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The Family and Mid-Victorian Idealism

Julia Anthony and Frederick Wilding: In the spirit of John Stuart Mill

On 24 June 1879, 26-year-olds Julia Anthony and Frederick Wilding were married in their hometown of Hereford in England. Neither the bustling West Midlands town on the banks of the picturesque River Wye nor the county of Herefordshire, of which Hereford was capital, possessed a tradition of migration. Yet, little more than a month later, they set sail from Gravesend, London, bound for New Zealand, where they intended to make a new life. Their decision to migrate had clearly been made long before their wedding: marriage and migration were for them inextricably linked. At first glance, the pair seemed unlikely candidates for migration, with perhaps more to lose than to gain in the process. Frederick Wilding had commenced his training as a barrister in London chambers and was already a well-respected solicitor in Hereford, where he served as an advocate in the local courts. Julia Anthony enjoyed considerable social status as a talented pianist trained in Germany at the Cologne Conservatoire, and as a member of a well-known, wealthy and politically influential Hereford family. The comfortable lifestyle the pair already enjoyed seemed destined to continue after their marriage. Indeed, the attractions life held for them in a settler society over 12,000 miles away are not immediately

apparent. To understand why they chose New Zealand over Britain we need to examine the forces, both personal and societal, that made their marriage a migratory moment.

Julia Anthony's family had risen to prominence on the strength of mercantile wealth. Originally members of the skilled artisan class in Abergavenny, Wales, the Anthonys had established a successful textile manufacturing business, Thos. Darker, Samuel and John Anthony. Julia's father, Charles (born in Hereford in 1803), managed the Hereford branch of the family firm until about 1831, when he sold his shares in the business and launched, with the assistance of local commercial interests, the *Hereford Times* as the mouthpiece of local liberal opinion in opposition to the long-established organ of conservative county opinion, the *Hereford Journal* (1663).¹ Anthony outlined the newspaper's political creed in unequivocal terms: it would advocate the 'protection of individual freedoms, the preservation of property, the practical acknowledgement of the rights of every member of the community, promote education and the abolition of the slave trade and monopolies in the Bank of England and the East India Company, and expose injustices and corruption in the Church'. It would act as a forum for the exchange of ideas, and aimed to 'accelerate the advancement of civilisation'. At the very least, Anthony promised that the *Hereford Times* would publish the 'clear and copious analyses of parliamentary discussions' that would lead to 'the elucidation of truth' and a 'better informed public'.²

Here, in such terms, Anthony placed himself squarely at the forefront of Hereford's version of the attack on the 'citadel of privilege' that was the hallmark of emergent middle-class liberalism. The position provided him with a springboard into local government politics. Over the next half century as councillor, alderman, Justice of the Peace, municipal trustee of charities and mayor for five terms, he was at the centre of local affairs.³ It was a period that saw Hereford increase its

1 John Armstrong, 'The Hereford Times Desk: Its History and Associations', ms, Colwall, 1982, Hereford and Worcester County Record Office Reference (HWRO), BC 97, pp. 1-7; *Littlebury's Directory and Gazetteer of Herefordshire 1876-1877 with Private and Commercial Resident*, (transcription by Rosemary Lockie, 2005), p. 27.

2 Charles Anthony (senior), *Hereford Times Prospectus*, 1 May 1832, Hereford Times Office, Hereford, HWRO, BH 32/47/1; *A Story Most Interesting as Touching All but Five: A Birthday Souvenir of the Hereford Times*, 1927, HWRO, BH 32/34.

3 Charles Anthony senior was mayor of Hereford 1852-55, 1868-69.

population from 12,000 to 18,000, throw off the appearance of an isolated and struggling market town and develop railway links with Swansea to the south, Gloucester to the east and westwards into rural Wales.⁴ Anthony was to benefit by association with this growth and the concomitant expansion of town services, and came to be seen as the 'founder of modern Hereford'.⁵

By the time of Julia's birth in 1853, Charles Anthony had consolidated his proprietorship of the *Hereford Times* and the Anthony family had become firmly embedded at the centre of the town's social and cultural life. Her childhood coincided with the full flowering of family fortunes. Over the next 20 years, the *Hereford Times* became a family enterprise that provided avenues of advancement for the older male Anthony children, Charles and Edwyn, who assumed its editorship and management respectively and followed their father into local Liberal politics.⁶ Family success brought increasing wealth as well as status and was reflected in their newly built home set in five-and-a-half acres on a hill overlooking the city: a classically styled mansion, complete with a ball-room and music studio, and servants.⁷

To understand fully the making of Julia Anthony, we need to look behind these trappings of middle-class success and explore more closely the family structure that developed within it. The youngest of four children born between 1841 and 1853, Julia Anthony was raised in an environment where the male influence loomed large. Her mother had died when she was an infant, and, while her father remarried in 1856, her stepmother, aged 48 at the time of her marriage, seems to have exerted little influence over Julia's life and died when Julia was 22. Instead, it was her father and considerably elder brothers, Charles (born 1841) and Edwyn (born 1843), who largely shaped the adults Julia and her elder sister Blanche (born 1852) were to become.

4 *Littlebury's Directory and Gazetteer of Herefordshire, 1876–1877*, pp. 1–2.

5 Armstrong, 'Hereford Times Desk'; *Hereford Times* (HT): 17 February 1885, 26 August 1911; Preface to William Collin's, *The Mayors of Hereford*, Wilding Family Papers (WFP), Canterbury Museum Documentary Research Centre, ARC.1989.124, box 42/1.

6 Charles Anthony junior was vice-president of the *Hereford Times* in the 1870s. Despite sustained pressure to stand as the Liberal candidate for Hereford, he did not do so. He also declined the mayoralty of Hereford offered to him in 1884 after his father died. Edwyn Anthony was a Hereford County councillor, alderman, Justice of the Peace, and Chairman of the South Herefordshire Liberal Association and the Hereford Liberal Club. Armstrong, 'The *Hereford Times* Desk', p. 22; 'Obituary: Charles Anthony junior', HT, January 1931, WFP, box 42/3.

7 Armstrong, 'The *Hereford Times* Desk', p. 12.

As a result, the sisters received a somewhat unconventional upbringing for girls of their class at the hands of three males deeply committed to their education and with a progressive attitude to women's rights in general.

Charles Anthony's career enabled him to provide the opportunities necessary to fully encourage the talents of his children. A warm and actively involved father, his public offices and newspaper business also made him an extremely busy one, and increasingly sons Charles and Edwyn assumed the dominant roles in their sisters' upbringing. Indeed, they may be seen as providing something of a generational bridge between the ideas of a father in his late 40s and early 50s when his daughters were born, and those of educated young men more in touch with the changing intellectual currents of mid-Victorian England. Their influence was to moderate and expand the education of their sisters in ways that freed it from the narrow confines of the middle-class household.⁸

The education of Charles and Edwyn Anthony was typical of that of young men of their class, background and social status. After a period at Hereford Cathedral School, both had been sent to Cheltenham College, 20 miles away in nearby Gloucester, established in 1841 as an Anglican school for boys and as one of the newer public schools, judged by one historian as more 'willing to experiment' with modern studies than many of the older public schools.⁹ Thereafter, the combination of an indulgent father, considerable family wealth, and the boys' own wide-ranging interests and talents produced a period of travel and experimentation in a variety of fields. The prospect of a career in the family newspaper provided a secure basis for this exploration. A prizewinning scholar, Edwyn pursued further study at home with a private tutor and at the Sorbonne in Paris before establishing himself as a sort of intellectual in residence at Christ Church College, Oxford, between 1868 and 1876, where he studied law in the Inner Temple. After completing an MA honours degree, he was admitted to the Bar as a barrister in 1877 but never practised.

