

# French Awareness of Australia: The Role of Albert Métin (1871–1918)

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## Introduction

This article has its origin in the translation by Alan Willey of two pieces that had appeared in a French newspaper, *Le Petit Parisien*, in September 1918.<sup>1</sup> The articles in question are presented in both English and the original French at the end of this article. In addition, Alan Willey has translated another earlier article from *Le Petit Parisien* (July 1918), the content of which reveals that the clipping about the Australian ‘tigers’ was not the result of happenstance or a singular event. Rather, these two articles strongly suggest a deliberate campaign by Albert Métin, the man chosen to lead the French Economic Mission to Australia a few months later,<sup>2</sup> to alert his compatriots to the significance of the Mission, and to inform them about Australia and the people with whom the French hoped to develop more systematic post-war economic ties. The English versions of these documents appear for the first time here.

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<sup>1</sup> Email from A. Willey to the author, 20 March 2017. Alan Willey taught French at Wesley College in Melbourne from 1963 to 1994.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed account of this Mission see Aldrich 1989, 1994 and Dwyer 2016. Métin died before the Mission reached Australia. General Pau became the titular head of the Mission, while André Siegfried, as secretary, took over the main work and reporting. As Aldrich (1989, 296) points out, as well as its major goal of seeking more extensive trade relations with Australia, the Mission had subsidiary goals of encouraging Australia’s continued participation in the war effort, and discussing matters relating to the South Pacific.



Albert Métin. Image Courtesy of Gallica, Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Métin's use of the press in these particular instances shows him to be not only politically and diplomatically astute but also well-informed and genuinely interested in helping build relations between France and Australia; and he was indeed well-informed, having completed a long study tour of Australia and New Zealand at the turn of the century. These had produced a number of enduring friendships in Australia as well as a book, *Le socialisme sans doctrines* (Métin 1901), which, as we shall see, was to become something of a classic for economic historians.

Both Aldrich (1989) and Dwyer (2016) note Métin's importance. Aldrich sums up the reason for his choice as Mission head: '*Métin ajoutait une connaissance profonde et une admiration expresse de l'Australie à sa stature politique*' (296).<sup>3</sup> Dwyer (32–33), in addition, provides evidence that the Australian press followed his preparations for the Mission quite closely.

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<sup>3</sup> 'Métin had a deep knowledge and express admiration of Australia as well as political status.'

The present study will argue that Métin's role in the development of French Australian relations deserves more detailed attention, for several interlocking reasons, which will serve to structure the analysis. Firstly, even a brief overview of Métin's place in the French context shows that he was a highly distinguished and respected public figure at the time of his selection as Mission head; that, in turn, as Aldrich suggests, is a significant indicator of the importance the French ascribed to the Mission. Secondly, looking back to Métin's first visit to Australia in 1899, on the eve of Federation, this article will show that, of a number of study tours conducted by French officials at the time, Métin's had the most impact,<sup>4</sup> notwithstanding his youth (he was twenty-seven). His openness of mind, together with his ready engagement with many different people and issues across the country attracted much wider attention and comment than any of his fellow social investigators. Thirdly, the publications derived from that study tour (Métin 1901a and 1901b), especially *Le socialisme sans doctrines*, not only established Métin as something of an Australia specialist; they have proven to be an enduring and thought-provoking mirror to aspects of Australian social and economic development. Finally, the articles in the *Petit Parisien*, written after Métin's nomination as head of the Economic Mission, must be seen not as the views of an individual, but as authoritative and official statements by a government spokesman, expressing a clear French policy to maintain and expand its trade links with Australia, and to base that policy on the new spirit of understanding generated by the two nations' shared experience of struggle and sacrifice as military allies in the fight for common values and shared interests. That there are elements of propaganda and opportunism at work in these articles is undeniable, but it would require an unusual degree of cynicism to limit interpretation to that dimension.



M Métin, *député* for Doubs. Image Courtesy of Gallica, Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

<sup>4</sup> See p. 31 for reference to the other study tours undertaken (Eds).

## Métin's place in French history

That discourse of shared sacrifice and values is prominent in the letter Georges Clemenceau wrote to Prime Minister Hughes to introduce Albert Métin (see Appendix 3).<sup>5</sup> Clemenceau paid homage to Australia's soldiers, and laid out his view of the deep compatibilities he saw between the French and Australian peoples, equally devoted to the democratic values of freedom and justice. It is clear that he saw the upcoming Economic Mission to Australia as a major step in the development of closer links between the two countries, and equally clear that he wanted Hughes to know that the man chosen to lead the Mission was appropriately experienced and distinguished.

This was indeed the case. In July 1918, Albert Métin was forty-seven years old. His trajectory to that point, as we can reconstruct it from his biography in Jolly's *Dictionnaire des Parlementaires de 1889 à 1940* (Jolly 1960–1977), from his bibliography in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, from his own writings, from various press articles, and above all from the long homage written by his friend Camille Vallaux (Vallaux 1919), was impressive.<sup>6</sup> Born in Besançon into a working-class family at the very time that the Third Republic was coming into being, Métin is an example of a republican dream success story, in which innate giftedness could lead a person of humble social origins, via an excellence-nourishing State education system, to high office and responsibility. Métin's brilliant early studies led to an *agrégation* in history and geography and a doctorate at the Sorbonne. During his early and mid-twenties, he worked as a teacher—in the *École municipale Lavoisier* and the *Conservatoire national des arts et métiers*—and would never lose his belief in education and in the importance of pedagogy. He would become the author of several

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<sup>5</sup> Very much the same discourse survives in the most recent expression of the official French Australian bilateral relationship, as can be seen in the 2017 Joint Statement of Enhanced Strategic Partnership, <http://dfat.gov.au/geo/france/Pages/joint-statement-of-enhanced-strategic-partnership-between-australia-and-france.aspx>, accessed 5 June 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Surprisingly, no formal biography of Métin has been written as yet. A shortened version of the Vallaux article is reproduced at the beginning of Ward's translation (Métin 1977, no page numbers).

text-books on history, geography, civics, ethics and the elements of politics and economics.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, Métin began to develop what would become an enduring interest in English-speaking societies. Beginning with a study tour of socialism in Britain, which yielded his first major book (Métin 1897), he won a University of Paris travel grant for an eighteen-month project, sponsored by the French Ministry for Commerce, which took him to North America and many parts of the British Empire, including all the Australian colonies and New Zealand. It needs to be understood that this was not, notwithstanding Métin's real personal passion, purely individual research, but rather part of a more general thrust, by the still young French Third Republic, to increase its knowledge of socio-political developments in the world, and to use that knowledge to inform and shape its own policies, as well as seeking out possible trade opportunities. Métin's work of observation and analysis was contemporaneous with that of a number of other official or semi-official undertakings, by men who, like Métin, included visits to Australia within wider journeys of discovery.<sup>8</sup> In his visit to Australasia, for instance, Métin was preceded by, among others, Ferdinand Journet, who represented the French Ministry for Public Works at the 1880 Melbourne Exhibition (see Journet 1885), Pierre Leroy-Beaulieu, and Louis Vigouroux, who was working for the *Musée social*.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The best known of these were the *Cours d'instruction civique pour l'enseignement primaire supérieur* (Masson 1903), and the *Cours d'économie politique et de droit usuel pour l'enseignement primaire supérieur* (Masson 1904), both of which went through many editions; indeed, both were still in use well after Métin's death, with revisions being provided by his friend and colleague André Siegfried.

