

**THE AUTHOR OF NOEL HOPE'S *MILLIARA*:
AN AUSTRALIAN ROMANCE**

IN *THE ACADEMY*, SEPTEMBER 23, 1893, p.253, T. Fisher Unwin announced the publication of a new novel: '*Milliara, an Australian Romance* by Mr Noel Hope' (See Appendix A for bibliographical details). By the end of October *Milliara* was available to Melbourne readers on the shelves of Mullen's Library.¹ *Milliara* was widely and favourably reviewed in English and Scottish newspapers and journals: *The Academy*, December 2, 1893, p.482, commented that '*Milliara* must be regarded as a remarkably well-constructed and well balanced story, and as notable above all things for that 'quiet power' of which we hear so much and see so little in present-day fiction'; *The Spectator*, February 24, 1894, p.271, after bewailing the inevitable sameness of novels written under the Southern Cross, stated that '*Milliara* is one of the good ones, for it is a thoroughly bright, pleasant and wholesome story'.²

In Adelaide the *South Australian Chronicle*, April 28, 1894, praised *Milliara*, stating that it was 'a work that we have no scruple in speaking well of. . . . The language is more than fair, the narrative spirited, the characters are forcibly delineated, and the dialogue is often powerful'. But in Melbourne the *Argus*, December 30, 1893, was not as complimentary, describing it as a 'very harmless specimen' of Australian fiction, 'a humdrum story of pastoral life, which, with a little change of scenery, might suit any part of England'. Despite this lukewarm reception, *Milliara* appears to have proved popular in Melbourne: all thirty-five copies in Mullen's Library were in constant circulation,³ and by April 1894 a one-volume edition had been released by E.A. Petherick and Company as volume 116 of 'Petherick's Collection of English, American, and Colonial Authors'⁴ (See Appendix B for bibliographical details).

The *South Australian Chronicle* commented that 'If we were invited to guess we should say that 'Noel Hope' is a *nom de guerre*, and that this is a woman's first attempt at fiction. If so we can compliment the author on her book'. Similarly the *Argus* and *The Saturday Review*, November 4, 1893, p.519, speculated as to feminine authorship but, unlike the *South Australian Chronicle*, as an explanation of the novel's supposed deficiencies. Apart from these three reviews, it appears that it has not been suspected that 'Noel Hope' is a pseudonym. Both the *British Museum General Catalogue* (1967) and *The Mitchell Library Dictionary Catalog of Printed Books* (1968) accept Hope as the author, and, similarly, there are no quotation marks around the name in E. Morris Miller, *Australian Literature* (1940), ii, p.653 or in Miller and Macartney (1956), p.235. However, the suspicions of the early reviewers can be confirmed. On the title page of volume one of the Fisher Unwin edition held by the State Library of Victoria the name 'Mrs F. Goldstraw' appears in spidery writing under that of Noel Hope. An inscription on the fly leaf, in the same hand, reads 'With the compliments of the Author'. *Milliara* is set in the Western District. A search of the directories revealed a cluster of Goldstraws in the Warrnambool/Heytesbury area, and there was even a lady

author amongst them, although no positive link could be made.⁵ But in the Melbourne directories there was a Mr F. Goldstraw, shown variously as living in High Street or at Wesley College. Frank Goldstraw taught at Wesley from 1872; in 1893 he took on the Headmastership in an attempt to build up flagging enrolments and save the College from threatened financial disaster due to the depression.

In the *Wesley College Chronicle*, December 1893, p.70, the following announcement appears:

ALL Australians who love their country will feel grateful to MRS. GOLDSTRAW. Against the wretched caricatures which would make out Australia to be a cheap copy of California, MRS. GOLDSTRAW gives us in *Milliara* a picture of Australian life, real and true and "full of atmosphere."⁶

For Bell Newton, the heroine of *Milliara*, the path of love does not run smoothly. Her tribulations are due largely to the wiles of Miss Bentinck, an attractive, well-educated young woman who has been engaged as governess to the younger Newtons. Those sections of the novel which are set in the schoolroom or which discuss the problems of providing an adequate education for children living on a remote station are most convincing, for, on the subject of teaching, Mrs Goldstraw could write with authority and feeling.

