

## THE 'AUSTRALIAN EDITION' OF CATHERINE MARTIN'S *AN AUSTRALIAN GIRL* (1890)

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The first edition of South Australian writer Catherine Martin's most important novel, *An Australian Girl*, was printed by Billing and Sons for the London publisher Richard Bentley and Sons in 1890. It was a characteristic Victorian three-decker, composed from the author's apparently difficult-to-read manuscript (with a significant number of uncorrected compositorial misreadings) and trade bound in Bentley's singularly hideous green 'crocodile patterned' board half-binding. A one-volume, six-shilling edition of the novel was published by Bentley a year later, in 1891, in blue willow-patterned cloth. This edition added a preface stating that it varied from the first edition only by the correction of 'a few clerical errors' and some 'slight omissions in one or two passages'.<sup>1</sup> It was a remarkable instance of misleading advertising, given that, while the second edition did indeed correct many of the compositorial errors of the first edition, it was in fact an abridged version of the novel which omitted at least twenty percent of the first edition text. However, Bentley's own *Lists of Publications* are no less misleading, not only in ascribing this preface to the author, rather than the publisher whose purposes it served, but, more importantly, in describing the relationship between this second edition and the subsequent 'Australian edition'.<sup>2</sup>

When Richard Bentley II printed the last of his *Lists of the Principal Publications Issued from New Burlington Street* in 1923, he had covered each year of the firm's publishing history up to 1898, with the exception of only four years, one of which was 1891. However, his printed *List of Publications* for 1890 gives the date of publication of the second edition of *An Australian Girl* as 22 July 1891 (describing it as 'reprinted, in one volume'), and his manuscript entries and notes for 1891 (written post-1899) add that 'a Third Edition, in one volume 2s 6d exclusively for sale in the Australasian Colonies appeared on July 26 1894'.<sup>3</sup> The printed *List of Publications* for 1894 describes this as an 'Australian Edition', with Bentley's 'Kangaroo series' pale green canvas binding and with new half-title and title leaves. The accompanying notes add that 'the present Colonial edition

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1. *An Australian Girl*, new ed. (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1891), p.[iii].

2. 'Mrs. Alick Macleod', *An Australian Girl*, Australian ed. (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1894).

3. See *The Lists of the Publications of Richard Bentley and Son, 1829-1898* (Bishops Stortford: Chadwyck-Healey, 1975), (hereafter *Lists*), microfiche 46, frame 2188; microfiche 47, frame 2233.

resembles [the second edition] in all respects except that the Preface of 1891 is omitted'.<sup>4</sup> Bentley was not alone amongst Victorian publishers in using terms such as 'edition' loosely to mean variously a resetting, a new impression, with or without alterations to stereotype plates, or a reissue;<sup>5</sup> nonetheless, the statement that the 'Australian edition' resembled the second edition 'in all respects' would appear to suggest that this was not a third edition in the sense in which we would understand the term (i.e. a new typesetting) but a new impression of the 1891 edition, unaltered apart from the omission of the preface and the substituted title-page, which now carried the pseudonym, 'Mrs. Alick Macleod', adopted by Martin in 1892. The record of Bentley's Trade Day Books for 1894-8, however, although not referenced under *An Australian Girl* in Alison Ingram's *Index to the Archives of Richard Bentley and Son, 1829-1898* (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1977), suggests otherwise. The Trade Day Book for 1894 records payment to Billing and Sons of 11/6 for printing '1400 Titles (including paper) *An Australian Girl* 2/6 Edition'. It does not record any other payment relating to the novel.<sup>6</sup>

The correspondence in 1894 between Catherine Martin and George Bentley (head of the firm between 1867 and 1895) provides an apparent explanation for this. On 2 July 1894 Bentley wrote to Martin pointing out that the sale of *An Australian Girl* in the six-shilling form was 'not active' (in fact only five copies had been sold in 1893) and that the publisher still had a 'large surplus stock' of it on hand. He proposed that these leftover copies now be brought out in Australia at 2/6, with a concomitant reduction of the author's royalty from ninepence to twopence a copy – a proposal to which Martin promptly agreed.<sup>7</sup>