<sup>8</sup> I would suggest that these journeys of societal exploration by the French in Australia are in many ways analogous to the geographical journeys undertaken a century earlier.

<sup>9</sup> For the importance of the *Musée social* in the development of social policy in France, see Horne (2002). Founded as a private repository for sociological materials from the 1889 Paris Exhibition, the *Musée social* quickly became not only a vibrant and ambitious research institute, but a quasi-governmental think-tank. Métin also did work for the *Musée social*, which became the recipient of some of the documentation gathered in the course of his research (Métin 1901, iii). Vigouroux and Métin were in Australia at the same time: their published works acknowledge each other and have considerable overlap, though Vigouroux cannot quite hide his irritation that his younger compatriot beat him to publication.

Why this special interest in the ‘Anglo-Saxon’ world? If the young Third Republic continued to promote its colonial power and its global ‘civilising mission’, it was still very much shaken by the Prussian defeat of 1870 and by a sense of losing influence in comparison with Britain and the English-speaking world. Works like those of Edmond Demolins (1897) on Anglo-Saxon superiority were widely read and commented upon. In addition, within France, the fall of the Second Empire produced a veritable existential social crisis. At the same time rural decline, the intensification of urban class struggle and religious/ideological conflict led to an almost permanent state of economic and political instability.<sup>10</sup> The amazing explosion of artistic, scientific, educational, technological and philosophical invention that characterised the *Belle Époque* had, to some extent at least, its equivalent in the quest for political and social renewal represented in the work of Métin and his fellow researchers, a quest that had them seeking inspiration especially in the newer English-speaking societies.

Métin’s expertise on foreign labour laws acquired on his travels served to launch an impressive political career. His centre-left persuasion, together with his undeniable fund of specialist knowledge, led to his first major position as René Viviani’s *chef de cabinet* in the first Labour Ministry created by Clemenceau in 1906. He was then elected as *député* for Doubs in 1909, and again in 1910 and 1914. Jolly describes Métin as ‘solid and hard-working’ and attached to the needs of his electorate, but also notes that he served on numerous national commissions and was entrusted with a wide range of reports on everything from social security to foreign affairs. He was Minister for Labour in 1913, and again in 1915 and 1916, after a period of service on the Eastern front. He remained actively involved in government throughout the rest of the war, in the Finance Ministry and in Foreign Affairs (Jolly 1960–1977).

On his way to Sydney, Métin died prematurely at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco, from apoplexy ascribed to stress emanating from the war. His death prompted the American city to declare an official mourning period, with flags at half-mast, and Métin’s body lying in state at the black-draped Town Hall (*New York Times* 1918). The Americans knew him—he had taught at Princeton, had met President Wilson, and had visited their troops which probably explains why there was an American army detachment at

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<sup>10</sup> For a good overview of this period in French history see Sowerwine (2018).

the state funeral he was given in Besançon when his body was returned home. The description of the funeral (see Appendices 1 and 2) is additional proof, if it were needed, that Métin was both a public figure of substance and a well-regarded local member, with more than 3000 people braving torrential rain to follow the hearse to the cemetery. His very considerable status is, I believe, compelling evidence of the seriousness with which the French treated the prospects of the 1918 Economic Mission to Australia. But there was yet another reason underlying his selection as Mission head: he was, as indicated above, already known in Australia, both from the extensive trip that he had made in 1899 and the book derived from it, *Le socialisme sans doctrines* (Métin 1901b).

### The 1899 trip to Australia

Métin arrived in South Australia on 27 April 1899, together with his wife,<sup>11</sup> on a journey that had already taken them to Egypt, India, Burma and Ceylon; over the coming months, they would visit all the Australian colonies (except W.A.)<sup>12</sup> and New Zealand until 3 October, when he left for the United States—a total of more than five months.

His presence generated a good deal of interest. A number of quite long interviews were published during his stay,<sup>13</sup> in which he detailed his positive impressions of Australia's (and New Zealand's) progressive social and educational developments—universal suffrage, labour laws, agricultural policy, old-age pensions, the practical components of primary education. No doubt this praise contained elements of diplomatic charm, but Métin also offered thoughtful comments, often reflecting critically on similar situations in France, thus projecting the image of someone genuinely

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<sup>11</sup> Métin married Noémie Meynet (1871–1968) in 1894. They had one child, a daughter Claude France, born in 1907. According to the Adelaide press interviews, Noémie had her own work interests, being particularly concerned with kindergarten teaching. (See e.g. *The Advertiser*, 28 April 1899, p. 4, and the *South Australian Register*, 29 April 1899, p. 7.)

<sup>12</sup> He did gather information about Western Australia and includes it in some of his analyses; but it would seem that he considered it as largely dominated by mining, and hence of less interest for his sociological investigations.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, the *South Australian Register*, 10 May 1899, p. 7; *Launceston Examiner*, 26 June 1899, p. 7.

intending to learn from the experience and to apply that learning back in France. Here is an example, from an interview in the *South Australian Register* (10 May 1899, 7):

The progress you have made in the colony since the year 1836 is indeed wonderful. No observant visitor could fail to admire the development that has occurred in such a brief period. It is a great proof of the energy of your people. (...) On the whole I think we have many things to learn from you. We have not as good a system of ballot as you have. We also lack adult suffrage. In France all the candidates for the Legislature provide ballot papers, which are distributed amongst the electors, and the latter simply fold up the paper containing the name of the man of their choice and drop it into the ballot-box. Then again our workmen, save in the big cities, are not so strongly organized as your workmen here. Our different Labour and Socialistic Parties are united only for political purposes at election time. We have not a central organization of labour. In France, too, as amongst the other nations of Europe, we are handicapped by traditions which are not in the direction of freedom.

