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QUEENSLAND
AND ITS
WRITERS
(100 years — 100 authors)

CECIL HADGRAFT

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PREFACE

THIS little volume is not a text book.

It seemed to me that in our Centenary Year some comment might well be made on a number of poets and novelists who have owed something to this State and to whom, in turn, we Queenslanders owe something. In dealing with them I have stressed those parts of their writings that refer particularly to Queensland. So my remarks are selective and are intended not as complete criticisms of their works, but rather as discussions of certain facets only. Neither does my limited choice suggest that other writers, here omitted, were without significance in the overall picture of Queensland literature.

It would not have been possible to write this book without recourse to the Oxley Library in Brisbane and the Mitchell Library in Sydney. To their officers I extend my thanks for much help most cheerfully given.

To others who have assisted with advice and criticism, particularly Professor F. J. Schonell, Mr. T. M. Barry, and Dr. Val Vallis, I record my appreciation.

My thanks are due to the Vice-Chancellor and the members of the Publications Committee, who have approved this book, and to the Senate of the University, who have approved its publication.

I can only hope that this small commentary on our literature will prove of interest to those who are debarred from easy access to the works of many writers whose books are out of print.

—C.H.

The University, Brisbane.
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This edition is limited to 1000 copies.
AFTER sixteen unpromising years the Moreton Bay penal colony was abandoned in 1840, and the great area that was to be called Queensland was thrown open to free settlement two years later. Its separation as a State from N.S.W. took place in 1859. A poet was on the spot: in that same year Charles Frederick Chubb (1822-1891) issued a leaflet at Ipswich, *Ode to Sir George Ferguson Bowen*. This was the first separate publication of verse in the State's history. In it Chubb looks confidently to the future:

This sunny land, which thou hast come to rule
Is but an infant in his swaddling bands.

Not all our early poets are so hopeful.

Chubb himself, son of a solicitor in England, to whom he had been articled, came out to Ipswich at the age of thirty-five. The family fondness for the law persisted — his son, Charles Edward Chubb (d. 1930), was appointed Justice of the Supreme Court of Queensland in 1889.

Our poet was writing before he arrived here, and composed some verses "on the waters of the deep on the voyage out." He continued to write and in 1881 published his sole volume, *Fugitive Pieces, Prologues, Etc.*

He has his historical place, but he is not concerned seriously with poetry. He is an example of the brisk occasional poet who can dash off verses when they are needed in a hurry. Even when he is describing nature he prefers to produce a sort of comic imitation of Longfellow:

Rent with the lightning flash perish’d the pride of the towering blue gums,
Dashing to earth with its sad wreck many a motherly 'possum . . .
Upsetting all the arrangements of grasshoppers, locusts, and guannas.

About half of Chubb’s volume is occupied with his *Prologues*, “written on the special occasions of our dramatic entertainments.” This refers to his Elocution Class, which began its operations in 1863 and produced comedies, farces, and revues, sometimes six in a year. The *Prologues* deal with topical affairs:

. . . navigators plough the southern main,
And Ipswich hears the shrill whistle of its train.
This is a reference to the turning of the first sod of the railway to Grandchester in February, 1864. The rivalry with Brisbane is glanced at the next year:

And now the big ships come to see our beauties,
We don't want Brisbane to collect our duties.

In 1867, a year of drought and disaster, Chubb remains optimistic:

In fact, when dear young Queensland racks with ill,
And everything seems going to the de'il,
Let us tonight forget our woes awhile —
Let all our faces wear a joyful smile.

But things become brighter, what with gold at Gympie and cotton elsewhere:

With credit stopped, an empty public purse,
All commerce stagnant — speculation worse . . .
The Civil Service, the sole refuge left —
The colony of life-blood seem'd bereft . . .
But times are on the mend, and glittering gold
 Comes to the beck and nod of sinners bold.
King cotton, too, with snow-white flag unfurl'd,
 Proclaims new empire in the southern world.

In a half-rueful couplet Chubb complains of the task of writing these Prologues —

... I myself by Fates appear designed
Perpetual prologues for the class to find —

but we may well believe that he really enjoyed every minute of it all. He was an extroverted cheerful body, active in the life of Ipswich. He was mayor in 1877. He may sometimes be a little careless and ungrammatical, but he is the best comic poet of the early group.

Chubb's 1859 publication was only a leaflet containing one poem. The first book of verse in Queensland was written by Thomas Beaton Hutchison Christie (1829-1879), who used the name Ralph Delany. This was Poems and Songs (1869), and was printed in Brisbane. Christie came from Scotland when he was thirty-three, and after an attempt at farming and running a private school went into the Education Department as a teacher.

He enjoyed writing poetry, and in his Preface he says:

"Ever since I was a boy at school I have written rhyme; it has been my greatest pleasure during a life of drudgery, and a solace in many a trouble and trial." The volume contains a great deal about Scotland, and much of it is written in the Scottish dialect. There is a suggestion of homesickness, and the dialect emphasises
this. Christie probably was something of a misfit, not only in this land but in his own country.

He deals very little with Queensland. In one poem, probably written in 1867, he tells his readers:

- Put no trust in politicians;
- Have no faith in all their charms;
- The surest means of independence
  - Lie within your own right arms . . .
- When the fields are white with cotton,
  Or with sugar-cane are green,
- You'll forget the cloud whose shadow
  Now is passing o'er the scene.

**Off to the Diggings** is another poem relating directly to Queensland events:

- I'm off to the diggings, hurrah! hurrah!
- I'm off to the diggings, hurrah!
- I'm off to the diggings my fortune to seek,
- Ho! which is the road to Gympie Creek? . . .
- Who at the back of a counter would stay,
- To measure out calicoes day by day,
- And all for twenty bob a week,
- When gold is in plenty on Gympie Creek?

Another poem, **Song of the Sabbatarian**, may refer to a habit of mind which he found the same in Queensland as in Scotland. It is his ironic comment on the fanatic:

- Command the sun to stop his course,
- Forbid the wind to blow,
- And tell the flow'rs they shall not bloom,
- The trees they shall not grow;
- The little wild birds shall not sing,
- The lambkin shall not play,
- The cattle all shall silent be —
- It is the Sabbath-day.

These poems are not serious. The bulk of his verse, however, is pensive or lyric or patriotic, and mostly has Scotland as its theme. Christie, the most facile and mechanically competent of these early poets, seems always to be a displaced person. He is a great contrast to the euphentic Chubb.

In the same year as Christie but probably some months later another Scot published, this time at Rockhampton, a book of verse, **Voices From the Bush** (1869). Its author was William Anderson Forbes (1839-1879), the best all-round poet of these early years in Queensland. Like Christie he looks nostalgically back upon his own country, but he is of much tougher fibre and accepts with wry humour or sardonic resignation the mishaps and hardships of his wandering life. He seems to have traced an erratic course and held a variety of jobs.
The picture of Queensland painted in his volume is a grim one—the digger,

Digging for himself a tomb,

buried as the shaft caves in; the heat

On Queensland's sultry plains;

the lonely life of the shepherd outback; the terror of a death in the bush; rain through the bark hut; the bush publican who defrauds the miner or shearer of his cheque:

Like angels' visits, far between
An honest publican, I ween,
In Queensland's bush is seldom seen,
For swindling is their aim.

He apportions blame for some of the distress of the year 1867: it is the squatters, he thinks, who have made things worse by their desire for cheap labour:

The greedy squatters, to get labour cheap,
Have fetched ship loads of immigrants out here,
And they themselves the whole advantage reap,
By keeping wages low and prices dear.

Nevertheless, these extracts give a slightly distorted view of Forbes. He is pessimistic, true, but he does not despair. Some of his verse is witty and caustic. His consolations, which he writes of enthusiastically, are liquor and food and tobacco. He is more realistic and concrete than the others — possibly, when all is said, more truthful. He looks at things with a clear and experienced eye and he describes them often in colloquial or slangy fashion, so that we see something of what he saw. Perhaps, at the risk of being misunderstood, we can put it like this — he did not let poetry get in the way.

So far we have had immigrants for poets. The first poet born in Queensland was George Vowles (1846-1928). His verse is various — autobiographical verse, imitations of other poets, topical comment on local events and figures, and descriptions. In his only book, Sunbeams in Queensland (1870), he traces some of his early life, his scepticism, his unruliness, his playing the wag and spending the stolen hours on Limestone Hill in Ipswich (his birthplace), some parts of his life as teacher, his reform under the influence of a woman, and his return to religious acceptance. We find all this in his poem, A Sketch. Spencer Browne in his Memories states that Vowles at the age of sixteen managed to get to New Zealand to fight in the Maori War of the early 1860s.
In other poems Vowles is a chameleon: he takes the
colour of the poets he has been feeding on. These range from
Spenser and Milton to Wordsworth; and he had probably read
the American, Edgar Allan Poe. It is difficult in such poems to
isolate the real Vowles, writing as he often does on what
he has not experienced but only read about — conventional
themes like the betrayed mother or the deserted orphan reclining
“beneath a blasted oak.”

He even wrote about Ireland, which he had never visited.
Here he was perhaps influenced by the poems of Eva O'Doherty
(née Kelly) (1826-1910) — known widely as “Eva of The
Nation”, the Dublin periodical. Vowles admired her and men­tions her in his verse. She was the wife of Dr. Kevin Izod
O'Doherty, who had been transported to Tasmania as a political
prisoner and after being pardoned had returned to marry her.
The pair came out to Queensland in 1860. Both grew homesick.
Eva O'Doherty’s poems pleaded the cause of Irish nationality
and her gaze was always turned to the land she had left. In
her Queensland, the only poem in her two volumes to deal
directly with this State, she writes of this land as a land without
legends, unawakened because unsung:

No poet-fancies o'er thy skies
Spread tints that hallow, live for ever;
No old tradition's magic lies
On mountain, vale, and river.
There is no heart within thy breast,
No classic charms of memories hoary,
No footprint hath old Time impress
On thee of time or story. . .
Oh, whose shall be the potent hand
To give that touch informing,
And make thee rise, O Southern Land.
To life and poesy warming?

The attitude of Vowles to Queensland is not like this, for
he lacks Eva’s insight. He accepts his surroundings and merely
comments on them. He writes some public poems celebrating
Governor Blackall, the visits of the Prince of Wales and the
Duke of Edinburgh, and he tells of his trip down the Bremer
River. When he briefly describes what he sees or hears he
writes no differently from a visitor, in spite of the fact that he
was born in this country:

The mopoke in its leafy shade
Trills its detested lay,
Awaking with the discord made
The sleeping God of day.
The squirrel leaps from tree to tree,  
Wings through the parting air;  
The sable bat flies over me,  
Is gone — I know not where;  
The curlew screams in yonder vale,  
The hooting owl is near,  
All things give out a fervent tale,  
But I alone a tear.

This writing does not seem to us now to have much direct connection with what the poet is describing: the language is that of the eighteenth century English poets. This is even more noticeable in some other passages:

After comes the kangaroo  
Bounding o'er the glistening dew . . .  
There the jackass, errless clock,  
Wakes the sleeper with his mock . . .

or:

Often now in aerial track  
Ducks are noticed by their quack . . .  
Or to haunts in a lagoon  
Where mosquitoes with a tune  
O'er the lilled water go  
With a thirst for blood they know . . .

Vowles, indeed, reveals the danger that a poet incurs in listening so attentively to others: he cannot speak with his own voice. If he had written, say, thirty years later he would have been more Australian and more effective.

The oddest thing about him is the contrast between the conventional poetry he wrote and the adventurinous and unruly youth he lived.
WHEN OCCASION DEMANDS

A POET laureate was formerly expected to write when occasion demanded — on the sovereign's birthday, a victory, a funeral, a disaster. Other poets have this touch of the laureate in them. They, too, celebrate or call attention to what the public ought to notice.

The most unsophisticated of our public poets was honest old John Knight (1835-1901), who filled the first half of his life with action and the second half with poetry. He learned the trade of stonemason from his father in Devon, joined the Royal Navy, fought in the Crimean War, and was posted to various naval stations all over the globe. He came to Queensland at the age of forty and lived a staunch Presbyterian life at Maryborough.

Until that moment he had written no verse; he now proceeded to make up for lost time. He wrote much about glorious Devon and the sea, and as much on the local Queensland scene — the Barrier Reef, Temperance, the clear Queensland winter, general elections, local corruption, and the evil influence of the octopus Brisbane. Australia was to him a sort of appendage of England: he was interested in Federation, but much more in the bonds of Empire. The first stanza of his Australian National Anthem stresses this:

God bless our Austral land!
God bless thee, old England,
Take thou our hand!
Touch hands across the sea,
Thy soil and ours be free!
Trust God both we and thee,
Mother England!

On the other hand he could be a very local patriot. A man should spend where he earned, John Knight felt, and not import what he could buy in his own township. He glances at this and at the perennial feud between Brisbane and most other towns:

Others there are, a smaller meaner set,
Who run up bills at local stores, and yet,
O tell it not in Gath, their tea is sent
From Brisbane — suckling of the Government.
QUEENSLAND AND ITS WRITERS

GEORGE ESSEX EVANS

JAMES BRUNTON STEPHENS
His sturdy honesty makes no concessions. Even Sir Samuel Walker Griffith, Queensland's greatest son, is not spared:

Thou master spirit of our youthful State
Despite thy protests, art emasculate;
Go! carry with thee to new spheres of power
This thought — I a recreant sacrificed mine hour.

The footnote to this castigation runs: "Sir S. W. Griffith, whose patriotism led him to accept the Chief Justiceship, having first increased the salary £1000. This, too, while the colony was in the throes of depression.—J.K."

Others of his public poems deal with matters in England or on the continent, and all in a rugged metre as rough sometimes as the stone he once chiselled in Dawlish by the sea.

To deal with James Brunton Stephens (1835-1902) as a public poet may seem unjust — rather like estimating a general by the speeches he delivered at the opening of some institutions. Of his poetry, indeed, not much is concerned with national events. He wrote eight poems that commemorate public happenings and only four can be called national. And yet his general reputation seems linked with these. Though the critic values him for a long poem, Convict Once, the non-professional reader mostly thinks of him as the poet who wrote on Federation and the future of the Dominion. A troublesome reader might object to both these opinions and point to the number of humorous poems that Stephens expertly produced. He was, in short, a very versatile writer.

He was a highly cultivated man, educated at the University of Edinburgh, and came to Queensland in 1866. A tutor for a time in the Beaudesert district, he then entered the Education Department, and finally went into the Colonial Secretary's Office as Acting Under Secretary. He was in 1878 one of the founders of the Johnsonian Club. In his poems he makes reference to its early nomadic habits.

His greatest poem, Convict Once, appeared in 1871. This is a long narrative of over a thousand lines, which relates the story of a woman who has served a prison term. She takes the name of Magdalen Power and is employed as governess to three girls. She becomes the rival of the eldest, Hyacinth, for the love of Raymond Trevelyan, son of an ex-convict. Hyacinth's father objects to the match, declaring he will give his consent only if he himself should propose marriage to an ex-convict woman. The reader may guess that he does: he falls in love with
Magdalen, not knowing her past. So Hyacinth and Raymond gain his consent. Magdalen, ill after an accident, dies forgiven by Hyacinth.

The story is not easy to follow. The poem is written in a metre that English does not readily yield to; there are gaps deliberately left for the reader to bridge; and the language is often strained. Despite all this the poem gradually tightens its hold, and the reader continues with a sharpened interest in the outcome. The most fascinating aspect, however, is the nature of Magdalen, who unconsciously reveals herself as she tells the story. It is the most unusual narrative poem in our literature.

As a comic poet Stephens is supreme. He has written more comic poems and better comic poems than any other Australian poet. Things like My Chinee Cook and Marsupial Bill and A Piccaninny are as deft or as uproarious as they could well be.

His four poems on Australia remain among the best examples of the period. In order of time we have The Dominion of Australia (A Forecast) (1877):

Not yet her day. How long "not yet"? . . .
There comes the flush of violet!
And heavenward faces, all aflame
With sanguine immanence of morn,
Wait but the sun-kiss to proclaim
The Day of The Dominion born.

In The Dominion (1883) Stephens urges all the States in turn to take the step to Federation. Here he addresses Queensland:

And thou, the youngest, yet most fair,
First to discern, and first to dare;
Whose lips, sun-smitten, earliest spoke
The herald words of coming good,
And with their clarion summons broke
The slumber of the sisterhood.

The revised version of his Australian Anthem (1890) is the most famous of this set of poems. It is like a shout of triumph, as though union had already been accomplished:

Maker of earth and sea,
What shall we render Thee?
All things, are Thine!
Ours but from day to day
Still with one heart to pray.
"God bless our land alway."
This land of Thine . . .

This was one of the two songs sung at the Inauguration of the University of Queensland on 10th December, 1909.
Stephens lived to see Federation born and to dedicate by permission to Queen Victoria his *Fulfilment: Australia Federata*, 1st January, 1901. He celebrates the event, but adds his warning that the future of the new Commonwealth lies in our hands:

The Charter's read: the rites are o'er;  
The trumpet's blare and cannon's roar  
Are silent, and the flags are furled;  
But not so ends the task to build  
Into the fabric of the world  
The substance of our hope fulfilled.

Stephens, though not our greatest, is our most cultivated poet. He is in addition, when the occasion demands, the poet of State and national events. He deserves the tribute we pay to variety and skill and sincerity.

A contemporary was much more of a public poet. This was George Essex Evans (1863-1909), who arrived in Queensland in 1881. Like Stephens he tried teaching, and at length entered the Public Service. He died at Toowoomba, where a monument has been raised to his memory.

Evans also was a varied poet. He wrote, for instance, five stories in verse, of which the best is *Loraine*. In each one of these there is the eternal triangle — two men and one woman, or two women and one man. Jealousy or faithlessness or revenge plays its part and Evans, rather inclined to point a moral, stresses how futile each can be. In his humorous verse he can relate a ridiculous incident well, but he is not so funny or so witty as Stephens. His lyric and reflective poetry is filled with good advice, from which we learn the value of suffering and the need for manly striving against circumstances.

Evans speedily adapted himself to his new homeland, and in his descriptive and patriotic poems he tells of the beauty and strength of the outback, and hymns the hope and promise of our future. He has seen the west in its different seasons —

I have seen the plains lying baked and bare  
When drought and famine hold revel there.  
And the cattle sink where the rotting shoals  
Of the fish float dead in the waterholes —

and after the rains —

I have seen the plains when the flood brings down  
The leagues of its waters, sullen and brown . . .  
And all is a sea to the straining eyes  
Save some lonely hut on a distant rise —

and in bushfires —

I have seen the plains in the mad delight  
Of the racing flames in their crimson flight —
and in a good season —

When the sun shone bright and a soft wind blew,
And the sky was clear with a fairy hue . . .
And the big-horned cattle, knee-deep in grass,
Wheeled scattered legions to watch us pass.

As a patriot Evans is not blinded by hopes or delusions. He recognises there are evils and in some poems he pours scorn on the materialists. In *Ode to the Philistines* he attacks those without spiritual vision:

You have judged by the rich man’s rule!
You have treated your thinkers as dust!
You have honoured the braggart and fool
Whilst Genius has starved on a crust!

But the poems for which he is best known commemorate people or places or events in our history: Brunton Stephens, Tooowoomba, T. J. Byrnes, Queensland, the Brisbane River, Queen Victoria, the women of the West, Eland’s River in the Boer War — to choose at random from the list. His *Jubilee Ode* to celebrate fifty years of Queensland as a State begins:

Stand forth, O Daughter of the Sun,
Of all thy kin the fairest one,
It is thine hour of Jubilee.
Behold, the work our hands have done
Our hearts now offer unto thee.
Thy children call thee — O come forth,
Queen of the North!

Evans died a month before the Jubilee celebrations began.

Of his poems addressed to Australia the best is probably *An Australian Symphony*, where he comments on the note of melancholy that runs through our poetry. The opening lines of his *Australia* must serve as the last example of his direct and masculine utterance:

Earth’s mightiest isle. She stands alone.
The wide seas wash around her throne,
Crowned by the red sun as his own.
This is the last of all the lands
Where Freedom’s fray-torn banner stands,
Not wrested yet from freemen’s hands.

If we search for a Queensland-born poet of democracy, then we probably think first of Vance Palmer. But after him we may pause. Another name is that of a woman, Lala Fisher (1872-1929).

Born in Rockhampton, she attended the Girls’ Grammar School there, later spent some five years abroad around the turn of the century; became homesick for Queensland and returned,
entered journalism in Charters Towers and Brisbane, and eventually in 1914 went to Sydney to run a paper herself — the *Theatre Magazine*. She was the unconventional and gifted daughter of the surveyor, Archibald Richardson, who went with the Jardine expedition to Cape York in 1864.

She is not a notable poet, but she is competent enough to avoid the trivial and trite phrases that mar so many lines in our minor poets. Most of her poems are mildly sad or timorous of the future: love, death, youth passing — these are the themes.

Her verse written during World War I takes on a democratic note. The copy of *Grass Flowering* (1915) in the Oxley Library is a gift from her to Ruth Bedford and the written inscription is dated 22nd February, 1918. In it have been inserted four poems written in her hand. She contributed poems to *The Daily Worker* on topical events, taking the side of the underprivileged. She strikes the note in *Progress*:

O! never count true worth and goodness lost;
The cruel fruitful years have taught too well
That all gain, wrested at enormous cost,
Has sprung from souls that knew when to rebel.

One of the handwritten poems in this volume is an attack on the colour bar. In another she sings the rise to power of the worker. In this sonnet she trusts that when the power passes to its new inheritor he will accept it without thought of revenge for the persecutions he has suffered. The last six lines sum up her hope:

Behold, the sleeper wakes! O grant that he,
Remembering the burden of the years,
The bitter and relentless tyranny,
The sterile yearning and the galling tears,
Find strength to close the pages of the past
And take with love his heritage at last.

Her poem welcoming the No vote in the conscription referendum of December, 1917, expresses her hatred of anything she interpreted as constraint. An individualist herself, she came to value the individual, as she saw it, in others.

Our nearest approach to a war poet of the First World War like Rupert Brooke is a devotee — Peter Austen (1892-1939). Austen dedicated *The Young Gods* (1919) to Brooke and wrote two sonnets and another poem in his memory. He was born in Brisbane, educated at the Boys' Grammar School, and saw service 1914-1917. He returned to Egypt in 1920, was converted to Islam, and died in Cairo.
Admiration for the work of another is unfortunately not enough for a poet. Austen felt intensely but, as it were, poetically. He knew Brooke’s poems and he reveals a fairly thorough acquaintance with those of Keats. His own verse leaps from one extreme to the other, from grim pictures of decaying corpses on the battlefield to miniatures of deliquescent idyll. He caught all the more obvious tricks of writers, so that some of his poems read almost like parodies. In addition he developed a mannerism of his own — repetition. Hardly a poem is free from it. Its unconsciously absurd zenith is seen in any stanza from La Folle — here the first:

Ah, he is dead,
See the blood, red, red, red,
Drip from his battered head,
All life is fled —
Dead! Dead!

At his best he can write Our Dead, which concludes:

Are all the singers, then, of Anzac dumb?
Where are the minstrels of Life’s calmer ways?
Will no one hail the gold millenium
Of these brave days?
Is there no Heart aflame with Heavenly fire,
Is there no Voice in Anzac to give tongue,
Shall no one grasp sweet Poesy’s dread Lyre.
Our song remain unsung?

With greater restraint in his verse he would have produced a greater effect.

A common form of public verse is the prize poem. Now prize poems may be competent but they are not likely to be memorable. Tennyson won the Chancellor’s Prize at Cambridge with Timbuctoo and Matthew Arnold the Newdigate at Oxford with Cromwell, but we are not obliged to remember the poets by these verses. We may have even humbler expectations of poems that win the Ford Memorial Prize offered by the University of Queensland. Three poems by Colin Bingham (b. 1898) carried off the Ford Prize in 1920, 1923, and 1924.

Bingham attended the University in the early twenties and later became a journalist in Brisbane and Sydney. After some years overseas as a special representative of The Sydney Morning Herald he returned to become its expert on international affairs and its chief leader writer. His three poems appeared in Marcinelle (1925). The first is addressed to Ross Smith, the aviator, and his companions —
To you who bravely mocked the great unknown
And ranged the wide dominion of the air,
Who crossed the snow-clad mountains that have thrown
A challenge forth to puny man to dare
Their might;

the second has for its subject the Brisbane Gardens —

Beyond the trees the Brisbane's noble stream
Extends its waters to the quarried shore
Which marks the southern bank: behold the gleam
Of silver sunlight on a wave-wet oar;

the third is a centenary ode commemorating the early and temporary penal settlement —

A hundred years ago the tireless tide,
That rose and fell between unquarried banks,
Felt on its breast the convict galleys ride . . .
And now, today, beside the winding stream . . .
A broad and thriving City, born in pain,
Lifts to the sky its building tops agleam.

But a poet, it seems, writes best when he wants to write:

the other poems in Marcinelle, with a lyric note, bear this out, and give a better indication of Bingham's talent.