8 Cora Wilding, 'Notes and Information about Julia Wilding', ms, WFP, box 36/168/8; Armstrong, 'The Hereford Times Desk', pp. 7–24.

9 Reader, *Professional Men*, p. 111.

After a short period as an equity draughtsman and conveyancer, he became something of a resourceful gentleman scholar and established a reputation as a mathematician, active within the London Mathematics Society. His talents extended to engineering, invention and architecture. In the 1870s he designed and supervised the construction of a new Anthony family home and devoted himself to improving printing presses and inventing a newspaper-folding apparatus for the *Hereford Times*. In 1878 he sold several patents for newspaper-folding machines to an American company in New York for £9,000. The raw energy of American society fascinated him, and a short business trip to New York was followed by approximately six years living in the United States. He returned to Hereford with an American wife in 1884 to run the business side of the *Hereford Times*. Edwyn's influence over Julia's life was necessarily less direct but at times as significant as that of elder brother Charles.¹⁰

After leaving Cheltenham College, Charles's life took a number of turns. At the age of 18, he embarked upon a military career, his father having purchased a commission for him as a subaltern (Cornet) in the Queen's Lancers. After two years service, he retired and embarked upon a two-year tour of Europe and America and despatched articles to the *Hereford Times* and the *Pall Mall Gazette*. He had already revealed himself as a precocious literary talent of liberal political sympathies. His first essays for the *Hereford Times* were 'a plea for the enfranchisement of women' and 'a tirade against the evils of drunkenness'.¹¹ Upon his return to the Anthony household in 1865, with his Canadian wife Elizabeth and a young son, Charles began a writing career with the *Hereford Times*. In 1867 he published *The Social and Political Dependence of Women*, a work that established him as a 'disciple of John Stuart Mill'.¹² After assuming the editorship of the *Hereford Times* in 1876, he wrote a number of political tracts, including *Popular Sovereignty* and *Duty and Privilege*.¹³

10 Armstrong, 'The *Hereford Times* Desk', pp. 20–22; 'Obituary: Charles Anthony, jnr.', WFP, box 41/1.

11 HT, 20 November 1909; HT, 15 February 1919.

12 HT, 15 February 1919; Charles Anthony, jnr., *The Social and Political Dependence of Women* [1867], Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1880; Nicholas Capaldi, *John Stuart Mill: A Biography*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2004.

13 Charles Anthony, jnr., *Popular Sovereignty*, Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1880; Charles Anthony, jnr., *Duty and Privilege*, National Press Agency, London, 1886.

The shared scholarly inclinations and progressive instincts of the Anthony brothers represented two strands of early Victorian public school education: the classical, literary and bookish, and the stirrings of the scientific and social inquisitiveness that were to strip away its religiosity. It is at the confluence of the traditional and the new that we can locate the shaping of Julia Anthony's education. Here Charles (junior), Edwyn and, to a lesser extent, their father confronted the 'woman question'. Their reading of the feminist political tracts, most notably those of Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill, sharpened their awareness of the deficiencies inherent in the traditional education of young girls. Both were publicly highly critical of a system which produced 'narrow and little minded' middle-class women lacking in knowledge and incapable of applying their minds to political and intellectual ideas in anything but a cursory manner. As he was to write in *The Social and Political Dependence of Women* (1867), heavily dependent upon Harriet Taylor Mill's *Enfranchisement of Women* (1851), Charles Anthony argued that it was the *type* of education provided for girls that lay at the heart of a social system that oppressed women.¹⁴ By 'confining the education and knowledge of women', society ensured that they had 'weak minds in weak bodies'.¹⁵ Many women became wives and mothers, he wrote, 'only because there is no other career open to them, no other occupation for their feelings or their activities' and girls were 'brought up with the one idea, "marriage" continually dangled before their minds'.¹⁶

Together, Charles and Edwyn fashioned an education for their sisters that they believed would allow them to break the shackles of their confinement. It combined elements of the traditional instruction thought appropriate for women of their social standing and much that was unconventional. Its intention was to provide an academic rigour and intensity that would provide knowledge and train the mind in the processes of reasoned analysis. In practice, this meant that the Anthony girls were taught at home by a governess, with additional instruction provided by specialist tutors and the Anthony brothers. Alongside ladylike accomplishments such as painting, needlework, singing and music, the girls studied subjects deemed appropriate for the upper middle-class female mind: art, poetry, literature, history,

14 Charles Anthony, jnr., *Social and Political Dependence*, pp. 26–86.

15 Charles Anthony, jnr., *Social and Political Dependence*, p. 61.

16 Charles Anthony, jnr., *Social and Political Dependence*, pp. 56, 72.

English grammar and composition, French and German languages. Julia's particular talent for music was exploited to its full potential, and a music room created within the family home. To this conventional fare was added Latin, mathematics and an introduction to scientific knowledge and methodology that went far beyond the realms of botany and nature studies which were the staple diet of the average middle-class girl, and indeed, beyond that which the brothers Anthony had received as public schoolboys at Cheltenham.

At the core of the heavily prescriptive curriculum was a reading program. Drawn up by Charles, it had the teenage Blanche and Julia grappling with the latest scientific, political, economic and social theories and was designed to provide a familiarity, or at least an awareness, of the latest currents of intellectual thought. There was a significant emphasis on evolutionary theories, both of the animal world and the development of human society, along with contemporary critiques of the Victorian world. The list of writers is daunting: John Ruskin (1819–1900), Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749–1832), Auguste Comte (1798–1857), Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), John Stuart Mill (1806–1873), Charles Darwin (1809–1882), Thomas Huxley (1825–1895) and Francis Galton (1822–1911).¹⁷ Whatever else this immersion in the intellectual discourse of the day achieved, its emphasis upon intellectual theories was the common currency of a household sheltered from the economic realities of the marketplace. For conscientious and talented young women, it was at once a stimulus to high thinking and idealism—and perhaps also a recipe for personal frustration.

By its very nature, the education of Julia Anthony raised expectations. Accustomed to equal treatment within the family, Julia and her sister Blanche faced an outside world of legal, social and economic inequality that barred them from the professions and occupations open to their brothers. As a family enterprise, however, the *Hereford Times* provided an avenue of advancement that did not unduly challenge conventional restraints. In its pages, Julia developed a recognised talent for writing, albeit anonymously, and with family editors and encouragers at her

17 Cora Wilding, 'Notes and Information about Julia Wilding'.

shoulder. Between 1870 and 1876 she contributed a series of articles from which it is possible to glean an emerging philosophy or set of attitudes.¹⁸

There are, of course, dangers inherent in accepting her written words at face value. The articles represent, like all publications, a self-conscious literary occasion. They were often derivative, with the influence of John Stuart Mill's works clearly discernible and they are likely to have been suggested and shaped by brothers Charles or Edwin.¹⁹ At times, they also take on the character of exercises in deductive reasoning, rather than expressions of deeply held convictions. Historians also warn of the pitfalls of assigning to individual writers the assumptions and ideologies of the entire school of thought from which they draw. These caveats notwithstanding, it is perhaps worth noting the observation of historian G. M. Young that 'to understand' a person we should 'consider what was happening, what ideas were in the air' when they were 'around twenty, "because what sixteen to twenty-four is talking about, twenty-four to sixty-four will usually write, or think, or do. Those are the charging years"'.²⁰ In this light, Julia Anthony's *Hereford Times* articles offer a useful snapshot of her developing preoccupations, beliefs and attitudes between the ages of 17 and 23 and might be seen as providing clues for an understanding of her subsequent departure from Britain at the age of 26.

