Exactitude and Pleasure: Late Nineteenth-Century Australian Pictorial Atlases and their Illustrations

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This study examines the use of photography and drawing or painting as the basis for the illustrations of late nineteenth-century Australian pictorial atlases in relation to the generic ideal of pleasurable instruction. Beginning with Australia, Illustrated with Drawings by Skinner Prout, N. Chevalier, etc. (2 vols., 1873–76) (hereafter Australia), the production of pictorial atlases burgeoned around the time of the centenary of Australian settlement with the publication of the three-volume Picturesque Atlas of Australasia (1886–88) and the four-volume Cassell’s Picturesque Australasia (1889). During this period of rapid technological change in the printing and publishing industries, new possibilities emerged for the production of printed images. While the earlier works employed engravings, in 1897 photographic prints were the sole illustrations used in Glimpses of Australia: An Album of Photographic Gems.

An important aspect of these technological changes concerns the interaction of word and image. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when the European discovery of Australia was recorded with text and illustrations in the form of copper engravings, the latter had to be included on separate pages due to the different print requirements of the two processes. Such engravings were also expensive and labour-intensive. As well, the plates had a limited lifespan, although this was remedied when steel plates began to be used in the 1820s.¹ The development of wood-engraving, however, facilitated a more intimate relationship between illustrations and written text since both could be printed on the same page. The informational value of pictures could be enhanced as the viewer’s attention was directed to pertinent aspects of the image. Lithography enabled the inclusion of more images since it was a relatively inexpensive, flexible process. And although photography was invented/discovered in the late 1830s, it was only towards the end of the nineteenth century that an efficient and inexpensive way of directly printing photographs rather than translating them into engravings was invented in the form of the half-tone process. Furthermore, printing costs were reduced with the introduction of the linotype machine.²

The publications under consideration provide the opportunity for developing valuable insights into not only contemporary ideas about different sorts of

images and the way they communicate with viewers, but also their politics. The desire to appeal to audiences by satisfying the Horatian dictum of “pleasurable instruction” remained a constant over this period, impacting both on expectations on the part of readers/viewers and also on the way publications were evaluated. However, there were dramatic changes in readership as literacy spread in the course of the nineteenth century. Although the Australian atlases of the later nineteenth century developed from earlier publications—both portfolios of prints and illustrated travel and exploration narratives—they are very different to their antecedents. In particular, while the early publications were directed at gentlemen-scholars, a much more diverse and more general audience was the target of later publications. Although the gaining of new knowledge could be a source of pleasure, most people responded better when information was presented in an entertaining manner. In a very successful book entitled *The Pleasures of Life*, first published in 1887–89 and intended as a guide for this emerging literate population, John Lubbock emphasised the importance of books that were neither “too technical” and specialised nor “too light, too merely amusing” as a significant source of gratification.

Furthermore, pictures in books were an important locus for debates about the provision of information and pleasure. They could easily be dismissed as mere embellishments. Writing about his choice of illustrations in *Of the Decorative Illustration of Books, Old and New* in 1896, leading English artist and designer Walter Crane distinguished between “the art of pictorial statement and the art of decorative treatment,” suggesting that “there are many cases in which they are combined, as, indeed, in all the most complete book-pictures, they should be.” So even in the realm of the visual a happy mean between information and pleasure was the ideal.

Andrew Garran, editor of the *Picturesque Atlas*, can be seen negotiating some of this difficult terrain when he stresses the factual element of his publication, suggesting that the writers and artists involved aimed “to be true to nature and to fact.” A decorative element is promised obliquely, nevertheless, when he writes that they “have diligently sought out what was most worth presenting

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4 John Lubbock [Baron Avebury], *The Pleasures of Life*, 41st ed. (London: Macmillan, 1908), v; see also v–viii, 31–53. Lubbock writes, “Of all the privileges we enjoy in this nineteenth century there is none, perhaps, for which we ought to be more thankful than for the easier access to books” (31).

to the mind and to the eye.” Indeed, the eye is assumed to be the organ of pleasure: writing about “How Books are Illustrated,” Picturesque Atlas artist Frederic B. Schell suggested that the pictures found in contemporary publications “delight the eye and instruct the mind.” They were essential to the popularity of magazines because they made personalities vivid and provided information about the landscape and life of all parts of the world. Images were also seductive, tempting readers to investigate further.

