

PART 2 : SUBURBS

CHAPTER 6FACTORS IN SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT

Melbourne's claims as a 'metropolis' rested, not only upon the size, complexity and temper of its economic life, but upon a certain level of development in the relations between the 'City'<sup>1</sup> - or economic core - and a surrounding suburban region. Thus, at about the time under discussion, we begin to read of the 'Melbourne Metropolitan Area'. Most of the remaining chapters are concerned with the changing patterns of social life in that suburban area; but it is necessary before venturing on these matters, to sketch at least the broad outlines of physical growth, and to indicate some of the factors shaping and promoting it.

In the period from 1881 to 1891, the population of 'greater Melbourne' increased from 284,874 to 491,700. Of this increase (206,926) only about 30 per cent was absorbed by the 7 municipalities<sup>2</sup> which, in 1881, had domiciled about 70 per cent of the city's population. Certainly great new tracts of these 'old' municipalities were opened up in this period: Abbotsford and Clifton Hill in Collingwood, Albert Park and Middle Park in

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I use the term in its traditional sense of a commercial and financial centre.

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The City of Melbourne itself, South Melbourne, Richmond, Collingwood, Fitzroy, Hotham (North Melbourne), St Kilda.

South Melbourne, parts of North Fitzroy, North Carlton in the City of Melbourne, North Richmond and Burnley in Richmond, Balaclava and Elwood in St Kilda, Windsor and Armadale in Prahran. Nevertheless the main share of the population increase was claimed by other, 'newer' municipalities on their borders. The dimensions of growth are summarized in the accompanying table (Table 6.1). It is notable that some of the largest population increases (in percentage terms) were in the hitherto relatively undeveloped northern and western suburbs (Essendon, Flemington and Kensington, Brunswick, Footscray) whose lack of scenic attractions were perhaps compensated by proximity to the central city.<sup>1</sup>

Population statistics, however, are but a guide to the physical process of suburban expansion. In Melbourne, perhaps more than in any other city in the world,<sup>2</sup> large and rapid population growth was handled without a dramatic alteration in population densities. In almost all suburbs the single-family detached or semi-detached house remained the basic residential unit; most houses were of only one storey and had an attached garden. The obvious result of such largesse of private

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The development of Brunswick, Northcote, Footscray and Kensington, however, cannot easily be separated from the growth of their 'staple' industries (brickworks, metals and engineering, saleyards and abattoirs).

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The Victorian Yearbook 1888-9, p.488 recorded that population densities in Melbourne were lower than almost any other sizable city outside Australia. Also see Adna F. Weber, The Growth of Cities in the Nineteenth Century (New York, 1899), p.139.

TABLE 6.1

## POPULATION GROWTH OF MELBOURNE SUBURBS 1881-1891

Suburb	1881	1891	Aggregate Increase 000's	% Increase
Essendon	3,200	14,441	11.2	488.4
Flemington and Kensington	1,861	9,958	8.1	379.9
Malvern	1,797	8,136	6.6	369.4
Brunswick	6,222	21,961	15.7	308.6
Boroondara	1,525	6,204	4.7	306.8
Hawthorn	6,019	19,585	13.5	296.7
Heidelberg	2,775	4,413	4.4	269.4
Footscray	5,993	19,149	13.1	242.7
Caulfield	2,488	8,005	5.5	221.7
Kew	4,288	8,462	8.2	143.3
Brighton	4,755	9,858	5.1	140.8
Coburg	2,659	5,752	3.1	116.3
Prahran	21,168	39,703	18.5	97.3
Williamstown	8,034	15,960	7.9	85.9
Moorabbin	3,733	6,542	2.8	75.2
Richmond	23,405	38,797	15.4	72.2
South Melbourne	25,374	41,724	16.3	72.8
St Kilda	11,624	19,838	8.2	70.3
Port Melbourne	8,771	13,067	4.3	52.1
Collingwood	23,829	35,070	11.2	50.9
Fitzroy	23,118	32,453	9.3	29.6
Hotham	17,839	20,997	3.1	22.8
Melbourne	65,859	73,361	11.5	11.4

space was a suburban sprawl unrivalled anywhere but on the west coast of the United States. This pattern of growth, moreover, demanded the provision - largely through government agencies - of a vast network of transport, communications and essential services.<sup>1</sup> To assert that this style of suburban development was wasteful would perhaps prejudge the values which it expressed or too readily endorse those of European urbanism; nevertheless it was certainly expensive.

Low-density settlement is but one example of the way in which the shape and structure of suburban growth were influenced by the values of the society whose needs it served. Others are found in the relationship of social class and family organization to the physical arrangement of suburbs. In class terms, the areal differentiation of suburbs was perhaps less marked than in European cities. E.E. Morris was impressed by Melbourne's 'diversity':<sup>2</sup> 'a poor house stands side by side with a good house; a cottage, one might almost say a hovel, in close proximity to a palace'. The pressures which set physical as well as social distance between classes were perhaps less imperative than those which operated in English cities. There, it has been argued, the middle class suburb was 'both an invention for accentuating... social distinctions and a means to

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It may be worth examining the contribution of such distinctively urban demands to the nineteenth century 'pattern of government growth' in Australia.

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In E.E. Morris (ed.), Picturesque Australasia, vol.I, p.58.

putting off for a generation or two the full realization of what was entailed in living in a slum'.<sup>1</sup> Such slums as Melbourne had were 'easily rectifiable' in comparison with the 'gigantic evils of overcrowding and impecuniosity in London and other large English towns';<sup>2</sup> the intrusion of the lower orders upon middle-class awareness was sometimes irritating and embarrassing,<sup>3</sup> but rarely traumatic or dangerous as it was in England. In such relatively frictionless conditions the pressures for the social differentiation of suburbs were mainly generated by economy or a mutual interest of all classes in the limitation of invidious comparison:

All the world over, whether in the seven-flat tenements of Edinburgh or the purlieus of Paris, in London's conservative West End, or New York's equally exclusive Fifth Avenue, the rich live with the rich, and the poor with the poor. The palace and the hovel, except in the imagination of the socialistic romancer, seldom adjut. Contiguity and its inseparable contrast have never yet served to increase the happiness of either class. In prosperous Victoria, this contrast, when apparent, is chiefly one of comfort versus luxury, extreme poverty being rarely a constituent. The cottage may sometimes be overshadowed by the mansion but it is usually a very respectable cottage which has

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H.J. Dyos, 'The Slums of Victorian London' in Victorian Studies, XI, no.1, September 1967, p.27, and see his Victorian Suburb (Leicester 1961), ch.I. Similar remarks are found, for example, in Engels, Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844 cited in W.O. Henderson (ed.), Engels: Selected Writings (Penguin 1967), pp.28-9.

<sup>2</sup> 'Australian Opinion and English Social Ills' in Age, 2 February 1884, p.13.

<sup>3</sup> 'Our Street' by a Resident in Australasian, 26 February 1881 and 12 August 1881.

no occasion to be ashamed of itself. It is doubtful, however, whether its inmates would not be happier if in less close proximity to their richer brethren whose wealthier lot is calculated to excite envy and discontent in the average bosom. The fact of an Englishman's house being his castle does not render him oblivious to its insignificance when compared with the palatial dimensions of his neighbour's stronghold. He is fully alive to the disproportionate, and utterly abhors being, in any sense, looked down upon. Hence it is, partly, that, in Melbourne, such class distinctions meet with the observance accorded them elsewhere, an obedience to the social law which takes its root from this perception of the fitness of things.<sup>1</sup>

The results of such 'perceptions' in the social differentiation of suburbs may be discovered by, broadly, two methods. One a 'subjective' approach,<sup>2</sup> proceeds through contemporaries' evaluations of the status of particular suburbs - for example the 'guide-book' descriptions of Toorak as an 'upper class' suburb, Hawthorn as a 'superior middle class suburb', Collingwood as a 'poorer class' suburb.<sup>3</sup> But such tags

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A.B.S.G., September 1886, p.53. But compare with the later view that 'in a community where all classes are virtually equal, we see no reason why the dwellings of the rich and poor should not be intermingled ....' (ibid., 13 June 1888).

2

For a modern study using this general approach see Athol Congalton, Status Ranking of Sydney Suburbs, University of New South Wales Studies in Sociology (Sydney 1961).

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Argus, 6 September 1884, p.13; 29 November 1884, p.4, 9 August 1884, p.13.

are notoriously euphemistic, and constitute, at best, a first approach to the problem. The second approach is through 'objective' data which, with the exercise of some reliable assumptions, may be taken as an index of a suburb's 'social rank'.<sup>1</sup> The data most suitable to this purpose - occupational returns of suburban areas - is not available for this period.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless it may be argued that statistics of the size and material of dwellings furnish a reliable index to the social status of suburban areas.<sup>3</sup> It is assumed that a suburb with a high proportion of brick houses or of houses with more than six rooms is likely to be a prestigious suburb and one with a low proportion of large brick houses and a high proportion of small timber ones is likely to be an invidious suburb.

This simple assumption needs, however, to be refined in the light of some complications and qualifications. While it is probably fair to compare suburb with suburb at a particular point in time, there are long-term trends away from timber housing and houses of less than four rooms which make it difficult to infer

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For a modern Australian study within this tradition see F.L. Jones, 'A Social Ranking of Melbourne Suburbs' in Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology, vol.3, no.2, October 1967, pp.93-110.

2

R.J. Johnston, 'The location of high status residential areas' in Geografiska Annaler 48, Ser. B(1966), 23-35, attempts a definition of Melbourne's high status areas in 1861 and 1888, the latter through locating 'high class' individuals' residences on an urban plan.

<sup>3</sup> The justification for this assumption is given at length in the succeeding chapter.

changes in the status of areas from changes in the distribution of houses. During the 'eighties there was, in fact, some easing of these trends: partly, perhaps, because of the relaxation in the late 1870s of the protectionist duties upon timber, partly because of the pressure upon costs imposed by dear land and 'cutting' competition among speculative builders. A second complication arises from the logistics of the Melbourne brick industry. Because bricks were fragile, heavy and discrete and therefore difficult to load and unload, and because roads were often poor, the cost of transporting them from the kiln to the building site was often considerable.<sup>1</sup> The relatively easy trip from Brunswick to South Yarra increased the price of a load of bricks by about 30 per cent over the price at the kiln; a longer route (e.g. to Brighton) or a more difficult one (e.g. to Footscray) might raise it as much as 40 or 50 per cent. With speculative, and thus cost-conscious, builders such differentials probably gave the edge to wooden construction in areas far from brick kilns. On the other hand, brick housing tended to predominate in areas closer to brick works, for example in Brunswick, Hawthorn, Collingwood, North Melbourne and Malvern. Two further complicating factors account for the high

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C. Mayes, The Australian Builder's Price Book (Melbourne 1886, 1891). The difficulties of the Northcote Brick Company in competing with the Hoffman Company because of unfavourable transport costs. (Minutes of Directors, 13 April 1887, 20 December 1887, and A.B.C.N., 2 February 1889, p.117.)

proportions of large brick houses in the generally low-status areas of Melbourne and Fitzroy. There was, in the first place, a City of Melbourne bye-law prohibiting the construction of wooden buildings. For a time Fitzroy was part of the City of Melbourne and the proportion of brick houses is correspondingly larger than other similar areas (e.g. Collingwood or North Melbourne). Secondly, both areas had a large number of boarding houses which, in the case of Fitzroy, however, had once been 'gentlemen's residences'.<sup>1</sup>

If due allowance is made for these factors, the distribution of housing (as shown in Table 6.2 and Map 1 provides at least an approximation to the social status of Melbourne's suburbs. According to this evidence, the most significant concentrations of high status areas were on the high south and east banks of the Yarra above Prince's Bridge, by the sea at St Kilda and Brighton, and through the undulating, sand-soil areas to the east of the Yarra. Low status areas, on the other hand, were grouped on the river flats of the Yarra and Saltwater (Maribyrnong) rivers and on the flat, basalt plains to the north and west of the city.

The association of elevated areas with high social status had medical, aesthetic and symbolic bases. A house on a hill or by the seaside was considered healthier than others. According to theories of disease<sup>2</sup>

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Argus, 9 November 1884, p.13.

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The influence of these theories on Victorian public health provision was brought to my attention by an unpublished paper by Mr A.H.B. Barrett, an M.A. student of the University of Melbourne.

TABLE 6.2

SIZE AND MATERIAL OF DWELLINGS BY SUBURBS

Suburb	Material <sup>1</sup>		Size <sup>2</sup>	
	1891	Per cent 6+ rooms	Per cent 1-2 rooms	Per cent 3-4 rooms
Melbourne	B	26.0	6.2	35.5
Fitzroy	B	19.5	3.8	39.0
Collingwood	E	8.6	4.7	33.1
Richmond	W	10.4	3.0	51.6
Prahran	E	26.9	1.3	32.2
South Melbourne	W	15.9	4.1	48.5
St Kilda	E	38.2	1.6	24.1
Hawthorn	E	37.5	6.7	20.4
Footscray	W	8.8	2.9	48.8
North Melbourne	B	11.4	7.1	55.0
Brunswick	B	9.8	2.0	46.1
Essendon	W	24.4	1.3	23.7
Williamstown	W	15.5	2.7	31.0
Brighton	W	38.1	2.0	24.1
Flemington and Kensington	W	11.5	0.9	46.2
Port Melbourne	W	8.1	3.9	56.2

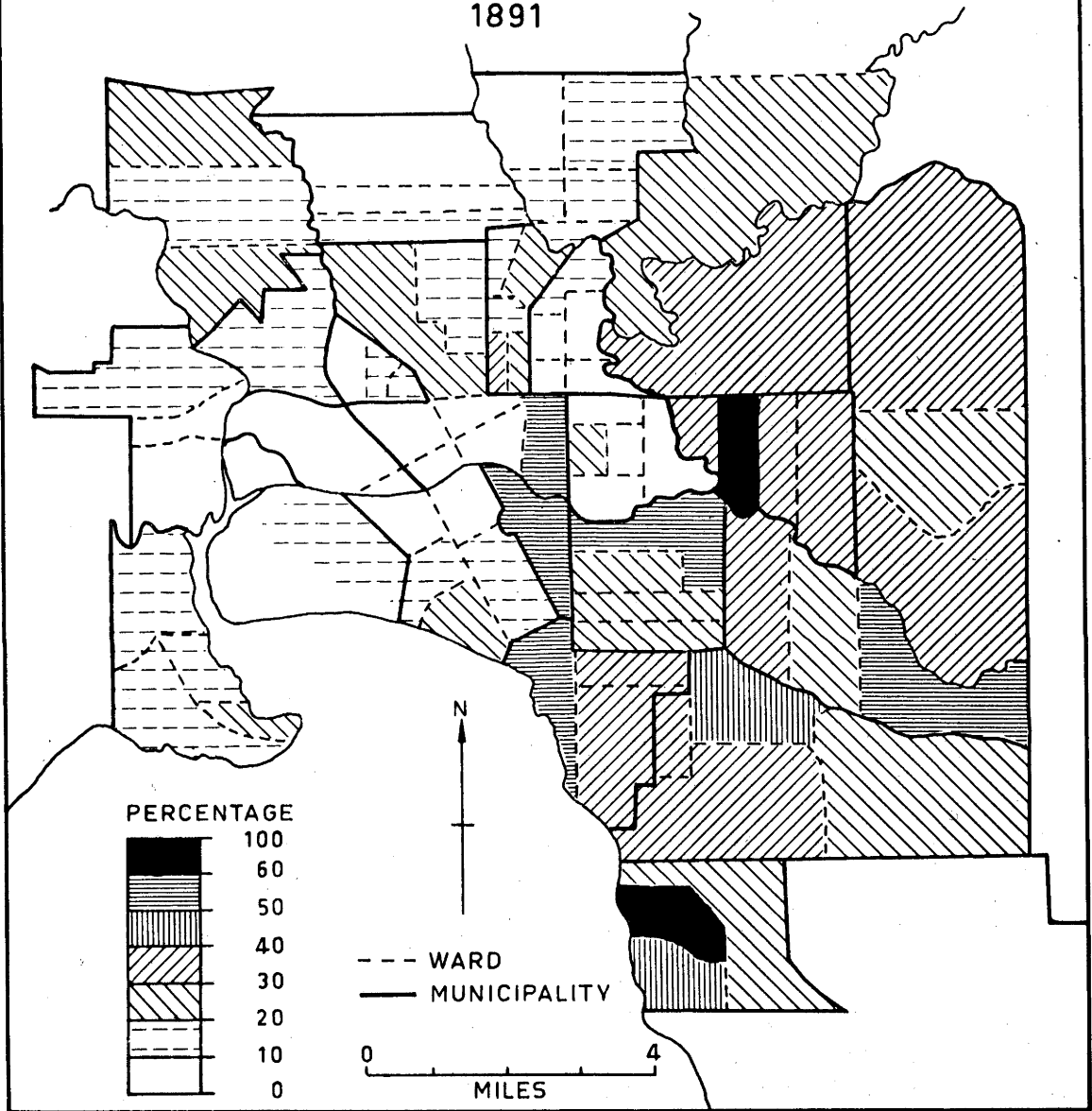
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B = over 55 per cent brick; E = 45 per cent to 55 per cent brick;  
W = less than 45 per cent brick.

2

Figures for 3-4 rooms are available only for the 1881 Census for which year they are given; figures for 1-2 rooms and 6+ rooms are for 1891.

PERCENTAGES OF HOUSES OF MORE THAN SIX ROOMS  
BY WARDS OF MUNICIPALITIES  
1891



still popular in Victoria, disease was spread through noxious 'vapours' and was, correctly, associated with the disposal of human and other wastes. Hill and seaside sites were exposed to breezes and fresh air, were remote from swamps and rivers filled with contagion and were favoured with natural drainage. Real estate agents interpreted suburban mortality statistics with an innocent disregard for nutrition, medical services, hygiene, education, and the age structures of the population and with a ritual acknowledgement of the efficacy of 'fresh air'. That Footscray was foul and Hawthorn healthy was perhaps as much a result, as it was a proof, of the popular theory of disease. Hill sites were favoured, secondly, because they were supposed to give access to 'a view'. There is no feature of real estate advertisements of this period more surprising than the number of sites, now quite enclosed by terra cotta and flapping bed linen, which were said to command panoramic views of all Melbourne, its suburbs, the Bay and surrounding countryside. Finally, living on a hill symbolized the householder's position in the social pyramid.<sup>1</sup> In this connection, the direct confrontation of the most prestigious suburbs (Toorak, South Yarra, Kew) and the least prestigious (Collingwood, Burnley, South Richmond) across the river suggests there is something in the view that suburban differentiation had the effect, at least at the extremes, of actually 'accentuating social distinctions'.

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For discussion of these matters see A.B.S.G., 13 June 1886, pp.117-8.

The second form of 'socio-spatial' differentiation deserving discussion here is that deriving from the age and conjugal condition of suburban populations. Table 6.3 (below) and Map 2 shows the percentage of married women 20-40 and of children 0-10 in the total population of each municipality. The main areas of what may be described as 'high familism'<sup>1</sup> appear to be grouped in the newer, outer suburbs, especially those on the western side of the city. This pattern may be explained in terms of several factors:

(i) Age of settlement. Suburbs of oldest settlement (e.g. St Kilda, Brighton, North Melbourne), especially in a 'city of a generation',<sup>2</sup> are likely to have an aged population. Nevertheless some older suburbs (e.g. Collingwood, Richmond) had a relatively young population while some fairly new, outer suburbs (e.g. Kew) had fewer young families.

(ii) Distance from the Central Business District. In a family with young children, the father was usually the only member 'tied' to the city's economic core; they were thus free to live in the healthier semi-rural suburbs. Conversely, boarding houses and other accommodation for young single persons were concentrated in areas close to the centre of the city.<sup>3</sup>

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I use this convenient shorthand term in the sense which Jones (op.cit.) adopts from Shevsky, Bell and others.

2

H. Perkins, Melbourne Illustrated and Victoria Described (Melbourne 1880), p.3.

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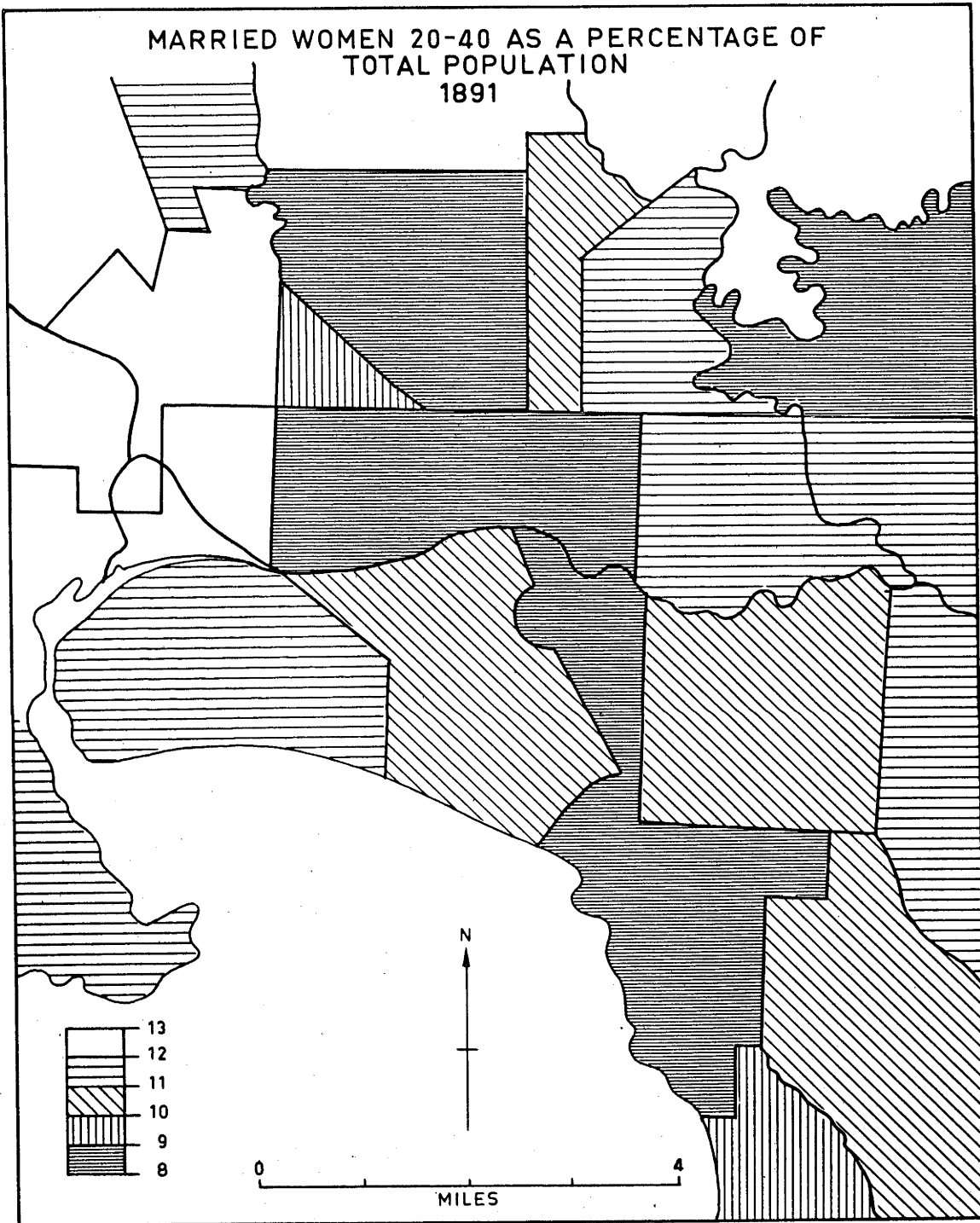
Whitworth, Handbook to Melbourne (Melbourne 1880) p.22.

TABLE 6.3

PROPORTIONS OF MARRIED WOMEN 20-40 YEARS AND CHILDREN 0-10 YEARS IN POPULATIONS OF MELBOURNE SUBURBS (1891)

	Children 0-10	Married Women 20-40
Melbourne	15.8	8.6
Fitzroy	21.6	10.6
Collingwood	26.1	11.4
Richmond	24.4	11.4
Prahran	22.0	10.0
South Melbourne	22.9	10.7
St Kilda	19.4	8.8
Hawthorn	22.8	11.0
Footscray	30.2	12.6
North Melbourne	23.0	9.9
Brunswick	30.1	12.6
Essendon	26.4	11.9
Williamstown	26.6	11.2
Brighton	23.8	9.9
Flemington and Kensington	30.1	12.0
Port Melbourne	27.0	11.7
Boroondara	24.5	10.8
Caulfield	24.5	10.7
Coburg	24.6	9.9
Malvern	24.5	11.8
Preston	29.8	11.3
Kew	19.7	8.4

MARRIED WOMEN 20-40 AS A PERCENTAGE OF  
TOTAL POPULATION  
1891



(iii) Socio-economic status of the suburb. Prahran, Hawthorn and Caulfield, which were settled about the same time as Brunswick, Essendon and Footscray nevertheless have a lower 'familism' score. This may partially reflect deferred marriage and lower fertility among the middle classes<sup>1</sup> but it seems as probable that older couples were, on average, wealthier than younger ones. The 'merchant's clerk' who, as a young man, 'ockypied a dwelling hin/A streete hin Halbert Park'<sup>2</sup> might one day become a stockbroker owning a villa in Armadale or Upper Hawthorn. Furthermore, the fact that land remained cheaper in western and northern suburbs for most of the 'eighties<sup>3</sup> may have encouraged young men with larger family responsibilities to settle there.

The features of Melbourne's geography and social structure which produced these socio-spatial patterns were fairly constant throughout our period; they shaped but did not promote suburban growth. In that sense, they may be described as static factors. Other technological factors however - among which we may number changes in transportation - had an important bearing upon the rate, as well as the shape of growth. William Fitzpatrick, a deputy-traffic manager of the Victorian Railways asserted that

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See below chapter 8.

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Melbourne Punch, 8 May 1884, p.190.

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Speculation turned to these areas only in the last stages of the boom. See A.B.S.G., 21 January 1888, p.451, 22 August 1888, p.280.

very early in the history of this city a railway system was established which induced people to go and live outside it, so much that our vast suburban system has been created in that way. I doubt if you will find a city of the same importance where so few of the inhabitants live in the city itself.<sup>1</sup>

Proponents of this view believed that 'the proper principle to adopt was to make railways precede population and not population railways',<sup>2</sup> and held that

within a radius of a few miles of Melbourne...., there can be no mistake made with regard to the construction of those railways. The tendency of Melbourne is to reside outside the city, and the greater the opportunity you afford for getting to and fro the more rapid will be the development and the expansion of the suburbs.<sup>3</sup>

New railway extensions were not designed to supply estimated requirements; indeed Railways' Ministers and Commissioners expressed a general scepticism about such

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Evidence to the Board appointed to enquire into the Working and Management of the Railways, V.P.P. 71/1895-6, Q.1911. For similar statements see Argus, 1 January 1889, p.7F.

2

David Gaunson quoted Argus, 15 October 1884, remarks on the 'Octopus' Bill (I have freely used the Rolland typescript [R.T.] of articles from the Argus on railway matters which is deposited in the V.S.L.).

3

Richard Speight (Chief Commissioner) in evidence to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways 1891, Enquiry into the Northern Lines, V.P.P. 3/1891 Q.2.

estimates. Introducing the 1884 'Octopus' Bill, Duncan Gillies avowed that

on one point I will follow the example of a predecessor [Bent]. I will not submit to the House estimates of the probable receipts from the proposed lines. Years ago I arrived at the conclusion that these estimates were wholly unreliable.<sup>1</sup>

Since estimates were unreliable, the question of probable demand was set aside. The railways would create their own demand.

These were simple assumptions indeed, for the part which railways played in suburban growth has to be understood in relation both to their technical characteristics (compared with trams, omnibuses, etc.) and the social needs and position of their prospective clientele. While trains travelled faster (20 m.p.h.) than trams (8-10 m.p.h.), trams ran more frequently and, in general, picked up passengers closer to their homes and dropped them closer to their destination. With the traveller from suburb to the city centre, it followed, ceteris paribus, that the further he resided from the centre of the city, the more likely he was to travel

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Quoted Argus, 8 October 1884, p.6 [R.T.]. For similar assertions see evidence of Speight, loc.cit., Q.57.

by train rather than tram.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, since the initial and recurrent costs<sup>2</sup> of railway operation were generally higher than the costs of trams, a system of fares geared directly to costs tended to draw wealthier persons to trains, and those who were poorer to trams. In fact, railway costs were spread among passengers by a system of varying fares: first and second class, weekly, monthly and yearly tickets.

Perhaps the most notable innovation of this type were the special 'workmen's tickets'. In January 1882, a number of workingmen from Footscray and Williamstown - particularly, it would seem, railway workers newly removed to Newport workshops - petitioned the Minister for Railways for special workingmen's trains to be run at reduced fares.<sup>3</sup> Within two weeks Bent had acceded to

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On the technology of trams see article of W.C. Kernot in Alexander Sutherland (ed.), Victoria and its Metropolis (Melbourne 1888), vol.II, pp.17-23, and his The Extension of Rail and Tramways (Melbourne 1887). The consequences of these differences are discussed in the evidence to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways 1891 Enquiry into the Northern Lines (loc.cit., see especially evidence of Speight (Qs.1, 133, 151, 189) and to the Board on the Working and Management of the Railways, loc.cit., especially evidence of Robert Lockhead (Qs.1362-5).

2

Kernot (loc.cit.) points out that the basic costs of cable tram operation did not vary with the number of cars which operated on a given line; energy input was constant.

3

Argus, 14 January 1882 and 13 April 1882. [R.T.]

the request and workmen's trains began running on all the main suburban lines - two in the morning and two in the evening - at the special rate of 2d for all journeys under 5 miles and 3d for all over 5 miles.<sup>1</sup> The new service proved popular: ticket sales rose from 1600 in late February to 2200 in March. The Minister was justified in expanding the service, especially with early morning trains.<sup>2</sup> Separate returns of traffic on workmen's trains were not published, but to judge from the number of scheduled services, they appear to have expanded even further during the rest of the decade. In 1883 there were 32 workmen's services daily; in 1887 there were 59.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless despite - and perhaps even because of - such innovations, social distinctions persisted between train and tram travel and since it was broadly true that

1

Ibid., 25 January 1882. As a further concession, tickets could be purchased in bundles of 1/9 or 2/6 for 12. [R.T.]

2

Age, 9 March 1882, p.3, Argus, 28 February, 6 March 1882.

3

Book Timetables of the Victorian Railways 1883, 1884-5, 1887. The services were as following:

	<u>1883</u>	<u>1887</u>
Williamstown	5	13
Brighton	8	13
Essendon	5	6
Hawthorn	4	9
Sandridge	4	8

lower class individuals resided in inner areas and upper class in outer areas, this tended to reinforce the technical adaptation of trains to outer and trams to inner areas. These relationships are well illustrated by the figures for railway use. (Table 6.4)

TABLE 6:4

OUTWARD TRAIN JOURNEYS PER UNIT OF SUBURBAN POPULATION<sup>1</sup>

Suburb	1881	1891
Essendon	93	147
Flemington and Kensington	130	156
Brunswick	-	17
Hawthorn	183	182
Footscray	132	148
Kew	-	9
Brighton	178	171
Prahran	127	154
St Kilda	130	77
Richmond	75	127
South Melbourne	46	98
Port Melbourne	72	128
Collingwood	-	11
Fitzroy	-	5
Hotham	10	61

<sup>1</sup>

Victorian Railways Report of the Board of Land and Works V.P.P. 48/1882-3 appendix 16, Report of the Victorian Railways Commissioners V.P.P. 124/1891 appendix 17 and Victorian Census 1881, 1891. These calculations are fairly crude ones since traffic through particular stations has to be assigned to the population of a municipality which may not correspond to the 'catchment area' of the station.

Other areas, especially in the south and east had high rates of use while inner and northern areas supplied few passengers.

The story of the part played by rail- and tramways in suburban development is of the gradual and mutually-destructive interpenetration of each system upon the other's catchment areas. The Melbourne Railways system in 1880 was a recently contracted (but unconsummated)<sup>1</sup> union of the privately-owned Hobson's Bay Railway Company which had operated most of the lines to the south and east of the city, and the Victorian [Government's] Railways which owned the lines to the north and west of the city (see Map 3 ). In 1880 the Berry Government enacted a bill (Act 44 Victoria 862) to extend the suburban system with new lines to Coburg in the north, Camberwell and Lilydale in the east, Mordialloc in the south, from Richmond to Alphington through the densely-populated Collingwood district and from Alphington to Prince's Hill. The cost of resuming valuable urban land and the opposition of local residents to level crossings forced the government to abandon the Richmond-Alphington line,<sup>2</sup> but the line from Prince's Hill was built and, though separated from the main

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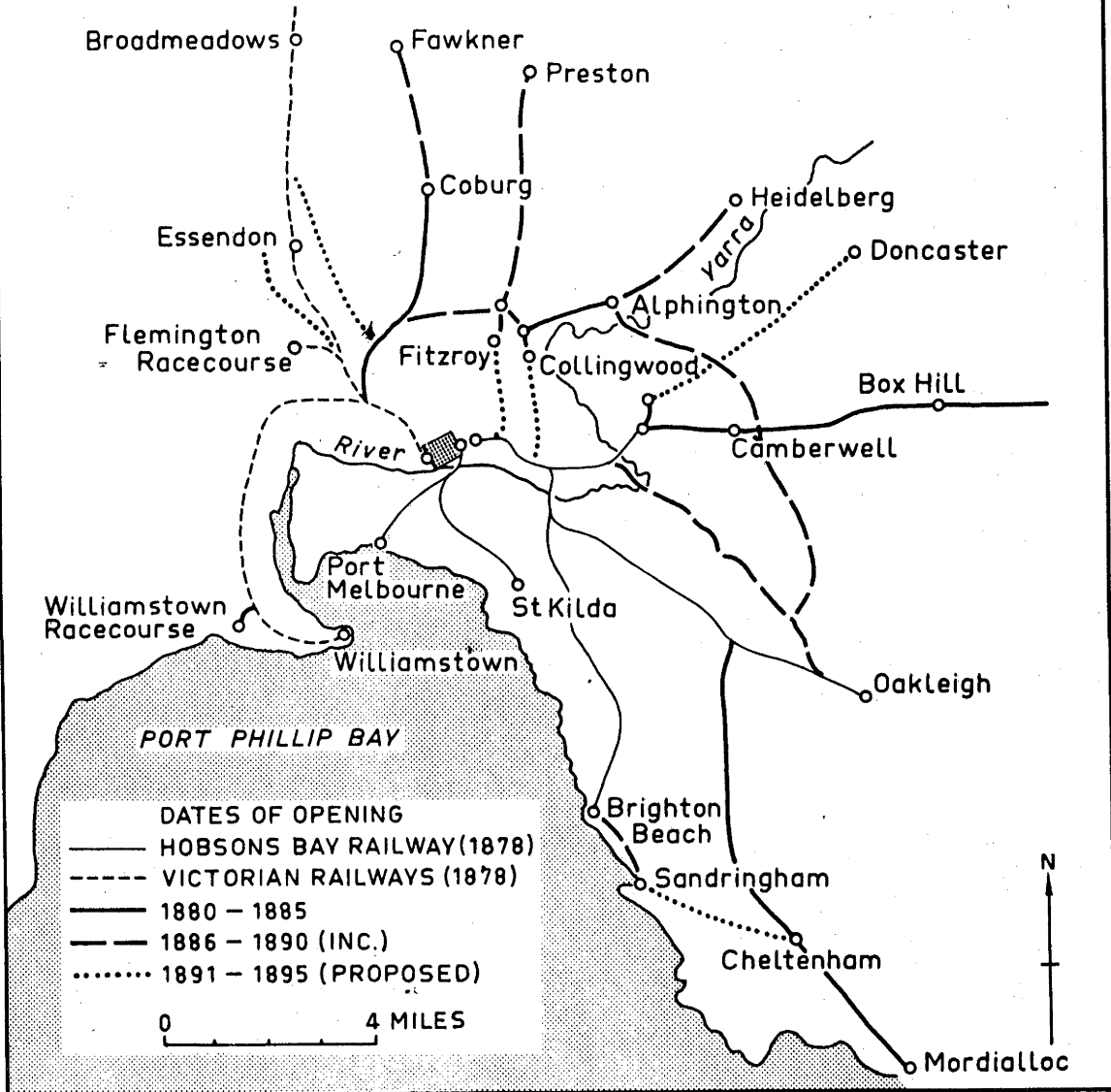
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The two termini were actually connected in 1879; but effective knitting together of the two networks had to wait for the Flinders Street Viaduct which was not opened until 1891.

2

Argus, 18 November 1880, 13 April, 15 September, 1 October, 5 October, 13 October, 28 October 1881, 8, 29 March, 25 August 1882 [R.T.].

# MELBOURNE RAILWAY SYSTEM 1880-1895



Broadmeadows

Fawkner

Preston

Coburg

Essendon

Flemington Racecourse

Fitzroy

Collingwood

Heidelberg

Yarra

Doncaster

Alphington

Box Hill

River

Camberwell

Williamstown Racecourse

Port Melbourne

St Kilda

Williamstown

Oakleigh

PORT PHILLIP BAY

Brighton Beach

Sandringham

Cheltenham

Mordialloc

0 4 MILES

N

suburban network, it was operated for a time with carriages driven by a gas engine.<sup>1</sup>

During the debates and discussions on the 1880 Act, ministers and members of parliament were besieged by deputations of local worthies urging the fullest development of railways in their districts and often pressing for proposed railways to be re-routed so as to conform with the general - or some more personal - interest.<sup>2</sup> Rarely did they show, or seem obliged to show, that the proposed new lines would be economic. Sometimes new lines were urged on the ground that they would appreciate the value of government lands.<sup>3</sup> Most commonly they were regarded as a public service to which all districts had a right. In this connection the districts immediately to the north of the city felt especially aggrieved. There was strong support for the contention that 'the northern districts, which [had] been neglected for so long should have a fair share of the plunder that was going on'.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Victorian Engineer, 15 June 1886, p.519.

<sup>2</sup> Allegations of 'jobbing' were frequent; it was commonly said, for example, that Bent had seen Brighton unusually well served for railway services and that O'Shanassy had secured the re-routing of the Camberwell line through his own property. But such accusations are difficult to substantiate. (See e.g. Geoffrey Blainey, A History of Camberwell, Melbourne 1964, pp.49-50.)

<sup>3</sup> In two cases where this argument was applied - the proposed railways to the Yarra Mouth and from St Kilda to Elwood - the Government was evidently not persuaded. See Argus, 10, 11 August 1882, 16, 31 October 1884. [R.T.]

<sup>4</sup> Reid quoted *ibid.*, 30 April 1884, p.9. For reports of the earlier agitation see *ibid.*, 16, 17 September 1880, 5, 20 July 1883. [R.T.]

In 1882 Thomas Bent proposed a second instalment of railway extension which was to make notable concessions to the northern districts. His bill included a line from Royal Park to Prince's Hill, with a 'cockspur' to Fitzroy, an extension to Northcote, and some elements of the controversial 'outer circle' line. The 'outer circle' was already a project with a considerable history: it had been first proposed in the early 'seventies by Thomas Higinbotham, then Manager of the Victorian Railways, as a means of bringing the Gippsland line - which entered the metropolitan area through Oakleigh - to a city terminal. This he hoped to achieve by constructing a great 'outer circle' of railway from Oakleigh, through Camberwell, Alphington, Clifton Hill and North Melbourne to the Spencer Street terminal. In addition, it was supposed that the new line would 'open up' a tract of hitherto undeveloped, but promising, suburbs.<sup>1</sup>

Bent's bill perished with the O'Loghlen Government in 1883. Yet, in spite of the opprobrium<sup>2</sup> surrounding

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Leo Harrigan, Victorian Railways to '62 (Melbourne 1962), pp.101-8. As critics pointed out at the time, these were most dubious grounds for such an expensive policy: there was no longer any need for the Gippsland railway to terminate at Spencer Street which, in any case, would be shortly joined to the Flinders Street terminal; it was very doubtful whether householders could be induced to live on the 'outer circle' by which route the journey to work would be longer and more expensive than by any of the old 'Hobson's Bay' lines (e.g. see 'Engineer' in Argus, 21 October 1884, p.7).

2

Especially because of the notorious 'Kensington Hill Job' (see M. Cannon, The Landboomers, pp.39-40).

his administration (which led to the transfer of some ministerial powers to a board of Railways Commissioners) his successor, Duncan Gillies, in 1884 produced an even more extravagant bill<sup>1</sup> (Act 58 Victoria 1381). It included extensions of existing lines from Coburg to Somerton,<sup>2</sup> from Royal Park to Prince's Hill, from Prince's Hill to Fitzroy and Collingwood together with a new line from Burnley to Oakleigh through Glen Iris<sup>3</sup> and the whole of the much-canvassed 'outer circle' connection.<sup>4</sup> In addition the parliament passed, as an amendment, a line from Hawthorn to Kew which had been included in Bent's bill but inexplicably omitted from Gillies'.<sup>5</sup> By making systematic mutual concessions to

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1

Bent's bill proposed a total of 915 miles of suburban and country railway; Gillies' 927.

2

Note agitation for this *ibid.*, 15 August 1883. [R.T.]

3

Deputations *ibid.*, 5 July, 11 August 1882. There were allegations that the line was a 'job'. *Ibid.*, 17 October 1884, p.9. [R.T.]

4

Apart from the obvious beneficiaries in the Balwyn-Canterbury area (see meeting *ibid.*, 22 October 1884), perhaps the most ardent support of the 'outer circle' came from brick company interests in the Brunswick area who hoped for a better supply of firewood from Gippsland (*ibid.*, 2, 28 June, 2 August 1883 [R.T.]).

5

The main reason given for dropping the line was the heavy costs of earthworks but this certainly did not convince the deputations which protested against the new Minister's action (*ibid.*, 8 October 1884 (edit.), 11, 17 October 1884).

local interests (collusion?), the parliament virtually abandoned economic calculation as a basis for suburban railways policy. Charles H. Pearson, himself a railway advocate, was among the few who spared some thought for the possible consequences of passing '900 miles of railway, involving an expenditure of four millions, without any information, without any discussion, and amid shouts of laughter'.<sup>1</sup> The 'Octopus Bill', as it came to be called, was a striking illustration of the thesis that 'the usual parliamentary methods [were] quite unsuitable for a developmental policy'.<sup>2</sup>

The lines passed in 1884 were gradually completed during the second half of the 'eighties; few were in operation before 1888-90. By this time, however, further extensions were projected. Although they were never carried out, they deserve attention as the logical culmination of the policies initiated in 1880-4. The Commissioners proposed<sup>3</sup> to build new lines from Newmarket to Keilor Road and from Royal Park to

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1

Ibid., 22 October 1884, p.7. [R.T.]

2

F.W. Eggleston, State Socialism in Victoria (London 1932), p.45.

3

Statement...by the Victorian Railways Commissioners [on] Proposed new lines of Railway in V.P.P. A1/1890.

Pascoevale in the north,<sup>1</sup> from Kew to Doncaster and Doncaster to Bulleen road in the east, from Sandringham to Cheltenham in the south. The most important and controversial extensions, however, were those from Prince's Bridge to Fitzroy and Collingwood. And for these, most arguments reduced to the simple assertion that 'the south has railways and that the north ought to have them'.<sup>2</sup> Had not financial depression curtailed capital expenditure, the Railways Commissioners might indeed have pursued, far into alien territory, the reckless policy of building railways in accordance with political demands rather than economic demand.<sup>3</sup>

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1.

The first seems to have passed through part of Thomas Bent's 'Heights of Maribynong Estate' (see M. Cannon, *op.cit.*, p.182); the latter certainly did pass through lands owned by Bent, Munro, Melville, Woods and other parliamentarians on the eastern bank of the Moonee Ponds Creek (Argus, 19 July 1892, p.5). Hence 'Oriel's' little rhyme:

It [Pascoevale line] ran past 'eligible lots' and  
'splendid situations',  
And after well-known patriots they named the  
leading stations.  
You heard the porter ring his bell, and cry with  
special unction -  
Next train for Bent Town, Munroville, La Rose and  
Melville Junction.

(Argus, 23 July 1892, p.13A)

2

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways Enquiry into the Northern Lines, V.P.P.: 3/1891, Qs.465, 1295-6.

3

The foregoing account of suburban railway development has some affinities with the more general account of investment in railways, presented by N.G. Butlin (Investment in Australian Economic Development, ch.V, especially sections 5 and 6). Butlin's account, however, is mainly confined to rural railways.

In some respects the building of the tramways was a more rational operation. From the time of the foundation of his Melbourne Omnibus Company in the 1860s, F.B. Clapp<sup>1</sup> had looked forward to the ultimate establishment of a tramway system. According to the Company's Secretary (W.G. Sprigg), 'every property it bought, every building it put up was carefully planned with a view to the future [street] railway system'.<sup>2</sup> The tracks of the new tramway system were actually to follow the old omnibus routes almost exactly.<sup>3</sup> In 1881 Clapp's plans were upset by the entry upon the scene of Henry Hoyt who formed a Victorian Tramway Company with the intention of establishing lines through several of the inner suburban areas. However, despite the concurrence of some of the municipalities, there was widespread antagonism to Hoyt's scheme and a proposed bill was dropped. In 1883 the Service Government established a Tramways Trust with formal control over tramways in most central municipalities. Clapp bought out Hoyt's Company and the Melbourne Tramway and Omnibus Company, having persuaded the Parliament of the superiority of cable trams

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1

See A.D.B., vol.III, pp.397-8.

2

Before a Parliamentary Committee (unnamed) quoted Argus, 9 November 1935 (in Kenyon Cuttings, vol.I, p.68, in S.L.V.).

3

Compare Wimpole's Guide to Melbourne (1881), p.86ff. and tram routes as given, for example, in Alexander Sutherland, *op.cit.*, vol.II, pp.22-3.

over other types,<sup>1</sup> was granted a lease to operate in the 13 municipalities until the lines were handed back to the Trust in 1916.

The company's first routes were confined to the inner suburbs: Richmond (1885), Fitzroy (1886), Collingwood and Clifton Hill (1887) along Nicholson Street (1887), Brunswick (1887) and Carlton (1887). Trams entered the 'city mile' by several routes and it was an intended result that the central business district was provided with a close network of tram transport.<sup>2</sup> In the later 'eighties, however, the Tramways managers, victims of lowering interest rates and rising expectations, began to extend their operations further afield into 'railway territory': to St Kilda and Brighton roads (1888), Prahran (1889), North Melbourne, West Melbourne, Port Melbourne (1890) and St Kilda Esplanade (1891). Horse trams, more economical for light traffic, were introduced on the Kew and Hawthorn routes. (see Map 4) There were schemes for additional lines in Prahran<sup>3</sup> and for a service from Collingwood to

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1

See especially evidence to Select Committee...on Melbourne Tramways Bill, V.P.P. 1884 passim. Sydney, of course, had adopted steam trams but her experience was not such as to encourage the 'sister' colony (see e.g. Australian Engineering and Building News, 1 May 1880, p.240).

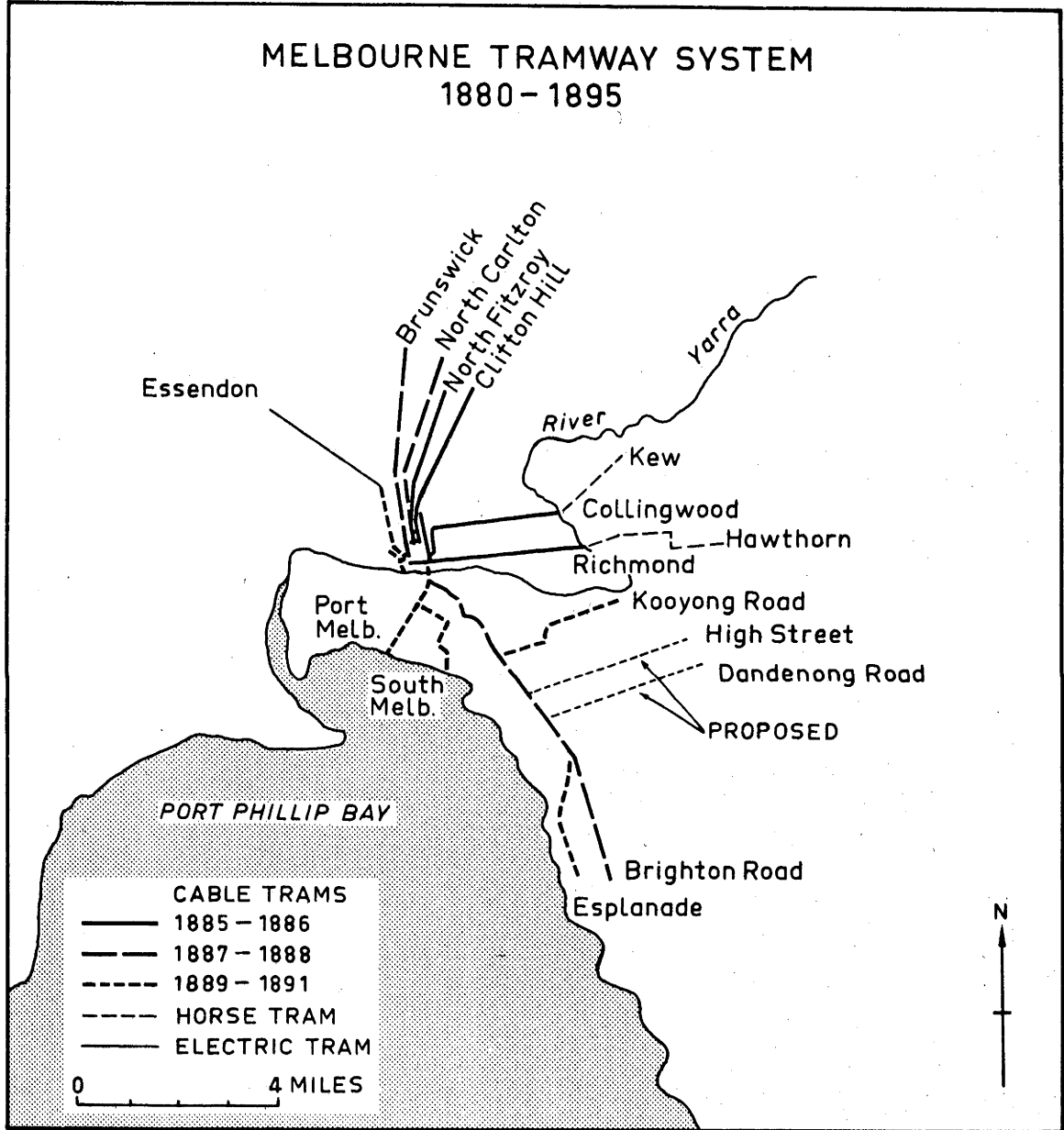
2

See Select Committee...on Melbourne Tramways, loc.cit., Q.100.

3

Select Committee on Tramways Act 1890 Amendment Bill, V.P.P. 1891. The new lines would add to the already existing lines along Toorak road, parallel tracks along High Street and Dandenong Road to Kooyong road.

# MELBOURNE TRAMWAY SYSTEM 1880 - 1895



Essendon

Brunswick  
North Carlton  
North Fitzroy  
Clifton Hill

Yarra  
River

Kew  
Collingwood  
Hawthorn  
Richmond

Port Melb.  
South Melb.

Kooyong Road  
High Street  
Dandenong Road  
PROPOSED

PORT PHILLIP BAY

Brighton Road  
Esplanade

**CABLE TRAMS**  
 ——— 1885 - 1886  
 - - - 1887 - 1888  
 - - - 1889 - 1891  
**HORSE TRAM**  
 - - -  
**ELECTRIC TRAM**  
 ———

0 4 MILES



St Kilda designed mainly, it would seem, to transport artisans expeditiously to the seaside.<sup>1</sup> The inapplicability of the tramways to outer suburban transport is evident in the following traffic figures:

TABLE 6.5  
TRAMWAYS TRAFFIC AND RECEIPTS 1886-1891<sup>2</sup>

Year	Average Extent open (miles)	Train Mileage	Passengers Carried	Receipts (£)	Passengers per Mile Run	Receipts (shillings) per Mile Run
1886	2.29	497,631	16,353,250	188,531	32.86	7.57
1887	7.60	1,508,516	17,992,047	207,329	11.92	2.75
1888	19.85	4,036,253	31,133,444	362,581	7.71	1.80
1889	30.99	6,396,874	45,000,364	526,588	7.03	1.65
1890	37.21	7,453,667	45,273,578	527,342	6.07	1.41
1891	45.31	9,169,912	48,044,826	562,541	5.24	1.23

The further the tramways extended into the outer suburbs, the poorer became their passenger/mile returns. Of course, the systems as a whole may well have remained economic; the profits upon the company's early years of operation had been prodigious. Nevertheless it was becoming evident that the penetration of trams into

1

Report and evidence of Select Committee...on the Suburban Tramways Company Bill, V.P.P. 1890, Qs.5, 48.

2

From Victorian Yearbook 1892, p.161.

railway 'catchment areas', like the railways' invasion of tramways' territory to the north of the city, constituted a source of potential difficulty and conflict. From the passenger's viewpoint, however, the interpenetration of the two services produced a transport system of exceptional extent, cheapness, variety and efficiency.

There is a third set of factors which, though they were necessary to suburban development, cannot be said either to have shaped or actively promoted it. This is the category of 'essential services' - roads, water, sewerage, gas - which generally followed the pattern of suburban expansion, retarding it only on the few occasions when they failed to match its pace.

The provision of roads and drains and such primitive sewerage as existed was a responsibility of local municipalities. However it was not until 1890 that Councils were empowered, under the Health Act, to supervise and undertake street construction and to recover from the owners of adjoining properties the costs of all necessary works.<sup>1</sup> The published returns of local government finance are not sufficiently detailed to recover estimates of the amounts spent on street construction as distinct from other public works; nevertheless some more detailed returns available for 1888 and 1889 do suggest that 'new' suburbs like Hawthorn, Northcote, and Brunswick were spending a considerable proportion of their total revenue for

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<sup>1</sup>

Act 1098 (1890), Section 234.

the purpose.<sup>1</sup> Although spiralling land values increased revenue from rates, local government bodies borrowed heavily during this period. In the period 1883-1892 Victorian municipalities borrowed about £1,875,700 in London.<sup>2</sup> Much of this, however, was probably devoted to less 'essential' projects, such as the palatial Town Halls which are the most evident legacy of this hey-day of municipal spending.

The disposal of night-soil was usually undertaken by contractors on behalf of city or shire councils which either levied a special rate or absorbed the cost in a general rate. The contractors collected the soil in special metal night carts, calling once a week between 11 at night and 3 in the morning, and deposited it either on market gardens or farms on the outskirts of the metropolis.<sup>3</sup> Since gardeners were prepared to pay for manure, those municipalities which adjoined open country (e.g. Brighton, Footscray, Port Melbourne, Prahran) were generally able to provide night-soil disposal services more cheaply than the inner suburbs.<sup>4</sup> Councils and their employees evinced little interest in how the soil was disposed of; one inspector who took

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1

Victorian Statistical Registers. 'Population'.

2

Victorian Yearbook 1893, vol.I, p.234.

3

Appendix A of First Progress Report of Royal Commission on the Sanitary Condition of the Metropolis, V.P.P. 27/1889 (especially Qs.XVIII and XX) also see evidence to the Commission of Eassie (Qs.3390-3407), Fullerton (Q.6114) and Robertson (Q.5968-70).

4

Ibid., Appendix A, Q.XXI.

the trouble to find out was appalled at the threat to public health posed by the conditions of its use on market gardens.<sup>1</sup>

Storm water, urine, and household drainage were fed into open drains and eventually flowed into the Yarra, the Saltwater River or one of their sluggish tributaries. Oftentimes its progress was impeded by unfavourable landfall, obstruction in drains or poorly-designed streets. As population became more concentrated, rivers and creeks polluted, the cartage of night soil more onerous and its disposal more difficult and unhygienic, the need for some comprehensive, modern system of sewerage became imperative.

The story of the creation of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works and the building of the Melbourne sewerage system lies outside the scope of the present thesis. Nevertheless, in view of the city's advanced transport, gas and other services, Melbourne's tardiness in this matter, especially in comparison with her rival capitals Sydney and Adelaide, calls for some explanation. Melbourne, firstly, was not favoured by its geography: unlike Sydney, most of whose sewage was conveyed by gravitation to an outfall in the ocean off Bondi, Melbourne was spread over a wide and not very high area (and hence could not use gravitation) and was not favoured with a suitable ocean outfall close to the

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1

Evidence of Eassie, *loc.cit.*

centre of the city.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, control of sanitation in Melbourne was divided among a score of local municipalities which were slow to recognize the problem and reluctant to surrender their powers to some necessary central authority.<sup>2</sup> Finally it may be suggested that the provision of sanitation - unlike some other services - was unregulated by the sovereign mechanism of competition. It was not until 1885 that a municipal conference was held to discuss the matter. In 1887 a draft bill for a Metropolitan Board of Works was placed before the Government which, in turn, established a Royal Commission to investigate the sanitary condition of the metropolis and invited the eminent English engineer, James Mansergh, to make a report. In 1890 the Board was duly constituted but it was not until 1897 that the new sewerage system was actually in operation.

