

WHAT DID THEY THINK OF THE JEWS?: THE EARLY YEARS OF THE SYDNEY BULLETIN

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The subject of antisemitism — hostility or opposition to Jews — has produced a considerable mass of research and writings, both regarding its history and its theory. One of the more recent and interesting studies is that by Kevin MacDonald, in his 1998 publication *Separation and its Discontent: Toward and Evolutionary Theory of Anti-Semitism*.¹ In this work the author reiterates earlier theories of cultural separatism and perceived economic exploitation as part of the explanation of modern antisemitism. The writer's emphasis on separatism also includes reference to Karl Marx's portrayal of Jews as clannish, asocial and an alien group engaged in economic exploitation of gentiles. Indeed, much attention is given to the concept of social identity as a major approach to group conflict in today's social psychology. This provides the picture of Jews appearing as a highly visible and impermeable group, segregating itself from the larger society and giving the perception of a high degree of group homogeneity, and indeed group purpose. The notion of very strong separatism and of strong collectivism within the group has also served to feed the development of negative stereotypes.² When these aspects are applied to colonial Australia it is clear that the Jews were seen as a separate cultural group, and in the context of growing Australian nationalism in the late nineteenth century, surpassed in their separateness perhaps only by the Chinese immigrants. In terms of hostility to Jews exhibited by a particular major colonial periodical, those features indicated above, of clannishness, alien nature, economic exploitation of gentiles and negative stereotyping, are all very much represented by that periodical, the Sydney-based *Bulletin*.

The Sydney *Bulletin* has very often featured in written discussion of aspects of Australian literary history of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with particular reference to its nationalistic and racialistic emphasis. Much of the useful study of these aspects is to be found in unpublished higher degree work in the University of Sydney and University of Melbourne. Ailsa

Thomson, for example, emphasised the 'cultural chauvinism' of the *Bulletin*, in its hostility to Britain as the colonising power and to the English-Australian governing classes, while it also attacked non-British elements as dangerous competitors in the economic field.³ A much more recent study, by Michael Hensley, looked at the magazine's racism in the popularisation of Australian nationalism.⁴ Other academic projects were somewhat more specialised in their treatment of the *Bulletin*, with S. Merchant examining the attitude towards the Chinese and M. Rodda studying the role of the *Bulletin* during the depression years of the 1890s.⁵ There have also been numerous publications dealing generally with the *Bulletin*, but probably one of the most relevant for this article is Patricia Rolfe's *The Journalistic Javelin. An Illustrated History of the Bulletin*.⁶

What is surprising about these works is the relative neglect of antisemitism as an ingredient in its nationalism and racism. The *Bulletin*, from its inception, made frequent reference to Jews, usually in the form of attacks, and Jews were certainly the major objects of racist comment, surpassed only, if at all, by expressed prejudice against the Chinese. Amazingly, Hensley's study of racism and nationalism simply ignores the Jewish question. Rodda's work on the *Bulletin* during the depression excludes mention of the Jews, who certainly bore a good deal of the opprobrium in the magazine's search for blame for national and economic misfortune. Even Thomson gives minimal treatment to Jews, simply and briefly suggesting that the *Bulletin's* anti-Jewish sentiment was based on fears of their economic competition with Australians.⁷ Patricia Rolfe does probe further into the issue of antisemitism, but her conclusions, to be examined, are not shared by this article.

The issue of the *Bulletin's* antisemitism has been taken up elsewhere. As to be expected, general histories on Australian Jewry which include the nineteenth century, by Hilary Rubinstein and by Suzanne Rutland, make references to the increasing anti-Semitic vitriol of this Sydney-based periodical and other publications of the past.⁸ There have also been two specialised studies designed to examine exclusively this aspect of the *Bulletin's* prejudice. In the October-November 1983 and February-March 1984 editions of the *Melbourne Chronicle*, Hilary Rubinstein presented 'Manifestations of literary and cultural antisemitism in Australia, 1856-1946'. Somewhat before that time, in 1969, A. M. McLean had written a final year honours essay at the University of Melbourne, which was even more specialised, entitled '*Antisemitism in the Bulletin 1897-1904*'.

