USE OF THESES

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AN ORIGINAL REACTION FROM ART

An Analysis of the Criticism of A.G. Stephens on
the Red Page of The Bulletin 1894-1906

Thesis submitted for the
degree of Master of Arts,
Australian National
University, 1972.

Carmel Jane Maguire
I declare that this thesis is my own composition and that I have acknowledged all the sources used in its compilation.

Carmel Maguire.
Most of the criticism written by A.G. Stephens is contained in his writings for *The Bulletin* between 1894 and 1906, and these writings appeared on what is usually referred to as "The Red Page". In fact this description is not quite accurate in that the front covers of the issues of *The Bulletin* for that period, on the verso of which "The Red Page" appeared, have faded to dull pink and it seems unlikely that they were ever nearer to red than bright pink at the time they were issued. Furthermore "The Red Page" was not so-called until 29 August 1896 although, under other titles, Stephens' work began appearing on the verso of the front cover of *The Bulletin* on 1 September 1894. In later years several variations of title were introduced, sometimes representing changes in the function of the page, at other times reflecting no more than the editor's whim. For the purposes of this study I have used the Red Page as a generic term to cover the whole period of Stephens' editorship, while attempting to indicate clearly the periods in which other titles were in use. The title, "The Red Page" was certainly the most enduring once Stephens began to use it in August 1896.
Problems of Access to the Red Page

In preparing this thesis I have been encouraged by the conviction that detailed work on his Red Page writings in *The Bulletin* had to precede any serious attempt to evaluate the contribution of A.G. Stephens to Australian literature. Almost as constantly I have been daunted by the amount of material to be sifted in surveying the Red Page, the range of topics covered and the physical barrier presented by its thin typefaces, ranging in size from small to minute, on poor-quality shiny paper, faded to dull pink and rapidly crumbling. Access to a particular item on any Red Page is made difficult by the amount of material with which it is surrounded and by Stephens' habit of using few sub-headings, presumably in order to conserve space. Access to the Red Page in general is made difficult by the fact that in the dark ages of Australian book-collecting and librarianship, "Remove covers" must have been a standard instruction to the binder. I have encountered several bound sets of *The Bulletin* from which the Red Page has disappeared. Again access to the Red Page is becoming increasingly difficult as the major Australian libraries become aware of the deteriorating physical condition of their copies and of the damage done to them by copying machines.
iii.

In view of all these problems of access I have deliberately quoted generously in my thesis and in citing items I have mentioned, wherever they apply, the headings of the articles or columns in which the items appear. I have also thought it important to place the passages I have quoted in their Red Page context, even at the risk of having the context distract both my readers and me from the point being made.

Sources

In some respects my study has been hampered by the lack of complete and reliable historical data not only on the life of A.G. Stephens but on the history of The Bulletin generally and particularly on the lives of the major figures on it between 1894 and 1906, J.F. Archibald, William Macleod and James Edmond. The events of Stephens' life are only sketchily revealed in published works and in the manuscripts to which I have had access. Of some significant events I have learnt in conversation and can cite no documentary evidence. The outstanding example is the murder of one of his brothers by another, which I mention in Note 4 of Chapter 4 on p. 124. I learnt of this happening in conversation with Mr W.R. Maidment of the University of Sydney and I understood it to have
occurred during Stephens' boyhood in Toowoomba, Queensland, but I am unable to cite either date or document.

**Style**

In general I have followed the conventions suggested by *The M.L.A. Style Sheet*, 2nd ed. (New York, Modern Language Association of America, 1970). In quotations I have tried to keep the use of [sic] to a minimum, adding it neither to obvious abbreviations like "Eng." for "English" nor to the rows of three or four periods without spacing which Stephens used to indicate either ellipses or long pauses. Where the ellipsis is mine I have used the three spaced periods recommended by *The M.L.A. Style Sheet*. In cases where I have already cited the imprint for a bibliographical item within a chapter I have not repeated the citation when it is mentioned again, unless the later reference is connected with Stephens' major discussion of it in a Red Page review. For the sake of brevity in footnotes I have sometimes used the abbreviation BRP followed by the date to indicate that the item is on the Red Page in a particular issue of *The Bulletin*. For readability I have shortened the possibly more correct but certainly more cumbersome "Stephens's" to "Stephens'". Stephens' own practice was punctiliously the reverse and he defended his
usage forcefully in argument with George Black on the Red Page for 5 February 1898.

It is quite impossible in typescript to match *The Bulletin*'s typographical sophistication of small and large capitals, occasional use of bold face and frequent use of italics. In quotations I have therefore used upper case letters for both small and large capitals and bold face type in the original, and I have used underlining to indicate italics. Because in some cases it has been quite impossible to convey an adequate impression of the Red Page by description and quotation I have included a selection of illustrations.

**Acknowledgements**

In the years I have worked on this study I have been assisted by many people, academics, librarians and laymen. In a very short list of them I must mention Associate Professor Tom Inglis Moore whose enthusiasm for Australian literature generally and conviction that Stephens especially had been neglected led to my interest in him; I must also thank Mrs Pauline Fanning of the National Library of Australia whose knowledge of Australian sources is invaluable to researchers. I have also received much assistance from the staff of the Mitchell Library and the
General Reference Library of the Library of New South Wales, and from Miss Marianne Ehrhardt and Mrs. Nancy Bonnin in the Fryer Library of the University of Queensland, as well as from the staff of the La Trobe Library in the State Library of Victoria.

In particular I should like to thank Professor Grahame Johnston of the Faculty of Military Studies, University of New South Wales, whose guidance helped me to shape the thesis, and Dr W.S. Ramson of the Australian National University who has exercised very helpful and encouraging supervision over the writing of it. I should also like to thank my father who has read many hundreds of pages of drafts patiently and critically.
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Chapter One

"An Independent Organism: an Empire in an Empire":
the Relationship of the Red Page to The Bulletin 1894-1906

Neither the population, the level of general education, nor the cultural milieu in Australia in the 1890s gave promise that the regular and serious discussion of literature could flourish in a weekly newspaper. The Bulletin was, to be sure, by the time Alfred George Stephens joined its staff in 1894 not only "The Bushman's Bible" but also widely read in Australian cities and towns where at least half of Australia's population of over three million people lived.¹ By mid-1886 The Bulletin enjoyed sales in all the colonies; more than 10,000 copies of each issue were sold in Melbourne. The total circulation was probably in the vicinity of 80,000 copies.²

¹ According to the 1891 Census, Australia's total population was 3,177,823, of whom almost exactly half lived in cities and towns with more than 5,000 inhabitants. See T.A. Coghlan, A Statistical Account of the Seven Colonies of Australasia (Sydney, Government Printer, 1892), pp. 333-353.

² For this information as for much other background information on the history of The Bulletin I am indebted to Miss Sylvia Lawson whose course of lectures on "The Early Sydney Bulletin" I attended between March and August 1971. The lectures were presented at Sydney University under the auspices of the Workers' Educational Association and the Sydney University Extension Board.
comments covered events all over the country, usually by quoting from metropolitan and provincial newspapers and many of these paragraphs together with verse, prose sketches and short stories were provided by its readers. It could therefore be argued that The Bulletin was a truly national newspaper, at least a decade before Australia was formally one nation.

Despite the extent of The Bulletin's audience and the involvement of many of them in its making, an acute contemporary observer was in no doubt at the cultural limitations of the milieu in which the paper operated. In 1892 Francis Adams recorded his impressions of Australia gathered in his years of residence between 1884 and 1890. In The Australians at the outset of his chapter on "'Culture' and 'Society'", Adams warned his readers that "To treat of 'Culture' and 'Society' in Australia, in the sense that one does of the greater European capitals, would be like treating of the snakes in Iceland".3

Before examining the particular characteristics of The Bulletin which led to its appeal to a wide and almost entirely unlettered audience, I should like to discuss briefly the important position of the newspaper in society

in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially in developing societies like the United States, Canada and Australia. The local newspaper was the most important forum for discussion of local issues within a community. And few towns were too small to boast at least a weekly when becoming a newspaper proprietor required no more than the will and capital or credit enough to buy a second-hand press and second-hand type. In Australia many of the early journalists began their careers in the printing trade as apprentices on newspapers. For example, this was the background shared by A.G. Stephens and J.F. Archibald, the founding editor of The Bulletin.4 If need existed the editors of small nineteenth century newspapers could often set type and operate presses themselves, as well as write copy.5 The nineteenth

4 Archibald was from 1871 to 1874 apprenticed as a compositor to William Fairfax and Henry Laurie (who later became Professor of Logic at the University of Melbourne) on the Warrnambool Standard. Stephens, whose father was part-owner of the Darling Downs Gazette in Toowoomba, Queensland, began at fifteen an apprenticeship to the printing trade on the Toowoomba Chronicle.

5 At least one example has survived. The Broadford Courier, a four-page sheet, is published in the town of Broadford on the Hume Highway forty miles from Melbourne, by Mr Eric H. McDonald, who writes the copy, sets the type and operates the press.
century provincial editors also tended to be itinerants and so they took new ideas and new attitudes into isolated communities. The newspapers were the channel through which almost all news of outside events was brought into the locality, and the editors also tended to become leaders in cultural activities. In this role they were often influential in bringing into their communities newspapers of wider than local interest. For example, A.G. Stephens recorded in The Gympie Miner⁶ for 5 April 1889, in reporting a meeting of the School of Arts Committee of which he was secretary, that "It was resolved that the Boomerang and Bulletin be added to the papers supplied to the reading room".

There can be no doubt that Australia supported a flourishing newspaper industry by the end of the 1880s, and Francis Adams found Australian newspapers not only powerful but gratifyingly independent in outlook and progressive in spirit. He wrote:

⁶ Stephens edited The Gympie Miner, a four-page sheet, published three times a week, on internal evidence probably from November 1888 until he joined The Boomerang in 1891. There is, thanks to the efforts of Mr Cecil Hadgraft, a microfilm copy of The Gympie Miner for 1881-1889 in the University of Queensland Library.
The power of the press is a very considerable fact everywhere; but in Australia, where 'Society' is impotent and wealth not yet fully organised, the newspaper is the best if not the greatest institution in the country.

Its legitimate profits have so far been large enough to keep it pure.

The principal proprietors in all but the big metropolitan dailies are journalists themselves.

Many have "made" their own papers, or even where the editor is merely an employee, he is left a free hand in the formulation of his "policy" to a degree unknown in England and in the central and eastern American States.

There are no Conservative newspapers in Australia in the English sense: the choice is between Liberalism and Radicalism.7

In his enthusiasm Adams seems to have overlooked the fact that a newspaper had to reflect, or at least not grossly offend the sensibilities of its readers, in order to sell enough copies to survive. At the level of the local newspaper, while forthright criticism of local political issues was countenanced, the editor had to tread

carefully on the reputations of citizens. When a
newspaper was aimed at a much larger population
representing diversity of taste, beliefs, attitudes,
education and culture - that is, once a newspaper became
a vehicle of mass communication - it was subject to the
levelling effect of its readers' tastes. It is well
understood today that in order to prosper newspapers,
along with other media of mass communication, have to aim
the bulk of their messages at the level of understanding

8 There was an amusing example in The Gympie Miner
for 28 November 1888 in which A.G. Stephens
reported: "The extract from Figaro re the 'Gympie
Skating Carnival', which appeared in our last
issue, was published in good faith, under the
impression that it was an unmalicious and rather
laughable skit on the reports which appeared in
the local papers. We are now informed that the
names of many ladies and gentlemen who were not
present were included, and that some of the most
respected townspeople are placed side by side
with others quite the reverse. We hasten to
assure them that, had we known the real character
of the report, we would never have reprinted it;
and we regret to have unintentionally pained
innocent and respectable people".
slightly below that of the average reader. 9 But the process was already beginning to be understood by the early twentieth century when an American sociologist identified the tendency of the newspaper to subsist mainly by the "enlargement of gossip". Examining the nature of the newspaper as a medium of mass communication, Charles H. Cooley wrote:

There is a better and a worse side to this enlargement of gossip. On the former we may reckon the fact that it promotes a widespread sociability and sense of community; we know that people all over the country are laughing at the same jokes or thrilling with the same mild excitement over the foot-ball game, and we absorb a conviction that they are good fellows much like ourselves. It also tends powerfully

9 "Whereas the individual communicator is dealing with individuals and able to watch the way his message is received and modify it if necessary, the organization is dealing only with averages and classes. It must pitch its reading level somewhere below the estimated average of its audience, in order not to cut off too many of the lower half of the audience. It must choose its content according to the best estimate it can make of what the broadest classes of receivers want and need. Whereas the individual communicator is free to experiment because he can instantly correct any mistake, the organization is loathe to experiment. When it finds an apparently successful formula, it keeps on that way." Wilbur Schramm, "How Communication Works" in his Process and Effects of Mass Communication (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1955), p.21.
through the fear of publicity, to enforce a popular, somewhat vulgar, but sound and human standard of morality. On the other hand it fosters superficiality and common-place in every sphere of thought and feeling, and is, of course, the antithesis of literature and of all high or fine spiritual achievement. It stands for diffusion as opposed to distinction. ¹⁰

These generalizations apply to The Bulletin in the period in which A.G. Stephens edited the Red Page, perhaps the more so because The Bulletin set out to be different from existing colonial newspapers. The first item in the first number on 31 January 1880 was entitled "A Matter of Public Concern" and it read:

To-day we send broadcast throughout the colonies the first number of The Bulletin. That it goes to an appreciative public we have no doubt. Excellence is the passport to success in colonial life, and The Bulletin bids to win. The aim of the proprietors is to establish a journal which cannot be beaten - excellent in the illustrations which embellish its pages and unsurpassed in the vigor, freshness, and geniality of its literary contributions. To this end the services of the best men of the realm of pen and pencil in the colony have been secured and, fair support conceded,

The Bulletin will assuredly become the very best and most interesting newspaper published in Australia. With our first issue begins a new departure in journalism. We give to the public what is dictated by the result of twenty years' experience on the colonial Press. The substance of the ordinary daily and weekly newspaper is gathered by the average reader in a few moments. The public eye rejects as uninteresting more than half of what is printed in the publications of the day. It is only the other half which will be found in The Bulletin.

According to an article entitled "The Firstborn of 'The Bulletin'" published on page 45 in the Jubilee Number of The Bulletin on 29 January 1930, John Haynes wrote the early part of this editorial and Archibald's contribution began with the sentence "With our first issue begins a new departure in journalism". The article in the Jubilee Number also pointed out that "Thereafter for many years the last two sentences were used for advertising purposes; in fact, they are sometimes still used".

The Bulletin therefore set out not to give a dispassionate account of the Australian scene but to emphasize the interesting half of the news. At first respectable elements in colonial society found scandalous what The Bulletin found interesting. Arthur Jose later referred to "The Bulletin as I first knew it, when
respectable newspaper shops in Melbourne refused to stock it". In its first two years, 1880 and 1881, The Bulletin's irreverence about established institutions, people and values earned it eviction from two Catholic printeries and two libel suits. Ironically the second of these was occasioned by an attempt to uphold the prevailing standards of decorum. In a leader published on 8 January 1881 W.H. Traill described an outing of young people to the Clontarf Picnic Ground on Sydney Harbour. In Traill's view "It was not an excursion - it was an orgy". Traill not only took a firm if somewhat hypocritical stand on sexual morals, he also broadened the base of The Bulletin's appeal by taking a serious interest in economic matters and in local and international politics. The greater irony in the "Clontarf Case" was that Traill's leader not only earned Archibald and his co-founder Haynes a term in Darlinghurst Gaol while supporters raised enough

11 A.W. Jose, The Romantic Nineties (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1933), p.53.

12 Stephens later recorded in a diary that "W.H. Traill lunched with me at Dawes Point this day week . . . Talk essentially dirty - dirty books - dirty lives - dirty pictures". A.G. Stephens, Diary, entry for 11 September 1896, p.27, in the Hayes Collection of the University of Queensland Library.
money to pay the court costs, but also earned Traill the editorship of the paper. This was the arrangement insisted upon by The Bulletin's nervous printer. When Traill left the paper in 1886 Archibald again took over as editor, and despite the new seriousness which Traill had brought to the paper's editorial matter Francis Adams was "in no doubt about to whom The Bulletin's success was due. He referred to Archibald as "the one journalist of genius in Australia" and described "his restless, discontented craving to reach to his own ideal of what his paper should be".  

Obviously too the broadening of The Bulletin's scope achieved by Traill's leaders and those of James Edmond who succeeded him had not affected the paper's essential irreverence. Edmond, in fact, proved to be a well-informed iconoclast, and in 1892 Adams also reported that "The Bulletin is the terror of the nascent classes of Australia who profess to ignore it, but its nicknames are part of the every-day speech of every one, and in the atmosphere created by its ceaseless ridicule, solemn impostures find it difficult to flourish".  

14 Francis Adams, The Australians, pp.54-55.
The spirit of *The Bulletin*’s writing was reinforced by its illustrations. Before Traill left the paper in April 1886 he had brought to it the artistic talents of Livingston Hopkins from the United States and Phil May from England. Vane Lindesay, writing of the time of May’s departure from *The Bulletin* in 1889, remarked that:

> Already at this stage two developments in Australian pictorial satire were evident. Firstly, irreverence was a dominant and definable characteristic of the *Bulletin* graphic humour. Royalty, the Church, the Salvation Army, with politicians and society matrons, the wowsers, and even the humble bush parson - in fact all and any pedlars of cant or humbug - were targets for the brisk wit of the Hopkins-May combination. Secondly, the joke caption had been pruned of its one-act play qualities to a more simplified and terse form. Many of Phil May’s jokes had a simple two-line caption, an innovation that was to persist in this field everywhere for fifty years into the present century.  

By the time Stephens joined *The Bulletin* in 1894 its appeal to the Australian public was firmly established. This appeal was based mainly on its lively impertinence and fearless refusal to refrain from comment on any issue or person wherein it despaired of cant, pomposity or corruption. A prime source of its impertinence was in the collections

of paragraphs which Archibald wrote or sub-edited and which were published under headings such as "Society", "Personal Items" and "Political Points". Archibald had also since the middle of the 1880s in his "Answers to Correspondents" given precise instructions to contributors on the qualities they were to cultivate in their essays into literature in order to earn publication in The Bulletin. His advice was often facetious, written as much with an eye to the entertainment of the general reader as for the enlightenment of aspiring writers. But the paper's sarcasm did not all emanate from Archibald. In the guise of polite reporting on the activities of Sydney society Ina Wildman as "Sappho Smith" wrote the urbane and satirical "Woman's Letter". Furthermore iconoclasm pervaded The Bulletin's editorials and the collection of sub-leaders published under the heading "Plain English". Many of these were the work of James Edmond whom Archibald and William Macleod, an artist who became the paper's business manager, had recruited to the staff in mid-1886 from the Rockhampton Bulletin. Edmond argued lucidly, at length, with erudition and humour. Sylvia Lawson considers that he was an excellent complement to Archibald, contributing irony and sequential argument as an addition
to Archibald's unsinkable mischief and emotional human values. 16

The promise of the first editorial that The Bulletin would be "unsurpassed in the vigor, freshness, and geniality of its literary contributions" proved extravagant. However, it is possible to trace a thread of literary interest dating from The Bulletin's second year. It consisted not so much in the literary content of the paper as in the fact that in its early years The Bulletin took literature, writers and writing seriously. In this context it is important to note that The Bulletin paid more attention to the death of Marcus Clarke than any other Australian newspaper. In Clarke's obituary published on pages 1 and 2 of The Bulletin for 13 August 1881 it was confidently asserted that "Australia has undoubtedly lost the brightest star in her literary firmament". The Bulletin also published a long appreciation of Kendall on 22 January 1881. At least from 1883 literary news and anecdote appeared from time to time in Archibald's collection of paragraphs headed "Personal Items". Critics have commented that the literary contributions to The Bulletin in its early years were

both few in number and poor in quality\textsuperscript{17} but this fact does not affect the proposition that \textit{The Bulletin} took literature seriously. It is also significant that during the 1880s \textit{The Bulletin}'s content of local verse and prose increased. Victor Daley's first contribution appeared in 1883, A.B. Paterson as "The Banjo" first appeared in 1886, and Henry Lawson's first story, "His Father's Mate", was published in the Christmas Number on 22 December 1888. \textit{The Bulletin} commissioned William Astley's "Tales of the Convict System" which appeared in it under his pseudonym "Price Warung" in 1888 and 1889. Astley's work had a non-literary purpose. It was intended as an antidote to the romanticizing of the convict past which was taking place in the euphoria of the colony's centenary celebrations. Edmond surely wrote for the paper as a whole when he suggested in his editorial entitled "The Day We Were Lagged" in \textit{The Bulletin} for 21 January 1886 that Eureka would have been a more fitting day to celebrate as the anniversary of Australia's birth than the day on which the first convicts landed.

The fact that the literary side of The Bulletin was slow to gather impetus reflected Archibald's essential pragmatism. He published what came to hand, rather shaping the results of his readers' motivation to contribute to the making of the newspaper than setting out to create an Australian literature. When Archibald invited contributions in "To Our Readers" as early as 1 January 1881, he told them that:

The Editor of The Bulletin will at all times be glad to receive information from correspondents living in town or country or the other colonies on subjects of general interest, more especially on matters connected with sport, the drama and fashion. Communications from ladies will be especially welcome.

Archibald also pointed out in this notice that there was "Great pressure on our space". Since, however, his own writing away from his pointed paragraphs was anything but compressed, his demand for conciseness from The Bulletin contributors was also pragmatic. Brevity became a necessity because so many of them availed themselves of the opportunities he offered for publication. From early in 1889 there was a real upsurge of fiction in The Bulletin and prose sketches, short stories and bush ballads were established features by the time Stephens joined the staff in 1894.
By the early 1890s The Bulletin had not only published a considerable amount of Australian writing but had also given to some of that writing the permanence and prestige of publication in book form. *A Golden Shanty: Australian Stories and Sketches in Prose and Verse* was published by The Bulletin in 1890, Price Warung's *Tales of the Convict System* in 1892, and Ernest Favenc's *The Last of Six: Tales of the Austral Tropics* in 1893. The Bulletin's literary criticism however was embryonic. Even a determined admirer, Adams, wrote in 1892:

> The Bulletin is the one really talented and original outcome of the Australian press, but its literary criticism is that of clever, sixth-form schoolboys and imperfectly-educated pressmen, and all it knows about culture is to perpetually spell it "culchaw".\(^\text{18}\)

A.G. Stephens adopted neither this spelling nor the attitude which underlay it. In "Correspondence" on the Red Page

for 7 February 1903 he reproved a contributor thus: "H.G. Strikes us as lop-sided. There's no sense in despising true culture: it's the abomination of culture falsely so-called that disgusts us." However, it seems unlikely that Archibald could have known of Stephens' regard for cultural values when he invited him to join The Bulletin at the end of 1893 or the beginning of 1894. Archibald was probably attracted by the liveliness of Stephens' general editorial work on The Boomerang\textsuperscript{19} and by the effective political satire of his pamphlet The Griffilwraith\textsuperscript{20} lampooning Sir Samuel Griffith and Premier McIlwraith of Queensland.

\textsuperscript{19} See Appendix 1.

From *The Boomerang* and from hearsay Archibald might have been aware of Stephens' literary interests. Such an awareness of a journalist with talents which could be put to good use on *The Bulletin* would have been in keeping with the aptitude Archibald demonstrated for choosing appropriate staff, an aptitude which was acknowledged in contemporary sources as well as in later reminiscence and comment. For example, when Francis Adams sought to account for *The Bulletin*’s achievements he wrote:

> What has been the reason of this astonishing success?

> Primarily the genius of Archibald, the man who made it, who knew not only how to give it the priceless contribution of his own Voltairian personality, but who knew also how to enlist in its behalf all the real literary and artistic talent available in the new land.  

Forty years later Arthur Jose reported that:

> ... Archibald was no solitary worker. I prefer to say that he obtained control of a concertina and by sheer blazing energy converted it into a full orchestra, utterly responsive to his conductorship ...  

> It was as conductor of that orchestra that I knew him. Always recruiting new players, he had an unerring judgment in allotting them their instruments and teaching them the nuances of each. He was the perfect sub-editor.  


Sylvia Lawson has written that:

Archibald's work in the next sixteen years [i.e. after Traill left The Bulletin in 1886] is not easy to define, for it merged seamlessly with that of others, particularly his two lieutenants, Edmond and A.G. Stephens... The achievements of Edmond and Stephens were their own, but also part of Archibald's; it was one aspect of his many-sided journalistic genius that he could see talent in obscure places.23

However and whenever Archibald discerned Stephens' literary interests and talents, he lost little time in giving him responsibility for a literary page in The Bulletin in 1894, even though Vance Palmer claims that "It was only after long argument that A.G. Stephens, one of his discoveries, persuaded him that a critical Red Page would be an advantage to the paper".24 There can be no question that Stephens was happy in his association with Archibald. It is interesting to note in the account which follows that Stephens grew restless as editor of the Red Page when Archibald ceded the editorship of The Bulletin to James Edmond in 1903 and that Stephens resigned from the paper when mental illness temporarily


24 Vance Palmer, National Portraits (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1940), p.131.
removed Archibald from *The Bulletin* scene in 1906. As a member of Archibald's orchestra Stephens felt under no sub-editorial constraints. In his monograph on Christopher Brennan, published shortly before Stephens died in 1933, he wrote about his inclusion in *The Bookfellow*\(^\text{25}\) and on the Red Page in 1899 of Brennan's writings on the French symbolists, especially Stéphane Mallarmé. Stephens boasted:

Mallarmé had an astonishing run in "Bookfellow" and "Bulletin". Brennan heaved and I pushed Brennan. The "Bulletin" editor looked askance; he frankly "never read the stuff". But the Red Page was an independent organism; an empire in an empire; I supplied or bought the copy, sent it straight to the compositors, and submitted the page in proof to the editor who had never seen the copy. Two editorial

---

cuts in 12 years. "Anyway, old man, I had the sense to leave you alone", commented Archibald long afterwards.26

No other evidence, external to or on the Red Page, suggests that Stephens was not telling the truth about Archibald's lack of interference in his editorship. However his claim that the Red Page was "an independent organism" cannot be accepted. Stephens was constrained in his writings both because they occurred within a popular newspaper with a large circulation, if not a mass circulation in today's terms, and because that newspaper was The Bulletin. He had also been predisposed to accept The Bulletin's influences by his own training as a journalist.

Stephens was already an experienced and accomplished journalist when he began work on The Bulletin in 1894. He was well aware, as he was to express it on the Red Page for 28 November 1896, that "The structure of successful journalism is built on the proverb that a living doll will sell ten times as many papers as a dead lion". He also appreciated that a weekly publication could permit neither the detailed discussion of topics nor contributions of the length possible in a monthly. In his "Magazine Rifle" column in The Boomerang for 17 January 1891 after discussing current issues of Harper's, Scribner's and The Century he went on to ask "Who will start an Australian magazine that shall take as undisputed a place against all monthly comers native and foreign as the Bulletin does against all weeklies?" On the staff of The Bulletin Stephens continued to be aware of the constraint on length of contributions and depth of discussion imposed on the contents of a weekly newspaper. On the Red Page on 18 October 1896 he admitted that had Poe's story "Fall of the House of Usher" been offered, The Bulletin would probably have rejected it on account of its length. "But", he asked, "what would you have? The Bulletin is The Bulletin - that is to say, it is not a magazine. It cannot do everything; it does what it can. (Wanted: an
Despite this early admission of The Bulletin's literary limitations in consequence of its being a newspaper, Stephens usually complained of restrictions of time, space and scope on the Red Page only when under attack from critical contributors. Several examples appear in the chapters which follow. Red Page readers did not always accept his excuses. In defending two articles he had written disparaging Robert Burns, Stephens entered on the Red Page for 19 February 1898 the special plea that "The object of the R.P. is to give rather stimulus than statement. For the attempt (even) at presentation of wholes, four curtained columns and one hurried newspaper-person don't suffice". He was well answered by George Black, journalist and radical politician, Scots by birth, who on the Red Page for 26 March 1898 added to several other objections the observation that "Nor can the writer of the Red Page evade reproach by his specious plea that the meagre space afforded by eight columns necessitated a recourse to generalities which led to misconceptions as to his true meaning. The writer who cannot make himself understood in 148 inches of solid matter has mistaken his vocation".

27 See, for example, pages 152, 167-168 and 176-177 below.
Working to a weekly deadline, Stephens was no doubt pressed for time in the preparation of copy, and pressed in the allocation of space to competing authors and topics. Yet there was justice in Black's suggestion that Stephens enjoyed on the Red Page ample space in which to make clear his meaning and to give a balanced view of subjects under discussion. Indeed when Stephens achieved editorship of a magazine in The Bookfellow in 1899 his views tended to be more idiosyncratic, his whimsies less disciplined and his ideas more fragmented than ever they were on the Red Page. However, Stephens had not mistaken his vocation. He was an excellent journalist, as incapable of writing a dull sentence as of avoiding controversy when it made good copy. Some of what he wrote of Archibald's editorship was true of his own:

Archibald, like a Governor's secretary who decided the entrée of nobs and snobs long ago, said "Let 'em all come!" His zeal for everything interesting in any aspect made The Bulletin a paper of delightful surprises. Its editorial whereabouts was [sic] not always clear; but it never lived in a rut. Vigorous or venomous assailants could assail Bulletin personalities and policies as they chose if they were but lively and entertaining.28

What was not true of Stephens in that passage was that he always made his editorial position very clear. When he shifted his position temporarily he was careful to point out that he was doing so. For example on the Red Page for 24 January 1903 he added to forthright condemnation of John Liddell Kelly's verses the following remark, "This by way of putting things where they belong in the interests of those Standards Which Must Be Kept Up". He then offered the further explanation that "Often one has to hurl stones at vocal dogs; but we would not have one dog dumb. Let 'em all sing! - or if they cannot sing, let them howl: Australia has ample Space and Silence for a retreat in extremity". Yet Stephens' "editorial whereabouts" could not allow this expression of Archibald-like sentiment to stand. He felt constrained to add the further explanation that "People are not all fitted to apprehend the high delights of Poesy; and there is a very large class of readers who will find excellent inspiration, and an air as rare as they can breathe, while they ramble with K. about Parnassus' lower slopes". Stephens could hardly have made it plainer that he was not prepared to

have either Archibald's hospitality to contributors or the tastes of The Bulletin's readers obscure his literary standards.

In many matters, however, The Bulletin's enforcement of popular and somewhat vulgar standards suited Stephens' temperament very well. Iconoclasm pervaded A Queenslander's Travel Notes, Stephens' account of the nine months of 1893 which he spent travelling in America and Europe written before he joined The Bulletin. Like Archibald, Stephens was largely self-educated and he mistrusted many of those who having been formally educated themselves spent their lives in formally educating others. Again, in the period of Stephens' editorship of the Red Page, The Bulletin owed allegiance to no political party and used its independence to comment freely on people and events. In this atmosphere Stephens developed the tendency which John Shaw Neilson was later to characterize as to "hit hard when folks might think he should have been a little more merciful". The Bulletin was particularly severe on

30 A.G. Stephens, A Queenslander's Travel Notes (Sydney, Edwards, Dunlop, 1894).

politicians, academics and all pretentious public figures; so was Stephens. And his treatment of aspiring authors was sometimes similar to The Bulletin's general editorial treatment of aspirants to public office. Stephens also gave needless offence to public men because he could not forbear from comment on current non-literary issues. Dr Maclaurin, Chancellor of Sydney University, for example, could hardly have relished finding himself described by Stephens on the Red Page for 25 January 1906 as a "conscientious pig" because the University had purchased a block of land in Martin Place. For The Bulletin's circulation the fact that its literary editor shared the vituperative vigour of its leader writers might have been an advantage. For Stephens, the literary journalist, intemperance in expression earned separation and hostility from sources from which he might have gained literary enrichment and over which he might otherwise have exercised influence. Stephens, however, remained content to accept assurances like the following that he had lost nothing by the hostility he had aroused in the universities. Louis Esson wrote to him from Melbourne in 1902 that "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.\textsuperscript{32}

His position as literary editor on a successful newspaper probably also influenced Stephens to exaggerate the importance of the personality of the literary critic.\textsuperscript{33} It is certainly obvious that a newspaper columnist working with a sympathetic editor must become prone to egocentricity. His reign over his territory is absolute and few of his readers are qualified to dispute his judgments. When they do, he can reserve for himself the final editorial word. Stephens never hesitated to have the last word in controversy and it is revealing to note in Chapter 5 of this study that Stephens could not argue urbanely with Christopher Brennan and John Le Gay Brereton who were among the few Red Page readers who enjoyed knowledge of literature at least equal to his own. Obviously some sound and readable literary criticism has appeared in newspapers while some that is unsound and unreadable has appeared in scholarly journals. Nevertheless


\textsuperscript{33} See pages 134-135 and 409 below.
the conditions of discipline necessary for scholarship can only prevail when the critic's work is subjected constantly to the judgment of his peers in a milieu in which he enjoys no special editorial privileges.

In contrast to the rest of The Bulletin's editorial writing, the identity of the editor of the Red Page was not long cloaked in anonymity. Even before Stephens began in 1899 to sign the page as "The Bookfellow" or with his initials, his personality was stamped upon it, and his identity was widely known. Henry Lawson wrote an angry letter to his publisher George Robertson after Stephens had reviewed While The Billy Boils on the Red Page. Lawson's letter indicates not only that the identity of the reviewer was no secret but that Stephens as critic concentrated on the ideal, ignoring practical details like The Bulletin's copyright negotiations even when he might have been party to prior discussions about them in the course of his general work on the paper. Lawson wrote in part:

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24 Henry Lawson, While The Billy Boils (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1896).
Don't take any notice of Stephen's [sic] complaints in Bulletin review. It was I who suggested to him the order of selection which he now suggests as his own. 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. I notice with astonishment that I am accused of imitating Bulletin humourists! Stephens has only been there two years. I have written for them for ten. Am writing to Bulletin and other papers about this.35

While some allowance must be made for Lawson's extreme sensitivity to adverse criticism, Stephens' attempt to separate Red Page criticism from The Bulletin's business and professional dealings with an author was hardly a success. Stephens' attempt to stand aloof as critic, which Lawson saw as hypocrisy, also served to alienate other writers. The Bulletin published original works within its covers and in book form. Stephens' double assignment as editor of the Red Page and of The Bulletin books meant that he often had to serve at once as advocate and judge of the same works. The analysis of the Red Page which follows indicates that he often accomplished this

difficult task with considerable skill. However, it is another factor which makes untenable his claim that the Red Page was "an independent organism".

Employment on The Bulletin involved Stephens with artists as well as writers, and there can be little doubt that The Bulletin's interest in art stimulated Stephens' interest. I have not discussed his Red Page art criticism in this study because I do not consider his writings on the subject a significant part of his critical achievement. The subjectivity of his judgments and his lack of technical competence were well indicated in his first serious attempt at art criticism in the Red Page entitled "Chiefly About Books" on 15 August 1896. In a review of a collection of cartoons by "Cynicus" 36 he wrote:

... a picture, to be Art even in the painter's limited sense, must make the same appeal as Literature or Music. It must move you, grip you, thrill you - either intellectually or emotionally. (The emotional appeal is the lower of the two, and the intellectual appeal at its best includes the emotional appeal.)...

The claque and chatter of artists - there never were such formalists - has surrounded the standards of their art with a mist through which it is hardly possible to see clearly. But surely the criterion of a perfect picture should be that of a perfect poem - it should unite highest conception with highest expression; the central idea should be paramount over all the intricacies of detail, which yet should, to the least of them, be necessary to its development and fulfilment; and the final effect upon the mind should be an inspiration, an exaltation, a nerving to strain on and up for the realisation of the ideal thus artistically portrayed.

Literary analogies pervaded his Red Page writing on art, much of which deserved Norman Lindsay's later censure of Stephens as art critic. Lindsay claimed:

Some people are born tone deaf, but A.G. was born form blind. He was incapable of understanding the constructive principles of pictorial art, or its technical problems, and suffered from the fatuous illusion that a drawing could be sub-edited like a piece of writing.37

It must be remembered that Stephens knew enough about the art of typography to have been capable of designing competently The Bulletin books he edited, that several of them were illustrated by artists Stephens chose, and that

37 Norman Lindsay, Bohemians of The Bulletin (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1965), p.32.
they included art books. Therefore the effect on Stephens of The Bulletin's involvement in pictorial art was not without benefit. Yet it is fair to conclude that the main influence of his own art criticism was the alienation of Norman Lindsay and the artists and writers whom Lindsay influenced.

There can be no doubt that Stephens' position on The Bulletin, as well as his own journalistic sense, made it impossible for him to confine himself to literary topics on the Red Page. While not aligned with any political party, The Bulletin took the liveliest interest in every aspect of the operation of the political process. The Bulletin office must have been alive with discussion on the topics which filled the paper, for example, Australia's relationships with Great Britain and other countries, conflicts ranging from the Boer War to altercations in and among Australian legislatures and the clash of interests between city and country. Conflict makes good newspaper copy and none was overlooked by The Bulletin, even at the level of the two Sydney societies of artists vying for

government subsidy. Like The Bulletin Stephens also interested himself in Australian language and bush lore and for a time in 1897 the discussion of "Notes and Queries" mainly on these topics seemed likely to obscure the literary function of the Red Page.

In one sense however the Red Page was an isolated organism within The Bulletin because Stephens never attained any influence in its management or on its overall policy. Likewise he had no share in the paper's financial prosperity. It is interesting to note that though he contributed an article to its Jubilee Number in 1930, none of the other articles made any mention of him. His contribution of maturity to The Bulletin's literary judgments was overlooked. Stephens was more generous in acknowledging the debt he owed The Bulletin. He wrote in a note to Percival Serle in 1925:

39 See Note 90 on page 395 below.
40 See pages 121-122 below.
- tell you how I learned taste - by loving literature from boyhood & then by handling up to 100 tales & poems daily with Bulletin Co. a dozen years - most of the time I picked most of the verse & much of the prose & had contacts with Daley, [word illegible], and other adepts to brighten judgment - perseverance does it.42

Some of Stephens' friends rejoiced that he did not persevere in The Bulletin's employment after 1906. Jessie Mackay wrote to him from New Zealand in 1907 that "The 'Bookfellow'43 is exactly what I always wished, and doubtless many another, a Red Page without the unspeakable 'Bulletin' tacked on. I am so glad that Australasian literature is really here and going to get the greasy thumb-mark of the 'Bulletin' off it at last".44 However, it was extremely unlikely that Stephens shared her view of the rest of The Bulletin, whatever his dissatisfactions.


43 Jessie Mackay was referring to The Bookfellow [2nd series] v.1 no.1 - v.2 no.7 (3 January 1907 - 15 August 1907), which from v.1 no. 18 until publication was suspended with v.2 no.7 was called Australia.

with its management once Archibald's influence had been removed. Throughout his Red Page writings there was no hint of anything but pride in the rest of the paper. He was a loyal employee, because whatever his personal resentments were against some of the staff he shared the extreme nationalism and unwavering belief in the glorious future of an independent and isolationist Australia which were the essence of The Bulletin's editorial faith throughout the period of his Red Page editorship.

Like The Bulletin Stephens put Australia always first, not because he was on The Bulletin staff but because it was in Australia that he believed. The Red Page was not an independent organism, not because of overbearing editorial direction but because Stephens shared The Bulletin ethos, which was essentially composed of Archibald's humanism and hatred of cant, augmented by the political and economic theories of Edmond, and enlivened by impertinent rejection of any attitudes or actions which sought to confine Australia to the status of a British colony.

Stephens worked on the Red Page to lay a sound basis for Australian literature, perhaps rather for the sake of Australia's cultural growth than for the sake of literature.
As a working journalist he was immune neither from the pressures which apply to all who participate in the making of a newspaper nor from the particular influences and demands to which The Bulletin environment subjected him. But he was predisposed to accept The Bulletin's influence by his temperament, background, training and convictions. The Bulletin gave Stephens an audience, an authority, and an opportunity to influence Australian writing which he could have attained nowhere else in Australia at that time and which he was never to regain after he left the newspaper's service.

The Red Page was very much a part of The Bulletin: and the part was not independent of the whole. However, the editor of the Red Page was given freedom to develop and express his ideas. He probably enjoyed this freedom because his views usually accorded so well in the literary field with the ideas expressed elsewhere in the newspaper on political, economic and social questions. Stephens' claim that the Red Page was "an empire within an empire" in my view survives the scrutiny of the following chapters. The Red Page was no more independent than Roman Gaul was of the Roman Empire, but within the framework of the newspaper as a whole the Red Page grew, developed its own
special qualities, and pursued its own interests. At least while Archibald remained the guiding spirit of The Bulletin, it was not an empire of which Stephens had any desire to renounce citizenship.
Chapter Two

"The Bulletin" Book Exchange Period, September 1894 to February 1896

On 1 September 1894 the inside front page of The Bulletin's bright pink cover was headed "Books of the Day", and beneath the heading appeared the announcement that "On receipt at Box 659 G.P.O., Sydney, of Postal Order, Postal Notes, or Stamps equal to the price stated, any book in the subjoined list will be forwarded to any Australian address". Book announcements had appeared before on the inside of The Bulletin's covers. The earliest seems to have appeared on 4 January 1890, and from 29 July 1893 to 11 November 1893 the inside back cover was devoted to a one column statement of The Bulletin's editorial policy along with some book advertisements and a note about the newspaper's "Missing Word Competition". Some of the advertisements in this period included quite lengthy descriptions of the books. In the issue for 18 November 1893 the statement of editorial policy was moved to the inside front cover, which henceforward carried occasional advertisements for books, especially books published by The Bulletin, and sometimes a cartoon. It seems then that from July 1893 someone on The Bulletin's editorial staff had been experimenting with the idea of
devoting one page on the inside of the covers to literary matters. Presumably the idea was that of the editor, J.F. Archibald, and he might well have had a literary page in mind, as well as general sub-editorial work, when, either late in 1893 or early in 1894, he invited A.G. Stephens to join The Bulletin staff. Stephens had left Australia on a world tour early in 1893 and was in London working on the Daily Chronicle when Archibald’s offer reached him. Two overseas despatches from Stephens were printed in The Bulletin in 1893. One, on page 13 of the issue for 22 July 1893 was headed "Wanted, an Australian Geary" and signed "A.G.S., San Francisco". It suggested Australian emulation of the Geary Law designed to exclude Chinese from the United States which had just been declared valid by the Supreme Court. The other was published in the "Plain English" section on page 5 of The Bulletin for 16 September 1893, headed "The Fight in the House of Commons" and signed "A.G. Stephens, London". It reported the disorderly behaviour of Members observed by him on a visit to Westminster. Stephens had had contributions printed in
The Bulletin before he went abroad, and on 22 April 1893 a sub-leader, noticing his political pamphlet, The Griffilwraith, remarked that "The volume is simply a succinct history of tales which The Bulletin has often told in detail" and that the name was a Bulletin invention. Vance Palmer claims that "There would probably have been a bright future for Stephens in Fleet Street; he had good prospects with the Daily Chronicle. Luckily for Australia he was not left to exploit them. The sharp eyes of J.F. Archibald . . . were upon him; an offer at the end of

1 A letter from Mary Hannay Foott thanks Stephens on 10 March 1893 for sending her a copy of The Bulletin with his "Strawstralia" article. I have not been able to identify any such article in the newspaper from January to March 1893. Mary Hannay Foott, Letter to A.G. Stephens, 10 March 1893, Letters to and Stories by A.G. Stephens 1892-1922, Mitchell Library MS A1926. However in The Bulletin for 18 February 1893 on page 22 there appeared "A School-Teacher's Idyl [sic]/The Slapping of Saunders" by "S.". In its sentimentality and its Queensland setting it sounded like the work of A.G. Stephens. In the "Society" section on page 12 of The Bulletin for 20 May 1893 the following paragraph appeared: "A.G. Stephens, a Bananaland journalist, says that he met old men who were deserters from the Liverpool (N.S.W.) Poor Asylum, every half-mile or so, recently on the road between Mount Victoria and Wentworth Falls. They admitted having been well treated as to tucker and tobacco. 'Then why did you leave?' 'Well, y' see, they make us wash ourselves every morning'."

the year [i.e. 1893] brought him home to the Sydney Bulletin. Good prospects Stephens might have had but he was also nostalgic for "sweet wattles", "swamp-oaks" and "grey gums" in a piece of verse entitled "In Absence" written in London in 1893 and published in The Bulletin on 14 July 1894. Although at least one of his friends was apprehensive, there seems to have been as little danger of his not returning to Australia as there was of Archibald's failing to be attracted by the liveliness of his contributions to The Bulletin, even if such an astute editor could have been unaware of Stephens' earlier career, especially his literary work on The Boomerang.


4 Other verses by Stephens appeared in The Bulletin in 1894 before the beginning of his work on the Red Page: "When My Hair Goes Up" was published on page 19 of the issue for 28 April 1894, and "On a Clerical Clown" on page 19 of the issue for 18 August 1894. There is also a letter from Mary Hannay Foott, in Mitchell Library MS A1924, saying she likes his "Matabele poem", and in The Bulletin for 21 July 1894 appeared verses entitled "J. Bull to the Matabele" by "The Wombat". This was not one of the pseudonyms to which Stephens admitted in his "Austrazealand pen-names 1890-1925", Mitchell Library Typescript, 014.9/S.

5 The tone of a letter from Mary Hannay Foott to Stephens in London suggests that she at least feared that he would not return and she was angry that "S." was not thought worth securing for our cleverly-conducted Brisbane dailies - even as foreign correspondent". Mary Hannay Foott, Letter to A.G. Stephens, 3 November 1893, Letters to and Stories by A.G. Stephens 1892-1922, Mitchell Library MS A1926.

6 See Appendix 1.
There can be no doubt that The Bulletin of 1 September 1894 marked the entry of A.G. Stephens on to the page he was to make famous as "The Red Page". This issue is the first on Stephens' own file of the Red Page housed in the Mitchell Library. On that date the page headed "Books of the Day" consisted of an annotated list of six works, five of them novels. For the first of the novels which was listed as The Yellow Aster, it was pointed out that "... as the germ of "A Yellow Aster" was found in Australia, and the authors were for some time residents of Melbourne, the book has special interest for Australian readers". The title of the work was A Yellow Aster and there was only one author, Mrs. Kathleen Caffyn, writing under the pseudonym "Iota". These inaccuracies perhaps

7 The Bulletin Red Page, 1 September 1894, 15 September 1894 - 12 April 1902, (Sydney, 1894-1902) Mitchell Library MS MDQ079/40. The issue for 1 September 1894 is marked in Stephens' handwriting and in his characteristic purple ink with a couple of crosses and at the bottom of the book list with an encircled "144½". This number may have been a measure of the space occupied by the item, or may have been an index number for his daughter Constance who in later life spoke of her work in cutting and pasting clippings of his work into a series of over four hundred scrap books. The scrap books have been scattered and only a few survive in the Mitchell Library and in the Hayes Collection of the University of Queensland Library.

8 The [sic] Yellow Aster by "Iota"; The Last Sentence by Maxwell Gray; The Prisoner of Zenda by Anthony Hope; The Rubicon by E. S. Benson; Tess of the D'Urbervilles by Thomas Hardy; and Reminiscences of the Great Mutiny by W. Forbes Mitchell.

9 Kathleen Caffyn, A Yellow Aster by "Iota" (London, Hutchinson, 1894).
indicated that Stephens was interested only in the novel's Australian associations. The three inches of the page which remained below the annotated list of books were filled with an advertisement for a book published by The Bulletin, Ernest Favenc's *The Last of Six: Tales of the Austral Tropics*, which was commended to readers by means of favourable extracts quoted from reviews in four Australian newspapers.

On the following week, 8 September 1894, the inside page of the front cover reverted to what had most often been its earlier role; it carried encouraging messages on the benefits to be obtained from the purchase of a variety of medicines and machines. But on 15 September literature returned. The page was headed "'The Bulletin' Book Exchange" and beneath the heading appeared the same note on availability of books as had appeared on 1 September. The heading remained unchanged until 22 February 1896. For convenience and brevity, I shall in future refer to the whole of the period from 1 September 1894 to 22 February 1896 as the BBE period. With the issue of 24 November 1894, the page's format was altered from two to four columns, the size of the type was reduced and closer setting used. Occasionally from then on and regularly towards the end of the BBE period, much smaller

45.

typefaces were used. Reading from the shiny coloured page of poor quality, highly calendared paper offers to the modern reader, as it must have offered to the contemporary reader, an unpleasant physical experience. But the Red Page was Stephens' province and he packed it to carry as much as possible of what he wanted to present to his readers. The content of the BBE pages is naturally of much more interest than the format, but in the development of both it is possible to discern Stephens' shaping of the vehicle of his criticism.

While evidence does not seem to be available from the surviving records,11 the continuation of the BBE for eighteen months suggests that it was not unprofitable as a bookselling venture. Only four weeks after its introduction, on 29 September 1894, the scope of the BBE service was broadened to include supply of books to any Australasian address. From its second appearance on 15 September, the

11 None of The Bulletin's detailed financial records appears to have survived. It is well known that Archibald left a large fortune, endowing the City of Sydney with the Archibald Fountain in Hyde Park and the nation with a valuable art prize. On p. 119 of a Diary kept by A.G. Stephens which is now in the Hayes Collection at the University of Queensland there is an entry dated 22 August 1929 which begins: 'Abstract of W. Macleod's will printed in SMH. Estate £231,064.' William Macleod was the business manager of The Bulletin during the BBE period and he was well known for his acute business sense and Scots parsimony.
BBE had included a warning to impatient bookbuyers that "As most of the books recommended are in strong demand, some may be temporarily out of stock. In such case, orders will be filed, and the books forwarded immediately on arrival of next shipment". This may of course have been not so much evidence of strong demand as a let-out clause to protect the book vendor with severely limited stocks or even no stocks at all, but the service was expanded from 27 October 1894. From that date there was an addition to the note quoted above to the effect that "Any book not in this list will be forwarded on receipt of price, particulars of which will be given to enquirers".

Besides its survival for eighteen months in a profitable newspaper, an increase in the BBE's following seems likely from the gradual build-up in length and frequency of appearance of an "Answers to Correspondents" section. The appearance of this section also indicated that Stephens was being allowed to give the inside front cover page an identity of its own. Stephens' answers were quite independent of the "Answers to Correspondents" columns which Archibald continued to run in another part of the paper. The range of advice Stephens offered to his correspondents was quite broad. In addition to the regular pattern of replies to inquiries about prices and availability of particular books, there were occasionally replies to those who had apparently
written for books on particular subjects. On 18 May 1895, for example, Stephens told "E.F.N." that he could not locate a cheap book on alluvial mining. Advice also went beyond bibliographical guidance. On 21 December 1895, "W.M.W." was instructed to "Learn French from a teacher if possible. If not, get an Ollendorff (5s.6d.), a dictionary (2s.8d.), and any easy annotated classic (1s.3d.); and peg away. When you're through Ollendorf take up another book of exercises, and a novel like 'Les Trois Mousquetaires', and then go through Ollendorf again. He's absurd and antiquated, but he hammers the language in". However assiduously "W.M.W." followed this advice he could hardly have been ready to participate in the first of Stephens' translation competitions which he announced in the BBE on 8 February 1896. The set piece was Maurice Maeterlinck's "Et s'il revenait", which Stephens acknowledged to its source in a contemporary periodical, The Pageant. The announcement of the competition was brief; beneath the poem was an invitation which read: "Readers may send English versions. The best will be printed". Obviously no reward other than the promise of publication was needed to attract contestants.

On six occasions the BBE remained unchanged, or very
nearly so, over two weeks.\textsuperscript{12} On five occasions the page was occupied wholly by advertisements, usually with the centre piece reserved for the announcement of \textit{Bulletin} books.\textsuperscript{13} Throughout the period the advertisements ebbed and flowed around the articles and lists of books; sometimes they were banished completely, while in other issues they occupied half the page. Towards the end of the BBE period there were less frequently advertisements other than publishers' and booksellers' announcements on the page.

Perhaps the first page actually headed "'The Bulletin: Book Exchange" on 15 September 1894 fairly indicated Stephens' intentions in originating the feature. Across the first column appeared in bold-face type the caption "Wickedness of Woman", and there followed an essay on the mystery of womanhood and particularly on the "new woman", in which evidence was called from Richard Le Gallienne, Goethe, \textit{Jane Eyre}, and Dostoevsky. The essay was by way of introduction to reviews of several books written by and and about "new" women.\textsuperscript{14} Stephens soon made it clear that

\textsuperscript{12} 20 September and 6 October 1894; 13 October and 20 October 1894; 10 November and 17 November 1894; 8 December and 15 December 1894; 5 January and 12 January 1895; 9 February and 16 February 1895.

\textsuperscript{13} 13 April 1895; 1 June 1895; 8 June 1895; 29 June 1895; 3 August 1895.

\textsuperscript{14} The books were \textit{A Superfluous Woman}, whose author Stephens did not name; \textit{Our Manifold Nature}, \textit{The Heavenly Twins} and \textit{Ideala} by Sarah Grand; \textit{The [sic]} \textit{Yellow Aster} by "Iota"; \textit{Dodo} and \textit{The Rubicon} by E.S. Benson.
his interests were engaged far more by the topic than by the books he was to review:

Woman is now moved by the Zeitgeist to explain herself; and it behoves Man to listen attentively, for such an opportunity may not occur again. She declares that her Wickedness coils round the root of sex, as might have been presaged physiologically, historically, and philosophically. Physiologically, since sex is to woman what the tides are to the ocean, ebbing and flowing in eternal rhythm, and perhaps owning the same original cause. Historically, since throughout the ages the weaker vessel has been primarily a vessel of passion, a love-lute with the loosened girdle of Venus for her single string. Philosophically, since the discussion of sex-questions has hitherto been tabooed to women, and women yearn for the tabooed.

Now they have broken the taboo, and proceed to defile the temples of conventionality while "Ouida" and Mrs. Lynn Linton shriek vainly in agonised protest. The new woman does not care for "Ouida" and Mrs. Lynn Linton. Her mission is to set Man to rights in fifteen editions, and she is fulfilling it successfully if not artistically. From a classical standpoint, the books mentioned below are mere ephemerae, which today are all the rage and to-morrow are cast into the dust-bin. From a sociological standpoint, as already affirmed, they have considerable importance. From the standpoint of the world which amuses itself they have novelty, interest, and some are of prurient piquancy.

Some of the reviews which followed were obviously derisive; in others it is difficult to discern whether the intention was ridicule or whether the views Stephens expressed were revelations of an extraordinarily romantic outlook on life and art. For example, of A Superfluous Woman Stephens wrote
that "It is a direct appeal to the barbaric passion of Woman".

In a final paragraph in this section Stephens gave, at least by implication, his view of what women ought to have been aiming to achieve:

When all reservations have been made it is plain that the vogue and celebrity which these writers have so speedily attained imply that, to some extent, they interpret existing social tendencies. Is the "revolt" a revolt in the direction of healthy blood and a healthy race? an instinctive revulsion from modern cant and disease to primeval purity and natural passion? If so, we can easily pardon its errors and exaggerations.

The remainder of this issue of the BBE was filled by a list of six works, briefly annotated, under the heading "Weighed, and Found Worthy".  

Thus in the first issue of "The Bulletin: Book Exchange" Stephens used the literary emanations of a movement in contemporary society as a lead into his views on the nature and purpose of woman, views which were probably daring in his time but which were not at odds with The Bulletin's

15 Listed were Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes and Adventures of Sherlock Holmes by Conan Doyle; National Life and Character by Charles H. Pearson; The Woman in White by Wilkie Collins; It's Never Too Late to Mend and The Cloister and the Hearth by Charles Reade.
outlook and reputation. Stephens also ably pointed to the literary deficiencies of the books under review, and his ending of the page with a list of works he had "Weighed, and Found Worthy" was evidence of his didactic intent. In fact Stephens' purpose in beginning the BBE seems to have been twofold: to use occasional essays to discuss interesting contemporary issues from any aspect and to separate the worthy from the worthless in literature for the guidance of his readers.

In the BBE period Stephens wrote many essays on many topics, and I shall refer to the most noteworthy of them.

The Bulletin's attitudes to women were varied but not conventional. Misogyny, ranging from puckish to waspish, permeated Archibald's paragraphs. James Edmond's leader, "The Great Woman Question" on 9 March 1889 announced with some humour the paper's turnabout to support women's suffrage. But on another aspect of the treatment of women in contemporary society The Bulletin was very serious indeed. In a series of cases where men were convicted of rape on the unsupported evidence of a woman without investigation of her character, The Bulletin campaigned vigourously in protesting the injustice of the law. On the Mt. Rennie Case, for example, when four boys were hanged for the rape of a girl in Moore Park, Sydney, The Bulletin poured forth its rage over many issues, including a leader on 8 January 1887, "The Priests Pass By", which must have contrasted sharply with the views prevailing in the community on the unquestionable innocence of womanhood in such cases and its right to society's protection. Stephens was himself the author of The Suffield Case, Bulletin Pamphlet no. 2 (Sydney, The Bulletin Newspaper Company, 1897), an advertisement for which on the Red Page for 11 December 1897 began: "Suffield was found guilty on the sole and uncorroborated evidence of a woman who contradicted, not only herself, but at least four other witnesses on her own side".
shortly. But the page often consisted of book lists classified under recurring headings, with short annotations on some titles. The lengths of the lists under the headings varied as new arrivals, depletion of stocks and considerations of space dictated. The characteristics Stephens used to classify his lists may be categorized as follows:—

- **subject**: as in such headings as "Wickedness of Woman Books", "Contemporary Science", and "Mining Books";
- **merit**: as in "Weighed, and Found Worthy", "The Permanent Force", and "Some Books Worth Reading";
- **author**: as in "Max O'Rell's Books" and "Tolstoi's Works";
- **publishers' series**: as in "Canterbury Poets" and "Minerva Library";
- **literary genre**: as in "Short Stories" and "Essays";
- **nation of origin**: as in "American Authors" and "Australian Books".

The heading "Australian Books" was first used on 29 September 1894, and under it *For the Term of His Natural Life* was described as "the best Australian novel", and *Robbery Under Arms* as "the second-best Australian novel". The other items in the list were the poems of Adam Lindsay Gordon, Henry Clarence Kendall and James Brunton Stephens. "Australian Books" proved to be one of the most persistent
and enduring of the BBE headings; Stephens' own name first appeared on the page in the list under it on 27 October 1894 as the author of *A Queenslander's Travel Notes*. When the "Australian Books" list last appeared in the BBE on 1 February 1896 it included fifteen titles.

From 1 December 1894 Stephens often used the heading "Some New Books" to cover reviews of newly received works, ranging in length from less than four to as many as fifty lines. The average length was between twelve and fifteen lines, and by early in 1895 Stephens had become adept at packing information into these one paragraph reviews. The following examples are both taken from the BBE of 23 March 1895:


18 The books listed were: *For the Term of His Natural Life* by Marcus Clarke; *Robbery Under Arms* by Rolf Boldrewood; *Poems* by Henry Clarence Kendall; *Poems* by Adam Lindsay Gordon; *Poems* by James Brunton Stephens; *The Godolphin Arabian* by James Brunton Stephens; *Poems* by Sydney Jephcott; *Poems* by George Essex Evans; *A Golden Shanty* by Bulletin writers; *Tales of the Convict System* by Price Warung; *The Last of Six* by Ernest Favenc; *A Queenslander's Travel Notes* by A.G. Stephens; *By Reef and Palm* by Louis Becke; *Seven Little Australians* by Ethel Turner; and *Poems* by Francis Kenna.
The Sphinx of Eaglehawk, by Rolf Boldrewood (cloth limp, 2s.3d.), is a short tale of life on old Bendigo bowdlerised to suit respectable English families. The episodes are familiar, and the author has described them better before. By the way, London Daily Chronicle's notice of "A Modern Buccaneer" - the best thing Rolf Boldrewood has done, &c - is repeated in an advertisement at the end of the volume. No reference to the fact that Louis Becke's brains created that best thing. Rolf Boldrewood is the Bayard of literature.

The Yellow Book, Vol. IV. (cloth, 6s.9d.), has considerably more blue than green in its composition. Almost every story deals with sex-relationships, and there is nothing so simply unabashed as "Theodora" in recent English literature. You read it hurriedly with delightful little frissons, and when you get to the end you sigh a little, and smile a little, and read it carefully over again. Next day you read it once more, to make sure. Of course it is good. Conventional people say it is immoral; but it is neither moral nor immoral, it is merely natural. The rest of the number is written with brains - which is a great comfort in these days of dullness. Space unfortunately forbids quotation of many interesting fragments. (Vols. I., II., and III. can also be had, 6s.9d. each).

Throughout 1895 the book lists continued. One of the qualitative headings, "Weighed, and Found Worthy" was replaced on 22 December 1894 by "Some Books Worth Reading". Another, "The Permanent Force", persisted until 9 November 1895, with its rather pompous introduction which stated that "These books are deserving, in Bacon's phrase, 'to be read and digested' - books which every thoughtful or cultured man should own and study". But the book lists
became shorter and the headings fewer as 1895 neared its end. Certainly from 23 November 1895 the bookselling function of the BBE was clearly on the wane. Lists of books had largely been displaced by reviews of recent publications, paragraphs of literary news and essays on writers which included lengthy quotations from their works. In these early days of his literary editorship, Stephens began to move from self-consciousness to self-awareness as a critic. His most significant contributions in the BBE period are easily separated from the total. In them overseas and Australian authors were introduced to his readers and their work assessed; in them his theory of literature began to emerge; and in them may be traced the maturing confidence and style of the man. For these reasons I shall discuss the most significant of the BBE writings at some length.

One of the notable features of the Red Page throughout its history was the wide range of its literary view. Not only English and Australian literature was brought to the notice of readers of The Bulletin. On 10 November 1894 Stephens wrote the following passage headed "American Authors" as an introduction to a listing of the "David Douglas' Series of American Authors" which included works by W.D. Howells and Oliver Wendell Holmes:
One does not forget Cooper and Hawthorne, Bret Harte and Howells, in wondering when America is going to produce a first-rank novelist. Poets she has - essayists, scientists, orators, historians - who may compare with all but the highest names in old-world literature; but her Thackeray, her Balzac, her Tolstoi, are still to seek. There seems to be something lacking in the American brain or the American environment, though with such a mingling of rich blood, such a variety of climate, and such a teeming panorama of effort and incident, their chances would appear rather in favor of a fuller, stronger intellectual life than is found elsewhere. So far, American culture tends to width rather than depth. Interest in books and writers is more widely diffused in America than in England, for example; and the humblest American newspapers exhibit a literary agility and originality which, however ridiculous in extremes, are yet preferable to the comatose parochialism of most English journals outside the centres of population. But the power of specialisation and concentration seems wanting to American writers of fiction. They have no back to their heads. They soar high for short flights, but lack the strength of pinion for sustained struggle. Conceive what memorable fruit might be borne were the method of Zola applied in a study of American life and character - its miseries, its splendours, its industrial strifes, its ferocious whirl of politics, its stern subjugation of natural forces! But where is the American Zola - gifted not only with the mind to plan such a task, but also with the tenacity and industry to complete it? West, east, centre, north and south, one calls vainly for an answer. Yet American fictionists have their field of special merit, though it be not on the highest plane of genius. They are beautiful bellettrists, masters of the short story, which they have lifted to a pitch of dainty delightfulfulness only reached in France beside. Their critical novelists of the neo-realistic school, like Howells and James, if refined to the point of weakness, are
invariably graceful and witty. Most of the authors collected below are artists in words whose style has the delicate savour of a hothouse flower, and who treat their themes with the sympathy and imagination of a poet.

This lengthy preface to the advertisement of the series was repeated the following week, 17 November 1894. The discussion would surely have served for most of the BBE's readers as an introduction to any consideration of American fiction as a whole. The Bulletin had from time to time printed American short stories, by Bret Harte and others, but they were stories of pioneer life presented as models or at least as hints for The Bulletin's reader-contributors. As an attempt to sum up the achievements of American fiction to that date, Stephens' paragraph was inadequate. His misreading of the subtleties of James as weakness suggests that he was unable to perceive that James was seeking for the novel new directions in the exploration of the human mind. The passage however represented Stephens' first attempt to summarize the qualities and suggest the weaknesses of an important corpus of literature. It showed lively appreciation of the national background of the novelists and it contained no hint of apology for the discussion of a "colonial" literature. With this piece Stephens identified himself with the struggle of young civilizations to produce literature which could be measured
against the products of "the highest names in old-world literature". The merits of the old were to be used as a touchstone for the efforts of the new, but reverence for old achievements was not to be allowed obscure the peculiar qualities of new aspirations.

Meanwhile in the BBE period Stephens was quick to point the shortcomings of the contemporary literary productions of the old world. On 27 July 1895 he wrote in "Concerning English Critics":

English literary criticism often seems to Australians singularly bad. For one thing, it is coloured by the loves and jealousies of literary cliques. Hath not one of their own writers recently said that "the bardlets of Bodley Head sit in a row, and have pomatum rubbed into their heads, week after week, by the assiduous Mr. Le Gallienne, who will presently skip up beside them again and expect to have pomatum rubbed into him?" The Le Gallienne coterie makes a good deal of current-literature criticism for the Daily Chronicle and Weekly Sun - if that can be called criticism which is mainly a chorus of undiscriminating praise. T.P. O'Connor's criticism in the Sun is a bolus of long extracts washed down with superficial epithets. The Literary World is weak and commonplace. The Bookman is good, as far as it goes; and the Academy is also good, though tame. The ablest English literary criticism, generally speaking, is found in the Athenaeum and the Saturday Review - the former being more thorough, the latter brighter. Quiller-Couch, in the Speaker, is a good taster and chronicler, but hardly a good critic. The Spectator would be good if it could get rid of its "respectable" bias; the National Observer runs too much to smartness and flippancy.
The last-mentioned qualities were hardly those on which adverse criticism was to be expected in the pages of The Bulletin. But far from any embarrassment about his milieu, Stephens was in fact prepared to argue that he had the advantage over English critics of contemporary literature. After citing conflicting judgments by the National Observer and the Spectator of William Watson's "Hymn to the Sea", he asserted:

Now, the truth, to an Australian mind, seems to lie about midway between these extremes of blame and praise. And the Australian mind is so peculiarly-situated 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.

These sentiments were probably sincere. There is no evidence at this time that Stephens yearned for a more populous and cosmopolitan milieu. He had sampled London's newspaper life while working on the Daily Chronicle and apparently felt no great pains in leaving it after a few months when he accepted Archibald's offer of a post on The Bulletin in 1894. Stephens was influenced in his attitudes to contemporary English critics by his own patriotism which was at this period a new feeling for a nation whose birth
had yet to be formally registered. And in his essay "Concerning English Critics" he came finally to the deficiency in them which he found least tolerable, namely their failure to distinguish between the authentic and the spurious in writings about Australia:

As examples of incompetent English criticism take almost every word penned regarding tales by English authors with an Australian milieu - and there is no English author so poor nowadays that he cannot sport a bushranger or a sundowner. Here critics and authors generally browse in the same fields of ignorance, with results satisfactory to both classes. The Saturday Review, for instance, says of one of Marriott Watson's recently-published stories, "The Last of Blackbeard", "an Australian bush-ranger" that it "would be a striking story anywhere". Anywhere - but in Australia, where its exotic unreality kills it at once. A bushranger sticks up a station. The family are at evening dinner; and "beef or mutton or pork" are mentioned as their "three staples". An English jackeroo has his meals with the squatter, and is referred to by the writer (and the bushranger) as "the cadet". The squatter resides on the station and his manager. The mutton is "half-bred Leicester". The bushranger enters and says all hands are "in a corral". "A station-hand, hot and dusty with travel, broke into the room" while dinner was proceeding - as is apparently the habit of station-hands. The bushranger takes the squatter's arm with one hand, and the manager's with the other, and marches them out to the stables. He is alone at the time; both his hands are occupied; and they submit! The bushranger fires twice point-blank without doing any harm; and eventually he and a mate are shot - thanks mostly to "the cadet" (of course). And so on. Perhaps one or two of these things would pass
singly; but together, to an Australian eye, they make the tale ridiculous. But the Saturday Review doesn't know that.

Stephens' patriotism was a motivating force behind other BBE pieces. His regard for the records of Australia's history was obvious in his notice of Volume III of the Historical Records of New South Wales. The review ran to two columns on 11 January 1896. Typically he could not forego castigation of those whom he suspected of having deliberately destroyed evidence of his country's early history:

The new volume deals with the period of Gov. Hunter (1796-'99). Not till 1800 do the local records begin to be of value; the papers dealing with the province's infancy, which might be expected to be preserved in Sydney, have apparently been carefully destroyed by interested parties. Those "first families"! Probably when Wm. Sikes, jun., became a man of importance in the new colony, the possessor of many hogs and goats and convicts, he saw no necessity for the publication of scandalous details regarding his lamented progenitor. And so, one conjectures, the Sikes Union for the Suppression of State Papers was formed. Held each son a lighted brand In a bold, determined hand - and - puff! - the awkward little lot of documents collected by Govs. Philip and Hunter, and Lieut.-Govs. Grose and Paterson, made a momentary black cloud on the Australian zenith.

Historical Records of New South Wales ... 1762-1811 (Sydney, Government Printer, 1892-1901), 7v. in 9.
For the remainder of the review Stephens concentrated on a mixture of quotation and paraphrase, lightly strung together, but his banter did not obscure his appreciation of the importance of the publication as source material for the study of his country's origins.

There was always the danger that Stephens' patriotism would overwhelm his literary judgment. Strident nationalism occasionally took over. "Australia's Coming War", a review of Kenneth Mackay's The Yellow Wave, which covered two BBE columns on 4 January 1896, was a good example of the lengths to which Stephens was prepared to stretch his literary standards to accommodate a polemical book which accorded with his political views:

In writing "The Yellow Wave" (6s.6d.) Kenneth Mackay has done something very like a national service. From the universal standpoint his book has not much literary or fictional value. There is life and movement; there are several strong passages; a good level of interest is maintained throughout. But the characterisation is not equal to the description: the women are dummies; the love-plot is always ineffective, and ends grotesquely rather than impressively. The style is clumsy...

From the Australian standpoint these literary defects sink into comparative insignificance, and the book becomes a valuable, memorable book; a book which crystallises into vivid language the hazy impressions dormant in many minds; a book for which the heart and head of every democrat should give the author thanks. Mr Mackay has had a fine idea. He has projected his imagination into the future, and realised what we are all forecasting - the future of North Queensland when the colored-labour policy and the land-grant-railway policy and the country-for-the-coolie-syndicates policy are pushed to their probable limits. The execution is not so good as the idea, but it is still admirable.

In this piece Stephens was not critic but political pamphleteer, distracted from literary pursuits by a subject on which he had already been moved in 1893 to write his pamphlet, The Griffilwraith, lampooning the efforts of Sir Samuel Griffith and Premier McIlwraith to develop the north of Queensland. His political convictions, patriotically based, sometimes chained Stephens to his place and time, leaving him at one with the average politician-hating, white foreigner-distrusting, yellow-foreigner-detesting Australian, towards whom much of The Bulletin's reporting and comment were slanted.

Other influences were also at work on Stephens, driving him into the corner of the average, the plebeian, the philistine in literature. Whether on account of his lack
of formal tertiary education, or his long-held conviction that religion provided no answers to life, Stephens was vulnerable to philosophical nostrums clothed in pseudo-scientific jargon. His review of Max Nordau's Degeneration on 21 December 1895 sounded in part admirably sceptical:

The text for the author's whole sermon is Guerinse's apothegm: "Genius is a disease of the nerves" (though, says Nordau, "science does not assert that every genius is a lunatic"). The sermon itself is an encyclopaedia of dissertations upon physiology, criminology, insanity, hypnotism, literary, musical and artistic expression - its modes and significations, and a hundred branches of science which Nordau cleverly connects with his radical idea. Wagner, Zola, Ibsen, Tolstoi, the Pre-Raphaelites, are exhaustively treated. Nietzsche, Maeterlinck, Verlaine, Walt Whitman, Oscar Wilde, and a score more are less elaborately discussed. Gleanings from a thousand books are added to the mass - which, it is not wonderful, leaves an impression of amorphous crudeness. The whole is more admirable than convincing - it has enormous weight and comparatively small penetrative power. And Nordau continually strains the interpretation of his facts. Doubtless, modern degeneracy being given, it

21 Palmer refers to a period in the late 1880s in which Stephens was working for a Sydney printer and writes that "Meantime, in addition to his daily work, he attended classes at the Sydney Technical College, where he gained certificates for proficiency, especially in French and German". A.G. Stephens: His Life and Work, ed. Vance Palmer, P. 4.

22 Max Nordau, Degeneration, tr. from the second edition of the German work (London, Heinemann, 1895).
must and does exhibit itself in modern art and literature. That is almost an a priori certainty: but, of Nordau's a posteriori proofs, almost as many weaken the conclusion as enforce it. His judgment seems to drift on the current of his prodigious fertility.

The last paragraph of the review, however, betrayed the lingering impression which Nordau's writings left in Stephens' mind, since he asserted that "Few books published have held such a wealth of ideas, and facts for alert minds on the literary scientific plane: there is dynamic suggestion and stimulus on every page". The ideas of Nordau were later to be brought forth by Stephens in argument with men of greater academic training, men like Christopher Brennan and John Le Gay Brereton, whimsically at first, and then when under strong and lucidly logical attack, Stephens was sometimes foolish enough to try to use them to prop up a hasty or capricious literary judgment. Unfortunately, too, these ideas of the important influence of physiology upon literature fitted in with some of Stephens' personal beliefs, on the role of women for example, and with his pride in being "modern". They nourished and were nourished by his mistrust of university men. They also intermingled with his "fair-go" patriotism which was of course well suited by The Bulletin's democratic and anti-intellectual tone.
On 7 December 1895, two weeks before the review of Nordau’s work, Stephens had included under the heading "Christmas Numbers" the following defence of them against charges that they catered for unlettered tastes:

But discount the Christmas Number as you will, there remains a substantial balance to its credit. It disseminates a wonderful amount of decent literature for its price, and a very reasonable quantity of art. It is not all Philistinish, and if it were it would not be wholly to blame. For mark this: whilst the neurotic Bohemian refines gross spirits, it is the Philistine who provides the race with healthy bodies, "Jin'yus! Jin'yus! Tak' care o' your carkus!" is the vital maxim which the Philistine consistently enforces. Give him credit for his most essential role in the world’s drama. Man does not live by bread alone - but he wants it with his wine. And, in effect, who drives the engine if it isn’t the stoker?

And yet so determined a champion of the common man sometimes aspired to write a graceful literary essay. In "George Eliot at Sea", which occupied one column of the BBE on 23 February 1895, he mocked the novelist’s predilection for disposing of her characters by drowning. A sampling of the essay may indicate its irony and Stephens’ attempt at a guileless simplicity of style:

I have read somewhere that George Eliot was "a fiery soul". Perhaps that is 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.
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. One does not object to Dunstan Cass, in "Silas Marner", walking into the stone-pit to perish; although you think that he, a boy bred in the neighbourhood, should have had more sense. Nor do I care to dispute about probabilities when Adam Bede finds his father in the Willow Brook. But these are simple cases, which it would be hard to bungle if one tried. It is when she attempts complex drownings that we feel George Eliot's deficiencies... One thing is plain: we should, for the sake of future lady novelists, teach all our girls to swim. The only alternative is to insist that doomed personages be removed by poison or the cord.

A little later, in the BBE for 18 May 1895, Stephens attempted a serious summary of the qualities of a novelist, under the heading "Conan Doyle's Novels". Stephens handled his topic with assurance. Having noted Doyle's popularity and his fertility, Stephens confidently assigned him his place in literature:

Doyle, indeed, rarely fails in interest. He has little originality of imagination: but give him a foundation and he displays considerable originality of workmanship. The keynote of his work is conscientiousness; he chooses his incidents well, and strains hard to pound out of each its last atom of literary efficiency. Some of Sherlock Holmes' outré conclusions may seem to conflict with this estimate; but they are none of them imaginative leaps - all solid results of masculine reasoning, built up step by step like a theorem in mathematics. Doyle is essentially a short-story writer. His novels are a mere succession of episodes through which stalk characters without individuality.
or intrinsic interest . . . Doyle, in fact, is generally worth reading and rarely worth remembering. One accompanies him with pleasure, and leaves him without very much regret.

In this essay Stephens took pains to measure Doyle's achievement fairly, letting neither his popular success nor his readability become in themselves grounds for adverse criticism. The opinions expressed in Stephens' essay were not when he wrote them the commonplace view of Doyle which they have since become.

In another field Stephens was beginning to make original judgments. On 28 September 1895, the publication of a complete edition of the works of Henry Kingsley was the occasion for Stephens' review of *Geoffry Hamlyn*. Perhaps it is an overstatement to suggest that this review represented a turning point in his criticism but it may be considered at least one of the decisive points at which Stephens began to study analytically the qualities which for him were to distinguish Australian from other literature. I quote the review in full:

Henry Kingsley is fortunate in his publishers; or, rather, his fame is. The complete edition of his works now being issued by Ward, Lock and Bowden is one of the prettiest series anywhere to be seen.

Marcus Clarke is said to have dubbed "Geoffry Hamlyn" "the best Australian novel that has ever been written, or probably will be written" - or words to that effect. The exact authority for the quotation is not given by the quoters, and Clarke was by no means as good a critic as he was a writer. Anyhow, if he said such a thing he was decidedly wrong.

"Geoffry Hamlyn" is not an Australian novel, but a novel about Australia - a very different thing. The point of view is English; the characters are all English (Australians are only introduced as stupid, leggy youths like the spitting Hawbucks); and the story ends with a triumphal return to England where Sam, it is to be hoped, makes a suitable Shallow, and Alice duly dispenses old gowns to the village clothing club. There is nothing Australian in the book but the scenery; and that, one admits, is lovingly and well described.

No wonder Englishmen admire "Geoffry Hamlyn", which flatters their foibles so naturally and continually. And "Geoffry Hamlyn" is an excellent romance, with a perfect right to admiration. But when it is called "Australian" - Australia must protest warmly.

"Geoffry Hamlyn" is a pleasant, rambling story of the old school, patchy in interest, and very patchy in merit. It is never quite dull enough to bore, and rarely bright enough to excite. You put it down without difficulty, and take it up without anticipation. There is one good "lift" when the bushrangers come, and Sam starts for his ride on Widderin: this gives the same exaltation as (e.g.) the death of Porthos, when "the giant slept the eternal sleep, in the sepulchre that God had made to his measure".

The pictures of the old-fashioned squatters of 40 years ago are enjoyable; and the author has a peculiarly vivid phrase-eloquence that is very effective. (Note commencement of chap. xvii, p.146; the bush fire, p.198; or
the lost child, p.279 - how superior to Marcus Clarke's laboured Dickensy version!)

There is no style or the semblance of it: Kingsley just prattled with his pen as he would have with his tongue, and the story comes less from his head than his heart. He is simple, manly, unaffected; and his John Bull prejudices in favour of "Grand Seigniors" and against the independent Australians (perhaps they earned them when the convict leaven leavened the whole lump, 40 years ago?) are the natural prejudices of his day and generation, birth and breeding. They jar on us now; but Kingsley can't help that. His work has no particular intellectual merit, but it will always have a kind of value as a picture (from one point of view) of a bygone Australian time. Good old Tory! Maybe he lived better according to his lights than we to ours, though we have (or think we have) the better lights.

Stephens was prepared to give the English writers of novels about Australia their due. The review was a fair assessment of Geoffry Hamlyn, and Stephens' preparedness to accept Kingsley in terms of his background and time was almost gracious. However, the review showed Stephens continuing to move towards his own definition of what was Australian literature by cutting adrift the works he considered were not.

