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JOURNALISM IN ADELAIDE, 1845-1854: AN EXAMINATION OF ITS LITERARY, CRITICAL AND TOPICAL SCOPE AT THE MID-CENTURY, WITH A PARTICULAR STUDY OF THE MERCURY, SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SPORTING CHRONICLE, AND COMMERCIAL ADVERTISER, (1849-1851)

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by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUMMARY

For Adelaide's readers at the mid-nineteenth century, newspapers were much more than the media of opinion and information. Though written for immediate practical effect, they were also vehicles for ". . . the inventions of Art, the researches of Philosophy, and the utterance of Genius."[1]

This study falls into two parts: in the first, Adelaide's newspapers have been considered as reflections of the local scene, in the second as the literature of the colonial reader. Their literary, critical and topical scope from 1845 to 1854 has been made central.

Since Adelaide then aspired no higher than to bear ". . . comparison with any other of the external settlements of Great Britain,"[2] it is not surprising that its journalists should imitate London papers like The Times and Punch. Yet even at their most derivative, they also showed that they responded to colonial experience, revealing thereby an emerging Australian consciousness. Between individuals, there were obvious differences, but in attitude, they were frequently like. Though editors might occasionally champion the interests of the lower orders they usually spoke for ". . . those who had leisure; those who for the most part had some travel, and those who had a smattering, at least, of the humanities."[3]

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[1]Advertisement for the Austral Examiner: Mercury, 22-ii-1851, p. 802, VI, iv.

[2]Register, 3-i-1846, II, iii.

[3]Hilaire Belloc, The Free Press (London: Allen & Unwin, 1918), p. 10.

A newspaper which epitomises journalism at the mid-century is the Mercury, Sporting Chronicle, and Commercial Advertiser. For almost three years, it set out to do as its model Punch did; to provide "an amusing commentary on passing events, combined with a vein of satire."[4] Like its more respectable contemporaries, it was essentially middle class in its opinions, but was much less interested in the gravities of colonial life than in its sport and follies. Its reputation for scurrility was not undeserved, but its support of drama, literature and pictorial journalism more than compensates for its vulgarity. Set beside establishment papers like the South Australian, it revealed the obverse side of a society normally seen as sober and decorous. Because of its intrinsic interest and its significance in the development of Adelaide's journalism the Mercury has been made the focus of this study.

When it collapsed in December 1851, there followed for survivors of the gold rushes a period of consolidation. Necessity compelled them to pander to the "farinaceous village" which Adelaide was about to become, and which was to find its best expression in that re-assuring voice of colonists of "the right sort", the Advertiser. Before Ballarat, Adelaide's journals had been provincial versions of the British middle class press, reflecting in the main a society whose character seemed malleable. But afterwards, they began to express with increasing frequency the parochial concerns of a community whose interests had rigidified.

This study follows, therefore, the course of journalism in Adelaide from provinciality to insularity, through a period of lively experiment to ineluctable self-centredness.

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[4]Mason Jackson, The Pictorial Press: Its Origin and Progress (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1885), p. 282.

I declare that this thesis, Journalism in Adelaide, 1845-1854: . . . contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except when due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

D. J. H. Manuel

LIST OF FIGURES

ABBREVIATIONS

Free Press: South Australian Free Press

Gazette: South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register

Mercury: Mercury, and South Australian Sporting Chronicle; later [c. November 1849] changed to Mercury, South Australian Sporting Chronicle, and Commercial Advertiser

Mining Journal: South Australian Gazette and Mining Journal

Morning Chronicle: Adelaide Morning Chronicle

Observer: Adelaide Observer

Odd Fellows' Magazine: South Australian Odd Fellows' Magazine

Register: South Australian Register

Times: [Adelaide] Times

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Newspapers were, in the nineteenth century, the vin ordinaire of literature. In this study, the emphasis will be upon the usual concerns of colonial journalism; not its peaks or troughs, but those unambitious expressions of literate men writing for the edification of like-minded readers. And because for much of the decade 1845 to 1854, newspapers served also as literary magazines and as abstracts of overseas publications, they will also be considered as reflections of colonial taste. By their literary, critical and topical concerns, they reveal the temper of the colonial mind and provide for the modern reader valuable evidence of the foundations of an Australian culture.

Not all aspects of all South Australian newspapers are of equal interest, but in their typography and general literary standard they were little inferior to the best contemporary journals. This is almost to be expected, for Adelaide's journalists wrote in the main for a cohesive group of superior education. At the mid-century, they made few concessions to Demos. They used the language of books, studded their prose with quotations, enlivened their descriptions with a wide range of Biblical and classical allusions. Their sentences were frequently complex, with lengthy subordinate clauses and sonorous periods. Colonial journalists were essentially "literary men", unlike those tradesmen who established a popular press later in the century, and reduced the language of journalism to its simplest elements. In the late 1840s and early 1850s, newspapers were produced by and for the respectable classes. Although the "lower orders" had access to

them in numerous pubs and coffee houses, the colonial press depended upon those who could pay for notices and advertisements and who could afford to be subscribers. If at Cambridge, "even among reading men, the newspapers had their due importance,"[1] in Adelaide, "a man's respectability much depended on his taking a newspaper."[2]

Much of the evidence to be used in this study will be taken directly from the newspapers themselves, chiefly because there is no better, or more vivid, alternative. It is strange that newspapers have attracted so little critical attention, and much of that little, excessively apologetic and defensive. Typical is this Heep-like justification:

> . . . the newspaper, essentially ephemeral thing as it is, yet has a place, though humble, beside the codex and the printed book - the most permanent records of human thought and experience.[3]

The statement was made, it is true, before micro-filming, but the writer seems to have assumed that hard covers are literary virtues, and ephemerality is an unforgivable sin. Such apologia are unfortunately too common, and have been justified on the dubious ground that "journalism" and "literature" are distinct artistic forms, a view which Shaw with typical vehemence denies:

> Journalism can claim to be the highest form of literature; for all the highest literature is journalism. The writer who aims at producing the platitudes which are "not for an age, but for all time", has his reward in being unreadable in all ages; whilst Plato and Aristophanes

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[1]E. Bulwer Lytton, The Caxtons, A Family Picture, Knebworth Edition (London: Routledge & Sons, [date of publication not stated]), p. 268. [First published London: 1849.]

[2]Observer, 19-viii-1854, V, iv.

[3]Stanley Morison, The English Newspaper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), p. xi.

> trying to knock some sense into the Athens of their age . . . are still alive and at home everywhere among the dust and ashes of many thousands of academic, punctilious, most archaeologically correct men of letters and art who spent their lives haughtily avoiding the journalist's vulgar obsession with the ephemeral.[4]

The emergence of a penny press and the sensationalism of the American yellow press were later to polarise differences between quality newspapers and popular, between the "higher journalism" and the lower, and by extension, between "literature" and "journalism". But such dichotomies did not apply to the respectable press at the mid-nineteenth century. Even to patrician Matthew Arnold, journalism was simply "literature in a hurry . . . ."[5] In South Australian newspapers of the 1840s and early 1850s, "literature" and "journalism" were not regarded as discrete. Obviously, there were significant differences between imaginative novels and newspaper articles, but when both appear in the same publication, (for novels were often serialised in the journals before being published as books), then the distinction between literary forms becomes even more blurred.

Newspapers, nevertheless, cannot be judged by the same critical standards as one would apply say to a novel. Plot, character, archetypes, biography, narrative are clearly not relevant in an examination of writing which is fragmentary, shaped by the nature of the journal itself. "There are," as M. L. James admits, "formidable problems facing anyone who tries to evaluate popular literature",[6] and though he was discussing the fiction written by formula for the working

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[4]George B. Shaw, The Sanity of Art (London: New Age Press, 1908), p. 2.

[5]Quoted by Edwin Emery, The Press and America: An Interpretative History of Journalism (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1962), p. 245.

[6]Louis James, Fiction for the Working Man, 1830-1850 (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 45.

classes of England, similar problems of judgment occur in the assessment of journalism as a literary form. The journalist's relation to his readers was largely governed by external forces; editorial policy, the expectations of the reader, the limitations of space, the periodicity of the journal's issues. Yet to neglect the most copious writing of the period, and in many respects the most interesting, just because the more usual critical approaches are not appropriate, is to detach, quite arbitrarily, what J. W. Ross has called "economic literature"[7] from "serious imaginative writing". If literary criticism is as Ezra Pound thought it the study of the art of "charging language with meaning to the utmost possible degree",[8] then the neglect of writing which is admittedly on a lower key is explicable. But if criticism is also concerned with the whole literary environment, out of which works of literary art sometimes appear, if Johnsonian blockheads writing for money are kin to those for whom writing is an irresistible compulsion, if the tastes of common readers are just as pertinent as more cultivated sensibilities, then newspapers should not be ignored.

The assumption that there are essential differences between writing produced to meet a known demand and that which is produced to satisfy the writer always was suspect. The truth of Dean Inge's dictum that "literature flourishes best when it is half a trade and half an art"[9] is confirmed by the example of Charles Dickens. Not

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[7]Quoted by James, ibid., p. 299, from J. W. Ross, "The Influence of Cheap Literature", London Journal (1845).

[8]Quoted by F. R. Leavis, How to Teach Reading: A Primer for Ezra Pound (Cambridge: Minority Press, 1932), p. 10, from Ezra Pound, How to Read.

[9]William R. Inge, The Victorian Age (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), p. 49.

only is it difficult even to speculate on when Dickens the tradesman becomes Dickens the artist, but it is often impossible to decide just when his work ceases to be journalism and becomes literary art. In the mid-century, such speculations would have seemed pointless. Journalism was one of the things which literary men frequently turned their hands to, and there is no suggestion that Dickens' reputation as a novelist was in any way damaged by his contributing to the Daily News or to Bentley's or by his editing journals such as Household Words or All the Year Round. Douglas Jerrold, Gilbert A' Beckett, Henry Mayhew, Thomas Hood, likewise, were known as men of letters, not simply as writers who had condescended to journalism. In colonial South Australia, to have written for Punch or The Times was to win a general celebrity as a man of literary talent. No doubt colonial readers accepted the conventional hierarchy of literary forms, in which serious poetry ranked high and journalism, particularly that practised in the daily newspapers, somewhat lower, but the sentiments which they expressed about a free press being the "palladium of England's glory",[10] and the prominence which journalists of "the better sort" enjoyed in society, confirm the belief that journalism was seen as an integral part of the literary world.

So much for defence. There are many ways of approaching the study of journalism, but the one to be most often followed here is description, augmented by extracts from the newspapers of the day. To quote freely is simply to follow the custom of colonial journalists, but here quotation has been used, partly to illustrate the texture of the language, but chiefly to show how well journalists could speak for themselves.

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[10] Observer, 15-v-1852, II, iii.

While describing some of the many interesting aspects of colonial journalism, this study will also attempt to follow the course of particular newspapers during the changes which occurred in South Australian society in the 1840s and early 1850s. This will involve a consideration of "personal journalism", that journalistic style which was virtually abandoned during the period being considered. It has not been possible to give more than passing attention to the language of colonial newspapers, though the specialised style used in sporting descriptions, the rhetoric used in letters to the editors and in reports of public meetings, and other aspects of literary style are worthy of separate study. Here, the principal emphasis will be upon the kinds of material used in South Australian papers. Although colonial editors used so much borrowed material that any study of colonial journalism is also in part a study of the British middle-class press, only Adelaide's newspapers will be considered in detail.

Most of Adelaide's newspapers followed as best they could the practices of English newspapers like The Times and of weeklies such as Punch and the Illustrated London News. Without a clearly defined operatives' class, Adelaide had no counterpart to the Chartist Northern Star or anything resembling a "pauper press". From the first days of settlement, the cost of printing and publishing newspapers was so high that only the middling classes could afford them. As Edward Lytton Bulwer had earlier argued when opposing newspaper and advertising taxes, price determined readership. Even if literacy had been more widespread, taxation policy ensured that only the well-to-do could enjoy the benefits of a diversified press. In America, the position as described by Lytton was different:

> Liverpool with 165,175 inhabitants has eight weekly papers - Boston, with only 70,000 inhabitants, has eight papers. The price in America being one penny, and in

> England sevenpence, it followed that, in 1829, whilst Pennsylvania, with a population of 1,200,000, published weekly 300,000 newspapers, being at the rate of one paper to every fourth person, the United Kingdom only produced 630,000 copies weekly, which was at the rate of only one to every thirty-sixth inhabitant. Then, with regard to the advertisement duty, in one year, the twelve daily papers only of New York published 1,456,416 advertisements, whilst, in the same year, the whole of the four hundred papers of Great Britain and Ireland only contained 1,020,000 advertisements.[11]

Douglas Pike's note that in 1850, 6,000 copies of the Register and the Observer alone were sold weekly to South Australians, then numbering 60,000, suggests that Adelaide's readers were almost as avid as America's.[12] That is not to say that there were more readers among the "lower orders" than there were in Great Britain, or that migration had made them more literate or better able to afford to become subscribers. It appears as if the middling classes had made the taking in of at least one newspaper a badge of gentility. How else is the number of Adelaide's newspapers to be explained! Though a cheap press was in the offing, a penny press pioneered by the Telegraph in London and made possible by "improvements in printing . . . falling prices for newsprint, and . . . railway distribution",[13] Adelaide's newspapers were beyond the means of most colonists. They were so expensive, at either fourpence or sixpence (apart from a short time in 1845 when the Register was published as a three-penny daily), that they had either to please the well-to-do or go under. As a consequence, colonial editors gave their readers what they wanted, essentially

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[11]Quoted by Alexander Andrews, The History of British Journalism, from the Foundation of the Newspaper Press in England to the Repeal of the Stamp Act in 1855 with Sketches of Press Celebrities, II (London: Richard Bentley, 1859), p. 197.

[12]Douglas A. Pike, Paradise of Dissent; South Australia 1829-1857 (Melbourne: Longmans, Green & Co., 1957), p. 394.

[13]Raymond Williams, The Long Revolution (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961), p. 176.

antipodean versions of the most prestigious English newspapers. The colonial reader wanted no truck with Yankee sensationalism, or with their unrestrained head-lines. Occasional extracts from American newspapers were sometimes reprinted; nigger jokes or yankee drolleries were quite acceptable to fill out a column or to separate more serious material. But it was not until later in the century that colonial editors began to lighten the "black page" style of a press which was then more interested in words than in their visual presentation. At the mid-century, short sentences and brief paragraphs would have been an admission of literary naivete.[14] The direct effect of American journalism upon South Australian in the 1840s and 1850s was slight, partly because the respectable classes were suspicious of "the British-hating Yankee",[15] partly because traffic between the two continents was fitful and much less than that which flowed between the United Kingdom and Australia.

If the quantity of material borrowed from America was uneven, then there was no shortage of copy taken from other sources. Whenever local news slackened or was too dull or arrived too late to be set up in print, Adelaide's editors looked to recently arrived ships to remedy the deficiency. For many years, South Australian newspapers were crowded with information and news from Hong Kong, Tahiti, Mauritius, New Zealand, Bombay, Calcutta, Singapore, the Cape, and wherever else vessels had called on their way to Port Misery. As much

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[14]To trace the influence of the American press upon colonial journalism would make an interesting study, and should disprove S. J. Baker's glib claim that "the two continents were scarcely known to each other." [Sidney J. Baker, The Australian Language (2d ed.; Sydney: Currawong Publishing Co., 1966), p. 403.] Even newly fledged Adelaide felt the influence of fortune seekers from America and was to take a keen interest in the Californian gold-strikes.

[15]South Australian, 1-i-1850, II, iii.

ness, and thanked God that they were not as other colonies.

Their journalists "puffed" South Australia's superiority in manners and morals, insisting over and over again that they were "untainted with convictism", that they were provincial Englishmen rather than colonials, even though C. H. Spence at the same time was noting that "old colonists" had developed customs which would have seemed strange in Edinburgh or London. Not that South Australians, as true-born Englishmen, had given up their right to criticise the way in which the Colonial Office was mismanaging their affairs. They wrote memorials of complaint whenever their interests seemed threatened; they undermined the authority of the Queen's representatives when it was expedient to do so. They behaved, in short, like patriotic Englishmen. Though a few mildly republican sentiments were sometimes heard even in Legislative Council, the newspaper reading class never saw themselves as allied in any important way to America and its democratic ideals. "Democratic" was, for many South Australians, a term of contempt. Like "enthusiastic", it had connotations of the mob, of distinctly ungentlemanly behaviour, and a lack of decent restraint.

Because of the colony's strongly dissenter bias, South Australian newspapers resisted the English press's movement towards Sunday issues. Sabbatarianism remained a more powerful force in Adelaide than it now was in London, with the result that even the Saturday papers, with the notable exception of the Mercury, tended to recapitulate the week's news rather than to offer more original material, lest the spiritually unwary be led into secular thinking on a Sunday. In most other respects, however, in appearance, tone, language, editorial stance they belonged in the journalistic tradition of the English middle-class press. All strove, even the most outspoken of them, to

Chapter 2

A PROFILE OF THE ADELAIDE PRESS

If newspapers at the mid-nineteenth century could not be all things to all men, in South Australia they were much more than instruments of trade or an easy form of entertainment. For some readers, of course, they would have been little more than this, mere embellishments of ordinary existence, but to many of those who were attempting to reproduce some of the civilities of English middle class life in inchoate Adelaide, they were the heart of colonial culture. For colonists living in tiny villages dispersed over a vast and demanding landscape or in bush-engulfed homesteads or in lonely suburban cottages, newspapers had to supply the place of books, magazines and conversation. By keeping vital those causes and principles for which many had become settlers, and at the same time by palliating their awareness of isolation, Adelaide's newspapers served purposes much more complex and more significant than their counterparts did at home.

And so when in 1843, the newly arrived journalist, John Stephens, announced in high-flown terms the establishment of a new journal, the Adelaide Observer, he was not simply "puffing", that species of vaunting to which colonials were peculiarly addicted. He felt he was about to make a genuine contribution to Adelaide's cultural life. When he undertook to produce a weekly which would embody

> . . . all the news of the week, and a due proportion of light literature (a species of reading specially demanded by the thinly-scattered population of these Colonies, to whom larger works are inaccessible, and who are far away removed from the many sources of

> amusement which abound in older and more populous countries) . . . ,[1]

he was simply stating a colonial commonplace: newspapers had to compensate for the lack of other literary forms. Though he went on to claim that his would be very different in quality and scope from those already in existence, in reality what he projected for the Observer could have been applied with equal accuracy to most of his rivals. Though variously coloured by the personalities of their respective editors, and distinguished by differences of opinion and background, in their over-all scope, South Australian newspapers were remarkably similar in their general aims. They all aspired to give

> . . . an impartial record of all the local news, accompanied by occasional notices from intelligent settlers on the pastoral, agricultural, and commercial progress, prospects, and capabilities of the Colony, not omitting its statistical details . . . .[2]

Their columns also contained items of "real interest in the neighbouring Colonies",[3] home news, commercial and shipping intelligence, prices current, original correspondence, poetry, ". . . a fair sprinkling of bon mots, on dits, comicality, and fun, while care will be taken in all things not to offend the most delicate or fastidious ear . . . ."[4] Like Stephens, editors generally strove to provide an ". . . advertising channel to Merchants, Ship-brokers, Manufacturers, Auctioneers, General Agents, Tradesmen, Mechanists . . . ."[5] Differences between individual newspapers there undoubtedly were, but in their literary and topical scope, they were more alike than not.

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[1]Advertisement, South Australian Magazine, II (October 1842-November 1843), p. 1.

[2]Ibid., p. 2.

[3]Ibid., p. 4.

[4]Ibid., p. 3.

[5]Ibid.

In appearance and in their opinions, they also strongly resembled each other. And why should they not, considering how much their editors had in common and how much their readers?

All were of course "colonial" and therefore were derived from newspapers produced at "home". But to be colonial was not in South Australia to be inferior. Editors and readers were united in believing that South Australian newspapers formed a worthy part of the total family of British middle-class journalism. The word "colonial" had yet to acquire its full range of pejorative connotations, and although some writers preferred to describe South Australia as a province rather than as a colony[6] - mainly because the latter carried overtones of "penal colony" and less fortunate settlements - both words were generally used interchangeably.

South Australian newspapers were also united in their belief that they served a society which was in all worthwhile respects superior to all others in Australasia. No editor would have quarrelled with the South Australian's smug assessment:

> Within the last month, we have had immigrants in scores from Swan River, New South Wales, New Zealand, and Van Diemen's Land; and all the information we receive proves that they have acted wisely in coming here. The Western Australian naively talks of his delight in seeing once more happy faces; the Portlander rejoices to find himself in a country of cash payments; the New Zealand-man feels a delight in resuming his place among a people where industry and civilisation, and plenty to do, are the order of the day; the Tasmanian is pleased and astonished to find

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[6]On the other hand, to be described as an "old colonist", one whose early arrival distinguished him from those who had arrived in the 1840s, was to be given the accolade of colonial society. There were however gradations even among old colonists. John Morphett was elected chairman of the 1851 Old Colonists' Festival ahead of Charles Sturt, chiefly because he was "a much older colonist". Mercury, 15-ii-1851, p. 793, V, ii.

> that locks and bars are not required to the houses, and that the community is as free from crime as the best parts of England.[7]

Although when times were bad each newspaper took its own direction, one blaming one group, another another, when the colony was enjoying prosperity they sang in chorus. As the Sydney Morning Herald ironically noted,

> . . . it is really quite refreshing to read with what unanimity [the Adelaide papers] are all agreed in puffing the colony;.. . . That South Australia is in a prosperous state is evident; but our friends are blowing their horns rather too loudly.[8]

In newspapers produced in so small a town for so compact a readership, such unanimity was not too common, simply because too much concord was bad for business. Yet for all their quarrels, Adelaide's newspapers made the same kind of assumptions about their readers' interests and loyalties. The result is that colonial newspapers argue, and express different opinions from the same kind of moral and social view-point. They could assume for example that colonists felt "a good deal of patriotic feeling . . . and a substratum of honest attachment to 'the land we live in'".[9] Loyalty to the queen, the sacredness of the sabbath, the correctness of free trade principles, civil liberty, decent behaviour were taken as axiomatic, as above debate. Some of these verities are implied in this account of a trip to Kooringa:

> The casual visitor at Kooringa cannot fail to notice the respectable and orderly character of the town and its inhabitants. This is particularly observable on the Sunday; there are no loungers - still less drunkards about the streets - all has the calm repose so especially indicative of an

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[7]South Australian, 11-iii-1845, II, ii.

[8]Sydney Morning Herald, 9-iv-1845, reprinted in the South Australian, 29-iv-1845, II, iv.

[9]Morning Chronicle, 29-iii-1853, III, ii.

> English Sabbath, and the school children, about one hundred and fifty in all, are assembled in the afternoon around their various teachers, presenting an appearance of health, comfort, and cleanliness, which speaks well for the present generation, and promises still better for that which is to follow.[10]

No less confident of his readers' values is the journalist who noted that Bulwer Lytton's latest novel alluded to Adelaide and the Burra Burra. Although obviously flattered that South Australia should be so distinguished, he wrote in an understated, self-depreciatory way, in a faintly sceptical style appropriate only if he were sure that his readers would respond in much the same way:

> As a rather amusing instance of the importance to which South Australia has risen, we mention that in the latest part (September) of the new novel called "The Caxtons", by Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, now in the course of publication in Blackwood's Magazine, the scene is laid in Adelaide, and one of the principal characters is a successful speculator in mines.[11]

There were of course more obvious resemblances between Adelaide's newspapers than these. In some articles there was exact correspondence. All newspapers borrowed material and it was not uncommon for one editor to quote another, either to ridicule his opinions or to take advantage of news that he had not been able to collect for himself. They battened on each other with the result that they frequently covered the same journalistic ground, argued about the same issues, even advertised the same events. In editorial stance, they were at pains to be different, but in their general practices, they followed the same conventions. At least two of South Australia's first editors had had extensive experience in British journalism,

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[10] South Australian, 26-ii-1850, II, iv.

[11] Ibid., 15-ii-1850, II, v.

George Stevenson on "a Whig newspaper, the Globe and Traveller",[12] John Stephens as editor of "the Christian Advocate, a Wesleyan journal of wide influence".[13] Another, more recently arrived, claimed to have been an intimate of Jerrold and Dickens and a sub-editor on Punch.[14]

Adelaide's editors may not have been in the front rank of British journalism, but most had been trained in its methods and had a share in its traditions. Apart from W. E. Hammond, editor of the Mercury, who had apparently come to Adelaide from Port Phillip, the majority had travelled directly from Great Britain, as had most of their readers. Naturally, in a profession more dependant than most upon pleasing their clients, editors tended to imitate familar models like The Times and to eschew the sensational, highly spiced style considered typical of the American press. As a result, in appearance, typography, in journalistic taste and editorial direction, Adelaide's main newspapers declared their kinship with the more respectable of their "London contemporaries".

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[12]Douglas A. Pike, Paradise of Dissent; South Australia 1829-1857 (Melbourne: Longmans, Green & Co., 1957), p. 104.

[13]Ibid., p. 135.

[14]His credentials must have been doubtful for the Mercury made him the target of a satirical sketch, called "The Model Emigrant" and subjected his journalism to an unkind parody:

"He says the colonial writers are donkeys, and illuminates the waste of their mental darkness by "Sparks from the Anvil", of which the following, amongst a hundred others, is a bright and burning specimen:- 'OUR SON BILLY. Alas! poor Billy! This compact little fellow fell on Saturday down a hole near Hindley-street. The following bulletin was issued: One p.m. - The infant boy Billy has just opened one eye and winked with the other. Half-past One - He has faintly expressed a desire for a lolly-pop. A Quarter to Two - He has eaten thirty. Three - He has seen a musquito and wants it. A Quarter before Four - Having caught the musquito and eaten it, he sleeps tranquilly. Six p.m. - He is now as well as can be expected. No more bulletins will be issued.'" Mercury, 14-vii-1849, p. 121, V, i.

This conservatism was steadily upheld. Both professional journalists and amateur correspondents behaved as if Adelaide's newspapers provided the same kind of publication opportunity as the best known journals and periodicals at home. According to James Allen, editor of numerous fly-by-night journals, there were:

> . . . many gentlemen, at present residing in South Australia, [who] are known to have placed the public at home under deep obligations, by their stated or occasional contributions to the general stock of periodical literature,[15]

and there were others whose full-time work had been daily or weekly journalism. Although there was a chronic shortage of printers and compositors, Adelaide had numerous professional and amateur writers. (Perhaps their fondness for the printed word made them more susceptible than most to the blandishments of the South Australian Company's pamphlets, in which the colony's prospects had been so glowingly forecast.) This might account for the generous number of newspapers with which Adelaide readers were supplied. From 1845 onwards there were never fewer than four newspapers available; two weeklies, the Observer and the South Australian Gazette and Mining Journal, and two bi-weekly papers, the South Australian and the South Australian Register. And on the periphery of these stable, more or less profitable newspapers were short-lived journals such as R. L. Milne's Australiana in which the editor's idiosyncratic views were propounded for as long as his enthusiasm and funds lasted. Papers like these were not fated to endure. Although in the Australiana's case, the editor promised to "publish nothing that may unnecessarily offend" the additional promise not to "decline the publication of anything

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[15]South Australian Magazine, I (July 1841), p. 1.

important to the well-being of the community, merely because it may offend"[16] was one he was unwise to keep. It led to his attacking Papists so violently that even dissenters were offended and the paper expired after only a few issues.

Throughout the decade, many newspapers were founded only to collapse when the promised or expected support from the newspaper reading class failed to manifest itself in subscriptions or advertisements. Typical of these is James Allen's 1848 attempt to establish the Adelaide Railway Times. In his history of British journalism, Andrews noted with some amazement the extraordinary growth of the railway press of 1845-46.

> We have preserved a list of co-existent newspapers devoted to railway matters in London, in 1845-6, which will be in itself a record of one of the greatest extravagances into which a nation ever fell.[17]

There were listed no less than twenty-nine such newspapers, a daily morning paper, the Iron Times, an evening paper, the Railway Director, nineteen weeklies and eight others issued either twice or three times weekly. What is noteworthy about Allen's attempt is first his optimism - the first railway in South Australia was not in fact to be completed until 1856 - and second his failure to learn from the 1846 collapse of the railway boom. In this, and as will be shown, in other matters, South Australian editors were slow to respond to changes in the British press. What they copied was the British journalism in which they had been originally trained, and although their multifarious borrowings suggest a considerable knowledge of contemporary British

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[16]Quoted in the South Australian, 22-viii-1845, II, iv.

[17]Alexander Andrews, The History of British Journalism, from the Foundation of the Newspaper Press in England to the Repeal of the Stamp Duty Act in 1855 with Sketches of Press Celebrities, II (London: Richard Bentley, 1859), pp. 266, 267.

newspapers, there seems to have been a time-lag in their appreciation of journalistic fashions. As will be shown later, "personal journalism" remained popular in Adelaide long after it had lost favour in London.

But this much had become clear by the 1850s. The proliferation of newspapers had gone too far. By 1851, there were no less than nine newspapers available to a population of just over 60,000. Two of them were highly specialised, the two German papers, the Deutsche Post and the Deutsche Zeitung. There was a free commercial hand-out, George Dehane's Commercial Advertiser, but as for the rest, they were competing for very much the same kind of reader. Dominating the colonial press were John Stephen's paper, the Register, now a daily, and the Observer. The remainder struggled for patrons. Chief of these were George Stevenson's Mining Journal, James Allen's Adelaide Times and its weekly counterpart, the Weekly Times, William Hammond's Mercury, Andrew Murray's South Australian, the Voluntary Principle's official organ, the Austral Examiner, not to mention the Australian Standard and Port Adelaide Intelligencer, the Odd Fellows' Chronicle and divers church papers produced by pious men like Henry Hussey. The journalistic world was overcrowded, and had been for many years. In a letter written by the book-seller-cum-evangelist, E. S. Wigg, some of the weaknesses of colonial society, including its newspapers, were bleakly anatomised.

> . . . Money is the great deity here. These old speculators link themselves with one or other of the six or eight newspapers issued here, and, for lack of politics to amuse themselves with, turn their attention to libelling each other; then comes an occasional horse-whipping, and an action for assault or libel.[18]

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[18] Mercury, 25-i-1851, p. 766, II, i.

Although the main purpose of Wigg's letter was to discuss the state of religion in South Australia and to try to remedy the shortage of evangelical tracts, this passing reference to Adelaide's newspapers identifies their political neutrality, their excessive numbers and their essentially personal character. The latter was not of course unique to South Australia. Throughout the English-speaking world, many middle class newspapers derived their savour from the personality of their editors. Often "the owner, editor, and publisher were one and the same person",[19] with the result that newspapers were frequently the expression of one man's point of view. The resultant journalism is appropriately described as "personal", since the style licensed editors to express their own crotchets and to cavil at contrary ones in their rivals, to make capital out of their opposition's short-comings, and to justify personal antipathies as if they were articles of faith. As with so many other aspects of British culture, Eatanswill journalism had been translated to the colonies virtually unaltered. The style which Dickens had mocked in Pickwick was widely practised in Adelaide's newspapers well into the 1850s:

> . . . Such leading articles, and such spirited attacks! - "Our worthless contemporary, the Gazette" - "That disgraceful and dastardly journal, the Independent" - "That . . . vile and slanderous calumniator, the Gazette"; these, and other spirit-stirring denunciations were strewn plentifully over the columns of each, in every number, and excited feelings of the most intense delight and indignation in the bosoms of the townspeople.[20]

But unlike the Eatanswill Gazette and the Eatanswill Independent,

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[19]Lucy M. Salmon, The Newspaper and the Historian (New York: Oxford University Press, 1923), p. 251.

[20]Charles Dickens, The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club, intro. Bernard Darwin, Centennial Edition, I (Geneva: Edito-Service S. A., c. 1970), p. 191.

which at least nominally represented opposed political parties, South Australia's newspapers were in most matters of like mind. Apart from the issue of State Aid to Religion - a contentious issue for many years - editors held remarkably similar views on matters affecting property, the colony's relation to the crown and the Colonial Office, on convictism, on the labour question and the colony's golden future. They differed in their support of the Governor and his administration, but more on personal grounds than political. The bickering that provided so much material for their columns seldom sprang from fundamental differences in ideology. As Pitt has noted,

> . . . the pioneer journals were continually contradicting, abusing, and ridiculing one another, and the quarrels begot by this spiteful sharpshooting developed into long running-fights in which the personalities of the editors came into full play.[21]

Adelaide's editors continued to practise this style long after it had been abandoned in England. According to Andrews, it had been the style of the 1830s; by the 1850s it was definitely passé. Speaking of the earlier style, he claimed that

> the style of newspapers . . . , although vastly improved upon that of former times, would startle those who are accustomed to the more subdued tone and calmer language of modern newspaper controversy.[22]

Though he acknowledged that the old style was "strong, bold and vigorous"[23] he believed that

> the journalist could [not] now be found in England who would admit this ribald abuse of a fellow-editor into his columns - certainly he would be excluded from the pale of newspaper society if he did: it is after the genuine and approved American fashion, which is no longer in favour here.[24]

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[21]George H. Pitt, The Press in South Australia 1836 to 1850 (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1946), p. 46.

[22]Andrews, op. cit., p. 221.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Ibid., p. 223.

Perhaps English journalists realised quicker than Australian the wisdom of Dickens' opinion that their status could not be improved while they continued to quarrel in public. In Adelaide, however, the position was somewhat different. Personal journalism had been established in the 1830s, principally by George Stevenson, and was further exploited by James Allen and John Stephens in the early 1840s. Having won the support of old colonists, they made this acceptable journalistic fare, and so were able to ignore overseas changes, at least as long as their readers continued to accept the style. Yet though towards the end of the 1840s, there were signs that the newspaper reading class was growing less tolerant of personal attacks, it was not until the death of John Stephens in November 1850, and the retirement of Stevenson in 1852 and of Allen in 1853, that "personal journalism" was superseded. Only after 1852, was the Adelaide press able to claim that it had achieved that "gentlemanly tone", which had come so much earlier to the United Kingdom.

That 'personal journalism' had had its critics even when it had been generally popular is shown by the advertisement inserted in the South Australian in protest against a Register obituary. The indignant friends of the late Samuel Stocks Junior were outraged when Stephens, himself a "Johnny Drinkwater", had included intemperance among the recently departed's qualities. They claimed that the Register had "exceeded the legitimate exercise of the Press in its remarks upon strictly private character", that the article was "an outrage on good feeling and Christian principle", and that the most appropriate action for all right-thinking men should be to "discountenance . . . any paper which prostitutes its columns to such

purposes".[25] In this instance, Stephens was able to ward off much of his former supporters' anger, but by the early 1850s, attacks upon private reputations had obviously lost favour. As Mr Rankine said, when proposing an ungracious toast to the Press,

> . . . So long as the press confined itself to public men and public acts, it deserved support, but when it descends to blacken private reputations, it deserved to be checked.[26]

The decline in "personal journalism" is also reflected in the law, or rather in its interpretation. Libel suits had been commonplace during the early 1840s, but injured reputations were seldom salved by substantial fines. Jurymen seem to have enjoyed that piquant blend of indignation and delight felt when respectable men make fools of themselves in public. The case was usually proved but frequently resulted in only nominal damages. But as the decade advanced, farthing fines were awarded less often. Public apologies were more often demanded and penalties as severe as £20 were sometimes imposed. Such an about-face meant of course that editors had to choose their words and their targets more carefully, if they were to remain in a profession whose profitability at best was often marginal.

It would be an over-simplification however to see these early personal feuds as wars to the death. Notwithstanding the lip-service paid to the principles of free trade and unrestricted competition, editors early realized that it was cheaper to threaten than to fight. The costs of newspaper production were so high, and the number of potential subscribers and advertisers so limited, that the economic weapon of lower prices could seldom be employed. Apart from James Allen's attempt in 1845 to win more readers with a three-penny issue of

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[25] South Australian, 12-ii-1850, II, iii.

[26] Observer, 21-ii-1852, III, ii.

the Register which he then owned, prices seldom changed. And even at sixpence an issue, most editors in the 1840s had to supplement their incomes by acting as commission agents or peddlers of patent medicines or stationers and job printers. In so precarious a business, expediency demanded that competition between newspapers be more apparent than real, more verbal than economic. And so, the South Australian in 1845 could itemise "the chief maladies of our contemporary [the Register] . . . [its] total want of judgment, and something which may be mistaken for either obduracy or want of moral courage"[27] and yet obligingly publish on Tuesdays and Fridays so as to complement the Register's appearance on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Later in the decade the journalistic war-whoops were even more blood-curdling, but when a newspaper actually failed, then the loss was noted with sympathy. Even the Mercury, notorious for its tactlessness and its malice, shed a generous tear on the demise of its arch-rival, the Austral Examiner.

> We hear that the next issue will conclude the career of this special organ of the voluntaries, that Prize Saint Tea-pot Tommy having got sick of forking out the possibles - so much for the voluntary principle and the zeal of the so-called religious public, who could not even support one paper - and that only a weekly. To the temperate and intelligent manner in which its peculiar views have been enunciated, we bear willing testimony, as well as to the invariable courtesy of its conductors who, we trust, will not take our meaning in a Pickwickian sense, . . . when we say that we regret their retirement from the arena, as the honest advocates of an interest by which they ought to have been liberally supported.[28]

Had there been open competition between newspapers, had not well-to-do

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[27]South Australian, 22-viii-1845, II, iii.

[28]Mercury, 6-xii-1851, p. 1121, V, iii.

supporters sometimes buttressed them with subsidies and advertisements, then many more would have had shorter lives than they actually did. Without the backing of influential groups, new journals could scarcely have survived with circulations of fewer than a thousand.[29]

Information about the circulation of South Australian newspapers is hard to find, and if found, cannot be completely trusted. Editors

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[29]There were some in London which were sustained by less but as the following table suggests, they appear to have been supported by church or secular associations:

AVERAGE CIRCULATION OF THE LEADING DAILY AND WEEKLY LONDON PAPERS IN 1850.
(Compiled from the Stamp Office returns)
D. M. - Daily Morning. D. E. - Daily Evening. The rest are weekly.

NAME OF PAPER	POLITICS AND OPINIONS	CIRCULATION
Illustrated London News,	Neutral,	66,000
Northern Star,	Chartist,	58,000
Lloyd's,	Democratic, Anti Poor Laws,	51,000
Weekly Times,	Radical,	40,000
Dispatch,	Infidel,	39,000
Times, D. M.,	As the wind blows,	35,000
Bell's Messenger,	Protectionist, Agricultural,	14,000
Sunday Times,	Radical,	12,750
Wesleyan Times,	Radical, Dissenting,	9,000
Gardener's Chronicle,	Neutral,	6,700
Observer,	Whig,	6,500
Bell's Life,	Sporting, Liberal,	5,600
Lady's Paper,	Neutral,	5,000
Morning Advertiser, D. M.,	Radical Organ of Publicans,	5,000
[Then follow twenty-three newspapers, of various political and religious colour, with circulations between two and five thousands.]		
Christian Times,	Organ of Evangelical Alliance,	1,900
Globe, D. E.	Whig,	1,900
Atlas,	Liberal,	1,650
Justice of Peace,	Neutral,	1,650
Standard, D. E.,	Tory Churchman,	1,600
Weekly Chronicle,	Radical,	1,600
Catholic Standard,	Radical, Papist,	1,600
Jurist,	Neutral,	1,600
English Churchman,	Puseyite,	1,500
United Service Gazette,	Neutral,	1,500
Gardener's Journal,	Neutral,	1,200
Naval and Military,	Neutral,	1,200
Builder,	Neutral,	1,000
Church and State Gazette,	Low Church,	800
Nautical Standard,	Neutral,	800

Observer, 8-v-1852, VI, iii.

did more than puff the colony. In their campaigns against their contemporaries, they exaggerated their own successes and disputed those claimed by their rivals. In 1850 the Register/Observer "were alleged to sell 6,000 a week, considerably more than the combined total of the other papers",[30] a claim which hardly accords with the Mercury's boast that it had in 1849 a circulation of 4,000, and that on one occasion, "1,000 extra copies of his [Hammond's] abominable rag . . . he readily sold."[31]

But whatever their circulation and whatever their profitability, this much is clear: they were more than money-making ventures. Those who supported them of course regarded them as useful in the conduct of business and valuable as rational entertainment. But they also saw them as instruments of progress, as vehicles of instruction, and as expressions of middle class culture. As RADICAL in a letter to the South Australian was to claim,

> Nothing evinces so much the civilisation of a people, or tends to secure so great an amount of happiness to a nation, as the character of the press. It is not only the great highway of knowledge and information, but is in effect the eye and key of science, literature, and politics; and to newspapers may justly be ascribed the merit of fixing and determining the enviable character which our country has assumed in the scale of nations.[32]

In the Victorian cult of self-improvement, newspapers were seen to play an important part. Few colonists would have disputed Charles Knight's claim, in Passages of a Working Life, that journals like his Penny Magazine were vital to the proper education of the working man:

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[30]Pike, op. cit., p. 394.

[31]Mercury, 14-vii-1849, p. 118, II, i.

[32]South Australian, 2-i-1849, II, v.

> The poor man must be made a thinking man - a man capable of intellectual pleasures; he must be purified in his tastes and elevated in his understanding; he must be taught to comprehend the real dignity of all useful employments; he must learn to look upon the distinctions of society without envy or servility; he must respect them, for they are open to him as well as to others; but he must respect himself more.[33]

The paradox which Arthur Bryant has pointed out, "The English individualists who subscribed with such uncritical zeal to the doctrine of laissez-faire in economic matters were among the world's greatest humanitarians",[34] applies also to practical colonists and their idealistic belief that it was their responsibility to humanity to try to achieve "civil liberty, social opportunity and equality for all religions".[35] The press was a most important means to these ends.

Inevitably there was a huge gulf between their ideals and their performance, but what Ebenezer Elliott had sung of the free press in England would not have been challenged in South Australia.

> God said, "Let there be light!"
> Grim darkness felt His might,
> And fled away.
> Then startled seas, and mountains cold,
> Shone forth all bright in blue and gold,
> And cried, "'Tis day, 'tis day!"
>
> .....
>
> By earth, and hell, and heaven,
> The shroud of souls is riven;
> Mind, mind alone
> Is light, and hope, and life, and power;
> Earth's deepest night, from this bless'd hour,
> The night of minds, is gone.

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[33]Quoted by Mason Jackson, The Pictorial Press: Its Origin and Progress (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1885), p. 278.

[34]Arthur Bryant, English Saga, (1840-1940) (London: Collins, with Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1943), p. 53.

[35]Pike, op. cit., p. 3.

> The second Ark we bring;
> "The Press!" all nations sing;
> What can they less?
> Oh, pallid want! oh, labour stark!
> Behold! we bring the second Ark -
> The Press! the Press! the Press![36]

Whatever the short-comings of South Australian newspapers, they were supported, not solely because they were profitable business enterprises, but because they were also regarded as necessary to the intellectual, moral and religious health of the community.

Towards the end of the decade, however, idealism gave way to prudence and common-sense. After the collapse of the newspaper boom of 1851, South Australians decided that only those newspapers which were self-supporting should be encouraged. Doubtless, the high capital costs of steam presses dissuaded philanthropists from establishing or subsidizing new journals to express their opinions: doubtless general prosperity dulled the edge of their altruism, and lessened the desire of well-to-do colonists to play the evangelist. Certainly the revised newspapers only occasionally expressed personal opinions or revealed the personalities of their editors. By the mid-1850s, "personal journalism" was practically dead. Thereafter, Adelaide's newspapers were much more discreet, more objective and more functional. But over the previous decade, they were a miniature of Victorian middle class journalism; simplified it is true but reflecting in a limited way the progression of British journalism from Eatanswill to the beginnings of the popular press.

If there is truth in the dictum, "Tell me what you like and I will tell you what you are,"[37] then it follows that a study of

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[36]Mercury, 21-vii-1849, p. 132, VIII, i.

[37]F. H. Hayward and B. N. Langdon-Davies, Democracy and the Press (Manchester: National Labour Press, c. 1919), p. 31.

Adelaide's newspapers will show something of the temper of colonial readers. Because most newspapers were frequently the personal expression of their editors, such a study also will tell us much about individuals' idiosyncrasies. Most of Adelaide's editors however were successful because they expressed both individual and shared opinions. They had to be sufficiently individual to be interesting and yet sufficiently representative to win popular support. Considering some of the ways in which newspapers reveal the personalities of their editors, will also expose at the same time some of the attitudes of the common newspaper reader, upon whose subscriptions and interest the South Australian press depended, and who was to determine many of the characteristics of the emerging colony.

Chapter 3

FOUR COLONIAL EDITORS

During the 1840s, South Australian journalism was dominated by four men; James Allen, George Stevenson, Andrew Murray and John Stephens. Of these, Stevenson enjoyed the most prestige, having been editor of South Australia's first newspaper, the South Australian Register and Colonial Gazette, and one of the colony's original settlers. In the early days of the colony, he had exercised a good deal of power, and by his outspoken editorials had won influence and enemies like this anonymous contributor to the South Australian Magazine:

> . . . By a series of circumstances of ordinary occurrence in all new colonies, and of which his connection with the press has enabled him to take the utmost advantage, he has managed to "wriggle" himself into some importance, and is evidently ambitious of a corner in any future frontispiece to the history of the colony.[1]

For a time, Stevenson's literary talents were lost to local journalism while he pursued his many other interests, notably in horticulture, but in 1845 he returned to launch a new Gazette, later to be renamed the South Australian Gazette and Mining Journal. In his introductory editorial, he promised to continue the policy which had contributed to the recall of Colonel Gawler, a kind of unconciliatory journalism which he had made peculiarly his own. As he himself said,

> It is now upwards of nine years since the first number of the South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register was published in London by the writer of the present notice. The

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[1]"The First Corporation of the City of Adelaide", South Australian Magazine, I (November, 1841), p. 163.

second number of that journal was printed in the Colony in June, 1837, and it continued to be edited by the same individual until August, 1842, when his connection with the newspaper press ceased. He now resumes his pen, not without the hope that his older fellow-colonists will discover it to be still guided by the same hand and spirit; while the more recently arrived among us, will find in the pages of the Gazette, not merely a record of passing events of the day, and of the general progress of the Colony, but an uncompromising advocacy of their interests whenever they are neglected or attacked. Bound to no party and acknowledging no master, the opinions of the Editor must necessarily be uncontrolled and independent.[2]

He then went on to list the issues which his paper would defend.

> We trust to carry the colonists with us in pursuing, among others, the following important objects:-
>
> 1st. A FREE PORT, and, as far as consistent with our obligations as a British Colony, a FREE TRADE.
>
> 2d. A reduction of Taxation, especially of Customs' Duties; and a modification and revision of the financial system of the province.
>
> 3d. The abolition of all restrictions upon the free and uninterrupted manufacture of articles of colonial produce.
>
> 4th. The discontinuance of the exercise by the Government of discretionary power in the dispensation of the Waste Lands of the Crown.
>
> 5th. A Legislative Council composed of Representatives duly elected by the Colonists; and an efficient and constitutional control by such Representatives over all monies taken from the people by taxation.[3]

Yet, for all his reputation as a controversialist, his latest venture had much less impact upon colonial readers than his former paper, the Register. The heat he had generated in the colony's early days had largely been dissipated. The causes he now championed had become more the voice of orthodoxy than a free-thinking crusader's.[4]

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[2]Gazette, 5-vii-1845, I, iv. [3]Ibid, I, v.

[4]And if the Register is to be believed, he had also lost much of his former journalistic energy.

"Honest George Stevenson has reprinted verbatim from last Wednesday's Register our report of the anti-convict meeting without acknowledgement, unblushingly passing it off as his own . . . . Seven

The Gazette and Mining Journal lasted until March 1852, when Stevenson announced that he could not pay his compositors enough to dissuade them from moving to better paid positions in Victoria. It is significant that the speeches made at a public breakfast given in his honour emphasised his being an old colonist, one of "the pioneers and pilgrim-fathers in the foundation of this colony."[5] It was left to Mr Osmond Gilles to eulogise his journalistic talents and abilities, in terms such as "'the thunderer' of South Australia as the Times was of London."[6] His journalistic rivals also bade him farewell, but more critically. The Observer conceded that "his talents as a newspaper writer enabled him to eclipse all his contemporaries"[7] but emphasised that

> . . . although he was sometimes too apt to indulgence in an exuberance of sarcasm, and to wing the shafts of ridicule and personality with an offensive appearance of wanton recklessness, yet the ability which always distinguished his best efforts was generally felt, by those not immediately affected, to be an almost sufficient atonement for the severity, and, but too frequently, the injustice of his attacks.[8]

What the Observer criticised was as much the style as the man. Stevenson had been trained in and later practised a form of journalistic thuggery which he had made respectable in South Australia. His critics granted that "as a horticulturalist, . . . he deserves well of the colonists; and as a journalist, there cannot be denied to him, the praise of great industry, enterprise and tact".[9] But his attacks upon

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columns of "appropriated" material at one swoop, may suit his editorial indolence, but it will not add to his literary reputation." Register, 17-ix-1845, III, ii.

[5]Observer, 27-iii-1852, II, v. [6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid., 20-iii-1852, II, iii. [8]Ibid.

[9]"The First Corporation of the City of Adelaide", op. cit., p. 164.

prominent colonists over a long period had created bitterness and resentment, which not even a three year retirement could allay. In any case, the Mining Journal was not directed with the same energy that he had given the Register. Stevenson gave much of his time to his property on the Torrens, and although he won many prizes at the Agricultural shows, he failed to win many readers from the established papers. Farmer-journalists were not likely to make successes of both interests, and yet it is a tribute to his abilities that his paper lasted until the gold rushes, which saw the end of many a viable journal.

It would seem that Stevenson's reputation was still sufficiently high to win readers. In the feuds between newspapers, however, the Mining Journal was seldom mentioned, which suggests that his rivals did not regard him as a serious contender for circulation or advertisements. It was Stevenson's former newspaper the Register which threatened to become all-powerful.

And yet early in 1845, the Register had clearly lost the pre-eminence it had enjoyed in Stevenson's day. Ever since James Allen had become its editor-proprietor in 1842 the newspaper had suffered many fluctuations in fortune. One of the reasons for its erratic popularity must have been James Allen's personality. More a speculator than a developer, he was quick to see opportunities for innovation, but was either unlucky or a poor judge of his readers' interests. In 1842, for instance, he established a journal called the Southern Star, whose sole purpose it seems was to attack Governor Grey. Not even Shakespeare's support in the epigraph, "Think upon GREY, and let thy soul despair. - SHAKSPERE - Richard III, Act V,

Scene 3",[10] could make profitable a newspaper whose direction was so blatantly destructive. His flightiness, his lack of steady principles, is apparent throughout his period as editor of the Register and later still in 1848 of the Adelaide Times. Though "a Baptist preacher, the patron of an Episcopalian church! - a dissenter, whose very name ought to be a synonyme for liberality",[11] he was a man full of prejudices and devoid of tact. Unlike Stevenson, who attacked personalities from a clearly delineated intellectual and moral position, Allen seems to attack for the sake of attacking. As R. L. Milne said of him:

> You have capabilities which are calculated to make you a useful member of society. Do not make your paper a slop-pail - a receptacle of libel and abuse - lest it bring you into dishonor. Do not "bear false witness against your neighbour", lest people say, your religion is only hypocrisy. Let the tone of your columns rise to a Christian standard.
> .....
> Bully - a low vulgar term - would be an unfortunate name for a newspaper; but, I am sorry to say, that it is the only appropriate designation that could be given to the Register. Its career has been characterised by kindling feuds among the settlers, the ill effects of which have been widely felt. Its libelling propensities have driven hundreds of thousands of capital, intended for investment, from the province. To its machinations have been attributed the recall of the first Governor of the colony; it grossly vilified another at the most critical time of his administration [here, Milne is alluding to the Register when Stevenson was editor]; and it vainly endeavoured to ruin the present.[12]

But instead of mending his ways, Allen attempted to reconstruct the bi-weekly newspaper he had bought. He issued it as a daily, he changed its price from sixpence to threepence, he used sheets of various sizes, he lowered advertising rates. He did everything except make it a better newspaper. As with his later venture the Adelaide Railway

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[10]Epigraph, Southern Star, 26-x-1842, I. [First available copy, ol. I - No. 2.]

[11]Letter to the Editor of the Register, reprinted in the South Australian, 21-i-1845, III, i.

[12]South Australian, 21-i-1845, III, i, ii.