The articles fall into two broad categories: some 20 columns written on trips to the Continent, mostly from Cologne between 1870 and 1873 when Julia was furthering her musical education, light in tone and striving to develop her writing talents; and a further 20, written mainly between 1873 and 1875 as the hopes which middle-class progressives had harboured for Gladstone's Liberal Government

18 The most important of these articles, published in the *HT* between 1873 and 1876 are as follows: 'Women's Suffrage', 15 February 1873; 'Women: Two Conflicting Tendencies', 14 October 1876; 'Marriage', 7 November 1874; 'Utilitarianism', 'John Stuart Mill', 17 May 1873; 'Peace and War', 8 November 1873; 'The Tyranny of Custom', 6 December 1873; 'Scientific Investigation', 9 August 1873; 'Scepticism v Orthodoxy', c. 1874; 'Education', c. 1875; 'The Power of Realization', 6 March 1875; 'Theory and Practice', 5 August 1876; and 'Early Influences', 9 December 1876.

19 John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (1869), *Utilitarianism* (1861, 1863), *On Liberty* (1859), *On Representative Government* (1861).

20 George M. Young, *The Victorian Noon-Time*, cited by Philip Collins, 'Dickens and his Readers', in Gordon Marsden (ed.), *Victorian Values: Personalities and Perspectives in Nineteenth Century Society*, Longman, Essex, 1990, p. 44.

began to fade.²¹ The latter reveal a young woman grappling with the intellectual theories of the day. A mixture of abstract expressions of her philosophy and a reaction to the events around her, they reveal an optimistic view of the future evolution of society alongside a deepening dissatisfaction with the present. The optimism sprang from a belief in the capacity of science to advance civilisation and provide a new way of thinking based on fact and observation and freed from the obfuscations of religion, custom and tradition. Science, she believed, provided the foundation for an ethical commonwealth implicit in Comte's 'religion of humanity': 'this religion, this faith and hope in the future progress and perfection of mankind is as ennobling and exalting a guide to the conduct as any we can conceive'.²² Scientific discoveries and material improvements, if wedded to a spirit of internationalism, would enable the world family to march forward in unison.²³

Scholarly, almost Olympian in tone, the articles are infused with an increasing disappointment, as Gladstone's reforming Liberal Party was ground down by the inertia of the electorate.²⁴ As Julia saw it, Liberalism had lost its nerve in the face of a widespread and irrational fear of change. Entrenched customs and a stern orthodoxy inhibited the open expression of opinions and novel ideas were thwarted by a 'tyranny of custom' that stymied progress.²⁵ Nowhere was this collective failure more clear to her than in the progress of feminism. She berates Liberal members of parliament who privately supported the enfranchisement of women as a matter of moral justice only to vote against it in parliament when confronted with widespread derision. A. N. Wilson has recently addressed the same issue and pointed to the

21 Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation*, pp. 237–71, 591–637; A. N. Wilson, *The Victorians*, Hutchinson, London, 2002, pp. 342–424.

22 Julia Anthony, 'Scepticism v Orthodoxy'.

23 Julia Anthony, 'Education', 'Peace and War', 'Scientific Investigation'; Andrew Wernick, *Auguste Comte and the Religion of Humanity: The Post-Theistic Program of French Social Theory*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2001.

24 Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation*, pp. 590–637; Wilson, *The Victorians*, pp. 343–64, 379, 383–84, 417. Gladstone's Liberals came to power in 1868 with a 'landslide' majority of over 100 seats. They were defeated in the 1874 general election by Disraeli's Conservative Party with a majority of 112.

25 Julia Anthony, 'The Tyranny of Custom'.

mania for Gilbert and Sullivan musicals as 'induc[ing] affection for the most moribund and unjustifiable abuses'.²⁶ Julia plainly did not see the joke.

Her discussion of the rampant individualism that blocked the path to reform draws heavily upon Morris, Ruskin, Matthew Arnold and Anthony Trollope.²⁷ She adopts their representation of nineteenth-century English society as consisting of a parasitical aristocracy, a selfish middle class intent on money making and a working class brutalised by the effects of industrialisation.²⁸ On the issue of how the path to reform might be smoothed, she is attracted to Ruskin's ideas about the need to balance the interests of the individual and those of society as a whole. By temperament she is drawn inexorably into his belief in the transformative power of education. It was this, she believed, that would ultimately pave the way for the removal of legal inequalities, injustices and abuses that would allow individualism to be civilised and a liberal society to be liberated.

This analysis led naturally to an emphasis upon the role of the family and the part it might play in the reformation of society. If English society was dominated by narrow-minded, conservative, selfish and largely unthinking men and women, then the family, as the microcosm of the wider society, held the key to social regeneration. Intellectually, she was drawn to the idealism of Mill whose argument she paraphrased in the pages of the *Hereford Times*. Social improvement could be initiated by 'noble' reasoned beings with a higher 'conception of the rights and duties' that 'every member of society individually owes to each other'. Such individuals, guided by 'a love of humanity' and possessing elevated aspirations, would usher in the 'amelioration of mankind'.²⁹ Educated and enlightened mothers were essential to the eradication of deficient parenting and unenlightened family

26 Wilson, *The Victorians*, pp. 420, 417–22.

27 See Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Politics and Social Criticism* (1869), John Murray, London, 1923; Anthony Trollope's critique of society, *The Way We Live Now*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1875; John Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, Collins Clear-Type Press, London, 1862.

28 See, for example, Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, ch. 2 and 3 (cited by J. D. Jump, 'Matthew Arnold', in Boris Ford (ed.), *The Penguin Guide to English Literature From Dickens to Hardy*, 5th edn, Penguin, Middlesex, 1966, pp. 319–23); Julia Anthony, 'Tyranny of Custom', 'Theory and Practice', 'Education', 'Early Influences'.