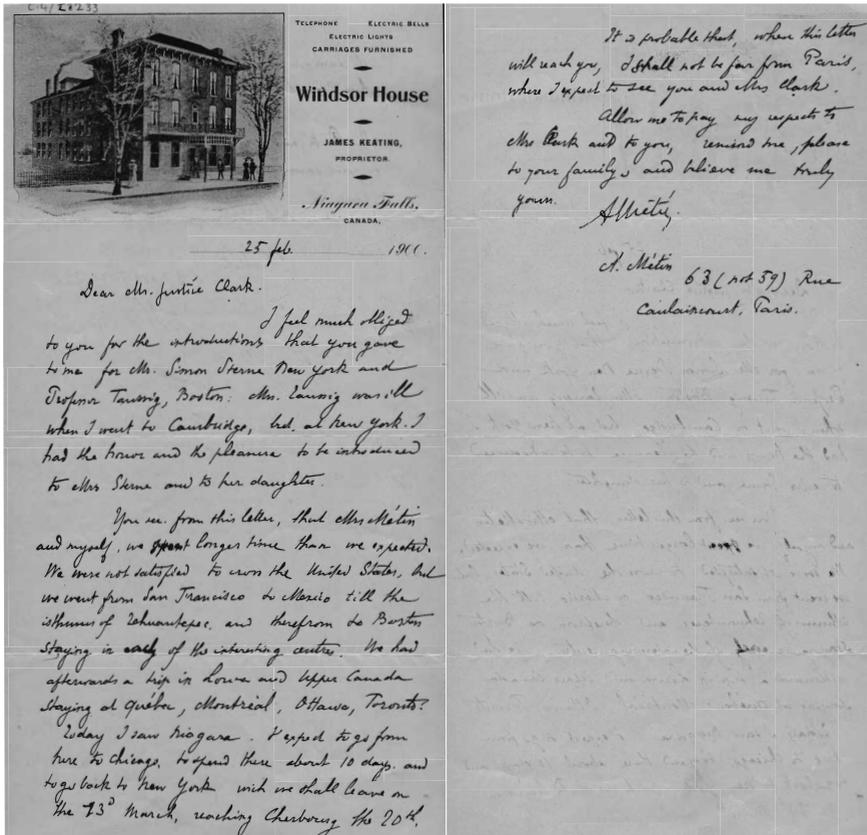
He frequently expressed his gratitude for the hospitality he received and for the openness with which authorities, both in the cities and in the rural centres he visited, communicated the information he was seeking. And so he should have, given the huge volume of material he amassed—in the form of official reports, brochures, existing English-language studies, and testimony from a wealth of individuals—that was sent back for further study and archiving at the French Labour Ministry and the *Musée social*.

Some of the people whom Métin met and held discussions with were very influential: mayors, state premiers, top level public servants and businessmen. Among these was the future Premier of New South Wales, William Holman. When Métin died, Holman published a panegyric in the Sydney *Sunday Times*, in which he praised the Frenchman's knowledge and 'clear and penetrating thought', and expressed his view that his death would be 'an enormous blow to the prospects for success' of the Mission.<sup>14</sup> Another eminent figure with whom Métin developed a friendship was Australian Founding Father, Justice Andrew Inglis Clark. The University of Tasmania Library has preserved two letters from Métin to Clark that express a strong sense of the amicability and

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<sup>14</sup> *Sunday Times* 18 August 1918, 2. Dwyer (2015) quotes this text at length.

mutual respect, as well as the confidence of the young Métin in relation to a man twice his age and much further advanced in his career. In the first, whilst thanking Clark for certain connections made in the U. S., he details his travels with his wife, and sends warm greetings to Clark's wife and family, noting that he hopes to see them shortly in Paris. In the second, as well as introducing a colleague to Clark, he offers to review Clark's book on the Australian constitution for the *Revue de synthèse historique*.<sup>15</sup>



Courtesy of the University of Tasmania Library, Special and Rare Collections.

<sup>15</sup> These can be viewed on-line:

Letter of 25 February 1900: [https://eprints.utas.edu.au/10344/3/A\\_Metin\\_Letter\\_dated\\_25\\_February\\_1900.pdf](https://eprints.utas.edu.au/10344/3/A_Metin_Letter_dated_25_February_1900.pdf)

Letter of 22 October 1901: [https://eprints.utas.edu.au/10344/4/A\\_Metin\\_Letter\\_dated\\_22\\_october\\_1901.pdf](https://eprints.utas.edu.au/10344/4/A_Metin_Letter_dated_22_october_1901.pdf), accessed 28 July 2018.

### *Le socialisme sans doctrines*

It was through *Le socialisme sans doctrines* that Métin became best known in Australia. Marian Sawyer began her review of Russel Ward's 1977 translation of Métin's book<sup>16</sup> thus:

Most students of Australian history or politics are able to quote at least the title of Métin's work "Le socialisme sans doctrines". (...) Russel Ward's translation will now make readily accessible the rest of the book, the title of which alone has exercised an important influence on the self-perception of Australians (*The Canberra Times*, 1 July 1978, 13).

She goes on to examine Métin's analysis of the Australasian labour movement and its particular relation to the State, and deplores the fact that the socially progressive nature of Australia just pre-Federation—described by Métin in terms of a pragmatic, rather than theory-informed, social 'laboratory'—is now a thing of the past. She concludes:

Australasia has still contributed little in the realm of social philosophy, while the narrow horizons provided by a concentration on material interests (and the haphazard extension of State intervention in support of these) have left us far behind, for example, the Scandinavian democracies. Certainly few would today categorise Australia and New Zealand as socialist societies, with or without doctrine.

Many Australians reading Métin today would sympathise with Sawyer's sense of something having been lost. *Le socialisme sans doctrines*, a deliberate popularisation of the formal report Métin submitted to his Labour Ministry (Métin 1901a), retains a lot of the rather dry statistical data of what was, after all, intended as a comprehensive mapping of European Australasia's history

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<sup>16</sup> Albert Métin, 1977, *Socialism without Doctrine*, tr. Russel Ward, Chippendale, NSW, Alternative Publishing Cooperative. Like Sawyer and other reviewers, Michael Cannon, in his review ('Our Lucky Lives of Yesterday', *The Age*, 29 October 1977, p. 25), considers that Métin made a valuable contribution to French Australian understanding. On the other hand, John Lonié's review, 'Doctrine without Socialism' (*Nation Review*, 1–7 December 1977, p. 17) excoriates Métin as a 'gallic Billy Hughes' and blasts his book with the comment: 'one can readily understand why no one previously thought it worthwhile to translate Métin into English'. I am grateful to Judith Roga at the National Library of Australia for providing copies of these last two reviews.

and current society. Both as a thoroughly documented compendium and an historical snapshot, the book has undoubted value. It also has enduring charm, which comes in part from a lively style, and even more from the vividness of eye-witness testimony. Métin visits farms and factories, he reads *The Bulletin* and Henry Lawson, he does not hide his disapproval of the systematic discrimination against Chinese workers, he spends time in the ‘village settlements’ created by state governments to ease urban unemployment and to get more land cultivated. He even has a chat with Berthe Mouchette and her sister Marie Lion (Métin 1901b, 217ff), without explicitly naming them, while inspecting the Mylor community in the Adelaide Hills. These settlements—their very existence will be unknown to many, perhaps most of today’s Australians—are seen by Métin as a key example not so much of utopianism as of the ingenuity of a young Australian democracy willing, in the face of the harsh conditions of the 1890s depression, to take risks and to experiment. He was less interested in whether the settlements succeeded than in the ‘let’s try this idea’ attitude among people and authorities. In sum, he admired this spirit, as much as the social achievements of universal suffrage, the eight-hour day and old-age pensions. And it was this spirit he saw again when he visited the Australian troops on the Western Front in 1918, before setting out to lead the Economic Mission.

### ***The Petit Parisien* texts and the *Mission Économique***

As already suggested, Métin’s two articles in the *Petit Parisien* may be seen as part of his meticulous preparation for the Australian Mission. The story of his visit to the Australian ‘tigers’ is in the same vein (see Dwyer 2015, 32). Other aspects of that preparation included a visit to London to meet directly with Prime Minister Billy Hughes, and to assure himself that the British government was in full accord with the Australian initiative of requesting the Mission in the first place: the French were not in the business of risking offence to Imperial sensitivities. Britain did not disapprove, though it contrived to have J. T. Meadows Smith, the secretary of the British Chamber of Commerce in Paris, attached as a member of the Mission, presumably to keep an eye on developments.<sup>17</sup> While in London, Métin also contacted the

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<sup>17</sup> We can note Métin’s careful references to the British in both articles, remembering that Australia’s independent formal diplomatic relations with France were not established until after the Second World War.