Both studies offer useful thoughts and theories about the *Bulletin* and what its editors and professional contributors thought

of Jews at the time. It is what they do *not* include, however, which invites further and more detailed study of the early years of the magazine. In Hilary Rubinstein's case, much of her scholarly comment deals with the *Bulletin* of the 1890s and beyond, except for her citing of the instances of 1881 and 1883, when it championed the cause of the virulently antisemitic literary figure, Marcus Clarke.⁹ The rest of Dr Rubinstein's observations of the early period deal largely with the Melbourne *Punch* (established in 1856) and not with the *Bulletin*, which commenced in January 1880. In the case of McLean's interesting essay, the treatment of the *Bulletin* concentrates on the period 1897-1904. There is scant justification for the commencing date, although a reading of the essay shows that it has much to do with the Boer War and its prelude.

The two authors share two common assumptions. One is that the more extreme, vicious *Bulletin* comment about Jews was the product of economic antisemitism, of the harsh vicissitudes of the late-century economic depression and of the stereotype of international Jewish financial interests as major promoters of the conflict with the Boers. The other assumption is that there is another type of thrust at the Jews which does not at all belong to this category of comment. This is the so-called milder, 'bantering' reference to Jews. McLean makes much of this type of reference, arguing that the *Bulletin* applied such banter to any minority group, including Scots, Irish, Jews, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Catholics and Temperance Unions. The claim is that Jews were treated like any other national group whose stereotypes were the subject of highly humorous cartoons and short paragraphs which contained no obviously deep prejudice.¹⁰ In Hilary Rubinstein's case, there is reference to this bantering, essentially non-malicious type of comment, but attributed to the Melbourne *Punch*. It is not clear whether she would also credit the early *Bulletin* with this milder form of ridicule, although with the exception of the brief quotes on the Marcus Clarke case, all of the vicious *Bulletin* comments in her account are located in the later years of that magazine.

Although Patricia Rolfe's work does not concentrate on the issue of antisemitism, she appears to share with McLean and Hilary Rubinstein the view on the 'bantering' category of the *Bulletin's* comments about Jews. It is worthwhile looking briefly at her comments. Admitting that some of the jokes may have been crude and boisterious, she suggests that we would accept them as good fun, unless we are 'sensitive about offending other races'. In an age when the issue of racism is treated with increasingly critical examination, this is an amazing comment. The view is moderated somewhat a little later with the acknowledgment that in today's more sensitive age

the *Bulletin's* comments may be seen as repellent and ugly. Nevertheless, Rolfe does claim that the Irish and Jewish jokes seem to be mostly of the sort which those people tell against themselves.¹¹ It will be seen, however, that jokes about Jews as revealed in this article are so cruel that they could not conceivably be told by Jews themselves.

Given the context of all these works described, the purpose of this study is, therefore, quite clear. It is to examine the *early* years of the Sydney *Bulletin* with reference to its antisemitism. In doing so it raises and seeks to answer a number of questions. Does the magazine contain much in the way of the so-called 'bantering' references to Jews which might amount to irritants but are not basically malicious? Is this simply part of the facetious treatment accorded to other minority groups in the Australian colonial community? And are these humorous gibes in fact of a quite different order from the attacks of the 1890s and beyond? This study of the *Bulletin's* treatment of Jews spans the period from commencement of the magazine in 1880 to 1885, the year of involvement of British expeditionary forces in the Sudan, an event which is of relevance to the Jewish question in Australia. The exercise is based on a fairly exhaustive reading of every issue of this periodical for the period under scrutiny.

This examination of the content of successive issues of the *Bulletin*, for a period of a little over the first five years of its publication, yields fairly frequent references in its pages to Jews. The comments are quite varied in type, as indeed is the general content of the magazine itself. Some of the topics are short news items, some dealing with essentially religious aspects, often contained in a regular section entitled 'Denominational Drops'; others are reports of social events, while many constitute part of the attempted humour of the *Bulletin*, including cartoons and supposedly facetious, brief paragraphs dealing with what were then assumed to be innate characteristics of contemporary Judaism.