But while this correspondence, read in conjunction with the Trade Day book record, appears to indicate clearly that the 1894 'Australian edition' was made up from surplus stock of the second edition published in July 1891 and differed only in the omission of the preface and the changed title-page, optical collation of a photocopy of the 1891 edition with a copy of the 1894 text reveals that this could not in fact have been the case. The collation was done at the Australian Scholarly Editions Centre at the Australian Defence Force Academy on a McLeod optical collator, and was twice repeated by other operators, with the results being carefully compared to exclude false variants. The final results of the optical

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4. Lists, microfiche 51, frame 2359.

5. See Allan Dooley, *Author and Printer in Victorian England* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992), pp.86-87.

6. *Archives of Richard Bentley and Son 1829-1898* British Publishers' Archives on Microfilm, part 2 (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1976-77) (hereafter *Bentley*), vol.32, f.20.

7. Bentley to Martin, 2 July 1894, *Bentley* vol.87, f.233; Martin to Bentley, 6 July 1894, *Archives of Richard Bentley and Son 1829-1898*, BL Add. MSS 46,646, f. 236 (vol.87).

collation were confirmed by physical comparison of seven pairs of copies of the 1891 and 1894 versions.

The optical collation revealed, first of all, a number of instances in which a start-of-line or end-of-line letter or punctuation mark was missing in the 1894 text. Typically, loss of letters or punctuation marks at the margins of the text would result from breakage or damage to the edges of stereotype plates, either through the impact of mounting nails and catches or in the process of making alterations to the plates.<sup>8</sup> This in itself suggested that the 1894 version had been printed from stereotype plates. The collation also and more startlingly revealed that the 1894 text contained a number of substantive variants as well as an omitted punctuation mark within a line. In one instance ('too.' to 'to.') the change appears to have been effected by punching out the superfluous letter and replacing it with type; in a second ('topical' to 'tropical') by the replacement of the whole word; a third (the omission of a superfluous 'once more') possibly required the replacement of two lines of text by the insertion of a soldered-in slug cast from type.<sup>9</sup> However, while these particular alterations occur at widely-scattered points in the text, the remaining eight substantive variants are clustered in gathering 5, suggesting that this entire gathering was reset – a suggestion supported by the introduction of two new typographical errors.<sup>10</sup>

In the 1894 text, three errors of syntax are corrected, and the spelling of the word 'flunkyism' is twice changed to 'flunkeyism'. The error 'bar-horse', which had appeared in both the first edition of 1890 and the edition of 1891, is corrected to 'barb-horse' (a fast Arabian horse). The incorrect attribution of a quotation to 'Montague' (appearing in both earlier editions) is changed to the correct 'Montaigne'. The rain which fell with 'tropical' fury in 1890 had become 'topical' in 1891; the earlier reading is restored in 1894. These variants are of considerable editorial significance: some of them appear more likely to have been of the kind that a revising author, rather than a printer's or publisher's reader, would make. (Who else but the author, for example, would know that a particular phrase in English should be ascribed to Montaigne rather than Montague?) The possibility of authorial revision of the 1894 text is particularly important in view of the fact that no proofs of the earlier editions of *An Australian Girl* have been found, and there are a number of question marks surrounding the extent of Martin's involvement in reading proofs for the first and second editions.

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8. See *Author and Printer*, p.73. In this case, some of the marginal losses occur in clusters, e.g. on pp.11–12, and p.25, but others are scattered singly throughout the volume, suggesting that the damage was not confined to a single plate.

9. The process of altering stereotype plates is discussed by Dooley, *Author and Printer*, p.63.

10. I am indebted to Brian Hubber for bringing this possibility to my attention.

The problem remained, however, of correlating the findings of the optical collation with the record of the *Lists of Publications* and with George Bentley's comments to Catherine Martin about using the 2/6 'Australian edition' to dispose of his remaining stock of the edition of 1891. It could perhaps be argued that the reliability of the *Lists* was somewhat thrown into doubt not only by their retrospective nature but also by the publishing firm's continuing inability to get Catherine Martin's name quite right.<sup>11</sup> A more serious possibility to be considered was that some copies of the 1891 edition might have been corrected in the course of printing and might subsequently have formed part of the surplus stock issued as the Australian edition in 1894. Comparative examination of the admittedly small sample available, however, showed no copies of the 1891 edition with the 'Australian edition' variants.

