

ALEXANDER IRELAND (1810-1894):  
A MIDDLEMAN OF LETTERS IN THE  
CULTURAL LIFE OF NINETEENTH  
CENTURY MANCHESTER

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Thesis submitted for the degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy

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June 1987



## **ETHOS**

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Alexander Ireland (1810-1894): a middleman of letters in the cultural life of nineteenth century Manchester

Summary

This study attempts to assess the contribution made by Alexander Ireland to the cultural life of nineteenth century Manchester. With relatively little formal education but extensive literary interests, he saw a role for himself in enhancing educational opportunities for others by means of both systematic provision and self-help. His early life was spent in Edinburgh, where a number of friendships and influences fostered his interests. The reorienting spirit of phrenology and of his Unitarian upbringing helped to fashion his own sense of purpose.

His mature years and his business career were spent in Manchester. For almost forty years he was managing director and co-proprietor of the Manchester Examiner and Times. For several decades this newspaper was a serious rival to the Manchester Guardian. During his first decade in Manchester, Ireland was also a director of the Athenaeum, a prime mover in the initially local campaign for secular education, and a member of the committee which founded the Free Reference Library. He was therefore at the centre of the city's cultural life.

Ireland's foremost interests were in literature. He formed an early enthusiasm for the works of Hazlitt, Hunt and Lamb. He was particularly influenced by the writings of Carlyle and Emerson, both of whom he knew. He developed an extensive knowledge of contemporary North American writing and came to know some of its authors. This absorption in the world of letters was complemented by his assiduity as a book-collector and bibliographer. His modest output as a writer was directed towards introducing literature to a less knowledgeable audience. In later life he came to be regarded as something of an elder statesman within the Manchester Literary Club. Despite these literary interests, he engaged in publishing only in a minor way and was unable to compensate for the ultimate decline of his newspaper.

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Bibliography

Alexander Ireland's life, 1810-1894

Alexander Ireland's life

Alexander Ireland was born in Edinburgh on 9 May 1810. He was the only son of Thomas Ireland, a textile commission agent, and had two sisters, Mary (born in May 1808) and Elizabeth (in November 1811). Thomas Ireland's family roots were in Fifeshire. In a letter of 25 June 1891 to Rev. A.H. Davidson, Ireland recalled that "My father's relations were for many generations lairds of Bannaty, near Edenshead between Milnathort and Auchtermuchty. My father received his education at Perth Academy and afterwards became a merchant in Edinburgh".<sup>1</sup> It seems probable, judging from entries in the Edinburgh directories, that Thomas Ireland moved to Edinburgh towards the end of the eighteenth century, in the hope of capitalising on the growth of the textile trade by wholesaling woven goods from the small factories and individual craftsmen of his native county via his office on South Bridge,<sup>2</sup> at the centre of the Edinburgh commercial community in the Old Town. During Alexander's childhood the family lived at 2 Buccleuch Place, in the suburb which had developed in the previous few decades to the south of the city wall at the Bristo Port entrance. With the exception of the George Square buildings in the immediate vicinity of the University, the housing in this area was not on such an opulent scale as that which was appearing during the same period in the New Town, but was occupied by a lower stratum of the business community which either could not afford, or did not wish, to move farther away from the centre of affairs in the Old Town.

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<sup>1</sup>Letter published in an unidentified newspaper, probably as a supplement to an obituary for Ireland (information provided by Rev. A.M. Hill, Secretary to the Unitarian Historical Society).

<sup>2</sup>From 1812 until 1823 at 46 South Bridge; from 1824 until 1843 at No.37. In the 1839 Directory only the premises were referred to as the Ayrshire warehouse, possibly anticipating the opening of the Glasgow-Ardrossan railway in 1840, which opened up a shorter sea-journey for trade with Liverpool, Lancashire and the Midlands.

The Irelands were a Unitarian family, associating with the congregation which, at that period, met in rented accommodation in the Skinners' Hall in Canongate and subsequently acquired its own chapel (St. Mark's) in Castle Terrace, of which Thomas Ireland was a trustee. It will be argued later that the influence of Unitarian tradition and the contacts which this association brought him played a significant part in Ireland's own education and in his earnestness to extend educational provision. The early years of Alexander's life were evidently relatively prosperous for the family and he was able to enrol as a pupil at the Edinburgh High School in 1820.

At that time the High School was situated at the end of Infirmary Street, off the east side of South Bridge, close to Thomas Ireland's office and not far from the family home in Buccleuch Place. A sixteenth-century foundation, the High School was by virtue of its location the largest school in Scotland at this period, attracting pupils from much farther afield than Edinburgh itself; partly in response to increasing class sizes, the monitorial system was introduced during the period 1810-20. To judge from the accounts of other High School pupils in Ireland's (and earlier) generations, it seems unlikely that the school regimen itself could have imparted the love of literature which was to become so important a part of his life. Sir Walter Scott, George Combe and Lord Cockburn all complain of the restricted diet of classical language and literature, taught without enthusiasm and with a severe, often brutal, discipline. Lord Brougham, another former pupil, speaking in Edinburgh in April 1825, shortly before the commencement of the new High School building by Thomas Hamilton in Regent Terrace, praised "liberal Scottish education" in general and the High School in particular (in preference to the newer rival Edinburgh Academy, founded in 1824) for having a "system so well adapted for training up good citizens, as well as

learned and virtuous men". It was several decades, however, before the High School, in the face of competition from more enlightened and pragmatic institutions, began to widen and co-ordinate its curriculum. French was not introduced until 1834, German in 1845 and Natural History and Chemistry in 1849. Although the curriculum was traditionally classical and discipline harsh, the five years which Ireland spent at the High School certainly would have given him the habit of study and at least some opportunity to develop an appetite for learning. Ireland did in due course begin the chronological sequence of his Book-Lover's Enchiridion (1882) with ten extracts from classical authors. Much more generally, from his youth onwards Ireland was to pursue an extensive self-education, of which the wide-ranging anthology of the Enchiridion was one of the eventual fruits.

As a burgh school with a good reputation the High School's population was varied, reflecting the social diversity still present in the Old Town during Ireland's childhood. In an 1892 reminiscence he listed as a point of some pride several contemporaries who subsequently achieved some eminence in the Scottish legal and medical professions or in the clergy. The only individual from this period with whom he maintained a lasting friendship, however, was Robert Cox (1810-1872). A decade or so after their schooldays, assuming a more independent existence, Ireland recalls that they would hold conversazione with mutual friends and, for relaxation, walk across the Pentland Hills to favourite haunts in the countryside south of Edinburgh. They shared an interest in local philanthropic initiatives and actively pursued a study of phrenology, a plausible pseudo-science which exercised a considerable fascination for many of Ireland's generation, containing within itself, as it did, seeds for potential educational and social reforms. Ireland's activities within the Edinburgh Phrenological Society will be detailed in their place

and the significance of this influence in his work for educational reform will be discussed in Chapter 3.

To his regret, however, Ireland found himself obliged to leave the High School after five years. He recalled that it had been his father's intention to allow him to continue his education for a further two years at the School, then at Edinburgh University, and that he himself would have welcomed such an opportunity. In 1824, however, the family and its textile commission business were seriously disrupted by financial difficulties. The immediate implications for Alexander Ireland of this change in family circumstances are summarised in an autobiographical sketch many years later: "I was deprived of an academic training by my father's misfortunes, which caused me to go into business occupations at the age of 15".<sup>3</sup>

It is not clear how far these difficulties arose from inept management and how far they were due to more general economic vicissitudes, culminating in the slump of 1825. Following the restraints imposed on industrial and commercial expansion by the Napoleonic Wars, a gradual recovery became in 1823-4 a pronounced upsurge in trade. This made unprecedented demands on the supplies of imported raw materials such as cotton, led to rash speculation on anticipated sales and forced up the price of such commodities. The increase in sales did not continue and financial difficulties spread through the chain of suppliers, shippers, manufacturers, commission agents (such as Thomas Ireland) and dependent commercial interests. Cotton manufacturers in Scotland relied extensively on the production of fancy goods and, lacking diversification, were particularly vulnerable in a general stagnation of trade. When, in the

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<sup>3</sup> A private letter to a Manchester Guardian correspondent written in 1892 and subsequently published as part of an obituary notice by J.B.Greenwood, of the Manchester Literary Club, in the Guardian of 3 January 1895.

course of 1825, the trade expansion of the previous two years declined, there was sufficient structural weakness in many parts of the business community to precipitate numerous bankruptcies, of trading concerns and banks alike. Elsewhere in Edinburgh the related bankruptcies of Sir Walter Scott, Archibald Constable (his publisher) and James Ballantyne (Constable's printer), together with that of the London firm of Hurst and Robinson (Ballantyne's paper suppliers), came to light in the autumn of 1825 and the early part of 1826. John Gibson Lockhart, recounting these affairs in his biography of Scott, refers to "the commercial excitement of the time" following "several years of extravagant speculation".

Whatever the immediate cause of Thomas Ireland's own financial difficulties, he moved his business premises from 46 to 37 South Bridge in 1824 and his family's home from Buccleuch Place, where they had lived since 1808, through a succession of short periods of residence in less attractive streets nearer to the centre of the Old Town. The Edinburgh directories for this period give the following addresses for Thomas Ireland.

1808-23	2 Buccleuch Place
1824-25	35 Lothian Street
1826	21 Lothian Street
1827	7 Brighton Street
1828-29	118 Lauriston
1830	106 Lauriston
1831-36	74 Lauriston Place

These residences would, of course, have been in "lands", the multi-storey houses in the Old Town in which a family would often occupy several rooms on one floor, depending on their means. Clearly this reversal in the family's fortunes at this particular juncture would have been a chastening experience for Alexander Ireland. However, he had sufficient spirit and determination, and the advantage of a number of beneficent influences, to turn the period immediately ahead into a formative experience of self-improvement.

Prevented from consolidating his formal education, Ireland was keen to pursue his nascent literary and intellectual interests by means of

whatever limited opportunities he could grasp. He read as widely as he could in such leisure time as he had. It seems reasonable to assume that his uncle, Richard Ireland, a bookseller in the Old Town, whom Alexander described as "a reading, thoughtful man", would have encouraged his nephew's self-education, no doubt loaning books from time to time. In some cases Ireland went to the length of transcribing a whole book, which he could not otherwise acquire; he particularly recollected making his own copy of Rev. Gilbert White's Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne (1789) and valuing the book the more so because of the labour he had expended in compiling it. Occasionally he would attend lectures at the University, which was close to his father's business premises and his uncle's bookshop. Another notable influence on Alexander Ireland in this process of self-help was Thomas Campbell (1774-1844), who enjoyed considerable fame as a poet in Edinburgh at the turn of the century, chiefly on account of his first major work "The Pleasures of Hope" (1799). Here, too, there was a family connection. As a young man Campbell had proposed marriage to Mary Keddie, who subsequently became Thomas Ireland's wife. In a paper of personal reminiscences of Campbell (Papers of the Manchester Literary Club, Vol. XIX, 1893), Ireland revealed that Campbell's early poem "On being accused of flattery" was dedicated to Mary Keddie (for whom the pseudonym Mary Kenny was used). Despite being rejected, Campbell remained a close friend of the family. He corresponded with Mrs Ireland from time to time, particularly during his sisters' illness and his own absence in London, when she was evidently of practical help to his family. In letters to her of 13 October 1836 and 31 August 1837 he also refers affectionately to Alexander Ireland. It may well be imagined that the benevolent interest of an established poet such as Campbell would have helped to foster Ireland's own enthusiasm for literature.

A distinctive feature of the Edinburgh literary scene in this period, and one which must have played its part in broadening Ireland's horizons,

was periodical journalism, and literary criticism in particular. Two quarterly periodicals, the Whig Edinburgh Review, founded in 1802, and the Tory Blackwood's Magazine, in 1817, immediately attained and subsequently maintained a quality of writing not found elsewhere in Edinburgh journalism and with few counterparts in London. Although it is unlikely that Ireland was able to afford his own copies of these periodicals until some years later, it is probable that he did have access to copies and so could assimilate the literary and political controversies which attracted so much attention, as well as the more scholarly contributions. It may even be that his first encounter with William Hazlitt, whose writings he came to admire so much, was the essayist's final four contributions to the Edinburgh Review in October 1829 and January and April 1830.<sup>4</sup> The Review's criticism had from the outset been forthright and well-informed, though frequently contentious, while its political writing propounded a liberal, pro-reform view, sceptical of the generally accepted autocracy of British politics. The Review generally, though by no means uncritically, upheld the work of established writers from the Elizabethan dramatists to the Augustan satirists. Francis Jeffrey (1773-1850), its co-founder and editor from 1803 to 1829, had little sympathy for the introspection which characterised the work of contemporary poets such as Wordsworth and Coleridge and felt that much of Byron's poetry lacked elegance. He acknowledged some partiality, however, for Burns and Scott, praised Crabbe and entertained some hopes of Thomas Campbell. By the time Blackwood's Magazine was

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<sup>4</sup> October 1829, "American Literature - Dr. Channing" and  
 "Flaxman's Lectures on Sculpture"  
 January 1830, "Wilson's Life and Times of Defoe"  
 April 1830 "Mr. Godwin" (a review of Godwin's novel  
Cloudesley (1830))

founded, critical writing had become more vituperative and even ostensibly literary reviews often had a political undertone. Blackwood's Magazine, under the direction of William Blackwood (1776-1834), used more personal invective in its criticism and this, by virtue of the periodical's reactionary *raison d'être*, usually took a rather different view of contemporary writers. Those writers and poets whom its principal contributor, John Gibson Lockhart (1794-1854), identified as the "Cockney School" - Leigh Hunt, Hazlitt, Keats - were accorded "sheer and instant contempt". Coleridge was attacked; Shelley and Byron aroused irritation at what was felt to be a misuse of their talents; while for Wordsworth there was cautious approval. There is nothing in Ireland's own writings to suggest that he had any predilection for satire or that he relished such aggressive journalism; yet the range and vitality of these two Edinburgh periodicals would certainly have provided an illuminating dimension in his explorations in literature.

The dominant literary figure in the city during the early nineteenth century was, of course, Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832). In a letter of 20 November 1890 to William Ewart Gladstone, Ireland recalled that

"In my boyhood and youth I was an eager  
devourer of the Waverley Novels."

and that, when Scott's authorship of the series was finally confirmed in February 1827,

"Great was the excitement in Edinburgh the  
following day. Nothing else was talked of,  
and every newspaper in Europe and America  
speedily reported the memorable event...."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Gladstone Papers, 44511, f.166. Ireland had evidently sent a copy of his William Hazlitt: Essayist and Critic (1889) some months earlier and had received an approving acknowledgement from the Liberal leader. Ireland was now taking the liberty of sending Gladstone a copy of an article which he had recently provided for the Manchester Guardian - "A Glimpse of Sir Walter Scott in 1829".

What Ireland's evidence was for the interest of European and American newspapers he does not explain. Ireland's "glimpse" was during the summer of 1829, at the age of 19, when he took advantage of an opportunity to visit Abbotsford, Scott's country house near Galashiels, on the assumption that Scott himself was absent at the Court of Sessions in Edinburgh. To his surprise and delight he met Scott at the house, and was able to converse with him and view the surroundings. In the same letter to Gladstone, Ireland recollects that, "So early as 1825" he was in the habit of calling in at the Court of Sessions on the High Street, where Scott was a clerk of the court, partly to observe the proceedings but partly also, "Fresh from reading one of his stories", out of a keen curiosity to see Scott. These occasions, allied to his leisure-time reading, clearly made a lasting impression on the young Ireland.

In working, no doubt fairly menially in the early years, for his father's textile commission agency, Ireland evidently had relatively little time for any such pursuits, but it is clear that he used this limited time systematically, recognising from the outset that such discipline was necessary if he were to improve himself. This was the means by which he acquired the wide knowledge of literature on which he drew, and which he continued to augment, throughout his life - in his own writings, in speeches, in correspondence and in innumerable conversations with friends and acquaintances who shared at least some of his literary interests. Equally, the high estimation which he placed on the benefits derived from this persistent study in difficult circumstances was to inform his own subsequent activities in the provision of municipal libraries, and was a moral which he repeatedly recommended in old age. As guest of honour at a Christmas Symposium of the Manchester Literary Club on 15 December 1884, he recollected that in his youth

"the less leisure I had, the more I treasured what little came to me, the more concentrated was my enjoyment of it, and the more I tried to extract from it . . . it is my belief that I made a better use of these short intervals of leisure than if they had been longer".<sup>6</sup>

Here Ireland was, probably knowingly, echoing a sentiment of Hazlitt's in the portrait of "Mr. Brougham" (later Lord Brougham) in The Spirit of the Age (1825), commending his subject's assiduity and wide range of accomplishments:

"Those who complain of the shortness of life, let it slide by them without wishing to seize and make the most of its golden minutes. The more we do, the more we can do; the more busy we are, the more leisure we have."

In his December 1884 address Ireland, still reflecting on the decade from 1825 when most of his time would have been taken up by clerical work, spoke with obvious contentment of the

". . . compensation in the secret delight of looking forward with assured certainty to the hours of uninterrupted leisure which are awaiting you when the week's work is over. Such hours often become the most rich and fruitful in our lives. And so it was in my case".

Ireland would certainly have noticed, and endorsed, a re-statement of his axiom in Geraldine Jewsbury's novel Marian Withers (1851), which, as literary editor, he undertook to serialise in the Manchester Examiner and Times' Saturday supplement during 1850. The estimable Mr. Cunningham, who represents a middle ground of good sense between the effete gentry at Carrisford Manor and the mean-spirited, self-made cotton merchant, Mr. Higginbottom, observes to the young heroine that

"All noble spirits are tormented with . . . remorse for their shortcomings, which inspires them, however, with an heroic parsimony for each instant . . ."

Although Cunningham was recommending a more general application to tedious and apparently profitless duties, he does go on to encourage Marian to use her 'intervals of leisure' to extend her reading in a variety of fields.

In a later paper for the Manchester Literary Club ("Books for General Readers", Manchester Literary Club Papers, Vol. XIII, 1887), Ireland attempted to provide some guidance on reading, together with a lengthy and varied list of suggested authors and titles, for those who had received a limited education and wished to extend their knowledge and understanding. He could, of course, speak from personal experience on the circumstances and needs of this class of readers since he had once been within it.

"There are thousands following these various employments ("trade and manufactures"), with tastes and aspirations above their often uncongenial and monotonous surroundings. desirous of improving their minds in their leisure hours, and with earnest longings after knowledge."

Although Ireland's list of suggestions included histories, scientific speculations and topographical works, and his advice was for a varied diet, he recognised, from his own self-education, the particular value of fiction for the inexperienced reader, pursuing a course of study with difficulty.

"To those engaged all day in dull and wearisome work, and whose surroundings it is not in their power to vary, nothing is so refreshing in the leisure evening hours as wholesome works of imagination. The mind becomes interested in such reading and is not tasked by it....This power of detachment gradually, but surely, exercises a refining influence, and strengthens the feeling of self-dependence."

This, then, was the perspective which Ireland gained, complementing a growing love of literature, from his exploratory reading in the regimen of study which he constructed for himself during his youth and early manhood.

All of Alexander Ireland's major interests throughout his later life in and around Manchester can be traced in influences and opportunities present during his early years in Edinburgh. Foremost

among these was his long acquaintance with Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882). In 1833 Emerson was travelling in Europe as part of his convalescence after illness during the previous autumn, following his resignation as minister of the Second Unitarian Church in Boston and the death of his first wife. At that period he had not, of course, commenced what was to be his prolific work as writer and lecturer and would have been unknown in Britain. It was after several months of travelling in Italy, France and England, paying visits to men of letters (Landor in Florence, Coleridge in London, and later Carlyle and Wordsworth), that Emerson reached Edinburgh in August 1833.

It was natural that his itinerary should include Edinburgh. A combination of historical, geographical and cultural factors ensured that the city had retained some of the magnetism of a capital. The civic and intellectual activity in Edinburgh in the early nineteenth century, the city's place at the centre of Scottish life and its setting, all helped to sustain a popular, sentimental, humorous but proud comparison with Athens. The ambitious architectural developments of the New Town were stimulated in part by the wish to regain some elements of its former role as a capital city. Henry Cockburn claimed that

".... there was diffused the influence of a greater number of persons attached to literature and science, some as their calling, and some for pleasure, than could be found, in proportion to the population, in any other city in the empire."<sup>7</sup>

Lockhart, writing in 1819, described Edinburgh as "a great mart of Literature."<sup>8</sup>

Ireland heard Emerson preach at the Unitarian Chapel in Young Street, in the New Town, on Sunday 18 August and was immediately

<sup>7</sup>Cockburn, Life of Lord Jeffrey, (1852)

<sup>8</sup>Lockhart, Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk, (1819) Letter XLII

impressed by the

"originality of his thoughts, the consummate beauty of the language in which they were clothed, and the dignity of his bearing, the absence of all oratorical effort, and the singular directness and simplicity of his manner, free from the least shadow of dogmatic assumption".

By a fortunate coincidence Ireland was able to act as Emerson's guide around Edinburgh during the following two days. Emerson's host, Dr. John Gairdner (1790-1876), an Edinburgh surgeon and a member of the Town Council, was too busy to conduct his visitor on the expected tour of the city. Gairdner was secretary to the Young Street congregation from 1815 until 1844 and so would have been well acquainted with the Irelands. It seems probable that Gairdner, knowing of his visitor's interests and also of the young Alexander Ireland's enthusiasm for learning, arranged that he should accompany Emerson around Edinburgh. This opportunity for discussion with Emerson "on many subjects connected with life, society and literature" was to be the basis of their long friendship and to have a profound influence on Ireland's personal philosophy. Ireland recalled the American's

"affluence of thought and fulness of knowledge which surprised and delighted me. I had never before met with any one of so fine and varied a culture and with such frank sincerity of speech."

Ireland acknowledged that the diary he kept of this occasion was "written in a strain of youthful, enthusiastic admiration."<sup>11</sup>

It is possible that Ireland also assisted Emerson in locating the whereabouts of Thomas Carlyle, whom Emerson wished to visit. Julian Hawthorne, in Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife (1862), asserted that "Mr. Ireland...directed him (Emerson) how to find Carlyle". Ireland's

<sup>9</sup> Ireland, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1882), p.141

<sup>10</sup> Ireland, *ibid*, p.142

<sup>11</sup> Ireland, *ibid*, p.143

own account of the arrangements prior to the historic meeting at Craigenputtock on 25 August was merely that the necessary information was obtained from the Secretary of Edinburgh University. It seems unlikely that Ireland would have omitted such a significant detail from his reminiscences of this exciting week.

It was also during this period, probably early in the 1830s, that Ireland became interested in phrenology and came to know George Combe (1788-1858), founder of the Edinburgh Phrenological Society and the uncle of Robert Cox, Ireland's close friend. Combe was the pioneering figure in Britain of the early nineteenth century interest in the entirely inferential 'science' of phrenology. Eccentric as it may appear with hindsight and promptly as it was dismissed by sceptics at the time, including many in the Edinburgh Medical School, phrenology can be seen as a hybrid from developments in the study of anatomy and in rationalist philosophy. Its rational method and apparent empirical plausibility, in the study, dissection and analysis of skulls, and the elaboration of moral, educational, social and physiological tenets on this basis, gained considerable support among professional men during the 1820s and 1830s. The Edinburgh Phrenological Society appears to have been one of the strongest and most active during these decades. Robert Mudie, in his critical and often humorous survey of contemporary Edinburgh, The Modern Athens: a Dissection and Demonstration of Men and Things in the Scotch Capital (1825), indirectly acknowledged the influence of phrenology in Edinburgh by observing that

"...the best system that ever came into general practice and belief, has proved to be that of the skull-men - a system which, though the Athenians gainsayed it a little at the outset, they have subsequently fallen deeper into than any other people upon the earth or moon..."

The Society held regular meetings and demonstrations, issued a quarterly Journal and Miscellany and had its own small museum. Robert Cox, who frequently delivered papers at the Society's meetings, was its Secretary from 1829 until 1836 and again from 1841 until 1847. For most of that time he also edited its Journal and was curator of the museum. Together with other young disciples of Combe, Cox founded the Edinburgh Ethical Society in November 1833 and was joint President until October 1836; Alexander Ireland was a member of the Society's Council. This Society met weekly in the University to discuss wider philosophical questions than the somewhat narrow physiological concerns of the parent Phrenological Society. Ireland himself delivered an "Essay on free enquiry" at a meeting on 3 February 1834.<sup>12</sup>

Given the widespread scepticism surrounding phrenology, however, there were many sympathisers who were not prepared to declare their adherence so openly as Ireland and Cox. Such individuals found it easier to identify with the various reforming and philanthropic initiatives of the period, some of which had been prompted by the phrenologists themselves. George Combe's lectures on phrenology during May-July 1832 in Edinburgh, to an audience of clerks and skilled artisans, led to the formation of the Association for Procuring Instruction in Useful and Entertaining Science. In his detailed study of the phrenological movement, Conquest of Mind (1975), de Giustino suggests that "there were probably more phrenologists (of varying degrees of devotion) in the Association.... than in the Phrenological Society itself". Ireland was active in this Association which, through its lectures, attempted to instil an awareness of health and sanitation problems, to provide elementary instruction in book-keeping, on the one hand, and in moral philosophy, on the other, and to encourage

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<sup>12</sup>The Phrenological Society Journal included outline reports of the Ethical Society's activities, but does not give the text of Ireland's paper.

provision for female education. Henry Cockburn described the venture as "a sort of popular unendowed college".<sup>13</sup> The Association pressed its case for social reforms with sympathisers in Lord Melbourne's Whig administration of the late 1830s and Ireland was evidently one of the activists in this enterprise. In his letter of 13 October 1836 to Ireland's mother, Thomas Campbell enclosed a letter which he had recently received from Lord Brougham, "because I know it will please you, as containing honourable mention of one who is dear to you". Brougham, who may well have known Campbell in Edinburgh at the turn of the century and who was associated with him in the foundation of University College, London in the late 1820s, had observed to Campbell that

"I wish you had been here when the Edinburgh deputation came t'other day. I never saw better men; but they were strangers to me, and one of them, Mr. Ireland, is, it seems, a friend of yours. We were exceedingly pleased with him".<sup>14</sup>

In what was presumably Alexander Ireland's first visit to London, he clearly made a good impression in the pursuit of his philanthropic work.

In Edinburgh, too, his circle of friends and acquaintances was widening. In the mid-1830s he came to know the Chambers brothers, William (1800-1883) and Robert (1802-1871). It seems probable that he made their acquaintance via his uncle, Richard Ireland. It is reasonable to suppose that, as booksellers during the 1820s, the brothers would have known Richard Ireland from the regular evening book auctions held for the trade in the Old Town.<sup>15</sup> Alexander recalled that he visited Robert

<sup>13</sup>Cockburn, Journal, 1831-1854, Vol.I, (1854)

<sup>14</sup>Beattie, Life and Letters of Thomas Campbell (1850)

<sup>15</sup>William Chambers quoting from his brother's journal regarding booksellers in the Old Town: "...there were likewise some attractive establishments of this kind near the College and High School, with which I had early become acquainted." (Memoir of Robert Chambers with Autobiographic Reminiscences of William Chambers, (1872)). Richard Ireland's bookshop during this period was at 59 South Bridge, "opposite the College Gate", according to Alexander Ireland.

Chambers' house frequently during this period. Reflecting in old age, he felt that Robert had been "the dearest, kindest and best friend I ever had".<sup>16</sup> In his own autobiography (The Story of a long and busy Life (1882), William Chambers' recollection of Ireland was that

"Robert Cox, my brother Robert, and he, formed a trio of congenial tastes and sentiments. Ireland was an exquisite player on the German flute, and I had him often at my evening parties, when he obligingly helped to entertain the company with his instrument. His playing of some of the Scottish airs was particularly excellent."

The Chambers family had moved to Edinburgh from the Lowlands in 1813 and the brothers' early years followed a similar course to Ireland's own. Their father pursued a textile commission business which was progressively less able to support the family. In consequence Robert Chambers had to be removed from school, when the intention had been that he should proceed to university. William himself recalled that during this period he "had read all that could be read for nothing at the booksellers' windows, and at the stalls which were stuck about the College and High School Wynds."<sup>17</sup>

Robert Chambers had established himself as a bookseller in Leith Walk in 1818 and the brothers had progressed from modest enterprises in bookselling, printing and publishing to a prosperous business in these fields. Over several decades they successfully presented a range of factual information in an accessible, often serialised, form for a new class of readers with little formal education. The most notable of these productions was Chambers' Edinburgh Journal ((1832-53), issued thereafter as Chambers' Journal (1854-1956)). Ireland could attest from personal experience that they had provided "a cheaper, and better, and wholesomer

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<sup>16</sup> Ireland's 1892 letter, published in J.B. Greenwood's obituary, op.cit.

<sup>17</sup> W. Chambers, Memoir of Robert Chambers with Autobiographic Reminiscences of William Chambers (1872)

literature than was then procurable."<sup>18</sup> The combination of acumen and altruism in the Chambers' publishing concern could hardly have failed to attract the young Ireland. His knowledge of their experience, moreover, must have been of value to him when he subsequently took the opportunity to move into the newspaper trade.

Ireland recalled that on his frequent visits to Robert Chambers, he "met there many bright spirits". Among these were John Hill Burton (1809-1881), the historian, and William Tait (1793-1864), founder of Tait's Edinburgh Magazine (1832-61). Tait was also a bookseller; Burton contributed to the Edinburgh Review and later to Blackwood's Magazine, and was involved in the Scottish activities of the Anti-Corn Law League during the late 1830s. The Chambers' circle was thus an important influence in Ireland's early manhood, as he extended his education and developed ideas and ambitions. Ireland himself never underestimated the value of these friendships and much later in life recorded his gratitude to

"one or two men, a few years ahead of me in age, possessing remarkable gifts, intellectual and moral - men of cultivated and refined tastes, and wide sympathies from whose company I never retired without feeling that the better part of my own nature was stimulated, my views on all subjects widened and enlarged, and my inner and outer world made brighter by the contact. These friendships exercised an abiding influence upon me, caused me more patiently to endure what was hard and uncongenial in my lot."<sup>19</sup>

Another of the "bright spirits" whom Ireland came to know at Robert Chambers' gatherings was William Ballantyne Hodgson (1815-1880). Ireland formed an enduring friendship with Hodgson, and their shared concern for

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<sup>18</sup> Ireland, Cheap Literature and The Love of Reading (1882), based on his speech at a Leicester Mercury dinner.

<sup>19</sup> Ireland, Address to Manchester Literary Club, 15 December 1884 (Papers, Vol. XI, 1885)

educational reform was to bring them together later when both were working in Manchester. Hodgson's career, in fact, lay entirely in the field of education. He was a successful Secretary of the Liverpool Mechanics' Institute and launched the Institute's day schools. He actively promoted a broader curriculum and more enlightened teaching methods, implementing these in a school which he founded in Manchester (Chorlton High School). He was heavily engaged in the network of mechanics' institutes and ultimately became Professor of Political Economy at Edinburgh University in 1871. Hodgson's childhood had been unhappy and his letters make it clear that from the outset he felt able to regard Ireland as an elder brother. This was a bond which was reinforced by their common interests and their leisure time, spent walking on the Pentlands with Cox and Robert Chambers.

In 1839 Ireland married Eliza Mary Blyth. A letter of Hodgson's (18 June) provides the only contemporary reference to Miss Blyth, who evidently had recently been introduced to Ireland's family and friends in Edinburgh. Hodgson congratulated Ireland on the forthcoming marriage: "Above all I was delighted with the prattle of your sister that is to be; she seems to be a most warm-hearted, lively, confiding little girl, fearing no evil because she thinks none".<sup>20</sup> Ireland's fiancée was the daughter of Frederick Blyth, a Birmingham merchant, who was chapel warden in the Unitarian congregation at the Old Meeting House in Worcester Street. It is not clear how Ireland, based as he was in Edinburgh, came to meet Eliza Blyth, but several possibilities suggest themselves. As trade gradually expanded during the 1830s Ireland may have travelled farther afield to secure commissions for the family business. Many Scotsmen, like

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<sup>20</sup> Microfiche file of letters etc. relating to Alexander Ireland (Manchester Public Library)

Ireland himself, settled in England and advanced their own careers considerably. Possibly there were trading links between his father's Edinburgh commission agency and the Birmingham concern of Blyth and Graham, and it seems feasible that Alexander may have come to know the Blyths in this way. Again, the Blyths, like the Irelands, were Unitarians. The Unitarian community, though by its nature never so coherent a body as other nonconformist groups, was fairly small, congregations usually being formed around a few middle class families. Accordingly it seems feasible that someone such as Ireland, staying in an English town in the course of business, would make contact with the local Unitarian congregation, if indeed he did not have an introduction to its minister or principal members. It may also be of some significance in these conjectures that there was an Ireland family associated with the Unitarian Brotherly Benefit Society at the Old Meeting House in Birmingham at this time. Moreover, these Irelands lived in Summer Hill, which was also the street where the Blyths lived. It has not been possible to corroborate any of these speculations, but it seems possible that they could account for the circumstances which led to Alexander Ireland's marriage to Eliza Blyth.

After their marriage in 1839 the Irelands took up residence in Edinburgh, at 24 Buccleuch Place, a few houses away from the apartment where Alexander Ireland himself had first lived. It was at the birth of their second child, Alexander, in November 1842 that his wife died. No record apparently remains of the son and daughter (Mary Elizabeth) of this first marriage, with the exception of Ireland's brief reference, in a letter to Emerson of 3 February 1847, that the two children were with him in Manchester. The sadness and disorientation of the winter of 1842 are still felt in the letter to Emerson. Writing for the first time at some length since their meeting in 1833, which had left such a positive impression on him, Ireland naturally reflected on the course of their

lives in the interim. Emerson had re-married in 1835 and was already establishing a reputation as a writer; his son, Waldo, had died, aged six, in 1842. In this perspective, Ireland's reflection is particularly poignant:

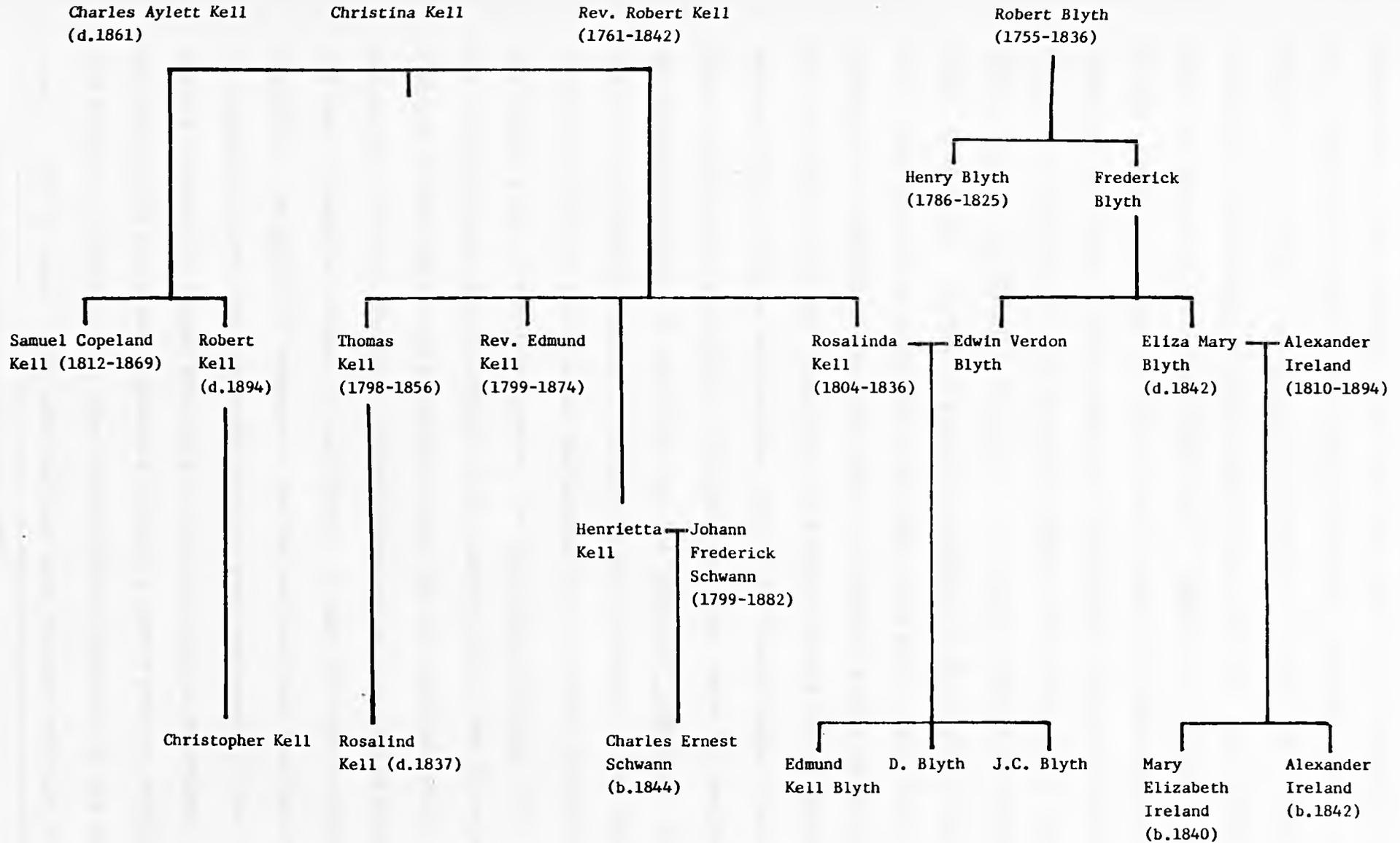
"How many worlds of thought and experience, of joy and sorrow have not both of us passed through since August 1833!"<sup>21</sup>

It was evidently only a few months after his own bereavement that Ireland took up new employment. It may be surmised that in these circumstances he sought a fresh start. With the gradual improvement of trade during the 1830s, it seems probable that his father's business was on a more secure footing and did not require Ireland's continued service. His move was to Manchester, then the most dynamic centre of commerce and industry. In the February 1847 letter to Emerson, he recalls that "a strange combination of circumstances brought me here". His route there lay, in fact, via his Birmingham connections. The Blyths were related to the family of their former minister at the Old Meeting House, Rev. Robert Kell. Kell's two nephews had moved to the West Riding and established themselves as woollen merchants in Huddersfield and Bradford. Rev. Robert Kell's second daughter, Henrietta, married another West Riding merchant, a German emigré, Johann Fredrick Schwann (1799-1882) of Huddersfield. Schwann was a wholesaler of woollen and fancy goods with an export trade to his native Germany. It was as Manchester agent for the expanding business of what had become the combined concern of Schwann, Kell and Company that Ireland came to the city in 1843. At this stage, therefore, he was continuing in the same field of work as in Edinburgh. It is reasonable to conclude that Ireland's placement was arranged through his family connections with the Blyths and Kells (see diagram on page 22).

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<sup>21</sup> Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Vol.3, p. 379

Alexander Ireland's first marriage and his link with Frederick Schwann via the Blyth and Kell families



Responsibility for setting up the Manchester office of Schwann, Kell and Co. rested with Ireland and two other colleagues, Henry Bowman and another emigré, Herr Wunsch. The Huddersfield Examiner obituary for Schwann, in mentioning the Manchester branch, simply notes that "for some reason the house closed its business there" in 1845;<sup>22</sup> whether the company's finance, or the timing of the move or the business acumen of the employees was faulty is not clear. At all events it appears that, having settled in Manchester, Ireland may have worked for Schwann for little more than two years. Bowman and Wunsch were sent on to Glasgow to look after Schwann's trade in Scotland. Ireland's place of residence in Manchester, however, is of some interest as a pointer to his next, and more significant, employment in the city. The 1843 Slater's Directory indicates that the next building to Schwann's premises at 19 George Street was occupied by another firm of textile wholesalers, William and Samuel Hague. Samuel Hague lived in Islington Place, off Broughton Lane, where his neighbour was Thomas Ballantyne, a sub-editor for the Manchester Guardian. Ireland's own first recorded residence in Manchester was in Broughton Lane and within the next few years he and Ballantyne were to become partners in publishing a new bi-weekly newspaper, the Manchester Examiner. It may be conjectured that, on arrival in Manchester, Ireland was directed to lodgings by the Hagues and prompted to make the the acquaintance of Ballantyne, a fellow Scot with Liberal views and an interest in writing; and that through Ballantyne, in due course, he made the move to establish himself in the sphere of newspapers. On the one hand this next move was to represent a more complete break with his past employment in the textile trade, as he gauged the scale of opportunities in Manchester and conceivably found that operating Schwann's agency was not sufficiently satisfying or lucrative when other possibilities beckoned. At the same time his more personal links with the past were retained since, by his

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22 Huddersfield Examiner, 29 April 1882

own account, he visited Edinburgh every summer until 1860 "to see my parents and old friends; and then what pleasant gatherings we had at (Robert) Chambers's house!"<sup>23</sup>

Between 1843 and 1851 Ireland appears to have occupied lodgings at several addresses in the suburb of Higher Broughton, close to Strangeways Park, about a mile to the north-west of the old city centre. Higher Broughton occupied an area above the River Irwell, overlooking Manchester and Salford. A contemporary resident recollected that "In Broughton Lane were very handsome houses and good gardens which were tenanted by well-to-do shopkeepers and merchants of the town."<sup>24</sup> Higher Broughton may be seen as part of the earliest outer ring of middle-class suburbs around Manchester, once warehouses and offices had supplanted the former residential streets, such as Mosley Street, near the city centre. The arc continued through similar pockets of more spacious and better housing in Broughton Park, Ardwick, Brunswick, Greenheys, Moss Side and Old Trafford. In turn, of course, with continued industrial expansion and increase in population, these suburbs were superseded by other pleasanter areas slightly farther away, places which had, even at the turn of the century, been villages outside the old town. The availability of railway transport was to continue this outward movement of the more prosperous in search of more salubrious living conditions which still permitted daily access to the business houses of the city. From Higher Broughton it would have been quite feasible for Ireland to walk to his work in Manchester, possibly accompanying Ballantyne, initially to Schwann's offices at 19 George Street and 2 London Road, subsequently to the newspaper offices near

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<sup>23</sup>Ireland's 1892 letter, op.cit.

<sup>24</sup>C.C. Armstrong, "Manchester as it was" (unpublished paper, 1875) Manchester Review, Vol.9, Spring 1960

the junction of Market Street and Pall Mall.

Another link which Ireland maintained with his earlier life in Edinburgh was his association with Unitarianism, attending Cross Street Chapel in Manchester. The Cross Street congregation, particularly in the nineteenth century, was demonstrably the nexus of many of the influential currents in the developing life of the city. Among its members and ministers during this period was a succession of men who sought in various ways to enhance the quality of life at a personal level in Manchester and in some cases on a national scale. For the most part they were businessmen, who were prepared to use their means to initiate and to foster what they saw as philanthropic causes. Sometimes these had social, civic or political aims; frequently they were concerned with the extension of educational opportunities. Its members were associated with the founding of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society in 1781, the Mechanics' Institute in 1824, and the Athenaeum in 1837. They were centrally involved in the initiative for a scheme of secular education, the Lancashire Public School Association, launched in 1847. Cross Street, of course, had its own Sunday School which provided non-sectarian teaching on a limited basis; while the neighbouring Unitarian congregation at Mosley Street operated a voluntary subscription day school for girls. Cross Street members were also prominent in the founding of Owens College in 1851, which by the end of the century had evolved as Manchester University. Among its members were several Members of Parliament, including John Benjamin Smith (1794-1879), who was Chairman of the Anti-Corn Law League during the early 1840s, then Liberal MP for Stirling, 1847-52 and Stockport, 1852-74. Another MP from the Cross Street congregation was Mark

Philips(1800-1873), Liberal member for Manchester from 1832 until 1847. John Edward Taylor (1791-1844), founder and first editor of the Manchester Guardian, was a member; as was Henry Enfield Roscoe (1833-1915), who was appointed as the first Professor of Chemistry at Owens College in 1857, and was one of the institution's stalwarts in its difficult early years, helping to place it on a sound financial and academic footing.

Given the intellectual calibre, social concern and influential position of many of the Cross Street congregation during the nineteenth century growth of the city, it is not surprising to find its members prominent in assuming civic responsibilities following the 1838 incorporation. J.E. Taylor was a member of the very first Town Council. Of the city's first twenty-eight mayors, ten were Cross Street members. In the early years possibly the most notable of these was John Potter who, in his 1851-52 mayoralty, encouraged the initiative which led to the founding of the Free Reference Library in Campfield. One of the activists in that movement was another Cross Street member, the Radical newsagent, bookseller and publisher Abel Heywood (1810-1893), who himself became mayor in 1876.

The most prominent link between Cross Street Chapel and Owens College was its minister, Rev. William Gaskell(1805-1884), whose sole pastoral appointment extended from 1828 until his death. Gaskell was a literary scholar and lectured on English Literature at Owens from its inception. He also lectured at the Manchester Working Men's College from its foundation in 1858 until its classes were absorbed within the Owens College provision in 1861. In addition Gaskell was Professor of English History and Literature at the Unitarian Academy - Manchester New College - from 1846 until 1853. At this time William Gaskell and

his family resided at 121 Upper Rumford Street, where, from 1847 until 1851, William Hodgson was a neighbour, living at No.108, near to his Dover Street school in Chorlton-on-Medlock. Hodgson appears to have been a frequent guest at the Gaskells' soirées, but the contact between the Gaskells and Alexander Ireland seems to have been no more than occasional over several decades, despite their shared interests in literature and a circle of mutual acquaintances.

It was during this same period, when William Gaskell's activities extended into regular lecturing, that his wife, Elizabeth (1810-1865), produced most of her novels and short stories. As is well documented, she achieved immediate critical acclaim as well as some notoriety in Manchester itself, particularly among her husband's congregation and colleagues. She also attracted some displeasure from those Manchester businessmen who felt their type unfairly depicted and the local setting too clearly identifiable in these popular productions. Mrs. Gaskell did, of course, temper the starkness of the conflict of class interests set out in Mary Barton (1848), when she came to write more balanced studies - Ruth (1853) and North and South (1855) - in similar settings. Even her more rural stories, however, still evince a strong human sympathy, an opposition to, though understanding of, violent and hostile reactions from groups and individuals alike, and an implicit recommendation of charity and plain-dealing.

Ireland's association with Cross Street is attested in Alexander Gordon's historical survey of the Chapel ("What Manchester owes to Cross Street Chapel").<sup>25</sup> Outlining its connections with the Manchester press (J.E. Taylor etc.), among other areas of the city's life, Gordon

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<sup>25</sup>Address delivered in the Chapel on 20 May 1922

recalled that

"...I did know a great deal of one of its (the Manchester Examiner's) editors, Alexander Ireland, who was a member of Cross Street till he migrated to Altrincham".

Gordon also recollected that William Hodgson, too, attended the Chapel during his residence in Manchester.<sup>26</sup> Despite their membership there is no evidence that Ireland or Hodgson were active in the Chapel's affairs. This may be accounted for by the demands of their respective business interests; for Ireland, it was also a period when he became immersed in several areas of the Manchester cultural scene. Moreover, Ireland and Hodgson were relative newcomers to Manchester and the well-established Cross Street congregation was, as has been seen, more than adequately supplied with able professional men for its own internal affairs. Certainly the two young Edinburgh men may be said to have shared something of what Donald Read, writing of the work of Taylor, Jeremiah Garnett and John Harland for the Manchester Guardian in the same period, identified as "a characteristic then common among Unitarians - an earnestness in religion, politics and in business which usually led them to high achievement in all three".<sup>27</sup>

During 1844 Ireland found himself well placed to assist his Edinburgh friend Robert Chambers in one of the latter's numerous publications. The book concerned was Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation (1844). This was a precursor of Charles Darwin's Origin of Species (1859), reflecting Chambers' own, and much other contemporary, interest in geology and the implications of recent scientific research.

