

AN EXCURSION INTO PRINTED KEEPSAKES: II: COLONIAL CELEBRATIONS

THE FIRST STAGE OF THIS 'EXCURSION'¹ took us into printing houses to look at the practice of providing visitors with a memento of the occasion in the shape of a 'personalised' keepsake — i.e. an impression from a forme of standing type into which the visitor's name and the date of the visit had been inserted. In the present stage, roles are reversed in that the press leaves the printing house to actually take part in a celebration, mementos of which it produces for distribution to bystanders. The examples recorded here suggest that the participation of a printing press in the celebration of a major event was a feature of the colonies of Australia and New Zealand in the nineteenth century.

The earliest example that I know of, however, of a keepsake printed during a particular celebration is that reproduced by Luther Ringwalt as one of the 'poems chosen to be printed during the procession on the Lord Mayor's day [in Dublin in the mid-eighteenth century], for distribution to the crowd . . . the following lines [were written] by Mrs. Grierson, the wife of the King's printer, and herself a skillful compositor:'

Hail, mystic art! which men like angels taught,
To speak to eyes, and paint embodied thought!
The deaf and dumb, blest skill, relieved by thee,
We make one sense perform the task of three.
We see — we hear — we touch the head and heart,
And take or give what each but yields in part;
With the hard laws of distance we dispense,
And, without sound, apart, commune in sense;
View, though confined, — nay, rule this earthly ball,
And travel o'er the wide-expanded all.
Dead letters thus with living notions fraught
Prove to the soul the telescope of thought;
To mortal life immortal honor give,
And bid all deeds and titles last and live.
In scanty life, Eternity we taste,
View the first ages, and inform the last;
Arts, History, Laws, we purchase with a look,
And keep, like Fate, all nature in a Book.²

Such apostrophes to the power of printing or of the press are commonplace; as Ringwalt says, in introducing his entry '*Poetry. — Metrical composition.*', 'The lofty office of printing, as furnishing a permanent embodiment to thought, and not only preserving but multiplying its form of expression, has frequently become the chosen theme of the poets.' What distinguishes this particular apostrophe is that it was reputedly printed off during the procession, though whether or not the press itself formed part of the procession I have not established.

The prospect of a printing press forming part of a procession is not so unlikely as might at first be thought. Indeed, instances of such a proceeding exist much closer to home than Dublin. For example, during the celebrations in Melbourne to mark the impending Separation of the District of Port Phillip (henceforward 'Victoria') from

New South Wales in November 1850 there was a huge procession, which culminated in the opening of the new Princes Bridge across the Yarra. In the order of procession the 'PRINTERS OF MELBOURNE' were sandwiched towards the head between the St. Patrick Society and the Ancient Independent Order of Oddfellows. The programme for the day reads: 'Press, on a mounted platform drawn by four horses, Banner — Full length portrait of Gottenberg, The Inventor of Movable Types, and other Trades in rotation.'³ According to 'Garryowen',

The greatest novelty of the occasion was the turn out of the Melbourne printers, who had, mounted on a huge waggon, lent by the Messrs. Langlands of the foundry, a printing press belonging to the *Herald*. A platform was erected as standing room for Messrs. J.P. Fawkner (the father of the Port Phillipian Press), William Clarke and Samuel Goode (two well-known typos). The concern was ornamented with a small grove of evergreens, and to it were attached eight well-conditioned horses, supplied by Mr. Bradley of Albury. The animals were smothered in ribbons, and during the progress of the procession, the press was kept going, sheets worked off and sent flying. These printing specimens were neatly-bordered tracts, surmounted by a press and medallion likenesses of the Queen and Prince Albert. The letterpress was a chronological epitome of the most notable dates and events in Port Phillip between 1835 and 1850, and was the production of Fawkner.⁴

On Tuesday, 19 November, *The Melbourne Morning Herald* reported on the procession of the previous Friday, giving much the same details as those provided by 'Garryowen' — whose source it may well have been — but adding one of those peculiar testimonies to the power of the press adverted to by Ringwalt:

On a huge waggon, boarded over, which was kindly lent by the Messrs Langlands, was placed the engine which has swayed or directed the world for the last century — which has gained for the Province of Victoria what the sword failed to gain for Scotland and Ireland; which has been the terror of evil doers; which has rewarded the patriot and the upright statesman with far higher distinctions than can be given by the bronze and marble mute representations of the cold clay of departed worth; the engine which portrays the mind instead of the body — THE PRESS was mounted upon the platform, ornamented with garlands . . . Several hundreds of sheets of a handsome specimen of type, (given in our front page) were worked off, and plentifully circulated through the crowds along the *route*.