Times, he was premature in believing that Adelaide was ready to accept new journalistic experiments. (A regular daily, for example, did not eventuate until 1850.) And in a short time, the Register began to show the usual symptoms of a newspaper in difficulties. The South Australian, after waxing satirical on the failure of the NEW DELAY NEWS, accused Allen of replacing "journeymen compositors by raw recruits", of ringing "the changes on [its] own office dummies", of repeating "every advertisement . . . until it is out of date or countermanded", of reprinting "the Government Gazette thrice a week, instead of once as heretofore", of printing "the latest colonial markets till the next arrival", and of employing "the largest type, as it costs the least money."[13] Even the casual reader, whose motives are purer than Murray's, notices the repeated advertisements. H. A. E. Meyer's book, for example, A Vocabulary of the Language Spoken by the Aborigines of the Southern and South-Eastern Districts of South Australia was advertised as "Just Published" on December 27, 1844, and was still so described in the issue of June 14, 1845.

The "Daily Journal" phase came to an abrupt end early in 1845. For all its being "the oldest and most widely-circulated journal in the Province",[14] for all "the expressions of approbation, which have reached us from all quarters", such radical changes did not produce sufficient additional subscriptions or advertisements, and so Allen attempted to return to the status quo. This however was not possible, for not only had he not attracted more support, but he had lost ground. He certainly had given his rivals, particularly the South Australian,

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[13] South Australian, 3-i-1845, III, iv.

[14] Register, 30-xii-1844, I, i.

a first rate opportunity to make fun at his expense. Andrew Murray, not remarkable for his humour, set about making whatever capital he could out of Allen's folly. Enclosed within a heavy black border appeared this mock announcement:

DIED

> On Wednesday last, the 12th instant, at its last residence, corner of King William-street, aged seven weeks and one day,
>
> The Daily Journal, the "Register".
>
> The unfortunate deceased, it appears, had been troubled with a trifling issue, which, having been checked by injudicious treatment, led to its death. It is supposed this event may have been accelerated by the imaginary love of humanity exhibited by deceased, who, fearful of injuring the health of its attendants, declined their services, and quietly sunk into nothingness. From its birth, the deceased had been afflicted with a total want of intellect, and labored under the most extraordinary delusions. Among others, it fancied itself a newspaper - a newspaper exceeding "the most sanguine expectations," giving the "earliest, best, and most extensive information," containing "all the business advertisements," offering "six papers instead of two" - in short, "the leading commercial journal in this colony;" and in these conceits it lingered until Wednesday morning, when it gasped its last, without a struggle - regretted by the retail provision store-keepers, to whom the present scarcity of common wrapping-paper rendered it of some value.[15]

Not content with this hackneyed grave-yard joke, he then enlisted Shakespeare's aid. In parallel columns, headed with Hamlet's injunctions to Gertrude, "Look on this picture - and on this", he set side by side Allen's optimistic announcement of a daily journal and his hang-dog statement announcing its cessation.[16]

Sustained malice was not really in Murray's nature and so it was not long before he returned to his more usual mode of war-fare, schoolmasterly reproofs of inaccuracies and mild amusement at some of the Register's more florid literary flights, as in this ecstatic

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[15]South Australian, 14-ii-1845, II, iii.

[16]Ibid., II, iv.

introduction to an agricultural show:

> Never more sweetly than yesterday did Aurora smile as, parting her golden ringlets, she carolled forth -
> "Good morrow; 'tis St. Valentine's Day,
> All in the morning betime - ".
> And at her back arose a bright, but not a burning sun, from a cloudless sky; and all was life and movement. From every suburb came the loaded drays![17]

As he had done with the collapse of the daily issue, Murray allowed Allen (or one of his reporters) to supply his own rope, merely adding, "The boy will be the death of us!"[18]

Whether or not Allen's excursion in daily-dom had damaged the Register's profitability, there is no way of knowing, but it is something of a coincidence that Allen in May announced that there was ". . . important family business requiring the presence of the Proprietor . . . in England",[19] and that he was offering for sale "the whole of the Printing, Bookbinding, and Stationery Business of the South Australian Register Office Including the Copyright of that well known Paper."[20] The auctioneer, J. Bentham Neales, undertook "to show, without chance of mistake, that the property [had] paid a large profit in the present proprietor's hands, amidst the worst of times"[21] and it may be that not even Allen's mismanagement had cost the Register its place at the head of Adelaide's newspapers. It must still have been a worthwhile investment, for within two months, it had a new owner-editor, John Stephens, in many respects the best journalist of the period. Editor of the weekly Observer since 1843, he had established a reputation for integrity and "correct principles", but

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[17] South Australian, 21-ii-1845, III, i.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid., 6-v-1845, II, i.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

had had little scope for his talents in a paper which "generally speaking, acted merely as a recorder of passing events".[22] In the Register, however, he had both scope and the advantage of following a failure. In his last editorial, Allen bade farewell to the Adelaide press, referred to his having sustained "the position of Editor of the 'SOUTHERN AUSTRALIAN' for a period of nearly two years and a half, and of Editor and proprietor of the 'Register' for nearly three years more," made a brief mention of "his successor's well-known talents, long experience in the newspaper trade, and general acquaintance with all details of colonial affairs," regretted the friends lost as a consequence of "that freedom of remark in which an independent journalist must necessarily indulge"[23] and then vanished, if briefly, from the colonial scene.[24]

In the meantime, Stephens made it plain that he would not slavishly follow Allen's dubious example. Although the South Australian deplored his failure to repudiate "any of those pernicious principles which have so long formed part of [the Register's] stock-in-trade"[25] and "advert[ed] to the most absurd and bombastic style with which the new proprietorship has been commenced",[26] its certainty of direction and the vigour with which the editor's opinions were expressed must have been obvious even to the most biassed. Like

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[22]South Australian, 8-vii-1845, II, iv.

[23]Register, 21-vi-1845, II, iv.

[24]He returned to Adelaide in 1848, having spent part of his three years in England giving lectures on South Australia, including a series at Crosby Hall, Bishopsgate Street, in June and July of 1846. John A. Ferguson, Bibliography of Australia, 1846-1850, IV (Sydney: Angas & Robertson, 1955), p. 2.

[25]South Australian, 8-vii-1845, II, iv.

[26]Ibid., II, v.

his predecessor, he was not afraid to speak his mind. He too did not "shrink from the task of animadversion or rebuke, whenever he shall be of opinion [sic] that the one or the other [was] imperiously called for."[27] More consistently than Allen he honoured his promise to keep "the columns of the Register . . . always . . . open to dispassionate and useful discussion, and to the contributions of the talented correspondents, with which the colony happily abounds."[28] To his editorials, be brought a genuine independence, and an awareness of the whole range of colonial society. He still spoke primarily to and for the middling classes, but he also championed some of the causes of the "lower orders". As his executors were to say in 1852, he had "constantly laboured to render [the Observer] the Agriculturalists' and the Operatives' Newspaper."[29]

Some of the changes undergone by the Register merely reflect the various ways in which editors supplemented their incomes. Allen had been agent for P. L. Simmond's Colonial Magazine and so had used his columns to advertise it. Stephens on the other hand was a book-seller and a seller of patent medicines. His advertising columns therefore began to be coloured by advertisements such as this:

TO THE SETTLERS OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

> The undersigned begs to inform the inhabitants of this colony, that he has been appointed by Professor Holloway, of 244, Strand, London, Wholesale and Retail Agent for the sale of his valuable medicines in South Australia, and he particularly calls the attention of persons residing in the interior to the numerous cases of cures which have been effected by Holloway's Pills and Ointments, not only in Europe, but in the Far West, the Island of Jamaica, the Mauritius, the East Indies, &c., and nearer home, in Australia. The medicines

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[27] Register, 25-vi-1845, II, ii. [28] Ibid.

[29] Observer, 29-v-1852, VIII, iii.

> are particularly adapted for parties living in the interior, where they have frequently to send forty or fifty miles for a doctor, and many of the squatters and settlers would have their servants and labourers saved from hospitals, or being laid up for months in a bush hut, at immense loss to themselves and pain and trouble to the sufferers and their fellow servants, by purchasing and keeping ready at hand for any possible emergency a few shillings' worth of Holloway's Pills and Ointment.[30]

His book-selling business he furthered by advertising the publication of books such as E. J. Eyre's Journals of Expeditions of Discovery and the arrival by ship of books such as Marryat's Midshipman Easy and Peter Simple, Mrs Trollope's Domestic Manners of the Americans, Horace Smith's Zillah; a Tale of the Holy City, Hood's Tylney Hall, Mrs Sigourney's Pleasant Memories of Pleasant Lands.[31] Lists of "Standard Library Editions of the most popular NOVELS, ROMANCES, and TALES"[32] help give to the Register a bookish savour peculiarly its own, at least for as long as Stephens remained a book-seller.

These are of course only superficial changes, and in a good deal of its advertising, and its commercial information, and its coverage of local events, it differed little either from its rivals or from the Register under Allen's management. But in its authorative pronouncement on moral and social issues, Stephens' Register spoke with a new voice. Convinced that his newspapers had to serve moral as well as useful ends, Stephens never allowed objectivity to stand in the way of his own convictions. Later, this assumption of moral superiority was to cause resentment in some of his readers and was to be the

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[30] Observer, 21-ii-1846, I, ii.

[31] Register, 2-vii-1845, I, i.

[32] Ibid., 5-vii-1845, I, ii.

subject of the following Mercury satire:

THE DIRTY ENQUIRY.

"We have visited these moral ordure-pits." - Vide Article in "South Australian Register" of Wednesday last.

Why, John, you surely cannot mean,
Who hate so deeply things obscene,
That you, with sanctimonious air,
Have recreated in Light-square,
And then ungratefully abused
The bridge that you with safety used.
Didst thou thy Californian brass
Upon those vestals seek to pass,
And when discovered, measly varmint,
Like Joseph fly and leave thy garment?
Ah, yes, thy nasal organ's hue
Too fatally proclaimed 'twas you!
Oh, John, despite thy pious mugs
We hail thee rankest of humbugs!
With tongue of oil, but heart of gall,
On the defenceless prompt to fall,
What from thy venomed tooth can save,
Who, ghoul like, violate the grave,
And pour thy slanders o'er the dead,
Who gave thee and thy children bread.
The muse indignant at thee spits -
Go, revel in thy "ordure-pits!"[33]

When he first became editor, not even the South Australian could deny that "a change in its administration . . . [was] absolutely necessary to its continued existence".[34] But Stephens went further than this. Courageously, he expressed his own opinions, which happily for him and his paper, usually were similar to those held by enlightened colonists, upon whom the Adelaide press so much depended. Because he believed strongly in the kind of radical idealism which underlay the settlement of South Australia, he was able to win back many of those readers whom Allen had alienated with his "want of

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[33]Mercury, 9-ii-1850, p. 360, IV, iv.

[34]South Australian, 8-vii-1845, II, iv.

principles".[35] Combining conservatism with radicalism, Stephens could claim with some truth to be "the friend of the working man", and yet be violently opposed to the socialistic ideas of Owen, and be an inveterate opponent of that much persecuted working man, W. W. G. Nicholls, who had tried so hard to preach the brotherhood of man to Adelaide's "mechanic class". Not that his readers were invariably pleased with their leading editor. In his obituary of Samuel Stocks Junior, referred to in the previous chapter, and in his attacks on John Lazar, the highly respected actor and theatre manager (and Mason), to be considered in a later, he made no concession to decorum, and showed no fear of either legal or physical retribution. The price of his honesty was for some readers too high. For the majority, however, his newspaper was so plainly better than any of the rest, that they were prepared to accept his puritanical views for the sake of his honest editorials and his comprehensive coverage of local news.

In his reporting of the petty crimes of the lower orders, he managed to extract both amusement and moral instruction from the same circumstances. He used a variety of euphemisms to describe Adelaide's many prostitutes, and was quick to detect unrepentance in the defendants. He, as was the fashion, made no attempt to be disinterested. Regular drunkards like Isabella Anderson were invariably treated as figures of fun; "Scotch Bella" was the subject of many a facetious account. Irish witnesses were reported in the manner of a Punch joke, dialect and stage directions and all, the magistrates serving as a chorus of middle-class condescension. Typical of the Register's style is this later example taken from the Observer:

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[35]South Australian, 8-vii-1845, II, iv.

> Defendant: If you are after swearing to that, you are sure enough going to swear false. The fact was, your Worship (continued the defendant), the woman comes up to my door, and says to me, says she, "Your boy has been into my yard with a firestick." I then said to her, says I, "Sure enough, I hav'nt got a bit o' fire;" and that's the thruth and plaze your Worship. Wid that the crater's sister comes up to me, and widout speakin' iver a word, what does she do but spit in my face. But, your Worship, the Germans are the very divils.
> Mr Smith - And the Irish are the angels.
> .....[36]

Fined five shillings. But when members of the middle class appeared in court, the Register and the rest condescended only rarely. In its coverage of such trials, the Register in particular issued virtually verbatim transcripts of the evidence and seldom interposed commentary. In its editorials, however, there were no constraints. In controversial cases such as the Reverend Farrell's alleged assault on a servant girl, Stephens was blatantly partisan, and prejudged the case with reckless subjectivity. He and his colleagues believed that the right to express what they believed, regardless of the laws of libel, had precedence over all other considerations.

In opening his columns to local writers, Stephens was especially free-handed, particularly if correspondents were prepared to argue or to convey information of a practical kind. He published, for example, seventeen letters by FIAT JUSTITIA, or rather homilies addressed to important colonists like Jacob Hagen, John Morphett, Major O'Halloran, Judge Cooper, the Commissioner of Police, the Sheriff, the Collector of Customs, and the "Colonists of South Australia" at large.[37] He

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[36] Observer, 27-iii-1852, VII, v.

[37] Register, 9-vii-1845, III, v; 12-vii-1845, II, iii; 16-vii-1845, III, i; 19-vii-1845, II, ii, iii; 30-vii-1845, III, iii, iv, v; 2-viii-1845, III, iv; 9-viii-1845, II, ii, iii; 16-viii-1845, III, i, ii; 23-viii-1845, III, i, ii; 30-viii-1845, I, iv, v; 6-ix-1845, III, i, ii; 13-ix-1845, III, i, ii; 20-ix-1845, III, ii, iii; 27-ix-1845, II, v, III, i; 4-x-1845, II, v; 15-x-1845, II, i, ii; 22-x-1845, III, i, ii.

also gave room to a rather esoteric series of articles on the Genus Locusta, the academic concern of NATURAE AMATOR, Mr Algernon Wilson, that

> . . . highly respectable man . . . favourably known in the literary world . . . [as] a respectable naturalist, [who] . . . has had his attention much directed to the entomology of this province.[38]

Men like Wilson were however desultory contributors, and after a few months, during which the Register had been strongly flavoured by prose written locally, Stephens was forced to do as his rivals did, use material from overseas and inter-colonial sources. Throughout the next six or so years, Stephens seldom devoted less than a quarter of his newspapers to borrowed extracts, sometimes as much as half. A typical issue of the Register would consist of a first page taken up by advertisements and part of the second. The fourth page would be borrowed material as was part of the third. Much of the remainder would contain mundane items such as notices from the Government Gazette, lists of Adelaide prices, births, deaths and marriages, shipping news, Law and Police court proceedings. What was left was occupied by an editorial or two, an occasional letter, an even rarer article.

What distinguished Stephens from his fellow editors was not that he borrowed a large proportion of his material but that he borrowed so adventurously and so widely. In the first two months of 1846, for instance, he acknowledged indebtedness to no less than 165 newspapers and magazines.[39] Stephens was quite specific in naming his sources,

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[38]"The First Corporation of the City of Adelaide", loc. cit.

[39]In the same period, Andrew Murray had mentioned only 63, although to be fair, not all of the South Australian's sources were specified any more precisely than as "the Mauritius papers", although there were at least three separate ones, the Cerneen, the Mauricien and the Watchman.

and was unquestionably more broadly eclectic.

The most frequently used newspapers, not only by the Register, but by the South Australian, the Mining Journal and after 1848, the Adelaide Times, were Punch, the Sydney Morning Herald, the Launceston Examiner, the Hobarton Courier, the Tasmanian Review, the Port Phillip Patriot, and of course The Times; in essence, the most accessible of Australian newspapers and the most respectable of the English. Stephens however quoted more often from papers which apparently his rivals had only infrequent access to. (The fact that the Register prided itself on being first to learn shipping intelligence suggests that its reporters had first call on the newspapers which most ships carried.) How papers such as the Bengal Catholic Herald or the Drogheda Argus came into his possession is doubtless explained by the vagaries of sailing ships, but the range and diversity of his borrowings made the Register a much livelier paper as a consequence.

But the chief reason for the paper's sustained vivacity is to be found in the personality of its editor. Apart from a brief retirement in 1848, when "ill health and an expanding circulation forced him into the position of manager, where he showed indifferent ability",[40] he set an example of moral courage unequalled by any of his rivals, not even by W. Hammond, whose Mercury for a short time in 1850 was to challenge seriously the Register/Observer's claim to be the leading newspaper in the colony. Certain of the correctness of his principles, he was prepared to challenge any who offended them, whether they be the Burra mine proprietors, influential merchants,

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[40]Douglas A. Pike, Paradise of Dissent; South Australia 1829-1857 (Melbourne: Longmans, Green & Co., 1957), p. 394.

church or secular dignitaries. As one of his rivals was to say when Stephens died in 1850 at the age of forty-four:

> . . . one of the Pioneers of Public Journalism here, he is undoubtedly entitled to the gratitude of the Adelaide Public. That the occasional acerbities of his writings, and dogged adherence to a particular course, if once adopted, were matter of pain to his best friends, is indisputable; but the memory of these blemishes ought to be eradicated by the recollection of his unwearied industry and undaunted courage in the championship of what he believed to be right, in which he often exceeded, and certainly was seldom in the rear of his Contemporaries.[41]

Generosity such as this was seldom shown to Stephens in his lifetime. He was frequently involved in libel suits, was threatened with physical violence, and at one stage had his printing presses seized. His paper was ridiculed, as Johnny's Daily Emetic, and predictably, his selling patent medicines was satirised, even after his death.

> The late departed editor of the Register (peace to his ashes) was certainly no friend to our Colony. He disseminated nauseous nostrums by the gross, and I much fear that, overcome by the mendaciously inviting labels of the pill boxes, he indulged in their contents himself. At any rate, in the "milk of my human kindness", I would charitably hope that it was the quantity of pills he swallowed which caused the bile to flow from his body to his pen, and which bile unfortunately being absorbed by many who took his journal in hand, tended to spread the disease he sought to cure.[42]

Just how important Stephens was to the tone of the Register can be simply demonstrated by contrasting those issues supervised by his executors, R. D. Hanson and Anthony Forster, with those Stephens edited in the first months of 1850. Gone is Stephens' impetuosity, his rhetorical vigour, the heat of his convictions. In their place are substantial virtues; greater objectivity, fewer personal idiosyncrasies, more discretion. But they are timid virtues. The Register was about to enter its "servant-of-the-people" stage, a role

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[41] Mercury, 30-xi-1850, p. 705, V, iii.

[42] Ibid., 1-ii-1851, p. 777, V, iv.

which would have been unthinkable in Stephens' day. Leave such subservience to papers like the South Australian.

Its owner, Andrew Murray, was the least flamboyant of Adelaide's four pioneer editors. His paper was inoffensive, with few distinctive features, except its unquestioning support of the governor, its calm, unexcited and unexciting style, and as will be shown in a later chapter, its interest in poetry. Murray played a not insignificant part in the newspaper wars of the 1840s and early 1850s, but was not prepared to make genuine enemies of would-be subscribers. And so, when the strength of his paper was put to the test towards the end of 1851, it succumbed. Doubtless, its supporters among the well-to-do would have lamented its loss, for its gentlemanly tone and its respectability were unquestioned. But its lack of brio, its conformity of opinion, made it a timid opponent during the period of personal journalism, and an unsatisfactory alternative when South Australian readers began to look for more local news and better informed opinion. Although it had lasted for almost seven years, it never was a major force in the Adelaide press, and when the effects of the Victorian gold rushes began to be felt, its early collapse in December 1851 could have been predicted.

The Adelaide press as a whole was slow to react to the news of gold strikes on the Turon and at Mount Alexander. Partly insulated by distance, they all tended to discount the rumours of bonanzas in the eastern colonies. After all, were not the mines at Kooringa among the wonders of the world? Surely the specimens of the Burra's azurite and malachite on show at the Great Exhibition were more substantial proof than any reports coming from those tainted colonies to the east? But soon rumour was replaced by local evidence. Not even the news of gold on the Onkaparinga could arrest the movement of

labour from Adelaide to Melbourne and Geelong. Newspapers were among the first to suffer. As George Stevenson said,

> During the last few weeks the withdrawal of so many men from [my] printing establishment has encreased [sic] the difficulties of regular publication, and, as must have been perceived, considerably altered the size of the type, and lessened the quantity of matter previously furnished in these columns. But the intimation that those who remain are about to follow the example of their friends, and seek the more liberal remuneration which the neighbouring colony holds out, renders unavoidable the step now taken.[43]

James Allen was also affected not only by the loss of labour but by a diminished number of supporters, and so he, "compelled to yield to the pressure from without, . . . abandoned his diurnal for a weekly issue."[44] The Register/Observer continued to appear as a daily and a weekly respectively, but as Henry Hussey described in More than Half a Century of Colonial Life and Christian Experience,[45] he, as printer, and various editors faced enormous difficulties during the latter part of 1851 and much of 1852. There were even more casualties among the minor papers; the Mercury, the Odd Fellows' Chronicle, the Austral Examiner, the Deutsche Post among others, but this is only to be expected. The history of British journalism is littered with the remains of countless newspapers which lasted only when times were good.

Although it is a coincidence that the death of Stephens and the loss of his rivals as a result of the gold rushes should occur within a year or two of each other, the effects upon Adelaide's newspapers were profound. With the exception of Allen, who did not retire from South Australian journalism until early 1853, the editors who had

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[43]Observer, 20-iii-1852, II, iii.

[44]Mercury, 29-xi-1851, p. 1113, V, iii.

[45]Henry Hussey, More than Half a Century of Colonial Life and Christian Experience (Adelaide: Hussey & Gillingham, 1897).

made personal journalism respectable had all gone. With their departure came to an end the newspaper wars, or at least, their most extreme battles. After 1851 they continued to quarrel, but with less vehemence and less courage. Thereafter the personality of the editor became less obtrusive, his own views less clear. The traditions established by Stevenson, Allen, Stephens, and Murray, were broken by 1852, and a new, more impersonal kind of journalism began to emerge.

Chapter 4

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE MERCURY

In achievement, if not in chronology, W. E. Hammond, editor of the satirical weekly, the Mercury, and South Australian Sporting Chronicle, deserves to be ranked with the pioneer editors of Adelaide's most influential papers. Although he began his paper in 1849, and was able to maintain it for less than three years, of all the newspapers that fell victim to the Victorian gold rushes, the Mercury was the one most to be regretted. During its existence from March 1849 to December 1851, it had been regarded as the black sheep of the colonial press, a scurrilous rag, inferior in point of respectability to all its rivals; more libellous than John Stephens' Register, more biassed than George Stevenson's Mining Journal, more captious than James Allen's Times. Even in its editorials, it was contrary, taking seriously quite unserious things; horses and hunting, pubs and theatres, concerts and scandals. Not that the other dozen or so newspapers completely avoided these aspects of colonial life. They were however more fastidious in their interest and more restrained in their language, being more tightly bound in their notions of respectability and journalistic decorum.

Yet for all its crotchets and vulgarity, in its literary, topical and critical scope, the Mercury showed to colonial readers new perspectives. Through the decade 1845 to 1854, there had been numerous attempts to widen the range of colonial newspapers. Most had tried to win a sufficient circulation among sectional interests. Papers

like the Austral Examiner had looked for readers among those who supported the voluntary principle in church funding. The Odd Fellows' Chronicle had relied upon the support of those who sought "the cultivation of Friendship, the promotion of Brotherly Love, and the defense and extension of Truth".[1] No wonder the lives of such papers were short. In some ways, South Australian society had never been more diverse, yet those who constituted the newspaper reading class, who were literate and sufficiently well-to-do to be subscribers, were culturally very alike. Although their occupations were as varied as those "middling classes" catalogued by Pike,

> . . . wealthy merchants, industrialists and bankers, through numerous grades of naval and military officers, civil servants, professional men, clergymen, farmers and freeholders, . . . shopkeepers, salaried clerks, tradesmen and independent skilled craftsmen,[2]

they never formed factions strong enough to sustain a factional newspaper for any significant period. Although the Register claimed to speak for Adelaide's operatives, there were too few Stephen Blackpools in Adelaide's few industries for it to follow the example of the Chartist Northern Star. And in radical, dissenter-dominated Adelaide, there was no place for papers like the Tory John Bull or the Catholic Tablet. There were just too few potential subscribers and advertisers to risk alienating them by too strongly advocating minority interests.

It was to the middle classes that the Mercury and its contemporaries were principally addressed. Inevitably, their tenor was bourgeois, their preoccupations money and status. Within these classes were of course as many variations as there were colonists,

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[1]Odd Fellows' Magazine, I (July 1843 - October 1844), p. 4.

[2]Douglas A. Pike, Paradise of Dissent; South Australia 1829-1857 (Melbourne: Longmans, Green & Co., 1957), p. 5.

cultured men like Charles Sturt, wealthy semi-literates like Mr Peacock, to whom the Mercury ascribed the following communication:

> Mister Peacock Esquire pressents his kompliments to the elekturs of the Noarlunga Distrikt, and I will be happy to meet you any day you may apoint. Pleas eggscuse mistakes, as he beggs to say I kant spel wel with a bad pen.[3]

(Though the spelling is Josh Billings', the insult is completely local.) Yet for all their differences, the newspaper reading class shared so many views and responded to situations in so predictable a way that newspaper editors were surely correct in treating them as if they were all alike.

That is not to say that individual newspapers could not afford occasionally to espouse unpopular causes, or to give offence to some of their readers. Being too willing to please the common reader, too cautious to risk offence, was almost as perilous as being too candid or radical, as the history of the timorous South Australian shows. Though it is surprising how few subscribers were needed to keep a paper going in South Australia the loss of a comparatively few subscribers and advertisers could put a newspaper's very existence in jeopardy. Only those editors who were adept in judging the right proportion of provocative material to orthodox middle-class opinion could hope to survive. Andrew Murray's proportion of provocation to platitude proved to be much too weak; had he only occasionally qualified his enthusiastic support for all that Governor Young and the Legislative Council said and did, had he only sometimes questioned the inevitable rightness of the status quo, he might have continued to hold his ultra-conservative readers and have won also readers who looked for some independence of judgment. William Hammond, on the

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[3] Mercury, 26-iv-1851, p. 873, V, i.

other hand, gave his readers much too heady a mixture. Had his satire followed more closely Gilbert A' Beckett's,

> Satire should, like a polished razor keen,
> Wound with a touch that's hardly felt or seen;[4]

had he been more moderate in his attacks upon Adelaide's nobs and snobs, then his satirical weekly might have lasted longer.

As was suggested in the previous chapter, John Stephens had, over the years, learned to steer a middle course between tact and honesty, between accuracy and exaggeration, without permanently damaging his reputation as a hater of scurrility and an abominator of libels. Though he had at various times angered members of the class upon whom his livelihood depended, he generally was given a good deal of licence, simply because he had earned a name as a frank journalist, one willing to speak his mind even in the most scabrous situations. Even so, he was involved in almost as many libels suits as Hammond, particularly in the latter stages of his life, when his irritability became increasingly difficult to control.

Unlike Stephens who had built his reputation slowly, Hammond gave himself little time to establish the kind of credit that Stephens and to a lesser extent Stevenson enjoyed. It is very doubtful in any case whether Hammond had Stephens' integrity and high principles, even if he had an equal share of his foolhardy courage and want of discretion. From the first, Hammond showed that he was no respecter of reputations or reputable institutions, and that he believed that humour justified his invective and vulgarity. He would have had no sympathy for the views expressed by Censor, one of the South

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[4]Quoted by Mason Jackson, The Pictorial Press: Its Origin and Progress (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1885), p. 282.

Australian's correspondents:

> It is perhaps one of the worst signs of the times in which we live, that it has, of late years, become the practice to give police reports in the newspapers with all their disgusting details in full, and sometimes a stray dash of carricature [sic], in order to pander to the vile taste of readers, who resemble vermin which, bred in dunghills, delight to feed on the corruption whence they spring; and, if we are to judge from the commonness of the practice, this class of readers is lamentably numerous.[5]

Or with R. L. Milne, who claimed that

> . . . public journals, like the waters conveyed to a town through conduits and pipes, at which every one sips when dry, ought to contain nothing offensive. Instead of tainting, they ought to refine the taste and the morals of their readers . . . . They pay their money for news, useful information, and untainted intelligence - not scandal, which, whether true or invented, can be grateful only to the lowest, the most depraved minds.[6]

Hammond knew better. He knew that for all their protestations about decency, even the most proper wanted to know about their neighbours' improprieties. Such a fresh, if not to say irreverent approach obviously appealed to Adelaide's newspaper reading class, at least for most of the first two years of the Mercury's life. Although there is no precise information about the various newspapers' circulations, there seems little reason to doubt Hammond's claim that in 1850, his was the most influential paper in the colony, even if four thousand subscribers seems something of a mercurial exaggeration. Doubtless much of the Mercury's initial success was due to its novelty and to its editor's enterprise - matters which will be considered later. Yet it would be misleading to discuss some of the ways in which Hammond broke new journalistic ground without acknowledging that the Mercury was in other respects very much in the mainstream of

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[5]South Australian, 23-v-1845, III, ii.

[6]Ibid., 21-i-1845, III, ii.

middle-class journalism. Even in its concern with crime and punishment, it expressed attitudes similar to those to be found in more decorous newspapers. In his account of an execution for example there is the same kind of sanctimonious morbidity to be found in say the Register's police reports:

> At eight o'clock on Thursday morning, the condemned criminal Yates expiated upon the scaffold his brutal murder of the poor old Shepherd Mansforth. About eight or nine hundred persons were present, not withstanding the state of the weather, the rain falling in torrents, and making the spectacle additionally dreary. It is pleasurable to record that but very few females were present, and those of a very depraved character. The gallows was erected on the outside of the Gaol, exactly opposite to the front door, and covered with black cloth below the drop; beneath which the coffin was placed. A strong party of Police under Inspectors Alford and Berkley were present to preserve order, which however the crowd shewed no desire to violate. Exactly at eight, Yates made his appearance and mounted the scaffold attended by Dr. Backhaus, who had been unremitting in his endeavours to bring the wretched man to a fitting state of mind, but with little apparent effect, his conduct being indicative of anything but penitent feelings, he kicked his boots off among the crowd with the most revolting hardihood, and displayed little inclination to kneel when desired to do so by the Reverend gentleman. The Executioner exhibited the grossest ignorance of his office, placing the knot under the wrong ear, which occasioned it to slip from the force of the fall to the back of the neck, causing extreme torture to the unhappy victim.[7]

In some of its advertisements, too, the Mercury replicated those carried in the other newspapers. It used the same kind of fill-in material, the same kind of lay-out, the same range of type-faces. If its size was different, it was conventional in its use of rather closely printed, "black" letter-press. More importantly, in some of its editorials, in its replies to correspondents, it often expressed views quite as conservative as its rivals', particularly in matters as self-evident as South Australians' superiority over all other

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[7]Mercury, 7-ix-1850, p. 605, V, iv.

Australian colonies, the perfidy and incompetence of the Colonial Office, the shiftless and treacherous character of the natives, the unmatched virtues of Queen Victoria, and the necessity to keep South Australia safe from the contamination of convicts.

There were nevertheless many aspects of colonial life, ignored or neglected by the colonial press generally, to which the Mercury gave hitherto unprecedented attention. Whether the Mercury's novelty was literally observable from the first issue cannot be established, since there are no extant copies earlier than the issue of July 14, 1849, Volume I, Number 20. Yet its full title, the Mercury and South Australian Sporting Chronicle, would have indicated from the beginning that its emphasis was different. Sport, although it occupied a legitimate place in the other newspapers, had been given comparatively sparse coverage until the advent of the Mercury. With Hammond's arrival, the position changed, for not only did he devote a much larger proportion of his newspaper to it, but he followed the journalistic styles of such well known English sporting papers as Era, Bell's Life and Sporting Life, from which he sometimes borrowed.

The kinds of sports covered were most varied, and gave even to the Mercury's advertising columns, a special character as in this announcement:

> This admired Horse [Teazer] is now rising Eight Years old; by the imported Arab Horse "SEPOY", out of the imported English Mare, "FLOWER OF THE FOREST".
>
> He is a remarkably fine Horse, of a rich Brown, stands upwards of Sixteen Hands high, is of a good temper, one of the best constitutions, with unexceptionable Feet and Legs, and for bone and muscular power he stands unrivalled in this Province.
>
> He is of the Purest and most Approved Blood that could be purchased in the Colonies, and allowed by all competent judges to be the Best Horse calculated to get Stock for the Turf, Field, or Indian Market.[8]

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[8]Ibid., 3-viii-1850, p. 568, VIII, iii. [Misprinted August 1, 1850.]

Elsewhere the paper was flavoured by accounts of wrestling matches, steeple chases, ploughing matches, "pugilistic encounters", horse racing, pigeon races, all kinds of activities that brought Adelaide's better sort into contact with working men and those generally of the lower orders. Shorter pieces were usually written in the work-a-day prose of the period, but in the longer articles, it was normal to graft a slangy style to a heavily whimsical as in this borrowed extract:

> What can be said fresh upon the subject of "going to the Races?" It would puzzle all the dilettanti of Europe and Australia, not to mention the Pasha of Egypt, to give us a satisfactory answer to the question, or a novel idea wherewith to astonish our readers. The same old faces, with their turnout, be they
>
> "Whiskey, buggy, gig, or dog cart,
> Curricle or tandem,"
>
> Vun-os shay, bus, cab, spicy cob, or a fifteen pence a-sider, warranted to take you to the course, barring accidents, are all there; the same hospitable caravanserais, where the thirsty souls pull up for a quencher, line the road; the same worthy hosts put out their friendly welcome, and their better halves (bless their hearts!) in their best bibs and tuckers, dart forth their smiles like sunbeams upon every newcomer. By the great Nimrod! a conjurer would be put to his wit's end to find a gloss of novelty for the description.
>
> Custom however, imperatively demands that something should be said; and as we are too thoroughbred to balk at any thing, however stiff, bullfinch or rasper, here's at it.[9]

Horse-racing reports tended to be more stylised and mannered than other kinds of sports writing, which in turn tended to be reported in ways markedly different from editorials. Even so, the sporting style generally was based on formal journalistic writing, and was still marked by the affectations of a "literary" manner, as in this account of the PORT ADELAIDE REGATTA:

> No day could have turned out more favorably for the lovers of aquatics than last Tuesday: a bright sky and a

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[9]Quoted from Bell's Life in Sydney; Mercury, 26-x-1850, Supplement, I, i.

epigraph for the Mercury: "People mutht be amuthed. They can't be alwayth a learning, nor yet they can't be alwayth a working, they an't made for it."[14]

Not that the Mercury was unique in wanting to amuse as well as inform its readers. Even that humourless Scot, Andrew Murray, or that puritanical Englishman, John Stephens, would attempt the occasional frivolity or assay some strictly respectable levity. The Mercury's peculiarity lay in the emphasis it gave to amusement and in the breadth of its interpretation of "right reverend sport". That is not to say that it neglected its informative function or was uniformly light-hearted. But in its determination to extract whatever entertainment it could from conventional news, to expose humbug and to deflate puffed-up reputations, it was quite outstanding. Throughout its life-time, the Mercury was consistently iconoclastic and irreverent, bringing to the personal journalism of the day a real delight in disparagement. Character-assassination had of course been a common feature of Eatanswill journalism for decades, and was to remain characteristic of aspects of the American press well into the twentieth century. There was therefore nothing absolutely novel in Hammond's editorial attitudes or in his methods. Nevertheless he succeeded in extending this kind of journalism, and in doing so, gave to South Australian journalism a new gusto, and made more or less respectable, humorous denigration.

Typical of his methods is this portrait of a fellow colonist:

> He might be seen, some three months before Great Britain's parent earth had purged him from her soil, lounging about

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[14]Charles Dickens, Hard Times, intro. Dingle Foot, Centennial Edition (Geneva: Edito-Service S. A., c. 1970), p. 323.

attention. It satisfied its readers' morbid interest in violence by describing in detail coroners' inquests, local murders such as THE DIRTY LIGHT AFFRAY,[20] or should the supply of local murders slacken, accounts of overseas trials and executions such as the famous Mannings case. It also re-argued its own libel suits and made capital out of disparities in judicial judgments.

> Verily the administration of Justice is conducted upon a queer principle here - Badcock cuts his wife's nose and gets two years with hard labour - Carroll splits another female's nose, and although a known ruffian who had been twice or thrice previously convicted, is let off with three months, while a poor girl whose only offence was the alleged abstraction of a cotton handkerchief of the value of eightpence is sentenced to a fortnight's imprisonment, the last three days to be solitary - what a sliding scale - Shame! Shame![21]

In its coverage of local crime, the Mercury was pursuing its interest in the realities which underlay apparently respectable behaviour. In a sense, while flattering its readers' consciousness of superiority, it used its police reports to extend its comic view of colonial life. It was not in this respect original; all newspapers in Adelaide dealt with crime in much the same way and from the same vantage point of moral superiority. But where police court news in other newspapers is frequently dissonant, at odds with much of its other features, in the Mercury it is completely at home. Doubtless Hammond rationalised in much the same way as his rivals did - crimes should be publicised so that would-be criminals may be deterred - but he must have known that his paper more than most depended upon sensational, biassed reporting. Any one could present the facts, but it took a writer to embroider upon them. Because he was interested in "reverend sport" wherever it

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[20] Mercury, 6-vii-1850, p. 533, V, ii.

[21] Ibid., 7-xii-1850, p. 713, V, ii.

might be found, he used trials not only for their intrinsic entertainment but for what they revealed of the people involved; the magistrates, the witnesses, the police, the legal profession generally. As themes for editorials, they were valuable only if they could provide opportunities for scoffing.

This propensity accounts for his treatment of amateur theatricals. A sturdy supporter of the professional theatre, and a well-informed critic, Hammond was to amateurs rancour itself. When the auctioneer J. Bentham Neales agreed to play Claude Melnotte in Bulwer's The Lady of Lyons and the Amateur Dramatic Society acceded to the requests of their many well-wishers and announced a forthcoming production, he made no pretence of objectivity and at once set about chastising their presumption. Where Murray would be tactfully vague, "We were not present, but understand the whole went off exceedingly well",[22] Hammond began his abuse even in his head-lines. Beneath the most used of these, THE DRAMATIC MANIACS, he criticised their selection of pieces, their grandiose aspirations to have the society re-named the Garrick Club - Hammond thought the "Guy Fawkes Association" would have been more appropriate[23] - their "being, as usual for amateurs, all abroad in the 'business'".[24] In condescending to notice their "perpetrations", he made sarcastic fun of their sycophancy in preparing ". . . a splendid white satin 'Bill of the Play' . . . for his Patronic Majesty",[25] the Governor, who after all the fuss then failed to come. Only once did he relent - when the Dramatic Society offered

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[22]South Australian, 1-iii-1850, II, v.

[23]Mercury, 31-viii-1850, p. 597, V, iv.

[24]Ibid., 8-vi-1850, p. 500, IV, iv. [25]Ibid.

to give a benefit performance for the widow and family of the late Captain Litchfield. Being a member of the Litchfield Fund committee he must have felt obliged to moderate his usual acrimony:

> THE DRAMATIC MANIACS.- This Association has been dissolved, and reorganized under the title of "The Garrick Club," the members of which intend giving a performance on the 25th inst., for the benefit of the Widow and Family of the late Captain Litchfield, on which occasion the Theatre will be placed by Mr Lazar at the disposal of the Stewards, for a trifling amount, merely sufficient to defray the expenses of the evening. The pieces selected are "The School of Reform" and "The Little Back Parlour," but as the object is a benevolent one, criticism must be dumb, and we trust that the house will be crowded, and the benevolent intentions of all parties fully carried out.[26]

At most other times, he continued to harass them even after they had turned their attention to less ambitious enterprises, lectures, debates and readings. A group such as this was of course ideal for Hammond's purposes; its amateurish work was doubtless an easy target for ridicule. Many of its members would have been young with too little influence to cause Hammond to fear retaliation. Crushing butterflies on the wheel always was one of Hammond's journalistic failings, and it is this determination not to abandon lightly a ridiculous subject which gives the Mercury much of its acid flavour.

Nowhere is this inveteracy more clearly seen than in the Mercury's long campaign against William Giles. Although towards the end of 1851, Hammond claimed that he had been motivated by no personal animus, throughout the paper's life, his antipathy is obvious. The Bishop of Bagdad was a compendium of most of the qualities that Hammond disliked. Giles was a "White Choker" with particularly strong wowserish convictions, and had been - at least according to Hammond - a butler at home and was a sycophant still. He was one of the least tractable of

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[26]Ibid., 14-ix-1850, p. 613, V, ii.

the Magistrates who sat in judgment on the Mercury's patrons in the hotel trade; he was a lay preacher strongly opposed to those allied evils, theatricals and strong drink, a parsimonious employer not above forcing his own convictions upon those who worked for the South Australian Company. Giles was ripe for satire, and because he chose to maintain a dignified silence rather than have recourse to the law, he could be attacked almost with impunity. Almost but not quite. During the 1851 elections, he had his revenge. Hammond finally overstepped the mark; Giles sued, Hammond made a kind of apology; and within a few issues, the Mercury was dead.

Examples such as these supply one of the main reasons for the Mercury's rapid rise and fall. Although George Stevenson had pioneered a similar kind of headlong journalism, by 1849 Hammond's brand of vituperation and satire had acquired a kind of novelty. But by 1851 this too had lost much of its freshness, and what was worse, colonial society was growing less forgiving of indiscretions in its public journals. As the kindliness of Hammond's humour declined, so too did his readers' tolerance. In its early days, the Mercury had been both extravagantly humorous and heartily abusive; but such an exuberant style had little in reserve, little capacity for growth or change. Elsewhere in the world of British journalism, personal attacks were becoming passé, and in the little Britain that was Adelaide, there was developing a similar coolness. The middle classes were growing more complacent and so began to prize less the Mercury's irreverence and to re-discover the sovereign virtues of the Register, its courtesy, its moderation and its tact.

This shift in taste is detectable quite early in 1851, but as the effects of the gold strikes at Ophir and Mount Alexander began to be felt more sharply, the South Australian newspaper reading class

hastened to build the barricades of conventionality. Those who were likely to have been most sympathetic to the Mercury were among the first to leave the infant city; not only the ladies of the town and the light fingered gentry, but many of Adelaide's most adventurous citizens; its speculators, its actors and singers, its foot-loose tradesmen and workers, that part of society which would have been less conservative in their behaviour and perhaps more willing than most to be amused by excessive conformity. Those who remained behind, who were prepared to endure the hardness of the times rather than risk making a fresh start in another colony, would have included the most staid (no pun intended) of Adelaide's settlers. By the end of the year, the newspaper reading class had obviously been diminished by the eastern migrations, and just as obviously had become more uniform in its sympathies and group opinions. The survivors began to close their cultural ranks, and to resent criticism. Instead of enjoying the discomfiture of their neighbours when the Mercury satirised them, they began to condemn instead the satirist. Most would have approved the sentiments expressed at a public dinner:

> While on his legs he would give "The Press", although it was a toast he was unable to do justice to. So long as the press confined itself to public men and public acts, it deserved support, but when it descended to blacken private reputations, it deserved to be checked. One paper of this kind [presumably the Mercury], which was a scandal to any society, had lately become defunct.[27]

Had Hammond been able to return to the more general, and more genial satire of his paper's first months, to lampoons such as the braggart "Model Emigrant", who

> . . . tells you with enviable command of muscle, that he has been the intimate friend of Douglas Jerrold, and all

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[27] Observer, 21-ii-1852, III, ii.

> the literary lions of the day; has been "sub" to Punch for years; has criticised Pickwick in manuscript, before Dickens would venture to send it to press; has cracked jokes with Lover, and exchanged ideas with Bulwer . . . ,[28]

or have published more parodies like the cockney tourist's "Narrative of an expedition into the interior of the Australian Continent",[29] in reality a Swiftian parody of a new chum travelling from the Stag Inn on East Terrace to the Maid and Magpie in Hackney, then conceivably his paper could have established a reputation for humour rather than for scurrility, and have secured a more steadfast readership. Hammond chose however to intensify his attacks upon individuals and to sharpen his satire. There seems little doubt that the views expressed by lawyer Bakewell[30] during the Giles-Hammond libel suit were commonly held:

> . . . That flood of scurrility and abuse which has been poured in from time to time must be stopped, and Mr Hammond be taught that however great his powers of ridicule may be, he is not at liberty to use them to the annoyance of his fellow men.[31]

Since Adelaide took English practices as their models, and not American, it is not surprising that the Mercury was more and more condemned for its vulgarity. How colonists must have wished that they could have the paper's boldness and healthy disrespect without having their own gentility suspected! It remained unquestionably the best sporting paper in the colony, having made household words of horses like Improver, Merry Monarch, Wallace, Coronet and Swordsman. It had given lively coverage of race meetings, steeple chases, pugilistic

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[28]Mercury, 14-vii-1849, p. 121, V, i.

[29]Ibid., 18-i-1851, pp. 758, 759, II, iv; III, i, ii.

[30]Presumably the Mr Bakewell who wrote so patronising an introduction to Clara Morison.

[31]Mercury, 4-x-1851, p. 1054, II, ii.

encounters, and of "brilliant runs with the Adelaide Hounds". It had catered admirably for a very real middle class concern, sport, particularly that involving horses. Whereas Hammond's rivals had supplemented local news by borrowing a variety of articles from a multiplicity of sources, Hammond had attempted to find material which was consonant with the general character of his paper: hence accounts such as the Geelong Advertiser's "Three Days with Mr Ferrer's Hounds in the Mount Macedon Country",[32] humorous pieces such as "How Mr Straggles went to Ascot", extracts from the History of the British Turf, including cheerful facts about James I being the first Royal patron of racing and Cromwell one of the first horse-breeders in England, Jorrocks-like advice on how to manage a rearing horse, even statistical tables showing the details of the winners of the Derby and the Oaks at Epsom from 1780 to 1848. When this kind of material failed, before adopting the indiscriminate borrowing policy of his rivals, he introduced allied subjects such as a wolf hunt in Hungary[33] and a rhinoceros hunt in Africa.[34]

Though by no means the Mercury's only distinction, a casual reading will reveal a strongly horsey emphasis. This is partly to be explained by Hammond's relationship with the L.V.S., partly because Hammond as honorary secretary of the Society was associated with the horse-owning classes, notably actors and publicans and other sinners. At the least, all of Hammond's patrons were providers of stabling, while some profited from the dinners and breakfasts that invariably accompanied race meetings and hunts, and a few like the actor-publicans

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[32]Ibid., 11-viii-1849, p. 150, II, i, ii.

[33]Ibid., ii, iii, iv.

[34]Ibid., p. 155, VII, i.

Coppin, Lazar and Morton King were race-horse owners as well. It was inevitable therefore that the Mercury should emphasise pre-hunt conviviality and consolation dinners, as part of his service to his masters.

His willingness to shape his paper to please his patrons can also be seen in the "Local Intelligence" paragraphs, and sometimes even in his editorials. When the L.V.S.'s interests were not involved, Hammond's editorials differed little in stance from his rivals'. But when the Society was in conflict with the Bench of Magistrates or one of its members was fined for allowing the water from his cellar to flow down Hindley-street,[35] then Hammond was licensed to let his indignation have free rein. Given a serious theme, then Hammond could curb his humour and be very proper indeed:

> That the process by which a barbarous population invariably recedes before the vigorous step of a civilized one is inevitable, few will deny . . . . Far be it from us to look lightly upon the sacrifice of human life, whatever be the colour of the skin, but while we would carefully guard that of the Black against unjust aggression, we should be equally diligent in preserving that of the White from the exaggerated statements of the one-sided philanthropists of Exeter Hall.[36]

But give him an individual as a target, and his most distinctive talents can be seen. Hell itself had no fury like Hammond with a congenial subject. But by his unreserved advocacy of the L.V.S., he made himself peculiarly vulnerable to changed economic conditions. By his reliance upon publicans, he put himself in the power of a group which was itself very vulnerable. Unlike his fellow editors, who had tried to satisfy more general needs, Hammond had produced a somewhat

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[35]Ibid., 19-i-1850, p. 336, IV, i, ii.

[36]Ibid., 8-ix-1849, p. 184, IV, i, ii.

specialised newspaper, one which depended upon continued prosperity and growth for its survival. Just as hotels appear almost miraculously when easy money is to be found, and disappear when times become more difficult, so did the Mercury prosper during the boom of 1850 and wither in the slump of 1851.

But whatever the reasons for the Mercury's inability to maintain its original popularity, its contribution to the colonial press was remarkable. Later chapters will show how it enlarged the scope of colonial journalism, with its Punch-like features in verse and prose, and with its tentative entry into pictorial journalism. But even as a sporting newspaper and as a vehicle for personal satire, it differed markedly from the general run of South Australian newspapers. It showed more clearly the complexities of colonial Adelaide, particularly the extent of its social range and the diversity of its cultural interests. By exposing many of the pretensions of the middle classes, the Mercury provided an anodyne to their latent Puritanism and their distrust of frivolity.

As will be seen, not all the effects of the Victorian gold rushes upon colonial Adelaide were bad, but one of the most serious was the extinction of the one newspaper devoted to right reverend sport. The loss of W. E. Hammond to Victoria meant that the dun plains of respectable journalism were seldom disturbed by the clangour of abuse or criticism. Without Hammond's dissonant voice, the character of the Adelaide press became progressively more complacent and conservative. Without papers like the Mercury, South Australian journalism was destined to become complacent and in-bred.

Chapter 5

MOUNT ALEXANDER AND THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PRESS

The Victorian gold rushes provided the social fulcrum for many changes to South Australian life. Especially were they instrumental in altering the character of the colonial press. Before the discovery of gold at Mount Alexander, most South Australians would have considered that material progress was inevitable, that the colony's future was secure, that hard work, a little luck, and patience were the formula for fortune. Or as John Lazar put it in a parody he sang at the Queen's Theatre in 1850,

> There's a good time coming, boys, a good time coming-
> Be patient, lads, take my advice,
> And wool will fetch a better price,
> In the good time coming;
> Sheep and cattle both will rise,
> To make your pocket stronger;
> All the mines will prove a prize -
> Wait a little longer.
> .....[1]

Although Lazar sought to score some "rare local hits" against John Stephens, who had recently had the better of him in what had proved to be a libellous review,[2] he also was articulating the received wisdom of his audience: persistence will be rewarded with prosperity. There was, it was true, some business stagnation, but he prophesied that "When traffic comes by rail-road train,/ Then commerce

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[1] Mercury, 16-iii-1850, p. 402, VI, iii.

[2] Ibid.: (". . . When editors shall truth betray,/ May our juries' minds be stronger,/ And make the slanderer dearly pay-/ Wait a little longer.")

will look up again",[3] and the steady acquisition of wealth would be resumed, at least by colonists of the better sort. And by the end of that year, it would have seemed that steady, sober industry was about to enjoy its rightful reward. Hotels, those infallible measures of colonial affluence, where easily won wealth could be easily spent, continued to keep pace with the population, rising from 118 licences in 1846 to 275 in 1850,[4] while the population made its steady progress from 25,893 to 63,700.[5] Newspapers, scarcely less responsive to business confidence, likewise continued to proliferate, for according to Andrew Murray's list of publications existent at the beginning of 1851, there were

> 1. The South Australian, every Tuesday and Friday, by Andrew Murray, Rundle street: price 4d.
> 2. The South Australian Register, daily, by William Kyffin Thomas (as Trustee for the Executors of the late John Stephens), Hindley street: price 4d.
> 3. The Government Gazette, every Thursday, by W. C. Cox, Government Printer, Victoria square: price 6d. per sheet.
> 4. The South Australian Gazette and Mining Journal, every Thursday and Saturday, by George Stevenson, King William street: price 6d.
> 5. The Adelaide Observer, every Saturday, by William Kyffin Thomas (as Trustee for the Executors of the late John Stephens), Hindley street: price 6d.
> 6. The Adelaide Times, daily, by James Allen, King William street: price 4d.
> 7. The South Australian Mercury and Sporting Chronicle, every Saturday, by W. E. Hammond, Gawler place: price 6d.
> 8. The Suedaustralische Zeitung, every Sunday and Thursday, by C. Muecke, O. Schomburgk, and G. Droege, Rundle street: price 4d.[6]

not to mention short-lived papers like the Austral Examiner and the

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[3]Ibid.

