THE SELF-MADE CRITIC:

A Literary and Biographical Study of A. G. Stephens

by

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Volume I

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Stephens is so protean a figure and his works so scattered and abundant that the research student must rely on the assistance of fellow scholars who have specialized in specific fields. In this respect I would like to thank especially the late Mrs Constance Robertson, Stephens's daughter and secretarial help-mate, Associate Professor W. M. Maidment of University of Sydney, Mr Leon Cantrell of the University of Queensland and Miss Sylvia Lawson of Sydney, all of whom generously shared ideas or gave valuable advice: the first three in relation to Stephens himself and Miss Lawson concerning Stephens' relationship with J. F. Archibald and the Bulletin.

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PREFACE

Three previously published articles on A. G. Stephens by the author are referred to in this thesis and some of the materials in them have been incorporated in it. The articles are:


"A. G. Stephens as Literary Editor", Southerly, XXIV, iii (1964), 161-173.

In addition, for the retrospective study of J. F. Archibald and the Sydney Bulletin (Chapter IV), I have drawn on an article entitled "The Genesis of the Bulletin (a tribute to J. F. Archibald)", in Drylight (Sydney Teachers College, 1961), pp. 59-66.
ABBREVIATIONS


"Criticism is in the nature of a bridge between art and the public. Its function is to set up a standard, and to guide the public to self-use of that standard. It demands in its construction minds fully trained to understand and appreciate the aesthetic laws which underlie art, and with a grasp of psychology which enables the critic to know what the public wants and what degree of improvement it will stand in its wants. It suffers from a divorce in these qualities."

- A. G. Stephens to Kate Baker

(Quoted by Kate Baker in an unpublished article on Stephens, in The Papers of Constance Robertson, ML MSS 1105/1, Item 2, p. 223)
OPPOSITE

Drawing by Norman Lindsay
From *Oblation*, 1902
INTRODUCTION

A. G. Stephens is a writer whose "life and works" in relation to his times invite close scrutiny, for his influence was considerable - in some ways decisive - during an important period in Australian literary history. In brief, his working life as a journalistic literary critic spanned the thirty years from the mid 1890s to the mid 1920s, a period when Australian literature moved gradually from the raw inward-looking nationalism of "the Bulletin bards" to the relatively sophisticated cosmopolitanism of post-war 'modernism' of a Kenneth Slessor or Kenneth Mackenzie. Frederick T. Macartney has said that "No other Australian critic is so often quoted as Stephens or has comparable influence". This orthodox judgment will need testing, as will conflicting opinions about the nature of this influence. Was it a harmful and inhibiting one as a Muir Holburn would assert; or was Stephens indeed, as Vance Palmer claimed, "the herald and expositor" of "the adult literature" that was to come into being during his life-time?

The periods that will need closest scrutiny are the twelve years from 1895 to 1907 when as editor of "The Red Page" of the Bulletin Stephens was the not altogether unacknowledged legislator of Australian letters; and the eight years from late 1907 to early 1916 when his literary journal the Bookfellow was at


3 In The Legend of the Nineties (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1954), p. 120.
its best and Stephens was both in close contact with local writers and extremely well informed on contemporary developments overseas. But the preparatory training and literary education which preceded this twenty-year eminence require closer study than scholars have been prepared to accord them (with the notable exception of W. M. Maidment¹) for they do illuminate the later critical practices and help us to explain the man's limitations and achievements as critic, as literary editor and as man of letters. Also, a study of the period of declining literary influence, from the revival of the third series of the Bookfellow (after a three-year break) in 1919, reflects on Stephens's relatively static ideas and interests in a period of dynamic change. The emergence of a more sophisticated and innovative body of writers during the entre- guerre years coincides with the period of Stephens's own literary decline and eclipse.

While admitting that this vital and experimental post-war writing owed absolutely nothing to Stephens's direct influence - in fact rejected and was rejected by him; and that the published work of two most considerable and critically respected writers of his own period (Henry Handel Richardson and Chris Brennan) appears to have been unaffected by his criticism, I shall attempt to establish that Vance Palmer's thesis that Stephens's critical writings and personal influence were "a lucky gift"² for the earlier, less tutored writers of his day is a tenable one (names like Steele Rudd, Shaw Neilson, even Joseph

¹ "A. G. Stephens and the 'Gympie Miner'", Southerly, XXIV, iii (1964), 176-205.
² A. G. Stephens: His Life and Work (Melbourne: Robertson and Mullens, 1941), p. 34.
Furphy coming to mind). Further, much of the minor lyric poetry of Stephens's time would have remained unregarded and certainly unpublished but for his energy and vision (one thinks of the volumes of verse he edited by Roderic Quinn, Louise Mack, Hubert Church, Robert Crawford and James Hebblethwaite). Also, some of the more tutored writers (for example, Mary Gilmore, the young Hugh McRae, Vance and Nettie Palmer and Miles Franklin) have acknowledged the help and encouragement they received both from the enthusiasm his personal contact aroused and from the lessons that the criticism taught. And finally, even intellectuals and scholars like John Le Gay Brereton, Arnold Wall and Bernard O'Dowd praised Stephens's pragmatic commonsense and academic scepticism as a challenging and in some respects salutary influence.

What emerges from a contemplation of Stephens's career and a close reading of his critical writings and manuscripts, is a firm impression of native intellect, practical commonsense, passionate devotion to letters, expressed in a mature, flexible, energetic and picturesque prose style. These were splendid natural endowments for the career that circumstance and his own ambitions and interests combined to forge. On the other hand one does feel the lack of an orthodox and academic education. Like good journalism his criticism is bright and readable, but it is also often impressionistic and under-researched, 'bitty' and underdeveloped. When the limitations of knowledge and lack of academic rigour were combined with a rather philistine taste for the middle- and low-brow - as well as with personal idiosyncrasies, eccentricities, whims

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1 For a contrary opinion, see Literary Australia, edited by Clement Sommler and Derek Whitelock (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1966), pp. 51-68.
and downright phobias it must be admitted with Vance Palmer that Stephens was by way of being a literary gad-fly. Also, as H. J. Oliver observed, Stephens emerges as a sounder critic of prose than of poetry. Lyric poetry (with a capital P) tended to be regarded as something precious, remote, ethereal, to be wept over or treasured for its beauty and melodic delicacy; not like prose to be subjected to realistic and tough-minded appraisal. Also, Stephens's a priori theories about the nature of Poetry tended to be based on a number of somewhat crankish ideas about the correlation between good poetry and heredity, insanity or physical ill-health.

On the other hand Stephens is important in his time because he constantly attempted to keep abreast of overseas developments, and in his mature Book-fellow days especially, to subject this writing to the same severe and confident scrutiny with which he had judged the local product in the Red Page. No "cultural cringe" here: "What does it mean for me?" rather than "What is the respectable critical consensus?" seemed to be his guiding question. So just as Brennan, whose poetry he never really appreciated fully, was the precursor of the more cosmopolitan modernists who are poets first and Australians second; so in his criticism Stephens is the precursor in Australia of a 'new' school of critics, who, taking the text as their starting-point, stress the critic's own honest responsiveness to and intelligent close reading of the text itself as the business of criticism. Of course, his criticism suffers the same faults as that of many of his successors: assertive articulateness

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and confident native intelligence need to be disciplined through scholarship and informed by cultivated taste if the criticism is to be sound as well as readable and incisive.

Finally, it is necessary to take into account just how busy and productive Stephens was during his writing life. Taken individually, or even in collections¹, specific pieces of criticism do appear slight and undeveloped and lack of sustained developed critical analysis must be admitted. On the other hand, when taken in toto these individually slight pieces will be seen to embody characteristic modes of thinking and consistent canons of critical practice. Therefore a rather broad survey of the man's life and diverse literary activities is necessary if a just and informed assessment of his status is to emerge². Just as a true appreciation of Archibald's contribution to Australian literature requires a reading of the Bulletin itself (there are no books by his hand) so it is essential to consider the mass of day-to-day writing (paragraphs, articles, reviews, notes and the like), along with the printed books in order to do justice to Stephens as critic and man of letters.

¹ For example, in Vance Palmer's A. G. Stephens: His Life and Work.
² This point is developed at length in the author's "A. G. Stephens: The Critical Credo", Australian Literary Studies, I, iv (1964), 219-241.
CHAPTER I

EDUCATION AND EARLY TRAINING (1865-1883)

It is especially relevant to consider A. G. Stephens's educational background and professional training: his biases, enthusiasms and theories; and the literary, philosophical and social influences upon him. Relevant because in his three capacities as literary critic, literary editor and literary agent Stephens was to be guided largely by the strength of his personal and commonsense response to the work before him¹ and by his own knowledge of the writer's personality and life - in some cases indeed by his own personal assessment of the man as a social or business acquaintance².

Alfred George Stephens³ was born in Toowoomba, Queensland, on 28 August 1865, the son of S. G. Stephens, part-owner and editor of the Darling Downs Gazette. That Stephens's sharp intelligence and capacity for work were inherited traits is suggested by some biographical notes and a "Genealogy" prepared by his daughter, the late Constance Robertson⁴. Mrs Robertson states that the father, Samuel George, had graduated from Greenwich Naval School and


² A neat example is Albert Dorrington. Early praise (in The Red Page) turning to outright abuse (in the Bookfellow) coincided with a personal and business estrangement, the details of which are fully recorded in The Papers of A. G. Stephens in the Mitchell Library (A2298) Vol. 3. These papers are referred to as "S.P." in subsequent footnotes.

³ In later life he sometimes affected the more aristocratic sounding "Gower" in place of "George"; perhaps as a pseudonym (usually "A. Gower Stephens", occasionally "Gower Stephens").

⁴ The Papers of Constance Robertson (ML MSS 1105/1, Item 1), p. 7.
served in the Merchant Navy before settling down to domesticity and journalism; and that his father’s uncle, James George Stephens, had attained the rank of Vice-Admiral in the Royal Navy and been appointed Maritime Governor of Valparaiso. Stephens’s mother, Euphemia Tweedie Russell, the daughter of a Chief Engineer in the Royal Navy, was related in a Jane Austenish fashion to one of the lesser branches of the English aristocracy. Mrs Robertson’s papers also contain this biographical note by Camden Morrisby:

As a literary family, the Stephenses are historically famous; especially as lexicographers, editors and critics. The Latin Thesaurus of Robert Stephens, and the Greek Thesaurus of Henry Stephens — members of an illustrious family of learned printers at Paris and Geneva, in the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries — were original works greatly valued by scholars in their epoch, and still held in esteem.

A. G. Stephens has a long inheritance of literary aptitudes. His father, Samuel George Stephens, was a proprietor of the old Darling Downs Gazette, and a founder of Toowoomba Grammar School where A. G. Stephens ["Number one on the roll!" he used to boast] was educated till the age of 15.

Stephens himself improved on this biographical gossip in remarks to Shaw Neilson, who wrote in an autobiographical note to Harry S. Chaplin:

One of the first things he [Stephens] told me was that his ancestors were Flemish pirates who settled in Wales 300 years previously. Most of the Stephens’ [sic], he said, had been editors. They were good at looking over other people’s work but did not have much creative power themselves.

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1 The Papers of Constance Robertson (ML MSS 1105/1, Item 2), p. 23. It is safe to presume that the father would have been fairly well educated himself. J. Hagan in Printers and Politica (Canberra: A.N.U. Press, 1966), p. 27, has noted that compositors and printers who had been trained in England were generally well educated. Since there was no local book industry in which they could exercise their "superior education", Hagan notes that one of their compensations was to write letters to their trade journals "in which Latin verse, Shakespearean quotation, Dickensian reference and classical allusion all come tumbling out in a prose often grotesque, but often curiously effective!"

2 Ibid., p. 61.

Alfred George was the eldest of thirteen children by Samuel George and Euphemia Tweedie Stephens. The father, editor-proprietor of a local newspaper, did the best he could for the first of his large family by playing a leading part in the establishment of Toowoomba Grammar School, in 1877. School records reveal that S. G. Stephens was Honorary Secretary of the Committee of Subscribers set up to endow the new school, and was elected to the first school board, and to Alfred George went the honour of being enrolled number one boy on the school's roll.

The school had a small but academically well qualified and conscientious staff who provided a sound conventional education in the subjects popular at this time, notably Latin and English grammar. The first Head Master, John Mackintosh was a Master of Arts from Edinburgh and a former master at Sydney Grammar School. One of Stephens's distinguished classmates, Sir Littleton E. Groom, K.C., later Minister for Home Affairs and Attorney-General of the Commonwealth, described him as "A conscientious capable teacher [who] ... laid well the foundations of the educational work of the school." Another intelligent and perceptive classmate, Charles Stumm, K.C., has supported Groom's opinion with this statement:

The general impression relative to the first Masters was that whoever were responsible for their appointments had discharged their duties with admirable skill and success. The Head Master, Mr. John MacIntosh [sic], laid broad foundations and aimed at the attainment of a high standard of manhood and of education.

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1 See Toowoomba Grammar School Magazine and Old Boys Register, Jubilee Number, XVI, ii (November 1926).

2 Ibid., p. 17.

3 Ibid., p. 23.
From the school records and reminiscences of various old boys, Stephens does not appear to have distinguished himself in the usual schoolboyish fields of sport or to have made a great impression as a personality and leader. It is clear, however, that he did contribute to the school's cultural activities: Sir Littleton Groom recalls that "During the early period school plays were staged in the Town Hall" and that in a production of *Julius Caesar*, "The performances of Archer and A. G. Stephens are recalled as noteworthy."¹ Mr Stumm recalled that he was promoted to the highest form in which there were only three other boys, all of whom distinguished themselves later. One was "A. G. Stevens [sic], who even those days had a strong literary bent."²

Stephens must have been a capable and conscientious student, because in 1880 at the age of fourteen after three years schooling he passed at credit level the "Senior Examination" of the University of Sydney³. Forty years later, at a time of great emotional stress, he was to say that he remembered with great detail and clarity extracts from texts "swotted up" for this examination⁴. Stephens was proud to the end of his early associations with the school and grateful to it for the sound basic education it provided. In the last year of his life he sent his friend and patron, the Honorable John Lane Mullins, a seven stanza tribute in verse to his *alma mater* entitled "Song of Toowoomba"⁵.

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¹ *Toowoomba Grammar School Magazine* and *Old Boys Register*, Jubilee Number, XVI, ii (November 1926), p. 17.
⁴ Letter to Miss Christina Elliott, concerning personal affairs, especially his hallucinations, dated 26 January 1920, S.P. (ML MSS DOC 782).
The manuscript, which is dated "26/12/32", bears this annotation in Stephens's hand: "J.L.M. from A.G.S. 'oldest' (on the roll; not on the census list) 'old boy' of the Grammar School Toowoomba". The seventh stanza will serve to illustrate Stephens's sentimental feelings about his old school:

As fish to the ocean,
As birds to the blue,
Dear School! with devotion
We come back to you:
The bond shall not sever
Where Grammar Boys are:
Toowoomba! for ever
And ever!
Hurrah!

Also, a letter from another "old boy", Mr F. H. Robinson, to Constance Robertson\(^1\) states that shortly before Stephens's death in 1933 the writer had contacted and "induced him to attend, as guest of honor [sic], a Christmas dinner party, given by old boys of Toowoomba Grammar School, of which his father was the founder, and he himself No 1 on the school register." That 'number' mattered!

Stephens was such a loyal "old boy" because in fact he owed all his full-time academic education to the school. Instead of proceeding to the University in distant Sydney, as his talents and inclinations suggested he should (why bother to matriculate otherwise?), the fifteen-year-old boy left school to begin an apprenticeship with a well-known local printer, W. H. Groom, who later became the Federal member for the district. Stephens has left no recorded reason for the family's decision to place him in the printing trade. One can deduce that his youth; the expense involved in rearing the other twelve young

\(^1\) **The Papers of Constance Robertson** (ML MSS 1105/1, Item 1), p. 337.
Stephenses; prevalent ideas about "the University of life" being the best teacher (very strongly held for example by J. F. Archibald); and the natural desire of a successful newspaper proprietor that his eldest son should follow his footsteps, learning the trade from the bottom up and taking over the business in due time, were governing factors.

Eventually, however, the boy did have to move out to Sydney to further his qualifications. Dr James Hagan, an expert on the history of Australian printing, has said in a personal note to the author that if Stephens took his craft seriously he would have had to go to Sydney for further training in the 1880s\(^1\). Dr Hagan says in his letter that he doubts if Stephens would have learnt "anything if at all at Toowoomba except how to 'set solid' - the lowest grade of type-snatching, requiring little in the matter of aesthetic, complicated or even careful setting." His father would have known too that without proper training printing was a dead-end occupation in the 1880s. To quote from Dr Hagan's history of printing in Australia:

Many - probably most - of the lads who worked on the papers that published once, twice, or three times a week were never apprenticed. Even if they had been, the master could not have met the terms of indenture that required thorough instruction in 'the art and mystery of printing', because the range of work done in these offices was usually very narrow. Large numbers of this first generation of colonially-trained compositors were mere 'hands at case', 'type-snatchers' or 'type-shovellers' incapable of anything except the simple solid setting of the weekly newspaper or periodical.

In any case Stephens's apprenticeship was transferred from Groom to a prominent George Street printer named Beard\(^2\). Here he continued his apprenticeship,
attending Sydney Technical College for formal theoretical and practical instruction in "the art and mystery of printing and composing". Stephens later told the anonymous author of an adulatory biographical note that he attended French and German classes at Sydney Technical College, securing "Certificates of Proficiency" in each of these subjects. The six-year period of apprenticeship completed, Stephens returned home (c. 1887) to acquire journalistic experience with his father until something better turned up - the post with the Gympie Miner in 1889.

Stephens's formal education and training can be summed up then as a conventional secondary education to the age of fifteen, followed by an apprenticeship in printing and composing at Sydney Technical College, with some part-time study of modern languages at the same institution. Otherwise, like so many prominent journalists, politicians and public figures of his time, Stephens was essentially a self-educated man. And like many of his self-tutored contemporaries, he continued to read (and grow intellectually) all his working life: serious reading and intellectual inquiry being pursued as desirable ends in themselves rather than as supervised and required means for the ac-

1 "A 'Bookfellow's Book'", The Leeuwlin, I, iv (January–February 1911), 247 f.

2 James Hagan, in a private letter dated 29 January 1969, states: "The Rules of the N.S.W. Typographical Association (founded 1880) provided for an apprenticeship to 'the art and mystery of composing' that was to last six years." Also that "Rule 1 of the 'New South Wales Typographical Association' (1881) states:

NAME AND OBJECT
1. That the name of this Association be the 'New South Wales Typographical Association', and that it shall be constituted of Journeymen compositors, Machinists, and Pressmen, who can produce an Indenture of five years, or otherwise satisfy the Board of Management, and of Apprentices in their last year. Employees and Overseers may be admitted as Honorary Members of the Association on payment of an annual subscription of 10s."
quisition of a terminal degree. Constance Robertson's biographical notes and
the work-books in the possession of the Mitchell Library throw light on Step-
vens's enthusiasm for reading and his methods of private scholarship. Briefly,
he kept two kinds of records of his reading: handwritten transcriptions of
memorable passages and a filed series of scrap books containing clippings and
some MS material. Mrs Robertson said in her roughly drafted biographical notes:

All my reading was done during these years [as office-girl in the Book-
fellow from just after World War I] - either in the office or travelling
to and from it [inserted later: "by rail when we lived up the N.S. line"]
and browsing, I discovered in a series of large ledger-like volumes,
hand-written extracts from the Bible, Shakespeare and the classics -
or relics from the days, when [break in MS here]
The most valuable portion of his library was his series of scrap-books,
containing clippings from newspapers and magazines and periodicals.
[illegible] x x x date - -
my job was to cut and paste too -
-- 1 - 26 Verses
  27 Verse crits.
Was there any significance first series of scrap-books devoted [to]  
verse. [sic]

From Stephens's own printed statements and from the internal evidence of
the critical writings (allusions, comparisons, parodies and the like) it is
obvious that he did read widely, retentively and not altogether indiscrimin-
ately in political science, moral philosophy, popular science, and of course
literature. He had been influenced by Henry George's theories of political
economy (Progress and Poverty, 1879); Friedrich Nietzsche's 'superman' phil-
osophy (Thus Spoke Zarathustra, 1883-4) and almost certainly William James's
pragmatism (Essays in Radical Empiricism, 1912 and earlier writings); Herbert
Spencer's System of Synthetic Philosophy (from 1860) and Charles Darwin's The
Origin of Species (1859); and the attacks on these scientists and phil-

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1 The Papers of Constance Robertson (ML MSS 1105/1, Item 1), pp. 203-205.
osophies by contemporary theologians would have buttressed him in his Niet-
zschean rationalism and contempt for conventional established Christian be-
liefs. His reading in history would account for the radical anti-colonial-
ist nationalism that was to commend him to J. F. Archibald (Justin M'Carty's
History of Our Own Times, 1879–1897; and Sir John Seeley's The Expansion of
England, 1883), were both subjects of lectures to the Gympie Literary Circle,
1889–1890). Also, H. A. Taine's History of English Literature (1886) with
its critical embodiment of contemporary rationalist philosophy and evolution-
ary theories was congenial to Stephens who later wrote (R.P., 28 July 1909),
"Sceptic and rationalist, he suits the modern eye: and one finds little to
alter in his best conclusions". Taine's thesis that three primordial forces
shape a nation's literature - Race, Surroundings and Epoch - must surely be
one source of Stephens's strongly held theories about ancestry and literature.

In short, Stephens was very much the product of his time, caught up in the
heady intellectual excitement that the ideas of Darwin, Spencer and Nietzsche
and the rest provoked. And like so many bright young secularists and radicals
of his day Stephens delighted in ridiculing his conventional elders' theologi-
cal and political theories. The empiric rationalism - the concern to apply
the methods of strict scientific observation, enquiry and deduction to all
areas of thinking that found its logical expression in the practical

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1 See especially The Apostle, May 1889–March 1890 edited (and mostly written)
by Stephens for The Gympie Secular Association which had been formed "to main-
tain the principles and rights of Free-thought and to direct their application
to the secular improvement of this life".

2 See Early Critical Work of A. G. Stephens (Gympie: unpublished MS, 1889–
1890), S.P. (ML MSS A7600).
pragmatism of a William James — this stayed with Stephens through his long literary life and informs all the critical writings.

The critical method that Stephens adopted in his later studies of Daley, Kendall and Brennan showed how much he was indebted to Taine, who argued:

Man, forced to accommodate himself to circumstances, contracts a temperament and a character corresponding to them; and his character, like his temperament, is so much more stable, as the external impression is made upon him by more numerous repetitions, and is transmitted to his progeny by a more ancient descent. So that at any moment we may consider the character of a people as an abridgment of all its preceding actions and sensations . . .

Where Taine would explain English literature in terms of its writers' Saxon heritage:

Huge white bodies, cool-blooded, with fierce blue eyes, reddish flaxen hair; ravenous stomachs, filled with meat and cheese, heated by strong drinks; of a cold temperament, slow to love, home-stayers, prone to brutal drunkenness: these are to this day the features which descent and climate preserve in the race.

or again:

Here [in England] the sluggish and heavy temperament remains long buried in a brutal life; people of the Latin race never see in them aught but large gross beasts, clumsy and ridiculous when not dangerous and enraged.

Stephens will distinguish between poets of Celtic and Saxon ancestry thus:

We get to the heart of the difference with a bold metaphor: Saxon poetry springs from a strong belly; Celtic, from a sick brain. Not sick in the sense of feeble or unhealthy; but ailing sick, longing-sick, love-sick . . .

The Celtic poet sings when the world is out of tune: he is apt to howl like a banshee, however melodiously.

Characteristically the Saxon poet writes from an overflow of high spirits: characteristically the Celtic poet writes from an under-current

of low spirits. Characteristically only; since there are many variations. Nevertheless, the work of a typical Saxon poet—say Chaucer—represents jolly ease and content: the work of a typical Celtic poet—say Mangan—represents melancholy and maladjustment. The Saxon poet sings because he has enough; the Celtic poet sings because he wants more. The Saxon poet makes a bonfire of the universe; the Celtic poet puts a torch to the pyre of his own heart.

Stephens's own reading in English, continental and classical literatures was considerable, but selective in the sense that he concentrated on the areas that appealed to his immediate taste: in poetry Shakespeare, the Cavalier lyricists, the Romantics and contemporary Victorians; in fiction the traditional English novelists, including his contemporaries again; in drama Shakespeare, Sheridan and Shaw. Milton, the Augustans and 'metaphysical' poets such as Donne (whom Taine had dismissed lightly) receive scant notice presumably because their verse does not conform to the melodiously emotional pattern, nor do poets before Shakespeare or the dramatists between Shakespeare and Sheridan. In short, there are great gaps; the kinds of poets and writers who are currently popular in some academic circles because of their complexity, ambivalence, intelligence, 'ironic mode' and control are precisely the ones Stephens appears to know least about, to have liked least. His taste was very much that of the common reader. His reading in classic and continental literatures perforce would have been in translation, except for French literature for whose nineteenth-century poets and novelists he had a special interest. Drama as theatre scarcely attracted his serious critical attention, nor did he do much to encourage play-writing among his Australian contemporaries—reflecting no doubt the lack of legitimate theatre, of an educated audience or even a history of play-writing and acting in the country before World War II. Stephens

1 "Saxon v. Celt" [in a review of The Poets of Ireland by A. J. O'Shonhooe], Bookfellow, 1 March 1913, p. 54.
was, however, well and deeply read in the 'standard' traditional and Australian authors, probably better but at least as well read as the average graduate of to-day. Certainly he was aware of the critic's responsibility to read widely, arguing that "to be a capable critic one must have surveyed a considerable extent of the literary field; must have read and reflected much; must have formed mental standards by continual judgment, by wide comparison" (R.P., 1 July 1899). No doubt he would have read more widely but for the demands that the writing of journalism and literary criticism made on his own time. Certainly the advice that he gave to young readers in a review of John Murray's edition of Byron's poems has a sincere ring:

Byron is one of the authors - like Shelley, Browning, Shakespear [sic], Spenser, Chaucer, and their high kindred - who by most of us must be read before twenty if they are to be read right through; and to read in fragments and selections is always to risk error. The world of literature is more than too much with us: There are so many books of delight, so many journals of interest, that the mere time to study a lengthy classic comes but rarely between youth and age. And it is in middle life that one wants one's knowledge of the classics to be sure and stimulating. Therefore, ye golden youth! vow to read and meditate your Byron while there is time: this new edition may confirm the vow. (R.P., 15 February 1906)

These biographical facts help to explain certain limitations in Stephens's critical practice. First there is the matter of balance or intellectual discipline. No matter how highly intelligent and naturally articulate a young man is, there is a danger that he will become a kind of intellectual weather-cock when he confronts successively the great thinkers of his age, each advancing his theories unchallenged in maturely written and closely argued books. At an established academic institution like Sydney University, a Professor Anderson could have posed questions about Nietzsche or Kant that would never have occurred to the youthful tyro; a Professor MacCallum might have challenged
the Tainean generalizations from a far closer and deeper knowledge of the classic English writers than the journalist-cum-critic could ever aspire to. Constantly arguing with lesser intellects, or less well informed readers than himself, could have no other effect than to produce a kind of shallow cockiness, a too enthusiastic succumbing to intellectual enthusiasm, a too facile assumption about the implications of Darwinian theory for the literary critic (the odd theories about the supposed relationships between the state of a person's physical health or sanity and his genius as a writer, for example). Rigorous academic training might possibly have inhibited the intellectual adventurousness and breezy bravado that distinguish so much of the criticism. Also they might have provided a kind of ballast which I for one find lacking from time to time in the critical pronouncements.

Rather than entertain this kind of self-criticism, Stephens adopted an offensive (really a defensive) attitude towards writers and critics fortunate enough to have had the higher formal education that he was denied. This was a potential critical blind spot: it perhaps caused him to denigrate unfairly poets like Brerston, O'Dowd and Brennan; and to question the value of writing that seemed only to be respected in academic circles and had little appeal for the common reader (Milton is a case in point). If a critic or writer 'paraded' his qualifications, Stephens's response was apt to be more violent than the lapse merited. Thus when the author of a booklet on Shakespeare introduced himself as "B.A., LL.B., M.H.R." Stephens declared "M.H.R." a vain display and demurred at the "LL.B."

A writer's rule of Taste declares that he is justified in stating himself, in introducing himself, but not in parading himself. In so far as he parades, he ceases to be writer and becomes a literary peacock...
The inferences are that P. McM. Glynn is ignorant of the rule of Taste; or that he is a peacock. The fact is that he is Irish. (R.P., 3 January 1903)

In short, again like many self-educated men, Stephens would argue that the university of life was a better preparation for creative intellectual activity than a course of study at Oxford or Sydney, whose disciplines he saw as imaginatively and intellectually inhibiting. Stephens's hostility towards the universities and university men would have been supported by J. F. Archibald, one of whose favourite sayings reputedly was "I have nothing against Oxford men. Some of our best shearers' cooks are Oxford men"; and like Archibald he came to regard the universities as halls of snobbery and hypocrisy where the privileged rich sent their sons to be indoctrinated in the same puritanical and materialist principles that their parents lived by. In 1902, for example, Stephens described the University of Sydney as "a mostly Scottish institution, with no individuality and no spirit except what is embraced in a sordid commercialism, and an almost savage intolerance of opinion" (R.P., 18 October 1902). And again, four years later the Chancellor, Dr Maclaurin, was described as "a conscientious prig" for investing on behalf of the University in a block of land opposite the G.P.O. in Martin Place at £500 per foot. Stephens declared that acquisition of land and money appeared to matter more than the pursuit of knowledge:

1 See S. E. Lee, "The Universities and Creative Writing", Drylight (Sydney Teachers College: 1960), pp. 33-36.

2 See Mrs A. C. Macleod, Macleod of "The Bulletin": The Life and Work of William Macleod by His Wife (Sydney:Shelling Printing Works, 1931), p. 32.

Willoughby in Joseph Furphy's Such is Life is another case in point.
With all this heaping of money, Sydney University is in a bad way. It lacks enthusiasm for learning, it lacks liberal spirit. It is truly described as existing hide-bound under the heavy hand of Dr. Maclaurin. Appointed for life, the professors tend to petrify in their chairs, their lectures to become a barren restatement of text-books. The University gives no national inspiration, shows little capacity for original research. With a monopoly of the young talent of N.S. Wales, it fails to stimulate that talent for creative work. Brilliant students it cannot help having, and they go elsewhere for laurels and fame. Yet while it hoards money and can purchase land at 500 l. per foot, Dr. Maclaurin is apparently content. Officially he sits upon the University like a Scotch curse, conscientiously doing his worst, and obstinately ignorant that he is killing the spirit in saving the shekels. All these magnificent buildings, all these magnificent investments, are dust and ashes, lacking the hot flame of an inspiring educational life. (R.P., 25 January 1906)

Stephens's close interest in University affairs was part of a wider concern that public education from the Primary School through to the University and Adult Education services should be as efficient and up-to-date as possible—and freely available to all. He believed, for example, that the University of Sydney should be

brought directly and completely under control of the Department of Public Instruction and converted into a well-fitting and perfectly-moving wheel in the community's educational machine...

The Sydney University, like other universities established in the last century or earlier, is partly an anachronism, with its roots in the Dark Ages. It is logically in the same case as the trade unions, with their old warrant superseded by new law. While education was left in private or charitable or occasional social hands, the isolation of a University was defensible. Now that the State has undertaken, in these countries, the whole business of education, the Sydney University and others, if they continue to receive State aid, might be brought into entire harmony with the general system. Otherwise waste and inefficiency, the things which Florence Nightingale detested, are inevitable.

He kept a critical eye on the Department of Education's readers, text-books and syllabuses; made it his business to comment on the finances and professional competency of Public Libraries (especially the Mitchell); and always expected University men who edited or wrote texts for pupils and students to

1 "Technical Education", Bookfellow, 15 January 1914, p. iv (Supplement).
take their responsibilities seriously. He himself wrote plays for children and intended his study of Kendall for a student audience. Stephens knew better than most how important it was that formal education and reading be continued into adult life - he himself had had to find his own education opportunities, and he did not want the bright young minds of the future to suffer similar disadvantages. All this has significance for Stephens's literary activities: from the very start he regarded himself as much a teacher as critic and littérateur. Because he did take himself seriously as lecturer (or rather perhaps, professor) in the university of life, his criticism had a broader basis than one would normally find in journal reviews: among the assessments of the local literary product would appear lectures from himself (and other authorities) on a host of literary topics from the technique of verse- or story-writing through to background lectures on classical and continental literatures. Because Stephens was a natural teacher of adults, was dedicated to improving the skills and knowledge of his protégés and bush or town readers, he was a student himself all his working life. To a large extent his criticism avoided the insularity and narrow nationalistic special pleading that might reasonably have been expected in Archibald's disciple - and is detected in a succession of critics from say Miles Franklin\(^1\) through to Rex Ingamells\(^2\) and Clement Semmler\(^3\).

\(^1\) Laughter, not for a Cage (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1956).
\(^2\) Handbook of Australian Literature (Melbourne: Jindyworobak, 1949).
\(^3\) Literary Australia, jointly edited with Derek Whitelock (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1966).
Another fairly obvious consequence of Stephens's self-acquired education was that he felt impelled from time to time to parade his knowledge and reading: he was not one to wear his learning as lightly as a Brereton or Brennan. Stephens's confidence in his own knowledge of the French language is seen in remarks he made about the entries submitted to the competitions ("Translate from the original French" etc.) that he ran in both the Bulletin and Bookfellow. On one occasion, indeed, he printed his own non-competitive translation of the poem "Les Conquérants" with the remark, "Of the competitive versions none was quite satisfactory." \(^1\) And there was what H. M. Green described as the "insufferably patronizing"\(^2\) tone of Stephens's comments about Chris Brennan's understanding of Mallarmé:

> With all his faults (and they were not mean) he was a good lad, a kind lad. With all his merits (and they were not low) he was a modest lad, a striving lad. "Indeed I loved him (on this side of idolatry) as well as any." But he never understood Mallarmé!

This comment about an Associate Professor of Comparative Languages by one whose academic qualifications in French were a "Certificate of Proficiency" from Sydney Technical College, is, as an apologist had to admit,"somewhat seigniorial"\(^4\); and even if it is - as R. G. Howarth maintained - a typical A.G.S. joke\(^5\), the joke is in poor taste. The joke, Professor Howarth said, lay in the hum-

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\(^1\) See Bookfellow, 15 August 1913, p. 192.

\(^2\) In Christopher Brennan: Two Popular Lectures Delivered for the Australian English Association (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1939), p. 5.

\(^3\) A. G. Stephens, Australian Writers III - Chris: Brennan (Sydney: Bookfellow, 1933), p. 45.

> See below, pp. 381-382.


\(^5\) Quoted by R. G. Howarth, in an editorial note, ibid., p. 228.
orous echoing of Tom Pinch's praise of John Westlock in *Martin Chuzzlewit*:

"he is a fine lad, an ingenuous lad, and has but one fault that I know of: he don't mean it, but he is most cruelly unjust to Pecksniff!"¹

It is a point of interest that Stephens was indeed a clever and accurate parodist who constantly slipped into parody in his critical writings. As Hugh McCrae said, he was so full of good reading (and had those ledgers of *bon-mots* at hand!) that "he became a chameleon of fine literature"². Usually the passage mimicked was widely—enough known for the parody to give point and wit to an observation. For example, in an outburst against a too ready acceptance of usages that blur distinctions in meaning ("we vex for every verbal child that is lost in the market-place and comes home dirty in the dictionary") the writer slipped easily and naturally into Iago's voice taunting Othello in the temptation scene³:

> Who steals my purse steals cash, and if he lives in New Zealand he is pretty certain to refund it as conscience money (by instalments according to the pressure of relief of circumstances); but who so robs me of my stinking word, merely to throw it on the rubbish-heap, robs me of that which not enriches him and impoverishes the language.

Occasionally, however, one senses the insecurity of the self-educated man: the parody, proof apparent of that wide and easy familiarity with the classics of literature, is meant, one senses, not only to amuse but to advertise that reading.

¹ Charles Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Chapter II.


³ See *Othello*, III, iii, 156-161.

⁴ "Stunned Words", *Bookfellow*, 15 October 1914, p. 227 and reprinted 15 September 1921, p. 150.
Yet another way in which Stephens was apt to demonstrate his wide reading and retentive memory was his quick recognition of 'echoes' in the work of contemporary writers under review. What a more generous-minded and academically trained critic might regard as legitimate borrowing or unconscious literary influence Stephens was apt to denounce as outright plagiary, especially if the author happened to be a University man like Brereton or Brennan. This readiness to denounce others does not come well in Stephens, for as Hugh McCrae has observed,

his dedication of Oblation was the paraphrase of a speech from Beaumont and Fletcher. And, once, he told me he had invented an expression "the toilet of the soul". "There you are. I give it to you. You can use it as your own." Yet, he had prigged it from Jeremy Taylor.

And again:

I have (or had) a special letter from him, written, so I momentarily thought, in mock seventeenth century phrases, with recordings which might have suited today. A straight-out steal from Suckling: although, obviously, in this case, A.G. was playing a game. Memory helped me; and I wrote him the answer Suckling had got.

Professor Leonie Kramer has shown that charges of plagiary that Stephens pressed against Gordon in his "Prefatory Sketch" in his 1918 edition of The Poems were a little ungenerous; and the bitter controversy with George Black over the literary merit of Burns's poetry that was pursued five months in The Red

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1 See Newspaper Cuttings: Brereton (ML QA 821/B) for Stephens's unpublished account of and comments on Brereton's alleged plagiarism as editor of Shakespearean texts for schools.


3 Hugh McCrae, "A. G. Stephens - A Character Study", Southerly, VIII, iv (1947) 251. The quotation: that follows is from this source.

Page 1, was sparked off mainly by Stephens's demurrer that "Burns is BURNS largely because the average reader doesn't bother about notes and commentaries." My own feeling is that Stephens himself had not read enough "notes and commentaries" and did not know, as scholars do, how the great creative writers (including Shakespeare) take much of their material from other literary sources rather than from a direct confrontation with human experience.

Finally, the technical training that Stephens received during his apprenticeship was to prove at once a help and a hindrance during the later journalistic life. The theory, still advanced in industry to-day, apparently was that the best way to know your profession was to begin at the bottom and work your way up. So it was an undoubted advantage if the editor of a small country journal knew all about composing and printing, because he could supervise his key employees better, and help out when necessary in setting up the leaders and pars he wrote. Also, as Stephens showed in his journal's supplements - and later his Bulletin and Bookfellow books of verse - the editor's imagination can have fuller play if he is fully aware of the technical resources at his command. The format of the Red Page itself, with its imaginative and often graceful layout and exploitation of different type sizes and founts, might be attributed to the editor's tradesman-like knowledge of printing procedures - as might the aesthetic presentation of edited books and the frequent complaints about the

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1 R.P., 23 October 1897 to 26 March 1898.
See also George Black's rejoinder in an 86 pp. pamphlet entitled In Defence of Robert Burns: The Charge of Plagiarism Refuted (Sydney: Dymocks, 1901) and Stephens's final word in "The Bookfellow" column of the Sunday Sun of 15 January 1911 ("What did we tell you?").
shoddy production of books under review\(^1\) or conventional printing practices ("figures might be substituted for the defacing signs employed as guides to footnotes")\(^2\). On the other hand, craftsmanlike conscientiousness can easily degenerate into pedantic fastidiousness. In Stephens's case this manifested itself in a tendency to over-punctuate and to take undue liberties with his authors' manuscripts, particularly if the author were relatively unlettered as in the case of a Shaw Neilson or a Robert Crawford\(^3\). The fastidiousness also resulted in infuriating and costly delays in publication; anyone who has looked closely at Stephens's papers\(^4\) will know that he tended to correct proof copies as heavily as the original manuscripts. Add to this the hours and money devoted to book design, illustrations, motifs and the like (artists found him infuriating to work for) and one can perhaps begin to understand why the Book-fellow was not a financial success. Hugh McCrae, with his amusing anecdote about the commission to draw a Scotchman "stepping out of his skin"\(^5\); and Norman Lindsay, in less charitable mood, have both drawn attention to Stephens's impracticability as editor. Lindsay, in fact, blamed Stephens's fastidiousness for the collapse of the Bulletin publishing enterprise, stating that he wasted a great deal of money keeping the presses idle "while he footled about, making trivial alterations in the type setting"\(^6\).

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1 See S. E. Lee, "A. G. Stephens as Literary Editor", *Southerly*, IXIV, iii (1964), 170 f.

2 R.P., 17 January 1896. Stephens was referring to *The Historical Records of N.S.W*.

3 "A. G. Stephens as Literary Editor", pp. 166-167.

4 As good an example as any would be *Such is Life*. See the letters to *Fumphry*, S.P., Vol. 2 (A 2298).


It appears then that both Stephens's unique qualities as a critic and editor and some of his serious limitations and lapses of taste are at least better understood if considered in the light of his early training and formal education. Stephens, it may be argued, stands in the same kind of relationship to Australian criticism as Neilson does to our poetry, Lawson to the short story and Furphy to the novel. Like the men he admired and helped and quarrelled with, Stephens himself was essentially an intuitive and largely a self-tutored genius.
CHAPTER II

GYMPIE (1888-1890)

In November 1888 Stephens arrived in Gympie — riding the 107 miles from Brisbane by horseback, he told Palmer later¹ — to edit the Gympie Miner for a National Syndicate, The Gympie Newspaper Company. This syndicate bought out the paper when the previous owner-editor, Arthur Leslie Bourcicault, decided to move on. Bourcicault had supported the National Party and his paper no doubt was regarded as a foil to the Liberal Gympie Times in those days of rather excited and parochial political enthusiasms. Stephens’s own political leanings (as deduced from the two pamphlets he wrote a couple of years later), his youth and enthusiasm, and his background experience both as printer and journalist would have commended him to a syndicate looking for a suitable successor to Bourcicault. As editor Stephens could be expected to keep up the lively journalistic competence of his predecessor and energetically implement the syndicate’s aim of adherence to and promotion of the principles and objects of the Australian National Party (including principles that J. F. Archibald’s Bulletin had been advocating by the way: exclusion from Australia of “Chinese and other servile races”; “White Australia”; Federation; Law Reform, including “repeal of all barbarous and obsolete acts”; Civil and Political Liberty; Social Justice and so on²).


I am indebted to Professor Maidment and to Vance Palmer’s A. G. Stephens: His Life and Work, for many of the details that follow.
Gympie was then a raw and thriving gold mining town\(^1\), in the centre of a rich pastoral and farming district. But as Professor W. M. Maidment's researches show\(^2\), the ardent young reformer and intellectual with his head full of Henry George, Darwin, Nietzsche and Shakespeare found it a rather parochial and dull community. Intellectual and cultural activities were at a low ebb: the Gympie Musical Union was to fold up in 1889 from lack of public support and lack of enthusiasm on its members' part; and that pervasive institution, the local School of Arts, was in a state of decline. Stephens immediately set about livening things up, both in his capacity as newspaper editor and as private citizen: he became a member, then chairman, of the School of Arts Committee, supported the Athenians and the Debating Club, read papers to kindred souls (such as the poet, George Essex Evans) at the Gympie Literary Circle, and was a very active member of the Gympie Freethought Society. Fortunately, Stephens has left documentary evidence of his varied activities during his two-year stay at Gympie in three different sources: in the (incomplete) files of the *Gympie Miner* which Professor Maidment has examined; in an exercise book that preserves in Stephens's carefully written hand the papers he read to the Gympie Literary Circle\(^3\); and in twelve issues of the journal of the Gympie Freethought Society\(^4\) which almost certainly were written, edited and printed by Stephens himself and were preserved by him in the same exercise book as

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1 Gold was discovered in 1867 and mined till 1930. Gympie became a municipality in 1880, and a city in 1905.


4 *The Apostle*, Nos 1 (5 May 1889) to 12 (2 March 1890), filed with *Early Critical Work*. 
the literary papers. Each of these is worthy of examination, not for the intrinsic merit of the writing itself, but for the way in which it helps to illuminate later practices; to quote Professor Maidment: "Some study of the earlier journalism may bring the later work - and especially Stephens's 'literary nationalism' - into fuller and more accurate focus than has always been attained in comment on the later work only."¹ Professor Maidment's article clearly shows that many of the interests, the characteristic modes of thinking and expression, and long-held philosophical tenets had been arrived at, or were in process of being evolved during this stage. For example, Stephens's concern that the worker be given the opportunity to improve himself through adult education shows in the way he advocated in his professional capacity as journalist, and in his private capacity as citizen, a move to re-establish in Gympie theoretical and practical classes in mining, his argument being that "That man is the best worker who is the best thinker, and who best understands the scientific principles which underlie his calling."² Also the editorials, topical pars, verses, crisp "Specimens" (that appear to imitate the practice of that prince of misanthropic journalists, Ambrose Bierce) and parodies show that Stephens was well on the way towards the highly individual style that was to be as easily recognizable to the knowledgable reader as another man's bank signature. Professor Maidment's quotations illustrate the sardonic wit, metaphorical turn of phrase, emphatic but logically reasoned line of argument, lucid exposition (with heavy punctuation) of the hard-hitting critic of later

¹ W. M. Maidment, "A. G. Stephens and the 'Gympie Miner'", p. 192.
² Ibid., p. 193.
years. And already Stephens was showing himself to be an inveterate — almost
compulsive — controversialist; a forthright, at times crudely bludgeoning,
antagonist who seemed to glory in personal clashes with local dignitaries.
No "Atticus" this, satisfied to

Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
And without sneering, teach the rest to sneer;
Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike, 1
Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike.

The policy of his Nationalist backers might account for the parochial att-
acks on Liberal politicians, but the Bulletin-like anti-clericalism, republic-
ism and anti-Imperialism are unmistakably "A.G.S.-ish", as is their expression.
Take this exercise in parody — in a neutral report that an additional stanza
to the National Anthem had been suggested:

Grandchildren not a few,
With great-grandchildren, too,
She blest has been,
We've been their sureties,
Paid their gratuities,
Pensions, annuities.
God save the Queen! 2

What emerges most clearly from Professor Maidment's study of the Gympie Miner
files is Stephens's fundamental philosophical credo; a credo he was true to
all his working life. And I agree with Professor Maidment that an understand-
ing of Stephens's empirical philosophy does enable us to understand the crit-
cical writings better, to find beneath the 'inconsistencies' that are so often
mentioned in critical articles at least one firm guiding principle. To quote
Professor Maidment again:

1 Alexander Pope, "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot", ll. 201-204.
2 Quoted by W. M. Maidment, "A. G. Stephens and 'The Gympie Miner'", p. 204.
His ultimate test of an institution, as of much else - of Christianity, the Bible, the Gympie Musical Union, no less that of monarchy - is pragmatic, in a rather vaguely conceived nexus of evolutionism, cosmic optimism and social cohesion. The question he asks is, Does it work? Stephens told Vance Palmer that one of the letters that pleased him most from Miner correspondents had praised him for giving the paper "a literary touch and a soul". Unfortunately it seems impossible to test the correspondent's opinion because the literary supplements are missing from the Miner files that Professor Maidment found in Gympie. But he did run competitions for the best letter or essay on practical mining topics and the best set of verses on Gympie Hospital Management with special reference to recent developments; he did publish writing of local talent, including a short story on mining and the poetic effusions of "Frond" - a "lady of unexceptionable piety and unfound ed literary pretensions" according to Professor Maidment; and he did advertise the Literary Circle's meetings by way of unpaid news items.

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The eight papers that Stephens read to Gympie Literary Circle are painstakingly transcribed in the now famed purple ink ("the ink once rated housemaid's stuff; but, now, through his adoption encaustum of kings"). It is a fair assumption that these papers were copied carefully from well-worked-over

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1 W. M. Maidment, "A. G. Stephens and 'The Gympie Miner'", p. 204.
Hugh McCrae (in Story-Book Only, p. 90) made a similar point: "like a Roman emperor, he wrote in purple ink".
notes: the penmanship and general presentation remind one rather of a conscientious school-child's composition book. There is only one erasure (on page 7) in the first lecture (of thirteen pages), and the quality of the penmanship would earn commendatory remarks from the severest of masters, in contrast to the manuscripts written under pressure in later life (which are well nigh illegible in many instances). That Stephens did not regard these early essays in criticism as youthful indiscretions is indicated not only by the careful preservation of the exercise book in which they are written, but by the fact that in later life he plundered whole paragraphs from them for Red Page and Bookfellow articles. For example, extracts from the second paper on "Anti-Climax" were used in at least two different places - in a travel book¹ and a Red Page article²; also some biographical gossip about sharing a railway compartment and talking books with the politician, William Bede Dalley - "one of the finest and most cultivated intelligences that Australia has nourished" - is repeated almost verbatim in an embryo number of the Red Page³.

Nevertheless these youthful exercises are not, as Vance Palmer has claimed, "largely adult in point of view"⁴, nor are they remarkable for originality of idea or distinction of style. In fact the three studies of overseas writers - of Thackeray, Sheridan and Molière - lean so heavily on critical opinion that one doubts whether Stephens indeed had even read some of the books he generalizes about.

² R.P., 23 June 1900.
³ Ibid., 20 June 1896.
For example, the paper on Thackeray is little more than a rehash of Trollope's opinions. From internal evidence (and long experience as a marker of scripts in which students generalize about texts they have not read) one suspects that *Vanity Fair* was the only Thackeray novel that Stephens had read. Thus, the *Book of Snobs* is described as "very piquant", or more revealing, *Henry Esmond* is dismissed in a paragraph of waffly comment of this order: "The story is a sad story, but all the more natural because of its sadness." In the Molière paper the tyro critic is franker; after a few tentative and unilluminating comments, Stephens, who apparently had not done his homework, concludes with straight quotation from his critic (unnamed): "I may conclude this very superficial sketch of Molière as a dramatist with the remarks of an English critic, which appear to me both pointed and judicious."

As well as being unoriginal, the literary commentaries are for the most part quite immature, Vance Palmer notwithstanding. The study of Thackeray begins with a schoolboyish flourish ("Upon the noble roll of British novelists, the name of William Makepeace Thackeray is blazoned in imperishable letters") and contains naive judgments on Dobbin ("one of the most beautiful creations in fiction . . . what a noble honest heart the ugly fellow with the big hands and feet has . . .") and on Jos. Sedley, said to have been "described with a

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1 For further evidence, see letter from Mrs M. H. Foott of 18 November 1892 (three years later) in S.P. (Al926). Mrs Foott wrote: "After you have read 'Henry Esmond' you must read 'The Virginians'.

2 "On Thackeray", read 24 July 1889, p. 46.

3 "On Molière as a Dramatist", read August 1890, p. 126.

4 "On Thackeray", read 24 July 1889, p. 33.

5 "On Thackeray", p. 43.

The quotation that follows is from this source.
rich humour, truth, and knowledge of human nature that have never been, and
I think, never can be surpassed. The immaturity shows up most tellingly in
the only paper on an Australian subject\(^1\), where Stephens at least is recording
some of his own responses to the poetry, though he does admit to borrowing his
methods from others. How far he was to develop in maturity of judgment and
style is emphasized if this youthful exercise is compared to the well-known
preface that Stephens wrote for his edition of *The Poems of Adam Lindsay Gor-
don\(^2\) in 1918. The embryo critic's evocation of Gordon's funeral reads like
a parody of precious adolescent romanticism, and must have occasioned a wry
smile in later years from the critic who was himself a competent parodist and
unmerciful censor of mawkishness in writing\(^3\). Thus, the funeral itself:

On the 25th. of June, 1870, just nineteen and a-half years ago on Christ-
mas Day, a funeral procession wound slowly along the bush track which
leads to the burial-ground at Brighton, near Melbourne. The tardy hearse
was there with nodding plumes, its dark burden dimly seen; there were
mourners in sombre garb, silent with steady downcast eyes; and hearts
were there, and tears, all the equipage of grief. Sullen clouds covered
the sky, and a bleak wind blew shrilly through the wailing gum-trees;
while in the air there seemed a dull uneasiness, and the tasseled grass
shivered as if anticipating the coming storm. As the procession passed
through the cemetery gates, rain fell in scattered drops, which increased
to a heavy shower as the coffin was lowered into the grave. Then the
last sad rites were performed; the mourners went silently away; and the
dead man, whose life had been so stormy, lay at rest in the bosom of the
infinite mother Earth, unheeding the stormy conflict of the elements
above him.

Similarly, its aftermath:

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1 "On Gordon", read 11 December 1899.

2 Published by the N.S.W. Bookstall Company, Sydney.
   Reprinted, with emendations, as "Australian Writers. IV. A. L. Gordon"
in *Bookfellow*, 15 March 1920, pp. 73-74.

3 And, ironically, in one of the papers (No. VII: "Anna Maria, A Tale of
   Hysteria") Stephens parodies and burlesques the romantic sentimentality of
   Longfellow's "Evangeline".

The bright sun that beats upon that grave cannot transfigure it as do a nation's praises; and the night-wind that sighs in requiem o'er it, voices no gentler deeper sympathy than that which fills thousands of Australian hearts to-day. For around that grave are clustered the tenderest associations of our dawning literature; it is indissolubly connected with our noble thoughts and aspirations; it enshrines the heroic impulses that will give birth to the heroic deeds of the far-distant future. And it possesses these titles to our reverence because it is the grave of Australia's first national poet.

Perhaps the morbid interest that Stephens was later to evince in the details of Barcroft Boake's suicide and unhappy last years is here anticipated. But more to the point is the concentration on biography both for its own intrinsic interest and for the light it throws on the literary product. Portraits of Thackeray as a jester with a broken heart ("Under the cap and bells and motley lies the ineffable weariness which is the spirit of the Book of Ecclesiastes"), and of Sheridan as a rakish genius ("As drunkard, dramatist, wit, spendthrift, orator he has rarely been equalled") are typical of the later critical practice, while the complaint that Molière's family history was "too obscure to allow us to trace what portion of his genius was hereditary" shows that the Taine-like emphasis on heredity and environment was there from the start. Also, these first attempts at literary criticism show that Stephens ever regarded himself as literary mentor and master for his less educated fellows; witness the modest remarks with which he concluded the paper on Sheridan's plays:

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2 See papers on Boake in S.P., Vol. 1 (A2297). Stephens collected detailed biographical data from members of Boake's family before writing his introduction and critical notes. He drew heavily on the father's long personal reminiscences especially.
3 "On Thackeray", read 24 July 1899, p. 52.
4 "On Sheridan's Plays", read 7 May 1890, p. 100.
5 "On Molière as a Dramatist", read August 1890, p. 121.
Should anything I have said gain them a new reader, or stimulate an old admirer to a fresh perusal, I shall be glad; for they are English classics which can never fail to please and to refine.

And the similar stratagem, in the essay on anti-climax:

If I have succeeded in giving a local habitation and name to a figure of speech the qualities of which are not generally known, yet which lies in wait, like a silent and treacherous tiger, seeking what unfortunate writers it may devour - if I have succeeded in this, my purpose to-night is fulfilled.

Finally, there are among the literary essays occasional flashes of genuine literary discernment and the later racy, vigorous mode of expression as when the speaker complains of Gordon's verse that "Occasionally, indeed, the thought does not fill out the verse, and there is a forceless repetition of a forceful phrase". (In the very next sentence, however, there is an odd conjunction of metaphors: Stephens continues "But as a rule, words and meanings are neatly welded and wedded.") The bright patches are exceptional, however, in the literary papers. At this time Stephens wrote better when engaged in a close analysis of books in which the literary interest is secondary. The first paper on Seeley's Colonial Expansion and the last on McCarthy's History of Our Own Times are clearly superior. The main reason I think is that here he was thrown on his own resources - was responding personally instead of passing on second-hand critical opinion; a second reason would be that Stephens was not yet ready for literary criticism, was better informed and more articulate on social and historical themes, on interests that were relevant (for the well-informed journalist). The first paper expresses his revolutionary

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1 "On Sheridan's Plays", read 7 May 1890, p. 109.
2 "On Anti-Climax", read 29 May 1889, p. 32.
nationalism and republicanism with energy and conviction, and argues rationally (and pragmatically) against Seeley's theory that a closely knit Imperial Federation of British colonies with England at the centre was an answer to the threat of submergence by Russia and the United States of America. With Archibaldian fervour Stephens asserts that Australia must stand on her own feet as a free, united and independent nation:

The spirit of English civilization is monarchal: the spirit of young Australia is essentially republican. Here, away from old-world feuds and enmities we breathe an ampler ether, a diviner air, than the denizens of the old country, steeped in hereditary prejudices. We refuse to be saddled with the antiquated forces and institutions which in England make misery and retard progress.

Of all the papers, the one that gives surest indications of the later achievement is the review of Justin McCarthy's History. This essay is the least worked over: the writing is rushed, there is a higher incidence of erasures, the speaker has limited himself to the first fifteen chapters (as far as he had read?) and himself apologizes for "the casual and slipshod commentary" he was laying before his audience:

An abler critic would deal directly with the facts and conclusions, would apply knowledge drawn from independent sources, compare Mr. McCarthy's inferences with the inferences which others have drawn, and pronounce judgment upon his accuracy, his impartiality, his adequacy. I have attempted nothing so elaborate. For such a task time has failed me, and books, and perhaps inclination. The only merit to which I could lay claim is the negative merit of originality.

"For such a task time has failed me, and books, and perhaps inclination" — a most revealing and prophetic confession. One of the major propositions argued

1 "On Seeley's 'Colonial Expansion'," read 13 March 1889, p. 12.
2 "Some Reflections on the first fifteen chapters of McCarthy's 'History of Our Own Times'," read March 1890, p. 128.
in this thesis is that the later work for all its brilliance and "claim . . . of originality" generally lacks solidity and structured development, partly because of pressure of time, but largely because of lack of 'inclination' on the critic's part to shape the brilliantly struck thoughts into something more substantial. For the moment, however, precisely because this essay was written under the kinds of pressure that produced the Red Page and Bookfellow pars and reviews, it comes to life and reveals promise - even fulfilment - not easily detected in the other papers. The comparison between Macaulay and McCarthy with its concluding metaphor could well have been gleaned from a Red Page article:

His literary style is modelled on that of Macaulay, and is always terse, clear and vigorous. It lacks Macaulay's epigrammatic glitter, and something of his strength and fulness. Macaulay soared on eagle wing to heights whither McCarthy's weaker pinion cannot follow.

More importantly, Stephens thought through some of his attitudes and convictions about writing; while not strictly relevant to his theme they do represent some of his most considered and thoughtful pronouncements on style and content. Especially interesting and relevant is his argument that since writing and literature reflect a living environment, draw their sustenance from life itself, style itself should be "the living embodiment and reflection of the age". Stephens saw the late nineteenth century as "emphatically the journalistic age". In contemplating how Stephens came to develop the fresh, flexible,

1 "Some Reflections on the first fifteen chapters of McCarthy's 'History of Our Own Times'", read March 1890, pp. 130-131.


3 Ibid.
original and natural prose style which T. Inglis Moore has described as "vigor-orous and sappy" and as "the best, practically, yet written in Australia" one need hardly look any further than this essay:

Tastes are continually changing; the ideal of one generation is the abhorrence of the next; the modes which are fashionable to-day may be absurd in fifty years. Buffon is reported to have said that the style is the man: I rather agree with Lord Chesterfield that the thought is the man, and the style is merely the dress of thoughts. It is an artificial envelope, whose form and colour any wind of whim may alter; the thought, if it contains a natural truth, is inimitable and immortal. I do not deny that the garb of the thought has much to do with its popular acceptance; it must be presented in the dress which suits the times; and from this very proposition I deduce the corollary that the age makes the style; that the style is the living embodiment and reflection of the age.

The trouble with the young speaker was that he did not really know when to stop, and like the older critic, once he mounted a hobby horse was inclined to pursue a blinkered course, or at least to ignore the complexities of (and possible rejoinders to) the proposition he was so enthusiastically propounding. Still, even allowing for the overstatement - perhaps even what Professor R. G. Howarth used to refer to as "the robust insensitivity" of the man himself - the statement that follows is both an honest declaration of personal conviction and an apt comment on Stephens's own style - an illustration (and a foretaste) of things to come:

Inveigh against the age if you will; but not against the man who is the product of his age, begotten of its breath, nourished by its inspiration, dying as he lived, under the sway of its resistless environment. Look at the record of English literature during the few years that the English language has had a literature worthy the name. It has been in constant flux, modified by changes of language, manners, customs, all the manifestations of that continually-changing thing which we call life. How many readers nowadays can peruse the splendid sentences of Gibbon

1 Six Australian Poets (Melbourne: Robertson and Mullens, 1942), p. 149.
2 "On McCarthy's 'History of Our Own Times'," pp. 133-134.
without fatigue? Yet it is not a century since Gibbon died. If anything suffers the sea-change that Ariel sang, it is literary style. If anything rings the knell of anything at all, they ring the knell of literary tastes. Whether we change for better or worse I am not now deciding. But as Gibbon's style was formed on that of the classical authors who were his chief study; as Macaulay's was largely influenced by the memoirs and essays which made the reign of Queen Anne so delightful to him; so McCarthy's is simply the result of his contact with the journalistic forces which surround him and have so largely contributed to the development of his work.

These critical juvenilia, then, though of limited intrinsic value, do help us to understand how attitudes implicit in the later criticism had evolved in the early impressionable years and how some of the literary theories were already being formulated. The young man lecturing to Gympie miners (and their wives) clearly anticipates the pundit of the Red Page exhorting bush workers to read and write well, for Australia's sake.

* * * *

On Sunday evenings Stephens attended the weekly meetings and concerts held under the auspices of The Gympie Secular Association in the local Temperance Hall. The Association's stated object was "to maintain the principles and rights of Freethought and to direct their application to the secular improvement of this life," and it defined Freethought as "the exercise of the understanding upon relevant facts and independently of penal or priestly intimidation." Like so many 'independent' and 'rational' thinkers of his day, Stephens could not see the relevance or admit the logic and truth of Christian


2 "Principles and Objects" of The Gympie Secular Association, printed in The Apostle (5 May 1889-2 March 1890), unpaginated.
teachings now that Nietzsche had spoken and Darwin had challenged, on scientific grounds, the Biblical account of Genesis and Old Testament 'legends' such as Jonah and the Whale or Noah and the Ark. Where his contemporary, Bernard O'Dowd, set about writing a Secularist "Book of Common Prayer" complete with funeral and christening services, Stephens was satisfied to print and it seems certain to edit and to write broadsides to publicize the Association's ideas and activities - "Subscription 1/- Monthly. Ladies free." Naturally the sardonic rationalist enjoyed himself poking fun at Biblical passages that fundamentalists were still asserting to be true in the face of the mounting scientific evidence to the contrary. The pragmatic Stephens, however, preferred to rely on plain commonsense, as in the article "Good Old Noah" where he evokes a ludicrous image of Noah solemnly sorting out "two stalwart fleas, male and female" and gives a 'realistic' picture of what conditions must have been like on the ark, "when ten million or so different animals got fighting over their food you can imagine it was as good as a play. Better, in fact. What amazes me is the way that man Noah went through it all."  

Further, Stephens's own observant eye convinced him that professing Christ-

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1 The Australian Lyceum Tutor (1888). See also E. Morris Miller, "Bernard O'Dowd's Early Writings", Meanjin, IV (1949), 233-240.

2 The Apostle, "Published Under the Auspices of the Gympie Secular Association! Stephens has filed Nos 1 to 12 (5 May 1899 - 2 March 1890) with his Early Critical Writings (Literary Circle Papers). No. 4 is missing. Of the rest it is certain that Stephens wrote Nos 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12 since he has pencilled in the initials "A.G.S." at the conclusion of each leading article. The internal evidence of style, subject matter and the rest further convince me that these are by his hand. The Apostle was printed at the Gympie Miner machine office, perhaps by the editor himself.

3 The Apostle, No. 8, 1 December 1889, unpaginated.
ians as a whole wore their religion lightly, their own actions contradicting Christ's teachings. This social hypocrisy so enraged the ardent young idealist that his first editorial article, "Precept and Practice", was directed against the rector of the local Anglican church - upholder of the established creed of the majority of local citizens:

The modern pastor shears Christ's lambs instead of feeding them, and the lambs exhibit a very unlaudable objection to the process. Some of the antics of the churches are indeed curious to witness. The Gympie Church of England last month held what is known as a bazaar. The congregation would not respond to any direct appeal to their sympathies, so a band of nigger minstrels was engaged to stupefy them while particolored [sic] females were distributed around to induce them to gamble away their money while under the influence of the narcotic.

And where his reading of history supported personal observation, the invective was if anything more violent:

We look over the brief period of the world's history called the Christian era, and we see that superstition has been one of the chief causes of human misery. It has caused infinite bloodshed and immeasurable woe. It has retarded the progress of our race, and is still hanging like a clog on the advancing feet of science and civilization.

Finally, the patriot was just as outraged as the student and rational thinker, asserting "That our sunny southern land may be saved from the devil's dogmas which have filled with woe and bloodshed eighteen centuries of European history, will be the heartfelt wish of every true Australian."

Generalizing, therefore, from these brief extracts from The Advocate, one can see that the religious scepticism deriving from Nietzsche and Darwin that

1 "Precept and Practice", The Apostle, No. 1, 5 May 1889.
2 "Truth is Mighty", ibid., No. 3, 7 July 1889.
3 "What a Contrast!", ibid., No. 7, 6 October 1889.
so permeates the Red Page writings is not immature or stagey posturing (Archibald's Bulletin was fiercely anti-clerical). As Professor Maidment pointed out, it derives naturally and logically from a deep-grained pragmatism. Christianity failed by all the empirical or commonsense tests, therefore it must be eschewed and attacked. It took some personal courage on the part of a small-town country editor to attack (in his personal capacity as a citizen, not in his professional role as journalist) society's most revered convention and to question his fellows' most cherished beliefs and strongly held principles. Later on as critic, when his own reading and commonsense convinced him that Milton was no poet despite the enormous authority that asserted he was, that Tennyson was a toady to the Queen and the poetic prop of a decadent establishment, that Kipling was little better than a jingo or Burns an unprincipled plagiarist, he said so clearly and emphatically - knowing full well that academics, intellectual friends, common readers and Scots would be deeply offended.

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1 See, for example, an article on "Faith-Healing" (R.P., 4 April 1905) and also an article entitled "The Bible Society's Plea" (R.P., 28 March 1903) where Stephens describes the society as "indeed a remarkable agency for the dissemination of discredited superstitions"; and again, "Christianity must follow the other supernatural religions to oblivion."

Similarly, in an article entitled "The Pope, and Kelly" (R.P., 2 March 1905) there is an attack on papist interferences in politics: "The man who casts his vote as an 'act of faith' is presently found incapable of casting his vote as an act of reason."

Even in the later Bookfellows where Stephens was concerned to preserve more respectable or conventional 'image', and was apt to doff his cap to God in songs and patriotic hymns he would print these lines, as late as 1921:

**WRITTEN ON SUNDAY.**

Ye see yon kirk with lofty spire uplifted to the sky?  
Within that costly edifice how many creditors have ! [sic for I?]  
And not a single man of them to call for cash forgets -  
Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands pay their debts.  

*(Bookfellow, 15 July 1921, p. 109)*
By late 1890, therefore, not only had Stephens clarified his thinking on certain fundamental critical and intellectual articles of faith, but he had also shown intellectual courage in pursuing them to their logical conclusions - even if this meant offending influential friends and acquaintances. Also he had shown that he was already developing the ability to communicate his convictions with fervour and incisive directness. An analysis of his writings over the two-year period that Stephens lived in Gympie - in the Miner, in the papers read to the literary circle and in the Apostle - confirms Professor Maidment's opinion that Stephens as early as 1890 had arrived at the pragmatic intellectual point of view he was to be true to for the next forty years as critic and writer.
CHAPTER III

THE BRISBANE BOOMERANG (JANUARY-SEPTEMBER 1891)

Stephens left Gympie at the end of 1890 and worked on Gresley Lukin's Boomerang for nine months as a sub-editor. According to Vance Palmer he was induced to accept the five pounds a week 'permanency' only after fairly long overtures on Lukin's part, because he was "jealous of his freedom, disliked the idea of being tied down to a sub-editor's job"\(^1\). But eventually Stephens did rise to the lure of responsibility for a proposed literary section and a guarantee of independence. Lukin had written that his idea "was that in this relation to the paper and myself you would be free from all worry of detail, and have time and opportunity to do your best work under the most favourable circumstances." It seems clear that by December 1890 Stephens had agreed to work with Lukin. The last issue of the Boomerang for 1890 carried this announcement:

Mr. Gresley Lukin desires to announce to Queenslanders that the Boomerang Newspaper has passed to his control, and that after 1st January next a new and enlarged edition of this popular paper will be published under his direction.

His policy, Mr Lukin announced, was to produce an independent and "democratic journal of the highest class" that would "steadfastly foster the national sentiment that Australia is for the Australians" and would work for good relations between capital and labour. Special interests and cultural pursuits would be

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1 Vance Palmer, A. G. Stephens: His Life and Work, p. 7. The extract from the letter by Gresley Lukin is quoted in the same place.

2 Boomerang, 27 December 1890, p. 4. Unless otherwise indicated the references that follow are from this source and are given within parentheses in the text.
met in special sections devoted to "Social Events", "Sport", "Mining", "Art, Music and the Drama" and "Literature". Regarding the last mentioned Lukin wrote:

Arrangements are in progress for publication of special tales of Australian life and character by popular authors of known ability, while new books worth reading will be weekly passed under review.

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No pun surely was intended in the last sentence; however, when the 'specialities' were announced, it seems a punning mind had been at work: Henry Lawson's column was to be called "Country Crumbs" and Stephens's 'The Magazine Rifle" (27 December 1890, p. 11)¹. Stephens made it clear from the start that he intended not only to engage in the newspaper critic's customary verbal sniping, but that he was "to search and rob, esp. of all that can be found in various pockets or storing places" (C.O.E.D.) with scant regard either to the laws or ethics of copyright. Thus, the number of 28 March 1890 joyously announced that a bundle of American and English magazines which had just arrived by sea mail would "be remorselessly pillaged by the 'Rifler' next week". Stephens justified his rifling on educational and cultural as well as professional grounds in the same way as he was to justify his practice of reprinting overseas stories and articles in his struggling Bookfellow² days. Stephens wrote:

Under this title [The Magazine Rifle] the BOOMERANG proposes to do, in a modest way, what Mr. Stead does in such an exhaustive manner, monthly, in the Review of Reviews. But here the Rifler finds that he is confronted with an embarras de choix. Of the making of magazine literature there seems to be no end. The editorial table literally groans beneath its

¹ See also The Magazine Rifle column of 1 August 1891 (p. 13) in which Stephens talks about "Andrew Lang-uage" and quotes some local verse with this preamble: "A thing of booty is a joy while it lasts. The 'Rifler' sometimes ravages neighbouring as well as foreign fields."

² See, for example, the issue of 1 February 1913 where three pages are filled up by reprinting allong article from the journal United Empire.
weight of wealth in this kind. It would tax the powers of the most om-
ivorous student to keep abreast with even one-half the serial literat-
ure of the present day; and yet the progressive reader cannot afford to
drop out of touch with the high standard of thought in the best magazines.
These are, indeed, the brief epitome of the intellectual work of the
time — the mirror in which is reflected in miniature or essence the qual-
ity of contemporary teaching or aspiration. So far by way of justificat-
on for our adoption of this as a leading feature of the new BOOMERANG.
(3 January 1891, p. 21)

Stephens's nine months experience as sub-editor responsible for literature
(the same post as he was to fill on the Bulletin) enabled him to try out the
ideas and develop the critical approaches that helped make the Red Page such
a distinctive and successful literary forum. It is doubtful if Stephens would
have had the initiative to have suggested the idea of a literary column along
the lines of The Magazine Rifle to Archibald, let alone have established the
Red Page so surely and confidently without this previous experience. What one
notes after reading through The Magazine Rifle columns is that already Stephens
realized the value of controversy in arousing reader interest and participation
in literary discussion; already he was insisting on the highest standards and
judging contemporary or local writing against the great names in literature;
already he was showing an eclectic taste and readiness to read beyond the cir-
cumscribed fields of English Literature; already some opinions were hardening
into articles of faith, especially on the subject of poetry; and already the
typical "A.G.S." style and critical modus operandi of biographical details
followed by critical generalizations supported by selective reference to the
text and extensive use of primary quotation were evolving. So although none
of the Rifler articles are really memorable or authoritative — worth preserv-
ing as part of the literary canon — they make interesting and fresh reading
even now. And, of course, even more than the Gympie material, they illuminate
the later critical practice and achievement.
A good example of Stephens's skill in sparking off lively literary controversy is to be found in the first column where this remark by W. D. Howells is quoted with approval, "a reader who has a preference for Kipling's sketches had better get some sackcloth and ashes, and put them on, for beyond all doubt his taste is defective" (3 January 1891, p. 21). Next week, in order to be "fair to the reputation of that 'flash in the pan', as Mr Stead calls Mr Rudyard Kipling", Stephens drew on Julian Hawthorne in Lippincott "to give a pen and ink portrait of him somewhat different from that presented from Harper's last week" (10 January 1891, p. 21). Kipling, whose alleged imperialist bias would have prejudiced the republican-minded young critic against his work, had an enormous popular following in the 1890s. Therefore it is not surprising that on 28 March Stephens was able to occupy himself with about one and a half columns of correspondence on the Kipling issue. As in the Burns controversy later, Stephens answered his critics on the spot (two says to one), but unlike the later critic was able to keep on good terms with his contestants - largely because the tone of his writing was not nearly so acrimonious nor self-assured as when he later quarrelled with George Black (over Burns) and John Le Gay Brereton (over Tennyson). Here, for example, is how the columnist terminated the dispute with his most persistent antagonist:

THE "Rifler" desires to acknowledge receipt of another interesting letter from "Scribbler" on the vexed question of Kipling's status in fictional literature in which "Scribbler" sets off with very considerable effect the judgment of the "Athenaeum" as against the authorities quoted in disparagement of Kipling in the BOOMERANG of 31st. ultimo. Considerations of space preclude the "Rifler" saying more at present than that he tenders "Scribbler" the assurance of his most distinguished consideration, and hopes to hear from him again whenever the spirit of criticism moves him. (11 April 1891, p. 10)

(The soft soap approach paid dividends; "Scribbler" did continue to contribute verses and letters from time to time.)
Stephens from the start attempted to take his standards from the best writing. The trouble is that he seems to have read too lightly to have acquired sound standards, and was passing through that adulatory stage (familiar to all teachers of University English) where the accolade of 'genius' is rather too readily bestowed on popular contemporaries. So William Morris is described as "the man who, in our estimation, comes nearest the standard of Longfellow and Tennyson among all our living poets" (17 January 1891, p. 21); on the evidence of "When Runnels Began to Leap and Run" (quoted, of course). Mr Alfred Austin "in the humble opinion of the 'Rifler'" was adjudged to have "here approached nearer to the touch of the Shakespearian spirit than it has been given to any living hand to attain" (7 March 1891, p. 22); Laurence Housman's "Corn-Witch" was compared favourably to Rossetti (21 February 1891, p. 21); William Watson's Wordsworth's Grave and Other Poems was said to contain lines "embodying, in residuum, one of the finest critiques on the genius of the great Lake poet we have ever met" (4 July 1891, p. 15); and on his death James Russell Lowell was acclaimed "one of the greatest, if not the greatest, of all American litterat- eurs [sic]" (22 August 1891, p. 22). Also after glossing a Miss Amelia B. Edward's opinion that "Thackeray was the greatest master of fiction the world had ever seen. The heart had no secrets for him. All its weaknesses, all its littlenesses or its tendermesses were open to him", Stephens, a strapping twenty-six year old, added this endorsing comment: "This, if we could have expressed it so well, has for about a quarter of a century been our opinion of the immortal 'snob'." (20 June 1891, p. 15) This last statement, along with other semi-facetious, self-deprecatory phrases used to modify judgments ("in our humble opinion", and so on) indicates the basic immaturity of the
critic who was attempting the quoted grandiosities. More revealing still is what the mature critic later thought of minor contemporaries like Watson or Binyon or Austin. For example, Austin's death twenty-two years later was to be the occasion for Stephens to quote with relish this gibe about the poet earlier considered as Shakespeare's contemporary reincarnation:

Two Alfreds in one generation born
The Laureateship of England did adorn;
But Nature found the first throes so exhausting
That after Tennyson she bore an Austin.

The mature critic's assessment was just as derogatory and almost as cruel:

"The late Alfred Austin was born in 1835, was named Poet Laureate in 1896; so that he had approximately 78 years of life and 17 seasons of laurels. His was the happy star of splendid mediocrity."

On the other hand even at this early stage Stephens was showing a critical interest in American and to a lesser extent local writing, the interest in the former probably occasioned by the fact that so many of the magazines he looted were from the United States. His criticism was that American magazine literature lacked the "sterling worth" of the best English writing, "however excellent in outward form and colour ... [it] may be" (7 March 1891, p. 22). He complained that the poetry was too empty, too satisfied with mere technical competence, too feeble-pulsed:

In short, American literature wants back-bone. With a pretty discursive acquaintance with past and present American writers, we cannot recall a single instance (dead Longfellow and living Lowell and Whittier not excepted) of a really virile transatlantic poet. ... Longfellow is always sweet and tender, and melodious, and, occasionally, suggestive of the highest things; Whittier is always nervous. The "Biglow Papers"

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1 Bookfellows, 1 July 1913, p. 168.
The quotation that follows is from this source.
of Russell Lowell are glorious but his more ambitious work is to our mind beautiful — just that and nothing more. (7 March 1891, p. 22)

This complaint, iterated later ("The American muse is tunesful and tender rather than large-boned and robust" [4 July 1891, p. 15]) was to become the standard comment on American lyricists in the Red Page criticism, and was also the charge levelled at English lyricists like Bridges — indeed was even thrown up at Shaw Neilson in the last letters. Alice Werner's folksy and now popular "Banner-man of the Dandenong" was welcomed (and quoted in full) as "a spirited lyric that Lindsay Gordon need not have disdained to own" (21 February 1891, p. 21); and some rough lines from the Cairns Post, beginning, "On a lonely Western station, round the flickering glow of a lamp", were quoted with approval (1 August 1891, p. 18).

At this stage Stephens could do little to foster creative writing in his homeland beyond encouraging readers to contribute verses and paragraphs to his column. But already he believed that the local writer should be published in his own country, and receive due recognition — not be damned simply because he was an Australian. He felt the "culture drain" was a reproach in a country that was just beginning to voice its national aspirations, and believed that the integrity of the writer was impaired if he exploited "local colour" to please overseas readers who demanded the extraordinary rather than the truth.

1 See, for example, comments made in 1931 on the final draft of Neilson's "Song for a Honeymoon", in S.P., Vol. 9 (A2305), p. 279.

2 In support of his demand for more robust vitality Stephens offered the advice in doggerel:
"Up lads! and sing hearty with triumphing voice!
Come, cheer up the party! exult and rejoice!
Let song like a river no downcast bloke mar!
Jock Neilson for ever and ever! Hurrah!"

2 See the issue of 17 January 1891, p. 4 for satiric comments about an article in the Edinburgh Review on life in outback Queensland ("Lumholtz among the Cannibals").
These life-long beliefs were to constitute an idealistic basis for his later publishing activities; just how deeply and consistently held they were can be gauged by comparing the later pronouncements, in the Red Page and the Bookfellow, with his Boomerang comment on a claim in the magazine Bohemia that Australian literature had been put back fifty years by the success of Fergus Hume's Hansom Cab because other writers would copy its shoddy tragedy and trashy sensationalism. Stephens's retort has a characteristic and prophetic ring:

So far, all the Australian books that have succeeded have been published in England, and it has been the English not the Australian public that has assured their success. England takes from us every year our best in all branches of life. Fergus Hume found himself appreciated in London; so did Mrs. Campbell Praed; so do our singers, our actors, and even our cricketers. Take an instance: [3] Not long ago Donald MacDonald's "Gum Boughs and Wattle Bloom", a volume of sketches unique for beauty of style and intenseness of observation, was published in England. Of the whole edition nine-tenths was absorbed by English readers. (6 June 1891, p. 18)

"The Rifler" is most like the critic of the Red Page and the Bookfellow in his attitudes to and theories about poetry, which even then was assumed to be the highest form of literary aspiration, and was constantly brought to his readers' attention in reverent commentaries and liberal quotations. And

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1 See S. E. Lee, "A. G. Stephens as Literary Editor", Southerly, XXIV, iii (1964), 161.

2 The Mystery of a Hansom Cab: A Story of Melbourne Social Life (Melbourne: Kemp and Boyle, 1886).

Stephens was referring to the English editions by Hansom Cab Co. in 1887 and Trischler in 1891. The book went through four editions between 1886 and 1887 for the Melbourne publishers. Stephens's statements about Australian books depending for their success on English public therefore seem to be contradicted by the example he cites. Hume (1859-1932) was born in England and educated in New Zealand, and spent only two years (1886-1888) of his long writing life in Australia, so hardly qualifies as an 'Australian' author.

3 Donald Alistair MacDonald, Gum Boughs and Wattle Bloom Gathered on Australian Hills and Plains (London: Cassell, 1887).
just as "A.G.S." was to banish most of Archibald's backblock bards from the Red Page, so he did not cater in the main for the popular taste in his Rifle column. In the very first issue three poems were quoted in full, all lyrical rather than narrative in mode; and later in addition to Morris, Austin, Watson, Lowell and their lesser contemporaries he quoted a poem entitled "Who's Afraid" by the recently-deceased Browning (described as "a powerful, but sometimes obscure, master [who] could, when in the vein, 'build the lofty rhyme' with the mightiest names in the English language" [21 February 1891, p. 21]) and the "magnificent chorus" from Swinburne's "Atlanta in Calydon" (along with a parody entitled "King Alcohol" by the Rifler, "who is a bit of a bard himself" [7 March 1891, p. 22]). Not only are the same relatively high literary standards maintained in the Rifle column but the poetic taste is the same as later, with a strong preference for short melodic emotive lyrics being displayed. It would be difficult to distinguish the minor overseas verse here quoted with approval from that by local writers like Church and Hebblethwaite who were praised and published in the *Bookfellow* up to forty years later. Although he was to formulate his poetic theories later, it seems quite clear that these formulations often constitute *ad hoc* rationalizations of an intuitive, near-sentimental preference for quietly pervasive melancholic verse very similar to that attacked in 1932 by Dr Leavis as "Georgian".\(^1\) The *Bookfellow* who was to quote Shaw Neilson's verses to Vance Palmer, "every word colored [sig

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1 The three lyrics quoted in this issue (3 January 1891, p. 21) were by the Americans, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Archibald Lampman and Rose Hartwick Thorpe.

with feeling"¹ could well have quoted as Stephens did (3 January 1891, p. 21) verse of this order (from "In November" by Archibald Lampman):

And all around me the thin light
So sere, so melancholy bright,
Fell like the half-reflected gleam
Or shadow of some former dream.

He may even have approved the Rifler's enthusiastic claim that "for unadorned classic beauty [this poem] is, we think, not unworthy of the hand that wrote 'Hyperion' and 'The Eve of St. Agnes'" (3 January 1891, p. 21). The "tendency to rather weak Archibaldean sentimentality" (to use Stephens's own phrase²) and suspect taste which his own creative writings embody and some of his critical pronouncements imply are tellingly exposed in the narrative verse and short stories selected for reprinting. For example, in February he printed a story from Petit Journal (Paris) called "Love's Dying Dream" (7 February 1891, p. 21) - a lachrymose tale about a young composer who fell in love with a prima donna living in the opposite apartment. He composes a song for her, sneaks it into her apartment, sees her portrait, picks it up to kiss, is apprehended as a thief, gaoled and pines away. Madame becomes famous through the song, learns about its author, visits and sings to him in gaol and the composer dies happy. Such embarrassing lapses of taste when "Literature" rather than "Life" was involved were to become rarer, but the Boomerang does

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² See also Hugh McCrae's statement, "I remember Vance Palmer's story of Stephens crying over Neilson's poems", in Southerly, IV, viii (1947), 250.

² See "Notes on 'Old Wife and New'", in S.P., Newspaper Cuttings: Victor Daley, [Q049714]....

On p. 3 Stephens has this query: "Is another of Daley's characteristics a tendency to rather weak Archibaldean sentimentality?"
provide further evidence of the "early and basic philistinism" that Professor Maidment hypothesized after reading the Gympie Miner files.\(^1\)

Also, the Rifle column shows clearly the critical blind spot that Brunton Stephens was to complain about later\(^2\): that political convictions tended to prevent him from judging fairly the poetry of writers whose beliefs were strongly opposed to his own. Tennyson, Kipling and the older Swinburne are cases where non-literary criteria were used to denigrate the writer. The clearest example of this confusing of literary with personal and political concerns occurs in a discussion about whether Swinburne would succeed the recently-deceased Tennyson as poet laureate. Very likely, said Stephens,

For Swinburne, who was once "the mudlark of freedom" who thundered against thrones, defied Mazzini and Irish Fenians, has now become as mild as a sucking dove, and if he ever rages at all, rages against Home Rule and labour strikes, and everything and anything that might in the least degree infringe upon the integrity or sanctity of the glorious British Empire. Indeed, he babbles only about babies and primroses and strawberry leaves. (7 March 1891, p. 22)

Stephens even debased his argument to the level of literary gossip and suppositious scandal ("His enemies say he is a dipsomaniac in perpetual charge of a keeper down at Fulham ..."), so strongly were his personal animosities engaged. So strongly, indeed, that thirteen years later almost identical attacks were made in a Red Page review of A Channel Passage and Other Poems: \("The

\(^1\) W. M. Maidment, "A. G. Stephens and the 'Gympie Miner'", Southerly, XXIV, iii (1964), 201.


Brunton, commenting on A.G.'s criticism of Tennyson, said inter alia "To my mind, when you have reduced the subject of your discourse to a prig and a word artificer Tennyson is still a very long way from being accounted for. For my own part I care very little about whether Tennyson was a prig or not, nor does it seem to me to matter much what were his relations with the Queen."
fine flame of Swinburne's passion fades when fed unduly with patriotic bias. Swinburne has a true-born Briton's pride in every liberty that does not oppose Britain."

Summing up then, it must be admitted that the Rifle column contains little criticism of intrinsic value. But it cannot be overlooked in any analysis of the later critical practice. Not only did writing and organizing the column provide valuable training and experience, but from the observer's point of view certain insights into the critical procedures emerge. For example, one is able to understand better some of the limitations that have been remarked upon in the maturer criticism because they stand out more clearly in these earlier fumbling essays into criticism. One of the common half-truths about Stephens - that he was narrow-minded literary nationalist who thought it "susp- ect and unpatriotic" to look to Europe for literary guidance and inspiration - is revealed when one considers his Boomerang practice. The Magazine Rifle is remarkable for its concentration on English, American and European literatures, and its almost complete avoidance of the local product. While it is true that he would continue to criticize some overseas writers on nationalistic (or rather political) criteria, it is also true that when Stephens did tend to concentrate on native Australian writing, he constantly used overseas writers as his measuring-rod; and in the Bookfellow especially commented on and quoted from

1 R.P., 3 November 1904.
2 See, for example, H. P. Heseltine, "Brereton, The Bulletin and A. G. Stephens; Australian Literary Studies, I, i (1963), 28.
overseas writers so that local readers and writers would be aware of contemporary literary developments. The Magazine Rifle column proves that Stephens's first interest was literature; the later concentration on Australian writing was relative, not absolute and is perhaps explainable more in terms of circumstance than of personal inclination.

* * * *

The literary column was Stephens's main responsibility, and naturally critical writing his chief preoccupation. But after the two large columns (half a sheet) had been written for the week Stephens found time for other activities, notably creative writing and straight journalism. A search through the Boomerang files reveals that the modestly self-designated "a bit of a bard" contributed nine poems and two prose sketches during his nine-month stint with Gresley Lukin. These are indisputably minor, but like the criticism warrant cursory attention here because they indicate an interest that was to be pursued to the very last weeks of his life. The collected verse and prose of A. G. Stephens would constitute a considerable body of undistinguished creative writing. One of the paradoxes about Stephens is the total lack of discrimination he showed in relation to his own ham-fisted creations: a refutation of T. S. Eliot's generalization that fine critics are apt to be fine poets and that the finest criticism of all is "the fearful labour" expended in polishing and redrafting poems prior to publication¹. Whereas Stephens was to outgrow the critical callowness of his Rifler days, the later verse

is indistinguishable in manner, matter and quality from the youthful indiscretions. In fact, the first original poem that Stephens printed in the Boomerang, "The Wooloongabba Tram" (9 May 1891, p. 10) was reprinted in the Bookfellow over thirty years later— and is no worse (nor better) than the occasional rhetorical effusions (for example, "Diggers All!!") and light verses "Mecum, You Come") he was writing in the early 1920s.

The same generalizations apply to the two prose sketches, one of which "The Woman and the Tram" (17 October 1891, p. 16) was also reprinted in 1922. These are the first of a long line of serio-comic tales that Stephens was to write for the Bulletin and the Bookfellow such as "The Aunthill" and culminating in the "original unpublished" account of "Why Brown Left Boston". "Mary Ann" (18 July 1891, p. 18) the second tale is fairly typical of the later sketches. It is a tale, that gains little in Stephens's telling, of a young farmer who saves a calf called Mary Ann and thereafter a strong attachment forms between them. The farmer chooses a foul-tempered girl to marry, and Mary Ann saves

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1 Bookfellow, 30 November 1922, p. 40.
2 Ibid., 15 June 1921, p. 90.
3 Ibid., 15 March 1921, p. 37.
5 Ibid., 15 July 1915, pp. 162-164.
6 S.P., Letters to and Stories by A. G. Stephens (A1926).

The manuscript shows that Stephens made four drafts of this heavy-handed sketch about one, Dorothea, who kept such a tight time-table keeping up with accomplishments such as drawing and eugenics that Brown is crowded out of her life.
him by eating her hat so that the girl reveals her true nature. Mary Ann dies of arsenical poisoning, the farmer marries the other girl (also named Mary Ann) and the story ends with the bride laying her wedding bouquet on the other Mary Ann's grave-stone! The Boomerang verses and sketches accurately portend the later undistinguished career as a creative writer.1

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Vance Palmer claimed that "It was not as a critic of literature that Archibald had pounced on him [Stephens] for the Bulletin, but as perhaps the brightest young journalist of the day."2 Interestingly enough Stephens terminated his Rifle column on 22 August 1891 to take over a 'scoop' story about the Royal Navy ("The Mildura Stokers") that was to be presented with all the force and reliance on relevant detail that characterized the exposés he wrote for Archibald's Bulletin about "coffin ships"3 and "Botany Bay Justice"4. Stephens's story5 was featured in both the Melbourne and Sydney press. In Brisbane itself "The Mildura Stokers" became a cause célèbre, mainly because of Stephens's flair for urgently expressed, yet logically argued and seemingly factual, journalistic exposition. Verbatim reports by the sailors themselves, a stat-

1 Fair examples as basis for comparison would be "Henderson's Pigyoor" and "Nelligan's Creature" published in successive numbers of the Bookfellow (1 February 1913, pp. 48-49; 1 March 1913, pp. 72-74; and 1 April 1913, pp. 97-98 respectively). These tales about various members of "Gozzlechopper Club" whose rule is "No Questions" show little advance in technique or humour on the earliest attempts in this genre.


5 "On Board a British Slaver: The Story of the Mildura Stokers", 12 September 1891, p. 9. The quotation that follows is from this source.
utory declaration by "Alfred George Stephens . . . a journalist residing in Brisbane and sub-editor of the BOOMERANG newspaper", and Stephens's own inflammatory commentary impart a kind of excitement even at this distance in time. Stephens's anti-British and anti-authoritarian fervour was aroused by the alleged outrage perpetuated in the name of Her Majesty's Royal Navy. The stokers, he said, had been forced to work full shifts in the Red Sea area in temperatures of over 100 degrees Fahrenheit with the air ventilators out of commission and armed guards on duty to prevent them coming on deck for air:

The panting men are compelled to put off almost all their clothing. Their sweating bodies are blackened by coal dust and scorched by the heat of the furnaces. When the iron doors are thrown open, and they stumble forward to their charges, the light that darts from the fiery mouths reveals a scene suggestive of Inferno.

Stead, editor of Review of Reviews, would have been proud of his youthful admirer.

W. T. Stead (1849-1912) had succeeded John Morley as editor of the Pall Mall Magazine in 1883 where he had attracted wide notice by his modernity in the presentation of news: his originality, enterprise and exploitation of 'sensational' material are claimed "to have exercised a potent influence on contemporary journalism and politics". In 1890 Stead founded the monthly Review of Reviews, the journal which Stephens in the very first words he wrote for his Rifle column (3 January 1891, p. 21) admitted to be his model. In the following week's column, place of honour among English magazines was given "to the versatile if somewhat sensational" Mr Stead's "unique magazine" (10 January 1891, p. 21); and two months later Stead's "wonderful review" was high-

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ly praised: "What Booth desires to do for humanitarian religion Stead wishes to accomplish for the literary world" (21 March 1891, p. 22). Stead's prefatory essay in the Review of Reviews ("To All English speaking Folk") was criticized as too self-centred ("The use of the first person singular is monotonously frequent"), but commended for offering "the most indubitable testimony to the man's large souled earnestness of purpose, catholicity of sympathy, and untiring, almost feverish energy" (21 March 1891, p. 22). Stead, incidentally, is said to have introduced the "Interview" to modern journalism and published a series of pamphlets on social ills and political issues while editor of Pall Mall Gazette. In both these forms of journalism he was to have a brilliant imitator in A. G. Stephens.

It is curious that Stephens's (and perhaps also Archibald's) indebtedness to Stead has not been remarked on before. Stephens's hard-hitting provocative style appears to owe something to the man he regarded as having "perhaps no living equal" as a journalist (14 February 1891, p. 20). Also, the Boomerang practices make it quite clear that in his own professional approach he was consciously aping the most successful journalist of his age. One of his contemporaries has expressed what Stephens himself seemed to admire and sought to imitate in his master:

He brought to his work an overflowing vitality, a limitless curiosity, a vehement crusading temperament, a positive preference for shocking, and even scandalizing, the inert multitude, provided only he could make it think. For pointed and animated writing, for the discovery of the human interest which lurked in the heart of the most forbidding subjects, for arresting phrases and unflagging vivacity in what other people thought

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to be dull times, Stead was unequalled among his contemporaries and has not been approached by many of his successors. But journalism with Stead was no mere craftsmanship. His great journalistic qualities were the qualities of a mind full to overflowing of honest emotion and conviction, a mind to which journalism was always a means not an end. No one would have repudiated more scornfully the idea that journalism was a mere branch of commerce.

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Brisbane in 1891 was too small and parochial a city to sustain a newspaper that sought to appeal to the same intelligent and rather radically-minded audience as the now popular and vigorous Sydney Bulletin. In a note written seven months after he left the Boomerang, on the occasion of its demise, Stephens lamented:

Alas, for the Boomerang! It has hustled to its last mark. Born half-a-dozen years ago from the brains of Lane, the capitalists' terror, . . . and Drake, the barrister and coming member of Parliament, it made a brave noise for a while in the Radical van. But metropolitan advertisers did not like its politics, and a couple of years ago it was traded to a company who placed it in Gresley Lukin's hands for regeneration. But even the efforts of that old war-horse have been beaten by the dull times. Latterly the paper tried to serve two masters, to run with the hares of property and hunt with the revolutionary hounds - and satisfied neither. It was a brave attempt at illustrated journalism in Queensland, and we grieve for its going.