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<sup>26</sup> Gordon contributed 720 biographical notices to the Dictionary of National Biography (1885-1912), including that on Hodgson.

<sup>27</sup> Read, "John Harland: 'The Father of Provincial Reporting'", Manchester Review, Vol.8, Autumn 1958

It was a layman's attempt to sketch the history of the universe and the living world, using an assortment of scientific evidence. Chambers wished to establish what he saw as the plan of "Law in the Universe" and a "Theory of Development". He saw scientific discovery as reinforcing, rather than undermining, theology. Such a radical tendency, positing an essentially mechanistic process, a much greater time-scale and a gradual refinement of life-forms, inevitably received a hostile reception, even among some scientists, because of its implicit refutation of the traditional view of creation. Although he would have been aware that others were pursuing similar lines of enquiry, Chambers felt it prudent not to acknowledge his authorship publicly, no doubt out of consideration for his family's position in Edinburgh society and the fortunes of the family business. Those party to the secret were Chambers' wife, his brother William and his close friend Alexander Ireland. To safeguard Chambers' anonymity, Alexander Ireland, now based in Manchester, acted as intermediary between the Edinburgh author and his London publisher for the first edition and for nine further editions which appeared between 1844 and 1853. Ireland ultimately revealed his discreet assistance in the publishing arrangements and in keeping Chambers' authorship secret when he provided the introduction to the twelfth edition in 1884 (i.e. following the death of William Chambers in 1883, the only other survivor of the original four). He elaborated further on this episode in one of his subsequent papers for the Manchester Literary Club, "The Secret History of an Anonymous Book"<sup>28</sup>

Despite Ireland's best efforts for confidentiality, however, it appears that a few individuals soon had conclusive proof that Robert

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<sup>28</sup>Papers of the Manchester Literary Club, Vol. XVIII, 1892

Chambers was the author. Chambers had indeed been among those suspected of the authorship during the speculation which ensued after the publication of the Vestiges. Those with a close interest in the subject matter were aware that a similar hypothesis had appeared in an article in one of the Chambers brothers' popular digests of scientific information and theory. William Chilton (1815-1855), a Bristol freethinker, confided in a letter of 1 February 1846 to his friend George Jacob Holyoake (1817-1906), a pioneer in the secularist movement, that

"I have this day learnt, upon what I may affirm to be the first authority, namely that of one of the first scientific men of the day ....that 'he has satisfied himself that Mr. Robert Chambers ... is the author'. It leaked out, I believe, through one of the printers."<sup>29</sup>

Chilton also evidently appreciated the delicacy of the issue of the authorship, adding, in view of Holyoake's lecturing engagement in Glasgow at the time,

"As you are in the neighbourhood, be cautious how you use this information."

Oddly, a later acquaintance of Ireland's, Moncure Daniel Conway (1832-1907), an American freethinker resident in London from 1863, put on record his doubts about Chambers' authorship. In his Autobiography (1904) he recalled visiting Robert Chalmers(sic) at St. Andrews in April 1866, but observed, "I made up my mind that he never wrote The Vestiges of Creation". Evidently Conway was aware of the speculation linking Chambers with the book, and it seems a little presumptuous that he should discount this on the basis of his own conversation with Chambers. Moreover, it appears unlikely that, in preparing his Autobiography almost forty years later, Conway would not by then have been aware of Ireland's explanation in the 1884

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<sup>29</sup> Holyoake Collection, letter 155

preface and on subsequent occasions. Yet the original observation remained uncorrected, possibly through an oversight on the part of the writer in assembling his reminiscences.

Chambers' work was, of course, soon to be superseded by the much more rigorous research undertaken by Darwin during the following decade. However, although the controversy surrounding the Vestiges is now largely lost from view, there are distinct indications in the fiction of the immediately pre-Darwin period which show the extent to which the issue had permeated among the educated public. An intriguing allusion to its hypothesis appears in Disraeli's Tancred (1847). As a contrast to the hero's high religious ideals, Lady Constance Rawleigh is made to recommend enthusiastically "a startling work just published", "The Revelations of Chaos". Disraeli's own antipathy to such a theory is indicated by Lady Constance's ridiculous over-simplification:

"It explains everything... First there was nothing, then there was something; then I forget the next. I think there were shells, then fishes: then we came, let me see, did we come next? Never mind that; we came at last. And the next change there will be something very superior to us, something with wings. Ah! that's it; we were fishes, and I believe we shall be crows".

At the same time Lady Constance's eager account is made to include a fair statement of the theory expounded in the Vestiges:

"...all is development. The principle is perpetually going on... We are a link in the chain..."

A bolder and more extensive appropriation of the evolution theory occurs at the climax of Alton Locke (1850), the second novel by the Christian Socialist cleric Charles Kingsley, where the hero, in delirium, has a sequence of dreams in which he successively assumes more sentient forms of life.

There are apparently no indications of Alexander Ireland's own interest in, or views on, this contemporary controversy. It may be assumed that he saw some value in his friend Chambers' work and that he endorsed the author's speculations to some extent. As a Liberal Ireland naturally had no sympathy for Disraeli's paternalistically radical Toryism, and was disinclined to give any commendation to the politician's novels, as a letter concerning Vivian Grey (1827) shows.<sup>30</sup> More surprisingly, perhaps, none of Kingsley's novels were included in Ireland's recommendations in his "Books for General Readers" compilation in the Manchester Literary Club Papers for 1887, when it might have been expected that he would have been happy to endorse the social reform imperative of Yeast (1848) and Alton Locke.

At the same time that Ireland was assisting in the publication of Robert Chambers' Vestiges, his own more modest first venture into writing appeared. This was his poem "Advice to Dwellers in Towns", composed in Dovedale on 6 August 1844.<sup>31</sup> This gives some insight into Ireland's own way of life and his awareness of what life was like for most of the population in industrial Manchester in the mid-1840 s. As the title suggests, the poem is an exhortation to those who would otherwise

"...miss life's purest pleasures,  
By living pent up, and apart  
From all these open treasures!"

to "wander forth, even for a day". Ireland, who had had to persevere with unrewarding clerical work in his native Edinburgh and had taken some of his relaxation on the Pentland Hills, could readily appreciate

<sup>30</sup> Letter of 12 August 1878 published in Ireland's own Manchester Examiner and Times, and preserved in the Alexander Ireland Collection. The letter apparently arose from a consideration of Hazlitt's review of Vivian Grey in the Examiner ("The Dandy School"), 18 November 1827; but it is not clear why Ireland chose to take up this subject at this juncture—and in the form of a letter rather than an article.

<sup>31</sup> The copy of the poem in the Manchester Public Library does not identify the publication in which the poem appeared.

the demands of living and working in Manchester and had evidently, even during his first year there, already begun to explore the nearby Pennine and Derbyshire countryside. It is with this perspective that his poem benevolently urges

"Come forth then, dwellers in towns,  
Your cares behind you leaving,  
Your desks and mills, your books and bills,  
Your hammering and weaving!"

In what continued to be an arduous, though more congenial, working life in Manchester, it is clear that Ireland took such opportunities as he could to walk among the nearby hills and occasionally farther afield. George Searle Phillips included a sketch<sup>32</sup> of Ireland in his account of Emerson's farewell "banquet" for a few acquaintances in Manchester in February 1848. In this Phillips recalled spending many enjoyable days walking on the Pennines with Ireland. Writing to George Combe on 31 October 1853 Ireland himself referred to his regular excursions in the limited time left by his work schedule.

".....on Sundays (my only leisure day) I generally go to the country, if the weather be good, in order to refresh my lungs and brain with pure air, and get a few hours' muscular exercise"<sup>33</sup>

This account is, of course, very much in terms of the phrenological theory which Ireland had absorbed from Combe, his former mentor in Edinburgh. Within the framework of their perception of physiology, the phrenologists maintained that on one day in each week working people needed opportunities for some refreshing activity. It was in this context that the phrenologists engaged in controversy, particularly in Scotland, over traditional restrictive Sunday observance. The cause

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<sup>32</sup>Phillips, "Emerson's Banquet at Manchester," a postscript in Emerson, his life and writings (1855)

<sup>33</sup> Combe Collection

for liberalising, by, for instance, introducing Sunday train services, was one to which Ireland's friend - and George Combe's nephew - Robert Cox devoted a good deal of attention. When Ireland was able to take more than an occasional Sunday away from his work in Manchester, he would from time to time arrange a short walking tour in mid-Wales, in company with William Hodgson and another friend, John Mills. These various indications of Ireland's enjoyment of country walking complement the impression, gained from other spheres of his activity, of a vigorous personality, pursuing both work and pleasure energetically.

Ireland's first active involvement in the city's cultural life was within the Manchester Athenaeum. This institution, founded in 1835, offered a range of educational and recreational opportunities within its imposing building on Princess Street, and in social terms attempted to bridge the gap between the Royal Institution and the Mechanics' Institute. Living in lodgings relatively close to the city, Ireland would certainly have been attracted by the civilised provision of the Athenaeum. It may be supposed that he attended some of its lectures, possibly participated in the debating society, and very probably would have been present at the annual soiree in October to hear the addresses by distinguished speakers - Richard Cobden in 1843, Benjamin Disraeli in 1844. Having become known within the Athenaeum membership, Ireland was appointed as one of its directors in February 1845. In this position he was involved in arranging the schedule of lectures, a new field of responsibility for him and one which gave him at least some limited scope to formulate an adult education schema. Ireland served as a director until February 1848 during what appears to have been a flourishing period for the Athenaeum following earlier difficulties.

As a director he was able to provide a lecturing platform for his friend William Hodgson and, more notably, for a recent acquaintance, George Dawson (1821-1887), who was to be a life-long friend. Dawson was a Nonconformist minister in Birmingham, where he had his own chapel and devoted congregation. A prolific lecturer, he was associated with many Liberal causes, sharing Ireland's concern for the extension of educational provision and his love of literature; clearly they were kindred spirits. Ireland's own recollection was of meeting Dawson after hearing him preach in December 1845<sup>34</sup> during a Christmas visit to relatives in Birmingham - whether the Blyths or the Irelands of Summer Hill he does not make clear. Ireland was evidently "so struck by his (Dawson's) simple earnestness of manner and directness of dealing with his subject",<sup>35</sup> that he immediately engaged his new acquaintance to give a series of four lectures on Carlyle at the Athenaeum. These were delivered during the following month and Dawson received several more engagements during Ireland's three-year directorship. It was also via Dawson that Ireland came to visit William Wordsworth. Dawson had married in August 1846 and, spending a honeymoon in Ambleside, the couple invited Ireland and Hodgson to join them in calling to see the Poet Laureate. Ireland recalled with some pride that, on returning to Manchester, he had been able to send Wordsworth a particular portrait of Ben Jonson to complete a collection. Naturally this opportunity to meet the distinguished poet, and to do him a service, would have been eagerly taken up by Ireland.

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<sup>34</sup>Ireland, "Recollections of George Dawson and his lectures in Manchester in 1846-47", Papers of the Manchester Literary Club, Vol. VIII, 1882. W.Wilson, however, in his Life of George Dawson (1905), dates the sermon and the meeting precisely as 17 October 1845.

<sup>35</sup>Ireland, "George Dawson, as Lecturer and Man", Papers of the Manchester Literary Club, Vol. XXI, 1895, which drew on material from the 1882 paper and from an April 1891 article of Ireland's in the Manchester Guardian.

The other lasting friendship which Ireland formed during these early years in Manchester was that with John Mills (1821-1896). Mills' career was in banking and he ultimately became managing director of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Bank, which he helped to found. Over many years, however, he gave occasional lectures at the Manchester Athenaeum and at other local societies. It seems probable that it was via the Athenaeum that the two first met. Mrs Mills' biography of her husband dates their friendship from "early in 1844". Though Ireland would have been in Manchester only for a matter of months by then, he may well have begun to participate in the Athenaeum's activities and so have made Mills' acquaintance. Possibly, too, Mills had seen and appreciated Ireland's Dovedale poem. They shared a concern for educational reform and an interest in social reform causes in general. Like many of their generation, Ireland and Mills were attracted to, and excited by, the distinctive writings of the two dominating contemporary thinkers, Carlyle and Emerson, and valued the opportunities which arose to meet the two authors. The nature of this fascination, for Ireland in particular, will be examined in Chapter 4. Mrs Mills' biography includes frequent affectionate recollections of Ireland and it is clear that the friendship between the two men was firm. John Mills' own regretful summary, shortly after Ireland's death, was of

"...our fifty years of close and confidential intercourse - a friendship of the truest ideal type."<sup>36</sup>

Like Ireland's friendship with William Hodgson, that with John Mills extended from the period when both were young, single and energetically

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<sup>36</sup> Letter of 7 February 1895 to a mutual friend and former neighbour, H.J. Fairchild, included by Mrs Mills in From Tinder-Box to the "Larger" Light: Threads from the Life of John Mills, Banker (1899)

pursuing their interests and adopted causes, to the time when both men were at the peak of their careers, sharing the same circle of friends and visitors.

It has already been suggested that Ireland probably began to take a definite interest in working within the newspaper trade when he became acquainted with Thomas Ballantyne, during his first two years in Manchester. During the same period Ireland would also have come to know Edward Watkin (1819-1901), who was honorary secretary of the Manchester Athenaeum in the early 1840s and, like Ireland, was for several years one of its directors. The opportunity which arose for Ireland was a venture with which Watkin was associated - namely, the founding of the Manchester Examiner in January 1846. This project was formed by several prominent activists in the Anti-Corn Law League as their great campaign, which had been directed from Manchester, moved towards its successful conclusion during the autumn of 1845. The intention was to maintain the momentum generated by the Anti-Corn Law campaign; on this basis it was hoped to promote other reform causes through the vehicle of a twice-weekly newspaper. The co-founders were John Bright (1811-1889) and Rev. William McKerrow (1803-1873). Bright, a Quaker and a Rochdale mill-owner, achieved prominence in national politics as Liberal MP for Manchester, 1847-1857, and Birmingham, 1858-89, serving as President of the Board of Trade in Gladstone's first ministry and as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in the second and third ministries. McKerrow was associated with many reforming social and educational causes, including the Lancashire Public School Association and the Manchester Secular School. Their choice as editor was Thomas Ballantyne. (1806-1871), who certainly had the necessary journalistic experience, having become editor of the

Bolton Free Press in 1838 and then joining the staff of the Manchester Guardian in 1841. Ballantyne had also been actively involved in the Anti-Corn Law League. Alexander Ireland was appointed as business manager soon after the Examiner's launch, taking over from Watkin, who was heavily involved in establishing the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway Company (1846-1877) at that time. Ireland never assumed the prominence of editorship and it is doubtful if the demands of regular political analysis would have been his forte. Nevertheless he came to exert considerable influence over the newspaper's policies, content and development, sometimes contributing articles of his own as well as superintending the practical and financial operations. Naturally he took an interest in introducing and sustaining some acknowledgement of literature, whether simply in the form of extracts from recent works, or in more ambitious supplements where space could more readily be allocated to literary and other cultural matters. Ireland remained in the post until 1882 and at a fairly early stage became a co-proprietor of the newspaper. He was also able to establish a modest private printing business on the same premises as the Examiner, no doubt utilising some of the same plant and staff, particularly as the merged Examiner and Times (1848-1889) successively acquired more sophisticated printing equipment for its increasing circulation in the 1850s and 1860s.

If Thomas Ballantyne was at least partly involved in Ireland's move to the Manchester Examiner, it also seems probable that during the mid-1840s he introduced Ireland to Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881). Ballantyne himself had made Carlyle's acquaintance whilst active within the Anti-Corn Law League, supplying him with information relating to the League. He appears to have maintained friendly relations with

the Carlyles, visiting them when in London during the following decade. Ireland's own relations with Thomas Carlyle appear never to have been so affectionate as in his friendship with Emerson, but were sufficiently congenial to lead to intermittent meetings and correspondence. The Carlyles' letters mention several visits by Ireland to their home in Chelsea; and it is also clear that Ireland usually met Carlyle and his wife during their occasional, often separate, visits to Manchester. Whilst Carlyle recorded his distaste for the "paltry enough speaking-match" with John Bright, which occurred when Ireland and Ballantyne took their visitor to Rochdale early in October 1847, he evidently blamed Bright, rather than his Manchester friends, for the outcome. Within a few weeks, having returned to London, he was consulting Ireland about Emerson's forthcoming visit. In a letter of 5 September 1851, written from Manchester, Jane Carlyle chided her husband (who had delayed writing to her, having mislaid her Manchester address) for not sending a letter "to the care of" Alexander Ireland. Certainly Ireland recognised Carlyle's strength as an original thinker and this is reflected in the extensive collection which Ireland amassed of reviews and articles relating to Carlyle's publications, as well as the works themselves. Some account of Carlyle's influence on Ireland and his circle will be given in the consideration of Ireland's literary interests in Chapter 4.

Working with Ballantyne and acquainted with the Carlyles, it was natural that Ireland should also come to know another of their friends who lived in Manchester, the writer Geraldine Endors Jewsbury (1812-1880). She was a particularly close friend of Jane Carlyle, who regularly stayed with her in Manchester during the late 1840s and early 1850s. Indeed it is very likely that Ireland's first meeting with the Carlyles was at one of Geraldine Jewsbury's frequent informal soirees. The "many

shining spirits"<sup>37</sup> who enlivened these occasions included writers, those interested in literature and the theatre, visiting actors, as well as friends, such as the Carlyles, en route on longer journeys. This circle also included Ireland's friend, William Hodgson, who lived quite near to Miss Jewsbury's house in Greenheys. Perhaps not surprisingly there is no indication that Hodgson's neighbours, the Gaskells, frequented these occasions, though they certainly knew Geraldine Jewsbury. Some of her writings (particularly her early novels, Zoe (1845) and The Half Sisters (1848)) scandalised many readers because of the writer's apparent disregard for conventional morality and religious belief. Although Mrs Gaskell's own writings in the same period were in some respects breaking new ground, it can be surmised that she and her husband would have found Miss Jewsbury's early novels distasteful and may well have been cautious in their social contacts with her. Jane Carlyle recollected, evidently with some gratitude, an occasion when "Mrs Gaskell took Geraldine and me a beautiful drive.... in a 'friend's carriage'"; but she was probably echoing Miss Jewsbury's own view of Mrs Gaskell in adding

"She is a very kind cheery woman in her own house; but there is an atmosphere of moral dulness about her, as about all Socinian women."<sup>38</sup>

Reference has already been made to Ireland's serialising of Miss Jewsbury's novel Marian Withers in the Manchester Examiner and Times during 1849-1850; but beyond this instance he does not appear to have

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<sup>37</sup> Annie Elizabeth Ireland, Selections from the Letters of Geraldine Endors Jewsbury to Jane Welsh Carlyle (1892), p.xiii

<sup>38</sup> Letter to Thomas Carlyle, 12 September 1851, New Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle (1903), ed. A. Carlyle, Vol.II, p.29

seen any opportunity for including her writings in the weekly supplement or of making any other use of her talents as a writer, despite her professed interest in journalism. It is difficult to believe that she did not broach this subject with Ireland. Despite his sympathy for the cause of female emancipation, however, he presumably felt that there was no ready opening for her which he could engineer within the Examiner and Times. From the early 1850s onwards she did, in fact, find a regular outlet for her writing in two London literary periodicals, the Athenaeum and Charles Dickens' Household Words.

Ireland's general interest in literature was naturally directed towards North American writing following his memorable meeting with Emerson in 1833. In addition to charting Emerson's own progress in the intervening years, Ireland also admired what he learned from George Combe of the secular education system being developed in Massachusetts. This heightened interest in North American affairs and the contact which Ireland had maintained with Emerson prompted the latter to arrange an introduction for a fellow New England writer and close friend, Margaret Fuller (1810-1850), when she came to Europe for the first time in 1846. Probably at Emerson's request, Ireland met her on arrival in Liverpool in August. He arranged for her to travel to Manchester and to make an excursion to Chester, before she left to visit Harriet Martineau in Ambleside and continue to Edinburgh. Emerson had also requested the Carlyles to receive her in London. Although Margaret Fuller's diary merely mentions her fatigue during her first few days in Liverpool and Manchester, occasioned partly by the transatlantic journey and partly by over-attentive hosts, she and Ireland evidently found time for conversation on literature and had some sympathy of aspirations. This becomes clear in Conway's

Autobiography, where he reprints a letter of 6 October 1846 from Margaret Fuller to Ireland, written from London before continuing her journey to the Continent. It appears that she had recommended Ireland to read Margaret (1845), a novel by a New England contemporary, Sylvester Judd (1813-1853), and was grateful to learn, presumably by letter from her Manchester acquaintance, that he had enjoyed the book. In a significant passage she alludes to their meeting and exchange of views, with what appears to be rather more than mere politeness:

"Time allows me now to say no more except that I am ever, dear sir, in friendly heart and faith yours. I should be much interested at any time to know what any or all of you are doing for the good of others and your own, what feeling, what hoping. To the new fraternity I think we belong, where glory is service whose motto Excelsior"<sup>39</sup>

Although Ireland may have met Geraldine Jewsbury, Jane Carlyle and Elizabeth Gaskell by this time (and several years later was introduced to George Eliot), it is doubtful if by 1846 he had met any woman of the intellectual stature of Margaret Fuller. She was exceptionally talented by any standards, having worked as a reviewer for the New York Tribune, conducted an illustrious literary periodical in Boston, The Dial(1840-42), participated in the Brook Farm commune and, with Emerson, in the broader Transcendentalist reaction against New England Puritanism. Her only meeting with Ireland is likely to have made a strong impression on him; yet it was a meeting and an acquaintance to which he did not usually allude in his later reminiscences of authors, possibly since Margaret Fuller remained largely unknown to a British audience.

One of Ireland's preoccupations during this period was the project of a lecture-tour for Emerson, whose literary reputation had certainly grown in Britain over the previous decade. No doubt with the help of

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<sup>39</sup> Conway, Autobiography, Vol.I, p.161

Hodgson's contacts in the mechanics' institutes, Ireland was able to construct a schedule of sufficient proportions to convince Emerson that the plan was feasible. Although Conway's account of the lecture-tour would have been pieced together at second hand some years later (whether from Ireland, or Emerson or other contemporaries), he clearly formed the impression that Ireland had played a central role in the arrangements:

"When it was announced that Emerson would visit England and read lectures, applications from all parts of the kingdom came to Mr. Ireland, and in many cases it was found impossible to comply with them."<sup>40</sup>

Carlyle, too, became aware of the proposition and of Ireland's part in it. In a letter of 25 April 1847 to his sister, following a call from Ireland, he mentioned that

"...we had a Manchester Philosopher last night here, who is arranging the matter for him (Emerson)."<sup>41</sup>

Ireland's plans came to fruition in the autumn of 1847, when, in Emerson's words "friendliest parties in Manchester...amply redeemed their word."<sup>42</sup>

Ireland himself appears to have been fully confident of the tour's success, but there are traces in Emerson's replies, as the project took shape during 1847, of some apprehension at the apparent scale of the schedule. In welcoming Emerson it would have been natural for Ireland to recount his meeting fourteen months earlier with Margaret Fuller. In a letter of 5 December 1847 to Fuller, who by then was in Rome, Emerson, picking up various threads and matters of common interest from her European journey and his own, affirmed that "Alexander Ireland, whom you saw, is an excellent person."<sup>43</sup> Despite the pleasant recollection of his 1833 meeting with Ireland in Edinburgh and encouraging signs in

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<sup>40</sup>Conway, Emerson At Home and Abroad (1883), p.159

<sup>41</sup>New Letters of Thomas Carlyle(1894), ed. A.Carlyle, Vol.II.,p.32

<sup>42</sup>Emerson, "Voyage to England", English Traits (1856)

<sup>43</sup>Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Vol.3

correspondence during 1847, Emerson could not have been entirely sure how congenial his forthcoming dealings with Ireland would be. He would have been reassured, therefore, to learn how amicable Margaret Fuller's brief stay in the North West had proved. As Emerson's own extended visit progressed, he evinced his gratitude to Ireland by periodic evenings of hospitality at his lodgings, which were close to Ireland's own. Here, too, they spent Christmas Day together. Partly from the necessity of the lecturing schedule, partly as a matter of courtesy, he kept in regular communication with Ireland during his extensive round of engagements. In due course he put his esteem on record in the "Personal" section of English Traits (1856), recalling Ireland's "friendly and effective attentions .... solid virtues (and) an infinite sweetness and bonhomie". At the end of Emerson's series of lectures in London during June 1848, Ireland's key role in the programme was acknowledged in Lord Houghton's closing appreciation.

Certainly for Ireland Emerson's ten-month lecture-tour represented a climax, realising expectations he had begun to form after their original Edinburgh encounter. For Ireland himself the opportunity to hear Emerson lecture and to converse with him over several months was a replenishment and a strengthening of the spiritual and cultural values which Emerson had come to symbolise for him and for others of his generation. On a broader view it must have been especially satisfying for Ireland to be the agent enabling Emerson to reach so many British audiences - particularly those at the Manchester Athenæum, in London and his native Edinburgh - and to see the generally favourable reception which he gained.

There was also a personal note arising from Emerson's lecturing engagement in Edinburgh in February 1848. Writing to Ireland from Ambleside on his return journey, he confided

"I had the best visit at Edinburgh, where I parted with your kindest mother last Sunday pm."<sup>44</sup>

Whilst staying in Ambleside, Emerson naturally took the opportunity to call on Wordsworth:

"I spent a valuable hour, and perhaps a half more, with Mr. Wordsworth, who..... was full of talk."<sup>45</sup>

Ireland himself, had, of course, met Wordsworth eighteen months previously. Emerson indicated in the same letter that, on returning to Manchester the following day, he would "stop at your office on my way home: for I doubt not, you have also some Acadian letters for me."<sup>46</sup> These personal and literary associations, together with the fact that Emerson took the trouble to write to Ireland while en route from Edinburgh to Manchester, are further evidence of the affectionate regard which the two had for each other.

During the same period Ireland was consolidating his position within the Manchester press. In 1847 he replaced John Bright as one of the proprietors of the Manchester Examiner, when the newly-elected MP for Manchester judged that he could not reasonably maintain a financial, and hence ostensibly controlling, stake in such a prominent local newspaper. Clearly Ireland must have been in a position to inject sufficient capital at this stage. Living in lodgings, with presumably

<sup>44</sup> Letter of 29 February, British Museum Additional MS, 33515, C2; reprinted in Letters of R.W. Emerson, Vol.4 and in Ireland's own Ralph Waldo Emerson (1882)

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Emerson was evidently expecting letters from his family to have arrived recently via the steamer "Acadia" and was using Ireland's business address as a poste restante.

relatively modest expenses for himself and his children, it can be surmised that he was reasonably prosperous after several years' work in Manchester. Ireland remained a co-proprietor when in November 1848 the Manchester Examiner merged with its Liberal rival the Manchester Times (1828-1848). Although in its earlier days the Times had been more bluntly Radical, it had been taken over in 1846 by George Wilson, the former Chairman of the Anti-Corn Law League. Wilson appointed as his editor Abraham Paulton (1812-1876), who had also been editor of the League's own newspaper, and under this regime the Times became more moderate in its political opinions. There was thus the economically anomalous position during 1846-47 of two Liberal newspapers, barely distinguishable in their outlook, and in the charge of two groups of former associates within the Anti-Corn Law League. It is not surprising, therefore, that an apparently amicable merger was achieved, to enable the new Manchester Examiner and Times to combat the real, and more successful, local rival, the Manchester Guardian. As well as taking his place on the board of the new publication, Ireland also continued as business manager, with Paulton as editor and the production carried out from the former Examiner building on Pall Mall. For Ireland himself, therefore, there would have been a minimum of change in the new dispensation, but a larger opportunity to pursue his career in newspaper management.

In the same year, 1847, in which he was organising Emerson's lecture-tour and negotiating the Examiner/Times merger, Ireland also became involved in an initiative for educational reform - the Lancashire Public School Association. This was a pressure group formed by a number of Manchester Liberals, several of whom worked for the Examiner;

most took a serious interest in the social implications of phrenology and all had been associated with the successful campaign for the repeal of the Corn Laws. The focus of their intentions, as regards the liberalising of education, was to increase basic provision and to introduce a more utilitarian curriculum, free from the contentious sectarian teaching which was then an integral feature of many schools. Ireland consulted regularly with George Combe over the progress of the Association and also arranged for sympathetic coverage, in the Examiner and Times, of its meetings and aims. Taking account of the scale of reform needed and wishing to establish a precedent which might subsequently be adopted nationally, the Association originally sought to introduce its plan in Lancashire. Interest and active support were sufficiently widespread, however, for the LPSA to re-fashion itself as the National Public School Association in October 1850. Ireland was again involved in the committee of the new body, which like its predecessor operated from Manchester. Ireland's part in this initiative over several years will be considered later. Although the movement was to achieve little success at a national level, the desire to increase educational opportunities and to remove any restrictive and partisan religious framework from the curriculum remained firm with Ireland and close friends such as Hodgson and Mills.

At about the time when the National Public School Association's cause was foundering, a different opportunity arose in which Alexander Ireland felt able, with commitment, to contribute to the cultural life of his adopted city. This was the authorisation by Lord John Russell's Liberal government in 1850 for municipal councils to establish public libraries. Manchester was the first to take advantage of this legislation. The necessary development committee was set in train early in the following year and Ireland, whose literary and bibliographic

interests would have been well-known, was co-opted as a member. The Free Reference Library was duly opened in September 1852 and Ireland's advice on the purchase of an appropriate range of books was particularly sought, both in the period prior to the opening and during the early years of operation. The Manchester initiative was initially, of course, local and specific in its aim - to provide an extensive library, with reference and lending facilities, to all residents. Naturally enough, however, the success of this venture led to an appreciation of wider opportunities. In due course Manchester established branch libraries and reading rooms in the suburbs, whilst other towns and cities acted on the impetus of the Manchester precedent to open their own municipal libraries. This appreciation of the scope for library provision was fostered by those, such as Ireland and his Birmingham friend George Dawson, to whom the availability of books was a cherished cause. Clearly, in Ireland's case, this evaluation derived directly from the love of literature he had acquired on his youth, and from the difficulties he had encountered in gaining access to books. In recognition of his commitment, Dawson was invited to deliver the inaugural address at the opening of the Birmingham Free Reference Library in October 1866. He defined his own evaluation both in broad philosophical terms, seeing the Library as

"...the expression of a conviction ...that  
a town exists...for moral and intellectual  
purposes"

and from the point of view of an individual, now able to take advantage of the new Library:

"The utilities of it are endless and priceless.  
It is too a place of pastime."

These sentiments of altruistic vision and practicality would have been Ireland's own in his work to establish the Manchester Library and he

made clear his endorsement by including a substantial extract from Dawson's address in his anthology "on the solace and companionship of Books", The Book-Lover's Enchiridion (1882).<sup>47</sup>

The relative prosperity of the Manchester Examiner and Times enabled Ireland to move in 1851 from Higher Broughton to the pleasanter and more rural surroundings of Bowdon, ten miles south west of the city centre. What made this practicable was the opening of the Manchester South Junction and Altrincham railway in 1849. By this means the daily journey to Manchester could be made in approximately half an hour - hardly any longer than Ireland would hitherto have spent in walking in from Higher Broughton. Associated with the expansion of the railway network, there was, of course, a general drift of middle class families away from the city centre and its immediate suburbs into more salubrious areas several miles farther out. Ireland obviously chose to follow this trend. This shift of a certain sector of the population inevitably prompted a corresponding increase in new housing in what had until then been outlying villages. The effect on Bowdon itself was gradually to merge it with the neighbouring market town of Altrincham. Certainly Bowdon had a reputation for being particularly healthy, whilst Higher Broughton, despite its pleasant streets and houses, was becoming engulfed by the spread of the city and would not have escaped its smoky industrial atmosphere. In Bowdon Ireland rented a small house in Oak Terrace, Sandy Lane (now Stamford Road). This was the beginning of a period of almost forty years' residence in Bowdon, during which time he reached the

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<sup>47</sup> Ireland, The Book-Lover's Enchiridion, pp.391-6

height of his personal prosperity, acquiring successively larger houses, and, with the exception of the final few years, able to lead a comfortable domestic life. He gradually built up a circle of friends in Bowdon, most of them, like himself, Manchester businessmen or university staff. Here, too, he was to entertain a series of distinguished acquaintances, usually men of letters, and amass a large personal library.

Probably the first of these visitors was the exiled Hungarian leader, Lajos Kossuth. In 1848 he had led a revolt to try to secure his country's independence from the Austrian Empire, but had been ousted after only a few months in power. The expectations aroused by the several European uprisings in 1848 focussed, for many Liberals, principally on developments in Hungary and Italy, perhaps because there seemed, for a time, to be the greatest likelihood of significant progress there. Possibly these expectations echoed, for Ireland, Hazlitt's evocation of the spirit of the French Revolution of 1789 in the course of his review of Wordsworth's "Excursion"<sup>48</sup>. Mazzini and Kossuth each subsequently toured potentially friendly countries, attempting to muster political and financial support. Ireland met both leaders and in November 1855 entertained Count Aurelio Saffi, one of the exiled leaders of the revolt in Rome. He evidently felt particularly drawn to the Hungarian cause. Kossuth addressed large-scale meetings in Manchester in November 1851 and again in November 1856 and January 1857. Ireland recalled that on each occasion he had "had the honour and good fortune of being thrown into friendly relations with him."<sup>49</sup> On the

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<sup>48</sup> Examiner, 21 and 28 August 1814

<sup>49</sup> From an undated Manchester Guardian article of Ireland's, a copy of which he forwarded to W.E. Gladstone with his letter of 9 April 1894: Gladstone Papers, 44518, f.167

first and third visits Kossuth was Ireland's guest at his Bowdon home. Ireland also welcomed the opportunity which arose of spending several days with Kossuth in Scotland in the summer of 1856, when the Hungarian leader was lecturing in Edinburgh and elsewhere. Recollecting the occasion, in his April 1894 letter to Gladstone, Ireland also intriguingly provides the only account of his father's character and political opinions.

"The chief promoter of his (Kossuth's ) Edinburgh lectures was my father... (who) was an ardent admirer of Kossuth, and was himself a Radical of the most pronounced type, a co-worker in all Radical movements..... when to be an avowed Liberal in politics was to be almost ostracised in those old days of Tory domination in Edinburgh."

Though Alexander Ireland himself was never a political Radical, this background clearly accounts for his inclination to various Liberal and reforming causes. At the time of Kossuth's Edinburgh engagement, he had not seen Ireland since 1851, but father and son had evidently made a favourable impression on him, since he wrote to Alexander, inviting both of them to accompany him in exploring the Highlands after a forthcoming lecture in Perth. Ireland's eagerness is unmistakable:

"The prospect of spending a few days with him in the relation of fellow-traveller was too pleasant to be resisted, and, difficult as it then was for me to be absent even for a day from the engrossing cares of a daily paper, I threw all business considerations to the winds and set out for Scotland."<sup>50</sup>

The mid-1850s certainly were a stressful period for Ireland and his staff. In common with most large-scale metropolitan and provincial newspapers, the Examiner and Times moved from bi-weekly to daily production in the summer of 1855. The comparatively leisurely schedule of issuing Tuesday and Saturday numbers was, therefore, replaced by

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<sup>50</sup> Letter of 9 April 1894 to Gladstone, *ibid.*

the more hectic demands of producing six numbers per week. Clearly different working arrangements would be necessary for all levels of the newspaper staff, as well as new and costly printing machinery to cope with the larger daily output needed. The Examiner and Times was in any case experiencing some unpopularity during the years 1854-56 because of its pacifist policy concerning the Crimean War. Above all it was, during this and the following two decades, engaged in an intensive rivalry with its more moderately Liberal neighbour, the Manchester Guardian. The efforts in both camps to achieve a dominant position in terms of sales and influence, to outmanoeuvre the rival and at very least not to be disadvantaged on any issue, would have required a considerable perseverance, expertise and ingenuity from the decision-makers within each newspaper. For much of this time they were, in fact, operating in adjacent buildings on Cross Street and Pall Mall. Mrs Mills had been led to believe that, in the earlier days of his career with the Examiner, Ireland "delighted in dispensing the hospitalities of his editorial den" to visitors and friends, and that "the little afternoon teas in Mr. Ireland's room" were a regular feature of the day.<sup>51</sup> In this middle period, however, with the exception of Kossuth's invitation, all the indications are that the demands of production and expansion left little or no time for leisure or any other pursuit. There was no diversification of his energies on the scale which he had earlier allocated to planning Emerson's lectures, promoting secular education and establishing the Manchester Free Reference Library. Equally, he produced virtually no writing and did not yet engage in the activities of the Manchester Literary Club. Ireland confided to George Combe, in his letter of 31 October 1853, that

"The daily calls upon my attention in connection with the Newspaper leave me litte time for reading for my own private satisfaction...."

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<sup>51</sup>Mrs Mills, op.cit., p. 141

Ireland's management and the newspaper's fortunes in general appear to have been fairly successful during the two decades following the change to daily production in 1855. It may be surmised, however, that the prolonged pressure gradually blunted Ireland's managerial skills and took some toll of his health.

In 1865 he re-married. His second wife, thirty-three years his junior, was Annie Elizabeth Nicholson (1843-1893). She was the daughter of Dr. John Nicholson, an oriental scholar of independent means. Her formative education was under the guidance of Russell Martineau (brother of Harriet Martineau), whom Dr. Nicholson employed as a tutor to his children. There are indications that Ireland's acquaintance with the Nicholsons began while Annie Elizabeth was still a child. Among the letters of support which the promoters of the Lancashire Public School Association Plan received in the autumn of 1847 was one from Dr. John Nicholson; he subsequently attended the Educational Conference held in Manchester in October 1850, at which the LPSA and its supporters re-grouped to become the NPSA. It is conceivable that this link may have led to some closer acquaintance between Ireland and the Nicholson family. Ireland visited Edinburgh each summer and may have broken his journey at Penrith, where the Nicholsons lived. Another possibility is a connection via Emerson. Writing from London to his brother William on 13 July 1848, Emerson provided an introduction for "Dr. William Nicholson, a learned and eminent physician, who...with his brother Dr. John Nicholson.... an eminent orientalist....are(sic) going with their families, to emigrate to the United States".<sup>52</sup> William Nicholson was evidently already in North America deciding where to settle. John

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<sup>52</sup>Letters, op.cit. Vol.3,p.100

Nicholson and his family did not pursue the plan, but it is possible that Emerson discussed this matter with Ireland and thereby provided an even earlier link with the Nicholsons. For this change in his domestic circumstances Ireland bought Alder Bank, a detached villa on Ashley Road, closer to the centre of Altrincham.

The one literary work which Ireland was able to bring to fruition during the years of his heaviest commitment to the Examiner and Times was his List of the Writings of William Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt (1868). This was a bibliographical compilation, itemising all editions of all the published works of the two authors, together with those of Charles Lamb. Ireland also interspersed a selection of extracts from reviews of the various works, which he had collected from contemporary periodicals. Whilst the assembly of the List would have been no inconsiderable task, the material had in fact been gathered assiduously over a period of forty years. Ireland's high regard for the three essayists and his close knowledge of their work, together with his experience as a book-collector, would have made the production of the List a practicable proposition during a period when Ireland could not have undertaken more extended or original writing.

Spending many hours of each week in the city centre, Ireland appears to have resorted, in the later years of his press career, to a number of nearby clubs where some relaxation could be gained. He was associated with three such organisations - the Brasenose Club, the Clarendon Club and the Reform Club - but these receive no mention in his own reminiscences and very little in the memoirs provided by others. It may be assumed that they figured to only a limited extent in his day-to-day life in the city. The Brasenose Club was formed in December 1869 for "gentlemen of literary, Scientific or Artistic Professions,

Pursuits or Tastes". Sir Charles Hallé was among its early members and occasionally gave piano recitals there. Alexander Ireland was the Club's first President, but after 1870 he appears to have taken no part in its activities. A published recollection on the occasion of the twenty-first anniversary dinner of the Club refers to various other founder members and those involved in its early years, but makes no mention of Ireland. Whether he withdrew from some disinclination or pressure of work is not known. Mrs Mills quotes a reminiscence by H.J. Fairchild, a former Bowdon neighbour, that Ireland frequented the Clarendon Club during the 1870s in order to meet friends and associates informally, away from the newspaper offices. In the year following his Brasenose Club presidency he was, according to William Haslam Mills, one of the prime movers in the establishment of the Manchester Reform Club - the city's Liberal Club. Ireland and Rev. William McKerrow were guarantors of the Club. C.P. Scott, then heir apparent for the editorship of the Guardian, observed in a letter of February 1871 that the Club "is at present very much in the hands of the extreme Radical party - the Examiner party in fact - who chiefly got it up".<sup>53</sup> However, apart from serving on the Liberal committee for the South East Lancashire constituency at the time of the 1874 general election, it appears that Ireland left the political relations between the Club and the Examiner and Times to others of the newspaper's proprietors and staff.

Given the relatively strong position of the Examiner and Times during the 1860s, Ireland was able in 1870 to have a larger house built on St. Margaret's Road. This was at the higher end of Bowdon, with an open prospect, to the west, of Dunham Park, the Earl of Stamford's

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<sup>53</sup> Quoted by J.L. Hammond, C.P. Scott of the Manchester Guardian (1934) - recipient not identified.

estate. The acquisition of this property, 'Inglewood', and the first decade of the family's residence there represented the height of Ireland's prosperity. The pleasantness of their life in Bowdon at this period was naturally augmented by having a number of friends among their neighbours. The Mills family had moved there in 1864. Indeed, a letter of October 1863 from Mills to Hodgson asserts that he and his wife were

"more than content with the prospect of living near Alexander ....he being there settles our choice of situation. He, of course, rejoices 'mightily' ..." <sup>54</sup>

A mutual friend of Mills and Ireland, William Stanley Jevons (1835-1882), also lived in Bowdon during his professorship at Owens College from 1866 until 1876.

Ireland was also the co-ordinator of an informal gathering of a few friends in Bowdon, who entitled their meetings the 'Roundabout Club', since the monthly venue rotated from one member's house to another's. Mills, Jevons, Meiklejohn (Hodgson's biographer and headmaster of a school in Bowdon) and Fairchild were among the regular participants. Guests were sometimes invited from among congenial acquaintances in Manchester and from visitors staying with one or other of the Bowdon families. The 'meetings' were devoted to pleasurable discussion. Fairchild's recollection was that Ireland had been "easily the leader in conversation, anecdote and reminiscences"<sup>55</sup>. Shortly after Ireland's death John Mills recalled Ireland's leadership of this social circle, in writing to Fairchild, who had by then returned to New York. Mills

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<sup>54</sup>Quoted by Mrs Mills, op.cit., p.293

<sup>55</sup>Quoted by Mrs Mills, op.cit., p.315

felt that despite Ireland's extensive activities in Manchester and farther afield, the Roundabout Club "was the scene where he appeared to the greatest advantage, and where he was usually serenely happy."<sup>56</sup>

Mrs Mills, in turn, acknowledged that her husband had

"for many years... found sympathetic society in the group of thinking men who were drawn together by the genial influence of his earliest and closest friend....Alexander Ireland"<sup>57</sup>

The Roundabout venues would, of course, have included 'Inglewood'. It was here that Alexander Ireland's extensive collection of books was housed. According to Mrs Mills the collection numbered about 20 000, before Ireland began to dispose of some items during the mid-1880s. George Searle Phillips, writing in 1855, claimed that even at that time Ireland possessed "one of the finest and rarest private libraries" in the area. William Haslam Mills (John Mills' son), who, as a young man, would have seen the collection at its fullest extent at 'Inglewood', spoke of Ireland's "almost regal library, which..had filled every inch of its appointed room - not excluding the back of the door in and out of the chamber."<sup>58</sup> In an obituary notice, W.H. Mills' elder brother, John Saxon, maintained that Ireland's library included "the best journalistic and periodical literature ranging over a period of fifty years" and amounted to "a representative collection of the best books published during that enormously fertile period...."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Letter of 7 February 1895 from Mills to Fairchild, quoted by Mrs Mills, op.cit., p.313

<sup>57</sup> From Mrs Mills' preface to her husband's volume of poems, Vox Humana (1897)

<sup>58</sup> W.H. Mills, The Manchester Reform Club, 1871-1921 (1922)

<sup>59</sup> J.S. Mills, "Personal Recollection of Alexander Ireland", Manchester City News, 15 December 1894

'Inglewood' was naturally a fine setting for Ireland's reception of his numerous literary acquaintances and North American visitors. Mary Cowden Clarke, Thornton Hunt and William Carew Hazlitt each stayed there. Above all there was Emerson's third and final visit to England in 1872-73, during which he was Ireland's guest for several days in May, shortly before his return to the United States. On one of these evenings Mrs Mills recalled that Emerson, Ireland and her husband "had a long sitting, not breaking up till after midnight". For Ireland himself these domestic circumstances were close to ideal: a wife and young family, which he had experienced only briefly during the three years of his first marriage; a fine house in pleasant surroundings, where he could entertain friends and visitors in some style and, increasingly in later years, work in his impressive library; yet still within comfortable travelling distance of the offices, libraries and clubs of Manchester.

The Irelands' five children were, in fact, all born during the years at 'Inglewood'. The five were: Walter Alleyne (1871-1951), Alice, Ethel Alleyne (1873-1947), Lucy and John Nicholson, the composer, (1879-1962). No record has been found relating to Alice Ireland, apart from her attendance with the family at the Longsight Library opening in 1892 and at her father's funeral. Lucy Ireland is mentioned only in an extract from her father's will, which also stipulates a bequest of "thirty volumes....selected from his library to each of his five children".<sup>60</sup> Walter Alleyne travelled widely and for the greater part of his adult life lived in North America. He wrote on colonial affairs, was for a time Colonial Commissioner of the University of Chicago, and later became personal secretary to the philanthropist Joseph Pullitzer.

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<sup>60</sup>Microfiche file relating to Alexander Ireland, op.cit.

Ethel Alleyne issued a collection of her mother's essays, Longer Flights (1898), and added a biographical introduction. She also delivered a paper on "Book Illustrations" at the Manchester Literary Club in 1899 - probably the first female contributor in what was, by social convention rather than by design, an all-male Club. In the previous year she had published a short bibliographical article in the Atlantic Monthly - "Some new letters of Leigh Hunt and R.L. Stevenson". Her article appeared in July and, intriguingly, she is recorded in the Sotheby catalogue as disposing of a collection of letters and documents in the following November. Almost certainly these items would have come from her father's collection; conceivably they were those which had formed the substance of her July article; presumably she was disposing of them because of financial difficulties. In her biography of the poet Sir William Watson (1858-1936), Jean Moorcroft Wilson claims that Watson became engaged to Ethel Ireland in 1889, when Ethel would have been only sixteen. Watson had come to know the Irelands through a friend, James Ashcroft Noble, who had been a literary reviewer for the Examiner and Times. Whatever the level of Watson's liaison with Ethel Ireland, it was evidently discontinued. She subsequently married the owner of a school in Switzerland, but after a divorce spent the remainder of her life in straitened circumstances in southern France.

John Ireland pursued a musical career from a relatively early age, entering the Royal College of Music at the age of thirteen, with financial help from his mother. Letters to his nephew, Silvio, in the John Ireland Papers repeatedly stress the unhappiness of his childhood in Bowdon:

"I had no home life at all."