Apart from some religious poems, most of the poetry of Clem Lack (b. 1900) deals with patriotic themes and Brisbane matters. Born in Bundaberg, he took his degree at the University of Queensland, and was for eleven years chief of the Parliamentary staff of one Brisbane paper, then leader writer for another. After some years in Melbourne he returned to Brisbane and entered the Chief Secretary's Department.

In The Fields of Amaranth (1936) he commemorates the military exploits of the Anzacs and pays tribute to their courage and sacrifice. The widespread answer to a country's call is given in The Landing:

They came from out the shearing shed and from the mustering track,
From the clamorous city street and from the teamster's shack,
The golden wheatlands of the Downs, the cane fields of the North,
From the North and South, and East and West, where'er the Word went forth.

He strikes an eloquent note in his praise of the soldier's sacrifice. Patriotic poetry is not easy, for the temptation to use resounding words is very strong, and such words may seem empty. The sincerity of a poet as a man may be unquestioned, but this sincerity and the sincerity of art are two very different things. If they were the same poetry would be much easier to write. As it is, lines that spring from an honest heart may read hollow when put into verse. Lack's patriotic verse is not always free from this danger, but at his best he is moving.
JOHN MANIFOLD.

JAMES DEVANEY.
His tribute to the pioneers stresses exploits that often went unnoticed, a grim glory that was unsung:

No trumpets blared for them on the fields of Destiny,
No roar of acclamation from a tented host;
But theirs was the pride of an empery,
That swept ten thousand furlongs to the coast.

Rather far removed from that, but full of concrete detail, are the lines on a Brisbane Saturday night:

And ever and anon, the wisps of sound
Are shattered by the traffic's surge and beat,
The clang of laden trams inward bound,
The raucous shouts of newsboys in the street.

By turns sympathetic and sardonic, he catches the passing show.

It is hard to decide where to place John Manifold (b. 1915). He has written a few short narrative poems, for instance *The Griesly Wife* and *The Bunyip and The Whistling Kettle*, which have a quiet hair-raising quality. He wrote the last, while he was in England, for the two daughters of the people he was staying with. It tells half comically, half weirdly, the fate of the "most superior camper", who puts his modern kettle on the fire and goes for a dip in the billabong. It ends:

He felt the water kiss and tingle.
He heard the silence — none too soon!
A ripple broke against the shingle,
And dark with blood it met the moon.
Abandoned in the hush, the kettle
Screamed as it guessed its master's plight,
And loud it screamed, the lifeless metal.
Far into the malicious night.

Manifold says that the two youngsters had nightmares for a fortnight after hearing it.

He has written also some lyrics, many in the form of sonnets. These generally start quietly and then poise for their impact at the end.

But his most powerful verse is satire. He has radical sympathies in politics and his eye for hypocrisy and pretence is hawklike. Some of these poems deal with Australian conditions, some with English. He himself has seen a variety of political camouflage — born in Melbourne and educated in Victoria and at Cambridge, he served in World War II, worked at editing in England, and for about the last ten years has lived in Queensland.

His best satires are short — neatly bitter comments on hollow promises and the pretentious facade. So that we may think of him in the way he would perhaps wish to be regarded,
as a public poet. As a poet writing of the fate of other poets in war-time, he distils into an acrid droplet — *To Lucasta* — his wry resignation. The last eight lines of the twelve run:

> One dies at Zutphen, one in Greece,
> Dozens in France and Spain,
> And now it looks, by all one reads,
> Like Greece's turn again.

> The mode is exigent, my sweet;
> I cannot well refuse
> To stoop and buckle to my feet
> My pair of dead men's shoes.

Only perhaps in the conclusion to his elegy for Lt. John Learmonth, killed on Crete, does he find much hope for all of us in some of us:

> Let others mourn and feel
> He died for nothing: nothings have their place.
> While thus the kind and civilised conceal
> This spring of unsuspected inward grace
> And look on death as equals. I am filled
> With queer affection for the human race.

His only book of poems, all too brief, is *Selected Verse* (1948).

Another poet, like Manifold, may be put in this group although he could find a place among the lyric poets. This is Laurence Collinson (b. 1925), one of the editors of the short-lived Queensland periodical *Barjai*. Born in England, he was brought to Queensland as a child and lived here until he was about twenty. At present he is in Victoria.

His book of verse, *The Moods of Love* (1957), has three sections in it: People, Feelings, The Moods of Love. The last section is a series of sonnets that rank him high among our love poets. The second contains his reactions to people and things that have made him think and feel and sometimes argue with himself. One neat and incisive piece, *The Sea and the Tiger*, condenses a world of comment:

> The sea sucks in the traveller,
> indifferent to his frantic thought;
> no more vindictive than a stone
> it yet destroys the mite it caught.

> The craving tiger seeks no man
> where animal will do instead;
> it cares not what the flesh be from,
> nor whether living, whether dead.

> And friends, who plan no cruelty,
> without deliberation rise
> and drown me with their deeds, and with
> their honest mouths eat out my eyes.
But it is in the first section that he is most telling. These are not public poems in the sense that they commemorate or detail public happenings; nor are they political judgments. They are the utterances of a poet who is sensitive to things that are public and visible to us all but remain generally unnoticed and unrecorded: the old maid, a party in the suburbs, a clerk, a protest meeting, people at church, Shylock in the play, children in various places and in various circumstances. These poems make daily life more real.

Collinson can in these poems range quite widely, from comic comment (On the conclusion of a Quarterly Meeting of a certain Literary and Artistic Group) —

Then out they rush into the night
their tongues all dripping with praise —
they know they won't need culture now
for another ninety days —

to tart and yet tender insight (the patronising adult observing the children playing at life on the moon) —

What a lovely game, continues Mr. Brown,
and finds no more to say, but waits embroiled
in a disastrous silence. An enemy unaware
he faintly feels the battle and retreats
to escape the puzzling wound. The children turn
again to incorruptibility.

Some of his poems were written before he left Queensland, when his memories of childhood and adolescence were almost undimmed. They renew innocence for us.
THE OUTBACK

A POET from the bush who was not a bush poet may seem a paradox. But this paradox breathed and walked, and the distance he covered must have been some thousands of miles. This was Philip Lorimer (1843-1897), born in Madras, educated at the University of Edinburgh, an immigrant to Australia in 1861, a staunch Presbyterian who gave up a job on a station on the McIntyre rather than kill a bullock on Sunday, a drover in the Gulf country who saw two-thirds of Burketown die of fever in 1866, a wandering minstrel who crossed mountain and plain in Victoria and New South Wales, a hermit who lived for weeks on end in a cave in the Blue Mountains, a tireless versifier who wrote for newspaper editors in country towns, a friend of Henry Kendall, an identity known to hundreds as Phil the Poet, and in all an independent individual lovable "old" man of much greater interest as a personality than as a poet.

Many of his poems were collected after his death by his sister. About half are reflections; the other half are classed as narrative and descriptive. But the classification is misleading. Lorimer must have known the eastern States as few other men, but when he wrote of what he knew we hardly recognise it as Australian. He writes like a Kendall who has not yet learned much about verse:

While the traveller's joy, with its small purple flower,
   In a bunch, like an amethyst spray,
Is blooming o'er logs, to remind us of power
   That has withered and crumbled away!

The most actual of his pieces is one of his few comic poems, written and recited at Bowen Downs in 1867:

Queensland! thou art a land of pest:
   From flies and fleas we ne'er can rest.
   E'en now mosquitoes round me revel;
   In fact they are the very devil...
   The scorpion and the centipede,
   And stinging ants of every breed,
   Iguanas, lizards, and poisonous snakes,
   Deadly fever with the shakes...

and so on through a catalogue worse than Egypt's seven plagues. Lorimer loved nature — but in the South, not in Queensland. And even then he was unable to put all his feelings into words. There is more poetry in his life than in his verse.
If a woman goes overland from Bourke to S.W. Queensland, a distance of some two hundred miles, and lives for years on the Paroo on a lonely station, sometimes by herself, then her first book of verse, we may think, will deal with these experiences. But Where the Pelican Builds (1885) does nothing of the sort. Mary Hannay Foott (1846-1918) came from Scotland to Victoria at the age of seven, and made the overland journey mentioned above in 1877. And yet in that little volume only a few poems reflect the actual life she knew. Most are public poems, and the figures she celebrates are distant in time or place or both — The Virgin, the River Jordan, David and Jonathan, Napoleon III, and Dickens. It is not until her second volume, Morna Lee (1890), that the Australian background really enters into her verse.

She will be remembered for the poem that gives her first book its title. The reference is to the legendary land far to the west of the settled areas in Queensland.

The horses were ready, the rails were down,
But the riders lingered still . . .

They had told us of pastures wide and green,
To be sought past the sunset's glow;
Of rifts in the ranges by opal lit;
And gold 'neath the river's flow.
And thirst and hunger were banished words
When they spoke of that unknown West:
No drought they dreaded, no flood they feared.
Where the pelican builds her nest!

The title poem of her second volume is a bush ballad, full of action and excitement, but in a smoother and more sophisticated style than the general run of bush ballads. It tells of John Warriston and his wild mare, which he had watered and saved in drought. When he is lying injured, she stops a stampede of the mustered stock and so saves the fortunes of the station for Warriston's child.

In descriptions of the outback Mary Foott gives us both pictures—in time of drought:

The rushes are black by the river bed.
And the sheep and the cattle stand,
Wistful-eyed, where the waters were,
In a waste of gravel and sand . . .

and after rain:

Fresh leaflets tinge the gray gum's crest;
Young grass makes green the russet plain;
Again the wild duck seeks her nest;
The bell-bird's note is heard again.
Her hopes for the future of Australia extend to poetry. When the years of pioneering are over, then we may expect our singers:

When the toilsome years of her youth are o'er,
And her children round her throng,
They shall learn from her of the sage's lore,
And her lips shall teach them song.

Mary Foott is probably our most musical poet of the bush.

Most descriptive poems dealing with Queensland picture the coast or the Downs or the green North or "the bush." The desert or near-desert areas have not figured largely in our verse. The best known examples of such poems are those of Ernest Favenc (1846-1908), who wrote of the dry areas with an unrivalled knowledge. Born in London, educated in Germany and Oxford, he came to Queensland in 1863. He was something of a pioneer, and some of the north-western pastoral lands were opened up by him. As an explorer he travelled from Blackall to Port Darwin in 1878 and in 1882 covered part of the Gulf country.

From those experiences come lines like these:

I had ridden far over the countryside,
Where all things living had drooped and died,
Where the soil was blasted, the land accurst,
Its veins licked dry by the sun's fierce thirst.

In a Preface to *Voices of the Desert* (1905) Favenc describes the essential quality of the scene:

In these districts . . . where — if untouched by fire — the spinifex piles itself up in great banks, as impenetrable as a barbed-wire entanglement, the striking feature is the absolute and utter stillness that prevails. If there is such a thing as darkness which can be felt, then the Australian desert possesses a silence which can be heard, so much does it oppress the intruder into these solitudes . . .

A land such as this, with its great loneliness, its dearth of life, and its enshrouding atmosphere of awe and mystery, has a magic of its own, distinctly different from that of the ordinary Australian bush.

The titles of some of the poems indicate Favenc's attitude: *The Desert Ghosts, In the Great Drought, Dead in the Bush, A Bush Tragedy*. He does not indulge much in purely descriptive verse: there is mostly some narrative, some incident that concerns the human intruder. We see this in *In the Desert*:

A cloudless sky o'erhead, and all around
The level country stretching like a sea —
A dull grey sea, that had no seeming bound,
The very semblance of eternity . . .
Almost it was as if my steps had strayed
Into some strange old land or unknown isle,
Where Time himself with drowsy hand had stayed
The shadow on the dial.

Time and Death are the companions of men on the track,
and only occasionally does Hope enter, and then often to deceive. It is a grim picture. There is enough of it, and Favenc gives the impression that he recognises a good theme for poetry and is not going to waste any of it. Only occasionally does he offer anything cheerful:

The time grows near when the low bare hills
Will echo the songs of a thousand rills.

This glance at the future of the artesian basin is one of his rare efforts to break the gloom of his sombre descriptions.

On the other hand, a man may work in the bush but not be interested in it as a subject for poetry. This happened with Frederic Charles Urquhart (1858-1935), born in Melbourne but, unfortunately, educated in England. Back in Australia he came to Queensland, joined the North Queensland Mounted Police, and ultimately was appointed Commissioner. For a period he was Administrator of the Northern Territory.

Of the twenty short poems in his thin volume, *Camp Canzonettes* (1891), only five deal with Australia and only two of these have the real scent and flavour of the Queensland that Urquhart knew. The rest of the poems are the debt he paid for his years in England. They are full of what young women once used to think was essentially "poetry" — soft effulgence, roseate dawn, the glorious orb of day. In this belief poetry consists in not naming things.

Urquhart as an official was concerned with the myalls, whom he sometimes had to discipline. Perhaps as a result his *Told by the Camp Fire* gives us an incident in which the aborigines are guilty. The old bushman brusquely puts aside pleas for tolerance: let them hear his tale, he suggests. And he tells how he returned to his home to find his family butchered:

Sal were a-lyin' foremost —
With her head agin' the door —
All cut and hacked to pieces,
And her life-blood on the floor . . .

And the kid were there, half roasted
In the fireplace at the side;
I've allus hoped he weren't put there
Afore his mother died.
The troopers pursue the tribe and surround the camp:

There were eight of them native troopers,
And me and their boss made ten;
And the mercy them devils gave to Sal
Were the mercy we showed then.

This is a sidelight on the brutal aspects of pioneering that we have often tried to forget.

Australian and immigrant poets have both loved and hated the outback, nor does their attitude seem to depend on their birthplace. One immigrant, at first indifferent, afterwards for the most part hated what he saw. This was Arthur Bayldon (1865-1958) who wrote two volumes of verse before he set foot in Queensland. He came from England in 1891 and spent about nine years in Brisbane before going to N.S.W. He published a third volume, *Poems*, in 1897, and very little of it is about this country. Except for a section which he says was written on a Queensland beach, we should hardly guess he had left England. These lines deal rather harshly with crabs, which are portrayed as feasting on a "poor drowned mariner."

Down they hurry eagerly,
Chittering with ghoulish glee;
They have smelt the tainted air
From that body rotting there.
How they twitch their claws and pry
Into each distorted eye;
How they spit on him with spite
As their nippers pinch and bite . . .

Bayldon's later verse has more connection with his new background. In *The Western Track* (1905) he paints the west in colours even more gloomy than those that Lawson uses. There are a few poems where he is joyous —

"Tis spring again
Miraculously fresh and new:—
Washed by the rain
The sky melts into seas of blue.
Wattles afire
With yellow torches scent the air,
As though a choir
Of angels had been resting there —

while in *The Lay of the Swimmer* the poet (who used to give exhibitions of fancy swimming) expresses his elation in the waves: but otherwise he is sombre, and shows the track filled with derelicts and hoboes and malingerers:

Luny swagmen, sneaks and spielers, cripples heaping groan on groan;
Ugly gaol-birds wanted somewhere, white-haired hatters all alone.
Like Lawson he mocks or sneers at the townsman who thinks that life outback is a sort of idyllic holiday. Even when he writes of the shearing shed, a subject that most other poets treat as either a cheery or a robust scene, Bayldon pictures a grimy hell that a man is well out of:

Then oh! for a roaring song, my lads, as we shout a fierce farewell
To the bumptious boss and the stinking shed and the cook's cracked bullock-bell,
To the fly-soup tea and sodden cakes and the lean chops dried to rags,
To the broiling bunks and the greasy duds and then, lads, roll the swags!

The more Bayldon saw the more jaundiced in outlook he became. Perhaps in his verse he took revenge on the land for the lack of appreciation its inhabitants gave his poetry.

A much more thoughtful poet, who deals with the bush through contrast, with pity and pride and a subtle insight into its influence, is Vance Palmer (1885-1959). He is in literature an example of the tried and tested professional. Educated at the Grammar School, Ipswich, he later worked at journalism and teaching, travelled widely on the continent and in the two Americas, served in the first World War, and has left his mark in almost every class of writing.

Neither of his two volumes of verse has been reprinted. When we look at other verse that has become popular, we can only wonder. For Palmer has always had a critical sense that forbids him to write what is not competent. Some of his poems are more than that. He has a reverence for our forbears:

Slow sinks the glowing flame and fades the ember,
No bright star flickers and the woods are stark,
But still our children's children will remember
The swift forerunners, bearers of the ark,
Who lit the beacons in the uncharted dark.

The land where they ventured was forbidding. Here Palmer exhibits two aspects of his reaction: the desolation of land in drought overwhelms the observer; the recovery after rain restores the soul.

I have known parched and desolate land,
Scarred by the sun, bleached by the drought —
A tawny stretch of blistering sand
All pocked with shrubs and twisted trees —
Turn to a rich tumultuous plain
Aglow with green life's ecstasies
Suddenly in a night of rain.
He makes the contrast (also made by Paterson) between town and bush, but he is subtler:

When I pass down the roaring street
A torpor steals on sense and mind,
So many moving shapes I meet —
All of them deaf, all of them blind.

But here, amid the soundless Bush,
Where not a face but mine appears,
A dead twig snapping breaks the hush;
And oh! the myriad eyes and ears!

But whatever face it wears, his country is his own, and he is intensely aware of his kinship to it —

Brown, passionate land of mine!

It is not merely a spectacle for Palmer, or a theme for a poem, or a source of emotion for him to feel. He recognises that it has made the men who have worked on it. They in turn represent it, they are enduring and resistant and even harsh like it. And Palmer knows them as his countrymen to whom he is bound by ties that cannot be broken. Others from industry have been branded by their work, but the kinship still persists:

They bear the brand of wrecked hopes and loveless toil and sorrow,
Ironic gods have shaped them to the metal beasts they tend,
There'll be little care for beauty in the world they build tomorrow,
But these are my people, and I'm with them to the end.

And so Palmer's two little volumes of verse are a confession of faith.
POETS owe something to their surroundings, and often they pay the debt with a poem that describes a particular spot. A reader may point to it on a map; and if he were there he could view the scene through the spectacles of the poem. Nearly a dozen Queensland poets give us such glimpses.

Alfred Midgley (1849-1930) had a varied career, and was the most pious of earlier poets. He arrived in Brisbane from Leeds in 1870 and then went north to Rockhampton to work as an engineer. Shortly afterwards he entered the Wesleyan Methodist ministry and served for about eight years in Ipswich, Toowoomba, and Brisbane. He next devoted his talents to business and later to politics. His poems were published in two volumes, Helen Young and other Poems (1873) and The Poems of Alfred Midgley (1908). The second volume was brought out under the auspices of a Publishing Committee, and was edited by E. W. H. Fowles, M.A., LL.B., author of The Workers’ Compensation Act of 1905.

The editor offers brief introductions to the various sections, and he comments on Midgley’s poetic qualities. Thoughts at the Graveside, he asserts, “might have been written by Young, or Montgomery, or Coleridge.” This brief judgment serves to measure the breadth of the editor’s reading (and also its depth), and to give us some indication of his taste. Poet and editor seem well suited to each other.

Midgley seldom dwells long on a particular object. He may start off with it — springtime, wattles, night, Easter, Beethoven, the Celestial Zion, the Talking Gum — but his piety soon leads him to draw a lesson for his readers. This is the case even when he deals with more worldly themes; Queensland, for instance, begins:

Busy streets, retreats of leisure,
Solid, shapely homes of men,
Fanes of worship, haunts of pleasure,
Wondrous contrast — now, and then!

But it concludes with advice to the reader.

The Publishing Committee in its wisdom decided to help Midgley’s poems with illustrations. Suburban Eventide —

Adown the river on the ebbing tide
The throb of steam-tug vibrates on the air,
With steady speed the tug and coal punt glide,
To city wharves and shipping waiting there —

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is accompanied by a photograph of the Public Library and the nearby waterfront — all much the same as now, except that the funnels of today's steamers are shorter. Similarly *The Exhibition*—

The spacious aisles with treasures filled—

has a print of the Museum, again much the same as now, an edifice in late Victorian enlivened discreetly with Byzantine.

We may sum up in the words of praise by the editor, who says that the volume "would make a handsome birthday present, and should find a welcome in . . . every Sunday School library in the Commonwealth."

Emily Coungeau (1860-1936) left poems on some half dozen Queensland spots and noted also where she had been in N.S.W. and South Australia. Before she came to Australia in 1887 she had travelled on the continent and in the Eastern Mediterranean, and she continued to travel after she arrived in this country. She died in Brisbane, and for some years previously had been living on Bribie Island.

It all looks like promising material for poetry of place. But the poet seldom identifies the spot; even with the help of the title a reader does not get enough exact description to make him say: Yes, I remember that. Perhaps her picture of Brisbane in *The City of the Purple Hills* is as particular as any:

The "Gardens" in such princely beauty set,  
The limpid lake whereon the black swans glide . . .

The river runs a glittering serpentine,  
White's Hill, Mount Cootha, float in violet blue,  
Slowly dissolving to a deeper hue  
When night, all dusky-haired, lets down her screen.

For the most part, however, she dissolves into generalities or reflections. In *Cleveland* we learn

And 'neath the tī-tree's shade, and spreading fig trees,  
The meek kine, lowing, wander at their will.

The Glasshouse Mountains become

. . . mighty Monoliths of Nature's mould,  
Horologues of time and seasons which have rolled  
Ere mortals' drama on life's stage begun.

The most detailed picture she gives is not of a place but a person — the young woman in the fashion of 1927:

Miss nineteen twenty-seven dons  
For morning wear quite simple frocks,  
With one of those small felt Pull On's  
And Arto hose with 'broidered clocks . . .
For dinner-dances she will wear
Metallic lace, or sequined net,
With filmy train, and shingled hair,
Making a lovely silhouette.

In 1924 she wrote a Centenary Prize Poem on the discovery of the Brisbane River, telling of

... Geebellum’s headland rude,
Where Pamphlet, Finnegan and Parsons, lone,
Half dead, by breakers buffeted were thrown...

But, with the “Mermaid” their deliverance came.
The fainting wanderers, their fears allayed,
The “Secret” breathed. The River was surveyed
By Oxley, who bestowed and sealed its name.

Her travelogue poetry gave her considerable satisfaction.

Immigrant poets have not infused their nationality into their Australian poems. Even the early poet Thomas Christie, homesick for Scotland, did not use Scottish dialect in his poems about the Australian scene. When he did write in dialect, such poems were written before coming here or else, if written here, they dealt with memories or persons outside. So when we find a dialect flavour in poems on the Australian scene, we may take some note of it. This happens with Alice Guerin Crist (1876-1941), who came from County Clare at the age of two. In *When Rody Came to Ironbark* (1927) we find Irish idiom, its lilt and turns of phrase, giving the verse a new flavour.

The title poem still is remembered, and is probably her best:

When Rody came to Ironbark, there spread a hectic glow
Around the little township — a dozen years ago,
And the townsfolk were divided, twixt laughter and dismay,
At the roysterin’ ways of Rody — the madcap tricks he’d play.
When whisky-primed and mischief bent, he drove in wild career.
The parson’s sulky hitched behind O’Grady’s brindled steer.
And he and other reckless lads, with laughter, song, and joke,
Made life on earth a burden for all sober-minded folk.

Alice Crist, a teacher and the wife of a settler, knew country folk, especially the Irish and those of her religion. About them and their doings, their gaiety and comradeship, their hardships and piety, she wrote her poems. And from them she renewed the flavours of Irish speech and intonation. She felt it fitted her themes. And the reader feels precisely the same. We may not accept her imported fairies and banshees, but her way of writing has a pity on the one hand and a joyousness on the other that make her quite individual. Her picture of an old Irish-woman musing is as characteristic of her own attitude as any:
DAVID ROWBOTHAM.

VAL. VALLIS
Ah! no, I'm not repin' 
And I love this wide new land, 
And I'm proud to see the childer 
Growin' prosperous and grand, 
But roots strike deep in Irish soil, 
Old memories are sweet, 
And tonight my heart is yearnin' for the cabin I was born in, 
And I smell the reek of turf-smoke driftin' up the city street.

A travelling poet is tempted to become a miniature tourist bureau, leaving behind him en route bundles of descriptive local verse. But a poet with a wider outlook may gather his experiences under a mood or absorb them into a personality. Lance Fallaw (1876-1958), professionally deft, saw enough places to make a voluminous guide-book. A graduate of Durham, he was an editor in South Africa, came to Queensland and worked in journalism for thirteen years (1908-21) in Rockhampton, Charters Towers, and Cairns, and then went south.

He captures some of the essence of each area in his poems, and yet he is not merely a peregrinating poet. A cosmopolitan, at home wherever he finds himself, he manages to treat his travels as life experiences. He is aware of the English love of wandering:

A wider sea, an ampler sky
Bear record of their Odyssey.

And something of this is felt in his poetry. He is a thoughtful poet, skilful enough to avoid the quaint absurdities of some of our early writers, and he has a point of view that holds a composition together. This appears in such poems as Anzac Day. Perhaps The Centaurs best shows the way he links past and present, distant lands and present places, together in a unity. He begins:

Dead race of centaurs, ye have left your heirs.
Then he traces horsemen through the ages — Assyrian, Athenian, Saracen — and moves to those of today:

The gauchos of the pampas, with loose rein
And circling lasso, hand in act to throw;
And, dark at sunset on some lonely ridge,
The boundary-rider of the Austral plain.