29 Julia Anthony, 'Education', 'Early Influences'.

environments. Ideally, the family would become a sphere where childrearing would be the joint responsibility of both parents, equally committed to the moral regeneration of mankind.³⁰

The prospect of marriage to Frederick Wilding, a prominent Herefordshire lawyer, gave these idealistic and intellectual ponderings greater immediacy. Prominent in her personal life by around 1877, Frederick Wilding was regarded by his fellow Herefordians as a perfect match or ideal husband for 'the daughter of Hereford'. He was born in Montgomery, Montgomeryshire, Wales, in 1852, to Harriet Farmer and John Powell Wilding, a surgeon, and as such may be placed at the lower end of the professional classes.³¹ One of four children, he attended Hereford Cathedral School, before proceeding in the 1860s to the ancient and prestigious Shrewsbury School for boys, one of the nine 'great public schools', as defined by the Public Schools Act.³² At the time, its reforming headmaster, Benjamin Hall Kennedy, was in the throes of endeavouring to shrug off criticisms of the school's curriculum. Charles Darwin, one of the school's most influential old boys, put the issue bluntly: 'nothing could have been worse for the development of my mind as it was strictly classical, nothing else being taught except a little ancient geography and history'.³³

The young Wilding thrived in the Shrewsbury environment, absorbing fully its code of gentlemanly and manly behaviour. He distinguished himself more as an athlete than as a scholar and drew from one historian comparison with C. B. Fry, regarded by Edwardian English commentators as the beau ideal of the gentleman sportsman.³⁴ After leaving Shrewsbury he studied law and qualified as a solicitor in the early 1870s after a five-year apprenticeship.³⁵ He entered a London counsel's chambers to qualify as a barrister, a profession

30 Julia Anthony acknowledged that, given the present structure of society, mothers shouldered much of the childrearing duties within the family.

31 Reader, *Professional Men*, pp. 16–20, 31–64, 151–52.

32 The other schools were Charterhouse, Eton, Harrow, Merchant Taylors', Rugby, St Paul's, Westminster and Winchester. The Public School Commission, 1864, expressed unease at the continued concentration upon classical studies in such schools at the expense of more 'modern' or relevant subjects such as science. See Reader, *Professional Men*, pp. 104–15.

33 Francis Darwin (ed.), *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin, including an autobiographical chapter*, John Murray, London, 1887.

34 'A Quarter-Century of Cricket. Doyen of Canterbury Sportsmen. Frederick Wilding', newspaper clipping, 3 October 1925, WFP, box 43/3, pp. 167–68.

35 Reader, *Professional Men*, p. 118.

which required in England a further three years training.³⁶ The cost of remaining in London to complete these studies led him to abandon them. By 1877 he had established a legal practice in Hereford, and was working as an advocate in the Hereford law courts, often appearing in front of Julia's father in his role as Justice of the Peace. The move to Hereford was thus in part a frustrated response to the entrenched customs and traditions of a British legal profession, where family influence and wealth counted for much and newcomers struggled to find a place. Thwarted professional ambition was to become a significant ingredient in his contemplation of English society and in the process by which he came to contemplate emigration.³⁷

Away from the courtroom and legal chambers the young Frederick Wilding's life presents a contrasting image. Here we see not a frustrated individual but a young man at ease with the society in which he finds himself, an enthusiast energetically participating in almost every aspect of sporting, cultural, intellectual and political life. He was acknowledged in the West Midlands as a rugby player unlucky to miss selection for England as international rugby took its first steps in the early 1870s. He captained Hereford in rugby and rowing, represented the town on the cricket field and made his mark locally in athletics and in boxing. It was a sporting résumé that prompted one writer to describe him as 'the best all-round athlete Herefordshire had produced'.³⁸ Nor was his enthusiasm for sport confined to the playing fields. By his own admission, he had at one time or another been the secretary of 'nearly every athletic club in Hereford'.³⁹ Away from the playing fields his talents allowed him to sustain an active, if relatively undistinguished, role in Hereford's Harmonic and Amateur Dramatic Society, and in the local Debating Society.

The young Wilding's enthusiasms and interests flowed into politics and led him into the intellectual and political circle of the Anthonys. As secretary of the Hereford Liberal Association, he worked alongside all three Anthony males. With Charles junior and Edwyn he shared a common educational background and an attraction to the emergent progressive philosophies of Mill and Ruskin. Something of his political

36 *Lyttelton Times*, 28 June 1913.

37 *Lyttelton Times*, 28 June 1913; Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation*, pp. 40–43.

38 'A Quarter Century of Cricket', WFP; Len and Shelley Richardson, *Anthony Wilding: A Sporting Life*, Canterbury University Press, Christchurch, 2005, pp. 16–17.

39 *HT*, 22 October 1878.

thinking can be seen in an address he gave, as retiring secretary of the Hereford Liberal Association, in which he surveys the destruction of Liberalism at the hands of Benjamin Disraeli's Conservatives:

The period during which I have had the honour of being your hon. Secretary has been a most painful and humiliating period, not only to the Liberal party, but to the country generally. We have seen the good ship of Liberalism almost hopelessly wrecked on the treacherous and shifting sands of foreign politics. We have seen how individuals, once prominent in the good cause, have deserted the leadership of the best and wisest statesman of all times—led away by a mistaken feeling of patriotic devotion, to even a bad government in a time of national trouble and peril, under the supposed necessity for the moment of electing between their country and their party ... With even deeper pain we have marked how the country generally has fallen away from her adherence to the old principles of humanity, justice and fair dealing to all mankind, and how under the spell of the Jewish magician she has indulged for a brief period in a wild dream of aggression, annexation and military pre-eminence in every quarter of the globe ... Such, ladies and gentlemen, has been the policy and spirit of the Conservative Party.⁴⁰

The comments display a disenchantment with the fickleness of the electorate and dismay that the reforming initiatives of Gladstone's Liberal Party have been sunk by Disraeli's unnecessary foreign entanglements. They stop short of pessimism and go on to express the view that the perversion of enduring British values would be short-lived. The address might also be read against the background of impending marriage to Julia Anthony, with its accompanying sense of change and new beginnings. Placed in this context, the comments can be seen as feeding into a shared pool of frustration, from which the couple were to draw in shaping their future. They were part of the soul searching that was gradually making their marriage a migratory moment. The calculations involved in the decision to leave Hereford for New Zealand were a finely balanced weighing of present frustration against the hopes of a better future. The decision in favour of the new world rested upon the perception that in the antipodes enduring British values and culture would be free from the restraining hand

40 'Hereford Liberal Association Presentation of a Testimonial to Mr. Frederick Wilding', *HT*, 28 June 1879.

of rampant individualism that was temporarily diverting the progress of humanity, and free of the obfuscations of religion imbedded in an established Church.

We may leave the newly-weds on their wedding day, little more than a month before they sailed for New Zealand from Gravesend. Their secular and rationalist inclination notwithstanding, the ceremony was conducted in the 'suburban' Anglican church of Tupsley by two clergymen. The occasion, captured at considerable length in the social pages of the local tabloid, the *Hereford Mercury*, reveals something of the social position the pair were leaving behind and offers tantalising glimpses of the motives that prompted departure. The roads leading to the church were, according to the *Mercury's* social columnist, 'thronged by members of the higher and middle classes of society, chiefly ladies, of whom there must have been 500', all anxious to catch a glimpse of the bride who wore a style of dress 'precisely of the type worn at the marriage of the Lord Mayor of London ... a few weeks ago'. After the nine carriages bearing the bridal party had arrived, guests unable to find space inside gathered around the entrance. The stirring strains of *Onward Christian Soldiers* played 'in a slightly accelerated movement', as Julia marched towards the altar on her father's arm, and filled the surrounding churchyard.⁴¹ With its militarist phraseology—'marching as to war'—it seems an odd choice for a secular couple, for whom the notion of war was a negation of humanity. Yet it encompassed also a sense of mission—'one in hope and purpose'—and perhaps it was this that appealed to a young couple imbued with idealistic notions of marriage and family. Perhaps also they found in its words the element of defiance and 'protest against the establishment' that, as historians have pointed out, appealed later to the civil rights movement in America.⁴²

41 *Hereford Mercury and Independent*, 25 June 1879.

