Henry Bournes Higgins, the eminent judge who presided over the formative years of the Arbitration Court, two volumes of poetry, **The South Wind** and **Shadowy Paths**, several volumes of essays, and **Fourteen Years**, a volume of selected extracts from her diaries during the years 1926-1939.

But her published work represents only the fringe of the material stored in Nettie's mind, in her diaries over the years, in her immediate jottings of conversations that seemed to her significant, in her amazing files of correspondence.

Australian writers have been extraordinarily fortunate in having so gifted, lovable, and generous a woman in their midst. Nettie's life has been in effect dedicated to the service of Australian literature, as writer, as critic, and as literary historian, and above all as guide, philosopher and friend.

I am fortunate in having this opportunity given by **Overland** to pay on its behalf this short and wholly inadequate tribute to Nettie Palmer for all her work for Australian letters. May her next seventy years afford her time enough to use the rich stores of memories from the first seventy, and to gather further stores for new generations to use.

—Flora Eldershaw.

## VANCE PALMER

It was at the end of a recent luncheon at a cafe in Melbourne. The guests were preparing to depart. Stephen Murray-Smith took me by a lapel and drew me into a corner. "Vance Palmer will be 70 this year," he said with an air of grave responsibility. "Would you do a piece for **Overland** to mark the occasion?" Gravity is catching on top of claret—especially when you know that kindly intention lies behind it—and I gravely promised. But now, alone with my typewriter—and not a drop of claret to cheer me—it seems a ridiculous promise to have made. Why should public notice be taken of a man's 70th birthday, any more than of his 35th or 47th? The mere hypnotism of round numbers, I suppose.

Palmer, like most writers, began his literary career as soon as he was old enough to sit up and look around him. In the years since then he has given us—of works admitted to the canon—nine novels, **Hurricane**, **The Man Hamilton**, **Men are Human**, **The Passage**, **Daybreak**, **The Swayne Family**, **Legend for Sanderson**, **Cyclone**, **Golconda**; four volumes of short stories, **The World of Men**, **Separate Lives**, **Sea and Spinifex**, **Let the Birds Fly**; two volumes of verse, **The Forerunners**, and **The Camp**; a three-act play, **Hail Tomorrow**; four one-acters under the title, **The Black Horse**; and four books of belle lettres, including **National Portraits**; a monograph on Furnley Maurice; an anthology of the critical writings of A. G. Stephens with foreword; a collection of the letters of Louis Esson with preface, under the title, **Louis Esson and the Australian Theatre**; and a considerable amount of literary journalism of the better kind.

This is a very substantial body of work, and examination of it soon discloses that his industry has been justified by the abilities brought to it. To my mind the outstanding quality of Palmer's fiction is its social range, his capacity to create humanly valid characters in any walk of Australian life between a musterers' camp and the social upper crust of a capital city, together with the characteristics they unwittingly share and the tensions between them. It is done with simplicity and ease, and is worth remarking because social range is more often attempted than achieved among novelists in any country at any time. If anyone, in a couple of hundred years, wants to share vicariously in Australian life as lived in the first half of this century, he will find Palmer's writings a lot of help, and the bloom on Palmer's prose should make his undertaking a pleasant one.

So Vance Palmer is 70 this year? Well, well! He has just attended the World Peace Assembly at Helsinki as an Australian delegate. His most recent book of short stories was published just a few weeks before he left. There is a new novel well on the way and, now he is back from Europe, he will presumably take up all his usual activities. What are we to do—except wish him Many Happy Returns?

—Frank Dalby Davison.

# The Birthday

by Gwen Kelly

THE fly buzzed around the old schoolroom, looking for windows. John Weston watched it idly, while the class in front of him struggled with a board full of arithmetic. He took out his handkerchief and wiped the sweat that was beginning to trickle down his forehead. Sydney could be hot in spring, damn hot. The fly circled the room, banging against the light, the blackboard, the walls in its fruitless search for windows. No wonder it couldn't find them. There they were, six feet above the desks, a line of dusty glass perched along the picture rail, too high for any present-day cleaner to worry about. John looked at the boys bent over the ancient desks in this school constructed well before the end of Victoria's reign. What an edifice it was, three solid stories, red brick outside and green painted brick inside. Diamond Street School! Somehow, when he had seen it printed on his appointment sheet, it had suggested light and cleanliness, a place that sparkled. He soon found the reality did not sparkle. The front doors of the school opened right on to Diamond Street itself, a dusty, concrete footpath and a dusty asphalt road up which the oldest trams in Sydney trundled every quarter of an hour. John looked at the windows and imagined the scene beyond them, the dirty pocket handkerchief playground, asphalted like Diamond Street, the stringy line of peppercorn trees dividing the primary section from the infants, the trees that harbored a profusion of emperor gum caterpillars. John's eyes wandered over the class. He wondered how many squashy, brilliant grubs were residing in their pockets at that moment.

"Get on with your work, Anderson," he yelled at one grubby form before turning back to his own work.

His head ached with the heat. The characteristic odor of small boys wafted up to his nostrils. God, how they smelt. He took out his handkerchief again, rewiped his brow and looked down at the lines of figures in front of him. Thank heaven the list showing the correlation of age with I.Q. test was nearly completed. They were not an imposing list: Anderson I.Q. 80, Johnson 101, Burt 97, Lancaster 110, Williams 103, Caesar 60. John glanced at him, a big, shambling, bullet-headed youth who was now gazing vacantly at the board, his hands busy under the desk with a piece of string.

"Have you finished, Caesar?" he asked with inner sorrow and amusement.

"All I can do, sir."

"All right, take out your magazine and read it until the rest are ready . . ."

Austin 120, a possible High School boy there, probably the best in the class next to Martin Cooper. What was his I.Q.? John ran his finger down the list only to find the space was vacant. The result of the test, an excellent one, was recorded, but the boy's age was missing. John took out his roll. The age would be there and he need not interrupt the boy. There they were: Anderson 13, Austin 12, Burt 12, Caesar 14, Cooper —. Apparently it had never been filled in. Perhaps he had been absent at the time.

"Cooper," called John, "What's your age?"

The boy looked up. To John's surprise, he colored slightly.

"Eleven or twelve, sir; something like that. I know I'm about the same as Betty Crawford and she's just twelve."

John, startled, looked at the small figure standing stiffly beside his desk. The open-necked shirt was clean but patched, as were the navy-blue pants. John was aware that his bare feet were covered with the dust of a hundred city footpaths but he always tried to ignore such details. As long as they came to school with clean hands and faces and tidy hair, he could not ask for more.

"I'm sorry, Martin," he said, using the Christian name deliberately, "but I have to know exactly. When was your birthday? What year were you born?"

The color in the boy's face deepened.

"I don't know, sir."

Remorse swept over John Weston as he thought back with shame to a childhood in which parties with cakes, balloons and presents were a regular feature. He remembered there were seven in Martin's family and they all slept in the one room, four pretty girls with blue eyes and Hollywood blond curls, and two other boys, aged about seven and fifteen. In addition there were mother, grandma, Auntie Flo and father, who fortunately was always departing on mysterious trips "to the country." John had found in Martin Cooper a response lacking in the rest of the class. In spite of his early resolves never to have a favorite, he liked Martin better than the others. Whilst most of them exchanged caterpillars, Martin would debate with him the pros and cons of Charles I's execution.

In time, John had lent him books, simple enough tales, but new to the boy whose home held nothing of this kind. On one occasion he had forgotten to bring a volume promised for the week-end and the boy, obviously disappointed, had asked to come home with him to get it. Although he suspected no-one would worry, John had insisted on first getting his mother's permission and had walked home with Martin for that purpose. He remembered the dirty lanes, spattered here and there with dying cabbage leaves and an occasional dead cat. They had come finally to a grey, paling fence, characteristic of the backyards of suburban Sydney, at the bottom of which was a hole about half the size of a normal gate.

"Lucky you're not tall," the boy had said, "or you wouldn't fit. Mum had to change grocers 'cos Mr. Hurly got too fat and wouldn't bring them in after he got stuck."

"What about the front door?" John had asked.

"We ain't got no front door," the boy had replied. "That belongs to Mrs. Summers. We rent the back rooms. She'd let us use the front, only there's too many kids and we muck up the hall."

John had squeezed through the hole into one of the tiniest backyards he had ever seen. To his horror, halfway through he was confronted by a full-size Alsatian who insisted on licking his face as he wriggled along. Martin had apparently sensed by the tenseness of his master's rear that something was wrong and explained hopefully:

"That's Rover, he won't hurt you. He's a beauty. Mr. Collins gave him to Walter when Rainbow didn't win the Metropolitan."

"Walter?" John had queried, straightening himself with difficulty; "he's only seven."

"That's right, but he's the S.P. bookie around here. Youngest one in the district. You can't trick Wally as a rule. He oughtn't to have taken a bet from Collins without getting the money first. He spends it all on drink. But he did and when the horse lost, Collins couldn't pay of course, so Dad told Wally to settle for the Alsatian."

John had found Mrs. Cooper a little, tired woman, pretty in the same doll-like way as the girls. When they came in she was busy stitching what looked like two old coats together.

"Dad left for the country again this mornin'," she had shouted across the wireless where Grandma and Walter had their ears glued to the race prospects for Hawkesbury.

"'E took the blankets this time, so I'm tryin' to run up a couple."

As John looked at the red-faced boy in front of him, he could well believe he had never had a birthday.

"That's OK, Martin," he said, "just check with Mum, will you?"

★

John was glad when the lunch bell rang, even though he'd have to spend his lunch hour with the head, going over the recommendations for secondary school. The head always told each child the proposed recommendation so that the parents could protest if they wished before the final selection was made.

In the corridor John almost fell over a small girl, very gay in a scarlet jumper and purple skirt. "You should be careful, Iris," he said, picking her up. "I might have hurt you."

"Oh sir, I just couldn't see where I was going. I'm that excited. I got a new Uncle Bill. 'E came last night."

John recovered manfully. As far as he could remember, this was Iris' sixth Uncle Bill.

"That's nice Iris, but where do you fit him?"

John knew only too well the Fentons had eight children and three beds.

"Oh sir. 'E just sleeps in the bed downstairs. Bobby and me are up on top now. It's beaut. Look 'e gave me two bob."

John gave up trying to work it out.

"That's great," he said simply and pushed on past the milling children to the head's office.

Mr. Stanley was old. In five years he would retire, but he was still active, too active for John's liking. He would have called it interfering.

"The problem's pretty simple," he was saying, "we'll recommend Caesar and perhaps Anderson for an opportunity class."

"Personally," said John, "I think Caesar needs a special school, not a special class."

"No doubt, no doubt," said the head, "but he'll leave in a year, so why bother? He'd have to travel to a special school and his parents won't come at that. Couldn't expect them to."

"All right," said John. He knew by now it never paid to argue. "What about the rest?"

"Quite simple, my boy, quite simple. All to tech. except Austin. We'll put him up for High.

"Austin's not as clever as Cooper."

"No doubt, no doubt. But he has more money. High school requires money, my boy, whatever you think. Some sort of background. Cooper has none."

"But he's clever," said John. "Much cleverer than Austin. I've even persuaded him to try a little verse and he likes it. Paterson and Lawson. Nothing involved, but it's a start."

The head smiled indulgently.

"My dear boy, what's the use of Paterson or Lawson to Cooper. He needs a trade. He's not

going to get that from three years' High School."

"He might get a bursary, go on to his Leaving. He's keen to try."

Stanley took off his glasses and wiped them carefully with his handkerchief.

"You had no right to mention it to him," he said. "He goes to the tech., unless his parents demand a High and they won't. They want him to earn a living and in their circumstances they're quite right."

"Am I supposed to concur with that decision?" said John stiffly.

"Yes," said Stanley. "My recommendation overrides yours. It would help," he added more gently, "if it came from you, too. A school needs to pull together. The children know where they are then."

He looked at John, at the lines of disapproval on the young face. Suddenly he turned his back and walked to the window.

"I'm not as hard as you think, Mr. Weston. I was young once, too. I thought like you. I sent a boy like Cooper to High School. During the depression he was out of work. He left at the Inter., took a junior clerical job. His elder brother became a successful bookie, his younger brother a well paid plumber. I met Peter once. He blamed me. If your Cooper boy's got what you think, he'll make through on his own account. There's always night school, you know."

"He won't," said John. "It's too hard."

"Then it's too hard anyway."

Stanley put on his glasses and turned back from the window.

"Well here's the list, Weston. Tell the boys this afternoon, and, by the way, I'd like your program by the end of the week."

"Yes sir," said John. He turned stiffly and walked to the door.

"By the way," the head's voice called after him, "did you know the Fentons had a new Uncle Bill? Mrs. Fenton was up to see me about Billy this morning. Apparently Bobby and Iris are going to sleep upstairs now and Mrs. Fenton has moved into the bed downstairs."

John felt himself relax as he began to laugh.

"So has Uncle Bill," he said.

He could still hear Stanley's laughter when he reached his own room.

★

"Anderson, we recommend you for the 07 class here. Your mother will receive a note to that effect; Austin, High School; Burt, Diamond Street Tech.; Caesar, the 07—you'll get a note too—yes Cooper, what is it?"

Martin struggled to his feet, obviously excited.

"I found out, sir, I found out."

"Found out what?"

"My birthday, sir; it's either the 18th July or the 25th August. Grandma says it was the day Gold River won the Novice Handicap at Randwick eleven years ago, but Auntie Flo says no, it was the day Peter Boy won the City weight-for-age at Canterbury, as she had a pound on him because she was certain I was going to be a boy."

"And how long ago was that?" asked John gently.

"Eleven years ago too, sir, so either way I'm eleven."

"Thank you, Cooper," said John. "Now to get on with the recommendations: Cooper, Diamond Street Tech."

"Oh no, sir—you must be wrong, sir."

John looked up and then away to avoid the hurt in the boy's eyes.

"That's the school's recommendation, Cooper, unless your parents demand a change."

"You know they'll do what you say, sir. Dad won't even look at it, sir. My only hope is for you to say High School, sir."

# Four Thousand To One

WE are proud of the success story we have to tell our readers. We have sold 4,300 copies of the last issue of **Overland**, which makes us, we believe, the most widely circulated magazine of our type in the English-speaking world. Furthermore, business arrangements are now being finalised which will, we believe, take our circulation to near the 7,000 mark. This will reduce price per copy and so enable us to increase size still further. And more sales mean more advertisements, and for every page of ads we get we can afford to print an extra page of letterpress.

You can look forward to bigger and better **Overlands** in the future.

What are the secrets of **Overland's** success? Three points made in the recent application by **Overland** for a Commonwealth Literary Fund grant are relevant:

"The magazine's broad and popular approach, the wide variety of writers who have contributed and the variety of viewpoints expressed, and its dedication to Australia, past, present and future."

"A country's literature develops from a country's life and it is the job of writers to reflect and, indeed, influence that life. Hence our approach is not academic."

"The list of contributors, the subjects touched on and the great variety of opinions expressed are proof that the magazine does not exist for the purpose of the promulgation of any set of political doctrines, though it does exist for the purpose of the examination of them all as they affect literature. The magazine's slogan may well be borne in mind (it is adapted from Joseph Furphy): 'Temper democratic; bias Australian.'"

And to these reasons may be added another: the enthusiastic way in which readers of **Overland** have flung themselves into popularising the magazine and winning extra sales and subs for the magazine.



A note of warning may be struck: our determination to push ahead with the expansion of the magazine could have disastrous results if **continually increasing** support does not come in the form of subscriptions, bulk orders and donations.

Readers may not be aware that a temporary politician named Cremean attacked **Overland** in the House of Representatives on October 12.

Concealed beneath a mass of lies and contemptible innuendoes was an attack on the magazine because it had dared to consider applying for a Commonwealth Literary Fund grant, and an attack on Dr. H. V. Evatt because he gave **Overland** permission to republish his historic essay on the Eureka Stockade, at the time of the centenary last year.

Readers will be interested to know that Dr. Evatt has now given **Overland** permission to publish also his remarks on McCarthyism in the intellectual and cultural worlds.



**Overland** is but little concerned with what the Cremean-Keon-Wentworth axis say about matters literary and cultural.

The level of their intellectual development can be gauged by their phrenetic attacks on individual writers from all round the political spectrum; their attempts to apply overt political pressure on the Commonwealth Literary Fund, and to hogtie its activities; and their persistent attempts to break the back of an independent liberal literary journal like **Meanjin**.

