

ANTIPHON FOR TWO ARCHIVISTS

During the (rare) idle moments at the Enquiry Desk of an Australian Archives Institution

(*Author's note:* "Cecils at the Uni" is a camouflaged phrase made popular by "Cecil's" beautiful research assistant)

Behold the hapless archivist,
His salary is meagre.
He faces one unending list
From correspondents eager
To know the year great-grandpa came,
Or where Mount Blank's located.
He feels he plays a losing game.
They never are placated;
But come afresh with queries new
to test his ingenuity,
Till life becomes within his view
One bloody great fatuity ...

(Voice 2. Encouragingly)

But stay, who's this that saunters back
From Cecils at the Uni.,
With typewriter encased in calf,
And calves by no means puny?

(Voice 1. Doubtfully)

Here Mrs Cecil sits
And contemplates her Cockburn.
Now does she plan a blitz,
Or merely do a slow burn?
Or has she sense to see
Her tilted nose so quizzical
Must win the victory
'Gainst charms naively physical?

(Voice 2. Impressed)

Reflections of such earnest gist
On the condition human
Buoy up the documentalist,
Attesting his acumen.

(Voice 1. Discarding inhibitions)

Well summer is acumen in,
Loud sing the archivist.
And if his verses sound cuckoo,
So is the vocalist.