Vance Palmer, who talked with Stephens about his experiences with Lukin at the Boomerang, says that "The staff, including the compositors, although desperately loyal to The Boomerang, dreaded being asked to take shares instead of money when they went for their wages on Friday nights." Naturally Stephens looked around for a more secure position and in October 1891, after completing

2 Cairns Argus, 19 April 1892, Vol. II, unpaginated.
3 A. G. Stephens: His Life and Work, pp. 9-10.
"The Mildura Stokers" assignment, he left to take up an appointment as editor of the Cairns Argus. Clearly Stephens parted on good terms with Lukin who, he declared in one of his last Bookfellows, was "a good scout". Until it closed down in April 1892 he was to send down occasional contributions to the Boomerang from Cairns, and in 1907 rejoined Lukin as a sub-editor on the Wellington (New Zealand) Evening Post. Lukin, who like Archibald has left no memorable books by his own hand, was an important influence, not so much in shaping the younger man's ideas and ideals as in encouraging him to express them freely and individually. Stephens's admiration of Lukin as a personality with élan and edge was to be reflected in his own life style – and contributed to his growing confidence, even panache, as a writer. Most importantly, of course, through his own commitment to literature, and his active encouragement of Stephens as literary columnist, he fostered the aspirations to a literary career that were later to be realized under Archibald on the Sydney Bulletin.

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1 Bookfellow, 29 November 1924, p. 31.

2 For example, "'Waiting', by a Northerner", Boomerang, 12 December 1891, p. 5 – an attack on Sir S. W. Griffith regarding his promised "trip up North next month", anticipating the Griffilwraith pamphlet of 1893.
CHAPTER IV

THE CAIRNS ARGUS (OCTOBER 1891-SEPTEMBER 1892)

I

Biographical

The Cairns Argus was a well-established but unremarkable small-town newspaper which appeared each Tuesday and Friday. Its proprietor, William Graham Henderson, understood the needs of the provincial community his paper served. His paper showed little concern for improving its readers' political and cultural awareness or broadening their interests, concentrating almost exclusively on cabled news paragraphs and "local and general" items for its staple. Interpretative articles were non-existent and other expressions of opinion such as editorials and letters were few in number, parochial in content and attitude and pedestrian in style. The journal's main function was to carry the notices, advertisements and shipping and railway information its readers needed in order to carry on their day-to-day social and commercial activities in this centre of a developing sugar-cane industry. Some idea of the society in which Stephens was to live can be gained from the advertisements of visiting doctors and of a local "pharmaceutical chemist", Robert Craig:

R. Craig invites the patronage of Town and Country, and all Orders and Prescriptions will always have his careful and personal attention.

TEETH EXTRACTED CAREFULLY WITH IMPROVED FORCEPS.

AGENT FOR LAZARUS & CO'S "SPECIALITE" SPECTACLES.
Each eye separately tested, and Lenses guaranteed to suit any sight. ¹

¹ Cairns Argus, 17 June 1892, unpagedinated. Unless otherwise indicated subsequent references are to this source and are given within parentheses in the text.
The conditions under which he worked and the paper's standing in this then comparatively remote and raw sub-tropical township are made manifest in a paragraph that appeared three months after Stephens's arrival:

The building is 50 ft. long and 26 ft. wide, with walls 12 ft. from floor to ceiling. The walls and roof are galvanized iron. There is a verandah at the back 9 ft. wide, and in front a bull-nose verandah 15 ft. wide. The interior is lined and ceiled with local kauri pine, which adapts itself admirably for such work. The floor and frame are of hardwood. There are four large elliptic windows in front, with Grecian columns. The front door and window frames are of local cedar. In the front of the building are two offices, 10 ft. by 9 ft., fitted with louvre fanlights, and partitions on top have been furnished with a large pattern of perforated zinc for ventilation. The cost of the whole will be about £400. ("Our New Premises", 12 January 1892)

Stephens's name would have been familiar to Mr Henderson because his paper had given prominence to the Boomerang articles on the Mildura stokers and to the ripples it had caused as far afield as Sydney. For example, just a month before Stephens's appointment as editor, the paper carried an account of the debate in the New South Wales House of Assembly on the Mildura stokers 'scandal' in which the Labour politician, George Black, quoted Stephens in support of his attack on the Government, with Sir Henry Parkes, the premier, speaking in rebuttal of Stephens's charges (29 September 1891). Also the paper reprinted from the Sydney Morning Herald a British admiral's opinion that Stephens and the politicians who believed and acted on his 'revelations' had "been making mountains out of molehills" (2 October 1891). So when Stephens cast round for a secure post as the Boomerang began to founder, the proprietor of the Cairns Argus was no doubt flattered and pleased to think that Stephens was

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1 Boomerang, 5, 11 and 19 September 1891.

2 Stephens's strong aversion to Sir Henry Parkes, expressed from time to time later no doubt dates from this debate. See "The Man from Brumagen", R.P., 31 October 1896.
attracted to his paper and convinced that the new editor could improve its performance. In any case the tone of a notice announcing his appointment shows that Stephens was able to establish definitively his status and independence as editor. The notice says quite baldly, "Mr. A. G. Stephens, lately sub-editor of the Boomerang and formerly editor of the Gympie Miner and the Darling Downs Gazette, has taken editorial charge of this journal" [my emphasis] (27 October 1891).

The editor immediately let it be known that there was a new active hand in charge. The first of a regular series of long, vigorously argued and sardonically titled editorials appeared in the issue of 27 October 1891 with the heading "The Knight and The Lady". The "Knight" in this case was Sir Thomas McIlwraith, treasurer in Sir Samuel Griffith's coalition government. The "Lady" was the Bank of England - an institution under attack by Sir Thomas, groundlessly so according to Stephens, who wrote:

The Treasurer was wrong in the first instance, but he would almost have atoned for his fault had he promptly acknowledged it. To persist in error because it is humiliating to pride to admit it, is neither dignified nor wise. Did the consequences affect only Sir THOMAS McILWRAITH, his attitude would be merely ridiculous. But that he should be willing, for the sake of saving his personal vanity, to inflict serious injury upon the colony, is another proof, if further proof were needed, that unbridled Power is not only demoralising to the individual, but highly dangerous to the community.

Under Stephens's energetic editorship the paper was to achieve both solidarity and brightness. The solidity lay in the editorials, usually written under the heading "What We Think", and occasional articles. This serious writing traversed a wide range of subjects mainly on political or currently relevant social issues, such as unemployment or capital punishment. Much of the political writing was concerned with parochial and ephemeral issues, such as
"Water Supply" (19 January 1892) or the conduct of the local School of Arts (12 July 1892). A great deal was concerned with broader but still specifically northern problems such as railway development ("An Open Letter [to the Queensland Railway Commissioners]", 10 June 1892), district hospitals ("The Cairns Hospital", 29 January 1892) and the case for separation of Northern Queensland from the rest of Queensland as a new state ("The Townsville Conference" [on separation], 3 June 1892). What is of interest, however, is that Stephens did attempt to arouse an intelligently critical interest in state and national politics by commenting frequently on parliamentary debates in Brisbane, with particularly bitter attacks on the coalition Government leaders, Sir Samuel Griffith and Sir Thomas McIlwraith (for example, "The Great Opportunist [Sir Samuel Griffith]", 16 February 1892 and "A Stiff-Necked Minister [Sir Thomas McIlwraith]", 22 March 1892). He also discussed such important issues as land selection ("Unconditional Selection", 15 January 1892) or coloured labour ("Kanaka Labour", 23 May 1892) and looked critically at the various annual government reports as they were issued (for example, "Public Instruction", 17 June 1892 and "Mines and Agriculture", 29 July 1892).

He looked further afield too, to national issues like "Australian Federation" (4 December 1891) and "The Defence Force" (27 May 1892). Indeed an electoral reform, a very live issue in Queensland then as now, Stephens analysed current reforms being initiated in the House of Commons in England ("The Property Vote!", 31 May 1892).

Breaking down parochialism certainly was a major aim and he delighted in lampooning its local manifestations, as, for example, when the Town Clerk on his appointment to that post
wrote a letter to Himself, and having called at the Council Chambers and ascertained that He was in, He asked Himself to take a copy of it. He then handed Himself the letter, and having read it informed Himself there would be no answer, and went on with his work. ("The Joke", 12 February 1892)

Also Stephens tried to broaden the interests, cultural background and knowledge of locals by such devices as introducing columns called "English Items", "Persons and Things" (biographical snippets on world celebrities), "Notes and Comments"; publicizing musical, theatrical or artistic activities; and reviewing new books both literary and non-fictional. Most importantly, he quickly adopted the Gympie Miner practice of bringing out weekly a full page "Supplement" that was filled with items other than straight news: commentaries, articles, reviews, abstracts from overseas journals and books and poetry, and stories by his own hand. The supplements generally appeared in the Friday issue with only occasional breaks from 15 September 1891 till 23 August 1892, thirty-four issues in all. These supplements and a brightly written sardonic column called "With Our Hundred Eyes" imparted to the paper a flair and a sparkle that are associated with bright journals or magazines rather than stolid provincial newspapers. Perhaps Stephens tried too hard in his brightly painted pars, but no doubt locals enjoyed items like these, from "With Our Hundred Eyes":

The School of Arts is catering for smokers, who will soon be able to absorb nicotine and literature al fresco. It also caters for stray horses, of various descriptions, who find excellent rubbing posts beneath it. (10 November 1891)

or:

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1 It is interesting even at this stage to see literary interests asserting themselves. In an allusive commentary Stephens added: Dicken's is dead; There you see how fact can beat fiction hands down. A Dombey and Son are no longer familiar in our mouths as household words; and nine out of ten have never heard of Mr. Toots. Yet here is the Town Clerk of an important (we defy Port Douglas malice) - of an important Queensland municipality following in that romantic individual's footsteps and writing himself letters with a grace as airy and inconsequent.
Dunn, of Dunn's flour, is done for.
The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind smaller than the best
Adelaide silk-dressed, and Death takes the miller as well as the man.
In Adelaide, a man who sells a packet of cigarettes on Sunday runs
the risk not only of eternal perdition - that doesn't frighten him, but
also of a month's imprisonment - that does.
In this wicked world of nowadays you get very long odds against the
future, but you have to take mighty short ones in the present.
Is humanity really getting any better? ("With Our Hundred Eyes", 9
February 1892)

As 'proof' of its popularity and brightness the paper ran a standard back
page advertisement in which it boasted of its "METROPOLITAN STYLE", described
itself as "AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER" and listed as its principal features
"PRACTICAL LEADERS / CRISP LEADERETTES / LATEST TELEGRAMS". When Stephens
resigned, the last three mentioned claims were dropped and in its place this
statement added "LARGEST CIRCULATION OF ANY PAPER NORTH OF TOWNSVILLE". No
doubt Stephens through his "crisp leaderettes" and generally sound and lively
journalism was largely responsible for the success Henderson claimed, and no
doubt they were dropped when Stephens left because the standards he had set
were so high that no-one on the staff could follow without seeming anticlim-
actic. More reliable proof of its quality under Stephens is that the paper
appears to have been read widely elsewhere - and paid the compliment of occa-
sional 'rifling', for Stephens was to complain that "Lacking original abil-
ity, the motto of many Queensland journals is aut scissors aut nullus. We
have suffered." ("Brevities", 15 July 1892). Also on 19 July 1892 he reprint-
ed with pride ("It is not every day one is called a 'brave éditeur'.") this
statement from the Courrier Australien of 9 July, complaining nonetheless that
"it is not quite fair comment":

Un journal de la province exulte de joie en déclarant que depuis la
ligne de conduite adoptée par Sir Samuel Griffith, la prospérité pub-
lique augmenté sensiblement, surtout dans les zones qui se livrent a
l'industrie des sucreries. Il cite comme exemple l'élévation dans le prix des loyers. Le brave éditeur de cette feuille oubliée d'ajouter que les salquées [sic] diminuent dans la même proportion, et que les malheureux sans travail sont logés à l'hôtel de la belle étoile.

In any case, the paper's hitherto "sole proprietor" was impressed enough to invite Stephens to become his partner from the beginning of April 1892. This "Notice" appeared in the issue of 5 April:

To my Friends and Patrons
Ladies and Gentlemen, - I have to announce that I have this day taken into partnership Mr. A. G. Stephens, for the past six months Editor of the Cairns Argus, and I confidently ask for the new Firm, which will trade under the style of

HENDERSON AND STEPHENS,
the kindly support which has been given to myself, and for which I tender grateful thanks.

W. G. Henderson.

The announcement went on to state that Mr Henderson was to look after business and job printing side but that

The Editorial control of the Cairns Argus will be continued by MR. STEPHENS. The paper will be conducted as an honest and impartial organ of public opinion, and a trustworthy representative of the interests of the town, the district and the colony.

As editor and part owner of the town's thriving newspaper, Stephens was now a man of some standing and as such took an active and intelligent interest in local cultural and literary and educational affairs, especially the local School of Arts and Show. In an editorial entitled "The School of Arts" Stephens commented acidly in response to the committee's complaint that it had not "received the support it was entitled to", that in fact it had received just what it was entitled to: "It is not at present a work of public usefulness, since the educational influence on which its claim to public support theoretically rests is reduced to the irreducible minimum." (12 July 1892).

It is not surprising, therefore, to discover a news report in the issue of 19 August 1892 stating that Mr A. G. Stephens had moved a six point motion
for vitalizing the School of Arts Library, included in which was the draconian measure that the Librarian be sacked and replaced with a Caretaker, the new job to be offered to the same man. He also demanded a changed policy for ordering newspapers and the appointment of a committee to supervise the purchase of new books, so that better quality books might be acquired and more catholic taste might operate in the selection of reading materials on which the further education and general knowledge of the town's more interested citizens so largely depended. The Supplement of 9 July 1892 on "The Show" which lists all the prize winners and gives the judge's reports names Stephens as one of three judges in the "Children's Section". The judges' report has this sensible, typically Stephensian comment:

A feature of the children's section at this year's show was the competition before judges. This is arranged to test the children's knowledge more effectually than can be done for offering prizes for home work [sic], to which some suspicion always attaches. Encouragement was also given to brain work as opposed to finger work, the former calling into play faculties which rust unused in the mere copyist.

Also, on 26 August 1892 Stephens's report on behalf of the judges of the "Children's Section" of the Cairns Show appeared. It included a perceptive comment that many modern educationists would endorse concerning the fetish in primary schools for prettiness in book work at the expense of intellectual or linguistic quality:

Some books had been very carelessly corrected by teacher, gross errors of spelling or grammar being frequently passed. A great many books showed a superfluous magnificence of printed heading to the exercise, along with inferior work in the exercise itself. If less time were spent on ornamental details, there would be more to spare for intellectual essentials.

Railways and railway construction were written about at great length and with a breadth of vision and technical expertise one would not normally expect of a country newspaper editor. Railways, of course, were the life-line
for the thriving sugar industry in Cairns, and its remotely situated inhabitants were suspicious of city motives in not supplying the railway services that the community desired and needed. In June 1892 the Railways Commissioners visited Cairns and met a deputation of local businessmen; because it was newsworthy, and no doubt because he enjoyed the repartee, Stephens printed some of the exchanges in full - for example:

Mr. [Commissioner] Mathieson: You see you take no responsibility in this matter. It's a privilege you get, a great privilege.
Mr. Walsh: It's no privilege.
Mr. Mathieson: Then don't use it. We don't ask you.
Mr. Walsh: We prefer to give the freight to a drayman.
Mr. Mathieson: Quite right, every man for himself.
Mr. Walsh: And the drays can beat you.
Mr. Mathieson: Of course they can.
Mr. Walsh, who seemed staggered by this view of the case, recovered himself and asked . . . ("With The Commissioners", 14 June 1892)

As ever, seeing both sides of the case and although obviously amused by the local man's discomfort, Stephens spoke up for the locals in an editorial in the same issue:

Some zealous indiscretions were committed by the speakers, but on the whole they pressed their points with due deference, if not with adequate knowledge. But Mr. Mathieson was so overbearing as to be impolitic. His attitude had nothing of the suaviter in modo, all of the fortiter in re. From the height of his superior railway wisdom, he bullied the deputation into rebellion; he might have argued them into submission. . . . We are writing in a friendly spirit, and we would suggest that Mr. Mathieson's motto on deputation-days be these lines from Shakespeare -

Of it is excellent
To have a giant's strength; but it is tyrannous
To use it like a giant.

Measure for Measure, Act ii, Sc. 2.

The balance and reasonableness of this statement notwithstanding, Stephens, it seems, saw it as a matter of personal pride that an educated and articulate local should be able to meet the Commissioner at his own level, even throwing in the literary allusion to establish his standing. Another reason for Ste-
phens's standing up for the locals, and his informed interest in the subject generally, becomes apparent when one reads Vance Palmer's biographical note:

But perhaps the chief event of Stephens' stay in the North was an intimate, personal one. There he met Constance Irwinsbelle Smith, daughter of an engineer engaged in the construction of the Herberton railway. They were married later in Sydney, when he returned from a short trip abroad.

Stephens later told Palmer that his "short trip" was financed by turning his share in the Argus to cash and that he "cheerfully blew the lot" on it, no doubt because his ambition now lay in writing and high-level journalism rather than in establishing himself in the safer, but more mundane, life as a small town newspaper proprietor. His last editorial, in the issue of 30 September 1892, was entitled "The Silver Lining" and in it he spoke rather condescendingly, if consolingly, in farewell to the locals. "Times are bad, and gloomy faces excusable," he wrote, "yet there are good reasons to hope for the future" because railways were promised and sugar mills being built. His final words, however, were banal and trite: "The cloud which shadows us shadows all Queensland, all Australia; but in our case the silver lining is steadily broadening and brightening." In the same issue and more indicative of his true feelings, was a farewell "Notice" entitled "To Argus' Readers" where his audience was gently and ironically chided concerning their narrow parochialism:

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, - Goodbye to you all. From many of you I have received kindness; from nearly all, courtesy. The courtesy I have tried to return; for the kindness I must remain your debtor. I had grown quite interested in watching you spur your hobbies, and I'm sure I

1 A. G. Stephens: His Life and Work, p. 10.
2 Ibid., p. 11. See below p. 95.
hope you will all reach the winning-post. You can never have more central mills, railways, and roads to the Russell than I wish you. Think of me kindly, and believe me,

Always yours faithfully,
A. G. STEPHENS.

II

Journalism

The editorials, articles, paragraphs and reviews that came from Stephens's ever-busy pen during this period are a quite significant contribution to the canon of Stephens's non-fictional, polemic and journalistic writing. In fact he was to compile two political pamphlets, relying mainly for his content on the editorials, many being reproduced verbatim\(^1\). For present purposes, however, the material collected in the *Argus* newspaper and its supplements are of significance for three main reasons: for the very real proficiency of the polemical prose writing; for the light it throws on Stephens the man and on the attitudes that were to colour so strongly his later work; and finally, for the embryonic literary criticism and experiments in creative writing, contributed mainly to the supplements.

Sir Samuel Griffith is the prodigal child of Australian politics. The nation's substance is entrusted to him, and he straightway goes and spends it in riotous legislation. After a sufficient time devoted to the husks of repentance, he returns and weeps upon the nation's neck, exclaiming that he has sinned before Heaven and in their sight, and - is worthy to be trusted with some more substance. ("The English Squadron", 11 March 1892)

\(^1\) *Why North Queensland Wants Separation* (1893) and *The Griffilwraith* (1893). See below, Chapter V, pp. 87-94.
This is vintage Stephens, hard-hitting and mordant, depending for its wit on Biblical parody and allusion - and employing his favourite literary device of anti-climax\(^1\). The stylist of the Red Page and the Bookfellow had arrived. Elsewhere Griffith is described as the "Proteus of Politics" for advocating contradictory policies ("Proteus in Politics", 22 July 1892), and again an unabashed opportunist: "Place and power are his objects, and to secure them he changes his sentiments, his principles, with unblushing alacrity." ("The Great Opportunist", 16 February 1892). The tirade that brings this editorial to a close will serve well to illustrate the developed rhetorical style that anyone familiar with Stephens's writing immediately recognises as peculiarly his. The rhetoric, it will be seen, depends on repetitive phrases ("at no time . . .", "his . . . tendencies . . .", etc.) and on the piling up of detail and illustration in long, almost mathematically balanced, sentences, often antithetical in content ("imperialistic . . . national", "his good deeds . . . his bad ones", etc.). Especially interesting is the way Stephens will balance a rhetorical sentence into four segments; two separated by commas on either side of a pivotal semi-colon, which itself comes more or less in the middle of the sentence, like the fulcrum of a chemical balance:

At no time a financier, he has squandered money without stint; at no time possessing a rational conception of the relation of the land to the people, he has made more mischief with land legislation than half-a-century of prudent government can remove. His imperialistic tendencies have been developed in opposition to healthy national sentiment;

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\(^1\) Significantly, in an article entitled "An Imperial Anti-Climax", (11 December 1891), Stephens expounded on the terms 'climax' and 'anti-climax': The one is a gradual ascent; the other, generally, a sudden fall. The essence of anti-climax is inconsistency, incongruity. It is a kind of exaggerated opposition. When two things are contrasted, we have an antithesis; when the contrast is a little sharper, we get an epigram; push it further still, and the result is anti-climax. - the bridge which links the sublime and the ridiculous.
his capitalistic tendencies (for the mask is now cast off) prevent the
growth of the vital sense of responsible citizenship. His good deeds
he owes to others, his bad ones are all his own. Unstable as water,
he cannot excel.

Clearly Stephens detested Sir Samuel Griffith and it is pertinent to note,
especially for its significance for the later literary criticism, how intense-
ly interested he was in the man behind the politics (later, behind the writ-
ing), and that he never quite succeeded, nor indeed sought to succeed, in
arguing solely about the policy (nor later about the text itself). The Cairns
Argus files provide abundant evidence of Stephens's predilection for argumen-
tum ad hominem, directed both at local politicians and remoter ones like Sir
Henry Parkes and Sir George Dibbs. The latter, it is true, offended Stephens's
anti-imperialist sensitivities by accepting a knighthood:

Sir George Dibbs has sold the mighty space of his large honours for a
cigar from the Prince of Wales and a title from the Queen, and there
is every indication that he will rue his bargain. Rue it, that is, un-
less he considers that it is worth while sacrificing his principles,
his prestige, his power, and his party to be for three months Lion of
London drawing-rooms and for life Sir George Dibbs, K.C.M.G. Of course,
if he thinks the game in England was worth the scandal in Australia,
there is nothing to be said. ("New South Wales Politics", 13 September
1892)

Fair enough, despite the flippant pun. But Stephens would not let well alone,
and finished with this unnecessary sneer that "possibly the social advantages
gained by Sir George and his dozen marriagable daughters may outweigh the dold
shoulder which he will undoubtedly receive from his whom friends." Even
untimely death would not save the individual from denigration, if he was dis-
liked and symbolized something as obnoxious to the writer as Royalty. So,
this tough-minded comment on a news item, printed on 19 January 1892:

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1 It must be conceded that Stephens did attempt to rationalize his attack a
week later where he claimed that De mortuis nil nisi bonum "is not always a
good motto, when it fetters free thought, and hinders us from drawing from
the lives of others the lessons they have to teach." ("With Our Hundred Eyes",
26 January 1892)
It is as useless as it is hypocritical for Australians to make pretence of grief at the death of the Duke of Clarence who has shown in his twenty-eight years of life no qualities which could arouse esteem or admiration. The dead prince appears to have been a commonplace young man, of small capacity and narrow mind; and had he come to the throne he would in all probability have made a very poor monarch, even as monarchs go.

On the other hand if he liked a man, or was personally indebted to him for some kindness or notice, Stephens was capable of rising above his ideological prejudices. Thus he was firmly opposed to 'socialist' or current 'labour' policies, arguing, for example, that it was no responsibility for the Government to supply jobs for all ("The Right to Work", 26 February 1892). Yet George Black, who had supported Stephens in the Mildura affair parliamentary debate and, ironically, with whom he was to argue most acrimoniously a decade later, was praised as a man despite his advocacy as a parliamentarian of Labour policies very much opposed to Stephens's laissez-faire attitudes:

Mr Black is coming to the front as an honest exponent of democratic opinion. His sturdy utterances are very refreshing to hear and read in the midst of the general hypocrisy and corruption of our dying Parliament. When Ministers defend every opinion in turn and members fall both ways with equal zeal, courage and principle, even if wrongly directed, are things to value and commend. ("Notes and Comments", 30 August 1892)

What is emerging is that apart from the quality of the polemical and rhetorical prose, generally embodied in the editorials, the files of the Cairns Argus throw interesting light on attitudes, beliefs, philosophic positions and prejudices that were to colour and give shape to much of the critical writing later. Generally, as one would expect of a young man, the files make manifest what Stephens was against - established religion, royalty and imperial-

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1 See pp. 77-78 below.
2 See R.P., 5 February 1898.
ism, and judicial punishment; but they do reveal also some positive attitudes and enthusiasms — ardent nationalism and a tough-minded and pragmatic philosophy that owed much to Nietzsche, for example. A close reading of the Cairns Argus shows that the "Red Pagan" of the Sydney Bulletin did not owe everything intellectually to the dominant figure of J. F. Archibald, and that Stephens was consistent and sincere, rather than a striker of poses that suited the Bulletin management, in the various iconoclastic comments and controversies that were to salt the columns of the Red Page.

Anti-clericalism is perhaps the most strongly felt and expressed conviction of all. It might be seen in curt, pointed news items quoted without comment such as: "William Shields, of East Moonta, cut his throat this morning. He had lately manifested religious mania." (5 February 1892); or a punningly titled item on "Gay Gardiner":

Andrew Gardiner, M.A., who was deposed from the ministry of the Presbyterian church some time ago for seducing a young woman, applied in the Bankruptcy Court to-day for a certificate, which was refused. (26 February 1892)

It intrudes itself into essays on politics. For example, an editorial entitled "The Fetish Political" (1 March 1892) began obliquely with this side-swipe at missionaries:

The fetish religious is an object of contempt to those who, by accident of birth, are brought up to worship a more spiritual deity. The missionary who exhibits the curiously-carven image to a pious crowd excites disdain and pity for benighted barbarians who attribute divine powers to the wooden horror. The process of moral evolution has taught every child in a Christian land that such imperfect representations of the anthropomorphic conception of a Supreme Power are entitled to no notice beyond the notice of the hymn-book dogmatist, to no sacrifice but the sacrifice of an eleemosynary threepenny bit in aid of their victims.

Stephens by this time was almost as fiercely anti-royalist and anti-imper-
ialist as the Bulletin's editor himself. These attitudes came through also in sly new items such as "Prince George, that harmless sprig of loyalty, is bad in his inside" ("With Our Hundred Eyes", 17 November 1891); or "Queen Victoria has preserved every gown she has ever worn, like Queen Elizabeth, who left 3,000" ("Persons and Things", 6 May 1892); and in a caustic comment on Lord Randolph Churchill's interview with journalists after his safe return from South Africa, in the issue of 19 January 1892:

The civilised world thrilled with compassionate indignation at his account of the misery he suffered during the voyage out in the Grantully Castle, where they did not stone the prunes at dessert and provided red currant jelly instead of black with the jugged hare.

But, said Stephens, he survived to report a good trip home on the Scot where

The aspic jelly was the best Lord Randolph ever tasted, and he used to prepare his own menu every day. Thus his valuable life has been preserved to his country, and he will once more take his place, fattened and re-invigorated, among her foremost statesmen.

Indeed all three - the anti-imperialism (involving a hatred of its instrument, the army), anti-royalism and anti-clericalism - were roused by one unique combination of circumstances: a cablegram stating that the Emperor Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany had exhorted his soldiers to remember the Lord's Prayer in times of difficulty. This provoked the Argus editorial that is most characteristic of Stephens at his choleric best, entitled "An Imperialist Anti-Climax" and appearing in the issue of 11 December 1891. Stephens's assertion

That the Emperor William of Germany, who is a soldier by choice, the chief of a state in which everything is subordinated to the military system, the apostle of a creed whose dogma is a justification of wholesale murder - that such a potentate should exhort his soldiers to remember the prayer of the Prince of Peace, is to mingle the sacred and profane as they have rarely been mingled before

is followed by the vintage "Bookfellow's" technique of explicating a statement
phrase by phrase, accompanied by a commentary that examines with savage irony
its speaker's motives and expresses the writer's own savage denunciations.

In his commentary Stephens begins like this with the opening phrase:

"Our Father," says Kaiser Wilhelm, recognizing that before the eternal
throne he is no greater than the meanest of his subjects, that men are
his brethren, that love is religion, that sympathy is duty - and tells
his soldiers that it is their duty to shoot a father or a mother who
is a Socialist, i.e., whose life has been made so unutterably wretched
by the monopoly of wealth, of culture, of happiness. [sic] by the pri-
vileged classes, that he or she is willing to vote or to fight for the
redress of injustice. And this is in defiance of the fact that the Lord
whose prayer the Emperor commends was himself a Socialist, and contin-
ually preached Socialism. Indeed, the Socialism of the New Testament
goes as far as communism. The rich are cursed, the poor are blessed;

and ends with two high-flown but logically inconsistent metaphors:

And "Amen," say the soldiers, whose blood cements the fabric of the mi-
ghty German empire, whose wives' and mothers' tears imprint upon the
roll of fame the illustrious name of the mighty German Emperor.

The editorial itself concludes with a furious Archibaldean flourish:

What a mockery it is - this hereditary monarchy with its fable of divine
right, its shibboleth of loyalty, and its hundred devices to impress
upon the people the sanctity of their ruler's clay!

The spirit of J. F. Archibald is sensed elsewhere, too; especially in att-
acks on the legal system and capital punishment. For example, in an editorial
of 14 April 1892 entitled "The Science of Crime", the writer quoted Cesare
Lombroso on the relation between mental and physical disorders and Havelock
Ellis on the psychological causes of crime, and commented that so much public-
ity had accompanied a murder involving a man named Williams that he was already
doomed: "In hardly any possible combination of circumstances could the average
jury acquit him", he wrote - anticipating his later defence of Dean and Suffield,
in *Bulletin* pamphlets.

On the other hand an optimistic note, typical of Victorian moral and social evolutionists confident that education and democracy would uplift humanity and civilization generally, was often heard — for example, at the conclusion of an editorial on "The Right to Work" in the issue of 26 February 1892 where Stephens wrote:

> The world is gradually growing better. Humanity, always struggling upward, has evolved out of chaos and savagery a civilization in which, despite its defects, life is better for all than it ever was before. Looking at the record of the past, one's heart beats high for the future.

In this same essay the thrust of Stephens's argument was that the state should drop its *laissez-faire* attitudes to unemployment and intervene so that work was available to all. But not yet resolved in his attitudes and no doubt recalling the teaching of his favourite philosopher, Nietzsche, Stephens argued against too soft a benevolence:

> Self-preservation is the first law of the State's nature, as of the individual's; and though the unemployed, being a discontented class, are a menace to its existence, yet it would be still more dangerous to the

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1 *History of the Dean Case* (1893) and *The Suffield Case* (1897). Very similar in tone and style to Archibald's own writing was a letter, quoted with approval by Stephens, to the Governor of Victoria concerning the execution of the notorious murderer, Deeming. The letter, written by Deeming's solicitor, Lyle, said that history would condemn the Governor for not commuting Deeming's sentence.

> A higher conception of the sacredness of human life will inevitably [sic] force itself upon the minds of our rulers and the people. Already mutterings are heard amongst the mass, and the prison system with its cross, its whip, its stake, its gallows, and its axe, will come for judgment before the enlightened opinion of the nation. ("Criminal Punishment", 10 June 1892)

2 See also "Horrocks to Hang" (16 September 1892): "We cannot hope for the abolition of capital punishment until the evolution of society has abolished crime."
state to guarantee them employment. In the first place, it is to the State's interest that its citizens should be provident, self-reliant men, not children clinging to the Government's apron-string. The sapping of the sense of independence means the loss of liberty, the prevention of progress, and the degradation of the race.

The uncertainty here is typical of a man who has not fully digested and made his own the teaching of the scientists, political theorists and philosophers he was currently reading: Lombroso, Havelock Ellis, Nietzsche, J. S. Mill and perhaps Tom Paine. The last two would have prompted his anarchistic arguments on the need to minimize government; for example, the statement in an editorial

that the ideal State is not one where personal liberty is infringed and abridged by a thousand peremptory statutes, but where the voluntary self-control of the community makes law unnecessary except as a record of State-morals derived from experience. ("Unconditional Selection", 15 January 1892)

And, while idealistic and concerned for the betterment of common man through education¹, his intuitive response as a laissez-faire part-owner of a newspaper was to reject socialism. A long, wittily titled attack on the socialist T. E. White shows this:

Certainly, the best constructive scheme of socialism known [the New Testament] to us is impracticable. Whatever progress, whatever civilisation, we have attained has been attained through individual competition; ... All experience goes to show that interference with natural evolution, beyond certain well-defined limits, causes a reaction which destroys the fruit of action. ("A Study in Black and White", 5 August 1892)

The confusion of values comes through most clearly in Stephens's attitudes towards the moral and racial issue of coloured labour. The North Queensland sugar industry, and the prosperity of Cairns generally, depended on cheap native labour. Stephens came out quite firmly in favour of black labour, blandly

¹ See for example, "Public Instruction", an editorial on the Annual Report of that department (17 June 1892).
overlooking the abuses in the system and using his anti-clericalism as a stick to beat a clerical opponent of Kanaka labour:

there is one huge fallacy which pervades the whole of Dr. Paton's shrilling appeal, and makes its literal bathos doubly ridiculous. We can never consent to cut the coat of Queensland according to the cloth of the New Hebrides Mission. ("The Church Militant", 5 April 1892)

His hard-heartedness and commercial hard-headedness on this moral and political issue and his failure to carry over ethical values expressed elsewhere into daily living come through in a review of Wallace Nelson's Facts, Figures and Arguments on the Black Labour Question in the issue of 29 April 1892. Here Stephens began by challenging Mr Nelson's figures: the death rate of Kanakas was not 500% higher than the death rate of whites; in fact it was only about 400% higher or less, and then only because of the Kanakas' predisposition towards consumption! With a cynical expediency and practicality he argued for commercial values over moral ones:

But to our mind, the question is a simple one: Will black labour benefit the sugar industry? This is a point, not of theory, but of fact, and both reason and experience say that it will. It is of no use for Mr Nelson and others to argue that sugar-growing ought to pay as well without black labour. We are not concerned with what it ought to do, but with what it does. We know that were a dozen plantations in full swing round Cairns to-morrow - and there is room for them - there would be more employment at better wages for every white labourer and every white artisan in the district; there would be more trade for every shopkeeper, more business for every merchant, more wealth for the whole community. In the face of such knowledge, is it reasonable to expect residents of Cairns to cut their own throat in cutting the throat of profitable industry?

Another deep-seated trait - his fervid nationalism - so strongly expressed in Red Page and Bookfellow articles comes through in brief comments like this on "Australian Federation":

The strife is between small interests and great, between colonial profit and national; the difficulty is to merge the citizen of Queensland, of Victoria, of New South Wales, in the citizen of Australia. Yet the game is worth the candle; (4 December 1891)
-and in a patriotic article on "The Defence Force" in favour of universal training: "To defend his country is every man's duty, and we believe that every man worth the name would do his duty." (27 May 1892). The nationalistic fervour comes out most idealistically, if immaturity, in a pseudo-poetical editorial penned for the Christmas eve issue of 1891:

Swimming in sunshine comes Christmas, the golden shafts gleaming around it, warming the air as the heart's warmed by golden thoughts brought in its train. Not as in older lands over the ocean, shrouded in snow and girdled with icy blasts, chilling and killing the poor ones who most need the soft breath of kindness, robbing e'en pleasure of pleasure by sharpness of contrast with deadly despair— not so comes Christmas to visit our sunny Australia. In summer's maturity here is no room for King Frost and his turbulent retinue: no deep diseases of wretchedness blazon diligence to charity's balm: sympathy still finds sweet scope for the deeds best befitting the season. ("Christmas", 24 December 1891)

This article ends on a curious note as the agnostic attempted to rationalize his rhapsodizing over Christmas and the young iconoclast his conventional expressions of optimism, idealism and nationalism. So a description of Australians "decking the home with the wattle and gum that take holly and mistletoe's place" is followed by this characteristic demurrer:

What though our rites be druidical, heathenish, remnants of myths that have long ago faded, still is their meaning of mirth and beneficence hopeful and helpful in more modern days. No superstitious obedience pay we to frowning divinities, no sense of homage due priest or religion need fetter our Christmas oblation.

The article concludes with this peroration:

"Gods, gods, and gods, we are weary of gods, we have looked on humanity," toiling, and striving, and sighing and yearning for heights unattained; surely the conflict of cults and of creeds is a pitiful vanity, not by such devious ways will the golden millennium be gained.

It will be seen that in the Cairns Argus Stephens does reveal himself as an earnest, energetic, eloquent young man in whom life-long held attitudes were beginning to emerge but who, as later, was experiencing some understandable difficulty in harmonizing the exciting but conflicting ideas gleaned from
the writers he admired and was reading currently. Less understandable, however, were some glaring inconsistencies in precept and practice, and the holding of conflicting ideas in watertight moral compartments - also to a degree characteristics of the older man and critic. This contrariety can be pointed up by comparing editorial comments on criminology and penology with editorial practice in the selection of news items. The rational man might argue that:

It may be finally pointed out that, whenever a large community grows excited over a crime, that community becomes directly responsible for a whole crop of crimes, more especially among young people and children. ("The Science of Crime", 14 April 1892)

But the journalist and man betrayed an almost pathological interest in sensational murders and pandered to the public's morbid curiosity in his news columns with day-by-day accounts of the arrest and trial of the murderers Williams, Deeming and Horrocks. In the case of the infamous Deeming\(^1\) he reproduced in the supplement for 3 June 1892 a long description entitled "The Death of Deeming", an interview with the hangman reprinted from the Melbourne Standard, and a reprinting of "Deeming's Last Poem". With Horrocks every issue leading up to his hanging had an item on the case, and in the issue of 27 September 1892 a detailed, voyeuristic account was given of his hanging. Clearly at this stage at least Stephens was journalist first and moral philosopher mainly in theory.

III

Literary Activities

The weekly supplements that Stephens prepared to accommodate the overflow

of copy that could not be fitted into the two weekly editions of the newspaper contain most, but by no means all, the literary materials to be discussed here. It is necessary from the outset to stress that compared with the bulk of journalistic writing, the purely literary material is limited in range and quantity. Nor must the impression be given that the supplements were composed predominantly, even considerably, of literary matter. Nor were the supplements planned in a standardized format (as with the Red Page). Each supplement appears to have taken its own shape according to what unpublished journalistic articles or creative writing lay on the editor's desk; which books, journals or reports he happened to be reading at the moment and thought worthy of quoting; and what events (such as the local show) were of more than ordinary interest to local readers. One number would consist of extracts from other newspapers on a hotchpotch of subjects: for example; "Railway Extension", "Settlement in New Zealand", "Prize Fighting", "Gambling Systems" and "Criminal Punishment" (Supplement, 10 June 1892). Another, the Supplement of 19 February 1892, would 'rifle' in the fashion of the Boomerang's "Magazine Rifler" ten long extracts from city and overseas journals on topics as diverse as sport ("A Cricketing Reminiscence"), politics ("Interviewing Sir Samuel"), religious satire ("A Snake Sermon") and "Aid to Aborigines". Other supplements might concentrate on local issues like "The Black Labour Question" (29 January 1891), a Townsville Conference on "Separation" (3 June 1892), railways (17 June 1892), "The Show" (9 July 1892) as well as on broader concerns such as overseas finance ("The Borrowings of Australia / A Financial Cassandra", 29 July 1892) and state politics (9 and 19 August 1892). In fact, the only supplement that is wholly or predominantly 'literary' in content is the supplement of 24 December
1891 when for Christmas reading Stephens himself supplied a reprint of his short story, "Mary Ann", and two poems ("The Good Woman" and "Ladies' Whist"); and reprinted "Back to Africa", the first chapter of a novel by W. Westall, "Injudicious Swearing" by Mark Twain and two stories from Cornhill and Holly Leaves. The literary activities, then, played a comparatively minor part in the life of a very busy small town editor-journalist.

One literary activity Stephens did take seriously was story-writing, creating an unhappily married couple called Mr and Mrs Spoopendyke as his leading characters and writing a series of no fewer than twenty-one stories from 4 December 1891 to 24 June 1892. The stories, humorous and sardonic in intent, were usually concerned with trivial domestic incidents such as "Hunting for a Receipt", "A Friendly Game of Draughts", "The Lost Shirt Stud", "Straightening the Accounts" and so on. The Spoopendykes' marriage is conveyed as a sterile, loveless affair, punctuated by bickering and characterised by mean-spirited behaviour on both sides. The folk 'humour' of misogamy is generally conveyed in snarling masculine or nagging feminine dialogue. A couple of examples will serve to show its quality. First, the husband's response when his wife discovers that he has absent-mindedly donned a missing pair of braces before putting on his shirt:

"Smart as a whip, ain't ye?" growled Mr Spoopendyke, as he drew off his shirt and let his braces down. "If my head was as clear as yours I'd hire out for a church bell. You only need four lenses and a drop of rain-water to be a microscope." Mr Spoopendyke hurried on his clothes and scuttled downstairs to get the paper before his wife could make a clutch at it. ("Mr and Mrs Spoopendyke: Spoopendyke's Braces", Supplement, 1 April 1892)

Or again, the husband's reaction when his wife tells him that their infant is his image:
"I don't see how you make out that," said Mr Spoopendyke, gravely. "I don't know when my nose looked like the thumb part of a boiled lobster claw. Do I understand you that my eyes bear any resemblance to head of a screw?" ("Mr. and Mrs. Spoonendyke: Spoonendyke's Baby", Supplement, 24 June 1892)

It is rough knockabout stuff, lacking in wit and ungraced by any touches of sympathy or insight into normal decent relationships. As such it is best ignored – as most of the later prose stories are best ignored – in any analysis of Stephens's literary achievement. It does seem a pity, however, that so much misdirected energy and time were, and were later to be, expended on such meretricious rubbish. It is ironic, too, that the creator of such misogynist travesties should court and marry a girl met during the time of their composing.

On the other hand, the reviews are promising: forthright, incisive, well-written and expressing strongly the personality responding to the work in question. A good example is a review of "John Miller's" (William Lane's) The Workingman's Paradise, an Australian Labour Novel in the issue (not the Supplement) of 29 April 1892. It will be noted that the critic begins with a blunt value judgment, which is supported by calm argument that gradually becomes more agitated until it reaches a rhetorical conclusion employing biblical rhythms and Latin quotations:

The book has no literary value, the style being ranting and exaggerated, though there are some forcible passages. As a picture of Australian life it would be farcical, were it not so malignantly slandering. The author paints the stratum of vice and misery existing in all human societies as if it were typical of the general life. The book is false in sentiment and false in fact. It is a deliberate attempt to rouse evil passions, made more nauseous by a hypocritical profession of serving the cause of purity and truth. Australians, we know whereof we speak; and we claim to represent Australians when we give "John Miller" Pascal's words to a similar libeller: "Mentiris impudentissime," - "You lie, sir, damnably."

Interestingly, the most carefully thought about and most considerable exer-
cise in literary criticism was an article on Whitman, entitled "Our Special Article: Walt Whitman" (and written again for the paper, the issue of 8 April 1892). This obituary tribute is interesting because Whitman was so naturally 'American' in manner and attitude, so innovative in technique, and so 'untraditional' in the subjects he chose to explore poetically. Later Stephens, though looking for a national spirit in writers, was to be suspicious of free verse or any manifestation of modernism and to prefer the conventional Georgian type lyrics on love, death and nature with their pervading aura of sadness. The appreciative comments he wrote here might not have been essayed quite so confidently or naturally by the older critic:

Whitman's creed was optimism, his faith in democracy unbounded. He set himself to sing things as they are, and found his ideal in the real. His poems are rough and crude, but when they rouse the enthusiasm of such masters of form as Swinburne and the Rossettis, minor critics may well be silent. His vigour, the breadth and thoroughness of his conceptions, his daring philosophy, stamp him a genius, of however unsteady pinion. His work, says William Rossetti, "forms incomparably the largest performance of our period in poetry."

But what is characteristic is the sensible and balanced evaluation of the late poet's "place in literature":

It is too soon to say if his place in literature is permanent. It is not too soon to say that he has permanently influenced thought and life. His has been a leading figure in America for a quarter of a century, and he has won his way through obloquy and ridicule to a place beside Emerson, Bryant, and Whittier.

In one other respect this article anticipates the later critical practice in that it is heavily loaded with biographical detail. As in his Bookfellow days, Stephens was already fond of tucking in brief biographical notes on living writers among other materials. For example, the Brisbane poet, Mary Hannay Foott, was mentioned in a note in which her "In Memoriam" was quoted and the comment made that "Some of her lyrics, including the well-known 'Where the
Pelican Builds', are among the best Australia has yet produced." (25 March 1892). There was also an amused note on the marriage of Rudyard Kipling—a professed Benedick (26 January 1892), and this no doubt sardonically intended piece of light literary gossip concerning the popular novelist Ouida:

Ouida uses on her hair and on her eyebrows scent that costs £8 an ounce. She cannot bear a piece of muslin that has been starched, and the touch of velvet, she says, makes her flesh creep. She hates the world, and likes to offend it in her books. Her study has a great Persian rug before the hearthstone; here she likes to lie and scream a little to ventilate her feelings. ("Persons and Things", 23 September 1892)

Otherwise the literary interests show indirectly as when the town clerk's writing to himself is compared to Dickens's *Dombey and Son* and Toots (12 February 1892) or when Sir Samuel Griffith, attacked as "The Great Opportunist" (16 February 1892), is compared to the highwayman of Dumas's *The Three Musketeers* who adopted the opposite religion from his intended victims.

Consequently, it can be seen that the literary materials in the Cairns *Argus* files do not in themselves constitute a substantial or significant addition to the canon of literary works worthy of preservation or of serious critical analysis. The non-literary essays, however, do embody much worthwhile material. Also, a great deal can be learnt about the evolving attitudes and convictions of a literary critic who was to depend confidently on the integrity and worth of his own intuitive personal responses to a work of art. Most importantly, during this time Stephens is seen to be sharpening the skills of writing and developing the confident, flexible, urgent, and allusive style that so characterizes the mature literary criticism.
CHAPTER V

PAMPHELTEERING AND WANDERJAHRE

(OCTOBER 1892–JANUARY 1894)

Stephens's experiences as journalist had resulted in a personal involvement in local Queensland politics and in the broader issues which excited the young men of his day, especially those "with foolish young notions about the duty of a citizen to his native country"¹: such things as White Australia, limited franchise, decentralization, the shearers' strikes of the nineties, fiscal policies, payment of naval tribute to Britain. He used the months of leisure between selling up in Cairns and leaving on a world trip some six months later to produce two pamphlets that are written with such style and spirit that they do hold a reader's interest although the issues they deal with are dead letters. These pamphlets do have intrinsic worth both for their logical structure and clarity of exposition and for the personal urgency - impressed in the style itself - with which the writer sets about measuring (corrupt) political reality against (ideal) ethical economic and social standards arrived at through his own reading, thinking and practical experience.

Stephens's first pamphlet, written late in 1892², won a prize of £25 which the "North Queensland Separation League" offered in 1892 for the essay which best put the League's case for the creation of an independent state in the north of Queensland. Stephens claimed to have written the pamphlet from ethical and educational motives. His experiences in Cairns had given him such

¹ "Dedication", The Griffilwraith (Brisbane: Edwards, Dunlop and Co., 1893).
an insight into the North's problems that he had been converted from the typical Southerner's position of uninformed antagonist to one of dedicated protagonist for separation. Further, he argued in his introduction that because many protagonists were inarticulate they needed someone to plead for them, to educate public opinion elsewhere:

Many Northerners know what they want, but cannot justify to others the faith that is in them. The following pages attempt to supply intelligible justification. The calculations and arguments differ often and widely from those adduced by other supporters of the Separation movement the conclusion is identical with theirs. [sic]

The tone throughout is rather pedagogical - even to the extent of organizing the exposition under seven logically ordered headings beginning in Chapter I: "The Argument A Priori" and ending Chapter XI: "The Conclusion". The essay is not nearly as dull as its thorough-going planning and highly parochial subject matter threaten, though of course from this distance no-one but an historian or "New State" enthusiast looking for arguments and precedents would care to follow the intricacies of argument or analyse the tables of statistics on which they are based. What does save the essay for the modern reader are the sudden flashes of humour and wit as a compelling image is struck, or (with what was to become something of a stylistic trademark later on) a homely analogy is pressed with gay agility and an outrageous straining of logicality to make a curiously persuasive point. "What would you think of a man who told you the circulation of the blood would be more perfect if the heart were placed in the big toe?" he asks to support his argument that Brisbane in the southeast corner of the state was geographically an impossible site for the capital

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1 Why North Queensland Wants Separation, unpaginated.
2 Ibid. The quotations that follow are from this source.
of a territory covering some 670,000 square miles. Then, comes a pseudo-medical argument that the result of placing the heart in the big toe would be for the flow of blood to stimulate its growth to enormous size while the rest of the body lost proportionately in health and strength. "Would this be desirable?" the author asks (with scarcely controlled straight face):

Would it be desirable that a man's body should become subordinate to his big toe? What would follow? In the first place, we should lose the use of the toe as a toe - by no means a small loss. Then we would gradually develop a type of humanity different from anything we know or can conceive. The toe would become supreme in the organisation; instead of the man wagging the toe, the toe would wag the man. As the power of every organ depends upon the supply of blood which it receives, the toe and one foot and leg would become swollen and much stronger, while the other foot and leg would wither away. The arms would become feeble; the brain, receiving much less blood, would lose its power; taste, sight, smell, and hearing would be weakened or destroyed. Thus the second result of placing the heart in the big toe would probably be to make us crippled, deaf, dumb, blind, and idiotic. Long before that, however, we would be exterminated by some race of men whose hearts were normally situated.

Although many of the arguments, and some of the passages, are lifted straight from Argus editorials on separation, Vance Palmer's comment that "the style and spirit" of this pamphlet "must have astonished the donors"^1 is surely an appropriate one.

The second pamphlet^2 written presumably to occupy his time at home in Toowoomba towards the end of 1892 or early in 1893^3 was published by Stephens at his own expense - the author observing in passing that he could well have made money by promising his opponents not to publish. This cynical attitude

^1 A. G. Stephens: His Life and Work, p. 10.

^2 The Griffilwraith (Brisbane: Edwards, Dunlop and Co., 1893). The pamphlet is subtitled: "Being an Independent Criticism of the Methods and Manoeuvres of the Queensland Coalition Government, 1890-1893".

^3 That is, between selling out in Cairns in September 1892 and leaving on the world trip in April 1893.
is established in the opening sentence of the "Dedication"1 where the author informed his prospective audience - "the 25,000 electors who have no votes" - that because he was not a candidate and they had no votes they had "the best of all reasons for believing me - I am not trying to make anything out of you."

The bland, sardonic, ironic tone is sustained as the author explains the idealistic motives ("I am a comparatively young man; and the foolish young notions about the duty of a citizen to his native country have not left me") that prompted him to devote time and money to writing and publishing his independent criticism of that unnatural hybrid, the politically expedient coalition government between the old political enemies Sir Samuel Griffith and Sir Thomas McIlwraith:

But my profession as a journalist frequently obliges me to travel about Queensland; and though that may sharpen my intellect, and enlarge my experience, and increase my capacity as an elector, it also prevents me from using my capacity. This is my misfortune, yet I cannot persuade myself it is my fault.

Nevertheless, as a Queenslander, I cannot help taking an interest in the administration of government in Queensland. That is natural; though the electoral law considers it improper.

Obviously this is pamphleteering of an unexpectedly high order, not of the order of a Defoe or William Cobbett perhaps but the only Australian writing of this genre that in my experience suggests such comparisons.

The writing here has much of the verve and astringency that we associate with the best Red Page criticism and like that writing much of it was originally produced to meet an editorial deadline (for the Cairns Argus). The severe pressing of illogical assumptions to ludicrous conclusions, the applic-

1 The quotations that follow are from this "Dedication" (unpaginated) from The Griffinwraith.
ation of syllogistic reasoning to expose absurdity which Stephens employs in his attack on plural voting, is not really bettered in any of the later writing:

The assumption is that a man and a house are entitled to more votes than a man, because possession of the house implies that the man is a better man, and more qualified to take a share in the government of his country. Consequently, a man with two houses is better than a man with only one, and a man with ten than a man with two. The ideal electorate would therefore be composed of a single man with an infinite number of houses, exercising an infinite number of votes.

The writing is further enlivened by the occasional exploitation of witty parody. The critic who would ridicule a poet's polysyllabic mannerisms by pursuing a Biblical allusion in the style of the original - "A certain poet [Hubert Church] went down from Tasmania to Maoriland, and fell among words, which stripped him of his simplicity, and stunned him, and never departed, leaving him half dead" - is clearly anticipated by the young controversialist of 1893, describing Sir Samuel Griffith as "the prodigal child of Australian politics", spending his nation's substance "in riotous legislation".

Stephens, as critic, usually stated his opinions with unequivocal directness. Brash, wrong-headed and inconsistent he often was, but at least the reader felt he was being confronted with a fearlessly asserted and honestly believed in point of view. Something of this same forthrightness and inconsistency between moral precept and practice come through in the justification for a "White Australia" policy, argued on a queer mixture of idealistic democratic principles and highly suspect "white supremacist" racialist theories:

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1 The Griffilwraith, Chapter VIII, "Electoral Reform", p. 49.
2 R.P., 12 January 1905.
3 The Griffilwraith, Chapter X, "Blunder and Plunder", pp. 63-64.
This chapter repeats verbatim an Argus editorial of 11 March 1892, entitled "The English Squadron" (see Chapter IV, p. 70).
Australia is a democracy, and Australian sentiment is essentially democratic. With the maintenance of a democracy any inequality of class or status is incompatible. Our citizens must all stand upon the same plain of opportunity. Individual differences of capacity there will always be, but to all who perform the duties of a citizen the fullest privileges of citizenship should be accorded. Yet it is impossible that aboriginals, kanakas, coolies, or Chinese should be received as equal citizens of the ideal State which it is our ambition to form. Such a union would be degradation. The mixed community of Australians has its faults and vices; but it has grand possibilities. Brutal whites may fall as low as the brutal kanakas, but the best white type soars infinitely above the best kanaka. Whatever our failings, we are the heirs of European civilization; and we cannot merge our nationality in a barbarism to which European civilization is incomprehensible.

As is the case with much of the later criticism, I think that here the reader is entitled to feel some outrage at the wrong- and muddle-headed reasoning and the outright prejudices that bolster the arguments, but still respect the writer for expressing them so ardently and resolutely.

Finally, The Griffilwraith contains as eloquent and passionate a statement as Stephens ever penned about the nature and motivation of his 'nationalist' theories. Quite clearly, as argued in earlier chapters, Stephens had formulated his theories long before coming under Archibald's personal influence. The later criticism certainly is informed by a pervasive patriotism; but to suggest that this patriotism was simply an unthinking emotional response somehow akin to jingoism; or worse, the simulated response of a good Bulletin staff man, is to ignore the evidence that early publications like The Griffilwraith afford.

The nationalism had an idealistic basis: like the early American colonists with their dream of an 'other Eden' free from the evils of rank and privilege,

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1 The Griffilwraith, Chapter VII, "Coloured Labour", p. 42. Editorials in the Cairns Argus of 15 and 29 April 1892 advance the same arguments (see Chapter IV, p. 79).
Stephens believed that "the whole environment in which the young Australian grows to manhood" was conducive to freedom: "Thought here moves with a broader sweep; there is a carelessness of tradition and conventionality that cramp the limits of action." Australians he compared to the old Frisians who had "earned the distinctive epithet of 'free-born Frisians' because they never bowed the neck to foreign or domestic yoke". A "love of independence . . . irrespective of parentage or the ties of kinship" was "inmate in those born on Australian soil". It is obvious that Stephens was on difficult ground here. Believing as strongly as he did in the shaping power of heredity and race memories he still had to rationalize why Australians born of servile English parents had such a love of freedom. Physical environment was not sufficient; it had to be explained in terms of the questioning and sceptical intellectual climate. So, in order to explain and justify his ardent nationalism, the young author proceeded to formulate in the clearest and most unequivocal terms his commitment to the pragmatist philosophy ("prove all things") that is implicit in the later criticism:

Thought here moves with a broader sweep; there is a carelessness of tradition and conventionality that cramp [sic] the limits of action. Pastors and masters tell us that young Australia is irreverent or indifferent to things round which for her forbears, for her contemporaries of European race, clusters an accretion of pious and respectable memories. The charge is true; and 'tis not pity that 'tis true. The precept is good, "Prove all things;" and it is that which the young Australian follows, still resolving to hold fast to that which is true. [my emphasis] But he will not take his truth on trust. No second-hand shams and spurious philanthropies will he swallow, because stamped with the hall-mark of regal or theological approbation. The imagination of the age of reason finds in him its concrete embodiment. The age of superstition will decay as the nation gathers strength, and flings off the trammels that would devitalise its lusty vigour.

1 The Griffilwraith, Chapter XII, "Under Which King, Bezonian?", p. 83. The quotations that follow are from the same source.
The pamphlets that Stephens wrote a year or so before joining the Bulletin staff would almost certainly have come under Archibald's notice, as the Bulletin was interesting itself in Queensland politics about this time - and advocating policies substantially the same as Stephens's\(^1\). It is scarcely conceivable that Stephens, already a contributor, would have failed to send a copy of his second pamphlet to the journal that then claimed (without exaggeration) to be the most widely-read and distributed journal in Australasia. And Archibald himself would surely have stirred to the rhetorical flourish with which his young admirer ended the peroration. The coming elections, he declared, would show whether Queenslanders were fit for freedom:

> Not the freedom of the child that is tied to its mother's apron-strings, but the freedom of manhood, kneeling at no throne but the throne of Justice, acknowledging no 'majesty' but the majesty of Truth.

* * * *

In April 1893 Stephens set out on a trip to London and the continent, via America, returning from Fleet Street in January 1894 in response to an invitation from Archibald to join the staff of the Sydney Bulletin as a junior sub-editor\(^3\). Stephens himself told Vance Palmer:

\(^1\) The Bulletin was especially concerned over coloured labour and land speculation in Queensland. The issue of 8 April 1893 devoted its leading article to an attack "The Public Enemy - McIlwraith"; and Hop's full-page cartoon, on the "Land Grab", depicts a zebra-striped map of Queensland in which the black stripes represent graphically the areas of land to be granted to the railway companies and the white backgrounds the area remaining for the people. The cartoon of 25 November 1893 is in support of separation for North Queensland.

\(^2\) The Griffilwraith, p. 84.

'I was twenty-five,' [in fact, twenty-seven\(^1\)] said Stephens in a reminiscence note, 'when I turned my share of a Queensland paper to cash and cheerfully blew the lot in a trip to America, Canada, and Europe; publishing 'A Queenslander's Travel-Notes' as a result. That was some of the luckiest money I ever spent, and I advise all young Australians to do likewise — to go round and see the rest of the world, and come back convinced that Australia is the best country of them all.'

The decision was not quite as impulsive as this note would imply. With characteristic foresight and initiative Stephens set about beforehand to persuade several editors at home (including his former partner on the Argus and his father in Toowoomba) to commission him as a roving reporter, with the special brief of sending back eye-witness impressions of the Chicago World Fair of 1893. A contemporary letter from his literary patron at the time, Mary Hannay Footh says in passing:

A kind friend of yours told me you had arranged to go to Chicago for a lot of papers. I hope you have indeed been so fortunate as to have made such an arrangement but I almost think that if you had you would have told me.

And Stephens's own introductory 'Note' informs the reader that:

This book . . . is chiefly a reprint of articles contributed to two Queensland newspapers, the Cairns Argus and the Darling Downs Gazette; though several appeared in Sydney Truth and two in Sydney Bulletin.

His 'grand tour' took Stephens across the continent of America with stop-offs at Chicago, New York and a visit to Canada; thence across the Atlantic to England, Scotland and Wales; across the channel for a short visit to Paris; and finally back to London where he was working in Fleet Street on the Daily Chron-

\(^{1}\) Stephens was born on 28 August 1865; he sailed from Sydney in April 1893.

\(^{2}\) A. G. Stephens: His Life and Work, p. 11. See above p. 69.

\(^{3}\) Letter of 18 November 1892 in S.P., Letters to and Stories by A. G. Stephens (A1926).

\(^{4}\) A. G. Stephens, A Queenslander's Travel-Notes (Sydney: Edwards, Dunlop and Co., 1894), unpaginated.
when Archibald's offer of a permanency as sub-editor on the Bulletin induced him to return to Sydney to take up his appointment from the beginning of 1894. Palmer's opinion that Archibald was fortunate to lure Stephens back to Australia ('There would probably have been a bright future for Stephens in Fleet Street; he had good prospects with the Daily Chronicle') receives some support in a letter Mrs Footh wrote to Stephens thanking him for sending her a copy of the Daily Telegraph with Lord Rosebery's speech:

I take the preliminary description of the Lords Out Late to be by the unlucky "S" who was not thought worth securing for our cleverly conducted Brisbane dailies - even as foreign correspondent. I am of course, delighted and congratulate you - I don't say that I am surprised though.

And in the same letter Mrs Footh told Stephens that two local editors were "much interested" when shown the newspaper, especially a "Mr. Knight of the Observer" who "spoke in the very nicest way about your writings. If you ever come back again we must have both these people to meet you the very first Sunday." Archibald's offer thereby came at a providential time and was to lead to a professional partnership of some eight years duration (1894-1902) that was to have a significant and, in Vance Palmer's opinion, even a decisive influence on indigenous writing in Australia in the years immediately preceding and following Federation.

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   The writer of this biographical notice appears to have made use of notes supplied by Stephens himself.


   At the time Mrs Footh apparently was on the staff of The Queensland, her letter being written on that journal's note-paper.


The "random notes" that Stephens sent to various newspapers during his nine
months trip were collated and published on his return to Sydney in 1894 as *A
Queenslander's Travel-Notes*. On the front cover and facing the title page is
a full page photograph of the bust of a virile looking, hirsute, gap-toothed
Australian aboriginal. The caption "A Queenslander" is apparently a not too
subtle dig at overseas acquaintances who thought all Australians were black-
fellows. (There is, however, a smaller quite handsome portrait of the author
on the last page of the book - just to make sure.) This practical joke more
or less sets the tone of the whole. *Travel-Notes* is very much a young man's
book that begins appropriately with a love sick poem ("In Absence") of thir-
teen stanzas for his girl, presumably the future Mrs Stephens whom he had met
in Cairns, with

"clear eyes, that met mine with a gaze frank and steady":

The moon and a star hung in blackness above me -
The moon and one star,
And I thought of the friends far away, those who love me,
Where sweet wattles are.

The prose chapters reveal the other side: the open-eyed wonder, know-all man-
ner, bursting vitality, buoyant brashness, downright vulgarity and cocky ego-
centricity of the innocent abroad, determined to see all and tell all. The
high American divorce rate and aggressive, audacious, painted American girls
shock him rather; though when told by one that kissing a man without wax on
his moustache was like eating an egg without salt he reports with boyish self-
satisfaction: "But later on there was found opportunity to convince this par-
ticular American girl that every rule has its exceptions. And we parted on

1 *A Queenslander's Travel-Notes* (Sydney: Edwards, Dunlop and Co., 1894),
unpaginated.
Subsequent references for the quotations from this source are given in
the text within parentheses.
the very best of terms." (pp. 98-99)

He notes that the Americans use "Sir" in an unservile sense: "It is merely a euphonic tag which seems to the accustomed American ear to round off a sentence agreeably" (p. 92); that Salt Lake electric tram-cars "are driven at a speed of quite 20 miles an hour - faster than Queensland trains" (p. 42); puns about American luxury trains costing thirty shillings a day more than the average fare: "but what peripatetic philosopher would grudge a fare so low for fare so high" (p. 84); sees to it that copies of the works of Queensland's two best-known poets - Brunton Stephens and Mary Hannay Foott - are put on display "in the temple of Chicago fame" (p. 71); at Niagara Falls is reminded of the anecdote he used to illustrate "Anti-Climax" in his lecture to the Gympie Literary Circle about the "reputed Frenchman", who exclaimed: "'O dis is sublime, dis is magneficent, by gar dis is pretty good!" (p. 85); and describes with gusto how he learnt the art of scone-making from the baking-powder men at the World Fair: "I baked several batches of scones myself with great applause, and ate them afterwards with exceeding satisfaction" (p. 67).

It's all very lively and rather appealing for its youthful innocence and eager spirit. The robust and radical philistinism that was so to affront Norman Lindsay later comes out most tellingly in the self-appointed connoisseur's reactions to the paintings at the Louvre. Norman Lindsay's future critic, "Hop's" and Phil May's editor, the confident authority on 'black and white' and art critic of the Bookfellow complains only that the paintings lack social awareness:

In the twenty-eight miles of canvas - which weary one at the Louvre, I found nothing to impress me like the tiny sketches at the Drury-lane fish shop. Raphael and Murillo were to me creators of coloured prettiness - marvellously pretty prettiness if you will, but the merest sound
and fury of art, signifying nothing in particular. In London and Paris the bare backs and hungry stomachs strike one painfully. I do not see how hordes of saints in brown and yellow, or Madonnas and children in red and blue, are going to clothe the one or fill the other. (pp. 164–165)

Despite some immature posturing and earthy philistinism (pragmatically justified again, it will be noted) Stephens does make some penetrating and characteristic observations about social conditions – in England especially. Here the prejudices and predilections he had already shown – and which were to be intensified through his close contact with Archibald – seem to predetermine, or at least to give a bias to the judgments and observations. In Wales it is not the singing or the non-conformist fervour of the local inhabitants that impress; rather he repeats the Apostle complaint about good shepherds shearing instead of feeding their flocks:

As for the Church, I never could understand why the salvation which is ostensibly free should be given only in forced exchange for the tenth pig and the tenth wheatsheaf and the tenth turnip, or why the successors of the Good Shepherd should reverse his practice, and shear the sheep instead of feeding them. (p. 136)

The antipathy towards the Scots which was to come out in his later attacks on the administration and teachers at the University of Sydney and in his fierce controversy with George Black over Burns's poetry may derive from his observations in Scotland. It seems more likely, however, that the already noted anti-clericalism and his distaste of 'hypocrisy' in any form would have caused him to dislike the canny Calvinists:

1 See, "Precept and Practice", The Apostle, 5 May 1889: "The modern pastor shears Christ's lambs instead of feeding them."


3 See R.P., 23 October 1897; 5 February 1898; 19 February 1898.
You cannot serve God and Mammon, said a celebrated authority. That authority erred, and the Scotch bear continual witness to the error. The typical Scotch character—picture has no middle-distance. There is hell and judgment in the background; there is the penny siller put prominently in the foreground, and that is all. It is the Scotchman’s part to dodge the one and clutch the other. (p. 145)

The British worker, lacking the postulated democratic idealism and pragmatic commonsense of his Australian counterpart, predictably comes under attack:

The average British workman is a particularly brutish workman. Give him meat and drink, a wife to kick, and little money for caris or so-called "sport", and all the fine democratic ideals may go hang. (p. 152)

And again:

You meet plenty [of workers] who always vote Tory, and think "they new-fangled Radicals" a curse to the country. No wonder the world moves slowly, with such dust to choke the wheels of progress. (p. 137)

The Queen, of course, came in for the same kind of ridicule and disparagement that Archibald’s Bulletin heaped on her in cartoon, verse, ‘par’, and cruelly factual photographs. Stephens’s sardonic prose portrait has a far sharper bite than Archibald’s vituperative outbursts:

The Queen is simply a fat little, dumpty little, old little woman—that is, her predominant physical characteristics are first littleness, then fatness, then dumpiness, then age... I searched her face for indications of expression, but could find none—simply a well-bred emptiness of all expression whatever.

There was nothing of the "divinity which doth hedge a king". Perhaps queens have no hedge; perhaps the age of divinity is gone with the age of chivalry; perhaps, nay certainly, it would be impossible under any circumstances for such a squat figure to look divine. Anyhow, the queen looked only in perfect bodily health, a good animal, with a certain air of repose and contentment becoming one who has always lived on the best of everything—nothing to do all day and no need to do that unless she likes. (p. 158)

It is not difficult to imagine Archibald rubbing his hands with glee over the passages just quoted. But what finally clinched the invitation to join the Bulletin perhaps were the two articles that Stephens contributed to the
Bulletin. The first, contributed from San Francisco\(^1\), under the now famous initials, gave an account of the "Geary Law" which had just passed Congress—designed "to prohibit the coming of Chinese into the United States". Stephens's commentary was in accord with Bulletin policy:

What America is doing, Australia will one day have to do; and the sooner it is done the better. In spite of the prohibitive Acts of the various provinces, Chinese are pouring in by thousands. The leak is greatest in the Northern Territory of South Australia, where already Chinese rule the roost [sic], and the humble white man goes from one to the other for a job. John Smith and Mike Callaghan are only too glad to swing a pick or feed the stampers in the claim or the battery owned by Wun Lung or Lee Fat. From Port Darwin, as the telegraph line-repairers know, the plague is fast spreading. White coolie politicians wink with sympathy at the yellow coolie labourer. Where is the Australian Geary?

The second contribution, sent from London in September\(^2\), would also have delighted his anti-traditionalist editor, who in collecting "sketches in prose and verse by Bulletin writers" some three years previously had included these verses:

The drivel of our fathers hands the dreary legend down,
Its gods and heroes building out of dolt and ass and clown;
The facts that never happened and the things that never would
Are engraved upon the statues of the men who never could.\(^3\)

Stephens was fortunate enough to have been present in the mother of parliaments when a fiercely-argued division ended in a display of fisticuffs such as one might witness in a rough colonial pub:

There were fully fifty members rough-and-tumbling on the floor, with silk hats and bad language flying in all directions like dishonoured pro•notes on the 4th of the month . . . The distinguished strangers

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1 "Wanted, an Australian Geary", Bulletin, 22 July 1893, p. 13. The quotation that follows is from this source.

2 "The Fight in the House of Commons", Bulletin, 16 September 1893, p. 5. The quotations that follow are from this source.

stood up and hissed, but we of the undistinguished mob cheered 'em on. We knew this show was for one night only, and wanted an encore before the performers left the stage...It was all over in five minutes. Then the Speaker came in, and explanation followed explanation, and excuse after excuse, and the naughty boys hung down their heads in shame, and the veil dropped gently over "this discreditable scene".

"But will I ever again thrill with awe at the hoary traditions of the British House of Commons? Nary thrill.

The opinionated, iconoclastic young journalist of *A Queenslander's Travel-Notes* with his flair for the telling phrase, his sardonic turn of mind and highly compatible irreligious, political and social convictions was just the man for Archibald's gadfly journal. And the qualities of mind and temperament that the *Travel-Notes* display were precisely the ones that were to make his critical writings so original and readable. Thus, commenting on the Australian tourist's need to have a good stock of native tall stories:

As for the men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders, any Australian Parliament can supply greater marvels in the shape of men without any heads at all, who nevertheless think what they call thoughts, speak what they call speeches, and drink what is indubitably Scotch whisky at a refreshment-bar. (p. 197)

On the other hand Stephens was always a working journalist at heart: *The Travel-Notes* accurately presage that brilliantly expressed critical insights will be marred by lapses in taste and judgment and suffer from a general scrappiness in presentation.

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Stephens then had had a fifteen months lay-off between selling up in Cairns (October 1892) and settling down to routine editorial work again on the *Bulletin* (January 1894). He used this time wisely - in writing, travelling, thinking. The result was that when he was given a job of some responsibility and 'prospects' he had the journalistic skills, the confidence and maturity and
freshness of vision that only travelling can bring, and the ambition to be something more than a hack journalist. He was well prepared for the career now opening up on Archibald's Bulletin; his success on the Red Page comes as no surprise to anyone who has read the already voluminous materials written during the years of literary and editorial apprenticeship in Gympie, Brisbane and Cairns particularly.
CHAPTER VI

RETROSPECT - THE BULLETIN AND J. F. ARCHIBALD (1880-1894)

When assessing the contribution that the Bulletin made to our pioneer literature it is customary to underestimate the importance of J. F. Archibald, and by implication (or even by direct statement) to overestimate Stephens's significance. Vance Palmer\(^1\) and P. R. Stephensen\(^2\) tend to overlook Archibald's influence; Frederick T. Macartney's revision and extension of E. Morris Miller's Australian Literature has a subject entry for "The Bulletin" but none for "Archibald, J. F."; and H. M. Green states categorically in his History:

On the critical side, and as to the main school and its chief founders, the ideas that Archibald promulgated were social and political, and literary only as an instrument and in the matter of craftsmanship; Stephens was emphatically a man of ideas in the literary field, and he had great power and influence, but he was wise enough to make no attempt to change the character of the age.

Stephens himself, fond as he was of Archibald, never really adequately acknowledged that as 'Literary Editor' of the Bulletin he did take over a 'going concern' with established writers discovered and developed by Archibald, endorsed some of the critical canons enunciated by Archibald in his "Notes to Contributors", and in general conformed to Bulletin policy as laid down by the editor. That is, his column existed as 'an empire within an empire'. In sneering at Archibald's (admitted) predilection for sentimental verse and

\(^1\) In A. G. Stephens: His Life and Work,; however, The Legend of the Nineties does touch on Archibald's work.

\(^2\) The Life and Works of A. G. Stephens ("The Bookfellow") (Sydney: the author, 1940).

melodramatic prose¹ (predilections of the age and ones from which Stephens himself was not altogether free²); and in stressing his own independence in literary matters, Stephens himself has tended to belittle Archibald's real achievement in stimulating a rough and folksy but distinctively Australian school of writers. This widely quoted statement by Stephens (on his publishing of Brennan's articles on French symbolist poets in the Red Page) embodies attitudes towards Archibald that have since become more or less the consensus:

The "Bulletin" editor looked askance; frankly he "never read the stuff"; distinctly it wasn't "Bulletin" matter". But the Red Page was an independent organism; an empire in an empire; I supplied or bought the copy... Two editorial cuts in 12 years. "Anyway, old man, I had the sense to leave you alone," commented Archibald long afterwards.

Despite, perhaps because of, the low-brow literary taste to which Stephens here alludes, Archibald's Bulletin between the years 1880 and 1894 had achieved a literary direction and a "power and popularity . . . as a rallying

¹ See Newspaper Cuttings - J. F. Archibald (ML QA920.5A/A).
Under the heading "The Bulletin's Scrap Book 10/6/95" Stephens has pasted three such poems with the annotation by his hand "Selected by J.F.A.". One poem, "Envy", is about the narrator's rival who always defeated him - in the schoolboy race, in position, in winning the hand of the woman whom both loved, even in the race to the grave! The final banal stanza goes:
Yes, and just now I have seen him
Cold, smiling and blest,
Laid in his coffin - God help me!
While he is at rest
I am cursed still to live
Even Death loved him best.

² Stephens, for example, published a maudlin poem - "The Mother" by Ruth Bedford - as late as 1905:
She kept her tender watch beside
The cradle where her baby lay,
And smiled to see, with tender pride,
The wayward little curls astray
In sweet and tender disarray.
(Bulletin, 27 April 1905, p. 3)

centre for those who were capturing the folklore of the still-living and vividly remembered past"¹. Before the more literate national literature that Stephens sought to sponsor and develop would be written, his writers had to feel confident that the material provided through their day-to-day experience of living in the Australian environment, informed by the knowledge and standards and taste acquired through reading the great books of the western civilization they inherited, was proper matter for literary endeavour. When Archibald began to interest himself in local writing it was broadly still in the first stage of cultural subservience to the mother country, a stage all colonial literatures seem to pass through. Writers tended "to depend for their imaginative food on transplanted culture", according to Vance Palmer, with "little knowledge of the creative impulses that were changing the face of the country, and drew no sap from the dynamic life around it, its idiom, its particular character, its mass-imagination"².

Archibald more than any other individual helped Australian writers of the 1890s overcome what A. A. Phillips has called "the cultural cringe"³. As happened earlier with colonial American and Canadian literature⁴, the reaction was strong and doctrinaire, and accompanied by an unsubtle nationalistic declaration of cultural independence. Norman Lindsay's judgment that Archibald through his Bulletin was able to fulfil "an impassioned aspiration in the Aus-

¹ Miles Franklin, Laughter, not for a cage (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1956), p. 98.
² Vance Palmer, The Legend of the Nineties, pp. 129-130.
tralian ego" because it was "not only the national Australian journal; it was Australia in concrete form", though overstated, is fairly close to the truth:

Up to its appearance, the Australian-born were wandering in a limbo be-
gotten by a nostalgia in the early settlers who called England "home". The Bulletin initiated an amazed discovery that Australia was "home", and that was the anvil on which Archibald hammered out the rough sub-
stance of the national ego, even to the crude device of making the Eng-
lishman in Australia a comic figure.

In brief then, in the years 1880-1894 Archibald helped to lead Australian literature from its pioneer stage of juvenile cultural subservience into its still immature stage of adolescent revolt against the parent stock. This sec-
ond stage had to be passed through before an expositor like Stephens, who un-
derstood with M. Barnard Eldershaw (however much he might deplore her image) that "Culture is a very perishable commodity. It cannot be transplanted for it must have one foot in the soil and the other in the spirit of the race", could point the way to the unselfconscious, adult, literary maturity of the best contemporary Australian writing.

Archibald advised in his first number that "The Proprietors of The Bulletin intend giving provincial matters the greatest attention" — a policy "always kept in view to date" Stephens noted in 1898. A search through early Bulletin files shows that at first the literature that Archibald served up to his "Lone Hands" and bush-workers' wives was the imported popular melodrama typical of

1 In Bohemians of the Bulletin (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1965), p. 5. The quotation that follows is from this source.

2 More responsible at least than the wider claim that "It [the Bulletin] had startled [sic] into being a genuine urge of nationalism" [my emphasis]. Ibid., p. 12.

3 Quoted by Vance Palmer in The Legend of the Nineties, p. 129.

the age; for example, Adrienne ("A Love Story of the Lancashire Cotton Distresses") which ran as a serial. Similarly, the 'tales' offered in the first year included "Back from the Grave" and "The Broken Necklace: A Love Story". But, prophetically, two folksy indigenous items appeared in this first year under the heading of "Tales": "The Sugar Bag and the Jumbucks" and "A Few Snake Stories". In 1881 the local content of the fifteen tales published was increasing but "The Waning of a Honeymoon: A Romance of Darling Point" shows that the weak imitations of fashionable overseas magazine romances were still popular. The verse published during the first two years included popular poems by Byron, Swinburne, Tennyson, Harpur, Gordon and Kendall along with lower key work like "The Billiard Game of Life", "The Drunkard's Burial" and "How Dear to My Heart is the School I Attended". "Ironbark's" [G. H. Gibson's] "The Ballad of Queensland" also appeared in 1881 as a promise of things to come. In 1882-1883 the emphasis on Australian folk writing gradually became more marked and each number of the Bulletin was carrying this standard "Notice to Artistic and Literary Contributors":

**STRICTLY ORIGINAL** matter contributed to THE BULLETIN will be paid for. The editor will be glad to receive and consider contributions as under:

1. Original humorous or political matter, illustrated or otherwise. (Drawings must be made in clean lines of Indian ink on white paper or Bristol-board.)
2. Unpublished anecdotes of living celebrities, or people who ought to be celebrities.
3. Humorous poems (from eight to forty-eight lines preferred).
4. Serious poems, of similar or greater length, especially those suitable for pictorial illustration.
5. Short Australian or other stories, up to, say 3000 words. About half that length, or even less, will be preferred.

This had the effect of releasing the flood of folk poetry and prose tales that Vance Palmer Has commented on:
The tradition of oral balladry and tale-telling was still alive, and bush people responded wholeheartedly to an imaginative rendering of the incidents of their daily lives. In the shearing-sheds, in small country settlements, at campfires along countless tracks, existed a scattered audience and an army of potential contributors, and as the Bulletin's national outlook widened it began to draw them into its circle, at first unconsciously and then with deliberate intent.

Whereas in the whole of 1882 only five "Tales" were published, in 1883 the number rose to thirty-one, in 1884 to forty-one and in 1885 to forty-five. By 1888 Henry Lawson and Edward Dyson were contributing stories like "His Father's Mate" and "A Chinese Barber's Mistake", and before Stephens's arrival in 1894, "Price Warung", Ernest Favenc, Louis Becke, "Steele Rudd", Louise Mack, Randolph Bedford and Ethel Turner were well-established names. Among the bards Victor Daley first appeared in 1882, John Farrell in 1883, A. B. Paterson in 1886, Henry Lawson in 1887. By 1894 Balladists like Barcroft Boake, "The Breaker" (Harry Morant), W. H. Ogilvie and E. J. Brady, with a host of occasional contributors using a variety of pseudonyms, had jostled for space with Paterson and Lawson. Also, in addition to Daley lyrist A. A. D. Bayldon, Arthur H. Adams, Francis Adams, Frank Kenna, Dowell O'Reilly, Hubert Church, Lala Fisher, Louise Mack and David McKee were contributing "serious poems" - some "suitable for pictorial illustration". Not only had many of the writers whose work Stephens was to edit later been 'discovered' by Archibald, but publishing projects were already under way. Thus Stephens as editor is usually given the credit (or blame) for producing The Bulletin Story Book and The Bulletin Reciter. Both these appear to have been first envisaged by Archibald himself - certainly the second which was projected in a Bulletin advertisement before Stephens joined the journal:

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1 The Legend of the Nineties, p. 105.
An "Australian Reciter."

In deference to repeated solicitations, THE BULLETIN proposes to issue a volume of Readings and Recitations, consisting entirely of prose and verse which originally appeared in this paper. The Editor will feel obliged for any suggestions as to selections deemed by readers suitable for incorporation in work of the kind, and it will facilitate matters if, whenever possible, each adviser gives the date of the issue in which the item appeared. Special consideration should be given, in selecting specimens, to their elocutionary possibilities.

Stephens, wisely, made himself thoroughly familiar with the creative writing that Archibald had printed in the Bulletin prior to 1894. His two books of Newspaper Cuttings on the Bulletin prove that he read through the files, beginning with Volume I, No. 1, with a view to reprinting worthwhile items in the Bulletin or republishing them in book form. The second volume has a hand-written (in purple ink) thirty-one page "List of fair to good matter (excluding paras) selected with a view to reproduction in Bulletin Magazine." Another, written in different (red) ink, states:

Later on, I did not read matter or choose with entire view to reproduction in Bully but merely selected as notable for some reason, or interesting, or likely to be sought for later.

And I have not touched paras - or, to any extent, articles - almost wholly verse & stories.

This exercise doubtless gave Stephens some perspective about Bulletin taste and policy over the years, and made him thoroughly familiar with the work of writers still submitting work. The comments do show considerable critical

3 Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 4 f.
4 Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 3.
independence - for example, he exclaimed over Daley's "O'Callaghan's Apple" (by "Greeve Roe"): "Daley has not a vestige of humour / & an Irishman!"¹ but in the main it is obvious that Stephens had high regard for the poets, Daley, Boake, Lawson, Kenna, Paterson and Lala Fisher and the prose writers, "Price Warung", Lawson, Favenc and Dyson, all of whom had contributed articles for Archibald during the two years (1890-1892) that his list surveys.

Not only would Stephens have inherited from Archibald a school of serious writers and the idea of a Bulletin press for publishing books by Bulletin contributors, but he would have been imbued with Archibald's ideal of a community of writers with common interests and aspirations, in close personal contact with their critic and publisher. In Miles Franklin's words,

> Here was a forum for opinions, a focus, a school and market for writers, a club open to all who had talent to join. Archibald pruned and ridiculed, he criticized and encouraged, he taught, he paid for everything he printed. A flock of writers was disciplined and given purpose and status. . . . Its contributors were of many avocations and diverse educations, self-made or academically applied. Slangy, pungent, irreverent, cynical, often sentimental, sardonically humorous, witty - written by themselves, it appealed to hardy men who knew the bush, who could ride and reap, shoot and shear and plough, grub out trees by hand and dress the timber to build themselves houses and fences.

What does impress the reader at this date is how closely Archibald, and later Stephens came to know their writers. Partly these community ties were fostered by Archibald's simple but astute system of payment. Norman Lindsay recalls that the Bulletin office near the Quay in that free-trading era, was at the centre of things:

This poem was published in the issue of 13 June 1891.

² *Laughter, not for a cage*, p. 99.
The Bulletin office was the established meeting place on Saturday mornings for all contributors residing in Sydney. They foregathered at the counter, handing to the clerk their contributions cut from a copy of the paper, which were paid for on the spot at space rates. Country contributors had to post in their cuttings and received their dole back in a money order.

This simple system of payment was an astute device on the Bulletin’s part. It forced each contributor to buy a copy of the paper to see if his contribution was in it, while those who failed to perform this ritual just made a present to the paper of their contribution. . . . The paper was run by a small staff because the larger proportion of it was written by contributors; not only of pars, but of verse and short stories. There was no question that Archibald had created a national journal . . .

Archibald was able to hold his team of writers together for several other cogent reasons. First he paid well— for verse and stories as well as for journalistic 'pars'; this at a time when according to Stephens himself other papers like the Australasian and Sydney Mail considered they were doing the artist a favour even publishing his work. (Lindsay in Bohemians of the Bulletin recalled that he was paid five pounds for some drawings that commanded only seven and sixpence in the other journals.) Writers were made to feel that their contributions would be carefully scrutinized by a keenly interested editor. For example, the standard notice that ran just above the editorial on page 6 in the early 1890s assured them that "The Editor will carefully read and acknowledge in the Correspondence column all contributions submitted. . . . All communications will be regarded as strictly confidential." Those whose work showed most promise received personal letters; Stephens himself has said that "Archibald's letters to his contributors—'love letters,' Dyson called them, thrilling to the touch—would make a story by themselves."

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1 Bohemians of the Bulletin, pp. 3-4.
3 Ibid., p. 48.
Also Archibald emanated friendliness and understanding and obviously was able to enthuse others when his own emotions were deeply stirred. Mrs Macleod recalls that "his personal charm . . . was great" and that "He had the gift of appreciation and the will and capacity to express it. No freelance, however humble, sent anything of worth to the paper and failed to hear about it from him."\(^1\) Sir Frank Fox, Archibald's first choice as editor of the unsuccessful literary journal (The Lone Hand) recalled that "A. was so unselfish, so magnanimous, so industrious in seeking to impress the spirit of the Bulletin spirit that I was made to feel an associate rather than a pupil and to be one of the 'team' with a full share of responsibility."\(^2\) Sir Frank suggested further that the influence was a continuing one:

In his school his pupils were taught not to imitate others but to work out their own special abilities. His taste was eclectic and his generous magnanimity had no atom of jealousy. Unconsciously he instilled this spirit into most of his colleagues and the B. eleven was constantly recruiting new players to take the place of those recruited to other teams.

Not only would Archibald have impressed on Stephens the importance of close personal contact (vide his Saturday evening seminars in the Rowe Street room) but would have inspired in him the belief that appreciating, editing and criticizing the works of others could be as exciting and satisfying in its way as the act of literary creation itself, particularly where the manuscript was by an unknown but promising hand. To quote Lindsay again:

\(^3\) Ibid., p. 16.
A capacity to love the created works of others is a virtue given to a few, and Archie had it in a supreme degree. All work of quality was treasure-trove to him. He bought and hoarded stories and verse and drawings which kept appearing in the paper long after he had ceased editing it. Pars were his own speciality. He would chuckle exultantly over a piece of wit and communicate it with gusto.

And Sir Frank Fox's confirmatory recollection of Archibald's encouragement of local talent almost exactly applies to his protégé of the Red Page and Bookfellow:

Archibald's chief characteristic was enthusiastic encouragement of budding [sic] talent and he had a genius in the discovery of it. There are few among the stars in the galaxy of the 19th century who were not in debt to his instinct in detecting a good 'lode' and his patient help in developing it so that the 'battery report' confirmed his 'prospectus'.

The older man's editorial influence was not always for the good. For example, Archibald who was fond of describing himself as literary cobbler and patcher of pars took far too many liberties with the manuscripts of his untutored writers. Thus no one is quite sure how much the early Henry Lawson stories owe to Archibald's hand. ("Lawson gave heart and insight to what he wrote, but it was Archibald who gave it polish. Lawson never minded what Archibald did to his work," recalled Mrs Macleod.) Archibald himself told Claude Mckay that after listening to Louis Becke's stories of lawless traffic in the South Seas in the days of "Bully" Hayes he encouraged the raconteur to write them down:

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1 In Bohemians of the Bulletin, p. 16.
2 "Some Unpublished Reminiscences from Sir Frank Fox", p. 16.
"Becke had a sense of the dramatic," he said, "but he lacked the literary gift to put together what he had to say. I worked over his manuscript and talked with him by the hour on anything he brought to me. Until I had rewritten twelve of his tales I didn't print one. Then I ran them in weekly sequence."

McKay also recalls that Archibald would say "I am a soler and heeler of paragraphs . . . and here's where I enjoy myself"; and then, on settling down to work (at Smith's Weekly), "would turn out a readable paragraph from the most unpromising contribution."

It is known from extant manuscripts how Stephens 'doctored' Barcroft Boake's verses and "Steele Rudd's" stories, and how he badgered Neilson, O'Dowd and Daley to accept his rewritings of verses, couplets, and stanzas - often to the detriment of the finished work, for while he was usually perceptive in detecting weak spots in the work of others, the ideas and feelings they were seeking were generally too elusive for his heavy poetic hand. And as the better-educated writers came along, this intrusive meddling was even more reprehensible. Archibald's example was a bad one here, and leads one to qualify the high praise Stephens undoubtedly deserves in other respects for his dedicated labours as literary editor.

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1 This is the Life (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1961), p. 129.
2 Ibid., p. 128.
3 Ibid., p. 129.
4 See for example, R. G. Howarth, "Shaw Neilson", The Union Recorder, 4 August 1949. (Summary of Address to the English Association.)
Professors G. A. Wilkes and Tom Inglis Moore separately have drawn attention to some of the serious limitations Archibald's prescriptions imposed on Bulletin writers. First, there was the famous Bulletin emphasis on conciseness: "Boil it down", "We wouldn't give two columns to Shakespeare" he told contributors and passed on his father's rule "Be terse; give forceful word-pictures; and omit as many words as you can." As Professor Moore said regarding Lawson's stories:

This demand was good for Lawson in that it encouraged him to develop a fine economy in his style. It was thanks to Archibald that Lawson learned to pack a lot in a little space. The demand for brevity, however, had also a narrowing influence, since it gave little room for any development of depth in character or significance. It tended to produce sketches and fragments rather than well constructed stories. Thus Lawson later rebelled at its limitations when he originated the longer, more leisurely, and richer stories of the Joe Wilson cycle. He could do this because Blackwood's Magazine, in which he published some of them, gave him room to elaborate his tales - room denied him by the Bulletin.

And again, after quoting Stephens's introduction to the Bulletin Story Book (where he described the Bulletin genre as "objective, episodic, detached - branches torn from the Tree of Life . . . Many are absolute transcripts of the Fact, copied as faithfully as the resources of language will permit") Professor Moore observed that the genre "also encouraged the Bulletin writers to be content with reportage, to be episodic, slight and scrappy. These weak-

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3 Ibid., p. 367.
nesses remained with Lawson in many of his stories." And one might add: with Stephens in most of his criticism, aptly described by Vance Palmer as "sparks his mind threw out in the heat and energy of the moment."¹

Archibald was a colourful, even idiosyncratic figure; in Mrs Macleod's words he was

frail, nery, mercurial, intellectually arrogant, full of likable little vanities, and a continuous and usually witty and informative talker . . . full of resentments, extravagantly-worded - [sic] resentments against people (I can still hear a diatribe he used to level against the late Judge Windeyer); resentments against institutions (he had an almost hysterical dislike of capital punishment); resentments against the kind of Jingoism that was then finding expression in the Boer War.

The cult of personality was strongly established within the Bulletin office itself, and the most powerful personality of all, that of its editor, did impress itself strongly in the journal. "The specialities of the paper are its style - a grotesque and cynical humour bearing the impress of a single and erratic genius - its uncompromising radicalism, and its violently anti-British tone" was the judgment of an intelligent and perceptive contemporary observer². This, despite Archibald's professed policy of editorial anonymity:

During the twenty-six years of his connection with THE BULLETIN no word about its editor ever appeared in that paper, nor has anything been printed about him in any other paper with his consent. This was not due so much to diffidence - it was rather from an accurate and sordid appreciation of the fact that obvious personal advertisement is the

¹ A. G. Stephens: His Life and Work, p. 33.
worst form of self-discount, and that in this world it is only the unknown which is terrible. It is often the business of a newspaper editor to be terrible.

Stephens was to be aware of the capriciousness and eccentricity. Indeed, when he visited Archibald at Callan Park Asylum for the Insane in January 1907 and listened to his delusory ramblings:

"I speak all languages—fourteen languages—English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Maori—fourteen!" He says, "I feel so strong. I never strangle a man. I take him by the neck and hurl him through that door."

Stephens commented:

Even his praise of himself and pride in his own prowess may have been latent in him before and his previous pronounced blame of self-advertisement may have been merely the conscious re-action [sic] against a tendency which he knew to be excessive in himself.

The men perhaps were more alike than has been indicated and it is sadly ironic that Stephens himself should have left a bitter condemnation of Archibald in a note for his daughter, Connie, which shows evidence of the same kind of mental stress Stephens had detected in Archibald. The note which was written on 9 June 1918 when Stephens was in low spirits, the Bookfellow having been closed down since 1916 not to open till 1919, must be quoted to give some kind of balance to what has been said. Two highly-strung, strongly individualistic people such as Archibald and Stephens could scarcely work without occasional friction, or in the case of the financially unsuccessful Stephens, hidden and deep resentment. This is what the note says:


2 Report of visit to Archibald on Saturday 4 January 1907 (typescript), in J. F. Tyrrell's Papers of A. G. Stephens (A3986), pp. 104-106. The quotation that follows is from this source.
C.S.
Re J. Archibald - Thanks for interest - He is old, selfish, lonely, scorned - he needs me more - much more than I need him. You had better say, if you see him again and he mentions, that I am very fully occupied, though at not very profitable work, and I said I would see him if I got the chance, but I thought that if he wanted anything particular he would write. This on the business side. - On the personal side: I gave him years of undiscriminating loyalty and unselfish devotion, including the final espousal of him when he lay lunatic in Callan Park, deserted by everyone (this I saw at the time distinctly against my business interest). In return, he treated me coldly, and in the end shabbily - after the end, very shabbily. (Some time after he had told me he was worth £30,000, I wrote to him for £100 perhaps to save the B - no doubt of delivery no reply).