In its very earliest editions, the *Bulletin* displayed a lively interest in things or people Jewish, with comment that could be categorised as objective or even sympathetic. Some of this was at the international level. For example, there were references to the Rothschild family, to Benjamin Disraeli and to an eminent London QC, identified as being Jewish.¹² There was certainly an awareness of European antisemitism in its more extreme forms, with brief reportage on the persecution of Jews in Russia and on a very large anti-Jewish demonstration in Berlin in 1884.¹³

Most of the interest, however, was with respect to the Jewish presence in colonial Australia. The Jewish press was acknowledged,

specifically regarding a series of articles in the *Jewish Herald* on the Stage Jew, including an analysis of Shylock. To this the *Bulletin* added the question: 'When shall we see represented on the stage a true Jewish gentleman?', and then the mischievous qualification: 'Israel is not composed entirely of blacklegs.'¹⁴ However, there was genuine interest at the start in the Jewish religion — the festivals, for example — and even a reference to a mezuzah at the Princess theatre, owned by the Benjamin family. More profoundly, the basic question of Jewish identity was addressed in all seriousness. A column in mid-1880 reported that mixed marriages were becoming the rage in Sydney, and the newspaper subsequently expressed approval of such a trend. On the other hand, it admonished those Jews who sought to anglicise (which the *Bulletin* interpreted was to deface) their names, arguing that they should never be ashamed of names such as Cohen or Samuel, which were far older than the Algernons or Reginalds and so on of contemporary times.¹⁵

Australian Jews figured in the social columns, often fairly prominently. It is not clear whether this was due to any strong representation they might have enjoyed in the ranks of the middle class, if such was the case, or to their apparently easy identification as Jews. Certainly the *Bulletin* readily so identified them, based on name and appearance. References were made to items such as a Jewish bachelors' ball, to Jewish skaters, to the visit to Sydney of one of Victoria's 'splendid daughters of Judah', and to an attempted duel by two Jewish men competing for a certain lady.¹⁶ Sometimes the notes carried with them the suggestion of Jewish social influence or wealth. An item in July 1880 claimed that there had been a strong Jewish presence in vice-regal circles, specifically of a former governor of New South Wales, because of the patronage of Jews by his wife, Lady Robinson. The writer suggested that the governor's wife had a strong predilection for the 'chosen race', which had been obvious at various functions, and surmised that this might have been due to the fact that she herself had a remote strain of Jewish blood. Over a year later, a similar disproportionate Jewish influence was alleged concerning a certain Sydney official function: 'Judging by the number of the "chosen race" on hand, one would imagine our Government offices were Synagogues...'. Yet another item, in 1882, dealt with a Sydney dramatic club dominated by Jews, elaborating that gentiles were outnumbered when it came to awarding roles in plays.¹⁷

In terms of the strictly religious and even theological aspect, the *Bulletin* in its earliest years seemed to be quite pro-Jewish. Only two months after its inception, the magazine targeted those Christian denominations who had opposed the opening of the Sydney School

of Arts on Sundays. It argued that Jewish people might therefore justifiably object to its opening on Saturdays; the article then went on to refer to the Jewish community as 'the least bigoted of all the religious denominations.'¹⁸ In August 1880, the Jewish religion figured in the *Bulletin's* attack on *Witness*, a Christian religious periodical which had taken Rabbi Davis to task for having asserted that there was neither a hell in the generally accepted sense of the term, nor a personal devil. The *Bulletin* accused *Witness* of inconsistent haggling over worn-out theological dogma and especially of impertinence in attempting to lecture to synagogue authorities. In the process, the *Bulletin* accorded to Jews a superior level of morality, social conscience, tolerance and charity:

By whom are our prisons filled — by those who call themselves Christians, or by Jews? Do we Australians ever hear of a Jew deserting his wife and leaving her and her children to die in the gutter, or live in misery and shame? Is it not a fact that the average Jew is every whit as charitable in purse and much more charitable in speech than are such 'Christians' as those who, caricaturing the writings of the Apostles, scribble absurd letters to those whom they think heathen? Does the Jew ever insultingly obtrude his religious belief on his fellow-man? Judaism, in the light of its results, means, in Australia, at any rate, morality, happiness, and opulence...¹⁹

The concluding reference to 'opulence', that is, to Jewish economic success, could be taken as a compliment or as ambiguous, although succeeding discussions on the Jews in terms of finance usually carried adverse observations, to be discussed shortly.