Photographs, however, were more problematic: during the nineteenth century, they were usually considered to be of informational value only, in contrast to the pleasure provided by the work of the artist. This attitude is highlighted by a London Times review of Australia:

Some few of the engravings, mostly reflecting the architectural beauties of the chief towns of the Colonies, are from photographs, and are of course not among the least faithful. But the human artists have caught with excellent truth some of the peculiar characteristics of the land, and their work, if not more correct, is, perhaps, more pleasing than that which owes its existence to the unerring pencil of the sun.

A later response to the Picturesque Atlas is very explicit about what the role and influence of the artist:

our discernment and enjoyment of the beauties of Nature and Art are materially enhanced by the labours of the artist. For he fixes instinctively upon what is most pictorial and admirable in both. He selects their best aspects, picks out the most striking point of view, seizes upon some transitory effects of light and shade, and discloses charms which the ordinary observer might have passed by without noticing, so that afterwards we see with his eyes and comprehend with his intelligence.

But was the strict division between the work of the photographer and the artist always maintained?

At the end of the century, Glimpses of Australia suggested that photographs themselves could provide visual “interest, entertainment and instruction.” How was this achieved? Did photographers find ways of emulating the approach of the artist? Or did their photographs evoke a pleasurable response in new and distinctive ways? Of particular interest for this study are the declared choices

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7 Centennial Magazine 1, no. 2 (September 1888): 118.
8 Ibid.
9 Times, 12 December 1876, 6.
11 Glimpses of Australia: An Album of Photographic Gems: Depicting Scenes, Cities, Industries, and Interesting Phases of Australian Life, with Concise Literary Descriptions (Melbourne: Gordon & Gotch, 1897), 1:[i].
made between photography or drawing, the ways the different media were actually utilised, either with overt acknowledgement or covertly, and the competing claims of accuracy and pleasure deriving from either.

Although valuable work has been done on some of these publications, in this study a comparative analysis of changes over time in several pictorial atlases in relation to the notion of pleasurable instruction enables new insights into visual images and the ways they were understood and used in this significant period. Pragmatism in the actual use of photography is revealed, but also increasing skill in the taking and making of photographic images. Furthermore, the importance of design elements in the illustrated book of this period is highlighted.

The various publications considered here differ in their physical format, but all were intended for gift-giving, either at Christmas for Australian locals or friends and family “at Home” in England, or on some other significant occasion such as end-of-school prize-giving. The two volumes of Australia are quarto size while the Picturesque Atlas signalled its importance and status as “a panorama of Australasian history and life” by adopting a large folio format. The Queenslander opined,

> It will form a monumental and enduring record of the natural features, economic progress, social advancement, and leading characteristics of the Australasian colonies at the period of the Jubilee of her Majesty Queen Victoria.

However, the physical bulk of folio books could be a problem: commenting on early folio publications about Australia, the Melbourne Argus considered that “their size rendered them inconvenient for frequent consultation by the reading public.” Cassell’s Picturesque Australasia was a quarto production, prompting the judgement in the Queenslander that it was less pretentious than the Picturesque Atlas and also more affordable. The latter was offered for sale only by subscription at a rate of five shillings per part (forty-two parts in all). The price of bound editions varied: full morocco sold for £18 while half morocco cost £15, and full cloth was £13. Cassell’s offered their book in “cloth gilt” for 10s. 6d. a volume, while gilt edges raised the price to 12s. 6d. The purchase price for each of eight parts “in wrapper” was five shillings. It was thus significantly cheaper than the Picturesque Atlas. The twenty-four parts of Glimpses cost one shilling each with “postage

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15 “Fine Art Publications,” Argus, 29 November 1873, 9. The writer is referring to the English public, but the point is relevant more generally.
extra,” or it could be obtained in volume format “beautifully bound in embossed cloth, gilt edges” for fifteen shillings each.

The publisher of Australia was Virtue and Company, an English firm “long ... celebrated for the illustrated works issued from their house,” according to the Argus. Cassell’s was another English firm, large and well known for its publications directed at the general reader, aiming to instruct in a pleasurable fashion, but the Picturesque Atlas was published by a specially constituted Picturesque Atlas Publishing Company, staffed mainly by Americans, but with well-known Australians recruited for a local touch, notably Garran, the editorial supervisor. He was a retired Sydney Morning Herald editor, but illness meant that he had limited active participation in the project. Gordon and Gotch, publishers of Glimpses, conducted a large and successful business in the Australasian colonies where it acted as a newsagent, press service and distribution agency for British publishers. Factual publications were their forte: beginning in 1870, each year up until 1906 they were responsible for producing the Australian Handbook, “a comprehensive volume of facts and information about Australia.” With their interest in new technologies and innovative business approaches, plus an efficient distribution system, they were the ideal firm to undertake production of a book of photographs illustrating Australia.