A partial solution to the problem was provided by Bentley's Publication Ledger for 1887-93, which lists two separate sets of payments to Billing in 1891, one in the September quarter and one in the December quarter, each for printing 1500 copies of *An Australian Girl*, the first including a payment for moulding and the second a payment for converting moulds into stereotypes.<sup>12</sup> It was clear from this that, despite the absence of any mention of a second impression of the 1891 edition either in the *Lists* or in the extant correspondence between Bentley and Martin, such an impression had in fact been printed. This was confirmed, and the details amplified, by examination of Bentley's Trade Day Book for 1891. Again, Alison Ingram does not include any references to the volume of Bentley's *Archives* containing the Trade Day Books for 1888-94 in her *An Australian Girl* entries; however, the Trade Day Book record for the September Quarter of 1891 correlates with the Publication Ledger in showing the printing of 1500 copies of a one-volume edition of *An Australian Girl*, composed from print (that is, from a marked-up copy of the first edition), with moulds for stereotypes being made from the standing type. Similarly, the record for the December quarter of the same year shows the stereotyping and printing from stereotypes of a further 1500 copies of the one-volume edition, including the preface.<sup>13</sup>

George Bentley had put an enormous amount of energy into the editing of *An Australian Girl* for its second edition, pressuring Martin to agree to the very substantial abridgment of her text which he wanted, and engaging a literary critic to mark up a copy of the first edition with suggested cuts.<sup>14</sup> As the September

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11. She is named variously in the *Lists* as 'Caroline Martin (Mrs. Frederick Martin)', 'Caroline Martin (Mrs. Herbert Martin)', 'Mrs. Frederick Martin (Caroline Mackay)', and 'Mrs. Frederick E. M. Martin'. She was of course Catherine Edith Macauley (Mrs. Frederick Martin, nee Mackay).

12. See *Bentley* vol.41, f.425.

13. *Bentley*, vol.31, f.136, 153. The correlation between the number of sheets printed on each occasion indicates that the preface was included in the second printing.

14. See, for example, Bentley to Martin, 9 January 1891, *Bentley*, vol.86, f.383.

quarter payment to Billing shows, he obviously anticipated that, in its abridged form, the edition would be successful enough to call for a second print run – something which would be most economically and efficiently achieved by making moulds for stereotype plates at the time of the first print run.<sup>15</sup> Bentley's confidence in this edition is further reflected in the fact that all and more of the edition (in fact 1530 copies) went to Matthew Bell Colley and Co. for binding.<sup>16</sup> It would appear that Billing had printed (at least) one extra copy for every fifty ordered by Bentley, presumably anticipating some spoilage and wastage of sheets.<sup>17</sup>

Sales in 1891 of the second edition appear to have justified Bentley's confidence in the abridgment in which he had invested so much of his own energy; over 1200 copies had been sold by mid-October.<sup>18</sup> This success perhaps encouraged him to go ahead during the December quarter with a second print run from stereotype plates. However, the second printing must have involved not only the making but also the alteration of the plates. There is no relevant correspondence between author and publisher at this period, probably because Catherine Martin visited London in the second half of 1891 and would have called on Bentley, with whom she was negotiating the publication of her next novel, *The Silent Sea*. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to assume that Bentley, planning a new print run of the second edition from stereotypes late in the year, would have agreed, as other publishers of the period did, that the author might make (necessarily minor) changes to her text before he printed it. The practice of permitting or even inviting authorial alterations to plated typesettings was so routine that, as Percy Russell had noted in 1886, printers had 'a department where corrections are made in stereo plates, generally the result of the author's afterthought'.<sup>19</sup>

But although Bentley had 1500 copies of this second, corrected impression printed, he had only 100 copies bound.<sup>20</sup> This may suggest simply that he took a more cautious approach to the market with a second impression; however, it also

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15. Dooley, *Author and Printer*, p.68, records Macmillan making the same decision in 1878 with Matthew Arnold's selection of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*. Macmillan reports: 'we printed 1500 ... should we need to reprint ... we have taken an impression in paper of the type & we could make stereo-type plates.'

