

W. W. GREG - A CENTENARY FOOTNOTE

During visits to the United Kingdom in 1974 and early 1975 I was able to pursue a long-standing inquiry into the involvement of William Rathbone Greg (1809-1881) in the debate on phrenology that took place in Edinburgh in the 1820's between the associates and adversaries of George Combe.¹ The starting-point for this investigation was the small group of letters Greg sent in 1829 to his Scottish friend Nicol Drysdale Stenhouse, later a solicitor and literary patron in Sydney.² Stenhouse's own passing interest in phrenology and his connection with Greg are treated briefly in Ann-Mari Jordens' unpublished M.A. thesis on the colonial Maecenas.³

Although there is valuable material to be gleaned from the minute books of the Edinburgh Plinian Society on W. R. Greg's early intellectual activities and interests,⁴ it is on the whole disappointing to see how little of the correspondence of this once noted publicist⁵ has survived in such public collections as the British Library, the Bodleian, the Cambridge University Library, the National Library of Scotland and the Edinburgh University Library. Indeed, if various offprints and pamphlets in the Kashnor Collection of the National Library of Australia that once belonged to W. R. Greg are added to the Stenhouse letters, this country can be seen to hold a not inconsiderable part of the rather meagre data available for a study of the author of *Enigmas*

-
1. See David de Giustino, *Conquest of Mind: Phrenology and Victorian Social Thought* (London: Croom Helm, 1975) and the same author's "Phrenology in Britain, 1815-1855: a Study of George Combe and his Circle," Diss. Wisconsin 1969.
 2. See Mitchell Library MS. A 99, pp. 238-250, 280-83. Also included in this volume (pp. 215-229) is a copy of Greg's pamphlet *Observations on a late Pamphlet by Mr Stone, on the Phrenological Development of Burke, Hare, &c.* (Edinburgh: John Anderson, Jun., 1829), which Stenhouse saw through the press.
 3. Ann-Mari Williams, "Nicol Drysdale Stenhouse - a Study of a Literary Patron in a Colonial Milieu," Diss. Sydney 1963, pp. 20-24. See also on Stenhouse's library, now in the Fisher Library of the University of Sydney, Ann-Mari Jordens, "The Stenhouse Collection," *Australian Academic and Research Libraries*, 4 (1973), 6-14.
 4. See Edinburgh University Library MSS. Dc. 2.53-54.
 5. See the account of him in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, VIII, 531-2.

of *Life*. In particular two of the three copies I have so far discovered of Greg's contribution to the polemic between George Combe and Thomas Stone are in Australia.

However, W. R. Greg's reputation has been overshadowed by that of Walter Wilson Greg, the son of his second marriage. Some of the obituary tributes to the great bibliographer published in *The Library* in 1959 draw attention to the extraordinary span covered by the careers of a father whose literary work began when he was a student contemporary of Charles Darwin in Edinburgh in the 1820's and of a son still marvellously productive in the 1950's.⁶ An isolated letter in the Edinburgh University Library collections,⁷ here reproduced by kind permission of Mr E. R. S. Fifoot, the University Librarian, gives a conventional but perhaps unconsciously prophetic glimpse of the future bibliographer at the age of five. The year is not indicated, but from internal evidence it can be conjectured to be 1880. I have not identified the recipient, nor have I had the opportunity to trace the dispersal of W. R. Greg's books and papers in his own lifetime and later in that of his son.⁸ However, it is clear that the process had begun by 1880 at the latest.

Park Lodge
Nov. 21.

Dear Mr Reid,

As you are kind enough to let me send you the Books I want to dispose of, I am forwarding two boxes - one an immense one. At the top of this are a quantity of old pamphlets & *imperfect* periodicals, which I suppose must be considered as waste paper merely. - Below this rubbish, and separated from it by a newspaper cover are the books, & a quantity of *perfect* Reviews & magazines, for which I shall be glad to accept any offer which Reeves & Turner, or anyone else may make; - leaving it entirely in

6. See the notes by J. C. T. Oates and J. Dover Wilson, *The Library*, 5th series, XIV (1959), 151, 153.

7. Edinburgh University Library MS. Dc.4.102, 2 leaves.

8. A few scraps were given by W. W. Greg to the British Museum, e.g. Add. MS. 44884 A.B.

your hands: - old Editions of good books are sometimes saleable. Among them are some *damp* copies of an old publication of mine.

Thanking you again I am yours sincerely

W. R. Greg

Mrs. Greg & my boy are both fair - the latter full of vigour & promise & noise. I have been ill this autumn, but am now decidedly better, & beginning to indulge in the hope of a quiet & comfortable old age - 71.

P.S. Kind regards to all who remember me. I trust the office is comfortable.

Wallace Kirsop

THE MUNBY FELLOWSHIP APPEAL

The Syndics of the Cambridge University Library have launched an appeal to endow within the library a Munby Fellowship for research in the history of the book trade and the formation of libraries. The fellowship will celebrate the very distinguished contribution of the late Dr. A. N. L. Munby in these two fields. The brochure issued by the Syndics describes Dr. Munby as 'a man of good humour and good sense with an inexhaustible capacity for enjoying everything to which he set his talents of hand and mind' - a description that will be heartily seconded by all members of this society who had the good fortune to know him or to attend his classes. Appointments will be for one or two years with the possibility of extension if circumstances warrant it. Donations should be sent to the University Treasurer, Old Schools, Cambridge, CB2 1TT, England. A special form for covenants is available.

Copyright of Full Text rests with the original copyright owner and, except as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, copying this copyright material is prohibited without the permission of the owner or its exclusive licensee or agent or by way of a license from Copyright Agency Limited. For information about such licences contact Copyright Agency Limited on (02) 93947600 (ph) or (02) 93947601 (fax)