"H. Grey", Adams [?], Daley - and a hundred small contributors - I see now that he treated them more than selfishly - shabbily. He deserted me when he should have stuck to me. All regular in a business relation, good enough in an ordinary personal relationship, mean and ungrateful in our relation. Intelligibly [?] pardonable had he been hard driven, hard pressed, but he was wealthy. Adams [?] and Daley found the same thing - "would sooner go to Macleod." Add his wife's personal testimony - Macleod's. Progressive degeneration due to syphilis.

In any case Stephens, I feel, was influenced by Archibald's example to adopt poses and attitudes that were flamboyant rather than sincerely held or rationally arrived at. His wearing of bushman's clothes; his grotesque theories about "nousometers"; his crankish objections to vaccination against small-pox;...

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1 S.P. (1104/1), p. 279b.
2 See also "Cracking a Stockwhip", R.P., 14 March 1906.
4 For example, Bookfellow, 15 September 1913, pp. 216–217: "To almost every medical man or woman in the community vaccination with small-pox means regular income. Is it any wonder that the medical fraternity, as a body, is banded together to force small-pox upon the community?"
the effect of red corpuscles on the literary product\(^1\); and transmigration\(^2\) - all show the kind of emotional and intellectual self-indulgence that the personable Archibald permitted himself, and seems to have inspired Stephens to emulate. Some of Archibald's pet resentments were against theorists and academic men ("I have nothing against Oxford men. Some of our best shearmers' cooks are Oxford men.")\(^3\). Here he found a ready disciple in the pragmatical Stephens, who appears to have endorsed to a dangerous degree (for a professed critic) Archibald's derogatory attitudes towards his better-educated fellows. That Stephens himself tended to share Archibald's taste for journalistic lightness (and an attendant dislike for 'heavy' - that is intellectually complex and deeply thought about matter) shows in the tone of a passage in which Stephens described Archibald's taste. There is some suggestion of dissent, but not much:

Always he [Archibald] sought matter, in verse and prose, that was lively, not deadly; bright, not dull; real, not sham; honest, not factitious, humorous or pathetic, as it might come, yet natural and sincere in any guise. He hated mechanical literary verse, and complained that he got little value from the Universities, little from school-teachers, oppressed with the burden of their books. What he liked the BULLETIN readers liked, and most of the work he picked and preferred stands at this day.\(^4\)

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1 For example, R.P., 14 March 1896:
"It is the red-blooded people who make literature, and whose hot passions are literature's staple. White corpuscles are the ruin of women writers, and of half the men."

2 R.P., 3 March 1904.

3 Quoted by Mrs A. G. Macleod, Macleod of "The Bulletin", p. 32.

A definitive assessment of the extent of Archibald's influence for good or for bad is difficult at this stage because of the scattered and incidental nature of most of the evidence available to the scholar at this time\(^1\); but there is one outstanding quality that both Archibald and Stephens shared: a tremendous capacity for work. Archibald's own tremendous capacity for work and his ability to imbue associates with the same drive and devotion are well attested. Sir Frank Fox has observed that "over-eagerness in work" was "almost an 'occupational disease' amongst Archibald's disciples. It was one of his half-serious maxims that 'the good journalist is married to his paper—any other interest savours of bigamy'."\(^2\) Anyone who surveys the bulk of Stephens's published writings and unpublished (and largely uncollected) letters and manuscripts must be awed by the tenacity and capacity for work they reveal. In this respect Stephens was a true 'disciple' of Archibald. That he was able to keep the Bookfellow alive almost single-handed over such a long span of years, and involve himself in so many peripheral literary activities while he was writing his best criticism is tribute not only to his own resolution and devotion to the cause of literature, but to the continuing influence and inspiration of J. F. Archibald, the most admired and brilliant editor of his generation.

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In conclusion, then, between the years 1880-1894 Archibald had established the *Bulletin* as a literary forum for the popular writers of his day as well as for some with more serious literary aspirations. When Stephens, because of his known interests in literature, was invited to take over from Archibald as literary editor, his task was made easier because the flow of writing was there. All classes of indigenous writers looked naturally to Archibald's *Bulletin* for publication. The new literary editor was therefore a powerful figure, particularly if allowed to make different discriminations in selecting work for publication in the literary section known later as the Red Page. Further, the ties between Stephens and Archibald were stronger and deeper than has been generally recognised. It was not simply "a lucky accident" that Stephens should have been invited to join the famous and popular radical journal's staff. It was an act of deliberate judgment on Archibald's part. He knew Stephens's capacity as a prose writer and journalist; saw that his intellect matched his own, that his philosophies, ardent nationalism and political beliefs were congenial; and was aware of his as yet unfulfilled literary aspirations. Archibald showed good sense in choosing Stephens as an up-and-coming man - saw the promise of the early work. It was only because Archibald did know Stephens's work, and did appreciate its potentialities, that Stephens in 1894 found himself on the threshold of a career that was to win for him an enduring place in the canon of Australian literary criticism.
CHAPTER VII

THE RED PAGE: THE SYDNEY BULLETIN (1894-1906)

I

Early Activities: Staff Journalism and Pamphleteering (1894)

A. G. Stephens became Junior Sub-Editor of the Bulletin early in 1894 at the invitation from its editor, J. F. Archibald, justly described by Walter Stone as the journal's "real talent scout". When Stephens resigned for undisclosed reasons in 1906 it had become quite clear that Archibald, whose health had been poor since about 1901, would not be permitted to return to his former post as editor with almost unchallengable authority in journalistic matters. During his tenure of employment on the Bulletin Stephens undoubtedly had a very good working relationship with Archibald whom he respected professionally and at that time admired personally. It is fair to assume that Stephens's enthusiasm for the Bulletin and its policies waned without Archibald's strong personality to sustain it; that he possessed little respect for the officers who had taken over Archibald's duties; and that this

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2 Miss Sylvia Lawson, who has inspected William Macleod's desk diary for 1902, told me in interview that Archibald's effective work finished in that year. Frank Fox, in the note quoted above, said that in 1901 Archibald "informed me that he felt his health was failing and he needed an assistant". Newspaper reports of 26 March 1903, 5 April 1903, 28 October 1906 and 30 December 1906 collected by Stephens in his Newspaper Cuttings - J. F. Archibald (ML MSS QA920.5/A) all report on Archibald's serious illness. The last mentioned, by George Black in The Sun (Brisbane), assumes that Archibald's death is imminent. It was just before this that Stephens resigned (18 October 1906).
attitude by an "old Archibald man" would be resented by the new men. But as will be shown later, there is much speculation on this matter. The point to stress here is that Archibald's influence was decisive and congenial: without his editorial encouragement the Red Page would not have developed along the lines it did.

It is a fair assumption that Stephens had impressed Archibald with the two controversial political pamphlets he wrote in Queensland\(^1\) before trying his wings in Fleet Street, and that the sardonic journalistic articles he contributed to the \textit{Bulletin} from London\(^2\) confirmed Archibald in his high opinion of Stephens as pamphleteer and controversialist. Thus, it would have been in a journalistic rather than a literary capacity that he received his invitation to join the \textit{Bulletin} (the few literary contributions had been of negligible quality). This theory is confirmed when Stephens's early commissions as a \textit{Bulletin} staff man are considered.

His first major assignment was to prepare a near-libellous attack on Archibald's old enemy, Judge Windeyer, entitled \textit{The History of the Dean Case}\(^3\). Here, and in another pamphlet entitled \textit{The Suffield Case}\(^4\) which appeared three years later, Archibald's thinking and obsessions are clearly discernible. It

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{Why North Queensland Wants Separation} (Townsville and London: North Queensland Separation League, 1893) and \textit{The Griffilwraith} (Brisbane: Edwards Dunlop and Co., 1893).
\item For example, "The Fight in the House of Commons", \textit{Bulletin}, 16 September 1893, p. 5.
\item A Special Number of the \textit{Bulletin}, 1 November 1895.
\item Sub-titled "Commentary on the Methods and Manoeuvres of BOTANY BAY JUSTICE", (Sydney: The Bulletin Co., 1897).
\end{enumerate}
is significant that the Bulletin's first publication had been The History of Old Botany Bay\(^1\), an account of the cruelty and degradation of "The Convict System" which carried this introductory note by Archibald: "We did not make our history. We only tell it. We merely flay the carcase of the hybrid and moribund monstrosity now on our demonstrating table, and dissect the congested organism underneath." (unpaginated) Also in 1891 and 1892 Archibald had commissioned and printed "Price Warung" to write a series of stories 'exposing' the convict system\(^2\). Archibald's attested near-pathological hatred of Judge Windeyer was because he associated Windeyer's severity with "Botany Bay Justice": Mrs Agnes Macleod\(^3\), writing thirty years later, said she could still hear the set distripe that Archibald used to level against the Judge; and Stephens, in telling how during a serious illness in 1907 Archibald raved, "I never strangle a man. I take him by the neck and hurl him through that door", commented: "I have heard him speak just as violently of Judge Windeyer."\(^4\) Further, Archibald believed that "Botany Bay Justice" still discriminated against the little man in favour of wealth and caste. When he and John Haynes were gaolied in 1882 for refusing to pay the contemptible farthing damages and seven hundred pounds costs incurred in "Clontarf Picnic Grounds Scandal" case, both partners believed that they had been victims of the establishment and that the libel case would have been dismissed but for the presiding judge's

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\(^2\) Tales of the Convict System (Sydney: Bulletin Newspaper Co., 1892).

\(^3\) Macleod of "The Bulletin" (Sydney: Snelling Printing Works, 1931), p. 18.

prejudicial conducting of the trial. In addition, Judge Windeyer was a "flogging judge", as the sentences in the Mount Rennie rapist trial show; and Archibald was to declare in his Lone Hand "Memoirs": "What has always struck me about the flogging of a prisoner, is that a man triced up and flogged, if he had a spark of manhood in him would feel afterwards that he must kill those responsible for such utter degradation of his humanity". Considering all it is reasonable to deduce that Stephens was closely briefed by Archibald in his first year on the Bulletin and assiduously worked to carry through his editor's wishes and policies, indeed had himself come sincerely to believe in Archibald's opinions and convictions. For example, the poem entitled "The Hanging Judge" in Oblation (1902) is a scarcely veiled attack on Judge Windeyer, Norman Lindsay's illustration being very similar to contemporary cartoons of Windeyer. So, although the logically ordered argumentation and the impressive piling-up of factual evidence in each of the pamphlets are Stephens's, the indignant tone and the personal attack on the Judge, including the unequivocal statements that less than justice had been done, derive from Archibald. Compare, for example, this attack on the judge (in The Suffield Case) with Archibald's own forthright pars and leaders in the Bulletin:

Judge Windeyer, who presided, conducted the trial rather as an advocate than as a judge, emphasising every point which could tell against Suffield, and slurring or opposing many points which could tell in his favour. . . .

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The judge took sides against Suffield; ridiculed the theories of the defence, and practically forced the jury to convict him. That was Judge Windeyer's habit in criminal cases. His trained mind formed an a priori theory, and accepted or rejected evidence largely as it happened to fit, or not to fit, that a priori theory. Instead of holding the balance fairly, and allowing the jury to judge the facts, he frequently used the force of his influence and the force of his mind to persuade or browbeat the jury into accepting his opinion of the facts. Further, in cases where a woman was concerned, Judge Windeyer was notoriously partial to the woman.

Then, even while editing the Red Page Stephens took the initiative in writing up "The Atacama Case" which, because of his articles, became a cause célèbre in Sydney during the last eight months of 1898. When the Atacama, a collier on the Newcastle to Brisbane run, foundered Stephens recalled that she had been bought cheaply and repaired superficially just a few months before by a firm of coal merchants whose activities had been under scrutiny by the journal (indexes in the Mitchell Library show that the Bulletin had been campaigning against what it called "coffin ships" since 1895). Stephens's investigations convinced him that the Atacama was indeed a "coffin ship" - and he said so in a passionately eloquent and hard-hitting article, reminiscent a little of his earlier denunciation of the Royal Navy entitled "The Mildura Stokers" (which appeared in the Brisbane Boomerang on 9 September 1890). Although a consequent libel action by the colliers cost the Bulletin three thousand pounds in damages, Stephens told Vance Palmer that Archibald was not worried because "the costs

1 The Suffield Case, p. iv.

2 The Bulletin of 2 April 1898, p. 8.
Follow-up reports and articles appeared on 9 April 1898, p. 24; 16 April 1898, p. 8; 17 August 1898, p. 24; and 1 October 1898, p. 24.
came back in advertising contracts almost at once, and the paper’s prestige was enhanced remarkably\(^1\).

This period of pamphleteering, then, was a lively introduction to the Bulletin. The success of Stephens’s pamphlets would have influenced Archibald in giving him such a free hand in the Red Page. For Stephens the success would mean the confidence to develop his hard-hitting, expressive, sardonic style, and to feel that so long as his page was bright and provocative Archibald would stand by it. Stephens, the critic, was given freedom and support that are rare enough to-day, let alone during the latter years of Queen Victoria’s reign\(^2\). Given Stephens’s own initiative and gifts, this freedom and sense of personal responsibility were to produce the fearless and distinctive criticism that is characteristic of the man at his best; negatively, it was to produce some unnecessarily iconoclastic writing (journalistically ‘sensational’ rather than critically ‘balanced’ statements) and a self-assurance that bordered on, and certainly was often interpreted as, arrogance in his relationships with some writers and reader-critics\(^3\).

\(^1\) A. G. Stephens: His Life and Work, p. 27.
For primary evidence see A. G. Stephens "Postscript" on "The Atacama Affair" pasted into his copy of Mrs Macleod’s Macleod of "The Bulletin" (in the Mitchell Library). In answer to Mrs Macleod’s claim that the ‘affair’ nearly ruined the paper, Stephens countered more or less as Mr Palmer has paraphrased him: that the ‘affair’ was very important to the future prosperity of the Bulletin, bringing in additional business by way of advertisements and subscribers.

\(^2\) Stephens said later (in Chris: Brennan [Sydney: Bookfellow, 1933], p. 23) that he would submit Red Page material "to the editor who had never seen the copy. Two editorial cuts in twelve years. 'Anyway, old man, I had the sense to leave you alone,' commented Archibald long afterwards."

\(^3\) See later, pp. 154-164.
Genesis of the Red Page (1894-1896)

Stephens was such a brilliant and resourceful staff journalist that one wonders how he escaped to the Red Page from the material world of politics and social controversy. The explanation, it seems, is that while Archibald and others could point 'pars' and 'items' as sharply as he (full-length pamphlets were a rarity\(^1\)), they either did not feel competent, or were too busily engaged otherwise, to handle the formidable quantity of creative writing now filling up the journal's middle and back pages. By 1893-1894 sorting through the bulk of work\(^2\) coming in was a full-time task in itself, and, compulsive worker though he was, Archibald would not have been able to carry literature as a part-time chore any longer. Even more to the point, as Vance Palmer so rightly said, verse and stories that did not as easily fit into the Bulletin framework as Paterson's and Lawson's had to be assessed. "Creeve Roe" had a place, but what of the lyricist, V. J. Daley? "Danton's" explosive verses were politically congenial but was his alter ego, Bernard O'Dowd, too learned for bush readers? Edmund Fisher's sentimental verses were clear enough, but were Bayldon, Quinn and Church real poets or bookish bores? These were unanswerable questions for one whose interest in literature though strong was not specialized and whose education had been as narrowly journalistic as Archibald's appears to have been. That 'expert' was to be A. G. Stephens, without whom, according to Palmer

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\(^1\) Between 1880 and 1897 only three "Bulletin pamphlets" were issued.

\(^2\) Examination of Bulletin files shows that contributed items selected for publication (sub-titled "For the Bulletin" in square brackets) often exceeded staff-written ones (unsigned). The long columns of answers to correspondents and contributors whose work had been rejected are compelling evidence too.
the paper would have had no literary centre; the stream of creative writing that was beginning to flow through it would have lacked direction. Archibald had an uncanny gift for unearthing the man who had something to say, but he had not the trained critical faculty of Stephens, nor had he a fundamental interest in literature.

While it is an exaggeration to say that Stephens at this stage had a "trained critical faculty" he did have the "Magazine Rifle" experiences behind him and had demonstrated his "fundamental interest in literature" through his own contributions in prose and verse. Consequently Stephens, whose intellect Archibald respected, was appointed to the new post. Vance Palmer again has summarized as well as anyone the qualities that Archibald would respect in his junior sub-editor, that his

literary judgment was sound, and its edge had been sharpened by contact with the best contemporary writing of England and France; he could distinguish what was interesting but ephemeral from what had more permanent worth. By nature he was robust, with an interest in men as well as in books, and a love for whatever was salty, indigenous, and charged with the country's character. He was not to be deceived by superficial slickness and was able to detect the original quality in work that was outwardly crude.

It was nine months, however, before Stephens was able to establish his own empire, and then it had been through a devious and gradual process. There was no room, apparently, for a column like the "Magazine Rifle" or support for supplements such as the *Argus* and *Miner* had issued. But Stephens's eye

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1 A. G. Stephens: *His Life and Work*, pp. 15-16.

2 In 1894 he contributed six poems to the *Bulletin*: "Lobergula Dead" (24 February, p. 8), "When My Hair Goes Up" (28 April, p. 19), "In Absence" (14 July, p. 24), "Dispersed" (17 December, p. 22) and "Forget Me Not" (*Ibid.*, p. 30).

3 Mrs Macleod reports in *Macleod of "The Bulletin"*, p. 37: "Archibald used to say 'A.G.S. has distinction'."

had been on the inside front cover. The red jacket of the journal was plastered with advertising matter for spirits, patent medicines, "galvanic belts" (guaranteed to improve the nerves), razors and so on. The advertisers, apparently with reason, did not consider that the inside cover was very closely or widely read, as the Mitchell Library's practice of removing the jackets before sending early numbers to the book-binder indicates. So the ever resourceful Stephens stepped in. A note by Stephens's hand¹ says in summary that in 1894, it was not always easy to induce advertisers to take space inside the coloured cover of the Bulletin. A firm of booksellers, George Robertson & Co. of Sydney, suggested that a list of current books should be printed to be sold on the mail-order plan, taking advantage of the Bulletin's widely-spread circulation. The idea took shape in September 1894 as the "Bulletin Book Exchange", with Stephens writing notes upon the books advertised. By February 1896, the notes had proved more valuable than the "Exchange", and by September 1896 the title "Red Page" was being used consistently. Stephens has left a published account which confirms his manuscript note; in a review of C. H. Bertie's Aboriginalities from the "Bulletin" he wrote:

On 1st September, 1894, "The Red Page" of the Sydney "Bulletin" was originated as one of the incarnations of THE BOOKFELLOW. The title was added later. At that day the inside cover of the "Bulletin" was not an approved advertising space; and at that day, also, a firm of Sydney booksellers wished vehemently - as it still wishes vehemently - to sell books. The books were reviewed; the space was filled, THE BOOKFELLOW was born.

¹ S.P. (ML MSS 1104/1, Item 1), p. 17.
² Bookfellow, 1 July 1913, p. 166.
The genesis of the Red Page is best studied by reading through Stephens's personal file of Red Pages in the Mitchell Library, for the period from 1 September 1894 (when he first took over the cover) to 3 August 1896 (when the term "The Red Page" was used for the first time). Best studied here because Stephens has clearly indicated, with the characteristic possessive cross, top and bottom, in purple ink, that practically all unsigned items are by his hand. Briefly, the page went through three clear stages of evolution.

First, from 1 September 1894 to 22 February 1896 when it was called "The Bulletin Book Exchange"\(^1\), the ostensible function of the page was to advertise locally available books. The second stage dates from 29 February and extends to 1 August 1896. Here the changed quality of the page was recognised in the more appropriate but undistinctive title of "Literary Notes". The third stage, which represents the Red Page in its fully evolved form dates from 3 August 1896\(^2\) till the 1960s when the new proprietors (Consolidated Press) first changed the nature of the page and then dropped the well-known feature.

During the "Bulletin Book Exchange" period of some eighteen months from September 1894 the swing from advertising to criticism was gradual but clearly perceptible. The first two numbers (1 and 8 September) simply listed the current books available through the Bulletin. The next few had adulatory reviews of, or informative notes on, advertised books. But in May 1895 a section entitled "Some Recent Books" and in July 1895 another called "Notes" introduced

\(^1\) For the first two weeks the heading "Books of the Day" was used.

\(^2\) From 8-22 August 1896 the title was "For the Red Page". After August 29 "The Red Page" was fairly consistently used; some issues have the title he later used in the Bookfellow of "Under the Gum Tree"; eight revert to advertisements.
newsy jottings about books and writers generally. By August 1895 the direct advertising function had all but ceased. In this month Stephens inaugurated a section entitled "Periodicals" which enabled him to resume his Boomerang practice of sifting contemporary English and American journals for interesting matter and to add his own comments on the books and their writers or critics.

Interestingly, the earlier critical articles were concerned solely with American and English literature. Thus, on 10 November 1894 he complained that American writers lacked Zola-like concentration and industry ("They have no backs to their heads. They soar high for short flights, but lack strength of pinion for sustained struggle"); on 23 February 1895 George Eliot was criticized for lacking verisimilitude in her depicting of violent death by drowning ("This is a pity, for she drowns heroes and heroines with as little compunction as if they were kittens. I complain that they do not drown naturally"); on 18 May 1895 Conan Doyle's "homely talent and splendid industry" were given qualified praise ("the inspiration is as different from that of genius as a maiden aunt from a married angel"); and on 15 June 1895 he gave an account of the Bronte family to illustrate that genius, insanity, intemperance and crime were linked:

The brutal moral is obvious. To get a genius, mate a vigorous man, with tainted blood, to a high-strung, nervous woman - or vice versa - and produce a dozen children in a dozen years. If half of them live over puberty, you will certainly have a genius - perhaps two or three.

1 "American Authors".
2 "George Eliot at Sea".
3 "Conan Doyle's Novels".
4 "The Bronte Family", anticipating his eccentric essay on "The Genealogy of Genius", with its "nousometer" (R.P., 3 October 1896).
Australian writers were first mentioned on 6 July 1895 \(^{1}\) when Bulletin writers' work was compared favourably with that of their English counterparts of the Yellow Book. In this issue, Brunton Stephens's long poem, "Convict Once", was said to be superior to William Watson's "Hymn to the Sea" because like good poetry it "draws us by its truth and strength" not by its "jewelled verb-iage". Some of the better English prose, Stephens noted, "corresponds very closely with that sought by the Bulletin", but,

The ordinary English tale has a small, weak point at the end of a long, weak introduction. Occasionally the point is strong, but the introduction is almost invariably weak. THE BULLETIN asks from its contributors brevity, and interest which races from strong beginning to strong climax.

On 27 July 1895 the first of the ex-cathedra pronouncements on criticism as such is recorded: the idea of 'critical space' providing perspective similar to 'critical time'. Stephens's argument was that Australian criticism was likely to be less biased, less motivated by traditions, politics and personal loyalties than its English counterpart for

the Australian mind is so peculiarly-situated [sic] that its judgments in such a matter are much more likely to be sound than those penned in the heated literary atmosphere of London. For its attitude is impersonal, almost incurious; it has the same high standards to refer to; and the dividing sea has almost the force of dividing time, and helps to lift its dicta above the mists of contemporary prejudice, into the clear upper-air which strengthens and refines the verdict of posterity.

The first sustained exercise in local criticism followed soon after. In an article entitled "Gordon's Colours" in the number of 14 September 1895 the poet was criticized for his failure to "fully utilise" the colour resources available to modern poets "to adorn their landscapes". The tyro critic noted,

\(^{1}\) "The Yellow Book".
\(^{2}\) "Concerning English Critics".
however, that despite his gloomy verse Gordon liked bright and violent colours: "Curious admirers may like to know that red is used 48 times in his poems (copyright edition), scarlet, 13; and crimson, 14; white, 48; green, 30; black, 29; blue, 24; grey, 23; golden, 23; and yellow, 9; purple, 10, and violet, 4. No other term occurs more than four times." After this pseudo-critical statistical foray, criticism of Australian writing gradually became more frequent though notes on overseas writers predominated till well into 1896. A surer and characteristic note was struck on 23 November 1895 when he predicted "a renascence of Australian literary art", said to have been in decline since the era of Kendall, Gordon, Clarke and Brunton Stephens. The Bulletin's (with his own projected?) role in this revival was immodestly proclaimed:

In "Price Warung", Ernest Favenc, Sydney Jephcott, Francis Kenna and two or three others, we have had gleams of the fire that should light our literary way. But not until quite lately - perhaps not even yet - have we accumulated a body of work which begins to compare with that achieved by our early giants. Now, with Louis Becke, Ethel Turner, and "The Banjo" well "arrived"; with Lawson, and Daley, and Montgomery approaching their goals; with many other Bulletin writers started in the race; it would really seem that 1900 will be able to cull for a favourite bookshelf a dozen new books of permanent value to take their place beside the favourite old ones. THE BULLETIN counts it indeed a sweet thing and honorable that it has been permitted to assist in securing this happy consummation.

In this same review the younger Stephens's sentimentality is glimpsed in his immoderate praise of Miss Turner's book: "The story is thoroughly feminine - the bubbling over of a heart brim-full with sympathy." True, there is a sensible cavil that the adult characters "remain children in spite of

1 "Gordon's Colours".

2 "The Family at Misrule" [a review of Ethel Turner's story]. The quotations that follow are from this source.
the formal labels and certificates of their age"; but in the balance one is left with a clear impression of a gallant abandoning of critical rigour:

Again charm is the chief quality - the charm of our contact with nerves all a-tingle with tenderness. This phrase may seem fantastic in cold print; but laying down the book one does not feel it a whit too warm. Only one Australian author since Marcus Clarke - Henry Lawson - has had such moving emotional art.

Clearly Stephens had not found himself yet. Even a promising review of Lawson's poems on 15 February 1896¹ which sensibly delineates the poet's shortcomings

His mental scope is narrow; he is comparatively uncultured; he iterates the same notes, and rarely improves his thought by elaboration; he wants harmony and variety of metre; his work is burdened with many weak lines and careless tags . . .

concludes, tellingly, with a pretentious flourish:

His capacity for emotion is Lawson's best gift. It is because he feels so deeply that he writes so strongly. His life has been a struggle and it is a struggle still; but, mayhap, had fortune been easier, his work would have failed so to move us. For the cases of literature are watered with tears and blood, and a people preys upon its poets' vitals.

Lapses like this, that recur occasionally throughout the entire writing life, were becoming rare. With the change in title to "Literary Notes" in the issue of the following week (22 February 1896) Stephens was well on the way to evolving both the tougher, more rigorous manner of the Red Pagan and the characteristic format of the Red Page (though not yet with its readers actively involved as writers and controversialists). That is, despite Archibald's policy of studied anonymity², the page had developed its own personality. It was obvious that a vigorous and intelligent but somewhat irascible

¹ "Henry Lawson's Poems". The quotations that follow are from this source.
² See above, p. 117.
and crankishly indulgent individual was its architect and maker. Brunton Stephens, for example, preferred these earlier pages which were written entirely by Stephens to the fully evolved (and signed with an "A.G.S.")) Red Pages of 1897:  

The only reason I had for thinking that the Red Page was not quite so interesting as at first was that the original writer (which now turns out to be altogether you) was giving less of himself and more excerpts from other people. I still regard it as the part of the Bulletin - clever as all the rest is. There is enough faculty of criticism in that page to run a separate review magazine.  

The second evolutionary stage when the page was called "Literary Notes" lasted just on six months (from February to August 1896). During these months Stephens worked hard to establish close ties with his reader-audience. There were competitions with personal answers from the editor to entrants; anecdotes and letters from readers were printed; the editor wrote didactic lectures on aspects of literary technique in response to queries and printed articles expressing opposing points of view by correspondents. These, with the customary reviews and the printing of specially commended poems in the place of honour (top right- or left-hand column) in italics, meant that the page had evolved to the point where towards the end it was almost identical in layout and composition with the Red Page itself. And Stephens, previously sensed as a presence, was now firmly established on his editorial throne, now prickly and formidable, now urbanely remembering his duties as host to the company that shares his page. To illustrate: in the issue of 1 August 1896, "half-way up the hill" of a reasoned argument on the need for Australian writers to work harder at their craft, the editor announced that "a pause is made

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1 Letter of 21 April 1897, S.P., Vol. 7 (A2303).
for the tired reader to glance at the scenery in a verse or two from Arthur Symons's recently published "London Nights". The prose text was here broken into and the verses inserted. Then after the query "Rested? Alions!", the argument resumed. Some of the best and most highly individual criticism began to be heard. A compiler of Stephens's best critical writings would need to consider very seriously such "Literary Notes" as a full-page review on Stephen Crane's The Red Badge of Courage; an attack on Professor Morris entitled "The Literary Fish"; an essay that attempted to distinguish 'verse' from 'poetry' and the already mentioned exhortation to Australian writers to work harder. There were still - as always there was to be - occasional gaucheries and critical idiosyncrasies. Thus, in the Crane article, a statement like this introduced another crankish hobby-horse: "It is the red-blooded people who make literature, and whose hot passions are literature's staple. White corpuscles are the ruin of women-writers, and of half the men." And, as in later life again, two 'poetess' friends were reviewed with less than critical rigour. In the case of Louise Mack, a fellow journalist on the Bulletin and a reputed beauty of the day, the review was conducted with heavy-handed gallantry and facetious wit in the form of deliberately over-precious images:

1 "Battle Pictures", R.P., 14 March 1896.
2 R.P., 23 May 1896.
3 "Recent Verse", R.P., 4 July 1896.
4 [Untitled], R.P., 1 August 1896.
5 "Battle Pictures", R.P., 14 March 1896.
6 See Mrs A. C. Macleod, Macleod of "The Bulletin", p. 37: "Stephens' golden beard, autocratic blue eyes, sombreroish hat and stiff military bearing gave the hordes of flapper poets of both sexes great aesthetic satisfaction." [Stephens has underlined the word 'aesthetic' in his copy of the book, now in the Mitchell Library.]
Australia really begins to be literary. Buzz-z-z! . . . the air is full of the clamor [sic] of little bees hurrying whither the new hive sits bright in the morning sunshine. Here comes one who has gathered honey from orange-blossom and hibiscus in far Eastern islands; yonder looms another with whose store lingers the heavy fragrance hidden in tropical orchid and magnolia; that has pilfered sweets from the roses of a quaint, old-fashioned Southern garden; this brings a breath of wattle from Wairee hill, where, great, grey plains roll to the craving West . . . Alas! the metaphor falls: indeed, it was never a Being erect upon two legs like Mr. Pickwick — for queen-bees do not voyage forth for honey and so much of our literary honey is being won by busy queans far up the slopes of Helicon.

It is interesting to note the gradual slide into ridicule, and then the attempt at some kind of balance with the self-deprecatory comment on the strained metaphor and the clever pun about literary "queans" winning (undeserved?) places on the upper slopes of Helicon.

In the second case, a review of the work of his respected literary patroness and admirer, Mrs Mary Hannay Foott, Stephens resorted to the trite and facile preciosity that was to mar the introductions to Quinn's and Hebblethwaite's poems:

The simplicity of this ["Where the Pelican Builds"], its directness, its pathos, its lyric spontaneity, have made it a treasure in many memories. It has a certain intangible fragrance, a charm elusive yet lingering, which seem to grow until they utterly possess its familiars. This writer, for one, is quite unable to get critically aloof from it, so woven into his mind are its sentiment and cadences.

But the excesses and lapses, usually associated it will be noted with appreciative notices, were more than balanced by the fine discrimination of say the Crane article and the distinctive energy of a piece like "The Literary Fish". The contemporary assessment of The Red Badge of Courage was just, generous

1 [Untitled], R.P., 27 June 1896.
2 "Mary Hannay Foott", R.P., 16 May 1896.
3 "Battle Pictures", R.P., 14 March 1896. The quotations that follow are from this review.
and surprisingly close to that of modern critics. He saw the faults clearly enough: the book seemed overwritten ("Much of its meaning is lost in the din, and the color [sic] and the movement of the language") and garish (wanting tone and harmony, "Its tints are too glaring: they strain the mind as it strains the eyes to gaze at a fire. And the book has no cool darkness to turn to"). "Yet, withal, it is a marvellous piece of work", he granted, though compared to the war novels of Tolstoi and Zola, only "a scene, an episode, a fragment": "The stranger who starts to run with them makes speed for a hundred yards, and leaves the track abruptly. Yet it is much that he rivals them as far as he goes."

Already one may observe the characteristic reservation of the maturer critic - "Good, but . . ." The younger Stephens, however, usually wrote at his best when in attack. The sparkle and zest, the verbal playfulness, the cantankerousness that ruffled sedate feelings and provoked healthy, light-producing controversy - and are the hall-marks of the Red Page in its hey-day - are glimpsed in the descriptions of Thomas Heney as "a corduroy poet - bump! - jolt! - bump! - yet you get along, and the road might be worse"; and in the comment on an explorer-writer named Willshire that

all he brings back from his perilous voyages in the wilderness is a collection of half articulated tags, and scraps, and vague hints, of the knowledge seething within him. He has no voice. Really, it would pay a literary syndicate to float "The Willshire Exploitation Company", mine, for his ore, and smelt him into golden speech.

A cheeky attack on the contemporary university establishment shows Stephens

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1 [Review of In Middle Harbour and Other Verses], R.P., 22 August 1896.
3 "The Literary Fish", R.P., 23 May 1896. The quotations that follow are from this article.
in his mordant and destructive manner. What began as a criticism of an individual professor (Professor Morris) for his lack of responsiveness to literature ("To Lawson's deep emotional note Prof. [sic] Morris is absolutely deaf") is generalized into a forceful attack on the whole system. The average professor, Stephens asserted,

is appointed, as a rule, not for the creative work he has accomplished (as a rule, a University professor is a singularly poor creator), but because he has passed certain examinations with more or less credit - that is to say, because he has read a certain number of books, absorbed a certain number of ideas, and given them out again on a certain number of sheets of foolscap with a certain amount of precision. Once he is appointed, the public, which knew nothing of the value of his credentials, knows little or nothing of the value of his performances. He takes a dozen or a score of students every year, and leads them through the same dreary wilderness of routine-learning from which he has himself doubtfully emerged. But what does he do to stimulate their minds; to teach them to think; to show them what a narrow thing a university is and how wide is the world; to make them original workers, not slavish imitators; in short, to educate them?

"Precious little!" was Stephens's comment. Professor Morris's review of Lawson's poems was not his 'first offence'; earlier, Stephens complained, he had written a Life of Higinbotham, a career "such that no Australian with any vitality, any enthusiasm, can possibly think of it unmoved. Prof. [sic] Morris contemplates it with as much animation as a cow chews cud - Prof. Morris, the Literary Fish."

By now the page had fully evolved; it remained only to supply the distinctive title.
The Red Page (so named) dates from 29 August 1896. Appropriately, it opened well with a just and lively review of Lawson's While the Billy Boils. The arrangement was poor, Stephens complained: "The book is like a bad cook's ragout. You get here a mouthful of salt, there one of pepper, the next is of meat uncondimented. Not only is power lost, but the haphazard mixture jolts the mind like an unexpected bottom step." And the impressions were too fragmentary ("the reader is perpetually getting up steam for a five minutes' journey which brings him back to starting point"). But Lawson had genius and literary insight, he felt what others merely knew ("the trifles which make evanescent impression on ordinary minds draw blood [and ink] from his"). Technically, too, his manner was strengthening; for now "The happy word and phrase come to him easily: the incidents fall without effort into place: his picture is made before he knows. Lawson is beginning to find himself." Stephens it will be seen was now in command of the "original, flexible, assured style" which Tom Inglis Moore has said seems to be "the best practically" yet written.

1 "Lawson's Prose". The quotations that follow are from this source.

This review, apparently, was carefully contemplated, for a letter from Louisa Lawson (who published the collection) thanking "Dear Mr. Stephenson" for "his kind congratulatory note" is dated 13 June 1896. Mrs Lawson went on: "It came at a moment when I was seriously trying to decide whether life was really worth living. And I cheerfully concluded that perhaps after all it was. I fear that I got more kicks than halfpennies all round for my blundering venture." (Original letter inserted in Henry Lawson's Short Stories, Librarian's Room, Mitchell Library and filed at C755-2)

2 Six Australian Poets (Melbourne: Robertson and Mullens, 1942), pp. 32-33.
in Australia. Town readers as well as the sought-after audience in the bush would have been appreciative of the gift of homely, humorous and enlightening image illustrated above (though one questions the logic of stew, "cook's rag-out", jolting the mind like an unexpected bottom step).

This review does raise an issue of critical integrity: that Stephens did not scruple at putting up as his own views expressed to him previously by others. Lawson, in fact, made this very complaint in a letter to George Robertson in which he pointed out that he himself had first made the comments about faulty arrangement, and that Stephens knew very well that his company as copyright holders were largely responsible for the "haphazard mixture" Stephens complained about. Lawson wrote:

Don't take any notice of Stephens's complaints in Bulletin review. It was I who suggested to him the order of selection which he now suggests as his own [Lawson's emphasis]. He and the Bulletin know that we had to abandon our original plan of selection because the Bulletin held the sketches which were to complete series and would not put them through. [Lawson's emphasis]

Allowing that Lawson was an affronted author defending himself to his publisher, and allowing that there is only Lawson's uncorroborated word on the matter of arrangement, it does appear that Lawson had valid grounds for complaint - at least on the matter of copyright. The young Stephens is revealed as a too eager critical prosecutor, consciously or unconsciously suppressing what might invalidate a case.

Examination of the files shows that the Red Page was very much a reflection

of the alert and energetic intelligence of its creator. It is very difficult
to generalize about the format of a 'typical' number, because one of the mani-
manifestations of Stephens's hand is unexpectedness, intellectual restlessness al-
most. The whole issue might be given over to Henry Lawson advising young writ-
ters to emigrate or shoot themselves\(^1\), or to several writers discussing and
disagreeing about a new book or an author recently deceased\(^2\); or to entries
by various readers to one of the many bizarre literary competitions invented
for them in playful mood. Or Stephens himself might take over completely -
even to the point of printing one of his own poems as the preferred poetic
offering of the week. Or he might indulge in fearful and serious arguments
and counter-arguments with contestants as formidable as Brennan or Brereton
or Black\(^3\). He even might circulate, as a practical joke, an imaginary acc-
count of Daley's romantic death in the Solomons\(^4\) and continue the pretence for
several issues, though obviously the joke was getting out of hand, if not hea-
vy-handed and in bad taste from the start. More typically, the page would be

\(^1\) "Pursuing Literature in Australia", R.P., 21 January 1899.

\(^2\) For example, R.P., 5 November 1898.

The whole page is given over to Mallarmé, who had died in the previous month
aged fifty-six. Included were a black-and-white 'life-mask' by "FV"; "The
Butterfly of Night", a symbolist poem to commemorate Mallarmé's fifty-sixth
birthday; and a discussion on the topic "Was Mallarmé a Great Poet" with the
"Yes" case argued by "C.B." [Brennan], "No" argued by "H.S.R." and "Yes-No",
characteristically, by Stephens himself.

\(^3\) See below, pp. 154-164.

\(^4\) See "Bookfellow's Funeral", R.P., 20 August 1903, with mock "Memorial Notice"
by Stephens and a facetious eye-witness account of Daley's death by one "James
Harrison" ("plainly a man of great intelligence").
a composite affair. In pride of place, top right or top left column would be the poem of the week, printed in italics and starred like a hotel directory to indicate its "rating" (Stephens was to complain later that the only worth-while poems in a competitor's anthology of Australian poetry were selected by the simple expedient of cutting out his starred items\(^1\)). Then there would be the unsigned articles, reviews and literary paragraphy by Stephens, with perhaps a signed article, or a letter, or comment by contributors; and, tucked away in the bottom corner witty and often devastating "Replies to Correspondents" whose contributions had been rejected outright, damned with faint praise, or promised consideration when repolished (generally the advice was "sharpen up" or "boil down").

The Red Page then had such style and vigour, the incisive voice such authority and wit that the column quickly became one of the most avidly read sections of the magazine — by writers and discriminating readers alike. Archibald's bards from the backblocks still contributed their ballads and rough lyrics but these were kept off the Red Page. (The longer prose stories and sketches of Lawson, Becke, Baynton, Favenc and a host of others, many of good literary quality and presumably chosen either by Stephens or Archibald, were printed in the back or middle sections because of the exigencies of space.) In the Red Page Stephens sought at once to cater for the more literate reader and to 'educate' his bush readers so that they would appreciate and read serious writing, including non-fiction and lyric poetry, along with the popular

\(^1\) Bertram Stevens's *An Anthology of Australian Verse* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1906).

See R.P., 18 October 1906 for Stephens's review.
ballads and prose sketches that Archibald had been serving up since the late 1880s. Victor Daley, Roderic Quinn, James Hebblethwaite, Richard Church, Louise Mack, Jessie Mackay, Shaw Neilson, Hugh and Dorothy McCrae, Bernard O'Dowd, Chris Brennan and Mary Gilmore were the names that appeared most often now at foot of the italicized and asterisked verses given place of honour on the Red Page; and Nietzsche, Shaw, Stendahl, Darwin, Ruskin were among the essayists and thinkers discussed. To keep up the quality of contributed items, literary friends and established poets or prose writers were encouraged to write about literary topics, to elucidate their theories of art and to enter the various literary competitions¹ (O'Dowd's well-known sonnet "Dawnward?", for example, won a competition to commemorate Federation in 1901). Little wonder H. M. Green alludes to "the extraordinary variety of entertainment" that the Red Page provided: "everyone must have been interested in it; if he was interested in any aspect of literature," was Mr Green's conclusion².

The most pervasive and consistent quality of the Red Page is its didacticism. Stephens took himself very seriously as the literary preceptor of the "bushman's Bible". Not only did he bring new work and fashionable writers to his readers' notice, but he lectured them on the history of literature, the relative importance of local and overseas contemporaries, the forms and techniques of literature. Some of the questions he asked (and answered) were:


Mr Green mentions that "cheek by jowl" with the literary criticism were articles, original or reprinted, by Stephens and others on a myriad of subjects from cracking a stockwhip and buckjumping to Dionysian worship, New Guinea cannibals, Judas Iscariot, graphology, small-pox vaccination and the Mona Lisa.
Who were the great writers? What could Australians learn from the classics and from continental or English masters? What books should every young man read by the age of twenty one?¹ and so on interminably.

To supplement his own breezy lectures and admonitions Brennan would be called upon to write on "The French Symbolist Poets", Hugh McCrae to discuss Herrick, Brereton to defend Tennyson, Lawson - and himself. A keen eye was kept on activities at the University, on the administration of the Public Library and on the current curricula prescribed for study in the public schools. And, above all, readers and writers were encouraged in the pursuit of excellence by the example of his own critical mind at work, assessing and discriminating, praising and censuring according to a fairly well realized set of critical principles². H. M. Green has written perhaps the most succinct and generous-minded appreciation of this aspect of Stephens's work:

His Red Page was of the greatest value to the younger generation of Australian writers, especially of verse, in that he upheld a vigorous and definite literary ideal, formulating the principles that underlay Archibald's guidance of the Bulletin generally as well as working them out in his own field; in that field he aroused and guided an enthusiasm that stimulated literary production, and educated it not only by precept but by introducing new or forgotten authors and literary forms. He provoked the extremely intelligent but crude and rather parochial Australian mentality to a consideration of questions aesthetic and intellectual, giving it a discipline that was badly needed. [my emphasis]

To my mind, the Red Pages of the decade 1896-1906 record Stephens's most

¹ R.P., 15 February 1906. See above, p. 12. In a review of John Murray's edition of Byron, Stephens listed Byron, Shelley, Browning, Shakespeare, Spenser and Chaucer among the authors "who by most of us must be read before twenty".


³ A History of Australian Literature, p. 726. In this thesis I dispute the words "especially of verse", and argue that it was in the area of prose that precept and example were most beneficial.
readable as well as immediately influential critical work. Working at the
top of his powers in the permissive atmosphere deliberately fostered by Arch-
ibald, financially secure and in a position of relative power, commanding
respect both as critic and literary editor, and working for a journal most
of whose religious, social, economic and political policies he then firmly
supported, Stephens was able to judge confidently, and to criticize honestly
and fearlessly. True, he was often brash, overbearing, clumsy and immature —
but these were qualities of the paper and the age; true, too, he was sometimes
obtuse, unjust, irresponsible, plain wrong-headed — but to say this is simply
to assert his humanity. What compensates to a large degree for the tempera-
mental and intellectual limitations are the vigour and energy, the sense of
mission, and of active involvement at the centre of things, the candour and
courage of his statements. However wrong he may have been, the critic of the
Red Page impresses as a writer of integrity and is relatively consistent in
his judgments: as collation of the published statements with confidential
notes to his partner (A. W. Jose) in a literary agency business and his own
unpublished notes\(^1\) show. For example, what he said about Lawson or Brereton
in print he stood by in private correspondence and personal records. Thus,
on Lawson, in the notes for Jose:

Doubtful if he can do anything for us — suspicious to deal with, too
far from English standpoint, & not breadth enough. Also: head & prices
swelled.

Personally: I like him; but he wants watching.

Projects - none known. He will probably go on producing scrappy verse
& prose, of gradually decreasing quality; cannot concentrate without an
editor.

\(^1\) See, for example, **Angus and Robertson Ltd: Publishing MSS 1881-1924**, (ML
MSS A1916).

\(^2\) A. G. Stephens, **Notes on Australian Authors for A. W. Jose** (ML MSS C365).
The notes were written c. 1899.
The problem with assessing the Red Page criticism from this distance is that it has to be looked at outside the context that produced it. Articles and notes that look slight and undeveloped from our perspective might be meaningful and satisfactory to an audience that could relate them either to preceding Red Pages or to other items in the same page. Stephens was not writing for posterity, but for the immediate audience of Bulletin subscribers, readers and would-be contributors. Thus, in addition to depending on context to round them out, many have a topicality or immediate relevance that either escapes the modern reader, or seems of little concern to him. I think even H. M. Green overlooked this point or did not take serious enough account of it, when he averred that Stephens's "scatteriness, his errors of carelessness or bias are such as would not often appear in a good academic critic."\(^1\) The point is he was not, and did not aspire to be, an "academic critic".

Mr Green, however, is very sound in his appreciation of the positive values Red Page criticism has for readers to-day: of "the acuteness of many of his intuitive judgments and short analyses and their apt and original expression". If one misses the developed argument and close, detailed, textual analysis of the best 'scientific' new criticism, there is a compensatingly memorable and humorous quality about the writing itself, especially in the shorter, epigrammatic thrusts, of which Mr Green coming first, has quoted the best examples. To those quoted so tellingly by Mr Green, one might add this perky comment on his friend's, George Essex Evans's, prize winning "Ode for Commonwealth Day": "Nice familiar little flowers of phrase, each growing in its own neat little

\(^1\) A History of Australian Literature, p. 710. The quotation that follows is from this source.
plot; and the whole trim and tame, and strictly suburban"¹, or an incisive and apt summing up of Bernard Shaw: "The whole of Shaw's work gives you the impression of disembodied intellect in a state of effervescence"²; or this editorial *cri de coeur* on 'poetry' sent into newspapers for publication:

A little, marvellously little, of that justifies the desecration of the writer's mental hearth, the profanation of the inmost domesticities of his soul, and is added to the golden store of the world's accepted poetry. Much more is graceful verse, the interesting disclosures of the results of flirtation with the Muses, and it helps an occasional newspaper to be readable. Very much more is the ludicrous expression of bathetic ineptitude, and the stale re-hash of butchered thoughts. Of this the quantity sent to THE BULLETIN (and probably other papers) is enormous.

So in fairness to Stephens one has to turn to the considered criticism, written for a general audience to test whether the scrappiness and epigrammatic brilliance were complementary: indicators of a lack of intellectual staying-power and concentration, that are to be deprecated in a critic of standing⁴. Even in the Red Page it is not all spontaneous reflexing, or intuitive and impressionistic responsiveness to the book or author at hand. There is evidence in the papers that Stephens did research for some of his articles and did talk over with others more expert than himself some of the topics he wrote about. For example, there is a letter from the art teacher, Julian Ashton, giving information about Whistler's life and art education in response to Ste-

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¹ "Verse, Pictures, and a Personal Reaction", R.P., 5 January 1901.
² "Shaw and Superficial", R.P., 15 October 1903.
³ "Some Bad Verse", R.P., 6 December 1902.
⁴ See below, pp. 174 f.
phens's request for help when preparing for a Red Page article on the artist. Also, it seems, he called on Chris Brennan to do some illegal borrowing of books from the Public Library on writers coming up for review in the Red Page. Thus a note (dated by Stephens "Jan. 1901"):

Dear A.G.S. I can't borrow O[scar] W[ilde]'s poems for you - but I can lend you my own very extra special reserved copy (only once lent before and destined to be lent seldom) . . .

Also this note came to Stephens with an essay on Henri de Régnier, published in the Bookfellow (21 October 1899):

Never had a Hérédia. But that's no reason why you shouldn't be obliged. Don't let any [sic] see this copy while you have it - I don't know whether I'd be hanged, drawn and quartered, or not. Sorry I missed you the other day, I had it waiting for you then. C.B.

So, having read the original French, he was able to argue with assurance that later critics were correct in arguing that behind the form of Hérédia's Trophées there is a poetic substance more vital and inspiring than was originally agreed, and that much that glitters may be the true gold of poesy. Grandiose the manner of Heredia is plainly, yet by dint of concentration grandiose can become the grand. To read Heredia once is to marvel at his majesty: to read him twice and thrice is to receive an abiding impression of his monarchy. He is a model for all the lax Latins, building in sonnets better than they know.

3 Ibid., p. 33. Stephens was probably preparing for an article on "The Sonnet" (R.P., 17 March 1900). His review of Hérédia's sonnets did not appear till 1905.
4 "Hérédia's Sonnets", R.P., 26 October 1905.
The fact remains, however, that most of the Red Page articles seem scrappy and undeveloped when abstracted and read alone, say in sections entitled "Writers and Their Work" and "Notes on Books".

The other main criticism levelled against the Red Page, that of provincialism, is not so valid. Stephens kept in touch with world literature, through reading of the originals, through subscribing to a number of contemporary literary magazines in England and America, and through constantly reviewing overseas as well as local writing. Hugh McCrae has remarked on Stephens's wide reading and retentive literary memory, saying that "he was so full of good reading, he became a chameleon of fine literature; and could change, at a pinch, from Latin to modern Italian". This reading shows up both in his own writing with its conscious parodies of the classics, and his constant accusations of plagiarism when his retentive ear picked up an echo in Kipling, Burns, Gordon, Brennan or Brereton. Perhaps the comment that expresses most clearly the non-parochial nature of Stephens's considered position is this early note:

Certainly, Australian literature should not be fettered by the limits of Australia: it should be universal, and it has a right to draw its material from any source it pleases. But a writer who observes and thinks for himself in Australia cannot avoid giving his work an Australian tinge, and when the Australian Tomlinsons come along with ideas and figures culled, not from life, but from books, we know they have not been observing and thinking for themselves, and justly curse them for worthless wordspinners.

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1 There are exceptions: for example, a long three-quarter column article on "The Making of a Masterpiece" [For the Term of His Natural Life], R.P., 26 September 1906.

2 Vance Palmer, A. G. Stephens: His Life and Work, pp. 35-77.

3 Ibid., pp. 81-144.


5 "The Local Muse", R.P., 10 October 1896.
What could be described as near-parochial perhaps is the anti-English (almost 'anti-pommy' in the crude Australian sense) bias Stephens shows when considering the work of Englishmen who had written in or about Australia. In this, it seems, Stephens was using the Red Page as a sounding board for Bulletin anti-imperial policy. He is, for example, less than fair to the English anthologist, D. B. W. Sladen who no doubt offended locals with this patronizing dedication to Edmund Gosse, in his collection of early Australian poets:

This Volume
written beyond the seas, though it bases its hopes
not so much on the daintiness
of its roses as on the vigour of its briars.¹

Sladen, Stephens argued, represented "a consummate type of British impudence. . . . His 'Haw!' pervaded the whole continent"². With a "limited brain, and limitless energy", Stephens went on, Sladen wrote poems "inspired by life and scenery in Australia" which one English critic claimed were comparable to Gordon's: "Taken altogether it gives him [Sladen] a high claim to be considered the best poet Australia has yet produced"! Stephens's comment in rebuttal has little to do with literary criticism but a great deal to do with Archibaldean policy:

British impudence! - was there ever impudence in the world to match it? Every week new Sladens reach our shores, with as much brain-quality, intellectual acumen, as the original Sladen - that is to say, with little or none. But they enter our Parliaments; they fill our profitable employments; they marry our daughters and sisters (and sometimes thrash 'em into divorce); they own our lands; they rule our businesses; they


² [Untitled]. R.P., 18 September 1897. The quotations that follow are from this source.
dominate our country. Everywhere the modest and brainier Australian
stands aside, or nearly everywhere; the Briton has far more share in
the destiny of Australia than his intelligence warrants, or his numbers
entitle him to. And all this from a capacity to eat heavily and drink
heavily, and present letters of introduction at Government House, and
bilk a tailor. No, not all; for something must be allowed for that
British energy which is to British impudence as root to flower.

Similarly, quite valid criticism of Kipling's "Recessional" culminates in an
amusing diatribe. The poem, Stephens recalls, was flung by Kipling into the
waste-paper basket, there
to be fished out by Mrs. Kipling, blissfully ignorant how shoddy "poetry"
is made. That is indeed a befitting connection which links Kipling, as
Imperialistic poet, with the shoddy union of races called "Imperialism" -1
the poetical bagman of the shoddy exporters of Manchester!

The criticism embodied in the Red Page, then, is never dull and often memorable.
The chief reservations about it would be that the powerful personality who
wrote it was allowed too indulgently to express his whims and foibles (for
example, about insanity and genius), was too closely and actively involved
in affairs of the day to stand off and see with reasonable perspective, too
busy to develop his scrappily arrayed germinal ideas, and rather too ready
to act as another polemic for the radical journal that employed him.

In his capacity as Red Page editor Stephens was as much teacher as liter-
ary critic. Reading the Red Page from to-day's perspective, it is interest-
ing to see how, like a contemporary University tutor, Stephens often would make
outrageous statements to provoke a response from a too placid audience. That
is to say, from time to time Stephens, the teacher, was more concerned with
betraying his readers into becoming critics than in writing considered, log-

1 [Untitled], R.P., 27 April 1901.
ical, responsible critical evaluations. In short, didacticism was the end and controversy was often the means. Stephens no doubt enjoyed the role of literary gadfly; but also he was teacher enough to know that nothing was more stimulating than intelligent disputation, that one way to bring the best out in a man was to challenge, and to provoke him to defend, cherished ideas and ideals. Just as he would prod an established Daley by confronting him with new verses by a promising rival ("You couldn't write that") so he would play the iconoclast in coherently expressed (tongue-in-the-cheek?) attacks on the poetic establishment - on Burns, Tennyson, Milton, Shakespeare, Homer and Dante. And Shakespeare himself was compared to the despised Burns, whose verses were said to be "the product not of genius, but of energetic, exuberant talent"; and the "Shakespearean type" of writer was described as being "the type of extense, not intense, energy - the type with a fair brain and enormous force - with an engine requiring 100 h.p. and a boiler supplying 300, or 500, or 1000 h.p." Furious admirers of Tennyson, reacting to Stephens's attacks on their man, were informed:

Even a humane philosopher will not deny himself the pleasure of thrusting his stick into an ant's-nest, and contemplating curiously the irritated swarm around the ferrule. What buzzing and biting! what Satan-ic going to and fro in the earth!

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1 See Hugh McCrae, Story-Book Only, p. 77.

2 [On Burns], R.P., 23 October 1897.

Earlier (R.P., 12 July 1897) Shakespeare had been given a modest 205 marks (a "Pass with honours") in an examination in which the subjects "Brain" (80/100), "Energy" (95/100) and "Education" (30/50) were assessed. Poe, by the way, was scored higher than Shakespeare on "Brain" (85/100) and "Education" (40/50) but lower on "Energy" (60/100), but also given a comparable "Pass with honours" (185/250).

3 R.P., 28 January 1899.

Stephens had accused Tennyson of effeminacy and lack of social conscience; saying that "Just as a cat picks her way among puddles, Tennyson's lady-like Muse picked her way among social problems . . ." (R.P., 11 December 1897).
In the case of Burns, whom Stephens accused in the issue of 23 October 1897 of plagiarism and described as "just a lively, hearty fellow, with a knack of rhyming, a lot of sense and humor [sic], and some susceptibility to pathetic appeals", a long and acrimonious exchange with George Black kept readers entertained for five months (from 23 October 1897 to 26 March 1898). Matters did not rest then either: Black wrote a pamphlet in which, at last free from Stephens's waspish interpolated editorial comments, he assailed the Bulletin's "red-handed murderer of reputation"; and described him as "the obscure unknown who parades his little oracle in The Bulletin's Red Page". Stephens himself returned to the fray in 1905 with a further attack occasioned by reports of the sale of Burns's family Bible for £1560 and of "N.S.W. Scots [putting] about the same money into a statue" ("the Scotch mind is a beautiful thing in the matter of whisky-tight compartments"). And the criticism of Burns as plagiarist was also reported in a newspaper column in 1911 (where Professor William Dixon's acknowledgement of Burns's debt to other writers was quoted with the comment "But what did we tell you?"). Stephens, it seems, was more seriously committed to his controversial opinions than his bland disclaimers about stirring up ants'-nests would suggest.

1 In Defence of Robert Burns: The Charge of Plagiarism Refuted (Sydney: the author, 1901).

2 Ibid., p. 40.

3 Ibid., p. 71.

4 "Living Dog, Dead Lion", R.P., 9 February 1905.

And it is necessary that the controversial attacks should be taken seriously for sometimes they reveal convictions and insights that modern scholars might endorse. Indeed, in his assessment of Milton Stephens is fairly close to the early Eliot and Leavis, though he appears to argue from a priori political principles and asserts his convictions rather than proves his case by textual analysis:

Fashions in poetry have been almost as numerous as fashions in dress; but in poetry the dead hand of our ancestors is heavy upon us. Nowadays we neither wear slashed breeches nor write interminable epics to exalt religious dogma; but though it is commonly agreed that good taste may be displayed in trousers, a considerable body of opinion still holds that only very bad taste can refuse to recognise "Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained" as two of the highest poetical achievements of the human mind. In reality, according to the standards set by present fashion, there is little more essential poetry in the "Paradises" than there is in Queen Victoria. Like Queen Victoria, Milton's epics are heavy, and faded, and invested with a fatiguing magnificence: and they continue to be revered as Queen Victoria is revered - because we have inherited the tradition of reverence from our fathers, and are not strong enough to shake it off.

It seems obvious to me that the criticism is influenced by Archibalden irreverence for tradition ("the drivel of our fathers"), but at least in this instance it lets in more light - shows more originality - than either Brennan's or Brereton's rejoinders three weeks later. Brennan, for all his wit, evaded the real issue in reiterating conventional academic attitudes:

... the man who questions the superiority of Homer - Dante, Milton - and I will add Tennyson - puts himself outside the pale of poetry and humanity; cannot display any good taste in trousers, since he belongs to those who don't wear 'em - the barbarians; being just a second Attila, or - if a more abusive name is wanted (it is!) - Nordau.

\[1\] [Untitled], R.P., 7 January 1899.
\[2\] [Untitled], R.P., 28 January 1899.
Also, as Stephens himself complained, Brereton in his "rhythmical remonstrance" entitled "The Purple Page" misrepresented Stephens's position on the relative merits of local and classic poets. Here Brereton imagines a young poet seeking advice from Stephens on how to write a poem that the purple page critic will praise:

"'Tis a great ambition," the Critic said. "First listen - and then despair. You've sat at the feet of the mighty dead! but the dead are defunct - so there! And Homer and Dante were smaller men than Paterson, Boake, or Quinn, 1

Brereton was on surer grounds when he accused Stephens in a personal note of lack of balance (in the Tennyson criticisms specifically), and of allowing his enthusiasms to over-run his critical sense, so pandering to the philistines whose attitudes and taste he was aspiring to improve:

P.S. That much of your criticism is true I don't attempt to deny. But there are a good many people who are such asses as to trust you implicitly because you have once or twice said something with which their own sharings of experience enabled them to agree. And when you are not only lob-sided [sic] but extravagantly so, they bray applause. Tennyson is not a mere old woman.

It was the recognition of the justice of this comment, perhaps, that moved Stephens to indicate that his criticism was partly tongue-in-cheek (the pleasure of thrusting a stick into an ants'nest).

Stephens understood, too, that controversy was a two-edged sword: he had to be prepared publicly to face and accept criticism himself. Indeed he seemed to welcome antagonistic comments, especially if the correspondent condemned himself by his own words - as did the writer of penny effusions - a James Purcell of Melbourne:

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1 R.P., 28 January 1899.
Sir - I have been shown your scathing article about Myself in the issue of your Dirty Contemptible Rag of two or 3 weeks back, and it is a great pity you can not stick to truth.

But while he would occasionally print an attack such as Victor Daley's "The Purple Critic" without comment, he did too often take unfair editorial advantage of his opponents by surrounding their texts with editorial comments apt to ridicule the man rather than to answer his arguments. Brereton, for example, was hurt, justifiably, by Stephens's imputation that "The Purple Page" was written to avenge earlier uncomplimentary reviews of Brereton's poems.

Stephens had written in answer to "The Purple Page" satire that the anonymous author of "Perdita, a Sonnet Record", was here counselled to take his anaemic Muse up the mountains and fatten her up on chops and claret. One is sorry to have galled the lady so; and to make her wince again by vengefully reprinting (oh, Heavens!) some of the sonnets to Perdita would be unkind, and might be fatal.

To this piece of public nastiness, Brereton replied (by letter) with dignity and reasonableness that contrast tellingly with the tone of Stephens's writing:

I regret having sent my verses on "The Purple Page" if they have caused you any annoyance. They were hastily scribbled as a mere satirical joke, and were not by any means intended as an attempt at serious controversy.

But did you (or do you) really believe that the thing was a vengeful return thrust for so ancient an injury as the "Perdita" article? You must think me possessed of a Corsican devil.

The same tactic of ridiculing the man by threatening to quote from his work was repeated during the controversy with Black over Burns. Here Stephens threa-

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1 Quoted R.P., 25 May 1901.
2 R.P., 28 January 1899.
tened "to quote some of [Black's] own ponderous, uninspired verses, and to ask whether a man who wrote like that could possibly be a judge of what was, and what was not poetry". Even a weak reply from a hurt "London lady" was introduced with a derogatory "Aha! a flower in our weary path - the galled jade winces" and has interpolations like this:

But in your notice last week of "----- -----" (which the Queen says is one of the few collections which have 
Ho! the Queen is Sladen, the condensed-milk poet; and it was the Queen which said of one of Sladen's poetry-books that "Taken altogether, it gives him a high claim to be considered the best poet that Australia has produced." Honour the Queen! ever met with a cordial reception from the whole press") ...  

"Price Warung", in a review of George Black's In Defence of Robert Burns, wrote perhaps the bitterest published attack on Stephens as Red Page critic. Even allowing for bias (Astley was defending a prominent labour politician) and personal antipathy, Astley's attack does draw attention to some of the Red Pagan's more obvious faults: to his immaturity ("the attributes of the juvenile who has just been promoted from the pot-hook and hanger grade to the upper form, whence he can arraign the Mighty Ones"); and clowning ("Why not let him - Heine, and Sainte Beuve, and Arnold, and Taine all rolled into the one Australian Conglomerate of Criticism - resume his posing, and his posturing, and his fooling, and create more glad laughter?"); and intellectual arrogance:

1 R.P., 12 March 1898.
2 R.P., 30 September 1899. The interpolation (from "Ho! ... Honour the Queen!") is set in a distinctive type to set it off from the rest of the text.
3 "'For the Price of Two Drinks'! A Book Study", The Worker, 23 March 1901, p. 7. The quotations that follow are from this source.
But in all seriousness, it was about time that somebody challenged The Red Page: its impertinent cocksureness, its affectations of scholarship, its pretences of esotericism, its assumption of phenomenal insight, its altogether questionable rehashing of Sainte Beuve and Fromentin, its canons of art in literature - canons which are so seldom of value when phrased with the semblance of originality, and when indubitably of value easily traceable to antecedent (not merely anterior) writers. The function of criticism is immeasurably important, but it is as Tennyson says - dare we quote Tennyson when The Red Page has, or thinks it has, left him anticipatorily covered with the dust of oblivion? - that if the poet comes rarely here, the critic comes rarer still. And The Red Page has still to show that in its case the old taunt of Francis Adams has lost validity. The Bulletin's literary criticism is still that of the half-educated school-boy.

It must be admitted that there is a kernel of truth in Astley's over-stated criticisms, and that the bad-feeling with which they are expressed was in part engendered by Stephens's own ill-natured personal sneer about Black's incapacity as a poet, quoted above.

There is also behind-the-scenes evidence that Stephens did become personally involved, did lose his objectivity when criticized and criticizing. The apocryphal portrait by Vance Palmer of Stephens listening silently and comprehendingly to a stream of abuse and vituperation from Henry Lawson "a touch of surprise in those wide-open blue eyes of his" may be true, but Palmer's explanation is surely idealized, if not sentimentalized:

He could not understand writers taking criticism in a personal way. Why should they? The man who could detect your weakness and point it out was your friend, not your enemy. He took for granted that other people's attitude to literature was as objective as his own, and though he sometimes seemed to drop writers he had once praised warmly it was not usually for personal reasons. Yet in spite of his austere pose and his almost scientific approach to literature, he was an emotional man, and could easily be touched by evidence of feeling in a story or a poem.

To put the matter in perspective there is the case of Frank Wilmot ("Furnley Maurice"). F. T. Macartney has said that Wilmot assumed the pen-name because Stephens was rejecting his contributions not on literary grounds but because of personal emnity. Wilmot had described Stephens and Norman Lindsay as 'immoral' in a review of Oblation, a slight Stephens never forgave according to Wilmot. The matter was raised in 1905 by Hal Stone, who in a satirical attack entitled "A Blood-Red Pagan of the Sydney Bulle." in his amateur magazine Ye Wayside Goose wrote:

"Mister Stephens once wrote a book - immoral at that - so Frank Wilmot, in his Microbe, unmercifully beat it to death. Before this event F.W. was a sure contributor to the Bulle.; afterwards his 'light went out', as the poets say. In consequence, the name of Frank Wilmot is, to Mister Stephens, like a matador's red cloak flaunted before a pagan bull. Stephens was so enraged by this criticism that he wrote a rejoinder, "Private and Confidential and not at all for publication", which if not "petulant and childish" as Mr Stone claims, was certainly ill-considered and unnecessarily provocative:

"To Those who have fallen by the Waysiderie."

"Dear Boys, Good Boys, Silly Boys. What very dear, good silly boys you are! Bless your cheerful little souls! I never thought of being vexed with Frank Wilmot, or anybody else, and as for bearing a grudge in the way suggested - well, dear boys, would you do it yourselves? If not why attribute to me the evil motive you justly condemn. [sic]

"Now look here! When you come out of the shelter of your little wig-wam, and the breeze of criticism blows cold upon you, why should you shiver in print? Cold winds are bracing things, properly considered.

1 Frank Wilmot (Furnley Maurice) - A Bibliography and a Criticism (Melbourne University Press, 1955), p. 11
Warm puffs are chilly. Oh! but that anti-climax was very bad. It was honest sentiment fallen into sloppy sentimentality, which is damnable. You don't think so?

"Well, my think is just as good as your think and for me; and it is even just as good for you, if it is a sincere think, which I affirm it is. Permit me to continue to believe all the nice things you say of yourselves, and to remain cut to the heart, but still alive and writting (not writhing)."

Faithfully (signed), A. G. Stephens.¹

The public controversy with John Le Gay Brereton and George Black and the private one with Frank Wilmot show that Stephens at times could be diverted from objective assessment of the text and betrayed by his impulsive and authoritarian nature into argumentum-ad-hominem, spite producing invective which generated heat rather than light and occasioned unnecessary enmity between the contestants. In general, however, literary controversy was kept within reasonable bounds and there is no doubt that the intellectual crossing of swords that Stephens encouraged and engaged in prodded his readers to produce some valuable and stimulating commentaries, and of course made the Red Page more readable both for his own contemporaries and later readers.

In summary then, the Red Page was Stephens's own creation. He had the sense to see that in a journal already packed with well established features he would have to 'make' space if his vision of a literary feature was to be realized. Converting the advertising section of the inside jacket into such a space was an act of great initiative and was carried through with perseverance and flair. Once properly established, from about the beginning of 1896, there was no looking back because Stephens had attracted a loyal and involved audience. No

¹ "Furnley Maurice" vs "The Red Pagan", p. 11
doubt Archibald himself was pleased that his journal now had a 'literary soul'. The Red Page as it evolved under Stephens was to be the liveliest and most readable of all Australian literary forums, depending for its success not only on the quality of its editor's writing and criticism but also on the contributions from readers who were invited, challenged, cajoled or affronted into writing for it.

IV

Complementary Activities: Editing the Bulletin Books

Stephens's responsibilities as literary editor of the Bulletin extended far beyond compiling and editing the Red Page. Once Archibald trusted Stephens's judgment he handed over to him much of the responsibility for selecting from the mass of literary contributions those worthy of initial publication or encouraging comment in the "Replies to Contributors" column. By about 1900, it seems, Stephens was almost sole arbiter in literary matters. This, of course, gave him tremendous power: not only could he make or mar a reputation through the authority of his criticism but he decided whether a man achieved publication in the most sought-after journal of the day. Further, the Bulletin was prepared to pay top rates for anything it published, and Stephens was the man who set the price. Stephens himself has talked about his bargaining with Victor Daley:

Daley's mind matched my own; we judged and valued by the standard of a similar taste; and the marketing was keen. So poetry was bought and sold subtly, weighed in the balance against silver, rarely gold, with seldom a difference in our scales.

More compelling evidence of Archibald's delegation of literary authority to his junior sub-editor is to be found in Stephens's "Newspaper Cuttings" on Victor Daley which preserve three holograph letters addressed by the poet to Archibald but referred to Stephens for action. One letter says:

Dear Archibald
I do not expect you to read anything to-day. But please read two or three verses. And if you cannot appraise kindly let Boy have something on a/ct. If Stephens is in it is another matter...

A second letter in much the same manner goes:

Dear Archibald
I send "The Green Harper". In the name of the Lord put it through & let Bearer bring the resultant coin. Have been laid up. Will try to get in this afternoon.

Yours always
V. J. Daley.

Kindly tell Girl how long to wait.

Then in the "Papers of A. G. Stephens" in the Mitchell Library this receipt is written out in Stephens's hand and signed by Daley:

Received cheque £3. 0. 0.
Paid by poem 1. 5. 0.
To pay by work 21. 15. 0.

V. J. Daley.

To a large extent, then, Stephens as editor of the Bulletin books was discriminating between materials which he in the first instance had selected for journal publication. Thus he was deeply involved in the process, from reading manuscript, often in rough form, to selecting for fugitive publication and finally editing in book form. He was fortunate in his raw materials, but also

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1 Newspaper Cuttings: Victor Daley (ML QA821/D141).
   This letter is dated (by Stephens) "27.1.1". The second letter is dated (again by Stephens) "1/8/1".

2 S.P., Vol. 3 (A2299).
   Stephens has dated this document "Abt 25.1.0".
perceptive and responsible in making the first discrimination. Certainly it is obvious to the present-day reader of the Bulletin that its files contain literary materials that are worthy of preservation in book-form in their own right, or are of such historical value and interest that they should be made more accessible to scholars and general readers; and this is to Stephens's credit. Apart from the odd extract, mainly in historical source books or surveys, modern scholars have left the bulk of these materials unsifted, uncollated and, of course, unpublished in book form. It is indeed fortunate that though deeply immersed in the day-to-day business of selecting, editing, preparing for weekly publication, reviewing and criticizing those materials, Stephens himself should have found the time to prepare for publication, in a six year period (from 1898 to 1904) no fewer than twenty-two books from Bulletin files. These books, of course, are long out of print, but at least are more readily available for perusal than the Bulletin itself.

In a way reading a poem such as Bernard O'Dowd's "Dawnward?" in the edited book¹ is a less rich experience than coming upon it in the Red Page and reading it in the context of Archibald leaders, "Hop" cartoons, contributed 'pars' and the rest, all of which give the reader a feeling for the texture of life from which the poem took its being - especially in this case the political and social ferment, the idealism and doubts that caused many intellectuals of the time to have ambivalent attitudes towards Federation. For 'new' critics, however, who prefer to sever "a poem's umbilical cord [in favour of] virgin births with mysteries lying beyond heredity"², Stephens has performed the useful func-

¹ *Dawnward?* (Sydney: Bulletin Newspaper Co., 1903).
² R. B. Heilman, "History and Criticism", in *College English*, XXVII, i (October 1965), 34.
tion of taking the poem from the context, printing it on a clean page and preserving it for posterity to judge. More to the point, the twenty-two books do give a good indication of what was in fact published as literature week by week over a period of twenty-four years (1888-1906), as well as what contemporary informed taste valued as 'best'. It is significant, as Vance Palmer pointed out¹, that no modern scholar has come forward to discover a Bulletin writer ignored by Stephens, though, as with Daley, there have been cavils about what he chose to preserve as a distillation of the 'best' poetry². In the case of prose, however, Stephens is a knowledgeable and discriminating guide. His The "Bulletin" Story Book³, for example, brilliantly interprets the genre in its introduction, and for me at any rate, the selection conveys in a concentrated form impressions that months of difficult reading of the fading and fragile primary sources simply confirm and enrich.

Stephens's characteristic method of working during these years has already been described and his general contribution as a literary editor evaluated⁴. Here then it remains to examine aspects of the work not previously assessed in detail, and to point up the specific relevance of Stephens's fruitful years as literary editor for the Bulletin in any broad assessment of his contribution to the Australian literary canon.

¹ A. G. Stephens: His Life and Work, pp. 18-19. Palmer wrote: "After a space of forty years his judgments remain valid. The writers he singled out really were significant. And no important work has emerged from the files of those days to accuse him of neglect."


It must be remembered that the idea of making up books from the Bulletin came from subscribers themselves and had been taken up by Archibald before Stephens joined the staff. A search of Bulletin files prior to 1894 shows that the following well-known writers had already had contributions accepted and printed by Archibald, in that sense had been 'discovered' by him: Francis Adams, Louis Becke, Randolph Bedford, Barcroft Boake, E. J. Brady, Hubert Church, Victor Daley, Edward Dyson, John Farrell, Ernest Favenc, Henry Lawson, Louise Mack, Harry Morant, Dowell O'Reilly, A. B. Paterson, Ethel Turner and "Price Warung". But Stephens it was who made the time and exercised his critical judgment in deciding who among the varying psuedonyms - "Boomerang", "The Breaker", "Ironbark", "Greeve Roe", "Steele Grey", "Cornstalk", "Dryblower", or "Gayh the Blacksmith" and the rest - were worth unmasking and publishing in book form under their real names (Victor Daley, Harry Morant and Bernard O'Dowd from this list, for example) along with the already identified writers such as Boake, Lawson and Paterson.

Stephens has left records which show how he worked. Using Macleod's file for the early numbers, he wrote out comprehensive lists of poems and stories of merit, even transcribing passages of exceptional interest or merit into red and blue marble covered school exercise books. As he came into contemporary numbers, instead of transcribing or listing he began his familiar practice of marking with a purple-ink cross, top and bottom, pieces he wished preserved, cutting them out and pasting them up into different scrap books (one for each

1 See above, p. 109.
2 Newspaper Cuttings: The Bulletin (ML Q049/3, 4).
author or subject). These files then served three purposes: they could be used for critical articles on various authors; they supplied (free) materials for reprinting in the Bulletin itself; and provided the raw materials for a collection of any particular writer's work.

Statistics tell the story: during the six years from 1898 (Will Ogilvie's Fair Girls and Gray Horses) till 1904 (A Southern Garland) Stephens edited fourteen collections of poetry, four novels, a collection of short stories, and two anthologies of cartoons (by Phil May and "Hop"). The poets who were represented in single volumes (generally their first volumes too) were Arthur H. Adams, E. J. Brady, Hubert Church, V. J. Daley, W. T. Goodge, James Hebblethwaite, Louise Mack, Bernard O'Dowd, W. H. Ogilvie (twice) and Roderic Quinn (twice). The novels included "Steele Rudd's" On Our Selection and "Tom Collins's" Such is Life, whilst anthologies included the popular cheaply printed "Bulletin" Reciter and a 'de-luxe' "Bulletin" Story Book. His own collection of literary criticism, The Red Pagan, makes up the total of twenty-two "Bulletin" Books". (To these might be added Barcroft Boake's Where the Dead Men Lie [1897] which Stephens persuaded the Bulletin to allow Angus and Robertson to publish, and for which he wrote an extensive "Memoir" and "Introduction".)

It can be seen that Stephens had to balance a number of conflicting interests. Archibald and Bulletin readers generally were given their popular verse in the Bulletin Reciter (1901) or Goodge's Hits, Skits and Jingles! (1899) and the comic prose of On Our Selection (1899) and Our New Selection, illustrated by Norman Lindsay (1903). Stephens would share with them an appreciation of Ogilvie's red-blooded narrative ballads and love poems - Fair Girls and Gray Horses (1898) and Hearts of Gold (1903). All these made handsome enough pro-
fits to persuade the commercial-minded general manager, William Macleod, to allow Stephens to indulge his own more literate and lyrical taste with volumes by Hebblethwaite, Church, Mack, Quinn and the rest; even that most unprepossessing whale of a book Such is Life which Macleod's Scotch nose "smelt and did not like". Stephens apparently succeeded because he was able to appeal to Macleod's nationalistic instincts and sense of journalistic responsibility. A "Note on Macleod" by Stephens's hand, pasted inside the front cover of his personal copy of Mrs Macleod's biography, says this:

And Macleod left the Bulletin Book Publications alone. He even authorized Purphy's "Such is Life", after being told that he would certainly lose money on the book, on the assurance that the Bulletin, as "the National Newspaper", ought to undertake the publication "for Australia."

Stephens, then, made discriminating readers aware that sensitivity and intelligence did characterize much of the serious but not popularly accepted writing of the time, and surely helped counter the impressions abroad that most Australians "were born, if not on the horse's back, then at least just outside the stable door" and "that the busy loins of the very first settlers had, through some strange mutation, sired a race of centaurs".

Certainly if he had done nothing else but edit the Bulletin books (and later edit and publish the Bookfellow poets), Stephens would have played an important part in our developing literature, that of finding a wider and more lasting

\[1\] See S. E. Lee, "A. G. Stephens as Literary Editor", Southerly, XXIV, iii (1964), 163.

\[2\] Macleod of "The Bulletin": The Life and Work of William Macleod by His Wife (Sydney: Snelling Printing Works).

Stephens's annotated copy of the biography is in the Mitchell Library.

audience for writers whose work otherwise might well have remained remote, even unknown, to the general run of readers. In fact, it was not until the 1940s that an Australian publisher (Angus and Robertson) was to sponsor Australian poetry on a comparable scale, and then often with a Commonwealth Literary Fund subsidy to cover the commercial risk involved. Stephens's pioneering work, of course, looks somewhat meagre when the output of the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s is considered, but I believe it would be true to say that only Douglas Stewart with all the resources of Angus and Robertson's behind him, has made a contribution comparable to Stephens in this field of editing and publication.

Two main criticisms have been levelled at Stephens as editor of the Bulletin books. The first, by Norman Lindsay, was that his poor business sense, his fastidiousness, and autocratic temperament alienated Bulletin management to the point where, in 1904, it suspended operations, rather than put up with an editor as perverse and impractical as Stephens. In Lindsay's words,

A.G. was a good publisher's reader - he made no mistakes over the works he selected for publication. But as a publisher, he was hopeless. The collapse of the Bulletin publishing enterprise was largely due to him. He wasted time and money over the format of a book, keeping the machines idle while he footled about, making trivial alterations in the type setting. I've known him to have twenty or more settings of a title-page made, over which, with them all spread out on his desk, he would vacillate interminably, unable to make his mind which was best. You could not do that sort of thing with handset type and flatbed printing machines without wasting money. His balance sheets must have infuriated Macleod, the Bulletin manager - a turbid, suspicious Scotchman. Also, Macleod did not like A.G. personally. So he suddenly shut down the whole thing, and A.G. was out of the sort of job he was most fitted to perform, just because he had to affirm his authoritative status, even over a flat-bed printing press.

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This has the ring of truth about it, and possibly a man of less exacting standards and greater tact would have kept the enterprise going. But it is difficult to blame Stephens for not compromising too far on literary principles. Compromise would inevitably have led to a dilution of the literary value in favour of works like the "Bulletin" Reciter which had popular appeal and commercial success. Even as it was Furphy was required for commercial rather than artistic reasons¹ to truncate his Such is Life in a brutal operation that may have been damaging to the unity and thematic import of the work as originally conceived. And it is difficult to see Macleod approving the publication of works by non-popular lyricists unless Stephens was insistent if not uncompromising. As Miss Sylvia Lawson's researches show, the Bulletin was making a great deal of money on its day-to-day operations². Since it was largely written by contributors and depended so much on the goodwill of its contributor-readers³, it would seem good business - good public relations - to reward and encourage its writers through the compliment of book publication, even if this involved the concern in some loss. Stephens cannot be blamed for being at the

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¹ See correspondence between Stephens and Furphy, from 4 April 1897 to 20 September 1903, in S.P., Vol. 2 (A2298).

² W.E.A. Lecture Course, Sydney University, July 1971.

³ Norman Lindsay in Bohemians of the Bulletin, p. 4, makes this point: "The paper was run by a small staff because the larger proportion of it was written by contributors... I recall a meeting between two pen-names at [the] pay day ritual. Said one, haughtily regarding the other, 'I'm Seagull.' Said the other, with equal hauteur, 'I'm Grubstake.' Instantly unbending, Seagull said, 'Put it there.' They gripped hands and breathed the bar, two initiates of the noble order of par jobbers."
mercy of a philistine management, especially following the decline of Archibald after his mental breakdown in 1902.

The second main criticism of Stephens as Bulletin editor is that he took undue liberty with his writers' texts. This is more serious and harder to defend and has been substantiated in several places.\(^1\) It is, for example, the subject of complaint by Henry Lawson to Sir Frank Fox, Lawson writing "Stephens didn't hesitate to alter whole verses, rhymes and all. I have had lines restored in the frame before you came."\(^2\) I have discussed this matter at length with Douglas Stewart who followed Stephens some forty years later as editor of the Red Page. Mr Stewart insists that the majority of Bulletin contributors expected\(^3\) as well as needed this kind of editorial help, since most of them were not formally well-educated. It was necessary in terms of practical reality for an editor to redraft or patch up on the spot. Because of pressure of time and the writers' lack of formal knowledge, the orthodox academic practice of referring manuscripts back to their authors for emendation just would not work, Mr Stewart argued. Subsequently Mr Stewart wrote to me, in a letter dated 4 February 1973:

As an inheritor of the tradition he [Stephens] established in the Bulletin and as one who has himself of necessity punctuated, altered, amended and even rewritten scores of contributed poems - "of necessity" because otherwise they just wouldn't have got published - I have a natural fellow feeling for him.

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1 See, for example, S. E. Lee "A. G. Stephens as Literary Editor", Southerly, XXIV, iii (1964), 167 f.


3 For example, A. H. Davis wrote on 24 October 1899 concerning Stephens's editing of On Our Selection, "Yes, have noticed you cut and spliced yarns in places and I think for better." S.P., Vol. 11 (A2307).
Added to this, of course, was the fact that Stephens in turn would have inherited the 'tradition' from Archibald, an inveterate 'heeler-and-soler', or 'literary cobbler' as he called himself.

In conclusion after all the criticisms are made, and modified, Stephens's contribution as literary editor for the Bulletin was an honourable and distinguished one; and work carried out not as a task but in response to a ruling passion almost, as his publication record as editor the Bookfellow books shows.

V

Complementary Activities: Published Literary Criticism

The most serious limitation in Stephens as critic, according to H. M. Green, was his scrappiness: an inability to follow up his intuitional 'points' with sustained analysis, or to develop them in a coherent or exhaustive way. Mr Green asserted that "a critic should be able also to proceed from an intuition or a series of intuitions to the development of a thesis, and this was outside Stephens's range." This is certainly not true of the prose pamphlets such as

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1 See J. F. Archibald, "The Genesis of 'The Bulletin'", The Lone Hand, 1 July 1907, 269.

Here Archibald concludes an apocryphal anecdote about not having time to charge a man who threatened to shoot him with these words: "You can't write half a newspaper yourself every week, and sole-and-heel all its paragraphs and verses and leaders with civility and dispatch, and see that technical justice is done too."

2 See below, pp. 323-328.


Mr Green expands this point later in the same paragraph: "In fact, Stephens's talent was essentially intuitive; he seizes upon a point of truth, states it, sometimes unforgettably, and sometimes extends it, but not usually very far."
Why North Queensland Wants Separation (1893), which as shown earlier do develop a strong line of argument with extensive detailed amplification and logical argumentation. Mr Green's charge that Stephens's literary criticism is "bitty" and undeveloped, not because of the nature of his medium (the Red Page and the Bulletin itself demanded pithy 'pars') but because he was constitutionally incapable of sustained analysis, can be conveniently tested at this point since in his Red Page years Stephens was given, or made, the opportunity to spread himself outside the Red Page itself in a number of considered literary articles. He also was able to expand and unify some of the Red Page reviews, paragraphs and brief articles into two published books: one on Daley and one a 'shaped' anthology made from his own Red Page materials.

To test Mr Green's criticism regarding literary articles, a representative article contributed to a journal and the introduction to The "Bulletin" Story Book will serve as evidence, as each attempts some kind of synthesis of diverse materials, and is obviously more carefully thought-through and organized than day-to-day writings in the Red Page. The first to consider is a long article entitled "Newer Australian Verse Writers" contributed to the Review of Reviews (Australian edition) in 1899¹. It must be admitted at once that Mr Green's criticism has some force in this instance: the article is organized on the 'string of pearls' rather than the 'shaped bracelet' principle: that is to say the nine sections tend to be self-sufficient entities with very tenuous links indeed. The best writing is in the general introduction which puts a

¹ 15 October 1899, pp. 504-510. The quotations that follow are from this source.
thoughtful argument about the relatively low standing of Australian poets, on an absolute scale of values, with the characteristic qualification and counter-attack:

But there are still some Australian readers, I believe, who are ignorant that we have begotten or bred several poetic minds whose best utterances rank with anything that is being written in the domain of minor verse to-day. (p. 504)

He then postulates some explanations for this situation; some sensible, others fanciful. Sensibly, he argues that in a pioneering community there is not sufficient leisure for serious sustained writing: "In this struggle with Nature much poetic material is provided; but the struggler has no time to transmute it into poetry." (p. 504). Fancifully, the critic claims that "great muscles born of his toil" rob the poet's brain of the rich blood it needs "if it is to assimilate beauty, to glow with emotion, to mould the emotion of beauty into beautiful and glowing words" (p. 504). But he recovers and writes a final paragraph that does synthesize in pithy, vivid imagery many of the beliefs he was to stand for and live by in later life: confident nationalism, a commitment to education, the need to search out talent and find it in unlikely places, and, of course, the need for patient dedicated editing by competent hands. Here then is the conclusion:

The Australian sun, or the Australian system of free national education, or both influences, or other, have set everybody writing verses. The amount of bad "poetry" offered to the weekly newspapers of Australia is something to wonder at. And occasionally in the heap of undistinguished pebbles you find a gem - a gem in the rough, it is likely, needing painful cutting and polishing, yet sometimes shining with rare radiance even while it lies in the heap. (p. 504)

When he turns to the eight poets, Stephens does attempt to link one to the other. But he does so rather arbitrarily and by bringing out similarities or contrasts in their work, rather than by relating their work to a central uni-
fying thesis – the one expounded in the introductory remarks. As an example, his treatment of the first four poets under consideration – Daley, Ogilvie, Quinn and Bayldon – might be cited. Ogilvie is introduced with a statement that where Daley "writes from the head", Ogilvie's poems "are pure emotion gushing straight from his heart" (p. 506). Quinn in turn is linked with Daley and Ogilvie in a statement that categorizes Daley as "poet of fancy", Ogilvie as "poet of emotion" and Quinn as "poet of mystery and imagination"; this in turn justifying a brief exegesis on "fancy" and "imagination" that is shallow, trite and effusive alongside say Coleridge's well-known statement at the conclusion of Chapter XIV of Biographia Literaria¹:

... fancy seems to me a more prosaic, more earthly attribute – a balloon loftily rising, maybe, but captive, tethered to facts. Imagination is the balloon freed and soaring high - so high that it hovers on the edge of the unseen, where one perchance may catch the note of the lark that sings at heaven's gate – the sublimest note in poesy. (p. 507)

Other 'connections' are made in terms of common celtic ancestry, with the geographical differences in birth-place or ancestral home given as explanations for differences in the poetry. Thus "Daley's Irish youth was associated with placid meadows distant from the sea, with lays and weird legends, and the fairies that danced in the delight of the moon" (p. 507); on the other hand, Quinn springs "from the sept that guarded the wild Donegal shores; and you can sometimes hear in his verses the sobbing rage of a fierce sea" (p. 507).

Bayldon, the fourth poet, is seen as an extension of Daley, only "still harder, still colder, and still more in love with colour and colour- phrases"

¹ "Finally, Good Sense is the Body of poetic genius, Fancy its Drapery, Motion its Life, and Imagination the Soul that is everywhere, and in each; and forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole", in Biographia Literaria by Samuel Coleridge, with an introduction by Arthur Symons, (Everyman Library Edition, London: J. M. Dent & Co.), 1908, p. 167.
His effects are said to be "so purely intellectual that he never stirs in me the purely vertebral thrill which some people recognise as the accompaniment of the best poetry" (p. 509). These provocative comments on intellectual poetry provide the link with Chris Brennan "the most lettered of our poets, and does not appeal to a popular audience" (p. 509). And so the essay develops. On the evidence of this article then Mr Green's charge appears to stand, with some modification: when given the opportunity, in an admittedly difficult and far-ranging article, Stephens did show an awareness of 'shape' and did try to link sections internally, though ratherfactitiously.

The "Introductory" to Stephens's collection of short stories\(^1\), on the other hand, is one of the best things he wrote. The collection itself is an excellent one with representative stories from writers of standing, including Barbara Baynton, Louis Becke, Arthur H. Davis, Albert Dorrington, Edward Dyson, Ernest Favenc, Henry Lawson and Alex Montgomery. Despite the prevailing tastes for sentiment and melodrama, seen in Dickens in his worse moments, there are only a few choices to offend modern taste; perhaps the weakest and trashiest being a story entitled "His Hair" by Mabel Holmes where the interest is predominantly in plot: a barber keeps the hair of a girl he loves from afar and when she dies hangs himself with a rope plaited from these locks. The general run of stories, however, to a greater or lesser extent satisfies the criteria argued for in the introduction, with realistic settings as in Harry Fletcher's "On the Land", a short powerful bushfire story; resilience, even occasional psychological toughness, as in J. J. O'Meara's "Esther"; a great deal of dis-

\(^1\) The "Bulletin" Story Book (Sydney: Bulletin Newspaper Co., 1901), pp. v-viii

The quotations that follow are from this source.
tinctively Australian humour, as in Edmond's, Favenc's, Dyson's and Abbott's stories; and compassionate insight into the human state as in Lawson's "The Drover's Wife".

The essay itself is tightly and, as ever, brightly written with a great deal of metaphorical word play. It represents the distillation of much practical experience and commonsense appreciation of the kind of story that life in pioneer Australia might reasonably occasion. More important, it is clear Stephens understood thoroughly the short story as a literary form and was a good judge of prose style. What impresses the reader, post Leavis and Eliot, is his moving towards a formulation of the artistic principles that are now known in the critical jargon as "objective correlative" and "enactment" or "embodiment", though in the case of the Australian critic their formulation is in less abstract and less tortuous but more colourful and metaphorical language. Take, for example, Stephens's statement on the 'significance', 'meaning' or 'moral' of a story; of the need for the artist so to 'shape' his materials that these 'significances' or 'moral meanings' are implicitly not explicitly stated:

Usually [the stories] are objective, episodic, detached - branches torn from the Tree of Life, trimmed and dressed with whatever skill the writers possess (which often is not inconsiderable). In most of them still throbs the keen vitality of the parent stem: many are absolute transcripts of the Fact, copied as faithfully as the resources of language will permit. Hence many of them, remaining level with Nature, remain on the lower plane of Art - which at its highest is not imitative, but creative, - making anew the whole world in terms of its subject. What is desired is that these isolated impressions should be fused in consciousness, and re-visualised, re-presented with their universal reference made clear - yes! with the despised Moral, but with a moral which shines forth as an essence, is not stated as an after-thought. In other words, the branch should be shown growing upon the Tree, not severed from it: the Part should imply the Whole, and in a sense contain it, defying mathematics. Every story of a man or woman should be a microcosm of humanity; every vision of Nature should hold an imagination of the Universe. (p. v)
The rest of the essay is written in like manner, with engaging modernity of outlook, characteristic individuality of style and urgently expressed personal convictions about art and life. Stephens, as an Australian and nationalist, makes a strong attack on "the cultural cringe"\textsuperscript{1} mentality expressed in the attitude that the Australian setting is less 'beautiful' or worthy of literary celebration than say the English countryside. The case seems overstated to-day, but at the time of writing it probably needed emphasis\textsuperscript{2} if writers were to be convinced that to accept the environments they knew and write naturally, even passionately, from them would be acceptable to readers and critics too:

In a word, let us look at our country and its fauna and flora, its trees and streams and mountains, through clear Australian eyes, not through bias-bleared English spectacles; and there is no more beautiful country in the world. (p. viii)

Finally, there is an optimistic and again patriotic projection into the future, with a reasonable but nonetheless demanding statement concerning the standards Australian writers must aspire to and the critics expect if the literature was to become memorable and worthy of the land; although it is true, that in typical Archibaldean fashion Stephens would send his writers into the bush for their inspiration, ignoring the city life that most of them, even then, knew best:


\textsuperscript{2} \textit{Bulletin} editorial policy, of course, would demand this kind of prose.
We are not yet snug in cities and hamlets, moulded by routine, regimented to a pattern. Every man who roams the Australian wilderness is a potential knight of Romance; every man who grapples with the Australian desert for a livelihood might sing a Homeric chant of victory, or listen, baffled and beaten, to an Aeschylean dirge of defeat. The marvels of the adventurous are our daily commonplaces. The drama of the conflict between Man and Destiny is played here in a scenic setting whose novelty is full of vital suggestion for the literary artist... there is a wealth of novel inspiration for the writers who will live Australia's life and utter her message. And when those writers come, let us tell them that we will never rest contented until Australian authors reach the highest standards set in literature, in order that we may set the standards higher and preach discontent anew. (p. viii)

This essay, in my judgment, refutes Mr Green's unqualified contention that Stephens could not, if he set his mind to it, write an article in which a thesis was thrashed out, though it is true that such an essay is exceptional rather than typical of the bulk of the critical writing.

