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The Ethos and Influence

~~by~~ Russel Ward.

OF THE
AUSTRALIAN PASTORAL WORKER

"The entire man is, so to speak, to be seen in the cradle of the child. The growth of nations presents something analagous to this; they all bear some marks of their origin; and the circumstances which accompanied their birth and contributed to their rise, affect the whole term of their being."

- De Tocqueville.

Russel Ward.

Russel Ward.

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PRELIMINARY NOTE ON METHOD

This thesis is concerned not so much with specific historical events, as with the characteristic attitudes and ideas, over a long period, of a large and imperfectly literate social group. Since this group - workmen in the Australian pastoral industry - was given to singing folk-songs, these have been treated as the most important single source of information about the group's ethos. Therefore the first two chapters are devoted, respectively, to defining the nature of Australian folk-songs, and to establishing that the pastoral workers of the nineteenth century did constitute a ballad community in something recognisably like the traditional European sense of that term. Chapters three to eight trace the origins and growth of this community and of its distinctive ethos. Chapter nine shows how this ethos came to have a disproportionately strong influence on that of the whole Australian community, and Chapter ten seeks to answer, tentatively, the question of why this transference of outlook occurred.

While the ballads have been treated as important source material they would, in isolation, give a most distorted and incomplete picture of the life and ideas of those

who sang them. Therefore official documents, newspaper and magazine files, histories, and factual books or manuscripts of travel and reminiscence have also been used extensively. The nature of the subject is such that imaginative works about bush life - novels, verse, and even semi-literate compositions and the memories of old men and women - often throw a vivid light on it, if they are used judiciously.

An attempt has been made to build up from these sources a balanced picture of the origins, growth and influence of the Australian pastoral worker's ethos.