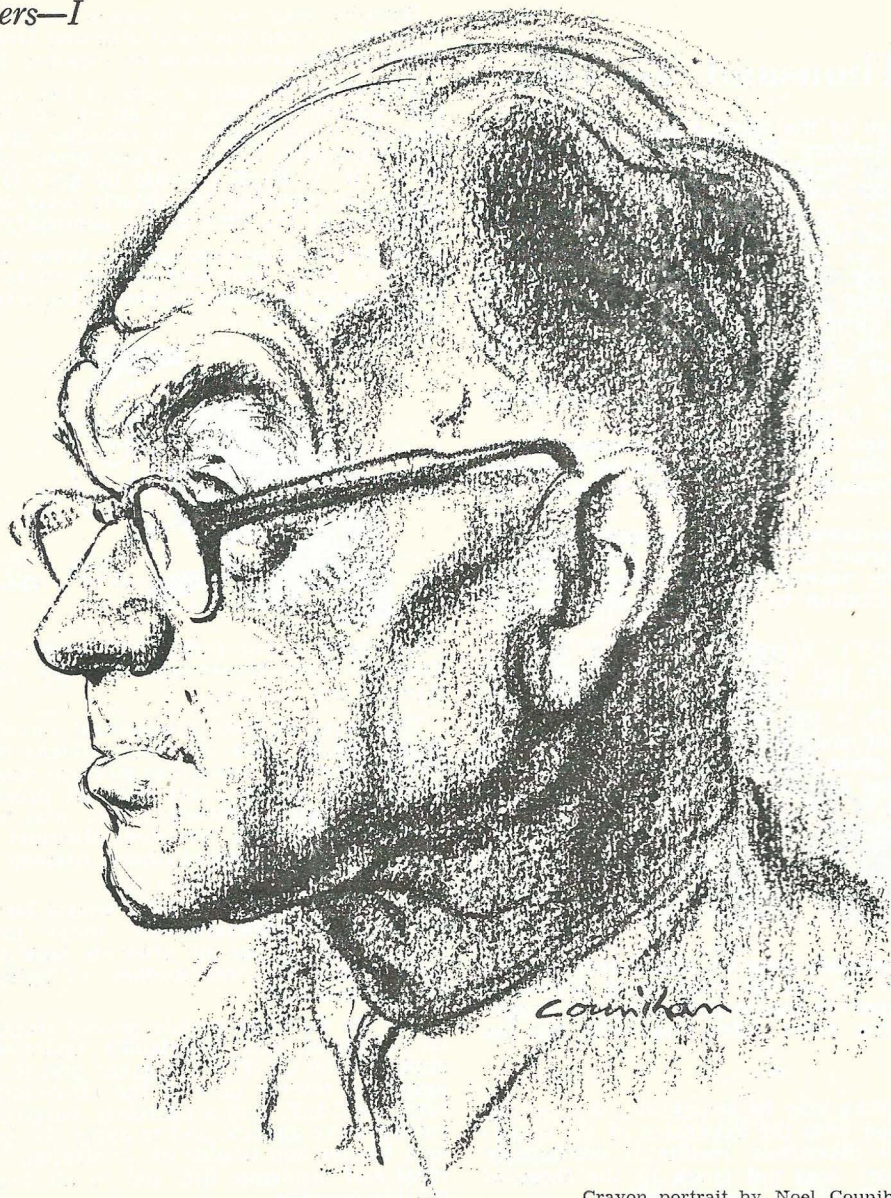
If Lawson were alive he would be a victim of the ragged bombardment these tatterdemalion political figures put up; after all, look at his record: himself a writer, his mother an agitator and his father an alien!

But we do think people should recognise attacks on **Overland**, and **Overland's** undoubted right to apply to the C.L.F. for a grant and to have such a grant, as merely part of the all-round attempt to turn the C.L.F. into a narrowly partisan and ultra-conservative agency, and to apply the Indian death-lock harder and harder on Australian literary, cultural and academic life, and to all free expression in this country.

John's fingers tightened on his pencil.  
"That's the decision, Cooper."  
"But sir, I found out my birthday. Doesn't that make a difference?"  
"I'm sorry, Cooper. The Headmaster has considered all cases carefully; you'll get a trade this way."  
"Is it your decision too, sir?"  
John's hands tightened on the pencil, so hard that it snapped, resounding like a shot in the silent room.  
My recommendation overrides yours—a school has to pull together—so Wally settled for the Alsatian—Dad took the blankets with him—my only hope is you—I sent a boy like Cooper to High School—he needs a trade—a trade—you're going to shoot him, John.  
John looked straight at the boy.

"Yes Martin, it is my decision, too."  
He turned back to his book.  
"The rest of you will go to the Tech. If your parents wish to see us about these decisions, get them to come up by the end of the week. Now take out your magazines."  
He shut the book abruptly and the pieces of broken pencil fell with a gentle clatter to the floor.

"Tell your young writers from me that to write their own generation or times is not enough, but to write so that the next generation can say we are there too, i.e. to include depth; or the trunk of the tree as well as the leaves. We do too much temporary work."  
—Mary Gilmore.



Crayon portrait by Noel Counihan.

**JOHN MORRISON**  
**AUTHOR OF THE JUST PUBLISHED BLACK CARGO**  
**(Australasian Book Society)**

I OFTEN think that the face of John Morrison should be carved in red gum and used as a figurehead on a wind ship sailing the sea, visiting strange countries and meeting the lifting waves with a projecting pipe still glowing serenely.

I think John would like the fancy; he is that sort of chap. I know he would select red gum as the housing for his spirit. That good old Australian tree has much in common with him. It has strength and dignity and grips the Australian soil with pride and affection.

John was born in England, but no native-born reflects the spirit of Australia more than he does. This country, of which he is now so much a part, has absorbed and re-created him as one of its most significant voices. His stories and novels could only be written here, reflecting, as they do, a great love for the bush and the sea and the Australian people.

Someone once told me he doesn't look like a writer. Maybe he doesn't. I can't say I know how a writer should look. But whether he does or not,

he is an impressive man to meet. His personality gains the respect and confidence of people almost immediately.

He is a quiet man in a group, a fluent and imaginative talker when the setting is right, and a friend is listening. Over a camp fire or in a bush hut, settings I have often shared with him, he becomes animated and inspired.

He is most sensitive to bush atmosphere, standing motionless on the banks of creeks or beneath gums as if listening to music when, on shared walks, he feels the need to impress a scene upon his mind.

His best stories deal with the waterfront and waterside workers. They picture a period in his life when he worked as a wharfie, a period that colors much of his work and gives it the richness of deep, personal experience.

He is intensely loyal to the waterside workers, quick to defend them and anxious to explain the conditions that weld them as a body of workers proud of their tradition.

I sometimes envy him the young receptiveness of his mind to an Australian scene or an Australian character. He was a grown man when he came to Australia and the country was exciting and strange to him. He has never lost that sense of wonder, of quick responsiveness to the significance of a scene.

The Australian-born often misses detail familiarity has robbed of its wonder, but John Morrison never does. In our walks together he has drawn my attention to the nakedness of gumtree limbs strange to a man originally conditioned to the thick foliage of English trees.

He often talks of one of his most vivid impressions when he first came to Australia. He saw a parrot on the limb of a dead tree standing in a

swamp and he conveyed the magic of it to me with unexpected animation at the memory.

John Morrison's mind rises to a scene or a situation almost with a child's unspoiled receptiveness and when he writes of it he creates the same response in the mind of his reader.

I have read in his note books word pictures of the Mornington Peninsular ti-tree country that evoke a picture more truthful than would be evoked by the scene itself since his mind probes deeper than eyes and uncovers some universal loveliness.

Noel Counihan's portrait of John Morrison has captured the very spirit of the man. It is the strong and sensitive face of one who is contributing much to Australian literature.

—Alan Marshall

## GOLD

All is dumb, deserted, cold,  
Where the diggers dug for gold  
On the scarred and broken flats  
Of Bendigo and Ballarat,  
The hills of Stawell and Ararat.  
But with September comes a gleam,  
On every hill, by every stream—  
Where the honeyeaters still  
Flirt golden wings, and drink their fill  
Of nectar from the honey-bells.

The gleam of burning, quenchless gold  
That the wattle-branches hold  
Above the scarred and broken flats  
Of Bendigo and Ballarat,  
The hills of Stawell and Ararat.

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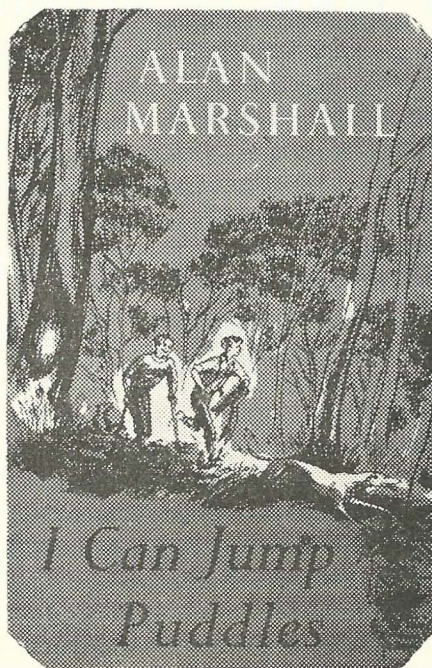
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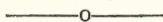
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Gerry Grant

# THE BLACKBOARD JUNGLE

WE are becoming accustomed to Hollywood films on social problems which draw attention to some of the evils of American society and offer sympathy to the working class and the underdog. The latest example is the M.G.M. production "The Blackboard Jungle," now enjoying profitable runs in the world's cinemas.

In it a teacher calls vocational high schools the "garbage can" of the American educational system.

It is in fact true that although their nominal purpose is to teach trades to boys with mechanical aptitudes, these schools are dumping grounds, not only for those working-class boys who fail to meet the extremely low standards of the academic high schools, but also for those who cannot find places at the crowded special schools for backward children.

The "North Manual Trades High School" of the film is an ugly building in an ugly district (the Bronx, New York) and so poorly planned that the noise from a machine shop makes teaching in other rooms a nerve-tearing torture. The overhead railway outside fills the classrooms with the rumble of its trains.

Delinquent gangs set the pace among the pupils, ruling them and terrorising the staff. A few boys may be willing to learn from the trades classes, but none from the academic lessons with which the film is concerned. Unable even to start teaching their "disorderly mobs" the staff become cynical and apathetic, bargaining or blustering for a quiet life. The pay is miserable, but unemployment among teachers forces them to compete even for these jobs.

Bright young enthusiasts, fresh from training courses and burning with pedagogic zeal will soon enough have that nonsense knocked—literally—out of them.

This apparent exposure of an important part of the American educational system should delight its opponents and embarrass its friends. The U.S. Ambassador in Italy would not let it be shown at the Venice Film Festival. The American entertainment trades magazine *Variety* suggested banning it from export.

And it appears to have a positive message as well, for it offers clues to a solution of the problems of delinquency and education, when for example a boy points out that "crime **does** pay" and that prison will keep him out of the army, and when a teacher "wins through" to his pupils.

It even makes good racial points, for it shows a Negro boy, Gregory Miller, as a fine lad, natural leader, intelligent and charming. Two white Americans make impassioned speeches condemning racial and religious prejudice. The worst of the boys is shown as a nauseating racist.

Is this then a progressive film?

From Metro Goldwyn Mayer of Hollywood?

In fact "The Blackboard Jungle" springs from a long and dishonorable line of "controversial" films which distort a social or political issue the more effectively because they admit some of the unpleasant facts that every American knows or suspects. The films select and twist these facts to give them a retrograde slant.

Of course, for the sort of overseas innocent who imagines that everyone in the United States lives in chromium-plated ease, these films can have a salutary effect.

But they are not progressive. They are a deliberate attempt both to answer and to deceive progressive-minded people.

"On The Waterfront" was just such a film. Professedly sympathetic to the workers, it showed them as a cowardly mob. The hero was not a militant worker, but a priest. The villains were trade unionists and the boss hardly appeared!

Hair-raising teenage crime is commonplace in America and is rapidly increasing. There are no exact statistics of convictions, but the following numbers of children aged 18 and under were arrested in 1951 for these crimes:

Robbery, burglary or larceny ..	25,193
Criminal homicide .. .. .	343
Drunkenness .. .. .	2,530
Narcotics offences .. .. .	1,010
Rape .. .. .	1,261

These are official figures.

In his illuminating book about American children's comics, *The Seduction of the Innocent*, Dr. Wertham cites examples of actual crimes in schools, including knifing, robbery, extortion and rape, and mentions a number of schools which are obviously far worse than that of the film—where for example one child in every five has appeared in a Children's Court, or where there are permanent police patrols.

The inadequacy of school buildings and the appallingly low level of education achieved are pretty widely recognised too. Adlai Stevenson, Democratic Presidential candidate, pointed out recently that schools are "currently short of at least 250,000 classrooms—room for 7½ million children," that is one quarter of the total school population. Dr. Wertham writes that 33 per cent. of students entering high school are "retarded at least one year in reading." By the time these pupils reach the fifth grade, he adds, the percentage has risen to forty!

"The Blackboard Jungle" understates therefore even the superficial symptoms of the problem. Far from exposing it, it attempts to build a brick wall in front of those who have caught disturbing glimpses and to disarm those who might be tempted to act. Reluctance to send it abroad is based on supposed foreign ignorance of the reality behind the film.

The story starts with a tough young teacher called Dadier joining the school. His enthusiasm survives the boys beating him up, slandering him to the headmaster, tormenting his pregnant wife and knifing him. He gains their confidence, isolates and recognises the worst of the delinquents and defeats them in personal combat, meeting violence with greater violence. The other boys swing round to his side, led by the Negro boy Miller, whose regeneration precedes and inspires that of the class. The delinquents go to prison or reform school according to their age and crimes.

This is of course no real solution. Nevertheless the whole force of the film is to pile implication upon implication that this purely limited, artificial and temporary elimination of juvenile delinquency from the vocational school system is the universal genuine and permanent solution to the problems of both!

The primary distortion here arises therefore from the separation of social issues from their social context. Selecting one aspect of a problem is of

course a common dramatic device, legitimate if its relation to the whole is clearly stated. Here it is concealed and confused.

**That this is deliberate there can be no doubt** and, in view of the overwhelming proof piled up by the American critics, John Howard Lawson and V. J. Jerome, that similar distortions in other Hollywood films were coldly calculated, there need be no surprise. Conclusive evidence in the case of "The Blackboard Jungle" is supplied by the alterations made in adapting the novel of the same name by Evan Hunter.

Some alterations were made for conciseness and the change of medium, but most of them accentuate the propaganda twists. The book, though bearing all the seeds of the distortions of the film, is less unhealthy and dishonest, precisely because it imputes less generality to its "solution." The book is also some way from the murderous hammer-blow violence that darkens every scene of the film.

The false isolation of the subject is illustrated by the almost complete absence from the film of comment on contemporary American society. You will find nothing here for example about the lack of leisure facilities for young people, the absence of city planning and the effects of bad housing.

You will find nothing about the national crime syndicates exposed by Senator Kefauver even though, according to the Melbourne **Herald** (no enemy to American imperialism), supplying arms to teenagers is a business in itself, under the name in New York of "Arsenals Inc."

You will find nothing about the false values and degrading influence of sadistic and pornographic mass media—newspapers, books, comics, radio and television programs, and (of course) such films as this.

This shielding by one million-dollar industry of other (ostensibly competing) industries is natural enough, but it suggests the naivete of any belief that Hollywood can get very far with a genuine portrayal of a social problem.

War is dismissed in a word or two, trafficking in drugs by an almost unintelligible reference.

The only character, a policeman, who attempts to explain the causes of juvenile delinquency, blames lack of family life—always a convenient by-pass for real causes.

The few references to the less superficial symptoms of the problem are distinguished by their casualness. They are merely part of the pretence that the film genuinely tackles the trouble. But when it really wants to get something over (that delinquents are worthless or women inferior, for example) it uses the tremendous impact of emotionally charged action.

Great emphasis is laid on the role of the individual teacher Dadier, who, combining a burning desire to teach with the toughness of a marine commando and willingness to work under intolerable conditions, "gets through" to his pupils and inspires his jaded colleagues to succeed in the task. If they only want to enough, they will. In this context even the passing mention of poor pay and teaching conditions has a reactionary meaning, for the teacher hero triumphs over them, and so can the others!

So did Makarenko, of course. But Makarenko never quietly put them on one side. On the contrary he tackled the physical problems of education with as much gusto as the pedagogic with which they are bound up.

Delinquency in this film is solved by eliminating the delinquents. For this to be acceptable, even the superficial humanism of the film must be set aside. Dadier's wife, persuading him to continue

at the school, says, "Kids are people and almost all people are worth while." The key word is "almost." The action underlines it. Twice Dadier brutally mishandles boys **after** subduing them. **After** preventing a rape he savagely beats up a boy. **After** completely cowing his two worst pupils he screams at them and hurls them out of the classroom, effectively out of the school.

Delinquents are not worth while.

A slant necessary to the whole swindle is that the class is essentially a mob, with leaders. If the leaders are evil, so is the class. Through sheer wantonness they will, for example, smash a teacher's prized record collection.

The disturbing problems of racism are used with great skill to obscure the crude deceit. Gregory Miller symbolises not only his school class, but all Negroes, for it is white America's artificial barriers against his people which form his decision to train as a mechanic and his unwilling rejection of academic education.

Dadier persuades him, however, that he can do better than the mass of Negroes, listing a few great men who have broken through (omitting du Bois and Robeson, of course). This is analagous to the hackneyed "you too can be a millionaire" line of the less subtle success stories. Dadier makes a pact with Miller that neither will quit. The personal triumph of the teacher links with the regeneration of the pupil. But what a casual impertinence, to insinuate a fake solution to the whole Negro problem into a fake solution to the problems of working class education!

Of course, if the sleight of hand is to succeed, Gregory Miller **must** be shown sympathetically.

Even the verbal fulminations against racism, by Dadier and his headmaster, are part of the swindle, for, in the very act of orating, the two are shown as hasty, prejudiced, ill-informed and quite incapable of weighing evidence! Almost incredibly, they both direct their outbursts at entirely the wrong people. Later Dadier even starts to use racist abuse himself against Miller—the height of inconsistency, designed to show that even the best of us are necessarily tainted with the disease. As for the headmaster—he, it is implied, is just a crank.

"The Blackboard Jungle" libels the American working class with its choice of vocational schools for subject, for through it runs the clear implication that delinquency and unwillingness to learn are exclusively working class faults, born of split families ("mother working at a war plant, father in the army") and a working life as a tradesman or laborer with no incentive to learn ordinary school subjects.

The boys are unfathomable—"young savages," not too far from animals. The teachers see them from outside.