The Printers had, besides, a very neat banner, representing the venerable founder of their art — Gottenberg — the illustrious man to whom the world is so much indebted.

The 'handsome specimen of type' (see Plate 1) is reproduced on the front page of the *Herald*, where it is described as 'a copy of the paper printed during the Procession on Friday last, and alluded to in our fourth page [cited above]'; its presence in the *Herald* is explained in a footnote, which reports that 'the only contribution to it from the *Herald* Office [was, *pace* 'Garryowen'] the types in which it was printed, and the verses

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at the foot' — i.e. the type was kept standing after the procession and, when returned to the *Herald*, reimposed as part of page 1 of Tuesday's paper. Unlike the keepsakes produced in printing houses, copies of Fawkner's 'Commemoration' are not distinguished one from another by a recipient's name: they are simply denoted 'Melbourne, the Fifteenth of November, 1850, Printed in the line of the Procession to open the PRINCE'S BRIDGE.' But, like those 'personalised' keepsakes, at least one copy was printed on silk; sadly that copy⁵ is now somewhat deteriorated.

As *The Argus* reported in its Supplement of the 19th,

A [Columbian] press from the *Argus* office was mounted on a dray drawn by eight horses, and a commemorative address struck off during the procession. On the platform with the press was Mr. J.P. Fawkner, who claims to be the "Father of the Port Phillip Press," and has interested himself much in getting up the printers' holidays. A number of compositors belonging to the different offices followed the press, and a banner of silk representing a portrait of Gottenburg, the inventor of moveable types, was provided for the occasion.

More important than identifying the source of the press is *The Argus's* description of a further component of the procession, not included in the programme and not reported by the *Herald* or *The Melbourne Daily News* and therefore, presumably, not noted by 'Garryowen':

In addition to the *Argus* press, Mr. Ham, the engraver, had a lithographic press mounted on a spring van, and struck off during the procession a tolerable but hastily executed lithographic sketch of the bridge.

Dr. Thomas D. Darragh, Head of Geology at the Museum of Victoria and author of the forthcoming biography of Thomas Ham, has kindly identified for me the 'tolerable' lithograph: it is the work of the artist William Strutt. The cartouche bears the perhaps prescient assurance that 'IN Commercial Wealth unbounded resources and promise of future Greatness, VICTORIA has not a paralell in the annals of Ancient or Modern COLONIZATION.' At the foot of the drawing are recorded the circumstances of its production: 'This Lithograph was this morning drawn upon Stone for the purpose of being printed & distributed during the morning of the Procession that accompanies His Honor C.J. La Trobe Esq to open the Prince's Bridge Melbourne, by the Artists & Workmen employed by Mess^{rs} Ham Brothers upon the "Illustrated Australian Magazine."' At the foot is the date 'NOV: 15TH 1850'. In the only copy known to me (see Plate 2), colouring has been subsequently applied by hand.

Ham's presence in the procession serves to explain an otherwise puzzling feature of the 'iconography' of the Separation celebrations. William Strutt's sketch (see Plate 3) bears two captions — both in the artist's hand, though clearly written at different times — the first reading 'J.P. Fawkner on y^e waggon on Separation day — 8 Horses 2 abreast. Collins Street M^t W. Powell's. Melbourne Nov 15TH 1851.', the second 'Separation rejoicings. M^t J.P. Fawkner scattering patriotic Fly sheets amongst the people — printed in the 8 horse waggon'. Strutt's sketches were purchased from the artist (then aged 82) in 1907, and it seems very likely that at least the second caption

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was added not long before that date. But even the first was probably added long after the event, for the date ascribed to the Separation celebrations is 15 November 1851 — i.e. one year late. The fact that Strutt was wrong in dating the celebrations makes more understandable his error in describing the sketch itself. The ‘bibliographical’ difficulty with the sketch is that it depicts a lithographic press being operated by workmen from the Ham Brothers establishment, not a Columbian being operated by Fawcner and his associates. The error is patent, but it has led to confusion to the present day.⁶



Plate 3

Reproduced with the permission of the Victorian Parliament Library Committee from William Strutt's *Victoria the Golden*