"I had a very bad kind of childhood  
- no home life or parental influence..."<sup>61</sup>

Both of John Ireland's biographers, John Longmire and Muriel Searle,<sup>62</sup> largely accept this view of Ireland's family life, drawing on his own reminiscences as related to his housekeeper, Norah Kirby, and, in Longmire's case, on the writer's acquaintance with the composer. At the same time they both seem to wish to exculpate Mrs Ireland from the suggestions of unhappiness and instability at 'Inglewood'. Both writers, however, give no more than a brief and simplistic account of John Ireland's childhood, and even these contain such remarkable inaccuracies of chronology that it is difficult to place much reliance on their picture of the family. Both claim that the young John Ireland met Emerson, overlooking the fact that the latter's final visit to England was in 1872-73, six years before John was born. The incident which they misrepresent in this case probably originates from an anecdote related by Mrs Mills, in her biography of her husband. It concerns an afternoon call at the Mills' home in Bowdon by Emerson and the Irelands on 12 May 1873, when "one of the little girls" put daisies in Emerson's top-hat. The child could possibly have been one of the Irelands' daughters. The more immediate source of their misapprehension is a statement by Norah Kirby in her introductory sketch for a catalogue of John Ireland's compositions in 1968. She claims that

"Ireland had a childhood recollection of dropping a handful of daisies into the upturned top hat which he saw in the hall of the family home one day: it belonged to Emerson."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Letters of 20 November 1953 and 4 April 1954

<sup>62</sup> J. Longmire, John Ireland: Portrait of a Friend (1969);  
M.V. Searle, John Ireland: The Man and His Music (1979)

<sup>63</sup> Kirby, "Appreciation and Biographical Sketch of John Ireland",  
John Ireland: a catalogue of published works and recordings  
(1968)

Either Mrs Kirby must have misunderstood John Ireland's recollection of an incident recounted by older members of his family; or Ireland himself may have confused the details of the incident or been misinformed.

Even more surprisingly, Longmire, in listing distinguished literary and artistic visitors to 'Inglewood' whom John Ireland may have met, includes Leigh Hunt! The confusion here appears to be between father and son. Although Alexander Ireland met and corresponded with Leigh Hunt, who died in 1859, it was, of course, his son Thornton whom Ireland consulted during the preparation of his List of the writings of William Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt (1868); and it is probable that Thornton Hunt subsequently visited Ireland in Bowdon. Similarly Longmire is misled into asserting that "Hazlitt, the essayist, was also a friend of his (John Ireland's ) parents". Although it seems very probable that Ireland began reading Hazlitt's essays during adolescence, he certainly never met the writer, who died in 1830 when Ireland himself was only 20. Ireland did, however, subsequently become acquainted with the essayist's grandson, William Carew Hazlitt, again in the course of preparing the 1868 List.

While some of John Ireland's reminiscences in old age may have been unduly coloured, it can be imagined that the Ireland household would not have been particularly well balanced or readily supportive. Alexander Ireland was sixty-one years old when his eldest child, Walter Alleyne, was born. His age, his frequent absence on business and his engrossing literary interests would inevitably have made him a remote figure to the children. Mrs Ireland, to judge from some of her reminiscences in Longer Flights, was very fond of the children when they were in infancy. She gives a further sign of this affection in recalling that, during the months before Geraldine Jewsbury's death in

September 1880, "she often asked me to tell her the little speeches of my children, any little thing about them,"<sup>64</sup> The "innocent trivialities" which Mrs Ireland duly recounted may well have been those of John Ireland, who was born in August 1879. As the children grew, however, and their quarrels and demands became tiresome, her chronic ill-health and her writing labours may have restricted the time she was able to spend with them. John Ireland has given his own partly regretful, partly resentful view of this situation:

"I wish I knew more about my parents, and for what reason my Mother could not put up with either myself or my brother Alleyne in the family home."<sup>65</sup>

Left to themselves or the attentions of nursemaids, servants and tutors, the children may well have been deprived of affection. To judge from John Ireland's recollections, these early difficulties did hamper his own emotional stability in later life and that of his elder brother and his sister Ethel.

During the period in which Ireland's children were born, and during the early 1880s, when he withdrew from the day-to-day management of the Examiner and Times, the newspaper began to experience more serious difficulties. By the end of the 1870s Ireland and his long-serving editor, Henry Dunckley, were ageing and probably less forceful than they had been in the previous two decades. There are suggestions from contemporaries that they became less conscientious in superintending the newspaper and its daily production. At this point, too, they found themselves in competition with Charles Prestwich Scott (1846-1932), the much younger and evidently more astute editor of the rival Manchester Guardian. Ireland was already 62 and Dunckley 49 when Scott, at the

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<sup>64</sup> Mrs Ireland, Selections from the Letters of Geraldine Endsor Jewsbury to Jane Welsh Carlyle (1892), p.xvii

<sup>65</sup> John Ireland Papers, op.cit., undated letter of June 1957 from John Ireland to Silvio Ireland

age of 26, assumed his editorship in 1872. During the following decade it is clear that the Guardian's position, in terms of sales, of internal management and of overall stature, was strengthening while Ireland's newspaper weakened. The other significant flaw in the development of the Examiner and Times was its strategy of allying itself fairly closely to the current policies of the Liberal Party. The crux came during the 1880s when the newspaper proved unable to judge with sufficient foresight what its stance should be on the difficult question of Irish Home Rule - particularly as the various factions within the Liberal Party were themselves divided on the issue. The Examiner and Times found itself out of accord with Gladstone, the majority of Liberals and much local opinion, whilst its rival was already promoting the more positive and radical Home Rule policy. Readers switched in significant numbers from the Examiner and Times to the Guardian; advertisers would naturally have followed, and a more pronounced decline in the fortunes of Ireland's newspaper began.

Clearly the years immediately preceding his retirement in 1882 would have been a difficult passage for Ireland. He may well have lost some of his earlier devotion to newspaper duty and anticipated being able to spend more time on his literary and bibliographic interests. Yet whilst he continued as manager, the daily schedule and increasing financial problems demanded his attention. The newspaper concern was, after all, his own major source of capital. Some insight into his position at this time can be discerned in a later essay of Mrs Ireland's, "The Understudy". Written in 1892, this fairly short and otherwise not entirely serious piece speculates fancifully on the potential benefits to harrassed businessmen of adopting some form of theatrical understudy arrangement for their more stressful periods. In

a passage which is surely derived from her observation of her husband's difficult later years with the Examiner and Times, she describes in convincing detail

"The man who must look cheerful, must go on 'Change and meet his partners and his banker, and keep up his handsome establishment, and present himself punctually at his office with an air of business-like unconcern, while he knows that things are all going wrong, that his brain is over-taxed, that he cannot go on in any real vein, and yet is goaded into the belief that his apparent prosperous jollity is the only thing to tide things over - such a man is subjected to a too heavy strain,"<sup>66</sup>

This gives a more sombre aspect to John Mills' recollection of Ireland, apparently at his most relaxed, in the meetings of the Roundabout Club which were enlivened by "the fine flavour and gusto of his jokes and stories, some of them crusted with welcome repetition, and some of them pungent with a touch of innocent wickedness."<sup>67</sup>

If Ireland's final years as business manager of the Examiner and Times had been rather over-burdened, his retirement in 1882 brought a prolific output of writing. As with his bibliographic work on Hazlitt, Hunt and Lamb, several of these later productions were formed around material which Ireland would have been compiling over many years. His literary anthology, The Book-Lover's Enchiridion (1882), was such a compilation. Emerson's death in that year prompted a memoir, drawing on Ireland's recollections, diaries and newspaper reports of the American's three visits to England, as well as published tributes from others and some correspondence. For his selection of Hazlitt's essays, published in 1889, Ireland produced a lengthy introduction, but, again,

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<sup>66</sup> Mrs Ireland, Longer Flights: Recollections and Studies (1898)

<sup>67</sup> Letter of 7 February 1895 from Mills to Fairchild, op.cit.

the biographical and literary material was familiar ground. During the same period he also took a more active part in the Manchester Literary Club and delivered several papers, usually concerning authors whom he had either known or had studied over many years. In a number of such speeches he also reaffirmed his belief in the value of reading and the need for estimable works of both fiction and non-fiction to be generally available as a means of self-help in adult education.

Despite his doubtless satisfying ventures into publication, Ireland's financial circumstances were deteriorating as the Manchester Examiner and Times continued to lose sales and revenue during the mid-1880s. In March 1888 the Irelands were obliged to sell 'Inglewood' and decided to move to Southport, partly on account of Mrs Ireland's poor health, but also as a means of reducing the family's expenditure. The newspaper, together with Ireland's printing business, was finally sold in the following year. For two years the family lived at Beaucliffe Terrace, on Leicester Street, adjoining the promenade; this was a fairly spacious semi-detached house, but naturally considerably smaller and less expensive than 'Inglewood'.

Although Mrs Ireland appears never to have enjoyed particularly good health - having earlier sought relief at various spas in England and on the Continent - she, too, had a considerable output of writing during the 1880s and early 1890s. Initially this was in the form of occasional essays, then a series, for newspapers, though it is not clear if any of her pieces appeared in the Examiner and Times. These various essays and short stories were subsequently issued in collected form. Her three principal publications, produced during the period of residence in Southport, were a biography of Mrs Carlyle, an edition of selections from the writings of Charles Reade and an edited collection of letters from Geraldine Jewsbury (whom Mrs Ireland had known) to Jane

Carlyle. As and when her health permitted she also gave lectures on literary subjects. These various activities would certainly have supplemented the family's reduced means, but it seems reasonable to conjecture that Mrs Ireland would have engaged in some form of literary work even in happier circumstances, in view of her obvious interest in writers and writing.

In 1891 the family returned to the Manchester area, taking up residence at 31 Mauldeth Road in Withington. This was a detached house in a pleasant suburb four miles south of the city, still, however, at a more modest level than their former Bowdon residence. Annie Elizabeth died there in October 1893. Mrs Mills' uneven collection of reminiscences in her biography of her husband rather surprisingly include no more than a very brief paragraph on Annie Elizabeth Ireland, whom she must have known as a neighbour and family friend throughout the twenty-three years in which the two families resided in Bowdon. Unless there was some long-standing antipathy between the two, which would have contrasted oddly with the close friendship between their husbands, this cursory treatment can only be attributed to the rather random nature of Mrs Mills' recollections.

In 1892 Ireland's friends in the Manchester Literary Club had petitioned Gladstone for a Civil List pension to alleviate his financial difficulties, and an annual sum of £200 was granted. Ireland still participated in the meetings of the Literary Club even in his final years and also attended a number of suburban library openings. He appears, therefore, to have been fairly active and alert in old age; though his more straitened circumstances must have evoked wistful recollections of his former position at the centre of affairs in a successful newspaper, as well of his prosperous days in Bowdon. He died at his Withington home on 7 December 1894.

Ireland's association with

The Manchester Examiner and Times 1846-1889

Ireland's association with The Manchester Examiner and Times 1846-1889

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When Alexander Ireland settled in Manchester in 1843, the city could be said to have been at its zenith as a centre of industrial, commercial and political power. In the 1840s in particular a combination of circumstances created in the Manchester area a greater dynamism than evolved in any other British conurbation during the Industrial Revolution, and made it a focus of attention for men of diverse interests who were concerned to analyse the significance of this acceleration in urban and industrial development. The eponymous hero of Disraeli's novel Coningsby (1844) found Manchester

"...pregnant with new ideas, and suggestive of new trains of thought and feeling. Its unprecedented partnership between capital and science, working on a spot which Nature has indicated as the fitting theatre of their exploits..."<sup>1</sup>

In the course of several days' exploration of Manchester (which the author himself undertook during his visits in October 1843 and 1844), Coningsby became aware of "a great source of wealth of the nations." A French observer in the same period, Leon Faucher, was impressed by the scale of the industrial capacity harnessed in "this grand constellation"<sup>2</sup> of townships and by the efforts of a minority of employers to combine sound business with an active philanthropy among their work-force. At the same time he was appalled by the physical and moral condition of the poorer classes in Manchester; it was no worse, he acknowledged, than in many towns, in rural areas and in other countries, but nevertheless constrained by the very framework

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<sup>1</sup> Coningsby, p.165 (Bradenham edition)

<sup>2</sup> Faucher, Manchester in 1844: its Present Conditions and Future Prospects (1844), translated by an anonymous member of the Manchester Athenæum.

which was producing the wealth and establishing the importance of Manchester. Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), like Frederick Schwann, a native German responsible for the English branch of his family's textile business, drew similar conclusions during the first period of his residence in Manchester in the early 1840s. In The Condition of the Working-Class in England (1845) he recognised that "The modern art of manufacture has reached its perfection in Manchester" and that it was "the classic type of a modern manufacturing town". From extensive explorations of the city, however, he attributed the very poor living and working conditions endured by the majority of the population to the way in which the process of industrialisation was being managed - laissez faire profiteering and its economic and social consequences. Engels' political analysis was such, of course, that he could give no more than a limited, distrustful and sometimes cynical acknowledgement of any subsequent signs of improvement in the period up to 1870 when he finally moved to London.

Manchester experienced a rapid increase in population during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This was, of course, a demographic phenomenon affecting most large towns in Britain which, for geographical and historical reasons, became centres of the expansion of industrial and commercial activity. Manchester and the south east Lancashire area benefitted in particular from the availability of natural resources and from technological innovations in textile machinery pioneered in the region. From a population of 22 370 in 1774, Manchester grew to 76 780 by 1801, 129 000 by 1821 and 187 000 by 1831. This was the measure of its magnetism as a centre of trade and employment, both for the surrounding villages and, continually, on a wider scale for migrants from rural areas in Lancashire, the North Midlands and later

from Ireland. During the half-century from 1820 there was also an influx from Jewish communities in Europe and the Middle East. Manchester was also, of course, placed at the hub of a number of smaller townships, each of which experienced its own expansion via the cotton trade during the same period, as more factories and mills were built. This wider development, in Salford, Bolton, Rochdale, Oldham, Stalybridge, Ashton-under-Lyne and Stockport, inevitably accentuated the growth and relative importance of Manchester itself.

By the 1840s this importance, based on cotton manufacture, was on an international scale. There was a well-established trade with North America and to countries within the Empire; once the trading restrictions in force during the Napoleonic wars had been removed, exporting to European markets was resumed. The initiatives of Manchester agents, however, evidently sought out and exploited an even wider range of other potential markets. Tariff barriers and periodic slumps occasionally interfered with Manchester enterprise but, over the period 1820-1850, did not generally hinder the aggrandizement of the merchants and of the city itself.

The factor which complemented this harnessing of natural resources, technology and business acumen was the development of the railway. Much of the impetus and of the financial support for this development came inevitably from the business community, which recognised the potential benefit to trade of a speedier movement of freight, as well as facilitating postal deliveries and commercial contacts. The first line opened for both freight and passenger traffic, the Manchester-Liverpool in September 1830, was probably the most significant, since it connected the industry of the Manchester area with an established sea-port. In the following two decades lines were constructed to

connect the city with Birmingham (1837), London (1838), Leeds (1841) and Sheffield (1845), as well as many smaller towns which became linked to the growing network. Thus when Alexander Ireland was finding his place in the business community of Manchester in the 1840s, the momentum of commerce and the possibilities of travel were very different from the conditions of his work as a commission agent in Edinburgh in the previous two decades.

The scale of the Manchester phenomenon was such that even contemporary observers identified a broad spectrum of liberalising principles which pervaded the political and commercial scene during the mid-century period and their influences can be traced beyond that time. Because these principles were invoked in various forms by North West politicians, businessmen and the activists of the Manchester-based Anti-Corn Law League, the ideas and individuals concerned came to be dubbed the 'Manchester School'. Charles Dickens, speaking in Manchester in September 1852, jocularly complained of his initial perplexity over this term,

"some authorities assuring me....  
that it was all 'cant', and some  
that it was all cotton."<sup>3</sup>

In fact there was no partisan or organisational grouping in this case and not even a great degree of coherence between the various strands of the 'School'. The strands were: a belief in the pre-eminent role of economic laws in national policy, deriving from the tenets of Adam Smith; free trade, and hence a basic objection to tariffs, preferential duties and monopolies; movement towards the optimum level of independence for the colonies; an internationalist, as opposed to an isolationist,

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<sup>3</sup>Report of the Proceedings at the Public Meetings held to celebrate the Opening of the Free Library, Manchester, 1903 - published on the occasion of the Library's fiftieth anniversary

trading policy; reduction in armaments and related expenditure; pacifist foreign policy, based partly on the Dissenting morality of many of the 'Manchester School'. Bright, Cobden, Fox and the League activists made it clear, even within the limits of the anti-Corn Law campaign, that they hoped to embrace some of these broader ideas. There was no unity, however, and different individuals had different ideals. Bright appeared to have the extension of the suffrage as his ultimate goal, while Cobden's long-term objective was international harmony based on sound economic and pacific policies. Some who supported free trade would not have endorsed the non-intervention position which Bright unpopularly adopted towards the Crimean War. Others would not have wished to extend the logic of free trade, as Cobden did, to removing imperial preferences and changing the basis of Britain's relationship with the colonies.

Critics of the 'School' accused its adherents of lacking a humanitarian outlook. Faucher complained of the "malady" of overworking in Manchester, where "Everything is measured in its results by the standard of utility". The more extreme proponents of 'Manchester School' political economy felt, of course, that the intervention of even the basic provisions of the utilitarian Poor Law of 1834 was unsound and maintained a Malthusian view of the social and economic problems of poverty. They accepted implicitly the rationale of profit-oriented economics and the political and social order which this produced, and saw these as ultimately beneficent to those with at least a rudimentary understanding of that rationale, allied with self-control and self-help.

A more realistic apologist was Alexander Somerville (1811-1885), who worked as a researcher for Richard Cobden during the anti-Corn Law

campaign and subsequently as a freelance journalist in Manchester, often for the Examiner and Times. As someone with little private capital, no family business to steer and accustomed to working at a fairly humble level, Somerville was better placed to appreciate the strictly limited appeal of the principles of the 'Manchester School'. Convinced of the essential soundness of these principles, he felt the need, which sympathetic manufacturers and politicians usually did not, of interpreting the economic forces at work to the labouring classes directly affected. To this end he founded a periodical, Somerville's Manchester School of Political Economy, in June 1850, which was printed by Alexander Ireland's company. In the first number Somerville voiced his regret that many of those whose views he shared contrived

"... to write of the sources of capital or wealth apart from human happiness.... Such professors of political economy have been a greater hindrance to the popular acceptance of the science than all the unreasoning opponents.... It is from such of its professed teachers that its characteristic of "cold blooded" is derived, and not without justice".

In contrast Somerville declared that his aim was "to relieve the principles of political economy from the shadow of these abstract men, and carry (it) with its genial benevolence into the daily business of life". The periodical ran to only three monthly numbers; Somerville appears to have been responsible for the entire contents and no doubt bore the financial costs as well.

Although his well-intentioned initiative was soon exhausted, it is probable that at least some instruction on political economy was at the same period being provided within the Mechanics' Institutes of the neighbourhood, while W.B.Hodgson was associated with the Union of Lancashire and Cheshire Institutes. Similar teaching could probably also have been located in Hodgson's own school in Chorlton-on-Medlock and in the Manchester Secular School in Jackson's Row. It was doubtless

also part of the curriculum in the minds of those Manchester men (of whom Ireland was one) who founded the Lancashire Public School Association in 1847 and proceeded to formulate plans for a rate-supported system of secular education. On the whole it is unlikely if any of these attempts to instil the principles of the 'Manchester School' persisted for long or were conspicuously successful. (Dickens' caricature schoolboy, Bitzer, in Hard Times (1854), is a humorous, but not entirely convincing, exception.) What is more certain is that a generation of the professional classes, particularly in the Northern industrial towns, would have absorbed some elements of the rationale of political economy. Some of its ethos, too, can be detected in the policies of the Manchester Examiner and subsequently the Examiner and Times.

The clear single origin for the newspaper's establishment was the imminent success towards the end of 1845 of the great campaign for the repeal of the Corn Laws. The campaign had been masterminded from Manchester and a number of its protagonists, looking to the future beyond the immediate goal of repeal, evidently recognised the need for a medium through which their amalgam of radical Liberal views could be broadcast. The League had established branches in many towns, maintaining contact with them and disseminating information via peripatetic agents and speakers. It had been well served from its Manchester headquarters by efficient administrators, entirely motivated by the cause. Regular meetings were held, increasingly on a large scale in Manchester and London. In the smaller towns agents sought opportunities to meet local merchants and tradesmen who might support the League, collected funds and reported regularly to the Manchester office. The scale and efficiency of this network and the momentum

generated were unparalleled as a pressure group of private individuals. This accumulated strength would have been unmistakable to supporters and opponents alike. As regards written propaganda, the League's principal supporters had published pamphlets of essays and speeches on aspects of the case for repeal. During almost the whole of the campaign they had also issued a fortnightly newspaper, The League (October 1839–July 1846), devoted entirely to the organisation's activities, reproducing speeches and presenting information in support of the cause. Its editor was Abraham Walter Paulton (1812–1876), who became editor of the Manchester Times in 1847 and then of the merged Examiner and Times from 1849 until 1854. Thus the League activists had acquired experience of mounting a campaign of pressure for reform and of utilising journalism to this end.

The opportunity that was to provide Ireland's career arose from the founding of the Examiner. The newspaper, a weekly like its local competitors and other contemporary provincials, represented the realisation of the desire by some of the Anti-Corn Law League principals to have a publication based in Manchester and supporting both the campaign for repeal and a wider range of Liberal policies. When this plan came to fruition in the autumn of 1845, the anti-Corn Law campaign was virtually assured of success, but three of the activists pursued the plan for a new Liberal newspaper. They were John Bright (1811–1889), Rev. William McKerrow (1803–1873) and Edward Watkin (1819–1901). They were also aware that if such a newspaper was to be successful, by the same forces which they propounded for economics at large, it would have to have a wider appeal to its potential middle class readership than the provision of merely local news and excerpts from other newspapers. They would require it to be soundly produced and managed, professionalism

matching political sympathy. Thomas Ballantyne was appointed as editor, Alexander Ireland as business manager. In fact Ireland's appointment seems to have commenced slightly later than Ballantyne's, a few months after the newspaper's first appearance on 10 January 1846. Contemporary accounts suggest that Ireland was appointed when Watkin found himself unable to attend to Examiner business because of his increasing commitments in railway speculations. It may, however, have been an early indication of Ballantyne's limitations as a manager, rather than as a writer, which prompted the proprietors to turn to Ireland.

In some respects this appears a surprising choice. Ireland had no direct experience of journalism, though while still in Edinburgh he would have learned something from the Chambers brothers of the production of their monthly educational Journal, and may, via George Combe, have known William Ritchie and Charles Maclaren, joint editors of The Scotsman. Although working fairly obscurely and uncongenially in Schwann's Manchester office, he had presumably achieved some prominence in becoming a director of the Manchester Athenæum in February 1845, after only eighteen months in the city, and would obviously have been known to Watkin in this sphere. There is no evidence to suggest that Alexander Ireland was himself directly involved in the free trade movement or took a prominent part in debating the political and economic questions of the day. Nevertheless once he was living in Manchester and working in the city centre, it is probable that he did at least attend some of the large-scale Anti-Corn Law League meetings in the Free Trade Hall. Professionally and socially he would have been in the company of the men who made up, and were themselves influenced by, the 'Manchester School'. In Ireland's early years in Manchester such influence in his own case would have come principally

from his friendship with W.B. Hodgson, Thomas Ballantyne and John Mills. More significantly, the fact that he was able to impress the Examiner proprietors and evidently proceeded to manage the new publication with reasonable competence is testimony to the standard of Ireland's general education (both formal and self-directed) and the business skills he had acquired during the twenty years since his premature removal from Edinburgh High School. George Milner, delivering a presidential tribute to Ireland at the Manchester Literary Club in 1884, attributed this transition to "Mr. Ireland's known ability and business training."<sup>4</sup> It may be that Frederick Schwann, as a member of the Anti-Corn Law League Council, had been able to recommend Ireland during the planning or early stages of the Examiner. Evidently Ireland also assumed Watkin's financial stake in the newspaper and so throughout his career with the Examiner and its successor he was a co-proprietor. W.H. Brindley describes Ireland as "chief proprietor", but there is no direct evidence that Ireland's was a controlling interest. However, he had clearly amassed some capital by 1846 and was able to acquire an even greater stake in the Examiner when John Bright sold his interest in 1847 on becoming MP for Manchester.

Certainly Ireland took full advantage of the opportunity to move into the newspaper trade. An essentially new opening was offered by the growth of newspapers in the mid-century period - in terms of scale of production and scope of coverage - to those of Ireland's generation and standing who were not aspiring to the professions, or had insufficient capital to become successful, independent manufacturers, but who did possess some literary skill and business acumen. In this respect John Edward Taylor and Jeremiah Garnett of the Manchester Guardian, Archibald Prentice and Abraham Paulton of the Manchester Times, Thomas Ballantyne

<sup>4</sup>"A Christmas Symposium, 1884", Papers of the Manchester Literary Club, Vol. XI, 1885; Ireland was guest of honour at the meeting.

and Alexander Ireland were peers within the local press of the 1840s.

A brief survey of the state of the Manchester press prior to the establishment of the Examiner early in 1846 will place its emergence in perspective. Although there had been six other weekly newspapers in Manchester when John Edward Taylor founded the Manchester Guardian in 1821, the following quarter of a century was a much more significant period in the town's emergence as a centre of provincial press activity. The newspapers established in Manchester during this time were generally on a sounder footing than their small-scale predecessors. They each attempted to operate on something like the model of the metropolitan newspapers, carrying fuller reports of local and regional news, as well as leader articles on national issues, though inevitably resorting to reprinting London and international news reports from the Times and the Morning Chronicle. Drawing on the increasing prosperity of the local business community, at least initially, for financial support, the Manchester Guardian, the Manchester Courier(1825-1916), the Manchester Times (1828-1848), and the Manchester Examiner (1846-1889) were each founded to represent distinct political, though not necessarily party, causes. Taylor and his backers were well aware that there was no responsible representation of pro-Reform views in the Manchester press of the early nineteenth century. Both Taylor and Prentice had written for the Manchester Gazette but were looking for opportunities to establish a more forthright, better managed, journalistic vehicle, between the extremes of the local Tory newspapers and the unstamped Radical publications. From these earnest beginnings, however, the Manchester Guardian gradually adopted a more cautious and conciliatory tone, to the consternation of some of Taylor's financiers and his former colleague, Prentice. Its support for practical rather than radical reform and its evident concern for business interests naturally

gave it a wider appeal among the local commercial community. It attempted to provide comment on national politics as they affected local issues, reported extensively on civic developments, on regional affairs and on trade. Its early circulation of 1 300 weekly copies in 1822 rose to 3 186 by the end of the decade and to 9 750 in 1846 when the Manchester Examiner was launched.

Archibald Prentice purchased and transformed the Manchester Gazette in 1824. He was able to obtain financial backing, partly from some of Taylor's disaffected supporters, to start the Manchester Times in 1828, offering more Radical views than those of the Manchester Guardian. His prospectus condemned the "notorious apostasy" of the Manchester Guardian and accused its editor of "having deserted the cause his Journal was established to support". Prentice does not seem, however, to have been able to adjust his management of the Manchester Times to widen its appeal, at least among the more moderate Liberal sections of its potential readership. He was possibly deflected from giving adequate time to the development of his newspaper by an increasing involvement in the anti-Corn Law campaign, and so failed to create a more versatile and viable publication. An initial circulation of 1 400 in 1828 had increased only to 3 500 by 1844. In 1846 he was bought out by two of the Anti-Corn Law League principals, George Wilson and Henry Rawson. Others in the League, as has been seen, opted at the same juncture for an entirely new vehicle, the Manchester Examiner, in seeking to expand their political views via a soundly produced newspaper.

The other newspaper established during this period which proved sufficiently strong to survive was the Manchester Courier. As a proponent of Tory opinion its career was largely separate from that of its various Liberal contemporaries in Manchester. In the early 1830s

it inevitably lost some ground because of its opposition to the Reform Bill, in the face of the naturally widespread desire for a wider franchise and a redistribution of parliamentary seats which would directly affect Manchester. The relatively moderate pronouncements of the Manchester Guardian attracted some Courier readers who would never have gone so far as to support Prentice and the more Radical Manchester Times. In general, however, its defence of the monarchy, the Established Church and of tradition, and its opposition to any prospect of significant change - whether in local or national government, in educational provision or in the practices of trade - secured a reliable, if not spectacularly large, readership. From a circulation of around 2 000 in 1828, it had expanded to 6 000 by 1843, no doubt assured of a more regular advertising revenue than Prentice's Times and more carefully managed, while not developing journalistically as the Manchester Guardian and subsequently the Examiner and Times did.

The scope of Ireland's new role within the Manchester Examiner can be gauged from William Johnston's contemporary account<sup>5</sup> of the press, which includes a survey of the personnel of a newspaper office. Johnston's order of priority is that "First comes the business-manager". This central figure

"makes the engagements, give orders to the cashier - answers letters on business - concludes arrangements with correspondents - confers with the solicitor, and does a thousand things besides, all connected, directly or indirectly, with finance."<sup>6</sup>

This early period of work in the provincial newspaper trade appears to have been largely successful for Ireland, his first broad opportunity in a much more challenging field and environment. An 1856 letter of

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<sup>5</sup>William Johnston, England As It Is (1851), Vol.I Chapter XVII, "The Press"

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p.232

John Bright's also indicates the senior position which Ireland came to hold. The Examiner and Times had given a report of Bright's convalescence from a recent illness and the notice was sufficiently obsequious to embarrass Bright. He protested, not to Henry Dunckley, who was by then editor, but to George Wilson, a close acquaintance from the days of the League, who, as co-proprietor of the Manchester Times, joined the board of the combined newspapers in the 1848 merger. Bright requested that Wilson should

"Ask Ireland not to put any more paragraphs about me in his paper - it is quite absurd and annoying - and people will doubtless imagine that I supply him with details for fear I should be forgotten".<sup>7</sup>

George Milner's 1884 eulogy of Ireland came, of course, two years before the ultimate decline of the Examiner and Times, though it will be suggested later in the present chapter that inherent weaknesses in the management of the newspaper had been developing for some time, and Ireland was probably not entirely blameless in that sequence. A useful contemporary assessment of the early period, however, is provided by George Searle Phillips of Huddersfield. Recollecting the occasion of Emerson's private dinner party at his Manchester lodgings in February 1848 (at which Phillips and Ireland inter alia were present), he states that Ireland "had been brought up to business, and was the business man of his firm; and it was mainly through him that the paper had so solid and influential a position".<sup>8</sup> Much later, the obituary notice for Ireland in the Manchester Weekly Times reflected on this same period and claimed that

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<sup>7</sup>Letter of 30 July 1856, George Wilson Papers

<sup>8</sup>"January Searle", Emerson, his life and writings (1855)

"...to his management of the concern (the Examiner and Times) the prominent position that it rapidly secured in the North of England as the organ of advanced Liberalism was largely due"<sup>9</sup>.

As regards Ireland's day-to-day work in these early years with the Examiner, an interesting detail is given by Mrs Mills. She recalled that John Mills' first acquaintance with Ireland was "in connection with literary work done for the Examiner, of which Mr. Ireland was then literary manager, Mr. Ballantyne taking the political department". It is conceivable that during Ballantyne's period of office, Ireland was concerned with the non-political sections of the newspaper, possibly directing coverage, editing and even contributing some material himself. He did not introduce a specifically literary content until several years later - in the form of a weekly supplement, including theatre and book reviews, extracts from new books, together with short stories and poems. Mrs Mills' account is marred, however, by locating Ireland's 'literary managership' in 1845, by giving 1846 as the date of the Examiner and Times merger and by identifying Archibald Prentice as the Times proprietor, whereas he sold out to Wilson and Henry Rawson in 1846. Ireland himself gave an outline of his work at this period in an 1847 letter to Emerson, explaining that, "I have the management and co-editorship of two newspapers here".<sup>10</sup> The second newspaper was the Manchester Express which was issued from the Examiner office on Tuesdays from late December 1846 until early July 1847, the Examiner itself appearing on Saturdays. Thereafter the Express was re-titled to conform with the Saturday edition and thus represented an

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<sup>9</sup> Manchester Weekly Times, 14 December 1894

<sup>10</sup> Letter of 3 February 1847, Letters of R.W. Emerson, Vol.3; at this point Ireland was making the initial arrangements for Emerson's lecture tour in the following winter.

intermediate phase in the Examiner's transition from a weekly to a bi-weekly newspaper.

Representing Radical rather than Whig views, the Examiner was initially competing directly with the Manchester Times. Inevitably, however, there were insufficient readers and advertising to support two Liberal newspapers of similar outlook. This closeness of view and the fact that the rival proprietors were former associates from the anti-Corn Law campaign made the practicalities of competition rather sensitive at times. Bright recalled, after sitting for a portrait which was to be included in a supplement to the Manchester Times,

"...in this case I made a great sacrifice of my own inclination for fear the Times should say I refused to sit because I did not wish to give them any advantage over the Examiner - these portraits being a common method of adding to the sale of the newspaper".<sup>11</sup>

Although the Times continued to increase its circulation during this period, particularly once Paulton had replaced Prentice as editor in 1846, it seems probable that the new proprietors, Wilson and Rawson, recognised the seriousness of the competition. While the Times increased from 1 500 copies in 1844 to 6 400 in 1848, the Examiner had managed sales of 2 800 on its appearance in 1846, rising to 4 800 by 1848. In this situation differences of personality and shades of opinion were clearly best discounted if an effective Radical challenge was to be maintained to the more successful Guardian. The final editorial in the Times on 26 October 1848 stressed the need for such a challenge, while tacitly acknowledging its own inability to sustain this and, understandably, avoiding the question as to why the Guardian "occupied, in point of circulation, the foremost position among its competitors."

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<sup>11</sup>The Diaries of John Bright (1930), ed. R.A.J. Walling.

The Examiner sounded a more confident note in its announcement, two days later, of the merger, carefully exempting itself from alleged shortcomings in the Manchester press and implicitly suggesting that the spirit and expertise of the Examiner were what were needed in a Liberal newspaper:

"A widely-felt want existed, owing, in fact, to the chief Newspapers of this district having gradually fallen behind their readers in political opinions. Those classes, from which both papers had...received support,...were prepared to welcome and appreciate political views more in accordance with the advancing spirit of the age."

The parties to the merger were clearly hoping that the combined circulations of the Times and Examiner could be retained, thereby outstripping the Guardian's weekly total of around 9 400 during 1848, and that the pursuit of a range of 'Manchester School' policies in a well-managed format would enable the new publication to maintain this position.

It is clear from contemporaries that the Examiner and Times succeeded for a time in each of these aims. Certainly for several decades its policy positions were clear and forthright, though perhaps ultimately too inflexible. Goldwin Smith, in a letter of 5 August 1864 to Charles Eliot Norton, described it as "the most influential paper in the manufacturing North of England".<sup>12</sup> Francis Espinasse, who in his time wrote for both the Examiner and Times and the Guardian, recollected accurately the motivation of the original Examiner initiative. It was "founded by John Bright to be the organ of a Liberalism more advanced than the Guardian's".<sup>13</sup> Louis Hayes, a local writer, remembered it as

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<sup>12</sup>Smith, Reminiscences (1910)

<sup>13</sup>Espinasse, Literary Recollections and Sketches (1893)

"a very powerful and widely read organ of the Liberal Party in this district."<sup>14</sup> W.H. Brindley, in a later retrospection (The Soul of Manchester (1929)), claimed that "the Manchester Examiner was the voice of the tabernacle ... and was quite definitely the organ of the Manchester School of politics." The indications are that for at least two decades the paper was efficiently organised by Ireland and its leading articles well-written, initially by Paulton, subsequently by Henry Dunckley. There is also evidence that in the early years the Examiner and Times did sell more copies than the Guardian and it is clear that the rivalry between the two papers persisted until the 1870s and was not decisively terminated until the mid-1880s. This rivalry will be considered in more detail later in the present chapter.

Abraham Paulton had been appointed as editor a few months after the 1848 merger. His predecessor, Thomas Ballantyne, had evidently proved not to possess the necessary adaptability for this larger sphere of responsibility. Following a disagreement with colleagues, Ballantyne left the Manchester Examiner and Times, after three years as editor, initially of the Examiner, then for the early weeks of the new publication. In his Literary Recollections and Sketches Francis Espinasse asserted that Ballantyne felt that "John Bright and the Manchester party ... had behaved badly to him as editor", when he was succeeded by his former Bolton associate in the League, Abraham Paulton. In the meantime, of course, Paulton had been editor of the other party to the 1848 merger, the Manchester Times, and had possibly proved himself the better journalist. Paulton may have benefitted from some deal struck between the two groups of proprietors at the time of the merger, when George Wilson and Henry Rawson, owners of the Manchester Times, had joined the

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<sup>14</sup> Hayes, Reminiscences of Manchester (1905)

board of the new publication. Another possible move to displace Ballantyne may have involved Ireland's friend W.B. Hodgson, who moved from Liverpool in 1847 to work in Manchester and was already well known in Liberal circles. J.M.D. Meiklejohn (Hodgson's biographer) records that "very tempting offers had been made to him in connection with the starting of a daily newspaper in Manchester". Leaving aside the fact that such a venture, in the mid-1840s, would almost certainly have been a weekly, or at most bi-weekly, publication rather than a daily, it is not clear from Meiklejohn's allusion whether this opportunity concerned the original establishment of the Examiner, or the merger with the Times, or some other, unrealised venture. In any case it seems reasonable to speculate that Ireland would have canvassed Hodgson's claims. Indeed it may be that Meiklejohn received this particular story direct from Ireland, since both were part of the same social circle in Bowdon when Meiklejohn brought out his memoir (Life and Letters of William Ballantyne Hodgson) in 1883.

Although Richard Cobden was never a proprietor of the Manchester Examiner and Times and although John Bright sold his interest in the Examiner following his election as MP for Manchester in 1847,<sup>15</sup> the policies advocated by the combined paper for over forty years were usually close to those of the two 'principals' of the 'Manchester School.' The first editorial, in the number for 4 November 1848, set out what were to be some of the axioms of the paper's standpoint; "A limited monarchy, based on democratic institutions... a check on the political power of the aristocracy ...a redistribution and extension of suffrage... colonial self-government ... reductions in the army and navy...strenuous

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<sup>15</sup> John Bright's younger brother Jacob (1821-1899) was later a co-proprietor of the Examiner and Times. Jacob Bright served as Liberal MP for Manchester 1867-74, 1876-85, and for the new constituency of South West Manchester 1886-95.

opposition to State pay for religious purposes." Thus during the following decades the paper supported the Lancashire, later the National, Public School Association in its campaign for a system of rate-supported secular schools, and regretted what it saw as the compromises and lost opportunities of the 1870 Education Act. Alexander Ireland himself was particularly active in the LPSA (his detailed involvement is discussed in Chapter 3); he would certainly have ensured that the newspaper's pronouncements made a positive case for secular education, and that adequate resources were made available for reporting its meetings. The Examiner and Times supported disestablishment of the Church of England and hence reported favourably on the activities of the Anti-State Church Association. It opposed the overtly political activities of Prince Albert during the 1850s and alleged indications of constitutional shifts which appeared to increase the direct power of the monarchy.

It looked for political progress to ensue from the European revolutions of 1848. It specifically supported the Hungarian attempt to break free from the Austrian Empire, and gave considerable attention to the visit of the exiled leader, Lajos Kossuth, in 1851. In this instance, too, Ireland had a particular interest at stake. In the aftermath of the 1848 revolts he had evidently felt especial sympathy for the Hungarian cause and accordingly joined energetically in arrangements for Kossuth's visit to Manchester. Clearly Ireland would have pledged the newspaper's support for the cause and arranged for ample coverage of Kossuth's meetings and other activities. The Examiner and Times opposed the aggressive nationalism of Palmerston's foreign policy in the 1850s and was sceptical about Britain's part in the Crimean War, attracting considerable criticism and losing sales because of its evident lack of patriotism.

It supported the Union against the Confederacy in the American Civil War, activated by the issue of negro slavery, which the Southern states wished to maintain. In this regard it was virtually alone among British newspapers and to some extent acting against the interests of the Lancashire cotton trade for humanitarian reasons. Karl Marx's brief survey of English press reaction to the American Civil War confined itself to London newspapers, and so took no account of the Manchester Examiner and Times' distinctive stand on this issue. This is surprising since Engels regularly supplied him with copies of the Examiner and Times and in letters to Engels he expressed considerable interest in noting its opinions. Again, it is very probable that Alexander Ireland was centrally involved in the direction of this policy. His view of the Civil War would have been formed not simply by force of libertarian argument, but influenced by his friendship with individual Americans (notably Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Lloyd Garrison,<sup>16</sup> Elihu Burritt,<sup>17</sup> Moncure Daniel Conway and James Thomas Fields<sup>18</sup>). Each of these American acquaintances was opposed to slavery in the Southern states. Clearly in their meetings with Ireland, spanning several decades, they would have provided him with direct reports of its effects on North American society. Some, too, had suffered as a result of their outspoken opposition.

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<sup>16</sup> William Lloyd Garrison (1805-1879), a zealous opponent of slavery, who at times offended more moderate opponents by his extreme views. He helped to found the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833. He was also in favour of female suffrage and, like Ireland, interested in phrenology. He visited England in 1833, 1846 and 1877, on each occasion spending some time with friends in the North West.

<sup>17</sup> Elihu Burritt (1810-1879), held pacifist views and in 1846 instigated the exchange of "Friendly Addresses" between British and American cities; many newspapers, including the Examiner and Times, carried these Addresses. Later in 1846 he visited Britain and formed the pacifist League of Universal Brotherhood. In 1863 he was appointed US consular agent in Birmingham. Like Ireland, he opposed sectarian influence in education.

<sup>18</sup> Fields (1817-1881), a Boston publisher and editor of the literary periodical, the Atlantic Monthly, 1861-1870; further details pp.233-35

The Examiner and Times supported the parliamentary reform which took shape in the 1867 Act, extending the vote to ratepayers, leaseholders and more affluent tenants, but protested at the failure to redistribute parliamentary seats on a more evenly demographic basis. Again it was earlier than most other newspapers in its support for the cause of women's suffrage, a fact duly acknowledged in Emmeline Pankhurst's The Suffragette Movement (1931) but evidently discounted by a more recent feminist history, despite its chapter on "Women's Suffrage in Manchester" (J.Liddington and J.Norris, One Hand Tied Behind Us: The Rise of the Women's Suffrage Movement (1978)). On this policy, too, it can be surmised that Ireland's was the guiding hand. Records of the Manchester Women's Suffrage Society indicate Ireland's willingness to accept announcements of the Society's meetings and to allocate reporters to them. His close friends W.B.Hodgson and George Dawson consistently advocated greater educational opportunities for girls and took ~~many~~ initiatives of their own in this field. Annie Elizabeth Ireland, for her part, was more involved in literary pursuits and less active in the suffrage movement than the family friend and neighbour, Isabella Mills, or than Rachel Scott (wife of C.P. Scott of the Manchester Guardian); but it is unlikely that Mrs Mills would have written so affectionately of Ireland, had he evinced an illiberal view of emancipation. Finally, and with a crucial inconsistency in its generally progressive outlook, the Examiner and Times opposed the prospect of Irish Home Rule, following the lead of Bright, at a juncture when Gladstone had gradually persuaded the majority of Liberal Party supporters of the soundness of this radical constitutional change.

Hence the newspaper's forthright political coverage was extensive. Shortly after its eventual demise, a contemporary writer claimed that

at the height of its strength, in the 1860s and 1870s, the Examiner and Times "was second to no paper in its political influence."<sup>19</sup> This firm allegiance to a particular school of Liberalism was clearly a deliberate policy pursued by Dunckley in his long editorship and by Ireland and his co-proprietors.

A year after the Examiner/Times merger, there was an attempt to establish a London newspaper which would promote the same policies as the Manchester parent. It is not clear precisely who was responsible for this initiative, but Ireland and Ballantyne were certainly involved. In a letter of 22 December 1849 to Joseph Neuberg, who worked for a time as Carlyle's secretary, Geraldine Jewsbury mentioned that

"...there is going to be a new London weekly newspaper started under very able management and very extensive principles - Ireland talked of sending you a programme. It would be a better speculation than the Manchester Examiner...Both Ireland and Ballantyne are sanguine of its proving a good thing."<sup>20</sup>

Whether Neuberg was considering a financial stake in the proposal, or possible employment, is not clear. Jewsbury herself evidently did have a personal interest.

"I am very anxious for the paper to go because I am engaged to write in it!"<sup>21</sup>

Clearly she hoped to have found the opening in journalism which had not been obtainable in Manchester. However, the projection appears not to have materialised. It may have been the failure of this plan which precipitated Ballantyne's departure from Manchester in the same year. If Ireland and his co-proprietors were ambitiously planning a parallel London newspaper, under the same control as the Examiner and Times,

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<sup>19</sup> From a biographical notice on John Howard Nodal (1831-1909), a sub-editor for the paper during the late 1860s, Manchester Faces and Places, Vol. 3, 1892

<sup>20</sup> Quoted by Susanna Howe in Geraldine Jewsbury: her life and errors (1935)

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

this would have been a unique expansion. Presumably such an ambition was based on the relative prosperity of the Examiner and Times, but it can be imagined that their Manchester capital was still insufficient to underwrite the substantial cost of setting up a comparable business operation in the metropolis. A similar and more successful attempt was made several years later by some of the same 'Manchester School' interests, though in this instance not including any of the Examiner and Times personnel, who were fully engaged in the new demands of daily production. What emerged as a London penny daily, the Morning Star, was founded in February 1856. Although Cobden and Bright were not directly involved, they evidently provided policy advice. The Star's editor until 1865 was Samuel Lucas, who was John Bright's brother-in-law and had, with Ireland, also been involved in the LPSA initiative in Manchester a few years earlier. Thereafter it declined and merged with the more moderate Liberal Daily News in 1869.

One indication of the Examiner and Times' prosperity and the scope of its influence is, of course, the size of circulation which the paper achieved. It is difficult to cite the exact scale of this with certainty. Returns compiled by Guardian staff conflict with claims made by Ireland on several occasions. The annual totals of stamps, which newspapers were obliged to purchase for each copy until 1855, sometimes give an overestimate of the number of copies actually sold, if a newspaper bought more stamps than it required, reselling the surplus. There was also a natural tendency to withhold circulation figures for periods which showed a significant decline in a paper's own sales. However, the Examiner and Times appears to have held its initial circulation of around 6 000 by the time it switched from bi-weekly to daily production in 1855. In the intervening seven years its sales had fluctuated, declining during 1854 and the early part of 1855 on account of the

editorial opposition to the Crimean War. After the war, however, and coping with the increased demands of daily production, the paper appears to have flourished during the next two decades. Its initial daily sale of around 18 000 had risen to 42 000 by 1868. Despite its relative success in competition with the Guardian during this period, there were regular claims of circulation achievements both in the paper itself and in Ireland's correspondence which are difficult to substantiate. Ireland repeatedly referred to the size of circulation in letters to George Combe, particularly during a period when Combe was considering advertising a forthcoming collection of his essays. On 11 November 1848, the first week of the newly merged paper, Ireland claimed that "Our circulation is the largest of any provincial journal". By 14 March of the following year this position was said to have been maintained. By 9 September 1857 Ireland was asserting that the circulation was "more than double the total number issued (during 1856) by all the newspapers, both daily and weekly, published in Manchester and the surrounding towns". Six weeks later, in a letter of 25 October, he claimed that

"The circulation of the Manchester Examiner and Times is now threefold greater than the circulation of all the other daily and weekly Manchester newspapers put together, and more than double that of all the newspapers published throughout the entire county of Lancaster (exclusive of the press of Liverpool)".