Stephens' interest in the literature being produced around him amounted in 1895 to excitement. He saw in the writers who had reached the maturity of their first books the beginnings of a literature which was truly of the country and its people. With the publication of
A.B. Paterson's first book of verse, *The Man From Snowy River*, Stephens entered the field in which his criticism was to have most influence, assessing the work of contemporary Australian writers and relating their achievements in literature to their own environment and to the great works of other literatures, ancient and modern. On 26 October 1895 Stephens devoted all of the first column and part of the second of the BBE to his review of *The Man From Snowy River*, under the heading "'The Banjo's' Book". In it he was first at pains to establish that Paterson was an authentic balladist, in contrast to Adam Lindsay Gordon. He pointed out that "The essence of the ballad is simplicity, and simplicity is the last thing Gordon dreamt of achieving. When he is natural, it is because he has written too lazily or too hurriedly to be artful: all his efforts are in the direction of elaboration". Stephens placed Paterson in an altogether different category:

"The Banjo" is just the ordinary bush bard sublimated - raised to the nth power, as it were. He is not akin to the bush "poet", for his work is not, and does not profess to be, all poetry, though it is sometimes highly poetic, when (as in "Kiley's Run") the subject suggests pathos. But "The Banjo's" sense of pathos is no more than any healthy male may possess without feeling his

24 A.B. Paterson, *The Man from Snowy River and Other Verses* (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1895).
appetite a bit the worse - no more than any average bushman has when he comes across a deserted selection, or his girl of yore who married somebody else. With such an invitation nine bushmen out of ten will sit down, if they are by themselves, to compose doggerel which they call "poetry". But it isn't poetry.

Stephens then indicated what he considered poetry was. He wrote that "Poetry is generally more or less of an unhealthy growth, a morbid secretion; and doesn't come naturally to the man who thinks nothing of riding 70 or 80 miles, or shearing seven or eight score sheep, every day for a week together. That man doesn't write poetry; his liver is too good; but if he is in the mood, and has a reading turn, he may compose very decent verse".

Stephens thus began to reveal his romantic view of poetry and in these remarks his later preference for the pure lyrists among Australian poets was clearly prefigured. At the same time the perspective in which he viewed the bush balladists, the Bulletin bards, was made clear. The review ended with the following summary of Paterson's qualities and estimate of his importance to Australians:

"The Banjo's" verse is more than decent: it is good, and is strongly leavened with the divine gift of humor. It isn't very deep, and the deeper it aims at being the less it succeeds; but it is stirring, manly stuff, which rejoices one to read and remember. Mr Paterson, indeed, like the old Cavalier lyrists, is able to combine the power to do and the power to write. Wolfe could only take Quebec, he couldn't write Gray's "Elegy":
but "The Banjo" rides and wins his steeplechases, and then, one may believe, sits down with a still tingling pulse and conveys the tingle to the pulses of his readers. Yet, though his horse-poems, such as the splendid "Old Pardon", may please most readers, he is perhaps at his best when, without too obvious labor, he touches the humorous or sentimental side of some commonplace bush scene or incident, as in "The Two Devines", or the first part of "Kiley's Run", or a dozen other pieces in his new volume. He is at his worst in pieces like "Lost" and "Only a Jockey", and one or two others injudiciously admitted. He has some verbal faults and a few lines of which the "merits indeed are but slight" (as he says in the weak prelude whose place should have been taken by "Daylight is Dying"). But withal he is "The Banjo" of whose verse every Australian already knows at least some snatches, and we love him.

Here was no exaggeration of Paterson's abilities. His reference to "Lost" and "Only a Jockey" isolated the worst pieces in the collection, in which maudlin sentiment was evoked in jerky doggerel. The best of Paterson's ballads in this collection are crude, without literary appeal, but stirring, as Stephens dubbed them, and they have remained capable of appealing to a wide variety of Australians over the years.

In his review of The Story of a Baby on 9 November 1895, Stephens showed that he had needed only two of

Ethel Turner's books to make the decision that her contribution to Australian literature was not to be weighty. He suggested that "Add 'The Story of a Baby' to 'Seven Little Australians', and one feels pretty sure in saying that Miss Turner's chief literary characteristic will prove to be, not power, but charm. 'The Story of a Baby' is an extremely charming book, with any amount of intuition and sympathy, and a good deal of careful observation, but falling short in the matter of insight and reality". In comparing Turner's hero and heroine, Larrie and Dot, to Dickens' David and Dora, Stephens was gentle, even indulgent to the young Australian writer, and yet he left no doubt of his judgment of the measure of Ethel Turner's stature against that of Dickens, whose work by the way had much less personal appeal for Stephens than that of other novelists, notably Thackeray. Stephens assigned Ethel Turner her place in the progress of Australian writing towards solid literary achievement in writing that "Miss Turner owes a good half of her success to her talent

26 In the paper "On Thackeray" which he read to the Gympie Literary Circle on 24 July 1889, Stephens described Thackeray as possessing "a range as wide as Scott, and an eye for detail infinitely keener, more truthful, more intellectual, and consequently more powerful than Dickens; rivalling Bulwer in fancy, and far surpassing him in force; with as quick perception of character as George Eliot, and with a much greater knowledge of the world". A.G. Stephens, Early Critical Work, Gympie, Q., 1889-1890. Mitchell Library MS A7000.
for language, her sense of words, her capacity to picture moods and tensions with the living glow which they have in her mind's eye. No other Australian storyteller has ever prattled so pleasantly".

A fortnight later, on 23 November 1895, he reviewed The Family at Misrule. The tone of the review was very good-humoured, the quotations aptly illustrated the points he wanted to make, and his opinion of Turner was obviously unchanged. More important was the glimpse given in the second paragraph of the review of the exciting environment in which Stephens saw himself operating at the end of 1895:

It looks, indeed, as if we were [sic] on the eve of a renascence of Australian literary art. Since the era when our major bards and prophets sang and saw - the era of Kendall, and Gordon, and Stephens, and Clarke - few of our writers have been able to give us body as well as bouquet in their vintage. "Rolf Boldrewood", beginning nobly, has become a mechanical grinder of books for the publishers. Mrs Ward, Miss "Keynotes" Dunne, and Marriott Watson, are of us, but not with us, either in heart or books. Mrs Campbell Praed, "Ada Cambridge", and "Tasma" - the first much the most capable - merely weave Australian scenery into the romances of sentimental commonplace penned for their feminine public. 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 the goal; with many other Bulletin writers well started in the race; it would really seem that 1900 will be able to cull for a favorite book-shelf a dozen new books of permanent value to take their place beside the favorite old ones. The Bulletin counts it indeed a sweet thing and honorable that it has been permitted to assist in securing this happy consummation.

Four years later Furphy wrote to Stephens: "Honestly, I am conscious of a sort of subterranean conviction that there is a Deus ex the Bulletin Co. moving in a mysterious way towards an Australian literature". There can be little doubt that such was the role Stephens already saw himself playing in 1895.

Henry Lawson's *In the Days When the World Was Wide* was published early in 1896. Stephens' review occupied one column in the BBE on 15 February 1896, under the heading "Henry Lawson's Poems". Stephens immediately linked Lawson with Paterson and went on to distinguish their achievement from that of previous Australian poets:

Henry Lawson joins "The Banjo" in Angus and Robertson's admirable Australian series. In these two writers, with all their imperfections, we see something like the beginnings of a national school of poetry. In them, for the first time, Australia has found audible voice and characteristic expression.


29 Henry Lawson, *In the Days When the World Was Wide and Other Verses* (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1896).
Passing a few verses scattered over our literature's single century, the name of Kendall is the only one to be cited in opposition to this view. Domett and Gordon were aliens in birth and thought. The same is true of Stephens, happily still with us. Their poems are not Australian poems, but poems about Australia - or Australasia, if it be objected that Domett's epic deals wholly with Maoriland (though the literary limitation of "Australia" to the continent has doubtful validity). Naturally, they reflect their accidental environment. Domett, feeling the poetic impulse, apostrophises the Maoris just as he would have apostrophised Red Indians had his lot been cast in America. Gordon's "Sick Stockrider" might easily have been a "Sick Gaucho"; he could have ridden "From the Wreck" without leaving England, and with a few verbal changes he could have written it there. Take away the title "Convict Once" and the constellations, and Stephens's masterpiece is cosmopolitan.

But Kendall? Kendall comes closer to the heart of Australian things, yet does not quite reach it. For he preserves always his individuality: not Australia, but Kendall, strikes the dominant note in Kendall's verses. So susceptible a soul could not, indeed, fail to be influenced by the voices sweet and stern which called him on every hand. But though these thrilled, they did not fill him. Australia colored, beautified, sometimes inspired his poems, but never swayed, mastered, wholly possessed the poet.

Stephens then sought to establish in the best work of Peterson and Lawson a curious combination of assimilation of the environment and exclusion of the writer's personality:

With Paterson and Lawson it is different. The men are subordinate to their themes. In Kendall's best verses - the sonnets: "To a Mountain"; the personal lyrics - the interest is subjective, it is brought by Kendall himself. Even in his descriptive pieces - "Mooni", 
"Orara", "Coogee" - we are less concerned with the scenery than with the poet's relation to the scenery. But Paterson's and Lawson's best verses are objective, impersonal. The interest is in the poem, not in the poet. Kendall, Paterson and Lawson have each held a mirror to their native land. Kendall's reflects his own image and Australia's; Paterson's and Lawson's reflect Australia's.

Moreover Stephens found it necessary to castigate Lawson because in his latest work he had begun to show signs of self-pity and resentment at his deprivations.

This is true of both, but it is more true of Paterson's. Yet, though Lawson's later verses are largely colored by his own thoughts and emotions, the bulk of his book is Australian, and it is when he is most Australian that he is most happy. This amounts to saying - what is perfectly true - that his earlier poems are among his best. It is curious to note the contrast between Lawson's optimism of seven years ago and his pessimism of to-day . . .

The change of note from Hope to Discontent, the change of view from impersonal to personal, have not improved Lawson's poetry. The less he broods the better he writes. It was before he soured that he wrote "Andy's Gone With Cattle" (1888), "The Glass on the Bar" (1890), "When the Children Come Home" (1890) and "The Drover's Sweetheart" (1890), and there is nothing in his book superior to these. "The Vagabond", which may be taken as typical of Lawson's later attitude, is a fine piece, with some splendidly sonorous stanzas, but - there are so many sucking Byrons busy at monotonous variations of the bitter old theme. And the Lawson who wrote "The Drover's Sweetheart" is unique.

Less than four months before, on 26 October 1895, in his review of Paterson's verse, Stephens had proclaimed that
"Poetry is generally more or less an unhealthy growth, a morbid secretion". Yet Lawson was bidden to free himself of subjectivity and pessimism. Apparently the emotion permissible in Australian poetry was to be generalized not individualized, looking outward not inward, and outward into a sunlit landscape. Stephens seemed to be offering Lawson conflicting directions.

The final paragraphs of this review of *In the Days When the World Was Wide* offered a good example of Stephens' ability to reach sound judgments on the merits of individual writers from a disjointed not to say confused basis of literary theory:

Lawson's shortcomings are obvious enough. 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. But how graphic he is, how natural, how true, how strong! How he feels, and makes his readers feel, in poems like "Out Back!" when phrase by phrase is painted an imperishable bush picture. Lawson's shortcomings are obvious; but, for Australians, they are as nothing beside his merits. And it must be remembered that his verse represents only half of his work, and perhaps not the finer half. His prose, brimming with humor and pathos, is of the best produced in Australia.

Lawson's keen sympathy, his knack of observation, are characteristically feminine. His sense of humor, his talent for vivid portrayal, are as characteristically masculine. Yet it is the woman in him, as in others,
that makes his talent glow to the white heat of genius. Intellect is great; emotion is great; but, for a poet, the greater of them is emotion. This it is which fires dull words, turns ore into gold, and, Pygmalion-like, draws with passionate ardor from cold stone warm, pulsating life. This

... adds the gleam,

The light that never was, on sea or land,
The consecration, and the Poet's dream.

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 oases of literature are watered with tears and blood, and a people preys upon its poets' vitals.

There were at least three unsatisfactory features of this review. Firstly, Stephens was never able to come to terms with Lawson's personality in spite of, or perhaps because of, their association going back to their days working together on *The Boomerang*. Secondly, in attempting to exhort Lawson to rise to the universal and transcend the personal in his work, Stephens fell back on an absurdly emotional view of the purpose of poetry and the role of the poet in society. Thirdly, in this review Stephens relied on assertion and substituted emotional special pleading for critical analysis.

More hints of Stephens' developing ideas on the nature of poetry were given in another BBE piece. In an essay on *The Yellow Book* on 6 July 1895, he described most of the
verse published in it as "the kind of poetry easily compassed at a certain pitch of culture - smart, correct and barren". Expanding this view he delivered the following pronouncement on the nature of poetry:

Poetry, as a whole, may be divided into think-things and pretty-things; kernel-verse and husk-verse; the class which draws us by its truth and strength, and the class which interests us by its glitter and melody. The poets of the day, the poets of The Yellow Book, are chiefly manufacturers of pretty-things. They are deft phrasemongers, and juggle marvellously with jewelled verbiage; but the divine fire of the elder bards is not theirs. The note of the superficial, the ephemeral, is struck by nearly all.

Here were intimations that Stephens in asserting the supremacy of emotion in poetry did not exclude from the "emotion" the manifestations of intellect. Again Stephens asserted without explaining the gulf which separated clever verse from great poetry. "Inarticulate" seems an inappropriate term to apply to Stephens at any point in his career, but there is no doubt that in the BBE period he could not analyze and explain the meaning of his intuitions, whether by defining well Ethel Turner's "charm", Henry Lawson's "strength" or what he meant by "emotion" in poetry. On several occasions in the BBE period - in his essay on The Yellow Book discussed above, in the review of Nordau cited on pages 64-65 above, and in his review of Quiller Couch's Wandering Heath\(^{30}\) on 22 February 1896, for

example - Stephens expressed a general dissatisfaction with the efforts of contemporary writers. Perhaps his dissatisfaction was aggravated by his own inability as a critic to pin down the causes of the writers' shortcomings.

In his review of Wandering Heath, Stephens expressed his disappointment in Quiller Couch and he remarked "But this incompetency for great efforts seems to mark all the promising young men of our time". Kipling, Gilbert Parker, J.M. Barrie, Barry Pain, Olive Schreiner were discussed and dismissed, and he continued:

Half-a-dozen other names suggest themselves - brilliant in promise, woefully disappointing in final performance. When one counts-up in this fashion the permanent results achieved by the fiction-writers at work in our time, one sees how great the early Victorian giants really were. What vitality, what depth, what fertility, had Scott, and Dickens, and Thackeray, and George Eliot, to go on producing book after book with fresh plot, and fresh characters, and fresh scenery which compelled admiration, often enthusiasm. The generalisation must not be taken too closely, but the idea is right. The authors of to-day, like the racehorses, are sprinters, who do their six-furlong short stories at a marvellous pace, but never see the end of a three-mile encounter. Meredith is the last of the Titans. It seems the same in France. How massive, how strong, Hugo and Dumas look beside Maupassant and Daudet! Literature too may echo the cry - Where are the builders of the Pyramids?

There was no suggestion in this review that Stephens saw the builders of literary pyramids lurking behind Australian eucalypts, nor would he allow Australian writers to be
identified with overseas writers beside whom they did not in his opinion measure up. On 11 January 1896, in discussing Jennings Carmichael's Poems,\textsuperscript{31} he disapproved firmly of Brunton Stephens' attempt to rate her more highly than she deserved:

Perhaps it is Miss Carmichael's talent for hunting the tame moral from its lair which made Brunton Stephens dub her "the Australian Jean Ingelow". But the comparison isn't over happy. Jean Ingelow had a little "imaginative power" and some capacity for subjective thought: Jennings Carmichael has neither. She wants even Ingelow's knack of melody; a line like

\begin{quote}
Grand is the leisure of the earth!
\end{quote}

is quite beyond her. Miss Carmichael's talent, in fact, lies in her power to put into more or less monotonous rhymes the emotions which passing moods and objects stir in her. Generally, the motions are shallow, feminine, and commonplace enough. When Miss Carmichael strikes the personal note keenly, she is effective - if your own mood is in sympathy; but her effect is neither powerful nor permanent.

Though he was unable at this stage to abstract and analyze the qualities which make literature powerful and permanent, the criticism of the BBE period leaves the impression that Stephens was working on a basis of firm

\textsuperscript{31} Jennings Carmichael, \textit{Poems} (London, Longmans, Green, 1895).
standards for literature, and that these standards were based on a sound knowledge of the classics of English literature together with at least an acquaintance with the masterpieces of European literature. One can also gather that he was aware of how far Australian writers fell short of universal standards and that he was yet determined to nurture them as of special interest and value to Australia at that time. On their individual merits he was not confused. There was confusion in his literary theory and lack of perception in his generalized discussions of the nature of poetry as well as of the nature of excellence in literature generally. In his judgment of individual works however he was able to apply his standards aptly to identify the qualities which he admired, particularly that vigour which he would have called "masculine", and that sensitivity which he would have called "feminine", and to judge the appropriateness of the style of the work to its literary form.
Chapter Three

"Literary Notes" and the Transition to "The Red Page"

February to August 1896

On 29 February 1896 the heading of the first column of the inside front cover of *The Bulletin* was "Literary Notes" printed in large capitals, while above it "The Bulletin" was centred on the page in a rather ornate cursive typeface. The new title, "Literary Notes", was certainly a more accurate description of what the page had already become. The bookselling activity through "'The Bulletin' Book Exchange" had lost impetus and only the "Australian Books" feature continued to appear. "Literary Notes" continued to be the overall title of the page until 4 July 1896.

Throughout the period to August 1896 the amount of literary matter on the page, as distinct from advertising matter, varied. The amount of advertisement varied from none, on 21 March and 27 June for example, to half or nearly half the page in the four issues for July 1896. And yet the page overall was gaining weight. The articles tended to be longer and where several themes were introduced Stephens made more effort to link them.

Between 27 June and 18 July 1896 there was a mood of transition in the content of the page and impressions of uncertainty of direction. The nature of the content seemed
however to have settled before 29 August 1896 when the title was stabilized as "The Red Page". Just why this title was chosen is not known. It could well have been suggested by the colour of The Bulletin's cover. It might have come from a caption "For the Red Page" which, Vance Palmer seems to suggest, J.F. Millington added to his contribution published on 8 August 1896. The pun on "read" would probably have appealed to Stephens, and he may well have been influenced in his final choice by the fact that "The Red Page" was noncommittal about the content. Whatever factors determined the choice, the changes of title over the period are indications that Stephens was actively searching for a banner under which to send forth his criticism. The titles used for the page between February and August 1896 and the dates on which they appeared are set out below:

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For convenience I shall in future refer to this period of "Literary Notes" and the transitional titles between that and "The Red Page" as the LNT period.

In this period Stephens began to be much more involved with his readers. They were invited to participate in translation and occasional verse-writing competitions, and judging from the number of their efforts dissected on the page after each competition response was good. One may well

2 On 14 March 1896 the heading of the page, "Battle Pictures", referred to the discussion of Stephen Crane's Red Badge of Courage with which the page began, and there was no overall title. This was probably an attempt to conserve space of a very full page rather than a change in editorial policy. On 9 May 1896 the page consisted wholly of advertisements.
wonder why they persevered. Stephens was sparing indeed in his praise of their efforts and frequently ridiculed them. For example, in the "To Correspondents" paragraph on 25 April 1896, "P.M." was told that "Translation sheep gets through the fence, but badly marked by the wire". Articles from contributors were also given space on the page. In the first issue titled "Literary Notes" on 29 February 1896 Stephens allowed more than one column to a contributor, "J.H.G.". The title under which the essay was published, "Over the Coals", was characteristic of Stephens as was the fact that he introduced it with a note remarking that "This paper demurs to some of the data, as well as some of the conclusions which follow. But it has lectured contributors so often that it rather enjoys being lectured by a contributor".

"J.H.G." criticized The Bulletin's demands for brevity and originality which he alleged accounted for the shallowness of its stories. He went on to criticize the short story as a literary genre, expressed his irritation

that The Bulletin preferred Swinburne to Browning, and concluded that Ethel Turner, Lilian Turner and Louise Mack had brought the paper the best literature that it had published because "They give characters and dig their stories out of hearts".

Stephens published a reply on 21 March 1896 under the heading "The Short Story". In a patronizing tone he explained that "Two or three weeks ago there was printed on this page a contributor's condemnation or depreciation of the short story, and especially of the Bulletin short story. The writer was plainly in earnest, and his remarks had the interest always attaching to a 'liberation of the soul'. Otherwise they gave opportunity to sigh for one's own hot youth and vanished delusions". Stephens then, allegedly for the benefit of "the Mahometan class of people who nourish a not-always-enlightened reverence for the printed word", proceeded to a criticism of the contribution. Of "J.H.G."'s disparagement of the short story as a literary form he exclaimed "It is nonsense . . . what uncritical incapacity we have here", and he paraded the names of American, English and especially French writers of the short story in contradiction of his contributor. In defence of the genre Stephens asserted that "Certainly, merit being equal, a good

\(^4\) Stephens was thirty years old at the time.
big story is better than a good little story, just as a good big horse is better than a good little horse. Bulk counts. But what is the use of asserting, with the air of Columbus, that a hundredweight is less impressive than a ton? It all depends on where and how they hit you. One brick judiciously dropped on the cranium is more impressive than all the pyramids of Egypt.

The facetiousness of Stephens' reply did not obscure the fact that he had not answered "J.H.G."'s charges against The Bulletin short story, and ironically in the same issue the paper's standard advice to contributors was published for the first time on the page. It read:

"Every man can write at least one book", every man with brains has at least one good story to tell; every man with or without brains moves in a different circle and knows things unknown to any other man. Write carefully and plainly on one side of the paper only, obliterating every unnecessary word; then mail your work to The Bulletin, which pays for accepted matter . . . Short stories, or ballads, especially on bush, mining, sporting, social, or dramatic themes, are preferred by The Bulletin; 1360 words go to a column. If you can possibly keep your story within a column all the better. Don't write a column on any subject if a half-column will do, don't write half-a-column where a mere paragraph is enough. "Boil it down".

It was just the emphasis on brevity in this advice which "J.H.G." had claimed to result in the sketchiness,
indigestibility and failure to develop characterization in many of The Bulletin short stories. Furthermore, in the passage quoted on page 80 of this study which Stephens had published on 22 February 1896, only one week before he published "J.H.G."'s piece, he had complained of the lack of substance in modern writing and had at least implied, in comparing Maupassant and Daudet unfavourably with Hugo and Dumas, that a predilection for the short story had some bearing on the "incompetency for great efforts" which he considered to mark all the promising young writers of the time. Stephens failed to answer the most pertinent of "J.H.G."'s complaints and made it clear that embryo critics could expect little encouragement on his page.

This period also saw the beginning of one of Stephens' embarrassing encounters with an Australian writer. It began on 18 April 1896 when Stephens reviewed William Gay's Sonnets.\(^5\) Gay, a minor poet, was in ill health, down on his luck, and very much offended by Stephens' review in which, after noting Gay's illness, he wrote:

> The sadness of Mr. Gay's circumstances may be read in the sympathetic criticism which his sonnets have received; but, taken together, they form a strong body of work, with something of Wordsworth's grave simplicity, of Milton's religious elevation. Singly,

with rare exceptions, they lack poetry, workmanship, distinction. Mr. Gay writes easily and not unmelodiously; the sonnet-form seems to suit him; but he has little grace or fervour, and for the most part he is merely gilding commonplace. There is so much inaccuracy in the sheet of eulogies which Mr. Gay issues that it seems necessary to say this, which detracts nothing from the impression of earnestness, sincerity, and sober dignity which his Muse leaves upon the reader.

Stephens might have done better perhaps to omit any reference to Gay's circumstances and to the generous opinions of the poet's sympathetic friends, especially as his own review followed in their path to some extent. It is difficult to understand how the sonnets could have had "something of Wordsworth's grave simplicity, of Milton's religious elevation" if they had "little grace or fervour". Stephens could certainly have foregone his lengthy comment on Gay's reply to his criticism on 23 May, and especially his last paragraph:

And, as Mr. Gay invites the comment, it may be pointed out, with the utmost sympathy for the man, that the poet should stand on his own merits. Mr. Gay's ad misericordiam personal plea - put in the forefront of his sonnets, meandering through his sheet of advertising "opinions", shouted by his lusty paragraphing chorus, and even closing his complaint above-printed - unnecessarily complicates judgment of his literary work. An artist relies on his Art: not on his crutches.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that some of the unnecessary complications were of Stephens' making and
that it was inevitable that he would have to close off the exchange with little gain to himself, personal or critical. On 6 June in "To Correspondents" there was a note which read "W. Gay. Thanks; but the discussion grows too personal for print. One regretted injustice was done you: the ad mis. plea does not meander through that sheet of advertising opinions".

These two examples of Stephens' ineptitude in dealing with an aspiring critic and an aspiring writer were indications that he was unable to handle urbanely the participation of readers in the making of the page, even though he encouraged it.

Another trend discernible in the LNT period is the increasing inclusion of verse on the page. Often several pieces were included under the heading "Reprints" with a subheading appropriate to the type of verse. For example, on 21 March 1896, under "Reprints" with the subheading "Lyrics of Love" were printed Gerald Massey's "Not I, Sweet Soul, Not I", Walt Whitman's "When I Heard at the Close of Day", and Richard Le Gallienne's "Hesperides". Again on 11 April 1896 the subheading was "A Bevy of Ballades" and

6 It seems likely that Stephens also chose the verse to be included in "Various Verses", a feature often included on a page before the editorial pages as a centre column between two columns of advertisements, and in "Bards of the Backblocks", a column which was often similarly sandwiched between advertisements on a page towards the end of The Bulletin. However it is impossible to say with certainty what responsibility Stephens had for these features.
more than two columns were occupied by Andrew Lang's "Ballade of the Southern Cross" and "Ballade of Primitive Man", Austin Dobson's "The Ballade of Imitation", and Richard Le Gallienne's "Ballade of Old Sweethearts". On 8 August almost three columns were devoted to American dialect verse by James Whitcomb Riley, Samuel Walter Foss and Mather Dean Kimball. While "Reprints" might have been a handy filling device for the editor they also gave readers of The Bulletin contact with at least a selection of contemporary verse in a variety of forms.

Topics introduced in the LNT period marked the beginnings of some of the extra-literary interests which Stephens was to pursue throughout the Red Page. Any work on an Australian topic was irresistible to him, regardless of its literary merit. On 25 April 1896 he described William Henry Willshire as "one of the men who know and can't write". Yet he devoted a large part of the page to a review of Willshire's book about Northern Territory aborigines, Land of the Dawning, from which he quoted liberally. Like the book itself the review is unworthy of serious critical attention except that it displayed Stephens' unquestioning adherence to the racist

view of Australia’s original inhabitants taken by white citizens at the time, a view which had been endorsed by The Bulletin at least since the middle of the 1880s. The review also revealed that Stephens was interested, albeit callously and even pruriently, in aboriginal life and customs. Moreover as a journalist Stephens could hardly have allowed to pass into limbo Willshire’s testimony to the ubiquity of the newspaper on which he worked, and so he began the review as follows:

The latest compliment reaches this locality with rather a left-handed swing:

... The Sydney Bulletin holds the proud sway over all Australian print-producers. It not only reaches the combos and stockmen of Central Australia, but it reaches lepers on isolated islands, lightouse-keepers that are difficult to approach, and wild aboriginals have used its red cover as the salient point of their costume.

The unapproachable lighthouse-keeper may pass; but is it exactly as a leader of leper opinion, a costumier of wild aboriginals, that one would wish to pose?

A few weeks after this Stephens gave the first explicit indication that he felt the constraints which the demands of weekly journalism imposed on him. On 23 May 1896 under the heading "Language and Logic" he replied to "Student" who had sought to reduce one of Stephens’ assertions on religion and creed to syllogistic form in order to demonstrate its logical absurdity. After attempting a not very convincing
semantic justification of his original assertion, Stephens under a cloak of defiance entered a special plea that "finally - throttling back a hundred other pleas - the complained-of assertion was correct in form and fact, even according to arbitrary ways and notions. For its meaning was clear enough, and a hurried newspaper-man, with the world a-calling to him to write it up, may be praised if he makes his phrase memorable, but can hardly be blamed so long as it is clear".

In fact, in the tradition of The Bulletin's pointed paragraphs which Archibald had established, Stephens often made his phrases if not memorable at least lively and entertaining. For example on 28 March 1896 he remarked of a two-volume religio-historical romance that "Few large underdone pies could weigh on the silent watches of the night more than these two volumes". On 27 June he took a line from the verse of J.C. Neild:

Eftsoons the Nocent Waterspout will rise!

and thereafter made it his touchstone of bad verse. Stephens was careful to point out moreover that Neild was "not the worst poet in Australia".

Not only in expression but also in choice of themes Stephens was influenced by his newspaper setting. At this period he interested himself in the dissemination of

literature by the public libraries, campaigning against inefficiency, censorship and privilege. On 28 March he criticized the Sydney School of Arts Library as inefficient and out of date. On 18 April he noted with more than a hint of scorn the Melbourne Public Lending Library's exclusion of the works of Kipling, Zola, George Moore and Ouida. On 15 August 1896 he complained at length of books missing from the Sydney Free Public Library and aired his suspicions that the Trustees enjoyed special privileges.

While Stephens was presenting new themes, his basic attitudes remained unchanged or presented predictable developments of tendencies already disclosed in the BBE period. Poets laureate were anathema. On 29 February after quoting a few lines from Alfred Austin, Stephens remarked that "It is to be hoped that Alfred Austin will be spared to write reams of similar stuff, in order that the notion of 'honor' may be for ever detached from the office of Court-sycophant". On 21 March he described Kipling as "the leading English manufacturer of poems by machinery . . . the very best oleomargarine". On 28 March he criticized the rigidity of the Christian sexual ethic in a review he titled "Love's Material Basis" of an article by Frederick Rochell in a contemporary periodical, Free Review. On 18 April he scoffed at a series of articles by William Gladstone on "The Future
Life and the Condition of Man Therein" which he said "in view of their originality, value, scope and enlightenment might have been penned by a medieval bishop". On 14 March in reply to a correspondent, "Agnes", who had been shocked by what she described as Thomas Hardy's cultivation of sex-topics, Stephens pointed out that "Jude's fault is that its realism is crude, dull and ugly; not that it is realistic". On 6 June in a paragraph on Alice Meynell he wrote that "The literary woman, if typically feminine takes a big risk when she starves her body of blood to feed her brain. Only atypical women like George Eliot and Harriet Martineau - practically males with no debt to motherhood to pay - can safely defy the sex's physiological law". On 22 August in introducing four of Arthur Symons' verses,9 he regretted that Australia's provincial sense of propriety in art forbade his reprinting some others, and remarked that "Perhaps there is in Arthur Symons some taint of modern decadence. But he is dexterous, and a poet, and human, and sweet . . . and ah Eros? and O Eros! and O Eros, Eros!"

All these attitudes Stephens had already disclosed in writings in the BBE period. He was against the English literary establishment, scornful of Christianity and particularly irked by society's acceptance of its sexual taboos; he was also firmly convinced of the correlation

9 The verses were "The Opium-Smoker", "Paris", "Kisses" and "Escalade".
between physiology and literary production.

Appeals to physiological causes to account for deficiencies in contemporary writing by men as well as women were sprinkled through his criticism in the LNT period. In his review of Stephen Crane's *Red Badge of Courage* on 14 March 1896, he asserted that "It is the red-blooded people who make literature, and whose hot passions are literature's staples. White corpuscles are the ruin of women-writers, and of half the men", and he considered that "The want of this age and this age's literature is more red corpuscles".

In the LNT period Stephens revealed prejudice in his attitude to universities and their contribution to literature, prejudice probably more damaging to his growth in stature as a critic than his pseudo-scientific notions on the connection between physiology and literature. On 23 May 1896 he responded to the review of Lawson's *In the Days When the World Was Wide* which Edward Ellis Morris had published in the *Review of Reviews*. Morris held the chair of English, French and Germanic languages and literature at the University of Melbourne. Since Stephens considered Morris deaf to Lawson's rhymes, blind to his pictures of bush life, and insensitive to the moods the verse evoked, he dubbed Morris "The Literary

Fish", which was the heading of the article. Stephens insisted that Morris doubly deserved the title on account of his own lifeless biography of George Higinbotham. But he also attacked him on a much wider front:

And, seeing that Prof. Morris's extra-official products are of such a kind, one is moved to ask of what kind are his official products. What is his value to his class of students? to his University? to Australia?

The question has urgency. In other professional walks a man has to give proof of his powers almost every day. The doctor whose patients die continuously, the lawyer who loses his cases, the journalist whose articles grow weak and dull, is soon and sharply reminded of his lapses. The University professor has no such spur to continual effort. He 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 - judging by the average University crop.

Morris was not the only target for Stephens' wrath. He went on to express his dissatisfaction with all academics professing literature in the Australian universities.

We have had two universities in full blast for a long time now - and their achievements in the fields of law, medicine, and practical science are around us. But where are their achievements in the field of literature? From Prof. Macallum [i.e. MacCallum] of Sydney University, we have a dull compilation on the Arthurian legend; from Prof. Morris, of Melb. University - the Literary Fish aforesaid - we have the Death of Higinbotham aforesaid; there are half-a-dozen volumes of echo-verse, culture-verse, of which J.B. O'Hara's is about the best; and - what else has the Australian University mill to show after grinding for scores of years under the most favorable conditions at the flower of our youth? Where is the fire of stimulated genius, the slowly-distilled blood of educated talent? And Echo answers Swear!

This outburst must have provoked antipathy towards Stephens in the two Australian universities. At the same time Lawson was not likely to have been flattered nor his uncritical admirers pleased by Stephens' assertion that "This paper isn't fee'd to defend Lawson, though much of Lawson's work has originally appeared in this paper. Taking him by and large, Lawson is a second-rate poet - with gleams,

12 M.W. MacCallum, Tennyson's Idylls of the King and Arthurian Story from the XVIth Century (Glasgow, Maclehose, 1894).
gleams. But he is Australian - and one likes to have a little land-plot and a little poetry-plot to call one's own; he is sincere; and he has a spark of the divine fire."

Three weeks later, on 13 June 1896, Stephens published the views of a correspondent, "W", who agreed with him on the absence of literary creation by university men and asserted that universities were of little use to literature. What, for example, asked "W", could a university have done for Lawson? In his reply Stephens disclosed his intensely idealistic concept of the function of a university:

A University should be genius's fertile soil, surrounding it with all the encouraging influences of learning and culture. A University should be genius's pace-maker, pointing out the line of effort, mettling it, stimulating it by historic examples, drawing it with contagious enthusiasm and hurrying it on to a definite goal. Genius is often faint and weary; a University should be the light in its window, bright with the promise of the ideal, infusing hope, and confidence, and courage to struggle anew.

What could a University have done for Lawson? Just this. Humanity, slowly climbing the mountains of Error to the heights of Truth and Knowledge, has, like Olive Schreiner's hunter, at infinite cost of blood and tears, hewn out a stair. A University could have shown Lawson the stair. In the desert of books a man may wander long before he finds the path. In the sea of facts you may fish long before you find a pearl. A University could have shown Lawson where the pearls lie. But it is needless to multiply metaphors. From readers' own knowledge must come their conclusions. The Australian University may be, as "W" suggests, a cook asked to make soup
without stock; or it may be a cook who throws a scuttleful of wet coals on a budding flame, and extinguishes that flame for ever. Judge!

In view of these high ideals for a university and his respect for learning, Stephens' declaration of war on the Australian universities so early in his literary editorship in The Bulletin was doubly unfortunate. The feud prevented his access to ideas and literary resources which might have deepened his understanding of literature; at the same time it inhibited the flow of his ideas and thus his critical influence.

Happily there were better influences at work on Stephens in this period than either Nordau's pseudo-science or his resentment of Australian universities. He was deriving ideas from other literary critics, or at least formalizing his own theories in his examination of their ideas. On 4 April 1896 Stephens praised Frederic Harrison and rated him as a critic superior to George Saintsbury and Churton Collins. On 2 May he discussed at length Harrison's essay on Matthew Arnold in the Nineteenth Century. ¹⁴ Stephens wrote of Harrison: "Indeed, of all critics now writing, he strikes one as likest to Arnold himself - so lucid, so impartial, so sane." Disagreeing with Harrison's suggestion that the capacity to be read aloud was a mark of excellence lacking

in Arnold's verse, Stephens mused on the importance of melody in poetry:

This is a delicate and devious theme, but the writer, at all events, would be disposed to hold that the capacity of poetry to be read aloud is not an ultimate, or even a necessary, test of its merit; that the poet who appeals chiefly to the eye does not inevitably take a lower status than he who appeals chiefly to the ear; and that, consequently, since there is no finality of standard, every poet should be regarded as a challenged duellist, and permitted to choose, in this matter, his own weapons, his own standard – rapier or pistol, eye or ear. To take a local example, Victor Daley is an exceedingly clever color-poet, but a comparatively moderate tone-poet. His harmonies often appeal more to eye than to ear; his verse often loses, rather than gains, by being read aloud. Then why insist that reading-aloud should be a criterion of its merit? Every cultured person knows that he does not consciously read letters, or even words. The practised reader's eye flashes to his mind at once the picture-meaning of a phrase, a whole sentence. Often, with a single glance at a page, he can disinter the buried thought, or thoughts, which are its message. The sound of letters, or words, or sentences, need not concern him at all. Is it not then possible to insist too much on the canon of vocal melody?

In spite of this disagreement, with its typical measuring up of an Australian writer's work against an asserted critical standard, Stephens made it quite clear that he endorsed Harrison's remarks on the general principles of criticism, which he quoted, and of which the most important sections were:
Criticism, according to Arnold's practice, if not according to his theory, had as its duty to lay down decisive canons of cultured judgment to sift the sound from the vicious, and to maintain the purity of language and style. To do all this in any masterly degree requires most copious knowledge and almost encyclopaedic training in literature, a natural genius for form and tone, and above all a temper of judicial balance. The touchstone of the great critic is to make very few mistakes, and never to be carried off his balance by any pet aversion or pet affection of his own, not to be biassed so much as a hair's breadth by any salient merit or any irritating defect, and always to keep an eye well open to the true proportion of any single book in the great world of men and of affairs, and in the mighty realm of general literature. The rare power is to be able to apply to a complicated set of qualities the nicely adjusted compensations, to place a work, an author, in the right rank, and to do this for all orders of merit, with a sure, constant, unfailing touch — and without any real or conspicuous mistake.

There can be no doubt that Stephens accepted as his duty the necessity "to lay down decisive canons of cultured judgment, to sift the sound from the vicious, and to maintain the purity of language and style", especially for Australian literature. In the LNT period however he could well have put into practice Harrison's advice on the avoidance of pet aversions and pet affections.

In addition to them, he adopted a variety of tricks of typography and language, the effects of which were often unpleasantly idiosyncratic. His writing was often declamatory.
and full of rhetorical tricks. He was especially fond of employing a figure of speech in which attributes are accumulated linked by the conjunction "and"; for example, "he is dexterous, and a poet, and human and sweet". This figure could be considered a form of anaphora. In seeking metaphor and simile which were vivid and down-to-earth, he sometimes achieved ludicrous incongruity with his subject matter. He also invented words, like "pen-breath" and "paper-space" which he used on 29 February. He introduced his personal pronouns of common gender, "se", "sis", "sim", on 27 June. He played with typography to suggest meaning. For example, he attempted on 4 July 1896 to suggest typographically the gulf which separated poetry from verse.15 He also resorted to irritating perversity in his methods of ending articles and in moving from one topic to another within the page. For example on 27 June 1896 he concluded a discussion of Louise Mack's work with "And - but space shortens"; and on 18 July after a discussion of rhyme he veered on to a new theme by writing "When the reader has reached just here, he will notice that just here the introduction of some amorous verses which 'S.-W.' has written for The Bulletin comes quite malapropos. They are introduced accordingly".

15 See Illustration 1.
And yet Stephens could write lucid prose, serious but not dull, forceful but not bombastic, such as the passage discussing the importance of melody in poetry which I have quoted on page 104. It was regrettable that at this time he was inclined to exult in the space he enjoyed in *The Bulletin* and to use it as a verbal playground in which he sought to astonish his readers not with the brilliance of his ideas but with a series of tricks of diction and typography.

Despite these weaknesses it was the pursuit of one of his pet affections which accounted for the best of his work in the LNT period. He loved contemporary writing, good and bad. On 2 May 1896 after his discussion of Harrison's essay on Arnold, he rebuked a lecturer, Mr. W. M'Millan, for his advice to a Sydney audience to avoid current literature and adhere to the classics in the following terms:

> The chief use of the old classics is as a pleasant guide to present conduct, and to use them to the utmost of their old classical capacity you must have the gloss of current literature. Matthew Arnold, for example, would probably rank as a classic in the M'Millan sense of the word, and doubtless Arnold can be enjoyed independently of the dicta of Harrison or other critics, but the lover of Arnold who dips into the Nineteenth Century gets a keener zest for his enjoyment. He finds, maybe, his own opinion crystallised in the inevitable words which he could not himself command; or he finds an antagonistic opinion which sets him keenly on the alert to examine and defend his own opinion; and
either way he profits. Classical literature is good, but current literature is sometimes as good, and always as necessary to a complete education. Mr M'Millan's theory would deprive his followers of the high privilege of contact with the best minds of the age; and to what purpose?

Stephens then sought to remove the error propounded by another Sydney lecturer, Miss Badham, who had urged her audience to shun the trivial in contemporary writing. He considered that "The first essential of any mind which is a mind is catholicity. It gleans in every field, and everywhere adds to its sheaf. It cannot, without loss, pass on its task of judgment to any other mind whatever: Ipse and Ex may give evidence if they like; but from Ego must come the verdict. And a local motto for every reader might be: No eclecticism before survey." On 20 June 1896 Stephens gave lyrical expression to his love for contemporary literature in an essay in praise of new books. Stephens set his essay in a bookshop where "In the gloss and crackle of new books there is a beauté du diable which will stir literary blood in spite of all the maxims of experience. You have been stirred by it before: you know it won't last: you half turn away to the time-tested second-hand shelf: then the leaves flutter as some curious Columbus-customer peers between the uncut pages, and your heart flutters too - you are undone." A week later, on 27 June 1896 Stephens was
stirred by the appearance of a new Australian book to
write that "Australia really begins to be literary.
Buzz-z-z! . . . the air is full of the clamour of little
bees hurrying whither the new hive sits bright in morning
sunshine . . . It is inexpres-sibly pleasant to stand and
listen to them all, and to welcome each dusty new-comer
struggling homewards with his precious load tucked tight."
The occasion for this excitement was the publication of
Louise Mack's The World is Round.\textsuperscript{16} In reviewing it,
Stephens suggested at first that Miss Mack had a long way to
go as a writer but later in the review his praise was much
less inhibited, and he wrote that "All the characters in the
book are more or less drawn from life - carved from the real
ham; and the author generally cuts pretty close to the
knuckle. There is hardly a dull line, or a weak line, or a
line false in fact or sentiment, anywhere to be found. All
is most real, and graphic, and convincing, and interesting".
This passage is an example of Stephens' writing at its worst
in contrived style and folksy metaphor. He quoted two
lengthy passages from the book and the review occupied more
than two columns. Yet it was curiously inconclusive and
finished weakly "And - but space shortens". Stephens'
excitement at the emergence of a literary Australia was
heightened by the generally favourable reviews which the

\textsuperscript{16} Louise Mack, The World is Round (London, Unwin,
1896).
English edition of Paterson's verse, *The Man From Snowy River*, was receiving in the English press. These he discussed at the end of the page on 27 June. While he quoted a paragraph from the *Glasgow Herald* to illustrate its critic's failure to "grasp the rationale of brumby-hunting", generally all was forgiven in Stephens' pleasure at the tone of the reviews. He remarked of the *Glasgow Herald* review that "This is well-meant anyway", and he continued "And London Times thinks that Paterson 'at his best compares not unfavorably with the author of "Barrack-Room Ballads"! which is a good big thing to say. Most of the reviewers lay proper stress on the horsey character of the verses - which is as it should be, no doubt. Elsewhere Pegasus is a nondescript; in Australia he is really a horse, and you'll generally find him in the saddling paddock".

Stephens' elation of 27 June was shortlived. On more sober reflection, he was apparently not really happy to have Australian literature continue its journey to Parnassus on horseback. A week later, on 4 July, in his review of James Hebblethwaite's *Verse*\(^1\) he was in earnest pursuit of Australian lyric poetry and in spite of many reservations he was prepared to rank Hebblethwaite's as "some of the most essentially poetic verses ever printed in our country." In

\(^1\) James Hebblethwaite, *Verse* (Hobart, Mercury, 1896).
his verses Stephens heard echoes of Heine, of Shakespeare, of Verlaine and of Arnold. However Stephens' review left no doubt that Hebblethwaite's "modest little pamphlet", as he described it, contained only odd lines that could be called poetry. At the beginning of the review Stephens tried, partly by means of the typographic device mentioned on page 106 and shown in Illustration 1, to suggest the gulf which separated poetry from verse. He attempted further explanation in a passage which, while it did little to illuminate the nature of poetry, yielded more evidence that Stephens' response to poetry was first and foremost emotional:

Verse is the kind of thing that anyone may write with a certain amount of culture and a certain amount of pains: Poetry is the other kind of thing. And the gulf is always there -- wide, narrow, deep, shallow -- still, a gulf. Poeta nascitur, poetilla fit. Perhaps at supreme crises of existence -- first love, fatherhood, motherhood, the death of dear ones -- the poetilla may overpass the gulf, distribute sis [sic] obnoxious middle, and for a moment gain foothold on the farther verge as true Poeta. But this is rare; and even so one seems to discern the artificial stimulus, to note the lack of native spontaneity. It is the difference between the bubbling spring and the artesian bore, between beauty unadorned and beauty manicured, cosmetiqued, and dressed by Worth. Of the verser's highest efforts you can say at once, "This is fine!" -- of the Poet's you cannot say it, because you feel it so. Certainly, after the nuptials, when satiety has dulled the fragrance of passion, it becomes possible for the critic
to look a poet in the feet, and point out the ungraces. But during the honeymoon, at all events, a Poet drowns criticism in sympathy.

It is curious to note that neither his emotional sensitivity to poetry nor his great interest in and professed adherence to the highest standards of criticism assisted Stephens in the evaluation of his own verse. The LNT period contained two striking examples. On 20 June at the end of his essay in praise of new books Stephens introduced what he archly described as "some quite unseasonable verses written 'for the Bulletin'". The verses, entitled "Renaissance", were his own and the first stanza will give sufficient indication of their quality:

In my ears it is sounding to-day,
   The song of the Spring;
How my heart leaps, and urges the blood in
swift surges to greet the sweet Spring;
And my pulse, from low undertones rising to
   thunder-tones, trumpets the challenge
of mystical May;
Of witching September, while Winter's dull ember
   Glows fierce in the glamour of Spring,
The passion-fed furnace of Spring!

On 25 July he announced that none of the contributors' verses on "The Honeymoon Train" which left Sydney late each afternoon for the Blue Mountains, a topic he had suggested to them, had proved worthy of printing, and "So a poetical bill on posterity has been drawn on the premises". Stephens' attempt was no doubt meant to evoke a gentle nostalgia:
the effect is more likely to have been hilarity. Though all are bad, perhaps the following stanza should be acknowledged as the worst:

That journey! O, Paradise holds nothing sweeter! (What bliss can be bought for a twelve shilling fare?)
With Nell on my knee (she got off at the stations) Pretending to scold when I let down her hair.

Since Stephens chose to reprint both "Renaissance" and "The Honeymoon Train" in a collection of his writings, The Pearl and the Octopus and Other Exercises in Prose and Verse, the conclusion is unavoidable that his inability to apply his critical principles to his own creative writing persisted well beyond the LNT period. Yet Stephens was quick to recognise the limits of the talent of other minor writers of verse. The review of Hebblethwaite's verse discussed above was evidence of this. The column he devoted to the work of Mary Hannay Foott on 16 May 1896 furnished further evidence. In a mood of admitted nostalgia evoked by "Where the Pelican Builds", and no doubt also affected by his long friendship with Mrs. Foott, he was by no means fulsome in his praise and yet prepared to allow her to share a little of the reflection of a poet's glory. He wrote that "Her flight is low; much of her work is commonplace. But there is a ring of artless romance in her; and sometimes fervid emotion kindles her strong sincerity to abiding poetic glow".

18 A.G. Stephens, The Pearl and the Octopus and Other Exercises in Prose and Verse (Melbourne, George Robertson, 1911).
At this period Stephens reserved the highest hope he allowed himself in Australian poetry for Victor Daley. On 4 April 1896 he was eagerly looking forward to publication of Daley's first book. He announced that "Victor Daley is busy revising his poems for publication, and the book will be issued by Angus and Robertson shortly. A permanent place in Australian literature awaits it. It was Daley who caught the lyre that fell from Kendall's relaxing fingers, and he has sung for us in a manner worthy of his master. Since Brunton Stephens ceased to write, there has been no Australian to match the color, and brilliance, and tender sentiment, and delicate imagery of Daley's voice".

In prose Stephens held high hopes for Louis Becke when he reviewed his collection of stories, The Ebbing of the Tide, on 11 April 1896. The review ended on the optimistic note that "To adapt a big phrase to our little sphere, he might be called in prose, as 'The Banjo' in verse, the leader of an Australian literary Renaissance". Two weeks later, on 25 April, Stephens warned that Becke's style was satisfactory

19 Victor Daley, At Dawn and Dusk (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1898).
only while it remained simple and that there was evidence in some of his stories of loss of simplicity in long sentences. This mild rebuke was followed on 20 June by a review of *A First Fleet Family*\(^\text{21}\) which Becke had written in collaboration with Walter Jeffery and with which Stephens was obviously displeased. He considered that "In contrast to Becke's earlier books, this is dull and disappointing. Part is history; part fiction; but the fiction is merely laid on top of the history, not woven into it to make a historical novel, so the book is neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring". On 1 August another story by Becke and Jeffery, *The Mystery of the Laughlin Islands*\(^\text{22}\) was described by Stephens as "a dull booklet which one is sorry to see Australian writers' names to". This was by no means his only complaint in this issue of "Literary Notes". Of


Ethel Turner's *The Little Duchess and Other Stories* readers were warned that "You must take Little Duchessess in little doseses: too many sweets cloy", and Stephens went on to berate Turner for her failure to portray her adult characters from life as she did her children:

Fancy is a very good thing, but it cannot take the place of knowledge gained by close observation. To be strong you must be natural; to be natural you must study from nature - paint your landscapes on the spot, daisy by daisy, as Scott did; watch your characters for a week to get the characteristic trait, as Maupassant did. The characters in "The Little Duchess and Other Stories" are like the shepherds and shepherdesses in the china-shop, exquisitely pretty, and dainty, and fragile, and utterly unlike any shepherds and shepherdesses that ever existed. Consider the story "Wilkes of Waterloo", which is beautifully-finished in its way. The author takes a lot of neat little emotions, and polishes them with a neat little phrase-duster, and puts them up on the mantelpiece each exactly where it ought to be; and you feel as you gaze that they are most elegant ornaments, arranged with charming taste, and no mantelpiece could look prettier. And ... after all, why cavil that china ornaments aren't alive? Only because one hopes for living things from Ethel Turner.

After dismissing J.D. Hennessey's novel *Wynnum* as "emotional cagmag" and delivering the rebuke to Becke and Jeffery noted above, Stephens disclosed the seriousness of


his complaint against Australian writers:

There is no getting away from the truism: easy writing is damned hard reading. The book written in twenty-eight days is forgotten in twenty-eight days: the book that lives is the book that costs a life and takes a life-time. We want an Australian author to spend, like Flaubert, years in meditation before spending years in execution; the local writer, so far, is too hasty, too scrappy; he will not take a large canvas and ample time - or a small canvas and ample time - and create a masterpiece. One seems to see here and there the minds to do memorable things; but where are the zeal, the persistence, the capacity to "toil terribly" to a far-off goal? Is there in our febrile national temperament, with its quick alternations of exaltation and depression, a something antagonistic to sustained effort on any line? Is it our nature always to flare fiercely for a moment, never to cast a steady radiance over an eternity of time?

Though readers were then allowed some respite in reprints of three of Arthur Symons' lyrics, as Stephens put it "half-way up the hill of argument", he had by no means finished his admonition of local writers. The passage which followed is very important in any assessment of Stephens as a critic because it reveals his view of the modesty of Australian writers' achievements to that date and his aspirations to assist them through The Bulletin. Noting that there were in Australia a few gentlemen fortunate enough to be able to spend £1000 a year on books which they

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25 The lyrics were "At Seventeen", "A Prayer to Saint Anthony of Padua" and "Sleep".
did not read and only rarely permitted others to read, he suggested that "If The Bulletin were as well off, its thousands and its libraries should be devoted as that noble bookman Stenhouse (the so-good friend to Kendall, and Deniehy, and many a bright spirit else) fifty years ago devoted his - to encouraging struggling young writers to shun the snares of superficiality and give to their generation and their country the best that was in them. When one cannot be Horace, how fine to be Augustus!" While modest beginnings in first books were to be welcomed, Stephens insisted that their modesty had to be recognized by their authors as well as critics:

One pardons, of course, a little book to a beginner, especially when it is good; but good is not enough. We want better, and best, and better than best. Several bright Australian writers are now bringing home creditable first-fruits. But... compare them with the masterpieces of literature and note the difference, the distance. Wherein lies it? That you might toil for a year, through a volume, to explain - so hard is it to get a clear mental image of the felt idea, and to put that image into words which do not utterly caricature it. But to say that those Australians are comparatively lacking in force of thought and intensity of expression; that they want Passion and Conscience; that their often brilliant objective visualisations are presented as detached impressions, floating outside themselves, not brought home and fused and ordered in subjective consciousness, and then re-presented in their relation and proportion to the great themes of existence; - that is to say something of what should be said. We
seem to want to think and generalise more; our logical processes stop half-way; we are all induction and no deduction; our details bear no reference to principles.

Of course, one doesn't desire to turn an emu into an ostrich: one doesn't expect that little Joey will jump as far as old-man kangaroo. (This for the benefit of silly people who won't read with sympathy, and won't understand that any given word has ten thousand given shades of meaning to a thousand different people, and won't be content to take the spirit when the letter is impossible.) If lovely Thais writes beside you, you take the good the gods provide you, and are properly grateful. But, all the same, The Bulletin will never rest contented till Australian authors touch the highest standards set in literature; and then it will set the standards higher and preach discontent anew.

Typically of Stephens the conclusion of even so abrasive an assessment of contemporary Australian writing was optimistic. The highest standards did not seem to him to be beyond the reach of Australian literature. Three weeks later, on 22 August 1896 in the last issue in the LNT period, optimism was the keynote. Stephens decided that Thomas Heney's novel, The Girl at Birrell's, in spite of its literary shortcomings, had "some claim to be considered the most characteristically Australian book published".

Stephens rated Heney's prose more poetic than his verse but even amid his verse there were acceptable portions, a stanza

from which he quoted. Stephens then concluded:

Crude and faulty enough, this; but poetic - and true. Wherefore may we not sum up in some lines which Robert Richardson has written for The Bulletin?

PAN IS NOT DEAD

Pan is not dead: he lives to-day
Here in our South-land, far away
From Tempe's streams in Thessaly,
Where once he reigned in pride and glee!
And ye who list may hear him play,
By creek and cove and sunlit bay,
His slender pipes, or sad or gay,
Touching his reed-stops piercingly -
   Pan is not dead.
And if perchance his Southern lay
Be fashioned in a wider way
Than shepherds heard in Arcady,
Still is it fresh and strong and free,
And wider yet shall grow its sway -
   Pan is not dead.

Truly this was a sentiment impossible to put into "words which do not utterly caricature it", and yet the fact that Stephens felt this way promised well for his continuing efforts on behalf of Australian writing. With such a faith, works were inevitable. Stephens entered "The Red Page" phase of his literary editorship with ambitions for Australian literature larger than could have been his reasonable hopes based on work to date. Against the promise of his interest in and optimism about Australian writing must be set some apprehension that Stephens had not yet applied himself to the enunciation of a more consecutive theory of literature and that his quirks and distractions were already so much part of him.
Chapter Four

"A Wealth of Ideas":

The Red Page from 29 August 1896 to 25 December 1897

A survey of the first sixteen months in which the Red Page was published under that title presents difficulties. Stephens wrote so much on so many topics that a selection must be made, but the selection must be generous if it is to convey his achievements and his weaknesses, evidence of both his sound critical judgments and his absurdities. His criticism in this period was by turns serious and flippant, perceptive and pedantic; it covered the great themes of literature and dabbled in any subject which caught his fancy or appeared to prop up any extreme view he had propounded.

Distractions from the pursuit of literature abounded. On 17 April 1897 there appeared a column heading, "Notes and Queries", and beneath it an announcement which began:

It is proposed to take advantage of The Bulletin's unique Australasian circulation to collect information from all manner of readers and observers on all manner of curious and interesting subjects. Preference will be given to notes and queries which are especially Australasian, or kin with Australasian, in their origin and reference - particularly to those dealing with aboriginal life and language, natural history, white-Australasian language, customs, exploits, and typical developments, characteristic old-time anecdotes and so on.
On 22 May 1897 the page was headed "The Red Page of Notes and Queries"; on 19 June, 17 July, 7 August and 4 September the heading was "The Red Page of Australasian Notes and Queries". On 3 July and 16 October, one column of "The Red Page" was devoted to these researches. On 22 May 1897 there was a long note by "T.S.R." on Adam Lindsay Gordon's plagiarism, but the subjects were otherwise non-literary. Frequently they were trivial, for example, red hair and its effects on the personalities of those who possessed it. Though the "Notes and Queries" preoccupations were occasionally pursued on the Red Page in 1898, most of the material gravitated to the "Aboriginalities" page which first appeared in The Bulletin on 21 August 1897.¹ A.G. Stephens apparently took some time to realize the justice of James Brunton Stephens' complaint when "Notes and Queries" first occupied the Red Page. Brunton Stephens inquired with mock ferocity "What the devil do you mean by prostituting that noble Red Page to 'the real Mackay', 'Red Hair', 'Aboriginal Habits' and so forth?"²

¹ Charles H. Bertie in his compilation of Aboriginalities from The Bulletin (Sydney, N.S.W. Bookstall Co., 1913) claimed the page began in 1898 but this is incorrect.

² James Brunton Stephens, Letter to A.G. Stephens. Typescript copy in The Papers of A.G. Stephens 1892-1933, vol. 7. Mitchell Library MS A2303. The first page of the letter is missing and the date can only be put between that of the preceding letter on the TS, 21 April 1897, and that of the following, 29 August 1897.
At least the "Notes and Queries" were discrete from the literary matter on the Red Page. Unfortunately Stephens' views on physiology as a determinant of all human behaviour, physical, intellectual and literary, and on genius as a disease of the nerves, were intermingled with his literary criticism. On 3 October 1896 he discussed "The Genealogy of Genius" and under that heading introduced his "Nousometer", a measure constructed on the basis that slowness or quickness of wits "refers to nothing but the vibrations of cerebral atoms". The tone of the article was serio-comic. With his pseudo-scientific measuring instrument Stephens sought to make a point of the proximity of genius to madness, by

NOUSOMETER

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<th>Vibrations</th>
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<tr>
<td>Madness (say)</td>
<td>+ 38,001 ((-1) to -19,000) (\text{See asylums, churches, &amp;c.})</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intense Genius (say)</td>
<td>(38,000 \to 35,000) (\text{Heine, Poe, Shelley, Blake, &amp;c. (fill 'em up for yourself).})</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extense Genius (say)</td>
<td>(35,000 \to 30,000) (\text{Voltaire, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Whitman, Homer, &amp;c.})</td>
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<tr>
<td>High Talent (say)</td>
<td>(30,000 \to 20,000) (\text{Hugo, Goethe, Byron, Thackeray, &amp;c. (keep filling: this is meant to be suggestive, not exhaustive).})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediocre Talent (say)</td>
<td>(20,000 \to 5,000) (\text{Scott, Dickens, our own (more or less) Marcus Clarke, Gordon, &amp;c.})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Talent (say)</td>
<td>(5,000 \to 16) (\text{Parkes, Neild, Marie Corelli, &amp;c.})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idiocy (say)</td>
<td>-19,001 (\text{to +1.5}) (\text{See asylums, Parliaments, &amp;c.})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
establishing that genius was also a disease. On the antecedents he ventured the opinion that "To make a genius is as easy - or as difficult - as making a cheese. You want from one parent a good-quality blood with plenty of red corpuscles: from the other a good-quality brain and a touch of nervous disease". This assertion could, with the rest of the article, be passed over as an absurd aberration if Stephens had not adopted the habit of later using in the context of serious criticism ideas which he had originally advanced, if not in jest, at least in a mood of irresponsible speculation. The necessity of filling a weekly page containing approximately 4,000 words surely precluded his giving much mature consideration to a great deal of what he wrote. Stephens however attempted to build upon the weak foundations of his physiological assertions. On 19 December 1896 for example, in reviewing Clement Shorter's *Charlotte Bronte and Her Circle*, Stephens returned to his earlier claim on the lineage of

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4 A.G. Stephens' intense personal interest in the nature of insanity and its relationship to genius might have stemmed from a tragedy in his own family when one of his older brothers shot and killed another brother.

5 During the sixteen months under survey there were only two occasions on which the Red Page did not appear, namely 12 December 1896 and 6 February 1897. It seems therefore that Stephens in this period was allowed only one week's leave per year.

genius when he remarked that "It was written the other day that to get a genius you want from one parent a good-quality blood with plenty of red corpuscles, from the other a good-quality brain and a touch of nervous disease. The Brontë family, perhaps the most characteristic genius-family of which there is record, fills these conditions admirably." There followed details of the miseries of her mother's marriage and Charlotte's death in childbirth. The latter event Stephens took as further justification for his view that "In proportion as is diverted to nourish the brain the blood which maternity demands elsewhere, the result is sterility, as in the case of George Eliot, or death, as in the case of Charlotte Brontë". Least judicious of all were the conclusions to which his musings on the misfortunes of the Brontës brought Stephens in the last paragraph where he claimed that "These things, among others, are proofs that literature is made on physiological principles; and that a family doctor - who can point to one page, and say - 'Scrofula!' to another - 'Eupepsia!' and to a third - 'Phthisis!' - should be easily the best of literary critics".

Stephens returned to the genius-family theme on 24 April 1897 in introducing an article on Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and in it he used his ideas of genius as a disease as a springboard for speculation on the debilitating effect of literary production. Significantly the passage began with a reference to Max Nordau, the source of Stephens' ideas on
Nordau says Rossetti was a degenerate, and Nordau is right. To degeneracy we owe all that is best in every field of artistic accomplishment. From degeneracy—that is, from a departure from the plane of sound physical health most advantageous to the perpetuity of the race—springs everything that most beautifully embroiders the coarse stuff of human existence... Leslie Stephen was quite wrong when he said the highest poetry is the product of a thoroughly healthy mind. The highest poetry is only produced at a high cost of nervous energy—that is to say, at the cost of degeneracy, temporary or permanent.

In seeking physiological causes for all literary phenomena, Stephens made many far-fetched assertions. For example in a review published on 6 March 1897 in which he was critical of Alex Montgomery's excessive use of iambic rhythms in his prose, he remarked that "It is interesting (and quite unprofitable in the absence of evidence) to speculate on the physical reasons of Montgomery's marked iambic preference. Possibly his heart is weaker in systole than in diastole: instead of the regular lub-dub it beats a biassed [sic] lub-dub—quaver crotchet in lieu of crotchet-crotchet. Thus in a slight valve-weakness, making a permanent change in the corpuscles, one might find the cause of the strong beat, the monotonous music of his prose". Since the point Stephens sought to make was the need for variety in prose rhythms, the analogy of the heartbeat was particularly inept.

His belief in the power of physiology probably accounted for his interest in medical literature which he often
discussed on the Red Page. On 9 October 1897 for example, he devoted most of the page to a discussion of the Australian Medical Journal and to G.V. Poore's Nervous Affections of the Hand and Other Clinical Studies. In musing on the latter work Stephens brought forth one of his many extraordinary explanations of female behaviour when he wrote that "Female loquacity is probably due chiefly to the greater affectability of the female brain - which is, as it were, hung more loosely than the male, and reacts more easily to evanescent impressions". Stephens' views on women were given their most consecutive expression in the period on 17 October 1896 when he reviewed Eppie Frazer's Human Verses under the heading, "Woman - Man's Parasite?" Stephens left no doubt that his belief was in the affirmative, since in his view "Woman is essentially - naturally - necessarily a vessel of passion; she 'suffers incessantly the eternal wound of love', as a Frenchman poetically puts it. Her sex is of much more moment to her than his to a man (except negatively): a man must be three parts brain; a woman, to be womanly, must always be three parts womb - 'womb-man', as the dictionaries show her".


While in establishing theories Stephens strove continually to ascribe literary phenomena to physiological causes, in discussing particular works his deterministic materialism was frequently replaced by a fanciful romanticism. The following passage appeared in a review of Richard Le Gallienne’s *Prose Fancies* on 19 September 1896 under the heading "In the Clouds of Fantasy":

In reality, men and women are nothing but balloons: they have a globe of spirit and a car of flesh. Sometimes - most times, indeed - the globe never gets inflated, and the car remains on earth - fulfilling ever so many useful purposes and ever so few that are beautiful. And sometimes a man has just spirit enough to make him a captive balloon - he would like to soar higher if he could; but his fleshy car is too heavy - he is tethered always to the ground. And rarely you find an individual - like Blake, or Shelley, or Keats - whose head is pure hydrogen, and who carries so little material ballast that he had hardly touched earth before he is away again forever, a speck in the ether almost undiscernible by the grosser souls he leaves behind him. Only sometimes he keeps on singing, singing, singing as he mounts, and to those who would fain follow, but who are left behind like the little lame boy of Hamelin, the mere song of what he sees is very precious.

There could hardly be a clearer indication of Stephens' romanticism than this word picture, with its deliberate echo of Shelley, of the lyric poet as skylark soaring to regions inaccessible to other men and becoming for them a combination

of high priest and seer. Such a passage was in strong contrast to Stephens' strident denials in other contexts that any aspect of man transcended the physical. Consider for example the terms in which on 20 March 1897 he rejected the concept of "soul"; he wrote that "Although the use of the word 'soul' in a poetic sense is conceded to those of religious habit, it is suggested that in the interests of correct terminology 'brain' might be substituted for 'soul' in many places... The Brain can do everything the Soul can, except live for ever - and the Soul's claims in this direction have never been passed for payment by a recognised insurance office." In the same article he also maintained that "All that there is of conscious life in any individual resides in the brain and attached nervous system... it is the knowledge of physiology, not the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom". Stephens' philosophy which made no attempt to reconcile this view with that of man as "a globe of spirit and a car of flesh" was lacking in depth and in disciplined thinking. In fact, though he made no explicit admission to this effect, while Stephens looked to physiology to explain literature, he looked to literature to explain life. Not physiology but art was his substitute for religious belief. In reviewing two stories by Stephen Crane on 14 September 1896, Stephens asserted that "The essential

characteristic of a work of art, whether in fiction or elsewhere, is that it should be no isolated presentment of detached things or persons, be in contact with every facet of existence. Every great book is more or less a new edition of the Book of Life".

In harmony with this belief Stephens demanded that literature should yield universal truth. On 13 February 1897, in discussing Alex Montgomery's stories, Stephens insisted that "To be enduring, literary work must be brought into contact with some primal fact of humanity; there must be a universal 'moral' in it. Not the 'moral' of the Sunday-school tract, dragged in brutally in violation of perspective and probability, but the natural moral which abstractly considered, every incident of life has for all things living". By a translation of one Maupassant story and a paraphrase of another, Stephens sought to show his readers how fiction could embody a universal truth, a real insight into the human condition. With grave simplicity he pointed out that "It is in the human stories - the stories in which you, the reader, might be actor, and not the individual stories, which depend on some peculiarity of person or circumstances, which you, the reader, do not possess or do not know - that Maupassant's power is greatest".

11 Alex Montgomery, Five-skull Island and Other Tales of the Malay Archipelago (Melbourne, George Robertson, 1897).
Stephens placed his highest hopes in the artist but he professed a firm belief in man generally. He would not have agreed with the sentiments expressed in the quatrain he printed at the top of the Red Page on 2 October 1897:

With sad eyes dulled by peering, far,
In search of God, black voids we scan -
Whilst all around us like a star
He shines through his shekinah - Man!

For Stephens, man's glory was visible and his own, not a reflection of that of Jehovah. Armed with this humanistic belief he continually deplored the moralizing in contemporary works by second-rate authors. That man and his world stood in no need of redemption by mortification was a belief to which he adhered firmly throughout this period. Near its beginning, on 5 September 1896, in discussing John H. Nicholson's allegory Halek, he affirmed his belief that "Man's built just right; all his progress has come through stretching out to satisfy his appetites, which want only regulating, not mortifying; and the time to be happy is now, the place to be happy is here". More than a year later he expressed the same view in very similar terms. The occasion was his review of Stephen Phillips' Christ in Hades and Other Poems on


6 November 1897, when, parrying the diction of Christian aphorism as he often did, he wrote that "Nothing profits the man who loses his own world, his only world for we can't see life sub specie aeternitatis any longer. The happy hunting-grounds are Here and Now".

Stephens' humanism led him to criticize adversely any work based on religious belief. His strictures were not limited to the second-rate. In the review of Halek on 5 September 1896, much larger literary figures than Nicholson were also assailed. He ventured the opinion that "There is no doubt that, owing to the religious character of their work, both Bunyan and Milton (as epic poet) have been ridiculously over-valued. Now we are beginning to get them in their proper literary perspective." This was typical of the provocative asides with which Stephens peppered his reviews in this period. Towards the end of 1897 he seemed to embark on a determined search for controversy, especially in his evaluations of Burns and Tennyson. In the first Burns was subjected to analysis in the light of Stephens' physiological beliefs, and his verdict was that "Burns was of the Shakespeare type - 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. The liver of such men is a physiological poem better than any they ever gave to literature. What beautiful bile Shakespeare must have had!"

In both the essays on Burns much stress was placed on his debt to the old ballads, some of which Stephens printed on 4 December 1897 alongside the poems of Burns which were allegedly derived from them. The comparison hardly made the point Stephens was pressing, namely that Burns was a plagiarist. However that Stephens' intention was to stir controversy rather than to make a serious contribution to the criticism of Burns was suggested by his quotation in the second essay from the closing paragraph of the first. At the end of the second article he wrote "Yet again, this notice is not intended to exactly show Burns's place in the poetic firmament, 'but only to hint how far the true conception of him is removed from the conception which is legendary and Scottish'."

On 11 December 1897, Stephens ridiculed Tennyson for his effeminacy, his friendship with Queen Victoria, his title, his laureateship, his snobbery and his lack of involvement in the social issues of his time. Stephens bestowed some praise on Tennyson. He wrote for example that "There has never lived a verse-writer with greater mastery of rhythm and cadence, with keener appreciation of the sensuous beauty
of words". However the praise was soon tempered in Stephens' comparison of Tennyson with other English poets who were his contemporaries or nearly so. In Stephens' view "Compared with Matthew Arnold's or Browning's work, Tennyson's is like an artificial fountain beside a mountain tarn or mountain torrent . . . His verbal magic is potent, but it is never the natural magic of Keats".

The controversy aroused by these articles on Burns and Tennyson was extensive and will be a theme in the following section of this study. In the period under survey there are opportunities to study the way in which Stephens handled some of the other controversies he aroused.

Reaction to his "nousometer" was apparently swift, since a fortnight after its appearance, that is on 17 October 1896, he published comments by "B.E." and "C." on his article. However Stephens did not allow the contributions to proceed without interruption. He intruded after each paragraph of the letters and the interruptions were rude and overbearing. "B.E." was taken to task for his syntax. "C." was accused of being slow-witted since he was not receptive to Stephens' ideas. The value in the exchange was that it led Stephens to disclose, albeit aggressively, some of his critical philosophy. He maintained that "The faculty of criticism cannot possibly depend upon the critic's incapacity to be swayed by his subject, since criticism is nothing but an
expression of how the subject sways the critic. 'B.E.' seems to think that a critic should be an insensitive block. He shouldn't. The more numerous and more delicate the stimuli to which his mind reacts, and the more certainly and vigorously it reacts, the better the critic. The nature of his criticism depends upon the quality of his brain and the extent of his knowledge." "B.E." suggested that the fact that critics, rather than novelists, playwrights, or poets, scored best on what he called "The Bulletin's mind-measure" might have been construed as favouritism. In denying this charge, Stephens replied that "Roughly speaking it may be said that the most distinctive quality of the poet is power of imagination; of the critic, power of analysis. Imagination is constructive, creative, largely synthetic. A critic needs power of synthesis too, but his power of analysis is employed precedently in any given case: he starts from a passive synthesis, the resultant of his previous impressions, analyses actively, and makes a fresh synthesis."

The worst example in this period of Stephens' inability to assimilate adverse criticism occurred one week later, on 24 October 1896, when he quoted, in a paragraph under "Items", John Le Gay Brereton's inquiry on whether the Red Page was invading the realm of humour in its claim that "only the meat-eater can write poetry". Stephens' reply to this charge was "Pooh! Didn't . . .".
While Stephens was generous in the space he allowed contributors on the page, he continued most ungenerous in his editorial comments on their views, and he well earned the title he frequently bestowed on himself in the period, namely "The Local Dogmatist". On 20 February 1897 for example, he introduced under the heading "A Literary Outlook" some comments from "Anglo-Australian" with the promise that "for the sake of fair play, the Foreign Dogmatist is allowed to say his sooth unhampered by editorial patting and pruning". His comments came immediately after the contribution and were churlish and pedantic; even the contributor's spelling of Swinburne as "Swinburn" was commented upon. Yet when "J.M." wrote on 3 April 1897 advising Stephens to abandon the use of his pronoun of indeterminate gender, "se", Stephens replied that "J.M." seems a fair specimen of the pedantic little insects who block the pathway to reform ... First used in jest it [the pronoun "se"] is approving itself in earnest and of real utility, and the 'foreign' feeling is disappearing in the habit of use". These extracts are ample evidence that Stephens was stubborn and ungracious in the face of criticism from his readers, and that in argument with his contributors he adopted attitudes which were the antithesis of the good humour with which he expected them to take his criticism. "The Local Dogmatist" was always

ready to justify his harshness to contributors on the grounds of truth to high literary standards. On 2 January 1897 he noted that William Gay's second booklet of verse continued earlier pleas for special consideration on the grounds of the writer's health. Stephens remarked that "If he is dying, he is only dying as fast as the rest of us". Gay died a few months later. Stephens also asked "And why does he set literary teeth on edge by offering his new volume to a host of bethanked patrons ... Mr. Gay has plenty of literary instinct: why will he not avoid even the appearance of bartering the muse's favors for woollen comforters?"

Perhaps with memories of his previous encounter with Gay, already discussed on pages 91-93, and perhaps also anticipating further controversy, Stephens continued that "Some people say it is in bad taste to write like this; but in how much worse taste is it to give reason for writing like this. One's pen moves unwillingly; but more duty is owed to Literature than to the littérature". Somewhat quixotically a fortnight later on 16 January 1897, Stephens reprinted on the Red Page Gay's "Primroses" which had formed the frontispiece of the booklet, and rose to the writer's defence against another critic. Of "Primroses" Stephens wrote that "This is as good as Wordsworth, in Wordsworth's rather-tame-rabbit way. And the neat climax of the final lines is

16 William Gay, Christ on Olympus and Other Poems (Bendigo, Wm. Gay, 1896).
wholly undeserving of the pedantic censure awarded in a
Melb. paper - surely by Prof. Morris, the Literary Fish".
Predictably there was no hint that Stephens' pen moved at
all unwillingly on 18 December 1897 when he catalogued the
inaccuracies he had discovered in Professor Morris's
dictionary of Australasian English.\(^\text{17}\)

Stephens had scant praise in this period for any of the
other critics of Australian literature whose work came to
his notice. A. Patchett Martin's review of the arts in
Australia for the \textit{British Australasian}\(^\text{18}\) was described in
the Red Page on 11 September 1897 as "interesting enough, but
hopelessly out of touch and out of date". Of Desmond Byrne
whose \textit{Australian Writers}\(^\text{19}\) he reviewed on 30 January 1897,
Stephens complained that "he has not the critic's instinct or
capacity, and rarely lightens his subject with the critic's
illuminating flash". Byrne was also criticized for confining
his remarks to "the bonny back numbers", Clarke, Browne,
However, the critic whose ventures into the assessment

17 E.E. Morris, \textit{Austral English: Dictionary of
Australasian Words, Phrases, Usages} ... 
(London, Macmillan, 1897).

18 The State Library of Victoria is the only Australian
library which holds \textit{British Australasian} for 1897 and no
article answering this description can be traced in it.

19 Desmond Byrne, \textit{Australian Writers} (London,
Richard Bentley and Son, 1896).
of Australian writing most offended Stephens was Douglas Sladen. On 24 October 1896, a Red Page paragraph reported that Sladen had written in *The Queen* apropos Louise Mack's *The World is Round*, that "In a city where *The Bulletin* is a power, art and literature have a good deal to struggle against". Stephens' rejoinder was "Not so much, anyway as when Sladen sloped around Australia and edited a collection of Australian verses for a London publisher" in which his own tame rhymes take up nearly as much space as the poetry of Kendall and Brunton Stephens. *The Bulletin* has a lot of faults to answer for, but it never sank quite so low as to maltreat a thrilling theme in the cruel fashion of Sladen when he wrote of Mrs Watson, the heroine of Lizard Island". Stephens then quoted two stanzas from Sladen's

20 On "The Library" page of *The Queen*, the Lady’s Newspaper for 15 August 1896 there appeared under "Short Notices" a review of Louise Mack's *The World is Round* which began: "It is not probably all Miss Mack's fault that her story is cruelly told and not, apart from the telling, of much value. Australia may not offer a society advantageous to imaginative literature, or perhaps the fact is the simpler one that a writer of great imaginative literature has not yet happened to be born in Australia . . ." This review is unsigned but Sladen edited the page and signed the main article on it each week.

21 Sladen edited three collections of Australian verse for London publishers, namely *Australian Ballads and Rhymes* (London, Scott, 1888); *Australian Poets, 1788-1888* (London, Griffith, Farran, 1888); and *A Century of Australian Song* (London, Scott, 1888). The last-named was the best known and presumably that to which Stephens was referring.
"Mrs Watson, a Queensland Heroine," the bathos of which supported his assertions. There is a strong likelihood that this outburst of Stephens against Sladen was based on hearsay evidence. The reported remark does not appear in Sladen's notice of The World is Round in The Queen and its pointedness would have been quite out of keeping with the dignity and expensive dullness of a journal which was a model of Victorian propriety.

On 18 September 1897 Stephens used the Red Page for a lengthy castigation of Sladen, wherein his verse, his British impudence, and most of all his reputation overseas as a "representative Australian" were attacked. The article was interspersed with a recurrent chorus of "Let us writhe". What had particularly upset Stephens on this occasion was the inclusion in a new edition of a slang dictionary of erroneous examples of Australian usage gathered by the lexicographers from Sladen's writings. The review contained hints of Stephens' frustration that his antipodean thunderings were unlikely to be heard in the appropriate quarters. He wrote, after a page of protest, that "It is useless to protest, apparently. Sladen has been puffed into London

22 Douglas Sladen, Australian Lyrics (Melbourne, George Robertson, 1883), pp.25-27.

prominence as 'a representative Australian' and 'The Bulletin's' affirmation on behalf of Australia that in that capacity he is an impudent literary humbug will assuredly never reach the minds of all the purchasers of the 'Slang Dictionary' . . . One can only hope that the historian of the period will be able to refer to this notice (it is written to that end) and authoritatively contradict the philologist". Thus in addition to all of his contemporary concerns, Stephens had a mind also that posterity should inherit accurate information. This solicitude for history even allowed him to see some merit in Charles Lyne's adulatory Life of Sir Henry Parkes. In perfect harmony with The Bulletin's long established editorial line, Stephens detested Parkes and vilified him at every opportunity. He characterized Lyne's biography as an attempt to "justify the ways of Parkes to men" and was scathing of the biographer's literary talents, but Stephens saw that Lyne had "done much valuable drudgery by which Parkes's future biographers will benefit".