The school is contrasted with other, sweet smelling, establishments, devoid of dirt. Dadier's wife makes disparaging comments on the "filthy miserable" neighborhood where her husband elects (she supposes on account of a pretty woman teacher) to work.



Another sure sign of deliberate bias is the film's contemptuous handling of all the women in it, with one very minor exception—the headmaster's secretary. Dadier's wife is a neurotic weakling; his landlady is a wordy fool; a teenage girl spies for a delinquent gang; the teacher Lois asks to be raped; another and ineffective woman teacher is, in Dadier's delicate word, a "slobberer."

Finally, this film, in spite of censorship of the worst passages, is violent—savagely, degradingly and entirely so, in visuals, sound, cutting and rhythm. Flung forward from the start by a frenzied pop tune, it hurtles at lunatic pace, the screaming violence of the blood baths merely punctuated by the menace of violence ever present in the quieter sequences. Few things in film equal the pathological horror of Dadier's pursuit of West, holding his blood-crossed hand tauntingly before him as he advances, pace by pace, into the camera.

This morbid brutality, besides ensuring good box office and attempting the degradation of the audience, is itself an important propaganda point, contradicting the mainly verbal humanism more effectively than any words. Its most profound effect is probably on children who, despite its "adults only" certificate, have little difficulty in seeing it.

The effect is more than just insidious. Already two cases of direct imitation have been observed in Victorian schools. A teacher writing on the blackboard ("never turn your back on a class!") was nearly impaled by a dart. Another had to try and teach a class "playing dumb" for a lesson.

Technically this film is magnificent. To aim its propaganda and conceal the target, the whole armory of screen devices is used by workers with the techniques of good cinema in their bones—people incapable of making a merely dull or superficially faulty film. Every second makes its carefully planned impact.

The direction, by Richard Brooks, is naturalistic to the last detail. The classroom scenes are superbly lifelike. The choice of cast is excellent. Glen Ford, as Dadier, is withdrawn, shy, and from choice, soft-spoken. He never finds words for his ideals, but from them he derives his obstinacy and slowly mounting anger. He is everybody's hero. Sydney Poitier as Gregory Miller is another kind of hero. Nursing his chip of resentment on his shoulder, his outward defiance is a sullen unspoken plea for the cloud of racial "misunderstanding" to be lifted.

That the worst of the boys is played by Vic Morrow is no accident, for he models himself on that twitching oaf Marlon Brando, whose lopsided style as he jerks and mumbles, writhes and bawls, is peculiarly suited to the inhuman message of most of his films.

It is remarkable how the three chief characters express themselves so inarticulately through words whose significance is the state of mind behind them rather than their explicit meaning.

"The Blackboard Jungle" is a bewildering film. Entangled and crammed into it are educational and social theory, box office sadism, and a complicated story. The reaction of many decent people is to dismiss it as a money-grabbing shocker.

But make no doubt about it. This is a vile piece of work, but the viler for being fully contrived.

Yet it is a tremendous tribute to the power of the working class and racial minorities that the attack on them must be so disguised and so many concessions made to reality.

And what sort of tortuous weapon is this for its instigators? Like the H-bomb, with which they threaten their enemies, it frightens even their friends.

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# LETTERS FROM ABROAD . . .

## Helsinki Night

FOR me one of the happiest gatherings at Helsinki took place outside the formal confines of the Conference. It was a reception given by the Finnish writers to the writers from abroad, whom it proved there were a good many. The people chiefly responsible for organising it were Jorn Donner and his wife—he a young novelist experimenting with new forms, she a poet of considerable gifts who has already published a couple of volumes.

The gathering was to be held at a certain casino outside the city. A good way outside it, it seemed, as the bus meandered through rustic lanes and avenues of birch, or stopped at the gates of clean, little farmyards where the very fowls and dairy cattle looked washed and combed. ("This Finnish passion for cleanliness," quipped a Freudian, "must have its root in a terrible sense of guilt.") I found myself in the company of an elderly Czech, a librarian, who for some time, he told me, had been engaged in writing a history of his country's literature. Casting about for common ground, I asked him if he knew Paul Selver, a friend of my youth who had first introduced me to Czechoslovakian poetry. Did he know Selver? Of course he did! His eyes lit up as he talked of the brilliance of Selver's translations, and I was able to give him some account of Selver's London background.

The bus stopped on the crest of a hill and we made our way down the twisting wooded path toward a lake, where a cluster of lights suddenly lit up the water. This was the casino, about as lovely a place for a gathering as could be imagined. Many little tables were scattered about a room that leant out over the edge of the lake, and the lively talk that soon arose was somehow given an intimacy by the nearness of the moonlit water, the shadowy birches, and the encompassing silence.

A good many people of international repute were there. I remember Sartre, chubby and smiling, very much a man of the world; Simone de Beauvoir, a brilliant and sophisticated Parisienne, yet not less at home in the company than Anna Seghers, with her white hair, plump little peasant figure and startling dark eyes; Fadeyev, pink, handsome, and benevolent; and Ilya Ehrenburg, curiously like Louis Esson in his latter days, with his rounded shoulders, shy-aggressive eyes, and quick little walk.

But it was not an atmosphere in which names and reputations counted. From the first it was given over to talk and good fellowship. There were no speeches. Instead, the Finnish writers had prepared a jolly little address of welcome that they gave as a sort of colloquial chant. Two men and two girls stood in a half circle, repeating each line in a different language—English, French, German, Russian. They were unable, they said, to offer us more than plain food and drink; Finland was a poor country and its writers were not among its few rich men—they had to scratch like chickens for a living; but such hospitality as they could show was given with a free hand, and open heart. It was all spoken with an air of mingled fun and modesty, yet there must have been pride at the back of it, for they could see our delight at the form their welcome had taken.

During the evening there were folk songs—some Finnish, some Chinese, and a few very beautiful and surprising ones by an Indian woman whose

name I have forgotten. But the evening was chiefly given over to talk. I happened to have as my table companion Joris Ivens, whom I had met in Melbourne ten years before. We recalled that meeting. It had been a lunch appointment but at five o'clock we were still talking—he telling me of his experiences in Spain with Hemingway making "Spanish Earth," expounding the technique of the documentary, canvassing the possibilities of staying in Australia and making a film of the country's life. He still has a strong feeling for the country and an itch to return. Perhaps when he had finished his present work on "Til Eulenspiegel," when he had made his promised visit to China at the beginning of next year . . . Yes, there might be a chance of slipping down from China. Ivens is a poet working in a popular idiom. In his talk as well as in his art he can communicate his vision of a world where the creative energies of the masses are on the point of being dramatically released. It was fitting that on the following Sunday he was to be presented with a prize for his work for peace and culture.

We went home soon after midnight, though no-one seemed anxious for sleep. Along the silent road leading to town were couples meandering idly, or stopping to look down through the birches at the still water. Those northern nights when the light has hardly faded before the birds are singing in the dawn gave one a sense of timelessness. Surely this happy moment can be held fixed forever, like the figures on Keats' Urn!

—Vance Palmer.



## A Warsaw Publishing House

THE Czytelnik building was as modern as any we had seen, with large airy rooms and windows, tasteful furniture and an air of unhurried quiet which would make it possible for the staff to work well at all times. Large as the building was, it was already too small for the ever-expanding demand of the Polish readers for good literature. We learned that large editions of books selected from the world's best creative works from East and West sold out not in weeks, but in days, even before reviews appeared in the press. We learned that up to forty new selections appeared each month, that the writers of Poland received all possible assistance from the Union of Polish Writers, were given grants to set them on a career of creative work or, if they had already produced a measure of good work, were offered contracts by the publishing house directly.

It was felt that in the past too much assistance had been given to inexperienced writers, that they had been robbed of initiative and the will to fight for recognition the hard way. Too often had they been saved the need to struggle from the ground up. The result was pale, lazy literature. Older and well-established Polish writers had found it hard to grapple with the problems of the New Poland and had buried their minds and their work in the grim past of war, destruction and racial persecution. Many of them had needed to free themselves of these deep impressions and had produced a sad, almost pessimistic literature. The most honest of them, and among them the most talented, had preferred to keep silent about the new life which was rising. The advance had been too swift and they

felt that they did not understand it. They left the depiction of the new life to younger and less experienced writers, with the result that a great deal of Poland's new literature lacked literary technique and polish. Only now, after ten years of great achievement, do some of the older writers begin to produce work which describes the new.

We found that the whole staff was alive, intelligent, broad politically and deeply concerned with the demand of the readers. There were monthly occasions during which the staff at Czytelnik personally sold books produced by their publishing house in kiosks and at book fairs in order to have personal contacts with the readers. Only that way were they able to work effectively in their fields.

Books in Poland are attractively produced, their printing and designing in keeping with their content. There is no uniformity, no dullness and the prices are cheap, ranging from two to seven zlotys. There are special editions for rural workers of larger print, bolder design and cheaper price. There are travelling libraries, regular book fairs and similar activities.

Indicative of the new spirit large in Warsaw was this incident. When one of the charwomen working at Czytelnik gathered that we were praising the books and the building itself, she dropped her work and insisted on showing us each room on the floor. Though we could not understand her words, it was clear to us that she felt, as everyone else from the Chief Editor to the proof-readers, that this building was her building, these rooms her own and the work performed of concern to her. There was an infectious fellowship between everyone connected with Czytelnik.

—Walter Kaufmann.



## AUSTRALIAN BUSH BALLADS

Edited by

Douglas Stewart and  
Nancy Keesing

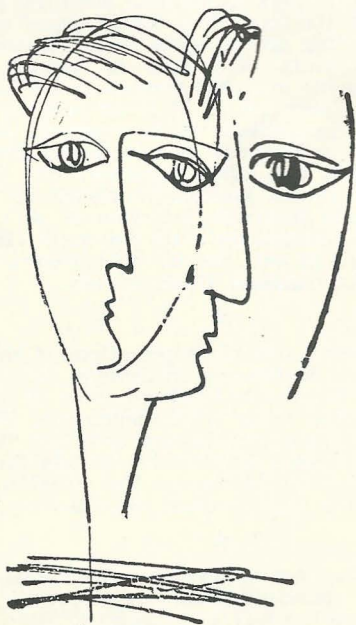
Here in this beautiful book is the most comprehensive selection of the best Australian ballads ever assembled into one volume. The result of a good deal of research by two well-known writers, it covers the entire range of the bush ballad—from its earliest beginnings in the songs of the immigrants and convicts until it reached its peak in the 'nineties. Among the old favourites of Banjo Paterson, Will Ogilvie and Henry Lawson, are many colorful ballads by unknown or little-known writers. 30/- (postage 1/1).

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# MEANJIN

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# Swag

With the Christmas season approaching, the minds of **Overland** readers at least should be turning to the thought of buying books as presents. The Editor would like to give his very highest personal recommendation to three Australian books just published which are of quite extraordinary merit and value. They are John Morrison's **Black Cargo** (Australasian Book Society, 17/6 and 13/6 (soft cover), 15/- and 10/- to members), Alan Marshall's **I Can Jump Puddles** (F. W. Cheshire, 19/6), and Hugh Anderson and Ron Edwards' **Colonial Ballads** (Ram's Skull Press, 30/6). Alan Marshall's book is reviewed in this issue; John Morrison's is a collection of some of the finest short stories put between two covers in this country for many years; and **Colonial Ballads** is the first study of Australian "folk-song" yet published, and is enhanced by the music of each song. Copies of these books are available through the Australasian Book Society, 360 Collins Street, Melbourne, C.1, and all prices include postage.

★

One of our readers has taken out ten subs. to **Overland** as Christmas gifts for friends. Why not do likewise? For five bob few gifts can be bought which will give so much interest and pleasure over such a long period. Send to the Editor at G.P.O., Box 98A, Melbourne, C.1, for special subscription forms for this purpose, or just send the names and the addresses of the intended recipients, and the current issue will be posted, together with a note specifying whom the gift is from, to arrive in time for Christmas.

★

Advertising in **Overland**, incidentally, should be good business to many. We have a large circulation and a readership of importance to those who sell books and similar products. Our rates are £10 page, £5 a half page and £3 a quarter page. Will **Overland** readers, when patronising our advertisers, please mention **Overland**?

★

Beer is again flowing in one of the famous pubs of literature—Schweik's The Flagon in Prague, Czechoslovakia. The inn, chosen by Jaroslav Hasek as the setting of the early chapters of that great war—and pretence—debunking novel **The Good Soldier Schweik**, has been used as a storehouse for the last fifteen years. It has now been re-opened after being completely renovated and decorated with Schweik mementoes. These include even a portrait of the late Emperor Franz Joseph. A portrait of Schweik in blue military cap and uniform adorns a signboard above the inn.

★

Mr. C. Castan, State School, Thargomindah (Q.), wishes to obtain a libretto for an opera, for which he is willing to write the music. Will those interested please write direct?

On November 5 Vienna's famous Opera House re-opened its doors after ten years of silence. Beethoven's "Fidelio" was the opera performed on the historic occasion. Opened in 1869, among the names of the directors of the Opera are the greatest conductors of their time, including Gustav Mahler, Felix Weingartner and Richard Strauss. After 1945 not only did the Opera House—destroyed by Nazi bombardment in a last frantic act of destruction—have to be rebuilt, but the company also. It has taken ten years of peace to restore what one hour of war destroyed.

★

Two famous Australian short stories, Henry Lawson's "The Union Buries its Dead" and Frank Hardy's "The Load of Wood," have been filmed in Sydney recently—and reports state that the outcome has been most successful. The films, which are directed by Cecil Holmes, with screen play by Rex Rienits, are intended as two parts of a three-part "omnibus" film. The story for the third section of the film, which will deal with contemporary life, has not yet been chosen.

★

Dame Mary Gilmore and Katharine Susannah Prichard have been nominated by the Australian Peace Council for a joint World Peace Prize. Several such prizes, each worth £7,000, are awarded yearly by the World Council of Peace to outstanding leaders in the arts and sciences whose work has contributed to peace. Recipients include Charlie Chaplin, Dmitri Shostakovich and Josue de Castro, President of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation. The Australian nominations will be supported by the sponsorship of some hundreds of Australian writers, artists, teachers, trade unions and other organisations, who are now being approached.

★

Dame Mary Gilmore has had many tributes in recent months, but we understand none has pleased her more than the news, that the Wagga Teachers' College is erecting special gates in her honor. Her 90th birthday party in Sydney in August was a tremendous event; over 300 present heard Leonard Thiele, Gavin Casey, Dr. H. V. Evatt and the Bushwhackers' Band contribute to the program. In Melbourne nearly a hundred people heard Professor A. R. Chisholm, Mrs. Nettie Palmer, Mr. Vincent Buckley, Mr. David Martin, Professor E. Morris Miller, Dr. Colin Roderick, and Hon. A. A. Calwell pay tribute to Dame Mary's life and work. Recordings were made at both parties, which were organised by the Australasian Book Society.

★

More than one hundred people attended an evening reception in Melbourne on October 30 in honor of Katharine Susannah Prichard, who is on her way back to her home at Greenmount, Western Australia, to resume her literary activity. Tributes were paid by Vance Palmer, David Martin, Jean Campbell and Alan Marshall. The reception was organised by the Australasian Book Society.

★

DONATIONS: We acknowledge with thanks the best "passing round the hat" so far: J.W. (proceeds of party), £17/4/-; K.S.P., £5; M.G., £3/10/-; M.P.R., 15/-; D.M., 15/-; J.C., 15/-; S.H., 10/-; P.W., 10/-; C.R., 10/-; R.N., 10/-; J.S., 10/-; G.E.M., 10/-; J.S., 10/-; K.M., 5/-; A.N., 5/-; A.G.M., 5/-; C.C., 5/-; L.S., 5/-; M.L., 5/-; J.M., 5/-; W.V., 5/-; N.R., 2/-; J.M., 1/-

The Children's Book Council of N.S.W. every August sponsors a Children's Book Week in Sydney; this year the panel of judges selected N. B. Tindale's and H. A. Lindsay's **The First Walkabout** (Longmans, 14/6) as the best Australian children's book of the year. This is a fictionalised account of the coming of the first of the Aboriginal people to Australia, based on field work and scientific studies. Also recommended were Helen Palmer's and Jessie McLeod's **The First Hundred Years** (Longmans, 17/6) and Mary Patchett's **Wild Brother**, a story of Australian wild life (Collins, 13/6).

★

The well-known nature writer, Crosbie Morrison, recently reminded readers of the Melbourne **Argus** that "every State in Australia has its national parks, but no State has enough of them." Quite apart from the fact that no States—not even Queensland or Tasmania, which are best off—have adequate national parks, Mr. Morrison points out that no clear understanding has yet been reached of the fact that the essence of national parks is conservation. "One reason for having such places," Mr. Morrison says, "is to foster a national pride not based on hatred or on the triumphs of war."

★

Last July was International Theatre Month in Australia, and by suggestion of the Australian Centre of the International Theatre Institute, a Unesco foundation, dozens of foreign plays were produced and acted on stages and over the microphone. French, Russian, Italian, Spanish and Scandinavian plays were well to the fore, and Hungarian and Chinese plays were also performed. "We need to know more about other people in other lands in a world in which universal brotherhood is the only ultimate alternative to universal destruction," stated Mr. Hugh Hunt, Director of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust. Mr. Hunt added: "If nations could speak to each other through their cultural masterpieces, instead of through their politicians, there might be fewer wars."