42 See J. M. Jasper, 'The Emotions of Protest: Affective and Reactive Emotions in and around Social Movements', *Sociological Forum*, vol. 13, no. 3, September 1998, pp. 397–424; and *The Social Movements Reader*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1968; David Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals: The Years of Power, 1891–1912*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1988, pp. 48–52. Hamer raises the question of whether the act of migration can be seen as a 'political gesture' (p. 49). He suggests that as such it might take 'conservative' or 'utopian' forms. In short, an emigrant might want to 'escape' the unwanted or embrace the prospect of change.

Mary Struthers and Orme Masson: Science and the imperial university

On 5 August 1886 Orme Masson, a 28-year-old chemist of Edinburgh, married Mary Struthers, the 24-year-old daughter of Sir John Struthers, an anatomy professor from Aberdeen, and Lady Christina Struthers, an advocate of higher education for women. Their summer marriage, like that of Julia Anthony and Frederick Wilding seven years previously, was a prelude to migration. Within three weeks the aspiring academic and his new wife sailed for Australia and a chair at the University of Melbourne. At first glance it would seem an unexceptional decision. The embryonic universities of Australasia had sought to draw their academic staff from amongst the graduates of the British institutions they regarded as parent bodies. Yet explaining the Massons' decision solely or even primarily in terms of an employment opportunity would leave unexplored the attitudes and assumptions that propelled the young couple to make the move to Melbourne. By placing the young couple in their family, social and intellectual context it is possible to examine the wider motivations that underlay their departure. In doing so we find that, like the Wildings of Hereford, the Massons of Edinburgh and Aberdeen share much of the secular idealism of the mid-Victorian generation of intellectuals. Their idealism was less explicitly articulated but, as we shall see, just as optimistically wedded to notions of progress and the capacity of science and education to produce a liberal and civilised society.

Born in 1858 at the fashionable London home of his maternal grandparents, Eliza Andrews and Charles Orme, (David) Orme Masson was the second child and only son of Englishwoman (Emily) Rosaline Orme, a highly educated member of a large and relatively affluent family of intellectuals, and first-generation Scottish academic, David Mather Masson. In 1852 David Masson became a pioneering professor of English Literature at University College, London, the first degree-granting institution in Britain to establish a chair in the subject.⁴³ The intellectualism that was to be the defining element

43 Jenny Young, 'Family Tree Compiled By Jenny Young', David Orme Masson Family Papers (DOMFP), University of Melbourne Archives, Acc. no. 1980.0080 (80/80 and 106/54); Jo McMurtry, *English Language, English Literature: The Creation of an Academic Discipline*, Archon Books, Hamden, Connecticut, 1985, pp. 1–5, 111–35.

of the young Orme's development was stronger on the maternal side, where it spanned several generations and blended artistic, literary, scientific and professional interests. His mother Rosaline, a scholar by disposition, had been one of the first students to attend Bedford College for Women, established in 1849 with the intention of providing a higher education of a liberal and secular nature. She became a published author in 1876 when Macmillan produced her anthology, *Three Centuries of English Poetry*.⁴⁴ Her younger sister Lilie was the first female law graduate of London University. Another sister, Olivia Blanche Orme Fox, helped establish Falmouth High School for Girls. A brother, Temple, taught chemistry at University College, London, while sister Julia married Henry Charlton Bastian FRS, physiologist, neurologist and Professor of Clinical Medicine at University College Medical School, and a participant in the scientific debate over spontaneous generation.⁴⁵ The Ormes' household in Regent's Park, London, was consequently a lively one and was made the more so by the comings and goings of artists, literary figures, social theorists and critics including Alfred Tennyson, Coventry Patmore, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Thomas Carlyle, as well as the leading figures of the Pre-Raphaelite circle, William Holman Hunt, Dante and William Rossetti. In such an environment the discussion of contemporary concerns such as the condition of Britain, the nature of 'progress' and the evolution of British society flowed naturally.⁴⁶

It was also a setting into which Orme's father, David Mather Masson, with his literary credentials and later academic position, fitted neatly. Born in Aberdeen, in 1822, into a highly religious and literate family, he had in 1839 at the age of 17 commenced theological studies under Thomas Chalmers at the University of Edinburgh. He was to remain a deeply devout man, but abandoned his religious studies to carve out a career as a man of letters. Chalmers continued to be something of a mentor and his reconciliation of recent scientific findings with traditional religion formed the bedrock of Masson's spiritual life.⁴⁷ As editor of the *Banner* magazine (1842–43), he actively supported

44 Rosaline Masson (ed.), *Three Centuries of English Poetry*, Macmillan, London, 1876.

45 James Strick, 'Darwinism and the Origin of Life: The Role of H. C. Bastian in the British Spontaneous Generation Debates, 1868–1873', *Journal of the History of Biology*, vol. 32, no. 1, 1999, pp. 51–92.

46 Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, pp. 3–4.

47 Thomas M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation: A History 1700–2000*, Allen Lane and Penguin Press, London, 1999, pp. 364, 370–80.

the formation of the Free Church of Scotland, and Chalmers, who led the dissidents out of the Church of Scotland in 1843. After a decade in Edinburgh and London editing, and writing a number of articles and essays for the Chambers publishing firm, Masson accepted a professorship at University College, London, in 1852. During this time, he aligned himself with John Stuart Mill on all matters, except religion, and established a reputation for being liberal, progressive and something of an internationalist. As secretary of the London-based Friends of Italy Society he hosted the visiting Italian patriot Mazzini.⁴⁸

In his writing and teaching Masson assumed the role of moral guide. He employed the works of writers grappling with the great social questions and theories of the day—the condition of England, the nature of progress, the development of society—to point the way forward to a better future. His most notable work, *a Life of John Milton, narrated in connection with the Political, Ecclesiastical and Literary History of His Times*, was published in seven volumes between 1859 and 1884.⁴⁹ His ideas were brought together in a survey of *Recent British Philosophy*, published in 1865, and an expansion of his lectures delivered to the Philosophical Institution of Edinburgh and the Royal Institute of London.⁵⁰ Described as a historian at heart, his studies of English literary figures were interspersed with several histories of the classical and medieval period. Between 1880 and 1884, after his appointment as Historiographer Royal for Scotland, he produced the ‘four massive volumes’ of the *Register of the Privy Council in Scotland 1578–1604*.⁵¹

David Masson had his greatest influence as Professor of English and Chair of English Literature and Rhetoric at Edinburgh University (1865–95).⁵² An inspiring teacher, he was depicted by an anonymous writer as having shaped a future generation by moulding his students’ characters as well as their minds:

48 Newspaper clippings: ‘David Masson: December 2, 1822’, *Glasgow Herald*, 2 December 1922; ‘Death of Professor Masson’, *Times*, 8 October 1907; ‘The Late Emeritus Professor Masson: A Distinguished Literary Career’, *Scotsman*, 8 October 1907, DOMFP, box 7/10/3.