Water supply had been vested in a central authority since the eighteen-fifties, when the Yan Yean system was inaugurated. Since that time there had been piecemeal additions to the reticulation system but no extension of the catchment area or of storage reservoirs. Indeed, for a time, the water supply system was unequal to the prodigious demands of expansion. The summers of 1887 and 1888 brought complaints from the enraged residents

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1

Victorian Engineer, 15 June 1888, p.7, Royal Commission on Sanitary Condition of the Metropolis, I, loc.cit., p.xiv and Water Supply and Sewerage Systems of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (compiled by George A. Gibbs Melbourne 1925), pp.53-54.

2

Victorian Engineer, 15 August 1886, p.8, 15 May 1888, p.8.

of South Melbourne, Port Melbourne and Williamstown, who were unable, for days on end, to get water from their taps.<sup>1</sup> The cause of difficulty did not lie in the sources of supply, for the old catchment had recently been augmented by the waters of Wallaby Creek (1885) and Silver Creek (1886) which increased the daily flow by some 12 million gallons.<sup>2</sup> (The Maroondah dam, on the Watts River near Healesville, was begun in 1886 but not completed until 1891.)

The main impediment to an adequate water supply was rather the reticulation system itself.<sup>3</sup> Several remedies were canvassed: meters, the introduction of an intermittent supply, separate systems for high or remote areas, a general increase in the size of street mains and service reservoirs. The first was rejected on the ground that any reasonable charge for excess water would not deter summer irrigators; the second because it offended against public health.<sup>4</sup> The third was employed only in the modified form of service reservoirs designed to fill at night or over periods of low demand and discharge at times when demand exceeded the mains flow.

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1

Argus, 1 December 1888, p.9H.

2

Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works, A Historical Survey of Melbourne's Water Supply (Melbourne 1942), pp.17-18 and Water Supply and Sewerage Systems . . ., pp.17-19.

3

Professor Kernot in Victorian Engineer, 15 February 1887, pp.5, 8. The maximum hourly consumption was about three times the average.

4

Ibid.

Such reservoirs were built at Essendon (1880, 1883), Caulfield (1883) and Kew (1886). A further large reservoir supplied by a direct pipe line from Yan Yean was opened at Surrey Hills in 1891.<sup>1</sup>

The provision of new mains - the principal means to the alleviation of the water shortage - proceeded with unequal vigour in various parts of the metropolis. Between 1880 and 1888 most mains construction was designed to increase flows to the quickly expanding eastern suburbs and to supplement the main flow from Preston to the central city (see Map 5 ). Little, however, was done to improve the mains to South Melbourne, Port Melbourne, Footscray, Williamstown and Essendon. After the crises of 1887 and 1888, however, a second 15" branch was provided for Williamstown and Footscray and 18" and 24" branches were run from the new 30" main to Essendon and South Melbourne.<sup>2</sup> Thus, by 1890, an adequate supply to all suburbs was assured.

In 1880 gas supply of the Melbourne metropolitan area within eight miles of its centre, with three exceptions, was in the hands of a single company - the Metropolitan Gas Company - which had been formed two years earlier by the amalgamation of the City of

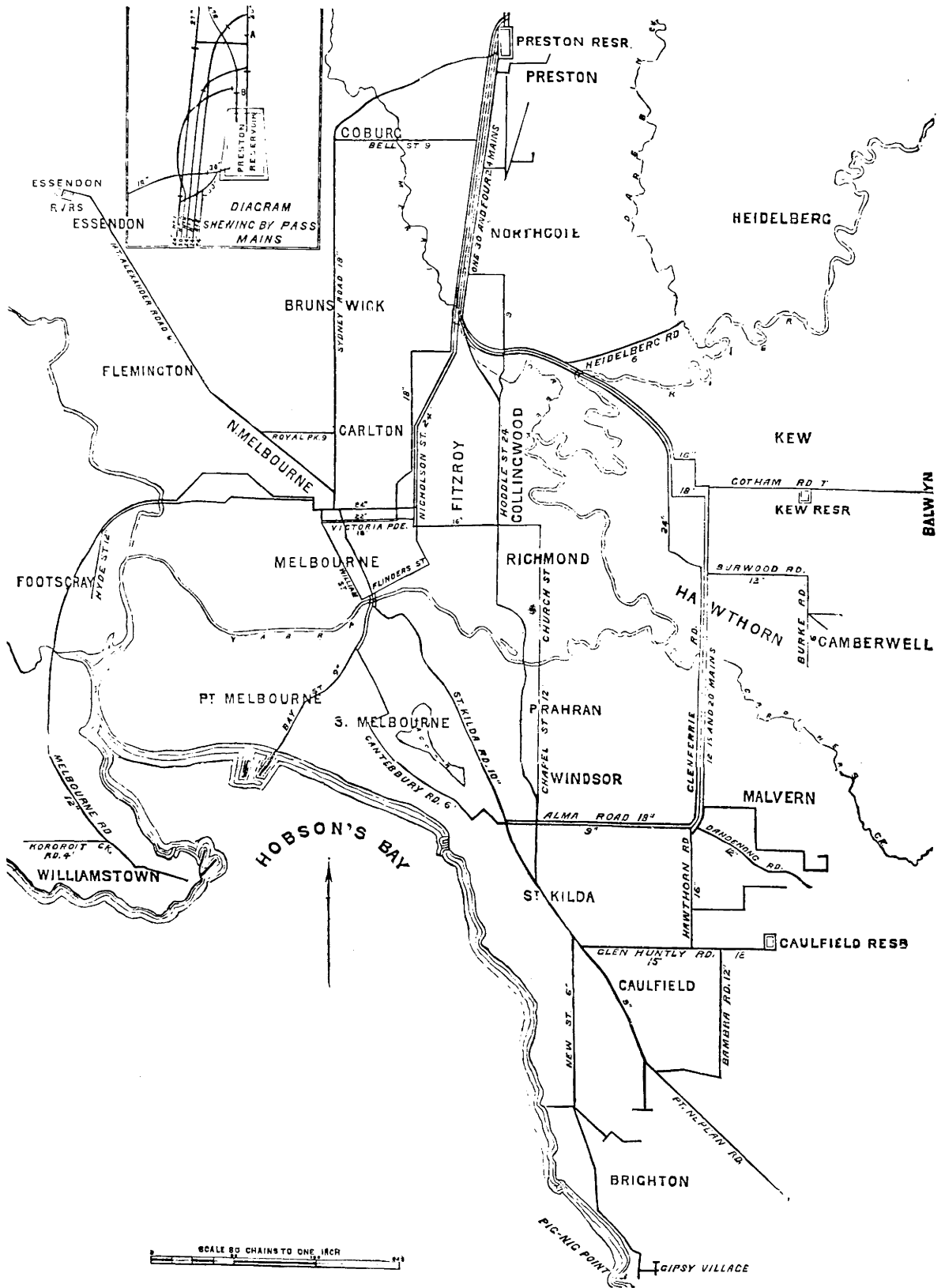
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1

Water Supply and Sewerage Systems..., p.20. This was necessary because the elevation of some of the newer eastern suburbs was greater than that of the main supply reservoir at Preston.

2

Royal Commission on the Sanitary Condition of Melbourne, Second Progress Report, Water Supply of the Metropolitan Area, V.P.P. 103/1889, p.9, Argus, 6 December 1888; Water Supply and Sewerage Systems..., p.36.



Melbourne Gas and Coke Company, the Collingwood, Fitzroy and District Gas and Coke Company and the South Melbourne Gas Company.<sup>1</sup> The Act of 1878 sanctioning the union and granting the monopoly, had excluded Brighton, Footscray and Williamstown; the first was served by the Brighton Gas Company (1878) and the latter two by the Footscray Gas Company (1878).

Until about 1880 gas was used almost exclusively for street and domestic lighting. In that year, however, the first gas stoves, priced at about £6, were sold in Melbourne and in 1887 gas water-heating appliances came onto the market.<sup>2</sup> Gas engines were commonly used in industrial plants. The proportion of new gas connections to stoves increased spectacularly during the decade: by 1885, 12,000 had been installed and about 40 per cent of new connections in 1887 were for this purpose. By 1889 the proportion had risen to 60 per cent.<sup>3</sup> A large

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1

41 Victoria no.586; see Metropolitan Gas Company, Jubilee 1878-1928, and Report of Select Committee of Legislative Assembly upon the Metropolitan Gas Company's Bill, V.P.P. D[24]/1877-8.

2

C.H. Eddey, 'Appliance Sales' in Compendium of Lectures delivered to Officers of the Metropolitan Gas Company (Melbourne 1941), pp.47-8. (The records of the Metropolitan Gas Company appear to have been destroyed.)

3

Argus, 28 May 1885, p.6E, A.I.B.R., 16 August 1887, p.482. See also Brighton Gas Company Director's Report, 16 July 1887 (in Defunct Companies no.397) and Footscray Gas Company Directors' Report, February 1888 (Defunct Companies no. 416), A.I.B.R., 16 August 1889, p.576.

proportion of gas stoves were hired rather than purchased; in 1890 the Metropolitan Company had 12,697 on hire.<sup>1</sup>

Such an active leasing policy suggests what other evidence confirms - that the gas companies were not content simply to cater to established demand, but were actively promoting gas consumption. Wherever their services fell short, there were competitors eager to annex their territory. In 1885, for example, when there were complaints of inadequate gas supply in the Prahran district, a rival company was formed in the hope of securing similar rights to the Metropolitan, only to be forestalled when the existing service was improved.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the Brighton Gas Company was forced to press ahead and service new areas by the active competition of Thomas Bent's Central Brighton and Moorabbin Gas Company. The threatened entry of the new company was averted by its amalgamation with the old Brighton company in 1887.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout the 'eighties, and especially after 1885, the Metropolitan Company attempted to lay its pipes and maintain supply well ahead of demand. In 1886 the Chairman (John Benn) reported that

new and enlarged mains have been laid wherever there was a prospect of a payable return, so

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1

C.H. Eddey, loc.cit., p.48.

2

Argus, 28 May 1885, p.6E, A.I.B.R., 14 August 1885, p.453-4. The South Suburban Gas Company formed in 1885 was voluntarily wound up in 1886.

3

Weston Bate, A History of Brighton (Melbourne 1962), pp.208-11.

that there is scarcely any settled population within the company's area that is not supplied.<sup>1</sup>

And in 1887: 'Keeping ahead of demand was the only safe means of conveying to their consumers a constant and ample supply'.<sup>2</sup> The company had taken over 300 miles of mains in 1878; in 1890 there were 723 miles. In 1878 there were about 35,000 meter installations; in 1890 about 77,894.<sup>3</sup> On the production side, the company installed a new mechanically-operated coaling plant, new retort stoking machinery and a large purifying and washing plant.<sup>4</sup> During the early 'eighties it erected new  $\frac{1}{2}$  million cu.ft. capacity gas holders at Richmond and Fitzroy. When a further holder of 3 million cu.ft. (more than double the required capacity) was undertaken in 1888, the Chairman explained to shareholders that

the reasons are that the cost per 1000 feet holding capacity is much cheaper proportionally than the cost of a small one, and that with ample storage gas can be made at a cheaper rate, and with less strain on the manufacturing plant; also that it occupies about two years to complete a large holder from the time the work is commenced, and we must not disregard the fact that consumption has about doubled in the last five years.<sup>5</sup>

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1

A.I.B.R., 15 February 1886, pp.76-7.

2

Ibid., 16 August 1887, p.482.

3

Ibid., 16 August 1890, p.576, 16 February 1888, p.87.

4

H.E. Grove in Compendium of Lectures, pp.17-18.

5

A.I.B.R., 16 February 1888, p.87.

So confirmed was the Company in its 'forward' policy that two further holders, each of 3 million cu.ft. capacity, were built in the succeeding two years.<sup>1</sup> By 1890 it was evident that the gas companies, like the providers of most other suburban services, were vastly over-extended.

The degree to which the economic collapse of the early 'nineties is attributable to this pattern of over-extended investment in suburban development is a matter still contested by economic historians.<sup>2</sup> On one side it is argued that the criteria for investment were not those of profitability, that the returns on some investments, particularly in services, were declining substantially in the late 'eighties, that borrowed capital was increasingly diverted to speculation; on the other, it has to be conceded that many service enterprises, particularly those enjoying monopolies, were showing healthy profits at least until 1889-90.<sup>3</sup>

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1

Ibid., 17 February 1890, p.109 and Compendium of Lectures, p.18. Such prodigious expansion had demanded large increments of capital; between 1884 and 1891 the company made share and debenture issues amounting, in all, to about half a million pounds. (A.I.B.R., 13 August 1884, p.379, 14 August 1886, p.458, 15 February 1887, p.85, 16 February 1889, p.97, 18 August 1891, p.591.)

2

The main protagonists are N.G. Butlin (Investment in Australian Economic Development, especially chapters III, IV and VI) and A.R. Hall, (The Stock Exchange of Melbourne and the Victorian Economy, especially chapter 4.)

3

Compare Butlin, op.cit., pp.414-5 and Hall, op.cit., p.129.

Nevertheless, whether as cause or consequence, it is indisputable that the depression of the early 'nineties saw suburban services straitened in just those areas where they had been over-extended in the late 'eighties.

There were signs of difficulty both in the new, outer suburbs where there was evident excess capacity in housing<sup>1</sup> and in inner, working class suburbs where there was heavy unemployment and depopulation. The most substantial declines in population were in South Melbourne, Richmond, Collingwood, Fitzroy and in the City of Melbourne itself.

Unemployment - which left men to sulk at home - and wage reductions - which compelled them to economize by walking to work - cut severely into railway and tramway traffic. This decline affected the railways mainly in those inner areas, already well-served by trams, where expansion had been most problematical.

Our suburban system, while it pays on the whole, has a great deal of mileage that is shockingly bad in the way of revenue...while you get the Brighton line and the Camberwell line, the Essendon line and the Williamstown line, and the line to Caulfield paying very well indeed, you may say that all the rest [i.e. Port Melbourne, Collingwood, Brunswick, St Kilda, Outer Circle] is very poor.<sup>2</sup>

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1

See below ch. 7.

2

William Fitzpatrick to Board on Working and Management of the Railways, V.P.P. 71/1895, Q.2052. It would appear, in fact, that the tramways had effectively captured the St Kilda traffic (see *ibid.*, evidence of Lockhead, Q.1365, and compare traffic figures cited above, p.337). The Reports of the Railways Commissioners for the mid-nineties do not furnish traffic figures, merely revenue.

Most sections of the latter were closed down in the early 'nineties. The Railways Commissioners' main remedy, however, was to raise fares, grading the increases heavily against first class passengers, periodical ticket holders and outer suburban residents.<sup>1</sup> Some first-class passengers announced their intention of henceforth travelling second class; the formation of a 'Second-Class League' enabled them to present a coincidence of individual economies as a gesture of united protest.

To many, who, like myself, have children attending schools, the proposed addition in fares is a consideration. We have been accustomed to travel first class, and as I am not prepared to acquiesce in the justice of this increased special taxation, we shall certainly join the 'Second-Class League' which it is proposed to form branches of in all the suburbs....<sup>2</sup>

The incidence of the fare increases gave particular offence to periodical ticket holders and those living in 'new towns... - such as Canterbury, Surrey Hills, Box Hill, and many other places - which, but for the railway and its facilities would have had no existence'.<sup>3</sup>

The tramways suffered most severe losses on those new, outer routes where they were in competition with

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1

Argus, 6 May 1892, p.4H (editorial).

2

'Second Class Leaguer' in Argus, 6 May 1892, p.6D (emphasis mine). One passenger with a family of 8 estimated that he paid £45 per annum for fares and could cut that amount by two-thirds by moving closer to the centre of town.

3

Ibid.

the railways. The Company's directors explained that trams needed to make about 1s a mile before they covered expenses and began to make a profit.

On lines which pass through closely populated districts, like those of Richmond, Fitzroy, Collingwood and Brunswick, the traffic is sufficient to meet this outlay and yield a handsome surplus, but on lines where large stretches of parkland and other unremunerative areas have to be passed, the same results cannot be looked for. Another disturbing element is the competition offered by the suburban railways, and in the case of the majority of lines this has had an enormous effect in reducing the traffic. The result of the past year has been that on some lines the return per tram mile has been under 9d when about 1s was required to pay expenses. The West Melbourne line has been run at a considerable loss, and neither the Port Melbourne, South Melbourne, nor Toorak lines have paid expenses. The Prahran line has yielded a slight profit, but the line to St Kilda has not quite paid its way. The horse lines to Kew and Hawthorn are worked at a loss.<sup>1</sup>

There was also cutting competition from cabmen.<sup>2</sup> By 1894-5 the average return over all lines was less than a shilling a mile.<sup>3</sup> Employees' salaries were drastically cut and trams were run at 12 m.p.h. instead of 9 m.p.h. so that fewer cars could make the same number of trips.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Argus, 4 July 1891 [in J.G. Roberts' Collection of Press Cuttings on Tramways, V.S.L.].

<sup>2</sup> A.I.B.R., 17 August 1893, p.788.

<sup>3</sup> J.C., 9 April 1895, p.6, 21 May 1895, p.6.

<sup>4</sup> By August 1894 salaries had been cut by 45 per cent at the higher levels, 35 per cent in the middle ranks, and 25 per cent on the lowest rungs. Salaries below 30/- were left unchanged. (A.I.B.R., 18 August 1894, p.551.) Australasian Ironmonger, 1 August 1893, p.229.

In 1893 it was suggested that less profitable routes might be abandoned;<sup>1</sup> but the Company, perhaps under pressure from the Trust, maintained its services throughout the depression.

Gas companies, like other suburban services, were saddled with enormous excess capacity. From 1891-2 there was a steep decline in consumption<sup>2</sup> which, in the case of the Metropolitan Company, fell from 1,898,250,000 cu.ft. in the period 1883-91 to 983,740,000 cu.ft. in 1891-8. Suppliers suffered from the competition of other illuminants especially electricity which, by 1894, was being used for street lighting in the City of Melbourne, Richmond, Essendon, Collingwood, Hawthorn and South Yarra.<sup>3</sup> Gas consumption for cooking and heating also fell away: by 1894 the Metropolitan Gas Company had repossessed 6233 gas stoves - about half of those on loan in 1890.<sup>4</sup>

The 1880s saw the reconstruction of Melbourne upon a new urban plan. The socio-spatial patterns, transport networks and essential services which were laid down in

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1

Age, 10 February 1893, p.6G.

2

A.I.B.R., 18 February 1892, p.121.

3

H.U. Alcock Electric Light Company began operations in 1890. Australasian Ironmonger, 1 February 1891, p.55, 1 May 1891, pp.129, 144, 1 June 1891, p.174, 1 October 1891, p.399, and R. Berryman, 'A History of Melbourne's Street Lighting', B. Arch. thesis, University of Melbourne, 1950.

4

C.H. Eddey in Compendium of Lectures, p.48.

those years served the city, with little alteration or addition, for another generation, and are easily recognized even today. Indeed, so ample was the provision of services in those years that, for a decade or more, their providers had to bear the costs of enormous unused capacity. But essential services, transport networks and even patterns of social differentiation reveal only the skeletal outlines of suburban society. A deeper understanding requires that we leave the streets and railway stations and enter the homes of the suburbanites themselves.

CHAPTER 7HOUSE AND HOME

It is the main theme of the first section of this thesis that, during the eighteen-eighties and early eighteen-nineties, Melbourne's work-a-day was conforming ever more to the processes of a 'metropolitan economy': to an organized market, to machine technology, to rational techniques of management. These advances necessarily implied a corresponding disappearance of 'traditional' modes and codes of business conduct, of personal skills and methods of management from the economic scene. However, they did not erase them completely for, although Melbournians were commonly described as busy and business-like,<sup>1</sup> they were as often described as 'home-loving'.<sup>2</sup> Traditional and personal relations, it would seem, were not totally supplanted but rather displaced from the city to the suburb. Indeed, the imagery and underlying psychology of

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E.g. R.E.N. Twopeny, Town Life in Australia (London 1883), pp.2-3.

2

E.g. H. Mortimer Franklyn, A Glance at Australia in 1880 (Melbourne) pp.172-3. As evidence of the continuing importance of this strain in the city's culture consider, for example, the most popular creations of three of her most famous 'daughters': Dame Nellie Melba's 'Home Sweet Home', May Brahe's 'Bless this House' and 'Edna Everidge's' 'Wild Life in Suburbia'.

suburban life are best interpreted as a subtle counterpoint to those of the bustling city.<sup>1</sup>

For the middle classes, to whom 'Home' had a national as well as a local reference, the imagery of suburbia was necessarily English. According to London standards, the prestigious styles of living were two: town life and country life.<sup>2</sup> Town life implied a town house - elegant, compact and close to the central city: East Melbourne - 'The Melbourne Belgravia'<sup>3</sup> and Parkville were the nearest colonial equivalents. Country life, on the other hand, implied an estate and a country house; set apart from other houses, amidst groves and gardens, its architecture was traditionally more rambling and eclectic. The houses of the western district were as close as Victoria came to the model.<sup>4</sup> Middle class suburbia, however,

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For some interesting sociological accounts of this relationship see J.R. Seeley, R.A. Sim and E.W. Loosley, Crestwood Heights: A Study of the Culture of Suburban Life (New York, 1956), pp.4-5 and William M. Dobriner, Class in Suburbia (Englewood Cliffs, 1963), chapter 3.

2

This, of course, is not to imply an absence of suburban life which, in different ways, is superbly documented by H.J. Dyos, Victorian Suburb - A Study of the Growth of Camberwell (Leicester, 1961) and George and Weedon Grossmith, Diary of a Nobody, (London 1892).

3

[J.] Thomas, Guide to Melbourne (Melbourne, 1879), p.66.

4

Margaret Kiddle, Men of Yesterday (Melbourne, 1961), see, particularly her account of gardens p.317.

claimed to offer both: 'THE ADVANTAGES of COUNTRY and CITY LIFE COMBINED.' The ideal suburban house cast glances in both directions:

Having Views of Surpassing Grandeur of both Land and Sea, that quite baffle description overlooking

Hobson's Bay, the Shipping, the You-Yangs, Steiglitz Mountains, the Dandenong Ranges, Malvern, Toorak and Surrounding Country

Together with

That Prodigious Growth, that Stupendous and Most Marvellous Monument of British Pluck of Modern Times, exhibiting Energy, Enterprise and Progress, the development of only some thirty-odd years that would do credit to the Growth of Centuries, that are almost incredible for so short a time

THE CITY of MELBOURNE and SUBURBS with its Colossal Establishments and Buildings, with its steeples, spires, and surrounding Palaces, that are most astounding to Visitors and Distinguished Tourists without doubt destined to become the LONDON and PARIS of the SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE.<sup>1</sup>

The country ideal was reflected in the terminology of housing: 'cottage', 'villa', 'mansion'. The names of some suburbs carried rustic overtones: Hawthorn, Burwood, Box Hill, Hawksburn, Armadale, Glenhuntly.

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The Vale Collection of Real Estate Maps (S.L.V.), vol.V : 20.

Others recalled their English suburban or rural models: Camberwell, Kew, Kensington, Windsor, Ascot Vale, Surrey Hills. The naming of houses, a ritual which householders were said to have invested with large significance,<sup>1</sup> summoned up rus, though with a particular emphasis. It was the forest and the garden, not the meadow or the field, which were registered to the fancy by 'Dingley Dell', 'Arden', 'Forest Lodge', 'Fern Villa', 'Coolena' and, most popularly, 'Fernleigh'.<sup>2</sup> These names conveyed a sense of 'coolness and seclusion and thick umbrageous foliage through which not a speck of disease-breeding dust can penetrate'.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes, too, they suggested the sheltered, glade-like recesses of valleys: 'Rosedale', 'Holmesdale', 'Lowerdale'. At bottom they suggested what other names announced more or less explicitly: an affection for the home as a retreat from the other agitated world of the city.

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See, for example, articles in the Australasian, 7 August 1885, p.439 and Australasian Building Societies' and Mortgage Companies' Gazette (hereafter A.B.S.G.), 1 February 1888, p.503 and ibid., 3 April 1888, pp.657-8. There were occasional, but generally ineffective, appeals for the use of Australian native names, Australasian, 28 March 1885, p.583. On 'fern' imagery see E. Graeme Robertson, Ornamental Cast-Iron in Melbourne (Melbourne 1967), p.23.

2

The names cited in the text are selected from the 1898-9 St Kilda Rate-book. The Australasian, 7 August 1885, p.439, confirms the popularity of names with the 'fern' prefix.

3

C. Boyne Luffman, The Principles of Gardening for Australia (Melbourne, 1903). p.44.

After the Tired City denizen has finished his day's toil, a gentle ride [by train] to his fond home is both cheering and refreshing. The jolting of cabs and buses is dispensed with, the free air soothes the brain and sharpens the appetite. Life is thereby prolonged and the moral tone elevated.<sup>1</sup>

He came home to 'The Rest', 'The Haven', 'The Anchorage', 'Mizpah', 'Sans Souci', 'Camelot', 'Beulah' or 'Nirvana'. There, discarding his city clothes, suburban man might plant his forget-me-nots and prune his pittosporum with an innate appreciation of the 'guiding principle' that he should

make no shapes or lines which are not more or less common in nature, for where streets, buildings and the ding-dong of city life provide so much that is artificial and discomforting, we should find in our gardens a short cut back to nature and rest.<sup>2</sup>

This radical opposition of the worlds of home and work, of nature and artifice, was paralleled by, and, indeed, founded upon the symbolic opposition of their representatives within the family. To the wife and mother, as Ruler of the Home, belonged the role of expressing those ideal, natural and essentially non-pecuniary values which were the obverse and leaven of her husband's.

Like the sweet, soft odour of white roses transfusing through the atmosphere an influence of natural and spiritual beauty, so should the character of woman blend with

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Vale Collection, vol.vi : 22.

2

C. Boyne Luffman, op.cit., p.45.

that sterner, more practical nature of man, and speak to him of a higher life, a nobler existence, than that of the busy commercial world in which he daily toils and strives for progress.<sup>1</sup>

She was to accept the constraints of an almost perfect identification with the Home:

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1

Mrs T. Harris, Woman - The Angel of the Home and the Saviour of the World (Melbourne, 1890), p.1. Mrs Harris's title, like much of the literature quoted in relation to the ideal of 'Home', is conventional and borrowed: it is an allusion (conscious?) to Coventry Patmore's 'The Angel in the House' (1854). The idea of 'Home' expounded in these paragraphs is well-established in the English literature of the mid-century (see, for example, the account of 'Home, Sweet Home' in W.E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind (New Haven, 1957), pp.341-8). Other stock images occur in the Melbourne context: Ruskin's image of the home as a rock in the midst of the stream is employed in the building society literature (see below) and in Alexander Sutherland's poem 'Home and the World' in his Thirty Short Poems (Melbourne, 1890) in which he begins with a word-picture of the rock amidst the waves and continues

So be thou in the world. So raise thy life  
On the one side swelling from the petty strife  
Of men and business care;  
But on the other, where  
Thy Home extends the smoothness of its breast,  
Sinking in trustful rest (pp.144-5).

The interest of these borrowings lies in their aptness to the description of a contemporary situation and in the little modification which the new context produces in them. In this, and in some other matters in Australian cultural history, we perhaps err in seeking what is important to the understanding of a period or a setting in what is unique to it.

The home, which is his [the husband's] paradise, is your handiwork, your refuge, your pride, your castle, your very, very own, your actual self, a part of you inseparable. It is your heart and brain translated into the arrangement of daily life.<sup>1</sup>

It followed that authority within this sphere was hers alone: 'in household matters the wife rules predominant and [the husband] should never interfere with her authority and government in this sphere'.<sup>2</sup>

He, on the other hand, was assumed to exhaust his functions as well as his energies in the other 'busy commercial world'. For him there were to be 'happy greetings by wife and children whenever he return[ed] from his struggle with the contending currents of the world's seething sea without'.<sup>3</sup> Then, according to convention, he was simply to 'loung[e]',<sup>4</sup> take his ease, and perhaps attend to the garden or play with the children.<sup>5</sup> His wife was not, in any way, to usurp his role as producer and provider: she was not to enquire about business matters,<sup>6</sup> although

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<sup>1</sup> [An Old Housekeeper], The Australian Housewives' Manual (Melbourne, 1885), p.94.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Etiquette (Sydney, 1885), p.222.

<sup>3</sup> A.B.S.G., 22 May 1889, p.44.

<sup>4</sup> The Australian Housewives' Manual, p.105.

<sup>5</sup> A.B.S.G., 22 May 1889, p.44.

<sup>6</sup> Australian Etiquette, p.224.

she might listen politely if her husband volunteered to unburden himself; she was not to challenge his skill, even in games.<sup>1</sup> His evenings were to be spent in wholesome, unbusiness-like enjoyments: 'a delightful commingling of confections, games, debates, wall pictures, songs, duets, suppressed mirth, and uncontrolled laughter'.<sup>2</sup>

The rearing of children was seen as a special, and almost exclusive, task of the mother:

To the mother belongs the privilege of planting in the hearts of her children those seeds of love which, nurtured and fostered, will bear the fruit of earnest and useful lives.<sup>3</sup>

The development of the powers of the minds and its cultivation are the work of a teacher; moral training is the work of the mother.<sup>4</sup>

According to some advice, the father might 'join with his wife in all her efforts to instruct her children' although he was to 'defer all matters pertaining to their discipline to her, aiding her in this respect as she requires it'.<sup>5</sup> Other writers, however, favoured a more extreme separation of roles: the mother was advised to present her children before their father

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1 Australian Housewives' Manual, p.105.

2 A.B.S.G., 22 May 1889, p.44.

3 Australian Etiquette, p.224.

4 Ibid., pp.226-7.

5 Ibid., p.222.

only 'as you do your table cloths, spotlessly clean, perfectly smooth, well-aired, and - when wanted'.<sup>1</sup>

Men who liked to have their children about were regarded as 'dreadful nuisances'.<sup>2</sup> Their meetings were to be prepared, formal and few:

Let your children, then, practice every little attainment they acquire in readiness for the children's hour, for the time when the house-father gets the one reward of his day, in seeing their progress toward maturity. Induce him to bear with their little stammering efforts to sing or recite, their hesitating fingering at the last little tune on the piano, the bashful production of the first effort at needlework or boat-carving....<sup>3</sup>

It was only in the later education of his sons, as they, too, prepared to enter 'the busy commercial world', that the husband had some part to play and here, it was assumed, he would undertake it only as a reluctant departure from his proper sphere:

You must cultivate and develop [your boys], so as to bring them nearer to their father, and you must drag him out of retirement, persuade him to shake off all feelings of lethargy, and even to be satisfied with less business or income rather than to waste the precious opportunities of turning your boys into good men.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [An Old Housekeeper], Men and How to Manage Them (Melbourne, 1885), p.35.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.36.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.39.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.106.

Here, as elsewhere, the conventional definition of roles was blurred. Even in theory, the spheres intersected.

Practice, however, set even closer limits to the attainment of this ideal separation. The picture of 'Home, Sweet Home' which emerges from the household manuals of the 'eighties is a treacherous guide to the way in which families actually lived. These were but ideals and ideals, moreover, of the middle class. Certainly rus in urbe may have exerted a mimetic attraction well down the social scale. Household manuals embodying its assumptions were prepared for clerks and prosperous artisans on £200-300 per annum as well as the professional and business classes.<sup>1</sup> The new working class suburbs were said to offer their inhabitants 'the health, pleasure and comfort of life in a cottage surrounded by its own garden...with all the advantages of country life'.<sup>2</sup> Most of the tradesmen of the metropolis had little gardens attached to their homes and observers noted that even the back-street slums of Collingwood had potted ferns at the windows.<sup>3</sup>

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1

Men and How to Manage Them was designed for persons on an income of £200-700 per annum, The Australian Housewives' Manual (p.29) for persons on an income of about £150 per annum. The clientele of the building societies, to whom much of the material in the A.B.S.G., was directed, was, as we shall see, largely artisan.

2

Advertisement in Argus, 25 October 1884, p.3G.

3

Australasian, 29 March 1879, p.6.

A name, a garden and a wrought-iron frieze under its verandah might fit a lowly cottage, as much as a great mansion, to symbolize its owner's independence.

Though the paraphernalia of suburbanism was widely adopted in Melbourne society, the way of life which it symbolized was nevertheless more congruent with the situation and incomes of its higher than of its lower orders. The working man was less able to establish physical and social distance between home and work. It was normal for his home to be within walking distance of work and, despite the introduction of workmen's rail fares in the early 'eighties,<sup>1</sup> commuting continued to be rare. The nature, as well as the rewards of his employment often established close links between the workman's home and workplace. We have seen, for example, that in some industries where 'outwork' prevailed, goods as well as men had to pass from home to factory.<sup>2</sup> In these cases, and in the case of shopkeepers and other independent tradesmen, the home itself became a workplace.

Similarly, the conditions of working class life tended to break down the ideal separation of roles between husband and wife. The wife was enabled to

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See Argus, 25 January 1882, 28 February 1882, 6 March 1882, 13 April 1882. Other references in E.C. Fry, 'The Condition of the Urban Wage-earning Class in Eastern Australia in the 1880's' (Ph.D. thesis, A.N.U., 1955), pp.404-5.

2

See chapter 2.

fully represent 'natural and spiritual beauty' only if she was freed from menial household tasks. Yet even the poorest form of domestic service - a 'girl' at 6/- a week - was hardly purchased on an income of less than £200-300.<sup>1</sup> In the poorest households, it was common for the wife to engage in some other employment beyond her domestic duties: as a handywoman, 'out-worker' or shopkeeper. The size of the workman's cottage did not permit the specialized living-space which was itself a precondition of an effective division of roles. It threw all persons and functions together; it forced children beyond the surveillance of the mother and into the street; it provided a powerful motive for the husband to forsake 'home comforts' for those of the public house.

That the 'Home' of the household manuals was effectively beyond the reach of most of the working classes naturally endowed it with additional charm. Yet one of its fundamental features was so universally adopted as to provide no basis whatever for invidious comparison: all classes, without exception, clung to the ideal of a separate, single-family dwelling. Even though families could not always avoid an internal confusion of roles, they could, and did, avoid confusion of their affairs with those of other families. 'Terraces and attached houses', as R.E.N. Twopeny noted, 'are universally disliked, and almost every class of suburban

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See discussion of servants in chapter 8.

house is detached and stands in its own garden.'<sup>1</sup> Such an arrangement was urged for hygienic as well as social reasons: detached houses admitted of 'free currents passing all round'.<sup>2</sup>

The little available quantitative evidence suggests that attached and terrace houses did decline in popularity during the 'eighties.<sup>3</sup> But perhaps a more vivid illustration of the strength of domestic individualism is found in the fortunes of the one notable attempt to establish tenement accommodation on the European pattern. George Coppin, theatrical entrepreneur, legislator and philanthropist<sup>4</sup> and the Rev. Charles Strong,<sup>5</sup> founder of the Australian Church and of a Collingwood Workingmen's Club, were the joint promoters of an 'Improved Dwellings and Lodging House Company' which erected a large tenement between Lonsdale and Little Bourke Streets.<sup>6</sup> Thirty-nine family dwellings

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1

Op.cit., p.37.

2

H.L. Wicken, The Australian Home (Sydney, 1891), p.107.

3

E.C. Fry, op.cit., pp.445-6.

4

See Alec Bagot, Coppin the Great (Melbourne, 1965).

5

There is still no adequate study of his career but see Evan Jones, 'The Solitary Bishop - Charles Strong' (B.A. 4th Year Essay, Melbourne, 1953) and F.B. Smith, 'Religion and Freethought in Melbourne, 1870-1890' (M.A. thesis, University of Melbourne, 1960), chapter VI.

6

Australasian, 25 July 1885, p.186.

were offered at 10/6 - 12/6 per week. The rooms were said to be more spacious than those ordinarily inhabited by the working classes and water, baths and laundry facilities were provided. These 'flats', it was supposed, offered all the facilities of an ordinary suburban home with the additional advantages of cheapness and proximity to the central city.

The family dwellings were opened early in 1885 but three months later only nine had been let. The Secretary reluctantly concluded that they were 'not appreciated by the class they were intended to benefit' and the Australasian<sup>1</sup> affirmed its belief that 'the working man who can afford 12/6 per week would prefer to live in the suburbs, even if the accomodation were not so complete as in the improved dwellings'. The family 'flats' were therefore converted into lodgings for single men. Later in the same year the siege of Khartoum and the well-publicized philanthropic activities of its martyr offered an occasion for re-naming the tenement. With the addition of a fernery, it was hoped that the institution would help to raise the tone and general character of Little Bourke Street.<sup>2</sup> But even then its fate was clear. Gordon Chambers persisted into the twentieth century as a sixpenny lodging house for derelict men.

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1

Ibid.

2

Argus, 28 August 1885, p.6E.

Within the limits of this universal preference for detached, single family dwellings, the people of Melbourne were housed in ways which reflect the disparities of their economic means and the diversity of their social values. Houses, then as now, were socially-significant objects. 'The first duty of a residence', a contemporary architect averred, 'is to provide shelter, secondly fitness and usefulness for the class required, and then decoration and ornamentation to the taste and purse of the client'.<sup>1</sup> It followed that a man's house should reveal something of his needs, his means, his social status and his taste.

A consideration of the basic function of a house - the simple provision of shelter - contributes very little to an explanation of variations in size and style of housing. The relationship between the size of a man's domestic establishment and the size of his house was loose and serves merely to heighten our sense of its other non-utilitarian functions. Table 7.1, which presents figures of the average number of persons resident in houses of various sizes, certainly shows that there was some relationship between household size and house size. On the other hand, as the second column suggests, there was considerable range in the numbers of persons who occupied dwellings of given size; a three-roomed house might accommodate as many as eight persons and a ten-roomed house as few as three. This

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A.B.C.N., 27 February 1892.

suggests what an interpretation of contemporary house plans confirms: that variations in the size of houses beyond two, or perhaps three, bedrooms were related primarily to the provision of the more specialized living space which we have already seen to be a condition for the highly-segregated role-play of

TABLE 7.1

PERSONS RESIDENT in DWELLINGS by SIZE of DWELLINGS.<sup>1</sup>

No. of Rooms	Average No. of Persons Resident	Range of Persons Resident
3	4.1	1-8
4	4.1	1-9
5	4.5	1-10
6	4.3	1-8
7	4.6	2-8
8	5.1	2-9
9	5.6	3-8
10+	5.6	3-12

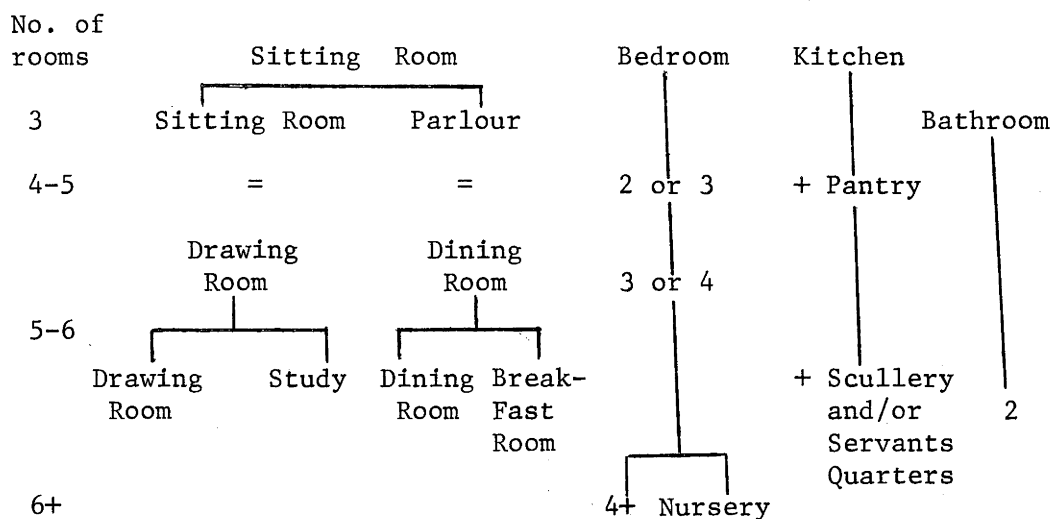
middle-class households. The diagram (below) illustrates the provision made in some typical plans.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

Based upon entries in Hawthorn Rate-book 1898-9, the only place and year for which persons inhabiting the dwelling are given.

<sup>2</sup>

See, for example, the series illustrated in the Universal Building Societies' Pamphlet of Useful Information for Persons wishing either to Build, Borrow or Invest (1884), which is bound with the Sands and McDougall's Melbourne Directory 1885. (inserted)



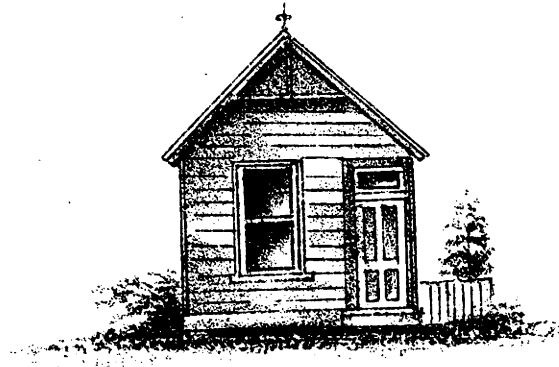
The relationship between a man's means and the standard of his housing was not a necessary one; nevertheless there was a social assumption that a man ought to have a house befitting his economic power.

As a man is judged publicly by the character of his attire, so, privately, are people by the appearance of their homes. Jones may have a substantial bank account but if he lived in a five-roomed cottage, it is not probable that his acquaintances will guess such to be the case; and so Jones will not be considered such a jolly good fellow as he otherwise would be.<sup>1</sup>

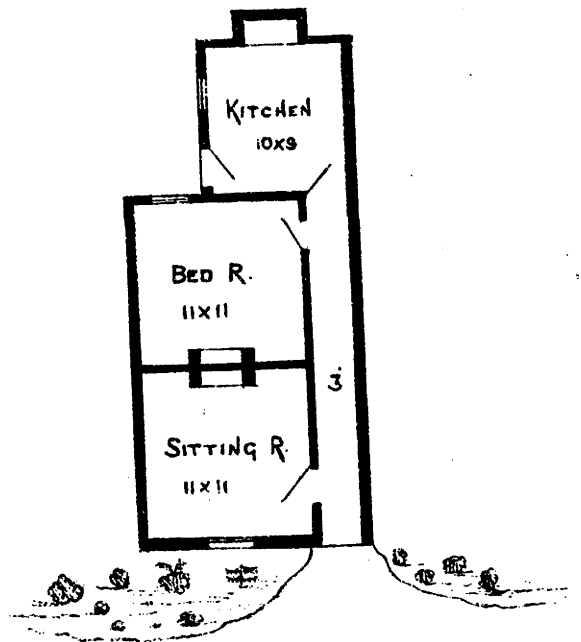
This assumption was commonly embodied in social commentary. R.E.N. Twopeny's account of 'Housing' and 'Furniture' in

<sup>1</sup> [Australasian Building Societies' and Mortgage Companies' Gazette], Home Truths for Home Seekers (1890), p.43.

WOODEN HOUSE  
TO BE BUILT FOR  
£100.



— ELEVATION —



— PLAN —

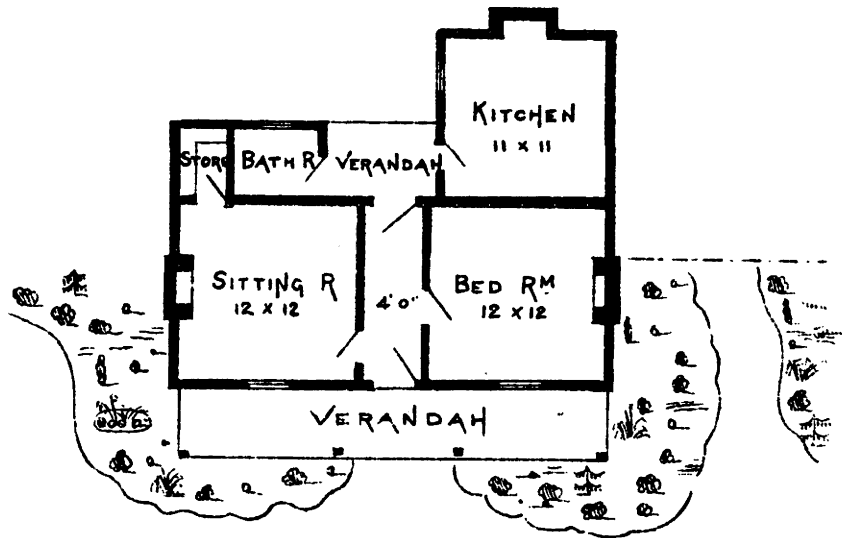
SCALE 16 FT. TO 1 INCH.

*H. Pitting & Son*  
*Architects*  
78 Coleridge St. W.

WOODEN HOUSE  
TO BE BUILT FOR  
L200



— ELEVATION —

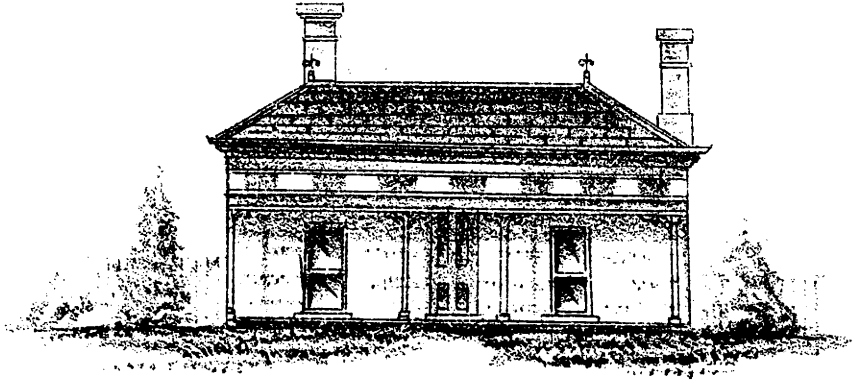


— PLAN —

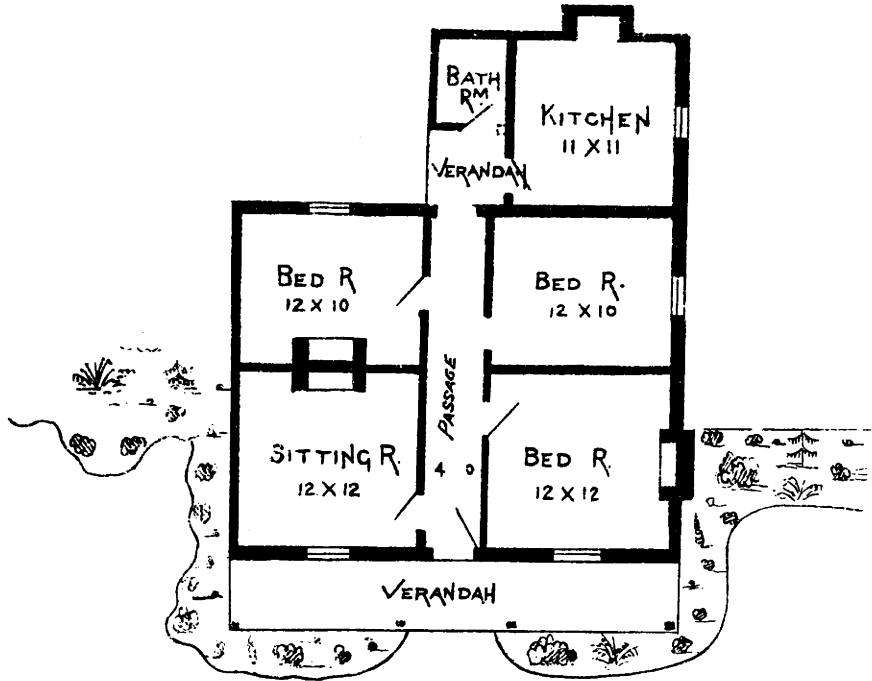
SCALE 1/8" TO 1" INCH

H. Billig & Son  
Architects  
78 Collins St. N.Y.

BRICK COTTAGE  
TO BE BUILT FOR  
£ 450



ELEVATION

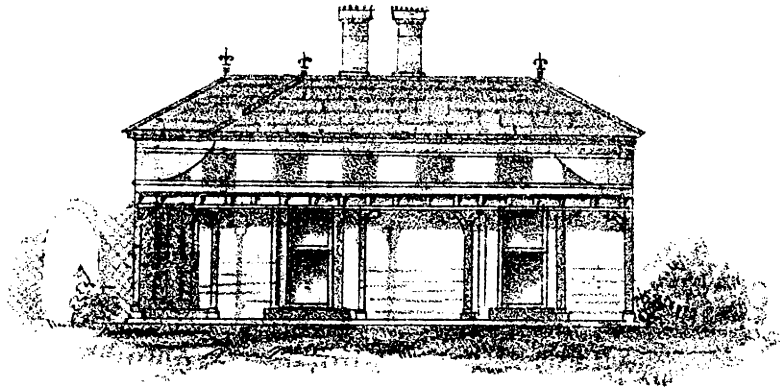


PLAN

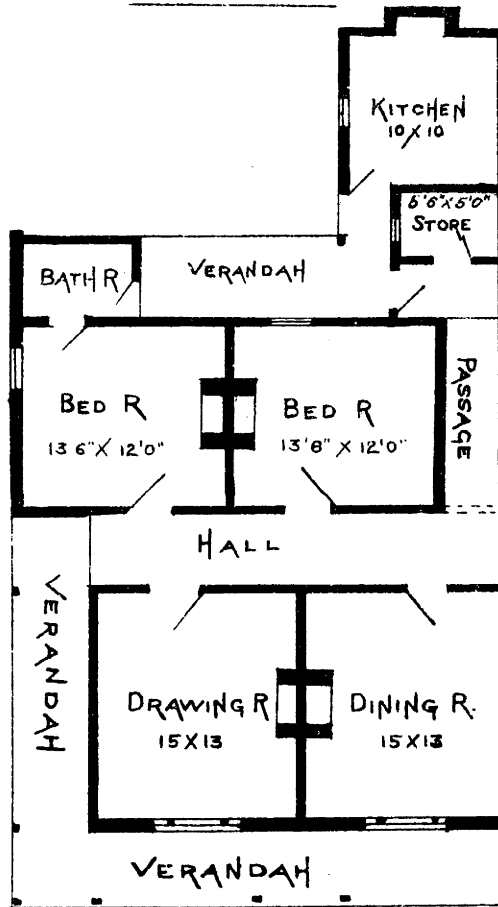
SCALE 16 FT TO 1 INCH.

*H. Billing & Son*  
*Architects*  
78 Collins St. W.

BRICK COTTAGE  
TO BE BUILT FOR  
£600

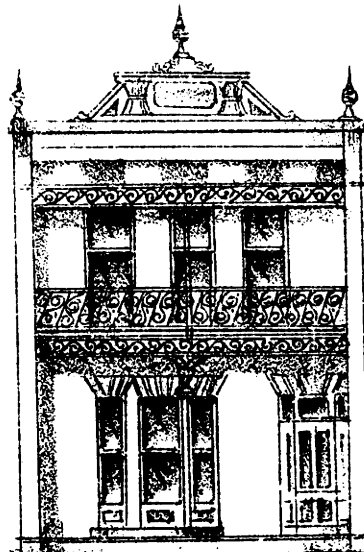


ELEVATION

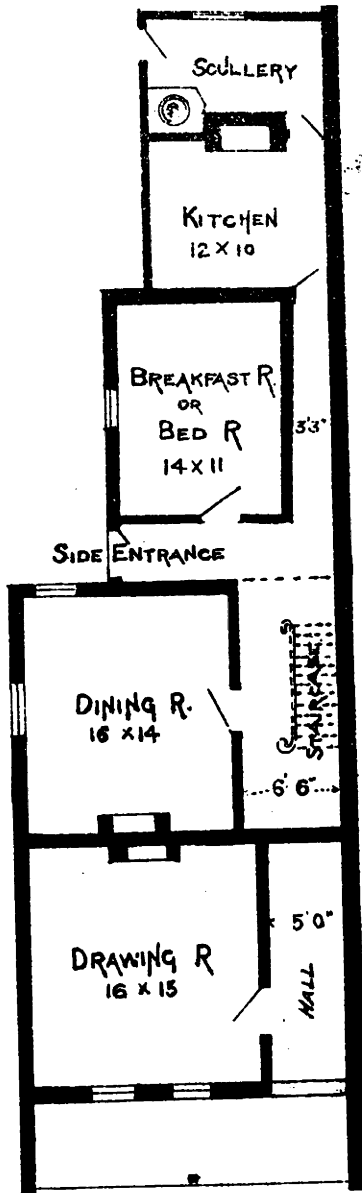


PLAN

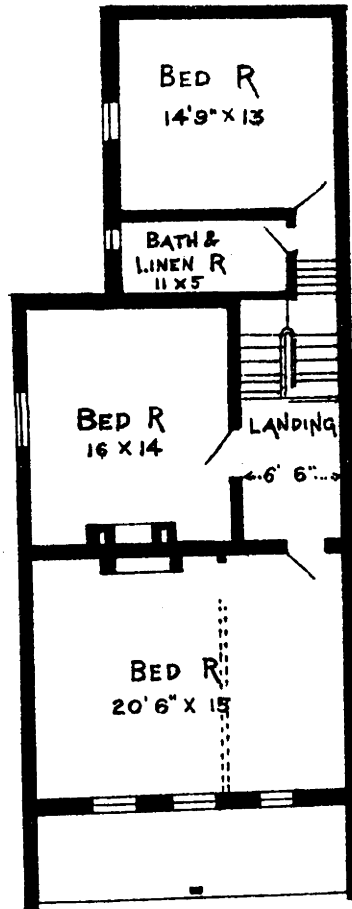
TWO  
STORY BRICK RESIDENCE  
TO BE BUILT FOR  
£900



ELEVATION



GROUND PLAN



1ST FLOOR PLAN

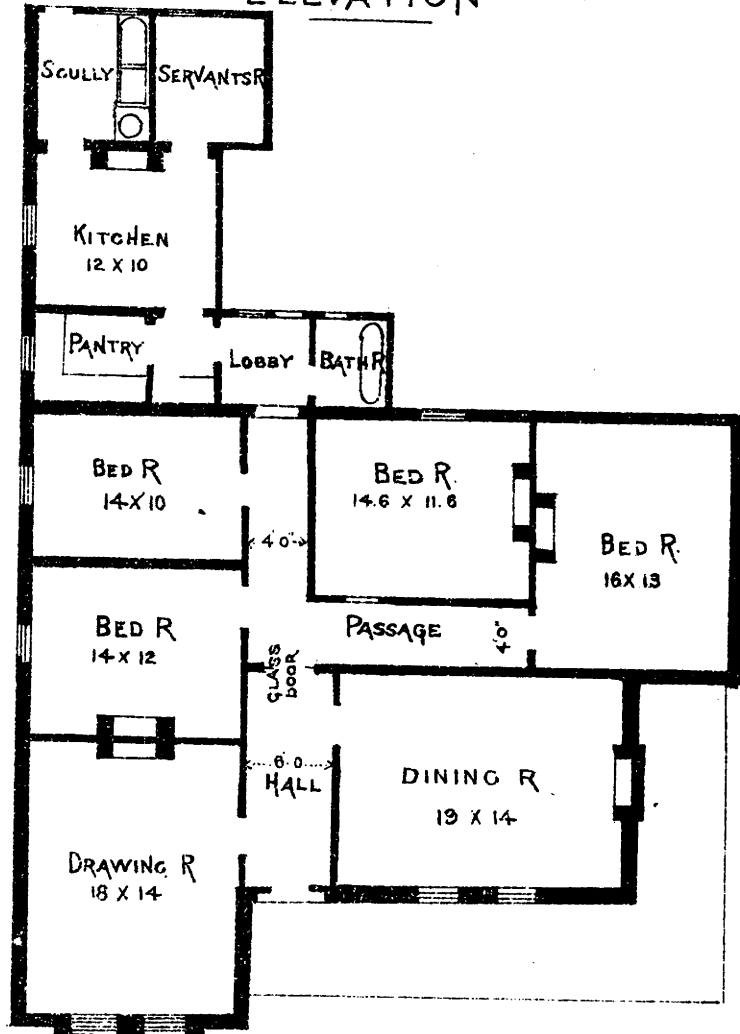
SCALE 1/8" TO 1" INCH.