16. *Bentley*, vol.31, f.137.

17. He had done a similar thing with the first edition of *An Australian Girl* in 1890, printing 569 copies instead of the 550 called for by Bentley – an extra copy in every thirty. Ultimately, all 569 copies were bound.

18. *Bentley*, vol.41, f.425.

19. *The Literary Manual; or, A Complete Guide to Authorship* (London: London Literary Society, 1886), as quoted in Dooley, *Author and Printer*, p.77.

20. *Bentley*, vol.31, f.153.

raises the question of whether he had in fact undertaken this print run with an eye to releasing most of the copies onto the Australian market (indeed, whether he may have had moulds made at the time of printing the first impression with such an eventuality in mind). In his initial correspondence with Martin about publishing a second edition of the novel he had stated that this would be an 'Australian edition'.<sup>21</sup> That it appeared instead as an ordinary six-shilling edition in July 1891 may possibly be explained by a contretemps with the Melbourne publishers Melville, Mullen and Slade who had advertised in the *Australasian Critic* of 1 December 1890 (p. 61) that they were bringing out 'a special Australian edition in one volume'. They had apparently approached both Martin and Bentley concerning the Australian rights, and had voiced their annoyance to Bentley at 'not having a monopoly of the work entrusted to them'.<sup>22</sup> In the absence of any reference to the corrected second impression in the *Lists* or in the extant correspondence between Bentley and Martin one can only speculate, but, given this apparent keenness for an Australian one-volume edition, it is possible that from the outset Bentley intended the 1400 unbound copies of this impression for the Australian market. However, there appears no specific reason, other than Bentley's eye to the market, for the two-and-a-half year delay in actually releasing them in Australia.

It is perhaps not surprising, given the absence of any mention of the second impression of the 1891 edition of *An Australian Girl* in Bentley's *Lists* or in the publisher's correspondence with Catherine Martin, that, despite the evidence of the Trade Day Books and the Publication Ledger, to date the existence of this impression has not been recorded bibliographically. Two hundred and six copies of the second edition were sold in the first three months of 1892 - a figure which indicates, on the one hand, that Bentley's apparent optimism in printing another impression of 1500 was not as well-founded as it might have appeared, and, on the other, that he had continued to sell copies of the first impression, since only 100 copies of the second impression had been bound. If, as this suggests, Bentley had decided to clear his stocks of the first impression before releasing any copies of the second, it is, moreover, possible that few or no bound copies of the second impression were distributed.<sup>23</sup> By the end of 1898 a total of 1483 copies of the second edition had been accounted for, a figure which is still fewer than the 1530 bound copies of the first impression.

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21. See Bentley to Martin, 9 January 1891, *Bentley*, vol.86, f.383.

22. See Bentley to Martin, 7 April 1891, *Bentley*, vol.86, f.399.

23. None of the nine copies of the 1891 edition held in Australian state and university libraries belongs to the second impression. I am indebted to the reference and rare books librarians of these libraries for confirming this.

Of the 1400 unbound copies of the second impression, 1001 were bound and marketed as the 'Australian edition' in 1894.<sup>24</sup> Of these, 869 had been sold after four years, 801 of them in Australia.<sup>25</sup> In the absence of any known copy of the second, corrected impression of December 1891, this reissue now provides the only witness to its existence, and to the substantive and accidental changes, at least some of which were probably authorial, made to the text of that impression. For this reason alone, while the 'Australian edition' is not what it appears to be – an issue of surplus sheets of the second edition as printed in July 1891 – it is of special significance in the publishing history of *An Australian Girl*.

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24. *Bentley*, vol.32, f.17.

25. Australian state and university libraries now hold ten copies of the 1894 version.