49 David Mather Masson, *Life of John Milton*, 7 vols, Macmillan & Co., London, 1854–94.

50 David Mather Masson, *Recent British Philosophy*, Macmillan, Cambridge and London, 1887.

51 ‘Death of Professor Masson’, ‘The Late Emeritus Professor Masson’, ‘David Masson’, newspaper clippings, DOMFP, box 7/10/3.

52 McMurtry, *English Language, English Literature*, pp. 111–35.

all that he has said and written accepts the high responsibility and maintains the dignity of the true man of letters. He has done much to show to heedless undergraduates and thoughtless 'general readers' that he who worthily studies the language and literature of our race is not chiefly concerned how most gracefully ... to turn a paragraph ... The student must also face for himself the problems with which the strong souls of Knox and Hume, Hooker and Milton, George Eliot and Carlyle struggled not in vain ...⁵³

Carlyle, more than any other contemporary writer, influenced Masson. The pair were lifelong friends, and contemporaries noted that Masson shared a certain moral earnestness with his friend, though without the pervasive gloom. Rosaline Masson described her husband as 'a happy Carlyle'.⁵⁴ Carlyle himself pronounced Masson a 'true thinking man, sincere and sure of purpose'.⁵⁵ Contemporary observers were struck by the irony that amongst Masson's greatest admirers and most successful former students were three Scottish authors known for imaginative works mixing fantasy, Scottish folklore and nostalgic tales of Scotland's rural past: Rev. Samuel Crockett (1859–1941); Ian Maclaren, the pen-name of Rev. John Watson (1850–1907); and Sir James Barrie (1860–1937). Part of the 'Kailyard School' of Scottish literature, which was later criticised for being divorced from the reality of a highly industrialised, urban Scotland of the late nineteenth century, the trio acknowledged Masson's lectures as their inspiration.⁵⁶ Writing in *Edinburgh Eleven*, Barrie described the vigorous, impassioned and often dramatic delivery-style of Masson's image-laden lectures 'that made his lectures literature'.⁵⁷ The huge numbers of students drawn to his classes led to the introduction of the degree with Honours in English (the first candidate graduated in 1895). A dedicated teacher, Masson missed only three lectures in 30 years, and also played a prominent role in the movement for women's tertiary education, student welfare schemes, university administration and public lecturing programs.⁵⁸ The earnestness and energy that Masson injected into his professional

53 'The Late Emeritus Professor Masson', newspaper clipping, DOMFP, box 7/10/3.

54 Rosaline Masson to Orme Masson, 16 July 1933, cited by Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, p. 110.

55 'David Masson', newspaper clipping, DOMFP, box 7/10/3.

56 'Death of Professor Masson', newspaper clipping, DOMFP, box 7/10/3.

57 James Barrie, *An Edinburgh Eleven: Pencil Portraits from College Life*, Office of the British Weekly, London, 1889; 'The Late Emeritus Professor Masson', 8 October 1907, newspaper clipping, DOMFP, box 7/10/3.

58 Extract from volume of university portraits, DOMFP, box 7/10/3.

duties flowed through into family life so that Orme and his three sisters—Flora, Rosaline and Helen—grew up in an environment where ideas and their importance were part of the rhythm of daily existence. They picnicked with Herbert Spencer, played games with John Stuart Mill, entertained the Carlyles and the Patmores (Coventry and George) and generally became accustomed to hearing the great questions of the day debated in front of them.⁵⁹

The young Orme Masson's formal education was consistent with such an environment; broad, liberal and loaded with expectations of subsequent tertiary studies. He attended 'Mr Oliphant's School', a small private establishment for boys, until 1869 when, at the age of 11, he embarked on four years of study at Edinburgh Academy, described as 'a private establishment patronized by the professional elite'. A relatively new private boys' school, the academy was established in 1823 with the intention of providing a first-class classical education that included instruction in Greek, to rival that of British public schools, and thus provide an entry route to Cambridge and Oxford universities. Its founders also desired to provide a pleasant educational environment with minimal corporal punishment, in contrast to their own experiences at Edinburgh High School.⁶⁰ Orme Masson excelled academically at the academy, frequently featuring in its prize lists. He matriculated at age 15 (enrolment at university at a young age was a distinct feature of the Scottish educational tradition) and embarked, in 1873, upon the 'uniform' four-year MA course at Edinburgh University. A broad and liberal undergraduate degree, it encompassed humanities, Greek, botany, mathematics, natural philosophy, natural history, rhetoric and English literature. A busy social life (sister Rosaline remembered him 'danc[ing] till three in the morning the night before an exam') and an active involvement in student life (the Diagnostic Society, a debating club; and the university theatrical company, of which Robert Louis Stevenson was also a member) probably resulted in academic performance described by Weickhardt as 'solid rather than brilliant'.⁶¹ In his final year (1876), he came 20th in humanities, 13th in Greek, 5th equal in mathematics and natural

59 Flora Masson, *Victorians All*, Chambers, Edinburgh, 1931, pp. 53–69.

60 Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, p. 6; Magnus Magnusson, *The Clacken and the Slate*, Collins, London, 1974.

61 Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, p. 7; Rosaline Masson to Orme Masson, 25 July 1933, DOMFP, box 2/1/8.

philosophy, 9th equal in natural history, 7th equal in rhetoric and English literature, and 42nd in chemistry—though this meant first-class honours in chemistry with 77 per cent. Orme's performance was good enough to provide him with several options for specialisation, especially in natural philosophy, mathematics and English. Yet after gaining his MA in 1877 he chose to pursue postgraduate studies in chemistry at Edinburgh University.⁶²

What was behind Orme Masson's decision to depart from the family literary tradition to specialise in scientific studies? In contrast, his sisters Flora and Rosaline were to become successful writers. Yet there was enough interest in science and connections with the scientific world within the Orme and Masson households to make a career in science appear an attractive possibility. Indeed, according to family accounts, it was Orme's mother, Rosaline, a published author, who more than anyone else influenced Orme's choices. She had attended chemistry classes at Edinburgh University, where she was inspired both by the subject and its teacher, Crum Brown, and encouraged her son in his direction.⁶³ The environment of the University of Edinburgh, with its world-renowned medical school, of which the chemistry course was a component, was also a stimulating influence. Orme and his parents were part of a generation that revered science as the key to progress; thus the relative sense of 'newness' and promise that surrounded the field of chemistry held some appeal. Moreover, the leap from his father's study of English, philosophy and history was not as great as it might first appear. David Masson's approach to the study of English literature, history and philosophy was essentially scientific, involving rigorousness, exhaustive analysis and the amassing of factual evidence. Contemporaries remarked upon the resulting absence of artistic merit in his critical literary studies. An obituary in the *London Times* remarked:

His perception of English literature was perhaps at the opposite extreme from that of the 'belletristic trifler'. For him it was simply the highest expression of the national mind and character, and as such was to be mastered by study as laborious and systematic as is demanded

62 Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, pp. 6–15.