H. Billing & Son  
Architects  
78 Collins St. W.

BRICK DWELLING  
TO BE BUILT FOR  
£1100



ELEVATION



his Town Life in Australia is a splendid example.<sup>1</sup> He considered, first, the 'large house' of the 'wealthy colonist' on £5,000 a year and the 'eight-roomed cottage' of the young solicitor on from £500 to £1,000 a year, then passed quickly over the smaller cottage of the 'clerks and smaller shopkeepers on £300-400 a year' to describe, finally, the 'less pretentious and smaller' 12/- a week cottage of the carpenter and 9/- a week cottage of the 'common labourer'. The same assumption, moreover, is to be detected in accounts of the way in which householders were presumed, or urged, to spend their incomes. Table 7.2 (below), which is composed from a variety of household manuals and letters of advice,<sup>2</sup> shows the amounts and proportions of weekly income which householders, at several income levels, were advised to spend on rent.

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1

Op.cit., pp.30-48. This work was a by-product of its author's attempt to promote an Australian Exhibition in London at which he had intended to distribute pamphlets to prospective Australian immigrants 'giving particulars of the life of each class of labour....There should, for instance, be one pamphlet on the life of the artisan, giving particulars of the rent he should have to pay, the kind of cottage he would live in (illustrated by a wood cut), the wages he could get, the price of food clothes and articles of household use' (Proposal for an Australian Exhibition (Sydney, 1883)).

2

£1,000 ('Perth' in Australasian, 28 February 1885); £850 ('Housemother', ibid., 7 April 1885); £600 ('A Willing Worker' in ibid., 7 April 1885, p.439); £300-400 (Men and How to Manage Them (1885), pp.117-8); £200 (letter of John Anderson, Argus, 15 June 1880, p.6); £160 (Australian Housewives' Manual, p.35).

TABLE 7.2

ADVISED RENT as a PROPORTION of TOTAL INCOME, c.1885.

Total Income (p.a.)	Rent (Weekly)			Rent as % Total Weekly Income
£	£	s.	d.	
1,000	3.	3.	0	16.4
850	3.	0.	0	18.4
600	2.	0.	0	17.3
300-400	15/6-16/-			13.9
200	14.	0		18.2
160	10.	0		16.3

It is noteworthy that rent was assumed to absorb a similar proportion of income at all income levels.

Evidence of this sort - negative, impressionistic, didactic or partial though it often is - nevertheless suggests hypotheses about houses and their occupiers which may only be properly tested by a closer examination of actual housing conditions. This, happily, may be done. The rate-books of the several municipalities of the metropolis<sup>1</sup> furnish an almost complete annual record of the size, material and value of all dwellings, of the names of their owners and occupiers, and, most importantly, of the occupations of the latter. As a source of evidence on occupations their value surpasses

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<sup>1</sup>

See Appendix 2 'Ratebooks'.

even that of the census - whose categories are often not helpful and which furnishes no local returns - and the city directories - which list only the occupations of persons in business on their own account. For our immediate purpose they are clearly of the first importance for they enable us to discover and describe relationships between the personal occupations of householders, on one hand, and the kinds of housing they occupied and the terms on which they occupied it, on the other. Most of the statistical material in the rest of this chapter is the product of computations based upon a ten per cent sample at five year intervals of entries in the rate-books of four Melbourne suburbs over the period 1878-9 - 1898-9.

These four municipalities were selected as contrasting types. TABLE 7.3 shows the estimated proportions of householders of various occupations at 1883-4.

Collingwood, of which the Abbotsford and Darling wards were sampled, lay on the north-eastern corner of the central city. The original and 'traditional' working class suburb, it was the home of the boot industry in whose employment about a quarter of its artisans - themselves 30 per cent of the householder population - were engaged. Though practised in euphemism, suburban 'boosters' described it as the home of 'the poorer classes'<sup>1</sup> and franker observers looked down upon it as

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1

Evidence to Standing Committee on Railways - Northern Lines, V.P.P., 3/1891, Q313.

TABLE 7.3

PERCENT OCCUPATIONS OF HOUSEHOLDERS IN 4 MELBOURNE SUBURBS  
(1883-4)

	Collingwood	Footscray	Hawthorn	St Kilda
1. Professional	1.0	2.9	5.5	5.4
2. Managerial	1.0	1.0	10.2	8.0
3. Shopkeepers & Indep. Trades	22.1	15.5	20.5	21.0
4. Artisans	30.3	30.1	16.5	14.3
5. Clerks	4.1	4.9	17.3	5.4
6. Shop Assistants	1.5	1.0	0.8	0.9
7. Service	14.9	4.8	11.8	7.6
8. Unskilled	18.5	24.3	3.9	4.0
9. Not in the Workforce	5.1	8.7	8.7	33.0
10. Unknown or Misc.	1.6	6.8	4.7	0.4
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	99.9	100.0
TOTAL NO. SAMPLE	195	103	127	224

a suburban 'Cinderella'.<sup>1</sup> Its housing was generally poorer than that of any other suburb - except, perhaps, North Melbourne.<sup>2</sup> Although it had been closely settled

<sup>1</sup>

Argus, 29 August 1884, p.13.

<sup>2</sup>

As measured by the percentage of very small houses, Census 1881.

since the eighteen-fifties, its population was relatively young and included a higher proportion of the native-born than some newly-established suburbs.<sup>1</sup> Most of the population growth during the eighteen-eighties was concentrated in the Abbotsford (eastern) and Clifton Hill (northern) wards.

St Kilda, on the other hand, was an 'old' suburb in terms both of settlement and population. In the eighteen-fifties merchants had taken up residence there, on a hill overlooking the sea and were joined by other 'colonists of the better sort ... judges, army officers and gentle people'.<sup>2</sup> It had been 'the fashionable suburb of Melbourne before South Yarra or Toorak were thought of'.<sup>3</sup> Thirty years later, 'the villas and mansions of Melbourne merchants and professional men'<sup>4</sup> were still conspicuous. In contrast to Collingwood, which was a working class suburb in more than one sense, St Kilda's householders included a very large proportion of persons 'not in the work force' (33 per cent in 1883-4).

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1

Census 1881, 'Birth place' and 'Ages'.

2

Martin Boyd, The Cardboard Crown (London, 1952), p.53. This, and some of Boyd's other novels, A Difficult Young Man (1955), Outbreak of Love (1957) and the much earlier The Montforts (1928) - are perhaps the best account of the life of these St Kilda gentry.

3

Argus, 13 September 1884. p.13A-B.

4

Whitworth, Handbook ... to Melbourne (Melbourne, 1880), p.215.

Some of its residents who so described themselves were certainly 'gentlemen' in a sense more definite than its usual equivalence with 'retired'. Nevertheless we also know that its population, as well as its settlement, was old and less composed than that of most suburbs of native-born. Although it was hardly a 'rattling go-ahead suburb'<sup>1</sup> during the 'eighties, there was some residential expansion, especially in the more sparsely-settled areas towards its eastern and southern boundaries. In both quarters (Balaclava and Elwood) the new population was rather poorer than the old.

Footscray, as we have seen,<sup>2</sup> became the 'new' industrial suburb of the 'eighties. Its metals industry brought it the optimistic title of 'the Birmingham of the South'<sup>3</sup> but the district also boasted tanneries, chemical works, meat preserving factories and the refinery of the Victorian Sugar Company.<sup>4</sup> In 1883-4 many of its artisans were employed in tanneries and quarries; by 1888-9 the balance had shifted towards metals and building. The population also came to include large numbers of railwaymen, most of whom were presumably employed at the railway workshops in neighbouring Newport. Unlike Collingwood, where the

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<sup>1</sup> Argus, 13 September 1884. p.13A-B.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 'Location of Industry'.

<sup>3</sup> A.B.S.G., August, 1886, p.41; Argus, 5 September 1885, p.3A.

<sup>4</sup> For short accounts of the growth of these industries see Footscray's First 100 Years (Footscray, 1959).

dominant housing style was the cramped, 16-foot single-fronted 'pepper-box', Footscray's houses were commonly set on larger double-fronted blocks and usually had a garden. The young and native-born were conspicuous, for the district was said to have been 'populated to a great extent by young couples, who have swarmed off the parent hives, and who have settled there because land is cheap'.<sup>1</sup>

Hawthorn was one of the new middle-class railway suburbs on the eastern side of the city. In the course of the 'eighties new stations (Glenferrie and Auburn) were opened on the line which ran along a shallow valley from west to east and homes were built, usually within a half-mile radius of them, on the slopes to the north and south. Later in the decade, a horse tramway, which followed an old omnibus route half a mile south and parallel to the railway, opened up the higher ground overlooking the Yarra. The new residents, for the most part, belonged to 'the superior middle class'. 'The lower class, speaking from the £.s.d., point of view' was said to have 'few, if any, representatives at Hawthorn'.<sup>2</sup> As the table of occupations suggests, this was not wholly true; there was an important brick industry in the valley and the population included a number of building workers. Nevertheless, the district was secluded from industrial

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1

Argus, 18 October 1884, p.13.

2

Ibid., 29 November 1884, p.4.

noise and dirt and its middle class tone was confirmed by the conspicuous presence of clerks (17.3 per cent of the householder population), professional men (5.5 per cent) and business directors and managers (10.2 per cent.). It seems to have attracted many of the 'new' businessmen of the 'eighties: accountants, shorthand clerks, land bank managers and manufacturers' and real estate agents.

While a sample drawn on the basis of such a selection of suburbs cannot be said to present an accurate general picture of the whole metropolis, it does furnish valuable evidence on the housing characteristics of certain types of area and occupation. Thus it may now be asked: what does this evidence tell us of the relationship between the occupations of householders and the quality of their housing? Table 7.4 shows the median rated net annual values of dwellings by the householder's occupation for the year 1883-4 in the three suburbs for which figures are available. The net annual value of a dwelling was the valuation upon which rates were levied and was defined, under the Local Government Act, as

the rent at which the same might reasonably be expected to let from year to year free of all usual tenants' rates and taxes and deducting therefrom the probable annual average cost of insurances and other expenses (if any) necessary to maintain such property in a state to command such rent.<sup>1</sup>

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1

Local Government Act, 1874, 54 Victoria no.1112, Section 248.

It was, therefore, a sum usually less than the market rent, but, since most taxes, insurances and expenses were proportional, it was itself a reliable index of the market rent. In all the municipalities discussed, valuations appear to have been carried out regularly.<sup>1</sup>

TABLE 7.4

MEDIAN NET ANNUAL VALUE (£'s) BY OCCUPATION OF HOUSEHOLDER  
(1883-4)

1. Professional and Managerial	71.7	(38)
2. Shopkeepers and Indep. Trades	30.7	(106)
3. Clerks and Shop Assistants	25.1	(31)
4. Artisans	21.3	(123)
5. Service and Unskilled	16.6	(123)
6. Not in the Workforce	39.3	(94)
7. Miscellaneous and Unknown	26.0	(6)

1

There was some small variation from suburb in the general order of values applied. The most conspicuous example was St Kilda where valuations seem to have been rather higher than elsewhere. Melbourne Punch in 1881 (17 February, p.69) remarked that 'the property-owners of St Kilda ought to be considered particularly modest individuals - for they go about declaring themselves to be the most over-rated men in Christendom'. It follows, of course, that occupations which are 'over-represented' in St Kilda (e.g. Professional and Managerial) will tend to be over-valued in TABLE 7.4.

This table appears to demonstrate that the assumption of household manuals and casual observers - that rent was closely related to income - was firmly grounded in contemporary conditions. Although the sample size is small, there does seem to be a distinct break between the housing of the highest 5-10 per cent of householders and the rest. This gulf is seen to be wider than the figures themselves suggest when it is remembered that the valuation of shopkeepers' residences are necessarily conflated with the rents of the shops themselves. The superiority of clerks' over artisans' housing may indicate, among other things, their greater propensity to employ servants and hence the provision of maids' quarters. This view is further substantiated by evidence of an appreciable difference between the average sizes of clerical and artisan households.<sup>1</sup>

TABLE 7.5 shows the average size of households by occupational groups in Hawthorn in 1898-9, the only year and suburb for which data is available. Finally, the evidence does seem to show an appreciable difference between the housing of the artisan class (a 'labour aristocracy'?) and the unskilled labourers and service workers.

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1

Cf., the findings of W.A. Armstrong in York (see his article 'The Interpretation of Census Enumerators' Books for Victorian Towns' in H.J. Dyos, The Study of Urban History (London 1968) pp.71 and 81), that variations in the number of domestics was the principal source of variation in household size.

TABLE 7.5

SIZE of HOUSEHOLD BY OCCUPATION of the HOUSEHOLDER  
HAWTHORN 1898-9

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Professional	5.5
Managerial	4.9
Shopkeeper	4.5
Clerk	5.1
Artisan	4.4
Service	4.4
Unskilled	4.4
Not in the Work Force	4.2

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It has been a part of the argument so far that the 'natural and spiritual' blessings of Home were more richly bestowed in the kind of houses which were available to the middle classes than in the crowded cottages of the lower orders. This 'differential access', however, pertained not merely to the type and quality of housing but also to the conditions under which it was occupied. It was commonly said, throughout the eighteen-eighties, that the blessings of Home were reserved, in fullest measure, only to the man who actually owned his own house.

To have a home which he has himself reared or purchased - a home which he has improved or beautified - a home, indeed, which, with honest pride and natural love, he calls

his own, will make any man a better citizen....<sup>1</sup>

The mere fact of a home being our own is an incentive to make it as beautiful as our means, no matter how small, will allow. It is like a little world of our own creation which we endeavour to make more and more perfect, and for which we work all the harder. But without this incentive, born of ownership, it is impossible to take the interest in the property, which, by inducing us to beautify the house and grounds, would improve its value....After the toil of the day, with its attendant weariness and manifold vexations, there is nothing more soothing than to sit beneath our own roof with the knowledge that it was reared through our own endeavours, and that we have not worked and saved altogether in vain.<sup>2</sup>

This view, of which the most vigorous proponents were the Melbourne building societies, was the grounding for a set of attitudes and beliefs which, in view of their breadth and coherence, may be described as 'the suburban philosophy'. Like other total beliefs it contained an evangel, a code of conduct, a social and political perspective; like them, too, it easily confounded short-term means and long-term goals. As

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1

A.B.S.G., 13 June 1888, p.96. The same assumption, it may be noted, was fundamental to the activities of English building societies (see, for example, Albert Mansbridge, Brick upon Brick (London, 1934), p.34 and Seymour J. Price, Building Societies - Their Origin and History (London, 1958), chapter 1.)

2

A.B.S.G., 14 August 1890, p.172.

a gospel, it appealed to conjugal affection and paternal pride, to manly independence and self-reliance, to the estimation of friends and to the satisfactions of the 'long acquaintanceship and endeared associations'<sup>1</sup> which only a castle of one's own could ensure. And, in contradistinction, it emphasized the evils of neglecting wife and family and explained how, through failing to throw off the thralldom of everlastingly paying rent, a man might 'forfeit the esteem of his more sensible friends and neighbours'.<sup>2</sup> In nice contrast to some other social philosophies,<sup>3</sup> it decried the 'barbarism' among a 'civilised people...resident in such cities as Queenly Melbourne and Queenly Sydney' of the migratory habits 'characteristic of the roving Arab... the nomadic Tartar and...the shepherd and stockman of the Australian interior' and appealed to the wanderer to

admit, after all, that it is possible to settle down in the one locality and house, and be content and happy in the knowledge that, even though humble and in the midst of sordid surroundings, it is Home - which, the Poet tells us, is of Heaven 'the kindred point'.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Home Truths for Homeseekers, p.57.

2 Ibid., p.16.

3 Cf. Russel Ward, The Australian Legend, p.168ff.

4 Home Truths for Homeseekers, p.55.

The conduct enjoined by the 'suburban philosophy' was essentially prudential. Its chosen prophets were Benjamin Franklin (on the virtues of thrift) and Charles Kingsley and Carlyle (on the sanctity of work).<sup>1</sup> It was the code of men who escaped the disappointments and frustrations of more reckless spirits by the pursuit of concrete, proximate goals: 'The first step towards making a man is right home-training, the next a trade, the next permanent employment, the next a home, and the next a wife.'<sup>2</sup> It so forcefully emphasized the timid, and essentially instrumental, virtues of prudence, temperance, providence and industry that they became 'ends-in-themselves'. Home-ownership, from being the justifying end, became a school of prudence:

The working man who continues for eight or ten years to pay his contributions [to a building society] becomes thereby an improved man; and who shall say that such improvement, confirmed by such means, is not of far more value to him and [his] family in many ways than even the house in which he lives rent free....The social circumstances and personal habits of a man favour his moral and, we may be permitted to say, religious character.<sup>3</sup>

The personal interconnections between temperance and building societies is evidence, not of humbug or

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1

See, for example, the Christmas editorial of the A.B.S.G., 19 December 1888, p.576.

2

Home Truths for Homeseekers, p.9.

3

A.B.S.G., 3 July 1887, p.105.

religious hypocrisy,<sup>1</sup> but of a functional dependence. As the Victorian Alliance Record claimed, 'building societies are doing a good work in the promotion of thrift, and are thus our allies in the war with intemperance'.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the building society promoters strongly supported scriptural instruction in State schools as a guarantee of those 'simple and elementary rules of uprightness'<sup>3</sup> which were the foundation of their own institutions.

The social and political doctrines, as much as the moral precepts, of the 'suburban philosophy' were radically individualistic. Poverty was a species of moral failure;<sup>4</sup> social classes were but lines in the shifting sand:

Although the mass of the population may appear the same arrangement of strata visible, the atoms composing the mass are ceaselessly changing, and from the lowest poverty-stricken strata to the very highest there is constant upward and downward motion. As each generation grows up the individuals ascend or descend to their proper place, and this, so to call it, moral or social gravitation is as much a law of nature as is physical gravitation.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As Michael Cannon (The Landboomers, Melbourne, 1966, p.3) and George Meudell (The Pleasant Career of a Spendthrift, London [1st edition], p.29) seem to imply.

<sup>2</sup>

Quoted in A.B.S.G., 15 July 1887, p.113. The same identity of interest is apparent in the history of the English building societies. See, for example, Seymour J. Price, From Queen to Queen - The Centenary Story of the Temperance Permanent Building Society (London, 1954), esp. chapter IV and the same writer's Building Societies, (London, 1958), esp. chapter I.

<sup>3</sup> Editorial on the 1889 election, A.B.S.G., 13 March 1889, p.764.

<sup>4</sup> A.B.S.G., 9 October 1889, p.306.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 1 June 1887, p.55.

It followed that collectivist solutions to working class distress were not merely evil, but a delusion. The building society borrower was in 'upward motion':

He has a stake in the country, and it is in his interest to help to increase the prosperity of such country, and to avoid and fight shy of all revolutionary and disquieting or factious movements, such as strikes, violent political agitations, or anything calculated to hinder its advancement.<sup>1</sup>

Building societies were thus 'deadly enemies' of the Single Tax and radically 'social' remedies. Insofar as the societies embodied a cooperative principle, it was merely to provide 'encouragement and assistance'<sup>2</sup> in pursuing goals which, it was assumed, nevertheless lay within the unaided capacity of an industrious and determined man.<sup>3</sup>

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1

Ibid., September 1886, p.49.

2

Ibid., 13 March 1889, p.764.

3

The societies' radical individualism was modified by their short-term interest in the general prosperity of the working men who were their potential clients. Their stance upon particular issues was determined, less by general social theory, than by the more immediate question of whether it would stimulate borrowing or maintain repayments. It was understood that 'if working men are not fairly compensated, they cannot be expected to save', (ibid., 11 September 1889, p.236). The societies therefore supported profit-sharing cooperatives (ibid., 25 September 1889, p.272) and strongly opposed Chinese immigration. 'If Chinamen are to overrun this fair land...the working classes will not then find it the easy matter it is now to keep up their building society repayments' (ibid., 2 May 1888, p.4). On the other hand, they were to oppose the Maritime Strike of 1890 for reasons that were equally instrumental: 'strike or no strike, building society instalments must be met or foreclosure ensues'. (Ibid., 28 August 1890, pp.196-7, 25 September 1890, p.254.)

The 'suburban philosophy' was essentially a rationalization of a general faith in the capacity of the individual to secure to himself and his family the 'natural and spiritual' benefits of Home. Yet, not content with generalities, its proponents also pretended to show, in precise terms, how a man might attain to a Home of his own. All that was required, they claimed, was that the workman's present rent should be converted into payment on a house. 'Why pay rent', it was asked, 'when by paying the same amount to a building society you can become your own landlord?'

#### EXAMPLE

- A. pays 11s. per week rent for 12 years, amounting to £343.4.0 and at the end of that time is no better off.
- B. buys a house and borrows £200 from Society, and pays 11s. 0½d. per week, or £2.7.10. per month, for 12 years, amounting to ... .. £344.8.0 and at the end of that time is owner of the property.<sup>1</sup>

The arithmetic of this argument was sound enough;<sup>2</sup> however it rested on assumptions which deserve closer examination.

1

Universal Building Societies' Pamphlet of Useful Information for Persons wishing either to Build, Borrow or Invest (1884), p.10.

2

Although note Meudell's claim that the tables were often actuarial frauds (The Pleasant Career of a Spendthrift, p.29).

In 1885 11/- a week would have paid the rent of a four-room brick dwelling. Even granting that the borrower owned a block of land, the same sum would barely have covered the loan repayments over a twelve year period on the construction costs of a three-room weather-board dwelling.<sup>1</sup> TABLE 7.6 sets out, in an approximate way, the relative 'purchasing power' of typical weekly amounts as either rent or repayment over a twelve year period.

TABLE 7.6

RELATIVE PURCHASING POWER OF RENTS AND REPAYMENTS (1885)

WEEKLY AMOUNT	BRICK HOUSE		WEATHERBOARD HOUSE	
	RENT	REPAYMENT	RENT	REPAYMENT
11/-	3 RM	-	4 RM	3 RM
15/-	4 RM	3 RM	4-5 RM	3-4 RM
20/-	5 RM	3-4 RM	6 RM	4-5 RM

1

This statement and the following table are based upon a study of advertised rents in the Age 'To Let' advertisements (See also TABLE 7.6 below), N.G. Butlin's estimates of construction costs (in his Investment in Australian Economic Development 1861-1900, (Cambridge, 1964), p.276) and the one building society table of repayments which I have been able to find - that in the Universal Building Societies' Pamphlet... (1884), pp.12-13. Furthermore, the costs of maintenance were said to be disproportionately high on many new, 'jerry-built' houses (see A.B.C.N., 28 April 1888, p.265.)

Faced with such a structure of housing costs, the family men on a middle income might adopt one of three courses of action. First, he might renounce the opportunity of owning his own home in order, whether from necessity or pride, to maintain his present standard of housing. His second option was to reduce his expenditure on other items and so save the margin between his rent and the repayment appropriate to his present standard of accommodation. Thirdly, he could continue to allocate a similar share of income to loan repayments as he had previously to rent, but suffer a deterioration in the standard of his housing. It was the business of building society propagandists to place an unfavourable construction upon the first course of action and to encourage the second two.

The propagandist assumed, for the most part, that the man who continued to pay rent was either careless for his family or overly concerned with maintaining appearances:

Were it not for this show of things, this vain desire to be duly admired, the tenant would spend less of unnecessary acquisitions and make it his bounden duty to acquire that most necessary and beneficial of acquisitions, a castle of his own.<sup>1</sup>

The propagandists were aware of the ways in which a great city facilitated social identification by

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1

Home Truths for Homeseekers, p.44, see also p.62.

'conspicuous consumption'<sup>1</sup> and the marketing of illicit pleasure:

Among the masses of our people in the larger cities there exists an 'irrepressible conflict' between the desire of spending and the duty of saving. On the one hand are ranged the many enticements (held out to everyone having a surplus over the absolute requirements of life) to indulge in extravagance of dress, mode of living, or amusement; or to gratify some more pernicious passion. These enticements continually tempt the susceptible side of man's nature to needless expenditure. On the other hand, the hope of becoming a householder and property owner, or a businessman urges the provident side to lay up part of the earnings, so that in time such hopes may be realised.<sup>2</sup>

Duty was fortified against Desire by the force of good example. 'Mary Ann' the servant girl who kept a bank book and only one boy friend was contrasted with her less economical friend 'Kate'.<sup>3</sup> 'Mr Robinson', who had used to accompany his wife to the theatre on Saturday nights halved his expenditure by going alone and abolishing his good lady's beer allowance.<sup>4</sup> And the

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1

'Conspicuous consumption claims a relatively larger portion of the income of the urban than the rural population, and the claim is also more imperative', Thorstein Veblen, The Theory of the Leisure Class (New York, 1899), Mentor edition, p.72.

2

A.B.S.G., 28 August 1889, p.223.

3

Ibid., 15 July 1887, p.127.

4

Ibid., 15 September 1887, p.218.

budgets of 'Spendthrift' and his more prudent fellow clerk were juxtaposed to reinforce Micawberish conclusions.<sup>1</sup>

It was recognized that the man who chose the third course - that of actually exchanging a better for a poorer, a larger for a smaller dwelling - must needs 'sacrifice some pride'.<sup>2</sup> Certainly the rentpayer might

occupy a dwelling of a slightly more imposing appearance than would be the case if the same amount of money were directed to the paying off of a house purchased from a building society.

But the would-be suburban proprietor was encouraged, not to grasp at the shadow and 'show of things', but to seek 'some potent substantiality in the back ground'.<sup>3</sup>

How far were Melbournians able to resist the beguiling shadows and grasp the substantial benefits of home-ownership? Casual visitors and observers seem almost to have believed that home-ownership was a general blessing. William Senior,<sup>4</sup> for example, who visited Melbourne in 1880, believed that 'the working classes of Melbourne' were 'the absolute owners of some of the suburbs....The thickly populated suburbs of East Collingwood, Prahran, Hotham, Emerald Hill and

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1

Ibid., January 1887, p.129.

2

Australian Financial Gazette, 5 November, p.314.

3

A.B.S.G., 9 October 1889, p.307.

4

Travel and Trout in the Antipodes (1880), quoted Melbourne Punch, 15 January 1880, p.27.

Carlton are to a considerable extent owned by the working man'. In 1888, the Daily Telegraph declared that Melbourne, 'beyond any other capital in the world' was 'a city of freehold homes'.<sup>1</sup>

Once again, however, the rate-books provide sounder evidence. TABLE 7 sets out rates of home-ownership by occupation for the three suburbs in which such figures are available.

TABLE 7.7

PERCENT HOUSES OWNER-OCCUPIED BY OCCUPATION OF HOUSEHOLDER

(Collingwood, Footscray, St Kilda)

Professional and Managerial	57.9	(38)
Shopkeepers and Indep. Trades	54.7	(106)
Clerks and Shop Assistants	48.4	(31)
Artisans	45.9	(123)
Service and Unskilled	49.6	(121)
Not in the Work force	43.0	(93)
Unknown, Miscellaneous	45.4	(11)

The most striking feature of this table is the broad uniformity of ownership rates over all occupational groups. While the working classes were perhaps not 'absolute owners' of suburbs, their relative position was comparable (if not quite equal) to that of the middle

<sup>1</sup>

Quoted A.B.S.G., 5 December 1888, p.550.

classes. Moreover, there appears to be no substantial difference between the three main classes of employees. Melbourne's claim to be, 'beyond any other capital in the world, a city of freehold homes' is more difficult to assess. TABLE 7.8 (below) presents ownership rates for the four sampled suburbs

TABLE 7.8

PERCENT HOUSES OWNER-OCCUPIED BY SUBURBS

Collingwood	45.1	(195)
St Kilda	43.8	(224)
Footscray	68.9	(102)
Hawthorn	51.2	(82)
All	49.5	(603)

These figures suggest that the general level of home-ownership in Melbourne may have been somewhere between 45 and 55 per cent. Even such a crude estimate has some comparative significance. The most recent available data for Melbourne (1961)<sup>1</sup> puts the combined level of home-ownership and rent-purchase at 72.7 per cent while the earliest available official figures (the 1911 Commonwealth Census)<sup>2</sup> showed that 35.0 per cent of private dwellings in Melbourne were owner-occupied or in process of being purchased. So far as they go,

1

Victorian Yearbook, 1967, p.624.

2

Commonwealth Census, 1911, vol.I, p.423.

therefore, these figures tend to substantiate Professor Butlin's guess that 'owner-occupation accounted for a higher proportion...of total housing 'before the depression of the 'nineties. If, however, as he implies, it accounted for the 'greater part'<sup>1</sup> of all housing, it did so only by a small margin.

International comparisons are more hazardous. The only comparable figures are for the United States (1890) where, of all cities over 100,000 population, only two or three in the mid-west had home-ownership rates of more than 40 per cent.<sup>2</sup> English statisticians published no comparable figures; but it is doubtful whether ownership in English cities reached either American or Australian levels.<sup>3</sup>

The second, and more important observation to be made on TABLE 7.8 concerns the disparity in levels of ownership between the 'new' suburbs (Footscray and Hawthorn) and the 'old' ones (Collingwood and St Kilda). A full explanation of these differences calls for more evidence than is available at the moment, especially

---

1

Investment in Australian Economic Development, pp.259-60.

2

From Abstract of the Eleventh Census: 1890 (Washington 1896), pp.288-9. The cities with the highest rates were Cincinnati, Cleveland and Detroit. Buffalo and Rochester (New York) both had rates over 40 per cent; but New York city's rate was only 6.3 per cent.

3

E.g. See Seebohm Rowntree, Poverty - A Study of Town Life (London 1901), p.166.

about terms of occupation for earlier decades and other suburbs.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, some suggestions may be offered.

It may be remarked, first, that this state of affairs has no obvious relation to those 'classical' theories of city growth according to which residential zones of the better sort are 'invaded' by working class populations as industry extends from the edges of the central city.<sup>2</sup> Neither St Kilda nor Collingwood had substantially altered its character as, respectively, a middle class and a working class suburb. Although, as TABLE 7.7 shows, there were some differences in the terms on which different 'classes' occupied their homes, these, with one exception, do not provide a basis for explaining differences between suburbs. The exception is the case of builders (who are classed as 'independent tradesmen') and building tradesmen (who are classed as 'artisans'). Both of these sub-groups tended to own their own homes in greater proportion than 'independent tradesmen' or 'artisans' as a whole and were, moreover, rather more heavily represented in 'new' than in 'old' areas.<sup>3</sup>

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1

I understand that Mrs M. Mitchell, an M.A. student of the University of Melbourne, is preparing material which may provide at least some of this information.

2

Ernest W. Burgess, 'The Growth of the City - An Introduction to a Research Project' in Robert E. Park, Ernest W. Burgess and R.D. McKenzie (eds), The City (Chicago, 1925), pp.47-62.

3

See chapter 3.

It might be argued, secondly, that relative prices or the policies of lending institutions made it easier to achieve home ownership in newer areas. Certainly it was often alleged that land, and hence housing, was cheaper in the 'new' outer suburbs.<sup>1</sup> Evidence on this point is difficult to assess. Houses for sale in Footscray were more commonly advertised in terms of 'deposit plus weekly payment' than of the total price. This, of course, lends some support to the view that home-ownership was facilitated in the new working class suburb but it makes actual price comparisons difficult and is, moreover, consistent with the view that lending institutions were merely adapting to a pre-existent demand. Insofar as price comparisons are possible,<sup>2</sup> however, they do suggest that there were some small price differentials favouring the 'new' suburbs. In the last quarter of 1885, for example, four-roomed houses were advertised in the four suburbs within these price ranges:

TABLE 7.9

ESTIMATED PRICES (£) OF FOUR ROOMED HOUSES BY SUBURBS  
(1885)

St Kilda	260 - 360
Collingwood	320 - 475
Footscray	285 - 300
Hawthorn	300 - 390

---

1

See above.

2

Estimate based on 'For Sale' advertisements in Age. (The Argus seems to have carried advertisements only for the better class of houses.)

Of course size alone gives a very poor indication of the quality of the product: houses in 'new' areas were presumably newer, on the whole, than those in old areas and price comparisons like those above may thus greatly under-estimate 'real' price differentials. So far as the figures go, however, they suggest that price was perhaps a more potent inducement to purchase in new working class areas than to purchase in new middle class areas. It ought to be emphasized, however, that price differentials in 1885 explain at most the persistence of local differentials in ownership rates; the rates which prevailed in that year were a product of the history of the previous two decades without proper investigation of which any explanation (like that offered above) must be regarded as tentative.

It is similarly unfortunate that no detailed evidence of the activities of building societies and other lending institutions has survived from the 'sixties and 'seventies. Quantitative evidence for the early 'eighties, however, suggests that the only building society which has left a detailed record (the Modern Permanent Building Society)<sup>1</sup>

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1

In preparing the figures quoted here and later in this chapter in reference to the Modern Permanent Building Society I have used the cards recording details of loan applications prepared by Professor Butlin in the course of his work now published in Investment in Australian Economic Development, esp. chapter IV and Australian Domestic Product, Investment and Foreign Borrowing 1861-1938/39 (Cambridge, 1962). These cards are now deposited in the A.N.U. Archives. Among 'old' suburbs I included Carlton, Port Melbourne, North Melbourne, Fitzroy, St Kilda, Collingwood, Richmond and South Melbourne. 'New' suburbs comprised all the rest: i.e. Brunswick, Footscray, Kensington, Newmarket, Boroondara, Sandringham, South Yarra, Hawthorn, Moonee Ponds, Ascot Vale, Surrey Hills, Prahran, Coburg, Malvern, Parkville, Albert Park and Preston.

was channelling the larger portion of its funds into purchasing or building houses in the older suburbs: in 1884, for example, loans were issued for the purchase or erection of 21 houses in Collingwood and 14 in St Kilda as compared with 19 in Footscray and 7 in Hawthorn. The suburbs receiving the greatest number of loans were Richmond (84), Port Melbourne (39), South Melbourne (38) and Fitzroy (28) - all of which must be regarded as 'old' suburbs. Certainly these suburbs also contained the larger proportion of all housing. Nevertheless TABLE 7.10 which presents figures on the distribution of loans between 'old' and 'new' suburbs in 1884 suggests that the concentration

TABLE 7.10

DISTRIBUTION OF MODERN PERMANENT BUILDING SOCIETY LOANS BY  
SUBURB TYPE AND PURPOSE OF LOAN  
 (1884)

	PURPOSE OF LOAN				
	OWNER OCCUPATION	LANDLORD	SPECULATOR	UNKNOWN	TOTAL
'Old' Suburb	127	70	9	62	268
'New' Suburb	60	14	6	35	115
% 'Old'	67.9	83.3	60.0	63.9	70.0
% 'New'	32.1	16.7	40.0	36.1	30.0

of housing in the older suburbs was not greater than the concentration of loans in the same areas. Further, it will be observed that the proportion of 'landlord'

borrowers was higher for the old suburbs than for the new ones. The only conclusion consistent with this analysis is surely that building society loans followed but did not determine the shape of building investment in the metropolis. There appears to have been no fundamental antipathy on the part of building societies (or at least not of this one) towards investment in 'older' rather than 'new' areas; insofar as loans were directed to landlord clients in 'older' areas and owner-occupiers in 'new' areas they merely followed the contours of a pre-existing pattern of ownership.

Aside from the conditions affecting the propensity of would-be owner-occupiers to buy in 'old' or 'new' suburbs, it is important also to consider the conditions affecting the propensity of landlords to buy or retain houses as a source of income. A closer examination of landlords in Collingwood and St Kilda in 1883-4<sup>1</sup> reveals that they were themselves usually residents of the suburb in which they held property. In many cases they both let and occupied a dwelling in the same street. Those who were not actually residents of Collingwood or St Kilda often lived in a neighbouring suburb (Carlton, Fitzroy; Brighton, South Melbourne) and many were found to have lived in the area where they now held

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1

Landlords recorded in my sample population were traced in the Melbourne Directory both at date (1883-4) and at 1875. This method may, of course, predispose a conclusion similar to that actually arrived at - since the Directory was more likely to yield information on persons living in the same district and in business on their own account. Nevertheless the fairly high return of information by this method suggests that persons of this class were in fact the main class of landlords.

property a decade earlier (1875). In general they seem to have been men of middle rank (shopkeepers and builders were especially common) but they included artisans and even some unskilled workers. Businessmen with large holdings seem to have been decidedly rare although some of the larger houses in St Kilda were owned by merchants. Many of these petty suburban proprietors were presumably the successful immigrants of the 'fifties, now approaching the end of their working lives. It was natural, therefore, that the community which had been the source and setting of their business should now claim the employment of their modest fortunes. Landlordism, of course, was the most natural of the few avenues available for investment by such men. Insofar as these investments called for speculative or managerial skill, these men - who 'knew' the local community and were known to it - were uniquely equipped. By contrast, however, the new suburbs were without the influence of a comparable landlord class. They appear to have been settled, for the most part, by young couples with little capital.

So then, while it may be allowed that differential land prices and the presence of a local landlord class take us some of the way towards an explanation of the differences in home-ownership rates between 'new' and 'old' suburbs, one is left, nonetheless, with an impression - necessarily unverifiable - that some weight must still be given to the symbolic and cultural factors with which this chapter was introduced. Perhaps it is simply that when a man rents a house he regards it instrumentally - it is a box for living in;

but when he buys a house he demands ideal and individual qualities which can only be truly found in a new home in the suburbs.

This account of the structure of ownership and quality of housing in the early 'eighties is a necessary basis for an examination of the impact of boom and depression. We already know, from the researches of Professor Butlin and others, the extent of growth in residential investment, of the inflation of prices, of the activities of lending institutions.<sup>1</sup> We know something, too, of changes in wage-rates and retail prices.<sup>2</sup> How did these changes affect levels of ownership, both generally and in various sectors of the city and sections of the population?

The data available from our four sample suburbs (see TABLE 7.11 below) is scarcely an adequate basis for generalizations about trends in the whole city. Despite the fact that levels of ownership declined in all but one of the suburbs, it is not unlikely that, over the whole metropolis, levels of home ownership may actually have risen. It will be seen that appreciable differentials persisted between the levels of ownership in the 'new' suburbs (Hawthorn and Footscray) and those

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1

N.G. Butlin, Investment, esp. chapter IV and A.R. Hall, op.cit., esp. chapter 4.

2

Victorian Yearbooks and for a discussion of this material see Fry, op.cit., Part III.

TABLE 7.11

PERCENT HOUSES OWNER-OCCUPIED BY SUBURBS.  
(1883-4 and 1888-9)

	1883-4	1888-9
St Kilda	43.8 (224)	40.9 (325)
Collingwood	45.1 (195)	35.8 (271)
Footscray	68.9 (102)	62.0 (237)
Hawthorn	51.2 (82)	61.4 (295)

in the 'old' ones (St Kilda and Collingwood). Since the number of houses in 'new' type suburbs increased more substantially than in 'old' ones<sup>1</sup> and, hence, a greater proportion of Melbourne's population was dwelling in suburbs like Footscray and Hawthorn rather than suburbs like Collingwood and St Kilda, it may be argued that, overall, home-ownership showed little or no decline.<sup>2</sup>

In view of the economic and psychological inducements to home ownership it may seem surprising that there was not, in fact, a large and general rise in owner-occupation. During the 'eighties the lending institutions came to

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1

See chapter 6. The proportion of persons living in 'new' suburbs (under definition adopted above) rose from 16.7 per cent (1883) to 22.6 per cent (1888).

2

It had to be recognized, however, that since the sample suburbs were selected as contrasting types, they are likely to represent the extremes rather than the averages of population movement between the two types of suburb and of the differentials in home-ownership rates between them.

offer longer terms for repayment (up to 12 years), lower interest on their loans and demanded a smaller security.<sup>1</sup> Although house prices rose very substantially, real wages seem to have kept pace. Rent, and the purchase price of houses do not seem to have altered their relations in any systematic fashion. If either rose relative to the other it was probably the purchase price of housing.<sup>2</sup>

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1

Butlin, op.cit., p.262.

2

Ibid., p.276. Assessments of this evidence depend somewhat upon the choice of a base. Here is a series of index numbers based on an 1883 base:

---

	Selling price per room £	Rent per room	Selling price	Rent
1883	80	2/1	100	100
1884	90	2/6	113	100
1885	97	2/6	121	117
1886	97	2/6	121	107
1887	96	2/11	120	140
1888	106	2/8	132	133
1889	102	3/6	128	127
1890	96	4/4	120	120

---

Yet there were other factors - especially demographic ones - which probably militated against the persistence of high ownership rates. Much of the demand for housing during the 'eighties may be assumed to flow from the accession to marriageable age of the children of the gold rushes.<sup>1</sup> Much of the rest was stimulated by the arrival of large numbers of unassisted immigrants.<sup>2</sup> While it is probable that unassisted immigrants were better able to embark upon home-purchase than assisted immigrants<sup>3</sup>, and although young Australian natives often received financial assistance from their parents, neither group was probably as eligible for home-ownership as the older and more settled population of the 'sixties and 'seventies. It is at least possible that the vigorous building society activity of the 'eighties was largely a response to the diminishing capacity of 'home-seekers' to achieve ownership.

There were, of course, other continuing influences restricting home ownership, notably the propensity of householders to move house. It is obvious that a man who owns or is buying a house will be slow to move from it. It seems almost as evident that a man who is inclined or compelled to move frequently will be slow to commit himself to buying a house. TABLE 7.12

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1

A.R. Hall, op.cit., p.117, Butlin, op.cit., p.237.

2

Butlin, op.cit., pp.243-4.

3

Ibid.

(below) shows that, in fact, these suppositions are well borne out by the available evidence.

TABLE 7.12

QUINQUENNIAL TURNOVER OF HOUSEHOLDERS BY CONDITION OF  
OCCUPATION 1883-4 - 1888-9 (COLLINGWOOD,  
FOOTSCRAY, ST KILDA)<sup>1</sup>

	Mobile 1883-4 - 1888-9	Immobile 1883-89	% Mobile	% Immobile
Owner in 1883-4	92	167	33.5	67.3
Tenant in 1883-4	183	81	66.5	32.7
% Owner 1883-4	33.5	64.5		
% Tenant 1883-4	69.3	30.7		

Not only the bias towards tenants, but the generally high level of mobility deserve attention.<sup>2</sup> The remarks of

<sup>1</sup>

For a study of mobility in an American town which utilises similar data see Sidney Goldstein, Patterns of Mobility 1910-1950: The Norristown Study (Philadelphia, 1958).

<sup>2</sup>

The general level of mobility seems fairly high by comparison with rates in an American city where 50 per cent turnover in a decade was regarded as high. See Stephan Thernstrom, 'Working Class Social Mobility in Industrial America' (Paper delivered at the Anglo-American Colloquium of the Society for Labour History, London, 23 June 1968), p.5. It could be interesting, although it lies outside the scope of the present thesis, to assess the effects of such mobility rates upon levels of social and political involvement.

contemporary observers suggest that five years may be rather too long an interval for its accurate measurement.

A notable feature of our Australian cities in the frequency with which certain of their inhabitants move from one place of abode to another. We refer to that class of people, forming a large portion of our suburban population, the family heads of which astonish their necessarily few friends if they remain two or three years in the one suburb, or five or six months in the one street. Many of such may be said to yearly migrate to some other locality, and, with their goods and chattels, keep moving around the General Post Office until they complete the circle.<sup>1</sup>

This elusive class of people consisted very largely of workingmen, and especially of unskilled labourers whose<sup>2</sup> impermanence of employment constituted an apparently insuperable obstacle to home-ownership. The building societies believed, of course, that

a workman's permanence of employment depends on himself. Given a settled condition in the affairs of the country, politically and financially, and the mechanical production is not prolific of violent fluctuations, the skilled, industrious and sober artisan need have absolutely no fear of his future.<sup>3</sup>

---

1

Home Truths for Home-seekers (1890), p.55.

2

The quinquennial turnover rate (1883-4 - 1888-9) for professional and managerial groups was 39.5 per cent, for 'shopkeepers' 38.7, for artisans 59.0 and for unskilled workers 66.7.

3

A.B.S.G., 2 January 1889, p.622.

Yet the qualifications almost overturn the assurance. Furthermore, even in some skilled trades, the little available evidence suggests that the turnover of employees was high. The annual turnover of employment in one large foundry and engineering works (John Danks and Co.) was almost a quarter (44 out of 188) in 1890-1.<sup>1</sup>

The effects of job mobility on residential mobility are more difficult to gauge. Since industries of the one type were usually concentrated in the same locality, change of job did not necessarily imply a change of residence. Neither, of course, did change of residence imply change of employment. Most moves appear to have been over short distances, permitting continued employment in the same job. At least half of those householders in the Collingwood sample of 1883-4 who had moved by 1888-9 and whose new residences can be located, were still living in Collingwood. At least ten per cent were still residing in the same street. Furthermore, of those who had moved to other suburbs, about half were resident in the immediately neighbouring suburbs of Fitzroy, Carlton and Richmond. In short, probably little more than a fifth of all those who moved in the interval were now out of reach of their old employment (and kin?).<sup>2</sup>

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1

From Wages Book in the A.N.U. Archives. This book, unfortunately begins only in 1890; I have found no comparable records for the 'eighties.

2

One wonders if there was not, in fact, a local 'kinship network' similar to that detected by Michael Young and Peter Willmott in their study of Family and Kinship in East London (London 1957), see especially chapter 2.

In fact, it was probably the labourer's subsistence wages, as much as his insecure employment, which kept him on the move:

Though a man may be industrious, sober, healthy, constantly employed and punctually paid for his labour, the size of his family, the smallness of his wages, or some cause other than dissipation, keeps him always at the extremity of spending his last cent. He never seems to get ahead; he is constantly in hot water.<sup>1</sup>

It has already been argued that, by many householders, home-ownership and occupancy of a fine house were perceived as 'alternatives'. Furthermore in the building society literature of the boom period, various occupational groups were caricatured as tending to one or another 'alternative': in general, clerks and salesmen were supposed to be mainly concerned with the 'show of things', artisans and tradesmen with the 'potent substantiality' of home-ownership, unskilled labourers, all too often, with the struggle simply to keep a roof over their heads.

These caricatures, of course, have a familiar look about them and, for that reason alone, deserve to be treated with caution. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that the rate-book evidence on valuations and occupancy over the boom period is generally consistent with them. TABLE 7.13 presents figures for valuations and home-ownership in the sample suburbs over the period 1883-4 - 1888-9.

---

1

Home Truths for Home-seekers, p.22.

TABLE 7.13

## VALUATION and OWNERSHIP 1883-4 and 1888-9

OCCUPATION	VALUATIONS			OWNERSHIP		
	1883-4 <sup>1</sup> (3)	1888-9 (3)	1888-9 <sup>2</sup> (4)	1883-4 (3)	1888-9 (3)	1888-9 (4)
PROFESSIONAL and MANAGERIAL	71.7 (38)	68.5 (73)	67.8 (113)	57.9 (38)	43.8 (73)	52.2 (113)
SHOPKEEPERS and INDEP. TRADES	30.7 (106)	38.9 (166)	42.0 (214)	54.7 (106)	53.0 (166)	53.4 (215)
CLERKS and SHOP ASSISTANTS	25.1 (31)	27.3 (67)	30.7 (112)	48.4 (31)	35.8 (67)	45.6 (114)
ARTISANS	21.3 (123)	23.6 (204)	24.1 (263)	45.9 (123)	46.1 (204)	47.9 (263)
SERVICE and UNSKILLED	16.6 (123)	22.6 (177)	23.3 (207)	49.7 (123)	40.1 (177)	44.4 (207)
NOT IN THE WORKFORCE	39.3 (93)	38.8 (124)	42.6 (166)	43.0 (93)	47.6 (124)	53.6 (166)
MISCELLANEOUS and UNKNOWN	26.0 (6)	26.0 (22)	32.4 (50)	66.7 (6)	40.9 (22)	50.0 (50)

1

Collingwood, St Kilda, Footscray. (Figures for Hawthorn 1883-4 not available).

2

Collingwood, St Kilda, Footscray and Hawthorn.

The most striking rise in valuations was among shopkeepers whose suburban trade, in this period, was said to be especially lucrative. The increased valuation of unskilled and service workers' homes, on the other hand, is more convincingly explained by the changing structure of rents. TABLE 7.14 (below) shows the approximate ranges of rents for houses of various sizes at three dates during the decade. It is evident that one important effect of the inflation of rents in the late 'eighties was a substantial increase in the absolute minimum rent. Unskilled workers, who inhabited the smallest and cheapest houses, had no choice but to pay increased rent. Artisans, however, could seek

TABLE 7.14

RENT RANGES BY SIZE OF HOUSE 1880, 1885, 1889.<sup>1</sup>

	1880	1885	1889
2 Rooms	4/- - 8/-	5/- - 8/6	7/- - 10/-
3 Rooms	7/- - 10/-	8/- - 10/-	9/- - 11/-
4 Rooms	13/-	9/- - 15/-	12/- - 16/-
5 Rooms	13/- - 17/-	12/6 - 18/-	15/- - 20/-
6 Rooms	16/- - 20/-	15/- - 25/-	20/- - 28/-
7 Rooms	17/- - 22/-	20/- - 30/-	25/- - 32/-

<sup>1</sup>

Source, 'To Let' advertisements in the Age. (The Argus appears to have attracted advertisements for the better type of housing.)

smaller and cheaper housing than the four and five room cottages to which they had been accustomed. Thus it appears that the housing styles of the skilled and unskilled manual workers were assimilated. Their propensities for ownership, on the other hand, which had been very similar in the early 'eighties, were now markedly divergent. While artisans included a fairly high proportion of home-owners, the proportion of unskilled home-owners fell by about nine per cent. Similarly, while clerks maintained homes of high valuation, their ownership rate also dropped.

Although these statistics seem nicely consistent with contemporary caricatures of the economic attitudes of these groups, such explanations are certainly not exhaustive. For example, the maintenance of high rates of ownership amongst both artisans and 'shopkeepers and independent tradesmen' cannot be understood apart from the fact that there was a substantial influx, into both categories, of building contractors and tradesmen who enjoyed higher rates of ownership. It should also be noted that in Hawthorn, where many of the better paid clerks and accountants lived, the home-ownership rate for 'clerks' was relatively high.

If 'artisans' and 'shopkeepers' were especially devoted to 'economy' we would perhaps expect them to be prominent among the borrowers and members of the most powerful agents of prudential economic attitudes - the building societies. In broad terms, such an expectation is fulfilled. It was certainly the impression of building society officials that their clientele consisted, for the most part, of 'the lower middle class

...of thriving artisans and prosperous tradesmen, with neither too much nor too little of earthly goods'.<sup>1</sup>  
 Their impressions are borne out by an inspection of the loans record of one large building society (the Modern Permanent).<sup>2</sup> Table 7.15 which presents an analysis of

1

Home Truths for Home-seekers, p.17.

2

Once again I have used Professor Butlin's cards in the A.N.U. Archives. It should be noted that the Figures in Table 7.15 are not consistent, at all points with those produced from the same source by E.C. Fry and contained in Appendix VI, 'The Analysis of the Records of a Melbourne Building Society, 1881-91' of his thesis 'The Condition of the Urban Wage Earning Class in Australia in the 1880s' (A.N.U., 1956). An analysis of Fry's figures actually suggests that artisans were increasing as a percentage of all borrowers towards the end of the 'eighties:

	<u>Skilled Workers as % All Applications</u>	<u>Unskilled Workers as % All Applications</u>
1881	3.3	0.0
1882	5.4	2.3
1883	19.7	3.8
1884	16.5	3.9
1885	12.4	4.0
1886	8.8	2.7
1887	8.7	4.1
1888	10.3	8.8
1889	15.0	6.4
1890	18.2	7.1
1891	18.9	8.1

My own categories, of course, were different from Fry's. My 'service' category is presumably split between his 'skilled' and 'unskilled'.

the allocation of loans between borrowers of various occupations for three years during the 'eighties, suggests that almost 60 per cent of all loans in 1884, 1886 and 1888 were allocated to those groups. We know already that building society advances accounted for an increasing proportion of all residential investment in the later 'eighties. Together, these facts suggest at least a partial explanation of the continued propensity among artisans and 'shopkeepers and independent tradesmen' for home ownership.

TABLE 7.15

DISTRIBUTION OF MODERN BUILDING SOCIETY LOANS  
BY OCCUPATION OF BORROWER  
 (1884, 1886, 1888)

	<u>PERCENT</u>	<u>NO.</u>
Professional and Managerial	2.7	12
Shopkeepers and Indep. Trades	31.9	143
Artisan	27.7	124
Clerks and Shop Assistants	3.3	15
Service	13.4	60
Unskilled	5.4	24
Not in the Workforce	14.7	66
Miscellaneous	0.9	4
Total known Occupations	100.0	448
Total Loans		1232

Although we may posit some relationship between the growing dominance of the building societies in residential finance and the continued high ownership rates among their principal clients, it is much more

difficult to specify the nature of the relationship. Because artisans and independent tradesmen were the staple clientele of building societies, it does not follow that they, above other groups, held to the economic values which it was an avowed aim of these institutions to propagate. Because home-ownership was applauded as a school of thrift or as a means of domestic grace, it does not follow that those who were owners or sought ownership were more earnest than others in their desire for the spiritual joys of 'Home'.<sup>1</sup> Especially was this so when the speculative mania of the late 'eighties provided other and more tangible incentives to investment in housing. Professor Butlin has shown that a growing proportion of building society advances was diverted to speculative projects rather than to the satisfaction of immediate and direct demand.<sup>2</sup> Further, our analysis of Modern Permanent Building Society loans suggests that among 'shopkeepers and independent tradesmen' the greater proportion of investment in housing was for purposes other than owner-occupation. While about 60-70 per cent of loans to 'artisans', 'service workers' and borrowers 'not in the workforce' were for owner-occupation, only 30-40 per cent of loans to 'shopkeepers and independent tradesmen' were directed to that purpose. Builders were of course the principal class of speculators although some artisans appear to have built houses in their spare time. In the heat of the speculative

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1

Cf. S.D. Clark, The Suburban Society (Toronto, 1966), chapter 3.

2

Investment, p.261.

mania, building society values were themselves modified. While continuing to maintain the forms of the old, essentially prudential appeal, they now incapsulated subtle enticements to worldly gain:

The working man can buy odd allotments or small cottages and villas, and go to a building society for his accommodation, and he will make a profit accordingly....Land investment has proved a profitable game for comparatively a few and we see no reason why not for the many....<sup>1</sup>

There is no way of estimating how many working men may have fallen to this bait. But if virtue has its reward, the relatively untroubled passage of most artisans through at least the first phase of the depression suggests that, true to form, they were unwilling to venture their modest fortunes to the chances of the boom.

Although speculation in both land and houses had over-reached itself by late 1889, it is difficult, even now, to see precisely why residential expansion should not have continued quite prosperously, if at a slower pace.<sup>2</sup> In fact, however, by 1890 the wind had gone out of the whole enterprise. In retrospect, of course, it seemed inevitable:

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1

A.B.S.G., 30 May 1888, p.64.

2

See A.R. Hall, The Stock Exchange of Melbourne and the Victorian Economy 1852-1900, pp.132-3.

Anyone with forethought must see that, allowing for the buoyancy of the colonial spirit, the resources of the colonies and the natural increase of the population, a time must arrive when the people must divert their attention, to some extent, from building houses. The influx of new colonists cannot always keep up, the arrival of new loan monies must come to a termination, and consequently the demand for houses cannot continue in so great a proportion as heretofore.<sup>1</sup>

By the late 1880's, the 'natural increase' of young married persons demanding housing may well have begun to abate.<sup>2</sup> Immigration, however, seems not to have slackened until the housing boom itself was on the wane, and the withdrawal of foreign investment was probably rather a result than a cause of the first decisions of lending institutions to reduce their advances and raise interest rates.<sup>3</sup> 'The buoyancy of the colonial spirit' it would seem, must also be heavily discounted: the effects upon public confidence of the collapse of the Premier Permanent Building Society in March 1890 and of the Maritime Strike later

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1

A.B.S.G., 24 May, 1890, p.648.

2

Hall, op.cit., p.118.

3

Journal of Commerce, 7 February 1890, p.6, notes on easing of building society advances and specifically notes that there had been so sign of a withdrawal of foreign funds.

in that year were certainly profound, even if they cannot be precisely measured.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps most important of all, however, was the effect of a large excess supply of housing upon an industry which depended very heavily upon the stimulus of high levels of demand and rapid turnover. By the end of 1890 there was a general feeling that

outer Melbourne is admittedly overbuilt. East, west, north, south, the spirit of speculation is apparent and has left its mark in the shape of empty terraces, houses, shops etc, both brick and wood in unmade, unformed streets.<sup>2</sup>

The Census of 1891<sup>3</sup> found the highest proportions of unoccupied houses in Northcote (12.8 per cent) and Brunswick (9.5 per cent) where the collapse of the brick industry had robbed many residents of their livelihood and in Oakleigh (12.5 per cent) Hawthorn (9.5 per cent)

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1

Most economic commentators (e.g. Australasian Insurance and Banking Record, 7 November 1890, p.781) could see that the Premier had been far more deeply involved in speculative dealings than any other. Indeed, it was obvious from the published figures: in 1889 the Premier had £713,891 invested in property; the next highest was the Modern Permanent with £78,000. (See, A.I.B.R., 16 October 1889, p.751.) Nevertheless the assurances that the Premier was different were made so insistently that one can only suppose that many who were less knowledgeable were unable to make the distinction.