Similar celebrations were to be repeated in Victoria within three years, again involving a procession incorporating a press at which keepsakes (including at least one on silk) were printed off for distribution to the crowd. The event was the laying of the foundation stone of the Geelong and Melbourne Railway at Geelong, 20 September 1853. The following day the *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer* described the

proceedings: on this occasion the press — ‘a car garlanded with evergreens and floral canopy’ — was sandwiched between ‘Germans, with national Flag, four abreast’ and ‘Orders of Odd-Fellows’ and was reported as ‘throwing off copies of Poetry.’ The poem distributed to the crowd was *The Old Chum’s Musings; suggested by the commencement of the Geelong & Melbourne Railway, September 20th, 1853*, written by George Wright of Geelong. The seven stanzas are set within an ornate border made up of typographical flowers, with the royal arms enclosed at the head, an Albion press at the foot. Beneath the border is the legend ‘Printed during the procession. Comb and Curtis, Printers, Geelong.’ The only copy of *The Old Chum’s Musings* known to me is printed on silk.⁷ No doubt the proportion of keepsakes preserved from among those printed on silk is likely to be higher than that from among those printed on paper, but it would be surprising if copies of *The Old Chum’s Musings* printed on paper had not survived among caches of printed ephemera. Because copies printed on silk would have needed more care in printing it seems likely that only copies printed on paper were actually produced during the procession: I imagine that — as with the special copies of Fawkner’s *Commemoration* — copies of *The Old Chum’s Musings* printed on silk were in fact printed on terra firma before or after the event.

Stanzas 1, 5 and 6 of *The Old Chum’s Musings* give some idea of the poem as a whole:

Not long ago, and down the Barwon’s streams,
 The sable swan led forth his graceful fleet.
 Not long ago our hills and valleys green
 Were all untrodden save by savage feet.
 No ploughman’s song the dawning’s stillness broke;
 No fowler’s gun the woodland echos woke;
 Nor forest monarch bow’d beneath the bushman’s stroke.

Oh! is not ours a glorious destiny?
 From barbarous thrall a country to release!
 Ourselves (the first page of her history)
 Starting a nation in the arts of peace!
 So may it be. We want no battle tale —
 No blood-stained glory bought by orphan’s wail.
 Be ours a free unfettered PRESS, the PLOUGHSHARE, and the RAIL.

Ah! — yes! — the Rail: prepare the iron way;
 Tear up the rock, and prostrate lay the wood;
 Drive thro’ the mountain’s rocky heart; nor stay
 For "Ex" or "Werribee’s" wild turbid flood.
 Let tunnel pierce the hill; arch o’er the stream;
 Lay the long rail across the verdant green;
 Wake, echo, to the roar of whirring wheels and steam.⁸

George Wright’s *Musings* was not the only printed keepsake produced to mark the occasion: the *Advertiser* goes on to record that as Governor La Trobe stepped out of the Council Chambers to join the procession he ‘was met by a deputation, who introduced to him Mr. F.M. Hughan, who read to His Excellency the following

original effusion, from a white satin slip'. Hughan's 54-line 'effusion' is entitled *On the Laying of the Foundation Stone of the Geelong & Melbourne Railway*, and it begins:

AWAKE my harp! and from each willing string,
Gush forth sweet sounds, and strains melodious fling;
Sing of this day, which crowns our land with pride,
And gathers thousands, — like the surging tide,
From far and near, — they come, a mighty throng,
With music pealing forth enraptured song:
The young, — the old, — the poor, — the rich and fair,
With banners waving on the balmy air.

The effusion completed, 'His Excellency bowed to the poet. The Military Band struck up the National Air. His Excellency joined the procession.' Governor La Trobe was not the only recipient of Hughan's poem: Edward Snell, the engineer on the line, records in his diary entry for 20 September that 'Kawarau [the architect], myself, the Governor and Dr. Thomson [President of the Railway Board] were presented with a piece of poetry on the occasion, printed on white satin and composed by Hughan.'⁹ Since the only references to the poem are to copies printed on satin it is perhaps surprising that in this instance the only copy known to me¹⁰ is actually printed on a slip of blue wove paper (337 x 132 mm.).

Nor was the inclusion of a printing press in a mid-nineteenth-century procession peculiar to Victoria: one was included in a procession held in Christchurch, New Zealand, 9 July 1863, to celebrate the wedding (which had taken place 10 March) of Edward and Alexandra, Prince and Princess of Wales.