★

Will no public body in Melbourne undertake the re-erection of Adam Lindsay Gordon's Brighton Cottage? About eleven years ago the cottage was being demolished ("Gordon was a disgrace—he never paid his rent," said a vengeful Mayor of Brighton) when well-known Melbourne writer and book-collector, Cyril Goode, stepped in and painstakingly removed 16,000 marked bricks and all fittings to his own backyard, where they still remain. Surely at a time when civic consciences are stirring over matters like Cultural Centres and Olympic Games something could be done about this unique relic of an Australian literary figure for long over-rated, but now under-rated? Cyril Goode was Secretary of the Henry Lawson Society for 13 years and is active in several Melbourne literary bodies.

★

The great Australian artist Frederick McCubbin was born just one hundred years ago, and the centenary is now being celebrated with an exhibition at Melbourne's National Gallery. "Such compositions as 'The Pioneers' and 'Down on his Luck' live as beautiful studies of the bush," wrote the Melbourne **Age's** Art Critic recently. "In their presence one can almost smell the blue gums and the blue-bitter smoke of a bushman's camp fire."

The Icelandic novelist and playwright, Halldor Laxness, has been awarded the 1955 Nobel Prize for Literature. Mr. Laxness, who is 53 years old, wrote his first novel, **Child of Nature**, at the age of 17. He is a member of the World Council of Peace, and was runner-up to Ernest Hemingway for last year's award. The prize is worth over £13,000.

★

Those who are enjoying Allan Morris' series on "The Big Rivers"—and we have had congratulatory notes from as far afield as Paris—will be interested in his book **Rich River**, published in 1952 by the Riverine Herald in Echuca, and still obtainable from that office at 10/6 a copy. This lively and colorful book of 150 pages covers the whole history of the river-trade, and is based on the McCulloch records. It is recommended to **Overland** readers.

★

Many readers have asked for complete back-numbers of **Overland**. Recently some copies of No. 2 and No. 3 have been found, and are available on request at the normal price. No. 1, unfortunately, has long been out of print. No. 4 is still available.

★

The Bush Music Club was one year old in October. In that time it has helped set up several singing groups and folk music ensembles; it has published a dozen "Bushwhacker Broad-sides," and its affiliated groups have performed at many functions. To celebrate its birthday the Club has decided to bring out two new regular publications. "Singabout" will be the new Club magazine, and it will appear quarterly, beginning in January. In between issues of "Singabout," the "Bush Music Club Newsletter" will keep members informed of the Club's activities. "Singabout" will have at least six songs in each issue, with the accent on modern work songs.

★

The Club's series of illustrated songsheets with music has proved so popular that it has difficulty in keeping up supplies. "Bushwhacker Broad-sides" cost 3d. each, or 2/6 a dozen. They are obtainable from Alex Hood, 19 Hughes Street, Potts Point, N.S.W., The Club's first song book was such a success that it sold out in a few weeks. They are to be produced regularly, and the next one will be six "Songs from the Kelly Country." It will consist of six special "Bushwhacker Broad-sides" of traditional Ned Kelly songs, with foreword, bound in a colorful illustrated cover. It will be issued in an edition of 250 copies in November, to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the death of our national folk hero. The price is 2/6 and orders may be placed with Mr. Hood. "Singabout" subs. (7/6 a year) should be sent to Karin Winter, 15 Chelmsford Avenue, Lindfield, N.S.W.

★

NOTABLE BIRTHDAYS: Hugh McCrae (October 4), Leonard Mann (November 15), Katharine Susannah Prichard (December 4). We also remember: Victor Daley's death (December 29, 1905), Christopher Brennan's birth (November 1, 1870), and his death (October 7, 1932), Bartlett Adamson's birth (December 22, 1884) and his death (November 4, 1951).

★

In the first printing of **Overland** No. 4 the ninth line was omitted from David Martin's poem "Four in a March." The line reads: "But the four walk on, an island broken adrift."

**Historical Studies—Australia and New Zealand** is the only publication printing important research work in this field. In the May, 1955, issue, Russel Ward's article on Australian folk-song, "Collectivist Notions of a Nomad Tribe," is particularly interesting, and other papers include "The Spread of Rural Settlement in N.S.W. 1788-1826," "Alfred Deakin and the **Morning Post**" and "Gipps and the Graziers of N.S.W., 1841-6." **Historical Studies** appears twice yearly, costs 21/- yearly to Secretary, **Historical Studies**, University, Melbourne, N.3.

★

"Of the 37 little magazines published in Australia since 1923, only five succeeded in lasting for more than ten issues," said Mr. John Tregenza, of Adelaide University, in a recent A.B.C. broadcast. "On the other hand eight went no further than the first issue, eight achieved two numbers, nine managed three or four, and seven ran for between five and ten issues." Mr. Tregenza concluded his broadcast by stating: "At any rate, it is good that many people, apart from professional writers and academics, should be writing seriously and for pleasure, good that ideas should be circulating freely. But the trouble is that since 1952 only one little magazine, called **Overland**, has appeared when there ought to have been at least half a dozen, for little magazines are good for the health of a country's literature!"

★

The Centenary of the Eight Hour Day in Australia occurs early next year. As **Overland** will feature this anniversary, it would be appreciated if research workers, short story writers and others could start thinking along these lines.

★

Correspondents have asked us to publicise the activities of the publishing firm of Arthur H. Stockwell Ltd., of Ilfracombe, Devon. This firm invites writers, through widely-placed advertisements, to submit all types of MSS., and it is evident that many Australian writers have done so. In cases we have information about the submission of the MS. has been followed by laudatory comments from the publishers, and the laudatory comments with detailed proposals for publication—at the author's expense. One writer was asked to pay £388 sterling for the publication of 1,500 copies of his novel. The firm also publishes a yearly anthology of verse and prose; the author is required to sign a statement that in the event of a MS. being published he will buy a minimum of eight copies at 6/6 sterling each.

★

George Enescu, Rumania's greatest musician, died last May in Paris. A tribute from Rumanian cultural organisations states that he "opened roads for Rumanian music . . . he showed the true line of development for a national school, pouring into forms of high artistic perfection the imperishable wealth of our popular music." The truth of this will be realised by those who know even his magnificent Rumanian Rhapsodies. As a violinist, Enescu was rated one of the world's greatest interpreters of Bach, and one of his pupils was Yehudi Menuhin. The Bucharest State Philharmonic Orchestra is to be named after Enescu. Almost his last words was this message to the Rumanian people: "I think constantly about the country, and with all my heart, in every moment, I am beside our people. My single wish on my recovery is—to come home."

The Mobile Teams of the Brisbane Realist Writers' Group have already done a number of shows. Two teams were out for Lawson night, presenting among other things a dramatisation with music of "The Songs They used to Sing." Women members of the team recently presented a program of Miles Franklin, Mary Gilmore and Kathleen Watson to a morning function of the Union of Australian Women. "Own work" programs have been successful, and members have found the experience of reading their own work very helpful in improving it. A recent evening of the Group was devoted to reading and discussing John Manifold's new book of verse, **Poems on Various Occasions**, now nearly ready for the press.

★

The B.B.C., a London correspondent states, recently produced a very fine dramatisation of Howard Fast's novel **The Last Frontier**. The Third Program also recently produced Zorin's "The Visitors," a stinging criticism of bureaucracy first produced in Moscow in 1952. The B.B.C. production was "brilliant from every point of view—acting, writing and production," our correspondent writes. "The Whisper in the Gloom" by Nicholas Blake (Professor C. Day Lewis), which was reviewed in the last **Overland**, was also successfully broadcast by the B.B.C. It is a "thriller" on the theme of peace. Catherine Duncan, who will be remembered in Australia for her work as a dramatist and actress, is recording a series of talks for the A.B.C. on "Impressions of an Australian Abroad." "Don't miss them," readers are advised. Meanwhile Australian listeners will regret that the A.B.C. does not either produce or re-broadcast plays of the standard and interest of those by Fast, Zorin and Day Lewis mentioned above.

★

Requests for the translation rights of Dymphna Cusack's latest novel, **The Sun in Exile**, have been received from France, Holland, Denmark, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Germany, Austria, Norway, Sweden, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and Japan. Miss Cusack is spending the European winter in Rome, working on a new novel, **Picnic Races**, which is set in a contemporary Australian country town. Her play "The Golden Girls" is to be televised by the B.B.C. shortly.

★

Only four out of every ten Americans have read a book in the past year, reports the American Institute of Public Opinion. The Institute said that, according to the latest figures, fewer books are read in the U.S.A. than in any other major English-speaking country. Only about two-thirds of the number of titles that are published in Britain yearly are published in the U.S.A., despite the huge discrepancy in population.

★

Among the many poems which have been written around the Eureka Stockade special mention must be made of Harry Hasting Pearce's **Thomas Kennedy's March from Creswick's Creek**, a stirring event, depicted by Lawson in splendid prose, and by Pearce in an ambitious and successful ballad of 57 stanzas. Attractively produced as a booklet, with illustrations by Ron Edwards, the booklet was published by the Ram's Skull Press for the Centenary last December. Pearce's is a creative use of Australia's traditional ballad forms, and the verse bears token to the author's imaginative recreation of events he has studied well. The ballad forms part of a series being written by the author, who is the Secretary of the Poetry Lovers' Society (Melbourne), on the goldfields history of his home town, Creswick. Price 2/6 from the author, 293 Nicholson Street, Footscray, Victoria.

A. A. Phillips

## THE DEMOCRATIC TRADITION

AUSTRALIANS have always lacked a decent sense of the fitness of things. The economic framework of early Australia should, in all reasonable probability, have moulded our society into aristocratic patterns, perhaps similar to those which developed in South America. The foundation of the country by a convict helotry, its growth through land-owners with vast properties supreme over their little group of laborers, seemed to justify the visting Englishman's version of a patriarchal squirearchy moulding the future with kind firm hands. Yet almost from the beginning, things did not work out that way. Years before the gold rushes, the democratic spirit was flowing almost as freely as the rum. The convict's voice, by all the rules of probability, should have been a muted whine or a behind-the-back mumbled curse. Yet, on those rare occasions when we can hear it, it is more likely to be lifted in the spirit of that early Australian expression of the spirit of mateship:

Hand to hand  
On earth, in Hell,  
Sick or well  
On sea or land  
On the Square, ever.  
Stiff or in Breath  
Lag or Free  
You or Me,  
In Life or Death,  
On the Cross, never.<sup>1</sup>

The Currency Lad could be defined, almost, as the man who did not touch his hat (fit ancestor of the non-saluting Anzac). Perhaps more significantly, it was usually a visiting Englishman who commented on this naughty omission; the squatter does not appear to have worried about it. But the squatter was not likely to be sensitive to the niceties of subordination; after all the name implies that his land had been won by an act of insubordination to Government—and the name was accepted with little protest, even by those members of the class to whom it did not literally apply.

It is for the historian, not the literary critic, to assess those influences which so early established a democratic tradition in Australia—particularly as the period was virtually devoid of literary expression. It is, however, important to my purpose to recognise that the currents of freedom and of fellowship were moving strongly in the Australian spirit long before the pastoral baronage was threatened. The immigrants of the gold rushes probably learned as much from the established tradition of the country as they contributed to it—although they may have been decisive in turning that tradition towards the adventurous political expressions in which it was embodied after the fifties. Yet even when this comparatively mature form of cultural activity had been achieved, there was strangely little literary expression of the Australian spirit.

The one aspect of that spirit which was aesthetically voiced was the sense of Australia as the land of the future. It appeared as early as W. C. Wentworth's Newdigate Prize entry, and it soon became proper form for the Australian poetaster to turn out his Ode or Sonnet, usually called "Australia," and throbbing with the correct prophetic platitudes.

Such novels as were published during the first

century of development were mostly written by Englishmen with little sympathy for the spirit of a country which they looked forward to leaving. A consciously Australian novelist first appears in the eighties in the person of Rolf Boldrewood; but even he is looking at the country from the squatter's side of the fence—and, by then, the squatters, under the pressure of the land war, had become more class-conscious, at least as an economic group. In his *Sydney-side Saxon*, Boldrewood celebrates Australia as the land of frontier opportunity where the crushed English underdog comes into his own; but "coming into his own" for Boldrewood meant acquiring wide acres and developing, with remarkable rapidity, into a big bug of his district. That version of Australia as the land of spoils to the victor puts Boldrewood an epoch away from the proletarian writers who were shortly to succeed him.

In the eighth chapter of *Robbery Under Arms*, Boldrewood stages an argument between the squatter Falkland and Dick Marsden. "Stages" is the right word, for Boldrewood has heavily loaded the dice of sympathy in favor of the sensible and patient Falkland with his argument for patriarchal control by a landed gentry. Boldrewood almost seems to be suggesting that the rebellious democratic demands voiced by Dick, and his distrust of the gentry, are the natural preludes to a life of crime. The writers of the nineties must have read that chapter with a scoffing disapproval.

Yet a contemporary Englishman would probably have been more impressed by another aspect of the scene—the picture of a landed gentleman meeting one of his laborers in friendly man-to-man argument, and of the laborer maintaining his ground with little bravado and with no humility. Because of Boldrewood's social prejudices and the easy shallowness of his values, a chasm stands between him and the Australian writers who were about to supersede him; but by virtue of his wide and tolerant knowledge of the Australian folk, and of his simple naturalistic approach to novel-writing, he is their close predecessor. He sticks up for the bosses, but he hasn't the sound of a scab.

The emergence of a school of Australian writers in the nineties has, in recent years, become a stock theme for patriotic hymnology—so much so that Vance Palmer, in his discerning study of the period, finds it necessary to strip away the legendary element in its popular repute<sup>2</sup>. Though his modifications of the legend were necessary, its basic truth remains. Before the nineties there was no such thing as Australian writing, no continuous stream of creative work; there were only occasional books, standing like water-holes in a sandy bed of apathy. From the nineties, the creek has often run feebly, it has never swelled to flood-level, but it has never run dry.

Moreover the group of writers which then emerged contained two of real power and importance if *Such is Life* is dated by the time of its writing, not its publication. Lawson and Furphy stand among the best writers in English of their day. It is difficult to find short stories in that decade as fresh and sure as Lawson's; no richer, more vigorous novel than *Such is Life* came from any English or American publishing-house during the period.

<sup>1</sup>—The Convict Oath, quoted from Price Warung, by Bill Wannan in *The Australian*.

<sup>2</sup>—See "The Legend of the Nineties," by Vance Palmer (Melbourne University Press).

Moreover, it was a strikingly original school of writing; indeed it might have been a revolutionary school, had it occurred to English writers to have learned from it—or even to have read it. For the first time for centuries, Anglo-Saxon writing had broken out of the cage of the middle-class attitude. Dickens, Hardy and Bret Harte had, it is true, written sympathetically and knowledgeably of the unpossessing; but they had written for a middle-class audience. They were the guides who conducted their middle-class audience on a Cook's tour of the lower orders. But to Lawson and Furphy, it was the middle-classes who were the foreigners—and they the often jingoistic nationalists of the poor. They wrote of the people, for the people, and from the people. In that task almost their only predecessors later than Bunyan were Burns and Mark Twain—and neither had the full courage of his convictions.

The Australian writers did not choose this subject matter in humble necessity, because they knew no other. They thought it thoroughly worth writing about, and they were happy with the audience which they addressed. Indeed they confidently believed that they were writing for the aristocracy of the future—the strong men who were sailing clear of the decadence of Europe, and setting a course—by dead reckoning—for Utopia. The prophets were addressing the chosen people—and their worst fault was their contempt for the lesser breeds without the law.

## Plain-Roast Mutton

It is for the historian, again, to analyse the social factors which produced this original and vigorous literature. One powerful practical influence, no doubt, was the compulsory system of education introduced in the seventies and providing Australian writers with a proletarian audience which could read. Yet how different is that audience, and the literature which fed it, from the corresponding growths in England. Set Archibald's *Bulletin* beside Harmsworth's *Answers*—and sympathise with the dilemmas of statesmanship, when virtually identical Acts of Parliament can produce such wildly different results. The *Bulletin* as Archibald finally evolved it was vulgar enough—happily and unashamedly vulgar. It met plebian taste by its snappiness and irreverence, but it was not pandering to the vulgar; its writers enjoyed that tone as heartily as its readers. If, with a firm free hand, the *Bulletin* writers shook the naked tomato-sauce bottle over their plain-roast mutton, it was because they shared the national taste in cookery. Moreover the core of the *Bulletin*'s conception, and the final cause of its success, lay in the assumption that the vulgar could think—and like it. Archibald and his colleagues gave their readers solid political argument, and a coherent, if unsubtle, political philosophy. And when a copy of the *Bulletin* passed from horny hand to horny hand until its honorable dissolution in tatters, the leader-page was probably as thumb-grimed as the Aborigines. Finally, consider the immense social significance of Archibald's idea of making his proletarian readers his contributors.

How differently Harmsworth approached the opportunity offered by the new audience from the elementary schools. His cynical seizure of a commercial opening is a full antipodes away from the "dinkum-ness" of Archibald's aim. Inevitably, he regards his proletarian audience with a condescension only a little short of contempt. He is quick to realise that there is a new class which has acquired the mechanical ability to read; but he assumes that these half-educated fellows will shy

Less dramatically revolutionary, but no less influential on their Australian successors, was the standard of the "dinkum" which they proudly reared, and which expresses the democratic spirit of their period and their nation no less clearly than their subject matter does. This standard has a subtle and pervasive influence over their technical approach to the problems of fiction-writing. They are not only compelled to tell the truth as they see it—revolutionary enough in a nineteenth century novelist; more, they are forbidden by their creed to dress it up in any fripperies. Furphy is moved to his arduous technical methods because he prefers "the stern veracity of the annalist" to the "mere expedience of the novelist." Lawson has to solve his central problem of structure, because the strongly-plotted tale is not true enough, for his tastes, to life as he knows it. Miles Franklin in *My Brilliant Career* follows the same dinkum course with a characteristic pugnacity:

There is no plot in this story, because there has been none in my life or in any other life under my notice. I am one of a class, the individuals of which have no time for plots in their life, but have all they can do to get their work done without indulging in such a luxury.<sup>3</sup>

The connoisseur of literatures, rolling that paragraph round his palate, might confidently pronounce "Australian—probably a nineties' vintage."

away in alarm or bewilderment from any challenge to coherent thought. So he provides them with the pap proper to their infantile state—a diet of scraps and shreds containing as little of the red meat of meaning as possible.