In 1855, at the age of thirteen, Matilda Broadbent began teaching in a tent on the Ballarat goldfields. Conditions were less than encouraging: the canvas tent was 'very rotten'; there were no privies ('a hole in the ground is used — but it is much too exposed'); and when the rotten tent blew away in a gale it was replaced by a wooden building sited so that water collected behind the building, ran through the schoolroom, and caused the floor to be covered with mud and slush.⁷ In spite of these difficulties Matilda impressed both the Local Patrons and the Inspectors, including Chief Inspector Orlebar, a man not always generous in praise. In his report dated May 25, 1858 he wrote that:

Miss Broadbent is also an admirable teacher. So great is the discipline, into which she has brought her pupils, by kindness flexibility and firmness, that after setting a lesson on the tables to an infant class to chant, she dared to leave it for another class and they continued the chant without a monitor over them for some minutes in perfect order. I never saw such a thing before.⁸

Matilda taught until, at seventeen years of age, she married Joseph Dixie, a Ballarat goldbroker. When widowed at nineteen she supported herself and infant son, Arthur, by returning to teaching at the Ballarat Benevolent Asylum school for orphans and deserted children, where she remained until it closed in July 1868.⁹ After two years apparently without employment Mrs Matilda Dixie became mistress at the Wesleyan School, Lonsdale Street, Melbourne;¹⁰ then in 1872 she removed to Hamilton to become the Resident Governess of the newly-established Alexandra College for young ladies. Within a few months she was

promoted to the position of Lady Principal. Alexandra College was established by a company of local citizens with the aim of providing for 'the daughters as sound an education as the sons' so that they could take their places at the Melbourne University when the authorities of that institution 'would become more liberal in their ideas'. The following year Matilda presented three candidates for the Matriculation examination.¹¹ After five years she returned to Ballarat to establish Queen's College, again preparing girls for matriculation and providing instruction in subjects not then usually regarded as feminine fare. At the prize-giving night in December 1878 Matilda announced that the 'long trying winter, and the burden of a large school' had proved so deleterious to her health that she would have to give up teaching.¹² A few days later she married Frank Goldstraw (eight years her junior) and moved to 652 High Street, Windsor.

After years of living the roles of schoolmistress, widow, governess and Lady Principal, being always the 'Christian Lady of unblemished moral character and . . . excellent deportment',¹³ Matilda's marriage brought her into a different world. Frank was a devoted and talented schoolmaster, but he was also a man of culture and an artist who exhibited regularly with the Victorian Academy of Arts (he was a member of the Council of the Academy) and later with the Victorian Artists' Society.¹⁴ After her marriage Matilda did not continue her career as a teacher although, particularly during Frank's period as Head Master at Wesley and later at Toorak Grammar, she had 'domestic charge' of the pupils as well as organizing 'Moonlight Concerts' and other entertainments for which she wrote and produced charades that provided both amusement and satirical comment upon Victorian society.¹⁵

While 'Noel Hope's' *Milliara* proved a success, Frank's 'new hope' for Wesley quickly faded. He resigned in September 1895¹⁶ and they moved back to his residence in High Street to establish Toorak Grammar School. Despite failing health Frank continued to teach until his death in January 1909. Matilda died in 1913; she was survived by her daughter, Amy Rose Goldstraw.¹⁷ So far I have not been able to trace Amy or to locate the scripts of the plays and charades performed at Wesley or any personal papers. From 'public' memories Matilda's image is that of an attractive, determined, intelligent woman, an outstanding teacher whose attitude to the education of girls was in advance of her time. One personal memory is available. Lawrence Ralph, who attended Toorak Grammar School in 1908, was sometimes invited to dine with the family: he remembers Matilda as 'a charming stately lady with grey hair dressed in the fashion of that time who smiled at you and notwithstanding the great differences in age and station made you feel completely at ease . . .'.¹⁸