The announcement in *The Press*, 9 July 1863, of the programme for that day includes the order of procession, in which — sandwiched between 'THRASHING MACHINE Drawn by four horses, with sheaves of wheat; decorated' and 'LARGE BANNER Borne by four of the City workmen' — appears 'PRINTING PRESS On a waggon drawn by four horses, decorated; with Printers at work. Members of the Printing Profession bearing banners with appropriate mottos.' On Saturday, 11 July, *The Press* reported Thursday's celebrations at some length. After a description of the various banners and a disquisition on William Caxton,¹¹ the report continues:

Then came a green and gold banner "We printers share the universal joy," followed by three white silk banners, on which were printed the first pages of the three newspapers of the day, the 'Press', the 'Lyttelton Times,' and the 'Canterbury Standard,' borne by three apprentices on horseback . . . Then came a triumphal car drawn by four splendid cart horses, the body richly hung with crimson and white drapery hanging down to the ground, and bearing the mysterious engine through which the mind of man ever ebbs and flows in ceaseless tide — the printing press. Round it stood the pressmen working at their craft as the procession moved through the streets, and printing a broadside which contained a full description of the procession of printers with the following appropriate verses in honor of the occasion

...

At least one copy of the keepsake has survived,¹² and the two sets of verses contained in it are also reprinted as part of *The Press's* report.

The first poem, entitled *Epithalamium*, begins:

Through window dight the golden light streams forth above the altar,
On England's Queen, and England's Prince, and *Denmark's* royal daughter.

and ends:

And winds shall bear New Zealand's prayer right home across the water —
God bless our Queen, God bless our Prince, and *England's* royal daughter.

Epithalamium is signed 'W.J.S.' — i.e. William Jukes Steward (1841-1912), later Sir William, M.P. for Waimate (1881-93) and Waitaki (1893-1911) and Speaker of the House (1891-3). The poem was reprinted in Steward's *Carmina Varia being miscellaneous poems by Justin Aubrey* (Dunedin: Fergusson and Mitchell, [1867]), with variations in accidentals in practically every line.

The second poem, entitled *Marriage Ode*, begins:

Unfurl the flag of England,
Bright emblem of the free;
And let it float rejoicing
O'er Zealand's Southern Sea.

It is signed 'F.T.A.', but I have been unable to uncover the author's identity.

My three examples of colonial celebrations involving printing presses being drawn in procession and producing keepsakes for distribution to bystanders all date from a very brief period, 1850-1863. Whether other examples are to be found outside this period I simply do not know. However, it is clear that the particular phenomenon described in this stage of the 'Excursion' overlaps another phenomenon of longer duration: printing on silk (or satin) in the colonies. For example, my colleague, Dr. Ross Harvey, has drawn my attention to the practice of printing copies of whole issues of newspapers on silk; he cites the example of the 29 May 1865 issue of the *Evening Mail* (Christchurch) in the Canterbury Museum. And Mr. Norman Houghton, Director of the Geelong Historical Records Centre, has pointed out to me that the practice of printing on satin was common, accompanying such occasions as the laying of foundation stones of Mechanics' Institutes. How to categorize these pieces, however, I have not attempted to determine.

In the final stage of the 'Excursion' we will concentrate on one particular event when 'personalised' printed keepsakes were produced — i.e. when the Thames froze over in the London area and printers took presses onto the ice in order to provide visitors, for a fee, with mementos of their visit to the frost fairs.