As for poems of place, his pictures of the Fitzroy and its low banks, the Berserkers, and the view from the summit, all derive from his Rockhampton days.

You'll come by creek and islet to the bay
Where our calm river finds his seaward way.
Our fair Fitzroy, the noblest stream that fills
His quenchless sources in the Queensland hills.
Nearly all such poems of Fallaw are happy. But in one, a bare bitter picture, he gives us the loneliness of the hut in the outback:

Unchanging as the winter sky,
League upon league the scrub-lands lie . . .

Rarely at times gaunt, grisly men,
Bred to the stockyard and the pen,
Come riding thro' the plain.
Life flickers for an hour — and then
Dies down again.

Fallaw is one of our most competent reflective poets of place. Another journalist who recorded local scenes was Victor Kennedy (1895-1952). He spent some sixteen years in Queensland at Cairns, Brisbane, and Gympie, but it was the northern areas that called forth his best efforts. He wrote a number of patriotic and religious poems, but in these he was much inferior, showing himself strangely deficient in metre and sense.

He has a good eye for tropical luxuriance. In _Farthest North_ he gives us the richness of the Cairns hinterland:

Still I have seen the broad pale moon
Change tropic nights to noon;
And I have seen the summer smile at Cairns and Innisfail;
Lantanas blazed their impudence down edgeways from the heat,
But crotons and hibiscus hearts flushed hot-blood welcomes sweet —
Ah me, when tropic calls ring clear can southern pleas prevail?

Perhaps his best lines, terse as so much of his poetry is not, are those that snapshot as with a camera the sudden coming of storm:

But I have walked upon the streets
Of a far-out jungle town
Where, when the "wet" comes in,
The-rain in steel-broad sheets
Drops like a shutter down.

Kennedy wrote more competently as he went on, but he persisted in writing philosophically instead of giving play to his talent for description. He was led astray by the lure of uplift.

One Queensland poet came to her Queensland themes only after practice in a different style. In a first volume, _The Happy Monarch_ (1927), the tone is nostalgic, looking pensively back on things past — a deserted farm house, an old plough, a closed room — and the style is "poetical" in the fashion of the Australian twenties, full of _dewy, sated languor, purple gloom_, and the other youthful terms that once were current. But in _Queensland Days_ (1944) the Queensland scene is treated in words and idiom that seem more actual.
The poet is Emily Mary England (Mrs. R. A. Anders), born in Townsville in 1899, educated at the Girls' Grammar School in Ipswich, and long a resident of the Boonah district. She has caught our background of inland and coast often with a deft fidelity: sale yards with their

Weather-beaten buyers, sunken-eyed,
Wire-supple, tough as leather . . .

the leisurely yarning of bush folk; an old blind mare —

But when the team goes by, through her great frame
A quiver ripples, and she lifts her head,
Vibrating to that muffled, four-fold tread,
And seems to wait for her familiar name;

Palm Grove, Maroochydore —

Noon drops like a plummet
Where water sleeps and calms,
In all the world's no quiet
Like this among the palms . . .

And the sigh of a dead leaf falling
Out of a dreaming tree
Breaks into the crystal moment
Like the fall of a dynasty;

and, perhaps as solid and tangible as anything she has written, the old salt at Southport —

Old, so old, he has done with the sea,
And she with him. And there sits he
With his deep, sad eyes and his dark, lined face,
Like a stranded mammoth that has no place
In this quiet town, this sober street,
Where children play and neighbours meet.

This language fits its subjects, and the subjects lie under the eyes of us all. But it needs the poet to awaken us, almost indeed to give us fresh eyes.

The poems of R. S. Byrnes (b. 1899) are tinged throughout with religious overtones, a natural enough result of the author's profession: he is General Secretary and Treasurer of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland. Born in Victoria, Byrnes went to school in Melbourne and graduated in Arts from the University of Sydney. In World War II he served in the Middle East. Some of the poems in Endeavour (1954) were written while he was in Syria and Palestine. In Australia he has seen much of the three eastern States. At present he is living in Brisbane and is President of the Fellowship of Australian Writers (formerly the Queensland Authors and Artists' Association).
Like some other poets, Devaney and Haley, for example, he has no great affection for modern experiment in poetry, and his own verse is in the older tradition. A few ballads in his volume, indeed, strike much the same note as the bush ballads at the turn of the century, while *Mining Town* and *Bush Fire* have the same type of vigorous description.

The commemorative and local poems derive from his own experiences. One effective stanza, with its evocative metaphor, comes from *Battle's End*, written in Syria in 1941:

> Thus Life and Death diminished — these to die  
> And we to live, stalks standing in the field  
> Where the rude Harvester had ridden by  
> And made earth stronger with his garnered yield.

Very different, but perhaps more vivid, is the city scene from *To Melbourne*:

> Swift trains on twisted lines at Flinders Street:  
> A fruit-stall with bright oranges, and decked  
> With daffodils: new grass beside St. Paul’s:  
> The soft light in the “Herald” woman’s eyes:  
> Grey evening, and the little water rat  
> That splashed beneath my oar at Prince’s Bridge.

His best verse springs from his impressions of particular events and places.

It is mostly things and scenes of the coast that John Blight (b. 1913) deals with. He came to Queensland at the age of two from South Australia, and has lived here since then. The north he knows from experience: to quote his own words, “... I rolled my swag and went for a walkabout up north for the best part of a year.” From that excursion come his poems on canefields, parrots, termites, waterfalls —

> Here are such simple things, water and rock —  
> A leaning precipice down which an arrowing fall  
> Leaps like a convict over his prison’s wall.  
> What is it, but escape? What but the shock  
> At seeing water escape holds us in thrall? —

A dead tree —

> How would you look in a steel-grey suit,  
> With telephone cups for your pips, and a boot,  
> A tall jackboot of fresh black tar?  
> It’s better you stand in the bush as you are . . .

Those two stanzas are simple enough in structure and meaning, but most of Blight’s poetry is more difficult, full of unusual comparisons, often with phrases and sentences that a
reader has to work at, and often so condensed that the meaning is obscure. He himself has recognised this, and says of his poems:

They have nothing of the clear,
Lyric mask of the lark:
Only the dark.
Sinuous casts of a mind . . .

We can agree with this. He is in the modern tradition, original and individual, but his verse can be crabbed as though he had wrought it out bit by bit. A poet of course does have to labour at details, but the result of all this toil can appear perfectly spontaneous — the art is hidden. Blight's verse only occasionally gives this effect of limpid easy flow, and then it is lighter, less serious work:

I saw the oyster-bird with red cockade-like beak;
White, blue-black, like a tricolour; plump as a chef —
And it could well prepare banquets to last a week.

The reason for the difficulty he presents is that he refuses to be content with mere description: he is always seeking the meaning behind appearance.

If a poet sings of particular spots on the Queensland coast then he is likely to have lived there. Val Vallis was born in 1916 at Gladstone and knew crab pots and fishing boats from childhood. But it is not enough to know a subject. During his service with the Army he wrote verses, but in the fashion of an older orthodoxy. He was fortunate in his critics and wise in his use of them. He developed a more contemporary technique and in 1947 issued his Songs of the East Coast. After the War he attended the University of Queensland, gained a First in Philosophy, and was appointed to the staff. A few years later he went to London to take a doctorate and on his return was made lecturer in Philosophy.

His poems are as full of memories as a net is of fish in a good haul, memories of smells and the sea, of ships and their cargoes and their crews —

. . . sailors,
Rich in the liquor of a new land would pass
By my father's house. The English stokers
Were given to quarrelling; the Germans on the Lahn
Sang folksongs in close harmony —

of the people of the township, and his father weaving nets.

The most vivid poem is probably The Net-Maker:

His hands were delicately fingerling harp-strings
As he leaned above the taut ropes on the fence,
And his ear was low to the float-line, hearing there
In this strange instrument his time-loved song —
The music of flood-tide and shimmering hauls,
Of southerly busters, and the choppy ebb
Against fresh northerlies . . .
All this the net played, his brown hands shuttling
Crab-wise, industriously, across its strings.

This sort of poetry gives a satisfaction that does not come from such poetry as, for instance, this —

He told me of opals that had gleaned
Their reds from a parrot's wing,
And their changing blues and their flashing greens
Right from the heart of spring.

This is in the same volume, but hardly from the same poet. The two poems serve as a measure of his growth. The sense of intimacy with the material in the extract from *The Net-Maker* has a satisfying actuality. When we have finished reading, it is as much ours as it once was the poet’s. Such an evocation of a particular sight on our coast is as tangible as sand, and there is no Queensland verse on the same theme that does this so well.

No other volume of Queensland verse has so devotedly confined itself to an area as *Ploughman and Poet* (1954). In it the Darling Downs is hived. Its author is David Rowbotham (b. 1924), a native of the Downs and a former student of Tooowoomba Grammar School. Teacher, journalist, Commonwealth Literary Fund lecturer, he pays tribute in his verse to memories.

In . . . the confined song I fashion
he creates the atmosphere of field and tree, old houses and old men, dust and smoke and grass, the road into a sunset, and the changes of mood and season of a pleasant land. He is not afraid of the apparently commonplace, for it has an identity:

The trough still squats at the five-ways corner, a lean
Weatherbeaten old fellow, reliable, never clean,
Dribbling in a kindly excusable way
Through plodding hours and the uneventful day.

And the iron lamp-post, relic of romances
By gaslight on the granite seat, stores fancies
Of the 'nineties in its blind head that rusts,
Among the twin willows: one of last century's ghosts.

He has a gentle and adept hand with interiors. The best poem in the book, *The Farmer's Wife*, a poem already well known, is of this kind. Another is *The Kitchen*, the last stanza of which gives us the wife:

Her eyes smile through memories of forty years
Of love as the old-fashioned clock with its scratchy chime
Hoards another hour with those gone by
And the calendar counts another day in Time.
It is pensive and slow-moving poetry, ruminative like the persons in it. Only occasionally does he move outside this circle of calm. One poem where he does, *The Green Wave*, is so good that it must be given in full:

The green wave stood upon the rock,
And the dark rock raised the green to white,
And the white arched like the neck of a snake
And struck, and all the world was white.

The green wave stood upon the sand,
And the sand held up a thousand bells,
And each bell broke like an opening hand
And sang, and the whole world showered bells.

The green wave stood upon my brow,
And soul went out to venture sleep,
And waves . . . waves . . . fell walls of snow
And roared, and all the world was sleep.

This will probably become an anthology piece.

His second volume of verse, *Inland* (1958), despite its *Mullabinda*, a grim powerful terse narrative, contains no poem quite the equal of this.
IN THE OPEN AIR

Almost all poets pay some tribute to nature, no matter what kind of poetry they write. It may be part of their inspiration even when they are writing of their own emotions, or it may enter as confirmation or contrast. The following poets do not deal much with particular spots or with what is loosely called “the bush”: they have a more general indebtedness.

In this group may be included Emily Bulcock (b. 1877) (sister of Vance Palmer), though her first volume, *Jacaranda Blooms* (1923), contains many poems on persons and places and events. These range from Ross Smith and Essex Evans to Caloundra, Mother’s Day, and Anzac. In her second volume, *From Quenchless Springs* (1945), she is more lyric and reflective, a poet of faith, loving and seeking beauty in all its forms.

Her memorial poems to our dead soldiers contain those feelings that women are especially likely to experience — grief and pride and, combined with these, a sense of the loss and a questioning of the gain. The best lines she has given us are those on Anzac, from her poem *Rosemary*:

> Was it so bitter in the glow of youth  
> Sudden to lay half-tasted pleasures by?  
> Dare waiting Death — as few have dared to die?  
> You have not known the slow years slay the truth  
> Of boyhood’s promise; nor the hopes o’erthrown  
> That they, your living comrades, since have known.

Colour plays a large part in her poems, and when she expresses her delight in nature she turns in particular to flowers, to such blossoms as those of the bougainvillea and poinciana. A few lines serve to show this love and to illustrate her power to give us the sense of place:

> Here parrots flash, their rainbow colours burning,  
> And strange birds, mad with music, midst the green,  
> Sing this new loveliness our hearts are learning;  
> O soft mysterious beauty Heavenward yearning!  
> O shining wonder that is Lake Barrine!

One poet, alive in every one of his senses, responded to the things of earth and wrote poetry that is a sort of pagan hymn. This was Brian Vrepon (1882-1955), whose real name was Benjamin Truebridge, born in Melbourne, educated at the University there, a musician at one time on the Staff of the Con-
servatorium. Later he spent some fourteen years in New Zealand. His Queensland years were from 1930 to 1943, and he passed them mining in the Gulf country and teaching music in Brisbane.

He has a sort of piety, a sense of earth's holiness. War, a crime against mankind, is also a violation of the earth, which brings forth grass and tree as well as man. When he describes nature he looks often at things in detail — mushrooms, grapes, jacaranda blooms, the feathers of a magpie.

He is also a philosopher, brooding over the significance of our life and our relations to nature. His response to beauty is felt in *Jacaranda*:

```
The red geranium throbs my throat,
The lily quiets my blood,
Spears of the ripening oat
Prick love and faith to flood.

But you, O lady of the hill,
You came so sudden ware
Upon my sight, my heart stood still,
And I could only stare.

Your purple swept me into flame
From smoulder of my years,
And like a great wind, passion came,
Though perilous to tears.
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These sensations and emotions are very intense in Vrepont. In one poem, *Blind*, the sense of beauty is shown as giving sight:

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A blind man came to a lilac-tree,
And the scent of it made him see;
He stretched his hand through rusted bars,
Swiftly and joyously.

So passionately probed his sight
With lightnings through his night
That superhumanly he saw
In supernatural light.
```

It is not surprising then that a poet like Vrepont, in his prize poem *The Miracle*, should take for his theme the revolt of the earth against man's abuse of it. Man has a choice, and his choice of Life instead of Death wins back the response of the earth. He is saved for a time, but his darker instincts still threaten his future, while Life gazes on the evolutionary process:

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Still on the mountain stands the peerless one,
Still slinks in jungle depths the changeless ape,
On the vast loom of Time's unhaste is spun
A creature conscious of its final shape.
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This is Vrepont’s most ambitious and successful poem.

One might think that a poet able to turn his pen to description and lyric and epigram with professional competence would develop an inner confidence. But a poet who knows his limitations and recognises how difficult good poetry is can never feel really assured. Paul Grano (b. 1894) laments that

My heart is a barren land where no sweet waters run, and it is to be counted to him for virtue. He has always, he writes in his Note to Poems, New and Old (1945), worked slowly and laboriously over his verse. He was nearly forty when he came, a law graduate from Melbourne, to live in Queensland. Before that time he had written little verse. Since then he has produced four volumes, only the last being a sizable book.

He is, with Haley, a neat and caustic writer of the short pointed poems we call epigrams. In H. G. Wells to the Devil he puts one case:

Sir, as scientist
I must insist
You don’t exist.

In the reply of the Devil he puts a better one:

Sir, I must insist
as scientist
you don’t exist
and, no kid,
you never did.

There are others, for instance a comment on the Tourist Bureau, as good. But Grano’s most ambitious and best poems are those where he tries to capture what he sees and what he feels — “an illumination, an inflow of grace.” He searches for Truth, Beauty, and God. And like an honest poet he knows, as he searches for the reality and the words for it, that what he puts down will not be what he wants to:

all life will Beauty fly me,
leaving pale hints of its passing —
still pools rippled by leaf-fall,
storm-scud swifiting wild skies . . .
sowing shadows of its shadow . . .

But a poet does what he can, and in Country Funeral he reaches to the simplicity of the little white procession in the dusty road. In another poem he offers us Cleveland —

... its flat farms
prinked with neat beds
of French beans and beetroot . . .
the sea ever speaking at its back door —
in an attempt to transfer homely charm. Another detailed picture is that of Samford, some twenty miles from Brisbane:

> Bloodwood and ironbark keep the road's edges,  
> till with a last run it bursts to the bridgehead  
> and wins to the paddocks,  
> where on the right hand  
> stands a lone willow,  
> yellow, O yellow,  
> sharply autumnal in alien graces.

All his descriptive poetry is his attempt to attain what he calls “the sacrament of Beauty.”

For some poets nature is a source of truth. It has its own place in their poetry, where it serves to point a moral or reveal some insight hidden until then. The most consistent user of nature in this way is Doris Waraker (b. 1894), born at Gayndah, educated at the Girls’ Grammar School in Brisbane, and then an acute and responsive film and dramatic critic.

She has published only a small volume, *Songs of Sun and Shadow* (1928). She belongs to an older school of writers who rely on words that are almost entirely suggestive in value — *bright, divine, calm, tender* — and who find nature a consolation. Each of her poems falls into two parts. The first is a passage of description; the second is an application. Nature is used first because it is beautiful to the eye, then secondly because it is valuable to the soul. So we might expect, and indeed we find, that even the more awe-inspiring aspects of nature are softened in order that the poet may derive a kindly lesson from them. In a gentle poem, *Wind and the Rain*, we have

> The song of the wind as its sings all day  
> In the echo of creeks that creep and croon  
> In distant hills that are cool and grey  
> When shadows deepen to afternoon.

Later in the poem she derives comfort from what she has observed.

Most of her poems are general pictures of the Queensland scene. Her best picture of a particular place is one of mists on Buderim Mountain.

One of the most individual of these poets died young, a prisoner of war in Burma. James Picot (1906-44) came to Queensland at the age of seventeen, and worked on a farm on the Darling Downs. During that period he gained his knowledge of the West that appears in some of his poems:
Dogs fear, behind an emu in that country,
The heavy threshing pads; a rabbit often
Is fox-mauled in the Trap, or possum-hair
Plays warm into your hand; you'll snare a cat!

But this, the settled mind of all the West,
Through that delicious winter to the storm-time,
The Young Year, black and lightened, runs, is legend.

Later he came to Brisbane to the Teachers' Training
College and the University, where he took honours in Philosophy.
Erratic, oddly learned, unpractical, with little apparent heed
for any morrow, he talked and wrote. His poems bear the
brands of T. S. Eliot and Gerard Manley Hopkins:

the dove,
Intolerably mellow;
Call, fall, trill, whistle, water-tumble telling
Love . . . to his fellow.

At the same time he is no mere mimic, and can write in his own
fashion. In 1941 he left with an A.I.F. contingent for the North.
Some of his best verse vanished with him. A selection from
manuscripts was made by C. B. Christesen and issued as *With
a Hawk's Quill* (1953).

Some of his most vivid lines come from his acquaintance
with the farm people and the farms:

Come prodding
Jerky geese, and pass the uncertain door
To poke for scraps upon her earthen floor.
Beyond the green, the writhe-n-timbered plains . . .

He had not only an eye for the oddity, but an ear for the
individual tone of voice, and he could put down dialogue that
reads like something overheard. Experimental and not yet sure
of the path his poetry was to take, he has left us hardly more
than some bright promises.

In some poets nature is fused very completely into the
verse. This is true of the poetry of C. B. Christesen (b. 1911),
a Queenslander by birth and education. He came from Townsville
to Brisbane while still a child, attended the Brisbane High
School, and was a student at the University.

In *North Coast* (1943) and *South Coast* (1944) the
names are a little misleading, for the poetry in them is not set
description of the coastal areas he has lived amongst, but lyric
verse. The nearest he gets to descriptive poetry is in lines like
these:
Night, and stars ensnared
In hairy casuarinas;
Wild-winged gulls scream past the honeysuckle-trees;
Beach crabs tear at the pungent wrack,
And the surf roars,
The stars shine,
And winds blow fresh from the sea.

But even then he is concerned with the mood such sights and sounds evoke. The background, especially in these lines, is well caught. In other poems the scene is worked into the theme, is a part but not the main part of what he is saying. Among his best brief lyrics is *Springtime Out of Season*:

Inform chrysanthemum
Of news that winter's come.
How d'hi's burst forth
As cold drifts north.

Springtime out of season;
Sunshine — why, there's no reason!
But cobalt sky,
The gold, and birds, all testify.

This is small and bright as a jewel.
THE lyric poet takes for his theme himself. A brilliant visitor to Brisbane, enormously concerned with himself and at the same time devoted to the cause of socialism, appeared here in 1885, stayed for a few years, went to Sydney, came back for another few years, and left for England in 1889. There he shot himself.

This was Francis Adams (1862-1893), born in Malta, educated in England, consumptive, gifted, intense, charming, and to the end master of his own fate. He came out in the hopes of regaining his health, and wrote novels, plays, criticism, and poetry at a feverish rate as if recognising that he did not have much time left. Most men he pitied as unhappy slaves of a system that he hated. He pitied, but he does not seem to have loved very much. He thought Australian writing poor, Australian taste materialistic. He knew very little of the land outside the capital cities where he lived and wrote, and though he had some faint hopes for the future of Australian democracy he found even that corrupted. Here he pictures the outcasts in a city:

Here to the parks they come,
The scourings of the town,
Like weary wounded animals
Seeking where to lay them down.

His hope is in rebellion: in Australia,

To wealthy cliques and gamblers and their slaves,
The huckster politicians: a poor Land
That less and less can make her heart-wish law.
Yea, but I see a land where some few brave
Raise clear eyes to the struggle that must come,
Reaching firm hands to draw the doubters in,
Preaching the gospel: "Drill and drill and drill!"

All that Queensland could do for him was to offer him the solace of beauty in flower and river, and on these he wrote some verse. On Brisbane he had something of the effect of a hawk on sparrows.

The note of pessimism is heard in Australian literature in the Nineties, especially from those who depict the grimness of the outback. A personal pessimism must spring from some other source. In Francis Kenna (1865-1932) a reader suspects
that it is something of a literary pose. Kenna’s life was nearly all passed in Queensland. Born in Maryborough, he was in turn a postal official, a teacher, and an editor in Brisbane, Charters Towers, and Bangalow in New South Wales.

He does not tell us clearly why he is sad:

I had a hope, and in that hope have toiled;
I had a faith, and of that faith am foiled;
I had a dream, and all my life was spoiled.

He has a vague hope in the future —

I know the winds are blowing,
I know the tide is flowing,
I know that Truth is growing
Through all her thousand throes —

but the present dismays him —

But now, like sad seas sobbing
‘Gainst bold, black headlands strong,
I hear the world’s woes throbbing
Against the shores of Wrong.

These come from Songs of a Season (1895), and that season was prone to melancholy, in England certainly, among some poets. Kenna may have been influenced by them. In his second volume, Phases (1915), he indeed writes imitations of some poets — The Philosophy of the Steak, which is a skit on Fitzgerald’s Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, a sea poem that recalls Coleridge’s Ancient Mariner, and a monologue that is rather like Roderick Quinn’s Currency Lass.

This last is among his most effective poems. A woman once betrayed revenges herself on society by ruining men. The poem shows her brooding, unrepentant, over the past. The last line comes with the force of a blow, and we realise where she is and what her fate is to be. The last two stanzas run:

I lie all night with straining eyes and wait
The face of Death, the Warden at the Gate;
I hear the tolling of the prison bell,
I hear the clanging of an iron gate.
I hear a sentry back and forward swing,
Upon the granite floors his footfalls ring,
And in the angle through the prison bars
A sound — O God! a sound of hammering.

One is left with the impression that Kenna probably enjoyed his melancholy, and that in one poem, The Gentle Pessimist, he may have been glancing humorously at himself:

I don’t want no occupation,
Graft is mostly pence and kicks,
I’m agin the whole creation,
That’s my creed and politics.
Probably the best is *The Hut by the Tanks*, a ghost story set near Helidon on the Darling Downs. There are not very many good Australian ghost stories, and this must rank high among them.

Practically all the tales of Adams are a bit off-centre. There is some oddity of personality or incident in each — slightly abnormal killings by aborigines and of aborigines, ghosts or inexplicable happenings, people who act queerly and seem fey or perverted, madness caused by strange deaths.

Adams has a style much more professionally competent than that of others of the time, and this together with his odd themes lifts his work out of the ruck. His stories are not like any others except perhaps the shorter ones of Ernest Favenc.

In his stories, as in his poems, Ernest Favenc tends to stress the grimness of the Queensland outback. On the other hand, three of the seventeen tales in *The Last of Six* (1893) are comic. The rest have as ingredients the ghost or supernatural motif, the relations between settlers and aborigines — generally tragic — some mysteries, and the endurance test of men in the desert or far western areas.

The grimmest, perhaps, of these is the title story, which deals with the fate of six who escaped from the French penal settlement on New Caledonia in a small boat. It opens at the end of their voyage on the mangrove-flats of Northern Queensland not far from Cooktown. Two men and a woman survive — the others have served as food. The two men then kill each other, and the woman with satisfaction watches the bloated corpse of the murderer of her child float down the stream. So she alone remains, the last of six.

In another collection, *My Only Murder* (1899), Favenc decreases the proportion of outback gloom, and gives us six ghost stories, some comic incidents, a few domestic tales, some crime and detection, and only a few stark outback stories. Here we find the usual disillusioned picture of women of the West:

His wife had, of course, degenerated into the usual dried-up mummy of the bush, with washed-out eyes . . .