British Committee of the French Red Cross, in order to get some accurate figures of Australian civilian donations to the French War Effort. When he learned how enormous the sum was ('half a million sterling'<sup>18</sup>) Métin described it as 'magnificent': 'These are sums which the heart of a Frenchman will never forget'.<sup>19</sup>

There is no mention of money in the *Petit Parisien* articles, although Métin would obviously have been aware of the need to explain and justify to the French public, as well as to the political world, what would be known to be a great expense, especially in the face of extreme wartime needs.<sup>20</sup> In the first article, Métin does this in several different ways. Firstly, he underlines Australia's enormous military contribution to the war effort in France, taking pains to point out that this is continuing.<sup>21</sup> Secondly, he points to Australians' respect and admiration of France in its fight for freedom, an assessment plausibly based on his knowledge of the Australian civilian contributions already mentioned. The glowing homage to Australia's advanced democratic and social systems (largely reproduced from *Le socialisme sans doctrines*), with its suggestion that France may have something to learn from Australia, serves to introduce another factor, namely that renewed French access to Australian wool will be an essential condition for post-war reconstruction in the areas of northern France most affected by the war. This theme of French self-interest benefiting from the Mission is developed in the final section of the article, where Métin portrays Australia as a wealthy nation and a potential client for France's luxury goods export market, taking advantage of the opportunity to displace the now-disgraced Germany as an important trading partner. All in all, this is a cleverly conceived and composed piece, which blends patriotic idealism with the lure of economic benefit, while

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<sup>18</sup> R. H. Illingworth to Métin, 26 July 1918 (University of Melbourne Archives, Red Cross National Office 2015.033, Box 259). Using the Bank of England's calculation method, this would equate to a little under £50 million in today's currency.

<sup>19</sup> Métin to Illingworth, 27 July 1918.

<sup>20</sup> The budget granted by the French government for the Mission was half a million francs (Aldrich 1989), equivalent to over 4.5 million euros in today's currency.

<sup>21</sup> The statistics Métin quotes from Hughes are not entirely accurate, although they do convey the scale of contribution. According to the Department of Veterans' Affairs figures, 295,000 Australians fought on the Western Front, with 46,000 dead, and 130,000 wounded. (<https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/history/conflicts/australians-western-front>, accessed 5 June 2018)

seeking to establish the reality of an ‘increasingly warm relationship’ between France and Australia.

The second article, published posthumously, is based on Métin’s visit to the Australian frontline troops, and while it plays on much the same themes as the earlier piece—the Australians’ outstanding military contribution, their admiration for, and empathy with the French, their advanced democratic and social practices—it adds a new dimension by emphasising Australian distinctiveness and specificity. Métin does not overlook the fact that these ‘tigers’—directly associated with the legendary French *Tigre*, Clemenceau—have a place in the British armed forces, but he draws attention to what sets them apart, beyond the slouch hat and certain details of their uniform: their independent command,<sup>22</sup> their 100% volunteer status, their shrewd realism (the wool-trader officer alert to opportunity), their love of sport, their cheerfulness of spirit and sunny disposition, their irreverent humour (as illustrated in the strange cross-dressing incident below). This is a people whose future, Métin asserts, will command attention, particularly in the Pacific.

Métin’s choice of *Le Petit Parisien*, to which his status would have given him immediate access,<sup>23</sup> allowed him to reach the largest audience possible. *Le Petit Parisien*, during the war, had by far the largest circulation of any newspaper in France, at almost two million readers, which was over half a million more than its nearest rival *Le Matin*. (Bellanger 1972, 305ff, 428) While it is impossible to measure in any precise way the impact of Métin’s articles on the French reading public, the articles themselves suggest a carefully planned process. One reader who has left us a record of his enthusiasm was J. R. W. Taylor, the very Francophile editor of *The Jackass*, the monthly magazine of the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Hospital in Rouen. In an article entitled ‘The French Mission to Australia and its significance’, Taylor quotes Métin’s ‘splendid article’ at length, and extols the closeness between the French and Australian peoples: ‘that strong democratic feeling born in the people in both lands, and (...) a peculiarity of temperament which distinguishes us as a type quite apart from the English.’ He went on to express his belief that the French hopes for an enhanced trade relationship

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<sup>22</sup> There is no indication that Métin knew that this was a recent achievement.

<sup>23</sup> Bellanger (1972), 427 ff. gives a good account of how the governmental *Maison de la Presse*, founded in 1916 and directed by Philippe Berthelot, interacted for propaganda purposes with the press.

with Australia would be fulfilled: ‘France need have no doubts. Australia has already gone a long way by inviting a mission to her shores. We are only too happily aware that she is prepared to go the whole distance.’<sup>24</sup>

As we know, Taylor was proved wrong. The French Economic Mission, despite all the ceremony and high-flown discourse attached to it, and despite the exceptionally warm welcome given by the Australian public during its travels across the country,<sup>25</sup> failed to find ways to extend or deepen trade relations between the two countries. France may have been ready—and it was certainly ready to try to redress the balance of trade ratio, grossly lopsided in Australia’s favour by virtue of the wool trade. But Australia, the desires of its Prime Minister notwithstanding, was not yet ready to abandon the ‘protection plus preference’ economic policy that had pertained since before the war (Coleman 2015).<sup>26</sup>

It would take almost another twenty years before Australia and France signed an actual trade agreement,<sup>27</sup> by which time the world was on the verge of another, equally devastating, war—one which would so significantly change the global political and economic order that it seems futile to seek continuities between the before and the after.

## Conclusions

Métin’s articles posit a future relationship to be based on the greater understanding between two democratic nations and peoples that arose from the shared experience of fighting together for freedom. The failure of that future to be realised, at least at that time, raises many questions about the history of the links between Australia and France, and it could be argued that Métin’s idealistic enthusiasm about Australia led him to misread or underestimate some of the less palatable realities.

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<sup>24</sup> *The Jackass*, n° 4, September 1918, 2.

<sup>25</sup> Dwyer (2015–2016) notes that there were a few exceptions to this warm welcome; cf also Aldrich (1994).

<sup>26</sup> For ‘protection’ read the tariff regime that Métin and other French observers, as well as French businesses, found prohibitive; for ‘preference’ read special treatment for Britain and other parts of the British Empire.

<sup>27</sup> The Agreement was signed on 27 November 1936 and gazetted on 17 December to take effect on 1 January 1937 (*Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, n° 106, 17 Dec. 1936, 2283).

A valuable future study might compare Métin's assessment of Australia with the much more critical one by Leroy-Beaulieu, which castigated, among other things, the young nation's upstart materialism, the aggressive but short-term nature of its policies towards the outside world, its excessive taxes, its shortage of arable land, and its self-defeating immigration policy (Leroy-Beaulieu 1901). But that does not invalidate the enduring importance of the closeness of purpose and spirit generated on the Western Front, nor the common sense and memory of loss suffered by both populations. Nor does it invalidate the other tenet underpinning Métin's project, that common democratic values and mutual respect offer fertile ground for building friendship.