Having seen that a number of the initial pages of the *Bulletin* were not unfavourable to local Jews, we also need to consider those comments which were critical. In the first place, to what extent were the references to Jews in the early years of the *Bulletin* mere 'banter'? In July 1882, for example, there were two items dealing with the Jewish prohibition on pigs, one in which a starving Jewish sailor succumbed to a barrel of pork, saying 'I don't know whether there isn't something in Christianity after all.'²⁰ It may well be argued that this is the type of joke which Jews would tell themselves and accordingly it could be categorised as harmless. Similarly there were sometimes facetious allusions to matters such as urban concentrations of Jews or to their unpopularity. A November 1880 social column reported a dinner party given by Mark Moses at 'his palace in Judea — we beg pardon — in East Melbourne'. A later item referred to the fact that 'most of us dart

around a corner when we see the beard of any member of a surviving [Jewish] tribe'; another announced 'bad news from Melbourne', that a Jewish Young Men's Association was being formed and that 'we are haunted with the dreadful suspicion that if these young men learned much more than they know at present, there will be a general exodus of Gentiles from Victoria.' Apparently ostracism of the Jews was celestial as well as earthly, for the regular 'Pepper and Salt' column suggested that the life of the Almighty was not much to be envied — 'more particularly as we are led to believe that there are Jews in Heaven.'²¹

While contemporary Australian Jews could probably take such jibes in their stride, it is doubtful if they could receive with equanimity those witticisms which insensitively drew upon the historic sufferings of Jews. One such account referred to the Spanish Inquisition and a Jew who claimed his Spanish ancestors were not in Jerusalem at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus. The article concluded with the comment 'God help the Spaniards! No wonder they started an Inquisition.' Regarding a much more recent Jewish tragedy, the Russian pogroms of the late nineteenth century, there was a degree of contradiction, for although the *Bulletin* had more than once alluded to the plight of the Russian Jews, it also rather callously referred to 'a Russian roll-up of the chosen people.' It is furthermore doubtful whether local Jews actually appreciated the attempted humour of the Gentile confession, in the section 'Brief Mention', that 'We have studied this strange people long and closely, and can honestly affirm that nothing will kill them. We've tried everything.'²²

An important consideration on this issue of the mere 'bantering' type of humour is not simply whether it was just harmless facetiousness, but whether, as several writers have maintained, it was applied at this level to a whole variety of minority groups. Certainly there were very frequent references in the years under study to the Irish, and less to the Scots. A very few of these items depicted Scots as shrewd and thrifty and a few were representations of inebriated Irish men, and only one or two suggesting an Irish lack of high intelligence. But the overwhelming majority of references constituted very gentle, kind humour, with no sting in the tail, as was sometimes the case with items dealing with Jews. In addition to the Jews, the one other minority group which was frequently singled out as an object of rather nasty humour was the Chinese, but most descriptions, whether in cartoons or articles, were vicious rather than gentle. Apart from the Chinese, however, the so-called 'bantering' references were much kinder to groups other than the Jews and there was far less of the stereotyping of

the Irish and Scots than of Jews. It is therefore very difficult to agree with previous commentators that the humour aimed at Jews was of the same order as that directed at most other minority groups.

Of course, once we put aside this category of less offensive items, the unabashed antisemitism of the *Bulletin* is most palpable. But it assumed more than one form. A minor aspect of the newspaper's prejudice seems to be mainly racial, largely encompassing various physiological and physical-cultural characteristics attributed to Jews. The magazine devoted an article at the end of 1881 to the subject of the longevity of Jews, especially those of the 'better class'. This was, again, a contribution which carried with it a back-handed compliment. The suggested longevity was attributed to temperate living and avoiding eating unclean animals, and there was also praise for the treatment of married women, whom, it was argued, were rarely converted into drudges. But another alleged reason was that Jews never gave themselves up to exhausting work; moreover, they scored on 52 fewer working days per year than Christians, since they used both Saturdays and Sundays as days of rest.²³ Added to the advantage of avoiding hard physical work was the supposed Jewish abundance of food. Hence the joke, 'The three great feasts of the Jews: Breakfast, dinner, and supper.'²⁴ In addition to this, there was more than once the mention that Jewish ladies were stout.