2

A.B.S.G., 18 December 1890, p.410.

3

Victorian Census, 1891, 'Habitations'.

Essendon (9.4 per cent) Brighton (10.7 per cent) and St Kilda (9.5 per cent) all of which, with the partial exception of St Kilda, could be regarded as 'new' middle class suburbs. Old and working class suburbs, on the other hand, seem to have been relatively well-occupied. Footscray (4.7 per cent) and Williamstown (3.3 per cent) - perhaps because their staple industries were slower to collapse - had few unoccupied dwellings, while Collingwood (6.4 per cent), Fitzroy (6.0 per cent), North Melbourne (4.3 per cent), Port Melbourne (5.3 per cent) and South Melbourne (7.9 per cent) also had low vacancy rates.

The statistical evidence on house values, is consistent with this picture. Table 16 (below), which shows the median rate-book valuations of houses in the sampled suburbs, suggests that, up to 1893-4, the most substantial falls in rents occurred in St Kilda, Footscray and Hawthorn while rents in Collingwood declined very little. The decline in St Kilda values - which is consistent with its high vacancy rate - is

TABLE 7.16

MEDIAN NET ANNUAL VALUE (£) PER HOUSE BY SUBURBS

	<u>1888-9</u>	<u>1893-4</u>
St Kilda	46.1 (325)	29.9 (344)
Footscray	23.1 (237)	13.0 (298)
Hawthorn	46.6 (295)	37.7 (352)
Collingwood	25.1 (271)	22.9 (246)

probably an indirect effect of the substantial fall in the value of some of its larger houses (the proportion of houses in the £60+ p.a. category fell from 35.4 per cent to 23.5 per cent). Some of the most spectacular falls in values were reported in the Brunswick area where rents in 1893 were down to 3/- - 4/- a week.

The decline in values had a differential impact upon houses of various sizes. Table 17 shows, in approximate terms, the variations in advertised rents.

TABLE 7.17

RANGES IN ADVERTISED RENTS BY SIZE OF HOUSE 1889-1893  
(in shillings per week)<sup>1</sup>

<u>No. Rooms</u>	<u>1889</u>	<u>1893</u>
2	7-10	4-8
3	9-11	5-8
3	12/6-16/-	6/6-10/-
5	15-20	9-13
6	20-28	10-18
7	25-32	14-18
8	30-38	17-20

It appears that, in both absolute and proportional terms, the decline in rents was greatest for larger houses and lowest for small ones. In St Kilda, the very largest houses (i.e. above 8 rooms) declined spectacularly

<sup>1</sup>

From Age advertisements.

in value - often by much more than 50 per cent. The explanation seems obvious enough: with a general inclination among all classes to reduce expenditure there was least demand for the very largest homes and a tendency to seek the most modest and economical accomodation.

With these patterns of values and occupations established, it is possible now to examine the effects of the depression upon the housing of the various occupational groups. (See Table 7.18 below).

TABLE 7.18

MEDIAN NET ANNUAL VALUE (£'s) BY OCCUPATION OF HOUSEHOLDER  
1888-9 and 1893-4

	1888-9	1893-4
Professional and Managerial	67.8 (113)	61.5 (112)
Shopkeeper and Indep. Trades	42.0 (215)	30.9 (221)
Clerk and Shop Assistants	30.7 (112)	27.7 (119)
Artisan	24.1 (263)	20.5 (274)
Service and Unskilled	23.3 (207)	16.8 (231)
Not in the Workforce	42.6 (166)	31.0 (234)
Unknown and Miscellaneous	32.4 (50)	28.6 (49)

Two broad trends emerge from these figures - the fairly shallow decline in values in the 'middle' ranges of the occupational ladder, especially among artisans, service workers and clerks and the much steeper decline among those towards the top ('shopkeepers', persons 'not in the workforce') and at the bottom (unskilled).

Excepting the unskilled workers, these trends are most simply interpreted as the expected consequence of the differential declines in rent illustrated in Table 5.17. This, in other words, is roughly the pattern of values which we would expect to emerge if each class continued to live in the same sort of house (irrespective of its value). The effect of this change in the structure of values, however, was to reduce the differentials, in value terms, which had emerged during the 'eighties between the higher ranks of employees and the class of 'independent tradesmen and shopkeepers' above them. The response of the unskilled workers, on the other hand, was simply the reverse of their behaviour during the boom: as the rises in absolute minimum rents had then served to assimilate labourers to the artisan class, so, when they fell, did the labourers follow them down to re-establish a separate, low, level of housing.

Reduced rents were one of the very few consolations of the depression;<sup>1</sup> together with cheaper food, they helped to temper the wind to many a shorn lamb. But a man without wages could not pay rent, no matter how

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1

J.C., 28 February 1892, p.6.

cheap it became. Many tenants - and some purchasers by instalment - simply abandoned their houses and went to live with friends.<sup>1</sup> Some camped as unauthorised tenants in vacant houses in the outer suburbs.<sup>2</sup> Others, who had nowhere else to turn, squatted in their houses, amassing large arrears of rent and defying the landlords to remove them.

Although they had power under the Landlord and Tenant Act to seize tenants' goods in distraint for rent,<sup>3</sup> landlords were usually slow to use it.<sup>4</sup> They were naturally reluctant to deprive a man of his home, especially if there was no assurance that they could find other tenants. Vacant houses, besides, were a standing inducement to theft and destruction; many of those in the deserted outer suburbs were stripped of roof leading, coppers, gas fitting, and any other saleable stuff.<sup>5</sup> If, therefore, the landlords, as a class, were 'most patient, tender and considerate'<sup>6</sup>

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1

A.B.S.G., 18 December 1890, p.410.

2

*Ibid.*, 23 April 1891, p.628.

3

Landlord and Tenant Act, 1890 (54 Vict. 1108), Pt.IV.

4

All members who spoke on the proposed amendment to the Act in 1894 conceded that the landlords had been most forbearing (V.P.D., vol.74/1894, pp.1189ff). For the difficulties of one landlord see W.H. Archer's Diary, 22 April 1893 and 19 June 1893. (M.U. Archives).

5

See letter from Buckhurst and Dixon (agents), Argus, 30 May 1892, p.7G.

6

Ievers, V.P.D., 74/1894, p.1192.

to their tenants it was, in part, for most prudential motives:

Landlords feel that they had better have their houses tenanted by poor people who would take care of them, than leave them to be damaged and robbed.<sup>1</sup>

There were some concerted efforts among the landlords to reduce these disabilities. Agents and auctioneers in Fitzroy and Collingwood formed a mutual protection association which called for the circulation of a black list of undesirable tenants, greater police protection for vacant premises, the legal enforcement of contracts to pay rent in advance and modifications in municipal rating in favour of vacant premises.<sup>2</sup>

If the law seemed a weak instrument to the landlord, it seemed a great scourge to the tenant who felt its pains. Under the Act, a landlord could seize a defaulting tenant's movable property in satisfaction of his claims for outstanding rent. Fixtures and articles in the process of being worked up in the course of trade were excepted, and instruments of trade were not to be seized if other articles could be found to make up the deficiency.<sup>3</sup> While most landlords were reluctant to use these powers, except as a threat, there were at least some who stripped tenants of almost

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1

J. Bull, V.P.D., 75/1894-5, p.327.

2

Argus, 20 August 1892, p.7D.

3

A.B.S.G., 17 August 1889, p.131.

everything they possessed.<sup>1</sup> It was not until 1895, when the most acute distress was over, that the Landlord and Tenant Act was amended to exempt from distraint instruments of trade, wearing apparel, basic furniture, bedding and cooking utensils to a value not exceeding £20. This exception, moreover, was conditional upon the tenant quitting his house within seven days.<sup>2</sup>

Landlords were deterred from using their powers not merely by the law's exemptions, prudence, or kindly sentiment but by the threat of violence on the part of the tenants themselves. Early in March 1892 a 'socialist agitator' (Mr Thorp) announced

that a band of men had joined together for the purpose of removing the furniture and effects of those who were financially unable to pay their rents. A horse and cart would [be] provided, and any person would be able to take 'a moonlight flight' without any names being divulged on making application to him.<sup>3</sup>

There was no immediate report of such escapades, but in June and July of 1892 bands of 'unemployed' appeared in open and fairly organised resistance to the landlords. Early in June a group marched into Cuddon's Auction Rooms in Richmond, announcing that

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1

See cases cited Winter, V.P.D., 74/1894, pp.1188-9.

2

Amendment to Landlord and Tenant Act (21 January 1895) no.1388 (in Acts, vol. 1894-5, p.255.)

3

See report of Thomas Wardley (Special Constable) on 'Sunday Socialist Meeting', 27 March 1892 in Police Reports - Melbourne, January-March 1892 (State Archives) [cited hereafter as 'Melb. Police'].

they had formed a band, organized with the purpose of frustrating rapacious landlords, and, that if [the owner] did not give them permission to take furniture distrained for rent, they would forcibly remove it in the interests of those who were unable to pay their rent.<sup>1</sup>

On 15 June, a mob (some 300-400 persons were said to be present) attempted to forestall a bailiff by removing furniture from a house in Carlton. When it was discovered that the bailiff had beaten them to it, they raided his house, seized the furniture and broke some windows.<sup>2</sup> On the 17 June 'a well-known character named Bonnor Hill' led a group of 'over 100 men' in an attempt to prevent repossession of some time-payment furniture from another house in Carlton. Although they were once again too late to prevent the goods being seized, the crowd afterwards surrounded the owner's house and hurled threats at its occupants.<sup>3</sup> On 5 July some furniture seized from a house in Fitzroy was 're-possessed' by a band of the 'unemployed', who locked up the bailiff while they carted it away. Later in the same day and in the same district, a band of men with a hand truck entered Mr Rushall's Auction Rooms and demanded the instant surrender of some furniture which had been seized, they alleged, in distraint for rent. When the proprietor denied possession of it,

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1

Richmond Guardian, 4 June 1892.

2

Melb. Police, 16 June 1892 (Wardley and McEvilly).

3

Ibid., 28 June 1892 (Wardley).

they searched the premises. His son threatened to go to the police and was struck across the face. Thereupon the raiders beat a leisurely retreat.<sup>1</sup>

There seem to be no further reports of such incidents after July 1892. The formation, in August, of the Collingwood and Fitzroy Property Protection Association may partially explain the cessation of hostilities.<sup>2</sup> But the precise significance of these demonstrations is as obscure as their ending. Certainly amongst their leaders - who seem to have had some connection with the Trades' Hall — resistance to distraint was part of a fairly coherent set of social attitudes the most fundamental of which was a conviction, amply fed by the land boom scandals, that their society and the men who governed it lived by robbery.<sup>3</sup> Yet, unlike Proudhon (whom they call to mind), they did not usually question the institution of property as such; on the contrary, they simply believed that, in a society of thieves, 'robbery' had become a legitimate means of defending the little bit of property that was theirs.

So far we have been dealing with the first phase of the depression (up to about 1893-4). To this point the effects of the decline in house values and rents had been most evident in the new, outer, middle class

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1

Argus, 6 July 1892, p.7F and Melb. Police, 5 July 1892.

2

See above.

3

See below chapter 8.

suburbs, in the higher class of housing and amongst the higher classes of occupants. Thereafter, however, the malady which began at these physical and social extremities of the metropolis, penetrated to its heart. By 1897, the pattern of vacancy rates revealed by the Census of 1891, had been practically reversed.<sup>1</sup> The highest rates were now found in the inner and industrial, rather than the outer and middle class suburbs. Collingwood (13.9 per cent), Williamstown (13.6 per cent), Fitzroy (6.7 per cent), North Melbourne (6.8 per cent), Port Melbourne (6.8 per cent), South Melbourne (6.1 per cent) and Richmond (6.0 per cent) were now the leaders, while Brunswick (1.5 per cent), Essendon (4.6 per cent), Northcote (4.4 per cent) and St Kilda (3.1 per cent) were now little affected.

Similar and related trends appeared in the regional pattern of average house values (see Table 7.19). Although values in the 'new' outer suburbs continued to

TABLE 7.19

MEDIAN NET ANNUAL VALUES BY SUBURBS  
1893-4 - 1898-9

	<u>1893-4</u>	<u>1898-9</u>
St Kilda	29.9	25.7
Footscray	13.0	9.0
Hawthorn	37.7	23.3
Collingwood	22.0	13.3

<sup>1</sup>

Victorian Year Book 1895-8. pp.98-9.

decline in this period, the most striking figures are those for Collingwood where values plummeted in about the same proportion as they had fallen in Footscray in the earlier period.

Table 7.20 suggests that the pattern of decline in values which was evident in the first phase of depression was also modified. Between 1893-4 and 1898-9 the steep decline in the rents of the larger houses flattened out a little; those of smaller houses, however, seem to have continued a fairly steep decline.

TABLE 7.20

RANGES IN ADVERTISED RENTS BY SIZE OF HOUSE 1893-4 - 1898-9  
(shillings per week)

<u>No. Rooms</u>	<u>1893-4</u>	<u>1898-9</u>
2	4-8	?
3	5-8	4.5-6
4	6.5-10	4-8
5	9-13	6-12
6	10-18	9-14
7	14-18	12-18
8	17-20	14-20

Once again these general and structural changes throw light upon an analysis of the valuations of houses by occupation of their inhabitants. (See Table 7.21). In the first phase of the depression, the most dramatic falls in valuations were among the middle and very lowest occupations. During this second phase, however, artisans, service workers and persons not in

the workforce' were the most notable sufferers. To a large extent, these trends were correlative to the declines in values among smaller houses and in the industrial suburbs - the special 'habitat' of artisans and service workers.

TABLE 7.21

MEDIAN NET ANNUAL VALUE (£) BY HOUSEHOLDER'S OCCUPANCY

	1893-4	1898-9
Professional and Managerial	61.5 (112)	53.3 (116)
Shopkeepers and Indep. Trades	30.9 (221)	25.0 (248)
Clerks and Shop Assistants	27.7 (119)	23.1 (128)
Artisans	20.5 (274)	12.2 (297)
Service and Unskilled	16.8 (231)	11.4 (306)
Not in the Workforce	31.0 (234)	21.8 (279)
Unknown and Miscellaneous	28.6 (49)	14.2 (33)

We already know that there was a close relationship between house ownership and immobility; this persisted through the depression. There also appears to be a close relationship between location and mobility: during the first phase of the boom, for example, mobility, amongst

both tenants and owners, seems to have been more frequent in the 'new' and outer suburbs than the 'old' inner ones (see Table 7.22). This, of course, is consistent with the view that these suburbs were subject to most serious dislocation in this period. (Because owners were more common in 'new' than in 'old' areas, these patterns were not, of course, reproduced in the turnover rates for each suburb as a whole.)

TABLE 7.22

QUINQUENNIAL TURNOVER OF OWNERS AND TENANTS BY SUBURB  
1888-9 - 1893-4

	<u>% Tenants</u> <u>Mobile</u>	<u>% Owners</u> <u>Mobile</u>
Collingwood	59.4	18.6
St Kilda	71.4	30.3
Footscray	83.3	31.8
Hawthorn	85.7	43.9

This detailed picture of change in housing values and their correlates is a necessary foundation for an understanding of developments in ownership patterns. Home-owners who were unemployed or bankrupted might have been forced to sell their houses in order to make ends meet — a real, but minor, hazard compared with those faced by the purchaser by instalments. His difficulties, of course, were part-cause, part-consequence of the difficulties of the lending institutions and are best understood as an aspect of their story.

From the early months of 1890 there had been signs of disquiet amongst the building societies. Even before the fall of the Premier Permanent Society there were murmurings; after it, societies became most reluctant to advance upon any but the safest land values.<sup>1</sup> The Maritime Strike offered a different kind of threat. To judge from the editorials of the building society journal, officials would seem to have been very seriously concerned about the possibility of large-scale default in repayments. Borrowers were urged to keep well clear of strikers: 'it behove each and every citizen to lay hold of his common sense, if he would come out of the struggle with a roof over his head'.<sup>2</sup> There is, in fact, little firm evidence that many borrowers did default at this stage. There was perhaps a slight increase in applications for suspension of repayments<sup>3</sup> but, to judge from official figures, there was no drop, over the whole year, in the number of borrowers. In fact, they increased from 19,210 in 1889 to 23,529 in 1890.<sup>4</sup> By mid-1891, however, there were signs that repayments were faltering: one society at least attempted to

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1

Standard Mutual Building Society Minute Book 19 August 1890, p.279 (M.U. Archives).

2

A.B.S.G., 28 August 1890, p.196-7 and 25 September 1890, p.254 and for a less committed view J.C., 19 August 1890, p.6.

3

See Modern Permanent Society Minutes (A.N.U. Archives).

4

Victorian Yearbooks, 1889, 1890, 1891.

encourage its borrowers by waiving its right to immediately recover fines for non-payment;<sup>1</sup> they were simply added to the principal.

Hardship provides only a partial explanation for default. Far more important was the depreciation of land values which placed borrowers in the invidious position of making repayments that had been set in terms of boom values in order to redeem drastically-depreciated assets. For this reason, the question of house values is central to the question of ownership. Many homes had depreciated so much that, by about 1892-3, their value was less than the sum of outstanding repayments, and the burden of repayments much greater than rent - which, by now, had fallen to 'almost nominal amounts'.<sup>2</sup> By the end of 1893 J.W. Hunt, Manager of the Modern Permanent Building Society - one of the soundest institutions - had to report to his British agents that

we have now rather more than half of our borrowers unable to keep up their fortnightly repayments. Out of this number, that is, those unable to keep up their repayments, about 60 or 65% are unable to pay even interest. In many of these cases we have reduced their interest to 6%. In many others we have taken possession altogether. In these latter cases, the nett receipts from rents do not average more than 2½ to 3% and I do not know when it is to improve.

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1

Standard Mutual Building Society Minutes, 20 November 1891, p.324.

2

J.W. Hunt to Finlayson and Auld, 17 July 1894 in Modern Permanent Building Society, London Letterbook (A.N.U. Archives).

The great trouble is the scarcity of employment. We used to look upon artisan and labourers' cottages as the best possible security, and our business was largely confined to that class of security. Now it is different. When the workman is out of work, he has no other resources and either stays in the house without paying, or clears out altogether and throws the house on our hands.<sup>1</sup>

Seven months later the Society had taken possession of nearly half its loans. Repayments had been suspended and interest only was being paid on half the rest.<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting that the great enemy was now depreciation in values, rather than unemployment.

What I feared has actually come to pass and large numbers have thrown up their houses simply because of the terrible depreciation in values....The working men are asking themselves why they should continue to pay a society 12/6 or 15/- a week when their houses are not now worth as much as they owe, and they can rent others next door at 2/- or 3/- a week.<sup>3</sup>

At the end of 1894 the accounts of the Society showed that almost 65 per cent of its assets were held as house property in possession and only about 26 per cent as advances on full or reduced repayment terms.<sup>4</sup> The building societies had become great, reluctant landlords.

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1

Ibid., 11 December 1893 (emphasis mine).

2

Ibid., 17 July 1894.

3

Ibid., (emphasis mine).

4

A.I.B.R., (1894), p.604, as quoted Butlin, op.cit., p.431. Also see Building Society returns in Statistical Registers.

It is obvious that such developments were bound to have deep and serious effects upon home-ownership and upon the attitudes and ideals which had sustained the practice. From the fore-going account of the nature and incidence of depreciation, depopulation and mobility, we may surmise that falls in home-ownership rates were most likely to have occurred among three main classes of householders:

- (i) those who were recent borrowers from building societies rather than those who had paid off their mortgages or were well-advanced in repayment.
- (ii) those whose properties depreciated most substantially in value.
- (iii) those who were employed in occupations especially liable to unemployment or insolvency.

It follows fairly naturally from (i) and (ii) that newly-settled suburbs were likely, at least in the first instance, to have suffered a more radical decline in home-ownership. However, as depreciation of values became a more significant factor, and as values began to fall in 'old' as well as 'new' suburbs, it may be supposed that home-ownership rates would have declined in the 'older' suburbs as well. These suppositions are, in fact, consistent with the pattern of ownership which emerged in the sample suburbs. Perhaps the most surprising feature of Table 7.23 (below) — the stability of ownership rates in Collingwood — is more comprehensible when it is viewed in relation to the apparent decline of ownership in that suburb during the

late 'eighties. By 1888-9, one assumes, only a small fraction of its householders were purchasers by instalment and thus endangered by the depression.

TABLE 7.23

PERCENT HOUSES OWNER-OCCUPIED BY SUBURBS  
1888-9, 1893-4, 1898-9

	1888-9	1893-4	1898-9
Collingwood	35.8 (271)	36.2 (246)	34.2 (260)
St Kilda	40.9 (325)	40.4 (344)	29.6 (405)
Footscray	62.0 (237)	49.7 (298)	40.3 (335)
Hawthorn	61.4 (295)	52.8 (352)	34.6 (407)

The extent to which these trends are associated with the fortunes of lending institutions may be judged from the pattern of repossessions which had emerged by the end of our period. (See Table 7.24). Judging from this evidence (which may be an unsound basis for any very tight inferences), insurance companies and banks would seem to have specialised in lending to middle class clients and building societies to the working class. The table (below) does not include what appear to be repossessions by estate agents, 'landlords' and private speculators. In both Hawthorn and Footscray there is evidence that some estate agents acquired large property holdings at this time.

TABLE 7.24

HOUSES IN THE HANDS OF LENDING INSTITUTIONS (1898)

	<u>Houses</u>	<u>% Total Sample</u>
Footscray	83	22.4
Hawthorn	75	18.9
Collingwood	51	16.6
St Kilda	52	12.6

These were the new proprietors; who, it must now be asked, did they expropriate? In fact, it would seem that scarcely any class escaped (See Table 7.25 below).

TABLE 7.25

PERCENT HOUSES OWNER-OCCUPIED BY HOUSEHOLDER'S OCCUPATION.  
(1888-9, 1893-4, 1898-9)

	1888-9	1893-4	1898-9
Professional and Managerial	52.2 (113)	57.1 (112)	34.5 (116)
Shopkeepers and Indep. Trades	53.4 (215)	38.9 (221)	31.0 (248)
Clerks and Shop Assistants	45.6 (114)	44.5 (119)	37.5 (128)
Artisans	47.9 (263)	47.4 (274)	36.4 (297)
Service and Unskilled	44.4 (207)	39.4 (231)	26.8 (306)
Not in the Workforce	53.6 (166)	56.4 (234)	41.6 (279)
Miscellaneous and Unknown	50.0 (50)	32.7 (49)	27.3 (33)

This table is not easily interpreted. Fluctuations in some of the principal occupational categories cannot be satisfactorily disentangled from fluctuations, which they reflect to some extent, in the geographical distribution of home-ownership. For example, the apparent stability of home-ownership among artisans is associated, in some measure, with the comparative stability of ownership in Collingwood - where many artisans lived.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the greatly increased numbers of householders 'not in the workforce' and the actual increase in ownership in that group (1888-9 - 1893-4) presumably reflects a tendency for bread winners to transfer ownership to their dependents in order to frustrate creditors. It is consistent with the little available evidence, and with a priori assumptions, that 'professional and managerial' and 'clerks and shop assistants' were most inclined to adopt this practice; to this extent, the ownership rates attributed to them may err on the low side.<sup>2</sup>

These qualifications aside, it would seem that two classes were most heavily expropriated by depression: 'shopkeepers and independent tradesmen' and 'service and

---

1

Yet it seems that ownership among artisans was relatively stable in all sample suburbs, and no class of householders in Collingwood had such a stable rate as artisans.

2

Nevertheless, 'clerks and shop assistants', perhaps because this category included most clerical public servants, were remarkably immune from expropriation.

unskilled' workers. These were, respectively, the most numerous class of insolvents and the main constituents of the unemployed.<sup>1</sup> Many insolvent shopkeepers appear to have been in business in the new outer suburbs; when their customers departed, they were left with assets doubly depreciated.<sup>2</sup> 'Labourers' always headed lists of the unemployed, and service workers, especially tramway and railway employees, were hard-put to maintain themselves. In 1893, a tramway conductor, facing drastic wage-reduction, reminded his employers that many 'men in the company's employ had built their little houses at the tramway termini, and...had to pay their instalments to the building societies'.<sup>3</sup> In the following months many of them were to join the thousands of expropriated workmen.

It was argued above that in the second phase of the depression the depreciation of land values became a more significant factor in depressing home-ownership rates. The figures in Table 7.25 are, in fact, nicely consistent with this view. The decline in values - which by this time affected all suburbs and all classes of dwellings - produced so steep and uniform a decline in home-ownership that, by 1898, it could be claimed that, at least in a majoritarian sense, landlordism had supplanted individual ownership.

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1

See below chapter 8.

2

'Goodwill' on suburban groceries was virtually non-existent. A.G.J., 19 April 1892, p.93.

3

Age, 7 February 1893, p.6B.

Melbournians now began to wonder

whether, after all, the modern development of the [building society] system is not a huge mistake, whether societies really and truly do render an economic service, whether it is not imprudent for the earners of wages and salaries to invest their savings in immovable property.<sup>1</sup>

But houses, to many, were not simply 'immovable property'; their value was spiritual as well as economic. With the 'immovable property', the ideal, too, was lost. 'Mortgage laid its heavy hand on the sixteen and thirty-two perch allotment, and its gripping fingers slowly strangled the petty suburban proprietor.'<sup>2</sup> Gone, now, was the day of the tradesman in his five-room wooden cottage in the suburbs with a garden in front, a laced verandah and a 'small iron-framed, time-payment piano, on which his daughter...discoursed popular airs with a powerful manual execution'.<sup>3</sup> Now the 'petty suburban proprietors' had to surrender their gardens and their pianos and retreat to the older, inner suburbs. What had become of 'Home'?

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1

A.I.B.R., 19 November, p.748.

2

Francis Adams, 'The Labour Movement in Australia' in Fortnightly Review, vol.LVI, 1891, p.184. Adams' obituary was slightly premature - he actually dates the beginnings of the decline of ownership from 'the last Big Drought of 1884' - and in other details was wildly astray. He also believed that the Building Societies were 'manipulated by one or two capitalists who have grown fat on the need of the workmen'.

3

Ibid.

Home - good Lord! a three-roomed hovel 'twixt  
 a puddle and a drain,  
 In harmonious connection on the left with Liver  
 Lane,  
 Where a crippled man is dying, and a horde of  
 children fight,  
 And a woman in the horrors howls remorsefully  
 at night.

It has stables close behind it, and an ash-heap  
 for a lawn,  
 And is furnished with the tickets of the things  
 we have in pawn;  
 And all day the place is haunted by a melancholy  
 crowd  
 Who beg everything or borrow, and to steal are  
 not too proud.

Through the day come weary women, too, with  
 famine-haunted eyes  
 Hawking things that are not wanted - things that  
 no one every buys.  
 And I hate the prying neighbours, in their  
 animal content  
 And the devilish persistence of the man who  
 wants the rent.<sup>1</sup>

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1

Edward Dyson, 'In Town' in Rhymes from the Mines  
 (Sydney, 1896). The metre and the sentiments were  
 perhaps suggested by Henry Lawson's 'Faces in the Street'  
 (1887).

CHAPTER 8

MAKING ENDS MEET

Melbourne society, in the mid-'eighties, was said to rest, not upon birth, rank or class but, fundamentally, upon distinctions of wealth. Twopeny, for example, remarked that 'wealth is, of course, the predominating factor here, as rank in London'. The novelist Ada Cambridge believed that 'money is the gauge of social consequence in Melbourne'.<sup>1</sup> Their remarks were meant to indicate more than the mere absence of a traditional aristocratic establishment; wealth, boldly asserted, and income conspicuously consumed together defined the levels of prestige and, to a large extent, the boundaries of social intercourse. The cultivation of a certain style of life - 'social advertising' as Edmund Finn called it<sup>2</sup> - was a main preoccupation of Melbourne Society. Among the 'upper classes' there was a demand for 'a class of goods in the way of dress, ornament and decoration not demanded by Adelaide, by Sydney or even by India itself'.<sup>3</sup>

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1

Twopeny, op.cit., p.105, Cambridge in Australasian (supplement), 4 November 1882, p.1D.

2

Edmund Finn, - 'The Phases of Social Advertizing', The Victorian Review, 1 July 1882; p.357. 'The business advertisement seeks custom and profit, the social advertisement aims at creating notice, good opinion or envy in the breasts of our fellows'.

3

C.H.S., 'Wealth and Waste', Australasian, 10 May 1879, p.584.

Indeed, critics had often to reproach - or satirize - a tendency to pursue the symbols of status at the expense of its inward graces. The 'middle classes' were supposedly obsessed with the mindless mimicry of 'genteel accomplishments'. Even the working classes relished definitions of their position in terms of consumer status rather than class. James Service, speaking on Eight Hours Day 1885, repudiated the phrase 'working people'. 'I think it would be better', he suggested, 'to speak of those who did not dine in the evening (Laughter and Cheers). I think that is the best distinction that could be drawn.'<sup>1</sup>

This emphasis upon status and consumption and repudiation of the language of class and power are natural reactions from a period of social and political turmoil. The constitutional crisis of the late 'seventies was portrayed as a social crisis and both the politics and the social discourse of the early 'eighties indicate a desire for the suspension of old class antagonisms. By the mid-'eighties, however, it may be argued that the language of status had a descriptive, more than a palliative, function. A closer examination of incomes, wealth, consumption and styles of life promises to throw light upon fundamental social distinctions and

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1

Argus, 2 April 1885, p.6B.

upon some of the more striking modifications produced by economic change.<sup>1</sup>

It is as well at the outset to reconstruct, as far as the scattered and slender evidence permits, the contemporary social distribution of incomes and wealth. The difficulty of such a task is obvious. Almost the only source of evidence - individual wage and salary rates - is an imperfect guide to family incomes. Ideally, it would be possible to account for relative security of employment, multiple employment, non-wage and non-salary incomes (especially capital income), the contribution of working wives, children and boarders, overtime, bonuses, allowances, and other complicating factors. Except in a few cases, however, evidence is confined to rates, and in some instances even this information is wanting.

Table 8.1 (below) presents an outline (no more) of the approximate ranges of salaries, wages and incomes

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1

I use 'class' in its classic or Marxist sense to mean a group of persons who share a common relation to the means of production, a common interest as against other classes'. In the terms adopted by R. Aron (La Lutte de Classes, Paris 1964, chapter III) it is a 'real' group. By 'status' I mean the position assigned to an individual, by himself or others, upon a hierarchy of prestige. In Aron's terms, status is a 'nominal' group. The definitions adopted here are, broadly, in conformity with M. Weber, The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, (New York, 1947), p.424.

for some typical occupations within the structure already employed in chapter 7. (See Appendix 3)

TABLE 8.1 APPROXIMATE INCOME-RANGES BY OCCUPATIONS (c.1885)<sup>1</sup>

	£ p.a.
Professionals	400-1500
Managerial	400-4000
Shopkeepers	200-500
Artisans	130-180
Clerks	75-400
Shop Assistants	125-200
Service	100-150
Labourers	75-90

The relative movements in incomes during the high boom (1885-90) is difficult to assess. Certainly there were general increases in money incomes and probably in 'real incomes' as well. The most substantial gains seem to have been among the professional and managerial classes, but there were also large increases among clerks - especially in the higher ranges - and shopkeepers. The rises in the official wage rates of skilled manual occupations - which were small - probably do not reveal the full extent of

<sup>1</sup>

I have attempted to locate the ranges for the great majority of income-earners. For the first three categories especially the evidence is patchy and the probable range of incomes very wide. It goes without saying that some incomes would have exceeded or fallen short of my ranges.

gains in terms of reduced transitional unemployment and increased overtime payments.<sup>1</sup>

The relationship between this structure of incomes and levels of prestige in the society at large was a subtle one; but of some connection there can be no doubt. It was a fundamental assumption of contemporary observers - like R.E.N. Twopeny for example - and, particularly, of 'ladies' columnists', in whose scribblings it emerged as the basis of almost every contemporary domestic problem - 'The Servant Difficulty', 'The Dress Bill', the 'Marriage Question'. In fact, this last question largely resolves itself into an anticipatory consideration of the larger question of 'making ends meet'.

Throughout the eighteen-eighties there was continuous debate over the question: 'Why don't the young men marry?' Various explanations were offered for this apparently indubitable fact: the young ladies

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1

Some members of the managerial group were certainly receiving prodigious earnings and capital gains. Prominent stock brokers, for example, were said to earn as much as £7000 p.a. from commission alone in 1888 (J.C., 16 November 1888, p.7.) Butlin (op.cit., p.224) estimates that professional earnings increased from an average of £516 (1885) to £603(1890). Judging from the slender evidence of advertisements, shopkeepers' profits would also seem to have increased; certainly retail margins increased from 29.5 (1885) to 35.1 (1890) (Butlin, op. cit., p.204). Clerical officers in the three companies whose records I examined enjoyed substantial increases in salary, especially in the higher ranges (£200 and over). It is difficult, however, to separate the effects of 'normal' promotion and of overall increase in the scale of remuneration.

of the day were alleged to be frivolous, over-educated, given to extravagant dress; young men, on the other hand, were said to be wanting in domestic inclinations and a sense of social duty. Some believed that the spinsters were suffering the competition of attractive moneyed widows while the impecunious bachelors were having to make their way against women clerks and post mistresses. Most commonly the difficulty was attributed to the inability of the young men -especially those of the middle classes- to establish and maintain a respectable ménage.<sup>1</sup>

As explanations, each of these theories was superfluous; there is no convincing evidence of a decline in the tendency of men to marry. The proportion of marriages per 1000 marriagable men was actually higher in 1881 (57.42) than it had been a decade earlier (52.43). Nor does it appear to have declined very substantially over the following decade (55.24 in 1891).<sup>2</sup>

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1

Australasian, 19 June 1880, p.785, Argus, series of letters 15, 19, 20, 25, 29, 31 May, 12, 14 June 1880, Melbourne Punch, 9 June 1881, p.231. Further series in mid-'eighties, Australasian, 14 February (313), 7 March (439), 11 April (727), 25 April, (775), 6 June 1885 (1063), 20 June (1159), 4 July (7), 18 July (103), 3 October (653), 31 October 1885, Supplement, p.5. See also Gray Letters, 8 October 1885.

2

Victorian Yearbook, 1902, p.157.





Matrimony, after all, is merely a matter of money; it implies the question satisfactorily answered: 'Can I keep a wife and keep up a respectable appearance on my present income?' How seldom can a professional man, or a bank clerk, or a civil servant answer that question in the affirmative before he approaches middle life. A young man in a profession, whose income is no larger than if he had gone in for a trade, finds it all he can manage to keep up appearances proper to his station in life. The thought of marriage does not enter his mind, or if it does, he is appalled by the hopelessness of his position. His own pride, as well as the little attention that is often bestowed on household affairs by young ladies, would render the keeping of a domestic absolutely necessary. If he could live before on £150 a year, how could he expect to do so then with the same degree of comfort on an income of less than £350 or £400?<sup>1</sup>

There was said to have been no decline in marriage among 'those who subsist by manual labour, or among the storekeeping or smaller trading public'. Rather was it among that class, of which bank officials were taken as a typical example, whose 'social position' was better

---

1

'Young Bachelor', Argus, 15 June 1880, p.6. The domestic incompetence of the young ladies is also a subject of complaint in an anonymous rhyme copied (c.1885-7?) in the notebook of J.D. Williamson, a builder (lent to the writer by Mr C. Vigus, Essendon).

Time was when girls could card and spin  
 And wash and bake and brew,  
 But now they have to keep a maid  
 If they have aught to do.

than their 'pecuniary one'.<sup>1</sup> These unfortunates faced the daunting alternatives of either contracting into a life of genteel poverty, marrying for money, continually deferring marriage in the hope of promotion, or finally, determining always to remain a bachelor. This last course, all agreed, was to be deplored; it left the young clerk or professional man a prey to the moral perils of masturbation and the demi-monde or to the anxieties of an uneasy abstinence.<sup>2</sup>

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1

'Coelebs of Twenty-five', Argus, 22 May 1880, p.9. Officials in some banks were, in fact, forbidden to marry until they had attained to a certain salary (about £250). See S.J. Butlin, Australia and New Zealand Bank (London 1961), pp.260-1.

2

H.D. D'Esterre Taylor, 'Something to do for our Boys', Victorian Review, 1 February 1884, pp.394ff, and J.W. Springthorpe 'On the Psychological Aspect of the Sexual Appetite'. A.M.G., October 1884, p.11. The young man who resorted to prostitutes was, in fact, faced with a system of charges and institutions which reproduced the gradations in most other forms of consumption. There were so-called 'respectable', 'high class' or 'flash' brothels like those of Madame Brussels which were said to be magnificently furnished - sometimes on liberal credit from large furniture merchants-and discreetly conducted. The clientele comprised 'a superior class of man' according to the superintendent of the city police who was himself discovered in one of these houses under suspicious circumstances. (Royal Commission the Police, V.P.P., 21/1883, Q6803ff). There were, secondly, the street-walkers of Collins-street who were said to consist, very largely, of 'sly women' - women who lived outwardly respectable lives as domestics or music teachers in the suburbs and came into the city at about 10 o'clock in the evening to ply their trade. These, apparently, often operated from 'respectable receiving houses' or hotels which they used as places of assignation; sometimes their proprietors also supplied rooms and operated as 'short-

(footnote continued on p. 458)

Artisans and labourers, on the other hand, looked for no probable increase in their wages and needed to maintain only modest appearances. Their main requirement for marriage - apart from a willing partner - was a small stock of capital for furniture and other necessaries. 'An Old Housekeeper', writing for would-be householders on £3 per week, advised that such couples might properly marry, even before their majority, on the savings from two years' work:

... there is not the slightest reason why in two years a young mechanic, tradesman or clerk should not lay by a hundred pounds to marry upon at least and I think in the same time a girl, if she be a servant, a shop-woman, a teacher or even factory hand, badly as they are paid, may herself save twenty or thirty pounds towards setting up in life. <sup>1</sup>

(footnote 2 continued from p.457)  
time houses'. There were, thirdly, the 'low accommodation houses' and the very lowest types of brothels like those in Romeo-lane, Bilking Square and other haunts off Little Bourke Street. These last were often controlled by Chinese or European 'bullies' and prostitution here was largely a 'front for theft'. (See evidence of Standish question 53-55, 71-2, Dalton E386-422, Winch 1032, 1037, 1059, O'Mara 352-3, in Report of the Select Committee upon the Bill for the Prevention of Contagious Diseases. V.P.P., D14/1878.)

<sup>1</sup>

Australian Housewives' Manual, p.29. Also see evidence of Dr J. Singleton to Select Committee of Legislative Assembly on the Contagious Diseases Bill loc.cit., Qs1729-35 that even young men earning no more than £100 p.a., could afford to marry; below that, he implies, his wife might need to 'earn money with her needle'.

Some of this sum might be devoted to insurance or building society payments; a large portion of the rest was marked for furniture and household equipment. According to advertisements it was possible to furnish a four-roomed house for as little as £27. Twopeny gives a list of articles for a labourer's cottage amounting to only £19. These, however, were optimistic estimates. 'An Old House-keeper' supplies a more complete list (including utensils, drapes, linen as well as standing furniture) which, without padding, raised the total to over £50 at the least:

	<u>'Desirable'</u>	<u>'Make-do'</u> <sup>1</sup>
Kitchen	31. 4. 9	31. 4. 9
Bedrooms and Passage	21.10. 0	11. 5. 5
Living Room	35. 0. 6	23. 3. 6
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total:	£95.15. 3	£65.13. 3
	<hr/>	<hr/>

<sup>1</sup>

Ibid., p.18, R.E.N. Twopeny, op.cit., pp.47-8. The 'desirable' estimate included carpets, drapes, chiffonier, sofa, table cloths, salt cellars, water jug, etc., many of which were probably rare in working class homes. She does not include a sewing machine - an article of household use which was becoming common at this time (the numbers imported rose dramatically from 14,615 in 1880 to 21,300 in 1885) - or a piano which, as an instrument of 'home culture' enjoyed extraordinary popularity. A cheap sewing machine cost £5-10 in 1885; a piano could be purchased from £25-30. Imports of pianos rose from 1248 (1881) to 5170 (1889) and there were about ten local manufacturers.

Above the level of 'make-do' there was a certain uniformity of taste in furniture which made the effects of a workingman's home similar in style - if not in quantity and cost - to those of his betters. This, as Twopeny's snobbish account suggests, was a partial consequence of the debased taste of the middle classes; but it owed something, too, to the aspirations of the lower orders:

[The] development of taste is not confined to the more wealthy classes. A man who has his house furnished for £200 or £300 wants his furniture to be of the same general order, although not, of course, as costly, as the man who spends £2000 or £3000. For what may be called middle class furniture there is more especially an active demand.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed the pressure of demand for furniture of all sorts was regarded as the most convincing retort to those who doubted if the young men were marrying.<sup>2</sup>

Such high standards of furnishing imply that, among the working class as among the middle class, marriage called for some exercise of prudence, some deferment of gratification. However, so liberal were the facilities for credit<sup>3</sup> that a couple could actually set up house with virtually no capital at all. In 1885 George Gray's daughter Julia, much against her

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1

Twopeny, op.cit., pp.38-48; Argus, 30 August 1884, p.13B.

2

Ibid.

3

For an account of hire-purchase arrangements see Wertheim v. Virtue in Victorian Law Reports, vol.XVI, pp.369-72.

father's wishes, married 'a second rate journeyman plasterer'. The couple were quite without means and for a time they lived separately - she with her aunt, he in lodgings. After a short time, however,

they ... rented a cottage at 14/- a week, and furnished it on credit for which they have to pay 12/6 per week, each payment being counted as part of the purchase money until the whole is paid for which I understand will take between two and three years.<sup>1</sup>

Early in 1886 the husband was brought to court for his debts; but for the fact that they did not own it, their furniture would have been seized. Evicted from their house, they moved from one to another barely ahead of the bailiff, finally residing in lodgings.<sup>2</sup> Their situation and fate were perhaps not unusual.

Apart from such scattered evidence, however, the effects of differential marriage patterns are to be measured only indirectly. Nevertheless, the following table of the distribution by age and suburb of never-married males does strongly suggest an underlying relationship between deferred marriage and social class. Middle-class suburbs (St Kilda, Brighton, Hawthorn) have larger proportions of never-married males (25-30) than do the working class suburbs of Brunswick, Port Melbourne, Williamstown, Collingwood, North Melbourne and Footscray. (The high ranking of Melbourne is to be explained by the presence of boarding houses and hotels.)

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1

George Gray Letters, 4 May, 10 August 1885.

2

Ibid., 20 February 1886, 20 January 1887.

TABLE 8.4      PERCENTAGE NEVER-MARRIED TO ALL MALES by AGE  
in MELBOURNE MUNICIPALITIES

	1881 <sup>1</sup>				All Ages
	21-25	25-30	30-35	35-40	
Melbourne	84.4	65.1	45.7	35.7	67.1
Kew	93.1	64.6	59.4	45.0	69.4
St Kilda	86.0	60.6	38.2	23.2	67.8
Brighton	81.4	56.4	29.4	18.5	68.2
Hawthorn	84.4	55.6	24.3	16.6	67.5
Richmond	82.9	54.4	23.8	17.2	65.1
Essendon and Flemington	86.6	53.5	22.9	11.4	67.8
Fitzroy	81.7	49.0	31.1	20.0	64.6
South Melbourne	77.5	48.1	29.9	12.5	65.6
Prahran	79.4	45.4	25.4	13.2	64.0
Footscray	73.6	44.7	18.9	11.4	66.2
North Melbourne	77.4	43.8	24.4	17.6	64.8
Collingwood	69.8	41.7	21.9	13.5	64.0
Williamstown	78.5	40.0	26.9	14.7	65.0
Port Melbourne	79.4	33.0	29.4	17.3	64.2
Brunswick	68.4	32.9	16.0	10.5	66.9

Yet, if this evidence is at least consistent with contemporary observations of a broad difference between the marriage patterns and attitudes of the middle and

<sup>1</sup>

From Victorian Census, 1881, 'Conjugal Condition'. For social composition of suburbs compare chapter 6.

working classes, it cannot be said, judging from similar evidence at 1891, that the succeeding decade produced any striking accentuation of the contrast. A broad distinction between middle-class and working-class suburbs can still be made; but the range of overall variation was less and the differentiation between the two sorts of suburbs was not so marked.<sup>1</sup>

Having entered the married state - whether recklessly like the 'second-rate journeyman plasterer', or cautiously, like the calculating bank clerk - the benedick was shortly immersed in a perennial 'struggle to make ends meet'. The 'ends' of course, were relative to his particular salary and station in life; yet the demands of status, in a society like 'Marvellous Melbourne', could be almost as pressing as those of necessity. According to the conventional definition of roles described in a previous chapter, it was the wife who, as Ruler of the Home, managed the disposal of the family income. 'Women' as 'An Old Housekeeper' put it, must be the medium through which men spend their money.<sup>2</sup> As men developed more scientific methods of business management, their wives were urged by 'home-management' and 'domestic science' experts to make 'well-managed

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1

From Victorian Census, 1891, 'Conjugal Condition'. No comparable tables were prepared for the Census of 1901.

2

Herald, 25 May 1885.

homes, where scientific knowledge [was] brought to bear upon the daily necessities of food and clothing and the comforts so necessary to health.'<sup>1</sup> 'An Old Housekeeper', only half in jest, entitled one of her guide-books Men and How to Manage Them.

How much 'science' housewives applied to their budgeting of course remains unknown. Although prescriptive guides to household expenditure are the best - indeed the only - evidence available for the study of household consumption patterns, they have obvious deficiencies.<sup>2</sup> Home-management experts certainly exaggerated the returns of thrift and good management: most articles and manuals strongly emphasized the need to avoid waste ('waste from all points of view is a sin'), shun debt, and practice little penny-pinching tricks of economy.<sup>3</sup> All required careful observance of a finely-judged weekly budget. By means of such 'elegant thrift' persons on 'moderate incomes' might 'live a wholesome, refined and comfortable life free from sordid surroundings without straining for false

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1

H.L. Wicken, The Australian Home, (Sydney 1891), p.3.

2

The approach to the social history of the family through budget analysis is associated especially with the name of Frédéric Le Play whose Les Ouvriers Européens (1855) and later works had a deep, though retarded, influence upon such later English sociologists as Charles Booth and Seebohm Rowntree. His central assumption - that the entire life-style and structure of a family is mirrored in its budget - is an extreme, but fruitful one.

3

Wicken, op.cit., p.7, 'Household Finance', Daily Telegraph, 22 February 1890, p.10A-B, Australasian, 30 November 1882, p.211.

appearances'.<sup>1</sup> Even an artisan might purchase 'decent comfort' and keep up 'a respectable appearance in the world'.<sup>2</sup> The principles of 'domestic economy' were but another derivation of 'the suburban philosophy'. Both decried hand-to-mouth, unsystematic scrambling on the one hand, and vain striving to maintain false appearances on the other. They urged saving without scrimping, respectability without repute.

Doubtless such advice, was more ignored than observed. The artisan's or labourer's income was not always regular enough to permit the steady discipline of budgeting and his wife, like Mrs Yabsley in Louis Stone's Jonah, probably 'did her shopping at the last minute, in a panic', always forgetting something which 'she got on Sunday morning from the little shop at the corner'.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, 'the little shop at the corner' was probably the main, and even the only, agency exercising discipline upon the household management of some families. Credit for food supplies was liberally available and, if the remarks of 'An Old Housekeeper'

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1 Men and How to Manage Them, p.[16].

2 Australian Housewives' Manual, p.[vii].

3 London, 1911, p.16. Stone's work is set in another city (Sydney) at a later time. Nevertheless it is based upon close observation of working class life which, in this matter, is unlikely to have altered much from time to time or place to place. For English working class behaviour in this regard see John Burnett, Plenty and Want, A Social History of diet in England from 1815 to the present day. (London, 1966), pp.144-6.

may be accepted, the shopkeeper selling for cash or offering a discount for immediate payment was something of an innovation.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, having conceded the imperfections of prescriptive budgets as a guide to family expenditures, it may still be argued that, in the absence of more reliable data, they do afford at least some valuable impressions of the standards and styles of life supportable by various incomes and of the approximate 'income-thresholds' for important forms of conspicuous consumption such as servants, carriages, private education etc.<sup>2</sup> For this purpose it may suffice to abstract four broad classes of income-earner: the artisan on £3 per week, the clerk or shopman on £200-300 a year, the more prosperous shopman or junior professional man on £500-600 a year, and the well-established professional or business man on £800 to £1000 a year. TABLE (inserted) sets out the fragmentary budget materials available for these classes.

The most substantial item in all budgets was food. In accordance with conventional ideas about consumption, it constituted a rather larger proportion of total income among low-income families (about a third) than

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1

Australian Housewives' Manual, p.38; and for career of one 'cash' grocery see article on F.J. Cato in J. Smith (ed), Cyclopedia of Victoria, vol.I, p.524-5.

2

For the extensive use of similar materials see J. A. Banks, Prosperity and Parenthood, (London 1954) chapter 5.

BUDGET INFORMATION.

\* = provision of unknown amount made.  
 - = no provision made

AMOUNT	£156 p.a. <sup>1</sup>	£200 - 300		£500 - 600			£850 - 1000		
BUDGET	£156	£200(1880) <sup>2</sup>	£300+(1885) <sup>3</sup>	£500 I <sup>4</sup>	£500 II <sup>5</sup>	£600 <sup>6</sup>	£850 <sup>7</sup>	£1000 <sup>8</sup>	
FOOD									
Butcher	6.0			17.0	15.6	15.0	18.0		
Baker	1.2			5.0	5.0	3.0	5.0		
Grocer	9.8			£1. 0.0	£1. 4.0	£1. 7.0	£1. 0.0		
Fruiterer	2.0			5.0	4.0	? <sup>9</sup>	} 10.0 <sup>9</sup>		
Fishmonger	-					3.0		? <sup>9</sup>	
Milk	1.2			9.0	7.6	? <sup>9</sup>			
Wines, Spirits & Ale	-			5.0 <sup>10</sup>	5.0 <sup>10</sup>		£1. 0.0 <sup>11</sup>		
TOTAL FOOD	£1. 0.0	£1. 0.0	£1.10.0	£3. 1.0	£3. 1.0	£2. 8.0	£3.13.0		
RENT	10.0	14.0	[15.6]	*	*	£2. 0.0	£3. 0.0	£3. 3.0	
FUEL and LIGHT	5.0	*	4.6	14.0	11.6	8.0	15.0		
CLOTHES	10.0	10.0	15.6	*	*	£2. 0.0	£3. 0.0		
LIFE INSURANCE	1.6		2.10						
FRIENDLY SOCIETY	1.0								
BUILDING SOCIETY	4.6								
SERVANTS	-	6.0	11.6	£1. 0.4	£1.10.0	£1. 9.0	£1.19.0	£2. 1.0	
HORSE and BUGGY	-	-	-	-	-	£2. 0.0	15.0 <sup>12</sup>		
TRAVELLING (HOLIDAYS)	-				*		10.0		
PEW RENT and CHARITY	-					*	5.0		
SCHOOL and MUSIC	-			*	*		15.0		
BABIES FUND	4.0		*						
TOTAL BUDGETED EXPENDITURE	£2.16.0	£2.10.0	£3.17.0	[£4.15.4]	[£5. 2.6]	£10.5.0	£14.12.0		

NOTES.

- <sup>1</sup>From 'An Old Housekeeper', Australian Housewife's Manual, (2nd edition, 1885), esp. pp.35 and 68, man and wife only.
- <sup>2</sup>John Anderson letter in Argus, 15 June 1880, p.6. (Man and wife only.)
- <sup>3</sup>'An Old Housekeeper', Men and How to Manage Them, (1885), p.117-8. (Man and wife only.)
- <sup>4</sup>'Thrifty Mary' in reply to 'Inexperienced Housekeeper', Australasian, 21 July 1883, p.71. The latter had asked for advice on budgeting for a family with six children. (Ibid., 16 June 1883, p.743) but did not request information on drapery, clothes etc.
- <sup>5</sup>'Contriving Lucy' in reply to 'Inexperienced Housekeeper', Australasian, 23 June 1883, p.775. These estimates were challenged as too low by 'Plain Jane', ibid., 7 July 1883, p.7, and defended by 'Contriving Lucy', 21 July 1883, p.71. The only alteration made as a result of this discussion was to raise milk from 5/- to 7/6.
- <sup>6</sup>'A Willing Worker', Australasian, 7 April 1885, p.439.
- <sup>7</sup>'Housemother', Armadale, Australasian, 7 April 1885, p.439. The budget is for a husband, wife and two children aged 14 and 15.
- <sup>8</sup>'Perth', Australasian, 28 February 1885, p.391, husband, wife and 'two little ones.'
- <sup>9</sup>These families had poultry, cows and, one, a vegetable garden worked by a man servant.
- <sup>10</sup>'Wine and Ale'.
- <sup>11</sup>'Wine and Spirits'.
- <sup>12</sup>Horse feed only.

it did in higher income families (a fourth to a fifth), although the gradation was less marked in terms of 'total budgeted expenditure'. The average Victorian's diet, on this and other evidence, appears to have differed quite markedly from the Englishman's. He consumed more meat, sugar and tea.<sup>1</sup> Meat, of course, was cheaper than in England, and mutton especially so.<sup>2</sup> The workingman's habit of eating meat three times a day was said, by some, to produce an excess of animal spirits.<sup>3</sup> It was a matter for particular pride that, in Victoria, 'the humblest people can afford meat, fish, eggs, fruit, poultry, butter, cream, vegetables, sugar, tea, coffee and flowers'.<sup>4</sup> Twopeny believed - and the budgets tend to confirm - that there was a remarkable sameness in the diets of all classes. Their fare differed rather in quantity and presentation than in kind. An artisan family could barely afford to have

---

1

Meat, United Kingdom, 119 lbs. per head per annum; Victoria 276 lbs. (Did the Irish seriously depreciate the United Kingdom average?); Sugar, United Kingdom, 68.99 lbs. per annum; Victoria 90.75 lbs.; tea, United Kingdom, 4.70 lbs. per annum, Victoria 10.01 lbs per annum. (Victorian Yearbook, 1893, vol.II, pp.356, 363.) Englishmen, moreover seem to have eaten more sugar than most Continentals or Americans (see John Burnett, op.cit., p.157).

2

	London (1885)		Melbourne (1885)	
	Mutton	beef	mutton	beef
per lb.	4½ - 7½	3¾ - 6¾	1½ - 5 <sup>d</sup>	4 - 8 <sup>d</sup>

from Victorian Yearbook, 1893, vol.II, p.360 and 1886, p.1095.

3

Twopeny, op.cit., pp.62-3; Charles Iredell, Ten Years' Practice in Australia (Melbourne 1896), pp.40-1; George Augustus Sala, Argus, 15 August, 1885, p.5C.

4

Men and How to Manage Them, p.19.

a friend or two to the evening meal once a week; they had, moreover, to take care 'not to attempt to exchange visits with people of very much larger means'. Even the clerks and small shopkeepers on £300 were assumed to have quarters too small and unprepossessing for dinner parties; they were advised to confine their hospitality to four to six guests at a simple, informal supper. It was only those of more liberal means - like 'Housemother' (£850 p.a.) - who could afford to go out 'a good deal to dinners and parties' and could give 'little dinners of nine courses'.<sup>1</sup>

As in England, the domestic economists excluded estimates for beer and tobacco from their working class budgets. Per capita consumption of beer in Victoria was less than in the United Kingdom but rather more than in most other countries. (28.74 gals p.a., in United Kingdom; 16.0 gals in Victoria; cf. e.g. 10.74 gals in United States). Even if its impression upon working-class expenditure was less than in Britain (where it may have absorbed as much as a quarter of incomes), it may still have jeopardized such vulnerable items as life insurance and building society payments. Beer, the working man's exclusive beverage, was consumed at all levels of society; the £500 budgets also included wine while the £850 list provided for spirits.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless it was beer rather

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1

Twopeny, op.cit., p.71, Australian Housewives' Manual pp.104-5, Men and How to Manage Them, p.40, Australasian, 7 April 1885, p.439.