Despite all Stephens' prejudices, distractions, eccentricities of conviction, contradictions in philosophy and aggression at the hint of opposition, to write only of them would be to give a distorted impression of the Red Page between August 1896 and December 1897. Stephens was also

bringing to Red Page readers and to Australian writers much that was valuable, exciting and unlikely to have reached them from any other source.

Stephens was concerned that Australia should be aware of world literature. He complained on 23 January 1897 of Australian ignorance of non-English literature, and on 20 November 1897 of the unavailability of many excellent American books in Australian bookshops. His references to European authors were frequent, their example was sometimes commended as that of Maupassant already discussed on page 130 above. On 5 December 1896 he offered a lyric by Emile Verhaeren for translation by contributors, and his comments on their submissions on 23 January 1897 were carping and pedantic. However, his major effort in this period to impart knowledge of French literature was the page for 5 June 1897 which he headed "The Red Page of Villon" and which was illustrated with a silhouette of the gallows at Montfaucon. While the typographical effect was untidy and some of his comments on translating Villon were tedious, Stephens' effort to bring a European poet to the notice of his readers was laudable. American verse was frequently reprinted on the Red Page. On 14 August 1897 the whole page was an obituary tribute to Jean Ingelow. Her "Echo and the Perr" was reprinted and Stephens attempted an assessment of her total work which was marred by his speculations on the
effect of her unmarried state on her literary motivation. On 11 September 1897 he reprinted Ingelow's "High Tide on the Coast of Lincolnshire". However, the American poet he most frequently reprinted in this period was Thomas Bailey Aldrich whom he rated on 10 July 1897 as "probably the name highest on the list of living American poets". Stephens believed that "With Whitman died the second of America's two great poets; the first was Poe. The remainder are mostly clever men like Lowell, who write forcible verses; or cultured men like Longfellow who write tolerable verses with a popular and rather crude sentimental appeal, or pleasant rhymers like Aldrich, who weave phrases tenderly and gracefully, and now and then strike a strong chord of humor or pathos". Stephens also occasionally reprinted on the Red Page in this period prose from overseas literary magazines and newspapers. On 12 June 1897 for example, George Bernard Shaw's essay on Meredith's Essay on Comedy was reprinted from The Saturday Review.

More remarkable than the reprints in this period were the illustrations on the Red Page. Their improvement over the sixteen months was dramatic. On the first issue entitled "The Red Page" on 29 August 1896, there was a reproduction

25 Verses by Aldrich were reprinted on the Red Page on 20 February, 27 March, 8 May, 15 May and 11 September 1897.

26 The Saturday Review, 27 March 1897, pp. 314-316.
of one of Frank P. Mahony's illustrations for Lawson's *While the Billy Boils*; its draughtsmanship was poor, so was its reproduction; its size was out of proportion to the amount of surrounding text from which it was fenced off with a harsh black line. Yet by 19 December 1896 there were good reproductions of two Beardsley drawings, and on 8 May 1897 the reproductions of four drawings, two by Beardsley and two by Phil May, came off very well and the setting of the type around them was technically admirable. 27 A series of posters printed on 27 February 1897 also came off well, and though some of the other blocks, like that for "The Babies Garden", a design for a nursery wallpaper by Will Bradley, on 23 January 1897, were obviously not of highest quality, Stephens actually succeeded through the illustrations in bringing to the Red Page in this period some of the atmosphere of Art Nouveau and the Arts and Crafts Movement. That he was able to do this is surprising when one considers the gulf which separated the quality and colour of the Red Page from the materials which Beardsley and Morris and their followers demanded for their work. During this time Stephens persisted in his own art criticism but had little to offer except tendentious reminders to local artists of their shortcomings. The improvement in the illustrations on the Red Page suggested

27 See Illustration no. 2.
that at least he was learning how to specify his requirements and that he took advantage of the technical competence of other members of The Bulletin staff in achieving the effects he wanted. From 11 December 1897 an elaborate printer's rule was used to make a border for the Red Page. While its blackness brought a faint aura of bereavement, it served to emphasize the separate identity of the page.

There were important reviews and discussions of Australian literature between August 1896 and December 1897. While Stephens devoted much space to the cultivation of this "little land-plot", there were signs that not all the writers growing in it were treated in like manner. On 29 August 1896,

28 The conclusion that the Red Page had established its own separate identity and even a coterie might be drawn from the appearance on the page on 13 February, 20 February and 27 February 1897 of cigarette advertisements intended to make snob appeal to Red Page readers. The text of the advertisement for "Old Dominion" cigarettes on 20 and 27 February was:

Red Page Readers should smoke Old Dominion Cigarettes. Why? Because your "Red Page" Reader is a thoughtful man. He probably has a critical taste and a refined mind. If he gives way to intoxication, it is literary intoxication - not beer; and such a man, one who could revel in Red Page cleverness, would appreciate Old Dominion Cigarettes. They are just as cleverly constructed, and the result of just as much thought. Old Dominion Cigarettes are good - really good - Nothing better in the shape of a cigarette is made. Light one first, and read the Red Page after.

29 See page 102 above.
in the first issue called "The Red Page", Stephens reviewed Lawson's *While the Billy Boils*. He first made the point that Lawson's work was widely known and acclaimed in contrast to that of Gordon and Clarke in their lifetimes, and he remarked that "The quickening of the Australian literary sense in the past ten years is wonderful to look back upon. Now, if there are not many to detect new talent, there are very many able to appreciate it when detected and ready to chorus enthusiastic welcome". Stephens' reception of *While the Billy Boils* was not especially enthusiastic, though it was in parts perceptive of the role which Lawson was playing in Australia's cultural development. In the following passage Stephens expressed Lawson's importance for his contemporaries:

The charm of Lawson's prose is essentially that of his poetry. Art he has none; his artifices are of the feeblest. For the most part he might say with Antony:

I only speak right on;
I tell you that which you yourselves do know.

But what others merely know, Lawson feels. He is indeed abnormally sensitive; the trifles which make evanescent impression on ordinary minds draw blood (and ink) from his. Then ordinary minds with pleasure recognise their own impressions. "Why, these are our thoughts; these people are our people; these scenes and places are the scenes and places we have known for all our lives."

Precisely; yet until Lawson pictured, revealed and vitalised them, those thoughts, those people, those places and scenes never really existed for ordinary minds.

30 Henry Lawson, *While the Billy Boils* (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1896).
Stephens had several specific complaints about the book. He disliked the fragmentary nature of some of the stories and quarreled with their overall arrangement. He considered that "the least that could be done was to concentrate the interest as far as the slight skeins of similarity permitted, and instead of half-a-hundred taps, to strike half-a-dozen blows". Stephens would in fact have had Lawson go much further than the gathering of the stories according to their themes on "Mitchell", "Steelman", "the bush", "the city", and so on. He suggested that if even he had contrived a set of characters to pass from chapter to chapter, as Mark Twain manages, and hung his matter on their pegs, his result would have been stronger." Stephens also disliked the echoes of other writers which he detected in some of Lawson's work. His most generous praise was for Lawson's style. Stephens considered that "His instincts of assimilation and selection are matched in his later work by his instinct of expression. His quaint simple style suits his themes and mode of thought and his manner is strengthening. 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." Even this praise held a strong suggestion that what Lawson achieved was instinctive and therefore effortless and not especially commendable. In fact the whole of the review was tinged with
disapproval of Lawson, and the insistence that Lawson had been well rewarded in public acclaim for anything he had achieved. On top of this underlying atmosphere of disapproval, Stephens issued a couple of explicit warnings to Lawson. After making the complaints about While the Billy Boils which I have outlined above, presumably in the realization that his lack of enthusiasm for Lawson's first substantial published prose work needed justification, Stephens wrote that "the standard for criticism of Lawson is rising as he rises. We ask from him better things than we asked a year ago. Hitherto he has only had to make a reputation - with his endowments an easy task: now - O labor of giants! - he has to maintain it."

The implication in this passage that a year before Stephens had himself been indulgent in his comment on Lawson's work was misleading in the light of his Red Page comments at that time.31 A little later in the review Stephens warned that "reputation like rank has its responsibilities. If Lawson's is not to wane, he must wax continually".

While from Lawson Stephens demanded high standards his requirements of lesser writers were much more lenient. His treatment of Roderic Quinn presented a good example of this. On 19 May 1897 Stephens reviewed Quinn's novel Mostyn Stayne.32 The review was prefaced by a disquisition on the connection

31 See pages 76-80 above.

32 Roderic Quinn, Mostyn Stayne (Melbourne, George Robertson, 1897).
between tubercular disease and imaginative power. In Stephens' view, "When to a weak chest you add Celtic ancestry you get a very promising artistic temperament". Since Quinn possessed both these qualifications Stephens moved quickly over the novel's faults. He complained of Quinn's style that "He runs instinctively to rhetoric; and his rombustious [sic] periwig-pated prose sometimes reads stagey and unreal". But throughout the review Stephens was anxious to find excuses for faults and to see in the novel foretastes of much greater achievements. He announced that "Much of the matter of 'Mostyn Stayne' is no less poetic than the style. But as a whole it is unconvincing". This implied that the style was admirable which was not the tenor of Stephens' earlier comments on it. He also pointed out that the novel read like "an echo of the current English historical romance, mimicking the mannerisms of Stevenson". Lawson had been criticized adversely for his first-hand echoes of Bret Harte, Mark Twain and others, but excuses were found for Quinn's imitation of an imitative genre. In extenuation of the unconvincing aspects of the novel, Stephens remarked that "The wonder is that, seeing the author has never been out of Australia, it should be as convincing as it is". Stephens' summary of the qualities of the work appeared, on the evidence presented in the review, to lack both detachment and logic. His opinion was that "Roderic Quinn's short stories are more
successful as short stories, verses as verses, than 'Mostyn Stayne' as a long story. Nevertheless, 'Mostyn Stayne' exhibits greater capacity than anything else he has accomplished for its slighter result is attained in a higher and more considerable field. Small as a performance, it is brilliantly promising. Stephens was not so naive that he could have believed Quinn's writing superior to Lawson's; he simply applied different standards in judging the performance of the two writers. Little of the indulgence he showed Quinn was present in his review of Edward Dyson's *Rhymes from the Mines*33 on 2 February 1897. Stephens' verdict was that "You can say little more to Dyson than 'Welcome!'. His merits are obvious; his defects, in comparison, are not. Though he flies neither very high nor on a very strong pinion, his work is generally pleasant and sometimes impressive. And Dyson takes pains to do his best".

The explanation of these disparities which most readily suggests itself is that Stephens at this time adjusted his standards of criticism according to some non-literary attributes of the writers, for example whether or not they were of established reputation and perhaps whether or not they took kindly to his advice and perhaps even whether or not he had played some part in the detection of their talent.

33 Edward Dyson, *Rhymes from the Mines* and *Other Lines* (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1896).
Another view could be that Stephens sacrificed strict standards long enough to give any Australian writer who showed a glimmer of talent sufficient encouragement to realize his potential. In this period he was certainly at times inclined to overpraise new work by minor writers. For example, on 30 January 1897 in reviewing John Reay Watson’s *In a Man’s Mind* Stephens claimed that "In the combination of literary skill and intellectual capacity, as developed in fiction, Mr Watson has hardly a rival among Australian writers, past or present". And after he had quoted a melodramatic and unintentionally humourous love scene from Watson’s novel, Stephens felt constrained to add that "Detached, this reads a little exaggerated, extravagant, but the book is keyed up to it". In other cases the weak were despatched with good humour and some finesse. For example, the plot of Lilian Turner’s *The Lights of Sydney* was mocked for the amusement of Red Page readers on 21 November 1896, and Stephens' judgment was that "The book is an excellent beginning. Miss Turner’s literary style is fluent, and her matter has fair emotional interest. She should become a very popular writer. And it is popularity that pays".

34 John Reay Watson, *In a Man’s Mind* (London, Unwin, 1896). Watson came from Gympie and fragments of their correspondence extant in the Papers of A.G. Stephens, Mitchell Library MS A2303, suggest that they were at least acquaintances from the Gympie Literary Circle days.

Some of the problems which Stephens encountered with his reader-contributors were disclosed on 1 May 1897 when he offered general advice to them. Such elements as clear handwriting and names on every page were covered, and he adopted a tone of long-suffering forbearance towards the delinquent. He sought co-operation by asking his contributors to imagine his problem. He wrote "Fancy a tired editor-man, whose brain should be always at its best, whose nerves should be always strung, and who never has time for half the things he wants to do - fancy him wading through forty pages of crabbed script like the tracks of a spider walking in his sleep. Yet that is what the cheerful contributor asks him to do every hour of his life. With the best will in the world, the editor-man can't do it".

In this article Stephens placed great stress on the volume of contributions received. Apparently at this period he decided that since he had to do so much elementary editing for writers he might as well make a business of it, and he set himself up as a literary agent. He advertised his services regularly at the foot of the Red Page from 15 May 1897 onwards.36 Stephens was very confident of his ability

36 The text and layout of the first advertisement were as follows:

A.G. Stephens, Literary Agent

Authors advised. MS. criticized and edited.
Publication arranged for.
Expert assistance in matters literary and artistic.
Confidential commissions undertaken.

Postal address: George Str. North P.O., Sydney.
Interviews by appointment. Fees on application.
to assess new work and he stated his confidence very
plainly at the end of his advice to contributors on
1 May 1897 in assuring them that "possibly, sometimes, the
editor-man makes a mistake; but that is very rare; for
experience - the habit of handling copy and the constant
reference to the highest standards - breed [sic] a knowledge,
and knack, and judgment which makes it almost impossible to
miss a good thing". Again on 26 June 1897 Stephens made plain
his belief in his ability to judge new writing, when he wrote
that "In literature, by many texts and comparisons, I have
fairly satisfied myself that my mind is well hung, as it
were - delicately poised - that it vibrates easily to a breath
of exalted feeling, of natural pathos, and remains stiff to
conventional artifice and pretty puppet play". These claims
can only be fully assessed in the light of his whole Red Page
performance, but in the period under survey Stephens could be
criticized not for his failure to recognize work worthy of
publication but for his failure to apply equal measures of
excellence to all the published works on which he commented.
The advice Stephens gave to Australian writers with serious
claims to critical attention was consistent. Firstly, he
demanded strength. Secondly he wanted a basis of reality in
cutting and truth in sentiment. In "The Local Muse", an
article on 1 October 1896, he deplored the lack of force
and of Australian reference in John Le Gay Brereton's
Stephens anonymously published *Perdita, a Sonnet Record*. 37 Stephens observed that "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". Realism, or at least the reflection of reality, in the work of Australian writers was a problem for Stephens in this period. On 13 February 1897 after comparing the achievements of Alex Montgomery and Louis Becke in short story writing, he complained that "Australian writers run too much to the easy, detached, realistic sketch - not too much if it be considered that they are young and learning, but too much if they are judged without reference to local conditions, as artists merely". Earlier in this article he had asserted, and misquoted Wordsworth in so doing, 38 that "The essence of good fiction, as of good poetry is 'emotion remembered [sic] in tranquillity' - but even in the tranquillity there should be 75 per cent emotion". On the other hand he had tried to impress upon Australian writers

37 *Perdita: a Sonnet Record* (Sydney, George Robertson, 1896).

38 "I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity". Wordsworth. *Lyrical Ballads*, preface.
earlier that emotion imagined without a basis in experience and perception led to literary disasters. The following admonition was delivered on 28 November 1896 in a piece he entitled "The Rudiments of Fiction", in which he reviewed Ethel Turner's *The Little Larrikin* and M. Ella Chaffey's *The Youngsters at Murray Home*:

Five-sixths of the women-beginners who write fiction for *The Bulletin* never dream of starting realistically, by describing the people and things under their eyes, which they know well, which alone, as a rule, they are competent to describe. Nor they invent some complex situation, dress it in language echoed from the books they have read, and produce an unreal monstrosity - because they have not the wit or the knowledge to make their invention life-like or probable. The men, less fluent as a rule, are more realistic. They do not invent; they describe incidents in their experience, characters they have met, scenes which have impressed them. And a much higher average of their "copy" is acceptable - flying low, they are nearer to Truth.

Here was the edge of one of Stephens' most serious problems as editor of the Red Page. How was he to fill the gap between his aspirations for Australian literature and the mass of undistinguished writing with which he had to deal? He had to make the majority of Australian writers


lower their literary sights to targets within their limited range. At the same time, for the few in whom, as in Lawson, he saw some touch of literary genius, he had to set standards of universal excellence. The final paragraph of "The Rudiments of Fiction" was as follows:

Doubtless imaginative fiction is the higher kind of fiction - the most impressive and permanent; but it requires the highest kind of qualities in the maker. Realistic description is comparatively easy. There is a little knack of observation and assimilation, and selection, and description; but many people can attain this with practice. Very fair results can be attained by describing outsides merely - what people do, how things look. When you go a little farther, and describe what people think, what things are, more talent is required. And when, advancing, you elevate thoughts and things to an ideal height, and finally, rising higher still, draw from individual thoughts and things their ideal law, and apply the law to the farthest extent of human conceptions, the path grows too difficult for all but fictional genius. But it is always good to begin at the beginning - with realism.

This showed one way Stephens saw out of his dilemma. While instructing Australian writers in the elements of their craft he sought to induce them to an appreciation of greatness in literature. To begin with realism was not to preclude progress to great imaginative heights. To maintain such optimism in the face of most of the work he received from contributors probably caused him more effort than was ever superficially evident at this time. His thoughts on the effect of the Australian bush environment on artistic aspirations
were gloomy. Despite his belief in man which has already been discussed on pages 131 and 132 above, when the Red Page entered into a minor sequel to the so-called "Battle of the Bards" in which Lawson and Paterson had led the opposing camps in 1892, Stephens came down on the side of the pessimists. On 27 February 1897 he published a piece by Lawson on "The Bush and the Ideal" which painted a bleak picture of the bush and in which Lawson complained that "The people of our cities look at the bush through the green spectacles of bush bards and new-chum press-writers, and are content - wisely, 'they knew it - to put down all their lives on the rim of Australia". On 27 March 1897 Stephens himself gave a dismal picture of intellectual life in the bush, which he termed "a mental tomb" for the many in it who lacked education. On 3 April Stephens published without comment letters from "J. Jingle" and Richard Holt (under his pseudonym '6 x 8t'), who both objected to Lawson's bitterness. In the face of his own convictions and his experience, Stephens' optimism about Australia's literary prospects was remarkable.

Real cause for optimism on the future of Australian literature reached Stephens later in 1897. He be, the

41 An extended account of the controversy is given in Bruce Nesbitt, "Literary Nationalism and the 1890s", Australian Literary Studies, 5, No. 1 (May 1971), pp. 3-17.
Red Page for 28 August with a letter from an anonymous contributor who alleged that there was discernible physical degeneration in Australians compared with their British progenitors, while at the same time their intellects were sharper. Stephens immediately set out to apply his correspondent's ideas to Australian writing:

... transferring his conclusions from life to literature, they do not go unsupported. It is the writer's experience that young contributors to our literary journals - who may be taken as typical Australians - prefer to express themselves in verse rather than in prose - and verse is the weak feminine of prose. The body of Australian literature in verse is probably superior both in mass and quality, considered as verse, to the body of Australian prose, considered as prose. This affirmation indeed is not capable of satisfactory proof: it would be safer to say that our verse literature, so far, tends to be superior to our prose-literature.

After presenting what he admitted was a "haphazard survey" of Australian writing to that date, Stephens referred to Macauley's argument that poetry was essentially the work of a youthful nation and proposed his own reasons for the tendency of young Australian writers to attempt verse rather than prose. He asserted that "There is no doubt that poetry is essentially the work of a youthful individual - simply because age dulls the senses and sensations, and the kernel of lyric force is keen feeling. But (and the gist of the matter lies here) it is essentially the work of a nervous,
excitable individual". Having apparently reached this romantic view of the nature of poetry in argument from physiological causes, Stephens went on to review three new books of Australian verse, namely G.W.L. Marshall-Hall's *A Book of Canticles* 42, Arthur A.D. Bayldon's *Poems* 43, and Christopher Brennan's *XXI Poems*. It was surely in the consideration of these works, and especially in the quality of the last of them, rather than in physiological speculation that Stephens had framed his ideas on the superiority of Australian writing in verse to that in prose. He found in Marshall-Hall's verse "feminine preponderance", that is, weakness; in Bayldon he could discover "no lyrical faculty", but in Brennan's *XXI Poems* he found "the lyrical cry". Here was cause for optimism on Australian writing. The Red Page of 28 August 1897 was the first occasion on which Stephens published criticism of Brennan, and a copy of his review of *XXI Poems* is included in this study as Appendix 2.

Stephens had first encountered Brennan's work a year before this, and he later recorded his first impressions of it:

44 Christopher Brennan, *XXI Poems* (1893-1897): Towards the Source (Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1897).
I saw it [Brennan's handwriting] first in 1896 in lines by an unknown writer commencing "The yellow gas is fired from street to street" - setting me agog with sub-editorial curiosity. Here was a company of regular feet marching with ideas and imagery - all strictly meditated - not like the "Bulletin" bards of use and wont. The verses were clear and vigorous.45

On 11 July 1896 Stephens printed the verses under the title "Night-piece" on page 3 of The Bulletin, in a column headed "Various Verses", sandwiched between advertisements for retailers, hair restorers, patent medicines, mining machinery, bicycles and sulkies. When "The yellow gas is fired from street to street" appeared in "Various Verses", the lines did not begin with lower-case letters in Brennan's usual convention, and there were also differences in punctuation and two minor changes in wording between that version and the one reprinted in the review of XXI Poems. It would be interesting to know whether Brennan or Stephens was responsible for the amendments of the 1896 version.

Stephens' review of XXI Poems lacked appreciation that Brennan in his poetry was embarking on a quest for man's lost paradisial condition in Eden. He compared Brennan's lyrical gifts with those of Quinn and O'Reilly and ended the review on a sentimental note which implied that Brennan's work might find a fitting resting-place in a "tear-stained scrapbook". Small wonder that Brennan later in a letter to Norman Lindsay referred to Stephens as "our master in

sentimentalism"46. Yet, overall the review recognized that an unusual talent had emerged and most critics would still agree that the pieces Stephens singled out for praise and reprinting, "Of old, on her terrace at evening" and "The yellow gas is fired from street to street", were among the most impressive in XXI Poems. Furthermore, although Stephens lacked appreciation of Brennan's philosophical content and intent, his warnings on Brennan's tardiness in wooing the muse could now be considered justified in view of Brennan's subsequently small poetic output. In 1898 and 1899 Brennan played some part in the shaping of the Red Page by his contributions of verse and prose and by his stern replies to some of Stephens' wilder assertions. This suggests that Brennan was not altogether displeased with the review of XXI Poems and that the review might have helped earn Stephens a valuable literary influence.

It was of course "the lyrical cry" in Brennan's poetry which most appealed to Stephens. Every pronouncement he made on the nature of poetry and the verse he chose to reprint between August 1896 and December 1897 confirmed his

predilection for the lyric. In fact any power to evoke an emotional response, however trivial, was likely to earn publication. The nostalgia it evoked was probably what appealed to Stephens in Shaw Neilson's "Polly and Dad and the Spring Cart" which he published on 5 December 1896 under the heading "Homely Verses". Stephens was suspicious of long poems because he maintained that "You may weld lyric passages into an epic or a drama, and add the force of narrative or of character, but the poetry remains always in the lyric passages". He gave this opinion on 26 September 1896 in a piece entitled "Hexameters - More or Less", in which he endorsed Edgar Allen Poe's belief that "Paradise Lost" was poetical only in parts and to this Stephens added that the same could be said of Shakespeare's plays. A little later in this article Stephens gave what he would probably have considered an example of "the critic's illuminating flash" when he asked

47 Neilson's own account of the publication of this piece is given in James Devaney, *Shaw Neilson* (Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1944), p.81. Neilson recounts that he came across Paterson's "Clancy of the Overflow" and "It struck my fancy very much. I began to try my hand at rhyming again. I accomplished a rhyme, 'Polly and Dad and the Spring Cart' and sent it to the Bulletin. I never heard anything of it for three months. Then it appeared on the Red Page".

48 See page 138 above.
"When an ounce of lyric meat is obtainable, why munch a yard of epic celery?" However this was immediately followed by an admission that "Nevertheless bulk counts; and The Bulletin is always on the look-out for an Australian poet who shall combine epic scope with lyric force". On 25 December 1897, the last issue for the period under survey, Stephens affirmed the need for poetry to embrace epic themes. The passage quoted below is also of interest for its intimation that Stephens' thinking on the nature of poetry might have begun to be influenced by Brennan by this time:

Poetry stopped - or flagged - with the barbaric races. And it is locally held that in our civilised day, the most forcible poetry refers to the primal subjects and impulses - e.g. Life, Death, Love. So, query: When we enter the imaginary world of poetry are we really embracing savagery - endeavouring to re-create our ancient Eden - seeking to become like those "vigorous, primitive sons" who saw "the green earth... as she was by the sources of Time"? In a word, is Poetry first and essentially a revolt?

Beneath the racy style of writing and amid the bombast and absurdity Stephens was considering literature seriously and he was especially interested in the nature of poetry. Many of the tricks of style he adopted, for example his habit of using dashes in lieu of some more disciplined style of punctuation, gave the impression that much of his writing in the period was hurried. Unfortunately however hasty his judgments or their expression he sought to make most of the
utterances of "The Local Dogmatist" sound like final and infallible pronouncements. He adopted a formidable pose and sought to justify it by the demands of his office. On 6 March 1897 he wrote that Arthur Quiller Couch was "too good-natured" to be a good critic, because "Your conscientious critic is almost of necessity a sour malevolent fellow with an evil eye - like Javert or the incorruptible Robespierre - who pitilessly damns, when it deserves it, the book of the man he has just dined with". Stephens' practice fell somewhat short of precept in the period under discussion. He was good-natured in the encouragement he gave to new writers in whom he saw any glimmerings of literary talent, and while he wrote harshly of the work of John Le Gay Brereton, a writer with whom he probably was dining at the time, there was a note of apology withal. On 6 November 1897, for example, he remarked of Brereton's work that:

\[ \ldots \] all the verses (three books of 'em) are so many stones heaped on the grave of a passion which won't lie quiet. It is to be feared this reads as it is not meant - unkindly; and the point of view is certainly most unfair. When a great poet loses his mistress, and walls her in immortal song, we stand with bared heads in the sanctuary of his grief; and when a small poet loses his mistress, and processes funerally behind the hearse, we can only note that the horses are lame and the trappings tarnished \ldots The worst of it is that Brereton turns out to
have been the author of 'Perdita - a Sonnet Record' which, as he shows by quotation at the end of the new book, was anathemised on this page as '... an abomination of bloodlessness... flat batch of verses'... But what is a critic to do? You must uphold standards and ideals; and when a poetical skull has to be hit, it has to be hit - not tapped - more particularly if it is none of your Keats-eggshell variety, but a good old Donnybrooker that merely shakes off a fly wherever the blackthorn lights.

While Stephens was so alive to the deficiencies of other minor verse-writers, he remained apparently oblivious to the banality of his own, since between August 1896 and December 1897 he published without signature at least five of his own attempts.50

The period under survey presented an opportunity to compare A.G. Stephens' criticism of Australian writing with that of James Brunton Stephens. On 2 October 1897

49 This work by Brereton was originally published anonymously, but Stephens' claim that he had been previously unaware of the author's identity was of doubtful sincerity.

50 "Alice and I and Memory" on 21 November 1896; "Como, N.S.W." on 28 November 1896; "The Four Cigars" on 30 January 1897; "A Fancy/To J. Brunton Stephens" on 3 July 1897. In a rare coy avoidance of the truth, on 26 September 1896 he published extracts from "Anna Maria, a Tale of Hysteria", a parody of Longfellow, and he attributed its authorship to "Boggs". He had in fact read it to the Gympie Literary Circle on 24 June 1890. See A.G. Stephens, Early Critical Work, Unpublished (Gympie, Q., 1889-1890). Mitchell Library MS A7000, pp. 111-119.
Brunton Stephens reviewed Barcroft Boake's poems *Where the Dead Men Lie*, which A.G. Stephens had edited with an introductory memoir. Brunton Stephens' criticism of Boake's work did not carry conviction and was sentimental to the point of becoming maudlin. While it is not difficult to appreciate that a writer invited to criticize work by A.G. Stephens on the Red Page would have been under some strain such flattery as the following can hardly be excused:

The memoir by Mr A.G. Stephens is not merely a specimen of fine literary craftsmanship. It is animated throughout with a spirit of loving sympathy which is even more delightful than the delicate discrimination with which the materials are selected and arranged. Had Boake foreseen such a biographer, perhaps our brother had not died. But, no. I suspect Boake died because he had come to the end of his life.

The interest in Brunton Stephens' piece derived not from what he had to say of Boake's work but in the opportunity he made of the review to chide Australian poets who were of the "brutal truth" school and the overlapping group whose work expressed "dissatisfaction with the existing state and system of Society". J.B. Stephens was capable of making a nice point, for example, when he said of those Australians whose writings were anti-society that "At the very time they are hurling defiance at Europe, they are almost wholly dominated by Europe. In these inspired moments they cease to be

51 Barcroft Boake, *Where the Dead Men Lie and Other Poems*, ed. with notes and memoir by A.G. Stephens (Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1897).
Australians - they are merely antipodeans". Brunton Stephens' remarks stirred Francis Kenna, under his pseudonym "K", to write a bitter rejoinder published on 30 October 1897, and Brunton Stephens replied to this on 13 November 1897. Obviously the criticism hit home and yet the original article was rather dull because it failed to identify by name any of the writers of whom he disapproved. His rebukes were generalized and delivered with wagging finger. An air of schoolmasterly tedium hovered about the essay. In contrast, the other item on the Red Page for 2 October 1897, an attack by A.G. Stephens on the inconsequentiality of Guy Boothby's novels, a topic of far less intrinsic interest than Brunton Stephens', fairly crackled with life and vigour.

While A.G. Stephens' journalistic training might have precluded his writing from dullness and despite his advertised confidence in his critical abilities, the period between August 1896 and December 1897 yielded evidence that he was realizing the limitations of his setting in The Bulletin. On 10 October 1896 he regretted that Australia did not yet possess "a story literature", and he admitted that The Bulletin would probably have rejected Poe's "Fall of the House of Usher" on the grounds of its length. To the objections he imagined his readers would make to this, he asked "But

52 "The Fall of the House of Usher" runs to slightly more than 8,000 words.
what would you have? The Bulletin is The Bulletin - that is to say, it is not a magazine. It cannot do everything; it does what it can. (Wanted: an Australian magazine)."

On 28 November 1896 he complained of the rash of writings about Henry Parkes which had followed closely on his death, but he ruefully admitted that "The Bulletin itself, in its time, has whetted the edges of its circulation on the hone of his notoriety". Later in this article he revealed his very practical appreciation of the essence of journalism when he wrote that "The structure of successful journalism is built on the proverb that a living doll will sell ten times as many papers as a dead lion".

In whatever way the setting of the Red Page in The Bulletin influenced its development, there is no doubt that in it between August 1896 and December 1897 Stephens brought a wealth of ideas to its readers, in feature articles, in controversy, in reprints of verse and prose, and in the hundreds of paragraphs of news of literature, authors, editors, booksellers, libraries and many other subjects. He also presented sound advice for aspiring Australian writers. One can only regret that he did not discriminate with more dispassionate judgment between the sound and the unsound among the ideas which he culled from a myriad of sources, and that he was not willing to re-examine his opinions when
they were challenged. It was a paradox that Stephens was for some purposes too close to the few people in his milieu with literary interests, and for other purposes he attempted to set himself too far apart from them. What was most to be admired in the period was his journalistic feat in bringing so much so regularly to Red Page readers which was of compelling interest. The least worthy of his ideas were about to earn for him determined and informed adversaries whose attacks could not be rebuffed with a wealth of ideas gleaned from doubtful sources like Max Nordau and his own amateur attempts to use evidence from contemporary research in human physiology to account for literary behaviour.
Chapter Five

"Rather Stimulus Than Statement":
the Red Page in 1898 and 1899

The Red Page in 1898 and 1899 was marked by controversy and, for part of the period at least, by a diminution of the attention Stephens paid to it. In these years he was trying to expand his sphere of operations outside the Red Page. With the publication of Will Ogilvie's *Fair Girls and Gray Horses* in October 1898 Stephens became editor of *The Bulletin* publications, and when he announced an expanded publishing programme on the Red Page on 10 December 1898 he wrote that "The Bulletin Library" was to "include all the best prose and verse which have appeared in its columns during the past 18 years". In addition to this ambitious project Stephens also edited *The Bookfellow*, a monthly literary magazine, of which *The Bulletin* published the first number on 7 January 1899. Both these ventures distracted his concentration from the Red Page and their effects were discernible.

In 1898 and 1899 Stephens not only allowed but invited


2 *The Bookfellow: a Monthly Magazinelet for Book-buyers and Book-readers, No. 1-5* (January - May 1899). Since Stephens in 1907 and again in 1911 began magazines called *The Bookfellow*, the five numbers published in 1899 are frequently referred to as the first series.
contributors to write more of the Red Page than they had previously. His search for copy sometimes brought good things in occasional articles and in lively debate. At other times contributions from local writers were undistinguished and reprints from overseas publications uninteresting. For example, while Victor Daley's articles on "Girls' Song-Games" on 26 February 1898 and on "Harold Grey" on 18 May 1898 were well-written and informative, Arthur Adams' on "Lee's Shakespeare" on 18 March 1899 and Arthur A.D. Bayldon's on "Longfellow" on 30 September 1899 were not; neither did the reprint of "John Milton: Poet and Cyclist" from The Freethinker on 11 November 1899 have much to recommend it in style or substance. Furthermore, Stephens' policy of allowing protagonists generous space meant that controversies were drawn out over long periods and over topics irrelevant to the original points at issue. Stephens pointed out on 26 March 1898 that "The controversy about Burns has degenerated into a controversy about the controversy". The same could have been said of almost all the Red Page controversies of the period, and their degeneration was largely due to the fact that from mid 1898 to mid 1899.

especially Stephens slackened his editorial control over the Red Page.

While Stephens was to achieve a great deal as editor of The Bulletin's books, the Bookfellow lasted for only five months. In the fifth number on 31 May 1899 he announced that "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". When Stephens referred to the magazine's failure as "another cairn of Experience piled for the guidance of travellers along the local literary road", he was apparently without bitterness. Yet the magazine was a dream he had long cherished and a project he had no doubt constantly urged on The Bulletin's management. In seeking to resurrect the magazine within The Bulletin, he adopted for the Red Page the whimsical title "Under the Gumtree", a title he had used as the heading for a collection of paragraphs in the last number of The Bookfellow. Topped with a drawing of a spreading eucalypt which was arboreally somewhat unlikely, "Under the Gumtree" appeared


5 The Bookfellow, No. 5 (31 May 1899), p.25.

6 Stephens had announced in the BBE, 17 August 1895 that The Bulletin Magazine "should make the port of publication in a few weeks"; see also BRP 10 October 1896 and p. 168 above.
continuously for eight weeks, from 10 June to 29 July 1899. Thereafter until 28 October 1899 "The Red Page" reappeared as the title once in every two or three weeks. 7

In the eight weeks between 10 June and 29 July in which "Under the Gumtree" was the only title used, Stephens strove to recreate the magazine atmosphere. On 10 June he used his attack on Walter Murdoch, "The Devil's Advocatekinling", and on 24 June he published "Artists in Australia: III. Sid Long" by "Titian Redde". 8 Both of these articles he had advertised on the Red Page on 3 June 1899 as to be included in the fifth number of The Bookfellow. Another series of articles begun in the magazine was continued in "Under the Gumtree" with the publication on 1 July 1899 of Christopher Brennan's "Newer French Poetry: IV. Paul Verlaine". There was also a marked increase in the number of illustrations which had in this period become scarce on the page until the adoption of "Under the Gumtree" as its title. Competitions abounded as they had in The Bookfellow, and several begun in

7 "Under the Gumtree" was used eight times, on 12 August, 19 August, 2 September, 9 September, 23 September, 7 October, 21 October and 28 October; "The Red Page" was used five times, on 5 August, 26 August, 16 September, 30 September and 14 October.

8 I have not discovered the identity of "Titian Redde". However "Artists in Australia: IV. W. Lister Lister" on 7 April 1900, and "Artists in Australia: VI. Girolamo Nerli" on 1 December 1900 were published without signature. (Part V did not appear on the Red Page.) The style of the whole series resembles Stephens' and it seems likely that he was "Titian Redde" and the author of all the articles.
the magazine were continued in "Under the Gumtree". Stephens also signed his major contributions to "Under the Gumtree"; "A.G.S." was the signature on 10 June, and most of the other pages with this title were signed "The Bookfellow". Both these signatures had been used in the magazine.

Stephens however apparently soon found "Under the Gumtree" unsuitable for some of the material he wished to present, and between 5 August and 28 October 1899 he again used "The Red Page" as the title in some weeks. Presumably he thought to preserve a distinction in the material he presented under the two headings, but the grounds for distinction were not well-defined. The division was not between Australian and overseas topics, but he might at first have wanted to reserve "Under the Gumtree" for purely literary matter, in articles, essays, verse, news and anecdote, and especially in dialogue with his readers. In his first reintroduction of "The Red Page" on 5 August he discussed Robert Green Ingersoll as "A Man Who Fought for Humanity". Ingersoll was an American lawyer, politician, and humanist whom Stephens considered notable for his anti-religious views and the oratory in which he gave them expression. The article implied without specific admission that Ingersoll was the source of some of Stephens' humanistic ideas. He quoted as a concentration of Ingersoll's teaching his claims that "The place to be happy is here; the time to be happy is now; and the way to be happy is to make

9 Stephens signed the page containing his article "Art versus Artists" on 2 September 1899, "The Artfellow".
others happy". The phraseology was very similar to that used by Stephens on earlier Red Pages in manifesting his belief in at least the first two of these propositions. However, efforts to make distinctions between the material used on "The Red Page" and that used in "Under the Gumtree" were soon to break down. In the second reinstatement of "The Red Page" on 26 August the matter was literary and its method of presentation indistinguishable from the "Under the Gumtree" offerings in surrounding weeks. On 16 September "The Red Page" carried the aftermath of the storm raised by Stephens in an article called "Art versus Artists" which he had published in "Under the Gumtree" on 2 September. "The Red Page" on 16 September also contained belated entries in a simile-writing competition which had been announced in "Under the Gumtree" on 10 June.

The Bulletin for 4 November 1899 saw the virtually permanent reinstatement of "The Red Page" as the title, and from that date the page was often signed "The Bookfellow". The permanent reinstatement of "The Red Page" on 4 November might be taken as marking Stephens' acceptance of defeat in his attempt to revive the magazine within The Bulletin.

10 BRP, 5 September 1896 and 6 November 1897; see also pp. 131-132 above.

11 "Under the Gumtree" occasionally reappeared as the title in later years, for example, on 15 September 1900 and on 15 February, 29 March, and 27 December 1902 and 3 January 1903.
The fact that he persevered so long in his attempt possibly indicates what no external evidence seems to survive to prove, namely that the dream of converting the Red Page into a place in which he could discuss literature in a whimsical, discursive, didactic and leisurely way died hard with Stephens. Part of the attraction of editing a magazine might have been the opportunity to establish himself as a literary personality, as "The Bookfellow", rather than as part of the corporate voice of The Bulletin. It was probably significant that, after the magazine died, Stephens frequently identified his own writing on the Red Page as he had never done before. In other ways, however, The Bookfellow experience had no lasting effect on the Red Page.

Before his involvement in editing the magazine Stephens had been challenged by a contributor on the scope of the Red Page. "Magnus" asked on 18 June 1898, "Why do you deal chiefly—almost exclusively—with fiction and poetry? These aren't literature: they're only a section of literature, and not the most weighty and important section. Has the Red Page no opinions on history, on philosophy, on philology and ethnology, for example?" Stephens' reply expressed forcefully the constraints he felt in time, space and competing demands on the Red Page in mid 1898:

Dear man, lend us your ear. (1) The R.P. is a literary minnow, and you can't expect it to have the swallow of a whale. (2) It isn't run by a staff of specialists,
and no man - no half-dozen men - can cover
the whole area of literature adequately.
(3) Time is wanting, as well as space.
Criticism of history, for example, is only
worth printing when it's worth printing. One
beauty of fiction and poetry is that they don't
take many hours a-reading. Yet you can't get
critically through even a 200-page novel under
two hours - that is, you can get through, but
you take the risk of receiving an inaccurate
impression, and commentarily misleading readers.
And if the novel is good - closely packed, with
a style and a thought to it - four hours is
little enough. Well four hours - or two hours -
is a lot out of a busy day, or a busy week; and
then, likely enough, when brought to proportion-
standards and compared with other books waiting
notice, that book is worth only two or three
inches of space. Now if you take a book even on
the fringe of history - Mahan's "Sea-Power",
say, you can spend an hour over a chapter, or a
week over the book - it cost years to write;
and if you disagree you must consider authorities,
and check impressions, for a hasty and
unauthorised impression is worth just 0. And
while you're doing this do you hear the East
a-callin', also the West and South and North
a-callin', and all wanting attention, and time,
and space, and notice? Etc. - are you beginning
to understand? Then (4) poetry, and to less
extent fiction - belles lettres generally -
are in a nearer relation to Art than your
philosophy and ethnology, or even your history.
These are all closer to Science, and hence less
fit for purely literary criticism. For they
deal with facts; whereas fiction and poetry are
products of the imagination, and must be judged
chiefly in relation to the Ideal, and it is in
the discussion of things ideal that the critic
finds his wings, if he have any, also his widest
province and his best justification. We could
go on till (19)12, but that will do for the
present. Well?

12 "(19)" is rather puzzling but could perhaps have been
a device meant to represent some date in the twentieth
century.
Earlier Stephens had admitted that the Red Page did not seek to give a whole view even on literary matters but rather to correct imbalance in established opinions. Argument about Tennyson's poetic stature was to persist throughout 1898 and Robert Burns' alleged plagiarism was discussed at length in the early months of that year. Stephens' allegations on Burns stirred George Black to write at length in defence of the poet and to attack the critic forcefully for his bias in attitudes and inconsistencies in argument. Under pressure from Black, Stephens replied on 19 February 1898 that:

The object of the R.P. is to give rather stimulus than statement. For the attempt (even) at presentation of wholes, four curtained columns and one hurried newspaper-person don't suffice. In the matter of Tennyson, for example, there was as much to be said on the other side; but it had all been said already. That side had not been said already; and it badly wanted saying. So with Burns. His other side had been said already; but it had been suppressed, overlain, forgotten, and clamored to be said again. Also: Good readers read with brains and sympathy - express the unexpressed, complete the unfinished, make some allowance, too, for the utter incapacity

13 The Tennyson dispute was provoked by Stephens' article on the Red Page on 11 December 1897 and continued on 8 January 1898, 29 January 1898, 2 April 1898 and 31 December 1898.

14 The Burns dispute was provoked by Stephens' articles on the Red Page on 23 October 1897 and 4 December 1897 and continued on 5 February 1898, 19 February 1898, 12 March 1898 and 26 March 1898.
of words to portray ideas, no matter how one tries. From no single Red Page can a final deduction be drawn: even a synthesis of Pages made by amiable minds will doubtfully yield the wished-for conclusion. But one does what one can, and tries what one can't.

When Stephens began to stimulate his readers to argument late in 1897 he probably did not foresee the challenges they would bring not only to his opinions but to his critical competence. In fact in the controversies he provoked or encouraged on the Red Page in 1898 and 1899, Stephens, while offering plenty of "stimulus", was quite unable to refrain from "statement", and he could hardly have expected his readers to heed his special pleas for their understanding. Stephens argued partly to stimulate but mostly to win, and much more interesting than the issues were his attitudes to the participants in debate and theirs to him. The disparity in background, education, intellect, and ambition as well as taste among the participants in Red Page controversies ensured conflict of opinion. It is possible moreover to divide them roughly into groups: the intellectual, represented by Christopher Brennan and John Le Gay Brereton who tended to disagree with Stephens; the traditional, represented by James Brunton Stephens, to whom Stephens sometimes deferred and at other times condescended; the protégés, especially Victor Daley, Will Ogilvie and Roderic Quinn, who tended to agree with Stephens and be rewarded with praise by him; and, apart from the groups, the lonely figure of Lawson isolated
from Stephens' approval by his determined pessimism and his refusal to forego self-pity. I should like to discuss these groupings in detail, beginning with Brennan and Brereton who were the most learned and the least prone to accept Stephens' statements.

One indication of Brennan's influence on the Red Page in 1898 lay in its frequent references to Symbolism and the French Symbolists, and in the fact that Stephens set poems of Baudelaire, Verlaine and Fleury for translation competitions. Brennan also twice contributed verse. Twelve lines beginning "She listens by the sources" were introduced by Stephens on 23 July 1898 with the remark that "Chris. Brennan, who has an air of holding up in Australia the banner of the French symbolists, is making new verse-steps 'Towards the Source'."

Two months later, on 17 September 1898, the Red Page began with four quatrains from Brennan, again without title, which began "The pangs that guard the gates of joy". Until early in 1899 Brennan also contributed

15 Baudelaire's "Hymne" was set for translation on the Red Page on 12 November 1898; Fleury's "Credo Païen" on 11 November 1899; Verlaine's sonnet "Mon Rêve Familiar" was set in The Bookfellow No. 4 (29 April 1899); and entries were discussed both in The Bookfellow No. 5 (29 May 1899) and on the Red Page on 1 July 1899.

16 "She listens by the sources" is reprinted in the section entitled "Poems Hitherto Uncollected: First Period" in The Verse of Christopher Brennan, ed. A.R. Chisholm and J.J. Quinn (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1960), p.215.

17 "The pangs that guard the gates of joy" is included, with minor alterations, in "The Twilight of Disquietude" section of "The Forest of Night" in Christopher Brennan, Poems (Sydney, G.B. Philip, 1913 [i.e. 1914]).
frequently to topics under discussion on the Red Page. On 13 August 1898 he made what Stephens termed "an illuminating note" on a discussion of language in Oscar Wilde's "Ballad of Reading Gaol", as well as correcting an earlier error Stephens had made in suggesting Huysmans had borrowed ideas from Wilde. 18 On 3 September Brennan contributed a review of Stephen Phillips' "Marpessa", a poem from which Stephens had printed long extracts on the Red Page for 16 April 1898. Brennan's review made no concessions to popular journalism in its serious discussion of Phillips' handling of myth and symbol. 19 Obviously Stephens was not prepared to forego publication of serious criticism in deference to the taste of some of his readers for lighter fare. Before he published Brennan's review, he had apparently been obliged to defend his publication of extracts from "Marpessa", since, on 30 April 1898, after filling the page with Sam Walter Foss's

18 "Peccavimus", C.B.: Red Page, July 30 - 'Huysmans probably borrowed Wilde's thunder'. The suggestion errs. 'A rebours' appeared in November 1884, 'The Decay of Lying', in January 1889. In Wilde's 'Picture of Dorian Gray' (1890), the atmosphere of 'A rebours' continually makes itself felt: one chapter indeed - on Dorian's collection of gems, vestments, etc., reads like one of the chapters on Des Esseintes library, flowers, or mouth organ." BRP, 13 August 1898.

19 Brennan's review of "Marpessa" has been reprinted in The Prose of Christopher Brennan, ed. A.R. Chisholm and J.J. Quinn (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1962), pp. 188-190.
light verse in the idiom of the American farm, he had remarked "And now it is reckoned 'The Bulletin' is about even with the people who wrote to ask where in Australia was the sense of wasting a page on the incomprehensible poetry of Stephen Phillips".

On 10 September 1898 Brennan was among those invited by Stephens to write appreciations of what they liked best in Daley's recently published verse, *At Dawn and Dusk*. Stephens found their appreciations interesting "rather as glimpses of the critics' own standpoint than as admeasurements of Daley's work". As he had requested of the contributors, Brennan set out his requirements of poetry and they included a demand that "the image would be no embroidery, no garment: but the very texture, the very flesh of poetry". He therefore found little to praise in Daley's work, and he considered "A Sunset Fantasy" a poem in which "Incoherence is too patent ... and the rich imagery is a mere embroidery, without significance". This view was not only a contrast to the views of his rather pedestrian fellow critics on 10 September but quite opposed to Stephens' opinion. On 11 June 1898 when he printed "A

20 Victor Daley, *At Dawn and Dusk* (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1898). Brennan's comments are reprinted in *The Prose of Christopher Brennan*, pp.190-192.

21 They were J.E.S. Henerie, "Kiwi", Will Ogilvie, C. Kendall (Henry Kendall's son), and "J.R.W." (presumably John Reay Watson).
Sunset Fantasy" on the Red Page Stephens had commented that "It almost makes one doubt the supremacy of the Idea, such aesthetic delight comes to a lover of words in this idealess, effortless presentation of Beauty".

The divergence in literary taste between Stephens and Brennan made it unlikely that their criticism would co-exist on the Red Page for very long. Their dialogue continued through 1898, but the Philistines were represented when Stephens mounted a Red Page discussion of Mallarmé on 5 November 1898 as a forum. The page was headed "Was Mallarmé a Great Poet?" Brennan's answer was published first under "Yes!", next came "H.S.R.=''s under "No!", while Stephens contributed a final section headed "Yes-No". Brennan's praise of Mallarmé was full of admiration for the man and reverence for his poetry. He asserted that "to turn the steps of a generation towards the source, towards Eden, for this end Stéphane Mallarmé lived", and he sought to convey the subtlety of Mallarmé's aim in poetry:

He desired to extract from things just merely that essence of poetry, that musicalité du tout; not things, but the harmonies, the parallelisms, the correspondences between them, what in our poetry is yet scatter'd comparisons, hints: to free the spirit from the reality, éléver une voix en pureté, as he defines it, with subtle and decisive simplicity - this was his aim . . . His was a poetry in which the first spontaneity was ruthlessly destroy'd by the intent will,

22 Brennan's remarks are reprinted in The Prose of Christopher Brennan, pp. 281-284.
the abstracting contemplation, the result emerging beyond, with a strange absolute spontaneity, a directness of unbodied emotion, of the idea itself.

Brennan mourned the failure of the world at large to recognize Mallarmé's greatness and dismissed complaints about the obscurity of Mallarmé's language with the question "Is it not indeed a foolish contention that our fragmentary speech, with its virtual signification rubb'd away, as the head of a coin is deleted, by daily misuse, should be able properly to render all the soul, and yet remain as plain as our street-conversation?".

After Brennan's dignified though emotional defence, "H.S.R."'s ridicule struck a jarring note. In his view "to inherit the tradition of Mallarmé" was "to cross esoteric with erotic, and breed a conundrum", and he asserted that "The craze even reached Australia. It was the fun of the world. First one promising young man was bitten, and he bit another, and the two combined to bite a third". The first young man was almost certainly Brennan, the second might have been Dowell O'Reilly whose verse, "The Butterfly of Night", was published at the end of the Mallarmé page under one of his pseudonyms, "D.", with the sub-title "A Symbolist Poem, written to commemorate Mallarmé's 56th birthday".

Stephens complained of Mallarmé that "Instead of executing he dreamt and brooded". Though much more subtle than "H.S.R."'s mockery, Stephens' remarks were probably also aimed at
Brennan to prod him to more energetic literary production. In seeking to make his point Stephens made the following assertions:

His Mallarmé's friends clung hopefully on, and looked forward to a great work which would be the liberal harvest of many years of meditation. This was apriori unreasonable. Mallarmé was a poet, not a historian. It was his métier to create, not to criticise and compile. And no man ever creates anything in letters after 50. No man creates anything which is worth creating (gives forth a fresh, strong, original impulse) after 40. In middle life judgment matures, but emotion goes. You may for a little while appear to supply the place of emotion by art, using the technique acquired by experience to give an appearance of life to the ghosts of fancies acquired when the heart was young. But to the skilled and sympathetic reader the difference in the work is manifest, and the difference in the appeal. All the experience in the world cannot compensate for lost Youth, for the intimate thrill of passion, the instantaneous reaction to beauty, and for the hot surge in the head which transmutes the impression of passion and beauty into words instinctively true and irresistible. In poetry, to feel is better than to know; and poetry which is not Young is never (in the best sense) poetry.

However quickly Brennan rose to this provocation it was six weeks before his rejoinder appeared on the Red Page on 17 December 1898, and then Stephens introduced it with an irritating non sequitur, "C.B. remarks on the other side". Brennan not only defended Mallarmé but held to ridicule

23 It was Stephens' habit to write a priori as one word.

24 Brennan's remarks are quoted in full in Appendix 3 below.
Stephens' beliefs in the power of physiology and in what he termed the "surge theory" to account for the "tinging of poetry. He characterized Stephens' attitude as "Ipse Physiologus dixi. Punctum.", and cleverly parodied the confused analogies and careless expression which invaded Stephens' manner when he tried to argue towards literary theory from physiological causes:

Now what is behind all this "physiology"? Perhaps this: poetry is the product of green and salad days, prose the result of thought. Therefore, as thought is to emotion - pardon, as grey matter is to white . . . or is it as white is to grey? - of course, I don't know, but no odds - so is prose to verse. "Verse is the weak feminine of prose",25 and the man is the woman's head. As for the prose which is the sturdy - not to say "stodgy" - male of the verse of Aeschylus, Dante, Marlowe, Milton; if I were to enquire as to its whereabouts who knows whether the "physiologist" mightn't turn a somersault, while still remaining true to the good old "high priori", and tell me that it was laid up, along with physiological certainty, scientific truth, final criticism, and Mallarmé's Oeuvre, in Plato's transcendental heaven?

This witty and pointed rebuke brought no immediate comment from Stephens but he was soon to provoke Brennan to another protest. Seeking to have the last word in the Tennyson controversy, Stephens tried on the Red Page on 7 January 1899 to make the point that fashions change from age to age in literature as in dress and every other area of human interest. He urged that "Like Queen Victoria, Milton's epics are heavy and faded, and invested with a fatiguing magnificence: and

25 A quotation from Stephens on BRP 28 August 1897, the page on which he reviewed Brennan's XXI Poems. See p. 158 above.
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”.

Stephens' search for idols to cast down did not cease with Milton. He continued:

Similarly, though Homer and Dante directly provide but an infinitesimal portion of the poetical stimulus which this generation is receiving, it is continually declared ex cathedra that Homer and Dante are the world's two greatest poets, while modern writers of verse are little more than the dust which drifts about their large historic feet. To argue this question with the (other) dogmatists it would be necessary to agree upon a definition of poetry. But such argument is not necessary to the affirmation that most Australian readers of verse know and care little whether Homer and Dante were poets or palmists. They accept the tradition, of course; bow to the printed name of Dante, and believe that Homer is something vast and venerable in the verse-line; but the poetical areas of their minds are occupied not with Achilles or Beatrice, but with the Man from Ironbark or the River Maiden. Even if you ask of those who may be supposed to possess cultured or classical taste, you find they are reading Keats, or Heine, or Stephen Phillips; if you notice whom they take pains to write about, it is Browning, or Mallarmé, or Kipling. Dante and Homer are very fine fellows, no doubt; but they are on the shelf with the old maids and Reid's Local Government Bill.

Nor were Dante and Homer to be left there. Further charges were laid: "Dante lives on; not because of his merit, but because five centuries claque for him . . . But the philosophy of the 13th century is now exploded, and it is time the poetry based on that philosophy exploded too."

Homer "may have
been merely the editor of a ballad anthology'. The point of all this hyperbole was to make the case that "Homage to 'classic' writers is in most persons partly or wholly automatic" and that in view of the conditioning he had received in his youth, "It would be astonishing if the Tennyson impression on Brunton Stephens had not become a source of automatic opinion partly independent of his higher judgment".

I should like to leave Brunton Stephens' reaction aside for the moment and concentrate on the replies by Brennan and Brereton. Stephens introduced the responses of all three on 28 January 1899 with the remark that "Even a humane philosopher will not deny himself the pleasure of thrusting his stick into an ants'-nest, and contemplating curiously the irritated swarm around the ferule [sic]." Yet his air of amused condescension was a thin disguise. He had, as Brennan's editors remark, "trailed his coat" but, as was typical of his conduct in the controversies of 1898 and 1899, he could not preside gracefully over the resulting argument. Brennan began his reply by remarking that "I have once before descended into this arena in fighting trim, on behalf of Mallarmé", and he went on to list "Questions I shall not touch". Among them were "the superficiality of stating

26 The Prose of Christopher Brennan, ed. A.R. Chisholm and J.J. Quinn, p. 194.

27 Brennan's remarks are reprinted in The Prose of Christopher Brennan, pp. 192-194.
that 'the philosophy of the 13th century is exploded' - nothing dies that ever deeply interested the human spirit, it is merely transformed"; and "whether criticism of Tennyson's 'conventional ideas' comes with good grace from a critic who declares that emotion is the essence of poetry - and who shall establish the hierarchy of emotions? Nor whether the fact that Tennyson was born before the glorious local precedent of writing your poem in half-an-hour has anything to do with denunciation of his coldness and artificiality". Brennan insisted that "there are chases jugées of poetic fame, around whose 'large historic feet' the revisionist is merely dust - sand-grain against a pyramid". He concluded with the charge that "the man who questions the supremacy 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".

Stephens allowed himself more space and a larger typeface to present the mixture of condescension, doubtful analogy and irrelevant anecdote in which he tried to deny the logic of Brennan's attack. The core of his argument was as follows:
The generation asks nothing but the maintenance of everybody's right to an original opinion - if such power has the power to analyse and value the drivel of his fathers and get an original opinion. The local opinion is that Tennyson is high among the poets and high among the great poetic artists. Nobody praised the precedent of writing your poem in half-an-hour. There are no choses jugées outside of mathematics, and the man who accepts another's judgment in lieu of judging for himself puts his intellect in fetters. The revisionist may be sand against a pyramid - or he may be a neat nine-pounder gun against a fateful house; matter of opinion.

Brennan did not again descend into the Red Page arena in argument after this confrontation with Stephens, although the last four in his series of articles on "Newer French Poetry", begun in The Bookfellow, were published in 1899.28 From this it appeared that while Brennan was no longer prepared to argue with Stephens he was willing to prepare original work for him, as Stephens, if his later testimony was accurate, was prepared to stand firm against The Bulletin editor and disapproving readers alike in order to have Brennan's work published.29 As well as exposing Stephens' inadequacy in argument, Brennan had in 1898 and 1899 pointed


up his major weaknesses as a critic, especially the effects of his rejection of traditional religious and philosophical values and of his replacement of reverence for the ideas of the past with belief in the pseudo-scientific attempts of his time to explain all in terms of physiology. Less obviously, his relationship with Brennan on the Red Page demonstrated Stephens' recognition of Brennan's quality as a writer and Stephens' determination to publish his work.

Until January 1899, Brereton was less exacting than Brennan in his criticism of Stephens. Brereton was apparently not deterred from contributing to the Red Page by Stephens' earlier strictures on his verse.30 On 23 April 1898 Brereton contributed a polished essay on "The Years of Hamlet", and on 28 May 1898 his verse, "Kyrielle of Open Speech", was published at the beginning of the Red Page. On 8 January 1898 Brereton contributed an article in which he dwelt on Tennyson's significance as "the representative poet of the Victorian age". It was a mild corrective to Stephens' earlier scorn of Tennyson. However, on 28 January 1899, in answer to Stephens' attack on Milton, Dante and Homer, Brereton contributed a piece of clever doggerel, "The Purple Page",31 in which the

30 See pp. 164-165 above.

31 See Appendix 4 below. The page was "purple" at least in that Stephens used purple ink for all his editorial markings on manuscripts and proofs and in his correspondence.
dialogue he supplied had "the Critic Man" assuring "the Poet who craved his aid" that "Homer and Dante were smaller men than Paterson, Boake or Quinn". The dialogue between critic and poet ended:

"Short-necked, full blooded, licorous, strong, must the Page-boomed Poet be;
(Two liquids mix in the ink of Song, and one of 'em's blood you see.)"
"My neck is long."
"Then your cake is dough."
"Ah, spare me the purple rest!
"Well, red corpuscles are all the go, and a short, thick neck is best."

Stephens' response to "The Purple Page" was ill-humoured; he asserted that "This isn't a Purple Page, and corpuscles hate to be called corpuscles, and nobody ever dreamt of dubbing local poets greater than Homer". He then suggested that Brereton's piece was prompted by Stephens' earlier remarks on his sonnets. Brereton was apparently startled by the vehemence of Stephens' reaction. He wrote to Stephens: "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 . . . I brought the 'P. Page' to you in person, but you were not in, so I left it. 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."32

The exchange showed Stephens once again unable to cope urbanely with the counter-charges of his wittier critics, who, while they might have agreed that the compass of the Red Page was too small to present wholes, were not prepared to let pass undisputed his presentation of distorted parts.

A.G. Stephens' relationship with Brunton Stephens was more complex. He embarrassed the older man by announcing on the Red Page his work in hand. Brunton Stephens wrote to him that "I have several times blushed painfully from top to toe as I have come across small pars. announcing as if it were a matter of moment that Brunton Stephens is engaged on a new poem. Poor souls! Poor Stephens! not meaning you".\(^3^3\) A.G. Stephens was anxious to have Brunton Stephens as a contributor and was generous in the space he allowed him. For example, when on 31 December 1898 Brunton Stephens offered "a few words respecting one or two of the adverse criticisms which touch most closely upon Tennyson's claim to supremacy among the poets of his generation", the "few words" stretched over all four columns of the Red Page and totalled more than 3,500. In his defence, Brunton Stephens claimed for Tennyson three cardinal virtues he found lacking in modern poets, namely "sympathy, clarity, sanity". Naturally Brunton Stephens

was displeased when A.G. Stephens on 7 January 1899 responded to his considered and carefully expressed views on Tennyson with a page which began by belittling the classics and finished by belittling himself, in order to prove that his regard for Tennyson was "almost of necessity beyond Brunton Stephens's control". On the personal level, Brunton Stephens, at the time 64 years old, might not have appreciated being referred to as "the ancient disciple". He did not appreciate A.G. Stephens' diagnosis of his regard for Tennyson as the result of "an infection of fame which pits brains as unmistakably as small pox pits bodies". Brunton Stephens must have had an advance copy of the Red Page for 7 January 1899 since on that day he wrote from Brisbane to assure A.G. Stephens that "I would rather have my brain 'pitted' by Milton, Tennyson and such like rare immortals than have it so deeply pitted by a lot of contemporary minorities as to destroy my vision for any greatness outside the current day and the narrow Bulletin environment. Take that ye divvle!" He was annoyed by the use A.G. Stephens made of this letter when he wrote on the Red Page on 28 January 1899 "So, here is an eminent pismire whose nip (not for publication) is followed by a 'Take that, ye divvle!'"
which gives interesting evidence of outraged feeling. Brunton Stephens resented both the reference to his letter and the misrepresentation of his feelings as "outraged". He wrote to A.G. Stephens that "I care not a rap about differences of opinion. When a man interests me I am not sure that he isn't all the more interesting on account of difference of views". In fact there was an important area in which the views of the two men were similar. Neither cared for realism in literature: Brunton Stephens because he found it at odds with his classical idealism; A.G. Stephens because it jarred his romantic patriotism. In his article on Tennyson on 31 December 1898, Brunton Stephens deplored the pursuit by modern poets "of the morbid, the corrupt, the gruesome and the brutal", and he added "No wonder so many of them are pessimists". A.G. Stephens' treatment of Lawson, discussed on pp. 204-211 below, showed the disapproval he felt for an Australian writer who refused to view his environment with romantic optimism.

A.G. Stephens' usage of Brunton Stephens at this time might have earned the enmity of a lesser man. It was remarkable evidence of the former's determination to enunciate what Brennan had termed "final criticism" that in his attempt to


36 BRP, 17 December 1898. See p. 186 above.
attain it he was prepared to put in jeopardy his friendship with a man whom he respected and admired. An important ingredient in A.G. Stephens' anxiety to explain away Brunton Stephens' opposing views was his determination to promote contemporary Australian writing, an aim which in 1898 and 1899 he seemed to find incompatible with respect for traditional literary values and the people who held them.

While A.G. Stephens was incapable of presiding light-heartedly over the controversies he raised on the Red Page in this period or of refraining from passing final judgment, he was more indulgent in his treatment of participants who tended to agree with his views, and particularly of those whose writings he was promoting at the time. Victor Daley, Will Ogilvie, Roderic Quinn, along with Arthur Adams, Arthur Bayldon and Arthur Jose, were allowed consideration of their efforts, creative and critical, not available to those outside the flock. Nothing demonstrated the special treatment Stephens accorded this group so well as the contrast between his acceptance of Victor Daley's "Narcissus and some Tadpoles" and his rejection of Brereton's "Purple Page".

Daley's piece did not lack point, but throughout it there was what "The Purple Page" lacked, namely an acknowledgement of Stephens' right to be:

... the Critic set on high,
The Red Page Rhadamanthus I.

"Narcissus and Some Tadpoles" was humbly submitted by Daley with the hope that "you will not object to the elegant caricature of yourself - done in innocent green ink and the purest spirit of friendliness". By contrast Brereton had to defend the fact that he had left "The Purple Page" for Stephens without a covering note. Daley admitted that his piece was a caricature and also acknowledged in it that there was a propensity among the poets to "drinking and swearing eternal admiration for each other's work". However in the absence of these qualities of deference and humility in Brereton's piece, and even if his charge that Stephens was making money "at a lordly rate" in running the Red Page was considered as an additional irritant, the differences between the two views of Stephens' editorial conduct were not


39 See page 192 above.

40 "Narcissus and Some Tadpoles", Scene II.
sufficient to account for the great disparity in his tolerance of the two contributions. Cause for his tolerant reception of "Narcissus and Some Tadpoles" lay rather in the fact that Daley participated, although with a little irony, in the mutual admiration society which Stephens encouraged among local writers in 1898 and 1899, while Brereton, like Brennan, placed himself outside it.

Local writers were encouraged by Stephens to criticize each other's works on the Red Page. For example, Arthur Jose on 16 July 1898, under his pseudonym "Ishmael Dare", reviewed Daley's *At Dawn and Dusk*, and in so doing took the lead that Stephens had given in his prophecy on 11 June that "the publication of Daley's book will be the most memorable Australian literary event since the publication of Kendall and Brunton Stephens". Jose's review was effusive in its flattery. He found Daley's verse "thrilled with the poetic temper, not with the mere fancy of an individual versemaker" and filled with "misty dreams and abounding life". The response of Brennan and others, including Ogilvie, to Stephens' invitation to write on what they particularly liked in Daley's verse has already been mentioned.41 A week later, on 17 September 1898, Daley asked for and was given space to publish "his own impression from the book concerning which critics' impressions were collected in last issue". It was

41 BRP, 10 September 1898. See p. 182 above.
modest and amusing disclaimer of greatness which ended:

Laurels, like bunches of spinach, should be gathered while they are green. When Beckford sat up three days and nights drinking black coffee and writing "Vathek" the fame that came to him was intoxicating because almost immediate. So, too, with Byron. Smaller people must wait longer, and when their fame comes to them they say - "You should have come earlier. Have you brought any money with you?"

Daley later remarked on 10 December 1898 in a light piece on the number and variety of girls in Fair Girls and Gray Horses that Ogilvie's love poetry was "too melodiously vague", but Roderic Quinn's article "The New Ogilvie" on 18 March 1899 was earnest in its praise of the verses, and reverent about the fact that they had been reprinted to meet demand. Stephens on 3 December 1898 devoted a page to Ogilvie and in measuring his achievement wrote that "Ogilvie stands just now at the head of our objective verse-writers; Daley at the head of the subjective". Ogilvie was placed ahead of "Lawson, Paterson, Gordon, et al."; Daley ahead of "Quinn, Stephens, Kendall, et al.". Stephens defended his measuring exercise in an aside which read "Is it profitable so to compare and criticise? It is more; it is necessary: for one cannot rightly praise without reference to a standard of praise and a standard involves comparison between (not rivals but) concurrent comrades in the fellowship of the muse".

The air of concurrent comradeship began to cloy on the Red Page between mid-1898 and mid-1899. Part of the cause for the development of the clique might have been the
necessity Stephens faced to provide copy for the page each week while he was preoccupied with editing Bulletin books and with the preparation of copy for The Bookfellow. Whatever the cause, the effect was provincial and stifling. It left Stephens open to some of the charges which Walter Murdoch levelled in an article in the Melbourne Argus on 6 May 1899, and which Stephens set out to refute in "The Devil's Advocatekinling" in "Under the Gumtree" on 10 June 1899. Stephens admitted that among Australian writers, "Local insistence on their merits, accented by sales - or even unaccented by sales - has been followed by sporadic cases of megalomania which one would hate to see endemic". But, after characterizing Murdoch as a Devil's Advocate of diminutive stature, Stephens mercilessly dissected his article:

The multitude of vague premises, loose inferences, irrelevant conclusions, in Mr. Murdoch's two single articles rolled into one, is a little embarrassing. Perhaps it is better to begin at the beginning:

Is it true, as we are assured on all hands, that a new note has been struck in Australian verse - a note of more decisive power, more pungent sweetness, more convincing truth, than any that Australia has hitherto achieved; that at last the great dumb heart of our vast and varied continent has, in Carlyle's phrase, got itself uttered?

And Mr. Murdoch answers his own five-barrelled question by "admitting without hesitation"

42 Walter Murdoch, "The New School of Australian Poets" The Argus (Melbourne), < May 1899, p.4.
that a new group of writers has arisen, within the last ten years, and presented us with a body of verse admirable in many ways, fresh, racy, vigorous, instinct with the spirit of Australia. But when we are asked to go further and accept these writers as poets in the full sense of the term, then, indeed, some of us are inclined to pause.

Then Mr. Murdoch mentions the names of his "new group of writers" to wit - Paterson, Lawson, Dyson, Boake, Daley, Ogilvie, Quinn, Brady.

This is the place where I look round in a puzzled way and wonder wherever did Mr. Murdoch hear or read those "assurances on all hands"? I pay attention to the local press; but I have never seen this general statement that "the great heart of Australia has been uttered", etc. Personally I don't believe it has been uttered: I think the most the new poets have done is to utter some out-lying emotions. And personally, until Mr. Murdoch produces some evidence of his "assurances on all hands", I shall believe he dreamt them.

And surely, surely, Mr. Murdoch dreamt that he was "asked to accept these writers as poets in the full sense of the term". Who asked him? where was he asked? what is a poet "in the full sense of the term"? The devil's advocatekinlin[sic] doesn't say. I can only express the opinion that, if his "full sense of the term" is anything like my "full sense of the term" whoever "asked" knew nothing about the matter. Not one of the writers named is a poet in my "full sense of the term" - a perfect poet; some of them are certainly poets in the ordinary sense of the term, with more or fewer reservations; some of them are better classified as verse-writers in the ordinary sense of the term, and so classify themselves. Mr. Murdoch is fighting men of straw. If he didn't invent them, wherever did he get them?

Murdoch had also alleged in his article that Paterson, Lawson, Dyson, Boake, Daley, Quinn and Brady were poetically all of a piece. To demonstrate their kinship he took single lines
from the works of Paterson, Boake, Dyson, Lawson and Ogilvie and welded them into a stanza, making the claim that "You could not play such tricks with the genuine poets. Try to combine a line of Tennyson, with, let us say, a line of Arnold, a line of Browning, and a line of Swinburne, and the difference in their respective manners becomes palpable at once". Stephens italicized this challenge on the Red Page, accepted it, and produced:

The Last Kiss

As a tired heavy honey-bee
In this lone, open glade I lie:
A little patience ere I die:
Forgive what seemed my sin in me.

The hopeless tangle of our age
May make one music as before...
One last time, one more and no more,
Suck out my soul, thy heritage!

Both stanzas were made up of single lines by Tennyson, Arnold, Browning and Swinburne. Stephens was thus able to press home his charges that Murdoch wanted knowledge, accuracy and taste.

Yet when Murdoch wrote of the group of Australian poets who had emerged in the previous ten years that "Whether we accept them or not they are evidently prepared to accept one another in a spirit of the deepest veneration", and cited Daley's praise of Ogilvie and Ogilvie's of Daley, he had justification for his cynicism. As Brunton Stephens remarked in a letter to A.G. Stephens, "I was highly amused by your handling of Murdoch. All the same, as you honestly recognised, it was a salutary article, for verily I say unto you it was becoming
a little difficult to distinguish between criticism and advertisement".\textsuperscript{43} Probably a rare exercise of discretion led Stephens to subscribe no name but only "Contributed" to the favourable review of E.J. Brady's \textit{The Ways of Many Waters}\textsuperscript{44} which appeared on 17 June 1899, the week after Stephens' reply to Murdoch. From that date he ceased inviting local poets to review each other's work, even though he had defended the practice against "The Devil's Advocate" by asking "And why should not Ogilvie praise Daley, and Daley Ogilvie, if both be worthy of praise? The obvious person to praise one poet is another poet, who should naturally best understand, be most in tune with poetry". When he wanted a poet as critic of Quinn's \textit{The Hidden Tide}\textsuperscript{45} he looked well beyond the local circle and on 28 October 1899 he published the opinion he had elicited from W.B. Yeats that "Mr. Quinn has real imaginative energy; and the mastery of expression, of precision of music and precision of phrase, which time will doubtless give him, should make him a very interesting writer".

Stephens' attitude to the minor writers, some of whose


\textsuperscript{44} E.J. Brady, \textit{The Ways of Many Waters} (Sydney, The Bulletin Newspaper Co., 1899).

writing, like Quinn's, he edited for publication by *The Bulletin* in this period, demonstrated not only his weakness for lyric poetry but also, again, his partiality for writers who were prepared to regard themselves as his protégés. In his relationship with Lawson, an established author of greater talent and with greater achievement than any of them, could be discerned his attitude to writers who resisted his influence. Conflict between Lawson and Stephens was essentially on attitudes rather than on literary values. Stephens' nationalism was optimistic, and it coloured with romance his idea of Australia. On 28 October 1899 in a scathing review of Turner and Sutherland's book, *The Development of Australian Literature*, Stephens was especially irked by Henry Gyles Turner's assertion that the history of Australia had been "hopelessly commonplace". Stephens retorted:

Our history hopelessly commonplace! The conquest of a Continent! the ruin of a Race! - these things commonplace! The tragedy of the Convicts! the heroism of the Explorers! the continual fight with the Bush and the Desert! - these things commonplace! Commonplace the epic of pastoral development, the lyric passages of pathos and humor which sing through settlers' stories, the glowing glorious drama of the gold-hunters! Why, no country on earth can show more thrilling romances, loftier themes, grander emotions. Jewels are everywhere for the artist's setting. And H.G. Turner stands at gaze and cannot see the sky full of stars!

46 H.G. Turner and A. Sutherland, *The Development of Australian Literature* (Melbourne, George Robertson, 1898).
Truly, to the commonplace mind all things are commonplace. But that is no reason why Australia should be libelled in a notice of "The Development of Australian Literature".

Hope had never been a large component in Lawson's nationalism which, by 1899, had almost been destroyed by disillusionment. He chose the Red Page on which to express his despair of a future for himself as a writer in Australia. His article, "Pursuing Literature in Australia" on 21 January 1899 was a mixture of documentation of his early experience and disclosures of his current circumstances and feelings. It frankly revealed his self-pity. Lawson wrote that "I don't know about the merit or value of my work; all I know is that I started a shy, ignorant lad from the Bush, under every disadvantage arising from poverty and lack of education, and with the extra disadvantage of partial deafness thrown in". "Pursuing Literature in Australia" raised a furore. On the Red Page on 11 February 1899 there were admonitions to Lawson from E.J. Brady and Alex Montgomery, and not unmixed sympathy from "H.F.", "7 x 7", Henry Stockdale and Bernard Espinasse. Adverse comments on Lawson's personal life were included on 11 March 1899 in the five letters Stephens introduced with the remark that "These embers have for the most part little to recommend them, but they give a

useful glimpse of public opinion on the questions raised. Brunton Stephens wrote a private letter which expressed his distress at the "dreadful paper of Henry Lawson's" and told A.G. Stephens that he should have advised him not to publish it. But Brunton Stephens seemed to have overlooked the fact that A.G. Stephens had provoked it in an earlier Red Page article.

On 22 October 1898 Stephens assumed the guise of a peripatetic hawker to give an anecdotal survey of the characters to be encountered in the hard life of the Australian bush and in the low life of Australian cities.

The correspondents were "Pat C.", "M.O'K.", "Te Kuri Pakeha", "6 x 8" (i.e. Richard Holt), and "Cripps Clerk".


Later evidence suggested that "The Hawker", whose writings appeared on BRP 22 October 1898, 25 February 1899, 28 April 1900, 27 October 1900 and 2 November 1901, was not Stephens alone. On BRP 20 April 1905, Stephens reported that "'The Hawker' was a Trinity, of whom one godhead went to England and one is going: but the godhead gone was best. We are sad for his epigrams. How dull people do hate epigrams!"
The message of the piece for Red Page readers was that "There's hundreds of yarns like that waiting for you; and you chaps ought to be able to dress them up a lot better than I can. I'm only a hawker". However, the hawker's sermon was also a deterrent to pessimism in which the following passage occurred:

Don't tell me the Bush is the abode of misery and desolation. I know better. These things are there; but they are not all the Bush, are not even most of the Bush. I know your Henry Lawson and admire his talent; but when he talks continually of the accursed country out-back - Bah! A town-man who made one trip into the back-blocks five years ago, and has stuck to the cities ever since. I tell you the Bush is beautiful and terrible. She has days and nights of glory. If your painters could only paint the spirit of Australia with her frowning eyes and smiling lips - Australia, the mother of heroes.

What Stephens had done was to revive the issues of "The Battle of the Bards" once more and that Lawson would respond was predictable. Lawson's insistence in his article on the hard "graft" he had put into his literary work was probably also, like his explanation that the order in which the stories appeared in While the Billy Boils had been beyond his control, an attempt to defend himself against criticisms Stephens had made of his work.  

50 See page 147 above.
Lawson had concluded "Pursuing Literature in Australia" by stating:

My advice to any young Australian writer whose talents have been recognised, would be to go steerage, stow away, swim, and seek London, Yankeeland, or Timbuctoo - rather than stay in Australia till his genius turned to gall, or beer. Or, failing this - and still in the interests of human nature and literature - to study elementary anatomy, especially as applies to the cranium, and then shoot himself carefully with the aid of a looking-glass.

As Lawson's confidence in his country and the future of its writers waned in this period, Stephens' confidence increased. He adopted the hawker's disguise again on 25 February 1899 to hymn Australia's natural beauties and retail anecdotes of her unique characters. Lawson was gently rebuked by Stephens in an article in The Bookfellow in which
he wrote that "Doubtless Lawson is the most characteristic literary product that Australia has yet achieved. So far as he knows our country, he has scrutinised it with a microscope. His work is crowded with intimate detail. But as art it lacks perspective: Lawson is always too close to his subject. It results that his work is minutely vivid, but also scrappy, detached, solitary". While Stephens expressed sympathy with Lawson's practical problems he would not have blame for them attributed to Australia. He wrote "I have set these things down in a spirit, not of condemnation but of regret. Nobody expects a poet to be a man of business. But for his failure to make poetry pay, whether Lawson blames himself or others, he should not blame Australia, which admires and loves and liberally encourages him".

But Stephens dealt more harshly with "Pursuing Literature in Australia" on the Red Page for 27 May 1899. To a complaint from F. Rollitt that "Maoriland has no literature, and her literary men may starve before the public or the Government lift a finger on their behalf", Stephens reacted strongly and laid the blame on Lawson. He wrote:

51 The Bookfellow No. 2 (18 February 1899): p.22.
It is somewhat alarming to find a recent Australian whine so echoed from beyond the Tasman sea. One hopes the local literary person isn't going to make a habit of it, for he has n't the least justification.

The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, But in ourselves, that we are underlings.