The physical appearance of Jews in general was in fact almost obsessive in the *Bulletin's* treatment of this section of the Australian community. In spite of its generalisation of Jews having an oriental appearance, it did acknowledge one report that claimed that many Polish Jews had light hair and blue eyes. However, the report went on to assert that there was 'probably no race in which the women are so generally attractive when young, and so universally unprepossessing when old'.²⁵ Mostly, however, the Jew was depicted as alien in appearance. There were references to such features as 'bulbous lips', 'the low foreheaded crowd' and — above all — 'dromedary noses', in a variety of articles and almost every time a cartoon appeared with a Jewish content.²⁶ The following article gives some of the flavour of the numerous jibes about the Jewish proboscis:

A little Hebrew, who after the manner of his race, runs a good bit to nose, was sculling his inamorata across the harbour the other day. He had a slight cold in his head. "Ikey, darling, presently murmured the dusky Leah, "There's a fly on your nose. Brush it off." Do that yourself, my dear, was the ready rejoinder, "It's nearer you than me."²⁷

On every occasion the image of the Jew was of great ugliness. This racially-emphasised antisemitism had no equal in racism directed against other groups in the pages of the *Bulletin*, except perhaps for its depiction of the appearance of the Chinese.

The racial prejudice of the *Bulletin*, however blatant, was far exceeded by its social-economic prejudice. It is here where the magazine's antisemitism reaches its most excessive expression. Other writers have of course noted this feature, but there has been a tendency to misjudge its lineage. Some of the works have correctly concluded that the *Bulletin's* antisemitic thrusts were exacerbated by the economic depression of the '90s and further by the Boer War, when Jewish finance was blamed for both developments. However, by overlooking the earliest years of the *Bulletin's* existence, these studies have under-estimated the extent to which local socio-economic issues under-lay its attack on Jews from the beginning.

For a start, the argument that the *Bulletin's* assault on Jewry was focussed on international Jewish finance or financiers, rather than on Australian Jews, is not borne out by the facts. It is quite clear that in its incipient phase of publication, the *Bulletin* quite specifically targeted Jews in Australia. It tended to depict them as essentially avaricious, greedy in terms of making money at all costs and especially in the sphere of money-lending. The accusation of monetary greed is typified by one of the earliest issues of the column 'Brief Mention' in which 'Nat Cohen announced his "talking hand", but some way obliterated the "I" in talking.'; another example was provided in the following year, with the story of three Jewish suitors (for the hand of a young lady) prepared to pay the mother money to advance their cause and who were not long in 'grabbing' the difficulty.²⁸ Yet another so-called humorous reference to Jewish greed is encapsulated in an 1883 imaginary incident:

'Why so gloomy this morning, Jacob?' 'Ah, my poor leetle Penjamin Levi — his is tead!' 'Dead? You surprise me. How id it happen?' 'Vell, you see, my leetle Penjamin, he vas at der synagogue to say his prayers, and a poy put in his hed at der toor and gries:"Job lot!"' and leetle Penjamin vas gild in der grush.'²⁹

Not long after, a much longer piece was published in the form of a poem, 'Song of Solomon'. This item was apparently based on an actual incident, in which there was a court case over an incident of Jewish marital infidelity, damages being awarded by jury. In the verses were references to Jews assembled at the court and allegedly crying 'Von't someone have to fork the monish over if Horwits vins

it' and then when damages were awarded, 'assembled Judah's smile waxed sickly.'³⁰

More often than not, the alleged monetary greed of local Jews was emphasised in the money-lending context.