2

Victorian Yearbook, 1885-6, p.539; and Burnett op.cit., pp.154-5.

than wine or spirits which showed the most striking per capita increase in consumption during the 'eighties.<sup>1</sup> Hotels were most numerous, even on a population basis, in working class areas. In 1885 Collingwood had 87, Richmond 64, Footscray 33; by contrast Hawthorn had only nine and Kew seven. The middle classes, it would seem, drank at home or club. Proposals to amend the Licensing Act in 1885 to allot licenses in a fixed proportion to population were opposed, with some justification, as 'class legislation'.<sup>2</sup>

The relations of rent and income are discussed at length in a previous chapter. There it was observed that rent absorbed a fairly constant proportion of all incomes (about 15-20 per cent). The same was true of dress which, like housing, was said to constitute a reliable guide to its owner's status:

The question of the amount suitable for a dress allowance is easily discoverable. A wife must dress according to her position in society - indeed, very often the status of the husband is gauged by the gowns of the wife.<sup>3</sup>

---

1

From 14.9 gals per head (1881) to 19.3 gals per head (1890) and spirits 1.8 down to 1.5 gals per head; wine 1.88 gets up to 1.94. Calculated from Statistical Registers.

2

Argus, 22 July 1885, p.6E, 29 July 1885, p.5C, 2 September 1885, p.9D, 10 September 1885, p.4G. Also see Ann M. Mitchell, 'Temperance and the Liquor Question in Later Nineteenth Century Victoria'. M.A. thesis, University of Melbourne, 1966, Table II opposite p.9.

3

Australasian, 24 January 1885, p.151.

Artisans and labourers were usually assumed to escape the compulsory vanity of 'respectable' dressing and may have resorted more frequently to mending or second-hand purchases. Yet it is significant that the women of Melbourne - poor as well as rich - were reckoned the best dressed in Australia.<sup>1</sup> The home sewing machine and the introduction of standardized 'ready-to-wear' clothing for women, as well as men, were beginning to affect a democratic revolution in dress.<sup>2</sup> Melbourne soft goods houses were sensitive both to the vagaries of London fashion<sup>3</sup> and, it would seem, to local moods. The annus mirabilis 1888, for example, brought something of a reversal in taste, as the established 'aesthetic and medieval styles' were supplanted by the 'ruffled, picturesque coquetry' of the eighteenth century. 'Straight, limp, light fabrics' gave way to 'rich heavy stuffs' (silk and satin imports trebled between 1880 and 1890), 'elaborate hairdressing' and 'sparkling, fanciful, omnipresent' jewellery.<sup>4</sup>

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1

E.g., R.E.N. Twopeny, op.cit., pp.73ff.

2

There were, in fact, four main sources of dress-supply for women: a) the private dress-maker; b) the merchant who made up the cloth he offered usually at a flat rate charge; c) the ready-made clothier; d) the home-maker.

3

Bright and Hitchcock, London Letterbook, 4 January 1884, p.308, 18 April 1884, p.381. (M.U. Archives). Robert Reid, London Memobook, 26 March 1897, p.99. (A.N.U. Archives).

4

Table Talk, 9 March 1888, p.8. Victorian Statistical Register, 1880, 1890, 'Interchange'.

The dripping ornament which was the essence of boom architecture had its counterpart in the world of fashion.<sup>1</sup>

The amounts apportioned to servants in the budgets correspond to domestic establishments of varying size. Thus the family on £200 could afford to employ only a girl, that on £300-400 a maid of all work.<sup>2</sup> Families on £500 (with a large number of children) had a nurse as well, while the £600 family had a boy, a nurse and a general servant. Finally, the £850 and £1000 families had two women and a man servant.

Or rather, they could have afforded them; for a persistent shortage of servant labour was perhaps the most serious, and certainly the most discussed, problem of domestic management agitating middle class wives. Several causes may be assigned for this deficiency. One was the cessation of assisted immigration in the early 'eighties. Irish assisted immigrants had composed a large proportion of servants: they were usually trained for little else and their entry into

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1

Cf. J.M. Freeland, Architecture in Australia (Melbourne, 1968) p.171.

2

But, according to 'An Old Housekeeper' (Men and How to Manage Them, p.118) families on less than £300 might have to do without domestic help. John Anderson's £200 budget is, significantly, designed for a young aspiring clerk. The rates of pay for female servants in 1885 were:

Cook	£40-75 p.a.
Laundresses	£35-52 p.a.
General Servants	£26-40 p.a.
Housemaids	£25-40 p.a.
Nursemaids	£20-40 p.a.
Girls	5/- - 8/- per week

(from Victorian Yearbook 1885-6, p.469)

such employment at 14 or 15 disembarassed their usually poor, and often prolific, parents.<sup>1</sup> Colonials, on the other hand, were disinclined 'to allow their daughters to lower themselves to such a degree'.<sup>2</sup> There were, secondly, other more attractive and remunerative fields of employment. Factory work, for example, offered more independence, more free time, the opportunity of living with parents or friends,<sup>3</sup> while domestic employment, especially in a single-servant establishment, promised few compensating attractions:

What sort of life is domestic service where only one young woman is employed, and treated as servants are treated in some households ...? She is wanted at 6 a.m., or before, and keeps busy all day till bed time at 10 or 11 p.m. 'No followers allowed', not even a brother or sister, lest they should eat or drink something, or take something home. The poor girl cannot sit with the 'family' - she is 'only a servant', and therefore has only the kitchen to sit in if she has any leisure. If there are any grown-up sons, she is liable to instant dismissal if

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1

E.g. Twopeny, op.cit., p.51, 'Four fifths of our servants are Irish, liars and dirty'. The Irish servant, usually caricatured as a monkey-faced cretin, was often the butt for exceptionally cruel and crude humour. (See Melbourne Punch, 29 January 1880, p.48, 22 March 1883, p.113, 29 March 1883, p.121, 12 April 1883, p.144, 31 May 1883, p.214, 5 July 1883, p.1.)

2

Argus, 17 October 1888, p.15A, Australasian, 4 March 1882, p.263.

3

Evidence of John Parry (wholesale clothing manufacturer) to Royal Commission on Shop Employés, V.P.P., 16\*/1883, Q1603, Registry Office proprietor quoted Australasian, 4 March 1882, p.263, evidence of workman to Royal Commission on Factory Act, V.P.P., 18/1884, Q4363.

one of them is seen speaking to her, and the daughters order her about as though she were a convict.<sup>1</sup>

For these various reasons, therefore, the numbers of female servants employed in the metropolitan area did not rise as rapidly as the population as a whole.<sup>2</sup>

The servant shortage was presented as a moral as much as an economic difficulty. Some saw it as the natural consequence of a state education system that disenchanted young colonials with manual labour and led them into morally-dangerous commercial pursuits. Others deplored its probable effects, especially the loss of that formality, regularity and discipline in household affairs which were regarded as fundamental

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1

Garden and Field, January 1888, p.101. The sexual fears suggested by the compulsorily-restrained relations between the servants and grown-up sons, taken together with the servant's heavily degraded position, is reminiscent of the stigma attaching to the negro woman in Southern American Society (c.f. John Dollard, Caste and Class in a Southern Town, New York, 1937, esp. chapter VIII.).

2

Categories are not constant and the following figures are to be taken only as an approximation:

1881	'Domestic Servants'	11,681	in County of Bourke.
1891	'Domestic or Lodging House Servants'	16,581	in Melbourne Metropolitan area.

(from Census of Victoria, 'Occupations', 1881, 1891.)

to the sound nurture of middle class children,<sup>1</sup> The moral leaders of society, including the wives of the Bishop and leading clergy, were perturbed. Opening a Servants' Training Institution in 1883, the Bishop (Dr Moorhouse) dwelt upon the dangers of factory employment and the virtues of domestic service as a training in wifely duty.<sup>2</sup> In 1885, at a public meeting in the Town Hall, a Victorian Domestic Servants' Immigration Society was established: the committee consisted mainly of wealthy matrons.<sup>3</sup> At the height of the boom, the methods of joint stock enterprise were applied to 'the servant difficulty'; a company was formed to arrange the importation of servant girls<sup>4</sup> but, like other ventures of its kind, it had little success.

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1

'Ne Sutor Ultra Crepidam', Argus, 1 December 1888, p.14D, and 'M' in ibid., 19 October 1888, p.13C. There was, in fact, considerable evidence to suggest that domestic employment was, morally, more 'dangerous' than factory or other employment. A large proportion of young girls 'in trouble' assisted by the Society in Aid of Maternity Hospital Patients were domestics (Argus, 29 April 1885, pp.4H and 7B) and a good number of prostitutes had been. (Select Committee of Legislative Assembly on Contagious Diseases Bill, V.P.P., D14/1878, questions 40-41, 193, 204, 370, 439.) Some, at least, of 'offences against young girls' were committed by their employers, their employers' sons and their fellow-servants. (Return in V.P.P., C5/1893.)

2

Australasian, 2 June 1883, (supplement 896, p.6).

3

Argus, 13 April 1885, p.5D, 14 April 1885, p.4G (editorial), 12 October 1885, p.5C.

4

Ibid., 20 October, 1888, p.25, 16 November 1888, p.4B, 4 December 1888, p.5D.

Attempts to enlarge the supply of domestic labour, therefore, seem to have failed. The mistress of the house had to offer new incentives and concessions even to retain her 'maid of all work'. The latter now demanded higher wages and payment in advance; she objected to wearing a cap which was despised as a badge of servitude.<sup>1</sup> Mistresses were advised to placate them, to indulge 'friendly gossips over the neighbouring fence, or little lingerings with the butcher or baker if they are not carried to excess,' to make concessions in the way of 'a little relaxation of old-fashioned rules, more spare evenings and attention to the inclinations of servants in little things', to set 'definite and regular hours of work and leisure, just as her sisters have in the factories'. Others, taking a different tack, wondered if it was 'absolutely impossible to retrace our course somewhat towards the primitive state of things in which the servant was regarded, and regarded herself, as a member of the family'.<sup>2</sup> Yet neither this nor the 'American' system of daily help - which was occasionally mentioned - could satisfactorily resolve the difficulty. For the servant was, above all utilitarian considerations, a symbol of middle class status and power of command; if, on the one hand, she became detached from the household or, on the other, became a full member of it, that subtle symbolism was spoiled.

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1

Australasian, 4 March 1882, p.263, 4 April 1885, p.631,  
2 May 1885, p.823, Melbourne Punch, 29 March 1883, p.121.

2

Australasian, 9 May 1885, p.908, 14 March 1885, p.506,  
4 March 1882, p.263.

Yet, utilitarian considerations did have some weight. The employment of a nurse by the £500 and £850 families was, of course, connected with the number of young children in the household. This is but one evidence of variation in budgetary calculations imposed by the varying compositions of families. The lower budgets, it may be observed, take account of children only in anticipatory fashion: there is a 'babies fund' in the £156 budget and, in the £300 budget provision is made for 'the inevitable increase of expenditure that comes with the increase of [the] family'.<sup>1</sup> Budgets in the middle ranges provide for children in infancy: there are large expenses for nurses and milk. The higher budgets include expenses for older children - music and school fees. A life-cycle is imposed upon the income-scale.

Food, clothing and housing costs for children probably varied with the expenditure on those items for adult members of the family.<sup>2</sup> Education, however, imposed costs of much wider variation. Both 'Thrifty Mary' and 'Contriving Lucy' mentioned school expenses and, in 'Housemother's budget' (£850) for a man, wife and two adolescent children, 'school and music' are included as a separate item; they amount to about 7/6

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1

Men and How to Manage Them, p.118.

2

Food costs were probably fairly small: milk together with lots of bread, jam, and oatmeal was the standard prescribed diet. See Dr Willis, Australian Health Society Lectures, Argus, 15 September, 1885, p.10B and Australian Housewives' Manual, pp.107ff.

per week per child. Private school fees averaged about £3 - 5 a term for day pupils, £12 - 20 a term for boarders plus 'extras'.<sup>1</sup> The weekly amounts quoted are thus consistent with the expenses of day pupils.

The private schools, were, of course the main avenue into the learned professions, commerce, finance or, indeed, any calling which required education beyond the primary stage. Of school children aged 13-14 in 1891, only 18.2 per cent attended private schools; at 16-17, however, 59.1 per cent were in private schools.<sup>2</sup> The evidence from both state and private schools suggests that few of those with an income of less than £500 could afford private education. State school children were found, on the whole, to belong to the lower middle and working classes.<sup>3</sup> An examination of enrollments in two private boys' schools (Melbourne Grammar and Scotch College) reveals that the sons of shopkeepers and clerks were rare; professional men, merchants, bankers and pastoralists sponsored most of the pupils.<sup>4</sup> These two

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1

Scotch College, Prospectus (1885), p.13, (at the school, Glenferrie Road, Hawthorn), Carlton Grammar School advertisement in Australasian, 1890.

2

From figures in H.H. Hayter, Victorian Census, 1891, Statistician's Report, p.349.

3

Royal Commission on Education in V.P.P., 47/1884, references under 'Children - Social Status' in Index.

4

I have attempted an analysis of the enrollments for 1880, 1885, 1890, 1895 at both these schools as they are found in Liber Melburniensis (Melbourne 1965) and, for Scotch College, in a card index kept at the school. Although both these sources furnish useful information (footnote continued on p.478)

schools, however, were among the largest and most prestigious. The numerous boys' and girls' schools scattered about the suburbs often had no more than 40 or 50 pupils, one or two masters or mistresses, a small amount of capital equipment (perhaps only £400-500)<sup>1</sup> and a rented house. Expanding populations and incomes made the late 'eighties a prosperous time for these schools. The speech days of about 40 private schools were reported in the Argus in 1886 (27 boys' and 13 girls'); by 1890 the number had risen to 67 (35 boys' and 32 girls'). Of the new schools, many were in the rapidly-expanding outer middle class suburbs, especially Hawthorn, Armadale, Toorak and Kew; some of the older schools in inner areas reported a loss of clientele to the new institutions.<sup>2</sup>

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(footnote 4 continued from p.477)  
 on the occupations of students after leaving the school, neither provides a full enough record of parents' names or occupations to permit a rigorous statistical analysis. It is my impression, however, that while Melbourne Grammar catered especially for pastoral families and for the sons of professional men, the fathers of Scotch pupils tended to come from the world of business. Wesley, according to its historians, was largely supported by 'small businessmen or white-collar workers' (Geoffrey Blainey, James Morrisey and S.E.K. Hulme, Wesley College - The First Hundred Years, Melbourne, 1967, p.83); but the basis for this generalization is not evident.

1

Judging from advertisements of schools for sale in the 'Partnerships and Business' columns of the Argus.

2

E.g., Alexander Sutherland's Carlton College. Argus, 20 December 1886, p.10A.

A prime function of the private school was to fit the young middle class Melbournian for his proper place in the life of the emergent metropolis. For boys this meant, as we have seen, an increasing emphasis upon the values and skills of the marketplace: 'commercial education' was a fetish of the boom years and would-be professional men were assiduously schooled for entrance to a University which had lately acquired the revealing sobriquet, 'The Shop'.<sup>1</sup> Young ladies, on the other hand, were given to the acquisition of 'genteel accomplishments': music, painting, literature, fancy needlework. Such unbusiness-like pursuits, as Henry Handel Richardson detected, were valued less for themselves than as 'status-symbols'; private school girls, no less than their mothers, were fundamentally concerned with the 'regulation questions':

Where do you come from?....  
 What's your father?....  
 How many servants do you keep?....  
 How much have you got a year?....<sup>2</sup>

---

1

'Amongst the undergraduates our University is commonly called "the shop". How unfortunate it is that it is so often looked upon and thought of a shop or place of apprenticeship, and the examination regarded from a purely commercial aspect.' 'Graduate' in Argus, 5 November 1892, p.4G.

2

H.H. Richardson, The Getting of Wisdom, (Windmill edition), p.42, which is based upon the author's experiences as a pupil at the Presbyterian Ladies' College.

Private secondary education and its costs - both in fees and in deferred earnings - were perhaps the most important component in the higher costs of middle class over working class children. These cost-differentials in turn no doubt sensitized middle-class parents to the benefits of 'family limitation', although in any case, the middle classes were probably in more or less exclusive possession of the knowledge of effective methods. The Australasian<sup>1</sup> in a rare discussion of the question in 1880, argued that 'the modern gospel of Malthusianism' was 'little known among the masses'; only 'the thoughtful and the provident' (i.e. the middle classes) came under its influence. This, indeed, is the conclusion most consistent with the little available evidence. The substantial differences between child-woman ratios in the various suburbs is, like the similar pattern in marriage, most convincingly explained in broad class terms. (See below TABLE 8.5).

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1

'Pros and Cons of Family Limitation', Australasian, 31 January 1880, p.134. Among the 'pros' it cited lessened danger to the mother's health, prevention of parental estrangement over the children's noise, prevention of premature ageing of parents; the 'cons' included the greater happiness of women with large families, the increased resources of the family for mutual help, greater chances of having exceptional children.

TABLE 8.5 CHILDREN 0-4/MARRIED WOMEN 15-45 by SUBURBS.<sup>1</sup>

PRESTON	1.6320
FLEMINGTON and KENSINGTON	1.0590
COBURG	1.0204
FOOTSCRAY	.9795
NORTHCOTE	.9687
BRUNSWICK	.9641
OAKLEIGH	.9310
WILLIAMSTOWN	.9265
FITZROY	.8901
PORT MELBOURNE	.8888
ESSENDON	.8802
NORTH MELBOURNE	.8701
BRIGHTON	.8618
RICHMOND	.8615
CAULFIELD	.8586
PRAHRAN	.8531
BOROONDARA	.8467
ST KILDA	.8390
MALVERN	.8234
COLLINGWOOD	.8206
KEW	.8160
HAWTHORN	.8157
SOUTH MELBOURNE	.8020
MELBOURNE	.6903

1

From Victorian Census, 'Ages' and 'Conjugal Condition'. Child/woman ratios are to be preferred to either crude or 'adjusted' birth rates, especially since 'place of birth', may not correspond to 'place of parents' normal residence'.

These figures suggest that the most fertile women were concentrated in outer and working class rather than in inner and middle class suburbs. Thus the tendency for young families to reside in outer suburban areas is compounded with a class component. Some, at least, of the class variation is presumably to be explained by the later marriage and short 'reproductive life' of middle class parents. The comparative use of artificial means cannot be assessed; nor unhappily is it possible to draw any useful conclusion about differential movements during the course of the 'eighties'.<sup>1</sup>

Melbourne society, as the preceding pages suggest, was becoming more prosperous, self-conscious, urbanized - even, perhaps, urbane. In these 'more settled and civilized times' greater attention was given to the etiquette and 'ceremonial uses' of a metropolis. Chief among these was the custom of afternoon and morning 'calls'. Ladies 'in society' were supposed to keep a visiting book:

This book should contain the names of everyone she knows, whether acquaintances, friends or relations and a line is usually drawn on the left of each page and another on the right and under these two headings dates are written - on the left when the [visiting] card is left, on the right when the lady returns the card, so that she can see at a glance whether she owes anyone a call or whether one is due to her.<sup>2</sup>

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1

Only crude birth rates - which are not useful - are available for each year; the adjusted birth rates and child/women ratios for 1881-1891 produce no very interesting pattern of variation.

2

Australasian, 20 March 1886, p.535, 18 July 1885, p.103.

It was the practice for a lady, having been introduced or recommended to another, to leave her card - or rather two copies of her own and one of her husband's - at the home of her new acquaintance. Her own card was endorsed with the time and day of the week when she would be 'At Home'. If this courtesy was returned, it opened the way for closer relations. The 'etiquette of cards' served several functions. It was a means of communicating names, addresses and titles. In a fluid society, it prescribed a means of entry into its more refined circles; at the same time, it provided a mechanism for the exclusion, without embarrassing confrontations, of unwelcome social climbers.

But Melbourne was a city of considerable distances and, as Professor Morris remarked, 'the tax upon ladies of visit-paying, which modern society demands, [was] made much heavier because of the distances that [had] to be traversed between friend and friend'.<sup>1</sup> Thus a carriage was a most desirable possession and the want of one an almost fatal liability in visit-paying:

For example, we will imagine a lady living at Studley Park and having no carriage. In her visiting list there will doubtless be residents of remote Brighton, Balaclava, St Kilda, Toorak, South Yarra etc., besides her closer neighbours at Kew and Hawthorn. She has a household to attend to, and many pressing duties of at least equal importance with that of keeping up her visiting connection.<sup>2</sup>

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1

E.E. Morris (ed), Picturesque Australasia, (London, 1889-90), vol.I, p.58.

2

Australasian, 9 August 1884, pp.282-3.

Both the £600 and £850 budgets include expenses for horse-feed and stable maintenance; both also include a 'boy' or 'man' among their servants, whose duties presumably included the care of the horse and buggy. For those on lower incomes, however, the expenses of a carriage were found only with difficulty:

Mrs D. I think, may love, we might get a pony and carriage now. The Wagthorpes have one and so have the Killjoys, and I am sure Killjoy's income is not as large as yours, nor Wagthorpe's either ....

Mr D. Let me see, pony and carriage will cost at least eighty pounds; stables another hundred, boy twelve and six a week, feed six shillings; wear and tear, shoeing etc, say five shillings. Now the interest on a hundred and eighty pounds, at ten per cent, is about seven shillings a week; this added to the boy's wages, feed, shoeing etc., will increase our expenses by thirty shillings. That's seventy five pounds a year, nearly house rent.<sup>1</sup>

Yet in this time of expanding railway and tramway services possession of a carriage was becoming rather 'a mark of respectability' than a simple means of conveyance. It was 'the favourite of the doctor, the retired tradesman, the man of independent means, and of every aspiring individual who seeks to gain influence'.<sup>2</sup> Carriage-builders encouraged the trend; they knew well that

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1

Melbourne Punch, 13 March 1884, p.103.

2

A.T.R., 3 May 1886, p.278 and Argus, 4 April 1885, p.13B.

the man who looks upon his buggy as part of his stock in trade...is not so likely to pay handsomely for building, repairing or renovating his vehicle as the man of leisure, who feels that fashion demands that his carriage, buggy or dog cart shall not only be stylishly built, but have every attention paid to those details which will keep his turnout the cynosure of admiring eyes,<sup>1</sup> and the topic of complimentary conversation.

During the 'eighties the numbers and splendour of carriages advanced prodigiously; 'the style of equipages', the Argus noted in 1885, 'marks the refined improvement of the times'. Broughams, phaetons, 'four-in-hands' became more numerous. In 1883 a 'Rotten Row' was established in Albert Park and, for a time, it became a favourite pastime to drive there in the afternoons, seeing and being seen upon the pretence of listening to the strains of Herr Plock's band.<sup>2</sup>

The selective association which the womenfolk of Melbourne practised through the custom of 'calls', their husbands formalized in clubs and pubs. Of these there was a virtual hierarchy extending from the universally - acknowledged apex - the Melbourne Club - down to a jungle of low bars and billiard rooms. The membership of the Melbourne Club consisted mainly of 'the proudest merchants and bankers and the most patrician squatters'. The entrance fee in 1880 was

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1

Australasian Carriage-builder and Saddler, 10 September 1890, p.75.

2

Australasian, 13 December 1884, p.1132.

40 guineas with a subscription of 12 guineas per annum.<sup>1</sup> The Australian Club, at the other end of town, was a more recent foundation; in 1880 it had taken over a large part of the membership of the recently-defunct Victorian Club. Its entrance fee and subscription were comparable to the Melbourne Club and its membership similar, though less 'established'; stock and station agents, merchants, bankers, squatters and lawyers predominated.<sup>2</sup> The Athenaeum, which had sprung from the old Mechanics' Institute had a somewhat larger and less exclusive membership. These 'exclusive' clubs appear to have prospered during the 'eighties: membership of the Australian increased from 249 in 1880 to 453 in 1890; in 1886 the Club undertook large additions to its premises which were financed by £10,000 of debentures issued to members. The Athenaeum likewise expanded its facilities.<sup>3</sup>

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1

Argus, 1 August 1885, p.7A. Sir Ernest Scott, An Historical Memoir of the Melbourne Club (Melbourne 1936) does not discuss the criteria of membership in any detail although the list of presidents does offer some clues. (p.82ff.). J. Thomas, Guide to Melbourne, (p.100), supplies the information on entrance fees etc.

2

On the Victorian Club see J. Thomas op.cit., p.100. The assessment of the membership of the Australian Club is based upon an analysis of its membership list contained in Rules and Regulations of the Australian Club 1881 (in Association and Institution Pamphlets, vol.X, S.L.V.). I checked the names against the Sands and McDougall, Melbourne Directory and Myles and MacPhail, The Victorian Squatting Directory, (Melbourne 1874-5).

3

R.W.E. Wilmot, The Melbourne Athenaeum 1839-1939 - History and Records of the Institution (1939), esp. p.36; and Argus, 7 April 1885, p.4F; the Australian Club, Minutes of the Committee, 27 January 1886 (p.46), 6 November 1889 (p.60), (At the Club, 110 William Street, Melbourne.)

Fulfilling a different function were clubs, like the Yorick and the Beefsteak, which gathered smaller numbers of gentlemen on regular occasions to dine, wine, speechify or sing. The Melbourne and the Metropolitan Liedertafels offered similar pleasures on a more extensive basis. The members of these dining societies were committed to comradely behaviour, not merely to the honourable use of common facilities. Clubs such as these were designed, sometimes quite consciously, as a businessman's refuge from 'the dust and din and turmoil of the work-a-day world'.<sup>1</sup>

Below these most exclusive clubs there was a congeries of middle-class clubs and associations. 'Housemother's' husband (£850 p.a.) for example, was a member of the Melbourne Cricket Club. There were also suburban bowling clubs, mutual improvement associations and clubs with an occupational basis - like the Travellers, the Pipeclay (Army) and the Accountants and Clerks.

Although most evident in the ornaments and entertainments of society matrons and gentlemen, the prosperity of the boom years was shared by the whole community. 'It was an era of extravagance in Balls, Garden Fetes, Dinner Parties and private theatricals'

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1

F.T. Carrington, The Yorick Club, its Origins and Development May 1868 - December 1910, (Melbourne, 1911), J.F. Deegan, Chronicles of the Melbourne Beefsteak Club, (Melbourne, 1890), 7 May 1887, p.81; see also pp.12-13, 23, 105 for similar remarks.

recalled Henry Gyles Turner of the year 1888, 'and I see from my diary that I took my full share'. Wrote Ada Cambridge:

It was never that I heard so much good music, saw so much good acting, met so many interesting travellers, enjoyed the greatest race meetings in the history of splendid Flemington, the hospitality of Government House in its best days, the most memorable entertainments of a time when nothing but the first-rate was tolerated.<sup>1</sup>

Yet Fitzroy had its 'Assemblies' as well as Hawthorn - even if the first was rather more 'free and easy' than the second. The artisan in the 'gods' attended the same plays and operas as the merchant in his box and the shopkeeper in the stalls.<sup>2</sup> Victorian football, then enjoying one of its greatest periods of popularity, was watched, as it was played, by both Collingwood bootmakers and St Kilda stockbrokers;<sup>3</sup> local affiliations, in some measure, effaced class loyalties. That fundamental uniformity of taste which Twopeny noticed in relation to food and furniture prevailed in other commodities as well. Distinctions of quantity or

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1

H.G. Turner, *Memorabilia*, p.111 (1887) and 117 (1888). (Manuscript Collection S.L.V.); Ada Cambridge, *Thirty Years in Australia*, (London 1903), p.185.

2

John Freeman, *Lights and Shadows of Melbourne Life*, pp.72-7.

3

On players see controversy over alleged prejudice against South Melbourne players because they were manual workers, (*Argus*, 4 September 1885, p.7C and 7 September 1885, p.10G); on uniformity of bad language at football matches for all social classes (*Argus*, 16 September 1892, p.6F.).

degree were more apparent than distinctions of kind. As Ada Cambridge put it: 'all in their degree were rich and lived lavishly'.<sup>1</sup>

Nowhere was this more apparent than in the social setting of that favourite civic rite - the Melbourne Cup. English visitors were surprised to find that racing was a pastime enjoyed by all classes.<sup>2</sup> The 'upper ten' drove in their carriages; the professional and trades people journeyed by special train; the working men came in vans, buses or on foot. At the course itself there was a precise social definition of vantage points: Toorak in the stands and on the Lawns; the lower middle classes on the Hill; the working classes, the Chinese and the 'criminal classes' on the Flat.<sup>3</sup> Yet all dressed for the occasion and 'bad taste was not particular to any suburb'.<sup>4</sup>

1888 - The Exhibition Year - saw Flemington and Melbourne at their apogée. In the enclosure, there was a notable access of new drags, broughams and barouches; the ladies of Toorak were splendidly attired in silks and lustrous satins whose predominant colour, the Argus noted, was an affirmative red. Over 100,000 people were estimated to have attended on that memorable day. The

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1

Op.cit., p.185.

2

E.g. Lord Hastings, Argus, 7 November 1888, p.8D-E.

3

10/6d entry to stands; 2/6 for Hill; the Flat free. Argus, 3 November 1888, p.22D.

4

Argus, 4 November 1885, p.8. Also Age, 6 November 1889.

newly-extended Hill was not spacious enough to accomodate the droves of aspiring middle class families who spread their wine and cake, their ham sandwiches, bottled beer and oranges beneath the gums. Down on the Flat, even the lower orders evidenced no poverty, 'no hungry or wolfish looks at the near but unattainable splendours. The people on the flat [were] just as content with themselves as the people on the Lawn'.<sup>1</sup>

The class conflicts of the early 'nineties, which are commonly presented as a clash of employers and employees, of Capital and Labour, were as often seen in Melbourne as a great disruption between the rich and the poor, the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'.<sup>2</sup> Overt conflict, where it occurred, centred on questions of property and wealth as much as employment and wages. Certainly the city had seen outbreaks of violence, and even wilder threats of violence, over industrial matters in 1890. But in virulence and frequency they were trifling compared to those elsewhere and, by 1892 or 1893 at the latest, the industrial power of most Melbourne unions was spent. On the other hand, although their status as employees had declined, many

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1

Argus, 7 November 1888, p.8.

2

Cf. e.g., R. Gollan, Radical and Working Class Politics (Melbourne 1960), chapters 7 and 8. On the new 'economic' basis for political divisions in Victoria see M.G. Finlayson, 'Groups in Victorian Politics, 1889-94', M.A. thesis, University of Melbourne, 1964, pp.217-221.

Melbournians were more sorely-aggrieved about their condition as clients of the building societies and other lending institutions, tenants of 'blood-sucking'<sup>1</sup> landlords, and customers of exacting shopkeepers.

The depression affected consumers in three ways: it took away their employment, reduced their incomes and devalued or immobilized their property. Of these, unemployment was certainly the most crippling disability. For various reasons it is impossible to furnish precise estimates of the numbers of unemployed, or of their social composition at the most critical periods of the depression. The Census of 1891 furnished returns of the numbers of unemployed in various occupations on the census-day 5th April; unfortunately, however, there are no separate returns for Melbourne, where unemployment was probably greatest. The Census showed 5.25 per cent of the colony's male breadwinners and 2.91 per cent of the female breadwinners unemployed. The worst-affected section of the urban workforce was the building industry where 1,704 carpenters (12.9 per cent of all), 500 bricklayers (16.7 per cent), 357 plasterers (17.3 per cent), 246 masons (12.7 per cent), 529 painters (10.8 per cent) and 186 plumbers (7.4 per cent) were out of work. 3,641 labourers (10.6 per cent) were also unemployed. Of industrial employees, the worst affected were furniture-makers (7.8 per cent), tobacco and cigarette manufacturers (8.0 per cent), iron founders (8.6 per cent), engineers (8.8 per cent)

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1

Montague Miller, Richmond Guardian, 10 September 1892.

and printers (6.6 per cent). Commerce was also beginning to be affected: 19.4 per cent of wool merchants, agents and brokers were unemployed and 6.2 per cent of clerks and 5.9 per cent of commercial travellers were without work. In retail trades, drapers (6.7 per cent) and outfitters (7.4 per cent) were most constricted. Persons in 'luxury' trades or crafts - such as artists (22.9 per cent), sculptors (11.4 per cent), theatre-proprietors (6.5 per cent) and livery stable keepers (6.0 per cent) - experienced unemployment somewhat above the average.<sup>1</sup>

Unemployment was more severe among old than young male breadwinners. Among women, on the other hand, unemployment was worst among the young (see Table 8.6). The situation of male breadwinners as it is represented in this table is most plausibly interpreted as the result of a tendency to compulsorily retire older employees. In manual occupations this would seem to have been carried out mainly by 'retiring' those over about 60 years of age. Among clerks and kindred occupations, however, dismissals would seem to have been graduated with age. Among shopkeepers there was little positive relationship between age and unemployment (see Table 8.7). With female breadwinners, on the other hand, the incidence of unemployment was heaviest upon those groups for whom wages were probably a supplement to a husband's income; least upon widows and other older breadwinners.

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1

Calculated from Victorian Census 1891 'Occupations'.

TABLE 8.6  
PROPORTIONS PER 1000 OF UNEMPLOYED BY AGE<sup>1</sup>

	Male Breadwinners			Female Breadwinners		
	Total No.	No. Unemployed	Per 1000	Total No.	No. Unemployed	Per 1000
5-15	8,798	97	11.03	3,668	32	8.72
15-20	49,645	1,704	34.32	27,256	1,031	37.83
20-25	60,788	3,038	49.98	26,712	947	35.45
25-45	159,355	8,232	51.66	30,777	869	28.23
45-65	79,509	4,920	61.88	20,029	354	17.68
65+	20,158	1,866	92.57	5,529	57	10.31
Unspecified	1,495	73	-	258	27	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>379,748</b>	<b>19,930</b>	<b>52.48</b>	<b>114,229</b>	<b>3,317</b>	<b>29.04</b>

Up to, and for almost a year beyond the taking of the Census, unemployment was seen simply as a mild accentuation of a seasonal slackening of demand. After 1891, however, as the problem became more acute, precise evidence of its extent and incidence became scarcer. It was only in June 1892, under the impact of sustained demonstrations of the unemployed and obtrusive distress, that the full extent of unemployment became evident:

Within less than a week the attitude of the public of Melbourne with respect to the almost unprecedented distress existing in

<sup>1</sup>

Victorian Census 1891, Statistician's Report, p.225.

TABLE 8.7

PER CENT SELECTED OCCUPATIONS UNEMPLOYED BY AGE (1891)<sup>1</sup>

	-15	15-20	20-25	25-45	45-65	65+
1. MANUAL						
Housepainter	0.9	8.8	11.0	10.3	13.5	22.9
Plumber	1.1	7.2	9.1	6.8	7.7	17.2
Bootmaker	1.6	5.7	6.1	6.9	6.7	11.4
Stonemason	0.0	8.0	11.5	9.3	14.5	35.8
Bricklayer	0.0	6.6	13.5	14.3	33.9	29.9
Labourer	4.5	11.1	8.2	11.3	10.1	15.8
2. 'CLERICAL'						
Commercial						
Clerks	0.9	3.1	6.1	6.7	12.8	13.0
Law Clerks	0.0	0.6	3.7	6.2	9.5	25.0
Commercial						
Traveller	0.0	1.3	4.2	6.2	9.4	4.7
3. SHOPKEEPER						
Draper	1.4	4.1	7.7	5.8	12.8	15.5
Butcher	0.0	3.5	3.9	4.1	8.9	16.5
Grocer	2.0	5.8	4.8	4.7	5.0	7.2
'Shopkeeper' (so described)	1.3	1.2	2.2	3.5	4.5	6.6

the metropolis has undergone a notable change. The great bulk of the population have only just become aware that anything more serious confronted them than the annually recurring period of 'hard times'.<sup>2</sup>

Dr Bevan (the Congregational Minister) and the Salvation Army had established a Labour Bureau in February and by the mid-year it had over 4,000 names on its books. Of

<sup>1</sup>

From Victorian Census 1891 'Occupations'.

<sup>2</sup>

Argus, 23 June 1892, p.7E-F.

these, 933 had been found jobs and 70 had failed to reply to offers, leaving a deficit of 3,500. Most of these were described as labourers, but there were also mechanics, shop employees and clerks.<sup>1</sup>

Both Dr Bevan - who had refused to address them under a red flag and was thereafter portrayed as a 'toady' - and the Salvation Army - which was alleged to divert charitable donations to the purchase of uniforms - were distrusted by the 'official unemployed'. Their Labour Exchange was represented as an attempt to 'break up the unemployed agitation'.<sup>2</sup> As such, however, it must be accounted a failure for, by the winter of 1892, the 'unemployed agitation' was more menacing than ever. On 6 June the police drew their batons to disperse a procession in Collins Street; four of the leaders were arrested and charged with an offence against a city council bye-law.<sup>3</sup> On 9 June there was another procession. Men of all ages marched through the city streets, the younger ones carrying banners:

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1

Ibid., 19 February 1892, p.7D, 14 June 1892, p.6D.

2

Police, Melbourne, Reports, 7 February 1892 (Stokes), 13 February 1892 (Gleeson), 19 February 1892 (Wardley), 20 February 1892 (Wardley), 21 February 1892 (Cantry). (State Archives.) The personal friendship of Dr Bevan and Colonel Sargood was confirmed for me by the latter's daughter, Mrs C. Jenner of Toorak.

3

Ibid., 7 June 1892 (Wardley) and letter of Chomley of the same date, 8 June 1892 (memorandum of Chief Superintendent). The leaders were eventually fined 2/6 each.

'Feed the poor, help the afflicted -  
2000 starving people'

'The abundance of the land is for us all' -  
Ecclesiastes 5th chapter 9th verse.

'Future Deputations will consist of  
[3 skeletons painted on banner]'

Mothers carried babes in arms. No arrests were made but police took the names of the banner-carriers.<sup>1</sup> Passmore Edwards, a leader of the unemployed, sent a facetious letter to the Commissioner of Police, thanking him for 'the invaluable protection of your men, who are eminently adapted to shield defenceless starving men and women of Marvellous Melbourne'.<sup>2</sup>

Whether these events bear upon it as cause or consequence is unclear, but it is remarkable that the very next day, 10 June, the Government opened its own Labour Bureau. Within a fortnight the total registrations

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1

Age, 10 June 1892, p.5A. Police, Melbourne, Reports, 10 June 1892 (Gleeson). The banner carriers mostly seem to have been single men who gave boarding house addresses; there is some suggestion that they were selected as banner carriers because they were regarded as most able to sustain prosecution.

2

Passmore Edwards to Commissioner Chomley, 10 June 1892, in *ibid.* Henceforth relations between the unemployed and the police became embittered. On the same day Edwards was reported as describing Inspector O'Callaghan as 'an Irishman, with a head only fit to boil pork in, and a dinner on him like a wine cask' (*ibid.*, 11 June 1892 (Wardley)) and on 16 June he attacked Constable Wardley, the plain clothes policeman permanently attached to the unemployed as 'a sneak whose blood, if blood was spilt at all, would be beneficial to the unemployed cause'. (*Ibid.*, 17 June 1892 (Gleeson)).

had risen to almost 6,000; after a month they had surpassed 8,000.<sup>1</sup> The registered unemployed were said to include labourers especially, but also 'foundrymen, engine-drivers, painters, carters, drivers, gardeners, blacksmiths, strikers, and grocers' assistants'. Most were married, usually with children. Registrations reached a peak in July-August 1892 and subsided in the summer months. In March 1893 they were again running at 6,000-7,000. In that month a rough return of the occupations of the registered unemployed was published:

Labourers	2,000
Farmhands and Gardeners	700
Carpenters	600
Engineers	400
Plasterers	400
Skilled Mechanics	350
Miners	250
Clerks	200
Bootmakers	150
Blacksmiths	120

In most short descriptions of the 'unemployed' these classes of labour are mentioned in roughly the same order: labourers, building tradesmen, clerks and artisans.<sup>2</sup>

The usefulness of registrations as a guide to the extent and incidence of unemployment was widely doubted at the time. The Argus, for example, believed that 'as a test of the actual numbers of the unemployed, the

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1

Argus, 11 June 1892, p.8C, 24 June 1892, p.7F,  
5 July 1892, p.6E.

2

Argus, 11 June 1892, p.8C, Age, 10 March 1893, p.5H.

registration at the labour bureau [was] absolutely worthless'. Some sections of the workforce, notably clerks and shopmen, were 'ashamed to make their necessities public' and did not register. Furthermore, the registrations were said to be inflated with large numbers of countrymen who had drifted to the city in the hope of obtaining relief. This second charge cannot be sustained: in July 1892 the police were called upon to investigate 100 random cases from the Bureau's list and found that 97 were 'genuine'. Registrations probably provide at least a minimum estimate of unemployment. But they may have fallen far short of the total. G.M. Prendergast, the Secretary of the Trades Hall, appearing before a Select Committee of the Legislative Council in August 1893, testified that, on average, half of the members of the unions were without work, and that 'the majority of these artisans do not appear upon the lists of unemployed'.<sup>1</sup> As the government's inability to provide work for all the unemployed became more evident, it is likely that the disparity between registrations and the numbers of actual unemployed increased. The arrangements which were made for relief probably distorted the occupational returns of unemployed: the large numbers of 'labourers' and housepainters were predetermined by the fact that swamp drainage of the redecoration of government buildings were the principal forms of relief work.<sup>2</sup>

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1

Argus, 29 June 1892, p.6A, 5 July 1892, p.6E, 16 July 1892, p.9E. Report of Select Committee of the Legislative Council appointed to consider and report upon the Present Distress and Want of Employment. Legislative Council Votes and Proceedings D3/1893.

2

Argus, 15 June 1892, p.6E.

The comparative incidence of unemployment in the various suburbs of the metropolis is also difficult to discover. In 1893, the Legislative Council appointed a Select Committee to investigate the distress and want of employment prevailing in the metropolis. During August and September evidence was taken from various witnesses and especially from the officers and councillors of the suburban municipalities who were usually asked to supply some estimate of unemployment in their own districts and of the measures taken to relieve it. Their answers were often partial or vague, but enough emerges to suggest that the most sorely-affected suburbs were probably South Melbourne (where 2,000 men - mainly timber workers, seamen and Harbour Trust employees - were said to be out of work), Richmond (500 men - mainly building workers - unemployed and 1,500 only partially employed), Fitzroy (one-third of the working population said to be unemployed), Port Melbourne, Northcote, Footscray and Brunswick - though not necessarily in that order.<sup>1</sup>

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1

Presumably as a measure of economy, the Committee did not have its evidence printed. One is bound, therefore, to rely upon the rather sketchy press reports of its hearings (Argus, 26 August 1893, p.10D, 30 August 1893, p.9H, 6 September 1893, p.10D, 7 September 1893, p.9H) and its own very brief Report, loc.cit. It may be noted, however, that estimates of the distribution of unemployment based on this source square with Central Distress Fund estimates of the areas of greatest need (Argus, 2 July 1892, p.9E).

Most observers agreed that unemployment was greater in 1893 than in 1892.<sup>1</sup> But, strangely, there was less agitation, fewer deputations. An Anglican deaconess offered a partial explanation: 'Most of the men have left town for the country. The women and children are left here though, and they suffer mostly in silence. They don't go in for deputations you see'.<sup>2</sup> Those men who were left had probably concluded that demonstrations, in any case, were futile.

After unemployment, the main threat to the income-earner was the enforced reduction of his wage or salary. Among salary-earners there was an informal policy of graduated reductions. The debate in parliament over civil service salaries, which resulted in graduated reductions of from 5 to 15 per cent, reflected humane considerations which also prevailed in other offices<sup>3</sup> - although the actual scale of reduction was sometimes heavier. The reductions applied in two 'outside' clerical establishments are reproduced below:

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1

This, moreover, is consistent with the unemployment index devised by P.G. McCarthy ('Labour and the Living Wage' in Australian Journal of Politics and History, vol.XIII, April 1967, p.83) which suggests that Victorian unemployment reached its peak (28.3 per cent) in 1893.

2

Argus, 14 August 1893, p.6E.

3

Cf. above chapter 5.

TABLE 8.8

CLERICAL SALARIES 1890 AND 18941. Swallow and Ariell Biscuit Company

<u>Salary 1890</u>	<u>Salary 1894</u>	<u>% Reduction</u>
£	£	
364	306	15.9
234	195	16.6
188	162	13.8
149	135	9.4
143	129	9.8
117	105	10.2
91	91	0.0

2. Modern Permanent Building Society

1250	800	36.0
400	300	25.0
400	280	30.0
300	225	25.0
90	85	16.6
46	46	0.0

These are the reductions imposed upon actual employees; they therefore compound promotions and other adjustments of staffing with the effects of a retrenchment policy. Nevertheless, the graduation of reductions and their relative severity stand out clearly. The Modern Permanent Building Society, bearing a heavier proportion of its reducible costs in staff expenses and facing a more critical financial situation than Swallow and Ariell, adopted a very severe scale of reductions.

The clerk's situation, however, was no worse than that of most wage-earners. We have already seen that 'official' wage rates were maintained as a standard

by many unions long after they had ceased to be paid to their members.<sup>1</sup> Thus the rates quoted in the Victorian Yearbooks and Statistical Registers often appear to overstate the current rates. In Table 8.9 (below) the rates quoted by the Government Labour

TABLE 8.9

WAGE RATES MELBOURNE 1890-1894

	OFFICIAL RATE 1890 (shillings per day)	OFFICIAL RATE 1894 (shillings per day)	PER CENT REDUCTION 1890-4 (midpoints)	LABOUR EXCHANGE RATE March 1893	PER CENT REDUCTION 1890-3 (midpoints)
<b>BUILDING</b>					
Masons	10-12	7-8	31.8		
Plasterers	10	7-8	25.0	4-5	55.0
Bricklayers	10-12	6-8	36.4	4-5	59.1
Carpenters	10-12	6-8	36.4	4-7	50.0
Plumbers				5-7	
Builders'					
Labourers	7-8	5-6	26.6	2/6-5/-	48.0
<b>METALS</b>					
Blacksmiths	10-14	9-11	16.7		
Fitters	9-13	9-10	13.0		
Engineers				5-8	
<b>FURNITURE</b> [£ p.w.]      [£ p.w.]					
Cabinet-makers	£ 2-3/15/	£ 1/5/ - 2/10/	29.3		
<b>CARRIAGES</b> £ 2/10/ - £ 2/2/0 -					
Bodymakers	£ 3/10	£ 2/10/	21.7		
<b>PRINTING</b>					
Machinists	£ 2/10/	£ 2/12/ -	15.4		

1

See above chapters 2 and 3.

Exchange in March 1893<sup>1</sup> are set beside the 'official' rates. It is evident, even from the 'official rates', that reductions were greatest in the building, furniture and carriage-building trades (the 'growth' industries of the 'eighties) and were least in metals and printing. In this respect, wage reductions reflect the variable fortunes of these industries and reproduce the pattern of unemployment. There is, secondly, some evidence that wages, like salaries, were trimmed most heavily at the top. It may be plausibly argued that, among all income-earners, the range of variation in incomes was less in the depression than it had been at the peak of the boom. Contemporary complaints of being 'ground down to a dead level' have a substantial basis in the redistribution of incomes.

The consumer was endangered, thirdly, through the depreciation or 'freezing' of the savings and property which might otherwise have sustained him through the depression. Early in 1892 the Argus, for example, had taken comfort from the belief that, despite loss of employment or reduction of wages, 'the man who [had] employed the past few years industriously [was] in no danger of being without shelter and food'.<sup>2</sup> Yet much depended upon the form in which those reserves were held. Probate returns on deceased estates during the 'eighties suggest that per capita

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1

Quoted Age, 10 March 1893, p.5A.

2

Argus, 15 February 1892, p.4G.

wealth was increasing quite rapidly, but the sharp decline in the figures after 1890 confirms that, as might be expected, a very large proportion of personal wealth was sunk in real estate or other depreciating assets (Table 8.10).

TABLE 8.10

VALUE OF DECEASED ESTATES 1890-95<sup>1</sup>

	Average value of Estates per deceased person (£)
1890	481
1891	406
1892	610
1893	377
1894	351
1895	341

Furthermore, a large proportion of personal savings was held in trading bank deposits, building society and finance company deposits or shares and insurance instalments. Certainly the proportion of substantial personal savings (i.e. deposits over £100) in savings banks - the only institutions which were relatively immune from the effects of the crash - had declined throughout the 'eighties and it was only after the

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1

Calculated from Victorian Yearbooks. Also see figures for average size of estates (ibid., 1895-8, pp.415-6) which suggests similar trend. The very high figure for 1892 is puzzling: a millionaire suicide boom?

closing of the trading banks in 1893 that the proportion rose again.<sup>1</sup> Together, this evidence points to the conclusion that a large portion of the assets of the people was held in forms which made them either less valuable or less liquid than their owners' personal needs required.<sup>2</sup>

No class was quite so vulnerable to depreciation and freezing of assets as that which lived solely upon dividends, rents or interest payments. Since some of these owned shares not fully paid, they often became liable to further calls which compelled them either to sell their sound assets or entirely relinquish their interest in more dubious ones. Widows, spinsters

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1

Victorian Statistical Registers 'Accumulation'. The great majority of savings bank deposits were less than £20 (77.9 per cent in 1890). Male depositors tended to predominate in working class area branches (e.g. Collingwood, Footscray, Fitzroy, etc.); females in middle class areas (Hawthorn, St Kilda, Brighton). This suggests that savings banks may have been used as family accounts in working class areas, as housewives' 'pin-money' accounts in middle class areas. No doubt a large proportion of depositors consisted of children.

2  
Trading bank deposits were not absolutely frozen: they could be sold, though at a discount sometimes approaching 50 per cent. (S.J. Butlin, Australia and New Zealand Bank (London 1961), p.302 and Robin Gollan, Commonwealth Bank of Australia - Origins and Early History (Canberra 1968), chapter 3). There was a large increase in the number of insurance policies surrendered to societies; holders were presumably unable to maintain payments. (J.C., 28 March 1893, p.7.)

and retired gentlemen were among the most unfortunate and sorely-aggrieved victims of the crash. In general, they suffered silently and privately,<sup>1</sup> but their just, though unavailing, protests were sometimes heard at shareholders' meetings, or pressed upon their supposed deceivers. For example, John Meredith, a retired schoolteacher on a pension of £55 per annum, reported his misfortunes to James Balfour, one of the directors of the failed Freehold Investment and Banking Company:

I am now 65 years of age (last b.d.)....I do not enjoy the friendship of the greatest in the land nor the sympathy of the elite....I have a wife and three children [and] by my stupid and ill-advised confidence I have deprived my young family of their patrimony and when I die I shall leave them poor indeed....I have for years been living in seclusion and practising economy in every possible way, putting by my money for the 'bank' [i.e. F.I.B. Co.]....I am not in a position to ascertain my cause of ruin in its detail. I am told it is depression of property. Then my 900£ has depressed itself into nothing.'<sup>2</sup>

He concluded by appealing to Balfour to sponsor legislation to 'shield the helpless, the widow, the orphan, the aged and him that hath no helper'.

This group of aged and dispossessed small proprietors, with 'no one to trumpet forth its woes', was conspicuous in Melbourne society for a decade or more. The Age surmised that

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<sup>1</sup> J.C., 26 April 1892, p.4.

<sup>2</sup> John J. Meredith to James Balfour, 8 July 1895 (Balfour Papers) and for similar testimony see M. Cannon, *op.cit.*, p.123.

in the private circle of most of us there is an instance or two of an old couple, a widow or elderly spinster who have [sic] suddenly been reduced from comparative affluence to subsistence upon an income utterly inadequate to afford the necessities of life.<sup>1</sup>

Some were reduced to as little as £25-50 a year; many were obliged to forsake their homes and live in boarding houses.<sup>2</sup>

Loss of employment, loss of income, loss of property: each and all of these afflictions may have driven some individuals so far into debt that they sought - or were compelled to seek - registration as insolvents. Of course the state of insolvency - which implied the previous acquisition of credit - was a kind of luxury; few of those who were necessitous registered as insolvents. Nevertheless the returns of insolvents and the reasons assigned for their default do provide at least a guide to the incidence of various financial afflictions. The occupations of persons most commonly filing applications were builders (especially in 1889-90), shopkeepers (especially in 1892), building tradesmen, hotelkeepers, clerks (especially 1892-3) and carriers.<sup>3</sup>

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1

25 December 1894, p.4H (editorial).

2

Ibid. The Age encouraged the practice of 'cooperative housekeeping'. The introduction of old-age pensions in 1900 may have been designed partly to alleviate the difficulties of this group. See Report of the Royal Commission on Old Age Pensions, evidence of Rev. A.R. Eager, V.P.P. 28/1898, Q290.

3

'Trade or Occupation of Insolvents - Return for Six Years' [1888-93] in Statistical Register of Victoria 1893 'Law, Crime etc.,' pp.15-16.

TABLE 8.11

MELBOURNE INSOLVENTS BY OCCUPATION AND PRIME ALLEGED CAUSE OF INSOLVENCY (1892)<sup>1</sup>

OCCUPATION	1	2	3	4	5	6	TOTAL
	'WANT OF EMPLOYMENT'	BUSINESS LOSSES, DECLINE OF TRADE ETC.	SPECULATIVE LOSSES DEPRECIATION IN VALUE OF LAND	PRESSURE OF CREDITORS	INABILITY TO COLLECT DEBTS	MISC.	
Professions	1	6	11	1	-	-	19
Managers, Agents and Entrepreneurs	4	8	24	2	2	1	41
Shopkeepers	-	74	23	18	14	10	139
Manufacturers	-	7	2	2	3	3	17
Builders	1	3	11	3	-	10 <sup>2</sup>	28
Clerks and Sales	6	1	23	14 <sup>3</sup>	-	2	46
Artisans	12	7	6	1	2	9 <sup>2</sup>	37
Service	7	13	-	4	1	9	34
Unskilled	5	1	1	10	-	3	20
Not in the Workforce	1	-	10	8 <sup>3</sup>	-	-	19
Out of Business	2	7	4	-	-	-	13
Miscellaneous and Unknown	1	7	5	1	-	1	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>428</b>

1

This table is based upon an analysis of notices of insolvency published in the Argus during the whole of 1892. I have included only those with Melbourne addresses. A multiplicity of causes was usually adduced for an insolvent's difficulties but I have attempted to assign priority to one of them. All cases which involved any speculation were classed under category 3.

2

Mainly 'losses on contracts'.

3

Often because they were guarantors of others; in the case of 'Not in the workforce', wives of indebted husbands.

According to this table, the main victims of speculation appear to have been professional men, managers, builders, clerks and retired people; it also seems likely that these were, in fact, the most ardent speculators in the late 'eighties. Shopkeepers, manufacturers and persons providing services (particularly boarding house keepers) were affected mainly by the decline in trade while manual employees (artisans and unskilled) were ruined by unemployment. Clerks and housewives, who had often stood guarantors for others who failed, were subjected to the pressure of creditors. Builders and building tradesmen commonly became insolvent because of losses on contracts. It is likely that the fates of these individuals point to the more general, if less extreme, difficulties of their fellows.

So severe a depreciation in incomes, employment and property was bound to have profound and widespread effects upon household economy. 'Who in the metropolitan area' asked the Journal of Commerce at the end of 1891, 'has not been forced to practise the most rigid economy? Honest men and women have put down all luxuries and reduced their expenditure; dishonest men have levanted, or found relief in the felon's cell, or in the grave'. Those for whom thrift was an absolute virtue were reconciled to depression as the hard school of prosperity:

The recent depression and enormous losses that have been made will probably in this connection be of infinite value to the community. It has taught those upon whom the burden has fallen to be more economical. They have discovered how

many extravagances, hitherto considered essentials, can be dispensed with, and yet be happy and comfortable.<sup>1</sup>

But it was cold comfort to those whose observance was more conditional. In the eyes of the Age, 'the iron [had] entered into the soul of thrift'.<sup>2</sup> The Commonweal and Workers' Advocate<sup>3</sup> wondered whether thrift, indeed, was any virtue: 'Has not this thrift - that is the spending of as little as possible upon the necessities of life and nothing upon comforts - almost ruined the small shopkeepers, and completely demoralized distribution...?' Many working men now felt that they had better spent their boom earnings on beer and tobacco than in vain striving for respectability and independence. The depression had come as a crushing denial of their 'legitimate' expectations. Destitute or disappointed, they might now have taken more reckless courses: flight, felony and self-destruction.

Yet, such actions are not necessarily to be understood as reactions. Certainly many thousands 'levanted' the city. Some tramped the countryside appealing for work, shooting rabbits, prospecting for gold. Others actually left the colony: during 1893 many building workers were said to have left Melbourne for New Zealand, America, England, New South Wales and South Australia;<sup>4</sup> in the following year many others

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1

J.C., 22 December 1891, p.5, 27 August 1895, p.5.