There is no country in the world which takes more interest in literature than Australia does; and Maoriland is quite close enough to win under Australia's mantle. True; the market for occasional verse and prose is small and unremunerative. But no "literary man" worth the name ever dreams of contentment with "occasional" verse and prose. He aims at a book, a dozen books - some solid achievement. And if Australia has not yet population enough to pay him for his labour, there is London £20 away or less. When an Australian miner can walk from Townsville to Coolgardie for gold, an Australian writer can easily work to Europe for gold and fame - if the Root of the Matter be in him. If! Anyway, the Whine is cowardly and silly. When Mr. Micawber came to Australia he begat far too many descendants who wait for something to turn up. Let the local writer go ahead and turn up something.

Stephens' renewed confidence in the wonder of the Australian environment and his pose as the hawker might have been suggested to him by the adventures of "Tom Collins" in Such is Life, since he was at work on Furphy's manuscript at this time. Certainly the attitudes of Furphy and

53 Joseph Furphy, Letters to A.G. Stephens, 1897-1904, The Papers of A.G. Stephens, Mitchell Library MS A2298. Furphy submitted his manuscript to The Bulletin on 2 May 1897; Such is Life was published in 1903. Furphy acknowledged receipt of his copies in a letter dated 8 April 1903.
Arthur Hoey Davis, another local writer who as "Steele Rudd" had begun to "turn up something", were more acceptable to Stephens than Lawson's. It might also be noted that Furphy and Davis took Stephens' counsel. Furphy pruned *Such is Life* as instructed and Davis, at Stephens' suggestion, rewrote his stories around the same characters, in the way Stephens would have had Lawson write his. Endorsing his own judgment, Stephens remarked on 16 December 1899 in his review of *On Our Selection* "Carrying the same characters through 250 pages, Arthur Davis gains a continuity of interest which almost takes the place of plot". In this review Stephens also contrasted Lawson with Davis and Paterson. He wrote that Davis "takes as a writer of humorous prose the place which A.B. Paterson holds as a writer of humorous verse; and is even more racy of the soil. Lawson's is a saturnine humour; but Paterson and Davis bubble with spontaneous fun". Lawson could hardly have expected to stand outside the great Australian optimism in the face of adversity and still be rewarded with Stephens' liberal encouragement. In an article entitled "For Australians" on the Red Page for 9 December 1899 Stephens suggested that faith in a great Australia could


be put in the place of the country's vanishing religious beliefs. "Good and evil are mingled everywhere", he wrote, "but there is no land with more beautiful aspects than Australia, no ideal with greater potentialities of human achievement and human happiness".

In addition to his differences of opinion with local Red Page contributors, Stephens in 1898 and 1899 continued his arguments with another group, the overseas critics of Australian writing. On 29 July 1899 he published and poured scorn upon expatriate Arthur Patchett Martin's article, "Pursuing Literature in London", a follow-up to Lawson's advice which dwelt on the difficulties of supporting oneself by writing in London. However on 25 June 1898 Stephens paid serious attention to suggestions of deficiencies in Australian writing made by the English critic, H.D. Traill in Literature for 14 May 1898. Among them was the charge that Australian verse was "without distinction of style or originality of thought". Stephens replied that "Maybe we can't claim much originality of thought: but for distinction of style (taken as including lyrical quality) no better minor poetry is being written in England than Daley and Quinn are writing in Australia; and nobody writes in England with a truer, tenderer sentiment than Ogilvie". Expanding his claims, Stephens quoted Arthur Adams' "In King-Street, Sydney",
Quinn's "The Hidden Tide" and Ogilvie's "Bowmont Water", and invited comparison of them with I. Zangwill's "Sic Transit", a piece of verse taken from the same issue of Literature as Traill's criticism. Stephens went on to quote Traill's allegations of Australians' lack of interest in literature and "almost entire absence of literary ideals, of appreciative study devoted to the English classics, of independent literary judgment". Stephens in reply pointed to the high rate of book sales in Australia as evidence of literary interest, but made some admissions:

A little of the writer's charge is true, toned and modified. We have 'literary ideals', but we have not enough; we have less than we might have of 'appreciative study devoted to the English classics' - and other classics as good as English; we might have more 'independent literary judgment'. Literary societies and magazines are wanting; and only small demur or qualification can be made to the statement that nobody makes a living by writing Australian books. And the conditions of Australian life, and brevity of Australian history, though they help to explain these things, do not altogether justify them.

However Stephens denied that Australian literature should be made solely on the English model. Probably urged as much by sentiments of patriotism as by literary considerations he wrote:

Necessarily, sprung as we are from the English stock, our literature must be an offshoot of English literature. But that it should be a devout imitation on a Jingo basis is neither necessary nor desirable. The best prose models are in French. The
strongest aesthetic stimuli are French. Most of the best history and philosophy is German. A little of the best poetry is Italian. To filter Australian ideas through English modes alone would be the depth of folly. We have the right and the duty - if we are developing a literature - to found it on the widest basis, the world-widest basis. We are heirs not only to English literature, but to every other literature as well. And to march solemnly in the ruts which Mr. English Jingo Traill politely points out to us - with God, in the guise of a Great English Jingo, hovering approvingly overhead - is not in the least, so far as this scribe knows, Australian literature's intention or tendency.

These were brave words, even though bumptiously expressed. Stephens was capable of expressing the same sentiment much more graciously. He wrote on 9 December 1899 "Give the same care and cultivation to a hundred modest bush flowers, draw them from obscurity as the rose has been drawn from the parent wilderness, let them be worshipped and adored through centuries of sentiment - and we have the rivals of the rose herself". In 1898 and 1899 Stephens obviously had the aptitude to recognize the potentialities of "modest bush flowers" like Furphy and Davis, but his lack of a consistent theory from which to draw sound practices for their cultivation was also obvious. In his own musings on the nature of literature there seemed to be little growth in 1898 and 1899, and development of his literary theory might have been inhibited by the fact that the roots of his philosophy lay
close to the surface. "I have no use for religious dogmas", he wrote on 19 March 1898, and gave as the sources of his convictions Edward Maitland's *The Pilgrim and the Shrine* and M.J. Savage's *Beliefs About Man*, "absorbed by an impressionable brain of fifteen".

Throughout the period Stephens adhered firmly to the belief, which he stated at the beginning of the Red Page on 15 October 1898, that "The essence of art is emotion". But when he tried to suggest what he meant by "emotion" in this sense, his explanations lacked consistency. On 22 January 1898 he stated that "the essence of art is its dynamic compelling quality; that this quality represents actual life which the artist throws from himself into his work; and that if he wants his work to carry far he has to make effort to give impulse - just as a speaker who wants his voice to carry far has, as it were, to take it with his whole strength and fling it at his audience". In the same passage in which he was musing on "Studies in the Elizabethan Drama" he rejected


57 Minot Judson Savage, *Beliefs About Man* (Boston, G.H. Ellis, 1882). The date of publication indicates that Stephens, born in 1865, must have been at least in his seventeenth year when he read it.

58 Arthur Symons' book *Studies in the Elizabethan Drama* was first published *in New York* by Dutton in 1919; Stephens must therefore have been considering whatever part or parts of it were earlier published in a periodical.
Arthur Symons' term "the moral idea" as a necessity for greatness in literature, saying:

Prefer, instead of "the moral idea" (which is mixed with baser associations), the universal application - That - the all-human reference, the accurate judgment, placement, of every detail in due proportion and relation to the widest conceivable synthesis, - is the secret of imperishable Art, which sees never a flower without a tree, never a tree without the landscape, never a landscape of the eye without the illimitable landscape of the creative imagination.

On 23 September 1899 he remarked complacently that "It is settled, of course, that no woman, no feminine woman, can be a writer of fiction on the high plane". However, he saw for the feminine woman another literary role:

Poetry is another matter. As philosophy, at one end of the mental gamut, calls chiefly for intellect, poetry, at the other end, calls chiefly for emotion. Its essence is passionate emotion, and woman is characteristically the vessel of passionate emotion. An overplus of intellect spoils poetry as it spoils a woman.

In this passage he seemed to equate "emotion" with sexual passion and absence of intellect.

Brennan was not the only Red Page contributor to notice the confused basis of Stephens' literary theory. Another contributor, whom Stephens described as "A Foreign Dogmatist called Compton", remarked on the Red Page for 7 May 1898 which was headed "The Basis of Art" that "Barren as the Burns controversy has been, it has - like occasional previous
plunges of the 'Red Page' into Art polemics - accentuated the crying need of criticism for something or anything like system. Argument, without admitted facts or established generalisations, generally becomes a mere polarisation of personal dogmatisms". Compton rejected as a definition of art, "Nature raised to the manth power" which he described as "the bold and hopeful epigram by which a Bulletin contributor once endeavoured to express the true inwardness of art achievement". Stephens defended the epigram, or at least appeared to do so in a passage notable for its lack of clarity. Stephens wrote that "Compton! seems to hold that Art is 'Nature' (and occasionally something else) 'raised to the manth power'. Now, what else is there? Admit his contention that man is subject and Nature object, man can't spin his Art out of himself, like old Jack Robertson's mythical telegraph-wire spider". Stephens might have been trying to convey ideas similar to those Brennan expressed on 10 September 1898 when Stephens had asked him to disclose his "standard of poetry". Brennan wrote "Shortly, then as is desired - that Beauty which poetry would achieve, is a new creation out of the old and lasting matter - Man and Nature; both being fused together in unity, that the soul may confer on outer beauty significance and in return receive, what belongs to it by right of birth, all splendour and glory - a nuptial exchange".
When on 24 September 1898 Stephens discussed *What Is Art?* he worked through the definitions of art which Tolstoy quoted, deciding that:

... the most scientific definition of all comes from Véron, whose book on aesthetics I myself prize especially -

Art is the manifestation of emotion transmitted externally by a combination of lines, forms, colours, or by a succession of movements, sounds, or words subjected to certain rhythms.

Which in the local opinion, is as near as anyone will ever get to defining art. No definition which has reference to "beauty" is worth a rap, unless the conception of "beauty" is widened.

Stephens had apparently forgotten or else changed ground on the claim he made on 21 May 1898 in disapproval of Wilde's discussion of the injustices of the British prison system in "The Ballad of Reading Gaol". At that time he had asserted that "Art must appeal to the mind undivided against itself: there must be no hesitation, no reserves. Hence it is that pure Beauty is *apriori* likely to produce the greatest artistic effect: to Beauty one surrenders unreservedly".

Stephens tried to define some of his critical terms when he devoted the Red Page to the measurement of Ogilvie's merits against those of other Australian writers on 3 December 1898. He introduced "some arbitrary definitions" which, omitting his facetious examples, were as follows:

Emotion = a cerebral reaction to sense-messages, and particularly an instinctive, aboriginal, pristine, racial reaction; i.e., a reaction to the strongest, simplest, most familiar impulses - to joy, fear, comradeship, love of woman, home, country.

Intellectual emotion = a cerebral reaction to sense-messages, but particularly an individual reaction; - i.e., a reaction colored less by ancestors than by parents, altered by personal ego conscious and unconscious. Usually intellectual emotion is not so strong as emotion; it is always harder, colder; but it is subtler, and sometimes finer and sweeter . . .

Fancy = imagination tethered to earth.

Imagination = fancy freed and soaring beyond the stars.

Stephens, having established definitions which satisfied him, continued:

Now it is possible to make arbitrary measurement of the poetical characteristics of some Australian poets:-

Daley = intellectual emotion plus fancy.
Quinn = emotion plus imagination.
Ogilvie = emotion plus fancy.
Kendall = intellectual emotion plus imagination.
Gordon = emotion plus fancy.
Stephens = intellectual emotion plus fancy.
Lawson = emotion.
Boake = emotion plus fancy.
Bayldon = intellectual emotion.

And so on. Of course spheres overlap: Daley is occasionally streaked with emotion, Quinn with intellectual emotion; the imagination of Kendall is rather in the atmosphere of his poems than in the poems; Boake's and Ogilvie's fancy wings higher than Gordon's - sometimes almost reaching imagination; Stephens's intellectual emotion is often close to emotion. And so on.
Stephens' definitions and comparisons relied on the assertion of simple measurements of height, breadth, depth, proximity, and even sweetness. To have had significance, his attempts to rate the poetical capacities of local writers would have had to be referred to much more widely accepted standards than the comparison of one with another of them. His attempt to divide the same writers into "subjective" and "objective" was no more illuminating:

The objective men deal with outsides, externals, realities, and the sensations they awake: the subjective, if they take an external peg for thought, speedily merge it in their dream and the sensations of their dream. There is no hard-and-fast line; but essentially the following classification holds. **Objective:** Ogilvie, Lawson, Paterson, Gordon, *et al.* **Subjective:** Daley, Quinn, Stephens, Kendall, *et al.* (The order here, as elsewhere on this page, is accidental. To establish an order of merit would involve reams of weighing and measuring, and then only a personal opinion would be established.)

However, he had already written that "Ogilvie stands just now at the head of our objective verse-writers; Daley at the head of the subjective", and he later remarked that "Ogilvie, like Gordon, is sliding into the subjective and higher rank", thus returning to criticism by simple assertion of measurement on his own arbitrary scale. His comparisons and measurements on this occasion led him to the extraordinary claim for Ogilvie that "a poem called 'The Bush, My Lover' ...
is the finest poetic utterance which the spirit of Australia has inspired".

The conclusion is inescapable that Stephens' criticism in 1898 and 1899 lacked an adequate theoretical basis including adequate standards of comparison. His zeal for the encouragement of Australian writing led him to praise immoderately the minor lyricists with whom he was surrounded, and in attempting to justify his claims for them he was prepared to denigrate the classics, to ignore his informed and perceptive critics, and largely to give up his former practice of comparing Australian writing with the best in overseas literature in similar genres. Stephens' critical performance in these years proved that as a basis of literary theory patriotism was not enough.

Stephens in 1898 and 1899 had to face the challenges to his critical authority which have been discussed in this chapter, and he also felt that literary criticism as a specialized calling was not appreciated. In "Under the Gumtree" on 1 July 1899 he set out to show to what extent the critical faculty differed from the creative faculty. As if in answer to an undisclosed proposition to the contrary, he wrote:

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. To create, for example, in the most artistic field of literature - Poetry - a man need not be equipped with learning: he relies less upon knowledge than upon instinct, natural impulse. He need not even have thought deeply, if he but feel keenly. But to be a capable critic one must have surveyed a considerable extent of the literary field; must have read much and reflected much; must have formed mental standards by continual judgment, by wide comparison. If the human brain, and human vitality, were capable of indefinite extension, there is no reason why the greatest poet should not be the greatest critic; and contrariwise. But they are not; and he is not.

These remarks were not an acknowledgement of his own deficiencies as a creative writer but the prologue to a proud defence of his literary theory based on physiological principles since he continued:

For here enters what has been called my "King Charles's head" of physiology (introduced with the more confidence because J.F. Nisbet's new book, "The Human Machine", is a repetition and enforcement of the sermon preached on this page for the last five years). Imaginative power, sense of beauty, sense of words, facility in the use of words, and all the other effects which readers are still accustomed to speak of as causes, are as much dependent on physical force and cerebral efficiency as the power of an engine is dependent on the heating surface of its boiler and the character of its construction.

Stephens went on to deplore the fact that "people are accustomed to transfer the reputation of rank, or ability from one mental field to another". One of his examples of this phenomenon was that "If Premier Reid ... were to venture an opinion upon Australian poetry, I am quite sure it would be reverently accepted by a large number of illiterate persons unable to judge its merits".

Stephens appreciated the reading and breadth of understanding necessary to produce a capable critic; he also believed that "some amount of poetical emotion every critic must have, or his criticism of poetry will be unsympathetic and barren". Yet he looked to physiological causes to account for the origins of the critical as well as the creative faculty. It was ironical that the man who denied choses jugées in philosophy, religion and art should have been so anxious to establish physiological first causes. His arguments to physiology were almost always irrelevant to the literary judgments he sought to make and they invariably led him into exaggerated assertions like that on 1 July 1899 that "if Keats had possessed much more than the 'scant learning' which Houghton credits him with, he would assuredly have dulled his sense of Beauty". Such assertions he could only defend, not as he had promised on 18 June 1898 "in the discussion of things ideal", but in further assertions of
the "Ipse Physiologus Dixi. Punctum." variety which Brennan had so acutely observed. 61

It was not in his theories but in the books which he saw through The Bulletin press after careful editing and in the manuscripts on which he was working that Stephens earned the compliment Furphy wrote to him at the end of 1899, "Honestly, I am conscious of a sort of subterranean conviction that there is a Deus ex the Bulletin Co. moving in a mysterious way towards an Australian literature". 62 Stephens' advertisements offering his services as literary agent ceased with that on the Red Page for 26 November 1898, but on 16 September 1899 a new advertisement appeared for the "Australasian Literary Agency" in which Stephens was described as the "Representative in Sydney" and Arthur Jose as the "Representative in London". In the period his experience with The Bookfellow must have convinced him that a separate literary magazine could not succeed and while in the revival of the agency he sought to assist Australian authors to publication he must have realized that the Red Page was the only forum he was likely to achieve for some time. It was unfortunate that the liveliness of

61 BRP, 17 December 1898. See p. 186 above.

Red Page debate diminished after the early part of 1899. Stephens' self-righteous vanity alienated the writers who could have shared in making the Red Page a vital literary force, and who could at the same time have benefited from communication with him and with each other on it. Winning entries in a competition for writing the most appropriate speech for an undertakers' picnic on 4 November 1899 were a very poor substitute for the best of the contributions by Brennan, Brereton, Brunton Stephens, Lawson and Daley earlier. Furthermore a major distraction from Stephens' concentration on literary topics appeared in the last issue of The Bulletin for the period on 30 December 1899, when the Red Page joined the rest of the paper in its campaign against the Boer War.
Chapter Six

"Bookfellow's Mixture"

The Red Page from January 1900 to April 1902.

A.G. Stephens ran the Red Page from January 1900 to 12 April 1902 with a great deal of verve, leaving the impression that he had it under tight editorial control and that he had his finger firmly on the pulse of happenings in the world at large. When he contributed a substantial article to the page he usually signed it. The signature he used most often was "The Bookfellow", but it is indicative of the amount of the Red Page Stephens devoted to other people's writing that in more than half the issues between January 1900 and 12 April 1902 neither his pseudonym nor his initials appeared. No announcement of his impending departure was made on the Red Page although he was to be absent from 12 April to 27 December 1902.

1 The signatures Stephens used on the Red Page in the period were as follows: "The Bookfellow" on 13, 20, 27 January, 3, 10, 17, 24 February, 3, 10, 17, 24 March, 14 April, 9, 16, 23, 30 June, 7, 21 July, 18, 25 August, 15, 22 September, 1900; 19 January, 6, 27 April, 11, 25 May, 1, 8, 22, 29 June, 6 July, 17, 31 August 1901; 29 March 1902: "Bookfellow" on 24 August, 28 September 1901 and 15 February 1902: "The " Fellow" on 14 September 1901: "B." on 23 February, 18 May, 20 July and 3 August 1901: "A.G.S." on 8 September 1900, 5 January, 10 August, 5 October, 7 December 1901; and 25 January 1902: "A." on 1 February and 22 March 1902: "G." on 8 February 1902: "Bill Spuds", the name he gave to "the hawker" on 2 November 1901. No signature of Stephens appeared on the other sixty-six issues of the Red Page in the period.
From January 1900 to April 1902, the contents of the Red Page reflected Stephens' preoccupation with two non-literary events, the Boer War and the Federation of the Australian colonies into the Commonwealth of Australia. The Boer War served to increase Stephens' resentment of Britain, and Federation increased his nationalism; in conjunction both events led him to seek out and extol the individuality of Australians and to urge them towards excellence, especially in the field of literature.

Stephens made clear his views on the Boer War in several ways. He reprinted from various sources articles supporting the Boer cause. Some were taken from the English press; for example, "When and Why the Boers Armed" on 28 April 1900 and "The Uitlander Grievances" on 19 May 1900 were both taken from the London Morning Leader. On 6 April 1901 he reprinted from the Chicago Record Bertrand Shedwell's anti-war doggerel "For His Good", and on 23 November 1901 S.W. Pennypacker's article "The South African War" was reprinted from the New York Sun. Reprints were also taken from Australian sources, for example "In the Death Agony" reprinted on the Red Page on 7 July 1900 was acknowledged to its source in the Brisbane Worker. In his own writing Stephens brought reports of British injustice in diplomatic negotiations and on the field of battle to the notice of Red Page readers.
On 13 January 1900 in "A Historian's Judgment of the Transvaal War", he discussed the evidence in James Bryce's *Impressions of South Africa* to show that Britain not the Boers had precipitated the war, and he concluded in disgust that "this is the war in which Australians have been lured and encouraged to take part!" The Red Page containing this article had begun with unsigned verses which Stephens explained had been occasioned by the call of the Archbishop of Canterbury for a day of humiliation and prayer for British victory over the Boers. While Stephens did not admit to authorship, the "Prayer in Time of War" was probably of his making. One stanza will be sufficient to indicate that while the lines lacked grace they were not without vigour:

God of massacre and carnage, give us carnage in a flood, -
Murdered fathers, weeping mothers, infants dead in tender bud.
Let our enemies be scattered; let thy altars swim in blood,
Blood! blood! blood! blood! blood! blood! blood! blood!

Verse by other writers was also used in his anti-war campaign. On 8 June 1901 he published William Watson's "Lamentation" which regretted the fate of "Our vainly grave in an ignoble quarrel". Reputation was no protection for established writers who supported the British war effort. On 23 February 1901 Stephens noted that "W.E. Henley (quanto mutatus) has

collected his rhyming twaddle about the Anglo-Boer war, and has produced in 'For England's Sake' a booklet fully worthy of the subject. On 30 March 1901 Stephens made effective use in his discussion of love letters of the pathetic letter from a Boer soldier's wife found on his body. On 17 August 1901 after devoting more than three columns of the Red Page to an account of British action against the civilian population of Krugerdorp, Stephens filled the rest of the page with Walt Whitman's lines, "To a Foiled Revolter or Revoltress". Stephens pretended no tolerance of readers who sought to argue with him about the War. On 20 January 1900 he wrote that the first salvo in his Red Page anti-war campaign, "Why the Boers Must Win", had been reprinted on 30 December 1899 "chiefly for its literary effect - it was fresh, original, and tant soit peu paradoxical. Come the controversialists - the plain ordinary controversialists - with solid arguments, maybe; but with no devil, no paradox, no tongue with a prickle-pickle-tang of unexpectedness. And if you don't print 'em - 'Where's your fair play?' So one goes - and no more". Having denied interest to the contributor's letter so effectively, Stephens saw no need to reply to any of the points it raised. Unfair tactics perhaps, but, like the rest of his anti Boer War writing, effective polemics.

Stephen's resentment of Britain also manifested itself in anti-imperialistic sentiments like those expressed in his article "Britain and India" which occupied the whole of the Red Page on 22 March 1902. The core of his argument was that "The work of plunder, so well begun, has been systematically continued. 'India must be bled!' Britain no longer steals with the mailed fist; she steals with the tax-collector's itching palm". These sentiments made it inevitable that Stephens would disapprove of the royal tour of Australia by the Duke of Cornwall and York in 1901, arranged as part of the official celebrations of Federation. On 8 June 1901 Stephens imagined a lively and most unlikely letter from the royal visitor, headed "Being a Duke" and addressed "Dear Bookfellow". Stephens had the Duke complaining "Where's the holiday? I'm slaving from morning till night: I don't get a minute's decent rest - not a minute! People complain I look bored: how can I help looking bored? I am bored. So would you be if you had to keep eternally grinning and bowing at people you never met in your life before, and never want to meet again - for fear they'll say something disrespectful of the monarchy if you let your mouth fix for a moment". Even more strongly than of the royal tour, Stephens disapproved of the loyal verses written for the occasion, which he called "Loyalty's
Literary Product" in the heading of a Red Page article on 25 May 1901. Stephens noted that "a thoroughly loyal poet", James Purtell, was "the only professional poet in Australia - the only man who makes a living solely and wholly by poetry. He invariably refers to his products as 'effusions' - sentimental gush poured out in a stream - and the effusions are sold by thousands to the illiterate bulk of Melbourne's population". However, even on the evidence of Purtell's "The Soldier's Dream of Home" which he reprinted, Stephens was prepared to conclude optimistically that "By-and-by, via Purtell, Purtell's readers may learn to appreciate loyalty to Australia. You can't hurry the universe or the race. Let us hope".

The derision with which Stephens greeted expressions of loyalty to crown and Empire was in sharp contrast to his wholehearted recommendations of Australian patriotism. On 8 December 1900, on the eve of Federation, he addressed to Red Page readers a stirring call for loyalty under the title "For Australia". In it he explained that he was prepared to accept the official celebrations as necessary since "The celebration by Blare and Glare of the establishment of the Commonwealth is the process by which we make intelligible to the crowd the supposed significance of the Commonwealth: it is a kind of picture-writing by which we give objective shape to the idea of the Nation". Stephens
did not regard Federation as in itself an achievement. He wrote that "There is no salvation in the abstract idea of Australian union: its chief value is as a stimulus to effort, and the effort must always be the concrete effort of the men who compose the union". In this article he laid down the directions in which he considered the efforts of Australian political leaders would best be directed. He asserted that "the objects of government must always be national existence, racial preservation, and a national prosperity in which every citizen may share in proportion to his desert". The attainment of these objects he concluded would "justify all the enthusiasm to which the establishment of the Commonwealth has given birth by proving to nearly every individual in the community that Patriotism Pays".

For the purposes of his argument for "racial preservation", Stephens was prepared to allow that "The mixed British breed on which we build our race is as good a breed, on the whole, as any to be found". It was certainly preferable in his view to "the establishment of Asiatic settlements, or of a Eurasian breed", or to the immigration of South Sea Islanders, because "the white races have won from the centuries a possibility of development along their own lines which is not shared by the Asiatic or the Islander". While the preservation of the race depended on keeping
Australia white, "national existence" for Stephens depended on the population of the bush. Stephens likened the capital cities to "huge cancers whose ramifications of disease spread far into national life; and the non-productive inhabitants whom they nourish are supported at the cost of the primary industries of the community". In expansion of this idea he asserted that "The city tribe of clerks and similar employees is the last class which should be encouraged to increase", since "Every one of them has to be carried on the back of some struggling farmer or miner or stock-raiser".

Stephens' belief in the superiority of the country dweller in the Australian population was not only expressed in the "For Australia" article on 8 December 1900. On earlier Red Pages he had propounded the view that the bush was a healthier place than the city. In his "Letter to a Bushfellow" on 20 January 1900 he assured his correspondent with some hyperbole that "Yours is the honest sweat in a saddle, not enervating perspiration over a desk; you hunt your dinner before you catch it, and fatigue your bodies into health while we are worrying our brains into disease". Depreciating the supposed advantages of city life he wrote "Yet you miss the mental stimulus of a metropolis, the mental attrition and polishing - poor stimulus! sad polish!"
somehow desiderated by these bundles of contradictory appetites - us". He went on to state that "Neither bush nor city is better; but both". However, on 21 April 1900 he wrote that "city life keeps the brain in continual excitement while denying the body proper rest and exercise", and on 28 September 1901 in introducing his review of Miles Franklin's _My Brilliant Career_ under the heading "A Bookful of Sunlight" he described beliefs that "the Bush is desolate, the eucalypt unbeautiful" as "the notions of our British fathers, persisting in their children".

Another article on the same Red Page which Stephens entitled "Our Country" he introduced with the note that "The good leaven is working in this exceptionally well written article from _The Age, Melbourne_." The article, extolling the beauty of spring in Australia, rejoiced in "the settler's home embowered in blossom and bursting leaf" where "a brave man and a brave woman live in strong self-reliance, the solitary life of the bush". The "good leaven" to which Stephens referred was presumably the pride of Australians in their native land, based on its natural beauties and the sterling qualities of the inhabitants of the bush.

There were however occasional cracks in the idealism with which Stephens viewed bush life. On 25 January 1902

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4 Stella Miles Franklin, _My Brilliant Career_ (Edinburgh, Blackwood, 1901).
in a bitter attack on Britain, entitled "Australia for Australians", Stephens referred to Australia's early use by Britain as "a receptacle for felons", and he hinted darkly at "unmentionable crimes hidden in the Australian bush - the family incest, the passionless murders". He resented what he considered government partiality in the provision of amenities for the cities. On 6 October 1900 he discussed the grant of £200 from the New South Wales Department of Public Instruction to the public library of the Rockwood Municipality in Sydney under the heading "An Example of the Gross Waste of Public Money in N.S. Wales". He complained that "Every Australian Government squanders on the capital cities money which should be devoted to the improvement of the conditions of life and labour in the country. In a hundred ways the cities are made pleasant places to live in. In a hundred ways life in the bush is rendered intolerable". Typically Stephens ascribed the deficiencies he discerned in life in the bush to government mismanagement and not to any fault in the inhabitants. In fact, Stephens saw in the bushman characteristics akin to those of Rousseau's noble savage. On 27 October 1900 he wrote that "In these days, when human society is an over-educated irony - blasé as a meteorite that has been through heaven and earth only to find itself on the cold floor of a
museum in the demoralising company of dummy nuggets of gold - in these torpedo times, when Philosophy seems an olio of clues to nowhere in particular, and Art an echo of crazes from everywhere in general, it is delightful to meet, under a gum-tree in the Bush, the Man who knows Nothing, who has never been anywhere and wants to go nowhere". Stephens apparently saw no conflict between this admiration of bush ignorance and his insistence that facilities for the improvement of the mind, like libraries, should have been provided for the men of the bush.

What Stephens sought and thought he found in the bush was the type who was distinctively Australian. Russel Ward has shown that "the traditional belief that the 'true' or 'typical' Australians were the men of the outback" was not only widespread but also had some substance in view of the high proportion of the native-born in the bush population in the nineteenth century. Stephens noted on 25 January 1902 that "At the census of 1891 there were in this country nearly the same number of men of adult age, born in Britain, as there were men born in Australia". But he more often sought physiological rather than demographic evidence of the existence or at least of the emergence of a race distinctively Australian. On 28 July 1900 he introduced

under the title "The Coming Australian", part of an address by Dr. R. Humphry Marten to the South Australian Branch of the British Medical Association, with the following note:

Many Australian medical practitioners possess valuable data for generalising about the Australian race - the way in which native-born whites of European descent are affected by climate, by occupation, by social conditions, by that environment which includes all these factors and others too intangible to be defined, yet all-important in fixing the character and destiny of the race. If leading generalisations could be established, even as theories, the deductions would be of the utmost service to physicians, legislators, sociologists and ethnologists.

The second part of "The Coming Australian" Stephens published on the Red Page on 11 August 1900, and, as an example of its level, one of Marten's generalizations was that "The teeth, as a rule, are extremely bad, this being caused by the enormous amount of butcher's meat consumed, and may be helped by the small amount of lime present in the drinking water, which is so often purely rain water from the roofs. It is cheering to know that good teeth, according to the latest French statistics, contrary to what is generally imagined, go with a high death rate". On 29 September 1900 Stephens condensed a paper given by Dr. Joseph Ahearne of Townsville to a Catholic Congress in Sydney under the heading "The Australian in the Tropics". On the Red Page
on 13 October 1900 Stephens expressed his disagreement with Ahearne's view that the white Australian was not able to work satisfactorily in the heat of North Queensland. According to Stephens, "Given a good wage and an eight-hour day, white men can cut cane just as well as black". It was of course necessary to Stephens' arguments for a white Australia to establish that the white man was capable of adapting himself to life and work in all the zones of the Continent.

Besides its nurturing of the "real" Australian, there was another element in bush life which would have appealed strongly to Stephens, its comparative freedom. In the period from January 1900 to April 1902 he championed freedom of the individual from a number of restraints. He began his plea "For Australia" on 8 December 1900 with the assertion that "The object of life, for everything living, is the satisfaction of natural appetites", and in the period he continued his earlier opposition to religious dogma and conventional attitudes to sexual morals. On 21 July 1900 in "The Holy Medical Church" he wrote of a pamphlet, *The Morality of Medical Practice*6, written by the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, that "Within the limits of his

creed Archbishop Carr is acute and forcible - he eats the herbage logically bare. But he cannot strain farther than his rope will permit. Beyond his bare patch is the universe; and he cannot reach it - tethered to his Dogma.

In reviewing a new English edition of Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* on 16 June 1900 in an article he headed simply "Sex", Stephens wrote:

> We live under the domain of undeviating law. For every effect there is a cause, and the chain of causation has never with human experience been broken. Sex-diseases are as much a part of human experience as are any other diseases. They do not come uncaused, and their causes and remedies should be studied just as the causes and remedies of diphtheria or neurasthenia are studied - in the interests of humanity. But over sex in European countries, and during later ages, a mysterious veil has been drawn. Religions have called 'unclean' the instinct upon which human existence depends; and the methods of Nature, in every other sphere free to enquiry, have in the sphere of sex been looked upon as 'indecent', 'improper', 'obscene'. It is time to end all that. Sex is not a mystic myth: it is a human fact; and it cannot be disregarded or suppressed without the most serious consequences to the individual and to the race.

On 31 August 1901 Stephens expressed his opposition to the restraints that were placed on the subject matter and the

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attitudes of contemporary novelists. He prefaced his discussion of "Two New Novels", *Sister Teresa* by George Moore and *Anna Lombard* by Victoria Cross, with the complaint that "English literary art . . . teems with prating praises of 'the mighty Elizabethans'; but if a mighty Elizabethan sprang to life in London nowadays, there is no 'Respectable' publisher who would print his books; there is hardly a 'Critic' who would not revile him".

Stephens also fought vigorously against literary censorship in Australia. Individual attempts were dismissed in short order. In a paragraph on 22 June 1901 Stephens ridiculed the attempt of the local parish priest to have novels he considered "an outrage to Catholic instincts" excluded from the Kiama School of Arts. Official attempts Stephens took more seriously. On 19 October 1901 in an article entitled "Suppressing Balzac", he invited Red Page readers to contrast the attitudes of two Australian academics, Professor Morris of Melbourne University and Professor MacCallum of Sydney University. Stephens noted that Morris had assisted the prosecution in a case in which a Victorian

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bookseller was fined for importing translations of Balzac's *Contes drolatiques* and Paul de Koch's *Monsieur Duport*. Stephens reported with scorn that Professor Morris had found Balzac's stories "thoroughly indecent". Professor MacCallum on the other hand, in testimony before the New South Wales Legislative Assembly Committee on Working of the Free Public Library, had upheld the right of the Library to house and make available for serious study books considered "objectionable". Stephens quoted at length from MacCallum's testimony in which he argued that "there are three classes of objectionable books that any great collection ought to have. One of these classes is objectionable books of undoubted genius . . . in the second place, every great public collection ought to have books, even if objectionable, which throw light on the origin of literary masterpieces . . . in the third place I think a public collection should have such books as do not possess

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The bookseller was George Robertson and extracts from evidence by Professor Morris appeared in *The Age* (Melbourne) for 21 September 1901 under the heading "Importation of French Translations/ Well-known Bookseller Fined £100". Under examination Professor Morris averred that "The Eve of St. Agnes" was not very indecent but that there was in Dryden's "Feast" a gross indecency which he had not noticed until it had been pointed out to him.
literary interest, but which, though not written by a man of genius, are still important as showing the manners of the time". MacCallum's testimony amounted to a comprehensive claim for the Library's right to buy any book regardless of any objections on moral grounds.

In this period another Australian academic whose works were considered "objectionable" by some members of his own university as well as by some of the public was given support on the Red Page. On 30 June 1900 Stephens in a report of a mock trial headed "The Sin of Witchcraft" ridiculed the Melbourne University Council's attempt to discipline Professor Marshall-Hall for his sensuous verses which he had ironically titled Hymns, Ancient and Modern. Stephens had made briefer and wittier comment on this dispute a fortnight earlier; on 16 June 1900 he wrote a paragraph reporting that "G.W.L. Marshall-Hall, whose term of office will expire at 1900-end, is to be asked to undertake anew Melb. University music-professorship, despite Bishop Goet's vigorous protest against 'those immoral Hymns'. A public musician's private morals do not matter while he keeps them to himself; but there should really be a clause in the Uni. agreement insisting that Prof. Hall improve his hexameters".

On 11 January 1902 Stephens wrote an article which he entitled "The Czar of Customs" and in which he attacked the provisions of the Customs Act of 1901, pointing out that "The word 'blasphemous', at least should be struck out. It is practically meaningless, except as a tool for the use of ignorance or bigotry . . . It is an offence against liberty to prohibit the importation of books, for example, on the ground that their contents are 'blasphemous'. Who, in the progress of thought, in the continual enlightenment of the human race, can arrogate the right to put a barrier to what shall honestly be written?" His criticism went straight to the weaknesses in the provisions of the Act which have caused problems of interpretation at law and of administration in the bureaucracy ever since. Stephens also came to see that official acts of censorship and censure had the support of the mass of the Australian population. On 15 February 1902 he wrote that "The truth is that Australia, in point of intelligence, is still little more than a large parish. Parochial is written large over almost every expression of public opinion; and narrow-minded leaders guide continually narrow-minded followers to narrow-minded ends". The immediate causes of this displeasure were public reactions to the sensuality of Marshall-Hall's verse and to the opposition to the Boer War expressed in academic
circles in Sydney. As Stephens saw it, "The persecution of Prof. Marshall-Hall in Melbourne, the clamour for the persecution of Prof. Wood in Sydney, exhibit the instincts of the Mob at its basest". And he concluded by asserting "So great a country is Australia! so small a parish!"

Writing in less serious vein on 20 July 1901 Stephens included women among the enemies of freedom, proclaiming that "We need another Wilberforce to preach a new crusade on behalf of the religious savage, pious one day in seven; the official savage, with his regulated holidays; the woman savage, with her fetish of birthdays and wedding days, and her annual repetition of a death-advertisement". He then invited Red Page readers to consider "What tame pack-horses most of us are, plodding under loads of habit".

Stephens in this period continued his habit of publishing and praising on the Red Page the work of Ogilvie, Quinn and
Daley. There was evidence of parochialism in his

On BRP 10 February 1900 Stephens quoted from Ogilvie's tribute to Harry Morant on his departure with the Transvaal Contingent; untitled verses by Ogilvie were published on 13 June 1900 (lines beginning "I envy all red roses"), on 6 October 1900 ("Some men are dreamers with their oars inboard"), and on 3 November 1900 ("Let green weeds gather in our garden ways"); on 18 May 1901 under the heading "On the Road to Scotland", Stephens reported that Ogilvie was on his way back to Scotland on the SS "Persic" and he quoted two of the pieces of verse he had written on the way, "Chess on the Persic" and "The Land at the Back of the Leeuwin"; on 22 June 1901 Ogilvie's verses, "The Reiver's Heart", headed the Red Page and on 12 April 1902 Stephens announced that Ogilvie had produced "Songs for the Buccleugh Hunt" and quoted "To Horse and Away", "Get Away On" and "Hacking Home". Stephens commented that "Ogilvie's rhymes are really spirited: in fact they challenge comparison with Whyte-Melville, and fail only by a pulse beat or two". On 12 January 1901 Stephens suggested that Lawson had borrowed ideas from Ogilvie (mentioned on p. 277 of text) and on 4 January 1902 he quoted an epigram of Ogilvie's on a tortoise-shell comb which was challenged as a plagiarism by "A.J.G." on 11 January 1902. Quinn's contributions consisted of prose and verse. The three prose sketches were "The Northern Traveller" on 26 May 1900, "Glimpses" on 4 May 1901, and "The Girl and the Island" on 13 July 1901. The three pieces of verse were "Astronomers" on 3 March 1900, "The Fisher Fleet" on 22 June 1901, and "Star-Tryst" on 21 September 1901. Quinn also wrote a eulogy on Daley's verse on 12 April 1902. On 20 January 1900 Stephens quoted Richard Le Gallienne's praise of Quinn's verse in the London Star, and on 22 March 1902 he praised a pamphlet Quinn wrote for the New South Wales Government, The Old Rocks: a Sketch of Their History (Sydney, Government Printer, 1902). Victor Daley's verse "Father" appeared over his pseudonym "Creeve Roe" on BRP 17 February 1900, and Stephens quoted his sonnet, "Death", on 17 March 1900. Daley on 12 May 1900 contributed a denial that he had borrowed an idea from Robert Buchanan as a Red Page contributor had suggested. On 5 January 1901 Stephens suggested that Daley should have been appointed one of the judges in a verse-writing competition sponsored by the New South
encouragement of them, especially when viewed against his lack of regard for verse writers from Victoria. On 20 January 1900 he wrote that "It is to be noted that the Victorian poetic product remains always smaller than that of New South Wales. The eastern atmosphere, more nerve-wearing than the southern seems also more nerve-stimulating: in Melbourne you have better bodily health than in Sydney, and therefore comes less rarely that ferment in the brain which tunes the poetic lyre to high poetic pitch". Stephens returned from the rim of absurdity to concede that "Doubtless something is to be allowed for the greater encouragement which verse writers receive in Sydney", but he disparaged the "Victorian cult of John Bernard O'Hara", asserting that Quinn's superiority to him would become plain in any

Wales Government, and on 18 May 1901 Stephens quoted in his article "Painter's Disease" Daley's view that Australia at that stage of its development could not nurture great artists. On 12 April 1902 Stephens, after printing Quinn's eulogy of Daley's verse, remarked that "Daley, alas! has been in very bad health lately" and invited contributions to the Victor J. Daley Testimonial Fund, for which a formal advertisement appeared at the end of the page. It was also on this page that Stephens introduced Ogilvie's "Songs of the Buccleugh Hunt" with the phrase "And, speak of the poet . . . !"
comparison of *The Hidden Tide* \(^{12A}\) with *Songs of the South* \(^{12B}\).

It is only fair to note that Stephens had no hesitation in awarding the prize in his sonnet competition to Bernard O'Dowd, a Victorian, on 12 May 1900. Furthermore Stephens could contemplate with equanimity the loss to Sydney of David Scott Mitchell's collection of Australian books, pictures and manuscripts. "They'll be just as useful in Melbourne as in Sydney", he wrote on 22 June 1901 when it seemed that the New South Wales Government would not meet the conditions Mitchell attached to his gift.

Stephens' parochialism usually embraced the whole of Australia. With true insularity it was the world beyond his native shores which he chose most frequently to censure. In "Australia for Australians" on 25 January 1902 in which he declared the time had come for Australia to be Britain's independent ally not her vassal, Stephens inquired "What essential part or lot have we in foreign ambitions or foreign quarrels, British or other? Why should we marry our national ideals to the corpses of European intrigue?"


On 24 November 1900 Stephens gave wholehearted approval to a book by Havelock Ellis, *The Nineteenth Century: a Dialogue in Utopia*, the purpose of which he saw as "to satirise the complacent ignorance which sees in the successful brutality of the epoch abundant proof of its grandeur and glory". Yet Australia, as his "For Australia" article on 8 December 1900 implied, needed only the effort of her citizens to bring about a Commonwealth in which a happy, healthy, homogeneous, largely rural population filled with "The instinct of Patriotism, of Love of Race and Country" could attain a self-contained and absolutely satisfactory existence quite untroubled by happenings elsewhere in the world. Stephens, unlike William Lane's Paraguayan colonists, did not believe that it was necessary

to leave Australia in order to create a Utopia.\textsuperscript{14}

Stephens' attitude to New Zealand in this period was condescending, and might also be considered evidence of parochialism. His disapproval was also influenced by his scorn for that colony's pride in being British and by his mistrust of institutions of higher learning and academic pretensions generally. In reviewing *The Jubilee Book of Canterbury Rhymes*\textsuperscript{15} on 1 December 1900 he asserted:

\textsuperscript{14} Stephens brought news of the bitter experiences of one of the Paraguayan colonists in the following paragraph on BRP 21 July 1900:

Many people have treasured the poignant little verses of "M.J.C." (Mrs. Gilmore) in *The Queensland and The Bulletin*. Her Paraguayan history reads sadly. Writing recently, she sums up her experience of the tragic dream called "New Australia":

\begin{quote}
Travelled alone from Sydney to Paraguay.  
Lost father and mother. Married; had a son.  
Resigned from Colony. Baby nearly died.  
Husband absent four months in Patagonia, out of the way of mails; no word from him.  
Fever and disappointment. Getting grey, but quite prepared to begin life again on nothing.
\end{quote}

Poor little woman!

Mary Gilmore's verses, "By the Lone Thorn", appeared on BRP 1 March 1902.

Maoriland is a curiously "educated" country. There are "high schools" and "colleges" and "universities" galore; every bright young man is labelled B.A. or M.A., and likes it, and is asked to tea for it; and there is more "culture" to the M.L. maiden's square foot than trips with a dozen arched Australian insteps. And the M.L. Parliament is about the only place nowadays where it is comparatively safe to lard a speech with familiar tags from Virgil (they spell him Vergil) or Horace (they call him Horatius). The trouble at present is that the average Maorilander, like the Mugwump, is a person educated beyond his intellect.

Stephens levelled a similar charge at inhabitants of the Eastern seaboard of the United States. Referring to what he considered their excessive regard for Robert Louis Stevenson, on 18 January 1902 he described the area as "populated chiefly by literary Mugwumps - persons educated beyond their intellects whose blood looks under the microscope like Mr. Casaubon's, full of commas and semicolons in place of corpuscles".

There was inconsistency in Stephens' attitudes to education. The remarks quoted above suggested that he was opposed to too much education for too many. Yet in the Australian context in this period he based his continuing opposition to Sydney University on its isolation from the community and its availability to so few. On 10 August 1901, commenting on an address by Professor Francis Anderson
to the N.S.W. Public School Teachers' Conference, Stephens complained that "since Dr Badham died, Sydney University has yielded little or no stimulus to N.S.W. educational system: it has remained a thing apart, content to give more or less efficient aid to the not-too-numerous students who presented themselves, and to hold yearly examinations [i.e. school examinations] which, despite Professor Anderson's eulogy, have little value as a test of the work of the mass of pupils in primary and secondary schools, no value as a test of pupils". Stephens saw no justification for the setting-apart of a State high school for the education of an elite. The Fort Street School ranked equally in his disfavour with the University. He wrote that "Professor Anderson referred to the favouritism shown to Fort-street school - that excrescence on N.S.W. educational system; but even more favouritism has been shown to Sydney University, which, from some points of view, is no less an excrescence". Opposing the financing of Sydney University from public funds Stephens suggested that "if Sydney University is to continue to receive subsidy from the State, then Sydney University should be made an integral part of the State educational system, and should be directed

16 Francis Anderson, The Public School System of New South Wales (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1901).
by the Education Department for the benefit of the State, instead of being controlled as a close corporation for the benefit of professors and a special class of students.

Stephens apparently had greater faith in the administrative competence of the New South Wales Department of Education than in its ability to produce text books. On 5 October 1901 he described under the heading "A Miscarriage of History", Joseph Finney's The History of the Australian Colonies, published by the Department as a text book for schools. The work was the culmination of a project begun by the Department in 1890. Stephens minutely detailed the book's inaccuracies and its typographical shortcomings. He included a reproduction, presumably by a photographic process, of one of its poorly designed pages of thin-faced type. With biting sarcasm he concluded that "Plainly, N.S.W. Department of Education has been too rash. Its authoritative book will not be fit for use in Australian schools until another dozen years have elapsed. The copies of the issue should be withdrawn from sale and burnt - with the exception of one only, which should be preserved in the Departmental museum for the warning of impetuous

17 Joseph Finney, A History of the Australian Colonies: Part I. New South Wales; Part II. The Other Colonies (Sydney, Government Printer, 1901).
officialdom and for the wonder of more enlightened times". In contrast to Stephens, two other writers who discussed education on the Red Page in 1901 wanted radical changes. James Hebblethwaite and John Le Gay Brereton were concerned not with authoritative text books but with getting rid of the learning of facts from text books and of the tyranny of examinations. James Hebblethwaite, a Tasmanian school-master and lyrist, contributed three articles in 1901: "Education and Atmosphere" on 15 June, "Education: a Restatement" on 7 September, and "Elementary Education" on 12 October. Hebblethwaite forecast in his article on 15 June that "the greatest advance in the Twentieth Century will be the reform of education". On 7 September he referred to "that arch-destroyer of youthful happiness - the present system of education", and he asserted that he wanted not to cram facts into unwilling ears but "to gaze at the fact until the 'Something' behind burns with light and colour like an opening star, and I see it and my children see it". Brereton's views were included in his article, "What Are Schools For", which Stephens ran on the Red Page on 10 August 1901 together with a reprint from the Bathurst Free Press of an article by a New South Wales country school-teacher, "Junius", on "A N.S.W. Bush School" and his own comments on Professor Anderson's address discussed above.
Stephens gave the page the overall title "Dossier 14. - Scholars and Teachers", listing Hebblethwaite's article of 15 June as part of the dossier. Brereton's complaints against the system were brisker but no less humane than Hebblethwaite's. He confessed that "On a fine sunny day I have sat in an inky room trying to induce a crowd of boys to learn nonsense, which they had not yet been drilled into thinking good stuff; and I have felt so ashamed of myself that I could have chewed the book to a pulp and kicked the blackboard into matchwood. Outside there were wind and water, sunlight and waving trees. Under the desks there were honest, enjoyable story-books here and there, and I had to threaten confiscation if they were opened". Brereton considered that "In an ordinary school the 'latent fire of insurrection' is fanned to a raging flame. The boys and girls are right, and it is time we acknowledged it".

Brereton concluded his surprisingly modern views with the assertion that "In real education the part of the teacher is twofold, and comprises the stimulation of intelligent interest and the satisfying of pertinent curiosity. Justice and love are indispensable. There must be no competition, no cramming". Brereton also believed that "Education should be voluntary - not compulsory". Stephens did not agree; on the same page as Brereton's remarks, on 10 August 1901, he endorsed as "good and valuable" the measures Professor
Anderson saw as necessary for educational reform in New South Wales. Among them was the insistence "That compulsory education should be enforced".

Stephens had in an earlier period expressed liberal views on at least one aspect of education. On 6 August 1898 he had suggested that "the whole abominable structure of grammar-teaching should be swept away, with its outhouses of analysis, and parsing, and so on. The thing to teach is not grammar, but literature - not the dry bones of the language, but its flesh and blood and brain". Stephens found it "a perennial wonder to see with what vitality and bravely children surmount the obstacles thrown in their mental path". Hobblet’waite and Brereton, with teaching experience, did not share his belief in the triumph of the pupils over the system. In contrast with their views, the remedies Stephens suggested in 1901 for education in New South Wales were authoritarian and conventional.

Stephens was also confused in his ambivalence between advocating education for all and believing that too much education could be harmful. After all Stephens' national hero was the bushman who had conquered a continent with little formal education. He was also without it and tertiary education himself, yet by no means lacking in
confidence in his intellectual abilities. Then again the essence of art for Stephens was emotion, the expression of feeling not learning. Yet in another of his inconsistencies in regard to education, he was quick on 22 June 1801 to invoke the authority of "N.S. Shaler, Harvard professor of geology"\(^1\)\(^\text{18}\) when he wanted to convince his readers that "A new theory of the development of ideas suggests that, in inheriting the ancestral thought-machine, we inherit also a number of latent ancestral thoughts", and therefore he advised them "No; don't read too many books: don't acquire so much experience; don't worry your overburdened brain. Go out into the sun and the rain, and let your ancestors talk to you".

Perhaps in pointing to these inconsistencies I have done no more than stress the obvious, namely that while Stephens loved to speculate he was no philosopher, of education, of art, or of life generally. He complained on 27 October 1900, again adopting the guise of the hawker, that "Philosophers all really mean the same thing, and their seeming variance is due to the fact that they have lost themselves in a nightmare of nomenclature, and seek for truth almost as vainly as a lot of flies looking for lucidity in a chaos of cobwebs". In this period Stephens flirted briefly with the

\(^{18}\) The work to which he referred was N.S. Shaler, The Individual: a Study in Life and Death (New York, Appleton, 1900).
ideas of Nietzsche. On 10 November 1900 he published two columns of extracts from Thus Spake Zarathustra\textsuperscript{19} which he headed "The Wisdom of Nietzsche", and he filled the rest of the page with his essay on "The Ethic of Nietzsche". Stephens' endorsement of the philosopher's ideas seemed to stem not so much from sympathy with them as from satisfaction at their variance from the Christian ethic. He wrote that "The vital truth which Nietzsche saw clearly, and which is the spirit shining through his imperfect expression of its details, is that when the Christian religion and its congeners were intellectually overthrown, the Christian morality fell with them. And upon its ruins Nietzsche has erected a system of human ethics to which there are many sentimental objections, but to the kernel of which no conclusive intellectual objection has yet been devised". A week later, on 17 November 1900, Stephens occupied almost half the Page with more quotations headed "The Wisdom of Nietzsche". Stephens might have found reinforcement in Nietzsche's ideas for his views on "race preservation", but Stephens took from Nietzsche, as he did from other writers, only those opinions which supported his own convictions or expressed pithily a thought towards which he had been groping.

\textsuperscript{19} Stephens probably used the following translation: F. Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra (London, Unwin, 1899).
Stephens continued to use the same method of endorsement of other men's ideas about literature when they came to his notice rather than setting out to develop for himself a complete and consistent theory of literature. Just as on the Red Page for 2 May 1896 he had seized upon the words of Frederic Harrison as expressing his own thoughts about literary criticism in general and Matthew Arnold's criticism in particular, so on 14 April 1900 he wrote that "Miles B. Arnold, in a Lond. weekly, says some true things regarding the field open to Poetry". He then quoted a passage which asserted that the proper language of poetry was comprised of "words to which generations have knitted innumerable ties" and that "the introduction of anything novel and modern in thought jars the reader because it sets going in his mind a train of newly-acquired, unsettled and possibly conflicting ideas". These views accorded with those expressed by Stephens when he discussed Wilde's "Ballad of Reading Gaol" on the Red Page for 21 May 1898. At that time he wrote that "Just in proportion as the denunciation [of the British prison system] succeeds, the poem fails as a piece of literature, a piece of Art. To reach its highest potency, the artistic emotion should not be complicated by references to anything

20 See pages 103-105 above.
rotten in the State of Denmark. For such references are susceptible of intellectual doubt and argument, and when argument comes in at the door Art flies out at the window".

In the period from January 1900 to April 1902 when he attempted explanations for his readers of the theories which underlay his critical pronouncements, Stephens found it difficult to give answers which were relevant, patient and serious. They were never complete. In seeking for his readers sometimes the reassurance of everyday analogy and other times the flash of brilliant metaphor, he often confused the issues. On 17 February 1900, for example, he published an article called "What is Literature?" It was occasioned by a letter which purported to be from "A Bushwoman" which read: "Dear Bookfellow, - We remember that one of your judgments ran, 'It is all very fine and large, but it isn't Literature'. And often you seem to express the same thought in other words. Now, what is Literature?" Stephens' reply began by side-tracking with a discussion on "What is Truth?" and speculation on why Jesus had not answered Pilate's question. Stephens suggested that Jesus might have been silent because he realized that "one always argues from and to one's own conception" or "as we are all silent - or superficial - in face of a request to reduce the Abstract to the Concrete at two seconds'
notice. After this preamble Stephens set out to answer the question posed him:

"What is Literature?" It is an easier question, because it refers to a thing which is the creation of the human mind - which does dwell in a temple made with hands - which can be corrupted by moth and rust - which can be borrowed by women who never return it: Literature is indeed not a concrete thing, but it cannot be entirely separated from the concrete. Destroy the books which enshrine it, and you destroy literature until another book can be written. With the burning of the Alexandrian library Literature was burnt, though not to death; and every borrower's thumb-mark on a beautiful page is a defacement of the beauty of Literature.

Stephens, in labouring the point that literature had to be written, seemed to overlook the preservation of literature in oral tradition, whether in the centuries of balladry belonging to English literature or indeed in the old bush songs of Australia, the origins and versions of some of which he encouraged contributors to discuss on the Red Page in this period. The precious conceit of the borrower's thumb-mark defacing the beauty of Literature added nothing to his explanation. Stephens then went to dictionary definitions and was not satisfied. According to the second definition he quoted, literature was "That class of writings

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21 See, for example, BRP, 20 July 1901, where E. Wilson Dobbs pointed to G.J. Whyte-Melville's "The Tarpaulin Jacket" as the proto-type of "Botany Bay".
distinguished for beauty of style and expression, as
poetry, essays, or history, in distinction from scientific
treatises and works which contain positive knowledge;
belles lettres". After this definition Stephens remarked:

That is better; but still unhelpful - for
alas! it begs the question as a dictionary
will. What is beauty of style or expression?
Will beauty of style or expression by itself
constitute literature? It will not. - Close
the dictionary: dive into the expanse.

Literature is the human mind's effective
manifestations in written language.

That is put forward as the best definition
attainable. For effective, if you like
read forceful or forcible. Everything, you
see, is in the adjective. Artistic would
be more satisfying, in one sense; but what
is artistic? - where is your criterion of
art or of beauty?

Up to this point Stephens' answer, like the dictio-
y, begged the question. But he pressed on:

No; beauty must be construed in terms of
strength - it is a mode of strength, as heat
is a mode of motion. When you say effective,
you do not eliminate the taste-cavil, the
quality-cavil, but you refer it to a
quantity-standard which is more intelligible,
more ponderable.

How much, and for how many, and ?or how
long, does a book impress, and move, and
thrill? What of active energy does it
disengage? What is its equivalent in
thought-rays? in emotion-volts? What is its
force, its effect? Estimate that, find that,
judge that, and you will know its universal
value as literature.

In suggesting that measurement of its worth could be based
on the degree of a work's appeal, the number of people to
whom it appealed, and the duration of that appeal, Stephens moved towards but did not elaborate ideas of universality of literary themes and of consensus of critical judgment. Instead he focussed his attention on "force" and "effect" which he treated as synonymous terms, as if he believed that literature operated in accordance with Newton's third law that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction in the physical universe. But his facility with words seemed to lead him astray from detailed analysis. He suggested no equipment for the measurement of the impact of literature in "thought-rays" and "emotion-volts". Yet he continued as if he had designed an anemometer capable of gauging literary force, writing that "This standard of force is the ultimate standard. Tastes differ with individuals, countries, and eras; but three and two are five, and twice five are ten, everywhere in the universe". He then gave an example of how his assessment by degree, span and duration of appeal could be used to decide literary worth. He wrote:

The scale inevitably adjusts itself. "Uncle Tom's Cabin" impressed many and much; but for how long? Catullus has moved much, and long: but how many? We argue that Catullus writes better literature than Mrs. Beecher Stowe - because people of "taste", people of "culture", people of "learning", prefer Catullus. Well, if it is so, in the long run Catullus's total force of achieved
impressions will outweigh Mrs. Beecher Stowe's. Her work dies; his lives through the ages. His mind's "effective manifestation" surpasses hers.

Thus Stephens concentrated on convincing Red Page readers that the ultimate standard in literature was the longevity of its impact, an attribute which must have remained difficult for them to predict because his attempt to analyze the elements of literature and their contribution to its force was superficial. When Stephens turned to the ingredients of literature in the next paragraph he concentrated on style:

Style is a requisite of literature; but what is style? Merely an aid to effect. Individual tastes may prefer the florid or the simple; but florid style, as simple, is only valuable in so far as it impresses, gives force. Having defined literature as the mind's effective manifestations in written language, you can proceed to define the things which go to make effect, and style is one of them. But style, and thought, and emotion, and interest, and melody, and picture - these are only factors in the total. The total is force. In the last resort literature must be judged, like everything else, by the force it develops - the quantity of latent energy which it makes active.

Perhaps it would be pedantic to argue that style is not a "requisite" but an inevitable concomitant of literature, but Stephens' failure to attempt to enumerate all the factors in the total which was "effect", much less to define them and assess their importance, was disappointing.
In the next paragraph Stephens tried to show how his measurement of impact could be applied in contemporary literary criticism:

"Then you must wait ten thousand years to judge what is literature?" Yes; and longer than that. But you can make provisional judgments as you go along, you know. If the literary effect of Mrs. Stowe is at this century-end equivalent to $10x$, and the literary effect of Catullus is equivalent to $7x$, you can still calculate on the future and defend your preference of Catullus - or of Mrs. Stowe. Nobody does, of course; but that is the only way to do it which will hold logic-water. As between any human mind, as agent, and the whole multitude of human minds, as subjects, the only fixed standard of measurement possible is a standard of how much force exerted, on how many, for how long. All the other standards shift with time, and place, and individuals, and circumstances.

While this passage hardly attempted to solve the problem of assessing new contemporary literature, it did hold a nice hint that final literary judgment might have to await the world's end. The conclusion of the article was a slick indication that Stephens did not believe in, let alone attempt to adhere to a "fixed standard of measurement" in judging what was literature. He wrote:

So that, for humanity,

Literature is the human mind's effective manifestation in written language.

But, for the individual appraiser, there is a standard much more satisfactory, much more easily applied. Truth, my dear Bushwoman, is -
what you believe. Literature is - what you like. Admire the corollary: What I like is Literature.

It must be remembered of course that Stephens was not writing for a learned audience but for general readers, most of whom knew very little of literature and less of criticism and who wanted not analysis in depth but enlightenment presented in an entertaining way. At times Stephens did well in his work of education of Red Page readers in aspects of literature new to them. For example, on 19 May 1900 he headed the Red Page "Symbolist Poetry" and on it reviewed Arthur Symons' *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*.*2* Before he began the review he informed his readers that "There are three foreign critics of the French symbolist poets at whose feet it is a pleasure and a profit to sit - in Australia, Chris. Brennan; in America, Vance Thompson; and in England, Arthur Symons", and he paid tribute to Brennan that "In the matter of textual knowledge our own critic is the most learned of them all." After praise of Symons' "brilliant capacity" as a writer and a jibe at his conversion to Catholicism, Stephens set out to explain symbolism to his readers:

What is Symbolism in Literature? Literally, it is a method of statement by allusions, of description by images. In order to display an idea, you do not consider it anatomically or as a criminal is registered for identification — for so, as a Symbolist holds, you would lose the idea completely. You are dealing with abstract things, not with concrete, and you cannot apply the methods of weighing and measuring which you would apply to the concrete. Thus, instead of nakedly stating the idea, you suggest the impression which the idea makes upon you, in the belief and the hope that such a suggestion of an impression will bring the reader closer to the idea than any exact statement. You endeavour to portray the thing, the fact, the thought, not as it is, but as it affects yourself — that is, you do not stand aloof from it, and describe it literally as an object outside yourself, but you bring it within yourself, fuse it with your consciousness, and hint in words the reaction of its action upon your consciousness. More than hint, suggest, you cannot do — since it is impossible to state an emotion by means of mere words. So you work roundabout, by metaphors, images, symbols.

Soon after he began his discussion of Symons' book, Stephens touched on the relationship of Symbolism to Mysticism, another concept which he found necessary to explain to his readers:

The Mystic, generally speaking, is a person who, like everybody else, finds himself unable to finally explain or account for the material Universe which confronts him. Hence he spins a beautiful series of dreams to convince himself that the material Universe does not really exist — it is a phantasm, a passing show, an emanation of Deity which is only worth studying for the sake of what it implies. It is a kind of symbolic poem, in fact, written
by the Almighty Poet. The ordinary eating-drinking-loving-swear ing individual sees only the words of the poem - the houses and the trees, the women and liquors; but the Mystic, by dint of turning his eyes inward or Brahminically contemplating his navel, realises the secret meaning of the poem. What the Religious Mystic does with the universe the Literary Mystic tries to do with language; but the literary result is usually less satisfactory. The Religious Mystic has his world ready made for him to evolve hidden meanings from - and very well made too, on the whole; the creative Literary Mystic goes to work the reverse way, and hides his meanings in a poem. Then his disciples proceed to find them out. The Poem is a mystic universe; a finite clue to infinity. Yet the literary disciple is in better case than the religious disciple. If the religious mystic fail to find the inner meaning of the universe the fault is his alone - it is plain that he has not sufficiently contemplated his navel. But if the literary mystic fail to find the inner meaning of the obscurities of Mallarmé he can shrug shoulders and hint that the Deity is a better artificer than Mallarmé.

The robust Stephens could hardly have been expected to give a dispassionate account of mysticism, but he went on to quote extracts from Symons' judgments on some of the authors he discussed, namely, Villiers, Verlaine, Laforgue, Mallarmé, Huysmans and Maeterlinck. Readers however were left in no doubt about Stephens' regard for the symbolist movement as a whole, and in his final paragraph there was a strong note of humanism if not hedonism to combat Symons' mysticism:
Symons's conclusion is an eloquent plea for mysticism - which will convince those whom it is fitted to convince. To weak and feminine minds mysticism will always appeal, and with its appeal comes the emotion requisite to the achievement of the highest Art. But while blood is red, pulses full, and brain strong, no man wittingly adopts the creed of individual renunciation, of worldly denial, and of living death. Mysticism is associated with individual decay or racial decadence. And though Art be found in the mystic's quiet moonlit paths rather than in the heat of worldly effort and struggle, victory and defeat, yet since the universal doom is sure, let us rather take it fighting than lying down. For, though Art is good, Life is always better.

Whereas the mystic saw life through the eyes of faith, Stephens wanted it to be portrayed in art with the eyes of the imagination. On the Red Page on 22 September 1900, having been questioned on a definition of imagination he had given in an essay on painting on 21 July 1900, he proceeded to "The Education of A.G.T." "A.G.T." had questioned Stephens' assertion that "Imagination is the faculty of forming mental images, but, in the high and special sense, the images must be created by the mind, not merely reflected from a physical object". Protesting that "This education is a toilsome business", Stephens pecked over every word of "A.G.T."'s challenge. But in a later
section of the article which he prefaced with "First class in Art, stand up and repeat your catechism"; there were some interesting revelations of Stephens' attitudes to art. The catechism began:

Q. What is Art? - A. The forcible manifestation of emotion, externally interpreted by arrangement of line, form, or colour, or by series of rhythmic gestures, sounds, or words.

Here Stephens added to the definition he had taken from Véron\textsuperscript{23} the notion of force which he had postulated as the only fixed standard for literature on the Red Page for 17 February 1900 discussed above. The catechism continued:

Q. What are the chief kinds of Art? - A. Sculpture, painting, the dance, music, poetry.

Q. Into what classes are these kinds of Art commonly divided? - A. Into idealistic and realistic.

Q. What is the difference between these classes? - A. Idealistic Art is more concerned with the representations of ideas - abstract conceptions; realistic with the portrayal of objects - visible appearances, concrete facts.

After two questions referring only to pictorial art, Stephens went on:

Q. Which is the greater kind of art? - A. From a human-standpoint the idealistic kind is clearly greater, since it involves a more complex mental process, requiring a higher mental faculty.

\textsuperscript{23} BRP, 24 September 1898.
After allowing that the idealistic painter's work was not always superior to that of the realistic painter, he made an extraordinary claim for the subjectivity of non-realistic art in the following:

Q. Is there between idealism and realism as clear a distinction in practice as there is in theory? - A. No; in practice these kinds of Art are merged. But in a realistic painting the subject has always greater prominence; in an idealistic painting the painter.

Overlooking the fact that all art requires selection and interpretation on the part of the artist, Stephens continued with a passage in which, although he referred only to pictorial art, the views expressed were clearly transferred from his ideas about literature. It concluded:

The idealistic artist ranks highest because his subject is only valuable as embodying his idea, and he has thus more scope to convey all the "forcible emotion" which he is capable of feeling. Since the emotion resides essentially in the painter, and not in the subject of his painting, it is plain that the more he can subordinate to his emotion, the greater, other things being equal, will be his Art . . . the highest form of Art is that which is calculated to produce the greatest possible emotion with the best possible admixture of the material elements of emotion.

The confidence of these pronouncements on pictorial art was rather ironical coming from Stephens, who in this period continued to complain about "transferred credit". On
18 May 1901 he described Walter Savage Landor's marginalia on Aubrey de Vere's poems as "Interesting as an argument against the transferred-credit fallacy of appreciation. Because Landor wrote good prose, runs the extollers' argument, therefore he wrote good verse, and was a good critic. More confusion of categories". And again on 20 January 1900, disagreeing with Rolf Boldrewood's laudatory preface to Ethel Castilla's verse, Stephens complained that "The gross public insist on transferring credit. When a person becomes eminent for his knowledge of chalk, the gross public insist on deferring to his opinion about cheese". Yet Stephens took umbrage at John Longstaff's warning to an audience of art students at the Melbourne T-Square Club to beware of the "mere literary critic of art". In a Red Page article on 29 December 1900 headed "Literary Criticism of Art", Stephens snapped "Longstaff knows when his clothes fit him yet he's not a tailor".

Stephens' view of realism, in contrast to idealism or imagination in literature, was puzzling. On 1 March 1902 in discussing Shaw's novel, Cashel Byron's Profession, he wrote:

24 Ethel Castilla, The Australian Girl and Other Verses (Melbourne, George Robertson, 1900).

25 G.B. Shaw, Cashel Byron's Profession, newly revised. (London, Richards, 1901).
As for Bernard Shaw, he is a continual delight. The real explanation of Shaw is that he is one of Lever's Irish dragoons whom some strange combination of causes has armed with a quill instead of a sword. In his plays, his novels, and his articles he is always making brilliant Light Brigade charges which dazzle the world fruitlessly. He is Harry Lorrequer in literature, jumping his horse Paradox over the conventions as Lever's hero jumped over the Duke of Wellington in Bret Harte's parody. The spectacle is gay and inspiring, but as Shaw's friend, Max Beerbohm, admits, it does not mean very much after all. It is magnificent, but it is not Literature which remains. We have had no wittier realism than Shaw has given us; but all realistic art is essentially temporary and incidental. Even style can only delay its oblivion, and Shaw has no style, no imagination, in the finer sense. His mind sheds light only for a meteoric moment. Yet why disparage the source of so many joys: if he is no sun, at least we have known no more ingenious fireworks: blessed be his books!

On 22 September 1900 Stephens had defined Idealistic Art as "more concerned with the representation of ideas - abstract conceptions", yet of Shaw's work which bristled with ideas Stephens was only prepared to allow that there had been "no wittier realism". Idealism for Stephens was the romantic idealism of mood and phrase, of silvery moonlight and soaring nightingales. He failed to recognize the romanticism of Shaw's idealism in naturalistic settings. One is left to wonder what Stephens could have understood by "style" and "imagination" when he asserted that "Shaw has no style, no imagination, in the finer sense". There
seems to be here at least a hint that Stephens misunderstood the nature of creativity.

In this period Stephens expanded intimations he had given earlier on the nature of the process by which lyric poetry was created. On the Red Page for 22 June 1901 he announced that "the hereditary brain-cells, though they be composed of entirely fresh nerve-plasma, are yet arranged after an ancestral plan beyond our control, and can spontaneously generate thoughts in which individual experience has no part". On this insecure physiological foundation he built the following speculations:

Making the befitting literary application, this theory furnishes interesting explanation of the irresponsible character of lyric poetry. From the earlier times the poet has been regarded as "possessed" by some external power. In this "possession" the priestess of Apollo raved, the Italian improvisatore chanted, the Maori tohunga writhed and foamed. From the earliest times the poet's chief themes have been love and death, the beauty of skies and woods and waters, aboriginal passions and the natural phenomena familiar from the human cradle. We know now that the power resides in the poet's brain, that the poetic "possession" is mere escape of brain-centres from their normal control; and we infer that lyric poetry is essentially the product of inherited emotion.

In expanding these ideas he sought the aid of some carefully selected local writers of verse, and reported as follows:
Sometimes the escape is conscious, the inheritance realised. You feel a detachment, a duality in your brain, as if some primal breath had blown across it. In our small local sphere, Roderic Quinn tells me that there are times when his own individuality seems to sleep; when he fancies himself standing on a Donegal cliff under a wild sky, gazing through driving sleet at the dark Atlantic heaving below; and strange alien thoughts come teeming, crowding. Between dreams and waking Will Ogilvie, bred on the Scottish border, has imagined himself heading a reivers' band across the Tweed, and the picture has recurred with a vivid, an intimate detail which seems never to have been learnt through his own senses. And Louise Mack says that "When I write verse I am not conscious of words - the feeling and the thought are almost dropped on the paper. The moment I am conscious, think of a word - the poem is dead, and I stop - can't hear it, don't feel it. I always write poetry as if it is someone else's that I've half-forgotten, and slowly am drawing down from the recesses of the brain, driven to it by some tide of feeling."

Thus is justified the belief which Macaulay reached on other grounds, that civilisation implies the decay and death of poetry. The more we read, the more we remember, the less opportunity we give to the primal ancestor within us to picture the emotions which he felt when red blood surged through a virgin brain in the vigorous youth of the race. It has been written that every savage is a poet, however imperfect his power of expression. It may soon be written that every civilised man is prosy. Only here and there some young and vital brain, escaping from the worry of modern life, the weight of bookish ages, survives to astonish us with the keen sight, the full emotion, the glow of the picture, born in some prehistoric group of brain-cells perchance ten thousand years ago.

26 Ogilvie's verses, "A Reiver's Heart", appeared at the head of the Red Page on this date, 22 June 1901.
It might be noted that even in the "small local sphere" Stephens was careful not to ask the opinion of a poet who had already opposed his idea of youth and the surge of emotion as essentials in the creation of poetry. Christopher Brennan would surely have scorned Stephens' ideas of the assistance received by the poet from "latent ancestral thoughts". He would also have found ludicrous Louise Mack's confession that "The moment I am conscious, think of a word - the poem is dead, and I stop". I base this assertion on the evidence of Brennan's revision of his lines beginning "The hollow crystal of my winter dream" which were published as "The Year of the Soul" on the Red Page for 7 September 1901. Between this date and their appearance as "Liminary" in "The Forest of Night" section of Poems 1913, Brennan made fourteen changes in wording and almost as many changes in punctuation and capitalization.

While "possession" by the thoughts of their ancestors was permitted to the minor lyrists, Stephens doggedly pursued with charges of plagiarism writers who he considered derived their ideas from pre-existing literature. Again

27 BRP, 17 December 1898.

28 The lines have been reprinted in The Verse of Christopher Brennan, pp. 95-99.
one is led to suspect that this was further evidence of his misunderstanding of the nature of creativity. No evidence was unimportant in his work of detection of plagiarism. On the Red Page for 10 February 1900 Stephens reported an English weekly magazine's finding of Adam Lindsay Gordon's lines beginning "Life is mostly froth and bubble" inscribed over the mantel in an ancient farmhouse. Sadly Stephens noted "So this also, it seems, may have to be accounted with A.L. Gordon's plagiarisms". On 24 February 1900 he withdrew the charge when E. Wilson Dobbs pointed out that Gordon had originally published the lines in quotes and asked what evidence there was on the date of the mantel as distinct from the date of the house. No writer was too obscure to escape chastisement. On 22 September 1900 he wrote that "Edwin Markham's 'Man With the Hoe' verses turn out to have been imitated from some which Cora E. Chase, an obscure Californian writer published in 1893". No amount of wit or style in the presentation of commonplace ideas was accepted by Stephens as compensation for lack of originality. In introducing "Poems by Oscar Wilde" on the Red Page for 26 January 1901, Stephens wrote that "Throughout his literary life Oscar Wilde was for the most part occupied in saying other men's good things ... In life as in art he cuckooed continually ...
Perhaps never was there a writer so brilliant at second-hand”. Contemporary Australian writers were included in his strictures, whether he considered their derivations deliberate or not. On 12 January 1901 in discussing Verses, Popular and Humorous, Stephens wrote that "Lawson is quite unconscious that he himself, since his original inspiration began to wane, is occasionally in the ranks of the men who come behind", and he pointed out verses in the collection in which Lawson’s ideas and phrasing echoed Paterson, Kipling and Ogilvie. Stephens remarked that "Since Lawson, then, takes his own where he finds it, he might be less severe on the others who, as he conceives, take their own from himself". On 7 September 1901 he found strong resemblances between Swinburne’s poem “In a Garden” and a passage from Ethel Turner’s Story of a Baby, and he printed the two passages in juxtaposition. With somewhat confused logic Stephens pointed out that "Seeing that Ethel Turner’s readers are certainly not, as a class, readers of Swinburne, this persistent reproduction in prose of Swinburne’s poem, as ‘By Ethel Turner’, is both discreditable and surprising”.

While no suspicion of literary derivation went

29 Henry Lawson, Verses, Popular and Humorous (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1900).
un-noticed, Kipling's work was the main target of Stephens' charges of plagiary in this period. On 27 April 1901 when he devoted the whole of the Red Page to a discussion of Kipling, Stephens' main concern was that "Kipling prend son bien où il le trouve; and as he has read more than most men, and travelled much more than most, no single brain can track him to all his sources". Stephens thought he had tracked one piece of Kipling's verse, "Recessional", to Cardinal Newman's "England" done in the metre of Quarles' "Divine Emblems"; and he suggested the sources of others. In this article Stephens also remarked that "That is indeed a befitting connection which links Kipling, as Imperialistic poet, with the shoddy union of races called 'Imperialism', - the poetical bagman of the shoddy-exporters of Manchester". Indeed more than his borrowings, the belief that praise for Kipling's loyal sentiments had been transferred to his verse rankled with Stephens. He wrote that "On the weakness of 'Recessional', to call Kipling a supreme artist, and to hail his product as belonging to the highest class of original art - that is indeed a confusion of categories into which only the ignorant and uncritical can fall". In view of Stephens' beliefs on the inferiority of realistic art, there was irony in the fact that in this article on 27 April 1901 he
also complained of Kipling's lack of verisimilitude in his references to many topics, including Australia, the sea, military life and the United States railroads. Stephens ended the article with the remark that "This note of some of Kipling's shortcomings is written to assist in 'putting him where he belongs' and to serve as counterblast to the rabid adulation of the mob". In one respect however, Kipling's vigour satisfied an important requirement Stephens had of literature and he continued "That he should be praised as one of the most forcible writers of the last century, in prose and in verse, is no less than his desert; though his verse is rarely poetry, and often his prose is merely vigorous journalese".

On 18 May 1901, under "Kipling's Conveyings", Stephens published a challenge from a Red Page reader, M.L. MacCallum of Elizabeth Bay Road, to his judgment that Kipling was a plagiarist. MacCallum asked "Why gird at Kipling for doing this, after the field has been spoiled by countless generations of poets?" Stephens answered in the form of a magistrate's judgment on a complaint by MacCallum as if footpads had robbed him in Elizabeth Bay Road. Stephens, as magistrate, concluded that "Then since thievery has existed for more than 2000 years, and the memory of many thieves, highly praised in their day, is still cherished
and treasured, why gird at the footpads who have robbed you in the comparatively new ground of Elizabeth Bay Road?"

MacCallum was not convinced, and in "The Case for Kipling" on 1 June 1901 he objected that Stephens had missed the point of his previous letter. Stephens replied that Kipling's borrowings were more deliberate and premeditated than those of Homer, Virgil, Chaucer and Shakespeare. The matter did not rest there. Other correspondents wanted to argue and Stephens allowed them space on 6 July 1901. Percival Serle, "Aletes", L.H.S. Brodzsky, Vincent Naylor and "Jeff" argued "The Case of Kipling - Pro:", while under "Contra:", "A.M." alleged that Kipling had derived the idea for the Jungle Books from an American naturalist30 and "J.R." complained of Kipling's misuse of Indian terms and erratic spelling. The arguments of those who were "Pro" were constantly interrupted by Stephens: those "Contra" were uninterrupted. Serle, Brodzsky and Naylor presented logical arguments particularly well and Stephens' treatment of them betrayed again his intolerance in argument.

30 "A.M."'s testimony was not very accurate. He cited the naturalist as "Ernest Seton-Thompson" when in fact his name was Ernest Thompson Seton, and if his knowledge of animal lore predated Kipling's, the book which embodied it, Wild Animals I Have Known (New York, Scribner's, 1898) came well after the Jungle Book and the Second Jungle Book which were published in 1894 and 1895 respectively.
Stephens ended the page under the subheading "In conclusion" on a note of studied rhetoric:

Because of Art, Justice.

The best economical incentive to industry is this: that a man shall receive the reward of his labour.

The best incentive to artistic creation is this: that the artist shall receive the credit and profit of his art.

In a community of thieves, industry decays.
In a community of plagiarists, Art decays.

"Stop thief!" Justice cries it. Art echoes it.