Other researchers have noted that nineteenth century Australian Jews were often to be found in the business of money-lending and pawn-broking. What has not been generally noted, however, is that interest rates on loans were extremely high at the time, apparently 60% or even more. It is significant that the opening weeks of the *Bulletin* coincided with the appearance of usury legislation before the New South Wales parliament. This took the form of the Usury Limitation Bill, introduced in the Legislative Assembly by John Hurley on 4 March 1880. Hurley spoke of so-called money-lending societies in Sydney which lent at ruinous rates of 60% and even as much as 160%. It was quite clear from his remarks that local Jews were a major object of his attack. He asserted that 'the law should afford the unwary against these Shylocks who were preying upon society in Sydney', and in the course of accusing money-lenders of being in league together to obtain money under false pretences, he made specific references to two Sydney-based Jews (who were defended during the parliamentary debate by Jewish member Henry Cohen).³¹ Arguments were then mounted in the Assembly that the proposal, to limit interest to 10%, would be ineffective in achieving its purpose, and the Bill was subsequently ruled out of order.

Nevertheless, the issue raised in parliament was pursued by the *Bulletin* with much enthusiasm. The newspaper, in what became its social crusade on behalf of the lower middle classes of Australia, took up the cudgels regarding interest rates. In echoing John Hurley's accusations, it clearly concluded that local Jews were preponderant in money-lending activities, and were unashamedly charging very high rates of interest. The Jewish lenders were so identified by reference to foreign accents, and specifically relating to interest percentages; hence 'per shent' was the expression used with great frequency in various columns. A good example of this emphasis appeared in a very early edition poem:

The Pawnbroker

The Pawnbroker with face and eyes a gleam
Knows well the pledge they never will redeem
He knows he's safe to get his 'shent per shent'.³²

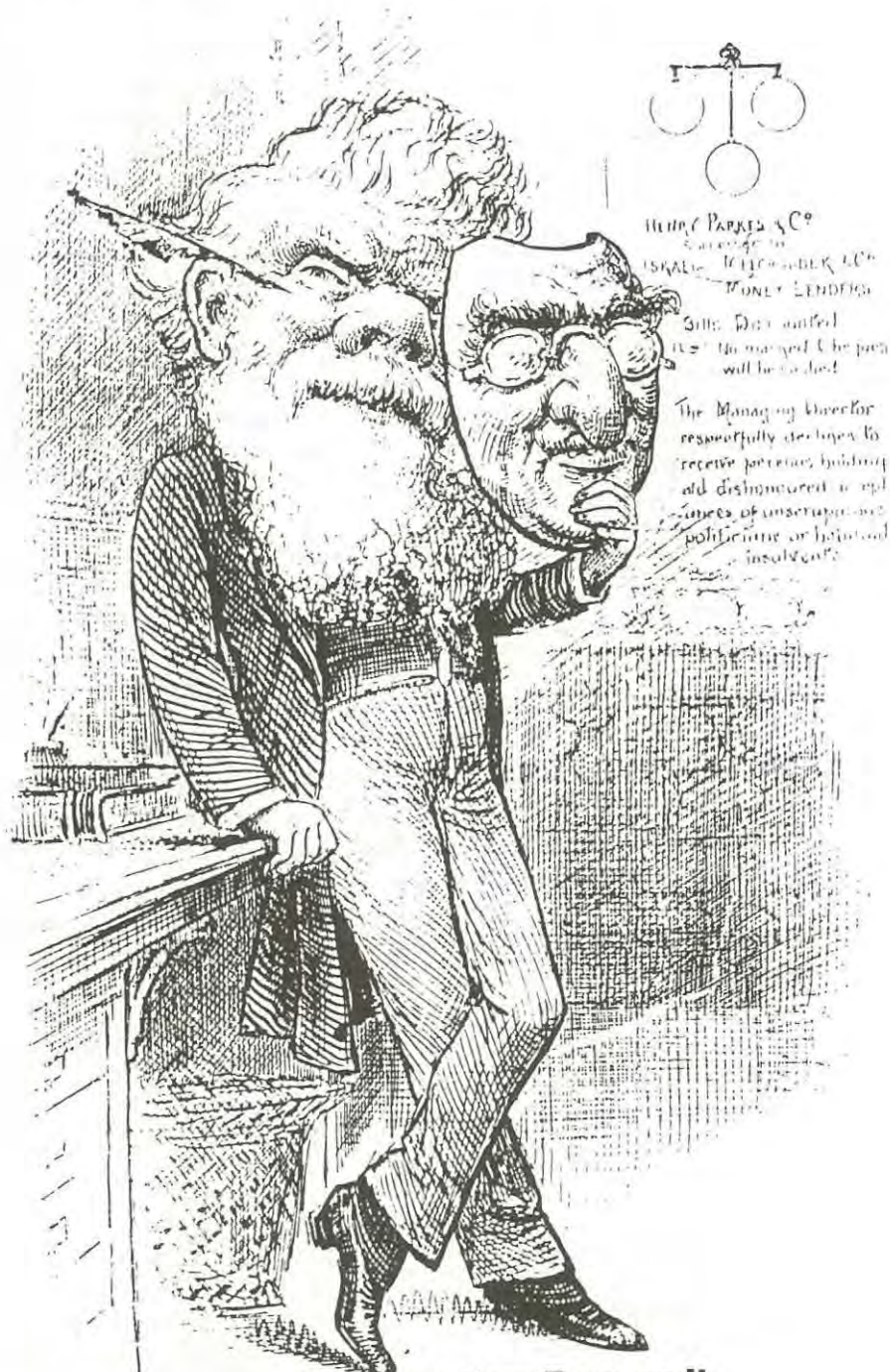
These attacks on money-lenders and pawn brokers, mainly identified as being Jewish through use of phrases such as 'per shent',