[4]Andrew Murray (ed.), The South Australian Almanack, for 1852 (10th pub.; Adelaide: Andrew Murray, c. 1852), p. xi.

[5]Douglas A. Pike, Paradise of Dissent; South Australia 1829-1857 (Melbourne: Longmans, Green & Co., 1957), p. 517.

[6]Andrew Murray (ed.), The South Australian Almanack, and General Colonial Directory for 1851 (9th pub.; Adelaide: Andrew Murray, c. 1851), p. 113.

Odd Fellows' Chronicle which sprang up during the year. All the signs of the colony's continuing prosperity were auspicious. Harvest prospects were good, profits from trade were high, and the copper mines were making free-spending gentlemen out of their lucky owners. Even to the most sceptical of observers, it would have been apparent that colonial optimism was justified. Tents were giving way to bluestone residences; gubernatorial management was being shaped by the advice of a Legislative Council; goods of all descriptions were flowing into the colony. But the year which had begun so promisingly was to prove climactic in the colony's development. Within a few months, South Australia was to fall from weal to woe with the suddenness of a classic tragedy. By the end of 1851, society was subjected to a recession of such severity that the whole course of colonial life was permanently affected. Among those who were to feel these effects most keenly were the South Australian newspapers.

There had been crises before; clashes with the natives on the Coorong and on Eyre Peninsula, fiscal difficulties, shortages and then excesses of labour, threats of convicts escaping from the penal colonies or being sent to Adelaide's undefiled shores, lawlessness at the Tiers and Port Adelaide. But it was not until the discovery of gold, first in New South Wales and then more menacingly in Victoria, that these were seen for what they were, minor alarums and excursions, temporary blemishes on the otherwise smooth realization of a radical utopia. Before Ophir and Mount Alexander and Ballarat, the newspapers convey a confidence that the colony's ultimate prosperity was inevitable, that despite setbacks the advantages enjoyed by South Australian colonists, not least of which was God's beneficience, would ensure that the righteous would be blessed. Unlike the older colonies, whose affairs were thought to be in the hands of runagates and

expirees, South Australia was demonstrably in the hands of men of the right sort, for the most part, "old colonists", those who had arrived in the 1830s and who had done so much to determine the colony's material and spiritual directions. True, even before the gold rushes, there had been signs of change, of power falling into the hands of men who were not quite respectable - unlettered men like Isaac Breaker who was unable to give evidence in court because he could not read the oath, Jews like the merchants Joe Barnett, Burnet Nathan and the Solomon brothers, "White Chokers" - evangelical dissenters with unfortunate principles, and in William Giles' case, with considerable influence - wealthy vulgarians like Osmond Gilles, not to mention those "Snobs" whose good fortune with the Monster Mine at the Burra Burra had given them preeminence over the "nob" proprietors of the Princess Royal. Direct political power however continued to reside in the hands of the gentlemanly class.[7]

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[7]The following table of Members of the Legislative Council shows just how important it was to own property and to belong to the right church:

Members of the Legislative Council 1851

	Office or Occupation*	Religion	Time of arrival in colony
C. Sturt	Colonial Secretary	C. of E.	1839
B. T. Finniss	Registrar General	C. of E.	1836
R. R. Torrens	Collector of Customs	C. of E.	1841
R. D. Hanson	Advocate General	Independent	1846
J. Morphett	Landowner	C. of E.	1836
E. C. Gwynne	Lawyer	C. of E.	1838
J. Grainger	Landowner, etc.	C. of E.	1845
N. Campbell	Mine manager, etc.	C. of E.	1848
G. A. Anstey	Pastoralist	C. of E.	1838
G. F. Angas	Landowner	Baptist	1851
C. H. Bagot	Landowner	C. of E. (vol.)	1840
J. Baker	Pastoralist	C. of E.	1838
R. Davenport	Pastoralist	Independent	1843
F. S. Dutton	Merchant, etc.	C. of E. (vol.)	1841
A. L. Elder	Merchant, etc.	Baptist	1840
J. Ellis	Pastoralist	C. of E.	1839

Now that copper mania had largely subsided, it would have seemed obvious that sedulity and enterprise were about to be rewarded.

By the middle of 1850, there was plenty of evidence to suggest that the radical experiment had succeeded, that Adelaide was now an achievement, not merely a theory. There was talk of building a railway between the town and Port Adelaide. The Mercury's doggerel account of "Walks in Adelaide" sketches a lively business community, with shops and auction-rooms and hotels crammed into the main streets. The Collegiate School was being built in Hackney; St. Francis Xavier's Cathedral had already been consecrated; the proposed massive two storied German and British hospital promised to be a land-mark. On all sides there was evidence of an established and affluent community. Even at the Port, "Improvements of every description (were) proceeding rapidly . . . and new buildings (were) every day erecting;"[8] Charles Tanner was about to "run a third Four-wheeled Vehicle between Town and the Port."[9] And perhaps the most significant innovation was

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	Office or Occupation*	Religion	Time of arrival in colony
W. Giles	Manager, etc.	Independent	1837
G. Hall	Merchant, etc.	C. of E.	1842
C. S. Hare	Merchant	C. of E. (vol.)	1836
J. Hart	Landowner, etc.	C. of E.	1836
G. S. Kingston	Architect, etc.	C. of E. (vol.)	1836
J. B. Neales	Auctioneer, etc.	C. of E. (vol.)	1838
W. Peacock	Farmer, etc.	Independent	1838
G. M. Waterhouse	Merchant	Wesleyan	1843
W. Younghusband	Merchant, etc.	C. of E.	1843

*As most members had eggs in many different baskets, only the chief occupation is given. Pike, op. cit., p. 435.

[8]Mercury, 20-vii-1850, p. 549, V, ii.

[9]Ibid.

a new theatre, described by Hammond in his editorial PROSPERITY AT THE PORT:

> Of the opinions entertained by the Capitalists of Adelaide, as to the stability of the Port as a profitable place for investment, not the least significant sign is, that in addition to the graver features which will mark Monday's proceedings, the day will be further signalized by the laying [of] the Foundation Stone of an elegant Theatre, which will be erected in such a substantial style as amply proves the confidence of its projector in the increasing prosperity of the place; and in connection with it, it is intended to erect a magnificent Hotel, so that in a few months the Port of Adelaide will boast an amount of accommodation for newly-arrived Colonists which cannot be paralleled, still less surpassed, in any of the Australian Colonies, not even excepting Sydney, with all the excellencies of Petty's and the Royal Hotel into the bargain.[10]

The building of the Port Adelaide Theatre coincided with the renovation of the Queen's Theatre in Gilles Arcade which suggests that not only were the well-to-do growing wealthier but that affluence was being enjoyed by a larger proportion of the community. Theatre-going was an expensive entertainment, as much as four shillings for a box, the gallery often as much as a shilling. (Clara Morison's struggles to negotiate an income of £40 a year provides a useful comparison.) The cost of the redecorated theatre's "five splendid chandeliers" ultimately had to be borne by the theatre-going public, as did the redecoration of

> the New Theatre, or rather the Old Theatre made new, which, from the dirty melancholy barn hitherto occupied by the Courts, has been converted into one of the most splendid edifices in any of the Australasian Colonies. The style of ornament is most chaste, and reflects the highest credit upon the taste and ability of the artist, Mr Opie, who, being an excellent actor himself, has no doubt worked _con amore_ at this gorgeous Temple of the Drama.[11]

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[10] _Mercury_, 12-x-1850, p. 644, IV, iii.

[11] Ibid., 30-xi-1850, p. 705, V, ii.

The projectors, John Lazar and George Coppin, would not have invested literally thousands of pounds had they not believed that the public was wealthy enough to requite their enterprise.

By the end of 1850 it must have seemed that the good times had indeed come. In Hindley-street alone there were scores of shops and dozens of public houses; for a frontier town, an impressive demonstration that Adelaide had passed through its raw stage into a more settled, more widely spread affluence. And the events of the next few months did nothing to check the sanguine expectations of right thinking men. The re-named Royal Victoria Theatre was doing well, and there seemed no reason to doubt that Coppin's other enterprises at Semaphore and the Port would be equally successful. Yet coincidentally, within a week of the opening of the Port Adelaide Theatre on June 26, 1851, there came an announcement which some editors were not slow to recognise as a threat. In an extract from the Sydney Empire of May 27, came this comment:

> It would be difficult to describe the excitement produced in our city (at other times so orderly and peaceable) by the discovery of the Bathurst Gold Fields. Rich and poor, old and young, mechanics and merchants; officials with their thousands a-year, and poor clerks with their seventy-fives and hundreds; all sorts of people, from the Government House lackeys to the Empire's compositors, have their brains just now stuck full of lumps of gold.[12]

Predictably Adelaide's editors at first tended to decry the "Sydney El Dorado", to minimize its importance, and to concern themselves with the effects of the weather and the "direful state of the roads" upon attendances at the new theatre. But within a few weeks it was evident that the promotion of the Port as Australia's Liverpool was doomed. At first there had been no great stir. There had been gold strikes

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[12]Ibid., 21-vi-1851, p. 934, II, iv.

before, and to some, Bathurst must have seemed almost as remote as California. There was still plenty of other, less disturbing, news, and for a time editors sang, cricket-like, of summers still to come. Few mirrored the society which C. H. Spence had noted:

> There had been for some months . . . a stagnation in business, and a great want of money in South Australia. Over-speculation in building and in mines had prevailed for some years, and though the mines which were every now and then discovered, and paraded as likely to rival the Burra or Kapunda, undoubtedly contained copper ore, it was neither of rich quality nor in great quantity.[13]

Editorials were in the main as optimistic and as quarrelsome as ever. Local news combined cheerful accounts of personal disasters with perfunctory references to gold fever in New South Wales. Editors were not to know that the Turon River strikes were to be the first in a series, each more promising than the last, and what was more alarming, each more accessible to restless South Australians.

There was no possibility of ignoring this kind of news. Mineral discoveries had always been worth reporting. The Californian gold strikes, for instance, had been given wide and varied coverage with extracts taken from whatever San Fransicso newspapers were available. Books like B. Ross's California: its Present Conditions and Future Prospects were recommended with some amusement to those "who may contemplate a change" and to "the wiser ones, who prefer the certainties of South Australian peace and comfort, to hazarding life, or at least health in the gold country."[14] Editors could afford to publicise generously gold strikes so far away. The colony would lose only a few

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[13]Catherine H. Spence, Clara Morison, intro. Susan Eade. Seal Australian Fiction (Adelaide: Rigby Ltd., 1971), p. 169. [First published London: John W. Parker & Sons, 1854.]

[14]Mercury, 15-vi-1850, p. 509, V, iv.

like the errant husband of a "Mrs Loman, a young woman married only five weeks ago, [who] applied for a warrant against her husband, who had deserted her, with the supposed intention of going to California."[15] Adelaide still had a proportion of foot-loose citizens who had come to Adelaide to make quick fortunes and who would be attracted to any place with better prospects. But for the majority, distance and the cost of travel would have been major deterrents. Bathurst posed a more serious threat, but it was still a long way away, and so the Mercury could say with some confidence,

> If anybody be gull enough to believe in such glittering illusions, let 'em go away at once, say we. Yet it is well to remind them that the journey is long,- the labour most toilsome,- the results most uncertain,- and bread only five shillings per loaf![16]

This was however only whistling in the dark. Sober, objective reports from the Sydney Morning Herald, perhaps the most respected of all Australian journals, began to create a picture that no amount of scoffing could destroy. Business men were quick to see that they could profit from the Bathurst gold strikes. Even before the end of June, 1851, J. Schmidt had announced that his "fine fast-sailing Prussian Frigate-built ship, WILHELMINA, 600 tons register" was about to sail direct to the New South Wales Diggings. By July, a public house "on the overland route for the Sydney Diggings" was up for sale. Many of South Australian colonists must have been tempted to try their luck. After all, had not the colony's first real wealth been won with minerals? Money could still be made in copper and silver and lead, but the returns on investments in mines at Kanmantoo, Tungkillo, Glen

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[15] South Australian, 22-ii-1850, III, i.

[16] Mercury, 21-vi-1851, p. 934, II, iv.

Osmond, and Montacute were trifling compared with what could apparently be won in New South Wales. Some had doubtless contemplated leaving South Australia in any case, but there seems not, initially, to have been any major exodus of Adelaide's gentle or working classes. The commonly held belief that "agriculture promises to be the mainstay of the colony"[17] would have reinforced the reluctance of many to travel so far and to risk so much.

But when on the heels of Bathurst came news of strikes nearer to home, at Castlemaine, at Clunes, and then at Mount Alexander and Ballarat, temptation was combined with improved opportunity. The security which distance had given Adelaide's men of property had been seriously disturbed. At first, when the effects of the Victorian gold rushes began to be felt in Adelaide, the Mercury spoke as if Adelaide was likely only to lose

> . . . a large body of those Gentry, familiarly known to the police as the "light-fingered." . . . the Light-square aristocracy, [who] quite overcome at the prospect of picking-up the auriferous metal without much hard work, have determined on visiting the Ballarat Springs for a change of air and exercise.[18]

But by the end of the year, the newspapers themselves were showing the symptoms of gold fever. Although editorials stressed that the latest gold discoveries were only of transient importance, their own advertisements and local news gave them the lie. Whereas the Turon strikes had been reflected mainly in the news of ships clearing out of Port Adelaide, after Ballarat the major theme of most newspapers was gold. Merchants and shop-keepers began to re-cast their advertisements. At Mill's Bazaar and Furnishing Warehouse were to be had "Superior

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[17]Register, 20-i-1852, III, ii.

[18]Mercury, 25-x-1851, p. 1081, V, iv.

Cradles for Gold-Washing". Carleton's well known Baking Powder and Dr Graham's Anti-Bilious and Digestive Pills were now found to be peculiarly necessary to life on the gold fields. Charles Platts offered for sale a Mining Manual, "being a yearly compendium of Information and General Science, with tables of Equivalents of Troy Weight in Avoirdupois and Vice Versa". William Lever listed Miners' and Draymen's Hats, "perfectly waterproof", among more fashionable attire. F. Vesey urged parties about to quit Adelaide to put the disposal of their properties into his hands.

The Shipping Departures told a similar tale. As the Register remarked, under the caption GOLD MANIA,

> Out of twenty-two vessels at present in the port, thirteen (of the aggregate tonnage of 3,500 tons) are laid on for Melbourne; two are loading for Liverpool; two for London. One is on the eve of sailing for Swansea; two are laid up for repairs, and the others are small coasters.[19]

In "Local Intelligence" paragraphs, there were items which told of men of unquestioned respectability - German farmers, Cornish miners, even some gentlemen - who were off to the diggings.

Editors did what they could to check the flood. They preached variously on "all that glitters is not gold" and on "radix malorum est cupiditas"; they anatomised some of the more obvious exaggerations in reports emanating from Mount Alexander; they counselled

> all prudent men who may have been on the point of betaking themselves to the neighbouring colonies . . . to delay their departure, and to await the revelations of the next few weeks with respect to the actual prospects of our own gold-fields,[20]

a reference to a report of gold being discovered on the Onkaparinga.

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[19]Register, 27-i-1852, III, v.

[20]Ibid., 1-i-1852, II, ii.

They even quoted improving verse, including "THE POET GRAY'S ADDRESS TO HIMSELF"[21] and an anonymous poem simply titled GOLD:

> Root of all evil! - Gold, red Gold!
> Price of the valiant and the bold;
> Tempter of virtue, honour, and peace,
> When will thy mighty Empire cease?
> Bribery's bait, and the rich man's stay,
> When shall the world disown thy sway?[22]
> .....

Gold fever was not to be cured with words, particularly those issuing from newspapers which were palpably suffering from the same disease. In the past, the scope of colonial editorials had been narrow enough; harvest prospects, the shortcomings of "our contemporary", the discovery of new lands suitable for grazing or wheat, emigration policies, the colony's relations with the British government, proposed railways, the emigration fund, the sale of waste lands, free trade, capital punishment, secular and religious education; the essentially practical concerns of an isolated community. But the Victorian gold rushes by the end of 1851 had become central to most editorials and many items of local news. Editors were compelled by necessity to harp upon an even smaller number of strings.

This narrowing of newspapers' topical scope is seen in the protracted discussions of labour shortages, the problems associated with travelling to Mount Alexander, bullion shortages. And whereas the newspapers had previously discussed with some detachment the probable value of explorations such as Captain Underwood's trip from Rivoli Bay to Cape Northumberland, and Eyre's epic journey to Albany and Sturt's expedition to the interior of Australia, so fearful were they that they gave to Alexander Tolmer's trip to Mount Alexander equal, perhaps

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[21] Mercury, 25-x-1851, p. 1080, IV, ii.

[22] Register, 14-i-1852, III, v.

even greater, importance. That it was of great economic significance is of course undoubted, but the contemporary press allowed its relief to distort its judgment.

> Last Friday and Saturday well deserve to be commemorated as red-letter days in the annals of South Australia. The arrival on the former of them of the first Escort of Gold from Mount Alexander, by a new and facile route, and within fourteen days time, is, under the circumstances, like the appearance of the first patch of blue sky betokening a speedy clearing up of the heavens and the dispersion of the storm and thunder-clouds, whilst the distribution on the latter of them of about five hundred letters, brought by that same Escort to anxious wives and families from their absent ones at the gold diggings, will, doubtless, have occasioned a greater amount of heartfelt emotions of gratitude and consolation than have ever been witnessed at any one time in the history of our infant community.
>
> The successful enterprize which has terminated in these two inestimable results, must necessarily be indissolubly connected in the mind of every South Australian with the favoured individual whose imagination conceived and whose energy has accomplished it. As the name of STURT is inseparably attached to the discovery of the noble Murray, so the name of TOLMER will ever be associated with the opening up of a near road to the hidden treasures of wealth which our adventurous settlers, who pay a visit to Mount Alexander, are prepared and wishful to send over to this the land of their affection and the home of their dear ones . . . .[23]

As far as the newspapers themselves were concerned, several had been damaged beyond recovery. Being of all literary forms, the most responsive to social changes, the newspapers not only reflected the community's concern with gold, but suffered many of its most adverse effects. Just as the community began to doubt the inevitability of its progress, so the newspapers began to express an unaccustomed

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[23]Observer, 27-iii-1852, III, i. For many years after, Tolmer basked in the reputation of being a saviour of South Australia, although as exploration his was little more than a jaunt. What a contrast between the "puffing" reports of South Australia's development before the gold rushes and the mewling references to "our infant community"!

timidity and uncertainty. In their coverage of local news, they began to combine lively gold intelligence with material which mirrored a town in the grip of economic stagnation. In those parts which dealt with shipping departures, with dealings in gold dust and nuggets, with mining supplies, the newspapers truthfully portrayed a quickening in the tempo in some parts of South Australian life. In "Local Intelligence", however, began to appear with increasing frequency reports of citizens who had been considered permanent South Australians now about to depart for the diggings. In other columns, there were more obvious signs that the colony's strength and enterprise were being drained; repeated advertisements expressing thanks for the liberal support received by tradesmen during the time they carried on business, capitalised offers of CONSTANT EMPLOYMENT and LIBERAL WAGES at the Burra Burra mines, the availability of the leases of pubs such as the Golden Phoenix, the Miners' Arms, the Clare Inn and the Golden Cross.

Not only did advertisements underline the sluggishness of commercial life. The fact that they were so often repeated without change suggests that editors were using them as dummies, to save the cost of setting up new material. It was as if only gold news was vital and as though the rest of the journalistic world was dying. In general appearance, Adelaide's newspapers were unchanged, but so too was much of their content. Advertisements, it is true, had tended to petrify, even in the days of prosperity; "books just published", "consignments just unpacked" were phrases which were retained and reprinted, sometimes many times, over several months. But as the recession intensified, the proportion of unchanged material increased. There was no lack of available material, for if life in Adelaide had grown dull, there was increased traffic between the eastern colonies and Adelaide. The ships that were shifting so many Adelaide citizens

to the diggings doubtless also carried many newspapers from other parts of the world, and if local news was scarce and depressing, editors could not have lacked material to borrow. It is probable that Adelaide had never been so richly supplied with overseas news, as this editorial comment indirectly suggests:

> The fact which we mentioned on Monday, that a large cargo of flour, tobacco, rice, and sundries, had arrived at Sydney from Boston, from which place it had been shipped within seven days of the arrival there of the intelligence of the gold discoveries at Bathurst, shows plainly enough that the Americans will lose no time in entering actively and extensively into the new circle of commercial operations, which will now be opened out in this part of the world.[24]

Bathurst and then Mount Alexander had brought Australia closer to the rest of the world.

Shortages of news were the least of Adelaide's editors' problems. A diminishing reading public and a shrunken business community were aggravated by a shortage of printers. When the Register appealed for compositors, in a preceding advertisement there were two errors, BRIGATON for BRIGHTON and "attentien" for "attention"[25] such obvious slips showing plainly a decline in the usually high standard of proof-reading. Stevenson's editorial announcement that he could not continue the publication of the Gazette and Mining Journal:

> During the last few weeks the withdrawal of so many men from his printing establishment has encreased [sic] the difficulties of regular publication, and, as must have been perceived, considerably altered the size of the type, and lessened the quantity of matter previously furnished in these columns. But the intimation that those who remain are about to follow the example of their friends, and seek the more liberal remuneration which the neighbouring colony holds out, renders unavoidable the step now taken.[26]

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[24]Register, 12-ii-1852, III, i, ii.

[25]Ibid., 11-ii-1852, IV, i.

[26]Mining Journal, 13-iii-1852, II, iv.

The newspapers also chronicled the loss of other skilled workmen, with advertisements for bakers and pastry cooks, those who would be most in demand at the diggings and who were likely to be able to pay the fare to get there; £2-10s., the usual cost by sea or £3 if they wished to travel overland on the outside of Harry Whittle's stage-coach, the "Adelaide Star".[27] In other less vulnerable businesses, shortages of tradesmen and a diminishing clientele were serious enough, but in journalism, they promised to be disastrous, particularly for the weeklies. The proprietors of the dailies could reduce the amount of new material to be set, hoping like the Register that "however terrible may be the storm which is gathering over the colony, . . . the South Australian Register will be permitted to weather it."[28] Or they could decide like James Allen, to contract the Times into a bi-weekly issue in the hope that good times would eventually return and allow a resumption of a daily publication. But the weeklies had fewer options. They had either to print new material or to succumb.

Apart from the Observer, which drew much of its sustenance from its daily partner, the Register, the weeklies which had enjoyed such popularity in the late 1840s and early 1850s were particularly susceptible to economic slumps. Having a less important commercial function than the dailies, they could not use many advertisements to pad out their columns, and they could not afford to borrow as freely as they used to do when printers and readers were more readily available. The collapse of the Mercury, the Austral Examiner and the Mining Journal, between December 1851 and March 1852, emphasises their vulnerability.

The end of these weeklies is not simply a consequence of the

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[27] Register, 4-iii-1852

[28] Ibid., 12-i-1852, II, v.

Victorian gold rushes. In the case of the Mercury, Hammond had long courted disaster by his intemperate attacks upon Adelaide's dignity, and in any case was so dependent upon the Licensed Victuallers' Society for support that when their prosperity was checked, so too was his. The Mining Journal had become a less important part of George Stevenson's interests and so when the difficulties of production mounted, so did his un-interest. As for the Austral Examiner, it had never been healthy, perhaps because its aims had been so impracticably lofty:

> The grand distinctive feature of the EXAMINER will be this:- It will invariably recognize the paramount claims of Religion as the highest human interest. This will be done without obtrusive profession. It will be evident in the tone of the paper, rather than in its formal utterances. "The Times are the masquerade of the Eternities;" . . . . . The EXAMINER will steadily oppose all systems and measures attempting to combine the Ecclesiastical with the Political; and from respect to the interests of true Religion, determined resistance will be offered to every effort to fetter it by State control, or pauperise it by State subsidies . . . .
>
> . . . Nothing of legitimate interest will be omitted; but news of minor importances will be epitomised, everything offensive to decency excluded, and prominence given to the transactions of philanthropic societies without distinction of sect or party. Larger space will be allotted to English news and literature than is usual with the Adelaide broad-sheets; and in regard of every common characteristic, no pains will be spared to make the EXAMINER fully equal to any of its contemporaries.
>
> Literature and science will have their departments in the EXAMINER, as well as Politics and Business. The inventions of Art, the researches of Philosophy, and the utterance of Genius, are all included within its province; so that it will furnish a wider range of subjects, and a more interesting description of reading, than ordinary newspapers supply.[29]

Despite "the temperate and intelligent manner in which its peculiar views (had) been enunciated",[30] it is probable that the paper would not long have survived, even without the social upheaval caused by the gold rushes.

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[29]Advertisement, Mercury, 22-ii-1851, p. 802, VI, iv.

[30]Ibid., 6-xii-1851, p. 1121, V, iii.

Just as the Examiner had failed to secure a sufficient readership among the "so-called religious public",[31] so too did the German papers run into difficulties. As Gilson and Zubrzycki have shown, foreign language papers had always struggled for survival, but when as many as fifty Germans at a time set off for Melbourne, led by the mineralogist and one time editor of the Deutsche Post, fuer die Australischen Kolonien, Johannes Menge,[32] then the erratic publication of the Deutsche Zeitung fuer Suedaustralien,[33] which had replaced the Sued Australische Zeitung could have been predicted.

By the beginning of 1852, the scope of those few newspapers which remained had drastically been contracted. Only gold and its effects upon colonial life were vital preoccupations. The Register found humour in "the quaint announcements which appear in front of the lesser business-premises of our fellow citizens."[34]

> . . . In King William-street, written on the back of a tea-tray, "Selling off for as much as we can get." In Hindley-street, written upon a batten extending over the footway, "Nuggets taken for shaving and haircutting." In Hindley-street West, pasted upon the back of a bush frying-pan, "Craydells for the digins."[35]

Jocularity could not however dissipate the unpleasant realities revealed in other parts of the paper; the appearance of ". . . George Coppin, of Port Adelaide, in the Province of South Australia, comedian" among the bankrupts cited in the INSOLVENCY NOTICES,[36] paragraphs which told of respectable men being dismissed from office, officials like Doctor Wyatt, the Inspector of Schools, and of policemen resigning;

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[31]Ibid.

[32]Miriam Gilson and Jerzy Zubrzycki, The Foreign-language Press in Australia, 1848-1964 (Canberra: A.N.U. Press, 1967), p. 5.

[33]Ibid., p. 8.

[34]Register, 31-i-1852, II, v. [35]Ibid.

[36]Ibid., 6-iii-1852, II, iii.

editorials voicing the fear of ". . . threatened activity of the noxious aboriginal element;"[37] letters protesting against the retrenchment of letter carriers; notices lamenting the departure of talented people like Francesca Allen, the Australian Nightingale, whose "warbling notes" were to be offered to wealthier audiences in Melbourne.[38] Not even cautionary tales, of men cursing the day they ever left South Australia, of a miner who had sent six hard-won ounces of gold to his wife and child only for the friend ". . . carrying with him the gold and the glad tidings" to discover that both wife and child were dead,[39] could do much to deter those wishing to leave, or hearten those remaining. And those paragraphs which did not refer directly to gold would have given scant comfort. In a description of a lively scene in Hindley-street, the writer ends on a lugubrious note: ". . . Almost without exception the purchasers were females, unattended by any of the manly sex."[40]

The most dynamic advertisements were those concerned with the erosion of the South Australian colony; ships sailing for Melbourne or Geelong, sales of mining equipment and supplies, agents skilled in assaying, brokers dealing in gold dust and bullion. Elsewhere, they revealed a South Australia rallen-tando; invitations to "parting jollifications" and to "farewell spree[s]."[41] Moribund advertisements gained a new lease of melancholy, as when John Stephens' executors appealed once more for ". . . all parties who are INDEBTED to them, and who are about to LEAVE THE PROVINCE . . . [to] call and PAY their

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[37]Ibid., 17-iii-1852, III, i.

[38]Observer, 7-ii-1852, III, v.

[39]Ibid., 13-iii-152, V, v.

[40]Register, 9-ii-1852, III, iv.

[41]Ibid., 13-i-1852, II, iv.

ACCOUNTS,"[42] or dwindled to forlorn gestures, as when some fifty business men continued to offer rewards for ". . . the discovery of the existence of a gold-field on Crown Lands."[43] Such reminders of the colony's ills were reinforced by advertisements which had been re-printed so many times that they would have lost their power to attract a reader's attention.

Editorials of course continued to be written, and a steady stream of correspondents' letters, but their tone was so dismal and their themes so auric, that they did little to lighten the gloom of the first months of 1852. The forced optimism of the Register's editorials gave way to sober prophecies that

> . . . in a few weeks more, according to all natural expectation, the whole male population, with the exception of the officials of the Government and of the public institutions, will have deserted to the gold-fields.[44]

Phrases like "the hardness of the times" and "the curse of gold" sounded a dismal chorus of despair in even the most phlegmatic of articles. And if the content of the newspapers was not evidence enough of the dire straits into which local journalism had fallen, then a count of the survivors tells its own story. By February, the colonial press had declined to its lowest point since the early 1840s. Only the Register, the Observer and the Times were appearing more or less regularly, although the Adelaide Morning Chronicle, which had taken the place of the South Australian, struggled to win readers, despite the unpropitious times. By early March, newspapers had become little more than repositories of dead advertisements and of stale news,

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[42]Ibid., II, i.

[43]Ibid., 2-i-1852, II, ii.

[44]Ibid., 19-i-1852, III, i.

mere chronicles of adversity. And yet within a few weeks, so resilient were they, that they were transformed, revived by several happy circumstances. Of these, Tolmer's gold escort and the Governor's new bullion act, were the most significant. These coupled with a shortage of water at Mount Alexander and the return of many South Australians gave businessmen the fillip they needed, and sent editorial spirits soaring. Forty-three furnace men returned to Burra,[45] fourteen farm labourers came back to the Houghton and Para districts, numerous gentlemen resumed less arduous and more predictable occupations.

Yet South Australia could not return to what it had been before Mount Alexander. The lure of rapid wealth was ever present, and in fact was to transform many steady colonists into itinerants, working in South Australia during the harvests and then travelling to Victoria during the winter and spring. And some who had contributed generously to the early development of South Australia were gone for good. Men like George Coppin returned briefly to turn their experiences at the diggings into entertainment, to settle their affairs, and then to return to Australia's new centres of affluence, Melbourne, Ballarat and Bendigo. Though Coppin, as Billy Barlow, could sing of "the truth which has become patent to so many of our fellow-colonists, that 'all is not gold that glitters'"[46] and resolve "for the future to abandon the diggings, to stick to South Australia, and trust to the Escort",[47] in reality, he and many of like mind had decided that their futures lay in the east. All that Adelaide could offer was respectability and affluence which relied on steady, hard work, and the

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[45]Observer, 20-iii-1852, V, v.

[46]Ibid., 3-iv-1852, IV, i.

[47]Ibid.

continuing prosperity of the eastern colonies. Adelaide was about to be changed from a frontier town of uncertain direction to what Trollope was to describe in the 1870s, as a "farinaceous village". Already, travellers were making invidious comparisons between Adelaide and what was now the commercial centre of Australia, Melbourne.

> Her merchants are wealthy, intelligent, and honourable, and her tradesmen are a cash paying, respectable class, occupying their proper position, and not as with us, sent to Coventry, merely because they are shopkeepers . . . .
>
> She [Melbourne] has worse pavements, but better streets, more money substance, but less politeness, no made road round the town, no fences, no gardens, and I may say, little or no fruit of her own and that little inferior and dear; but then she knows little of mortgages or renewed bills . . . . She has an abundance of churches, and the means of religious instruction which appear to be valued to a commendable extent, and the ministers, as far as I could learn, whether receiving Government pay or otherwise, make no complaints. Her scholastic institutions are not, I am sorry to say, deserving of high commendation, and are in this respect inferior to our own. She has a Mechanics' Institute, which, though wealthy, cannot boast a good library. There is a weekly concert at 1s. each, attended by high and low, but no chairs for the elite and no haughty assumption of rank and style.[48]

Although the writer, R. F. M., clearly believed that Adelaide was still culturally superior, there can be little doubt that a new kind of society was evolving in Melbourne, and that it had become most attractive to those who wished to repair their fortunes or to improve their social position. Unable to match Melbourne's prosperity, Adelaide had to draw what comfort it could from its respectability and its stable social structure.

Mirroring this stolidity is the changed nature of Adelaide's newspapers. Unluckily, the gold rushes coincided with the loss of four of South Australia's most lively journalists. Stephens had died somewhat earlier; Hammond and Murray both went to work on Victorian newspapers; George Stevenson travelled to Melbourne, and although he

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[48]Ibid., 10-iv-1852, VI, v.

returned to South Australia, never resumed his journalistic writing. Which left only Dismal Jemmy Allen, to maintain the personal style so characteristic of the press before Mount Alexander. And even he, lacking the stimulus of incautious and disputatious rivals, began to adopt the conciliatory tone of the new breed of editors. The gold discoveries continued of course to affect Adelaide's newspapers in more direct ways; gold news, for example, was considered to be of such importance that the Observer ". . . made arrangements for the regular transmission every week of a DIGGINGS EDITION . . . to Mount Alexander."[49] Such an arrangement would

> . . . afford the friends of South Australians who have proceeded to that locality, an excellent medium of communication with the absentees . . . . It has appeared to the Conductors of the Observer that it would be of much practical utility, to devote some space in their advertising columns, to the telegraphic purpose of conveying messages from the friends at the one end, to the friends at the other.[50]

But in style and spirit, South Australian newspapers generally had become tame and even more utilitarian. As early as 1845, it had been noted that

> the colonists of South Australia [had] not been a reading community - not that as a body they are illiterate, but that they have been too much engrossed in business, and, unfortunately, in some instances, pressed by calamity to bestow their time or money on congenial pursuits.[51]

By 1852, their absorption in business began to be even more obviously reflected in the papers they read. Few colonial readers seem to have mourned many of the changes that the gold-rushes had wrought; the loss of talented people like the musicians, Andrew Moore and J. W. Wallace, actors like Coppin and Lazar's daughter Rachel Moore, or journalists like Hammond. Content with the increasingly parochial concerns of an

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[49]Ibid., 8-v-1852, I, iii. [50]Ibid.

[51]Odd Fellows' Magazine, II (July, 1845-April, 1846), p. 162.

essentially pastoral community, they wasted little time regretting the loss of a way of life that had been chromatic and dynamic. Like the practical men they were, colonial readers began to demand newspapers which were reliable, conservative and unadventurous. The age of the Advertiser was at hand.

Chapter 6

AFTER THE GOLD RUSHES

Once it became clear that the South Australian settlement would not only not be abandoned but actually would benefit from Victorian prosperity, and that the loss of population was likely to be only seasonal, then the infant community took heart and began to plan for the future. But this time, there was to be little talk of an Australian Athens or an antipodean Liverpool. The Observer's joyful headline, "GLORIOUS NEWS.- ARRIVAL OF MR. TOLMER AT WELLINGTON WITH UPWARDS OF A QUARTER OF A TON OF GOLD FROM MOUNT ALEXANDER",[1] ushered in a more tentative phase of development. The economy began to recover its poise as gold began to find its way into South Australian pockets, and diggers both successful and disappointed began to return at least for the summer, and stay-at-home farmers and shop-keepers began to gather the rewards of their caution. But not all the dislocations of colonial life were to be so quickly repaired, or indeed to be repaired at all. Much of the colour had faded, and no quantity of gold, short of a bonanza, could restore it. This was particularly true of South Australian journalism. Every newspaper, whether long established or newly launched, was for almost a year subjected to difficulties unprecedented in the course of journalism so far; a shortage of compositors, a lack of capital for the new steam-driven printing machines, a loss of readers, an exodus of experienced editors and reporters to

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[1] Observer, 20-iii-1852, IV, iii.

the thriving newspaper industry in Melbourne. Add to these trials, a reduced income from advertisers, and an increasing number of cancelled subscriptions, as more and more of the newspaper reading class went to Victoria to try their luck, and the scene is set for a radical re-organization of the Adelaide press.

One of the first adjustments to be made was to incorporate gold news into its main journalistic concerns; another was to modify its tone to suit a community which had lost many of its most divergent members; criminals, actors, musicians, scientists like the eccentric Herr Menge, editors of the calibre of W. E. Hammond. Only if South Australia could produce a counter-attraction, its own Ophir or Ballarat, could it hope to recover its lost population, and with it, a proportion of adventurous people. Otherwise, those who remained would have to content themselves with prospects of comfortable affluence, with unspectacular prosperity. For a while, Echunga promised to revive more dramatic ambitions, but as the "Song of the South Australian Digger" shows, at least one realist was not deceived:

1.

Echunga! Echunga! a pathway of fire
Is - the light of my pipe as it travels to thee:
Auriferous thoughts fill my breast with desire,
And the future smiles brightly and sweetly on me.

.....

5.

Echunga! Echunga! ten tons weight of gold
Are doubtless hidden somewhere in thy breast;
Many hundreds have sought it, but all we are told
Is of ounces amongst them. Oh where is the rest?[2]

Although from time to time rumours of important discoveries of gold in the Adelaide Hills and along the Onkaparinga created some little local excitement, particularly among those who believed that Adelaide

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[2]Morning Chronicle, 4-xi-1852, IV, i.

would become a back-water without the stimulus of gold, there was also a sizeable group who were apprehensive about the effects of gold mania upon the moral development of the colony. It was these who were to fashion the next stage in South Australia's development, who were to make it what Twopeny was later to note: "essentially lower middle-class, Nonconformist and Radical in its origin . . . the New England of the Antipodes".[3] With the loss of many of the colony's most energetic and adventurous spirits, a different set of values began to be prized. Conservatism, "correct principle", propriety and predictability, seriousness of purpose, began to overshadow the kinds of virtues that Henry Kingsley's hero thought necessary for advancement in the colonies;

> . . . And even on the diggings, with all the leaven of Americanism and European Radicalism one finds there, it is much easier for a warden to get on with the diggers if he comes of a known colonial family, than if he is an unknown man . . . . All people, prate as they may, like a guarantee for respectability. In the colonies, such a guarantee is given by a man's being tolerably well off, and "come of decent people."[4]

Birth and affluence might be all very well in the eastern colonies, but in Adelaide these were not enough. Newspapers might applaud Jacob Hagen's keeping up an "Old English Custom" by "entertaining his tenants on the day of his annual rent audit",[5] but the safest way to establish oneself in a puritanical society was to avoid giving offence. Predictability and conformity became the bench-marks for South Australian behaviour, and so became the characteristics of the

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[3]R. E. N. Twopeny, Town Life in Australia. Facsimile Edition (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1973), p. 122. [First published London: Elliot Stock, 1883.]

[4]Henry Kingsley, Ravenshoe (London: Oxford University Press, 1925), p. 317. [First published London: 1862.]

[5]Observer, 17-iv-1852, V, v.

sobriety almost immediately following Stephens' death, but the new journals, the Free Press and the Morning Chronicle and the Examiner were even more conservative. The public for which Allen now wrote was very different from the one which had encouraged him in his battles with his rivals. Early in 1853, he detected a new complacency and languor in the way in which the affairs of the colony were being administered. For him, Adelaide had become a replica of Washington Irving's Tarry Town, a new Sleepy Hollow, a colony whose prevailing character he claimed was summed up in Thomson's "The Castle of Indolence":

> A pleasing land of drowsy head it was,
> Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye;
> And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,
> For ever flushing round a summer sky.[7]

It seemed to him that "indolence [has] cast such a spell over the minds of the good people, that they [have] no power to think of anything that did not immediately concern themselves, and hardly for that".[8] His remedy for the malaise was to GO A HEAD, BOYS, YANKEEISE![9] a solution which shows how out of sympathy Allen was with the revised Adelaide, an Adelaide which was beginning to regard all enterprise as a sacrifice to Mammon. While still sanctifying work,

> Work, work, my brothers, work,
> Work, while 'tis called today;
> And ever with this knowledge toil,-
> To labour is to pray,[10]

the newspaper reading class had grown even more suspicious of republicanism, more opposed to speculation and Yankee 'cuteness, more

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[7]Times, 17-i-1853, II, vi. [8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid., 25-i-1853, IV, i.

[10]From "Laborare est Orare", by John Alfred Langford, Morning Chronicle, 29-iii-1853, IV, i.

grudging in their approbation of thrust and energy - since their concomitants, vulgarity and sharp-dealing, could not always be explained away. In essence, they had become what Allen thought them, complacent, philistine and parochial. The whole tempo of colonial life had become slower, more attuned to the seasons, and to the calmer pursuits of a community seeking prosperity in agriculture and grazing. Not now for them, quick fortunes and sudden departures. They were planning to stay, to become genuine settlers, not seekers of competencies so that they could afford to return "home". Home was now to be Adelaide, a place of sturdy ". . . public buildings and places of worship", of "neat and substantial edifices" and of shops "on a scale equal to those of many of the first market-towns in England".[11]

In such an environment, Allen must have thought that his talents were not sufficiently appreciated. Having handed over the management of the Adelaide Times and the Weekly Dispatch (formerly the Weekly Times) to others, he bade farewell to his public with no obvious regret. He seems to have been relieved that he was able "to retire from the political arena, if not with a competence, at least without any complaints of a begrudging non-requital of his labours".[12]

His successor lost no time in changing the Times to meet the new morality. He promised to eschew controversy, and to spare no exertion to

> supply full and FAITHFUL reports of Legislative and all Municipal and District Council proceedings, as well as every interesting public meeting throughout the province,

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[11]George French Angas, Savage Life and Scenes in Australia and New Zealand; being an artist's impressions of countries and people at the antipodes, I (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1847), p. 209.

[12]Times, 16-xi-1853, II, ii.

> whether relating to local affairs or general politics. We invite correspondence on all subjects of colonial interest, altogether irrespective with our accordance with the views of the writers, so that their communications be judiciously brief and respectfully worded . . . .[13]

He predicated in short a kind of fair-minded, provincial, cautious journalism, which was to culminate in the establishment of the Advertiser and the Chronicle in 1858, conservative papers that with the Register were to dominate the Adelaide press for most of the next century.

The reforms proposed by the new editor, John Brown, should not be considered as a complete failure on Allen's part to adjust the Times to the times. A man who had founded the Adelaide Railway Times years before a single sleeper had been laid was not likely to be insensitive to social change. There is in any case plenty of evidence in the Times issued in 1852 and 1853 to show that he had damped down many of his paper's former emphases, particularly its concern with personalities. He had of course lost most of his most stimulating opposition, the Mercury and the Register of Stephens' day. There was now little scope for the journalistic skirmishes that had so enlivened the colonial press before the gold rushes. Apart from some sporadic sharp-shooting, the Times also had grown staid and functional. Instead of offering conventional reporting coloured by paragraphs of accusations and rejoinders, by quarrelsome letters, and editorial exposés of the egregious folly of his rivals, even Allen was reduced to publishing Homestead Hints, travelling on much the same road that the Observer had taken:

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[13]Ibid., 17-xi-1853, III, iii.

> The country Agricultural Associations having done the Observer the honour to adopt it as their accredited organ, it has been thought advisable (at a considerable pecuniary sacrifice) to reduce the scale of charges on advertisements of a nature intimately connected with the interests of Settlers and Servants.[14]

Allen too bowed his head beneath the yoke of the colony's agricultural interests, when he described the Times as "The South Australian Yeomen's Own Paper".

It is doubtful whether Allen could have ever made enough sacrifices to please his increasingly puritanical readers, even though he had maintained a circulation second only to the Register's. Allen could claim with justice that "no-one could accuse us of being mealy-mouthed; we are in the habit of speaking as we feel".[15] But it is probable that he was wrong in believing that "we speak as the public feel",[16] at least as far as his treatment of reputations was concerned. They could have had no objection to his making harmless fun of the Register's literary style:

> Whatever amount of earnestness and enthusiasm it may be delightful to see engaged in the proud Anglo-Saxon task of striving to obtain an unlimited range of social self-government, and to secure the triumph of every conceivable ramification of political independence, it would, in our humble judgment, be a manifestation of almost equal wisdom, and an operation of scarcely less utility, to contribute some little fraction of that zeal and intensity of feeling towards the attainment of certain specific objects, whose actual importance and necessity, and direct connection with the general benefit, can be understood and felt by every member of the community.
>
> Is not this fine? Is it not smart? Lah! How we apples do swim![17]

But the fact that his successors immediately disclaimed any wish to continue attacks upon individuals, suggests that the newspaper public

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[14]Observer, 5-vi-1852, VIII, iii.

[15]Times, 14-iii-1853, III, i. [16]Ibid.

[17]Ibid., 19-iii-1853, III, v.

had tired of unfair "political warfare", of "unnecessary bitterness", of "personal allusions which the political or public conduct of individuals do not warrant".[18] With Allen's retirement, the last exponent of the older style of journalism took his leave of the newspaper reading public. Under new government, the Times developed into an impersonal, more objective kind of journal, one which accorded better with the colony's changed concept of itself.

Before gold had compelled South Australians to revise their plans for the future, there had been general agreement that as far as possible Adelaide should resemble an English provincial town. Because it was not then clear in what directions South Australia should travel, whether its future lay in mining or sheep or industry or agriculture, colonists when in doubt measured their achievements against the benchmarks of the British middle classes. Reliant upon the British for their markets, for investment capital, for their population and for much of their cultural nourishment, they continued to look backwards for approval and for guidance. Many colonists must have felt what William Howitt thought about the Victorian gold-diggers:

> . . . Every one thinks of himself, there is no patriotism, because no man looks upon this country as his home. All are in a sort of temporary exile,- the servants of mammon, that they may spend "golden earnings at home."[19]

After the gold-rushes, however, there was a marked change in attitude, at least in South Australia. With the removal to Victoria of many of those whose connexion to the new colony had been weakest, there remained behind those who were prepared to settle and to bind their lives to whatever future the colony had. It would be unkind to regard

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[18]Ibid., 17-xi-1853, III, iii.

[19]William Howitt, Land, Labour, and Gold, or; Two Years in Victoria. Facsimile Edition, I (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1972), p. 37. [First published London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1855.]

them as a kind of sediment, heavier material which remained after loftier spirits had gone to seek fortune elsewhere, but it is significant that the exodus following the strikes at Forest Creek and Bendigo coincides with a growing insularity in the Adelaide press. Though as South Australians, they had always regarded themselves as superior in mettle to Vandemonians, New South Welshmen, and to currency lads and lassies in general, after 1852 they were less able to regard themselves simply as translated Englishmen or Scots. With their growing economic dependence upon their sister colonies, they could not afford to remain aloof. Whether they liked it or not, they had begun their progress towards an Australian identity. Whereas Andrew Murray would have had considerable support for his earlier claim that a colony producing "corn, wool, oil, tallow, ores, and metals"[20] could prosper only if overseas and especially English markets were steady, by 1854 it would have been just as obvious that South Australia would have to look to Victoria and New South Wales for most of its customers. As the Register put it,

> . . . The gold of Mount Alexander has created a market almost insatiable. We have neighbours close at hand rich enough and hungry enough to take everything we can spare for their own consumption.[21]

But not even the prospect of sharing in Australia's new found wealth was sufficient to bring back to Adelaide those who had given so much colour and vitality to the infant community. Some could have been easily spared, if one can judge from this ironical comment:

> Judging from this week's records of our Police Court, the people of South Australia might be ranked amongst the most virtuous communities of Christendom. For four consecutive

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[20]South Australian, 1-i-1850, II, ii.

[21]Register, 24-ii-1854, II, v.

E. S. Wigg had previously noted, Adelaide had far too many papers for all to be profitable. Even without a recession, some rationalization would have been necessary. Unfortunately, the most conservative papers were best equipped for survival. For all the rhetoric justifying the unique roles of a free press, from the Austral Examiner's Miltonic epigraph, "Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties",[23] to lengthy editorials on the unique powers of the Fourth Estate, the events of 1852 and onwards show very plainly the kind of newspapers South Australian readers wanted; papers which gave information rather than controversy, "business intelligence" rather than "light literature".

A free-speaking press had always had its critics. Readers as different as Robert Torrens, the Collector of Customs and W. W. G. Nicholls, the socialist water-carrier, had in their own ways agreed that colonial editors too often exceeded the limits of propriety. Torrens had thought "to rescue the press of my adopted country from 'Yankeyism'. In explanation of which term I beg to refer you to Dickens's American Notes."[24] Nicholls had also regretted the press's power to damage causes and to mangle reputations:

> Give me that power you possess,
> I'd make your very friends confess
> That you're a boy, or knave, or fool.[25]

And what had been said of George Stevenson in 1841,

> . . . all his opinions are cast in the mould of self-interest, and . . . all the shafts of his pen are intended to gratify his personal dislikes, or minister to the

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[23]Epigraph, Austral Examiner: Mercury, 22-ii-1851, p. 802, VI, iv.

[24]South Australian, 25-i-1848, III, iii.

[25]Ibid., 3-iv-1846, II, ii.

most readers wanted their newspapers to go. So well did it reflect the new temper of its public that it was to remain a force in South Australian journalism until the 1930s, when it was incorporated into its junior rival, the Advertiser.

Less successful than the Register even before the gold-rushes, the Adelaide Times was much slower to change its former emphases, and to lose its reputation for inconsistency and immoderation. Nevertheless, despite the cessation for a time of its daily issue, it managed to maintain a circulation sufficient for survival. Although it was never to challenge seriously the pre-eminence enjoyed by the Register, it was still lively enough in 1853 to allow Allen to sell it as a going concern. And as soon as John Brown became its proprietor, he hastened to cool his policies to match the luke-warm ones of his rival, content, it seems, to occupy second place rather than to compete openly for the Register's readers and advertisers. By the end of 1853, a kind of equilibrium had been achieved, two dailies and their weekly offshoots firmly entrenched, several new journals struggling for what remained of the market.

It is not known whether Hammond ever returned to Adelaide, but if he did, he would have been struck by the changes which had taken place in the Adelaide press since his departure. Some he would have welcomed, others he would have seen as a falling off. Overall, however, he would have found few resemblances between the journals of 1853 and 1854 and those he had known in the hey-day of 1851. He would have expected to see fewer newspapers, but no doubt the narrowness of those that remained would have shocked him. He might have wondered at their diminished vitality, their prudential policies, their dominantly commercial character. As an advocate of free trade and competition - except when the advantages he and his patrons

enjoyed were threatened - he would have considered that the new virtual oligarchy of ownership encouraged conformity and produced dullness. A truce having been declared between the Register and the Times, he would have seen the bickering between the rest as trivial, mere ripples on the surface of a deep conformity.

An observer like Hammond would not have been deceived by the make-believe warfare with which the Register and the Times strove to entertain their readers. The papers still delighted to expose the gaffes of their rivals as they had done in Hammond's day, but they did so without verve and courage. How differently would Hammond have handled this example of the Times's slovenliness. Not for him the good humour with which the Register pointed out that a meeting of the Adelaide Philosophical Society, which gathered monthly to hear learned papers given by Adelaide's intellectuals, had in fact been cancelled, even though the Times had praised the speaker for the "masterly and comprehensive manner" in which he had spoken on "The Motions of Animals" and had regretted that the "attendance was limited".[29] Where Hammond would have used the occasion for a revision of the editor's previous blunders and a catalogue of his personal foibles, leading perhaps to a satire on his latest chicanery, the Register merely gave the item an ironic caption, HOW TO MAKE NEWS, coolly set out the evidence, and gently reproved the editor for some journalistic inaccuracy.