Queensland as a setting does not play a big part in this volume.

Favenc as a storyteller is less expert than Francis Adams, and he can less easily arouse tension or produce a spine-chilling atmosphere. But he tells his stories without the preamble that Adams employs, so that they are only about one-third the length — grim vignettes that have been undeservedly forgotten.
OTTO'S LAND AND ITS WRITERS

VANCE PALMER

JUDITH WRIGHT
Very different is the mood of Mabel Forrest (1872-1935) (née Mills), born on the Darling Downs, living her life in Queensland and escaping from it in her poetry. She starts with an everyday object — a red broom handle, a taffeta dress, a brass door knocker, a black cat — and is transported in fancy to the strange or the romantic. The string mat in the nursery becomes a dream barge, and she travels to the Mysterious East:

A little Nubian boy, so black
From small flat feet to bullet head,
Carries a bowl of scarlet, filled
With snowy milk and floating bread;
And pecking with pink beaks at it,
Blue pigeons on his shoulders sit.

That is a characteristic passage — full of colour, and rather like a miniature dramatic scene or tableau.

At other times she tells of the past — Kings and Queens, witches, courtiers, plots, highwaymen, proud ladies. The number of kisses in her poetry is very large, and they are generally passionate and long-remembered.

About her own land she wrote little, and when she did her fancy embroidered the theme. In Queensland Woods she writes:

The brown surveyor's axe has cut a shield —
The curling bark makes haste to heal again —
Small ficus plants have climbed, with emerald coins
Plastering a grizzled trunk, and flowering vines
Have decked the grimmest boles to carnival.

Which is actual. But then hamadryads and goblins and elves enter, and we feel rather far from what we know. She was a poet who looked on her surroundings mainly as points of departure for a world peopled by her imagination.

Probably the most puzzling of Queensland poets is William Baylebridge (1883-1942). His real name was Block-sidge, and he issued some of his earlier volumes under that name. His personality was enigmatic: to some he appeared a complex person, to others a man who assumed a personality as a sort of cloak. His works were numerous, and many were issued privately or in limited editions. He indicated that others were published, but no copies are known to exist. In his writings he seems to be working towards a social philosophy that resembles Fascism, but much of it is rather contradictory. All in all, an air of mystery still clings round his name, and a student of his poetry is left with the feeling that Baylebridge rather indulged a taste for mystification.
He was born in Brisbane and was educated at the Boys' Grammar School. From 1908 to 1919 he was abroad in Europe and served in World War I. He died in Sydney.

To read his numerous volumes in the order of their publication is to trace the development of a man determined to be a poet. He imitated other poets, especially Shakespeare, and constantly revised his work. A new volume, for instance, would contain former work altered together with new poems. His growth was rather slow, and the poems in his early books are defective. The following lines are typical of his practice as a stumbling apprentice:

By Brisbane stream, that ebbs and fills
Through the city of brazen hills,
Full many a jocund flower's there grown:
But like my Love no other one.
I am not afraid to bring her to town:
I brought her from Bundamba down,
My Logan lass, unto the town . . .

It is not easy to classify him. He wrote some good stories in verse, a considerable number of sonnets, some reflective verse, and a fair amount that expresses his theories of life and society. As a writer of sonnets he is our best Queensland poet, and indeed these poems bear comparison with most others of their kind in Australian literature. They deal with a love affair that Baylebridge apparently had. The following example is no. xxvi in his sequence of 123 sonnets:

What shall I tell in her? Her comeliness —
That dark and bright beatitude of brown?
Brown eyes, brown lash, brown sinuous length of tress —
How fair these! Grace she is from heel to crown.
Shall I report the quickness of her sense,
Her thought, in brain less working than in blood?
Or show that trust, impatient of pretence,
E'er pressing to her soul's vicissitude?
Ah, rather, had I due address, would I
Acclaim her sovereign singleness of heart:
None surer beats, I vow, beneath the sky:
Fair, kind, and true, yet true's her loveliest part.
And thus I less lament, unchallenged there,
That less in her I must with others share.

This must strike any reader as being rather old-fashioned in language. Some of the words, indeed, have a meaning that now is practically obsolete; tell, for instance, in the first line means enumerate. And the Shakespearean flavour, especially in the last two lines, is obvious in this sonnet as in most of the
others. Baylebridge certainly had courage to write in this tradition and in such close imitation of his mighty master, for he must have known that readers would compare his sonnets with those he used as models. Under such circumstances it is surprising that his sonnets should still seem so effective.

Some poetry is personal history. Reading it we may trace the growth or decline of a poet's beliefs and spiritual resources. The four volumes of James Devaney (b. 1890) are like a partial autobiography. In Fabian (1923) we have the poetry of a sick man, an invalid in Westwood sanatorium near Rockhampton. Two things chiefly concern him — the thought of death —

In on the morning tide,
Chance waftage of a dim and desolate shore:
A pause, and then — out on the evening tide
To the grey vast, and we are known no more —

and the loss of faith. Bewildered, he questions in turn philosopher, poet, worldling, Christian, agnostic, but their answers do not satisfy him:

Now, with no star to guide, my spirit flees
Beneath black skies, like some lost ship ablaze
Driving through midnight seas.

Even nature has no meaning for him:

But now I hear
Only the witless brook, the bleak-blown tree,
The drench of rain,
And the wild wind, driving across the land,
And the salt wave, dying along the sand.

In the second volume, Earth Kindred (1931), health restored and love awakened have brought about a miraculous transformation. There is no more brooding over death, and nature can now give delight. In The Blue Egg he writes:

Here in my hand I hold
Two little wings to be,
Feathers of greeny-gold;
Latent in this blue gem
An atom of ecstasy
Atilt on a grass stem.

Though the lost faith is not restored, a new consolation replaces it, a pantheism:

Ours is a fellowship with all that is,
Which moves forever on a conscious plan
From slime to germ, thro' lowly forms that pass
Up from the speck of brain that weaves untaught
Webs in the grass,
Ev'n to the yet evolving mind of man.
Unfortunately, as counter to these gains, the poetry is not so intense. It may remind us of the theory that art springs from a wound in the spirit of the artist.

The lost intensity is returning in Devaney’s third book, *Where the Wind Goes* (1939). The poet finds consolation and support in himself: he does not need to rely on nature. Indeed, he is the interpreter, the intelligence that provides meaning in nature:

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That I am one with all beauty,
That all is nought till known by me,
That all it means it means for me . . .
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A fourth book of poems, *Freight of Dreams*, was withdrawn on publication. Its contents appeared, together with some from the first three books, in *Poems* (1950). The new poems have the effect of the second and third volumes fused. Devaney has a greater confidence, he can even afford to write some light verse, and the technique is now more accomplished than before. He still has no answers to his questionings, but he is calm, not despondent or resentful, in the face of the mystery.

Devaney, educated in Sydney at St. Joseph’s College, has lived in Queensland, except for a short period, since 1922. Though he has little patience with modernist tendencies in poetry, he has wide literary interests and is critic, novelist, and lecturer as well as poet. The changes in his outlook are of great interest. It should not surprise us if his still later poetry were to show him returning to the faith he once held.

Except for William Baylebridge, no Queensland poet has devoted so much space to the love of man and woman as Zora Cross (b. 1890). In the volume for which she is chiefly known, *Songs of Love and Life* (1917), she gives us sixty love sonnets, of which the best is probably the following:

```
But, Dear, what will remain of you and me
When we no longer pace the morning here?
When Time has soothed the last unloosened tear
And earth no more extends us charity?
Nature, who loaned us youth and passion’s glee,
Rose cheeks and laughing eyes and scorn of fear,
Will come for them again some distant year,
And what she lent full garner as her fee.

But when some other man, some other maid
Wears your grey eyes and my rose cheek’s soft hue,
Will our strong loves outfill their fragile frames,
And our large thoughts unto their minds give aid?
Ah, no, for never man was loved as you.
Her maid as I, and such love Heaven claims.
```
The volume contains some religious poems, a description or two, and a few mythological poems. But the main interest is the poet's reactions. She is an introvert. This book was very popular and went through three editions in three months and a fourth in the following year. Probably most of the purchasers were women.

In *The Lilt of Life* (1918) Zora Cross turned, in another series of sonnets, to the theme of motherhood. There are forty-five of these, and the tone is more subdued.

Her best verse is in her *Elegy of an Australian Schoolboy* (1921). The level is higher than before, the poet has a firmer control over her feelings, and the effect on a reader is one of greater sincerity. It is a poem of lament, and the attitude is that of a woman — a resignation, a nostalgia, even a half-felt resentment at the soldier's love for England:

```
I have not heard the Channel waters roar
Nor seen old Thames go by
Brown-barged and shouting from full shore to shore
Her hoarse commercial cry;
But I can hear the waters of the creek
Where we played Nelson's fight,
And all the memories of our childhood speak
To me this blue, still night.
```

These are the finest lines she has written, and the elegy is among the best of such Queensland verse.

Few Queensland poets have expressed such a general elation in living as F. C. Francis (b. 1895). Though in *The Crest of the Rainbow* (1943) he may disclaim pretensions —

```
My slender music lives and dies a dream —
yet the sheer joy in life makes him confess
I sing because I have to sing . . .
And ever I follow the beckoning sun
And the moon through the green leaves calling,
With a song for a web of dawning spun
And a song for a soft night falling.
```

Even when he contemplates the ending of life or the brevity of beauty and youth, he soon finds consolation: a star will brightly shine on the grave or flowers will spring from it. This may seem to some rather cold comfort, but the attitude in Francis is consistent:

```
. . . Come not here
With mournful mien and flowers of the dead
But deck the spot with greenness and pass on,
Remembering I loved Australia's skies,
Her little creeks and falls, her singing birds,
Her waving wheatfields, and her high blue hills.
```
Francis came from Victoria to Queensland in 1910. His varied callings have given him a fund of experience to draw on. The Authors and Artists’ Association paid him recognition by electing him President in 1950. A further volume in 1944, *Columbus Journeyed South*, diversifies his claims, for these poems show experiments in technique. Though there may be some decrease in the artless freshness, much of the old *joie de vivre* still persists. It is significant that when he thinks of loss or death, it is in terms of what the living still possess, their joy in what nature offers. The soldier bids farewell, he is

Lost to the creaking saddle, the champing bit,
   The panting bark of a cattle-dog come home,
Lost to the dense green scrub where fantails flit
   And whip-birds roam.

With his vocabulary of rather older phrases Francis greets the joys and mishaps of life with invincible confidence.

Of his time but not concerned with its material natural surroundings is Edgar Holt (b. 1904), who came to Queensland as a child. His chief gathering of poems, *Lilacs Out of the Dead Land* (1932), suggests in its title — with its reminder of T. S. Eliot — the trademark of the influences on him. Again, he wrote in the twenties, when a certain mild violence of language was frequent in many Australian poets who were connected with *Vision*, the short-lived literary magazine of the Lindsay group.

Holt had a University background in Queensland, worked on various Brisbane papers, and then in 1929 went to Melbourne and ten years later to Sydney.

Enigmatic and suggestive, his poems are partly lyric, partly comment. They are the poems of a young man. The influence of Eliot appears rather oddly, among the words that Holt employs, as theme and attitude. The last lines of *World’s End* run:

Like cymbals on metallic moons
the words fall down the hush of space,
beating their questions on the peak
of bloodless stars, and on the face
of pregnant suns, clanging the void,
until their hollow challenge dies . . .
And from the waiting silences
a cosmic giggle shakes the skies.

Eliot has suffered something of a sea-change under the waves of Lindsayan diction. But in spite of his debt Holt has a control over words which make us regret that he did not continue until he found his own individual manner.
If a poet holds a belief intensely, then it may recur in his poetry. Ernest Briggs (b. 1905), in his sequence of poetry booklets, reveals an underlying trust in the importance of the poet's task. As critic of music, art and literature, and as poet also, Briggs (who came to Brisbane in 1931 from Sydney) has a wide foundation on which he can rest his theories.

He insists on the value, supreme above all else, of the daemonic and driving force in genius. He knows there may be a contrast between this power and the often eccentric behaviour of the genius in society. But he considers that if we pay too much attention to this oddity we may not see the genius. There is something in this of the later years of W. B. Yeats, and perhaps of Nietzsche's prediction of the superman, who is not to be bound by the rules that apply to ordinary mortals.

Briggs of course lays no claim to genius and demands no licence for himself; yet behind and through his verse a reader feels an urge to create, a struggling force that may be a torment to a poet. His poems when best are lyrics of this kind. His first book was *The Merciless Beauty* (1943), which was followed by some half dozen others. It is likely that this first volume is still his best. His talent appears sometimes in a limpid simplicity, and this is found in his nature poetry:

A bird flies up from the garden tree;
The tree lets down its heavy scent:
A petal falls, and suddenly
Comes back the beauty of a summer spent.

But his most intense poetry is found when he describes the pressure of genius within the man, or when he praises a particular example. His poem on W. B. Yeats, for instance, jets as though forced from a stored-up fountain of emotion. In the following lines he writes on the man of genius:

For he has gone beyond all mortal
Telling;
Has apprehended his divinity;
He has not any home, nor any dwelling . . .
Who by the inward pressure of that force is thrown
From discontent to larger discontent,
Into extremity of rage, to rage alone
Till all that frenzy is magnificent.

The best of Briggs is this humility — the tribute he pays to the masters of his craft.

In a Preface Martin Haley (b. 1905) says: "Wit has its place in literature." His booklets of verse prove he is right. Something of a wit, very much a member of his religious persuasion, neatly deft in his prose (he has an excellent essay on
Chinese Poetry in Translation in his Middle Kingdom), ingenious and acidic in his epigrams, Martin Haley has issued not far short of a dozen thin books of verse. As translator, teacher, lecturer, poet, he has his own quite individual place.

His favourite model is the Roman poet Martial, a master of the subtle or blunt, kindly or vituperative, and obscene epigram. In short, a mixture of a poet. And Haley in his own line has something of the same flavour except the last. When he translates he captures the point of his original. He has written also some religious poems and some poems of places, but he is best in short pieces.

He can speak from personal feeling:

One sin there is that will not be forgiven
On earth, or even in the courts of heaven.
In hopeless hell they freeze — the dull, close-lipped
Editors who return no manuscript.

And he can be topical and speak for many others. Here is his comment on meteorologists:

Their knowledge grows from more to more,
Till with nice readings, line and law,
With bold infallibility they predict
The weather of the day before.

Sometimes in his tart rejoinders he gives with one hand and takes away with the other:

I'm sorry I called you "idiot".
Come now, let's have a drink.
A habit in a friend unfit,
I'll really have to conquer it —
This saying what I think.

These may seem rather on the surface, with their verbal neatness or unexpected faceabout. But he has an occasional power to get below the surface, and then a little piece of four lines is a whole comment on our society:

We see a hundred beings and say naught,
In strait-laced, careful, city manners sunk.
This stranger winked, smiled, spoke, and so I thought:
"He is so friendly that he must be drunk."

Haley's only Queensland rival in such poems is Paul Grano. His polish and deftness are things rare enough to be valued.

One of the satirists of the Australian civilised wasteland is very much under the influence of the poet who opened up a similar line of country — T. S. Eliot. In theme, if not so much in manner, Joseph O'Dwyer (b. 1912) follows his rather formidable model. And like Eliot he is often obscure, full of allusions
and changes of reference. He writes in *vers libre*, does not avoid unusual words, and sometimes a reader feels that O'Dwyer is a prose satirist who has chosen verse for reasons not very obvious. He was born in Melbourne and came to Queensland when a child. Educated at St. Joseph's, he took an Arts degree at the University of Queensland and taught at the B.G.S., Rockhampton. While he was there he wrote his prize poem, *The Trojan Doom*. In 1941 he returned to Melbourne and served in the Navy.

Something of his academic background filters through his poems. He is a literary disillusioned poet, to whom so many things of everyday life are contrasts with what society professes. They are violent and hateful reminders that the life of the mind and the life of the city can be two very different things.

Perhaps the simplest of his poems, one that hints at his attitude as poet and philosopher to the world he does not really live in, is *Helen in a Tram Car*:

You might have been
I do suppose you were
sixteen. You face had held
the loves and doughnuts of three thousand years
to grave your countenance such calm despair.

For I was dreaming in a staid philosophy
when you disturbed my equipoise
and made me wonder whether I had shaved.

And even this short poem has in its third and fourth lines an allusion to his reading. We may think that much of O'Dwyer's writing, penetrating, oblique, tortuous, still remains uncrystallized.

The best poet living and writing in Queensland, indeed one of the two or three greatest poets to have written in Australia, is Judith Wright (Mrs. J. McKinney) (b. 1915). She was born at Armidale and educated there and at the University of Sydney. She came to Queensland in 1944, worked at the University, then married and went to Mount Tamborine.

She differs from most of our earlier poets, especially those of last century, in two ways. They could imagine poetry to consist in the use of what is called "poetic diction" — words like *e'en* and *twas*, or phrases like *roseate dawn* and *heavenly sphere*; again, they found the Australian background still strange, even though they might be born here — they saw things through the spectacles of English poetry. Judith Wright does neither of these things. She is in addition very completely their superior in sheer skill of writing, in finish, in technique.

In her first book of poems, *The Moving Image* (1946), written before she came to Queensland, she concerns herself
chiefly with two tasks. One is the painting of pictures, full of
images that are most freshly vivid — a horse, a trapped dingo,
a country town, and people such as a remittance man, a surfer,
an old bullocky, or two old sisters and their brother living in an
old house that time is slowly closing in on. *Blue Arab* lets us
see her skill in using words without waste:

The small blue Arab stallion dances on the hill
like a glancing breaker, like a storm rearing in the sky.
In his prick-ears the wind, that wanderer and spy,
sings of the dunes of Arabia, lioncoloured, still.

The small blue stallion poses like a centaur-god,
netting the sun in his sea-spray mane, forgetting
his stalwart mares for a phantom galloping unshod;
changing for a heat-mirage his tall and velvet hill.

These poems make us see things in a way we never did before.
Again, she broods over the folly and waste and tragedy
of the war that is being waged: "liberty is love, and has no
frontiers," and yet men kill for liberty —

Was it for love you gave away your life?
Was it for love you piloted the fighter
and died in the dark sea? Do your scattered bones,
rolled on the chill floors of the shallow Baltic,
accept the sacrifice?

The soldier is gone from the fields he once ploughed, troop trains
move north, dreams of peace and beauty are destroyed.

Her second volume, *Woman to Man* (1949), opens with
poems of pregnancy, the months before the birth of a child, and
the love this awakens. This volume indeed could be considered
a whole book about love in its different forms — of woman for
man, of mother for child, of human being for nature, of love
thwarted or wasted, of love like pity, even, we may say, of love
that links nature together.

The two finest poems are the first in the book (the title
poem), which is probably the greatest of Australian lyrics, and
*The Old Prison*. The latter begins:

The rows of cells are unroofed,
a flute for the wind's mouth,
who comes with a breath of ice
from the blue caves of the south.

Then the image of the bee enters, suggested by the word *cells*
and the honeycomb-like prison.

O dark and fierce day,
the wind like an angry bee
hunts for the black honey
in the pits of the hollow sea.
The prison, once full, is now empty, a dead shell. Those who lived in it have been scattered. The poem makes the contrast between the bees and the convicts, and words like laboured and nest as well as cell link the two ideas together. Unlike the bees, the convicts and their work were barren, and on this note of love thwarted the poem ends:

They did not breed nor love.
Each in his cell alone
cried as the wind now cries
through this flute of stone.

And the last two lines look back to the opening lines. It is a beautifully rounded poem, and though all the words are simple they are woven together to form a complex pattern.

In her two later books, The Gateway (1953) and The Two Fires (1955), the poems do not lend themselves so readily to quotation. In these volumes Judith Wright has turned more and more from the world of natural objects to the world of ideas. She still uses images from nature, but they serve rather to illustrate her thoughts on death and the brevity of living things. Love still remains as a partial answer to these problems, for from love springs new birth, both for us and for the world outside us.

Another problem that she treats, the problem all poets are confronted with, is how to snare in words ideas and things. But while she can give us lines like those that follow — Black-Shouldered Kite — we have no fear that the difficulty is beyond her:

Carved out of strength, the furious kite
shoulders off the wind's hate.
The black mark that bars his white
is the pride and hunger of Cain.
Perfect, precise, the angry calm
of his closed body, that snow-storm—
of his still eye that threatens harm.
Hunger and force his beauty made
and turned a bird to a knife-blade.

The two words in the fifth line — perfect, precise — apply equally to her own evocative verse.

Of all our poets no one, with the possible exception of Christopher Brennan, seems likely to survive by so many memorable lines or by so many poems that we may wish to treasure in our memory.
THE first Queensland novel is set on the Darling Downs in the period just before Separation — *Fern Vale, or The Queensland Squatter* (1862), by Colin Munro. It appears to be a rare novel, for even the Mitchell Library does not possess a copy. Its three volumes run to about a thousand pages, and it is too long. Munro indeed has some trouble in filling his space, for though he occupies the first half well enough with local colour, descriptions of bush life, shepherds' huts, corroborees, floods and droughts, snakes and kangaroos, he has to pad the second half with the scruples of rather high-principled lovers who feel bound by enforced promises to others.

It begins as the Ferguson brothers move into Queensland:

> As the sun sank below the western hills our travellers drew near, by one of the three converging roads, the antipodean town of Warwick.

They encounter a storm —

> When the momentary flashes of light lit up the darkness of the woods, and revealed the naked stems, like argentous columns, supporting the black canopy of eternal shades, they displayed a scene calculated to create in an imaginative fancy the existence of a vast catacomb of departed dryads —

and later the precocious Miss Rainsfield, aged sixteen, who in her speech is almost as formidable —

> "I . . . would think the happiness of a married life depended in a great measure upon a congeniality of temper, mutual forbearance, and reciprocity of kindly feeling, existing between the parties concerned; and that if amiability is allied to impetuosity, or petulance to generosity, the result must necessarily prove disastrous."

These passages give some taste of the style, which is orotund, formal, and polysyllabic (a definition that is rather like most of Munro's writing).

In his preface Munro says he wrote the novel to give some idea of the realities of squatting, to show the real types
of squatters, and to correct the absurd ideas that most English-men had of Australia and its people. So that the novel is partly a guidebook. He gives definitions —

“A shout”, in the parlance of the Australian bush, is an authority or request to the party in waiting in a public-house to supply the bibulous wants of the companions of the shouter—

and even statistics — population of Brisbane in 1846: 500; in 1856: 4,400; in 1861: 8,000.

Munro writes from the standpoint of a very moral squatter, and vents opinions on the right attitude to aborigines and Chinese, bush-publicans, the Masters and Servants Act, Land Laws, and the Demon Drink. His condemnation of bullock-drivers ("some of the most reprobate members of the family of man . . . ignorant in the extreme . . . in the scale of humanity on a par with the aboriginal blacks") is a great contrast to the attitude of Furphy in *Such Is Life* some forty years later.

The novel has then all the defects of a conscious class-attitude, and we have to read it in that light. But it is illuminating in parts, and it can still be read with interest. It is in truth no bad beginning to our fiction.

Another old-fashioned pioneering novel, with an old-fashioned hero, is *Out of the Groove* (1892), by Edward Kennedy. The author spent some years in the North in the sixties and knew the work of the Black Police. This appears in the novel, the hero Bob Briton (a significant name) serving with them for a time. Heroes with such names were frequent last century, and ranged from the physically adventurous, as here, to the markedly religious, as in *Eric: or, Little by Little*, by Dean Farrar.

Briton comes out to Queensland in the 1860's, sees Brisbane —

Brisbane in those days, with its collection of wooden "humpies", galvanized roofs and half-formed streets, bore little resemblance to the well-laid-out town of substantial buildings which constitutes the capital in the present year of grace —

joins the Black Police, later resigns, and begins breeding horses (the well-known 'walers') in the Gulf country for the Indian market. A happy marriage is the reward of some years of honest endeavour.

Characters enter and leave the pages like rabbits from a conjuror's hat, for Kennedy is determined to give pictures not so much of the country as of the colonial types of the period.
He quotes some lines on the Queensland bullocky:

Rough lads were they, most blasphemous to oxen,
Whose eyes and livers all day long they cussed,
Their pastimes, 'drunks', and rough and tumble boxing,
Their highest aim, the money for a 'bust'.

It is a very moral book, and has topical references to freedom of opinion in religion, some sort of Unitarianism being the author's favourite. With such a note of instruction it seems, in spite of the author's denial, a trifle adolescent, and is rather like a book for grown-up boys.

Stories of our outback generally concern life on stations, the enormous holdings of the squatters. More intimate pictures of a rather different life are given by Steele Rudd (Arthur Hoey Davis) (1868-1935). Rudd's setting is the Darling Downs in southern Queensland, where Rudd was born, educated, worked, and to which he returned on occasions after he became a successful writer.