2

20 February 1894, p.5E.

3

14 November 1891.

4

Age, 15 March 1893, p.5H.

rushed to the newly-discovered gold fields of Western Australia. But were they abandoning old ways? The building workers were itinerant almost by nature. The Western Australian immigrants, according to a reporter at the wharf, were mainly single young men; all of them, he said, were determined to return to their families in Victoria.<sup>1</sup> The census figures confirm his observations on their youth: Dr Norma McArthur has shown that the emigrants of 1891-1901 were largely single males and that the married couples who emigrated had fewer dependent children than the immigrants of the 'eighties.<sup>2</sup> Their continued attachment to Victoria is attested by the large and steady flow of remittances from Western Australia throughout the 'nineties.<sup>3</sup>

There were some fearless spirits who counselled resistance to the law. Indeed, their appeals rested upon a quite coherent 'philosophy', ranged against that of 'self-help'. The 'unemployed agitators' who espoused it claimed that theirs was a society run by 'thieves and land swindlers', of whom James Munro and Sir Matthew Davies were the chief.<sup>4</sup> This theme had already emerged during the boom years:

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1

Age, 11 April 1894, p.5G.

2

'Net Migration to Australian Colonies and States, 1881-1911' in Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology, vol.3, no.1, April 1967, pp.64-6.

3

I am indebted for this observation to Mr J. Gibbney.

4

Police, Melbourne, Reports, 21 July 1892 (Wardley), 16 July 1892 (Wardley).

Land booming is unintentional robbery, - robbery of all, though alas of the poor mainly; for the poor being forced to spend all their wages, pay a greater share of toll to the landlords of the shops.<sup>1</sup>

In 1891 David Andrade the anarchist was applying Proudhon's doctrine ('Property is Robbery') to Victorian conditions,<sup>2</sup> and by 1892 it had emerged as a full-blown local variant: the Government consisted of 'a lot of thieves and land swindlers' and the prevailing distress was 'the robbery of the working classes by the capitalists'.<sup>3</sup>

If society was really a gangland, there could be no redress for its victims but by robbery and violence. Thus the unemployed worker was urged, 'if he could not earn sufficient to keep him in food' to 'take what he wanted', to 'rob his baker and butcher', to squat in his house without paying rent, or - more desperately - to 'smash windows to obtain what they wanted', to 'revolt against society' or to 'visit houses at Toorak and St Kilda and drop a Bob'.<sup>4</sup> Some speakers urged the

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1

Robert Jones, High Rents and Low Wages [Melbourne 1890], p.6, pamphlet filed in Police, Melbourne, Reports, January-March 1890.

2

Commonweal, 5 September 1891.

3

Police, Melbourne, Reports, 16 July 1892 (Wardley), 18 July 1892 (Wardley).

4

Ibid., 6 June 1892 (Wardley and Nicholls), 21 June 1892 (Wardley), 5 February 1892, 22 February 1892, 30 March 1892, 26 June 1892 (Stokes). The main speakers to this effect were Fleming (Boot Operatives Society), Mellor and Flynn.

unemployed 'instead of spending their money on the Melbourne Cup this year to save it up and buy a rifle with it'. So armed, they might 'resent [sic] any interference' with their raids, or even make a united attack upon the Government.<sup>1</sup>

It would be rash to conclude that these threats were idle. From August to November 1892 - about the period when these doctrines were receiving most attention - the police and citizens of the metropolis observed 'an alarming increase in the number of burglaries about the city and suburbs of Melbourne'.<sup>2</sup> Most were concentrated in the southern and south-eastern suburbs of the city, although the theft of food, tobacco and alcohol was also reported from other areas.<sup>3</sup> The victims were often prominent wealthy citizens: James Service, H.G. Turner, Josiah Marks of the Standard Building Society, Thomas Pigdon the contractor and city councillor and James Aitken the merchant, were all robbed in the last quarter of 1892, usually of jewellery, silver plate, cigars or alcohol.<sup>4</sup> The robbers were believed to be novices, men previously

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1

Ibid., 6 June 1892 (Wardley of White), 22 August 1892 (Cantry of Fleming), 4 September 1892 (Geelan of Fleming).

2

Argus, 13 October 1892, p.7D.

3

Ibid., 9 November 1892, p.6G, 19 August 1892, p.3F.

4

Victorian Police Gazette, 2, 12, 26 October, 16, 23 November 1892 (copy at Police Headquarters, Russell Street, Public Relations Department - relevant volume missing at S.L.V.).

unknown to the police,<sup>1</sup> and their activities assumed a distinctive pattern. The thieves adopted

the habit of entering houses by the front window and leisurely proceeding to search various rooms for valuables, either before or after they had turned up the gas in the drawing room, eaten cake, refreshed themselves with wine, and entertained themselves with a game at euchre or cribbage.<sup>2</sup>

They retired in the same leisurely fashion, amidst heaps of broken soda and champagne bottles. The bravado, as well as the uncunning hedonism of their actions, lends some support to the theory, proposed by an Argus reporter, that their motive was 'not robbery but revenge'.<sup>3</sup>

Yet it cannot be maintained that robbery and violence were condoned by more than a handful of extremists. Despite the impressions of contemporaries, the number of persons taken into custody for alleged larceny was no higher than in the boom years,<sup>4</sup> and the doctrine of

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1

Argus, 19 November 1892, p.13

2

Ibid., 18 November 1892, p.6B.

3

Ibid., 19 November 1892, p.13A.

4

1885	1953	1891	2586
1886	2386	1892	2673
1887	2717	1893	2560
1888	2592	1894	2560
1889	2839	1895	2135
1890	2847		

Victorian Statistical Registers, 'Law, Crime, etc.'

'one man, one rifle' was greeted by most of the unemployed 'with loud laughter'. James White, its principal exponent, was regarded by the police as a 'wild agitator' whose 'words and actions are of little consequence'.<sup>1</sup> The mounting hysteria and violence of anarchist rhetoric in the latter half of 1892 are most plausibly interpreted as reactions, firstly, to the now-evident ineffectiveness of processions and street demonstrations -even in summoning supporters, and, secondly, to the continued quiescence of the moderate majority of the unemployed. From about August 1892 the unemployed movement was effectively divided between 'physical force' and 'moral force' parties. The latter, under the aegis of the Trades Hall Council, sanctioned no means but the ballot-box. At meetings of the unemployed, the moderates attracted most hearers. On 24 September, for example, the 'Socialists' - whose platform included physical force speakers - drew an audience of about 700 while the Trades Hall moderates attracted between 3,000 and 4,000.<sup>2</sup>

The third escape from the sordid struggle to make ends meet - one which was not accepted conditionally or capriciously - lay in suicide or psychiatric breakdown. In 1892 the Age referred to a 'Suicidal Mania' and

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1

Police, Melbourne, Reports, 18 September 1892 (Geelan), 19 September 1892, (Cauty), Note of A.W. Colville (Secretary to Commissioner) for information of Commissioner, 14 July 1892.

2

Ibid., 8 August 1892 (Stokes), 25 September 1892 (Geelan and Wardley).

Dr Maloney asserted - with doubtful authority - that about half the suicides of the previous year were caused by want and starvation.<sup>1</sup> Distress and financial embarrassment were commonly cited as causes of individual suicides. Perhaps the most famous case was that of T.P. Fallon, a prominent merchant and tramway speculator. By the end of 1891 he was on the point of financial failure; shortly after the New Year he was found with his throat cut in his room at a Fitzroy boarding house.<sup>2</sup> There were other, less notorious, cases: John King, a butcher with eight children who became melancholy over business losses and hanged himself; Emile Dennemont a wine saloon-keeper who became depressed over the decline in his trade; C.R. Hawkes, a mining agent under wrongful suspicion of shady dealings; James O'Brien, a railway labourer who returned from the country after searching, unsuccessfully, for work, found his wife drunk and his children starving and immediately went upstairs and cut his throat with a table knife.<sup>3</sup>

That many who committed suicide in 1892 were under economic strain does not show that they took their lives because of it; after all, most people were in some

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1

Age, 5 January 1892, p.5F, Argus, 21 January 1892, p.9A.

2

Argus, 5 January 1892, p.5. It was also conjectured that his suicide might be connected with the imminent return to Melbourne of his estranged wife.

3

Argus, 13 August 1892, p.5E, 21 May 1892, p.9H, 11 June 1892, p.8C, 16 June 1892, p.6A, 14 November 1892, p.6.

difficulty. Although the suicide rate was fairly high during the worst depression years (1892-3), it was not as high as during the high boom years (1888-9). Indeed, the figures<sup>1</sup> broadly confirm Durkheim's<sup>2</sup> classic conclusion: 'even fortunate crises, the effect of which is abruptly to enhance a country's prosperity, affect suicide like economic disasters'. Similarly, psychiatric breakdowns do not appear to have increased. The Inspector of Lunatic Asylums reported:

In view of the grave monetary disturbances, with their attendant sufferings, mental and physical, which have marked the period under notice [1892], a larger production of mental disease was to have been looked for. Nevertheless relatively fewer patients were admitted to the Asylums than during previous years....<sup>3</sup>

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1

Suicide - Victoria.

	No.	per 10,000		No.	per 10,000
1880	118	13.9	1891	119	10.4
1885	89	9.3	1892	134	11.5
1887	132	12.9	1893	134	11.4
1888	139	13.1	1894	116	9.9
1889	143	13.5	1895	127	10.8
1890	123	11.0			

From Victorian Yearbooks.

2

Emile Durkheim, Suicide (trans. John A. Spaulding and George Simpson) London 1952, p.243. For similar modern evidence see article 'Disasters' in International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences (New York 1966).

3

'Report of the Inspector of Lunatic Asylums 1892' in V.P.P. 33/1893, p.3.

Resort to self-destruction or madness, no less than to 'fight' and 'flight' were indulged by but a few of the many who were subjected to the extraordinary economic pressures of the early 'nineties. All but these unhappy few somehow maintained the dogged, if sometimes unavailing, struggle to make ends meet.

It would be interesting, therefore, to know how this great majority of people adjusted dwindling resources to persistent needs. Consider, for example, the case of Gripman Apple of the St Kilda tramway depot, facing a wage reduction of almost fifty per cent:

He could not see how a man could sustain a family and keep himself respectable on 33 or 35s a week. A man with four children would have to pay 30s for food alone, and 10s for a house. They could not save anything for a rainy day. As a first class man his wages would fall to 22s 6d. He paid 14s a week for a house to a building society, and his expenses, exclusive of food and clothing amounted to 21s a week. With his present wage [£2/10/-] he could do no more than make ends meet.<sup>1</sup>

Apple's estimates for rent and food were certainly inflated. Since 1888-9 there had been a steep decline in rents and prices.<sup>2</sup> A house rent of 10/- in 1889

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1

Quoted Age, 7 February 1893, p.6B-C.

2

For a systematic presentation of Melbourne wholesale prices 1861-1911 see the Commonwealth Statistician's Labour Report no. 1 (1912), especially pp.48-9 and Appendix, pp.xvi-xix; for retail prices see Victorian Statistical Registers. An approach to the question of living conditions through 'real' or 'effective' wage rates is not satisfactory: official wage rates, as I showed above, are not a fair indication of current rates  
(footnote continued on p.517)

would have fallen to no more than 7/- in 1893-4; 'An Old Housewife's' food basket for an artisan family on £160 per annum, which was reckoned at £1 in 1885, could now be purchased for about 13/6. This general fall in prices of about 30 per cent was said, by the conservative press, to have enabled the employed workman actually to maintain his standard of living. Indeed, it was said, that they had profited at the expense of the 'moneyed classes'.<sup>1</sup> This view cannot be sustained. Wage reductions were often much more than 30 per cent and, though graduated, often pressed the low wage-earner below or very close to subsistence. A 'poverty line' or level of subsistence is not easily drawn. Professor Gosman in 1892 thought 8/- per day was as little as a man and his family could be expected to live on, but early in 1893 at least one struggling timber yard employee asserted that he and his family were surviving on 15/- a week.<sup>2</sup>

(footnote 2 continued from p.516)  
of pay; they omit overtime, unemployment, etc.; they ignore credit and substitutionary effects. A series compiled by Professor Butlin (Australian Domestic Product, Investment and Foreign Borrowing 1861-1938/9, Cambridge 1962, p.158) from Melbourne wages and retail prices actually indicates a rise in 'effective wage' rates in the worst depression years (1892-3)!

1

Argus, 20 July 1892, p.5H, 20 January 1892, p.9D.

2

Age, 15 March 1893, p.5H.

Apart from the decline in prices, the most substantial factor favouring the unemployed, underemployed or 'reduced' wage-earner was the maintenance of credit. An Age reporter observed of the South Melbourne unemployed in 1893: 'The local grocers and storekeepers, for the time being, are more to these people than the Government or anything else, for the grocer can give credit for oatmeal and bran'.<sup>1</sup> Even scrupulous domestic economists had to abandon cash dealing: 'many householders who formerly paid cash down, or ran monthly bills only are now running up accounts with their grocers that come to double figures, and the day of reckoning seems to be indefinitely postponed'. This extraordinary extension of credit (and consequent threat to the solvency of tradesmen) were not confined to working class suburbs like South Melbourne; the Australasian Grocers' Journal reported that 'some of what are termed the "best" suburbs are...distinctly "cronk", and bills of £30 and £40 with local tradesmen are much too frequent'. Prudence made many shopkeepers reluctant to refuse credit ('if they press for repayment they may lose good customers') and 'common humanity' persuaded others who had 'hitherto professed to carry on a cash trade' to make concessions. Yet the shopkeeper knew that a small householder was unlikely ever to repay debts that mounted above £20 or even £10. Moreover the merchant who supported him would not countenance any large extension of credit. The 'family' butcher or grocer had to pare his expenses

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1

12 July 1893, p.6A.

and endeavour to negotiate that narrow path between a tightness that killed trade and a liberality that would plunge him into insolvency.<sup>1</sup>

We have already seen that landlords, like shopkeepers, often showed forbearance in extending credit to unemployed tenants. A North Richmond clergyman estimated in mid-1892 that most workingmen in his district were, on average, about £4 in arrear with rent. Many landlords, however, could not afford such concessions; oftentimes they were themselves almost wholly dependent upon their rents as income. If the landlord became exacting, tenants usually considered rent as a prime claim upon whatever resources they could muster.

The ladies who are visiting in the various suburbs find numberless cases in which people in extreme need would rather have rent paid than be supplied with food, and who, if money is given them to buy necessaries with, promptly hand it over to the landlord. The greatest and most pressing trouble of these people is the danger of losing what remains of their furniture and the shelter of a roof.<sup>2</sup>

When tenants were evicted or found the payment of rent too onerous, it was common for a family to share a house

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1

A.G.J., 22 June 1892, p.137, 22 September 1892, pp.197 and 202, 22 October 1892, p.222.

2

Letter of Rev. J. Dawborn, Argus, 5 July 1892, p.6C. (For his own efforts in relief see my 'Class, Associations and Opinion in Richmond 1860-1892', B.A. 4th year essay, University of Melbourne 1962, p.61), Argus, 1 July 1892, p.7F-G.

with relatives; the same arrangement was often adopted when a husband went 'up country' in search of work, leaving his wife and children in the city. In this respect, young, single immigrant men, without the assistance of a family, were an especially unfortunate class.<sup>1</sup>

The family or individual without access to employment, credit or the mutual help of family or friends had no resort but to the assistance of government or private relief agencies. Yet such help was severely limited both by funds and by its dispensers' restricted view of their function. The ideals of self-help, which dominated the economic thinking of Melbournians in both boom and depression, were two-sided. One emphasized the rewards of industry and thrift; the other, hell to its heaven, preached the natural consequences of sloth and improvidence. As a rule, it was assumed that those in want deserved their fate. Relief ought to be provided only in order to prevent actual starvation, or to rescue guiltless women and children from the spinelessness of their menfolk. A correspondent in the Argus stated the doctrine succinctly, if harshly, when he asserted that

the Government should only undertake relief works to keep the people from starving. A very low rate of wage would do this. A distinction should be made between reproductive and unproductive relief works, for the former pay, say, one-third less than the current rate, and for the latter one-half less....The great

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<sup>1</sup>

E.g. Argus, 21 February 1892, p.7G.

difficulty is dealing with women and children. They should be dealt with in a kinder way than being merely kept from starving, but where it is possible to deal with the man apart he should be offered the bare alternative, work or starve....<sup>1</sup>

The general acceptance of this doctrine was to have depressive effects upon both individuals and the whole economy.

In accordance with it, the Government Labour Bureau forced applicants to accept sub-standard wages in return for work; this, in turn, strengthened the tendency to wage-cutting elsewhere. The insistence upon 'reproductive work' placed very close limits upon the amount of relief work that could be given. By July 1893 the Government's provision had scarcely touched the extremities of the great ocean of indigence: it had issued 2,000 free railway passes to country areas, and provided employment, usually for a short term, for about 1,000 men. The average wage at the government camps at Koo-wee-rup (400 men), Lyonsville (70 men) and Rushworth (120 men) was little more than £1.<sup>2</sup> Local municipalities also sponsored works mainly designed to assist the unemployed, but after the bank crashes of early 1893, some had not the finance to continue them.

Direct relief in goods or money was spurned by most self-respecting unemployed workmen, even as it was discouraged by charity organizers. 'Work, not charity'

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1

H. Armytage, 11 July 1892, p.7D.

2

J.B. Patterson's statement of relief measures (Argus, 6 July 1893, p.9F); statement on camps (*ibid.*, 23 August 1893, p.9H).

was the plea of all. Nothing, it was believed, so destroyed independence and self-respect, so 'pauperized' the workless as the 'handout'. Artisans and clerks were particularly sensitive to the humiliation it implied.<sup>1</sup> Probably only those in most desperate need would have suffered to answer the questions of benevolent ladies and charity organizers. An occupational return of persons assisted by the Ladies Benevolent Societies from the Central Distress Fund in July-August 1892 showed a predominance of labourers (53 per cent of the whole), carpenters (7 per cent), painters (7 per cent), plasterers (3 per cent), bootmakers (3 per cent), bricklayers (3 per cent) and clerks (2 per cent).<sup>2</sup> Possibly 'labourer' had become a prospective rather than a retrospective title, but it is as likely that labourers, standing on the very lowest rung on the occupational ladder, were actually the group most in need of assistance and least inhibited in seeking it. Similarly, in the notes from a charity-organizer's notebook reproduced in the daily press, there was a notable predominance of men with large dependent families:

C.D., plasterer, aged 40, wife 29. No work for 12 months. Four children under 6 years of age. Almost in rags and shoeless. Would sooner have work than charity.

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1

Argus, 21 January 1892, p.9B, Age, 12 June 1892, p.6A.

2

From Argus, 14 September 1892, p.10C.

E.F., clerk aged 30. Five young children and another expected. Most excellent character. No steady work for 12 months. Only one bedstead for family. No blankets ....Only rags to lie on.

G.H., painter, aged 34. Four children under 10. Wife expecting confinement. In great distress.

I.J., Labourer, aged 43. Seven children under 12. No work for 9 months. <sup>1</sup>  
Respectable people, neat and clean.

Direct relief in Melbourne was organized on a local voluntary basis with supplementary assistance from the Government. In consequence, middle class areas, where there was least distress, were better served than the deeply-depressed working class areas. In Prahran, for example, relief payments of 10/- - 15/- per week were usual; in other areas 2/6 was the maximum. Disbursements from the Central Distress Fund redressed this imbalance only slightly. No payments were made to the comparatively comfortable areas: St Kilda, Brighton, Malvern, Hawthorn, Williamstown, Moonee Ponds, Flemington and Essendon; the grants, however, were most unevenly spread between the needy areas: the City of Melbourne, for example, received 18/10d per person relieved, Richmond

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1

Argus, 24 June 1892, p.7F. It is possible, of course, that these cases were selected as being especially pitiable. Nevertheless, there is further evidence suggesting that large families were prominent among those seeking relief. For example there was a ratio of about 5 dependants to every person seeking relief in both Northcote (*ibid.*, 13 September 1893, p.9H) and Prahran (*ibid.*, 21 February 1892, p.9G).

only 3d.<sup>1</sup> Even this degree of assistance was terminated in September 1892 when the coffers of the Central Distress Fund were exhausted. The Committee, making a virtue of necessity, declared an absolute end to further relief in order to prevent the 'pauperization' of the unemployed.<sup>2</sup> Thereafter, relief was sporadic, patchy and meagre.

The evident difficulties of husbands in caring for their wives and children introduced a new urgency to the still-current question 'Why don't the young men marry?' The number of marriages actually fell dramatically in the early 'nineties.

TABLE 8.12

MARRIAGES PER 1000 PERSONS IN MELBOURNE (1890-95)<sup>3</sup>

1890	10.92
1891	9.91
1892	8.59
1893	7.95
1894	8.28
1895	8.59

1

Ibid., 2 August 1892, p.9E, 7 November 1892, p.7B.

2

Ibid., 10 September 1892, p.9E.

3

Victorian Statistical Registers 'Vital Statistics'. Since marriages between country people were often celebrated in the city, the Melbourne rate is higher than that for the whole colony; this contrasts with the birth-rate.

The frequency of marriage depended, so the Yearbooks had it, very largely upon the view taken by prospective husbands of their 'future prospects'. These, it had now to be conceded, were most inauspicious: the salary of the 'ordinary young man' - even £2 per week - was 'barely sufficient to supply [his] own necessities'. It was fairly clear, therefore, that

the diminution of marriages in the year 1892, as compared with the previous year, is due to the 'depression'. As in this prosaic world not even soul can mate with soul without the accompaniment of chairs and tables, when Edwin's salary is reduced, Angelina, like a sensible girl, sees the necessity of 'biding a wee', so that when they mate, the butcher and baker may have their due.<sup>1</sup>

Those who had already married and undertaken family responsibilities now found it increasingly difficult to 'provide for their offspring in turn'. This 'stern fact' was 'perplexing not a few and account[ed] for the declining birthrate in [the] colony'.<sup>2</sup>

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1

Age, 22 April 1893, p.13A-B. Not all were as sensible as Angelina; Amelia Smith, a 16 year-old domestic, was told by her young man, a cordial factory employee, that 'he could not think of marriage yet for a long time to come, because he would desire to occupy an assured and remunerative position before he undertook such obligations and responsibilities as marriage would imply'. Whereupon the poor girl threw herself under a train at North Melbourne station. Argus, 12 February 1892, p.6E.

2

J.C., 27 August 1895, p.6.

GREATER MELBOURNE: CRUDE BIRTH RATE  
(births per 1000 population)<sup>1</sup>

1890	37.71
1891	36.64
1892	36.13
1893	33.35
1894	30.94
1895	29.64

In all suburbs the child-woman ratio (births per 1000 married women 15-45) fell uniformly in the intercensal period 1891-1901. It would appear, therefore, that the decline affected all sections of the community, although in 1901, as in 1891, middle class suburbs had lower ratios than working class suburbs.<sup>2</sup>

The immediate causes of this decline were several. The proportion of married women 15-45 in a period of prime fertility (say 20-30) was now less than it had been in the mid-'eighties. Many families were temporarily dispersed: husbands were searching for work in the country or other colonies; wives and children were staying with relatives. These factors, however, were probably less important than the deliberate and artificial restriction of fertility and the increase of infanticide.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

Victorian Statistical Register 1895, 'Vital Statistics', p.35.

<sup>2</sup>

Victorian Census 1891, Victorian Yearbook 1902, p.173, for suburban return of child-woman ratio (not given in Census 1901).

<sup>3</sup>

See Victorian Yearbook 1902, especially pp.168-9, 173-5, for some discussion of these questions.

Local evidence for the first is sparse. Mrs B. Smythe who was lecturing on contraception and related subjects in various suburban town halls during the early 'nineties, claimed that 'the law of population' had become 'one of the great questions of the day' 'Every trade, every business, every profession is overcrowded,' she observed; in such times additional family responsibilities were to be avoided. There can be little doubt, despite a general paucity of contemporary comment, that a widespread adoption of contraceptive devices was the most important factor in the decline of the Melbourne birthrate,<sup>1</sup> although abortion - which seems to have increased during the period - doubtless played a considerable part.<sup>2</sup>

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1

Mrs B. Smythe, Limitation of Offspring, being the substance of A Lecture delivered in the North Melbourne Town Hall, and elsewhere, to large audiences of Women only. (Melbourne 1893), p.[5]. The most important source of evidence on the decline of the birth rate generally in Australia at this time is the Report and especially the evidence of the New South Wales Royal Commission on the Decline of the Birth rate (1904). For both the above references and for other information on this subject I am indebted to Mr Neville Hicks of the Department of Demography of this University who is currently engaged on a full study of the subject.

2

Evidence of Youl to Royal Commission on Charitable Institutions, V.P.P. 60/1892-3, Qs.3897-3912. For some cases see Argus, 1 March 1892, p.6C, 15 March 1892, p.6D.

The generality of the practice of infanticide was masked, to some extent, by the fact that considerable numbers of murdered infants were actually returned as stillbirths or as having died from some illness which, however, had been induced by deliberate malnutrition.<sup>1</sup> During the 'eighties there had been widespread concern about the growth of 'baby-farming' establishments which were suspected, often with reason, of deliberately starving or ill-feeding children under the pretence of looking after them. In 1890 the Legislature passed a bill to control their operations; henceforth all persons undertaking to care for children in return for payment had to be registered, and the deaths of all children in such establishments were to be investigated by a medical practitioner.<sup>2</sup> Yet, as some members had predicted, the Act did not noticeably reduce the incidence of infanticide. In 1892 the City Coroner (Dr Youl) testified that 30 or 40 babies a year were found dead on the streets; Dr Neild went further, asserting that he had himself carried out post mortem examinations of some 500 children 'the majority of whom have been distinctly killed'.<sup>3</sup> In 1893

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1

On disguised infanticide see evidence of Dr Jones quoted Argus, 23 August 1892, p.7D.

2

'An Act for the Better Protection of Infant Life' Act no.1198, especially sections 4, 12. The Act was a compromise to meet the objections of those (e.g. James Balfour, C.J. Ham and others) who opposed the foundation of a state Foundling Home because they believed it would provide a facility to vice.

3

Evidence of Youl (Qs.3893-4) and Neild (Q.2825) to Royal Commission on Charitable Institutions 1892, loc.cit.

infanticide became a leading public question with the exposure of the grisly activities of Mrs Knorr who had murdered several babies after taking sums of £5 to £25 in return for their care.<sup>1</sup> Yet the Argus believed that cases of ill-treatment by baby-farmers had decreased while murder and desertion of infants had grown apace.<sup>2</sup>

Even those who were not driven to such harsh expedients, and whose survival was never in doubt, nevertheless felt the constraints of an enervating economy:

The floods, the banks and the curtailed screw,  
The weekly bills, and the grasping Jew,  
The servant's wage and the doctor's fee,  
And the needful change by the breezy sea,  
And the pent-up hours at the desk, which mean  
A man's brain changed to a mere machine,  
And a wife's tired eyes and the children wan  
All press like lead on the average man.<sup>3</sup>

The merchant, as well as his clerk, was straitened: James Balfour, whose income remained high by most standards ( £3000 ), nevertheless made substantial cuts in expenditure.

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1

Argus, 28, 29 November, 1, 2 December 1893.

2

Ibid., 5 September 1893, p.50.

3

George Essex Evans, 'The Average Man' in Lorraine and other Verses (1898), p.161.

TABLE 8.13

JAMES BALFOUR - BUDGETS 1890 AND 1893 (EXTRACTS)<sup>1</sup>

	<u>1890</u>	<u>1893</u>
	£	£
Housekeeping	536) ?	290) ?
Garden and Wages	- )	143)
Clothing	17	34
Education	181	120
Medical	54	33
House repairs and furnishing	10	30
Life Premiums	119	97
Club, Entertainment	41	16
Horsefeed and Saddlery	39	?
Charity	737	101
Books and Publications	24	7
Sundry Expenses	672	169

The cuts in 'charity', 'entertainment', 'books and publications', and 'sundry expenses' together suggest a careful attempt to avoid luxury and contain expenditure within the limits of necessity. Austerity, of course, was commended by considerations other than mere economy; it was indecent, as well as imprudent, to indulge in 'social advertizing' at a time when others were in want. Those who continued to ride in splendid carriages, to dispense lavish entertainment and generally

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1

The 1893 figures are from a specially drawn-up list of 'Personal Expenditure'; 1890 figures are taken from ledger entries; both in Balfour Papers.

behave as 'great personages' were accused of acting in 'bad taste'.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, almost every item of conspicuous consumption was heavily depreciated. In dress, for example, there was a transformation in the criteria of choice. From a concern with variety, fancy and show, there was a reversion to plainness, utility and cheapness. People now looked, above all, for 'wear' in socks and stockings, and it was obligatory, as one merchant put it, 'to buy our stuff all round a good bit cheaper than home Hses to compete in this mkt'.<sup>2</sup> As early as 1891 William Gibson called upon his buyer to

send us no more high-priced goods of any kind. As an illustration suppose 30/- was the price a customer would pay two seasons ago the limit now is 10/-.<sup>3</sup>

And Robert Reid warned his London agents, still geared to boom tastes, against 'import[ing] stuff for a museum'.<sup>4</sup> The market for furniture was spoiled as thousands of pieces were repossessed, seized in distraint for rent, or sold to meet debts. 'Art furniture' was now 'overdone' and unsaleable; 'good medium class work'

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1

J.C., 30 August 1892, p.5.

2

Robert Reid, London Memo Book, 16 February 1897, p.73, 24 April 1897, p.123, 11 May 1897, p.144 (A.N.U. Archives).

3

Gibson to Dougall, 8 December 1891, p.324 (Foy and Gibson Papers, M.U. Archives).

4

Loc.cit., 13 October 1896, p.25.

was the only safe line.<sup>1</sup> Many who had bought expensive carriages at the height of the boom, now relinquished them. By 1893 there were yards full of second-hand buggies and barouches. Among those who continued to use carriages, there was a reaction in taste:

There are now no purchasers like those who, in the midst of the 'boom', thinking that their wealth consisted of hundreds of thousands of pounds, gave carte blanche to coachbuilders to build the very best vehicles they could conceive. Those who are buying vehicles now want them for useful rather than ornamental purposes.<sup>2</sup>

What was true of goods was true also of services. The number of female domestic servants employed in greater Melbourne remained fairly stable (1891 = 15,372; 1901 = 16,581) but the more expensive men servants fell from 2,755 in 1891 to 1,651; the 'servant difficulty' seems to have solved itself: advertisements from servants wanting employment appeared in the public press and domestic servants marched with the female unemployed.<sup>3</sup> Private schooling, especially for girls, weighed more heavily upon parents' budgets. The numbers of private schools, teachers and pupils declined substantially.<sup>4</sup> Wesley College, for example, was leased

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1

Gibson to Dougall, loc.cit., 12 April 1892, p.417,

4 August 1891, p.301.

2

Australasian Coachbuilder and Saddler, 10 October 1892, p.73 and 10 April 1892, p.3.

3

Victorian Census 1891, 1901 'Occupations'.

4

Victorian Yearbooks 1893, p.411, 1895-8, p.1093. The largest decreases seem to have been in Presbyterian and Wesleyan schools; those in Anglican and Roman Catholic were less marked.

to a new headmaster who, in turn, lost substantially from the withdrawal of pupils and non-payment of fees.<sup>1</sup> Scotch, too, was in difficulties. In February 1894 its principal (Dr Morrison) confided in his diary:

Day for receiving parents and enrolling new pupils. Depression most marked. Smallest entries for twenty years.

And the next day:

Must make great reductions in expenditure.<sup>2</sup>

Enrollments at Scotch fell from 125 (1890) to 35 (1895); at Melbourne Grammar from 122 to 47.<sup>3</sup>

The gentlemen's clubs also suffered a great withdrawal of members and patronage. The Athenaeum's membership declined from 1,568 in 1887 to 1,036 in 1893.<sup>4</sup> The Australian Club, embarrassed by its extended buildings and declining membership, amended its rules to reduce the entrance fee to £10 until its membership reached 650 (later 750), to give each member the right to nominate three candidates for election and to place the elections in the hands of a special committee.

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1

G. Blainey, et al., op.cit., pp.87-92.

2

Quoted Nancy Adams, Family Fresco (Melbourne 1966), p.34.

3

Scotch College - Old Boys 1851-1939 (typescript at School) and Liber Melburniensis.

4

R.E.W. Wilmot, op.cit., p.38.

By these means the growing number of resignations was countered by an access of new members, and the prized social accomplishments of the boom years were sold off at bargain prices.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, in the end, the depression destroyed, even as the boom had largely created, an entire splendid, self-confident, extravagant style of life. Henceforward Melbourne was to adopt a more restrained, sober - even chastened and hesitant - bearing. There were only 67,000 at the Cup in 1892; the Argus correspondent was surprised that there should be a meeting at all:

The world - which means our Melbourne world - has been (for its sins) so piteously whipped of Fortune lately that one might be pardoned for thinking its limbs too stiff to move in time again, even if the music were supplied.<sup>2</sup>

He found Flemington a 'little nook' steeling itself against 'the harsh realities without', trying not to notice the absence of those erstwhile patrons who had

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1

The Australian Club, Minutes of the Committee, 5, 7 August 1893, 19 April 1893, 7 March 1894, 11 April 1894; the membership figures were as follows:

	New Members	Resigned or died	Total
1890	34	19	453
1891	22	24	450
1892	20	31	439
1893	201	44	596
1894	32	55	572
1895	12	48	537

(From Minutes).

2

Argus, 22 November 1892, p.5D.

ignominiously 'dropped out'. The ladies' dresses, though splendid, had abandoned the dazzling colours of '88 for subtler, less assertive pastel blues and greens.<sup>1</sup>

The visit of Sarah Bernhardt in 1891 was the last of the theatrical feasts; thereafter audiences declined and the extravagant fare of the boom years gave way to sterner diet. (The most successful play of 1892 was a moral drama 'The Village Priest'.) With the end of its material prosperity, Melbourne's 'Culture' also evaporated:

Will the public ever realise [asked 'Oriel' of the Argus] that the depression is not all bogus shares and unemployed? I pass down Bourke-street every day, and see the doors of the Royal hermetically sealed, and the poor old Opera House only waiting until the Gaiety girls go away....Look at the artists, again. What has become of that pleasant Bohemian life that a short eighteen months since was in full vigour?

'The life', he concluded, 'has gone out of the whole thing'.<sup>2</sup> Time, distance and a vicarage view enabled Ada Cambridge to survey that transformation with more detachment:

The best thing that ever happened to Melbourne Society, as I have known it, was the snuffing out of the lights of that feast, the coming of that cold daylight to the revellers. A

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1

Ibid.

2

Argus, 13 August 1892, p.13A. See remarks of Arthur Streeton quoted Asa Briggs, Victorian Cities (London 1963), pp.311-12

better example of the vulgarizing effects of wealth, and the refining effects of being without it, was never packed in a neater compass.<sup>1</sup>

Such judgements, however, go beyond mere pecuniary values and trespass upon a more general issue to which we must now turn: the moral significance of the rise and fall of 'Marvellous Melbourne'.

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1

Thirty Years in Australia (London 1903), p.188. Ada Cambridge was married to a Church of England clergyman who was, for a time, stationed at Williamstown.

CONCLUSION

'MARVELLOUS MELBOURNE'<sup>1</sup>

'Marvellous Melbourne' - the favourite contemporary title for that booming city - was coined by the celebrated, but now aged and impecunious, lion of journalism,<sup>2</sup> G.A. Sala during his lecture tour of the Australian colonies in 1885. Sala's visit to Melbourne began auspiciously. He arrived in March and for two days

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1

This chapter, which is principally concerned with the varieties of urban imagery appropriated to the description of Melbourne, owes something in approach to such works as Anselm Strauss, Images of the American City (New York, 1961) and Morton and Lucia White, The Intellectual Versus the City (Harvard 1961 and Mentor 1964); see also Anselm Strauss, The American City, A Source Book of Urban Imagery (Chicago, 1968).

2

Matthew Arnold (Culture and Anarchy, 1869 (Cambridge edition, 1963, p.61)) had him as the leader of the 'young lions of the Daily Telegraph 'who' pander to the lower, the sensation-loving nature of the populace'. (For further references of the same kind see 'Friendship's Garland' in R.J. Super (ed.) The Collected Works of Matthew Arnold (New York, 1960), vol.5, pp.349-50.) By the mid-eighties the 'young lions', as Sala himself admitted, had 'grown to be somewhat elderly lions..., passably toothless, blunt of claw, thin of mane, and tuftless of tail' (quoted Australasian, 21 March 1885, p.572.).

his rooms at Menzies Hotel were besieged with distinguished well-wishers.<sup>1</sup> But, portentously for the city he acclaimed, his fortunes then took a downward turn. His lectures in April were a flop<sup>2</sup> and his departure early in 1886 might have gone unnoticed but for the melancholy circumstance of his wife's death a few day's earlier.<sup>3</sup>

Yet if Melbourne was unkind to Mr Sala, he, on the other hand, was generous in his recollections: 'I found Melbourne a really astonishing city, with broad streets full of handsome shops, and crowded with bustling well-dressed people.'<sup>4</sup> When he reported on his travels

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1

George Augustus Sala, The Life and Adventures of George Augustus Sala (London, 1894), vol.II, p.423. The Governor invited him to dinner (Australasian, 21 March 1885, p.555) and the Premier called to offer information for the book which, it was justifiably assumed, would issue from his travels (Ibid.).

2

He missed the pitch of the Melbourne Town Hall (ibid., 28 March 1885, p.620) and of his audience. Sala had composed his lectures as set pieces before leaving England (see his letter Argus, 14 April 1885, p.6D) and his lecture on 'Famous People I have seen and known' included a eulogy of Mr Gladstone and but a few non-committal references to Lord Beaconsfield. In the interval, General Gordon was martyred at Khartoum and the Gladstone Government was held responsible. Thus, when Sala presented his lecture, apparently without alteration, his eulogy of Mr Gladstone was heard in stony silence, and his fleeting references to Lord Beaconsfield were greeted with rapturous applause. (Sala, Life and Adventures, p.424).

3

Ibid. and Argus, 1 January 1886, p.5C.

4

Ibid., p.423.

in a series of meandering newspaper sketches, 'The Land of the Golden Fleece', he wrote of a city 'teeming with wealth and humanity'.<sup>1</sup> Succumbing to that journalistic 'flamboyance' which had so offended Matthew Arnold, Sala christened it 'Marvellous Melbourne'.<sup>2</sup> It was 'marvellous', he said, not merely because of the advancement of its civilization, or its wealth and vigour but chiefly because of its precocity. He celebrated the gold rush as the beginning of Melbourne's greatness; those years had left 'a residuum of "real live men", as the Americans say, and those live men and their sons [had] made Melbourne what she is, magnificent and marvellous'.<sup>3</sup> He compared the young metropolis to Philadelphia (in respect of its layout) and Paris (because of its splendid boulevards).<sup>4</sup> In short, he lent his authority to all the most extravagant claims of Melbournians themselves.

For Sala had said nothing new. Westgarth and Kelly,<sup>5</sup> thirty years before, had written of the access of push

1

The articles principally concerned with Melbourne appeared in the Argus, 8 and 15 August 1885, p.5.

2

Ibid., 8 August, p.5A.

3

Ibid., p.5D.

4

Ibid., 15 August, p.5A.

5

Victoria, Late Australia Felix (Edinburgh, 1853), pp.151,345. Westgarth returned to Victoria in 1888 and found 'the old Melbourne of my time, of a full generation past, had been entirely swept away, and, but for the merciful act of leaving the old street names, I might have been dropped into this modern Babel without any possibility, within at least its own wide boundary, of knowing where in the wide earth I had arrived'. William Westgarth, Half a Century of Australasian Progress - A Personal Retrospect (London, 1889), p.47.

and energy which had transformed Melbourne into a bustling city, and as early as 1859 Richard Hengist Horne had hailed it as 'the New York of the Southern Hemisphere'.<sup>1</sup> More recently Anthony Trollope<sup>2</sup> and R.E.N. Twopeny,<sup>3</sup> to name but two notable observers, had written of its remarkable progress, its 'youthful power', its 'bustle and life'. Indeed there is little in Sala's articles which could not have been gleaned from an attentive reading of Trollope and a single progress of 'the Block'.

Such, however, was the appetite of Melbournians for immoderate praise that 'Marvellous Melbourne' was readily absorbed into their vocabulary and consciousness. Within a few days of the publication of Sala's piece on 'Marvellous Melbourne' Garnet Walch, a prominent Melbourne publicist was referring to 'what Mr Sala is pleased to term Marvellous Melbourne'.<sup>4</sup> Nor is it surprising that the epithet gained wide currency. Sala had not used it casually but often and with emphasis. His articles on 'The Land of the Golden Fleece' were published not only in the London Daily Telegraph but in the Melbourne Argus and Australasian and the Sydney Morning Herald. They were later reworked into the books

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1

Australian Facts and Prospects (London, 1859), p.205.

2

Anthony Trollope, Australia and New Zealand (London, 1873), vol.I, pp.383-8.

3

R.E.N. Twopeny, Town Life in Australia (London, 1883), pp.2-3.

4

Argus, 14 August 1885, p.3H. Walch was the author of Victoria in 1880 (Melbourne, 1881).

A Journey Due South (1885) and Right Round the World (1888). Sala's judgement of Melbourne carried a certain authority: his Living London, Echoes Re-echoed had been published two years earlier (1883) and his Gaslight and Daylight (1859) and other colloquial sketches of London life had first established his literary reputation. If Mr Sala said Melbourne was 'marvellous', then surely it was. Perhaps most importantly, however, he found a phrase with just the sweep and crude euphony to engage the immediate attention of real-estate promoters, guide-book writers and other city 'boosters'.

Sala's phrase was vague enough to suggest several themes: the city's material progress, the lively temper of its commercial and social life, its dominance over the other Australian cities. The image of Melbourne as the bustling metropolis of Australasia - 'The Queen City of the South',<sup>1</sup> 'the empire-city of Australia'<sup>2</sup> - rested, in large measure, upon the sometimes implied, sometimes explicit, contrast with its poorer, languid 'fractious old mother, Sydney'. The contrast was a natural one and, for that reason, may be overwrought: travellers passing from one to the other were bound to point up their comparisons; the irony implicit in Melbourne overtaking the older 'mother city' was too obvious to escape comment. The basis for comparison lay, above all, in the alleged contrast between the energy and drive of

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1

H. Perkins, Melbourne Illustrated and Victoria Described (Melbourne, 1880), p.3.

2

A.B.C.N., 15 June 1889, p.570.

Melbourne businessmen and the slowness of their Sydney competitors.

There is bustle and life about Melbourne which you altogether miss in Sydney. The Melbourne man is always on the look-out for business, the Sydney man waits for business to come to him. The one is <sup>1</sup>in a hurry, the other takes life more easily.

Even Sydney-siders acknowledged the justice of the contrast. The President of the N.S.W. Institute of Architects confessed to a delegation from Melbourne that 'we are a very slow-moving community' and thanked them for lending a hand in waking it up.<sup>2</sup> In an 'Odious comparison of Melbourne and Sydney' a 'Sydney man' urged his fellows to emulate Melbourne's sprawling transport system.<sup>3</sup> T.S. Mort, bemoaning the wharf conditions in Sydney, claimed that

...had Melbourne men been here our port would not have been in its present condition. I mean to say had men of Melbourne mind been here, matters would have been totally changed. Transplant Melbourne men to Sydney and the conditions would have been totally different.<sup>4</sup>

Even the Lord Mayor of Sydney acknowledge that Victoria, 'for its age, was one of the wonders of the world'.<sup>5</sup>

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1

Twopeny, op.cit., pp.2-3.

2

A.B.C.N., 9 November 1889, p.443.

3

Ibid., 11 and 18 February 1888, pp.82ff and 99ff.

4

To a Select Committee on Wharf Accommodation, quoted K. Cable, 'Eastern Suburbs Railway: Early Plans and Politics' in J.R.A.H.S., December 1965, p.325.

5

A.B.C.N., 9 November 1889, p.444.

The theme of Melbourne's material progress was also broadly drawn. The advent of this 'city of a generation'<sup>1</sup> was said to constitute 'an event unparalleled in the annals of the world'.<sup>2</sup> In 1888 the Daily Telegraph published a series of statistics of population, capital inflow, railway revenue, water supply and savings bank deposits which, it was suggested represented 'a chapter of social growth, an expansion of wealth and material well-being, such as can be scarcely paralleled in the history of the planet'.<sup>3</sup> Even American visitors, who were familiar with comparable phenomena, conceded that Melbourne, along with Chicago and San Francisco, constituted one of the 'marvels of the world'.<sup>4</sup>

Observers played at dividing the history of Melbourne into 'positivist' stages of civilization. Twopeny in 1883 had surveyed a 'log-hut' stage, a 'weather-board' stage and a 'brick and stone' stage.<sup>5</sup> By 1888, however, the architecture (and institutions) of the city were even further advanced:

[Melbourne] passed through an original weatherboard stage, then through a brick era of plain and not very ostentatious architecture, and now it is being covered

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1

H. Perkins, op.cit., p.3.

2

Victorian Railways Tourist Guide (Melbourne, 1885), p.6.

3

Reprinted A.B.S.G., 5 December 1888, p.550.

4

T.A. Knox, The Boy Travellers in Australasia (New York, 1889), p.456.

5

Op.cit., pp.30-31.

with lofty and massive buildings that are intended to be permanent. In like manner its business has changed and increased. Instead of being merely a station for the export of wool and tallow, it has founded a variety of interests, and outstripping its manufacturing stage, is becoming recognized as the financial centre of a very large portion of Australia. Similarly, its institutions have altered from those suited to the days when bullock drays toiled slowly along Collins-street to those of a large and somewhat self-conscious metropolis.<sup>1</sup>

The fabric of the city was taken as the basis and yardstick of its civilization. 'One of the first things a stranger noticed on landing was the magnificent public buildings, and the natural conclusion he came to was that this was a prosperous community.'<sup>2</sup>

Though natural, the visitor's conclusion was perhaps invalid. Certainly some architectural critics believed that appearances were a most uncertain guide to the character of the city. One of them actually described Melbourne as 'the City of False Semblant'.<sup>3</sup> Its architecture, he claimed, was 'a mere superficial dressing applied only to the front'. Another believed that utility and fitness were entirely disregarded: 'the primary notion was to have something fine and imposing'.<sup>4</sup> The buildings of Melbourne are perhaps a

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1

Australasian, 4 August 1888, p.265.

2

D.M. Davies at Builders and Contractors' Dinner A.B.C.N., 31 August 1889, p.211.

3

Ibid., 25 April 1891, p.305 (editorial).

4

Ibid., 9 August 1890, p.82(T.A. Sisely). For contrasting, more optimistic views, see F. Harrison, *ibid.*, 15 June 1889, p.555, and Rieusset, *ibid.*, 7 February 1891, both of whom were native-born.

better guide to the aspirations than to the cultural achievements of its people.

Yet, considered even from this viewpoint, the styles as well as the sheer size and magnificence of the boom buildings deserve attention. 'Like the old Romans', Australians were now tending to congregate in great cities, 'spurning rusticity'.<sup>1</sup> Melbourne's architecture, like its people, evidenced a preoccupation with metropolitan, not to say imperial, motifs; it is the architecture of Greece, Rome and Renaissance Italy.<sup>2</sup> 'The Rialto',<sup>3</sup> 'The Olderfleet' and the E.A. and A. Bank<sup>4</sup> were clothed in splendid Venetian Gothic; the Modern Permanent Building Society, Prell's Building and the new Federal Coffee Palace were piped with Italianate

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1

A.B.S.G., 6 November 1890, p.327.

2

Cf. J.M. Freeland, Architecture in Australia (Melbourne, 1968), who, properly, emphasizes the element of personal display in boom architecture (pp.171-2).

3

Illustrated, *ibid.*, p.191.

4

Maie Casey, et.al., Early Melbourne Architecture 1840-1888 A Photographic Record (Melbourne, 1953), p.36.

stucco; Town Halls<sup>1</sup> and suburban mansions<sup>2</sup> were surmounted with the campanile of Renaissance palazzi.

The splendour of Melbourne's private building, however, was not matched by its public works; civitas lagged behind urbis. James Service returned from England in 1883 and, after remarking on the city's notable progress during his absence, suggested that it wanted but two things - a tramway and a sewerage system - to attain the pinnacle of civilization.<sup>3</sup> Others added to the list: wooden street paving, a new Prince's Bridge, tree-lined streets, improved harbour

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1

On Town Halls see Freeland, op.cit., pp.175-6. For a selection of designs with comments see the Building and Engineering Journal, 17 November 1888, p.433 (Brunswick), *ibid.*, p.445; (St Kilda), *ibid.*, 15 November 1890, p.370; (Williamstown competition design; not built), 2 August 1880, p.25; (Port Melbourne), Argus, 17 July 1885, p.7C-D; (Comment on Collingwood Town Hall). There was a most interesting controversy in which the Hawthorn City Council insisted upon the inclusion of full classical pillars and refused to entertain mere pilasters (see A.B.C.N., 8 and 22 December 1888, pp.513 and 561). The splendour of Melbourne Town Halls in comparison with Sydney council chambers is remarked, *ibid.*, 27 August 1887, p.251.

2

For two comments on the use of towers in domestic architecture see Twopeny, op.cit., p.33, and 'Tasma', Uncle Piper of Piper's Hill (Melbourne, 1891), pp.66ff. On Melbourne's mansions of this period see Ann Hone, 'Men, Mansions and Melbourne' (B.A. Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1961), and Freeland, op.cit., p.161.

3

Australasian, 12 May 1883, p.594.

facilities.<sup>1</sup> One by one these improvements were carried out until, by 1886, but one 'fatal blot' remained. 'Marvellous Smellbourne'<sup>2</sup> remained unsewered. The absence of that amenity, moreover, was continuously, odiously and inescapably evident:

Anything more degrading to a fine city than soil carts parading the streets at night or nightmen being met on the staircase of a stately hotel, polluting the air with an abominable stench cannot well be imagined.<sup>3</sup>

But defective sanitation was not merely a source of embarrassment; it was believed to undermine the very foundations of the city. Fitzgibbon, the Melbourne Town Clerk, compared his city to the beast in the book of Daniel: its head was of gold, but its feet of clay.<sup>4</sup>

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1

Ibid., 27 December 1884, pp.1225-6. For some interesting comment on the introduction of trees in city planning see Australian Engineering and Building News, 2 February 1880, p.169, and ibid., 1 April 1881, p.178. The arguments in favour of tree planting were both 'artistic and sanitary' - the optic nerve was said to be relieved by resting upon green objects. Reference was made to papers by Dr Phené presented in Manchester and Edinburgh. On similar movements for parklands in American cities see Charles N. Glaab and A. Theodore Brown, A History of Urban America (New York, 1967), p.70.

2

A.B.C.N., 23 February 1889, p.189.

3

Letter of H. Wilson, ibid., 30 July 1887, p.195.

4

Ibid., 26 September 1891, p.257 (cf. Daniel 2: 32-33).

When he called for the reformation of 'Murderous Melbourne', the Sydney Bulletin<sup>1</sup> was quick to appropriate the phrase:

Sing hey! for the City that's Queen  
Of the continent known as Australia,  
Where the gutters are slimy and green  
And all sorts of terrors assail yer...

Others made the sanitation nuisance a starting point for more thorough-going criticisms of the city. In 1890 J.H. Barrows, a Brunswick bank manager, gave a lecture before the Bankers' Institute entitled 'The Barbarisms of Barbarous Melbourne'.<sup>2</sup> He began upon the familiar ground of Melbourne's 'marvellous lot of stinks', her medieval drainage, the squalor of her Chinese quarter and the general want of attention to good taste and beauty. But he went on to assail not only the physical environment of the city, but its culture and morals as well. Larrikinism, the 'godless' education system, the incivility of railway officials, the 'Jumbo-worship' of football matches, the spitting propensities of the young Australian natives -

these various barbarisms, and many others I might mention, envelop and defile Melbourne like those ever-increasing clouds of smoke, hanging like a pall over the boasted civilization of our city. Disfigure all the beautiful - give full play to all the brutal, the dismal and the vile - and you have the elements of genuine barbarism, even though you cover it with the thin cloak or gloss of

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1

27 April 1889, p.12.

2

Argus, 18 January 1890, p.13F.

fancied civilization. The coin is base even though you gild it. The city sinks, even though your new warehouses and offices rear their heads up to heaven's gate almost.<sup>1</sup>

Melbournians should be instructed by travel, should observe the amenities of other cities. Particularly should they look to London whence they might import the 'common decencies of life'.

None of these charges was new; but rarely had they been lumped together and uttered on a note of such high-pitched complaint. It took the wailing of a Jeremiah to rise above the brouhaha of the boom. Barrow's criticisms were not well received.<sup>2</sup> Most of the Argus correspondents conceded the sanitary deficiencies of the city but considered that when he went on to mount a more general attack, he revealed himself as a representative of that familiar type -

"the candid friend" from England, who makes mountains out of our faults and molehills out of our virtues, if, indeed, he allows us any of the latter, and perpetually thrusts English customs, manners and institutions down our throats ad nauseum.<sup>3</sup>

The counter-attack proceeded along conventional lines: Was not Barrow perhaps a failed, and soured, London bank clerk?<sup>4</sup> Was London really an example of the 'decencies

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>

Only one correspondent agreed with Barrow's general line of criticism. See letter of 'Stewart Islander', *ibid.*, 30 January 1890, p.4G.

<sup>3</sup>

'Native', *ibid.*, 23 January 1890, p.11D.

<sup>4</sup>

'Fitzroy Branch (ANA)', *ibid.*, 27 January 1890, p.8G.

of life'? ('After a perusal of How the Poor Live in the East end of London and other works on the same subject, I think he [Barrow] will agree with me that there are some "decencies" which ... Australians ... can reasonably do without.')<sup>1</sup> Was it fair to judge all Australian natives by a misbegotten few?<sup>2</sup> Was Melbourne, in only its fiftieth year, properly judged by the standards of the world's metropolis?<sup>3</sup>

The confrontation of civilized London and aspiring Melbourne was a stock theme of fiction, as it was of social intercourse. The mutual adjustments of the down-at-heel, but aristocratic, Cavendish family and their rich but vulgar Australian relations, the Pipers, is the principal theme of 'Tasma's' Uncle Piper of Piper's Hill (1891). And in Francis Adams' The Melbournians (1892) the same idea is developed in the relationship between Susie and Lord Morecamb:

'What do you think of our Australian cities?  
What do you think of Melbourne?' [asked Susie].

'Am I to tell you the truth?' [Lord Morecamb] asked with a fine smile.

'Oh, of course'.

'Then I think it would be dreadful to have to live in them. They are almost worse than the American cities. It is interesting to see them. But I understood an English girl who

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1

'Native', loc.cit.

2

'Austral Fern', *ibid.*, 21 January 1890, p.7G.

3

T.M.C., *ibid.*, 27 January 1890, p.8G.

said to me the other day that, if she could not go back to England, she would die.'

'What was it hurt her so?'

'The narrowness and dryness of things here, she said. No pictures, no music, no social life, no shade even....'

'I don't think London is any better. It is a horrible place! There is no sun there and that's worse still....'<sup>1</sup>

Comparisons of this kind not only mirrored different values but focussed upon different features of city life and different parts of the city.<sup>2</sup>

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1

(London and Sydney) pp.106-7. The play 'Marvellous Melbourne' presented at the Alexandra Theatre in 1889 developed a similar theme. (see reviews Argus 21 January 1889, p.6C and Australasian 26 January 1889, p.186)

2

For Australian reactions to the superior Englishman see Arthur Patchett Martin's 'My Cousin from Pall-mall' in his Fernshawe (London, 1885), p.110, and Garnet Walch, 'A Drug in the Market' in Douglas Sladen (ed.), A Century Of Australian Song (London, 1888), p.521.

...Education and English polish are very unsaleable stuff/the men that are wanted in Melbourne must be sent out here in the rough.

The Englishman whose experience of London was not that of the West End compared Melbourne much more favourably with London. George Gray, for example, fell into conversation with 'cousin William Dew' one lunch time in Cole's Book Arcade. 'In conversation I ask [sic] him what his impression was of Melbourne. He said it surpassed anything that he had heard, or imagined about it, and in his opinion the streets, shops and people would bear favourable comparison with the best portion of London' (George Gray, Letters to England, 11 January 1885). In fact, as another new chum noticed, Melbourne, in many particulars was 'aping her mother metropolis', P. Clarke, A New Chum in Australia (London, 1886), p.26.