In the very occasional slanging matches that returned to South Australian journalism, tolerant good humour was never far away, even when the Register offered the Times a refurbished set of epithets

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[29]Ibid., 20-v-1854, II, iv.

taken from a Blackwood's review"

> . . . 1st, "an ineffaceable blockhead;" 2nd, "a singularly paltry critic;" 3rd, "a skulking creature;" 4th, "a cockatrice;" 5th, "a caitiff;" 6th, "a driveller;" 7th, "a cold toad;" 8th, "a contemptible little snake;" 9th, "a fool;" 10th, "a perfect galley slave;" 11th, "a thorough scavenger;" 12th, "a poor knave;" 13th, "a young whipper-snapper;" 14th, "a wretched curtailed messan;" 15th, "a puppy;" 16th, "a poor pitiful;" 17th, "a jackdaw;" 18th, "an absolute bungler;" 19th, "a chatterer;" 20th, "a billy-goat butting at a wall."[30]

The offer was made in so playful a manner that readers must have known that the battle of the newspapers was no more than a literary game, an impression Hammond and his rivals would have been at pains to conceal. Their indignation and outrage might have been no more genuine, but they would have felt that they owed their readers something better than verbal battledore. Hammond would have found it difficult to believe that Adelaide readers had grown so fastidious as to have lost their appetite for scandal and lively abuse. Certainly, he must have believed that the readers of 1852 were less stodgy than this, for he had himself attempted to adapt a new Melbourne Mercury for South Australian readers, offering to them the same kind of fare that had appeared in the old Adelaide weekly. The offer appears not to have been repeated, and so it may be that the newspaper reading class had lost interest in the mind of journalism foreshadowed in this advertisement:

> The MELBOURNE MERCURY;
> OR,
> Mount Alexander and South Australian Intelligencer.
>
> On SATURDAY, the 1st of May, will be PUBLISHED IN MELBOURNE, the first Number of the above Journal under the Editorship of
> MR W. E. HAMMOND.
> Reporters have been appointed at Mount Alexander and

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[30]Ibid., 31-v-1854, II, vi.

> Adelaide, to convey to the inhabitants of each place, THE SAYINGS AND DOINGS of their absent friends.
>
> THE BOWL OF PUNCH
>
> will be brewed as strong as ever, and a considerable proportion of its ingredients collected in South Australia. It will be found as usual bitter to hypocrisy, acid to cant and vice, but always with good spirits, and sweetened to the friends of
>
> RELIGIOUS, SOCIAL, AND POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE.[31]

Since nothing appears to have come of this scheme, it may be that Hammond had once again misjudged the temper of the times. It must have been apparent even in 1851 that suits for libel were being taken more seriously by the public. While trials still were regarded as public entertainments, and subscribers enjoyed reading about grown men behaving like children, juries had even then grown censorious, showing less willingness to recommend token damages.

The newspapers of 1853 and 1854 show, however, that readers had not become altogether indifferent to public quarrels. Controversy still lived, immoderate language was still employed. Editors however presented this material in a different fashion. Sometimes editorials would contain the kind of expression which had coloured so many of the memorable battles between "Johnny" Stephens, "Dismal Jemmy" and Hammond - phrases such as "deep-seated, ineradicable, unforgiving rancour", "ruthless toryism", "miserable, brutal, mob-trodden, tobacco-chewing, sling-drinking republicans; blundering fools indulging in idleness and beastly politics; and fit only to be classed with hangmen, or the cudgel-men of Donnybrook Fair".[32] In general, however, colonial journalism was now tame in sentiment and expressed "with such turmid [sic] verbosity that it turns out merely a magniloquent piece

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[31] Morning Chronicle, 14-vi-1852, I, v.

[32] Register, 14-ii-1854, III, i.

of milk and water".[33]

What had changed was the editor's willingness to become directly involved in local arguments. Instead of participating, so risking the loss of support of at least one of the parties concerned, the Register and to a lesser extent the Times simply allowed the disputants room to argue in print. By opening their columns to rancorous quarrels such as the long-standing feud between Robert Torrens and G. S. Kingston, by publishing the correspondence generated by the enquiry into Alexander Tolmer's administration of the Police Force, and by reporting in detail the rowdy public meetings which so often accompanied elections, the papers were able to establish a reputation for objectivity and detachment, yet still be able to titillate their readers with much the same kind of material which Hammond had used in the Mercury. Undignified bickering such as preceded the question of whether or not Mr Hare had promised to resign the seat of East Torrens was reproduced with Hansard-like accuracy, and with little risk of the paper being sullied in the process:

> Mr Reynolds - There is a certain courtesy due to the electors, and although his words do not convey contempt, Mr Hare's manner is contemptuous and unbecoming.
> Mr Hare (rudely) - Well, Sir, I do treat you with contempt.
> Mr Reynolds - The insult sits lightly on me, for I have not deserved it. I, however, feel a greater contempt for you, Mr Hare, . . .[34]

Such fair-minded scandal-mongering emphasises just how far the personality of the editor had receded in importance. When editorial comment could not be avoided, rarely did it now have the partisan force characteristic of say an indignant Stephens or an outraged

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[33]Morning Chronicle, 22-iii-1853, III, ii.

[34]Register, 28-i-1854, III, i.

Hammond. Rather, the new Register preferred the much safer method of irony, as when C. S. Hare decided to accept the dubious offer to succeed the late Mr Ashton as superintendent of convicts:

> . . . had the misguided people understood their representative's character better, they would have seen that his services were most disinterested, and that his only object in undertaking the superintendence of convicts - the only reward he sought - was that he might be the means of "reclaiming but one wanderer, or restoring one erring individual to society." But thus it is that in this wicked world good men's motives get cruelly misrepresented.[35]

Hammond, with his delightful sense of the ridiculous and his fondness for sarcasm, would probably have approved of this method in this case, but it would not have been the usual way in the outspoken days of 1851. Such an opportunity to ridicule the pretentious, to cry "humbug" and "jobbery", should not have been missed. And as for the Register's treatment of Mr Dashwood who had been so incautious as to describe Port Adelaide as a mudhole and who had compounded the offence by anonymously writing a letter of justification, he would have seen this as arrant cowardice:

> . . . The colonists will not submit to be insulted, and maligned, and injured at pleasure, by persons who are drawing their earnings from the public purse. And we most earnestly recommend Mr. Dashwood to write no more anonymous letters. They will only render his case more difficult and more desperate, and widen the difference that at present exists between himself and his friends.[36]

What has such christian disappointment got to do with lively journalism? When does restraint become timidity?

To show how much the colonial press had changed, it is only necessary to set side by side Hammond's valediction to the Legislative Council of 1851 and the Register's comments on the forthcoming

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[35]Ibid., 31-i-1854, II, v.

[36]Ibid., 11-i-1854, II, vi.

elections of 1854. "Look here, upon this picture":

> . . . Yesterday, happily for the South Australian Public, the Legislative Council gave its last kick, and expired unhonored, and certainly unregretted; but as a finishing stroke, passed a motion, at the instance of that exquisite Solon, Mr John Morphett, in favor of continuing the "State Grant in aid of Religion," which is likely to prove the "question of questions" during the forthcoming Elections. Major O'Halloran made a sham fight, asking for an adjournment which he knew would not be granted, and his Excellency having made a speech replete with bunkum, the Council adjourned. As a fitting wind up to the farce, a slavering address was presented to his Excellency, but, we are happy to add, that the only non-official signatures to it were those of Messrs O'Halloran and Morphett, of whose late career the least that is said [sic] will be soonest mended.[37]

"And on this":

> An election contest is at present going on in two important districts of the colony, and a writ will doubtless be issued in a day or two for a third district. In times of political quietude, and when no important leading question is agitating the public mind, and more particularly when our native Legislative fabric will shortly have to be reconstructed through means of a general election, we are not desirous of being the instruments of creating unnecessary excitement, or of stimulating hostile parties to unmeaning warfare. There is, however, at present, and indeed at all times, amongst those who are friendly to political progress, a necessity for watchfulness, for activity, for consistency. Political principles should be guarded with great vigilance, and every step acquired in the right direction should be supported and maintained.[38]

Though the political situations are not exactly parallel, they are sufficiently like to point up substantial differences in style and in temperature, the one impetuous and partisan, the other calm and judicious.

Within the space of two years, the Register had accommodated itself to a different cultural environment. Never far below the surface of most editorials is a tranquil self-satisfaction, an

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[37]Mercury, 22-ii-1851, p. 800, IV, iii.

[38]Register, 21-vi-1854, II, ii.

attitude underlying this editorial on the prospects for 1854:

> The year which has just closed has furnished perhaps more causes of congratulation to the colonists of South Australia, in a commercial and social point of view, than any which has preceded it. Nobody, who knew anything of the character of the country and of the population could entertain a moment's doubt of the ultimate prosperity of the province; but the drain of labour and of capital during the early part of 1852, through the discovery of the gold-fields in the neighbouring colony, led to very serious apprehensions as to the speedy advent of some calamitous monetary crisis . . . . Measures, which proved eminently successful, but to which we need not now refer, were adopted to avert the impending crisis; and through the skilful management of the Government, aided by the intelligence and fortitude of the colonists, a healthy reaction in the state of affairs soon became apparent. Things have progressed favourably ever since, and now prosperity and social order reign from one end of the land to the other.[39]

To truckle so blatantly to the Government, to flatter so obviously their readers' conceit and complacency, would have seemed to Stephens and Hammond a betrayal of an editor's duty, to lead and not to follow public opinion. As the editor of the Morning Chronicle said in his rather bitter 1853 swan-song,

> . . . Perhaps no journal we have ever seen possesses so many characteristics of the "servant of the public" as our contemporary the Register. It caters for them; it endeavours to please them; it fears to offend them. It gives them information, and allows them to draw their own deductions from it. If it has any political principles at all, it does not give them forth to its readers broadly, but shrouds them in a haze of negatives and palliatives; and though on many principles of political economy, it has not even the knowledge of a tyro, its active bustling manner of getting in the shipping news, and chronicling the amount of exports and imports, has won it the character of a first-rate commercial paper.
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> Undoubtedly, the Register does very little harm; but we would like the leading journal of the province to take higher ground than it now occupies; and as we arrange our mantle about us, that we may fall with dignity, we would fain see in the gentlemanly Register, that strength of purpose and those high principles which would prevent the Morning Chronicle from being missed or regretted.[40]

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[39]Ibid., 2-i-1854, III, i.

[40]Morning Chronicle, 22-iii-1853, III, i, ii.

(He dismissed the Adelaide Times as similar to the Register, but "far below [it] in many respects; it is inconsistent and personal, whereas the Register is too lukewarm to be the one, and too gentlemanly to be the other".[41] After Allen's departure, John Brown ensured that the resemblances were even more strongly marked.)

Lack of high principles would not have been the kind of criticism Hammond would have levelled at Adelaide's 1853 and 1854 newspapers. Much more germane would have been their uncritical stance, their unwillingness to engage in - to fabricate, if necessary - conflict and dissent, their too easy acceptance of individual pretensions. Newspapers still wrote about prominent colonists, but they saw them with too much kindliness. Where had the heroes and villains gone?

In some cases, they had, like Coppin, become permanent Victorians. Others like A. L. Elder had made enough money to return home. But there remained many who had been the dramatis personae of the pre-gold rush newspapers, but who were now allowed to play their roles unhissed. Some had of course left the centre of the colonial stage - literally so in the case of John Lazar who in 1854 was already an alderman, later to be mayor of the city of Adelaide; "Gwynny" was still prominent, busy in the courts building the reputation that was to bring him to the position of Chief Justice; J. H. Fisher had been lionised into inactivity; R. D. Hanson, one of the executors of John Stephens' journalistic estate, and author of some of the Register's later editorials, had become Advocate General; C. S Hare had become a public servant.

Though some of the players had retired or moved from the centre of the stage, at least one of the Mercury's villains had not changed

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[41] Ibid.

his characterization. William Giles continued to be as self-righteous an employer as he had been in Hammond's day. Busy as he was serving as a parliamentarian, he was still able to give evidence against

> two young women, respectively named Christina Kilgour and Mary Irvin [who had been charged] with leaving his service without giving a month's notice . . . . His family was in a state of total disorganisation from the conduct of his servants, and he was sure that unless such persons as the defendants were taught that they could be punished, a greater number of the families of the colony would be similarly disorganised.[42]

How Hammond would have delighted in such a news item. Yet it seems not to have attracted a single note of comment, not a reference to parsimonious upstarts, not an allusion to butlers and house-maids, certainly no Stephens-like championing of the under-dog. Unsaid "hear, hears" seem to surround the Register's account.

Emerging with increasing insistence is the newspaper's support of the establishment, and its growing sympathy for the views of wowsers and philistines. There is something plaintive and despairing in J. Y. T.'s complaint about the MORAL NUISANCE IN LIGHT SQUARE:

> It is about time that some steps were taken to abolish the most infamous nuisance at present polluting Adelaide. I allude to the houses with which the neighbourhood of Light-square is infested . . . . The residents of West-terrace and the adjacent parts have long been compelled to take a circuitous route on their ways to and from the various places of public worship, in order to avoid the profane and offensive language and conduct of Light-square . . . .[43]

But in AMICUS's account of the statistics of drinking in South Australia there is a note of authority, even though he probably still spoke only for a minority interest. The Temperance group had obviously gained ground since Hammond's day.

> Supposing we were all total abstainers (and on another occasion I shall be prepared to prove that we might safely be so - nay, more, ought to be so), nearly £650,000 wasted on

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[42]Register, 7-vi-1854, III, iii.

[43]Ibid., 12-vi-1854, III, iii.

> alcoholic drinks and tobacco, with at least £150,000 more for colonial beer and wine, in all £800,000, would have been saved in cash to the colony during the last year only; to say nothing of loss of time, health and energy, with sickness and its expenses, public crime, most of which arises from drunkenness, and the other costly fruits of a devotion, whether moderate or immoderate, to Bacchus . . . .
>
> What might not we have done in the cause of religion, and of philanthropy! How many churches and chapels, schools and libraries might we not have created![44]

Attitudes like these would not have been new, but tipplers like Andrew Murray and James Allen, and supporters of publicans like Hammond would have detected a new strength in opposition, a revitalised puritanism in middle class attitudes to the demon drink.

Epitomising much of the changed temper in Adelaide society is the weekly which nominally took the Mercury's place as official organ of the Licensed Victuallers' Society. In appearance, it was not unlike its predecessor, with the same sized sheet of four columns, much the same range of type founts, with a preponderance of advertisements slanted towards the hotel trade. But in content, and vivacity, how different! Where Hammond had pursued "very reverend sport", both literally and in his opposition to cant and humbug, the newly created South Australian Free Press pompously claimed to be "a Champion never out of mail,/ Ready to break a lance for truth with every crowding error".[45] This was a promise of earnest purpose which the paper kept only too well. Occasionally it offered material which Hammond would not have been ashamed to use, but in general factual news and commercial intelligence dominated the paper in the same way as it now dominated its rivals. Like them, the Free Press almost completely neglected the "literary magazine" function which the Mercury and its contemporaries had accepted. Neither poetry nor parodies nor stories

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[44]Ibid., 23-ii-1854, III, vi.

[45]South Australian Free Press, 29-x-1853, VI, iv.

nor sketches were used in any regular way to relieve the deserts of STATISTICAL MEMORANDA and AGRICULTURE, HORTICULTURE, AND THE FARM-YARD.

An exception is YOUR COMMISSIONER's parody of James Allen, Junior's book, Journal of an Experimental Trip by the LADY AUGUSTA, on the River Murray; predictable enough in its humour, but a rare glimpse of frivolity in a paper otherwise devoted to business and useful information. It takes as its theme a row up the River Torrens, and by inflation of language, makes ironical fun of the original journal and explorers' earnestness everywhere.

> The river off Point Magarey increases in volume; the current is so strong, and the stream of such a depth, that we were compelled to seek assistance from the settlers, who manfully got into the water and pushed behind. In the evening, we drew up alongside the bank as usual, and Mr. Plymouth Dock, one of our party, sang a song, written for the occasion by himself. I send you a copy which I was fortunately able to procure:-
>
> My boat is on the shore,
> And my bark is on the sea;
> The fire begins to roar,
> And the stoker's at his tea.
>
> My native hills are high,
> My native hills are green,
> Oh! could I to them fly,
> I'd kiss the happy scene.
>
> Oh, mighty Torrens, how
> Neglected is thy lot,
> On thee, my willing prow,
> I'd bend, and go to-- what?[46]

In a paper which carried no illustrations, almost no poetry, either original or select, little argument, trifles such as this assume an exaggerated significance. Much of the rest of the paper was completely predictable; the practical concerns of a practical community. It took little notice of the theatre or of musical performances. To race-

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[46]Ibid., 29-x-1853, VII, iii.

meetings it gave lifeless, mechanical coverage. Such a paper was too dull to live, even by Adelaide's prosy standards. It had the faults of its rivals, an entrenched suspicion of controversy, a reluctance to support local writing, a fastidious uninterest in scandal or personalities. What is worse, it outdid them in caution and seriousness. By disassociating itself from the concerns of the respectable at play and from the lower orders, it missed an opportunity to exploit the interest which had earlier sustained the Mercury. Its demise in April 1854, therefore, would have surprised few, and probably disappointed none.

There seem to have been no more attempts to supply the place left vacant by the Mercury. With the end of the Free Press and with James Allen's retirement, it could be said that Hammond's ghost was finally laid to rest. Though not much is known of Hammond's career after he left Adelaide, it appears that he tried to establish other Mercuries in Melbourne and Geelong and continued to practise the kind of journalism that had in Adelaide become obsolete. The rumour of his being poisoned in 1852[47] and his attempted suicide in 1868 may point to a general reaction against his kind of satirical humour. Yet put his paper against those which outlived it, and the stolidity of the new Adelaide press is thrown into sharp relief. With his loss, Adelaide was deprived not only of one of its liveliest editors, but one of its most effective social critics. Matching a decline in self-criticism, the Adelaide press began to calcify. It began to overvalue decorum, impartiality, and inoffensiveness, qualities which were to increase its sense of responsibility but also its weight. Adelaide had created the newspapers which it now deserved.

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[47]Morning Chronicle, 29-xi-1852, III, iii.

Chapter 7

POETRY AND THE PRESS

During the decade 1845 to 1854, Adelaide's journals changed in character, moving from the turbulence of personal journalism to the calmer waters of a countrified, somewhat complacent press. Yet despite substantial changes in style and temper, they continued to carry features which had altered little. In typography, layout, and in many evergreen topics, they were at the end of the decade much the same as they had been in the beginning. Each newspaper was of course distinctive, as one would expect when editors still enjoyed "ample room and verge enough" to win readers as they thought best. But in content, there was considerable uniformity. Local news and commercial intelligence were of course essential to survival, but editors were also united in their support of light literature; pearls of epigrammatic wisdom, belles-lettres, jokes, descriptive sketches, less often poems. In their acceptance of an explicitly literary function, Adelaide's editors followed a policy which was to survive the gold rushes.

Most issues of most papers show plainly just how seriously editors undertook the guidance of their subscribers' literary tastes. Though it would have been suicidal to neglect those features which made newspapers valuable to business and community interests, most editors were also prepared to sponsor various forms of imaginative writing, particularly if it was correct in tone and sentiment. Unlike most of their modern counterparts, they considered it their bounden duty to make their newspapers serve literary as well as utilitarian ends, to leaven factual information and "relevant" discussion with

respectable literature.

Of all the complimentary epithets used by Adelaide's journalists, "respectable" was perhaps the most significant, representing for many the accolade of their approbation. It was variously applied; to manners, to dress, to behaviour, to opinions, as well as to literature. For many a modern reader, respectability is not an endearing quality, especially when given an exaggerated emphasis. But to appreciate the colonial temper, the term must be given its contemporary value. To question its meaning is of course sensible. Rigid, undeclared standards of propriety invite sceptical examination. Even at the time, voices such as Dickens's and Mayhew's, and somewhat later Ruskin's and Arnold's were heard, accusing the self-consciously respectable of double standards, of callous materialism, of Pecksniffian humbug. Similar criticisms have been echoed so often that for some of today's readers they have been axioms of social criticism: Victorian respectability cloaked licentiousness and violence, Mr Bounderby and Mrs Grundy were archetypal figures, everywhere a brutal reality underlay a facade of superficial social advancement, middle class prosperity was derived from economic slavery, Victorian religion was cant set to music; and so on.

The contempt expressed by writers like Strachey is understandable, but the period was not unaware of its own shortcomings. Nor should an entire social class be condemned for the pretensions of a few of its members. There are too many examples of Victorian men and women who were clearly not hypocrites, who were charitable for honourable reasons, whose lives testify to their firm convictions and to their philanthropy. There is, nevertheless, some evidence in colonial newspapers to give weight to the often expressed opinion that the Victorian middle classes were particularly given to airs and graces, to false

propriety and real pretension. In the colonies especially, where self-criticism tended to be a late and not very welcome arrival, humbug and respectability were inextricably tangled.

It is in the newspapers, of course, that general opinions and common attitudes find readiest expression, and it is for this reason that they provide such convincing evidence of the Victorian middle classes' tendency to idealize their lives and either by omission or exaggeration, to misrepresent the realities of their behaviour. Newspapers like the Mercury could claim that its business was to expose the humbug of those who boasted of their respectability. Conservative papers like the Observer could promise not to "shrink from exposing the misrepresentations of the press, or the malversations of individuals",[1] and "the Thunderer of the South", George Stevenson, could threaten Jacks in office with public disgrace. Yet in reality they fostered the hypocrisy they claimed to attack. For all their threats to tell the truth and shame the devil, they consistently pandered to their readers' desire to pretend that Adelaide was a purer version of respectable middle-class life "at home". Editors openly claimed that they spoke for colonists of the "better sort", that their newspapers were shaped to meet the needs of those who

> demand to know something more than the price of grain, or the doings of their police, . . . [those who] can appreciate the charms of Literature and the value of Science , . . . [those who] have now leisure to enjoy those mental luxuries which in by gone days they sighed for in vain.[2]

Underpinning much of the journalism of the day is the assumption that all colonial behaviour is to be measured against the conventional standards of the English middle classes. Acknowledgements of the fact

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[1]Advertisement, South Australian Magazine, II (October 1842-November 1843), p. 3.

[2]Advertisement for the Austral Examiner; Mercury, 22-ii-1851, p. 802, VI, iv.

that Adelaide deviated from the proprieties of an English provincial town were rare.

The motives of colonial readers can only be guessed at, but there can be little doubt that colonial editors over-emphasised the respectable aspects of colonial life and minimised its more vulgar elements. This is very understandable in a colony such as South Australia, for it was young, with a future less than secure, and with a reputation for respectability that had to be maintained if the money of investors at home was to be won. Although the Adelphi planners had given the colony a good start, its continued prosperity depended upon retaining the confidence of pious men like George Fife Angas and of maintaining the optimism of those who were already colonists or who could be persuaded to become "new arrivals". Since Adelaide's newspapers were sometimes read in England as well as in the other colonies, it was imperative that editors should frequently reassure their readers that life in Adelaide was equal in respectability to life in provincial England, or show that colonists of "the right sort" had access to information about trade, government, politics, important people, respectable recreations, which was not significantly different in quality from that available to overseas readers. It would have been an embarrassment to the Colonisation Commission if newspapers had given more than fleeting glimpses of some unpleasantnesses that must have been inescapable elements in colonial life; the dust, the heat, offal rotting in the summer sun, pigs running loose in Adelaide's rutted streets, the taint of effluvia emanating from the Torrens,[3] not to mention those Victorian commonplaces, drunkenness, prostitution, and

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[3]Letters to the Editor by PHILANTHROPIST, South Australian, 10-iii-1848, III, v., and by MEDICUS, Ibid., 11-iv-1848, III, i, ii.

violence. Just as impolitic would have been objective, detailed accounts of the wilderness which lay beyond the Maid and Magpie. By all means describe this unfamiliar landscape in conventionalised terms. Emphasise the picturesque or the quaint (as several writers did when recounting their travels to the German villages on the banks of the Torrens) but by no means draw attention to the country's uncomfortable vastness or its disconcerting strangeness lest the timorous or the equivocal be prematurely discouraged.

In any case, colonial journalists were not much interested in the landscape as such. They were essentially town dwellers, writing principally for those who were their near neighbours. Indirectly, yet sometimes consciously, they created a picture of colonial life which was essentially urban, with the resemblances to middle class life at home strongly highlighted. Where conventional journalistic practice ends and hypocrisy begins is of course impossible to decide but it is true to say that in most South Australian papers the uniquely Australian elements were underplayed - unless they could be shown to be superior or interestingly different from things in Britain. Setting aside the Law Court columns - which in any case were written more to amuse or titillate the unarraigned than to show the obverse side to colonial respectability - and "Local Intelligence" with its morbid pre-occupation with "melancholy occurrences", coroners' inquests and "serious accidents", a high proportion of the remaining local news was devoted to accounts of the ways in which the genteel town-dweller spent his hard won leisure. Hence in many issues of the Register, the South Australian, the Adelaide Times, the Observer, the Mining Journal and especially the Mercury we find accounts of recitals of the Adelaide Choral Society, the Deutsche Liedertafel, and other amateur groups of musicians, of theatrical performances, both amateur and professional,

of circuses, displays of fireworks, equestrian exercises, of conversaziones at the Mechanics' Institute, of improving lectures, both religious and secular (with or without lantern slides). Collectively the newspapers focus upon a narrow social class pursuing middle class culture with whalebone determination. And since the "Love of Literature" was one of the attributes of the common reader, it is not surprising that in many newspapers there was a "poetry corner".

This small but recurrent aspect of colonial journalism shows yet another way in which Adelaide's editors tried to give their readers the same kind of fare that they would have found in the prestigious papers issuing from the English middle-class press. To translate this aspect of British journalism to the antipodes may be regarded as unthinking mimicry. On the other hand, it could be seen as an expression of colonial idealism, a demonstration of confidence in the colony's future. Though colonists would have known that their town was raw and unfinished, more a frontier town like San Francisco than a genteel place like Bath, they clearly believed that they could do no better than to imitate an English provincial centre where the refinements of Victorian life could flourish, where respectable middle class values could be preserved. Although newspapers portray Adelaide society only partially, their emphasis upon genteel recreations and rational entertainments is certainly explicable, perhaps even admirable.

This is not to say that Adelaide's middling classes were in fact uniformly and consistently genteel, or were too fastidious to be concerned with wealth and influence. If they were not quite the crass materialists Robert Lowe thought them[4] neither were they so impractical

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[4]"The man in a colony is a money-making creature". Quoted by G. M. Young, (ed.), Early Victorian England, II (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 380.

as to believe that literature, painting, music, the civilised arts in general, were more than graceful refinements, appropriate enough in a man who wished to be thought a gentleman, but of much less importance than a knowledge of agriculture, or mineralogy, or surveying, or any other of the "useful" arts. Accordingly, although colonial newspapers contained some "cultural" material their bias was essentially utilitarian. Poems and reviews and prose sketches were all very well in their way but the real business of colonial newspapers was to keep their readers supplied with practical information and relevant opinions.

That poetry was however a respectable interest is confirmed by the frequency with which it was quoted, both in formal writing, and in speeches and addresses. In a sense, it too was useful; to catch the eye in advertisements, to give tone and variety to extended prose, to give warrant to a speaker's claim to gentility. But it was valued for more than its usefulness. Newspapers could not afford to publish poetry just for appearances' sake nor would gentlemen have turned their amateur hands to writing it, if it had not given them pleasure. A local naturalist, R. P. Wilson, occasionally expressed his less scientific thoughts in verse; a colonist of means, H. H. Blackham, indeed, wrote so much verse as to have achieved some kind of local celebrity as a poet. And there must have been readers like Clara Morison and Mr Reginald (although C. H. Spence made her heroine and hero superior in culture to the generality of colonials), who actually enjoyed poetry for its own sake. It was presumably for such people that colonial editors included in some issues poems either borrowed from overseas books and periodicals or from other Australian newspapers or verse written by local "litterateurs".

Though most South Australian newspapers did at some time print

poetry, only in the South Australian and the Mercury did it appear with any kind of regularity. Andrew Murray was especially conscientious. In many issues of the South Australian, from its beginnings in 1844 until its demise in 1851, he reserved part of the first column of page four for poetry, either original or select. Hammond was much less predictable, but he too gave to verse a good deal of prominence. With these two exceptions, South Australian editors gave only sporadic recognition to verse, preferring prose to poetry, practicalities to fancies. Indeed one might suspect that it was used as fill-in material and then only because it used less type.

Naturally enough, in a colony still grappling with day-to-day problems of survival, newspapers had obviously to emphasise material of interest to the majority of readers. An interest in poetry had to be ranked below more pressing matters such as migration and labour shortages, land sales and mining discoveries, statistics and inventions (sometimes leavened by controversy such as J. W. Bull's indignant claim that Ridley's Reaping Machine was his idea[5]). Poetry never occupied a very large or secure place in many local newspapers, even when there was a scarcity of more obviously newsworthy material. In the Register it played a very minor role indeed. While John Stephens was editor, he apparently felt little compulsion to use verse even to pad out his columns. When there was a shortage of geniune news, his usual recourse was to generate it, usually by carefully outrageous attacks upon his rival editors, occasionally by castigating those who had offended his rather puritanical notions of propriety. If these expedients failed, then he turned to the wide range of

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[5]John W. Bull, Early Experiences of Life in South Australia, and an extended Colonial History (2d ed.; Adelaide: E. S. Wigg & Son, and Sampson Low, London, 1884).

periodicals and books that he had access to. Even when reduced to this extremity he showed a strong preference for prose over poetry.

Much the same could be said of George Stevenson, at this time (1845-1852), editor of the Gazette and Mining Journal. Never very scrupulous in his prose borrowing, he was conscientious in his avoidance of poetry. James Allen also doubted whether poetry was good business in a newspaper, though he had strongly recommended prospective contributors to the South Australian Magazine to create ". . . that light and airy reading, which beguiles the imagination, and informs the understanding, without corrupting the morals, or vitiating the taste".[6] His practice as editor of a literary magazine differed considerably from his practice as editor of a newspaper. Only rarely did he make room in his columns for overseas and local poets, although during his short term of office on the periodical he had published not only Blackham and "Ianthe" but had devoted several pages to Henry Parkes' book of poems Stolen Moments.[7]

Hammond's Mercury was so different in so many respects from the other South Australian newspapers that it will be considered separately in later chapters. Murray's South Australian, on the other hand, was so conformist (except for the emphasis he gave to poetry) that he scarcely merits special critical attention. In most respects, he was quite unexceptional; too discreet, too eager to conciliate his readers, too phlegmatic in his responses to colonial life; qualities which make for dull articles and editorials but which may in part explain his fondness for poetry which was morally correct, serious in intention,

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[6]South Australian Magazine, I (July 1841), p. 3.

[7]Ibid., II (June 1843), pp. 284-287.

conventional in technique. Unlike his less sentimental contemporaries, he alone gave regular accommodation to the kind of poetry that E. W. Cole of the Melbourne Book Arcade was to popularise in the 1890s:

> A grand idea which produces noble resolves, or a humane recital which brings tears of sympathy into the eyes, although given in simple, or even in ungrammatical language, is of far greater value to mankind than volumes, or dozens of volumes, of exquisite obscurities or "sublime nonsense."[8]

Not that poetry was necessarily of passionate concern to Murray. His interest in verse was never so intense as to cause him to neglect items of local news, no matter however trivial, or to curtail advertisements. As he was in policy, so he was in poetry; prudent. Poetry of the right sort was safe, inferior it is true to reports of the Legislative Council, but better than the kind of controversy which animated his rivals. When faced with a choice between an article such as Thomas Burr's "Remarks on the Geology and Mineralogy of South Australia"[9] and his usual poetry column, he very promptly dropped the latter. In fact, between February and April 1848, apart from a pseudo-Irish ballad by BOSTONIAN addressed to Edward John Eyre,[10] his paper carried no poetry at all, fancy giving way to accounts of Kennedy's discovery of the Victoria River, to Supreme Court suits, and to borrowings in prose.

To give Murray his due, however, such gaps were comparatively rare. For much of the life of the South Australian, poems appeared regularly, and from those selected can be inferred what Murray thought would be

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[8]Quoted by Michael R. Turner (ed.), Parlour Poetry, A Hundred and One Improving Gems (London: Michael Joseph Ltd., 1967), p. 17.

[9]South Australian, 15-v-1846, III, iii, iv, v, IV, i, ii, iii, iv, v.

[10]Ibid., 4-iv-1848, III, ii.

acceptable to the majority of his readers. Though, as will be seen, there was considerable variety in form and theme, most of the poems he printed were uniformly inoffensive. Not for Murray splendid rhetoric or "inspired nonsense". As a business man, he should please if he could or avoid offence if he couldn't. Occasionally, he would venture a frivolity or two from Punch or a bathetic Australian poem such as "The Squatter's Perplexity" from the Sydney Morning Herald:

> How long shall I sigh, and
> How long shall I groan?
> How long shall I lie in
> My slab hut alone?
> With station unsocial, and
> Tenure uncertain -
> Without e'er a table-cloth
> Carpet, or curtain;
> .....[11]

These he usually left to wander captionless over the first three pages. It was on page four, under several captions, that he placed what might be called Scrap Book Poetry, poetry that was correct in sentiment, poetry that would not in Mr Podsnap's words, bring a blush into the cheek of a young person. Here it was that the most uplifting poetry came to rest. Murray seems to have taken pains to categorize accurately the poetry which appeared there. If the poems were borrowed, they were labelled as "Select Poetry"; if they were locally written, they were described as "Original", a particularly generous description in many cases. Only occasionally did he label them simply as "Poetry". Once he employed "Ancient Poetry" to distinguish a "sweet old ballad, written in the reign of Elizabeth, [printed] at the request of a literary friend, who has been unable to procure a copy"[12] but in

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[11]Ibid., 12-ix-1845, I, v.

[12]Ibid., 13-iv-1847, IV, v.

general his selections were either Original or Select. On page four such captions guaranteed that the verse to follow would be respectable in theme, and orthodox in language.

Elsewhere, Murray was prepared to be rather more adventurous. In 1848, for example, TYRO and FOGGY DEW[13] waged a long verse battle on the question of a celibate clergy. The campaign was fought in a variety of locations, sometimes even on page four, but never in the first column. Slanging matches such as these had no place in respectability corner.

> "Tyro", you have the talent of a skunk;
> And all a skunk's deficiencies - that's flat:
> From every point in question you have slunk,
> Your little frozen heart going pit-a-pat;
> And, safely, from your dead tree's hollow trunk,
> You rage, scarce knowing where it would be at:
> At random, you discharge your dirty squib
> Against a man, because he has no rib.
> .....[14]

Serious poetry, even that coming from America, Longfellow's "Preludes to the Voices of Night", Cullen Bryant's "Evening", Mrs Sigourney's "The Western Emigrant" were allowed to enter, though Murray was at pains to label them "American Poetry". It was almost as if the editor was exercising his usual caution by qualifying his acceptance. Seriousness justified their place, but the caption was a reminder that their gentility might not withstand close examination. Apart from this reservation, however, Murray did not discriminate against American poems. Providing they belonged to the order of sober verse, they were welcome.

It is this uniformity of tone, this emphasis on verse which was

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[13]One wonders what irreverent quirk led this versifier to choose such a sobriquet and what innocence prevented Murray from playing the censor. Perhaps, its tune was better known than its suggestive words?

[14]Ibid., 18-iv-1848, III, ii.

decorous in diction and gentlemanly in sentiment, that unifies much of the verse appearing on the last page. Though Murray took poems from sources as varied as Protestant Thoughts in Rhyme, G. S. Smythe's Historic Fancies, magazines such as Tait's, Hood's and Blackwood's, the Christian Mother's and the Drawing Room, from journals as disparate as the United States Gazette, Punch, the Morning Post, the Glasgow Citizen, the Liverpool Albion, even an on-board newspaper, the Neptune Herald, those poems which were located here bore strong tonal resemblances to each other. Even when South Australian writers took up their pens at the insistence of friends, poems which Murray singled out for distinction were no less earnest than those borrowed from overseas publications. Elsewhere he was prepared to be tolerant, as he was with a page one poem, "The Bushman".

> . . . Though not first-rate poetry [it was] very grateful, we understand, to the feelings of the settlers. It was sung a few months ago, with unbounded applause, at a three-days' pic-nic, attended by about forty ladies and gentlemen, the elite of one of the southern districts.[15]

He did not seem to care whether the poems were old or new. Providing there was no hint of indecorum or humour, they were acceptable, even old poems like "The Distracted Puritan", "Lilliburlero" and "Jemmy Dawson". How else is the relegation of Hood's "The Bridge of Sighs"[16] to the first page to be explained, and the elevation to page four of PYLADES' sonnet "Addressed to One who Lately Subscribed Himself 'A lover of mankind'"?

> Such numbers style themselves; but what is love?
> When manifested, how evinced by those
> Who feels [sic] its warmth, and in whose heat it glows?

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[15]Ibid., 18-vii-1845, I, v.

[16]Ibid., 7-x-1845, I, iv.

> For me, no sign of it doth ever prove
> Its sweet existence as I lonely rove
> Along the world's highway, and anxious cast
> Inquiring looks on those who hurry past -
> Looks that the tenderest sympathy would move.
> I hear no answer to the words that speak
> From out my heart of hearts, requiring one
> To love beyond all others, one alone
> Of all men loving me. In vain I seek
> The treasure. Will it e'er be mine to own?
> Will ever light so gladsome on me break?[17]

No man of letters could be blind to their respective qualities, but then dullness is no crime, and suicide is.

Yet if he jealously guarded this part of his paper for a particular kind of poetry, he tried to publish a good deal of local verse elsewhere. Occasionally, he rejected a contribution, usually with tact, but he seems not to have been difficult to please. His reasons for accepting some poems seem scarcely more literary than Dickens's;

> . . . such as having been to school with the writer's husband's brother-in-law, or having lent an alpenstock in Switzerland to the writer's wife's nephew, when that interesting stranger had broken his own.[18]

It would appear that he wished not to offend and so published most of whatever poems were offered him. The only kind of criticism such a policy allowed him was to deny them a position in the Original Poetry column; evaluation by location as it were.

The poetry of E. D. A. (presumably E. D. Andrews, sometime editor of the Odd Fellows' Magazine and for a short time in 1852, editor of the Register) being both copious and distinctly uneven illustrates something of Murray's way of dealing with locally written verse. A dearth of local poetry, respect for an "old colonist" and a colleague might account for his publishing E. D. A.'s "A Song for the

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[17]Ibid., 9-i-1846, IV, iv.

[18]Charles Dickens, Miscellaneous Papers, Centennial Edition, I (Geneva: Edito-Service S.A., c. 1970), p. 56.

Sturt Dinner", but surely tolerance has its limits. Elephantine compliments could be forgiven but what of this unconscious disparagement of the company's fertility?

> He's gone through many a peril,
> And has now a deathless name;
> Though he's found the country sterile,
> Yet he'll find us still the same.[19]

And what of the ambiguity of "he has been a bold bushranger"[20] and of the final verse:

> Then now we'll bid him welcome,
> While our hearts will beat amain,
> And as he's safe returned home,
> He'd better not leave again.[21]

Only charity and the informality of the occasion justifies his publishing it at all, let alone putting it on page four, though not, it is true, in the first column. Literary judgment seems not to have played a part in his placement of E. D. A.'s poem, "On the Discovery of the Burra Burra, or 'Monster Mine'" - though the rhyming was eccentric enough to account for its being categorised as Original. The diction and the thought most certainly were not. Whatever interest the poem has is essentially historical. In the first stanza it becomes apparent that the Australian experience would test fully the ingenuity of poets. How E. D. A. must have wished that the conventionally named Princess Royal mine had succeeded and the uncouth Burra Burra had failed. Elsewhere he had essayed some byronic rhymes ("excitement"/ "quite bent"; "copper"/ "stop her") but his imagination capitulated when he had to find a rhyme for "Burra":

> Australians are now in a state of excitement,
> And I see each breast with an inward burra;

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[19] South Australian, 17-ii-1846, IV, iv.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

Ever'y [sic] one whom I meet seems determin'd and quite bent
On buying up shares in the Burra Burra.[22]

That not all colonial versifiers were as resourceless can be shown by considering a poem on a similar theme by "Timothy Short", the nom de plume of Nathaniel Hailes when in satiric vein. Though his puns, carefully italicised, owe much to poems like Hood's "Ben Bolt", the poem as a whole has an insouciance and facility that show that some colonial pretensions to literary ability were not unfounded. For instance -

Adelaide friends! I understand
In clubs you are combining
Engaging all in mining, and
A few in undermining.

And if you add thus, day by day,
To mineral combiners,
You shortly will exhibit a
Majority of miners!

So you have placed in sure arrest,
And bound in survey-chains,
That MONSTER with the callous breast -
The cold and copper veins!

'Tis said that with contending gold
You won the monstrous section,
Struggling - as we have done of old -
At some hard-fought election.

.....

When English Nobs returned their "own,"
Though borough mongers thorough
No contest knew, as you have known
For your unpeopled Burra.

Iron has pierced our souls; ne'er mind!
Fortune leads on, and stop her
Shall none; our sons shall ever find
Their pudding in the copper.

.....[23]

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[22]Ibid., 30-i-1846, IV, iv.

[23]Ibid., 24-x-1845, III, v.

And so on, through ten more verses, full of puns on "sinking", "shafts", "wheals", (the Cornish word for "mines"), "lodes", "mettlesome", concluding with a plea for a job:

> So, if you have in your new field
> Aught in the clerkly line,
> Affording but a mod'rate yield
> Be kind - and made it mine![24]

Such levity meant of course demotion to page three, even though in technique and humour, it is clearly superior to E. D. A.'s attempt. If their respective placements reflect Murray's opinion of their worth, then it would appear that his moral standards were rather more steady than his critical. The Victorian age has been described with some truth as the golden age of comic verse. In South Australia, however, humour ranked much lower than poems of earnest purpose, no matter how tired their theme or how flaccid their rhythms. Most were patriotic or sentimental or both, revealing an editorial taste rather more cuprous than golden. Frivolities such as parodies and acrostics were not uncommon elsewhere in his paper, but column one, page four he made sacred to the solemn muse, the chaste receptacle for poetry with airs. Not only did such poetry occupy a regular position but it also outweighed all other kinds of verse. The tireless E. D. A.'s 1846 burst of poetic frenzy shows plainly what Murray thought to be true poetry, and so by extension what many of his readers believed were the parnassian heights. E. D. A., though never quite a McGonagall, had no mean gift for matching mundane themes with prosy diction.

> Some were dark - some were fair - with a dignified air
> Moved swift through each measure the stately and tall;
> While some little fairies, like so many Peris,
> Performed "Payne's Last Waltz" at our Governor's ball.[25]

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[24]Ibid.

[25]Ibid., 2-vi-1846, IV, i.

And when he was roused to righteous indignation, the cliches thickened and the metre struggled:

> Discord and strife in South Australia reign,
> And vile dissension rages near and far;
> Those who, as brethren, crossed the azure main,
> Now, alas, foemen, wage sectarian war.[26]

A little more interesting was his lengthy poem, "The City of the Plain",[27] despite its cliches and laboured puns. In the first stanza for instance he dwelt upon the extremities of the Australian climate, a trite enough observation, but at least an attempt to see the landscape as it was:

> There is a modern settlement on South Australia's shores,
> Where the summer's dust is borne in clouds; and when the winter's rain
> Descends, at length, with dreaded force, it down in torrents pours,
> Threatening oft to flood or deluge this City of the Plain.[28]

In the second stanza, in a laboured parenthesis, he gave birth to a smirking compliment to the ladies:

> (I hope its lovely damsels, whether Martha, Jane or Kitty,
> Will not regard this verse with an air of cold disdain:
> That beholding all their graces, and their faces, fair and pretty,
> I have ventured thus to name it, the City of the Plain.)[29]

The poem's imperfections are obvious enough, but it holds some interest for the modern reader, notably its imperfect assimilation of a traditional rhetoric ("Ere the sun illumes the heavens, amid the shadows dark,/ The early riser oft discerns a heavy laden wain,") into a local register, ("With pile on pile of gum-wood, she-oak, and stringy-bark"). As an expression of a fresh response to a novel stimulus, the verse is unskilful and banal. On its technical merits, it should not have

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[26]Ibid., 21-vii-1846, IV, i.

[27]Ibid., 16-vi-1846, IV, i.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Ibid.

been published at all, let alone be given page four status. Murray might, however, have considered that its local theme outweighed all purely literary considerations. With poems like D. G.'s "South Australian Lyrics", he was on much firmer ground. Although the title promised some originality, the poems themselves were even more derivative than E. D. A.'s, and more regular in sentiment and in metre:

> In one of those sequestered dells,
> Where Nature's choicest beauty dwells,
> I idly strayed:
>
> Australia's sun shone overhead,
> The ground beneath with flowers was spread,
> In pride arrayed.
>
> The pure air and the glowing sky,
> Filled all my mind with ecstasy,
> And warmth like theirs;
>
> Yet, when my eyes were turned to look
> Upon the sparkling, rippling brook,
> They filled with tears.
>
> Wild Caledonia's mountain scenes,
> Her cataracts, and deep ravines,
> Rushed to my mind;
>
> .....[30]

A poem like this, and its companions,[31] must have satisfied most of Murray's criteria. It was undoubtedly serious, it was regular in rhythm, it was locally written, had a nominally local theme, some nostalgia, and later, a "female form, surpassing sweet".[32]

Giving weight to the suspicion that he put "poetry" on page four, and "verse" elsewhere, is his treatment of Nathaniel Hailes's work. As "Timothy Short", Hailes was usually located on page three, but when

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[30]Ibid., 22-vii-1845, IV, i.

[31]Ibid., 23-ix-1845, IV, i., 30-ix-1845, I, iv.

[32]Ibid., 22-vii-1845, IV, i.

he used his own name and wrote as seriously as he could, he sometimes soared into page four, as with his poem, "The South Australian Peasant to his Mistress in England".[33] Hailes's own practice of course encouraged this discrimination. It was as if his nom de plume was a tacit apology for frivolity, as if he undervalued his light verse and shared Murray's preference for poetry which was derivative and dealt with safe subjects such as, in this case, the separation of lovers. Hailes's humour was irrepressible, or so one would have anticipated in a poem whose title so strongly invites parody. But, no. The poem as a whole is quite straight-faced:

I.
Come away from your far native hill, love,
  Nor be stayed by distrust of the seas;
For affection can stormy waves still, love,
  And diminish the gale to a breeze.
I have built a snug cottage for you, love,
  Where gold wattle-trees perfume the plain;
Beneath heaven's [sic] soft sunny and blue, love,
  That smile upon fruit-trees and grain.

II.
Sheep I tend - twenty score of them mine - love;
  Here man's labour for comfort is sold;
Round us blossom peach, orange, and vine, love,
  And our soil contains riches untold.
Squalid beggars would here be a show, love,
  For starvation's unknown to this land;
Yet no Union, believe me, we know, love,
  Save the union of heart and of hand.

III.
Come away from your far native land, love,
  For you promised my wife you would be;
And, until the sweet vow you fulfil, love,
  Pleasure's cup is unplenished for me.
Soothing labour, we'll laugh and we'll sing, love,
  From the first to the last of the year -
I had tutored a bird of bright wing, love,
  To exclaim, "Would that Lucy were near!"[34]

His middle class antipathy to Unionism is to be expected, but surely

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[33]Ibid., 23-xii-1845, IV, iv.

[34]Ibid.

not the final Wordsworthian bleat! There is of course something schizophrenic in many aspects of Victorian life. Hailes's combination of genuine humour and high seriousness is certainly not unprecedented.

Poetry like this appeared often in the South Australian. G. F. A. sounded similar notes in his poems on "Home" and "The Stormy Petrel", the latter beginning with a variation on Hailes's "Bird of bright wing" phrase:

> Bird of untiring wing,
> Whence art thou wandering?
> Has the broad blue sea
> A home for thee
> On its bosom of murmuring waters?[35]

Like so many other colonial poets, G. F. A. seldom strayed far from the language of romantic meditations or the diction of Augustan pastorals but in his treatment of the hackneyed theme of homesickness, he gave a glimpse of unobtrusive excitement, even adventurousness. "Home" does inevitably harp on familiar nostalgic strings; an idealised English country-side with "many a white-washed cottage home/ Beside my native stream", with a "songster . . . in the grove that bears/ His green and mossy nest;" with melancholy allusions to the woods, and summer flowers, and "the depth of the hazel glen" and "the thrilling joys of Home". But more strongly sounded is the restlessness and energy that characterised so many seemingly staid colonists. Putting aside the Byronic flourish of "I long to glide on the stormy wave/ Of the wild and faithless sea", beneath the cliches lie genuine vigour and confidence. Only until the challenge of "far off lands" has been answered will he know "and not till then/ The thrilling joys of Home!"[36] As Brian Elliott has rightly said, "Much verse was written

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[35]Ibid., 13-vi-1845, III, iv. The poet may be George French Angas whose book of sketches and water colours had appeared at much the same time.

[36]Ibid., 13-vi-1845, III, iv.

with a view to expressing proper 'establishment' attitudes",[37] but occasionally even conventional verse reveals qualities which explain why these gentlemen are ten thousand miles away from home.

Most of the poetry published in the South Australian betrayed little of the uniquely colonial temper. Whether it was original or select, it seldom wanders far from what convention had decided were the boundaries of respectability. A favourite theme was the death of children, not real death by disease or starvation or accident, but picturesque death, death as an extension of restful sleep. David Lester Richardson's "Stanzas to my Child"[38] typifies the Victorian tendency to sentimentalise death. His "The Final Toast" was also a favourite, and was much sung at bibulous lodge dinners, testimony to the ambivalence of colonial attitudes:

> The Masons' social brotherhood, around the festive board,
> Reveal a wealth more precious far than selfish misers' hoard;
> They freely share the priceless stores that generous hearts contain-
> "Happy to meet - sorry to part - happy to meet again."[39]

Like Academy story-pictures, there were poems with sentimental titles like "On the Death of an Infant", "To a Sleeping Child", "The Bereaved", "The Mother's Watching", "A Beloved Youth", "On the Death of a Young Lady". A poem which asks, "Shall we grieve that thou art called away/ To a world more fair and bright?"[40] could have only one honest reply, but Christianity and respectability demanded that real grief be kept to one's self and out of public literature.

Just as stylised was respectability's treatment of adult death. With the lower orders, a poet could attempt pathos ("a printer, weary

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[37]Brian Elliott, The Landscape of Australian Poetry (Melbourne: F. W. Cheshire, 1967), p. 30.

[38]South Australian, 24-i-1845, IV, i.

[39]Ibid., 21-i-1845, IV, iv.

[40]Ibid., 16-ix-1845, IV, i.

and wan,"[41]); with historical figures, righteous indignation:

> Who fears to speak of Ninety-Eight?
> Who blushes at the name?
> When cowards mock the patriots' fate,
> Who hangs his head for shame?[42]

But in general, colonials apparently required that poetry should make death the pretext for a sermon or a stimulus to sentimentality. Overt demands for pity were quite in order. "Weep not for me, when life is o'er;/ Let not one tear be shed"[43] parallels Hood's call for the reader to pity "One more unfortunate/ Weary of breath,/ Rarely unfortunate/ Gone to her death." The feelings which such poems appeal to are likely to be superficial and limited, unlike the great elegies which refuse to be contained, which produce unexpected resonances in the reader's consciousness.

Much more lively must have been the colonists' response to poems dealing with virtue undone. Death was usually a safe topic, but "the recent seduction of a beautiful girl by Capt. Cockburn of the 11th regiment"[44] trembled on the edge of dubiety. The obvious response was righteous indignation, but it was probably pleasantly complicated by vicarious salacity and the consciousness of moral superiority. The poem consists of several agonising verses during which "the lost one" appealed to her virtuous and implacable mother.

> Oh! lift me up - desert me not - my mother, dear and mild -
> My soul is stain'd, my heart is rent - but still I am thy child;
> How vain are words, how vain are tears, for what, alas! is done;
> The trampled lily ne'er may raise its pale face to the sun.
>
> .....

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[41]Ibid., 22-iv-1845, IV, ii.

[42]Ibid., 21-xi-1845, IV, iii.

[43]Ibid., 28-iv-1846, IV, i.

[44]Ibid., 29-v-1846, IV, i.

> Oh! had I made one effort then! but fast we fled away,
> And folded in his clasping arms a victim lost I lay;
> What more befel [sic] I hardly know - a dreadful dream appears
> Upon this girlish head to pour the miseries of years.[45]

The "mother's denunciation of the seducer" was even more dreadful:

> Thou hast polluted that which was most pure -
> Thou hast cast down that which was most secure -
> Thou hast destroy'd my child, and oh! be sure,
> Remorse shall follow thee!
>
> .....
>
> Our social frame, do'st think, was ever made,
> That thou and thine should scorn the "sons of trade,"
> And for thy sport our sacred homes invade?
> Remorse shall follow thee![46]

How delicately the poem appeals to outraged respectability and to the prejudices of a none-too-confident middle class! Even when the union was lawful, as in another poem, the reader was invited to feel regret that the daughter should leave her father for the sake of a husband of any kind, a sentiment which dies hard even today.