Rudd wrote sketches and anecdotes of life on selections or farms and sent them to the Bulletin. A. G. Stephens later, commenting on On Our Selection, says that it "came to its editor as a gathering of sketches of Queensland farm life. Families, of different names, were shown living in a similar way. By the obvious device of concentrating interest in one set of names, one set of personages: and by arranging some chronological continuity, some climatic effect, the book gained value of unity." From then on Rudd turned out stories of the same kind without apparent effort, some two dozen volumes in all, most of them on much the same subjects.

Rudd's characters, such as Dad and Dave, have become part of the Australian scene. The blurb on a modern reprint says their fame is due to "humour, unforgettable characterization and warm and timeless humanity". The humour we may certainly grant. Rudd could tell a comic incident with liveliness, and if he thought an incident was funny then he repeated it several times. But the two other qualities are hard to grant. The pictures of persons are caricatures rather than characters, and the humanity claimed for them is rather a myth. Some of their fame is certainly due to comic strips, films, stage, and radio. And the dialogue is well caught.

Rudd is as famous as his characters. Here he is fortunate, for other writers have made characters — John Bull, Mrs. Grundy — and only these have lasted. Their creators have been forgotten.
As Rudd went on writing, his characters got less and less lifelike. Parts of the earlier volumes, for instance *On Our Selection* (1899), are actually pathetic:

... the nearest house, Dwyer's, was three miles away. I often wondered how the women stood it the first few years, and I can remember how Mother, when she was alone, used to sit on a log where the lane is now and cry for hours. Lonely! It was lonely.

and again:

... Mother fell sick. Dad did all he could — waited on her, and talked hopefully of the fortune which would come to us some day — but once, when talking to Dave, he broke down, and said he didn't, in the name of Almighty God, know what he would do ...

But in later volumes Rudd turned his characters more into grotesques. (The Lindsay illustrations even from the beginning tended to show them as loony hayseeds.) This means that Rudd's early stories are his best. In them he shows us the struggles, the comic misfortunes, and the mixture of despair and humour with which the farmer meets his setbacks. Rudd's pictures of the "cocky", though overdrawn, are now part of our national heritage.

A complement to Dad, a female counterpart, stands squarely on her feet in the books of Sumner Locke (1881-1917), born at Sandgate. Her three Queensland volumes are *Mum Dawson, Boss* (1911), *The Dawsons' Uncle George* (1912), and *Skeeter Farm* (1915).

The first volume is typical. Instead of the Rudd family there is the Dawson family; instead of Dad, the half-heroic half-comic husband, there is Mum, the voluble, abusive, and dominant wife. D. H. Souter, later the sophisticated and cynical illustrator of the fashionable *ménage à trois* (the cat almost his signature), depicts Mum as a large brown capable robust lined woman. Dawson is slightly bent at knees and shoulders, and seen from the side resembles the letter S. He has hands resignedly in pockets and is a trifle furtive.

Only occasionally could a reader mistake any of Locke's pages for Rudd's. Locke is less comic and less light, she uses less dialogue, and the characters she draws are more grimy and more like sub-species. A passage like the following could hardly be found in Rudd, who keeps his grimness mostly for animals:

"Yer'd better go down and bring yer brothers out've the mudhole," she said in a flurry. "Tell 'em their father's dead; and they'd better hurry if they want to see 'im warm."
Rudd's first person narrative makes the story-teller seem like one of the family. Locke's glance is more from the outside. Here Dawson's clothes are too tight to let him kneel at the wedding:

[Dawson] went quarter way down and stood with bent knees like a frayed horse about to have an attack of string-halt...

Some of her paragraphs are really rather grim. Dawson has broken his back unloading water:

... she shouted, and Dawson heard it quite distinctly, as he was only dead in the centre of his back... She went out of the bedroom after knocking down one of the children that had not recovered enough strength after the fever to stand up properly if anyone bustled past in a hurry.

(Which is nearly as grotesquely cruel as the Happy Family dialogues that have been popular for the last few years: Father, why do I go round and round? — Be quiet, or I'll nail your other foot to the floor.)

One has the uneasy feeling that Locke did not use all her talent. Every now and then there is something in her that reminds us of a greater and harsher figure — Barbara Baynton.

One novelist, who was also a busy journalist and politician, had much to do with Queensland but did not write much fiction about it. This was Randolph Bedford (1868-1941), a member of the Queensland Parliament from 1917 almost to his death.

In True Eyes and the Whirlwind (1903) and in Billy Pagan, Mining Engineer (1911) he tells the adventures of Pagan, his favourite hero. The early section of the first novel, dealing with Billy's boyhood, is nearly as acute and true as Norman Lindsay's Saturdee, thirty years later. But Queensland is more or less an incidental theme in these. The same is true of The Snare of Strength (1905), a story of politics in Melbourne and of mining speculation in other States, Queensland being one. This is probably Bedford's best-written novel. It is full of cynical pronouncements on life —

No lazy woman can be quite virtuous —

and of racy and vigorous pictures of mining life —

A gorilla of a man led this raving mass of energy, shovelling ballast on to the naked new permanent way as if seven devils inspired him and a hundred horse-power engine gave him steam... His arms, long enough to reach to his knees, plied the short shovel with a tireless swing, that distributed five shovelfuls of ballast at every stroke. The measurement of his chest was the measurement of his height — five feet. He spat tobacco-juice in an almost continuous stream, and shovelled, and cursed, and harried, and insulted, and so earned...
his extra shilling a day for making the pace. A brave brute in the clothes of a man; and his only name, even on the pay-sheets, was Tommy the Dog.

Bedford's only real Queensland novel is the oddly named *Aladdin and the Boss Cockie* (1919), mainly set in Townsville and the townships inland from it. Aladdin Biddulphson, ruined on the Sydney stockmarket, goes north, falls in with a theatrical touring company, takes it over, keeps it precariously afloat, and saves it and himself by finding tin and speculating in shares.

It gives an intimate and entertaining glimpse into the working of the old troupes that used to appear in tents and town halls at Show time up to about the twenties, with their tried and tested melodramas and tear-jerkers full of breast-clutching agonies and happy endings. A mixture of farce and fantasy, full of oddities of character and speech, it is not unlike Brunton Stephens's *A Hundred Pounds*, over forty years before, and like it should not be taken to represent its author's real capacity. Bedford is on the spree.

The most evocative pictures of parts of Queensland come from Queensland's most famous literary son, Vance Palmer. He has a background and fund of experience as varied as one could well wish. Residence in England and Spain and Mexico, travels in the United States and Finland and across Russia, service in World War I, and a literary life spread over almost forty-five years since his first volume — this, we might think, should provide enough material for an endless series of novels.

But Palmer shows no signs of wanting to be an expatriate in theme. Basically Australian in his outlook, he has written his novels about Australia, and about Queensland life in particular. He has done more than any other to make us accept without any feeling of strangeness or embarrassment the settings we know. He uses the Queensland outback and the Queensland coast, and in his later novels he gives us pictures of mining and urban life.

His best-known and best novel is *The Passage* (1930), where he takes the Caloundra area for a setting. It is the story of a family, of their relations to one another, and also of their relations to that seaside township. In it he gives us the finest example of what has probably always been in his mind, the subtle linkage between the life of people and the place they choose to live in. It is a matter of sympathy and tempo. They derive a sort of spiritual satisfaction from the rhythm of their
routine and the response that they find in their natural surroundings. It is a harmony, hard to depict and put down in words.

This accounts for what some readers think of as a defect in Palmer — a feeling that things never come to a climax, that events tend to tail off and leave a sense of incompleteness. This, a defender of Palmer would maintain, is just the way life so often seems to behave, and Palmer refuses to modify events to provide the expected satisfaction.

In *Golconda* (1948) he takes us to the Mt. Isa area, and uses it as a basis for a picture of the opposition of the miners to organized capital. Palmer has always had strongly democratic sympathies, but again he refuses to give us falsely happy endings. He recognizes that individual action on a small scale has been constantly yielding to large-scale combinations in modern times, and this is what happens in the book.

His attitude is probably best summed up, with qualifications, in the following words from his next volume, *Seedtime* (1957):

"... agitators are difficult people unless they can learn to adapt themselves. They're necessary before a revolution, a damned nuisance after it's achieved or partly achieved. Ferment has become life to them; they can't stand order, industrial planning, constructive work of any kind..."

This is spoken by Lambert, the Queensland Premier, to Macy Donovan, a union organizer who appears in both novels. The changes in Donovan are part of the theme in *Seedtime*. The rest concerns union affairs, political rivalry, and a love interest. The setting is spread over Mt. Isa and Brisbane and the northern cane-fields. And again, as in others of Palmer's novels, the ending may seem inconclusive to many readers. But that is how life is.

Though Palmer is our greatest Queensland novelist, his short stories are generally recognized as his most perfect work. Indeed, apart from Henry Lawson, he is the greatest master of the craft in Australian literature. The necessity for some point and for a fairly tight structure in the short story has prevented him from diffusing his material. In these most effective tales, of all kinds from the "slice of life" to the well-knit example to the surprise ending type, he has covered most of the varieties the Australian short-story writers of this century have attempted. And oddly enough his short stories seem to have a greater sensitiveness than his novels. Perhaps their brevity has made
him rely more on suggestion than on explanation. At all events it seems very likely that he has influenced by his technique many others now writing.

With Dorothy Cottrell (1902-1958) the setting moves to the west. The most surprising thing about her two Queensland novels is their relative popularity. The first, *The Singing Gold* (1928), is the story of Joan Jerington-Whatmore from the age of about ten to thirty, who tells her own story. It is set partly on a station west of Toowoomba, partly on an island off the North Queensland coast, and partly in Sydney. On the station she loves Jerry Henton, who calls her his Little Comrade. But she marries Clippington Mackenzie, a charming idiot boy, who wears little boots. They suffer poverty in the city, but at last he is run over and in the end she marries Jerry, her old love, who is glad to have his Little Comrade back again. By her first husband she has twins, two little boys.

For most adults this story must in parts be if not unreadable at least unbearable. It is written in a half-cosy half-romantic style that sets the teeth on edge. Very few novels can have the words *little* and *tiny* scattered so frequently through their pages like prunes in a pudding. It should appeal to middle-aged women addicted to romantic retrospection. It was serialized in the United States in *The Ladies’ Home Journal* and was extremely popular both there and in England and Australia.

The other novel is much better but has proved much less popular. This is *Earth Battle* (1930), the story of Tharlane, a far western station that has ruined all its holders. Its destined master at last determines on its conquest: Henry B. Henrics (Old H.B.), the worst man in Queensland, gross, uncouth, brutal, ungrateful, but vital and knowledgeable and implacable, sets out to subdue the killer. And in the end, after heartbreaking effort, he does — only to see all his efforts ruined by a fire set going by a man whom he has unjustly had imprisoned.

There are two fine things in this novel. One is the descriptions, especially those of drought:

... as the sun sank, he became a rosy copper ball hung in a murky-lilac sky, and the wind roared over a world seemingly lighted from within by a strange copper-pink which veiled its grey and hung across every distance ... and then the wind roared on in darkness.

And all the night was filled with strange shakings and beatings of loose things, and with the ceaseless, endless rush of the wind.

The stars were hidden. In grey, dry darkness the wind's bellows fanned the waiting conflagration of the grass.
The other is the gradual rise to the climax. Repeated hints in the second half warn us of the approaching danger, the prisoner now freed who is coming for his revenge. So that everything is set out, as it were. We are warned, and yet we must be made expectant. Cottrell manages this very expertly, and the tension tightens our nerves as it does those of the characters in the book. This novel has had far less appreciation than it deserves, especially if we contrast it with its predecessor.

Another novel of locality is set in the north of the State. Probably the best way to give an idea of this, *The Northerner* (1948), is to say that it is the opposite of any book by Steele Rudd. Rudd's pictures are brief and comic: the picture that Joan Colebrook gives of the Atherton Tableland — Cairns, Atherton, Innisfail, with Mount Bartle Frere rising in the middle — is elaborate and serious.

It is an account of farm life in the 1920's. Richard Cromwell, married, with a family of youngsters, is determined to make his mark. The story tells of his borrowings, his investments, the opening up of the district by a road, holidays, the growing up of the family and their love affairs, and the aging of Richard, who dies at last without realising his ambition.

Except for some passionate love-making there is nothing really exciting in the book. And yet as it continues on its even way it develops a power to hold a reader. He is keyed up to await the turn of events, and he becomes more and more engrossed in the fortunes of the characters. These grow more complex as the story proceeds, and the last half of the book is probably for that reason twice as interesting as the first.

It is very likely that local identities appear in this novel. The Governor, for instance, who pays a visit to the district, almost certainly represents Sir Matthew Nathan, and a very sympathetic and penetrating portrait it is. Perhaps the very best character creation, however, is Michael Marble. The analysis of this young man, frail, timid in some ways, sexually maladjusted from youth, suddenly awakened, thwarted, married unhappily, is something of a miniature triumph. It is impossible of course to be quite sure in these cases, but some incidents in the novel read as if they had come from the author's own experience.

She captures, as well, the atmosphere of the area. There is, for instance, a paragraph describing the gum tree:

It was everything, the end of every Australian scene, the silhouette upon every slope ... And at its best it was a beautiful thing. Its fine greyish down-streaming leaves hung
in clusters from pale branches which seemed to hold so many pastel colours. Its great trunk was smooth and white amongst the blue shadows of early morning and late evening. It was subtle rather than splendid, a ragged giant, a perfect dignified product of time.

Not all her writing can be as good as this, but she has a capacity for selecting and putting down the essential feel of places. This is a novel little known that deserves to be better known.

One of our novelists has stuck to his last. J. E. Macdonnell served for fourteen years in the R.A.N., saw service in both World Wars, and after leaving the sea joined the staff of the Sydney Bulletin. He is still a sailor at heart. All his fifteen novels deal with life afloat, and all bear on them Macdonnell's trademark, the imprint of experience.

When his normal sea-life has not been enough for his fiction, he has won knowledge the hard way: "... he has been catapulted from an aircraft carrier, submerged in a submarine, lowered from a helicopter ... and he's still writing." The claim in the last four words is borne out certainly in his later novels — in 1958 he published four: Frogman!, Killer Ship, Night Encounter, and Bilgewater.

Macdonnell has recognised not only the value but also the interest of technical detail. Coming as it does from a man with his background, it may be accepted as authentic:

Grunting with the weight, he hauled the wire up to Scourge's fairlead, where two pairs of hands eagerly clutched and dragged it through. In a trice the eye was slipped over the tongue of the big towing-slip, the pin put in, and moused securely with seizing-wire.

Now the landlubber is not likely to know any of the terms used here, nor could he perform the operation to save his life. But he reads the passage nevertheless. It is indeed quite surprising how much technicality the average reader can take. And Macdonnell, seeming to sense this, seldom holds his hand.

These novels are quite frankly stories, tales of adventure in wartime. The note of excitement, almost of romance, is struck often at the beginning of a story:

A destroyer is a beautiful brute of a ship, all grace and guts. At top speed she races, her stern packed down under the grip of the screws, twin jets of foam like fire-hoses at her knife of a stem. At slow speed she slides, a ripple at her bow and a slight bubbling at her stern, serving to give an impression of even greater strength than when her screws are thrusting her at thirty-six knots.
A reader coming on that at the very start of a novel, here "Gimme the Boats" (1953), would have to be cold-blooded as a fish not to respond. This novel was Macdonnell's first novel to win a wide popularity. It is easy to see the reasons for it.

His novels must be accepted in their intention, and as such they deliver what they promise — thrills and excitement and some intimate glimpses into a life that few other of our novelists can provide.

The area that Margaret Trist restricts herself to in her short stories remains much the same in the only novel she has written with a Darling Downs setting — *Morning in Queensland* (1958).

One of the themes in this novel, indeed the most important, is an extremely difficult one to handle successfully. It is the development of a little girl, Tansy Strathallan, from the age of five to seventeen, the dubious field of childhood and adolescence, where a novelist's memories are likely to be distorted by a novelist's point of view. And the encompassing theme is not much easier to manage — the daily life of country people on the outskirts of a small township. It seems there is not going to be enough point to make a short story, and not enough body to make a novel.

That is what a reader feels at the start. But it is not long before the even, unhurried narrative takes hold, and then the reader continues as if he were living as the child does. He sees things (so far as we as adults can do) as she does, he responds to people and things and events as she does, he grows aware of implications, of life opening out. It is really an unusual performance, this quiet and unpretentious book.

It is not easy to see how it is all done. One of its secrets seems to be the photographic and dictaphonic memory that Margaret Trist possesses. Another is the use of concrete details, the vignettes of the township, the gossip, the odd characters, the household chores — washing and washing-up and ironing and making beds and woodchopping and cooking — the schoolroom, school reports, the worn weatherboard houses, the dusty streets, the drives in the sulky, visits, making ends meet. Everything is given us, all the innumerable little things that compose the pattern of daily life. And yet we are not bored by it all. This is perhaps due to the double angle of vision: we see things as Tansy does, and we see Tansy seeing things. And the humour is delightful.
There is hardly a false note in this novel except perhaps at the start, where the little five-year-old girl may seem a trifle too mature in her responses. It is tempting to overpraise the book, for the difficulties Trist has to overcome are so obvious. All in all, though, it is a miniature triumph. It is almost certain to become an Australian classic in its kind.
OUR first town novel is the story of Sandle Scott:

He had come to Queensland filled with the notion of making his fortune. He had gone to the Gympenswood diggings, and in six weeks had found himself in possession of two hundred pounds. Just half that time spent in the town of Brisborough sufficed to reduce his entire possessions to his wearing apparel, a red blanket, and a tin pot.

The learned Brunton Stephens wrote this for the Queenslander and reprinted it in a little volume, A Hundred Pounds, in 1876. It is a story of love and intrigue set, as the reader can see, in Brisbane. But the background is slight. Stephens concentrates on Sandle’s faithful pursuit of Mary Drysdale, the treachery of Shiress Braithwaite, climbing the social ladder by his engagement to Charmian Parselle, daughter of a Queensland M.P. who is in the Ministry, and the changing relations of these four. The choice of names is amusing, the events are melodramatic (murder most foul by Braithwaite of his old uncle one stormy night, the discovery by Mary, hands round the throat, sudden rescue of heroine from villain by hero), and the style is formal. All this seems quaint to us now. People last century were not hit — they were struck; a voice could be piteous; and

... in the lurid light the spectral face had flashed on him.

Some of this oddity comes from Dickens, some from the general fashion of the period.

It is hard to say if Stephens had any of his tongue in his cheek when he wrote this novel. Some of the humour is the polysyllabic type that is as old as Charles Lamb and as modern — or as old — as Walter Murdoch, and Stephens here probably knew quite well what he was up to. But other pages read quite serious. It is easy for a novelist to be caught up in his story and to take himself seriously, even though he may have started out more or less playfully. The scholarly Stephens seems to have become entangled in a net of his own weaving.

The second town novel, also set in Brisbane, was written by one who, from practically any point of view, remains the most fascinating of Queensland novelists. This is Rosa Praed (née Murray-Prior), who was born in 1851 on a station on the Logan
inland from Ipswich, and died in England in 1935. Her father at one period was a Member of the Legislative Council and Postmaster-General. Rosa Praed made use of her opportunities in Brisbane and stored up memories of political and social life that she was later to use in her novels. She married in 1872, lived for a time on Curtis Island and in the Gladstone district, and went to England four years later. Except for one visit she never saw Australia again. All her novels she wrote outside this country.

One of the best of these is a novel of political and social life in Brisbane, Policy and Passion (1881). We are introduced to Longleat, a squatter who is Premier of Leichardt's Land (as Rosa Praed spells it). He is infatuated with a married woman, Connie Vallancy. His daughter is infatuated with Hardress Barrington, an Englishman of good family who comes out to make his fortune. People from England are shown as rather despising the new land:

"To the refined Englishman, reared mid the associations of art, literature, music, the drama — accustomed to European luxury, and the charm of congenial society — Australia, if not a hell of discontent, must be a sink of degradation."

But the hero, Dyson Maddox, is a worthy type:

A typical Australian of the second generation, unconventional, courageous and energetic; lacking somewhat the graces of society, but rich in an air of native distinction, and in the chivalry which arises from intuitive good breeding.

He saves the reputation of Honorla when she escapes from Barrington's evil design. Longleat is less fortunate: his convict past is revealed and he poisons himself.

This novel gives us a picture of the social life of the capital and the political quarrels of persons and parties, a picture that her early life made it possible for Rosa Praed to draw. It is likely that in the character of Honorla she gives us a partial portrait of herself and her reaction to life in Queensland. Honorla, for instance, speaks of the contemporary attitude to England:

"To be colonial is to talk Australian slang; to be badly dressed, vulgar, everything that is abominable; at least that is the general opinion. I have seen Englishwomen who talked slang, only in a different way; nevertheless we all tried to imitate them . . . You will see that it is the fashion out here to be as British as possible."

Rosa Praed was an unusual Queensland girl, always in search of some ideal, finding that man was not the answer (her marriage was unsatisfactory), and so turning in later life to spiritualism and mesmerism, reincarnation and "affinities", for
a solution to her questions. At one period she had complete faith in the revelations of Nancy Harward, whom she believed to be the reincarnation of a Roman slave girl named Nyria.

Rosa Praed was a very voluminous writer and produced about forty-five books — novels, short stories, memoirs, romances. About half of them have some concern with Australia either in setting or characters. She leaves the impression of a mystical, yet alert and questioning woman who knew most persons worth knowing, always seeking but never finding because she was not certain what she was looking for. A great deal of her own personality with its doubts and fears found its way into her writing.

Another Brisbane novel, one even more crammed with local colour, is *The Dis-Honourable* (1895). In it John David Hennessey (1847-1935) tells a mystery story. The setting is the great Brisbane flood of February, 1893. The danger is that the novelist may merely spread a narrative on a slice of history. Hennessey, however, uses the flood very skilfully, for the murder and the circumstances going with it all depend on the setting. So Hennessey has it both ways. He gives details that he almost certainly observed on the spot. One occurs when the hero, George Jackson, sees a porter with a broom at the end of the railway platform:

> Wondering what the man could be at, sweeping away there in the rain, he drew nearer, and, to his surprise, observed the railway embankment swarming with cockroaches, centipedes, mice, beetles, and other and, occasionally, more dangerous vermin and reptiles, which were seeking refuge out of the wreckage of the flood. The porter had been put there to keep these pests at bay.

He gives us also some major incidents:

> At a quarter to six o'clock, just as the dawn was breaking, the great iron railway bridge, which spanned the river at Indooroopilly, gave way with a crash and roar like thunder, that was distinctly heard a mile distant from the scene.

And the account of the collapse of Victoria Bridge is full of excitement.

The story itself is highly ingenious. The body of Constant McWatt is found in a punt by Jackson, who is later accused of murdering him. Jackson, with the help of his lawyers, conducts his own defence, and is acquitted. One amusing point is the bringing in of a cockatoo as a witness.

In spite of some rather old-fashioned flavours such as the use of soliloquy and dreams and occasional melodramatic language, this novel can be read today with considerable interest. It gives us glimpses into a past that many living can still recall;
old Sydney House at Toowong, for example, now pulled down to make way for the A.B.C. television studios, is almost certainly part of the setting of the crime. And the ingenuity is no whit inferior to that of present-day mystery thrillers. With a few modifications it might well be issued as a novel written by a modern, and nobody would know the difference.

It was natural that Brisbane, the only sizable town last century, should figure first in these stories. Now we move north. Partly as setting, partly as a sort of rendezvous, the North Queensland port of Bowen appears in *Tom Gerrard* (1904). Its author, Louis Becke (1855-1913), wrote some three dozen books, mostly novels and short stories of the South Seas. Very few of his novels deal with Australia, and only this one novel with Queensland. It is difficult to decide how to classify it. It contains some pioneering on a cattle-station in the Gulf country, a background of bank crashes, an attempted hold-up, a selection of bad characters, and a love interest. In all, it is a medley, with thrills predominating.

The hero, Tom Gerrard, has misfortunes, among them facial disfigurement. An alligator savages one side of his face when he rescues Kate Fraser from its attack, and the other is laid bare from cheekbone to chin by the whip of a rival. This serves to test the love of the heroine, who sees through the surface to the true man beneath.

Becke had worked on the Palmer River field and knew North Queensland fairly well. About Bowen he is virulent:

> The Jetty was one of Bowen's triumphs; was over a quarter of a mile long, cost twenty thousand pounds to build, and was costing four thousand pounds a year to keep in order, and enable the staff of engineers, inspectors, etc., to dress in a gentlemanly style, and maintain their prestige as officials of higher importance than the Customs officers, of whom Bowen was provided with six, all dressed very becomingly, and all more or less related to members of the Queensland Cabinet — as a matter of fact it would have been a difficult task to find any male person in the Government service in Bowen — from His Honour Judge Coker to Paddy Shea, the letter-carrier — who was not connected with, or did not owe his position to a member of the Ministry.

*Plus ça change* . . .