'mine uncle' 'the fraternity' or 'members of the order', were not limited to the matter of allegedly exorbitant interest rates. The *Bulletin's* assault on local Jewish finance attributed or implied a high degree of unscrupulousness as well. A central accusation was that in many cases the objective was not merely to charge unfairly high rates of interest, but also to make it virtually impossible for the debtor to honour his or her debt. In this situation the borrowers would forfeit their security, that is their personal possessions, furniture or even property, to the lender. One particularly vicious article in December 1882 claimed outright dishonesty displayed by 'a wily Israelite and his grasping gudgeons.' In this case there was alleged to be connivance between the lender and a valuator: the latter offers an unfavourable report on the furniture of the applicant, who must nevertheless pay the valuation fee; then the co-operating (and even presumably related) lender and valuator are 'both ready for the next poor Gentile'.³³

The *Bulletin's* self-appointed role as champion of the lower classes of Australian society helps to explain in general its emphasis on the impact of usury, which it described as a 'nefarious' trade. However, as Hilary Rubinstein has indicated, the social crusade was also specifically related to defence of author Marcus Clarke, whose indebtedness to Jewish money-lenders and his marked antisemitism was probably no coincidence. In 1883 the *Bulletin* added to its former indignation on Clarke's behalf by claiming that Jewish usurers in Melbourne were endeavouring to prohibit publication of a memorial volume of the writer's works, designed to benefit his 'poor widow and helpless children'. Without attempting to establish the authenticity of the correspondent's report, the *Bulletin* emphasised the hypocrisy of the alleged action in terms of Jewish scriptures. The report proceeded to remind:

the ornaments of their race of the words of their God Jehovah when he imperatively commanded 'Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise and they cry at all unto Me I will surely hear their cry' How is this for the 'Shenters'?³⁴

Whether pleading the plight of borrowers in general or that of particular 'victims', the *Bulletin* had by the mid-1880s moved to accuse Jewish money-lenders of undue financial influence on the state itself. The earliest indication of this development came in the form of a cartoon in late 1884. In the sketch, New South Wales political leader, Henry Parkes, is shown holding the mask of a person with a large hooked nose, while a pawn-broker's sign is seen near-



Putting a New Face on It.

Cartoon, *The Bulletin*, 1 November 1884.

by. Part of the title announces 'Henry Parkes & Co. Success to Israel.'³⁵ This pictorial assault was soon to be followed by criticism of Jewish linkages with the Sudan War and their financial implications for New South Wales.