The 'candid friend from England' saw Melbourne from above; he condemned it for falling short of London standards. Victorian countrymen, on the otherhand, saw it from below, as a great octopus sucking life from the land. Melbourne grew largely at the expense of the country districts, especially the gold fields. From the viewpoint of the urban producer this was natural and instinctive: people 'swarmed to the city like bees to the twig'.<sup>1</sup> To the countryman, however, urban immigration represented a terrible disruption of the natural order. The Australasian, a weekly with a large rural circulation, was proclaiming, even in 1879, that

centralization is one of the chief evils we have to combat. Its disastrous effects are apparent in the abnormal growth of both Melbourne and Sydney which bid fair to become 'the great wens' of Australia.<sup>2</sup>

By 1885 there were concerted attempts in the worst-affected areas to combat the cityward movement. A Decentralization League<sup>3</sup> was formed in Sandhurst, particularly among local merchants whose Riverina trade was falling into Melbourne hands. Their complaints, however, were more general. It was alleged that the pattern of government spending, especially upon railways, schools and its own bureaucracy favoured concentration in the metropolis. By the late 'eighties there were protests, too, against the proposed reapportionment of

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1

Manufacturer, December 1891, p.122.

2

9 August, 1879, p.178.

3

Argus, 6 October 1885, p.4H and 28 October 1885, p.8E.

electorates towards the bulging metropolis.<sup>1</sup> It was argued, in the country interest, that the movement of population to Melbourne was not a permanent development, merely 'a fortuitous concourse of atoms',<sup>2</sup> that Melbourne voters had readier access to legislators, that weight should be given to 'the great producing interests'.<sup>3</sup>

The decentralists foresaw nothing but economic ruin and moral collapse if the cityward movement were not arrested.

It surely indicates something wrong that the metropolis contains more than one-third of the population of the country....It is impossible to reconcile such a condition in a new country with what has always obtained elsewhere in truly prosperous communities, and therefore the patriot is forced to look on the prospects as ominous of coming disaster and collapse....If I spoke as a moralist, it would be allowed me to repeat the warning given for centuries of the dangers to the moral and physical well-being of men when they are crowded into cities, but it will not be out of place even here to note that whereas in the United Kingdom crime has very sensibly diminished, it remains the same in Victoria, if it has not actually increased....<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> V.P.D., 58/1888. Electoral Districts Alteration Bill.

<sup>2</sup> Andrews, *ibid.*, p.1383.

<sup>3</sup> Harper, *ibid.*, p.1323.

<sup>4</sup> Letter of John Crozier (Castlemaine) in Argus, 27 October 1885, p.8H.

Moral arguments of this kind found widespread support. The Argus, for example, acknowledged the authority of Cobbett and de Tocqueville; decentralization, it conceded, was a safeguard of democracy. But it went on to question the theory that Melbourne had been built up by the direct action of the state. The metropolitan railways and water supply systems, for example, were more profitable than those in the country; in these matters, at least, the city was subsidizing the country districts. The growth of Melbourne was impelled by more general and irresistible forces:

The times do not favour one-horse affairs either in carriages, in commerce, or in cities. The enormous joint-stock companies consolidating some private enterprises and crushing others and the absorbing metropolis are alike the products of the age, and in no small degree the one assists to strengthen the other. In the solar system the dominance of the centripetal force would mean the inrush of the planets to be devoured by the sun. The asteroids would go first. Scores of Victorian hamlets could be mentioned which have disappeared from the scene having slipped down the railway to Melbourne.<sup>1</sup>

The countryman used to come as a mere sojourner; to see the Exhibition, the Opera Comique, the arcades; to study the likeness of Ned Kelly in the Waxworks or the reliefs on the Burke and Wills monument.<sup>2</sup> He returned

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1

Argus, 31 October 1885, p.11A-B (editorial). Cf. H. Perkins, *op.cit.*, p.5. 'There is a law of gravitation by which smaller are attracted to larger bodies, and, by some such law, Melbourne has year after year attracted to itself, either temporarily or permanently, representatives of the best classes of other of these colonies'.

2

Melbourne Punch, 17 February 1881, p.63.

but a little wiser and rather poorer than he arrived. Increasingly, however, the countryman came to work and settle in the great metropolis. He left the countryside, innocent and undefiled, to negotiate the snares of the city:

Backward looks he once and lingers  
As his swarthy sun-burnt fingers  
Ope the station gate,  
Then, o'er dusty roads and gritty  
Southward rides he to the city -  
Southward to his fate.<sup>1</sup>

In the eyes of the moralist he was at best a source of refreshment to a polluted environment,<sup>2</sup> at worst another victim to 'the rush and flurry, the hard materialism, the blinding glare, the dust and turmoil, the manifold temptations of city life'.<sup>3</sup> Even if he remained in the country, the colonist was not immune from the contagion of the metropolis. Bishop Moorhouse claimed that

this great city is the centre not only of the wealth and culture, but also of the vice and pleasure of the colony. There is not a family in our remote mountains and lonely forests which is not interested in diminishing the temptations to which its male members are exposed when they visit the metropolis. There is not a family which may not know the shame and agony of having a poor daughter lost in the mazes of this deadly labyrinth of sin.<sup>4</sup>

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1

C.A. Sherard, 'Satan's Ganymede' in D. Sladen (ed.), op.cit., p.418.

2

C.J. Ham, Argus, 29 May 1885, p.6E.

3

Y.M.C.A. speaker quoted Herald, 3 January 1885.

4

Quoted Argus, 22 September 1885, p.9E.

When churchmen abominated the city's sins, they were concerned, above all, with what contemporaries euphemised as 'the Social Evil'. Henry Varley, an evangelist who saw Melbourne as a battlefield in the great 'War between Heaven and Hell'<sup>1</sup> asserted that

I know of no other city, the size of Melbourne, that has so many prostitutes in it. I know no city the size of this on God's earth with five or six such debasing places of amusement in it as Melbourne has.<sup>2</sup>

Neither the Bishop, in whom it would have been unbecoming, nor Mr Varley, who was a transient, could claim constant, first-hand, factual acquaintance with the evils to which they alluded. Yet, throughout this period, a small group of 'investigators' was making short, sporadic forays into the jungle to Melbourne's 'back slums' to report, for the edification or titillation of their readers, exact descriptions of Melbourne's low life.

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1

Henry Varley, The War Between Heaven and Hell in Melbourne, being a graphic and interesting sketch of the recent crusade against sin and social wickedness in the city. (Melbourne 1891).

2

Henry Varley, The Social Evil (Melbourne 1878), p.16. For some account of Varley's activities See Keith Dunstan, Wowers (Melbourne, 1968), pp.65-6, 169.

The first and most notable of these was Julian Thomas<sup>1</sup> whose descriptive articles in the Argus and the Australasian under the pseudonym 'The Vagabond' struck out' as he put it, 'a new line in Australian journalism'.<sup>2</sup> It was his practice to investigate social conditions of the poor and outcast as what we would now call a 'participant-observer'; he impersonated a hospital out-patient, an asylum warder, a tramp, a destitute immigrant. He claimed no interest but personal profit;<sup>3</sup> he cared 'nothing for the politics of individuals or committees. I must write the truth as I see it and my only endeavour is to be impartial'.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, his own sympathies emerge clearly from his writings: he was

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1

Thomas seems to have presented himself in Australia as an American and most contemporary biographies (eg. in Mennell's Dictionary of Australian Biography, 1892) gave his birthplace as Virginia. In fact, he was English - born and began his journalistic career in England and Wales. In the early 'seventies he went to America and married the widow of a Virginian planter. It was after quarrelling with her that he left for Australia where he arrived 'sick in body and mind, and broken in fortune' (Vagabond Papers, Sketches of Melbourne Life in Light and Shade. First series (Melbourne 1877), p.v; (also see 'Stanley James' in Australian Encyclopedia, Sydney 1958). Thomas claimed that he had thus become a 'vagabond' from necessity. But he apparently had some experience of journalism in New York and may have emulated similar 'slum-reporters'.

2

The Vagabond Papers, Sketches of Melbourne Life in Light and Shade, First Series (Melbourne, 1877), p.v.

3

The Vagabond Papers, Fourth Series, p.xiii.

4

Ibid., Second Series (Melbourne, 1877), p.v.

worldly, sceptical, humane and tolerant. He cared little for 'fashionable' religion although he occasionally adopted the same tone of high moral indignation as its custodians.<sup>1</sup> Generally, however, his attack was less direct; it was by the accumulation of significant detail that the reinforced his main theme: 'how the forces of society work against the weak'.<sup>2</sup> His poor are buffeted from one charitable institution to another until, at last, unpaid and unprayed for, they are shovelled into paupers' graves. 'In death as in life', he reflected, 'the poor have not a square show for salvation'.<sup>3</sup>

Probably none of his imitators equalled the brilliance of Thomas' journalism; nevertheless his articles did much to open up Melbourne's low life as a subject of charity and curiosity. Indeed his piece on 'Outcasts of Melbourne' (1877)<sup>4</sup> had a similar impact to Andrew Mearns' The Bitter Cry of Outcast London (1883) in England.<sup>5</sup> In 1882 Rev. Samuel Chapman of Collins

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1

E.g. his remarks on theatre vestibules. *Ibid.*, First Series, p.198. On the theatre vestibules and prostitution see Dunstan, *op.cit.*, pp.165-8, and for a similar English case see E.S. Turner, Roads to Ruin, The Shocking History of Social Reform (London, 1954), chapter 9.

2

*Ibid.*, Second Series, p.191.

3

'Pauper Funerals', *ibid.*, p.67.

4

Reprinted *ibid.*, Third Series (1877), p.52.

5

Anthony S. Wohl, 'The Bitter Cry of Outcast London' in the International Review of Social History, XIII, 1968, pt.11, pp.189-245, K.S. Inglis, Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England (London, 1963), pp.67-9.

Street Baptist Church launched a forthright attack upon the conditions of the back slum dwellers of Little Bourke Street<sup>1</sup> which inspired the formation of a committee of clergy, politicians, city councillors and other prominent citizens 'to investigate the back slums with a view to their abolition'.<sup>2</sup> The Argus and Australasian took up the cry. In a series of articles on 'the Back Slums of Melbourne' an Argus reporter and 'another gentleman' who knew them at first hand presented a series of detailed, street-by-street descriptions of conditions in these worst slums of Melbourne.<sup>3</sup> Although they took care to be 'objective', their articles were permeated with assumptions which, under even thinner disguise, were to shape most of the 'slummer' writing of the decade.

The reporters were at pains to emphasize how alien to all right instincts were the habits and condition of the slum-dwellers. Sexual vice, theft, gambling, opium addiction and, especially, the miscegenous association of Chinese men and abandoned white women - each constituted a flagrant violation of middle class morality with its emphasis upon Family, Property, Sobriety and the dominance of the European. Devoid of moral sense, the people of Little Bourke Street had fallen to the level of animals, 'brutes in the mire of their filthy den'.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Australasian, 3 March 1883 (Supplement no.883, p.9).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 27 January 1883 (Supplement no.878, p.10).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 20 January 1883, p.79; 3 March 1883, p.273.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 27 January 1883 (Supplement no.878, p.10).

John Freeman in his Lights and Shadows of Melbourne Life (1888) developed the animal imagery even further: his slum-dwellers are 'rattish' and 'predatory'; they cry like monkeys, they 'come forth from their holes like unclean animals'; they blink in the light like owls.<sup>1</sup> The poor were pariahs, members of a community apart; not simply the lowest stratum of a social pyramid. Little Bourke Street, where poverty, filth and moral decay were actually conjoined, was the text upon which reporters and reformers alike preached the lesson of their necessary conjunction.<sup>2</sup>

The reporters were concerned, secondly, to emphasize the propinquity of vice to the very heart of the city:

By a right of way flanked on the one side by the sky-reaching Bourke Street Coffee Palace, and on the other by the Theatre Royal pile, we leave the hurry and bustle of Bourke-street and plunge at once into that quarter of Little Bourke-street where almond-eyed Celestials people the footpaths and chatter in doorways, where the air is redolent with the fumes of opium, and where playful half-caste children can now be counted by the hundred.<sup>3</sup>

It became conventional to develop the contrast between the brightness and health of the 'Marvellous Melbourne' which was most evident to the visitor and the darkness and disease of the 'back slums' which it concealed.

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<sup>1</sup>  
(London), pp.15-19.

<sup>2</sup>  
See, for example, Australasian, 3 March 1883, p.273.

<sup>3</sup>  
Ibid., 20 January 1883, p.79.

Thomas' Vagabond Papers were sub-titled 'Sketches of Melbourne in Light and Shade'; John Freeman's Lights and Shadows of Melbourne Life modified the title to underline the contrast, which he developed more crudely than Thomas, between Melbourne's civilization and its vice.

As the visitor passes through [Melbourne's] broad streets, he will marvel at its stately buildings and manifold signs of prosperity. He will notice the well-to-do look of the people he meets; he will admire the grace and demeanour of the women, and the manly independent bearing of the men.

Let him now turn down one of the arteries leading from the broad streets to the little ones at the back, and he will see that although we have much to rejoice in, we have also something to deplore. He will find that Melbourne has its shadows as well as its bright spots, its hovels as well as its palaces, low life as well as high, and abject poverty side by side with boundless wealth.<sup>1</sup>

By the late 'eighties the evils of Little Bourke Street had become, as one complainant said, 'an oft-stated, but still urgent case'.<sup>2</sup> The 'slummer-reporters' turned to other refuges of vice: they developed the contrast between Smith Street Collingwood 'where everything was almost a blaze of light, and where plenty and providence

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1

Op.cit., pp.vii-viii.

2

Daily Telegraph, 9 June 1888, p.9A, 'The Night Side of Melbourne by a Visitor'. Also see Argus, 22 January 1889, p.5C-D, 'Our Mid-City Slums'. Australasian, 21 April 1888, p.852-3, 'The Chinese Quarter'.

abounded' and the desperate poverty in the narrow streets which adjoined it;<sup>1</sup> between the 'health, life and energy' of Bourke Street during the day and its sordid night traffic of beggars, drunks and prostitutes.

The slum reporters' repertoire of imagery is nicely displayed in a passage of the most famous fictional reconstruction of Melbourne life - Fergus Hume's The Mystery of a Hansom Cab (1887). Calton the detective and his guide Kilsip turn from the balmy night air of a Bourke Street flooded with electric light and band music into a Little Bourke Street

where the narrowness of the street, with the high buildings on either side, the dim light of the gas lamps, and the few ragged looking figures slouching along, formed a strong contrast to the brilliant and crowded scene they had just left.<sup>2</sup>

They negotiate a dark, air-trapped lane as hot as a furnace; they pass Chinamen shrilling 'like parrots'. Calton presses closer to his guide 'like Dante to Virgil in the Infernal Regions'. They thread ever narrower and darker lanes. 'It is like walking in the valley of the shadow of death' Calton mutters. At the end of the 'tunnel', they are plunged in total darkness.

With the work of the slum reporters, as with much 'sensational' journalism, there is tension between its apparent objects and its actual application to the

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1

'Social Wreckage', Daily Telegraph, 15 April 1887, p.7A.

2

(Arrow edition, London, 1959), pp.89-102.

reader's tastes. Thomas, Freeman and Hume set down the details of slum life with the avowed object of revealing a sore upon the face of a fair city and rousing her citizens to cleanse it. Yet, almost in the same breath, they asserted that vice, poverty and squalor such as they had described, was a mark of all great cosmopolitan cities. Freeman's book which consists, largely, of a series of sketches, drawn in the manner of Mayhew, of 'the Melbourne street people'<sup>1</sup> illustrated - so he and his reviewers claimed - 'the tendencies of modern life towards the production of uniform types of humanity and modes of life.'<sup>2</sup> Thomas asserted, quite explicitly, that the 'back slums' were not merely an aberration from Melbourne's otherwise benign development but a consequence of it:

In every civilized community there is a vast substratum of poverty, disease, vice and crime, and by its depth the stability of the institutions of the country may be judged. In cities which boast of the highest civilization and luxury, the opposite extreme is found. This arises from two causes - the opposition of nature (or natural impulses) to civilization, and the quick step of the march of progress which leaves so many behind, forced or fallen from the ranks to join the legion of outcasts.<sup>3</sup>

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1

E.g., Costermongers (p.143), Newsboys (p.151), Tinkers (p.206), Cf. Henry Mayhew, London Labour and the London Poor (3 vols., London, 1851), for costermongers, vol.I, pp.6-63.

2

Australasian, 7 July 1888, p.11 (review), and see Freeman's own similar statement, op.cit., p.206.

3

Op.cit., Third Series, pp.52-3.

To some readers, therefore, accounts of a vicious and extensive low life provided but a confirmation of the marvellous progress of their city, a source of mildly prurient interest, and an occasion to savour the comparative comfort of their own firesides.

'Marvellous Melbourne' bespoke not only present satisfactions, but past achievements and expected glories. The city's histories,<sup>1</sup> in heavy leather volumes, put men to monuments, made monuments of men; its historians, creatures of their times, retold the simple story of Melbourne's origins as variants of a 'foundation myth'.<sup>2</sup>

The essential facts of the foundation story are straight forward. In June 1835, John Batman, a Van Diemonian grazier and Australian native, sailed across Bass Strait to Port Phillip where, on a site close to the present centre of Melbourne, he concluded a 'treaty'

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1

The 'eighties saw the formation of the Historical Society of Australasia. Its membership was decidedly élitist, confined to 'the aristocracy of intellect' and its concerns were largely those of collecting historical memorials, writing the history of 'The British Empire in the South' and exploding myths. (Inaugural meeting, Argus, 9 May 1885, p.10E.)

2

James Bonwick recognized that the Batman-Fawcner story had reached the status of a 'myth'. See his The Writing of Colonial History (Sydney, 1896). For a study of urban myth-making similar to that undertaken here see R. Richard Wohl and A. Theodore Brown, 'The Usable Past: A Study of Historical Traditions in Kansas City' in Huntington Library Quarterly, 23 May 1960, pp.237-59.

with a group of aborigines. According to this agreement, he took possession of some 600,000 acres in return for which he gave a quantity of tools, food and other articles of barter. About two months later John Pascoe Fawkner, English-born trader and newspaper proprietor of Launceston, also arrived in the vicinity and laid claim to land which included the present site of Melbourne.

The early historians of Melbourne were hard put to find heroic matter in the story of their city's founders who, after all, were 'common-place characters',<sup>1</sup> full of human frailties.<sup>2</sup> Johnny Fawkner had lived on into the 'sixties, small, cantankerous and 'far from robust'.<sup>3</sup> Batman, who had died in 1839, was a more promising candidate for the role of hero and martyr. James Bonwick, in his various accounts of the Port Phillip settlement,<sup>4</sup>

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1

T. McCombie, The History of the Colony of Victoria (Melbourne 1858) p.18.

2

James Bonwick, John Batman, the Founder of Victoria (Melbourne 1868) p.2.

3

G.W. Rusden, The Discovery, Survey and Settlement of Port Phillip (Melbourne 1871) p.46.

4

Discovery and Settlement of Port Phillip being a History of the Country now called Victoria... (Melbourne, 1856); John Batman, The Founder of Victoria (Melbourne, 1867); Port Phillip Settlement (London, 1883); also see E.E. Pescott, James Bonwick, a writer of School Books and Histories With a Bibliography of his Writings (Melbourne, 1939).

presented Batman's story as that of a robust, generous, 'bold and skilful bushman' - an 'Australian Daniel Boone'.<sup>1</sup> He was shown as a friend to the Tasmanian natives and an enemy to the bushrangers of Van Diemen's Land. At Port Phillip his relations with the natives were as amicable and just: his 'treaty' was compared to that of William Penn with the American Indians.<sup>2</sup> He entered upon Port Phillip as a native bushman upon his own familiar territory. His gainful purposes and the disposition of the land were in perfect harmony:

...covered with kangaroo grass about ten inches high, and as green as a field of wheat; very good sheep land...The whole appeared like land, laid out in farms for some hundred years back.<sup>3</sup>

Fawkner, the town businessman, on the other hand, lived too long and too uneasily with his fellow Melbournians to be fitted for conventional heroic treatment. His narrative of the city's foundation, like his own story, was one of violent disruption. He and his companions broke in upon the natural order. His ship, the 'Enterprise', had been sailed up the Yarra to the future site of Melbourne where he had been impressed by the untouched, unusable beauty of the landscape:

The velvet-like grass carpet, decked with flowers of the most lively hues, most liberally spread over the land, the fresh water, the fine lowlands and lovely knolls

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1

Bonwick, Discovery and Settlement..., pp.36-7.

2

Bonwick, *ibid.*, and Port Phillip Settlement, p.195.

3

Batman's Journal, 30 May 1835, quoted Bonwick, Port Phillip Settlement, p.180.

around the lagoons on the flat or swamps, the flocks almost innumerable, of teal, ducks, geese, and swans, and minor fowls, filled [the explorers] with joy....The indescribable charms which the country, at first sight, around Melbourne displayed, riveted almost every visitor's attention, until man's hand had despoiled nature of her pristine features.<sup>1</sup>

There are differences of more than values and interests between these impressions of Port Phillip: Batman had landed in the early winter, Fawkner on the eve of spring; Batman wrote contemporaneously,<sup>2</sup> Fawkner almost twenty years later. Nevertheless, these two accounts furnished texts for the lessons of later historians.

As the city grew, it was Fawkner's reminiscences rather than Batman's journal account which they usually appropriated. For example, the gentleman-lawyer Labillière darkened and extended Fawkner's vision of disruption. Who, he wondered, could have conceived

when the placid waters of the Yarra were ruffled by Fawkner's little ship, that they were soon to be disturbed by a ceaseless throng of vessels of various sorts and sizes; that their purity was to be darkened by the pollution of trade; the fresh air of their banks contaminated by smoke and steam - the atmosphere of commercial prosperity; and the stillness of ages broken by the harsh screech of the civilizing locomotive, and the many sounds of industry and commerce?<sup>3</sup>

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1

John Pascoe Fawkner in the Diggers! Advocate, 1853, quoted Bonwick, Discovery and Settlement, p.57. (emphasis mine.)

2

Although his journal was clearly not a very exact document (see Bonwick, Port Phillip Settlement, p.189).

3

Op.cit., vol.II, p.92.

Yet these same incidents and scenes, the imagery of a great disruption, could be as readily appropriated to the heroic version of the city's history. Westgarth the merchant, for example, saw the penetration of Fawkner's 'Enterprise' as a life-giving event. He filled Fawkner's bushland with kangaroos, its skies with paroquets whose chattering 'imparted life to a scene otherwise hushed in the rare presence of man, and the total absence hitherto of his noisy but enlivening commerce'.<sup>1</sup> George Sala portrayed Fawkner as civilizing the 'Jungle'.<sup>2</sup> The Encyclopedia Britannica<sup>3</sup> (9th edition) used the bushland scene as a backdrop for the prodigious advancement of the young city:

In [1835] John Fawkner sailed up the Yarra in his little vessel the Enterprise, laden with materials for a settlement; he was stopped by a slight waterfall in a valley where dense groves of wattle trees, all in bloom, loaded the air with perfume, and where flocks of white cockatoo whirled aloft when the first stroke of the axe resounded in the forest. The spot is now the centre of a great city 10 miles in length, six in breadth, covering an area of 45,000 acres and peopled by 350,000 persons. So rapid and solid a growth at a distance from the mother country of the whole extent of the earth is an example of colonizing enterprise altogether without parallel.

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1

William Westgarth, Victoria, late Australia Felix (1853) quoted Bonwick, Discovery and Settlement, p.59. (emphasis mine.)

2

Argus, 8 August 1885, p.5C.

3

Quoted H. Perkins, op.cit., p.7.

This, indeed, was the standard use of the foundation stories. That the size and splendour of contemporary Melbourne should have so far exceeded the expectations, and even the dreams, of her founders was, in itself, a cause for anticipating the city's future with confidence.<sup>1</sup>

As the civilization of the city became more advanced and complex, as its chroniclers became intoxicated with its vigour and progress, so did they incline to magnify the role and personality of the Founders<sup>2</sup> and to embellish and stylize the natural, untouched wilderness into which they had entered. Perkins, for example, brought a touch of Landseer to Fawkner's original description. The pioneers set foot in

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1

It is interesting that a model of 'Old Melbourne' was one of the most popular exhibits at the Exhibition of 1888. Building and Engineering Journal, 21 July 1888, p.40. Similarly, the A.B.S.G. ran articles on the original land sales in Melbourne. The moral was obvious: if the city could grow and land values rise so much in the previous fifty years, how much more might they be expected to advance in the next fifty? (See A.B.S.G., 24 October (p.463), 7 November (p.493), 21 November (p.517), 5 December (p.562), 1888).

2

It is interesting that, once the boom was over, historical judgments of Batman and Fawkner, like the appreciation of the city itself, seem to have been restored to a saner basis. H.G. Turner, for example, remarked that 'the wild enthusiasm which greeted Fawkner as the "Father of the Colony" and the "Founder of Melbourne" is only to be explained on the ground that the original condition of affairs was lost sight of in contemplating the great development which had sprung from an insignificant fact: (A History of the Colony of Victoria (London, 1904), vol.I, p.97).

as beautiful a sylvan scene as the eye of an artist could desire to rest upon : softly rounded hills..., rich pasturages..., an open glade upon which you might almost have expected to see a herd of dappled deer grazing with the confidence inspired by perfect solitude..., purple mountains... a pastoral Arcadia.<sup>1</sup>

Batman and Fawkner were described as 'nineteenth century Argonauts',<sup>2</sup> and, even more commonly, as the Romulus and Remus of Melbourne.<sup>3</sup> 'Melbourne', suggested one imaginative 'booster'

could be likened to Rome because it is built on seven eminences, namely, the eastern and western hills of the city, Batman's hill, St Kilda Hill, South Yarra Hill and Richmond; also because it had its Romulus and Remus in the persons of John Pascoe Fawkner and John Batman. True, Fawkner and Batman were not twins, but, like Romulus and Remus, they undertook to build a city, and quarrelled for precedence....Romulus lived for 39 years after founding Rome; Fawkner lived for 34 years after founding Melbourne. Romulus and Fawkner outlived by many years Remus and Batman.

Such comparisons, however fanciful, suggest the manifold uses of a foundation myth to the city 'booster'. It effectively reinforced all the constituent ideas of 'Marvellous Melbourne': the city's extraordinary material progress, its legitimate place among the great European cities with their obscure and ancient traditions,

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1

Op.cit., pp.20-1.

2

E. Wilson Dobbs, A.B.C.N., 28 May 1892, p.369.

3

Argus, 2 August 1884. p.13A.

and the enormous power - for good and ill - of that 'enterprise' which had first broken the arcadian stillness of the bush only half a century before.

This last theme - the relation between the old, natural and the new, civilized orders - was freed from the encumbrance of historical facts and personages in a notable series of 'official' pageant-poems celebrating the progress of Victoria and its metropolis. These 'Cantatas', 'Masques', 'Odes' and 'Inaugural Prize Poems' are generally bad verse. Yet the very features which make them uninteresting from a literary viewpoint - their stereotyped form and imagery, their trite or over-blown sentiment, their obvious symbolism - may commend them to the social historian. They are essentially 'Rhymes for the Times'<sup>1</sup> which capture and amplify the conventional sentiment of the moment. Of course they require careful interpretation; not even boom-time Melbournians, whose appetite for pageantry was estimable, may have swallowed the most high-flown ideas of their laureates. Yet it should be remembered that these pieces were sung or recited on the same programme as 'God Save the Queen' and 'The Hallelujah Chorus';<sup>2</sup> one assumes that they were received in a similar spirit.

All appear to derive from a single model - Richard Hengist Horne's 'Lyric Masque' - 'The South Sea Sisters' -

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1

The title of a volume of poems by J.F. Daniell.

2

See the programme for the Opening of the Exhibition of 1880-1 in the Official Record of the Melbourne International Exhibition 1880-1 (Melbourne, 1882), pp.li-lviii.

which was commissioned for the Intercolonial Exhibition of 1866.<sup>1</sup> With it they share a similar form and repertoire of imagery.<sup>2</sup> Yet within this limited framework, they offer various and even opposing visions of the Yarra-side settlement. Unlike Fawcner's account, Horne's poem presents the coming of 'civilized man' as a redemptive, not a despoiling, event. It opens with a picture of Victoria sunk in primeval desolation. (Molto Adagio)

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1

R.H. Horne, 'The South-Sea Sisters' A Lyric Masque written for the Opening of the Intercolonial Exhibition 1866 (Melbourne, n.d.). The circumstances of its composition are briefly mentioned in Cyril Pearl, Always Morning (Melbourne, 1960), p.213. Little is added by Anne Blainey in her later study of Horne, The Farthing Poet: a biography of Richard Hengist Horne, 1802-84, a lesser literary lion (London, 1968).

2

This is most evident between Horne and Rev William Allen's Inaugural Prize Poem written for the opening of the Centennial International Exhibition, Melbourne, 1888 [copy in S.L.V. Exhibition Pamphlets, vol.III]. Note the reappearance of Horne's 'white flocks' as 'fleecy-covered flocks' in Allen, Horne's 'first seed of a nation's Tree' as 'the tree of Australian liberty' in Allen, Horne's 'chestnut-spotted cattle' as 'chestnut spotted kine' in Allen. There is a similar sharing of images between J.W. Meaden's 'Cantata for the Opening of the Melbourne International Exhibition 1880' (in Official Record, p.liv) and J.F. Daniell's 'The Jubilee of Melbourne' in D. Sladen, op.cit., pp.121-2. Meaden has 'white-winged vessels', Daniell a 'white-winged ship'; Meaden's 'domed cities' became 'domed palaces' in Daniell. (Cf. with Coleridge's 'airy pleasure domes' in 'Kubla Khan'.)

O solitude!. O voiceless crowd of trees;  
 O hopeless wilderness without one fruit,  
 Or herb, or graceful flower! O pathless maze  
 Of maddening monotony, all glare,  
 Or else unspeakable sadness of blank shade....

O solitude!

Thou hadst 't an empire then without a soul  
 Beneath the solemn and unworshipped heavens,  
As though nor earth, nor heaven, possessed a God.<sup>1</sup>

With the coming of the European, however, the whole  
 created universe is mysteriously restored:

Such was the scene, till civilized man  
 Came with his flocks and pastoral hand  
 To claim - redeem - and use the land....<sup>2</sup>

Now oxen, flocks and herds, dogs, horses and the  
 'warbling magpie' appear: the godless Australian  
 landscape assumes its divinely-appointed, English, aspect.  
 Yet this pastoral arcadia (andante pastorale) is  
 interrupted by a sudden change. Plutus rises (allegro  
 molto agitato) and the colony is utterly transformed by  
 the influence of gold; the life of the city is  
 revolutionized by a sudden access of Yankee 'push':

The Yankee comes on his 'little pony'  
 To feather his tall hat in Melbourne town -  
 To open up lands, and teach us to drive  
 To dash on and thrive....

Throughout the poem it is Victoria, not Melbourne, the  
 pastoral arcadia rather than the 'mad city' which  
 occupies the central place. Nor is there more than a  
 hint that colonial progress could be other than benign.

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<sup>1</sup> (Emphases mine.)

<sup>2</sup> (Emphases mine.)

By 1880 the Melbourne International Exhibition provided a second rostrum for the colonial laureates.<sup>1</sup> In J.W. Meaden's Cantata for the Opening of the Melbourne International Exhibition (1880) the land to which the pioneers came is painted in less uniformly dark shades; it awaits, not a redeemer, but human companions to rouse it from sleep and add joy and laughter to its solitary beauty:

In slumbers deep - where branching tree ferns wave,  
And Austral seas the long, low beaches lave,  
Where, fringed with reeds, the silent lone lagoon,  
Reflects the starry cross and crescent moon,  
With garnered sweetness in her peaceful breast  
The fair Victoria lies too long at rest.

From the old world an army 'vast and busy' pours in upon the shores of the waiting land. Then, as the poet foretells

...fair South land, no longer  
Thy coasts shall silent be  
The merry voice of laughter  
Shall echo songs of glee.  
Then busy sounds of labour,  
Shall rise on the summer air  
And sweetly chime the Sabbath bell,  
That calls to the house of prayer.

The colony is represented as a combination of several and equal interests - pastoral, agricultural, mining and city - each responding to the Creator's command to subdue the earth and make it fruitful.

<sup>1</sup> Also see 'On the Opening of the First International Exhibition of Melbourne, 1 October 1880', (in the Melbourne Review, October 1880, p.420) Richard Andrews, Ode: Anticipatory of the Opening of the Great Exhibition in Melbourne, 1880 (privately printed - six copies only) and untitled poem by Edward Smithurst of Carlton in Herald, 15 January 1885.

However, in Richard Andrews' Ode: Anticipatory of the Opening of the Great Exhibition (1880), Melbourne as the site and symbol of Victoria's progress assumes a larger part. But its glories, and those of its hinterland, are not the glories of the rich European capitals: '...not ours the boast/Of marble palaces and steel-clad host.' Rather did the colonists rejoice in the simple joys of "Happy Homes where Peace and Plenty reign"<sup>1</sup>.

With the rise of 'Marvellous Melbourne', this moderate tone was set aside for grandiloquent, more distinctively metropolitan, claims. The sense of measured pride in the city's progress was supplanted by one of amazement and even of disbelief. Finally, an ambivalence towards the civilizing mission of the European became evident in the poets' increasing readiness to recognize the supernal charms of the unspoiled bush:

The waters of the noble bay were fed  
By a pure stream which no pollution knew;  
Man's commerce had not stirred its rocky bed,  
But on its banks sweet-scented wattles grew....<sup>2</sup>

Thus J.F. Daniell in his 'The Jubilee of Melbourne' (1885?). Rev William Allen's Inaugural Prize Poem for the Opening of the Centennial International Exhibition (1888), in striking, and presumably deliberate, contrast to

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1

The Melbourne Review Poem (cited above) pictured Victoria advancing to meet the world 'with modest pride'. The theme of homes was prominent. In fact 'Home, Sweet Home' was placed as Victoria's 'air' beside the 'Marseillaise' and 'The Star-spangled Banner' (see Official Record, p.lxiii).

2

J.F. Daniell, loc.cit., p.121.

Horne's original, presented the 'solitude' of the untouched bushland as the very evidence of divine presence:

O'er all perpetual solitude doth brood,  
 Save where the savage stalks in search of food;  
 A land by civilization's step untrod -  
Alone with Nature, and with Nature's God.<sup>1</sup>

In Melbourne, as elsewhere, a romantic view of nature emerged as the obverse of a deepening awareness of the city and its morally-ambiguous civilization.<sup>2</sup>

In these later poems the great themes of 'Marvellous Melbourne' - its unbelievable progress, its vigorous business and social life, its widening repute - were amply developed:

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1

Pt.II (cf. Pope 'Essay on Man', 1.147). (Emphasis mine.)

2

Other evidence is found in the imagery of suburbia which is treated above ch.7 and in the desire for escape from the city to arcadian holiday resorts. It was during this period that many of the towns in the hills first began to cater for refugees from the smoky city. A visit to such a resort is described in Thomas Knox, op.cit., p.479. The conventional sentiments for such an occasion are presented in Patchett Martin's 'In the You-Yangs' (Fernshawe, London 1885, p.221)

Not sweeter to the storm-tossed mariner  
 Is glimpse of home, where wife and children wait  
 To welcome him with kisses by the gate,  
 Than to the town-worn man the breezy stir  
 Of mountain winds on rugged pathless heights.

Here, fifty winters since, by Yarra's stream,  
 A scattered hamlet found its modest place:  
 What mind would venture then in wildest dream  
 Its wondrous growth and eminence to trace?  
 What seer predict a stripling in the race  
 Would, swift as Atlanta, win the prize  
 Of progress, 'neath the world's astonished eyes?

It is no dream, upon those grass-grown streets,  
 Has risen up a city vast and fair,  
 In whose thronged thoroughfare the stranger meets  
 With signs of all the world can send most rare  
 And costly to her marts. And everywhere  
 Ascends the hum of nervous, bustling strife -  
 The splendid evidence of healthy life.<sup>1</sup>

In William Allen's vision of 'The Present and Future',  
 the language of 'dreaming' is more deliberately introduced  
 and more decisively repudiated:

Where the spotted snake crawled by the stream,  
 See the spires of the great city gleam.  
 Is it all but the dream of a dream?

....

Not a dream! For the night is away  
 And we walk in the light of the day  
 That shall not be extinguished for aye.

Several conclusions are suggested by this exploration:  
 First, that as Melbourne came to dominate its hinterland,  
 so did it take precedence in the poetic expression of the  
 colony's identity. Second, that characteristically city  
 preoccupations - material wealth and progress, the  
 temper of business life - supply more and more of the  
 poets' 'inspiration'. Third, that the extraordinary  
 progress of Melbourne placed such strains upon a poetic

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1

J.F. Daniell, op.cit., p.122. Cf. Oliver Goldsmith,  
 'The Deserted Village'.

form already given to hyperbole, that the poets were driven to the device of 'dream-talk'. Fourth, and perhaps most interestingly, that as these tendencies became more pronounced, so did the poets - like the historians - adopt a less antipathetic view of the wilderness from which the city had grown.

As Melbournians reconstructed the past to support their developing sense of identity, so did they create visions of the future which expressed their present moods of optimism or disquiet. Indeed the past, especially the immediate booming past, was taken as their best guide to the future: '"We know what we are, but know not what we may be". We may only speculate and judge by the past what is to be the future.'<sup>1</sup> All manner of decisions, personal and institutional, were necessarily based upon the view people took of their 'future prospects'. Sometimes, for example, with great public works, like the Melbourne sewerage scheme, they required long-term forecasts of population growth and its probable effects. H.H. Hayter, the Government Statistician, appearing before the Sanitary Commission of 1889,<sup>2</sup> supplied an estimate of the probable

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1

Argus, quoted A.B.S.G., 19 September 1888, p.348.

2 Quoted A.B.S.G., 5 December 1889, p.417. (I have been unable to find these estimates in Hayter's evidence to the Commission as printed in V.P.P. 27/1889). For an example of Hayter's 'booming' statistics see his tables in Victorian Yearbooks from 1885-6 of 'Populations of the Principal Towns in the World' showing the relative positions of Melbourne and Sydney. In 1889-90 he added a paragraph explaining that Melbourne was now more populous than any other town in the Southern Hemisphere except Buenos Aires, or any town in the United Kingdom, except London, Glasgow, Liverpool or Manchester (p.95). On Hayter's own booming activities see M. Cannon, The Landboomers (Melbourne, 1966), pp.100-4.

population of Melbourne 45 years later. He assumed an annual growth rate of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent which, though it was lower than the average rate of growth for the previous seven years, exceeded the average rate over the previous 45. The population of the city in 1933, he estimated, would be about 1,566,280 - as large as that of Canton or New York and larger than Berlin or Vienna. Here, then, was a notion for the 'boosters' to conjure with:

What will Collins-street be, when a human tide of three times the present volume ebbs and flows along its broad pavements? What will be the roar of the suburban railway traffic when the trains have to run three times as often, or have to be three times as big as at present?... What will be the tumult and fever of Melbourne when its business is multiplied three fold?<sup>1</sup>

It was sometimes said that Australia in 1890 was at a similar stage to the United States a hundred years earlier; Melbourne and Sydney were like Chicago and New York in 1790.<sup>2</sup>

Presuming that our Australian population will increase in the same ratio (as the U.S.) ie. double itself every twenty five years, in 1915 we shall number eight million souls; in 1940, sixteen millions; in 1965 thirty-two millions, and in 1990, a century hence, sixty-four millions....

Should Melbourne retain her present proportion to the whole of the population, in 1990, with a total Australian population of 64,000,000,

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1

A.B.S.G., 5 December 1889, p.417.

2

Ibid., 20 November 1890, p.351. Adna. F. Weber, in his The Growth of Cities in the Nineteenth Century (New York, 1899) p.1, makes a similar comparison.

one-eighth or 8,000,000 will be resident in what would then be the 'Queenly City' in very truth.

Yet, embarrassed by its evident absurdity, even the 'boosters' shrunk from such a conclusion: 'This', they modestly conceded, 'is beyond the dreams of even Melbourne which will probably rest content with being no smaller than, say London or New York or Paris'.<sup>1</sup> Even if it was not to be the largest, 'in a few years' it would be at least 'the finest city in the world'.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, in their hearts, even the most ardent 'boosters' may have doubted that the boom could persist indefinitely. None ventured to suggest that the great card-house of speculation could collapse but, in fitful imaginings, Melbournians saw their city crumpled by earthquakes, ravaged by disease, bombarded by foreign foes.<sup>3</sup> Hubris summoned up Nemesis; Prosperity and its

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1

Ibid.

2

G.D. Langridge in A.B.C.N., 31 August 1889, p.211.

3

See, for example, the curious remarks of James Mirams, upon being asked if he foresaw any end to the boom after 1888: 'My opinion is that, short of two contingencies, the one being an earthquake to shake down the city and the other a bombardment by some foreign foe, there is no probability of any material cessation in the present progressive and prosperous condition of the colony this side of two years.' A.B.S.G., 2 January 1888, p.451.

sins called down a Judgement.<sup>1</sup> Prophecies of doom are among the most interesting psychological reactions to the instability of the boom years.<sup>2</sup>

With Melbourne's growing self-awareness there naturally went a certain prickly sensitivity to the imagined greed and envy of foreign adversaries which, in part, explains the hysteria and mild paranoia generated by the 'Russian scare' of 1883:

Victoria, you see, had enjoyed a continued run of prosperity for many years; its people had prospered and made money hand over fist and... never hesitated to spend it as freely in pleasure. Melbourne grew to be a large and wealthy city, its colossal warehouses and shops gradually extended to the suburbs, and colonists thought of nothing but commerce, money-making and pleasure. We [recalls the prophet-historian] entirely overlooked the fact that the colony with its tremendous trade and magnificent wealth offered a tempting prize, at once rich and rare, to any filibustering fleet.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> There was a natural tendency to react to the more absurd predictions of the 'boomers'. The J.C. (8 July 1890, p.4) for example, remarked upon the presence of 'some amongst us who have...gone to the other extreme and have found delight in belittling the resources of the colony, and the sagacity of those engaged in the administration, in finance, and in commerce. The A.B.S.G. was also concerned to ridicule the forebodings of 'the croakers' (13 February, 1889, p.711).

<sup>2</sup> Work in this genre was not entirely new: see for example After the Crisis of '80 (Melbourne, n.d.) (in S.L.V. Victorian Pamphlets, vol.CXIII).

<sup>3</sup> The Battle of the Yarra (Melbourne, 1883), pp.7-8. This pamphlet is clearly inspired by The Battle of Dorking (first published in Blackwell's Magazine (1868) and later republished in Melbourne in 1871 by George Robertson). This and other literature of the type is treated in I.F. Clarke, Voices Prophecying War (Oxford, 1966).

In The Battle of the Yarra (1883) 'An Old Colonist' foresaw a great disruption in European relations in which Russia was set at odds with Britain. The Australian cable is cut by the Russians. In Melbourne attempts are made to organize volunteers to meet the expected invasion. But panic breaks out. The banks and building societies collapse; thousands are thrown out of employment. Finally on a scorching summer day, amidst dust storms and under black skies,<sup>1</sup> the Russians invade the city. The few Volunteers offer heroic resistance<sup>2</sup> but are overwhelmed by superior arms, discipline and experience. By evening scores of them are dead and the gutters of Flinders-street are red with their blood.<sup>3</sup> The Russians also figure as angels of death in The Battle of Mordialloc (1888). Once again Melbourne is presented as puffed up and ripe for judgment. 'Our prosperity advanced by leaps and bounds. There seemed no earthly reason why we should not go on forever'.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the prophet is hard put to devise an 'earthly reason'. Victoria passes anti-Chinese legislation which is vetoed by the Imperial Parliament. The colony declares itself independent, whereupon the Chinese and the Russians make a pact to invade the rich but defenceless city. After a bloody battle at Mordialloc (a sea-side resort close of Melbourne) the city is captured and sacked.

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1

Ibid., p.21.

2

Ibid., p.31.

3

Ibid., p.27.

4

Op.cit. (Melbourne), p.9.

Marvellous Melbourne Twenty Years Hence (1889)<sup>1</sup> is an implicit attack upon two specific evils of boom-time Melbourne - the alleged faults of the Harbour Trust, and the sanitary condition of the metropolis. It is, in fact, the second of these which encompasses the city's destruction. Melbourne is attacked by plague and 100,000 of her citizens perish. Then, as historical precedent disposed, a great fire follows in its wake, destroying and purifying as it goes. Melbourne's end is a bitter one: its banks and theatres are all razed; its population shrinks to a mere 40,000 Asiatics who conduct opium dens and lottery establishments in the deserted 'skyscrapers' of Collins Street; and - final humiliation - Geelong, now a city of 350,000 supplants Melbourne as the capital of Victoria and the emerging Federation. 'Marvellous Melbourne' with its amazing progress, its energy and vigour, its continental dominance, is utterly humiliated.

Each of these prophecies is to be read, firstly, as a means of urging concrete, though sometime vaguely-articulated, policies in a period when the general mood of optimism made it difficult to obtain a hearing. But it has also to be recognized that they express and exploit a certain discomfort with the vapid prophecies of the 'boosters', a discomfort which was based as much upon a sense of 'cosmic balance' as it was upon specific evidence. The progress of Melbourne, these prophets felt, was too marvellous to persist without precipitating an equally marvellous Fall.

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<sup>1</sup>

(Melbourne, 1889).

Judgement did come upon Melbourne. Not suddenly like a thief in the night, but by the slow accumulation of pain and knowledge. For those who could read them there were signs: in 1889 there was a general collapse in land values; in 1890 the Maritime Strike; in 1891 the Yarra flooded and the countryside was plagued with locusts; in 1892 there were epidemics of measles and influenza; in 1893 the banks collapsed and wool and wheat prices fell. 'Misfortunes', a philosophic editor reflected, 'never come singly'.<sup>1</sup> The Almighty had exacted terrible vengeance upon 'Marvellous Melbourne'.

Contemporaries had been agreed that Melbourne's commercial life was not only vigorous, bold and enterprising but mercurial, and erratic. 'We are', said one, 'a wonderful people. Great in hope, fierce and irresistible in panic'.<sup>2</sup> 'We know of no middle way in anything' said another.<sup>3</sup> Some attributed this 'instability of our national temper'<sup>4</sup> to the excitement of the gold rush days but, whatever its origins, the proof of it was everywhere in 1892. When the boom-bubble was pricked, all confidence, resolution and presence of mind were lost; in proportion as they had been previously puffed up were Melbournians now deflated. From an orgy of speculation they now turned to 'equally extravagant bewailing of [their] fate'.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A.F.G., 30 July 1891, p.147.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 28 February 1894, p.15.

<sup>3</sup> R.C. Brown, A.B.C.N., 31 October 1891, p.346.

<sup>4</sup> J.T. Collins, Argus, 17 September 1892, p.13D.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., and also see J.C., 27 March 1894, p.8.

As Melbourne itself was previously perceived as 'Marvellous', so was it now dubbed 'miserable'.<sup>1</sup> Poets discarded the old themes of progress and plenty for the new sad, ones of suffering and decay:

We may read of wealthy cities in the books we  
 chance to scan;  
 We may read of fall'n empires and the fall'n  
 state of man;  
 We may picture in our fancies golden treasures in  
 our path;  
 But they change as does the weather, or like love,  
 will turn to wrath.

Melbourne once was in its glory; revelled in its  
 golden lore;  
 But that glory fast is fading, perhaps to see it  
 never more.  
 Those who hoarded up the treasure, in those days  
 when times were best,  
 Feel that they have been the wisest, and in  
 comfort take their rest.  
 While the hundreds who are starving never thought  
 hard times would come,  
 And they spent their daily earnings; now they have  
 no food or home.

. . . . .  
 This is Melbourne, Marvellous Melbourne; what an  
 empty boast of pride,  
 While its poverty is swelling like a mighty ocean  
 tide.<sup>2</sup>

The most sensitive men in public life were burdened with  
 revulsion, not only from the poverty and financial scandal,

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1

R. Helger Wallace, Argus, 28 December 1892, p.3D.

2

G.H. Willoughby, Marvellous Melbourne and Other Poems  
 (Melbourne, 1898), pp.1-12 (copy in Mitchell Library).

but from the entire 'life-style' of the city. Deakin<sup>1</sup> wrote of 'its stews, its smells, its coarseness, vulgarity, harshness, artificiality, baseness, selfishness, corruption, ferociousness and vice' and wished himself in the country - 'the source and goal of human development'. His friend Charles H. Pearson was doubtless aware of the city decaying around him when he wrote, in National Life and Character (1894), of the relentless encroachment of great cities<sup>2</sup> and of the social calamities left in their path. He wrote, with feeling, of the cramping, deadening round of the ordinary city-dweller ('The dweller in a great city is tending more and more to become a very small part of a very vast machine')<sup>3</sup> and of the debilitating effects of unbridled expansion ('The decline of the Roman Empire was undoubtedly hastened by the heavy indebtedness of the

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1

From the Notebook 'Clues' dated 3 October 1892, no.578, p.45, in Deakin Papers (A.N.L., MS 1540/27/341). For a similar reference see *ibid.*, 19 June 1890, no.403, p.48 (MS 1540/27/340). There is some evidence that Deakin had earlier adopted a conventionally romantic, antipathetic attitude to the city. See for example the description of 'Restless' in 'The City of Worldly Content', A New Pilgrim's Progress, purporting to be given by John Bunyan through an Impressional Writing Medium [A.D.] Melbourne, 1877 (copy in Deakin Papers, A.N.L., MS 1540/27/346.)

2

*Op.cit.* (London), p.13. On Pearson's personal suffering as a result of the collapse of 'Marvellous Melbourne' see John Tregenza, Professor of Democracy, the Life of Charles Henry Pearson, 1830 - 1894, Oxford Don and Australian Radical (Melbourne, 1969), pp.235-9.

3

*Ibid.*, p.168.

cities - an indebtedness which was often occasioned by their engaging in great public works').<sup>1</sup>

That drive, 'push' and enterprise so much admired of visitors in the 'eighties showed itself less admirable in the strained and depressed conditions of the 'nineties. 'Keen business competition' was now 'grinding self-centred dispositions into sharp-cutting hardness'.<sup>2</sup> In his poem 'In Collins Street' (189?) George Essex Evans<sup>3</sup> detected sinister undertones in the bustle of commerce:

I stood in the heart of the city street,  
I felt the throb of her pulses beat,  
The thunder of life on the sunny air,  
The waves of the people everywhere,  
Like the stirring lilt of a mighty song  
Ran the fever of life in the moving throng,  
With the hope and joy and the want and woe  
Of a million souls in its ebb and flow.

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1

Ibid., p.187. The novelist Justin McCartie in an article 'The Concentration of Population' saw Melbourne as 'a huge quicksand' and likewise compared its condition to that of Rome on the eve of the barbarian invasions (Australasian Grocers' Journal, 22 June 1891, p.400-1.)

2

Rev A. Marshall: 'It is in the crowded life of large cities rather than in the quiet and seclusion of the country that the worst evils seem to be generated by the friction of selfish and sinful human nature upon itself.' As further instances he mentioned the sophistication of fashion, criminality, poverty, sweating. (Argus, 14 September 1896, p.5A.)

3

In his Loraine and other Verses (Melbourne, 1898), pp.172-4; also see his 'A Commonplace Song' in *ibid.*, pp.163-5.

Like a floating straw in an eddy caught  
 My soul was whirled in the city's thought -  
 The purse-born pride and the scheming brain,  
 The grinding need and the grasping gain;  
 The silent strength that is born to rule,  
 And the shallow laugh of the feckless fool,  
 The fresh young face where no shadow lies,  
 And the quenchless pain in the harlot's eyes....

In the countryside, the old churlish cry against 'rotten Melbourne' was revived and amplified:

The fact was that Melbourne had killed the whole colony, and all the country districts were to be offered up as a sacrifice in order that something might be done to deliver Melbourne from its wretched condition. Where was all the wealth of the colony gone? A second Melbourne had been built over the original Melbourne of ten years ago, but they could not see the population in it. Ichabod was written over it. That was where the capital had gone, where the banking money had gone; and that was the means by which the colony had been dragged down to its present condition.... Melbourne had wasted its substance with riotous living, and had plundered the country districts in building up this modern Babylon.<sup>1</sup>

Further abroad, in London, there was also wailing and gnashing of teeth. 'Melbourne', John McIlwraith reported, 'positively stinks in the nostrils of English people....I have always been proud of Melbourne and held it up on all sides but now I feel ashamed to mention it....'<sup>2</sup> The 'seamy side' of its financial life

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1

H.R. Williams, V.P.D., 72/1893, p.1113. (Cf. 1 Samuel 4:21 'And she named the child Ichabod, saying "The glory has departed from Israel".')

2

John McIlwraith to Branston, 28 October 1892 (John McIlwraith Letterbook 35/2/18, A.N.U. Archives, p.155-6).

was exposed in the English reviews.<sup>1</sup> Sydney now had its revenge: the Bulletin's cartoonists took savage delight in the scandals of 'Marvellous Smellboom'.<sup>2</sup>

Journalists now wrote of the 'fierce chastisement'<sup>3</sup> which had fallen upon the city, of Melbourne being 'purged by adversity'.<sup>4</sup> Nor were there wanting signs of repentance: the colonial Treasurer received several small sums of money through the various Government departments from anonymous donors 'who evidently felt uncomfortable on account of some smart practice by which they had defrauded the Government'.<sup>5</sup> Others, however, whose obligations were heavier saw their difficulties,

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1

See especially J.W. Fortescue 'The Seamy Side of Australia' in the Nineteenth Century, 29, 1891, pp.523-7 and the various articles in criticism of it; Howard Willoughby [editor Melbourne Argus] 'The Seamy Side of Australia: A Reply from the Colonies', *ibid.*, 30, 1891, pp.292-302; R.M. Johnston [Tasmanian Government Statistician] 'The Attack on the Credit of Australasia' in *ibid.*, 31, 1892, pp.606-22, Sir Robert G.C. Hamilton, 'Lending Money to Australia' in *ibid.*, 32, 1892, pp.194-202 and Sir George Baden-Powell, K.C.M.G., M.P., 'The Credit of Australasia' in Fortnightly Review, M.S. 50, 1891, pp.3-12. The controversy largely hinged on the question of the degree to which government railways policies had unduly favoured the concentration of population in large cities like Melbourne.

2

Bulletin, 20 August 1892, p.14.

3

A.F.G., 22 December 1892, p.185.

4

Argus, 22 February 1892, p.6H.

5

*Ibid.*, 8 October 1892, p.7A.

not as the final consequence of their own particular reckless, imprudent or sinful acts, but as the incursion of an over-whelming, disabling external force. The depression was 'a plague',<sup>1</sup> a 'great wave',<sup>2</sup> an infection from abroad.<sup>3</sup> Thus, unable to resist the deluge, they counted themselves guiltless for their own, and others', sufferings.

To most churchmen, however, even such natural disasters declared the judgement of the Almighty:

As Christians we believe that nothing happens without God, and that it is our duty and privilege to recognize His almighty hand in all events, whether they affect ourselves or the community at large.<sup>4</sup>

It behove all men, therefore, to examine themselves, repent their past sins and amend their lives. In 1892 the Free Presbyterians had undertaken a 'solemn fast'

in order that they might humble themselves before God on account of His heavy hand on the community, felt by all classes in the general commercial depression and widespread distress in the colony and also to confess the sins which were the procuring causes of God's wrath.<sup>5</sup>

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1

John McIlwraith to Andrew McIlwraith, 10 July 1892, p.297.

2

J.W. Hunt to Finlayson and Auld, 5 November 1894 (Modern Permanent Building Society London Letterbook 24/3/2 A.N.U. Archives, p.18).

3

W. Shiels, The World's Depression (Melbourne, 1894).

4

Bishop Goe, Argus, 17 May 1893, p.3A.

5

Ibid., 13 May 1892, p.3A.

Among these they numbered immorality, irreligion and 'the insidious advances of Romanism'. In the same year, the Wesleyans<sup>1</sup> set aside a Week of Self-Denial. They saw the distress of the community as the result of 'some hasting to get rich, and entering into unjustifiable speculations little less than gambling'; the people were called upon to heed the warning: 'Beware of covetousness'. In short, each denomination construed the disaster as the fruit of its favourite sin.

In May 1893, the Anglican Bishop (Dr Goe) acceded to representations for a special Day of Humiliation and Prayer.<sup>2</sup> Services were held by each of the principal protestant denominations and there was a special combined service in the Melbourne Town Hall. In his address on that occasion, Dr Goe recalled that most had already told their troubles to God in private prayer and in family and congregational worship. Now, however,

as the cloud of misfortune grew blacker and threatened to burst in ruin more or less terrible upon our heads, we became more importunate and thought it well to gather together in a great public meeting...and cast ourselves before the throne of God

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1

Ibid., 9 March 1892, p.10A, and Pastoral Address in Minutes of the Wesleyan Conference, 1892, p.73 (copy at the Offices of the Methodist Church of Victoria, Little Collins Street Melbourne). Also see comments of the President of the Baptists, Argus, 16 November 1892, p.10C.