The two books that Stephens wrote and edited for the Bulletin, The Red Pagan (1904) and Victor Daley (1906), are a fairer test of Mr Green's assertion of Stephens's inability to sustain a theme and organize diverse materials into works that have unity and shape. In each case Stephens was aware that he would face a critical audience of readers, some disgruntled by sharp criticism and real or imagined slights, others by the rejection of contributions in favour of alleged cronies. So he did work on the materials, polishing and organizing as well as he could in the time at his disposal. To what effect?

The materials in his first book, The Red Pagan, would be extremely difficult for any writer to synthesize or harmonize as they embody selections from close on 500 weekly numbers of the Red Page written between the years 1894 and 1904.

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The quotations that follow are from this source. Page numbers are given in the text after each quotation.
The punning title itself suggests the dilemma. First the book had to represent the red page, selecting what the author regarded as his best or most typical and distinctive work from that source. At the same time it had to represent the red pagan, an iconoclastic, republican, perhaps socialistically inclined heathen, one of whose delights was to torment conventional, respectable, well-established Christians. The book sought to be at once 'literary' and 'philosophical', attempting the difficult synthesis of an art with the 'science of sciences'. To represent truly the unique quality of the Red Page, it would be necessary to reprint much of the material verbatim; otherwise the freshness, spontaneity and topicality would be vitiated. A note in the fly leaf opposite page one does state that "the greater part of the contents is reprinted, with some alteration, from 'The Red Page' of 'The Bulletin!'". This is true; the book is virtually a scissors-and-paste-job in which any 'alterations' (apart from minor changes in punctuation and the occasional word) are to be found in either an introductory paragraph reflecting back on a previous extract; or a concluding paragraph anticipating the next one. Usually the link is quite arbitrary, purely verbal, and often is forgotten after the first paragraph. This may be illustrated by looking briefly at a section of some fifty pages (pp. 14 f.) comprising Chapters 3-9.

After two introductory chapters on the twin themes of literature (Chapter 1, "What is Literature?") and philosophy (Chapter 2, "The Philosophic Life") Stephens has alternating chapters, one on 'philosophy' - for example, Chapter 3 "The Case of Annie Besant"; the next on 'literature' - Chapter 4 "Rhetorical Ruskin", and so on with essays on the Brontës and George Eliot interspersed with reflective pieces such as "The Genealogy of Genius". Clearly a good deal
of thought and care has gone into the planning so that the two threads of literature and philosophy interweave in a preconceived pattern.

Closer analysis shows, however, that the links and patterning are forced and tendentious. The critical discussion of Annie Besant's theosophy (Chapter 3) comes to a complimentary close: however trivial or wrong-headed her creed, she was a good woman, Stephens avers, one of those heroic spirits who give courage to the present, and hope for the future. And here, on this bank and shoal of time of which alone there is any certitude, we are proud to yield them honour, whether our destiny be divinity or dust. (p. 18)

Thought about the after-life introduces the next chapter on John Ruskin, which is in the form of an obituary notice, and begins with a 'pagan' affirmation:

Of course there is no evidence that our destiny is divine, and little doubt that it is dusty; but that sentence finished itself with malice aforethought of Ruskin; and though I dislike it, I like it too well to alter. (p. 18)

Then follows the Red Page article of 10 February 1900 almost verbatim. Chapter 4, the extraordinary "The Genealogy of Genius" article with its "Nousometric" readings running in sequence, Idiocy - Madness - Common Intelligence - Low Talent - High Talent - Extense Genius - Intense Genius, is linked by allocating Ruskin to the 'Extense Genius' class - "the mind's sheet lightning" (p. 22). Then follows the essay pretty much as written for the Red Page of 3 October 1896 with the next chapter on the Brontes following 'logically' because they illustrate 'intense genius' (p. 31). And so the pattern follows; Chapter 7 on Jean Ingleslow being followed by a light-hearted account of love-making in literature as described by women writers. This chapter ("How it is Done") looks ahead to Chapter 9 "George Eliot at Sea" with its sardonic, amusingly expressed criticism that the novelist drowns off her heroes and heroines unnaturally, as if they were kittens:
I have read somewhere that George Eliot was "a fiery soul". Perhaps that was the reason she was never at home in the water. I suspect she could not swim; and when the characters in her novels go boating she is always at sea—even if they are only sculling on a river. (R.P., 23 February 1895)

The link to this opening, which Stephens obviously liked too well to change, comes at the end of the previous chapter on love-making:

This seems a good place to complain of women writers—not that they lack humour: that is trite; nor that the fights are the weakest passages of their historical novels: since one is not expected to read their historical novels; but—that they do not make love well, and that they arrange death badly. (p. 47)

The linking then is clever, the cracks between the separate article-bricks being expertly plastered over. My own response, coming to the book after reading the Red Page first, is that the cracks do show, that no amount of verbal plaster can hide them and that therefore the unity is a facade rather than a structural reality. To someone coming fresh to the book the impression might not be quite so strong; but it is difficult to see how the connectedness between such diverse materials could be anything but factitious without considerable rewriting, and reorganization, within the body of each article—not just at each end. This, of course, would have defeated the first purpose to give readers a concentrated exposure to the quintessential Red Page.

There is, however, a subtler and more natural unity; one that comes from the pervasive personality of the writer and the consistency of the rationalist point of view, the underlying philosophy that informs each essay. The second of these is the more important and more naturally realized. One gathers the impression that Stephens worked rather too hard to create the image of a cultured, urbane man-of-letters moving easily from Mr Shandy's Saturday evenings to Max Klinger's art, from Latin classics to Roderic Quinn's Australian verses,
in a collection of discursive, free-flowing associative essays about literature, philosophy, religion, art, history and the national ethos. There is something pretentious about the name-dropping of authors read: Meredith, Thoreau, Sterne, Shelley, Balzac, Byron, Tolstoy, Rossetti, Shakespeare, the Brontes, Eliot, Milton, Zola are some of the names that pop up incidentally or illustratively. Also there is the hob-nobbing with the famous, with Annie Besant:

When Mrs. Besant visited our land Australia, I remember asking her if she could have accepted Theosophy at the outset of her public career. She reflected, and doubted, and opined No . . . (p. 11)

or with locals:

In our small local sphere, Roderic Quinn tells me that there are times when his own individuality seems to sleep . . . And Louise Mack says that "When I write verse I am not conscious of words . . ." (p. 106)

Along with this name-dropping there are some uncomfortable attempts at easy familiarity of manner and informality of tone, such as "I remember a second-rate and half-intoxicated actor delaying me on a midnight kerbstone to recount, almost with tears, how . . ." (p. 83). And again:

I, for example, do not in the least desire to be discussing Literature just at present. It is a beautiful morning, with a zephyr-softened sun, and I want to Bask out on a Beach. With a Girl. One of Quinn's beaches and girls, for choice—

"Pink feet and white ankles
On beaches of gold." (p. 7)

This slightly ponderous skittishness of style, however, disappears when Stephens becomes seriously engaged in the central theme suggested by his title. His religious scepticism, the positivism, humanism, rationalism, agnosticism (though not the paganism!) illuminate all he writes, and the style has an urgency, vitality and sincerity that attract one to the man and his theories. On every other page almost, a spark flies. It might be to assert hedonism above Christian asceticism, that
the object of existence on this earth is to have a good time.
The only human way of having a good time is to get emotions, impressions, sensations - the most and most varied and most intense sensations that your brain can give. Every human being tries instinctively to live the most intensely conscious kind of life that he is capable of living, and to remain conscious for the longest possible period. (p. 8)

Or a mordantly witty aside:

Literature is a more or less ideal representation of life; and death is the natural and effective literary-climax because it is the natural and effective life-climax . . . Injudicious workmen even go past death - into heaven or hell. (pp. 61-62)

Or a brilliantly balanced poising of antitheses, as in these comments on John Buchanan:

Disbelieving religion, he clung to it; bitterly independent, he accepted a pension; uxorious in his life, he professed horror of Rossetti's uxorious art. And, writing continually, he left little or nothing that will be read twenty years from now. (p. 88)

The anti-religious zeal reflects and is closely related to two other 'philosophic' commitments; one social and political, the other nationalist - almost patriotic. The first commitment is to the present, rather than to the past or future. Pioneer conditions in Australia meant that there was urgent need to be up and doing, creating our own way of life and traditions: "If we are not History's legatees," he wrote, "it is because we have the chance to be History's founders and establishers." (p. 157) Religion was to be deplored because it represented the institutionalized, inflexible modes of behaviour that might have been relevant in England or Europe but were irrelevant here, for example: "Our fathers brought with them the religious habit as they brought other habits of elder nations in older lands" (p. 153). Force of habit, transmitted mainly through women, he argued, was inimical to progress and freedom and experiment-
She is essentially a periodic creature, with the phases of the moon, the ebb and flow of the tides - a Tuesday-and-Friday recipe, a machine for the eternal repetition of plum pudding at Christmas. Her brain is so impressionable that one act begins a habit - and every habit is a fetter: partly for this reason woman is hereditary slave. A great part of woman's life is spent in endeavouring to tether more individualised man by her habits; and, for the sake of peace, he often permits the tie. (p. 80)

With Archibald Stephens would see uncritical habitual thinking as the great barrier against breaking colonial ties with England and establishing a republican Eden in Australia. Loyalty to the crown, dependence on a British legal system, respect for English institutions and traditions - especially the established church, reverence of English and classic literatures at the expense of our own were some manifestations of this habitual thinking. Thus he attacks adulation of Dante, whose work was said to be only "50 per cent poetry and 50 per cent academic humbug", for "the philosophy of the 13th century is now exploded, and in so far as it is based on that philosophy it is time the poetry of the 13th century exploded too. The dead hand should be buried." (p. 98)

And, of course, there is the attack on Milton which Chris Brennan deplored.

To the present generation the two Paradises were as obsolete as "slashed breeches", Stephens argued, and

they continue to be revered as Queen Victoria is revered - not because they are majestic and musical, but because we have inherited the tradition of reverence from our fathers, and are not strong enough to shake it off. (p. 94)

1 Characteristically, Stephens hedges on the sweeping judgment of a preceding paragraph that "In reality, according to the standards set by present fashion, there is little more poetry in the "Paradises" than there was in Queen Victoria" by explaining in a following paragraph that "the argument does not decide whether the present generation is right or wrong ultimately", just that the present generation is bored with Milton and should admit it "instead of exalting the bore at the expense of generations preceding" - a curious abdication of critical responsibility.
So the argument is advanced that "a man should gaze forward, not back perpetually" for

Let's wife was salted: take care you are not petrified. Even a moderately Chinese devotion to great-great-Grandfather may undo you. Your parents were fine fellows: they made you; but look to your children. (pp. 90-91)

But that precisely is what religion teaches in its concept of an after-life, might be the rejoinder. And, flexible as ever, Stephens has his own qualification; look forward to a future, yes; but only to one that can be assured in material, concrete, rational terms. So he predicted the decay of religion in Australia not solely because of "the sense of mental enlightenmment" but

because there is in the developing Australian character a sceptical and utilitarian spirit that values the present hour and refuses to sacrifice the present for any visionary future lacking a rational guarantee. (p. 153)

This then leads to Stephens's second great philosophic commitment - pride in Australia, a nationalism akin to patriotism symbolized by his adopting the gum-leaf as an identifying motif. His argument runs that people need to be strengthened by some kind of faith; religious faith that had sustained people in the homeland was dying in Australia. Therefore love of country should replace religion as a unifying and developing force:

It is the duty and should be the pride of every father and mother and teacher of Australian children to intensify the natural love of Australia, and to point out in how many ways Australia is eminently worthy to be loved - both the actual land and the national ideal. Good and evil are mingled everywhere; but there is no land with more beautiful aspects than Australia, no ideal with greater potentialities of human achievement and human happiness. (p. 157)

The argument receives its most eloquent statement a little later, where although mindful of pejorative association that the word 'patriotism' has (for example, Dr Johnson's dictum that it is the last refuge of a scoundrel) Stephens argues that it still has its place:
The making of Australia proceeds, according to the previous argument, without the binding influence of religion. All the more reason, then, to encourage the growth of nascent patriotic sentiment, and to pay attention to the development of individual character. Patriotism may have little or no logical warrant, but while it remains a natural instinct it justifies itself. Yet the future of Australia depends in the last resort neither upon the lessening religious force nor upon the increasing patriotic force: it rests upon the character of Australia's inhabitants. If it be the pride of every Australian boy to become a better man than his father, of every Australian girl to become a better woman than her mother, of every Australian father and mother to rear children better than themselves, both the individual and the nation will surely have their reward. (p. 160)

The last sentence, incidentally, explains—or helps to explain—the consistently didactic tone of much of Stephens's writing, his educational fervour and evangelical zeal which are referred to from time to time in this study and are seen to be a distinguishing characteristic of the Red Page itself.

The Red Pagan then is perhaps the most important single book from Stephens's hand, one a student of his work could well begin with. It is important not so much for the value of its literary criticism, or for its thematic unity and elegance of shape, as for the light it throws on Stephens himself as a personality, and (especially) as a thinker. Sincerely held and consistently lived-by and practised beliefs receive urgent and invigorating expression. The radical reformism, "sceptical and utilitarian spirit", unashamed and unrepentant nationalism, which inform the literary criticism here receive explicit and eloquent exposition. Consequently the Red Pagan is an excellent, perhaps a necessary, complement to the critical writings under survey in this study.

1 The very first leader that Stephens wrote as editor of his own journal (Bookfellow, 3 January 1907, p. 3) was on "Australian Education".
The second book, on Victor Daley¹, is a slim volume which appeared three months after Daley's death on 29 December 1905. It has all the marks of hasty compilation and lack of architecture. Instead of being written as a planned entity with unity of style, logical development and inter-connections between its five sections, the book appears to have been thrown together around two commemorative articles written for different journals in January 1906, two months before the book appeared². The book, which has no table of contents, has a curious disconnectedness. It divides broadly into two halves: the first, which gives biographical facts and examines hereditary influences, comprises Sections I–III; the second, which attempts some kind of literary evaluation, comprises Sections IV and V (the various sections are unitled). It is difficult to see the logic of breaking the first half into three parts: biography (three pages); personal anecdotes (twelve pages); hereditary influences (six pages) until it is realized that Section III is reproduced almost verbatim from the Red Page³ and the other two sections written to incorporate ancillary materials. Similarly, the division of the literary commentary into two sections appears to have little logic or point: Section IV (eleven pages) comprises a few critical generalizations followed by a tedious and arid analysis of Daley's


Although the date 1905 appears on the title page, a note opposite page 1 says: "Copyright 1906 by A. G. Stephens - Edition of Six Hundred copies March 15, 1906, . . . ."

² The author's note (opposite page 1) says: "A portion of the contents has been printed in THE BULLETIN, another portion in STEELE RUDD'S MAGAZINE."

³ R.P., 20 August 1903.
alleged borrowings and influences\(^1\); Section V (eight pages) repeats and elaborates some of the critical points made earlier and concludes with a typical rhetorical peroration in which the poet's achievements and limitations are put in balance. This book certainly appears to justify Mr Green's already quoted strictures about Stephens's "scrappiness and inability to develop" his intuitive judgments and short analyses.

The study, as Mr Green said of the criticism generally, is valuable for the "acuteness of these intuitive judgments and short analyses and their apt and original expression"\(^2\). It is interesting therefore to find evidence of how Stephens worked, during the preparatory stages, in his scrapbooks and papers on Daley in the Mitchell Library. The evidence comprises rough-typed comments on Daley's verse which appear to have been working notes for the book, immediate responses evoked by a rereading of the fugitive and collected poems\(^3\).

The first thing Stephens did, apparently, was to sort through the fugitive verse to satisfy himself that the published work was a valid canon on which to base critical judgment. The various poems are listed and classified in three categories: "Poetry", "Verse", and "Satiric"; with "Quality" ratings in six levels: "Very Good", "Good", "Fair", "Tolerable", "Tolerable to Fair"

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1 Echoes from R. A. Poe, T. B. Aldrich, Joaquin Miller, Moore, Swinburne, George Eliot, Rogers and Heine are documented. Daley's influence on Hugh McCrae is similarly illustrated. This literary detection, while a tribute to Stephens's retentive memory and a valid enough point to establish, is an evasion of literary analysis when made at such length in so brief a study.


  The quotations that follow are from this source.
  Typescript copies of many of these working notes are also to be found in S.P., Vol. 3 (A2299).
and "Pretty Fair". He then went to the published works and wrote off-the-cuff responses to the poems, as he read on page by page. These notes, collected in Stephens's newspaper cuttings on Daley, give both an indication of his spontaneous thinking and of his mode of composition.

First for reflections of firmly held critical theory:

Daley a jeweller in words - always more colour and brilliancy than song - a colour-poet, full of verbal felicities rather than a music-poet, striking deep and pregnant chords.

His verse appeals to the eye and the imagination fancy, not to the ear and the soul, distinctly shallow - a juggler with all the old balls.

Is Daley's talent feminine in its prettiness. [sic] Certainly it is not bold and masculine.

Is another of Daley's characteristics a tendency to rather weak Archibaldean sentimentality?

Daley has evidently a weak religious side - was he a priest's boy? - I think he was a chorister. They broke his mind - emasculated him - took out the thought-pith which might have given strength to his verse. Anyhow, this is a beautiful fancy beautifully expressed.

What might be noted here is the stress on the musical qualities in verse (the pejorative mention of "eye poetry"), of the need for beautiful expression and of the appeal good poetry must have to the deeper feelings and aspirations ("appeal to the soul"). Negatively, there is the denigration of the imagination ("imagination fancy") with a tendency to see imagery, fancy and imagination as adjuncts to poetry rather than as integral to it\(^1\). Also, intellectually, there are the contempt for religious values ("a weak religious side"), and a dislike of "Archibaldean sentimentality" and "feminine . . . prettiness" -

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\(^1\) See below pp. 384 f. for Chris Brennan's conflicting views, expressed especially in the lecture, "Symbolism in Nineteenth Century Literature".
his robust nature demanding "bold and masculine" (albeit beautiful, emotional and delicately musical) verse.

The working notes, used for the book on Daley and Red Page articles, give a good insight into Stephens's characteristic method of composing. That is, there is an initial close reading of the primary text with quickly written spontaneous impressions recorded and critical issues raised as questions - the whole to be refined or resolved later on reflection or during the period of intensive writing. This in some measure explains the freshness and immediacy of the style since many of the striking phrases and quick insights are preserved in the final drafts in their original urgent form. Also, and conversely, the ability to sustain a line of argument in coherent structured prose can be explained: critical issues and ideas had been raised, reflected upon and, in broad outline, resolved before attempting the first draft. These extracts from the notes will serve by way of illustration:

Query - is one of Daley's faults lack of compression of tendency to eke out lines with weak words and phrases to save trouble? Seek confirmation. [sic for "confirmation?]

Note - Daley fails noticeably in thought - shallow he is - a butterfly of song not a bird - clear trill, but a flashing colour wing in the sunshine and shade chiefly -- Improve this.

Has Daley the happy knack of setting down the thoughts and expressions that strike him in his reading, and then carefully working poems up from his magazine of brilliants?

Count Daley's sad poems.
Count Daley's merry poems.

And finally, this note on "Years Ago" shows tentative opinions hardening into the judgments confidently expressed in the book:

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1 See Australian Verse-Writers: Victor Daley (Sydney: Bulletin Newspaper Co., 1905) and "Daley" [an obituary tribute], R.P., 18 January 1901.
Well sustained and with some lyrical light and fragrance.\[sic\] Fragrant an epithet for all Daley's verse - it is flowerlike. But all this play of pretty epithet is not poetic fire - there is no insight - no real grappling with life-problems - he is a sweet singer of stale themes furbishes merely the old image.

It will be noticed that the various comments are more in the nature of sparks thrown off as his mind brushed with Daley's. It will be seen, too, that a few of the iterated criticisms are emerging: that Daley lacks manliness, that his verse is too artificial and decorative, and that emotional and intellectual depth is wanting - even the key phrase "Australia's sweet singer". But Stephens does not appear to be concerned about developing and substantiating these arguments: there are no reflective retrospective summaries. Also it will be noted that some of the purple passages and extended metaphors are already being rough hewn ("improve this"), strengthening my impression that often Stephens was more interested in writing well, and epigrammatically, than in scientifically analysing the work under scrutiny. Indeed one often feels that having coined the memorable phrase, he argues up to and around it, instead of working from the poem itself - recalling his own confession in an article in the Red Pagan (p. 18) that he liked an ill-considered sentence "too well to alter" it.

The stylistic flashiness then was consciously sought; and while clever, even at times impressive, it does in the end annoy a modern reader accustomed to a more neutral, less intrusive authorial style; for example, the statement that "Daley had the failing pulse of a fading race and paints his dream of joy upon a canvas of regret."\[1\] This sounds impressive, and perhaps for this

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1 Australian Verse Writers: Victor Daley, pp. 22-23.
Page numbers for subsequent quotations are given in the text.
reason set the tone of Daley criticism for about forty years. But as Muir Holburn was to point out, the content of a statement like this is partly nonsensical, partly inaccurate. Nonsensical in evocation of the "Celtic twilight" as an explanation of the weakness, delicacy and sentimental melancholia of the Australian poems. Inaccurate in that it ignores a very substantial body of the Daley canon — in fact all the "Creeve Roe" humorous, political and satirical poems. Another illustration is that "birds and butterfly" image in the notes which Stephens told himself to work on. It developed into this when polished:

There was little heat in him, but his light streams brilliantly through coloured windows.¹ In the domain of Poesy he is not a singing-bird, but a butterfly, flashing gorgeous wings in sunshine or shadow. (p. 41)

Muir Holburn points out that this fantastic statement was challenged by a contemporary, H. Ellis, who wrote in complaint to Stephens: "It seems to me . . . that [Daley] was much more than a "butterfly", he had a good deal of the intellectual subtlety of the spider as well."² Mr Holburn claims, correctly I believe, that statements like the one above placed the "seal of authority" on the "highly damaging 'Daley legend!'" that Daley as a poet was an exotic fin-de-siècle lyricist divorced from the business of daily living. In Mr Holburn's judgment, Stephens

in this instance, did not display his usual fervent adherence to the basic law of scientific literary criticism, namely that however much latitude the literary critic may be permitted in making his final "sub-

¹ The unintentional jingle of "but a butterfly" appears to have eluded the writer's ear; suggesting that Stephens's own criticism of Daley might be personally applied: Daley had a "poor[er] ear and wrote in pictures". (p. 20)

jective" judgment, his attitude towards the facts upon which his judgment is based, must be uncompromisingly scrupulous and circumspect. It is clear, indeed, that Stephens never fully comprehended the significance of Daley's art, any more than he really appreciated that of Chris Brennan, Bernard O'Dowd or Furnley Maurice.

As a critic Stephens always was to rely strongly on the force of his own 'subjective' responses, responses often irrational and idiosyncratic enough to be labelled prejudices. This can be illustrated in the study of Daley, where rather contradictory, logically irreconcilable points are made. First, there is the complaint, made later of Shaw Neilson, that because he inherited the "failing pulse of a fading race", Daley lacked manliness: his verse for all its charm was too precious:

His stronger bent is shown in reduplicating images, in building a rainbow of phrases to span his skies of fancy. . . . For sometimes one follows his muse through a rich growth of similes that darken the path, leaving an impression rather of embroidery than of poetry. (p. 39)

The jeer of effeminism (embroidery not poetry) had been made before, when Daley was advised to write in more vigorous hearty measures. And Daley had written, quite reasonably, in a personal reply to Stephens:

By the way in a previous flattering notice you say something about my not having "the rugged force of Lawson or Boake". That's all right. I have no objection to the statement. But I would like to point out a thing that you may not know - viz. that I have always deliberately chewed declamation in Verse. The voice of the muse is apt to grow hoarse and raucous - as though she had been drinking gin - with too much shouting. Besides there are plenty of Bards who are shouting already without me joining their number. And if you think again, you will recognise that this "Rugged Force" is always destructive, never constructive, in its aims. It has not the breath of long life in it. 2

1 "What Do They Know about Daley?", in Creeve Roe, Poetry by Victor Daley, p. 20.

2 Typescript extract from a letter (undated) collected as part of working notes for a projected article on Daley in S.P., Vol. 3 (A2299).
Here one is confronted with the dilemma that Stephens in his subjective response to poetry never was able quite to reconcile. At one extreme there was the hearty, aggressive 'masculine' man of action who wrote declamatory love poems in hammering, metrically and euphoniously insensitive verse; at the other was the sentimentalist reading his favourite lyrics with tears streaming from his eyes, and agreeing with Poe that if *Melancholy* is to most legitimate of all poetical tones, *Death* the most melancholic topic, this topic becoming poetic when allied to *Beauty*:"the death, then, of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetic topical in the world" (p. 25). Accepting "the poetic validity and utility of this idea", then, Stephens is led to ignore the perceptive and just comment of his notes that Daley's "The Old Wife and the New" shows "a tendency to rather weak Archibaldean sentimentality" and praises the poem highly (pp. 38 f.) in his book. Some idea of the *triteness* and sentimentality of this poem can be gauged by quoting the lines that Stephens himself did. First, the children died:

Then children came - ah me! ah me!
Sad blessings that a mother craves!
That old man from his seat could see
The shadows playing o'er their graves.

And so on to the death of the old wife, the acquisition of a new one ("His young wife has a rosy face, / And laughs, with reddest lips apart,"), down to the final lines where "He sits beneath the curling vines, / . . . An old man with a broken heart." The desired prescription apparently is to write slushy content in manly strains\(^1\).

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\(^1\) Stephens's comment on these mushy verses is revealing: "It was rarely that Daley wrote thus seriously" [my emphasis] (p. 36).
The Daley study then is immature. It relies heavily on mechanical, factual biography and fanciful psychological analysis; the literary criticism itself is extravagantly expressed and contradictory in its claims, approved poems sometimes exhibiting the very qualities the "weaker" poems are accused of exhibiting. Partly the rush for publication would be to blame, the book having been assembled quickly while the memory of Daley's death was fresh in readers' minds. But even making allowance for this, and for the fact that two earlier unconnected and largely unamended articles were rough-stitched in, the failure must be attributed to the critic's inability to allow his considerable intellect and commonsense to operate in a rigorous assessment of the full range of Daley's published and unpublished poetry.

Sound sense does assert itself from time to time, of course. For example, after a puzzling comment that "it is partly [Daley's] ironic aloofness that gives his verses their occasional air of artificiality" (how "artificiality" is a consequence of "ironic aloofness" is not stated), Stephens says simply and justly, but without elaboration: "The lighter rhymes, published usually over the signature 'Creeve Roe', were more spontaneously and sincerely written" (p. 37). It seems that at this stage at least, and in his criticism of poetry, Stephens was more concerned to argue from a priori subjective convictions, to argue up to assertions, and to prefer the glittering phrase to the exact or accurate one. For all its sharply expressed insights into the weaknesses of Daley's lyric poetry and its muted appreciation of the limited poetic achieve-
ments, the Daley study raises serious doubts both about Stephens's ability to construct a full-length literary study, and about the validity of his poetic theory and practice. The book, however, is valuable and interesting for the light it throws on Stephens himself, and for its admittedly impressive flashes of stylistic bravura.

VI

Conclusion

Readers may be divided into four classes:
1. Sponges, who absorb all they read, and return it nearly in the same state, only a little dirtied.
2. Sand-glasses, who retain nothing, and are content to get through a book for the sake of getting through the time.
3. Strain-bags, who retain merely the dregs of what they read.
4. Mogul diamonds, equally rare and valuable, who profit by what they read, and enable others to profit by it also.

— S. T. Coleridge.

"Profit[ing] from what they read and enabl[ing] others to profit by it also" is a succinct statement of the basic requirements of the literary critic. In this respect, the critic of the Red Page performed his function admirably. One of the delights for a reader to-day, coming fresh to those articles and reviews written a life-time ago, is to feel the excitement that Stephens him-

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1 For example, at the beginning of the critical section (p. 22) Stephens writes, that "The chief poetical qualities of Daley's verse are fluency of fancy, colour of phrase, and charm of allusion. His sense of the values of words was not good; often he fails in melody; he lacked high imagination, and was deficient in passion." This surely is a statement that begs amplification, illustration, modification; a fine topic sentence' on which to base vigorous sustained critical analysis. But having stated the insight, Stephens leaves it, any subsequent amplification being incidental and haphazard.

2 Lecture II, "Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton, 1811-12", in Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare and Other English Poets by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, collected by T. Ashe (London: George Bell and Sons, 1884), p. 44.
self communicates in his writing as his own knowledge expands, as insights come to him through reading. The zest and vigour in the writing, which have been commented on and illustrated from time to time, partly reflect the enthusiasm of a young-minded man discovering himself in books and sharing those discoveries with readers. Perhaps some of the discoveries seem trite, the enthusiasms callow, the self-exposure naive; but they could not have seemed that way to the bulk of Stephens's readers. And for the few academics and teachers who were in intellect his peers and in scholarship his masters, and who were offended by the evidence of triteness, callowness and naivety (and said so), there was the useful function of challenging set and conventional thinking; for example, in the articles on Burns, Milton and Tennyson. William Walsh, though he was thinking of the much greater figure of Coleridge, has expressed as well as anyone could Stephens's own distinctive achievement as a critic during this period. Professor Walsh writes:

One of the enabling things the critic has to do is to move, positively to startle, people out of their usual lethargies of thought and attitude. He has to cut through the carapace of habit. The critic, the ideal reader, has to make other readers more naked and more perceptive. Part of the rejection that most good critics receive in their lives is to be attributed to the resentment of reader's [sic] at this treatment.

Stephens's rejection by so many who might have helped when he left the security of the Red Page is partly explicable in these terms, though his own abrasive personality and his predilection for controversy were contributing factors. It is revealing, therefore, to look at some of the unsolicited responses from appreciative readers, not simply because they show that among the discrim-


The quotation from Coleridge on the four classes of readers is quoted in this place.
inating there was good-will, but because they were discriminating and what they had to say then, has some point to-day: point both in the absolute sense of suggesting values that are there for readers to-day, and in the historical sense of indicating what it was like to grow up or live with the Red Page critic as your literary and intellectual mentor. Thus, Jessie Mackay, responding to an article in which Stephens declared "Already she has the purest, finest note we have heard from Maoriland . . ."\(^1\), wrote an excited letter which clearly conveys what it meant to a young writer to receive this kind of notice in the Red Page:

I do not know how to thank you for the amazing appreciation of my verses in the "Bulletin" of the 23rd. May. You had prepared me for some kind things, but it takes one's breath away to be put above Domett and Arthur Adams (though of course on the lyrical side only).

You have made several people very happy; my father is so proud — my sisters too. And for myself I feel I have had my day whatever comes, and when the greater star comes, I shall remove my farthing candle with what grace is possible. If you should happen to look round years hence and remember to ask why I did no more after all, try to remember too that it was not laziness, and certainly not riches, that stifled all poetry for me, as it seems to be stifled now. But I am satisfied; thanks to you, I have had my day.

There is also extant an enthusiastic letter from Louis Esson (then twenty-three) in Melbourne, showing that young intellectuals warmed to his anti-establishment postures, in much the same way as the radicalism of a journal like Nation Review appeals to contemporary undergraduates:

Why don't you come over to Melbourne and lecture on Literature at the University? I feel sure you would shake things up a lot. You are very kind even to suggest that I should try original topics. After a course of poor old Morris's lectures one seems to have little fire or original-

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1 "Jessie Mackay's Verses", R.P., 23 May 1903.
2 Letter of 1 June 1903 in S.P., Vol. 5 (A2301).
ity left. My original effusions repose in a drawer, for future reference. They are original but probably little more. Fortunately during the last few months I have been interviewing the so called great men of this village and there is nothing like interviewing for giving a person a sense of his own importance. So possibly I may fire of [sic] at you some original work, that is sure to be of too high class in order to meet with popular approbation.

Not that I would suggest that you voice the "popular" judgment. I may say that in certain quarters, not so very far distant from the University Wilson Hall, you are decidedly unpopular. I have had many an argument at the "Shop", regarding the R. Page. This is meant to be taken as a compliment for there is even less literature at the University than anywhere else.

Lionel Lindsay was another young man of promise who commented on Stephens's unpopularity among established literary figures. He made the same point as Walsh did of Coleridge: that Stephens's candour, honesty and integrity, while the hallmarks of a responsible critic, were also the very qualities that rendered him unpopular in the literary marketplace:

I don't think anything for a long time has given me so much pleasure as when my brother [Norman] told me that you thought something of my work - I've got such a devil of a liking for your point of view, and your genuine critical instinct and style. I'm very much out of tune with the fellows here. They will insist upon bringing moral judgements to questions of art, which irritates me extremely. One thing that always amuses me is their attitude towards you. Either the indignant upbraiding of a fool of a guilty woman, or admitting your cleverness regretting what they are pleased to consider your "gods". But above all they cannot understand your frankness — your faculty of saying exactly what you mean as far as newspaper ethics will here yet admit of. Truth seems such a simple thing to me that I cannot understand why people will not admit themselves to be the liars they are yet. Everyone seems to hate frankness like the plague, and I know they think yours is of the nature of a pose. — Generally the conclusion here is that owing to you The Bulletin isn't what it used to be, a consummation for which I am gratefully thankful. And I feel pretty certain that Australian Literature will recognise it one day as the only genuine criticism this country has produced.

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Also, Will Dyson, speaking for disgruntled readers three years after Stephens had left the Bulletin:

I have been working through old Bulletins looking for my drawings and if it isn't too belated let me offer you belated congratulations on the Red page of that date and less belated congratulations on the Red page of to-day, which is all an enemy would wish it to be.

Primary evidence such as this, though selective (Stephens probably did not keep all the abusive letters he received) does not, I think, give a false impression of Stephens's active encouragement of an inspiration for young writers, for Nettie Palmer in her obituary tribute remarked that "Writer after writer, as well as reader after reader, has told me what it was to grow up looking for guidance in that [the Red Page's] direction."¹

Finally, what public approval and a favourable review by Stephens meant to even a writer as established as Henry Lawson can be gleaned from Henry Lawson's letters to his publishers, and others; for example, this to F. S. Shenstone:

A. G. Stephens was present [at a banquet in Lawson's honour] — to my surprise. He led with a most generous and flattering speech on my behalf. We shook hands. I think you'll get a first-class review from him. Send book at once.

Just as the Bulletin itself was Archibald's monument, a creation greater than any of the books made from it, so the Red Page itself is better than any

   See also letter of 15 December 1905 to George Robertson, p. 63.
of the extant published books or essays on "Bulletin writers". What it lacks in coherence and developed argument is to a large extent compensated for by its far-ranging comprehensiveness of cover and almost unfailing liveliness in writing. And its sheer bulk is testimony of boundless energy and application. On Stephens's own criterion of "quantity of quality"¹ those files of brittle and decaying pink inside covers embody some of the best indigenous criticism in our literary canon. A half-serious note that Stephens sent to A. W. Jose, his partner in a literary agency business (Jose was to attempt to 'place' Australian manuscripts in London), will serve to summarize the many-sided activities of the editor of the Red Page, and gives some insight into his restless energy and drive, during this the most productive period of his life:

A. G. Stephens.

Journalist; Australian; Bulletin editorial staff for six years - before that printer, & editor etc. for half-a-dozen papers - devil, reporter, manager, editor, proprietor. Writes and edits Red Page etc; editor of "Bulletin" publications.

Book (?) "A Queenslander's Travel-Notes" - bright journalism.


Started "A History of Australian Literature" - ask Heinemann if he's favourably disposed to include in his series & crack S. up.

Ask Walter Scott if he'll take "The Humour of Australia" in his series if well enough done.

Grant Richards has asked to compile a book of Aust. house verse on 10% royalty; copy nearly ready; will send to Jose to trade.

Personally - an awful nuisance in his youth; gradually mellowing.²

Stephens resigned from the Bulletin on 18 October 1906 without advance notice to subscribers. There had been rumours, however, to the effect that Arthur Adams would be taking over the Red Page, rumours that must have emanated from

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¹ See, for example, Henry Kendall (A Critical Review for Schools), (Sydney: Bookfellow, 1928), p. 13.

² Notes on Australian Authors for A. W. Jose [1897?], S.P. (CS65).
the Bulletin management itself, and which came to Frank Morton (in New Zealand!) at least four months before, as this extract from a letter to Stephens shows:

Is there any shadow of fact at the back of this obstinate rumour that Adams is going to the Bulletin in September, "to run the Red Page"? ... I ... am merely puzzled by a rumour that stops short of saying where you come in.

The management, strangely, appears to have been unprepared for the break, because on the following week "The Inky Way", a column, part literary but mainly general in content, which had been appearing spasmodically on page 37 of the Bulletin, replaced the Red Page. And there is no public evidence of any sudden or serious clash: "The Inky Way" carried Stephens's advertisement for the bookshop he was moving to, and when the Red Page was revived in the following week the new editor, Arthur Adams, wrote a genial paragraph about Stephens's past services to the Bulletin and commended the new venture to his erstwhile readers.

No one seems to know quite what caused the break. As early as 1899, when the first series of the Bookfellow proved a financial failure, there were rumours of conflict. Chris Brennan, for example, wrote to John Le Gay Brereton that he had heard that "the Bulletin people had put their feet down on Stephens and demanded that he should attend to the work for which he was hired, and enjoy less posing as literary Tanard". Douglas Stewart said in an interview with me that when he was with the Bulletin 'old hands' had told him that

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2 Undated letter, written in 1899 and quoted by H. Chaplin in A Brennan Collection, p. 50.

See below, p. 231.
the dispute was over salary, Stephens demanding a rise to £12 per week which Macleod would not grant. H. M. Green also believed that the resignation was over salary, stating "It is said that when asked to take over, temporarily, the editorship of the Bulletin as well as of the Red Page he demanded the full salaries for both jobs; this story may not be true, but it ought to be."

Sir Frank Fox, first editor of the Lone Hand, told Walter Stone that there had been a personal disagreement: "Edmonds, when editor of the B. disagreed with A. G. Stephens and installed Adams as editor of the Red Page", but does not elaborate on the nature of this disagreement. Mr Stone, after talking with Fox and former employees of the Bulletin, is of the opinion that the Bulletin management felt that Stephens's private business as 'literary agent' conflicted with his duties as literary editor - that he was suspected of diverting poems sent to him from the Bulletin to other sources (for commission).

Although this is at best hearsay, and doubtful hearsay at that, letters from Francis Kenna showed that he at least was puzzled by the dual functions when he wrote, "I am sending you herewith the Verses we spoke about . . . Did I understand you to say that you would like them for yourself. If so I should like you to have them, only telling me their destination" and, again, ten months latter: "Thanks for cheque. Where have you placed it? I should like

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1 A History of Australian Literature, Vol. 1, p. 703 (footnote).
to see it in print. Some idea of the extent of the private editing activities may be gained from a letter A. H. Davis wrote regarding *On Our Selection*:

Of course, when I wrote to Mr. Macleod I didn't know you were so keen in your efforts to float "O.O.S." in England, and in view of that I have decided now not to interfere. But when you give it up as a bad job then I'll have a try.

As to the editing fee. For the work done in *producing* the book I thought £30 was too much. I still think so. But it is plain to me now that your services extended much further than the actual production of the book and I admit that in suggesting a reduction of the fee I was in error. I'm sorry - and withdraw the suggestion unreservedly.  

Incidentally, this correspondence shows that Macleod at least condoned, if not encouraged, Stephens in these side-activities, for Davis's first letter, asking permission of Macleod to launch *On Our Selection* at his own expense in England, had been passed on to Stephens and is preserved in his papers: hence the reference to Macleod in the first sentence.

A presumptive source of discontent too was the grooming of Frank Fox for the editorship of the *Bulletin*'s projected literary journal, the *Lone Hand* - a post to which Stephens surely would have felt his capacities and past performances, if not his position as editor of the Red Page, entitled him. His own sardonic comments on its early troubles and consequent failure show more

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3 The *Bulletin*'s agreeing to print his advertisement for the Literary Agency on the Red Page from 15 May 1897 to 26 November 1898 is further evidence on this point.
than a touch of malice. A letter from a sycophantic 'poetess' friend, Iala Fisher, dated December 1909 is further evidence along these lines. Mrs Fisher wrote in passing:

Goodness gracious - likewise damn. It makes me ill to see The Lone Hand, and to think what it might have become were you in the chair. Beales were telling me only today that they took the back cover for £360 per annum £30 per issue! They've dropped out now. Wheeler started out with Horderns too - splendid prices that have dwindled down to almost nothing . . . The fact of the matter is - The Lone Hand has become a discredited medium. And the management have themselves to blame. Arthur Adams [Fox's successor as editor] reminds me of a faded, pretty girl. He was chewing sweets in one of the boxes while his Tame Cat was in progress. It did look so effeminate.

Possibly a combination of all these factors, and the by now certainty that Archibald's recurrent illnesses were such that he was unlikely to return, underlay Stephens's apparently impulsive decision to make a break that was to be decisive - and unfortunate, both for him and his readers.

Stephens's readers did not follow him to the Bookfellow, for how were they "to know that the A.G.S. who signed his initial so casually was the body, beak, and bones of the Red Page?" And, although he was not to realize it himself, Stephens was never again to experience the same secure and amenable work conditions; as Palmer again said, his great gifts were largely wasted in "the mere journey-work of earning a living", and an inadequate one at that. Not only

2 Vance Palmer, "Writers I Remember - III A. G. Stephens", Overland, XVII (April 1960), 31. The quotation that follows is from this source.
were his critical and creative energies dissipated on fruitless and time-con-
suming commercial projects, but his poverty, his fear of offending subscribers
and supporters, may have caused him to be less forthright in his judgments and
to tone down "the original free, bright and breezy"¹ style of the Red Page at
its best.

¹ This phrase was used by Brereton to Stephens in a letter dated 12 December
CHAPTER VIII
INTERLUDE (1906-1911)

There was no Red Page for the week following Stephens's resignation. Instead, a column entitled "The Inky Way" appeared, carrying this advertisement:

The New Book-Shop.
The Bookfellow's.
7 Hamilton Street, Sydney
Write for Australian Books, Rare Books, Any Books
Agents in Paris and New York
A.G.S. ¹

Next week, when the Red Page resumed again, Arthur Adams, the new editor, announced:

Readers of this page, so long conducted by Mr. A. G. Stephens, will have noted the modest advertisement of his new business. The critic turned bookseller has the courage of his convictions; so long occupied in telling Australia what books to buy, the critic is now prepared to sell them. "The Bookfellows" (7 Hamilton-Street, Sydney), promises to be the happy hunting ground of the judicious Australian book-worm.

On 22 November 1906 another advertisement appeared. However ruffled private feelings might have been, there was no overt hostility on either side.

The break from journalism would have been welcome because it would have enabled Stephens more time to engage in heady literary talk with a circle of friends, admirers and writers he had gathered around him. Sir Frank Fox observed in a rather tart note that "On leaving the R. he [Stephens] tried to set up a little circle of his own after the manner of de Goncourt's in Paris but was not successful to any degree."² Since his Gympie Literary Circle days

¹ [Advertisement], R.P., 25 October 1906.
² R.P., 1 November 1906.

Norman Lindsay has left a malicious account of "A.G.'s Saturday Night Symposiums" in Bohemians of The Bulletin, pp. 21-22. For a full account, see below, p. 330.
Stephens had cultivated literary company and talk with the same kind of passionate enthusiasm as others take up golf, patronize the theatre or subscribe to symphony concerts. Witness, for example, his account of a literary evening in Paris where "with eau sucrée [sic] and smoke, poetry was talked till three o'clock in the morning. From one o'clock till three o'clock the debate was over a caesura – only one caesura, my friends."\(^1\) "That night I lived", the older man recalled.

So one can imagine the high hopes and characteristic zest and enthusiasm with which Stephens entered his new venture. The shop, as indicated, was to be a meeting-place for writers and readers. One of his visitors, Hugh McCrae, has left this description of the establishment, and of Stephens's business methods. It was, he recalled,

a bookshop or rather a book-cavern, under a block of buildings in Hamilton Street. To enter it you ducked below a sign inscribed "En Souriant", and so soon as a proper amount of visibility had been attained you became aware of multitudinous volumes, some stuck in cases against the walls, but more dropped facetiously over a centre table, baited with a box of cigars – at a price!\(^2\)

Miles Franklin was also a visitor. Drawing on her sentimental memories, she has one of her fictional characters, Dick Mazere the up-country poet from "Three Rivers", wander into Stephens's shop. Dick is avidly examining the second-hand books on display:

The shy bushman look of him and the rapt face attracted the notice of a tall man who had fostered numbers of the type. He was without a hat. Dick shrank from him as the sensitive with slender purses shrink from pursuing salesmen. This man was evidently a floor-walker in charge of

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\(^1\) "Australian Literature", Bookfellow, 15 August 1921, p. 122.

\(^2\) Story-Book Only (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1948), pp. 90-91.
the books. Fearing he had laid himself open to suspicion by buying so little, Dick edged toward the door, but the man cut off his escape. He showed books that had missed Dick's attention, and the boy's eyes shone, though uneasiness lessened pleasure. He could not say that he did not want the books or that he could not afford them, he had been gently reared to be ashamed of poverty. The man was quiet and not like a towny. His clothes had a comfortable up-country look and he had a beard like the Bool Bool uncles. Dick didn't know how it started, but presently he was confiding that he loved books better than anything, but that he had very few - the drought was so bad - and yes, he would like to write something.

The man said he would like Dick to look at his own pet volumes. Dick lacked the technique to decline or accept and soon found himself in an upstairs room. He saw at once that the shop held a mob of cleanskins, but here was the home paddock of prime specimens and tried stock. Oh, to be a bookseller and publisher and have a room like that, or, failing such a height, to have a book written by himself with a publisher's name on it, and gum-trees and kookaburras lining the cover, as Ignez had! Ignez! In that moment he realized the greatness of Ignez. What a girl could do surely was not beyond a man. He squared his shoulders to effort. The sinking left the pit of his stomach when he thought of home. The most congenial encounter in his young life ended by his carrying away an armful of books that the bearded man had wrapped up, and that were so heavy that Dick had to hoist the parcel to his shoulders. There had been a murmur about defective copies, shop-soiled - couldn't offer 'em for sale. The man's tact had been such that Dick enjoyed this gift without a wound.

Another interesting piece of primary evidence is a ballade sent to Stephens by Louis Esson in response to a competition to advertise his 'literary book-shop'. This gives a fine impression of the rather precious fin-de-siècle atmosphere of the shop, an idea of its contents and an indication of the kind of affection younger writers had for its owner:

Ballade of the BookFellows

Pavements ring, and business broils;
Therefore, far from din and glare
All Life's tedious tasks and toils,
Turn to A.G.S.'s, where
Books he stacks, quaint, rich and rare
Prussian blues, Parisian yellows,
Dream bouquets [sic] beyond compare
At the Muses' Shop, - BookFellows.'

1 "Brent of Bin Bin", Cockatoos (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1954), p. 246.
When from Sense the Soul recoils
Join the Wise Ones debonair.
Henry Lawson's billy boils
While "The Banjo" strums on air
Onto Montmartre Baudelaire.
What is Fame? Not Punchinello's
Bells that chime, but Shelves that snare
At the Muses' Shop, - BookFellow's.

Sheaved Verse from Singing soils
Vine and gum leaf, corn and tare;
Pearls from Beauty's Sea, such spoils
He, the critical Corsair
Decks out, gay, in Fancy's fair.
Violins and violincellos [sic]
Color, perfume, - all are there
At the Muse's Shop, - BookFellow's.

Envoi

Dilettante! - Love brings care.
Pleasure's vain. Wine, though it mellow
(Dreams and Books are best) forswear
At the Muse's Shop, - BookFellow's.

After eight months in business Stephens decided to sell out, possibly because he was the bad businessman of Miss Franklin's novel or because, as he himself announced, "The business of Australia magazine constantly extending leaves no space and time for the pleasure of shopkeeping. The Bookfellow's, Hamilton Street, Sydney, disappears as a shop." J. R. Tyrrell, who did the cataloguing, told Walter Stone that "the sale was not a remarkable success and that A.G.S. was bitterly disappointed as it meant that The Bookfellow, which had temporarily become Australia, was certain to fail". Primary evidence supp-

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1 S.P., Vol. 11 (A2307).
2 Catalogue of the Bookfellow's Book Sale (4-5 June 1907), p. 3.
3 W. Stone, "Beating the Salvage Bag", Biblionews, I, iv (October 1966), 5. The Catalogue (loc. cit.) was boastfully optimistic: "The Greatest Sale ever held in Australia. Introducing many rare and curious Australian, English, French, and American books." Hence the sharp "disappointment" Mr Stone mentions.
orting Tyrrell's statement is to be found in a contemporary account of the
sale in the *Native Companion*, perhaps by E. J. Brady, the journal's editor.
The account is worth quoting in detail, both for the titles of the books sold
and the prices they realized, and for the comments on Stephens himself at the
beginning and end:

Mr. A. G. Stephens, discovering that the production of a weekly journal
left no time for the "pleasures of shopkeeping", offered his library to
the wolves. The *Native Companion* secured a marked copy of the sale
catalogue, showing the prices Bookfellow's collection brought under the
hammer. The books were sold in lots. Some of the figures are interest-
ing:— Eight vols. of Becks and one of A. B. Paterson averaged 1/2.
Five vols. of Henry Lawson, Steele Rudd and Stephens, 1/3. Tom Collins —
Such is Life, A. G. Stephens — The Red Pagan, Randolph Bedford — True
Eyes and the Whirlwind, 3 vols., found a purchaser at 1/4 each. Have-
lock Ellis' Studies in Psychology of Sex, 3 vols., brought 6/6 each.
A copy of Rod Quinn's Moslyn Stayne, a youthful novel, sandwiched in
with an essay on Remorse, fetched 1/3. As Quinn was little more than
a schoolboy when he published Moslyn Stayne, the association is relevant.
The Poems of Francis Adams and J. B. Stephens realized only 10d a copy.
Five vols., A. G. Stephens (on Victor Daley), Dora Wilcox (Verses). Will
Ogilvie (Fair Girls and Grey Horses), J. H. Michael (John Cumberland) and
E. J. Brady (Ways of Many Waters), found a reluctant purchaser at a shilling
each. W. H. Fitchett's Deeds went in a lot of 7 vols. for 1/3 - patri-
ottism is its own reward. A volume of Hogarth (containing the suppressed
plates) brought eight guineas. Dr H. Ploss — "Das Weib in der Natur und
Volkerunde", ("The Monumental Book on Woman," with many curious pictures),
realized 26/3 a volume, sold no doubt to a young missionary from Afghan-
istan. Senator Neild's poems were eagerly bought in by a political oppo-
nent for 6d. Marshall Hall's Hymns (suppressed - scarce), only 1/-.
Greville Tregathen's "Australian Commonwealth" (in Fisher Unwin's Stories
of the Nations Series) was sacrificed at 1/3. This monumental work should
have brought more. A rare first edition of Henry Kendall's Poems and
Songs, at 2/9, and Peter Possum's Portfolio, Sydney, 1858, at 9d., were
good value for the purchaser. Dad's Wayback and a Tourist's Guide to
the Hunter River went hand in hand out into the cold, hard world at 7d.
each. Lieut.-Co. J. C. Neild's Report on Old Age Pensions, which wrecked
a Government in New South Wales, was carted away in a delivery wagon by
another enthusiast, who separated himself from 7d. in order to acquire it.
The late J. A. Andrews' Handbook of Anarchy and other pamphlets realized
11/-. Andrews cut most of the type for these productions out of flooring
board with a penknife; the printer's ink used was made from condensed
milk coloured with the juice of berries — facts the catalogue did not
set forth. A volume of Melbourne "Tocsin," containing contributions of
Victor Daley, and O'Dowd, and Norman Lindsay's early drawings, went for
9/. The Bookfellow's collection throughout spoke the man of keen literary tastes. The Australian section was particularly comprehensive.

In addition to the titles listed in the Native Companion, the Catalogue lists at least two items that must have been particularly difficult to part with, namely:

507 Stephens, A. G. The Bookfellow - A monthly magazinelet [sic] for Bookbuyers and Book-readers - 1 vol. Complete set bound in Buckram - only 16 copies collected and bound thus. This is No. 1 (The Editor's copy). Scarce.

1005. Australiana - Original Manuscript and Pamphlets. Five volume folio in old parchments, containing numerous MSS., portraits, etc., of Australian authors.

That Stephens was prepared to let so many treasured items go so cheaply, speaks at once of the financial straits that he found himself in and of his determination to press on in the ambitious but unprofitable venture of producing weekly a journal devoted almost entirely to literary concerns - a kind of expanded Red Page.

The new Bookfellow\(^2\), renamed Australasia on 2 May, had been appearing since 3 January 1907 as a weekly magazine. It was quite an expensive production of folio size with top quality paper, aesthetically set out in clean readable type and strong inks, with a three-colour block cover and attractive illustrations and designs - both originals and reproductions - scattered throughout the text. There was a variety of discreet advertisements from soap manufacturers, tea and cocoa merchants, booksellers and patent medicine dispensers. Clearly Stephens needed the goodwill of his advertisers, and was not averse

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1 Anon., The Native Companion, II, i (1 August 1907), 52-53.
2 For a critical account and evaluation of this journal see below, Chapter IX, pp. 234-242.
to running factual features, for example, which advertised Lipton's tea plant-
atations in Ceylon, or (as he did later) even to recommending a patent medicine
in a semi facetious note to a complaining contributor:

For a combination of literature and toothache, your letter is the finest
we ever saw . . . The medicine you want is Hudson's Eumethol Jujubes.
By biting a Hudson's Eumethol Jujube carefully every night for ten years,
the BOOKFELLOW has preserved a healthy mouth, sound teeth, and a high
standard of criticism. Hudson's Eumethol is our advertiser; but we
can't help that. The advertisement tempted us; the Jujubes convinced
us. Every tobacco smoker will find that the Hudson habit pays . . . 1

Despite his canvassing of advertisers, despite the close supervision of errant
printers to ensure the highest standards of presentation, despite the best eff-
orts of literary friends like Mary Gilmore and Hugh McCrae who contributed gen-
erously, sales remained disappointing. The editor did his own part too with
an editorial advertisement that told readers that his "high class family maga-
azine of general interest . . . is already circulated more widely than any Aus-
tralasian weekly but one"2. Further, the advertisement pointed out, the Book-
fellow had become "indispensable to every cultured reader in Australia"; was
"of permanent interest, because it prints valuable and original Australasian
literature"; was "preserved for binding in every public library in the Common-
wealth". Back numbers were rare too, because it was "a magazine that is kept,
not thrown away. It is salted for perpetuity." Readers were also invited to
subscribe, at a guinea a time to a "special [half-yearly] edition of fifty
numbered copies only of The Bookfellow . . . being printed on superior paper ..

1 Bookfellow, 1 September 1912, p. 228.
2 Ibid., 18 April 1907, p. 2.
The advertisement was a stock item in subsequent numbers of the journal.
The quotations that follow are from this source.
in a distinctive binding", to each of which would be added an original drawing or "choice piece of manuscript". But all these ploys, including the disastrous book sale, were only stop-gap expedients. On 15 August 1907 Australia ceased publication precipitately (or certainly without printed warning to contributors and subscribers). In all, Stephens's revived Bookfellow and Australia had run for eight and a half months - from 3 January to 15 August.

The sudden collapse of Australia meant that Stephens had to cast around for a secure position to recoup his finances, for he wrote to this effect in a letter to the influential politician, Alfred Deakin: "As I lost my small savings in The Bookfellow, my nose must stick to the grindstone for a while, and it will do me no harm to 'learn' this country for journalistic use."  

"This country", of course, was New Zealand, a country Stephens liked to call "Maoriland" and whose writers, he was fond of saying, should join their Australian counterparts in a community of "Australzealand" or "Australasian" letters. His wife, too, was suffering ill-health at the time as he told Jessie Mackay, a statement repeated in the draft of a letter he wrote to four New Zealand papers to refute rumours of strained relations with his employers there ("I came to New Zealand chiefly for reasons connected with the health of my family"). Gresley Lukin, his erstwhile Boomerang editor, was with the Wellington Evening Post, so Stephens joined this paper as leader-writer. Some idea of the sudden-

1 Bookfellow, 31 January 1907, p. 4.
2 Letter of 8 November 1907 in S.P. (AS102).
3 See correspondence with Miss Mackay (1907-1911) in S.P., Vol. 5 (A2301).
ness of his departure can be gleaned from his correspondence about this time with Alfred Deakin. Deakin had been in fairly close correspondence with Stephens and had expressed his admiration for the Bookfellow in political speeches; yet when Deakin wrote to Stephens saying he would like to meet him during a projected stay in Sydney, Stephens had to reply that he was in New Zealand "an interesting country - quite worth a year, I think. Still - a kind of exile, as the Australians in Wellington say". And again, in elaborating the reasons for the failure of Australia:

I owe you a line to explain that I could not get the capital necessary to keep Australia going for the 3 or 4 months that intervened apparently between loss and profit - so thought best to stop and take salary, and have tried New Zealand for a change. It is the State-Dominion! - with which I was unfamiliar, so I shall be able to better my equipment. I have joined the staff of the Evening Post, which ranks as the leading paper of W'ton, and have been very kindly welcomed by many friends. Our leading articles deal frequently with Australian politics, so I shall be able to give you a friendly official word now and then.

Vance Palmer has said that Stephens did not fit in very well, did not feel at home, in New Zealand:

To the young men of the Post he seemed an aloof formidable figure, an atmosphere of reserve about him as he passed into his sanctum from the street, looking neither to right or left. One of them has confessed to watching his daily entrance with a sense of youthful awe.

Palmer went on to say that Stephens found it hard to come back to ordinary journalism because "He did not care for the rush, the clatter, the casual.

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1 See Bookfellow, 1 May 1912, p. 132; and Mr Deakin's letter concerning the Bookfellow to the Melbourne Age of 21 March 1912.
2 Undated letter, S.P. (AS102).
3 Letter of 25 September 1907, ibid.
4 A. G. Stephens: His Life and Work, p. 27.
The quotation that follows is from this source.
contacts of newspaper offices. He was The Bookfellow, with his own style, his own way of looking at things." The last sentence is perceptive: it is clear that Stephens's pride had suffered; his spirits naturally were down following the successive failures of the bookshop and journal; it must have been a let-down to be writing ephemeral topical leaders that conformed to his employer's policy instead of the original and independent literary assessments that were "salted for perpetuity". The hurt pride can be sensed in yet another letter he wrote to Deakin, making the most of his situation:

Now, when all has been said for Australia, I must own this is a healthier place - for me. Blood-pressure is higher than in Sydney, which means more energy, & a quicker recuperation from fatigue. For the rest, the folk are kindly, though of course the city is very much in the provinces. Hubert Church, in his note of greeting, wrote, "Welcome to Bœotia," & I suppose it is a little bit like that. Still, I do not depend too much on others, having plenty of work & many shields against ennui.

Certainly there were rumours about rifts with the Evening Post's management. Frank Morton's reporting of these, though sympathetic towards Stephens, led to an acrimonious exchange of which only Morton's letter of 4 and 12 January 1909 remain. In them Morton alluded to Stephens's arrogant sense of superiority, his self-assumed god-like omniscience:

I noticed the jib of your omniscience on Saturday.
Wherefore, dear Jehovah -
I'm sick of cherishing wild fidelities to men who chuck me as sop to any slavering Cerbrus [sic] ... I'm going to criticize you. I wonder if you know how easy that will be.
And I shall not make mere empty statements unbacked by proof or instance. Out of your own inkpot I shall judge you.

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1 Letter of 8 November 1907 in S.P. (AS102).
Stephens's reply evidently showed that he was far from appeased, especially over Morton's repeating rumours of rifts with the *Evening Post* management. Once again the intelligent Morton protested his best intentions and repeated the shrewd criticism of Stephens's undue arrogance and insensitivity:

As to the reiterated talk about the Post — well, what better can I do than return you to your own arguments? Say that I had nothing to do with you, as you, but I had to do with the action of ignorant idiots who deprived Australia of a literary man of some force and quality, and made no profitable use of him. Have you ever found anything improper in the newspaper comments that have damned Arthur Adams as Ed. [sic] of the Red Page? If you have — well, to Hell with sophistries! A journalist is in some sort a public character. The mistake I seem to have made for years is the mistake you so consistently make yourself — I have over-estimated your authority and importance.

Finally, on being shown a paragraph said to have been written by Morton which discussed his relations with the proprietors of the *Evening Post*, Stephens drafted a strong "Letter to the Editor" of four provincial New Zealand papers headed "A Denial". "Mr Morton!", he said, "is known to me as a clever writer with excellent qualities, and his good intention toward myself is manifest"; therefore, continued Stephens, he regretted more the publication of the paragraph "which in my opinion is not warranted in taste & certainly is not warranted in fact." The "denial" concluded:

Since Mr. Morton, writing in ignorance, has inferred otherwise, I desire to say that my professional relationship with the proprietors of the Evening Post has been made pleasant by their continuous kindliness and liberality; and Mr. Morton's remark as to my possible loss of independence and self-respect is simply nonsense.

For the rest: I came to New Zealand chiefly for reasons connected with the health of my family. My stay has been both agreeable and

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2 Annotated "Posted 12/8/9" in Stephens's copy, S.P., Vol. 5 (A2301). The quotations that follow are from this source.
profitable. I have been honoured with a hospitality greater than I could accept, and have learned highly to esteem the merit of New Zealand and of New Zealanders.

Thus the paragraph in question is likely to cause to others the annoyance which it causes to me; and I ask you, Sir, to give this denial a corresponding publicity.

To date, it seems, no scholar has searched the Evening Post files and other New Zealand sources for materials written by Stephens while working as "Assistant Editor" to Lukin. Miss Carol Dickie of the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington has written that her search of the files revealed that in October and November 1907 a number of articles over the initials "A.G.S." did appear in the Evening Post. These articles Miss Dickie described as being "of a general nature, with humour and literary criticism included". Unfortunately the Wellington Post have materials indexed only from 1922 onwards; before that periodic burnings of material, including manuscripts, took place. Thus any attribution of anonymous political or literary articles will have to be tentative, on the basis of internal evidence and style. A note in the Mitchell Library papers, apparently by Stephens himself, suggests that some of the material would be of critical interest. The undated note says:

In New Zealand, Stephens showed his versatility by many leading articles and many special articles upon subjects so diverse as industrial arbitration and railway and tramway management ... A comprehensive series of articles on New Zealand literature was written ["for a syndicate" - cancelled by A.G.S.] at this time. [my emphasis]

Stephens could return fairly confident of resuming old ties with literary companions in Sydney, to judge from the tone and substance of letters like this one, from Roderic Quinn:

1 Letter to Mrs Robin Marsden of 2 October 1973, and confirmed in letter to me of 12 December 1974.

2 S.P. (ML MSS 1104/1, Item 1, p. 15a).
Dear A. G.
Here's another attempt to get into touch with you. How are you speed-
ing? Sydney is empty of any word of you. Into the heart of what grey unfathomable isolation have you withdrawn. Your silence makes me re-
member you as you seemed to me in the days when we first met - as a man apart with many thoughts of books in his head and little thought of the things of this world - smokes and whisky and good company and much else. I have it on good authority however that you are not far-
ing ill as far as your material needs are concerned and that gives me comfort. I suppose you do not find much fellowship of the kind that you desire in Wellington but since the old school strapped their bags and went their ways Sydney's literary atmosphere has also become rar-
ified almost to nothingness and it would take many years and many poets1 to recharge it with its old charm.

The Sunday Sun of 17 July 1910 announced (on page 7) that Mr. A. G. Stephens, the "Red Pagan", had been secured to conduct a weekly literary column. Al-
though the founder of the Red Page was "almost too well known in literary cir-
cles to need a mention!", the announcement was accompanied by a potted biography - one that Stephens himself obviously had drafted. The last two paragraphs are of particular interest, for the light they throw on the relationship with Archibald and the critic's journalistic activities in New Zealand. In London (in 1894), the notice says, Stephens

was attached to the "Daily Chronicle", with excellent prospects, when he received a letter from Mr. J. F. Archibald, editor of the "Bulletin", offering him a place on the staff of that paper. The acceptance and return to Australia fixed the course of his life. He remained with the "Bulletin" twelve years (broken by another travel-trip to Europe in 1902). Mr. Archibald, an editor of unique experience, described him as the best judge of literary values in Australia.

Mr. Stephens's journalistic versatility is remarkable. He has contrib-
uted articles on many subjects to nearly every important newspaper in Australasia; and during his recent engagement as leader-writer on the Wellington "Post" his work in the fields of industrial arbitration and of railway finance and administration won the praise of experts. Mr. Skerrett, K.C., characterised one article upon arbitration law as "worthy of a legal-opinion writer in the highest flight".

1 Letter of 8 October 1908 in S.P., Vol. 6 (A2302).
The first "Bookfellow" column appeared on 24 July 1910 and continued weekly thereafter in the Sunday edition of the Sydney Sun, which proudly announced in its weekly issues: "The Sun prints The Bookfellow's weekly article which is read by everybody with any pretension to literary taste."

Stephens's immediate financial future was now secure, for he had negotiated with the Sun management for his column to be syndicated in Newspapers throughout Australia. The anonymous speaker, whose paper on Stephens to the Australian Literature Society (read in March 1911) is preserved in the Mitchell Library's collection of Stephens's papers, told his audience: "This year, through his articles in papers whose total circulation is over 300,000, Mr. Stephens has probably reached the largest Australian audience addressed by any Australian journalist."²

This was a time for the recouping of forces for yet another attempt to establish the Bookfellow journal on a permanent and businesslike footing. Funds were being amassed, backers approached, contacts with writers resumed, a new and large audience becoming aware of his voice, and a storehouse of creative criticism and reviewing was being collected. By December 1911 Stephens was ready to try again, and the rejuvenated Bookfellow was to run almost without a break (as a monthly) until February 1916 when it was suspended because of war-time restrictions and Stephens's own patriotic activities in other directions.

In a reminiscent note, reflecting on Gresley Lukin and on his own activities during the four-year interlude just surveyed, Stephens wrote that "Zealandia is a great little country; and several ex-Australians... have found it

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¹ For a critical account and evaluation of this column see above Chapter IX, pp.
² S.P. (AS102).
a friendly haven."¹ Lukin's reported comments on New Zealand have some personal application for the rejuvenated Stephens preparing to launch the Bookfellow again late in 1911. Lukin, Stephens wrote, is reported to have said that "I came to Zealandia broken in health, in pocket, and in reputation. This blessed country has renewed my health, refilled my pocket, and restored my reputation."

The second great productive period of Stephens's life, as editor of the monthly Bookfellow from 1911 to 1925, was about to begin. The period from 1907 to 1910 was too unsettled for the production of sustained high quality work; consequently the interlude is of limited importance in any consideration of this critical canon, although in the circumstances a necessary period of rehabilitation and self-analysis.

¹ Bookfellow, 29 November 1924, p. 31. The quotation that follows is from this source.
CHAPTER IX

THE BOOKFELLOW (1899–1926)

I

Introduction

The Stephens who returned to Sydney in his forty-sixth year to take up creative literary criticism was a mellower, less iconoclastic public figure. The "three-initialled terror" and self styled "Red Pagan" had gradually dropped his Archibaldean postures. The radical had become liberal in politics, the anti-colonialist who bitterly assailed England's role in the Boer War was a jingoistic patriot by 1914 and the denigrator of Judge Windeyer sought the friendship of respected and eminent citizens.\(^1\) The erstwhile challenging and waspish "A.G.S.", in short, had matured into the "Bookfellow": a stoutish creature who sought to convey the impression that his natural habitat was among books: reading and making books; buying and selling, hoarding and giving them away; and, above all, writing and talking about them and sharing his insights and enthusiasms with any audience that might listen. This benevolently caricatured figure\(^2\) was to edit in fourteen years between December 1911

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\(^1\) For example, Alfred Deakin, the Prime Minister, and John Lane Mullins, M.L.C. The correspondence with Deakin began in June 1906. A letter dated 21 June 1906, presumably in response to one from Stephens seeking a meeting, says: "I have read you in and out of the Bulletin for years and was looking forward to the pleasure of meeting you some day." S.P., Vol. 3 (A2299).

\(^2\) By Hugh McCrae in a line drawing entitled "Ye Bookfellow", which was repeatedly reproduced in the journal, generally in the "Under the Gum Tree" column.
and March 1925 ninety issues of the Bookfellow in a self-styled battle to foster a national literature among "the philistines". Two short-lived series had appeared previously - a brief run of five numbers in 1899 with Bulletin backing, and a sustained run of thirty-three weekly issues in 1907. Stephens himself gave a succinct history and explanation for his choice of title in the new year issue of 1913:

In reply to a correspondent who (actually!) asks "What is this BOOKFELLOW?" we beg to say that the original BOOKFELLOW (one word, please, and a little "f") appeared in 1899. The title was invented as a variant of the familiar Bookman, Booklover and the rest, and was fondly believed original until the inventor met, in a novel of Whyte-Melville's, the statement that gypsies call Oxford men "bookfellows". Yet it is not discreditable to yield the pas to Egypt. THE BOOKFELLOW was continued till 1906 on what is called the Red Page of "The Bulletin" newspaper - that page also being a BOOKFELLOW invention in a day bygone. Then THE BOOKFELLOW became a weekly journal. But the time for a weekly journal of THE BOOKFELLOW class is not yet; and the journal was merged in syndicated weekly articles from which the monthly BOOKFELLOW flowers naturally.

Although the bulk (almost three quarters) of Bookfellow numbers belongs to the third series (1911-1925) the earlier two series are important enough to warrant individual examination, both for their intrinsic worth and for their evolutionary interest.

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1 The Bookfellow was to reappear from January to July 1926 as a feature in Stage and Society.

2 A "message" to contributors (1 January 1913, p. 12) quotes as its text Samuel on the Philistines (I Samuel, vii, 12).

3 Ibid.
II

The Bookfellow: Series 1 (1899)

On 31 December 1898 this advertisement appeared on the Red Page of the Bulletin:

The Bulletin will publish / about 1st January / The Bookfellow. / A Monthly Magazinelet / For Book-buyers and Book-readers. / Subscription, One Shilling / per annum. / Specimen Copies Free / to any address.

The new venture had been long planned; but Bulletin approval was grudging — and in the event, short-lived. Two months before approval was finally given Stephens was informing contributors that the projected magazine would not eventuate. A letter from Roderic Quinn shows that some, at least, appreciated the sense of frustration and disappointment that Stephens must have felt when all his urgings and arguments failed to move Macleod's Scotch heart:

And so your magazine will never issue after all. Ah! the pity of it. I am sorry for your sake — you put such heart in it — and for my sake — when shall Margaret wear such dress again? — and for our country in general, thwarted of its artistic and literary appetite. As you say none of the matter you collected will go to waste, nothing will be lost — only love's labour!! — only that!

And when the journal did appear it was as a tiny octodecimo costing a penny a copy. Despite the small size, however, Stephens went out of his way to produce a journal that would appeal to dilettantes. Expensive blocks; high quality paper; elegant type-faces; commissioned articles from academics like Chris Brennan (on the French symbolist poets); original work by the new and

1 Letter of 22 October 1898, S.P., Vol. 6 (A2302).
2 On 25 March 1899 (after three numbers) the price was raised to 3d. and the size increased to duodecimo.
established Australian lyricists; 'rifled' items from the more arty and cosmopolitan overseas journals; and a breezy personal column entitled "Under the Gum Tree" in which Stephens ranged from contemporary Continental and English literature (and initiated competitions requiring the translation of a Verlaine sonnet or the writing of a quatrain) - all these (together with the exotic cover and unusual format) gave the production a slightly precious air similar to overseas fin-de-siècle publications. Henry Lawson, for example, was appalled by Stephens's 'unAustralian'\(^1\) and pretentious aestheticism:

His culture seemed to be of the sort that seeks to smother freshness and originality, yet is slave to a bastard form of originality which smothers itself in the end. The culture which calls an introduction, or preface, a "fore-word", and a conclusion or appendix an "afterword"; and would call 'em "in front-words" and "behind-words" because of "art for art's sake". The culture that wants and tries to invent a language of its own which uncultured people couldn't understand; but which wouldn't alter the position, anyway, seeing that fewer read and fewer understand it when it tries to talk in a known language.

The journal, however, could not attract a wide enough reading public to cover costs despite the publication in the Red Page (of 10 June 1899) of 'opinions' like this (from the *Melbourne Cycling News*), "Proud, pleased and gratified to be one of the godfathers of this particularly welcome little stranger", and this (from the *Yarrawonga Chronicle*), "We like it immensely. Indeed a choice little morsel." There were, too, occasional *Bulletin*-like gestures to 'bush readers', for example, in the theory that bushmen are natural poets:

\(^1\) "The Australian Writer" [i.e. The "Bookfellow"]. Galley proof of unprinted article for the Red Page dated 1899 (ML MSS QA821/L425.1, *Newspaper Cuttings: Henry Lawson, Vol. 1*). Reprinted in Colin Roderick, editor, *Henry Lawson: Autobiographical and other Writings* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1972). Lawson described Stephens as "an Australian born Britisher who was born, educated and sent on his travels with a swelled head." The quotation that follows is from this source.
The universe presses very closely upon a solitary or semi-solitary dweller in the Bush. He loses pride of humanity in the sense that he is but an atom on the grand scale of Nature moving grandly about him. . . . Human forces seem puny in the face of the Bush; they are extinguished when the Bush joins hands with her terrible sister the Desert. Physical revolt is hopeless, yet a man instinctively revolts against the submergence of his individuality. So he writes because the creation—act reassures him of his strength; and he rhymes because prose is too pale and too tame to tell his passions.

But sales were disappointing—perhaps Lawson was right and the practical-minded bush reader had become "cultured and art-for-art's-saked and first germ celled to the full—as much as he could stand". Whatever the reason, with the fifth issue of the series the journal disappeared for eight years. It carried "This Intimation" (marked off by rows of inverted & symbols) to its readers:

With this number The Bookfellow dies to the soft music of the tears of many well-wishers in the sure and certain hope of a ruddy resurrection on the Red Page of The Bulletin. Subscribers' surplus stamps will be returned to them; and friends will please accept this intimation as final.

In spite of hundreds of kindly notices, and subscriptions weekly increasing, The Bookfellow does not pay, and is not likely to pay unless advertisements are obtained; and, except the class of advertisements which would be a desecration of the shrine, these things which no Bookfellow can stand without appear to be unobtainable.

To merely print The Bookfellow costs for 2500 copies about £25; and to fill it as per sample is worth at least another £30—total £55. Take 2500 Bookfellow's at 3d. and many are sold at 2d. to book-sellers; multiply and subtract according to Colenso; and the result is—Loss. It would take a sale of at least 5000 . . . to repay cash expenditure; and there is still much worry and anxiety unpaid for. A sale of 5000 at 6d. would be encouraging enough; but that is judged not possible at present.

So here is another cairn of Experience piled for the guidance of travellers along the local literary road.

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1 Bookfellow, 29 April 1899, pp. 1-2.
3 Bookfellow, 31 May 1899, p. 25.
Looking back, the venture appears to have been ill-founded and impractical. Since the magazine carried so many features from the Red Page, it must have seemed poor value to contemporary readers of the Red Page. Perhaps there was some justification for selecting from the previous four or five Red Pages the matter which deserved a better presentation and more permanent form of recording than the flimsy pink inside jacket the Bulletin afforded. Stephens may have felt that he could give more 'direction' to his work by selecting what he regarded as quintessential from the mass of Red Page material. Perhaps, too, he was hoping to force the management's hand. Just as five years before he had persuaded them to forgo advertising space to give him a literary column; now, by a similarly successful venture, he might build his Red Page up into a fully-fledged literary magazine with an independent editor and staff, like Archibald's long-cherished but short-lived Lone Hand which finally appeared in 1907. The Bulletin, however, was first and always a business venture and its Scotch manager - as Stephens himself bitterly observed in later years - had no literary soul.

There is also the suggestion that Stephens gave a disproportionate amount of his working energy to editing the new Bookfellow, and rather offended the management with the literary 'airs' he affected in consequence. Thus Chris Brennan in an undated [1899?] letter to Le Gay Brereton:

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1 The Mitchell Library and Fisher Library bookbinders did remove the covers of some of the early issues when binding. The Mitchell had to acquire early numbers of the Red Page from other sources - notably Stephens's personal file.
I had heard a week ago that the Bulletin people had put their feet down on Stephens and demanded that he should attend to the work for which he was hired, and enjoy less posing as a literary Tolstoy, less communing with self and nature in the mountains (this is not so bad even if I have to lose my 31/6 over it.)

Indeed, from the business point of view it was probably politic that further power should be withheld from Stephens at this stage. As editor of the Red Page his eccentricities and whims, what his writers and readers often resented as an overbearing arrogance, were alienating some of Archibald's protégés. Lawson cut close to the bone in his already mentioned attack when he drew attention to some of the objected-to whims and idiosyncrasies:

... I noticed that, through it all the editor was doing his best to introduce into Australian Literature and make the reader familiar with at least the names of certain alleged things he professed to have discovered, and which he called "First Germ Cells", "Red Corpuscles", "Culture", and "Art". He signed himself "Definate [sic] Article Bookman"; and when a young Australian writer published a book, he wrote up that writer's personal appearance, temperament, character and antecedents - if he had any - drawing largely, as I could see, on his, The Editor's, culture and imagination ...

And again; drawing attention to various idiosyncrasies:

The editor of the Writer [i.e. Bookfellow] invented, or imagined, "dual sexes", to fit his bi-sexual theory of poetic genius, and called 'em "sim" and "sis", as distinguished from him and her; in short, he wanted to make out that a poet couldn't write unless he was a man and woman in one. He tried to hustle the Australian reader into adopting his notions in the lump - dual sexes, names and all - but he couldn't do it.

As well as resenting the assumed arrogance writers like Lawson and Daley were annoyed by Stephens's attempt to build up a coterie of "Bookfellow poets" to

The "31/6" refers to the amount Brennan was paid for each article in his commissioned series on "Newer French Poets".

2 "The Australian Writer".
The quotations that follow are from this source.
set against Archibald's older "Bulletin bards" as the true purveyors of Australian culture. In Lawson's words:

... I found the "Australian Writer" was publishing its own bards and story-tellers in book form, and booming them pluckily while never missing a chance to belittle the work of outside Australian writers who didn't publish with the "Australian Mutual Back Scratching Publishing Company".

Similar criticism by Victor Daley in a sketch entitled "Narcissus and Some Tadpoles" was published in the Bookfellow, its editor perhaps cajoled by the disarming note that Daley sent in with his witty and probing verse satire:

Dear Mr Stephens,

Herewith a Sketch. Hope you will not object to the elegant caricature of yourself - done in innocent green ink and the purest spirit of friendliness. I believe, myself that it will give joy to many readers of the Red Page and be as comforting balm to the wounded feelings of many rejected contributors. Will call to see you to-morrow.

Yours

Victor J. Daley.

It is more probable however that Stephens both appreciated the implied acknowledgement of his power and recognized the satiric merit of Daley's verses, which seem to me clearly superior to the normal run of verses preserved in this the first series of Bookfellows. As with Lawson, the main criticisms were cronyism and arrogance. The opening exchanges between "The Red Page Editor" and various "Voices" (from manuscripts), besides showing Daley's skill, admirably suggest these limitations or flaws:

Scene I. - THE RED PAGE ROOM.
(The RED PAGE EDITOR discovered sitting, en boucher, in his shirt sleeves. Proof sheets of new Australian poems on his desk. Coils of more new Australian poems (in manuscript) hanging over back of his chair. He reads one of the latter, and mutters, shaking his head: "Won't do.

1 Letter of 14 April 1899, S.P., Vol. 3 (A2299).
Lacks the indefinable something which is the soul of Poetry. Must define that one of these days." Takes up another poem. Strikes out six verses and leaves two. Murmurs "Pith in these - all the rest is padding," and sweeps the refuse into the W. P. Basket. Hums softly -

The critic of the days of yore (I aptly call him Blunderbore) Ground bones of bards to make him bread - I scoop their marrow out instead.

(Muses a few moments, then lilts loudly) I am the Blender of the pure Australian Brand of Literature. No verse, however fine, can be The radiant thing called Poetry Unless it is approved by me. I am the Critic set on high, The Red Page Rhadamanthus I. The Master, too, of the Event Am I on this weird Continent: This phrase I took from - thanks herewith! - My little brother Meredith. I make or mar. My daring hand Explores the entrails of the land, And finds, beneath a greasy hat, An Austral Homer at Cow Flat. I seize him by his shaggy hair, And lift him high, and hold him there, And wave him like a Habakkuk; And yell to notify my luck. Should any dare at me to jeer And say "His swan's a goose, we fear"; I crown his head with laurel-wreath - And promptly fling it in their teeth.

VOICE FROM PROOF-SHEETS A primrose by a river's brim A splendid sunflower is to him. VOICE FROM W. P. B. But he himself, - bear this in mind! - Must be the first that flower to find.

SEVERAL VOICES FROM PROOF-SHEETS (conclusively) His simple task is to be good To members of the Brotherhood. R. P. EDITOR (with gay irony) A month goes by. I drop him hard, And take up with a newer bard - The Shakespeare of Dead Dingo Swamp. The Cow Flat Homer has to tramp.  

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It was eight years before Stephens was ready to assume his mellower "Bookfellow" image, but even then affronted memories of the more waspish A.G.S.'isms were to continue to rankle with men like Lawson and Lindsay and to make it difficult for the freelance editor to persuade some of the better-known writers to place their work with him.

III

The Bookfellow (and Australia): Series 2 (1907)

When Stephens left the Bulletin "in a huff and a hurry"¹ at the age of forty-one, reviving the Bookfellow became an all-consuming preoccupation. Despite the previous failure Stephens refused to be daunted. Perhaps he felt that the Bulletin management had not given him a fair trial earlier; he was certainly encouraged by the correspondents who had written deploring early demise of the first series - correspondents as respected as Brunton Stephens, who wrote:

I am very sorry to see the end of the Bookfellow. I wonder at it, too, for I thought there would have been a large public for it. And it was real good - no doubt about that. However, the Bulletin will still keep the Bookfellow's soul going marching on, and that is something in the way of consolation.

Stephens may well have reasoned, too, that he would carry over to his new journal the following that previously had found itself 'consoled' by his presence in the Red Page. Mary Gilmore, for example, wrote after reading the first four numbers:

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The more your magazine comes, the more I am sorry for the "Bulletin" - and I couldn't say more than that if I enlarged for a week - and unless the "taste" of the "Lone Hand" is different (from that of the present "B") I am afraid it won't mend matters. The "B" will cease even as a tradition to represent Letters (in Australia) and be no more than a mere weekly. "The Bookfellow" is wider and bigger and if possible more individual than the "Red Page" + Bulletin, but the loss of the latter - as-it-1 was leaves a sore spot where we call the heart.

And some time later Alfred Deakin included in the list of things "We agree on ... entirely":

3. The "Bulletin" has lost its leadership and is losing fast the confidence of its readers tho' [sic] it is still trading on its old reputation. It is a thousand pities that you could not yet challenge it in its own field. It would mean a lot of money ... in the first year or two ... But opportunity will come.

There is little doubt, then, that Stephens did set out to challenge the Bulletin "in its own field" - for pre-eminence in the little world of Australian letters. To this end he increased the size from duodecimo to folio (the same size as the Bulletin) and the frequency of publication from monthly to weekly. Both moves would be designed to woo Bulletin readers by offering them a magazine that conformed to long established reading habits both in format and frequency of issue. A circulation similar to the Bulletin's was also sought. The magazine boasted that it was "The Most Widely Circulated Australasian Weekly But One" and an early number carried this editorial comment:

Lest the modesty that is the jewel in its dower should tarnish, The Bookfellow will as far as possible refrain from referring to its own noble qualities in its own brazen columns. But just once we must be permitted to thank the hundreds of correspondents who have sent letters of kindly welcome, and have shed cash-blood in witness of their faith. The Book-

fellow is now sent regularly to newsagents in every capital city in the Commonwealth, in the "four sister" cities of New Zealand, and in many a town behind and between; while subscribers have already squared the circle from Cooktown to Dunedin, and Brisbane to Perth.

The price was very reasonable, too, being reduced from 6d. per issue (or 16s. per annum to 3d. (or 12s. per annum) after three weeks. For their threepence readers received a sixteen-page folio that strove to set new standards in technical presentation for journals of its type. The first cover was an expensive all-over two colour plate featuring a gum-leaves motif; glossy paper was used throughout so that the printed items could be set off with dozens of small decorative blocks: drawings, motifs (including Hugh McCrae's of portly "Ye Bookfellow" in eighteenth-century regalia), 'headpieces' and 'tailpieces'.

Shaw Neilson's "Old Granny Sullivan!", for example, was given an extravagant two-page spread: printed in bold large type with an ornamental border to fill the left hand page and faced, on the right hand page, with a full page charcoal illustration by "Dagmar Ross, S. W. Bacon Co., Eng.". The publication costs alone must have been considerable; and certainly there was trouble with printers unused to such an exacting task-master (not very prompt in payments

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1 Bookfellow, 24 January 1907, p. 4.
2 Thereafter advertisements for Lipton's teas and Fry's cocoa were featured on the cover.
3 On 18 April 1907, to initiate a competition on the topic "Headpieces and Tailpieces", two pages of designs were printed (pp. 8-9). The winning entry by Hugh McCrae is of Pan piping to a friend among kangaroos and gum-leaves.
either?), for the printers were changed twice during the eight months that the series survived.\(^1\)

To meet costs Stephens was forced to accept extensive advertising: in the case of Lipton's tea even going so far as to commission the short-story writer, Albert Dorrington, to drop off at Ceylon on a trip to England and to write an informative, descriptive article on tea-growing which directly advertised "Lipton's, the Tea Australians Drink"\(^2\). To appeal to more general readers too, there was a series on dogs (the dingo, the kelpie, etc.) by Robert Kalenski; an account of "How an Amateur Fought" by Hugh McLean; short stories by Bierce, Stephens and Dorrington; and The Lady Calphurnia Royal, a romantic novel by Stephens and Dorrington, ran as a serial from 20 June. He ran "Interviews" with personalities like Madame Melba, J. C. Williamson, W. H. Traill and "The Circus Man", all written up in Stephens's brightest journalistic style. Competitions (prize £3.3.0) for the best Australian limerick, unadjectival eulogy of an Australian town, facetious letter of condolence and translations of French poems were also designed to appeal to general readers as much as to "Bookfellows".

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1 The printers were:
   1. 3 January–2 May.    S. Leigh and Co., Clarence St.
   2. 9 May–20 June.      J. A. Campbell and Sons, Mullins St.
   3. 27 June–15 August. Arthur Norwood, Queen's Place.

2 The article ran from 20 June 1907 to 4 July 1907. Also, on 6 June 1907 (pp. 14–15) there was a two-page account of Lipton's entitled "A Mammoth Business / The Story of Its Evolution".
To involve his readers further, and because he felt that much important 'folk' history was being lost for want of recording, Stephens revived the "Australian Notes and Queries" which he had initiated in the Bulletin, but which had degenerated into apocryphal "Aboriginalities". Bookfellows were invited to send in "valuable facts impressions or experiences which may otherwise be lost to our country" concerning aboriginal life and language, natural history, white Australasian language, exploits and typical developments and characteristic old-time anecdotes. Further, the editor with Bulletin experience in mind required that:

All references to books should state title, author, publisher, date of publication, place where published, and pages quoted from; and all records of personal experience should give date and place of occurrence and other helpful details.

For his elite audience of dedicated Bookfellows the editor printed verse from old Red Page contributors like Neilson, Hugh and Dorothy McCrae, Hebblethwaite, Quinn, Ogilvie, Church, O'Dowd, Mary Gilmore, Jessie Mackay and M. A. Robertson; and stories and articles by Dorrington, Will Lawson, Edward Dyson, Hugh McCrae, and Louis Esson. Favourite poets and poetic themes were presented in a series of attractively illustrated and printed "Little Anthologies": there were Little Anthologies of Tobacco, of New Zealand Verse, of Sea Verse and of Irish Love Songs (as themes); and selections of verse by Dorothy Francis McCrae, Mary Gilmore and Ella Wheeler Wilcox (as individual collections). The practice of printing overseas verse, stories and articles under the guise of 'reviewing' was continued; and the editor himself wrote

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1 Bookfellow, 7 February 1907, p. 12.
2 For example, a series of articles entitled "Sailors' Chanteys" was pirated from a book under review, Laura Smith's The Music of the Waters (Bookfellow, 7 March 1907, p. 9; 14 March 1907, p. 9; and 21 March 1907, p. 7).
short paragraphs in his own "Under the Gum Tree" column, reprinted an occasional poem or sketch, and wrote two or three sustained articles. He also enthusiastically endorsed Will Lawson's plan for an "Association of Australasian Authors"¹ to protect local copyright ("An author is a poor creature; but the worst use you can put him to is to starve him"²). In "The Interesting Case of W. H. Ogilvie and The Bulletin Company" its erstwhile Junior Sub-Editor wrote a full page attack on the Bulletin for selling the poet's copyright to a publishing firm for £150 without giving the poet a share. "What . . . would 'Steele Rudd' say [if his £2,000 worth of copyright were sold without division of profit]?"³ he demanded; and had the satisfaction of printing Davis's reply in the following issue "Well, I wouldn't say anything - but my solicitors would say quite a lot."⁴ Clearly Stephens was working towards attracting writers (and with them readers) away from his powerful and well entrenched opposition⁵.

The "Answers to Correspondents" columns do show, however, that Stephens was still capable of throwing off sparks, and provide some of the liveliest reading of all. For example:

¹ Bookfellows, 18 April 1907, p. 3; 25 April 1907, p. 14; and 9 May 1907, p. 5.
² Ibid., 18 April 1907, p. 3.
³ Ibid., 4 April 1907, p. 6.
⁴ This article prompted Will Lawson to write (18 April 1907, p. 3) suggesting the formation of an association of authors, with similar functions to the recently-formed The Australian Society of Authors. (See "Editorial" in The Australian Author, III, iv [Spring, October 1971], 3.)
⁵ Ibid., 11 April 1907, p. 14.
⁶ See S. E. Lee, "A. G. Stephens as Literary Editor", Southerly, XXIV, iii (1964), 166-167 for further details.
Terrible! terrible! Have you no shame? (14 February 1907, p. 13)

Your evident pleasure in concocting it must remain your reward. (6 June 1907, p. 13)

Doesn't vehemently move us, and a languid emotion isn't worth inking. (14 March 1907, p. 14)

And the deeply-held ideas about melody and 'singing lines' come through in vigorous comments like these:

No rhythm in it; count your stresses - or chant it till it swings truly. (18 April 1907, p. 11)

Good idea, but handling still too stiff, and too many nasty little words impeding it. Make it flow, and grandly. (14 February 1907, p. 18)

You want to grip your ideas tighter with your form. All those leave an impression of bulging over. And if you'd play the lines on a piano, so as to get a regular time-beat, you'd do better. (28 February 1907, p. 18)

But the "Bookfellow" was dissipating his energies too widely. Readers were getting very little of the authentic Stephens; so little in fact, that when Vance Palmer searched the Bookfellow files for articles worth preserving in book form he found none at all in this second series. I am in agreement, substantially, with Palmer's implied judgment of Stephens's critical performance in this second series. Apart from sociological studies of "The Englishman" and "The Australian" and an editorial note on "[The Australian] National Character", a brief commentary on "New Zealand Verse" and a thoughtful essay on

1 A. G. Stephens: His Life and Work, "The Englishman", pp. 179-181 is attributed to Bookfellow, 15 February 1921. In fact, this 'portrait' was first published in the number of 28 February 1907, p. 3; the 1921 item reprints the earlier one.

2 Bookfellow, 23 February 1907, p. 3.

3 Ibid., 14 March 1907, p. 3.

4 Ibid., 27 June 1907, p. 3.

5 Ibid., 10 January 1907, pp. 13-14.
"What is Australian Literature?"\textsuperscript{1}, Stephens's work here is disappointingly snippety and uneven. Tart comments to correspondents ("You too!! We get 50 letters a day; and unless you observe correspondence rules on page 2 we can't help you"\textsuperscript{2}); rueful editorial admissions ("Misprints and blunders: they gather by single spies if not by battalions . . . to astonish and disgust us later"\textsuperscript{3}); and apologetic explanations ("It is gladly regretted that so many exhibits [of Australian limericks] have been received from all parts of Australasia that the competition machine actually was clogged in the embarrassment of its own riches"\textsuperscript{4}) - all show that Stephens was feeling the strain.

The Bookfellow, apart from secretarial help, was a one-man show. It is surprising that he was able to keep the venture going so long for no one man has hours enough to edit and write for a journal of this size, manage its business affairs (including Australasia-wide distribution) and supervise the technical details of production (with three different printers). Something had to slip; in Stephens's case it was the time-consuming business of reflective writing and reading.

One final comment is that the nationalism which so excited P. R. Stephens\textsuperscript{5} - and was blazoned in his gum-tree motif and slogan "FOR AUSTRALIA" - tended to express itself about this time in social and political commentary

\begin{enumerate}
\item Bookfellow, 14 February 1907, p. 3.
\item Ibid., 9 May 1907, p. 13.
\item Ibid., 28 March 1907, p. 4.
\item Ibid., 4 July 1907, p. 14.
\item See The Life and Work of A. G. Stephens ("The Bookfellow"), p. 4.
\end{enumerate}
rather than in literature. On 2 May 1907 the journal was renamed Australia and the Bookfellow and from 30 May 1907 simply Australia, a change symptomatic of the new emphasis. Intelligent contemporaries were quick to note both the general loss of vitality and too insistent nationalism. Frank Morton expressed their disappointment in candid, and I feel accurate, analysis of the situation:

The Bookfellow was a fine title, attractive, distinctive, and especially A.G.S. Australia is too big and vague. And you feel it: altho' [sic] you wouldn't admit it. You don't try to lure the gaping mob to the hills as you did in the early numbers, but are content to feed them on the flat. Fact is, the paper has not the snap it had. You are becoming, I my dear, too respectable.

And again:

You see, the things that people want to say in criticism of you, they do not say to your face. But I hear 'em all. I am a devout Stephensian, and I am for ever [sic] smiting some yawping idiot that arises to prove that you are not you; but merely a jumped-up counterfeit. And when one agrees with idiots on some point it is sometimes difficult to lie with quite convincing heat and vigour. I feel that Australia needs ginger.

As mentioned earlier, Series 2 came to a sudden close on 15 August 1907 (Vol. 2, No. 7 - the thirty-third number). It was four years before the third series appeared, in 1911. Meanwhile Stephens had been working as a journalist in New Zealand and (from July 1910) as literary columnist with the Sydney Sun. The third series was to evolve from his Sun column.

IV

"The Bookfellow Column": The Sydney Sunday Sun (July 1910–December 1911)

The Sunday Sun management regarded its engagement of Stephens as a major journalistic 'scoop'. This is clear from the tone of the announcement itself:

1 Letter of 18 July 1907, S.P., Vol. 5 (A2301). The following quotation is from this source.
The services of Mr. A. G. Stephens, the "Red Pagan", have been secured to conduct a literary column in the "Sunday Sun".