In his letter to Combe of 24 February 1858 and in an editorial in 21 May, the circulation was said to be "considerably larger" than the combined sales of Manchester competitors. After almost three decades of production, an editorial of 5 January 1874 made the rather more modest claim that the paper "has never ceased to have a circulation considerably larger than that of any other daily paper in the manufacturing districts of Lancashire and Yorkshire". It seems probable that there was a period during the 1860s and early 1870s when the Examiner and Times was more

successful and possibly more influential than both its Manchester rival and its provincial counterparts. An occasional extravagant claim within the newspaper itself, for which there was at least some justification, would have been a natural ploy in the competitive process. It is more difficult, however, to evaluate Ireland's claims to Combe, an old and respected friend. There are no sources which corroborate Ireland's accounts of the paper's sales and achievements; the sets of sales totals recorded by the Guardian staff may, of course, be equally contentious. The impression from the range of evidence is that the Examiner and Times was widely read and respected, as well as financially successful, during this period, but was perhaps never quite so pre-eminent as some of Ireland's statements suggest.

The Examiner and Times was produced, like its contemporaries, at the hub of the city's commercial activity. The various newspaper offices were each situated close to the junction of Cross Street and Market Street, immediately opposite one side or other of the Exchange and very close to the Stamp Office and, later, the Electric Telegraph Company's office. The Examiner was originally based at 22 Market Street, within Newall's Buildings, which had been the headquarters of the Anti-Corn Law League. In view of the close connections between the newspaper's founders and the League, it is possible that the Examiner was able to occupy the League's offices as the latter scaled down its operations early in 1846; equally, the plant used to produce the League's own newspaper may have been acquired on site by the Examiner proprietors. For most of its existence, however, the Examiner and subsequently the combined newspaper operated from 7 Pall Mall, immediately behind the east side of Cross Street; it also had additional premises at 1 Norfolk Street, adjacent to Pall Mall. The Guardian had originally been produced from 29 Market Street, but during the 1840s moved to offices at 4 Warren

Street, part of its eventual site at 3 Cross Street. The Manchester Courier was housed at 22 St. Ann's Square, on the opposite side of the Exchange from Cross Street, and later in Red Lion Street, off the Square. Before the 1848 merger the Manchester Times had been produced in Angel Court, again opposite the Exchange, off the north side of Market Street. During most of this period, therefore, the Manchester press was concentrated within a very small area. Their location close to the necessary sources of information is understandable, while their proximity to each other makes for an intriguing view of their day-to-day activities and rivalry.

During the mid-century a number of legislative constraints on newspaper production were removed, facilitating the expansion of those publications which had the capital and the capability to expand. In 1853 the duty payable by newspapers on each advertisement was abolished. Two years later the stamp duty requirement was withdrawn, which for many years had been a considerable burden in a newspaper's overhead expenditure. In 1861 the import tariff on paper was abolished. Both the Examiner and Times and the Guardian were sufficiently sound to be able to take advantage of these ameliorations. The front pages as well as many inside columns carried a wide range of advertisements. As a direct consequence of the removal of Stamp Duty, these two newspapers and their counterparts elsewhere were able to undertake daily, rather than twice-weekly, production. Once the paper supply became cheaper, newspapers increased the number of pages, particularly in the Saturday numbers.

Over a longer period newspapers also benefitted, of course, from technological advances. The spread of the railway networks during the 1830s and 1840s enabled newspapers to acquire information from other

areas and especially from London much more quickly. If the short-term effect was to extend the practice of reproducing reports from metropolitan and other provincial newspapers, this at least extended the coverage and probably the appeal of enterprising newspapers like the Guardian and the Examiner and Times. Of even more direct significance to newspaper production was the availability of the electric telegraph and increasingly sophisticated machinery for bulk printing. In 1847 the Guardian, the Examiner, the London and North West Railway Company and the Post Office established arrangements for the transmission of news from London to Manchester by means of electric telegraph. The new facility was first used on 23 November when the Queen's Speech at the opening of Parliament was included in the early evening edition of the Examiner. The telegraph was regularly used for parliamentary reports, notable London news and even for weather information. In practice it proved a somewhat unwieldy process to integrate into the production schedule for a particular edition. It was time-consuming, expensive and not always reliable because of technical faults. From June 1849 the Examiner and Times reverted for a time to rail communication, whether from its own reporters or via other newspapers, because of the high cost of the telegraph service. This change also prompted the paper to issue its weekday edition on Wednesday, like the rival Guardian. Previously Ireland had calculated on selling more copies by issuing the weekday number on Tuesday, which was market day in Manchester. Reliance on trains rather than telegraph, however, meant that the Monday parliamentary report could not reach Manchester in time for a Tuesday production. Clearly the Examiner and Times management could not contemplate issuing its mid-week edition devoid of current parliamentary news, leaving the Guardian to provide the only report.

To meet the demands of the newspaper trade - the local rivalry, the possibilities of expansion, the commercial and professional obligation to improve - both the Examiner and Times and the Guardian invested in progressively more powerful printing equipment. When the Guardian had begun printing in 1821, its Stanhope flat-bed press was capable of producing 200 single-sided pages per hour. The relative success of both papers and hence the intensity of their competition, but particularly the practical necessities of daily production from 1855, each led to the need for faster, more efficient and larger-scale printing. Freed from the Stamp Duty, newspapers could afford a lower selling price; hence many more copies were sold and the scale of production increased exponentially, from the twice-weekly output of around 8 000 copies (in the case of the two Manchester papers) to the urgent schedule of around 18 000 daily. Prior to June 1855 when the switch to daily production became commercially possible, the Examiner and Times presses were capable of printing 2 500 copies per hour. For the rapidly increasing circulations thereafter new machinery was needed. The two Manchester rivals were able to obtain the plant they needed from the New York engineering firm of Robert Hoe. Hoe's rotary presses, with four, six and later ten cylinders operating simultaneously, were also installed by the Times and the Daily Telegraph and by other British and European proprietors during the late 1850s and early 1860s. The machines were in fact constructed by the Manchester engineering firm of Joseph Whitworth, under contract to the American company and supervised by one of Hoe's engineers. William Conquest. By August 1860 the ten-cylinder machine acquired by the Examiner and Times was producing 20 000 copies per hour. Naturally this new technology was also expensive. Having installed a six-cylinder machine

for the Guardian in March 1858, Conquest reported to Hoe that, although "they are much pleased with the working of the machine... I think the money frightens them a little".<sup>22</sup> The similar machine purchased by Ireland early in the same year cost £3083 and prompted him to admit to George Wilson that the paper was "very hard up" in consequence.<sup>23</sup> Wilson had evidently promised financial assistance, but in a letter of 19 August, Ireland felt obliged to remind his co-proprietor that he had not yet upheld this promise. Some indication of the size of the workforce employed to produce the daily paper is given in Frederick Leary's History of the Manchester Periodical Press (unpublished MS, c. 1897). He records that in 1860 the Examiner and Times employed 40 typesetters, 38 machine operators and a further 30 clerical staff. Given that much of the production work was labour-intensive, this was nevertheless a considerable establishment and serves to emphasise the scale of the newspaper's operations during its most successful period.

Having outlined some of the constraints and improvements in the production of the Examiner and Times, it is appropriate to identify the paper's principal staff who contributed to its relative success, particularly during its first two decades as a daily. Among the journalists several individuals were prominent. Foremost was Henry Dunckley (1823-1896), the paper's longest-serving editor, from 1854 until its sale in 1889. Dunckley had been educated at Glasgow University in the 1840s and became a Baptist minister, serving in Salford from 1850.

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<sup>22</sup> Correspondence of R. Hoe and Co., quoted by F.E. Comparato in a brief account of the enterprise of the Hoe Company in selling its printing machinery to British and European newspapers - "'Old Thunderer's' American Lightning: Machinework and Machinations in Furnishing the First Hoe Rotaries to The Times, 1856-60", Journal of the Printing Historical Society, No. 13, 1978-79.

<sup>23</sup> Letter of 21 May 1858 from Ireland to Wilson, George Wilson Papers

He was evidently an accomplished writer, and it was in this connection that he came to the notice of the newspaper's proprietors. During his first year in Salford he had won an essay prize sponsored by the Religious Tract Society for a treatise on "The Glory and the Shame of Britain". In 1853 a Free Trade essay prize was offered by a group of former Anti-Corn Law League Council members, including George Wilson, Abraham Paulton and Henry Ashworth. Dunckley's essay, "The Charter of the Nations", was successful. John Bright's diary entry for 6 December noted that Dunckley "will be an acquisition to our district"<sup>24</sup> In the following year he was invited to succeed Paulton as editor. His leading articles in the newspaper came to be widely respected. His regular articles in the Saturday supplement under the pseudonym of "Verax" were particularly popular. Contemporaries recalled especially the influence of his pronouncements on the relationship between Church and State (a contentious issue of particular interest to a largely Nonconformist readership) and a series, "The Crown and the Cabinet". This concerned the place of the monarchy within the British political system, and was precipitated by the prominent public role adopted by Prince Albert, which caused considerable uneasiness among Liberals. It was a clear tribute to Dunckley's ability and influence that C.P.Scott invited him to contribute a regular political article in the Manchester Guardian in 1894, some five years after the former editor's era with the Examiner and Times had terminated. Scott had evidently wished to capitalise on Dunckley's powerful treatment of certain key issues in his Examiner and Times articles. While gratefully accepting the offer, Dunckley was reluctant to recycle old material:

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<sup>24</sup>Walling op.cit.

"...I cannot go back in any formal manner upon my past journalistic career"<sup>25</sup>

He undertook to provide articles.

"...giving the preference to such (issues as can - as you suggest - be treated with reference to the past..."

but, with a positive, philosophical and professional outlook, qualified his acceptance:

"...though for the sake of life and reality one must always be sure of finding a vivid starting point in the present."

Dunckley was awarded an honorary doctorate of letters by Glasgow University in 1883 in recognition of his editorial work over the previous thirty years with the Examiner and Times. In April 1889, following the sale of the newspaper, former colleagues from the printing staff presented him with an address and £500 "in recognition of the harmonious relations which had existed between them as employer and employed". On the same occasion he also received a portrait from a group of admirers, "for services rendered to the Liberal cause during the previous 40 years." Attention will inevitably be drawn to shortcomings in Dunckley's later years as editor, in relation to the demise of the Examiner and Times during the 1880s. It is clear, however, that he was a very effective writer and much respected by colleagues and contemporaries.

Several other notable individuals worked for the Examiner and Times either as staff reporters or on a regular freelance basis during Dunckley's long editorship. Henry Sutton (1825-1901), who was chief reporter between 1850 and 1853, was also a poet and published several anthologies. His philosophical work, The Evangel of Love (1847), greatly impressed Emerson, who invited Sutton to his private dinner party in

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<sup>25</sup> Letter from Dunckley to Scott, 5 January 1895: C.P. Scott Letters, Guardian Archives.

Broughton, in February 1848. Emerson was evidently very fond of the young writer, prompting George Searle Phillips, in his account of this occasion, to describe Sutton facetiously as "the apostle John".<sup>26</sup> Sutton later edited the Salford News and also worked for the Liverpool Albion. He was succeeded as chief reporter by W.P. Stokes, who had previously been the Times correspondent in Manchester. The next chief was W.S. Mackie, who became editor of the Edinburgh Daily Review in 1876, and whose brother, Alexander, owned a number of provincial newspapers, including the Warrington Examiner. Mackie's successor, William Lister, began his journalism with the Warrington newspaper, then worked for the Birmingham Morning News, before joining the Examiner and Times. Lister was one of the founder members of the Manchester Press Club in 1872.

Francis Espinasse (1823-1912), son of a French emigré and educated at Edinburgh High School, worked as a special correspondent for the Examiner and Times in Paris during the 1848 revolution. Occasionally producing other articles for the Manchester paper, his journalism also took him to London, where he wrote for The Critic, and Edinburgh, where for a time he edited the Edinburgh Courant. His first employment had been as an assistant at the British Museum Library. He published the first volume of a projected Life of Voltaire but did not complete the work. Espinasse was a friend of the Carlyles, visiting them when in London and periodically corresponding. With Ireland, Jacob Bright and Samuel Lucas, Espinasse was also involved in the Manchester-based campaign for secular education, serving as Secretary to the Lancashire Public School Association in 1849. John Mills, the Manchester banker and Ireland's close friend, supplied occasional articles on music and reports on concerts in Manchester and elsewhere. John Howard Nodal

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<sup>26</sup>"January Searle", "Emerson's banquet at Manchester", an appendix to Emerson, his life and writings (1855)

(1831-1909) was a sub-editor for the Examiner and Times during the late 1860s. He also edited a humorous periodical, the Free Lance, from December 1866 until July 1868. He had earlier been manager of the news department within the Cross Street office of the Electric Telegraph Company. When the Manchester Courier became a daily in 1864, Nodal joined it as a sub-editor. He moved to the editorship of the Manchester City News in 1871. Nodal had earlier worked as secretary to the Manchester Working Men's College from its commencement in 1858 until it was absorbed within Owens College three years later. Later in life he was an active member of the Manchester Literary Club, engaging in the study of dialects, and was the Club's president between 1880 and 1886. Thus Ireland usually had at his disposal a group of experienced journalists, often men with literary interests, a factor which would have strengthened the working relationship between the manager and his writers, reviewers and reporters.

Ireland's responsibilities as business manager would have left him very little time to make any direct contributions of his own to the newspaper. Yet it is likely that, in common with his counterpart Peter Allen of the Manchester Guardian and managers of other large-scale newspapers, some versatility was expected and forthcoming. It is probable that managers contributed as best they were able, according to individual interests and the restrictions on their time, finding some appropriate level between the political analyses of the editor and the daily news reportage from the journalists. In Ireland's case the opportunity which he created for himself was, naturally, literary reviewing. He elaborated this essentially self-contained feature, however, to develop a Saturday supplement for the Examiner and Times. In due course this was accorded its own title, the Manchester Weekly Times. The Weekly Times survived the ultimate demise of the parent

newspaper and so was able to acknowledge, in its obituary, Ireland's part in its origin.

"The idea of the literary supplement, which has proved so popular, came from him. At the time such a feature in a cheap weekly newspaper was quite unknown. For some years he made himself responsible for the editing of this portion of the journal, and he had the immense satisfaction of seeing the feature in which he took so much personal delight everywhere received with favour. ... The paper owes very much to his foresight and accurate appreciation of the tastes of the reading public..."<sup>27</sup>

Ireland had obviously sought opportunities to introduce some literary material in his early years with the Examiner and after the merger. Occasionally extracts from contemporary books and periodicals were incorporated, presumably selected by Ireland. Frequently the supplement would include a literary article or extended review, in addition to the usual brief notices and extracts. That for 15 April 1848 carried a survey of the main quarterly periodicals - the Edinburgh Review, the Quarterly Review and the Westminster Review. Given Ireland's literary interests and his extensive collecting of literary periodicals, it seems highly likely that he would have determined on the article and produced it. During the summer of 1848, the paper serialised Alexander Somerville's Autobiography of a working man (1848). The final two numbers of the Examiner in October 1848 took a natural interest in the appearance of Mrs Gaskell's Mary Barton, published a few days previously. The number for 28 October included several extracts without comment. On the following Tuesday more extracts were given together with a review. The portrayal of life and working conditions in Manchester was welcomed; the narrative was felt to be perhaps a little too melodramatic and

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<sup>27</sup> Manchester Weekly Times, 14 December 1894

unrestrained; but "the picture shows much geniality... and is full of interest and truth". The supplement for 20 April 1850 began a serialisation of the novel Marian Withers (1851) by the local authoress Geraldine Jewsbury, who was a close friend of Jane Welsh Carlyle. That for 10 August 1850 included a short essay by Leigh Hunt, "Description of A Hot Day", and an extract from Hunt's Autobiography, published earlier that year. The same supplement also included an extract from John Watkins' Life, Poetry and Letters of Ebenezer Elliott (1850). The scale and nature of this literary content, in a bi-weekly provincial newspaper, which still had only a modest circulation, can be attributed directly to Ireland. Apart from occasional notices and extracts, the Examiner's Manchester rivals did not include such material at this period. The actual extent of Ireland's initiative was relatively small but significant.

In these early years the supplement included engravings from recently published novels, notices of sales and exhibitions, as well as numerous publishers' advertisements. Another regular feature was a short thematic sequence of extracts, entitled "Select Thoughts and Sentiments". Often these had a moralising aim and were given pithy headings - for instance, "Doing Good" and "The Wisest the Most Forbearing". Given the quantity of literary material which Ireland was subsequently able to assemble for his Enchiridion, it may well be that these half-columns of short extracts in the supplement were earlier attempts of his in the spirit of anthologies. Ireland also arranged to reproduce the complete sequence of John Ruskin's 'Letters' from his Time and Tide by Weare and Tyne (1867) - which collectively comprise a philosophical and cultural survey of Victorian life, in the context of the contemporary agitation for further parliamentary reform. These 'Letters' appeared in the supplement between 1 March and 7 May 1867. Gradually during the 1860s,

however, the literary content of the supplement decreased, because of the pressure of news and other reportage in the daily schedule. During the 1870s there were occasional short stories and poems in Lancashire dialect by the local writers Edwin Waugh (who was the first Secretary of the Lancashire Public School Association) and Ben Brierley. By the 1880s the literary and illustrative content had virtually disappeared, whether as a policy change or an economic measure is not clear; possibly this may be an indication of Ireland's own gradual withdrawal from the day-to-day business of the newspaper.

The practice of issuing a weekly supplement with the Saturday edition, containing reflections on the issues of the week as well as more literary material, was also intermittently adopted by the Guardian and the Courier and by other provincial newspapers. Sometimes space did have to be curtailed for advertisements. The first number of the literary magazine Belgravia (1867-1889) included a facetious article by George Augustus Sala on "Market Street, Manchester", in which he contrived to be uncomplimentary about the Manchester press. Its newspapers were said to

"overflow with advertisements... but beyond telegrams and short paragraphs of general intelligence, and one short leader, denunciatory of somebody or something, there is not much reading in them".

Whether this was inconsequential or whether it related to Sala's own association with Ireland's Weekly Times, to which he had contributed a regular column, "Echoes of the Week", is not known. Yet the content of the Examiner and Times supplement, as constructed and overseen by Ireland, provides a refreshing addition to the newspaper's staple coverage of political, commercial and current affairs.

In earlier decades the Examiner and Times in general and the tone of its supplement, the Manchester Weekly Times, in particular, had attracted a notable commendation from Leigh Hunt, whom Ireland had known since 1837. In a letter of 2 June 1848 Hunt thanked Ireland for sending "a glorious batch of Examiners" and generously added

"...my Manchester namesake does more than abundant honour to its godfather in every way. It is one of the very best newspapers in England; is indeed a newspaper truly so called and yet a magazine to boot, as our family enjoyment of it here weekly testifies."<sup>28</sup>

Hunt's reference was to his own weekly periodical, The Examiner, which he had founded in 1808 and edited until 1821. There was a further titular link in that the appropriate section in Ireland's weekly supplement was headed "Literary Examiner", a natural sub-heading which, as Ireland would have known, Hunt had originally used for precisely the same purpose in his own publication. Writing to Ireland again in October 1848, Hunt acknowledged his interest in Somerville's autobiography, currently being serialised. In a later letter (27 October 1859) Hunt reaffirmed his "constant pleasure in reading ... both your original articles (often plucking out the whole hearts of questions) and the judicious and entertaining selections which you make from books".<sup>29</sup>

Ireland certainly included contributions of his own in the newspaper and its supplement when there was occasion to write on literary matters which particularly interested him. Sometimes these appeared as "Literary Examiner" articles; sometimes it was appropriate to insert a book review; on other occasions Ireland, rather oddly, published a letter of his own on some literary topic, as if communicating

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<sup>28</sup>The Correspondence of Leigh Hunt, ed. Thornton Hunt (1862), p. 122

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p.304

formally to the editor. For the most part these contributions were designed to draw attention to authors, such as Hazlitt and Hunt, whom Ireland considered were generally neglected. In other cases, drawing on personal knowledge, he sought to throw light on a particular issue relating to one of his favoured authors. Two contributions concerning Hazlitt were published close to the issue of Ireland's own bibliographical List of the Writings of William Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt (1868). The first, a review of William Carew Hazlitt's Memoirs of William Hazlitt (1867), appeared on 24 September 1867; the second, dealing with both Hazlitt and Hunt, on 7 May 1868. A letter from Ireland, concerning Hazlitt's 1827 review of Disraeli's novel Vivian Grey (1827), was printed on 12 August 1878. Ireland noted with satisfaction that Hazlitt had criticised what he saw as the novelist's affectation (the review had been entitled "The Dandy School"); as a Liberal Ireland was naturally unsympathetic towards Disraeli and was probably hindered, as a literary critic, from seeing any virtue in Disraeli's novels.

Ireland produced a relatively early article on Leigh Hunt ("The Genius and Writings of Leigh Hunt", 6 July 1847) in the period when he was still adventurously introducing literary material into the supplement. A later article on the life and character of Hunt appeared in October 1869, possibly, like his second Hazlitt article, attempting to draw attention to the recent publication of his List. Ireland inserted three reviews of works by Hunt. Firstly he wrote on the Autobiography (1850) in the number for 22 June 1850. On 1 March in the following year he drew attention to Leigh Hunt's London Journal, a periodical from the early 1830s which Hunt was persuaded to revive in 1849. A review of what was evidently a favourite piece by Hunt, "A Tale for a Chimney Corner", appeared in October 1869 (discussing Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner", before re-telling a ghost

story). The appearance of Talfourd's Final Memorials of Charles Lamb in 1848 gave Ireland the opportunity to produce a review in the Examiner for 12 August, Lamb being the third of the early nineteenth century essayists whom Ireland particularly esteemed.

Similarly the publication of Emerson's Society and Solitude collection of essays in 1870 would have been a welcome opportunity for Ireland to write on his American friend and on some of the material which Ireland would have originally encountered during the 1847-48 lectures. Again, Charles Eliot Norton's issue of The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1834-1872 in 1883 would have been a source on which Ireland would have felt prompted to write, in view of his acquaintance with the two authors and high regard for them. His review appeared in the Examiner and Times on 6 March 1883. He inserted three letters during 1881-82 on aspects of Thomas Carlyle, when there was more than usual interest in Carlyle following his death in February 1881. This was the period when Ireland was also providing copies of letters and other information for Conway's biography of Carlyle, and hence would have had material readily available for a number of newspaper pieces. These three concerned: the account of the destruction of part of Carlyle's manuscript of his French Revolution (1837); the author's early literary ambitions; and an outline of Carlyle's views on Louis Napoleon.

It could not be claimed that Ireland's occasional articles, reviews and letters on literary topics in the Examiner and Times introduce new data or provide analytical criticism. Leigh Hunt's fulsome tribute, in his October 1859 letter, relates not so much to any particular recent article - there had been nothing notable in the previous few months - but partly from grateful interest in the copies which Ireland regularly forwarded, from his recognition of Ireland's

perseverance in providing some artistic content within the body of a standard newspaper, and his understanding of the value of literary contributions like Ireland's for a new class of readers. Ireland's own, and the supplement's, literary articles were neither so regular nor so perceptive as the literary criticism which Hunt had been able to include in his own Examiner several decades earlier. Yet Ireland's pieces would have added to the knowledge and enhanced the perceptions of many contemporary readers of his provincial newspaper. In some cases the subject matter would have been fresh to them, the authors and titles hitherto undiscovered. Ireland's summarising of what he especially valued in the writings of Hazlitt, Hunt, Emerson and others would have developed the sensibilities and discrimination of his audience - both the comparatively well educated, who pursued these interests further through membership of the Literary Club, and some of the many who were taking advantage of the new public libraries.

Another of his occasional forays can be identified in the reporting of the death of Margaret Fuller, the American writer, in the summer of 1850. Ireland had met Fuller in August 1846 at the outset of her projected tour of Europe, and there is some evidence of at least one exchange of correspondence. The Manchester Guardian and Examiner and Times numbers for 7 August 1850 each carry the same basic information concerning the wreck of the "Elizabeth", in which Margaret Fuller had been returning from Italy to the United States, on 18 July in a storm off Long Island. Clearly the only source of information for both newspapers would have been the New York newspapers for 19 July, obtained via the packet steamer which happened to be leaving New York for Liverpool on the day following the storm. The Examiner and Times report, however, also provided the following elaboration:

"The Countess of Ossoli (late Margaret Fuller of Boston, Massachusetts) was returning to America after an absence of several years spent in foreign travel and in the principal foreign capitals. She enjoyed a brilliant and wide-spread reputation as one of the most gifted of American women."

These details of her whereabouts are likely to have been known only to Ireland among the Manchester journalists, and indeed to very few others in Britain. Equally, this estimation of her standing in North America could have come only from Ireland, who at that time would have been one of the few familiar with her writings in The Dial and elsewhere. Ireland's knowledge of Fuller would, of course, have been enlarged through conversation with her friend Emerson during the latter's 1847-48 visit. Ireland would have been aware that very few indeed of his readers would have known of Margaret Fuller; nevertheless he would have felt an obligation to put on record the details at his disposal and at the same time would have seen the opportunity of providing yet another literary introduction within the context of his newspaper's staple reporting. It seems probable that as regards writing for the newspaper, as distinct from determining policy and managing its affairs, he limited himself to occasional, fairly unobtrusive contributions of this kind, on matters in which he had a particular interest and specialised knowledge. Beyond that, however, he would have been instrumental in ensuring that the supplement did include its regular literary features of extracts and reviews.

The political causes to which the Liberal elements of the Manchester press responded and the circumstances in which they developed as newspapers were naturally also integral to their provincial contemporaries. The Birmingham Daily Post (1857-1918), the Leeds Mercury (1807-1901), the Liverpool Mercury (1811-1904) and the

Newcastle Chronicle (1825-1864), each serving industrial conurbations, were among the most prominent which maintained a moderate Liberal, occasionally Radical, view of affairs. In the context of a detailed survey of the Manchester Examiner and Times and its co-existence with other Manchester newspapers, a brief comparison with a similar provincial paper should afford a useful perspective.

The Sheffield Independent (1819-1938) was another example of a newspaper which began in Radicalism and gradually shifted its ground into a more pragmatic Liberalism. Like the successive ventures of the Guardian, Times and Examiner in Manchester, the aim of Henry Andrew Bacon, the founder of the Independent, was to provide an organ for forthright Liberal views, lacking in other local newspapers. Bacon considered James Montgomery's ostensibly Liberal Iris too timid in relation to the movement for political reform. The declared intention of the new weekly paper was, to champion "British independence and amelioration of the condition of the British people". Its self-justifying claim was that "at no Era of our history has it been so necessary to exert the influence of the Press, in the cause of an honourable Independence and a general Reform". When after a few months Bacon needed business partners, they were, like the Manchester Guardian's initiators, Unitarians - in this case from the Sheffield Upper Chapel. These co-proprietors included Thomas Asline Ward, a local cutlery manufacturer, and Michael Ellison, manager of the Duke of Norfolk's estates in the area. Ward served as editor from 1823 to 1829 and was energetically concerned to make the newspaper an influential political journal, as he was active in promoting educational and other improvements in the life of the town. His own initial declaration of policy "contemned slavish adherence to party", acknowledged "predilections in favour of the Whigs", but insisted that, if a Whig government were to

act unconstitutionally, the Independent would "chastise them with all (its) energies". His elaboration of his political views clearly makes him an early adherent of what was to become the 'Manchester School' corpus of policies. His first editorial advocated "The most rigid economy in the public expenditure ... A pacific policy towards other nations ... and a liberal commerical system which shall open as far as possible the markets of the whole world for the sale of our unrivalled manufacturers". Despite the respect which Ward enjoyed in Sheffield and his earnest attempts to maintain a Liberal weekly characterised by the independence of the paper's title, the business did not prosper during the 1820s, achieving circulations of only a few hundred. In 1829 the newspaper was sold to Robert Leader (1779-1861), a Sheffield stationer.

Several generations of the Leader family retained control of the Independent for the remainder of its lengthy career. An article marking the fiftieth anniversary of the paper's appearance acknowledged the influence of the Leader family in civic affairs and, in particular, via their newspaper. Their policy was said to be one of "democratic Liberalism, free trade, Parliamentary reform" and support for the incorporation of Sheffield, which was achieved in 1843.<sup>30</sup> Robert Leader junior (1809-1885) was editor from 1833 until 1875 and under his management the newspaper became more successful. By April 1839 its circulation had risen to 2,000 copies, and by 1850 was selling over 4,000 copies of each number. During the 1850s and 1860s it installed more sophisticated machinery, as papers elsewhere were doing, in order to increase efficiency and cope with daily production. Leader and Sons' own 1892 pamphlet giving the history of the Independent claimed that,

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<sup>30</sup>P. Harvey and P. Roberts, article in Sheffield Daily Telegraph 11 December 1969.

in making these installations, their newspaper "was ahead of all its rivals". While this was no doubt true in respect of the Sheffield Iris and the Tory Sheffield Mercury, it is noteworthy that the purchases of, for example, the Hoe rotary printers were in each case made some five or six years after the two principal Manchester papers had reached that stage of development. Similarly the Independent was not issued as a daily until 1861, whereas the Manchester Examiner and Times and the Guardian had each switched to daily production at the earliest opportunity, on the abolition of Stamp Duty in the summer of 1855. It is possible that the Independent had less capital at its disposal than its Manchester counterparts. It may also have been less ambitious. Considerably more successful than its two Sheffield contemporaries in the mid-century period, the Independent clearly did not have the spur of local rivalry which the two Manchester newspapers experienced.

The policies which the paper adopted during Leader's editorship were on many issues close to those already observed in the Examiner and Times and what one would anticipate from a broadly Liberal publication. Given the different personalities involved, at least some differing local conditions and the fact that Liberalism represented a broad spectrum of opinion, there are from time to time in the Independent interesting divergences from the 'Manchester School' outlook found in Ireland's newspaper. The Independent argued consistently for Corn Law reform. Like the Examiner and Times it also opposed factory legislation, seeing this as a matter to be regulated by economic forces rather than by government interference. It evidently endorsed an article by Alexander Somerville on land reform, which was included on 26 February 1848.<sup>31</sup> Taking a more advanced humanitarian view than most

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<sup>31</sup>"Primogeniture and the Conveyance of Land"

of its Liberal counterparts, it opposed capital punishment, urging that at very least, "the punishment shall not be made a spectacle".

It did not, however, endorse the aims of the secular education campaign. A letter of 3 July 1850 from Isaac Ironside, a prominent Sheffield Radical, to the Secretary of the National Public School Association suggested that the editor of the Independent might be relied on for support; and an earlier letter from Ironside (3 May 1850) had claimed that "The Bainesites have little influence in Sheffield".<sup>32</sup> However, an editorial of 15 January 1848 had made it clear that the Independent supported the nonconformist Voluntaryist cause (freedom for denominational, as distinct from secular, schools) led by Edward Baines, editor of the Leeds Mercury. The scope it saw for schools operated by different religious denominations was as part of a varied provision, certainly opposing any religious, and particularly Anglican, monopoly of education. There was condemnation in the number for 8 January 1848 of a report from Ontario of a movement to change what had been secular schools into "exclusively sectarian" institutions. Like the Examiner and Times the Independent supported the activities of the Anti-State Church Association. It reported - in January 1848 - a series of lectures, "On the Characteristics of the Age", recently given by George Dawson in Cheltenham and regretted the religious controversy which had ensued in the locality. Part of the report included Dawson's reference to the opposition he had encountered from Rev. Hugh Stowell in Manchester in 1846, and in this respect Ironside's letter of 3 May 1850 appears to be more accurate in asserting that "Stowellism is not known there (Sheffield)". The Independent welcomed moves

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<sup>32</sup> National Public School Association Papers, M 136/2/3/1767

towards the removal of University Tests.

The Independent maintained a central 'Manchester School' policy of opposition to increased spending on armaments. Similarly, on 26 February 1848, in the unrest leading to the various European uprisings, it was urging that "England be not involved in continental broils". In different political circumstances, however, it supported British engagement in the Crimean War in 1854 on the principle of "maintaining the rights of nations", claiming (3 June 1854) that this was a "duty, to which Mr. Bright shuts his eyes". In common with the Examiner and Times it offered encouragement to the cause of the exiled Hungarian leader, Lajos Kossuth, who visited Sheffield on 5 June 1851 as part of his British tour.

The Independent did not have anyone with Ireland's knowledge of literature who could supervise its coverage of such topics to the same extent. Nevertheless there are indications of its attempt to take some account of cultural affairs. As early as 1821 it occasionally included poems by James Montgomery. In September 1831 it advertised Ebenezer Elliott's Corn Law Rhymes and on 22 July 1848 published Elliott's "The People's Anthem". On 8 January 1848 it announced Emerson's forthcoming lectures in Sheffield, recommending him as an original thinker. The lectures were subsequently reported fully. From 1854 it published a supplement, the Weekly Independent, much in the style of the Manchester Saturday supplements: a summary of the week's news, an editorial digest, serialised novels, illustrations, and in later years articles on fashion and competitions.

The common ground between the Sheffield Independent and the Manchester Examiner and Times is encapsulated, in a literary connection, in a letter from George Searle Phillips (himself editor of a Sheffield

newspaper, the Free Press, for a short period in the mid-1840s) to George Jacob Holyoake.<sup>33</sup> Phillips mentioned that he was considering issuing a cheap edition of his own Memoirs of Ebenezer Elliott (1850) and expressed the view that favourable notices for such a publication could probably be counted on from, inter alia, Leigh Hunt, the Manchester Examiner (sic) and the Sheffield Independent. The similar view which the two newspapers would have had on the literary, social and political aspects of Elliott's life is an appropriate indicator of the distinctive place of each paper within its own community.

In Sheffield, then, the Independent was gradually able to establish itself as the most successful newspaper in its locality during the mid-century period, and the only truly Liberal paper in what was a relatively small conurbation. The press scene in Manchester was essentially different. The Manchester Guardian and the Examiner and Times, each Liberal newspapers of a different cast but each of some substance, found themselves co-existing for almost forty years. This rivalry, conducted at one period from adjoining buildings, was clearly a significant part of their evolution. Ireland's paper was the more orthodox Liberal of the two, almost invariably offering support to the Liberal Party in its columns. William Haslam Mills, writing a retrospective article on the occasion of the Guardian's centenary, reminded his readers of the position which the former rival had occupied in the previous century.

"If the sons of the most strait-laced Liberalism will throw back their minds to this period, they will find the Manchester Examiner and Times and not the Manchester Guardian in the furniture of old associations ..."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Letter of 20 June 1854, Holyoake Collection, 675

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"The Manchester Guardian: the paper and its readers, a century of history", Manchester Guardian, 5 May 1921.

The Guardian itself was always a more independent concern, avoiding direct partisan affiliations. Even when C. P. Scott became a Liberal MP in 1895, his paper did not commit itself unquestioningly to the party's policies. A clear indication of this independence appeared in one of Scott's early editorials, on 23 May 1872, when he had been in office for only four months. Endorsing the expressions of support for the Liberal Government of the day made at the opening of the Liverpool Reform Club, Scott nevertheless pointedly criticised extravagant promises of social reform:

"Even Conservatism, if sober, is better than Liberalism drunk".

Although the Guardian was less Radical than its rival in the early years of competition, under Scott's editorship in the 1870s and 1880s it became more positive, more astute and more radical, in a non-political sense, than the Examiner and Times.

The responses which the two newspapers made to a wide variety of current affairs provide interesting and sometimes vivid contrasts throughout the period of competition from the late 1840s until the mid-1880s. Several examples may be noted, whilst others, of more significance, will be considered in greater detail. In 1847 sharply differing interpretations appeared in the two newspapers during June and July of the prospects for food prices. The Guardian was forecasting increases. The Examiner argued that prices should fall, following imports of foreign wheat, since local prices were evidently much higher than Continental and the imports would alleviate shortages. The Guardian continued to be pessimistic. In February of the following year the two newspapers took issue over defence spending. There was clearly unrest in France, which was to culminate in revolution later in the year. The Guardian stressed French hostility to Britain, kindling

memories of the Napoleonic War of only a generation earlier, and raised the possibility of a French invasion. The Examiner discounted this, felt the matter was a French internal affair and, displaying Manchester School pacifism and economics, ruled out the need for increased armaments. Reporting the Hungarian uprising of the same year, the Guardian predicted failure for Kossuth and his party, suggesting that he did not lead a generally popular movement, but only a faction. The Examiner and Times, in contrast, supported Kossuth's struggle and lamented his subsequent defeat and exile; Ireland was among those who entertained the Hungarian leader during his visit to Manchester in November 1851. In October 1848, while the Examiner and Times gave a largely favourable notice to Mrs. Gaskell's Mary Barton, the Guardian criticised the novel for "its morbid sensibility of the conditions of the operatives".

In the conditions of direct competition, particularly when operating in close proximity, it was natural that journalistic tactics should at times become almost peevish, as one newspaper sought to gain an advantage over the other. By way of illustration, in early August 1850 the two papers received the latest despatches of North American news from the most recent arrival in Liverpool. Their source and its extent must have been identical. Yet where the Guardian on 7 August included a brief paragraph beginning, "Canadian politics are unimportant", the Examiner and Times evidently saw an opportunity to make better use of material which its rival had either overlooked or rejected, and in the number for 10 August quite deliberately began its equivalent report, "Canadian politics are interesting". As it happened, the matter for report was one of particular interest to the Examiner and Times principals, namely a legislative development in Ontario restricting denominational influence in education, which

coincided with the aspirations of Ireland and his colleagues in the Lancashire Public School Association.

The Crimean War inevitably brought into sharp focus the different political outlooks of the two newspapers. The Examiner and Times naturally supported the Bright and Cobden policy of non-intervention and pacifism, as a basis for better international relations and a more prudent use of national resources. The Guardian generally endorsed Palmerston's decisive foreign policy. Despatches from the Battle of Balaclava in late October 1854 reached England by mid-November. In reporting the charge of the Light Brigade on the 15th, the Examiner and Times was dispirited, referring to the event as "this desperate but inexplicable feat of war". The Guardian's report on the 18th, however, tried to be reassuring:

"However much we may regret the heavy loss sustained ... we may feel tolerably well assured that the lives of those who perished in that charge were not uselessly wasted."

The Examiner and Times was grudging and sceptical about the conduct of the war:

"... their (the allied generals') despatches do not convey much that would confirm public confidence in the speedy success of their operations".

The Guardian, by contrast, was almost disingenuous:

"In this extraordinary charge, no doubt, the survivors owed their safety to the amazement created amongst the enemy by their extreme audacity".

The Examiner and Times' editorial on the 18th was entitled, "The war - what will it cost us?" and concluded, with some exasperation:

"A nation had better be ruined than dishonoured. But ... by what strong ties are we bound to be quite certain that we are floundering in no blunder, and under any circumstances, how gladly should we seize every opportunity of escaping from the strife which is consistent with rectitude and self-respect!"

The Guardian, however, sought to rally its readers' patriotism:

"The people know thoroughly well that our national part in the affair is of their own deliberate adoption and that it rests with them to carry it through ... We are more truly a united people on the merits of this war than on any question within the memory of political observers ..."

The Examiner and Times' position was a difficult one to defend in a popular newspaper and its appearance of being unpatriotic certainly had an adverse effect on sales for a time. The Guardian understandably attempted to discomfit its rival, claiming, in the same number (18 November), that

"(the country's) unanimity is only rendered more conspicuous by the few faint and scattered murmurs that are properly ascribed to the wanderings of political lunacy, or the exigencies of a most perverted ambition".

This was a clear reference to John Bright, and the Examiner and Times was further reproached in the next number (22 November) for being the "only newspaper of respectability adopting, at a moment like the present, Mr. Bright's opinions on the war". The Guardian continued the offensive against Bright on 24 January 1855, refuting his moral objection to their policy -

"He refers our almost unanimous approval of the war to the fact that it stimulates the sale of newspapers"

- by suggesting that Bright's real concern was the correspondingly poor sales of the Examiner and Times. Interestingly both newspapers, in addition to printing despatches from Lord Raglan and Lord Lucan, included extracts from French and Russian newspaper accounts of the war.

The American Civil War in the following decade, while not involving British military engagement, affected Manchester even more directly, since it terminated for a time the supply of cotton from the Southern states. With the exception of Thomas Ballantyne's short-lived weekly, the Manchester Review (1860-61), the Examiner and Times was the only prominent newspaper to uphold support for the North, despite the economic consequences for Manchester and the surrounding areas. The basic issue of slavery was sufficient for Ireland and Dunckley, as it was for John Bright. They were unhappy about the North's military initiatives and its blockade of Southern ports, but were sure that the Northern cause was essentially right and that the Southern states should not be allowed the latitude to perpetuate slavery. The Guardian, too, could not condone slavery:

"Our feelings and our interests are alike set against the Southerners ..." (11 November 1861)

but it took a more pragmatic view of the wider political issues:

"... yet, for the life of us, we cannot look kindly upon their enemies ... We ought to support the North; but we cannot and do not".

Similarly in the previous week (2 November):

"There are a great many things in the world which we do not like, but which we do not go to war to put down."

Despite the slavery problem, the Guardian felt that the Southern states had a right to secede from the Union. The anti-Southern view, however, appears to have had extensive support in Manchester and the cotton towns, despite the hardships created by the unavailability of American cotton. Henry Adams, son of the American ambassador in London, visited Manchester for five days in November 1861 and gained the

impression (from, inter alia, a local "newspaper editor"<sup>35</sup> - possibly Dunckley or Ireland) that those involved in the cotton trade would maintain their support for the North and take no part in moves to break the Union blockade of exports from the Southern ports. A supporter of the anti-slavery movement, Rev. Samuel Garrett, an Evangelical minister, felt that the Examiner and Times was "more honest than the London papers" in its stand on this issue, and that "The cotton famine in the North of England awoke men's consciences there."<sup>36</sup> It is true that there were local initiatives in Manchester and other Lancashire towns to express support for the Southern cause, just as associations were formed with the contrary aim. It is significant, however, that when the immediate issue was not one of patriotism but of economic recession, the Examiner and Times did not apparently suffer as it had for a time because of its stand during the Crimean War.

Despite the numerous instances of philosophical differences and day-to-day rivalry, there were occasions when common interests led the two newspapers to co-operate. Although their news coverage was widened by the facilities of the electric telegraph from the late 1840s onwards, they found, as did other provincial newspapers, that the service was cumbersome and expensive. An even more irksome factor, as these newspapers became more ambitious, more sophisticated in their production and scope, and jealous of their individualities, was the monopoly exercised by the Electric Telegraph Company on the content of its news transmissions. Moreover, what the newspapers received were identical despatches, imposing the same kind of restraint as they had

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<sup>35</sup> Quoted by A. W. Silver, "Henry Adams' 'Diary of a Visit to Manchester'", American Historical Review, 51, no.1, October 1945

<sup>36</sup> E. R. Garrett, ed., Life and Personal Recollections of Samuel Garrett (1908)

to accept in obtaining overseas news from deliveries of foreign newspapers. While newspapers could employ their own parliamentary reporters and, at greater cost, send journalists on specific overseas assignments, their access to metropolitan news and reports coming into London from elsewhere was effectively constrained. In October 1865 several Manchester proprietors collaborated to form the Newspaper Telegraph Association to try to counteract this monopoly. This led in due course to a meeting in Manchester in June 1868 of proprietors from several provincial newspapers, J. E. Taylor junior taking the chair and Ireland representing the Examiner and Times. This meeting, in turn, prompted parliamentary legislation later in the year, by which control of the telegraph system was to be assumed by the Post Office. The expense of having journalists permanently based in London to transmit their own news reports was presumably partly offset by the lower Post Office telegraph charges and justified by the independence which the newspaper gained. The body established to oversee this reorganisation was the Press Association, which held its first meeting in London in March 1869, Taylor and Ireland again representing their respective papers.

At a more personal level there were regular instances of individuals moving from one of the two newspapers to work for the rival. Thomas Ballantyne began his Manchester journalism with the Guardian, became the first editor of the Examiner and later again wrote for the Guardian, first as London correspondent, then based back in Manchester. John Mills wrote articles on fiscal reform on a free-lance basis for both papers, in addition to his intermittent concert reviews for the Examiner and Times. Ultimately Henry Dunckley moved from editing the Examiner and Times to writing feature articles for the Guardian. A particularly interesting example of this mobility is William Evans

(1824-1883), a printer. After serving his apprenticeship with the firm which printed the Anti-Corn Law League newspaper, Evans worked for Alexander Ireland's company, whose technical resources were largely devoted producing the Examiner and Times. Evans became manager of Ireland's printing department, subsequently worked on the production of the Guardian and eventually became both a partner in the newspaper's printing company, with Taylor and Jeremiah Garnett, and co-proprietor of the subsidiary evening publication, the Manchester Evening News (1868-).

The Guardian was ultimately successful in disposing of the competition from the neighbouring Examiner and Times. For a lengthy period, however, the rivalry had been extremely serious, particularly during the late 1850s and in the following decade. Any prolongation of the Guardian's difficulties in this period, or a different permutation of the skills and influences involved, might have seen the Examiner and Times emerging as the dominant Liberal newspaper. Ireland's paper, for instance, seized the initiative to switch to daily production a few days ahead of the Guardian in the summer of 1855, and in fact before the crucial legislation abolishing Stamp Duty had finally been enacted. The Guardian was sceptical about the effect of daily production on the quality of the newspapers to be produced, but could not, of course, afford to resist the move. A rather grudging editorial in its first daily number (2 July) commented

"We may regret it was not reserved to us to give the first daily sheet to the public of Manchester; but we must acknowledge that we have been outstripped by competitors whose zeal to serve the public has been greater than their desire to obey the law".

The Guardian's first dilemma as a daily was whether to reduce its price to 1d, like the Examiner and Times, or to remain at 2d and hope to retain its sales despite the higher price, thereby creating a larger

income. Initially it opted for the latter course. Two years later however, the Guardian conceded this particular tactical struggle, presumably because of a perceived threat to sales. When the Guardian took this step of reducing its price to 1d, Friedrich Engels had claimed, with some relish, that "... its attempt to turn itself into a first-class provincial paper has completely failed!"<sup>37</sup> As one more feature of the day-to-day rivalry, David Ayerst, in his comprehensive survey, Guardian: Biography of a Newspaper (1971), records the satisfaction which Peter Allen, the Guardian's business manager, took in concealing the planned price decrease from the rival staff until the first 1d number appeared. Ayerst argues that on the basis of the larger income from its higher price as a daily, the Guardian was able to provide a better news service. Since the difference in price lasted only until 1857, however, and the reduction to 1d was followed by a difficult financial period, as the Guardian, like its rival, installed new machinery, the initial retention of the higher selling price and any improvements which accrued were probably not of long-term advantage to the newspaper. Certainly the Guardian's profits appear to have declined sharply in this period and Ayerst cites Peter Allen's acknowledgement that his own and his colleagues' families experienced a worrying degree of financial constraint. It is probable that for most of the 1860s the Examiner and Times had the larger circulation. By the late 1870s, however, and during the 1880s the Guardian was producing a better newspaper than the Examiner and Times because it was by then better managed and on a sounder financial footing. The Guardian had also moved its premises in 1864 to what was presumably a less expensive site in Deansgate; but by

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<sup>37</sup> Letter to Karl Marx, quoted in translation in W. O. Henderson and W. H. Chaloner, "Friedrich Engels in Manchester", Memoirs and Proceedings of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, Vol. 98, 1954-57.

the early 1880s it was able to finance a new building on Cross Street, adjoining the Examiner and Times building on Pall Mall.

Thus the balance of success between the two newspapers shifted over several decades. Initially the Manchester Guardian was inevitably stronger than its younger rival, and after a difficult phase of expansion and serious competition was later able to consolidate its position. The thirty-eight years of competition from the Examiner and Times between 1848 and 1886 can now be seen as a relatively short time in the life-span of the Guardian. There has been no comparable local competition since that time and the Guardian has assumed national and even international standing. Its period of sustained local rivalry should, however, be recognised as a significant part of Manchester newspaper history. Both newspapers, moreover, perhaps fired by the local rivalry, had made considerable achievements in their respective publications. They were more substantial than other provincial newspapers, covering a wide spectrum of affairs; at the same time this variety was well classified, its typography clear and, particularly in the supplements, attractive. Altogether their standards came to approximate more to those of the best metropolitan newspapers.