Not all correspondents took Stephens' views on plagiarism seriously. Introduced with a facetious note from Stephens to the effect that "The furfurous bread taken away, here's the fur furious dripping", on 10 August 1901 the Red Page bore a letter from "A Converted Thief" which began:

Dear Bookfellow. - You have converted me to literary honesty. I shall steal no more.
The following verse is my first absolutely original piece of work:

Zaqr bmt elly opm
Bze lnmrr 'sstva?
Ffw wl, orhlmqjdlxz hhht,
Hobeq npsrvytqj!
Jwm yly pmjtuhlxazi u om Rfe telqjy.

I do not think you will be able to trace the ideas, emotions, or metre, of the above lines to any other writer.
The writer was not entirely content since at the end of his letter, he confessed that "One problem still troubles me, and I beg you to solve it. Must pure literature entirely dispense with facts, on the ground that, where not plagiarised from books or newspapers, they are plagiarised from real life?" Stephens' final remark was an indulgent "Dear, innocent fellow!"

There were positive aspects of Stephens' concern for the acknowledgement of an author's rights to his intellectual property. This concern motivated his encouragement of Red Page readers in their researches on origins and versions of the old bush songs. Their researches yielded information which was interesting in itself and which without Red Page publication might not all have survived. Another aspect of Stephens' concern for literary property was his interest in copyright. Under the heading "Copyright" on the Red Page for 30 November 1901 Stephens wrote:

Copyright is a national question. Literature, painting, sculpture, music, the drama, and other arts which help to make, preserve, and civilise a nation have the very greatest value to us. We wish to encourage these all. We wish to protect these all. One way of encouragement and protection is to give the artist legal property in the results of his labours. A man who writes a book has as much right to the profit of the work of his brain as a man who builds a house has to the profit of the work of his hands. Property in a work of art should endure as long as property in a work of handicraft. That is, copyright should be perpetual.
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Australian copyright legislation should put Australia first. It is technical copyright is practically of no value to us. We gain nothing by it, except the right to lie in a backsaw of the artistic stream. What we want is the American system, by which any foreigner who claims copyright to books, for example, has to bring the book to America first, and print it there with local labour, from local materials - at least as soon as it is printed elsewhere. America thus gains in two main ways. First, she protects her industries. The foreigner finds himself compelled to pay American type-founders, paper-makers, cloth-makers, type-setters, machinists, and other allied artisans. Then America comes first, not last, in the matter of literature. Many of the best English books, for example, are published and read in America before they are read in England. Many English publishers have an American office. And if an author does not choose to do thus, America can reprint him.

Stephens was careful to acknowledge his borrowing of the idea for Australian legislation from the United States model, and he urged it again in his article "The Czar of Customs" on 11 January 1902. Stephens believed it most important that the work and prosperity of Australian authors, publishers and printers should have been facilitated by proper legal protection, because, as he reminded Red Page readers in discussing copyright on 30 November 1901, "Remember that the Naissance of Australian literature is taking place!"

The assistance Stephens offered at the birth took three forms in the Red Page between January 1900 and April 1902.
He was concerned with the revaluation of established Australian writers, with the education of all who aspired to write in the hope that new talent would emerge among them, and with the identification of worthwhile contributions to the literature of Australia. He made it quite clear that his interest was in literature rather than in the sensibilities of the people who attempted to write it. In his "Letter to a Bushfellow" on 20 January 1900 Stephens justified his severity towards poor writers in the following passage:

Ours is not a wealthy community, a populous country: for our geniuses, if we have them or when we get them, there are too few patrons and purchasers. Every shilling which a worthless "poet" filches from an Australian pocket helps to keep the pocket of a worthy poet empty. Every atom of credit which a worthless Australian "poet" secures means so much less in the stock from which worthy poets are entitled to draw. It is one's duty as a responsible critic, is [sic] is one's pleasure as an intelligent Australian, to "écérer l'infini" as soon as "l'infini" is notorious enough to make it worth while. Often there isn't any pleasure, and the duty is hard to do. Many decent people dribble sentimental verses without the least idea that they are committing a poetical crime. It is easy to see that in their unpoetical moments they are good fathers, fond mothers, estimable citizens. Nobody wishes to batter the head of a good father or a fond mother, or to hit an estimable citizen in what he conceives to be his tenderest emotions. But, if the standards are to be upheld, somebody must. Perish the individual! Flourish Literature!
Stephens put his precept into practice in his revaluation of the work of James Brunton Stephens, whose verse he discussed in two Red Pages in this period. On 11 May 1901 the page was headed ""Convict Once, and Other Poems I."", and on 3 August ""Convict Once and Other Poems II." 31 A.G. Stephens sought in the article on 11 May 1901 to show that "Convict Once" had been grossly over-praised by T.J. Byrnes and by Turner and Sutherland. 32 Stephens suggested that only Christie Murray "in one of a series of articles written for the local press when he visited Australia" had hinted that the poem was marred by polysyllabic words and often by metre as well as diction more suitable to prose. According to A.G. Stephens:

If he [Brunton Stephens] had thought of it he might have written -

Ponder my troop of words chryselephantine,
moving their feet in the manner I tell them,
Fettered by shackles of science scholastic,
owning me Father and Master and King;
Concatenation of proud polysyllables (Turner
and Sutherland never could spell them) -
Abracadabra, where is thy victory?
Mesopotamia where is thy sting?

31 James Brunton Stephens, Convict Once and Other Poems (Melbourne, George Robertson, 1885). "Convict Once" was originally published separately as Convict Once: A Poem (London, Macmillan, 1871).

32 A.G. Stephens referred to "a lengthy paper read to Brisb. Literary Circle in 1894" by T.J. Byrnes, and to Turner and Sutherland's praise of "Convict Once" in The Development of Australian Literature.
A.G. Stephens then gave an amusing outline of what he termed "the remarkable story of 'Convict Once!'", observing on the sudden appearance of the heroine's mother that "Until now we did not know that there was any mother; but she has to live, it seems, in order to die, and to justify some reflections about Death which Magdalen has been hoarding; and she has to die for Reasons of the Story". His final comment on 11 May was that "I feel rather like Cain after the little transaction with Abel; but, in view of the utterances of Byrnes, Turner, Sutherland and many others, this side of 'Convict Once' has long needed exposure. Of the other side, and of the other poems of Brunton Stephens, there is something to be said on another occasion".

When A.G. Stephens availed himself on 3 August 1901 of another occasion to discuss the work of Brunton Stephens he described "Convict Once" as "the work of a sentimental Pedagogue rather than a Poet". He quoted from the poem the well-known lines beginning "Linger, oh Sun, for a little, nor close yet this day of a million!", on which he commented that "This is agreeable rhetoric, not flawless; but the poetical emotion is slight, and is made slighter by the rhetoric". After quoting other stanzas and alleging that those quoted "kernel the best of 'Convict Once!'", A.G. Stephens
asserted that "Brunton Stephens's qualifications for poetry are energy, a little fancy, a little power of thought not very new or original - the qualifications of his Scottish nation. He lacks imagination and strength of emotion - Poetry's most essential requisites; he lacks, technically, the finer qualities of Taste; and the Poet in him is hampered by the continual obtrusion of the Pedagogue . . . Instead of emotional fervour, Brunton Stephens gives us intellectual images, - that is, his mental field is essentially in the domain of prose, and not in the domain of poetry".

Though he thought Brunton Stephens lacked "that subtle perception of the incongruous which is the basis of humour", A.G. Stephens considered that "A collection of Brunton Stephens's witty verse could well deserve perpetuity; and it is by these successes, and not by his serious, emotional failures, that he will gain whatever perpetuity is allotted to him". A.G. Stephens concluded:

Had he chosen, Brunton Stephens might have written valuable prose, for his fragmentary work in prose is shrewd, sane, and brightly expressed; and he had the persistent force to execute a high literary or historical conception. But always the rooted Poet in him has been craving for the light, and always the stony soil of the Pedagogue has prevented all but a few stray tendrils from appearing. So the best of his artistic output is the verse in which his natural faculty has found free expression, the verse such as that which is now borrowed to adorn this page.
One of the two pieces of Brunton Stephens’ light verse A.G. Stephens printed at the end of the Red Page on 3 August 1901, "On a Fork of Byron’s", made his point. In it Brunton Stephens made witty play on the connection between fork and pen:

For 'twixt the fork and the divine afflatus
The links are perfect; there is no hiatus;
Fork, stomach, brain, pen, - all one apparatus.

So when the food that on the fork ascended
Grew into verse as with the brain it blended,
The fork wrote just as truly as the pen did.

The other verses, "A Piccaninny", remain interesting only as a grim commentary on the indifference of even educated Australians to the plight of the aborigines. Brunton Stephens’ advice to the black child was:

Die young, for mercy’s sake! If thou grow older,
Thou shalt grow lean at calf and sharp at shoulder,
And daily greedier and daily bolder;

A pipe between thy savage grinders thrusting,
For rum and everlasting 'baccy lusting,
And altogether filthy and disgusting;

Just such another as the dam that bore thee -
That haggard Sycorax now bending o’er thee!
Die young, my sable pippin, I implore thee!

However damaging a commentary the choice of these verses might have been on A.G. Stephens’ racial prejudice, we can hardly complain that in general he over-valued Brunton Stephens’ verse, and, as he said, "Brunton Stephens might have written valuable prose".
In this period there was evidence of development in A.G. Stephens' appreciation of prose. He enjoyed John Le Gay Brereton's *Landlopers* which he described on the Red Page for 13 January 1900 as "170 pages of excellent small beer - with occasional flights towards a dithyramb". Although on 30 November 1901 Stephens described *Kim* as "an Indian On Our Selection" he immediately pointed out among several differences that "Kipling writes better than Arthur Davis writes". Stephens gradually revealed his ideas on the qualities which went into the making of good prose. Simplicity and succinctness were two of his requirements.

In an article on Ruskin on 10 February 1900 he wrote:

Ruskin wrote rhetorically, oratorically: his prose style is too continually in the clouds where his head was. The energy of it is remarkable; the beauty of it is sometimes remarkable; it is frequently turgid, and its artifices are monotonous. When a thought can be expressed in two plain words you do not continually desiderate a glittering fifty. Every intelligent reader of Ruskin must pine for a diminished torrent and a greatly-diminished spout.

Stephens made it clear, however, that simplicity was not to be confused with monotony. When he reviewed Alfred A. Grace's


stories, *Tales of a Dying Race*, on 4 January 1902 under the heading "A Maoriland Writer", he wrote:

"Tales of a Dying Race shows a distinct improvement in power and taste; and some of its faults are faults of technique, easily mended. For example, he can mend his writing style - at present characterised by a stiff and undeviating simplicity. Now simplicity is a good feature of style - it is the best; and why? Because on the whole it is the means of most clearly, most fully, most forcibly transmitting thought. But this simplicity is not monotonous or tame; it does not direct attention to itself. It achieves its effect by being a limpid medium through which thought and emotion pass as clearly as light through pellucid glass.

Lucidity was another requirement. On 22 September 1900 he commented that D.G. Rossetti "wrote an individual prose, quietly melodious, not unlike that which W.B. Yeats practises today; but with a sharper note in it ... In strong distinction from his poems, Rossetti's prose is rarely rhetorical - so rarely that one thinks he deliberately set a gulf between the manners of this and that. The commentary on Blake's paintings and poems, which is at this day the most valuable of his prose pieces is less carefully composed than the stories are, yet gives a similar impression of lucid thought easily clothed in words".

Stephens also counselled freedom from rule in the interest of force in expression. In instructing his

contributors on 3 March 1900 on how to write the examples of paradox he called "bulls", he assured them that "the first principle of rhetoric is that you may defy all the rules of grammar, all the formulae of mathematics, even all the laws of Nature - as long as you secure the effect, i.e., an effect which you could not secure while maintaining the rules and the formulae and the laws".

In this period Stephens used Red Page competitions as exercises for contributors after he had given them lessons. One example was the "bulls" competition mentioned above; another was his call at the end of an article on "Anti-Climax" on 23 June 1900 for "some good Australian examples of anti-climax". The most successful competition in this period was the call he made for a sonnet on Australia. He introduced it by devoting a whole page to a discussion of "The Sonnet" in which he reassured his

36 In Stephens' terms, "A bull is essentially a contradiction between phrase and sense, between letter and spirit, between the actual statement and the possible implication". His interest derived from G.R. Neilson, ed., A Book of Bulls: Being a Very Complete and Entertaining Essay on the Irish and Other 'Bulls' (London, Simpkin, 1898).

37 This article was an edited and much abbreviated version of the paper "On Anti-Climax" which Stephens had delivered to the Gympie Literary Circle on 29 April 1889. See Early Critical Work of A.G. Stephens: Unpublished (Gympie, Q. 1889-90), pp. 14-32. Mitchell Library MS A7000.
readers that "It is a form of verse in which any cultured person, by dint of taking pains, may achieve a tolerable success - a greater success than the same talent, the same pains, will bring in other recognised forms. Lyric poets are born; sonnet-writers are made". After quoting Kendall's "Rest" and Charles Harpur's "Absence", Stephens announced that Bayldon's "Marlowe" was "probably the best single example yet produced in Australia" and that "the best collection of Australian sonnets is the work of Arthur Adams" while J. Le Gay Brereton "seems to be our most productive sonneteer; and his form is generally accurate, but his matter lacks spirit". V.J. Daley's "Death" Stephens considered too constrained by the form but he believed that William Gay "has perhaps handled the sonnet more sonorously than any other local writer", and "Australian Federation" was quoted as perhaps his "most effective sonnet". Readers were then invited to compete for a prize of £2.2s. by writing a sonnet on Australia in the rhyme scheme of one of the six sonnets about sonnets with which he ended the page.³⁸ On 12 May 1900, Stephens announced that the prize had been awarded to "D. Fenton", ³⁸ The writers of the sonnets were D.G. Rossetti, Theodore Watts-Dunton, Eugene Lee-Hamilton, Richard Watson Gilder, James Young Gibson from the Spanish of Lope de Vega, and one was anonymous beginning "You build a sonnet about this plan".
one of Bernard O'Dowd's pseudonyms, for his sonnet "Australia" which began "Last sea-thing dredged by sailor Time from Space". O'Dowd's sonnet and several of the other entries were printed on the page. One of them by "R.C." undoubtedly earned publication not for any poetic merit but for its reference to "our great Red Page Zeus".39

Stephens had justification for his complaint about the verse which won fifty guineas in a verse-writing competition which had been hastily arranged by the New South Wales Government. The winner was George Essex Evans with his "Ode for Commonwealth Day". On the Red Page on 5 January 1901 in an article he entitled "Verse, Pictures, and a Personal Reaction", Stephens printed Evans' ode, after which he remarked "That is the 'prize ode'. That is the verse which has won Fifty Guineas in N.S.W. Govt's farcical competition . . . If Premier Lyne had any sense of his own ignorance, he might have had the sense (weeks ago, when he first babbled) to ask a committee of writers such as

39 "R.C.", who might have been Robert Crawford, began his sonnet:

O Muse! we are to be paid £2 2,
If we can fourteen lines in such a way
Spin out upon the theme "Aus-tra- lia"
As our great Red Page Zeus just thinks will do.
Mr. J. Brunton Stephens, Professor McCallum [i.e. MacCallum], Mr Victor Daley, Mr. Chris. Brennan - men whose literary brains are deservedly respected - to formulate conditions, advertise dates, and judge competitive verses". In terms very similar to those he had used in disclosing his critical stance on 20 January 1900, Stephens explained his reasons for pointing out the deficiencies in Evans' ode:

We must keep up the standards. This is a young country, with a small population, and there is only a small fund of credit and cash from which the artist can draw reward. So we want to keep the fund for the most deserving, and to dole reward in proportion to desert. Every atom of credit filched by an indifferent artist is filched from the different and better artist; every penn'orth of profit gained by the not-good or good-enough writer is taken from the pocket of the better and more promising writer.

Among Stephens' objections to Evans' "Ode" was the complaint that "It is not representative of Australian capacity, or of Australian thought and inspiration . . . Because, for the matter of it, it is a catalogue, a bill-of-fare, a prospectus; and, for the style of it, it is a statement of the trite, a reiteration of the obvious". He described the beginning of Evans' "Ode", "Awake! Arise!", as "an opening so banal that even Henry Lawson has parodied it".

40 See page 284 above.
Stephens explained on 17 November 1900 why he considered that literary competitions could assist in bringing Australian literature to birth. In "Kippered Verse with Local Sauce!", a stern rebuke to the Sydney Morning Herald for its praise of Kipling's verses, "The Young Queen", he asserted:

The Herald has evidently no idea that there are half-a-dozen writers in Australia far better entitled to the name of poet than ever Kipling was . . . As for using the Kipling mixture at Commonwealth celebrations, it is time the Herald, as an Australian newspaper, set itself to encourage Australians to rely upon their own strength instead of leaning on foreign crutches. To be sure the idea of giving a Govt. prize for a local patriotic poem has little to recommend it. If the occasion does not stimulate the poet, a prize will not. Yet poets must live, and in Australia they live hardly enough. The community which claims their labour surely owes them bread-and-cheese. Let the wealthy S.M. Herald proprietary, instead of spattering Kipling with unearned praise, offer fifty pounds for a local ode to commemorate the Commonwealth foundation. That would pay as a business speculation; and the Herald would certainly receive, in a mass of rubbish, some poetry worth twenty times as much as Kipling's hackneyed box of tricks.

In Red Page competitions in this period Stephens allowed his contributors to waste a good deal of time on sentimental trivia like the writing of love-letters, some of which he published on 8 February 1902. The most extended discussion he allowed contributors in this period was on the well-worn lines of whether Australia should have engendered cheerful
optimism or black despair in its writers. "Onlys", in a piece Stephens headed "Austerile?" on 16 February 1901, argued:

We have had for some hundred years the glimmerings of a national literature - the reflex of our life. We have Gordon and Marcus Clarke, Boake and Lawson. What is their 'note'? Pessimism, pessimism, and again pessimism. The tragedy of desolation, the half-understood, the vividly-expressed horror of a vast, vague, and bloodless land. A young country, a young nation, should have a joyous life. Not necessarily sentimental or childish, but strong, clearly conscious of present difficulties, with a ring of hope for the future. Where is the Australian writer whose work is blooded with hope?

At the end of this contribution Stephens remarked that "This invites answers and criticism - which will be printed if written briefly, with brains". The contributions he printed on 2 March 1901 under "Austerville", on 16 March 1901 under "Austerile? Austerville?", and on 13 April 1901 under "Our 'Future'" were remarkable for their optimism rather than for their brevity or their wit. The days of the Red Page as a lively and interesting forum of literary opinion seemed to have passed.

41 Contributors were John A. Adey, "Fialla", "Edson", "Schnebelawopski", "E.K.", and "Alice Eyton". Seven other contributions were acknowledged.

42 Contributors were "Puyyaka", "Pukaki", "Point Blank", "Barrow-Northe", and "Aletes". Seven other contributions were acknowledged.

43 Contributors were "J.C.R." and "A.B.T.". Five other contributions were acknowledged.
Nevertheless Stephens continued to identify what was worthwhile amid the mass of new Australian writing. On 28 September 1901 he hailed Miles Franklin’s *My Brilliant Career* as "A Bookful of Sunlight", and because of its author’s complete assimilation of her environment and of Australian attitudes he described it as "the very first Australian novel to be published". Stephens also admitted the weaknesses of the girlish odyssey and concluded that "The book is not a notable literary performance; but it is fresh, natural, sincere - and consequently charming". Despite his distaste for realism in fiction, Stephens also recognized Barbara Baynton’s talent. He wrote on the Red Page on 29 March 1902 that "Barbara Baynton who left Sydney for England the other day with a book of literary sketches designed for London publication, has written several remarkably strong Australian stories, nearly all unpublished. As a writer, she is a kind of female Henry Lawson, with no less intensity, and even a greater fidelity to detail. Her work is uneven; but it holds rare poignancy and power". Stephens later took pride in the fact that his


45 The Red Page for 29 March 1902 is wrongly dated 22 March 1902: the correct date appears on *The Bulletin* cover.
praise on the Red Page for 18 August 1900 of Norman Lindsay's drawings to illustrate Boccaccio's "Decameron" was "the first authoritative recognition of Mr. Lindsay's merit in an important newspaper".\textsuperscript{46} On the same page Stephens also published two of the collection of bookplates which Lindsay was at that time exhibiting for sale.\textsuperscript{47}

Christopher Brennan continued to submit verse for Red Page publication. On 7 September 1901, the Red Page began with "The Year of the Soul",\textsuperscript{48} and on 29 March 1902 with "Secreta Silvarum"\textsuperscript{49}. Stephens suggested not only that Brennan should have been one of the judges in the New South Wales Government's verse-writing competition\textsuperscript{50} but that he


\textsuperscript{47} See Illustration 3.

\textsuperscript{48} "The Year of the Soul" appeared as "Liminary" in "The Forest of Night" section of Poems 1913 and has been reprinted in The Verse of Christopher Brennan, pp. 95-99.

\textsuperscript{49} "Secreta Silvarum" appeared as "The Quest of Silence" in "The Forest of Night" section of Poems 1913 and has been reprinted in The Verse of Christopher Brennan, pp. 109-110.

\textsuperscript{50} See pages 293-294 above.
should have been considered for the chair of modern languages and literature at the University of Melbourne which became vacant on the death of Professor Morris. On the Red Page for 18 January 1902, Stephens suggested that the University of Melbourne should either "secure a Continental scholar under 35 with languages", or "it should appoint a local student such as Chris. Brennan, now of Sydney Public Library, a man whose knowledge of literature and power of mind are uncommon even in Europe". Stephens' regard for Brennan's scholarship had not deterred him from publishing on the Red Page earlier in this period two jibes at Brennan's poetry. The first was the following, published on the Red Page on 30 June 1900 over one of Dowell O'Reilly's pseudonyms, "D.", without introduction or comment by Stephens:

The Symbolist

Come! let us rail at Cyrus Brown,
The poet pale of Sydney Town;
His form is frail, his curls hang down,
His hat suggests a martyr's crown,
He must not fail to win renown -
As a Symbolist!

He writes of a "rose", but it means - in brief -
Sweet scents for his nose, and thorns for his grief;
Red sunsets - and glows - and blood - and beef.
One phrase (in his hand) will expand to a sheaf,
And a forest he grows from a single leaf;
Does this wrinkling Symbolist!
His mind is sure - his purpose planned,
To purge and purify the land
Of poetry we understand.
"For the world is curled in a grain of sand,
And poetical homoeopathy's grand",
Sings the tinkling Cymbalist.

There is evidence that Brennan was not amused by this mockery. "It annoyed him as it was never meant to do", O'Reilly wrote to Stephens a few months later. Only a week after publishing Brennan's verses, "The Year of the Soul", Stephens included on the Red Page for 14 September 1901 a long letter signed "B.C./(About 4000 years or so)" which ridiculed symbolist poetry, and which made particular sport of Brennan's verse. The letter asserted that "A title is really an excrescence" and disclosed that "You will find the title about the middle of the poem". "B.C." went on to introduce his symbolist poem without title which caricatured Brennan's style in its diction, elisions, and run-on stanzas, and which included capitals at the end of lines as well as following Brennan's convention of beginning lines with lower case letters. The parody began:

the matin stroke inaudible expireS
winging to caverns murk'd of silent sounD:
steals sinister the cohort of desireS
where prison'd in voluptuous profound

slumbrous obscurities (O whither fly, ye shapes august!) I vision’d overture
yawning the daisied coverlet away
till victor in the aeon-strife I burN

with vast resolve jetted from starry heights.

"B.C." was undoubtedly Stephens himself. The text of the letter is almost identical with the parody of Brennan which Stephens presented in the version of "The Crown of Gum-Leaves" which he included in both *The Red Pagan* and *The Pearl and the Octopus*.52

The Red Page version of "The Crown of Gum-Leaves" was published on 7 December 1901.53 Among the contestants for the crown before the invisible but "immensely vital, splendidly imperious, distinctly feminine" Presence of the Genius of Australia were Daley, Paterson, Quinn, Ogilvie and Brennan. Brennan, in this version, did not get through the preamble to his verse in time to read any of it, but the others were imagined reading as examples of their work parodies supplied by Stephens. Daley’s evoked from the Presence "a little sigh", Paterson’s "a half-suppressed laugh"; after Quinn’s "the gum-leaves only shivered slightly"; reaction to Ogilvie’s was lost in the clamour of other contestants to be heard, and Brennan’s explanatory


53 See Appendix 5 below.
introduction to his verse evoked "a sound scarcely breathed, softly modulated; yet a snore, a distinct unmistakeable Snore!". When the Presence withdrew, only one leaf from the crown remained; which poet got it Stephens did not disclose. He finished the piece cryptically, "But the leaf remains in the possession of the poet with the best right to it".

"The Crown of Gum-Leaves" was an unusual piece of critical writing in several ways. Its setting was fantastic, an inn in the remote bush with a sign over the door with "Riot" on one side and "Rest" on the other, where only mulga rum was served. The parodies, especially that of Paterson's manner called "The Honour of the District", were cleverly done. The descriptions of the poets were accompanied by hints of their weaknesses, for liquor as well as praise. Only Paterson was suggested as both modest and temperate.54 "The Crown of Gum-Leaves" was marred by its obliqueness. Readers were expected to recognize the poets from descriptions such as "a shortish fellow, with a brown face framed in rusty-brown hair" and "a tall

54 "E.S.S." contributed a comment in doggerel on "The Crown of Gum-Leaves" to the Red Page of 21 December 1901 in which he suggested that the crown could not be earned because "Some rascal has swallowed the Muse".
silentious person with a long head and eyes of faded blue". The Red Page version of "The Crown of Gum-Leaves" was much shorter than that published in both The Red Pagan and The Pearl and the Octopus. Stephens, presumably for reasons of space, omitted all but a few lines of his parody of Quinn, cut the introduction to Brennan's contribution severely and omitted the parody of his verse and the parody of Lawson called in the other version "In the Days When the Beer Was Strong". However, the only message which emerged with any clarity from the labyrinthine imaginings of both versions was that Stephens considered none of the contenders worthy of the crown as the poet of Australia.

"The Crown of Gum-Leaves" should have earned Stephens acquittal of a charge made by Walter Murdoch in an article on "Some Recent Verse: and Criticism" in The Argus for 11 May 1901 that English critics remained indifferent to Australian verse because it was over-praised in Australia. Stephens was able to show on the Red Page for 8 June 1901 that Murdoch's evidence was often inaccurate, and he concluded that "As a commentator Mr. Murdoch is either ignorant or malicious - he can take his choice".

Stephens realized in this period that Australian writing did not have wide appeal, though characteristically he was inclined to blame English audiences rather than Australian writers for this. The Red Page on 15 March 1902 included
the following comments in one of its news paragraphs:

Reported from London that both Henry Lawson and Louise Mack are making preparations for return to Australia. The fact is, as Patchett Martin affirmed and Ambrose Pratt re-affirms, the Australian literary man or woman can very well nowadays make sis [sic] London profit without leaving Australia. London does not particularly want Australian work, unless of the adventurous Becke class, which is readable whatever its field. The fidelity to Australian life and character, for example, which is Lawson's peculiar merit, gives him a foreign and uninviting air in England. The English don't comprehend such work unless it is universalised, so to speak - made plain to limited understandings by a levelling of local features and an increase of general dramatic effect.

Not only in "The Crown of Gum-Leaves" but in other Red Page pieces in this period Stephens overdid the local features. On 2 February 1901, for example, the main Red Page article, "Extracts from Minutes of Proceedings of the Society of Irresponsibles, held in the Society's Attic at Sydney on an Indefinite Date", was marred by a self-conscious bohemianism and there could only have been a small group of readers who could have recognized the characters, "Bogs", "Broyne", "Barkis" and "Dorian", or have understood the references made in their yarns.

More often than he was precious, Stephens was sentimental on the Red Page in this period. Examples ranged widely. There was his report on 14 April 1900 of the farewell
dinner for Lawson at which the poet said "When I lose sight of the Leeuwin, there will be a hole in my heart big enough to put all Australia in", on which Stephens commented "That's a big heart as well as a big hole". There was the competition in writing love-letters for which he set the tone on the Red Page on 30 March 1901 and for which contributors were still submitting entries on 8 February 1902. In another competition announced on 3 November 1900 Stephens called for descriptions of the joy of having time, place and the loved one coincide. In articles from contributors there were effusions of cloying sweetness like "M.H."'s "Bush Girls" on 23 November 1900 and the description of childish wiles and baby talk in "Bedtime" by "R.A.K." on 4 May 1901. Another aspect of Stephens' sentimentality was that while he wrote sensibly about sex, he could not write about women without extreme romanticism. In "The Modern Woman" on 21 April 1900 he wrote that "The only way to understand Woman is to consider her as a

55 The idea must have been suggested to Stephens by Browning's lines in "Never the Time and the Place":

Never the time and the place
And the loved one all together.

56 See page 239 above.
foreign country, where the scenery, indeed may bear some resemblance to that which you know, but where land and water are nevertheless different, where the inhabitants have their own language, their own customs, their own modes of life and habits of thought - where, moreover, they are extremely distrustful of strangers, and will cheat you whenever it seems in their interest to do so". From this point Stephens moved to one of his typical appeals to physiology when he asserted that "it may be ventured in physical terms, that the nerve-paths from the brain to the spinal centres are still less-marked in later-evolved woman than in man". Physiological argument marred some of Stephens' best work in this period. On 4 January 1902 in "A Maoriland Writer", after writing well on simplicity as a feature of prose style,57 he asserted that pace in writing was determined by physiology. He wrote that "From a slow lymphatic man you get invariably slow lymphatic writing... From a passionate eager man you get naturally eager, passionate writing", and that "the slowly-moving mind naturally embodies its message in slowly-moving language; and some sentences crawl like beetles while others flit like butterflies".

57 See page 289 above.
The most serious shortcoming in the Red Page from January 1900 to April 1902 was Stephens' failure to develop sound literary theories. Because of this his attempts to educate his readers were often deficient, especially in his tendency to retreat to his familiar cliches about the supremacy of emotion in poetry. In "Voices from the Basket" on 29 June 1901 when he sought to explain to unsuccessful contributors why their work was not acceptable he told them:

What you have to remember is that to fully and fitly express a round emotion in square words is an impossible thing. There is an eternal conflict between Feeling and Style. You want to find the exact poise which will gain most Style while sacrificing least Feeling; and the balance varies. Style is the preservative; but only Feeling is worth lyrical preservation. (Thought, unless sublimated to Feeling, belongs to Prose). So the verse-architect's problem is very like that which confronts the naval architect: you have to gain speed, but without losing cargo-capacity; and the theoretical line of grace is continually being subordinated to practical utility.

Not only was the analogy in this passage inept, it also suggested again, in the antipathy which Stephens saw between feeling and style, his failure to appreciate that the elements of literature were integrated and interdependent.

It is obvious from the number of correspondents and contributors in the period that the Red Page had by 1902
earned a large and devoted following. What contemporary readers might have found to outweigh the faults I have suggested were its novelty, its scope, its contrasts, its liveliness, and its humour. Stephens brought them samplings from a wide range of literature. On 3 February 1900 he presented under the heading "Poems in Prose" more than three columns of extracts from the work of Ivan Turgenev. On 10 March 1900 Ella Wheeler Wilcox was featured as "A Passionate Poetess". Neither did Stephens neglect to tie off ends of earlier discussions. On 11 August 1900, for example, he recorded the death of Stephen Crane and summarized his achievements as an "astonishingly clever writer without being a great writer". So ended Stephens' chronicle of Crane's life and writing which had been threaded through many Red Page paragraphs since his review of The Red Badge of Courage on 14 March 1896. No significant adventure which befell an Australian writer went unnoticed on the Red Page, even if first reports were sometimes inaccurate. On 28 July 1900 he reported George Morrison, the author of An Australian in China,58

and correspondent there for the London Times, as among those killed in the Boxer Rebellion; a report he corrected on 11 August. The death of William Oswald Hodgkinson, a well-known newspaper editor in Queensland, brought a summary of his life and extracts from his writings under "Hodgkinsoniana" on 4 August 1900. Research was encouraged among Red Page readers, not only into the origins of the old bush songs, but into many other Australian topics. For example on 23 March 1901 Stephens published "Nil"'s article, "Some Australian 'English'", which reported some of the peculiarities of the pronunciation of English in South Australia. Red Page readers were also given frequent observations on life in Europe. "F.S.D." wrote from Italy and Germany,59 and on 22 February 1902 Ambrose Pratt reported "Some Impressions of Literary London". Stephens also showed tolerance of eccentricity when it was amusing. S.A. Rosa was allowed space to take to task both the writers of the Federal Constitution and the Prime Minister for their English composition.60 Reformed anarchist, J.A. Andrews, wrote of his 'inventions on 31 March 1900 and of "Australian

59 BRP, 12 May 1900, 13 October 1900, 3 November 1900, 2 February 1901.

60 The Constitution was criticized on BRP, 9 June 1900, and the Prime Minister's English on 11 January 1902.
Natural History", especially ants, on 7 April 1900. Stephens was amused on 26 October 1901 by the suggestion by C.P.W. Longdill in his pamphlet A New Religion\textsuperscript{61} that love-making should be limited to leap years and he remarked that "The spectacle of the New Religious swain waiting until he reaches a year divisible by 4 before crooking his finger to a nymph and murmuring 'Long dilly, dilly, come and be loved!' is not without its peculiar charm; yet one can understand that there may still be a certain human unrest, all too human unrest, among votaries when the Georgian calendar misses leap-year (as in 1900), thus necessitating a close season of eight years".

While Stephens in his writing often substituted eye-catching phrase and emotional prejudice for the dispassionate analysis which his themes demanded, his prose never lacked life. His expression was sharp, succinct and his mastery of words complete. On 25 January 1902 he referred to "The vocal O'Sullivan, by the grace of Gab a 'leading politician' in N.S.Wales". Neither was his vision always clouded by nationalistic romantic sentiment. When news reached Australia of Harry Morant's death before a British firing squad in South Africa for alleged ill-treatment of Boer prisoners and civilians, Stephens painted

\textsuperscript{61} C.P.W. Longdill, A New Religion (Auckland, printed by A. Spencer, 1901).
him on the Red Page for 5 April 1902 not as an Australian martyr to British military imperialism but as "an accomplished good-for-naught".

In this period the Red Page contained drawings by Aubrey Beardsley, as on 1 September 1900, by D.H. Souter, as on 13 January 1900, and by Norman Lindsay, as on 18 August 1900. Whether the Red Page contained their illustrations or the work of lesser-known artists, the effect was usually pleasing, and illustrations and text were carefully blended to achieve a unity of impression from the page. Stephens was careful about typographical accuracy and errors were very rare. He was also discriminating in his choice of ornament, as of illustrations, and from 26 January 1901 he usually used a graceful tiny printer's flower to separate paragraphs.

The overall impression left by the Red Page between January 1900 and April 1902 is one of vitality, generated by the force of Stephens' personality, his prejudices, his prose and his editorship. Vitality was the quality which made the "Bookfellow's Mixture" satisfying to its readers, not the vapid romanticism expressed in the verse with that
Bookfellow's Mixture

No place for dreamers!
No room for dreams!
Then why these visions?
And why these gleams?

No room for dreamers! . . .
Oh, bitter fate
That sends a dreamer
Through earth's grey gate!

The birds may linger
And laugh all day,
The winds may loiter
Their lives away;

And every flower
And little leaf,
And tall, red forest
And yellow leaf,

And lazy lily
And jonquil fair,
May use a life-time
To watch a star.

No room for dreamers! . . .
Oh bitter fate
That sends a dreamer
Through earth's grey gate!

For you, you dreamer!
With eyes in space,
The thin grass covers
Your only place.
Nothing could have shown so dramatically what Stephens had achieved in the Red Page by 1902 as his departure from it. While he was away, Joseph Furphy, anxious about The Bulletin's lack of progress towards publication of Such Is Life, wrote to his friend William Cathels that "The immoral journal that we wot of is hastening slowly—dam [sic] slowly— with publication. Stephens is away in Yurrup [sic], since April, on a 6 months' furlough, and Montgomery has taken his place as editor of the hog-wash in question". Presumably it was to the manuscript of Such Is Life that Furphy referred as "the hogwash in question", but he could almost as easily have been referring to the Red Page, of which Alex Montgomery was also editor in Stephens' absence. Montgomery adhered to Stephens' formula of publishing verse, articles contributed and reprinted, answers to correspondents, reviews and general comment. He used many of the contributors Stephens used, for example Victor Daley on 18 October 1902, Henry Lawson on 20 December 1902, and Furphy as "Tom Collins" on 30 October 1902. On 20 September 1902 Montgomery showed that his taste in illustration was similar to Stephens', since he used in an article by Ernest Favenc two of the illustrations which Stephens had already used on 2 December 1899, though

63 Joseph Furphy, Letter to William Cathels, 1902, Letters of Joseph Furphy, Mitchell Library, MS A1964. "[July?]" has been added to the manuscript.
they were not from identical blocks. Montgomery echoed Stephens' opinions. An example was his article critical of "The University of Sydney" on 18 October 1902. Yet the life of the Red Page had departed. While Stephens' advocacy of the supremacy of the brain and of emotion in poetry and his insistence on Australia's potential greatness might have become monotonous, to have the Red Page offering no guidance on such questions made it seem insipid and dull. Many other readers must surely have looked forward to Stephens' return as eagerly as did Furphy.
Chapter Seven

"The Autumn of Our Discontent":

The Red Page from December 1902 to December 1904

A.G. Stephens marked his return to the Red Page on 27 December 1902 in two ways: he used "Under the Gumtree" as the title and he signed the page "A.G.S.". "Under the Gumtree" lasted for only two weeks, 27 December 1902 and 3 January 1903, but Stephens' initials appeared on all but five Red Pages from December 1902 to December 1904. He thus firmly re-asserted his control over the page, and yet he seemed anxious to surround with mystery the reasons for his absence. On 27 December 1902 he began "Under the Gumtree" as follows:

Now that there is no risk of embroiling Australia and endangering the peace of Europe, I naturally grasp the first opportunity of explaining the matter. The Coronation has become ancient history; and however King Edward may be vexed, I have myself to consider. I scrupulously refrained from promising secrecy. And it has become impossible to endure longer the eternal chant: "Did you see the Coronation?" "What did you think of the Coronation?" "How was it that you did not write about the Coronation?" Quid-nunc or crony, they have no other greeting.

The initials "A.G.S." did not appear on 24 September 1903, 26 November 1903, 24 December 1903, 31 December 1903 and 1 December 1904.
In fact during his absence from Australia between April and December 1902 Stephens had written for *The Bulletin* neither about the Coronation nor on any other subject.\(^2\) That his trip was a private venture later references leave no room for doubt.\(^3\) However in "Under the Gumtree" on 27 December 1902 Stephens appeared anxious to mislead Red Page readers since he continued his article:

> Of course, when I knew that there was going to be a Coronation and that I was travelling from Australia to write about it, I realised that there and then was the chance of my journalistic career. "The Coronation", I told myself, "will never occur again;"

\(^2\) The only mention of Stephens in *The Bulletin* between April and December 1902 was in the following paragraph which appeared in "Personal Items" on page 15 of *The Bulletin* for 26 July 1902:

> George Black, who hasn't any love for A.G. Stephens since that little Burns squabble, devotes a column or more to slating A.G.S.'s "Oblation" in last week's *Worker*. It concludes:

> The pamphlet _s dedicated to the late Brunton Stephens. He did not long survive the insult.

\(^3\) Stephens pasted into a scrapbook an undated cutting from *The Weekly Press* (Christchurch) of an article titled "The Bookfellow" which, in outlining his life, remarked that "He remained with *The Bulletin* some twelve years (broken by another travel-trip to Europe in 1902)." Since the article mentioned that the Bookfellow had "turned 50 years of age", its date must have been between 28 August 1915 and 27 August 1916. In the same scrapbook there is a paste-up of an article entitled "A.G. Stephens" by Camden Morrisby; Stephens has written the name of the newspaper indecipherably with the date "30/11/29" beneath. This article referred to his work on *The Bulletin* having been "broken by a journey to Europe to study pictorial art". A.G. Stephens, Scrapbook, No. 258, Hayes Collection of the University of Queensland.
and if it were to occur, you will [sic] not be there to see. What is your life but a newspaper that endureth a little time and then vanisheth away? Out of all possible Coronations there is given to you just this one Coronation to write about . . ."

Stephens went on to give an answer to one of the questions which he had alleged was constantly being put to him, namely, "How was it that you did not write about the Coronation?" His answer began with a few facts but reality was soon displaced by fantasy:

So I set sail; I arrived; I found a boarding-house with a bathroom; and at five o'clock on my first London morning, even in the very thrill and moment of waking, I was admonished of an Omen and lay expectant.

The next moment I saw my Coronation Article.

Stephens then described the literary qualities of the article in his vision:

I remember quite well the style in which my Article was written. Sometimes it had scintillating facts that suggested G.W. Steevens, and sometimes there were abrupt dashes of colour that reminded me of Stephen Crane; but chiefly it came sonorous from the soul of that mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonies, Thomas de Quincey. Nothing so gentle as its fluting in the piano passages; and when it rose crescendo I thought of the voice of the great Lord Romney thundering at the close of Beauchamp's Career. It was gay, delicate, audacious as Max Beerbohm. It was stern, acrid, undissaudable as Walt Whitman. Now it held the singing sweetness of Keats, and now the reverberant majesty of Marlowe. In brief, it was a masterpiece; and I wondered if it would do for The Bulletin.
Since Stephens later recorded resentment that William Macleod, The Bulletin’s business manager, had refused "when I went to England - to make an engagement for a term of years on my return", there might have been a touch of irony in the last sentence. It is also tempting to speculate that Stephens had offered to write for The Bulletin from London on topics including the Coronation and that this offer had been refused. Certainly the rumour that he was in London to report the Coronation had gained currency. Will Ogilvie wrote from Scotland to Stephens in London on 24 May 1902 that "I believe you’ve come to report the Coronation for the Bulletin - I wonder at such a red republican as yourself coming near London at such a jingo time".

Stephens in "Under the Gumtree" on 27 December 1902 went on to recount the loss of the vision of his Coronation article between dream and waking. The cause of the loss was the appearance among the throng of dignitaries in his

4 A.G. Stephens, Diary, entry for 12 January 1905, p.87, Hayes Collection of the University of Queensland.

vision of the Australian Prime Minister, the sight of whom supplanted the Coronation in Stephens' imagination with another vision, that of Australia:

Unluckily, just as I was raising myself cautiously on an elbow, I saw Barton, and I cheered, cheered lustily - "Hooray!" and "Hooray!" again. I did not cheer Barton; I cheered Australia. The warren of London and all the pallid, driven, rabbit-faces disappeared; and I was back among brown-necked men in a land of infinite purple vistas, where the million-varied eucalypts lean one to another to croon secrets old before Britain was born. And I cheered with all my heart and soul and strength.

Then I heard alarmed noises in the next bedroom, and knew that my coronation article was gone.

Stephens then pretended that when news of his loss reached Buckingham Palace the Coronation was postponed, but that the delay was to no avail since, as he had had to explain to the authorities, "I had lost hope of recovering my article, and could not condescend to makeshifts". While Stephens no doubt intended his article to be light and whimsical, his heavy hand with fantasy must surely have

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6 "Plans went ahead for the elaborate ceremony of the coronation which was fixed for June 26th, 1902. Two days beforehand when London was filled with distinguished foreign and imperial visitors the king had to undergo an immediate and dangerous operation. He recovered and the coronation (though shorn of some of its glory) was held on August 9th". Article on "Edward VII", Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1967 edition, vol. 8, p.9.
mystified, if not misled, all readers except his close friends and his Bulletin associates.

Stephens gave no factual account on the Red Page of his experiences abroad in 1902. Obviously Red Page readers were eager to have his impressions. In "Correspondence" on 3 January 1903 he assured "H.M." that "No, there is no animosity against him. Considering his temptations, considering his opportunities, King Edward's record may be held an uncommonly good record - for a monarch". Yet almost all Stephens' references to his overseas experiences were indirect. On 13 August 1903 in reviewing George Moore's anti-clerical stories about Ireland, The Untilled Field, Stephens mentioned that "In the Naples arcade I have seen two men, sitting outside a café, spit contemptuously as a priest passed". In an article on the poor health of the British royal family, entitled "Monarchs Dying", which appeared on the Red Page for 11 April 1903, Stephens included detailed descriptions of the appearance of both King Edward and Queen Alexandra. Again on 2 May 1903 when a contributor, "Fax", asserted that neither the King nor the Prince of Wales, who had visited Australia in 1903 as the Duke of York, spoke English with German accents, Stephens remarked that "These ears heard the Duke of York speak twice

7 George Moore, The Untilled Field (London, Fisher Unwin, 1903).
in Australia; King Edward twice in England. If both did not say 'Dank yout' then these ears are German too".

Stephens also referred on the Red Page for 24 January 1903 to having seen and listened to the Boer leader, Christiaan Rudolf de Wet, in London. Stephens gave the most direct report of his impressions of London on 22 October 1903 when he presented a discussion he called "The Sweet Uses of London". He printed first a contribution from Henry Lawson with the subheading "One View", and he followed this with "Another View", his own, in which he asserted:

London is, from one point of view, a nice friendly, familiar city - with that curious air of homeliness that Sydney has, among Australian cities. From another point of view it is a filthy hole. The men are beasts of burden and the women beasts of pleasure - hard driven. The air is unspeakably foul. The climate is vile, with variations. In good weather, it is a good place to visit. To live there is ghastly. This is no wail of the disgruntled, because Australian journalists do well in London, in their modest journalists' way. We'll talk of that another time.

Stephens made good his promise in "Journalists in London" on the Red Page for 14 January 1904. Again he made no detailed disclosures of his own experience, but some of the ambivalence of his feelings about life in London came through in the following passage in which he recommended travel to young Australian journalists:
But, Question: is it worth while going to London? Certainly! even if one comes back again. Go not to London only, but to Europe and America; go to gather experience and to adjust your valuations of life and affairs; go for the sake of new sensations and fuller sensations. Every young Australian journalist should see the elder world before he is thirty, if possible before he is twenty-five. Let him spend his savings cheerfully: he will get value in an enlarged mind and increased capacity.

Yet again: Is it worth while going to London? That is a matter of taste. After clean Australian air, and bright Australian sunshine, London filth and gloom are depressing things. For some people, London has not enough compensations. It is all right as long as you can leave it when you wish; and of course you leave it easily if you can. There is a gay Continent a few hours away, and any number of cheap week-end and holiday trips which can be turned into a continual feast. As a perpetual residence (speaking always from an Australian journalist's standpoint, fixed as nearly as possible), London palls. Of course, in a sense, a higher value of life can be reached there. Good music, good pictures, can be heard and seen. You are close to the art-pulse of the world at Paris. Club-life offers pleasures, and the bustling crowd whirls you along.

While this passage conveyed the impression that London's major attraction for Stephens was its proximity to Continental Europe, in it he revealed at least the superficial aspects of the conflict which marked his attitudes to Britain. In fact Stephens returned to Australia in a dilemma caused by more serious considerations than the attraction of London's literary and artistic life and the
repulsion of its weather and polluted air. The force of circumstances and events had been borne in upon him and had effected modification of his views so that after his return to Australia he was no longer quite the "red republican" Ogilvie had dubbed him.8

On the one hand, Stephens remained fiercely anti-British in his attitudes. He railed at Australian Prime Minister Barton's agreement at the 1902 Colonial Conference to pay £200,000 per year for British naval protection, which he described under the heading "Naval Tribute" on the Red Page on 6 June 1903 as "a clear case of taxation without representation". On the other hand, Stephens was convinced that Australia's geographical isolation made the country vulnerable to attack and that Britain's protection was necessary while Australia's population remained small. On 24 January 1903 when he reviewed Christiaan Rudolf de Wet's account of the Boer War, Three Years War,9 he appeared to retract some of his former sympathy for the Boer cause and he revised his beliefs on the desirability of an Australian republic. He wrote:

8 See page 318 above.

9 Christiaan Rudolf de Wet, Three Years War, October 1899-June 1902 (Westminster, Constable, 1902).
De Wet's book, in fact, has changed the writer's views of several things connected with the great contest. He affirms (p.99) that had not so many of our burghers proved false to their own colours, England - as the great Bismarck foretold - would have found her grave in South Africa.

Well, it would not be pleasant to Australia to see England in her grave at any time. All faults and merits reckoned, the English are about as good as any other nation, and better than several other nations; and when the hegemony of America or Russia does come, there is no clear probability that the world will be better off. At the present time, with a four-million population to defend the continent, Australia certainly cannot afford to see England in her grave. Times have changed since the United States grew up; and there are nowadays too many earth-hungry powers and ambition-bitten rulers for an isolated Commonwealth's security. The Commonwealth Cabinet does not seem to have any time to spare to direct diplomatic relations with aggressive Russia or restless Japan; not to mention other boundary-extending or colonies-desiring countries; and the Commonwealth revenue seems hardly yet elastic enough to provide for an army or a navy on a war footing. Until we have grown a bit, we shall have to stick to England; and all we can do is to see that England makes as little as possible a fool or a knave of herself - pending our arrival at the 25-million population mark, and our establishment of (say) half-an-ammunition factory, seeing that nobody seems to care about the urgent necessity of getting a whole one.

Stephens found little reassurance in Australia's dependence on Britain. The convenience of the arrangement was counterweighted by his fear that it brought extra danger
of Australia's unwilling involvement in armed conflict. On 13 June 1903 he began the Red Page with a piece of verse entitled "A Marching Song". Though it bore no signature the ideas were as unmistakably those of Stephens as the declamatory style and ungainly expression. The second last of the eleven stanzas was:

Come what may, that the old beast-nature
Snarls and crouches and reeks our doom:
Why for that shall we brook dictature
When we shall war, and how, with whom?
Self-revering, an armed Australia
Well may fight for her own young blood -
Never, to gild a king's regalia,
Never in a foreign feud.

Japan was the country from which Stephens considered Australia most likely to suffer aggression. In the spate of books about Japan which he reviewed on the Red Page between December 1902 and December 1904, there was none in which he did not find reason for boreboding, regardless of the subject matter of the work in hand. On the Red Page for 2 May 1903 he considered Clarence Ludlow Brownell's The Heart of Japan and concluded that "Once more we are impressed with the utter difference between European and Asiatic modes of thought". On 25 February 1904 after reviewing H.I. Hancock's Japanese Physical Training, 11

10 Clarence Ludlow Brownell, The Heart of Japan (London, Methuen, 1902).

11 H.I. Hancock, Japanese Physical Training (New York, Putnam's, 1903).
Stephens asserted that "It will be useful to count some early traces of Japanese ambition. Later Jap diplomacy has been suave and careful, biding its time". He then quoted excerpts from sources dating from 1895 to 1901 in support of his claim.\(^\text{12}\) The array of quotations looked very much like the gleanings from a scrapbook kept over a number of years. His comments after them suggested that he was approaching conviction that possession of Australia was Japan's goal. He wrote:

> All these footprints lead into the cave.
> One wonders if at the end of the cave there will be found a ...

> ...radiant land! o'er whom the sun's first dawning
> Fell brightest when God said "Let there be light";
> O'er whom the day hung its bluest awning
> Flushed to white deeps of star-lustre by night!

as the local rhymester rhetorically puts it.

On 26 May 1904 Stephens reviewed Life in a German Garrison Town\(^\text{13}\) under the heading "A Heroic Soldier". The


\(^{13}\) O.F. Bilse, Life in a German Garrison Town (London, Lane, 1904).
book was an exposure of attitudes and conditions in the German army, and Stephens agreed with its author, Oswald Fritz Bilse, on the baseness of the professional soldier. "Military mentality", he remarked, "is everywhere of a low type", but his fears immediately flew to Japan, and he continued:

The point is not without its local application. To the north we see in the Japanese a race in whom barbaric instincts persist vaingloriously. Death for the Mikado is prized as an individual ideal . . . the Japanese mental attitude is still the slave's attitude of implicit obedience to a master; the civilised European mind demands an explicit reason for authority, a clear justification of self-sacrifice. And with this nation of scientific fanatics Australia may presently be contending for the empire of the Pacific, even possibly for the empire of Australia. Is she ready? Is she making ready?

Although Stephens' nervousness about the future of Australia might not have originated during his travels in 1902, the impressions he gathered abroad did nothing to allay his fears and an uneasy conservatism entered his political thinking on his return.

In Stephens' view, safety for Australia lay in numbers, and on several occasions he deplored the falling birthrate. On 2 July 1903 he considered T.A. Coghlan's pamphlet, The Decline in the Birth-Rate of New South Wales,14 and while disappointed in its generalizations he judged it "An

important contribution to social statistics". On the same Red Page appeared his "Ballade of the Birth-rate", one of his heavy-handed attempts at light verse, with a refrain asking "But why don't statisticians marry?"

Generally Stephens' pursuit of a solution to Australia's population problem was in earnest and it brought him into conflict with James Edmond who had taken over the editorship of *The Bulletin* from J.F. Archibald in January 1903. On 10 December 1903 the Red Page was occupied by a full-page article by Stephens called "Before the Day". Stephens began it by calculating that at the rate of increase then taking place, Australia in 1953 would have achieved "only from eight to ten millions of inhabitants", and he went on:

Why the deprecatory "only"? For two reasons. First, from the point of view of nation and race, a large population is better than a small population, if the standard of individual happiness be maintained. The resources of Australia are vast enough to maintain fifty millions of people as comfortably as they maintain four millions. Second, seeing the risk of the British connection, which exposes us at any moment to war in a foreign quarrel, - and seeing the possibility of attack by our Asiatic neighbours, - the practical safety and the complete independence of Australia will not be assured until, if need be, we can place in the field a million men trained to bear arms. Australia's present position is a position of grave risk, even of grave danger.

Stephens considered that the solution to the population problem lay in attracting migrants of "the agricultural and stock-raising class". True to his idealism of the bush
Australia, he remarked that "'the man on the land' is often and foolishly ridiculed; but he is in many national aspects the best man in the country to-day, he will always remain in some aspects the best man in the country". Repeating his complaint of 6 October 1900, Stephens also asserted that "More and more residence in the cities is made attractive, and life on the land is made intolerable. Every atom of governmental influence should be thrown in the opposite direction. Decentralisation, and again decentralisation, and again and again decentralisation, until for the mass of the community the Bush has ceased to be a word of terror, and life in the Bush has been made on the whole preferable to life in Melbourne or Sydney or Brisbane". In the short term, Stephens considered that suitable immigrants could have been attracted to the bush by the Government's provision of "Free land to the cultivator - and care that the gift is not barren". Stephens justified his suggestion of this public expenditure by asserting that "Every settled family is a new contributor to national taxation, a fresh pillar of national stability. And, if fertile and rain-blessed lands grow scanty, national irrigation and a graduated land-tax to pay for it". This was too much for Edmond, who in a foot-note signed "Ed. B." pointed out that "The Bulletin's view somewhat

15 See page 235 above.
differs from the above. The N.S.W. selector already, to all intents and purposes, gets free land; the money received from him by the State goes back to him, every penny, in reductions of railway rates". Edmond also warned that "Nobody who knows the far-back country has much faith in irrigation; the lack of water to irrigate with is too pronounced. If N.S.W. was decentralised, and the farmer got free land, but was expected to pay for his own local works and pay for the carriage of his produce exactly what it cost, his position would probably be worse than it is now. On a great part of N.S.W. no price that the State could afford to pay would fix settlers permanently".

Undeterred by Edmond’s intervention, Stephens went on in "Before the Day" on 10 December 1903 to develop his theory that the falling birthrate had nothing to do with declining personal morals but depended on the simple pragmatism of the individual who could only be induced to act for the good of the state where this was shown to coincide with his own. Stephens’ concern for the birthrate also led him to suggest an extremely conservative role for Australian women. He asserted:
The simple life is essential for mothers above all, if population is to increase as we wish it. From the community's point of view they are vehicles of reproduction and little more. It is not essential that they should be one whit more. If they will only be good mothers, the best possible mothers, they fulfil the greatest service of which they are capable. Nothing matters but the children. The children, well born and properly cared for, demand the whole of their time, every atom of their energy. And here have our mothers been burdened with the business of government, the responsibility of the vote!

He found comfort in his belief about the Australian woman that "Taking her by and large, she relies upon her instincts, and uses her reason to vote as her husband directs her", but he immediately added the warning that "Nevertheless, in so far as woman's suffrage is effective, it is a clear menace to the birth-rate".

Little as Stephens' ideas on moral, social, agricultural, political and economic issues added to the sum of Australian wisdom in these matters, I have quoted a sampling of them because I consider them important as symptoms of his hardening conservatism, of his dissatisfaction with many aspects of Australian life, and perhaps of modification of his hopes for Australia generally.

Less subtle than any of these changes in Stephens' attitudes was the increase in the egotism of his editorship of the Red Page immediately after his return from Europe.
Correspondents were snubbed. In "Under the Gumtree" under "Correspondence" on 3 January 1903, he replied to "W.H.R.", "Thanks for kind enquiries. In politics, The Bookfellow is a radical conservative; in literature and other arts the modern spirit permeates his ancient wisdom, in philosophy you may call him a cynical epicurean stoic". A fortnight later, further enquiries from "W.H.R." were less kindly received, when, again in "Correspondence", Stephens replied that "Since you are dense: the meaning is that he is epicurean when he can afford it, stoic when he can't, and cynic all the time. But all-too-human". The implied humility in the last phrase was not mirrored in his Red Page writings in the first few months of 1903. On 31 January 1903 in a type font of reduced size along with a set of particularly ugly pseudo-gothic letters for headings, subheadings and initials, there appeared on the Red Page an article entitled "Creeping Up". In it after mocking earlier publications of members of the Australian Literature Society, a Melbourne group, he discussed seriously two pamphlets recently published by the Society. He found A.W. Brazier's Marcus Clarke: His Work and Genius though vigorous . . .

sometimes awkward in style and doubtful in substance". Of Professor Tucker's pamphlet, *The Cultivation of Literature in Australia*, 17 Stephens remarked that "Professor Tucker speaks from his chair in Melbourne University as one having authority, so it is pleasant to find him reflecting (in a very sane and lucid paper) the opinions of *The Bulletin* scribes". He repeated this claim a little further on in the article, adding a touch of modesty when he wrote "In fact many of his ideas have been already expressed in *The Bulletin*, though Prof. Tucker usually expresses them better". Then lest anyone should have doubted that his own judgments had priority, Stephens placed beside quotations from Tucker's paper extracts from his Red Page writings with the dates of their publication. Such pride in his earlier judgments might have been passed over as legitimate though bluntly expressed. However Stephens chose to conclude the article with an insult to the Australian universities:

And so on with half-a-dozen passages that we could parallel. The Universities are "creeping up". Pleasant to see them stepping into line like this: they move slowly, but we always said they would "get there", given sufficient time - sufficient time - (or sufficient eternity).

The employment of the first person plural in this passage was typical of his usage at the time. He archly introduced another quotation from his own writing on 7 March 1903. Consideration of Part I. of J.H. Maiden's *The Forest Flora of New South Wales* led Stephens to complain that "we have but a scanty poetical nomenclature for our flowers and trees". In the midst of his complaint he remarked:

> As a distinguished writer has pointed out, "The rose is a beautiful flower, but the most beautiful only because thousands of years of care and cultivation have been lavished to bring it to perfection, because thousands of lovers have breathed its perfume, thousands of poets have apostrophised its exquisite form. Give the same care and cultivation to a hundred modest bush flowers, draw them from obscurity as the rose has been drawn from the parent wilderness, let them be worshipped and adored through centuries of sentiment - and we have here the rivals of the Rose herself".

The "distinguished writer" was Stephens himself. He had published the passage quoted on the Red Page on 9 December 1899.

On 21 March 1903 there was evidence of Stephens' self-conscious condescension to Red Page readers. In his review of Mrs. Craigie's *Love and the Soul Hunters* he strove to


convince his readers that the book was "stagnant, dead; and all the best literature moves". In the midst of his argument Stephens interpolated the following paragraph:

(Dead means dead. Dead does not mean dead. This refers to Mrs Craigie's book. This does not refer to Mrs Craigie's book. The clue through the maze of figures and [verbal] [sic] fallacies is clear; but you must unwind it yourself. If we are always as obvious and ingenuous as Sydney Telegraph's crusade against boxing contests, you will reproach us for becoming unstimulating.)

The self-consciousness of Stephens' criticism abated by the middle of 1903 but his editorship of the Red Page was thereafter occasionally marred by the affectation of bored superiority. On 18 August 1904, for example, after noting that "John F. Macdonald has invented a new journalistic style for the Saturday Review", Stephens indulged his love of parody and adopted Macdonald's staccato manner to write a report of a concert given in Sydney by the pianist Paderewski. He identified the audience as suburban and wrote of them that "Suburbs are obese and shapeless, even in youth, or scraggy and horrible. In a hundred faces, not one fresh and healthy. And the features of the Suburbs, mon Dieu! Their fishy lustreless eyes; their aborted noses, their weak mouths, wan lips, receding chins. They are terrible, these Suburbs! - a national mishap". Reverting to his own prose style, Stephens
maintained his pose of superiority and he concluded that "Today he [Paderewski] is distinctly in an elder phase. He has lost freshness; ardour, la fogue de la jeunesse, since I heard him play eleven years ago; but he has added an effortless grace, a perfection of mastery that I do not remember to have noted then". The casual inclusion of a French phrase in this passage was typical of Stephens' method when he chose to affect either ennui or archness. At other times he sought to impress Red Page readers with his easy familiarity with French literature. On 25 February 1904 he wrote a facetious passage on George Moore's devotion to the music of the barrel-organ when he heard it in the poetry of Mallarme but not in the street outside his home. Stephens then wondered "What should be answered to distant Bill, turning over to ask Jim 'Who is this [blank space] Mal something that this Red Page bloke is gassing about?' Inviting topics for a more spacious day!" On 28 July 1904 Stephens claimed that "The memory of Taine returns with the new volume of his Life and Letters 20n. He then described Taine, Comte and Renan as "three chiefs of French philosophy in the nineteenth century", of whom he

asserted, without bringing forth convincing supporting evidence, that Taine was the greatest. In "The Man of Purple" on the Red Page for 10 November 1904, Stephens discussed Pierre Louys' *L'Homme de Pourpre*, and he compared Louys with Hugo, Leconte de Lisle and Merimée, and he advised readers that "Since probably Merimée is better known in Australia [i.e. than Leconte de Lisle] if you remember Merimée's Roman simplicity, and conceive of Louys as a Grecian parallel, fainter and more feminine, with a form less boldly, more exquisitely chiselled, and colour added to the form, you may get an idea of the manner of Louys". In view of the very small number of Red Page readers at that time likely to have heard of either Merimée or Leconte de Lisle, Stephens' advice could be considered pompous if not ludicrous. He seemed after his return from Europe in 1902 to find solace at times in the pretence that he was operating in a cosmopolitan milieu such as only Europe could have given him.

The frequency with which Stephens published his own verse on the Red Page between December 1902 and December 1904

might be adduced as further evidence of his increased egotism. His attempts at serious verse were extraordinarily ungainly in expression and turgid in sentiment but some of the occasional verse and the parodies were

22 The verses in this period which can be identified as Stephens' were:

"Three Cliffs" (BRP 14 February 1903); "For a London Commercial/By Our Reporter (In the Standard)", a sonnet on price of wheat in the manner of Rossetti (BRP 28 February 1903); "Ballade of Purple Pimpls" (BRP 7 March 1903); "Pharoah Australis" (BRP 21 March 1903); "A Marching Song" (BRP 13 June 1903); "Ballade of the Birth Rate" (BRP 2 July 1903); "A Bush Story" (? 'P 10 September 1903); untitled lines beginning "Sayonara to the cherry-blossom fading" (BRP 18 February 1904); untitled lines beginning "Of all the prophets that are smart", aimed at Dowie, an American faith-healer operating in Adelaide (BRP 25 February 1904); an untitled ballade, as if by George Eliot, with the refrain "I did not marry Herbert Spencer" (BRP 14 July 1904); "In Memoriam: 5th August 1903", an obituary in verse on Phil May (BRP 18 August 1904); untitled lines beginning "A Song, a Song, with a chorus strong for the sweet September days" (BRP 15 September 1904).

The single stanzas of political satire which accompanied the series of three "Australian Bookplates" were almost certainly by Stephens. "I. George Reid" was published on BRP 30 May 1903, "II. C.C. Kingston" on BRP 27 June 1903, and "III. W.H. Fitchett" on BRP 10 September 1903.

The following verses were probably his: "Superstition" by "Darius Hystaspes" (BRP 28 March 1903); "Potts Point and the Prison" (BRP 17 September 1903) which is dotted with illustrations all signed "H.McC." but the verse itself sounds like Stephens' and not Hugh McCrae's.
quite cleverly done. On 28 February 1903, for example, Stephens produced as an exemplar for one of his competitions a sonnet in the manner of Rossetti embodying a stock exchange report on the price of wheat. On 10 September 1903 in "A Bush Story" Stephens provided an amusing caricature of one of Hume Nesbit's verses from his book, *Mistletoe Manor*.23 Probably Stephens' best effort on the Red Page from December 1902 to December 1904 appeared on 14 July 1904 in a jibe at Herbert Spencer for an avowal in his *Autobiography*24 that he had not been in love with George Eliot. Stephens remarked that "One imagines that something could be said for the lady; but unfortunately she is not here to say it", and he went on to present a witty ballade with the refrain "I did not marry Herbert Spencer". However, when Stephens tried to convey pathos in verse the results attained remarkable depths of banality. The bathos of *Oblation*25, the collection of his verse


published in 1902 with Norman Lindsay's illustrations, was repeated in his Red Page verse. Consider, for example, the opening line of "In Memoriam: 5th August 1903", an obituary for Phil May published on the Red Page for 18 August 1904. It began

Phil May! Phil male, virile and vehement.

His verse-writing might not have been motivated entirely by egocentricity. Stephens might have been seeking compensation for the lack of stimulus to his critical powers which he found in the dreary procession of new books received for review between December 1902 and December 1904. As an example, "Some Recent Books" on the Red Page for 7 February 1903 listed nine titles, eight of them fiction. Stephens found none of them satisfactory. He commented that Jane Barlow's The Founding of Fortunes was "slow"; Eden Phillpotts' The River "humourless" but "above average"; Eleanor C. Price's Angelot he described as "duller than usual" historical romance; and Booth Tarkington's The Two Vanrevels as "a pleasant trifle". Charles White's History

29 Booth Tarkington, The Two Vanrevels (London, Grant Richards, 1902).
of Australian Bushranging 30 Stephens found representative "of a deplorable class of publications" and he added that "his story would hardly stimulate a prawn". W.E. Norris's The Credit of the County 31 Stephens described as "a dish of tepid scandal"; Mrs. W.K. Clifford's Woodside Farm 32 as "feeble"; C. Forestier Walker's The Silver Gate 33 as "poor stories"; and Bernard C. Blake's At the Change of the Moon 34 as "poor". On one occasion, on 16 June 1904, in his search for stimulus among new books Stephens reviewed an engineering firm's catalogue 35. At other times he appeared to take fiction seriously announcing on 11 August 1904, for example, under the heading "Recent Novels", that "Despite complaints of decadence, the English novels of the last few months have included many worth reading, and several worth keeping to read again". In this period

30 Charles White, History of Australian Bushranging (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1901-1903), 4 vols.

31 W.E. Norris, The Credit of the County (London, Methuen, 1902).


33 C. Forestier Walker, The Silver Gate (London, Greening, 1902).

34 Bernard C. Blake, At the Change of the Moon (London, Greening, 1902).

35 Clyde Engineering Company, Catalogue of General Engineering (Granville, N.S.W., 1904).
Stephens also on several occasions commended advertisers in the text of the Red Page, a practice he had previously sternly condemned. On 15 December 1900 he had referred to "the tribe of third-rate story-books sent for review by Geo. Robertson", a remark which he admitted unlikely to encourage the inflow of review copies but he added "there are already too many reviewers busily tempering the winds of criticism". In contrast Stephens announced on the Red Page for 27 December 1902:

The Bookfellow has pleasure in recommending to book-buyers the long-established house of Geo. Robertson and Co. Prop. Ltd., Sydney. The firm's advertisement appears on this page, and that in itself is a recommendation. Orders for any book or magazine, new or old, may be forwarded; and the staff take pains and pleasure in answering queries. Especial attention is given to teachers and librarians. And this is an honest puff.

On 13 June 1903 Stephens published a long list of sixpenny fiction available from George Robertson's, and on 7 January 1904 W. Dymock, another bookseller, was also awarded a free advertisement on the strength of his having for sale an incomplete file of The Bulletin. On 28 January 1904 Stephens resumed some of his former irreverence to give Red Page advertisers more subtle reinforcement. He referred to George Robertson as "one ewe lamb of a regular advertiser (besides a gentleman who prefers to sell a really excellent
jujube from this high vantage ground)" and he laughed at Robertson's conflicting statements on the efficacy of his Red Page advertisement. Stephens concluded by advising readers that "he will supply you at least as cheaply and as efficiently as anybody else, so perhaps you had better deal with him". Despite these concessions to the necessity of maintaining advertising revenue, Stephens did not disguise his feelings about most of the booksellers' stock in trade. On 5 May 1904 apropos "a little book on the artist Turner by F. Tyrrell-Gill", he remarked, "Regarding Turner she has nothing to say, and she says it pleasantly enough. Too many of these sugared nullities cumber booksellers' counters nowadays: one grows weary of literary lollipops".

In addition to his boredom with the ephemera which he received for review, Stephens found little cause for enthusiasm in Australian attempts at serious writing in this period. New books by established authors disappointed him. On the first Red Page after his return from Europe, on 27 December 1902, in reviewing E.J. Brady's second collection

36 An advertisement for Hudson's Eumenthol Jubes, manufactured by a pharmacist in Ipswich, Queensland, had appeared regularly on the Red Page since 25 March 1899.

37 F. Tyrrell-Gill, Turner (London, Methuen, 1904).
of verse, *The Earthen Floor*,\(^{38}\) he compared it with Brady's first work, *The Ways of Many Waters*,\(^{39}\) and wrote that "The new book cannot be said to rank as highly as the old". Stephens was also disappointed by Ethel Turner's collection of stories, *Betty and Co.*\(^{40}\). On the Red Page for 12 November 1903 he wrote that "The title piece is rather dull and prim . . . Compared with the author's earlier work, the other stories are as a rule cleverer without being so effective. Some improvement in grasp and handling of the subjects does not compensate us for the loss of the buoyancy, the natural gaiety, that were the basis of Ethel Turner's charm". A week later, on 19 November 1903, he described Arthur Jose's essays, *Two Awheel*,\(^{41}\) as "a singularly barren book" in which "His impressions are crisply written but show hardly a trace of feeling or imagination". Arthur Adams' novel, *Tussock Land*,\(^{42}\) Stephens

\(^{38}\) E.J. Brady, *The Earthen Floor* (Grafton, N.S.W., Grip Newspaper Company, 1902).


pronounced on 5 May 1904 to have "interest rather personal and local than technical". The anxiety to be fair to Adams in this review echoed the tone in which on 10 January 1903 Stephens had reviewed *The Nazarene: a Study of a Man*.43 On that occasion Stephens had concluded by commending Adams "for trying to do the best that his talent permits. Of Louis Becke, for whom he had once held high hopes, Stephens reported in "Memoranda" on the Red Page for 7 January 1904 that "His work no longer sustains his reputation, and his reputation scarcely sustains his work". There was even a hint of disapproval of Ogilvie's success in the magazines in the following paragraph which Stephens wrote under "Memoranda" on the Red Page for 24 March 1904:

Ogilvie has carried his trenches close to the fortifications of Eng. magas; and you see him now storming six strongholds a month at the point of the lyric. Possibly he is improving his form: possibly he is losing his force: these points are debatable. But he has a trifle more dexterity and a trifle more emotion than competitors; and they print him in all quarters. Feb. Pearson's has one piece; this - "At the Last" - is from Feb. Idler; a neat réchauffé of tags and sentiments.

Among Australasian writers publishing their first books Stephens discerned no outstanding talent. On 30 June 1904 he described Robert Crawford's *Lyric Moods*44 as "A booklet


of verse by a writer who exhibits little more than echoes of the last verse he has read". Will Lawson's verses, The Red West Road, published under his pseudonym "Quilp N.", Stephens considered "plainly the work of a beginner" though he went on to claim on the Red Page of 21 March 1903 that "through 'Quilp N.'s' frequent crudity shines usually the true picture, the vital emotion" and he was confident that Lawson would do better.

There was a new modesty in Stephens' assessments of those writers whose work he singled out for praise, and he was at pains to point out that their significance was local. When, for example, he discussed "Jessie Mackay's Verses" on 23 May 1903, Stephens described her as "a writer of decided minor promise" and he added that "We need only a sufficient number of lyrics such as 'The Grey Company' or 'Spring Fires' (here printed Dec. 1, 1900) to hail her as the equal of - Ogilvie, say - in our little Australasian class". He found echoes of other writers in Mackay's verses, notably considering that her stanza:

Pale lieth Poetry
Passing and dying -
Have they no care for her
Cozening and canting?
Have you no tears for her
Dreaming and ranting? -

45 Will Lawson, The Red West Road: and Other Verses by Quilp N. (Wellington, Turnbull, Hickson and Gooder, 1903).

46 "Sheedy Was Dying" was among the verses published under the heading "A Page of Verses Written for The Bulletin" in The Bulletin for 7 December 1901. The first two of its six stanzas were:

Grey as a rising ghost,
Helpless and dumb;
This he had feared the most -
Now it had come;
Through the front door,
Mocking, defying,
The Thirsty Land lay,
And Sheedy was Dying!

Why should he ever
Keep turning, keep turning
All his thoughts over
To quicken their burning?
Why should the North wind speak,
Creeping and crying?
- Who else would mourn for him?
Sheedy was dying!

Jessie Mackay's comment was "By the way I never modelled my verses on the two Australian poems you named - never saw or heard of them."

It was not surprising that Stephens noticed the similarity between Mackay's metre and that of Neilson's "Sheedy Was Dying". Neilson later complained of what he considered Stephens' excessive editing of the piece. See James Devanny, Shaw Neilson (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1944), pp. 86-87.
concluded his discussion of Jessie Mackay's verse by announcing somewhat cryptically that "Enough has been said and cited to show how high is Jessie Mackay's claim to a place in our new-born, faintly-shining galaxy". A note of his former confidence returned on 13 June 1903 when Stephens asserted that "We should not be permanently on our knees before the immortal W.S. Better be up and doing to find or create an Australian Shakespear [sic]". However there might have been a hint of mockery in the paragraph on 2 July 1903 in which he discussed the existence of the Nobel Prize for Literature and bade "Bush bards and city bards, awake! arise!

On 1 October 1903 Stephens presented two columns headed "Mary Gilmore's Verses" and in the rest of the Red Page under the heading "One Australian Girl" he gave a brief criticism of her work followed by interesting autobiographical data she had supplied mainly on her South American experiences. Stephens saw Mary Gilmore as neither an Australian Shakespeare nor a potential Nobel Prize winner. He wrote that "Her work is often hasty - the rough embodiment of a

47 The verses included were "Lovers", "Sweet-Heartin'", "Quarrelin'", "Marri'd", "Baby", and untitled pieces of which the first lines were as follows: "Day gives her radiant face whereon", "The moonlight flutters from the sky", "His eyes looked into mine", "Sing sweet, little bird, swing sweet, sing sweet", "My little love is sleeping", "Time waits not on our idle days", "You are there", "My hand in thine", and "Draw down the blind".
mood or an idea, quickly seized and crudely put down. Yet sincerity and passion give the verse a rare poignancy. Such a little homely gem as 'Marri'd' is unique. The theme is commonplace; even the vision is commonplace; but the power to express the vision at that pitch and in that way is memorable". Stephens' enthusiastic nationalism was rekindled briefly by Randolph Bedford's novel, True Eyes and the Whirlwind,\(^{48}\) of which he wrote on the Red Page for 28 January 1904:

> The book is particularly welcome because it is Australian - the male of My Brilliant Career, and could not have been written anywhere but in Australia. The author's temperament is Australian. His big, breezy attitude is Australian, his shyness hidden under bluster is Australian; and his work represents him faithfully. The cry for a distinctive Australian literature can be met now with one book and two. And by-and-by we shall better the art while preserving the outlook.

Stephens, albeit indirectly, made plain that it was as a reflection of Australia rather than as a contribution to literature that he found the novel admirable. This was a

continuation of the spirit in which he had received
John Liddell Kelly's verses, *Heather and Fern: Songs of Scotland and Maoriland*,\(^4^9\) on 24 January 1903. At first
Stephens ridiculed Kelly's pretension in having referred
to his verses as "poems", and he suggested that there lurked
within Kelly the "romantic ancestor lurking in all good
Scots" and "at the most surprising moments he will come out
into a cold, critical world and prove that the survival of
the unfittest is still possible". Stephens however
immediately went on to explain "This by way of putting
things where they belong, in the interest of those Standards
Which Must be Kept Up. But we are glad Kelly has published".
In explaining why Kelly's verses were welcome though
execrable, Stephens wrote "Often one has to hurl stones at
vocal dogs; but we would not have one dog dumb. Let 'em all
sing! - or if they cannot sing, let them howl: Australia
has ample Space and Silence for a retreat in extremity".
Stephens also professed to see some cultural purpose being
served by verses like Kelly's when he asserted that "People
are not all fitted to apprehend the high delights of Poesy;
and there is a very large class of readers who will find

\(^4^9\) John Liddell Kelly, *Heather and Fern: Songs of Scotland and Maoriland* (Wellington, printed for the
author by the New Zealand Times Co. Ltd., 1902).
excellent inspiration, and an air as rare as they can breathe, while they ramble with K. about Parnassus' lower slopes".

Stephens did not have to exercise such tolerance when he reviewed Bernard O'Dowd's verses, Dawnward? on the Red Page on 10 March 1904. Of O'Dowd's work he remarked that "At best it is uncommonly stimulating. His muse is a half-sister of Emerson's, devoted heart and mind to the service of the democratic spirit". Stephens concluded this review with a metaphor almost as awkward as some of O'Dowd's, when he wrote that "O'Dowd's bronze does not always run freely; but when it does he moulds a statue". Despite this tribute to the monumental quality of the best of O'Dowd's verse, Stephens prefaced his review of Dawnward? with a frank disclosure of his disappointment at the lack of progress of Australian writing. He began the Red Page on


51 Among the manuscripts and proofs of Dawnward? at the Mitchell Library is the following stanza in O'Dowd's hand:

When Liberty salaams to Fate
And Havoc's typhoons blow,
I kiss the shoulders of the great
And Envy's vipers grow.

Beside it Stephens has written "Obscure and awkward - just picture it", setting O'Dowd a task probably beyond even his powers of involved image-perception. Proofs of "Hate", in Bernard O'Dowd 'Dawnward': Author's Proofs, etc., Mitchell Library MS A805.
10 March 1904 as follows:

Comparing current impressions with those of some five years ago, we seem to be in the hollow of the local literary ripple — "trough" and "wave" are too ironical. Five years ago half-a-dozen of our little bards were sweet and vocal together, doing what is destined apparently to remain their best work: there was a remarkable stirring from 1895 to 1900. To-day few things that are worth reprinting seem to get themselves written or printed: the poetic age is at pause. As to prose, the youngsters rarely show brains or assiduity for great work; and maybe this is merely the autumn of our discontent, with winter to come.

Stephens' pessimism was not transitory. He expressed his discontent with Australian writing again on 14 April 1904. Under the heading "Memoranda" he related an anecdote illustrating the energy and determination of the Japanese; one of them was described as having sold his mosquito-net to buy a Webster's Dictionary which another borrowed in order to make two copies. Stephens then invited his readers to "consider the amazing bibliographies of a German like Nietzsche, an Italian like d'Annunzio, a Frenchman like Mirbeau, a Belgian like Maunier - or of hundreds less well known", and he exclaimed:

Here, as we know, if a writer lays a little rhyme of sixteen lines or a little story of a thousand words, he is apt to cackle over it for a week and drone upon it for a month. "We must buck up". Puddly said. Yes.... the noted contrast was worth noting. There are natural disadvantages here, to be sure. Atmosphere - the writer must create his own.
Audience - it is scattered over a continent. And printing expenses are enormous - from 40 to 50 per cent. in advance of London or Paris. The Labour paradise must be paid for, and imported material costs. But excuses cannot content us. After all, is there not a lack of the single aim, the strenuous life? Is it not sleep upon full stomachs that makes the difference?