Mr. Stephens is almost too well known in the literary circles of Australia to need a mention. He it was who founded the Red Page of the "Bulletin," and conducted it for many years, bringing to bear upon literary matters a viewpoint hitherto unknown in this country ...

Nor did they skimp their literary columnist in matters of space and presentation. The three-column layout (on page 9, adjacent to "Fishing Notes") resembled both the Red Page and "Under the Gum Tree" (Bookfellow) column both visually and in general content, tone and approach. In the first number (of 24 July 1910) the large eye-catching heading - "The Bookfellow / Written for The Sun by A. G. Stephens All Rights Reserved" - was illuminated by an ornate gum-tree lined black-and-white allegorical drawing of a diabolical bunyip-piper enticing a host of juvenile koala bears to their leafy doom (bliss?). A long new poem by Arnold Wall ("The Muse's Sunday Out") was printed in the top left-hand corner spot where so many of the well-known asterisked and italicized poems had been introduced to Red Page readers. Two of "Hop's" better cartoons were reproduced to illustrate a commentary in honour of the artist's sixty-fourth birthday ("The merit of a great deal of our black and white is all on the surface: Hop puts his quality deeper down; his work is a commentary on life."²)

There were copious and varied brightly written notes on books and writers with tantalizing sub-headings typical of the Red Page. For example, a note on O. Henry's death bore the unlikely heading "Wooden Nutmegs":

¹ Sunday Sun, 17 July 1910, p. 7.
² Ibid., 24 July 1910, p. 9. The quotations that follow are from this source.
The [*sic*] is humor [*sic*], and truth, and a stimulating subtlety in Henry's stories, but the aroma of wooden nutmegs, the taint of the machine, prevents them from reaching the highest cosmopolitan rank. In their development they are a little too like a conjurer's feats - their cocktail fillip of surprise is not precisely the best that the conte can do for us.

The rest of the criticism in this first number was of comparable soundness and the writing just as distinctive and barbed; for example, this note on Arthur Bayldon:

It is Bayldon's heroic misfortune to have attacked poetry without a poetical brain, to have spent his life on literature [*sic*] when he had much better have continued owning lighters. With prodigious energy, he has no vestige of high imagination, and his best talent is to reflect a fact rhetorically. Without knowledge sufficient to poise his judgment, much of his work is marred by the most obvious faults, usually faults of extravagance; perpetually he strives for high notes until his poetic voice cracks.

And again:

Bayldon is not a great writer, but he has narrowly missed being reputed a great man. In some aspects he is a great man. Unluckily he struck his statuesque pose before he found his pedestal; and in the dust he is disregarded.

The best and sharpest criticism was directed against a young New Zealand writer, Miss Dulcie Deamer, who had won a prize of £25 in a Lone Hand competition with a story that was "simply a tour de force, a feat in literary acrobatics, quite wonderful in the circumstances, but quite worthless". Annoyed as ever at the waste of misdirected talent Stephens gave Miss Deamer sound advice: to observe at first hand ("the last thing a young writer should do is to write at second hand, distilling books instead of observing life"), and to write honestly and naturally ("what remains is that Miss Deamer should leave the field of artifice and apply her undoubted literary talent to work that will have the virtues of sincerity, simplicity and truth"). With characteristic directness and cogency the critic declared that
intrinsic falsity vitiates the whole of Miss Deamer's work; it fails in illusion. It fails also in interest. As the work of a girl it is curious, just as a dog smoking a pipe is curious. But the test of literature is not its curiosity, but its value, its force and effect, its power to convince and move us. The whole race of literary prodigies is condemned by the appeal to the result.

Although this first column was clearly the considered work of an exceptional talent, the consistently high standard was not to be sustained in the later issues. The "Red Pagan" had proved he could do it again, but once the initial impetus was lost Stephens seemed to lack the energy and enthusiasm, the involvement necessary, for writing of this quality. He retained the format, showed individual taste (and individual predilections) in his choice of 'feature' poems, 'rifled' with discrimination, involved correspondents in occasional controversy, wrote a series of set pieces on "black and white" artists, contributed poems and sketches, and reviewed the popular lending library books of the day - the staple of his Sunday audience, mostly with wit and gusto. The literary clownishness that Stephens apparently was unable to resist throughout his writing life when confronted by works of extraordinary badness, was illustrated in a mock-serious exegesis of some of the more ludicrous works of Arthur Bate- man, a self-styled "Austral Shakespeare" whose Dramatic and Poetical Works came to Stephens for review. As with much of Stephens's comic writing, the horse-play is too cruel, too obvious, and far too long sustained (recall the Red Page series on Daley's presumed 'death'). For over six blocked columns (in two issues) Stephens churned out burlesque criticism of this order:

1 R.P., 20 August 1903.
2 Sunday Sun, 18 September 1910, p. 9; and 2 October 1910, p. 17.
Four hundred and fifty solid pages of poetry at the first blast — cut upon ye, little trickling poetasters! Futil tribe of Mc's and 0's! Call upon the caves to hide ye, the mountains to cover ye, for the Sun! the Sun! of Austral poesy has arisen in his strength, and his burning rays shall light the pyres of rivals. What shall we say of him. [sic] How describe him? Language fails; metaphors miss; hyperboles fall short. The Austral Shakespeare is magnificent, marvellous, splendid, glorious. He is solemn, stately, sumptuous, spectacular. He cuts a dash, a splash and caper. He kills the calf and roasts the ox; he rolls logs and picks up pins. Imagination pants after him; reason is dethroned by him. How then view him in his majesty. [sic] Only through the dark glass of quotation. Every page of the "Works" is a pearl-oyster. Let us gather pearls on the Shakespeare shore.¹

There are, of course, articles and reviews of distinction scattered through the columns of the Sunday Sun, many of which were reprinted when the Bookfellow resumed publication in 1911. The quality of the writing and criticism might be illustrated by looking briefly at comments on four well-known figures. First, John Galsworthy's new book A Motley was said aptly to show "Just the glimpse of genius, the intuitive art that seems beyond the reach of Galsworthy's careful talent."² In the same number a long review of Mary Gilmore's Married and Other Verses, after noting the limitations and weaknesses honestly enough, concluded with a generous and defensible assertion that here Mrs Gilmore "makes a notable accession to Australian poetry, and adds a thrilling voice to the literature of humanity". Then there was a characteristic and well-taken rebuke for the publishers of Lawson's "discreditable collection", The Rising of the Court:

¹ Sunday Sun, 13 September 1910, p. 9.
² Ibid., 31 July 1910, p. 9.
We cannot take the book with a callous acceptance of its assertion of the decadence of one who has been styled first in his rank of Austral-ian authors. Why trail Lawson's well-earned reputation in the dust?

And finally, in the same number, Arthur Adams's *Galahad Jones* is said "to hover continually between a sentiment and a sneer, and each spoils the other".

As well as throwing up sparks like these, the *Sunday Sun* files of 1910-1911 are of some interest to the researcher looking for specific evidence of Stephens's long-held critical theories and literary taste. Sentimentality, it would appear, was acceptable if rendered in verse form and designated "Poetry". Thus melodic and melancholy verses by Edward Tregear ("Too wild the waters, too fierce the spray, / Night and day") were printed with the rhetorical question "Is it not exquisitely grieved?" Also C. H. Souter's mawkish "Irish Lords" was printed with the comment that "Its trailing cadence of old grief never fails to give me the thrill that accompanies poetry, and brings the tears very close to eyes well worn in the worship of a thousand poets." Later James Hebblethwaite's projected volume *Meadow and Bush* was said to "represent certainly the finest body of poetical work that has come out of Australia" when Hebblethwaite's "grace is suffused with emotion, not even Wordsworth can thrill us with a nobler ecstasy". Again in a review of *Wine and Roses* there was a suggestion that Daley's "Creeve Roe" verses should be collected but published separately from a second volume which combined the best serious verse

2 Ibid., 7 August 1910, p. 9.
3 Ibid., 11 September 1910, p. 9.
4 Ibid., 2 October 1910, p. 17.
from *At Dawn and Dusk* and *Wine and Roses*, "Daley is worth one book of grave verse and one book of the rhymes which he signed usually "Creeve Roe", so as not to impair the dignity of his serious muse." \(^1\) [my emphasis] The familiar argument that poetry belongs to youth also emerged in an article entitled "Poetical Editors". Poetry, he said is

written from a bounding pulse, ... the high-tensioned nerves, of the dreamer who has brooded under the sunlight, and goes forth to finger his delirious harp under the moon. Poetry is one of the phenomena of the universal fulgescence, the life-force that swells the apple and rounds the orb. Properly seen, ... every poet is a pustule; he has more energy than he can find outlet for, and just naturally he burgeons into the excess of wild words ... 

An often noted preference for lightweight over serious (or 'solemn') literature was demonstrated again, as in the note on 7 August 1910 entitled "Wanted a Bindloss", wherein Australian writers were enjoined to adopt the current best-sellers' successful format and produce books of action "neither too foolish for the wise, nor too wise for the foolish". Also familiar was the assertion that "Greek literature inevitably is outmoded, in so far as it is based in fables"; that moderns accept too readily the standing and authority of irrelevant classics. The argument ran

The grand academic error is to apply the standards of yesterday to to-day and to-morrow. For most people classical literature is valuable no longer. Its content of thought and emotion has been re-valued, re-adjusted, and absorbed in modern language; and English literature, for example, contains everything that was worthy in Hellenic literature - contains far more mindstuff than any man can apply. Yet we preserve the tradition of the emancipated "Dark Ages" in turning to their source of light, though the

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\(^1\) Sunday Sun, 29 January 1911, p. 17.

\(^2\) Ibid., 26 November 1911, p. 13.
new sources give better illumination at less cost of labor! Better—because the light shines through the crystal of science instead of through the lanthorn of superstition . . .

Finally, on technique, the critic iterated that the essential feature of good poetry was its melodic quality. This point was made for example in a review of Dorothea Mackellar's The Closed Door and Other Verses on 28 May 1911. It is also made on 12 February 1911:

The first thing you have to do in writing poetry is to keep time—not to count non-existent feet, or to mark stresses, or to measure values. But across the woof of time the warp of stresses runs to make the stuff of poetry, and in the stuff is woven the pattern of syllabic values.

The names of poets chosen for honourable mention illustrate that the critical ideas expressed in the reviews and articles were consistently applied; almost all the poetry embodies the qualities of emotional content and melodic statement. A short list of the poets most frequently praised would include the lyricists Edward Tregar, Roderic Quin, Hubert Church, Shaw Neilson, James Hebblethwaite and Mary Gilmore.

"The Bookfellow" columns in the Sunday Sun from 1910-1911 are important too for the way in which they confirm and modify impressions of Stephens's basic philosophical position as deduced from a perusal of the earlier writings. Positively, the mature man still hero-worshipped Nietzsche, both as philosopher and as "a literary Proteus, with many sides and many books for many people" (18 June 1911). The most forthright statement is to be found in an early issue, where after announcing that the first complete English translation was in current publication, and that some fresh biographical material was available, he declared

1 Sunday Sun, 30 July 1911, p. 9.
2 Reprinted as "Heart of Poetry", Bookfellow, 15 June 1914, p. 128.
Nietzsche is an author whose ideas are permeating a great part of current thought that will sooner or later find expression in action; and his books deserve the serious attention of everybody who is concerned with human problems. Whither are we tending? Whither should we tend? What should be the rule of life for the individual? What for the race? And why? To these questions and others Nietzsche supplies answers that have profound philosophical interest.

Negatively, the tone of an article entitled "Evasit, Erupit, Obit", written on the occasion of William James's death, shows a patronizing and intellectually arrogant tone towards the ideas of a distinguished philosopher who strove to make a coherent and self-sufficient philosophical system from basic beliefs very similar to Stephens's own professed commonsensical practicality ("Prove all things"):

William's final creation is practical: the word made flesh, the thought asked for its justification in deed, and the deed asked for its justification in the fuller, intenser life of the agent. The maxim "Taste and try before you buy" is plainly inapplicable to the celestial dream.

Although he agreed that "The Gospel of James" was expounded with novel emphasis and that the exposition was attractive, Stephens said he could not "see anything new in 'Pragmatism' but the label". "Pragmatism", he declared, "is simply the philosophy of backing your winners" - after they'd won. Relying on the now discredited psychological theories of "instincts and race memories" (he even talked about "creating new instincts") and the questionable logical device of analogy, Stephens delivered his confident coup de grâce in this paragraph:

Pragmatical progress now can only be in the direction of creating new instincts by an induction of tests, so that the philosophy will become unconscious. But this is precisely what the progress of religion, for its true votaries, has performed already. The motto of the eternal re-

1 Sunday Sun, 28 August 1910, p. 9.
2 Ibid., 4 September 1910, p. 9.
The quotations that follow are from this source.
turn is the drill-sergeant's "As you were!" Pragmatical William Cobbett, forced to save his pence, who asked himself in face of an article to be purchased: "Do I really want it? Can I do without it?" was a proper subject of mockery for pretty girls. Because the pretty girls have transformed reason into instinct - the individual's argument into the argument of racial experience - and do not need to waste time in pondering whether they really want that love of a hat, being assured as soon as they see it that they can't do without it. It is fortunate that a pragmatist is built for practice, since he has decidedly the worst of it in theory.

This article in the *Sunday Sun* is one of those contradictory pieces of evidence that continually crop up to complicate and confuse the issue of Stephens's basic critical theories and philosophical beliefs. Jamesian pragmatism, one imagines, would have had some attraction for a writer whose works, implicitly and explicitly, embody so much down-to-earth intellectual practicality and commonsense empiricism. Perhaps here again as much as the brightness and independence is demonstrated a basic journalistic levity: the flippant tone as shown in the heading "Evasit, Erupit, Obit" and the sub-heading "The Gospel of James" as well as in the facetious images drawn from commerce and the racetrack, is in questionable taste for a death notice. Perhaps too here is further evidence that the bouncy self-sufficiency, the refusal to be impressed by the 'great names' of letters and scholarship, the suspicion of the academic and intellectual 'establishment', the close to arrogant faith in his own intellectual stature could and did sometimes operate negatively: in this case blurring a recognition of shared ideas, and leading to an over-simplified denigration of the theories of a considerable and complex intellect.

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When Stephens launched his *Bookfellow* for the third time on 1 December 1911 he kept his syndicated column running in the *Sunday Sun*. This advertisement in the daily *Sun* (of Saturday 30 December 1911) gives an inkling of his apprec-
iation of the tastes and interests of his journalistic audience: "There is one Australian publication that is more fiercely agreed with or disagreed with, more talked about and more furiously argued about than any other. That publication is THE MONTHLY BOOKFELLOW." The monthly journal was to draw much of its raw material from the backlog of "Bookfellow Columns" of 1910-1911 and from the columns that were published contemporaneously\(^1\). The Bookfellow journal was about to begin its vintage period of 1912 to 1915.

V

The Bookfellow: Series 3 (1911-1925)

The third series was produced and sustained under great difficulties: in the 160 months from December 1911 to March 1925 (when the magazine ceased separate production) Stephens was able to issue only ninety numbers; that is, could meet little better than half the self-imposed monthly deadlines. Publication details are as follows:

- **Volume I**, December 1911 to January 1913, 14 numbers
- **Volume II**, February 1913 to January 1914, 12 numbers
- **Volume III**, February 1914 to January 1915, 12 numbers
- **Volume IV**, February 1915 to January 1916, 11 numbers (November 1915 did not issue)
- **Volume V**, February 1916 to January 1921, 14 numbers (September 1920 did not issue)
- **Volume VI**, February 1921 to November 1921, 10 numbers (December 1921 did not issue)
- **Volume VII**, January 1922 to August 1923, 11 numbers (eight months no issue)
- **Volume VIII**, October 1924 to March 1925, 6 numbers
- \*Vol. V, i issued February 1915; Vol. V, ii-xiv from December 1919 to December 1920

\(^1\) Up to this point, analysis has been concentrated on material not reproduced in the Bookfellow journal of 1911-1912. Articles preserved in the Bookfellow are considered in the next section.
There were two long breaks, a war-time break of forty-five months (from February 1916 to December 1919) and another of fourteen months (from August 1923 to October 1924). In addition there were occasional unexpected breaks: the numbers for November 1915, September 1920 and December 1921 did not appear, and it took nineteen months to issue the eleven numbers that comprise Volume VII (which ran from January 1922 to August 1923). The frequent changes of printer and format are further evidence of production difficulties: during the years 1916-1925, for example, no fewer than five different printers were employed, namely:

1. Vol. V, i (February 1916): Morton Ltd, 75 Ultimo Road, Sydney
2. Vol. V, ii-xiv (December 1919-January 1921): Central Press, 10 Central Street, Sydney
5. Vol. VIII, i-vi (October 1924-March 1925): Publicity Press, 12/16 Regent Street, Sydney

Nevertheless the new Bookfellow did get off to a good start, and maintained its early momentum and quality until the second year of the War. Stephens had profited from the 1907 fiasco. The new series was less ambitious, more soundly based and obviously, in these first three years at least, the work of a less harried man. After the journalistic sojourn in New Zealand, Stephens returned to criticism with his old enthusiasm and energy; and with far fewer financial distractions because of the sure financial returns from his syndicated literary

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1 For an account of Stephens's financial and publishing difficulties see Constance Robertson's "A.G.S. as Papa" in The Papers of Constance Robertson (ML MSS 1105/1, Item 2), pp. 213 f.

Also, Harry F. Chaplin, A Neilson Collection (Sydney: The Wentworth Press, 1964), p. 3.
column. Stephens later boasted in an autobiographical note that the "Bookfellow Column" was syndicated in "up to ten daily newspapers of Australia and New Zealand - one in each Australian State and four in New Zealand provinces. This series reached one of the largest audiences ever attained by an Australian author; with a total circulation that numbered frequently over 200,000 [corrected: sometimes 300,000]"\(^1\). Where in 1907 business worries connected with the bookshop were in the background, now Stephens was required by his bread-and-butter occupation to practise the art of criticism before a large and not altogether undiscriminating and inappreciative audience, as this comment by Arnold Wall (from New Zealand) shows: "I am very sorry to miss your column in the Press, and suppose your contract has expired. It is a real loss. A really fresh and original comment upon books is a rarity anywhere now, and 'South of the Line' as the journalists say, it is a godsend."\(^2\)

More importantly, as noted earlier, Stephens retained copyright over the syndicated material. This meant that the best material from the column could be used again in his magazine. Thus two of the articles that the perceptive Palmer selected as representing Stephens's best criticism (that is, are collected in his Life and Works of A. G. Stephens) appeared in the column first\(^3\). In short, by the end of 1911 Stephens not only had found touch again, but had

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1 S.P. (ML MSS 1104/1, Item 1, p. 15a).

2 Letter of 27 April 1911, S.P., Vol. 7 (A2303). Wall must have been referring to a New Zealand publication; the column ran without break in the Sunday Sun during 1911.

3 Notably "Heart of Poetry", Bookfellow, 15 June 1914, p. 128 (Sunday Sun, 12 February 1911) and a review of L. Stone's Jonah, Bookfellow, 1 December 1911 (Sunday Sun, 15 October 1911).
accumulated a good stock of copy to fall back on - a stock that was being continually replenished as the weekly syndicated column deadline was met. As Stephens himself put it in a retrospective note "the journal was merged in syndicated weekly articles from which the monthly BOOKFELLOW flowers naturally".\(^1\) The fifty numbers of the Bookfellow that Stephens produced contemporaneously with his syndicated newspaper column (that is, from 1911 to 1915) are up to the standard of the better Red Page criticism. Here Stephens was working again at somewhere near the top of his powers, so it is appropriate that when Vance Palmer set about collecting the best of Stephens's writings he should select seventeen extracts from these fifty numbers, as against seven only from the seventy-eight numbers that preceded and followed these 'flowering' years from 1912-1915.\(^2\) This proportion is a pretty just summing up of the relative importance of the early and later Bookfellows. The middle period clearly represents the Bookfellow at its best.\(^3\)

After the 1914-1918 war Stephens's literary influence became attenuated. The newspaper audience was lost; and as he aged he found himself cut off from the main stream of vigorous Australian writing. The old buoyancy and flexibility were largely gone; social conditions had changed; Stephens's reactions were

\(^1\) Bookfellow, 1 January 1913, p. 12. See above, p. 226.

\(^2\) Thirty-eight numbers had appeared before (Series 1 and 2); forty came after (from Series 3, 5, ii).

\(^3\) Palmer's marked preference of Red Page to Bookfellow material - forty-three extracts to twenty-four - does not appeal to me as a just estimate of the relative critical importance of the "Red Pagan" and the "Bookfellow". Palmer it seems was attracted by the 'Australianism' of the Red Page as against the more cosmopolitan interests shown in the Bookfellow.
those of a rather intolerant conservative. Like many middle-aged and elderly men of his day (including that arch critic of the Boer War, J. F. Archibald) who threw themselves with patriotic fervour into a 'war effort' at home because their age precluded active service, Stephens became a rather pathetic sabre-rattling jingoist. The pacificist who fourteen years before could describe the South African contingent as "Sheep to the Slaughter"\(^1\) filled his Bookfellow with fiery editorials, patriotic marching songs, and uncritically accepted propaganda about German atrocities in Belgium. It is instructive to compare his diatribes against "The Hun" with earlier Red Page attacks on the English for their 'maltreatment' of Boer women and children in South African 'Concentration Camps'\(^2\). And, like many other civilian Colonel Blimps, he found himself out of sympathy with the younger generation who had endured or were appalled by horrors that his own propaganda had rendered him incapable of appreciating. Also much of his literary energy between 1916 and 1919 was dissipated in collecting and collating The Anzac Memorial, a plush souvenir for returning soldier-heroes, the 1919 edition of which is surely one of the most vulgar and pretentiously gilded examples of 'arty' production in our publishing history\(^3\).

So the Bookfellow lost its sparkle and its sense of contemporaneity as its editor turned his scrutiny increasingly backwards to the writers he had known

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\(^1\) R.P., 4 August 1900.

The article begins "When is this insane folly going to stop? Here we are, a nascent nation to whose development ardent young manhood is essential, sending away the flower of our manhood . . . to be used up in Britain's wars."

\(^2\) R.P., 17 August 1901.

\(^3\) See especially the 'deluxe edition' in the Mitchell Library collection.
at the turn of the century and before the war. And as his own creative resources flagged more and more so he 'rifled' his own earlier work increasingly, sometimes hardly altering a phrase from the original article. So, apart from the reviews, one has to sift through considerable dross in the Bookfellow from 1916 to 1925 before being rewarded with the sparkle of serious original criticism. Little wonder then that Stephens lost his audience and finally had to close down in 1925. Mainly one suspects, through the offices of an old friend, Mrs Lala Fisher (editor of the Theatre Magazine in Sydney and a minor poet), Stephens's Bookfellow did reappear briefly (from January to July 1926) as a supplement to Stage and Society. But the race was run: to younger contemporaries the Bookfellow had become obsolete and out of touch, an anachronism and a relic.

In a way the failure of the Bookfellow was inevitable. It lacked an audience. As Palmer said (of the earlier numbers); "Most of the people who had eagerly read the critical notes of A.G.S. on the Red Page were not used to the idea of buying a literary paper. Literature as a spice to the journalistic dish - yes - but not as a whole meal."\(^1\) Stephens's obstinate courage and initiative in continuing to produce for so many years the kind of journal he felt the country needed, and its literature deserved, are admirable. And become more admirable as one becomes aware of the daunting difficulties confronting the editor and his efforts to surmount them.

Circulation, of course, was a major concern; without this it was impossible

\(^1\) The Life and Work of A. G. Stephens, p. 28.
to attract the advertisers whose fees alone could make the journal a commercial proposition. Worse, lack of an audience rendered the missionary zeal futile. Stephens used every device he could think of for increasing circulation, including notes like this:

"The Bookfellow" commences its third year [1911-1914] of the present Series with a widening circle of enthusiastic subscribers that can still widen. Liberal terms are offered to agents who will introduce the magazine to new readers in their home towns. Bright boys and girls also can earn—have earned—ample pocket-money by canvassing for subscribers to THE BOOKFELLOW. Write to the Manager.

"Trade Supplements" were introduced with the first number of the new series.

The editor informed 'the trade' that specimen copies of this supplement "went to every Bookseller and every Publisher in Australasia and that specimen copies of the ordinary edition went to every Newspaper (over 800) every Library (over 2000) and every School (over 10,000) in Australasia". Consequently,

All possible Buyers of Books, and all possible Sellers of Books, are thus brought into a close connection for their common profit. You, who wish to sell, are here speaking to every buyer. You, who wish to buy, may here state your wants to every seller.

The responsible reviews should improve public taste, he argued ("supply a basis of general value"), and the sale of good books, because they cost more, would bring higher profits:

If you can plant a set of "The Golden Bough" on one retired elderly philosophic gentleman in your town (and every town has at least one retired elderly philosophic gentleman in residence) you will make at a blow the profit you make on (say) 500 "cheaps".

1 "The Bookfellow", Bookfellow, 15 January 1914, p. 12.
2 Ibid., 1 December 1911, p. i [Supplement].
3 Ibid., 1 January 1912, p. vi [Supplement]. The quotation that follows is from this source.
A "retired elderly philosophic gentleman" would be attracted to books as expensive as *The Golden Bough*, Stephens argued, if he read about them in the Bookfellow: "In the hands of a good fisherman THE BOOKFELLOW is bait - honest bait. You try." Even as late as 1920, he was arguing that because his magazine held "the quality of permanence" and had "taken its place as an integral part of Australian literature"¹ he had a responsibility to achieve as widespread a circulation as possible:

We purpose to circulate Australia and New Zealand in other countries. We purpose to circulate sound opinions, first principles, reasonable conclusions, in Australia and New Zealand.

The Six States of vast Australia exist virtually in news-tight compartments. New Zealand is another news-tight compartment. Very little about one compartment is published or known in another. Western Australia is influenced by events unheard of in Queensland, busy at its own fire.

The Bookfellow cultivates its garden in Sydney, but we hope that the morals of Sydney, fairly deduced, will apply to the fables of Wanganui.² Aesop is still hitting all round the compass of thought.

In addition to these fairly conventional trade practices, Stephens called upon influential, even distinguished, friends and well-wishers to assist in publicizing his journal. For example, Arthur Deakin, the former Prime Minister and then Leader of the Opposition in the Federal Parliament, wrote to Stephens early in 1912 that he would "be only too happy to take any chance of calling attention to the 'Bookfellow' - Have been doing that by means of chat already - Would make a public reference if only an opportunity offers - But such are very rare"³. That opportunity came at a conference of the "Australian Natives:  

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¹ Bookfellow, 15 May 1920, p. 119. Stephens was quoting from an advertisement by "Gilmore's Book-Shop".

² Ibid., 15 June 1920, p. 121.

Association" in March. A facetious comment on Deakin's speech in an editorial of The Age on 20 March enabled Deakin to repeat his commendation, in a letter to the editor which said:

Sir, - Permit me to remind the readers of your second leader in to-day's issue that in remarks occupying about half an hour my allusion to Hansard itself occupied about half a minute. Further that so far from "only recommending" one single "class of literature to all Australians - that of 'Hansard!'," I expressly urged attention to the very gratifying developments in Australian literature, both poetry and prose, and also in literary criticism, thanks to the recent republication of our admirable monthly review "The Bookfellow".

Later on there are letters from literary friends whose help in publicizing the journal had been sought. Arthur D. Bayldon, for example, wrote from Katoomba early in 1922: "November number came to me from Wise's office this day after I wrote to you. This second one I will see placed on the reading table of the School of Arts here and it may lead to your getting subscribers." And about three years later R. H. Croll wrote from the Education Department office in Melbourne:

Congratulations on No 2; it is an improvement on No 1 and that was better than most of our journals. And thanks for the extra copies of No 1. I have used them in judicious (as I have judged it) advertising. You saw the notice I hope, that we gave the Bookfellow and your plays [for school children] in our Education Gazette. I posted you copies.

But for all these turns and stratagems, for all the professed goodwill of the discriminating admirers, circulation remained unsatisfactory. True, Stephens and book-collectors did advertise complete volumes of the earlier Book-

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1 The Age (Melbourne), 21 March 1912. Quoted in part by Stephens in Bookfellow, 1 May 1912, p. 132.


3 Letter of 18 December 1924, ibid.
fellows as "rare" and "valuable"\(^1\), but this was partly because so few were sold, so many "returned". In 1916, for example, Alf Burke's job with the "N.S.W. Bookstall Company" was to pick up the unsold papers and magazines ("returns") from the company's various branches and deliver them to their respective offices. Burke told Walter Stone in a reminiscent note

I remember quite clearly how I went up to some dusty and dingy offices in Rowe Street to return the "Bookfellow" each month. Stephens' office was noticeably overcrowded and I recall the peculiar open look on his face as he signed with violet ink the preferred delivery slip. The beard was in evidence. I don't recall that he ever spoke to me but there would, of course, be no reason for speech with me. I do not think I called at the Rowe Street offices of the "Bookfellow" more than twice but the man and the office were and still are, very clear to me.\(^2\)

Lack of financial backing was a concomitant problem. Stephens found, as the editors of Meanjin and Southerly did later, that some kind of subsidy was necessary to sustain a purely literary journal in Australia. C. E. Ritchie in a commemorative notice in All About Books remarked that Stephens had never come through to a prosperous and comfortable leisure, and that "In reply to a note of regret and appreciation for the vanished "Bookfellow", he said that he could not attempt it again without a subsidy"\(^3\). Lack of finance was to have deleterious effects on the criticism. Much creative energy was dissipated in drumming up advertisements, many not really appropriate for a literary journal. Worse, the old independence was in jeopardy: important well-wishers and potential

\(^1\) See Bookfellow, 15 May 1920, p. 119 for an advertisement by "Gilmore's Book-Shop": "The early issues . . . are keenly sought by collectors at many times the published price."

\(^2\) "Some Recollections of the N.S.W. Bookstall and A. G. Stephens", Biblionews, XIV, x (October 1961), 32.

\(^3\) All About Books, 12 June 1934, p. 119.
subscribers could not be offended lest they withdrew support. O'Dowd mentioned this in a "more in sorrow than in anger" reply to Stephens's harsh review of The Bush ("the only one"). O'Dowd wrote:

I hope you're getting on well for I like you personally well. People tell me that you write nowadays according to advts. [sic] received etc. If so, I'm D----d sorry, for you're too good stuff for such pitiable use. But I can't judge myself for I've only seen one scrap of your paper for a year and that happened to be somewhat unworthy of you - and really not yourself.

Stephens himself admitted that one of the main reasons for the remarkable burgeoning of indigenous verse in Archibald's Bulletin had been that its editor paid the highest rates for verse as well as for prose (despite his quoted belief "Poets don't want money, they want marmalade"); and paid only for quality, not for names, thus keeping the Daleys, Quinns and Lawsons on their mettle. Stephens, perforce, had to accept what the name poets were prepared to send along, as there is adequate documentary evidence that the rates he offered were extremely low. True, friends like the McCraes, Hubert Church, Arnold Wall and Mary Gilmore as well as his protégé, Shaw Neilson, did send along a steady stream of creditable verse - and did so partly out of respect for the man and the critic and because they were pleased to be published in a journal of Stephens's. But there were complaints; from the start by George Essex Evans, "I will bear in mind your offer re Bookfellow although the price

1 Letter of 4 August 1913, S.P., Vol. 6 (A2302).
3 Ibid.
offered is very low for the kind of thing you ask for"\textsuperscript{1}, and later, by Frank Wilmot:

I fully recognise that there is very little market value in that Meredith paper and therefore will not haggle but willingly accept the guinea on condition that you print it entire. Of course you get rather good weight\textsuperscript{2} for your money but no one should refuse to help a promising young paper.

The editor's own wry printed comment after the long break between 1916 and 1919 drew attention to the financial difficulties he was facing. Under the heading "UNDER THE GUM-TREE", he asked,

What's wrong with the now-a-peace [sic] world is the positive difference between superlative debt and comparative money. The field of work enlarges telescopically while the yield of cash diminishes microscopically.\textsuperscript{3} Have you caught the prevailing epidemic?

The papers in the Mitchell Library show how Stephens dunned friends and literary men for subscriptions. This letter speaks for itself, obviously written in response to a suppliant letter:

Dear A.G.S.

All Australia owes you gratitude: I am sorry there is such a poor return.

I'll give you 10/- a month for 6 months and Serle (see his enclosed note) will make his £1 a month for the same period.

Good luck to your efforts.

Postal notes for 30/- herewith\textsuperscript{4}

Sincere regards,

Yours,

R. H. Croll

What the struggle to keep the Bookfellow going meant in family and economic

\textsuperscript{1} Letter of 7 April 1899, Letters to and Stories by A. G. Stephens, 1892-1922, S.P., (A1926).

\textsuperscript{2} Undated letter [1907?], S.P., Vol. 7 (A2303).

\textsuperscript{3} Bookfellow, 15 December 1919, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{4} J. R. Tyrrell's Collection of Papers of A. G. Stephens (A3986).
terms is indicated by comments his daughter, Constance, made in her rough draft of an unfinished biography. Mrs Robertson wrote of these times:

From the day he left The Bulletin in 1906 until the day he died in 1933 - with the exception of possibly a year as leader-writer - the E P Wgtn [Evening Post Wellington], he had no regular income. For some years during which he wrote syndicated literary articles, under the title of the B[ookfellow] for papers throughout Aust and N.Z. there was some degree of permanence, but it was only an illusion. From the moment he started The B[ookfellow] again as a mag in [sic] it is not an exaggeration to say that we never knew where money was coming from. The arrival of even one 6/- Subscription often meant the difference between dry bread, bread and jam, or no bread at all. The arrival of English and American mails with books for review meant feast days: with my pig-tails flying I would rush books to Skinner's Bookshop or Tyrrell's bookshop - and father fixed the price! Then we ate well. If the larder was really low I've seen A.G. going through book-shelves, turning over treasured volumes, wondering which one he would part with to satisfy the hungry mouths . . .

Elsewhere in the incomplete and scrambled biographical notes is the heartfelt and pathetic outburst: "Bookfellow was his dream, and our curse." Mary Gilmore, also, told Harry F. Chaplin in a letter dated 12 October 1961 that as early as 1913 she had purchased "the right, title and interest" in the Third Series of the Bookfellow for seventy pounds and she did this
to prevent the paper being seized by the printer to whom the money was owing, and because she believed it to be such an asset to Australia. A.G.S. agreed to edit the paper for a salary of £4 weekly. This was the amount she was then receiving each week for her page in The Worker, and she paid it to A.G.S.

In the Papers of A. G. Stephens (in the Mitchell Library) there is further documentary evidence of the editor's financial problems later on. For example,

1 The Papers of Constance Robertson (ML MSS 1105/1, Item 2), pp. 123-129.
2 Ibid., p. 125.
3 H. F. Chaplin, A Neilson Collection, p. 3.
a 1923 letter to his daughter, Constance, from Stephens's erstwhile landlords informed her that the sum of £15. 6. 8 was still owing for rent and that

When Mr. Stephens left here, which was last December, he promised to let us have a cheque for the balance of the rent within two months of his departure. We waited for this period and then wrote him a letter to the address which he had given us, and found that he had moved and we have since been trying to locate him without success.

Five days later the following "Agreement" was drafted by the father, repeating the stratagem used earlier when Mary Gilmore came to the rescue:

In consideration of the sum of Forty Pound Sterling, to me paid in cash by Constance Sweetheart Stephens, the receipt of which is acknowledged, I have this day assigned to her, free of all incumbrance or liability, my entire right, title and interest in THE BOOKFELLOW newspaper . . .

Eleven days later Stephens was writing affectionately to "CS, sole creditor of Bookfellow" undertaking to repay his debt "either from my book sales reasonably to be anticipated in U.S.A. this year, or from contingent share of S. G. Stephens' [his father's] estate." Finally, on 19 February 1925, there was a "dismissal notice" from "C. Stephens", receipt of which was signed by Stephens, "Please take notice that as from Friday, February 27, 1925 I will not require your services as manager or in any other capacity in connection with THE BOOKFELLOW."

The lack of financial backing not only meant that Stephens had to write

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1 S.P. (ML MSS 1104/1, Item 1), p. 259.
2 Dated 12 December 1923, ibid., p. 269a.
4 Ibid., p. 271.

Attached to the letter is pro-forma receipt signed by Stephens which says: "Received from / C. Stephens / ONE LETTER." Both receipt and letter appear to have been typed by Stephens himself.
much of the original creative work - inferior prose, sketches and insensitively declamatory verse - as well as the reviews for current literature and reflective articles on established writers, but he was short-handed on the managerial side, in fact desperately overworked. The co-operation he sought from fellow litterateurs was rarely forthcoming. So in 1914 J. B. O'Hara wrote refusing to assist with the production of the Bookfellow because of school-teaching duties, but promising, "When the happy time [retirement] comes I'll gladly join you - if there be any opening such as you outline. Meanwhile you can count on my earnest co-operation."¹ And earlier, Bernard O'Dowd had written declining to assist with the issue of a Melbourne edition in a note that said: "I've not been able do anything in the matter you wrote about . . . for my present work absorbs, obsesses almost, and I couldn't yet stand the strain of more."² The best direct evidence of Stephens's frustration is the draft reply which he typed on the back of a circular from W. E. Fitzhenry in 1925. Mr Fitzhenry had sent the circular, under the letterhead "The Australian Writers' and Artists' 'Year Book'" to editors throughout Australia asking them to supply information that might be included in a year book which would let writers and artists know where they were most likely to place their work. Stephens's draft reply ran:

Dear Sir, - Regarding your circular. If you have a literary inclination - with time and energy and a little cash to spare - why not co-operate with me in establishing the Bookfellow? - which I am suspending because there is too much work for one man single-handed and I have not yet found a right second. As a registered newspaper, established for a dozen years and more - the best literary periodical ever produced in Australia with a strong foundation of subscribers and advertisers, influential Australasia-land credit and world-wide connections, it looks to me a much better busi-

¹ Letter of 6 April 1914, S.P., Vol. 6 (A2302).
² Letter of 15 December 1913, ibid.
ness proposition than your projected Year Book. If you care to go into the matter, you might make an appointment to see me at office, 4th floor (E. J. Forbes) 26 Jamieson St.,

Yours faithfully,

VI

"The Bookfellow" Feature: Sydney Stage and Society (1926)

After a nine months lapse "The Bookfellow" appeared in print again on 19 January 1926 as a regular feature in Stage and Society, a glossy expensively produced monthly. The journal ran photographs of 'social' celebrities, news about social occasions and the various cultural activities currently occurring in Sydney, and of course interviews with and articles on local and visiting actors, actresses, dramatists, producers and the like. It is all very far removed from the Bulletin's Red Page in tone, atmosphere and intended audience; and is symptomatic of how much Stephens had lost touch with 'common' or representative Australian readers and writers. He was now writing for a rather esoteric group: the wealthier, fashionable, dilettante upper crust pursuing the cultural life with varying degrees of serious intent. On the face of it, it must have seemed to the journal's management that a literary column would have appeal to minds cultivated enough to appreciate its features on art, music and theatre.

The standard of writing is generally better than in late Bookfellows: Bouncier, more assured and freshly conceived. This would be because the critic had been relieved of the pressures associated with editing, writing, printing and

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1 Dated 27 September 1925, J. R. Tyrrell's Collection of Papers of A. G. Stephens (ML MSS A3986).
selling a journal. With just the monthly deadline to meet he could direct all his energy and intellectual resources into writing again. A very interesting development was the concentration on art. The interest in art probably resulted from contacts with Archibald and his black-and-white Bulletin artists ("Hop", Norman Lindsay, Phil May and later Hugh McCrae). Articles on artists and reviews of exhibitions, relatively infrequent in the Red Page, gradually became a regular feature in the Bookfellow. In his Stage and Society feature, criticism of art assumed almost the same proportions as criticism in literature, and embodied some of his most considered and interesting writing. The nature of the journal and his assumed readership would have been an important factor in prompting this new emphasis; but, it is a natural and logical extension of the other great cultural 'love' of Stephens's maturity. Because he did attempt to develop a rationale of art criticism, to apply the methods of literary criticism to the viewing of canvases, and because art criticism became so absorbing a concern, some detailed analysis of the art criticism must be attempted¹. For the moment it is necessary to stress that much of the literary value of the Stage and Society feature accrues from the quality of the writing about art.

The design of his feature was similar in some respects to the Bulletin's Red Page and the Sunday Sun's "Bookfellow Column", although the format and appearance (three to four consecutive quarto-sized pages) were necessarily different from the earlier columns (single page folio in newsprint). Most columns began with a new poem from one of Stephens's favoured poets (especially Shaw Neilson), printed in an elegant and different type face and often illus-

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¹ See below, pp. 294-303.
trated or decorated in black-and-white. For the rest there were the literary articles and reviews; literary gossip and brief notes on writers and books (under the headings "Book Marks" and "Literary Chit Chat"); "trade" items on bookselling and publishing; and the already referred to articles on music, and art especially.

The quality of literary criticism and the directions it was taking may be illustrated by references to two writers: the local man, Arthur Bayldon; and the poet of world stature, W. B. Yeats.

The review of "Arthur Bayldon's Poems" repeats judgments made earlier concerning his limitations, "Thwarted on the great scale of Fate, Bayldon achieves himself on the petty. He is a volcanic coral insect in Australian poetry." The witty, appropriate and devastating coral insect image (an amusing variation of the traditional 'industrious ant' theme) shows that Stephens was once again fully engaged and interested in his topic. Later on, lighting on the book's title "The Eagles", he develops his argument in playful bird imagery that as in the earlier more exuberant criticism is pushed just a step too far, to the point where the reader begins to become a little embarrassed for the critic committed to an extended metaphor which he just cannot leave alone:

Line upon line, and mettle upon mettle, Bayldon has accomplished his last book, "The Eagles" - full of spectacular ideas, sonorous syllable, shining feathers from the wing of majesty. The eagles are worth more than their commercial price of six shillings [sic] Their brood is various. Sometimes a haughty bird flies with strong pinion in the dazzling eye of the sun; sometimes a moral bird roosts meditatively on a nest of sticks; sometimes a fledgling falls off squawking.

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1 For example, in the "Bookfellow Column", Sunday Sun, 24 July 1910, p. 8.
2 Stage and Society, 19 April 1926, p. 18. The quotation that follows is from this source.
His column entitled "Book Marks" often contained brightly expressed pithy comments that show a great deal of development from his earliest attempts at this kind of writing in the Cairns Argus. For example, in one column there was a wry comment on writers and literacy: "Misprints occur; the printer gets the blame; he doesn't care while he gets the boodle. Printers are like cabmen - a weary and cynical brood. They see the seamy side of writers"; as well as characteristic debunking of famous academics, in an obituary note on Sir Sidney Lee, who was said to be

a typical student of letters who spent most of his life on the Dictionary of National Biography. Wear of facts, he wrote futile fairy-tales about Shakespeare. A good clerk and recorder, a good mole; but unillumined, unilluminating, beyond the breadth of his burrow.

In the article entitled "William Butler Yeats" Stephens once again reveals how little he had shifted from original judgments and conceptions. For example, in an approving comment on the romantic elements of "In the Land of Heart's Desire", Stephens expresses the familiar idea that an atmosphere of sadness ("regret") is perhaps a sufficient condition for good lyric verse:

Yeats creates his atmosphere; he transfers his mood; he follows, singing, an exalted quest; a synthetic poet, not a born poet, he is yet a fine poet. And if his inspiration remain aspiration, if his deed be but a dream, we are never quite sure that our best moments are not those spent in musing with a beautiful regret.

What is revealing, however, is Stephens's critical assessment of the canon of Yeats's poetry as it existed then - between Michael Robartes and the Dancer

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1 Stage and Society, 15 July 1926, p. 19.
The following quotation is from this source.

2 Ibid., 17 June 1926, p. 19.
The quotation that follows is from this source.
(1926) and The Tower (1928). Dividing the periods into 'early', 'middle' and 'late', without in any way defining them, Stephens criticizes both the 'earlier' poetry (presumably to The Wind Among the Reeds [1899]) and the 'later' (presumably from Responsibilities [1914] on) and prefers the middle 'twilight' period (presumably In the Seven Woods [1904] and The Green Helmet and Other Poems [1910]). These are certainly not judgments that modern criticism would endorse; and even if the undefined periods were not thought of along the lines suggested, there is still a failure to recognize the strength of the 'latest' poems Stephens would have seen: "Easter, 1916", "The Second Coming" and "A Prayer for my Daughter", to mention three from Michael Robartes. Tellingly, the criticism offered was that these poems were "positively obscure"; proof once again of Stephens's inability or reluctance to wrestle with dense, complex, intellectually challenging poetry. This is what Stephens wrote:

On a survey it seems fair to suggest that Yeats is at his best when he is neither formal nor formless; when his verbal outline is broken sufficiently to give his melody play, yet not sufficiently to let his substance escape. In his earlier writing he is comparatively lucid, in his later writing sometimes positively obscure; one thinks that he is happiest with a middle style that is neither in shadow nor in shine, but in twilight moon-chequered.

"The Bookfellow" feature in Stage and Society was the critic's final opportunity to practice his chosen profession in something approaching a full-time capacity. When without notice or explanation the column was dropped after the number of 15 July 1926, the name "Bookfellow" also disappeared except for the occasional fugitively printed article or retrospective mention. It was time for this; and though his critical opinions had atrophied, it is fitting that the Stage and Society columns should contain so much writing that recaptures the verve and sparkle of earlier days, even if much of it is in the field of art criticism.
VII

Evaluation: Bookfellow Criticism of Overseas and Local Literature

A survey of the critical writings during this period shows two important developments: a maturer, more conscious evaluation of the critic's role with some fairly explicit formulations of critical principles and beliefs; and, concurrently, much more attention proportionally to overseas writing than the xenophobic Archibald would have allowed. Also, there was a conscious effort to 'place' the established names of Kendall, Clarke, Boldrewood, Daley, Brennan, Gordon and the rest in sustained articles, though the reviewing of current Australian writing (and painting) still received due notice. In brief, the critic's interests had widened and deepened: he now viewed literature, especially Australian literature with a clearer perspective. This is not to suggest that the journalistic interest in contemporaneity was supplanted. Dr Leavis's often cited assertion that literature's "life is in the present or nowhere; it is alive so far as it is alive for us" was foreshadowed in a review of L. C. Horby's Modern Italian Literature, where in livelier and more figurative language than Leavis's Stephens argued that "What makes a classic estimable is not honourable credit in the Past, but life-cash-value in the Present. A reader's reverence should be reserved for proof of a reader's profit." Also,

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2 Bookfellow, 1 January 1912, p. 29.

The quotations that follow are from this source.
After all, it is a natural instinct of life that leads many readers to prefer the daily paper to literature, and next door's gossip to a tale of accidents in Africa. We reprehend them of course; yet they are reprehensible only from the standpoint of a general theory; from their own practical standpoint they are unassailable. A preference for modern literature can be justified similarly. It is what our contemporaries are doing that excites us most; because they are infused with our own spirit, are bothered with our own problems, and achieve the successes and failures not of a former generation but of our own.

But, as so often happens with Stephens, apparently dogmatic positions like this tend to be modified, if not reversed, almost it would seem according to the whim of the moment - or the debating point to be argued cogently. So the older critic recognized in an article entitled "Critical Time and Space"¹ that "the perspective of Time" was necessary for the sound judgment of contemporary writing. Only an occasional critic (like Robert Bridges) "detached in contemplation of the past" could gain this perspective, otherwise "contemporary criticism of London by London is usually too close to the date and the fact: the reviewing dyer's hand is coloured by the vat it dips in". (A further comment that "in Antipodean space an equivalent of that true palate of Time" could be found would appear to be a retrospective rationalization of Stephens's increasing interest in the criticism of overseas writing.)

Also, as a critic Stephens was becoming increasingly concerned to clarify his thinking on the issue of 'national' as opposed 'universal' interests in literature. His reading of overseas writing continually confirmed for him the truism that great writing must transcend the particulars of time (the classics) and space (overseas writing) - in his own words "The best author is he who, in a secular comparison, gives the greatest life to the most people"². Thus he

1 Bookfellow, 15 August 1920, p. 175. The quotations that follow are from this source.

2 Ibid., 1 January 1912, p. 29.
saw it as a serious deficiency of Theodore Dreiser's *The Financier* that the realism "may seem excellent in America; but at this distance the detailed descriptions of life, buildings, and scenery in Philadelphia forty years ago can often be skipped without loss."¹ Thomas Hardy's poetry similarly was said to suffer because "Much of the work is too local, too personal, in a universal view; much reflects only passing views, momentary episodes . . ."² But, as Shakespeare, Molière or Goethe illustrate, 'universality' does not necessarily mean an anonymous cosmopolitanism: the truthful rendering of relevant national particulars can lead to the recognition of our common humanity, even if the reader belongs to a different nationality. So, in some advice to readers on "How to Win £250" in a competition to unearth "the great Australian novel" Stephens insisted that story, incidents and people must be "taken from life" - Australian life."The interest must be human - universal; but the label on the interest must be 'Australian' - or 'New Zealand'. Your story could have happened everywhere. But it did happen in your own district."³ The most lucid and specific statement of the critic's considered attitude to the problems of 'nationalism' and 'universality' in literature is to be found in a criticism of J. C. Williamson for turning the salty characters in A. H. Davis's *On Our Selection* into caricatures in his dramatization of the book. The play, he said, amounts to a laughable travesty of life on a bush farm; it should have pictured the life itself . . . [Williamson] forgot that the best types of all are not local, but human; and that it is feasible here, as elsewhere, to exhibit human passion, human struggle, in local guises. Passion and struggle will not be Australian, but they will appear in a familiar Australian phase; and our recognition of externals will aid us to appreciate the eternal dramatic essence.

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¹ Bookfellow, 1 April 1913, p. 94.
² Ibid., 15 October 1920, p. 184.
³ Ibid., 1 May 1913, p. 112.
⁴ Ibid., 1 June 1912, p. 157.
Further, Stephens was interested in any formulation of critical principles and often quoted overseas critics who confirmed, modified and challenged his own largely empirically arrived at conclusions about the nature and function of his craft. Thus Arthur Ransome (in *Portraits and Speculations*), in distinguishing 'kinetic' from 'potential' speech, was said to have made a distinction that was "similar to our own. His 'kinetic' literature is literature that actually exerts a force. His 'potential' literature is literature than can exert force upon the right audience."¹ Stephens's own practice to some extent was summed up for him in Harold Monro's argument that criticism is a shared personal response rather than a judicial judgment. So he quoted with approval this dictum² by Monro (said to be editor of "the best general review of modern literature that England gives us"):

> It is for the critic to interpret the work of great men, to reveal their qualities of which many had been in ignorance, and to stimulate an appreciation of them. Criticism must inevitably be a form of autobiography.

Characteristically the approval is qualified with a demurrer that the critic is also a judge (from the Greek *krites*) "bound, when called upon, to deliver the reason for his judgment, and that reason holds his interpretation of the case." Stephens would have had this thought in mind in an earlier review of Archibald T. Strong's *Peradventure, A Book of Essays*³, where although the writer was commended for having "studied with discretion and meditated with taste" on

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¹ *Bookfellow*, 1 April 1913, p. 79.
² From *The Chapbook* of February 1920, *ibid.*., 15 June 1920, p. 124. The quotations that follow are from this source.
³ *Ibid.*., 1 January 1912, p. 43. The quotations that follow are from this source.
"Keats and Poe and Baudelaire, on Villon and Lamb and Swinburne, on Marlowe and Herrick and a dozen more", the qualification was made that "he seems to write 'about', not 'into'; he is gracious rather than decisive, interpreter rather than critic".

In general, "The Bookfellow" was a more level-headed, responsible and intellectually aware critic. But this is not to deny that there were frequent lapses into immaturity and brashness, nor that many idiosyncrasies and questionable theories remained unchanged. Intellectual poetry was still suspect: "We are sure that the Muse, as a lady, bears no baggage of learning; she trips it with a bandbox, and her heavy trunks are sent by prose."¹ Mystic, romantic verse still appealed most ("a dream in the forest of Arden, a wondering by the coast of Faery, an illumination of the soul"). He still believed that "the full essence of poetry is an unattainable ecstasy"² and that the finest poetry was Celtic because it sprang "from a sick brain . . . ailing-sick, longing-sick, love-sick". And the coarser grain of hearty philistinism reveals itself even towards the end, as in a review of Ernest O'Ferrall's Bodger and the Boarder³, described as "an uncommonly clever book of broad-farce sketches". This description of Bodger: "First he shook his clenched fist in the air, and made words

¹ [Review of Herbert Trench's Lyric and Narrative Poems], Bookfellow, 1 February 1912, p. 52. The following quotation is from this source.

² "The Poets of Ireland, by D. J. O'Donohoe" [Review], ibid., 1 March 1913, p. 54. The following quotation is from this source.

³ Ibid., 15 May 1921, p. 69. The quotations that follow are from this source.
with his whiskers; then he flung both arms outwards with a passionate gesture," was heartily commended; it "should be staged and pictured at once", he wrote, "It is exactly what the male public wants, and much of it is what the public ought to want. Buy the book and enjoy it." On balance, however, the earlier generalizations regarding increased maturity and critical responsibility apply, and are well supported by a closer analysis of the application of Stephens's critical principles in the evaluation of overseas and local writing.

The comprehensive and up-to-the-minute surveys of overseas literature were made possible both by Stephens's life-long habit (since "Magazine Rifler" days at least) of subscribing to English and American literary periodicals and because he did read, with some concentration on poetry anthologies, selectively from current first editions: for example, the Oxford editions of English, Spanish, German, French, Irish, Scottish and Latin verse were noticed and quoted from as they appeared. And if a noted literary figure like Zola or Ibsen were to die, a 'retrospective' article usually followed. For example, after the Swedish dramatist, Strindberg, died, Stephens surveyed the life and work of the man whose declaration, "Put the truth on paper and you have Art" is said to have influenced a leader of the realist school of writing in Australia, Katharine Susannah Prichard¹. In his article² Stephens was sharply critical of Strindberg on two grounds: the work was too self-centred ("All his liter-


² Bookfellow, 1 July 1913, p. 156.
The quotations that follow are from this source.
nature appears to be torn out of his own entrails"; and too naturalistic ("passages of raw realism, often remarkably forcible, that never have found firm foothold in universal art"). It is obvious that Stephens was concerned that the Zola - Ibsen - Strindberg brand of naturalism should be so influencing writers in England (Shaw) and America (Upton Sinclair and Sinclair Lewis), and Australia (K.S. Prichard). How he was using his position to prevent this influence becoming too strong in Australian letters is illustrated by this familiar-sounding little homily on the limitations of realism:

Inevitably this method limits his [Strindberg's] value. Art must escape from the personal and particular. It is efficient in proportion as its reference ceases to be individual and becomes all-human. Strindberg turns perpetually in the cage of himself. His readers may sympathize with his struggle, but their artistic sympathy is shut out by the cage. That cage is Strindberg's world: the human world is beyond it.

This is sound criticism, of course, and well expressed; and is consistent with later criticism of Sinclair Lewis's best-seller, Main Street:

Our simple complaint of "Main Street" is that it is merely fiction-journalism, uninteresting. The whole book, on the level of the author's talent, was worth a single chapter. Its quality as a representation of fact, its "realistic" quality, is unimportant. What is important is that it does not bring to a reader in Australia an increase of imaginative life; it remains merely a social tract interesting to U.S. ladies.

Underlying the revulsion against 'modern' realistic fiction was a streak of prudery - obvious in later criticism of Slessor and the "Vision" school of writers and explicit in comments that Upton Sinclair's Sylvia "should really be entitled Syphilis."

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1 Bookfellow, 15 September 1921, p. 149.
2 "Satyrs in Slops", The Australian Bystander, 7 January 1924, pp. 28 f.
With every inclination to maintain the liberty of literature, we cannot see any public advantage in permitting such a mess of horrors to be lent or sold indiscriminately in the guise of popular fiction . . . In THE BOOKFELLOW'S opinion Sylvia should be withdrawn from general sale.

And again:

A new example of U. S. fiction—compost is announced to combine the fiercest virility with the softest femininity and the purest religion—the perfectly holy hermaphrodite. Wasn't the ancient Alexandrian library entitled with "Medicine of the mind"? The modern library of U. S. shirtwaist novels, for "Medicine", would read "Manure".

A far cry this from the 

enfant-terrible whose Oblation (1902) with its fleshy Lindsay illustration so offended contemporary reviewers.

The apparent reason for noticing and commenting on continental literature, generally in translation, was 'educational': here was the wider background in time and space that came ready-made to a man who had majored in Arts at a University but was denied the intelligent common or 'bush' reader Stephens talked so much about and once saw as his particular audience. So, in a review of The Oxford Book of Latin Verse he took the point that "Acquaintance with Latin poetry is one of the luxuries of life", limited to the few who have or anticipate leisure, or "can spare time" for an Arts course. The values of a leisurely classical education are recognized, and I think seriously put forward by Stephens, despite the outrageous pun:

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1 "Sylvia", Bookfellow, 15 March 1914, p. 64.

2 Ibid., 15 February 1916, p. 13.

3 See Frank Wilmot, "'Oblation': A. G. Stephens and Norman Lindsay", in The Microbe, I, vi (May 1902), 10-13.

4 Bookfellow, 1 April 1913, p. 77.

The quotations that follow are from this source.
Whoever lives without their [the Latin poets'] pleasure will die with his circle of living incomplete. In a universe of broken arcs [sic] this argument is futile, and every new Noah must choose his own means of salvation from the irksome flood. Yet one rests a little more securely when one has hailed Ararat in Latin.

The main interest in overseas writing as ever was in verse, particularly English and American. Yeats, Flecker, Brooke, Francis and James Thompson, Bridges, Dowson, Binyon, Hardy, Housman, Sassoon, Whitman and Vachel Lindsay among contemporaries; and the Romantics, the Elizabethans, Browning and Tennyson, Longfellow, Herrick and Burns among traditional poets were the names that recur. In the shorter list of novelists, dramatists and essayists the recurring names were Shaw, Wilde, Wells, Bennett, Hardy, Compton Mackenzie, Maugham, Wodehouse, Elton, and Huxley in England; Dreiser, Bierce, Crane and Sinclair Lewis in America. The aim was two-fold: to criticize fearlessly and honestly from the "perspective of Space", as an end in itself; and to educate Australian writers and their audience by providing standards they could aspire to (or in the case of Neilson, Stephens would argue, transcend).

The judgments expressed were generally severe but sound: Stephens was not one to enthuse over fashionable names unless the work met his personal demands — in verse, of transcendental emotion melodiously and euphoniously uttered. "Nearly all Georgian Poetry", he claimed, "is pretty literary verse"1, and Longfellow was denigrated as an excellent poet for children to begin with, "the ideal popular poet: he dilutes thought and tells stories, he is devout and gilds moralities"2. Poems of Eliot-like complexity and experimentation

1 Bookfellow, 1 June 1913, p. 134.
2 Ibid., 15 January 1915, p. 4.
were ignored, or sourly dismissed in passing as in this comment that Vachel Lindsay's poetry was "programme-music the right way up; with words and ideas no conundrum to guessed by dreary pundits in tacked-and-hammered footnotes, but merging and uniting with their vehicle, brother and sister mind-in-sound."[1]

While the Georgians - and their Australian contemporaries - were adjudged too effete, Lindsay was taken to task (justly again) for being a vigorous versifier rather than the sensitive melodist Stephens discovered in Shaw Neilson. In the review of Lindsay's poetry, which is amusingly titled "The Muse Does a Cake-Walk", it will be noted that the critic's suspect preference for the lower key in literature glimmers through as natural taste asserts itself over cultivated intelligence:

We admit the vigour - and occasionally the poetry; and we praise the author for his effort to return, with whatever mob concessions to verse made vocal. Far too much eye-poetry, manufactured for vision merely, is written nowadays by tone-deaf personages great and small: when we utter it - Ocacophony? [sic]

Yet Poetry began as Music, fine Poetry must be Music still, Poetry must sing. Or, at least, it must utter itself sonorously. Coo or roar your favourites, and listen. V. Lindsay roars, yet for a great part euphoniously. His own fine ear has conceded too much (yet perhaps not too much for a beginning of shared enjoyment) to the audiences he incites to roar with him. He is back to the music-hall, back to the corroboree, back to the Stone Age of strutting warriors chanting with a men-melodious chorus to a ring of thigh-smiting women.

Well, he takes Poetry out of books and puts it where it ought to be; into the common life as a thrilling, warming, civilizing stream of art.

The implied criticism of Eliot, Pound and the imagists ("eye-poetry", "tone-deaf personages") receives explicit statement in a brief note on T. S. Eliot's prose style in The Sacred Wood: "The author is informed, combative, suggestive. Often we disagree with him - and always wish he would put surge and sonority into his prose."[2]

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[1] Bookfellow, 15 January 1921, p. 234. The following quotation is from this source.

On balance, however, it is clear that the Bookfellow did provide a discriminating if not too comprehensive commentary on overseas writing and that in doing this the critic was doing his bit to educate both audience and writers so that informed taste would determine judgments and practice rather than an insular prejudice that was manifesting itself both assertively in chauvinistic praise and negatively in what A. A. Phillips described as "the cultural cringe". Where Stephens tended to let his readers down was in the inadequacy of his background - on his reliance on fresh responses to currently printed work or faded memories of work read in his youth. He just did not have the time to become well enough informed to be balanced and completely just. I take, as a final illustration of both strengths and limitations, a page on "Books and Writers" written late in 1921. Here, in a note on Yeats that ignores the 'tougher' manner embodied in the already published satires, lyrics and elegies of The Green Helmet (1910), Responsibilities (1914) and The Wild Swans at Coole (1919), Stephens chose to demonstrate his generalization that "the veil we have always seen trembling round Yeats is the veil between artifice and art" by referring to "Innisfree" (1893). Yet on the same page he made a pertinent observation (that still has some application) that London editions publish "inferior work over there" because they "are simply ignorant of better work over here", giving as his illustration "the enthusiasm for R. Brooke's 'Grantchester', local doggerel lauded as literature". And, as ever, he avoided pushing his claims too far:


2 Bookfellow, 15 October 1921, p. 170. The quotations that follow are from this source.
. . . Neilson will be an English classic (observe we dodge the amphibological trap!) not when Yeats and Bridges are forgotten; for these are in the classic line, unforgettable; but - when A. Noyes, L. Abercrombie and the good-enough-bad-enough crowd of notorieties are forgotten.

The highly individual evaluation of overseas writing in Stephens's Bookfellow constitutes a significant contribution to the canon of literary criticism in Australia. If Stephens's journal was to have vitality and a focus, however, a major concern - though not perhaps to some extent as in the Red Page - would have been the reviewing of current Australian writing, and the assessment of the lasting contributions made by the established and by now often deceased writers whose work could be viewed from "The perspective of Time".

The reviews of current local writing were as crisp and incisive as ever but nearly always much briefer and often less severe than earlier. The tarter comments were reserved either for older writers who had moved beyond Stephens's aegis, or for the newer, younger writers with whom he grew increasingly impatient as their work reflected the post-war 'modernism' of such writers as Joyce, Pound or Eliot. The earlier complaints (by Daley and Lawson) of Red Page coteries, repeated later by O'Dowd, do apply to Bookfellow criticism. The writers who published in the Bookfellow, and later had their collected works edited by Stephens, often received praise in excess of their merit. It is true that Neilson, Hugh McCrae and Mary Gilmore were justly praised - in Mrs Gilmore's case perhaps under-valued, because the critic tended to stress the oddity of an expert on cooking writing poetry. But minor writers like C. H.

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1 For example, the comment that "With one hand she passes out poetry; with the other hand cookery, and with both hands inexhaustible sympathy", in Bookfellow, 15 December 1918, p. 9.
See also ibid., 15 February 1914, p. 36.
Souter, James Hebblethwaite, Robert Crawford, J. P. Bourke, and M. A. Robertson were cases in which personal interest rather than defective taste tended to colour judgments— all had volumes of verse published and edited by the critic. It has already been shown how the tone of reviews of Hubert Church's, Bernard O'Dowd's and Robert Crawford's poetry is a kind of barometer, indicative of personal business relations between the critic and the poets\(^1\). O'Dowd's case will suffice here. The critical consensus is that *The Bush* is O'Dowd's best poem\(^2\). But whereas the Red Pagan had praised highly the cruder propagandist verses published under his editorship as *Dawnward?* (1903), the "Bookfellow" dismissed *The Bush* as prosaic verse:

> In view of Mr. O'Dowd's previous literary performances, we are sorry to say that his argument would have come better in prose; often it comes worse in rhymed prose. Mr. O'Dowd has met in *The Bush* everything but the Muse. His work wants his earlier fervour; his complicated lines are usually destitute of melody . . . [It] is eccentric, but it isn't poetry.

The tone of this review ("the only poor one") so hurt the large-spirited poet that he wrote with uncharacteristic asperity to Stephens charging him with critical dishonesty: "People tell me that you write nowadays according to advts. received etc. If so, I'm D—d sorry, for you're too good stuff for such pitiable use."\(^4\)

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\(^1\) "A. G. Stephens as Literary Editor", *Southerly*, XXIV, iii (1964), 171-172.


\(^3\) *Bookfellow*, 1 January 1913, p. 16. See also *ibid.*, 30 December 1921, p. 199 for a similarly harsh review of *Alma Venus* entitled "Rhyming Philosophy".

\(^4\) Letter of 4 August 1913, S.P., Vol. 6 (A2302).
That criticisms of cronyism and lack of rigour in assessment of protégés, made as early as 1899 by Victor Daley, had some point is perhaps best borne out by the case of a lesser and now largely forgotten poet, Robert Crawford. In 1923 Professor J. W. Mackail visited Sydney to participate in the founding of a Sydney Branch of the English Association at Sydney University. Stephens was affronted on three grounds: it smacked of colonialism having an 'English' rather than an 'Australian' society; the new Association was an excrescence ("If the University does not now promote the study of language and literature to the utmost of its power, what in the name of Letters does the University do?"); and Australians could equal Mackail in both scholarship (for example, Brennan) and literary skill (for example, Crawford). The third point is the one to elaborate here. Stephens quoted Crawford's stanza:

Beneath the poplars, traveller, let
Thy footsteps be beguiled:
Drink of the fountain Simus set
By Gillus, his dead child.

claiming it was better than the Englishman's prose rendering: "Sit beneath the poplars here, wayfarer, when thou art weary, and drawing nigh, drink of our spring; and even far away remember the fountain that Simus sets by the side of Gillus, his dead child." Disregarding for the moment the validity

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1 "Narcissus and Some Tadpoles", Bookfellow, 29 April 1899, p. 14. These lines, for example, are prophetic of the treatment of Crawford:
"... My daring hand
Explores the entrails of the land
And finds, beneath a greasy hat,
An Austral Homer at Cow Flat."

2 A note on the Founding of the English and Classical Associations, Bookfellow, 15 August 1923, pp. 108-109. The quotations that follow are from this source.
of comparing prose with verse, Stephens appears to have ignored the limitations of Crawford's poetry: its mechanical metre and heavy rhymes, including the non-eye rhyme "beguiled / child"; the awkward repetition of the be syllable in "be beguiled"; and the awkwardness, the unintentional ambiguity of the last two lines (not apparent in Mackail: "remember the fountain that Simus sets by the side of Gillus, his dead child"). Not satisfied with this, Stephens goes on to make the preposterous assertion that if a very trite, almost banal patriotic stanza on Gallipoli¹ "were in Meleager's garland, with centuries of scholarship to pore over it, it would be famous". Still not satisfied he goes on to say that Crawford's work is of comparable worth to Donne's and Gray's: "Laurels grow slowly; Crawford's will be green next century. It is easy to gain assurance. Imagine his best verses in the books of 17th or 18th century poets, and see how well they bear the test of companionship with Donne or Gray."

Where Stephens was not so personally involved, and the writer was young and promising rather than established (and generally disappointing because he had not achieved up to initial expectations) Stephens was discerning and just - with the predominating tartness usually alleviated by at least one encouraging comment. Reviews of new verse by Vance Palmer, Louis Stone, Frederick Macartney and Leon Gellert (to take four better-known names) will serve as illustrations.

Palmer's The Forerunners was described as a collection of "short pieces rather virile than poetical"². Though personally attracted to the author ("a

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¹ "They owed their mother land a love
   That only life could pay
   Who to Gallipoli bequeathed
   The freedom of their clay."

² Bookfellow, 15 August 1915, p.177.
   The quotations that follow are from this source.
good and still young Australian, with a vigorous bush life behind him and a literary career before him in London"), Stephens made the comment that other discerning critics have made about Palmer's writing: that sincerely and even passionately held convictions often received vigorous rather than memorable statement:

In Australia he awoke passionately and watched and wondered: his reaction is sincerely expressed in surging lines that lack melody and the magic touch. There are eloquent gestures, vivid pictures, thoughtful shapes, in work well said but not sung. Mr. Palmer's phrasing, though often good, is not quite good enough for the carefully free form he prefers: the discipline of a regular short-long stanza might better him.

Still, the critic concludes that the work was "worth meditating and preserving" - as it is.

Stone, whose talent and art (in Jonah) were said to be "of high order" was wisely advised to pay more attention to formal structure. The third part of his novel was not integral, Stephens claimed: "Structurally 'Jonah' is equivalent to 'two rooms and skillion', and the skillion is only a 'lean-to'." Also, sound advice about style and tone was offered: "His further work will gain by some relaxation of tension, some increase of perspective; and by the omission of certain verbal superfluities."

Macartney's early verses (Earthly Vessels, 1913), though praised for "idea and phrase" were severely criticized on technical grounds (the poet was given lessons under heading "Sound", "Overflow" and "Excessive Alliteration"): "We

\[1\] Bookfellow, 1 December 1911, pp. 10, 12. The quotations that follow are from this source.

\[2\] Ibid., 15 November 1913, p. 250. The quotation that follows is from this source.
have looked through 33 [sic] crudities in sonnet-shape to find something to
set over against condemnation; but there is nothing that does not jar heavily."
Even the more mature Poems (1920), while similarly praised for "a strong body
of ideas and effective phrases"\(^1\) only brought "a hope that Mr. Macartney will
presently write poetry worth remembering". Again, although it reflects the
critic's aversion to 'modernism', there was some sane advice for the youngish
(thirty-three-year-old) poet:

The last section, worth reading, brings hope that Mr. Macartney will
presently write poetry worth remembering. But he has wasted his strength
on the fad of "free verse": which looks the easiest and is the most
difficult kind of verse-writing. Very few of us can do without the
discipline and support of strict form.

The review of Leon Gellert's *Songs of A Campaign* is an excellent example
of Stephens's commonsense and general soundness. The *Songs* had been widely
lauded for patriotic rather than literary reasons. (The *Sun* had enthused:
"crimson-splashed, yet white-robed and white-jewelled, the Spirit of his Song
rises triumphant, leading Victory and Sorrow, Defeat and Glory, walking hand
in hand"\(^2\)). Although he had been as patriotic and jingoistic as most of his
fellows during the war years, Stephens's critical sanity quickly re-asserted
itself when confronted with "the laborious immaturity" of Gellert's more pre-
tentious pieces. Stephens is seen at his best in a brilliant two-page line
by line exegesis of a sonnet entitled "The Australian Muse" which began:

\[
\text{Uplift thy lyre and touch the tender strings;}
\text{But leave unsung the epics of thy land} \quad (\text{ll. } 1-2)
\]

\(^1\) Bookfellow, 15 August 1920, p. 168.
The quotations that follow are from this source.

\(^2\) Quoted in review entitled "The Muse Misguided", Bookfellow, 16 February
1920, pp. 68-69.
The quotations that follow are from this source.
and included these "Memoranda for the Muse":

Breathe forth the secret whisperings of thy birth,
And play the soft tunes of thy infancy.  (ll. 5-6)

Stephens's pithy and vigorous commentary was necessary and salutary and well written:

But this is precisely what the Muse has been doing for half a century — or since Kendall published her secret whisperings and soft tunes in 1862. Every decade her repertory of tender lyrics has grown; we can fill a small library with the volumes. Really, Mr. Gellert's advice is not reasonable. Because an able-bodied Muse, with her lyre in front of her and our history behind her, should have managed epics fifty years ago. Instead of breathing gentle whispers and playing soft tunes she had only to open her ears to the rude, strong, rich, hearty, sad, joyous, proud music of Australian life — take her Time — mind her health — attend to her job — and an Epic was finished. In the Time available, with the themes available, our Australian Muse might have managed half-a-dozen epics — all glorious for posterity.

Incidentally, Stephens's frequent complaint that so many open-air Australians had no muscle in their verse, must have been confusing for the young writers who constantly had held up for their emulation Neilson's delicacy or Quinn's other-worldliness, or heard described as the very "air of Poetry" because of their "grace of form, sweetness of mellow feeling"\(^1\) lines like these by Hebblethwaite:

Like the scent of violet,
Subtly sweet with all regret,
Love and Spring they pass away —
Ah me, well-a-day!

In turning from current reviewing to the articles that embody Stephens's considered criticism of the then established, if not 'classic', Australian

\(^1\) Bookfellow, 15 August 1920, p. 168.
writers, one observes immediately that there is much more attention to fiction; not the same preoccupation with 'the highest art' — lyric poetry. Partly this could be a reflection of the fact that in the period 1907–1925 when Stephens was writing his reviews, apart from Stone and Henry Handel Richardson and the early novels of Vance Palmer and Katharine Susannah Prichard, very little of note was being written in fiction — and what did appear was generally published abroad during breaks in Bookfellow production. Partly too, the "perspective of Time" meant that Marcus Clarke, T. A. Browne, A. H. Davis, Louis Becke and Henry Lawson (but curiously not Furphy) should be 'placed', along with the older poets, Henry Kendall, A. L. Gordon, J. B. Stephens, Victor Daley and Barcroft Boake (Charles Harpur was practically ignored; and Chris Brennan to be the subject of a later study). For most of the names mentioned Stephens prepared long, formally structured articles (or in the case of Becke and Browne death notices and tributes which surveyed the "life and works"). In general, there is little that is fresh and original (to the writer) in these articles: an article on Gordon borrows extensively from the introduction to the collected works; those on Becke, Lawson and Stephens from earlier Red Pages; the formal article on T. A. Browne in 1920 substantially repeats the death notice of 1915; and one on Kendall is the basis of a later booklet written for schools (1928), and so on. But since they do represent his considered thinking and illustrate his critical modus operandi it is worthwhile paying some attention here to a series of five

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1 For example, H. H. Richardson's Maurice Guest (1908), The Getting of Wisdom (1910), and Australia Felix (1917).

It is still a curious, and perhaps damaging, omission that the Bookfellow from 1919 to 1925 practically ignored the most considerable Australian novelist of the day.
articles entitled "Australian Writers" which appeared in five successive numbers of the Bookfellow in 1919 and 1920.\(^1\)

The articles look and read well, giving the impression of thoughtful considered final statements, though anyone who knows Stephens well is apt to be discontented by familiar-sounding passages which on checking prove to have been lifted verbatim from earlier critiques ("Hasn't he modified his opinions at all after all these years?"). And they confirm impressions expressed earlier about Stephens's Taine-like commitment to the biographical method and 'race-memory' theories. Usually about half each article (that is about one full Bookfellow page) is a lucid exposition of what Stephens would regard as relevant background information. The sub-headings tell their own story. In Kendall's case they run: "1. Race and Parentage. 2. Youth and Poetry. 3. Poetry and Manhood. 4. Kendall's Closing Years."\(^2\) For Marcus Clarke (after a brief introduction): "1. Race and Parentage. 2. A Scapegrace in Australia. 3. A Brilliant Journalist. 4. Personality and Life."\(^3\)

That Stephens regarded this background information as highly relevant is proved by his comment (under a sub-heading "Race and Heritage") that "Family history accounts fully for the strength and weakness which Henry Kendall showed in after life,"\(^4\) though one wonders why the critic should indulge his rather

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\(^2\) Ibid., 15 December 1919, pp. 3-4.

\(^3\) Ibid., 15 January 1920, pp. 41-42.

\(^4\) Ibid., 15 December 1919, p. 3.
mawkish preoccupation with authors' graves by telling us later that Mrs Louisa Lawson had raised a public subscription of £200 so that a decent monument could replace a "rude wooden cross and weatherworn tinsel wreath". Or why finish up an article on T. A. Browne's literary achievement resurrecting a literary scandal relating to Browne's plagiaristic publication of Becke's A Modern Buccaneer?

One has to turn to the second half of the various articles - to sub-headings like "Kendall Put Australia into Poetry" and "Kendall's Place in Literature" - for some evidence of Stephens's achievement as solid critic and reflective evaluator.

Once again, however, the reader is more impressed by the generally excellent prose style, the occasional insights and just evaluations memorably expressed than by sustained intellectual argument. There is, for example, the wittily expressed complaint that Brunton Stephens was really a prose writer rather than poet giving us intellectual images rather than emotional fervour: "Always he has one solid Scotch foot on the solid ground of fact. Sometimes he has two: even when his head is in the clouds he gets rheumatic twinges in his poetical feet from the earth-damps." There is point, too, in the comment that Stephens's best performance was in light verse (after the manner of Hood and Calverley) rather than in the weighty narrative Convict Once or the serious patriotic lyric "The Dominion of Australia" - though the critic's complaint (of Convict

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1 Bookfellow, 15 December 1919, p. 4.
2 Ibid., 15 April 1920, p. 89.
3 Ibid., 16 February 1920, p. 58. The quotation that follows is from this source.
Once) that "the poetic emotion is slight and made slighter by the rhetoric", as well as the already quoted complaint about unmelodic prose rhythms, betrays his prejudice for emotive melodic lyrics; and as Frederick T. Macartney observed, "hardly allows for the ordinary exigencies of narrative verse".¹

What impresses most about the considered literary judgments — and disregarding for the moment the manner of their expression — is their general sanity and soundness. Stephens's opinions on Gordon, Kendall, Clarke and Browne have become critical commonplace, and despite the inevitable demurrers that reflect individual taste, are frequently quoted both for their reasonableness and their concentration on essentials. The ability to cut straight through to the core of things is seen in the (congenial) recognition that Kendall's power lay in his 'singing pictures':

Past these debts [to Milton, Tennyson, Christina Rossetti, Swinburne, Patmore and Poe], he has his own strong sense of rhythm and sweet, instinctive melody. Wind blows and water runs through his poetry; still more than he saw the vision of the Bush he heard its singing voices.

He saw, too, the serious limitation of the self-centred melancholic "brooding atmosphere of feeling" ("he is the poet of Nature and himself — not poet of Humanity"). And, given Kendall's historical significance, what better 'placing' comment could be made than this? (assuming 'first' is used in the temporal sense, rather than as a synonym for 'best'):

The value of his work remains chiefly personal and Australian; he has but a small place in the rank of English poets. In the Australian literary rank he will stand always among the first. Innocence, sensitive feeling, sympathy with Nature, sing sweetly and sadly in his melodies.

² Bookfellow, 15 December 1919, p. 4. The quotations that follow are from this source.
In summary, then, there is (naturally) a considerable bulk of literary criticism in Stephens's Bookfellow. The writing is as lively and individual, and the opinions as personal and intuitive as in Red Page days. The main changes are in emphasis: a concern to explore and expound the principles of the craft of criticism, and more interest in overseas writing. Also, as is to be expected in an ageing man, more retrospective articles about the local writers of his youth and some alienation from younger contemporaries.

VIII

Evaluation: Bookfellow Criticism of Art

From his earliest years, in Gympie and Cairns for example, Stephens had shown an interest in music, art and the theatre. On the Bulletin he came into close contact with cartoonists and illustrators, Phil May, Livingstone Hopkins and Norman Lindsay - in the process becoming very knowledgeable about the theory and techniques of black-and-white drawing. So much so that Archibald entrusted Stephens with the editing of collections of cartoons from the Bulletin by May and Hopkins¹, for which he wrote competent introductions. And although most of his energies were taken up with literary activities during his years as Red Page editor, he did write a series of essays on "Artists in Australia" in 1900². In addition there were articles "Whistler" (R.P., 30 July 1903), "The Art of Phil May" (R.P., 10 September 1907) and "Rossetti As Painter" (R.P., 27 April


² See, for example, R.P., 1 December 1900 (on Girálamo Nerón).
1905). As well there were occasional reviews of art exhibitions and frequent lengthy commentaries on the "bad state of affairs" in art and art education in New South Wales.¹

When Stephens became owner-editor of the Bookfellow he also took personal responsibility for reporting and reviewing most of the art exhibitions, musical concerts and film productions, as well as interviewing local and visiting celebrities, and followed his Red Page practice of writing critical essays on leading artists of the day, notably a sequence of seven extensive essays on "Black-and-Whites" in 1912-1913². The articles on non-literary topics constitute such a bulk of considered writing, that they attract some attention in their own right; in the context of this thesis, however, they demand analysis for the light they throw on Stephens's critical method generally and for the influence that they had on his approaches to the writing of literary criticism.

Although untrained as an artist (or musician) Stephens wrote as confidently and assertively about pictures and singers as he did about books, relying as ever on the validity of his own personal response - approving what was 'liked' and criticizing from the point of view of an intelligent layman and spectator what was 'disliked'. His journalistic grounding in and predilection for black-and-white, as well as his natural preference for 'commonsense realism' come through continually. A typical comment is this one, in a review-article on "Cubism":

¹ "In the Name of the Artist", R.P., 7 September 1905.

² The articles appeared in the Bookfellow as follows: "I. Preliminary", 1 October 1912, p. 262; "II. The Moral of Norman Lindsay", 1 November 1912, pp. 290-291; "III. Hugh Maclean", 1 December 1912, pp. 317-318; "IV. Mr. Alfred Vincent", 1 January 1913, pp. 20-21; "V. Leonard Booth", 1 December 1913, pp. 40-41; "VI. Hal Eyre", 1 March 1913, pp. II-IV (Supplement); and "VII. Harry Julius", 1 July 1913, pp. XVII-XIX (Supplement).
When a painter presses his individual idea so far that his painting seems false to one spectator, he has missed one note in his universal harmony. When he presses his idea so far that his painting seems false to many cultivated spectators, there is a reasonable presumption that the painter's idea is a discord in the universal harmony.

The article on cubism, indeed, is as good a testing rod as any, as it shows Stephens's practice as a critic when confronted by new and innovative work for which a critical canon has not yet been established. The critic does attempt to understand the point of view of the impressionists and cubists, but as with the symbolist and imagist poets shows limited appreciation of what the innovators were about. Instead a number of brief quotations from the editors' commentary are taken out of context and quibbled with, and derogatory comments made about the illustrative pictures. For example, concerning Picabia's conventionally cubist painting "The Port of Naples" and under a derisive sub-heading "See Naples and ???", Stephens says:

The painter has thoughtfully added the title, as a child adds A HORS [sic] to its picture. There is no mistake. Picabia says that is his idea of the port of Naples; we say it brings us no idea whatever that we can connect with our idea of a port or our idea of Naples. There is a vehement contradiction. What is proved or disproved? Everything for each of us and nothing for Art.

This demand for 'reality' is repeated throughout the article, explicitly under the heading "The Impressionist Fallacy":

The common fallacy of the painters of green cows in red grass, for example, is to say: "I see; therefore it is." And it may be - for them. Yet, if they cannot convince spectators of the reality of their green cows, evidently their painting is false, whatever the truth of their vision. In failing to give an illusion of truth they fail to give their truth.

1 "Cubism, by Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger", Bookfellow, 15 August 1913, p. XXII (Supplement).
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., pp. XXII-XXIII.
It is easy to see why with these attitudes persisting to the end, Stephens would not accept the directions poetry and prose were to take after World War I, manifested, for example, in Eliot's The Waste Land, Joyce's Ulysses or Brennan's Poems. A review of the last-mentioned volume neatly illustrates this point. Stephens' demands for realism and intelligibility for the 'common reader'; his reluctance to struggle with new, or unfamiliar techniques; his impatience with intellectuals or esoteric imagery come through in this philistine disparagement of the Lilith symbol:

The earlier part of the book is occupied with the angel in the house, her approaches and issues. Follow sections in trappings and labels which doubtless mean something to the author, but nothing to us. The book, in fact, is encumbered with unnecessary paraphernalia. [my emphasis]

Norman Lindsay and Hugh McCrae have written amusingly and revealingly on Stephens's applying the methods of literary analysis to the criticism of art and on his failure to understand the difference between verbal and pictorial images or representations. McCrae, for example, tells about being commissioned to illustrate some ideas for the Bookfellow:

I had hardly time to fit myself in a very small chair before a subject came along. Through his nose, resonantly, Stephens said: "Draw me a Scotchman stepping out of his skin." I was too used to his galimatias to show any astonishment, and, notwithstanding my small capacity, I determined to have a thousand tries. As a result, in about five days, I had flayed the whole Scottish nation, and was already turning my thoughts towards Ireland when he called a retreat.

Lindsay is perceptive about Stephens's failure to understand the difference

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2 Story-Book Only (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1948), p. 90.
between the writer's and artist's crafts, a failure that negates the validity of much of his art criticism. In 1908 Stephens and Lindsay argued over the artist's 'distorted' anatomy in his drawings of the human body. C. H. Souter, a doctor, had sent Stephens a letter in which he attempted to show that the anatomical details in a Lindsay nude were out of proportion. (Souter traced the outlines of the Lindsay figure and compared them to a photograph of a life model.) Stephens sent Souter's letter to Lindsay who scribbled this undated reply on its reverse side:

Dear A.G.S.

The lunatic who evolved this astonishingly brainy bit of criticism would erect an equilateral triangle . . . [Completely erased by Stephens's hand] . . .

I hope he's managed to duly impress you. I wish you could give me this document to send to Bill Dyson. He would wear it next his breast.

Yours ever ---
Norman Lindsay

P.S.
I see by his signature that he is a Scotchman - which is as good as an explanation, but in reality this poor Caledonian is struggling with an impossibility --- you cannot possibly reduce this semblance of a spher- ical surface to linear measurement.

Then, in an article entitled "The Moral of Norman Lindsay"², Stephens drew attention to the anatomical disproportion of the subject's arm in a Lindsay drawing, without seeming to understand the foreshortening effect of perspective or, as in the case of say a Modigliani's long necked women, the validity of an artist's distort ing vision. Lindsay's irritable commentary on this matter merits quotation. According to Lindsay,

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1 Undated but carrying the annotation by Stephens's hand of "? 24 Feb 1908", J. R. Tyrrell's Papers of A. G. Stephens (ML MSS A3986).
2 Bookfellow, 1 November 1912, p. 290.
the disarming thing about A.G.'s opinion on plastic matters is that he was completely obtuse to pictorial imagery in any form. I have had a lot of experience in what editors think can be transferred from the written to the pictorial image, but A.G. was fantastic in his inability to realize the limitations of the artists's job. He once gave me a commission to design him a bookplate. Its subject was to be an apple tree under which a lady was seated (it had to be the portrait of a particular lady), while A.G. himself reclined with his head on her lap reading a volume of Matthew Arnold, and on the page of that volume a full page of Matthew Arnold's prose was to be inscribed. There were several minor items - two kookaburras, two hats, symbolically superimposed, and other matters which I have forgotten, all to be enclosed within the space of two by three inches. It was quite impossible for A.G. to see that to include a legible page of prose the figures would have to be life-size in proportion.

When the history of art criticism in this country is written, the value of Stephens's contribution no doubt will demand some attention, especially for the numerous articles on "Black-and-Whiters". The validity of Stephens's judgments as a critic of art, however, are of minor concern here. What matters is how some aspects of Stephens's theorizing about the function of criticism generally - whether applied to art or literature - receive their most explicit and closely reasoned exposition when related to art criticism. For example, in the already mentioned article on cubism, Stephens had important things to say on the responsibility of the artist to his audience, and on the standard of taste.

The rights of an artist's audience (the argument would apply to a poet's too) are discussed under the heading "The Aesthetic Compromise" where Stephens argues, as he argued in poetry, for intelligibility - for 'communication' having precedence over 'self-expression'. There must be a compromise, he said, based on a community of ideas:


2 Bookfellow, 15 August 1913, pp. XXI-XXIV (Supplement). The quotations that follow are from this source.
Underlying that community of ideas (unless a picture is to be merely a pattern) must be a community of sense-impressions regarding visible objects. That is, the painter must appeal to a convention of the mind through a convention of the eye. That is the foundation of his art. His superstructure is his power, in whatever measure, to impose his own vision, and his own idea of his vision, upon spectators. If he goes too far from convention, he loses the power to impress others. If he remains too close to convention, he thwarts his talent to express himself.

Similarly, in response to the cubist claim that "The visible world can become the real world only by the operation of the intellect", Stephens demurred by stressing again the viewers' response to the art-object: "But, unless it becomes the real world by the operation of the other fellow's intellect, it is artistically unreal. Your intellect must chime with mine before you can appreciate my Nocturne as I do."

On the slippery concept of Taste, Stephens had some sound and sensible comments to make; for example, in this answer to the question "Where is the equator of Taste between these poles of the individual and the community?":

There is none that can be calculated. But we rely upon the long-continued agreement of a considerable number of spectators to trace the line of Taste approximately. The artistic value of a painter depends upon his ability to place his paintings near the line of Taste. The critical value of a spectator depends upon his ability to place his judgments near the same line. The agreement of cultivated contemporaries may give to the one confidence in his painting, to the other confidence in his judgment. The agreement of cultivated posterity will settle the place of both painting and judgment as far as they can be settled.

But throughout there is an apparent failure to see that a creative critic's function might be to question and modify rather than to accept current orthodoxy and critical taste, however 'cultivated' that taste might be. F. R. Leavis and Ezra Pound come to mind as early perceptive critics who understood Hopkins and Eliot and asserted their worth in the face of ridicule from 'establishment' critics of the day who purported to register cultivated taste.
Stephens, however, always argues cogently his case for conservative 'standards of taste':

When a poem by Catullus, or a painting by Raphael, or a folk-song by an unknown composer artistically impresses human generation after generation, approximate standards are fixed. Hitherto, in painting, standards have been fixed less by the painter than by the subject, less by the idea than by the apparent fact. Painters have striven firstly to express the form and the colour of an object as they might truthfully appear to ten thousand spectators. And they have expressed their personal ideas, not after expressing conventional facts, but while, in, by, and through expressing conventional facts. That is, they have merged themselves in their subjects, their subjects in themselves, and in attaining their own unity of fact and idea have attained a unity which seems truthful and potent to their critics.

Very few Australian critics before or since have written so clearly on the beliefs that underlay the practice of their criticism, and it is fortunate for the literary student that Stephens did regard art and literature as similar artistic disciplines, and that really he was expounding the principles behind his practice as a literary critic when theorizing about the field for which he was less well qualified.

Certainly, the criticism of art reads very much like the criticism of literature with the same preoccupations emerging. For example, the often expressed idea that one of the functions of criticism is to 'keep up the standards' is reiterated in an article entitled "The Australian Billabong" where Stephens averred that

Artistic criticism in Australia usually consists of yards of parish pump-water. That is bad for the rising generation of painters - some of whom may make Australian artists if they get a chance. Painters in Australia formerly got too little credit and too little money. Nowadays, when the Suburbs have taken to buying bungalow-decorations at extravagant prices, they get too much money and credit. The excess is bad for Australian art - which is chiefly chocolate-with-cream and should be blood, sweat, and chain lightning - free of life as well as beauty of design.

1 Stage and Society, 15 July 1926, p. 19.
Similarly criticism of Hans Heysen's "decorative eye ticklers" is reminiscent both in import and style of the rigorous denunciations of local writers who were skilful versifiers but lacked poetic vision or intensity. "How long are we to wait for a painter to rise to the height of an artist - to rise to the height of a man - and paint the rich, striving, inspiring life of men and women in Australia?" he queries (very much after the fashion of the introductory comments in The Bulletin Story Book, 1901). Mr Heysen, he complained assertively, shows 

a slight vision of art, with passages of skilful craft. Much of his painting is pretty well done, and most of it was not worth doing. His mind is imitative, not creative; he has no gift of original feeling, or no capacity to convey it. In the eyes of draughtsmen who cannot draw and painters who cannot paint, he shines as a star; in the world of art we may grant him the occasional illumination of a candle.

Finally, the interest in art did have one indirect consequence for the writer of literary criticism. Always an allusive writer, and fond of explicating abstractions through imagery or analogies, Stephens often turned to art for an apt metaphor or comparison. It is fascinating to see this happening in a piece of critical writing. For example, in a review of Rudyard Kipling's Collected Verse (Bookfellow, 1 February 1913, p. 28) the point is made that the poet's manner is "external, objective; and poetically defective, though excellent in its manner". As he warms to his subject and develops his point the critic searches around for images and in a flush of creative energy, very similar to a poet's, seizes first on the image of the newly-invented "electric searchlight" and from there by natural association to chiaroscuro in art:

Kipling's mind was like an electric searchlight: it illuminated brilliantly everything it plunged upon, and nothing beyond the definite circle of its rays. In the surrounding shadow there is no chiaroscuro of mystery: black is dense black, white is intense white; Kipling has no half-tones. Atmosphere seems burned up in the cold, blue flame; the remarkable descriptive lines that state an object so clearly to the eye fail curiously to make it visible to the mind.

Not only is the point a valid one in relation to Kipling's poetry, it is made urgently and eloquently through the use of light and colour imagery. Stephens is distinguished as a critic because he did bring the whole of his experience to bear on the work under scrutiny in order to find 'common ground' with his reader. A very significant area of that experience, that potential well of expository imagery, was the world of art. And this from the literary point of view is the real value of his art criticism.

IX
Conclusion

In summary, the criticism preserved in the Bookfellow abounds with 'quotable quotations' that are sound, penetrating, lively; as usual Stephens shows limitations in the appreciation of narrative or intellectual verse and has very restrictive notions on the lyric. Consequently his criticism of prose is generally sounder, but even here there are occasional contradictions and lapses of taste. Above all there is a disappointing 'bittiness' even in the longer reflective articles: Stephens in his Bookfellow period, either by inclination or from force of journalistic circumstance (or a combination of both), never really faced up to the challenge of writing comprehensively and exhaustively on literary topics. That is to say no one Bookfellow article could stand by
itself as an adequate monument to his critical power, but cumulatively consid-
ered the critical writing collected in the Bookfellow and its off-shoots is
considerable and impressive.

Though more mature and responsible, "The Bookfellow" does manifest increas-
ingly symptoms associated with hardening of critical arteries. The ideas on
lyrical poetry show little progression from earlier Red Page pronouncements
and as indicated earlier were practically uninfluenced by the not so quiet re-
volution in technique that the imagists and their followers had advertised.
True, Stephens did recognize and foster the admitted talent of a Shaw Neilson,
a Hugh McCrae and a Mary Gilmore. But in later years the gaze was backwards
and the bulk of published verse lacks the vitality and sense of contemporaneity
of the earlier Red Page poets. His poetasters served up pallid, feeble-pulsed
stuff rather similar in tone and spirit and technique to that of their despised
fellow 'Georgians' (consider Roderic Quinn, James Hebblethwaite, Robert Craw-
ford, M. A. Robertson). The limited innovations of a Furnley Maurice or Fred-
erick Macartney were actively discouraged: no young Slessor or Fitzgerald
would have found the "Bookfellow" of the twenties a congenial or understanding
editor.