The one hundred pictures used in Australia were derived from pre-existing stock by artists such as Thomas Baines, Nicholas Chevalier and John Skinner Prout. Baines’s images were done when he accompanied an expedition to Northern Australia in 1855–57 under the leadership of Augustus Gregory. Author of the text, journalist Edward Carton Booth, assured his readers:

All that is interesting in Australian scenery and in the ways of Australian life have been gathered together, and all that could be learned from personal knowledge and thoughtful care will accompany these pictures of that “other England” in the south, in which all Britons are so deeply interested.

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20 “Special Advertisements,” South Australian Register, 16 September 1897, 4.
Apart from title page vignettes, they are full-page steel engravings. An upfront attitude is taken to the role of photographs: their use is acknowledged beneath the prints, part of the standard attribution of contributors in the complex construction of a printed image in the period. Fourteen accomplished engravers were responsible for interpreting the original images.

The book was praised by the *Sydney Morning Herald* for being “handsomely bound” while the engravings were “beautifully executed … convey[ing] on the whole fair and exact representations of the localities pourtrayed,” although some criticisms were made about “faults … of omission [rather] than of commission” in the text.28 Although, as the example noted earlier demonstrates, photographs were often described as accurate but lacking in a personal touch, more informed commentary recognised the limitations of photography in conveying accurate information. For another reviewer of *Australia* (commenting on photography in general), photographs failed to convey “one of the chief beauties of our southern landscapes—the brightness and transparency of the atmosphere” because of stark “painful” contrasts of “glaring” highlights and black shadows. However, this was something that an experienced engraver could easily achieve, as this compendium demonstrated.29

The range of imagery encompassed landscape, cities and towns, “the Life of the People in Town and Bush,”30 including indigenous inhabitants. This was repeated in subsequent albums, with many of the same scenes being represented albeit in their more current form. The later publications offered many more illustrations: the *Picturesque Atlas* had, in the words of the subtitle, “over eight hundred engravings on wood” while “more than One Thousand” pictures were offered in the Cassell’s book,31 and *Glimpses* had three hundred and eighty-four plates.

The expansion of book production in the nineteenth century saw the development of publishers’ bindings (books intended for a gentleman’s library were issued in temporary bindings since the purchaser was expected to bind them in covers of their choosing).32 A number of cover designs for the *Picturesque Atlas* can be seen in extant copies, one a plainly decorated geometric scheme with gold bands outlining a rectangle while others combine the gold embossed title in ornate script with restrained gold decorative devices or floral sprays. Again there is an urge to stress the seriousness of the undertaking. Cassell’s alternative is more assertively decorative with gold rustic script for the title. Some versions have in addition an advertisement for the contents in the form of ensemble of outlining archway with vine supporting two birds and, below the title, three small framed overlapping

30 Advertisement for *Cassell’s Picturesque Australasia*, *Maitland Mercury*, 5 June 1886, 1.
31 Ibid.
pictures spilling across the space. At the bottom is that quintessentially Australia animal, the kangaroo standing at attention in profile.

Both books provide a contrast to Australia in their use of specially commissioned images, either steel or wood engravings. The Picturesque Atlas, however, is coy about the use of photography as the basis for its pictures while Cassell’s book provides a list of plates “indebted” to photography at the beginning of each volume. Buildings and city scenes predominate, although some landscapes are derived from photographs. Even so, the editor, Edward Ellis Morris, Professor of English at Melbourne University, assured readers, “in order to secure truth to Nature, artists specially commissioned by the Publishers travelled through the colonies, taking sketches and preparing illustrations.”

