

A SHORT BIBLIOGRAPHY OF QUEENSLAND VERSE: THE COLLECTING OF QUEENSLAND BOOKS OF POETRY AS A HOBBY

(From a paper read by Mr. J. H. Hornibrook, Secretary of the John Oxley Memorial Library, at a meeting of The Historical Society of Queensland, Inc., held on March 25th, 1948.)

In speaking to you on the Bibliography of Queensland Verse, and the collecting of Queensland books of poetry as a hobby, I would mention that in no sense have I expanded my work into the domain of literary evaluation, although I have covered as completely as possible the biographical details of the various authors.

Previous work on the Bibliography of Queensland Verse was confined to the small section dealing with Queensland writers in Searl's Bibliography of Australian Verse, 1925, to the critical survey made by Professor J. J. Stable in his book—*A Book of Queensland Verse*, 1924, and to H. A. Kellow's work—*Queensland Poets 1930*—with all of which you are of course acquainted.

While most of the works I have listed can scarcely be called poetry, I think that their preservation has been amply justified in the excellent survey with which Professor Stable prefaced his book. I have been guided by the principles embodied in that survey in deciding just what constitutes Queensland Verse—at times a much more difficult problem than would appear at first sight.

Many of the early works, such as those of Ralph Delany, Alexander Forbes, etc., were written by men who were emigrants from their native lands. Those who lived long enough in Queensland to have helped build up the State or to have been influenced by it to any considerable extent have been included. Similarly I have included the works of Queenslanders who have lived and published their works abroad, as, for instance—"Eva" of the "Nation," Mrs. Mary O'Doherty, Francis Wm. Adams, Arthur A. D. Bayldon, etc.

In the books I have mentioned, Searle, Stables and Kellows, the number of books of verse listed that could justly be regarded as Queensland verse was about 100. During the past 10 years I have expanded that list to 491, which I feel sure covers almost completely all of the works published in Queensland or by Queens-

landers. These represent the work of 229 authors, whose verse has been published in book form. Incidentally there are 159 male authors publishing 353 books of verse as against 70 females publishing 138 books.

The compilation of the bibliography was not a matter merely of sitting at a table and checking up catalogues and so on. As one who has travelled all over Queensland, I visited all Public, Semi-Public and even private libraries in all towns I visited, as well as the Brisbane libraries of any importance. Here I was able to see books that had not been previously catalogued.

It will be seen that between visiting libraries, writing to and having interviews with the authors that I was able to complete as near as practicable a list of the authors and their published work in book form.

Coming as I did into personal contact with many of the authors I took the opportunity of collecting all available biographical details. Here is where I found work particularly interesting, it meant much letter writing to the authors, their relations or friends, and much research work through the records at the Oxley Memorial Library, the Public libraries and old newspapers.

Everywhere I have found a readiness to assist and I am satisfied that if one is genuine in research work private individuals and officials are only too pleased to give the necessary assistance.

Much hard work was done, many hours were spent searching with little to show, but all the time material gradually accumulated with the result that the Biographical Bibliography of the Queensland Poets is practically complete to date and if need be could be published in book form almost immediately.

The inclusion of the biographies has made the bibliographical part of my work surprisingly interesting. Ralph Delany's poems, for instance, would be of interest solely from the fact that it was the first book of verse published in Queensland. A knowledge of the author's career, however, gives the book much added interest. Ralph Delany was a pen name adopted by Thomas Beaton Hutchison Christie. *Poems and Songs*, A. Cleghorn, 1869.

There surely must be some significance in the large number of Queensland poets who have at some time or

another served in the Department of Public Instruction. The list of Queensland school teachers who have published books of verse includes some of our best writers—J. Brunton Stephens for instance.

Similarly the work by Alexander Forbes is by virtue of the career of its author one of the most interesting books we have. Incidentally the biography of Forbes is at once the most interesting and most difficult of the problems with which I have had to deal. *Voices from the Bush*—Northern Argus, 1869.

Of the 491 books I have listed in my bibliography, about 90 per cent. of these are in the Oxley Library. The remainder, some extremely rare and of little literary value are gradually turning up and I hope before long that it will be possible to complete the collection. The hope that this will give a scope for literary research to future students has been the end and aim of all my bibliographical work. If it should prove of service in making possible a more comprehensive view of the origins of poetry in our own State, I shall consider myself well repaid for the years of really hard work involved.