The NSW Premier, William Holman, when he learned of Métin's death, was pessimistic about the Mission's prospects for success. It was, he said, 'an enormous blow' (cited in Dwyer 2015, 35). Would the Mission have had a better chance with Métin at the helm? His replacement, André Siegfried, was also competent and experienced. Ultimately, such speculation about what might have changed had Métin not died prematurely is probably idle. But there is another question which, although it might seem equally speculative, could also lead to a new angle on future 'French Australian relations' research, namely: did Métin's knowledge and positive assessment of Australia's social 'experiments' influence his own activities as a policy-formulator and law-maker and, if so, to what extent? To probe this question would require close analysis of Métin's parliamentary speeches, and perhaps also those of his fellow 'explorers' such as Vigouroux and Leroy-Beaulieu; it would also require new scrutiny of that other crucible of so much of France's social philosophy, the *Musée social*. It would be interesting to know if Australia, during those formative decades of the early twentieth century, gave France something more than wool and blood.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Alan Willey's translations of the two articles discussed in the above article

From *Le Petit Parisien*, 26 July 1918 Front Page

#### A post-war initiative

##### THE FRENCH TRADE MISSION TO AUSTRALIA

The Australian Federal Government, keen to develop further the increasingly warm relationship between their people and ours, has invited a French trade mission to their country. The British government has forwarded this request with their blessing and our government has agreed to it.

The delegation will carry to the Antipodes the expression of our gratitude for the magnificent part that the Australian contingent is playing in the war. According to figures recently announced by their Prime Minister, Mr Hughes, the fifth continent, by voluntary recruitment, has provided more than 450,000 soldiers and sailors. At the end of June he calculated that almost 49,000 of that total had been killed, 183,000 wounded and only 3,274 taken prisoner. A simple comparison of these figures plainly shows the spirit of sacrifice and heroism of the Australian forces. Even in recent days they have earned the praise of our Minister of War for their continuing valour and repeated successes in defending our front. We shall never forget what Australia has done for us.

For their part Australians will always be mindful of the importance of the sacrifices that France has made, in order to defend right against violence, as well as the greatness of spirit shown unanimously by our nation. Having lived with us and among us, Australians will be aware of the principles common to all regions of France. They will realise how badly our country was misjudged when the traditional qualities of family, honest toil, mental effort and everything that makes up the moral strength of our fellow countrymen and women were unappreciated.



Mutual respect, brought about by comradeship in battle, is strengthened by a commonality of ideals. Australia is a democracy like France and even more so as she has given women the right to vote.

Before any of us Europeans she has provided the example of social laws that have earned her the name of the Workers' Paradise. The eight-hour day started there; also the protection of those in domestic service, arbitration and conciliation, workers' retirement pensions and many other innovations to which the civilised world is becoming accustomed.

As regards the land, Australia is keen to encourage her smallholders, prompting the farming community to join associations and cooperative groups, thus enabling agriculture to progress while maintaining the growers' independence. This is one of her most striking undertakings. Having set out on a previous visit to study questions of labour, my enquiries led me quite rightly to look into Australia's laws concerning land, an especially interesting matter for a Frenchman.

Finally Australia, although relatively thinly populated, but developed with the most modern methods, produces an excess of wool, meat and wheat. She also produces more minerals and metals than she can use. She is therefore a great exporter. In normal times her foreign trade exceeds that of Japan and, in proportion to the size of her population, is three times greater than that of France. We are especially involved in that as wool buyers, and the principal customers were to be found in the areas that suffered enemy invasion.

So one can well understand the interest that we have in maintaining our share in the acquisition of foodstuffs and primary produce that come from that great country. We shall arrange this with Australia, with the full agreement of Great Britain, which is represented in our delegation.



French exporters should now be as concerned as our importers, and perhaps even more so. Before the war they were already playing a more important role than is generally believed. Our foreign trade cannot be accurately assessed by measuring the space occupied in ships. We export little heavy freight, it is true, but we export products of art and refinement that are worth, in terms of money, much more than other products. We are well aware of that in Paris, the capital of luxury and fashion, in Lyon too, the city of silk manufacture, and in so many cities too numerous to list.

Their customers, our best customers, are the rich countries. Now Australia is to be counted among them, by reason of the importance of its production

and, may I say, by the care with which she has effected a fair distribution of her wealth.

The opportunity seems all the more favourable because at present the market is closed to German competition. Such a situation evokes many strange thoughts. Here, in fact, are nations busily buying and selling, according to either their preference for, or their rejection of, sentiments originating in certain ideals of morality and freedom. The fact that in such cases those nations are calling upon France is an indication that her glorious role in history will be maintained, if we have the determination, in the new world now being created.

**Albert MÉTIN**

Former minister, member for Doubs

From *Le Petit Parisien*, 12 September 1918 Front Page and p. 2

### **The ‘Tigers’ of the Australian Army**

*Day by day we have been able to follow in the British communiques the exploits of the Australian army, to whom we attribute, among other successes, the taking of Péronne. Just before setting off on a mission to Australia, our friend and colleague Albert Métin, who was to die so unfortunately on the journey, had paid a visit to the Australian army. He had been keen to write down the impression which this magnificent army had left upon him and it was a few days before his death that he sent us the article which you will read and which has just reached us.*

If, without failing in our duty, we could say all that we have seen concerning the Australian army, we would add to the impression that the whole collection of British troops forms at the same time the most varied and the most united mass in the world.

The Australian corps consists of Australians commanded by Australians from the corporals to the Commander in Chief; it fights under the flag of the Australian Commonwealth, that is to say the flag of Great Britain, enhanced by the Southern Cross in white on a blue background. It is equipped in the English way, from rifles to cannons, from machine-guns to aircraft. When its soldiers, moving up to the front line, replace the felt hat with its turned-up

brim by the regulation steel helmet, they seem quite English. Then you have to be very close to them to distinguish a few original details: the Australian badge in the shape of the rising sun, the map of Australia punched on the bronze buttons.

### **All volunteers**

All are volunteers, since the Commonwealth does not practise conscription and has no standing army. All have taken on the bearing of hardened regulars; we were shown a battalion from each state, plus another made up of recruits from the whole Commonwealth territory. The bearing of every one was perfect, without any carelessness or inexperience. General Pau paid them very sincere compliments.

To appreciate their actions on the battlefield, it will be enough to remember that they won a victory a week since the beginning of April when they arrived to stop the German offensive in the region. Recently, after their advance from Hamel, Mr Clemenceau went especially to congratulate them. It was the first time, before our visit, that a French representative had made a speech to them in their own language. They were given the English text of our Prime Minister's speech; they didn't know his nickname and they liked it because it is the same one that has been given to them. So they called his speech: Message from the Old Tiger to the Tigers.

These 'tigers' of the Antipodes, emerging from service or combat, remain citizens of a free and rich Australia. Civilians before the war, destined, after victory, to return to a life of work and business, they show all the awareness of and concern for economic order. The staff commander who showed us around is a very knowledgeable wool dealer, who loses no opportunity of finding out more for the practice of his trade. I could say as much for the others: every man to his station.