> " . . . My rose which for years
> I have fostered with smiles and watered with tears,
> I transplant from its soil: in thine should it thrive,
> 'Tis the sunshine of love that must keep it alive.
>
> To consecrate, honour, and sweeten thy life,
> I give thee, I give thee the faith of a wife;
> Thou shalt cherish and shield her in good and in ill."
> She springs to her husband, "My father, he will."[47]

These lines, and countless others appearing in the South Australian possess many of the dubious virtues that Dickens found in the caricatures of Leech:

> He has a becoming sense of responsibility and self-restraint; he delights in pleasant things; he imparts some pleasant air of his own to things not pleasant in themselves; he is suggestive and full of matter, and he is always improving.[48]

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[45]Ibid. [46]Ibid. [47]Ibid., 28-i-1848, IV, i.

[48]Dickens, op. cit., p. 150.

But their worst feature is their conventionality. With few exceptions, they relied upon the restricted associations of a trite rhetoric for their effect. Many of the poems published in the South Australian press were excessively influenced by the obvious expectations of a conservative reading public. Only occasionally did they deviate into individuality. Almost by definition, poetry which was colonial in origin had to be limited, unadventurous and derivative. The journalistic medium largely determined the message, giving its middle-of-the-road characteristics to the poetry it carried. Predictably, the South Australian, the least enterprising of the established newspapers, sponsored poetry which avoided the harshnesses and crudities of colonial life, treading a consistently cautious path in matters both controversial and cultural. Andrew Murray saw his duty plainly, to support the status quo, to shore up convention, to emphasise respectable pursuits, to ignore or minimize the uncouth. Hence his predeliction for poems on the carpe diem theme:

> Where - where are all the birds that sang
> A hundred years ago?[49]

and for "Times that have been"[50] and for essays in nostalgia such as T. W. C.'s poetic plea for a "home, heart, and grave, on the banks of the Tweed" in lieu of his real address at No. 50, Gawler place.[51]

There is no disputing that Murray's selection of poetry was often timid and orthodox, much of it dull and commonplace. Yet it would be foolish to forget that civilization is often no more than a series of conventions; that ". . . freed from the necessity of keeping up the

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[49]South Australian, 21-x-1845, I, v.

[50]Ibid., 19-v-1846, IV, i.

[51]Ibid., 8-i-1847, VIII, iii.

appearance of being civilized, the majority of human beings would rapidly become barbarous."[52] Although a poem like R. C.'s Burnsian tribute to Mary is saccharine and derivative, the conventionality of lines such as these,

> But fare ye well for aye, Mary,
> The thought has aye a balm,
> We'll meet ayout the sky, Mary,
> Wi' holy love an' calm,[53]

can, and perhaps should, be regarded as another demonstration of colonial courage. If it were right to judge poetry completely out of its historical and social context, then this and countless poems of like quality can not be valued highly. Within their journalistic setting, however, they show a wholly admirable capacity to transcend the depressing realities of colonial life.

Take for example the theme of childhood innocence. Not even Byron could escape mawkishness when writing "To My Son":

> Those flaxen locks, those eyes of blue,
> Bright as thy mother's in their hue;
> Those rosy lips, whose dimples play
> And smile to steal the heart away,
> Recall a scene of former joy,
> And touch thy father's heart, my Boy![54]

And so it is not surprising that what Byron did badly, lesser talents did worse. Similar poems appearing in the South Australian were even more sentimental, over-full of velvet post-card phrases such as "the blue heaven of that laughing eye" and of lines like

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[52]Aldous Huxley, Jesting Pilate (London: Chatto & Windus, 1926) p. 109.

[53]South Australian, 9-v-1848, IV, i.

[54]George Gordon Lord Byron, Poetical Works, Oxford Standard Authors (London: Oxford University Press, 1904), [reprinted, 1952], p. 52.

Rest in thine innocence!
Too soon thou'll wake unto the woes of life,
Th' underlying consciousness of pain and sin,
And the fierce workings of the world's wild strife!
Sleep on, then, sleep![55]

But when these poems are seen as part of a whole newspaper, as the obverse side of bald announcements of children actually dying, of infants being killed or maimed, then their sentimentality appears less reprehensible, their feeling less questionable. Idealization and humbug are closely related, but it would be a bold critic who would presume to categorise newspaper poems as absolutely one or the other. The contradictoriness that underlies so many aspects of colonial life is to be found also in its verse. Though a poem such as H. C. C.'s "English and Australian Homes" has manifest imperfections, it also reveals however clumsily something of the colonial vision:

We breathe a free, a purer air
On South Australia's shore,
Though we may dearly wish to see
England again once more;

.....

But in Australia's milder clime,
Who would not wish to roam,
And find here independency,
Health, happiness, and home?

.....

We are the germ, and shall become
A nation bold and free;
The hardy sons of England's soil
Shall prize our liberty.[56]

By their preference for respectable, conventional verse, colonists showed that they saw themselves as still forming part of the English middle classes, despite the real hardships of isolation and primitive

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[55]South Australian, 2-v-1845, IV, iv.

[56]Ibid., 27-x-1846, VIII, i.

living conditions. There is much that is admirable, if obsessive, in their desire to create a new Britannia in such an unBritannic other world. We may perhaps deplore their literary judgement, their predilection for hymn-like rhythms and chapel-like sentiments,[57] their conservatism, and their blindness, but as evidence of their aspirations, newspaper poetry is invaluable. Above all, it demonstrates the earnestness of the colonial middle classes, and their determination to translate to the antipodes their notions of an ideal, simpler version of English life. Since poetry was obviously part of this ideal, the newspapers, and especially the South Australian, supplied it. The demand was not insistent but it was steady and who better suited to meet such a gentlemanly request than Andrew Murray? With light verse, he was less at home. By its nature it is quirkish and unpredictable, less aligned to established attitudes; hence Murray's avoidance of it. But with serious verse, he was much more confident, and so can be taken very much as a man representative of many readers.

Murray is easy to ridicule, this colonial Polonius, but he obviously knew the tastes of his readers; he held tenaciously to respectable opinions and valued them in people and in poetry. As a critic, he revealed very few standards, but the greatest of these was the implied canon: the best poetry is that which is admired by people of the right sort. It is the very ordinariness of his judgement that makes his poetry columns so useful as a gauge of the common colonial reader.

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[57]Typical is this stanza:

> Ne'er droop your head upon your hand,
> And wail the bitter times:
> The self-same bell,
> That tolls a knell
> Can ring out merry chimes.

Observer, 13-iii-1852, II, v.

Chapter 8

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COMMON READER

Middle class colonists in South Australia prided themselves on many things; their rectitude, their "business-like utilitarianism",[1] their energy and enterprise, their piety, their "exemption from all convict taint".[2] And not only did they consider that they were morally superior to settlers in less fortunate Australian colonies, but they believed that they were more culturally aware. Their editors continually reminded them of their gentility, of their taste and discernment. In the newspapers it was taken for granted that readers would be interested in concerts, theatrical performances, conversaziones, lectures, books, art exhibitions. Editors clearly thought it their duty to draw their readers' attention to advertisements they might otherwise have overlooked, and to encourage them to support the arts.

> We had the pleasure a few days since of inspecting Mr. Aaron's collection of engravings, to which the attention of the public is invited in our advertising columns. The collection comprises several of the popular works of Danby, Sir William Allan, Fisk, Bateman, Catermole, Stone, Herring, &c., and are handsomely framed in bird's-eye maple, gilded. They are exceedingly well worth seeing, if regarded only as a gratuitous exhibition, and the prices are sufficiently moderate to enable the lover of the arts to add an extra decoration to his parlour walls without incurring the censure of extravagance.[3]

Taken very much for granted was the colonist's love of literature. Editors frequently appealed for contributions from "the talented

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[1] Morning Chronicle, 2-ix-1852, II, iv.

[2] South Australian, 14-i-1845, II, v.

[3] Observer, 5-vi-1852, V, v.

correspondents, with whom the colony happily abounds";[4] they reviewed and advertised books; they offered "light literature" in their back pages; they wrote as literary men speaking to well-read readers. But unlike the editors of periodicals, who were seeking an elite among South Australian readers, pioneer journalists like John Stephens, Andrew Murray, and at the mid-century, William Hammond, set out to please a majority of potential subscribers, to win the common reader to whom Dr Johnson had earlier addressed himself. They could not therefore afford to adopt too lofty a tone or to speak in unconventional terms. And because their livelihoods depended upon the approval of the ordinary literate colonist their newspapers provide valuable evidence of the literary knowledge which was common to most readers. The occasional esoteric or private allusion is of course to be expected, but in general, newspapers were aimed at the median man. To please him, journalists had to draw upon "familiar quotations", upon a common stock of literary and topical allusions. They were also obliged to articulate commonplace opinions. Magazine editors could try to elevate colonial taste; newspaper editors had to reflect it.

It will be argued in a later chapter that the main reasons for the failure of magazines to win and hold a sufficient readership were their own literary limitations and the covert opposition of the newspapers. Despite the approval and critical attention which they gave to the periodical press, newspaper editors did not make room for it. In addition to their usual fare, news, advertisements, comment and information, they continued to offer poetry, descriptive sketches, letters, articles, essay-like editorials, reviews and criticism; most of the things which were thought to be peculiarly the province of

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[4]Register, 25-vi-1845, II, v.

periodicals. By serving also as quasi-magazines, they effectively destroyed any chance the periodical press had of breaking new ground. Much less pretentious than publications such as the Odd Fellows' Magazine, Adelaide's newspapers show much more clearly the common reader's literary interests. The quotations used by journalists and by those whom the newspapers report, their allusions to books and to characters, all serve to illuminate the furniture of the colonial mind.

Newspapers do not of course reveal the common reader very precisely. The personalities of some editors were so obtrusive that their papers at times read more like personal manifestos than as vehicles for conventional opinion. Yet despite their limitations, even the most idiosyncratic of them reveal something of the common reader's stock of literary allusions. Although a journalist's conscious purpose was not to portray the ordinary reader, by the language he used and the assumptions he made, he unwittingly fills out the modern reader's impression of what was shared knowledge in colonial Adelaide. Take for example one of the Mercury's satirical poems, "The Blighted Eye". Its explicit purposes are clear, to deflate the pretensions of John Morphett, and to preach the following moral:

> . . . my legend endeavours to teach,
> Don't attempt to do any thing out of your reach,
> And don't keep a creole
> To peep through your key hole
> And knock down your old-fashioned family delf,
> When he happens to see you "beside yourself,"
> And if you really must peep, peer, and pry,
> Be sure to remember to MIND YOUR EYE.
>
> TO POLITICIANS.
>
> Gentlemen,--- South Australia wants no peers.[5]

But through the long rambling verse, replete with puns, local and

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[5]Mercury, 5-i-1850, p. 321, V, iv.

topical allusions, and echoes of Byron, are lines which tell the modern reader something of colonial culture.

> You have seen I dare say,
> If you have not, you may
> Any time in a drive or a ride to the Bay
> (That is if you happen to look the right way),
> As pretty a place as you'll see any day,
> A cross 'twixt a mansion and cottage ornée,
> A sweet still retreat,
> Unpretending and neat,
> Where one might retire from the dust and the heat
> Encountered all day in the town, and repose a
> Few moments of calm with your own "cara sposa,"
> Beneath the cool shade of the gum and mimosa;
> .....
> Every shelf in this study, all corners and nooks,
> Are stored with a fine, choice assortment of books,
> Comprising, Locke, Bacon, Hobbes, Newton, and Burke,
> Gray, Spenser, Ford, Massinger, Goldsmith, White (Kirke);
> There's Hafiz in Persian,
> Baptist Noel on immersion,
> Some rather dry works on entail and reversion,
> The speeches of Feargus O'Connor and Tully,
> The lives of Lord Byron, Dick Turpin, and Sully.[6]

Too much reliance should not of course be placed upon such a parade of authors. The tyranny of rhyme doubtless influenced it. But if it is unlikely to be an accurate catalogue of John Morphett's library, its emphasis upon philosophy, religion, science and non-contemporary writers of plays and poetry - with the possible exception of Byron who remained a "modern" in colonial Adelaide, even though he had died many years before - accords with the evidence of book advertisements and patterns of quotation. Even the supposed tastes of a colonist with aristocratic aspirations tell the modern reader something of the traditions shared by the generality of newspaper readers.

The common reader is of course no more than a convenient figment. Almost any study of colonial biography will reveal how diverse, how heterogeneous, were Adelaide's middle classes. That most clearly

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[6]Ibid., 5-i-1850, V, iii.

delineated sub-class, the "old colonists", who gathered annually to celebrate their own achievements at one or other of the city hotels, and to express "mutual affection and hearty good wishes"[7] revealed few common characteristics. They were not, in a cultural sense, Australians. They had come directly to South Australia from the United Kingdom, bringing with them a variety of talents and a range of educational backgrounds. Yet so insistent and uniform were the newspapers' assumptions about their readers' values, that the common reader emerges, despite differences in nationality, religion, and wealth. Although their formal educations had been completed elsewhere, once they became genuine colonists, they seemed to acquire a new uniformity of opinion. A shared environment would of course hasten the development of similar interests and purposes. Distance from the diversifying influences of home, the struggle for a respectable existence, the pressure exerted by a small community, would hasten the evolution of a colonial temper. That is not to say that the common reader in South Australia was radically different from the typical middle-class reader at home. After all, the epithet "colonial" implies cultural as well as political dependence. But a decade and more of isolation and hardship must inevitably have had its effect. In New South Wales, by the mid-century there had been time for colonists to come to terms with their environment, and for their dependence upon the mother country to have weakened, to have changed perhaps to resentment. In Adelaide, on the other hand, separation had created an even stronger attachment to the home land, even though South Australians were in reality Englishmen, Scots, Cornishmen, Germans, Irish and Welsh. The better established

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[7] Observer, 3-iv-1852, VI, i.

the settlement became, the more tenaciously did the colonial middle classes cling to what they remembered of genteel behaviour at home. Inevitably, there is something old-fashioned and dated about the South Australians' notions of English life. A newly arrived Clara Morison could talk to Mr Reginald about Tennyson, Borrow, and Mrs Barrett Browning, but established colonists drew their cultural nourishment from older sources.

It is remarkable how so disparate a community could weld itself into so homogeneous a cultural group. Consider the 1850 office-holders of that most respectable of Adelaide's associations, The South Australian Agricultural and Horticultural Society. There were two Irish Vice-Presidents, C. H. Bagot and T. S. O'Halloran; a Scot, A. L. Elder; and Englishmen as different as they could be without losing their claim to gentility. Three of them could be called Londoners, but whereas John Morphett was connected to a wealthy merchant family, Edward Stephens was the son of an impecunious clergyman, and J. H. Fisher, himself a lawyer, belonged to the professional classes. They had claims to social position before coming to South Australia. Not so William Giles, whose respectability had first been discovered in South Australia, by virtue of his position in the South Australian Company.[8] Less is known of the others, although their occupations suggest that they would have had little in common until colonial concerns united them. William Allen for instance had been a master mariner, Francis Dutton, among other things, a merchant, Jacob Hagen a money-lender. Yet for all their differences, they are typical of the group to whom and for whom the newspapers generally spoke.

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[8]His inveterate enemy, the Mercury, insisted that he had been a butler at home and had only "just scrambled out of the gutter." Mercury, 12-vii-1851, p. 960, IV, iv.

Editors seldom drew their readers' attention to the differences between colonists. Only by appealing to shared interests and common values could they hope to win an audience.

As a result, Adelaide's newspapers emphasise those traits which their readers shared, and draw upon the knowledge which was common to most subscribers. They had no special interest in those readers who had to borrow their neighbours' newspapers or who took advantage of the Reading Room of the Subscription Library or the parlours of various public houses. Revealed even in mundane advertisements are some of the shared attitudes and information which help shape our notions of the colonial common reader. Those who could afford newspapers were likely to be the book-buyers as well, and so even lists of books, "just unpacked", indicate something of the range of colonial interests, and something of their literary priorities. The lowly position of poetry in the following advertisement occurs many times in newspapers throughout the decade.

> Bibles, large and small in every variety of binding
> Testaments, in morocco, calf, and roan
> .....
> Watt's Hymns, a choice collection
> Church Prayer Books, plain and handsomly [sic] bound
> Pinnock's Catechisms, comprising music, drawing, chemistry, &c., &c.
> .....
> The works of Shelley, Pope, Ovid, &c.[9]

In many advertisements, books of verse had no place at all. Much more usual were lists of novels, the titles of which confirm Raymond William's opinion that although ". . . we think of the period as that of Dickens, Thackeray, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, at the upper levels of the novel, and of Elizabeth Gaskell, Kingsley, Disraeli, in a

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[9]Gazette, 28-ii-1846, I, iii.

subsidiary range,"[10] with the exception of Dickens, they were much less read than Eugene Sue, Captain Marryatt, Bulwer Lytton, and rather surprisingly Fenimore Cooper. Or so it would appear from advertisements appearing in South Australian papers.

Those carried by the Register when its editor, John Stephens, turned book-seller are particularly interesting, for he should have been particularly sensitive to the literary needs of his readers. Unlike stationers like C. Platts and E. S. Wigg, who tended to specialize, the former in lending-library - type novels, the latter in religious tracts and pamphlets, Stephens was much more catholic in his offerings. In one advertisement, he listed books as diverse as Peregrine Pickle, Hyperion, The Lay of the Last Minstrel, Marmion, The Lady of the Lake, Two Years before the Mast, Caleb Williams, and The Last of the Mohicans,[11] showing the same kind of eclecticism that characterised his borrowing from contemporary newspapers and journals. Book-selling as a secondary interest, he soon abandoned, which suggests that Dashwood, Platts and the rest were better judges of book-buyers' tastes than he. They would have known that books of verse seldom made money, and so when they did advertise them, they tended to offer only standard works such as Shakespeare's, Cowper's Poems, Crabbe's Tales, Milton's Paradise Regained, Byron's The Giaour, or anthologies like Bagatsky's Golden Treasury, or established successes like Bloomfield's Poems.[12]

But if poetry was not much in evidence in the commercial columns, elsewhere it was omnipresent. It was used to supply elegant variation

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[10]Raymond Williams, The Long Revolution (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961), p. 54.

[11]Register, 5-vii-1845, I, ii.

[12]Mercury, 11-v-1850, p. 469, V, iii, iv.

to editorials, reviews, even sporting descriptions, to add variety to the reader's staple diet of prose, and to offer at least a modicum of lofty thought or amusing satire. For all their popularity among readers, novels could not be easily assimilated into newspapers. Without a knowledge of the whole, readers were unlikely to make much of an extract, no matter how lengthy. Newspaper editors would have much preferred to borrow poetry, which took up room without taking a great deal of type, and which made more or less complete sense. Poetry was used for other purposes as well. Journalists and correspondents were much given to quotation; from novels rarely, from the classics not infrequently, and from the English poets, often. Colonial writers must have assumed that their readers were acquainted with the same set of books as themselves. Why else quote? The study of a writer's use of quotations doubtless reveals something about his own knowledge and taste, but when he writes for a newspaper, he also indicates what he believes to be the common ground, those allusions which he and the common reader share. Whereas a scholar writing for his peers may display his erudition without fear of offence, a journalist or a correspondent who wishes to be published must avoid the arcane, and concentrate upon the conventional.

Quotation seems to have been as much a colonial weakness, as Evelyn Waugh's hero, Dennis Barlow, thought it was a national vice. Certainly, colonists who wrote to Adelaide's various editors were particularly quotation-prone. Varied quotation appears to have been regarded as a test of literary competence, as proof that the correspondent was fit to contribute. Editors and their reporters tended to quote less often - for obvious reasons - but even they quoted much more than their modern counterparts do. Since colonial journalists were closer to their public, they were better able to judge what their

readers knew and what they expected. Readers doubtless would have tolerated some quotation used for display, for the flourishing quotation was as much a genteel accomplishment as a way of emphasising a point or of achieving stylistic variety. But to judge from a wide range of quotation used by a number of writers employing a variety of prose forms, it becomes clear that literary men writing for the newspapers seldom avoided commonplace allusions or were much on their guard against cliché.

Of all the newspapers of importance in colonial Adelaide, the Mercury was most addicted to quotation. Its editor was an ingenious parodist and punster, and relied heavily upon well known poetry for his inspiration. His paper moreover was not so much interested in news and politics as its rivals, and allowed more room than most for locally written material in both prose and poetry. As a result, the Mercury's columns are spangled with borrowed gems. At first glance, it would seem strange that Hammond who was the most unconventional and iconoclastic of editors should use so many quotations that must have been less than fresh in his own day. But in reality, as a humorous writer, he could hardly have used any other kind. Parodies and puns derive much of their effect from disappointed expectation, from the unexpected twists given to predictable material. Thomas Hood and Horace Smith would have taught their colonial admirers the value of well worn quotation. Certainly, local comic writers such as "Timothy Short" and Hammond himself succeeded in turning cliché into comedy. Burlesque, parody, and some kinds of puns depended for their humour upon a reading public able to recognize readily the original. It follows that by considering some of the quotations actually used, either for comic or serious purposes, the modern reader can discover part of his colonial heritage.

It is perhaps significant that the Mercury relied almost exclusively on the English poets, and seldom quoted from the classics. In radical Adelaide, radical in theory if not in practice, classical studies were in some minds associated with privilege and superior birth: gradgrindian utility was more in favour than traditional accomplishments. What Hammond said of education is consistent with his comparative neglect of Latin quotations.

> . . . prejudice may lead some to prefer a Reverend or a Graduate as a Tutor, but with the utmost deference for black cloth and trencher caps, we conceive that well educated and intelligent laymen, practically familiar with the business transactions of life, are quite as eligible for the public teaching of youth, in a thoroughly mercantile community, as mere scholastics, whose chief recommendation lies in an M.A., acquired on the banks of Cam or Isis. It matters little what "Arts" a man is dubbed "Master" of, if he be not master of the art of communicating what he knows, in a manner agreeable to the young.[13]

Although the South Australian regularly headed one of its paragraphs of local news pauca in parvo and occasionally used phrases such as "ne sutor ultra crepidam", though the Register made laborious fun in school-boy dog Latin ("in hoc est hoax, cum quiz et jokesy,/ Et roastum, toastum, grillum folksey"), Hammond made little use of Latin, and none of Greek. Apparently willing to grant that the classics had their place in education,[14] apart from an occasional "mirabile dictu", he seldom went outside English literature for his quotations.

The nature of his newspaper might partly explain this preference. Because the Mercury was also a "Sporting Chronicle", its scope was somewhat wider than the other weeklies, and was much less serious.

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[13]Mercury, 30-xi-1850, p. 705, V, iii.

[14]Ibid., 5-i-1850, p. 319, III, iii. "Having taken the degree of Bachelor of Arts, the classics of course form a leading feature in the course of study adopted by Mr Haire, to which, however, the more practical and utilitarian branches are not made unduly subordinate, Troy weight occupying as important a position with the student as the Siege of Troy."

Although his readers must have been drawn from the same middle classes as his rivals', his concern with the less formal aspects of colonial life made a more familiar tone almost obligatory. Hammond could not afford to use the recondite quotation that R. L. Milne had used in his anti-papist paper, Australiana. Races, wrestling matches, concerts, plays, police news, gossip demanded a much more commonplace stock of quotations and allusions. And what more commonplace a source than Shakespeare! Hammond, his fellow editors, and therefore presumably their readers, were steeped in Shakespearian verse, particularly that of the great tragedies. Like their counterparts at home they gave to Shakespeare a respect little short of idolatry. Although he was, and is, the most quotable of poets, colonists were able also to respond to his power in the theatre. Between March and August 1851, for instance, patrons of the Royal Victoria Theatre in Gilles Arcade could have enjoyed Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Macbeth and The Merchant of Venice, "compressed into FOUR ACTS", and although the legitimate drama was never as popular as "laughable farces", "burlesque extravaganzas" and "romantic dramas", theatre-goers of the better sort had opportunities to renew their acquaintance with his more familiar plays.

It is probable that the first words of the Mercury were Shakespeare's. There are no known copies of the first nineteen issues, but under the letter-head of the twentieth are Nathaniel's words from Love's Labour's Lost: "Very Reverend Sport truly, and done in the testimony of a good conscience."[15] In general, Hammond seems to have preferred the tragedies to the comedies, at least as a source of quotations. He and many of his correspondents were particularly indebted to Hamlet. It is of course the richest mine of polished

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[15]Love's Labour's Lost IV.ii. 1,2; Mercury, 14-vii-1849, p. 117, I.

phrases, but it was also the most performed of the tragedies. Morton King, for example, several times played the gloomy Dane for Adelaide audiences and for those who patronised the short-lived theatre at Port Adelaide, and although the "groundlings" tended to laugh at the Ghost, audiences were generally respectful; for Adelaide, even enthusiastic:

> Taken as a whole, the performance was infinitely superior to anything this side the Line, and was deservedly applauded by a numerous and highly respectable audience, who called the Tragedian before the curtain, when he briefly but feelingly acknowledged the warmth of his reception, which must have been most gratifying, illustrating the line of the great Bard - "His worth is warrant for his welcome hither."[16]

No one could accuse Hammond of searching out the least familiar lines from Hamlet. There is no hint of irony in his use of "There are more things in Heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt on in your philosophy", "a consummation devoutly to be wished", or those much travelled epigrams, "Frailty, thy name is woman" and "Brevity is the soul of wit." There is no selfconsciousness in his use of Hamlet's advice to the players to add authority to his theatrical criticism. Like his rival, John Stephens, he never questioned the propriety of holding mirrors up to nature or saving the judicious from grief.

Hammond was not always so earnest or so trite. When for instance James Allen announced yet another innovation, the transformation of the Adelaide Times into a daily, Hammond waxed sarcastic on the theme of the times being out of joint. And when a veterinary announced that he was about to begin in business, the Mercury noted that he would now be able to have cured all the ills horse flesh is heir to. He quoted from Hamlet, however, on a lower key as well. Some quotations he drew attention, to, but there were others that were used so unselfconsciously, phrases like "fat and scant of breath", "most

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[16] Mercury, 8-iii-1851, p. 817, V, ii.

filthy bargain", "very like a whale", that there can be little doubt that Hamlet was more than a convenient source of memorable phrases. It would seem that this of all Shakespeare's plays was the most thoroughly absorbed, if one can judge from the frequency with which Hammond referred to it. Only the Bible was better known.

If Hamlet was the play he most thoroughly ransacked then it may be assumed that Hammond's predilection was also that of the common reader. Of the other tragedies, Macbeth was quoted more often than most. When Hammond was in hectoring vein, Lady Macbeth's commands must have seemed particularly appropriate: "screw your courage to the sticking-post [sic]", "Stand not upon the order of your going,/ But go at once", but throughout the paper, phrases like "coign of vantage", "still they come", "even handed justice", "fret his hour upon the stage" are pressed into service by journalists and correspondents with equal confidence. So too with Othello. In an age when libel suits were frequent, it is not surprising that Iago's words about "filch(ing) a man's good name" or Othello's "nothing extenuate,/ Nor set down aught in malice", or Cassio's "O, I have lost my reputation" should be commonplace, even though the play itself was seldom performed in Adelaide, and then once in the form of a "burlesque extravaganza". Since Hammond was frequently arraigned as plaintiff, it is not perhaps surprising that he turned to The Merchant of Venice for "O wise young judge", "a second Daniel" to add colour to his articles of justification. The paucity of references to King Lear is more understandable. It does not lend itself to the kind of brief quotation which newspaper writers needed. Even so, one ingenious writer found a use for "The Prince of Darkness is a gentleman".

Other plays he quoted from must have been well-known among Adelaide's literate classes. The use of Richard III ("in these piping

times", "For Dickon, thy master, is bought and sold", "A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!") suggests that the play had not yet suffered the slump in popularity from which Olivier rescued it a century later. Julius Caesar, one of the least allusive of Shakespeare's plays, supplied relatively few quotations, although lines such as "There is a tide in the affairs of men/ Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune" would have had particular relevance in a community which had been conceived by theorists and established by speculators.

There are dangers in being too positive, when discussing a newspaper's range of quotations and allusions. Sometimes quotations have not been identified as such; often, buried as they are beneath literally millions of words, they doubtless have been overlooked. Nevertheless, it is safe to make the tautological claim that Hammond and his writers favoured well known plays above those which were then less fashionable. Although the history plays had made Pistol, Fluellen and Falstaff familiar names, apart from "minions of the moon" and Fluellen's leek, there are few quotations taken from the plays themselves. Comedies like As You Like It were scarcely ever used. Even "In fair round belly with good capon lined" comes from the all-the-world's-a stage speech, doubtless a much quoted gem in the many anthologies sold by Adelaide's book-sellers. Of the same order perhaps are the "one touch of nature" line from Troilus and Cressida, and the "local habitation and a name" phrase from A Midsummer Night's Dream.

It must not be assumed, however, that what was quoted in the Mercury is the same as what the writers knew. "Zounds! I was never so bethump'd with words/ Since I first called my brother's father dad" appears only once, but it is so unusual a quotation, taken from one of Shakespeare's least performed plays, King John, and is so deeply buried

in the body of the play,[17] that one can assume that this work was well known to the writer, although not necessarily to his public. This much at least can be ventured about the Mercury's knowledge of Shakespeare's plays and about what was shared with the general reader. Expressions like "Once more unto the breach, dear friends" had by the mid-century become so familiar to the educated as to lose their alien flavour in Victorian journalistic writing. That there is a correspondence between the plays most performed and the plays most quoted is also to be expected. Other plays are represented by single quotations or not at all. But this can not be taken as proof of limited knowledge. As had been argued earlier, a journalist is circumscribed by what he believes he shares with his audience. He is not seeking the most original phrase, but the most familiar - providing of course it is apt. The price of popular recognition is somewhat hackneyed quotation.

In a newspaper written by many hands, it is unwise to be dogmatic about patterns of quotation. In January 1851, for example, the Mercury contained the following quotations and allusions:

> "Once more unto the breach, dear friends".
> "Wale of tears" (as Sairey Gamp has it)
> Don Juan
> "dire confusion worse confounded"
> "Shew me ten Parsons and I'll shew you nine rascals"
> "When rogues fall out, honest men come by their own".
> "Lots of people", says honest John Bunyan, "are for religion when she walks in shoes of silver, who would pass her by in rags."
> Lots of what Cobbett used to term the Black Slugs.
> "Soft mortals, who can all believe,
> And pin their faith on each knave's sleeve."
> . . . must surely have had Ossian in his mind's eye -
> "While round her form the thin clouds bend the awful faces of her father."
> Thomas Fold . . . whose face according to the poet,
> "Formed to look upon the stars."

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[17] King John II. i. 466,467.

"fat and scant of breath"
"Here, here - it's all about cocks and fighting". SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER
"her most filthy bargain".

Yet although the first impression is of bewildering variety, over the whole range of the newspaper, quotations, particularly those used in the local intelligence columns, begin to take shape. There is for instance a tendency to quote the more epigrammatic poets, particularly Pope. Moreover, since the paper sought to achieve a light touch, it is not surprising that well-known epigrams were mangled for comic purposes. Pope's "Whatever IS, is RIGHT" became "Vot is, is right", a kind of dialectal humour to which Wellerese was a recent addition. That Hammond could parody The Rape of the Lock couplet, "For lo! the Board with Cups and Spoons is crown'd,/ The Berries crackle, and the Mill turns round," as

> Let Berry's China uncracked go,
> And Humphries tread or knead his dough,[18]

suggests that a knowledge of Pope was also part of the common reader's cultural furniture. The use of Pope's Alexandrine, "That, like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along", to convey tedium is not unexpected in a satirical weekly; so is "Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike" and "damn with faint praise". But what is notable is the Mercury's assumption that their readers would know Pope so well, so much better it would seem than Milton. Although there are isolated references to Lycidas, Il Penseroso and L'Allegro, ("meditate the thankless Muse", "A dim religious light", "Nods and becks and wreathed smiles"), apart from "chimeras dire", the major poems do not appear to have provided many quotations. This is probably more a reflection on Milton's quotability than an indication of the general reader's

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[18]Mercury, 20-iv-1850, p. 445, V, ii.

knowledge. Milton's complicated syntax would have made him less useful to colonial writers than the Augustan poets with their neat phrases and incisive thoughts. Goldsmith would have been much more suitable. The Mercury contains several references to The Deserted Village, and a misquotation from Retaliation, applied to a local figure who had "given up to party what was meant for mankind."

Other Augustan poets were quoted less frequently, but collectively they suggest that the newspaper reading classes were generally well read in eighteenth century verse. Matthew Prior ("fine by degrees and beautifully less"), Macpherson's Ossian, Gay ("In other men we faults can spy/ And blame the mote that dims their eye"), Cowper's "Monarch of all they [sic] surveyed", and of course Burns ("O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us,/ To see oursels as ithers see us"), and references to Gray, and to Dyer's The Fleece, give a peculiarly old-fashioned cast to the quotations used in the Mercury. This bias towards the eighteenth century is underscored by the comparative neglect of nineteenth century poets. Except for Byron, whose influence upon foolish young men C. H. Spence portrayed in Clara Morison, and Thomas Moore whose songs were still being sung around parlour pianos, none of the great romantics was much quoted; except for Wordsworth and Shelley, they were seldom even mentioned by name. Keats, Coleridge, Blake seem to have had no effect upon the Mercury's literary embellishments, or for that matter upon the other newspapers. There may have been practical reasons for this neglect; the allusive language of romantic verse, its imaginative complexity could have jangled in the practical prose of colonial journalism. But catalogues of books for sale also suggest that the effect of the Romantic Revival on South Australian society had been very slight indeed.

Recognition is a pleasure which a writer using apt and familiar

quotation is able to give his readers. Aptness on its own is somewhat less flattering. That Hammond and his contemporaries did not quote from the romantics (although Andrew Murray in the South Australian once reprinted a poem by Coleridge) may be taken as evidence, not of their personal ignorance, nor of their preferences, but of their belief that their readers were less likely to recognize such quotations than more easily memorised lines from the Augustan poets. (The neglect of Blake's poetry was of course general.) There may be historical reasons for the conservatism of colonial taste. Many of the "old colonists" would have been at school in the 1820s, and since poetry read there must have been at least one generation behind the times, this might account for the fact that Hammond used quotations which were already stale, yet were so well entrenched that the bulk of them still can be found in standard collections of quotations.

Hammond was however not deaf to the leaden clang of cliché. By misquotation and parody, he was able to give new life to otherwise exhausted allusions. He took the Reverend Mr Gardner to task for inflicting

> upon the company [The St Andrew's Society] the long quotation of - "Is there a man with soul so dead," &c., which is about as novel as Dan O'Connell's "Hereditary bondsmen, know ye not."[19]

He did not moreover confine himself to the commonplace. He quoted from Chapman, for instance:

> Ran, sirs! ay,
> We do believe you. Ran like any brick
> With which Semiramis reared Babylon,
> Muris coctilibus. Runs it not so?[20]

and rather less adventurously from Butler's Hudibras, but it must be

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[19]Ibid., 7-xii-1850, p. 713, V, ii.

[20]Ibid., 2-ii-1850, p. 350, II, iv.

conceded that he seldom strayed far from the well-worn paths of conventional poetry.

Similar patterns of quotation are to a large extent to be found in rival newspapers. In the years that John Stephens owned and edited the Observer and the Register, he drew upon much the same stock of quotations, although less often. Like Hammond, Stephens preferred Shakespeare above all writers and Hamlet above all plays. He also valued Pope's concision, slightly misquoting for example ("Destroy his web of villainy in vain-/ The creature's at his dirty work again") in order to add bite to one of his own aggressive articles. But though he quoted less, he tended to range more widely. Perhaps his small stature and his paranoia account for his use of the opening lines of Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot ("Shut, shut the door good John, fatigued, I said./ Tie up the knocker, say I'm sick, I'm dead"); his piety might account for his quoting Pope's less well known, The Universal Prayer:

> Teach me to feel another's woes
> And hide the faults I see;
> That mercy I to others show,
> That mercy show to me.

But whatever his reasons, he frequently mirrors Hammond's kinds of quotations, thereby giving weight to the suggestion that they made similar assumptions about the literary knowledge of their readers.

The other main editors, Stevenson, Allen, and Murray were less given to quotation, but they too tended to quote conservatively. Murray was rather more interested in contemporary poetry and so he tended to print whole poems rather than incorporate parts into his own writing. Allen who as magazine editor had tended to load every rift of his editorials with quotations from Wordworth, Gray and Byron quoted much more sparingly as editor of the Adelaide Times. Stevenson differed little from the rest except he went rather further into the past, in quoting Massinger ("We worldly men, when we see friends and

kinsmen/ Past hope sunk in their fortunes, lend no hand/ To lift them up, but rather set our feet/ Upon their heads, to press 'em to the bottom."[21]) and in one editorial, quoted lengthily from The Merchant of Venice.[22]

What does this uniformity suggest? It could be said that the editors were so alike in their literary backgrounds that their quotations simply reflect their sameness. But this does not go far enough. They came from different parts of England, were of different ages, and were of very different temperament. The explanation is surely to be found in the character of their readers. Although quotations are to some extent part of a writer's personal equipment, monuments to former tastes, they are also part of the idiom of educated men. More than any other kind of writer, journalists could not afford to express their own preferences. To quote too frequently from one's private store was to jeopardise that easy communication between writer and reader upon which newspapers depended. That habit of quotation weakened as the century advanced, but at the mid-century, quotations were used both as decoration and as idioms. Some were so familiar that they no longer needed to be identified; "the [most] unkindest cut of all" is one such example. Others were in the process of being assimilated into the language. Others yet again retained their exotic character, and so would have stood out however punctuated. Almost all, however, were commonplace, forming part of the common stock of literary references. This is not to say that this is the limit of the colonial reader's range. On this kind of evidence only, it would appear that the common reader had been virtually untouched by the Romantic Revival, and had

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[21] Gazette, 14-ii-1846, II, i.

[22] Ibid., 11-iv-1846, II, iii.

been little affected by the poetry written in his own day. This is most improbable. Nevertheless, quotations do obliquely reveal something of colonial culture, and coincidentally add features to the portrait of the common reader.

Chapter 9

A PERIODICAL PRESS

Forming part of Adelaide's journalistic world, and yet in important ways, distinct from the newspaper part of it was the periodical press. Like daily and weekly publications, it sought readers from the middling classes, but was especially concerned to satisfy those who constituted Adelaide's cultural elite. In so small a community, such an exclusive clientele always was hard to locate, especially since magazine proprietors not infrequently sought profit on their investments as well as cultural improvement. It was hard enough for newspapers to win sufficient support from the common reader, let alone from an even narrower clientele.

Yet despite the inevitability of their failure, Adelaide's magazines at the mid-nineteenth century point up the ways in which daily and weekly newspapers undermined them, not by open opposition but by usurping many of the functions considered peculiarly their province. From the point of view of local writers, there was only a limited number of ways to have their work read, and the newspapers provided most of them. Newspaper editors were always in need of copy, and although there were limits to their tolerance, they were prepared to publish a wide range of material providing it was adequately expressed and likely to interest at least some of their readers. Yet to some aspiring authors, it must have seemed that Adelaide lacked a vehicle sympathetic to their more sublime thoughts, that there was need in short for a periodical press. In the United Kingdom, the middle classes could choose from a wide range of monthlies and quarterlies.

Why should not Adelaide have its own version of an Edinburgh Review or its own Critical Quarterly? Were not Adelaide's readers like those at home? Was it not clear

> . . . that, on the part of the general community, an intellectual thirst, once confined to the very few, was now keenly felt[?] Men wanted to know about books, and events, and to find them discussed . . . .[1]

It must have seemed so to James Allen, who in 1841 launched the South Australian Magazine and justified his enterprise in a lengthy editorial on "The Use and Advantages of Colonial Periodical Literature."[2] He dismissed the objection that there was a "paucity of interesting, amusing, and instructive facts"[3] and set out to show would-be writers some of the subjects they could exercise their talents upon. His was an early attempt to distinguish between the world of newspapers and the world of periodicals, though he was engaged in both. Clearly, Wordsworthian nature would have a more appropriate setting in a magazine than in a newspaper.

> Let us look abroad with the eyes of a philosopher, and we shall find, as it has been beautifully expressed, that we cannot pick up a pebble from the brook, without finding all nature in connexion with it. Wherever we open our eyes, or in whatever direction we look, we perceive ourselves to be in the midst of boundless associations.[4]

Or if such sentiments were too ethereal, there was "no lack of materials in South Australia for the effective supply of a magazine devoted to the interests of science and literature."[5] There was

> . . . its climate, its varied and delightful scenery, its

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[1]A. R. D. Elliott, "Reviews and Magazines in the Early Years of the Nineteenth Century," Cambridge History of English Literature, NS, XII, The Nineteenth Century I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), p. 141.

[2]"The Use and Advantages of Colonial Periodical Literature," South Australian Magazine, I (July, 1841-September, 1842), pp. 1-8.

[3]Ibid., p. 2. [4]Ibid. [5]Ibid.

> rising hills and noble plains, its deep, rich, umbrageous, and affluent forests, its microscopic resemblance to the older country in the bustling activity of city life, and its mimic representations of the "Wild Sports of the West" in the Emu or Kangaroo hunts of the interior . . . .[6]

There was ample opportunity for "the splendid creations of soaring fancy . . . keen and cutting satire . . . the beauties of nature . . . a sentimentalizing tenderness for what we once called 'HOME'."[7]

Throughout the article, Allen spoke as if what he proposed was virgin journalistic territory. But when he came to summarize his aims, they differed little from what editors would have claimed for their newspapers. In emphasis, newspapers were of course different but they too could claim to provide "a permanent record of whatever was valuable in the progress and history of the colony", to serve as a "fund of amusement and instruction", and as an "influence . . . upon the young", and as a vehicle for the display of "the intellectual capabilities of the various classes of the community."[8]

In more populous communities, magazines and newspapers could travel their separate ways as if the other form did not exist. But in Adelaide this was not possible. They all were addressed to the same class of reader, they were fed by the same group of writers, and as Allen's own example shows, were sometimes led by the same men. Magazines were of course different from newspapers. They were produced under different circumstances and for a "portion of [the public] usually denominated the literary world."[9] Only occasionally concerned with items of news or with advertisements, they emphasised material which was obviously "literary"; poems, stories, essays, reviews. Newspapers

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[6]Ibid., pp. 3, 4. [7]Ibid. [8]Ibid., p. 5.

[9]South Australian, 28-i-1845, III, iii.

on the other hand were chiefly concerned with news, advertisements, and commercial intelligence, and could give only secondary importance to work not written for immediate practical effect. Yet in Adelaide, magazines never succeeded in delineating an area or a readership which was distinctively theirs. In the United Kingdom, magazines and reviews occupied a middle ground between books and newspapers, and offered their readers material which was not often to be found elsewhere. South Australian magazines, on the other hand, tended to replicate the kind of materials used by newspaper editors to fill their "Literary Rag-Bag" columns. The result is that they appear more as an extension of colonial journalism than as a separate literary vehicle. With so limited a potential readership, the tendency of magazine editors to make their publications resemble more the newspapers is perhaps explicable, but was to prove unwise. Either there was a genuine demand for a periodical press or there was not. A hybrid could not successfully compete with newspapers which could accommodate the same kinds of material and publish them much more frequently.

The history of colonial periodical literature is a history of failure. James Allen's 1841 venture was bound to founder in a colony whose very existence was at that time uncertain. But subsequent ventures were little more successful, not only in South Australia but in the other colonies. By 1845, the South Australian could claim that the Odd Fellows' Magazine was

> the only surviving magazine in the Australian colonies, and that circumstance alone is sufficient to insure for it a favorable and indulgent reception by the public.[10]

Periodicals were not, however, to be sustained by sentiment or by

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[10]Ibid.

parochial pride. Although the Odd Fellows' Magazine was to have the longest life of any magazine produced in the 1840s, by 1848 it was clear to at least one correspondent that South Australian readers were unwilling to change their preferences for newspapers over magazines.

> Several attempts have been made to establish a colonial literature in this province. The South Australian Magazine, the Odd Fellows' Magazine, and the Adelaide Magazine, have each appeared, and become in their turn numbered in our reminiscences of the past; each sustained the credit of the colony for literary ability, but fell before the more absorbing pursuits, which arose out of the critical position of the colony a few years back.[11]

To judge from the number of book-shops that apparently flourished in Adelaide, Platts', Dashwood's, Wigg's, Darcy's, colonists moreover preferred religious and commercial tracts, bibles and testaments, hymnals and sermons, anthologies of verse, books of travel and natural history, to local periodicals. Allen's venture lasted less than two years, the Adelaide Magazine only two issues. Even the Odd Fellows' Magazine, whose literary virtues were buttressed by the loyalty of lodge members, was issued only a dozen or so times. Why such feeble support, particularly when the vigour of the newspapers and the proliferation of book-shops and book-auctions are considered? Direct competition from overseas periodicals seems not to have been fierce. Periodicals such as Fraser's, the Monthly Magazine, and especially Blackwood's were quite well known in the colony, and were much quoted in the newspapers, but according to E. S. Wigg, colonials as late as 1849 had access to very few.

> There are shoals of books, perfect trash, continually deluging the Colony: . . . With colonial newspapers we are deluged, having nine, two of which have two issues per week; of periodicals we have only one, and the English ones pay angels' visits.[12]

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[11]Ibid., 16-v-1848, III, ii, iii.

[12]Mercury, 25-i-1851, p. 766, II, i, ii.

Distance and the consequent delay probably account for the paucity of overseas competitors. As James Mill had said in 1824,

> . . . a periodical production must sell immediately, at least to a certain extent, otherwise it cannot be carried on. A periodical production must be read the next day, or month, or quarter, otherwise it will not be read at all.[13]

This immunity from overseas competition did not however secure any great advantage for local magazines. According to Allen's estimate, there were writers aplenty,

> . . . many gentlemen . . . known to have the public at home under deep obligations, by their stated or occasional contributions to the general stock of periodical literature. Nor are their [sic] wanting many ladies among us, to whom the periodical press of Great Britain is in a greater or a less degree indebted.[14]

But what was most doubtful was the colony's capacity to support this venture, subscribers willing to pay good cash for "the benefits of intellectual acquirement and intellectual improvement."[15]

Allen, and his successor, T. Y. Cotter, soon learned that they were wrong in believing that Adelaide's literary world was an exact miniature of that at home. Adelaide undoubtedly had its men of leisure and culture, but in the reading classes, they were outnumbered by those who had "converted soap, candles, ironmongery, drapery, treacle, chicory . . . into mining shares, sheep runs, freehold lands, town buildings, Bank balances"[16] - the recently well-to-do who could recognize the utility of newspapers but who were less certain of the value of magazines. Furthermore, it is doubtful whether Allen was

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[13]Quoted by George Levine (ed.), The Emergence of Victorian Consciousness; the Spirit of the Age (New York: Free Press, 1967), p. 176.

[14]"The Use and Advantages of Colonial Periodical Literature", op. cit., p. 1.

[15]Ibid., p. 6.

[16]"Personal Recollections of a Septuagenarian," Observer Miscellany (Adelaide: Robert Kyffin Thomas, 1878), p. 178.

Yet there must still have been some colonial optimists who believed that magazines could offer fare not usually found in newspapers. In a limited sense, the sponsors of the Odd Fellows' Magazine were right and while they confined themselves to lodge matters and to the "cultivation of Friendship, the promotion of Brotherly Love, and the defence and extension of Truth", they were offering their readers a specialised kind of literary service. But once they began to seek readers outside the lodge, they began to encroach upon the territory of the newspapers. Instead of letters ending "I remain, your Brother, in F, L and T", instead of observing its own rules, "to take every proper opportunity to explain its principles and objects, and to keep watch over their conduct that each shall do credit to the Order," the magazine began more and more to resemble a newspaper, and so began to court hostile criticism. Early in its life, the newspapers had given it either perfunctory critical attention ("The contents of the present number consisting chiefly of extracts, translations, and reports of anniversary dinners, do not come within the scope of criticism"[21]) or condescending praise. But once it went beyond what journalists believed to be its proper functions, then benevolence was forgotten. John Stephens, or one of his reporters, made it quite clear what he believed the magazine should be.

> We omitted to notice, last week, the Oddfellows' Magazine for November and December, which has just made its appearance. It is a great improvement on its predecessors: one half of it being filled as such a periodical always ought to be, with reports of meetings, and other movements of the various lodges here, and with condensed notices of the sayings and doings of the Society in England and other countries, which, we should imagine would be more interesting by far to the generality of the members of the craft, than the somewhat bizarre mixtures which have been

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[21] South Australian, 28-i-1845, III, iii.

> lication, more general information, and great facility of transmission by post.[25]

Though he foreshadowed, in fine, a newspaper, it was not until 1851 that it actually appeared, the short-lived Odd Fellows' Chronicle.

Only rarely were newspapers and magazines in direct, avowed competition, principally because the latter were read by too few to be worth the trouble. Some lodge brothers no doubt would have supported the lodge magazine regardless of its merits, but it is unlikely that even they could keep abreast of colonial affairs without the supplementary reading provided by the various newspapers. And if they were in search of poetry and prose of a less mundane kind, then they would have found the newspapers superior even here. Local periodicals were over-full of self-consciousness of this kind:

> As the sun rose high in the heavens, we did not fail to pay proper attention to the refreshments; and if a feeling of ennui did occasionally arise, we had recourse to a volume of Shakspeare we had brought with us.[26]

Newspapers were not of course free of similarly affected fare but since it formed only part of a much larger and more varied whole, and was leavened by borrowings from some of the best writers of the period, men like Dickens, Disraeli, Jerrold, then even the most rabid of lodge members would have had to acknowledge the newspaper's superiority.

It was inevitable therefore that magazine editors should strive to make their productions more like the Observer. They began to print notices of births, deaths and marriages; they listed "prices current", they wrote editorials inspired by the excitement of the colony's statistical returns; they encouraged epistolary exchange between correspondents. But of course such attempts were bound to fail.

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[25]Ibid., Supplement to Vol. II, p. 176.

[26]Ibid., I (July, 1844), p. 141.

Newspapers not only had the advantage of frequent and regular publication, but felt less obliged to print locally written material. They could, and did, refuse contributions which they considered inept or inappropriate. Magazine editors on the other hand had too small a clientele to risk offending any of them. Brothers expected gratitude from their editors, not criticism.

The problem of maintaining a viable periodical without challenging the newspapers on their own ground was virtually insoluble. Men of literary ability were almost invariably engaged in other things, principally striving to win the competence many of them had come to South Australia for, and so the supply of publishable material was erratic and distinctly uneven in quality. And since magazines were monthlies more by intention than by actual issue, they could not match the newspapers' capacity to introduce subjects, discuss them, and then turn to fresh material. The Register for example was able to announce the publication of Eyre's Journals of Expeditions of Discovery into Central Australia and to review it twice all within a fortnight[27] while the Odd Fellows' Magazine took four months to review two of Marcus Collisson's miniscule pamphlets on Mining and South Australian affairs.[28] And when W. A. H. wrote a letter to the editor of the Odd Fellows' Magazine, accusing the Literary Society of neglecting "the education of our youth"[29] - a theme certain to produce a response among newspaper readers - whatever interest the letter generated had completely disappeared by the next issue, for there was no reply. Unable

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[27]Register, 31-i-1846, I, iv; 7-ii-1846, II, v, III, i, ii; 11-ii-1846, I, v, II, i, ii, iii.

[28]Odd Fellows' Magazine, II (August, 1845), p. 117; (November, 1845), p. 162.

[29]Ibid., I (October, 1843), p. 54.

to match the newspapers' immediacy, magazines could not even claim that they had any great advantage in novelty. N. R. F. rode through the German villages and left his impressions behind in the South Australian[30] as well as the Odd Fellows' Magazine and the South Australian Magazine; Henry Blackham and "Ianthe" wrote their usual verse whether it appeared in a newspaper or a magazine.