2

Ibid., 17 May 1893, p.3A; Manning Clark, A Short History of Australia (New York, 1963) has the Day of Humiliation as a Sunday; in fact it was a Wednesday. (p.159).

in deepest humiliation and prayer, in the hope that the Lord would remember us in our lowest state....<sup>1</sup>

He recalled how King Hezekiah, his city beseiged by the Assyrians, had spread out the threatening letter of Sennacherib before The Almighty; how Daniel, though innocent himself, had identified with the sins of the people; how Jonah called upon the King and all the people of Ninevah to cast themselves upon the mercy of God and how the Lord had held His hand from the destruction of that wicked city. Others were reminded of God's grace in latter days, of His providence towards the English people in the face of the Spanish Armada<sup>2</sup> and after the Great Fire.<sup>3</sup> Yet, in the present circumstances, the people were not confronted by an adversary of flesh and blood, or even by a natural disaster. Thus, as the Bishop confessed, it was more difficult to see causes or pray for remedies:

In times like the cholera or the cattle plague they knew what to pray for, but their troubles now arose out of the complex forms of modern civilization, and made the petition more difficult. We knew the cause of our troubles to be covetousness, extrayagance, selfishness and forgetfulness of God.<sup>4</sup>

The clergy of the respectable denominations shrank from a more exact recitation of the people's sins; their

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1

Ibid.

2

Letter of Rev H. Braddock, *ibid.*, 17 May 1893, p.3A.

3

Bishop Goe, *ibid.*, 18 May 1893, p.6E.

4

Ibid.

congregations were too thickly packed with 'boomers'.<sup>1</sup> The remarks of Rev Alex Marshall of Scots' Church at the Town Hall service illustrate their difficulty. He was careful to limit his condemnation to general Sin, and actually denied the existence of certain specific, and by now evident, sins. Indeed, he was at pains to affirm that

...the men who had the direction of [our great financial] institutions were upright honourable men. We could sympathize with them in their misfortunes, whatever blame we might be disposed to attach to the general policy.<sup>2</sup>

The sins to be repented were not 'villainy and deception' but (good Presbyterian sins) 'reckless living, extravagance, gambling, mammon worship and God-forgetfulness'.<sup>3</sup> Thus, Sir Matthew Davies, for example, could claim that his legal responsibility for

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1

'...those who have bestowed upon our citizens an absolutely unlimited liability..., those with whom malversation is a matter of millions - have all been excellently grounded in the faith. Nay, more, upon that foundation they have built up (by aid of a certain refined melancholy of manner, much shiny broadcloth, gold watch guard and hair oil) an edifice vastly imposing to the eye. Most of them could repeat the Apostles' Creed and the Ten Commandments; the rest are familiar with the Confession of Faith and the Shorter Catechism....' 'Oriel' in the Argus, 15 October 1892, p.4H, and also see G.D. Meudell, The Pleasant Career of a Spendthrift (London, 1929), pp.29-30 for a similar account.

2

Argus, 18 May 1893, p.6E.

3

Ibid.

the Freehold Investment and Banking Company implied no moral responsibility<sup>1</sup> and his friend and fellow director, James Balfour, was encouraged to see himself, not as an object of wrath, but as a sacrificial victim for the sins of the people. 'I have been thinking', wrote his son from Dunedin,

of the time Melbourne is going through just now in connection with the Captivity of the Jews in Babylon. They went through this weary time of trial and they came out purified but the innocent had to suffer with the guilty. 'The Servant of the Lord' was among the people.... No doubt many are wondering why you should be suffering. Perhaps they will come to see that your sufferings are really brought through their sins....<sup>2</sup>

Not everyone, of course, could find comfort in sackcloth and ashes. George Gray the builder and architect had firmly believed that God, having endowed man with 'commonsense and reason', left him to become 'fortunate or unfortunate, successful or unsuccessful, happy or miserable' in proportion as he used these talents properly.<sup>3</sup> But with the depression, his petty

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1

Ibid., 14 August 1892, p.6D.

2

Rev G.H. Balfour to James Balfour, 9 February 1893 (Balfour Papers). James Balfour was a supporter of the Day of Humiliation and Prayer (see Buchanan Balfour to James Balfour, 16 June 1893). It should be added that Balfour's full responsibility in the Freehold Investment and Banking Company losses is at least doubtful (see my article in A.D.B., vol.III).

3

George Gray, Letters to England 20 June 1886. (Manuscript Collection SLV)

bourgeois arminianism left him desolate: 'My whole life', he now confessed, 'has been one huge mistake from which there is no escape, but by that common road called death'.<sup>1</sup> Others reproached themselves and their fellows for their failure to perceive and decry the excesses of the boom while there was still time. There was, after all,

comparatively little merit in humiliating ourselves when we have been weighed in the balance and found wanting. The fact is, that in this 'Marvellous Melbourne' when the delirium of the boom fever was raging, individual responsibility was forgotten, and with the swelling vanity of the fabled frog, the prayer of men and women was, 'Give us more gold and land, O Mammon! for this shall last forever'. Why was the voice of the preacher not heard then, crying in the wilderness, 'All is vanity...'?<sup>2</sup>

While the rich put their souls in order, the poor struggled to sustain their fainting bodies. As in the 'eighties, reporters were sent out, like explorers of the 'dark continent',<sup>3</sup> to investigate their condition. Articles on 'How the Poor Live', 'Poorer than the Poor',<sup>4</sup>

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1

George Gray to his daughter Ellen, 11 July 1892, quoted Wilkinson, op.cit.

2

Letter of 'J.B.' [a clergyman?], Argus, 18 May 1893, p.6.

3

The metaphor was common in England. For an example of its use in Melbourne see Richmond Guardian, 2 June 1883.

4

Series of three articles on the poor in Brunswick . (Age, 10 July 1893), p.5F-G, Collingwood (11 July 1893, p.5F-G), South Melbourne (12 July 1893, p.6A-B).

'The Cry of the Workless',<sup>1</sup> tracts on The Bitter Cry of Outcast Melbourne<sup>2</sup> began to appear. The use of titles already familiar to English readers suggests that poverty had now reached levels comparable only to the appalling conditions of 'outcast London'.<sup>3</sup> No longer did the reporters seek to identify dark blots upon the face of an otherwise fair city; Melbourne was now 'The City of Dreadful Night'.<sup>4</sup> They moved beyond the narrow lanes of Little Bourke Street and into the outlying, unmade streets of Brunswick and South Melbourne.<sup>5</sup> Poverty had spread through the whole fabric of society: 'side by side, almost rubbing shoulders with the children of the rich, can be found the emaciated and wasted faces of the women and their little ones'.<sup>6</sup> Every suburb, even South Yarra and Toorak, had its hapless poor. There was the same recognition of their de-humanized, almost animal,

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1

Ibid., 2 April 1894, p.5D-E.

2

Mentioned Commonweal and Workers' Advocate, 30 April 1892, pp.2-3.

3

Note the specific disavowal of this during the boom period: '...it is merely trifling with the subject to compare the easily rectifiable condition of some limited areas in the city of Melbourne with the gigantic evils of over-crowding and impecuniosity in London and other large English towns'. Age, 2 February 1884, p.13.

4

This phrase, from James Thomson's poem of that title, was commonly used during the early 'nineties. Thomson's poem was first published in the National Reformer in 1893; it was most popular, however, during the 'eighties and 'nineties.

5

See above footnote 4, p.595.

6

Age, 22 June 1892, p.5H.

existence; now, however, they were portrayed, not as predators or scavengers, but as sheep, 'herded' and 'hunted'.<sup>1</sup> No longer did the reporter emphasize their moral degeneracy, but their 'independence' of charity, their self-respect, their frustrated industry. He attempted, by every means, to commend them to the sympathy and charity of right-thinking Melbournians.

As the city came to objectify the concentrated sin and suffering of the colony, so did the countryside, first and original source of goodness and wealth, assume an ever purer, simpler and more harmonious aspect. Melbournians now yearned for what they fancied as the bucolic innocence of rural life, for the secure but independent station of a 'petty yeomanry', for the communal joys of the fictioned medieval village.

These regressive longings were most vividly expressed in the several village settlement movements of the early 'nineties. 'The Social Pioneers Land Settlement Scheme' was avowedly inspired by the ideas of Owen, Fourier and Cabet,<sup>2</sup> although its claim to make 'every labourer a capitalist, and every tenant a landlord' meshes more nicely with the ideals of the 'petty suburban proprietor' than those of the communitarian. The scheme's founder, David Andrade, anarchist and vegetarian propagandist, also wrote a novel - The Melbourne

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1

Ibid., and ibid., 10 July 1893, p.5F.

2

Commonweal supplement, 16 April 1892. Each settler was required to contribute the not inconsiderable sum of £100.

Riots and How Harry Holdfast emancipated the Workers<sup>1</sup> - in support of his ideas. At the other end of the social spectrum, Patterson, Laing and Bruce, a large softgoods firm, sponsored a settlement for their employees at Bayswater.<sup>2</sup> Twenty-three married men were employed in clearing land until the pangs of enforced celibacy drove them citywards again. Similar ventures were begun by the Cooperative Village Settlements Association,<sup>3</sup> the Affleck-Robertson<sup>4</sup> Association, the Salvation Army,<sup>5</sup> the Rechabites,<sup>6</sup> the Essendon Village Settlement Association,<sup>7</sup> and Lady O'Loghlen.<sup>8</sup>

The two most important settlements, however, were those sponsored by the Rev Horace Tucker and by the Victorian Government. In conception the second is properly described as 'anti-utopian'; its originators saw village settlements as a device for supporting and correcting the undeserving poor, not as the prototype of a new society.<sup>9</sup> (This is not to deny that among its

<sup>1</sup> (Melbourne, 1892).

<sup>2</sup> Argus, 23 July 1892, p.8E.

<sup>3</sup> Age, 26 May 1893, pp.6F-G.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Mentioned by R.E.W. Kennedy in his article, 'The Leongatha Labour Colony: Founding an Anti-Utopia' in Labour History, no.14, May 1968, p.54, and Age, 7 October 1893, p.9F.

<sup>6</sup> Argus, 5 March 1893, p.5C.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 9 September 1893.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 5 August 1893, p.10F. The scheme was abandoned because the demand for village settlements was deemed to be over supplied.

<sup>9</sup> R.E.W. Kennedy, loc.cit., passim.

supporters, notably those in the Legislature, there were many who saw village settlements in a more idealistic light.<sup>1)</sup> The Tucker Scheme, on the other hand, was founded and supported by utopians. Tucker was the priest in charge of the 'fashionable' Christ Church, South Yarra.<sup>2</sup> In February 1892, just as the middle classes were coming to realize that the prevailing distress was neither temporary nor ephemeral, Tucker wrote a letter to the Argus.<sup>3</sup> He had just returned from the country and had been impressed by the contrast between its flourishing condition and the scenes of bitter distress in the metropolis. To alleviate this anomaly he proposed the foundation of a 'cooperative settlement' of 100 families on an experimental basis. They should be granted 500 acres of land and given a year's supply of provisions after which, he assumed, the settlement would

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1

See below

2

Horace Finn Tucker appears to have been born in England but received his theological training at Moore College N.S.W. and the University of Melbourne. He was ordained in 1873 and afterwards served in Sandhurst (1873-5) and Campaspe (1876-80). In 1880 he became rector of Christ Church, South Yarra. He married Caroline Lavinia Brodribb, daughter of a prominent squatter family. As a churchman he was regarded as 'high' and his radical social views led to some friction with his congregation. He communicated his communitarian ideas and compassion for the poor to his son Gerard Kennedy Tucker who was later to found the Brotherhood of St Laurence. See Crockford's Clerical Directory (London, 1908) and I.R. Carter, God and Three Shillings (Melbourne 1967), chapter 2.

3

Argus, 9 February 1892, p.10B.

be self-supporting. So would it be possible to 'turn back the human tide from the crowded city to the free open plains'.<sup>1</sup>

Tucker's proposals were received with interest and a committee consisting of clergy, charity organizers, politicians and socialists was elected to promote a settlement.<sup>2</sup> However it soon became evident that Tucker's ideas were too conservative for the socialists, too utopian for the charity organizers. The former were tending to the secular communitarianism of Owen and Fourier; the latter to labour settlements on the German pattern. Both groups broke away to form their own settlements.

Tucker's own ideas - as they are expressed in various speeches and pamphlets and in his novel The New Arcadia (1894) - derive from several sources, the most important of which were Charles Kingsley and the 'Christian Socialists',<sup>3</sup> the Ruskin of Unto This Last,<sup>4</sup>

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1

Ibid.

2

Ibid., 23 February 1892, p.10, which also provides full exposition of the scheme; see also *ibid.*, 22 February 1892, p.6G.

3

The New Arcadia (Melbourne, 1894), pp.179. 'The best person ever lived these days - "Big-Gun Kingsley" they call him...Parson Brown says it 'ud do his eyes good to see this place. He loved the poor, and the country, though they did leave him to die alone, and no notice taken on him, 'cause he spoke up for the people'. Also see his lecture on 'Christian Socialism' in Age, 21 April 1894, p.15G.

4

Rev Charles Strong addressed the Wonwondah settlers on Ruskin's Unto This Last (Commonweal, 20 August 1892).

Henry Maine,<sup>1</sup> and, more generally, that host of nineteenth century thinkers who viewed the village society of the Middle Ages as a repository of faith and communal bliss. The general drift of his ideas became evident in April 1892, when the Governor opened a 'Villagers' Fete', complete with maypole dances, country games and a Punch and Judy Show, in aid of the scheme.<sup>2</sup> Taken together, the essential themes of Tucker's Village settlements - and perhaps of village settlements generally - constituted an almost equal and opposite reaction to the themes of 'Marvellous Melbourne'. For 'progress', 'individual enterprise and 'city-dominance' were substituted 'regression', 'cooperation', and 'ruralism'.

The regressive features of Tucker's scheme were evident both in its half-articulated faith in the beneficence of the medieval commune<sup>3</sup> and, more obviously, in the paraphernalia of his imagined 'New Arcadia' with its 'bowers' and 'grottoes', its 'village green' and 'jolly smiths', and its kindly village priest celebrating the ancient rites in 'the figured eastern light' of a Puginesque chapel.<sup>4</sup>

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1

See below.

2

Argus, 5 April 1892, p.5C.

3

'...the system of competition went back to the age of slavery, and though modulated by feudalism, was still in close connection with the dark ages. (Tucker to the Cooperative Society, Argus, 20 August 1892, p.8F, italics mine.)

4

New Arcadia, pp.131-2, 71-2, 160.

It was a reaction, secondly, to the de-humanizing effects of competition: 'Competition...appealed to the basest passions of mankind....Competition made men work like machines'.<sup>1</sup> It was, moreover, a characteristically metropolitan form of life:

'Greedy creatures, these dirty pigs', soliloquized Tom as the two leaned for a moment upon the fence.

'Irresistibly reminding of your vaunted social life in the town - both alike a selfish dog in the manger scramble' remarked Frank waggishly.

'That's rough, old man'.

'But true to life nevertheless. There's a lot of the hog in our nature, and it comes out very strongly in the city.'<sup>2</sup>

Tucker's cooperative ideas, however, fell short of outright communism. Almost the only ripples of conflict to disturb the peace of 'New Arcadia' are generated by the opposition to the village elders of black-hearted anarchist-communists (like Malduke)<sup>3</sup> and well-meaning, but misguided, socialists (like Elms).<sup>4</sup> Although Tucker occasionally spoke against the private ownership of land,<sup>5</sup>

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1 Argus, 20 August 1892, p.8F.

2 New Arcadia, p.143.

3 Ibid., ch.xxvi.

4 Ibid., p.246-7.

5 Argus, 20 August 1892, p.8F; 'The secret of all the inequalities that troubled people at the present time and led to the troubles between capital and labour was the private ownership of land.'

his own scheme<sup>1</sup> was founded upon the cooperative clearing and working of land which was ultimately to be held privately in five-acre allotments.

The third tenet of Tucker's faith lay in his assumption that the countryside could restore city-spoiled man to pristine innocence. This impulse was partly negative: it was necessary to remove the city dweller from a contaminated environment - 'out of town and into the country where he could begin from the beginning.'<sup>2</sup> But the country was not merely neutral ground; it was the Englishman's native element: 'Scratch the Englishman, wherever he lives, and you find the farmer beneath the surface, and the earth-hunger in his breast'.<sup>3</sup> Restored to the land, a man was restored to God, man and nature: 'Undoubtedly the land can do wonders', reflected Doctor Courtney, 'some of the most diseased trees in the city merely required careful transplanting'.<sup>4</sup>

Critics of Tucker's settlements concentrated their attack upon the first and last of his main tenets. They asked, firstly, whether it was possible, or even desirable, to revert to some earlier, ideal state of society. They quickly divined the source of his inspiration:

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 23 February 1892, p.10.

<sup>2</sup> Argus, 20 August 1892, p.8F (note ambiguity of 'beginning').

<sup>3</sup> New Arcadia, p.23.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.128.

I fancy [wrote one letter writer to the Argus] Mr. Tucker must have discovered a well-known book called Sir Henry Maine's Village Communities,<sup>1</sup> and fancies that the hands of the clock of time can be turned back and an earlier state of society reproduced. Many will doubt it, and none can fail to see that the modern 'village community' if it can exist at all, will be a far more expensive and complicated affair than the old one. One is also tempted to fear that communities and states grow and are not turned out of philanthropic workshops ready made.<sup>2</sup>

The Argus<sup>3</sup> later offered a similar, though more sophisticated criticism. The 'ancient village commune' of Sir Henry Maine, it pointed out, was an extension of the family, and accordingly, its government was patriarchal. The Tucker settlements, on the other hand, were heterogeneously composed and had 'not a single element of cohesion among them'; furthermore their directors, at least in theory, had no patriarchal authority.

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1 Village Communities (London, 1871).

2 Argus, 9 March 1892, p.10A.

3 Argus, 7 September 1892, p.10B. The government of 'New Arcadia' was in fact rather more democratic than that of the village settlements. The 'community', exerting itself through the kindly force of 'public opinion' was the main disciplinary force. (New Arcadia, p.306). In the village settlements, on the other hand, discipline was largely imposed by the rules formulated by the Directors (see Tucker Village Settlements of Victoria, Handbook for the Information of Contributors and Intending Settlers, Melbourne, 1892), passim.

The third principle of Tucker's scheme - the regenerative powers of country life - was also disputed. The Argus,<sup>1</sup> for example, had doubted whether plumbers, bootmakers, upholsterers, drapers and other townsmen could adapt to the hard manual labour of the settler. The practicality of village settlements was most fully canvassed, however, in the parliamentary debates on the Village Settlements Bill. On one side were those, like J.B. Patterson,<sup>2</sup> who believed that agriculture was man's natural occupation. In proof of this he offered the observation that

most of the tradesmen who live in the suburbs of Melbourne have little gardens attached to their homes....There is no class, clerical or mechanical, who [sic] cannot adapt themselves to agricultural and horticultural pursuits with perfect success.

Moreover, the land was the original and only real source of wealth;<sup>3</sup> it was proper that Melbournians, who had so sumptuously fed upon the labours of the countrymen, should now return some portion of that debt in kind. Those who opposed the Bill divined no farmer's heartbeat in the townsman's breast, no rural longings in weekend gardening. Between the city's ways and those of the country there was an unbridgeable gulf:

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1

Ibid. The settlers were, in fact, mostly manual workers especially from the building industry; they were mostly married men with children - in some cases quite large families. Tucker Village Handbook, pp.17-22.

2

V.P.D., 69/1892-3, p.597.

3

E.g. L.L. Smith, 'All wealth springs from the land'. Ibid., p.604.

Men who were brought up about the town, who are accustomed to their beer and long pipes, to go to the theatre at night, or to sit by the fireside talking cosily to a pretty girl, are unfit for farm life. That is a very different kind of occupation from a man going on a farm and swinging a mattock or a pick for nine, ten, twelve or even fourteen hours a day.<sup>1</sup>

Both the unhappy history of the village settlements<sup>2</sup> and the conspicuous reluctance of the urban unemployed to venture into the countryside - except itinerantly - tended to substantiate their view.

Yet such an unbridgeable gulf is to be seen, not merely as a barrier to the attainment of the 'New Arcadia', but as a condition necessary to the emergence of the idea itself. For, the romantic conception of country life itself depends upon the emergence of cities large, 'ferocious' and rampant enough to arouse disgust and disillusionment. In Melbourne the appearance of such sentiments was further stimulated by the poverty, financial scandal and grinding competition of the depression. The relationship between the fall of 'Marvellous Melbourne' and the emergence of romantic ruralism is nowhere better illustrated than in the

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1

McLellan, *ibid.*, p.613; see also Vale, *ibid.*, pp.605-6 and Ievers, *ibid.*, p.617.

2

The settlements were plagued with various problems: insufficient financial help (Argus, 10 December 1892, p.7A), bad seasons (*ibid.*, 23 September 1892, p.3F), unavailability of work in surrounding districts (*ibid.*, 31 August 1892, p.5B), unsuitable application of labour (e.g. carpenters wholly occupied in grubbing). (Tucker Village Handbook, pp.17-21).

poetry of Bernard O'Dowd for that poet's great celebration of 'The Bush'<sup>1</sup> (1912) is but the obverse of the terrible vision of Melbourne and its manifold afflictions which he presented in his earlier poem 'The City'.<sup>2</sup> (1901)

The City crowds our motley broods,  
And plants its citadel  
Upon the delta where the floods  
Of evil plunge to Hell.

Through fogs retributive, that steam  
From ooze of stagnant wrongs,  
The towers satanically gleam  
Defiance at our throngs.

It nucleates the land's Deceit;  
Its slums our Lost decoy;  
It is the bawdy-house where meet  
Lewd Wealth and venal Joy.

Grim wards are here, where Timour Trade  
His human cairn uprears;  
There silent Towers, where girls betrayed  
Unseen rot through their years.

The City curbs the wrath that bays  
Rebellions in our souls,  
By soothing fumes, and pageant days,  
And sweet Circean bowls.

. . . . .

<sup>1</sup> Palmer (The Legend of the Nineties, Melbourne, 1954, p.11,) implies that 'The Bush' was a poem published out of due time. Its whole background is that of the city. O'Dowd described himself as being 'in city exile' (A.A. Phillips (ed.), Bernard O'Dowd (Melbourne, 1963), p.196); he writes, too, of 'ugly towns and cities', 'the squalid city', and makes clear which city he has in mind when he writes how Herod's daughter sools her 'morning daily' On John the Baptist by the Yarra Bank. (p.190)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.2. This poem was originally published under the pen name 'Danton' in the Bulletin, 1 June 1901 (Hugh Anderson, Bernard O'Dowd (1866-1953) An Annotated Bibliography (Sydney, 1963)). It is reprinted in W. Murdoch (ed) The Poems of Bernard O'Dowd (Melbourne 1944) p.53ff.

The Babylonian Venus sways  
 In every city park;  
 Her idiot niece, Abortion, plays  
 Beside her in the dark.

Great spider intellects here lurk  
 In bank and in exchange;  
 And through the feeblers folds of Work  
 Hyaena sweaters range.

Debts gargoyles 'neath each eave grimace;  
 Debts mildews sour the soil;  
 At all there grins a Shylock face;  
 Round all, Debt's suckers coil.

Here Thrift, with Art obscene endowed,  
 A sterile haven finds  
 Where Malthus-Onan's whey-faced crowd  
 Slink from the genial winds.

And Art spurns Poverty her spouse,  
 To be the courtesan  
 Of ogre of the counting-house  
 Or ribboned Caliban.

And o'er that hovel-burdened waste  
 Where indigence is pent,  
 The Huns of Property have raced  
 On withering hoofs of Rent.

When, at last, the shocks of that great upheaval had passed and Melbourne began its slow recovery, it was evident that some at least of its losses would be irrecoverable. It was a sober, chastened - to us, a more familiar Melbourne - that entered the new century.

APPENDIX 1LOCATION OF MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

In 1880 factories were mainly confined to the inner core of the city. About 500 Melbourne's 900 factories were within the City of Melbourne; Fitzroy (80), Collingwood (60) and Emerald Hill (59) were the other main industrial areas. This concentration of manufacturing industry in the central city and its periphery reflected some of those general factors which made Melbourne a good example of the classical 'concentric zone'<sup>1</sup> pattern of land use, as well as conditions more peculiar to itself. In general terms, Melbourne was about to reach that stage of growth at which the advantage to the manufacturer of ready access to his market began to be outweighed by the disadvantages of higher rentals and increasing remoteness from an outwardly-migrating workforce. Among the more particular factors favouring central location were the 'accidental' facts that both fresh water - which had been required for wool-washing, tanning and brewing - and port facilities - which had determined the location of the ship-repair industry - were available in the central city.

A similar conjunction of general and particular factors underlay the location of particular industry groups.

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1

E.W. Burgess 'The Growth of the City: An Introduction to a Research Project' in R. Park, Burgess and McKenzie (eds), The City (1925), pp.47-62.

TABLE presents a set of indices ('local location quotients')<sup>1</sup> designed to measure, albeit crudely, the

TABLE A1 LOCAL LOCATION QUOTIENTS OF MELBOURNE INDUSTRIES (1885)

DISTRICT	CLOTHING	BOOTS and SHOES	ENGINEERING	COACH and WAGGONS
CITY	1.28	.71	1.07	.51
<u>INNER SUBURBS</u>				
COLLINGWOOD	.77	2.81	.26	2.05
FITZROY	1.55	2.74	.51	1.79
RICHMOND	1.03	.68	.89	.87
SOUTH MELBOURNE	.41	.66	1.97	1.04
NORTH MELBOURNE	1.49	.80	.47	.83
<u>OTHERS</u>				
ST KILDA	--	.75	--	3.08
NORTHCOTE	--	--	--	--
PORT MELBOURNE	1.31	1.73	--	--
FOOTSCRAY	--	--	1.96	2.38
WILLIAMSTOWN	--	--	2.00	--
HAWTHORN	--	--	--	--
BRUNSWICK	--	--	1.33	--
PRAHRAN	.82	--	--	2.45

<sup>1</sup>

These 'local location quotients' (L.L.Q.) are a measure based upon P.G. Hall's measure given the same name. (See his The Industries of London (London 1962) p.17). Hall has used local employment figures; for want of anything better I had to use figures of establishments. Thus my L.L.Q. is a much cruder measure. It is calculated from  $\frac{\text{Percent total number of establishments of type X in district Y}}{\text{Percent of all manufacturing establishments in district Y}}$  to  $\frac{\text{total number of establishments of type X}}{\text{all manufacturing establishments}}$ .

The figures for the numerator are taken from Sands and McDougall's Melbourne Directory; those for the denominator from the Victorian Statistical Registers - 'Production'.

localization of four main industries. In some cases, this clustering was pronounced: Collingwood and Fitzroy, for example, could seem to have been quite disproportionately endowed with boot factories. In others, like the carriage-building industry, localization was less evident. Clustering, of course, was largely a product of external economies; it occurred either where producers required ready access to a particular, localized institution, source of supply, port or market or where there was a high degree of interdependence among producers. The clothing industry, with its close dependence upon the Flinders Lane soft goods trade and the city retailers, and the boot trade, with its dependence upon a skilled and localized labour force and its historical, though no longer functional, association with river-side tanners and fell-mongers, approximated to the first type. There was a symbiotic relationship between engineering shops and iron foundries although both were best served by proximity to ports (e.g., at South Melbourne, Footscray and Williamstown).

During the 'eighties some of these clusters were consolidated while others were dispersed and reformed in new locations. Much the most important of the pressures influencing these changes was the general and spectacular rise in land values, especially in the central business district. In consequence, the late 'eighties especially saw a general displacement of factories from the central city to the suburbs:

The high price of land during the greater portion of the year [1888] induced many large manufacturing forms to remove from the

city proper, and several large places have been and are in the course of being erected on the south side of the Yarra, between Footscray and Williamstown and in other suburbs.<sup>1</sup>

Location in outer suburbs no longer prohibited easy access to the city market-place:

The improvement in the means of access into the city by the erection of new bridges, the trams and the improved water way, all tend towards sending the factories further from the centre towards the outskirts of the metropolis...<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, the number of factories within the City of Melbourne (which included most of Carlton) continued to increase throughout the eighteen-eighties (from 501 in 1880 to 552 in 1890). Far more significant, however, was the growth of factories in the suburbs. As shown in TABLE A2 (over) by 1890 suburban establishments outnumbered those in the city by almost two to one.

Immigration of the industrial work force and the appreciation of old industrial sites thus combined to substantially modify old industrial land-use patterns. Industrial re-location was strongly influenced, albeit negatively, by emerging patterns of residential land-use,<sup>3</sup> firstly because industrial users were not concerned with the aesthetic considerations which made hilly, sandy

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1

Factory Inspectors' Report. V.P.P., 30/1889, p.7 and A.I., 1 August 1888, p.201.

2

Ibid.

3

See chapter 6.

TABLE A2      FACTORIES BY SUBURBS 1880-1895

SUBURBS	1880	1885	1890	1895
Brighton	3	6	12	11
Brunswick	16	22	44	31
Collingwood	60	86	128	95
Essendon		5	15	9
Flemington and Kensington	11	3	25	17
Fitzroy	80	78	77	56
Footscray	13	27	72	39
Hawthorn	--	6	15	16
Kew	3	4	3	1
Melbourne (City)	501	518	552	665
Northcote	--	2	16	7
North Melbourne	42	61	90	71
Port Melbourne	29	23	32	24
Prahran	31	36	37	27
Richmond	44	58	72	68
St Kilda	10	12	18	9
South Melbourne	59	73	135	110
Williamstown	17	17	47	28

country most suitable for home-building and secondly, because their labour force was unlikely to reside in prime residential areas. In short, cheap land was attractive both to factory-owners and their employees. Since the southern and eastern suburbs were preempted for middle class residential use, industry was disposed to extend to the west and north. Furthermore, there were other related attractions. The Saltwater (Maribyrnong) River at Footscray, Yarraville, Kensington and Flemington was more freely available to noxious industries - like rope works, tallow factories and sugar refineries - than the Yarra.<sup>1</sup> Footscray, for example, was said to have been favoured for manufacturers 'because of its considerable water frontage, its natural facilities for drainage and the cheapness of its land'.<sup>2</sup> The livestock sale yards and abattoirs at Newmarket attracted subsidiary skin, tallow and hide industries. The railway workshops at Newport sustained a variety of subsidiary carriage-building and wheel-making works.

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1

The pollution of the Yarra was restricted by the Yarra Pollution Act (1855), but its tributaries were not. (evidence of Footscray Town Clerk to Royal Commission on the Sanitary Condition of the Metropolis, First Progress Report, V.P.P., 27/1889, Q.6286). Under the Health Act (1890) municipalities were empowered to prevent pollution of rivers and other water courses (H.B. Allen, 'Second General Report on Mr Mansergh's Scheme of Drainage', V.P.P., 76/1891, p.8). However some, like Kensington and Flemington adopted a lax attitude (see evidence of Kensington Town Clerk in V.P.P., 27/1889, Qs. 433, 444, 447), while others, like Footscray, found it difficult to successfully police the Act.

2

Argus, 18 October 1884, p.13.

Further east, the clay deposits of Brunswick and Northcote were the foundation for a growing brick-making industry.

The 'movement of industry to the suburbs' is a pictorial way of expressing a changed balance of industrial locations between the inner city and the suburbs which was achieved without any actual reduction in the number of city establishments and few transfers of city businesses to the suburbs. High land values in the central city simply acted upon the owners of new factories as a disincentive to central city location. Nevertheless, the actual transfer to several large and well-established businesses from the central business district to new suburban locations seems to have had a significant effect upon the complexion of the areas into which they moved.

The appreciation of city land values had unequal effects upon various kinds of manufacturers. Its impact was felt most acutely by those for whom rent was a very significant factor in production and, among established businesses, by those whose sites appreciated most significantly. These effects of land appreciation, however, operated within restrictions imposed by such factors as the costs of relocation and the relative availability of labour. In the most significant single example of re-location - the movement of the iron and engineering industry from the C.B.D. to South Melbourne, Footscray and Williamstown - all these factors operated positively. Rent was a significant factor - their plants were set on large sites; their old home in the north-western quarter of the city mile

(along Latrobe, Little Lonsdale and Franklin Streets) was being invaded by commercial and financial buildings.

The extensive area occupied by some of these firms, and their central situation [made] them invaluable as sites for the erection of the magnificent blocks of offices and commercial buildings which are now being built with amazing rapidity.<sup>1</sup>

Relocation often provided the opportunity for technical innovation. Certainly the metals industry became an important component in the identity of the new industrial suburbs: Yarraville, for example, was cast as 'the Birmingham of Victoria'.<sup>2</sup>

Other industries were more loath to move. Carriage-builders coveted city locations as display centres and some, like Daniel White for example,<sup>3</sup> maintained city showrooms while moving their workshops into the suburbs. Clothing manufacturers, on the other hand, often occupied only a single crowded room in the upper 'flats' of a tall city building. Much of the work was done on the 'outwork system',<sup>4</sup> so that rent constituted only a small proportion of costs. Thus, for clothing manufacturers, the penalties of high rent did not counteract the advantages of proximity to the retail market. Boot

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1

A.I., 1 August 1888, p.201. Firms which moved include T. Robinson and Co. to Newport, Robinson Bros and Co., to South Melbourne, T. Monteath and Sons deeper into South Melbourne, Campbell, Sloss and McCann, H.W. Mould.

2

Argus, 5 August 1885, p.34.

3

Manufacturer, August 1887, p.11.

4

See below.

manufacturers, however, who usually maintained larger establishments, showed some disposition to forsake the central city (35.8 per cent of all boot and shoe factories were located in the City of Melbourne in 1885 but only 24.3 per cent in 1891).<sup>1</sup>

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1

The first figure is my own based upon the 1885 Sands and McDougall Directory; the second is P.J. Rimmer's based on the 1891 Directory. (See his 'The Boot and Shoe Industry in Melbourne' Australian Geographer, no.5, March 1968, pp.370-81.)

APPENDIX 2'RATE BOOKS'

Rate books are a record, usually kept in yearly volumes, of the description, valuation and condition of tenure of all rateable properties in a municipality and of the rates levied upon them.<sup>1</sup> The record was maintained by the municipal valuer or rate-collector and, in accordance with the Local Government Act, entries in it were to be set out in the form shown by FIGURE 1.<sup>2</sup> 'No. on the Rate' simply indicated the consecutive numbering of entries in the rate-book. The 'person rated' is almost invariably the occupier of the dwelling who, in the last instance, was liable to pay the rate.<sup>3</sup> 'Trade or occupation' furnishes a brief description of the occupier's normal source of livelihood. 'Description and situation of the property' gives the address - which, for the later part of the period is denoted by street number - and an abbreviated description of the dwelling or property, e.g., '5 [Room] B [rick]' '3 [Room] W [eather] B [card]' 'Land 50' x 120'. This description, it should be remarked, is not invariably given. 'Division for separate rating by reason of special benefit' is simply a citation of the

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1

Local Government Act [54 Victoria no.1112] 1890 section 272, the relevant provisions are substantially those of the 'Local Government Act' 1874 [no.506].

2

Ibid., Schedule 17.

3

Ibid., section 294.

FIGURE 1

CLASSIFICATIONS OF RATE BOOK ENTRIES

No on the Rate	Surname of the Person Rated	Christian Name of Person Rated	Trade or Occupation	Name of Owner of Rateable Property	Description and Situation of Rateable Property	Ward	Division for Separate Rating by Reason of Special Benefit	Electoral District and Division	Net Annual Value	Rate at x d in the £
426	Jones	William	blacksmith	William son	15 Robert St 4 WB	West			20	
427	O'Neill	Patrick	C[ivil] E[ngineer]	O'Neill	17 Robert St 5 B				30	

class under which a particular property fell so that it was exempted, under a provision of the Local Government Act, from the payment of rates (e.g., 'Church', 'Hospital', etc.).<sup>1</sup> The 'net annual value', which is defined in the text, was determined by the municipal valuer against whose valuation appeal might be made to a judge of petty sessions.<sup>2</sup>

The rate-book was made up from a 'valuation book' or record of valuations which actually furnished more comprehensive information than that available from the rate-book:<sup>3</sup> details of the occupation and place of residence of the owner, of the terms on which property was let, and the number of persons occupying the premises were all to be recorded. Unfortunately, very few of these books have survived and the historian is therefore bound to use the rate-books which exist in almost complete series for a large number of Melbourne municipalities.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Ibid., section 246.

2 Ibid., division 7 of the Act.

3 Ibid., section 251 and Schedule 15.

4 I have positive knowledge of virtually full series for the following municipalities: Footscray, Collingwood [in the Victorian State Archives], St Kilda, Hawthorn, Kew, Brighton, Williamstown, Brunswick, Prahran, Fitzroy, Richmond. I understand that books also exist for Camberwell (G. Blainey, A History of Camberwell, 1964, p.99). In all cases - except that of Collingwood - the books were kept in the municipal offices.

The procedure adopted in this rate-book survey<sup>1</sup> was to select every tenth rated building (whether occupied or vacant, residential or non-residential) in the rate-books of the four municipalities at the year 1898-9 and to trace each site backwards in time, at five-year intervals, through the preceding rate-books. That is to say, I surveyed in turn the rate books for 1898-9, 1893-4, 1888-9, 1883-4, 1878-9. The entries were usually made in the rate-book in the same order as they occurred on the map. A sample consisting of every tenth entry in the rate-book is therefore drawn on almost the same basis as a sample drawn by a person who walked along each street of the suburb selecting every tenth house. Because each house continued to appear at about the same point in each rate-book, it was relatively simple to re-locate it

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The uses of rate-books to the historian were first perceived by Mr J. O'Brien of the University of Melbourne who used them, very largely, to provide a chronological footing for the architectural history of Melbourne's housing (Peter Bamford and John O'Brien - 'Dating Houses in Victoria' in Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand May 1961). Weston Bate in his History of Brighton (Melbourne, 1962) and more especially in his M.A. thesis (University of Melbourne, 1952) carried their use a stage further by the construction of maps to show the spread of settlement, types of economic activity etc. More recently, the present writer (in his B.A. essay 'Class Association and Opinion in Richmond 1860-1892', Melbourne, 1962) and Renate Howe in her M.A. thesis ('The Wesleyan Church in Victoria 1855-1901', Melbourne, 1965) and her article 'The Social Composition of the Wesleyan Church in Victoria during the Nineteenth Century' in the Journal of Religious History, vol.4, no.3, June 1967, pp.206-27) have developed their use as a source for occupational analysis of social groups.

from year to year or to determine if it were absent. By including non-residential buildings and vacant dwellings at 1898-9 I intended to guard the safety of the sample against the contingency of industrial resumption of former residential sites<sup>1</sup> and previous occupation of dwellings then vacant. We have to assume, however, that sites which were vacant in 1898-9 were not occupied at an earlier date and, further, if the site of a house drawn in the sample at 1898-9 were found to be vacant at an earlier 'sample-date', it was deemed to have been vacant at each preceding 'sample-date'. In short, vacant allotments were always regarded as having never been occupied. This notwithstanding, the figures reproduced in the tables at each date are for occupied sites only.

The characteristics of a 'systematic' sample, drawn in the way I have just described, are well-known.<sup>2</sup> Provided there are no 'periodic features' in the list or series from which the sample is drawn - e.g., a city grid in which every tenth house was disposed to be a corner house - the sample may be regarded as adequate.

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1

This was thought most likely to be a problem in Collingwood as it was in Fitzroy (see, for example, evidence of William Pearl before the Standing Committee on Railways 1890, V.P.P., 3/1890, question 662-3).

2

For brief theoretical discussions see Hubert M. Blalock, Social Statistics (1968), pp.397-8 and John Madge, The Tools of Social Science (1953), p.209. For the use of a similar technique upon a similar source within an historical situation see L.L. Robson, The Convict Settlers of Australia (Melbourne, 1965), Appendix I, 'Sampling and Statistics', pp.161-7.

I have no evidence of any such 'periodic feature' in my own sample. It must be emphasized, moreover, that the sample was not drawn with the intention of obtaining a cross-section of a whole metropolitan population. Even the ability to generalize over the population of each suburb I regarded as a less important objective than that of obtaining a reasonable number and variety of types of houses and householders over which to generalize about the relations between them.

It is clear that the sample size (though not its proportionality) diminishes at each preceding 'sample-date'. Thus, both the statistical and human error may be said to increase with each sample date: that for 1898-9 is presumably the most reliable; that for 1878-9 the least reliable. Inferences at the earlier dates have, therefore, to be drawn with rather less confidence than at the latest.

The data furnished by this procedure was recorded and coded on edge-punched cards. These cards, I found, provided the most efficient method of recording and analysing the data consistent with my desire to retain a measure of 'contact' with the raw material. Unlike computer handling - which might have permitted me to draw a larger sample over a greater number of suburbs - this method allowed me to actually 'see' what effect coding was having upon the process of analysis and, more importantly, opened up ways of further pursuing or checking my conclusions.

The most difficult part of the coding procedure was that of devising and employing a relevant classification

of occupations. The problems of designing a consistent and widely-applicable scheme of occupational classification are well-known to sociologists. To the historian, though, the task poses such additional problems that he is tempted to exclaim, with John Rosier a witness before an enquiry into the Factory Act (1901): 'Is not the classification of men a wild theory?'<sup>1</sup> Some of these problems derive from the inaccessibility of his subjects compared to those of the sociologist: he cannot ask his man to explain what he does. He has to determine, as best he can, what a man who calls himself a 'blocker', or simply a 'government employee' actually did. Other problems are posed by radical changes, since the nineteenth century, in the tasks, remuneration and prestige of certain occupations: engine-drivers, clerks and some marginal professions, like dentists for example, are cases in point. The third sort of problem - which is related to it - is that of coping with historical changes within one's period. It may be argued, for example, that a dentist was a professional man in 1893-4 even though he was not in 1883-4. Similarly it could be argued that a bootmaker was an artisan in 1878-9 even though he was not in 1893-4.

These problems are mainly operational rather than fundamental or theoretical ones. In this respect they are unlike the fourth problem which is that of determining the basis and structure of the classification itself in accordance with contemporary perceptions and values. It makes no sense to superimpose a twentieth century

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<sup>1</sup>

V.P.P., 31/1901 Q 568.

occupational scheme upon a nineteenth century social setting. Yet how are we to discover the pictures of the social structure which Melbournians carried in their heads, or chose between the few accounts of them which are left to us? If we took this problem as seriously as it deserves we should probably never arrive at a classification at all.

Of course we are presented with one very elaborate and inclusive system of classification: that of the 'Occupations of the People' in the colonial Census. Yet there are several insuperable objections to its use. It was designed originally for use in English rather than Australian conditions<sup>1</sup> and was merely taken over by the colonial census-takers as a matter of convenience. Its principal feature was that a classification was based upon the material with which the worker was concerned. Thus 'workers in leather' were not separately identified as employers or employees, tanners or bootmakers, workmen or salesmen, foremen or apprentices. In the English situation this scheme may well have reproduced an important feature of social structure. A recent writer, for example, has defended the classification and claims that, in the smaller towns at least, there was 'a feeling that people engaged in making the same kind of thing were the same kind of people'.<sup>2</sup> In Australia, however, the statisticians were becoming increasingly aware of the

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1

See Coghlan's Introduction to 1891 N.S.W. Census, p.270.

2

J.R. Vincent, Pollbooks - How Victorians Voted (London, 1966), p.52.

inappropriateness of the classification to colonial conditions.<sup>1</sup> Coghlan changed the New South Wales scheme for the 1881 Census and by 1890 discontent was so general that the Statisticians held a conference in Hobart to devise a new one. The result was that the 1891 Victorian Census classified persons not only by the material on which they worked but also by their status as employer, self-employed or employee.<sup>2</sup> In short, it merely superimposed the rudiments of a new system of classification upon the old one.

I have been obliged, therefore, to design a system of my own which, while it may be 'reconciled' with the census sub-groupings at most points, owes only a little to the Census classification itself. In devising it, I have given greatest weight to the perceptions of writers (like R.E.N. Twopeny or the authors of guide-books and household manuals) who were most sensitive to differences between occupations which had their root in income or style of life. In short, it is a classification principally designed to assist in testing the kinds of hypotheses thrown up in the discussion at the beginning of chapter 7. It is a necessary consequence of this that other features of occupations (e.g., their place within a system of

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1

Coghlan, especially, was damning: 'The exigencies of this so-called scientific and accurate classification necessitate some very extraordinary grouping, for the most diverse and incongruous classes of workers must frequently be more or less connected with the same materials'. Loc. cit. p.270.

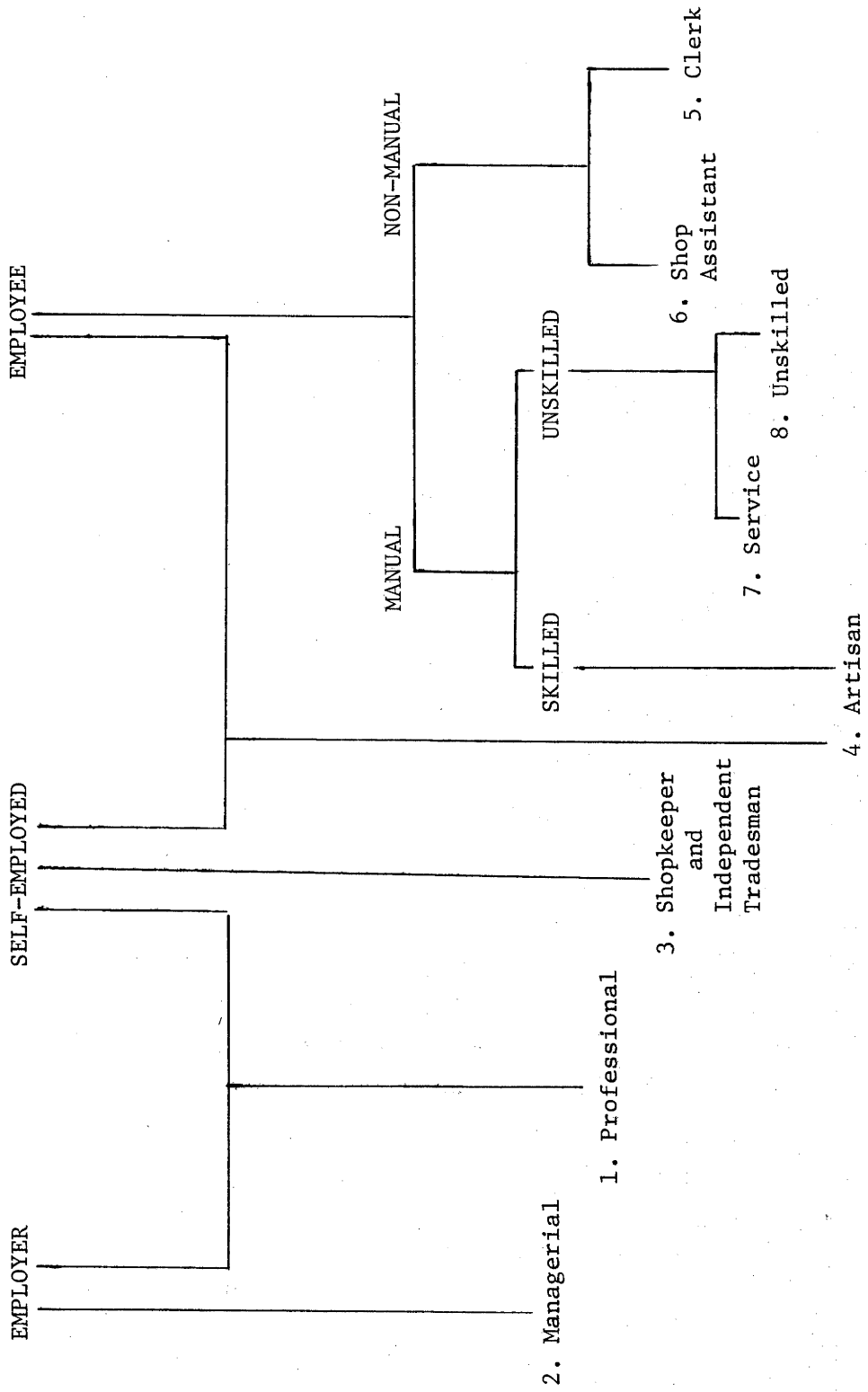
2

Victorian Statistician's Report, 1891, p.191 and table VIII of 'Occupations' (p.75) in the Census Report.

production or within a sectoral division of the economy) have been under-emphasized. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the analysis based on this scheme yielded the most unambiguous results in relation to valuations, while the analysis in terms of occupation and mobility was, at least superficially, more problematic. It must be said, too, that the classification is designed only for a metropolitan population; it excludes many 'rural' or 'provincial' occupations.

FIGURE 2, sets out, in schematic fashion, the classification which was adopted. The lines in the diagram are to be regarded as 'guide lines' only: they suggest the basis for the kinds of distinction involved in the classification and assign certain priorities in allocating particular occupations to the various categories.

FIGURE 2



APPENDIX 3INCOMES

The incomes of professional men varied largely in accordance with their success in establishing a prosperous clientele. With doctors (general practitioners), income was related to the three separate factors: the size and wealth of his private practice, his guaranteed income from 'clubs and appointments to institutions'. Medical agencies advertised practices from £500-£3000, but the mean for most advertised suburban practices (including clubs and appointments) was between £600 and £1000. Government appointments as medical superintendants to Lunatic Asylums usually carried incomes of £500-600; but for these there was no initial expense of 'buying in'.<sup>1</sup> Eminent barristers may have earned as much as a County Court (£1500) or even a Supreme Court judge (£3000). Crown Prosecutors earned £600 and solicitors probably earned little more than £500-800.<sup>2</sup> Of dentists, architects, accountants and engineers it is impossible to say much;

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1

I have used the advertisements for medical practices in the 'Business Partnerships' columns of the Argus. The salaries of government medical officers are listed in the Blue Book in the Government Gazette. Professor Butlin (Australian Domestic Product, Investment and Foreign Borrowing 1861 - 1938/9, Cambridge 1962, p.224) uses these listings as the basis for his series of estimates of professional earnings. Government appointments were less prestigious and probably less remunerative than private practice; to this extent his estimates (average 'specialized' professional earnings 1885=£516) may be on the low side.

2

Blue Book and Twopeny, op. cit., p.45.

their earnings, however, were probably comparable to those of other professional men.

Because it was related to the size and profitability of his investments, the income of a merchant or entrepreneur may have varied within very wide limits. James Balfour, a merchant of some substance, was spending between £4000 and £5000 p.a. in the late 'eighties. H.G. Turner the salaried general manager of a large bank earned £3500. J.W. Hunt, the manager of a building society, drew £1000 in 1885, £1560 in the late 'eighties. Michaelis Hallenstein paid salaries of £750-1000 to the managers of his tannery.<sup>1</sup> These sums may be representative of the general order of variation.

The incomes of shopkeepers, for want of suitable records, simply defy close analysis. Twopeny put small shopkeepers in the £300-400 range and the little additional evidence is consistent with his estimate. Advertisements for small businesses occasionally quoted the supposed annual or weekly profits or, more usually, the weekly takings. A yield of 20 per cent profit<sup>2</sup> on takings was regarded as a good average. In fact, most advertised takings, reckoned on this basis, would have yielded profits in the £300-600 range with a few large grocers and drapers

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1

James Balfour Statement of Income in Ledgers 1890 (loose notes) in Papers.; H.G. Turner Memorabilia, p.111; Modern Permanent Building Society Minutes of Directors; Robert Michaelis to Edward Michaelis, 8 September 1891, p.95, Michaelis Hallenstein Letterbook 36/10/1 (A.N.U. Archives).

2

'Profit' is undefined but presumably means 'net profit' - profit after deduction of wages, rents, taxes etc. Retail margins, according to Butlin (op.cit., p. 204) were about 25-30 per cent.

above (up to £1000) and some small fancy-goods and confectionary shops - presumably run by women - rather less (£150-200). There was probably some exaggeration in advertisements and, since many shopkeepers borrowed heavily to set up in business, these estimates probably give an inflated impression of their disposable incomes. Perhaps the best that can be said is that, at the top, shopkeepers may have earned as much as some in the managerial and professional groups; at the bottom, little more than artisans.

The incomes of artisans were more closely related to standard rates. Skilled adult tradesmen in the building or metals and engineering industries were paid on a scale from £130 to £180 in 1885; overtime may have boosted their incomes to £200 or more. Many factory-workers were on piece rates; the incomes of male operatives in the boot and clothing industries, for example, varied from 30/- to £3.10.0.<sup>1</sup> It was more common for wives and older unmarried children in this class to work; family income may therefore have exceeded the husband's wage by £50 or £100. (Most women's employment brought no more than £50-75; 'apprentices' began on as little as 5/- a week). Unless he became a foreman or an independent tradesman, the artisan could not expect his wages to rise as he became older.

Clerks, on the other hand, expected - or at least hoped - that their salaries would rise as they accumulated experience and proficiency. Nevertheless the great bulk of

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<sup>1</sup> Victorian Yearbook 1885-6, Victorian Statistical Register 1885, Evidence, Royal Commission on the Tariff [R.C.T.], V.P.P. 50/1883, Qs 2515, 2596, 3463, 7762, 8136, 8493, 11576.

of clerks - whether in government or private employment - were in the lower echelons. Salaries in the civil service were discussed in Chapter 5. Table A3 (below) reproduces the approximate salary levels in private employment.

Table A3. Clerical Salaries (c 1885)<sup>1</sup>

	£ p.a.
Manager	500 - 1000
Secretary	
Accountant	300 - 400
[Cashier]	
Head Clerk	200 - 300
Junior Clerk	75 - 150
Messenger	50 - 100

1

Hoffman Brick Company, Minutes of Directors 1885 (M.U. Archives) Swallow and Ariell - Notebook of Staff Salaries 1887 (M.U. Archives) Modern Permanent Building Society, Minutes of Directors 1885 (A.N.U. Archives) also see, for banks, S.J. Butlin - Australia and New Zealand Bank (Melb. 1961) pp.260-2. The only direct evidence on the relative proportions of persons in the various salary ranges is contained in 'Salaries of Permanent Professional and Clerical Officers in Banks of Issue, Insurance Offices and Wool Warehouses, 1894-5' in Statistical Register of Victoria 1894 'Interchange' p.245.

Salary	Proportion of officers at each Salary			Average Salary		
	Banks	Insurance Officers	Wool Warehouses	B.	I.O.	W.W.
£1000+	2	3	3	1859	1287	1650
£500-1000	4	3	10	645	604	590
£300-500	15	7	12	351	357	350
£150-300	34	32	32	198	192	192
under £150	45	55	43	88	107	65
Total	100	100	100	219	202	242

When Twopeny placed clerks in the £300-400 group, he was taking an optimistic view of their condition; the majority was certainly earning salaries of less than £300. They were bound to dress respectably and it was improper for a clerk to undertake work other than his regular employment or to send his wife out to work. There was substance in the recurrent complaint that they were worse off than artisans; nevertheless such 'genteel employments' continued to attract disproportionate numbers of applicants.<sup>1</sup>

The wages of shop assistants were similarly proportioned. Those in 'genteel' departments - such as drapers' assistants - might earn from £125 to £200 per annum; butchers and bakers earned from £100-150. Women shop assistants received from £60-120. Until the early closing movement achieved its objects in 1884, shop employees probably worked longer hours under more trying conditions than any other class of 'respectable' employees. Transport workers seem to have earned wages somewhere between those of a labourer and those of a skilled artisan. Bus drivers, for example, earned £90 to £120 according to experience. Train drivers, on the other hand, had rather greater prestige and income.<sup>2</sup>

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1

Twopeny, op.cit., p.46. On the appeal of 'genteel employments' see evidence of John Hindle, draper to Royal Commission on Shop Employees, V.P.P. 16\*/1884, Q's 170-2. 'I have noticed that in all businesses that require a certain amount of elegance in dress, and manner, and gentility, the supply is always greater than the demand....'

2

On shop assistants see Statistical Register of Victoria and Royal Commission on Shop Employees, loc.cit., Q's 112,431. On transport workers see evidence of Sprigg, *ibid.*, 2960.

The lowest rung on the income ladder was occupied by labourers, lumpers and other casually-employed, unskilled manual labourers. The general labourer's rate in 1885 yielded an income of only about £75-90, even with constant employment. And that, of course, could not be assumed.<sup>1</sup>

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I

The income figures above are standardized on a yearly basis to facilitate comparisons. It is important, however, to recognize that the conventional forms of presenting income figures - as hourly or daily rates (labourers and most artisans), as piece-rates (factory workers), as weekly wages (shop assistants, transport-workers, better-paid artisans) or as yearly salaries (clerks, managers, professional men) - do indicate something of their relative continuity of employment and of the pay period in the various occupations. It is broadly true that the higher the individual's earnings - and this seems to apply within occupational groups as well as between them - the more constant and secure his employment and the more likely he was to receive payment on a long term basis.

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