There were, however, more pervasive weaknesses within the newspaper which rendered it particularly vulnerable at this juncture. Although Ireland and Dunckley had steered the paper successfully through the first ten years or so of their partnership, it seems clear that they were not so able as Charles Prestwich Scott proved to be, once he had settled in to the Guardian editorship. In any case a much younger man, Scott evidently combined most of the functions of leader-writer, policy-maker and business manager, which for the Examiner and Times were divided principally between Dunckley and Ireland. Scott was

probably thereby able to bring more decisiveness and direction to the Guardian's development. Dunckley's particular strength as a writer, especially on political and religious issues, may in fact have been more appropriate to a weekly periodical than within the context of a daily newspaper. At the same time he and Ireland were from the generation of journalists who, in the mid-1850s had had to adapt from bi-weekly to daily production. William Johnston, in his 1851 essay on "The Press", argues that the pressure of frequent production probably restricted the perspective of those responsible, and may have militated against more far-sighted judgement. Patently this was less true of Scott, from a later generation of journalists, who, as newspaper reader, before his active involvement in journalism, would have been accustomed to daily reportage and analysis, and yet was able to bring a more detached judgement to his editorial work. There were, moreover, positive practical weaknesses in Dunckley's method of working and, perhaps more particularly, in Ireland's management by the 1870s, when Scott was establishing himself. Both evidently made a practice of leaving the newspaper office for home before the next day's number was complete. This proved particularly embarrassing in December 1879 when Ireland and Dunckley had left before the telegraph report of the Tay Bridge railway disaster was received late in the evening. The Examiner and Times thus missed the dramatic story, while the other Manchester papers were able to include it as the most prominent feature in the next day's number. A memoir of Ireland by someone who "knew him intimately both in business and in his immense library at Bowdon" suggested that he increasingly pursued his enthusiasm for literature to the neglect of his business commitments.<sup>38</sup> Ireland is said to have

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<sup>38</sup>Undated article by "J.M.S.", no source specified, miscellaneous microfiche material relating to Alexander Ireland (Manchester Public Library)

withdrawn from the day-to-day running of the newspaper in 1882, which, probably not without significance, was also to be his most productive year as a writer.

The demise of the Manchester Examiner and Times was precipitated in 1886 by the Gladstone Government's explicit avowal of a policy of Irish Home Rule. The Manchester Guardian had itself been a gradual convert to Home Rule as the most pragmatic and most honourable solution to the Irish problem. In 1864 it had opposed an early indication of Gladstone's perception of such a solution. During Scott's editorship there appeared an emphasis on how successive governments should deal with the problem. Even in the early 1880s, however, Scott himself was still reluctant to envisage complete devolution, though welcoming various possible compromises for the transfer of authority to "honest" Nationalists as distinct from Fenians. By 1886 Scott and evidently many other Liberals had assimilated Gladstone's policy and the Guardian accordingly pursued a positive argument in favour of Home Rule. The Examiner and Times inclined to John Bright's opinion that coercion to enforce essentially English-oriented policies was the right course. In other circumstances Bright might have been expected to be sympathetic to the claims of independence from a British 'colony', with the prospect of saving considerable national expenditure and manpower. However, the frequent violence of nationalist extremists in Ireland and the Fenian bombings in Manchester itself undermined any inclination Bright might otherwise have entertained towards the principle of Home Rule. The fact that Irish MPs appeared to condone these acts of violence antagonised him further. He was probably also apprehensive that an independent Ireland would have an Established Roman Catholic Church and was wary of the designs which this body might be expected to have on the country's education system. Lacking in decisive leadership at this

junction, the Examiner and Times was inclined to ponder the issues and continue to urge caution within the framework of a British administration.

This was a policy from earlier decades, which had failed to recognise some shifting of ground within English politics, even at a local level. P. F. Clarke, in Lancashire and the New Liberalism (1971), notes that the various Manchester Liberal Associations had all indicated their support for Gladstone's policy early in 1886. Yet the Examiner and Times, which, as Ireland acknowledged, with possibly rueful irony, in the following year, had "always been a staunch and committed supporter of Mr. Gladstone and his Cabinet",<sup>39</sup> deviated from the adventurous party line on this occasion and was apparently unaware of, or unresponsive to, local Liberal opinion. Gladstone's policy proved to be widely popular, doubtless for a variety of reasons; the hesitant and somewhat obtuse views in the Examiner and Times contrasted poorly with the bold recommendations from the Guardian. In a more significant switch than at any time since the issue of the Crimean War, readers were attracted to the Guardian from the Examiner and Times. Although the Manchester Guardian did not ultimately take over the failing Examiner and Times, it did gain most of its former rival's readership and, in some respects, occupied the political ground which had been the province of the Examiner and Times in its more distinctively Radical days. Interestingly, the Guardian was to maintain an unpopular anti-war stance during the Boer War (1899-1902), similar to the position adopted by the Examiner and Times during the Crimean War.

Although the latter continued, with Dunckley as editor and Ireland

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<sup>39</sup> Letter from Ireland to William Carew Hazlitt, 15 April 1887, British Museum, Additional Manuscripts 38906, f.6. Hazlitt had evidently sought a reference from Alexander Ireland in applying for a post to Joseph Chamberlain, who was, of course, the leader of the Liberal Unionist faction which opposed the Home Rule policy.

as proprietor for two and a half years after this crux, it was irrevocably weakened. Despite the suggestions of Alexander Ireland's slackening managerial control in the years leading up to his retirement in 1882, and the sudden upsurge in his literary output during that year, there are some grounds for conjecturing that, even at this stage, the Examiner and Times became more vulnerable after his departure. It is conceivable that Dunckley, whose forte had always been writing rather than any wider responsibility, and his less experienced colleagues were not only less adept than Ireland in the broader aspects of managing the newspaper, but also less able - or may be even less inclined - to resist John Bright's influence on the Irish Home Rule question. Mrs Mills claims that, in a discussion between Ireland, Jacob Bright and her husband, "some years before Mr. Gladstone arrived at his convictions and policy"<sup>40</sup> these three had been united in their support for Home Rule. It is ironic that this measure of difference between the Bright brothers should prove so significant for the fortunes of the Examiner and Times and in due course for Ireland's personal finances in particular. Jacob Bright, too, was a co-proprietor of the newspaper at this stage, but presumably was also unable to modify its adherence to his brother's view, at least until the practical damage had been done in terms of rivalry with the Guardian.

In his editorial for 1 June 1886 Scott asserted that

"To do justice to Ireland, to bring peace in the relations of the two parts of the kingdom, the Liberal Party as we know it must be shattered and re-created."

This shattering process certainly took place over the next decade, the Liberal Unionist faction led by Joseph Chamberlain effectively withdrawing a substantial minority of support from the Liberal Party. In the period following the 1867 Reform Act and the 1870 Education Act,

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<sup>40</sup>Mrs Mills, op. cit. p.127

the greater educational opportunities - both at an elementary level in the Board Schools and in the consolidation of institutions providing higher education - aided by the expanding availability of information via the press, all led to an increased political awareness among newspaper readers and to a clearer focus on major issues than the Examiner and Times could match, in the crucial instance of Irish Home Rule. It could not respond adequately to the needs of the times in the mid-1880s. In what might be seen as a more polarised political scene in the 1880s and 1890s, there was perhaps no longer sufficient scope for two Liberal newspapers in Manchester. Engels readily recognised this polarisation and the abandoning of the middle ground, occupied by the Guardian, in its former days, and subsequently by the Examiner and Times. His analysis was that

"All the Manchester prejudices of the Liberals of 1850 are today articles of faith only with the Tories, while the Liberals know full well that for them it is a question of catching the labour vote if they intend to continue their existence as a party."<sup>41</sup>

This change in the political landscape was also recognised by Dr. Alexander Mackennal, minister of Bowdon Downs Congregational Church, in a memorial sermon for John Mills in October 1896. Recalling Mills', and Ireland's long connection with the Manchester Examiner and Times, Mackennal observed that the paper "did so good a work, and helped to prepare a constituency and lay a foundation for the eminent service which the Guardian is rendering today."<sup>42</sup>

Katherine Chorley, in Manchester Made Them (1950), attributed the

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<sup>41</sup>Letter to A. Bebel, 5 July 1892, K. Marx and F. Engels, op. cit., p.526

<sup>42</sup>Quoted by Mrs. J. Mills, op. cit., p.388

decline of Manchester Liberalism in the last two decades of the nineteenth century to precisely that exodus of businessmen and their families to the suburbs and nearby towns which Mills and Ireland exemplified, living in Bowdon, some ten miles south of the city centre. Both naturally travelled to Manchester daily; neither had any significant involvement in local affairs other than social activities, Yet it does appear probable that Ireland did give increasing time to his own literary pursuits rather than his newspaper commitments, towards the end of his managerial responsibility in 1882. John Mills, writing to W. B. Hodgson on 21 May 1878 concerning "miserable strikes and bad trade in Lancashire", commented significantly that "one can hardly forget (them), even in these bosky and bloomy gardens of Bowdon".<sup>43</sup> At the same time it is difficult to envisage the intensive activity of, say, the Anti-Corn Law League or, on a smaller scale, the Lancashire Public School Association taking place if the activists had been commuting considerable distances rather than living close to the city centre, as those concerned were in the 1840s and 1850s.

Clearly it was a long-term policy error within the Examiner and Times to associate so closely with the Liberal Party, leading the paper's principals to be less than fully aware of the changes that were gradually re-shaping Liberalism and rendering them incapable of adapting to meet this challenge. Some of this intransigence it may have acquired from John Bright; certainly he was something of an *éminence grise* in the papers' affairs in the long period after withdrawing his own financial stake in 1847. The Guardian had chided him for commending the "exceptional integrity" of the Examiner and Times' stand on the

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<sup>43</sup> Letter published by Mrs. J. Mills, op. cit., p.351

Crimean War, when it assumed that Bright had retained a close interest in, and influence on, the paper's conduct. Absalom Watkin, a moderate Liberal, and father of Edward Watkin (one of the founders of the Manchester Examiner), who differed from Bright on the Crimean issue, noted with regret the authority which Bright was evidently able to wield among at least some of the Manchester Liberals. Watkin's guests for dinner on 22 November 1855 included Bright and Ireland. Bright evidently spoke dismissively of distinguished politicians among his contemporaries and Watkin recalled that:

"I could see that he thought himself superior on the whole to anyone else (in Parliament) ... observed also that he was considered an oracle by ... Ireland (and the others)"<sup>44</sup>

A few years earlier Ireland's paper had found itself in a potentially embarrassing position over an issue on which John Bright took a very firm line - and this on a Manchester platform, before a large and distinguished Liberal audience, on an occasion which the paper could not ignore. The occasion was Lajos Kossuth's visit to Manchester in November 1851 and the issue was the nature of the support which could reasonably be invoked for the cause of Hungarian independence. It is safe to assume that Paulton (as editor), Ireland (as business manager and proprietor) and co-proprietors Henry Rawson (who led the delegation which formally welcomed Kossuth on his arrival in the city) and George Wilson (who chaired the 11 November Free Trade Hall meeting at which Kossuth spoke) each wished to express the strong sympathy with the justice of the Hungarian cause which is evinced in the editorial of

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<sup>44</sup> A. E. Watkin, Absalom Watkin: Extracts from his journal 1814-1856, p.299

the 12 November number. The Examiner and Times was evidently impressed by Kossuth's public performance. The inner circle of Manchester Liberals, which would have included Ireland, were no doubt also inspired at a personal level, from their private meetings with Kossuth, including that at Ireland's Bowdon home following the Free Trade Hall meeting. Among these men of influence, experienced in public campaigns, there would have been a natural desire to offer active support.

Yet the "peace principles" of the Manchester School ruled out support for military intervention; and, in the extreme form propounded by John Bright, would hardly have endorsed Kossuth's own resort to armed struggle, as distinct from his political activities both during his governorship and latterly in exile. John Bright's unequivocal declaration in his Free Trade Hall speech was against any "war spirit" which might emerge from the meeting. Kossuth, for his part, made it clear that

"I am not come to entreat England to take up arms for the restoration of Hungary"<sup>45</sup>

but would welcome financial support and sustained public pressure, in the form of meetings, petitions and newspaper coverage. However, a detached observer, the authoress and translator Catherine Winkworth (1827-1878), provides some insight into the difficulty which arose for the Examiner and Times. In a letter of 13 November to her sister Emily, she records that Kossuth also expressed a wish that the British Government might at least declare itself prepared to take military

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<sup>45</sup> Manchester Examiner and Times, 12 November 1851

action against Austria and Russia, calculating that the threat of force could be sufficient to effect an Austrian withdrawal from Hungary. Such a proposition was naturally unacceptable to Bright. This exchange, which evidently took place after the main speeches, was not recorded by the Examiner and Times, despite its extensive reporting of the meeting and of Kossuth's visit. It seems probable that the paper's policy-makers found themselves in a dilemma on this point, not wishing to appear lukewarm in their support for Kossuth, but unwilling to compromise their "peace principles" - and very probably urged by Bright not to do so.

The Examiner and Times response was to focus attention on a counter-attack of criticism levelled at Kossuth in less sympathetic newspapers and from Tory politicians. The same 12 November number reported briefly on a Manchester Council meeting at which some Tory members had objected to the disproportionate attention being given to Kossuth's visit, compared with that of Queen Victoria in the previous week. The account of the formal procession through the streets of Manchester recorded that

"In Piccadilly, several copies of the Times, which had accused Kossuth of republicanism and dismissed his English supporters as "scum", were burnt, amid loud plaudits and exultant cries."

The 8 November number, anticipating Kossuth's visit and noting the criticism already roused by his reception in London a few days earlier, included a seven-stanza poem, "The Detractors of Kossuth", by "J. M." (very probably John Mills, who certainly shared Ireland's admiration).<sup>46</sup> The following number, for 15 November, had an editorial

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<sup>46</sup> Prior to lecturing in Crewe in March 1857, Kossuth stayed with the Mills family in Nantwich.

entitled "Lajos Kossuth and his calumniators" and also included a remarkable, anonymous, ten-verse poem, "Farewell to Brave Kossuth, the Noble Magyar!". The first nine of these verses are a rather florid eulogy of Kossuth's noble ideals and strength of purpose; the final verse, however, becomes an advertisement for a national chain of tailors, comparing the reliability of the products with Kossuth's own perseverance, and appending the addresses of various shops! Evidently no-one's editorial sensibilities were jarred by the juxtaposition of a homage in poetic form, according with the paper's own view of Kossuth, and a (presumably remunerative) piece of commercial opportunism. Rather it was presumably taken as further indication of popular support for the Hungarian cause - or contrived, with the advertiser, to suggest this.

The editorial for 12 November, moreover, did not fail to notice Kossuth's epigram, that "commerce is the locomotive of principles", which Paulton, the current editor, recognised was calculated to make a favourable impression on a Manchester audience, many of whom had participated a few years earlier, often in the very same hall, in the anti-Corn Law campaign. Again, probably uneasily conscious of the limit to which it could urge active support for an independent Hungary, the newspaper was not averse to a little self-congratulation and rallying:

"On passing the Examiner and Times office, Kossuth, whose attention was called to it by one of his companions, bowed in courteous acknowledgement ... at the office a large flag was hung out, with the words "Free Trade; Free Press; Free People; Welcome, Kossuth."

It seems reasonable to conclude that Paulton and Ireland were simplifying their tactics in this display, in the hope of covering the weakness of their position on this particular issue. By comparison, the Manchester

Guardian, more conservative at this period than it had originally been under J. E. Taylor and than it was to become under C. P. Scott, could afford to concentrate on antipathy towards Austria and Russia. At the same time it applauded Kossuth's high ideals and dignified bearing, without contemplating any action that might be required in pursuit of those ideals.

What in some respects was a comparable dilemma could have arisen during the following decade in the Examiner and Times coverage of the American Civil War. John Bright was certainly discomfited by the issue: opposed to slavery and hence to an independent Confederacy, but also uneasy at the Union's aggression. It can be surmised that the problem of slavery and its location in the USA represented a more immediate and intelligible issue for an English, and particularly a North West, audience than had Kossuth's case for Hungarian independence, despite the interest roused by his 1851 visit. Possibly, too, Ireland and Dunckley, at the height of their powers and of the paper's success, felt more secure in handling the American issue. The apprehension of the Lancashire cotton interests may in fact have strengthened their hand, enabling them to concentrate on the moral issue of slavery and its unpleasant realities. Ireland's own conviction would have been fortified by his close contacts with numerous anti-slavery Americans. Naturally reports were given of the Union blockade of Confederate ports and of the main events of the war itself, but avoided explicit discussion of the separate moral issue which troubled Bright: namely, whether the end (abolition of slavery) justified the means (Civil War).

There is an interesting comparison, on this relationship between politics and the press, in the case of the Scottish Radical, William Weir, who had repeatedly been criticised and constrained by the moderate

Liberal proprietors of the Glasgow Argus during his editorship of 1833-39. Perhaps, unrealistically, Weir had tried to pursue an independent course in the paper, but ultimately bowed to the resistance and resigned. In a farewell speech he reflected on the danger he had tried to avoid:

"The sin that most easily besets the newspaper press - whether calling itself Liberal or Conservative - (is) a too great inclination to flatter the prejudices of that section of Society by which it (is) supported."<sup>47</sup>

The Examiner and Times rendered itself vulnerable by framing its policy in terms of loyalty to the Liberal Party, and ultimately to a faction, rather than maintaining a truly independent judgement. Its principals were accordingly perplexed when John Bright and the Liberal Government of the day were no longer in harmony. A more distinctive policy had never been part of the paper's tradition, from its outset in the aftermath of the Anti-Corn Law League. Towards the end of his career Scott, by comparison, was acknowledged to have

"kept the heart and mind of his paper free from the control of any power outside it, and used it as an instrument of civilisation, and not as a mere hoarding for any one party to stick its placards on."<sup>48</sup>

Part of his paper's prosperity, at least, had derived from its successful emergence from the years of competition with the Examiner and Times, achieving greater maturity in terms of policy as well as keeping pace with its rival in means of production.

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<sup>47</sup> Quoted by K. J. Cameron, "Finance, Politics and Editorial Independence in the Early Victorian Provincial Press: The Case of the Glasgow Argus 1833-1847", Publishing History, Vol. V, 1979

<sup>48</sup> Article on the Manchester Guardian centenary, Observer, 1 May 1921

From 1886 onwards the reduced circulation inevitably caused financial problems for the Examiner and Times. Liberal leaders in the North West would have preferred J. E. Taylor junior, the Guardian proprietor, to buy its near neighbour and former rival, so as to avoid a take-over by Liberal Unionists who had been encouraged by the Examiner and Times' initial aversion to Irish Home Rule. It appears, however, that Taylor was unable to negotiate an exchange with Ireland and his co-proprietors, their long rivalry with the Guardian probably predisposing them to resist such a move even in financial adversity. In January 1889 the Examiner and Times was in fact purchased by a Liberal Unionist consortium, the Manchester Press Company, which also acquired the Weekly Times and the printing business of Alexander Ireland and Co. The venture did not prosper, losing £60,000 by 1891, when it was put up for re-sale. Several memoranda from C. P. Scott in the early part of the year reveal that the Guardian was still considering what advantage it could derive, if any, from the debris of the Examiner and Times:

"The Examiner dying - possible purchase" (undated)

"Need to purchase its premises and possibly Weekly Times" (20 February)

"Hope that the Unionists will buy, otherwise we buy premises and plant, nothing else"  
(8 March)

"Hold off at present and get it more cheaply later on" (9 March)

"Negotiations off; wait to be approached"  
(14 March)

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In April 1891 the paper was acquired by a new consortium, which, although it assumed the title Manchester Examiner Company Ltd., was in fact based

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<sup>49</sup> Guardian Archives, letters and miscellaneous papers of C. P. Scott

in London. In October, however, there was a further transfer, this time to a group led by Thomas Sowler, proprietor of the Conservative Manchester Courier. Rationalising its resources, the new company switched some of the printing to the Courier premises and reduced its staff, but found itself involved in several lawsuits for wrongful dismissal. In July 1893 there was yet another re-sale, but the paper survived only until the following March. At this point the Guardian did finally acquire the Examiner and Times' adjoining site and was able to extend its own Cross Street premises at the rear through to Pall Mall. Thus the final years of the Examiner and Times were somewhat ignominious as its successive owners struggled with mounting difficulties, some of which, as has been seen, had their origin in inherent weaknesses from its more successful days.

The output of Alexander Ireland and Co., had in fact remained very limited, consisting mostly of small-scale magazines and pamphlets, even handbills and tickets, but only the occasional book. In the 1850s there were programmes, tickets and announcements for concerts at the Free Trade Hall. In 1866-67 the firm produced the seventeen numbers of a literary periodical, Country Words. The contributors included Mrs George Linnaeus Banks (1821-1897), whose biographer, E. L. Burney, has claimed that "for typography and general appearance (Country Words) equalled London and Edinburgh productions". In the 1870s there was the Manchester Athenaeum Gazette and the Women's Suffrage Journal. From 1878 to 1885 Ireland printed the Literary Club Papers, but appears to have lost, or relinquished, the contract when the newspaper began to experience financial difficulties. Probably much the same circumstances accounted for his printing only Volumes 2 - 5 (1884-87) of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society's Transactions. Ireland did produce

the earlier editions of his own Enchiridion (1882), as well as technical books by two of his friends: W. B. Hodgson's Errors in the Use of English (1881) and J. M. D. Meiklejohn's four-volume An Easy English Grammar for Beginners (1862-66). There are no indications, however, of any attempts to capitalise on the expanding market for school text-books in the 1870s, or to secure profits from marketing cheap novels (though Ireland may well have balked at this), or to gain a foothold in publishing more respectable literature.

Alexander Ireland and his family were naturally directly affected by the decline in the newspaper's fortunes during the 1880s. It seems clear that the paper was his major source of income and that, with the exception of his small-scale printing business and the limited sales of his own and his wife's writings, he did not have any other independent means. It may be possible to detect a first indication of the newspaper's difficulties in the 1880s in Ireland's sale of part of his library, via Sotheby's, in March 1885. His younger son, John Ireland (1879-1962), in a somewhat fatalistic reflection at the age of 75, observed that this

"... is a dangerous age in the Ireland family. My father began losing his money at that age (i.e. 1885), and by the time I was ten years old he was more or less ruined."<sup>50</sup>

The memoir by "J.M.S.", a little more frank though no less sympathetic than the conventional obituaries, recalled Ireland's neglect of his business and eventual "distressful commercial failure".<sup>51</sup>

Ireland's services to the Manchester press were not, then,

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<sup>50</sup>Letter of 20 November 1953 to his nephew, Silvio Ireland, John Ireland Papers

<sup>51</sup>"J.M.S.", op. cit.

primarily as a journalist or as an editor. He had enabled the Examiner and the Examiner and Times to achieve a position of influence, a certain period of prosperity and a good standard of production, by his own efficient administration for many years. Ireland had also been able to enhance the quality of the newspaper by his introduction of literary and artistic content, and not least by his own occasional literary contributions. Had he and Dunckley been able to delegate their task to someone of C. P. Scott's age, ability and acumen during the 1870s, it is conceivable that the Examiner and Times could have continued to prosper, instead of becoming burdensome to the two principals who had served it so well in earlier years. When in Manchester in the autumn of 1847, Emerson had spoken affectionately of "the little clique of the Examiner newspaper, who are all good friends of mine, (and who) seem to embrace whatever of literature or of social movement is to be found".<sup>52</sup> It is clear that in his newspaper career the Edinburgh man and Manchester citizen exemplified this positive and beneficent nature.

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<sup>52</sup>Letter of 11 November 1847 to Elizabeth Hoar, Letters, Vol. 3, p. 425

Ireland's participation in cultural developments  
in Manchester

Ireland's participation in cultural developments in Manchester

The formative influences from Alexander Ireland's early life in Edinburgh - humanitarian, cultural and pragmatic - can clearly be traced in the spheres of activity which he found outside the demands of his newspaper business. He had come to Manchester at the age of 33, relatively impecunious, with a decade or more of business experience, a good deal of literary study, but no particular reputation in any field. It can be surmised that, especially after the unsatisfactory nature of his brief employment by Schwann, Ireland would have been hoping that Manchester nevertheless held some opportunities by which he might establish himself. The social imperative enunciated by his friend George Dawson was that which Ireland was forming for himself during these years. Dawson "advocated most earnestly and persistently the duty of every citizen to take some share of public work".<sup>1</sup> In Ireland's letter of 3 February 1847 to Emerson, reflecting on his decision to settle in Manchester, he was able to say that

"... I am surrounded by kind friends, and I feel that it is in my power now more than ever before, to do some good to my fellow-creatures..."<sup>2</sup>

The present chapter will attempt to show what Ireland was able to achieve in pursuing those aspects of 'public work' which particularly appealed to him.

During the mid-century period there were many local initiatives whose immediate aim was some improvement or benefit or new provision within their community. The social, educational and cultural projects in his native Edinburgh and in Birmingham, where he came to know Eliza Blyth, naturally had their counterparts in Manchester, where Ireland

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<sup>1</sup> Ireland's 1882 Manchester Literary Club paper, "Recollections of George Dawson and his lectures in Manchester, 1846-47"

<sup>2</sup> Op. cit.

had established his career. It would be unhistorical to attempt to draw these various programmes together in relation to some single unifying principle or motive. In many instances there is a clear moral aim, an altruistic wish to enhance some aspect of local urban life, often specifically for those whose upbringing and employment limited their scope for self-improvement without some external catalyst. Abel Heywood's newsroom in Oldham Street, Manchester in 1834, Edward Watkin's work in 1845 for the creation of Peel Park, Salford together with Queen's Park and Philip's Park in north Manchester, Susan Dawson's Birmingham evening school for women in 1847, and the Edinburgh Secular School promoted by George Combe and James Simpson in 1849 each had an immediate social benefit in view, which their promulgators saw as a moral duty. Other initiatives, particularly those with a specific educational objective, can in some cases be seen to have had a largely economic impetus. The mathematics classes provided by Leonard Horner's Edinburgh School of Arts, the chemistry classes in Schwann's Huddersfield Mechanics' Institute, and the courses pioneered by George Wallis in the Manchester School of Design, were clearly aimed at training a skilled artisan class who could improve the efficiency and strengthen the competitiveness of the local trades in which they worked. Within these developments which, initially at least, had fairly limited horizons, the improvements were usually for the direct benefit of the poorer classes, and more generally for the town, effected in a concept of civic duty.

For Alexander Ireland, as for many other initiators in this period, the very broad field in which they felt impelled to act was that of education. At a basic level there was usually the tangible aim of a specific school or class or opportunity. Beyond the practicalities of introducing some new provision lay a desire to extend understanding

and moral awareness, trusting that this could only be beneficial to an individual and, at a more general level, that it would tend to promote political and social reforms. This impetus to ameliorate can be traced to a number of sources. For many, their own awakening had come from the ideas of Adam Smith (1723-1790) enunciated half a century earlier. Aware of the strengths of the Scottish educational system and of some of the implications of increasing industrialisation, Smith had argued for a state provision of education as being the practicable method of educating the growing working class population. He also saw such an education as being highly desirable for an individual's own well-being in the disorienting circumstances of living and working in towns. Smith, who had become Professor of Logic at Glasgow University in 1751 and then held the Chair of Moral Philosophy from 1752 until 1764, observed that the minister/school-master was the natural and, in many cases, the sole leader in a community. Accordingly he saw it as the duty of educated, professional men to accept the responsibility of organising the provision of such education, which the clergy could no longer adequately or appropriately do on the larger scale required and with the widening curriculum which Smith felt would be needed. It is probable that many of the Scotsmen and Scottish graduates who played their part in a range of education developments in the first half of the nineteenth century would have acknowledged Smith as a major influence on their view of education.

A similar evolution was urged by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) in the second of the Lay Sermons (1817) and later in On the Constitution of the Church and State according to the Idea of Each (1830). Coleridge felt that, in the rapid changes taking place in the nation during the Industrial Revolution and the various agitations for political reform, there was a need for what he hoped would be a resurgence of a deeper

cultural influence, "a pre-occupation of the intellect and the affections with permanent, universal, and eternal truths".<sup>3</sup> In Ben Knight's The idea of the clerisy in the nineteenth century (1978), his exposition of Coleridge's speculation makes it clear, however, that the former Unitarian minister did not envisage this cultural expansion as part of an erosion of established religious structures. In the context of the Scottish pattern of education Smith had stressed the potential influence of the local school-master and other professionals in their communities. Coleridge took as his model for an influential élite the parochial and diocesan structure of the Church of England, identifying a 'national church' of all well-educated men committed to Christian beliefs and humanitarian principles. It seems probable that Coleridge, less of a rationalist and more of a deist than Smith, may have hoped that a revitalised Church of England could become the ideal vehicle for his clerisy. In this respect he was probably less pragmatic than Smith, though accurately identifying the inadequacy of the contemporary Anglican and Nonconformist churches to fulfil a positive role in the life of the country. One difference, however, in Coleridge's position was that the development of his own religious and philosophical views, together with his travels in Germany and study of German thought, provided him with a broader view of religion and its potential influence; whereas Smith would have been more familiar with the more restricted and narrowly critical role to which the Presbyterian Church was gradually consigned within community life in the expanding towns of the Scottish Lowlands.

A generation later than Coleridge, George Dawson (1821-1887), educated at Glasgow University and unorthodox even among Nonconformists, was to identify a "priesthood of literature". This hypothesis emerged

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<sup>3</sup>Coleridge, Lay Sermons, II, "Blessed are ye that sow beside all Waters", (1852)

in his lecture on "The religious and political movements of Europe and America" at the Manchester Athenaeum on 16 June 1846. Dawson made it clear that he had in mind religious men who nevertheless had no place in ecclesiastical history or the current hierarchy, but who exercised more spiritual influence than orthodox apologists. He referred in particular to Wordsworth and Carlyle. Had his lecture come after the experience of Emerson's own lectures, in Manchester and elsewhere, towards the end of the following year, Dawson would certainly have cited the American, too. He understandably forbore from including his own extensive lecturing in this assertion, yet it is clear that his admirers felt that the lectures did exhibit the "pre-occupation" which Coleridge had wished to see.

Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) certainly was the dominant contemporary influence on Ireland's generation in providing a fresh sense of perspective for altruistic initiative. Probably very few of his readers would have been equipped to appreciate fully his admiration of Goethe and his exposition of German philosophy. Yet the gist of Carlyle's interpretation of contemporary life, his insistent advocacy of a morally responsible role for those who could take stock, culturally, of their own and the country's current position, clearly did find a willing audience. They would, moreover, have been excited by the vibrancy, and often violence, of the style in which Carlyle's analyses were delivered. They would also have been impressed by the sense of history which Carlyle imposed on his evaluations. Carlyle's emphasis was on a spiritual nobility which he urged that contemporary realists with sufficient perception should develop and execute against the forces of materialism ("Mammonism"), which seemed to be propelling the industrialising and urbanising development of Britain. This individual role which he posited could also draw no support from what

Carlyle saw as the superstitions of much conventional religious practice and order, nor from the sceptical reaction against orthodox Christian theology which merely succeeded in identifying its weaknesses. In the same vein Carlyle saw no particular positive value in the tendency of current scientific theory towards the idea of natural selection. This difficult amalgam of pleas in Carlyle's early writings, appearing in the 1830s and 1840s, would have been inspirational for those, like Ireland, who felt the need for some kind of a philanthropic role. Carlyle variously identified and posited an "aristocracy of talents", a "Literary Guild", "captains of industry" and the "few Wise". The talent which Ireland and his associates had to offer was their education, and their awareness of the importance and potential of soundly based education, their ability to write and their awareness of the importance of literature. Carlyle's formulations would, then, have given a philosophical perspective to the role which Ireland determined for himself in the secular education campaign and the establishment of free public libraries. In assimilating this philosophical basis and identifying appropriate instantiations, Ireland, Hodgson, Mills and others of their generation would certainly have been, in George Searle Phillips' phrase, "possessed by the glitter of Carlyle".<sup>4</sup>

Political developments, too, would have given some impetus to these tasks which Ireland and his friends set for themselves. The 1832 Reform Act had been historically, if not practically, momentous. The powerful anti-Corn Law campaign of the following decade had sharpened

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<sup>4</sup>Phillips ("January Searle"), Emerson, his life and writings (1855), p.44

the perceptions of many social reformers as to what might be achieved and what means be used. In his biography of Emerson (1888), Richard Garnett, who was to provide the Dictionary of National Biography notice on Ireland, claimed that the success of the anti-Corn Law campaign "had engendered a conviction of the adequacy of moral force to effect all reforms, and of moral reforms to cure all physical evils".

Alexander Ireland's Unitarian upbringing in Edinburgh would have prepared him for the perspective in which altruism in general and educational developments in particular came to be his guide and landmark. Unitarianism's own perspective was, in general, to place a Pelagian emphasis on 'good works', taking Christ as a pre-eminent, but not supernaturally intervening, example. This view re-interpreted religious history, discounting traditional Christian theology as a superstructure built and augmented by successive generations of orthodox theologians, and dissociating this from the beliefs and practices of the early generations of Christians. The commitment of many nineteenth century Unitarians to educational developments can, then, be accounted for by reference to two factors: firstly, the rationalistic nature of Unitarian theology and the tolerance of individual belief; secondly, the long experience of maximising what few educational opportunities were open to Dissenters, of whom the Unitarians were undoubtedly seen as an extreme wing by the Established Church, which had hitherto controlled so much of English education and the social welfare of the poorer classes. There was, of course, a good deal of variation of credos among Unitarian congregations and their ministers. In general, however, there was a tolerance of fraternal beliefs, though with the increasing scepticism of the early and mid-nineteenth century Unitarianism was often, for freethinking adherents, a stage on the way to agnosticism, atheism and even

aggressively secularist views. Ireland himself has left no direct indication of his religious views, but it seems probable that he experienced at least part of this progression, to judge from his close sympathy with Emerson and Dawson, each of whom had taken one of these routes away from early more conventional belief. At the same time Ireland evidently retained a tolerance of more orthodox opinions, whilst regretting their constraints on individual, and more general, educational advances.

Regardless of the shades of opinion within Unitarian congregations, however, such groups were often early initiators of education provision, sometimes for the mutual benefit of members, sometimes directed towards those outside their number but with an identified need for education. The Unitarian congregation at the Old Meeting House in Birmingham organised two educational societies during the 1790s - the Birmingham Sunday Society and a mutual improvement society. Lectures on natural philosophy were not confined to members of the congregation but "made gratuitously available to young persons employed in the manufactories of the town".<sup>5</sup> The societies merged in 1796 to form the Brotherly Society and established an "Artisans' Library" in the following year. This development is clearly one of the forerunners of the mechanics' institutes of the 1820s and of the Unitarian Adult School movement. Alexander Ireland's own family appear to have been active Unitarians within the Edinburgh congregation. Their ministers included Thomas Southwood Smith who combined his Edinburgh ministry (1812-17) with his studies at the Medical School. Smith subsequently devoted

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<sup>5</sup>Charles Baker, "Mechanics' Institutes and Libraries",  
Central Society of Education Papers, I, 1837

himself to the movement for public health legislation, in which he co-operated closely with Edwin Chadwick. Although Ireland himself would obviously have been too young to be aware of Smith's ministry, it is reasonable to suppose that Smith's social concern would have accorded well with Thomas Ireland's reformist views and hence would have probably have indirectly reinforced Alexander Ireland's upbringing

The Unitarian presence in Manchester had always been strong, in terms of enduring congregations whose membership, though relatively small in numbers, was characterised by altruism and independence of mind. Dr. Thomas Barnes (1747-1810), who was minister of Cross Street Chapel from 1780 until his death, had pioneered a Manchester College of Arts and Science, which functioned between 1783 and 1787. Its aim was to provide an education in liberal arts and applied science for the sons of Manchester businessmen. Rev. Alexander Gordon, in his address on "What Manchester owes to Cross Street Chapel" (delivered in the Chapel on 20 May 1922), claimed that Barnes' initiative had given "the first inkling of the idea" for what subsequently became a Mechanics' Institute on the London model. For the first eight years of its existence, the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, with Barnes as Secretary, held its meetings in rooms at Cross Street Chapel. From its inception the Society was a meeting place for Manchester intellectuals and, particularly during its early years, a forum for the exchange of ideas on scientific research and engineering innovations by prominent participants such as John Dalton, William Fairbairn and James Nasmyth. Benjamin Heywood (1793-1865), whose banking house occupied the nearby corner site in St. Ann's Square, was one of the prime movers in founding the Manchester Mechanics' Institute in 1824 and was its first President. He also encouraged the establishment of a Manchester School of Design, which evolved from the

Mechanics' Institute in 1832, and sought to obviate the need to purchase foreign designs for local textile products.

The Unitarians of Cross Street and of the other Manchester congregations were the only denomination to permit a petition of support among their members for the secular education policy of the National Public School Association, on its foundation in 1851. Much of the initiative for the NPSA came from the Manchester men - including Ireland and Hodgson - whose initially more localised programme had been the basis for the Lancashire Public School Association four years earlier.

Probably the most significant educational development in the city during the mid-century was the founding of Owens College in 1851, and again Cross Street members were prominent in the early years. Among the conditions specified in the will of the posthumous founder, John Owens (1790-1846), a successful Manchester cotton merchant, was the stipulation that neither staff nor students should be required to subscribe to particular religious tenets. This basis was clearly very much in the Unitarian tradition and would have attracted support from Manchester Unitarians for the new institution. Of the thirteen original trustees, four were members of Cross Street.

The first educational institution with which Ireland became closely associated in Manchester was the Athenaeum, which had been founded in 1836. When Thomas Coates conducted his national survey of adult education provision in 1839 for the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, his impression of Manchester was that it "abounds in flourishing Societies for adult education". In addition to the three central organisations (the Royal Institution, the Athenaeum and the Mechanics' Institute), Coates listed three nearby lyceums, in Salford,

Ancoats and Chorlton-on-Medlock, as well as a suburban mechanics' institute in Miles Platting. According to Absalom Watkin (one of the first directors) the initial plans for "a Literary and Scientific Institution to be called the Athenaeum" were discussed in October 1835. It seems clear that some younger professional members of the community felt a need for some formal association, combining educational and recreational opportunities, which would bridge the social gap between the Royal Institution and the Mechanics' Institute. The founders included Cobden, Samuel Dukinfield Darbshire, John Potter and Mark Philips, all of whom were members of Cross Street Chapel at that period. Watkin records that the meeting "to celebrate the opening of the Athenaeum" was held on 11 January 1836 in the Royal Institution. In fact its first three years of activity took place within the rooms of the Institution until it was able to provide its own purpose-built premises. Funds raised from £10 shares and other subscriptions encouraged the directors to proceed with plans for the new building, which was in Bond Street (Princess Street), adjacent to the Royal Institution, and was opened on 28 October 1839. The facilities included a newsroom, library, lecture hall and gymnasium; foreign language and other instructional classes were held, and a debating society functioned. The membership at this point stood at about 1,200.

This early enthusiasm for the venture, however, was evidently not sustained. The directors' ambitious plans for the new building proved expensive. The Athenaeum's Minutes for October 1838 record that some individuals who had undertaken to give support by buying shares had not done so. Cobden's speech at the October 1843 soiree indicated that during the early 1840s membership had fallen as low as 370. Mrs. George Linnaeus Banks recalled going to the Town Hall in "midsummer 1842" to a

Ladies' Committee which was organising a bazaar "to rid the Athenaeum of debt".<sup>6</sup> These efforts towards recovery appear to have been at least temporarily successful. Speaking at the October 1844 soir e, Disraeli observed that the Athenaeum was by then on a sounder footing, even than at the time of his previous appearance a year earlier. He felt that the organisation had in its early years been hampered by "party and sectarian feeling" and by too limited a view of what it might achieve. He asserted that the Athenaeum was "part of that great educational movement which is the noble and ennobling characteristic of the age", and suggested that by being more rather than less ambitious, by seeing itself as a necessity in the life of the city and not as a luxury, it might achieve more. Certainly the popular annual soir es in the Free Trade Hall, featuring eminent speakers (of which that in October 1843, attended by 1,600, was the first), must have seemed a vindication of this renewed optimism. By 1845 membership had risen to 2,070.

At the annual meeting on 3 February of that year, among the newly appointed directors was Alexander Ireland. It may be conjectured that, since his arrival eighteen months earlier, he had attended some of the Athenaeum's activities, possibly through the offices of Edward Watkin, the Manchester Examiner founder, who was also a director of the Athenaeum at that time. Living in lodgings close to the city, the civilised facilities afforded by the Athenaeum would certainly have been attractive to Ireland. Given his interests in literature and education it is not surprising to find that as from February 1845 he also served

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<sup>6</sup>E. L. Burney, "George Linnaeus Banks, 1821-1881", Manchester Review, Vol. 12, no. 1, Summer 1971 - quoting from a note by Mrs Banks in Manchester City News, "Notes and Queries" (not traced)

on the Books and Papers Sub-Committee and the Lectures Sub-Committee. It was from this position that Ireland was able to arrange for George Dawson to lecture at the Athenaeum. Described by Charles Kingsley as "the best public talker in England",<sup>7</sup> Dawson had first impressed Ireland by a sermon delivered during his December 1845 visit to Birmingham. The immediate engagement was for four lectures on "The Genius and Writings of Thomas Carlyle", which Dawson duly gave on 13, 15, 20 and 22 January 1846. Dawson's original Manchester Athenaeum engagement and subsequent appearances in Manchester in March, April, May and June culminated in his inclusion among the guest speakers at the annual soirée held by the Athenæum membership on 22 October 1846; other speakers were Archbishop Whately of Dublin and William Chambers

From the initial January engagement for the Athenaeum, Dawson's appearances had proved to be a source of controversy. Rev. Hugh Stowell (1799-1856), vicar of Christ Church, Salford 1831-65, was aware of Dawson's somewhat unorthodox religious views, and protested in letters of 23 May and 10 October 1846 to the Manchester Courier against the decision to provide a public platform for what he regarded as the "covert scepticism" of Dawson's lectures. The Manchester Courier, as a Tory newspaper, was sympathetic to Stowell's objections to Dawson's "speculative theology", an editorial in the 10 October number commending the former's "most temperate and judicious letter", and declaring that the educational aims of the Athenaeum were being betrayed by the directors' employment of a lecturer such as Dawson. Elsewhere Dawson's lectures occasionally led to local religious controversy but these

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<sup>7</sup> Quoted by Conrad Gill, History of Birmingham: Manor and Borough to 1865 (1952)

incidents, while taken seriously by the protagonist himself, clearly did not disturb his own views, nor affect his lecturing career. Ireland recollected the value in this respect of someone whose religious teaching "influenced deeply both Trinitarians and Unitarians, and appeared less dogmatic and more reasonable to the many who stood entirely outside the pale of sects".<sup>8</sup>

Despite the controversy surrounding his engagement, which was prompted by his unorthodox religious views, Dawson returned in May 1846 to give a further six lectures on "The Characteristics and Tendencies of the Present Age". In his own 1882 Literary Club paper, "Recollections of George Dawson", Alexander Ireland remembered the "extraordinary effect" Dawson had had on his Manchester audiences, adding

"... not only did it (Dawson's appearance) stimulate earnest thought amongst us, but it also revealed to many searching spirits a series of writings abounding in riches, hitherto known only to a small number of students; an impulse was given to freedom of thought ..."

Dawson was also at the Athenaeum in April 1846 to deliver an oration on Shakespeare on the dramatist's anniversary and Ireland recounted to a younger generation what had evidently been a memorable occasion:

"It was certainly a remarkable proof of the lecturer's powers, that he was able in our busy town, engrossed in commercial pursuits, to induce a thousand men to leave their ordinary callings at an hour in which they are generally absorbed in business ..."<sup>9</sup>

Dawson was engaged again in the autumn of 1847 to give six lectures on "Historical Characters Reconsidered". In so far as he was a regular

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<sup>8</sup> Ireland, *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Ireland, *ibid.*

visitor to Manchester, particularly between 1846 and 1850, this can at least in part be attributed to his lasting friendship with Alexander Ireland and to the liberal philosophical, religious and cultural views which he found among his Manchester acquaintances. Ireland himself recalled the "great impetus ... given (by Dawson's lectures) to free thought and to a spirit of free enquiry".

Ireland was, of course, also instrumental in the ambitious plan to persuade Ralph Waldo Emerson to undertake a lecture tour in Britain in 1847-48. He delivered his six lectures on "Representative Men" at the Athenaeum during the autumn of 1847 and spoke at the annual soir e in October. Emerson's lectures attracted a good deal of attention, though according to George Searle Phillips, "Few people there present knew what to make of these lectures; they were so ultra, and so utterly unlike anything that had previously been heard by them".<sup>10</sup>

Other lectures at the Athenaeum during its first decade or so provided a substantially literary content, though with occasional other topics of cultural and humanitarian interest. It is probable that Ireland was involved in selecting and arranging at least some of these; certainly many fall within his own fields of interest. The following are examples:

1835-36	four lectures by James Montgomery:	"The British Poets"
1837	ten lectures by Benjamin Robert Haydon:	"Painting"
1839	six lectures by James Sheridan Knowles:	"On Dramatic Poetry"
1840	four lectures by Thomas Southwood Smith (the former Unitarian minister in Edinburgh):	"Organisation and Life"

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<sup>10</sup>Phillips, op. cit.

1842	five lectures by Rev William Gaskell	"On Poets of Humble Life"
1843	six lectures by Charles Cowden Clarke (extended for a further series of six in 1845):	"Subordinate Characters in Shakespeare"
1845	four lectures by W. B. Hodgson:	"Germany and its Literature"
1846	three lectures by Samuel Wilderspin (the educational reformer, who founded the Edinburgh Model Infant School in 1829, with help from George Combe and other phrenologists)	"Infant and National Education"

On some occasions there appears to have been some liaison in terms of programme schedules between the Athenaeum, the Royal Institution and the Mechanics' Institute, which was nearby in Cooper Street. Clearly it would have been to the advantage of each body if prospective lecturers, musicians or actors could be offered several engagements across successive evenings, with appropriate adaptation of their material to suit the level of audience. In January 1846, for example, Charles Swain (1801-1874), the Manchester poet, gave six lectures on "Modern Poets" at the Athenaeum and evidently utilised some of the same material in a number of lectures at the Royal Institution during the same period. In addition to his Athenaeum engagement in the autumn of 1847, Emerson gave a series of lectures on popular subjects at the Institute.

After 1850 the regular courses of lectures became much more infrequent. The large-scale annual soirées were also discontinued after 1848. The directors of the period apparently concluded that the Athenaeum had not "secured permanent popular support" and that the effort and expense involved were no longer justified within the rest of the institution's work. More attention was evidently given to the smaller scale, less formal and, no doubt, less expensive activities; a

substantial library was accumulated, a billiards room and a restaurant opened. Over the next two decades membership fluctuated but remained fairly substantial: 1,373 in 1855, 1,975 in 1865. The indications are, then, that from the late 1830s the Athenaeum passed through several phases, as different groups, and generations, of individuals devoted time and enthusiasm to its functions and saw changing purposes for it. Alexander Ireland served as a director of the Athenaeum until February 1848, by which time the Examiner/Times merger was probably under consideration and Ireland was also involved in the newly founded Lancashire Public School Association (which will be discussed later in the present chapter). Ireland's active association with the Athenaeum was therefore for a relatively short period, but coming, as it did, soon after his arrival in a new environment, it may be assumed to have been an opportunity which he welcomed and which provided the scope for his own first significant contribution to the cultural life of the city.