Likewise they continue to live in complete harmony with the democratic and social institutions of their country. The general relates with an understandable satisfaction his recent conversation with Mr Branting, chief of the Swedish Socialists. 'We asked him', he said 'for his programme'. He replied, among other points: free education, universal suffrage without restriction, votes for women, freedom of trade unions, laws for the protection of work. We answered that we had achieved all that a long time ago in Australia. 'To our mind, this country of Sweden, which you consider

smitten with progress, and which is so, would appear fairly conservative.' The same leader is very keenly interested in the League of Nations and is concerned about the part that his country will be able to play in setting it up. Happy Australia, whose volunteers become such good soldiers, and whose fighting men never forget during the war what makes their country great.

### **Emulators of the French**

In France the Australians have been pleasantly surprised to experience vague but general appreciation. I consider that they have been flattered to discover in our republican people the opinion that Melbourne and Sydney are 'the workers' paradise' and that the various states are endeavouring to set up and consolidate small rural properties. Above all they have been pleased to discover that their tendencies do not shock us, quite the reverse. Our democratic tendencies are in sympathy with theirs; their customs fit in with ours. The result is a very special understanding between Australian and French troops at the front, made more close by the moral qualities of their recruitment. One doesn't seem to hear very often in their camps the usual demand of the inhabitant who believes himself wronged and who complains in a sort of "franglais": 'Me speak, interpret right away!'

We were there when the Australian telephone and telegraph informed us of the first victories of the French counter-offensive. Immediately soldiers and officers communicated the good news by word or gesture in every village. Their joy was communicated everywhere in a wink. Nothing more touching or more encouraging. What the Australians bring us is precious: the way in which they give it is imperceptible. Cheerfulness seems the very soul of this healthy people, raised in the open air of a land of sunshine.

We have met groups of them engaged in various sports, encouraged by their officers in their free time: it was a real English weekday afternoon, and even more so if you think about the proximity of the enemy cannon. Suddenly, among a crowd watching a race, appeared a civilian in black wearing an opera hat. 'That must be the minister,' suggests one of our party. Whereupon the so-called chaplain reveals a 'girl', in short skirts, very much in fashion, with tight stockings and a floppy wig. In these two characters we recognise two volunteers dressed up, made up, painted and copiously powdered with flour, rather like the French couple ready to sing the well known song:

*The maid replied: "You'll come back tomorrow."  
The next day, handsome Nicholas... etc...*

Further along again, another couple appears amidst prolonged laughter, amused at our surprise.

Just remember that of all the soldiers, these are the furthest from their families, that distance has prevented them from having any leave so far: many left their country four years ago and several have been through the experience of Gallipoli.

What a lesson in patience, coolness and good-humour, and what a charming way to receive our congratulations! 'Good', they say. 'Do you find in us people like your own soldiers, whom we admire so much?'

Our gratitude will perhaps not be the only reply to make to them. The story of the Pacific nations will tell what an increasing influence Australia will have as a result of her part in the war of nations for the liberty of the world.

**Albert Métin**

### **The Funeral of Albert Métin**

Besançon, 11 September.

The funeral of Albert Métin, Member of Parliament for Doubs, Head of the French mission to Australia, has been carried out in great solemnity.

The funeral started at Viotte railway station at 1 p.m., in the presence of the authorities and a large crowd.

The Minister of Munitions was represented by the Deputy Head of his cabinet, Mr G. Roussel.

Despite the torrential rain, more than three thousand people followed the hearse, which was literally covered with wreaths.

An infantry battalion, with flag, and a detachment of Americans, with weapons, paid the military honours.

At the cemetery, Mr Colliard, Minister of Labour, who represented the government, after having recalled in moving words the career of his predecessor, so brutally cut short, expressed himself thus:

Coming from the ranks of the democratic workers, raised to premier place in the state by his intelligence, energy and firm and loyal character, he never forgot his origins and his burning sympathy has always been directed to the world of labour, to the workers in the factories and fields, whom he never lost sight of nor forgot.

Albert Métin died before seeing this victory in which he believed and for which he gave his life. However, he lived long enough to see our great soldiers, his friends, drive back and victoriously hustle away the hordes of barbarism.

His heart, of a democrat and a Frenchman, rejoiced at this, and to take up the words of Mr Clemenceau, he saw there the dawn of the day of 'triumphant liberation, where we shall see fall the old chains of the most crying oppression of the past, giving way to new institution of justice and new developments of liberty'.

Messrs Moustier, President of the General Council, Grosjean, Senator, Marc-Réville, Member of Parliament, and Tramu, Delegate of the Republican Associations, also paid tribute.

## Appendix 2. Transcription of Original French Texts

*Le Petit Parisien*, 26 juillet 1918, p. 1

### *Pour l'après-guerre*

#### LA MISSION FRANÇAISE EN AUSTRALIE

Le gouvernement fédéral d'Australie a voulu que la sympathie croissante entre son peuple et le nôtre fût encouragé par l'envoi d'une mission française sur son territoire. Le gouvernement britannique a présenté cette demande et l'a appuyée, notre gouvernement l'a agréée. La mission a été constituée sans retard, elle est en route.

Elle portera aux antipodes l'expression de notre gratitude pour la part glorieuse que le contingent australien prend à la guerre. D'après les chiffres récemment publiés par le premier ministre, M. Hughes, le cinquième continent a fourni, par recrutement volontaire, plus de 450.000 soldats et marins; sur ce nombre il comptait, à la fin de juin, près de 49.000 tués, 183.000 blessés et seulement 3.274 prisonniers; la simple comparaison de ces chiffres fait ressortir l'esprit de sacrifice et d'héroïsme de l'armée australienne. Ces jours derniers encore, elle méritait les éloges de notre ministre de la Guerre pour sa vaillance et ses succès répétés dans la défense de notre front. Nous n'oublierons jamais ce que l'Australie a fait pour nous.

De leur côté les Australiens se rappelleront toujours l'importance des sacrifices que la France s'est imposés pour défendre le droit contre la violence et la grandeur d'âme avec laquelle notre nation les a consentis sans marchander. Ayant vécu chez nous et avec les nôtres, ils connaîtront les vertus communes à toutes nos provinces; ils sauront à quel point on méconnaissait notre patrie quand on n'y voyait pas les traditionnelles qualités de la famille française, la probité du labeur, l'effort de la pensée et tout ce qui fait le moral de nos compatriotes.



La mutuelle estime développée par la fraternité d'armes se fortifie par la communauté d'idéal. L'Australie est une démocratie comme la France et même plus que la France, car elle a reconnu aux femmes le droit de vote.

Avant nous tous, Européens, elle a donné l'exemple des lois sociales qui l'ont fait surnommer le Paradis des Ouvriers. La journée de huit heures

a commencé chez elle; de même, la protection des salariés à domicile, l'arbitrage et la conciliation, les retraites ouvrières et bien d'autres innovations auxquelles le monde civilisé s'habitue de plus en plus.