Stephens seemed to be condemning as anti-literary those features of their way of life in which Australians took great pride, good wages, ample sustenance, and assured leisure.

It was strange that Stephens did not appear to find alleviation of his disappointment in Australian writing in the appearance of Such Is Life. No-one could have known better than he the single-minded and strenuous effort Furphy had invested in preparing it for publication. Such Is Life was published on 1 August 1903, but no full-scale review of it ever appeared on the Red Page. Prior to publication, Stephens had commended Such Is Life to Red Page readers on 9 July 1903 in the following paragraph under the heading "Bookfellow's Mixture":

Such Is Life, the book by "Tom Collins" which The Bulletin Newspaper Company will publish on 1st August, is like no book that has yet been published on this side of the line. It purports to be a story of bush experiences in the Riverina, dated some 20 years ago. But

Joseph Furphy, Such Is Life: Being Certain Extracts from the Diary of Tom Collins (Sydney, The Bulletin Newspaper Company, 1903).
it is much more than that. The author's pictures of people and character are finished to a finger-nail. He adds a commentary, half humorous [sic], half philosophical, which represents the essence of his life. The Bulletin used to say that every man could write one book at least. This is "Tom Collins's". A substantial volume of some 300 pages, it is not to be picked up lightly, nor lightly flung aside. There are many city-dwellers whom it will not please. On the other hand, I am far mistaken if the Bush does not account it classic.

Furphy would have had no cause to complain of this notice as he did of a review by Frank Morton that "The praise is more rotten than the censure". And yet there was not in Stephens' introduction of the book to Red Page readers the eager excitement of his commendation of the manuscript to

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53 Joseph Furphy, Letter to A.G. Stephens, 29 November 1903. Papers of A.G. Stephens, vol. 2, Mitchell Library MS A2298. I have not been able to locate the review by Frank Morton to which Furphy referred.
Archibald. Stephens apparently followed closely the treatment the book received at the hands of other reviewers and on two occasions he brought English reviews to the notice of Red Page readers. On 7 January 1904 he informed them that "The Manchester Guardian, from many points of view the best of Eng. newspapers, finds the illuminating word for Furphy's Such is Life. 'It is a book for lighthouses and long voyages' - and large calm Bush spaces, one may add". On 25 February 1904 Stephens reported that "The Athenaeum

54 Stephens commended Furphy's manuscript to Archibald as follows:

This book contains all the wit and wisdom gathered in Furphy's life-time; it is his one book - it is himself. It is thoroughly Australian - a classic of our country.

The interest is diffused and slow, and the sale would be slow; it is a book for intelligent bushmen - squatters, selectors, drovers, miners; and for those city-men who can appreciate it.

I think it a most valuable book to add to list, and anticipate an English edition. It is solid, yet never dull; and the author is a man with brains and a sense of style.

I do not anticipate a "splash" or a big profit; but it will cover expenses and something over, and sell twenty years hence.

reviews *Such is Life*, by 'Tom Collins', in a liberal space and spirit". He objected to the review's disapproval of the book's "large and irreverent manner", but he quoted with approval a passage which included *The Athenaeum*’s statement that the book "is as essentially Australian in its every line as the wattle, the waratah, or the Sydney Bulletin".

The fact that Stephens had to wait more than ten years to tell the full story of his tribulations in editing *Dawnward?* is understandable, but why he did not disclose the story of Furphy's and his own hard work in bringing *Such Is Life* to publication, why he did not advertise it more forcefully on the Red Page, and why its appearance did not allay some of his pessimism about Australian writing

generally, remain difficult to understand.  

Stephens was also disenchanted with contemporary overseas writing. He complained on 5 May 1904 in his review of

Such Is Life appeared in Red Page advertisements on 9 July and 16 July 1903. The only other advertisement for it which I have been able to locate in the body of the paper appeared at the end of "Sporting Notions" on p.26 of The Bulletin for 6 August 1903. It read simply: "Now Ready. Such is Life! by Tom Collins. A real Australian bush yarn; 4s. 6d.". G.A. Wilkes, in his article "The Eighteen Nineties" in Arts I (1958) 17-26, and reprinted in Australian Literary Criticism, ed. by Grahame Johnston (Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 30-40, attributes to Furphy an unsigned notice of Such Is Life in a lengthy advertisement on the inside back cover of The Bulletin for 30 July 1903. The lack of Bulletin advertising for Such Is Life contrasts with the regular announcements, especially between August and December 1903, of some of its other publications notably The Bulletin Story Book and Our New Selection.

The only other Red Page references to Furphy between December 1902 and December 1904 appeared in a contributor's comment and a reply by Furphy. "Kaiata" alleged on 8 September 1904 that "'Tom Collins', author of Such is Life ... is scattering an agricultural water-cart among Vic. mallee cockies. Upon each cart, under the maker's name, appears the following 'poem':

Good, Better, Best,  
Never let it Rest,  
Till Your Good is Better,  
And Your Better Best."

Furphy responded on 22 September 1904 pointing out that the water-carts were "manufactured, not by me, but by a well-to-do and correspondingly right-thinking relative of same sur-name and first initial", and he exclaimed "Hear, O Israel! I am not responsible for perpetration of lines quoted by Kaiata".
Arthur Adams' Tussock Land that "The English seem wedded religiously to the transportation system: formerly they sent us their bad characters, now they send us their bad novels". On the same page under "Received", Stephens noted that Walter de la Mare's Henry Brocken57 was "an excursion into literary dreamland, careful and dead". J.M. Barrie's The Little White Bird58 he dismissed on 24 January 1903 as "faint sketches strung on a thread of feeble story" by "an exhausted author". Stephens titled his discussion of George Bernard Shaw's Man and Superman59 "Shaw and Superficial" on the Red Page for 15 October 1903, and before reprinting several passages from the play he complained that it was "Singular, indeed, how little on the great scale Shaw has achieved, for all his pother and fuss". Stephens was not prepared to accept wit and style as literary qualities ranking equal to feeling, nor ideas as substitutes for emotion. At least these are the premises on which he appeared to have reached the following conclusion:

57 Walter de la Mare, Henry Brocken (London, Murray, 1904).
59 G.B. Shaw, Man and Superman: a Comedy and a Philosophy (London, Constable, 1903).
We must come to the explanation of shallowness, superficiality, despite all that equipment. 'Shaw has no back to his head'. He thinks without feeling. This seems a strange conclusion to the Socialist, the sympathist, the champion of lost causes. Yet, closely scanned, Shaw's pathos, Shaw's indignation, Shaw's wrath against injustice, look like pure feats of intellect. The whole of Shaw's work gives you the impression of disembodied intellect in a state of effervescence. Assuredly he does not lack sincerity, yet he rarely conveys the force of sincerity. He gives light without heat.

Superficiality was also the basis of Stephens' dissatisfaction with the work of G.K. Chesterton. On 21 April 1904 in "Memoranda" he referred to Chesterton as "a bright, shallow, ingenious journalist, dealing at present in too many half-truths and hasty impressions". On the Red Page for 5 May 1903 he wrote of Chesterton's book on the artist G.F. Watts that "His little book resolves itself into an explanation and defence of Watts, interesting and impermanent. Why impermanent? Because Chesterton does not think deeply enough, does not range widely enough: his mind gives no steady light, but lightens by eloquent flashes that bring the details of his subject into bright relief, and leave the proportions of the whole unascertained". Stephens reprinted on the Red Page for 24 September 1903 Hilaire Belloc's "How to Write a Lyric" from Caliban's Guide.

to _Letters_, a work which he had said in his review on 13 August 1903 "belongs to the class of jeux d'esprit that would be very humourous if they were written with humour". In noticing Kipling's _The Five Nations_ on 19 November 1903 Stephens asserted that "All the life has gone out of Kipling as artist; and there remains only the preacher who fits laborious morals to dull tunes". In summary, Stephens viewed contemporary English writing either as lively and superficial or as laboured and dull.

In a review of Swinburne's _A Channel Passage and Other Poems_ on the Red Page for 3 November 1904 which Stephens entitled "Swinburne Grown Old", he remarked that "It is curious to trace the failing pulse through the body of familiar devices". It is also interesting to note that the tracing brought Stephens once more to his familiar standpoint that lyric poetry was written in youth and inspired by instinct. He wrote:


63 A.C. Swinburne, _A Channel Passage and Other Poems_ (London, Chatto & Windus, 1904).
Melody in verse comes by natural magic: art's service is in the avoidance of obstacles to smooth expression. Consciously, doubtless, Swinburne has done this or that, omitted this or that; but one feels sure that his fine effects are instinctive and not conscious. He follows his daemon. At his height he is plainly possessed, dominated, drunken with sweet influences of sound. "Quo me rapis?" he may mutter, evading the pits and brambles of the path; yet the path is set beyond his power to alter, and on each side is the wilderness of unknown words. If he cannot follow now, it is because age's eyes dim and age's feet tremble, and the voice of the god calls only to worshippers quick with the divinity of Youth.

In this period Stephens' assertions about particular works were seldom supported by theoretical justification. He took for granted acceptance among his readers of views he had earlier expounded on the Red Page. When he introduced new general ideas about literature they were usually trivial. On 8 September 1904, for example, he reviewed Robert Buchanan's Ballad of Judas Iscariot, in doubt whether it was deserving of reprinting as a separate item because its inspiration depended on Hood and Coleridge. Stephens continued:

And then one marks again a point not commonly stressed: that a reader's impression of verse (especially) changes with the type in which the verse is presented to his eye. Buchanan's ballad, reprinted in large, heavy type, with three verses upon a page, seems inferior to the same ballad

printed in small light type, with eight or nine verses on a page. Why? Because the larger type directs the eye to minute faults of workmanship, while preventing you from receiving the narrative impulse that counts for so much in a ballad. It may be accepted as a general rule that, the less perfect the technic [sic], the smaller should be the type used. Very few poets can bear picces. Again there should be a correspondence between the character of type and that of verse. A certain strain of bland banality in Tennyson unfits him for old-style type: plainly he should be printed in a plump and delicate modern-face, rather large than small, to display his fatuous aspects while doing justice to his art. Swinburne requires a small, fierce-looking, heavy, and widely spaced type, suggesting compressed energy. We would give Arnold an old style of clerical cut, such as The Century uses, but larger; Browning's type should be tall, thin and peculiar.

These distinctions are not entirely fanciful. Quite clearly type and page should follow the mood of the verse.

Stephens' words call to mind William Morris and the effort he expended to design a type face for his verse in which he could spell "sudden" as "sodaine" and have it look natural.65 However while these ideas have application in typographical design and were, as Stephens wrote, "not entirely fanciful", and while they showed that he was influenced by the revival of interest in typography which had occurred in Britain and Europe, characteristically he pressed them too far. In a statement later in the article he claimed that "L'Allegro''

65 William Morris, A Note by William Morris on His Aims in Founding the Kelmscott Press (London, 1908).
should be printed twice as large as "Il Penseroso": sombre verse generally demands small type on a small page". In the same article Stephens offered Australian verse-writers a lesson in the importance of quantity as well as accent in verse. He described as a "very common fault with Australian verse-writers" the fact that "they will not let words take their proper quantity-value", and he instanced Gordon as a frequent offender. He pointed his lesson in the concluding paragraph:

Gordon, of course, did not pretend to do better; but that is no reason why his successors should do worse. There is the ungracious pastor's steep and thorny way to follow; it must be followed by all who aspire. It is not sufficient nowadays to count your syllables, square your rhymes, and make passable sense. Our young writers are urged to cultivate Swinburne's feeling of words, mark what he does with stress, and pause, and cadence; how he seeks mellifluous unions and avoids harsh juxtapositions: for by science comes art, and by art comes poesy, given the original breath of the Muse. The rest is the crackling of thorns under the pot-boiler.

Stephens did not suggest to Australian writers in any more detail how such elegance was to be imparted to their verse and the strong accents and monotonous metres of his own provided them with no examples.

When Stephens reviewed Christina Rossetti's Poetical Works on 21 April 1904 his analysis of her talents went

no further than a reiteration of his idea on the physiological basis of genius, and in the following passage he referred with pride to the issue of the Red Page on which he had put forth his "nousometer":

Genius, in a general sense, is a fever of the brain - the brain itself being due to a localised fever or ferment of the ancestral organism. Every specialisation of function is accompanied by increased energy in the specialised part, and probably every physiological gain has had a pathological beginning - since a ferment in one part of the organism robs the common store of energy. Fancifully, therefore, life is a disease of the universe and man an evanescent pustule.

Genius, is [sic] a special sense, is a disease of the pustule. Setting aside structural and chemical causes, we can consider it in effect as representing an abnormal series of cerebral vibrations, since last year's experiments with radium have confirmed the theory (here expressed 3/10/96) that "the atom is really a sort of solidified vibration - half-a-dozen spirit waves tied, as it were, into a knot of matter". The abnormality is pathological, because gained at the expense of the life-sustaining forces of the organism.

Stephens' criticism of prose in this period was less marred by fanciful pseudo-science than his criticism of verse. He made some progress towards coming to terms with realism in prose, moving a little from the view he had expressed on 1 March 1902 that "all realistic art is essentially temporary and incidental". On 14 February 1903 under the heading "One Realist and Another", he compared the painter Millet with the Australian writer Barbara Baynton
in order to highlight the limitations of the realism in her *Bush Studies*\(^6^7\). The contrast with Millet had apparently been suggested to him by the receipt for review of Romain Rolland’s book on the painter\(^6^8\). Stephens asserted that "Realistic art, as reiterated, is the universal expression of a particular impression", and that he considered Millet’s picture "The Sower" to have reached "the apex of realistic art". He then wrote that "The steps of that art are thus three in number. First, there is the statement of the thing seen. Second, there is the statement of the thing seen so that it becomes a type of its class. Third, there is the statement of the type so that it is seen in relation to all things, all types; becomes universal in its reference - a key to unlock every comprehending mind". Stephens considered that Millet had taken the first two steps. On the other hand:

Barbara Baynton has taken only the first step. Her studies of some Australian people and scenes are realistic beyond anything of the kind yet written here - beyond Lawson, even beyond Miles Franklin. Bit by bit, with careful epithet after epithet, the work is built up until nothing could be closer to the life. Flaubert would have been in ecstasy over such a pupil: for minute fidelity there has been no writer anywhere to surpass this writer.


But always or nearly always Mrs Baynton remains on the first plane of realism—she describes wonderfully well the thing she sees; but that thing is not a human type, or is a human type for Australia only. So that the reader, on the third plane, has to strain his mind to an unfinished piece of realistic art, if he would receive the message which is that art's justification and climax. And, if he have not Australian knowledge, this is a task which the reader cannot achieve.

The value of Bush Studies for Australians is another matter. Despite inequalities and some lack of finish, they deserve the warmest praise.

The book contains only half-a-dozen sketches; and four of them are in all essentials perfect so far as they go. This is uncompromising commendation; but Bush Studies deserves uncompromising commendation. So precise, so complete, with such insight into detail and such force of statement, it ranks with the masterpieces of literary realism in any language.

On the first plane only.

While it could be pointed out that Stephens overlooked the depth of some of Baynton's dark psychological insights, his analysis captured exactly the simultaneous promise and disappointment one feels in reading her stories. Furthermore his criticism was written in admirably plain language which clearly conveyed his meaning. On the Red Page for 28 February 1903 when Stephens returned to Bush Studies and quoted extracts from "Scrammy 'And", he was concerned that the stories would provide bad publicity for Australia. He wrote
that "Bush Studies represents one phase of Australian life, in one place, at one time; and it would perhaps have been well if the author had said this in a preface, for foreign readers are sure to refer the descriptions to Australia generally". And yet Stephens had to admit that "never has the desolate barbarism of the Bush been so powerfully depicted". He hastened to point out however that the bush itself was not to be blamed, asserting that:

One revolts in reading for the ghastly facts endure within a day's journey of the pleasant bustle of Sydney, that great cancer-city sucking the blood of the Bush for its sustenance. If ever a statesman arises in Australia, it will be a cardinal feature of his statesmanship (so far as Govt. expenditure goes) to starve the gross cities so that the men and women on the land, the essential creators of Australia, may be helped to a life with some breadth, some humanity, some intellectual aspiration.

In his criticism of prose in this period Stephens was frequently concerned with what he described on 2 May 1903 in the heading of an extract from Anatole France as "Morality and Mummy", that is, the conventional standards of morality which forbade the exploration of sexual relationships and demanded obscurantism in such matters from writers generally and from newspapers in particular. Stephens was proud that The Bulletin did not adhere to these standards and on the Red Page for 28 February 1903 he concluded his discussion of Barbara Baynton's stories, some of which had
originally been printed in The Bulletin, as follows:

Before leaving Bush Studies note two things: one that its truthful glimpses of Australian life, graphically expressed, could not (would not) have been printed in any Australian paper, though they rank highly as literature and are circulated widely in book form when issued by an English publisher. We are too mealy-mouthed (in print), and stuff far too much "respectable" wadding in our ears. With all their breadth in some directions, Australian audiences are still parochial, or the newspapers make believe they are. - The second thing is this: Bush Studies, written to the fact, stresses what may be called the predominantly obstetric quality of typical Bush life. This quality comes naturally: the increase of flocks and herds is the daily business, the source of living income. There is no prudish shame in referring to the accidents of begetting and birth: they form the staple of conversation in many a home, and the children calmly discuss chances with their parents. Transference of ideas to the human species is easy; for apart from begetting and birth the Bush yields to many of its denizens little excitement, scanty diversion of monotonous occupation. So Bush Studies has already appeared "shocking" to some city critics, smug in the solace of churches, and theatres, and "down-the-harbour" picnics. But the thing goes on.

Such a passage reminds us forcibly of the cant-ridden society in which Stephens operated. Sometimes his reaction to it led him to express sane views sensibly. For example on the Red Page for 14 March 1903, in what he himself

69 "The Chosen Vessel", for example, was published as "The Tramp" in The Bulletin, Christmas number, 12 December 1896.
described as "A long introduction to The Egregious English by Angus McNeill". Stephens embarked on a description of the racial characteristics of the Scots, Irish and English in which he complained that "humourless people cannot understand that expressio unius is not affirmatio alterius, unless that other be a precise logical opposite". He then cited the following example:

The Bulletin was formerly considered by some narrow people "a scandalous paper". ("Formerly" - because opinion has apparently changed. In Sydney Telegraph of 28th February, for instance, the Palace Theatre advised at the head of its list of complimentary press notices - Bulletin says: "One commendable feature of 'The Wrong Mr. Wright' is the fact that all its fun is CLEAN and WHOLESOME from the beginning to the end of the piece."
- making The Bulletin, you observe, a criterion of what is "clean and wholesome".)

When Hebblethwaite's book of verses, breathing simple devotion to God and published by The Bulletin, reached some narrow people, their astonishment was great. Even the two or three Maoriland writers under solemn league and covenant never to offer verses to The Bulletin - because it was "such a scandalous paper" - found it necessary to revise their


From letters and comments it appeared that into their narrow minds had at last filtered a conception of Breadth—the Breadth which includes "piety" and "impiety" alike as manifestations of the Human, each worthy of appreciation from the standpoint of journalism or of literature. These humourless, illogical critics had been arguing that because the Bulletin included h, i, j, therefore it could not possibly include x, y, z.

At other times Stephens reacted to the narrow-mindedness of contemporary society with irony and with deliberate attempts to be shocking. On 8 October 1903, for example, under the heading "The Wickedness of Woman", Stephens reviewed the novel, Six Chapters of a Man's Life by Victoria Cross, twice, "once for the moral and once for the a-moral". His "a-moral" review concluded that "The whole is a fine performance, and an interesting proof of the inferiority of the naturalistic method in literature". His "moral" review included heavy-handed ironies like "Illicit sexual relationships unfortunately exist; but that is no reason why they should be written about". In one of his deliberate attempts to shock, under "Comments" on

72 One of the covenanters was Jessie Mackay who wrote to Stephens telling him that "We all read the 'Bulletin' in my country when it comes our way: we all laugh over it; we all especially revel in the Red Page. But one or two Maorilanders have taken a medieval vow not to write to it - I among them". Jessie Mackay, Letter to A.G. Stephens dated 3 January 1903, The Papers of A.G. Stephens, vol. 5, Mitchell Library MS A2301.

73 Victoria Cross, Six Chapters of a Man's Life: a Novel (London, Scott, 1903).
2 May 1903 Stephens quoted a notice of the stage version of "The Light That Failed" from Playgoer which referred to the heroine's having taken down her hair. Stephens commented "It is woman's antepenultimate take-down and weak man usually falls before the bodice and smock" because "hair-roots are the profoundest roots of sex".

Forsaking innuendo, Stephens complained on 11 August 1904 in discussing "Recent Novels" that "The American tribe are pleasant for a change; but the substitution of sentiment for passion, in deference to the neo-puritan ideal, ends by devitalising them. The glory of art tarnishes as soon as it comes in contact with a hypothetical standard of morals". Yet the most effective demonstration of the hypocritical prudery of the times was provided not by Stephens in attack on accepted standards but by Henry Lawson in conformity with them. The following paragraph appeared on the Red Page on 14 February 1903 under "Culled Contributors":

H.L.: Note that My Brilliant Career was published against the judgment of Blackwood's London manager and reader, nor did William Blackwood think greatly of the book. I told him that it would go in Australia; and he published it at [sic] a venture, as you may see by the cheap get-up. And I was right. I had to barrack for many religious, political, and sex-problem passages which I blushed at myself, while I was assuring him the Australians wouldn't blush - and he saw the blush and struck 'em out. Old Harris, the schoolmaster, is my favourite-character in that book. I think the school scene where Harris shapes up to the inspector
is a grand touch. The McSwats are well drawn, and McSwat's diary and Harold's letter to his sister are gems. I've read columns of London reviews of "that extraordinary book" - a to-be-continued notice of four columns altogether, for instance, in the Sunday Sun; and I've had many letters about that book; but I never saw mention of old Harris, for whose sake, especially, I took it to England. He is a man and a gentleman, in spite of the drink and his disreputable appearance - the one hero - though he only has a page or two - the one solitary hero in My Brilliant Career.

Miles Franklin was one of the few Australian writers with whom Stephens dealt kindly in this period. There appeared on the Red Page for 31 March 1904 with her photograph an amusingly girlish account of her experiences incognito as a housemaid in wealthy homes in Toorak and Potts Point. On 14 April 1904 Stephens printed under "Contributors" the following attempt at a gallant reply by "E.S.S."

Oh, had I known in time, alack!
An authoress so fair
Was washing dishes at Toorak
I'd been a gardener there.

Stephens might have regretted that there was not among his readers a wit capable of turning a more polished and original compliment to a talented, young and pretty writer.

In general the period between December 1902 and December 1904 marked a deterioration in Stephens' personal relationships with Australian authors, the causes for which
were obviously in large part attributable to what he wrote or allowed to be published on the Red Page. On 14 February 1903 Stephens opened the Red Page with the following piece of verse, unsigned but surely his own:

Three Cliffs

From that cliff Daley fell:
  The Muses' lover,
  He cast his line too well
  And himself over.
  Shrieked all the tuneful Nine!
  Fled all the fishes! ...
  (One basketful divine:
   Seventeen dishes.)

From this cliff Lawson fell:
  Our Bush reflector,
  Losing in hydromel
  His poise of Hector.
  Were nerves awry his foes?
  Did his wrongs rankle? ...
  (Broken, a noble nose;
   Item, an ankle.)

Sometimes, in dreaming dull,
  By a cliff ghastly
  I see a human hull,
  Shroud and rent mast lie;
  And humbly meditate:
  Here, in this life-hell,
  But for the grace of Fate
  I, even I fell.

Presumably the verse was suggested to Stephens by Lawson's accident which had been reported in The Bulletin in "Personal Items" on page 15 of the issue for 20 December 1902 as follows:
Henry Lawson who since his return to Australia has suffered much from ill health and worry, fell over the cliffs at Manly (Sydney) last week. Like Horace he can claim to be surely under the protection of the Muses, for a fall which would kill most men only inflicted on him comparatively slight injuries (including a broken ankle) from which he is now recovering.

On the Red Page on 28 February 1903 Stephens commented wryly on an exaggerated report of the incident in the London Daily Chronicle that "Lawson's historic 'fall' has given him a fine advt. anyway". In "Three Cliffs", Stephens might have been referring also to some accident which had befallen Daley, or else the reference might have been to his ill health. Whatever events suggested the piece to him, its publication was extraordinarily tactless when Daley was ill and destitute and when Lawson was as always low in funds and more than ever low in spirits. Furthermore, the last stanza strongly hinted that Stephens derived some satisfaction from his own preservation from a "life-hell" such as Daley and Lawson inhabited. Part of the offensiveness of "Three Cliffs" might well have sprung from no more sinister cause than Stephens' ineptitude as a rhymer, but this piece formed part of a pattern of insensitivity to the feelings of writers of which Stephens' treatment of Lawson and Daley in this period provided obvious examples.

Stephens published on the Red Page for 8 October 1903 a
bitter attack on Lawson by John Le Gay Brereton. Brereton sent his verses entitled "To Joe Swallow"74 to Stephens with the following letter:

There are times when all a man's friends feel that it might do him good to have a kick on the backside; but all shrink from the odium of the act - from the "kicked him when he was down" sneer, and from the uncomfortable sensation of having (however unwillingly) assumed a "moral" and "Superior" attitude. Now poor old Harry Lawson is fairly starving for a kick.

Is the enclosed too personal for the Bulletin? If it would pass on the ordinary grounds, I wish you'd use your discretion, as an acquaintance of the parties with some conception of the possible effect of publication.75

Three days later Brereton wrote again to Stephens dissatisfied with the tone in which Stephens had replied to him and in particular with a suggestion that part of his motivation was a tendency to "want publicity".

Brereton's letter read:

Don't feel satisfied at yr. note. I don't exactly "want publicity" - not in this unconditional way. I wrote as Lawson's friend of ten years, and because I hoped such a reply to his public blithering might do him good. Personally I hate appearing in the matter. It will bring me no credit, and I'll be misunderstood by nearly everybody.

74 "Joe Swallow" was one of Lawson's pseudonyms.

I asked you to be a kind of intermediary between me & the Bulletin - to act as a second, revising self for me, for - the matter being somewhat delicate - I did not care to trust my own judgment alone. The thing is between you and me, of course - I'm not trying to make you carry the corner of responsibility. Well, there it is - 76

Stephens, in spite of his initial reservations, Brereton's indecision and the tone of the verses themselves, went ahead and published "To Joe Swallow" on the Red Page on 8 October 1903 with the signature "J.LeG. B.". The verses attacked Lawson for his complaints of the rottenness of the world and of the perfidy of his friends, and for the loss of his ideals. The following stanza was the most bitter:

The ash will never flare again; the old ideal's dead,
And you have n't learnt enough to light another one instead;
But when manhood, reawakened, bids your canine nature shrink
From hungering and howling for your vomit in the sink,
You may drop your tale of wrong,
And, by God, I swear your songs
Will be better than your "alley" hymns of "drums" and muck and stink.

Brereton concluded his tirade with the hollow-sounding reassurance to Lawson that:

I am here, at any rate
And am quite content to wait
Till your lonely heart is crying for the solace of a friend.

Whatever Stephens thought was to be achieved by publication of "To Joe Swallow" no lively debate ensued. Two weeks later, on 22 October 1903, he published without comment a reply by Dowell O'Reilly. It was also in verse, headed "To J. Le G. B.", and it was a weak rejoinder to Brereton's provocation, which concentrated on trying to arouse pity for his friend Lawson whom he claimed was "In the Valley of the Shadow of Death". O'Reilly saw Lawson as a prisoner, as he addressed Brereton:

My eloquent friend! So you've come at the end to weep in rhyme and pray
For this Self, condemned, whose comrade Self lies murder'd by the way.
Fresh from the flowers and sun-lit hours, the evening and morning stars,
You tip-toe along the dark prison of wrong, and prattle reproof through the bars:
   To the whites of your eyes
   You are shocked at the cries
Of your old chum, who dies
In the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

O'Reilly signed his verse "D.O'R. (with love to the Prisoner.)".

Even if Stephens' publication of both pieces could have been justified as news-worthy in a time when there was little activity on the local literary scene, in the interests alike of justice and lively debate he would have done better to have persuaded Lawson to answer for himself. On the same Red Page as O'Reilly's reply Lawson wrote what Stephens headed "One View" of "The Sweet Uses of London", and though Lawson rated London generally unsatisfactory as
a writing place he remarked "But I must say this: That
the smallest men of London journalism are many times
larger and more broad-minded and generous than are the
little men of Australian literature". Stephens might
therefore have got better copy if he had persuaded Lawson
to defend himself against Brereton's attack. When on the
same page Stephens presented "Another View" of London, he
made unmistakeable his view that Lawson's greatness was
behind him. Pointing out how different Lawson's case had
been from that of most Australian writers who went to
London seeking success, Stephens wrote "And Lawson was the
genuine article: there was no mistake about that. There
was enthusiasm for him ten years ago: there is appreciation
still. When his first little book was published by his
mother, it was written for The Bulletin (5/1/'95) that
'Henry Lawson is the voice of the Bush, and the Bush is the
heart of Australia' - and so on with words of warm
commendation and encouragement. His work does not amount to
much on the grand scale; yet it is a big thing for Australia,
and a few Englishmen could understand that".

Stephens considered that Lawson had squandered his
opportunities and his disappointment in Lawson's later work
was not tempered by personal regard. Perhaps it was
therefore not surprising that he should have printed
Brereton's wild cry against Lawson. However, two other
writers for whom Stephens later recorded the warmest feelings of affection did not escape Stephens' tactlessness. These were Christopher Brennan and Victor Daley, of whom he wrote in his monograph on Brennan:

Only one other man of the writing tribe has come into my mind like that - Victor Daley - still cerebrally my possessing possession: and I have known many of the notable. Save Daley and Brennan, all or nearly all remain external in their writings, figures of life that is not closely and deeply my life, figures of labour, figures of dream, shapes passed or passing. This, in degree, by reason of circumstance; but chiefly, I feel, by reason of sympathy or lack of it. Daley and Brennan always came back to me, they shall always remain with me.77

Daley was ill with tuberculosis and Stephens was among the instigators of the testimonial fund collected for him by The Bulletin in 1902.78 On the Red Page for 23 May 1903 Stephens wrote a paragraph about W.E. Henley's pension from the British Government and went on to remark that "the Australian Govt., on the highest public grounds, should follow the example in the case of Victor Daley". In the column headed "Bookfellow's Mixture" on 30 May 1903 Stephens


78 Among Stephens' papers is a notice of meeting of the Victor J. Daley Testimonial Fund on 22 March 1902. Stephens commended the Fund to Red Page readers and formally advertised it on BRP 12 April 1902. Stephens renewed the appeal for Daley on BRP 27 April 1905, and there are references in Daley's letters and receipts which suggest that Stephens administered the Fund in 1905 and 1906. (Papers of A.G. Stephens, vol. 3, Mitchell Library MS A2299.)
announced that Daley was off to the Solomon Islands to find "his long-lost Ideal". On 16 July 1903 the Red Page began with verses by Daley entitled "The Quest". Later on the page Stephens presented "A Day's Work", first "As Seen by Mr. Dooley", the American frontier character created by F.P. Dunne whose humour has not worn well, and then "As Seen by Mr. Daley". Daley recounted lightly the story of his day's adventures which were concerned mainly with the avoidance of one of his Manly creditors. In a paragraph under "Bookfellowshipment", again on the same page, Stephens announced that Daley, "our most poetical figure" had left on a cruise on 1 July, and that "The Quest", Daley's verse published at the head of the page, "may be presumed to be his thoughts on leaving Australia for first time in twenty years". There were several references in the verse to the poet's "Brunelys".79

On 23 July 1903 the Red Page carried a piece headed "Norfolk Island" in which the description was facetiously interspersed with messages to Brunelys about the writer's coming. It was not signed but was obviously meant to be read as from Daley. On 30 July 1903, the Red Page began with verses entitled "A Sunrise Fantasy". Again there was no

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79 "Brunelys" was obviously a derivation from Daley's poem "Blanchelys" which was published in "A Page of Verses Written for The Bulletin" in *The Bulletin* 7 December 1901, p.16.
signature, and they might have been a parody of Daley by Stephens. In them Brunelys featured as the object of the poet's delight. On 6 August 1903 the Red Page carried a "Song of Brunelys" by "Brunelys" on which Stephens commented as follows in a paragraph under the heading "Memoranda":

Judging by the verses in another column, our absent poet is getting closer to the Ideal of his quest - he is "burning", as the children say at forfeits. Apparently he has put himself imaginatively in the place of his heroine, in order to utter the passion he attributes to her. There will be a mail from the Solomon Islands next week, and we must hope for good tidings. To-day's record appears to have been composed at the New Hebrides.

In view of the unlikelihood of regular mail deliveries from the South Pacific at that time, the "Song of Brunelys" might also have been composed by Stephens. On 13 August 1903 the Red Page began with the first two stanzas of an "Epithalamium", but almost half the second stanza consisted of asterisks, as the writer described his delight because:

Her, the banana on the topmost bough
That all the gatherers missed, I gather now.

At the top of the third column on the Red Page for 13 August was a drawing without caption which was a caricature showing a black girl in the foreground and behind her a frock-coated man with a large head strumming a lyre. The
man was obviously meant to represent Daley. Beneath the drawing at the beginning of "Memoranda", Stephens wrote:

There is to hand an "Epithalamium" of twenty-one stanzas, representing certainly the finest poetical performance yet consummated south of the equator. Our favourite writer rises to heights unknown and unimagined before. In the face of his transports, those of Joannes Secundus seem tame and paltry. It is keenly to be regretted, therefore, that the poem cannot be printed. In the latitude of the Solomon Islands such a glorification of Hymen is all very well; but in Australia we have to consider N.S.W. Legislative Council. Even in the stanzas preserved, it has been found imperative to deploy asterisks. The remaining nineteen stanzas would be substantially all asterisks.

Stephens had thus carefully built up an elaborate framework for the deception that Daley's voyage around the islands was to be a succession of sensuous delights. The extent of Daley's participation in the early stages is impossible to discern, but by 20 August 1903 Stephens was quite carried away. In the third column of the Red Page, headed "Bookfellow's Funeral", Stephens introduced "the account of the tragedy at the Solomon Islands" with a paragraph beginning "The sad news communicated to-day will be received everywhere with profound grief. Et tu Brunelys!", and he continued in this vein with a succession

See Illustration No. 4.
of statements punctuated with Latin tags. Stephens alleged that the account had been written by "James Harrison" who "appears to be established as a trader on the island of Choiseul". In it was detailed the arrival of "your friend" on the island, his reception by the natives as the long-awaited "Red Conqueror", and his immediate betrothal to the chief's daughter. Before their marriage could take place on the next day the island was overrun with heads of tribes from neighbouring islands, all wanting to present their daughters as brides for the Red Conqueror. After a great feast lasting five hours at which the Red Conqueror "made several speeches, and the natives literally hung on his lips", he was given his total of thirtyfour brides. "Harrison" related that he was then "kept under a kind of surveillance" because "the chiefs were afraid I might interfere", but he did manage to get news of the Red Conqueror's plight to the District Commissioner. Next morning "Harrison" found the Red Conqueror under a palm tree, and "He handed me some manuscript, with the ink still wet, and requested me to forward it to you. An hour later he breathed his last". "Harrison"'s account concluded that "At noon the Commissioner came in his launch. I gave him the body, embalmed by a native method which gives it all the appearance of life. It will be taken to Sydney in the Ovalau".
Daley's name was not mentioned in "Bookfellow's Funeral" which it might have been possible to dismiss as a joke in exceedingly bad taste, or at worst as evidence of a mildly deranged imagination, had not Stephens headed the following column on the Red Page for 20 August 1903 "Victor James Daley" and in it written a perfectly serious and straightforward obituary. In fact all but a few sentences of it Stephens used in the monograph he wrote on Daley and published in 1905 after Daley had died. 81 A ludicrous sidelight on the "Red Conqueror" episode was Stephens' assertion in the obituary column on Daley on 20 August 1903 that "For a man, he was curiously virginal, with a notable repugnance for gross thought and expression".

After the initial shock it should have been obvious to Bulletin readers that Daley was still alive on 20 August 1903 since in that issue there appeared on page 35 a long report by him entitled "Noumea", and the following week his verses "Land Ahead" were published among the "Various Verses" on page 3 of The Bulletin. Contributions from him also soon

began to re-appear on the Red Page. However, simple souls and careless journalists were misled. An embarrassed lady wrote to Stephens from the Public School at Sunny Corner, New South Wales, saying that she had been "convinced on a second reading, of the huge joke! and recognized Daley's own extravagance of fancy in 'The Red Conqueror', and the 35 wives!" She hoped that Stephens would not be "mean enough" to show her original letter to Mr. Daley.

On the Red Page for 10 September 1903 Stephens reported gleefully in a paragraph under "Memoranda" that Daley had sent him an account of his death taken from the Red Page and reprinted by what Stephens termed "a most reputable paper", The South Australian Register, on 25 August 1903. Stephens closed the item with the quip that "If he real...

82 On BRP 24 September 1903 Daley in "Distinguished Authors" reminisced on the poverty of Australian authors generally and told several anecdotes of Marcus Clarke. On 31 December 1903 he wrote an article entitled "Irish" on the Irish language, and on 21 April 1904 Stephens introduced as "The Australian bachelor's soliloquy, by a jealous married man" some untitled amusing light verse by Daley. On 30 June 1904 verses by Daley, also untitled, beginning "We bought a volume of Anacreon", headed the Red Page.

were dead, as The Register affirms, he could not be expected to admit it". It is apparent both from Daley's having sent this notice to Stephens and from the letters he wrote to Stephens in 1904 and 1905\(^8\) that the "Red Conqueror" episode and the obituary made no lasting difference to their friendship. Daley also wrote amusing verses entitled "Wrecked Illusions, Dedicated to Louis Becke" which were published in The Bulletin on 17 September 1903. In them he reproved Becke for the romantic pictures he had painted of "women brown" and hard-drinking island traders. The second last of the eighteen stanzas read:

You may say in weak excuse -
Being gnawed
By your conscience - that the loose
Stories that you did produce
Dealt with other isles. No use!
You're a Fraud!

In the circumstances it is hard to concede much likelihood to Norman Lindsay's accounts of Daley's rage over Stephens' articles.\(^8\) Even on face value his report of Daley's attempt to wreak physical vengeance on Stephens seems unlikely in


view of the state of Daley's health at the time. However, whether or not the hoax was readily forgiven by the victim, the articles reflected no credit on Stephens and were evidence of an astounding lack of sensitivity, not to say sense, on his part. I suspect that the idea might have been suggested to him by a rumour current in London at the time that Lawson was dead; on the Red Page for 16 May 1903 Stephens had noted in a paragraph under "Bookfellow's Mixture" the report of Lawson's death and an obituary by E.C. Buley in To-Day (London) for 25 March. Stephens' comment was "E.C. Buley has killed him!"

On the Red Page for 2 June 1904 Stephens advertised a series of lectures on "Symbolism in Nineteenth Century Literature" to be given by "C.J. Brennan, M.A., an occasional contributor to this page". A postcard from Professor Francis Anderson among Stephens' papers suggests that Stephens played a major part in the arrangement of the lectures. He reported on one of them in "Bookfellow's Diary" on the Red Page for 4 August 1904, where the entry for "Fri., July 22" began:

86 Francis Anderson, Postcard to A.G. Stephens, dated 26 March 1904, Hayes Collection in the University of Queensland Library.
Attended lecture on "Symbolism". A score of persons, male and female, scattered about a large hall filled with fog, through which darted at intervals a flash of light with the name of Blake, or Novalis, or Mallarmé tacked on to it. Fixed my eyes on a lovely thing in (?electric blue) sitting a few rows away, and meditated.

In other words Stephens was bored by Brennan's lecture. Later in his report he remarked "Though this lecturer is n't amusing; he's a brainy chap, but the pen's his weapon". Musing on Brennan's lecture Stephens decided that "Lectures are out-of-date, a survival from the age before printing", which he considered "All right for a class of students, if the lecturer has personal magnetism to enforce his speech to minds still unfamiliar with the printed word; all right for subjects merely pictorial; all right for an orator. But when a chap attempts to give you in an hour the result of years of reading and thinking on an abstract question, and every sentence requires weighing and chewing, there is nothing in it". Downright as this criticism was of Brennan as lecturer, Stephens was at least tactful enough not to refer to another of Brennan's shortcomings, namely his drinking, which caused Stephens one notably embarrassing experience in this period. Stephens recorded the following incident in a diary:
Meeting C. Brennan in Power's bar, George St., we had several drinks & dined at Paris House. I had arranged to take Mrs. S. later (Sat. evg.) to one of Lemare's organ recitals at the Town Hall, & asked B. to come. He agreed, & telegraphed to his wife at Mosman that he was not returning till late. Entering the hall, at 8 o'clock, the liquor he had drunk took effect, and a doorkeeper recommended me not to take him in. I thought I could keep him quiet, & we sat down. Some half hour later, as Lemare was playing on the organ a Wagner piece that B. knew, he commenced droning the melody with a voice gradually rising to a roar. I could not silence him.

He rose from his seat & droned on from a closed mouth, waving his hand in time with the music - a red, fantastic figure, with his large head gorged with blood & his mouth emitting strange sounds. People turned & stared. Presently two ushers came, and listening to no entreaties of mine (indeed, entreaties were baseless, for B. would not sit down or be silent) they half carried, half dragged him to the vestibule.

There he collapsed completely & lay on the floor. I tried to lift him; he could not walk; & with the assistance of an usher I might have got him to a cab. Unluckily he had been carried to the main entrance, & someone had sent for the police. One came, then another, & they dragged him, walking heavily between them, to the watch-house in Kent-st [sic] Clarence Street, close by. I offered a sov. to be allowed to put him in a cab as we passed the rank, but they said it was too late.

Reaching the watch-house, he was at once placed in the dock before a sergeant. I hovered round in distress till I was told that if I did not cease importunity I would be locked up too. I offered bail, but was told it was useless till he grew sober. Mrs. S. in meantime was in the Town Hall. I saw B. carried to a cell, & returned to her, & sat the performance out.
... At the close of the recital she went home alone, and I returned to Brennan. My plea affected the sergeant-in-charge, & we went to see B. in the cell. He was shouting, uproarious. "You see we can't let him go like that". He was allowed to put his head through the little hatch, & we gave him a drink of water, & I counselled him to keep quiet till I returned later.

At 11 I was back, & though he was still far from sober the sergeant permitted me to take him away - on the urgency that we were both householders, with wives waiting, & would miss our "last boats" - I to Chatswood per train, he to Mosman. We signed our names & were bound over to appear on Monday at the Central Police Court, Goulburn St., & I put B. into a cab & took him to Circular Quay. He was much better when we reached there, & I put him on his boat and went home.

On Monday I went to Central P.C., & could not see Brennan. I hired old Vardy, who spoke to the clerk, & the name was mumbled merely. I paid 6/- fine & charges, & 10/- to Vardy - total 16/- & went to B. office. Some hours later B. called, & explained that he & his wife ("She acted like a trump; I told her all") had been in an inner room of the court, & had feed another solicitor & paid another fine. (The other solicitor did nothing, & of course two fines could not be paid). He said "I have no money now". I said, "That doesn't matter". (He has not repaid 16/- to date 6/10/4) I suggested in as friendly a manner as possible that I had heard reports that he was drinking too much, & that as he could not carry his liquor it wd. be better to stop. Some days later he met me in the streets & thanked me, saying "That was good advice; & I will act upon it". I think the incident gave him a shock, & certainly his public conduct (which was being commented upon by the clerks at the Library, where he is employed) has been more circumspect since. His father was (or is) a publican in ? Surry Hills so that he has a dangerous heredity.
I met Mrs. B. in the street recently (Sept. 1904) & she spoke kindly & asked me to dinner - seeming to impute no responsibility to me, as indeed is just. However, B. has become alienated from me, whether from sham real or false or from an idea that I am reckless company & I have seen little of him since.87

Stephens might have made a veiled attempt to reinforce the personal advice he had offered Brennan when he wrote an article entitled "Writers and Alcohol" on the Red Page for 12 May 1904. Stephens was not convinced by the statistics quoted by T.P. Whitaker who had claimed in an article in The Contemporary Review for March 1904 that abstinence from alcohol promoted longevity. Stephens claimed however that "Physiology gives us surer ground [i.e. than statistics] for individual reasoning. It may be asserted at once, with the reference here befitting, that the whole clan of brain-workers - and especially the tribe of writers, irritabile genus - should use alcohol as little as possible". There was irony in the fact that Stephens became estranged from Brennan to whom he had shown some

87 A.G. Stephens, Diary, pages 80-83, Hayes Collection of the University of Queensland Library. Although Stephens has dated the entry "1903, Ag", he discloses within it that it was written on 6 October 1904. Stephens wrote a review of one of Lemare's recitals on BRP 16 July 1903, and since the organist gave a series of them the incident might well have taken place in August 1903.
discretion and done some kindly service but not from Daley to whom he appeared to have given ample cause for irritation.

The "Bookfellow's Diary" which Stephens published on the Red Page for 4 August 1904 was interesting not only for the evidence of his boredom at Brennan's lecture. It provided a view in microcosm of Stephens' activities and attitudes at the time. In the first entry dated "Wed., July 20", Stephens reported his unsuccessful attempt to obtain from a dilatory artist the design for a book cover, for the block of which the binder was waiting. The incident threw some light on the pressures under which Stephens worked as editor of The Bulletin books. The second entry, dated "Thurs., July 21", recorded the visit of the author of The Villainy of War, who wanted a Red Page review of his work. The author also promised to bring Stephens a copy of a new American magazine. Stephens prepared two reviews, one unfavourable, one favourable, and resolved "To use whichever the case demands". The entry disclosed

88 There is no bibliography which lists by title Australian works published at this time. However, it seems unlikely that The Villainy of War was an actual work. No such title is listed in the English Catalogue of Books for 1903 or 1904.
boredom with the probably fictitious representative of importunate authors and an affectation of a cynical willingness to barter good reviews for favours received. The entry for "Fri., July 22" reported his boredom at Brennan's lecture discussed above. In the entry for "Sat., July 23", the moralizing in "a local writer's yarn about a maternity home, with incidental verses" caused Stephens to reveal his exasperation at the hypocrisy of conventional moral attitudes. He abjured Red Page readers "Let us avoid even the appearance of cant, social or otherwise. In view of the birth-rate fuss, it ought to be recognised by this time that it's a woman's business to bear children - legitimately if possible; but, anyway, to bear them". The entry for "Sun., July 24" revealed that he "Read Truth and the Phaedo". The juxtaposition of John Norton's Sunday scandal-sheet and a classic of Greek literature made a

89 Stephens had already defended Truth on the Red Page for 16 May 1903, describing as "not quite fair" G.C.W.'s epigram:

Truth is John Norton's honoured wife,
And, that her garb be decent, - see
How every Sunday of his life
He clothes with mud her nudity.

Stephens added that "Norton's paper is a useful vehicle for a great deal of matter which the 'respectable' press will not carry; and while so many people believe that her well is a good place to drown Truth in, one must not complain if when she is lugged out she drips and looks muddy".
nice contrast between the philistine and the intellectual in Stephens, as he no doubt intended that it should. For "Men., July 25" Stephens reported that a local painter brought him his problems in being pursued by the daughters of several landladies, and that they also gossiped about Julian Ashton, who appeared as "J—— A——". The visit left Stephens musing that "local painters see everything with a single I". This entry is a reminder of the time and space which Stephens devoted to the discussions of art and
the problems of artists in the period being studied.\textsuperscript{90} The entry for "Tues., July 26" saw the return of the author of

\textsuperscript{90} Stephens was perforce as editor of \textit{Bulletin} publications much involved with art and artists in 1903 and 1904. He prepared for publication \textit{Phil May in Australia} (Sydney, The \textit{Bulletin} Newspaper Company, 1904), and \textit{On the Hop! a Selection from the Australian Drawings of Livingstone Hopkins} ("Hop" of "The \textit{Bulletin}") (Sydney, The \textit{Bulletin} Newspaper Company, 1904). In 1903 he prepared two catalogues of Phil May's drawings to accompany exhibitions in Sydney and Melbourne (see Mackaness and Stone, \textit{The Books of The \textit{Bulletin}} pages 72-73), and in 1904 he also put out the first three series of "The \textit{Bulletin} Postcards".

Stephens also voluntarily involved himself in the controversy over the control of art education in New South Wales. He lost no time after his return from Europe in entering it. He gave an account of the current situation on 3 January 1903. Thereafter he made many passing references to it on the Red Page and on 6 October 1904 he published a long article called "Voices Crying from the Desert". He then embarked on a series of "Letters to a Minister of Instruction" which he headed "Complete Letter-Writer" and numbered in a sequence which began with "XC" on 13 October, and continued with XCI on 20 October and XCII on 27 October 1904. On 22 December 1904 he wrote an article called "Currency" in which he reported the representations made to the State Parliament by the New South Wales Art Students League, requesting a national art school. Stephens criticized Australian pictorial artists for their lack of singlemindedness in the pursuit of excellence (for example, BRP, 9 May 1903) and for their tendency to offer the Australian environment as excuse for their shortcomings (for example, BRP, 8 October 1903). In other words, Stephens was as dissatisfied with Australian artists as he was with Australian authors and for the same general reasons.
The Villainy of War with the promised magazine which Stephens found "familiar and worthless", and he therefore resolved to use the unfavourable review. The final entry for "Wed., July 27" recorded the visit of a London journalist and Stephens' resolve to "Be a father to him".

No doubt the "Bookfellow's Diary" was carefully posed and the incidents reported not haphazardly chosen. Their interest is therefore heightened rather than lessened since obviously they offer in sum the clues for the self-portrait which Stephens wanted his readers to see: the portrait of the critic as busy man of affairs, his time taken up by importunate unknown authors and improvident unreliable artists, a little bored with established writers, exasperated by local parochialism, but kindly to newcomers withal.

The air of bored condescension which pervaded the "Bookfellow's Diary" appeared also in Stephens' attitude towards attempts being made to create a literary milieu in Melbourne. On 16 May 1903 under the heading "Newly Published" he reviewed H.G. Turner's The Aims and Objects of a Literature Society. Stephens wrote:

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H.G. Turner, as most people know, has waved a useful flag in front of the local literary battle; but he was born too early to assimilate modern notions of literature, and his enthusiasm is more admirable than his judgment. Still: a pleasant little paper, with a plethora of loose expressions. One sentence flashes out as a motto for the schism-rent "Australian Literature Society", if it want a motto -

We...like to get together and talk, especially about things we are not very familiar with.

The more you study that sentence, in regard to H.G. Turner, and in regard to "The Aust. Lit. Society", and in regard to Australia, the more you will find in it.

Anticipating that objections would be made to these remarks,

Stephens continued:

And ... "conscience" (the instinct of order, the instinct of justice) rises and asks, Is that fair? Is that just? What is there on the other side, with paraphernalia and propaganda and a set of polished ideals. Their whoop for Brallaghan will balance any outcry on behalf of O'Callaghan. By all means let them whoop. There is n't much in literary societies of dilettanti: they play prettily and create nothing - not even standards. The Melb. society is better than its class: it gives us pamphlets, and the pamphlets are readable. And as a focus for scattered aims, an advertisement for current literature, a spur to the purchasing public, it has a claim upon affection. The working tribe of Australian writers wants as much encouragement and advertisement as - as it deserves. Even H.G. Turner does not always praise all the wrong people. Sometimes you can see him doubting if Art really did stop short in the cultivated court of the Empress Josephine, or thereabouts.

On 2 May 1903 Stephens dismissed the aspirations to greatness of a Melbourne poet when in "Notes and ___ " he wrote
simply that "Some Verses by Frank Wilmot (The Microbe Press, Melb. 6d.) were not worth the pains of printing". It could be pointed out that both these attacks were, like "Creeping Up", the article on the Red Page for 31 January 1903 about the first two pamphlets of the Australian Literature Society, written in the period of Stephens' excessive egotism in the six months immediately following his return from Europe. However Stephens clearly paid no heed to the warning given him by Louis Esson in a letter in 1902 that "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".92


note on the verso of the title page announced that "The
greater part of the contents is reprinted, with some
alteration, from 'The Red Page' of 'The Bulletin'".
Stephens made an entry in a diary on 1 August 1904 which
began "Published The Red Pagan, 1st month's sales abt 200
copies. Abt 200 more sent for review. A good deal of
hostility among incompetent authors. The B. enmity
transferred to me, & I've earned a good deal on my own a/c". 94

Despite this consciousness of accumulated hostility
expressed in August 1904, Stephens was soon to earn more by
his inability either to curb his imagination or to refrain
from exercising his talent as a parodist. His article "The
Ghost" occupied the whole of the Red Page for 8 December
1904. It described an imaginary visitor to his office in
the person of "a small neat colourless man with vague
features, a slight moustache, and a deprecating air of being
nobody in particular". However Stephens' fantasy soon
revealed that this nondescript figure was indeed the author
of "Steele Rudd"'s, Henry Lawson's and Edward Dyson's
stories. He laid claim to "A Golden Shanty", 95 and parodies

94 A.G. Stephens, Diary, p.80. Hayes Collection of
the University of Queensland Library.

95 Edward Dyson's story "A Golden Shanty" was the
title-story in A Golden Shanty: Australian
Stories and Sketches in Prose and Verse by
"Bulletin" Writers (Sydney, The Bulletin Newspaper
Company, 1890).
of the styles of A.H. Davis and Henry Lawson were offered as proof of his ownership of their stories. Stephens entitled the parody of Davis "Death of a Hero", and it extended over more than one column; Lawson's manner was caricatured in a paragraph. The imaginary visitor explained of Lawson that "The young man whom I employed under that name took to writing on his own account and mixed the style. I was forced to dispense with him". Stephens came at last to publish "Bill's Idee", an overworked attempt at a prose sketch of working-class humour, which Stephens alleged the imaginary visitor had offered to him to be published under his name. Presumably the publication of "Bill's Idee" was Stephens' real purpose in this otherwise pointless excursion into fantasy.

Another entry in Stephens' diary indicated that though The Red Pagan was dedicated to J.F. Archibald, co-founder, part-owner and, until 1903, editor of The Bulletin, Stephens did not enjoy friendly relationships with William Macleod, the paper's business manager. In fact by the end of 1904 his connection with The Bulletin had reached a crisis point. In his diary there is an entry dated 12 January 1905, evidently written up after the event, which recorded an interview he had sought with Archibald
and Macleod seeking reassurance of his future security. 96 Stephens summed up the interview as "in effect a statement by Macleod that there was no sentimental bond between us, but purely a commercial one; and - inferentially that I had nothing to look for from him, & that he had already faced & met the contingency of my dismissal or resignation. This is in line with his refusal - when I went to England - to make an engagement for a term of years on my return". Stephens' account continued that "In the afternoon I saw Macleod again - said I had decided to stay on. He said - 'I'm glad to hear it' & was apparently cordial. I judge Arch. had talked to him meanwhile & urged my retention if possible".

Other entries in Stephens' diary in this period late in 1904 and early in 1905 show that he felt underpaid and lacking in status on The Bulletin and ill at ease with Macleod. Macleod he summed up as "a small-brained rather narrow man, not bad-natured, inclined to be generous 'as long as it doesn't hurt himself', fond of approbation &

96 A.G. Stephens, Diary entry dated 12 January 1905, p.88. Hayes Collection. The date of the interview remains obscure. Later on p.93 of the diary in the entry for 1 February 1905 Stephens rewrote his account of it, with added details. This re-writing indicates that he considered it a significant event in his career.
flattery. He likes crawlers & abets tale-tellers". 97

Stephens was therefore by the end of 1904 estranged not only from authors he had criticized and academics he had ridiculed, but from the most powerful figure on *The Bulletin* itself. The reasons in all cases were as much personal as professional. On the face of it *The Bulletin* management had little cause for dissatisfaction with his services. Earlier *Bulletin* books must have been selling steadily. In "Notes and ___" on the Red Page on 2 May 1903 Stephens announced declaration of the first dividend of £1 per recitation for contributors to *The Bulletin Reciter* 98 and on 17 December 1903 he also announced on the Red Page the first dividend of 11/6d. per share for contributors to *The Bulletin Story Book*. 99 In 1903 and 1904 Stephens had edited twelve publications for *The Bulletin*, 100 so that his diligence at least could hardly

97 A.G. Stephens, Diary, p.94. Hayes Collection of the University of Queensland Library.


have been in question. That the Red Page continued to enjoy a large following was indicated by the number of correspondents to it and by their readiness to participate in competitions and discussion. Furthermore though Stephens professed himself in the autumn of his discontent with contemporary Australian writing, he included in the Red Page between December 1902 and December 1904 much interesting reminiscence of earlier authors and journalists, as well as of Australian life generally. A contribution by "M.B." on the Red Page for 18 August 1904 began discussion of the events of Marcus Clarke's life. "Old Adullamite" questioned the data on 1 September, and "M.B." replied to him on 22 September. The focus of the discussion moved to Clarke's sources and after "T.F.M."'s contribution on 20 October under the heading "Marcus Clarke's Sources", Stephens summed up sensibly that Clarke's sources were the convict records which were available to all but "No one else has had the talent to sift the wheat from the chaff, or to create a rival to the book which in our small local way and degree is a masterpiece". Frank Morton was a frequent Red Page contributor in this period. He wrote a series of articles entitled "Three Founders" on 22 September, 13 October and 20 October 1904 on the newspaper entrepreneurs, John Fairfax, Edward Wilson and David Syme. Morton also
wrote well about Rolf Boldrewood on the Red Page for 1 December 1904. Stephens himself on 16 May 1903 published with commentary several of Brunton Stephens' letters to him under the heading "J.B. Stephens: Some Letters", and on 28 April 1904 Stephens presented a column on Peter Airey, who had contributed often to The Bulletin as "P. Luftig" and who had just been appointed Minister for Mines in Queensland. Stephens headed his article "M.M.M.", suggesting that Airey should have been Minister for Mines and Muses. On 10 January 1903 Stephens devoted two columns of the Red Page to a discussion of James Bonwick's An Octogenarian's Reminiscences and on 28 April 1904 he reprinted a column of extracts from William Craig's My Adventures on the Australian Goldfields under the heading "An Evening in Old Bendigo".

The Red Page between December 1902 and December 1904 was not lacking in wit. Occasional lapses into sentimentality like James Hebblethwaite's verse and 'C.M.A.'s prose


103 Stephens published Hebblethwaite's "A Psalm of Life and Death" in three parts on BRP 23 July 1903, 6 August 1903 and 20 August 1903. In all it occupied more than four columns.
sketches, "Bush Township Children", on 9 June 1904, were redeemed by amusing contributions like "Junius Junor"'s suggestions on how Australian poets could secure markets in "The Poets' Corner" on 7 February 1903 and by Stephens' scorn of the inflated claims and advertising devices of the Encyclopaedia Britannica in a paragraph on 22 September 1904. Stephens' lively wit was also obvious in occasional thrusts at bad books. He remarked in "Received" on 10 September 1903, for example, apropos Hume Nisbet's Mistletoe Manor that "He draws very well for an amateur, and he writes very badly for a professional".

Apart from Edmond's intervention on 10 December 1903 to express his disagreement with Stephens' views on immigration and irrigation, there was nothing to indicate The Bulletin management's dissatisfaction with either the content or the tone of the Red Page. Stephens dedicated The Red Pagan to Archibald, and Macleod must also have acquiesced in the publication of that collection of Stephens' work. Furthermore in this period Stephens was twice allowed to extend his empire within The Bulletin. On 25 April and 2 May 1903 the Red Page was continued on the inside back cover of the magazine, with the heading "The Other Red Page". Again, any references Stephens made

on the Red Page to The Bulletin as a whole expressed pride in its superiority to the rest of the Australian press. One example occurred on the Red Page for 14 March 1903 in the passage quoted on page above. It is therefore difficult to ascribe Stephens' problems with his employers to any cause other than his ineptitude in getting along with people.

Another puzzling feature of the Red Page in this period was its dearth of illustration. The Bulletin had entered a period of brilliance in the quality of its black and white art. The work of Norman Lindsay, D.H. Souter and Alf Vincent was outstanding. Yet none of their work appeared on the Red Page between December 1902 and December 1904, and the few illustrations which appeared there were undistinguished. In fact one reproduction, "The Kiss" by "Cappiello", which appeared on 8 October 1903, Edward Dyson described to Stephens accurately as "emasculate rubbish". There might well have been elements of truth in Norman Lindsay's later reminiscences of the difficulties of working as an illustrator for Stephens whom he alleged "was infected by the editorial illusion that a drawing could be sub-edited on

the same principle as a piece of writing".106 This could be an area in which Stephens' personality tended to cut him off from some of the most talented people in his environment.

The major problem facing the student of Stephens' work on the Red Page at the end of 1904 is whether his discontent was forced upon him by his environment or whether it was created and sustained by qualities within himself. There was a lack of good contemporary writing to challenge him, and he was aware of the petty jealousy and animosity of inferior writers who resented his criticism. However he had also adopted a critical stance alternatively overbearing and condescending, and his quirks of philosophy and his egocentricities of opinion had robbed him of communication with the best minds in his environment. Perhaps most assistance in the solution of this problem is to be obtained from an article he wrote on the Red Page for 24 March 1904 which revealed on the one hand his difficulties and shortcomings and on the other his conception of the critic's role.

Stephens' article was prompted by an article by Max Beerbohm entitled "The Critic as Pariah" in The

Saturday Review. Having first quoted the scorn of critics expressed by Hippocrates in De Arte, Stephens claimed that "bantering Beerbohm, professing to probe the hatred of the criticised for the critics, merely lances the surface of dislike". Stephens then commenced his own probing and he wrote:

That dislike is in large part due to the critic's perennial attitude of superiority: "Confound his impudence!" is the natural reaction. But resentment is here a confession of inferiority: the really superior artist is too sure of his worth to pay attention to attitudes; him criticism does not disturb, for he cannot be patronised or contemned. It is the inferior artist, with his knowledge or suspicion that the critic may be right, who is angry with his assailant. Maybe he does well to be angry; but anger is none the less a sign that he has done badly. If he were truly mastiff, and the critic were truly barking cur, he would not merely affect the mastiff's noble indifference.

Stephens would not accept Beerbohm's statement that the critic was "wound up from the outside"; he asked "But where, dear Art! is the creator who is not wound up from the outside?" Again he asked rhetorically "is not the whole literary tribe a tribe of parasites upon the actors and makers of the world?" After comparing English criticism unfavourably with that produced in France, Stephens expressed his views on the nature of criticism lucidly and logically, with a physiological analogy for
Criticism is not a matter of finding flaws or even of stating merits. It is not merely a business of labels and classifications though the most impressionistic critic cannot avoid some implicit classification. Then what is criticism? Well, cutting the knots of the schools, we may say that it stands for an original reaction from Art, just as Art is an original reaction from Nature. (In the wider sense, of course, Nature comprehends Art, and Art comprehends criticism.) And just as painting depends for its value upon the personality of the painter, so criticism depends for its value upon the personality of the critic. His work is creative if he has power to make it so; his starting point is merely a musician's keynote, from which the harmonies of all the world may spring. Yet the impression is not all, and Brunetière is not all wrong in his endeavour to make criticism an exact science. For the critic is controller: he sets bounds to the inevitable banks through which the current of art must flow. Realise how much one owes physically to the faculties of balance and orientation. Were it not for the regular tension of the spinal muscles maintained by the cerebellum and its connections, we could not hold ourselves upright or hold ourselves in a given place. Amid uncoordinated theories criticism comes similarly as governor and director - art's cerebellum. Ignorance replies that the man with the power to do a good thing just goes and does it. But no. Every artist is first a critic. He reasons upon what he has seen; consciously or unconsciously he associates memory with memory; and then, upon the vantage of his criticisms, he builds his work. Critic-artist's analysis, artist-critic's synthesis, constitute the rhythm of creation.

Evidence for the validity of Stephens' insistence on the personality of the critic as a determinant of the
quality of his work might be gathered from his writings on the Red Page between December 1902 and December 1904. His own personality had been shaped largely by self-education in a parochial environment. In that environment he was distracted from the pursuit of literary ends by a paucity of stimulating writing as well as by a patriot's concern for his country and a journalist's pursuit of news-worthy copy. Discontented with his standing as with the achievements of the artists he criticized, Stephens lacked the qualities of mind and of temperament which would have allowed him to rise above conflicts of personality to the formulation of a consecutive theory of criticism capable of reconciling his own uncoordinated theories.

By the end of 1904 it was obvious that Stephens no longer felt as secure as editor of the Red Page as he had formerly and that his truce with The Bulletin management was unlikely to result in his being content for much longer to remain their employee.
Chapter Eight

"Letters Must Breed Life":

The Red Page from January 1905 to October 1906

To the end of his editorship of the Red Page Stephens doggedly pursued his ideal of a distinctive Australian literature. Whatever his difficulties with The Bulletin management, of which the decline in publication of Bulletin books might have been a symptom\(^1\), no hint of personal discontent with his situation seeped into his Red Page writings. In 1905 he conducted a vigorous campaign aimed at ensuring the enactment by the Federal Parliament of a satisfactory law on copyright. His articles and comment on the subject were frequent and forceful\(^2\). As he

\(^1\) There were in 1905 only three Bulletin publications: Stephens' *Victor Daley, On the Trail of the Trust* which Mackaness and Stone describe as "A series of articles dealing with the International Harvester Co.", and the reprint of a chapter from Richard Jebb's *Studies in Colonial Nationalism* entitled "The Bulletin": Richard Jebb's Criticisms. In 1906 there were no publications. See Mackaness and Stone, *The Books of The Bulletin*, pp.78-79.

\(^2\) On the Red Page for 4 May 1905 Stephens announced that a copyright bill was being drafted, and substantial articles on copyright appeared on 31 August 1905, 21 September 1905, 28 September 1905, 19 October 1905 and 26 October 1905; Shorter pieces covering from one to a few paragraphs appeared on 5 October 1905, 12 October 1905, 2 November 1905 and 16 November 1905. On the Red Page for 5 April 1906 Stephens inquired tersely why the Act had not been proclaimed.
remarked on the Red Page for 12 October 1905 at the
head of a column headed "Copyright", "This has become a
permanent subject, apparently. Because it is important".
Stephens made no secret of the fact that the importance
of copyright was closely associated with his nationalistic
fervour. On the Red Page for 24 August 1905 he quoted an
overseas report of the concern of some Hungarian citizens
that patriotism was declining among their youth because
their government's failure to subscribe to the Berne
Convention on Copyright had led to the flooding of the
country with pirated foreign literature.³ Stephens'
comment was that "Australia is in the same case. While
this country continues to borrow its literature from
Britain, the emergence of a patriotic national spirit will
always tend to be thwarted or delayed".

Since the Copyright Law passed in Australia in 1905 was
based on the British and not the Canadian model as Stephens
had urged, his campaign was not a notable political success.
Its significance for this study lies rather in the evidence
it provided of Stephens' unwavering devotion to the ideal
of Australian nationhood and his belief that a distinctive
Australian literature had to exist in order for Australia to
attain that ideal. His copyright campaign also showed that

³ The report was quoted from an article in the
N.A. Review by G.H. Thring.
Stephens was capable of analysis in depth as well as of persuasive argument. The most notable evidence was his article entitled "Copyright" which occupied the whole of the Red Page on 28 September 1905 in which he gave a detailed comparison of the provisions of the Australian and Canadian laws.

Stephens' patriotism was expressed in many contexts on the Red Page in 1905 and 1906. In an article on 16 February 1905 he firmly rejected a suggestion by The Age newspaper that Federation had proved an expensive failure. Stephens asked:

How can Australian Federation be expensive? or a failure? Was it not the cheapest national union that ever was purchased? - bought not with the price of blood, but at the easy cost of a few speeches, half-a-dozen bottlesful of fervid ink. How possibly can that be a failure which embodies a national hope, cements a national union, and gives to six petty States, representatives of one race in one country, a common basis of defence, a common goal for aspiration. If all the revenues of all the States were squandered for a dozen years, or fifty years, what difference would that make to the essential virtue of Federation?

Moreover Stephens warned his readers "In grumbling at the long bills of Federation, let us remember that it will be a buckler for our children's backs at Armageddon". Stephens persisted in his belief not only that Australia would have
to fight for its survival but that its opponents at Armageddon would be Asians and that the Japanese were at once the most likely and the most formidable foe. In "Three Points of View", an article in which he reviewed K. Asakawa's The Russo-Japanese Conflict on the Red Page for 24 August 1905, Stephens wrote a justification of the White Australia Policy quite captivating in its naiveté:

Since Japan must expand, we want her to expand in Asia, not in Australasia. It is true that the greater her expansion, the more formidable will be her menace to this country. In 50 years of unimpeded progress she may have nearly 100 millions of population; and apparently the Chinese and Koreans cannot be squeezed much closer. But the menace of her impeded expansion is much more formidable here and now. What is quite clear is that Britain must not be permitted to break down the White Australia policy in favour of Japan. As North Queensland knows, the Japanese are industrially the most dangerous competitors of all the coloured races. The Kanaka is tractable; the Chinaman is manageable; but the Jap wants to own the country, and shows fight if hindered.

There is no need for exclusion to be offensive. Britain can tell Japan what is in some ways quite true, that the Australians are an inferior race who must be sheltered from the superior Jap if they are to survive. Put that way, there is no ground for complaint.

The only amelioration in Stephens' attitudes towards the "coloured races" was the notable change in his Red Page.
writings in 1905 and 1906 about Australia's Aborigines. In "The Bad Westralian Nigger" on 9 March 1905 he savagely satirized the reactions of Mr Francis Connor, a member of Parliament for the Kimberley district, to a report made by Dr Roth on the condition of Aborigines in Western Australia. Roth's report brought a reaction from the Russian publication, Novoe Vremye, and on the Red Page for 18 May 1905 Stephens quoted a translation of the Russian criticisms which had appeared in St James's Budget. Stephens had obviously been impressed by the warm praise Tom Petrie accorded Queensland Aborigines for their trustworthiness and kindness in his Reminiscences. Stephens did not review Petrie's book until 30 March 1905, but in "The Bad Westralian Nigger" on 9 March he quoted a long extract with anecdotes illustrating the virtues of the Queensland Aborigine. Stephens followed up the quotation with biting sarcasm:


6 Tom Petrie, Reminiscences of Early Queensland... Recorded by His Daughter (Brisbane, Watson, Ferguson, 1904).
The Westralian black is not like the... He does not return good for good, and evil for evil. The Northwestern squatters are wrong to treat him as kindly as they do; kindness makes no impression on his black heart. The best thing is to get rid of him as quickly as possible. As American slave-owners used to say, "the only good nigger is a dead nigger". While he can be used, he may be used under a suitable term of indentures - say 99 years - with some good stiff clauses that will constitute an employer his own tribunal of justice, and permit the nigger to be flogged, maimed or killed at an employer's discretion, like the wild animal he is. Talk of charity is monstrous. Talk of Christianity is ridiculous. Talk of setting apart areas of land as reserves where the aboriginal can live out his days without white interference is the greatest piece of moonshine that was ever spun by Easterners, who know nothing about the matter.

Dr Roth's report should be smothered and shelved as quickly as possible. It was a mistake ever to obtain it. If a report is wanted, the proper body to furnish it is a committee of Northwestern squatters, under the chairmanship of Mr. Francis Connor. They know more than anyone else about the matter. They know what to put in a report, and what to omit. Next to the aboriginals, who do not count, they are the persons most interested. One is quite confident that their report would show that, for the Westralian aboriginal, everything is for the best, and a lot better than he deserves. And, as the natural protest against Dr. Roth's report shows, that is the report that was wanted.

Stephens chose to lay the blame for white Australians' bad treatment of and attitudes to Aborigines on their British heritage. On the Red Page for 6 April 1905 in "Australian and Briton", he deplored the calumnies in
descriptions of the Aborigines as the "lowest race on earth" in school text-books. Stephens asserted of the Aborigine that "The prejudice against him is a British prejudice entirely", and he painted a romanticized picture of Aboriginal happiness before the coming of the white man. He wrote:

Civilisation is not synonymous with felicity. The condition and character of the early Australian, and of the Australian today in districts where the British have not intruded, are almost certainly better - more to be desired and more to be imitated - than those of thousands of dwellers in the slums of British cities. The Australian is naturally generous and affectionate, gallant and gay. In the early days his life was a perpetual picnic. The land gave him food bountifully: to hunt and fish was a pleasure: climate and environment alike were beneficent; and the Australian prospered. Like Paddy McGee, he was always free and hearty. There was no happier race than his under the nourishing sun.

Even Aboriginal cannibalism was to be preferred to British industrial society, as Stephens explained that "To be sure, the Australian was only an accidental or occasional cannibal: his offence was a very little one. He was not a monstrous cannibal like the British industrial system, devouring the flesh and blood of a hundred thousand victims.

7 Stephens cited "Hughes's Class-Book of Modern Geography 1902 ed."
But 'wholesale' is 'respectable', and 'retail' is 'degraded'!" As a policy for the future Stephens advocated a sort of benevolent and quite impractical apartheid. He claimed that "British vice and disease have destroyed probably more than half of the aboriginal race; and it seems a fair thing to give the rest a chance to live and die quietly. There is no 'problem' to solve. If the blacks are to live on, they must be kept entirely apart from the whites. Difficulty arises only at points of contact between the aboriginal race and other races". Stephens' comments on Aborigines in 1905 and 1906 always laid stress on his two contentions that the Aborigines had been idyllically happy before the coming of the white man, and that the white man's misdeeds were inevitable consequences of his British background. So on 13 April 1905 Stephens commented on a Saturday Review article critical of the Aborigines' failure to develop a settled way of life that "when a whole race escaped from the burden of British civilisation, the Briton shakes his wise head and commiserates - the other fellow!" Again in "Aboriginally Speaking" on the Red Page for 29 March 1906 Stephens was angered by what he termed the "preliminary patronage" of Andrew Lang's preface to Mrs. Langloh Parker's The Euahlayi Tribe. Stephens resented the patronage

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because he considered that the Australian Aborigines "lived in a blessed condition which three-fourths of Europeans waste their lives endeavouring to secure", and that "If ever there existed a Golden Age on earth, it existed in Australia before the whites came". His last Red Page comment on the subject was very much in keeping with his new attitude to Australia's original inhabitants. On 11 October 1906 in "Central Australia", his review of J.W. Gregory's *The Dead Heart of Australia*\(^9\), Stephens exulted that "Of the aboriginals Prof. Gregory can scarcely speak too highly. The superstition of degradation finds no support in him. He refers to the repetition of the original blunder as 'wild misrepresentation'".

In view of his new-found romantic enthusiasm for the Aborigines, it was not surprising that Stephens found Mrs Gunn's *Little Black Princess*\(^10\) to his liking. He used the heading "A Book of Gay Blackfellows" for his review of it on the Red Page for 11 January 1906. Stephens considered Mrs Gunn's idealized picture of Aboriginal life on an outback station "a bright and charming narrative", and he concluded that "No author gives a more vivid or attractive

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Apart from the notable modification in his attitudes to Aborigines, Stephens evinced only subtle changes of approach in his conduct of the Red Page in 1905 and 1906. Though there were a number of articles by contributors and a number of competitions, readers shared somewhat less in the making of the Red Page than they had formerly. However, Stephens derived much of his material from current issues of English, and occasionally of American periodicals. There were few Red Pages between January 1905 and October 1906 without at least one column of news, quotation and anecdote derived from these sources. Often his reviews of new books also consisted largely of quotation. On 28 December 1905 under the heading "Sportive Scholarship" in his review of Hugh Platt's *Byways in the Classics*¹¹, Stephens remarked that "We have excerpted shamelessly". This admission could have been applied to many of his reviews in this period. Yet Stephens always excerpted skilfully, and realization that the Red Page in 1905 and 1906 was more carefully contrived than it had been previously is derived not so much from immediate impressions as from recognition of a number

of minor changes in editorial policy. For example in this period Stephens became a more careful bibliographer. Contrary to his previous practice, he cited the place of publication, publisher and price of almost every item he reviewed. He also adopted a consistent policy of signing every Page with his initials, "A.G.S.", even on those few occasions when his own contribution was insignificant. This again was a departure from his previous practice.12

Study of the format of the Red Page from January 1905 to October 1906 also reveals that Stephens made efforts to tailor his matter to fit columns exactly so as to have headings appear at beginnings of columns. To achieve this he sometimes used single paragraphs as fillers at the end of preceding columns. He continued to use various titles to describe the collections of paragraphs on assorted subjects, and occasionally his choice was precious, as in his use of

12 For example, on 5 July 1906 the Red Page contained reprints of Yeats' verse headed "Poems of W.B. Yeats", and the works, "The Rose of the World", "For a Book of Irish Stories", "Fairy Song" and "The Song of the Happy Shepherd" filled the first column; the second and third columns and all but a few inches of the fourth were occupied by an article by Frank Morton on John Macarthur, Robert Campbell and William Bligh, entitled "Some Lost Leaders". Stephens' only contribution was a final paragraph praising the latest edition of Henry Maine's Ancient Law (London, Murray, 1905), yet his initials appeared beneath it at the foot of the fourth column.
"Loose Ends Tied" as the heading of the third column on 12 July 1906. However, Stephens tended in this period to use less fanciful headings like "Memoranda" and "Received", and he often contrived to have one of these headings appear at the top of the third or fourth column of the Page. Another factor which contributed to the uniform appearance of the Red Page in this period was its lack of illustrative matter. When Stephens sought to achieve variety in typographical effect, his attempts were irritating in their idiosyncrasy. For example, on 17 August 1905 his article on "Two-Up" was interspersed with blanks to suggest the profanities which were part of the normal speech pattern of the entrepreneur who ran the two-up school. Again in "An Interrupted Article" on 7 June 1906, he bade the compositor exhibit graphically not only "a necklace of negatives" but

13 For example, "Memoranda" was the heading of the fourth column on BRP 16 November and 23 November 1905, and on 22 February, 19 July, 26 September and 11 October 1906, and of the third column on BRP 16 March 1905; "Received" was the heading of the fourth column on BRP 19 January, 9 March, 16 March, 30 March and 27 April 1905.

14 The only illustration which appeared on the Red Page in this period was the good-quality half-tone block of the "Mona Lisa" published on 22 March 1906 to illustrate Stephens' article, "Leonardo and Others".
"moons of both sexes". Not surprisingly, the results were absurd. However, the direction of most of the changes in Stephens' editorial practice in 1905 and 1906 was towards a more uniform appearance and thus perhaps less spontaneous impact than it had had previously.

There is no evidence to suggest that any of these changes were other than of Stephens' own choosing. Indeed the decline in spontaneity of presentation as well as in intrinsic value of some of the material presented on the Red Page in this period was to a large extent obscured by Stephens' prowess as a journalist. In addition to the skill with which he interpolated quotations into book reviews and excerpted paragraphs from the current periodical literature, he perfected a technique for presenting interviews in the first person in such a way as to make the revelation of personality appear perfectly natural, whether his subject was a musician, an artist, a troupe of acrobats,
or a youth talking about collecting cicadas.\textsuperscript{15}

Stephens also put his effective prose style and considerable knowledge of literature to good use in some of the articles he wrote between January 1905 and October 1906. The topics were almost always suggested by books he received for review. Yet the articles were more than reviews because Stephens enriched them with literary and philosophical comparisons, with humour, with occasional wit, and above all with his own joy in literature. For example, on 16 February 1905 Red Page readers were presented a one-column essay on "Maxim Gorky," in which Gorky's life and work were outlined and

\textsuperscript{15} The interviews Stephens published on BRP in this period were: "Said the Photographer" on 16 February 1905; "Said the Cellist" on 23 February 1905; "Said the Man from Jewburg" on 2 March 1905; "Lady Contributors" on 23 March 1905; "Said Frank M'Comas" on 11 May 1905; "Children's Ways" on 25 May 1905; "Said the Bookseller" on 13 July 1905; "Two-Up" on 17 August 1905; "Said the Acrobats" on 31 August 1905; "Said the Chemist" on 2 November 1905; "Said the Nature-Student" on 28 December 1905; "Cracking a Stockwhip" on 15 March 1906; "Said the Astrologer" on 24 May 1906; "Said Dattilo Rubbo" on 28 June 1906.