Magazine editors in any case seem to have been fettered by their notions of what was suitable literature. Whereas newspaper editors were often compelled to range widely for the material needed to fill their columns, Allen as editor of the South Australian Magazine, and later Cotter, and E. W. Andrews, editor of the Odd Fellows' Magazine were hyper-conservative even in what they borrowed. While Andrew Murray was re-printing poems by Longfellow, Cullen Bryant, Mrs Sigourney, Mary Howitt, Hood, W. M. Praed, David Lester Richardson, the magazines favoured translations of the classics, or long established poets such as Cowper. Their prose borrowings were equally timid. Bound to prefer locally written prose above all other, they seldom had to borrow, but when they did, they chose translations such as THE ADVENTURES OF THE LAST ABENCERAGE. TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF CHATEAUBRIAND, BY THE LATE EDMUND MORTON, ESQ.,[31] rather than contemporary English or American fiction.

On almost every count, newspapers were superior. Unencumbered by the magazine's overt literary purpose, they were able to escape many of the pitfalls into which periodicals so often fell. While the magazines clung to the prerequisites of "fine writing", classical tags, quotations, - particularly from the Bible, Shakespeare, Burns, Byron,

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[30]South Australian, 17-iii-1846, III, i, ii, iii, iv, v.

[31]Odd Fellows' Magazine, II (August, 1845), p. 97.

Moore, Gray, Wordsworth - descriptions of landscape, usually in the diction of Augustan nature poetry, newspapers set out to please, not impress, their readers. In their editorials, in their correspondence, editors promoted prose which was vigorous, lucid and unmannered. They knew their readers; men of business for the most part, not indifferent to the "high aspirations of the spirit", but more vitally concerned with the realities of colonial life. Editors of magazines took on the other hand an impracticably lofty view. Despising "the proverbial inertia of all its inhabitants on all subjects which do not directly involve the acquisition of wealth,"[32] they were too willing to sacrifice quality for the noble sentiment. They were mistaken in believing that Adelaide was another London writ small, an error which was demonstrated again and again, when for instance the Adelaide Magazine was launched in 1845. Though George Stevenson stated that it promised to rank "amongst the highest class publications of the mother country,"[33] its brief career showed that colonists supported only what they wanted, not what they ought to have.

The feeble challenge magazines offered to the newspapers was due partly to their sponsors' mistaken belief that Adelaide was large enough, and culturally advanced enough, to support even the most limited of periodical presses. There was "a dearth of literary and professional talent,"[34] notwithstanding the Register's counter-claim that "the supply of merely literary . . . men [was] in excess of demand."[35] But the most destructive force operating against them was the nature of their nominal supporters in the newspaper world. With

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[32] Mercury, 1-vi-1850, p. 492, IV, ii.

[33] Gazette, 17-i-1846, II, iv.

[34] Register, 22-i-1850, III, iv, v.

[35] Ibid., III, v.

the coming of the Observer in 1843 and the Mercury in 1849, local writers could find larger audiences, and those more frequently. Weeklies offered many advantages, and so could be more selective and more entertaining. Whatever local material they contained was frequently in excellent literary company; the most expert of local writers, and many of the most important writers in the English-speaking world. Writing for a coterie would of course have been appealing to some, but when support slackened and publications were delayed, others must have preferred the practical advantages offered by the newspapers.

The struggles of the periodical press to survive in Adelaide is a study in itself. In this study, however, magazines have been considered for the light they throw upon the literary life of Adelaide. Although not a vital part of the colonial press, they were tenuously attached to it, through shared goals, shared contributors, and, one suspects, shared readers. They represented the more serious expressions of colonial sensibility, and provide useful bench-marks against which to measure the literary scope of the newspapers.

Chapter 10

LIGHT LITERATURE AND THE MERCURY

If periodicals like the Odd Fellows' Magazine and the South Australian Magazine looked for subscribers in the upper cultural reaches of middle-class Adelaide, the Mercury sought them everywhere; and to win them, Hammond was prepared to make his weekly a carpet-bag for all kinds of local writing. True, he preferred satire to sententiousness, follies and foibles to gravity and goodness, but because he was a shrewd judge of popular taste, he was prepared to accommodate even these, providing improved circulation was likely. Such catholicity, such hospitality, makes the Mercury one of the most varied of all Adelaide's papers, quite putting into the shade conservative magazine editors, like Cotter and Andrews, and timid journalists like Murray.

The Mercury was not of course unique in its capacity to adjust its fare to the tastes of the common reader. Adelaide's journals generally were extraordinarily responsive to changed attitudes and expectations. In the warmth of pre-gold rush optimism for instance newspapers such as the Austral Examiner and the Witness sprang up almost over-night in response to a fancied demand for papers with a religious emphasis. Even a new periodical, Henry Hussey's The Church Intelligencer and Christian Gleaner was considered viable, though he was to acknowledge in his autobiography[1] that even as late as 1858,

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[1]Henry Hussey, More than Half a Century of Colonial Life and Christian Experience (Adelaide: Hussey & Gillingham, 1897).

"periodical literature, whether secular or religious, had not . . . been a success in South Australia",[2] and that "the daily and weekly newspapers seemed sufficient to satisfy the wants of the major part of the population, both in town and country".[3] Nevertheless, in the late 1840s and early 1850s, there was such confidence in the colony's prospects that pious speculators believed that papers and periodicals like the Austral Examiner and The Church Intelligencer could compete with the secular, and in the Mercury's case, irreverent press.

Amid this flurry of new journalistic ventures, Hammond continued to adapt his paper to the needs of more worldly readers, leaving to Hussey and his high-minded supporters the moral education of the young.[4] Throughout 1851, he moved further away from the "colonial intelligence" kind of reporting towards a more literary kind of journalism; theatre and music criticism, verse both satirical and serious, and prose of a non-factual or non-polemical kind. Though he continued to open his correspondence columns to controversial exchanges and to accounts of journeys to out-of-the-way parts of South Australia, he showed himself more willing than his rivals to publish original stories and sketches, prose which was imaginative rather than descriptive or expository or argumentative. Not that the others were insensitive to the appeal of works of the imagination. They would have endorsed the rhetoric which

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[2]Ibid., p. 280. Hussey was well placed to pass such a judgment, having been an apprentice to George Dehane and to John Stephens, and, later, printer-publisher of the Register and the Observer during "the troublous season of the exodus to the Victorian gold-fields."

[3]Ibid.

[4]Hussey anticipated, wrongly it proved, that there were enough readers who wanted to follow the "proceedings of the Church in the Colonies", to enjoy "original and well-selected articles calculated to interest and improve the youthful mind", and to acquire "an accurate knowledge of the great truths of our holy faith, and the principles of our Church." Ibid., p. 109.

John Stephens had used as a preamble to one of his own advertisements:

> I heartily despise the idle declamation against romances which I so often hear. Poesy and imagination are the higher and holier matters of the intellectual world. All noble conceptions, all holy thoughts in the mind, are undoubtedly connected with the qualified love and indulgence of romantic feeling. I have heard many a good soul declaim, that he would be glad if there was nothing of romance in the world. I should regard him who could, and would, destroy the illusions of fancy and the imagination, as I would the evil genius who would destroy foliage and flowers from the trees, to give us fruit on the naked stem.- Flint[5]

It did not seem to have occurred to them that they could use their papers to indulge their readers' "qualified love . . . of romantic feeling". By default, they left the patronage of local writers of fiction to erratic publications like the South Australian Magazine and the Odd Fellows', and to the less respectable, but much more lively, Mercury.

Hammond quite early in his paper's development must have thought that his readers would be interested in locally written fiction, if only suitable work could be found. If one can judge from the amounts of factual and controversial prose he actually published and from the tenor of his replies to correspondents, it would seem that he had a good deal of "fruit on the naked stem" to choose from, and very little "foliage and flowers". Doubtless his contributors being in the main men of business found letters to the editor, even doggerel, easier to write and less time-consuming than stories and sketches. The fragility of literary magazines which depended to a large extent upon such contributions confirms ZYNE's opinion, expressed in a letter to the South Australian,[6] that colonists put business first above all things, so explaining why periodicals "fell before the more absorbing pursuits,

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[5]Register, 5-vii-1845, I, ii.

[6]South Australian, 16-v-1848, III, ii, iii.

which arose out of the critical position of the colony a few years back".[7] There were so few "literary gentlemen" with the leisure to devote to writing, that while to dash off an indignant letter or some facetious verse was an acceptable hobby, to write a tale suitable for publication smacked somewhat of professionalism.[8] Better to deny the public a chance to enjoy their work than risk refusals such as these:

> W.S.- The City DOES comprise North and South Adelaide, and as our correspondent seems fond of striking facts, we beg to apprise him that two and two invariably make four, in the absence of sufficient evidence to the contrary.[9]

> AN ELECTOR'S NIGHTMARE.- This is utter trash, and therefore unsuited to our columns. The author had better employ his time more usefully, and not waste ours in looking over such consummate nonsense.[10]

> McLAREN VALE.- The writer of this NOTICE must be mad to expect us to insert such a farrago of illiterate nonsense. . . . The communication finishes with, "To be continued;" but we respectfully decline.[11]

Had Stephens lived, then he might have provided an alternative outlet for works of the imagination - he had for example used both Dickens and Disraeli when he needed to borrow material - but since his death the Register and the Observer had grown more circumspect and less

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[7]Ibid.

[8]It may be that to preserve their reputations as amateurs of talent, most would-be writers did as "The Pleiades" did in 1852. This group of seven produced a manuscript magazine for circulation among themselves and their friends. They might have anticipated in any case that had they offered to Hammond sketches and articles with titles as unpromising as "A Trip to Lake Alexandrina", "The Poetry of the Bible", "Litigation", "Punctuality", "Nothing", "History of the Art of Printing", "Sunset in South Australia", "The Crying Baby", "On Brain Scattering", "A Dream of the Future", "On the Human Form", "What is an Editor?", "Supply of Pure Water", "On the Marvellous", they might have suffered the indignity of a rejection, exacerbated no doubt by the bluntness of an editor notorious for his sarcasm. Register, 23-i-1854, II, v.

[9]Mercury, 21-ix-1850, p. 620, IV, ii.

[10]Ibid., 3-v-1851, p. 880, IV, i.

[11]Ibid., 12-vii-1851, p. 960, IV, i.

enterprising, with the result that the Mercury was virtually the only regular vehicle for imaginative prose.

Even so, the regular space for literary contributions, Hammond's "Bowl of Punch" columns, contained much more verse than prose, and much more satirical prose than fictional. Yet while it would be a distortion to claim that sketches, stories and prose parodies occupied an important part of the Bowl of Punch, or the occasional Our Literary Rag Bag feature or the uncaptioned columns where original material also sometimes appeared, they did contribute to the literary character of the paper.

Many prose articles traversed much the same kind of country covered in local verse. Sketches tended to be satirical in intention, facetious in tone, topical in theme. They were even on occasion parodic. That prose parodies were much less common than poetry is of course to be expected. Whereas a parody of a poem is strengthened by the poem's organization, by its patterns of rhyme and metre, prose parodies tend to be amorphous, lacking in structure, drawing few benefits from the original. The fault lies in the nature of the original being parodied and in the limitations of newspaper space. Apart from fables, there were few prose forms sufficiently concise to be accommodated in a newspaper. Seldom would a short-story, let alone a novel, be sufficiently compact to allow the would-be parodist to adopt and adapt the original structure. And where would the parodist find models sufficiently mannered to be imitated and sufficiently well-known to be recognised? In the Bible obviously; perhaps in Pickwick; possibly in dialect drolleries of the kind that "Josh Billings" was to popularise somewhat later; conceivably in eccentric monologues such as Douglas Jerrold's Mrs Caudle's Curtain Lectures, a Punch feature which seems to have been well-known in the colonies. But where colonial

readers could be expected to have transcribed numerous poems into scrap or commonplace books, it is doubtful whether there was much prose, apart from aphorisms and epigrams, which lent itself to the various processes of familiarisation; anthologies, public readings, school examinations.

A prose parody which demonstrates some of the problems facing the colonial parodist is one which formed part of the Mercury's pre-election compaign of 1851. Its model was the Old Testament, its writer probably Hammond himself. The following extracts show why prose parody was so much less effective than parodies of poems:

THE BOOK OF BAGDAD
CHAP. I.

1. And, behold, in those days, it came to pass that the elders and nobles assembled themselves together:
2. And, lo, up and spake a scribe who had a seat in the lower place, and said unto them:
3. Behold, are there not countries far away in which we have many possessions, inhabited by unlearned men, who know us not?
4. Wherefore it is expedient that we send forth a ruler to rule over them. Speaketh not thy servant well, O elders?
5. And the elders and the nobles, and they that sat with them, lifted up their voices, and shouted with a great shout, and said:
6. Joy unto thee, thou scribe; for thou hast well spoken: be it even as thou hast said.
7. Lo, we will send out a Chief Butler to rule over them, who shall be our servant, to do even unto our possessions as thou hast said.
8. And the scribe bowed down his head, even unto the ground: and the nobles and the elders, and they that sat with them, chose unto themselves a man to be Chief Butler, whose name was Guiles:
9. And he departed and went.
10. But the Chief Butler did not remember the nobles; but forgot them.

.....[12]

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[12]Ibid., 19-iv-1851, p. 862, II, i.

THE BOOK OF BAGDAD
CHAP. II.

1. And it came to pass when the Chief Butler perceived that he could not have a seat in Council by the fair voice of the people;
2. He took unto himself some other humbugs, not worse than himself, for that was impossible,
3. Who loved the chief seats in synagogues and the inner rooms at feasts,
4. Who tried to devour widows' houses, and for a show made long prayers.
5. Now, one of these men was an unbeliever, and another a drinker of new wine, and of a dismal countenance;
6. And he said unto these people: Lo, ye are righteous in your own sight, and holy in your own eyes; yea, ye talk good words with your lips, while your hearts are full of wickedness;
7. Who promise good works unto your neighbours which ye never intend to perform;
8. And now, behold, ye are not men after mine heart [sic]; and am I not a more arrant humbug than ye all?
.....[13]

To ensure that the clues were recognized, the writer had to deviate too obviously from the original. In this example, he had to call the parody, "The Book of Bagdad", so that regular readers could anticipate yet another attack upon the much abused William Giles. The familiar gibes are dressed up in pseudo-biblical language; Giles's humble origins, his sycophancy and his ingratitude, his wowserism, his dissenting opinions, his parsimony, his alliance with Dismal Jemmy Allen. Whatever humour the series has is derived chiefly from the re-working of familiar jokes. Little is gained from the dissonances of language or from the reader's recognition of the original. It is in any case a hackneyed device, and probably was even in Hammond's day, although in a basically puritanical community, a biblical parody might have had a power to shock which has not survived. Nevertheless, the fact that the parody was not continued or repeated does suggest that Hammond

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[13]Ibid., 26-iv-1851, p. 870, II, iii.

found it unsatisfactory as a form of satire.

Much less laboured were the proceedings of the Judge and Jury Club, a series of seven mock-trials presented in the dialogue form so often used in reporting real court cases. The humour again relies heavily upon devices not much in favour these days, puns on surnames, indirect allusions to contemporary events and scandals. Hammond cannot however be criticised for not writing for posterity. Those wishing to understand the humour of South Australian colonists must reacquire a taste for word-play, dialect jokes, and archly emphasised quips. But not all the good-will in the world can hope at all times to breathe new life into matter which is purposely so ephemeral, and into sketches which need detailed foot-noting to be fully understood. Consider the case of THE QUEEN v SAMUEL SOCKS [Stocks] - INDICTMENT FOR CONSPIRACY, ETC.

> First Chop Baron [J. L. Barron, proprietor of the "London Coffee and Chop House"] on the Bench
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> .....
>
> The indictment against the prisoner, after the usual verbiage set forth,
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> "That on the 1st day of the month of April, in the year of our Lord, &c., the prisoner, Samuel Socks, did, with other disreputable persons, conspire to supplant one Paddy Keenstone [G. S. Kingston] of the City of Adelaide, in the Province of South Australia, gentleman, in his lawful endeavours to be returned by the lieges of her said Majesty, Queen Victoria, as a Member of Council, &c., and that the above conspiracy was attempted to be carried into effect by tampering with the prejudices of the voters of the District of Kooringa, in the said Province of South Australia, &c."
>
> Mr Hookey Walker [possibly William Walker], A. G. [Advocate General], then opened the case, and said -
>
> "Gentlemen - Proud as I feel this day in assuming, for the first time, the dignified position in which the penetration of our respected Governor has placed me; I feel prouder still in the consciousness that the present case is one of most vital importance to the interests of that community which the attempt of the accused has so signally insulted . . . . Had the prisoner gone elsewhere to exercise his stratagems, the offended voice of an indignant people might have slumbered in silence, or been raised only in shouts of derision at the imbecile attempt. But when he chooses these "diggins" as the theatre for the farce in which he would be principal actor, justice demands that he should be made to pay the full penalty due to his atrocious

> conduct. Were he a young man, we might allow a plea of mitigation on account of the natural impetuosity with which youthful blood rushes into any existing struggle. Were he a rich man, we might make some excuse for the interests he had at stake in the forward or retrograde movements of Colonial business. Were he a Burra Director, we might imagine that too much pride had puffed him up, or too much wealth turned his brain. But he is none of these.[14]

As a parody of the Victorian advocate's rhetoric, it was probably based on the practices of lawyers such as J. H. Fisher, Bakewell and Mann, men whose performances in court the Mercury had doubtless seen many times, not only as reporter but as both plaintiff and defendant. But as humour, it relies on the rather jejune device of twisted names (Peacock becomes Beancock, Mildred, Mill-dread), on the comedy of innuendoes, and on gibes which had become so automatic that they no longer had to be amusing to amuse.

Suffering from similar disabilities is Hammond's Caudle Lectures for Candidates, for although the title promises a parody of Mrs Caudle's Curtain Lectures and the sketch is in the form of a scolding monologue, its real force is derived from its "rare local hits".

> Mr Caudle! Mr Caudle! So, sir, you're come to bed at last; a pretty thing, indeed, to keep one up till this time of night, all alone. It's a shame, and there's not another husband in the world but yourself would have done it; but I suppose you're studying one of your electioneering speeches, your maiden speech, I believe that's what you men call it; I'm sure an old married man like you is, or ought to be, much better employed in bed than sitting up all night attending to maiden's speeches. Don't suppose I'm ignorant of your flirtations with those needlewomen - there, you needn't pretend to be asleep. Needlewomen, indeed! I know that every fraction spent upon those sluts is subtracted from my pin money, which I'm sure for a man of your standing in society, is ridiculously small. So you think you'll be returned for the City and head the poll, do you; but unless you behave more like a husband to me, I'll expose you to the electors, sir. I'll let 'em know why you take the chair at Agricultural Meetings, and drink everybody's

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[14]Ibid., 3-v-1851, p. 878, II, i.

> good health, and then get everybody to drink your good health in order that you may soap 'em (poor fools) by telling them that "it's the proudest moment of your life", and that "you'll do everything for everybody", when you know you won't. I'll tell 'em you're deceiving 'em, for it is a great matrimonial fact, that a man who won't do anything for his wife, is not capable of pleasing anybody else. You only did it to secure the agricultural interest, as you call it. Of course not - oh, no. Then the Germans; you go to their Hospital Meetings and tell them . . . .[15]

Much more durable are those prose features whose humour relies less on a detailed knowledge of colonial Adelaide than on the recognition of universal kinds of folly. One such is the "NARRATIVE OF AN EXPEDITION INTO THE INTERIOR OF THE AUSTRALIAN CONTINENT, WITH A DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIVES, THEIR RELIGION, MANNERS, AND CUSTOMS, ETC., From the Journal of a Cockney Tourist". Its form is the well established Munchausen-like traveller's tale; its title echoes books such as Eyre's Journals of Expedition in Central and Southern Australia, and Charles Sturt's Two Expeditions into the Interior of Southern Australia; its humour is the dead-pan new chum joke that had become so popular in the eastern colonies. Though not remarkable for even-ness of tone the following extract shows that not all of the Mercury's satire has dated:

> After my arrival in Adelaide, having been repeatedly told of the unknown state of the interior, and having always had, like Mungo Park, an ardent desire for adventure, I determined to set out on an exploring expedition up the country, and hand my name down to posterity as a benefactor of the human race, in the same illustrious list with a Park, a Young, a Humboldt, and, last but not least, a Hutton. Disregarding all the representations of my friends, I selected the North Eastern route, which I was told was the least frequented. The night previous to my departure I made my will, and wrote an affectionate letter to my dear mother and sisters in England, which I gave to my landlady with instructions to post it if I did not return within three years. I provided myself with a number of little trinkets, such as buttons, glass-beads, nails,

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[15]Ibid., 18-i-1851, p. 761, V, iii.

> &c., for traffic with the natives, as also a couple of blankets, a Britannia metal teapot (acquired at Whyte's last raffle), a cup and saucer, and a small store of provisions. I was armed with a double barrelled gun and a pair of pistols, to defend myself against the ferocious animals which infest these parts, and to provide myself with game when my provisions ran short.[16]

Then follows a passage which captures something of the manner of Sturt, who had earlier written:

> The morning on which I left Sydney a second time, under such doubtful circumstances, was perfectly serene and clear. I found myself at 5 a.m. of that delightful morning leading my horses through the gates of those barracks whose precincts I might never again enter, and whose inmates I might never again behold assembled in military array. Yet, although the chance of misfortune flashed across my mind, I was never lighter at heart, or more joyous in spirit. It appeared to me that the stillness and harmony of nature influenced my feelings on the occasion, and my mind forgot the storms of life, as nature at that moment seemed to have forgotten the tempests that sometimes agitate her.[17]

No less joyous was the Cockney Tourist, though he too observed the decencies of melancholic reflection before beginning his epic crossing of the East Park Lands.

> It was a beautiful sunshiny morning in December, when I sallied forth from the Stag Inn, with my knapsack on my back, and sped gaily along across the Park Lands till I came to a small bridge. Here I paused, and turned back to look at the distant steeples and public houses of Adelaide, which glimmered through the dust. My reflections were here of a most painful nature, so much so as almost to make me give up my expedition. Behind me I left civilisation, female society, brandy and water, and all the other little items which constitute man's happiness in this world; before me lay a vast and unknown desert, inhabited by savages, who might possibly be cannibals for any thing that I knew to the contrary. The thought of fame, however, re-assured me, and with one bound I crossed the bridge. After mounting a slight eminence, my road lay between two fences, and I observed at some distance a large building erecting, for the purpose of instructing the youth of the country in the English language. A very

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[16]Ibid., 18-i-1851, p. 758, II, iv.

[17]Charles Sturt, Two Expeditions into the interior of Southern Australia, during the years 1828, 1829, 1830, and 1831: with observations on the soil, climate, and general resources of the colony of New South Wales, II (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1833), pp. 8, 9.

> fine garden by the roadside, and a few rather neat cottages, shewed that the natives near Adelaide were beginning to appreciate some of the comforts of civilised life. After walking some distance I came to a brick building at a place where four roads met, apparently a caravanserai or inn. I entered and demanded some refreshment, which was brought; and after satisfying my wants, thanked the landlord for his kindness, and presented him with a brass button. Much to my surprise, the savage refused to accept it, and demanded money. I marvelled much to think how soon the most benighted heathens, learn the value of that dross. However I satisfied his claim, and left the inhospitable dwelling.[18]

As the sketch develops, the less certain becomes the irony. Factual description increases, as does the mechanical verbal humour characteristic of so many other Mercury features. The tourist displays some egregious ignorance of a rooster and of "a decoction of dried leaves", talks briefly of "spiders" which the inhabitants "dissolve . . . in their liquor, and drink it greedily", and abandons irony in favour of a sarcastic discussion of the natives' ideas of religion. After a night in the bush, fire-less and stung by ants and their allies, he "gathered the blankets around [him], left [his] clothes and goods to their fate, and slowly crawled along towards town", where he was "taken up by an officious policeman as a dangerous lunatic": "Thus it is that misfortune and disappointment are ever attendant upon true genius and enterprise in this world".[19]

This was to be the only one of its kind, perhaps because the realities of colonial experience, of trying to fashion a new Britannia in a landscape both alien and intractable, were too tender for satire, even as genial as the Cockney Tourist's. Much safer, because more familiar, were satirical portraits of typical colonists such as the

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[18] Mercury, loc. cit.

[19] Ibid., 18-i-1851, p. 759, III, i, ii.

Model Emigrant,[20] the Model Tenant,[21] the Barrister,[22] the Demagogue,[23] the Model Engineer,[24] the Model Canvasser.[25] The first two of these, uncomplimentary, even libellous, descriptions of a newly arrived newspaper editor, appeared in 1849, but it was not until the excitement preceding the 1851 elections that the series was resumed. With the exception of the Barrister, a flattering, Cheeryble-like portrait of J. H. Fisher - a respected old colonist and by a happy coincidence the Licensed Victuallers' Society's lawyer - the methods of satire are the same; snide remarks about the subject's private life and direct criticism of his public character. Contrast this cruel picture of the Model Tenant with the following unctuous portrayal of Fisher:

> He presents himself to the owner of a neat cottage as a gentleman lately arrived from England, who is about to start a newspaper that will shew up everybody and everything, from time immemorial to the present date, and beyond it. He asserts, with something like triumph, "I belong to the Douglas Jerrold school, by G-d!" but looks narrowly in your face to see if you are laughing at him on this account.
>
> He is very particular in enquiring whether the grocer, the butcher, and the baker are to be readily got at, and what upholsterer sells reasonably good furniture on the most moderate terms, as, owing to a stupid mistake of his broker's, his personal effects have not been shipped; he enquires also if the public-house at the corner draws mild ale, and whether it is frequented as it ought to be by the dutiful subjects of her majesty Victoria.
>
> Legally installed in the tradesman's tenement, he suddenly becomes a convert to the Irish system of occupancy, which means to pay no rent, or as little as possible. What he said was a charming little cottage a few weeks ago, he now damns as only fit for a dog kennel - swears the landlords

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[20] Ibid., 14-vii-1849, p. 121, V, i.

[21] Ibid., 21-vii-1849, p. 129, V, ii, iii.

[22] Ibid., 1-iii-1851, p. 809, V, iii.

[23] Ibid., 8-iii-1851, p. 815, III, v.

[24] Ibid., 19-iv-1851, p. 862, II, i, ii.

[25] Ibid., 21-xii-1850, p. 729, V, iv.

> are thieves and extortioners, and manifests a profound admiration for Mr John Stephens' lecture on sewers.[26]

Fisher on the other hand is limned with almost Dickensian good humour:

> Go to the Supreme Court: mark him, a somewhat aged and white haired man with a large oval, jolly face, laughing and twinkling eyes, "a fair round belly, with good capon lined", and a still, erect, and manly bearing. In addressing juries, most insinuatingly plausible, and obsequiously candid; fidgetting his gown at periods, with satisfactory self-assurance that he is doing his client service, for the jury ever look smilingly on the counsel, if not on the cause. Hear him cross-examine the opposing witnesses, luring, frightening, flattering, but never bullying. Watch his merry old face in a row upon "a point" with his Honor, how he stands corrected, but sits down unconvinced; and then with what a glorious wink to everybody he acknowledges his own gammon. Observe the vain effort to appear aghast at the incorrigible foreman who announces an adverse verdict, or the laughing look of triumph if the cause be gained.[27]

Much more in character were the Mercury's caricatures of its current enemies, for instance the Demagogue;

> Charles Simeon Rabbit [C. S. Hare] is a great man in his own estimation, a very great man; he assumeth a bluff, John Bull style of address, which imposeth upon the inexperienced, who are tickled thereby, forgetting that when in the stirrup, no tyrant is half so bitter as your heretofore popularity hunter,[28]

or the Model Engineer;

> He sheweth his teeth with a "Carker" like smile when speaking about "Jack, Tom, and Harry," whose conduct he places in contradistinction with his own. He weareth rings and ruffles, and rejoiceth in Eau de Cologne and white kid gloves, which he weareth in the remotest districts of the bush, carefully placing on the exterior of the latter a multiplicity of rings wherewith to astonish the weak nerves of the bushmen's wives and daughters. He seeketh popularity not so much by wishing to live in the bosoms of the former as in those of the latter.[29]

Kindliness of course had little place in a satirical weekly, and

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[26]Ibid., 21-vii-1849, p. 129, V, iii.

[27]Ibid., 1-iii-1851, p. 809, V, iii.

[28]Ibid., 8-iii-1851, p. 815, III, iv.

[29]Ibid., 19-iv-1851, p. 862, II, i.

in any case was more difficult to convey than disparagement, just as medieval gargoyles are much more satisfying than angels. Moreover the hubbub of rowdy electioneering gave some kind of sanction to character-assassination of this kind. After the Council had been elected, however, it must have been too risky to continue such overt attacks, and so Hammond returned to more conventional, less blatant modes.

Yet though personalities were the Mercury's raison d' être, Hammond was always willing to vary his paper's emphases. While most of his rivals steadfastly refused to see Adelaide's nakedness and spoke as if it were a fashionable town in one of the more distant provinces, Hammond was prepared to acknowledge a little of the country's strangeness in a proposed series of Australian Tales. He thought so highly of them that he regretted that he could not afford "to have them illustrated by a Gill or an Angas".[30] The other papers had contained reviews and extracts from the journals of explorers and had reported local explorations, but only Hammond realised that fiction, in the form of Sketches from Life in Australia;[31] could satisfy both his readers' hunger for light literature and their curiosity about the country on whose edge they were so precariously poised. The author, writing under the name of Osiris Australis, "a gentleman of known literary talent", whose "elegance and fluency of style" would, in Hammond's opinion, be speedily recognised, must have originally planned to write a whole sequence:

> It is proposed to write a set consisting, as may appear advisable, of a greater or less number of these Tales.
> The materials are abundant, and in very many instances, gathered from the personal observations of the Author, who has

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[30]Ibid., 7-ix-1850, p. 605, V, ii.

[31]Ibid., 14-ix-1850, p. 610, II, i, ii, iii; 21-ix-1850, p. 618, II, i, ii, iii; 28-ix-1850, p. 626, II, i, ii, iii.

> thought it desirable to print them, as a means of coaxing the public into the A.B.C. of Colonial education.
>
> The interest would not in every case turn upon the Aborigines, but occasionally upon the diversified adventures of private "Bushmen," or of Explorers, - of the Bush Police - or of Bushrangers, the writer's acquaintance with matters of colonial interest having been gathered during nearly twenty years of wandering in the different settlements, whether penal as Van Diemen's Land; semi-penal as Port Phillip (now re-christened "Victoria"); or free ab initio as South Australia. . . .[32]

Unfortunately these ambitious plans came to very little, one story in three instalments; little enough for the modern reader to base his understanding of how literary gentlemen viewed their environment beyond the town. The first and only tale is rather flat, with its hero, Charles Montgomery, a sea-captain of "unusual stature but of perfect proportions . . . of an ancient though not very wealthy family in Wales"[33] slain before he ever came alive. More a sermon than an entertainment, it suggests that the remaining stories would have been no great loss, if sentiments such as this were to be their foundation:

> Into all uncultivated minds, whether amongst the untamed children of nature who inhabit the wilds of a newly discovered land, or amongst the uneducated classes of refined and luxurious countries, ideas almost always abtain [sic] access by simple observation, with little or no conscious ratiocination; and the remark applies especially to superstitious impressions; nor is this all, for exactly in proportion to the extent of credulity is the amount of tenacity with which impressions so acquired are retained. Received without examination, and generally without reason, they are entangible by argument, and impervious to truth; the well-clad bumpkin of Lancashire can never be persuaded that his cow died of the botts rather than of Grammer Hogsflesh, nor can the naked savage comprehend the existence of natural cause for effects, when the latter alone are presented to his cognizance. Behold then our friend Charles Montgomery at once invested in the estimation of the simple aborigines, with those attributed of a celestial nature in which most savage tribes agree to clothe their Deity. That these supposed attributes are not always of the most benevolent or loveable character is well known; and who amongst us shall say that the phenomenon rests not

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[32]Ibid., 14-ix-1850, p. 610, II, i.

[33]Ibid., 21-ix-1850, p. 618, II, i, ii.

> upon similar grounds in the cerebrum (so to speak) of the sage, and the cerebellum of the savage, each of whom in his own degree, is prone to take to himself the credit of all the good, and to cast upon external influences the onus of all the evils which may accrue to him, the sage forgetting or disregarding what the savage never had the advantage of knowing, the pregnant "Gnothi seauton", and here again we may draw from the savages of Australia, an illustration of the invariability of nature's laws, for although their notion of a merciful and all-wise Being is faint, almost to nullity, their estimation of the power and cunning of a malevolent spirit is most enormous.[34]

Stylistically the tale is more or less what one would expect from a writer with a colonial reputation for fluency and elegance: "grateful shade", "bubbling rivulet", "sparkling dew-drops", "wooded glades", "mighty canoply", "majestic eagle", "sable denizens", "patient artificers", the decorative phrases that fine writing required. But it is equally obvious too that the author was interested in the language and customs of the aborigines who eventually kill the hero on the beaches near Yankylilly. It is a rather detached interest but not unsympathetic, the same mixture of patronage and wonder that marks another contemporary account, the adventures of Brown and Raikes in John Sherer's The Gold-Finder of Australia.[35] Osiris Australis takes the trouble to gloss not only commonplace words like "waddies" ("A heavy cudgel, used as a missile against birds, a staff against enemies, and a 'twig' to support connubial discipline"[36]), "wurleys", "lubras" and the colonial meaning of "scrub" ("Large tracts of thick bushes, matted with creepers, and fortified with prickly plants"[37]), but also "currayong", "Omba" ("An indigenous plant resembling the lettuce in flavor"[38]), and

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[34]Ibid., 28-ix-1850, p. 626, II, i.

[35]John Sherer (ed.), The Gold-Finder of Australia; how he went, how he fared, and how he made his fortune. Penguin Colonial Facsimiles (London: Clarke, Beeton & Co., 1853), pp. 89-134.

[36]Mercury, op. cit.

[37]Ibid., 14-ix-1850, p. 610, II, i.

[38]Ibid., II, ii.

"bhurtee", ("A large white grub, which the natives highly esteem, when UNCOOKED resembling cream; roasted it solidifies, and assumes the taste of a Filbert"[39]). Doubtless he used such words to heighten "an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative", as he did with his account of the natives using smoke signals to

> convey intelligence to their own outlying parties or to their allies, and not unfrequently [sic] the route of a supposed enemy or of an intended prey . . . several days before the event indicated to the distant tribes could occur, a fact which has been seen several times illustrated in a marked way, when for instance many hundreds of blacks have been found assembled to dispute the passage of overland parties conducting flocks or herds from Sydney to Adelaide, and this at points of the journey where a comparatively weak tribe were known to inhabit the circumjacent country.[40]

In his attitudes, however, he reveals something of the liberal colonist's concern for and yet suspicion of the aborigines. As a Christian, he would have felt a moral responsibility to bring the truth to a "poor benighted black fellow- creature";[41] as a member of a community almost obsessed with "the gospel of work and the doctrine of self-help",[42] he could not but deplore a race which seemed indifferent to both. On the one hand he could justify the murder of "our unfortunate hero . . . [who] fell prone upon his hands and knees, one of the spears passing completely through his body, and protruding some inches below the chest"[43] by recounting the circumstances leading up to an earlier murder of a native by one of Montgomery's crew. On the

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[39]Ibid. [40]Ibid., 28-ix-1850, p. 626, II, i.

[41]John W. Bull, Early Experiences of Life in South Australia, and an Extended Colonial History (2d ed.; E. S. Wigg & Son and Sampson Low, London, 1884), p. 155.

[42]J. F. C. Harrison, The Early Victorians, 1832-1851 (St Albans: Panther Books Ltd., 1973), p. 169. [First published Great Britain: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971.]

[43]Mercury, 28-ix-1850, p. 626, II, iii.

other, he could counsel caution in dealing with natives, thereby striking a compromise between the doctrine of the brother-hood of man and the practicalities of dealing with "greedy and thievish" savages, whom God had chosen not to make Englishmen.

> It is by no means intended here to claim for the untaught savage a character wholly exempt from those treacherous and revengeful elements, which unhappily the utmost cultivation of intellect and morals has failed to eradicate from human nature; on the contrary, we are well convinced that in all communication with them, the greatest caution and care will ever be needful, to guard against the mischievous operations of these subtle passions, violent and dangerous as they are in proportion as their possessors (white or black) are removed from the hackneyed but comprehensive ingenuas didicisse of the classic.[44]

If this one tale had set the pattern of all the other "diversified adventures" of private Bushmen, Explorers or Bushrangers then Osiris Australis's failure to keep to his original plan is not much to be regretted. Their narrative interest is likely to have been slight, their moral reflections too obtrusive, their concern with the quaint or unusual somewhat irritating. Nevertheless, it does show a genuine interest in the Australian aborigine. Although this interest was to be more systematically demonstrated in some of the papers presented to the Adelaide Philosophical Society, whose founders had urged the necessity to record "the many interesting natural phenomena which are altogether peculiar to this country",[45] in monographs such as Mr Moorhouse's "The Structure of the Aboriginal Dialects of New Holland",[46] the fact that a colonial writer should employ fiction for the same purposes and that Hammond should so enthusiastically support its

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[44]Ibid., II, ii.

[45]First Report, Adelaide Philosophical Society, presented at the Annual General Meeting, 24-i-1854, p. 1.

[46]Ibid., Sixth Monthly Meeting, 21-vii-1853, p. 3.

publication shows that colonists generally were beginning to widen their vision, to look beyond the town and business. The assumption that the common reader could be just as interested in Australian subjects as the colonial intellectual suggests that colonists generally were beginning to feel at home.

Too much should not be inferred from this single example, but similar attitudes are implicit in the tale, "The Steeple Chase for a Bride".[47] In structure it is little better than Osiris Australis's sketch, although it is much more lively in language and much less sententious. It consists of a description of a steeple-chase, told in the language commonly used by sporting journalists, sandwiched between two episodes of fiction. The steeple chase was initiated by two rival suitors, Ben Burton and Jack Jasper, the winner to marry the unnamed heroine. The ending is predictably surprising:

> But mark ye gentle readers, mark the fickleness of woman-kind. Never chance breaking your heart or your neck, where the case is doubtful. She married Jack Jasper [the loser] after all, and left the "old un" to extinguish the fire of his affection in the best way he could. And he did extinguish it with copious draughts of divers liquors, whose names and titles this historian recordeth not. 'Twas a long job, and terminated with his life alone. At last he died "a wictim o' love and lush," in the bloom of his years, at the premature age of 78.[48]

Then follows a comic epitaph compounded of cockney slang, thieves' cant, a kind of Weller-ese, all in the rhythms of a bush ballad:

> As was inscribed on his tombstone:-
> EPITAPH.
> "All lads of mettle, warning take by I,
> And never for a faithless woman sigh,
> Lest, when yer think yer race of love is run,
> The prize obtained, the lovely crittur won,
> You find yourself put out, cut up, and done,-

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[47] Mercury, 18-i-1851, p. 758, II, ii, iii, iv.

[48] Ibid.

> Till, like poor buried Ben, to earth yer goes
> In early youth - pale - 'cept the red red rose-
> Y [sic] buds that blossom on yer grog-gemmed nose.[49]

The juxtaposition of Australian terms like "dingo" and "scrubby" with White-chapel expressions such as "Hows'ever", "lush", "yer old knacker", "Tisn't the jonteel thing" is continued in the prose, and would now seem incongruous had not C. J. Dennis accustomed us to much the same kind of hybrid:

> From the starting place, which was in the centre of a gum forest to Dingo River, was a distance of five miles and upwards by the line laid down. At the commencement, after leaving the forest, it was necessary to cross a swampy piece of ground, then through a scrubby thickly timbered flat, full of holes and roots; after which the open forest again, which near the township, had been felled in all directions, leaving logs, heads of trees, stumps, and broken boughs to struggle amongst. On sighting the river it was necessary to jump a four-railed fence into a stubble field, then over a rasper[50] that separated it from the river, or else to take the side line fence, make for the road down to the ford, and then race up the distance back to the public house door. The former plan, involving two fences and a charge at the brook, otherwise the Dingo River, was much the shortest route, if not the most practicable.
>
> "Now Ben," said Jack Jasper, "bring yer old knacker along, and name him afore you start, and then you'll see the Lady-killer no more this side the river!"
>
> "That's as may be," replied Ben. "Hows'ever, you wants the hoss's name and you shall have it. I've christened him "Mistake", and mind you don't make a mistake, my boy."
>
> They were off![51]

The story appeared under the caption, "Original Australian Yarns", a triply mis-leading title, for neither its originality nor its Australian-ness is very remarkable, nor did this story have any successors. It was in fact something of a novelty in South Australian journalism, even in a paper as devoted to sport as the Mercury was. Although the landscape in which the steeple chase moves is Australian

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[49] Ibid.

[50] "Rasper: Hunting. A high difficult fence 1812". (O.E.D.)

[51] Mercury, 18-i-1851, p. 758, II, iii.

enough with its fallen trees and mill-heads, there is little that suggests a South Australian setting. Rather, it seems like a derivative of the bush yarn which had become popular in the newspapers in the older colonies, with its bushmen stereotypes and its emphasis upon action. As a short story, its merits are few enough, but as an indication of yet another of Hammond's innovations, it is particularly valuable.

It is a pity that fiction formed so small a part of colonial journalism, for there is, outside the literary magazines and the Mercury, little other evidence of the common reader's taste in prose which was other than utilitarian or functional. Novels like Clara Morison were rare and in any case were published in England primarily for English readers, for the well-to-do. Other kinds of colonial writing, the reminiscences for example of men like John W. Bull and Alexander Tolmer, were written many years after the events they recount. The editor who reviewed Notes of a Gold Digger, and Gold Digger's Guide was probably right when he facetiously said:

> MR BONWICK certainly deserves consideration from Colonial Editors. But for him, their critical faculties might rust, and their libraries receive no additions in the shape of presentation copies. He is almost the only author, and certainly the most voluminous, these southern lands can boast of; and whatever may be the intrinsic merit of his productions, he is entitled to all praise as one of the pioneers of Australian literature.[52]

Such a dearth of locally written prose emphasises Hammond's enterprise as an editor. Without his support, colonial writers would have had even fewer opportunities to have their work read, and although there seem not to have been many writers clamouring for a hearing, the Mercury was most responsive to their feeble call. Even so, the

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[52]Morning Chronicle, 6-xii-1852, III, iv.

Mercury's sponsorship of locally written fiction was never anything more than a secondary consideration, a mere deviation from the paper's main emphases; sport, commerce, topical events, personalities. That it also served as a kind of literary magazine is a happy by-product of its other concerns. To treat its prose and its verse as if they were complete works of art, detachable not only from their times but from the milieu in which they appear, is clearly pointless. To subject a satirical verse such as "The Church Militant" to a New Criticism kind of scrutiny is to forget that it is an aspect of journalism with its own canons of excellence. Because of its topicality, and its gaiety, such a poem should not be made the target of the heavy guns of literary analysis. The only possible conclusion of such an approach is to dismiss the verse either as incomprehensible or not worth comprehending.

THE CHURCH MILITANT.

"Here, here - it's all about cocks and fighting."
SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER.

We blamed thee, Badcock, that thou dids't cut off
The promontoried feature of thy love,
And as we told thy nomen, which the scoff
Of ribald roysterers never failed to move,
(Oh, patronymic vile!), we raised a cough
Behind the lily whiteness of our glove;
Choky nor stepper can thy honors doff.
Rising thy LIGNEOUS namesake far above,
Thou didst cut off THY nose - he's in the lurch
For merely "snubbing" that of MOTHER CHURCH.

CHURCH MOUSE.[53]

The fastidious reader might find the joke on Badcock's name predictable and vulgar, the slang expressions for "gaol" and "hanging" stylistically offensive, the belated reference to the church imperfectly

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[53]Mercury, 25-i-1851, p. 769, V, iii.

related to the early part of the verse, even allowing the connection established by the pun on "snubbing". Such an orthodox methodology of analysis is clearly not warranted. Readers looking for the perfections of anthology pieces should not search for them in newspapers. But if they wish to form an impression of the whole range of colonial journalism in the later 1840s and early 1850s, then they should not neglect the Mercury. Its shortcomings are obvious enough, but just because it was so closely rooted in its own times and was so involved in the affairs of its day, it offers more than adequate compensation. Not all its humour has worn well. That does not lessen, however, its worth as a gauge of the colonial temper nor its value as literary and cultural history. Fortunately, the paper has much more than antiquarian interest. Just by contrast with modern journalism, hedged in by laws of libel and talk of ethical standards, it is refreshing to read a paper which says plainly what it thinks. How much more lively would modern papers be if their editors spoke as frankly to their correspondents as Hammond spoke to his!

> DECENCY.- We noticed the shameless wretch with her ill-looking seducer at the Theatre, on Thursday last, and wondered at her assurance in so publicly blazoning her infamy. He certainly is an ugly dog, though she is no beauty; but before long she'll heartily regret the kind and indulgent husband whom she has driven from her, when she finds out the real value of "her most filthy bargain."
>
> POST (AND RAIL) OFFICE.- We think your complaint unfounded. We always find the gentlemen of this department ready and willing to afford every accommodation consistent with their duty. They have much to do, and you were probably in haste, and therefore impatient; besides your allegation is bad upon the face of it, as you say you called for a valentine. Now the coming of this description of communication is generally supposed to be unknown to the recipient, and we do not wonder if, when the nature of your enquiry transpired, the clerks laughed at you. In future get your fair friends to send them by hand.
>
> ENQUIRER.- The Medical Gentleman you mention is NOT a Roman Catholic, nor does he belong to any sect here; has more faith in Esculapius than all the Fathers, ancient or

> modern; and we are convinced prefers Bavarian Beer to all the Waters of Baptism, however administered.
>
> MILES'S BOY.- We cannot insert your castigation of the "Dray-Tax King," as it is too severe; he's a good fellow, but hasty in his cups[;] we'll talk to him next time he's in town, like a Dutch uncle[;] if he doesn't reform, then let him look out.[54]

Where else in South Australian newspapers is to be found such enjoyment of folly? such an unashamed delight in scandal? such unflagging pleasure in plays on words?

That Hammond by his innovations extended the range of colonial journalism is indisputable. But he did more than this. He gave new dimensions to the conventional view of colonial life at the mid-century. More than any of his rivals, he portrayed a more subtle social fabric than papers like the Register chose to do. He showed Adelaide's low life more clearly, he showed some of the shadows lying behind respectable facades. He showed that the Mercury's readers were very little different from the rest of us.

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[54]Ibid., 8-ii-1851, p. 784, IV, i.

Chapter 11

THEATRICAL CRITICISM

In the narrow sense of fault-finding, criticism was the essence of the Mercury. In it were criticised prominent citizens, government policy, the law, and any other aspect of colonial life which could be regarded as germane to a paper devoted to very reverend sport. There has however been a tendency among those who have noted the paper's existence, to overlook, amid its more lurid concerns, its real value as criticism in a broader, more literary sense. Occupying a significant part of most issues were articles, squibs and editorials which had as their theme the performing arts, particularly music and theatrical performances, and to a lesser extent, the pictorial arts of painting and sketching. True, these were also dealt with in the other newspapers, but generally less fully than in the Mercury, and from a viewpoint which tended to ignore the involvement of the lower classes. Because the purpose of Hammond's paper was to show to colonial society itself at play, it affords the modern reader a fresh appreciation of some of the complexities of life in the late 1840s and early 1850s, certainly a different appreciation from that which he would have formed had he read only the Register or the South Australian. Had no copies of the Mercury survived, then our picture of colonial life would be so much the flatter, so much more unexciting in its texture.

Except for the Mercury, the modern reader would have little reason to doubt that Adelaide of say 1851 was only a smaller version of the town portrayed by Trollope in the 1870s; respectable, sober, industrious and more than a little dull. This is indeed implicit in

much of C. H. Spence's 1854 novel, Clara Morison. Even among the Forest Creek diggers, the South Australians spoke as if they were a homogeneous class and as if no one would challenge their claim to be ". . . by far the most respectable part of the digging community."[1] In the other newspapers is portrayed a comparatively simplified society, with the middle and lower classes clearly delineated and their interconnections neglected or glossed over. They do occasionally give glimpses of a town which was much less simple, a town with as much of San Francisco in it as Bath: "Irish orphans" loitering under the verandahs of Hindley-street hotels, seamen fighting the police at Port Adelaide, Germans imitating their homeland villages in the upper reaches of the Torrens, native children swimming at Marino and refusing to return to their lessons, footpads lying in wait by the river crossings. But only the Mercury consistently focused its attention upon those occasions when class barriers could not be easily maintained; at the races, in the courts, at the theatre. Without the Mercury's gossipy interest in the people who went to such entertainments, it would be easy to underestimate for instance the German influence on colonial life, particularly on its serious music, or the Jewish community's on its theatre. And without Hammond, it would be easy to give to Adelaide's "better sort" virtues to which they were not fully entitled. How else could we have learned that the proprietor of the Rosina-street brothel took as much as fifty pounds a night and was able to

> laugh[s] . . . at the idea of detection, because certain Government officials, in various branches of the service,

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[1]Catherine H. Spence, Clara Morison, intro. Susan Eade. Seal Australian Fiction (Adelaide: Rigby, 1971), p. 238. [First published London: John W. Parker & Son, 1854.]

[were] amongst his visitors?[2]

The reason for the Mercury's superior knowledge of these aspects of South Australian life lies principally in its involvement in the hotel business. Though it was much later that Adelaide came to be called the city of churches and hotels (almost a tautology in any town that was as much a protestant frontier town as Adelaide was at the mid-century), to have described it as a publicans' town for most of the decade 1845 to 1854 would not have been far from the truth. Hotels were focal to many of the community's activities, too focal to judge from E. J. Crawford's complaints against the condition imposed by the Bench of Magistrates:

> The Licensed Victualler must pay £25 license [sic], and must, whether he will or no, find securities for good conduct;
> Build a house to suit the taste of the Magistrates, often very much larger than needed;
> To build large stables;
> To put up stockyards, whether he will have a horse or bullock to come to stay with him once in a month or not;
> To keep a stock of hay and corn, and have sufficient servants in readiness to attend upon any one, - or woe betide him the first time a Magistrate calls at his house and cannot get his horse fed and attended to;
> He is obliged to be civil, and prompt in his attendance or - look out for his license [sic];
> To have beds and lodgings for travellers and receive them at all times;
> To keep a light burning all night, no matter the price of oil;
> To close his house and suspend his trade at a fixed hour;
> To shut his house up on the Sunday (which, though a wholesome and proper rule, is nevertheless a restriction);
> .....
> He is obliged to receive any corpse, no matter its conditions.[3]

Though some were described as little better than hovels, others had rooms large enough and sufficiently elegant to accommodate many kinds

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[2]Mercury, 14-xii-1850, p. 721, V, i.

[3]Ibid., 16-viii-1851, p. 1002, VI, i, ii.

of respectable meetings; Old Colonists' Dinners, the celebrations of the various national societies, the arcane proceedings of lodges of every description. One hotel, the Black Horse in Leigh-street, served for a short while as a vaudeville theatre and as the venue of Quadrille parties. Nor were officials unwilling to use hotels for weightier business:

> Pursuant to advertisement a Special General Meeting of this body [the Licensed Victuallers' Society] was held on Tuesday morning last at the Temple Tavern, but in consequence of the crowded state of the house, occasioned by the sitting of the Court and of the Licensing Bench, the meeting was adjourned to the Scotch Laddie, where the business was proceeded with.[4]

By the end of 1850, almost three hundred hotel licences had been granted, including no less than twenty-seven in Hindley-street according to Alexander Tolmer's testimony. Because of its close relationship with hotels, the Mercury was at an advantage in its coverage of those activities which took place in them. Doubtless there would have been pubs too "low" for the Mercury to notice, except in terms such as these:

> It is no rash statement to assert that at least three-fourths of the deaths which occur in this Colony are the result of over indulgence in ardent spirits, an evil hugely aggravated by the introduction of crude and acrid liquids from the numerous illicit stills which abound.[5]

But there were others which justified their being described as "noble edifices", hotels like the Royal Exchange, the Phoenix, and the Blenheim, where the genteel could with propriety disport themselves, at concerts, lectures, dances, to which ". . . any brother [could] take or send his sister as to a private party."[6] And it is because Hammond

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[4]Ibid., 15-ix-1849, p. 190, II, ii.

[5]Ibid., 25-v-1850, p. 484, IV, ii.

[6]Ibid., 5-i-1850, p. 317, I, iii.

was more concerned with such hotels than his rivals that he provides such a valuable counter-balance to their more fastidious journalism.

