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in purchasing support in return for the profitable patronage in their power to bestow. Until some measure be passed, or some steps be taken, by which the support of the Press shall not be purchased by the misapplication of the public moneys, the political independence of our colonial journalism will never be complete. Had such prohibitory measures been passed years ago, many existing abuses would long since have been swept away; and at least Governments and Ministries and political cliques would have been kept in greater subjection. The evil is not so great now as at one time, and I hope the time is not distant when we shall be alive and remember this great evil as a thing of the past.

Mr. Fawcner's policy, as enunciated in his first leading article, was pacific. He writes, "Harmony is the motto of the Launceston Advertiser, whose columns shall never be prostituted to scurrility, calumny, sycophancy or disaffection; nor shall they be made the vehicle of slander, malice, or party feeling." I propose, as an instructive lesson in journalistic polity, to shew how Mr. Fawcner kept his word.

A worthy Methodist, one Mr. Dowsett, alarmed at what he considered a terrible sign of a fallen age, which was shewn by the existence of a paper under such management, resolved, in the very desperation of virtue, to originate a counteracting force, and he became owner and editor of a newspaper called the *Cornwall Press*. Mr. Fawcner was a very thin, spare, diminutive man, Mr. Dowsett the reverse. Mr. Fawcner could have ridden feather weight, and Mr. Dowsett might have been entered for a sixteen stone handicap.

A war sprang up and raged between the illiterate editor-publican, and the impulsive Methodist. The latter commenced the assault. All sanctities of private life were disregarded on both sides. Mr. Dowsett wrote and printed in his organ that Mr. Fawcner was an addled-headed blow-fly, a phenomenon which I think must be new in the annals of natural history. Mr. Dowsett further asserted that Mr. Fawcner only measured four feet nine in his boots, but would perjure himself if he could induce any one to believe he was two inches taller. To which Fawcner retorted that Mr. Dowsett was an oleanogenous moral pestilence. Mr. Dowsett treated the charge with the utmost contempt by calling Mr. Fawcner a sniveller. Mr. Fawcner retorted with a question, "Did Mr. Dowsett remember the bailiff of the Lieutenant-Governor's Court, who advertised to be sold off at the Albion Hotel, lollipops, bulls-eyes, barley sugar, and kisses?" And, indeed, by asking Mr. Dowsett to call and pay his long-standing grog score. After this the Methodist retired from the fight, and the editor imitating in print the crowing of a rooster, sat down in triumph. These are a few of the amenities of the Press in the days I am referring to.

Some faint idea may be formed as to the way the newspaper press was then persecuted, both in New South Wales and Tasmania.

As General Darling had the reputation of press-gagger in New South Wales, so Colonel Arthur obtained similar notoriety in Van Dieman's Land.

Mr. Bent's struggle for freedom was the first. And here, by the way, I may mention that the Mr. Bent I allude to was the much-respected grandsire of young Mr. Bent, the very clever delineator of plantation nigger characters. Governor Arthur had passed a most atrocious Act, in the preamble it asserted that Van Dieman's Land was established solely for convicts, and that discipline was essential for that class. It was therefore enacted, that an annual licence for a newspaper must be obtained from Government under a penalty of £100. The newspaper proprietor was also required to find three sureties of £400 each. A Government censor was appointed over the Van Dieman's Land Press, to whom every column, every paragraph, every line had to be submitted for his approval before it could be published. A newspaper editor in another colony, speaking of the unhappy Mr. Bent, says: "Well do we remember with what pathos its editor, when conversing with his friends, would descant on the hardships he had to endure. With the tears rolling down his cheeks has the hoary veteran detailed to us the horrors he was often and often doomed to feel on receiving back his proof-sheets, sometimes so altered that he could scarcely recognise a fraction of their original import. Paragraphs were struck out which were vital to the sense and consistency of his article, and sometimes whole columns cut down at one remorseless blow."

SNYDER.

The difficulties attending upon a free expression of opinion through the Press led to some contrivances of the Roman Pasquin kind. An old stump of a gum-tree had been left in the middle of Elizabeth-street, Hobart town. All sorts of advertisements were attached to this lounge of the townspeople. This was the place selected for criticisms upon the conduct of Government officials, and the early visitants at

the stump were often edified by the details of some tyrannical act of a Government official. One poor fellow was caught in the act of affixing a placard of this character, for which he received three hundred lashes.