For the Picturesque Atlas, distancing from photography was necessary in order to stress not only the informational value of its illustrations but also their artistry. Indeed, it was to provide an education in artistic standards, according to the Daily Telegraph: “people who are now in hopeless ignorance will, by mere comparison, have unconsciously learned the distinction between what is good and what is essentially bad, and finer degrees of perception will follow as a matter of course.” Again, it was important for the artists employed by the company, Americans as well as Australians, to be seen as working directly in front of their subject rather than copying some pre-existing image. Another article stressed their strenuous exertions in trekking wide and far in search of the interesting and valuable, concluding “they have left nothing undone that could promote the interest or increase the value of their productions.” But in practice expediency and convenience could intervene.

Pragmatism is revealed in the following anecdotes detailed by Picturesque Atlas artist Albert Henry Fullwood in an illustrated letter. He found photographs to be useful when he was sick in Armidale: they could be used to sketch a famous waterfall that was dry when he visited. Later, after a “look around,” a photograph taken under his direction was the best way to record a street in Newcastle. Nonetheless, a sketch of “the leading features” was necessary as well since “a photo is misleading as regards the heights of various objects as the eye sees them.” Fullwood believed “by this means [he] saved [him]self about 2 days.”

37 Ibid., 19. On sketching methods used by the Picturesque Atlas artists, see also Margaret Maynard, “The Sketch-books of William Macleod 1850–1929,” Art and Australia 18, no. 1 (1980): 70–75. For further discussion of the issues involved in the use of photography, see Kerry Heckenberg,
Englishman William Hatherell was responsible for many of the original pictures used in *Cassell’s Picturesque Australasia*. His work is broader than that of the *Atlas* artists, with a more emphatic and decorative linear quality (see Fig. 1). He was only a young man when he accepted the commission to travel to Australia to “make three hundred drawings for a big history of the colony which the firm [Cassell] was publishing.”\(^{38}\) The work took a year and the illustrations that resulted from his travels cemented his career as a significant artist in this field: for contemporary critic Percy Bradshaw, “Hatherell’s technique, from the outset, was extraordinarily mature, and he brought a grace and painter-like distinction into illustration which was soon appreciated by the leading publishers of the day.”\(^{39}\) He excelled in the production of a unified picture with interesting effects of light and shade rather than “a mere photographic illustration” with its “unnecessary detail.”\(^{40}\)

As these comments suggest, detail was another issue for the atlases. Too much could be seen as “wearisome”; a judicious selection “of all that is most important and interesting to know with regard to these colonies” was desirable.\(^{41}\) In the case of photography versus art, the photograph was criticised not only for its distortions, but also for its lack of selectivity: “its even-handed justice would be a disqualification as valid as its inclination to unduly magnify objects immediately beneath its ken.”\(^{42}\) Artist Godfrey Rivers suggested that photography was useful for recording the “commonplace” while the artist aimed for something more vital: “the realist, if he be an artist, will not try to give the public a commonplace photograph of life, but to give a presentiment which is more complete than reality itself, more intense than real life, or rather life at its intensest moment.”\(^{43}\)

Where the *Picturesque Atlas* was happy to acknowledge a debt to photography was in translation of the artist’s sketch into an engraving: “in very few instances photography has been pressed into the artists’ service, except for the mechanical reproduction of a finished drawing.”\(^{44}\) Photography was used to transfer the sketch to the end-wood blocks or steel plate onto which it was engraved. Thus the original sketch remained undamaged; it was available then as a guide to the engraver in reproducing not only the object or scene, but also the artist’s style.

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\(^{39}\) Ibid.

\(^{40}\) Ibid., 6.


\(^{43}\) “Genesis of Colonial Art. II,” 9.
Figure 1: William Hatherell, On the Yarra Yarra.
From Cassell's Picturesque Australasia (1889), 1:61. 20 x 14.2 cm.
and manner.\textsuperscript{45} As well, the sketches could be exhibited and sold subsequently, aiding in publicity for the \textit{Atlas}.\textsuperscript{46}

Both the \textit{Picturesque Atlas} and Cassell’s version utilised the full gamut of contemporary illustrative devices, including the purely decorative flourishes that added “beauty and daintiness” to contemporary magazines in the view of one commentator.\textsuperscript{47} Pictures could take various forms. Most common is the full or half-page square or rectangular plate, usually outlined with a thin black line but sometimes framed with a decorative border, the latter an example of the influence of Japanese art.\textsuperscript{48} Enclosed circles or other shapes and unframed vignettes were other favoured formats. Vignettes provided picturesque variety and irregularity; they could also suggest expansiveness.\textsuperscript{49} Other possibilities combined the two: open sides or bottoms were utilised, contributing to the three-dimensionality of the image.\textsuperscript{50} With its large page format, the \textit{Picturesque Atlas} page displayed the written text in two columns. Wood-engravings could be inserted into either side or into the middle with the text wrapping around them (see Fig. 2).