Au point de vue agraire, elle s'applique à développer chez elle la petite propriété, à donner aux ruraux l'habitude des associations et de la coopération qui permettent les progrès de la culture tout en maintenant l'indépendance des cultivateurs; c'est là un de ses efforts les plus saisissants. Parti, dans un précédent voyage, pour étudier les questions ouvrières, j'ai été amené dans mon enquête à traiter comme elle le mérite sa législation des terres, particulièrement intéressante pour un Français.

Enfin, l'Australie, relativement peu peuplée, mais mise en valeur avec les procédés les plus modernes, produit en excès de la laine, de la viande, du blé. Elle fournit aussi plus de minerais et de métaux qu'elle n'en peut consommer. C'est donc une grande exportatrice; son commerce extérieur, en temps normal, dépasse celui du Japon; proportionnellement au nombre des habitants, il est presque trois fois plus considérable que celui de la France. Nous y figurons surtout comme acheteurs de laine, et c'était dans les régions envahies que résidaient ses principaux clients.

On comprend donc l'intérêt que nous avons à conserver notre part dans l'acquisition des aliments et des matières premières qui viennent de ce grand pays. Nous le ferons d'accord avec lui, en complète entente avec la Grande-Bretagne, qui se fait représenter dans notre mission.



La sollicitude des exportateurs français doit en ce moment s'éveiller autant et plus peut-être que celle des importateurs. Avant la guerre, ils jouaient déjà dans notre vie économique un rôle plus important qu'on ne le croit généralement; en effet, on n'évalue pas à sa mesure notre commerce extérieur quand on l'estime suivant la place qu'il prend sur les bateaux. Nous avons peu de fret lourd de sortie, c'est exact, mais nous envoyons au dehors des produits d'art et de goût qui valent, à poids égal, beaucoup plus que ceux des autres. On le sait à Paris, capital du luxe et de la mode, on le sait à Lyon, la ville des soieries, on le sait dans tant de centres dont la liste serait trop longue.

Leurs clients, nos meilleurs clients, sont les pays riches; or, l'Australie se classe parmi eux par l'importance de sa production et, qu'on me permette de

le dire, par le soin qu'elle a donné à préparer une répartition équitable de la richesse.

L'occasion apparaît d'autant plus propice qu'à présent le marché se trouve fermé à la concurrence allemande. Une pareille situation appelle de bien curieuses réflexions. Voici, en effet, des peuples préoccupés de vendre et d'acheter suivant les préférences qu'ils doivent à des sentiments dont l'origine se trouve dans un certain idéal de moralité et de liberté. Qu'en pareil cas ils appellent à eux la France, c'est l'indice que son rôle glorieux dans le passé se poursuivra, si nous le voulons fermement, dans la nouvelle humanité qui se forme.

**Albert MÉTIN**

*Ancien ministre, député du Doubs*

*Le Petit Parisien*, 12 septembre 1918, pp. 1–2

### **LES « TIGRES » de l'armée d'Australie**

*On a pu suivre, au jour le jour, dans les communiqués britanniques, les exploits de l'armée australienne, à qui revient, entre autres succès, la prise de Péronne. Précisément avant de partir en mission pour l'Australie, notre ami et collaborateur, Albert Métin, qui devait si malheureusement mourir en cours de route, était allé rendre visite à l'armée australienne. Il avait tenu à écrire les impressions que cette magnifique armée lui avait laissées et c'est quelques jours avant de succomber qu'il nous envoyait l'article qu'on va lire et qui vient de nous parvenir:*

Si nous pouvions, sans manquer au devoir, dire tout ce que nous avons vu à l'armée australienne, nous contribuerions à donner l'impression que l'ensemble des troupes britanniques forme la masse à la fois la plus variée et la plus unie du monde.

Le corps australien se compose d'Australiens commandés par des Australiens depuis les caporaux jusqu'au général en chef : il combat sous les couleurs de la Fédération australienne, c'est-à-dire le drapeau de la Grande Bretagne complété par la croix du Sud en blanc sur fond bleu. Il s'équipe à l'anglaise depuis les fusils jusqu'aux canons, depuis les mitrailleuses jusqu'à l'aviation. Quand ses soldats, pour monter en ligne, remplacent le feutre à bord retroussé par l'uniforme chapeau de fer, ils semblent tout à fait des

métropolitains : il faut être alors bien près d'eux pour distinguer quelques détails originaux : l'insigne australien en forme de soleil levant, le contour de l'Australie frappé sur les boutons de bronze.

### Tous volontaires

Tous sont des volontaires puisque la Fédération ne pratique pas la conscription et ne possède pas d'armée permanente. Tous ont pris l'allure de vieilles troupes régulières : on nous a présenté un bataillon de chaque État, plus un composé de recrues prises sur tout le territoire fédéral. Leur tenue à tous était parfait, sans aucun oubli, sans aucune inexpérience. Le général Pau leur en fit de très sincères compliments.

Quant à leur action sur le champ de bataille, il suffira, pour la faire apprécier, de rappeler qu'ils ont remporté un succès par semaine depuis le commencement d'avril où ils vinrent arrêter l'offensive allemande dans la région. Naguère, après leur avance de Hamel, M. Clemenceau vint les féliciter sur place. C'était la première fois, avant notre passage, qu'un représentant de la France les haranguait dans leur propre langue. On leur a distribué le texte anglais de l'allocution de notre Premier : ils n'ignorent pas son surnom et il leur plaît parce que c'est le même qu'ils se sont attribué. Aussi appellent-ils son speech : Message du vieux Tigre aux Tigres (*Message from old Tiger to Tigers*).

Ces « Tigres » des Antipodes, sortis du service ou du combat, restent des citoyens de la libre et riche Australie. Civils avant la guerre, destinés à rentrer après la victoire dans la vie du travail et des affaires, ils manifestent tous des connaissances et des préoccupations d'ordre économique. Le commandant d'état-major qui nous conduit est un commerçant en laines fort entendu et qui ne laisse perdre aucune occasion de se renseigner pour l'exercice de son métier. J'en pourrais raconter autant des autres : chacun dans son état.

De même continuent-ils de vivre en toute sympathie avec les institutions démocratiques de leur pays. Le général rapporte avec une légitime satisfaction sa récente conversation avec Mr Branting, le chef des socialistes suédois. « Nous lui avons, dit-il, demandé son programme. Il nous a répondu, entre autres points : instruction gratuite, suffrage universel sans restrictions, vote des femmes, liberté aux organisations ouvrières, lois de protection du travail. Nous avons répliqué que nous avons depuis longtemps réalisé tout cela en Australie. Chez nous, ce pays de Suède, que vous considérez comme épris

de progrès et qui l'est, apparaîtrait comme passablement conservateur. » Le même chef s'intéresse vivement à la Société des nations et s'inquiète de la part que sa patrie pourra prendre à la constituer. Heureuse Australie, dont les volontaires deviennent de si bons soldats et dont les combattants n'oublient jamais à la guerre ce qui fait la grandeur de leur pays.