63 Flora Masson to Orme Masson, 16 December 1936, DOMFP, box 3/1/12; Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, pp. 7–9.

in the case of the severest sciences. Hence the great burden of his teaching was the necessity of strenuous effort alike for enjoyment and the production of what is best in any form of literature.⁶⁴

While his father searched for answers to the great questions of their time in literature, history and philosophy, Orme went in search of the 'chemical truth'.⁶⁵ Unlike his sisters, Orme came to reject the religion of his father. He later claimed that clergymen had 'been brought up to declare the truth of what they know to be untrue'.⁶⁶

Orme Masson became one of the new breed of research scientists, trained in methodologies developed in Germany. In April 1880, after two years further study in botany, natural history, chemistry and practical, he was awarded a Bachelor of Science degree. He followed this with a brief, but much sought after stint in Frederick Wohler's laboratory at Göttingen, Germany, before returning to England in 1880 to take up an appointment as lecturer and research assistant to chemistry professor William Ramsay at University College, Bristol. Masson was to remain in close contact with Ramsay, who received the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for his discovery of inert gases. Masson resigned, however, from this post a year later in 1881, presumably to advance his career prospects, and returned to Edinburgh University, where his research work on the composition of nitroglycerine (facilitated by a prestigious scholarship and several fellowships) led to his attainment of a PhD in 1884.⁶⁷ There followed the problem of finding a suitable academic position.⁶⁸

To understand the motivations that prompted migration, we need to explore the trends at work within the parent institutions that made up the 'British university' and the place that this university established

64 'Professor Masson', *Times*, 8 October 1907, DOMFP, box 7/12/1. His life of John Milton spanned six volumes and was written over 10 years.

65 Orme Masson, 'The Scope and Aims of Chemical Science and its Place in the University', Inaugural lecture, *Argus*, 24 March 1887.

66 Orme Masson to Flora Masson, 12 January 1936, University of Melbourne Archives (UMA), quoted by Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, p. 180.

67 Orme Masson served as one of three joint presidents of the first Students' Representative Council at the University of Edinburgh, formed in 1884, possibly as a more democratic answer to the elitist 'Speculative' society within the university. He was heavily involved, along with his father, in the celebrations for the university's tercentenary held in April 1884. Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, pp. 15–17.

68 R. J. W. Selleck, *The Shop: The University of Melbourne 1850–1939*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Victoria, pp. 285–86; Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, pp. 9–14, 20–23.

in the new settler societies. The first Australasian universities were products of the mid-Victorian age: Sydney (1850), Melbourne (1853), Otago (1869), Canterbury (1873) and Adelaide (1874).⁶⁹ Historians have described their gestation in terms that underline the old world attachments that underlay their foundation. W. J. Gardner's path-breaking *Colonial Cap and Gown: Studies in the Mid-Victorian Universities of Australasia*⁷⁰ discusses them within the framework of Louis Hartz's 'fragment' thesis.⁷¹ As institutions or 'fragments' of the old world, they looked backwards not forwards and took on forms that were conservative and derivative.

Yet, as Gardner and others have demonstrated, such a generalisation obscures as much as it reveals. It needs to be seen in the context of the diversity of models available to colonial universities from within the mid-nineteenth-century British university system. Oxford and Cambridge stood as the exemplars of rural retreats of contemplation, whose exclusivity was maintained by religious tests and a curriculum built around Greek and Latin. The urban, more secular and cheaper universities of Scotland and Ireland had developed in ways that were less exclusive.⁷² When the founding fathers of colonial universities discussed what sort of academy they wished to create, they did so in terms that reflected their individual understandings of this diversity.⁷³ They were also aware of the growing body of criticism that held the universities, especially Oxford and Cambridge, to be retarding the advancement of science by their traditional concentration upon Latin and Greek.⁷⁴ It was from within this mixed framework of inherited tradition that the Australasian colonies established their universities.

69 Selleck, *The Shop*; W. J. Gardner, E. T. Beardsley and T. E. Carter, *A History of the University of Canterbury 1873–1973*, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, 1973; W. G. K. Duncan and Roger Ashley Leonard, *The University of Adelaide, 1874–1974*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1974; H. E. Barff, *A Short Historical Account of the University of Sydney*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1902; W. P. Morrell, *The University of Otago: A Centennial History*, University of Otago Press, Dunedin, 1969.

70 W. J. Gardner, *Colonial Cap and Gown: Studies in the Mid-Victorian Universities of Australasia*, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, 1979, p. 11.

71 Hartz, *The Founding of New Societies*, p. 3.

72 Selleck, *The Shop*, pp. 9, 18, 21–22, 26–27; Reader, *Professional Men*, pp. 134–35.

73 Selleck, *The Shop*, pp. 25–27; Gardner, *Colonial Cap and Gown*, pp. 10–11.

74 Reader, *Professional Men*, pp. 127–45; Selleck, *The Shop*, pp. 17–20, 46–52, 284–85.

Where then can we place Orme Masson as aspiring academic? A young, talented English-born but Scottish-educated chemist, son of a professor of English literature, he gained his PhD in Edinburgh. Although one of the 'ancient' universities, the University of Edinburgh, founded in 1582, had a decidedly more democratic tradition, providing a less expensive and more professionally orientated education to greater numbers of students.⁷⁵ There was also more emphasis on research. Masson, in the words of Richard Selleck, was 'one of the new British academic scientists for whom training in research was part of the preparation for professional life'.⁷⁶ Yet the newly qualified and ambitious Masson faced difficulties securing an academic appointment in a relatively new field where suitable positions were scarce and competition fierce.

Opportunities for academic advancement for scientists were limited in Britain for a number of reasons. Chemistry as a scientific discipline distinct from that of medicine was a relatively recent development. Indeed, the two subjects had only begun to be separated at Edinburgh University in 1844, and a Chemical Society founded at the university (refounded) in 1874. One of Masson's inspirational teachers, Alexander Crum Brown, Professor of Chemistry and Chemical Pharmacy, University of Edinburgh, had become the first holder of the London Doctor of Science degree in 1862 and was at the forefront of the pioneering movement to professionalise the chemistry field by establishing proper qualifications and standards. Crum Brown aided the formation of the Chemical Institute of Great Britain between 1876 and 1877 specifically for this purpose.⁷⁷ Yet Weickhardt points to the relatively stagnant state of chemistry research in Britain in the 1880s when Masson was searching for a suitable appointment:

There was ... evidence of a sad decline in the research productivity of British chemistry, as measured by the number of original papers read before the Chemical Society, which had fallen from 113 in 1880 to 63 in 1883. In fact the 1881 *Transactions* contain no papers at all from any of the professors of chemistry at Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, St Andrews, Aberdeen, University College, London, or the Royal College of Chemistry.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Reader, *Professional Men*, p. 134.

⁷⁶ Selleck, *The Shop*, p. 286.

⁷⁷ Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, pp. 7–9.

⁷⁸ Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, p. 22.