Another device used by both books consisted of a number of often overlapping images combined in a variety of ways, potentially increasing their informational content, but also their decorativeness and amusement value (see rear cover and Fig. 3). Often their status as images is emphasised by corners that curl over, or cast shadows. Mixed levels of reality may co-exist together as sprays of vegetation lie above and/or below the main picture. Vegetation may protrude from the frame, deliberately flouting conventional laws of perspective. Such combination prints were a sign of modernity, demonstrating contemporary achievements in printing technology.\textsuperscript{51}

Modern book design was, however, a contentious topic. In a discussion on the “artistic aspects” of the open book page, Crane was critical of many contemporary practices:

\begin{quote}

The picturesque sketcher loves his ‘bits’ and ‘effects,’ which, moreover, however sensational and sparkling they may be in themselves, have no reference as a rule
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{45} Schell, “How Books are Illustrated,” 120–21; see also Frances E. Sheldon, “Pioneer Illustration in California,” \textit{Overland Monthly} 11, no. 64 (April 1888): 349.


\textsuperscript{47} Sheldon, “Pioneer Illustration,” 353.


\textsuperscript{50} Rainey, \textit{Creating “Picturesque America”}, 34, 158.

\textsuperscript{51} Esau, \textit{Images of the Pacific Rim}, 115, 123.
to the decoration of the page, being in this sense no more than more or less adroit splashes of ink upon it, which the text, torn into an irregularly ragged edge, seems instinctively to shrink from touching, squeezing itself together like the passengers in a crowded omnibus might do, reluctantly to admit a chimney sweep.52

Figure 2: Ellis Rowan, A Glimpse in the Strathbogie Ranges.
From Picturesque Atlas (1886–88), 2:307. 24.5 x 18 cm.

52 Crane, Decorative Illustration, 6, 148–49.
Figure 3: Plate from Cassell’s Picturesque Australasia (1889), 1:21. 20.3 x 14.1 cm.
He is very disapproving of some of the negative influences of both Japanese art and also contemporary American magazine illustration. The combination print described above, disparagingly dubbed the “card-basket style” by Crane, is one of these clever Americanisms: “a number of naturalistic sketches are thrown accidentally together, the upper ones hiding the under ones partly, and to give variety a corner is occasionally turned down. There has been a great run on this idea of late years, but I fancy it is a ‘card-trick’ played out.” The influence of photography on painting resulting in an interest in light, shade and tone rather than line and decoration was also to be lamented.

Crane was not the only critic of some of the stratagems employed in the 1880s atlases. Unimpressed by “the historical and descriptive matter” in the Picturesque Atlas, the Queenslander complained, “the rather promiscuous manner in which the illustrations are strewn in among the letterpress is not without its inconveniences.” Another reviewer declared “the border round the frontispiece” to be “rather a mistake,” and concluded, “we think that in future numbers the publishers will do well to alter it.” Yet most reviews were enthusiastic, especially about the images. The Brisbane Courier description of the finished product as “a sort of pictorial, national classic,” particularly successful in its images rather than its text, is typical. However, it did find some of Schell’s work repetitive: “Mr. Schell, perhaps, gets the most ‘taking’ landscape effects, but he repeats them too often. Mr. Piguenit’s is the more genuine and solid work.”

Even the assistant-editor responsible for supervising the production of the publication, writer and critic Fred J. Broomfield, was disappointed with the history and typography while praising the pictures as the crowning achievement of wood-engraving. In spite of this general acclaim, the Picturesque Atlas was not a financial success. Inadequate sales led to the liquidation of the company, and the dishonourable sales methods that had been employed tarnished the reputation of the project and prompted the Book Purchasers Protection Act of 1890. A more compact quarto version also failed to sell in the 1890s.