Another amusing aspect that Becke touches on is newspaper relationships. Journalism at certain periods last century was much more juicy, more lusty, than now. Comments were on the level of "our reptile contemporary". The editor of the Bowen *Clarion* is shown reading the following passage from the Rockhampton *Bulletin*:
Bowen is a delightfully laid-out town on the shores of Port Denison. It is inhabited by some six hundred people — mostly official loafers and spongers of the worst type. The community consists of boozy squatters, snobbish wives of snobbish officials, anaemic old maids, obsequious tradesmen on the verge of insolvency, and two respectable and hard-working persons — the latter are Chinamen . . . The atmosphere of matchless snobbery and vulgarity that pervades Bowen can be perceived by the passing voyager many miles out at sea.

Such pictures, which it would be a pity to miss, are a good enough reason for putting Tom Gerrard in this group.

Another northern town, Innisfail, is the setting of at least part of a novel by Zora Cross, *The Lute-Girl of Rainyvale* (1925). Looked at from one angle this is an unsophisticated thriller, and as such it is very easy to laugh at. Her mother has left to Melise Hargreaves two Chinese vases, which turn out, naturally, to be beyond price. (They were bought in Brisbane.) Melise has the greatest difficulty in keeping possession of them, for a scheming adventuress is after them, a Chinese doctor in Innisfail tries to palm off a copy when he mends a crack in one, and an enormously wealthy Chinese collector, Li Kee, ardently desires to return them to China. There is a hero, Dale Acton (son of wealthy Sir Peter Acton), who “ensnared all susceptible girl hearts”, there are some mystic rites and magic, and luscious descriptions of scenery and of Melise —

> Her golden hair in which there was just a suspicious red tint, was piled up high on her small head. It fluffed curliquely about her rosy ears; and one or two little curls tapped with soft persuasive tenderness the milk-white column of her throat —

while the style and technique are wondrously old-fashioned and artless. And so one might continue in the same vein. Nothing could be simpler than to guy the novel. But the odd thing is that after a time a reader no longer wants to do so. He finds that he stops looking at the book realistically. It gradually takes hold, and develops a charm that persists. It is fresh and youthful and romantic, something like a fairytale. To read it is rather like opening one of those old musical boxes, which momentarily at least give a tinkling delight that an adult imagines he has long outgrown.

North Queensland remains the setting for the mystery thrillers of Peers Elliott (b. 1906), a native of Townsville, educated at the Grammar School there. The second novel he wrote, *Trust the Police* (1939), was accepted and proved successful.

It is a story of police efforts to stamp out a gang of smugglers who are bringing into the country not only opium but
also morphine and cocaine. In a letter that Elliott wrote to Firmin McKinnon he says that he gathered the material for the novel from his father-in-law, Mr. F. V. Haughtey, a former police officer who retired in 1934, from members of the Customs Department, and from two men who had once been engaged in smuggling opium and "whose names must not be mentioned."

This story is a very readable thriller, packed with action and violence, and flavoured with suspense that increases up to the very end — the revelation of the identity of the master-criminal. The clues to this are masked by the scent of a red herring. The turning point is the discovery, in the stomach of an alligator, of a human forearm and hand.

As a detective story it is less ingenious than Hennessey's *The Dis-Honourable* but more exciting. The setting, recognisable as Townsville, is merely sketched in and does not obtrude much. It is, as it were, the stage on which the actions happen. The other thrillers by Elliott are of much the same kind as this novel, and are probably the best Queensland examples we have.

In most town novels the reader is told or can guess the place without much trouble. In *The House of Winston Blaker* (1947), by Edith McKay, he may be left a little unsure. Claxton in the 1930's is "a prosperous coastal town in Northern Queensland", where Winston Blaker, a miniature tycoon, runs a department store. His rival owns Graves and Sons' and is a very different type, long established and conservative. Blaker's methods are the high-pressure kind, with frequent sales, competitions, advertisements, and a general air of rather breathless promotion reflecting Blaker's own explosive vitality.

The citizens of Claxton look on this rivalry with fickle enthusiasm. They live in a town surrounded by hills, with a river running through it. There are trams, and one part of the hills is called "the Range". Moreover, the tram "started from the Botanical Gardens, which marked the terminus of the line". This may sound meagre evidence, but to anyone who has lived there it all adds up to Rockhampton. One might go on to guess at the identity of some of the characters, but this would be mere speculation. (Edith McKay confirms the guess — Rockhampton was the setting. But she left there at about the age of twenty, and many of the characters are mixtures of memory and imagination.)

The people of this warm city do not appear to great advantage. McKay has little time for social pretensions, and even social charity becomes suspect; one leading socialite, for instance, comes in for cynical comment:
She gave liberally to all Church functions, but to nothing else, hoping perhaps to bluff her Maker and get on the right side of His ledger.

On the other hand McKay sometimes attributes to the townsfolk a morality that seems a little exaggerated. Blaker has an affair with a woman in Sydney, who later comes up to stay for some time in Claxton. He quarrels with his wife and frequently visits the cuckoo in the nest. This is shown as an affront to Claxton, and its citizens thereupon decide to boycott his shop. And all this squeamishness in Rockhampton! The whole picture then is something of an attack on hypocrisy. In the end the other woman decamps when Blaker's store starts to slide downhill, Blaker himself falls ill, his wife comes to the house and nurses him, and we are left with a promise of reconciliation, reform, and rehabilitation.

Nobody is going to call this a great novel, but it has more than its local interest. Blaker, full of confidence and egoism, bounces out of the pages, and the pictures of the social background are quite vinegary. An attraction for Rockhamptonites might lie in the guesswork about local identities that they could hopefully or misguidedly indulge in.

Townsville appears in the spotted mirror of *Girl With a Monkey* (1958), by Thea Astley. This short novel is a series of flashbacks in the mind of Elsie Ford, a young schoolmistress who returns to the north for a day to gather her belongings for her transfer to the south. She is going because she hates Townsville, because she cannot stand Duffecy the headmaster, because above all she is bent on escaping from Harry. She has half encouraged him, but in the final resort she simply cannot go through with it. He is a road-worker, coarse, kindly, drunk, uneducated, and willing to read a dozen books a fortnight to bring himself up to her conversational level. She escapes his persistence, but at the cost of some soul searching. The train moves out, with Harry making his last appeal as he runs alongside and thrusts a paper bag through the window —

"Elsie! Elsie! Here's some fruit I brung yer" — ungrammatical to the last.

It is not a pleasant novel, but it is a very real picture. Nobody in Townsville is going to like it very much — Townsville depicted as hot, wet, grimy, parochial, easygoing, and unbearable:

Below, the hotel was stirring to life in kitchen and bar. A rumble of empty kegs being rolled and stacked in thunderous proximity by the barman filled every corner of the
downstairs hall and the dining room where two plump maids were setting the bent porridge spoons and the butter dishes.

The railway station is one of those we have all stood on:

Porters shoveled their hand trolleys between the mums and the dads, the drowsy children, the visiting football team on its home trip. By the bookstall the men thumbed through the cheap pornography and the women the bran-and-mash weeklies that doled out the philosophy of their sex. And all along the line of carriages stood people gulping railway tea and sandwiches.

The story was almost certainly written by one who is or has been a teacher. And it reveals a very widespread attitude among writers. Hardly one of them has a good word to say for schools and the system — whether Arthur Davies in The Fiddlers of Drummond or Brian James in The Advancement of Spencer Button or the short story writers who have treated the theme. Even Seaforth Mackenzie's The Young Desire It is not overly encouraging. Their accounts may not square with the experience of some who have also done their share of teaching, but that does not render their impressions less true for them.

A phrase-maker —

Through the southern fanlight a saxophone trapped in a private radio howled pitifully and close — sometimes too fond of the unusual word, Thea Astley has given us, not a great novel by any means, but at least an album of vivid snapshots. We need the urban novel, and this is an extremely competent example.

There is one novel of a Queensland town that Queenslanders will probably not find it easy to obtain — Kenneth Cook's Vantage to the Gale. Announced for publication, it is unlikely to be on sale up here. The publisher's summary (with discreet deletions) may explain this position:

Roy Sildon was mayor of Pantonville, a small Queensland town, when he was shot . . . He recovered and . . . set himself to regain public favour.

The summary goes on to mention the floods in Pantonville, the part played by Sildon, and his re-election just before the book's dramatically unexpected end. This first novel has the force of the American "novel of power", gaining additional impact from its unusual setting. The figure of Sildon himself has a curious fascination, standing out with compelling force.

For most Queenslanders this will ring a bell, and they may recall a situation rather like that described. But the law of
defamation in this State is a relevant consideration, and book-sellers in Queensland are unlikely to risk selling the novel if it is published.

Other writers, Frank Hardy (*Power Without Glory*) and Cyril Pearl (*Wild Men of Sydney*), would appear to have cashed in on public events. It is the opposite of the whitewashing of historical characters such as Richard III. (Only King John seems to be left grimy.) A neologist might be tempted to call the new tendency “black-washing”.

Over two centuries ago biographers were less restrained and used to wait on the doorstep for their prey. Addison, writing in 1716, describes them like this:

There is a race of men lately sprung up . . . whom one cannot reflect upon without indignation . . . They are our Grub Street biographers, who watch for the death of a great man like so many undertakers, on purpose to make a penny of him. He is no sooner laid in his grave, but he falls into the hands of an historian; who, to swell a volume, ascribes to him works which he never wrote, and actions which he never performed.

But, however present or future laws may limit the field of fiction, one subject remains evergreen. It is summed up by Basildon, who comments on a publisher’s statement that books without sex do not sell:

In publishing there’s nothing wrecks
The Balance Sheet like lack of sex.
Many have landed in the red
Through leaving out the double bed.
A THOROUGHLY ripe example of Victorian melodrama transplanted to Australia appears in *Gilbert Gogger* (1876), by James Augustus Edwards. It was published in Mackay (the only novel published there?), but its concern with Queensland is slight. It starts off in England in the approved cloak and dagger fashion. Theodosius Gogger, driven frantic by his cousin Gilbert, who displaces him in the affections of Julie Tracey, vows revenge. He writes in his diary:

Gone! gone! oh traitor! I shall go mad. My enemy alive, and I chained to this bed with this fever. Curse him! curse her! Gone! Be calm, my heart; be still, my pulse. Vengeance is to come! Fool! infatuated that I was to bring him here! Vengeance!

He carries out part of his fell purpose, but fortunately bursts a blood vessel before he can do more, which is to frame Reuben, the child of his cousin's marriage.

Reuben indeed does go to the dogs for a time, but is reformed by good books:

During his illness he had had access to a different class of books than those kept by the Widow Jonas as part of her stock-in-trade; for Jack Sheppard’s Progress to the Gallows, he now read the Pilgrim’s Progress to the Happy Land; for Barney the Vampire, or the Feast of Blood, he read Robinson Crusoe . . .

The story then shifts to Australia, where Edwards proceeds to pile on local colour — gold rushes, an attack by four hundred aborigines on a homestead, the gold-fields of Ballarat, station life (depicted in idyllic hues), overlanding, and so forth. The squatters get as far north as the Fitzroy basin, but the account here is rather meagre. It is full of action and Australianisms, his stock of which Edwards is determined to display. The reader is threatened with a sequel — *Sir Gilbert Gogger; or, Queensland Since Separation* — but this did not appear.

The book, then, lacking plot and real characters, reads mostly like a burlesque. But it is good for a laugh. It must be a rather rare book now, and seems likely to disappear soon from existence: the copy in the Oxley Library is well advanced in decay, and the brittle pages are beginning to crumble.
In a period when so many novels set out to be instructive as well as exciting it may be unwise to single out one as more typical than the rest; but there is probably no other Queensland novel so full of useful information as *Adventures in Queensland* (1879) by Australian (F. A. Blackman).

This begins as history and develops as a guidebook to adventure or a manual for newcomers. The area is west of Maryborough, the period the late forties and the fifties. There is no plot until near the end, when Scotchy the Blower (i.e. the boaster) betrays his race and joins with the aborigines in an attack on the whites. Apart from this, the only improbability is the discovery in a cave of a prehistoric monster plausibly conjectured to be an ichthyosaurus, bus suspiciously resembling a bunyip sixty feet long.

The greatest interest, apart from details, lies in Blackman's attitudes. He is a spokesman for the squatters, whom he portrays as benefactors of the State, unappreciated and badly treated by the various Land Laws. Anything that stands in the way of these gentry is consequently bad, for example, aborigines. Blackman makes a few concessions and does recognise that some whites were sometimes to blame; but in general he treats a "dispersal" of aborigines as a sort of slightly risky sporting venture rather like big game shooting.

The account reads sometimes a little callous:

Three of them were imprudent enough to climb up trees, whence they were picked off like squirrels, falling with a dull thud.

Such parts may seem heartless, but they also seem actual. It is likely enough that after a few such expeditions the taste would grow on one.

Except for convicts, Queensland novelists last century had all the customary Australian material at their disposal—exploration, pioneering, pastoral life, bushranging, aborigines, flood and fire, mining, politics, town life, and the universal theme of romance. One novelist decided to waste nothing and use everything. This was Alexander Grant, who lived in Queensland from 1860 to 1891 and then went back to England.

In 1881 he published *Bush-Life in Queensland, or John West's Colonial Experiences*. John West, his father dead, is sent out by his guardian to Queensland at the age of seventeen. He travels from Brisbane to Ipswich by river, and from Ipswich to the station, Cambaranga. He is the new-chum, who has to learn his way around, take up land of his own when he knows enough, and make his fortune. All the things mentioned above are related, together with more particular details—a new billy
takes a longer time to boil than an old one, for instance — and these could only be drawn from personal experience. Here Grant knew what he was talking about.

Now and then he puts things in a way that seems un-Australian to us:

The startled kangaroo flying through the forest glade . . .

But the rest is very real — bullocks, overlanding, drinking, shearing, poisoning dingoes, horse-breaking (a very good chapter, this), corroborees, insects, bush races, goldfields . . . The result is that it all reads rather like a guide-book. In fact, noting the first title, a librarian might feel disposed not to include it in fiction at all. The point of view is that of the English middle class, educated, with some capital — in short, the “gentleman” as contrasted with the labourer. Grant writes, for example, of the miners as

the roughs, who believed in the glorious maxim of “Liberty, fraternity, and equality.”

John West gains his experience, a very varied one, mostly by practice. But he asks questions, like a sensible fellow, and these are short. The answers he gets are like miniature essays, informative, grammatical, well arranged, and rather formally expressed. Grant assimilated the atmosphere and attitudes of the new land, and there are passages where he shows his characters to express the colonial resentment of English ignorance and prejudice. The book would have been a safe one to put into the hands of a newcomer to Queensland. And it has the additional merit of being exciting as well as useful.

The three novelettes of Alfred Bernie Bell are adventure stories that merely happen to be set in Queensland. Wild Rocket (1894) does not bother to create characters — it simply takes them ready-made from old stock. The most obvious is the English jackaroo, the Hon. Simpkins Fitzmuggins, indignantly lisping:

“I never received such outrageous treatment in — aw — all my life,” said Simpkins. “I shall write to my uncle, Lord Fitzmuggins, to remit me the necessary funds to enable me to return home. Australia is inhabited by babawians.”

Similarly with the plot: Storm the squatter hates Campbell the selector, while Storm’s daughter and Campbell’s son love each other.

In The Diamond of Glen Rock (1894) a medley of scenes and events and characters — a sea-rescue, a shearsers’ strike, rough unpleasant Labour agitators (Tony Hoodlum, for
instance), a hoary-headed hunchback of 103 years, a lost daughter, a jewel, a bequest, and a happy marriage—defies orderly analysis. Part of the plot is set in Esk. Both these novels ran as serials in *The Queenslander* before appearing in book form.

*Oscar* (1894) introduces the French penal settlement on Noumea, though parts are set on the N. Queensland coast and in the area a little inland. The hero, Oscar Trevosser, escapes a danger that few other Queenslanders can have incurred—execution by guillotine.

Bell has the squatters' cause at heart. He has in addition a fondness for right royal defiant attitudes and speeches, and the more improbable the happening the more gusto he develops.

Adventure and mystery combine in the next novel. For three quarters of its length *They That Sit in Darkness* (1897) is as puzzling a murder mystery as Hennessey's *The Dishonourable*. Its author, John Mackie, "the first white man to build a house and settle on the Van Alphen river in the far Northern Territory," where as he tells us he lived for weeks on crows, hawks, snakes, and currajong roots, was very much a traveller. He turned to prospecting for gold in Queensland and later was in the Mounted Police in Canada.

In this novel of N.W. Queensland he forbears to give us a tourist guide book to the area, for which we may be grateful, and mostly confines himself to the story of John Tyndall Farquharson's arrest for murder and his acquittal. Part is occupied with an attack on a small band of whites by some hundreds of aborigines.

Mackie worked under difficulties. A mystery in a town, where suspects and witnesses are plentiful and near at hand and where evidence can be gathered quickly, is easier to develop and elaborate than one in the Gulf Country, where the scene is laid in this novel. Mackie relies to some extent on confused identities and on perjury springing from jealousy. But it is all very plausible, and the inquiry by the magistrate is full of surprises.

Only in the concluding chapters does Mackie give way to the stock devices of the period. Then we are deluged by coincidence—Farquharson and a dead man who plays an important role turn out to be half-brothers, a baronetcy falls from the clear sky, the narrator is struck by lightning and blinded, and a happy marriage concludes a spate of conveniently arranged events. This cascade of expected surprises
rather spoils the taste of the novel, which otherwise is adult and ingenious.

Of the Australian novels of Herbert MacIlwaine only two are important. The others are much lighter. His first volume contains three longish short stories — the finding of a gold-reef and the sacrifice of one of the two partners; a skit on obscurity in poetry by means of which an old drunk is passed off as a bush bard, and the fate of a sensitive English parson in the backblocks. Another volume is a boy’s book about the adventures of an Australian lad at a Public School in England and then on a gold strike in Australia. In both books, however, there occur two favourite themes of MacIlwaine — the English attitude to Australia and the fate of the English migrant in Australia. MacIlwaine is pro-Australian, though he himself was an Englishman, and his Australian hero is the squatter or the pioneer.

In *Dinkinbar* (1898) Queensland appears the testing ground for the English migrant, the jackeroo. Susan Thynne, a young English girl, is prejudiced against Australia from the start:

To be a breeder, a tender, a slaughterer of beasts, a drover, a butcher with bloody hands; to be heavy-footed, heavy-jawed, earth-stained, beefy to the very soul — was that Uncle Joseph’s ideal of manly fitness?

When she comes to the station at the base of C. York peninsula she finds things are better, more heroic in fact, than she has expected. And as she conforms more and more to her surroundings, so some of the roughness of the men is softened by her own charm and gentleness. Of the jackeroos who come out only a few make the grade, a state of affairs that Uncle Joseph had warned her of from the start. In the end Susan marries the Queensland hero.

In spite of some sentimental and philosophical passages this is a very satisfying story, and MacIlwaine’s intention seeps through without being too obvious — the debt owed to the early squatter, so often forced to abandon his holding:

He is the unredeemed pledge of civilization, the man before his time, the one who sows that his followers may reap. It is written that his forgotten bones shall serve to stake the boundaries of his people’s territory.

*Fate the Fiddler* (1900) mirrors the author’s beliefs more clearly: the squatter has to contend with the banker and the speculator as well as with hostile nature. MacIlwaine distrusts the moneyed interests of the city, he dislikes Irish policemen
and the general run of outback magistrates, and he has a cynical comment to make on the way the aborigine has been used in the Black Police:

The Australian aboriginal, according to Western standards, is starkly useless, save in one particular—he loves to kill the members of any tribe but his own: hence when armed, drilled, officered and taught to shoot, and then bid to slay, anywhere outside his own small native district, he is bloodthirsty and invincible. His hand is then turned where useful against his brother, and he thus prepares the way for the Gospel of Peace and stable government to complete the conquest.

These two novels of MacIlwaine have had rather less than their due, and probably, as has been suggested, the author deserves more critical attention than he has received.

Outback adventure sometimes over-ripens into fantasy. The publisher's blurb to A. E. Yarra's The Vanishing Horsemen (1930) starts off with a libel on Australian fiction:

A good Australian novel is a sufficient rarity to hail with more than customary delight.

And this in the face of what had appeared in the thirty years since the century began—novels by Henry Handel Richardson and Miles Franklin and Katharine Prichard and Eleanor Dark and Louis Stone and Vance Palmer and . . .!

So often these tales of the wild and woolly West are spoilt by their grotesque exaggerations and their forced heroics. But Mr. Yarra has written with admirable composure a story which although thrilling in the extreme, has upon it the unmistakable stamp of sincerity.

This novel, "written with admirable composure", is a story of cattle-duffing. Cattle are stolen, but the prints of the thieves’ horses are absent—as if the cattle had gone off of their own accord. A car's tracks suddenly stop, and resume fifty or a hundred yards further on. A skeleton on horseback appears in the night near the stock, and vanishes as the watcher gallops towards it. Stolen stock can be tracked to the boundary of a holding, but at some distance from it the hoof-prints cease. Or horse-tracks lead to an impenetrable wall of "wait-a-while", and then stop—but no tracks lead away from it. These occurrences, so normal of course in Western Queensland life, so lacking in "grotesque exaggeration," are explained at last in terms of rubber casts on horses' hoofs and car tyres, black cloaks, the use of bags, and a trick opening in scrub. (These cattle-duffers are even more mysterious and ingenious than those in the Boondooma area near Kingaroy early this year.)
All one needs to do with the blurb is to insert the word *not* in each sentence. But a reader has to admit that the story is thrilling.

Everyone is supposed to have a novel in him. He may not have the skill to write it, but he has the material. Arthur Groom had both requirements when he wrote *Merry Christmas* (1930), a lively account, in the form of fiction, of work on a great cattle station in N.W. Queensland on the borders of the N. Territory. In spite of his disclaimer that "The characters in this book are all imaginary," information received goes to show that some of the characters in the book are based on people that Groom met when he was a jackeroo.

The picture of station life is part of the interest the book has. And Groom can make it exciting. Probably the best section is his account of the stockman trampled by cattle, the rescue, the smoke signals bridging the hundred or more miles to the head-station, the ambulance car and its race to the spot through flooded creek and swamp, over claypans, through bush trackless except to the eye of the aborigine who goes with them, and the success in reaching a remote hospital in time.

Another interest is the love story of Jim Walters and Helen Delaney. But the life of much of the novel springs from a rascal, Sandy Jackson. He has the gift of the gab, and uses it mostly to get himself out of trouble that he deserves to be in. Here he tells his injured friend of the rain that has broken the two-year drought:

"Everywhere got it. There's water and ducks for miles an' yesterday Doctor shoves her hand out the back door to feel the rain like, an' a passin' duck lays a blanky egg in it . . . Everyone's waitin' for the Mail Car to get through so's they can write off for goldfishes an' water-lily seeds to throw in the puddle holes."

He is a scrounger, a loafer, a skite, and badly needs to be reformed. He is certainly going to be when he marries Peggy Bryant. But he makes us laugh, and we forgive those who can do that. Rogues have always made the best comics.

Groom has written no other novel. This seems to be the one he had in him, and he made a success of it. It appeared as a serial in 1929 in *The Bulletin*, a paper that is not prone to print dull stuff. There are many greater and more competent Australian novels that are not nearly so readable.

If an expert in any field can write clearly, then nobody will equal him in interest. This is shown in the books of Henry
Lamond, born in N. Queensland in 1885, experienced all outback activities, and a veteran in writing. He began to write short stories for American magazines over a quarter of a century ago, and then collected them as *Tooth and Talon* (1934).

In this volume there are eleven stories, each containing some wild creature — stallion, dingo, kangaroo, emu, bull, wallaroo, eagle, boar, crocodile, goanna. These differ in most things, but they share one trait — the males fight in the mating season. This situation, crammed with action, Lamond uses in each story. He is realistic and unsentimental: he admires beauty and courage and efficiency, but he makes no concessions. Nature red in tooth and claw is his theme, and each creature obeys the laws of its kind, the carnivora devouring their victims, the victims escaping when they can; the stronger lording it over their weaker fellows and showing no mercy to the conquered. Incidents, perhaps inevitably, recur; the paralysing of a joey by a hawk, for instance, is shown in two different stories from two different angles.

Excitement, incidents related with an insight and vividness that could come only from experience, and some sensitive passages of description — these mark the stories. Here is the eaglet:

> Next day, when the hen hopped awkwardly from her nest, she uncovered a fluffy ball of down, all bare belly, gaping beak, pink skin, and two hideous black bruises which would later develop to eyes. The other egg lay discarded. Not more than once in a thousand times does an eagle hatch two chicks from two eggs.

Out of these eleven packed stories probably the finest is *Big Ben*, an account of a crocodile in North Queensland.

The rest of Lamond’s works are full-length novels, each like an expansion of one of the short stories in *Tooth and Talon*. It is not easy to do this without making a book seem like a piece of nature study. So Lamond introduces human beings, and their relations with these wild things are nearly as important as the doings of the wild things themselves. This again limits the creatures: the emu, eagle, boar, crocodile, and goanna, when they appear, play very subordinate roles. Domesticity has entered and pushed them out of the picture.