Furthermore, despite growing criticism, the continuing emphasis placed by English public schools and universities upon the classical and liberal educational programs at the expense of science and the newer technical professional trainings, further limited employment opportunities for men such as Masson.⁷⁹

Engaged since 1884 to Mary Struthers, daughter of Sir John Struthers, Professor of Anatomy at Aberdeen University, the matter of securing an academic position was becoming for Orme Masson a pressing matter both professionally and personally.⁸⁰ In keeping with the family tradition and upper middle-class social convention of the day, the timing of Masson's marriage was dependent upon his ability to support a wife (and future family) in suitable style. Throughout 1884–5, while on a research fellowship at the University of Edinburgh, Masson applied unsuccessfully for the limited number of chemistry chairs on offer in Britain; early in 1886 he turned his attention to an advertisement in the *Lancet* and *Nature* for the chair at the University of Melbourne. On 10 June the university selection committee notified him of his successful appointment, Masson formally accepted on 3 August and he and Mary Struthers were married on 5 August 1886.⁸¹

Masson's application for the Melbourne position had been timely. There was growing receptivity in the colonial universities towards scientific research and its perceived potential to aid industrial and agricultural development. The sudden death of the sole chemistry professor, John Kirkland, on 22 October 1885, imperilled the future of the discipline. Moreover, the need to find a replacement for Kirkland came after a number of 'unsatisfactory' appointments and a series of public scandals involving accusations of drunkenness, nepotism and irregular practice.⁸² The University Council was more than ever anxious to adopt a selection process that would stand up to public scrutiny and deliver a first-class academic. Kirkland's appointment had itself been much criticised. A Melbourne University graduate, and already

79 Reader, *Professional Men*, pp. 104–15.

80 John Struthers, *Memoir of Dr Alexander Wooler* [printed pamphlet, n.d., publisher unknown], DOMFP, box 7/10/3; *In Memoriam: James Struthers, M.D. of Leith*, Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1891 [reprinted from the *Edinburgh Medical Journal*, July 1891], DOMFP, box 7/10/3; 'Obituary: Lady Struthers', *The Journal of Education*, September 1907, DOMFP, box 7/10/3; 'Mamma's Forbears', ms, DOMFP, box 7/10/3.

81 Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, pp. 13–14, 17, 23.

82 Selleck, *The Shop*, pp. 206, 297.

a chemistry lecturer at the university, he had been appointed to the newly created Chair of Chemistry in 1882, after a farcical application process in which the position was only advertised locally, and for less than three weeks. Four other Melbourne University graduates, three of whom were also members of the teaching staff, were appointed to newly created chairs at the same time, and it is possible to see elements of economy and Victorian assertiveness in the appointments.⁸³ Historians, commenting specifically on Kirkland's appointment, have judged the process deficient and observe that Kirkland lacked 'thorough' training in chemistry. Both Richard Selleck and Geoffrey Blainey agree that Kirkland would not have been appointed if the university had followed its earlier practice of using a British selection panel.⁸⁴

Whatever the motives behind these appointments, the public criticism that ensued led the University Council to revert to looking further afield for Kirkland's replacement. A panel of British experts chaired by the Victorian Attorney-General was assembled in London to receive applications, interview British and European-based candidates, and rank them. The position was advertised locally and in Britain, Europe and the United States, although the selection committee ultimately decided not to wait for American applications to arrive. There were generous inducements to draw scholars to the other side of the world: an annual salary of £750 for the first five years, an increase of £150 pounds every five years within a salary cap of £1,200. Moreover, the criteria provided to guide the selection panel's deliberations were designed to point them towards a younger scholar—neither under 25 'nor much over 32'. Teaching experience was paramount in the quest for a man of 'moral character' and 'gentlemanly manners' and the secular nature of the new university was underlined by the injunction that 'men in holy orders' were not to be considered.⁸⁵ Masson was judged to meet the criteria admirably and was ranked first of the 34 candidates. Significantly, as Weickhardt points out, he was placed ahead of a scientist regarded by some members of the London

83 Selleck, *The Shop*, pp. 176–78, 196–210; Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, p. 21.

84 Selleck, *The Shop*, pp. 196–99, 285; Geoffrey Blainey, *A Centenary History of the University of Melbourne*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Victoria, 1957, p. 102; Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, p. 21.

85 University of Melbourne Council Minutes, 16 December 1885, cited by Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, pp. 20–22.

selection committee as possessing superior scientific qualifications, but seemingly judged as lacking the innovative, pioneering spirit or drive thought appropriate in a colonial university.⁸⁶

For their part, Orme and Mary Masson would have found the prospect of employment by the University of Melbourne attractive for a number of reasons. The potential for financial security and the determinedly secular nature of the university held obvious appeal. Perhaps equally important was the presence of Edinburgh University acquaintances in Australia, albeit in Sydney, who confirmed for them that there were enough similarities between the University of Edinburgh and the University of Melbourne's teaching style to provide a sense of familiarity.⁸⁷ Those who had gone before them provided insights into the possibilities a new university offered scholars with agendas for the future. Significantly, there were signs during the 1880s of an increasingly sympathetic attitude within the university towards the study of science and scientific research.⁸⁸ The place of classical studies in a rapidly expanding colonial society with specific labour requirements had been questioned since the university's foundation and 'attack[s] on "useless" knowledge' had become 'a colonial preoccupation'.⁸⁹

Selleck suggests that the 1880s witnessed a change in the general conception of the idea of a university, whereby it came to be seen not simply as a disseminator of information, but as a creator of knowledge via research. His definitive history of Melbourne University demonstrates that this change revealed itself most clearly in the endorsement of science. Furthermore, it was linked to claims such as those made by a member of the university Senate, Charles Topp, that in the natural sciences, particularly, colonial universities possessed 'greater facilities for original research than did the universities at "home"'.⁹⁰ Against this background, a Senate Committee chaired by Henry Higgins, already making his mark in Victorian society, formally

86 Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, pp. 21–23.

87 Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, pp. 24–25.

88 Selleck, *The Shop*, pp. 284–300.

89 Selleck, *The Shop*, p. 19.

90 Selleck, *The Shop*, p. 284.

drew attention in 1885 to the paucity of scientific instruction within the university and successfully proposed the introduction of a BSc degree and the creation of a chair in biology.⁹¹

These stirrings within the university suggested to Masson that the environment at Melbourne University offered fertile ground for the development of his ideas. He was aware that behind the grand proclamations of intent there lurked the realities of a new and relatively raw institution, most notably a lack of equipment, and unsuitable buildings and laboratories.⁹² He was also well aware that, notwithstanding the expressed desire for the university to become a significant contributor to the advancement of knowledge rather than primarily a disseminator of established knowledge, teaching would loom large in his duties. As his inaugural lecture at Melbourne was to make clear, Masson harboured the hope that from within the university he would be able to influence the development of science in Australia. He would train a 'small band' of students in scientific research methods, so that they could contribute to 'original work' and strive to raise the status of chemistry to that of a discipline in its own right.⁹³ In prosecuting this personal mission, he was to be recognised by contemporaries and subsequently by historians as part of a 'brilliant triumvirate of young scientists'.⁹⁴

91 Selleck, *The Shop*, pp. 284–85.

92 Selleck, *The Shop*, pp. 289–90.

93 Orme Masson, 'The Scope and Aims of Chemical Science and its Place in the University'.

94 Selleck, *The Shop*, p. 298 and also pp. 287–89, 297. The other members of the triumvirate were Walter Baldwin Spencer, a Lancashire man and Oxford graduate, appointed Professor of Biology at the University of Melbourne in January 1887, and Thomas Ranken Lyle, Irishman and graduate of Trinity College Dublin, appointed Professor of Natural Philosophy (Physics) at the University of Melbourne in March 1889.

This text is taken from *Family Experiments: Middle-class, professional families in Australia and New Zealand c. 1880–1920*,
by Shelley Richardson, published 2016 by ANU Press,
The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.