The contrast suggests that the lower-class Australian of the period had an exceptional confidence and vigor of spirit—and the suggestion could be supported by plenty of corroborative evidence. A clue to the nature and sources of this spirit may be found in a passage from *Such is Life* in which Furphy is attacking the snob-romantics of Henry Kingsley's novels:

Urbane address, faultless syntax, even that which shall not be taken away, namely, the calm consciousness of inherent superiority, are of little use here, and yet your Australian novelist sees no inconsistency in placing the bookish student or the city dandy many degrees above the bushman, or the digger, or the pioneer, in vocations which have been the life-work of the latter . . . What an opportunity for some moralist, in his rabid pursuit of originality, to merely reverse the incongruity—picturing the semi-barbarian lassoed full-grown and launched into polite society, there to excel the fastidious idlers of drawing-room and tennis court in their own line. This miracle would be more reasonable than its antithesis. Without doubt it is easier to attain gentlemanly deportment than axe-man's muscle; easier to cultivate a taste for opera than to identify a beast seen casually twelve months before; easier to dress becomingly than to make a bee-line straight as the sighting of a theodolite, across strange country in foggy weather, easier to recognise the various costly vintages than to live contentedly on the smell of an oil-rag.

<sup>3</sup>—Preface to "My Brilliant Career," by Miles Franklin (Blackwood). The book was published in 1901, but it was written before the turn of the century.

And it is surely time to recognise the three-penny braggadocio of caste which makes Captain Vernon de Vere (or words to that effect) an over-match for half-a-dozen hard-muscled white savages, any one of whom could take his lordship by the ankles and wipe the battlefield with his patrician visage . . . which makes a party of resourceful bushmen stand helpless in the presence of flood or fire, till marshalled by some hero of the croquet-lawn; above all, which makes the isocratic and irreverent Australian fawn on the "gentleman" for no imaginable reason, except that the latter says "deuced" instead of "sanguinary," and "by Jove" instead "by Sheol."

To this passage one might add a sentence of Lawson's: "I had the bushman up in me now, and wasn't going to be beaten while I could think," and that perceptive remark that Douglas Stewart puts into the mouth of Ned Kelly: "Australia's a country, parson, where a man can ride a horse."

These passages make clear the strong link between the frontier spirit and the Australian democratic tradition. That tradition was essentially a bush-product; to the Australian mind of the time. "The spurious and blue-moulded civilisation of the littoral," as Furphy calls it, did not matter, it wasn't the "true Australia." And, in the bush, the common man had at last decisively proved himself. His economic struggle was going badly—the Robertson Act had failed to unlock the land, the great strikes had been broken, Government had proved itself a vindictive enemy; but his spiritual struggle had been won. His victory depended on the simple fact that on the frontiers of the new countries the common man could beat the gentleman. He could stand firm on his own feet and cock snooks at the refined tenderfoot. He was no longer the underfed, pallid, uncertain product of the slums or of a forelock-tugging tenantry, accustomed by centuries-old habit to assume his own inferiority. Successful life in the bush depended on the individual's cunning of hand and stoutness of heart. Here at last he had proved himself a man—and he was pretty sure he was the better man. The English radical movement was seeing the common man as someone for whom something should at last be done; but the Australian democrat was seeing him as someone who was at last going to do something for himself—and who was going to inherit the future.

The writers of the time were politically Left as a matter of course. Even Banjo Paterson, the cheerful extrovert, was anti-scab and a follower of Henry George, almost, one suspects, without thinking about it. The nearly automatic nature of their ideas is suggested by a passage from Lawson:

"You're allers findin' excuses for black-legs and scabs, Mitchell," said Barcoo-Rot, who took Mitchell seriously (and who would have taken a laughing-jackass seriously). "Why, you'd find a white spot on a squatter. I wouldn't be surprised if you black-legged yourself in the end."

This was an unpardonable insult from a Union point of view, and the chaps half-unconsciously made room for Barcoo-Rot to fall after Jack Mitchell hit him.

Yet Lawson's continuation of the passage is no less characteristic:

But Mitchell took the insult philosophically. "Well, Barcoo-Rot," he said, nursing the other leg, "for the matter of that, I did find a white spot on a squatter once. He lent me a quid when I was hard up. There's white spots on the blackest characters if you only drop prejudice and look close enough. I suppose even Jack the Ripper's character was speckled . . . And, as for turning black-leg—well, I

suppose I've got a bit of the crawler in my composition (most of us have), and a man never knows what might happen to his principles."

"Well," said Barcoo-Rot, "I beg your pardon—ain't that enough?"

"No," said Mitchell, "you ought to wear a three-bushel bag and ashes for three months, and drink water; but since the police would send you to the asylum if you did that, I think the best thing we can do is to go out and have a drink."

It is, of course, partly a personal idiosyncrasy of Lawson's to emphasise that mateship is something more than class-solidarity. For him mateship was a religion to be thumped home with evangelical fervor. But there is something there, too, of the Australia of his time. Mitchell is not just a mouth-piece, he is speaking the bushman's truth as the bushman would speak it. The complexity of pattern of nineties democracy reveals itself as soon as one looks at the way the writers regard, in practice, the squatter—the political villain of the period.

The most succinct declaration of the doctrine of mateship which Lawson ever made occurs in "Telling Mrs. Baker" in these words:

"We could have started on the back-track at once, but, drunk or sober, mad or sane, good or bad, it isn't bush religion to desert a mate in a hole, and the boss was a mate of ours; so we stuck to him."

Lawson is not there evangelising; there is no conscious paradox in the phrase "the boss was a mate of ours." Strongly as he and his readers felt about the sins of the squattocracy, they would not have noticed anything strange about the sentiment, anything inconsistent with the slogan "Socialism is only Mateship." Lawson was merely recognising without surprise an every-day truth of bush-life.<sup>4</sup>

Lawson, has, I think, given only one portrait in any detail of a squatter—the highly sympathetic little study of Black in "Joe Wilson's Courtship." It is true that he is careful to point out that Black was "a squatter of the old school, who'd shared the early hardships of his men." Boldrewood himself has not painted the squatter in tones pleasanter than those of this attractive little sketch.

Furphy, always a more socially conscious writer than Lawson, does devote a good deal of his attention to analysing the sins of the squattocracy, but the individual pictures of squatters with which he exemplifies his text, are often unexpectedly sympathetic. Stewart, the (adj.) Christian, is morally the most attractive person in *Such is Life* and—a prodigy among the figures of fiction—his is a character without failings which is both interesting and convincing. Montgomery is more prone to capitalistic naughtiness, but, in the central incident of Priestley's trespass, he is shown as striking a nice balance between the bushman's obedience to the law of mateship and the grass-owner's subservience to the God of Property. The incident is one of the best examples of Furphy's gift for the ironical and penetrating appraisal of character in action—and it is far from unsympathetic towards the squatter it is analysing.

Furphy's portrait of Smythe is, it is true, scornfully hostile in tone, but it is significant that Smythe is rolled in the dust of Furphy's contempt, not, in the main, because he is wickedly capitalistic, but for apparently slighter reasons—because he does not know his own beasts when he sees them, and because he permits himself a splitting headache under the heat of the sun. He is damned because

<sup>4</sup>—To be socially precise, this boss was a droving-contractor, not a squatter; but he had been a squatter.

he is no member by craft-right of the Bushman's Guild—a brotherhood to which the squatter could attain and thus redeem himself.

It may be claimed that these examples of the triumph of human sympathy over social prejudice are no more than you would expect from any novelist worthy of his craft; if the Australian writers had shown less breadth of feeling, they would have proved themselves mere mongrel artists with a tin-can of propagandism clattering at their tails. Such a view would ignore an important limitation in the sensibilities of the Australian prophets. Warmth of feeling, a ready tolerance, a belief in the essential decency of man—these were qualities in which they were rich; but their sympathies did not easily extend beyond the common man. Furphy's fineness of perception suddenly deserts him when he has to deal with the Aboriginal or the Chinese. Lawson lived among the Maoris for twelve months; yet this wonderful opportunity for the human observer produced one story only—and that an impatiently hostile study, in which Lawson's usual kindness has evaporated. Neither Lawson

## Unheroic Cockydom

One would expect to find the selector a favorite figure with the Australian writer of this time. Socially, he belonged to the right class; he was not tainted by the urban blue-mould; he was contemporaneously engaged in a conquest of Australian nature as heroic and as significant, if not so romantic, as the pastoral invasion of the plains in the thirties. Moreover he was a striking symbol of the social wrongs against which Australian proletarians were bound in the mateship of rebellion. The failure of the Robertson Acts to loosen the squatter's grip was the bitterest example of the strength and injustice of the Haves. The selector, then, might easily have been seen as the Promethean hero-victim of contemporary mythology (with the vultures of Drought and Dummyism plunging alternate beaks into his liver). Those, however, who know Australian writing—or Australian life—will already have smiled as so ingenuous an assumption. The Cocky simply will not do as an heroic figure; it would be as safe for the melodramatist to domicile his wronged lover at Footscray.

There is, in fact, a lack of natural sympathy in the writers of the nineties for the selector. He is looked at affectionately only when he is seen primarily as a bushman, with his holding regarded merely as an incidental possession. Seen in that focus, he may be treated as warmly as Joe Wilson in that charmingly sympathetic picture "A Double Buggy at Lahey's Creek." But, as soon as he becomes essentially a selector, a representative of a special class, the view is likely to become that which Lawson presents in "Water Them Geraniums" or "A Day on a Selection"—a sketch in which the author's ironic powers are for once set free from the curb of sentiment. Even that picture seems gentle if it is set beside the flashing Irish anger with which Miles Franklin's heroine, in *My Brilliant Career*, beats against the prison walls of kindly cultureless meanness on the McSwat's selection (I do not think the technical origin of the holding is ever described; but spiritually, it is decidedly not a station, although its sole product is wool in apparently large quantities). The twist of mind towards the selector is even clearer in Steele Rudd's *On Our Selection*. In its first chapter, Rudd—who obviously was strongly influenced in style by Henry Lawson—seems to be shaping towards a naturalistic account of the selector's life, in which its grim hardships would be met by a stoic invincibility of character. That attitude does not last long; it rap-

nor Furphy—nor most of their lesser contemporaries—can draw an Englishman with verisimilitude, much less sympathy. They cannot observe even the middle-class townsman with unblurred vision. The toff in a Lawson story who runs from a charging bull, leaving his girl-companion to be rescued by a station-hand, is a fair sample of the product of the blue-moulded littoral as the Australian writer of that time saw him.

Yet in the social hagiology of the time, the squatter was as sinful as the sinister Chow or the decadent Imperialist or Urban Fat; why was he, alone among the damned, included within the range of the writer's sympathies? Partly, no doubt, simply because the bushman writer knew the squatter well enough to understand him; whereas with the other figure the absence of intimate contact made it easier for political mythology to replace realistic assessment. That, however, is not the whole truth; the presence of some other source of half unwilling sympathy with the squatter becomes clearer if we contrast the literary treatment given him with that accorded to the selector.

idly falls away to farce, with the selector-family tumbling into all the postures of a clown troupe. It is clear enough that this contemptuous ridicule does not reflect Rudd's real attitude towards his protagonists. Every now and then there is a touch of naturalistic vividness, affectionate in tone, which comes from a deeper layer of conviction, and is impelled by a stronger feeling, than the drearily mechanical farcing. The book has a continuing life only because there flickers through it an interpretation of the selector far more sympathetic and far more valid than the implication of the story's structure.

Why did Rudd thus falsify his own view of the selector? Perhaps his motives were merely commercial. Perhaps he lacked Lawson's structural skill, and could not hold his story firm without the strong pillars of farcical incident. But there is another possibility. Did the current of the contemporary attitude towards cockydom set so strongly towards ridicule that Rudd could not resist it, without the aid of a stronger artistic impulse than he possessed?

Set together these two tendencies, each running counter to the political faith of the time—the freshet of sympathy for the squatter which bubbles, almost unwillingly, into the writing of the nineties, and the no less involuntary impulse to satirise the selector; and it becomes clearer than ever that the origins of the democratic tradition are rooted in the pastoral age. Something earlier and more powerful than the turmoil on the gold fields or the war with the squatters had determined its quality. Although the political struggles of the diggers and the townsmen had no doubt sharpened its edge, its tone was not so much the anger of the wronged, awakening to their rights, as the pride of men who had won their spiritual independence. The squatter, when he was a member of the Bushman's Guild, shared that pride and the expansiveness that went with it, but the selector's necessary lowering concentration on "getting by" ran counter to the older spirit. The flavor of that traditional attitude had been determined, I believe, largely by two early exaltations experienced by the Australian common man—the challenge of the sheer empty space of a continent to the men from the fetid slums and the tight little hedgerow squares; and the knowledge that life and victory over a harsh nature could be won only by a man's own wit, and a man's own courage and a man's own hands.

# The Obtrusive Doubt

WITH the turn of the century, a change came over the expression of the democratic tradition, best observed in the writings of Bernard O'Dowd. It may be claimed, it is true, that his differences from Lawson and Furphy are due more to a contrast of personalities than to any change in the social climate. O'Dowd, indeed, was born a year earlier than Lawson, although he did not publish his first book until 1903, by which time Lawson's creative vigor was declining. Moreover, he was a very different sort of man. Lawson, to his lasting humiliation, could not meet the scholastic demands—comparatively low at the time—of matriculation. O'Dowd sailed easily over the hurdles which stood between a poor boy and a university degree. O'Dowd would have been happily at home in a meeting preaching radical reform to the converted in a North London suburb; fifteen minutes of such doings would have afflicted Lawson with an unconquerable thirst.

It is true enough that the difference of temperament and background are enough to account for the differences in the tone of their work. Yet I believe that the spirit of a time somehow finds the voice which is suited to express it. Had Lawson been born twenty years later, he might never have been heard of; had O'Dowd lived twenty years earlier, he might have been only a Brunton Stephens. One of the unluckiest accidents which can befall a writer is to be born into the period which does not suit him; and Christopher Brennan, for example, might well lament that his parents mated when they did. In the interests of the development of Australian literature, they should have delayed the consummation of their passions for twenty years. O'Dowd, on the other hand, fitted most happily into his epoch, with the result that he has more importance than his limited aesthetic powers could have won for him.

There is, of course, some absurdity in regarding successive decades as different epochs. The truth behind that absurdity, which justifies its use as a handy shortcut, is that in the development of the Australian mind, successive phases can be observed. Often two phases may be simultaneously expressed by two voices differing in the degree of their responsiveness to the flow of time; but for each phase a different decade is central to its development.

Most of O'Dowd's central beliefs are the same as those of the writers of the nineties; but there is a notable maturing and intellectualising process at work. There is still a flame of evangelical prophecy, but there is less adolescent crudity. A vigorous nationalism still asserts itself, but not now in the tones of cock-sure insularity. O'Dowd can write:

"Fraternity," we call; and till  
Its banner is unfurled  
O'er all, we dare not pause. We will  
Democratise the world.

The race that claims within its bound  
Divine Equality  
And treads another on the ground,  
Is building on a lie.

O'Dowd did not desert the doctrine of White Australia; but his support is based on the danger of racial mixture, rather than on the older assumption of Australian moral superiority.

The change is not only in the view of the outside world, or rather in the fact that O'Dowd looked at it, and the writers of the nineties ignored such essentials. It is notable that O'Dowd writes "fraternity" where Lawson or Furphy would have written "mateship"—and that is not entirely because he is a poet writing it in the prophetic mode, and

they were realistic fiction-writers. The informal Guild of Bushmen, in which Christian names were easily banded, had taken out Articles of Association, and was learning to address the chair.

When O'Dowd is expressing the belief in the Australian future, in the power of the new countries to break clear of the feudal suffocations of Europe, there is an important modification of the older triumphant self-confidence. Probably O'Dowd in the role of Australian prophet is best-known by the "Australia" sonnet, and by the dithyrambic conclusion to "The Bush." Each makes the same assertion:

Last sea-thing dredged by sailor Time from Space.  
Are you a drift Sargasso, where the West  
In halcyon calm rebuilds her fatal nest?  
Or Delos of a coming Sun-God's race?  
Are you for Light, and trimmed, with oil in place,  
Or but a will o' wisp on marshy quest?  
A new demesne for Mammon to infest?  
Or lurks millennial Eden 'neath your face?

And in "The Bush":

Yet she shall be as we, the Potter, mould:  
Altar or tomb as we aspire, despair:  
What wine we bring shall she, the chalice, hold:  
What word we write shall she, the script, declare:  
Bandage our eyes, she shall be Memphis, Spain:  
Barter our souls, she shall be Tyre again:  
And if we pour on her the red oblation  
All o'er the world shall Asshur's buzzards throng:  
Love-lit, her Chaos shall become Creation:  
And, dewed with dream, her silence flower in song.