Of his volumes, from *Brindle Royalist* (1947), the story of a bull, to *The Red Ruin Mare* (1958), probably the most successful is *Towser* (1955). In this little classic Lamond draws on his fund of intimate knowledge of sheep dogs, and in its kind the volume must be among the best of Australian stories. He is not as sensitive or as accomplished a stylist as Frank Dalby
Davison, but for pictures of Queensland station life earlier this century and of its peculiar fauna we may find Lamond's books very satisfying fare.

Since the end of the 1920's few novels of the Queensland outback have appeared. Two minor examples, interesting for their points of view, may conclude this section.

One is Margaret Isabel Ross's *Greentree Downs* (1938), which seems at first sight written for children, but which has interested their parents as well. It is different from other bush stories, for it paints an idyllic picture. Four young Americans lose the inheritance their parents have left them, and are invited to Australia by their uncle. The novel tells their adventures.

It is a sort of Swiss Family Robinson affair. By an error they take up their dwelling in an old building miles from the head station and decide to make it comfortable in order to help their uncle, who they mistakenly think is poverty-stricken and in need of their help. This attitude, needless to say, wins over Uncle Andy, an irascible misanthropist with the usual heart of gold beneath.

It is told by one of the children, Elizabeth, aged about seventeen. Despite the stock characters — handsome young man, crusty old man, cracked prospector, beautiful Alice — and the unlikely happenings, the story has a charm and a freshness that make it extremely readable. It may be "corn", but it is very attractively served.

A very different sort of novel is the masculine *Strangers on the Ophir* (1945), by Tom M. Ronan, the story of an attempted cattle lift in the early 1890's.

The incidents are exciting enough — the preparations of the thieves, a gory fight, a robust race-meeting with few holds barred, the shooting of one man in mistake for another — but many readers will find the characters of equal interest. Many of these are villains, and they vary in their kinds of villainy. Of the good characters, the hero is the laconic cynical leathery capable intelligent type with a younger friend who wins the girl but is later killed. Another is a lifelike and realistic policeman:

Michael Devlin was a very peculiar policeman. If a man reported to him that he had been forced to shoot a black-fellow, Devlin would come out and help him burn the bones. But let a bagman take a bottle of booze into a black's camp, and Devlin would hound him out of the country.
A few belong to both camps — McGarry, for instance, a gross and dishonest pubkeeper who is moved by the innocence of the heroine.

Ronan is an unsentimental writer who makes few concessions to orthodox romance. The love theme does not run its normal happy course, the hero does not marry the beauty, the fight is won by the villain, the deserving old rider does not spur his old horse to victory. All this is rather unusual, and it makes us think that Ronan, with greater insight into character and with a rather less well-worn subject, might have given us a very satisfying novel. But even as it is, we are left with a vivid and lusty picture of an earlier age.
PIONEERS

TWO dangers lie in wait for the author of sagas and historical novels. The first is that he may write history instead of fiction. He traces, through a morass of detail, changes in law, customs, prices, population and so forth. All of this may be accurate and informative, but it is not what we mainly want from a novel. Such a product may lack only diagrams and an index to serve as a text-book.

The second danger is that he may preach a sermon. Much early Australian history is dark and cruel. A humane novelist, knowing this, attacks the bestialities of the convict system or the brutalities practised on the aborigines. We are almost warned about our past and urged to be ashamed of it. Very few historical novelists have escaped these two dangers completely.

The most vigorous and brutal of Queensland saga novels are the two by Brian Penton (1904-1951) — *Landtakers* (1934) and *Inheritors* (1936). In a letter to the *Courier-Mail* after a review of the second novel Penton wrote that he had not intended to picture the development of Queensland but to picture the development of a man. That may have been his aim, but he happened to do something of both tasks.

The first novel traces the rise of Derek Cabell, a young Englishman who comes out to Queensland in the late 1840's and takes up land about fifty miles north of the Moreton Bay settlement. Cabell is a sensitive person who hates the men, the land, the brutality, and his own exile. Never, he vows, will he allow himself to grow like the others. At the end of the book he has in some respects grown worse, for while they are brutal they still have some sense of comradeship — others have suffered and suffering makes them kin. But Cabell is a lonely individualist.

In the second novel, a sequel, Penton had certain difficulties to overcome. The first novel was a saga, the story of Cabell’s growing power. What is a sequel to deal with? Cabell now has a family, but if the story is to concern all members of it, then the interest may be spread too thin. Penton overcomes this by still keeping Cabell the main figure. He is shown us as a fierce angry mean bitter old man, with no friends, yet still awaking some respect by his courage and his strength. The
members of his family do not love him, and some leave home to escape him. In the end, as Cabell grows feebler and blinder, his son James, a wowser and a priggish seeker after respectability, manages to push his father into the background and ultimately to present him as an Heroic Pioneer of the District. He is, so to speak, given a tombstone before he is dead.

Parts of the second novel are extremely funny. But some of the raw-meat style and the brutality of phrase and incident still persists. Even women appear grotesque or grim — witness the governess, Miss Montaulk:

Her hair, which hung in rat's tails over her ears, had been dyed some time ago and since had grown three or four inches, so that the top of her head seemed to be covered with a dirty-white, inadequate skull-cap. Her upper lip had a black moustache, bristling and tough from treatment with depilatories, and black hairs grew out of the moles on her neck. She had a nose like a pug dog's, with the nostrils turned out, and strong buck teeth.

This means that these novels — certainly the first — are melodramatic in the way they are written. And in the first Penton piles on the agony: it is full of Cabell's (or Penton's) hatred for the land, full of drought and pests and cruelty. And yet in spite of these faults both books are among the best of our novels of pioneers. Probably the reason for their success is Penton's ability to draw characters — Cabell in Landtakers and the family in Inheritors. This distinguishes them from others of the type and almost puts them in a class by themselves.

In Southern Saga (1940) Roy Connolly traces a history of station life in the 1850's in the Burnett district, and of Brisbane as a village in the same period. It is the story of Stephen Everett, a serious squatter, and his wife Georgiana, the spoiled darling who for a long time finds the outback unbearable after her pampered fashionable life in Sydney.

It is a long novel, nearly a quarter of a million words, and sometimes a reader feels that he is not being spared. Almost everything that can happen does happen: all the life on a station is described in full — mustering, drought, dangers from aborigines, fights, plots, love, brutality, and a happy ending. Connolly, in other words, is no different from other novelists of the type in his fondness for local colour. On the other hand he is more vivid than some others, and his pages are brightened up by lively details — the grey-beaver-hatted gentry; the cabbage-tree hats of the gay-shirted bush-workers; phaeton or victoria, brougham, or family coach. These are taken from one page, so
that the reader may guess the enormous amount of checking that the novelist did before he wrote. Even in his picture of the gold rushes, a theme that has so often been dealt with, he manages to be fresh and original. A bush race meeting, a less worn subject, comes before us with its shouts and excitement and crude vitality.

Connolly is superior to some other writers in his brighter style and in his management of the story. Many sagas just meander. This one has something of a central problem: how will the marriage work out? So that the story, deliberate at first, begins to hasten in the later pages and bursts into action near the end.

The old saying that the onlooker sees more of the game is borne out by the Queensland novels of Sarah Campion. She is the daughter of the late G. G. Coulton, the great English historian of the medieval period. She travelled during the years 1938-40 in South Africa, New Zealand, and Australia, so that her knowledge of Queensland, which she gained as she worked here at a variety of jobs, came from a brief acquaintance. It was long enough. Like D. H. Lawrence, who spent only some months in Australia, she had an extraordinary sensitiveness to atmosphere and people that gave her the essentials of our background. Beside her portrayals those of the native-born novelists often appear crude and superficial.

In three novels she traces the life of Mo Burdekin. These are Mo Burdekin (1941), Bonanza (1942), and The Pommy Cow (1944). The area for the most part is northern Queensland. Two things especially must strike a reader. The first is the indifference and the cruelty of nature as it appears in her pages. Nature of course can be cruel anywhere; but in Australia, she insists, it is cruellest. A river rises, and the children, like ants, are swept off. The sun glares, and grass withers, and stock die, and a township becomes derelict. Women fade quickly:

... women who had once been young and light of foot, bright-eyed, with the brief dewiness which rests even on Australian maidens; and were now hags of thirty-five and forty with dusty hair, bowed shoulders, seamed skins, and hands swollen by work to the shape of grotesque fungi.

The second is that despite all this the land lays its spell on those who live in it. They curse it while they suffer from its capricious cruelty; but away from it they are poignantly homesick for it:
... a gum tree ... growing far from its own sun, its own dry ant-ridden soil, yet still growing, and sending out undaunted on the English air that smell that is all Australia in one dizzy breath.

With a command over style that so many Australian-born novelists lack, Sarah Campion injects into these novels a gusto and vitality, especially in her descriptions of storm, that sweep us along. And she has a sardonic humour that reads like our own, except that we so seldom can express it in our fiction.

In a fourth novel, *Come Again* (1951), a certain sense of exhilaration, of response to the struggle, seems to have evaporated. A township becomes a ghost town: all leave it or die in it one by one. George the Sydneysider and Ellen the little half-caste girl come to it. But it is no use:

What was he doing in the outback? What could he do with the outback? It existed only for him and for millions like him, as a romantic territory to be traversed in dreams: It existed only to support him, and millions like him, with its physical food, its mutton, its wool — and its fancied romance.

This is like the finish to a journey of exploration that has ended only in flatness. It is as though Campion had exploited the possibilities for fiction that Queensland offered, and then had become a little ashamed of her early enthusiasm. She has got it out of her system.

But while she had it she gave us three vital novels.

Of these saga novels the most historical, if the phrase may be used, is *My Love Must Wait* (1941). The writer is Ernestine Hill, born in Rockhampton, journalist, writer for the A.B.C., and author of other works that commemorate endeavour in Australia.

It is the long, rich, packed story of the explorer Matthew Flinders, from his boyhood days, dreaming of the sea, to his final hours when, drained by pain, he was barely aware that the record of his explorations and charting of our coast was at long last published for the benefit of the world of learning to which his life had been devoted.

It is a novel — one can call it this for its imaginative insight — very closely following documents and records, and probably the dialogue is the only part of it without complete historical warrant. This is where the danger of such a novel lies. Life has little regard for art, being often disorderly and shapeless and caring nothing for climax and proportion. But this book has its pattern — from the hopes of childhood to the growth of knowledge, the experience of the sea, the early trips
in the *Tom Thumb*, to the great voyages of the *Endeavour*. Then the tide turns. Disasters come in rapid sequence and Flinders, putting in at Mauritius, is held captive for over six years by the French, to chafe at inaction, to long for reunion with his wife in England, to lament the passing of the years with his writing still to do. At last the release, the return, the lack of encouragement, the pushing on of his work with sickness racing his pen. Flinders wins, but only just.

It is an heroic story, and it is told in something of the grand manner. Ernestine Hill was fired by her subject, and she lifted her style to the occasion. The book is full of things done, things seen, people and places caught as by a camera. Famous names bestar the pages — Admiral Black Dick Howe, Bligh, Hunter, Sir Joseph Banks, Sheridan the dramatist, Bass, Margaret Catchpole, King, Decaen the French governor. The snapshot of Nelson gives us a taste of her skill:

Matthew caught one glimpse of his face as he chanced to look upward... a shrunken face from that he had remembered, an eye gone, teeth missing, an arm gone, physique frailer than ever, racked by victory after victory. For all his glory Nelson paid the price.

It is violent action and the grotesque and the sublime that capture Hill’s imagination, and the pages describing these are the best in the book. Here for example, is George Bass after light-heartedly setting out to cross the Blue Mountains:

He was back in a month, a ravenous, rueful man, his clothes in tatters.

Fifteen days and nights in rain and sun, he had rambled a delirium of scrubby gullies to where the iron cliffs thrust their buttresses to the sky. He scaled the broken heights with his climbing irons, let himself down into black ravines with his ropes and his grappling-hooks, staggered on through horizontal jungle, scratched and clung, crawled on hands and knees, and dangled down in space till he reached the crest... and covered his eyes and shuddered, for the earth was hacked from beneath his feet in dizzying miles of air to the tufted tops of the gum-trees.

Goliath shadows sprawled across a madman’s maze of valleys. Beyond, there rose another range... moon-mountains and moon-craters, skeleton ribs of earth veiled in a thousand shades of filmy blue.

This style may be a little lush for some tastes, but it fits most of its subjects and gives us a novel vivid and engrossing to a high degree.
AFTER finishing *Burnt Sugar* (1934), a novel of the North Queensland canefields, a reader feels that Eric Baume wanted to do a little more than write a novel. The clue is probably found in the Foreword by Adam McCay. In 1933 Baume, himself a New Zealander, wrote *Half-Caste*, a story of relations between Maori and white. It did not please the New Zealanders. McCay says of it:

> It was more to their taste that the New Zealand of novel-writers should remain what it had traditionally been, a respectable British country, inhabited by Imperialist shop-keepers, highly intelligent fat-lamb graziers, superbly skilful fishermen, and superior Natives with many University degrees and a few Knighthoods.

But Baume saw it in colours “less decorous”. He set out to dig a little below the surface, to peer into *whares* and tell what really went on. And he may not have been altogether displeased when he ruffled some sleek feathers.

Probably he had the same outlook when he wrote *Burnt Sugar*. Italians and Australians in the north have not always been on the most amicable terms. Certain words were thrown across the gulf of nationality. Now the average reader knows little of this, and unless he is on the spot he may not even guess. Baume’s novel highlights these quarrels — Italian cane-growers boycotting Australian cane-cutters, the hostility of the Unions, the profound drinking, the rain and the heat. It can be an explosive mixture. Baume paints a picture that may be thought a rather exaggerated one. If you want to show ill-feeling, then the temptation is to show that and very little else. And some maintain that this is what Baume has done.

This slant forgotten, however, Baume tells a competent and vivid story. He takes side-swipes at most of the inhabitants. Even a priest, a figure that practically all novelists, Protestant or Catholic, handle tactfully if not gingerly, is glanced at sideways:

> Father Gregory Ahern finished a blessing . . . Spoke in Italian an Italian would have envied — was it not tremendously valuable when an appeal for church funds had to be made?

Mario wanting to be Australian and to be accepted, Marta his mother wanting him to be Italian, Marchesini wanting him to be a Fascist — these and others have some distortion in their
point of view. Only Albert Green, the schoolteacher, a sentimentalized figure, sees things impartially. Mario’s search to find and to make himself leads him far from the original little boy on the canefields.

But the answer, Baume implies, lies farther off still. He shows us the problem, but he is not obliged to find the solution. That he does not offer one may indicate his understanding of what he saw at the time.

The three North Queensland books of Jean Devanny, born in New Zealand, progress from propaganda to fiction. In *Sugar Heaven* (1936), which is set in the sugar area, she is mainly concerned with industrial strife:

... in the course of an eight-months’ lecturing tour through tropic Queensland, that Goliath of States which hangs like a beard upon the lips of the Pacific, I was privileged to become involved in the fiercest and most important strike struggle that the sugar industry of Australia has known...

Other themes are interwoven. Dulcie, wife of Hefty Lee, begins by hating and fearing the rampant lushness of the cane and despising the militancy of the cutters. By the end of the book she has taken up the cause of the strikers and feels she belongs to the land. But in spite of such emotional problems parts of the book read like a newspaper record of events. Passages like the following all too frequently clog the story:

On September the 1st the cutters for the Hambledon mill area around Cairns had met and declared a sympathy strike, with the Jugoslav nationals much to the fore. On September the 4th the A.W.U. called a meeting in Cairns and attempted to enforce a secret ballot on the strike, whereat three hundred cutters left the meeting. The small minority remaining in the hall declared the strike off in that area. The A.W.U. officials suppressed the facts...

The intermingling of nationalities is worked out against the background of the strike — the mutual distrust of Italians and Australians modified by the need for common action. So that it is a novel of racial problems as well as a political pamphlet.

In *Paradise Flow* (1938) the propaganda is less strident. Two strands run through the book — the hostility among big and small cane growers on the question of crop restriction (the period is the early thirties, when sugar prices fell disastrously) and the emotional relations between Laurel, wife of Big Mac the dominant figure of the district, and Muranivich the giant Jugoslav, endlessly drinking, enormously lascivious, irresistibly
disreputable. She insists that her relations with him are spiritual, and this gradually subdues her gross admirer. No doubt such things can happen.

The best parts of the novel are the character sketches — Muranivich himself, for instance, in spite of some improbabilities has a roaring vitality; while Verst the Anglican parson, father of Laurel, is a charming and saintly eccentric. The medley of nationalities is even more varied than before — Jugoslav, Italian, Russian, Spanish, Chinese, and Australian.

The third novel turns back to the late nineties, when the question of Kanaka labour, with Federation and White Australia looming nearer, was an anxiety to the canegrowers of the north. In Cindie (1949) this is the background to an emotional conflict between Cindie the servant and Blanche the wife. Cindie is an administrative genius. She gets things done, and the family come more and more to depend upon her. Accepting yet hating this, Blanche becomes her enemy: she would have her husband lead, not follow. The comic verse on love has some relevance here:

The heart of Man is capable of
Forty ridiculous kinds of love.
The heart of Woman is just one ocean
Of jealous, immoderate, damp devotion.

Except for damp this sums up Blanche, a complex figure, arrogant, proud, beautiful, passionate, determined to make her husband succeed. The tension between Cindie and Blanche mounts, and the reader awaits a disaster at the end. But — perhaps as in life — it fizzles out into anticlimax. All the same, except for the last unbelievable pages of reconciliation, this is a powerful and tense novel, where Devanny’s stature as a potential novelist reaches its zenith.

Some novels are varied enough to be classed in more than one way. It would be easy enough to find reasons for putting Elizabeth Webb’s Into the Morning (1958) in any of three groups. It gives pictures of station and aboriginal life in S.W. Queensland, out past Cunnamulla; it gives also some of the best sketches of Brisbane and the South Coast from Surfer’s to Mermaid; and, perhaps better than either, it gives an insight into the mind of a half-caste, Toddy Vine, as he tries to forget his dash of colour during his growth over a period of some fifteen years, from the early thirties to the post-war period.
The best novel dealing with this problem is certainly Xavier Herbert's *Capricornia*, and it may be as well to say at the start that Webb's novel is not of the same rank; it lacks, for one thing, the galvanic, almost frenetic, life of that comic masterpiece. But it has other qualities. There is, for instance, the way it is told. The author is a middle-aged woman, and the hero of the novel is a young, lusty, and resentful man. She has the audacity to tell it in the first person — Toddy puts his own case. Against all probability, the attempt is extremely successful. We may think perhaps that he is rather too literate for his background, and perhaps he may couch some things in a way a man would not. (Though even here we could be seeing things just because we know the author is a woman.) All in all, Webb has got inside Toddy's skin with an imaginative insight that is unusual. All through the book his prickliness is evident. So often his brief moments of satisfaction express themselves in phrases like this:

They acted as if I didn't have any colour in me at all.

In the end he comes to terms with his surroundings, and we leave him successful and with hopes of happiness in his future.

The whole problem of assimilation is one that perhaps only time has the answer to, but Webb shows the many facets of it, from the tribal full-blooded aborigine to Toddy himself, who can mostly pass for a young Australian browned on a Queensland beach. Now and then we find miniature lectures on the proper attitude to adopt — as when the anthropologists visit the Cherbourg settlement — but on the whole the device of making Toddy speak for himself is quite natural and unforced and unsentimental.

This is a very competent novel, sensitive, angry, and puzzled. We feel these emotions as Toddy does. That is our sincerest tribute to the author's imagination, to her capacity for creating this shadow in our midst.

The latest novel dealing with a half-caste is Lyndon Rose's *Country of the Dead* (1959), but here the setting is simpler and the problems more complicated. An old tribal chief, Unda, spears Cranky Jimmy. A policeman follows him into the desert, partly led, partly misled, by Nugget the half-caste boy. This sounds clear and obvious enough, but the novel is nothing of the sort.

Lyndon Rose and her husband Ronald lived some four years in Queensland and both took their degrees at this University. Before coming to Brisbane they travelled in the Centre,
they knew the work of the Mission, and they did some anthropological work among the aborigines. Later they lived in Maori settlements in New Zealand and in villages in Samoa. At present they live in Canberra. If her Queensland years serve as our justification for claiming Lyndon Rose, the excellence of her novel is the incentive for making the claim.

The story she tells can be read, if one wishes, as the punctuated story of a pursuit. But she has meant it as more than that. It is just as much a study in conflict. Most of the characters in it are torn between ideals or loyalties or beliefs. There is the padre, massively heroic, anchored to his faith. In the words of Hern (who probably represents fairly well the attitude of the author),

"The padre thinks it's better to die a Christian than to go on living, as these people have done for centuries, honestly and sufficiently and heathen."

But even the padre has qualms as he surveys the parasitic qualities that Mission paternalism has engrafted on the de-tribalized. Then there is Nugget, son of a white prospector and a lubra, who admires the mechanical gifts of white civilisation and yet underneath has a pride in the ancient skills and lore that his old black kinsman has tutored him in. Even Patterson the policeman, deliberately keeping nuances of right and wrong below the surface of awareness, uneasily recognises that there are depths of human relationships and primitive adherences involved in this simple case of a man speared near a waterhole.

And the novel is also a sort of lament, unpitying and open-eyed, for the passing of the tribes. For those who have succumbed to the lure of easy food, who have "traded a way of life for a bag of flour," Lyndon Rose has only a shrug of dismissal. These present a problem that persists, but it is not her concern in this novel. Nugget goes back with old Bertie to the desert, to a life already doomed to extinction.

There hovers through this short novel a wavering background of unspoken implication — perhaps a regret that real faiths cannot admit compromises:

The padre's surplice moved in the wind, the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace of his position. Patterson felt himself to be no more than a part of some scene that the padre saw passing before him, with the swiftness of a moving picture, against the background of his vast domain. There seemed so much behind everything . . .
Norton the schoolmaster would feel much like that, and for a completely different faith, in the presence of one of the old men of the Lieri tribe. There seems no solution for this conflict, and a novelist is not to be asked for one. If he can present the problem as evocatively as this novel does then he will do well enough.
We do not today care much for the sermon masquerading as a novel, and indeed we are in little danger of encountering one now. But the species was frequent enough last century, especially in New South Wales.

One Queensland example belongs to a series published by the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (a series that includes *Archie Grey; or Doing It Heartily* and *Charley Watson, the Drunkard’s Little Son* and *Difficulty Hill and Some Lads Who Climbed It*). The title of this novel cannot compete with these. It is *The Fortunes of the Fletchers* (1873). In it Charles Henry Eden relates the Queensland adventures of George Fletcher. The period is the middle and late 1860’s, and the setting is first a sugar plantation not far from Brisbane. Here George, a blacksmith and wheelwright, takes charge of a mill. The details are elaborate and the technical terms profuse — *stool, ratoon, arrow, megass, teache, skip, dunder*. It is all very instructive, rather in fact like a popular textbook, and yet like many such accounts written last century it remains readable still.

Later the competent hero transports mining machinery to the Gympie goldfield, and once again we are given an account of processes. But there is more adventure in this section, and George has a narrow escape from being robbed by bushrangers.

Eden’s aim appears in his Preface: “My object in the following pages has been to give a simple and every-day account of the kind of life that an emigrant to . . . Australia is likely to encounter.” This he faithfully — perhaps too faithfully — carries out. His tone transpires through the contrast he makes between social classes here and in England, and the chances open to the enterprising in Australia:

> The boundaries between “castes” are much less clearly defined, even if they have any existence . . . The truth is, that steadiness and perseverance will always win the day against brains and flightiness.

This last sentence is revealing. Eden is rather like Defoe in *Robinson Crusoe* — God helps those . . . It is the morality of Eden’s period: success is the reward of virtue and hard work.

In another story, *Guinea Gold* (1879), Eden does tackle the Robinson Crusoe theme. John Marshall is left on an island off Rockingham Bay in N. Queensland, and has for a short
time some of the problems of the castaway. But he is not as dexterous as Crusoe, and his attempt to build a bark canoe is a failure. As in his first novel Eden indulges here in long accounts and explanations; his discussion of the progress of a Queensland cyclone, for instance, is worthy of a Weather Bureau official. It is perhaps worth noting that some thirty years later W. H. Bain in *The Lonely Isle* (1909) also depicts an immigrant cast upon a island. But it is probably hopeless now to try to rival Defoe.

One of the strangest books written in Queensland is a moral fable. It does not deal with Queensland; it does not deal with Australia; in fact it does not deal with any land we know. It is the story of a spiritual pilgrimage. Its author, John Nicholson (1838-1923), came out to Australia in his teens, followed a variety of callings in Queensland from whaling to schoolteaching, and died in Brisbane.

This book is *Halek* (1882), first published in England and later in Brisbane. In the Preface to the later edition Nicholson gives a note on how he conceived the story:

*Halek* was begun in the little town of Springsure, about the year 1873. Being at that time destitute of books, I tried to appease my hunger by writing a few; and I had no difficulty in determining that I would write a work which would combine the most engaging qualities of Robinson Crusoe with those of *The Arabian Nights*.

Suddenly, however, while writing away without any definite plan, the allegory, *Halek*, shot up like a new volcano, shouldered aside my meaningless trash, and poured itself forth in a tumult of delightful imaginings.