In the same style and presumably by contributors in imitation of Stephens were "Said the Still-Runner" by "Falder" on 10 August 1905, and "Said the Adsmith" by "W." on 7 June 1906.

Stephens later claimed the method as his own invention in Interviews, Bookfellowship No. 2 (Sydney, 1921).
in which Stephens neatly summarized his impressions of the qualities and shortcomings in Gorky's work in the following paragraph:

Gorky's message should be received from himself: many of his stories have been translated to English. His utterance seems curiously compounded of Borrow, and Byron, and Nietzsche: men to whom probably he is not indebted for one idea, one phrase: it is life that has taught him their meanings. Like Borrow, he would wander everlastingly, drunk with "the wind on the" steppes; and like Byron, he is a tragic figure bewailing a world awry; and like Nietzsche, he affirms the rights of one's-self and extols the superior morality of Strength. First of all he is a Russian writing for Russians a literature that holds a political meaning of suffering and revolt. His rebellion from conventional morals, his deification of the force and freedom of King-Vagabond, represent a reaction from the body-and-mind-sickness of the Russian nation. The Russian peasantry still lives and dies as naturally as the beasts; and Tolstoy, after sounding all the resources of reason, has taken refuge in their inconscient faith - too late. But advanced Russians have lost their grasp upon eternity without gaining sure foothold in life. Old Russia solved the riddle of existence by existing: New Russia is torn by the Sphinx. Gorky and the rest have still to discover that the best way of answering a riddle is to pose one. How many of us fail to realise that the devouring "Why?" is itself devoured by "Why not?"

On one occasion Stephens attempted a polished account of an incident in his own past experience. The result was "The Wittiest Man in London" which appeared on the Red Page
for 25 April 1906, but generally his essays were book-based. On 30 August 1906 he devoted the whole page to an entertaining essay on "Richard Burton", a topic suggested to him by the appearance of Thomas Wright's biography.\^{16} Stephens' joy in literature was never better conveyed than when the crop of new books brought to his notice lesser-known writers of the past. His introductory remarks and the interweaving of apt quotations from the works were calculated to ensure that Red Page readers went on to discover more of authors hitherto unknown to them. No better example was presented on the Red Page than Stephens' review of a new edition of Matthew Prior's poems\^{17} on 2 August 1906, which he introduced as follows:

He caught more than an echo of Horatian charm; and half-a-dozen generations have found him lovable. He "had rather be thought a good Englishman, than the best Poet or greatest Scholar that ever wrote". Yet he was Poet too, in the mode of Queen Anne when verses and gardens were trimmed rigorously - and Scholar conning his mellow Augustans - and sprightly Wit as well, apt in antithesis, buoyant in fancy, bearing a sound digestion to his books and bubbling with the discreet mirth of a philosopher.


\^{17} Matthew Prior, The Writings of Matthew Prior. Ed. A.R. Waller (Cambridge, University Press, 1905).
The same infectious enjoyment of the verse and temptation of Red Page readers to sample it for themselves were conveyed in Stephens' article entitled "Shining Singers" published on the Red Page for 1 March 1906. The "Singers" were the poets, mainly of the seventeenth century, represented in a series of booklets edited and published by J.R. Tutin. Stephens' ability to whet literary appetites by apt quotation was also displayed in his essay on Emily Dickinson on the Red Page for 12 April 1906, occasioned by a new edition of her poems. He judged her:

An unusual poetess, without a doubt.
T.W. Higginson, who prefaces her book, is reminded of Blake; but not happily, one thinks. Blake's mind was a crystal, with whatever flaws - the mind of a madman child: Miss Dickinson's mind suggests rather a witch-broth, with New England religion, Emerson's philosophy, and lonely womanhood bubbling together in turmoil, and jetting forth hot spouts of doctrinal emotion.

Thereafter in the review he skilfully interpolated extracts which conveyed the flavour of Emily Dickinson's verse.

One of the most interesting of the essays Stephens wrote for the Red Page was that entitled "Q. Horatius Flaccus Day". It appeared on 7 December 1905. Stephens began the

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18 They included Charles Cotton, Poems (Hull, J.R. Tutin, 1903) and Richard Crashaw, Poems (Hull, J.R. Tutin, 1905).

19 Emily Dickinson, Poems (London, Methuen, 1904).
essay by announcing that "Tomorrow we shall celebrate the 1970th anniversary of the birth of Horace (be the same more or less). One trusts this notice will enable the daily press to publish mendacious memoirs and misleading descriptive articles (as recently for Nelson and Trafalgar)". Echoing the antipathy he had earlier expressed to the observance of anniversaries^20, and in accord with his belief in the value of contemporary writers, Stephens complained that "Too long a foolish human race has been wasting To-Day in awe-stricken contemplation of Yesterday, and worshipping its dead ancestors instead of its living children". He went on to explain:

One of the reasons why Horace may be extolled on his 1970th birthday (and at any other time) is this: he was among the first to understand the significance of To-Day. "Don't waste it", he said in effect; "bury Yesterday with it". Horace realised fully that Yesterday had become an attractive subject for occasional poetry; and instead of looking back for famous anniversaries, he very sensibly looked forward for his fame - not for a century, but in saecula saeculorum; and so he gets it. But he only gets it because he deserves it - as much to-day as yesterday and no more to-day than to-morrow. The deeds of Nelson and Augustus are in the same limbo, and in process of time one set will seem as musty as the other. Trafalgar will be remembered in 2905 as Actium is now - or not so much, unless a new Shakespear [sic] illuminate Nelson and Emma as the old one has lit Antony and Cleopatra. But, short of a cataclysm, Horace in 2905 will still console and inspire his readers.

^20 See page 244 above.
On reflection, Stephens was prepared to allow some usefulness to regular celebrations, because:

Life is a petrifying spring, and many people require the consentaneous impulse of the crowd to force them for a moment to stand from under. The work-habit, too, is more pernicious than morphia; now and again we may see the Time-Spirit as healer, applying his calendar-holidays and antidotes to the quick poison of toil. And some festivals of the earth we as earth-animals can never escape from. While the Spring surges, there must be a yearly anniversary of rejoicing that the system of telluric hydrostatics can raise even the most bigoted vegetarian's blood-pressure.

However, Stephens insisted that these admissions of the utility of regular celebrations did not destroy his essential argument that "A true symbol fully embodies the substance" and needs no set occasions for recall.

Anticipating objections to his choice of Horace as an object of devotion, Stephens suggested to his readers that "If you don't appreciate Horace, the argument suggests that the fault is in you: for Horace nineteen centuries are barracking". Stephens apparently chose not to notice that this argument to the authority of the centuries was one he had deplored when adversaries had used it of Dante in an earlier Red Page debate.21 Pressing Horace's claims on 7 December 1905, Stephens went on to assert that

21 See page 186 above.
"It is because Horace said his deed that he outlasts Nelson, and because of the way in which he said it". Yet Stephens could not entirely dismiss the value to society of the Nelson spirit. Before going on to discuss in detail the pocket text of Horace which had suggested his musings, he closed his essay with the following warning:

The half has not been said, but this should be said in safeguard: that from another aspect Horatian retirement, the Horatian philosophy, represent (like Thoreau's) the weak man's excuses to himself and others for declining combat. Horace was too wise too young, because his pulse failed early. His literary decoration of the quiet life is somewhat narcotic for the strenuous business of the world. A community of Horaces in Australia would lead a delightful existence doubtless - until the Japs came and blotted them out. Is to do better than to be? - remembering that to be is to do. One could not argue it for the individual but the community is compelled to dispense with argument. Life, to be Life, must remain dynamic, with Turgenev's motto behind it, to "fight on and damn it all". So, after all, we must stick to the idea that Nelson and a thousand others represent; and if the Nelson-label is the most convenient for the idea, by all means glorify Nelson. But not at a stated time and season; at every time, all the seasons.

Ironically Stephens thus finished his essay on "Q. Horatius Flaccus Day" on the side of Trafalgar Day, though

this conclusion could hardly have surprised attentive Red Page readers. Whenever Stephens had to choose between action and reflection, between hero and poet, between politics and philosophy, his decision was always on the side of the deed, the doer and the practical solution. One aspect of his pragmatism was forthrightly expressed in his review of Benjamin Hoare's *Preferential Trade* under the heading "The Gospel of Protection" on the Red Page for 18 May 1905. Of Protection Stephens then wrote "The principle stands; but the extent of the application of the principle may well depend upon time and place, and circumstances".

Stephens' mistrust of academics was associated at once with his pragmatism, his optimistic humanism and his egalitarianism. In a paragraph on the Red Page for 6 July 1905, he reported Professor MacCallum's reference in a public statement to "the benefit of studying modern history as corrective to 'that tendency to look at ourselves as the roof and crown of things'." On which Stephens immediately commented "But we are: of existing things, and in relation to ourselves". He further protested that "While we see so many people doddering over the dead Past we are bound

to insist on the virtue of the living Present and the promise (that with the advance of the Past and the labour of the Present we may make performance) of the Future”. Stephens was scornful when he considered that an academy was making progress at the public’s expense. He was enraged at the purchase of a block of land in Martin Place by the University of Sydney. In fact the purchase was made from the munificent Challis Bequest, but Stephens believed that the University was misusing public money and he commented on the Red Page for 25 January 1906 that “Sydney University appears to be practically governed by its chancellor, Dr Maclaurin, who (in the writer’s opinion) may be described in his public capacity in two words - a conscientious pig”. Furthermore, Stephens claimed that “With all this heaping of money, Sydney University is in a bad way. It lacks enthusiasm for learning, it lacks liberal spirit”.

Stephens rejoiced wholeheartedly when he found scholarly writing which was to his liking. On the Red Page for 15 February 1906 he reviewed the first number of the Modern Language Review. He approved Paget Toynbee’s article entitled “English Translations of Dante in the Eighteenth Century”, remarking:

Toynbee handles his article lightly, as befits. Scholarship should not be a dull and ponderous thing: it should exist to égayer le monde, like Rabelais': perish the learning that is a prior death! One would watch the old controversialists hurling epithets like "Stercus diaboli!" around their lurid arena, rather than attend a funeral march of mummies resuscitated to die anew in the odour of sanctity. Letters must breed life: that is their end and virtue; or we shall cleave to buckjumping exhibitions.

Another article in the first number of the *Modern Language Review*, A.C. Bradley's "Notes on Passages in Shelley", also pleased Stephens. Although he described it as "curiously considered with intent to amend that lovely text for scholiasts", Stephens commented that "He also can be commended. Really to be erudite is to be born again like a little child, with a child's zest for riddles, and a child's innocent delight when the answer is round and perfect; for it is the child who lives the keenest life".

Despite his joy in literature in which learning was worn lightly, Stephens appeared on the Red Page in 1905 and 1906 curiously inhibited from a total commitment to the study of literature for its own sake. There was, in fact, in some of his ideas almost a mistrust of literature itself. On 15 February 1906, for example, in reviewing a new edition of the works of Byron, he referred to him

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25 For regular readers these words would have had an extra significance since Stephens had written an article reporting on Martin's buckjumping show on the Red Page for 4 January 1906 entitled "Sport and a Spectacle".

as "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". One inference could be that Stephens considered time in adulthood too precious to be sacrificed to the study in depth of literature. Perhaps another deduction could be that Stephens also felt that the works of even the greatest poets did not always "breed life" and that they could not be read in entirety by a mature person without inducing boredom. At the very beginning of the final period of his Red Page editorship Stephens announced that boredom was his enemy. On 5 January 1905 he remarked gratefully of K.C. Thurston’s novel, *John Chilcote, M.P.*, \(^{27}\) that it was "a good piece, and does not weary one. L’ennui voilà l’ennemi! A book’s virtue is to give life: if it take without compensation it is merely another path to perdition. ‘The medicine of the mind’ should be tonic: we need no bromide of bore". He made it clear also that boredom was a factor with which he had to contend in the reviewing of contemporary literature when on 15 March 1906 in an article he called "Little Books" on the several series of pamphlets which were then in vogue with publishers, he wrote that "Luckily the plague of little books comes not without

occasional benison. Detestable little books are those summarising bigger books that must be swallowed whole to yield their value, or those squeezing the last drop of weariness from a staled subject.

Examination of Stephens' dictum that "Letters must breed life" in the context of his Red Page writings in 1905 and 1906 reveals that Stephens did not mean that letters must promote action. The "life" to which he referred was a quality in letters transmissible to those who read them. Among the qualities which Stephens continued to demand from literature in this period was "emotion", which was clearly his term for at least one of the ingredients which imparted "life" to letters. On the Red Page for 18 May 1905 in reviewing John Todhunter's verses, Sounds and Sweet Aire,$^{28}$ Stephens wrote that "His style is careful, his expression cultured; but his pulse, even with the force of Irish legend behind him, is nearly always too faint to thrill us. And above all we want to be thrilled, to have and hold emotion". On 22 June 1905 he quoted from an English magazine, The Fortnightly, what he described as "a Japanese poet's dictum" that "'What is called poetry arises in the heart: man must put into words what he feels. How diverse are our emotions! Well, emotion in verse is poetry'". On this Stephens commented "Didn't

$^{28}$ John Todhunter, Sounds and Sweet Aire (London, Elkin Matthews, 1905).
we say so?", which suggests that he might well have added the italics to the quotation from The Fortnightly. Indeed "emotion" seems to have been a quality which Stephens demanded from art generally, since on 27 July 1905 in a Red Page review of a recital by a visiting violinist, Hugo Heermann, he wrote that "We are of those who like personal emotion in music".

Though Stephens attempted in this period no definition of his concept of emotion, his demand for the re-presentation in art of emotional experience was obviously closely related to his romantic outlook on life, and his romanticism pervaded his criticism. At no time was it more obvious than when Stephens wrote about women. Of Christina Rossetti's verses in an article entitled "Saint I! O Christ is Rest" on 30 March 1905 Stephens wrote "Not to know them is not to know the work of the best woman poet in English". Yet for Stephens her verses had significance only as a guide to her sexual aspirations and disappointments. He wrote that "They divide themselves naturally into three moods, corresponding with three life-epochs - girlhood unawakened, young woman-hood passionate with a dream of love soon relinquished, a middle life and age of thwarted instinct vainly seeking consolation in religion". Stephens' view
of the benefits to be derived by woman from sexual experience extended to the improvement of her singing voice. On the Red Page for 20 April 1905 when he discussed the fourth volume of Havelock Ellis' *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* under the heading "And Oh! Her Voice", Stephens claimed that "Many an unmarried woman tends to wither and decay, her voice sharing in a general physical failure. But marriage expands a bud into fullest bloom, with often a real accession of vitality; and the more complete and intense the emotional life, the greater is likely to be the emotional value of a singer".

When he took a wider view of the human condition Stephens added determinism to his romanticism. In "An Interrupted Article" on 7 June 1906 he wrote that "The moment I overstep Me, I am on the foreign territory of You, who own other allegiance, speak another language. Nor is there refuge in a parallel of identities. Between all agreements remains the difference between Me and You. No metaphysical arbitrator can justify a common rule of conduct from You to". Here Stephens broke off with the remark "at which point Hubert Church came in". Stephens thus introduced a deliberate echo of the interruption of

inspiration suffered by Coleridge when the making of "Kubla Khan" was interrupted by the arrival of "persons from Porlock". This was a ploy in keeping with the idiosyncrasies of style and typography in the rest of the article rather than convincing evidence that the depth of Stephens' thought was such that he could not readily resume it. Indeed the following week, on 14 June 1906, Stephens returned to his theme, beginning the first column without heading simply "Resuming then:": In the second article he sought at first to establish that "Egoism is my only basis of virtue", and having established this proposition to his own satisfaction he continued:

The virtue of Altruism thus comfortably abolished, see how the virtue of Egoism accompanies it to limbo. For being what I am, a momentary link in the universal chain, how can my deeds be mine? They belong to the unending procession of causes in the past - to stars and suns, earth and moon, to my myriad ancestry and my life-environment, to books and men and this morning's breakfast. All these things sum in me; and when I decide for virtue it is because there is no other decision open: my majority-verdict was given already by the inevitable Past. How shall I claim merit, then, for acts which I cannot help or hinder?

According to his final paragraph, the point Stephens sought to make in the two articles was that "The only virtue is community-virtue: the individual's is null. We are
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glow-worms who shine if 'it is our nature to': the light is neither creditable nor discreditable, but may be useful".

Having concluded the second article on 14 June 1906, Stephens proceeded immediately to a discussion of Ibsen’s plays, and the two articles might in fact have been prompted by the necessity for justification of his disapproval of Ibsen. Certainly in them Stephens had sought to establish that moralizing was pointless since our behaviour is determined for us by factors outside our control, and on 14 June 1906 he wrote that "Moralist and dramatist Ibsen was called: the fit word was moraliser". Having given him this label, although Stephens was prepared to admit that in Ibsen’s plays "the plot moves, the characters live, the mummer feels that he is portraying flesh and blood, not a literary puppet", he objected that:

> A play, like any other piece of art, should be brought into relation with the human universe: it must, if it is to last. That means that the characters must be, not figures merely, not even representative figures of an age or country, but human types. Here Ibsen fails: his people are individual, his method episodical. He is confined to statement, is never symbolic. Considering his method, one might find one word for it - stark. It is bare and brutal and strong, and after that - what? It expresses Ibsen's ideas.
It is interesting to probe Stephens' misreading of Ibsen. I suspect that his refusal to recognize the universality of Ibsen's characters stemmed from their basis in commonplace reality rather than in sentimental fantasy and in particular from their failure to conform to Stephens' norms of sexual romanticism. Stephens summarized his dissatisfaction with Ibsen as a lack of "heart", since he concluded his discussion with the remark that "One cannot call Ibsen's a life of fruitless egoism; but barren egoism? - there is room for dialectic. Art without heart comes perilously close to Dead Sea fruit". To substitute "sentimentality" for "heart" would be to do Stephens an injustice. Perhaps "romance" is the nearest equivalent to his meaning. He certainly deplored social realism of the kind he found in Upton Sinclair's The Jungle of which he wrote on the Red Page for 31 May 1906 that "The book makes no literary appeal; and even in America its significance as a social plea is one-sided". Obviously Stephens found exotic stories of adventure with a touch of magic more relevant to his literary values, since on 4 January 1906 in musing on his distaste for Rider Haggard's

Ayesha\textsuperscript{31} he wrote "If it be hinted that the reason is subjective... but no! last week the critic burned midnight gas in - guess? - The Arabian Nights".

Stephens' canon could not accommodate unsentimental criticism of life as revealed in the lives of commonplace people in commonplace circumstances, whether in Ibsen's plays or Sinclair's novels. Yet force was a quality he was prepared to accept, at least in Browning's work, as a substitute for what he called "the highest kind of poetical imagination". In a review of C.H. Herford's \textit{Robert Browning}\textsuperscript{32} on 8 June 1905 he wrote:

Herford agrees that Browning wanted the highest kind of poetic imagination, and would possibly agree that splendid energy was his best possession. "His senses were efficient servants to an active brain, not magicians flinging dazzling spells into the air before him or mysterious music across the path". "The implicit realism of his eye and ear was fortified by acute tactual and muscular responsiveness". This is near one's own idea that Browning has built his poetry, architected it, engineered it: his mind was rich and strong, but in quality ordinary. It is by his rushing force that he succeeds.

Originality of thought was a strong element in Stephens' understanding of literary force; and grace, subtlety and

\textsuperscript{31}Rider Haggard, \textit{Ayesha} (London, Ward Lock, 1905).

writ did not compensate in those writers in whom he
discerned its lack. In reviewing R.H. Sherard's biography
of Oscar Wilde\textsuperscript{33} on 9 August 1906 Stephens asserted:

Wilde had the genius-temperament, but not
genius-intensity. His mind was feminine
and receptive, not highly original, lacking
propulsive force. His beautiful verse is
full of imitations; the epigrams of his
brilliant comedies decorate familiar dramatic
themes, like new spangles on Harlequin's
old jacket; Ruskin inspired the aesthetic
pose, Whistler claimed the ideas of the
Renaissance lecture - and so on.

Stephens' generalizations on the nature of poetry in
this period made it obvious that he had no thought of
abandoning his preference for the lyric. On the Red Page
for 23 August 1906, in discussing a paper on Robert
Browning\textsuperscript{34} delivered by H.G. Higgins to the Literature
Society of Melbourne, he wrote:

Now the local doctrine is that, the less
baggage of thought a poem carries, ostensibly
and painfully, the better is like to be the
poetry, other things equal. To the making of
poetry thought goes necessarily, as to the
making of every form of art; but thinking a
poem is an antecedent process and only when
the thought is fused in emotion does the
poem flower into true generic fragrance.
Chloris, no doubt, smiles with her sphincters;
but ah, her smile!

\textsuperscript{33} R.H. Sherard, \textit{The Life of Oscar Wilde} (London,
Laurie, 1906).

\textsuperscript{34} H.B. Higgins, \textit{Browning: His Mind and Art}.
Literature Society of Melbourne Booklet No. 5
Red Page readers in this period were offered no guidance on how this fusion of poetic thought in emotion was to be achieved. Though in this period he offered little technical advice on how to write poetry, Stephens made it clear that he considered success lay in the careful application of subtle rules. He neither admired nor approved the freedom of Walt Whitman's verse. In a passage on the Red Page on 11 October 1906 discussing Edward Carpenter's *Days with Walt Whitman*[^35], Stephens wrote:

> Now that turbid impressions have cleared, it is generally understood that it is Whitman's personality and ideas that are worth remembering, not his literary accomplishment, albeit some aspects of him are fine merely as literature. But in the limited senses he was prophet rather than poet, and his written expression of himself is an accident of his era. Had he possessed the gifts of an orator he would have been magnificent in remaining himself. He had the doctrine and vocabulary of another Isaiah, but "the power of the press" and some personal weaknesses thrust him into the artificial writer's groove, where he never quite fitted. So he remains, more than most authors, an author who must be taken apart from his authorship if one is to win the best of him.

Stephens believed that the future of English verse lay not in freedom of rhythms and in dispensing with rhyme but in closer attention to its music. Having undervalued the

importance of ideas in poetry, he quite mistook the
direction of English verse when, apropos verses entitled
"Renaissance Gentlemen" by "Anodos" in The Academy which
he reprinted on the Red Page on 6 July 1905, he wrote:

It is now quite clear that English verse of
the future will be moulded partly by the
quantity of words, that feature which
generations of critics have assured us
could not exist in English verse. Note the
little blots above. "Wooed" may be held as
long as mood, but practically the e makes
a difference to the eyes at least, with the
result of a rhyme not quite beautiful.

In his advice to Red Page readers on verse rhythms, Stephens
took it for granted that they would have been aspiring to
write in regular metres. When he discussed "Verse and
Stress" on 19 April 1906 he explained that:

every word must bear its due burden of
stress, neither less nor more. If your
metre demands a heavy stress, you must have
a heavy word to meet it; and conversely.
It was because he had no ear for this rule
that Gordon wrote such rattlettrap verse:
he seems to take his words by the head, as
he would take a reluctant steeplechaser, and
hurl them clattering at the metrical line.
And it was partly because Kendall had an
unconscious knowledge of this rule, and
disposed words so as to bring out their fine
values, that his verse is comparatively
melodious.

But enough technic. [sic]

Stephens rarely dallied long in the discussion of
technique. He preferred to give lush descriptions of
verse which appealed strongly to him. For example, on 26 October 1905 he wrote an article on "Heredia's Sonnets" of which he asserted:

One after another they pass in splendid pageant: a legend of the centuries related with all the concision [sic] that Hugo lacked. Their colour, their sonority, are obvious attributes. To the eye they appear like some brilliant tropical plant, its gorgeous leaves glistening with a metallic lustre. To the ear they may suggest the falling clash of the old Conquistadore's armour in a marble hall. Each is struck like a brilliant medal into perfect form; and as the coin outlasts the city, so it is possible that the miniatures of Heredia may outlive the sprawling grandeur of Hugo.

Happily Stephens' style was seldom so close to the rococo. His ideas on poetry were however at times overlaid with such a thick coating of romantic nostalgia as to obscure their meaning. For example, on 21 June 1906 he closed a discussion of Yeats with the following paragraph:

Yeats creates his atmosphere; he transfers his mood; he follows, singing, an exalted quest: he is a true poet and a fine. And if his inspiration remain aspiration, if his deed be but a dream, we are never sure that our best moments are not the most ineffectual, or that our happiest moments are not those spent in musing with a beautiful regret.

36 José-Maria de Heredia, Sonnets from the Trophies of José-Maria de Heredia. Rendered into English by Edward Robeson Taylor. 3rd ed. (San Francisco, Elder, 1902).
Neither the passage on Heredia nor that on Yeats seem to conform to the advice Stephens gave his readers in an article entitled "Literary Style" on the Red Page for 3 August 1905. In it he disagreed with the propositions of Tancrede de Visan\(^{37}\) that "poverty of thought is always accompanied by an anaemic style" while "Abundant intellectual life is matched with a style richly-colored and tumultuous". Stephens commented:

> A thesis interesting and...untenable. For the critic confuses categories. He is concerned with two of thought: clear, and rich or poor; two of style: clear, and rich or poor. Boileau said that clear thought implies clear style. This De Visan would not deny, nor the converse that clear style implies clear thought. But, he suggests, the French are apt to believe that clear style means rich thought: which is unwarrantable. Agreed. Then, lo, he blunders likewise. "Poor thought means poor style; rich thought means rich style". But we were talking of clarity. De Visan has shifted ground. His application to A. France and Lemaitre is equivalent to contending that clear style means poor thought: a fallacy like that he combats.

Stephens concluded this article by giving writers permission to evolve their own rules of style, provided they worked within the bounds of clarity. He wrote:

> 37 Stephens did not disclose the source in which he discovered de Visan's propositions.
Rich style or simple is a matter of taste. Clear style is obligatory, if you would not waste your thought. Think clearly, therefore, that you may write clearly. But think fully also, enrich your thought, that you may have a worthy load for your admirable vehicle. It is prohibited to have a barren mind. It is prohibited to have an obscure style. But don't regard these prohibitions. Trespass, and let the editors and the publishers bite you. Then, having earned your own wisdom, prohibit yourself.

The emphasis placed on thought in this advice seems at odds with Stephens' beliefs about poetry, and it is therefore probable that he meant his remarks on "Literary Style" on 3 August 1905 to refer only to prose.

In general in this period Stephens proved more adept in the criticism of prose than of verse. He seemed to hold fewer preconceived ideas on the nature of prose, and his remarks on particular prose works often suggested a deeper and wider appreciation of it than he had of verse. Unfortunately he seldom gave detailed evidence in support of his critical intuitions. For example, one of the "Recent Books" he noticed on the Red Page on 4 January 1906 was Edith Wharton's The House of Mirth and he wrote that "Between Henry James and Edith Wharton there is only sex to choose. James's work is just a trifle tenser and

38 Edith Wharton, The House of Mirth (New York, Scribner's, 1905).
intenser, his phrasing just a trifle brighter, his sense of the shades of an idea just a little more acute".

However, instead of pursuing the comparison, Stephens went on to summarize the plot of The House of Mirth, remarking that "The characters are closely studied and well displayed, and the book repays reading and suggests meditation. The author is not without illuminating passages that are almost epigrammatic", and Stephens then quoted what he described as "Some fragments".

To discover Stephens' requirements of literature from his Red Page writings in 1905 and 1906 has involved largely the collection of fragments. His insistence on life, emotion, force and clarity in literature generally, his belief that poetry was not the vehicle of ideas, his distaste for social realism were all consistently though not consecutively expressed. His requirements of literary criticism were revealed somewhat less obliquely. On 19 April 1906 in reviewing F.C. Constable's Poverty and Hereditary Genius under the heading "Two Recent Books", Stephens asserted that "Criticism should be deep as a river and clear as a brook". Stephens' writing seldom lacked clarity but he sometimes failed to examine in depth

interesting issues he raised. Moreover he was at other
times superficial to the point of silliness in pursuing
at length an idea which amused him. He chose, for example,
on 22 February 1906 under the heading "'I Declare the
Banns..." to suggest a mating of Bernard Shaw with the
sensational romantic novelist Victoria Cross. The idea
had occurred to Stephens after The Irrational Knot by
Shaw and Six Women by Cross had reached him in the same
mail. Stephens wrote:

O meat-fed Victoria! martyr of passion,
proud mother of perfect Pathans moving
arrogantly through the imaginations of
maidens, canst thou then vanquish a perfect
Wagnerite? O grain-devouring Bernard!
victim of self-conscious cerebration, ascetic
foe of instinct, hath the girdle of vehement
Venus noosed thee defying nuptials, noosed
and indignantly dragged to hang Haman-high
with an irrational knot beneath thy love-
tone-deaf ear?...

Stephens then went on immediately:

These hymeneal flights are exhausting, and
one cannot be expected to remain at such a
height for more than a paragraph; but it is
persisted that Victoria is Bernard's true
mate and complement, and it is suggested
that - as doubtfully and certainly as the
analogous Lydia knew the scarcely less heroic
Cashel Byron - Bernard knows it.

40 G.B. Shaw, The Irrational Knot (London, Constable,
1905).

This passage could hardly have been judged other than laboured humour according to Stephens' own classification. On the Red Page for 4 May 1905 he wrote in an article entitled "Wit and Humour" that:

Some of our correspondents are still puzzled as to the difference between wit and humour. Properly seen, there is no difference, or no difference of race. There is a distinction of class and mode only. Wit is condensed humour, with the relationship of forked flash to summer lightning, of the beef extract to the ox. Wit spend essentially upon a perception of incongruities, but it farther unfolds in licit congruities. Humour has a more individual aspect; wit a wider scope.

In criticism, as in literature generally, Stephens demanded life. On 15 February 1906 he compared W.P. Ker's Essays on Medieval Literature to Edward Dowden's Montaigne. Stephens' preference was distinctly for Ker, and he explained that "One values Ker because his criticism is alive and gives life: it recreates his subjects. Dowden's criticism is dull and dead". When Stephens found criticism which was lively he was inclined to make excuses for its superficiality. He began his article entitled "American Critics" on 2 November 1905 by contending

James Huneker's collection of drama criticism, *Iconoclasts* 44, as "seductive journalism". But after quoting a selection of Huneker's epigrams he concluded by remarking "Why should admiration of the stars exclude enjoyment of such fireworks? Seen a little closer, the stars would be fireworks too". Though Stephens thereby admitted his weakness for superficial criticism expressed in lively prose, in other contexts he placed great emphasis on soundness of critical judgment. Echoing earlier admiration 45, on 7 September 1905 in the column headed "Flotsam", Stephens asserted that "Frederic Harrison, away from Positivism and his pets, is soundest of English critics". Again, in a paragraph under "Memoranda" on 16 March 1905, he dismissed Churton Collins' criticism from serious consideration. Stephens' main complaint against Collins was his over-praise of contemporary writers, especially Stephen Phillips and William Watson. Stephens proclaimed that:

The margin for difference of critical opinion is really very small: a mere ten per cent. or so of variation from the totality of just judgment. That ten per cent. is quite sufficient to give play to temperament, room for a nice flair to


45 See page 103 above.
disport hypercritically. And you may permit one freak, one hobby, one great revolt as everybody's safety-valve.

Judged from some of his earlier Red Page writing, Stephens' view had not always been so conservative. Other evidence that Stephens had put aside old controversies could be derived from the careful and fair review which he accorded Tucker and Murdoch's *A New Primer of English Literature* under the heading "A School Book" on 13 September 1906. In it he gave no hint of his previous disagreements with Murdoch. In Stephens' view the Primer had "a definite place in the scheme of inquiring scholars aged twelve to fourteen, and it takes its place admirably". Stephens also conceded that "The authors conform to conventional standards; but their critical spirit moves freely and brightly, and the practical obligation to compile has not prevented them from supplying original aspects".

The aspect of the work which displeased him was its neglect of contemporary literature. He complained:

46 See, for example, page 178 above on Tennyson and Burns, and page 187 above on Dante and Homer.


48 See pages 200-203 and page 303 above.
The weakness of the book is to stop short at the uncultivated court of Queen Caroline, or thereabouts, and the note to the very inadequate chapter on the "Victorian Period" is a confession of weakness. The authors have no warrant to presume the student's acquaintance with recent writers; and in any case, that knowledge is what their book exists to supply. "The world has not made up its mind as to what the distinctive characteristics of the period really are": and if that is so, there is all the more need for the authors to make a beginning of the task. They should help in the work of decision, and should refuse to follow in the rut and adopt other people's choses jugées. It is precisely in regard to recent and contemporary writers that a "new primer" is wanted, for there are many old primers to reiterate the praise or blame of the old authors. At the breach of honour and difficulty A New Primer fails as lamentably as the rest.

In the last paragraph of the review Stephens resigned himself to his disappointment, remarking that "We suppose it is still too soon to hope for a primer of English literature which shall deal only with what is worth children's knowledge, eliminating the always-accumulating mass of scholastic lumber, leaving historical detail to advanced students, and employing the brief available year or two in transfusing the beauty and the glory".

Between January 1905 and October 1906 Stephens discovered some beauty but little glory in new Australian writing. He was unquestionably proud of what had been
achieved, not least in criticism. On 18 October 1906 on the last Red Page he edited he wrote, in reviewing Bertram Stevens' *Anthology of Australian Verse*\(^{49}\), that "In the last ten years a good deal has been done towards establishing a canon of local criticism". Stephens also expressed pride in his achievements in philosophy. On 12 July 1906 when he reviewed Otto Weininger's *Sex and Character*\(^{50}\) under the heading "Weininger's First Part", he hailed Weininger as "a new example of the value of the philosophical imagination". Of Weininger's speculations on the mixture of male and female elements in every personality, Stephens commented that "In the theory intrinsically there is no novelty. In the present writer's memoir of Barcroft Boake,\(^{51}\) published in 1897, it was summarised exactly as Weininger might summarise it". Lest anyone should have doubted Stephens' claim to the priority of the ideas, Stephens immediately quoted two paragraphs from his memoir of Boake, after which he commented "That

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\(^{49}\) Bertram Stevens, ed. *An Anthology of Australian Verse* (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1906).


\(^{51}\) A.G. Stephens, "Barcroft Boake: a Memoir" in *Barcroft Boake, Where The Dead Men Lie and Other Poems* (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1897), pp. 155-208.
was possibly the most definite statement published up to that time, and it was formulated upon hints and indications in Weismann, Geddes and Thomson, and others. On the following week, on 19 July 1906, Stephens reproduced in quotation marks a long paragraph from an article he had originally published on the Red Page for 22 June 1901. It embodied his theory that "in inheriting the ancestral thought-machine, we inherit also a number of latent ancestral thoughts". Ostensibly his purpose in quoting from the article was to set readers to work to report experiences in their own lives capable of supporting his theory of inherited memory. However, the timing suggests that use of the passage on the Red Page for 19 July 1906 might have been suggested to Stephens from a review of his achievements. Such a review would surely have not been unlikely at a time when he must have been on the point of resigning from The Bulletin.

Evidence of Stephens' pride in the achievement of Australian writing generally is to be found in the note of avuncular indulgence which frequently crept into his news reports on established Australian writers. One example occurred in a paragraph on the Red Page for 12 January 1905 on what he termed "The vicissitudes of the local tribe of authors, the heads we have pillowed and hit". In the
paragraph he referred to Daley, Lawson, Paterson, 
Brannan, Brereton, Ogilvie, Adams, Quinn, Dyson, Brady, 
Kenna, Church, Furphy, John Farrell, Bayldon, Browne, 
Ethel Turner, Louise Mack, Mary Foott, Mary Gilmore, 
Ada Cambridge, Miles Franklin and Jessie Mackay. Stephens 
ended the paragraph by remarking "Are there others? - 
little gleams, faded performances? - yet are not these 
 enough? They are a handsome tribe, and we love them dearly 
(with the proper reservations)". In a sense Stephens 
 answered his own question on their sufficiency by 
 announcing in an advertisement headed "Australasian 
Anthology" on the Red Page for 30 March 1905 that "The 
undersigned is completing preparation of a new Anthology 
of Australasian Verse, presently to be published in Sydney 
and London. He will be sincerely grateful to correspondents 
who will direct attention to verses worthy of inclusion 
that may have escaped his notice". That his advertisement 
brought an embarrassingly large response was obvious from 
remarks in his review of Bertram Stevens' *An Anthology*
of Australian Verse\textsuperscript{52} on the Red Page on 18 October 1906. On that occasion he reported that, in addition to the mountain of work he had himself been collecting since 1898, his "possibly indiscreet advertisement" had brought him "new peaks to scale, fresh alps to climb".

Between January 1905 and October 1906 Stephens claimed no exciting discoveries of new Australian literary talent. The most enthusiastic review he wrote of Australian work in the period was that of Mrs Gunn's \textit{Little Black Princess}\textsuperscript{53}, but its tone was restrained in comparison with the excitement with which he had greeted some earlier Australian books, for example \textit{My Brilliant Career} which he had hailed as "A Bookful of Sunlight" on the Red Page for 28 September 1901.

In 1905 and 1906 Stephens recognized the talents of Shaw Neilson and Hugh McCrae and frequently published

\textsuperscript{52} Bertram Stevens, ed. \textit{An Anthology of Australian Verse} (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1906). Stephens' advertisement was also to prove indiscreet in that his projected anthology was never published. An entry in his Diary for Jan. 18 [1905] records: "Saw Macleod & obtained authority to do Aust. Anthology & Book of Bulletin Verse". (A.G. Stephens, Diary, p. 92, Hayes Collection in the University of Queensland Library.) Presumably once Stephens severed his connection with The Bulletin, neither they nor the London publisher were willing to continue the project.

\textsuperscript{53} See pages 419-420 above.
their verse on the Red Page. However he did not press
their claims to greatness. On Neilson he uttered no word
of assessment, and his only critical reference to
Hugh McCrae was on 21 September 1905 when he announced
that the prize for a Red Page competition for a spring
poem was to go to McCrae "whose work is becoming memorable".

McCrae's "The Day of Judgment" was published
on BRP 13 April 1905; his winning entry in the
spring poem competition was published on
21 September 1905; his untitled lines beginning
"When Death comes seeking for a prison'd soul"
were published on BRP 26 October 1905; "Sonnet"
on BRP 25 January 1906; untitled lines beginning
"Last night I read within a ragged book" on
BRP 10 May 1906, "The End of Desire" on BRP
24 May 1906, and "Credo" on BRP 28 June 1906.
McCrae also contributed three columns of prose
on "Robert Herrick" to BRP 14 September 1905,
and on 7 June and 12 July 1906 his entry in a
ballade-writing competition was disqualified by
Stephens after consultation with his readers.
Stephens published his own verse on the Red Page more frequently than that of either Neilson or McCrae. It did not improve, though the piece which was perhaps Stephens' nearest approach to witty verse was also interesting as a mirror of his mocking attitude to any self-conscious posturing he detected in Australian writers. The piece was "The Dying Poet to His Wife" which he published on the Red Page for 4 May 1905. In sixty lines it celebrated the interest anthologists were beginning to take in Australian verse. The poet's health showed marked improvement after the arrival of the morning mail, and he admonished his wife:

55 Stephens published his own verse on BRP in 1905 and 1906 as follows: untitled verses on Woolloomooloo on 9 February 1905; "The Dying Poet to His Wife" on 4 May 1905; untitled parody on Kenneth Grahame on 1 June 1905; untitled lines on a New Zealand anthology on 8 June 1905; translations from French verse by Valentine de Saint-Point on 7 September 1905; "Spasms" on 14 September 1905; "Re-echoes", a parody of Kipling, on 5 October 1905; "Paid to Doodlekine, W.A." on 12 October 1905; "Salvation Emigration" on 19 October 1905; "To Phyllida, Putting On Her Hat" on 2 November 1905; "Nurse Jane's Diseases" on 14 December 1905; "Quintus Horatius Flaccus" on 11 January 1906; a sonnet "On the Burning of G. Darrell's MS. Plays in the Great Fire of Sydney, 31st March, 1906" on 19 April 1906; a translation from de Regnier on 26 April 1906; untitled lines beginning "When Deakin talks" on 10 May 1906; translations of Heine on 17 May 1906; and "The Tote" on 26 July 1906.
I think I'm better now, Mary: take that wet rag away:
You know I hate my forehead slopped - no, never mind; obey!
Give me the letters here, Mary, and bring the bottle too;
You never mix it strong enough; Mary, you never do.
Aha! - here's Jones - yes, Jones it is! - "compiling an anthology" ...
"Make extracts"...why, of course he can ... that doesn't need apology;
And Robinson - dear me, how strange! is "making a collection,"
And begs the honour to include my "Ode to Vivisection".
And Bones asks most politely - yes, he asks me: Mary, look!
To add the lustre of my name to grace his little book.

Stephens would brook no complaints from local poets that they were unappreciated. On the Red Page for 20 April 1905 he introduced as "'R.Q.' too disconsolately to a friend", Roderic Quinn's six quatrains presumably addressed to Daley. The burden of Quinn's verses was:

Put by your lyre that sounds a golden truth
It may not move dead souls with sweet alarm;
The roses of the heart - the rose of youth
And love seem spoiled of half their charm.

Romance is dead, and sing you ne'er so loud
She will not stir a lash, nor draw a breath,
The platform liar and the large-eared crowd
Have shamed the lady into death.

In fact Stephens' attitude to Australian writing in this period was sometimes astringent and sometimes indulgent. He did not believe that Australian writing
was to be over-protected. On the Red Page for 12 October 1905 he defended from the attack of a Senator the existence of the Australian magazine, Life, which consisted of paragraphs clipped from other publications. Stephens remarked that "if scraps are demanded they may as well be clipped in Australia, and provide employment for local clippers and printers". Furthermore Stephens saw no reason why Australian writers should have been protected from overseas competition. He wrote:

It can be urged, of course, that scraps magazines depress the local writer who wants to do Australian work and be paid for it; but as long as they are made in Australia the local writer must accept the task of convincing the public that his work is better worth paying for. He has a majority on his side already, and competition for the minority will sharpen his talents and improve his work. We breed good horses in Australia, but nearly all of them are better ridden with a spur.

Stephens never hesitated to be amusing at the expense of the Australian writers of minor talent whose work he reviewed between January 1905 and October 1906. For example, in the column headed "Recently Published" on the Red Page for 3 August 1905 he remarked of A.T. Strong's

Sonnets and Songs⁵⁷ that "These are written with literary appreciation and without any influence from that potent Muse who makes one local bard tear off his clothes and writhe naked on the floor in travail and mortal sweat. (His readers writhe in their clothes...later on)". Neither were more adept verse writers spared ridicule. Stephens entitled his review of Hubert Church’s Poems⁵⁸ on the Red Page for 12 January 1905 "A Precious Poet", and he opened it by remarking that "A certain poet 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". Stephens went on to remind Church that "Every 'stunning word' is a little rock in the stream of a poem: with a strong current the stream flows over it and bears you along; but the interruption is perceptible". In addition to a weakness for unusual words, Stephens also found deficiencies in Church’s metrical sense. After quoting several single lines from the verses, Stephens asked "Surely Church does not think these, printed as verse, are anything beyond elaborate prose?" Stephens also

⁵⁷ A.T. Strong, Sonnets and Songs (Edinburgh, Blackwood, 1905).

⁵⁸ Hubert Church, Poems (Wellington, Whitcombe & Tombs, 1904).
described as "seriously amusing" Church's attempts to discuss New Zealand politics in his verse. Yet Stephens also claimed that the poems had "passages of harmony that are uncommonly pleasant", and he ended the review on a note of optimistic reassurance in affirming that "Several pieces in The West Wind\textsuperscript{59}, several passages in the Poems are worthy to be cherished. If he will cease paraphrasing the ideas and language of others, and rid his work of crudities, obscurities, and extravagances - a not impossible task - he has the talent to do better still". Obviously Stephens had intended the review's heading "A Precious Poet" to be understood in both senses of the epithet.

On 18 May 1905 Stephens reprinted on the Red Page verses which Arthur Adams had had published in the March issue of the Monthly Review. Stephens introduced them with the comment that "You can tell an Adams poem in the dark by the glittering exclamation points that hedge his lines". Stephens was as acutely aware of the declamatory effect of Adams' verse as he was apparently unaware of the same fault in his own.\textsuperscript{60} After quoting Adams' verses on

\textsuperscript{59} Hubert Church, \textit{The West Wind, The Bulletin Booklets No. 5} (Sydney, The Bulletin Newspaper Company, 1902).

\textsuperscript{60} Compare Stephens' verse quoted on page 460 above.
18 May 1905 he remarked that "The exclamation marks are bad form, of course; since a reader, like a nag, may justly resent being spurred all the time". At the same time Stephens recognized that Adams "has done pretty well with his talent, and may reckon upon a moderate English market for the future".

An example of Stephens' indulgence of a minor verse writer occurred on 1 June 1905 when he began the Red Page with verses by Dora Wilcox entitled "In London", and in a later paragraph reviewed her Verses from Maoriland. Although he found in the verse "too many echoes of phrase and thought" and complained that "Unfortunately Miss Wilcox's ear sometimes fails her, and several of the lines are flawed", Stephens considered that "he has given us a little volume to be treasured".

Stephens was also generous to Will Lawson. He described him in his review of Between the Lights and Other Verses on the Red Page for 26 April 1906 as "less dainty, less subtle, than Ogilvie, and cannot yet pass from

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61 Dora Wilcox, Verses from Maoriland (London, George Allen, 1905).

62 Will Lawson, Between the Lights and Other Verses (Wellington, Ferguson and Hicks, 1906).
sentiment into passion". Stephens also considered of this lesser Ogilvie that "His verse is too fluent, too easy, wanting more weight behind it to develop its force. His art is simple: he dumps his lines on the rhyme, and rattles over verbal obstacles with an energetic beat". It was no doubt Lawson's energy which moved Stephens to assert that "Indeed, Lawson has all the vitality that Kipling once possessed, and needs only a little more skill with words to get Kipling's effects". While Stephens' summary of Lawson's qualities might have held a hint of condescension, it was also generous. He wrote of Between the Lights and Other Verses that "It is a book of rhymes manly, graphic, and sympathetic, with honest poetical passages for many honest people".

In 1905 and 1906 Stephens tended to be bland in his approach to the work of minor Australian prose writers, possibly because he had earlier mapped their talents and decided what was to be expected from them. He wrote of Louis Becke when he reviewed Notes From My South Sea Log on the Red Page for 21 December 1905 that "He had always a good dramatic sense and, now that he takes no pains at all, his books are as good company as himself (bar the

63 Louis Becke, Notes From My South Sea Log (London, Laurie, 1905).
stutter) - and Becke was always the best of company".

On 28 June 1906 Stephens published an extract entitled "A Meeting of Creditors" from Louise Mack's *Children of the Sun*. In a later paragraph he announced that "The new book is as childish and sweet and sincere as the others", and that "It breathes devotion to Australia". However on the book's literary value, as distinct from its sentimental appeal, he was curiously silent. Stephens also employed delicacy in his comments on Randolph Bedford's novel, *The Snare of Strength* on the Red Page on 18 January 1906. After noting that it had received favourable English reviews, he quoted from the notice in *St. James's Budget* which he considered "the best critical appreciation" and which praised the book's originality while censuring its crudity. In endorsing the English periodical's criticism Stephens wrote:

The journalistic bulk of the book is inferior to Bedford's own first-class work (as, for example, in the vivid and vital impressions of London recently contributed to *The Bulletin*). Bedford has a big talent, and the way to do justice to it (in book-form, at all events) is to take care not to strain his literary

64 Louise Mack, *Children of the Sun* (London, Melrose, 1904?).

voice farther than it will go. The ordinary tones of that energetic voice are level with other men's top-notes; and Bedford's top-notes are steam-whistles. When he falls just short of "fine writing" his writing is fine; when he goes farther he gets into fustian. His keenness of observation, his pungency of expression are always manifest; he has genuine vision and emotion; but throughout The Snare of Strength he seems to need the admonition one remembers given by a veteran manager to a young actor: "Don't strut. Don't scream."

When Stephens reviewed the fourth book in Arthur Hoey Davis's saga of Queensland farm life, Back At Our Selection in the column headed "Currencies" on the Red Page for 18 October 1906, the last Stephens edited, he seemed to take pride in its crudity. He found the book "as full of crude, honest, homely, vigorous vitality as were the earlier books", and he ended his review by commenting that "Some of the illustrations are technically shocking, and some of the details are rather rough; but errors and shortcomings seem somehow to swing with the spirit of the whole performance, as if young Australia were flinging things around from sheer gladness of heart in a reckless and original manner of its own". In this period even when Stephens was prepared to examine Australian prose more critically his conclusions were still optimistic and encouraging. On the Red Page for 17 May 1906 he wrote

66 A.H. Davis, Back At Our Selection by "Steele Rudd" (Brisbane, Steele Rudd & Co., 1906).
that Edward Dyson's novel *In the Roaring Fifties*67 "gives new occasion to praise his talent and craftsmanship". Stephens found fault with Dyson's ability to sustain narrative and he described the ending of the story as "a novelist's disaster". He also criticized Dyson's style which he considered "too formal for the highest flights" and which he said "lacks speed where it is needed". He also accused Dyson of "stilted writing". Yet Stephens concluded that "These are faults easily mended, and they are far outweighed by merits".

To those Australian writers whose talents Stephens had earlier identified as major, his attitudes varied in the final phase of his Red Page editorship. Two of them he virtually ignored. Furphy and Brennan were mentioned among "the heads we have pillowed and hit" in the paragraph on 18 January 190568. Thereafter he made only two references to Furphy. One was a note on the Red Page for 9 November 1905 which read "That bright little paper, *Barrier Truth*, commences publication of nother [sic] Australian story by 'Tom Collins', writer of *Such is Life". The other was a passing comment in his essay entitled "The Dangerous Diarist" on 31 May 1906 that "'Tom Collins'...


68 See pages 455-456 above.
has told how he keeps a mnemonic diary; and lo, for the fruit of it, a book! - not, one hastens to add, a book that by any stretch of language can be denominated dangerous". Only one piece of Brennan's work appeared on the Red Page in this period. This was a translation by Brennan of Heredia's sonnet, "A Une Ville Morte", which Stephens published on the Red Page for 26 October 1905 along with versions by E.R. Taylor and W.P. Reeves.69

Stephens paid more attention to Victor Daley. In the final paragraph of the Red Page on 27 April 1905 he reported that Daley was very ill and asked for contributions towards his support. Stephens' immediate reaction to Daley's death was to write on the Red Page for 11 January 1906 a bad-tempered paragraph on the ugliness of Waverley Cemetery after Daley had been buried there. A week later, on 18 January 1906, Stephens devoted the first two columns of the Red Page, which he headed simply "Daley", to an assessment which was largely personal and filled with his affection for the man. When he referred to Daley's work he compared him to Tom Moore and he made no extravagant

69 That Stephens had not lost contact with Brennan is shown by the existence among the Papers of A.G. Stephens in the Mitchell Library of an MS copy of "Towards the Source", entitled "Brennan: Poems" and endorsed in Brennan's hand "fair copy, provisional & incomplete, for the use of A.G. Stephens, March 1905".
claims for his friend's achievements in verse. Stephens wrote:

Daley always reminded me of Tom Moore - a poet whom he had carefully read and scarcely ever referred to. Both lacked depth and passion to be great poets; both decorated fine fancies with fine verses; both had a gay satirical vein; both were "the height of company". I think they are a good match, though Daley had a poorer ear and wrote in pictures; Moore wrote more musically, less brilliantly. Both were popular, and careful of their popularity.

On 1 February 1906, in discussing The Sphinx, Stephens remarked that "For local interest Wilde may be compared with Daley; two Irishmen: the one weaving verse into a sumptuous tapestry, the other painting upon satin".

Stephens lost no time in publishing his monograph on Daley, which was first advertised on the Red Page on 29 March 1906.

Along with his valedictory to Daley on 18 January 1906, Stephens published a long review of Bernard O'Dowd's booklet, The Silent Land and Other Verses. Stephens was perturbed by the lack of freedom and variety in O'Dowd's prosody. He wrote that "The book opens stiffly; as he goes,


72 Bernard O'Dowd, The Silent Land and Other Verses (Melbourne, Lothian, 1906).
the author improves his work, and sometimes gives fine expression to fine ideas. More often he is cramped by his crustacean stanza - a regular 4-3 iambic quatrain, with alternating rhymes; and frequently his ear plays him false". Stephens also remarked that "O'Dowd's capacity is so good that one wishes he would perfect himself in the technic [sic] of verse. This book would serve well as a subject for a lesson in prosody to senior classes". Stephens proceeded to give such a lesson, finding in O'Dowd's verses plenty of pitfalls from which to warn young aspirants to the writing of verse. Stephens decided that some of O'Dowd's verse, notably "The Common Room" from which he quoted three stanzas, was "not poetry, but poetical philosophy, finely stated". However, Stephens was satisfied with what he called "some of his singing stanzas", and he ended the review with four of them beginning "We are not the Self we seem" from "The Silent Great" section of "The Silent Land". Of them he remarked "That is good philosophy, good poetry, and good humanity".

Stephens might also have noticed O'Dowd's ability to write good criticism. The opportunity was provided on the Red Page for 30 November 1905 when, under the heading "Australian Writers and an English Critic", Stephens
introduced The Academy's review of A Southern Garland, the collected edition of booklets of verse by Quinn, Hebblethwaite, Louise Mack, Church and O'Dowd published by The Bulletin between 1899 and 1903. After reprinting the review, Stephens published comments on it by Quinn, Hebblethwaite, Church and O'Dowd. In his introduction Stephens was preoccupied with the patronizing, albeit kindly, tone of the review of what he described as "poetry distinguishable only from English minor verse by the fact that some of it is a good deal better than current English minor verse". Quinn, Hebblethwaite and Church were offended that the English reviewer expected cruder lines with a more original point of view. O'Dowd's comments in defence of Australian verse's derivations were at once more succinct and more acute. Among his answers to the criticism was the reminder that "verse of good quality claims to be assessed by virtue of that quality, not on what a chance critic however able wants to see come from 'the colonies', but on its note of universality". Furthermore O'Dowd did not remain on the defensive: he expressed forcibly the role he considered ideas had to play in poetry. He wrote:

73 A Southern Garland (Syd., The Bulletin Newspaper Company, 1904). Reprints with minor alterations Bulletin Booklets Nos. 1-6: The Hidden Tide and The Circling Hearths by Roderic Quinn; A Rose of Regret by James Hebblethwaite; Dreams in Flower by Louise Mack; The West Wind by Hubert Church; Dawnward? by Bernard O'Dowd.
Finally, in my opinion thought is a more important element in the valuation of absolute poetry than form or melody: form as an end, and melody as an end, have resulted in both local and English sterilisation: and originality of thought (i.e., inspiration - "essential brain work") must come back to the Muse before she will become fecund of poetry as distinguished from guitar-libretto.

Stephens remained consistently critical of Henry Lawson's pessimism and unprepared to overlook his personal faults. At the same time as editor of the Red Page Stephens was prepared to use copy written by or about Lawson when it was topical. For example, on 13 April 1905 he introduced with the words "H. Lawson supplies a personal paragraph", a rhyming comment printed as prose on Lawson's reaction to seeing Longstaff's portrait of himself hanging in the Art Gallery. Stephens also published on 2 November 1905 under "Memoranda" the following anecdote:

All publishing houses should have legends for clients to goggle at. Some of these days a local firm will recount with pride how a favourite author - having been used, as he conceived, despitefully - sought out his pet enemy at the business, and hit him in the full glare of publicity and the eye. The turmoil was monstrous; but the author held his ground till a policeman came. Then, as he walked away with the policeman - or as the policeman walked away with him - the author grew oratorical upon his youth, his exploits, and his misfortunes; whereupon the bowels or other appurtenances of the policeman's compassion were so moved that he
told the author to go in peace and sin no more. And the author, his countenance shining with glorious resolve, walked carefully back to the place where he had left his enemy, greeted him kindly (him expectant of apologies and buried hatchets!) and - hit him in the eye. Our faith in the great, the indubitable Future of Australian Literature dates from that day.

Other evidence suggests that the anecdote, however inaccurately, almost certainly referred to Lawson's behaviour towards Fred Wymark on Angus and Robertson's premises. 74

74 A.H. Spencer has written what could be a polite version of the same incident:

"One day Lawson or 'Henry' as he was affectionately and respectfully known to one and all - entered Angus and Robertson's bookshop, one of the usual days when beer had built him up into springtime jollity. He was so full of the joie de vivre inspired by Bacchus and his colleagues, indeed, that he even dared approach the steely Wymark and held out a hand for a 'little something' to aid him in further libations to his gods. As a rule, Henry avoided the alert Wymark, who, underneath a brusque manner, concealed the heart of a child. Wymark gestured Henry away, whereupon the poet raised his walking stick in mock anger, and made as if to strike him. Quick as thought Wymark shouted (Henry was very deaf), 'I'll give you five shillings for your walking stick, Henry!' With beer at threepence a glass five shillings was a large fortune to Henry; silently the exchange was made, and Fred Wymark handed the stick to me, saying, 'There you are, Spencer, there's a poet's prop.'" A.H. Spencer, The Hill of Content: Books, Art, Music, People (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1959), p.103.
On 21 December 1905 the Red Page was headed "The Lawsons - Three Generations", and to it Henry Lawson contributed "Tales of a Grandfather", while Stephens wrote "Mother and Son", noticing the similarity between some of the verses in Louisa Lawson's The Lonely Crossing and Other Verses and in her son Henry's When I Was King and Other Verses. After describing Louisa Lawson's work as "a little book of primitive verse; but keenly felt, and sometimes adequately expressed", Stephens reviewed Henry Lawson's When I Was King. The work did not please him. He wrote:

The book *When I Was King* is below Henry Lawson's reputation, and below his merit. It was a mistake to collect in a volume so many casual newspaper verses, so many jaundiced reflections of bitter hours. These are not the best of Lawson, but the worst; and he has written so much that is good, and strong, and brave, that one cannot be satisfied with dismal doggerel of the alleys and the pubs. It is necessary to say this, for Lawson is regarded as a representative Australian author; he is possibly the most original and characteristic author that this country has produced; but

75 Louisa Lawson, *The Lonely Crossing and Other Verses* (Sydney, printed at Dawn Office, 1905).

76 Henry Lawson, *When I Was King and Other Verses* (Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1905).
his vision includes only a small arc of the Australian horizon, and the foreigner who relies upon him alone for a picture of Australia will be led very far astray. His woeful pictures must not be taken as fully descriptive of the Bush, and his miserable broodings are far from depicting the cheerful courage of the men and women of the Bush.

Stephens' final admonition to Lawson on the Red Page was consistent with all he had ever written of him there. Stephens closed his review of *When I Was King* by suggesting that "If Lawson will leave himself and his troubles right out of his writing, and use his good eyes and his good heart to write the joys and sorrows of other people - especially the joys - his future work will be a great deal more satisfactory".

On the Red Page for 23 November 1905 Stephens remarked, after quoting an anonymous American critic's claim that American literature had been inspired by definite American ideals, "And in this country's literature we want - definite Australian ideals!". For Stephens these ideals included a courageous and spirited optimism which Henry Lawson did not supply. In 1905 and 1906 Stephens did not overlook the work of any of those Australian writers who conformed to his requirement that "Letters must breed life", whether it was embodied in the practical advice given young Australians by Arthur Adams in "On Going to London" on the Red Page for
22 June 1905, in "H.G.'s gentle mockery by parody of several Australian writers of verse in "A Real Anthology" on 25 June 1905, or in the mock-heroic narrative in which on 31 August 1905 Norman Lindsay as "Norman Victor Hugo Lindsay" wrote "The History of a Crime". Lindsay's amusing prose recounted the hanging by the Art Society of one of his robust pictures so high that he had to get a ladder in order to remove it. Yet Stephens did not concentrate entirely on the practical, the lively, or the humorous in his Red Page offerings in 1905 and 1906. On 27 September 1906 Stephens presented in "The Making of a Masterpiece" a serious, scholarly study of Marcus Clarke's revision of For the Term of His Natural Life. Stephens returned to the original version as published in The Australian Journal and studied the revisions Clarke made before the novel was published in book form. Stephens decided that:

77 The Red Page is wrongly dated 26 September 1906, though the date shown on the cover and in the rest of the issue is 27 September 1906.
Incontestably the work has been improved since the original publication. The old version has not the rounded shape, the vital form which Clarke has given to the new. Clarke doubtless had in mind the method of publication which Charles Dickens adopted - a method which bred monsters. He took hints and help from the Tichbourne case; and especially from Les Misérables. He pillaged the old records ruthlessly, and created with splendid talent a book that remains, whatever its faults, the only masterpiece in fiction that has been written in Australia.

At the same time Stephens realized the importance of the existence of the earlier version, and he concluded his examination of the work by remarking that "there are in the old version many passages of good writing, and many passages of Australian interest, that one would not willingly have buried".

Perhaps in considering the factors which led Stephens to relinquish the editorship of the Red Page on 18 October 1906, we ought not overlook the possibility that he might have wanted to pursue the opportunity to study the making of Australian literature to a depth incompatible with the demands of weekly journalism. One other factor was certainly more obvious. Archibald’s mental health had declined to such an extent that by January 1907 he was
confined in a mental institution. Stephens had lost his sponsor and the only power on The Bulletin to whom he had given unreservedly his affection and respect. Whatever his reasons for leaving The Bulletin, Stephens went quietly. He went immediately to found a bookshop in Sydney, the first advertisement for which appeared on the Red Page on the week following his departure, 25 October 1906, and the last on 10 January 1907. From 14 February to 14 March 1907 his weekly Bookfellow was advertised there. His only epitaph in The Bulletin was a paragraph at the end of the second column of the Red Page on 1 November 1906 which read:

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 Bookfellow's" (7 Hamilton-street, Sydney), promises to be the happy hunting-ground of the judicious Australian book-worm.

Whatever was the decisive factor in Stephens' decision to abandon the Red Page, it could not have been cynicism on the future of Australia or of her literature. He

78 Stephens wrote of a visit to Archibald in the State Mental Hospital at Callan Park in a note dated 4 January 1907 in J.R. Tyrrell's Collection of Papers of A.G. Stephens, Mitchell Library MS No. A3986.
professed no other faith than his patriotism. He remained sceptical of religion and castigated its adherents. Sometimes he saw in religion a conflict with patriotism. For example, in "The Pope and Kelly" on the Red Page for 2 March 1905 he described Kelly, a union official, persuaded from socialism by a Papal encyclical, as "a bad citizen" who "in the matter of the government of Australia, a matter which is not a religious matter, does not put Australia first". At other times Stephens made it clear that he could not believe in the sincere conversion to religious conviction of previously free spirits. Of Oscar Wilde's confession of faith, for example, he wrote in "When the Devil Was Sick" on the Red Page for 13 April 1905 that "Where it is in earnest, De Profundis reads like the last faint cry of an infidel expiring at the Christian stake. There is 'a meaning and purpose in it all', says The Daily News. The meaning is the pleasure that the sufferings of heretics give to the holiest heart".

Undoubtedly, Stephens' faith in his own abilities, in his reputation and in the future of Australia was

79 Oscar Wilde, De Profundis (London, Methuen, 1905).
sufficient in 1906 for him to believe that he could continue to make his way as a critic without The Bulletin's backing. The rest of his life was to prove his faith unfounded, and his editorship of the Red Page was to remain his most notable achievement. Speculation on why he left The Bulletin and whether he would have achieved more if he had remained is largely in vain. It can only be assumed in view of his requirements of literature that by 1906 much of the writing with which he had to deal as editor of the Red Page and the atmosphere of The Bulletin had for him ceased to "breed life" and that he therefore decided to seek more stimulating employment for his talents. Perhaps he applied to his own decision the advice he had given Red Page readers at the end of his article "Light of the World - and After?" on 5 April 1906. At the end of that article, written after the exhibition in Sydney of Holman Hunt's famous picture, Stephens wrote "Sum cuique: to every man his own universe of truth or error - and error truly believed is truth for the believer. The thing essential is to find your universe and live in it; instead of wavering miserably between two worlds."
Chapter Nine

"Towards Establishing a Canon of Local Criticism"
the Achievement of A.G. Stephens on the Red Page

In order to assess A.G. Stephens' achievement in criticism on the Red Page, attention must be given to the literary theories on which his judgments were based. A study of his theories reveals the many literary influences which had worked upon him. Such a study also allows us to see how he selected from various movements in art and from contemporary ideas about literature, philosophy and science those which he judged most useful in his mission of achieving a literature for Australia. Concern for Australia's cultural development might well have been Stephens' major motivation. However if the Red Page is to be assessed as literary criticism it must be judged by literary values. Stephens once defined criticism as "an original reaction from Art",¹ and it is by this standard of criticism as a noble and necessary pursuit of man, freed from boundaries of nationalistic sentiment, that I propose to judge the Red Page.

¹ BRP 24 March 1904.
On the evidence of the Red Page there can be no doubt that the major assumptions on which Stephens based his literary criticism were Romantic. They stemmed from the influence on him of the great works of, and the traditions which flowed from the Romantic Movement in European philosophy and literature which began in the eighteenth century and which flourished in English literature from the early nineteenth century. Walter Jackson Bate has written:

If the eighteenth century began with the belief that man's distinctive nature is his reason, it ended with a common belief that what is "natural" in man is his feelings. This assumption took various forms. First, it encouraged an emphasis on such qualities in art as spontaneity, immediacy and originality. If what is best and most "natural" in man is his emotional character, then, in art, what is to be prized is the original and outgoing expression of his feelings.

In harmony with the central idea of Romanticism, Stephens announced on th. Red Page that "The essence of Art is emotion." Stephens was never able to define satisfactorily what he meant by emotion. His attempts to do so usually led him to specify the effects a poem should create on its audience rather than to define the qualities of the work.


3 BRP 15 October 1898.
itself. Stephens asserted, for example, that "When a poem gives you the sensation of being turned inside out and held gasping over the Infinite by a single hair, it has gone far to prove that it really is a poem, and not an exercise in verse by an experienced or inexperienced word-juggler." Such cosmic emotion was not transmitted to Stephens by poetry which was the vehicle of ideas or argument. Like the Romantics Stephens rejected the values of Classicism. Dryden he referred to as "master of the artificial Muse" adding that "there was always too much intellectual admixture in Dryden's lyrics". Far from demanding original ideas in poetry, Stephens was prepared to admit there only familiar ideas. He wrote that "there are some human ideas of such general acceptance that they do not complicate the message, and these may be so introduced as to heighten the artistic emotion." Towards the end of his Red Page career Stephens explained that "only when the thought is fused in emotion does the poem flower into true generic fragrance". More than ten years

4 BRP 15 October 1898.
5 BRP 24 February 1900.
6 In discussion of Oscar Wilde's "Ballad of Reading Gaol", BRP 21 May 1898.
7 BRP 23 August 1906.
earlier he had written in similar vein that "Intellect is great; emotion is great; but, for a poet, the greater of them is emotion. This it is which fires dull words, turns ore into gold, and, Pygmalion-like, draws with passionate ardor from cold stone warm, pulsating life".  

The belief that art was to be the vehicle of spontaneous, immediate and original feeling led the adherents of Romanticism in literature to place lyric poetry above all other literary genres. W.K. Wimsatt has written of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that "This was the time . . . when modern literary criticism completed one of its major shifts in preference among literary genres", and that the shift was to the lyric as "the most poetic kind of poetry, the most direct, free, and unlimited making of the poetic mind".  

A.G. Stephens' preference for the lyric was absolute and unashamed. "When an ounce of lyric meat is obtainable, why munch a yard of epic celery?" he asked on one occasion, and in practical criticism he looked indulgently on the work of Australian lyricists who attained any dexterity in verse.

8 BRP 15 February 1896.


10 BRP 26 September 1896. See page 163 above.
For Stephens, as criticism was "an original reaction from Art" so Art was "an original reaction from Nature". Stephens took his concept of nature from the Romantic tradition. It was not only the external world but man as part of and in relationship to this world and to himself, his inward nature, his dreams, hopes and imaginings. From Nature came his intimations of reality, and of his origins and his destinations. Therefore the nearer man lived to Nature and the less he was dependent upon material things of his own manufacture the nearer he must have been to the well-springs of Art. The path to primitivism had been traversed by the Romantics, notably by Rousseau in philosophy and Wordsworth and Blake in poetry. Late in his Red Page career Stephens came to regard the Australian Aborigine as "the noble savage". But he had also sought to establish the existence of qualities of natural goodness and peasant wisdom among the white bush population of Australia, bravely confronting Nature in the bush and uncorrupted by the evil influences of city and town life. For Wordsworth's Nature, Stephens wanted to substitute as the ideal of Australian literature, "the Bush" which he personified as "beautiful and terrible", and he resented

11 BRP 24 March 1904.
12 See pages 414-419 above.
13 BRP ?? October 1898. See page 207 above.
Lawson's refusal to idealize it and make it the core of an Australian mythology.

Stephens' primitivism was manifested also in his assertions that "It is the child who leads the keenest life" and that poetry was the product of youthful nations and youthful individuals. Stephens' ambivalent attitude to education and his mistrust of universities could also be said to have had a theoretical basis in his primitivist beliefs. In general of course the primitivism which postulated youth in nations, lack of sophistication in individuals and society, and closeness to external nature as circumstances conducive to artistic creation fitted very well the conditions in Australia at the time when Stephens was editing the Red Page. He was able to apply these beliefs not only to the Australian bush but to Australia as a whole, a youthful nation, innocent of the corruptions of the old world, at the time when he was striving to bring to birth an Australian literature.

Romantic primitivism also endorsed the fitness of the plain man's language for poetry. Stephens had little to say directly on the subject of poetic diction on the Red Page but he published the views of many disputants after a contributor, Stefan Von Kotze, had objected vehemently to

14 BRP 15 February 1906. See page 433 above.

15 See, for example, BRP 25 December 1897 and 5 November 1898 and pages 163 and 185 above.
the banality of the phrase "in her bed" in the following lines from Wilde's "Ballad of Reading Gaol":

The poor dead woman whom he loved
And murdered in her bed.

To end the controversy Stephens published a contribution from Victor Daley which he described as "a fine and adequate last word". In it Daley asserted that "Common, homespun words are the warp in which is [sic] woven the ideal pictures of the mind". Stephens was also unhappy about Hubert Church's use of startling words in his lyrics, and, on a broader plane, one of his several objections to Symbolism in poetry was obscurity of language. Romantic primitivism also gave Stephens warrant for acceptance in his canon of the bush ballads whether in their folk forms in the old bush songs or in Paterson's crude and vigorous narrations of more recent bush legends.

The great Romantics were concerned to probe the origins of creative power in literature. Coleridge in his Biographia Literaria allotted to the imagination the central role in the creation of literary art. He wrote:

16 The discussion ranged over BRP 2 July 1898 and 13 August 1898.

17 BRP 12 January 1905. See page 462 above.
The imagination then, I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and prime Agent in all human Perception, and as repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.

Fancy, on the other hand, Coleridge down-graded as "no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space". The nobility of Coleridge's vision of the imagination as a mighty inward power of perception and synthesis found an echo in Stephens. He wrote that "Imagination is the faculty of forming mental images, but, in the high and special sense, the images must be created by the mind, not merely reflected from a physical object". But maintenance of an exalted theory of imagination would have been very difficult in face of much of the writing which Stephens had to discuss on the Red Page. Therefore

21 BRP 21 July 1900. See page 268 above.
when he sought on one occasion to compare the qualities of Australian writers of verse Stephens reduced the gap between imagination and fancy, defining fancy as "imagination tethered to earth" and imagination as "fancy freed and soaring beyond the stars". 22

Stephens was incapable of sustaining allegiance to Coleridge's theory of literary invention which has been characterized as "organic". 23 Stephens sought quicker, simpler explanations of literary creativity in physiological causes of genius and invention. The homage the great Romantics accorded imagination was reduced in Stephens to a distaste for realism in literature and a determination to expose plagiarism wherever he discerned it. At his worst, Stephens was prone to mistake for imagination sentimental fancy; and in lapses of taste such as his admiration of novelists like D'Annunzio24 and of minor Australian writers like Louise Mack25, Stephens on the Red

22 BRP 3 December 1898. See page 219 above.


24 See, for example, BRP 19 January 1901.

25 BRP 17 June 1896.
Page deserved Vance Palmer's charge that he "had a weakness for the minor key in literature". 26

Intolerant as Stephens was of social realism in imaginative literature, his Red Page strictures on writers whom he accused of either copying or echoing other writers' ideas and phrases seemed to have arisen from considerations of economic justice. Literature was after all property, not to be alienated from its owners. Furthermore the rewards available to writers, especially to Australian writers, were scarce and had to be husbanded. These were the grounds on which Stephens frequently justified the vehemence of his attacks on what he considered bad work. 27

Stephens probed no depths in his speculations on poetic inspiration. Instead he sought to establish that lyric poets were possessed by the thoughts of their ancestors. This he considered a legitimate source of inspiration for the lyric poets of Australia. A cynic might add that this theory had special utility in the Australian situation and might ask from what other sources could come food for the imagination of poets exiled from their history in an empty


27 See, for example, BRP 20 January 1900, 5 January 1901 and 6 July 1901 and pages 284, 294 and 281 above.
continent, geographically old but historically new-born, and in a society anxious to forget its convict origins and quite unlikely to find in them inspiration for lyric poetry. Moreover, in seeking to establish poetic inspiration from ancestral thoughts Stephens was able to pursue his interest in identifying racial characteristics in national literatures. The Celtic revival in literature and the Irish character, for example, were frequent Red Page topics. Racial prejudices and preconceptions filled Stephens' assessments of poets like Tennyson and Robert Burns. As well as being concerned to establish the Australian as a racial type, Stephens was almost certainly influenced by Taine and Matthew Arnold to believe that race had a bearing on

28 See, for example, Daley's articles, "Green Fire" BRP 25 November 1899, "The Humourless Irishman" BRP 18 April 1903, "Shule Agra" BRP 27 June 1903 in which he announced that "The Celtic Renascence is in full flower in Sydney", and "Irish" BRP 31 December 1903. Stephens also reprinted overseas articles such as "The Irish Character" by Bart Kennedy in The Daily Mail BRP 20 July 1905. Stephens also wrote at some length on the subject himself in articles like "Irish Literature" in which he reviewed The Cabinet of Irish Literature (London, Gresham, 1905) BRP 24 August 1905.
Ideas of race memory were also common in popular speculation at the time, and some basis of psychological respectability was later found for them in what has been called "the Jungian thesis that beneath the individual 'unconscious' - the blocked-off residue of our past, particularly childhood and infancy - lies the 'collective unconscious' - the blocked-off memory of our racial past, even of our pre-humanity".  

Just as Stephens sought to account for poetic inspiration by a genetic mechanism of "hereditary brain cells" his theory of poetic genius was physiological and deterministic. Stephens believed that genius was "a disease of the nerves", and associated with this belief was his occasional pretense that poetry was the product of moody introspection by unhappy and unhealthy writers - a


31 BRP 22 June 1901. See page 273 above.  

32 BRP 3 October 1896. See pages 123-126 above.
belief which had filtered into the Romantic tradition through study of the biographies as much as of the poetry of Byron, Shelley and Keats. Stephens once announced on the Red Page that "Poetry is generally more or less of an unhealthy growth, a morbid secretion". Yet he disapproved of Lawson's verses, "The Vagabond", because "there are so many sucking Byrons busy at monotonous variations on the bitter old theme". In fact Stephens' whole temper as a critic was that of a rudely healthy optimist, convinced of the power of progress, especially through science, a belief quite at odds with the Romantic outlook, and with that of Matthew Arnold who, according to René Wellek, "almost single-handedly, pulled English criticism out of the doldrums into which it had fallen after the Great Romantic Age".

Yet Arnold's influence on Stephens was considerable, and Arnold was the frame of reference through which other critical influences reached him. It seems likely, for

33 BRP 26 October 1895. See page 72 above.
34 "Henry Lawson's Poems", BRP 15 February 1896. See page 78 above.
example, that it was from Arnold that Stephens learnt to
admire Heine. 36 Arnold was also apparently the standard
against whom contemporary English critics were measured,
since Stephens wrote in praise of Frederic Harrison that
"of all critics now writing, he strikes one as likest to
Arnold himself - so lucid, so impartial, so sane". 37
There were several echoes of Arnold on the Red Page.
Some were obvious and serious like his agreement with
Harrison's interpretation of Arnold's belief that it was
the duty of the critic "to lay down decisive canons of
cultured judgment". 38 Another use Stephens made of
Arnold's counsels on the Red Page was obvious and playful,
namely Stephens reference to "touchstones" in selecting
J.C. Neild's line "Eftsoons the Nocent Waterspout will
rise!" as a touchstone of bad verse. 39 Other echoes of
Arnold on the Red Page were more subtle. For example,

36 Arnold's essay on Heinrich Heine was published in
the 1865 and 1869 editions of his Essays in
Criticism. See Matthew Arnold, Lectures and Essays
in Criticism. Complete Prose Works vol. 3,
pages 107-132.

37 BRP 2 May 1896.

38 BRP 2 May 1896.

39 BRP 27 June 1896 and page 96 above.
Stephens used the phrase "natural magic", once in relation to Keats and again in relation to Swinburne. Stephens had apparently so thoroughly assimilated the phrase from Arnold that he no longer recognized that it was not his own thought. There is also perhaps an echo of Arnold's famous injunction that the critic should "see the object as in itself it really is" in Stephens' remark that Kipling's "The Drums of Fore and Aft", in contrast to Stephen Crane's The Red Badge of Courage, "with far less pomp of language, shows you the thing as it is". Stephens also stood firmly by Arnold's belief in the dignity of the critic's mission, the importance of the critical spirit, and the distinctiveness of the critical from the creative faculty.

Stephens like Arnold believed that criticism had a didactic function. It was, in Frederic Harrison's phrase, "to sift the sound from the vicious". Again like Arnold Stephens subscribed to the belief that poetry could be regarded as "criticism of life" and that it could

40 BRP 11 December 1897 and 3 November 1904.

41 Arnold's attribution of "natural magic" to Keats was first made in his essay on Maurice de Guérin in the 1865 and 1869 editions of his Essays in Criticism. In "On the Study of Celtic Literature" Arnold expanded his ideas on "natural magic", discussing many writers including Keats. See Matthew Arnold, Lectures and Essays in Criticism, Complete Prose Works, vol. 3, p.34 and pp. 375-378.

42 "Battle Pictures", BRP 14 March 1896.