### Émules des Français

En France, les Australiens ont trouvé avec une heureuse surprise un sentiment trop vague mais assez général d'appréciation à leur endroit. J'estime qu'ils ont été flattés de rencontrer dans notre peuple républicain l'opinion que Melbourne et Sydney sont « le paradis des ouvriers » et que les divers États s'efforcent d'établir et de consolider chez eux la petite propriété rurale. Surtout ils ont été heureux de constater que leur orientation ne nous choque pas, tout au contraire. À leur inclination démocratique répond la nôtre ; leurs habitudes s'accommodent de nos mœurs. Il en résulte une bonne entente toute particulière entre troupiers australiens et français du front, facilitée par la qualité morale du recrutement. Il ne paraît pas qu'on entende souvent dans leurs cantonnements l'ordinaire réclamation de l'habitant qui se croit lésé et se plaint dans un sabir soi-disant franco-anglais : « *Me speak* interprète tout de suite! ».

Nous étions là quand le téléphone et le télégraphe australiens nous apprirent les premiers succès de la contre-offensive française. Aussitôt soldats et officiers communiquèrent par la parole ou la mimique les bonnes nouvelles dans tous les villages. Leur joie se communiqua partout en un clin d'œil. Rien de plus touchant, rien de plus encourageant. Ce que les Australiens nous apportent est précieux : la façon dont ils la donnent est inappréciable. La gaieté semble l'âme de ce peuple sain, élevé en plein air dans un pays ensoleillé.

Nous en avons rencontré des groupes se livrant aux sports les plus variés, que leurs chefs encouragent dans les moments de détente : c'était un véritable après-midi de semaine anglaise, et mieux encore si l'on songe à la proximité du canon ennemi. Tout d'un coup, dans une foule qui assistait à une course se dessine un civil en noir, à cheveux blancs surmontés d'un gibus. « Ce doit être le Pasteur, conjecture l'un d'entre nous ». Là-dessus le prétendu aumônier démasque une *girl* en jupes courtes, à la mode, avec des bas très tirés et une tigrasse flottante. Dans ces deux personnages nous

reconnaissons deux volontaires déguisés, grimés, fardés et copieusement enfarinés, quelque chose comme un couple français prêt à chanter le refrain bien connu :

*La belle répondit : « Vous reviendrez demain. »  
Le lendemain, le beau Nicolas etc...*

Plus loin encore, un autre couple apparaît au milieu des rires prolongés, qui s'amuse de notre surprise.

Pensez maintenant que ces gens sont de tous les combattants les plus éloignés de leurs familles, que la distance leur a interdit jusqu'à présent les permissions : beaucoup ont quitté le pays depuis quatre ans et plusieurs ont traversé les épreuves de Gallipoli.

Quelle leçon de patience, de sang-froid, de bonne humeur et quelle charmante manière de recevoir nos félicitations! « Bon, disent-ils, trouvez-vous en nous des émules de vos soldats que nous admirons tant? »

Notre gratitude ne sera peut-être pas la seule réponse à leur faire. L'histoire des États du Pacifique dira quel accroissement d'influence aura valu à l'Australie la part prise par elle dans la guerre des peuples pour la liberté du monde.

**Albert MÉTIN**

### **Les obsèques d'Albert Métin**

Besançon, 11 septembre

Les obsèques d'Albert Métin, député du Doubs, chef de la mission française en Australie, ont revêtu le caractère d'une grande solennité.

La levée du corps a eu lieu à une heure de l'après-midi à la gare Viotte en présence des autorités et d'une foule nombreuse.

Le ministre de l'Armement était représenté par le chef-adjoint de son cabinet, M. G. Roussel.

Malgré la pluie qui tombait à torrents, plus de trois mille personnes ont suivi le char funèbre, littéralement couvert de couronnes.

Un bataillon d'infanterie, avec drapeau, et une section d'Américains, en armes, rendaient les honneurs militaires.

Au cimetière, M. Colliard, ministre du Travail, qui représentait le gouvernement, après avoir rappelé en quelques phrases émues la carrière de son prédécesseur, si brutalement interrompue, s'est exprimé ainsi :

Sorti des rangs de la démocratie laborieuse, élevé aux premières places de l'État par son intelligence, son énergie, son caractère ferme et loyal, il n'a jamais oublié ses origines et sa sympathie ardente a toujours été acquise au monde du travail, aux ouvriers des usines, comme aux travailleurs des champs, qu'il n'a jamais séparés dans son amour et dans sa sollicitude.

Albert Métin sera mort avant de l'avoir vue, cette victoire dans laquelle il a toujours cru et à laquelle il aura donné sa vie. Il a vécu cependant assez pour voir nos grands soldats, ses camarades, refouler, bousculer victorieusement les hordes de la barbarie. Son cœur de démocrate et de Français s'en est réjoui, et pour reprendre la parole de M. Clemenceau, il y a vu l'aurore du jour des « libérations triomphantes où nous verrons tomber les vieilles chaînes des plus criantes oppressions du passé pour de nouvelles installations de justice, pour des développements nouveaux de liberté ».

MM. Moustier, président du conseil général ; Grosjean, sénateur ; Marc-Réville, député, et Tramu, délégué des associations républicaines, ont également pris la parole.

### Appendix 3. Clemenceau's Letter to Hughes

National Archives of Australia: CP222/1, 1 Letter from President Clemenceau to Prime Minister William Morris Hughes

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

Le Président du Conseil

Ministre de la Guerre

Paris, le 20 juillet 1918

Mon cher Collègue,

Le présent message vous sera remis par M. Albert Métin, Ancien Ministre, chargé de mission en Australie, qui vous apportera avec mon meilleur souvenir et mes félicitations pour l'oeuvre patriotique que vous avez accomplie sous le drapeau britannique, l'expression de l'admiration profonde et de la reconnaissance émue qu'inspirent à tous les Français la vaillance des troupes australiennes et le généreux enthousiasme de votre nation pour la cause du Droit et de la Liberté.

Les deux peuples savent bien que leur idéal est le même, que leurs aspirations sont communes et créent entre eux une ardente fraternité. L'amour de la civilisation, la haine de la tyrannie, le respect de la dignité humaine inspirent à vos soldats, comme aux nôtres, le même héroïsme sur les champs de bataille, dans cette guerre juste dont l'enjeu est la liberté du Monde.

Veillez agréer, mon cher Collègue, l'assurance de ma haute considération,

[signature] G Clemenceau

A Monsieur Hughes, Premier Ministre d'Australie



## Official Translation of Clemenceau's Letter to Hughes

REPUBLIC OF FRANCE

The President

War Minister

Paris, 20 July 1918

My dear colleague

This message will be delivered to you by Mr Albert Metin [sic], Deputy and former Minister, now our official representative in Australia, who will bring you, with my best regards and my congratulations for the patriotic work which you have accomplished under the British flag, the expression of the profound admiration and the emotional gratitude which the bravery of the Australian troops and the generous enthusiasm of your nation for the cause of Right and Liberty has inspired in all French people.

The two nations are well aware that their ideal is the same, that their aspirations are mutual and this creates between them a fervent sense of brotherhood. Love of civilisation, hatred of tyranny and respect for human dignity inspire in your soldiers, as in ours, the same heroism on the battlefields in this war in which it is the freedom of the world which is at stake.

Please accept, my dear colleague, the assurance of my highest respect,

CLEMENCEAU

To Mr Hughes, Prime Minister of Australia