55 Crane, Decorative Illustration, 178.
57 Illustrated Australian News, 2 April 1887, 59.
59 Jordens, “Fred J. Broomfield,” 466; see also 465–66.
60 Ibid., 466.
While the *Picturesque Atlas* systematically worked through the history and contemporary attractions of the various Australasian colonies, the Cassell’s book is very different. Its heterogeneous mixing of topics, probably dictated by the exigencies of publication deadlines and problems in obtaining material, could nevertheless be cited as advantageous. According to the editor, variety of topic and presentation, or absence of any “regular topographical arrangement,” was not a problem in a work that would be dipped into rather than read from cover to cover.62 Indeed, one reviewer commented that the lack of rule in “the arrangement of articles … is not necessarily a ground of complaint, for variety is charming and the reader may find it a relief to be whisked about from one part of Australasia to another.” This may lead to confusion on the part of “the ordinary Englishman or foreigner,” but, “as, however, the design is evidently not to instruct after the prosaic methodical manner of geographical and historical works, but to impart information in a picturesque and entertaining manner the editor may be complimented upon achieving his purpose.”63 But again, the market failed to respond enthusiastically: a company representative deemed it a “limited success.”64

In spite of this, Gordon and Gotch obviously felt the time was ripe for a new publication in the years leading up to Australian Federation.

The cover design (see front cover) of *Glimpses* is most striking and seems to promise something very different from its predecessors. An embossed floral frame surrounds a central rectangle, which sits on top of a horizontal decorative floral band and a gold palm frond that lies diagonally across the cover. Inside the rectangle is a figurative design that derives from the traditional iconography of atlas title pages where figures, often nude and female, represent continents, or muses. The muse holding an image or a book, representing the contents of the publication is a common trope.65 The sun in the top left corner and the globe in the bottom right also recall atlas imagery, but photography is invoked both in the sun’s rays and also in the pairing of dark and light (or gold) nude female figures. Photography literally means “light writing” while the linking of dark and light figures is suggestive of the role of the negative and positive images in the medium. While drawing on traditional iconography, the bold simplicity of the design connotes modernity.

There are also assurances about diligent scouring of the land for interesting subjects and photographic talent to record them: “special agents have been sent to

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62 Morris, “Editor’s Note,” 295.
64 Simon Nowell-Smith, *The House of Cassell, 1848–1958* (London: Cassell & Company, 1958), 266. It “was considered fortunate that many hundreds of the last volume were lost at sea.”
interesting and picturesque places throughout Australian lands, professional and amateur photographic talent has been impressed.” Furthermore, “the best processes of up-to-date pictorial art have been brought into requisition.”66 The photographs are displayed in two ways, either one to a page, mostly outlined with a thin line and only occasionally vignetted, with concise letterpress below or, particularly in the second volume, grouped together in what the editor, New Zealander E. D. Hoben, termed “combination blocks,” similar to the “card-basket” images found in the 1880s atlases. These were advantageous, Hoben argued, because they allowed the provision of even more images, and thus, visual information: “nowhere else can anyone gain so wide and accurate an idea of what Australia looks like.”67

What is not spelt out is that this enables the introduction of a decorative element in the varied shapes of the constituent images (circles, either upright or horizontal rectangles, keyhole forms), their frames and linking devices. Sometimes purely decorative flourishes provide frames; most commonly vegetation, often floral, frames and sometimes overlaps the images as well in a familiar fashion. Other trite devices such as butterflies, birds and animals add more ornament and emphasise the Australian identity of the book and its images. Sometimes these combination blocks do have a coherent theme, for example, “In and Around Adelaide” (2:197) and “Pastoral Scenes in New South Wales” (2:241). But other groupings seem to be haphazard, perhaps depending on the images available as a printing deadline loomed, an impression reinforced by the apparently random overlapping of one image over another. Hoben nevertheless tries to provide some linking theme, however tenuous. Thus “An Australian Souvenir” combines such “typically Australian” scenes as an image of a statue of Queen Victoria, a pair of kookaburras, a Darling River steamer and an outback riding party (2:257). However, another grouping of an exclusive Sydney men’s club, a Sydney Harbour scene, a Queensland wool-pressing operation and a scene on the River Darling prompts him to acknowledge, “these pictures may at first sight appear incongruous”; rather desperately he goes on to argue that the wool industry provides “a certain connection between the scenes they depict nevertheless” (2:377).