Not every reader will agree that the imaginings are delightful. The difficulty in all allegories is that of making the surface story interesting. It is useless for the writer to point to the deeper meaning lying beneath and say that this is the important thing. Such an attitude makes a story into a tract.

*Halek* the hero tells his own story. He is a pilgrim in search of spiritual satisfaction, and he passes from Pagam to Karom to Sahitam. When the unwary reader comes upon such names, he may be excused for blinking. And the book is full of these. Nicholson uses Hebrew words and roots and spreads them lavishly through his pages. *Halek*, for instance, means pilgrim, while *Sahitam* is the state in which celestial love is paramount.

After trials and soul-searching and reformation Halek is purified and resolves to go forth and preach the meaning of
renunciation. His further adventures are related in a sequel, Almoni, but this is a less interesting story.

It is all very edifying, but it is doubtful if Halek is now read by any but the professed student. It suited the taste of its age and received extravagant praise from many; but nowadays we are rather less patient of such sugar-coated pills, and tend to think this writing more of an oddity than an entertainment.

One novel that grew out of Queensland history, that used history for a lesson, is The Workingman's Paradise (1892) by William Lane (1861-1917). But today a reader probably finds greater interest in its author and the circumstances of its appearance than in the novel itself.

Lane was one of the powerful influences in the early years of the Labour movement not only in Queensland but in Australia. He came from England and engaged in journalism in Brisbane. He was an enormously active man and founded the Boomerang and the Worker. But his idealism did not find sufficient scope in writing and organising; it needed a new society. This he thought to establish in Paraguay in South America. In 1893 his hopeful band set sail for the New Australia, where every prospect was to please and man was no longer to be vile. The failure of that experiment need not concern us. Lane eventually returned, went to New Zealand, and remained the disappointed but still dogged idealist to the end.

He wrote his novel to raise funds for those imprisoned during the Queensland shearing strike and to expound the virtues of unionism and Socialism to those who would listen. On the title page of the 1892 edition is pasted a little sticker:

Published in aid of
UNION PRISONERS' DEFENCE FUND
W. Kewley, Sec.,
Blackall, Q.

It is a proletarian novel, at least in intention. "If you look for the working classes in fiction, and especially English fiction," wrote George Orwell in one of his critical essays, "all you find is a hole." In Australian fiction only Katharine Prichard and Kylie Tennant and to a lesser extent Vance Palmer have devoted many novels to such characters. Even Lane cannot limit his cast to them, and he finds most interest in what has come to be called the intelligentsia. He lays the scene almost wholly in Sydney, he says,

because it was not thought desirable for various reasons, to aggravate by a local plot the soreness existing in Queensland.
The story tells the relations between Nellie Lawton, devoted to the Cause, and Ned Hawkins. She converts him to her way of thinking, but will not marry him because she cannot endure the prospect of bringing forth a child into such a corrupt society.

It is easy to pick holes in this novel — its slightly strained and amateurish style (despite Lane's journalistic experience), its obvious attack on the reader's sympathies, its naive choice of examples, its device of question and instructive reply. As a critic does this he feels rather a heel for doing so, since Lane is so sincere and well-meaning and idealistic. But that is where the matter rests: a good sermon, but not a good novel.

When we bear in mind the great popularity and influence of Dickens last century, it is a little surprising that so few Queensland novelists tried to create, as Dickens did so frequently, odd or eccentric characters. One of the few who attempted this task was Michael Costello in Harold Effermere. A Story of the Queensland Bush (1897). Harold, the hero, starts off as a very honest boy, athletic but unscholarly, whom his guardian entrusts to Brownlow to be cured of a passion for a life in the outback. Brownlow makes the going so tough that Harold runs away, ending up in Central Queensland. Here he succumbs to temptation, and a companion remarks:

"When you fust came to these Clearings, you would neither smoke, drink, gamble, swear, nor kiss the girls. Now you do all these things better than the most seasoned hand among us."

But Harold does reform and under the influence of Athnie, another orphan, even learns to read and write with some success.

The real interest of the novel, however, is Ponsonby Oberon, an Irishman, voluble with blarney, conceited, excitable, boastful, full of excuses and Shakespearean quotations, who tries to take others down but is invariably taken down himself. This amiable oddity is the life of the book, which without him would be rather too reformatory for modern tastes. An undiluted dose of Harold alone after his reformation — an insufferable prig full of self-deprecation and humility and prayerful references to Providence — would be too much for us today. Oberon serves as comic relief. He is, though a caricature, funny and human. Dickens might have drawn him in an off moment.

A very queer mixture of a reform novel, sometimes like a Sunday-school lesson, sometimes like an extended advertisement for a New Thought publication expounding the Mysterious East,
was written by Douglas Price, M.A., author also of *The Soul of Judas* and *The Earthly Purgatory*. This puzzle is *One of a Crowd: The Story of a Queensland Girl* (1916).

In a way, odd as the comparison may seem, it is like *Halek*, for it is the story of a soul searching for fulfilment. But it is no fable. Little Karen Petri, sent to the Orphanage, is actual enough in her actual surroundings. She hates the Orphanage, she hates officials, she hates the people she is assigned to as a little skivvy. If they appeared to her as the revolting creatures they do to the reader, then she had good reason.

There is for example her first mistress, a Sabbatarian, bigoted and narrow. (It is interesting to note the number of incidental references in the fiction of last century and the early years of this to the melancholy English and Australian Sunday.)

... the pious hypocrisy of the Sabbath, when one might not run, or play, or shout, or laugh, and when even to clean one's boots or one's nails might bring down the wrath of Jehovah, or of Mrs. Maudsley, his representative.

Then she lives in an Anglican convent, intends to take the veil, but at last finds she has no real vocation for the life. Her years have been unhappy:

Pain is the woof with which the warp of character is woven.

From there on she finds herself — she marries a man who has given up holy orders, and with him lives on an island paradise off the N. Queensland coast. World War I sees them both prepared to return to the world they have retreated from, to preach renunciation and condemn the horror and futility of war. The book ends with a fable from the East, which concludes with advice from a sage:

"... thou thyself art Siva ... And even in thick darkness dost thou dwell. But open thy Third Eye, and gaze within. Be true to the visions thou there seest writ large. So shalt thou scale the hill of illumination. So shalt thou dwell upon the Mount of Kailasa . . . ."

This advice is as enigmatic as other parts of the book. It is intended as a guide, but one must be already initiate to see the light it offers.

A tale for pious young people is J. S. Berry's *Hail Australia* (1930), which is supposed to be written in 1929 by an old lady who came to Queensland in the late 1860's at the age of eighteen.
The account of the State is carried further back still in a chapter told by her step-father, who came out in 1849.

Bessie lives at Indooroopilly, marries, and then goes with her husband Rex to the first bank in Cunnamulla. A few years later, to get medical attention for the children, suffering from blight, she goes overland from Cunnamulla to Bourke. This is the reverse journey, as it were, of the one taken in 1877 by Mary Hannay Footh the poet.

This is among the quaintest and most proper of our novels. Few authors can have applied the words *rough* and its antonym *nice* so often to so many people. The most characteristic passage deals with the servant Maria, whom Bessie finds abandoned by some rough people:

So I kept her at the Bank, and ... taught her to keep herself clean and tidy, showed her how to make nice plain clothes, and myself made what she could not manage. In time I taught her to speak less roughly, but she really was the roughest, most neglected creature I had ever dealt with. Through good fortune and adversity, through sickness and health, she was my most faithful servant and friend, and eventually married a nice respectable tradesman in good circumstances.

Bessie herself appears a neat, timid (in unimportant affairs), indomitable (in real crisis), priggish, respectable, religiously devout, slightly snobbish, proper little creature. She tells a mincing tale. It is like walking primly through the pioneering age with skirts drawn very properly aside. She is quite absurd and equally heroic.
SHORT STORIES

THE number of short story writers from Queensland is small. The greatest of them, Vance Palmer, is treated in another section; so is Henry Lamond; so is Steele Rudd. Their inclusion here would swell the roll; but even so the roll is short compared, for instance, with that of New South Wales.

The earliest of any consequence is R. Spencer Browne (1856-1943), whose brisk and businesslike short stories have an unsurpassed banality of subject. His Romances of Goldfield and Bush (1890) contains seven stories, four of which are set in Queensland. Jack the Hatter, an English digger on the Palmer field in N. Queensland, leaves a locket and letters for the narrator to deliver to a woman in England, now married to another. Frank Molloy, squatting in W. Queensland, intends to propose to Mary Earl as soon as he makes money. But Mary’s father commits forgery and to save him Mary marries his elderly partner. When her husband dies she takes a position as governess and meets Frank once more amid the welcome sound of wedding bells. Sub-Inspector James Holmes of the Queensland Native Police is merciless in his treatment of the outback aborigines. The explanation is that a tribe had burned his homestead and carried off his wife. Jimmy Dumaresq (pronounced, as the author points out, Du Merrick), ruined by drought, cannot propose to Kate Moreton, daughter of a Darling Downs millionaire. Later, more successful, he meets her in Cooktown. Again she refuses him, only at last to relent when he is wounded in defending her against an attack by the aborigines.

These themes are threadbare. But the brevity and directness of the tales, told as though space were precious and words were few, atone for much.

Spencer Browne’s talent lay in reminiscence, and his A Journalist's Memories (1927) is a storehouse of anecdote, especially valuable for Queensland identities.

The fiction of Francis Adams is much more concerned with Queensland than his poetry is. His Australian Life (1892), for instance, contains fourteen short stories classed under two headings (Along the Coast and Up-Country), of which one in the first group, The Red Snake, a coldly horrible tale of the aborigines, and all in the second group have Queensland for their setting.
The short stories of the poet Arthur Bayldon are better than most of his poems, and they are also more bizarre in their settings — the floor of the Coral Sea, a dream in a hypnotic trance in a haunted house, a Chinese opium den in North Queensland, plots among the revolutionaries in Czarist Russia. The collection, *The Tragedy Behind the Curtain* (1910), contains fourteen stories, of which only a few concern Queensland; some others are linked to Queensland only because the narrator tells the story here.

A reader who remembers the stories of Edgar Allan Poe will find reminders in Bayldon — the first person story, the indirect narration, mystery, even the idiom. But Bayldon is more melodramatic in his style and more sentimental in his attitudes. The most vivid tale is probably *Thirst*, where in a few pages we have a grim snapshot of the agony of the travellers in the desert:

"We sweated our juices, and then our hands and faces shredded. We spoke in whispers, for our voices frightened us in that dungeon-hush. The rustle of our footsteps seemed to come from another world. Our shirts and pants, sapless as withered leaves, stiff as buckram, seemed heated to the edge of catching fire."

The biggest man collapses first. He falls on his face, and the old man telling the story goes on:

"His tongue squeezed out and was jammed, and I touched it — it was like emery paper."

Bayldon would probably have written better stories if he had been able to devise some sort of plot, if he had given his tales more form. As it is, though they are often lifelike, they are too much like life, incidents told just as they occurred without enough rounding or shaping by the author.

These short stories so far are more or less physical. They tell of things that happen and of the people who take part in them, and the people are factors, scarcely more, in the happenings. A reader hardly thinks of them as individual beings but rather as natural objects. The writers, in other words, have not concerned themselves with the emotional or spiritual effects on people or with their inner life.

With R. S. Porteous there is a move towards this inner life, a tendency that is more frequent in modern stories than in those of last century.
The tales of Porteous deal with seafaring men. One of his novels, *Brigalow* (1957), is set on a western station, and is one of the most readable of its kind. It is a literate and informed book, steering a deft course between the instructional and the purely adventurous. It is as attractive as Arthur Groom's *Happy Christmas*. But for his short stories Porteous turns to the sea.

These are tales of excitement, but in each one there is some relation between character and things. The sea serves as a sort of test of character. It makes men or breaks them or at any rate measures them: the young officer who is unsure of himself, the Hollywood-hero captain, dashing, handsome, and plausible but thoroughly bogus, and on the other hand the slipshod sailor who really knows his job in spite of his outward seeming.

The tales are varied — adventure, suspense, mystery, comedy — and above all actual. They are set mostly on boats and ships off the Queensland coast, and they bring the smell and feel of places very close to the reader. They are less thrilling than those of Louis Becke, but they are probably more true to the life and the reality described. Porteous exudes a tone of level and unperturbed competence.

One writer of short stories has deliberately limited her material. Margaret Trist writes of family life on the Darling Downs, and her families are restricted to certain classes. Within her self-imposed orbit she is extremely vivid and deft. She was herself born at Dalby and lived her early years in the south-east corner of the State. Her stories come from these years.

*In the Sun* (1944), her first collection, contains stories of moods and frustrations. Such frustrations may not seem important to us as adults — but then they would not happen to us as adults. They happen to the young. The victim each time is made to feel different or inferior or helpless. Margaret Trist has, it seems, a very sensitive memory for the bit of sand in the sandwich, for the fly fallen into the tea. More than that: she has evoked the moods of a child, so far as a reader can judge, with extraordinary delicacy and accuracy, and this is a feat that not many storytellers have been able to perform.

In another book of stories, *What Else Is There?* (1946), the time moves nearer to the present and the stories are more concrete. The earlier stories have a faint air of theory, as though they were rather like essays on how a child would feel in certain circumstances. In the later stories the impact is sharper.
One sees and almost smells the rooms, the streets, the shops. These are pictures of small country-town life — cynical or humorous or sympathetic as the case demands. And the range of characters is wider than we might expect — schoolmaster, hired girl, half-cracked old aunt shameless and voluble, little girl obedient and uncertain, grandfather, small-town would-be dictator (female), and perhaps her most successful type, father of family sometimes jovial, sometimes resentful. Women are more numerous than men in her stories. Many of the families are poor, and most of the stories are sad or tart. Margaret Trist's short stories are hives for her memories, and sometimes the honey is a little bitter.

The pictures of the Darling Downs that David Rowbotham gives in his poems are gentler and softer than the sketches he limns in Town and City (1956). This volume contains in addition five tales, all a little grim — a piece of brusque euthanasia, the unwitting and casual cruelty of childhood, a character gnawed hollow, a number of hypothetical killings, and a night out that is paid for in different ways.

The plots are ingenious and so varied that it is hard to say what is the common quality that these stories possess. A couple are rather formal; one is told, not shown us; another is a puzzle; the most vivid is ironical. All are extremely competent, and we can only hope that they are the start, the promise, of a sequence. If those to come are as expert as these, then we shall have a stock to match that of any of the younger southerners now writing. Rowbotham confesses to a preference for prose — "the great adventure," to use his own phrase. As yet he has published more poetry than fiction, but in which his greater talent lies is still an open question.
CRITICISM

Writers like to be read, and they like to have evidence of it. Royalties from their books are not enough. So that even hostile criticism can afford them some satisfaction. That is one of the uses of criticism, apart from its interest to readers and its value to literature and writers in general.

The most valuable of our critics in all these ways, the best critic indeed that we have had in Australia, was A. G. Stephens (1865-1933), a Queenslander who was born in Toowoomba. There he attended the Grammar School until he was fifteen. It was all the formal education he received except for some classes at the Sydney Technical College. The rest of his quite considerable learning he gave himself, and he probably had no better teacher.

After some time with a printer in Sydney he returned to Queensland and spent years as journalist and editor in Toowoomba, Gympie, Cairns, and Brisbane. He wrote and lectured on literature, politics, and religion, and in all these he was regarded at the time as something of a radical.

In 1893 he travelled through the U.S., to England, Scotland, Wales, and the continent. While he was abroad he received an offer to join the staff of the Sydney Bulletin. From then on until his retirement from that paper he was the greatest force in Australian criticism that we have had or indeed are likely to have.

As editor of the Red Page he wrote criticisms of the poets and novelists and short story writers of the period. His influence was sometimes resented but always respected. He stimulated Australian writing, praising where he thought he was justified in doing so, encouraging, sometimes condemning. He was not narrowly Australian, not parochial; he could discuss delicate writers like Daley and Quinn as well as robust bush balladists like Paterson and patriots like Brunton Stephens and Bernard O'Dowd. And he couched his remarks in a lively prose very different from that of the academic ivory-tower type. Here is a passage from his criticism of Miles Franklin's My Brilliant Career. Stephens has just said that this is an essentially Australian book written by a little bush girl.
The book is not a notable literary performance; but it is fresh, natural, sincere — and consequently charming. All over this country, brooding on squatters' verandahs or mooning in selectors' huts, there are scattered here and there hundreds of lively, dreamy, Australian girls whose queer, uncomprehended ambitions are the despair of the household. They yearn, they aspire for what they know not; but it is essentially a yearning for fuller, stronger life — the cry of their absorbed, imprisoned sunlight for action, action, action! 'Miles Franklin' is one of these incomprehensible ugly ducklings who has luckily escaped from the creek, and is delightedly taking her swan-swim in the river of literature.

Stephens left *The Bulletin* in 1906 and until his death made a rather uncertain living by lecturing, criticising, and publishing. He issued at intervals a periodical, *The Bookfellow*, wrote a few novels and a few poems not very successfully, and tried to keep his independence.

Our debt to Stephens is considerable. He lived at a time when literature in Australia was becoming Australian, and he helped the process. He persuaded *The Bulletin* to publish some twenty-three volumes by various Australian authors, the most important being Furphy's *Such Is Life*. In spare moments he compiled literary facts and figures — material for a dictionary of Australian slang, for instance, and biographical notes on over two hundred Australian and New Zealand writers. As a critic he established for his period a sort of canon, a grouping of the most important writers. Much of this we still accept. He personally gave up a great deal to carry out his self-imposed task, and Australian literature would not have developed in quite the same way if A. G. Stephens had not lived and written.

Nothing in Queensland has compared with the work of Stephens in *The Bulletin*. There has been *The Queenslander*, a weekly that ran from 1866 to 1939, with its reviews of books and its occasional articles and its reports of lectures. (An extremely full account of a lecture on Brunton Stephens by the Hon. T. J. Byrnes, the Attorney-General, appeared for instance on 7 July, 1894.) But it was all rather tentative.

The nearest approach to a miniature Red Page has been the literary page in the newspapers. William Farmer Whyte (1879-1958) was editor of the Brisbane *Daily Mail* from 1918 to 1921, and in those years he conducted a literary column and a literary page. Scott Macdonald (1875-1944) wrote literary leaders for the Brisbane *Courier* and the *Courier-Mail* in the 1920's, and collected some of them as *A Bookman's Essays* (1928). Firmin McKinnon (1881-1953), literary editor and finance writer
CRITICISM

of the *Courier-Mail*, wrote reviews and essays for the paper in the 1930's. The successor to these is Roger Covell, whose Saturday reviews and notices arouse hopes in readers that some day the space will be extended to correspond with that in the great southern dailies.

Our second important critic was Henry Arthur Kellow, who was born in Scotland in 1881. Unlike Stephens, he attended a university, graduating from Glasgow. At the age of thirty-one he came out to Queensland to accept the Headmastership of the Boys' Grammar School at Rockhampton, a position he held until his death in 1935.

Kellow had a formidable personality, and his pale and almost transparent blue eyes had a look of penetrating appraisal. The possessor of a resonant voice that always preserved something of a Scottish flavour, he read splendidly. As a teacher he was luminous, with a capacity to clarify essentials. He was never much concerned to be a meticulous scholar; instead, he saw things in their pattern and relationship. Like Dr. Johnson, whom he admired and whose style he had analysed at some length, he could gut a book in the time that it takes an average reader to master a chapter.

In some such way he wrote his *Queensland Poets* (1930), working in bursts with a fierce concentration. It is likely to remain the best criticism of our poets up to that time that we shall have. It is not a short book, but a full discussion of majors and minors. There were few good poets for him to deal with, and so he had the temptation to exaggerate the importance of the others. But it was a temptation that he did not consciously give way to. As if to remind himself and us to keep our heads, he ended his Introduction to the book with a quotation from *Midsummer Night's Dream*: The best in this kind are but shadows.

Some books of criticism may be very useful at the time they appear, but may be soon forgotten. Some other criticism lasts, partly because it is good but also because it is well written. Kellow's book is of this second kind. If we take style into account as well as penetration and judgment, then we have some grounds for thinking his *Queensland Poets* the best single volume of Australian criticism that has so far been produced.

The next critic was the doyen of Australian writers. This is Vance Palmer. He has been discussed among the poets and the novelists, but he is in addition dramatist, critic, essayist, short story writer, lecturer, and broadcaster. His essays, a collection
entitled *National Portraits* (1940), contain some criticism among their biography and discussions. The book deals with twenty-one figures, ranging in time from Macarthur to Monash. They are representative figures — soldier, explorer, politician, painter, writer, banker, and so on. To read the book is to see by brilliant flashes the cavalcade of our history.

Palmer's literary criticism is contained in four volumes, three of them dealing with individual writers — A. G. Stephens, Frank Wilmot (Furnley Maurice), and Louis Esson — the fourth being an estimate of the work of the writers in the 1890's. This book, *The Legend of The Nineties* (1954), is something of a landmark. Until it appeared there were widespread misconceptions of what the Nineties produced and of the value this had. Nobody after reading Palmer can look on that period in quite the same way again.

When he deals with particular figures he uses a mixture of biography and criticism. Each of the books on the three writers has become a small standard work. That on A. G. Stephens is a selection from the *Bulletin* writings and some others, chosen so as to show the wide spread of Stephens's interests, together with an introduction that outlines his life and his importance. With each of the other two writers Palmer was on close terms, and he contributes personal details that make his figures come alive. He has known a great number of the Australian literary men of this century and so his background is full and rich.

As one of our older men of letters Palmer has exercised an influence on younger men that has been felt and appreciated. He has always offered encouragement to budding talent, and here only Stephens himself and perhaps Norman Lindsay have surpassed him.

One unique figure among our scholars and critics was W. A. Amiet (1890-1959), a graduate of the University of Melbourne. Except for his service abroad with the A.I.F. in World War I and a year's post-graduate study at Oxford, he lived from 1912 in Queensland.

At Mackay he conducted a flourishing legal practice, wrote newspaper articles regularly, produced a series of books on literature and astronomy, delivered speeches and addresses, and died on 13 April this year, dictating the last of his articles in bed a week before his death.

All this suggests the man — mentally and physically alert, devouring experiences, warm and friendly and often unexpected
in meeting a situation, interested particularly in things a little out of the ordinary. He studied many languages, and his *Literature by Languages* is the outcome; he read astronomy, and we see the products in *Starry Pages* and *Starry Ages*; he made off-beat literary trips, and these resulted in notes on the palindrome, hypotyposis, polyopton, epizeuxis, and — undoubtedly his rarest and richest prize — a fine example of the homeographic homeophonic homognome. These are on exhibit in his *Scrambled Scrutinies*. We can only regret that his oddly learned, fluent, and witty scholarship concerned itself so fleetingly with Queensland subjects.

One other critic must be looked at before we close the list. In 1944 James Devaney issued his book on Shaw Neilson — a poet writing on a poet. It was a happy combination. Devaney had known Neilson in Melbourne, and in his old age Neilson came up and stayed at Devaney's home near Brisbane. The book then is partly biography, partly reminiscence, and partly a reproduction of Neilson's talk. An intimate picture emerges.

These critics are only some of many. And but for space, one might go on to deal with writers in related fields such as P. R. Stephensen, whose *Foundations of Culture in Australia* (1936) was a pioneering book of considerable importance, and with scholars less directly concerned with our writing such as Eric Partridge.

A few other names demand mention, though the concern is not purely criticism. In 1924, a hundred years after the penal settlement, J. J. Stable and A. E. M. Kirwood issued *A Book of Queensland Verse*. This began with Chubb's *Ode* of 1859. The Introduction by Stable outlined the course of Queensland poetry. Kirwood contributed biographical notes. Both were on the University staff, Stable being Professor and Kirwood a lecturer.

The quarterly *Meanjin* began in Brisbane in 1940 as *Meanjin Papers*. It was founded by C. B. Christesen, who shifted headquarters early in 1945 to Melbourne. The paper now has a Commonwealth grant, but in its early years Christesen had to contend with great difficulties in producing what has now become the premier paper of its kind in Australia. *Barjai*, edited by Laurence Collinson and Barrie Reid, ran from 1943 to 1947.

An important bibliography appeared in 1953. This was *Bibliography of Queensland Verse*, compiled by J. H. Hornibrook. This records, with possibly a few exceptions, all volumes of verse published up to that date by Queensland poets — these being
defined as poets who lived in Queensland for two or more years. Hornibrook's task was long and laborious, and in the course of his inquiries he collected not only biographical information but the volumes themselves. These he later presented to the Oxley Memorial Library. Without this labour of love it seems almost certain that no full record of our poetry in an easily accessible form would yet exist in Queensland. The Bibliography can still be bought, although only 450 copies were printed.

To F. W. Robinson the Fryer Memorial Library of Australian literature at the University owes its inception and growth. Robinson retired from his position as Associate Professor of English near the end of 1958 after thirty-six years of service at the University. Though his interests included Queensland literature as only part of his work, the Oxley Library also owes much to his efforts. The Fryer is his alone: *Si monumentum requiris, circumspice.*
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