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NOTES

- ¹ *Argus*, Oct. 28, 1893, p.16: Mullen's Library. 'NEW BOOKS added during the week'.
- ² See also *The Graphic*, Dec. 16, 1893, p.760; *European Mail*, Nov. 1, 1893, p.26; *Athenaeum*, Nov. 11, 1893, p.658. The *Wesley College Chronicle*, April 1894, p.101, claims that there were also favourable reviews in the *Daily Chronicle*, *Glasgow Herald*, *Scotsman*, *Literary World*, *Queen* and the *Manchester Guardian*, but I have not been able to check these. It was also noticed in *The Saturday Review*, Nov. 4, 1893, p.519, but this review is unfavourable.
- ³ *Wesley College Chronicle*, April 1894, p.101.
- ⁴ Announced in *Petherick's Monthly Catalogue*, Dec. 30, 1893, p.86: 'Shortly | *Milliara*; | *An Australian Romance*. | By Noel Hope. | Cloth limp, cut flush, 2s; Green cloth, flexible, 2s 6d.' A copy of the latter is held at the State Library of Victoria, where the Fisher Unwin two-volume edition is also held. Other copies may be found at SPL, QU (1894), and NML (1894).
- ⁵ Alice Goldstraw, *The Border of the Heytesbury*. Terang, Vic.: Terang Express, 1937.
- ⁶ In *Wesley College. The First Hundred Years* (1967) p.90, Geoffrey Blainey et al. refer to Matilda's authorship of *Milliara* apparently without realizing that it was unknown except at Wesley. Similarly, the Caelli family, descendants of Frank's brother Charles Goldstraw, knew that Matilda was 'Noel Hope' but were unaware that her authorship is not generally acknowledged.
- ⁷ Reports of Inspector Walker, Public Record Office of Victoria (PROV), Series 880, Box 4, 56/844 and Series 1406, Volume 1, 53/1626; Report of Inspector Venables, PROV, Series 1406, Volume 3, 58/1093.
- ⁸ PROV, Series 1406, Volume 3, 58/1245.
- ⁹ Victorian Education Department, transcript of Service Record.
- ¹⁰ Throughout this period it appears that Matilda continued to live in Ballarat as there are letters to the Board of Education addressed from there in which she enquires after a position and requests a reference for a position in New Zealand. For her appointment to the Wesleyan School see PROV, Series 903, Box 158, 70/10447.
- ¹¹ *Hamilton Spectator*, Jan. 27, May 15, Feb. 14, 1872. University of Melbourne, Matriculation Records, 1873.
- ¹² *Ballarat Star*, Dec. 21, 1877; *Ballarat Courier*, Dec. 18, 1878.
- ¹³ PROV, Series 903, Box 159, 70/11651: letter of reference written by the Rev. James Bickford.
- ¹⁴ VSL, Index of the Catalogues of the Victorian Academy of Arts and Victorian Artists' Society Exhibitions, 1870-1903.
- ¹⁵ *In and about Wesley College* (Ballarat: F.W. Niven, 1893), p.3; *The Spectator*, Feb. 3, 1893, p.91; *Prahran Telegraph*, Jan. 21, 1893; *Wesley College Chronicle*, July 1893, p.30, Oct. 1893, p.44, Dec. 1893, p.62-3, Apr. 1894, p.88-9, Sept. 1894, p.123, Oct. 1895, p.206.
- ¹⁶ Wesley College, Council Minutes, July 29, 1895.
- ¹⁷ Her son, Arthur Willoughby Dixie, died in 1901; her other daughter, Winifred Goldstraw, born Dec. 17, 1881, lived for only eighteen days.
- ¹⁸ Personal communication, Oct. 5, 1981. The burden of biographical research for this article has been greatly lightened by the generosity and co-operation of Nina Valentine, of Ballarat and Queen's Anglican Grammar School, who has spent many hours researching Matilda, particularly in relation to Queen's College, Ballarat; Russell Barton, a descendant of the Warrnambool Heytesbury Goldstraws, whose most thorough research has covered Frank Goldstraw's family, although they are not related; and Peter Wilkie, Librarian of Wesley College, who granted ready access to the College archives and put me in touch with Mrs Valentine and Mr Barton. My thanks also to Harold Love for help and encouragement.