A corollary of the Mercury's involvement with hotels is its interest in Adelaide's theatre folk. Apart from an early attempt to establish in Franklyn-street a small theatre ". . . after the unique plan of the Parisian minor theatres, embracing merely a pit and dress boxes, with a box saloon,"[7] the history of Adelaide's early theatres becomes part of the history of its pubs. It was not until 1850 that "the theatre ceased to be a mere adjunct to the taverns, and became an institution in its own right":[8] and even during that year, when three disaffected members of John Lazar's company decided to establish a separate vaudeville theatre, they chose the principal room of an hotel for their first performances.

Just in the way of business, therefore, Hammond was involved in Adelaide's theatre life, particularly as Adelaide's three main professional actors, Coppin, Lazar, and King, were among its leading publicans as well. But more than this, he was a keen theatre-goer, and consequently gave to the professional theatre a good deal of free publicity. He regularly reviewed, or had his reporters review, each change of programme. He announced forthcoming productions in paragraphs of local intelligence and drew his readers' attention to benefit nights and to the arrival of new talents. Like his rivals, he was obliged to print advertisements for the New Queen's Theatre and then under its new name, the Royal Victoria, and later still for the Port

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[7]Henry Capper, South Australia; containing the History of the Rise, Progress and Present State of the Colony, Hints to Emigrants, and a Variety of Useful and Authentic Information (3d ed.; London: Henry Capper, 1839), p. 97.

[8]Gerald Fischer, "The Professional Theatre in Adelaide, 1838-1922", Australian Letters, II (March 1960), p. 86.

Adelaide Theatre, but he was under no business obligation to publicise them to the extent that he did.

It is somewhat paradoxical that Hammond, normally so scarifying in his comments on amateur actors, should be so benign in so many of his criticisms of professionals. In this, as in other respects, he differed markedly from his chief journalistic adversary, John Stephens, who seldom bothered about amateurs and was unfailingly tactful when he did. And yet if Stephens caught the faintest whiff of prurience from the professional theatre, he was more explosive than Hammond himself. As a general rule, he gave it little more than routine announcements and some perfunctory comment: as he said himself, "our notices were occasional, as our visits were irregular."[9] As a Johnny Drinkwater, he must have seen the theatre's association with hotels as morally most dubious, though he would not have been fool enough to believe that all who attended theatres were in grave spiritual danger. He did however imply that there were too many on the stage and in the audience whose breeding was distinctly "low". Yet arising out of one of his irregular visits to the theatre came a most interesting and revealing statement of a middle-class dissenter's antipathy to the stage and of his critical assumptions. Stephens' sensibilities were so outraged by a performance by John Lazar, that he abandoned his usually guarded references to acting, and wrote a forceful and indiscreet editorial entitled, "A Licentious Stage", echoing perhaps the title of that more famous puritanical tirade, Jeremy Collier's Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage. It is a significant statement, both because of what it reveals of his attitudes

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[9]Register, 16-i-1850, III, ii.

to drama, views presumably common among those who valued their respectability too highly to be regular theatre-goers, and because of the contrast it provides with Hammond, who displayed sufficient knowledge of the London stage to have some claims to be regarded as a critic.

Stephens' views were basically those of an intelligent, straight-laced outsider; Hammond's were more liberal and better-informed. In their rejection of immorality on the stage, they were united, but in their recognition of it, they were worlds apart. Stephens saw the stage as a threat to propriety at best, as a sink of iniquity at worst. Hammond on the other hand hoped that there were "few really sensible, well-educated men" who could

> uphold the puritanical doctrine of the stage being one of the devil's choicest allurements to lead mankind to the "Bottomless Pit," and still fewer who, by a tortuous kind of reasoning, can, in any way, connect the Drama with the encouragement of vice.[10]

Stephens would have been proud to number himself among that few. He charged Lazar with dealing out ". . . with unblushing effrontery, allusions culled from or calculated for the especial gratification of the ladies of Light-square, who are, we confess, his firmest supporters."[11] He warned parents against permitting their children to attend "this hotbed of demoralization".[12] "As the Theatre is at present conducted, no man can sit out a performance without being disgusted; no lady can enter the impure precincts without contamination."[13] Whatever the moral danger, Stephens had apparently not accepted the fact that the theatre did not attempt to please solely those children, or

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[10] *Mercury*, 19-iv-1851, p. 864, IV, iv.

[11] *Register*, 16-i-1850, III, ii.

[12] Ibid., III, iii.

[13] Ibid.

their parents, whose innocence he was so anxious to protect. Unlike Hammond, he resented the fact that the fare offered by Lazar was selected not for the fastidious few but for coarser appetites.

His outburst provoked the inevitable libel suit, out of which arose a later trial for perjury, but the value of Stephens' energetic editorial lies in what it reveals of the common reader's critical assumptions, and in its intrinsic worth as an example of forceful journalistic prose. It begins mildly enough, with Stephens making much of his forbearance in not previously criticising the weaknesses of earlier productions. He gave seemingly generous praise to the manager, "for keeping the house open when, it appeared to us, the attendance was not sufficient to protect him from loss".[14] In this, he was more liberal than dissenters like William Giles, who regarded the theatre as a home for the devil, and appropriately enough on one occasion refused to send the Company's fire appliance when the Port Adelaide Theatre was threatened. He then went on to catalogue those things which he could have found fault with had he been of a carping disposition:

> We made every allowance for the insufficient support received, and we were complaisant enough to suppose that there really was no histrionic talent in the colonies, except that possessed by the manager, his family, and the "ladies and gentlemen" whose "sweet voices" he secured. We sneered not at the taste that, with such appliances, suggested the production of "Grand Oriental Spectacles," or the manner in which they were got up; the miserable contrivances were passed over; the shabby wardrobe unnoticed; the wretched scenery uncondemned, although never appropriate to the piece, nor in keeping with itself, and seldom shifted into the intended position until it was time to remove it again, while, through the openings, the audience were favoured with "long-drawn vistas" into that terra incognita, the back of the stage. We complained not of trees and flowers growing in the recesses of a 'donjonkeep," or marble columns springing from the deck of a vessel, and

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[14]Ibid., III, ii.

> were content to imagine a little back parlour a Parisian saloon; a cottage, with a practical door, an Italian colonnade.[15]

He also forgave curtailments of the players, the interpolations of the prompter, the ruthless scissors of the manager and the "treacherous memory of the mimic, who frequently substituted his own amusing mistakes for the 'ponderous levity' of his author."[16] Such a parade of lost critical opportunities makes one wonder what he would have said had he not decided to be tolerant. Statements such as these do more than show the mechanics of colonial theatre production; they also reveal the naturalistic standards of the day. By commenting on the lack of verisimilitude of the scenery, of the properties and costumes, and by noting muffed lines and truncated scripts, Stephens was expressing the kind of petty criticism to be expected from a superior, if not particularly sympathetic critic. But when he turned to the style of acting, especially stage "business", he took the stance of all who judge art from a moral point of view.

In an earlier chapter, attention was drawn to the colonial fondness for quoting Shakespeare, especially his tragedies, and specifically Hamlet. As far as theatre criticism was concerned, Hammond's and Stephens' range of reference was even narrower; Hamlet's advice to the players. Stephens in particular made frequent use of this part-scene, treating it as if it summed up all that was worth knowing about acting. The key-note of his "Licentious Stage" editorial is even narrower still; the moral implications of o'er stepping the modesty of nature. He showed no awareness that Shakespeare had given rather different advice in Henry V, inviting audiences to let their

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[15]Ibid., 16-i-1850, III, ii.

[16]Ibid.

imaginations work and to transcend the limitations of unworthy scaffolds and wooden Os. Stephens seems to have equated modesty, not with restraint, but with decency. According to him, Lazar had with his gestures and facial expressions "so outraged propriety"[17] that he had driven the writer to abandon his former disinterested tolerance, and to attack obscenity for the sake of "peace, good order, and public decency."[18] Lazar's offences were so rank - to move briefly from the advice-to-the-players scene - that Stephens felt impelled to castigate them.

> There can, to our minds, be no greater, no more dangerous nuisance, than an indecently conducted theatre - no greater theatrical atrocity than to announce a "juvenile night," to lower the prices so as to induce an attendance of young people, and then to present an entertainment not only indecent, but brutally and unnaturally so.[19]

Though such a lengthy, emotional statement was not a common occurrence in the Register, the morality underpinning it most certainly was. Thomas Bowdler and Mrs Grundy had survived their journey to the colonies and were in remarkably good health. The editorial would have sounded a familiar note throughout the middle classes everywhere. Parliamentarians such as Shaftesbury, novelists such as Charles Kingsley and more especially Dickens, journalists like Henry Mayhew, had drawn to the attention of the Victorian middle classes the moral corruption that the young were exposed to in the factories and the work-houses. Any colonial writer, therefore, whose chief motive was to defend the young against defilement in other places was certain to have the approbation of many. Unfortunately for Stephens, the man he had attacked was very well thought of, despite triple handicaps; being

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[17]Ibid. [18]Ibid. [19]Ibid., III, ii, iii.

a Jew and an actor and a publican. And so when he denied the charge, and sought the protection of the law, which found for the plaintiff, Stephens' supporters must have been in a minority. Even so, there would have been many decent people who felt that Stephens had spoken for them, and who would have agreed that decency and naturalism were sine qua non to successful theatre.

If "A Licentious Stage" reflects the prejudices of an austere and not very enthusiastic supporter of the theatre, Hammond's articles generally, and especially one entitled "Our Colonial Theatricals",[20] show the attitudes of one who was open-minded, worldly, and pragmatic. His sympathies were wide. He could speak of Rachel Lazar's performance of the Jewess with enthusiasm, claiming that she and her father had sustained the characters "with the greatest pathos, . . . so as to draw tears from the audience"[21] and yet so admire Coppin and Lazar's foolery as Slasher and Crasher that he thought his "risible facilities" could do himself damage. As much of his other writing shows, Hammond was not normally tactful and good-natured but in those theatrical notices which went beyond a factual summary of which actors played what parts, he obviously tried to mention the best features of the production and to soften his criticisms of their worst. When in doubt, he remained non-committal, as in this review of Morton King's performance in Hamlet:

> On Thursday Mr Morton King made his appearance for the first time since his return to the colony, in the character of Hamlet, and was warmly received. His impersonation of "The Dane" had certainly lost nothing of its former energy, but where an actor is so indifferently played up to, he is frequently compelled to more physical exertion than could be

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[20] Mercury, 19-iv-1851, pp. 864, 865, IV, iv, V, i.

[21] Ibid., 2-iii-1850, p. 384, IV, ii.

wished, to relieve the flatness of the minor characters.[22]

Such restraint in suggesting that King had done some over-stepping of nature, such discretion, is seldom found elsewhere in the Mercury's other columns. To actors, he was generally sympathetic. Only on people of importance did he exercise vituperative powers of this kind:

> Grossly illiterate, proverbially mean, his name never appearing to any public charity unless connected with the Chapel, an arbitrary and penurious employer, it is difficult to imagine how Mr. Peacock, although possessing his fair share of the usual impudence of his sect, could have cheated himself into the belief that any Constituency, much less an enlightened one such as that to which he appeals, would send him into Council to snuffle out his absurdities, in preference to a high-souled gentleman such as Major O'Halloran.[23]

When he did find fault, he criticised the performance rather than the man, perhaps because he knew that actors were putting on only counterfeit airs. It was real pretension that he hated. In its theatrical criticism, the Mercury spoke for those who went regularly to Gilles Arcade, and not especially for those who attended only when the Governor was expected or when the performance's respectability had been guaranteed either by high prices or the sponsorship of a lodge or by a programme which clearly belonged to the legitimate drama. Hammond was never patronising in his criticism, nor fearful that the plays presented in Adelaide would deprave or corrupt, though he certainly knew of "certain minor establishments in London, in whose wretched abortions, miscalled 'broad farce', the vulgar passions and tastes of a low mob are shamefully pandered to."[24] Neither was he critical of theatre managers who selected pieces without pretensions, plays which set out solely to entertain. As a critic he was middle-brow at best, and he

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[22]Ibid., 8-iii-1851, p. 817, V, ii.

[23]Ibid., 12-iv-1851, p. 856, IV, iv.

[24]Ibid., 19-iv-1851, p. 864, IV, iv.

had a great willingness to be pleased; hence his favourable comments on Mr Charles Axtelle's "TALENTED COMPANY In the Equestrian, Acrobatic, Dramatic, and Pantomimic Departments"[25] and Dr E. A. Matthew's GRAND DISPLAY OF FIREWORKS.[26]

He had his preferences and his dislikes, of course. Of Ella Rosenberg, he said for example;

> [it] proved an amazingly dull affair, and will not, we hope, be repeated . . . these heavy Sentimentals are out of date - light comedy and farce are "your only wear" for Colonial Theatres, particularly with such companies as tread the boards here.[27]

He understood the risks that managers took if they revived plays such as The Merchant of Venice and Macbeth, Bulwer's The Lady of Lyons, Buckstone's Luke the Labourer and Isabella, Richard Cumberland's Don Pedro the Cruel, or George Almas's Pedlar Acre. They might attract sufficient of the judicious to avoid loss, but if managers wished to please those who attended regularly then they must supply them with melodramas, spectacles, and "laughable farces." The common colonial theatre-goer was less well educated than the common reader, and his tastes were much less nice. Although most of the plays offered in Adelaide's theatres were at least a generation old, managers believed that Cox and Box was better business than School for Scandal or She Stoops to Conquer, that "mirth-provoking trifles" were more appealing than Macbeth, even when "produced with all the original music most carefully arranged."[28] Hammond accepted as perfectly reasonable that entertainment should not be sacrificed for the sake of raising the

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[25]Ibid., 18-i-1851, p. 757, I, ii.

[26]Ibid., 18-v-1850, p. 478, VI, iv.

[27]Ibid., 9-ii-1850, p. 361, V, i.

[28]Ibid., 5-iv-1851, p. 849, V, ii.

cultural tone of the local theatre. He makes this point quite clear in his rejoinder to PLAYGOER, one of the Register's correspondents. He showed that the legitimate drama was a most unprofitable business, that the receipts for Morton King's performances averaged only from between £7 and £11 a night.

> For the class of persons who chiefly constitute the play-going public, low comedy and broad farce are best adapted as most suited to their comprehension, and as it is only by his Exchequer that the manager can guage [sic] the tastes of his audience, to hold up the establishment to public obloquy, and to slander the character of its conductor, is, by lessening the number of its supporters, the most effectual means of preventing any elevation in the tone of the performances, which the manager might otherwise be able to effect.[29]

Not a very complimentary assessment of colonial audiences, nor a very lofty notion of what the theatre should strive to be, but an eminently sensible comment on the actual position. Hammond's defence of John Lazar suggests that he had a wide knowledge of a number of theatrical forms and a genuine sympathy for actors, strengthened no doubt by his antipathy to all who dared to condescend to anyone. PLAYGOER's idealism in advocating "improving drama", while consistent with his class's belief in that what was not profitable should at least be uplifting, is clearly at odds with the realities of theatre production. In his biography of Coppin, Alec Bagot makes it clear that theatre managers could make their fortunes only if they provided popular, that is vulgar, fare.[30] Although Hammond was scathingly critical of pieces such as "The Vampire Bride" -

> We would much rather see such trashy pieces banished from our stage; they are bad enough when played at the metropolitan theatres at home, but with actors such as the Adelaide

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[29]Ibid., 19-i-1850, p. 337, V, i.

[30]Alec Bagot, Coppin the Great: Father of the Australian Theatre (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1965), p. 120.

Domestics would have had neither the money nor the time. Which left those mentioned above; tradesmen, apprentices, miners, shepherds, seamen, "ladies of pleasure", minor government officials, those spendthrifts who undervalued the dissenter virtues of self-denial and frugality. Only on special occasions such as Morton King's performance of Claude Melnotte in The Lady of Lyons did the respectable classes predominate in theatre audiences, a fact noted by the Register, now in new editorial hands following the death of Stephens:

> His Excellency and Lady Young honoured Mr. Morton King by being present at his benefit last evening, and the Vice-regal patronage secured a brilliant attendance. The house throughout was well filled, and the boxes were occupied by parties who should more frequently visit a place of entertainment every way worthy of support. It is a bitter satire on the taste and spirit of the officials and fashionables that they can only enjoy Bulwer's poetry and King's acting in the train of the Governor.[34]

A much more representative audience would have been that which watched King play Hamlet in the newly opened and soon to be closed Port Adelaide Theatre:

> . . . the "gods" manifested a disposition to laugh at the Ghost, and in some of the other serious parts occasionally, but on the whole Mr. King's excellent performance appeared to give great satisfaction.[35]

It is because the Mercury knew the usual character of the theatre-going classes that its reviews so enrich the modern reader's impression of this aspect of colonial life. Though Hammond was in many ways just as snobbish as his rivals, he was in his theatrical criticism surprisingly liberal. Accepting without question the theatre's role as moral teacher and the conventional touchstones of dramatic writing he nonetheless could find merit in popular entertainment. He made of course

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[34]Register, 30-vii-1851, III, iv.

[35]Ibid., 28-vii-1851, II, v.

the usual gestures:

> Aside from the immortal works of Shakspeare, and the ever fresh, though quaint, productions of Beaumont and Fletcher, Ben Johnson [sic], and many others of the olden school, what finer lessons of morality, what better insight into the various phases of human character can be impressed on the minds of the rising generation than in those inculcated by the Plays of a Talfourd or a Bulwer?[36]

But when he turned to the real problems facing a theatre manager in a "juvenile metropolis [such] as ours", he spoke with much more understanding and conviction:

> There is then only one means of drawing [play-goers], and that is perpetual change; an easy matter to recommend, by-the-bye, but the constant recurrence of which is a heavy drag on the energies and abilities of a company . . . . Mrs. Moore is possessed of a very versatile genius and is perfectly "at home" on the stage; her colloquy is always correct and fluent, and her actions and positions easy and natural . . . . Her main fault is the not sufficiently varying her intonation, a habit doubtless acquired from the carelessness which frequent playing to about a score of non-critical individuals must create.[37]

His voice carried like authority when he spoke of actors, their strengths and weaknesses. Of King he said, he is "an occasional 'Star', though a brilliant one - we hope he may be 'fixed' and think they plan it".[38] He did not claim that Lazar was a Kemble or a Reeves, but he thought that he could "most admirably assume either of their favourite style of characters, and in rapid succession."[39] For Coppin he had nothing but unqualified praise.

> [He] is an unfailing attraction; his manner is perfect, whether as a walking gentleman, an impudent valet, a drunken cobbler, or an ignorant clown. In "dressing his characters" to the life, he cannot be excelled, and he assumes such a perfectly new cast of countenance, and mannerism of gait, that his identity is completely sunk "for the nonce," into that of the living caricature he is representing.[40]

That his years in the colonies had not destroyed Hammond's judgment is

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[36] Mercury, 19-iv-1851, p. 864, IV, iv. [37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid. [39] Ibid. [40] Ibid.

partly shown by this less parochial tribute to Coppin's abilities when he returned to England in 1854:

> . . . An Australian comedian of considerable repute . . . an actor of more than average merit, and an excellent delineator of comic character . . . Mr Coppin's style is rich, without being vulgar, and he possesses all the ease and pliancy that nothing but constant practice and careful study could bestow.[41]

In this and other reviews, Hammond (and his deputies) maintained an objectivity and open-mindedness not notable in the paper as a whole. Though following his attacks upon local dignitaries, he had been accused of being a "liar and a blackguard"[42] and his paper of having an "assassin-like character . . . which had not spared even the Governor",[43] as a critic of theatre, he was seldom other than genial, constructive and judicious. His own preferences he easily submerged to speak well of a pantomime such as the Clown and Pantaloon, of family acts such as the dancing Chambers family, and of music which was not "flashing, tear-away music, such as uneducated ears can neither make head nor tail of".[44] Providing they were well presented and thoroughly rehearsed, he was willing to be pleased. He was unstinting in his praise of Lazar and Coppin for their transforming the old theatre, "a dirty, melancholy barn" into "one of the most splendid edifices in any of the Australian colonies", and for their building a new theatre at the Port "in such a substantial style as amply proves the confidence of its projector in the increasing prosperity of the place".[45]

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[41]Observer, 16-ix-1854, V, vii: extract from the London Sunday Times.

[42]Mercury, 28-vi-1851, p. 943, III, iii.

[43]Ibid., 5-vii-1851, p. 951, III, ii.

[44]Ibid., 19-iv-1851, p. 865, V, i.

[45]Ibid., 12-x-1850, p. 644, IV, iii.

Nor was he above preaching to those who he thought should be patronising the theatre:

> It is a most deplorable evidence of the preponderance in our community of the sensual over the intellectual, to witness the comparatively empty houses which have for some time past greeted the optics of our disgusted, but indefatigable, corps dramatique. Why it should be so is inexplicable, as few of the London houses exceed in elegance of arrangement the Adelaide Theatre, while the Port one is, as to both seeing and hearing, every thing the most exacting playgoer could wish. At both houses novelties are constantly produced, and yet with the same result; how long the management will be continued at so ruinous an expense is impossible to say, but it is disgraceful to the taste of the Colony that our Drama should remain in such a position.[46]

Hammond was to return to this theme in an October 1851 editorial, but with increased sharpness. He took as axiomatic that the Stage was "a most efficient and important exponent of the morals necessary to secure national prosperity", that it was

> the great School of Public Instruction, where Courage, Chastity, Honor, Generosity, and the other leading social virtues, are more forcibly illustrated than could be done in all the Sermons delivered from the time of Saint Paul down to that of Johanna Southcote, William Giles, or any other old womanish expounder of the faith.[47]

He re-affirmed his belief that no one could criticise the theatres themselves, their "elegance of structure, convenience of accommodation, and propriety of arrangement"[48] and reminded those who criticised the quality of performance that

> encouragement begets enterprise, and . . . those who wish to see the Theatre adorned by the best of talent, should, by their attendance, hold out an inducement to the Managers.[49]

He conceded that the direful state of the roads made attendance difficult at times but he was more inclined to blame alternative entertainments:

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[46]Ibid., 26-vii-1851, p. 977, V, iii.

[47]Ibid., 11-x-1851, p. 1064, IV, ii.

[48]Ibid. [49]Ibid.

> Public Houses, [which] are nightly crowded, and Casinos which, in modern Phraseology, imply receptacles for the promotion of indiscriminate intercourse between the sexes, crammed to excess. The glorious thoughts and high imaginings of a Shakespeare are left to fall unheeded upon the empty Benches of a House, which, had the Citizens of Adelaide one thousandth part as much love for literature as they have for lucre, would be filled on every occasion.[50]

His sermon ended with the hope "that for the credit of the Colony, our duly [sic] place of rational amusement will not be permitted to die away . . . [lest] we . . . sink into a mere hive of unimaginative Swipers and Psalm Singers - one half 'drunk with filthy beer', the other not a whit more respectably intoxicated with enthusiasm."[51]

But it was not simply love of lucre and the easy attractions of pubs and casinos that were ruining the theatre and were to cost Lazar most of the £2,000 he had invested at the Port. Rather, it was the lure of quick and spectacular fortune which was undermining the colony's prosperity and those businesses which were most dependent upon it; theatres, newspapers, and paradoxically those public houses which Hammond blamed for the decline of the drama. Hotels were crowded, simply because they were filled with those preparing to leave the security of life in Adelaide for the excitement of Forest Creek, Mount Alexander and Ballarat. No wonder the theatre's attractions had grown less appealing.

By November 1851, Coppin was offering his Port Adelaide Theatre for letting either as a store, offices or chapel, and though the Mercury thought it could detect signs of "the taste for theatricals, being not dead but merely sleeping"[52] when Mrs Mereton re-opened the Port Adelaide Theatre for yet another performance of The Lady of Lyons, there was no doubt that the drama was about to fall on hard times, and

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[50]Ibid. [51]Ibid.

[52]Ibid., 6-xii-1851, p. 1121, V, i.

with it, its most sympathetic critic. Though Lazar at a public dinner said that "he still hoped that times would mend, and that Mr. Coppin and himself might again appear before them"[53] it must have been as obvious to them as it subsequently was to C. H. Spence that South Australia was under an eclipse: "Labourers, tradesmen, shopkeepers, clerks, and gentlemen, all caught the gold-fever, and there was no business doing in Adelaide but the sale of outfits to the diggings."[54] By the end of December, the Mercury had ceased publication and so Adelaide lost a critic who was exceptional in his advocacy of the theatre and in his willingness to discuss acting and plays and management as if they were worthy of serious consideration.

Just how exceptional Hammond was as a critic of theatre, even within the context of his own paper, is high-lighted by his criticism of the pictorial arts. When he spoke of acting, he spoke as a playgoer of considerable experience, as one qualified to pass judgment. In his criticism of painting and sketching, on the other hand, he tended to play the fool, to mock the artist rather than comment on his work. He spoke as a tyro who knows what he likes only when he is convinced he has not seen it. He criticised painting on three main grounds; life-like colour, precise draftsmanship and conventional perspectives. Work which failed to satisfy these most rigid standards was invariably assailed. A Mr Hutton, a portrait painter, and a Mr Hamilton, who did "stud portraits" were especially singled out for the familiar sarcastic treatment. Hammond mocked the "Huttonian theory . . . [of] Copper complexions and Zinc colored hands";[55] he hoped that

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[53]Ibid., 29-ix-1851, p. 1112, IV, iv.

[54]Spence, op. cit., p. 170.

[55]Mercury, 20-vii-1850, p. 549, V, iii.

this theory would eventually be "superseded by nature" and advised that "disgusted dauber" to take a few lessons from artists he admired, Gilfillan and Opie, to "cure him of the ghastly tints he indulges in . . . smoky visages and cholera colored hands."[56] When Hutton sued, Hammond was unrepentant:

> . . . neither as a Draughtsman nor as a Colonist [sic - Colorist?] has he ever arrived at mediocrity . . . there is no violent stretch of animadversion in applying [the epithet, meretricious] to one who, as a Painter, is not fit to clean . . . palettes.[57]

Clearly, the pictorial arts were fair game for satire in a way that the professional theatre was not.

It is probable that Hammond was no worse qualified than the generality of his readers, but his criticism of painting was crassly literal. Even when he praised, he was imperceptive and vague:

> We have just received a Lithographic Sketch of the festivities at this hospitable mansion [Prospect House] . . . which conveys a spirited idea of the gaiety of the scene. The perspective is exceedingly good . . . . As a specimen of colonial art it is most creditable to the place, being free from the cloudiness which generally spoils lithography, and calculated to add largely to the credit of the artist as a draughtsman.[58]

Similarly general was the praise he gave to S. T. Gill and to George French Angas. As a critic of art, he was seldom convincing, although his more malicious shafts are sometimes themselves entertaining.

Such a difference in attitudes is to be expected. Painting was more obviously an amateur recreation than acting, and the scorn he poured on the Dramatic Maniacs parallels that he gave to would-be professional artists such as Hutton. More important perhaps is

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[56]Ibid., 27-vii-1850, p. 557, V, iii.

[57]Ibid., 3-viii-1850, p. 565, V, iii. [Misprinted August 1, 1850.]

[58]Ibid., 5-i-1850, p. 319, III, iv.

Hammond's obvious interest in the theatre and his comparative ignorance of the pictorial arts. As the next chapter will show, he was not indifferent to their application to journalism, but as a critic he found the theatre more congenial to his tastes.

It is as a critic and unwitting historian of colonial theatricals that Hammond occupies a special place in the journalism of the period. In quantity alone, he gave to the professional theatre a coverage unequalled by the other newspapers, and in doing so, did much to foster its growth and to educate its potential audiences. That the theatre fell into desuetude was no fault of the Mercury, whatever its other short-comings. By giving to plays and entertainments serious, if not particularly original attention, Hammond played an important part in elevating the place of the colonial theatre in the eyes of his readers.

Chapter 12

A BEGINNING TO PICTORIAL JOURNALISM

In attempting to widen the topical scope of his newspaper, to make it serve better the interests of the common reader, Hammond had already shown himself more willing than his rivals to learn from English newspapers, particularly from Punch and, in a less specific way, from sporting papers such as Sporting Life and Bell's Miscellany. To be colonial was of course to be derivative, but the Mercury went further than its rivals by imitating more varied papers than they did. From Punch, for instance, came the Mercury's humorous direction, and not a few direct borrowings; from the sporting papers came its accounts of races and hunts and crimes. But it must have been apparent to Hammond, even in 1849, that he had much to learn from London's most successful newspaper, the Illustrated London News. Although it had been established as recently as 1842, it had by 1850 achieved a circulation of 66,000, significantly more than its nearest rivals, the Northern Star with 58,000, Lloyd's with 51,000 and the Weekly Times with 40,000.[1] Not that he could hope to enter pictorial journalism in any significant way, for woodcuts were expensive and demanded an expertise unlikely to be found in a settlement barely a decade old. Nevertheless, from the fact that he introduced an illustrated masthead and a handful of sketches and cartoons can be inferred his awareness of the possibilities of pictures in a weekly newspaper. His search for new literary features suggests that he also knew how

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[1] Observer, 8-v-1852, VI, iii.

necessary variety was to a paper like the Mercury.

Hammond's first excursion into pictorial journalism was modest enough, and even at its peak could not in the nature of things be carried very far. Even so, it is another of the ways in which he outdid his contemporaries and suggests perhaps a direction the Mercury might have taken had not the gold rushes intervened. By illustrating his mast-head and his "Bowl of Punch" columns of satirical verse, Hammond showed himself more aware of the possibilities of pictures, more willing to lighten the effect of closely printed copy. The first illustrations were crude enough, a Punch looking more like a hobgoblin than a source of worldy wisdom, and a Mercury holding a quill more like a dart player than a writer or a god. Nevertheless, a start had been made and within a few months both the quantity and quality of pictorial material had improved. Not later than November 17, 1849,[2] the Mercury announced that it could provide "Copper-plate and wood Engraving, by a first-rate Artist", probably a reference to Samuel Calvert who was to make an important contribution to the paper's pictorial aspects over the next two or so years.

It seems likely that one of Calvert's first jobs was to draw another "Bowl of Punch" and to prepare an alternative to the original mast-head. They had to be improvements. The first Mercury had been engraved hovering woodenly above a simple collection of symbols (as shown in Figure 1, page 239). The new Mercury was much more impressive. He seems more at ease, and certainly was better proportioned, with

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[2]Mercury, 17-xi-1849, p. 261, I, i. (There are only six 1849 issues in the only known file of the Mercury, viz., 14-vii-1849, 21-vii-1849, 11-viii-1849, 8-ix-1849, 15-ix-1849, 17-xi-1849. Fortunately, apart from some minor mutilations, the issues of the next two years are virtually complete.)

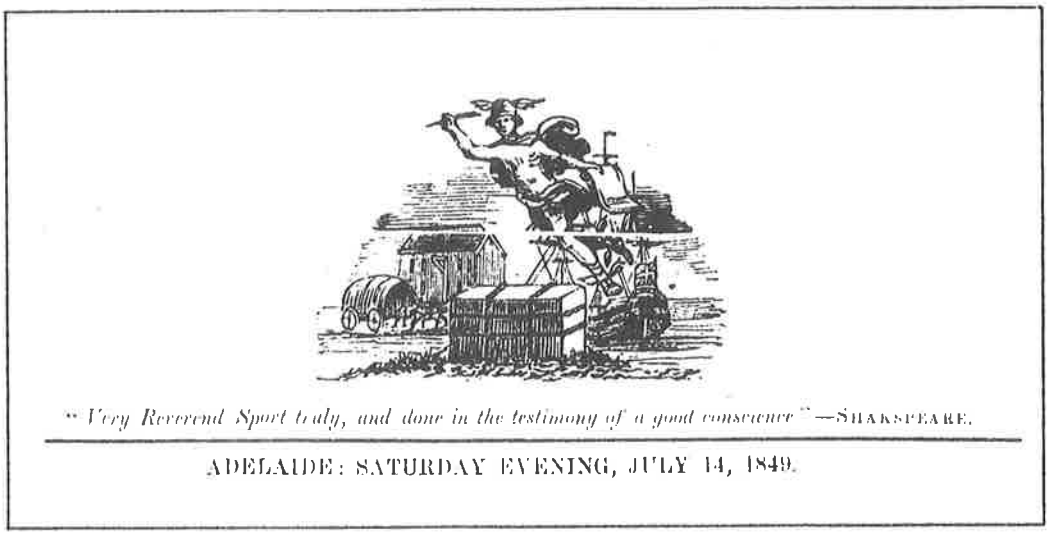

Figure 1

clearer features, even more obviously winged sandals. He moved also in a scene of greater complexity, though the symbolism was virtually unchanged. Apart from a pennant on which was emblazoned SPORT, the new illustration was essentially the same, except that the sky-line had become more crowded with buildings and bare-masted ships and the number of figures had multiplied:

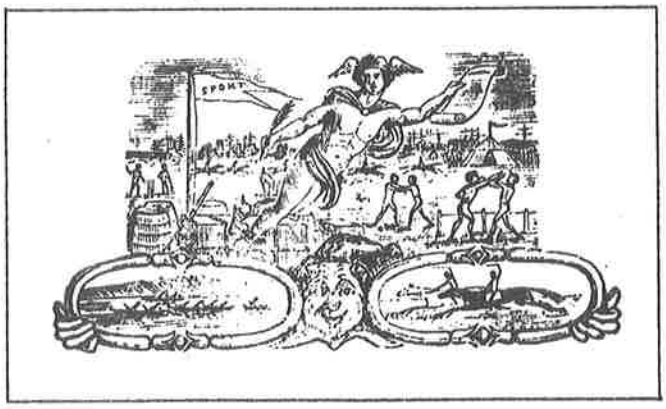

Figure 2

It would seem that there were cricketers, wrestlers, pugilists and men on horse-back, and in the background a pavilion, with a pennon at its peak, probably meant to be symbolic of another favourite colonial sport, drinking. In the foreground is an elaboration of the original commercial symbol, several barrels, crates and bales taking the place

of the solitary package used in the first engraving.[3]

The artist had however introduced something new, a kind of visual plinth for the main part of the design; a jester in motley supporting on one arm, a boating scene, delimited by an ornamental frame, and on the other, two horses drawn in the manner of the sporting prints, one black, one white, each being whipped by a stylised jockey. The intention of this innovation was clear enough; to sum up the paper's main editorial directions, sport and commerce supported by humour.

For almost two years, this illustration was retained, though Mercury's features became eroded with wear and the boat scene developed a diagonal crack. The block however must have eventually broken, and perhaps have fouled the machinery, for there was no issue at all on November 1, 1851, and for four issues afterwards, the letter press, the Mercury, South Australian Sporting Chronicle, and Commercial Advertiser was unsupported by an illustration of any kind. On December 6, however, another illustration was introduced, new in execution if not completely in ideas.[4] On the left was a be-rugged thoroughbred, on the right, irradiating the whole scene like a Blakean Orc, was a new Mercury, bearing in his right hand not the quill but the traditional caduceus, and in his left, a lance. A new metaphor had been introduced, and had become entangled with the lettering. (Figure 3, page 241). Attached to Mercury's lance is a pennant bearing a dog-latin motto, which seems to read SINE HUMBUG MUNDUS . . . COELUM. Writhing on the ground is a well-fed dragon, presumably the HUMBUG referred to in the device. The other symbols were essentially the same, although the commercial scene had gained

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[3]Ibid., 17-xi-1849, p. 261, I.

[4]Ibid., 6-xii-1851, p. 1117, I.


THE MERCURY,
SPORTING CHRONICLE
AND COMMERCIAL ADVERTISER.

Figure 3

a smoking chimney stack, a wind-mill and ships making heavy weather of a visibly curved ocean.

More striking even than these changes is the lettering of SPORTING CHRONICLE. Instead of conventional type, the artist had engraved the letters in the form of fantastic figures; the R for instance, a seated man smoking a disproportionate meerschaum, the G a cat bent over a top-hat, the I a pistol standing on its stock. It owes something to Cruikshank and to Punch but its effect is curiously disintegrated. Moreover, though Hammond was a rabid admirer of all things English, there is some incongruity in his making a St George of himself, indeed any kind of saint. Similarly jarring is the juxtaposition of conventional symbols and eccentric lettering. Hindsight might suggest that Hammond, knowing that the Mercury was on the brink of bankruptcy, was offering some kind of self-justification, showing why he had abandoned simple humour, signified perhaps by the omission of the jester, for the sake of the SINE HUMBUG kind of satire that had become so characteristic of the Mercury's latter days. Whatever the reasons, there can be little doubt that Hammond was aware that illustrations would soon be an integral part of South Australian newspapers, particularly those with so wide a scope as the Mercury.

During 1849 and most 1850, there is little to suggest that Hammond was in any great hurry to enter the field of pictorial journalism. Apart from an increased number of engravings decorating advertisements for various local stallions at stud, and stylised ships and stage coaches at the head of shipping intelligence and announcements of C. Tanner's Royal Mail Carts, there was little to vary the visual impact of the letter-head and the "Bowl of Punch". Whatever novelty Calvert's latter engraving had had, would have quickly faded, although even now it is a striking design with its four figurines; two glum

school-boys respectively crowned by a mitre and a dunce's cap and two caricatures labelled FOLLY and HUMBUG being dosed from a cauldron by a conscientious Punch. Occasionally the paper contained the insignia of lodges whenever the Foresters or the Masons were about to meet, and after June 1850 a porcine Bacchus, advertising J. B. Carey's "WINES AND SPIRITS of the BEST Brands".[5] These were essentially decorations. It was not until the issue of May 25, 1850, that Hammond showed that he was prepared to illustrate, as well as decorate, his paper's letter-press.

Though Calvert's skill was more than sufficient to tackle whatever illustrative material Hammond considered needful, it had not been used for local news previously. Others had briefly entered the field of pictorial journalism, notably the Monthly Almanac and Illustrated Commentator, which had been

> devoted to light amusing articles, some of which are personal but not illnatured. It (had) several neatly executed carricatures [sic] illustrations, in which some of the likenesses (were) happily hit off,[6]

but they went the way of all who attempted to establish literary magazines in a community much more interested in newspapers. When Hammond introduced a portrait into a weekly, he touched on a feature which was to dominate eventually the world of journalism. The occasion was provided by one James Johnson, alias William Cooper, alias James Williams, a one-eyed villain accused of a particularly grisly murder. S. T. Gill had drawn his portrait during the preliminary hearing, Calvert had done the wood-cut, and presumably Hammond the text:

> Above, we present our readers with a wood cut of the features of this man, who is accused of the murder of his

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[5]Ibid., 8-vi-1850, p. 501, V, iv.

[6]South Australian, 8-ii-1850, II, iv.

> companion, James Bunton, on the banks of the Darling. The spot where the crime was committed being in the Sydney district, the prisoner will be forwarded there for trial, after having undergone preliminary examinations here, the police being actively engaged in looking up further evidence, that at present obtained being extremely meagre. The fidelity of the likeness may be relied upon, being taken in Court, exclusively for this Paper, by Mr S. T. Gill, and cut on wood by Mr Calvert, the Illustrator of the Monthly Almanac.[7]

Such fare was of course familiar stuff in the Sunday press in England, but in South Australia it was a real, and not to be soon repeated, novelty.

Three issues later, the Mercury introduced yet another innovation, a political cartoon. It was not original, being a copy of a Punch cartoon. It depicts a tailor, presumably Lord John Russell, measuring a lanky Australia for a new suit, while the dwarfish other colonies of Van Diemen's Land, Cape of Good Hope and Mauritius and unnamed others look on.[8] There is moreover no way of knowing whether this was immediately followed by any others, since the relevant pages in the only known surviving file have been mutilated. It is probable however that Hammond thought that his readers needed only to be given glimpses of pictorial journalism, that the expense of more regular productions was not warranted. Not until March in the following year did new pictorial material begin to appear with any great frequency. For the rest of 1850, with three exceptions, Hammond varied his letter-press only with repeated pictures.

Two of the three exceptions are worth noting, one merely an advertisement, the other an animal sketch. To draw particular attention to his booth at the Adelaide Races, J. B. Carey had paid for a large sketch of a horseman taking a post and rail fence, and though

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[7]Mercury, 25-v-1850, p. 485, V, ii.

[8]Ibid., 15-vi-1850, p. 509, V, ii, iii.

its connection to the liquor trade seems now rather tenuous, its visual impact must have been considerable.[9] A more static, but more relevant picture, is a four column wide illustration of the First Prize Winners at the South Australian Agricultural and Horticultural Show of 1850. In it are portrayed Coppin's horse, CANTAB, John Baker's prize bull, with JB prominent on his flank, and a boar owned by a Mr Mueller.[10] Again, more a tantalising glimpse of a possible development than an actual accomplishment.

But to the arrival of a new constitution and an unprecedented interest in the Legislative Council elections, the Mercury responded with a significantly increased number of wood-cuts. Before the 1851 elections, E. S. Wigg had undoubtedly been right in his acid assessment of colonial attitudes to politics:

> . . . they play the village barber to perfection, and talk of politics; but, unfortunately, they who see so clearly, and understand so well themselves, cannot make themselves understood to the public; therefore we have neither Whigs, Tories, nor Radicals. I believe the only parties here are Voluntaries and Staters.[11]

But as has been shown earlier, 1851 - at least until the news of Ophir reached Adelaide - was to prove a remarkable year. Business was booming, new buildings were being erected both in Adelaide and at the Port, those who had made money were beginning to re-invest it in the colony rather than at "home". Advertisements were becoming larger and more airy in appearance, testimonial lists were growing longer. There was an air of confidence everywhere and no paper responded more exuberantly to these great expectations than the Mercury.

Early in 1850, Hammond had tried to interest his readers in the

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[9]Ibid., 2-xi-1850, p. 665, I, ii, iii.

[10]Ibid., supplement to 23-xi-1850, I, i, ii, iii, iv.

[11]Ibid., 25-i-1851, p. 766, II, i.

details of their own town, by mentioning new buildings in his local intelligence columns, and by publishing a doggerel, pseudo-Byronic, register of the shops and business houses that lined Adelaide's main streets:

WALKS IN ADELAIDE

There being no Directory in prose,
We purpose, for the benefit of those
Who may require this sort of information,
Of our chief streets to make a revelation.
In such affairs the obstacle's to start 'em,
Which to avoid we'll go "secundem artem,"
And ere we yet the notion more entangle,
Take first of Hindley Street the north east angle.
The "premier" house which on our list appears
Is that of those redoubted auctioneers,
"Strongman, Weakhead & Co.," illustrious name
Which once with pride a leading place could claim,
But sham return-sales, though for little reckoned,
Have left them now a very dubious second.[12]

These versified walks continued over many issues, and then stopped for almost a year. Then in March 1851, Hammond was able to give his readers something better. Believing quite correctly that his readers were more concerned with their own affairs than with anyone else's, that home town news was more appealing than overseas - still a journalistic axiom - he launched a series of seven engravings by C. Winston, "an artist of great talent recently arrived in the colony."[13] No better an artist than Calvert - indeed his human figures were invariably much less natural - Winston was a particularly competent draftsman. Hammond, ever alert to changes in Adelaide, commissioned him to sketch those buildings which had either been recently built, or begun, or were being planned. The result is a new feature in South Australian journalism, a collection of architectural drawings, consisting of two banks, a school, a chapel, a cathedral, a hospital, and a group of

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[12]Ibid., 26-i-1850, p. 345, V, ii.

[13]Ibid., 15-iii-1851, p. 825, V, ii, iii.

buildings at the Port, Coppin's pub, theatre and a Masonic Hall. Typical of these "Views in Adelaide" is the then New Wesleyan Chapel in Pirie Street.[14]

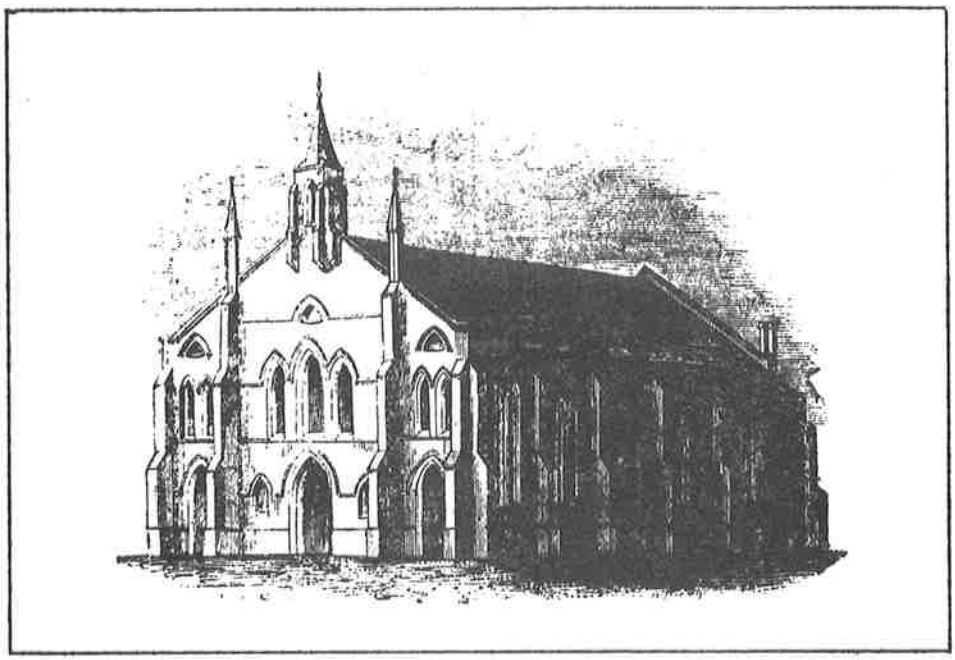

Figure 4

The series seems not to have provoked any great excitement among the Mercury's readers but Hammond would not have continued it if he had not felt that it was of interest. It is highly likely that colonial readers felt as much pride as aesthetic pleasure in Winston's drawings, for were not the buildings tangible evidence of colonial achievement? Despite Hammond's puffing them as "Noble edifices", and his description of the Collegiate School as "the Eton of the South", they were collectively neither distinguished nor original. Yet so atune was

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[14]Ibid., 3-v-1851, p. 881, V, ii, iii. (The other "Views in Adelaide" were: The Adelaide Branch of the Bank of Australasia, 15-iii-1851, p. 825, V, ii, iii; Coppin's White Horse Cellar, Port Adelaide Theatre, and Masonic Hall, 22-iii-1851, p. 833, V, iii, iv; The Bank of South Australia, 5-iv-1851, p. 847, III, i, ii; The Cathedral Church of St. Francis Xavier, 26-iv-1851, p. 871, III, ii, iii; The Collegiate School, 17-v-1851, p. 897, V, ii, iii; The German and British Hospital, 26-vii-1851, p. 977, V, i, ii.)

Hammond to the colonial temper, that it is probable that he saw these sketches more as symbols of the success of the settlement. To have noted that the buildings were no more than copies of countless similar buildings in Great Britain would not have seemed to him a criticism. Passable imitations would confirm that the need for improvisation had passed, that Adelaide had become architecturally and culturally an extension of life at home.

The Mercury's newly displayed architectural interest was not confined to this series. Colonial pride in its own accomplishments began also to appear in its advertisements. It has been argued earlier that one of the best gauges of colonial confidence is the hotel, and since Hammond was still secretary of the Licensed Victuallers' Society and numbered many hotel-keepers among his "advertising friends", it is not surprising that his paper, more than the rest, should reflect the buoyancy of the hotel business. Coppin's new venture at the Semaphore demanded a large advertisement, handsomely illustrated, and his former hotel, now in the hands of J. Schmidt, merited an even better illustration by Samuel Calvert.[15] (Figure 5, page 249). The Blenheim Hotel too displayed its attractions in a detailed engraving, or rather two engravings, since both Winston and Calvert were commissioned to execute the same work. Calvert's in particular shows that not all the local architectural talent was being applied to churches.[16] (Figure 6, page 249).

At the same time as he was developing this aspect of pictorial journalism, Hammond was also improving the over-all appearance of his paper. This he did by using more space, so lessening the blackness

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[15]Ibid., 16-viii-1851, p. 997, I, ii, iii.

[16]Ibid., 30-viii-1851, p. 1016, IV, iii, iv.

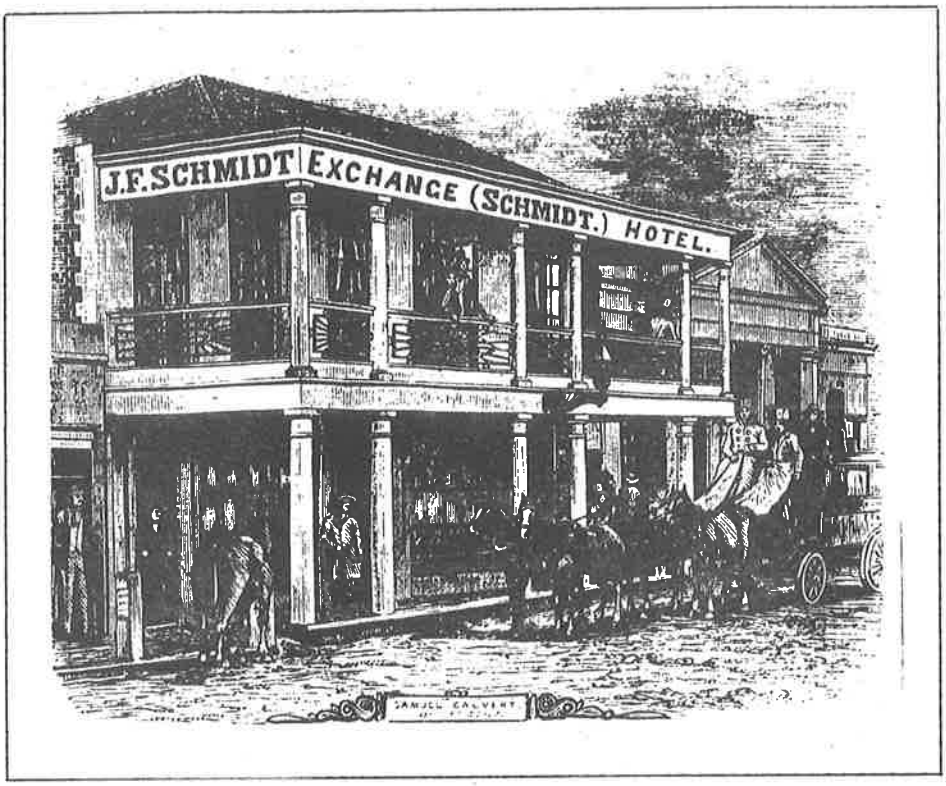

Figure 5

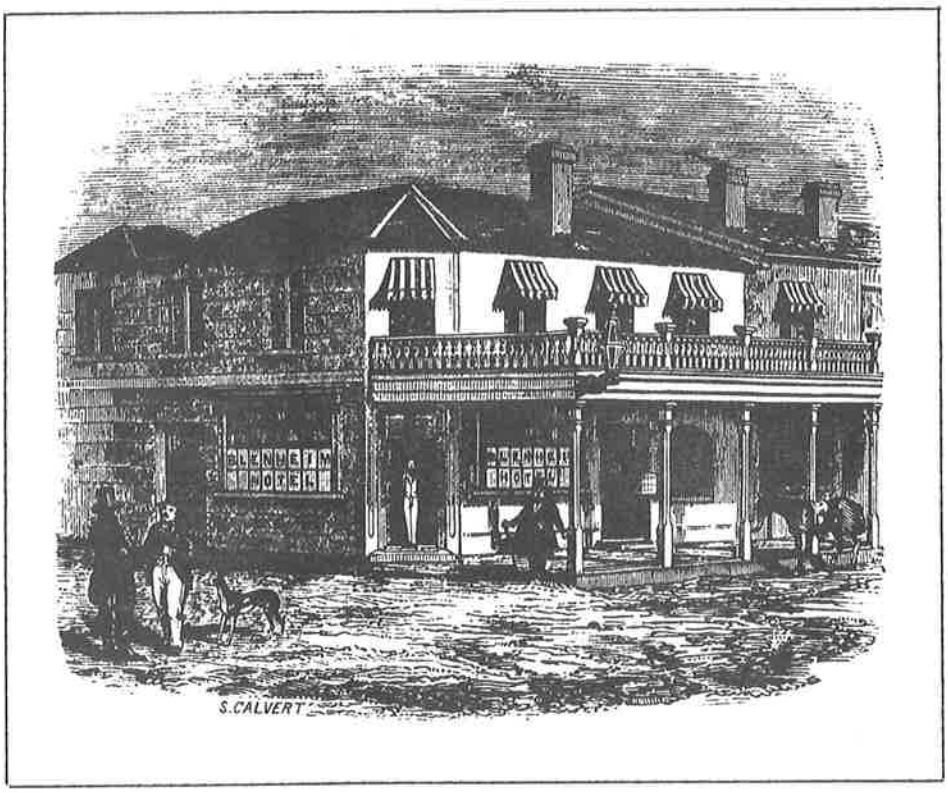

Figure 6

of closely printed letter-press, and by persuading his regular advertisers to head their copy with an illustration, such as the following advertisement for Ottaway's Prime Ginger Beer:[17]

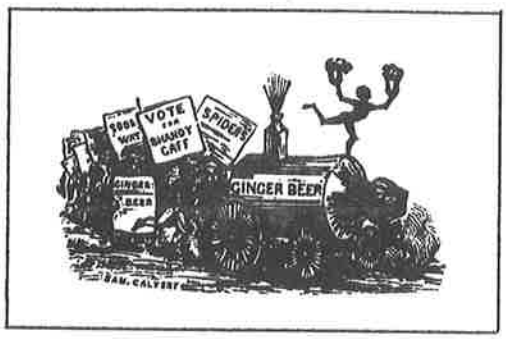

Figure 7

As a "commercial advertiser", he also encouraged his patrons to be more adventurous in their choice of type-face, to take advantage of the wide range of founts that his printer, T. Strode, then possessed. He obviously was successful in persuading Alfred Spain and John Life to experiment as the advertisement on page 251 (Figure 8) shows.[18]

In columns not devoted to advertisements, Hammond was also enlarging the scope of his paper. Reflecting the colony's interest in the forthcoming elections was Hammond's foray into political cartoons on local themes. His former prejudices and preferences had not changed but the manner he chose to express them had. When his traditional butts began to canvass votes, he enlisted pictures to support his derogatory words. One of the first of these was based on the fable of the Bull and the Frog, the former representing the Mercury's favoured candidate, F. H. Dutton, the latter, Joe Barrow, who had presumed to challenge the squire of Anlaby.[19] The cartoon makes little sense

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[17]Ibid., 26-vii-1851, p. 980, VIII, iv.