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NOTES

1. *Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand Bulletin* 11(1987), 51-66.
 2. J. Luther Ringwalt, *American Encyclopaedia of Printing* (Philadelphia: Menamin & Ringwalt; J.B. Lippincott, 1871. Reissued, with introduction by Daniel Traister, New York: Garland, 1981), p.353.
 3. The programme is reproduced in 'Garryowen' [Edmund Finn], *The Chronicles of Early Melbourne 1835 to 1852. Historical, Anecdotal and Personal*, 2v. (Melbourne: Fergusson and Mitchell, 1888), v.2 pp.914-15.
 4. 'Garryowen', p.916.
 5. State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Pictorial Collection, H1546.
 6. The confusion has been continued at the Museum of Victoria, where the display label accompanying Fawkner's wooden press incorporates the Strutt sketch, thereby implying not only that Strutt's caption is accurate but also that the press on display is the one in the sketch. And in her narrative accompanying the published reproductions of Strutt's Victorian sketches Marjorie Tipping writes: 'Strutt made Fawkner a pen and ink sketch of the scene at the bridge which could be quickly transferred to stone. The enterprising Fawkner, from a trolley, patriotically scattered the lithographs to the crowds surrounding La Trobe.' (*Victoria the Golden. Scenes, Sketches and Jottings from Nature. By William Strutt. Melbourne, Victoria 1850-1862. With a narrative by Marjorie Tipping.* ([Melbourne]: Library Committee, Parliament of Victoria, 1980), p.5.) Heather Curnow, *The Life & Art of William Strutt 1825-1915* ([Martinborough, N.Z.]: Alister Taylor, [1980]), p.18, writes: 'A press from the *Argus* office was mounted on a dray drawn by horses, and commemorative addresses were struck off during the procession. These most probably featured a design by Strutt "which represented a Settler leaning against a bale of wool on one side and an aborigine on the other, clothed with his opossum rug: the central space was filled in with a description of the date of the first meeting petitioning the Home Government for Separation, also giving a copy of the petition . . .". [fn. 'Autobiography of William Strutt, 1850-1862' p.36 (NK 4367 National Library of Australia.)] The pen-and-ink sketch was made the night before Separation Day, and was transferred to a lithographic stone. The next day Strutt sketched J.P. Fawkner scattering these patriotic fly-sheets among the crowds. [fn. Sketch of Fawkner scattering patriotic fly-sheets, in 'Victoria the Golden', page 9 (Victorian Parliamentary Library). No copies of this fly-sheet, some of which were "struck off from the stone in silver on a black ground", have been traced.] Thomas Ham also had a "lithographic press mounted on a spring van, and struck off during the procession a tolerable but hastily executed lithographic sketch of the bridge". [fn. *Argus*, 19 November 1850.]
- The ultimate source of the confusion is Strutt's autobiography, 'Off for Australia. *Emigration every body, & every thing, now, all, is new. Autobiography of William Strutt*' (National Library of Australia, MS4294 (formerly NK4367). This is a photocopy (made by Rex de C. Nan Kivell in 1955) of a typescript (owned by Mrs. Davies, Strutt's grand-daughter) of the now-lost manuscript. All of Ms. Curnow's details are to be found in pp.35-6, but after describing Fawkner 'scattering the fly-sheets of the historical memento amongst the eager crowds' Strutt continues: 'I made a sketch of the incident, which is still preserved in my historic album, purchased from me by the Victorian Government, and now in the Melbourne Parliament House Library' – i.e. the autobiography was written no earlier than 1907. The most straightforward explanation for the various discrepancies is that, writing at least 56 years after the event, Strutt simply could not reconstruct the events accurately; his own sketch and the accounts in contemporary newspapers are clearly more trustworthy witnesses to those events.
7. State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Collection, MS9992.
 8. The text is reproduced in full in the *Advertiser's* report, with a few variations in accidentals. The poem was reprinted in Wright's *Wattle Blossoms, Some of the Grave and Gay Reminiscences of an Old Colonist* (Geelong: Heath and Cordell, 1857), with two variations in substantives and sixteen in accidentals. I presume that George Wright, author, is the same George Wright whose announcements as auctioneer of real estate and other goods appear in the *Advertiser* in September 1850. George Wright, author, has a certain claim to fame in the annals of colonial Victorian literature: 'George Wright, of Geelong, issued without imprint, in broadsheet, a poem, *Ye Melancholie Storie of Maister Timothie Brown*, 1851. In the same year Nathaniel Lipscomb Kentish printed in broadsheets his *Commemoration Victorian-Australian Anthem, Separation: a Colonial Anthem* and *Commemoration National Anthem*. Either the poem by Wright, or one of these anthems by Kentish, is the first recorded separate publication of original verse by a Victorian author, issued in Victoria, if we omit the supplement of the *Port Phillip Herald*, 1846.' (E. Morris Miller, *Australian Literature from its Beginnings to 1935, a Descriptive and Bibliographical Survey*, 2v.

- (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1940; reissued Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1973), pp.107-8.)
9. *The Life and Adventures of Edward Snell: The Illustrated Diary of an Artist, Engineer and Adventurer in the Australian Colonies 1849 to 1859. Edited and Introduced by Tom Griffiths with Assistance from Alan Platt* ([Sydney]: Angus and Robertson and the Library Council of Victoria, 1988), p.342.
 10. State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Collection, MS9345/Box 1035/2(d). The slip is among the Alexander Thomson papers relating to the Geelong and Melbourne Railway Company.
 11. In view of the 'mythology' surrounding the introduction of printing into England – discussed in the first stage of this excursion – it may be worth quoting *The Press* on Caxton and the banners: "Then a blue and gold banner displaying the words, "First English printer William Caxton, A.D. 1474." The date is that of the first book ever printed in England. Caxton, who was a mercer of London, set up the first printing press in the Eleemosynary or Almonry which stood at the west side of the Sanctuary in Westminster, by the permission and under the encouragement of its learned Abbot, Thomas Miling. The press was built in 1471, and the first book entitled "The game and playe of the chesse" translated from the French, appears to have been three years in hand, as it was only "Fynished the last day of Marche the yer of our Lord God a thousand four hundred and lxxiiij."
 12. Canterbury Museum.

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