The *Hobart Town Times* was the first who fought the battle for the freedom of the Press. When a stamp act was brought into operation, imposing a shilling duty on each newspaper printed, the *Times* appeared without a stamp, but without public news. Mr Bent was the first sufferer. The next proprietor, Mr Henry Melville, sustained the struggle. Repeatedly and heavily fined, repeatedly and roughly imprisoned, Mr Melville lived to see the emancipation of the Colonial Press and the liberty of the subject. But his contest ruined a fine fortune. Though he lost all, and is now a dependent old man in London, he deserves to be acknowledged and honoured as the true defender of the colonial newspaper Press. With no free Press to overawe the tyranny of rulers the state of the colonies can be imagined. Even free persons were subjected to the lash for very trivial offences, and women were flogged through the streets of Hobart Town for using abusive language towards Government officers. The supposed slandering of a school girl caused the offender to receive 150 lashes. Witnesses who gave evidence unsatisfactory to the magistrate were ordered to the triangles, and on one occasion a judge directed a witness to be taken out of Court, and to receive one hundred lashes in order to get more satisfactory evidence from him. We read of men being ordered twenty-five lashes every morning for eight days in succession to induce them to make confession. But when at last, through the protracted struggles of Mr Bent and Mr Melville, the right of the newspaper Press to give freedom of expression was vindicated, these horrible cruelties and many terrible abuses ceased to be perpetrated.

Before a free Press tyranny halts, turns back, and conceals itself within the folds of its own ugly mantle. The names of Bent and Melville are always to be associated with the freedom of the colonial Press, and so I say, and let all say, God bless these two brave but unhappy and ruined men.

Young colonists know nothing, and can feel nothing of the immense boon, and the manifold blessings in living in an atmosphere of freely-expressed public opinion; but those dwelling in the early days of the colonies know how to estimate it at its true worth. Better, I think, a scurrilous Press, a libellous Press, or a venal Press, than that there should be no Press at all. Scurrility and venality in the lower class of newspaper writers will always be kept in check by an intelligent people, and by that noble community of press-writers who would not soil the paper they put their thoughts on by writing what is neither fit for men nor women to read. For many years after the time I am speaking of, a very large section of the Press was very demoralised. There were men to be found, —and men, too, possessing the very highest order of talents—who prostituted their powers; who indulged in the most vindictive personalities; who, in ribald language, exposed the affairs of private life; who robbed women of their fair fame and men of their well-earned honour; who wrote blasphemy, and whose lives were as soiled and filthy as their writings. Thank God, these evils have been blotted out of the newspaper literature of later years. The colonial Press, whatever its many faults may be, is now as pure in its tone, and as temperate in its language as in any other part of the world where the fourth estate lives in all the full strength of a wholesome vitality. To form some conception of the immense power the newspaper Press now holds at its command for good, we have only to imagine that some arbitrary order has gone forth forbidding the printing and circulating in the colony of any newspaper for just no more than one year. Then proceed to imagine in that one year what abuses would spring into life; what cruel acts would be perpetrated. How the liberty of the subject would be trampled on. The rich grinding down the poor—the poor, lawless and depraved. Government corrupt. Officials arrogant. Life and property insecure. Vice rampant everywhere. Who that thinks at all of the period to which I have been referring does not feel this would be as is said of it?

It is not so much the actual and positive

good the Press accomplishes, as the many wrongs it keeps in check, which without such a suppressing power would spring up over the land as poisonous fungi upon unwholesome ground. There is, however, one great evil which saps and undermines the independence of a large portion of the colonial Press. This is the power which Colonial and Provincial Governments possess, in purchasing reports in return for the profitable patronage in their power to bestow. Until some measure be passed or some steps be taken, by which the support of the Press shall not be purchased by the misapplication of the public moneys, the political independence of our colonial journalism will never be complete. Had such prohibitory measures been passed years ago, many existing abuses would long since have been swept away; and at least Governments and ministries and political cliques would have been kept in greater subjection. The evil is not so great now as at one time, and I hope the time is not distant when we shall be alive and remember this great evil as a thing of the past.

BY SNYDER.

No. IV. 4

I TAKE SHIP FOR A DISTANT COLONY.—I GAIN EXPERIENCES IN PASTORAL PURSUITS.—I AM ONCE MORE ON A NEWSPAPER.

No man is wise who, having obtained a great popularity, waits too long, so that it begins to wane, and admiring multitudes, forgetting what he has done for them, only bear in mind what he now is. I had, as a reporter, acquired great fame, and determined to quit for another colony—then known as Port Phillip, now as Victoria. I gave the Editor notice of my intention to leave, and in return he gave me the strongest of recommendations. He said I was the most imaginative reporter he had ever known on any staff to which he had been attached. He gave me some wholesome advice, and comforted me with the assurance that if I lived there was a brilliant future before me; but he thought I should be found more useful as a member of the Fourth Estate if—if (he hesitated a little)—"if, in fact, Mr Snyder, your reports could be looked upon as just a little more reliable. For instance, I have at times, in common with some others, had my doubts of the *bona fides* of that "Wild Boy and Girl of the Woods." And the cavern scene in which the bushrangers had made the rendezvous was, to my fancy, a little too highly coloured. But you have done well, and I am sorry to lose you. You need not mind giving the usual month's notice. You can go at once. The loss of you will sooner fade from the memory than if you continued your service any longer."