The most vigorous poems in the main are Stephens's own robust declamatory
verses (clear poetic failures by his own criteria). These and the prolix
prose sketches which he kept reprinting are indistinguishable in technique
from the contributions he first sent to Archibald in 1893. They would be
printed and reprinted, one imagines, not so much from editorial narcissism
as from the need to find copy for an ailing journal. Clearly Stephens in the
third series, especially after The World War, was having trouble in persuading readers to be correspondents and controversialists, and was failing to attract the promising young writers to contribute sketches, stories or poems. Partly this would be for financial reasons – he just could not afford to pay top rates like the Bulletin, but mainly I feel it was because the Bookfellow after 1919 was not alive in the sense that Archibald's Bulletin had been: did not speak clearly to or for a contemporary audience.

Increasingly, too, the later Bookfellow review at length unimportant and ephemeral work that would have been beneath the Red Pagan’s notice. Partly this would be for the admirable purpose of improving the taste of the readers whom Stephens regarded as his widest audience, the unacademic booklovers who patronized the lending libraries and for whom the latest novel was staple.

Thus this sensible letter from the librarian at Kalgoorlie Mechanics Institute:

May I subscribe an Australian librarian's appreciation of the value of your excellent paper. We purchase something over two thousand books a year for our Lending Library, and find that your review is the best guide we can obtain in the choice of new books, especially in the choice of books by new authors.

In fact, there is only one other review which we receive which is as unbiased by trade considerations in its judgments, and that review The Times Literary Supplement, lacks the Australian viewpoint, which combined with excellent discretion, keen literary appreciation, and apt expression, makes your journal so valuable.

Partly it was because Stephens did take an almost sadistic delight in debunking the inferior sentimental and sensational romances of the day (which his own Lady Calphurnia Royal, written in collaboration with Albert Dorrington, imitates). And though the destructive reviews do make for lively light reading

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1 Quoted, "with grateful pleasure", in Bookfellow, 15 December 1919, p. 8.
it does seem rather like 'cracking beetles with wheels' (to use an 'A.G.S.ism') to see Stephens using his talent so. The review of a novel called The Creeping Tides where Stephens retold the story in the author's own gushing style, will serve by way of illustration:

Listen! There are two lost souls.

John was an officer in the English army in India. He was court-martialed for cowardice. It was true! John joined the American army in the Philippines [sic] and proved himself bravest of the brave. After the war was over, John came to New York with so much celebrity that the newspapers do not waste him on week-days. They save him for Sundays!

But this, though good fun, is surely a squandering of critical ability and energy: another example of a boyish literary playfulness (and love of parody) that was never quite outgrown.

But in balance the Bookfellow journal was an admirable and courageous achievement. In view of the conditions under which he worked, and the inadequate public recognition and financial returns, the wonder is that the editor achieved so much. To have sustained for so long the only purely literary magazine of quality in the country through almost single-handed effort during the years when most people contemplate security and retirement (from his forty-sixth to sixtieth years) in the face of formidable editorial, production and financial difficulties is testament to Stephens's vision, dedication and determination.

As Vance Palmer said in his tribute, the time was not yet ripe for a literary magazine in Australia - was not to be until 1939-1940 in fact, when Southerly and Meanjin appeared. And quite apart from the intrinsic value of the

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1 Bookfellow, 15 April 1914, p. 89.
criticism and writing that the journal alone preserves, the Bookfellow is of real value for the literary historian. Despite its editor's fixed ideas in some respects, it stayed the distance long enough to reflect trends, and even to influence them a little through its effect on a small but important audience of readers and writers. Some of these contemporaries were generous in their recognition of Stephens's contribution to letters in Australia. One, Hugh Wright (the Public Librarian), wrote this in a testimonial:

Mr. Stephens will be known to you as one of the foremost authors and critics of Australian Literature. He has helped many other authors to do good work for the Commonwealth, and has edited to publication no [corrected in pencil to "not"] fewer than forty books of Australian verse and prose. For want of capital, he has this year been obliged to suspend indefinitely publication of The Bookfellow. [sic] magazine, 1 which was certainly the best of its class ever issued in Australia.

And there is the generous (perhaps 'fulsome' is the better word) judgment by Dr Walter Williams, Dean of the School of Journalism at Columbia University. He told Stephens in an interview, first printed in 1914 (and subsequently quoted from time to time by way of advertisement):

"I was very pleased with the copies of THE BOOKFELLOW. I read the paper from cover to cover. I think it is written with great ability—and the ability is shown in every page. That is what I especially liked. How does it compare with other papers of its type? It is not so large as many others, but in quality of matter it compares favourably with any literary review in the world, and the forcefulness, the virility, with which its opinions are expressed, I don't think I have seen equalled in the world."

"Yes," said Dr. Williams when the note of his remarks was read to him, 2 "I will stand by that."


The letter was in support for a grant from the Trust to enable him to resume publication of the Bookfellow. Filed with correspondence with J. Le Gay Brereton.

Finally, a more responsibly expressed yet no less generous tribute from the literary historian, H. M. Green, seems to me both as just as it is generous - a fitting conclusion to any discussion of the literary importance of Stephens's Bookfellow to Australian letters of the time:

I have been going over the files of the Bookfellow, and have been struck again by the fact that you seem to be almost the only Australian critic, at any rate in those days, who had any ideas to express! I get lots of cuttings from articles by other people, but they are useful only as reminders, and occasionally where they give facts. There aren't any ideas in them. It is a great pity that the Bookfellow had to stop.

Miss Noble/PL/429005

Mr Stuart Lee
62 Victoria Avenue
CHAMPSWOOD NSW 2067

9 March 1978

Dear Mr Lee,

The Head of the Department of English has advised that the corrections to the Library copy of your thesis for the degree of Master of Arts (Honours) have been made to her satisfaction and that you may now be awarded the degree with First Class Honours.

A copy of the thesis is available for return to you and may be collected from Miss Noble in the Faculty of Arts Section of my office.

Yours sincerely,

Kenneth W. Knight
Registrar

The Candidate has signed the undertaking relating the lodgement of the thesis in the University Library.

cc

Professor Wilkes
Professor Kramer
Associate Professor Maidment
Faculty
File
Sequence
THE SELF-MADE CRITIC:

A Literary and Biographical Study of A. G. Stephens

by

Stuart Edward Lee

Volume II
CHAPTER X

THE MIDDLE YEARS (1906-1926)

VARIOUS LITERARY ACTIVITIES

The Bookfellow was the major but not all-consuming interest of Stephens's middle life\(^1\); and any survey of the work and times must take into account activities that while not directly concerned with the day-to-day writing, editing and publishing of the Bookfellow itself, were complementary - almost by-products. As in his Red Page days editing a literary publication brought Stephens into close contact with writers seeking advice or an audience; there were invitations and pressures to lecture or write on literary matters for other journals; there was the need to read, carry through research and to file relevant information as a basis for Bookfellow articles and reviews; and there was the challenge to write creatively himself. Thus there is a responsibility and need to explore and evaluate these various supplementary literary activities - editing, lecturing, researching, writing, criticism and the rest.

I

Literary Criticism

Some of Stephens's better criticism was contributed to journals other than the Bookfellow during his middle years. Perhaps, as he so often said of his

\(^1\) There were two major breaks in Bookfellow and associated literary activities: the journalistic sojourn in New Zealand from 1907-1910 (see Chapter VIII); and World War I (especially from 1915 to 1918) when his energies were devoted to the 'war effort', writing jingoistic propaganda, penning patriotic songs and verses for recitation, and editing An Anzac Memorial (Sydney: R.S.S.A.I.L., 1916 and 1917).
own writers (following Archibald), a man writes better for other editors. Certainly, with commissioned and contributed articles he did seem to spread himself more, and take greater pains over the presentation, than when writing to meet his own monthly deadlines or to fill up an empty column or space—often set up in galley proofs from holograph first drafts, to judge from the manuscripts in the papers. His contributed articles were often typed up, so would go through three stages of emendation: after and during the first written draft, after typing up, and after proofing (once again, judging from abundant evidence in the papers). Also, as is to be expected, the commissioned and contributed articles were on subjects and writers in whom he had a special interest, often knew well personally. Thus Ashton Murphy's promise, as editor of Steele Rudd's Annual, 1918 to keep space for an article on "New Australian Writers", with this editorial crack of the whip: "We expect something in your old style—something that made the sparks fly"\(^1\); Kate Baker's invitation to write the preface for her edition of Rigby's Romance\(^2\); and contributions to The Home\(^3\) and Art in Australia\(^4\) on Henry Lawson.

The first critical articles contributed to another journal during the period under review, however, were not of a high standard. In 1910 the editor of a newly established Western Australian journal, The Leeuwin, invited Stephens to write a series of four articles on local poets\(^5\). The editor's biographical


\(^3\) December 1921, pp. 26-27.

\(^4\) November 1922, unpaginated.

\(^5\) "The Manly Poetry of Western Australia", The Leeuwin, I, i-iv (October 1910 to January-February 1911).
and critical note\(^1\) was fulsome. Stephens, who was 'between jobs' and in the
process of re-establishing the Bookfellow, responded in like manner. As a
guest, writing on crude, indigenous poetry for a local audience he apparently
regarded it as politic and good manners to patronize his subjects - or at least
by omission refrain from normal, searching criticism. Perhaps the 'bushman-at-
heart' stance that Stephens sometimes adopted was no pose and he really found
the masculinity of "Bluebush's", "Dryblower's" and "Prospect Good's" verse ad-
mirable and salutary. However that may be, he walked his critical tightrope
skilfully, praising the rough ballads where he could, not saying anything crit-
ically outrageous, but by selectivity (particularly omission) giving a somewhat
false impression of the value and importance of these back-woods verses. Thus
positively:

[It is] . . . the most virile and the most characteristic poetry that
is being made in Australia to-day . . . For vigour and versatility the
East has at the moment no writers to rival this little Western comrade-
ship.

The admiration of 'shirt-sleeves poetry', as Stephens called the verse under
review, was rationalised in a statement which perhaps is his extreme affirm-
ation of the all-importance of emotion in poetry. No matter how crude the
verse, if it arouses emotion it should be respected as poetry, he argued:

It is said that the Arabs are careful not to tread on any scrap of writ-
ten paper lest it should contain the sacred name of Allah. In the same
manner I think every lover of poetry is careful not to contaminate the rud-
est rhyme that may contain a heartbeat. That is to say that every lover
of poetry is a faithful Catholic. He may like some kinds of poetry
better than others, yet he finds every kind a good kind - however stiffly

\(^1\) "A Bookfellow Book", The Leeuwin, I, iv (January–February 1911), 247–256.

\(^2\) "The Manly Poetry of Western Australia", The Leeuwin, I, i (October 1910),
47.
or crudely it succeeds in transferring its content of emotion. If it does not hold and convey emotion, then it is not poetry, no matter how fine its form or how famous the name of its author.

The argument becomes ludicrous, however, when verses were quoted in support. Thus the critic would quote these lines from "Bluebush" (J. P. Bourke):

But now I'm getting old and hipped,
And kick against the ruts,
I often think I'll have a pray,
And can't get down for nuts -
And Dave 'ud say a prayin' pea,
He's never got no guts

and would assert that though "not refined poetry" this was "real poetry", for let us never forget that all the refinements of life spring from precisely such realities as are illustrated by this humble "battler". . . . Let not the flower despise its roots.

. . .

No doubt such stanzas deserve to be called coarse. I would defend them, as I enjoy them [my emphasis], because they are not vulgar; they are not affected or insincere; they express the primitive man in 'Bluebush' as he is found.

Recalling his later personal and confidential criticism to Shaw Neilson that his poetry was "too feminine", lacked the measure of a man, it is credible to infer that Stephens was sincere here; that he did 'enjoy' two distinct categories of emotion-producing poetry; in one relatively watertight compartment were the "the Bulletin bards" and their Western counterparts, in the other "the Bookfellow lyrists" such as McCrae, Neilson, Crawford and the rest.

1 "The Manly Poetry of Western Australia", The Leeuwin, I, i (October 1910), 49.
2 Ibid., pp. 98-99.
3 The two extremes were called "the literature of art" ("writers with a languid pulse whose finest effects are gained by a decorative use of language") and "the literature of humanity" ("writers who use the oldest rhymes, the oldest rhythms to give impetus to the messages of emotion that fly hot from their hearts"). It is true that Stephens did attempt to reconcile the two: "The one kind does not exclude the other; the best poetry is human in impulse, artistic in expression." (pp. 48-49)
Much of the fugitive criticism written during this period, however, is significant and must be considered in any account of the critical achievement. The first was the 1921 preface for Kate Baker’s edition of Furphy’s Rigby’s Romance, which with characteristic verve he described as "a juicy quarter of the mammoth Such is Life"\(^1\). This is so well known and has been so adequately discussed elsewhere\(^2\), that perhaps the most useful procedure here is to reproduce Miss Baker’s delighted acknowledgement of the manuscript:

Dear A.G.S. —

You’re GREAT.
You know your man & your book. One could almost imagine you to be an Irishman.
And to think what the reading public of Austra Zealand would have lost had I not insisted & persisted that you & you alone Must write the "Preface" to "Rigby’s Romance".

In 1921, too, a lively and comprehensive series of three articles on "Australian Humourists" appeared in The Home. The first was on James Edmond, leader writer for Archibald from 1886, and from 1902 to 1915 editor of the Bulletin\(^4\); the second on Henry Lawson\(^5\) and the third on "Steele Rudd" (A. H. Davis)\(^6\). These three articles rank with Stephens’s best criticism and are of interest

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2 For example, by Professor R. G. Howarth in his Foreword to the enlarged edition (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1940).


4 The Home, 1 September 1921, pp. 6, 7, 74, 76.

5 Ibid., 1 December 1921, pp. 26-27.

6 Ibid., 1 March 1923, pp. 23, 98, 100.
because they cover new ground, that is are not 'cannibalized' from earlier articles as so often was the case in later years.

James Edmond is an important and largely ignored Bulletin writer who, for example, wrote the sardonically titled "Wild Cat" financial column from 1892. Miss Sylvia Lawson, after reading the Bulletin files in preparation for a series of W.E.A. lectures in 1971 and a projected biography of Archibald, described Edmond as the 'intellect' behind the Bulletin. In Miss Lawson's judgment Archibald was the 'heart', who could feel things; but Edmond it was who had the capacity to develop them into logical, structured articles in ironic, humorous writing. In his article on Edmond Stephens makes the valid point that Edmond's humour depended on a peculiar fanciful extravagance of phrase, image and substance; a deliberately contrived vagueness and inconsequence; and, like Mark Twain, a piling up of detail with the purpose of ridiculing foolishness while entertaining through humour. Stephens, who loved to parody both in verse and in prose (for example, the parody of Othello in the article on "Stunned Words"), here sets himself the considerable linguistic achievement of making valid, responsible generalizations about Edmond's humour, but of doing so in the elusive and bizarre style that Edmond made his own - particularly the extended metaphor. Stephens, whose own penchant for playfully extended metaphors would have matched Edmond's, succeeds wonderfully in this particular exercise, perhaps because so practised in the technique.

1 Lecture at the University of Sydney, 3 June 1971.
2 "Australian Humourists - I. James Edmond", The Home, 1 September 1921, pp. 7, 74, 76.
3 Quoted below, p. 342.
Stephens's analysis of Edmond's humour is worth close attention here for the light it throws on him as a flexible, resourceful and, if need be, humorous critical writer. His analysis is sustained in the metaphor of a traveller who is in such a hurry that he crams his suitcase with belongings till it strains to bursting point; on arrival at his destination he unpacks by the expedient of tumbling the lot on to his bed; that, said Stephens, was what Edmond's mind was like:

It was always racing along at the speed of the train that goes to Strathfield, busily endeavouring to think as fast as it could before reaching the next station. When that mind looked out of the window and saw anything that asked to be written up, and lots of things that didn't ask to be written up, Edmond merely added them to the heap of other things that were going through his head at the time, threw out the product at the next stop, and accepted a fresh topic. As his mind was always full, it never mattered how insignificant the topic was; it became important by a simple process of addition to other things of more or less importance, and more or less relevant to the topic. The more irrelevant they were, the funnier the paragraph usually became; since what is usually called humour has branches in the incongruity of words or ideas, with a root in the congruity or basic identity of everything under the sun. Edmond's peculiar merit as a humourist was to be interested in so many things so distant from one another that when he tumbled out the contents of his mental portmanteau all kinds of grotesque analogies sprang to light by sheer juxtaposition. The process was like the working of the law of gravitation, which, according to old Isaac Newton, collects apples and orbs with equal regularity and attention to dispatch. The average journalist is content to harvest apples, but Edmond habitually harvested anything that happened to be falling in his mental region, and the customer who got a case of ants and asteroids, when he had expected plain, daily-paper fruit, rarely failed to grin when he was recovering from the sudden fracture of the order of things. That fracture was the essence of Edmond's humour.

The Lawson and "Steele Rudd" articles are similarly written, in the case of Lawson the stratagem being to have Steelman and Smith talk in their char-

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1 "Australian Humourists - 1. James Edmond", The Home, 1 September 1921, pp. 7, 74, 76.
acteristic idiom about their maker. Both articles are entertaining and sound in the same way as the Edmond article. The series is very well written indeed.

Stephens's considered 'last word' on Lawson, somewhat akin to his monograph on Brennan in 1933, is to be found in *Art in Australia* (November 1922). Conceived as a unity and written freshly from a consistent point of view, it transcends the previous snippety reviews or scissors-and-paste pastiches that served as 'articles'. Lawson, again like Brennan, had died two months previously, and although there had been animosity and conflict between the two (mainly on Lawson's part) it is apparent that Stephens has put this from his mind and is attempting a just evaluation. For he assumes the eminence of the best writing and pays its author the compliment of rigorous searching criticism:

Lawson never achieved literary width proportionate to his depth; he never justified, in the aspect of literature, his rare gifts of observation, insight, and description, often made golden by sympathy and compassion and idealistic fervour. Much of his work remains to Australia; very little to the world.

The balance and sanity of this circumspect praise are to be constrained to the eulogies that even less nationally minded critics of the time essayed, or what seems to me the too partisan praise of later ones. Of course, as always in Stephens, strong convictions (amounting almost to prejudices) are expressed unreservedly; for example, his demand that men be mascu-

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1 "Henry Lawson", *Art in Australia*, November 1922, unpagedinated. The quotations that follow are from this source.

2 For example, English-born F. J. Broomfield's *Henry Lawson and His Critics* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1930).

line: "Much of Lawson's work views Australia through the distorting glass of his own moody mind. 'My aunts said I should have been a girl,' he wrote. His womanish wail often needs a sturdy Australian backbone." But it seems to me that Stephens is exactly right when it comes to indicating the precise limits of Lawson's art, the failure to realize the thematic significance of his materials, and an attendant intellectual limitation:

Lawson had the gift of putting himself in another man's place; but he always remained himself, he had rarely the gift of becoming and interpreting the other man in the other man's place. His incidents are always right, but his point of view is often wrong. And his keen vision was near-sighted; he saw things distinctly, but he did not see things large. He saw people as they were, but he could rarely see them as they saw themselves, he could rarely describe them in their just proportions and relations. To all his vivid impressions of life we must add interrogation marks - when true? where true? how far true? When, for personal reasons, he is in sympathy with his subject, Lawson's truth goes a long way; when he is out of sympathy, it stops at the end of his pen.

Or again:

For poetry as for prose, Lawson wanted lofty imagination; his descriptive work is unsurpassed in his domain; but he needed to see the thing go on, or to hear an actual observer's account, before he could describe. After the Dickens and Harte and Poe and Kendall and Australian Journal of his boyhood, he read few books; his mind was not widened by literature; he used his eyes, he listened as he could, and remembered all he saw and heard. Inevitably his view of life was limited, however keen.

I would argue that this is criticism of a high order, cogently expressed, fair-minded and perceptive. This opinion is backed by two contemporary scholars, John Barnes and Cecil Mann, both of whom have chosen to reprint the article: the one as an example of Stephens's best criticism\(^1\), the other as an example of the best extant criticism on Lawson\(^2\).

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In 1924 Stephens wrote an important and little known article on younger contemporary Australian poets for the *Australian Bystander*. As indicated by the title "Satyrs in Slops: Alleged New Poetry in Sydney. A Review and Condemnation", the article was a virulent attack on poets who belonged to the Vision school and were represented (along with Stephens himself) in a volume of verse entitled *Poetry in Australia, 1923* with a preface by Norman Lindsay that puts the Vision point of view towards art. The article, which was given to me by the late Kenneth Slessor when I asked him about Stephens and the younger writers' attitudes towards his criticism, concentrates on the Vision poets' immorality, decadence and unwholesome concentration on sex - "the sex-squint of their literary outlook":

After reading the book, I wrote to remove from further editions the poems in my charge. In some particulars, the book is obscene and vile, a blot upon the name of poetry, a scandal to the fame of Australia. (p. 28)

As a vituperative diatribe this article would seldom be equalled in the canon of Australian criticism: forty years later Mr Slessor could still quote to me the exact wording of some of the phrases - for example, "They offer, instead, a baggage of worn-out artifices, much lewd language, and the decaying odour of foreign stews." (p. 28) And again:

Sydney City Council employs youths with brush and pan to remove ordure from the streets. Why employ youth to preserve the odour of ordure in "Poetry in Australia, 1923"? . . .

The charge against several of the new rhymers is that during a large part of their labour they have seen chiefly the putrescence of the slime, and shown chiefly the iridescence of the scum. (p. 28)

The main criticisms were that the poets were technically inept ("a set of rhymers"), too intellectual ("whose talent is heady, not hearty"); fashionably

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1 "Satyrs in Slops", *The Australian Bystander*, 17 January 1924, pp. 28,32. The quotations that follow are from this source.
gimmicky ("whose form imitates ephemeral English verse, not classical English poetry"); and offered a debased vision of humanity ("who bring us no atmosphere of gallant life, no high and chivalrous imagination, no reflection of the glory and grandeur of Australia"). Slessor was criticized, with some point, for being too baroque ("The weak structure of [his] verse is propped with pillars of excessive decoration"); aesthetically decadent ("Reliance upon decorative effects, and particularly upon alien decorative effects, is a well recognised mark of decadence in art and letters"); and too imitative ("public appreciation of such poet-apes is always conditioned by public ignorance of the poetical calling").

I regard this as an important article for the light it throws both on Stephens's attitudes towards the new generation of writers who after 1923 began to supplant the Bulletin and Bookfellow coteries, and on the firmly entrenched beliefs that Stephens had concerning what constituted 'good poetry'. His angry alienation from newer writers influenced by the innovative practices of Pound, Eliot and Joyce, makes Stephens sound like an embittered Colonel Blimp of letters - ironic when one recalls the iconoclastic pragmatism of his own youthful writing. His poetic prejudices - including dislike of 'head poetry', distrust of 'foreign' influences, a feeling that image, metaphor and symbol were decorative additions rather than manifestations of an imaginative and creative mind - were to blind him to the virtues and achievement of Chris Brennan, and make his book on that poet seem curiously old-fashioned, given its date of publication (1933). On the other hand the essential points of

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1 See below, Chapter XI, pp. 379-391.
criticism that Stephens made against the *Vision* school have been endorsed by some modern critics, especially those influenced by Dr Leavis, who also press the charges of moral frivolousness, indulgent sensuality, verbal indiscipline and artistic irresponsibility\(^1\).

Finally, indicative of Stephens's financial problems and his difficulty in finding a market for his writing, is a series of fourteen articles entitled "Australian Women Poets" which appeared in *Aussie*, "The Cheerful Monthly", during 1922 and 1923. Surmising that Stephens, who had come into contact with *Aussie*'s editor, Phillip C. Harris, during the war years through his editing of the patriotic memento *An Anzac Memorial*(1917)\(^2\), I searched *Aussie* for Stephens material. The series on women poets had on the surface an A.G.S. ring about them. The lay-out and ordering (I, II, III, etc. as in the Bookfellow series), the list of names (Gilmore, Cross, Mackay, Mack and other poets closely connected with Stephens) and finally the wording of the sub-title ("This section, written by Women, is devoted to things about Women that should be known by Men, and things about Men that should be known about Women"), all were re-dolent of Stephens. Internal evidence from the articles themselves is cogent evidence that Stephens either contributed the articles himself under a psuedonym or 'ghosted' them for his daughter, Constance Robertson, who edited the women's section of *Aussie*. The pervasive style, the characteristic structur-

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2 During the war years Harris had edited *Aussie* as a soldiers' magazine: "The Diggers' Own Paper, Printed at the Front". It ran for some years as a civilian magazine, aimed at an audience of ex-servicemen and their families.
ing of the articles (biography, quotation, pithy impressionistic generaliz-
ing) and recognized echoes from earlier articles by Stephens establish for me
that "Eve’s Daughter" was "The Bookfellow" in disguise. Compare, for example,
the statement by "Eve’s Daughter" that "Every woman is a poet - instinc-
tively and naturally"\(^1\) to the earlier admission by Stephens that

> I am with those who hold that the poet is half a woman. I believe that
to reach the highest ecstasy of poetry, the female receptivity must
accompany the male energy. If I were to express my inmost thought I
would say (and although my own life is spent at the pen) that writing
is a woman's business, anyway; a man's business is fighting.\(^2\)

The article on Mary Gilmore from which the first quotation was abstracted
begins with the typical A.G.S.ism that "Primarily, poetry is a surge and out-
pouring of emotion", and then puts women in their place with masculine firm-
ness:

> Women, mostly, are versifiers, not poets. They write charmingly, forc-
ibly - sometimes - tenderly; but generally they lack that ability for
sustained flight and adequate expression which would enable them to reach the highest levels of achievement.

Further evidence of Stephens’s hand is seen in the frequent references to hered-
dity, Celtic influences and the rest, as well as the occasional passage of
purple prose as this, on Dorothea Mackellar: "She reminds one of a Celt of
the days of Deirdre, with the mind of a visionary peering with white face and
burning eyes through the black branches of the night."\(^4\) Most telling of all

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\(^1\) "Australian Women Poets: I. Mary Gilmore", *Aussie*, 15 May 1922, p. 39

\(^2\) "The Manly Poetry of Western Australia", *The Leeuwin*, I, i (October 1910), 48.


is the explicit statement of what elsewhere has been implicit, that academic studies are imimical to the writing of poetry:

There always has been, and always there will be argument as to whether or not too much of the academic in life has a tendency to sap the springs of emotion from which poetry flows.

Poetry is a spontaneous outburst, and it is noteworthy that the greatest poets in the world have been schooled in the University of life, rather than the University of letters. Study of university [sic] magazines too often reveals metrical composition which is called poetry, but from which all the spontaneity has been squeezed. It shows the touch of too much learning. Frequently, that is, but not always. Sometimes there comes a flash of true poetry, a lilt of lyricism — but it is the exception which proves the rule.

If these articles are accepted as being by Stephens, as I claim they are, they constitute a considerable addition to the canon of his work, measured in quantity alone. It is true that most of the opinions expressed can be gleaned from Red Page and Bookfellow articles (and surely from the last public lecture on "Women Poets"), but there is value in having the material so concentrated and ordered. In addition, the writer has attempted to pitch his language to suit the imagined audience (a fair bit of 'talking down' as in the Kendall booklet, written for children) so perforce much rewriting was necessary. To this extent at least the material is fresh. Finally, as in the attack on the Universities, the writer is blunter — behind the safety of his pseudonym he can state explicitly where previously he might have felt it impolitic to reveal these strongly-felt convictions for fear of ridicule, or charges of philistinism.

1 "XIII. Enid Derham", Aussie, 15 May 1923, p. 43.
During the period from 1911-1926 Stephens edited twelve\(^1\) volumes of verse and published ten of them under the Bookfellow imprint. In addition Shaw Neilson's *Green Days and Cherries* (1914) was edited to the proofing and design stage but not proceeded with, perhaps because of the war situation. Also most of the collating and editing for *New Poems* (1927) would have been done in 1926. Thus it will be seen that the output is comparable to Bulletin books in quantity, though produced over a much longer time period (sixteen years as against six). The type of verse produced, predictably, was more uniform since Stephens himself was sole arbiter: Shaw Neilson, James Hebblethwaite, Mary Gilmore, M. A. Robertson and Robert Crawford exemplifying his taste and preferences (Hugh McCrae whose verse appeared regularly in the Bookfellow is the outstanding omission). So it can be seen that Stephens's contribution to publishing in these years was a distinguished and important one.

The ten volumes printed for the Bookfellow represent a remarkable business achievement since, unlike the Bulletin books, they were published without financial backing and by an impecunious editor for writers who were often even worse off (for example, the alcoholic Robert Crawford). They show the old concern for aesthetic presentation and cleanness of text, reflecting at once

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\(^1\) See Bibliography: I. Primary: E. Edited Books.
The number becomes fifteen, if Neilson's *Green Days and Cherries* and *New Poems*, are added, and the "Revised and Enlarged" edition of Boake's *Where the Dead Men Lie* (1913) counted.
Stephens's understanding of the printing trade (and his ability to impose
his will on printers) and the meticulous, time-consuming work that preceded
publication, especially at the preparing of manuscripts and proofing stages. It
must be said that the verse preserved is of a very uneven quality, ranging
at one extreme from poetry as distinguished as Shaw Neilson's; while Mary Gilmore is represented by
an insignificant volume of children's verse entitled The Tale of Tiddly Winks
(1917). The general run of verse is conventional work by lyrists who now are
largely forgotten: poets like M. A. Robertson, James Hebblethwaite, Robert
Crawford and Mabel Hookey come to mind. There is also a volume of comic
verses by Dr C. H. Souter entitled Irish Lords and Other Verse (1912), some
of which anticipated C. J. Dennis's The Songs of A Sentimental Bloke (1915)
in their exploitation of slang and dialect. An important undertaking was the
editing for Angus and Robertson of an "accurate and authoritative" edition of
Adam Lindsay Gordon's poems, a project long and jealously contemplated to
judge from the tone and context of his attacks on earlier 'incompetent' editors

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1 See S. E. Lee, "A. G. Stephens as Literary Editor", Southerly, XXIV, iii (1964), 161-163.
2 Three volumes: Old Granny Sullivan (1916), Heart of Spring (1919) and Ballad and Lyrical Poems (1923).
3 Off the Bluebush, published by Tyrrell's (1915).
4 Land of Memory (1919).
5 Meadow and Bush (1911).
6 The Leafy Bliss (1921 and enlarged edition 1924).
7 The Eagle of the Field (1913).
8 Poems of A. L. Gordon (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1918).
such as Douglas Sladen and Frank M. Robb. Later editors of Gordon must be indebted to Stephens for this responsible and scholarly volume with its well-written and informative introduction.

The manuscripts in the Mitchell Library show that in addition to the unpublished Neilson volume Stephens had at least three other volumes under way. The first was James Hebblethwaite's curiosity piece entitled The Christian's Rubaiyat, a typescript with manuscript corrections by the author and emendations by Stephens, who gives the date as "?1910. Unpublished." The second was Arnold Wall's Dream Fishing: An Extravaganza, in clean typescript with block illustrations and dated 1911; and the third Harry Morant's ["The Breaker"] Station Songs and Drowning Ditties, in typescript dated 1923 by Stephens with a pencilled note: "Includes over 30 pieces not previously collected."

The Hebblethwaite book is a curiosity piece with little intrinsic literary merit. Stephens's own note, inserted in 1930, is fair comment both on the stodginess of its content and its technical unevenness:

FitzGerald's Omar's "rubaiyat" praises "wine, red wine!"
Here is J. H.'s Christian heel upon the serpent.
Needs rewriting in leisure. Many stanzas are rough; some already 6 beautiful and fine.

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1 See, for example, Bookfellow, 1 November 1912, p. 274 where Sladen is dismissed as "An Incompetent Editor" and 1 November 1912, pp. 299-300 where remarks are made concerning Robb's "defective and erroneous" and "Not to be considered a final" edition.

2 Green Days and Cherries (1914), unpublished, except for three copies bound from proof of book set in type but later cancelled.

3 Filed at ML QA821/H.

4 Filed at ML QA821/W.

5 In S.P., Vol. 7 (A2303).

Dream Fishing: *An Extravaganza* is, however, a publication loss because Arnold Wall is a poet of standing in the New Zealand canon who in these verses did explore, however fancifully, an area of experience that mattered a great deal to him - trout-fishing during long vacations⁠¹. Also, the book is attractive and ready for publication. The 'mock-up' of the booklet has visually pleasing black-and-white decorative motifs as headings for each of the seven carefully typed and corrected poems that comprise the sequence, with notes by Wall and Stephens. Stephens's note indicates a frustration the reader shares that such a project should fall through because of lack of finance:

In 1911 he [Wall] sent me the draft of a new booklet of verse: *Dream Fishing*: asking if I could get it published in Australia, with illustrations, as a booklet. I took some pains with it: since the fantastic verse is skilful and interesting; and employed Hugh McCrae to make sketches for illustration, of which one (commended by Wall in enclosed letter) has survived.

But I had to tell Wall that I had no money to publish the book, and could not win another publisher. He interested L. H. Booth, director of Christchurch School of Art, in the work; and Booth made some admirable illustrations of which prints are appended (Booth retaining originals).

¹ See Letters of 14 November 1910 and 10 December 1911, S.P., Vol. 7 (A2303). Wall writes: "I have a four month's holiday before me & expect to be fishing & gardening. I suppose you will envy me." Then, answering Stephens's predictably explosive reply about getting on with writing: "Your scolding duly received & taken to heart." There is also Wall's explanation that after the academic grind and the frustrations of discouraging critical responses to his work he needs these interests and diversions to keep his spirits up.

² Note signed, "A.G.S." and dated "19.9.30", in *Dream Fishing: An Extravaganza* (ML QA821/W).
Morant's *Station Songs and Droving Ditties* is also a publication loss as it is more comprehensive than either Sir Frank Fox's (1902)\(^1\) or F. M. Cutlack's (1962)\(^2\) selections. For example, Mr A. T. Bolton, who selected and arranged the ballads collected in Part Two of Mr Cutlack's book, found Stephens's unpublished book on Morant, along with Fox's already published selection, a useful starting-point. All the thirty-six poems selected by Mr Bolton are among the seventy selected by Stephens; that is to say Mr Bolton could find no materials of merit that had been overlooked by Stephens. Also Mr Bolton was able to check Stephens's and Fox's texts by referring to the poems cut out of journals (mainly the *Bulletin*) and pasted into Stephens's scrapbook on Morant\(^3\).

In general Stephens's collection stood up well to textual scrutiny. As literary editor Stephens often took the liberty of changing titles where he felt a poet or editor had erred. In this case Mr Bolton had occasion only to change one title: the poem entitled "A Western Goodnight" by Stephens being restored to "A Note for Nell" by Mr Bolton. One interesting sidelight on Stephens's editorial practice and initiative is illustrated by his 'solution' of textual problems in the second last stanza of "Who's Riding Old Harlequin Now?". The original, in reference to a character named Andy Ferguson, has the line "When old Gergie was fain to follow." Stephens made sense of this by crossing out "Gergie" and writing in "Andy". The later editor, more perceptively, read "Gergie" as a misprint for "Fergie" - a far more likely reading. This little

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1 *Bushman and Buccaneer: Harry Morant: his Ventures and Verses by Frank Renar* [Frank Fox] (Sydney: H. T. Dunn, 1902).


3 *Newspaper Cuttings, etc. collected by A. G. Stephens*, Vol. 14 (ML Q049/12).
incident illustrates the difference between an impressionist editor used to taking journalistic liberties with his texts and seeking easy answers to his textual problems and the practice of an academically trained editor like Mr Bolton.

Although one regrets that lack of financial backing in some cases either caused the publication of works of lesser quality (because the poets could afford to subsidize them) or was responsible for the non-publication of worthwhile material, Stephens's contribution as editor was a considerable one. And it was one he obviously found rewarding, because he was excited by the whole business, from unearthing the new poet through to taking advantage of his early training and knowledge as a printer to produce volumes that satisfied him professionally and aesthetically. A book edited by Stephens stands out among the shoddy 'job' volumes produced elsewhere by private printers during this period.

III

Literary Circle

Having left the Bulletin it was even more important to Stephens as publisher and editor to keep on friendly terms with the writers who might supply copy for his various activities, and congenial, stimulating companionship for his moments of leisure. He kept in contact both by voluminous correspondence and by having regular meetings, both individually and in gatherings at his Bookfellow office, up two flights of steps in Hamilton Street, and later, Rowe Street, Sydney. Constance Robertson, his daughter, who worked for seven years (from the age of thirteen to twenty) as 'skivvy' or office girl in Rowe Street has described the office in some detail: the bed which served as sofa where he
often spent the night instead of going home\textsuperscript{1}; and the battered desk at which he worked reviewing books, writing creative criticism, coping with printers, dealing with people. He could put down his pen, remove his battered eye-shade and steel-rimmed spectacles, stretch wide his hand, say "Don't make a noise, I'm going to sleep", draw the curtain wrap himself in a rug & go to sleep.

The working area, Mrs Robertson recalled on another occasion\textsuperscript{3}, with three or four large bookcases which with a curtain served as a room divider, was in front; behind was the living area complete with old bath and sink. Here visitors: Mary Gilmore\textsuperscript{4}, Vance Palmer\textsuperscript{5} or Hugh McCrae\textsuperscript{6} would call in to discuss business, to pay a social call or meet fellow writers. McCrae has left a humorous description of visitors' welcome to the 'establishment':

In Rowe Street, he ran an establishment with five pairs of stairs between himself and the groundlings. On the threshold, visitors were greeted by the smell of burning cloth and the noise of irons from the tailors' next door, but these were compensated for by a sweet welcome when Stephens's daughter (Connie) asked them in.

On Saturday nights, it seems Stephens was in the habit of holding literary symposiums in his rooms to which established literary friends and up-and-coming writers were invited. Norman Lindsay has left a description (with an anecdote

\begin{itemize}
\item[1] ["A.G.S. as a Papa"], The Papers of Constance Robertson (ML NSS 1105/1, Item 2), p. 151.
\item[2] Ibid., pp. 185, 187.
\item[4] Ibid., p. 247.
\item[5] See A. G. Stephens: His Life and Works, p. 32.
\item[6] See Story-Book Only (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1948), p. 90. The quotation that follows is from this source.
\end{itemize}
imputing plagiaristic motives to his host) which conveys something of the atmosphere of the place and the occasion:

I regularly attended his Saturday night symposiums in the small eight-by-ten room in Rowe-street, where the company sat knee to knee, walled in by books, so much space being already taken up by a stretcher bed behind a partition, in which there was a small door. That door was of significance, fiercely disclosed to me by Albert Dorrington. A.G., always sat with his back to the table, jammed up in the corner on which that door opened, partly obscuring his right arm. Said Albert on that score, "If you've got a good thing to say, don't say it at those damned evenings in A.G.'s room. He's got a sheet of paper pinned behind that door and he jots down anything he thinks he can use."

Which was true, as far as the pinned-up paper was concerned. When alone in A.G.'s room, I inspected that door, to which was attached a dangling pencil and a sheet of paper scrawled all over with A.G.'s indecipherable hieroglyphics.

Lindsay repeated this story in his book, about Stephens and his associates\(^1\), where the room is described as being fifteen feet by five feet and these details are added:

One wall was shelved from floor to ceiling with books. A section of it had been cut off by a partition, behind which was a camp bed and bedding. Under the window was a square iron tank, the wooden lid of which served as A.G.'s writing table. Though his home was up the North Shore line, he frequently spent the night at Rowe Street, hence the bed, and the iron tank, which had a tap attached to it, so that he could make his morning ablutions in it. The small allowance of floor space left over from these various obstructions packed the company in . . . requiring an adroit manipulation of the elbow, lest one jerk a libation of wine over oneself and neighbour. A.G. always provided a half-gallon jar of wine for the refreshment of guests, who helped themselves to it.

As well as making his visitors welcome Stephens attempted to give them a sense of fellowship and feeling that their work mattered through voluminous


\(^2\) Bohemians of the Bulletin (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1965), pp. 21-22. The quotation that follows is from this source.
personal correspondence. Obviously he had learnt from Archibald the editorial effectiveness of treating his contributors "like men" and showing respect and affection for them in encouraging, friendly letters, "love letters", Dyson called them, thrilling to the touch. The papers in the Mitchell Library abound with letters, many intimate and personal, from writers as various as E. J. Brady (to 1907), C. J. Brennan (to 1933), J. Le Gay Brereton (to 1933), A. H. Davis (to 1921), Mary Footh (to 1916), Mary Gilmore (to 1933), Hugh McCrae (to 1922), Jessie Mackay (to 1930), Wolla Meranda (to 1928), Frank Morton (to 1919), Shaw Neilson (to 1933), Dowell O'Reilly (to 1922), C. H. Souter (to 1932) and Arnold Wall (to 1929) to mention a few. Hugh McCrae, whose whole family referred to Stephens affectionately as "the Admiral", was naturally extrovert and demonstrative in his letters; but it seems that his relationship with Stephens during this period - like that of many of the correspondents mentioned above - was more on a warm personal basis than on a business one. His letters demonstrate the kind of relationship Stephens valued among his circle of writers:

My dear Papa-in-letters. Tomorrow will be your anniversary, and our hearts go out to you. As for celebrations one can hardly think of anything adequate ... nothing short of the National Anthem could meet the occasion ... Three Cheers for the Admiral! ... TIGER!! ... imshi tiger!!


2 "A. G. Stephens II. A Character Study", Southerly, XIII, iv (1947), 251. McCrae wrote: "I experienced his full flavour at my own home ... where he holidayed, once, for a month; and, during that time, I don't think the sun can have shone anywhere else. He hired a boat, and rowed the whole family of us up and down the Yarra till he wore ruts in it; every day for a week."

Vance Palmer has said that "Stephens's influence on the writers of his day was immense"; and this is certainly so, not least because through personal contacts and correspondence he was able to transmit his own passion for literature, persuade them through his own example that literature is an important and exciting way of life. What it was like to know Stephens at this time and work with or for him has been graphically described by Albert Dorrington, in a note contributed to the Bulletin in 1930:

[Joseph] Conrad always reminded me of my old collaborator, A. G. Stephens, voice, manner, eye and stance. You left them both wondering whether you had been interfering with a dreamer or a volcano. Conrad would sit quietly listening till your foot came down on his pet illusion. And then the crater woke and poured the scalding stuff about your ears. Of the two men A.G.S. was more patient, less jumpy and infinitely more catholic in his appreciation of younger writers.

IV

Lecturing

Lecturing was yet another field of literary activity that engaged Stephens's energetic interest. In 1914, he contracted to deliver a series of lectures in Sydney and Melbourne for The Australian Lecturing Bureau under the title "Evenings with Australian Authors". These lectures were widely advertised and presided over by chairmen as distinguished as Sir Edmund Barton, Mr Alfred

1 A. G. Stephens: His Life and Work, p. 32.
2 "The Literary Game", R.P., 4 June 1930.
3 See Syllabus of Lectures (1914) in the Mitchell Library, and Bookfellow, 15 March 1914, p. 54, for advertisement.
Deakin, Mr Peter Board (Director of Education in New South Wales) and Sir William Cullen (Chancellor of the University of Sydney). The lectures were supplemented by musical programmes in which settings of the poems by the poets under discussion or of patriotic verses by Stephens himself were sung or played by local artists. For the first lecture on "Baffled Idealists" (on Gordon and Boake)¹ a local composer, Mr Ernest Truman, composed a fantasia for violin and piano on the subject "Baffled Idealists", which, Stephens reported,

was written in three days, and seemed an excellent introduction to a suite that will deepen the motive, and illuminate it in perspective. Mr. Truman played the piano part; the emphatic violin part was played by Mr. W. J. Coad, who, especially considering the scanty opportunity for rehearsal, interpreted with force and feeling.

The proceeds of the first lecture (£5. 5. 0) were devoted to the Boake Memorial Fund raised "to redeem his grave from its present obscurity by erecting a stone or other memorial of poetic talent untimely lost."

In all, six lectures were given in King's Hall, Sydney in this "first series" in 1914, namely:

Lecture I: "Baffled Idealists" (A. L. Gordon and Barcroft Boake)
II: "Some Women in Poetry" (Ada Cambridge, Annie Adams, Mary Foott, Louise Mack, Mary Gilmore, Dorothea Mackellar and Jessie Mackay)
III: "Prose Romancers" (Henry Kingsley, Marcus Clarke, Louis Becke and T. A. Browne)
IV: "Dreamers and Singers" (Henry Kendall, J. B. O'Hara, V. J. Daley, W. H. Ogilvie, C. H. Souter, Roderic Quinn)
V: "Sons of Australia" (Henry Lawson, Edward Dyson, A. B. Paterson, J. S. Neilson, Hugh McCrae)
VI: "The Serious Muse" (Hubert Church, J. B. Stephens, Bernard O'Dowd and James Hebblethwaite)

¹ Delivered on Tuesday evening 18 May 1914 in the King's Hall, Sydney.
² Bookfellow, 15 May 1914, p. 109. The quotation that follows is from this source.
The lectures were repeated at the Independence Hall, in Collins Street, Melbourne¹. A letter from Alfred Deakin warning Stephens against using the Trades Hall lest he be branded a "Labour Man", says: "Small as the attendance was in the Independent Hall it remained undiminished to the end and thoroughly interested."² A second series was projected for 1915³, but apparently "Owing to the social disturbances caused by the War"⁴ did not eventuate. Unfortunately, too, all but one of the manuscripts of these lectures are either lost or dispersed. From the very detailed synopses and the tantalizingly brief reports that Stephens wrote in the Bookfellow it might be thought that their loss is a serious one.

The one lecture, however, for which I have been able to locate the manuscript, suggests that this might not be so. This lecture, on Mary Gilmore⁵, followed pretty much the pastiche pattern of run-of-the-mill Bookfellow and Red Page articles: biography, long quotations, brief critical comments; and appears to incorporate very little new material. In a summary treatment of the poet⁶ whose only published volume to date (15 May 1914) had been Marri'd.

¹ See advertisement, Bookfellow, 15 June 1914, p. 129, and "Note", Bookfellow, 15 August 1914, p. 177.
³ See report of final lecture in Bookfellow, 15 October 1914, p. 238: "It is intended to continue the series next year."
⁴ "Note", explaining postponement of September lecture, Bookfellow, 15 August 1914, p. 177.
⁵ S.P., Vol. 4 (A2300).
⁶ "Some Women in Poetry". Six poets were discussed in the one lecture, namely: Ada Cambridge, Annie Adams, Mary Foott, Louise Mack, Mary Gilmore, Dorothea Mackellar and Jessie Mackay.
and Other Verses\textsuperscript{1} Stephens devoted over half his time to biography, quoting verbatim from an autobiography\textsuperscript{2} that Mrs Gilmore had sent for incorporation in a Red Page article over ten years before\textsuperscript{3}.

The only real criticism, which would have taken about a minute-and-a-half in the reading, is well worth repeating:

Mary Gilmore's verses have gained a wide popularity. Their poetical value issues from instinct and temperament, and not from education, though she has been [sufficiently] well educated in the conventional sense. The heat, the glow, the touch of phrase and tingle of feeling that differentiate [the best of] her work from mere journal-verse, these she owes to her ancestry. Her work is original in fibre.

Twice or thrice, as in "A Little Ghost", it holds an atmosphere of mystery, that indefinable haunting quality which is given and received by no conscious artifice or effort. At other times Mary Gilmore writes what might be called epigrams of emotion - stanzas of four or eight lines in which the words set themselves without premeditation to the tume of feeling:

\begin{quote}
We did not think, did we,
Love had us in a net?
Nor we may not remember
Nor yet may we forget.
\end{quote}

A slight verse and simple; yet there is something in the saying that is noteworthy.

The notes on this lecture concluded with Stephens quoting some sentimental lines (beginning "His eyes looked into mine" from "The Awakening") and saying "I will ask Miss Lois Zucker to sing that for you."

Apart from the apt and memorable phrases like "epigrams of emotion", this

\textsuperscript{1} (Melbourne: G. Robertson, 1910).
\textsuperscript{2} 28 Folio pp., dated 11 June 1903, S.P., Vol. 4 (A2300).
\textsuperscript{3} R.P., 1 October 1903.
\textsuperscript{4} S.P., Vol. 4 (A2300).

The qualifying words, "sufficiently" and "the best of" are pencilled in by Stephens's hand.
lecture adds little of note to the Stephens canon - a generalization one sus-
pects that would apply to the other lectures, given the nature of the audiences
(most would not be Bookfellow subscribers), the pressure under which the lect-
ures were prepared and the lecturer's apparent concern to entertain rather
than seriously inform his voluntary captives.

The synopses which do survive (as advertisements in the Bookfellow and in
a printed syllabus entitled Evenings with Australian Authors, 1914) seem to
confirm that as with so much of later Bookfellow criticism, Stephens worked
over earlier articles, and relied more heavily than ever on biographical mat-
terial and lengthy quotations from the poets under review. Also, each lecture
was too packed to permit of comprehensive evaluation of the writer's contrib-
utions to Australian letters, let alone discussion of key works of depth.

The synopsis of the lecture on Gordon and Boake\(^1\) gives some idea of the
relative emphasis: note the single phrase "Poetic Qualities" tacked to "and
Personal Worth" in the Gordon section, and the adding of the words "Poetic
Merit" to the section on "Natural Faculty" for Boake:

SYNOPSIS
Introductory - Place and Value of Poetry in Life - Merit of Australian
Poetry - Gordon’s Relation to Australia - Heredity and Parentage - An
Exile from England - Personal Traits - The Woman He Loved and the Woman
He Married - Career in Australia - Character of the Celt - Need of Just-
ification in Expression - The Ideal Through Others Realised in Self -
Manly Gordon - Rider and Writer - Struggle for Sunlight - Beaten at
Last - Poetic Qualities and Personal Worth.
Boake’s Curious Parallel with Gordon - Parentage and Early Life - Exp-
erience Reflected in Imagination - While Gordon Brooded, Boake Dreamed -
The Ideal Through Self Realised for Others - Boake’s Keen Sympathy with
Suffering - Thwarted Hopes - Natural Faculty and Poetic Merit - Tragic
Death.

\(^1\) Lecture I: "Baffled Idealists", delivered Tuesday 28 April 1914.

\(^2\) "Advertisement", Bookfellow, 15 April 1914, p. 81.
Still, any loss of primary material is regrettable, especially when the lecturer is a critic of Stephens's standing. And while what he said about individual writers can probably be gleaned from the earlier articles that he relied on for content, one would expect the usual phrases of brilliance to light up familiar paths in some of the linking or expanding sentences. Also comments on the "Comparative Value of Australian Prose in a Local and General View"¹, or "Place and Value of Poetry in Literature" (from the above synopsis) would be of some import.

Stephens's own Bookfellow report on the first lecture shows that the lecturer's nationalistic zeal, reinforced by the patriotic fervour that the war had engendered, found characteristic expression. After quoting John Boyle O'Reilly's maxim, "The world was made when a man was born," Stephens elaborated: "He must taste for himself the Pierian spring. Every nation must re-create Poetry in a national environment, to correspond with its national stage of culture."² This led to an attack on Australian society and governments for not encouraging their "dreamer and idealist" writers, perhaps with sinecures as in England, citing Henry Lawson's Red Page advice that any young Australian writer, unable to quit the country should shoot himself³, and referring to the impending departure to America of Hugh McCrae, a young writer "of high original talent", Stephens interpolated this bitter comment:

³ "'Pursuing Literature' in Australia", R.P., 21 January 1899.
To many recent or contemporary writers, and to some of unusual merit, attach tales of poverty and neglect which show that Australia may be a good country for brawn to come to, but is not a good country for brains to stay in, since the greater the merit of the authors, the greater seems to be their chance of living and dying in destitution. . . . Whatever the uselessness of a poet, the worst use you can put him to is to starve him.

McCrae’s departure really upset Stephens, for he returned to the topic in his second lecture. The report on this lecture contains a transcript of what he had to say on the topic, in a typical A.G.S. image, lovingly if fantastically developed and played with:

The lecturer referred to the departure of Hugh McCrae for America via London in May, after farewell gatherings of friends in Sydney and Melbourne. He said that a few years ago McCrae in relation to Australian literature was like a young eagle flying to the sun. His sky grew clouded, and presently the eaglet was seen chained to the table of Dives, sharing crusts with Lazarus and the others. Commercial captivity is not good for eaglets. McCrae’s feathers moulted, his crest tarnished, he was degenerating in talent and in character. Fortunately for himself, he had been able to escape, and might now be imaged to a seagull, questing the ocean in search of food. It was hoped that the American eagle might revive in him the spirit of his pristine race.

It appears, then, that Stephens did at times move into contemporary affairs or relate his poets to them and so perforce wrote freshly and relevantly; these are the extracts whose apparent loss is to be deplored. What he would have said about each individual author most probably would have been already documented in Red Page and Bookfellow articles.

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1 Bookfellow, 15 May 1914, p. 109.

Doubtless Stephens’s most useful work in this area was the compilation of a great reference library of some five hundred scrapbooks, each one representing a different author or subject, in which Stephens or his daughter would paste in cuttings of interest or importance from newspapers, magazines or journals; in some cases manuscripts, corrected proofs and holograph letters to and from Stephens. Stephens’s method was to search through the numerous papers and magazines he subscribed to, marking items for cutting and pasting with a purple cross top and bottom with the number of the scrapbook scribbled in the margin or across the text. His daughter, Connie, has said that during her seven year stint as office girl at the Bookfellow it was her continuing job to cut out the items, paste them in the relevant book and refile in numerical order on the shelves. Stephens’s method of filing was to have a large board, as large as a table top, on which the book numbers and the subject headings they represented were set out.\(^1\)

The value of these books to researchers is enormous. For example, when preparing a paper on Bernard O’Dowd’s uncollected poetry\(^2\) I found the scrapbook on O’Dowd\(^3\) an indispensable lead. Because Stephens knew O'Dowd’s various

\(^{1}\) See Constance Robertson’s account in "Mary Gilmore", Southerly, XXV, iv (1965), 247.


\(^{3}\) ML QA821/026/1A1.
pseudonyms and likely places of publication he had been able to collect a 
number of fugitive poems and paste them into his scrapbook. Given the names 
of likely journals and the various pseudonyms from the scrapbook later resear-
chers are able to follow Stephens and work more methodically through materials 
looking for pseudonyms and searching sources that they would not have known 
about otherwise. Similarly when Dr L. T. Hergenhan was preparing a biblio-
graphy on J. F. Archibald\(^1\), he could be directed to an important series of 
memoirs by Archibald's partner, John Haynes\(^2\), which are pasted up in the scrap-
book on the Bulletin\(^3\), but otherwise appear to be non-existent because the 
obscure newspaper in which they appeared is not in the Public Library files. 
One could go on instancing their value as resource materials; for example, 
the A. H. Davis scrapbook\(^4\) shows exactly how Stephens worked as editor to 
order and link the On Our Selection sketches, which had come to the Bulletin 
for fugitive publication as self-sufficient stories; the Henry Lawson scrap-
book\(^5\) has a full-page attack on Stephens as critic on important documents 
which has since been discovered and published by Professor Colin Roderick\(^6\);

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1 For The Literature of Australia, edited by Geoffrey Dutton (Ringwood: 
3 Filed at ML Q049/4.
4 Filed at ML QA827/R9141.
5 Filed at ML QA821/L425.1.
6 Henry Lawson: Autobiographical and Other Writings (Sydney: Angus and 
Robertson, 1972).
and the V. J. Daley scrapbook\(^1\) gives a revealing insight into Stephens's methods of preparing and writing up the more extensive studies. Also the already mentioned unpublished *Station Songs and Droving Ditties* by Harry Harboard Morant ("The Breaker") has been of use to later scholars in the field\(^2\). Stephens no doubt had been attracted to Morant's work partly by the scandalous and currently sensational circumstances of the poet's execution during the Boer War and partly through his Red Page association with the poet. He had gone to the trouble of fossicking out pieces never before collected by searching through obscure country newspapers, and in a piece of journalistic detection discovered additional 'facts' about Morant's 'war crime' (shooting Boer prisoners) and the reasons for his summary execution before a firing squad.

Accordingly, scholarship into Australian literature and allied topics (such as the Commonwealth Literary Fund and Public Libraries) is indebted to the work Stephens (and his daughter) devoted so much time and energy to in these middle years while the Bookfellow was, on and off, a going business concern.

Another activity that occupied some of Stephens's spare time in the early

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\(^1\) Filed at ML QA821/D141.

\(^2\) See above, p. 325.
years was his collaboration with S. E. O'Brien in the assembling of Material for Dictionary of Australian Slang. Frequent comments by Stephens on pronunciation, slang, style, metaphor, split infinitive and linguistic change — both in the Red Page and the Bookfellow — show that the study and teaching of language were abiding interests. In general, Stephens welcomed change that added to the writer's store of vigorous expressive words — hence the interest in slang; but resisted strongly "assaults on the language" by a "semi-literate public" which, in gathering its meaning of a word from the context, would blur the sense of such a precise word as "egregious" into "merely a vehement epithet of intensification like 'bloody'":

The true sense is not yet obsolete; and we would preserve it from obsolescence. A writer never has words enough for the nice discrimination of ideas; and we vex for every verbal child that is lost in the market-place and comes home dirty to the dictionary. Who steals my purse steals cash, and if he lives in New Zealand he is pretty certain to refund it as conscience money (by instalments according to the pressure or relief of circumstances); but whose robs me of my stunning word, merely to throw it on a rubbish-heap, robs me of that which not enriches him and impoverishes the language.

The 'dictionary' is incomplete and leans very heavily on Professor Edward Ellis Morris's Austral English with frequent notes like this "Use Morris's text on quotes". For example, the entry on "Coo-ee" goes, "Morris's stuff all good. He misses slang or vulgar use: 'Within coo-ee of' i.e. within hail. Within

1 Typescript, folio, 190 pp., 1900-1910. Purchased by the Public Library from A.G.S. for d/d/- on 12.8.25 (Librarian's annotation), and now in the possession of the Mitchell Library (Q427.9/0). Page references are given in the text.

2 For example, "Australian Slang", Bookfellow, 15 August 1920, p. 158.

3 "Stunned Words", ibid., 15 October 1914, p. 227.

coo-ee of the station or house etc." (p. 58). The editors, however, did not rely wholly on their own personal experiences and introspection. They were able to refer to "Notes and Queries" column of Bulletin, which Stephens claimed to have originated for the purpose of recording folk history and Australiania which otherwise would have been lost. And they did have the initiative to refer to authorities on dialects and slang in the United Kingdom in an attempt to discover the derivations of some imported slang terms. Thus under the heading "Larrikin" (a three-page entry) there is a reference to F. W. P. Jago's The Ancient Language and Dialect of Cornwall (1882), and a letter from Dr Jago carrying this annotation: "With a view to getting further light on the subject Dr. Jago was written to and replied as follows." Further, the entry contains this comment by Stephens:

All the stuff you showed my by Jago on the Cornish larrikin simply brings the derivation on all fours with the Sergeant Dalton theory: Cornishmen roll their r's just like certain Irish. "We minerrrs require fowerr meals a day." I have heard Cousin Jack remark, and the r's sound just like those in larrikin. (p. 104)

The authors do not attempt a definition of slang or indicate the principles that they worked from in selecting words. The net is thrown rather wide with a great deal of cant included as well as technical terms thought to be peculiar to Australia: "stock route" and "skillion", for example. Also there are re-

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1 Bookfellow, 1 July 1913, p. 166.
On 22 May 1897 Stephens had initiated "The Red Page of Notes and Queries" (changed to "The Red Page of Australasian Notes and Queries" from 19 June 1897).

  Typescript with MS corrections, folio, 190 pp. (ML MSS Q427.9/0), p. 105.
The quotations and references that follow are from this source unless otherwise attributed.
atively few coarse blasphemous or indecent expressions, indicating perhaps that moral considerations overrode linguistic ones, for Stephens who claimed to have "knocked around" surely was well aware of the cruder slang expressions that pepper the idiomatic speech of working men everywhere. There is, however, this lively and accurate entry:

Suck, or suck-hole, or suck-arse: a low-down cringing sycophant. Workman's epithet for a tale-bearer or informer who ingratia tes himself with foreman or master by doing informing or other dirty work. "He would suck the boss's hole if he asked him to." (p. 161)

There is also a frank definition of the term "Ram" as "a libertine or licentious man: obvious connection with the virility of the stud ram" (p. 143).

In a comment on the word "dead", however, some of the pervasive vulgar and indecently humorous uses (for example, "dead cunt") are ignored in what is otherwise a useful note: "Dead is a superlative prefix. It is in fact the 'Great Australian Superlative'. Dead sure, dead straight, dead spit, dead broke" (p. 67). Some of the entries are inaccurate or incomplete; for example, the football term "rabbiting" is defined as "catching an opponent - while running with the ball - by the ankles to bring him down" (p. 140). What the writers here described is a legitimate 'low tackle'; they miss the point, made, for example, by Sidney J. Baker¹, that tripping is involved: the 'rabbited' player is tapped on the ankle so that he trips over the tapped foot with his other foot in running, this being regarded as a cowardly and dangerous (therefore an illegal) method of bringing an opponent to the ground. The authors also fail to offer a theory as to the relationship between this action and that of catching rabbits ('rabbiting').

¹ The Australian Language (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1945), p. 179.
On the other hand there are a number of fine, informative and accurate entries. For example, a two-page entry on "Cockatoo" (or "Cockie") carries this comment:

Though "cockie" practically covers every settler under the status of squatter, it more especially applies to the small selectors who hold from forty up to one hundred and fifty acres of land. It is only the "boss cockie" who is anything more than a wheat grower. On many cockies' farms poultry [sic] milk, butter and eggs are either unknown or positive luxuries. Their practice is to grow but one crop - wheat, and on it they depend for subsistence. (p. 53)

Another interesting note defines "Dags", as "The pendants of matted dirt and wool which hang about a sheep's rump. Cutting dags, or dag cutting, is considered a very hard-up job: mostly called dagging" (p. 63). A rather fanciful theory, however, is advanced concerning the word's derivation from the Australian coal-mining technical term "darg" (the amount of coal each miner is expected to mine per shift) and the words "tag" or "tags". The editors write:

The Farmer's Encyclopaedia quoted in Worcester's Dictionary, vide B. and L., defines darg or dargue as a quantity of peat one man can cut and two men wheel in a day. Perhaps a connection between this and corruption of tag or tags. (p. 63)

Finally, Stephens's literary interests show through. For example, one of the West Australian poets he was sponsoring in 1910 was E. G. Murphy who wrote under the pseudonym of "Dryblower". In an article on the poet¹ Stephens commented on the derivation of the pseudonym. The entry in the dictionary may be assumed to be based on information supplied by the miner-poet. The note describes the process accurately and concisely thus, and almost certainly is by Stephens;

¹ "The Manly Poets of Western Australia" - I. E. G. Murphy ("Dryblower"), The Leeuwin, I, i (October 1910), 47-49.
Dry-blowing: a Westralia mining term, a method of extracting gold from washdirt or pulverizes [sic] cement. Its invention and use are owing to the want of water on the many West Australian goldfields. The alluvial dirt is held up and shaken in a sieve or thrown up in the air. A current of air—wind... blows away all the lighter matter, and the gold falls into a prepared receptacle: of no use in obtaining fine gold, only suitable for grainey, coarse, or shotty gold or the nuggets known in W.A. [sic] as slugs. (pp. 73-74)

VI

Creative Writing

As might be expected, during these middle years Stephens did try to emulate his writer friends by producing a steady trickle of verse and prose, not simply for the Bookfellow but with the idea of making money on the popular market, and more seriously of contributing to the canon of Australian literature. Needless to say he was not very successful in either field, and doubtless wasted much creative energy in attempting to fulfil these aspirations. He discovered that it was one thing to recognize another's weaknesses, and be able to help him with a line, word or phrase, or even to 'know' and expound on the formula for commercial success in story writing¹, but another to create the product yourself.

A promising start was made in 1909 when, in collaboration with Albert Dorrington, Stephens had published a 'popular' romantic novel entitled The Lady Calphurnia Royal². This summary of the prologue indicates its essential quality: the exotically named characters and melodramatic plot, for example:

¹ "How to Win £250" [Novel-writing prize], Bookfellow, 1 May 1913, p. 112.
The prologue relates how Imaun Pasha was shot in a duel by Dr. Barradas, a famous oculist, and died in the arms of Calphurnia, Lady Royal. Ten years elapse—Paul Barradas, son of the doctor, is given shelter by an English aunt. Wearying of dependence, he goes to London—and starves genteely till he "stows away" on a mail steamer bound for Australia. Calphurnia and her daughter are on board; and Calphurnia pays Paul's passage. He is introduced to her daughter Aimee, and the two are naturally mutually attracted. Reaching Australia, Paul gladly accepts Lady Royal's suggestion that he should inquire into the management of Barcroft Downs, one of her stations, whither he proceeds by coach.

Some passages are undoubtedly by Stephens's hand, for example, this piece of Archibald-inspired philosophizing:

The bush breeds good animals; the city pavements give up broken-winded screws that are always ready for the knacker's yard. Measure him brain for brain with your average cockney and the nomad comes out a very big man indeed. His instincts are wholesome and his conversation clean; the bar-nymph in it is shadowy and subordinated.

Nevertheless it seems that Dorrington's own account is accurate: that Dorrington wrote the original and that Stephens tidied it up, as he had done for Davis with the On Our Selection sketches. Dorrington wrote in the Bulletin later:

I spent three years in Sydney hammering out a first novel. It was a crude, disjointed thing that fell to pieces under A. G. Stephens's first critical scrutiny. He carried it to his mountain den and bravely set to work remodelling its ill-constructed chapters until it looked readable.

So the novel cannot really be attributed to Stephens; even if it could it must be written off as romantic pulp similar to "Ouida's" or Marie Corelli's as the quality of the writing in its (very carefully punctuated) concluding paragraph shows:

1 Bookfellow, 15 August 1907, p. 110.
2 Ibid., p. 111.
3 "The Literary Game", R.P., 4 June 1930.
There was a quick step on the verandah, hushed suddenly as Paul saw his wife and child. He came up gently and caressed her brow. She took his hand in hers and pressed it; her eyes filled with happy tears. The woman's craving for a word of love came to her; she raised her head and spoke:

"So you are not weary of your little wife?"

He knelt and kissed the hem of her gown.

In fact Stephens received little more than his share of £50 advance from Mills and Boon. A pirated American edition retitled Our Lady of Darkness (1910) was a best-seller, but the collaborators received nothing. And when Dorrington achieved successful London publication in 1931 (reprinted in 1932) he cut Stephens out of the royalties. This caused an acrimonious argument between the two, with the frustrated Stephens, anchored in Sydney, powerless to take effective legal action against either publishers or co-writer. Stephens's lengthy file on the topic contains a furiously written outburst in spattering purple ink, "An unscrupulous rogue".

Stephens was more successful with his second book, Bill's Ideas. Bill is a rough amalgam of C. J. Dennis's "Sentimental Bloke" and Louis Stone's "Jonah": an uneducated friend who after a knockabout life as leader of a Sydney push, has married, tried his hand at several respectable occupations and become the mayor of his inner city municipality. Bill is fond of trans-

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1 The Lady Calphurnia Royal, pp. 373-374.

2 See correspondence, agreement, copyright memoranda, statutory declarations etc. re publication in London of The Lady Calphurnia Royal (1909-1910) in the disputes with Albert Dorrington over distribution of royalties. Also dispute over royalties involved in its reprinting in 1931 as Our Lady of Darkness, S.P., Vol. 3 (A2299), 40 pp., unpaginated.

3 Illustrated by Harry Julius, Mick Paul, and Hugh Maclean (Sydney: N.S.W. Bookstall Co., 1913).
lating and interpreting in racy Australian slang the maxims of the calligrapher Vere Foster — apparently acquired from copybooks ("whose lithographed models expressed edifying admonitions to Nineteenth Century English pupils in a flawless current hand of the plainest style")¹, in the process of learning to write in later life. The anecdotes Bill narrates have the inventiveness and credibility of earthy, well-told working men's yarns, so perhaps owe their vitality to conversations with some unknown friend that Stephens later wrote up. The book enabled Stephens to use his considerable skills as writer-up of interviews, a form of journalism in which he excelled². The writer also had a good ear for the sub-literate Australian vernacular of the day and an obvious affection for his salty, individualistic and verbose mate. As humour and entertainment Bill's Idees succeeds at about the same level as Edward Dyson's Fact'ry 'Ands and A. H. Davis's On Our Selection, though there is less 'story' and far more rough wisdom and pragmatic philosophizing. This volume should be as well known as its predecessors. The main weakness is that although Bill does come through in his monologues as an archetypal Australian 'character', the characterization in literary terms is very thin indeed. Bill is displayed as a curiosity rather than exposed as a human with some complexity and unexpectedness. Also, the concentration is so strongly on anecdote (or yarn) that the other characters are mere ciphers; and the persistently

² See below, pp. 351 f.
humorous intent prevents the writer from developing inherent themes or significances: for example, the germ of a thought that education in the rough and tumble of life produces the best practical philosophers and wisest husbands and realists in human relationships\(^1\).

The Pearl and the Octopus, and Other Exercises in Prose and Verse\(^2\) (1911) is pretty undistinguished stuff. The stories are humorous or fantastic and 'popular' rather than serious in literary intent - rather like stories printed in the high circulation magazines of the day. For example, the title-piece is a melodramatic yarn with reasonably realistic descriptions of external character and setting, but highly improbable action and psychology: the octopus is given human motivation, and in a cheap Poe-like contrived ending the raconteur emerges as a spirit from the dead.

During this period Stephens continued writing his rhetorical, patriotic, occasional, clumsily amorous, and popularly humorous verses on a wide range of topics - mainly for the Bookfellow. Those collected in The Pearl and the Octopus are no better or worse than the fugitively printed magazine verse and are best forgotten - along with published pamphlets like Souvenir of France's Day (1917); A Song for Sydney (1925), the latter described as "a short musical-dramatic piece representative of Sydney"; Girls of Sydney Town (Song, Words and Tune, 1925); Along the Castlereagh (1924), about booksellers; and The Wild

\(^1\) Compare the half dozen yarns that Stephens wrote for the Bookfellow in 1913-1914 about various members of "The Gazzlechopper Club" whose general rule was "No questions". See Bibliography, p. 590.

\(^2\) (Melbourne: G. Robertson, 1911).
Colonial Girl, amusing in its boisterous and obvious way. H. M. Green is surely right when he dismisses them as "by-products of [excess] literary energies"\(^1\); but along with his meretricious plays for school children\(^2\) unfortunately they do exist in published form to embarrass admirers of the mature criticism, and to make them wonder indeed whether Stephens might have been more at home on the lower slopes of Parnassus.

VII.

Interviews

It has been suggested that Stephens probably relied on conversations with a real life Bill for his Bill's Idees, and that because his writing skills were those of an editor-critic rather than a creator he could transmute this rough material into fairly satisfactory humorous sketches. Stephens seemed intuitively aware of this; and had earlier delivered his own Vere Fosterish maxim on the subject:

> It seems evident to me that the critical faculty in literature is essentially different, but not altogether distinct from, the creative faculty: they are overlapping spheres of which neither contains the other. As a rule, the greater the creator the less his critical power; the greater the critic the less his creative power.

The 'interview', as Stephens developed it, was a form that exactly suited his strengths and avoided his deficiencies. As conjectured for Bill's Idees, the

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\(^1\) A History of Australian Literature, p. 406.

\(^2\) Capturing the Bushrangers and The Australian Flower Masque (Sydney: Websdale Shoosmith, 1924).

\(^3\) R.P., 1 July 1899.
subject would provide the groundwork of fact, the character interest, and the idiomatic saltiness of style. Stephens would then work on this material, elaborating, modifying, inventing, contributing his own ideas until the finished product was indeed an art form - part fact, part fiction; half subject, half Stephens. In his hand the 'interview' transcended the hack journalism out of which it evolved.

One might question, then, why the subjects did not complain more often. I am reminded of a Director of Education who when asked to write a foreword for a publication replied, "You know what I'd say, and what you'd like me to say; so you write it." It seems that Stephens had a faculty for drawing speakers out, a very retentive memory and gift for catching the characteristic cadences and idioms of his subject. From the mass of information volunteered or elicited, he would select the more pertinent, intelligent or provocative remarks and work these up into lively, pointed, coherent statements. These statements would present the speaker as having a livelier mind and turn of phrase because salted with A.G.S.isms. One suspects he played the Boswell to his various minor Johnscons, preserving the important facts and occasional characteristic turns of phrase but in the main producing worked over monologues (some 'dramatic' in the Browningesque manner, in that the reader is aware of the speaker's attitudes and responses to his audience). The speakers, one suspects, would be flattered by the continuity and eloquence with which Stephens endowed them; pleased that ideas they stumbled to articulate emerged so lucidly; and, if surprised at some of the developments and extensions, satisfied to own them
as theirs. Thus the Italian-born artist, Dattilo Rubbo, is heard to say, unidiomatically, exactly what Stephens himself believed:

In the painting here I think the artists should try and get the Australian sentiment. In Italy we paint the Italian sentiment: in Australia it should be the Australian. An artist should paint his own country.

With more important, and politically prominent, figures like A. W. Holman and Andrew Fisher, Stephens did send the proofs to the subjects for checking and correction — and in each case emendations were made. But more representative would be the case of the entrepreneur, J. C. Williamson, whose interview was published, in three instalments, in the Bookfellow, during January 1907.

First, Stephens caused some concern to Mr Williamson's business associates by printing a loosely-worded statement that was interpreted to indicate that Williamson intended to resign soon: "At sixty a man may fairly rest from active labour. It is not easy to give up when one feels so well and strong; but my desire is to relinquish management in the very near future." Next week Stephens had to explain that the second instalment would be held over for a week so that Mr Williamson could revise it more carefully than the first —

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Proof with NS corrections and emendations by Mr Holman.

Typescript, corrected and initialled by Mr Fisher.

4 Interviews made by A. G. Stephens with notable people, 1909-1927, SP.
(ML MSS 1104/4, Item 1).
Carbon typescript, cuttings and galley proofs.
Mr Holman, for example, completely rewrote the three page conclusion.

5 Bookfellow, 10 January 1907, p. 11.
though the interviewer insisted in a tart note that there was a great difference in meaning between "desiring" and "intending" to do something:

Evidently the distinction between wishing and deciding is far from clear in the popular mind . . . The position is quite intelligible, and it is quite consistent with Mr. Williamson's language as reported in The Bookfellow. But we are still too close to the era of picture-writing for language to receive its precise significance from readers of newspapers.

But the third interview, entitled "The Australian Stage: What it Demands of the Actor, the Author, and the Manager," shows just how much Stephens manipulated his unsuspecting subject, "used the interview as a peg upon which to hang his own ideas" as Walter Stone put it. Stephens, whose prejudices against 'realistic' and 'intellectual' as opposed to 'romantic' and 'emotional' poetry are well known and frequently documented in this study, recorded Williamson as saying "Well, a good play must have heart interest. It must hit the audience below the collar-button." Almost three years later Stephens published a supplementary interview with Mr Williamson in the Melbourne Argus, in which the entrepreneur expounded further on "the function of drama as entertainment" and made critical remarks about some of the contemporary 'realists', including Pinero, Jones - and Shaw:

1 Bookfellow, 17 January 1907, p. 4.
2 Ibid., 31 January 1907, pp. 14-17.
3 A Letter from George Bernard Shaw [to J. C. Williamson], with a prefatory note by Walter W. Stone (Sydney: Talkarra Press, 1955), unpaginated.
5 "Intellectual Drama: An Interview with J. C. Williamson", Argus, 18 December 1909. The quotation that follows is from this source.
I like human interest. As I told you before, I like the play that gets below the collar button . . . I'm with the public: I believe in the drama of emotion rather than the drama of ideas . . . As for Bernard Shaw - well, his plays certainly are clever and interesting. He is unquestionably a brilliant writer of intellectual drama, and his work can hardly fail to stimulate and exhilarate intelligent people. I don't think he ever expects to be very popular.

It is revealing to compare Williamson's comments on Shaw with Stephens's own criticisms printed almost six years before¹. The two are so alike that there must be a strong presumption that at least in preliminary discussions Stephens was able either to impress his own opinions on Williamson or to influence him to articulate his ideas in a manner congenial to Stephens. This is what Stephens had written:

Singular, indeed, how little on the great scale Shaw has recorded, for all his pother and fuss. On the small scale, of course, he has fluttered magnificently: his discontented mind has been a perpetual feast during a dozen years and more. Yet, if you think and recollect, it was essentially a Barmecide's feast of fine and empty platters. Why? - with a mind in such gestation, to bring forth so little living; with a pen of such gesticulation, to write so little that remains.

One must come to the explanation of shallowness, superficiality, despite all that equipment. "Shaw has no back to his head." He thinks without feeling.

Unfortunately for Williamson, a copy of the interview with Stephens came to Shaw with an unanswered business letter on his desk. Shaw, naturally, was very annoyed; so annoyed according to Mr Stone that he refused to allow his plays to be produced by Williamson's company and so "may well have closed a chapter in Australian theatrical history". It is worth quoting Shaw's reply, because applied to Stephens rather than to Williamson his comments constitute a valid, incisive criticism of Stephens's own limitations:

¹ "Shaw and Superficial", R.P., 15 October 1903. The quotation that follows is from this source.
For that interview I desire to heap reproaches on you. I ask you, man to man, is it business to take my plays in hand and then cry stinking fish in this wicked manner? Just at the very moment when you should deplore the intellectual barrenness of the fashionable drama, and declare that it has been the dream of your life to regenerate the drama in the Colonies and do for Australia what Ibsen and Shaw and Barker and Pinero and the rest are doing for the mother country you come out with all this tosh about "heart plays", and people going to the theatre to be amused (when you and I want only to be amused you know very well that we go to a music-hall) and all the old rigmarole of my enemies.

Or even more decisively:

I do not trust you a bit in this matter of production: how could I, after those disgraceful remarks in The Argus? You have to be converted; and you cannot be left to convert yourself. In fact, you owe it to yourself now to make my plays fail in order to prove that Ibsen, Shaw, Pinero, and company are a gang of unwholesome cranks, and that your dear old dramas which get below the shirt-button are the real thing.

Irresponsible as journalism perhaps, but as a semi-fictional genre in which the creator is allowed to take liberties with his subject, the interviews made interesting and lively reading: for example, an opera singer explaining 'nerves' in a typical Stephensian image: "It is like the acrobat who has leapt to his trapeze a thousand times - but will he catch it the thousand-and-first?"² I believe that Stephens is seen at his creative best, not as humorous short story and sketch writer, but in his Boswellian guise as 'interviewer'. His collection of Interviews³ is a much neglected (not mentioned, for example, by H. M. Green) and well worthwhile contribution to a unique genre in Australian letters.

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1 A Letter from George Bernard Shaw, unpaginated. The quotation that follows is from this source.

2 "Said Madame Nordica", Bookfellow, 15 September 1913, p. xxviii (Supplement).

3 (Sydney: Bookfellow, 1921).
I have attempted to substantiate the claim that simply to measure Stephens's achievement in terms of his work as critic and editor for the *Bookfellow* is seriously to underestimate his achievement during the productive middle years of his life, that is to say from the ages of forty-one to sixty. As in his Red Page days there was much associated and worthwhile activity, the most important of which would have been his editing of books of poetry, his collection of primary documents and his contribution of considered, definitive, critical articles to various literary journals and magazines. If Stephens's achievement during these twenty years were judged solely on activities other than editing the *Bookfellow* the conclusion would have to be that it was a significant, even honourable one.
CHAPTER XI

THE LAST YEARS (1926-1933)

I

Introduction

A. G. Stephens still haunts me. A figure, solitarily moving among men.
During the nineteen-thirties, I would see him at a bookshop; or, with his bunch of keys, outside his box at the post-office; or, in the street, tidily dressed in shabby clothes . . . sometimes, at sunset . . . going, God knows where?
We had been companions; but were no longer so.
His pride was above pity; and the ratchet in his indomitable neck kept his head fixed towards the stars . . . recalling something I had said in happier times. "He kept 'em golden, looking through his beard."

Hugh McCrae's sympathetic portrait is evidence of the waning status and loneliness of the once influential "three initialled terror". The apparent pointlessness of his pursuits and falling upon hard times are themselves indicatory; more subtly the falling-out with old friends reveals a decline of standing and performance. The occasion of this argument had been a Bulletin article on Kendall where Stephens, who in the past had been a searching but rarely spiteful critic, had repeated some malicious literary gossip concerning allegedly disdainful treatment of Kendall by the poet's father, G. G. McCrae. The article, both in content and tone, was unworthy of the critic.

1 "A. G. Stephens II. A Character Study By Hugh McCrae", Southerly, VIII, iv (1947), 250.
2 "Kendallania (1)" by A. Gower Stephens, R.P., 11 June 1930.
   In his retort (R.P., 25 June 1930) McCrae wrote: "Out of this brotherly badinage [between G. G. McCrae and Kendall] an interloper mixes dung with the chaff, and dishonestly passes it off for real."
3 See below, pp. 366-370, concerning Stephens's later critical writings on Kendall.
Norman Lindsay, despite his malice and overstatement, had a point when he said that Stephens's last years exemplified the criticism made by Stephens on Lindsay himself — that a brilliant early career ended in "dismal failure". To quote Lindsay:

I had been closely associated with him in his days of greatness, when he had guided opinion on literary values, made and unmade reputations, and had published works by writers which have now become classics. But that generation was rapidly petering out. Now, a new generation was arriving which knew little about him. In his maturity, he had sunk to the commonplace levels of journalism.

The relative unproductiveness of the last years may have been exacerbated by psychological problems. As early as 1920, the critic whose writing was so sane and balanced and logical was corresponding with a medium, Miss Christina Elliott of Lewisham, concerning his "Hallucinations and Illusions, Visions; Ghosts and Apparitions; Insanity"; believing himself to be "the victim of an extraordinary (though not, as I am informed, unparalleled) 'persecution' managed through the ear". His theory was that the moisture in the inner ear supplied "a tension required for the transmission", but despite having had his ears "examined and cleaned by aurists" and using a drying liquid the voices persisted. Further, he believed that almost every word he wrote was overheard and comprehended by his "persecutor" who was able to "listen in" because Stephens had the common habit of speaking to himself while writing. Stephens was aware that these were the symptoms of a person suffering from a "persecution complex" and elsewhere expressed fears about being insane ("I write this

1 Bohemians of the Bulletin (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1965), pp. 38-39,
2 See letter of 26 January 1920, S.P. (ML DOC782). The quotations that follow are from this letter.
remembering that the asylums are full of people with similar notions”). The letter, that runs for seventeen pages of closely written script, ends with the postscript: "I add that I believe that almost every word of this writing has been 'overheard' and comprehended by the person speaking." Also, his daughter, Constance, records in her draft biography that her father did worry the family in later life with some odd behaviour, for example:

... he loved the Australian bush, the smell of gumleaves, the fragrance of boronia. One of the tragedies of A.G.'s later years from which he never had recovered - was when he was lost in the bush for some days & returned home distraught. We had not worried about his absence because practically all his life he had had a bed in his office, & had thought he had gone to town instead of returning home.

There is evidence then that in the last years Stephens suffered some occasional severe mental stress and it is possible to surmise that these intermittent psychological problems both contributed to and were partly responsible for the alienation from the writers in the mainstream of literary life in Australia.

Because of this alienation Stephens all but ignored the 'new' writers in his later critical articles and so denied himself the exercise of the talent that was his per excellence: reviewing contemporary literature. With the notable exception of Neilson, his protégé, the names that recur in published articles during this period are the old guard of Morant, Kendall, Lawson, Boake and Gordon. To quote the younger critic against himself:

1 The Papers of Constance Robertson (ML MSS 1105/1, Item 2), pp. 149, 151.
There are too many grandpas in the fields of Australian literature at present, strutting magnificently on the strength of good work they did a generation ago. I believe in revering Grandpa in his own epoch and emphatically in our epoch if his work justifies that reverence; but it is the product that is important - not the label on the tin. All the gold medals gained by a good jam 30 years ago prove nothing for the worth of that jam to-day. Only deeds count; and they [sic] young with the hope of deeds are better worth encouragement than the old with their repetition of memories and regrets.

There is no doubt that Stephens kept an eye on the newer writers. R. D. Fitzgerald told me that about 1930 he was introduced to Stephens at the funeral of his daughter, Mrs Ross Gollan, and was surprised that the old man knew of him and had read his poetry: "Keep trying; you might write something worthwhile some day", was the critic's backhanded compliment. Also there is a note to his daughter, Connie, in the Stephens Papers, on Christina Stead dated 3 December 1932 which says:

She has always possessed a strong literary mind. An insatiable but highly discriminating reader for many years. Such of her writings as I have seen indicate a faculty for the most extraordinary imagery. I cannot compare them with anything that I have read. The late George Robertson, who examined a number of Christina's early short stories, before she left for London and Paris, wrote to me, speaking in the highest terms of their strange and fascinating imagery and recommended immediate publication. One London critic, referring to some of her work, said that it possessed a strange combination of the language and atmosphere of a Herman Melville, an Edgar Allan Poe and a Dante. I confess that I can scarcely imagine such a combination.

2 Interview with R. D. Fitzgerald, 6 June 1968.
But time and again the hostility towards his younger contemporaries shows through. For example, in a contributed article on Australian poetry he spent some time attacking new poetry: "THE BULLETIN has not been enamored of the fantastic, erotic, foreign school". Rather it encouraged poetry whose national use was "to sing, to chant, to represent, to reinforce and heighten and lead". He continued "There, past the patter of poet-apes and the gabble of the schools, you hear BULLETIN verse and Australian poetry talking. Learn those splendid lines by heart, and be grateful to the land that bred you."

The prejudice against younger Australian poets who looked overseas to the imagists and continental writers for their masters comes through time and again, not least in the correspondence. For example, Wolla Meranda, whose Pavots de la Nuit (Paris 1922) Stephens regarded as one of the best hundred books written by an Australian and who knew Stephens's predilections, would write: "... there is nothing in "Jack" [Lindsay] - is he the son of Norman? Sessor has a sort of heavy German force that may tell some day - please the coming proletariat."

The hard times to which McCrae alluded ("tidily dressed in shabby clothes") was another inhibiting factor. By 1930 the Great Depression had reached its peak in Australia (about 30% of the work force was unemployed) and money was not readily forthcoming for literary or cultural purposes. Moreover the

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1 Bulletin, 29 January 1930, p. 49.
The quotations that follow are from this source.

2 Miller and Macartney, Australian Literature (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1956), p. 333.

Bookfellow (defunct finally in 1925) had drained his resources and energies. His daughter and editorial assistant, Constance Robertson, constantly adverts to the poverty that haunted the Stephens's household after his resignation as Red Page editor in October 1906. Comments quoted earlier bear repeating here:

From the day he left the B in 1906 until the day he died in 1933 — with the exception of possibly a year as leader-writer — the EP Wgton [sic], he had no regular income. For some years during which he wrote syndicated literary articles under the title of the B for papers throughout Aust & N.Z. there was some degree of permanence, but it was only an illusion. From the moment he started The B again as a mag in [sic] it is not an exaggeration to say that we never knew where money was coming from. The arrival of even one 6/- subscription often meant the difference between dry bread, bread and jam, or no bread at all. The arrival of English & American mails with books for review meant feast days: with my pig-tails flying I would rush books to Skinner's Bookshop or Tyrrell's bookshop — & father fixed the price! Then we ate well x [sic] If the larder was really low I've seen A.G. going through bookshelves, turning over treasured volumes, wondering which one he would part with to satisfy the hungry mouths...

One indication of the difficulties and their effect on his writing is found in a letter to the Honourable John Lane Mullins. Mr Mullins, who was by way of being a patron to Stephens — at least to the extent that he subscribed in advance to publications and, as the letter shows, provided some financial backing; has preserved this letter from Stephens:

Dear Mr. Lane Mullins, — I have not been so fortunate as to find you at office when calling recently; and will call again. "Kendall" has stood still; for the reason that it is desirable to type afresh the copy before seeking a fresh printing estimate. The price quoted was £3, which I had not available; so I commenced the task myself. Since I am not a practised typist, and have had much else to do, I have managed only half, but expect to finish shortly. 2 Your advance of £30 remains in Bank.

1 The Papers of Constance Robertson (ML MSS 1105/1, Item 2), pp. 123-129. The quotation appears on p. 264 above, in relation to difficulties in keeping the Bookfellow in production.
Mrs Robertson also lists thirteen changes of address over the years (p. 57).

The position must not be overstated, however; Stephens, though in financial difficulties, was not poverty-stricken. He was able to afford his children adequate educations - the eldest son (John Gower) completing medical school and attaining a position on the Career Research Committee by 1933. He put the position quite frankly and reasonably in a letter to Neilson dated 2 March 1930: "I never have enough cash to do all I want, which is principally the publication of books of poetry, but I have enough for all practical purposes. I rejected an offer of pension like yours last year."²

II

Literary Criticism: Studies of Kendall, Neilson and Brennan

Once he had lost his forum in the Bookfellow, Stephens had limited opportunities for publication. The correspondence shows that many contributed items were rejected by editors to whom the initials A.G.S. meant very little or too much (a number were signed A. Gower Stephens, possibly to disguise the writer's real identity from editors who may have been antagonistic or had old scores to settle). During this time the editor of the Bulletin did show some interest and compassion, accepting six lightweight articles on Kendall, and inviting him to contribute an article to the "Jubilee Number" of the Bulletin (29 January 1930). This article³, in Stephens's best authoritative crisp manner, throws light on Archibald as a literary editor, and is characterized by toler-

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¹ See Obituary Notice in The Sydney Morning Herald, 17 April 1933.
ance and generosity of mind that are often wanting in manuscript notes written in this period about former colleagues. One interesting contribution was on Wallace Elliott's poetry which began by deploiring that because of his own shyness Wallace Elliott's poetry was not included in Currie and Alexander's just published *Treasury of New Zealand Verse*\(^1\). As the article developed, it is seen that even at this later stage the literary editor in Stephens was trying to unearth a new poetic talent to place alongside the protégés of his later years: Shaw Neilson, Robert Crawford and M. H. Robertson. "By favor [sic] of the author", he wrote, "a typescript is before me, with permission to cite examples." Then followed the familiar pattern of extensive quotation and commentary and an uncharacteristically large claim that "the soul of Maoriland scenery has not been so deeply felt or so fully shown before." The poetry quoted in support does not satisfy its critic's claims, but the comment is interesting not simply because it showed that Stephens was trying to the end to help a new poet along, but because he recognized implicitly that poetry in New Zealand (apart from Arnold Wall and Jessie Mackay) had scarcely arrived, and was in a way anticipating its remarkable burgeoning in the late thirties and forties when poets like Stewart, Dowling, Curnow, Fairbairn and Baxter began to emerge. Also, the old nationalist stance is as resolutely held as ever: Elliott is better than Domatt, "because he writes not as a foreigner extolling alien beauty, but as a son of the soil, intimately, possessive and possessed."

\(^1\) "Wallace Elliott's Poems", R.P., 23 April 1930. The quotations that follow are from this source.
Stephens's literary and critical achievement during this period, however, rests principally on the considered contributions he made concerning the work of three poets: Kendall, Shaw Neilson and Brennan. With Kendall he is seen chiefly as biographer and teacher; with Shaw Neilson as literary editor and critical protagonist; and with Brennan as an ageing erstwhile friend and colleague attempting a reasoned evaluation of the poet's standing and achievement.

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Miles Franklin's already quoted complaints about Stephens's inordinate interest in literary gossip and dates are given substance by the six articles on Kendall contributed to the Bulletin from June to December 1930. Virtually they are a rewriting of the unpublished manuscript entitled "Henry Kendall: New Light on an Australian Poet"¹ already referred to in connection with Stephens's contributions to literary scholarship. The first relates the anecdote which so enraged Hugh McCrae, about how at The Yorick Club G. G. McCrae (Hugh's father) would insist on reading "his inferior verse", which Kendall disliked, to the starving shivering poet². The second is mainly biographical details about Kendall's mother, Tilly McNally, from information supplied to Stephens by Henry Lawson's mother, Louisa³. The third (once again based on gossip from Louisa Lawson) comprises light chat about Kendall and his supposed fiancée, Rose Bennett: of their parting after a tiff on Redfern Station when Henry is supposed to have refused to pick up Rose's dropped parasol until she said

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¹ J. R. Tyrrell's Collection of the Papers of A. G. Stephens (ML MSS A3986), dated 1928.
² "Kendalliana (i)", R.P., 11 June 1930.
³ "Kendalliana (ii)", R.P., 18 June 1930.
"Please". The fourth tells how Louisa Lawson trained Henry to succeed to Kendall's laurels and relates some gossip concerning Daley and friends drinking and boasting after the poet's funeral. The fifth, in effect a rejoinder to Hugh McCrae's attack on the first article, returns to the subject of Kendall's treatment by G. G. McCrae's cronies, asserting that Kendall was "the subject of droll witticisms" by established Melbourne citizens "with full bellies and warm backs". The final article harps continually on the fact that biographical details concerning Kendall were in error by two years in "The Victorian Reading Books" (1928): "How many hundred thousand Australian children may be misled before those books are corrected?" was the theme. So obviously one has to turn elsewhere for significant criticism of the poet - to the book on Kendall, published in 1928.