Australia can lead the triumph of freed man—but will she? A doubt has begun to obtrude. Prophetic fervor has been modified by a prophet's scolding of an idolatrous generation.

At first sight, this seems strange; for in the nineteen-hundreds the democratic struggle seemed to be going better than in the decade when William Lane had made off for Paraguay in despair of an Australia still enthralled to feudal masters. The trade unions were beginning to boss the bosses. For the first time anywhere, except in neighboring New Zealand, the Labor Party had won to political power. An era of exciting social experiments had opened. It would seem that there was more cause for optimism than in the grey nineties.

That would, I think, be a superficial view. Defeats in the early skirmishes had not mattered; the spirit which was to conquer the future flamed unchecked by them—stirred, indeed, by the reality of battle. Furphy defines the stage of the struggle in **Rigby's Romance**:

One moment, Tom. Don't mistake me for an organiser. I'm merely an agitator, a voice in the wilderness, preaching preparation . . . The program is hidden in the order of events, and will be evolved in its own good time . . . Principles only are vital; and how often have these been obscured and subverted by insistence on details. If we assuaged our zeal by remembering that Socialism is relative, not absolute . . . that it must gain by evolution, not by miracle—we should be much further ahead than we are.<sup>5</sup>

It is comparatively easy to be confident at that stage: it requires only the flame of zeal. In the nineteen hundreds, the time called, not for manifestoes, but for platforms. The democrats had to

<sup>5</sup>—It is impossible to be sure in which decade any particular passage of **Rigby's Romance** was written, since the book was re-cast from a discarded section of **Such is Life**.

bend their backs to the tiresome toil of organisation, to meet the temptations, both gross and insidious, of power, to accept politically necessary but spiritually enervating compromises, to subdue the joyous gallop of agitation to the cautious canter of responsibility. Utopia was beginning to display its most obstinate characteristic—its habit of retreating with the horizon.

When one moves forward another decade to the post-1914-war period—and to Frank Wilmot as the characteristic democratic voice of that period—one is aware that the old confidence has still further evaporated. The same essential demands lie behind his social poetry—that the common man shall inherit the earth and that Australia shall lead that triumph; but O'Dowd's doubt has deepened into dismay:

Having slept so long, men do not wish to wake,  
Nor stir, nor understand.  
Nor brush the darkness from their brows and take  
The grandeur close at hand.  
Courageous ires, the fruit of ireful claims,  
Are folded in a keep  
Of dreams and smoke that once were acts and  
flames—  
For men, poisoned with words and bitter names,  
Have cried themselves to sleep.  
And in that sleep are dreams of frightful hue;  
Drag slow across the brain  
Marauding talons of the Golden Few  
The coroneted pirates saunter through;  
The load of dreaming breaks the heart in twain,  
The sleeper wakes—to find those dreams are true—  
And falls asleep again.

Wilmot's sense of the dangers threatening the democratic march are not only deeper and less hopeful of recovery than O'Dowd's; there is another significant difference. O'Dowd is fond of using the word "Mammon"; and—in 1955—it is natural to assume that he means by it the victory of materialist standards, conquest by Hollywood. Sometimes he does—he was very well aware that the common man had gone lusting after false gods; but more often for him Mammon is a symbol of the wicked capitalist still exploiting us. It was the doubt whether the common man would come into his inheritance that mainly worried O'Dowd, rather than the fear that he was ceasing to know how to use it when it was won.

Wilmot, shivering under the low clouds of the released iniquities of war, sees the failure in different terms. He is still angry about the "marauding talons of the Golden Few"—but he places the blame for social failure on the indifference of the Many, on the common man's retreat into indifference. He expresses it in "Lines to G.B.":

For men may live in suffering so long,  
That they grow friendly with their pain and wrong;  
And there they sit and smoke, or sit and smile  
While years reel past them in a senseless dance;  
Hoarding their blessing, with a miser's guile,  
And never know they need deliverance.

It is not that Wilmot has deserted the strongest Australian tradition of writing from, to and for the common man; rather an older and invincible class-distinction has asserted itself—the chasm which divides those who are driven by the sharpness of their spiritual hunger from those who exist in an anonymous apathy. The earlier writers were, each in his own way, aware of that distinction—even Lawson, as unassumingly humble a writer as ever lived, knew very well that he belonged to the tragic elite of the sensitive; but unlike Wilmot, they did not envisage the apathetic as a formidable army likely to erode by inertia the aims which they served in common with him.

There were other causes of the waning of confidence, recognised by Wilmot. In "Echoes," written soon after 1918, he imagines a returned soldier thus addressing Australia:

Australia speak.  
Surely you have not died in such a little while?  
Why will you taunt me with your silences? . . .  
Speak in a voice of your own.  
I do not understand what things you tell me  
With these strange lips and foreign tones;  
Is it not enough  
That your wharves are piled with alien merchandise?  
Must your young soul be flooded with foreign  
despairs? . . .

The poisonous winds have soiled the shining hair  
Of the fair lady I went out to save.  
She does not speak in a voice that is her own,  
But mumbles echoes of things half comprehended,  
And round her red lips hover alien words.

Wilmot has there, I think, laid his finger on one of the causes of the Australian spiritual recession in the nineteen twenties—our retreat into imitativeness. The Australia of the nineties had been jingoistically assertive, it had been ridiculously condescending to poor played-out Europe, it had, in fact, swaggered with an absurdly youthful cockiness. But it had been socially and politically adventurous, and it had shown a useful initiative, so that W. H. Fitchett was not being merely a braggart when he called Australia the "social laboratory of the world." The first fruits of the bushman's self-confidence had been a series of communal experiments worth making.

Australia in the nineteen twenties was a good deal less cocky, less boastful, less ignorantly insular. But now, instead of venturing boldly, we did, dutifully and dully—whatsoever England had done ten years before. The baby had vanished with the bath-water, the boldness in action had gone with the boasting, the independence had faded with the insularity.

One powerful influence behind the dwindling self-confidence of the democrats was the growth of the city populations. The bushman maintained a strong influence on the Australian attitudes as the central figure of the national legend; but that statement contains an obvious admission. He was no longer a flesh-and-blood force; the man of the blue-moulded littoral now dictated our cultural growth, though they might still declare, with sincere piety, that the bush was the real Australia. In a sense this was true. Urban man is everywhere much the same; it was in the paradoxically close cradle of the open spaces that the individual Australian character had been moulded. Its influence still affected the nation as a whole; but the city population was not the cohesive force which the scattered bushmen had been. It was harder to move to communal high adventure the masses of the towns: as Wilmot calls them:

A force that throngs the bye-ways and the streets,  
A dark enormous influence that pours  
Its passion through the light and vainly beats  
On spired churches and closed college doors.

★

In more recent decades there has been no notable recovery from the lost assurance expressed by Wilmot; equally there has been no desertion of those egalitarian values which Wilmot held as firmly as O'Dowd or Furphy. "Isocratic irreverence" still remains the heart of the Australian attitude; indeed its influence is strengthened because the modern Australian feels behind him the force of a tradition—as Leonard Mann puts it in a poem which admirably expresses the spirit of the modern Australian democrat:



H. McClintock

For we have found  
 The blazed trees and the rounded ash  
 Of old camp-fires left  
 By the forerunners, the illustrious ones  
 In the genealogy of the human spirit . . .  
 I tell you, Bill, we cannot stay here  
 In the position of these times  
 Where we await fatality  
 In a tip of broken bourgeois goods  
 To the sound of broadcast idiocies.  
 God decorate the old commanders  
 But we must go forward now  
 Selecting our new leaders  
 Who can make a synthesis  
 Out of this bloody mess.  
 We will not turn back to the waste land  
 Where reflex motions of dead creations cease  
 And in advancing chaos  
 The last lights flicker . . .  
 No feeble breath will blow  
 The ember into fragrant flame  
 For the flame is in heart and mind.  
 It will not burn and it will cease to burn  
 Unless we keep it bright by our advance,  
 Unless, at times when halted  
 By some obstacle we attack,  
 A wind blows out of the far country.

The wind which blows from the far country through the mind of the Australian democrat is the spirit of the nineties. As a literary influence, it is obvious not so much in political conceptions—though the Australian writer is still usually politically conscious and usually a radical; it is revealed most strikingly in the inheritance of certain humane values. The effect of the literature of the nineties—and of Lawson, in particular—can be

## THE OLD

I heard the dark Australian say  
 How, when a warrior has grown old,  
 And can no more his spear uphold  
 Among the hunters of the march,  
 He claims one privilege, the last—  
 That, to be spared the long retreat,  
 They shall make swift his tired feet  
 And shall make light his way,  
 And strike him hard, and let him go  
 In mercy with the honored strong,  
 Who share the feasting round the slow  
 Eternal fires of the past.

The black folk take for burial dress  
 A bough, for winding sheet the sky.  
 But our own are left to die  
 Like Argos, hound of Ulysses,  
 Whom knaves betrayed of all his ease,  
 And left to perish on the dung.  
 The years, like solemn curses flung,  
 Smite them with want and loneliness.  
 Oh, let the old once more, once more  
 Rise, angry with the heat of youth,  
 And come against the robbers' door  
 That guards the wealth they stole from these.

DAVID MARTIN

"A public gallery full of old and sick people prayed in the House of Representatives at Canberra last night as Parliament opened for the Budget session.

"They were a deputation of age and invalid pensioners who came to Canberra to seek higher pensions.

"As Mr. Cameron, Speaker, read the Lord's Prayer, the pensioners prayed audibly with him.

"The pensioners had hoped to interview Mr. Menzies, Prime Minister; Sir Arthur Fadden, Treasurer; and Mr. McMahon, Social Services Minister.

"But none of these three Ministers would see them." Melbourne *Argus*, 28th August, 1955.

strongly felt in the work of such writers as Prichard, Davison, Palmer, Mann, Fitzgerald, Lambert, Dark, Barnard, Eldershaw, Tennant, Waten, Vickers—the list could be extended to wearisome length. In all these writers there is the same belief in the importance of the common man, the same ability to present him without condescension or awkwardness, the same square-jawed "dinkum" determination to do without the fripperies, the modes—and sometimes the graces—of aesthetic practice, the same unembarrassed preference for revealing the simple verities rather than the sophistications of human nature. It is by such qualities that an Australian writer usually swiftly reveals to the knowledgeable reader his national ethos, and his inheritance—reaching back through Lawson to the "isocratic irreverences" of the pastoral era.

Indeed Australian writing shows to the discerning reader the strong influence often assumed to be lacking in Australian life: the influence of tradition. It was natural enough to assume that a quality which is the product of time must need much time for its firm growth, but that quantitative assumption is fallacious. It was also easy to confuse tradition with mellowness, which is frequently, but not necessarily, its product. Australian practice proves the paradox that a youthful crudity can itself become a tradition. The influences which I have been discussing deserve and demand the term "tradition" as their proper title; for they have retained their power when the forces and circumstances which called them into existence have ceased to exist—and they are strongly based, not on a logic or a necessity, but on a communal pride of the heart.

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# • Reviews •

## Novels of the British Way

**The Moment of Choice** (Bodley Head, 1955) is the third in the series of novels (in the roman feuilleve genre) by Jack Lindsay on "the British way." **Betrayed Spring** (1953) had as its basic theme the disillusionment of the British workers in the Attlee Labor Government, experienced with heightened bitterness in the course of the grim winter of 1946-7. **Rising Tide** (1953), a slighter novel in every way, dealt with the support given to the 1949 Canadian Seamen's strike by the London dockers and their lockout by the Government-sponsored Dock Labor Board. The social theme had its personal counterpart in the life-story of a young married couple who had made their appearance in **Betrayed Spring** and who now go through difficulties of adjustment to each other in response to the demands a docker's life (the husband, Jeff Burrows, is a docker) makes on them. **The Moment of Choice** takes as its main setting a typical wool-manufacturing town in the West Riding of Yorkshire during the year's span April 1950-51, a period in which the outbreak of war in Korea heightened the tensions existing in British social life. The novel's main characters have already been met with in one of the four parts of **Betrayed Spring**.

Though not a trilogy (each novel is, as the author observes, "complete in itself" without any direct plot sequence), I believe we miss much of the real worth of Lindsay's achievement if we do not consider the three novels together. Taken separately, for instance, **Betrayed Spring**, despite its impressively realistic insight into the nature of the British labor movement presented in terms of quite a number of flesh-and-blood characters typifying different phases of middle class and working class life, is an over-diffuse novel, spreading itself too widely, and at times too shallowly, over four scarcely related centres of action: London, Lancashire, Yorkshire and Tyneside. The intended dramatic emphasis, the unfolding of the betrayal, is blurred through lack of a central point of integration which would fuse the divergent elements into a thematic whole. There is great creative energy, imaginative perceptiveness, some memorable characterisation; but the dramatic content of the novel's theme does not emerge with the conviction intended. In a different way **Rising Tide** often fails to rise to the pitch of artistic tension needed to link in a convincing union the personal and the social-political aspects of conflict. There is too much dramatically unassimilated, purely "documentary" reportage of the strike struggles, while at least some of the phases of Phyl's and Jeff Burrows' personal contradictions seem too ready-made to be fully satisfying. The pattern of the novel seems to suffer from being too hastily put together.

**The Moment of Choice** strikes me as much more integrated in structure and development of its theme, thereby gaining greater realistic penetration and impact. Its handling of the main characters, such as Kit Swinton (Yorkshire mill-owner's son with Laborite sympathies, but irrevocable), Jane Dacres (mill-owner's daughter who, by honestly facing up to realities, is persuaded to take her stand with the peace movement), and Jill Wethers (mill-worker and Communist), is more rounded and subtler in terms of the closely-studied stages of the growth of personal character in response to social reality. Thus Kit's marriage to Jane

Dacres is threatened to breaking-point because of their different attitudes to the growing menace to peace and democratic liberties in Britain. Kit's inclination towards political compromise in the interests of his career (aligning him more and more directly with the employers and their right-wing Labor adjutants) finds its counterpart in his personal life: he becomes alienated from his wife and unfaithful. Jane, on the other hand, while in love with her husband, cannot shrink from her "moment of choice" when squarely faced with the challenge of the British people's struggle to defeat the forces of inhumanism and war:

"... she knew that if she denied the strength and purity of its appeal to her deepest self, she was in effect denying all that had given her life its meaning... Yes, it was true that life might be highly complicated, but at the moment of change, which for a man was also a moment of choice, everything was essentially simple. And it was that stark simplicity, the clear burning lines of what Blake called the human face divine, that one denied if one refused the challenge of the moment..." (p.235).

Again, in the final reconciliation with his wife, Kit comes to see that its true meaning is much more than personal, rather "a new relation to people everywhere, in the mill and in the Labor movement..." (p.334).

This capacity for revealing the human soul grappling with the forces of good and evil in the world—forces depicted with impressive mastery of detail and psychological insight in the light of the author's Marxist comprehension of reality—is perhaps Lindsay's greatest strength as a creative writer. When one returns to the earlier two novels, one is freshly aware of his sustained power of presenting the constant struggle and movement of individual will and social reality, of correlating the moral development of the person with the pattern of social change. Despite imperfections alluded to, Lindsay impresses us by his over-all avoidance of the all-too-easy pitfall of the "chronicle" novelist: the sacrifice of human story to social history as such.

Konstantin Simonov recently reminded Soviet writers that "the aesthetics of socialist realism does not demand softening the picture of life where life is stern and even merciless. It does demand that the goal should always be seen beyond the deed; beyond sacrifices, the cause for which they have been made; beyond temporary defeat, the prospect of final victory..." As yet, in this trio of his novel series, Lindsay may have dwelt on what is "stern and merciless" in British capitalist society today, concentrating on the necessary day-to-day "deed" without showing (as Katharine Susannah Prichard so magnificently envisages in **Winged Seeds**) the "goal" and the "final victory" beyond. Yet in **The Moment of Choice**, despite its thematic preoccupation with middle-class types, we surely feel, against the background of working-class strength and fighting spirit portrayed in **Rising Tide**, that "a stirring thrills the air." We are persuaded that the British people, despite the formidably entrenched power of capitalist oppression, are moving on their way in defence of the precious British heritage of popular liberties and in the cause of socialist emancipation. That is the measure of Lindsay's great and pioneering achievement and, as his series continues, it may well express in more decisive and positive terms the future stages of the British people's struggle.

—Ian Milner.

## Bush Ballads

**Australian Bush Ballads**, by Douglas Stewart and Nancy Keesing (Angus & Robertson, 30/-), fills handsomely a gap that has been too long empty.

Fifty years ago and more bush ballads were all the rage. Paterson's **Man from Snowy River and Other Verses** sold 18,000 copies within three years of its first publication in 1895, and during the first decade or so of the present century no living poet in the English-speaking world, except Kipling, had such a wide audience. Then from about the time of World War I it became fashionable to sneer at the bush balladists as a set of common fellows who produced nothing but vulgar jingles. Naturally the chorus was often led by versifiers whose own work furnished, by its portentous obscurity and pretentious hollowness, a striking contrast. Other critics, with good hearts but muddled heads, blamed the balladists much as one might condemn a magpie for not producing the notes of a lyre-bird.

Douglas Stewart's introduction to the present volume cuts through much of this nonsense by pointing out firmly that the ballad is a distinct kind of poetry, to be judged as such in its own right and on its own grounds.

It is, if you like, a rather inferior kind of poetry. On the whole nonsense verse is a more inferior kind still. But it is as irrelevant to criticise a balladist for not emulating Keats or Dylan Thomas as it would be to blame "Lewis Carroll" or Edward Lear for not having quite the Shakespearean touch. As even the austere Mr. Eliot says, in a defence of Kipling's ballads:

"If we belong to the kind of critic who is accustomed to consider poems solely by the standards of the 'work of art' we may tend to dismiss Kipling's verse by standards which are not meant to apply."