The other significant influence from Ireland's early life in Edinburgh, which can be seen to have shaped his involvement in educational initiatives, was his interest in phrenology. In essence the 'science' of phrenology posited that broad human characteristics could be related to specific areas of the brain; and that, once such identification was made and the relative preponderance or paucity of individual attributes was known, it was possible to accentuate or mitigate specific tendencies with a view to enhancing the balance of the character and hence the individual's life and potential. Thus phrenology appeared to have its basis in empirical investigation and also to open up social and moral considerations on this basis of apparent fact. This combination of apparently scientific inquiry and moral philosophy, together with the prospect of devising practical implementations from phrenological conclusions, made the study

attractive to many educated, professional men. There was particular interest in Edinburgh, possibly because of the relatively large numbers who would have undertaken at least some scientific or medical study at the University. George Combe (1788-1858) was the chief protagonist of this development and founder of the Edinburgh Phrenological Society in 1823. Ireland and his friends Robert Cox and Robert Chambers were active members of the Society, attending the weekly lectures and periodic demonstrations in dissecting skulls.

On a wider view, phrenology was never a coherent movement. George Combe's writings were widely read and respected among the many Phrenological Societies. Nevertheless most of these organisations existed largely in isolation, open to individual and local variations and interpretations and often occupied with internal dissension over the exact limits and wider implications of the 'science'. There was little contact between the Edinburgh and London Societies or between these and the continental Societies. An attempt at national co-ordination of the many, mostly small, Societies in 1838 was unsuccessful. Nevertheless George Combe's writings earned him a reputation among North American phrenologists which enabled him to undertake a lecture tour there during 1838-40. He gave a course of lectures on phrenology in Boston, New York and Philadelphia and individual lectures in several other towns in the eastern States. The complete series of Combe's lectures was published as Lectures on Phrenology, including its Application to the present and prospective Condition of the United States (1839) and was issued simultaneously in New York. On his return he compiled an account of his activities and recollections of his extended visit in Notes on the United States of North America during a phrenological visit in 1838, 1839 and 1840 (1841). After initial disappointment among some of his American

acquaintances, who had anticipated a more philosophical work, its perceptiveness, frankness and generally favourable and optimistic views of the United States came to be recognised.

Whilst the active adherents of phrenology achieved only limited and temporary success as an organised movement, the phrenological approach to the study of character did have a widespread influence during the early Victorian period. Among George Combe's many correspondents was Mary Ann Evans ("George Eliot")(1819-80). In a letter of 5 May 1852 to her friend Mrs. Charles Bray, describing a public meeting at which Charles Dickens took the chair, her impression of the writer is at least partly formed by a phrenological observation.

"His (Dickens') appearance is certainly disappointing - no benevolence in the face and I think little in the head - the anterior lobe not by any means remarkable."<sup>11</sup>

In Alexander Ireland's own recollection, written in 1890, of seeing Sir Walter Scott, during the late 1820s, he still expresses himself with some traces of phrenological diagnosis in conveying Scott's appearance and his own absorbed interest. Recalling that, in his youth, he would make a point of going into the Court of Session, where Scott worked for a time, Ireland would

"... feast my eyes with a steady and prolonged sight of his memorable features. I always endeavoured to get as near to him as I could and gaze upon that face and head, which, once seen, could never be forgotten; trying to realise the fact that from that head and brain had emanated a portrait gallery of real men and women ... His was a face in which were combined

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<sup>11</sup>The George Eliot Letters, ed. G. S. Haight, Vol. II, p.23

shrewdness, humour, kindness,  
keen perception and sagacity ..."<sup>12</sup>

An interesting fictional instance of at least a superficial phrenological analysis occurs in Disraeli's Tancred (1847), which suggests that this writer, too, at least at this period, gave some credence to phrenological insight. In the hero's crucial interview with Sidonia, we are told that the latter's

"keen and far-reaching vision traced at the same time the formation and development of the head of his visitor. He recognised in this youth not a vain and vague visionary, but a being in whom the faculties of reason and imagination were both of the highest class, and both equally developed. He observed that he was of a nature passionately affectionate, and that he was of a singular audacity. He perceived that though, at this moment, Tancred was as ignorant of the world as a young monk, he possessed all the latent qualities which in future would qualify him to control society."

In the same novel, however, as was seen in an earlier chapter, there is an acknowledgement in passing of the significant appearance of the evolution theory, which, perhaps aided by the very controversy it aroused, was able to focus attention on an apparently more fundamental view of human existence than phrenology could offer.

Phrenology in general and George Combe in particular, as its most prominent apologist, were not without their critics even in Edinburgh. Two debates on phrenology in the Edinburgh Medical School in November 1823 were largely hostile. The Edinburgh Review under Francis Jeffrey's editorship, had no sympathy for Combe's views and

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<sup>12</sup>Letter of 20 November 1890 from Ireland to W. E. Gladstone, Gladstone Papers, 44511, f. 166

Jeffrey made a characteristically trenchant attack on Combe's System of Phrenology (1822) in the October 1826 number, the second edition of the work having recently appeared. The relationship between phrenologists and the Established Church was understandably hostile; for the latter the new 'science' appeared to take the undermining rationalist tendency a significant stage further, developing a critique of human nature entirely without reference to Christian theology. Between the phrenologists and the Unitarians, however, there was a measure of sympathy; neither group saw the other as a necessary threat to, or contradiction of, its own basis. Indeed the puritan and humanitarian principles which phrenologists claimed to derive from their 'scientific' study, without recourse to sources in Christian theology but equally without explicitly denying this existence of a Supreme Being, made phrenology particularly intelligible and amenable to many Unitarians. George Combe maintained that the "resolutions" of phrenology "are not opposed to religion or morality, and therefore quite suitable for laymen who have not sworn allegiance to Calvin and the Divine Assembly at Westminster".<sup>13</sup> Certainly Combe speaks of having friends among the Edinburgh Unitarians. De Giustino observes that "phrenologists, particularly in Scotland, were on friendly terms with Unitarians and had no scruples about donating to Unitarian building projects".<sup>14</sup>

The general interest in phrenology, which had appeared to increase during the 1820s and 1830s, fostered first by Spurzheim's and subsequently by George Combe's lectures and publications, dissipated

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<sup>13</sup> Letter of 12 May 1831 to Rev. David Welsh, a founder member of the Edinburgh Phrenological Society

<sup>14</sup> de Giustino, The Conquest of Mind (1975), p. 106.

during the following two decades. A number of factors can be identified in this decline. On an intellectual level the concepts of phrenology expounded by Combe from 1819 onwards had not developed; as advances were made in the study of other branches of science, notably geology and biology, the apparently rational, scientific basis of phrenology began to assume some of the fallibility which sceptics had always maintained it had. Hazlitt's perceptive and more charitable reference in his 1826 essay "On Dr. Spurzheim's Theory", was to

"a system, which after all has probably some foundation in nature, but which is ... overloaded with exaggerated and dogmatical assertions, warranted for facts."

Setting aside the unsubstantiated link between physiological and moral constitution, Hazlitt saw that phrenology, though containing some potentially beneficial insights, was too fragmented and mechanistic as a philosophy of morals. From his own study of philosophy Hazlitt objected that phrenology failed to identify a common basis of human understanding as the directive within character and behaviour. As a Hazlitt student, Ireland must have encountered this essay at a fairly early stage, but does not acknowledge that it caused him to be more sceptical of phrenology, particularly in his active Edinburgh years in the local Society.

During the 1840s the differences between groups of phrenologists became more apparent; the London Phrenological Society became more interested in the quasi-medical and psychological procedures suggested by phrenology rather than the philosophical basis or possible social implications. Mesmerism and, subsequently, superficial phrenological diagnosis enjoyed a more popular vogue but eroded academic respectability. Interest in public lectures on phrenology could not

be sustained. George Combe himself devoted his time increasingly to revisions of his writings.

More significantly, Combe's North American visit led to his friendship with Horace Mann (1796-1859), the enterprising Secretary to the Massachusetts Board of Education from 1837 to 1848. Mann's development of non-denominational schools, locally financed and administered, had a substantial influence on the British initiatives towards secular education in the 1840s and early 1850s. It was to this end that George Combe and other phrenologists (including Alexander Ireland and W. B. Hodgson) directed their efforts when it became clear that the earlier methods for disseminating phrenology were no longer sufficiently popular and were not leading to worthwhile achievements of human understanding, in phrenological terms. Combe's own educational initiative was the Williams Secular School in Edinburgh, founded in 1849. He also welcomed the appearance of similar institutions in Leith, Glasgow, Manchester and Salford, and the six Birkbeck schools in London which another educational reformer, William Ellis, established during the late 1840s and early 1850s. Even among those who were not openly adherents of phrenology, the wisdom of Combe's ideas about its application to schemes of education was sometimes recognised. Most notably Prince Albert, in 1850, sought Combe's advice about the education of his sons and arranged for his German Secretary and tutor, Ernest Becker, to spend three months in Edinburgh to consult with Combe and observe the methods and schemes of the Williams Secular School.

It seems probable that a commitment to at least some of the moralistic principles derived from phrenology, if not the corpus of its empirical claims, was maintained by adherents such as Ireland and Hodgson, long after the active study and propagation of phrenology undertaken in

their youth had ceased. The clearest instance of this arose during the late 1840s, when Ireland was well established in Manchester and Hodgson moved there to begin his own school. Speaking on 4 July 1846 at the dissolution of the Anti-Corn Law League, to the Manchester audience which had rallied to so many of the League's large-scale meetings during the campaign, Richard Cobden assured his hearers that

"We are dispersing our elements to be ready for any other good work, and it is nothing but good works that will be attempted by good leaguers"<sup>15</sup>

Cobden was clearly hoping that the co-operation and sense of purpose which had galvanised the League's activities could be harnessed for other reforming causes. The area of activity in which Alexander Ireland began to engage towards the end of his third term as an Athenæum director was the promotion of secular education.

The extent of sectarian influence in education was a matter of perennial controversy in the Victorian period and one not satisfactorily resolved even by the decisive 1870 Education Act. In the mid-century period, when the populations of the industrial towns and cities were still expanding rapidly, such primary and secondary education provision as existed was far from uniform. The concern of many Nonconformists and freethinkers was threefold: that large numbers of children, particularly in urban areas, were receiving little or no education; that the teaching provided often contained a predominance of doctrinal material pertaining to either the Anglican Church or one or other of the Nonconformist bodies; and that both the Established Church and groups of Dissenters resisted attempts to make a more broadly based education more systematically available. Several factors brought this discontent into sharper focus in the late 1840s. Firstly, there appeared a

likelihood of legislation from Lord John Russell's Liberal Government

<sup>15</sup>Speech included in F.W.Hirst, Free Trade and other fundamental doctrines of the Manchester School(1903)

which took office in 1846. In the wake of improvements to working conditions in factories (the Ten Hours Act of 1847), there were signs that the government was prepared to consider a national system of education, financed by local rates and organised within each locality by the Church of England. This would obviously have consolidated the extent of Anglican control of education. As such it was not acceptable either to those who wished to see an educational provision free from direct sectarian influence, or to those who preferred local voluntary initiatives, which left scope for Nonconformist doctrinal teaching, and who objected to what they saw as state interference. Secondly, the Anti-Corn Law League's achievement of its goal early in 1846 led some of its supporters to think in terms of mounting similar campaigns for other large-scale objectives within the range of Liberal/Radical aspirations. Thirdly, those who had promoted the claims of phrenology in the previous decade began to acknowledge during the 1840s that their philosophy per se was not proving generally acceptable, and that it could best be propagated by means of a more liberalised system of education. These influences coalesced in Manchester, in a group of League and 'Manchester School' adherents who accepted the phrenological view of individuality and education.

Alexander Ireland was one of this group. His colleagues in the initial discussion of this new campaign were Jacob Bright (younger brother of John Bright), Samuel Lucas, W.B. Hodgson, Thomas Ballantyne and Rev. William McKerrow. Their first formal meeting, on 1 June 1847 was held in the vestry of McKerrow's Presbyterian Church in Lloyd Street. After a larger meeting on 25 August in the Mechanics' Institute, at which the group constituted itself as the Lancashire Public School Association, offices were taken at 3 Cross Street. The Association's aims were the establishment of a system of new schools in Lancashire, funded by local

rates and controlled by boards elected by the ratepayers. The curriculum envisaged would exclude any specific doctrinal teaching or sectarian interpretations, and would concentrate on a range of what were seen as useful subjects. Lucas is credited with producing the Plan for the Establishment of a General System of Secular Education in Lancashire, which was issued in July 1847 and which became the Association's policy. Lucas had sent a draft of the Plan to George Combe and, in a letter of 14 June to Combe, Ireland outlined the basis envisaged for moral training, free from sectarian bias:

"We must confine ourselves to those histories, maxims, precepts, commands etc. which form a common and neutral ground for all Christians, and to which even a Deist would not object".

The promoters were encouraged by the example of Massachusetts, where Horace Mann, himself a phrenologist, had established such a system in the decade from 1837.

Other Manchester men involved in the LPSA included Dr. John Relly Beard (minister of Strangeways Unitarian Chapel, 1843-64), Ireland's friend John Mills, Hugh Mason (a philanthropic millowner in Ashton-under-Lyne and later Liberal MP for the town), William Maccall (a former Unitarian minister), Henry Peacock (later a co-proprietor of the Examiner and Times), Absalom Watkin, George Wilson, Francis Espinasse and Samuel Alfred Steinthal (minister of Cross Street Chapel from 1871 to 1893). The Association employed a full-time Secretary from the outset, the first official being Edwin Waugh, the local author. Waugh served until August 1848 and was succeeded by Henry Forrest, a Manchester bookseller, whom Ireland described as "a worthy and intelligent man, but not very pushing".<sup>16</sup> Forrest occupied the post only until the end of 1848, when he was replaced by Espinasse, who served until January 1850.

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<sup>16</sup>Letter of 16 April 1847 from Ireland to Combe, Combe Collection

In the early stages of the new Association, this group generated a good deal of optimism. In his letter of 2 June 1847 to Combe, reporting the initial meeting, Ireland claimed

"We could carry all the reasonable people in Lancashire with us. We could have the benefit of the League machinery and experience - its lists of liberal men ... and I think we could calculate upon the support of all the MPs of the district".

In a further letter to Combe a few days later, Ireland enunciated his own view of the Plan with some confidence - and anticipating a development beyond Lancashire:

"Its triumph would solve the problem of national education... its principle and machinery are capable of general application"

"... any remedy for our ills that shall be effectual and permanent must be based on the elevation and... the thorough rationalizing of the lower classes of the people..."<sup>17</sup>

Writing to Combe on 21 October, Ireland was clearly envisaging that the LPSA could capitalise on the anti-Corn Law campaign, as well as hinting that Combe himself might help explicitly:

"Cobden thinks well of our scheme and I fancy he only requires to see a few strong and decided expressions of opinion in its favour from influential and well-known writers to lead him to give it his hearty support. If he would head such a movement as this, it might lead to results fully more important even than the free-trade movement."

Ireland and Ballantyne were naturally able to ensure that the Manchester Examiner provided support for the campaign. An editorial of 24 April 1847, reflecting concern at the possible trend of legislation and anticipating developments later in the year, declared

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<sup>17</sup>Letter of 26 October 1847 from Ireland to Combe.

"We think that some plan of secular education is needed by the country... if the Whigs had more honesty and less cowardice, more of the reality and less of the pretension of liberalism, they could easily devise and ...establish a representative system, which, while it inflicted injustice on none, would benefit every class of the community."

Welcoming the LPSA Plan on 20 July, the Examiner did not reveal that its editor, business manager and one of its proprietors were responsible for the initiative, but asserted that the scheme

"has sprung from the voluntary zeal of men disinterestedly earnest in the work of instruction ... it carries into the depths of society the boon of an education, in many respects more valuable than that now enjoyed by the 'more favoured classes'."

The Examiner and subsequently the combined newspaper naturally reported extensively on LPSA meetings thereafter. Ireland confided to Combe that they were engineering publicity for the LPSA cause and again encouraged the Edinburgh phrenologist to lend his active support.

"(We) now intend to make the thing extensively known... We wish to have letters addressed to our paper about it for publication"<sup>18</sup>

The Manchester Guardian had given the Plan qualified support, endorsing the administrative structure proposed, but wishing to be assured of provision for moral instruction based on biblical selections. This, of course, was an approach which the secular education activists wished to abandon, since it led to precisely those doctrinaire differences which the LPSA was combating.

The LPSA did receive a promising degree of encouragement from elsewhere. Thomas Carlyle, writing to Alexander Ireland on 15 October

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<sup>18</sup>Letter of 6 September 1847 from Ireland to Combe.

1847 to make arrangements for Emerson's arrival in the following week,  
added

"Hope your School Society prospers?  
Glad shall I be to learn that your  
Scheme, or any rational or even semi-  
rational Scheme for that most urgently  
needful object promises to take effect  
among those dusky populations!"

George Combe was able to arrange financial support for the LPSA during  
1850 from a wealthy Norfolk landowner, Edward Lombe, who was interested  
in educational reform; though Lombe withdrew his aid when the Association  
did not pursue the more vigorous, radical campaign he wished to see  
implemented against sectarian interests. Combe himself was nevertheless  
encouraging in recognising the persistence of the Manchester activists  
after three years of work in pursuit of a system and concept of education  
which he entirely endorsed:

"You and your small band of educators  
have good reason to be proud of your  
enterprise. It will one day be  
recognised as a more important  
movement than the Reformation or the  
Reform Bill, if you succeed in  
accomplishing your object."<sup>19</sup>

The Association also found that bodies in other parts of the country  
had similar aspirations and contacts with these pockets of support led  
to an Educational Conference at the Manchester Mechanics' Institute on  
30 October 1850. Clearly there was some pressure for closer collaboration  
between the different groups and the outcome was a merging of separate  
identities to form the National Public School Association. The aim was  
to implement the Lancashire plan on a national basis, elected boards  
operating within borough or parish boundaries. The new body had  
branches in London and Birmingham, though the co-ordination of activities  
remained in Manchester; the Executive Committee included McKerrow and

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<sup>19</sup>Letter of 19 November 1850 from Combe to Ireland.

Beard, while Ireland, Hodgson, Paulton and Wilson served on the supervisory General Committee. At this stage Ireland was still sanguine. Writing to Combe on 10 November 1850, he acknowledged his own and the LPSA's debt to Combe's own views on education.

"I feel it an honour to have been one of the band ... and I am sure that but for the clear views attained through the writings and lectures of yourself .... neither Hodgson nor myself would have been able to render the cause the service we have done. This is said in no boastful spirit, but in justice to you and the phrenological school".

What might otherwise have been an increasingly strong national body with a network of support, in reality began to experience the sort of internal divisions which had for decades weakened the Nonconformist response to the Established Church's extensive influence in education. There had been those within the LPSA - Mills and Hodgson among them - who foresaw some dilution of the original aims and some accommodation of Voluntaryist views within the new national organisation, The NPSA did not embrace the Voluntary cause and its body of support, but does appear to have softened the former LPSA opposition to religious teaching of any kind. W.J. Fox's parliamentary Bill in May 1851 to promote secular education sought to provide a specific objective for the movement, just as repeated motions calling for the repeal of the Corn Laws had attracted increasingly large minority votes ten years earlier, prior to the eventual success of that campaign. Fox's Bill was heavily defeated, however, and he did not repeat the attempt. In January 1852 and again in June 1853 deputations from the NPSA were received by Lord John Russell, but proved completely ineffectual. In fact the NPSA held no public meetings after February 1852, Robert Wilson Smiles, Espinasse's successor as Secretary, resigning when he concluded that there was no

prospect of achieving the parliamentary legislation which the Association needed to put its education scheme into practice.

During the early 1850s, therefore, the movement for secular education did not progress. It lacked leadership. Despite his support, Cobden appeared unwilling to assume the prominence he had had during the anti-Corn Law campaign. Its need for the wider public support which the earlier campaign had been able to muster was hampered by doubts and suspicions over the underlying aims of the movement. Its declared aim of no sectarian teaching was unpalatable to many, while its use of the term "secular" to describe its concept of education was widely felt to be ambiguous and could be interpreted by opponents as meaning 'atheistic'. Speaking in support of Fox's Bill, Cobden felt obliged to account for having "been taunted with the use of the word 'secular'" and to refute the charge that there was "some great conspiracy in the country ... some parties aiming to deprive the country of its religious faith,"<sup>20</sup> Even when he had had sight of the draft Plan in June 1847, George Combe had advised Lucas to be cautious in using the term 'secular', Combe himself having suffered misrepresentation by religious opponents in his own cause of phrenology. The leaders of the secular education movement do not appear to have been able, however, to conduct their campaign adroitly or to achieve the momentum which they had experienced in the Anti-Corn Law League. Its basis was perhaps never likely to have a very wide appeal and the opposition was formidable.

A more successful and tangible legacy of the Manchester activists was the Model Secular School, established in Jackson's Row in August 1854. The school's aim was "to test the principles of the National Public School Association". The curriculum offered included training in a

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<sup>20</sup>Speech included in Hirst, op.cit.

range of basic skills, together with "social philosophy and some of the more simple laws of political economy". The religious education provided "did not meddle with points of theological dispute, or sectarian difference of opinion". The Examiner and Times tried to foster interest in the school by including announcements and reports of some of its activities. The headmaster, Bernard Templar, gave a survey of "Ten Years' experience of the Manchester 'Free School', formerly the 'Model Secular School'" when the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science held its annual conference in Manchester in October 1866. He explained that the pupils tended to come from the "class of labourers unable to pay fees or buy books, but too respectable to send their children to the ragged schools". 2143 boys had passed through the school in ten years, and a government grant had been obtained. Robert Smiles appears to have served as a governor, and when the NPSA was formally dissolved in 1862, it may have been Smiles, as the Association's former secretary, who was instrumental in directing the remaining funds to the Secular School.

It is clear that some of the significant educational initiatives in this period emanated from Scotland and that Scotsmen and those trained at Scottish universities took a leading part in educational ventures in England, especially in adult education. C.W. New, in his biography of Lord Brougham's early career, speaks of his leading "a Scottish invasion of England". In reality the Scottish burgh and parochial schools and the four universities produced large numbers of young men educated "for life and not for literature", as Robert Mudie defined the nature of Scottish education. Even at a time of economic expansion in Scottish cities and towns, there were insufficient professional and commercial outlets for the products of this system.

Expansion of trade and consequently of townships was naturally taking place elsewhere, in England, in Northern Ireland, in Europe and in North America, and Scotsmen and Scottish-trained men moved farther afield to take advantage of such opportunities outside the limited scope of Scotland itself. Lockhart, in 1819, observed that

"They (Scottish universities) diffuse over every part of the kingdom, and over many parts of the neighbouring kingdom, a mighty population of men, who have received a kind of measure of education which fits them for taking a keen and active management in the affairs of ordinary life."<sup>21</sup>

The formation of the Lancashire Public School Association in Manchester in June 1847 had a strong Scottish element. Ireland, in a letter to George Combe on 2 June 1847, noted with some pride the "curious fact that the meeting at which the Anti-Corn Law League originated consisted of five or six Scotchmen, with one or two Englishmen ... Our meeting yesterday (to form the L.P.S.A.) consisted of six individuals, five of whom were Scotchmen". As an instance of more lasting effect, James McCosh (1811-94), a student at Glasgow University between 1824 and 1829 and then at Edinburgh, under Thomas Chalmers, from 1829 until 1834, ultimately became President of Princeton University, New Jersey from 1863 until 1888. During that period he was able to re-organise the institution and enable it to develop from a small college and Presbyterian seminary into a major seat of learning.

The education provided by the Scottish schools doubtless had its limitations. One critic of the system, Alexander Somerville (1811-1885), related the disaffection of another, Archibald Prentice (1792-1857), both men having had experience of the burgh school as pupils.

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<sup>21</sup>Lockhart, op.cit. Letter XVII

"He (Prentice)...has said that although he learned to read and write, he was never taught anything, and in after life he has always denounced the parochial school system of Scotland, so much lauded by Scotchmen, as an institution much behind the requirements of the time".<sup>22</sup>

Nevertheless both men were able to develop the basic skills acquired, allying a talent for articulation with a strong political sense. Both achieved some standing in the Manchester of the 1830s and 1840s: Prentice as editor of the Manchester Times from 1828 until 1848; Somerville as a freelance lecturer and writer and as an assistant for Richard Cobden, gathering information relevant to the Anti-Corn Law campaign. Whether as part of the increasing mobility of labour (both skilled and professional) or in pursuit of personal ambition or, as in the case of Alexander Ireland's own move to Manchester in 1843, the chance of a specific opening in business, there was in this period a general exporting of Scottish talent and sound education. Henry Cockburn rather regretted "The operation of the commercial principle which tempts all superiority to try its fortune in the greatest accessible market" and which accordingly led talented Edinburgh men "to be absorbed in the ocean of London".<sup>23</sup> He perhaps under-estimated, or did not care to estimate, the enormous influence in the various branches of education, and hence of national life, which some of the exiles were to have in England and farther afield. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that individual instances of what Thomas Chalmers called "the great national superiority of Scotland, in respect of her well-principled and well-educated people"<sup>24</sup> appeared as the leading figures in educational developments in England.

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<sup>22</sup>A. Somerville, Free Trade and the League: a biographic history, Vol.II, Manchester, 1853

<sup>23</sup>Cockburn, Life of Lord Jeffrey (1860)

<sup>24</sup>T. Chalmers, The Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns(1826)

A lesser-known contemporary writer whose ideas were influential with Ireland was Samuel Bailey (1791-1870). He was a Unitarian, associating with the Sheffield Upper Chapel, and founded the Sheffield Banking Company in 1831, serving as its chairman for many years. His writings were mostly on economic subjects, but he had wide interests and, in addition to his investigations of the early public libraries, published a study of the evolution question, An outline sketch of a new theory of the earth and its inhabitants (1824), and one of Shakespeare, On the Received Text of Shakespeare's Dramatic Writings, and its Improvement (1862). Bailey stood unsuccessfully as a Liberal candidate for the new constituency of Sheffield in 1832 and again in 1834. He was a founder member of the Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society and its president in 1826, 1830 and 1831.

His writings were highly regarded by both Hodgson and Ireland. Hodgson made use of them within the Liverpool Mechanics' Institute and recommended them to other organisers. Alexander Ireland compiled an almost complete collection of Bailey's books and pamphlets, and provided a bibliographical survey of these in Notes and Queries in 1878.<sup>25</sup> Ireland and his fellow-promoters in the campaign for secular education would certainly have found encouragement in Bailey's writings, though there is no record of Bailey's direct involvement in the campaign. Ireland particularly noted that in Letters of an Egyptian Kafir (1839) Bailey

"shrewdly argues against a passive and unquestioning acquiescence in a blind and traditionary belief in theological dogmas taught by parents, nurses, preceptors and priests of all sects and denominations."<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup>Ireland, "Samuel Bailey of Sheffield", Notes and Queries, 5th Series, Vol.IX, 9 March 1878, pp.182-5. In view of his detailed knowledge of Bailey's writings, it is surprising the Ireland does not include the 1824 work on evolution.

<sup>26</sup>Ireland, "Samuel Bailey of Sheffield", Notes and Queries, 4th Series, Vol.XI, 10 May 1873, pp.184-5

Such a re-orientation was precisely one of the forces which Ireland and his associates wished to bring to bear on local education provision. Ireland especially commended Bailey's promulgation of rational critique as a basis for an education policy and for other spheres. His estimate of Bailey was that

"No author of this century has written with greater force and clearness, or with more powerful reasoning, on the right and duty of free enquiry in every department of human thought, on the imperative necessity of candid, temperate and fair discussion, and on that much neglected part of morality, the conscientious formation and free publication of all opinions affecting human welfare. We have never had a more earnest or strenuous advocate of intellectual liberty and free discussion than Samuel Bailey."<sup>27</sup>

Given this degree of enthusiasm from Ireland for Bailey's writings, it is surprising that the two men apparently never met. Bailey lived on the southern outskirts of Sheffield; Ireland's keenness to visit notable authors took him much farther afield on other occasions; yet he was evidently not able to arrange a meeting in this instance. Bailey was known to be of a retiring nature and does not appear to have encouraged visits by admirers. It must be assumed that Ireland became aware of this and did not press what otherwise would have been a natural inclination on his part.

Hodgson, however, does appear to have known Bailey and evidently considered issuing an edition of his works in the decade following the writer's death. Not surprisingly he discussed this project with Ireland. In an earlier piece on Bailey<sup>28</sup> Ireland had urged the production of "a uniform edition" as "a fitting memorial of this admirable thinker and manly advocate of right and duty". In his 1878 article Ireland observed that

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<sup>27</sup> Ireland, Notes and Queries, 1878, op.cit.

<sup>28</sup>Op. cit.

"I have reason to know that the prospectus of such an edition will soon be issued."

Hodgson confided to G.J. Holyoake in November 1877 that he had understood that he was to receive a bequest from Bailey specifically to finance such an edition. However, the money was not forthcoming from Bailey's estate and this literary project seems to have been abandoned. Possibly Bailey, who was evidently a modest man, had thought better of such a grand gesture; possibly Hodgson had imagined the notion to be more definite than it actually was in Bailey's mind. In fact Bailey left substantial sums for the benefit of the Sheffield Infirmary and Dispensary, and of the Lancasterian Schools.

The third field in which Alexander Ireland made a significant contribution to the cultural life of Manchester was the establishment of public libraries. As adult literacy increased during the period 1820-50, because of the increased facilities for adult education, many publishers sought to exploit this market with a wide range of cheap literature, particularly serialised novels. Angus Bethune Reach, visiting Manchester in 1849, described the interior of Abel Heywood's Oldham Street bookshop as "literary chaos", which included "Masses of penny novels" and "cheap reprints of American authors". He inferred that Heywood's business satisfied a "restless and all-devouring literary appetite", but regretted that commercial forces obliged the bookseller to retail "weekly instalments of trash".<sup>29</sup> In an 1882 speech, reflecting on the difficulty in his youth of obtaining the quality of books he sought, Ireland he observed that the contemporary reader had the benefit of "a cheaper, and better, and wholesomer literature than was then procurable."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> A.B. Reach, Manchester and the Textile Districts in 1849 (1849)

<sup>30</sup> Ireland, "Cheap Literature and the Love of Reading", 1882

Those involved in extending educational provision were naturally also well aware of the lack of substantial libraries accessible to the poorer sections of the community. Such library provision as there was could not be expected to meet this need. Mechanics' Institutes had small-scale libraries for the use of their members, while the enterprising Mutual Improvement Societies, formed by some groups of neighbours and acquaintances, had even fewer books at their disposal. Circulating libraries, two of which functioned in Newall's Buildings during the 1840s, aimed at a rather more affluent section of society, while providing little that was more elevated than the fiction which Heywood sold. In the preface to his Corn Law Rhymes (1831), Ebenezer Elliott derided such outlets as "circulating libraries for adult babies". Private subscription libraries, such as the Portico in Mosley Street, were more likely to have a better range of established literature, but were well beyond the means of the mill operative or clerk. The seventeenth century foundation of Chetham's Library on Long Millgate was nominally available to all, but its collection was largely of scholarly and antiquarian interest. More earnest readers sometimes resorted to transcribing as Alexander Ireland himself had in his youth. Charles Knight, who as publisher for the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge had been well placed to identify the new readers, spoke approvingly of the Chambers brothers' achievements through the quality and quantity of their publications for this audience.

"They were making readers. They were raising up a new class, and a much larger class than previously existed.... They were planting the commerce of books upon ...broader foundations than those upon which it had been previously built. They were relegating the hole-and-corner literature of the days of exclusiveness to the rewards which the few could furnish..."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Knight, Passages of a Working Life (1864-65)

Educational reformers accordingly recognised the need to provide municipal libraries, with a wide range of stock and without restriction of access. Emerson gave timely support to this cause during his 1847-48 lecture tour, recommending the formation of libraries as "rather a public than a private property" in his lecture on "Domestic Life", which was included in his series at the Manchester Mechanics' Institute, as well as at several other venues. Widespread interest in such provision led to a parliamentary Bill in 1849 and consideration of the implications by a Select Committee. This body received evidence from, among others, Edward Edwards (1812-1886), who was then working as an Assistant Keeper at the British Museum Library and who was shortly to become the first librarian of the Manchester Free Public Library. The consequent legislation was passed in August 1850 and by the following January the Manchester Town Council had appointed a committee to develop plans for what was to be the first municipal public library.

This General Committee met frequently during 1851-52 and at its third meeting, on 16 January, co-opted Alexander Ireland and W.B.Hodgson, who were also to serve on the sub-committee "to recommend books for purchase". Abel Heywood, too, was appointed, while Rev. William McKerrow was brought on to a separate sub-committee devising regulations for the Library. The Campfield building, formerly the Owenite Hall of Science, at the junction of Deansgate and Liverpool Road, was purchased. Edward Edwards was appointed as librarian, at an annual salary of £200 and the Library was formally opened on 2 September 1852.

Sir John Potter, who as Mayor in 1851 had actively supported the initiative, declared at the opening ceremony that

"...no personal objects and no private motives have been attempted to be served... We have been animated solely by the desire to benefit our poorer fellow-creatures".<sup>32</sup>

He went on to remark, rather patronisingly, on the law-abiding nature of these "poorer fellow-creatures", their loyalty to the Queen, their efforts at self-help via the Mechanics' Institute, their modest subscriptions towards the Library, and clearly he saw the establishment in terms of "Recognising... good conduct". This was evidently the latest of a series of such pronouncements of the deserts of the Manchester citizens and was naturally irksome for an observer with Engels' outlook. To him it was clear that

"The Free Traders here are making use of...semi-prosperity, to buy the proletariat"

and he consoled himself with the prospect of some, unspecified, groundswell of reaction against this patronage:

"I am already looking forward to the outburst of indignation at the ingratitude of the workers which will break loose from every side at the first shock."<sup>33</sup>

Perhaps Engels would have derived some satisfaction from the concern subsequently expressed in some quarters at the use being made of public libraries, and in particular the proportion of novels being purchased by librarians and borrowed by readers. This issue, which received considerable attention over the following decades, will be examined later in the present chapter.

Initially some books for the Library were received as donations: Prince Albert provided eighteen volumes from his own library; Ireland's

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in the Report of the Proceedings at the Public Meetings held to celebrate the Opening of the Free Library (1903),

published to mark the 50th anniversary of the Library

<sup>33</sup> Letter from Engels to Karl Marx, 5 February 1851 (reprinted in Marx and Engels, On Britain (1953))

Edinburgh friends, the Chambers brothers, donated sixty volumes. From an early stage, however, Edwards, with the advice of the sub-committee, set out to purchase a suitably diverse stock. Towards the end of 1851 Edwards did apparently receive some specific advice from Ireland, himself a book-collector by this time, on how best to budget the funds available for purchases. At its opening the Library contained around 21 000 books. Once opened, the Library functioned as both a reference and a lending library. Despite Edwards' evident aptitude for this new and challenging role, he remained as Chief Librarian only until 1858. Towards the end of this tenure he had been unwilling to implement fully the Council's request for an analysis of readers' occupations and financial standing. He had also proposed, in his Manchester Worthies and their Foundations (1855), what must have been the controversial suggestion of an amalgamation between the Free Public Library and the Chetham's Library. Edwards argued that their respective collections would be complementary. Nothing came of the idea, and it can be surmised that the Chetham feoffees would have resisted the loss of independence and separate identity which a merger with the new, much larger and more diversified Public Library would have entailed. Edwards was succeeded by Robert Wilson Smiles (1808-1879), the former Secretary of the National Public School Association.

Other towns took advantage of the 1850 legislation, in the wake of the Manchester initiative. The Liverpool Public Library was opened six weeks after Manchester's. Sheffield and Bolton followed in 1853, Cambridge in 1855 and Birkenhead in 1857. Birmingham, rather surprisingly, did not establish its initially small-scale Public Library until 1861, expanding this considerably, however, to open its Central Library in 1866. Ireland's friend George Dawson was at the centre of

the Birmingham development. Well aware of the Manchester precedent in 1851 in which his friend Ireland had been a leading proponent, Dawson and others urged the Town Council in 1852 to take the necessary steps towards establishing such an institution. The object was not finally achieved, however, until the following decade; the first free local library was opened in April 1861, the Central Lending Library in 1865 and the Free Reference Library in 1866. Appropriately Dawson made the inaugural speech at the latter ceremony.<sup>34</sup> In this respect Dawson and Ireland clearly had much in common, sharing a love of literature and a zeal to make it available to a wider, often poorly educated, public. R.W. Dale spoke of Dawson's "great work, not only in Birmingham but throughout the country, in stimulating and strengthening... a love of literature for its own sake".<sup>35</sup> In his speech at the Manchester Athenæum soirée in October 1846, Dawson had spoken of literature as "the great enchanter of modern times", not simply as a means of entertainment but of enlightenment. Just such a view informed Ireland's own work for the establishment of free public libraries and his own writing about literature and men of letters.

Despite the general welcome for the provision of public libraries, many who had a concern for literature and popular learning addressed themselves to potentially worrying aspects of the essentially new phenomenon of large numbers of readers taking advantage of the extensive opportunities for reading in formal surroundings. It could be anticipated that many of the new readers would find fiction most palatable. The issue which exercised promoters, librarians and other

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<sup>34</sup> Extracts from the speech were included by Ireland in his Book-Lovers' Enchiridion (1882)

<sup>35</sup> Dale, "George Dawson: Politician, Lecturer and Preacher", The Nineteenth Century, Vol.II, 1877

observers was the extent to which fiction should be made available and whether any guidance need be given or restrictions imposed. Samuel Bailey delivered a paper "On Free Public Libraries" before the Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society in February 1853, in which he passed on information received from a friend at Salford Free Library on the pattern of reading which was emerging in both the Salford and the Manchester Public Libraries. The indications were that there was a substantial proportion of fiction within the total of books borrowed. Edwards acknowledged that a similar position obtained in his final year at Campfield. Recollecting the Library's policy at that time, however, he asserted that the range of his purchases had observed

"...the duty of judicious selection, avoiding what could fairly be termed 'trash', and a too nice preference for such books only as would suit a highly cultured class of readers..."

... The books of Fiction ...provided are... among the best of their class (comprising) standard masterpieces (and) many books of which the utmost that can be said is that they are very amusing".<sup>36</sup>

By way of justification of the policy of providing this range, Edwards claimed, rather grandly, that "Prose fiction has become, in larger measure than ever it was before, the occasional vehicle of some of the best thoughts of our best thinkers".

This assertion would have confirmed the view of John Taylor Kay, the librarian at Owens College, that municipal librarians were acting irresponsibly in their provision of fiction to suit popular tastes. In his paper on "The Provision of Novels in Rate-Supported Libraries" at the Library Association's annual meeting in Manchester in September 1879 (which Ireland attended), Kay claimed that in recent years fiction

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<sup>36</sup>E. Edwards, Free Town Libraries (1869), pp. 143-44

accounted for fifty per cent of books borrowed from the Manchester Public Library and its branches, and that in Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool and Sheffield the proportion was considerably higher. He made it clear, in the face of much opposition from fellow-librarians, that he was opposed on principle to the use of library funds, drawn from local rates, for buying all but a narrow selection of novels. Kay's view was that, with few exceptions, novels - and particularly contemporary fiction - were not suitable material for those with little education or discernment. He would entertain no novelist more recent than Scott. His solution to this problem derives directly from the political economy propounded a generation earlier, asking

"...is it wise or necessary ...to find in these days of cheap literature and high wages, novels, presumably for the working man to read, free or at the expense of the ratepayers? ... For novel-reading is a luxury, an amusement, a relaxation, and like all other luxuries should be paid for ... the recipient is demoralised politically in being taught practically that he has a right to luxuries at the expense of his fellow-ratepayers ...The principle of free trade and fair competition in the book market ... would remedy any inconvenience the people may suffer through novels not being lent to them free,"<sup>37</sup>

George Dawson would have excluded even Scott.

"If you want cheap books, buy them. You can have Waverley for sixpence and the choice of two editions."<sup>38</sup>

Dawson's rationale is similar to Kay's, though couched more positively in terms of maintaining the quality of the Library rather than explicit concern with the use of ratepayers' money.

<sup>37</sup>Kay, "The Provision of Novels in Rate-Supported Libraries", Transactions and Proceedings of the Second Annual Meeting of the Library Association, 1880

<sup>38</sup>Dawson's inaugural speech at the opening of the Birmingham Free Reference Library, 26 October 1866 - Ireland's Enchiridion p.395

Other literary figures had doubts about the morality of some contemporary novels and the moral responsibility of the author. Jane Welsh Carlyle, who approved of some of her friend Geraldine Jewsbury's novels, but found her early works - Zoe (1845) and The Half Sisters(1848) - particularly distasteful, felt that these productions represented the more unstable and insupportable aspects of Geraldine's personality.

"It is her besetting weakness by nature, and her trade of Novelist has aggravated it - the desire of feeling and producing violent emotions."<sup>39</sup>

A particularly trenchant view of the allegedly pernicious influence of modern novels appeared in John Ruskin's 1881 series of five articles, "Fiction, Fair and Foul", in Nineteenth Century. In the first of these, on Scott, which was included in the number for June, Ruskin criticised those novelists who aimed at "providing representation of dispiriting aspects of urban life, relieved by no morality, justice or regeneration". He cited the nine deaths in Dickens' Bleak House (1852-53), which, Ruskin claimed, were included "merely as the further enlivenment of a narrative intended to be amusing". Sections of Scott's novels, he asserted, were "coloured to meet tastes which he (the novelist) despised". As for lesser authors of Ruskin's own day, he believed that

"the automatic amours and involuntary proposals of recent romance acknowledge little further law of morality than the instinct of an insect, or the effervescence of a chemical mixture".

Ruskin, then, would have endorsed Kay's view that the provision of most fiction within public libraries could only detract from their potential benefits and very probably do harm to indiscriminating readers.

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<sup>39</sup> Letter of 28 November 1856 from Jane Welsh Carlyle to Mrs Russell; New Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle (1903), ed. A. Carlyle, Vol.2, p.126

A number of other contemporaries with an interest in the same issue took a more constructive approach, though often accompanied by some cautious qualification. At the extreme, W.B.Hodgson argued for freedom in reading, particularly among the young, "with the smallest possible restrictions".<sup>40</sup> William Makepeace Thackeray, speaking at the opening ceremony for the Manchester Library (2 September 1852), appears rather disingenuous in acknowledging that

"... our novels are but what we may call the tarts for the people; whereas history is bread, and science is bread, and historical and spiritual truth are that upon which they must be fed".<sup>41</sup>

Perhaps not wishing to offend an earnest audience on a formal occasion, Thackeray seems to be deliberately overstating the dichotomy, while, for his own part, reserving a place for fiction in the use to be made of the Library. On the same occasion Sir James Stephen (Professor of Modern History at Cambridge) had no such inhibitions. He declared

"It may be admitted that they (libraries) tend to a desultory, discursive, and idle use of books ...all experience assures us that this noble chamber will be filled by a large majority of persons seeking not instruction but pastime; looking not for tonics but for narcotics. Nevertheless...of those who enter this temple of learning...some will, at least, find their way to the shrine of wisdom. And even if it should be otherwise, in affording your poorer fellow-citizens the means of innocent and intellectual delight, you will have conferred on them an inestimable advantage".<sup>42</sup>

In his essay on "Books", Emerson, while acknowledging that fiction was "only confectionery, not the raising of new corn", came to feel that the novel was "not....inoperative now" and "doubtless it gives some

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<sup>40</sup>Quoted by Meiklejohn, Life and Letters of W.B. Hodgson (1883)

<sup>41</sup>Report of the Proceedings at the Public Meeting held to celebrate the Opening of the Free Library (1903)

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

ideal dignity to the day".<sup>43</sup> George Milner (President of the Manchester Literary Club), speaking at the opening of the Newton Heath Branch Library on 28 September 1891, declared that

"The novel, no less than the treatise, would be of signal service in the education of the young, if it were only rightly selected and rightly used".<sup>44</sup>

Milner urged the provision of reading lists, introductory lectures within the library and more formal links between school and library to ensure some continuity of disciplined study; a plea which Edwards had also made.

Alexander Ireland himself saw "works of the imagination" as being of "the highest importance" to readers with relatively little education, and was "Half inclined to say that any reading was better than none". At the same time, the works of imagination must be "wholesome", and entertainment and instruction "mingled".<sup>45</sup> In his "Books for General Readers" paper he made clear his distaste for eighteenth century English novelists:

"Fielding, Smollett, Richardson, Sterne... can hardly be recommended for general reading. With all their merits and power of character - painting, their pages are too often sullied by incidents and descriptions offensive to modern habits of thought and feeling."

In a recommendation of Samuel Bailey's writings, Ireland hoped that, among the many readers in public libraries, there would be

"...thoughtful and earnest young men and women who care for and can appreciate something higher than the ephemeral and vapid literature of the hour"<sup>46</sup>

Ireland, too, stressed the need for guidance to the inexperienced reader

<sup>43</sup> Emerson, "Books", Society and Solitude (1870)

<sup>44</sup> Credland, The Manchester Public Free Libraries(1899), p.173

<sup>45</sup> Ireland, "Books for General Readers", Papers of the Manchester Literary Club, Vol. XIII, 1887

<sup>46</sup> Ireland, Notes and Queries, March 1878, op.cit.

and this was the *raison d'etre* of his "Books for General Readers" paper. This compilation consisted of the advice which Ireland saw as desirable for the serious reader with little education: for example, the recommendation of a balanced diet in reading, and specific warnings - as against the eighteenth century novelists. This accompanies an extensive list of books recommended for this purpose. The list has seventeen categories, such as Biography, Essayists, Prose Works of Fiction, and American Literature, and includes such books as Hakluyt's Voyages (1599), George Combe's Constitution of Man (1828) and Victor Hugo's Les Miserables (1862). The English novelists recommended include Dickens, George Eliot, Mrs Gaskell and Thomas Hardy.

Ireland's North American acquaintance, the writer Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894), was evidently involved in a similar propagation in the same period. In a letter of 4 January 1884 to Ireland, requesting a copy of the latter's Ralph Waldo Emerson (1882), Holmes explained that he was himself preparing a book on Emerson, which formed part of a series "to meet the need of that class of readers which dreads a surfeit, though it wants to be fed to a moderate amount, and may be made hungry for more, if we do not begin by cramming too hard."<sup>47</sup> Ireland would have endorsed this view and the type of provision in which Holmes was engaged. Ireland's own selection from Hazlitt (William Hazlitt, Essayist and Critic (1889)) was at least partly to the same purpose, and, given Ireland's extensive knowledge of literature, it is surprising that he produced no more in this genre.

When Ireland reiterated his views on the value of reading in his "Address on the moral influence of free libraries", in opening the Longsight Branch Library on 23 July 1892, he was taken to task in the

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<sup>47</sup> Morse, Life and Letters of Oliver Wendell Holmes (1897), Vol.2, pp.58-59

following number of the Spectator for stressing too exclusively, as the critic saw it, the benefits of extensive reading and underestimating the value of breadth of experience in real life. Ireland's preoccupation with books can at times appear to lose proportion and his Longsight address, adapted from earlier material and delivered in old age, was perhaps somewhat sentimental and simplistic. However, in the face of the continuing expansion of educational opportunities and library provision, some guidance for poorly educated readers could only be beneficial. The Spectator criticism was a little unfair, moreover, in respect of Ireland himself, since he had undertaken much of his own education, pursued a long and active working life, shouldering considerable business responsibilities, and eventually incurred financial difficulties at an advanced age. Within this perspective Alexander Ireland was surely able to evaluate the worth of his own extensive literary study and impart at least some precepts to younger generations.