APPENDIX A

MILLIARA | [pseudo-gothic type:] An Australian Romance | BY | NOEL HOPE |
VOL. I[II]. | LONDON | T. FISHER UNWIN | PATERNOSTER
SQUARE | 1893

Volume I:

8°: α^4 A- P⁸ Q² [possibly cognate with Q⁶, Vol. II] [\$1 signed]; 126 leaves, pp. *i-v*, *vi-vii*, *viii*, *1*, 2-48, 49, 50-160, 161, 162-241, 242-4

i half-title, *iii* title, *iv-vii* CONTENTS, 1-241 text of novel, 242 colophon:
EDINBURGH | COLSTON AND COMPANY | PRINTERS, 243-4 blank

Volume II:

8°: α^4 A- P⁸ Q⁶ [possibly cognate with Q², Vol. I] [\$1 signed]; 130 leaves, pp. *i-v*, *vi-vii*, *viii*, *1*, 2-96, 97, 98-144, 145, 146-158, '157' [= 159], 160-252

i half-title, *iii* title, *v-vii* CONTENTS., 1-252 text of novel, 252 colophon:
COLSTON AND COMPANY, PRINTERS, EDINBURGH

Both bound in pale green cloth with black, coated end-papers and gold lettering on the spines. Leaf size is 185.5mm. x 123mm.

Copy: La Trobe Library, State Library of Victoria.

APPENDIX B

MILLIARA | [pseudo-gothic type:] An Australian Romance | BY | NOEL HOPE |
COLONIAL EDITION | E. A. PETHERICK & CO. | MELBOURNE,
SYDNEY AND ADELAIDE | LONDON: T. FISHER UNWIN | 1894 | [*All Rights reserved*]

8°: π^4 [?] A- 2G⁸ 2H⁶ [\$1 signed]; 248 leaves, pp. *iii-v*, *vi*, *1*, 2-48, 49, 50-160, 161, 162-492

iii title, *v-vi* CONTENTS, 1-492 text of novel

The La Trobe Library copy, here described, has been crudely repaired with loss of end-papers, and possibly of additional leaves from the preliminaries and 2H. On the other hand, it is also possible that the preliminaries were condensed so as to be printed with 2H⁶ as a single sheet. In that case the correct notation would be π^2 — as in the copy at present — and 'vi' an error for 'iv'.

Note: The London (U1,U2) and Petherick (P) 'editions' are from the same setting with the following exceptions: (1) the preliminaries, (2) presence of volume identification in signatures of U, (3) page numbers and signatures in the part of P corresponding to U2 form a continuing sequence, (4) U2, pp. 1-11 and P, pp. 242-251. In the last instance the point of the resetting was to adjust the length of

a chapter by one page, the P version being the shorter. As it is immaterial in P whether a chapter heading falls on a recto or a verso, but vital for U2 that p.1 fall on a recto, this alteration would seem to indicate that the sheets for P, pp.242-492 were printed before those of U2. In the case of U1 and P, pp. 1-241, the priority seems to have been the other way round. On pages in U containing chapter headings, the page number has been dropped to the foot. But when, as at pp. 1, 49 and 161, this coincides with the beginning of a gathering and space has to be found for both a signature to the right and a volume identification to the left, the page number has been omitted. Since this procedure would have had no rationale if P had been the first to be set, as it has no volume identifiers, the fact that P, pp.1-241, does in fact correspond in these omissions indicates that it was printed subsequently to the U sheets. In the P text corresponding to U2, however, the pagination sequence is unbroken. The process of composition would therefore seem to have been:

- (1) pp. 1-241 set with signatures as for U,
- (2) composition of the rest of the text continues with continuous pagination and signatures as for P,
- (3) following the printing of U1, the chases are unlocked and the volume identifiers removed to allow the printing of P, pp.1-241,
- (4) following the printing of P, pp. 242-494, pagination and signatures replaced as required for U2 and pp. 242-251 reset over eleven pages in order to bring p. 1 onto a recto and to leave room for an enlarged heading. This also has the effect of not requiring the impositions from U2 sig. B onwards to be reconstructed to allow for the one-page anomaly created by U1's p. 241.

If this hypothesis is incorrect, and U2 was printed before P, pp.242-494, it could only be because the expense of resetting was lower than that of reconstructing the impositions. A search for examples of type damage between states — the only sure means of resolving the problem — has so far proved inconclusive.

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