

There was movement at the station . . . or, to be more precise, at Sheepyard Flat, up the Howqua track, under the rampart of Timbertop and the rim of the High Country, where the Mountain Cattlemen gathered this year for that grand shivoo — their annual Get Together.

Featuring, on this occasion, a Book Launching with a difference. A book entitled, appropriately enough, **Movement At The Station** — The Revolt of the Mountain Cattlemen.

And, of course, the running of that most glorious of all Australian horse races, the Cattlemen's Cup.

This year destined to be an event filled with drama. Heart-warming and heart-breaking. Such stuff as "Banjo" would have made a ballad on to rival his Man From Snowy River.

The mountain men and women, and children were there. Joined by Bushies and Townies. And the wonderfully wise, Irish-eyed mountain horses.

Lazy Harry and his band came to play all night long. And the mountain men and women and their guests caroused and danced on the earth of that alpine valley until the Sunday dawn.

Exhilarated by the great storm that broke over the high country on Saturday night . . . the Gods cracking ten mile long stockwhips of lightning to strobe-flash the deep valleys and the black mountaintops.

THE SAME AS THE IRISH WHISKY

But everyone about betimes for Professor Geoffrey Blainey, up on the platform to officially launch the book — **Movement At The Station** by Bryan Jameson.

(That's Jameson without the "r" — spell the same as the grand Irish whisky.)

But of course they're not much for honours. As the spokesman of the Mountain Cattlemen, Graeme Stoney (he of splendid bushranger aspect) tells the mob:

"It's Professor Blainey. But we don't hold much with that sort of formality, and since we've got to know him, we'll call him Geoff."

Similarly, the guest of honor, Bryan Jameson, is given the mountain accolade: "A cantankerous old bugger, but he's written a bloody good book."

Which **Movement At The Station** (published by Collins, recommended price \$16.95) indeed is.

It is, as Jameson says in his Introduction, a partisan book, but one which takes great pains to be honest.

It presents a persuasive case for the Mountain Cattlemen — that endangered species who are fighting to defend their traditional lifestyle, founded on the summer grazing of their herds on the remote High Plains.

KILLING THE LAST WHALE FOR A QUID

The issue of conservation is one that has engendered violent passions in our society, particularly in the past 15 years.

Properly so, since through greed or ignorance we of the human race have already done enormous damage to the all-too-finite planet we inhabit.

But it has perhaps become too much

Making a book on the mountain horsemen

simplified into black and white.

Not all farmers, graziers, miners and foresters are gross and ignorant people whose only interest is to make the biggest dollar they can — without caring if they rip the guts out of the land in doing it.

Similarly, not all "greenies" are farsighted and nobly motivated people whose cause is dedicated to saving our earth from the industrial rapists and preserving at least some of our environment for generations still to come.

Of course there are some who would kill the last sperm whale or cut down the last tree if there was a quid in it for them.

And there are conservationists who will lie and distort facts — because there are electoral votes in it, or for personal aggrandisement, or out of shortsighted emotional commitment.

CARING FOR THE HIGH PLAINS LIFESTYLE

In **Movement At The Station** Jameson

presents an admirable work combined of scholarship, investigative journalism, living folklore and contemporary history.

The subtitle — **The Revolt Of the Mountain Cattlemen** — is pertinent in particular to that memorable occasion when 300 horsemen rode into the heart of Melbourne to demonstrate on the steps of Parliament House.

And of the drama — and often slapstick comedy — when the mountain men became political activists in the critical Nunawading by-election.

And above all, Jameson offers a soberly presented and factually endorsed case strongly supporting the rightness of the cattlemen's fight to care for the High Plains and preserve the lifestyle they have followed for 150 years.

Its basis is that the annual presence of the cattle is now part of the ecological balance on the High Plains and to shut them out would be to invite disaster such as has already occurred on the Barrington Tops in New South Wales.

Far from destroying the environment of the high country, it seems the cattlemen may be our best means of preserving it — and Jameson's book may help greatly towards achieving that most desirable end.

TO BE "JUST A GIRL" AGAIN

It was as fine a book launching as I've seen. In fact they gave their mate Geoff a blue ribbon for it — and he wore it proud.

It was the first of many awards made that day in the final competitions of the mountain horsemen and women — and children — at play.

The mountain children come early to the hard and joyous arts of horse and whip and bush and animal craft by which the families make their living.

How better to sum up what the magic of it for them than to quote the words of young Kate Stoney. (She who rides like a young centaress, if there be such a thing.)

After the summer break filled with horse and stockwhip — riding safari to the high plains, driving the monstrous big header

in the paddocks — she was collar proud in uniform once more. On her way back to school.

Her eyes moist with regret for lost beauty, She



murmured with sad resignation to her mum: "Now I suppose I'll have to go back to being just a girl again."

UNSTINTING IN ADMIRATION AND DELIGHT

You've got to watch the children. They're on your hammer all the way. As we saw in the Australian Women's Stockwhip Cracking Championship.

Won grandly by Sharon Smith, but with young

Linda Burley (coming into open competition after having earlier won the Junior title) filling second place.

And what's this? Young Tanith Blair, in open competition after having won the Ten Years and under title, takes third place.

The cream of the best being that her mother, the splendid Leanne, is placed fourth.

Leanne looked down at her offspring with embarrassed pride and younger brother, Justin, broke the rank of spectators to pat Tanith with awed delight.

Younger brothers don't always give a girl the respect and admiration she deserves. But Justin did this time. Unstintingly.

Most satisfactory, the whole thing. And more richness was to come in the Cattlemen's Cup.

A WILD AND GLORIOUS FINISH

A certain partisanship is unavoidable in such a contest, and you may remember that last year we were strong for Christa Mitchell as the first woman to ride the race.

And we had to be barracking for young Chris Stoney, didn't we?

Because, apart from Chris, we had had the pleasure of meeting and discoursing with his splendid mare, Philly.

When the tumultuous shout thunderclapped through the ghost gums and echoed in the hills . . . it was Chris Stoney and the splendid Philly who led the awesome charge.

Down into the wild tumult of the river . . . Across, and lost to sight in the trees, though you can still hear the thundering hooves on the treacherous hillside.

Down into the valley again . . . The call comes back — Christa has fallen in the river. Not seriously hurt . . . The riders are getting their billyies of water . . . They're on their way. Charging home.

In a wild and glorious finish, they come up out of the river, over the great log jumps. And Chris Stoney and the splendid Philly lead them five lengths clear.

Wonderfull! Wonderfull!

PASSING INTO FOLKLORE THE HARD WAY

But you wouldn't want to know! One of the rules is that you must end the race with at least a mug of water still in your billy.

That's right. After riding so magnificently. Winning

so splendidly. Chris couldn't fill the quota.

By default the cup went, for the fifth year in succession, to Ken Connley. This year riding Rainbow, instead of that wily old stockhorse, Ace, who carried him to victory four times before.

"I didn't want to win that way," Connley told the crowd, and, to general acclamation, invited young Chris Stoney to take the cup and put it on his own mantelpiece for

the first six months of the year.

Chris might console himself with the thought that by winning and losing as he did, he becomes part of the folklore of the mountains in a way no ordinary victory would have achieved for him.

"He split it getting off," said his mum, Helen. "I was crying so much . . . if I'd only been quick enough and cried in the billy I could have filled it for him."