Then I took ship and sailed away. When I say I took ship, I merely speak metaphorically. I mean I took a schooner of about forty tons burden. It was manned by the captain, a mate, an able seaman, a boy, and a Newfoundland dog. I was the only passenger. The *Mary Ann* can scarcely be said to have been a passenger vessel. She was not roomy between decks; nor had she much saloon accommodation. In fact, to be candid, I may say the *Mary Ann* had no saloon accommodation whatever. My berth at night was under cover of the weather bulwarks and a boat's sail, but in the morning I invariably found myself in from nine to twelve inches of water in the lee-scuppers. Provisions were laid on for a passage of twelve days, whereas the passage lasted thirty, and as a not unnatural consequence provisions ran short. After a brief consultation it was decided by a majority of the whole to open hatches and break cargo. It consisted of six-foot palings, flooring joists and quartering, several hogsheads of Hobart Town ale, a number of 7lb jars of Tasmanian jam, and some kegs of pickled herring. To each man was assigned jam *ad libitum*, and pickled herrings, with two quarts of beer per diem. The six-foot palings were employed for keeping the galley-stove going. On the thirtieth day out we sighted Williamson Town, and on the thirty-first we warped up the Yarra to the wharf. And here I may remark that to the present day I have detested jam and pickled herrings, but have not lost my liking for colonial ale.

The first guinea I earned as a Victorian journalist was writing a heartrending account of the passage, with the awful sufferings of the captain and crew. I took the account to the *Port Phillip Patriot*, then owned by Mr Boucault—brother, if

I mistake not, to the present eminent dramatic author and actor. Testimonials were not in vogue in those days, or I am quite sure a most flattering one would have been presented to the captain for the presence of mind he displayed in broaching cargo, when he found that, if he had not done so, there could have been no reasonable doubt on his mind but that the crew would have done it on their own responsibility.

From Melbourne I proceeded to explore the interior of the western districts of the colony, where, having for a time engaged with a sheep farmer in idyllic pursuits, I subsequently undertook to advance the somewhat neglected education of his lovely and charming daughter, who unfortunately during my temporary absence got mixed up with a bush fire and was consumed. And this brought my engagement to a natural termination.

Then it was that I sought out and obtained employment on a newspaper in the second town of Port Phillip, known then by the name of Corio, after changed to Geelong the inhabitants of which for several years were in derision called Geelongese. The proprietor of the newspaper I engaged with, besides having a newspaper, kept the post-office, a stationer's shop, a store, a circulating library, a fancy repository, and general agency. There were other pursuits attached to the establishment, which consisted of a front shop, a printing-room, and a small settlement in the upper story for my employer's family. There was little or no money in the town of Geelong in those days, but what little there was, was made to go a great way. The Geelongese were admirable financiers. If a stranger came into the town and made payment of a one-pound note to his hotel-keeper for board, lodging, and refreshments, the hotel-keeper paid it away to the spirit merchant, who paid it away to his draper, who paid it to the butcher, who paid it to the baker, who in his turn paid it to the grocer, who squared up with the hotel-keeper, the original recipient of the one-pound note, on account of his grog score. A little money at that time, and by the mode of financing I have indicated, covered a multitude of liabilities. I don't think the newspaper proprietor ever received anything in specie himself. He gave orders to his compositors and his reporter upon the various tradesmen for both the necessaries and the luxuries of life. In the accounts kept—and the keeping of which formed a portion of my duties—very few money columns were used. On the left-hand side of the ledger would be entered the subscription and advertising account, while on the *per contra* side would be written the set-off—something, perhaps, as follows:—1 lb tea, a pair of stay laces, 3 lbs. bacon, 1 tin terapot, pair of lady's socks, half-pound treacle, &c. When a line was drawn below on both sides the account was presumed to have balanced. This mode of doing business has long since passed away, and when at times I run short of money, I feel a wish it might return. I know that I had one of the best of employers, and this I may say, that what of good in newspaper work I have learned, he was my first instructor. It was he who impressed upon me this great truth, "That words spoken in anger may be forgotten and forgiven; but that words of anger, written and printed, were indelible, and lasted for ever. There was no knowing, no saying when or where a man might produce these printed words and fling them at his enemy's teeth." This advice I have endeavoured, as well as an imperfect nature will admit, to follow during my own career, and I have tried to impress it on my juniors. Attack principles as ferociously as you like, walk into big public men upon public grounds, smash them, pulverise them, annihilate their principles, but trench not upon their private lives. Leave poor helpless women and erring men, however great sinners they may be, to themselves. Let philanthropists and professors of religion take them in hand. Newspaper writers, in the very nature of their profession, are compelled to write perforce many things which cause pain. My brothers of the press, do you take heed unto my words. Try your utmost to avoid giving offence and you will still make enemies, but make as few of them as possible. It is almost a certainty that they will turn up against you at some time or other, to your discomfiture.

Let me here relate something which may afford some idea how a good man can have his revenge.