And Eliot goes on to quote Professor R. G. Collingwood who, in his **Principles of Art**, takes Kipling as an example of "the artist as magician." Collingwood defines magical art as "an art which . . . evokes of set purpose some emotions rather than others in order to discharge them into the affairs of practical life."

More or less consciously the bush balladists of the 'nineties and after sought to evoke emotions connected with the great Australian task of the nineteenth century—that of opening up the interior. And their more or less conscious purpose was to intensify the national self-awareness of their countrymen by concentrating attention on the distinctively Australian manners and mores which had grown up in the back country. In doing so they developed, as Stewart says, an indigenous form of ballad poetry, "robust, humorous, earthy and heroic," with "its own distinctive virtue of ironic realism."

Of course bush ballads, like patriotism, were not enough to make a national literature. But they did provide a basis, completely true within its limited range, to the dry red soil of the country's heart.

The more sophisticated Australian poetry of today is to be judged by quite other standards; yet at its best it still preserves a spare, anti-sentimental realism, the tone of which would have been unhesitatingly claimed as their own by the old hands who conquered the inland plains for posterity.

Thus Douglas Stewart makes his Joe Byrne say of Ned Kelly:

" . . . The government made him an outlaw  
And the papers way back in the cities that howl  
for his blood

And the smug little men who read about him at  
breakfast

While their wives read them—they are the ones  
who hate him,

And what they hate is what they fear in themselves  
And what they fear is what deep down they love:  
The man that stands up straight as a man in the sun  
And dares to be himself . . ."

And A. D. Hope writes of "Australia":

"And her five cities, like five teeming sores  
Each drains her: a vast parasite robber state

Where second-hand Europeans pullulate  
Timidly on the edge of alien shores.

Yet there are some like me turn gladly home

From the lush jungle of modern thought to find  
The Arabian desert of the human mind;

Hoping, if still from deserts the prophets come.

Such savage and scarlet as no green hills dare

Springs in this waste, some spirit which escapes

The learned doubt, the chatter of cultured apes  
Which is called civilisation over there."

And John Manifold consciously builds on the ballad tradition the finest Australian elegy, so far as I know, yet written, a poem beginning:

"This is not sorrow, this is work: I build

A cairn of words over a silent man,

My friend John Learmonth whom the Germans  
killed."

It is more than time, then, that we had a ballad anthology, if only to show something of the sources of our literary tradition; but nearly all of these verses can still be enjoyed for their own sake. Apart from some songs in the "Bushranging" section, there are few true folk-ballads in the book. The authors however promise a companion volume of these earlier anonymous songs which formed the sub-soil from which the "literary" ballads of the nineties sprang. The present volume is the first anthology to do justice to the quality and range of the "literary" bush ballad. Apart from the once popular **Bulletin Reciter**, it is the only one.

This reviewer regrets some omissions such as G. H. Gibson's (**Ironbark**) **My Mate Bill**, and another fine ballad (perhaps too long for inclusion) in E. S. Emerson's (Milky White) **A Shanty Entertainment** (1904). Most readers will probably have similar personal regrets. But so, inevitably, have the authors themselves. They should not lay them too much to heart. They have earned everyone's gratitude by combing through an immense amount of material to select their 220 odd specimens. The book is solidly and attractively produced and, prices being what they are, a bargain at 30/-.

★ —Russel Ward.

## The Veterans

The vivid re-creation of the war in New Guinea that is the main point of Eric Lambert's **The Veterans** (Shakespeare Head, 15/6) is so evocative of what tens of thousands of Australian soldiers went through that every jungle clearing, every turn in the track, every creek crossing mentioned by Lambert conjures up the Markham Road or the San-ana Track. And the characters that Lambert draws, David Bruce, Lasher and the rest, are known intimately to every man who ever fought on foot in New Guinea.

Before my own eyes, as I read of Lambert's men, were the men of the Sixth Division as they toiled along the track burdened down with mortars, tin hats, packs and weapons. The determination to see the job through and the confidence they gave to others was born of the proofing period of the Middle East, which Eric Lambert wrote about in **The Twenty Thousand Thieves**.

**The Twenty Thousand Thieves** has been printed eleven times and has now appeared on railway

bookstalls as a cheap paper-back. All readers of **The Veterans** will have the earlier book in mind as they read it, and, indeed, Eric Lambert might well have been daunted at the thought of writing a satisfying sequel to that magnificent novel. But he was not, and in **The Veterans** he has written a novel which takes the theme he was developing in **The Twenty Thousand Thieves** to its proper conclusion.

That theme is, in Wilfred Owen's words:

"... I mean the truth untold,  
The pity of war, the pity war distilled."

But Owen goes on to say:

"Now men will go content with what we spoiled,  
Or, discontent, boil bloody and be spilled.  
They will be swift with swiftness of the tigress,  
None will break ranks, though nations trek from progress."

The measure of Lambert's great work in his two war novels is that he has ensured that men not only feel "the pity of war," but will not go content with what was spoiled. They will break ranks, one feels after setting down **The Veterans**, if nations trek from progress.

**The Veterans** finds the men of the Seventh Division in Sydney on their return from the Middle East. The impact of war on Australian society, as seen through the eyes of the men who have been spilling blood for that society, is a vital part of **The Veterans**, and is something that at one and the same time had great significance for every soldier who returned to Australia from the Middle East or New Guinea, and which no other writer has dared to tackle.

These Sydney scenes of wartime upheaval and racketeering are sketched in shallower colors than the New Guinea section of the book, but they have unique historical interest and value.

That new element is in itself an important follow-on from **The Twenty Thousand Thieves**; but there will be few who have read both books who will not have noted a deepening of the reaction of the participants to the horror and futility of war as they are immersed in the mud-and-jungle fighting of New Guinea. The New Guinea sequences are tragedy of an epic quality, deepening to the blackest depths that men are called on to go down into. They are scenes unrelieved, as war was relieved in **The Twenty Thousand Thieves**, by the varying experiences and varying tempo experienced by Australian soldiers in the Middle East.

Warmth of human understanding; a sure grasp of realism; a point of view and the courage and ability to put it forward and make it stick—these are all features of Lambert's writing in **The Veterans**; and his all-round painting of his characters and their environment far transcends anything yet produced on the war in the islands. His writing at times reaches rare heights of beauty and skill.

A measure of Lambert's achievement is the fact that he shows, at one and the same time as the indignity and inhumanity of war, the underlying reasons the Australian soldier faced up to the war and fought through it.

**The Twenty Thousand Thieves** and **The Veterans** will be read by generations of Australians as the military histories of the ordinary bloke. If he never wrote another line, Lambert has won a place in Australian literature with these books; by far the most convincing portraits of the Australian soldier written.

We can have great faith in Eric Lambert's humanity and his ability; and we can know that, when he is once more as deeply identified with the struggles of the Australian people, feels personally as deeply immersed in their fate as he was in the life

and progressive death of the X Battalion of the Seventh Division, then new books of the same calibre as these will emerge, to make still more secure the place of one who knows and loves his fellowmen.

—S.M.S.



## The Secondary School

In education, as in many other matters, our administrators of the past century were content to follow English models and English theory. One basic assumption borrowed from the educationalists of the "Mother Country" is that children, being of different types, require different kinds of secondary education.

We are familiar with the technical schools which train the future artisans, the high schools for potential clerks and professional workers, higher elementary and central classes for those who cannot get into other schools, and, of course, private fee-paying schools for those whose parents "are content to pay large fees in order that their sons may have the privilege of being educated, exclusively, with the sons of other rich men." (G. F. Bradby, **The Lanchester Tradition**, p.11.) Only certain of these private schools and the high schools provide an effective preliminary to university education.

As early as 1938 the British Trade Union Congress reacted to this situation:

"The separation of the three types of school is . . . bound to perpetuate the classification of children into industrial as well as social strata . . . So long as this stratification of children at the age of eleven remains, it is in practice useless to talk of parity in education or equality of opportunity in after life."

Thus forward-looking Englishmen are challenging the old assumptions. Obviously the alternative to separate schools is a unified secondary school. Brian Simon in **The Common Secondary School** (Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1955, 15/9) argues the case very effectively. His book, which was written about the situation in Great Britain, abounds in lessons for Australian readers.

It is rather startling to discover that each of the British political parties has a clearly defined policy on the question of common secondary schools. While Conservatives support the present divided system, the Liberals seek some modifications of it, and both the Labour Party and the Communist Party favor common secondary schools.

Such schools, variously known as comprehensive, multi-lateral, or multi-purpose, would take in all the children from the local area. Up to the age of fourteen or fifteen the pupils of each sex would receive instruction in the same subjects. Thereafter, at an age when the young people have some conception of the sort of jobs they wish to fill as adults, specialised subjects would be introduced. But throughout their schooling the children would share one school and have equal opportunity. Such epithets as "high school snob" and "tech. school louts" would disappear from boys' vocabularies.

Mr. Simon does not neglect to point out that the question of the type of school is inseparable from the broader problem of the need to free education from the stranglehold of economy. (In Victoria, for example, the Government, having worked out that £10m. a year is the bare minimum required to provide sufficient buildings to house the growing school population, is spending £5½m. annually.)

The raising of the school leaving age is also brought forward as an essential feature of a satisfactory education. In the U.S.A. the school leaving

age is generally sixteen, in the U.S.S.R. all urban districts have compulsory education to seventeen, and in such Western European countries as Switzerland there is a considerably higher proportion of university students than in Great Britain.

Simon says of Britain, where the school leaving age is fifteen, "It is, then, abundantly clear that we have fallen dangerously behind other countries." What shall we say of Australia's compulsory education to fourteen?

No citizen is unaffected by the nature of Australian education: any person who fails to consider the problems posed by Simon is neglecting the future of Australian children. Simon's book provides answers to some of our problems.

—J. A. Gale.



## Red Spots before his Eyes

Frederick T. Macartney's charge of communism against the literary magazine **Meanjin** in a recent pamphlet, **The Increased Price of Liberty**, deserves a forthright answer.

I have no sympathy with Communism. Communism I regard a form of mental derangement. One symptom of the disease is that the victim suffers from the delusions of seeing sinister plots and underhand motives everywhere. Anyone who thinks for himself and refuses to believe that all persons of other shades of political opinion are actual or potential scoundrels or fascists must be himself a scoundrel or a fascist. Another character of the disease is that one may catch the symptoms without catching the disease itself. Mr. Macartney appears to be one of these victims. He belongs to that unfortunate class of people for whom any sort of social protest labels the protestant a communist or at least a fellow-traveller of Communism. His diatribe against **Meanjin** shows that he suffers from the very popular current complaint of Red Spots before the Eyes.

Mr. Christesen, the editor of **Meanjin**, has some irritating delusions of his own. Mr. Macartney's quotations from his editorial comments show well enough that he believes that there are wicked men all around us busy whittling away our civil liberties. There probably are. There **always** are, in fact, in every society which has civil liberties to whittle at. What makes Mr. Christesen irritating is his childlike conviction that all the villains are on one political side of the fence. One can go as far with Mr. Macartney as to agree that **Meanjin** would be a better magazine if the editor could see that there is a constant and universal tendency to tyranny in all power groups. But when one looks at the actual examples of Mr. Christesen's alleged communist activities in his editorials, what do they amount to? Mr. Christesen is perturbed by the sillier forms of the anti-communist witch-hunt; he takes the Labor Party view of the Royal Commission on Espionage; he thinks a civil servant has been victimised by his department; he has protested because a young woman has been arrested for distributing leaflets in the street; he views with alarm recent legislation in various States against obscene publications; he protests because a suburban town hall has been closed to the organisers (non-party, but faintly political) of a "popularity parade"; he is disturbed because the W.A. Crown Law Department has refused to prosecute a constable found by a coroner to have "unlawfully killed" an Aboriginal; he protests against the refusal to allow a writer to enter Arnhem Land to collect samples of Aboriginal art for a textile firm. I think Mr. Macartney's arguments that many of these protests were ill-informed and ill-advised are perfectly well

taken. But what on earth have they to do with communism? They suggest on the contrary that the editor of **Meanjin** is a man who will protest against almost anything; that far from following the dictates of Moscow, he simply has a permanent chip on the editorial shoulder. One can be pardoned for suspecting that there is another and perhaps larger chip on Mr. Macartney's shoulder.

However, the eccentricities of editorial comment are one thing. The policy and nature of the magazine as a whole are quite another and, if Mr. Macartney appears deliberately to have confused the two, it is his misfortune. It is the main attack, not on the editor, but on the **Meanjin** itself that should concern us.

I have been closely associated with **Meanjin** almost from the start. It has always been and continues to be precisely what its editor claims, an open forum of discussion on literature and the arts in particular, and on matters of cultural and social interest in general. It is the most lively and alive magazine of its kind in Australia and it is indeed almost the only one of its kind. It enjoys a high reputation abroad. It receives support from the University of Melbourne which has a committee to oversee its contents. The views of one member of this committee, Professor I. R. Maxwell, in answer to Mr. Macartney were trenchantly expressed in the latest number of the magazine. It receives support from the Commonwealth Literary Fund, whose members do not apparently share Mr. Macartney's alarm and suspicion.

When one looks at the grounds for his attack they prove in fact to be without foundation. Mr. Macartney's first contention is that the Commonwealth Literary Fund is not intended to provide means for discussing political matters. **Meanjin** should, he thinks, be a purely literary magazine like **Southerly** to deserve support from public funds.

One might reply in the first instance that the Commonwealth Literary Fund does not apparently share this view. **Meanjin** was a magazine of exactly the type it is now when the heads of the three main political parties first saw fit to approve its grant. In the second place, it is simply not the case that **Meanjin** is out of step with general practice. More than half the reputable literary magazines of the world give considerable space to articles on social and political questions not directly concerned with literature. In the third place, literature and the discussion of literature is, among other things, concerned with society and politics and must be so concerned. Literature, as Cardinal Newman said, is "the life and remains of the natural man" and it deals with everything that pertains to man. And while man remains politically divided, the literature of man will be partisan. On Mr. Macartney's view neither Shakespeare, nor Milton, nor Swift would have been eligible for a grant from the Commonwealth Literary Fund.

Fortunately the Fund does not share his view and the Prime Minister has defended in Parliament its grants to writers of ability whose works have a political coloring far more vivid than the delicate tinge of pink that marks Mr. Christesen's expressed views. On what grounds would Mr. Macartney deny the same privilege to a literary magazine?

His second charge against **Meanjin** is that it is not the open forum that it pretends to be. A survey of its articles simply does not support this and Mr. Macartney's real reason appears to be that the editor declared in 1954 that if he could not publish material for and against a particular issue in the same number of **Meanjin**, he would promise to see that it appeared in consecutive numbers. In this case, however, the editor was unable to do so and offered Mr. Macartney the right of reply, with

**The Increased Price of Liberty**, in the second next number of the magazine. Mr. Macartney, who can have little idea of the exigencies of editing, refused to take this as an offer in good faith and took steps to publish separately. All that he has proved by this is not that **Meanjin** is run with a communist bias, but simply that he himself was not prepared to enter the open forum on the same terms as other people. Had he done so there would have been no objection to his article. He is entitled to his views, however perverse, and they could have been answered in the same medium. And not all his views of course were perverse. In his individual criticisms of the **Meanjin** editorials he would have found as many **Meanjin** readers to agree with him, including myself, as would have been prepared to rebut his amateurish attempt to tie a Red Herring to Mr. Christesen's virtuous tail.

—A. D. Hope.



## Alan Marshall's Story

**I Can Jump Puddles** (Cheshire, 18/9) is, I believe, the finest work Alan Marshall has written to date. He strikes deeper notes, he goes more profoundly into the lives of his people. Not that **I Can Jump Puddles** is a departure from his earlier subjects and manner, but it is a development. This new book reveals that Alan Marshall has grown significantly as a writer in recent years, earlier evidence of which was his short story, "My Bird," recently acclaimed in the London **Times**.

**I Can Jump Puddles** is, as Kylie Tennant said in her review in the Sydney Morning Herald, a wonderful book which could be given "to a boy or girl to read, and you could give it to a university professor or the most fastidious literateur of your acquaintance." And it is just this that is the hallmark of the masterpiece.

Briefly the book is the story of a boy's struggle with adversity and his victory. It is an ode to courage, to man's unconquerable spirit. Never through all his trials with polio, in hospital, and on crutches does the hero of **I Can Jump Puddles** lose his optimism, his buoyant confidence in life.

It is not however a subjective, egotistical book, a paean of praise for the courageous individual pitted against his fellows and divorced from society. On the contrary **I Can Jump Puddles** reveals the close ties the hero has always had with the ordinary every-day people from whom he himself stemmed. In truth the hero derives his superlative courage from just that association. Alan Marshall draws a whole gallery of types, flesh and blood representatives of the Australian people. This achievement reveals more than ever his quality as a bard of the people.

**I Can Jump Puddles** is a people's book. It is full of sayings and humor, the Australian's love of justice and his independence.

The book does not hide or gild the realities of the period in which it is set. There are memorable pictures of the way in which the wealthy squatters lived. The home of Carruthers, the squatter king of the district, "stood in the centre of thirty acres of parkland, a large area of which was laid out in gardens designed in English style with ordered pathways and formal flowerbeds blooming under strict direction . . ."

The original Carruthers, who had owned hundreds of square miles of rich land, had divided their land into scores of farms all mortgaged to the estate, bringing in a large income in interest alone.