43 "Battle Pictures", BRP 14 March 1896. See page 105 above.
substitute for formal religious belief. Stephens also believed in "high seriousness" as a mark of great art. For Stephens the proper subjects of poetry were loving, fighting, birth, death, what he called "the great themes of existence". Stephens believed that "To be enduring, literary work must be brought into contact with some primal fact of humanity; there must be a universal 'moral' in it . . . the natural moral which abstractedly considered, every incident of life has for all things living". Stephens made it clear that the "natural moral" existed with reference to a philosophic ideal not to any code of behaviour since he also wrote that "The glory of art tarnishes as soon as it comes in contact with a hypothetical standard of morals". Yet great art had to be serious. Stephens was amused but not moved by the "pretty-things" of the verse of The Yellow Book. He did not subscribe to the doctrine of Aestheticism that art was apart from and exempt from the laws of society and to serve no other purposes than its own. Stephens thus shared Arnold's Horatian belief that art was useful as well as sweet, that

44 BRP 14 September 1896. See page 130 above.
45 BRP 1 August 1896.
46 BRP 13 February 1897.
47 BRP 11 August 1904. See page 371 above.
48 BRP 6 July 1895. See also page 81 above.
culture was to carry "light" as well as "sweetness". He also acquiesced in Arnold's return to the persuasion of the classical tradition that literature was made according to rules, however subtle. Stephens wrote that "though it is true that poetry cannot be made by rule (alone), it can be mended. Genius itself succeeds by unconscious knowledge of the rules, - by a science that is instinctive in genius". 49

In the broadest sense Stephens could be said to have had a warrant from Arnold for his use of the Red Page for the instruction and guidance of aspiring Australian writers in the hope of bringing to birth an Australian literature. After all, Arnold wrote that "A time of true creative activity . . . must inevitably be preceded amongst us by a time of criticism". 50 However, Stephens as editor of the Red Page could not be judged to have satisfied Arnold's requirement of "disinterestedness" in the critic. René Wellek has sensibly explained Arnold's concept of "disinterestedness" as "a denial of immediate political and sectarian ends, a wide horizon, an absence of prejudice, serenity beyond the passions of the moment". 51 I have suggested in Chapter One of this study some of the factors

49 "Verse and Stress", BRP 19 April 1906.


51 René Wellek, History of Modern Criticism 1750-1950: the Late Nineteenth Century, p.156.
in The Bulletin environment which made it anything but a zone of quiet for the dispassionate consideration of literature. The Bulletin's flattery of the Philistine would have appalled Arnold. Moreover Stephens of his own volition narrowed his horizons and indulged his prejudices in ways which would have been anathema to Arnold.

Arnold rejected institutionalized religion. So did Stephens. But Stephens also ridiculed all religious belief and experience. His atheism was militant and polemical rather than disinterested. He missed no opportunity to belittle Christianity. Stephens had obviously been steeped in the language of the Authorised Version of the New Testament and he took his revenge for this immersion in his frequent parodies of Christian scripture. Several instances have been quoted in the foregoing chapters. None would have given him more satisfaction than his announcement to a correspondent that "It is not necessary to wonder at the outspringing of 'life' from 'matter'. Whenever two or three atoms are gathered together there is life in the midst of them". Stephens' materialist horizons would allow no metaphysical speculation on the nature of life. He smugly announced on the Red Page that "Metaphysics is an

52 Answer to "Crites" in "Little Items", BRP 30 January 1896. Matthew 18:20 "For where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them".
exploded science" and that "all the metaphysicians from Aristotle to Kant, and past Kant, have been 'hooting up a dead limb of the tree of knowledge', darkening counsel and confusing understanding". He continued:

At the close of the nineteenth-century there is left but one primal science in the realm of human knowledge - the science of Physics in the widest sense, the science of things natural, things as they are; and the science of things dreamt of, dogmas invented, baseless theories sent flying like stringless kites into the domain of the imagination - the science of metaphysics - is in truth, if not in fact, as dead as the legendary cock that crowed to warn the legendary Peter.

Stephens added that "All these centuries the metaphysicians have been poking the smoke; the progress of physiology has at last taught people - some people - to poke the fire". 53

In "poking the fire" with his physiological beliefs Stephens was never profound and frequently absurd. It is one thing for a materialistic critic to believe as I.A. Richards did, that complete knowledge of neurology might solve all problems of the literary imagination and the processes by which observations are transmuted into art. 54 But it is quite another for Stephens to have

53 "Upstairs in the Brain", BRP 22 April 1899.

54 See, for example, I.A. Richards, Principles of Literary Criticism (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1924), pages 120 and 251.
invented neurological phenomena in order to account for literary genius in terms of cerebral vibrations\(^55\) and to have made wild assertions about the effect on literature of an author's heredity, his sex and other physical characteristics as Stephens did with the Rossettis, the Brontës, George Eliot and many others.\(^56\)

In some of Stephens' beliefs might be discerned influences of the Positivists who, in Wimsatt's words, "assigned to art a gloriously continuing imaginative function in the phases of human advancement that were to succeed upon the outmoded eras of religion and metaphysics".\(^57\) Stephens in a sense tried to transfer the Darwinian theory of evolution to literature. He insisted always that the past was past, that there were no literary choses jugees, because he was afraid that excessive veneration for the classics of literature would inhibit Australia's attempts to develop a literature of its own. From such insistence sprang the Red Page controversies on

\(^{55}\) BRP 3 October 1896 and 21 April 1904.

\(^{56}\) See, for example, BRP 19 December 1896 and 24 April 1897 and pages 123-126 above.

Homer, Dante and Milton. Stephens' stance was the reverse of disinterested. He was passionately anxious to have Australia become literary and willing to take from any theory those elements which seemed likely to spur Australian writers to "go ahead and turn up something".

Happily Stephens' theoretical positions based on pseudo-scientific premises, largely invented by himself and frequently postulated a priori, were seldom essential to his judgments of particular works. When he used physiology to justify his enthusiasm for a particular work it was usually after he had been able to find little of value in it according to his literary canon. The outstanding example on the Red Page is his review of Roderic Quinn's novel, Mostyn Stayne. In discussing the work of women writers Stephens invoked physiology to provide a basis for ideas which were in fact a part of his inheritance of the Romantic tradition. Stephens' theoretical attitude to women could be summed up in Byron's lines:

Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,  
'Tis woman's whole existence.  
(Don Juan, I. exciv.)

58 See Chapter 5, pages 170-225 above.
59 BRP 27 May 1899. See page 210 above.
60 BRP 19 May 1897. See pages 148-150 above.
Stephens asserted that "Her sex is of much more moment to her than his to a man (except negatively): a man must be three parts brain; a woman, to be womanly, must always be three parts womb - 'womb-man', as the dictionaries show her". 61 He was especially proud when he found corroboration of his ideas that every individual was a compound of male and female elements, 62 and later discoveries about hormones have proved his intuitions to have had some basis in biological fact. However, Stephens used his speculations as bases for assertions that women who wrote powerfully, Sappho and George Eliot for example, were predominantly male. Yet, paradoxically and romantically, Stephens persisted in regarding women as in theory "a foreign country". 63 Paradoxically again, these theories appear to have had no effect on his estimates of the literary talents of Australian women writers, like A. B. Paton, Miles Franklin and Mary Gilmore.

Science was for Stephens a handy stick which he used to belabour the cant-ridden society of his time and place on sexual morals. Unfortunately arguments to physiology to justify his moral positions almost inevitably became mixed with assertions about the effects of physiological

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61 BRP 17 October 1896. See page 127.
62 BRP 12 July 1906. See pages 454-455 above.
63 BRP 21 April 1900. See pages 305-306 above.
traits on literary performance. A notable Red Page example occurred in an article on Sappho in which he wrote:

Henry Wharton . . . thinks it necessary to try and whitewash his subject in the interests of respectability. For Sappho is traditionally credited with having loved women rather than men, and sapphism is still a current term for the habit. But the adage connecting smoke with fire has some validity; and, a priori, the predominance of male elements in Sappho would, according to local dogma, account for her preference. And though such a preference be abnormal, and rightly to be deprecated in the interests of society, it is wrongly called "unnatural" from the individual point of view.

Stephens then quoted in French supporting evidence from Krafft-Ebing to which he added "So that Respectability need make no wry face at the worst stories of Sappho, if only it be scientific enough not to be stupid". From this point he proceeded:

Sappho, says Maximus Tyrius, was "small and dark" . . . This is likely enough. Sappho was transcendentally vital; and the evidence goes to show that, on the whole, dark races and individuals possess the stronger vitality. And as for littleness. Every distinguished woman-writer has been little. Even in the small Australian way, six times in ten the woman who can write a story or a poem rather more intense than the ruck turns out to be a little blackavised creature with bright eye and her clothes bundled on anyhow. Four times in ten she isn't blackavised; but she never fails to be little. Her brains have stolen the energy that makes other woman's bodies grow.64
Such uncritical assertions were not unchallenged by the few among his readers who were of cultivated intelligence. Stephens' inability to assimilate criticisms like Brennan's of his "good old 'highpriori'" reasoning was regrettable. After all Stephens had the confidence of Hazlitt in his criticism and his philosophy, he had the courage to oppose moralistic cant as fearlessly as Anatole France, and he had the ability to write lively interesting prose like that of Saintsbury and Quiller-Couch. Had he been better disciplined intellectually the Red Page in 1898 might have marked the beginning of a truly vital movement in Australia's cultural development if not in Australian literature. Stephens had a good deal in common with the Impressionist critics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries even though he did not subscribe to all their beliefs, and he pointed out on one occasion that "the impression is not all". However, Stephens was convinced of his own sensibility: he informed Red Page readers that "In literature, by many texts and comparisons, I have fairly satisfied myself that my mind is well hung, as it were - delicately poised - that it vibrates easily to a breath of exalted feeling, of natural pathos, and that it remains stiff to conventional artifice.

65 BRP 17 December 1898. See page 186 above.

66 BRP 24 March 1902. See page 409 above.
and pretty puppet play". Like the Impressionists
Stephens was also convinced of the value and importance
of criticism. However, he certainly did not subscribe
to the notion which originated from Ruskin that the artist
himself was the only person fitted to engage in criticism.

Serious objection can be made to Stephens' theory of
literature not on the grounds that it was a compound of
ideas and influences from many sources but because it was in
many ways political, philosophical and social rather than
literary. Furthermore, as a basis for literary criticism,
Stephens' theory, though consistent within itself, was
deficient in that it did not support his attempts to probe
the nature of literature. Perhaps his love of parody
could be attributed to the fact that he found it easier to
mimic than to analyze the qualities he discerned in
literature. Stephens' own explanation of his love of
parody was typically expressed with a physiological analogy.
He wrote that "Good parodies are delightful criticism.
Keen-edged and clean-cutting, they draw blood almost without
wounding; and bleeding is nowadays healthful in letters, if
no longer in anaemic life". Stephens was happy to make

67 BRP 26 June 1897. See page 153 above.
68 BRP 1 July 1899. See pages 221-222 above.
69 Review of George Forest, Misfits: a Book of
Parodies (Oxford, Harvey, 1905), BRP 9 November
1905.
sweeping physiological assertions, but when pressed to expound his theory of literature he tended to retreat ultimately to relativism. In his most sustained investigation of the nature of literature on the Red Page he came to the conclusion that "Literature is - what you like. Admire the corollary: What I like is Literature". In fact Stephens' whole theory of literature was highly subjective, and in his insistence on emotion and force he was really specifying effects rather than delineating qualities which made literature effective. Stephens' theory of literature lacked synthesis as well as depth. For him form and content were separate considerations, and he regarded the image as an addition to poetry, as a trope. These views led him to over-emphasize the importance of literary genres and of literary figures. He sponsored many genre-writing competitions on the Red Page and he believed that excellence was more easily achieved in some genres than in others. The sonnet, for example, he regarded as "a form of verse in which any cultured person, by dint of taking pains, may achieve a tolerable success".

70 For example, "Force in writing comes with congestion of the cortical capillaries": BRP 4 April 1903.

71 "What is Literature?": BRP 17 February 1900. See page 265 above.

72 BRP 17 March 1900. See page 292 above.
Stephens left the literary imagination underexplored on the Red Page, preferring to side-step from aesthetic theory into postulations of a priori physiological certainties. Self-criticism was not one of his strong points. He was apparently unable to discern let alone remedy the weaknesses of his own verse, and given the opportunity to choose from his prose he went unerringly to much of the most idiosyncratic, most physiological, and least interesting of his Red Page writings in The Red Pagan. Nevertheless, Stephens might have been thinking of his predilection for physiological argument when he wrote that to the critic "you may permit one freak, one hobby, one great revolt as everybody's safety-valve". Stephens' willingness to allow the critic an area of unsound judgment was hardly in accord with the best critical principles. Yet there is some argument for refusing to allow the existence of an idée fixe to obscure the remainder of a critic's achievement. R.P. Blackmur, having discussed the danger of a critic's taking a "confused approach" to literature, wrote the following passage, part of which is peculiarly applicable to Stephens:


74 BRP 16 March 1905. See pages 451-452 above.
The worse evil of fanatic falsification — or arrogant irrationality and barbarism in all its forms — arises when a body of criticism is governed by an idée fixe, a really exaggerated heresy, when a notion of genuine but small scope is taken literally as of universal application. This is the body of tendentious criticism where, since something is assumed proved before the evidence is in, distortion, vitiation, and absolute assertion become supreme virtues. I cannot help feeling that such writers as Maritain and Massis — no less than Nordau before them — are tendentious in this sense. But even here, in this worst order of criticism, there is a taint of legitimacy. Once we reduce, in a man like Irving Babbitt, the magnitude of application of such notions as the inner check and the higher will, which were for Babbitt paramount — that is, when we determine the limits within which he really worked — then the massive erudition and acute observation with which his work is packed become permanently available.75

Stephens' work lacked erudition but he was able to observe acutely the qualities of most of the works he reviewed. Despite the rather confused basis of his literary theory and the physiological heresy, his intuitions about literature were usually sound. His did not forego judgment of contemporary writers and, in the light of subsequent critical opinion, he made few errors. It is interesting to note, for example, that a critic as different from Stephens as René Wellek has described Edmund Gosse as "a

versatile but trivial critic". These words could also be used to summarize Stephens' opinion of Gosse. He wrote:

Gosse has been a writer of fine enthusiasms, bright intuitions, and luminous phrases; but he has attempted tasks too heavy for his knowledge, and his critical judgment was never to be depended on. Usually agreeable, and often suggestive, his warm feminine impressions of literature are rarely exact. For want of thoroughness and acumen his histories of English literature have made no mark. He is good company, and has introduced us to many pleasant paths of imagination, yet he cannot reach the temple at the heart of the wood, and must be left always expressing a rather tentative admiration for the trees at the outskirts.

Despite Stephens' obvious preference for poetry he was unable to make a workable distinction between it and prose. He once wrote that "the essential difference between Poetry and Prose lies in the time-pulse or music-beat (i.e., the rhythm), which is the peculiar property of Poetry".

This distinction simultaneously ignored all the subtleties of language and imagery in poetry, of rhythm and diction in prose, and the role of ideas in both. Yet on the Red Page Stephens wrote some good prose and some good criticism of prose. In occasional essays like "The Cloud", in

76 René Wellek, A History of Modern Criticism: The Later Nineteenth Century, page 143.
78 BRP 15 October 1898.
79 BRP 23 March 1905.
which he voiced his misgivings about socialism after an encounter with a Department of the New South Wales Government, he revealed a nice talent for irony as well as mastery of a simple and effective prose style. He also wrote with sound judgment of new works by contemporary novelists, for example of Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* and Joseph Conrad's *The Nigger of the Narcissus*. Thus Stephens in practical criticism was often better than his theory. But there were limitations associated with both his personality and his milieu which he was not able to overcome.

Australia in the Red Page years was in Stephens' view "so great a country . . . so small a parish". With the second assertion there can be little argument. Stephens could scan the current British and American periodical literature and excerpt it for his readers but he could not overcome Australia's remoteness from the flow of European and North American ideas. Australia at the time was preoccupied with ideas not of literature and the arts but of nationalistic fervour and in these Stephens passionately shared. But even had he wished he could not have stemmed

80 BRP 14 March 1896.
81 BRP 4 June 1898.
82 BRP 15 February 1902. See page 244 above.
the tide of national pride mixed with fear of foreign attack which brought the six colonies to Federation. Furthermore Australian nationalism was not looking for new ideas, it was not revolutionary. In essence it was based in practical politics rather than on any ferment of ideas similar to those which had precipitated the founding of the United States of America and the French Revolution. Australia strove to become "a new Britannia", better managed than the old but based on solid bourgeois values. Along with exaggeration and Marxist dogma there is much truth in Humphrey McQueen's thesis. Despite Stephens' iconoclasm and onslaughts against cant and hypocrisy, he was not a free spirit. Unlike Shaw, Huneker and Mencken who, Wilbur Scott writes, "marshaled their wit, intelligence, wide reading and love of shock to unseat the Kronos of Victorianism", Stephens had a patriotic mission. Stephens' patriotism committed him to conservative values, to racial prejudice and to provincialism as it ensured that


he would be unable to concentrate on the study of literature exclusive of political and social considerations.

Having remarked conflicting English critical judgments on a piece of contemporary verse, Stephens claimed near the outset of his Red Page career that "the Australian mind is so peculiarly-situated that its judgments in such a matter are much more likely to be sound than those penned in the heated literary atmosphere of London," Stephens neglected to mention the disadvantages of isolation from a "heated literary atmosphere". He might have done well to have pondered Arnold's views on the effects of provincialism on literary criticism. Arnold wrote:

The provincial spirit, again, exaggerates the value of its ideas for want of a high standard at hand by which to try them. Or rather, for want of such a standard, it gives one idea too much prominence at the expense of others; it orders its ideas amiss; it is hurried away by fancies; it likes and dislikes too passionately, too exclusively. Its admiration weeps hysterical tears, and its disapprobation foams at the mouth. So we get the eruptive and the aggressive manner in literature; the former prevails most in our criticism, the latter in our newspapers. For, not having the lucidity of a large and centrally placed intelligence, the provincial spirit has not its graciousness; it does not persuade, it makes war; it has not urbanity, the tone of the city, of the centre, the tone which always aims at a spiritual and intellectual effect, and not excluding the use of banter, never disjoins banter itself from politeness, from felicity. But the
provincial tone is more violent, and seems to aim rather at an effect upon the blood and senses than upon the spirit and intellect; it loves hard-hitting rather than persuading.

Several of the shortcomings which Arnold attributed to provincialism were features of Stephens' criticism on the Red Page and were manifested in his exaggerated pride in his philosophizing and his calls on physiology to explain literary phenomena; in his enthusiastic praise of some works and more frequent abrupt condemnations of others; in his dogmatism and his lack of urbanity in argument; and in his personal confrontations with writers. Moreover Stephens tried to maintain high critical standards and at the same time foster Australian writing and educate his readers. So he had to attempt to transcend parochialism although he was firmly attached to his place and time by his patriotic hopes for Australia's future greatness in every sphere of activity.

Stephens believed that "fiction and poetry are products of the imagination, and must be judged chiefly in relation to the Ideal, and it is in the discussion of things ideal that the critic finds his wings, if he have any, also his widest province and his best justification". On the Red


BRP 13 June 1898. See page 177 above.
Page, however, Stephens had to reconcile the difference between the Ideal and the real task he had taken upon himself as midwife to Australian literature. Convinced of the superiority of idealistic to realistic art, he had to urge beginners to write of places and events they knew and to write simply, clearly and with an awareness of the rules of craftsmanship. He had to be practical while waiting for the emergence of the Australian who would combine "epic scope and lyric force". Stephens had to work as a critic very close to many of the Australian writers whose work he criticized. Though he did not always treat their work with disinterested detachment, it is difficult on Red Page evidence to detect lack of integrity in his total judgments. His overall opinion of the work of Victor Daley and of Henry Lawson could hardly have been different even had his personal feelings for the two writers been reversed.

Such is the background against which has to be evaluated the claim made by Stephens on his last Red Page that "in the last ten years a good deal has been done towards establishing a canon of local criticism". It

88 See, for example, "The Rudiments of Fiction", BRP 23 November 1896 and page 155 above.

89 BRP 26 September 1896. See page 163 above.

90 BRP 18 October 1906.
is significant first that his canon was "local". Stephens never made any secret of the fact that it was the "little land plot" of Australian literature that he set out to cultivate. And he wanted that literature to convey "genuine Australian ideals". He did not necessarily mean patriotic ideas; witness his frequent censure of the verse of Bernard O'Dowd whose patriotism was beyond question. But Stephens was convinced not only that a nation needed a literature in order to be great but that "a writer who observes and thinks for himself in Australia cannot avoid giving his work an Australian tinge". Stephens' views on what constituted worthy Australian ideals were somewhat limiting to men like Lawson and Brennan, since they were to be ideals of sturdy independence, optimism and courage, enshrining the mythos of the Bush.

Stephens believed that part of the function of the imaginative writer was "to make us perceive what we see, imagine what we already, conceptually or practically, know". This belief was implicit in his dedication of the

91 BRP 23 May 1896. See page 102 above.
92 BRP 23 November 1905. See page 476 above.
93 "The Local Muse", BRP 1 October 1896. See page 154 above.
94 René Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature, p. 33. Taken from a section in which the authors paraphrase the views of Max Eastman.
Red Page to the cause of fostering Australian writing in order that Australians should find self-expression. Stephens made his belief explicit in his review of Henry Lawson's stories, While the Billy Boils. The central problem in Stephens' canon was the conflict between his Australian values and his literary values. For him Australian life was rough but honest and to mirror it crude and vigorous writing was in order. He wrote of Daley that "Less Australian [i.e. than Lawson or Boake], he is more literary". Again, on the last Red Page he edited, Stephens wrote of "Steele Rudd"'s Back at Our Selection that "errors and shortcomings seem somehow to swing with the spirit of the whole performance, as if young Australia were flinging things around from sheer gladness of heart in a reckless and original manner of its own". Between the extremes of his insistence that Australian writing be judged ultimately by world standards and his tolerance of crudity in the interests of having Australia express itself, Stephens sometimes worked on a middle ground on which he tried to tame the Australian wilderness.

95 BRP 29 August 1896. See page 146 above.
96 BRP 11 June 1898.
97 BRP 18 October 1906. See page 467 above.
with sentimentality. Thus he set topics in Red Page verse-writing competitions like "The Honeymoon Train" and "The Dear Australian Villages". Stephens was unable to reconcile the dilemma of establishing a canon of criticism in which both his Australian and his literary values could co-exist. This is in fact a problem which has remained to test the synthesizing powers of Australian critics.

Yet in other ways Stephens laboured to widen the literary perspective in which Australia was to see itself. In his canon Australian literature was to be broadly based on European, rather than exclusively British traditions. Stephens was acquainted with French and German literature, and to a much lesser extent with European philosophy. He praised Heine, admired Taine, delighted in Verlaine and in Zola and Flaubert. He urged Brennan to follow up his interest in the French Symbolists on the Red Page, and himself reported on the work of Turgenev, Gorky and Tolstoy. Though Stephens was overbearing and pedantic in his translation competitions and though he remained

98 BRP 25 July 1896. See page 112 above.

99 BRP 13 April 1901.

apparently unaware of the work of Benedetto Croce, in general he put his knowledge of European languages and literatures to good use in the education of Red Page readers.

Stephens insisted that Australian literature as literature was to be judged by world standards. His frequent references to Australian letters in such terms as "our little sphere"101, the small Australian way"102, "our new-born faintly-shining galaxy"103, and so on, made clear his belief that by world standards Australian writing was insignificant. Stephens made it quite clear for example that by international standards Lawson was "a second-rate poet"104, and there has never been a more unequivocal condemnation of dilettantism and excessive pride in small literary performance than that Stephens delivered to Australian writers on the Red Page for 1 August 1896.105 Stephens' only serious errors of

101 BRP 11 April 1896. See page 114 above.
102 BRP 18 October 1898. See page 504 above.
103 BRP 23 May 1903. See page 348 above.
104 BRP 23 May 1896.
105 See pages 115-120 above.
judgment in favour of Australian writers lay in his attempts in 1898 and 1899 to see in the vapid lyrics of Daley and Quinn and in Ogilvie's lyrical ballads the beginning of a great era of Australian song.\footnote{106} Usually Stephens flayed weakness wherever he found it, whether in J.M. Barrie\footnote{107} or Jennings Carmichael.\footnote{108} There is little evidence in the Red Page to support the view of Stephens as flatterer of local authors which seems to have gained currency in today's journalism.\footnote{109}

On the evidence of the Red Page Stephens could not be accorded rank among significant literary critics of the nineteenth century. The Red Page's significance was local. For its readers it was entertaining, readable and culturally valuable in the range of literature and literary ideas it brought them. If the Red Page could not be claimed to have inspired writers like Furphy, it at least encouraged them and put them in touch with Stephens as a literary editor. In editing the Red Page Stephens had to withstand

\footnote{106}{See pages 196-204 above.}
\footnote{107}{BRP 24 January 1903. See page 358 above.}
\footnote{108}{BRP 11 January 1896. See page 83 above.}
\footnote{109}{For example, "He [Neilson] was one of A.G. Stephens' literary 'finds' in the 1900s, and, as with others of that distinguished critic's protégés, suffered from over-praise". "Onlooker" column, \textit{Sun Herald} 30 January 1972.}
the waves of trivial books which flowed to it for review. He sifted them patiently, usually with sound judgment. His equanimity was disturbed much less by the waves of trivia than by his realization that development in Australian literature was to be much slower than he had hoped in 1896 when he had rejoiced that "Australia really begins to be literary". Yet Stephens continued to work with genuine enthusiasm for literature and without foregoing hope of Australian literary greatness.

The Red Page always had something to say. It was often prejudiced, polemical and overbearing. It was neither closely reasoned in its arguments nor profound in its insights. But it was lively, argumentative and ennobled by Stephens' faith in literature as a vital force in life. The Red Page made available to a society emerging from colonialism a view of a wider literary world. It was tonic; and it provided for a mass of readers and many aspiring writers information and ideas which would otherwise have been inaccessible to them. In spite of Stephens' distractions, idiosyncrasies and philosophic limitations, the Red Page was "an original reaction from Art".

110 BRP 27 June 1896. See page 109 above.
List of Works Consulted

The works in this list have been arranged according to the following classification:

1. Manuscripts
2. Works by A.G. Stephens
3. Works of Australian Interest
4. Works of General Interest

1. Manuscripts

Furphy, Joseph.

Stephens, A.G.


Diary, Correspondence and Scrap Books. Hayes Collection of the University of Queensland Library.


Letters. La Trobe Library of the State Library of Victoria MS 8486.


2. Works by A.G. Stephens


The Boomerang. Brisbane, 1887-1891. A.G. Stephens was sub-editor in 1891, and he edited a literary column called "The Magazine Rifle". His copy of The Boomerang for 1891 is in the Hayes Collection of the University of Queensland Library.


Interviews, Bookfellowship No. 2. Sydney, The Bookfellow, 1921.


The Pearl and the Octopus: and Other Exercises in Prose & Verse. Melbourne, George Robertson, 1911.
A Queenslander's Travel Notes. Sydney, Edwards, Dunlop, 1894.


3. Works of Australian Interest


Coghlan, T.A. A Statistical Account of the Seven Colonies of Australasia. Sydney, Government Printer, 1892.

Devaney, James. Shaw Neilson. Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1944.


Jose, A.W. The Romantic Nineties. Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1933.


Lawson, Sylvia. "The Early Sydney Bulletin". A series of lectures delivered at the University of Sydney under the auspices of the Workers' Educational Association and the Sydney University Extension Board, March-August, 1971. [Unpublished]


Palmer, Vance. *National Portraits*. Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1940.


4. Works of General Interest


A.G. Stephens and The Boomerang

A.G. Stephens has written his own account of his association with The Boomerang on the fly leaf of the bound volume of the newspaper for 1891 which once belonged to him and which is now in the Hayes Collection of the University of Queensland Library. It is as follows:

I spent most of 1891 as sub-editor of the Boomerang in Brisbane. The editor was Gresley Lukin, who had purchased the paper from J.C. Drake and Wm. Lane, and was conducting it as a democratic weekly. He had not enough capital to keep afloat; and in the next year the paper ceased publication - owing me about £7.10s. I applied to the liquidator for a dividend, and received the office Bible.

When I came, Henry Lawson was on the staff at £2 a week, writing verses and "Country Crumbs" - which often were also in verse, printed as prose, and pounded out rhyme by rhyme as Henry tramped the floor interminably. Frank Daly, a clever Irishman, supplied much of the lighter matter - not always scrupulously acknowledged to original sources. A.G. Yewen, a convinced Socialist who expounded Karl Marx until disaster convinced him that Capitalist doctrine paid the Individual Capitalist better, and who took a place on the Sydney Morning Herald, dealt with Labour and wrote leaderettes. Archibald Moston was a well-paid contributor until hard necessity made Lukin ask me to ask him to stop contributing - for Lukin was rather inclined to shirk unpleasant jobs, and wrote nothing himself; though he was always an affable director and a generous director while he had money. The "artist" was J.G. Gasking - rather wooden, but with a talent for getting " likenesses". His portraits
are trustworthy.
A reasonable amount of good work went into the Boomerang; and, for the benefit of future delvers into the history of the Australian Press, I have initialled the leading contributors.

July 29, 1914       A.G. Stephens

In his Boomerang column, "The Magazine Rifle", between January and August 1891, Stephens quoted snippets from overseas and occasionally from Australian magazines, a procedure for which he asserted on 7 February 1891 he found "small occasion to apologize while the inexhaustible field of weekly literary and society review lies open to the 'discriminating shears'." Stephens used to comment on the quality of the magazines as well as on the merit of individual poems and articles. As he put it on 1 August 1891: "A thing of booty is a joy while it lasts. The 'Rifler' sometimes ravages neighbouring as well as foreign fields." On 21 February 1891 he remarked that "A. Werner in a *Time and Times* contributes a spirited lyric that Lindsay Gordon need not have disdained to own", and he went on to quote Gordon's "Bannerman of Dandenong". On 20 June 1891 he summarized a lecture in praise of Thackeray given by Miss Amelia B. Edwards before the Birkbeck Institute and reported in several English literary magazines, and commented: "This if we could have expressed it so well has for about a quarter of a century been our own opinion
of the immortal "Snob". In April and May of 1891 Stephens engaged in a spirited debate with "Scribbler" of Toowoomba, Queensland who challenged his judgment that Kipling was a "literary Charlatan".

The leaders and sub-leaders which Stephens has identified as his own in the Hayes Collection copy reveal that he was already an accomplished journalist, witty and fearless. Commenting on a proposed expedition to found a Socialist Utopia in the Argentine, at the end of a leader on 18 April 1891, he bade dissatisfied Australians: "Don't go to the Argentine, go to the ballot-box." In exposing appalling conditions aboard a British merchant ship on 14 September 1891 he made a statutory declaration that his revelations were the truth. In "The Magazine Rifle" it is possible to see the columnist serving his apprenticeship to the criticism of literature. The column also shows that his association with the Boomerang gave him the opportunity to range widely in his reading of the English and American periodical literature of the time. It is also obvious that the views of the "Magazine Rifle" on the classics and on established contemporary writers were already settled.
Appendix 2

A.G. Stephens' Review of
Christopher Brennan's XXI Poems
on the Red Page for 28 August 1897.

Chris: Brennan is a verser in yet another category. Bayldon wants a dash of the woman - to give him laughter and tears, and flushes of tenderness, and floods of passion; and he wants more vigor - his brain seems tired, anaemic, working slowly and laboriously. And Marshall-Hall, as before stated, has plenty of woman and a good deal of vigor, so Arthur W.L. Bayldon-Hall, if we could only mix him, would probably marry the Muse in immortal earnest. Brennan can woo alone, but he woos very tardily - his 'XXI Poems' (Angus and Robertson) are represented as four years' output, which means an average of less than half-a-poem a month. And the afflatus-years slip away so quickly! Of course, it is in verse, if anywhere, that mere quality is better than mere quantity, but quantity of quality is the final desideratum.

And it is only at the end of his four years' course that Brennan is beginning to do memorable work. At the outset he is lost in misty ideas and whirling verbiage, through which by degrees he gropes his way to lucidity and force - one can see both his mind and his style strengthening as he goes. (Even yet Venus has not quite risen from the foam of words.) And at last he reaches a fine poetical performance with a rare poetical promise, as in 'Romance' -

Of old, on her terrace at evening
. . . not here . . . in some long-gone kingdom
0, folded close to her breast!

- our gaze dwelt wide on the blackness
(was it trees? or a shadowy passion
the pain of an old-world longing
that it sobb'd, that it swell'd, that it shrank?)
- the gloom of the forest
blur'r'd soft on the skirt of the night-skies
that shut in our lonely world.
not here .. in some long-gone world ..

close-lock'd in that passionate arm-clasp
no word did we utter, we stirr'd not:
the silence of Death, or of Love ..
only, round and over us
that tearless infinite yearning
and the Night with her spread wings rustling
folding us with the stars.

not here .. in some long-gone kingdom
of old on her terrace at evening
O, folded close to her heart! ..

This has what is called in critics' jargon 'the lyrical
cry' - a bird not common in any latitude, but most often
not where names like Brennan, or Quinn, or O'Reilly;
cluster round the parallels. And there are two or three
other poetical pieces in Brennan's booklet which have the
same feeling, though it is not tuned to quite the same
pitch. The most powerful piece is 'Cities': which was
printed in 'The Bulletin'. *

The yellow gas is fired from street to street
past rows of heartless homes and hearths unlit
dead churches, and the unending pavement beat
by crowds - gay rather haggard shades that flit
round nightly haunts of their delusivé dream
where'er our paradisical instinct starves -
till on the utmost post, its sinuous gleam
crawls in the oily water of the wharves,

where Homer's sea loses his keen breath, hemm'd
what place rebellious piles were driven down -
the priestlike waters to this task condé'n'd
to wash the roots of the inhuman town -

where fat and strange-eyed fish that never saw
the outer deep, broad halls of sapphire light,
glut in the city's draught each nameless maw
- and there, wide-eyed unto the soulless night
methinks a drown'd maid's face might fitly show
what we have slain, a life that had been free,
clean, large, nor thus tormented - even so
as are the skies, the great winds and the sea.
Ay, we had saved our days and kept them whole
to whom no part in our old joy remains,
had felt those bright winds sweeping thro' our soul
and all the keen sea tumbling in our veins,

had thrill'd to harps of sunrise, when the height
whitens and dawn dissolves in virgin tears,
or caught across the hush'd ambrosial night
the choral music of the swinging spheres

or drunk the silence if nought else - But no!
and from each rotting soul distil in dreams
a poison o'er the old earth creeping slow
that kills the flowers and curdles the live
streams,

that taints the fresh breath of re-risen day
and reeks across the pale bewilder'd moon
- shall we be cleans'd and how? I only pray
red flame or deluge, may that end be soon!

Doubtless this is already enshrined in the scrap books
of the illuminati. There are not many things in life better
than, being a writer, to happen across some one to whom your
long-forgotten emotion has been translated through the magic
of print; and some one who has had that emotion by sim [sic]
for years, and has lived with it and mingled with it, and
tenderly regarded your version of it at times of birth,
marriage, or burial - at the crises of joy or grief, or when
spring-change was thrilling 'this machine'. Someone sent
in the other day an old scrap-book compiled mainly from
Farkeed's 'Empire' in its lusty days, and treasured through
the years since. And upon certain pages where verses nestle
over the name of A.J. Evelyn, there are stains probably of
time, yet not impossibly of tears - for the forgotten
Evelyn was worth a tear. A poet wants no better
immortality for his verses than tear-stains in an old
scrap-book.

* The lines had been published under the title
"Night-piece" in "Various Verses" in The Bulletin,
11 July 1896, page 3. There were differences
in capitalization and punctuation and two minor
changes in wording between this version and
that published in XXI Poems.
The secret is out. To speak a priori, and settle questions in advance - envious prestige! - all you want is physiology. "No man ever creates anything in letters when over 50; no man creates anything which is worth creating (gives forth a fresh, strong, original impulse) after 40. To expect a poetic masterpiece after 25 years hard scholastic labor is to fly in the face of physiology." Ips: Physiologus dixi. Punctum.

Perhaps the "physiologist" is, after all, "flying in the face" of fact. Tradition, at least, imaged Homer as "the old man in rocky Chios," and Aeschylus called song "a wayside gift from heaven to men whose prime is past." History would have us believe that Aeschylus wrote the Prometheus and Oresteia when over 60, Sophocles the Cadipus Coloneus when over 80, Euripides his most passionate and romantic tragedies - a striking contrast to the realistic problem-dramas of his youth - on the environs of 70. Milton wrote no verse beyond scattered sonnets for 20 years, sat him down at 51 and dictated "Paradise Lost". Tennyson did finer lyrical work at 60 and upwards than in his youth; Swinburne's "Tale of Balen", written at 58, is as fresh and poignant as the "Poems and Ballads" of his twenties. Only a few examples these.

"A poet is not there to compile." Perhaps not; but if you mean to say that there is no memory for inspiration, no power of developing and amplifying the confused riches thereof - generally just the raw matter of art - that the poet cannot patiently and systematically exercise his voluntary consciousness on the sudden "surges" and flashes of his subconscious mind, just as other people can in other departments, pray how came Goethe to write "Faust", Milton to write "The Paradises", Dante to write "The Commedia", Hugo "The Légende des Siècles", &c., &c., &c.?
Nor did all the lyrical poets, from whom the "surge" theory is a hasty generalisation, get them delivered of their songs in a frenzy. Technique? - technique can neither be learned nor practised apart from the matter it is suited to: there is no abstract technique.

The fact is, genius generally "flies in the face" of everything; of physiology, by living harder and wilder, and yet longer than cautious people; also in the face of critics. For another instance, haven't they been telling us that to write one's tongue well and preserve originality one should know only that one tongue. Proofs: Milton, skill'd and eloquent in six languages; Swinburne, rhythmical in five.

Now what is behind all this "physiology"? Perhaps this: poetry is the product of green and salad days, prose the result of thought. Therefore, as thought is to emotion - pardon, as grey matter is to white ... or is it as white is to grey? - of course, I don't know, but no odds - so is prose to verse. "Verse is the weak feminine of prose," and the man is the woman's head. As for the prose which is the sturdy - not to say "stodgy" - male of the verse of Aeschylus, Dante, Marlowe, Milton; if I were to enquire as to its whereabouts who knows whether the "physiologist" mightn't turn a somersault, while still remaining true to the good old "highpriory", and tell me that it was laid up, along with physiological certainty, in Plato's transcendental heaven?
O this is the song of the Critic Man and the Poet who craved his aid, 
For the singer came of a Scottish clan, and none of his verses paid,
So he sought the Critic who acts as Fate with an aspect keen and sage,
And raises cash at a lordly rate by running "The Purple Page".
The Poet sank at the Critic's boots, and caught him about the knees
And sobbed: "I'm sick of derisive hoots; so give me your counsel, please.
I fain would write such a gallant song that the trump of 'The Purple Page'
Would tootle its praise with a blast so strong it would echo from age to age."
"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,
But there wasn't a Purple Critic's pen to show what they should have been,
And so they scribbled and scrawled away, and the Public (being untaught)
Like a tame ass nibbled their wisps of hay, and by primitive wiles were caught;
And now the halter is round their nose, and the selfsame track they tread -
Or did, till 'The Purple Page' arose and clamoured:
THE DEAD ARE DEAD!
So down with 'the Monarchs of Royal Song,' and shovel them out of sight!
The millions echoing praise are wrong, but 'The Purple Page' is right."
"Then how shall we know when a work is great?" the Poet enquired, and sighed.

"I'm coming to that, if you'll only wait," the Man of the Page replied;

"The poet sings of the things he knows, and what do we know out here?
The hills where the stunted gum-tree grows, and the froth of the thrip'ny beer,
And sheep and cattle on burning plains, and dust, and the plague of flies,
And sunbaked saddles and brittle reins, and bush where the curlew cries;
And men who tramp it and men on mokes in the motley play of fate,
And bummers, and shearsers, and coxes, and blokes,
and critics, and love and hate."

"Hm! these are the subjects that lie to hand? - but what must the poet bring -
A love of beauty, a cunning hand, and the inborn power to sing?"

"Why, first of all, he must calmly trace his manifold hopes and fears
To their primal source in the savage race far over the labelled years.
He must not think of the noble plan, but most grovel and search the dust,
And must sift the body and soul of man for his elements - greed and lust;
For lust is the glory of Purpleness, and the fashion of bards to-day
Is to mash themselves to a Purple mass for the Future to clear away.
Short-necked, full-blooded, licorous, strong, must the Page-boomed Poet be;
(Two liquids mix in the ink of Song, and one of 'em's blood, you see.)"

"My neck is long."
"Then your cake is dough."
"Ah, spare me the purple rest!"
"Well, red corpuscles are all the go, and a short, thick neck is best."
The poet staggered away in grief, and moaned on the office stair,
And sought in the nearest pub. relief from the grip of his fierce despair;
But they cleared him out and they moved him on to the last resource of woe,
And the papers noted at last he'd gone where the Purple Poets go.

J. Le G. B.

ERP, 28 January 1899.
The Little iron-grey man stood at the door of his hostel, calmly eyeing the distance. In the direction in which he looked, toward Alice Springs, nothing was visible but the stony floor of the desert, shimmering under a sky of brilliant blue. Here and there a clump of ragged mulgas lit up the expanse; the Mitchell-grass left by the rains had been scorched to dry roots. He moved inside to cast a final glance at the preparations which she had ordered. In the larger room the massive table filled nearly the whole of the space. Around it, on three sides, chairs were ranged so closely that there was scarcely room to walk between them; and at the head, on a dais raised somewhat above the floor, stood one chair alone. In such a place, these chairs were remarkable; for each was carved from a solid block of wood, and their grotesque ornamentation seemed to satisfy the oddest vagaries of aboriginal fancy. Except for the table and the chairs, the room was empty, and the stone walls were uncoloured and bare. The man surveyed the disposition of the chairs, found nothing to alter, and returned to the door. It was not yet ten o'clock, and she had told him to prepare all for her peculiar hour of noon. He filled his pipe and waited calmly.

A stranger - and all white men were strangers in that district in the heart of Australia - would have wondered to see a stone house, solidly built, standing so far in the desert. It was away from all roads, and even away from the central telegraph line. No wheel-tracks were seen near it; no path led from it in any direction. Apparently none but wandering aboriginals could ever have taken advantage of its shelter. Yet there it stood under the fierce sun, in the unbroken silence; and a sign which seemed to mark it as a hostel swung from a projecting beam above the door. Upon one side of the sign was written, in red letters, the word RIOT!
Upon the other side was written, in black letters, the word

REST.

Beneath the sign the little iron-grey man smoked calmly.

His second pipe was half-finished when his attentive eye perceived upon the eastern horizon a blurred patch which seemed to be detaching itself from the blurred clumps of distant mulga. He watched with calm interest: it was a year since he had seen a white face. The patch quickly defined itself and took shape as a figure on horse-back, which presently trotted up to the door and asked for Scotch whisky. The little iron-grey man surveyed the visitor calmly. He was a small, boyish fellow, with a good-natured expression - his face told nothing in particular beyond good-nature; and he rode an old gray horse which looked as if it had been hungry for some years.

"I suppose this is the place?" he asked, with a light smile.

The little iron-grey man took his pipe from his mouth. "This is the place."

"And what about the whisky?"

"There is nothing but mulga rum; you're welcome to that."

The visitor dismounted, and the gray horse immediately lay down and made noises suggestive of hunger. His rider patted him kindly, and followed the little iron-grey man inside to the smaller room, where a row of wooden vats stood behind a carved wooden counter. The little iron-grey man filled a glass with fluid which shone with the deep, intense blue of the sky without.

"And this is mulga rum?"

"Ay - distilled from the sap of the mulga."

The visitor tasted it. "Funny flavour?" he smiled.

"The best flavour," said the little iron-grey man.
The visitor drank, and presently asked for another glass. The little iron-grey man shook his head. "Better not!" he said, and went outside.

"Hold on! I haven't paid you."

The little iron-grey man took no notice. He was watching the arrival of two more travellers, on foot.

"Now we'll have an explanation of the mystery!" said the leader of the two, a shortish fellow, with a brown face framed in rusty-brown hair. "Are you the proprietor of this caravanserai? . . . Hullo! You here!" he shook hands with the first traveller without pausing in his question.

The little iron-grey man nodded.

"Then can you tell me why I and my friend here have suddenly felt an irresistible impulse to come to this outlandish place - why we simply had to come - couldn't keep our feet away from it? - and can you tell us, further, who paid our fares and smoothed away the obstacles of the journey? - and can you tell us, finally, why we both had a premonition that we must bring a poem in our pockets?"

The little iron-grey man paused in re-filling his pipe.

"You will know later," he said, calmly.

"You have n't sampled the rum yet!" said the first traveller, with his genial smile.

"Rum! Good God! where is it! Come along!" He hurried inside, followed by his mate, a tall, silentious person with a long head and eyes of faded blue.

"Well, this is rum!" He held the glass admiringly to the light and sniffed the pervasive odour. He tasted it. "Rum! It is nectar - pure nectar! This is the drink that Ganymede gives to the gods. And as we are the gods, you" - he took off his hat and bowed magnificently to the little iron-grey man - "must be Ganymede!" He looked round triumphantly to mark his effect - drank - smacked his lips - and threw out commandingly the arm which held the glass. "Another glass, Ganymede!"
"Bet--" commenced the little iron-grey man, and checked himself, looking at his guest. He re-filled the glasses. "It's good, isn't it," said the tall man tentatively, resting himself loosely on the counter.

"Good!" The rusty-brown traveller flung out his arms with a gesture of sweeping disdain. "Good! Here is the best liquor in all the earth - in all the earth - and a far better liquor than they have wit to concoct in Heaven - and this man says it's good! Good! My God!"

But seeing that there was no longer an audience (for the little iron-grey man had returned to the door), he dropped his voice and remarked meditatively, "I wonder what we're here for? There are more of them outside."

Indeed, travellers were now fast arriving. The first was a tallish, thinish fellow on foot, with a sunken visage lighted by soft, dark eyes. He slouched up to the door with, "Well, chaps, I see you're all here!" - and was immediately beckoned to the counter by the rusty-brown man, who had already taken charge of the proceedings and was playing the part of host with practised ease.

The next came ambling up on a good horse. He was a muscular fellow, clean-shaven, with an anxious brow and he threw half-nods all round as he recognised the company. Followed him a stoutish young man with a florid complexion and a fine dome of skull. He padded leisurely to the door, looking enquiringly around, but with the self-conscious expression of one who is master of his fate and equal to any symbol under cover of which Fortune may present herself.

Then followed a tribe of others wearing various aspects - all of them (with exception of a lad of seventeen who walked with the air of meditative seventy) being in turn introduced to the sapphire mulga-essence behind the carved counter.

It was now nearly noon. The little iron-grey man cast a decisive glance at the sun, put his pipe in his pocket, closed the door, and calmly motioned the company into the larger room. No sooner were they seated than the reason of their presence seemed to become manifest simultaneously to them all.

"Oh, that's it, is it," said the anxious-browed horseman. "Then---"

"Allow me!" interposed the rusty-brown traveller,
rising in his seat with the importance of a master of ceremonies, and moving towards the unoccupied chair at the head of the table. The little iron-grey man, standing beside it, shook his head calmly. "Oh, very well - no matter - I can speak just as well where I am.

Gentlemen! - We are met here, as I understand, at the invitation of the Genius of Australia" - he bowed raciously towards the empty chair - "to decide which of our number shall be hailed and acclaimed as Poet Laureate of this magnificent continent."

He paused. In the space upon the table directly in front of the vacant chair, there had become suddenly visible a wreath of gum-leaves. No one had placed it there; it simply manifested itself, like a Mahatma's letter arriving from unknown heights of space. All eyes turned to it; even the elderly lad of seventeen regarded it with mild curiosity. At the same moment there was a rustling of silken garments as if some person had occupied the chair at the head of the table; and all were conscious of a new Presence in the room - a Presence intensely vital, splendidly imperious, distinctly feminine. The little iron-grey man bent in an attitude of worship.

After a moment the speaker continued, in a lower voice: "We are here, gentlemen, I say, to decide which of our number shall be called - er - Laureate of Australia; and I doubt not that you have been impelled to bring - er - as I have, some - er - testimonial of your title to this high and honourable office. I gather that it is the wish of the - er - exalted Personage whom I now understand to be present" - he looked inquiringly at the Chair - "that these testimonials shall now be read, and my own I will proceed to read to you. Possibly when I have finished" - he gazed invitingly at the wreath of gum-leaves - "it may be thought - er - unnecessary to go any further." He looked round with an air of illumination, and continued: "It has this moment been made known to me, gentlemen, at the will of our gracious Hostess" - he bowed patronisingly to the Chair - "and, doubtless, to you also, that should to the Chair - "and, doubtless, to you also, that should any of our poor compositions seem to you worthy, that wreath of gum-leaves which we see before us will of its own motion ascend to crown the brow of the laureate. Well, then," - he smoothed his hair - "ahem!"
AMA. 'NTH.

The days rise up in argent lace,
The rights are steeped in purple dreams,
But not for me the radiant tide,
And not for me the poppied streams.

The cynical years have brought no calm;
No glory dazzles through the haze;
In vain I seek the ancient balm,
In vain the light of other days.

Then Youth flung largesse to the winds
That brought new gifts from every clime,
And perfect love attuned our minds,
And Beauty consecrated Time.

And hand-in-hand we wandered through
A dim, delicious orchard-close,
Where many a lovely flower blew
In fragrance to out-vie the Rose,

Who flaunted splendour all around
As never since the world began,
Save in the enchanted Persian ground
Of sweet-voiced Saadi's Gulistan.

Yet when you stayed to pluck a flower
High-destined to a happier lot:
"This rose will not outlive the hour,
And even fades forget-me-not;"

You said, - "but when this day has flown,
That you may aye remember me
Through life, and death, and all, your own -
Take amaranth, and rosemary."

Then in that shining orchard there
Our dreams made music all the day,
With viol, lute, and dulcimer
We watched them pass in brave array.

And you were Queen of Phantasy,
And I was King of Fair Romance:
To us the courtiers bent the knee,
For us the minstrel and the dance.
Our throne was one great amethyst
    Shapen and carved with cunning arts,
The footstools that our suppliants kissed
    Were opals shot with fiery darts.

The arras of our presence-hall,
    Woven by looms of far Cathay,
Bade Life and Death in worship fall,
    So dark its shades, its hues so gay.

And pages, slashed and furbelowed,
    Sported with scarlet shoulder-knots
Where musical, sweet waters flowed
    From sculptured founts and hidden grots;

And Love and Joy, with hurrying feet,
    Presided over all our hours,
Till came a gust of wintry sleet,
    And birds were mute, and drooped the flowers.

And now, alas! in exile old,
    From that fond empire fallen low,
I mourn the days of rose-at-gold,
    The halcyon prime of long ago.

I know not where your spirit flies,
    In what dark realm for succour craves,
Or if in lost Atlantis sighs
    And wanders far beneath the waves,

Or if in some Hesperides
    Where blessed souls, divinely pure,
Beneath the golden-fruited trees
    Walk in a peace for ever sure;

But wheresoever you may be,
    I pray that God may give me grace
One day in far eternity
    To gaze a moment on your face.

Come then the torment and the pain!
    Come then the tempest of the soul!
I shall be bathed in bliss again
    Till Time shall wither like a scroll.

For sweet Adonis' festival
    The Greeks of old a garden grew,
Where lettuce twined with fennel tall,
    But never came a slip of rue.
For when the short-lived feast was o'er  
The faded wreaths were thrown away,  
And why remember, why deplore  
(They said) the joys of Yesterday?

I too grew for the feast of Life  
Within my heart a garden rare,  
Where Love and Fame, in friendly strife,  
And every pleasing flower had share.

The rose, and royal hollyhock,  
Blue lavender and lily, too,  
I tended - and the Fates made mock,  
For ah! their roots were all in You.

I watched them one by one depart,  
And of them all remains to me  
This fadeless blossom of my heart,  
The amaranth of Memory.

The rusty-brown traveller closed in a cadence of  
ecstasy, with an expectant eye on the wreath of gum-leaves.  
There was a little sigh from the Chair, followed by a  
movement of impatience, and the wreath did not move.  
"Oh, very well, then---!" He sat down noisily, and  
scowled as he pushed his manuscript about on the table.  
The little iron-grey attendant nodded to the wiry horseman,  
who commenced rather nervously:-

THE HONOUR OF THE DISTRICT.

He was a noble Englishman - a-travelling round the earth  
To cure incipient tendency to gout -  
Or so he said; and ten portmanteaux guaranteed his birth,  
But the Cooma district could n't make him out.  
For he turned up at Kiandra, when the carnival was on,  
And he won the champion snowshoe-race with ease;  
The local heroes hung their heads and said, when he had  
gone,  
'Twas plain the gout had never reached his knees!  
His name was something-Cholmondeley; he was very wide-  
awake;  
And all the girls admired his Alpine hat; -  
But, you see, it was the honour of the district was at  
stake,  
And they could n't let him travel off with that.
He was heard of next at Jindabyne, duck-shooting in the spring,
And he killed his birds without a single miss;
And the veteran Jinda sportsmen, who "preferred a lively wing,"
Opened eyes and muttered, "What the gout is this!"
He was asked to Adaminaby, to see some shearing done
(He grew fonder of the district every day),
And the boys all looked delighted when he said that, just for fun,
He would shear a few to drive the gout away!
So they chose a heavy wether, with a real mountain fleece,
And they showed him how he ought to hold the shears
(The points away) and how to pluck the wool (like plucking geese),
And they stood around prepared with cheerful jeers.

But the stranger gripped the wether like a workman with his knees,
And his stroke was swift and clean - a ringer's clip;
He had finished that big wether in five minutes, if you please!
And had pinked as if the boss was at his hip.
He said he felt that nothing helped like shearing for the gout,
And he kept the pickers going all the day;
The ringer had shorn eighty five, when Cholmondoley with a shout
Marked "Ninety!" - and the bell rang - "Wool away!"
But he said, of course with practice he would really get up speed:
The thing was to make sheep obey your eye;
In love, and war, and sport, and work, an Englishman could lead
If he only once made up his mind to try.

But the boys were very sulky, for they had n't a reply,
And they put their heads together what to do,
When suddenly Wild Donegan jumps up and slaps his thigh:
"By Hokey! lads, we'll see the beggar through!
We'll have a little steeplechase, a sweet three mile or so,
And set the course down Nungar mountain side;
We'll make a jolly day of it, and ask the girls below,
And we'll string my noble Johnny on to ride!"
And they set at once to state the little plan,
And the Englishman was willing - for, of course,
Though he was n't any horseman, he believed that any man
With good English blood could sit upon a horse.
The day came round, and such a crowd was never seen before,
From every station round, from every town,
From Tumut, Gilmore, Adelong, they rallied by the score
To see the noble Englishman put down.
They gave him a young brumby that was only ridden twice,
But he managed to stick on through all the chaff;
And then the starter called them, and they cantered in a trice,
While the girls picked places ready for the laugh.
The start was up among the clouds that hid the mountain top,
And the riders all seemed dropping on your head,
You'd think that once they tumbled they would never, never stop
Till they landed in the rocky streamlet-bed.

They came down helter-skelter, and the stones flew in their wake;
And they risked their necks, quite careless of a fall,
For they knew the tarnished honour of the district was at stake -
But the Englishman rode straightest of them all!
He brought his mount in lengths ahead, a-tremble and a-foam;
When the others straggled after in a tail,
He was talking to the girls about the hunting leaps "at home" -
Forty feet of ditch beyond a nine-foot rail!
He feared he had done badly - since he saw they looked askance,
But he wished he had his Shetland pony there
He had ridden when a youngster - that he might have had a chance
To show the girls what Englishmen could dare!

And the boys of Adaminaby, with faces long and glum,
Loosed bridles and rode silently away;
They felt too sick for cursing, but they wished in Kingdom Come
The Johnny who had beaten them that day,
But jolly Jeanie Mackie was with indignation full,
And she gathered all the girls together there:
Says she, "The boys have failed to get this Johnny by the wool,
So we girls will try and catch him by the hair!
He put them down quite easily - no wonder that they frown!
But the honour of the district is at stake;
And there's one thing, girls, I wager that he never will put down -
And that's a slice of Tumut Christmas-cake!

Now, the Tumut cake is famous over all the country-side,
For the recipe is never known to fail:
'Twas invented by a bushranger to welcome home his bride,
And they hanged him for the crime in Wagga gaol.
It is tougher than the hair-ball that you find inside a cow,
And the currants break your teeth off when you bite:
There was no one ever heard of who could eat a slice, they vow,
And a single crumb will turn a stranger white.
So they set to work and made it, and they mixed it double strength,
'Stead of' treacle using glue, to take no chance;
They baked it for a week or more, and when it was done at length
They invited all the district to a dance.

The noble Englishman came first: his dancing was renowned;
He put all the local steppers in the shade;
And he held the girls so deftly that they never touched the ground,
But flew like birds - no matter what they weighed!
So they felt a little sorry when the supper-bell rang . . .
And even Jeanie's voice commenced to shake;
When she said, "Oh, Mister Cholmondeley, you are hungry now, no doubt,
Won't you try a slice of Tumut Christmas-cake?"
But he simply said "With pleasure!" Lord! that man had pluck in stacks!
And she passed him a great slice upon a plate
(They'd chopped at it for half-an-hour, until they broke the axe)
And all the people gathered round to wait.

They saw it was the real thing, as black as night inside,
With delusive sugar icing, pink and white;
And strong men gasped and shuddered, and the women nearly cried,
As the Englishman prepared to take a bite.
He took it, and it held his jaws as firmly as a vise;
But the courage of the dogged British race
Rose within him, and he stiffened all his muscles to the slice,
And he ate it without stirring from his place!
But hardly had he finished when he gave a fearful yell,
And leapt in air eleven feet or more;
He writhed, and squirmed, and fought, and tore, and
wriggled where he fell,
And his horrid groaning noises shook the floor.

They almost felt remorseful as they watched the wreck he made,
So they lifted him and put him in a bed;
And all the girls stood round him with their handkerchiefs displayed,
And when the spasms had left him, thus he said:
"Here die I an Englishman, who loved his country well,
And my enemies I honestly forgive;
But there's no man born of woman, and no devil out of hell,
Who could eat a slice of Tumut cake and live!"
So he died, as was expected, and the people all agreed
It was right the district honour so to save;
And his funeral was elegant as any man could need,
And three parsons were discoursing at his grave.

And the boys all threw a clod upon the coffin - just for luck,
And the girls sowed weeping willows for his sake;
Though bonnie Jeanie Mackie lost her pride and lost her pluck,
And cried at home as if her heart would break.
They got a Sydney tombstone up, with all his names in full
(There were nine beside the Cholmondeley) - and a text;
For they knew a noble Englishman is pure merino wool,
And they did n't want his mother to be vexed.
So the job was neatly finished; every man his shilling gave,
For the honour of the district was at stake;
And they tell the stranger proudly: "He was bravest of the brave;
But we put him down - with Tumut Christmas-cake!"

There was a sound from the Chair as of a half-suppressed laugh - a laugh deliciously toned; but the wreath did not move. The tall, fair traveller, who had several times half-risen from his seat, seized the opportunity, and read in a dreamy, chanting voice some lines, of which only here-and-there-a-one was audible:—

The city lay a-swellter in the heat . . .
There came a wind, a lion-wind that leapt . . .
And little children gasped and strove for breath . . .
Drooped necks like weary lilies on their stalks . . .

Until — . . . and eyes awoke to shine
And men praised God for life and love, fair women and
he ended with impressive unction; but the gum-leaves only shivered slightly, as if a breeze had passed over them. The little iron-grey man nodded to the first-comer, who rose with an apologetic smile.

"I'm afraid mine is n't of very much account," he said; "but of course I don't take myself very seriously, and I'd never dream of expecting any such honour as that which is proposed for one of the others, whom I'm sure are all very much better than I am." This modesty being greeted with encouraging cries of "Go on!" - and a marked wave of sympathy proceeding from the Chair - the speaker was emboldened to read the following:-

BEAUTY'S A-FLOWER

The sun goes down in glory,
   The long day's toil is done:
'T is time to tell the story
   That waits for set of sun.
Gray Ronald whinnies waiting;
   The good horse knows his task;
For Night's the time for mating,
   And Love has but to ask.

So mount in haste, fond lover!
   And o'er the plain away;
There's fifteen miles to cover,
   And back by break of day.
Through cabbage-gums a-blossom
   In Springtide's lavish dower:
With million-creaming bosom
   The grey Bush is a-flower!

So up the rocky ridges,
   Along the silent creek
Where spiders build their bridges
   And ghostly curlews shriek;
Till, swift as Love's own shallor,
   We skirt the timber dead
And settle for the gallop -
   The fence a mile ahead.

What fence would stop a lover
   With Beauty waiting there!
So off . . . and up . . . and over!
   With half-a-yard to spare.
Was ever good horse bolder!
   What reck though Fortune lower.
The foam-flecks gem his shoulder -
   Gray Ronald is a-flower!
A mile, and then I wander
The garden path I know:
See! in her window yonder
The trysting light burns low.
Hush, voice! what need of token?
Hush, heart! her pledge is true:
Such faith was never broken;
She's yours, and all for you...

A footstep patters lightly,
A face upturns to mine,
A snowdrift breast heaves whitely
And misty blue eyes shine:
O, Love it is Life's noon-light
And this Love's day and hour -
Her lips meet mine in moonlight,
And Beauty is a-flower!

"You're out of it!" cheerfully remarked the rusty-brown traveller, who had recovered his natural good humour.
"Who's next?"

"I believe I am next," said the traveller with the Jovian brow, rising rather ponderously. "The piece which I am now about to read to you, Madam" - he addressed the Chair with dignity - "may be considered somewhat difficult of apprehension; but that is a quality which it shares in common with everything which represents the triumph of refined taste as opposed to that of the gross hard - 'la multitude vile', as Baudelaire fitly describes them. I admit, however, that the piece is not designed to be ingested in the process of oral recitation. Nevertheless -"

He paused. All eyes, and ears, were turned to the Chair. Yes, there it came again - a sound scarcely breathed, softly modulated; yet a snore, a distinct, unmistakable Snore!

A hot-tempered poet rose, stammering: "B-b-but this is m-m-monstrous! I have n't read m-m-mine yet!"

"Nor I!" "Nor me!" "We have n't read ours!" cried fourteen poets in chorus.

Everybody rose and gesticulated with the exception of the traveller whose reading had been interrupted. He seated himself with the expression of Eugene Arv, in the
condemned cell, equal to either fortune. The hubbub grew around him. The rusty-brown traveller, vociferating, "Gentlemen! Gentlemen!" was powerless to quell the tumult. The little iron-grey man appeared perplexed, but calm.

Suddenly there was silence. As mysteriously as She had come, they felt the Presence vanish. For a moment they were awed. Then a poet rose to his opportunity. "I have not yet read mine", he explained; "but mine is undoubtedly the best. Therefore -" And he stretched over the table and grasped the wreath of gum-leaves.

That is, he grasped the space where the wreath had been. For, even as he touched it, it disappeared beneath his fingers: one would have said it had melted into air. There remained - a single leaf.

Instantly the poets nearer to the leaf threw themselves upon it. Those farther from the leaf threw themselves upon the poets. There was combat and a scuffle. Loud voices affirmed superiority; louder voices denied. Several poets on the outskirts of the struggling mass commenced to read their pieces to each other. Then the little iron-grey man perceived it was his time to act.

Upon his hint several left the room. The others he collared and took in turn to the door, kicking them forth calmly, but not unskilfully. When all were out, he closed the door.

No sooner had a poet reached the open air than he tottered and fell, and slept instantly where he fell. Not one who had partaken of the mulga rum escaped its potent stupor. The youthful antique alone remained erect, gazing pensive at the prone forms that strewed the ground around him. While light remained, he busied himself in inditing a poem descriptive of the scene. When the light failed, he chose the plump and dignified traveller for a pillow, and slept deliberatively. Above him, in the newly-risen breeze of evening, the sign of the hostel creaked backward and forward between its legends of Riot and Rest - Riot, and Rest. And the vast wings of Night drooped over all.
When the travellers woke at daylight, dishevelled but buoyant, they stared round in surprise. They lay, or sat, or stood, among the stones of the desert. The hostel had vanished. The more curious searched for its site, but found no trace that a building had stood where they remembered it. Then - was Yesterday a dream? No; for an ambient odour of mulga rum still remained like a blessing upon the spot. "The rum at least was real," muttered the rusty-brown traveller regretfully.

It was fortunate that some of them had sandwiches in their pockets; and they remembered having passed a waterhole not far away. Gradually they made their way back to civilisation. Nobody yet wears the crown of gum-leaves.

But the leaf remains in the possession of the poet with the best right to it.

A.G.S.

BRP, 7 December 1901.
ILLUSTRATIONS
LITERARY NOTES.

Recent Verse.

"There is a great gulf fixed."—Luke xvi. 26.

VERSE.

Verse is the kind of thing that anyone may write with a certain amount of culture and a certain amount of pains: Poetry is the other kind of thing. And the gulf is always there—wide, narrow and deep—still, a gulf. Poets are not poets, not poets fit. Perhaps at supreme crises of existence—first love, fatherhood, motherhood, the death of dear ones—the poet's voice is feebler than the gulf, distributes itself in a shape of liquid, and for a moment gain foothold on the farther verge as true Poets. But this is rare; and even so one seems to discover the artificial stimulus, to note the loss of native spontaneity. It is the difference between the bubbling spring and the artesian bore, between humanity unadorned and beauty mantled, cosseted, and dressed by Worth. Of the verse's highest efforts you may say at once, "This is fine!"—of the Poet's you may say: "It is not because you feel it.

Certainly, after the mephit, when satiety has dulled the fragrance of passion, it becomes possible for the critic to look a poet on the feet, and point to its unconscious breadth during the honeymoon, at all events, a poet's voice is feebler than the gulf, distributes itself in a shape of liquid, and for a moment gain foothold on the farther verge as true Poets. But this is rare; and even so one seems to discover the artificial stimulus, to note the loss of native spontaneity. It is the difference between the bubbling spring and the artesian bore, between humanity unadorned and beauty mantled, cosseted, and dressed by Worth. Of the verse's highest efforts you may say at once, "This is fine!"—of the Poet's you may say: "It is not because you feel it.


PROSPECTUS.

OF THE GENERAL GORDON EXTENDED GOLD-MINING COMPANY, NO LIABILITY.

To be registered as a No-Liability Company under "The Companies Act 1882."

Capital : £45,000 in 90,000 Shares of 5s. each.

50,000 Shares issued as paid to 5s. per Share are offered to the public at 5s. on application and 2s. 6d. on allotment.

40,000 Shares fully paid up are to be issued to the Vendor, who also receives £2000 in full payment for the property.

Provisional Directors: Hon. Dr. Allan Campbell, M.L.C., James Newland, Esq., Harry Hickford, Esq.

Bankers: Bank of Australia.


Brokers: W. A. Kingsborough, 3 Royal Exchange, Adelaide.


A STUDY IN WHITE AND GOLD.
The Modern Jeweller's Shop, 50 King Street, Sydney.

The Goldsmiths & Silversmiths Alliance.

Samuel Low, Marston and Co. published at the end of their edition of J. B. commuter's "The Un-Honorable," a local novel which contains remarkably plain references to the scandals of a former Q. governing ring. Mr. K. may say, a busy little journalist who was formerly a Wesleyan clergyman, has three or four other stories in print or in press.

"When I first began journalism," said John Darby recently, "a London morning paper reviewed a book causally—once in half a year; now one of its most popular features is a careful survey of all the work done in Literature, art, and music." And can it be said that the new culture-width implies less depth?
The wise Ulysses stands upon the stair,
His wave-draped robe always idly at his feet;
And all around is stillness, save the best
Of faintest ripples that make cool the mast
With cool lipped sound, and on the ocean floor
Of well-grown rock, fit golden shadows fleet,
And in the sleeping sun
Ulysses bears a name from 1,200 days of yore.

He saw the grey and wintry olive woods
Upon the smooth green shoulder of the hill;
And he beheld the muffling of the grey, rough floods
That smile the shore and all the pebbles thrill
With glad stern motion in the setting sun;
But salt sails crust, green award; and olive tree
Grew dreamlike; and his eyelids slowly fell;
And seeing the sun of the sea,
For memory’s lingering voice now names Penelope,
In silent sunshine lies each winding street,
Nor is there intervenent either high or low;
His hands are no sound of any feet,
And the sweet blue air is in a glow
From some divinest wellspring’s overflow
Of tender bliss,
And on the stately limbs of carved snow,
And on the columned marble’s peachy hug,
The glad morning light; trebles and blooms on air,
O how they speak not but list that silvery sound
Of flute, and pipes, and merry clashing din,
And cry of sweet clear voices, floating round
The temple’s roof—O, can it be a sun
To think Apollo and his shining kin
Have left the glittering mount?—In colored words
They slowly lower past where keen and thin
The hot light leaves the ebon shade—who leads
This train of tender youth fresh from the flowery meads.

The scattered buds a dainty pathway leave;
From orbs and lappets that the children bring
Faint haunting gales of sylvan sweetness breathe—
As shyly sweet is a young blue-eyed thing!
The wise Ulysses yearns to see her clasp
About his childless neck, and with them roam
Beneath the rain of garlands, hear them sing
In rapturous harmony!—Spring! Spring! Spring is come,
Ah leave the host of stone, the sweet earth is your home.

The word “sansouciot,” which the French
Revolution applied in a altered sense, was first
coined by the Abbé Maury, who used it of some
ladies in the court. The reader will note that the New
Woman does not follow here as so anticipated.

Arnold (another comparison) could not be
assumed.

ULYSSES.

To Homer, who wrote the Iliad and Odyssey,
And to his mound, which now is lying there.
To give a reception to our Homer, Miss Jones—
And winding up with
To ask when we first bestowed a great sea;
The angels told his lot for to see;
The sea and the tempest, that dangerous gale,
That came to Corinth, and so did the wind,
A pleasant, in the push of pretentious
allies, to meet a modest little pamphlet of
“Verse” by James H. L. Blake, of
Hobart, which yet includes lines whose
melody, and simplicity, and flavour, might
well claim the higher taste. Could Homer,
for example, wish a better ballad-beginning
than this:

Once as I lay a-sleeping
Beneath an ancient oak,
There slept to me a maiden—
One of the sylvan folk.

Pale-sweet her face as moonbeam;
Her hair was clear dewy tips
Fall on each side in darkness;
She kissed my dreaming lips.

Or this:

Faint winds are softly sighing
Within the ruined shrine,
The rose of day is dying
To twilight in the view.

On blast other glowing,
Above a cloud of green
A trembling star isrowning
The seeds of folding sleep.

And there is no Shakespearian grace in this slight song—

Like the scent of violet,
Subtle sweet with all regret
Love and Spring they pass away—
Ah me, well-a-day!

Vesper bell knells dying beam,
Form and feature fall to dream,
Gone the voice, the love of May—
Ah me, well-a-day!

Sigh we for the sunny light,
Sigh we for the love that’s dead,
Love and violet decay—
Ah me, well-a-day!

“A languid bard” Mr. Hebb wails

And winds are softly sighing
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Iltlfon's 'Sketch-Book' was, in some degree disappointing to his Australian
admirers, in that it did not show an advance in capacity and
achievement commensurate with the artist's advance in sphere and
reputation. But Mr. G. Craig's "Sketch-Book" and "Slimple,"
series of lively sketches of London children—leaves a better impression of May
for the sake of his pictures. Perhaps his results come rather from exaggeration than
from pure caricature—which consists not so much in
irritating individual and local peculiarities to an
unusual point, but in accurately representing the
subject in as unusual or improbable situation
which is either admirable, incongruous with the subject's
chief or usual aspects. The two examples chosen
for reproduction on this page do not illustrate this
tended tendency of 'Guttersnipes,' but

'To all readers! W. G. Craig's "The Federal Defence of Australia," (Geo. Robson
and Co.) is a Book. It is read and chaptered like a
book, printed like a book, bound like a book. In reality, however,
it is only a series of newspaper articles, and to throw
these into consecutive and coherent shape the author has
lacked either art or opportunity. Thus to stand under his
show-a-bath of heterogeneous facts and impressions
is like standing under the ill-fated umbrella of the poet's
frieze. You may expect to be hit with normal
pummel or a pummel, Federal forts or a pummel, a
bunch of grapes or an item about Australia's national
invasion. So Mr. Craig's seeming-
book is more tedious than least it should be. But he
has much knowledge of his subject and much
capacity to treat it; so his seeming-book is more
interesting than it might have been. And he
 tells it, as an expert, that
our army and our nation are
obsess; that our defence
is false virility

"Our naval squadrons" would be practically useless
in war, because as a fleet it cannot steam
down than 10 knots an hour, and so much will
induce to be once and out-manufactured by
Russian vessels of similar type, while the 20-knots
French, German and Spanish merchant cruisers
would whenever they lighted it add considerably
to the multitudinous navies of the sea.

It is pleasant to turn aside from the push
of the imperial and pretentious books to the smaller,
but very fine and faithful studies by Charles
Grave, "To the Waters," and "Cheer." They have kept
psychological and natural and accurate
pictures of phases of Italian life which the work of either
 outbreak of Major Crawford. Great

If the S. of A., gave its subscribers a chance to take liberties with the
reduced rate things might improve. Anyway,
the institution wallows in a sea of routine.
The "nine" books of the "author's books"
the public want, seems nearly unobtainable.
You can get a start of space class, but the
average average author's books aren't

The committee badly wants changing; some of
these books have perished in the mist, and
the S. of A. has petrified along with them.

"The Dead March of the Waters" is reprinted to
show the pretty-pretty of "W. A. B.," many
of whose works are called "The Dead March," have
appeared in the Bulletin, and who now
threads his other works in a most luscious
published by Molville, Mollon, and Blake, of Melbourne.

THE DEAD MARCH OF THE WATERS.

By the binoculars scanned in the
theatino German, and the
can't be seen until it
Swallows are fresh and plentiful, over all
a storm, a heat.,
'Tie the Dead March of the Waters'

Near the headland, where the sheldons
swing their melancholy treusual,
and the thistles turn to twinge all
the
Where the kites are silting clusters every

Breeds, in solitary silence, Delaplaine
Peaceful from fresh sea dreamt of
wearied and the public
are weary mountain waters to the
nother sea bed,
and the sides roll heavy laden with the
pages of a lover.
bewildered and the sky

Now a smile on the
Half a sheltered hope of rescue, a

Though he is aging to that music, I shall
Still I draw up to the slumber, happy but
ting still

Think it foolish, '... listen!... there
now; that low mewing
You can hear him

'Tie the Dead March of the Waters'... and the sides are

W. A. B.

Publishers' Notices.
It seems that Aubrey Beardsley will always remain more fantastic than fertile. Yet, apart from his technical skill, there is real power in the fifty drawings which he has just collected in a volume. Not only are many of his conceptions strikingly artistically, but they have nearly always moral and religious overtones. Characteristic of Beardsley's art are the mingling of black and white in dense masses and strong contrasts—indeed, some of his imitators seem to suppose. Nor does it lie altogether in his exaggerations of draughtsmanship, though these are indeed distinctive. It is the spirit, the savour, emanating from all his drawings which gives them that quaint air of intellectual other-worldliness. Ordinary artistic conceptions become redefined and distorted in passing through the strange medium of his mind, and leave upon ordinary people the kind of impression made by a face which looks at you from a curved mirror. But Beardsley is neither to be despised for his eccentricity nor praised for his non-conformity. He is to be valued for his originality, to which much latitude may be allowed in a fast-conventional age. His embodiment of the ideas of Merlin and Herodias, here reproduced, is well worthy of consideration.

Much of the best of Phil May's work remains embodied in The Bulletin. It was while in Australia that he perfected his fine talent, and for humor, vigor, and effective ease he has never surpassed some of those earlier drawings. So the are charmingly natural examples of clever illustrative art. And the picturing of life and character throughout the whole series of drawings is most admirable.

- La Goliard's "The Quest of the Golden Girl" is meant to cause like Bozma, with a difference—and achieve a different effect. The author, in fact, is beginning to see things a little too thin. Yet the book has enough of pristine charm to make it pleasantly readable, though the woman-elements on which it is largely based for effects are not precisely particular piquancy. There are occasional quaint conceits and captivating phrases—

- the entwined little tales of Sieges and Azledas followed by a troop of Sires and Sirens, with the artist (of a crooked stickling-top) who designed to encircle one of the white columns of that little marble temple which sat before me.

- fed from my youth upon the honeycomb of woman.

- the wild white peice of these silent hours when we lay thus marred and mended side by side.

- No silent madam, by your leave,

- Though wondrous wondrous sit be

- Can lure this heart—upon my knees.

From little pink print below.

And so on.

Some little items:

Paperkite: "The one-time undertaker of 'Bob, Boy,' like that of Rouseau's 'Hotel Contract,' Cooper's 'Last of the Mohicans,' St. Pierre's 'Paul and Virginia,' Borrow's 'Lavenberg,' and much in the books of Sand, Quicher, Schusse, and even Malahuit, is the blotted superior of savage life to civilization."

- C.S. : Did you ever see an Arab donkey-boy on the way to the Pyrenees, pricking his unhappy property in a vicious little stick? And did you see that the Arab for donkey is horrid? Or, so you need not ascend to the region of the expression, 'poking horrid'—i.e., unloving the billy that has temporarily or permanently identified himself with another donkey.

- Cripps Clark: "As a recent Bulletin statement, there is no kind of relationship between 'Marie Corelli' and Marco Corelli, and Marie Corelli, and Marco Corelli; and Marie Corelli, and Marco Corelli. The opinion should stand by the former giving advisory comment, suggestions, justifiable eulogy, heartfelt praise; to the latter the explosion of the new talent, the introduction to the fresh young mind, the key to its merits, the clue to its claim of distinction."—S. F. Argonaut.

- Posts, you say, are irreligious. No! Their creed is love. Can you get a better show?—"B.D." For 'The First Letter.'

The little story about Dot and Grigg in last issue was written by Maggie Kneale of M.W.

Paperkite: "All that Elie Schneider wanted to move his home one time. He saw the vestige of her flame illuminating the new book."

- C.S. : You are wrong about Buchanan and the bay-beard albatross. It was not Labouchere; but Edmund Yates, who so sweetly the serious Scotchman.
I speak of life—of love. I sing the Spring, and the rose and the snow, standing at ease over the drifts of winter snow. The Spring, the rose, and the snow, forever stored within the heart of man—its purest heritage. The rose, the snow, and the heat of the sun, in which the rose and the snow and the heat of the sun meet. There is philosophy in this...

Lilith was the first girl. When Adam was alone, he was as if by the invisible fingers of Lilith. Adam sought his mate among all the women of the world, but he could not find her. The only woman he found was Lilith, as she had been created by the invisible fingers of Lilith. The only woman he found was Lilith, as she had been created by the invisible fingers of Lilith. She was the only woman he found, as she had been created by the invisible fingers of Lilith. She was the only woman he found, as she had been created by the invisible fingers of Lilith. She was the only woman he found, as she had been created by the invisible fingers of Lilith. She was the only woman he found, as she had been created by the invisible fingers of Lilith.

The storm surroundings of all life demand a complement. A heat must make the epiphany necessary. In the frozen North, the red-haired woman, the emerald-eyed girl, the blue-black tresses of the tropic, and the tawny-haired Venus match the beauty of the woods and streams of the South. So does the moon's aspect of the South.

Kansas City woman is shrewd, sharp, and possessive. In her way as the hill-top town she rules an empire, set to her words, stronger than a slayer's blade, and she appeals to him. Therefore, she red-haired red lady of the North.

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She is shrewd, sharp, and possessive. In her way as the hill-top town she rules an empire, set to her words, stronger than a slayer's blade, and she appeals to him. Therefore, she red-haired red lady of the North.
The red-haired Kansan always is free, and becomes somewhat subdued and womanly when she is in love. She has a gentle grace and dignity about her that is charming. She is not a chatterbox; her voice is like a sweet melody. Her speech is soft and refined. She cannot outrun the wind, nor does she expect to. She is content to sit and listen to her partner, and will never interrupt unless it is to say something of interest. She is a true Kansan, and will always be a true Kansan. She is not a woman to be trifled with, and will not stand for any nonsense. She is a real Kansan, and will be a real Kansan forever.
THE RED PAGE.

EPILOGUUM.

It is time to realize Richard Marsh to his proper position in the annals of literature. His first and only novel, "The Haunted Palace," written between 1866 and 1867, establishes his claim to be the best man in that field. He died in 1911, after a long and successful career as a writer of detective stories. He is best known for his novel, "The Haunted Palace," which tells the story of an old man who builds a house on a sensitive spot, and the dead return to haunt him. His novels are characterized by a dark and gloomy atmosphere, and his characters are often puzzling and complex. Marsh was a master of atmosphere and mood, and his work remains popular today. His legacy is a testament to his skill as a writer, and a reminder of the power of literature to captivate and transport us.