As its sub-title ("A Critical Review for the Use of Schools") and textbook format show, the book was intended for the profitable school market. Nevertheless, it is a very interesting embodiment of Stephens's strengths and limitations as a critic. On the negative side there is what new critics would severely adjudge to be examples of the twin fallacies - 'affective' and 'in-

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1 "Kendalliana (iii)", R.P., 9 July 1930.
2 "Kendalliana (iv)", R.P., 16 July 1930.
4 "In Praise of Kendall", R.P., 30 July 1930.
The phrase "the subject of droll witticisms" was quoted from Turner and Sutherland's The Development of Australian Literature (1898), p. 275.
6 Henry Kendall (Sydney: Websdale and Shawsmith, 1928).
The quotations that follow are from this source.
tentional'. That is, there is a great deal of stylistically impressive but ultimately subjective and impressionistic commentary, in addition to the already familiar over-emphasis on biography, heredity and literary gossip (over-emphasis in the sense that all the details are not strictly relevant to an understanding or explication of the text). Further, much of the argumentation is a priori from the very restrictive and highly subjective assumptions Stephens held about the nature of 'true poetry' (lyric, melodic, ecstatic, beautiful, sublime, non-intellectual and the rest). Some extracts follow, to illustrate both the occasional inflation of style, and the basic assumptions:

Because poetry expresses the first human wonder at the universe, the last human ecstasy of life, it is both the deepest root and finest flower of the tree of literature. (p. 2)

Poetry is everything that you feel; - becoming a thought in the mind; - and expressing itself in beautiful words. The stronger the feeling, the better the poetry. (p. 3)

The source of poetry is always human feeling or emotion perceived and enforced by the mind. (p. 3)

Only beauty of form: the beautiful agreement of words with feeling: makes poetry immortal. (p. 3)

On the positive side, as the quotations show, Stephens kept forgetting his school audience, and in his raciest and most highly individual language rehearsed his beliefs about the nature, purpose and form of poetry. The section on the "Form of Poetry", for example, goes into technicalities that would furrow the brow of any school child; but it does reveal a sound and surprisingly up-to-date concept about say 'rhythm' and 'harmony' - and a capacity to express these concepts simply and lucidly. Thus, on rhythm:

The form of poetry is usually a series of verses measured in time and flowing in rhythm. Rhythm is the regular surge of syllables in the measure of a verse: like the regular movement of waves. A syllable
is so much of a word as makes a single sound in speech. A syllable always contains a vowel; but the measure of a vowel in time may be changed by the surrounding consonants. (p. 3)

Having made his generalizations Stephens then attempts an assessment of Kendall as a poet, judging a priori from the assumptions outlined and already referred to in his introduction. It must be admitted that given the poetic credo the criticisms generally are sound, the evaluations fair, and the praise, where merited, generous. Also the criticism itself is consistent with the stated principles. Some of the more detailed criticism comes close to Leavis's idea of 'enactment' as when Stephens remarks that in inventing the adjective "sooming" (in the phrase "the surging sooming sea") Kendall was trying to give a precise impression of the fact. So literature works to interpret and reinforce life: by putting into pictorial words, sonorous, words, truthful words, the impressions made by life upon minds that perceive clearly and vigorously. (p. 10)

Kendall is criticized on grounds that are now critical commonplace: for too close an imitation of praised English poets in his nature poetry; for concentrating on form at the expense of content; for lack of exactness; for writing "around his subject rather than out of it"; and for tepidity - "The work is often good; but we miss the salt-sea tang, the wildwood savour, the bright blood of the boy" (p. 12). In the end, Stephens argues with some cogency, Kendall fails because he lacks the 'universality' of classic poetry:

1 For a fresh look at these critical assumptions see G. A. Wilkes, "Going Over the Terrain in a Different Way: An Alternative View of Australian Literary History", Southerly, XXXV, ii (1975), 141-156.
In the lofty sky of Poetry, these poems [the classics] rise higher than Kendall's beautiful descriptions of Australian scenery; because they are not limited by a particular landscape: they appeal to all readers of English. The human value of literature is measured by its effect upon the greatest number of minds during the longest time. Our own national poetry is better for us than the national poetry of other peoples; yet the human spirit of literature shines beyond nations and periods. In a literary view the best Australian poetry is that which embraces the feelings and thoughts of mankind everywhere through the ages. Transcending the national, it becomes universal. (pp. 12-13)

Here, perhaps, is the classic statement of Stephens's considered position as a critic who is also a nationalist. "Quantity of quality" and "effect on the greatest number of minds during the longest time" remain two reiterated critical yardsticks. While the nationalist welcomes Australian landscape poetry just as fervently as any Jindyworobak of the 1940s, the rational critic sees, as the late Rex Ingamells preferred not to, that a true test of quality is the effect on those multitudes of minds who live beyond Australia, and that insular chauvinism is no sound basis for literary criticism. So, again: "[Kendall's] gift of melodious writing makes his verses memorable. In the Kingdom of English literature he was not a great poet: in the Australian province of that kingdom, his work has abiding beauty." (p. 15)

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John Shaw Neilson remained till the end the Australian poet whom Stephens most admired; and he continued to act as literary editor, business agent, adviser and friend to the poet. Since 1905 Neilson had been sending everything he wrote to Stephens for criticism, suggested emendations (including punctuation), and eventual publication both fugitively and in book form. And he did so even after the publication of the last of the four volumes which Stephens edited (New Poems, 1927¹), despite Stephens's thoughts about standing down in

¹ (Sydney: Bookfellow, 1927).
favour of Melbourne friends. An issue that should be clarified is James Devaney's claim that Stephens's attitude to Neilson during the last few years was commercial and domineering. An objective reading of the correspondence and documents in the Mitchell Library hardly substantiates Devaney's claim. Certainly Stephens was almost brutally frank (in a letter dated 2 October 1932) in comparing his own insecure and impecunious state with Neilson's:

In spite of your job and your pension you want money too. I have no job and no pension and I want money too . . .

Even if your suggestions for royalty could be managed, I see small chance of profit to me (don't see much anyway) and you may have noticed I'm beginning to think of profit to me - my author being nicely fixed up with real money and many mirrors of his pride as a great Celtic chieftain. (So he ought to be.)

Further, as Stephens pointed out in a letter dated 12 October 1932, his relations with Neilson as literary agent and editor, though necessarily on some kind of business basis were scarcely mercenary ("entirely commercial"). There is abundant textual evidence that Stephens in working on Neilson's verses "much overpassed the line of merely editorial duty" - extra service he did not grudge "for one moment because of the pleasure it gave". Against Devaney's strictures about Stephens seeing to it that his family retained the copyright of poems which rightly belonged to Neilson and his heirs should be set Stephens's own frank and direct statement to Neilson in a letter dated 23 July 1931:

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2 See Devaney's Shaw Neilson (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1944).
3 "J. S. Neilson Papers", in S.P., Vol. 9 (A2305).

The quotations that follow are from letters in these papers.
You have a poetical asset — try and get it published. I do not see my way to publish at present; believe I could sell out to Angus & Robertson for £100; but I don't know how you would fare then. I have had pride and pleasure out of your work; and I wish to leave you better, not worse, for our dealings. I can trust myself with your copyright, but I could not trust a commercial publisher.

Since I cannot publish, the first object of a new act, is to restore you the larger part of your copyright as set. This will remain valuable if not profitable for 50 years after [sic] you die. I reserve a part which you estimate at two-fifths and I at one-third for my considerable and commercially unprofitable editorial services.

Devaney's strong criticism of Stephens's supposed lack of ethics in his business dealings with Neilson is so serious and widely accepted that supporting evidence for the case already advanced should be offered. First there are letters in Harry F. Chaplin's collection¹ which show that Devaney was either prejudiced against Stephens, or drew his conclusions from incomplete and biased evidence. In fact Stephens 'emerges with credit' in Mr Chaplin's considered opinion. Second, there is the printed statement from Nettie Palmer who asked him [Neilson] about Stephens, and he told what he owed him all these years as mentor and support. Even financially: "Most poets spend their lives losing money on what they write. Thanks to Stephens, I think I've made quite six shillings a year. But he must have lost sixty pounds on my book; he would publish those de luxe copies."

More important issues are the extent to which Stephens over-edited the poet's work, taking undue textual liberties with the poet's text, and the extent to which his own taste for emotional poetry (at the expense of humorous or more cerebral verse) caused him to misrepresent the poet in the collected anthologies. Both these matters have been investigated² but the letters and

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documents of the last years throw more light on these controversial issues. First, in the matter of editing it appears that Stephens did claim to have done more than Neilson would admit to. There is no disputing that most of the mechanical punctuation is by Stephens' hand, as this undated (but late) note in the Stephens papers shows: "I wrote it ["Lory"] and sent it to you to revise and punctuate. I hardly like to acknowledge to Mrs. Dyer that I was not able to punctuate it myself, nor I was liable to make some small mistake in grammar."\(^1\) But this exchange brings out the area of disagreement. Thus, Stephens in rejecting a reduction of copyright from a two-fifth share to one-third:

Your new proposal is objectionable for the essential reason that it implies that my relation with your work has been, is, or maybe, entirely commercial. Your previous attitude accrediting me with two-fifths of work is preferred. You and your poetry are established at your present credit largely because of my uncommercial work for the benefit of Australian poetry through you. Though I have received commercial benefits the cost of labour outweighs them. In working at your verses I have much overpassed the line of merely editorial duty; with the result that a number of lines in your published works belong to me and not to you. I do not for one moment grudge the service, which gave me pleasure; I am glad of your success I worked for; and it is needless to state that the overwhelming merit of your composition is yours and yours alone. But my share was much more than a business man's share. Therefore we go along on existing bases.

Neilson on the other hand preferred to think of Stephens as editor in the more conventional sense – one who corrects, challenges, suggests, rather than as one who is a co-writer 'putting in' words and lines which are 'his' rather than the poet's own. Neilson demurred:

\(^1\) S.P., Vol. 9 (A2305).
I agree entirely with what you say about the uncommercial work which you have done for me. It is not so much the lines you have put in but the bad lines and stanzas which you have kept out. In fairness to myself I must say that at all times and to everybody I have acknowledged my indebtedness to you.

This seems to me the more probable and realistic interpretation, given the hammering, vigorous, verbally insistent nature of Stephens's own verse: lines by Stephens would surely sit uneasily among Neilson's subtler and quieter verse. Support for this opinion is found in correspondence concerning "Song for a Honeymoon". In his letter Neilson rejected many of Stephens's proffered changes usually on the ground of verbal infelicity. For example, "I don't like the words ancient feast in the first line. They seem to spoil the music. I think the feast could be understood." And again, rejecting Stephens's suggestions "strong" for "good", "chant" for "song" and "robing" for "singing":

I think that (singing) and (strong) jar a little where they are. You have in times past pointed out the importance of having the vowel sounds right. I can't always give very good reasons for my preference but I have repeated all these lines over dozens of times. I am more likely to be right in the sound than in the sense.

During his later years Stephens was very active both privately and publicly in promoting Neilson's reputation, both among men of letters and the community at large. Privately he wrote to leading academics and literary figures drawing their attention to Neilson's latest and earlier works; at every opportunity

2 See Devaney, Shaw Neilson, pp. 31, 41, 49, 50 for examples; and H. M. Green, A History of Australian Literature, Vol. I, p. 440 for a contrary opinion on the line "Lifting the eyes of the heart to the height of the sky" in "The Birds Go By".
3 Letter of 30 November 1931, S.P., Vol. 9 (A2305). The quotations that follow are from this source.
friends and visitors had his work brought to their attention, as Vance Palmer later recalled:

As soon as the talk turned to poetry Stephens jumped up in his impulsive way, and, bringing down from the shelf a large, bound volume of typescript, began reading with a rapt absorption. It did not need the feeling in Stephens' voice to make the poems sound new, strange, and moving. He also gave lectures to academics and the public in which the poet's cause was advanced with fervour. Thus H. M. Green in a review of New Poems (1927) began by saying that "few people have heard about Shaw Neilson, unless they happen to be W.E.A. students and have had the good fortune to attend Mr. A. G. Stephens' lectures on Australian Literature."

The published articles can also be seen as part of this 'promotion campaign', so naturally the emphasis here is on the positive merits of the poetry, with very little of the balancing criticism of faults or limitations that characterize the criticism of other writers, including Brennan. These articles were placed in the public press and in a trade union journal, perhaps in an effort to secure the wider popular audience Paterson and his fellows had enjoyed. The most interesting of these articles is the first one contributed to the Australian Worker, in a literary column conducted by H. E. Boote, political essayist, novelist and versifier. Here Stephens recalls his response thirty

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1 John Shaw Neilson: A Memorial, p. 27.
2 The Australian Highway, 10 July 1928, p. 176.
3 "Shaw Neilson's Humour", Sydney Mail, 10 March 1926.
4 "Shaw Neilson", Australian Worker, 22 December 1926 and 5 October 1927.
years before when he read and accepted for publication in the Red Page (of 5 December 1896) the first poem sent in by Neilson, entitled "Polly and Dad and the Spring Cart": "I saw the natural truth of humanity, the spectacle of real life in Australia; with humour of character. The easy doggerel of the form does not drivel, and the philosophy of feeling does not whine."¹

It is not surprising that when Neilson started to send his more serious verse, Stephens should have been excited. For Neilson's poetry was to exemplify many of the qualities he consistently believed to be the essence of 'true' poetry: human sympathy, emotional perceptions delicately realized and expressed in harmonious, melodic, easily memorised verse. In Stephens's own words:

Neilson has bettered the form of his verse: his human sympathy is unchanged. A heart in an art in a dream in a song: that is Neilson. He has gained the intuitive touch of English words that lets them fall into place in harmony: indeed he inherits that, but he had to learn the words. At his height of ecstasy language fails him: his tongue "can never come up to tell" that [sic for "what"?] his mind has seen. It is the melody of words - the inspired phrasing of inspiring feeling - that makes the essence of poetry immortal.

One has to turn to the private correspondence to discover where Stephens really believed Neilson's weaknesses lay: that he "lacked the measure of a man", was incapable of the red-corpuscled Anglo-Saxon heartiness and rude humour that Stephens applauded from time to time in his more earthy moments. This is a rather surprising criticism, because the very first poem he had from Neilson had been a versified yarn whose humour was reminiscent of "Steele Rudd"

¹ Australian Worker, 22 December 1926, p. 13. The quotation that follows is from this source.
in *Our Selection*. Also, as Professor Oliver has established, Stephens's editorial practice of deleting most of the humorous and narrative verses, while retaining "slobery" pieces, gave a wrong and one-sided impression of the poet as a man and as an artist. Neilson himself was to complain of this misrepresentation. The circumstances were that Stephens, rather spitefully, had sent Neilson a cutting from the *Bulletin* in which Robert Crawford also accused the poet of lacking a manly sense of humour. Neilson wrote back to Stephens: "What he is really driving at is I suppose the fact that there seems to be an overdose of the tearful in my little book. Had all my rhymes comic and serious been dished up together people might have tumbled (that) I am not moaning all the time." Perhaps the letter that brings out this apparent critical schizophrenia best (one watertight compartment for emotional lachrymose verse, another for earthy, breezy, cruelly humorous stuff) is one written by Stephens in response to receipt of an admittedly self-pitying poem entitled "Song in the Yellow":

Dear Neilson, - Don't like it much. These songs - like Kendall's - bewailing insufficiency - "the song I cannot sing" - have an essential weakness. It is the bard's job to sing, without excuses or regrets. And it gives, a weapon to the jealous enemy when you call yourself dull and cool. 4. "Meet 'em smiling and part with a smile," say the Pov-

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2 Neilson's word in a letter of 15 October 1922 (S.P., Vol. 9, [A2305]) complaining about some of the verse included in *Heart of Spring*. "I think the Milliner is altogether abominable. It's such bad verse but it's slobery. You have heard a drunk man crying about his mother. Well that's what it puts me in mind of."


4 Referring to the opening lines of each stanza: "How shall a poor man sing? . . .", "How shall a cool man sing? . . .", "How shall a dull man sing? . . .".
tery Pointers - whether they get a job or not; and no matter how hungry
they are. The idea is poetical, but people don't appreciate that kind
of idea.

In balance, the evidence of these last few years supports the conventional
view that when "Australia makes up its account with the late A. G. Stephens
one of the outstanding items in its indebtedness to that able critic will ob-
viously be his early and helpful recognition of the genius of John Shaw Neil-
son". There seems little doubt that verse of Neilson's quality would have
been discovered without a Stephens, and some doubt as to whether his influence
was altogether a good one. But history has it that one of Australia's great-
est poets was discovered, edited, challenged, kept writing, found an audience
and was given, both privately and publicly, the help of a first-rate critical
intelligence. On the other hand the evidence of the last years is that, des-
pite the growing reputation and continued productivity, there was to be no
published volume during a period of seven years. It was not till after Ste-
phens's death that Neilson's "Melbourne friends" did bring out the new volume
of verse which Stephens had been advising the poet to press for. Lack of
finance, with rivalry and bitterness in Sydney from possible sponsors, were
perhaps the operating factors, rather than lack of concern, loss of energy
or flagging interest. Mary Gilmore certainly believed so; and in her anec-
dote can be sensed the frustration that the critic, his supporters and pro-
tégees experienced during these last years:

2 R. H. Croll, "Introduction", The Collected Poems of John Shaw Neilson,
(Melbourne: Lothian, 1942), p. xiii.
The previous volume was Stephens's edition of New Poems, 1927.
When the book [Heart of Spring] came out the critics damned it with faint praise. I asked one why. He replied, "To satisfy a grudge against A. G. Stephens." Stephens used to read Neilson with the tears of a reciprocal tide of perception running down his face. He could take any buffet against himself, but a hurt to Neilson was like a mortal wound to him. The critics knew this. Their cruelty to Neilson did not matter to them.

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The third major literary figure to engage Stephens's attention in the last years was C. J. Brennan. Brennan died on 5 October 1932; by 14 December Stephens had in print an article entitled "Chris Brennan; with a loving thought from A. G. Stephens," which was to be the basis of his last major critical work - work he was engaged on in one way or another to the day of his death. At Brennan's funeral his former colleague, John Le Gay Brereton, was called upon to read the oration. Hugh McCrae has said that Stephens wrote his article and then his book on Brennan in a fit of pique:

While Brereton read an oration over Brennan's grave, Stephens stood apart. Later on he complained, "I went there hoping to be asked to speak, but nobody asked!"

Within a few months Brereton himself had died (propter viam, with his face to the stars, as it was fit he should do) . . .

Stephens left a book which contains the speech he wanted to make at Brennan's grave; a better, clearer, fuller and more considered summarization than he could possibly have given at the cemetery.

McCrae's interpretation apparently was based on a newspaper report that Brereton had been importunate, taking advantage of the poet's funeral to enhance

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1 John Shaw Neilson: A Memorial, p. 22.
3 Australian Writers: Chris: Brennan (Sydney: The Bookfellow, 1933).
4 Story-Book Only (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1948), p. 93.
his reputation for scholarship. The gentlemanly Brereton was distressed both by the rumour and by the reported offence that Stephens had taken. In any case Stephens preserved in his papers a note dated 24 November 1932 (just over a fortnight after the funeral) from Brereton giving his version of the incident — along with an order for Stephens’s proposed monograph on Brennan:

The fact is that I reluctantly undertook to give that very brief address at the pressing request of Father O’Reilly who was to conduct the religious service. O’Reilly was an old and valued friend of C.B.’s, and knew what the poet and I thought of one another.

If the lie flutters in your direction, please swat it.¹

It seems then that McCrae’s account for the last-minute burst of creative critical activity is correct. This partially explains the tone of the book: wounded vanity and a sense of deliberate snubbing by the literary establishment would lead the writer to justify himself, to prove his credentials. Thus the passages where the writer tends to lose sight of his subject and describe in detail his own unassailable independence as Red Page editor; his own services to Brennan both as editor publishing his articles and as friend encouraging and provoking a languid genius to record in prose for posterity the knowledge and insights that were uniquely his². It might indeed partly explain what H. M. Green has described as the "insufferably patronizing" editorial attitude the writer adopts towards his subject³: Stephens always resented


Quotations from this book are referenced in the text, the page numbers being given in parenthesis after each quotation.

³ In Christopher Brennan: Two Popular Lectures Delivered for the English Association (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1939), p. 5.
the prestige given to University men over practising men of letters and would
be keen to show that his intellectual and literary status was at least compar-
able to Brennan's. This attitude reveals itself from time to time, for example:

Whatever excuses we may find, and agreeing that Brennan's service in
Library and University was sufficient for an ordinary career, the burden
of a failure to put his extraordinary knowledge and intelligence to full
literary account was Brennan's. Apparently nothing seriously prevented
him from turning his French material and his Symbolist material into two
excellent books for London publication. He drew regular salary for thirty
years in positions that made no exhausting demand upon his energy.
(pp. 27-28)

F. T. Macartney has argued\(^1\) that the "somewhat seigniorial attitude" can
be forgiven and understood if the reader keeps in mind the five-year differ-
ence in age (Stephens being the senior one) and the habit of semi-serious bad-
ing that characterized their thirty-year relationship. As Macartney points
out, the two continually sought to take the rise out of each other both in the
cut and thrust of conversation and in their correspondence. Macartney accord-
ingly asks the reader to make allowances, to see this as yet another round,
albeit a one-sided one, in a good natured battle of personalities: to remem-
ber Stephens's own statement, "This is a personal tribute, a critical review,
a moral and spiritual sermon" (p. 14). The late Professor Guy Howarth in an
editorial note to Mr Macartney's article supports this line of argument. Pro-
fessor Howarth pointed out\(^2\) that the passage which Green found so objection-
able, "With all faults (and they were not mean) he was a good lad, a kind

\(^1\) "Stephens on Brennan", *Southerly*, X, iv (1949), 221-228.

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 228.
See above, pp. 17-18.
lad. With all merits (and they were not low) he was a modest lad, a striving lad. "Indeed I loved him (on this side of idolatry) as well as any." But he never understood Mallarmé" (p. 45), humorously echoes Tom Pinch's praise of John Westlock in Chapter II of Martin Chuzzlewit: "he is a fine lad, an ingenuous lad, and has but one fault that I know of: he don't mean it, but he is most cruelly unjust to Pecksniff."¹

Disparagement of the man then is contested; disparagement of the poetry is undeniable: it is described as "an addition rather than a creation", and adjudged as being of less import than Brennan's other contributions as scholar, inspirational lecturer-teacher, and original critic (pp. 30-32). There is no doubting Stephens's critical integrity here: it was simply that both Stephens's strongest prejudices against University trained men and his own rigidly believed in ideas on the nature of poetry operated against Brennan.

Stephens's long-held views that scholarship rendered poets too cerebral, too unemotional, too derivative and imitative of the masters they had studied comes through time and again in deprecatory comments, as: "The effect is that of a book of artifice, encumbered with intellectual paraphernalia. Brennan wanted heat to set his words in motion, and he wanted sense of melody to make their motion musical." (p. 32) Or, again: "He wrote honestly from his own mind; without unfair use of predecessors' writing. He was not a highly original writer; he was constructor rather than creator; but he applied his own ideas and commentaries." (pp. 36-37)

Stephens also felt that Brennan's researches in French Symbolism and his adopting of an experimental poet like Mallarmé as his master (a man who "counts

¹ For a discussion of this quotation in the context of Stephens's educational qualifications see pp. 17-18 above.
for little in French poetry. His delicacies are cooked to a cinder: his art is a game of artifice" [p. 42]) were detrimental to his art. Detrimental because they caused the poet to write to a theory or doctrine rather than to express and explore experience poetically. Even if the theory or doctrine were good or true, Stephens argued, the product alone counted. In this case, since the doctrine was poor, the product was doubly damned: "On a declivity of decadent art the doctrine-loaded cart drags the horse downward" (p. 42). This failure to accept innovation ("decadent art"), especially where it led to writing that did not belong to the mainstream of the traditional English poetry Stephens knew and loved, is consistent with the already noted unreadiness to accept the 'new directions' pointed in Pound's, Eliot's and Joyce's work, or in that of their Australian admirers like Slessor and FitzGerald.

It is the classic response of the self-educated, practical-minded, conservative man-of-the-world to 'new-fangled University ideas'.

The rigid theory of poetry of course operated most unsympathetically in the case of Brennan, whose poetry contradicted to greater or lesser extent many of Stephens's firmly believed in tenets. To begin with there was the prejudice against intellectual and difficult or obscure and experimental verse in favour of ecstatic simply expressed, free flowing, traditional verse. The two had disagreed from the start, as the correspondence between them shows.

1 For example, "Satyrs in Slops", Australian Bystander, 17 January 1924, p.28. See above, pp. 318-320.

2 S.P. (ML MSS 1104/1, Items 2 and 3). The papers contain twenty-five letters dating from 28 July 1897 to 3 September 1927. The quotations that follow are from this source.
Early on (letter of 15 August 1898) Brennan was writing on his theories of poetry, especially concerning the importance of image and metaphor — thereby predating the Imagists by over a decade and certainly finding no appreciative audience with a critic who tended to see figurative imagery as a decorative or technical device. Stephens could not follow Brennan in seeing imagery as being basic to the poetic process, a way in which Coleridge's creative imagination expresses its vision of new relationships in concrete, concentrated language.

Particularly relevant is Brennan's reasonable query, "Isn't the difference between Prose to Poetry principally one of greater concentration of mental energy? Things seem more in shorthand, analysis suppressed, ellipsis everywhere?"

Had Stephens been interested, he could have read Brennan's published lectures on symbolism and attempted to refute the substantial case that Brennan argued on the poetic value of metaphor and symbol. The metaphor, Brennan

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1 For a later critic influenced by Brennan's theories see R. G. Howarth, Notes on Modern Poetic Techniques (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1949).

2 Letter dated "1899", S.P. (ML MSS 1104/1, Item 2).

3 Symbolism in Nineteenth Century Literature, Lecture 1 (Sydney: Beatty, Richardson and Co., 1904). [Syllabus course of set public lectures to be delivered from 15 June to 6 July 1904.]

Reprinted in The Prose of Christopher Brennan, edited by A. R. Chisholm and J. J. Quinn (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1962), pp. 48-173. The quotations are from pp. 50-51 of this publication.
said, was "more direct [than the simile], more energetic, more expressive, concentrating itself, in the last resort, upon the verb, which is the very being and energy of the sentence" (p. 50). Metaphors, "condensing into themselves the life and beauty of the poem", were contrasted to "the untransmuted fact or feeling which leads up to and, for the lazy reader, explains them, as if the poet were joining his affidavit to his poem". And again, "Now there are certain poems, few in number, short in scope, but most satisfying in manner, where, by a mere juxtaposition of images, without documents of affidavit, a mood is flashed upon us suddenly, directly and completely." Contrast this to Stephens's complaints of 'difficulty' and 'obscurity' in Poems (1913), quoting Wilde on Browning against Brennan thus:

"What right has a man to the title of poet when he fails to produce music in his lines, who cannot express his thoughts in simple language that the people can understand; but, on the contrary, has so imperfect a command of his (mother) tongue that all the efforts of a society of intellectual pickaxes cannot discover what his words really mean?" (p. 40).

Brennan also makes the telling point against critics like Stephens who were apt to talk of images and metaphors as though they were technical "embroidery", that far from being "the 'clothing' of ideas, the 'ornaments' of poetry", images are "the flesh and blood, the living body, the living garment of poetry".

It seems clear that Stephens misunderstood or dismissed too lightly Brennan's theories of poetry, some deriving apparently from Coleridge's Biographia Literaria, Chapter XIV. True, there are some brief extracts from 'literary letters' where Brennan is allowed to state his 'literary doctrines' as they related to symbolism and imagery. But there is no explication or close reasoned refutation of Brennan's doctrines which are congenial and sensible for
the modern critic, following Leavis and Eliot. Once again, Stephens's lack
of academic stamina and knowledge seem to have let him down; in his familiar
demand for simplicity and ease in both comprehension and form he would qual-
ify in Brennan's words as "a lazy reader" demanding that the poet join "his
affidavit to his poem". In brief, then, Stephens either did not appreciate
or could not accept Brennan's unexplicit poetry, his reaching out towards the
poetry of implication with which modernists have made us so conversant.

Perhaps the comment most controverted by modern criticism is the one im-
puting lack of thematic unity: "Poems (despite ostensible unity) is generally
a factitious mixture of learned materials and patterns shaped with patient
poetical labour to form. The effect is that of a book of artifice, encumbered with
intellectual paraphernalia." (p. 32) This is no place to counter Stephens's
argument in detail; that has already been done by Professor G. A. Wilkes in
a series of five articles entitled "New Perspectives on Brennan's Poetry".2
Professor Wilkes's conclusion is unequivocal and factually incontrovertible:

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1 Further support for the claim that Stephens was either uninterested in or
incapable of interpreting at depth difficult or obscure poetry is found in
the correspondence with Shaw Neilson (S.P., Vol. 9 [A2305]).

For example, in a letter dated 22 December 1928 Neilson complained that
"people" were "so inquisitive" and were "always wanting to know the meaning
of things". Such people he complained "have no imagination". More specifically,
in response to Stephens's query as to what the poet meant by "Petticoat
Green", Neilson, after giving a fairly obvious explanation ("... green I
take to be the colour of youth and all joy. The petticoat in this too repres-
ents for me woman at her most charming time 16 to 19"), exclaimed somewhat
impatiently, "It all seems plain to me but of course one does not always see
one's own obscurities." (Letter of 5 January 1916, ibid.)

2 In Southerly, XIII, i-iv (1952); XIV, iii (1953).
As a study of the manuscripts of the unfolding cycle makes plain, it is this unity of theme that has imposed on Poems (1913) its coherence of form. We are no longer at liberty to mistake the character of his volume: patterned on the symbolist livre composé, it is "a book of verse conceived and executed as a whole, a single concerted poem". This must be the datum for criticism, not some other datum. We must give up estimating Brennan's poetry from isolated lyrics, and begin to evaluate it as a whole.

It is true that at least one modern critic, Robert Ian Scott, would deny the work the unity that Brennan sought for and that Professor Wilkes recognizes in it: "Instead, the book is a chaos of fragments, some of them self-sufficient, even magnificent poems, and some only muddled empty bombast, 'poetical' in the worst sense, which clogs the sense [sic] and movement of the whole book."² But Mr Scott does admit the thematic unity of the Eden-cycle, what Professor Wilkes called the quest for Eden or the human "paradisal instinct". What he postulates, as a subjective response or personal judgment, is an artistic falling apart because (for Mr Scott) "the Lilith myth is too ambiguous to make it obvious why Brennan says what he does or why it concerns us"; because "the relation of its parts, each to each, and of all to the whole, is not clear or inevitable" (overlooking Brennan's argument that he did not write plainly for "lazy readers", but for those who can perceive related nuances, recurring images, symbols and patterns); and because "his all too often awkward, artificial and verbose style" means that Brennan's writing is "inadequate to the great work he set himself". Many of the criticisms Stephens made

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1  Southerly, XIV, iii (1953), 160.
2  "Christopher Brennan's 1913 Poems", Southerly, XVIII, iii (1957), 133. The quotations that follow are from this source.
of Brennan's style have been accepted by later readers because expressed so memorably. Mr Scott's already mentioned criticisms come to us in somewhat clumsy and flaccid prose. Contrast their expression with Stephens's flexible, lively and metaphoric prose:

Brennan's is a bush of poetry that smoulders and never really burns; an apparatus of patient craft that seldom becomes an artistic engine. Always busy with himself, his images remain external for others; they rarely make the decisive escape of poetry from the composer. Tolerable displays; some good sonorities; many efficient ideas; yet we sit in a theatre to watch a performance we do not often join.

Whatever one makes of this as criticism, there is no denying its vigour and sappiness as writing. Mr Douglas Stewart has told me that he regards the sentence beginning "Tolerable displays; some good sonorities; many efficient ideas" as one of the best (stylistically) yet penned in Australian criticism. (Mr Stewart, by the way, asserts the validity of Stephens's criticism too.) Also Professor Tom Inglis Moore has pointed out that up to the 1940s Brennan studies had been vitiated by the uncritical eulogies of friends or disciples who gave exaggerated praise: "To these it comes as a salutary tonic", says Professor Moore, who agrees with Mr Stewart on the quality of the writing ("vigorous and sappy").

Frederick Macartney is another established critic who would endorse many of Stephens's judgments, especially on the matter of style ("said not sung"),

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1 Australian Writers: Chris: Brennan, p. 42.
2 Six Australian Poets (Melbourne: Robertson and Mullens, 1942), p. 149.
quoting in support H. M. Green ("at times [Brennan's poetry is] ponderous, turgid and artificial" and "his taste . . . far from perfect"); and Randolph Hughes (frequently "laborious jejune, anaemic, thin, sterile, turpid, pebbly, metallic"). Such a convergence of opinion by older critics does not necessarily mean that Stephens is 'right' and newer critics are 'wrong', where the issue is such a complex and slippery one as style. Here, surely, intuition, tacit judgments and cultivated taste do contribute to the final assessment, however committed the critic might be to 'objective' methods of literary analysis. So although he might not endorse Stephens's judgments - indeed refute them intellectually - a modern reader can still appreciate the quality of Stephens's impressionistic responses; and agree with Macartney that stylistically, "In Australia critical writing on as high a plane as Stephens's book on Brennan is very rare."¹

Another point that should not be overlooked is that the book, like much of the earlier work, was written with remarkable speed under all kinds of distracting pressures. The manuscript must have been written in about six weeks, for detailed correspondence with his printer, Robert T. Gow, concerning the technical details of printing, proofing, binding and the rest begins on 1 December - less than two months after Brennan's death². Preceding this there had been much importuning of patrons, friends, colleagues, literary men for advance

² S.P. (ML MSS 1104/1, Item 1).
The correspondence with Mr Gow, manager of "The New Century Press", runs from 1 December 1932 to 7 April 1933.
subscriptions and backing so that the printing could proceed. Major emendations were made at the proofing stage and minor corrections and changes during the printing. All this writing was being carried on while the author kept up a running correspondence, as business manager, quibbling over costs and prices as an editor giving advice on how to print the covers: "The colours you have are right, but I suggest a little slower roll and a little more impresion [sic] to get the colours showing strongly and richly on the cloth. Machinist can manage it if he takes his time."\(^1\) Stephens's impatience and frustration are manifest in letters to his publisher. For example:

> I am NOT trying to teach Robt. T. Gow (as if I could); but he has a great many things to think about and I have only this at the moment. So, if I can make suggestions to SAVE TIME ON THE JOB, I trust to be pardoned.

The wonder is that the book as a finished product shows so little signs of haste and improvisation and demonstrates again the tremendous concentration, energy and spontaneous intellect Stephens could bring to bear on any task, right up to the last weeks of his life. That the style is so seemingly polished is also remarkable.

Finally, the reader who knows something of Stephens's personality and quirkish ideas (for example, on heredity and the literary product\(^3\) or on the function and nature of art) can make allowances - or demur, as has been done in this anal-

\(^1\) Letter of 7 April 1933, S.P. (ML MSS 1104/1, Item 1), p. 337.


\(^3\) For example, the statement that "All Celts' verse in English is written in a foreign language that can be learned and adopted and used, but is not the language embedded in perhaps 10,000 years of a differentiating tribal brain", in *Australian Writers: Chris: Brennan*, p. 19.
ysis. But there is internal consistency. One can take bearings and stand somewhere between the critic and his subject; and the reading is a heady and exhilarating experience. In brief, for all his cavils the reader enjoys the one-sided argument and freely concedes, as onlooker, the critical integrity of the living combatant: "I have uttered many words of opinion: have I inadvertedly uttered one word untrue in a fair opinion? I think not. Brennan demurs and demurs and enjoys the tribute."\(^1\)

III

Supplementary Literary Activities:

Literary Editing, Lecturing, Research and Creative Writing

The demise of the Bookfellow in 1925 was the first and most obvious evidence of Stephens's literary decline. Constance Robertson has described\(^2\) how M[ary] G[ilmore] "bought in" when the paper was "in deep water"; how she herself had used her personal income to pay printers' bills - even taking over management and employing Stephens as editor. The rough notes say:

when my income rose - in
When the B was again
- M G had bought it in
in deep water, & printers were hammering,
I guaranteed a max. - or the printer's bill, now
employed A.G. as editor & . But after
2 or 3 months the
printers hammered again. I could not
keep this going, so I sacked A G - by

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registered letter, and felt I had butchered
his dream - the dream which began
in 1898 with half a dozen little 1
booklets sold

Ever resourceful, Stephens did attempt to keep alive his Bookfellow after 1925.
He did this by persuading the management of a monthly journal called Stage and
Society to run "The Bookfellow" as a regular feature from the beginning of
19262. The venture was to be short-lived, however; Stage and Society itself
ceased publication in July 19263. "The Bookfellow" had lost his last audience.

* * * *

Denied the practice of his chosen métier as literary editor, Stephens turned
his attention to lecturing and teaching, long-cherished ambitions to judge from
his comments and practice during the Bookfellow period. His first approach, in
1925, was to the English Department of Sydney University through the good offi-
ces of John Le Gay Brereton. Stephens desired and thought that he was entitl-
ed to a full-time lecturing post. Brereton had to point out that this was im-
possible, but was able to hold out some hope for including lectures on Aus-
alian literature into the course for 1926 with Stephens as visiting lecturer:

I'm afraid there's not much chance of making you a lecturer in the De-
partment of English. As you say, there is no money, and in the Faculty of Arts all precedents are against the proposition. However, the Senate has surely set its seal upon you by admitting you to the circle of Ex-

1 The Papers of Constance Robertson (ML MSS 1105/1, Item 2), pp. 215, 213.
[The manuscript is disjointed here. This passage has been restored by re-
ordering out-of-order sheets.]

2 See correspondence with Lala Fisher, especially the letter of 18 November

3 The feature ran from January-July 1926.
For an assessment of this feature see above, pp. 267-271.
tension Lecturers. I know of nobody better qualified by knowledge, experience and critical ability to lecture on Australian literature, and if there were a chance of appointing a new lecturer for that work, yours is the one name that would first and inevitably occur to me. I believe you thoroughly qualified.

This was followed a fortnight later by a letter which said:

Holme and I have been talking over the lecturer proposal, and, though we can't see a possibility of getting you any regular work or permanent employment that way, there is some chance of our putting on a temporary lecturer - for a course of three of five lectures - next year, but the work would necessarily be honorary. Would you care to take such a short course on Australian literature (some section of it) without fee, if it were found practicable?

"Answered Not Without Fee" is Stephens's handwritten annotation to this unreasonable suggestion. Then, early in the new year, Brereton was writing to say that Professor Holme, his "friend in court", was taking leave because of "nervous illness", and that without Holme's active backing the case was hopeless: "Holme was regretful, but his absence is unavoidable and the rest follows".

What did follow was a recommendation to the W.E.A. that Stephens be commissioned to write and deliver a lecture series on "Australian Literature". The synopsis that Stephens prepared shows that he took this work very seriously indeed and prepared a comprehensive if somewhat predictable course. The course was 'predictable' in the sense that the writers are those he wrote about and worked with earlier; that there was a great deal of self-plagiarism - working up of material used in earlier articles or lecture courses (for example,
the series of public lectures in 1915 terminated by the serious turn World War I had taken). Also the methodology was identical with the earlier work: comprehensive biographical details, brief pointed impressionistic critical comments and a great deal of reciting (rather than reading) from favourite poems and prose extracts. Thus Miles Franklin chided Stephens to this effect: "You advertised a lecture not a recital, so that it was not incumbent on you to recite, except as an indulgence to us, and the idea generally circulated was that your memory was marvellous."  

An introductory lecture on Australian poetry, however, is an impressive piece of work even as it comes down to us in its abbreviated form as "Syllabus of a Lecture". Impressive not so much for the sonorities of a style, that at times borders on the pretentious, as for the considered dicta on such large critical issues as the function of poetry, life and literature, the relationship of Australian to English Literature. Here ideas that were implicit in the earlier criticism, or dealt with in snippet form - often as asides, receive final consideration. It must have been heady stuff for a W.E.A. audience of housewives and earnest litterateurs to absorb, but reads well in print. Thus these comments under the heading "Why Poetry?":

**Reason of Literature:** Literature reflects Life in the mirror of the mind. Taking from Life a motive, Literature restores to Life a meaning.

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2 *A Lecture on Australian Poetry (A Contemporary Sketch)*, Sydney University Extension Board, 1932 (Syllabus of lecture). [Transcribed in typescript by Kate Baker for Constance Robertson, in The Papers of Constance Robertson (ML MSS 1105/1, Item 2, pp. 245-249).]

The quoted summary is from this source.

Literature Lives [sic]: The function of Life is living, the function of Literature is greater living. Life pays; Literature repays. What does not increase Life is not Literature.

Poetry in Literature: Life is highest when revering Life. Literature is highest in Poetry, most vital of its modes. Tonight we talk together:

"Of poets whose mysterious melody
Frailest and longest - lived of earthly things,
Still sings above the forward-blowing wind,
A living voice when pyramids are dust."

Spirit of Poetry: Poetry escapes from local to universal, from temporal to eternal. Poetry is an overflow of living energy. Poetry a memory and a dream. Vision and wonder, sorrow and joy, faiths and aspirations, ardours and exaltations - Poetry.

Substance of Poetry: Rhythm of words in time - the surge of sonorous life through the brain. Melody of syllables; emphasis of rhyme. Poetry sets language to music. Songs and words of the human opera; an early Australian example. Ancient ear-poetry; modern eye-poetry; the root is in the feeling and emotion. Poetry beats from the heart of a poet; Poetry lives in the heart of the people...

Literature Changes: The World moves; Life adjusts itself to movement; Life recreates itself continually. Literature, reflecting Life, recreates itself continually. In every land, with every generation, Literature changes, adjusting itself to Life.

Australian Literature: The distance of Australia from the Mother Country; the difference of Australians from their British parents; means a difference of Australian Literature from English Literature. Not a difference of eyes, but a difference of outlook; not a difference of spirit, but a difference of substance - a difference of incidents, not of essence. In a new soil, under strange skies, Australian Literature must grow a new tree from the old stock of English Literature.

"When a lyre bird lit on a shimmering space
It dazzled mine eyes, and I turned from the place
And wept in the dark for a glorious face,
And a hand with a harp of Australia."

Australian Poetry: British poets in Australia changing to Australian poets. The school of exiles - Australia their foreign country; the school of patriots - Australia their home. Many ascents; few flights. Preference of the skykark to the albatross.

Conclusion: We go where glory waits us, with many rich premonitory gleams...

Stephens, whom contemporaries like McCrae and Lindsay described as having
had a thin voice and being over-sensitive and gauche in social situations\(^1\), apparently was unsure of himself and his popularity. In any case Brereton was writing two years later:

> Your average attendance is sufficient proof of your success; I wish you were making more out of it. Some of my students who attended told me about the lectures. Now if I come across any unusually keen critical remarks in their theses, I'll think of you.

Miles Franklin was also sounded out\(^3\): "You ask for your faults. Men usually put that question only to the seductive charmer who replies that there are no faults. You are above that I hope." Although approving in the main Miss Franklin did draw attention to the shortcomings already referred to: too much attention to biography (difficulty of audience in keeping up with names and notes because not clearly enunciated); too much like virtuoso concert performances, with dramatic recitals rather than readings followed by close critical and textual analysis; and too much living in the past:

> No reference to Australian manifestations of the American and European school of poetry which started before the war with Ezra Pound (to mention an obvious example) and which among the post-war poets has eschewed the conventional Victorian school. Has Australia's isolation immured her from this experiment?

And again:

> In my callow days when I used to harass [sic for harass?] you about the age of each celebrity you mentioned, you pointed out what a limitation it showed on my part, and demonstrated that it was savages or inferior

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\(^1\) For example, Norman Lindsay commented that "Under all his devices to maintain a bold front to the world, his was a shrinking and unhappy ego, ... inordinately sensitive to its impression on others", in "A. G. Stephens - I. A.G.'s Mask", Southerly, VII, iv (1947), 249.


\(^3\) Letter of 18 September 1929, S.P., Vol. 3 (A2299). The quotations that follow are from this letter.
 intellects generally which insisted upon birth-days and actual calendar-years in denoting people. That was so interesting to me at that date as to be a revolution - a ten foot hurdle which I nevertheless assimilated and applied. I now consider this interest in exact age is evidence of extreme youth or advanced senility, yet I come home and find the master a note-book of ages.

On the other hand there was generous and affectionate praise for the lecturer as teacher. As the frequent articles on educational topics in the Red Page and Bookfellow show, as does the Kendall booklet and the plays he wrote for school children, Stephens had a life-long concern about and interest in education. Perhaps he was a natural and enriching teacher, as Miles Franklin told him in the same letter: "You evidently are a teacher; to be touched with that wand is to be of the blest." The audience recognized that too, she said, and

It is a good sign when a lecturer's room is crowded with the young. The young were as interested in you as I used to be (and am, of course) and hold you in similar affection. . . .

When you halted, more because another thought flashed into your head than through the dropping of stitches, you were greeted with affectionate applause - laughter that was affection rather than amusement, and, my dear sir, people are not loved for their faultlessness.

The love of teaching (including lecturing) was satisfied in other ways. Miss F. Barle Hooper in replying to the "Toast to the English Association" in 1962 recalled as a highlight of her long association with the Sydney Branch (since its inception in 1923) "an outstanding address on Shaw Neilson by A. G. Stephens" in 1926\(^1\). The anonymous editorial secretary's summary of the address suggests that as ever Stephens concentrated on the melodic qualities of Neilson's verse and after referring to the old fashion of accompanying poetry on the harp, made this memorable remark (on the newer poets Eliot and Pound

presumably): "Poetry has lost its mother, music, and if you read it, you can hear it pining." Further evidence of the success of this lecture comes in a letter from Brereton apologizing for both his absence from the lecture and the small audience, but saying how much the academics present had admired it.

Also, there were more direct ties to the Department of Education. Two articles were published in Education (Sydney), one on Marlowe and one wittily entitled "Literature Inspected". In addition Stephens was approved as tutor for teachers preparing to write theses on literary topics - part of the requirement for promotion in those days.

* * * * *

The enforced leisure of these last years meant that, apart from lecturing and writing, Stephens had plenty of time for research and reading. And as Miles Franklin's complaint suggests, much of this scholarship took the form of finding out personal details about a writer's family, date and place of birth: satisfying a lifelong concern - almost obsession - about the relevance of ancestry in the literary process. So, more and more, the creative, impressionistic, spontaneous working off the text which had characterized the work

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1 English Association: Sydney Branch, Offprint, from The Union Recorder, 19 March 1926.


5 See S.P. (ML MSS 1104/1, Item 1), pp. 345-346, for letter of 13 March 1935 enclosing £6.6.0 and requesting Stephens to tutor for LB (Headmaster class II) thesis, as he had done for a previous unfinished one on "The Literary Work of H. G. Wells" on 19 December 1930.
of the younger hard-pressed professional critic gave way to plodding, methodical gathering of biographical facts. He wrote to A. J. Ogle, Blackie's representative in Australia, concerning the Brereton copyright trial which had been forgotten for over a decade, wrote it up (on 10 February 1933) and offered it to the Mitchell Library with twelve other items for £6. 6. 0

1. The journalistic interest in literary gossip also prompted letters to the Principal of the Presbyterian Ladies College in East Melbourne seeking facts about "Miss Ethel Florence Lindesay Richardson's" school career and whether subsequently, when she returned to her alma mater as the famous novelist Henry Handel Richardson, the school had snubbed her.

The query to Presbyterian Ladies College was consequent upon a piece of literary detection: Stephens's obtaining on 7 April 1932 a birth certificate saying that "Ethel Florence Lindesay Richardson was born on 3 January 1870 at 139 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy". The Principal did supply information of inherent interest to students of the early novel Maurice Guest: that as well as having a brilliant academic career (Honours in French and English and the gaining of an open scholarship for which she was presented a silver spoon by Her Excellency Lady Loch), Miss Richardson had won the Tennis Tournament held in conjunction with the opening of Wyselaskie Hall by Lady Loch (the interest in outdoor sports). On this same occasion the busy and talented Miss Richardson had also provided the main entertainment "having produced a Cantata arr-

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1 See S.P., Vol. 1 (A2297) for note by Librarian which says "Bought 14.2.1933".

2 See S.P. (Ar 77/5, 6) for two letters from W. Gray, Principal, Presbyterian Ladies College East Melbourne, dated 27 July 1932 and 8 August 1932.
anged for two sopranos and chorus of some voices", with a piano accompaniment by the composer and four strings on the subject of Tennyson's "Sea Furies" (the interest in music). An interstate search was also instituted for J. F. Archibald's birth certificate to check Archibald's claims to a romantic French background and the relevant document finally brought to light despite Archibald's deliberate evasiveness. Archibald's biographer (Miss Sylvia Lawson) has told me that the research Stephens did in this respect and the scrapbook of cuttings he collected on Archibald were very valuable research tools for her, though Stephens himself never seemed to find the time to unify what he had discovered, experienced, and partly written up in manuscript into a substantial article or study.

What did excite Stephens greatly was his discovery from the poet's birth certificate that "Kendall was two years older than has hitherto been supposed, even by his family." This discovery, Stephens went on, "involves a readjustment of lessons taught to children by Australian Education Departments; since Kendall's practical merit has been emphasized in many of our school books."

The point is elaborated thus:

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1 For example, Archibald's assuming the Christian names "Jules Francois". The birth certificate showed that his given names were "John Feitham". See Scrapbook on J. F. Archibald (ML MSS QA920.5A/A).


3 "Henry Kendall: New Light on an Australian Poet", loc. cit. (1928). Subsequent quotations are from this source.
Kendall was born on 18th April 1839 - not in 1841 or 1842 as recited by all his biographers. The superstitious may find a prognostication of a life that had passages of bitter misery in the fact that he was born on a Friday.

All the important episodes of Kendall's life are consequently advanced by two years. He goes to sea aged 16, not 14; he publishes his first book of "Poems and Songs" when aged 23, not 21; he marries aged 29, not 27; he goes to Melbourne aged 30, not 28; he dies aged 43, not 41.

In addition the fact that Kendall's given names were "Thomas Henry" not "Henry Clarence", is given due prominence in the article that is mostly biographical.

No wonder Miles Franklin complained as she did. The article was offered through his literary agency to a number of journals (a note at the end says: "Stephens Box 711G, G.P.O., Sydney. / Please return if declining. / Cut at discretion") and finally sold with other papers to J. R. Tyrrell. Cecil Hadgraft has written concerning this research:

His interest in our literature was not mercenary: he spent a lot of time on things for which he could expect no possible return. For example, the Mitchell Library contains his collection of notes and literary biographies. Stephens did these investigations almost offhand, as it were, and was quite prepared to chase through old church registers to settle a disputed date. The birth of Henry Kendall, for instance, was long thought to be 1841 or 1842. Kendall himself in a letter gave this information. But Stephens showed that the correct date was 1839.

Such a patronizing interpretation of Stephens's motives, of course, is disputed by the fact that after all Stephens did 'hawk' his article through the literary agency. And it seems odd to imply that it was admirable for a professional writer not to be 'mercenary' - sell his knowledge for what the market would bear. Also the false suggestion of impractical idealistic motives gives a wrong impression of Stephens both as a man and a professional writer.

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2 Stephens had pride and integrity in the matter of the writer's professional rights. It has already been shown that he refused Le Gay Brereton's flattering invitation to lecture at the University "without fee" (see p. 393); and H. M. Green believed that Stephens resigned from the Bulletin on a matter of principle - refusing to do another man's job without a compensating salary allowance, (see p. 206).
In other respects Stephens's contribution to research and knowledge were indeed invaluable. A long item (117 pages) on the literary fund\(^1\) reflects a very long interest in and close knowledge of its purposes and history (to judge from numerous Bookfellow articles and pars over the years), reinforced by some immediate fact-gathering. This unpublished manuscript will be extremely important for the researcher who one day chooses to write up the history (and influence on Australian writing) of the Commonwealth Literary Fund. Even more valuable, of course, was the comprehensive library of personal scrapbooks on literary figures or related topics; the collections of manuscripts and letters by writers of his day; and Stephens's own personal manuscripts, notes, unpublished material, annotated books and the rest. Stephens, of course, knew this and in the last years he spent considerable time going through the documents that he had accumulated over the years, annotating or correcting by hand so that the records were more complete and accurate. Walter Stone, the book-collector, avers that this was partly because such annotations increased the value of his materials\(^2\). Certainly during the last few years when cash was short, manuscripts were taken to the Mitchell Library, haggled over and sold for a few pounds at a time, as the librarian's annotations in the collections of Stephens papers show (the annotations give date of purchase and

\begin{enumerate}
\item "The Literary Fund. A news item by A. G. Gower Stephens", 1931, S.P. (ML MSS 1104/1, Item 5).
  [Typescript with MS corrections.]
\item Mr Stone's further statement (in interview) that "Stephens made up books" to sell in these last years receives partial support from a letter to Percival Serle dated 15 November 1932 where Stephens says, "I have sold an annotated copy of Macleod of the Bulletin by his widow to Mitchell for £3.3s. Can you think of anyone who might be likely to buy a duplicate at same price?" (in "A. G. Stephens to Percival Serle", Meanjin, XI, i [1952], p. 74).
\end{enumerate}
purchase price in code). It is fortunate that the Mitchell Library was able to purchase so many of the manuscripts, as well as acquiring others sold to dealers like J. R. Tyrrell. But unfortunately the scrapbooks especially seem to have been widely dispersed, if Constance Robertson's figure of about five hundred is accurate. And, Walter Stone notwithstanding, it is indeed fortunate that Stephens did annotate some of the books he sold to the Mitchell Library. The splenetic and explosive corrections and annotations in his copy of Mrs Macleod's biography of her husband correct 'errors' of fact or interpretation, expand on bald or bland statements, and of course provide additional and valuable insights into the man who managed the Bulletin during its great years and into his relationships with his editor and staff.

The hurt pride, anger, frustration that Stephens felt as his 'treasures' were sold one by one to meet yet recurring financial crises are made manifest when one opens the Stephens's personal copy of the three early prose-pamphlets, reads the Mitchell Librarian's annotation "15/-" and sees an undated note by Stephens's hand scrawled on a thin scrap of paper torn from an exercise book and pasted on the front inside cover: "Unique copy / I suggest / that Mr. Geo. / Robertson should / purchase, & / read with / intent to / discover how / much charity / he owes to a / journalist/who has to / toil so hard / for a living." * * * * * * *

1 "Mary Gilmore", Southerly, XXV, iv (1965), 247.

   [Mitchell Library copy with MS corrections and annotations by A.G.S.]

During his later years of retirement Stephens also turned his hand to creative writing, producing longer, more worked-over occasional poems, and, refurbishing some of the earlier prose and drama, with an eye to the commercial market. In neither case was the product itself of intrinsic worth or interest.

The verse, as ever, was hearty vigorous declamatory stuff, heavily punctuated - especially with exclamation marks. The form was generally traditional: monotonously regular rhythm, conventional rhyme schemes (often with chorus), unsubtle accentuated beat and sound patterns. The subject-matter and tone were similarly predictable; on the one hand hearty, flippant humour; on the other hearty, serious patriotism - the two conglomerating to produce "In Praise of Aussie Girls" (1931):

But I weary of Romance made in England or France,
   For Australia can advance in pride
With a swarm of loving girls in a bobbery of curls
   And my sprightly little Aussie, always sweet and saucy,
My winsome little Aussie bride.

John Shaw Neilson recalled that Stephens had sent him a copy of this poem and expressed surprise that he would sign his name to such "poor stuff": "It was difficult for me to understand why so gifted a man could be so careless about his own rhymes but he was a man of riddle altogether."¹

Patriotic and nationalistic themes predominated: an ode commemorating the opening of Parliament in Canberra (9 May 1927) and another entitled Australian Anthem (1933) being typical. Perhaps the content (public and occasional),

tone (rhetorical, for recitation) and form (ritualistically conventional) of these poems are inherent in the genre, but it is significant that this was the genre Stephens chose to work in. Since the quest for an appropriate "National Anthem" (to replace "God Save the Queen") is still sought in some quarters it might be instructive to study Stephens's contribution, noting the mechanical, unimaginative and verbally insensitive nature of the poetry also the hypocrisy inherent in these public displays of conventional enthusiasm, where, for example, the rationalist poet is felt obliged to make the conventional apostrophe to God:

Land of all the earth the best!
Land I love beyond the rest!
Fatherland for ever mine,
All our honour shall be thine.
Lead our dream to show the light,
Help our flag to gain the height,
   Australia! 
   Australia!
We sing our love to thee.
Waves that deep around us roll
Chant their freedom to the soul:
Skies that bloom above us fair
Tell the glorious hope we share:
Ours the days of high delight
And the shining joy of night,
   Australia! 
   Australia!
We sing our pride in thee.
God, who holdest in Thy hand
All rich treasure of our land,
Grant Thy aid to guard our own
Though a world be overthrown.
See, the tide of battle comes!
Hark the thundering of drums!
   Australia! 
   Australia!
We live and die for thee.¹

The entry submitted by Stephens to the Sydney Morning Herald’s competition for an ode commemorating the opening of Parliament House at Canberra in 1927 has interesting biographical associations, and throws further light on the writer’s personality and standing during these last years. Stephens was offended when his ode was not selected as the prize-winning entry. A personal letter from the judge, John Le Gay Brereton, in response to one from Stephens expressed regret that Stephens’s poem could not be awarded the prize:

Thanks for printed copy of your ode. I recognised those verses as yours as soon as I came across them - there was no doubt about your hammering energy in the opening lines, and I could hear you declaiming them. I must confess that this recognition added to my final judgment a tinge of regret that I felt obliged to turn them down. 1

Stephens also wrote to the press2, protesting against the award on the technical grounds that it did not conform to or approximate the traditional Pindaric form - a criticism Brereton answered, quite reasonably:

I take it, to speak seriously, that you think all odes (or do you mean all odes for public occasions?) should approximate the Pindaric type. In the old days when such odes were recited to a large concourse, a vigorous full-throated style was necessary. The English ode is more varied, isn’t it? There is a wide range between the Ode to Evening and Alexander’s Feast; but both are odes.

Finally, the depth of Stephens’s resentment to be deprived both of the honour and the £50 prize in favour of Dora Wilcox, whom he regarded as a minor poet (and a New Zealander to boot), can be gauged from a scribbled note his daughter preserved, written five years later:

2 "A Disgruntled Competitor", Sydney Morning Herald, 12 May 1927, p. 11.
Distrusted Brereton as judge. I fixed up Kelso King to pay me wages as Uni. lecturer in Aus. Iit if Senate approved - might have got past with Brereton's backing. He bit and reconsidered - dreading rivalry. Then he threw out my SMH Commem opening of Parlt ode - recognising fist. Mine best and two more better than Dora's left-over from NZ Dominion that got the £50. Then he knowing author threw out my King's School song they will never get one as good. Best intentions perhaps, but ---

The papers in the Mitchell Library also indicate that Stephens spent a great deal of time attempting to break into the popular market for prose and drama, encouraged no doubt by the commercial success (for its pirate editors) of the romantic novel, The Lady Calphurnia Royal, written in collaboration with Albert Dorrington. The manuscript he worked on in this period was entitled Sweet Shamrock. In the papers several drafts are extant - as a novel, as "A Comedy in Four Acts", and as a script "Simplified for Theatrical Production". An early letter to Mr Eric Pinker (dated 20 November 1922) gives the history of writing: "I commenced the theme as a novel, written in part, and stopped on the novel to write on the play. I expect to complete the novel next year, 1923 - for U.S. and English publication." During the last few years importunate letters went to publishers in England, America and Australia, extolling the novel-cum-play's virtues, one suggesting, indeed, that "Chapter

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3 "Correspondence [etc.] . . . re Sweet Shamrock", in S.P. (ML MSS 1104/1, Item 4).

4 Ibid., pp. 6-7.
VIII would make a good moving picture. Please change brushware to aluminium ware for screen."¹ The letter also suggested several alterations in response to objections; for example, "Too many Aunts and cats. This can be remedied by simple omission." As with the earlier sketches, this play-novel is very much concerned with plot, or popular story line, and has practically nothing to offer by way of character development or thematic significance, as Stephens's own summary of the plot in the letter already quoted from shows:

The plot shows, against the elderly suburban background, Sweet Shamrock making up her mind whether to marry Stafford or Blake. In the first act she embraces Stafford, Second act, she embraces Blake, with Stafford an accidental observer. Third act, she explains Blake away and embraces Stafford. Fourth Act [sic] first scene, she elopes with Blake; last scene, she marries Stafford. Act by act Shamrock and the audience swing in dramatic suspense to the happy ending.

The idea of putting seven elderly Aunts in dumb show against the amorous young excitements visible next door makes a dramatic contrast.

The rival lovers in pursuit of Shamrock make a dramatic conflict.

The grandmother is a strong character singing Moore's melodies up a tree with a bottle of gin like a real Irish lady.

The cats are seven comic details. The family banshee is opulent with humour.

Eventually, although rejected elsewhere, Sweet Shamrock was accepted by the Brisbane Courier Mail on 2 September 1931 and published as a novel in serial form. Clearly the financial return was insignificant in relation to the time and energy expended on writing, redrafting and finally selling the work.

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¹ Letter to James B. Tinker, "Correspondence [etc.] . . . re Sweet Shamrock", S.P. (ML MSS 1104/1, Item 4), p. 15.¹

² "Sweet Shamrock: Summary", ibid., p. 5.
Three conclusions might be essayed regarding Stephens's creative writing during this period: first, that poverty forced the writer into commercial activities that involved a waste of creative talent\(^1\); second, that Stephens's critical powers failed him when it came to self-evaluation\(^2\); and third, that the creative writing is but a further manifestation of the pervasive streak of philistinism that from time to time vitiates the literary criticism\(^3\).

IV

Death and Contemporary Tributes

Writing and rushing through the publication of the Brennan monograph must have exhausted Stephens physically and mentally. In a business letter, written a week before his death, one senses a race against time as well as the customary editorial impatience with printers:

I very much appreciate the kind expressions in your letter of 31st March and am confident that you have hunted valiantly; but - when do you bring home the bacon? Up to time of writing, one week later, delivery is 140 paper copies; leaving balance of 260 copies required.

Death came suddenly at St Luke's Private Hospital on Easter Saturday, 15 April 1933. (His mother, Mrs S. G. Stephens, had died at Toowoomba on Good Friday,

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\(^1\) This view is put by Vance Palmer, "A. G. Stephens", in Intimate Portraits and other pieces, selected and edited by H. P. Heseltine (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1969), pp. 108-114.

\(^2\) Slight evidence to the contrary is suggested by the note attached to The Flower of Sydney, a prose essay distributed to editors throughout Australia by Stephens (calling himself the "AustraZealand Press Correspondence" Agency): "Editor, - This may or may not be 'rather silly', but it is what people read and talk about - a correspondence breeder that may elicit some ideas worth while." See S.P. (ML MSS 1104/1, Item 1), p. 289d.

\(^3\) See W. M. Maidment, "A. G. Stephens and the 'Gympie Miner'", Southerly, XXIV, III (1964), 201. Professor Maidment finds "evidence of early and basic philistinism" in an editorial of 4 September 1889.

one day before her son.) He was cremated at Rockwood Crematorium on Easter Monday, 17 April, "By request no flowers". Mary Gilmore wrote a brief tribute which she entitled "The Last of the Giants":

There was once a group of writers here of whom each one stood as it were a flame or a star in his own firmament.

They made the name of Australia sound across the world in their day, and across time in the years since they wrote. One by one they went - Kendall, Daley, Farrell, Lawson, Archibald, David Wright, Dowell O'Reilly, Brennan, Brereton, Edmond, and now the last of the group is gone, A. G. Stephens.

Only those who were intellectually shaped by his hand, only those who stood on the strong steps of his work, know with what a sense of loss the words were uttered, "A. G. Stephens is gone."

As Mrs Gilmore implied, the younger generation of readers and writers was in the main ignorant of his name and reputation. Nettie Palmer, indeed, was moved to protest a month later about "the appalling lack of public response" to the news of his passing. In her tribute Mrs Palmer suggested that a Memorial Fund should be established. This occasioned a letter from John Shaw Neilson, dated 2 July 1934, which was at once generous and just:

Sir, - I am pleased to hear of the suggestion that a memorial should be erected to the late A. G. Stevens [sic]. I believe that the next generation will honour him, but I think it is fitting that there should be a tribute to him now, whilst the memory of his personality is still with us. If our literature is worth anything at all, we cannot afford to forget this man who did so much for it. In the nineties, and during the early years of this century, he strove very hard to encourage and strengthen our little band of writers.

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1 Death notice and obituary note in the Sydney Morning Herald, 17 April 1933. Mrs Gilmore's quoted tribute is from this source.


3 "Suggested Memorial", All About Books, 14 August 1934, p. 163.
In 1935 a committee comprising a number of leading literary figures\textsuperscript{1} was set up in Melbourne with plans to initiate a movement to honour Stephens "for his great services to Australian literature. The Memorial suggested is a medallion and tablet to be placed in the Mitchell Library, Sydney."\textsuperscript{2} These plans changed two years later, the now stated object being the "issuing of a volume containing a memoir and a selection from his essays and reviews" by V. Palmer\textsuperscript{3}. Seven months later Miss Ritchie, the secretary, wrote to Mrs Robertson informing her that the fund was still so far behind the necessary amount that the committee had decided to close the appeal and return the money to subscribers\textsuperscript{4}. The venture did have one outcome, however: Vance Palmer went along independently on his project to write and publish the suggested volume, which appeared four years later with an important, appreciative introduction and biography by the compiler\textsuperscript{5}.

In 1940 a Sydney committee was formed to raise money for an "A. G. Stephens

\begin{enumerate}
\item Mrs Hubert Church, Miss Kate Baker, Miss C. E. Ritchie, Miss Joan Davidson, Messrs R. H. Croll, Percival Serle, F. Wilmot and G. Byrne are named on the printed circular in The Papers of Constance Robertson (ML MSS 1105/1, Item 1), p. 293.
\item Letter from Miss C. E. Ritchie to Mrs Constance Robertson of 2 December 1935, \textit{ibid.}, p. 247.
\item Letter from Miss Ritchie dated 24 March 1937, \textit{ibid.}, p. 293. See also H. F. Chaplin, \textit{A Neilson Collection} (Sydney: Wentworth Books, 1964), p. 73.
\item \textit{A. G. Stephens: His Life and Work} (Melbourne: Robertson and Mullens, 1941).
\end{enumerate}
Memorial Fund"¹. The object in this case was to have a portrait bust by Frank Lynch cast in plaster "for safe keeping pro. tem., in the basement of the National Gallery" (Circular of 7 August 1940). Photographs of the bust are included in an "Interim Report" (dated 14 August 1940). It was necessary to raise more money however, so that the bust could be cast in bronze because the trustees of the Mitchell Library, where it was proposed to house it, would not accept one cast in plaster. Eighty-three subscribers raised £68.18.0 for this purpose. I have not been able to ascertain whether the bust is still extant, and if so where it is housed.

The enduring tributes, however, are the book by Vance Palmer, a monograph by Stephensen², and various articles by contemporaries and academics who know the man only through his works. These works unfortunately are out of print, in the case of printed books; largely inaccessible to the common reader, in the case of the bulk of his work in the Bulletin and Bookfellow; and dispersed or lost, in the case of his unique and comprehensive collection of manuscripts and scrapbooks. The best service modern criticism could render by way of tribute would be a more comprehensive and representative collection of the best critical writing and belles-lettres than Vance Palmer could afford, and of course continuing evaluative studies and articles. It is appropriate, however, to conclude with a tribute from one of his protégés, the poet Hugh McCrae, for it is a tribute that sums up generously values that would not be

¹ Members were: V. Crawley, Miles Franklin, Robert Kalenski, C. W. Salier, S. B. Hooper and P. R. Stephensen (Hon. Sec.). See The Papers of Constance Robertson (ML MSS 1105/1, Item 1), pp. 489-593, for a copy of the committee's circular and other materials. The references that follow are from this source.

apparent to those who know the man solely through his printed work:

Yes, Stephens helped me up the difficult ladder by giving me chances I was unable to find anywhere else; he allowed me to encroach in his time, he advised me, lent me books, took me to many lunches, and was altogether my friend.

If he came back, I'd run to meet him.¹

¹ Letter to H. F. Chaplin, undated (c. 1950), in The Letters of Hugh McCrae, selected by Robert D. FitzGerald (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1970), p. 211.
CONCLUSION

Critics themselves have found it difficult to be objective about Stephens; in his writing as in his life-style he tends to provoke strongly partisan responses. At one extreme J. Scott Macdonald would say, of Stephens's essay on Brunton Stephens, that "As a sample of the work of the grand Inquisitor of Australian Letters it is the ephemeral journalistic impertinence of a cocksure, jaunty oracle that had better be forgotten"; and use phrases like "crude imperception and grotesquely biased spleen", "the Bulletin dictator" and "total abhorrence of the spiritual side of life". At the other extreme a critic as sound and demanding as H. M. Green would say that in his considered opinion, "No critic has exercised so strong, so wide, or so beneficial an influence upon the young Australian writer as A. G. Stephens, and so far as Australian literature is concerned there is no doubt of his pre-eminence." The second opinion is supported by other critics of standing and scholarship, notably T. Inglis Moore who has described Stephens "as the strongest single force in the shaping of Australia's literature" and as the man who "raised literary criticism [in Australia] to such a high level that it became a decisive influence

1 "Convict Once and Other Poems", R.P., 11 May 1901.
2 "The Two Stephenses" [A. G. and Brunton], Meanjin Papers, I, vii (1942), 15-16. The quotations that follow are from this source.
on the growth of the new literature that was then finding its own distinctive voice." The first judgment may be dismissed as revealing more about the "biased spleen" of its writer than it does about Stephens's true quality. The second mature judgments are the ones to be taken seriously and challenged, modified, or agreed with according to which aspect of the many-sided literary activities is under judgment.

In this thesis, therefore, the intention has been to examine the life and work of A. G. Stephens in a comprehensive survey so that his general contribution to Australian literature might be assessed responsibly and his standing as a writer objectively established. The thesis has sought to prove a number of major propositions, which may now be stated as conclusions and in summary form.

First, A. G. Stephens's contribution to an emerging Australian literature is significant in his own right as well as being of historical importance. In this regard should be mentioned his work as critic, editor and writer. As critic he achieved eminence for establishing the Red Page and the Bookfellow as influential literary forums, and in the process creating a canon of criticism that is both substantial and perceptive; as an editor for editing the Bulletin and Bookfellow books and for publishing in the columns of these journals the work of new and otherwise unrecognized but promising writers; and as a writer for his critical and non-literary essays, belles-lettres and journalistic articles in newspapers, journals, pamphlets and books.

Next, it is argued that this contribution, though substantial and at its best brilliant, is uneven and flawed because of circumstances largely out of
the writer's control: the circumstances of his education, his temperament and recurring poverty. Largely self-educated, he had many of the prejudices of what Geoffrey Serle has called "the old Australian anti-intellectual". Mr Serle's analysis, indeed, is perceptive of less agreeable traits that Stephens himself exhibited from time to time:

He assumes that the university of life is the only one that matters and the best school is the school of hard knocks. He tends to believe that intellectuals and artists are conceited, effeminate and subversive of authority and moral values - that academics are impractical or 'theoretical' and professors absent-minded.

Stephens's authoritative, combative, sometimes vain and self-indulgent temperament did lead to critical indiscretions such as over-statement or arguing up to an assertion, and often by introducing unnecessary acerbity detracted attention from the work under analysis to the personality of the critic himself. The recurring poverty and lack of assured backing meant that many promising projects did not come into fruition; that the critic had to spread his work too thinly, almost to the point of hack-writing at times; and that many ill-advised but potentially lucrative essays into 'popular' writing squandered creative energy. Also, there appear to be grounds for contemporary suspicions that financial considerations (such as the success of a protégé's book) could affect the critical judgment.

The thesis maintains, further, that though limited to the extent and for the reasons stated, Stephens's contribution to literary criticism in this

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1 From Deserts the Prophets Come (Melbourne; Heinemann, 1973), p. 214.
country is unique and memorable because of fearless and energetic application of the natural endowments of intellect, commonsense and articulateness together with a confident pragmatism that prompted him as critic to argue from first principles, query traditional assumptions and rely on the integrity of his own considered and intuitive responses to a work under review.

Another major conclusion is that Stephens's criticism of prose is generally sounder than his criticism of poetry. This is explained in terms of the critic having fewer theoretical preconceptions about fiction and allowing the positive qualities of intellect and pragmatic commonsense to receive fair play when prose is under analysis. Unfortunately with poetry some narrow predilections and a priori assumptions of questionable literary validity operate to negate the native intelligence and practical commonsense that inform the prose criticism.

A significant conclusion is that, as with most great critics, Stephens did have a theoretical interest in the craft of criticism, and in the course of his writings does reveal a groping towards the formulation of a consciously realized critical credo or set of critical principles. Despite the contradictory and impulsive nature of much of the extemporaneous writing it is clear that as a critic of Australian literature Stephens attempted an equipoise between two potentially antithetical forces: his fervid, emotional nationalism responding generously and approvingly to works redolent of the Australian spirit on the one hand, and on the other his intellectual conviction that

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the local product must pass the test of 'universality' by being measured against the achievement of the best from overseas and traditional literatures. The following emerge from various published statements as endorsed tenets: a trust in the validity of the subjective response of the critic; a firmly held belief that instinctive, hereditary and psychological forces acting on an author are so important that they are worthy of study in their own right - thus the emphasis on ancestry, biography and historical background; an elevation of the emotional and romantic elements over intellectual and classical ones - leading to a preference for "below the collar-stud literature", to use his own phrase; and, in the criticism of poetry specifically, a greater concern for the aural aspects of euphony and rhythm or melody than for power of imagery and flexibility of tone and voice, leading to a rejection of 'modernism' and a failure to appreciate the value of the innovative and experimental poets from T. S. Eliot and Kenneth Slessor on.

It is also argued that there is a scrappiness and lack of development and depth in most of the published criticism. This is partly explicable in terms of the conditions under which Stephens wrote and published for most of his writing life - under pressure of time for journals and newspapers, but only partly so. Even in the longer articles and critical studies, however, there is a comparative lack of architecture reflecting an impatience with the kind of sustained intellectual labour that the arguing of a considered thesis requires. Consequently, his critical writing is characterized by flashes of brilliance and illuminating insights eloquently conveyed, rather than by construction on the larger scale. The intuitions tend to be asserted rather than established by reasoned and close analysis of the texts as favoured by
modern critics. Significantly, there is a lack of major sustained critical studies to point to as illustrations of the expressed critical credo being realized consistently and rigorously.

Another important contribution documented in the thesis relates to research and scholarship. All scholars who have examined primary documents relating to Australian literature of the period (from 1896 to 1920 particularly) are indebted to Stephens. First, he filed most inward correspondence and towards the end when he had acquired a typewriter some copies of outward correspondence with writers, publishers and academics – the Neilson and Purphy letters being particularly cogent examples. Also, he kept and filed original manuscripts, copies of corrected galley-proofs and other materials relating to the publication of the many poems, stories and books that passed through his hands as editor. Further, he kept a comprehensive collection of newspaper cuttings on most of the writers of the day and on literary topics, in addition to compiling a list of their pseudonyms, complete with brief autobiographical entries. Most of these materials are now accessible to scholars in the various libraries listed in the bibliography. Together they constitute an invaluable literary resource.

Finally, there is a considerable bulk of creative writing in verse, prose, fiction and drama to be assessed. The proposition is advanced that apart from some clever parodies and wholly or partly fictional monologues in prose (often described as 'interviews', a genre Stephens excelled in), this collection of creative writing has little literary worth. As a writer and stylist Stephens's reputation must rest substantially on his prose essays and articles, both literary and non-literary.
Stephens himself, appropriately and characteristically, has left a fair and judicious summing-up of his critical achievement and one which is substantially supported by the evidence adduced in this thesis:

The leading characteristic of that work is incisive vitality - it is full of original and seminal ideas. It has been said, with some exaggeration, that many people disagree with "the Bookfellow," but everybody reads him. His writing is straightforward, individual, sincere. His generalising habit of mind leads him continually to refer to principles and his wide experience is backed by an unusually keen and sane judgment of men and books. His constant cry in life and art is: "Keep up the standards!"

1 S.P. (ML MSS 1104/1), p. 7a.

The note is undated, but is c. 1923-1924, as it contains this note: "C[onstance] S[tephens] editor Sun will probably publish this if put before him with paper herewith opened. No objection to saying you are proprietor." [my emphasis] (On 12 December 1923 Stephens sold the Bookfellow to his daughter, Constance. See ibid., p. 269 b.)
SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

PREFACE

The mass and diversity of both the primary and secondary materials, and
the scattered nature of their publication and (for manuscripts) filing and
location, create problems in ordering. The intention of this bibliography
is to sort materials into various categories and within each category to list
the various sources so that the reader has a clearer idea of the nature, scope
and accessibility of Stephens's prolific writings. Two areas caused special
problems; notably "Manuscripts" and "Edited Columns and Journals". The fol-
lowing procedures have been followed for each:

1. Manuscripts

Manuscripts are listed in two sections, viz.:

SECTION A: MANUSCRIPTS

Here a listing and a general description of manuscript collections located
in the Mitchell Library and other sources are given. The material is sorted
into three categories: major collections, minor collections and research mat-
erials.

SECTION B: PUBLICATIONS (AND SELECTED MANUSCRIPT ITEMS)

Here the diverse primary materials located have been sorted first into seven
categories ranging from "1. Literary Criticism and Essays" to "7. Edited
Books". Within each category the materials are sorted into sources: "Published
Books", "Articles, Essays and Reviews in Edited Journals and Columns" and so on.
For purposes of completeness and convenience "Manuscripts" are treated as one
source and a listing of selected specific manuscript items is given after the
published sources, at the end of each category. Thus, within the category "1. Literary Criticism and Essays" and following the four listed published sources there is a sub-section "e. Articles and Essays in Manuscript".

2. Edited Columns and Journals

The bulk of Stephens's important critical writing is scattered in eight journals and newspapers on which he served as literary editor, literary columnist or editor. Stephens himself has signified that all unsigned paragraphs, articles and reviews in edited columns and journals are his\(^1\). Since these are far too numerous to list in toto, and many are of ephemeral import and interest, a select though comprehensive list from the files searched is given. A brief description of the eight sources follows:

i. The Gympie Miner (November 1886 to December 1890)

The Gympie Miner exists as a newspaper office work-set, with erratic gaps. Most of the weekly (presumably literary) supplements are lost. W. M. Maidment has examined and described these files. See his "A. G. Stephens and the Gympie Miner", Southerly, XIV, iii (1964), 190-204.

ii. "The Magazine Rifler" Column of the Brisbane Boomerang (3 January 1891 to 22 August 1891)

A complete file exists in the Mitchell Library. Stephens joined the paper at the invitation of its editor, Gresley Lukin. As the title suggests, most of the items are extracts 'rifled' from contemporary journals.

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\(^1\) See "A. G. Stephens: A Distinguished Queenslander", in Correspondence 1929 with Camden Morrisby (ML D0C2487). [Typescript 'biography' written by Stephens for Mr Morrisby to copy out and have published in the Brisbane Daily Mail of 30 November 1929.]
iii. The Cairns\textit{ Argus} (October 1891 to September 1892)

This newspaper is filed in the La Trobe Library of the State Library of Victoria.

iv. The Wellington\textit{ Evening Post} (September 1907 to June [?] 1910)

It has not been possible to search these files yet for Stephens material, but from "The Papers of A. G. Stephens" in the Mitchell Library it appears that Stephens was employed almost full time in "straight journalism" as sub-editor and special features writer rather than as a literary editor. A note by Miss Carol Dickie of the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington says:

A. G. Stephens's time in New Zealand remains something of a mystery. He seems to have been a freelance writer. A number of articles over the initials A.G.S. appeared in the Wellington\textit{ Evening Post}, October and November, 1907. A check was made with the\textit{ Evening Post} offices, who have material indexed from 1922 onwards. Before that, periodic burnings of material took place; thus there is no record of any of it. Stephens's articles were of a general nature, with humour and literary criticism included. Presumably any of the anonymous political articles could have been his, but we have no way of knowing.

v. "The Red Page" of the Sydney\textit{ Bulletin} (10 November 1894 to 18 October 1906)

The page was situated on the inside front cover of the\textit{ Bulletin} and is variously titled: i. "The\textit{ Bulletin} Book Exchange", 10 November 1894 to 22 February 1896: ii. "Literary Notes", 29 February to 15 August 1896: iii. "\textit{For the Red Page}", 22 August 1896: iv. "The\textit{ Red Page}", 29 August 1896 to 18 October 1906: v. "Under the Gum Tree". Unsigned articles are by Stephens, who from 10 June 1899 acknowledged editorship with the initials "A.G.S.", and occ-

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1 Letter to Mrs Robin Marsden of 2 October 1973.
asionally, "(The) Bookfellow". Files exist at the Fisher and Mitchell Libraries, Sydney and at the Bulletin office. The Mitchell Library has Stephens's own personal file of front page covers in which unsigned articles are acknowledged with purple-inked crosses top and bottom.

vi. The Sydney Bookfellow [also titled Australia, briefly in 1907]

This journal was owned and edited by Stephens. It comprises:
Series 1, I-V, January to May 1899 (monthly)
[Series 2], I-II, vii, 3 January to 18 August 1907 (weekly)
Series 3, I-V, i, December 1911 to February 1916 (monthly)

V, ii-VII, vi, December 1919 to March 1925 (monthly)
Illustrated 18 mo., 12 mo., 4 to., roy. 4 to., and fol.

After publication ceased in May 1899 it was continued in "The Red Page" of the Bulletin until revived in a new (folio) format on 3 January 1907. Four numbers, 2 May-23 May 1907, were entitled Australia and the Bookfellow and issues 30 May-15 August 1907 were entitled Australia. Publication then ceased till 24 July 1910 when it was revived as "The Bookfellow Column" in the Sydney Sunday Sun, and syndicated in papers throughout Australasia. This column merged into the third series which reappeared in yet another format (quarto) - again as a monthly and under the original title of The Bookfellow. Publication again ceased after February 1916 until February 1919. There were no issues for November 1915, September 1920 and December 1921. After August 1923 there was a break till October 1924 when the journal was revived again for six issues. In March 1925 it ceased to appear as a separate publication.
vii. "The Bookfellow" Column of the Sydney Sunday Sun (July 1910-December 1911)

This column was conducted by Stephens after his return from the Wellington Evening Post. It continued as a syndicated column, published throughout Australia and New Zealand until after outbreak of war in 1914, reprinting material from the Bookfellow journal which had been re-established in December 1911. Many of the important items printed in 1910-1911 were reprinted in the Bookfellow, 1911-1912. The Public Library of New South Wales in Sydney has a complete file.

viii. "The Bookfellow" Feature in Sydney Stage and Society (January-July 1926)

This feature usually comprised three or four pages located in the middle section of a glossy magazine designed to meet the interests of theatre-goers and fashionable 'society' generally. It appeared ten months after the final number of the Bookfellow journal in March 1925. Files exist in the Mitchell and Fisher Libraries, Sydney.

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v. The Red Page (The Sydney Bulletin)

vi. The Bookfellow, Series 1

vii. The Bookfellow, Series 2

viii. "The Bookfellow" Column (The Sydney Sunday Sun)

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A. MANUSCRIPTS

1. MAJOR COLLECTIONS OF PAPERS

a. The Mitchell Library, Sydney

i. The Papers of A. G. Stephens [1]. 12 Vols. (ML A2297-ML A2308)

These papers were acquired during Stephens's lifetime and after his death. They supplement the major collection (catalogued separately at ML MSS 1104, q.v.) which was acquired after the death of his daughter, Constance Robertson. They contain ALS to Stephens by Australian writers; MSS, corrected proofs and other documents by Australian writers; and articles and literary works by Stephens. The material is arranged alphabetically by author's surname as follows:


Vol. 6 (ML A2302) Bernard O'Dowd, Will Ogilvie, J. B. O'Hara, Dowell O'Reilly, Rod Quinn.


Vol 9 (ML A2305)  John Shaw Neilson.

Vol. 10 (ML A2306)  Harry Morant.

Vols. 11-12 (ML A2307-ML A2308)  MSS, letters and proofs by various writers connected with the Bulletin.

ii. The Papers of A. G. Stephens [2].  6 Boxes (ML MSS 1104)

These papers were acquired by the Mitchell Library with the papers of his daughter, Mrs Constance Robertson, on her death, and have been treated as a separate collection. They comprise:

Box 1 (ML MSS 1104/1).  I. Correspondence 1896-1935

A. Correspondence 1896-1935 with miscellaneous papers mainly re his work for the Bulletin and the Bookfellow. MSS, typescript and photoprints (Item No. 1).

B. Copies of letters from C. J. Brennan, 1899-1927 re poetry and articles on poetry written for the Bulletin and the Bookfellow. 2 drafts, carbon typescript with MS corrections (Items Nos. 2-3).

C. Correspondence and copies of correspondence, 1922-1931 re the publication of Sweet Shamrock. Typescript (Item No. 4).

D. Correspondence, 1930-1931 re Commonwealth Literary Fund; with articles on the Fund. Typescript (Item No. 5).

Box 2 (ML MSS 1104/2).  II. Works of Imagination.

A. Sweet Shamrock: a comedy in four acts, 1922.

i. Carbon transcript with MS corrections and plans (Item 1).

ii. Various drafts (Item 2). Published as a story in serial form in Australia and New Zealand, 1931.


D. "Marmaduke in America". Short Story. Carbon typescript (Item 5).

Box 3 (ML MSS 1104/3). III. Other Works.


i. Carbon typescript with cuttings inserted (Item 1).

ii. Carbon typescript drafts with MS additions (Item 2).


C. Biographies. Compiled by C. Robertson from material collected by A. G. Stephens:

i. Carbon typescript copy (Item 4).

ii. Material collected for biographies (Item 5).

Box 4 (ML MSS 1104/4). Other Works (continued).

D. Interviews made by A. G. Stephens with notable people, 1909-1927. MS carbon typescript, cuttings and galley proofs (Item 1).

IV. Literary Articles

A. Australian literature. Carbon typescript with MS corrections (Item 2).

B. Australian poets. Carbon typescript with MS corrections (Items 3-6).

Box 5 (ML MSS 1104/5). Literary Articles (continued)

C. Australian prose writers. Carbon typescript with MS corrections (Item 7).

D. Other writers. Carbon typescript with MS corrections (Item 8).

E. Miscellaneous topics. Carbon typescript with MS corrections (Item 9).

F. Works of various writers sent to A. G. Stephens. MSS, printed and carbon typescript with MS corrections (Item 11).

Box 6 (ML MSS 1104/6). V. Scrap Books (Items 1-9)

A. Newspaper cuttings of Australian interest with MSS, 1895-1910 (Item 10).

B. Bookfellow reviews, 1899-1932 (Item 11).
iii. Miscellaneous Papers of A. G. Stephens

Letters to and Stories by A. G. Stephens: 1892-1922 (ML A1926)
In Angus and Robertson Ltd: Publishing MSS, 1891-1924.

[Contains ALS to A.G.S. from M. H. Foott, Alex Montgomery, G. Essex Evans, Louis Esson, Lala Fisher, Will Lawson, Hugh McCrae, Mary Gilmore, Bert Royle, Geoffrey G. Harpur, Arnold Wall; poems by Anna Wickham (transcribed by Mary Gilmore); four sketches by A.G.S.]

J. R. Tyrrell's Collection of Papers of A. G. Stephens: 1890-1932 (ML A3986)

[Comprises ALS to Stephens and two from him, in connection with his work as literary editor, 1890-1932. Also poems and articles by Stephens, including an account of the genesis of the Bulletin and biographical material on J. F. Archibald, mainly concerning his date of birth and mental breakdown. Original MSS, typescript and printed material.]


[Contains MS papers read to the Gympie Literary Circle on Thackeray, Gordon, Sheridan, Dickens, Longfellow, Molière and others; eight numbers of the Apostle, written by Stephens and published under the auspices of the Gympie Secular Association.]

iv. Notes on Australian Authors for A. W. Jose: 1899 (ML C865)

In Angus and Robertson Ltd: Publishing MSS, 1881-1924.


v. The Papers of Constance Robertson, 1915-1963 (ML MSS 1105/1, Items 1 and 2)

[Item 1 contains family and business papers from 1918, with many directly on A. G. Stephens.
Item 2 contains an uncompleted typescript and MS biography of her father, A. G. Stephens, with "family tree" and bibliography.]

b. The Fryer Memorial Library of Australian Literature, Brisbane

[A brief description of this collection is published in The Hayes Collection, University of Queensland Library, 1970. The material occupies approximately twelve inches of shelving and has been carefully indexed to result in over 500 entries.

There is one group of material which is correspondence relating to an anthology in 1905; another group on Stephens's own work, containing his contributions to magazines, his critical writing, and related correspondence. The largest group is the correspondence with Australian literary figures, contributors to the Bulletin, the Bookfellows, anthologies and publications in which Stephens had an interest. Most of the material bears annotations in the familiar purple ink. In general the material ranges from 1889 to 1933 with concentrations about some dates such as 1905 and 1927.

An important item is a Journal, spanning the years 1896 to 1930 of some 35,000 words which contains diary entries, fictional letters, working notes, interviews, etc. Mr Leon Cantrell of the English Department in the University of Queensland is presently editing the document for publication.]

c. The National Library of Australia, Canberra

The Collection of Harry F. Chaplin (MS 11145), The National Library of Australia.

[Contains letters from Stephens to N. Lindsay, H. Lawson, H. McCrae, C. Brennan and S. Neilson. The most important material is in "The A. G. Stephens and Shaw Neilson Miscellany", comprising two large albums. Here are included forty letters from Stephens, MSS annotated and corrected by his hand, and a long unpublished article "Poetry and Shaw Neilson", offered to the Age in 1923, but rejected. The late Mr Chaplin wrote:
I decided that it might be rewarding to select a few authors and concentrate upon acquiring a complete set of their first editions, as well as inscribed and associated copies, manuscripts, autograph letters and material relevant to their lives and work. I chose Norman Lindsay, Henry Lawson, Hugh McCrae, Chris Brennan, C. J. Dennis and Shaw Neilson.

Naturally the collection contains many letters from A. G. Stephens, especially to Neilson, and to a lesser extent Brennan and McCrae.]

d. The Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington (New Zealand)

[When Stephens was in financial difficulties over the Bookfellow in 1912-1918 he sold a number of MSS to Turnbull in New Zealand. As a result the Alexander Turnbull Library has a considerable amount of A. G. Stephens material including ten folders of his papers and three volumes of MSS poetry submitted to the Sydney Bulletin (1895-1905) and the Bookfellow (1911-1912). The Stephens material comprises miscellaneous inwards correspondence (1907-1914); various MSS of articles and poems by Stephens; material collected for An Anzac Memorial (1915); manuscripts and portraits of a number of Australian writers connected with Stephens; and 26 letters from Stephens to A. H. Turnbull (1912-1918), as letters and MSS photocopied from originals held in Australian libraries.]

2. OTHER PAPERS AND COLLECTIONS OF PAPERS

a. The Mitchell Library, Sydney

ML A805 A Personal Note [on Bernard O'Dowd]

[Also contains MS copy for Dawnward? and author's proofs with corrections.]

ML Al494 Andrew Fisher / Leader of the Australian Labour Party / An Appreciation and an Interview / by A. G. Stephens. 1910.
[Typescript corrected and initialled by Mr Fisher.]

ML Al696 V. J. Daley: Correspondence, papers and transactions; collected by E. J. Brady, 1898-1929.
[Contains biographical notes on Daley and material on Stephens.]

ML Al916 Barcroft Boake Where the Dead Men Lie and Other Poems, 1913.
In Angus and Robertson Ltd: Publishing MSS, 1881-1924.
[Contains copy for 2nd edition of Boake's book.]

ML A2602 The Papers of J. L. Mullins.
[ALS, poems ("Australian Anthem" and "Song of Toowoomba"), receipts etc. 1927-1932.]

ML A3268 Gilmore Papers.
[Volume 17 contains letters from Stephens. Restricted access.]

ML A5007 Letters Received or Collected by J. R. Tyrrell.
[ALS from various writers associated with Stephens.]


ML Ad43 V. J. Daley: Holograph letters (9) to A. G. Stephens re poems and Bulletin contributions.
[Also, a letter to Stephens from O. Tregear re Daley's "Romance."

[Typescript, with MS corrections by Holman, c. 1922(?) printed in Bookfellow, 15 January 1915.]

ML Al27/15 ALS from Norman Lindsay re the printing of designs for Hugh McCrae's book. c. 1902.

ML An25 "J. S. Neilson's 'Song for a Honeymoon'."
[MS with MS corrections and suggestions by Stephens.]

ML Ar 72/5, 6 Letters from W. Gray, 27 July and 8 August 1932, in answer to enquiries re H. H. Richardson.

ML As102/1 Paper read before the Australian Literary Society on Stephens's Life and Work. March 1911. Anon.
ML As102/2 Photostat copies of letters (4) to Alfred Deakin. September-November 1907.

[Originals in National Library of Australia. This set donated to Mitchell Library by R. N. Crawford, April 1952.]

ML As149 "Stephens, A. G."

[Typed list of MSS purchased 6 February 1941 from his estate.]

ML C755/2 Letter from Louisa Lawson (inserted in Henry Lawson's Short Stories, Librarian's Room), 1896.

ML C874 Barcroft Boake, Where the Dead Men Lie, and other poems, 1897.
In Angus and Robertson Ltd: Publishing MSS, 1881-1924.

[Contains copy for 1st edition of Boake's book, with MS notes by Stephens.]

ML DOC196 TLS letter to C. J. Dennis and copy to A. H. Davis, from Sydney 8 December 1922 re rights on their plays with answers written in spaces provided and a further letter from C. J. Dennis, 14 December 1922.

ML DOC529d "On the Life of Keats by Benjamin Haydon", 1923.

[Typescript carbon copy of poem with MS corrections dated "17/12/1923"]

ML DOC769 "Australian Anthem", 1933.

[Typescript carbon copy of poem with MS corrections dated "5/3/1933"].

ML DOC782 ALS to Miss Christina Elliott, Lewisham, re personal affairs, 26 January 1920.

ML DOC1690 Ellis, Henry Havelock: ALS (2) to A. G. Stephens from Cornwall, England, 24 June and 2 July 1902, expressing interest in the Bulletin.

ML DOC2487 Stephens, Alfred George: Correspondence, 1929, with Camden Morrisby and the Daily Mail, Brisbane, re article on A. G. Stephens published in the newspaper on 30 November 1929.

[Carbon typescript, typescript with MS corrections and additions and corrections and photocopy of newspaper cutting.]

ML DOC2510 Stephens, Alfred George: ALS to J. S. Neilson from Sydney, 8 March 1920, enclosing an acknowledgement by Queen Alexandra of the receipt of Neilson's Heart of Spring and other poems.

ML MSS 231/9-11 O'Reilly, Dowell Philip: Papers, 1884-1923.

[Correspondence with A. G. Stephens, 1902-1922. ALS, MSS and typescript - corrected and annotated by A.G.S.]
ML MSS 364 The Papers of Miles Franklin, 1841-1954.
   a. Correspondence with A. G. Stephens, 1897-1932.
      Vols. 7 (5-60); 55 (290); 80 (3-11); 87 (25-55, 111-112, 117, 121, 125-127).
   b. References to A. G. Stephens by other correspondents.
      Vols. 67 (17-49, 67-73b, 83a-83b); 121 (21).

   [This item is a "Gallery Show Case" containing miscellaneous items specified by R. Hughes for permanent exhibition concerning A. G. Stephens, C. J. Brennan, V. J. Daley, Sir Lionel Lindsay and H. McCrae.]

   [Contains references to A. G. Stephens.]

ML MSS 862 Poems by various writers, collected by A. G. Stephens, 1865-1905.
   [Typescript with MS corrections and additions.]

ML MSS 926 Archibald Family Correspondence, 1877-1947.
   [Contains MS and typescript material on J. P. Archibald and the Bulletin.]

ML MSS 954 Brennan, Christopher John: "Towards the source", 1894-1900.
   [Copy of the text (unsettled) prepared for A.G.S.]

ML MSS 1050 Brennan, Christopher John: Papers, 1911-1932.

   [Not completely sorted, but papers do contain material relating to Stephens.]

ML MSS 2547 The Bulletin, newspaper.
   [MSS by various writers, 1896-1908, sent to A. G. Stephens and corrected and annotated by him for publication mainly in the Bulletin and Book-fellow.]
b. Other Libraries

The Papers of Kate Baker. In the National Library of Australia (MS 80).
[Contains correspondence with A.G.S. and unpublished articles.]

[Contains ALS by A.G.S., photostat copies of which are in the Mitchell Library at AS102.]