How small farmers and workers and swagmen lived is equally memorably described by Alan Marshall.

The class realities of Australia are well understood by the author. He is always on the side of the people. The boy's father says: "When you write . . . be like Robert Blatchford. That's the bloke that wrote **Not Guilty** and it's a great book. It was written to help people . . ."

**I Can Jump Puddles** was written to help people. It is a contribution to the struggles of the people for a better life as well as being another landmark in the development of the progressive tradition in Australian literature.

Alan Marshall is a fine artist. He is also a fine man with a great heart. He has combined writing with the support of every noble and just cause of our time.

**I Can Jump Puddles** is a book that should be in every school, library, workshop and on every private bookshelf. Make sure that your fellow worker and neighbor gets it.

—Judah Waten.



## OTHER NOTICES

**An Introduction to the English Novel** by Arnold Kettle. Hutchinson's University Library, 1953. Two vols., 29/-. Covers the whole period of the English novel, largely by reference to specific novels by representative writers. Scholarly and at the same time in touch with life at every point. A most significant critical work.

**The Siren** by Marie Majerova. Artia, Prague, 1953. A Czechoslovak classic by one of that country's most distinguished writers. **The Siren** is a chronicle of four generations of industrial workers in Kladno—"Red Kladno"—an industrial centre long considered the most sensitive indicator of Czechoslovak national feeling. It is an event to have classics of this nature made available to English-speaking readers.

**People, Be On Your Guard!** by Julius Fucik. Artia, Prague, 1953. Stories and articles by the man who wrote **Notes From The Gallows**, considered by many the greatest human document to come out of World War II. Mainly written in the Thirties, these pieces add to our respect for the character and talent of Fucik, who was murdered in a Gestapo prison in 1943. Illuminating as they do the European political scene of the Thirties, they are not only valuable but timely, too. This book and the preceding one distributed in Australia by Joseph Waters.

**The Ballads** by M. J. C. Hodgart. Hutchinson's University Library, 1950. With awakening interest in Australian folk-songs this substantial little book covering the poetry, the music, the history, the folklore and the literature of the English and Scottish ballads should be valuable to many.



As **Overland** went to press David Martin's unique selection of contemporary Australian left-wing verse reached the bookshops. Called **New World, New Song**, it contains one sample each of the work of thirty writers of verse, ranging from housewives and railway fitters to fitters and scientists, covering among them a vast range of ground, talent and mood. Martin has discovered some gems—the collection would be worth buying for Mick Lawson's "Betrayal" or Laurence Collinson's "Promenade" alone. At 1/-, the booklet would obviously make an ideal Christmas card for friends at home or overseas. Three of the poems, incidentally (Ross Tracie's, Laurence Collinson's and David Fisher's) first appeared in **The Realist Writer**, precursor of **Overland**, to which acknowledgment is not made.

# THE BIG RIVERS — II

by Allan Morris

**E**YEBROWS in Bourke today would be raised if a cargo of goods from Sydney arrived after having been consigned by sea to Melbourne, by rail to Echuca, thence by Murray river boat via Wentworth. And yet for twenty years during last century this was not only the most practicable route for cargo, but also for judges on circuit!

To get this in perspective, we must throw out of our minds railways, good roads and motor trucks (if we ever had them there) and remember that the Eastern Highlands were a very considerable barrier to horse and bullock teams. Remember, too, the vast hinterland, the squatters' country, including southern Queensland, the greater part of New South Wales, northern Victoria and quite a part of South Australia. Horse and bullock teams pioneered transport in this area, but, until river boats arrived, laboriously.

The South Australians, inspired by Captain Charles Sturt, first tackled the navigation of the Murray and its network in 1853 when the *Mary Ann* and later the *Lady Augusta* sailed from Mannum and Goolwa respectively. Very soon thousands of miles of navigable rivers had been explored, and by 1875 the recognised termini were Albury on the Murray, Wagga Wagga on the Murrumbidgee, Walgett on the Darling, Seymour on the Goulburn, and to a point between Moulamein and Deniliquin on the Edward. A small stretch of the Wakool river was also navigated regularly. In all, over 3,500 miles!

The rivalry between New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia for the rich trade of the vast Riverina was intense. The South Australians lost the initiative only because sand bars at the Murray mouth made a first class port there impossible, preventing our Mississippi having its New Orleans. This tragedy, as I believe it was and is, gave Victoria its great opportunity. Echuca, the closest point on the Murray to Melbourne, was linked by railway in 1864, and for fourteen years was unchallenged as the greatest river port Australia has known. And, thanks to Wm. McCulloch & Co., who left at Echuca seventeen years (1866-1883) of their working records, we have an accurate and thrilling picture of the trade itself. McCulloch & Co. were the largest firm on the network in the hey-day of the river boats, the 1870's, and at one time owned or were agents for twenty-six steamers at Echuca alone.

The trade had a pattern, a rhythm as it were. Let us start with "the dry." On an average, for three months in the year, there was insufficient water in the rivers for the boats to run. There were no controlling weirs as there are now and as a result rivers were often very high, and frequently very low. About the end of January, as a rule, boats tied up until the "break" in April or May. In some years it was possible to run almost the year round; in others six months were lost.

During the dry the tempo slowed down. Horse and bullock teams were at a premium as agents did their best to get cargoes urgently wanted to the outback stations. One difficulty was that shortage of feed occurred at the same time as low rivers, a basic cause of those classic struggles between squatters and bullockies immortalised by Tom Collins in *Such is Life*. Teams from as far away as Nangerybone and Cobar in central New South Wales

came down to Echuca. Others from southern Queensland struggled down the Darling to stranded steamers, adding further to the difficulties of the captain and skeleton crew who had to shift cargo about to get the right lot. And after finding the consignment, the transfer to land began by dinghy because steamer and barges were tied up in the middle of deep holes in the middle of the river. Prices for teams soared, as much as £17 a ton being paid in 1869 for horse teams between Echuca and Wagga.

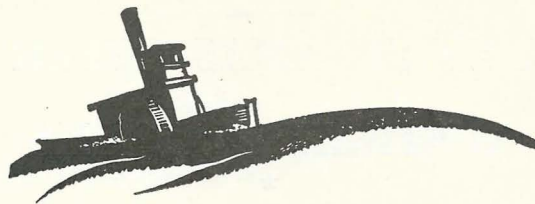
No wonder that everyone watched the weather. Shipping agents had an elaborate reporting system by telegraph from all over the network, and each day in Echuca river heights and weather conditions were posted for all to see. Excitement grew at the prospect of "the break" and, when it finally came, river fever struck at Echuca, manifesting itself in a whirl of activity. Skippers and crews were wired to report, and to prepare the fleet tied up in Rotten Row for inspection by the Navigation Board; quaint forms for "Foreign Going Ships" giving details of crew had to be certified. "By a Foreign-going Ship" states the formula, "is meant one which is bound to some place not situate on the coast of New Holland, New Zealand, or Tasmania and by an Intercolonial Ship is meant any Ship employed within the above limits." And that in 1878 for the steamer *Saddler*, commissioned to operate from "Goolwa to New South Wales and Victoria backwards and forwards in any rotation for any period not exceeding six months or (crew) to be discharged at Echuca."

The transition period between the ending of the dry and the time rivers were high was a hazardous one. Always keen to be the first out of port, skippers ran the risk of snagging or of being stuck. Sometimes "the break" turned out to be a false alarm, sufficient water coming down to get the boats away, only to have them stranded when the rivers failed to hold. But that was all part of the game. On occasions the Murrumbidgee would be running well, but the Murray poorly. Then there was much sticking, winching, sticking and winching down to the Murrumbidgee Junction when all would be well. At other times the Murray would be high, thanks to rains in Victorian tributaries, the Lachlan would be satisfactory, but the Murrumbidgee low. Then the boats had comfortable trips to Balranald to be followed by laborious work if they were to reach Hay. Add the Darling river to the picture, and you have infinite variations.

Usual procedure when the break came was to get a number of shallow draft vessels to work up the Murray to Albury, Howlong, Wahgunyah and Corowa for large consignments of flour. By the time the barges were loaded with hundreds of tons, the river would be right. Then the race started to get to Wagga, Bourke and Walgett, and all ports intermediate with this valuable cargo to catch the high prices. In the meantime Melbourne firms would assemble big orders and rush them to Echuca to catch the first boats out. Passengers, too, would be ordered forward before the estimated sailing date, frequently having to stay in Echuca for days before getting away.

Conditions at Echuca wharf at the start of the season were usually chaotic. All stores, full during

# The Riverines



I dream of days when the tough crews fought  
In ninety pubs at the top-end port;  
When riverines from a hundred lands  
With a thousand faces but the same strong hands,  
From Swiss to Swede on Australia's Nile  
Urged their boats upstream to the last dry mile.

For here was a country's heart to win  
Here was a land to woo  
No time to wait to choose your mate  
The next one had to do.

When the boys on Echuca's crowded slips  
Turned stout red gum for the hulls of ships;  
When Freeman hard on the Murray's side  
Forged boilers fit for the banks of Clyde;  
And the caulkers' mallet and shipwrights' adze  
Turned out a soul for the river lads.

Though the man on the mallet may  
have been

A Chinaman or a Jew  
But here was a boat to get afloat  
And here was a job to do.

Hear the piston slap and the steam valve roar  
As Joe slides logs through the firebox door,  
And the drag on the chains at the skipper's swing  
On the wheel for "aport" while the paddles sing  
Till the banks glide past and the wharves recede  
So she ploughs upstream while the barge hands  
feed.

And Darky is cook for the riverines,  
He'll curse the galley blue  
At curried eggs or fried frogs' legs  
But he's good at wombat stew.

There's wheat and wool at the Ten Mile Bend  
And the trapper's camp has skins to send  
Down by the river. There're five of flour  
To drop at the long hut in an hour.  
And she'll stop tonight in the lee of the scrub  
At Barmah Bend 'cos it's near the pub.

For there're tales to tell and there're  
songs to sing  
Traditions to renew  
But it won't be long, ere tomorrow's  
song  
Laments for the motley crew.

Morn's bushland wakes to the whistle's blast  
The muttering mate says "The stream won't last  
Till we cross the bar." Yet she's got an inch  
And there's still a gum that will take the winch.  
So the crew conjects if the river fades  
How they'll walk her home on the paddle blades.

But it's quieter now round the upper  
bends  
Where the warning whistles blew  
For the river dropped and the trading  
stopped  
When the iron rails pushed through.

Old Echuca's dead by the riverside  
(The crews were buried where their steamers  
died)

So the winch grows old and the cable thin  
Whilst the now deserted docks silt in  
And the slipway rails are thick with mud  
Left by the Murray's changing flood.

Yet the tourist up from Melbourne town  
May wonder if it's true  
That his river host has produced a  
ghost  
That the riverines all knew.

A ghost from the past may someday steam  
'Tween the waters' banks again. My dream  
Revives them from paddle days  
Though I see them probe five decades' haze  
Yet I recognise their sunburnt faces  
Australians all, but a hundred races.

So here's where I look for the riverines  
The men the river knew  
They'll be born again in the stress  
and strain  
Of toil—and a job to do.

LAWRENCE WALTON

the dry, were swamped with goods for the boats, and the railway yards alongside the wharf were a nightmare. Even with stevedores and shunters working the clock round, the problem was almost insoluble, being made so because cargo for one boat and its barges, hundreds of tons, was distributed in as many as twenty railway trucks. Consider the problems of railway management alone when dozens of vessels at a time were strung along the wharf. And what a huge structure the Echuca wharf was. By the 1880's it was 330 yards long, with several tiers, the top decking being 38 feet above summer level of the river. On it were two huge sheds, seven two-ton and one ten-ton hydraulic cranes.

Gradually the early rush subsided and something like rhythm set in. The Victoria made three-weekly return trips between Echuca and Wagga, the Pride of the Murray and the Trafalgar shared the passenger run between Echuca and Wentworth on a weekly schedule. Most boats plied the Murrumbidgee trade, but quite a number, including the Rodney, concentrated on the Darling. All the rivers excepting the Lachlan were busy highways. At each port the skippers wired river heights to Echuca, and were always obliged to wire from

Tocumwal or Swan Hill their impending arrival at Echuca so that more cargo and passengers could be ordered forward. The outward cargo as a rule was station stores to squatters, and all manner of merchandise for storekeepers. There were large consignments of beer. Mining machinery for Beechworth went up the river by boat, so too did huge quantities of red-gum sleepers for railways. Large consignments of rock salt from Swan Hill went all over the network, as did huge quantities of wire from Echuca at the period when squatters were fencing their runs. Frequently boats and barges were converted into sheep and cattle pens for bulk transport of stock. On one occasion a boat load of stud rams was consigned from Mannum to Echuca for Mathoura station. Great quantities of red gum left Echuca mills for the building of piers, woolsheds and houses.

But the wool season was the highlight of the year. From June onwards organisation for it began on a colossal scale, and for months wool poured over the Echuca wharf. As the shearers came down through Queensland to New South Wales and Victoria and South Australia so too did the wool, some of it to South Australian ports, the majority of it to Echuca. A boat and barge could handle up to

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1,600 bales, and it took all the best organisation and manpower to get the boats discharged, loaded and off again in the shortest time. It was essential to have space available for wool being brought from afar by the teams. In 1880, the record year for Echuca for imports, 43,975,692 lbs. of wool, about 19,000 tons in 97,000 bales, came from New South Wales alone, mostly over the wharf. Add to that the considerable quantity from northern Victorian stations and you have some conception of the job river boats did.

Why did the trade slowly collapse? Intercolonial rivalry had something to do with it; in a way the boats helped their own ruin; uncertain rainfall was another factor; so too was the sand-bar at the Murray mouth.

Victoria was the first to use "the iron horse," as Sir John O'Shannassy put it, to capture the trade. The line to Echuca in 1864 was a definite stimulus to the river trade. But the Melbourne-Wodonga line in 1873 made the first inroads, helped by the boats themselves which carried huge quantities of sleepers to Wodonga, as in fact they did for all subsequent railways built. By 1878 South Australia tapped the Murray trade with the line from Morgan to Adelaide. The next year New South Wales linked Wagga to Sydney by rail, by 1880 the line had reached Narrandera, and by 1882, Hay. And so, apart from the Balranald trade, the Murumbidgee had been ruined for the boats. Bourke was the next to have the railway in 1885. Swan Hill had it by 1890 and Mildura by 1903. Then followed Menindie, Moulamein, and finally Balranald, the latter in 1926. That was the finishing touch. The three States, Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales, had cut the network to ribbons, all of them following the Victorian lead by offering very cheap freights to undercut the other.

Today a few steamers still remain. At Echuca, the Edwards and the Adelaide still run the river with logging barges. At Mildura the famous Rothbury does the same. The Coonawarra, a three-

**T H E M A P**

Devil take our imitative, city-minded gran'dads, who Saddled us with Warwick, Ipswich, Bloomsbury (near Yalbaroo), Surbiton (on Belyando)—names like these will never do!

Mt. Mistake, The Risk, The Blunder, Wilson's Downfall make a change, But the names I like are those that show a sense of somewhere strange—

One Tree Hill and Wild Horse Mountain, Razor-back and Nightcap Range.

And at sundown when the hills are monstrous and the bunyip stirs, I am pretty sure the native names are what the land prefers:

Murderer's Flat was our invention, but Eurunderee was hers.

Jundah, Thunda, Nocatunga, Thargomindah, Gunnewin,

Tarrewinabar, Canungra, Tabragalba, Coolwinpin, Ulandilla by the Maranoa where the songs begin.

Binna Burra, Bindebango, Mullumbimby—these belong!

Bunya, Quinalow, Nanango, Tallebudgera, Durong; Xylophones among the timber,

Bellbirds in the border mountains,  
Wallangarra, Woodenbong.  
J. S. MANIFOLD.

**OVERLAND**

("Temper democratic, bias Australian")

is a quarterly Australian literary magazine, Price 1/-, 1/3 posted. Subscriptions (5/- year, posted) and MSS. to the Editor at G.P.O., Box 98A, Melbourne, C.I. Editorial Board: S. Murray-Smith (Editor), Jack Coffey, Ian Turner (Associate Editors), Eric Lambert (Vic.), Joan Clarke, Len Fox, Frank Hardy (N.S.W.), John Manifold (Q.), Joan Williams, Lyndall Hadow (W.A.), Jock Graham (for Coalfields), Brian Fox (New Zealand). Manuscripts, which are welcomed, will only be returned if a stamped addressed envelope is attached. Please add exchange to cheques.

decker passenger boat, runs between Mildura and Renmark. The Wanera also runs cruises from Mildura, where the Avoca caters for excursions. The Canberra is an excursion boat based on Renmark. There may be one or two more. Some of the Murray steamers sailed to other far-distant ports, the Burrabogie, for instance, to the Gippsland Lakes, the Decoy to Western Australia, the Thistle I believe went to Brisbane, the Shannon was wrecked on King Island, and I understand that one or two intrepid skippers reached New Zealand, in small paddle steamers, mark you. The great majority of the hundred odd steamers and many more barges litter various parts of the river with their remains, particularly at Mildura and below. Some of them have achieved respectability as house boats, the Ruby for instance; others like the Gem, the Marion and the Hero are tied up at Mildura in a cluster. At many of the old ports on the network, river skippers and men, now land-lubbers, spin yarns about their "good old days" and make almost daily pilgrimages to check the river height, still the pulse of Australia's only navigable river system.

Published by S. Murray-Smith, Mt. Eliza, Victoria; printed by "Richmond Chronicle," Shakespeare Street, Richmond, E.1.