Alexander Ireland was actively involved in the arrangements and proceedings when the national Library Association held its second annual conference in Manchester in September 1879. Its sessions took place in the Town Hall and visits were made to the principal libraries of the city. Ireland, Steinthal and John Nodal were elected as members of the Association. The published transactions contained a survey of notable private libraries in the area and outlined Ireland's own collection of Robert Burton, William Godwin, William Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt and Samuel Bailey editions. This paper, produced by Nodal, proposed that some formalised account of the special collections in the area be compiled. Ireland was evidently associated with this proposal. As a book collector he would have been aware of bibliographical surveys such as John Hill Burton's The Book-Hunter (1862) and Burton's references

to the current lists of collections in the United States, This suggestion from Ireland would, of course, have been in character, given his enthusiasm for disseminating information on books and authors, as exemplified in his own writings and lectures.

When Ireland was invited to open the Longsight Branch Library in July 1892, it was out of recognition of his support over many years for the extension of library provision and his known love of literature. He observed in his address that he was the last survivor of the committee which had established the Free Library in 1851. In what was to be his final year he attended two more such ceremonies, the opening of the Chester Road Reading Room on 31 March and of the Gorton Branch Library on 5 May 1894. His sentiments both in his Longsight address and elsewhere in his writings and correspondence make it safe to assume that of his various public activities in the cultural life of Manchester, it was his association with its libraries which he valued most.

Alexander Ireland's altruistic contribution to the cultural life of the city was not that of an affluent benefactor or campaign leader or platform orator. It was not a pre-eminent role at all. His work in these fields - administering the Athenæum, promoting secular education, establishing the Free Public Library - was via committees and consultation, often probably on an informal and convivial basis, arranging, suggesting, drawing on his numerous contacts and acquaintances. His own spur for this range of activity was the humanitarian concern fostered in his Edinburgh days. His activity extended from the lecturing engagement concluded with George Dawson in Birmingham in December 1845 to the wisdom offered in his Longsight address in July 1892 and the retrospective evaluation of Dawson<sup>48</sup> which

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<sup>48</sup>"George Dawson, as Lecturer and Man", Papers of the Manchester Literary Club, Vol. XXI, 1895

Ireland gave at the Literary Club in October 1894, only two months before his death. Writing in 1887, George Saintsbury claimed for Manchester that "no town in England is now more renowned for cultivation of literature and of art".<sup>49</sup> Ireland's assiduous contributions to this cultural life may frequently have been behind the scenes rather than front stage, but were nevertheless substantial.

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<sup>49</sup>Saintsbury, Manchester (1887)

Ireland's literary activities and acquaintances

Ireland's literary activities and acquaintances

There is abundant evidence that Alexander Ireland's over-riding interests lay in literature. Despite his involvement in other spheres of activity - his early adherence to the Edinburgh Phrenological Society, his efforts in the Lancashire Public School Association - despite the positions he adopted on the major political issues of his time - whether the American Civil War and its effects in Manchester, or the prospect of Irish Home Rule - and despite the inescapable claims of his newspaper business, the many indications are that literature was his abiding concern. By the time William Chambers made his acquaintance in 1836, he observed that Ireland, then aged twenty-six, "had considerable literary taste". Ireland's own writing, lectures, articles and correspondence during his mature years all testify to this same love of literature. The Manchester Courier obituary was to acknowledge "the devotion, amounting almost to reverence, with which he studied and enjoyed the poets of his youth".<sup>1</sup> John Mortimer's memoir of Ireland, in the first volume of the Literary Club's Papers issued after his death (Vol. XXI, 1895), recognised that Ireland's relatively modest literary output was not that of an original thinker, but concerned itself with biographical, bibliographical and critical matters. These were his self-imposed limitations. Ireland himself hinted in his 1884 reminiscence that he would have hoped to produce a more substantial body of writing, had his formal education continued and had his means, in later life, been less dependent on the fortunes of his business. What level of literary work Ireland might have achieved under more favourable circumstances is debatable. An observation by John Evans in his 1880 survey, Lancashire Authors and Orators, is probably apposite to Ireland's case. Evans noted that men of letters in the urban areas of the North West were often at least partly self-educated, and were

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<sup>1</sup>Manchester Courier, 8 December 1894

neither sufficiently wealthy nor successful enough in such writing as they undertook to be able to pursue a literary career independently of other means. Accordingly they combined writing with some other occupation as a means of livelihood. Evans argued that this division made for "happier men". Understandably there is a note of regret in Ireland's hints as to what might have been. In reality his work in broadcasting the virtues of the writers he admired proved to be quite considerable and was much appreciated by his wide circle of acquaintances both in Manchester and farther afield.

Although Alexander Ireland's knowledge of literature was extensive and his tastes catholic, as is clear from his Book-Lover's Enchiridion, foremost among "certain favourite subjects which have occupied my attention for some years"<sup>2</sup> was his enthusiasm for the essayists William Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt and Charles Lamb. In the "Books for General Readers" compilation in the Manchester Literary Club Papers for 1887, Ireland regretted that Hazlitt was "too little known to the present generation of readers". The decision to issue his 1889 selection of Hazlitt's work, William Hazlitt, Essayist and Critic, was accordingly prompted by a desire

"...to keep his memory green, and rescue his writings from undeserved neglect...(to) give to many readers of today, who only know his name, some 'taste of his quality'".<sup>3</sup>

In an appraisal of Ireland's selection and its accompanying memoir, George Milner asserted that

"There are probably few men in England more competent to deal with Hazlitt and those who were his friends than Mr. Alexander Ireland."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Letter of 19 February 1836 from Ireland to Rev, James Morison, Alexander Ireland Collection (Hazlitt, 3.64)

<sup>3</sup>Letter of 15 October 1889 from Ireland to W.E.Gladstone, Gladstone Papers, 44508, f68

<sup>4</sup>G.Milner and J. Mortimer, "William Hazlitt", Papers of the Manchester Literary Club, Vol.IX, 1890

Milner welcomed Ireland's selection as a substantial supplement to the various volumes of Hazlitt's writings which the essayist's son and grandson had issued. Ireland claimed to have known Hazlitt's writings "ever since I began to take an interest in Literature".<sup>5</sup> It is conceivable that this early acquaintance with the essays came through the agency of George Combe. Combe's only meeting with Hazlitt was on 9 May 1822 at the house of William Ritchie (joint editor of The Scotsman); Hazlitt was in Edinburgh to arrange his divorce from Sarah Stoddart. Combe's largely favourable analysis was, predictably, in the form of a phrenological diagnosis. Hazlitt's final contributions to the Edinburgh Review appeared in October 1829 and April 1830, and this seems to have been the period when Ireland began reading the essays.

Writing to Hazlitt's son on 22 February 1850, Ireland claimed that

"In the course of 16 or 17 years I have formed a collection of his (Hazlitt's) works which is perhaps unique, there being no work of his which I do not possess in its original form"<sup>6</sup>

Certainly as early as his 1836 letter to Morison he was extremely well versed in the Hazlitt canon:

"I possess and have read almost all his writings, amounting to nearly 30 volumes, besides his contributions to various periodical works, known only to those who from long intimacy with his work can at once recognise his style of thinking and writing wherever they find it"<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Letter of 22 August 1866 to Bryan Waller Procter, a friend of Hazlitt's, concerning Procter's Memoir of Lamb (1866) and Ireland's review of it in the Examiner and Times, BM Additional MS., 38899, f.100

<sup>6</sup> Alexander Ireland Collection

<sup>7</sup> Letter from Ireland to Morison, op.cit.

The extent of his familiarity with Hazlitt's work and his confidence in discussing it are clearly shown in a later submission to Notes and Queries on "William Hazlitt's contributions to the Edinburgh Review."

Here he identified five articles, not included in a supposedly definitive list in William Carew Hazlitt's Memoirs Of William Hazlitt (1867), which

"...I think may, without doubt, be attributed to his pen. They all exhibit his unmistakable characteristics of style and thought,"<sup>8</sup>

In the first attempt at a complete edition of Hazlitt's works (the twelve-volume set assembled by A.R. Waller and Arnold Glover (1902-06)), the editors note Ireland's claim and concur with him on the authorship of three of these five articles. However, they dispute his assertion that the other two are by Hazlitt, specifically taking issue with Ireland's stylistic judgement. Regarding "Wat Tyler and Mr. Southey" (Edinburgh Review, March 1817), they find it

"incredible that Hazlitt could have written a long article like this on such a subject ...without betraying his identity by a single phrase".

"The History of Painting in Italy" (October 1819) they dismiss as

"...very dull indeed, (it) shows not a single trace of Hazlitt's manner from beginning to end."<sup>9</sup>

This does appear to indicate that Ireland's obvious enthusiasm for Hazlitt, his familiarity with the range of works, and his assiduity in collecting Hazlitt editions, were not matched by the skill in textual analysis which Ireland himself felt he had developed.

The 1836 letter to Morison also makes clear that the young Ireland had already had dealings with London booksellers during the early 1830s, in the course of compiling his Hazlitt collection. These contacts were

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<sup>8</sup> Notes and Queries, 5th Series, Vol.IX, March 1879, p.165

<sup>9</sup> A.R.Waller and A.Glover, Works of William Hazlitt, Vol.X.,p.403

evidently sufficiently frequent for him to be approached by one dealer who offered "an inordinate price" for Ireland's copy of Hazlitt's Letter to William Gifford (1819). In the same line of scholarship, Ireland inserted an article on "William Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt" in the Examiner and Times on 7 May 1869, summarising the characteristics of the two authors. In augmented form, this was issued as a pamphlet. 1868 also saw the publication of Ireland's bibliographical List of the Writings of William Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt, which also contained data on Lamb's writings. In the course of preparing this volume he had consulted William Carew Hazlitt, the essayist's grandson, whose own Memoirs of William Hazlitt had appeared in the previous year. This correspondence and acquaintance with W.C. Hazlitt was maintained over the following decades. Together they visited William Hazlitt's Wiltshire domicile, Winterslow. Ireland gave the younger man a rare portrait of Hazlitt and, in turn, importuned for any specimen of a letter or manuscript of Hazlitt's which his grandson felt able to spare.<sup>10</sup>

Developing an appreciation of a range of literature at a relatively early age, Ireland was attracted by the freshness and forcefulness of Hazlitt's style. As a young man, inclining naturally to reformist views under the influence of his father, he evidently relished Hazlitt's concern for truth; and would have been led on to explore the freedom-slavery antithesis which Hazlitt applied to so many subjects - most obviously, political and social issues, but also in matters of literary, dramatic and artistic execution. That so much of Hazlitt's writing was itself concerned to investigate literature would also have made it particularly attractive in Ireland's scheme of self-education. In old

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<sup>10</sup> There are several MS in the Alexander Ireland Collection, including parts of Hazlitt's essay "On the Fear of Death", which J.H. Swann, the cataloguer, claims are in Hazlitt's handwriting. Whether these were items provided by W.C. Hazlitt for Ireland's collection is not clear.

age he acknowledged that

"In my early life I owed him gratitude for leading me to appreciate our early English writers..."<sup>11</sup>

In the 1836 letter to Morrison, written when he was still in the process of this self-education, Ireland analysed the effects of Hazlitt's writing more closely:

"I still look back with delight and love to call up from the treasury of past remembrances, the feelings with which I perused for the first time his vigorous, racy and idiomatic pages .... when a new, fresh, and far-seeing spirit of criticism seemed opening upon me as I advanced.... Hazlitt possessed the sure combination of an acute and penetrating intellect joined to a warm and brilliant imagination ...I think it is almost impossible for the reader to escape catching a portion of his impassioned enthusiasm, whatever be the subject which calls it forth..."<sup>12</sup>

In the perspective of his other reading during these early years, particularly perhaps of contemporary periodicals like the Edinburgh Review, the Quarterly Magazine and Blackwood's Magazine, Ireland was evidently soon able to recognise the distinctive structure of much of Hazlitt's criticism - the focus on an author's intention and effects, on an actor's portrayal, or on a painter's technique. Ireland's engrossing interest in literature naturally embraced the authors themselves and in this respect, too, he found Hazlitt an illuminating mentor - both concerning other writers:

"No author ever gave me so keen a desire to know the writers about whom he discoursed so eloquently and justly."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Letter of 15 October 1889 from Ireland to W.E.Gladstone, op. cit.

<sup>12</sup>Op. cit.

<sup>13</sup>An undated note of Ireland's appended to his 22 February 1850 letter to Hazlitt's son, Alexander Ireland Collection

- and concerning Hazlitt himself:

"... besides, there was something to me quite fascinating in the personal recollections and associations with which his writings are studded - giving me a deep personal interest in the man" 14

"Seldom have the inmost experiences of an author been more completely revealed than in the case of Hazlitt." 15

Possibly with a sharper and more honest critical faculty for having assimilated Hazlitt, Ireland soon recognised, however, that this self-revelation by the author inevitably also threw into relief the man's weaknesses, both of character and in his writings.

As early as the 1836 letter to Morison Ireland acknowledged that, in his study of Hazlitt, "my opinions regarding these writings are considerably changed and modified since I first became acquainted with them". This did not represent a lessening of Ireland's admiration for much of Hazlitt's writing, but a detachment from identifying himself with some of the opinions which Hazlitt had held. Ireland came to see that the perceptive literary criticism, which in general he found so illuminating, could in certain instances be channelled away from genuinely literary concerns because of political or personal prejudice against a particular writer. He became aware that the championing of social justice and political reform, with which he often sympathised, could on certain issues be intransigent rather than positive. In literary criticism Hazlitt had allowed the change from his earlier good relations with Coleridge and Wordsworth to colour his judgement of their writing; similarly he indulged his opposition to privilege at the expense

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ireland's "Memoir" of Hazlitt, prefacing his William Hazlitt: Essayist and Critic (1889), pp.1-11

of a more constructive examination of Byron's poetry. It is unlikely that Ireland would have concurred in these non-literary arguments, diminishing the artistic merit of each of these poets. Despite his high regard for Hazlitt, Ireland included examples of these polemical observations in his 1889 selection. He also attempted on several occasions to set this aspect of Hazlitt's writing in some perspective. In his letter to Morison, Ireland was already able to acknowledge that Hazlitt's judgements were "sometimes wayward and capricious". In his 1887 "Books for General Readers" paper, he cautioned the reader coming fresh to Hazlitt that "His criticisms as a rule are just and discriminating!" In the introductory memoir to his 1889 selection of Hazlitt's writings, they are said to be "characterised ...for the most part, when disturbing influences were not present, by an unerring critical judgement." This apologia is developed.

"Even when his judgements are at fault, they are hardly calculated to mislead the taste of the reader, from the ease with which it is perceived and referred to its source in caprice or a momentary fit of spleen."

Clearly Ireland would not have wished to condone or overlook Hazlitt's obstinacy in personal relations, or his failure to resist introducing political prejudice against an author into ostensibly literary criticism; yet Ireland strove, both in his 1883 paper for the Literary Club and in his 1889 memoir, to set these flaws in the wider context of what, for him, were Hazlitt's achievements as a critic.

Similarly, as Ireland hints in the Morison letter, he did not, beyond possibly youthful enthusiasm, share Hazlitt's opposition to the monarchy and to much else in the established political order; yet Hazlitt's apparently instinctive urging of social and political reform, and his consistency in this vein, were, in themselves, features which

Ireland could admire. In sending a complimentary copy of his William Hazlitt: Essayist and Critic to Gladstone, Ireland commented that

"Hazlitt was one of the truest Liberals we ever had, and he never swerved from his fealty to the cause of liberty...."<sup>16</sup>

Nevertheless Ireland recognised - again, probably quite early in his reading of Hazlitt - that the French Revolution and the subsequent role of Napoleon were political shibboleths for Hazlitt, who retained idealistic interpretations of these events. In his "Books for General Readers" paper, Ireland warned that Hazlitt's Life of Napoleon Buonaparte (1828-30), was "one-sided but brilliant"; he advised his potential audience "to counteract the effects of this work" by reading a more recent and balanced exposition, Pierre Lanfrey's Napoleon (1871-79). Ireland recognised that probably the chief handicap to a better appreciation of Hazlitt was the lingering reputation of the essayist's Radical, republican views, personal and political prejudices, and perhaps particularly his unwavering esteem for Napoleon Bonaparte. Yet for Ireland these constraints did not counterbalance what he saw as the sterling qualities in Hazlitt's work.

Despite Hazlitt's relative unpopularity during the mid-nineteenth century, Alexander Ireland was by no means alone in admiring his writings. George Searle Phillips, in his 1850 Memoirs of Ebenezer Elliott, recorded a conversation between the 'Corn Law Rhymer' and Thomas Lister, the Barnsley postmaster poet, in which the latter had occasion to admit that he had not read anything of Hazlitt's. This evidently provoked an outburst from Elliott:

"Not read Hazlitt!...I wonder how you got your taste to the standerd it now reaches, and that it is not narrow and grovelling. The reading of Hazlitt was an epoch to me."

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<sup>16</sup>Letter 26 August 1889 from Ireland to Gladstone, Gladstone Papers, 44507, f.193

In the same period Charles Royce, a member of the Manchester Athenæum during the 1840s who recalled enjoying Dawson's lectures there, listed among his recent reading "(Horace) Mann's Educational Tour, also Hazlitt's Lectures on the English Comic Writers". The Hazlitt, he felt,

"is an excellent book of its kind. All Hazlitt's writings are sensible and without parade; radical as he was, I rather like him".<sup>17</sup>

Following the publication of his bibliographical List in 1868, Ireland came to be recognised as an authority on Hazlitt. His Hazlitt collection was acknowledged in the Library Association's Transactions for its 1879 Annual Meeting in Manchester. His selections and memoir in William Hazlitt, Essayist and Critic (1889) consolidated this position, and he was evidently consulted by Richard Le Gallienne during 1889 when the latter was preparing his edition of Hazlitt's Liber Amoris (1893). Later in the century informed critical opinion began to reassert the value of Hazlitt's writings: Bryan Waller Procter, from the generation who had known Hazlitt, Richard Garnett, George Saintsbury, Richard Le Gallienne and Edmund Gosse, from a younger set of critics. This reassessment culminated in the Waller and Glover edition of Hazlitt's work, issued during 1902-06. Although Hazlitt's surviving friends - Procter, Hunt, Charles Cowden Clarke<sup>18</sup> (each of whom Ireland subsequently knew) - never lost their regard for his work in the long period when his reputation was low, the rehabilitation of Hazlitt can be partly attributed to Ireland's own conviction which prompted his 1868 List and 1889 selections.

The 1868 List also attested, of course, to Alexander Ireland's regard for Leigh Hunt; his eventual collection of Hunt's various

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<sup>17</sup>Letter of 6 November 1846 from Charles Royce to his brother George, Royce Family Papers

<sup>18</sup>Ireland's 1868 List was dedicated to Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke

publications and periodicals amounted to 113 volumes, as compared with 81 volumes of Hazlitt. Hunt's reputation, too, had tended to suffer on account of his early Radicalism and particularly his imprisonment during 1813-15 for slandering the Prince Regent. Although there was a suggestion that he should be considered for the Poet Laureateship, on Wordsworth's death in 1850, his old associations ruled this out. In Alexander Ireland's Christmas 1884 speech at the Manchester Literary Club, he suggested that Hunt, like Hazlitt, was still "too little known by the present generation of readers".

Since their original meeting in London during April 1837 Ireland had evidently come to know Hunt sufficiently well to be "in the habit of spending an evening with him when business carried me to London".<sup>19</sup> In turn, Ireland was able to introduce Emerson to Hunt when the American's lecture tour brought him to London during the spring of 1848. Ireland's enthusiasm for Hunt's writings and his affection for the man were evidently shared by his friend William Ballantyne Hodgson. He wrote eagerly to Ireland on 11 December 1843 to report that he, too, had now met Hunt and was to see him again on his next visit to London. The contact was taken a stage further in the following year, when Ireland took the liberty of sending Hunt a copy of his poem "Advice to Dwellers in Towns" - "the first verses, I may say, I ever composed".<sup>20</sup> He judged that Hunt would appreciate the poem's sentiments, urging the value of spending leisure time in the countryside as a relief from a working life in the city. Ireland acknowledged that

"my love of nature..(has) been much strengthened (and), I may say, owes much of its development to an intimate acquaintance with your writings and those of kindred spirits"<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ireland, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1882), pp.171-2

<sup>20</sup> Letter of 26 September 1844 from Ireland to Hunt, British Museum, Additional Manuscripts, 38110, f.100

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

He signed his letter as "your friend and well-wisher and brother book-lover, and grateful reader for 20 years (although I am only 34)"—a further indication of how early Ireland's literary explorations had begun.

In his "Books for General Readers" paper Ireland maintained that Hunt's writings "are conspicuous for their delicate and subtle perception of the beautiful in life, nature and literature". As with much of Hazlitt's work, Hunt's frequent absorption in literary matters, his wide reading and positive criticism, would have had a direct appeal for Ireland. In this respect Ireland himself was something of a 'general reader': not aiming to produce extensive or original literary criticism, but keen to explore a wide variety of English and other literature, and hence grateful for "the most genial and discriminating of literary guides" in Hunt. The appeal, moreover, went beyond Ireland's desire for wider literary horizons and informed criticism to his perspective as a bibliophile. From reading Hunt's essays, Ireland recognised that

"Books were to him a real world, exhaustless  
and delightful"<sup>22</sup>

Accordingly, Hunt's discourses in this field, like Hazlitt's, are substantially represented in Ireland's Book-Lover's Enchiridion. Ireland also appreciated Hunt's evident "love of simple pleasures" in the homely and superficially narrow focus of many of his essays. In his obituary of Ireland, John Saxon Mills spoke of his "spontaneity and simplicity of character," and this disposition would have inclined him to Hunt's range of subject matter, his lightness of tone and his sanguine outlook. Ireland knew Hunt sufficiently well to be aware that the affectionate nature of the man and his writings was maintained despite his frequently pressing financial circumstances and difficult family life.

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<sup>22</sup>Ireland, "Books for General Readers", op.cit.

Ireland produced two papers on Hunt for the Manchester Literary Club: "The Connection of Lord Byron and Leigh Hunt in the production and publication of the Liberal", given on 3 March 1884; and a general survey of Hunt's life and writings, on 9 February 1891. In neither case is the text of Ireland's paper included in the Proceedings, though a synopsis of the later talk is given. These omissions are tantalising, since the 1891 synopsis claims that Ireland's paper "will form the most perfect bibliography of (Hunt's) writings that has yet been compiled", but does not present the data. Hence it is not clear precisely what material Ireland was bringing forward which, by implication, would have supplemented his 1868 List.

Ireland's September 1844 letter to Hunt was written at a time when he was beginning to engage in activities at the Manchester Athenæum. He added a postscript to his letter outlining an idea he had for "getting up a lecture at our Athenæum here or in Liverpool on your writings and their characteristics". Nothing came of this project in the short term, though some of Ireland's material may well have been stored and eventually used in the 1868 List and his later papers on Hunt. Ireland's access to a Liverpool audience was via Hodgson, who was constructing the lecture schedule at the Liverpool Mechanics' Institute. In fact earlier in 1844 Hodgson had begun to arrange, via Vincent Novello, for Hunt himself to lecture at the Liverpool and Manchester Mechanics' Institutes, the subjects and dates to be determined by Hunt - "Nothing that he might choose can come amiss to us".<sup>23</sup> In this case, too, however, the plan appears not to have been carried into effect. During the late 1840s and early 1850s Ireland occasionally included extracts from Hunt's writings in the Weekly Times and the two corresponded from time to time

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<sup>23</sup> Letter of 21 February 1844 from Hodgson to Vincent Novello, British Museum Additional MS, 38110, f.68

in this connection. Ireland consulted Leigh Hunt's son Thornton in preparing his 1868 List and subsequently provided the notice on his former acquaintance for the Dictionary of National Biography in 1891.

The third English essayist whom Ireland particularly admired was Charles Lamb. The 1868 List, principally concerned with the works of Hazlitt and Hunt, also included a chronological list of Lamb's writings, extracts from Procter's Memoir of Lamb (1866) and Ireland's own review<sup>24</sup> of this latter work. In thanking Procter for having sent a copy of his Memoir, Ireland observed that, "for the last 30 years I have devoured everything relating to him..."<sup>25</sup>. There were three strands to Ireland's esteem for Lamb. He particularly relished the "inimitable and indescribably quaint humour, free from all sting or bitterness",<sup>26</sup> which he found in the essays of "Elia". He found, in Lamb, as in Hazlitt and Hunt, another fellow-bibliophile, and, again, amply reflected this in the extracts from Lamb included in the Enchiridion. Not least, he recognised and respected Lamb's courage and patience in continuing his his essay-writing in the same good-humoured vein over many years, whilst contending with his sister's mental illness. Ireland expressed the hope that his own review of Procter's Memoir would "contribute to a wider knowledge of Lamb's heroic and self-sacrificing life".<sup>27</sup>

Some interest attaches to the fact that Procter chose to send Ireland a copy of his Memoir of Lamb. It may be that the two men had met earlier, in which case Procter would naturally have become aware of Ireland's literary interests. Certainly, even in the 1860s, Ireland was

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<sup>24</sup>Manchester Examiner and Times

<sup>25</sup>Letter of 22 August 1866 from Ireland to Procter, op.cit.

<sup>26</sup>Ireland, "Books for General Readers", op.cit.

<sup>27</sup>Ireland's letter to Procter, op.cit.

known in some literary circles in London; in addition to Hunt and Carlyle, he knew John Chapman, the publisher, and may have been remembered by some of those who attended Emerson's London lectures in June 1848. Yet there is no explicit record of an earlier acquaintance between Procter and Ireland. Moreover, by 1866, when Procter's book appeared, Ireland had not published any of his own compilations, which were to indicate the nature of his literary tastes. It seems probable, therefore, that, if Procter had not learned of Ireland's preference for Lamb from their mutual friend Hunt, he may, as an author, at least have been aware that the Manchester Examiner and Times and its weekly supplement frequently contained informed literary reviews. Thus the copy of the Memoir which Ireland acknowledged in his letter of 22 August was probably that which Procter anticipated that the Manchester newspaper would review, without necessarily knowing that Ireland was the likely reviewer. Certainly Ireland's letter (the sole letter to Procter traced) appears to be the first step in an acquaintance, confirming to Procter that Ireland had been in a position to ensure a review of the book and proceeding to indicate the reviewer's particular interest in doing so, as well as providing a copy of the review produced.

Ireland's library, in fact, included an extensive range of Charles Lamb's and his sister's writings, and, as with his Hazlitt and Hunt collections, numerous relevant reviews and articles from a wide variety of British and North American newspapers and periodicals. Given his particular interest in Lamb and the extent of his resources, Ireland was well placed to attempt the resolution of a literary dilemma concerning Lamb and Thomas Carlyle, which ensued from the publication of Carlyle's Reminiscences in 1881. In this autobiographical compilation, originally assembled in 1866, Carlyle made some disparaging personal

remarks on Lamb in later life, concerning his apparently trivial conversation, his demeanour and drinking habits, and suggesting at very least some senility in the essayist. Ireland's paper for the Manchester Literary Club, "On Certain Harsh Remarks Upon Charles Lamb by Thomas Carlyle", given on 14 December 1885, attempted to preserve Lamb's good reputation whilst going some way towards vindicating Carlyle, for whom Ireland also had a high regard. He suggested that Carlyle's observations on Lamb were written before he might reasonably be supposed to have learned - via Procter's 1866 Memoir - of Lamb's stressful family life. Ireland charitably assumed that Carlyle would not have written so ungenerously of Lamb had he been aware of Mary Lamb's mental illness. Ireland attributed Carlyle's remarks not simply to his acknowledged irascibility but also to what he claims would have been the alien nature of Lamb's writings for Carlyle:

"Elia's peculiar humour and fantastic ways of regarding men, book, and things must have been mere foolishness to him".<sup>28</sup>

Finally Ireland sought to transfer blame from Carlyle to James Anthony Froude, Carlyle's literary executor, whom Ireland felt should have exercised his privileged position more prudently in editing and publishing the Reminiscences. Ireland claimed to have seen a final memorandum of Carlyle's in the manuscript of the Reminiscences, which made clear the writer's intention that this assortment of recollections and observations should not be published. Ireland felt that Froude should have respected this injunction and removed the objectionable references to Lamb, rather than publishing indiscriminately. In the interim between appearance of the Reminiscences in 1881 and Ireland's paper in 1885, Froude had aroused further consternation among Carlyle's

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<sup>28</sup> Ireland, "On Certain Harsh Remarks Upon Charles Lamb by Thomas Carlyle," Papers of the Manchester Literary Club, Vol. XII, 1886

friends and followers by his indiscreet edition of the Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle (1883). This included material which clearly indicated serious disharmony in the relationship between Thomas and Jane Carlyle, and many observers felt that such details should have been suppressed. These early controversies in Froude's handling of his responsibility were to have implications for Annie Elizabeth Ireland's two publications concerning Mrs Carlyle and these issues will be examined further in relation to Mrs Ireland's literary work.

In common with many of his generation of "young thinkers",<sup>29</sup> Ireland was an enthusiastic admirer of Thomas Carlyle. He came to know the Carlyles during the 1840s, but appears never to have been on quite such familiar terms with them as his Manchester acquaintances Thomas Ballantyne and Francis Espinasse. Nevertheless he was a periodic visitor at their London home, saw them during their occasional visits to Manchester, and corresponded with Carlyle from time to time, usually on literary matters. During Ireland's early years in Manchester, Carlyle's writings were clearly attracting an eager audience among many involved in adult education and, indeed, in self-education. Mrs Mills recalled that around 1845

"Carlyle readings and Carlyle lectures were given, not in grand Toynbee Halls, or dilettante fashionable drawing-rooms, but in small Mechanics' Institutes, country Sunday School rooms, and cottages, in the dinner hour as well as the evenings."<sup>30</sup>

His collections of lectures, On Heroes and Hero-Worship (1841), and essays, Past and Present (1843), are likely to have been the focus of this

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<sup>29</sup> Ireland's recollection of his August 1833 conversation with Emerson on Coleridge was that "He spoke of his Friend and Biographia Literaria as containing many admirable passages for young thinkers...", Ralph Waldo Emerson (1882), p.143

<sup>30</sup> Mills, op.cit. p.108

interest. The latter volume, moreover, included his essay on the Peterloo incident, "Manchester Insurrection ". This Northern audience was no doubt largely the same as that which Carlyle himself dismissed as "a band of intellectual canaille"<sup>31</sup>, when he heard of the successes of Emerson's lecture-tour. Alexander Ireland did, of course, arrange that George Dawson's first lectures at the Manchester Athenæum, early in 1846, should deal with Carlyle. Jane Carlyle, aware of this level of interest in Manchester, through her own visits and from her friend Geraldine Jewsbury, referred jocularly to "your Manchester worshippers" in a letter to her husband.<sup>32</sup> This was, of course, the time and the arena for Emerson's first lectures of his 1847-48 visit and in a letter of 11 November 1847 he observed that

"The circle of people that I see here,  
are almost adorers of Carlyle..."<sup>33</sup>

Ireland's own awareness of Carlyle dated from the previous decade. For Conway's Thomas Carlyle (1881), Ireland made available a number of Carlyle's early letters. In the 'explanatory note' which he provided as a preface to these letters, Ireland indicated that he had read the author's French Revolution (1837) soon after its publication, that he was familiar with a number of articles which Carlyle had produced for the Edinburgh Review during the late 1820s, and that, evidently knowing of Ireland's interest, Emerson had sent him a copy of the first American edition of Carlyle's Sartor Resartus in 1837. The French Revolution, Ireland recalled,

"produced a deeper and more vivid impression on  
my mind than any work I had ever met with before".<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> A diary entry of Carlyle's for 9 February 1848, quoted by M.D. Conway, Autobiography, Vol.II., p.102

<sup>32</sup> Letter of 11 September 1847, Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle, Vol.I., p.395

<sup>33</sup> Letter to Elizabeth Hoar, Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Vol.3,p425

<sup>34</sup> Ireland's note in Conway, Thomas Carlyle, p.156

In the same period Ireland had had access to a number of early letters from Carlyle to two of his contemporaries at Edinburgh University, which give the first indication of his thinking. Having supplied these letters to Conway, Ireland recounted with evident pride Carlyle's reported reaction on learning, a few years earlier, of Ireland's keen interest in the letters:

"....an expression of surprise, not unmingled with satisfaction, that there was anyone, at that early time, who felt so much interest in him and his doings as to have taken the trouble to preserve these records of his youthful thoughts and feelings and struggles."<sup>35</sup>

Given this interest in Carlyle, Ireland naturally formed an extensive collection of his writings, together with numerous periodical articles and reviews pertaining to Carlyle. Ireland himself produced several such pieces in the period following Carlyle's death in 1881, drawing on his long acquaintance with the author and his works. He inserted two letters in the Manchester Examiner and Times during February 1881 (Carlyle having died on 5 February) when obituary notices and personal memoirs were still appearing in many publications: "The Accidental Burning of Mr. Carlyle's Manuscript", 19 February (this prompted by a letter in the Times concerning the loss of a volume of the French Revolution); "Carlyle and Louis Napoleon", 21 February. A further letter was produced in his newspaper in July of the same year, entitled "Thomas Carlyle's Youthful Literary Ambition", drawing on Ireland's familiarity with the early Edinburgh letters. Two articles were published in the Athenæum: "Thomas Carlyle and Leigh Hunt", 18 June 1881, based on copies of some of their letters which Ireland possessed; "Carlyle's Relations with Emerson", 8 November 1884, surveying the long acquaintance of the two authors and their good

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p.157

relations. An earlier article of Ireland's in the same field, "The Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence", had appeared in the Academy on 7 April 1883. A detailed contribution to Notes and Queries on 10 September 1881 listed books, articles and memoirs concerning Carlyle. On Carlyle, therefore, as in most of his writings, Ireland's aims were to introduce the author to those whose study had been more limited or otherwise directed, by means of biographical survey and personal impressions of the strengths of the writing; and to facilitate further exploration by providing precise bibliographical data.

The influence of Carlyle on Ireland and his Manchester associates in their educational ventures during the 1840s and early 1850s has been indicated in the previous chapter. More generally, for this generation his influence was that of a spiritual awakening, in cultural terms, leading those whose education, in the broadest sense, gave them at least a fragmentary awareness of civilisation, to recognise and attempt to fulfil this cultural responsibility. Carlyle felt, and made others feel, that they could and should exert themselves to instil a moral order in the accelerating industrialised, and increasingly politicised, society. Carlyle identified this responsible class in various terms, but certain of these formulations would have had a particular appeal for such as Ireland. Given his position in Manchester in the 1840s, the opportunity to participate in various reform initiatives and to publicise these activities and the opinions which informed them, Carlyle's forceful exposition in "The Hero as Man of Letters" must have seemed like an injunction to Ireland:

"...the writers of Newspapers, Pamphlets, Poems, Books, these are the real working effective Church of a modern country."<sup>36</sup>

In the mid-1840s Ireland, Ballantyne and Espinasse probably saw themselves as disciples of Carlyle to some degree. Certainly they appear to have

<sup>36</sup> Carlyle, On Heroes and Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History(1841)

visited him in London and welcomed him to Manchester on a number of occasions during this period. In The Idea of the Clerisy in the Nineteenth Century (1978), Ben Knights claims that Carlyle "had, since coming to London, been marking out possible followers."<sup>37</sup> Whilst Ireland and his Manchester associates were of relatively modest intellectual stature, it is possible that, for a time at least, Carlyle may have cultivated their discipleship in hoping to find potentially sympathetic 'men of letters'.

Although Ireland, like most of Carlyle's many visitors and acquaintances, never came to form a close relationship with the author, and may, with age and experience, have consciously distanced himself somewhat from Carlyle's views, he nevertheless retained his high regard for Carlyle. In fact he probably grew to doubt, as Carlyle himself did, whether some form of significant cultural re-orientation could be effected; though this modification of earlier optimism did not diminish Ireland's enthusiasm to foster the large opportunities opening up from the provision of public libraries. In a speech in 1882 on Scottish men of letters - "The Land O'Cakes and Brither Scots" - Ireland associated Carlyle with Burns and Scott, in estimating their international reputation and influence. At this juncture Ireland still felt that Carlyle was

"...the greatest intellectual and ethical force of our time - with a faculty of dramatic imagination scarcely ever equalled"<sup>38</sup>

Ireland would have been familiar with, and would have endorsed, Leigh Hunt's assessment of Carlyle in his Autobiography (1850);

"...one of the kindest and best, as well as most eloquent of men, though in his zeal for what is best.... he calls upon us to prove our

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<sup>37</sup> Knights, p.98

<sup>38</sup> Ireland's speech at the annual dinner of the St. Andrew's Society of Manchester, held on 30 November 1882.

energies and our benevolence by acting the part of the wind rather than the sun, of warring rather than peace-making, of frightening and forcing rather than conciliating and persuading."<sup>39</sup>

As well as defining the differences of outlook and temperament between Hunt and Carlyle, this contrast perhaps also serves to indicate why Ireland came to have more affectionate regard for Emerson than for Carlyle. Ireland's own nature, particularly as he grew older, was to encourage and assist, by the establishment of libraries, by his own literary and bibliographical surveys, by his anthologies and simply focussed, if eulogistic, speeches.

Perhaps even more remarkable than Ireland's diligent study of certain British authors was his extensive knowledge of contemporary North American literature. He never visited the United States, but he appears to have familiarised himself with its writers from the early years of his self-imposed scheme of education, and later supplemented this reading by collecting a wide range of North American periodicals and newspapers. Ireland's interest in American writers and their work may have been awakened by Hazlitt's article "American Literature - Dr. Channing" in the Edinburgh Review for October 1829. His interest would certainly have been assisted at a relatively early stage by George Combe's Notes on the United States of North America during a phrenological visit in 1838, 1839 and 1840 (1841) and the reports of Horace Mann's educational reforms in Massachusetts in the same period. An undated, unidentified newspaper cutting in the Alexander Ireland Collection claimed that

"There is perhaps no man on this side of the Atlantic who has a larger acquaintance than Mr. Ireland with the best writers of America,"<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Hunt, Autobiography, p.379

<sup>40</sup>Advertisement for J.C.Hotten's projected collection of Emerson's early essays

This interest received its first substantial impetus, however, from his opportune meeting with Ralph Waldo Emerson in Edinburgh in August 1833. Their friendship lasted almost fifty years until Emerson's death in 1882. Despite only two subsequent periods of meeting - the American's visits to Britain in 1847-48 and 1872-73 - and no more than occasional correspondence, Emerson's influence was pervasive. In the interim years Ireland was able to extend his understanding of Emerson by reading the collection of essays which appeared in 1841 (the English edition having a preface by Carlyle) and his contributions to The Dial (1840-44), the literary periodical which Emerson helped to found and sustain together with Margaret Fuller (1810-1850). The transcendentalist ideas formulated by the Dial writers, emerging, in Emerson's case, in his 1836 collection of essays, Nature, proved to be a natural and welcome extension of horizons for those whose early mental discipline was akin to Ireland's. Younger men such as these had the critique of conventional religion imbued by a Unitarian upbringing; they had the self-discipline to extend their limited education and did so eagerly; they were already in the process of trying to interpret human nature in terms of phrenology, and were prepared to accept the theological and philosophical implications of advances in scientific theory. The impact which George Searle Phillips recollected from the 1841 Essays is very likely to have been Ireland's own:

"It is impossible to estimate the effect these essays produced on the minds of the young and thoughtful in England. There was a freshness and beauty about them absolutely fascinating..."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Phillips ("January Searle"), Emerson, his life and writings (1855), p.31

Emerson was not hostile to organised religion, but, after his 1832 separation from the Boston Unitarians, he had no sympathy with most of its activity, seeing it as unnecessarily constraining on intellectual development. He rejected an emphasis on religious formulations in terms of doctrine and liturgy. Instead he wished to enhance the value of spirituality. Shedding much of religious orthodoxy, he was sure that the source of spiritual authority came from an individual's own inner strength; that human nature, if continually aware of its potential, provided its own discipline. Religious faith was not blind trust but the achievement of intuition. The important precept was self-trust. Naturally, orthodox churchmen saw this set of ideas as atheistical and destructive, but Emerson was attempting to regenerate religion by re-defining 'spirit' and its operation in human life. This prospect was an exciting extension of philosophy for Ireland and Hodgson who, in the 1830s, were themselves trying to enliven the rather sterile proceedings in the Edinburgh Phrenological Society. The emphasis on individual responsibility also accorded well with the developing views which Ireland, Hodgson and some of their contemporaries had of the initiating role they should play in their community in terms of education, social reform and a wider culture.

In his Life of Emerson (1888) Richard Garnett claimed that the value which Ireland derived and carried forward from his 1833 meeting made him "the first European who recognised a light of the age in the American stranger". Francis Espinasse traced the birth of Emerson's influence on British thinkers to Richard Monckton Milnes' article on the American writer in the Westminster Review for October 1839. Ireland it was, however, who gradually formed the project of a lecture-tour for Emerson.

Many of those who attended his lectures in the North and Midlands were impressed by the broad outlines of his addresses and their general effect, even where some of the particularities of the presentation were not fully absorbed. Phillips, who entertained Emerson during his Huddersfield engagements in December 1847, recognised the transcendentalist message:

"For the first time in American history a man is born... who puts under his foot all creeds and traditions, and seeks the spirit at first-hand".<sup>42</sup>

For Phillips Emerson was

"...the spokesman of many thoughts, not the organizer of a philosophy....nor does he seek to make converts, or stereotype men in creeds, or found an institution."<sup>43</sup>

William Birch junior evidently attended the Manchester Athenæum series and recalled these in an obituary sermon, "Divine Temples: in memoriam of Emerson", delivered in the Free Trade Hall on 30 April 1882:

"His aim seemed rather to inspire men to receive good from any source and act up to the light within them. He did not like the idea of a man receiving a creed from others and pledging himself to it for his whole life".<sup>44</sup>

Others were less appreciative. Emerson lectured at the Commercial College in Glasgow in February 1848 and the conservative Glasgow Courier, seeking to denigrate the newly founded institution and aware of his unorthodox views, referred to him as "an infidel spouter from ...Harvard College".<sup>45</sup> Emerson recorded in his journal that he was "preached

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p.3

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p.6

<sup>44</sup> Birch, published as No. 469 of a series of pamphlets, Sunday Evenings at the Free Trade Hall, Manchester

<sup>45</sup> Quoted by W.H. Marwick, "Early Adult Education in the West of Scotland", Journal of Adult Education, Vol. IV, No.2, April 1930

against every Sunday by the Church of England...and the Athenæum and the Examiner (are) denounced in the newspapers" for their support of the lecture tour. Emerson even feared for a time that "my friends Ireland and Dr. Hudson<sup>46</sup> will find some difficulty in realising for me those engagements they first promised".<sup>47</sup> In general, however, the tour was a success; some invitations could not be accommodated and were declined with regret; audiences were more numerous at venues in the North and Midlands than for the London series of lectures in June 1848.

Emerson did on occasion confound some of those who were otherwise among his English admirers. In the "Literature" section of English Traits he wrote of "the limitary tone of English thought", outlining the generally unimaginative nature of the English and purporting to show how these innate limitations made impositions even on accomplished contemporary writers and poets. He saw it as an era when "Nothing comes to the book-shops but politics, travels, statistics, tabulation, and engineering". Dickens was said to be "local in his aims"; Wordsworth had "written longer than he was inspired"; while Tennyson "wants a subject, and climbs no mount of vision". John Mills was perplexed by what he saw as "this libel on English poetry",<sup>48</sup> and rallied the support of Hodgson and Dunckley for some written rejoinder. According to Mrs Mills, even Ireland seems for a time to have considered approaching Emerson on this subject. During the 1872-73 visit, E.J. Broadfield, an Examiner and Times journalist, was similarly "surprised...to hear his almost caustic criticism of Browning,"<sup>49</sup> during a social gathering at

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<sup>46</sup> James William Hudson, one of the co-ordinating Secretaries in the Mechanics' Institute network

<sup>47</sup> Emerson, Journals, Vol. VII

<sup>48</sup> Quoted, without date, by Mrs J. Mills, op.cit.

<sup>49</sup> Broadfield, "The Emerson Centenary: Some Reminiscences", Manchester Guardian, 25 May 1903

'Inglewood'. Even in old age Emerson would perhaps have been more discreet had he known that his hostess, Mrs Ireland, was especially fond of Browning's works and acquainted with the poet. Emerson had, of course, in the same English Traits essay, praised the classical English authors, as well as recognising those, including his Manchester admirers, who formed

"a minority of profound minds existing in the nation, capable of appreciating every soaring of intellect and every hint of tendency".

He described these constructive critics as "the perceptive class" as opposed to "the practical finality class". Nevertheless his disparagement of the foremost English authors of the day was unpalatable to those in the Ireland coterie who otherwise revered him.

A much less sympathetic impression of Emerson emerges in the writings of John Ruskin, who had in general a much poorer view of recent British writers. Ruskin evidently found it difficult to come to terms with Emerson's views or with the American himself during their meeting in Oxford in May 1873.

"I found his mind a total blank on matters of art, and had a fearful sense of the whole being of him as a gentle cloud - intangible."<sup>50</sup>

Emerson, of course, at the age of 70, would not have debated with Ruskin so readily as he might have done when younger. His record of the occasion nevertheless complements Ruskin's:

"I found myself wholly out of sympathy with Ruskin's views of life and the world. I wonder such a genius can be possessed by so black a devil. I cannot pardon him for a despondency so deep."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Quoted in an anonymous article, "Ruskin and Emerson", T.P.'s Weekly, 3 April 1903 which is included in Vol.38 (p.183) of The Works of John Ruskin, ed. E.T.Cook and A.Wedderburn, 1912

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

In February 1883 Ireland sent Ruskin complimentary copies of his anthology, The Book-Lover's Enchiridion (1882) and his pamphlet on Scottish men of letters, The Land O'Cakes and Brither Scots (1882). It appears that Ireland may also have provided a copy of his In Memoriam Ralph Waldo Emerson (1882), on which Ruskin, rather tactlessly, in view of Ireland's evident affection for Emerson, commented

"I have never cared much for Emerson;  
he is little more than a clever gossip,  
and his egoism reiterates itself to  
provocation."<sup>52</sup>

For Ireland, however, the long friendship with Emerson was a source of continual inspiration, and the initial Edinburgh meeting and two subsequent visits were landmarks in his life.

One recorded incident alone during their long acquaintance could, potentially, have damaged their good relations. This concerned a projected volume of Emerson's early essays, which the publisher John Camden Hotten planned to issue in the early 1870s. In his article, "John Camden Hotten and Emerson's Uncollected Essays",<sup>53</sup> Dennis Welland traces the rather maladroit involvement of Ireland and Moncure Daniel Conway in this abortive affair during 1870-72, before they managed to extricate themselves and retain Emerson's good opinion. Emerson had not wished the edition to proceed, once he learned of it via Conway, until he himself had undertaken the revision of his early Dial articles. Ireland and Conway had not consulted him until several months after Ireland had supplied Hotten with details of the 1847-48 Manchester lectures and Conway had provided a biographical introduction. Welland suggests that Ireland, at least, could have been expected to act more

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<sup>52</sup>Letter of 9 February 1883 from Ruskin to Ireland, Works, Vol. 34, p.563

<sup>53</sup>D.S.R. Welland, "John Camden Hotten and Emerson's Uncollected Essays", Yearbook of English Studies, Vol.6, 1976

positively and with greater propriety, since he clearly held Emerson in such esteem.