The single plates do excel with their informative detail: a particularly dramatic example is a scene of flood devastation on the Yarra (Fig. 4), a marked contrast to the scenes of well-dressed ladies and gentlemen boating for pleasure found in the other atlases (e.g., Fig. 1). But frequently the various photographers draw on traditional compositional schemes found in painting and drawing. A contemporary lecture on landscape photography by Manchester photographer J. W. Wade shows how precepts for a picturesque landscape were applied to photographed versions: “a foreground possessing some interest should, if possible, be introduced into the

67 *Glimpses of Australia*, 2:[i]. Hoben was a journalist, but also famous as the founder of “the New Zealand Rugby Union” (“Death of Mr. E. D. Hoben,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 February 1918, 8).
picture." Straight lines within the composition were to be avoided and variety of size and placement of objects was desirable: “the placing of a principal object in the centre of a picture must also be avoided, and also objects of the same size or quality at each side of the picture.” “Pictorial effect” depends on the “balance of light and shade.” The same photograph of “The Yarra at New Norfolk” by John Beattie could therefore be the basis of illustrations used in both *Cassell’s Picturesque Australasia* (3:98) and *Glimpses* (2:214), with the woodcut version having only minor changes in staffage and vegetation from the photograph. But in *Glimpses* the disadvantages of current photographic and printing technologies are also apparent, with skies in particular being uniformly flat and dull, although occasionally clouds are touched in by hand to enliven the plate.

![Burnley Bridge](image)

*Burnley Bridge, over the Yarra, after the Floods of July, 1891.* The liability to flood is a thing which affects all Australian rivers, which, however quiet and peaceful they may look at certain times in the year, and however small none of the streams may appear after a dry season, may be seen but a little later turbulent, roaring masses of rushing water, overflowing their banks and carrying all before them. Such permanent rivers as the Yarra, running as it does through settled country and the city and suburbs of Melbourne, are as far as possible provided with outlets and safeguards against such catastrophes, but even these tame streams sometimes burst their banks, and such a thing happened to the Yarra in July, 1891, with a consequence of much disaster and damage to its surroundings. Burnley is a manufacturing centre in Richmond, a populous suburb of Melbourne, and it was one of the centres of damage during the 1891 floods. The accompanying picture is therefore given as a curiosity that those who see the peaceful and harmless river flowing quietly under the Burnley Bridge to-day, may see just what that innocent looking river could do when it for some cause breaks bond.

*Figure 4: Burnley Bridge. From Glimpses of Australia (1897), 1:171. 17.6 x 22.8 cm.*

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69 Ibid.
70 Albeit in this case without acknowledging Beattie.
Nonetheless, the album received some good reviews, at least in the provincial press. The *Mornington Standard* praised it using familiar terminology, suggesting that the pictures in the first part “form a pretty and exceedingly instructive photographic album.” Indeed,

Being printed on specially prepared paper, combined with clearness of production, together with the beauty of the selection, the whole forms a work of art which anyone might feel proud of possessing.\(^{71}\)

For the *South Australian Register*, “judgement exercised in the selection and the skill in the execution” of the “photographic gems” ensured the excellence of the publication.\(^ {72}\) The “diversity of places and subjects” included were another source of pleasure,\(^ {73}\) while the *Kilmore Free Press* pronounced the “work very beautiful in its photographic gems as well as in its letterpress.”\(^ {74}\) Another review declared, “views are all very beautiful and interesting.”\(^ {75}\)

Thus *Glimpses* in its similarities and differences from the earlier compendiums reveals some of the complex interactions between painting and photography at the end of the nineteenth century. The critical response noted above suggests that photographic prints, like the illustrations included in earlier atlases, could provide both information and pleasure. Painterly precepts influenced choice of viewpoint, composition and lighting in photography, although there were still technical limitations due to the difficulty in dealing with extremes of light and dark in the one image. Photography also influenced painting, first by an emphasis on detail and then with more attention given to tone rather than line. Most significantly, photography had an advantage over traditional pictures in the sense of immediacy attached to its images. This is especially apparent when the different views of the Yarra River are compared. However, the promise of the striking simplicity of the cover design is not realised fully in the plates, especially in the combination blocks. Here the fussy trickery of past practices continues to be utilised, suggesting a continuing failure of confidence in the ability of straightforward photographic prints, clearly displayed, to entice the viewer.

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72 “Glimpses of Australia,” *South Australian Register*, 2 February 1897, 5.
73 Ibid.
74 *Kilmore Free Press*, 26 November 1896, 3.
75 “News and Notes,” *Sunbury News and Bulla and Melton Advertiser*, 21 November 1896, 2.