[18]Ibid., VIII, ii, iii.

[19]Ibid., 7-vi-1851, p. 921, V, iv.

MACHINE . . . [which would mean] a considerable reduction in the prices of every description of job printing" - the Mercury had almost run its course.

Giles's suit for libel had been thrown out on a technicality, but for the first time Hammond acknowledged that he had exceeded his licence. In an editorial, which is part self-justification, part apology, he claimed that

> to Mr Giles we have no personal antipathy; and it has been merely as the more prominent member of a class that we have selected him for castigation . . . .
>
> We must not be misunderstood as intending to convey the slightest imputation upon our late antagonist, whose private character we believe to be unimpeachable in every respect.[30]

Such hang-dog humility was so uncharacteristic of Hammond that it would seem that if he had escaped the chastisement of the law, he had not escaped scot-free. His virtual recantation of a feud which he had sustained for more than two years must have been extracted only by the most serious of threats. In any case, it seems not to have prolonged the paper's life. Gold mania was not to be cured with words, or for that matter with pictures. Had the good times lasted longer, it is possible that the Mercury could have developed into Adelaide's first viable illustrated newspaper. As it was, its other editorial policies had ill-equipped it to withstand the frost which had blighted hardier newspapers. Hammond's interest in pictorial journalism simply emphasises how innovative he was, and how ill South Australian journalism could afford his loss.

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[30]Ibid., 29-xi-1851, p. 1112, IV, iii.

Chapter 13

POETICAL EFFUSIONS AND A BOWL OF PUNCH

Although towards the end of its course, the Mercury's attempts to outdo its rivals grew somewhat frenetic, pursuing novelty at almost any cost, the paper, from its first days, had carried features which were new to South Australian journalism. Some, such as pictorial journalism, proved transient, sign-posts to roads not taken rather than realised achievements; others were introduced early in its life and were regular thereafter. The most characteristic of these were of course the satires and lampoons on local issues and dignitaries; hence the Register's gibe, a "fuddling lampooner", "barrel organ" for factional interests. Such a comment at such a time from such a source, when to denigrate one's contemporaries was virtually a journalistic canon, cannot of course be regarded as an objective summation of the Mercury's literary scope. Hammond's enterprise ensured that his paper was much more than this. Though he obviously favoured light verse of a satirical kind, he also published other kinds of writing.

One of these is "serious" poetry, poetry of the kind that Andrew Murray had made a feature of the South Australian, poetry which was grave in theme and formal in language. If quantity can be taken as a measure of preference, then Hammond clearly preferred more light-hearted verse. He was however sufficient of a business-man and sufficiently in tune with his readers to have realised that there was a demand for moral and improving verse. If "improvement was the key to

success in life, the secret of how to get on,"[1] then it was his duty to publish poems which could inspire and uplift, poems like J. W. King's "A Summer Invitation":

> Sons of the living Babylon,
> Who work for scanty bread;
> 'Midst grandeur, misery, wealth, and want,
> The dying and the dead;-
> Nature, with all her sylvan throng,
> Now bids you come away
> To meadows, groves, and shady lanes,
> Blooming in bright array.[2]

A sense of moral responsibility and perhaps good business sense would have formed his decision to use sentimental poems about mothers and their errant sons, the joys of spring, the transience of youth:

> Then cast no mournful shadow
> O'er the soul of youth;
> Leave it in its holy faith -
> Its unsullied truth.
> Leave it in the sunshine
> Of its glowing summer hours;
> In the radiant land of promise,
> The Dream land's lovely bowers.[3]

But whereas Murray printed such poems because they were consonant with the gravity of his paper and doubtless because he preferred them, Hammond seems to have published them more out of a sense of duty than out of any great love of pathos. As he said when introducing a locally written poem called "The Monad", he had "little taste for abstruse sentimentals",[4] a not unexpected admission in the light of his satirical verse and some of his theatre criticism. That he categorised such poems as "Poetical Effusions" further suggests some equivocality in

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[1]J. F. C. Harrison, The Early Victorians, 1832-1851 (St Albans: Panther Books Ltd., 1973), p. 169. [First published Great Britain: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971.]

[2]Mercury, 15-ii-1851, p. 796, VIII, i.

[3]Ibid., 2-viii-1851, p. 988, VIII, i.

[4]Ibid., 19-iv-1851, p. 866, VI, i.

his attitude, since "effusion" had already acquired some of its contemptuous connotations by this time. At best such a caption suggests patronising indulgence, the attitude of an editor opposed to humbug of every kind but prepared to over-look this particular kind of literary extravagance.

Whatever his private opinion, however, he gave a significant amount of newspaper space to poems which were all too clearly serious in intention. He used fewer than Murray, and gave them serious internal competition from his light verse columns; nevertheless, the dominant flavour of the Mercury is qualified by pathetic pieces such as William Howitt's "Spring Flowers", ("But, oh, ye Spring Flowers! oh, ye early friends!/ Where are ye, one and all?"[5]), and by ballads such as Andrew Winter's Helen-of-Kirkconnell-like "Love and Jealousy";

> There's some one lurks by yonder tree,
> His smile is calm as calm can be;
> But if you could look deeper in,
> His heart 'tis wrinkled up with sin.[6]

Except that he was less scrupulous in acknowledging his sources than Murray, (he took quite unblushingly the whole of Longfellow's "The Village Blacksmith", without so much as a mention of the poet or his nationality[7]), and was much less careful (he ascribed "The Press" to R. Elliot instead of to Ebenezer Elliott, the Corn Law Rhymer[8]), Hammond differed little in the kinds of poems he plagiarised. It may be that he favoured poems which sang more loudly the virtues of the English and the glories of their language, poems like "The Doughty

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[5]Ibid., 17-v-1851, p. 900, VIII, i.

[6]Ibid., 9-ii-1850, p. 364, VIII, i.

[7]Ibid., 10-v-1851, p. 892, VIII, i.

[8]Ibid., 21-vii-1849, p. 132, VIII, i.

Man"[9] and "The Saxon Tongue".[10] He certainly advocated in his own editorials sentiments similar to those expressed in James Gilborne Lyon's "The English Language":

> Mark, as it spreads, how deserts bloom,
> And error flies away,
> As vanishes the mist of night
> Before the star of day!
> But grand as are the victories
> Whose monuments we see,
> These are but as the dawn which speaks
> Of noontide yet to be.[11]

In his selection of serious poetry, he was even more patriotic than Murray. Macaulay's poems, "The Armada"[12] and "King Canute",[13] deserved their place perhaps on literary grounds, but only a sturdy patriot could find merit in "Energy", by the author of "Proverbial Philosophy", Martin Tupper:

> Indomitable merit
> Of the Anglo-Saxon mind!
> That makes a man inherit
> The glories of his kind,
> That scatters all around him
> Until he stands sublime
> With nothing to confound him
> The conqueror of Time,-
> O mighty Perseverance!
> O Courage, stern and stout!
> That wills and works a clearance
> Of every rabble rout,-
> .....[14]

More obviously practical are his reasons for choosing poems which

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[9]Ibid., 13-iv-1850, p. 440, VIII, i.

[10]Ibid., 5-i-1850, p. 324, VIII, i.

[11]Ibid., 3-viii-1850, p. 568, VIII, i. [Misprinted as August 1, 1850.]

[12]Ibid., 25-i-1851, p. 772, VIII, i.

[13]Ibid., 20-vii-1850, p. 552, VIII, i.

[14]Ibid., 30-iii-1850, p. 424, VIII, i.

accorded with his paper's function as a sporting chronicle. "How the Race was won", "Song of the Fox-Hunter", "The Horse", "The Hunt", "The First Day of the Season", while not exactly earnest in tone, at least treat sporting subjects as worthy of serious attention. And as for poems which advocated self-reliance and hard-work, sentiments such as "Let dotards grieve for childhood's day", or "Let tomorrow take care of tomorrow", or "There's work for all to do", there is nothing to suggest that Hammond was anything except conventional in his attitudes to these middle-class virtues.

The tolerance he showed to writers of such verse seldom extended to South Australians. Though he was prodigal of space for locally written light verse, no matter how lame its metre or incomprehensible its point, he was often captious when offered the "Original Poetry" that Murray so generously supported. One of the few he did publish - and then only as an extract - Hammond justified more on philanthropic grounds than on literary:

> To assist the struggles of Genius is one of the strictest duties and greatest pleasures of literary life, and it is therefore with great pleasure that we refer to the announcement in another column of the publication of an original poem [The Monad] by a resident here. When we add that a sudden and severe affliction has rendered the author incapable of pursuing his accustomed avocation, no further apology is necessary for the appeal to public support which we now make on his behalf, which, we trust, will be promptly responded to.[15]

To two of Adelaide's better known poets, "Ianthe" and E. W. A., (E. W. Andrews), he was much less kind. In order to show the gullibility of Murray, Hammond set out to prove that "Ianthe" and E. W. A. were at best hoaxers, at worst blatant plagiarists.

On the face of it, it would seem that Hammond had an unanswerable case, when he claimed that seven poems recently printed in the South

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[15]Ibid., 19-iv-1851, p. 866, VI, i.

Australian had actually been derived from poems published in Archer's Little Songster. With obvious relish, he wrote:

> In one of our contemporaries we found, a few days ago, a long array of columns filled up with the most remarkable productions of poetical genius it has ever been our task to wade through. For what purpose they were written, but, more especially, for what purpose they were put in type, we are at a loss to divine; yet are we devoutly grateful for the hearty laugh the majority of them afforded us. That the worthy editor considered them the genuine productions of some of our colonial bas bleus, we doubt not; but on mature consideration we have decided that a hoax was played off on the fair poetmistress, by some playful male. One main reason for this opinion is, that on turning over an old scrap book we have found a collection of ditties, odes, &c., of which many of those delectable compositions are merely a paraphrase; and some of these we give, to show how closely they have been imitated.[16]

Then, without further comment, he set side by side the seven locally written poems and their purported counterparts, "taken from ARCHER'S LITTLE SONGSTER, AS SOLD AT THE GERMAN HOSPITAL BAZAAR".[17]

They tell me thou art beautiful,
That at each festal scene,
.....

They tell me thou'rt so bountiful
At every festal spread,
.....

Throughout the gay and crowded rooms,
I witness'd not a sweeter sight
.....

On that big cookshop's crowded board
I did not see a sweeter sight,
.....

What's in a name? O, there is much;
A name will oft at a memory's touch,
Wring from the heart an anguish'd sigh,
.....

What's in a name? oh, there is much;
A NAME will oft, by a PEN AND INK touch,
Wring from the Jew, without a sigh,
.....

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[16]Ibid., 31-v-1851, p. 913, V, ii, iii.

[17]Ibid.

Conducted shortly thou will be into a
garden fair,
.....

Conducted shortly you will be into thy
husband's house;
.....

I've canvassed Adelaide around
And kindreds everywhere have found:
.....

I've canvassed all the town around,
And not a lover yet have found!
.....[18]

If the evidence had been supplied by anyone else but Hammond, then the reputations of two of Adelaide's literary folk would have been seriously compromised, and Murray's dubious critical standards once more demonstrated. There is no way of verifying Hammond's accusations without Archer's Little Songster, if such a book ever existed, but Hammond's own record and the iconoclastic bent of his paper throw into doubt the question of who was being gammoned. That two poets should plagiarise from the same book and from one obtainable at a bazaar is in itself suspicious. Combined with Hammond's reputation as a parodist and his notoriety as a practical joker, this "proof" seems too pat. Only the week before he had printed an uncouth, illiterate notice purporting to be C. T. Hewitt's, reproduced, according to Hammond, "verbatim et literatim both as to orthography, punctuation, and style".[19] The contemporary reader would have known that this was a fabrication, for an 1854 letter to the Register shows that Hewitt was adept in writing the involved prose used by Victorian men of education when they took up their pens[20] - unless of course there were two Hewitts of

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[18]Ibid.

[19]Ibid., 24-v-1851, p. 903, III, iv.

[20]Register, 13-i-1854, III, v.

Willunga. And that so facile, if not to say wordy, a writer as Andrews should risk his reputation for so slight an advantage seems most improbable.

But whether Hammond exposed a hoax or perpetrated one, his "exposé" does at least prove that local writers of serious verse were fair game for the Mercury and may even suggest that Hammond was comparatively indifferent to poems of feeling, unless they were written by overseas writers. Much more to his taste were poems without pretensions, those which were topical and amusing rather than weighty or sentimental; poems in short like those which Punch favoured. Though mawkish lines like the following were frequent enough, they were outweighed many times by poems with titles like "Doggerel on Duelling", "The Early Closing Shop-keeper to his Customer", "The Groans of Wren's Ghost" and "The Jolly Undertaker":

> The ivy in a dungeon grew
> Unfed by rain, uncheered by dew;
> Its pallid leaflets only drank
> Cave moistures foul, and odours dank,
>
> But through the dungeon-grating high
> There fell a sunbeam from the sky;
> It slept upon the grateful floor
> In silent gladness evermore,
>
> The ivy felt a tremor shoot
> Through all its fibres to the root;
> It felt the light, it saw the ray,
> It strove to blossom into day.
>
> .....[21]

By allowing facetious poems to share page eight, column one, with "poetical effusions", Hammond clearly was determined not to allow serious verse to become an invariable feature, lest the gaiety of the rest be diminished. Unpredictability was the end he strove for.

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[21] Mercury, 1-iii-1851, p. 812, VIII, i: "The Ivy in the Dungeon", by Charles Mackay.

Much more consistent in theme and tone were the poems which appeared under two other captions, Bowl of Punch and a less regular feature, Our Literary Rag Bag. Both were concerned exclusively with light verse, although Hammond accepted editorial responsibility only for the first, if the following disclaimer is taken at face value:

> [All communications under this heading appear unaltered in every respect, and therefore neither ourselves nor our printers must be held answerable for any absurdities of diction or orthography.][22]

The influence of Punch upon the paper as a whole, and on these two features in particular is obvious, as this illustration shows:

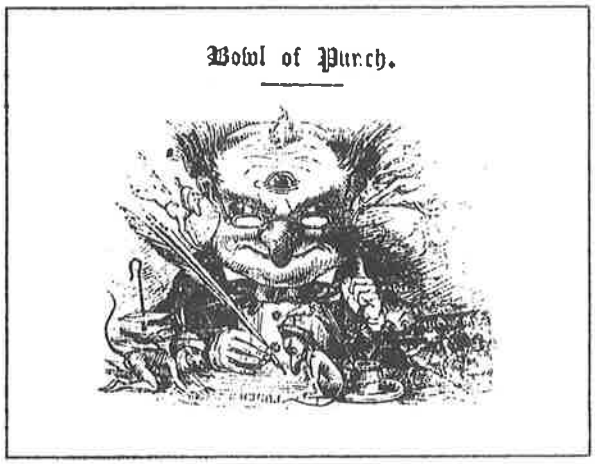

Figure 10

Its weaknesses were however very much its own. Where Punch was concerned with issues affecting a wide community - cholera, international crises, royalty, events such as the Great Exhibition, the problems of Empire - the Mercury was aimed at a small homogeneous readership. Punch could use a poem such as "The Wife's Entreaty" confident that all its readers would recognize its allusions. Hammond on the other hand could feel no such confidence about STINGING ANT's "Mount Barker Requisition Hymn":

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[22]Ibid., 22-ii-1851, p. 799, III, i.

How doth the fickle, lazy bee
  Improve each lying power,
To gather honor, or the pay,
  At one elector's bower!

How gullfully he builds his cell,
  How ill he treads the pax, (peace)
And labours hard to prove it well,
  With the sweet tongue folks tax!

.....[23]

As he said himself, "We confess we do not quite understand this, but suppose those in the locality will."[24]

Obscurity is of course endemic in verse written for a small community. Surnames indicated by a capital letter followed by a dash, esoteric allusions, puns which derive their point from some arcane understanding, doubtless heighten the enjoyment of those in the know, but for those outside, either in space or time, such verse can be irritating. Even verse which was more lucid, such as Hammond's "Walks in Adelaide" has an interest more historical than "literary", even in Hammond's elastic terms. Yet there can be little doubt that light verse on local themes was immensely popular among readers and contributors, if one can judge from the quantities actually published and from tactless "Replies to Correspondents", such as these:

> THE WALKERVILLIANS.- This is unmitigated trash and cannot appear, although being in a female handwriting, we are loath to exclude a contribution from one of the fair sex.[25]

> JOHN TARR is an ass, and dreadfully deficient in orthography. "GALLANT Sons of Neptune" we never heard of before; but lest our Correspondent should think he is unjustly treated, have popped his letter into the Rag Bag.[26]

> ARGUS (Walkerville).- You have sent your literary swine to a wrong market, my friend. We know the gentleman you name

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[23]Ibid., 15-iii-1851, p. 825, V, iii.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Ibid., 1-iii-1851, p. 808, IV, i.

[26]Ibid., 1-ii-1851, p. 776, IV, i.

> to be a thoroughly honorable and upright man, who has, moreover, sustained that character in this Colony for years past, and if you can find us any instance in which, during his residence in South Australia, he has done a dirty act, why we'll insert your communication, but NOT TILL THEN . . . .[27]
>
> J. D.- This is inadmissable, being libellous and moreover tedious.[28]

Much of the verse he published he must have written himself, under a variety of facetious pen-names, but there were many other poems obviously written by other hands, which suggest that writing light verse was a common literary recreation.

A widely used device was to parody well-known, usually long dead, writers, and although it probably throws more light upon the formal education of colonial writers and readers than upon their taste, it also indicates what a colonial writer expected his readers to know. The nineteenth century was of course a palmy period for parody, attracting poets of the calibre of Coleridge and Shelley, and versifiers of greater humour such as Carroll and Calverley. Punch was well-known for its parodies on poems such as Hood's "Song of the Shirt" and Wolfe's "The Burial of Sir John Moore at Corunna", and so it is not surprising that the Mercury should follow Punch in this as in so many other respects. Parody at a century's remove is however a very elusive thing, especially if the parody had been based on a then popular song. There were songs like "Billy Barlow" and "There's a good time coming, boys" which were performed and parodied so often in Adelaide theatres that there is little likelihood of the writer's parodic intentions being mistaken. And with songs like Isaac Watts' "How doth the little busy bee" the modern reader can detect the writer's mood when the verse shifts from sentiment to incongruous frivolity.

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[27]Ibid., 25-i-1851, p. 768, IV, i.

[28]Ibid., 4-i-1851, p. 744, IV, i.

But most popular songs do not long remain so, and as accounts of public dinners show, there were listed many songs which have not retained their popularity, with the result that the modern reader's enjoyment is lessened simply because he hears no echoes of the original. For every long-enduring lyric like "Believe me if all those endearing young charms", there must have been many more popular songs which were parodied but which have proved to be ephemeral, songs like "Mary Draper" and "St Patrick's Day in the Morning".

With more formal verse, however, the colonial poetaster tended to err on the side of conservatism rather than risk parodying a poem which might not have been recognized. As a general rule, therefore, the Mercury's parodies were based on anthology pieces, favourite poems written for the most part in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Byron was something of an exception, for he was both parodied and yet still read with enthusiasm by colonial readers. As C. H. Spence rather coldly noted, "These half-gentlemen are all rabid for Byron",[29] which preference might account for Hammond running a lengthy first canto of Don Juan in Adelaide, the rather tame adventures of Don Juan's third son. As a parody, it is not a success, for though the parodist has caught the method, he has missed the manner, as this stanza shows:

> "Difficile," quotes Byron, as he knows,
> Or did, "est proprie communia dicere;"
> And this is such a fact I do suppose,
> As often proves a moral poet's misery,
> It may not hit LORD BYRON, but it shews,
> That many a verse of this my poem is awry;
> And in the midst of all the which supposes
> Allow me to observe this Canto closes.[30]

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[29]Catherine H. Spence, Clara Morison, intro. Susan Eade. Seal Australian Fiction (Adelaide: Rigby Ltd., 1971), p. 32. [First published London: John W. Parker & Son, 1854.]

[30]Mercury, 4-i-1851, p. 745, V, iv.

Less obvious is this parody of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage:

I stood on Lofty's rocky range,
Where Lofty's mount looks on the sea,
Methought that all things there seemed strange,
A gulf 'twixt all below and me,
A mighty cloud my vision fills
Of hovering writs - dishonored bills.

Fill high the bowl of "elder" wine!
My shepherds dance beneath the shade,
I see their greasy moleskins shine,-
And thinking on the mess I've made,
To honest Th -t-n, I declare,
I'll hand those sheep,- and this I swear!

.....[31]

Apart from the title, "Mildew's Lament, after Byron", and the first few lines, there is little in the rest of the poem to suggest that the writer intended a close parody. It soon lapses into a succession of versified local allusions. Those who wished to be more successful as parodists would have been wise to follow the example of the anonymous writer who parodied "John Anderson, my Jo", a shorter, more mannered, and therefore more imitable kind of poem:

John Alcohol, my jo, John,
When we were first acquaint
I'd siller in my pockets, John,
Which noo, ye ken, I want.
I spent it all in treating, John,
Because I loved you so;
But mark me, how you've treated me,
John Alcohol, my jo.[32]

Goldsmith's verse offered advantages similar to Burns'. His "The Deserted Village" gave little except the opening phrase to a lengthy "Ode to Walkerville", "Lovely village Walkerville", but there is no doubt that Hammond's skit on James Allen is much enlivened by its resemblances to Goldsmith's song from The Vicar of Wakefield:

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[31]Ibid., 9-ii-1850, p. 360, IV, iv.

[32]Ibid., 24-viii-1850, p. 592, VIII, i.

When dismal Jemmy gets too jolly,
And late at road-side Pubs doth stay,
What shall conceal a preacher's folly,
Who lushes when he ought to pray.
The only way to get his hand in
For next day's leaders long and dry,
Is, clap him into bed all standing,
For in Broad SHEETS he's used to LIE.[33]

In a newspaper which prided itself on being SINE HUMBUG and which throve on "rare Local Hits",[34] rhymed couplets for satirical portraits were inevitable. Those who preferred this form of course took Pope and Dryden, occasionally Butler, as their models, but even the best of them established only superficial links with the classics of Augustan satire, scarcely managing the metre let alone achieving their grace and wit. Nevertheless, Hammond's "The Bench Cantwell" shows no little dexterity and a good deal of his own brand of humour:

Awful the scene whene'er the Bench doth meet
And Bagdad's Bishop[35] takes his sacred seat.
Like Jove he frowns, when viewing from afar
Some luckless, godless scion of the BAR -
(Not that where Gwynny[36] fancies he can plead,
With Sussex "Patois" juries to mislead -
But that where nobblers and bright ales abound,
While care (and no FLIES) is in "spiders" drowned)
"Thine is refused," he saith; "go pray, my friend;
Humble thyself; think on thy latter end;
For, ah, it grieves my inmost soul to tell,
Ye publicans are all bound straight to hell.
.....
Thy house is needless; go then, wretched man,
And get a living the best way you can!"
But when some snuffling psalm-smiter appears,
Lo, how the Bishop pricks his godly ears,
And, prompt to give the lying Mawworm[37] help,
E'en condescends to nurse his dirty whelp,

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[33]Ibid., 1-vi-1850, p. 493, V, ii.

[34]Ibid., 13-iv-1850, p. 438, VI, iv.

[35]William Giles, of course.

[36]E. Castres Gwynne, the lawyer.

[37]Like Cantwell, a character in Rickerstaffe's play, The Hypocrite.

Regarding too, with most complacent eye,
His protege pour forth the ready lie,
Well pleased, he nods, and then proceeds to say,
"Granted - 'tis thine - thou knowest the right way."
.....[38]

Well-sustained parodies were however rare and even they achieve their effect less from the parody than from Hoodian puns and topicalities. (Not that this is a weakness solely colonial: much of The Dunciad relies upon the reader's recognition of contemporary references.) "The Bench Cantwell", for example, expects the reader to know something of the feud between the Mercury and the Bench of Magistrates, the diminutive for Gwynne, the colonial slang word, "spiders", Bickerstaffe's comedy, Hammond's antipathy to "White Chokers", especially to Giles: not insuperable problems but barriers to easy understanding nevertheless. It is no wonder that such parodies have not survived. Add to these, the Mercury's penchant for puns and the modern reader's suspicion of them even in Shakespeare, and the neglect of a pleasant trifle such as "The Art of Book-keeping", becomes more explicable:

"How hard, when those who do not wish
To lend - that's lose - their books,
Are snared by anglers - folk that fish
With literary hooks;

Who call and take some favourite tome,
But never read it through:
They thus complete their set at home,
By making one at you.

.....

A circulating library
Is mine - my birds are flown;
There's one odd volume left, to be
Like all the rest, a-lone.

---

[38]Mercury, 16-iii-1850, p. 403, VII, iv.

I, of my Spenser quite bereft,
Last winter sore was shaken;
Of Lamb I've but a quarter left,
Nor could I save my Bacon.

They picked my Locke, to me far more
Than Bramah's patent worth;
And now my losses I deplore,
Without a Home on earth.

Even Glover's works I cannot put
My frozen hands upon,
Though ever since I lost my Foote,
My Bunyan has been gone."[39]

It would be foolish however to dismiss this aspect of the Mercury's literary scope, simply because fashions in verbal humour have changed. Quite apart from such poetry's value as social and cultural history, and its utility as a catalogue of authors who were for the nineteenth century reader classic, it also serves to illuminate an aspect of colonial taste which could be over-looked. The Mercury's parodies and burlesques and imaginary dialogues provide a counter-balance to the view commonly held that the Victorian reader was invariably sober-minded and susceptible to sentimentality. Without such frivolities, the modern reader would be in danger of accepting uncritically the view of Victorian life which Strachey did so much to fashion. The common reader of the middling classes of course enjoyed sentiment and high-sounding rhetoric, but was not less entertained by violence, vituperation, and nonsense. Although a burlesque such as ROLLA OF "OURS" makes a university review seem sophisticated by comparison, to ignore it is to risk underestimating the playfulness of the colonial newspaper reader:

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[39]Ibid., 24-v-1851, p. 908. VIII, i.

PIZARRO: . . . His father, an old cobbler,
Loving his family, but more his nobbler,
Referred me to his ma: she loth to lose
So fair a chance, said she'd not "mar" his views;
Then, with some few remarks about cigars,
Consigned her son to me, a son of "Mars".
Then you'll perceive, his fortune I have built;
The snake I'll "scotch."
VALVERDE: But how?
PIZARRO: He shall be "kilt."[40]

Understandably, such laboured humour cannot have much appeal today, but it should not be neglected, for the simple reason that it formed part of the colonial reader's literary range.

What Punch was to the English middle-classes generally, the Mercury was to South Australians. And just as Punch has to be included in any account of the reading habits of the Victorian middle classes - lest their materialism, their piety, and their earnestness be over-stressed - so too must the Mercury's light verse. However contrived the humour now seems, however mechanical, there can be no doubt that it formed part of the common reader's literary taste, and must be considered as a significant aspect of colonial journalism.

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[40]Ibid., 15-ii-1851, p. 790, II, iii. (This was presumably a parody of Sheridan's play, Pizarro.)

Chapter 14

THE NOMENCLATURE OF HOTELS: AN ADDENDUM

The colonial mind was most consciously displayed by colonists using traditional literary forms, particularly poetry, letters, essays, editorials and fiction. But there were other ways. As Matthew Arnold has pointed out, a society's culture can also be found in

> . . . their way of life, their habits, their manners, the very tones of their voice; look at them attentively; observe the literature they read, the things which give them pleasure, the words which come forth out of their mouths, the thoughts which make the furniture of their minds . . . .[1]

Newspapers of course form a major part of the "literature they read", and reveal much of the common reader's general attitudes. But within the newspapers' least literary columns are items of news, advertisements, factual reports, which also constitute the furniture of the colonial mind. There is some danger of the modern reader investing the essentially prosaic with a false glamour, of seeing significances which exist only in his imagination. A catalogue of drapery at a century's remove can acquire a romantic patina which it could not have had at the time:

> Cachmere [sic], Albert, Victoria, and other shawls
> Hair-cord, brocaded and check muslins
> Musard and Windsor do.
> Figured and striped do.
> Jaconet and printed do.
> Green, white, and amber lenos for musquito curtains

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[1]Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism (London: John Murray, 1957), p. 13. [First published London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1869.]

catalogued literally hundreds of hotel names, some of which throw an oblique light upon an interesting aspect of colonial life, namely the literary fancies of actual or would-be publicans. Not all, not even a majority, of South Australian hotel names are particularly imaginative or ingenious. Many proprietors merely attached familiar English names to their antipodean premises. Neither they nor their patrons would have felt any incongruity drinking at the Angel, Gouger-street, rather than at the more famous Angel, Islington, nor at the Saracen's Head, though its actual location was sparsely settled Carrington-street, not suburban London.

Of the more than two hundred applications which the Bench of Magistrates considered, perhaps more than a quarter bore such sturdily British names as the Star and Garter, Sir John Barleycorn, Tom o' Lincoln, the Rose and Crown and the inevitable Traveller's Rest. That royalty should prefix many hotel names is also to be expected in such a loyal colony as South Australia; hence, the Royal Oak, the Royal Hotel, the Royal Admiral, the Royal Standard, and of course Coppin's (later Schmidt's) Royal Exchange. (One wonders what the queen would have thought about the "assemblage of ladies of a certain description" who used the royal verandah as an alternative to the theatre.) And just as hunting had been translated to the colonies, so too were the familiar names of pubs like the Tally Ho, the Buck's Head, the White Hart, the Stag Inn. Whether the choice of such names signifies imaginative atrophy or nostalgia there is no way of knowing, but the effect of names such as the Huntsman's House is to evoke something of the colonists' hankering for an idealised bucolic England, made more poignant by distance and possibly alcohol. Just as traditional were vari-coloured animals; red, black, and gold lions, black bulls, black and white horses, black swans, and those named after English counties,

Chapter 15

THE JOURNALISM OF 1854

If 1851 was an Annus Mirabilis amid the first years of South Australia's existence, a year notable for achieving the right to vote, for the victory of the voluntary principle over state aid to religion, a golden year for fortunate Victorians, and a year of boom and slump for South Australians who stayed at home, then 1854 was a year of steady prosperity and general consolidation. The worst effects of the gold discoveries had passed; shortages of labour and bullion, business failures, the loss of many of Adelaide's most enterprising citizens. Having survived the upheavals of 1851 and the stagnation of 1852, Adelaide had by 1854 achieved a kind of equilibrium, a steady growth in population, an affluence derived largely from supplying the wants of colonists in Victoria and New South Wales, and a society whose values were becoming more definite. But the Adelaide of 1854 was not the Adelaide of 1851. It was still the centre of South Australian affairs and was to house in the town itself and in the surrounding villages more than half of the colony's total population - an urban concentration of which Trollope was to remark in 1871:

> [the] proportion of urban to rural population, - or I may perhaps better say of metropolitan to non-metropolitan, - is very much in excess of that which generally prevails in other parts of the world.[1]

But whereas those who lived in the town had formerly determined to a

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[1]Anthony Trollope, Australia, ed. P. D. Edwards and R. B. Joyce (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1967), p. 636. [First published London: Chapman & Hall, 1873.]

large extent their own social values, the colony's newly conceded reliance upon agriculture and grazing shifted the colony's cultural focus towards the country. As Pike has suggested,

> large numbers of South Australians, tutored in the ingenuities and rough life of the diggings, lost their fear of the discomfort of isolated country life and more readily turned away from Adelaide to invest their earnings and their energies in pushing back the frontiers of settlement.[2]

Numerically, the shift towards the country could not have been large, but among those who did begin the settlement of the mid-north and the south-east were many of the colony's most influential men. More and more Adelaide was seen not as an embryonic provincial capital but as a market-town for rural interests.

This emphasis upon the affairs of the country is particularly noticeable in the newspapers of 1854. The tightly-knit community, necessary for the support of the personal journalism which had flourished before the gold rushes, now was dispersed. Hindley-street no longer was the centre of the South Australian world. Paradoxically, with the dispersion of the newspaper reading class, came a narrowing of journalistic range. Instead of the urbanity epitomised by the Mercury, the South Australian press began to resemble the ironic beau ideal outlined by Bulwer Lytton:

> . . . well conducted, well edited by a man of the world, of education, of practical experience in agriculture and human nature, mines, corn, manure, insurances, acts of parliament, cattle-shows, the state of parties, and the best interests of society.[3]

The Register had anticipated this change as early as 1851, and so by

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[2]Douglas A. Pike, Paradise of Dissent; South Australia 1829-1857 (Melbourne: Longmans, Green & Co., 1957), p. 460.

[3]E. Bulwer Lytton, The Caxtons, A Family Picture, Knebworth Edition (London: Routledge & Sons, [date of publication not stated]), p. 48. [First published: London, 1849.]

1854 had come to be generally regarded as the most progressive of South Australia's newspapers. That such changes were seen as progress and improvement is borne out by the Register's new year editorial for 1855:

> . . . Beyond question, the newspapers of any free country are the most comprehensive, minute, and reliable data from which a discriminating mind can draw the facts of history; and it would be a sacrifice of public interests to the ideas of false modesty, were we to suppress allusion to the progress of public journalism, simply because we are individually concerned in the subject . . . .[4]

In the second leader of the same issue, there is some recognition of the colony's Philistinism - "We have yet much to do in connection with education, art, and science"[5] - but the writer seems satisfied that what had always been secondary roles - serving as literary magazines and as vehicles for controversy - had dwindled even further in importance and that the personality of the editor and the flavour of his opinions were to be wherever possible suppressed.

The new journalism was not of course unconnected to the old. Factions still formed and quarrelled in public, colonists of "correct principles" were still occasionally seen behaving in an unprincipled fashion. Nevertheless, much of the gaiety and entertainment had gone for good, leaving a press which was sober, cautious and plainly pragmatic, a press which, chameleon-like, had adjusted itself to the dominant attitudes of its readers. Just as the newly acquired wealth of the country as a whole had hastened a movement towards colonial independence, so the new journalism became more truly colonial than a provincial imitation of the press at "home". 1854 saw in short a weakening of South Australia's attachment to Great Britain and a strengthening of its colonial character.

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[4]Register, 1-i-1855, II, iv.

[5]Ibid., II, vi.

One of the most striking features of the press of 1854 is the emphasis given to local government. Formerly, the Legislative Council had dominated the political coverage of papers such as the Register and the Mercury. Now, newspapers gave scarcely less space to the work done by the district councils of surrounding villages, agricultural areas such as Willunga, Strathalbyn, Mount Barker, and pastoral areas such as Naracoorte, Mount Gambier, and those other settlements whose affairs had become so critical in the continuing prosperity of the colony. Only the events of a major crisis like the Crimean War were sufficient to diminish - and then only temporarily - news about what was being done to build roads, to distribute land, or to collect rates and taxes. Central to the revised South Australian press were the affairs of those who were reaping the rewards of their virtue, "the untiring energy exercised by . . . old colonists, sticking to their adopted land through good and evil report, adversity and prosperity, as thorough colonists".[6]

Attempts to widen the range of local journalism invariably failed. None of the papers founded in 1853, the Examiner, the Free Press, or the Morning Chronicle, seriously threatened the pre-eminence of the Register or even was able to supplant that other survivor of the storms of 1851 and 1852, the Times. Far from demanding replacements for the newspapers which had perished during the gold rushes, for the Mercury or the Mining Gazette or the South Australian, the newspaper-reading public seemed more than satisfied with the Register, and the Times, and their respective weekly counterparts, the Observer and the Weekly Dispatch. Several entrepreneurs tried to restore

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[6]John W. Bull, Early Experiences of Life in South Australia, and an Extended Colonial History (2d ed.; Adelaide: E. S. Wigg & Son, and Sampson Low, London, 1884), p. 108.

something of the competition which had existed between the newspapers of 1851, but by 1854 a virtual oligarchy had been established, a concentration of ownership which was not to be successfully challenged until the advent of the Advertiser and the Chronicle in 1858. Numerically, and qualitatively, South Australian journalism had been reduced to its simplest expression. Two dailies and two weeklies were now sufficient to satisfy most of the needs of a simplified society.

Acting as ballast within the new South Australian press is a welter of facts, calculations, and helpful hints. In a Times advertisement for an issue of its Weekly Dispatch, there is clear evidence of how soberly and how sadly colonial readers expected to be entertained. Although in this issue there are a few features reminiscent of the newspaper's literary magazine function, the stress is principally upon the utilitarian and the profitable. Consider for example a few titles:

ARTICLES

And We're a' Noddin', Nid, Nod, Noddin'
Smashing the "Smashers"
More Hansonian "Gems", by "A Barrister"
Public Markets, and Shade for our Streets
Captain Geves of the Ship Albatross
Railways in Australia . . .
Mount Alexander, and Murray River Railway
Anti-Convictism
Houseless Strangers
The Ocean Steamers

FAMILY READING

England's Wives and Daughters in Australian Homes, including -
- Be Something
- Married Life
- A Mother's Love
- Female Education
- Want of thought
- The Man of Business
- Useful Receipts
- Penalties
- Hints for all

Homestead Hints; or, the Garden, Vineyard, and Field, in South Australia, including -
- Thoughts on Horses and How they Rank

About Geese
Profit in Fowls
Maxims for Gardeners
Trifles to Smile at, "A thing of Shreds and Patches"
for all, including -
The Alderman
Major Austin's Left Leg
How to get rid of a Jealous Husband
New Works in the Press &c., &c.[7]

Such a plethora of useful information was not of course unknown in the journalism preceding the gold rushes nor was it now inappropriate. After all, in a colony which rested to some extent upon the utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham - a philosopher whose memory had been honoured in the name of one of Adelaide's streets and in the christian name of one of its then leading auctioneers, J. B. Neales - the practicalities of colonial life could not be ignored, however prosaic they seem today. What was new was the importance colonial editors gave it, and conversely, the neglectful treatment they meted out to humour and to unimproving entertainment. Apologetic "trifles to smile at" were no substitute for a Bowl of Punch; or Household Hints for vigorous debate. Recognising that the colony's future rested largely in the hands of graziers, farmers, and those who served them, merchants, agents, brokers, and believing that the newspaper reading class wanted facts rather than frivolity, and put conventional wisdom ahead of argument and disputation, colonial editors throughout 1854 set out to give their readers what they were known to want. To venture into areas where tastes were unknown or equivocal was too risky. The society which the newspapers of 1854 so obsequiously served must have been very like that which Twopeny noted in 1883;

> . . . a pastoral and agricultural colony, undisturbed by the forced marches of gold-mining. In Adelaide middle-class respectability is too strong for larrikinism, and imparts a

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[7]Times, 12-ii-1853, I, iii, iv.

> far healthier social and moral tone than obtains in either Melbourne or Sydney; but for these advantages, the little town pays the small but disagreeable price of Philistinism.[8]

Respectability Adelaide had always prized, but the means by which it could be achieved, "early arrival, thrift, temperance and its illegitimate offspring abstinence, piety, and the ownership of land,"[9] had been qualified by recent experience. In general, the roads to colonial acceptance had become narrower. Birth, education, or refinement were giving way to the meaner virtues of puritanism. By 1854 Adelaide and Philistia would have been sister cities. The acquisition of money had been acknowledged - not without pride - as the dominant vice in colonial society, almost from the colony's first days. But before the gold-rushes, the consequent Philistinism had had dash and style. After Mount Alexander, when the making of money had to be decently steady rather than vulgarly spectacular, Adelaide's attitudes to artistic and cultural values became somewhat dun-coloured. The colonists of 1851 had been particularly sensitive about their differences from the other Australian colonies and had taken pride in their fancied resemblances to English society of the better sort. They had striven to reproduce as far as possible a society which was English provincial rather than Australian colonial. But once economic necessity compelled closer links with neighbours who had already travelled some distance along the road to colonial independence, who were already expressing Tom Collins's "bias, offensively Australian", then Adelaide's development took a more vulgar direction. This is particularly noticeable in the newspapers' concentration upon parochial concerns such as

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[8]R. E. N. Twopeny, Town Life in Australia. Facsimile Edition (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1973), pp. 122, 123. [First published London: Elliot Stock, 1883.]

[9]Pike, op. cit., p. 510.

Morning Chronicle in 1853, had in part been relieved a year later, but the support of the respectable of both sexes no longer could be assumed.

> In what town or country uninhabited by Dutchmen do we find as little amusement as in Adelaide and its surrounding territory? What opportunities have we of social meeting? Above all, what places of amusement are open to the women of the colony, particularly of the middle class? The public house opens its hospitable door to men, as well as the theatre, the billiard room, the race-course, and the reading room, while their wives, sweethearts, and sisters want concerts, balls, and conversaziones, and are even now longing for a horticultural show this year, that they may have an opportunity of seeing a few new faces (not to mention the bonnets.)[17]

Whereas in the old days, all classes from the Governor down had met in the theatre and at the Exchange, church-going was now one of the very few activities in which social distinctions could be over-looked. When all colonists had shared much the same kind of difficulties, the enforcement of rigid class divisions would have been absurd; but once pre-fabricated wooden houses, wattle and daub huts, and tents began to give way to a variety of permanent dwellings, when stone villas could be contrasted with working men's cottages, then the opportunities for occasional democratic mingling were made more difficult. For the professional theatre, there was to be no return to the position it once had enjoyed on the margin of respectability. Though the Port Adelaide Theatre had apparently been purged of its licentiousness,

> From the strict decorum with which the theatre has been latterly conducted by Mr Knight, we would have no objection to see it frequently made use of,[18]

and the Royal Victoria, under the management of H. Lambert, had won the Times's flabby support, ("On the whole, we can certainly recommend the theatre under its present management to our play-going public"[19]),

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[17]Morning Chronicle, 13-i-1853, II, v, vi.

[18]Times, 27-v-1853, II, iv.

[19]Ibid., 20-vi-1853, II, v.

it is plain that the fastidious puritanism that had marked so many of John Stephens' remarks about the theatre had become a journalistic norm. No matter how decorously the theatre was conducted or how unexceptionable the selection of plays, it was never to recover the grudging acceptance it had received during John Lazar's management and Hammond's support. Play-going now had been abandoned, in double sense, to the lower orders and to those foolhardy few who were indifferent to their class's disapproval.

Only musical performances maintained their reputation as an acceptable diversion, and then principally because they were now offered more often by amateurs than professionals. Resident soloists of the calibre of S. W. Wallace, Andrew Murray, and Francesca Allen were not to be replaced by musical nonentities like Mr Bennet and Miss Chalker, not even when buttressed by members of the Adelaide Choral Society.[20] Instead of ambitious programmes such as those publicised by the Mercury, consisting of operatic arias, overtures and orchestral works performed by the aggregation of both professional and amateur musicians, violin and piano virtuoso pieces, choral items by the Deutsche Liedertafel, there were tinkling programmes made up of songs like "Remember thee! yes, love, for ever" and "Friends of my Youth". Musicians continued to visit the colony, but they tended not to be first class, and in any case were received with a reserve not noticeable in pre-gold rush days. Adelaide was to pride itself on its music, but its reputation was based upon the work of amateur groups, an indication of its satisfaction with local talent.

As for reading as entertainment, there is little evidence to show whether that too had become more conservative and more pious. Accord-

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[20] Register, 9-vi-1854, IV, i.

ing to the Morning Chronicle it had certainly declined in quantity:

> We find no counterpoise any where to the spirit of money making, which, always the besetting sin of new colonies, has here grown to giant strength from our inevitable proximity to the Victoria gold fields . . . the people as a body do not read half so much as they did a year ago.[21]

But the colony's willingness to support a reduced number of newspapers, despite an increase in population from 66,538 in 1851 to 92,545 in 1854,[22] does suggest that Adelaide's readers were satisfied with the kind of journalism typified by the Register, and felt no need to return to the diversification of 1851. Even when the Advertiser was launched, the weight given to advertisements reveals all too clearly its commercial bias and its affinity to its nominal rivals.

The newspapers of 1854 were sharply slanted towards business and its attendant advertisements, towards agriculture and its attendant commonplaces. About half of the total space of the dailies was taken up by insurance companies' financial statements, testimonials for patent medicines such as Moffatt's Vegetable Life Medicines and Holloway's Ointments, advertisements for American Sarsparilla, notices of houses and land for sale, with shipping information, details of cattle impounded and goods to be auctioned; all the apparatus of a society in which commerce had become the most respectable of all pursuits. By way of divertisement, a sizeable proportion of the remainder was devoted to local news, with a heavy emphasis upon Serious Accidents, Furious Driving, Melancholy Occurrences, Sudden Deaths, Coroner's Inquests, Destructive Fires - domestic trivia masquerading as news of significance. The reduced press of 1854 had of course gained as well as lost. Its readers were better informed and were better guarded

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[21]Morning Chronicle, 7-x-1852, II, v.

[22]Pike, op. cit., Appendix A, p. 517.

against journalistic attacks upon their reputations and against excessive editorial bias and influence. The necessity to sustain inter-newspaper wrangling had also been much reduced. Yet if these were improvements, they had been bought at some considerable cost. The papers as a whole were even further from the ideal than their predecessors had been. Instead of following the maxim used by the Morning Chronicle as its epigraph,

> This is true liberty, when free-born men,
> Having to advise the public, may speak free.-
> EURIPIDES,[23]

editors and proprietors chose to muffle their voices for the sake of propriety and circulation. As a consequence, the papers of 1854 are remarkable for their subservience to their readers and advertisers. In petty matters or in factual, they were prepared to advise their readers, but in contentious issues, they tended to hide behind the barricades of journalistic detachment or else to rely upon the received wisdom of the middle classes for which they were still principally the spokesmen. In John Stephens' day, there had been a vast gulf between the press's avowals to canvass

> the acts of public men and public measures, to maintain the freedom of the press, the great palladium of public liberty, by the exercise of an independent and unbiassed judgment,[24]

and its actual performance. But by 1854, the liberal idealism which underlay such a statement had largely been abandoned to the practicalities of making newspapers pay.

The changed character of Adelaide's newspapers was of course paralleled elsewhere. American journalism, with its sensational head-

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[23]Morning Chronicle, 9-viii-1852, II, iv.

[24]Register, 25-vi-1845, II, v.

lines, human interest stories, and its bombast, had had some slight effect upon Adelaide's newspapers. Colonial journalism, moreover, was altering in response to changes which had already taken place in English middle-class journalism. The London Times still remained the model for all aspiring Australian newspapers, but whereas the Sydney Morning Herald and the Melbourne Argus had succeeded in capturing something of the Times's spirit, the Register had too often only caught its gentlemanly manner. In editorial direction and emphasis, the South Australian press was now composed largely of country-town newspapers with airs. In essence, it had become ineluctably colonial.

APPENDIX A

Newspapers and Journals referred to in the South Australian between January 3, 1845 and June 27, 1845.

Advertiser
Agricultural Gazette
Albion
Americane Advocate
Argus
Asiatic Journal
Athenaeum
Atlas
Atlas for India
Auckland Chronicle
Auckland Times
Augsburg Gazette
Australian

Belfast Chroncile
Bengal Hurkaru
Bell's Weekly Messenger
Bentley's Miscellany
Blackwood's Magazine
Bombay Courier
Bombay Gentleman's Magazine
Bombay Times
Boston Bee
Boston Daily Times
Bristol Mercury
Britannia
Bulwer's Student

Cabotsville Chronicle
Calcutta Englishman
Cape Commercial Advertiser
Cape Shipping Gazette
Christian Mother's Magazine
Clare Journal
Colonial Gazette
Colonial Observer
Colonial Times
Commerce
Commercial Journal
Constitutionel
Cornwall Chronicle
Courier

Debats
Diario del Goberno

Dublin Evening Mail
Dublin Evening Post
Dublin Gazette
Dublin Monitor
Dublin News Letter
Dumfries Courier
Durham Advertiser

Echo de la Nievre
Edinburgh Witness
Englishman
Era
Examiner

Frankfort Journal
Fras(z)er's Magazine
Freeman's Journal
Friend of China
Friend of India

Galignani
Gazette dez Tribunaux
Gazette du Bersi
Geelong Advertiser
Gentleman's Gazette
Glasgow Argus
Glasgow Chronicle
Globe
Gloucester Journal

Hamburgh Borsenhalle
Hampshire Chronicle
Herapath's Railway Magazine
Herford Times
Herald from Cork
Hobart Town Advertiser
Hobart Town (Hobarton) Town Courier
Hongkong Register
Hood's Magazine

Illustrated London News
Inverness Courier
Iowa Transcript
Ipswich Express

Jamaica Morning Herald
Jerrold's London Magazine
John Bull
Journal des Debats
Journal do Commerio
Journal of Agriculture
Journal of Commerce

Kentish Independent
Kilkenny Journal

Launceston Advertiser
Launceston Examiner
Leeds Intelligencer
Liverpool Albion
Liverpool Mercury
Liverpool Times
London Journal of Commerce
London Mail
London and Paris Ladies' Magazine
Loraine Republican
London Monthly Times

Maitland Mercury
Manchester Advertiser
Mauricien
Medical Gazette
Mining Journal
Montreal Gazette
Montreal Herald
Montreal Transcript
Montrose Review
Morning Chronicle
Morning Herald
Morning Post
Murray's Tasmanian Review

Nation
National
Naval and Military Gazette
Nelson Examiner
New Edinburgh Review
New York American
New York Censor
New York Herald
New York Journal of Commerce
New York Sun
New York Tribune
New Monthly
New Zealand Spectator and Cook's Straits Guardian

Observer [Adelaide]
Observer of the Rhine
Ottawa Advocate

Perth Gazette
Perthshire Courier
Philadelphia Colonization Herald
Pictorial Times
Plymouth Journal
Polynesian
Portland Examiner
Portland Guardian
Portland Gazette
Port Phillip Gazette
Port Phillip Herald
Port Phillip Patriot

Port Phillip Standard
Presse
Prussion Gazette
Public Ledger
Punch

Quebec Gazette
Quotidienne

Register [South Australian]
Richmond Star
Rochester Daily Democrat

Scotsman
Seicle
Semanario Filipino
Semaphore de Marseilles
Shipping Gazette
Simmond's Colonial Magazine
Singapore Free Press
South African Journal
South Australian Commercial Advertiser
Southern Cross
Southern Queen
Spectator
Springfield Republican
Stamford Mercury
Standard
Sunday Times
Swan River Inquirer
Sydney Morning Chronicle
Sydney Morning Herald
Sydney Weekly Register

Times [London]
Tom Bourke of Ours
Tweddel's Yorkshire Miscellany

United Service Gazette

Weekly Despatch
Weekly Register
Wellington Spectator
Welshman
Western Expositor
Western Times
Westminster Review
Westmoreland Gazette
Willie's Evening Mirror
Wiltshire Independent
World of Fashion

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