Joseph Furphy: Correspondence. State Library of Victoria.
[Contains one letter from A.G.S.]

[Reprints letter dated 18 February 1904.]

George Mackaness: Correspondence and Literary Manuscripts. National Library of Australia (MS 534).
[Contains MSS by A. G. Stephens.]

[Contains correspondence 1907-1931 between J.S.N. and A.G.S. about publishing agreements and MSS with corrections by A.G.S.]

[Reprints eight letters on literary matters written from 1926-1932.]

The Papers of C. H. Souter, 1874-1944. Archives Department, Public Library of South Australia (MS 1481).
[Includes correspondence from A. G. Stephens - answers to letters from Souter which are filed in the Mitchell Library's Papers of A. G. Stephens and Papers of Constance Robertson, q.v.]
3. RESEARCH MATERIALS COLLATED BY A. G. STEPHENS

a. Newspaper Cuttings, Mitchell Library

i. Newspaper Cuttings etc. collected by A. G. Stephens, 15 Vols. (ML QO 49/3-17)

Comprises:

- Vols. 1-2 (ML QO 49/3-4) The Bulletin
- Vol. 3 (ML QO 49/5) Sugar Culture
- Vol. 4 (ML QO 49/6) Aborigines
- Vols. 5-6 (ML QO 49/7-8) S[outh] S[ea] Islands
- Vol. 7 (ML QO 49/9) Francis Adams
- Vol. 8 (ML QO 49/10) Northern Territory
- Vol. 9 (ML QO 49/11) T. A. Browne
- Vol. 10 (ML QO 49/12) H. Morant and F. Morton
- Vol. 11 (ML QO 49/13) A. Meston
- Vols. 12-13 (ML QO 49/14-15) Victor Daley
- Vol. 14 (ML QO 49/16) Dorothy McCrae, G. G. McCrae and Hugh McCrae
- Vol. 15 (ML QO 49/17) Imperialism

ii. Newspaper Cuttings: Various Authors (ML QA821 et al)

[These cuttings are filed, generally at QA821, by authors' surnames. They are not attributed by the Library to A. G. Stephens.]

Stephens had his personal collection of cuttings filed in thick hard-covered school exercise books, a book to each subject or prominent literary figure; or in the case of lesser figures half a book (one author each end). As well as newspaper cuttings, some manuscripts, ALS and edited galley proofs and pers-
onal comments were pasted in. Stephens's daughter, the late Mrs Constance Robertson, described the collection thus in a talk to the English Association:

His great reference library was about five hundred scrapbooks, each one representing a different subject, and it was my job to paste scraps: a cross at the top, a cross at the bottom, with the number of the scrapbook on it. He had a great board as large as this table, 5 foot by 3 foot, with all the numbers on the book, and I had to cut them out and paste them in the book and put them back on the shelves.

The original file numbers used by Stephens can still be identified in many cases; for example, the scrapbook on the McCraes (ML QO 49/14) is number "411". The original 500 volumes are now widely dispersed - in many cases lost. Most were sold by Stephens when short of funds during his later years. The Mitchell Library apparently had first option and appears to have sifted through and purchased the more valuable items. Some of the others have come through private collectors to the Fryer Memorial Library at the University of Queensland. Many, presumably, are in the possession of private collectors: for example, the important book of cuttings on Joseph Furphy is in the personal library of Mr Walter Stone, Sydney, N.S.W. and has been examined by kind permission of the owner.

It is unfortunate that the Mitchell Librarian broke up the collection purchased from Stephens, and filed each volume separately by author's name, with no indication that the collection had been made by Stephens. These cuttings may be located now only by a painstaking check in the Library's catalogue of entries for authors in whom Stephens would have had a critical or personal interest.

1 Southerly, XXV, iv (1965), 247.
An alphabetical list, with the Mitchell Library catalogue numbers, of the volumes thus located follows:

Adams, A. H. (ML QA821/211.2/1A1)

Adams, Francis (ML Q049/9)

Archibald, J. F. (ML QA920.5A/A)

Bayldon, Arthur [with Baynton, Barbara] (ML QA821/B358.1/1A1)

Baynton, Barbara (ibid.)

Becke, Louis (ML QA823/B394)

Boake, J. B. (ML QA821/B)

Bourke, J. P. [in Newspaper Cuttings: West Australian Verse, 1897-1918] (ML QA821/N)

Brennan, C. J. (ML QA821/B838/4)

Brereton, J. Le Gay (ML QA821/B)

Browne, T. A. (ML Q049/11)

Church, Hubert (ML QA823/C)

Clarke, Marcus (ML QA823/C)

Cochrane, G. M. [Grant Hervey] (ML QA821/C)

Crawford, Robert (ML QA821/C)

Daley, V. J. (ML QA821/D141)

Daley, V. J. (ML Q049/14-15 [2 vols.])

Davis, A. H. (ML QA827/R914/1)

Dorrington, Albert (ML QA823/D)

Dyson, Edward (ML QA821/D)

Edmond, James (ML QA920.5/E)

Evans, G. E. (ML QA821/E92.1/2A1)
Farrell, John (ML QA821/F245.2/2A1)
Franklin, Miles (ML QA821/C)
Goode, W. T. (ML QA827/G)
Hebblethwaite, James (ML QA821/H)
Jephcott, Sydney [with O'Reilly, Dowell] (ML QA821/O)
Kendall, Henry (ML QA821/K33/1A1)
Lawson, Henry (ML QA821/L425.1, 1-3 [3 vols.])
Lawson, Will (ML QA821/L)
Mack, Louise (ML QA821/M153.4/1A1)
McCrae, Dorothy [with McCrae, G. G. and McCrae, Hugh] (ML QO49/14)
McCrae, G. G. (ibid.)
McCrae, Hugh (ibid.)
Mackay, Jessie (ML QA821/Ml)
Macleod, A. C. [wife of William] (ML QA821/M)
Meston, A. (ML QO49/13)
Montgomery, Alex (ML QA823/M)
Morant, H. [with Morton, F.] (ML QO49/12)
Morton, F. (ibid.)
O'Brien, S. E. (ML QA821/M)
O'Dowd, Bernard (ML QA821/026/1A1)
Ogilvie, Will (ML QA821/031/6A, 1-2 [2 vols.])
Ophel, Francis [in Newspaper Cuttings: Western Australian Verse, 1897-1918] (ML QA821/H)
O'Reilly, Dowell (ML QA821/O)
Paterson, A. B. (ML QA821/P296/2)
Quinn, Roderic (ML QA821/Q)
Robertson, Mary (ML QA820/2)
Souter, C. H. [with Turner, Ethel] (ML QA823/T945/1)
Stephens, J. B. (ML QA821/S)
Turner, Ethel (ML QA823/T945/1)

b. Collections of Poems and Prose by Various Writers: Newspaper Cuttings and Typescript. Mitchell Library

i. Poems 1865–1905, by various writers, collected by A. G. Stephens, 9 Vols. [1905?], Mitchell Library (ML MSS 862)

[Unpublished typescript, MS corrections and emendations, with biographical notes by Stephens. Contents:

Vol. I. 1. Poems by James Hebblethwaite
2. "Additional Poems" by Hebblethwaite [annotated "Received May 1905"]
3. Appendix to above: "Additional Published and Unpublished Poems"
4. Verses by H. B. Allen
5. Two poems by Lala Fisher

Vol. II. 1. Verses by George Essex Evans
2. Verses by Lala Fisher [Mrs Frank Fisher]
3. Verses by Mabel Forrest [Mrs J. Forrest]
4. Verses by "P. Fairleigh" [Philip Moses]
5. Verses by Lilian Wooster Greaves
6. Verses by Montague Grover
7. Verses by R. H. Horne

Vol. III. 1. Verses by G. H. Souter
2. Verses by Ethel Turner [Mrs H. R. Curlewis]
Vol. III. 3. Verses by Mary Colborne Veel


3. Verses by Rosamond Benham

4. Verses by W. Bennett

5. Verses by A. E. Currie

6. Verses by R. J. Cassidy ["Gilrooney"]

7. Verses by Ethel Castilla

8. Verses by E. L. Eyre

9. Verses by A. J. Evelyn


2. Orion and Pleiades and The Chambers of the South by Sydney Jephcott. [Contains 30 poems not included in Reeves’s London edition, 1892.]

3. Appendix by Sydney Jephcott [5 new poems]

Vol. VI. 1. Verses by Henry Grant

2. Verses by A. H. Lovett ["Barkis"]

3. Verses by E. G. Murphy ["Dryblower"]

4. Verses by Dorothy McCrae

5. Verses by Seaforth Mackenzie


2. Verses by A. C. M‘Lay
Vol. VII. 3. Verses sent by E. McWhae
4. Verses by George Mather ["Mickey White"]
5. Two poems by J. K. McDougall
6. Sonnets by Dr [Patrick] Moloney, Melbourne
7. Verses by F. W. Ophel
8. Verses by William Reay sent by George Dart
9. Verses by Charles Oscar Palmer
10. Verses by Maud Peacock
11. Verses by D. M. Ross
12. Verses by A. Nugent Robinson

Vol. VIII. 1. A Volume of Australian Verse by George Gordon McCrae. 1888. [Comprises 38 poems not collected elsewhere.]

Vol. IX. 1. Verses by John Neilson [father of John Shaw Neilson]

Vol. X. 1. Verses by John Shaw Neilson [Comprises 32 poems of which only nine were printed in later volumes edited by Stephens. In "A Biographical Note" in a Memorial to John Shaw Neilson (Melbourne: Bread and Cheese Club, 1942), E. H. Croll wrote, on p. 10: "A curious setback had come in 1905, when he had collected his published and unpublished poems and submitted them to Stephens in order that some might be selected for an anthology. A.G.S. was ever a severe critic; he told Neilson bluntly that only three or four of them were worth preserving."]
2. Verses by Lola Ridge

NOTE: These volumes are now in the possession of the Mitchell Library. The Librarian's annotations show that they were sold by Stephens piecemeal during 1919 and 1920. They appear to be copies made by Stephens of poems submitted to him in 1905 by poets throughout Australia in response to an invitation to submit poems for consideration for inclusion in a projected Anthology of Aust-
ralian Poetry. This anthology was never printed; Stephens's later annotations (confirmed by research) state that in many cases the poems have never been collected elsewhere. Consequently these volumes are valuable historical re-
source materials.]

ii. Poems and Prose, 1892-1923: newspaper cuttings collected by A. G. 
Stephens (ML QA820/2)

[Stephens's file of "newspaper cuttings, No. 174" - mostly from Bulletin 
minor writers and cartoonists.]

iii. Verses by Various Bulletin Poets

Brereton, J. Le Gay - Verses, n.d. (ML A821/B)

Evans, G. E. - Verses, n.d. (ML A821/E)

Gilmore, M. J. - Verses, n. d. (ML A321/G)

Hebblethwaite, J. - Verses, n.d. (ML A821/H)

Jephcott, S. - Verses, n.d. (ML A821/J)

McCrae, G. G. - Verses, n.d. (ML A821/M)

Neilson, J. S. - Verses, 1893 (ML A821/N)

Souter, C. J. - Verses, n.d. (ML A821/S)

[Contributions by the listed writers to the Bulletin. Typescript and newspaper 
cuttings.]

c. Alphabetical list of 172 authors and artists of Australia and New Zealand 
with place and date of birth, and working pseudonyms [1923?] (ML A920/5)

[Much of the information here appears to have been abstracted from "Autobi-
ographies of Australian and New Zealand authors and artists" (q.v.). Typescript 
with MS corrections and additions.]
d. Autobiographies of Australian and New Zealand authors and artists, collected by A. G. Stephens, the Bookfellow [1901-1924]. (ML QA920/A)

[Typescript and MS. A note by Stephens's hand adds: "231 autobiographies / of Australian and / N.Z. authors / and artists. / + one added later." The "autobiographies" are questionnaire forms filled in by the writers in response to requests by Stephens for information he might use in 'placing' their work through his "Literary Agency". Much of the information appearing in Bulletin and Bookfellow critical notes was transcribed from these documents. He asked for the following particulars: "Name in full: Pen Names: Date of Birth: Race and Parentage: Marriage and Family: Present Address: Present Occupation: Published Works, with Publisher's Names and Date of Publication: Autobiography and Remarks:". This is an invaluable research resource; for example, I was able to use them to trace many hitherto unattributed 'fugitive' poems by Bernard O'Dowd who for reasons connected with his occupation used a number of pseudonyms. (See "The Uncollected Poems of Bernard O'Dowd", Southerly, XIV, ii (1953), 110-124.)]

e. Australzealand pen-names, 1890-1925 (ML 014.9/S)

[Typescript with MS corrections.]


[Typescript with MS corrections, Folio, 190 pp.]

g. Correspondence 1930-1931 re Commonwealth Literary Fund (ML MSS 1104/1, Item 5)

[Includes several drafts of news item entitled "The Literary Fund" by A. G. Gower Stephens. Typescript, 119 pp.]
I. PRIMARY

B. PUBLICATIONS*

1. LITERARY CRITICISM AND ESSAYS

   a. Published Books


   Evenings with Australian Authors [A syllabus of Lectures]. Sydney: the author, 1914


   Australian Writers: Chris Brennan. Sydney: Bookfellow, 1933


   b. Chapters, Articles and Essays in Published Books

   "Preface", in Barcroft Boake's Where the Dead Men Lie (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1897), pp. v-vii

   "Memoir", ibid., pp. 155-208

   "A Personal Note", in Roderick Quinn's The Hidden Tide (Sydney: Bulletin Newspaper Co., 1899), p. xxxiv (Reprinted in A Southern Garland, 1904)

* Contains selected manuscript items; see Preface to Bibliography, pp. 421-422.
"A Personal Note", in James Hebblethwaite's *A Rose of Regret* (Sydney: Bulletin Newspaper Co., 1900) p. xxxii (Reprinted in *A Southern Garland*, 1904)

"A Personal Note", in Louise Mack's *Dreams in Flower* (Sydney: Bulletin Newspaper Co., 1901), unpaginated [p. xlviii]


"A Personal Note", in Hubert Church's *The West Wind* (Sydney: Bulletin Newspaper Co., 1902), p. xlviii

"A Personal Note", in Bernard O'Dowd's *Dawnward?* (Sydney: Bulletin Newspaper Co., 1903), unpaginated [p. xlviii]

"A Personal Note" [on Roderic Quinn, James Hebblethwaite, Louise Mack, Hubert Church and Bernard O'Dowd], in *A Southern Garland* (Sydney: Bulletin Newspaper Co., 1904), pp. xxxiv, xxxii, [xlviii], xlviii, [xlviii] (Reprints of earlier *Bulletin* booklets in one volume.)

"Preface", in Barcroft Boake's *Where the Dead Men Lie and Other Poems* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1913), pp. v-vii

"Memoir", *ibid.*, pp. 169-217


"Preface", in J. S. Neilson's *Heart of Spring* (Sydney: Bookfellow, 1919), pp. v-vii

[Preface], in M. A. Robertson's *Land of Memory* (Sydney: Bookfellow, 1919), unpaginated


"Preface", in J. S. Neilson's *Ballads and Lyrical Poems* (Sydney: Bookfellow, 1923), pp. 7-8


"Literary Memories", *ibid.*, pp. 169-170


"Louis Stone's Jonah", *ibid.*, pp. 115-116

"Henry Kendall", *ibid.*, pp. 147-148

"A Word for Australians" [Extracts from "For Australians" (R.P., 9 December 1894) and "For Australia" (R.P., 8 December 1900)], in *The Australian Dream*, Ian Turner, editor (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1968), pp. 245-251


"Introduction to The Bulletin Story Book 1901", *ibid.*, pp. 106-110


"Chris: Brennan 1933" [Reprint of Monograph, published 1933, with two slight deletions], *ibid.*, pp. 131-156


"The Banjo's First Book", *ibid.*, p. 4

"Henry Lawson's First Book", *ibid.*, p. 5.

"Stephens on Lawson", *ibid.*, p. 5


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c. Articles, Essays and Reviews in Edited Columns and Journals

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[On American magazines: Harper's, Century, Scribner's, Lippincott and Atlantic Monthly], 3 January 1891, p. 21

[W. D. Howells on "the Kipling Boom"], 3 January 1891, p. 21

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[On Alice Werner], 21 February 1891, p. 21

[On English writers: L. Housman, Kipling and Browning], 21 February 1891, p. 21

[On Harper's and the Strand Magazine], 28 February 1891, p. 22

* Many items are untitled, or cryptically titled. In such cases a brief description of their content is indicated within square brackets.
[On Illustrated English Magazine, Longman's and The Fortnightly], 7 March 1891, p. 22

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ii. The Cairns Argus*

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[On Rudyard Kipling], 26 January 1892 (Supplement)

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[Review of The working Man's Paradise: An Australian Labour Novel, by John Miller (William Lane)], 29 April 1892

[On "Ouida"], 23 September 1892

iii. The Red Page (The Sydney Bulletin)**

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** Unless otherwise paginated Red Page articles appear on the inside front cover of the Bulletin, occasionally continued on the inside back cover.
"Pretty Proser" [Miscellaneous reviews], 13 and 20 October 1894

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[Contains MS of papers read to Gympie Literary Circle and articles written in The Apostle for the Gympie Secular Association.]
[Materials for Barcroft Boake's *Where the Dead Men Lie*, 1st Edition], 1896–1897 (ML C874)

[Contains personal reminiscence by Boake's father; draft of Stephens's "Introduction" and "Biographical Note"; business letters to Macleod and Angus and Robertson re *Bulletin* copyright; receipts and accounts from cemetery and monumental mason re plot and grave: "Marble panel lettered with imperishable lead letters."

[Materials for Barcroft Boake's *Where the Dead Men Lie*, 2nd Edition], 1913 (ML A1926)

[Contains additional copy for 2nd edition of Boake's book.]

**Dictionary of New Zealand and Australian Slang**: compiled by A. G. Stephens and S. E. O'Brien [1897?], S.P. (ML MSS 1104/3) Items 1 and 2

[Item 1: Carbon typescript with cuttings from *Bulletin* inserted.
Item 2: Carbon typescript drafts with MS additions.]

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[Contains notes prepared for literary agency on best known contemporary Australian writers.]

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[Scrap book.]


[Typescript with MS corrections. Folio, 190 pp.]

"Materials for publication of *The Lady Calphurnia Royal*, 1901–1930, S.P., Vol. 3 (ML A2299)

[Business transactions, account of dispute with joint author, Albert Dorrington, over publication and distributions of royalties.]

"Materials for publication of V. J. Daley's *Dawn and Dusk*, 1902–1906, S.P., Vol. 3 (ML A2299)

[Contains business transactions, drafts for commemorative and other articles and book on V.J.D.; autobiographical notes by V.J.D.; letters re Testimonial Fund for V.J.D.]

"Mary Gilmore's Verse", 1903, S.P., Vol. 4 (ML A2300)

[Galley proofs of "Red Page" article published 1 October 1903.]


[An untitled critical commentary dated 15 September 1905. Typescript.]
"Notes for Daley Book", in Victor Daley: Newspaper Cuttings, 1905 (ML Q049/14)
[Also in S.P., Vol. 3 (ML A2299)]
[Working notes made when reading through Daley's poems in preparation for
Victor Daley: A Biographical and Critical Notice, 1905.]

"Baffled Idealists", 1914[?], S.P. (ML MSS 1104/4) Item 2
[Incomplete typescript notes of public lecture delivered 28 April 1914.]

"Mary Gilmore", 1914, S.P., Vol. 4 (ML A2300)
[Carbon typescript, with MS corrections, of notes for a lecture recital.
4pp.]

"Re J. Archibald", 1918, S.P. (ML MSS 1104/1, p. 279b)
[A note dated 9 June 1918 to C(onstance) S(tephen).]

[Typescript carbon draft with MS corrections, for Kate Baker's first edition,
Melbourne, 1921]

"John Le Gay Brereton and the Trial for Breach of Copyright before Starke J.",
1922-1933, S.P., Vol. 1 (ML A2297)
[An account of the prosecution for plagiarism concerning the school text
Henry V: contains
1. Brereton's 4 pp. closely written MS letter of explanation.
2. Typescript of extracts from Starke J.'s judgment, with MS notes inter-
   polated by A.G.S.
3. Note by A.G.S. dated 10 February 1933 using information supplied by
   Blackies.]

"Introduction" to Harry Morant's Station Songs and Droving Ditties, Sydney,
1923, S.P., Vol. 10 (ML A2306)
[Unpublished typescript.]

"A. G. Stephens to Percival Serle [1926-1932]", Meanjin, XI, i (1952), 72-74
[Reprints eight letters on literary matters, from 3 February 1926 to 26
November 1932.]

"Synopses of lectures given to W.E.A. Australian Literature class, 1927",
S.P. (ML MSS 1104/4) Item 2
[The typescript contains:
1. Fixed forms in verse (quatrain, triolet, rondeau, villanelle, ballade,
   sonnet).


[Typescript with MS corrections. Circulated to editors with note "Stephens Box 71LG, G.P.O., Sydney. Please return if declining. Cut at discretion."]

"A. G. Stephens: A Distinguished Queenslander", 1929, in Correspondence 1929 with Camden Morrisby (ML DOC2487)

[Typescript with MS additions and corrections of biography written by Stephens and sent to Mr Morrisby to copy out "in his own neat script" and then submit to the editor of the Brisbane Daily Mail as "preliminary advertisement for lectures in Brisbane." Accepted and published on 30 November 1929.]

"Christina Stead", 1932, S.P. (ML MSS 1104/1, p. 307c)

[A note to Connie Robertson, dated 3 December 1932.]

"Materials for publication of Chris Brennan: A Monograph, 1933", S.P. (ML MSS 1104/3) Items 3a, b, d

[Galley proofs with MS corrections and carbon typescript lists of Brennan sales.]

"Lawson and Brereton; A Note by A. G. Stephens", 1933, S.P., Vol. 1 (ML A2297)

[Dated 23 February 1933, and written shortly after Brereton's death, this item comments on the literary argument between Brereton and Stephens in 1903 and includes the two poems involved: Lawson's "The Uncultured Rhymer to his Cultured Critics" and Brereton's "To Joe Swallow".]

"Biographies of Australian Writers; compiled by C[onnie] Robertson from material collected by A. G. Stephens", 1934[?], S.P. (ML MSS 1104/3) Item 4

[Carbon typescript copy.]


[Carbon typescript, drafts of article and broadcast with MS corrections.]

"Australian Poets", n.d., S.P. (ML MSS 1104/4), Items 3-6 and (ML MSS 1104/5), Items 1-6

[Carbon typescript with MS corrections. Contains articles on Boake, O'Dowd, Quinn, Harpur, Kendall and "Women Poets" q.v.]

"Australian Poets: Boake, O'Dowd, Quinn", n.d., S.P. (ML MSS 1104/4), Item 4

[Typescript with MS corrections.]
[Typescript draft of article with MS corrections.]

[Contains drafts of article for Bookfellow and typed out speech entitled "Dreamers and Singers" — a lecture on Kendall.]

[Typescript, with MS corrections. Poets discussed: Ada Cambridge, Mrs James Gleny Wilson, Louise Mack, Dorothea Mackellar, Mary Hannay Foott, Jessie Mackay.]

"Australian Prose Writers", n.d., S.P. (ML MSS 1104/5) Item 7
[Carbon typescript with MS corrections.]

[Biographical details, criticism and anthology of published and unpublished poems.]

[Draft of article on Boake, typescript with MS corrections.]

Various Notes and Articles on V. J. Daley, n.d., S.P., Vol. 3 (ML A2299)
[Comprises:
1. Notes for commemorative article.
2. Working notes for book on Daley by Stephens [as in Newspaper Cuttings (ML Q049/14).]
3. Autobiographical notes by Daley.
5. The same, amended.
Carbon typescript with MS corrections.]

[Carbon typescript with MS corrections, 23 pp.]

"Material for Biographies of Australian Writers", n.d., S.P. (ML MSS 1104/3) Item 5
[Includes copies of birth certificates, marriage certificates, funeral certificates for Brennan, Lawson and other leading contemporary writers.]

[Typescript articles with MS corrections.]
"J. B. O'Reilly", n.d., S.P., Vol. 6 (ML A2302)
[Typescript notes for article.]

[Typescript with MS corrections, unpublished.]

2. GENERAL PROSE

a. Published Books


*A Queenslander's Travel-Notes*. Sydney: Edwards, Dunlop and Co., 1894

*The Dean Case: A Special Number of "The Bulletin"*. Sydney: 1 November 1895. Illustrated.

*The Suffield Case: The Evidence at the Police Court and at the Trial, with A Plan of The Scene at the Alleged Outrage, and A Commentary on the Methods and Manoeuvres of Botany Bay Justice*. Sydney: The Bulletin Co., 1897

*J. C. Williamson's Life Story*. Sydney: The Bookfellow, 1907

1. Enlarged and altered to *J. C. Williamson's Life Story, Told in his Own Words*. Sydney: N.S.W. Bookstall Co., 1913

2. Again enlarged as *J. C. Williamson Memorial, with Valedictory Notice from Partners or Associates, Portraits and Addenda*. Sydney: The Bookfellow, 1913

*Woodcuts*, with an original woodcut by Lionel Lindsay; decorations by Roy Davies. Sydney: the author, 1923

b. Chapters, Articles and Essays in Published Books

"The N.S.W. Bookstall Books, and their Publisher, A. C. Rowlandson", in *A. C. Rowlandson: Pioneer Publisher of Australian Novels*. Sydney: John Sands, 1912, pp. 6-9. [Reprinted in *The Late Cecil Rowlandson* (1928).]

"Introduction", in *Book Plates*. Sydney: Edgar Bragg, 1923, unpaginated

"The New South Wales Bookstall Books, and their Publisher, A. C. Rowlandson", in The Late Alfred Cecil Rowlandson: Pioneer Publisher of Australian Books, with Foreword by R. Wynn. Sydney: John Sands, 1928, pp. 6–9

[Obituary tribute, reprinted from Sydney Morning Herald of 29 June 1922], ibid., pp. 25–26


[Another edition Melbourne University Press, 1945.]


[Reprinted from The Red Page, 24 May 1901.]


[Reprinted from A Queenslander's Travel Notes, 1894.]


[Reprinted from The Red Page, 1 December 1889.]


[Reprinted from The Red Page, 17 August 1901.]

c. Articles, Essays and Pars in Edited Columns and Journals

1. The Gympie Apostle *

"Precept and Practice", 5 May 1889

"Credat Judaeus Apella", 2 June 1889

"Truth is Mighty", 7 July 1889

* Unpaginated.
"What a Contrast", 6 October 1889

"A Convenient Religion", 3 November 1889

"Good Old Noah", 1 December 1889

"A Shifting Beacon", 2 February 1890

"We Should Smile", 2 March 1890

ii. The Brisbane Boomerang

[On Madame Blavatsky], 8 August 1891, p. 15

"On Board a British Slaver: The Mildura Stokers", 12 September 1891, p. 4

iii. The Cairns Argus *

"Australians, English and Americans Compared" [On Henry George], 9 October 1891 (Supplement)

"The Knight and The Lady" [On Sir Thomas McIlwraith], 27 October 1891

"Thirty-Three to Twenty-Eight" [On separation for Northern Queensland], 30 October 1891

"Ethics of the Unemployed", 13 November 1891

"Coloured Labour", 20 November 1891

"Australian Federation", 4 December 1891

"A Woman's Story / An Alleged Daughter of Queen Victoria", 4 December 1891 (Supplement)

"An Imperial Anti-Climax" [On Kaiser Wilhelm], 11 December 1891

[An Australian Christmas Message], 24 December 1891

"Unconditional Selection" [On the need to codify laws], 15 January 1892

"The Great Opportunist" [Sir Samuel Griffith], 16 February 1892

* Unpaginated.
"The Right to Work", 26 February 1892

"The Fetish Political", 1 March 1892

"The English Squadron", 11 March 1892

"A Stiff-necked Minister" [Sir Thomas McIlwraith], 22 March 1892

"The Science of Crime", 14 April 1892

"The Class Bias", 29 April 1892

[Review of Facts, Figures, and Arguments on the Black Labour Question by Wallace Nelson], 29 April 1892

"The Bellenden-Ker Commission" [On reservations for aborigines], 10 May 1892

"Looking Backwards" [Review of Pictures from the Social Democratic Future by Eugen Richter], 13 May 1892 (Supplement)

"Kanaka Labour", 23 May 1892

"Separation in 1892" [Review of pamphlet by William Coote], 23 May 1892

"The Worker" [Criticism of the Queensland labour journal], 23 May 1892

"The Defence Force", 27 May 1892

"The Property Vote" [On electoral reform for the British House of Commons], 31 May 1892

"The Townsville Conference" [On separation], 3 June 1892

"An Open Letter" [To the Queensland Railway Commissioner], 10 June 1892

"Commissioners' Courtesies" [To a deputation to the Queensland Railway Commissioners], 14 June 1892

"Public Instruction", 17 June 1892

"The New Elections Bill", 21 June 1892

[On Sir Henry Parkes], 24 June 1892

"Land Settlement", 1 July 1892

"The School of Arts", 12 July 1892

[The Courier Australien on the Cairns Argus's "brave éditeur"], 19 July 1892
"Proteus in Politics" [Sir Samuel Griffith], 22 July 1892

"Tête-à-tête with the Queen" [Imaginary conversation between Queen Victoria and Sir G. Dibbs], 22 July 1892

[A note on Dibbs and Gladstone], 26 July 1892

"Mines and Agriculture" [Commentary on reports by two government departments], 29 July 1892

"Provincial Partition", 2 August 1892

"A Study in Black and White" [George Black, T. E. White and socialism], 5 August 1892

"The Conciliation Bill", 19 August 1892

"Bread, Beer, and Boots", 23 August 1892

"Horrocks to Hang", 16 September 1892

"The Constitution Bill", 20 September 1892

[An account of the hanging of Horrocks], 27 September 1892

"The Silver Lining", 30 September 1892

iv. The Sydney Bulletin

"The Finding of Frank Gardiner", 22 July 1893, p. 5

"Wanted, An Australian Geary", 22 July 1893, p. 13

"The Fight in the House of Commons", 10 September 1893, p. 5

v. The Red Page (The Sydney Bulletin)

"Contemporary Science" [Review of the "Contemporary Science Series"], 29 September 1894

[Review of Apparitions and Thought Transference by F. Podmore], 1 December 1894

[Review of Strikes, Labour Questions, and Other Economic Difficulties by A. W. Johnston], 4 May 1895
[Review of *Outlines of Australian Physiography* by C. H. Barton], 27 July 1895

"A Real Chinaman" [Review of book by C. Holcombe], 28 August 1895

[On sex education for children and *Baby Buds* by E. Ethelmen], 5 October 1895

"Historical Death-Beds", 12 October 1895

[Review of *History of the Australasian Colonies* by E. Jenks], 26 October 1895

"Christmas Numbers", 7 December 1895

"*Degeneration*" [Review of Nordau's book], 21 December 1895

"Australia's Coming War" [Review of *The Yellow Wave* by K. Mackay], 4 January 1896

"Historical Records of N. S. Wales", 11 January 1896

"Malay Sketches" [Review of book by F. A. Swettenham], 8 February 1896

"Of Translation", 7 March 1896

"Buckle and His Critics" [Review of book by J. M. Robertson], 18 April 1896

"Chiefly About Books" [Criticisms of the Sydney Free Public Library], 15 August 1896

"A Book of the "Good Old Days"" [Review of *Australian Pioneers and Reminiscences* by N. Bartley], 12 September 1896

"Woman - Man's Parasite?", 17 October 1896

"The Man from Brummagem" [Review of *An Emigrant's Home Letters, by Henry Parkes*, with preface and notes by Annie T. Parkes], 31 October 1896

[On forgetting about Sir Henry Parkes], 28 November 1896

"Thiebault's Memoirs", 26 December 1896

[On *Life of Nelson* by Southey], 16 January 1897

[Review of *Posters in Miniature* by E. Penfield], 27 February 1897

[On the human brain], 20 March 1897

[On country and city - and the *N.S.W. Agricultural Gazette*], 27 March 1897
"Notes and Queries", 17 April 1897
[On the Bulletin office], 1 May 1897
"The Red Page of Notes and Queries", 22 May 1897
"The Red Page of Australasian Notes and Queries", 19 June 1897
[On the Loan Exhibition at Sydney Art Gallery], 26 June 1897
"The Red Page of Australasian Notes and Queries", 17 July 1897
[On the loss of valuable books by Sydney Public Library], 24 July 1897
[On the new edition of Lady Hamilton and Lord Nelson by J. C. Jeaffreson], 24 July 1897
[On "Modern Education" by Professor Peck], 31 July 1897
"The Red Page of Australasian Notes and Queries", 7 August 1897
"The Red Page of Australasian Notes and Queries", 4 September 1897
[Review of the Australian Medical Journal], 9 October 1897
"Notes" and "Queries", 16 October 1897
[On art: 'truth' and 'idealization'], 30 October 1897
[On Dr Elder's theories about 'mirror-writing'], 13 November 1897
[On child art: comments on Children's Ways by Professor Sully], 27 November 1897
"The Suffield Case", 11 December 1897
[Review of Ethnological Studies among the North-West-Central Queensland Aboriginals by W. E. Roth], 25 December 1897
[More "apropos Dr. Roth's books"], 8 January 1898
[Notes on art and artists], 29 January 1898
[On theological books], 19 March 1898
"The Basis of Art", 7 May 1898
[On The Studio], 18 June 1898
Commentary on The New Australian Schools Series of readers by William Brooks, 6 August 1898

On Tolstoy's theory of "What is Art?", 24 September 1898

"Parnell and His Power", 4 February 1899

On the seventh volume of the transactions of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, 1 April 1899

"Gladstone as Orator" [Review of Democracy and Liberty by Lecky], 8 April 1899

"The Real Australian" [Review of The Native Tribes of Central Australia by B. Spencer and F. J. Gillen], 15 April 1899

"Upstairs in the Brain", 22 April 1899

[Review of the new edition of Webster's International Dictionary], 24 May 1899

"A Cursory Commentary" [On Reminiscences by Justin McCarthy], 8 July 1899

"Master of His Fate" [On J. F. Nisbet], 22 July 1899

"A Man Who Fought for Humanity" [R. G. Ingersoll], 5 August 1899

[Review of The Diet of Australian School Children by Dr P. Muskett], 19 May 1899

"Art versus Artists", 2 September 1899

"The Pious Footballer" [The Rev. M. Mullineux, captain of the visiting English football team], 9 August 1899

"These Artists", 14 October 1899

[On anti-climax], 18 October 1899

"Eaglehawk and Crow" [Review of The Land of the Eaglehawk and Crow by J. Mathew], 2 December 1899

"For Australians", 9 December 1899

"Why the Boers Must Win", 30 December 1899

"The British at Omdurman", 30 December 1899

"An Historian's Judgment of the Transvaal War" [On Impressions of South Africa by James Brice], 10 January 1900

[On sleep, and Mme de Manacine's theories], 5 February 1900
"Bulls" [Review of *Book of Bulls* by G. R. Neilson], 3 March 1900
*"Artists in Australia; IV. = W. Lister Lister", 7 April 1900
"The Modern Woman" [Review of book by Laura Marholm], 21 April 1900
"When and Why the Boers Armed", 28 April 1900
"The Black Man and the War", 5 May 1900
"Sex", 16 June 1900
"From a Squatter's Note-Book" [Review of book by Thomas Major], 23 June 1900
"The Sin of Witchcraft" [On Melbourne University and Professor G. W. L. Marshall-Hall], 30 June 1900
"In the Name of the Prophet = Art!", 7 July 1900
"The Holy Medical Church", 21 July 1900
"An Australian in China" [G. E. Morrison], 28 July 1900
[On Norman Lindsay's illustrations for Boccaccio's *Decameron*], 18 August 1900
[Biographical note on Norman Lindsay, with self portrait], 25 August 1900
"N.S.W. Art Society", 8 September 1900
[Review of *The Australian Photographic Journal*], 15 September 1900
"The Education of 'A.G.T.'" [In art], 22 September 1900
"An Example of the Gross Waste of Public Money in N.S.Wales" [Re the supply of free books to municipal libraries by the Department of Public Instruction], 6 October 1900
"The Australian in the Tropics" [On Dr Ahearne's paper, printed in R.P. of 29 September 1900], 13 October 1900
"Sydney Art and Artists", 20 October 1900

* "Artists in Australia: I andII" (on Frank Mahoney, Tom Roberts) appeared in the *Bookfellow* on 25 March 1899, pp. 32-36 and 29 April 1899, pp. 28-33. No. III (on Sid. Long) appeared in R.P. of 24 June 1899. They were written by a contributor who used the pseudonym "Titian Redde".*
"The Wisdom of Nietzsche" [Quotations], 10 November 1900; 17 November 1900

"The Ethic of Nietzsche" [Quotations], 10 November 1900

"The Nineteenth Century" [Review of book by Havelock Ellis], 24 November 1900

"Artists in Australia: VI. Girolamo Nerli", 1 December 1900

"For Australia", 8 December 1900

"Literary Criticism of Art", 29 December 1900

"Bismarck's Love-Letters", 9 February 1901

"Austerile?" [Controversy: article by "Onlys" and various rejoinders], 16 February 1901; 2 March 1901 and 16 March 1901

"Modern Pen Drawings" [Review of special edition of The Studio], 23 February 1901

"Religious Lies and Others: By An Occasional Liar", 9 March 1901

"A Publisher's Recollections" [G. M. Smith], 23 March 1901

"Our 'Future'" [More responses to "Austerile?" article], 13 April 1901

"Painter's Disease" [On Tom Roberts's farewell dinner], 18 May 1901

"The Decay of Christian Dogma" [On a new edition of Encyclopaedia Biblica], 18 May 1901

"Being a Duke", 8 June 1901

[On royalty and Sydney's tasteless illuminations], 8 June 1901

[On royalty, tasteless architecture and the Sydney G.P.O.], 1 June 1901

[On human evolution], 22 June 1901

[On the Mitchell Library], 22 June 1901

"Dossier 14 - Scholars and Teachers" [On the need for educational reform in N.S.W.], 10 August 1901

[On British atrocities in South Africa], 17 August 1901

"A Roving Australian" [A. J. Fischer, artist], 24 August 1901

[On factions in N.S.W. art societies], 14 September 1901
[On foreign representations of the kangaroo], 14 September 1901

"A Miscarriage of History" [Review of The History of the Australian Colonies by Joseph Finney], 5 October 1901

"A New Religion" [Review of pamphlet by C. P. W. Longdill], 26 October 1901

"Art-and Other Things", 9 November 1901

"W. S. Gilbert Reminiscent", 16 November 1901

"Copyright", 30 November 1901

"In the Name of the Prophet - Gum!", 28 December 1901

"The Czar of Customs", 11 January 1902


[On British atrocities against children in South Africa], 18 January 1902

"Australia for Australians", 25 January 1902

[Review of Peace or War in South Africa by A. M. S. Methuen], 1 February 1902

"Love-Letters", 8 February 1902

[On newspaper howlers and the ignorance of jingoistic and parochial Australians], 25 February 1902

"Love & Letters", 8 March 1902

"England's Intellect and England's War", 3 May 1902

"Froissart in 1902" [Review of Froissart's Modern Chronicles by F. C. Gourd], 17 May 1902

"England's New Ally" [Japan], 25 May 1902

"Wanted - a Better 'Full Stop'.", 31 May 1902

"What is Truth?", 31 May 1902

"A Voice Crying in the Desert" [Herbert Spencer], 28 June 1902

"The Will and the Flesh" [Review of Limitless Man by Helen Wilmans], 16 August 1902
"Fighting Journalism", 16 August 1902

"The Lord and His Britain", 6 September 1902

[On Memento of the Coronation of King Edward VII by Sir John See, Victor Daley, Sam See, E. J. Brady et al], 6 September 1902

"A New Religion", 13 September 1902

"The Mugs and the Monomonites", 13 September 1902

"A Little Ray of Sunshine" [On The Protest], 11 October 1902

"The University of Sydney", 18 October 1902

[On Melbourne University], 30 October 1902

"The Problem of Education", 8 November 1902

"Trial by Newspaper", 15 November 1902

"Between Ourselves" [Review of book by Max O'Rell], 15 November 1902

"The Sham of the Century" [Review of Imperialism, a Study by J. A. Hobson], 22 November 1902

"Australian National Character", 29 November 1902

[On the coronation of Edward VII], 27 December 1902

[Review of The Geographical Development of Australia by E. Favenc], 27 December 1902

[On art education], 3 January 1903

[On Reminiscences by James Bonwick], 10 January 1903

[On Three Years War by C. R. De Wet], 24 January 1903

"The Brunt of the War" [Review of book by Emily Hobhouse], 7 February 1903

[Review of The Forest Flora of N.S.W., Part I by J. H. Maiden], 7 March 1903

[On Percy Lindsay's end-paper design for The Bulletin Story Book], 7 March 1903

[On the English], 14 March 1903

[Review of Love and the Soul Hunters by Mrs Craigie], 21 March 1903
[On the quality of local newspapers], 21 March 1903

"The Bible Society's Flea", 28 March 1903

"Melba and Musical Criticism", 28 March 1903

"Paints and Painters", 28 March 1903

"Chamberlain in Africa", 4 April 1903

"Faith—Healing", 4 April 1903

"Monarchs Dying!", 11 April 1903

"Te Cibum Laudamus", 18 April 1903

"A Methodist Mistake", 18 April 1903

"The Heart of Japan" [Review of book by C. L. Brownell], 2 May 1903

"The Poor Relation" [On North Queensland aborigines], 9 May 1903

"Medically Speaking", 30 May 1903

"Naval Tribute", 6 June 1903


"Let us Irrigate", 27 June 1903

"The New Nation" [Review of book by P. F. Rowland], 9 July 1903

"Whistler", 30 July 1903

[Review of third volume of Studies in the Psychology of Sex by Havelock Ellis], 13 August 1903

"The Art of Phil May", 10 September 1903

"Au Cafè" [sic] [An imaginary dialogue between Henry and William James], 8 October 1903

"The Soul of David Syme", 3 December 1903

"Before the Day" [On free selection and the Australian birth-rate with caveat by Archibald], 10 December 1903

"His Majesty" [A satirical item on the society journal His Majesty], 17 December 1903
[Review of exhibition by N.S.W. Photographic Society], 17 December 1903

"Journalists in London", 14 January 1904

"In the Early Days" [Review of My Adventures in The Australian Goldfields by W. Craig], 21 January 1904

"In Cloud-Cuckoo-Land" [On the Knibbs-Turner interim report on education in N.S.W.], 28 January 1904

[On Sydney University and Scotch professors], 25 February 1904

[Commentary on "transmigration"], 3 March 1904

[Review of A Study of British Genius by Havelock Ellis], 10 March 1904

"'Follow My Leader' (As a Game for Illustrators)”, 17 March 1904

[Review of Australasia: The Britains of the South by P. H. Gibbs], 31 March 1904

"Ghosts" [On missionary traders], 14 April 1904

[Review of Phil. May Folio], 12 May 1904

"A Doctor's Confessions" [Comment on The Confessions of a Physician by V. Veresaeff], 19 May 1904

"The Heroic Soldier" [Review of A Little Garrison Town by Lt. Bilse], 26 May 1904

"A Historical Mystery" [On History of the Australian Colonies by Joseph Finney], 26 May 1904

[On copyright], 2 June 1904

"Map of the Mulish Ignorance of N.S.W. Education Department", 2 June 1904

"The Task of the Historian" [Review of History of Civilization in England by H. T. Buckle], 16 June 1904

[Review of Confessions of a Journalist by Chris. Healey], 23 June 1904

[On the N.S.W. Department of Education's "egregious History"], 7 July 1904

[On Dr Roth's report as protector of aborigines in North Queensland], 14 July 1904
"Paderewski", 4 August 1904

[On Paderewski], 18 August 1904

[Review of The Northern Tribes of Central Australia by B. Spencer and F. J. Gillen], 25 August 1904

"Fighting with Lee" [Review of Reminiscences by General J. B. Gordon], 1 September 1904

[Notes on art and artists, including Norman Lindsay], 15 September 1904

"Voices Crying from the Desert" [On art education in N.S.W.], 6 October 1904

[On The Times and Encyclopaedia Britannica], 6 October 1904

"The Complete Letter-Writer: XC. - To a Minister of Instruction" [On art education], 13 October 1904

"A Monster in a Garden" [On the statue of Jack Robinson in Sydney Domain], 13 October 1904

"The Complete Letter-Writer: XCI" [On art education], 20 October 1904

"The Complete Letter-Writer: XCII" [On art education], 27 October 1904

[On the N.S.W. Art Society], 3 November 1904

[On Reminiscences by Judge Henry Hawker], 15 December 1904

"Currency" [On the proposal to found a national school of art], 22 December 1904

[On war correspondents], 22 December 1904

"The Bright Black" [Review of The Native Tribes of South-East Australia by A. W. Howitt], 19 January 1905

"Our Failure" [On federation], 16 February 1905

"A Russian View of Australia" [On the Novoe Vremya's commentary on Australia's maltreatment of its aborigines], 23 February 1905

"The Pope, and Kelly", 3 March 1905

"The Bad Westralian Nigger" [On maltreatment of the aborigines and Dr Roth's report], 9 March 1905

"Rubinstein on Women", 9 March 1905
"Women's Insides", 16 March 1905

"The Cloud" [On "red tape" and the post office], 23 March 1905

"In the Olden Time" [Review of Tom Petrie's Reminiscences of Early Queensland], 30 March 1905

"The Sorceress" [On witchcraft in the Middle Ages], 30 March 1905

"Australian and Briton", 6 April 1905

"Marriage Agencies" [On the fourth volume of Studies in the Psychology of Sex, by Havelock Ellis], 6 April 1905

"And Oh! Her Voice!!" [Havelock Ellis on hearing and sex], 20 April 1905

"Rossetti As Painter", 27 April 1905

"Marsh-Coops", 11 May 1905

"The Vision of Love" [Havelock Ellis on vision and sex], 11 May 1905

"The Gospel of Protection" [On Preferential Trade by B. Hoare], 18 May 1905

"In Northern Seas" [Review of book by Alfred Searcy], 8 June 1905

"The Wittiest Woman in the World" [Sophie Arnould], 15 June 1905
[On Sydney and Melbourne: "barbaric villages"], 22 June 1905

"The Complete Swimmer" [On Swimming by Ralph Thomas], 6 July 1905

"Two-Up!", 17 August 1905

"Three Points of View" [Australian and British attitudes to Japanese expansion], 24 August 1905

"Copyright", 31 August 1905

"The History of a Crime" [Note on contribution by Norman Lindsay], 31 August 1905

"In the Name of the Artist" [On the "bad state of affairs" in N.S.W. art], 7 September 1905

"Copyright" [On the Commonwealth Copyright Bill], 21 September 1905; 28 September 1905 and 5 October 1905.

"Ethics of Journalism", 12 October 1905
"The Canadian Model" [Of copyright laws], 19 October 1905
"The Australian Attitude" [To copyright], 19 October 1905
"Crumbs Swept Up" [On Senator Keating's Copyright Bill], 19 October 1905
[On the Senate debate on copyright], 26 October 1905
[On the N.S.W. Department of Education], 2 November 1905
"N.S.W. Public Library", 9 November 1905; 16 November 1905 and 23 November 1905
[On the Copyright Bill], 16 November 1905
"Copyright", 23 November 1905
[On E. W. O'Sullivan and the Mitchell Library], 7 December 1905
[Review of Drawings of Sir E. J. Poynter], 28 December 1905
[Review of The War in the Far East, 1904-5 by the Military Correspondent of The Times], 28 December 1905
"Sport and a Spectacle", 4 January 1906
[On Sydney University and Dr Maclaurin], 25 January 1906
[Review of The Singing of the Future by D. Ffrangcan-Davies], 25 January 1906
[Review of The Empire and the Century, essays published by John Murray], 25 January 1906
"The Foe" [On "The Yellow Peril"], 1 February 1906
"A Maker of History" [James Bonwick], 22 February 1906
"A Living Artist" [G. C. de Tourcey], 1 March 1906
[Review of Seven Angels of the Renaissance by Sir Wyke Bayliss], 1 March 1906
"Quips and Cranks" [On M. Grant Duff], 8 March 1906
[Charles Whibley on Pitt the Younger], 8 March 1906
"Philosophically Speaking", 15 March 1906
"Cracking a Stockwhip", 15 March 1906
"Leonardo and Others", 22 March 1906
"St. Judas Iscariot", 22 March 1906

"Serpents of Old Nile" [On the English translation of The Instruction of Ptah-Hotep], 29 March 1906

"Aboriginally Speaking" [Review of The Euahlayi Tribe by Mrs L. Parker], 29 March 1906

"Copyright", 5 April 1906

"'Light of the World' — And After?" [On Holman Hunt], 5 April 1906

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"Sydney Symphony Orchestra", 15 May 1914, pp. XVII-XVIII (Supplement)


"Harry Lauder", 15 June 1914, p. 132
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"Political Australia", 15 July 1914, p. 147

"The Native Tribes of the Northern Territory of Australia. By Baldwin Spencer" [Review], 15 July 1914, pp. 147-148


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"Year Book of New South Wales" [Review], 15 July 1914, p. 152

"A Journalist on Newspapers" [Mr Walter Williams], 15 July 1914, p. 156

"Elman and Bauer" [Music review], 15 July 1914, p. XXVI (Supplement)

"Art", 15 July 1914, p. XXVII (Supplement)

"The Month" [On World War I], 15 August 1914, pp. 171-172

"The Mutiny of the 'Bounty'. By Sir John Barrow" [Review], 15 August 1914, p. 174

"Ancestral Cooking" [Review of Pot Luck by May Byron], 15 August 1914, p. 176

"Local Effort" [Art review], 15 August 1914, p. 180


"Australian Historical Records. Edited by F. Watson" [Review], 15 September 1914, pp. 197-198

"The History and Theory of Vitalism. By Hans Driesch" [Review], 15 September 1914, p. 198

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"Language", 15 September 1914, p. 205
"Second-Hand Bookselling", 15 September 1914, p. 205

"The Month" [Articles on "Antwerp and After" and "The Commonwealth Program"], 15 October 1914, pp. 219–220

"Nietzsche. By Paul Carus" [Review], 15 October 1914, pp. 220–221

"Stunned Words", 15 October 1914, p. 227

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"At the Western Suburbs Philharmonic Concert", 15 October 1914, pp. XXXVII–XXXIX (Supplement)

"Suffering Art", 15 October 1914, pp. XXIX–XL (Supplement)

"The Month" [Article on "Fortune of War"], 15 November 1914, pp. 243–244

"Right and Wrong of the War: What the World Thinks", 15 November 1914, pp. 249–250

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"Painting and Music", 15 December 1914, p. XLVIII (Supplement)

"The German Spy System", 15 January 1915, p. 5

"Journalist and Julia" [Review of Stead, the Man by E. K. Harper], 15 January 1915, p. 5

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"The Prevention and Control of Monopolies by W. J. Brown" [Review], 15 January 1915, pp. 8, 10

"The Month" [Article on "Australia and the War"], 15 February 1915, pp. 27–28

"Treitschke and the Great War. By J. McCabe" [Review], 15 February 1915, p. 29

"Copyright in Titles", 15 February 1915, p. 32

"Good Irish Stories: By W. R. Le Fanu" [Review of Seventy Years of Irish Life], 15 February 1915, pp. 34–35

"Under the Gum-Tree" [Article on "New Zealand Politics" and critical comments on the N.S.W. Labour party], 15 February 1915, p. 36

"The Month" [Articles on "An Empire Trade Mark" and "Labour and the War"], 15 March 1915, pp. 51–53

"New Zealand Official Year-Book, 1914." [Review], 15 March 1915, p. 54

"The Fighting in France. Light on the Military Situation" [Review of The Battle of the Rivers by Edmund Dene], 15 March 1915, p. 59

"Getting Close to Cant", 15 March 1915, p. 60

"Exiled in Australia" [Review of Kultur Cartoons by W. Dyson], 15 March 1915, p. 61
"Moving Pictures: Prospects of Profit for Australasian Authors", 15 March 1915, pp. 68-69

"The Month" [Article on "Labour and the War"], 15 April 1915, pp. 75-77

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"The Gospel of Treitschke", 15 April 1915, p. 82

"Exhibition of Lithographs" [Criticism], 15 April 1915, p. 82

"Art and the Artisan", 15 April 1915, pp. 85-86

"Robert Parten's Recitals" [Criticism], 15 April 1915, pp. 86-87

"The Labour-Capitalist", 15 April 1915, p. 94


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"What the 'Naturalisation' of Germans is Worth", 15 May 1915, p. 107

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"The Month" [Article on the war and the Commonwealth Literary Fund], 16 July 1915, p. 147
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"When Blood is Their Argument. By F. M. Hueffer" [Review], 15 August 1915, pp. 172-174

"The Soul of Europe. By J. McCabe" [Review], 15 August 1915, p. 174

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"J'Accuse. By a German" [Review], 15 October 1915, pp. 197-198

"D'Annunzio for Freedom", 15 October 1915, p. 201

"Funeral of Polyhymnia" [Review of concert programme], 15 October 1915, pp. 207-208

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"Spring-cleaning the Studios" [Review of exhibition by Messrs Grace], 15 October 1915, pp. 209-210

"N.S.W. Art Society" [Review of exhibition], 15 October 1915, p. 210


"The Month" [Articles on "The War in Winter", "Bungle in the Balkans" and "Women Wanted West"], 15 December 1915, p. 219

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"M. Adolphe Detaille's [Imaginary] Letter to M. Henri Verbruggen" [Re the Conservatorium of Music], 15 December 1915, pp. II-III (Supplement)

"Mr. Edward Atkins's Piano Finger-Method", 15 December 1915, pp. III-IV (Supplement)

"A Sydney Beer-Garden Once Upon a Time", 15 December 1915, p. IV

"The Month" [Article on "Labour at War"], 15 February 1916, pp. 3-4

"The Chidley Case", 15 February 1916, pp. 4-5

"The Kangaroo Marines" [Review of book by R. W. Campbell], 15 February 1916, p. 8

"D. Low's Caricatures", 15 February 1916, p. 9

"Music a Medicine", 15 December 1919, p. 6

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"How They Did It" [Review of book so titled by Gerald O'Donovan], 15 April 1920, p. 99

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"Artists in Australia: Three Sydney Shows" [Review of shows by W. Lister Lister, Arthur Streeton and Blamire Young], 15 May 1920, p. 108
"Old English Notions", 15 May 1920, p. 112

"A Little Trouble with Archimedes" [Commentary on news item], 15 May 1920, p. 113

"Case of Mistaken Contemporary" [Anecdote], 15 May 1920, p. 113

"Australasian A B C", 15 June 1920, p. 121

"Overgrown Australian Cities", 15 June 1920, p. 121

"Arts and Crafts" [Comments on "N.S.W. Conservatorium", "Moisewitsch" and A. H. Fullwood], 15 June 1920, p. 123

"The Oldest Sydney Bookseller" [C. H. Mihell], 15 June 1920, p. 134

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"The Craft of Art: Our Art Exhibition", 15 July 1920, p. 141

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"Australian Slang" [On the word nark], 15 August 1920, p. 158

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"Public Opinion" [Political articles], 15 October 1920, p. 179

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"N.S.W. Society of Artists", 15 October 1920, p. 185

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"Margaret Catchpole", 15 December 1920, p. 227

"Public Opinion" [Political articles], 15 January 1921, p. 231

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"Forty Years on the Pacific" [Review of book by Frank Coffee], 15 September 1921, p. 138
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"A Book of the Violin" [Review of The Violin and its Technique by A. Rivarde], 30 November 1921, p. 178

"Wild Flowers of West Australia" [Review of book by E. H. Pellowe], 30 November 1921, p. 179

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[On the London Exhibition by "Australian Artists in Europe"], 27 October 1924, p. 6
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"Art in New South Wales" [On J. Salvana and Norman Lindsay], 29 November 1924, pp. 48-50

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"Broadcasting", 29 December 1924, p. 62

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"Book Plates", 31 January 1925, p. 77

"Australzealand Portrait Painting" [On the Archibald Prize], 31 January 1925, pp. 82-84

"European Art Exhibition, 1923", 31 January 1925, p. 86

[On a suggested beer-garden in Sydney], 28 February 1925, p. 91

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"Brush and Pencil" [Various notes], 28 February 1925, p. 95

[On the Mitchell Library], 31 March 1925, pp. 107-108

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"Lister Lister's Landscape Paintings", 31 March 1925, p. 109

"An English Soldier in Japan" [Review of The Military Side of Japanese Life by D. M. Kennedy], 31 March 1925, p. 111

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"The Book Trade", 31 March 1925, p. 117

x. "The Bookfellow" Feature (Sydney Stage and Society)

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"Who Owns the Drawings?", 19 January 1926, p. 19

"Ardvt. in Sydney", 19 January 1926, p. 19
"Lack of Subject Pictures", 19 January 1926, p. 19

"Feminine Humour", 19 January 1926, pp. 19-20

"Charitable Art", 19 January 1926, p. 20

"A Rise in Trade" [Second-hand bookselling], 17 February 1926, p. 18

"Maternal Instinct", 17 February 1926, p. 19

"Medicinal Literature" [On books by Charles Maclaurin], 17 February 1926, p. 19

"Selling Music", 17 February 1926, p. 19

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"Politically Speaking" [On W. M. Hughes], 17 March 1926, pp. 18-19

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"The Professional Fallacy" [The devotion to processes in art instead of to results], 17 March 1926, p. 22

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"Maggie Moore Stories", 17 April 1926, p. 15

[On W. Lister Lister's and Roy Le Maistre's exhibitions of paintings], 17 April 1926, p. 15

"Morals and Music", 17 May 1926, p. 18

"Trouble in Bookmen Corner", 17 May 1926, pp. 20-21

"Sydney Ardvt. Shows" [On Norman Lindsay, Blamire Young and Hans Heysen], 17 May 1926, pp. 21-22

"Music Hath Qualms", 17 May 1926, p. 22

"Australian Bookselling", 15 July 1926, pp. 18-19

""Hello!" Said the Duchess" [On Tom Roberts and the Commonwealth Commission to paint Kendall's portrait], 15 July 1926, p. 19

"The Australian Billabong" [On art criticism in Australia], 15 July 1926, p. 19
d. Articles and Essays Published Fugitively in Other Journals


"Oscar Ashe", The Home, December 1922, p. 34

"Austral-Zealand Portrait Painting", The Bystander, 23 February 1924, p. 19

"Sydney Harbour Bridge: Greatest Steel Arch in the World", The Bystander, 27 March 1924, pp. 7, 18

"Bookselling Prices - Trade Anecdotes", Sydney Morning Herald, 18 June 1924, p. 11

"Art in Country" [Tamworth], Sydney Morning Herald, 6 June 1925, p. 11

"Improvident Authors", The Australian Worker, 20 January 1926, p. 13

"Stationery and Books", Sydney Morning Herald, 6 September 1930, p. 19

e. Articles and Essays in Manuscript

"Account of Visit to J. F. Archibald on Saturday January 4th, 1907 at Callan Park Asylum for the Insane". J. R. Tyrrell's Collection of Papers of A. G. Stephens, (ML A3986)

[Typescript with MS corrections.]


[Typescript with MS corrections.]

"'The Literary Fund' by A. G. Gower Stephens". 1930-1931, S.P. (ML MSS 1104/1, Item 5)

[Typescript with MS corrections. A "News Item". 117 pp.]

"The Flower of Sydney". 1930[?], S.P. (ML MSS 1104/1, Item 1, p. 289)

[Typescript, syndicated press article dated 4 April 1930[?].]


[Typescript.]

Sydney Bulletin Writers, Manuscripts and Portraits. n.d., Alexander Turnbull Library (Q091)
3. INTERVIEWS

a. Published Book

**Interviews by A. G. Stephens.** Sydney: Bookfellow, 1921

[Contains: 1. Harry Lauder, "Singing in Character"
2. Daisy Kennedy, "Art of the Violin"
3. Leonard Barwick, "Art of the Piano"
4. Joseph Coyne, "Farce - Comedy Acting"
5. A. C. Rowlandson, "Publishing in Australia"
6. "The Nature Student."]

b. Fugitive Publications in Edited Journals and Periodicals

i. The Red Page (The Sydney Bulletin)

"By a Bush Bookseller", 9 March 1895

["I am a hawker"], 22 October 1898

[I guess (said the hawker) ...], 25 February 1899

["Yes, said the Hawker ..."], 27 October 1900

"Selling Books" ["C. Mack Jost says"], 27 April 1904

"Said the Photographer", 16 February 1905

"Said the 'Cellist" [Arnold Foldesy], 23 February 1905

"Said the Man from Jew'burg", 2 March 1905

"Said Frank M'Comas", 11 May 1905

"Said the Bookseller", 13 July 1905

"Said the Acrobats", 31 August 1905

"Said the Chemist", 2 November 1905

"Said the Nature-Student", 28 December 1905

"Said the Astrologer", 24 May 1906

"Said the Adsmith", 7 June 1906

"Said Dattilo Rubbo", 28 June 1906
ii. The Bookfellow, Series 2 and 3

"Said J. C. Williamson", 10 January 1907, p. 11; 17 January 1907, p. 8; 24 January 1907, p. 8; and 31 January 1907, pp. 14-17

[Amended and reprinted as "Intellectual Drama: An Interview with J. C. Williamson", The Argus, 18 December 1909.]

"Said the Circus-Man", 14 March 1907, pp. 11-12

"A 'Lightning' Sketch" ["Said Claude Le plastrier"], 11 April 1907, p. 13

"Said R. D. Adams. 'I Remember . . .'", 9 May 1907, p. 6

"Said Dr. Danysz: 'I Go . . . A Little Weary'", 16 May 1907, p. 5

"Said Senator Walker: A Banker's Reminiscences", 30 May 1907, p. 6; 6 June 1907, pp. 5-6

"How I Wrote My Australian Carol: By Herbert Edwards", 13 June 1907, p. 15

"Miss Beatrice Holloway", 20 June 1907, p. 11

"Said the First Mate", 27 June 1907, p. 7


"Sydney Shop Assistants: Said Sam Hordern", 15 August 1907, p. 102

"George Sutton Titheradge", 1 December 1911, pp. 17-18, 20

"Said the Managing Man", 1 February 1912, p. 66

"Book-Thieves" ["Said the second-hand bookseller"], 1 April 1912, p. 117

"Said the Circulating Librarian", 1 July 1912, p. 182

"The Literary Life ["Said the Man from Melbourne"]", 1 August 1912, pp. 216-217

"Said Madame Nordica", 15 September 1913, pp. XXVII-XXVIII (Supplement)

"The Modern Band: Its Aims, Methods and Components" ["Said John Philip Sousa"], 15 October 1913, pp. 240-241

"The Phillips-Fox Exhibitions: An Interview [with E. P. Fox]", 15 October 1913, p. XXX (Supplement)

"Mr. Alfred Hill [said]", 15 December 1913, p. XXXVII (Supplement)
"Parting Guests" [Interview with Clara Butt], 15 January 1914, p. III (Supplement)

"Mr. J. W. Coad (violinist)said"], 15 February 1914, p. V (Supplement)

"Lois Zucker in Italy", 15 May 1914, pp. XVIII-XX (Supplement)

"Leonard Borwick", 15 June 1914, pp. 130-131

"Cinquevalli: A Famous Juggler's Story", 15 August 1914, pp. 178-179

"Piano and Italy: Said Dora Hill", 15 November 1914, p. XLII (Supplement)

"Conducting a Choir" ["Said Conductor Thomas], 15 November 1914, pp. XLII-XLIII (Supplement)

"Wedgwood China: Interview with an Expert" [Mr Harry Barnard], 15 November 1914, p. XLIV (Supplement)

"1,500,000 Australian Books: N.S.W. Bookstall Co.'s Little List" ["Said the publisher" (A. C. Rowlandson)], 15 January 1915, p. 21


"The Craft of Leather-Working: By a Sydney Craftswoman" ["Said Mary Dallow"], 15 March 1915, p. 65

"The Art of Singing: An Interview" ["Said Roland Foster"], 15 April 1915, pp. 84-85

"The Art of the Fiddle: An Interview with Daisy Kennedy", 15 December 1919, pp. 12-13

"Little Interviews: Education in N. S. Wales" ["Said the Manager of Stott's Business College"], 15 July 1920, p. 140

"Little Interviews: The Duty on Pictures" ["Said Dattilo Rubbo"], 15 July 1920, p. 140

"Little Interviews: N.S.W. State Education" ["Said T. Stanley Summerhayes"], 15 August 1920, p. 161

"Australiana: Un Beau Mari et Des Bons Infants" [An interview with Calve], 15 February 1921, p. 19
c. Fugitive Publications in Other Journals and Periodicals

"Syd. Long, A.R.E.: An Interview with A. G. Stephens", *Art in Australia*, 1 December 1921, unpaginated

"Art of Singing" ["Said Madam Melba"], *Art in Australia*, 1 May 1922, pp. 8-11


d. Manuscripts


[Typescript with corrections and emendations by Mr Fisher.]


[Carbon typescript, cuttings and galley proofs.]

*Interview with A. W. Holman*. n.d. (ML AL62)

[Proof with MS corrections and emendations by Mr Holman.]

4. CREATIVE WRITING - VERSE

a. Published Books and Leaflets

*Oblation*. Illustrated by Norman Lindsay. Sydney: Websdale, Shoosmith, 1902

*The Pearl and the Octopus, and Other Exercises in Prose and Verse*. Melbourne: G. Robertson, 1911

[Prose and verse.]


[Verse leaflet.]

*Souvenir of France's Day*. Sydney: Author, 1917

[Verse leaflet.]


[Verse leaflet.]
Along the Castlereagh. Sydney: Websdale, Shoosmith, 1924
[Verse leaflet.]

Commemorative Ode for the Opening of Parliament at Canberra, Australia, May 9, 1927. Sydney: Edgar and Bragg, 1927
[Verse leaflet.]

The Green and the Grey and the Red. Sydney: Worker, 1928
[Verse leaflet.]

[Verse leaflet.]

Library of Parliament, N.S.W. Sydney: H. Murray, 1931
[Verse leaflet.]

b. Fugitive Publications in Edited and Other Journals, Periodicals and Newspapers

i. The Brisbane Boomerang

"King Alcohol", 7 March 1891, p. 22

"The Wooloongabba Tram", 9 May 1891, p. 10

"Vae Victimis", 16 May 1891, p. 10

"A Birthday Ode: To Chloe", 23 May 1891, p. 10

"True Blue", 30 May 1891, p. 10

"On the Block", 6 June 1891, p. 10

"Cooke of Toowoomba", 13 June 1891, p. 10

"A People's University", 20 June 1891, p. 10

"The Bush Poet" [Parody of Kendall's "The Last of His Tribe"], 11 July 1891, p. 15

"Waiting! By a Northerner", 12 December 1891, p. 5

"The People's Cry", 13 February 1892, p. 5
ii. The Cairns Argus (Supplement)

"The Good Woman", 24 December 1891

"Ladies' Whist", 24 December 1891

iii. The Sydney Bulletin

"Lobengula Dead", 24 February 1894, p. 8

"When My Hair Goes Up", 28 April 1894, p. 19

"In Absence", 14 July 1894, p. 24

"On a Clerical Clown", 18 August 1894, p. 19

"Dispersed: A Lay of the Herberton Hot Springs", 15 December 1894, p. 22

iv. The Red Page (The Sydney Bulletin)

"The Honeymoon Train", 25 July 1896

"Alice and I and Memory", 21 November 1896

"Como, N.S.W.", 28 November 1896

"The Four Cigars", 30 January 1897

"The Song of the Sword", 25 March 1899

"In Hospital", 25 March 1899

"Prayer in Time of War", 13 January 1900

"The Coffin-Ship", 24 February 1900

"No Place for Dreamers", 2 June 1900

"A Piccanniny", 3 August 1901

"On a Fort of Byrons", 3 August 1901

"Three Cliffs", 14 February 1903

"For a London Commercial" [Parody of G. B. Rossetti], 28 February 1903

"Pharaoh Australis!", 21 March 1903
"A Marching Song", 13 June 1903

"The Quest", 16 July 1903

"Norfolk Island", 23 July 1903

"A Sunrise Phantasy", 30 July 1903

"Epithalamium", 13 August 1903

""A Bush Story"" [Parody of Hume Nisbet], 10 September 1903

"Lady Sydney Vere de Vere", 17 September 1903

"Versions: 'When leaves fall . . .'" [Translation of poem by Olvedo Guerrini], 7 January 1904

"In Tranquillissimam Memoriam: J.F.", 21 January 1904

"Divagations", 18 February 1904

"Of all the prophets that are smart . . ."", 25 February 1904

"Paul Kruger", 28 July 1904

"In Memoriam [Phil May]: 5th August, 1903", 18 August 1904

"A song! A song! With a chorus strong", 15 September 1904

[Song for Wooloomooloo], 9 February 1905

"The Dying Poet to His Wife", 4 May 1905

[Parody of "Tit-willow" by W. S. Gilbert], 3 August 1905

"Spasms", 14 September 1905

"Re-echoes" [Parody of "The Sick Stockrider"], 5 October 1905

"Paid to Doodlekine, W. A.", 12 October 1905

"Salvation Emigration", 19 October 1905

"To Phyllida, Putting on Her Hat", 2 November 1905

"Nurse Jane's Diseases", 14 December 1905

"When Deakin Talks", 10 May 1905
v. "The Bookfellow" Column (The Sydney Sunday Sun)

"For Alice in Autumn", 4 September 1910, p. 9

[Parody of "Faces in the Street"], 26 March 1911, p. 11

"Sydney Ditties: 'Sydney's the City'
   'This City of Sydney'
   'Little Old Sydney is Good Enough for Me'", 28 May 1911, p. 11

vi. The Bookfellow, Series 3

"A Song for Sydney", 1 January 1912, p. 36

[Shakespeare's ghost reports the deliberations of the Shakespeare Memorial Committee in Sydney], 1 December 1912, p. 311

[A stanza for George Gordon McCrae], 1 June 1913, p. 145

"Your fame recalls those tossing ships of old" [Translation of "Les Conquérants"], 15 August 1913, p. 192

"Ballade of a Non-Aquatic Plant", 1 April 1914, p. XVI (Supplement)

"Simpatico, Simpatica", 15 June 1914, p. XXIV (Supplement)

"Sonnet for That Kind of 'Lady Novelist' and Beauty", 15 July 1914, p. 160

"This City of Sydney", 15 July 1914, p. XXVIII (Supplement)

"Australian National Anthem" [Words and music by A. G. Stephens], 15 August 1914, pp. XXX-XXXI (Supplement)

"The Women Left Behind: Written for Recitation", 15 September 1914, p. 193

"All Ends in Smoke", 15 October 1914, p. 228


"Sydney's The City", 15 January 1915, p. 23

"Sonnet of Hates", 15 July 1915, p. 166

"A Song for Sydney", 15 August 1915, p. 180

"The Drovers Toast", 15 January 1920, p. 54

"A Ballad of the Baby Show", 16 February 1920, p. 70
"The Fight on the Bunnerong Road", 15 June 1920, p. 132
"The Wild Colonial Girl" [Parody], 15 October 1920, p. 191
"Old Favourites: The New Programme", 15 January 1921, p. 242
"To a Concertina Grub", 10 February 1921, p. 10
"Sonnet of Hates", 15 March 1921, p. 28
"All Ends in Smoke", 15 March 1921, p. 36
"Mecum You Come", 15 March 1921, p. 37
"1914. Tricolour. 1918", 15 April 1921, p. 51
"The Fortune Teller", 15 April 1921, p. 59
"All the World's A Shop", 15 May 1920, p. 77
"Diggers All!", 15 June 1921, p. 90
"The Philosopher", 15 June 1921, p. 95
"Written on Sunday", 15 July 1921, p. 109
"At Watsons Bay" [Parody of "The Ancient Mariner"], 15 September 1921, p. 142

Four Sonnets: 1. "Morning Ecstasy"
2. "The Spirit"
3. "To the Moon"
4. "Love Unreturned", 15 September 1921, p. 143

"Ballad of Bernard Hall" [Parody of "Sam Hall"], 15 October 1921, p. 160

"Omar Shrubsole", 30 November 1921, p. 181

"Married", 28 February 1922, p. 26

"Vagabond", 28 February 1922, p. 26

"The Discovery of Australia", 15 June 1923, p. 81

"The Hat She Never Wore", 15 June 1923, p. 92

"J. C. Williamson: Died July 6, 1923", 15 July 1923, p. 104

"Two Notions of Salome", 27 October 1924, p. 10
["Boys and girls, come out to play"], 31 December 1924, p. 60

"On the Life-Mask of Keats", 31 January 1925, p. 81
vii. "The Bookfellow" Feature (Sydney *Stage and Society*)

"Good-bye, Sydney Town" [Words and music], 19 April 1926, pp. 16-17

"Discobolus Up to Date" [Parody of "A Psalm of Montreal" by S. Butler], 17 May 1926, p. 20

viii. The Broken Hill *Barrier Daily Truth*

"Airman", 8 October 1928, p. 8

"Spring Girls", 8 October 1928, p. 8

c. Manuscripts

*On the Life of Keats* by Benjamin Haydon. 1923 (ML D00529d)

[Typescript carbon with MS corrections dated 17 December 1923.]

*Song of Toowoomba*. 1932, S.P. (ML A2302)


*Australian Anthem*. 1933 (ML DOC769)

[Typescript carbon with MS corrections dated 5 March 1933.]

5. CREATIVE WRITING – PROSE STORIES AND SKETCHES

a. Published Books


Reprinted as *Our Lady of Darkness*.

2. English edition (London: Wright and Brown, 1930)

[Novel.]

*The Pearl and the Octopus, and Other Exercises in Prose and Verse*. Melbourne: G. Robertson, 1911

[Belle Lettres, Stories and Verse.]

*Bill's Ideas*. Illustrated by Harry Julius, Mick Paul and Hugh Maclean. Sydney: N.S.W. Bookstall Co., 1913

[Short Stories.]
b. Fugitive Publications in Edited and Other Journals, Periodicals and Newspapers

i. The Brisbane Boomerang

"Mary Ann", 18 July 1891, p. 18

"The Woman and the Tram", 17 October 1891, p. 16

ii. The Cairns Argus (Supplement)

"Mr and Mrs Spoopendyke: The Fifteen Puzzle", 4 December 1891

"Mr and Mrs Spoopendyke: Preparing to Enjoy Themselves", 11 December 1891

"Burglary Co., Limited: Shareholders' General Meeting" [Chairman's address to Thieves' Association], 11 December 1891

"Mr and Mrs Spoopendyke: The Medicine Chest", 18 December 1891

"Mr and Mrs Spoopendyke: A Slight Indisposition", 24 December 1891

"Mary Ann", 24 December 1891 (reprinted from the Boomerang of 18 July 1891)

"Mr and Mrs Spoopendyke: How They Missed the Masquerade", 15 January 1892

"Mr and Mrs Spoopendyke: A Simple Trick at Cards", 22 January 1892

"Mr and Mrs Spoopendyke: Hunting for a Receipt", 29 January 1892

"Mr and Mrs Spoopendyke: Some Difficulty About a Dog", 12 February 1892

"Mr and Mrs Spoopendyke: A Friendly Game of Draughts", 19 February 1892

"Mr and Mrs Spoopendyke: Temporarily Mislaid", 26 February 1892

"Mr and Mrs Spoopendyke: The Difficulties of a Witness", 4 March 1892

"Mr and Mrs Spoopendyke: In the Surf", 11 March 1892

"Mr and Mrs Spoopendyke: The Lost Shirt Stud", 25 March 1892

"Mr and Mrs Spoopendyke: Spoopendyke's Braces", 1 April 1892

"Mr and Mrs Spoopendyke: Straightening the Accounts", 8 April 1892

"Mr and Mrs Spoopendyke: Some Difficulty About the Calls", 14 April 1892
"Mr and Mrs Spoondyke: A Complicated Garment", 22 April 1892

"Mr and Mrs Spoondyke: The Difficulties of an Orator", 6 May 1892

"Mr and Mrs Spoondyke", 3 June 1892

"Mr and Mrs Spoondyke: Opening Sardines", 17 June 1892

"Mr. [sic] and Mrs. [sic] Spoondyke: Spoondyke's Baby", 24 June 1892

iii. The Sydney Bulletin

"A School-Teacher's Idyll: The Slapping of Saunders", 18 February 1893, p. 22

"School-Teacher's Idyll: II. The Shattered Ideal", 24 June 1893, p. 3

iv. The Red Page (The Sydney Bulletin)

"An Undertaker's Speech", 4 September 1899

"Other Irrelevancies and Grass-Tree George", 28 April 1900

"Poor Bibi!", 14 July 1900

"Extract from Minutes of Proceedings of The Society of Irresponsibles, Held in the Society's Attic at Sydney on an Indefinite Date", 2 February 1901

"Night in the Bush: Maoriland", 21 February 1903

"The Ghost" [Incorporating "The Death of a Hero" and "Bill's Idees"], 8 December 1904

"A Modern Lover" [Unfinished story, for competition], 29 December 1904

"Bill's Idees: On Drink", 5 January 1905

"Bill's Idees: On Poultry", 14 December 1905

"Dan's Spache on the Earthquake", 17 May 1905

"Bill's Idees: On Drink", 15 September 1906

v. The Bookfellow, Series 2 and 3

"A Tight Place" (reprinted from the Kalgoorlie Sun), 6 June 1907, pp. 9-11

"His Artistic Day", 1 February 1912, p. 67

"Morden's Manhood" [A parody of H. Bindloss], 1 May 1912, p. 132

"What Happened to Jones", 1 May 1912, p. 121

"The Changeling", 1 June 1912, pp. 164-165

"Bill's Ideas: Of Socialism in Our Time", 1 December 1912, pp. 319-321

"Moxham's Third Moment", 1 February 1913, pp. 48-49

"Henderson's Pigyoor", 1 March 1913, pp. 72-74

"Nelligan's Creature", 1 April 1913, pp. 97-98

"A Woman Never Knows", 15 October 1913, pp. 239-240

"The Foil", 15 February 1914, p. 47

"Life: I. The True Mate. II. A Fine Woman", 15 March 1914, pp. 70-71

"The Noble Art of Canvassing [by Major Tomkins (retired)]", 15 April 1914, pp. 93-94

"The Alleged Poet and Shelley", 15 July 1914, pp. 154-155

"Poets — Politics — Pigs: Story of a Successful Life", 15 November 1915, pp. XLVI-XLVIII (Supplement)

"Buttercups and Daisy", 15 June 1915, p. 141

"The Aunthill", 15 July 1914, pp. 162-164


"The Slapping of Saunders" (reprinted from the Bulletin, 18 February 1893), 15 April 1920, p. 102

"Music and Morals: The Teacher of Singing at the Gate", 15 April 1920, p. 107

"Bill's Ideas of Fighting with Hock Keyes", 15 August 1920, pp. 172-173
"School-Teacher Idylls: II. Deodatus Green" (reprinted from the Bulletin, 24 June 1893), 15 October 1920, p. 189

"The Strange Case of Conan Doyle: Another Adventure of Sherlock Holmes", 15 November 1920, pp. 204–205

"Scentless Women", 15 December 1920, pp. 219–221

"Bill's Idees of Real Life in Melbourne", 15 April 1921, pp. 56–57

"Marmaduke in Australia", 15 August 1921, pp. 128–131

"She Comes Every Wednesday", 15 September 1921, p. 151

"His Father's Hand", 15 October 1921, pp. 170–171

"Taking a Holiday", 15 November 1921, p. 181

"The Woman and the Tram", 30 January 1922, pp. 6–7

"The Alleged Poet and Shelley", 30 January 1922, pp. 8–9

"Mr. William B. Beattie: In One Immortal Hour", 15 July 1923, p. 85

"Never Mix", 15 August 1923, p. 115

"Poetry a la Mode", 28 February 1925, pp. 100–101

vi. "The Bookfellow" Feature (Sydney Stage and Society)

"Music Hath Charms", 17 May 1926, pp. 22–23

vii. Stories Published Fugitively in Other Journals

"The Pearl and the Octopus", Golden West, December 1909, pp. 63–64

"Real Life in Sydney: The Man Who Lost His Trousers", The Triad, 30 October 1914, pp. 41–42

c. Manuscripts

A Sydney Passion-Flower [with R. Allan], n.d. S.P. (ML MSS 1104/2, Items 6 and 7)

[Unpublished novel. Two typescript drafts, one corrected and amended in MS by Stephens.]
Four Sketches by A. G. Stephens, n.d. (ML A1926)


[Typescript.]

Three Tales, n.d. S.P. (ML MSS 1104/2, Item 4)


6. CREATIVE WRITING - DRAMA

a. Published Books

Capturing the Bushrangers: A short Play for schoolboys, in Three Scenes. Sydney: Websdale Shoosmith, 1924

The Australian Flower Masque. Sydney: Websdale Shoosmith, 1924

Very-Great-Grandmother. Sydney: Websdale Shoosmith, 1924

b. Fugitive Publications in Edited Journal

i. The Bookfellow, Series 3

"The Prize Australian Play: A Tragedy in 200 Facts and One Episode", 15 May 1923, pp. 74-75

"Very-Great Grandmother: A Play for Children", 27 October 1924, pp. 17-20

"The Lost Child: A Play for Children", 29 November 1924, pp. 44-46

c. Manuscripts


[Typescript.]

Sweet Shamrock. A Comedy in Four Acts. 1922. S.P. (ML MSS 1104/2, Items 1 and 2)

[Typescript, emended drafts including one entitled "Simplified for Theatrical Production". Published as a story in serial form in Australia and New Zealand, 1931.]
7. EDITED BOOKS

a. Published Books


Davis, A. H. ["Steele Rudd"] *On Our Selection.* Sydney: Bulletin Newspaper Co., 1899 (Reprinted 1904)

Goodge, William T. *Hits! Skits! and Jingles!* Sydney: Bulletin Newspaper Co., 1899 (Reprinted 1904)

Quinn, Roderic *The Hidden Tide.* Sydney: Bulletin Newspaper Co., 1899

Dorrington, Albert *Castro's Last Sacrament and Other Stories.* Sydney: Bulletin Newspaper Co., 1900

Hebblethwaite, James *A Rose of Regret.* Sydney: Bulletin Newspaper Co., 1900

Mack, Louise *Dreams in Flower.* Sydney: Bulletin Newspaper Co., 1901

Quinn, Roderic *The Circling Hearths.* Sydney: Bulletin Newspaper Co., 1901


Church, Hubert *The West Wind.* Sydney: Bulletin Newspaper Co., 1902


*Shamrock and Waratah, a Tribute to Victor J. Daley.* [Joint editor with R. Quinn, F. J. Bloomfield, Mrs Espinasse and D. H. Souter.] Sydney: W. Brooks, 1902


Davis, A. H. ["Steele Rudd"] *Our New Selection.* Sydney: Bulletin Newspaper Co., 1903
O’Dowd, Bernard *Dawnward?* Sydney: Bulletin Newspaper Co., 1903

Furphy, Joseph [*“Tom Collins”*] *Such is Life: Being Certain Extracts from the Life of Tom Collins.* Sydney: Bulletin Newspaper Co., 1903


*A Southern Garland.* Sydney: Bulletin Newspaper Co., 1904

[Reprints: Roderic Quinn’s *The Hidden Tide, The Circling Hearth,* James Hebblethwaite’s *A Rose of Regret,* Louise Mack’s *Dreams in Flower,* Hubert Church’s *The West Wind,* and Bernard O’Dowd’s *Dawnward?*]


Hebblethwaite, James *Meadow and Bush: A Book of Verses.* Sydney: Bookfellow, 1911

Souter, C. H. *Irish Lords and Other Verses.* Sydney: Bookfellow, 1912

Boake, Barcroft *Where the Dead Men Lie, and Other Poems.* Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1897 (Revised and enlarged edition, 1913)

Hookey, Mabel *The Edge of the Field.* Sydney: Bookfellow, 1913

Neilson, J. S. *Green Days and Cherries.* Sydney: 1914

[Unpublished, except for three copies bound from proofs of book set in type, but later cancelled.]

Bourke, J. P. [*“Bluebush”*] *Off the Bluebush: Verses for Australians West and East.* Sydney: Tyrrells, 1915


Neilson, J. S. *Old Granny Sullivan.* Sydney: Bookfellow, 1916

Gilmore, Mary *A Tale of Tiddley Winks.* Sydney: Bookfellow, 1917

Robertson, M. A. *Land of Memory.* Sydney: Bookfellow, 1919

Neilson, J. S. *Heart of Spring.* Sydney: Bookfellow, 1919

Gordon, A. L. *Poems of Adam Lindsay Gordon.* Sydney: Bookstall Co., 1918

[Reprinted 1921]

Crawford, Robert *The Leafy Bliss.* Sydney: Bookfellow, 1921

[Enlarged edition, 1924]
Neilson, J. S. **Ballad and Lyrical Poems**. Sydney: Bookfellow, 1923

Neilson, J. S. **New Poems**. Sydney: Bookfellow, 1927

b. Unpublished Manuscripts

**Poems 1856-1905, by various writers, collected by A. G. Stephens, 10 Volumes, 1906 [?]** (ML MSS 862)


Benham, Rosamond **Verses by Rosamond Benham**, 1905 (ML MSS 862, Vol. V)


[Unpublished typescript collection of 85 poems, 36 previously published and 9 later published in *Penetralia*, 1912. Stephens's MS annotation says "Publication declined by the Bulletin - Angus and Robertson".]

McCrae, G. G. **A Volume of Australian Verse** by George Gordon McCrae, 1888 (ML MSS 862, Vol. VIII)

[Contains "88 poems not collected elsewhere" according to Stephens.]

Neilson, John (Senior) **Verses by John Neilson**, 1905 (ML MSS 862, Vol. IX)


Neilson, J. S. **Verses by John Shaw Neilson**, 1905 (ML MSS 862, Vol. X)

[Unpublished typescript collection of 32 poems, 12 of which Stephens described as "never printed" in MS annotations made c. 1920.]

Hebblethwaite, James **The Christian's Rubaiyat**, 1910 [?] (ML QA821/H)

[Typescript, with MS corrections by author and amendments by Stephens, who gives date as "?1910".]
Wall, Arnold  Dream Fishing: An Extravaganza, 1911  (ML QA821/W)
[Typescript with block illustrations.]

Morant, Harry ["The Breaker"]  Station Songs and Draying Ditties, 1923  (A2306)
[Typescript, dated 1923 with pencilled note by A.G.S.: "Includes over 30 pieces not previously collected."]

II. SECONDARY *

1. SPECIFIC STUDIES OF A. G. STEPHENS

a. Published Books

Palmer, Vance  A. G. Stephens; His Life and Work.  Melbourne: Robertson and Mullens Ltd, 1941

Stephensen, P. R.  The Life and Works of A. G. Stephens ("The Bookfellow"). A Lecture Delivered to the Fellowship of Australian Writers.  Sydney: The author, 10 March 1940

b. Chapters or Sections in Published Books


* Arranged in alphabetical order by author's surname.

Lindsay, Norman "A.G.'s Saturday Night Symposium", in *Bohemians of the Bulletin*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1965, pp. 21-27

Lindsay, Norman "A. G. Stephens", in *ibid.*, pp. 29-39

McCrae, Hugh "My Friends and I [A. G. Stephens]", in *Story-Book Only*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1948, p. 73


[Originally an A.B.C. broadcast in a series entitled "Writers I Remember".]


[Stephens, A. G.] "A. G. Stephens (By Camden Morrisby)", in *Brisbane Daily Mail*, 29 November 1929

[Although attributed to Mr Morrisby this "biography" in fact was written by Stephens. See *Correspondence 1929 with Camden Morrisby* (ML DOC2487).]


Wynn, R. "A. G. Stephens", in *The Late Alfred Cecil Rowlandson*. Sydney: J. Sands, 1928, p. 33
c. Journals, Periodicals and Newspapers

Anon. [An account of the "Bookfellow's" auction of his library in Sydney on 4-5 June 1907, with details of prices paid for certain items.] The Native Companion (E. J. Brady, editor), II, i (1 August 1907), 52-53


[Review of The Pearl and the Octopus.]

Anon., editor [Reminiscences by Old Boys re Early Years of Toowoomba Grammar School], Toowoomba Grammar School Magazine and Old Boys Register (Jubilee Number), XXL, 2 (November 1926), 17 f.

Anon. [Review of Stephens's Chris Brennan], Sydney Morning Herald, 22 April 1933, p. 8

Anon. "Versifier and Critic" [A tribute to "versatile Stephens"], Barrier Daily Truth (Broken Hill), 8 September 1928, p. 8

Barnes, John "A. G. Stephens and the Critic's Task", Meanjin Quarterly, XXVII, iv (1968), 459-471

Brady, E. J. "A Critic Criticized", The Radical, 15 October 1904, p. 1


Burke, Alf "Some Recollections of the N.S.W. Bookstall and A. G. Stephens", Bibliowews, XIV, x (October 1961), 32-34


Dickson, A. and Wilmot F., editors [Note on "The Red Page Man", Norman Lindsay and Oblation], The Microbe, I, iv (March 1902), 15

Dickson, A. and Wilmot, F, editors "'Oblation': A. G. Stephens and Norman Lindsay", ibid., I, vi (May 1902), 10-13

Deakin, Alfred "Letter to the Editor", The Age, 21 March 1912

[Quoted in part in Bookfellow, 1 May 1912, p. 132.]

Dorrington, Albert "The Literary Game", Red Page, Bulletin, 4 June 1930
Gilmore, Mary "The Last of the Giants", Sydney Morning Herald, 17 April 1933, p. 8

[An obituary tribute.]

Hansen, Clement "A. G. Stephens", Southerly, VIII, i (1947), 9

Heselton, H. P. "Brereton, the Bulletin, and A. G. Stephens", Australian Literary Studies, I, i (1963), 16-31

"H.M.L." [Review of The Pearl and the Octopus], Sunday Sun, 7 May 1911, p. 17

Lee, S. E. "The Universities and Creative Writing", Drylight, 1960 (Sydney Teachers' College), pp. 33-36


Lee, S. E. "A. G. Stephens as Literary Editor", Southerly, XXIV, iii (1964), 161-173

Lindsay, Norman "A. G. Stephens: I. A.G.'s Mask", Southerly, VIII, iv (1947) 246-249

Lindsay, Norman "Lindsay on Stephens", Overland, 17 (Autumn 1960), p. 31

"L.S." (Louis Stone?) "Bill's Idees" [Review], Bookfellow, 1 April 1913, p. 89


McCrae, Hugh "A. G. Stephens: II. A Character Study", Southerly, VIII, iv (1947), 250-251


Moore, T. Inglis "A. G. Stephens as Critic", Prometheus, Magazine of the Canberra University College Students' Union (1956), pp. 37-40


Morrisby, Camden "A. G. Stephens (By Camden Morrisby), in Brisbane Daily Mail, 29 November 1929

[Although attributed to Mr Morrisby this 'biography' in fact was written by Stephens. See Correspondence 1929 with Camden Morrisby (ML DOC2487).]

Neilson, J. S. "Suggested Memorial" [Letter to the Editor re suggested memorial for A. G. Stephens, dated 2 July 1934], All About Books, August 1934, p. 163

Palmer, Nettie "The Bookfellow" [An obituary tribute to Stephens], All About Books, May 1933, p. 67

Palmer, Nettie "Some Australian Books for Christmas" [including a review of Stephens's Chris: Brennan], All About Books, December 1933, p. 203


"Q.E.D." [Review of The Pearl and the Octopus], The Leeuwin, I, x (August 1911) 300-301

Ritchie, C. E. "A. G. Stephens: To the Editor", All About Books, June 1934, p. 119


Stone, Leon "'Furnley Maurice' vs 'The Red Pagan'!", Bibliowews and Australian Notes and Queries, Second Series, IV, iii and iv (1970), 10-12

Stone, Walter "Brunton Stephens Writes to A. G. Stephens", Bibliowews, XIII, ii (February 1960), 4-6

[Reprints two letters from S.P.]

Stone, Walter "Beating the Salvage Bag: Lactantius, A. G. Stephens, the Lindsays" [editorial], Bibliowews and Australian Notes and Queries, Second Series, I, iv (October 1966), 3-6

Stone, Walter "A. G. Stephens and F. A. Malcolm", Bibliowews and Australian Notes and Queries, Second Series, VI, i and ii (1972), 7-8
d. Unpublished Manuscripts

Anon. "Paper Read Before the Australian Literary Society [on A.G.S.'s Life and Work], March 1911" S.P. (ML MSS As102)

Anon. "Bibliography: Alfred George (A.G.) Stephens", in The Papers of Constance Robertson, n.d. (ML MSS 1105/1, Item 2, pp. 279a, b)

Baker, Kate "Arthur George Stephens: A.G.S., The Bookfellow", in ibid., 1933 (pp. 221-259)

[Typescript account of the author's literary friendship with A.G.S.; long correspondence with A.G.S. (they never met) with a tribute to his work as critic.]

Esson, Louis "Ballade of the Book Fellow's", S.P. (ML A2307), c 1907, p. 561

Ewers, J. K. "The Critic in Australia (The Place of A. G. Stephens)", A.B.C. Broadcast Talk, Perth, 19 April 1936

[Typescript transcribed by Kate Baker in The Papers of Constance Robertson (ML MSS 1105/1, pp. 261-275). Survey of life and work with appeal to support memorial appeal.]

Lawson, Henry "The Australian Writer", in "Newspaper Cuttings - Vol. I - Henry Lawson" (ML MSS QA821/L 425.1)


Morrisby, Camden [A. G. Stephens: a genealogy], in The Papers of Constance Robertson (ML MSS 1105/1, Item 2, pp. 1-4), n.d.

Morrisby, Camden "A. G. Stephens", in ibid., pp. 61-69, n.d.

Robertson, Constance ["AGS as a Papa"], in The Papers of Constance Robertson (ML MSS 1105/1, Item 2, pp. 1-219), n.d.

[Mrs Robertson in a personal note to S. E. Lee (17 April 1960) said of this MS:
"I once wrote about 5000 words on AGS as a papa - it was for an AGS number of Southerly, I think - but decided against publication because unless it were in proportion in a full-length biography, it would not be fair."]

Rowbotham, David Browsing Through a Scrapbook: an item from A.G.S.'s hometown, in Hayes Collection, Fryer Library, Queensland, n.d. [c. 1950]

[MS of article sent to R. G. Howarth for publication in a projected "A. G. Stephens" number of Southerly (never issued). Describes an interview with Stephens's brother, and refers to a scrapbook kept by the critic's mother containing cuttings, letters, postcards, notebooks, photographs, etc.]
2. SPECIFIC STUDIES OF WRITERS CONNECTED WITH STEPHENS (AND CONTAINING
SPECIFIC REFERENCES TO HIM)

a. Published Books

Anderson, Hugh Bernard O'Dowd. An Annotated bibliography. Sydney: The
Wentworth Press, 1962

Anderson, Hugh Shaw Neilson: An Annotated Bibliography and Checklist. 1893-


Anderson, Hugh The Poet Militant: Bernard O'Dowd. Melbourne: Hill of Con-
tent Publishing Co., 1969


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