This sequence of events is all the more surprising in view of an earlier piece of opportunism from Hotten, of which both Ireland and Conway were most probably aware. In April 1866, immediately following Thomas Carlyle's installation as Rector of Edinburgh University, Hotten had issued a pirated version of Carlyle's formal address, accompanied by some, apparently injudicious, biographical material. Acting with speed, he evidently secured considerable orders from some reputable London booksellers, until persuaded to suppress his pamphlet. During the previous few years Conway had been a frequent visitor at the Carlyles' London home and was on good terms with them. Living and working in central London, he must have known of the Hotten publication. It also seems reasonable to assume that Ireland, too, would have learned of this development, either from literary acquaintances in London or via the Manchester booksellers. Although in 1867 Conway had assisted in Hotten's publication of Whitman's Leaves of Grass, and again in 1869 for his edition of Hawthorne's Notebooks, it might have been expected that Ireland and Conway would have been either more circumspect or more authoritative in collaborating with Hotten on the proposed Emerson collection. It seems probable that in their shared enthusiasm to promote Emerson's writings and to safeguard his reputation in England, they misjudged the means presented to them at this juncture. It is likely that Hotten would have given them the impression of being prepared to publish regardless of their co-operation. Their three-month delay in acquainting Emerson with the project is difficult to account for, particularly in view of their acknowledged misgivings regarding the collection and Hotten himself. Possibly in the interim they were seeking means of either thwarting or somehow legitimising

Hotten's project. Possibly the relationship between Ireland and Conway was not sufficiently close for either of them to proceed securely and decisively in what was a difficult affair. As the elder of the two, and described by Conway himself as "Emerson's factotum" in England, Ireland perhaps should have taken the initiative towards reaching a satisfactory outcome. By the time of Emerson's arrival in England in November 1872, he had still not carried out the revisions which he had insisted were necessary, and possibly was no longer fully capable of doing so at the age of 69. During the same period, however, and possibly prompted by the threat of the Hotten collection, Emerson had published an American edition of some of the material in which Hotten had been interested. Hotten did not persist with the plan and the publication was abandoned. It may be surmised that, when they met during the 1872-73 visit, Ireland would have been at pains to ascertain that his friendship with Emerson had not been damaged by the Hotten affair and by any suspicion that he himself had been remiss in appearing to sanction the plan without resolving the ensuing complications.

Ireland's own publication on Emerson was produced shortly after Emerson's death in April 1882. Initially based on Ireland's obituary notice in the Manchester Examiner and Times, together with other material which he possessed, it was issued as In Memoriam Ralph Waldo Emerson (1882). Since it proved to be a popular compilation, Ireland augmented the original text with a longer assessment of Emerson, further reminiscences and a miscellany of extracts relating to Emerson, culled from various periodicals. In general the emphasis is on biographical and bibliographical, rather than analytical, detail. In the supporting commentary in his "Books for General Readers" paper, however, in 1887, Ireland summarised his view of Emerson as having

"... been one of the highest ethical forces of his time; he has exercised ... an influence probably not exceeded by that of any writer of the last two generations. The lessons he teaches are sincerity, simplicity, hopefulness and self-dependence; and, above all, fidelity to the divine law written upon the conscience as the only safe law of life for any man"<sup>54</sup>

A mutual friend in later years, Moncure Daniel Conway, reflected on the significance of their first meeting, observing that

"Whatever spiritual bonds had remained on the Edinburgh youth softly fell away, after Emerson's touch, and his mind was gently revolutionised".<sup>55</sup>

Ireland recalled that, during their walk around Edinburgh, Emerson "spoke much about Coleridge"<sup>56</sup> and that this had proved "a fruitful topic of conversation", as Ireland himself had recently been reading some of Coleridge's writings for the first time. This presents an intriguing comparison, via the linking element of Coleridge, between, on the one hand, Emerson's sermon, his subsequent conversation with Ireland, the impression he made on the young Scotsman and, on the other, Coleridge's own sermon in Shrewsbury in January 1798, his conversation with Hazlitt during the return walk to Wem and his early influence, as recorded by Hazlitt in his essay "My First Acquaintance with the Poets". Ireland would certainly have been familiar with this essay, written ten years earlier. As so often, however, he summarises rather than elaborates, contenting himself with recalling Emerson's commendation of Coleridge to "young thinkers".

Alexander Ireland's knowledge of, and regard for, American literature extended beyond Emerson to other contemporaries. Certainly

<sup>54</sup> Ireland, op. cit.

<sup>55</sup> Conway, "Alexander Ireland and Emerson", New York Evening Post, 12 January 1885; microfiche file relating to Ireland, Manchester Public Library.

<sup>56</sup> Ireland, Ralph Waldo Emerson, p.143

he was assiduous in a role which evidently came naturally to him - welcoming American visitors to England, assisting their arrangements, corresponding and providing information. H. J. Fairchild, an American who was part of the Irelands' social circle in Bowdon during the 1870s, recalled "the unwearied kindness of Mr. Ireland to Americans in general and his unflinching interest in America"<sup>57</sup> In an unpublished article "Recollections of Mr. Alexander Ireland of Manchester", Fairchild observed that Ireland had been "opposed to slavery (and a) staunch supporter of the Union cause during the war". He had "welcomed Americans to his home and heart ... His library was full of American books, from Margaret Fuller (with a complete set of The Dial) to the present day, and his favourite anthologies were Dana's Household Book of Poetry ... and Emerson's Parnassus".<sup>58</sup> Ireland was acquainted with Nathaniel Hawthorne, when the latter was American consul in Liverpool in 1853-57, and he accompanied Hawthorne during one of several visits to the Art Treasures Exhibition held in Manchester in the summer of 1857. In his English Note-Books (1870) Hawthorne claimed that "Ireland is one of the few men who have read Thoreau's books", and recalled that "he spoke of Margaret Fuller, and of The Dial".

Margaret Fuller had, in fact, been the first of a series of American visitors whom Ireland had received. Ireland was evidently impressed by Fuller:

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<sup>57</sup> Letter of 4 March 1895 from Fairchild to John Mills, reprinted by Mrs. Mills, op. cit.

<sup>58</sup> Dated 5 January, these recollections were intended to aid M. D. Conway in producing his two articles on Ireland for the New York Evening Post, 12 and 19 January 1895, but evidently reached Conway too late. Again this material is reprinted by Mrs Mills, op. cit.

"Her powers of conversation were extraordinary; she exercised a singularly fascinating influence upon all those she came in contact with."<sup>59</sup>

Yet apart from a number of later references to this August 1846 meeting, he appears to have paid little or no attention to her writings in his subsequent articles and lectures. This is especially surprising, given Ireland's interest in contemporary North American writers, her own wide interest in literature, her radical philosophical writings on the role of women, and, not least, her eventful life and tragic death at the age of forty. She was an exact contemporary of Ireland's; in addition to his own literary interests, he was particularly sympathetic to the cause of female emancipation. Certainly he would have been probably uniquely placed, among British men of letters, to produce an assessment of her life and writings. Several of her North American friends, including Emerson, did issue such memoirs and evaluation; possibly Ireland felt that these records, from those who had known Fuller better, obviated any other attempts. Even these memoirs, however, which were very probably in his possession, receive no mention. Possibly she struck too radical, too philosophical a note for Ireland's taste. This avant garde position is certainly attested by her fellow-American, Ireland's friend Conway:

"Her natural place was at the centre of a circle where thoughts and truths were being discovered which had not yet found their channels in literature."<sup>60</sup>

Ireland also came to know James Russell Lowell (1819-1891), the poet and essayist, who served as American ambassador in London between 1881 and 1885. Ireland was, in effect, introduced to Lowell by Emerson,

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<sup>59</sup> Ireland, "Books for General Readers", op. cit.

<sup>60</sup> Conway, Emerson and His Friends, p.31

while the latter was staying with the Irelands at the end of his 1872-73 visit. Writing to Lowell from 'Inglewood' on 14 May, Emerson gave a generous estimation of his host, no doubt recognising that this would be his own final visit to England, but that others, such as Lowell, might still value an English contact with Ireland's experience.

"Here in this house let me ... introduce to you my old friend Alexander Ireland, the Editor (sic) of the Manchester Examiner, the stout ally of ... all good North America in the last war, and of particular Americans before and since, and who well knows how to make Manchester and Liverpool kindly to them."<sup>61</sup>

In an undated Examiner and Times report,<sup>62</sup> Ireland recalled visiting Lowell at his London residence and meeting other Americans there. Ireland also knew and corresponded with Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894). Holmes' recent death was mentioned on the occasion of Ireland's final appearance at the Manchester Literary Club on 8 October 1894. Although there is no recorded observation from Ireland on Holmes at this point, John Mortimer, in his "Memoir" of Ireland in January 1895, reported having received a letter from him (probably his last piece of correspondence) shortly after the October meeting, in which Ireland recounted his acquaintance with Holmes.

Ireland's interest in American writers and Emerson in particular was also evident among the members of the Manchester Literary Club, many of whom would have heard the 1847-48 lectures. The Club's Papers for 1882 include Rev. Stuart J. Reid's account of "A Summer Day at Concord", during which he had had an interview with Emerson. Three years later the Club heard a paper from James Gooden on "Concord and its

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<sup>61</sup>Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson, vol. VI, p.242

<sup>62</sup>Microfiche file relating to Ireland.

Worthies", which provided a survey of the literary figures associated with the town, particularly in recent times. Although there is no evidence that Alexander Ireland himself visited North America, his friend George Dawson undertook a lecturing tour there in 1873, meeting Emerson shortly after the latter's return from his own third and final visit to Britain. This esteem for Emerson has an interesting local parallel in the enthusiasm for Walt Whitman (1819-1892) among a group of Bolton disciples, towards the end of the century. From 1885 a small group of professional men and businessmen, referring to themselves with some self-mockery as the 'Bolton College', had met informally but regularly to discuss matters more philosophical than merely current affairs. Some of the group had discovered Whitman's poetry, and an avid interest in the work and the man became the focus of the group's activities. Appreciative letters were sent to Whitman and in July 1890 one of the group, Dr. John Johnston, visited the poet at his home in Camden, New Jersey. In the following year another of the devotees, J. W. Wallace, made the transatlantic pilgrimage. Whitman evidently valued this appreciation from a group of patently sincere well-wishers from outside conventional literary circles. Even after his death in 1895, the group continued to celebrate his birthday and to maintain their study of the poet.

Similarly, Ireland's interest in American affairs has echoes in other instances, both actual and fictional, of a fascination with, and in some cases an idealisation of, life in America and the potential of the New World compared with the restrictions and problems of the Old. Perhaps the best-known example is the unfulfilled project which Coleridge and Southey formed in 1794 for a 'pantisocratic' community, for which they selected the Susquehanna valley, in Pennsylvania, as the location.

Archibald Prentice recalled a similar ideal when he came to record his actual visit to North America (Tour in the United States (1848)).

"Thirty years before, I had formed the scheme, and several friends had joined me in it, of leaving our own land ... and forming a community on the banks of some small stream, contributory to a larger navigable river in the Western States of America".

George Searle Phillips entertained a similar notion, which is not without irony in view of Phillips' ultimately tragic decline in New York.

"I sometimes picture to myself ... a Colony of Friends located in some distant land, untrammelled by prejudice and open to all noble and beautiful influences, as a dream not quite impossible to be realised".<sup>63</sup>

There was, of course, the real-life 'experiment' of the Brook Farm Community in New England in the early 1840s, with which Margaret Fuller, Hawthorne and other transcendentalists were associated, and which Hawthorne represented in his novel, The Blithedale Romance (1852). Two English novels of the same period also posit an ideal of life in the New World as their denouement: Mrs. Gaskell's Mary Barton (1848) gives a final, brief glimpse of a simple, wholesome existence, contrasting with the earlier struggles, desperate poverty and heartlessness of industrial Manchester. Charles Kingsley's eponymous hero in Alton Locke (1850) dies en voyage but has optimistically conceived a new life in North America as the resolution of his own and his friends' difficulties in England. The unhappy heroine of Anne Brontë's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall (1848) cherishes for a time the prospect of "a quiet humble home in New England" as an escape for herself and her young son from their tormented life with Mr Huntingdon. In contrast,

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<sup>63</sup>Phillips ("January Searle"), Essays, Poems, Allegories and Fables (1851)

Charles Dickens' visit to the United States in 1842 prompted two works which were critical of some of the pretensions and eccentricities he was surprised and disappointed to discover. The autobiographical account in his American Notes (1842) set down many uncomplimentary impressions; in the lengthy American section of Martin Chuzzlewit (1843-44) the treatment of these foibles is for humorous effect. Responding to American dismay and irritation at his criticisms, however, Dickens explained that, far from having an English disdain for a former colony, he shared the general optimism for the future of the United States. Ireland, too, would have shared this optimism, inspired by the country's Constitution, by particular realisations which it made possible, such as the Massachusetts secular education system, and by the corresponding vision of its best writers.

Incidental references have been made to the Manchester Literary Club and it is appropriate to give an outline of the Club's activities and Alexander Ireland's association with it. The Club was founded in 1861, initially functioning as a debating society and discussion group, issuing no publications and holding its meetings in rooms at Cross Street Chapel. W. S. Jevons was associated with the Club in the late 1860s, but Ireland does not appear to have participated in its activities until 1882, the year in which he withdrew from the day-to-day business of the Examiner and Times. A leavening of topographical papers reflected the interest of many members, including Ireland, for weekend or holiday excursions into the countryside of Wales, the Lake District and Scotland. The Club adhered mostly to literary interests, whereas the more distinguished Literary and Philosophical Society, founded in 1781, had, despite its title, concerned itself largely with scientific and technological subjects during the nineteenth century.

Although Francis Espinasse described the Literary Club as "not so much social as intellectual",<sup>64</sup> its proceedings were generally rather lighter in tone than the more senior Society, and the membership probably less affluent and less well educated, though in some instances evidently widely read. Several decades earlier they would have been devotees of the Athenæum, but, with a younger generation's wish to create their own sphere of activity, their energies were channelled into the Literary Club. Middle class businessmen, usually without a university education, not identifying with classical learning: what they sought from the Club was a cultural framework which would complement their professional lives and civic roles. A typical example was Thomas Read Wilkinson (b. 1826), general manager of the Manchester and Salford Bank, who was to purchase most of Ireland's library in 1895 and donate it, as the Alexander Ireland Collection, to the Manchester Public Library.

The Club's monthly meetings, usually held in one of the hotels in the city centre - the Albion, the Grand, or the York - received papers on a wide range of literary subjects: aspects of established British authors, appreciations of more recent works, accounts of local writers, studies of dialect. These were naturally congenial surroundings for Ireland and at the meeting on 13 December 1883, he acknowledged that "his short connection with the Club had proved a great pleasure to him".<sup>65</sup> Ireland's ten papers for the Club were given at regular intervals from the time of his retirement in 1882 until a few months before his death in December 1894. Even during the family's two-year residence in

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<sup>64</sup>Espinasse, Literary Recollections and Sketches (1893)

<sup>65</sup>Papers of the Manchester Literary Club, Vol. X, 1884

Southport between 1889 and 1891, he maintained some links with the Club's activities. His subjects were often the authors of the earlier part of the century, whose works formed the core of his own library.

- 1882 "Recollections of George Dawson and his lectures in Manchester in 1846-47"(a written paper, not delivered as a lecture)
- 19 February 1883 "The Life and Writings of William Hazlitt"
- 3 March 1884 "The Connection of Lord Byron and Leigh Hunt in the production and publication of the Liberal"
- 15 December 1884 Address as guest of honour at the Club's Christmas Symposium (an autobiographical survey with particular reference to writers whom Ireland had met)
- 14 December 1885 "On Certain Harsh Remarks upon Charles Lamb by Thomas Carlyle"
- 1887 "Books for General Readers" (a written paper, not delivered as a lecture)
- 9 February 1890 "The Life and Work of Leigh Hunt"
- 12 October 1891 "The Secret History of an Anonymous Book" (relating Ireland's involvement in the publication of Robert Chambers' Vestiges of Creation (1844))
- 6 February 1892 "Reminiscences of the poet, Campbell"
- 8 October 1894 "George Dawson, as Lecturer and Man"

For the most part these papers were not presenting detailed or original critical analysis. Their appeal was in the personal knowledge of most of

his subjects with which Ireland could enliven bibliographical and antiquarian data. By virtue of this personal acquaintance, Ireland was regarded as something of an elder statesman by the Club members. In the discussion following Ireland's second contribution, in February 1883, the Club President, George Milner, observed that

"To many of the younger members (Ireland) seemed to stand in the relation of a genial interpreter between themselves and some of those well-known writers of the early part of the present century"<sup>66</sup>

Similarly when Milner introduced Ireland as principal guest at the 1884 Christmas Symposium, he acknowledged that

"Through him we younger men seem to touch those great spirits who are already of the past."<sup>67</sup>

Such tributes could at times become effusive. The Manchester Evening Mail added to its obituary notice for Ireland, in the number for 8 December 1895, a sonnet by J. B. Greenwood, a member of the Literary Club. Greenwood tried to convey Ireland's stature as a man of letters but, confusing a number of ideas, referred to Ireland quite inappropriately as "the Hazlitt of our city".

Given his love of literature, his own extensive collection and his association with the expanding Public Library in Manchester, it was entirely natural that Ireland should undertake the compilation which became his Book-Lover's Enchiridion (1882), and wish to present for others' edification "a selection of the best thoughts of the greatest and wisest minds on the subject of Books."<sup>68</sup> The first two editions

<sup>66</sup>Op. cit., Vol.IX, 1883

<sup>67</sup>Op. cit., Vol. XI, 1885

<sup>68</sup>Ireland, Preface to The Book-Lover's Enchiridion

were issued under the apposite pseudonym of 'Philobiblos'. The anthology proved popular and went through several more editions during the 1880s, Ireland successively augmenting with more extracts. The anthology form itself was not new, of course, and various other collections of extracts and commentaries were published in the same period. These, however, tended to have a more comprehensive aim than the reflection on the value of books themselves which was Ireland's precept.

Bibliophile though he was, Ireland came to adopt a more realistic attitude towards what was for some, like his Manchester acquaintance, James Crossley, the mania of book-collecting. Even before he reached the stage of needing to dispose of some items to raise money, in 1880 Ireland confided to William Carew Hazlitt, himself a book-collector:

"I am not buying any more books, as I have really no room for them. Indeed, I would rather diminish the size of my library by eliminating a few thousand volumes, which I could get access to in our Free Reference Library here (i.e. Manchester) ... I think it is a mistake to encumber oneself with too many books. If I had to live my life again, I would go in for a couple of thousand volumes only of the choicest authors, and make use of good libraries when I wished to explore out-of-the-way corners in the fields of literature"<sup>69</sup>

Ireland disposed of part of his collection at a Sotheby auction in March 1889. John Saxon Mills estimated that, by the time of his death, Ireland's library was "reduced to some six or seven thousand volumes",<sup>70</sup> from the total of twenty thousand which Mrs Mills had suggested as its

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<sup>69</sup> Letter of 26 April 1880 from Alexander Ireland to W.C. Hazlitt, BM, Add. MS, 33903, f.98.

<sup>70</sup> J. S. Mills, op. cit.

extent during Ireland's prosperous years at 'Inglewood'.

In surveying Alexander Ireland's business and literary activities, it may reasonably be wondered why he never became a more successful, larger scale literary editor or publisher. He acquired substantial experience of the newspaper trade, managing the Examiner and Times business affairs, exercising considerable control over the newspaper's policies and coverage, initiating and possibly conducting the innovation of the Weekly Times, and working to establish the Press Association. He had a great love of literature and an extensive knowledge of books and authors. He was, moreover, acquainted with several contemporary British and North American writers, and was probably more familiar than most of his contemporaries with current American literature. He owned his own printing concern and therefore had staff and machinery at his disposal. Writing to George Combe on 4 October 1852, Ireland had explained that

"... we have a printing office, and are letter-press printers, as well as publishers ... The management of the printing is entirely under my control".

However, the machinery and staff concerned were probably required almost wholly for the production of the Examiner and Times. Possibly, too, Ireland had insufficient capital, even in the periods when the newspaper was particularly successful and his personal finances prospering, to expand into publishing or founding and sustaining a literary periodical. J. T. Slugg records that Thomas Sowler, the proprietor of the Manchester Courier, initially had a small-scale printing business on Hunt's Bank as well as a bookshop in St. Ann's Square, but that Sowler relinquished the bookselling business when he undertook production of the Courier, because he could not finance such diversification. Several decades later, in 1909, C. P. Scott had regretfully to decline Winston Churchill's request that Scott should publish a selection of the politician's

speeches (Liberalism and the Social Problem (1909)). His difficulty was that Taylor and Garnett's printing resources could not cope with such a project in addition to the daily production of the Manchester Guardian. Again, it is probable that even in the successful 1860s and 1870s, Ireland never felt so financially secure as to be able to abandon newspaper printing for the speculative and competitive business of publishing.

In considering what might have been a rather different career for Ireland, there is an interesting comparison in the life of one of his North American literary acquaintances, James Thomas Fields (1817-1881). There are a number of similarities in the lives and work of the two men which again prompt the speculation as to why Ireland was unable, or unwilling, to follow the path which took Fields into publishing and the editorship of a literary periodical. In similar circumstances to Ireland's, family financial difficulties prevented Fields from continuing his formal education beyond the age of fourteen. In consequence he was usually unable to afford to buy books and this difficulty of access appears to have increased his enthusiasm for literature. Working first as a bookseller's clerk in Boston, subsequently as a junior partner in the firm, he developed his interest and came to have especial regard for the writings of Leigh Hunt. Becoming, in due course, a co-proprietor of the publishing house of Ticknor, Reed and Fields, he acquired a circle of literary friends and acquaintances, particularly among the authors whose work Fields was issuing. Visits to England in 1847, 1851, 1859 and 1869 enabled him to meet Hunt and Wordsworth, on the first occasion, and subsequently other British writers. As a publisher he fostered good relations with some of these writers. Just as Ireland readily assisted a number of American visitors to Britain, Fields entertained Trollope, Thackeray

and Dickens in Boston, provided introductions and otherwise advised on their business arrangements. Between 1861 and 1870 he edited the Boston literary periodical, the Atlantic Monthly, and tried to give the magazine "a broader popular appeal".<sup>71</sup> In this respect, too, Fields seems to have had much in common with Ireland. A regular contributor to the Atlantic Monthly, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, observed that Fields exhibited "the promptness and business qualities" which his predecessor as editor, the author James Russell Lowell, had lacked in his dealings with contributors. Higginson added that

"Fields' taste is very good and far less crotchety than Lowell's ... It was a torment to deal with Lowell and it is a real pleasure with Fields".<sup>72</sup>

Like Ireland, Fields published a number of literary memoirs and anthologies, including Yesterdays with Authors (1872), In and Out of Doors with Charles Dickens (1876), and The Family Library of British Poetry (1878).

It seems probable that Ireland, too, could have successfully managed a literary periodical or directed a publishing house. It would surely have been his *métier*, combining his business acumen in the newspaper trade with his literary interests. Possibly, as has been suggested, the basic difficulty was lack of capital. Possibly the right kind of opportunity, the favourable combination of circumstances, never materialised for Ireland. Possibly, too, marketing conditions were different between the two countries and demography and communications may have operated in favour of Fields. It can be imagined that there

<sup>71</sup> J. C. Austin, Fields of the Atlantic Monthly: Letters to an Editor, 1861-1870, p.29

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, pp. 29-30, quoted from Letters and Journals of T. W. Higginson (1921) ed. M. T. Higginson

would have been more scope in North America at this time, both for the literary periodical and for a reputable publishing concern. Fields would have had fewer established publishers to compete against than someone embarking in business in London or Edinburgh. Similarly the Atlantic Monthly would have had fewer rivals than any projection for a new British literary periodical in this period. Despite the numerous similarities between Ireland's and Fields' position, and despite Ireland's apparent potential in these areas of literary work, Fields clearly had the good fortune of the more successful business career.

The diary of John Chapman, the London publisher and an acquaintance of Ireland's and Hodgson's, records that, when Chapman was seeking financial assistance in difficult circumstances in January 1851, "Hodgson ... tried to persuade me to think of Ireland of Manchester as a partner". Chapman's considered response, however, was to tell Hodgson that "I should prefer him (Hodgson) to anyone else".<sup>73</sup> It is not clear whether Ireland was ever aware of this tentative prospect of a partnership with a London publisher. As it was he remained in Manchester and, despite relative financial success from the Examiner and Times, never branched into the field of publishing for which he appears to have been so well qualified.

Despite his absorbing interest in literature and in authors, Ireland's own writings were not extensive and were not undertaken to provide elaborate critical analysis of his chosen subjects. He may well have felt that he could not sustain such an approach, despite his wide knowledge and catholic taste, and that literary criticism at

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<sup>73</sup>Extracts from Chapman's Diary, published in G. S. Haight, George Eliot and John Chapman (1940)

that level was best left for others more able than himself. There are clear indications that he saw his role as being to draw attention to the scope of literary study, to certain favourite authors but also to literature in general, via the expanding provision of public libraries. Within this task of introducing literature to a less educated audience, there is evidence that he had several more such projects in mind during his final years, but felt unable to carry these into effect. In a letter of 8 July 1889 to the poet Robert Browning, to whom he had recently sent a copy of his earlier pamphlet William Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt, Ireland mentioned that he was considering compiling a volume of selections from Hunt. He evidently intended providing a memoir and envisaged this production as a companion volume to his selections from Hazlitt, which had been issued in the previous month. Ireland would obviously have been very well placed to bring out such a book, given his own extensive collection of Hunt's works, his familiarity with the writings and his personal acquaintance with the essayist. In the event, possibly disrupted by the removal from Bowdon to Southport and then the return to Manchester, he appears to have settled for the brief survey of Hunt's life and works in his February 1891 paper for the Manchester Literary Club.

Similarly in Ireland's undated 1892 letter, on which J. B. Greenwood drew in his obituary notice in the Manchester Guardian, Ireland observed

"I have often thought that there should have been a life and correspondence of Robert Chambers. Ample material could be found. I say this, admiring as I do the excellent double autobiography of William and Robert Chambers; but that only covered his boyhood and youth, and not his middle and later life. I have an unpublished account - sent before they were married to the lady who became his wife, Miss Kirkwood - of his own early struggles, a copy of which she herself gave me. I once told Professor Masson that he was the man to write and edit such a memoir."

In fact, Ireland himself could surely have produced such a biography, or, if necessary, adopted the selections and introductory memoir structure of his Hazlitt volume. His long friendship with Chambers and his familiarity with his writings would appear to have equipped him ideally for such an undertaking. Again, however, what he produced was the October 1892 Literary Club paper, which concentrated on the events surrounding the publication of the Vestiges in 1844.

More intriguingly both Ireland's 1892 letter and the report of the discussion following his February 1891 Literary Club paper on Leigh Hunt contain hints of a possible autobiography. He is reported as having responded with some modesty, or possibly reluctance, to the Literary Club's suggestion that he should write his own reminiscences, by observing that he might have worthwhile things to say concerning only some of the men of letters he had known. The 1892 letter is similarly diffident:

"I may perhaps be able to put together a few recollections of interesting people I have known."

This apparent reticence is tantalising. In addition to the authors on whom he has written at some length, it would have been valuable to have a later assessment of, for example, Margaret Fuller. Equally, Ireland could surely have provided an interesting account of Charles Dickens' several appearances in Manchester during the 1840s with his company of actors, as well as indicating the extent of Ireland's own acquaintance with the novelist. The few reminiscences which he did record make no mention of George Eliot, to whom John Chapman introduced him in September 1851 - though it may well be, of course, that this was their only encounter. Nevertheless it would have been interesting to have Ireland's impressions of this novelist and her works. It is certain that he met Geraldine Jewsbury on numerous occasions, usually

at the soirées at her Manchester home during the 1840s and early 1850s. Yet apart from his evident willingness to serialise her novel Marian Withers in the Examiner and Times' weekly supplement, there is, again, no indication of his estimate of this local novelist, who attracted a good deal of controversy with her early novels. There are only the briefest of records to establish that he knew James Thomas Fields, who must certainly have been a kindred spirit. Ireland's Christmas 1884 address as the guest of the Literary Club had, of course, already dealt in outline with some of his more notable friendships and encounters. John Mortimer's memoir at the January 1895 meeting of the Club suggests that Ireland was indeed assembling some reminiscences in the months before his death. It may be that he would simply have re-worked the 1884 address into a further paper for the Club audience. What his friends - and later generations - would have welcomed was a more extensive and systematic survey, however "garrulous",<sup>74</sup> of his literary activities, his many acquaintances and his mature reflections on this literary panorama, which had begun with his own exploratory reading almost seventy years earlier.

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Alexander Ireland's literary work during his mature years was complemented by that of his second wife, Annie Elizabeth. She shared his general interest in literature and attempted a wider range of writing herself with modest success. Initially she contributed essays and short stories to newspaper supplements such as her husband's Weekly Times. She issued some of these in collected form as

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<sup>74</sup>His own apologetic epithet in the 1892 letter, on account of its length and rambling nature

Tales, Sketches and Verses (1883). "These trifles" were dedicated to her husband and in fact the book was printed by Ireland. The collection contained seven short stories and twenty-nine poems. Some of these were also included in a second collection, Short Flights (1885). A third collection, Longer Flights: Recollections and Studies (1898) was published posthumously by her youngest daughter, Ethel Alleyne. The volume comprised thirty-two short essays from what had originally been a series of fifty, produced for syndicated publication in a number of Lancashire and Yorkshire newspapers during 1889 - 1891. These included reminiscences of, among others, Helen Faucit, the actress, and James Anthony Froude, the writer - and Carlyle's literary executor, whom Mrs Ireland knew through her own current research on Jane Welsh Carlyle.

Her short stories in these collections are among her slightest, but arguably her most effective writing - perhaps precisely because they are less ambitious and closer to the actual level of her talent as a writer. There is some sentimentality in characterisation and narrative, but usually a clear implication that sympathy and sincerity of feeling are to be valued more highly than personal ambition and materialistic acquisitiveness. Her heroines in these stories (for instance, Mary Weatherly in Weighed in the Balance) are adaptable and long-suffering, but not to be deflected from their selflessness. There is successfully contrived humour in Love and Learning, where Mr Lafone's pedantry and didactic literary conversation are seen to be at the expense of his courtship of Caroline Gerard. No doubt this particular 'trifle' would have been especially amusing to Alexander Ireland, in view of his own consuming literary interests. In Yellow Roses, exercising some subtlety of control, she leaves the reader to infer the

romantic denouement towards which the narrative has been leading, resisting the obvious, pedestrian conclusion. This provides a more balanced ending and suggests some maturity in construction.

According to the obituary writer in Manchester Faces and Places, Mrs Ireland was a founder member of the Browning Society in 1881. Certainly she was active in its meetings during 1889 - 1891. The Society, formed to promote research into the poet's life and works, met monthly, during the winter, at University College, London and continued its activities until 1893. Mrs Ireland gave three papers:

26 April 1889	"On 'A Toccata of Galuppi's'"
28 March 1890	"Remarks on Browning's Treatment of Parenthood"
27 February 1891	"On Browning's Poem 'Cristina and Monaldeschi'"

For the most part these studies do not aim to analyse the poems concerned. Introducing her first paper, she specifically disclaimed any attempt at analysis and explained that her aim was simply "to express something of what the poem suggests to me". In fact the first and third papers deal largely with historical and philosophical issues: Galuppi's musical career in eighteenth century Venice, the impermanence of the grandeur of Venice; the outline of Cristina of Sweden's life, the moral issue of her arranged murder of her former lover- Monaldeschi, the legal nature of the power she exercised after abdicating from the Swedish throne and subsequently dismissing accusations concerning the murder. The second paper strays into a sentimental treatment of motherhood, based on evidence in a number of Browning's poems, notably "The Ring and The Book". Mrs Ireland also served as a member of the Society's Committee between 1889 and 1891, helping to plan future

meetings and the annual publication of the Society's proceedings.

In the same period of the late 1880s and early 1890s, her writing became an important source of income in the family's difficult financial circumstances. Her newspaper pieces and lectures in Manchester and Southport would have been constructed partly to meet this need. The three substantial literary works which she produced in the early 1890s are more likely to have been prompted by her own ambitions as an author. For her Life of Jane Welsh Carlyle (1891), Froude enabled her to draw on some of the Carlyle material at his disposal, which had been used in his own publications in this field in the previous decade. The biography of Mrs Carlyle is detailed but frequently sentimental in its treatment. Establishing Jane's character in childhood is synthesised, at one point, as

"It was a woman's soul, a woman's nature, essentially, in this Ariel of a child with the deep dark eyes and fiery temper."<sup>75</sup>

When she later needs to introduce the question of the tension in the Carlyle marriage in the decade from 1845, arising from the pleasure which Thomas Carlyle obviously derived from the company of Lady Harriet Baring (later Lady Ashburton), Mrs Ireland paints garishly:

"Yet here lay the source of a bitter and terrible alienation between the two who had so faithfully hitherto stepped beside each other in sunshine and storm."<sup>76</sup>

The gist of this setting of the scene, before Mrs Ireland's subsequent elaboration of the case as she saw it, could probably be accepted by most of those who have made different interpretations of the Carlyles'

<sup>75</sup>Ireland, Life of Jane Welsh Carlyle, p.9

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p.184

relationship; but this level of embellishment would not enhance any argument. Her own argument is drawn directly from Froude, seeing Thomas Carlyle as insensitive to the distress he was causing his wife on this matter. The style of Mrs Ireland's representation of this case prompts a more recent biographer of Mrs Carlyle to dismiss "the sentimental imbecilities" of Mrs Ireland's Life.<sup>77</sup>

Drew is also sceptical of the view held by some interpreters that Mrs Carlyle wished to share in her husband's work, to undertake some writing herself, and hence to be more highly regarded for her own abilities and achievements rather than merely as Mrs Carlyle. This is then seen as part of the source of her unhappiness and was certainly Mrs Ireland's view. Two even more recent studies, however, reassert Jane Carlyle's ambition and individuality.<sup>78</sup> Whilst Drew maintains that Mrs Carlyle "had no real creative ability",<sup>79</sup> Mrs Ireland feels that her subject had considerable potential which was almost entirely sublimated. Citing Mrs Carlyle's semi-frivolous, semi-serious exercise, "Budget of a Femme Incomprise", which she reproduces in full, and presumably drawing on the journal and letters which Froude had edited, Mrs Ireland gives an estimation of Jane Carlyle's potential which, perhaps unfortunately, appears to borrow from her husband's earlier "Books for General Readers" paper. Alexander Ireland, writing in 1887 and commending the Letters and Memorials of Mrs Carlyle,

<sup>77</sup> E. Drew, Jane Welsh and Jane Carlyle (1973), p.7

<sup>78</sup> I Too Am Here (selections of Jane Welsh Carlyle's letters) ed. A. and M. Simpson (1977); V. Surtees, Jane Welsh Carlyle (1986)

<sup>79</sup> Op. cit., p.187

claimed that

"This remarkable and gifted woman would probably have achieved a conspicuous position in literature had she not been overshadowed by her husband's towering personality."

The assertion in Mrs Ireland's biography, published four years later, was that

"Mrs Carlyle had a finished and remarkable literary style of her own, and would have made brilliant use of it, had she not from the first been overshadowed by the towering genius and exacting personality of her husband."

Possibly Mrs Ireland was gathering material for her biography over a period of several years. No doubt Alexander Ireland and his wife shared this estimation of Jane Carlyle. Possibly, however, Mrs Ireland, writing under some pressure and not in good health, opted to take advantage of some readily available material of her husband's.

These parallel observations and the question of Mrs Carlyle's literary talent prompt an interesting comparison with the Irelands. Annie Elizabeth Ireland very probably regarded her own literary career as of a lesser order than her husband's. Certainly her representation of the Carlyles' relationship and her periodic reflections on it, together with incidental observations on marriage in some of the essays and stories, suggest that she had such a perspective for her own marriage. Yet Mrs Ireland did in fact produce more writing - and more original writing - than her husband, and this during a period when her own health was indifferent and the family finances needed the additional income which this writing brought.

Mrs Ireland's other work in the same field as her biography was an edition of Selections from the Letters of Geraldine Endors Jewsbury to Jane Welsh Carlyle, published in the following year, 1892. In this case,

too, her Introduction suffers from a sentimental style, when the basic contention often appears to be reasonable. Accounting for the mutual sympathy of her two subjects, she renders this as

"Over each had the 'car of Juggernaut'  
passed with searing bruise"<sup>80</sup>

More seriously some significant incidents are diluted or passed over. Geraldine Jewsbury's wish to dedicate her novel The Half-Sisters (1848) to her friend emerges clearly in the letters subsequently published by Alexander Carlyle in 1903 (New letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle), as does Mrs Carlyle's resistance to the proposal on account of "the questionability" of some sections - "perfectly disgusting for a young Englishwoman to write".<sup>81</sup> Whilst this particular evidence of Mrs Carlyle's serious reservations, at times, regarding Geraldine Jewsbury may not have been available to Mrs Ireland, she abandons her more usual colourful representation in noting tersely, and perhaps uneasily, Mrs Carlyle's objection:

"The readers of Carlyle literature  
will remember how this wish on her  
part was received."<sup>82</sup>

This unevenness of style and treatment in introducing the subject does not help to illuminate the relationship which is meant to emerge from the selection. Drew suspected that the letters were used in "very mutilated form" by Mrs Ireland, and that her introduction was "a masterpiece of misstatement."<sup>83</sup>

Although the 1903 New Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle

<sup>80</sup> Ireland, Selections, p.vi

<sup>81</sup> Letters 94 and 97, both January 1848, to John Forster, New Letters and Memorials, pp. 238 and 242. Froude had included a slightly later letter (dated February 1848) from Jane Carlyle to Forster in Letters and Memorials (Vol.II, pp.30-31) in which her objection is clear though more considered.

<sup>82</sup> Ireland, *op.cit.*, p.x

<sup>83</sup> Drew, *op.cit.*, p.235

probably gives a better perspective of its subject than had emerged from Froude's and Mrs Ireland's publications, it is an avowedly anti-Froude enterprise. Thomas Carlyle's family had objected strongly to Froude's unwillingness to make the various Carlyle papers in his possession available to the family, and they were horrified by his unsympathetic portrayal of Carlyle. The contemporary reaction against Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle (1883) in particular was indeed fairly widespread. It appears that this may have been Alexander Ireland's own view of the revelations concerning the Carlyles' relationship. Although Ireland later came to value the Letters and Memorials, an undated letter, apparently from Ireland to Conway, and written shortly after first reading Froude's 1883 publication, insists

"That book will do irreparable injury to Carlyle's memory, and will cut down the sale of his books ... The half of the letters ought never to have been published. They are too sacred for words ... Would poor dear Mrs Carlyle herself ever have wanted those letters to be published? No. No; and a thousand times no!"<sup>84</sup>

It may be inferred that, although Ireland felt that Froude's selection of Mrs Carlyle's letters was injudicious, in general he subscribed to the Froude view of the Carlyles' relationship. Sir James Crichton-Browne's introduction to Alexander Carlyle's New Letters and Memorials makes no reference to Mrs Ireland's biography, which he must surely have known of, and known to be a reiteration of Froude's view of the marriage. Yet in seeking to discredit Geraldine Jewsbury as one of Froude's main sources of evidence, Crichton-Browne attempts to enlist Mrs Ireland's support, by producing what, taken out of context, appears to be a

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<sup>84</sup>Alexander Ireland Collection (Carlyle 9.71)

disparaging reference in her introduction to the Selections of Jewsbury's letters. In fact, despite the other shortcomings of her introduction, Mrs Ireland was, at least, fairly acknowledging Geraldine Jewsbury's excitable nature. Mrs Ireland's reaction to The Half-Sisters is likely to have been the same as Mrs Carlyle's; nevertheless she makes it clear elsewhere in the introduction that she "knew her well, and loved her much".<sup>85</sup>

Mrs Ireland's other substantial literary production was her Selections from the Works of Charles Reade (1891). Reade (1814 - 1884) was a prolific writer, popular in his day, and this selection provides a wide range of extracts from his novels, stories and essays. In her Introduction, Mrs Ireland suggests that at least part of the impetus for her book was a regret that Reade's talents were not more generally recognised by literary critics. Her Introduction is more genuinely analytical than its counterparts in the biography of Jane Carlyle and her Carlyle-Jewsbury Selections. In this respect it also has a better critical focus than both her Browning Society lectures and most of her husband's writing on literature, where the emphasis is often on general impressions and biographical or historical detail. Despite her own regard for Reade's novels, Mrs Ireland acknowledges that they suffer from "inequality of style",<sup>86</sup> and from some misjudgement in the selection and use of background detail, appearing to place ephemera on the same level as more integral features of plot or character. On a broader view, however, she felt that Reade "profoundly understood women, and drew them with a masterly fidelity and tenderness".<sup>87</sup> Like her husband,

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<sup>85</sup> Ireland, op. cit., p.vi

<sup>86</sup> Ireland, Selections from Charles Reade, p.xvi

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p.xvii

Mrs Ireland evidently took note of the reception which favourite authors received in the literary periodicals and elsewhere. As the Irelands acquired a wide range of such sources, she was able to claim with some authority that Reade "was largely read on both sides of the Atlantic".<sup>88</sup>

In general Mrs Ireland can be said to have been more accomplished as an essayist and a writer of short stories than as a critic, editor or biographer. It appears that with a subject or a body of material for which she had a high regard, her style, her thread of narrative, and her undoubted critical perception were not harnessed nearly so effectively as in smaller scale productions where the subject matter was her own creation. In her Introduction to the biography of Mrs Carlyle, she professed to have "wished for some years to write about...(Mrs Carlyle's) deep isolated nature, her shining gifts, her unique charm, and her life of pain". In this she would, of course, have had the advice of her husband, who had known both Thomas and Jane Carlyle. This, together with the extensive collection of Carlyle's writings and of supporting reviews and articles which Alexander Ireland possessed, may well have been the deciding factor in her choice of Mrs Carlyle as a subject. In other circumstances, without such a readily available array of material, it can be imagined that she might have chosen one of several other contemporary women who, unlike Jane Carlyle, had produced a corpus of writings. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Elizabeth Gaskell, Anne or Emily Brontë, or George Eliot would each seem to have been potentially attractive and fruitful choices. It also seems probable that a choice other than Jane Carlyle would have been of another woman and a literary figure. Although her exposition of the Carlyles' marriage and the

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p.xxvii

Carlyle-Jewsbury friendship gives rise to some of her most highly coloured and diffuse writing, she appears to be positively engaged in these emotional and psychological surveys and speculations. Often explicit in these and implicit in much of her newspaper pieces are fairly conventional assumptions regarding a woman's position in the family, in marriage and in work. The paradox is, then, that Mrs Ireland probably derived more satisfaction from these more ambitious undertakings than from her shorter newspaper essays and stories, which, however, were more convincingly executed.

Another common interest of the Irelands was music. Ireland himself had been an accomplished flute player in his earlier days in Edinburgh. Their youngest son was to become a reputable composer, but Mrs Ireland herself was also said to be "a fine musician". This was the observation of Arthur Perceval Graves (father of Robert Graves), who became HM Inspector of Schools in Manchester in 1875. He took up residence in Bowdon "amongst pleasant and intellectual neighbours", of whom Alexander Ireland was "another good friend of ours".<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Graves, To Return to All That: an autobiography (1930)

## Conclusions

## Conclusions

When the British Association for the Advancement of Science held its eighty-fifth annual meeting in Manchester in September 1915, a commemorative Handbook was issued which, among other topics, included a survey of literary associations with the city. Twenty years after his death Ireland was evidently still sufficiently regarded by the anonymous writer of this section to gain some mention for his bibliographical writings and book-collecting, and as the host to distinguished literary visitors. In this context Ireland was described as "the most distinguished scholar among the Manchester men of business of his day". Certainly for someone with relatively little formal education, who faced early difficulties in pursuing his own literary interests, Ireland's extensive reading is remarkable. It was this reading, on the persistence in which he could write with conviction, that naturally formed the basis of his collecting and his absorption in bibliography and literary history. From his reading he soon came to perceive qualities such as the sincerity of writing in the essays of Hazlitt, Hunt and Lamb, as well as their respective delicacy and vigour of style. It was natural, too, that the love of literature which these writers pervasively displayed should attract Ireland and characterise his own more modest essays, articles and speeches. Yet in this field he appears to have recognised his own limitations as a critic and expositor. Instead he saw a natural role as an introducer of writers and of literature to a potentially large audience which was, in varying degrees, less familiar with the literary landscape. In a recent article on Leigh Hunt, D.H. Stam describes his subject as

"a gatekeeper, one who opened up doors to information resources for a wide variety of friends."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Stam, "The Doors and Windows of the Library: Leigh Hunt and Special Collections", The Book Collector, Vol.35,no.1, Spring 1986

This could appropriately be applied to Alexander Ireland and his concern for the exploration of literature and the formation of taste.

In his memoir of Ireland, John Saxon Mills (a nephew of Ireland's friend John Mills) perceptively described him as "a hero-worshipper,"<sup>2</sup> making an appropriate allusion to the theme of Carlyle's influential 1841 collection of lectures, On Heroes and Hero-Worship. Ireland certainly gives the impression at times of cherishing particular literary figures beyond mere critical admiration or personal affection. Sir Walter Scott was clearly a hero of his youth in Edinburgh; Carlyle and Emerson evoked a comparable reaction in his mature years. Scott had been the dominant contemporary novelist, widening Ireland's cultural and historical horizons and demonstrating the scope of character portrayal, During the 1830s and 1840s Emerson and Carlyle assumed, for Ireland, the appearance of prophets, almost of religious leaders, in the evident absence of a sufficient, orthodox Christian belief. Mills' term "hero-worshipper" might suggest a certain lack of discrimination by Ireland. Yet Ireland could recognise the periodic arrogance of Thomas Carlyle and the too denunciatory nature of some of his work, without lowering his overall estimation of Carlyle. Equally, although distance and infrequent meetings may have lent some enchantment to his view of Emerson, the practicalities probably placed his initially feverish and later reverential response to Emerson in a better perspective. Again, in his 1887 "Books for General Readers" paper, drawing on his life-time's experience of literary exploration, he warned his readers against Scott's later novels, though did not elaborate his reservation.

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<sup>2</sup>Mills, "Personal Recollections of Alexander Ireland", Manchester City News, 15 December 1894

The range of Ireland's work and the extent of his influence within his adopted city was considerable. His various efforts were pursued with a geniality of character which endeared him to many. The obituary notice in the Manchester Courier - a newspaper which would never have had any sympathy with Ireland's, and the Examiner and Times', Liberalism - felt able to say that "no difference of (political) opinion ever blinded Mr. Ireland's bitterest opponents to the charms of his personal character".<sup>3</sup> George Searle Phillips spoke of Ireland's "most true and affectionate nature", and claimed that, at Emerson's farewell 'banquet' in Manchester in February 1848, Ireland had

"made that.... group beautiful by his presence,  
and joyous by his joviality and rich fund of  
anecdote and literary learning."<sup>4</sup>

Mrs Mills felt that he "saw only the best side of everybody"; her nephew, John Saxon Mills, remembered his "spontaneity and simplicity of character". John Mortimer, of the Manchester Literary Club, recalled his "open ingenuousness" and "his wholesome and delightful optimism". It was this optimism and enthusiasm which in Edinburgh had carried him through his own self-education in difficult circumstances; and it was this active benevolence which led him to try the opportunities which presented themselves for strengthening the cultural counterbalance to the materialistic modus operandi of Manchester. Aware of this civic dimension from the outset of his years in Manchester, it was natural that Ireland should include in his Book-Lover's Enchiridion one of the imperatives from George Dawson's inaugural speech at the opening of the Birmingham Free Reference Library. Dawson had asserted that

<sup>3</sup>Manchester Courier, 8 December 1894

<sup>4</sup>Phillips, Emerson, his life and writings (1855)

".....a great town is a solemn organism through which should flow, and in which should be shaped, all the highest, loftiest, and truest ends of man's intellectual and moral nature..."<sup>5</sup>

In so far as Ireland's own library provided "an ever-at-hand companionship, a recreation and solace of which one could never be deprived, a refuge from frivolous and sordid cares",<sup>6</sup> it served to impel him back into the cultural life of the city to do what he could for friends, acquaintances and people at large.

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<sup>5</sup>Quoted by Ireland in The Book-Lover's Enchiridion (1882), p.396

<sup>6</sup>Ireland, Cheap Literature and the Love of Reading (1882)

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