Some writers, especially McLean and Rubinstein, have properly linked the *Bulletin's* most strident turn-of-century antisemitism with the Boer War. This stemmed largely from allegations that British actions were motivated by Jewish financial interests, which were to be secured against the Boers by continued British domination of southern Africa. While this emphasis did occur, these accounts of the *Bulletin's* prejudice overlook the fact that journalistic attacks over alleged Jewish financial influence and its relevance for Australia began not with the Boer War, but as a result of an earlier conflict in northern Africa. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, Britain had been intervening in Egyptian affairs, even militarily, arising from a combination of British investments in the region (especially with the Suez Canal), Egypt's chaotic government, and that country's international indebtedness. This situation was exacerbated by a Sudanese revolt against Egyptian governance in 1881 and climaxed in January 1885 with the rebels' capture of Khartoum and killing of General Gordon, British commander of the the garrison in that city.

What aroused the intense interest in Australia was the decision to send a New South Wales contingent of troops to assist the British expeditionary force in the Sudan in its attempt to wrest control from the rebel force. On 12 February 1885, the acting Colonial Secretary for New South Wales announced that a contingent would be sent from the colony, 'to testify to the readiness of the Australian colonies to give instant and practical help to the Empire'.³⁶ The troops sailed from Sydney on 3 March. The public debate which ensued contained two opposing arguments, both of which exploited Australian nationalist feelings. On the one hand, it was argued that the participation of Australian soldiers would be an ingredient of a developing Australian nationhood. On the other hand, British jingoism was raised as a spectre and there was an accusation that Australian blood and money would be sacrificed because of 'the machinations of Jewish bond-holders in the Suez Canal Company'.³⁷ The press in Australia focused strongly on the issues being debated, and given its anti-Jewish sentiment in the five years since its inception, the tone of the *Bulletin's* participation in that debate comes as no surprise.

It has been contended in this paper that, contrary to the impression in some other works on the subject, the *Bulletin* mostly directed its hostility specifically towards Australian Jews. This is not to say that it did not also attack 'international' Jewry. In fact, when

acknowledging the plight of persecuted Jews overseas, it embraced the theory of blaming the victims. In March 1882 it quoted uncritically the words of an observer of the 1880s on the oppression of Jews in Poland and Russia, offering the conclusion that their persecution was not a matter of religion at all: 'They are usurers of the most grinding type, and of filthy person. It is as usurers they are maltreated, not as Hebrews.'³⁸ Fairly soon after this report, another followed with similarly callous reference to the victims. On this occasion, mention was made in the section 'Pepper and Salt' to the flight from Russia of many Jewish families. However, an opportunity was also seized to attack so-called Jewish financial exploitation of others, with the comment that connected with the exodus, '21,000 gilt balls have been sent to England, whence 2,100,000 borrowers will in due course go to Hades.'³⁹

With the advent of the Sudan trouble, the *Bulletin* gave full vent to its hostility towards overseas Jewish financial interests. It freely aired, without reservation, the allegation that the Egyptian debt, over which England was apparently fighting, was 'simply Jewish blood-money', and argued that the British had not waged war when other countries in the past had repudiated their international debts. The *Bulletin's* answer to its own question on why the Egyptian situation was different, came with its listing of prominent British families — Oppenheimer, Rothschild, Goschen and Lazarus — all Jewish of course, with their strong bond-holding role. Even more damning, in the newspaper's view, was the fact that the New South Wales government had joined forces with such elements by offering an armed contingent to the Imperial government. It went on to insinuate that, in the process, that offer involved the office of Sir Saul Samuel, a well-known Sydney Jew, who held the position of New South Wales Agent General in London from 1870 to 1897.⁴⁰ A further object of attack on the link between imperial jingoism and Jewish finance was the local financial implication. On 18 March the New South Wales parliament received a motion from Treasurer George Dibbs for the Australian Military Contingent Bill, the purpose of which was to pay for the Australian contingent in the Middle East.⁴¹ To its attack on alleged jingoism and international Jewish finance, the *Bulletin* added its criticism of the debt so incurred by the colony of New South Wales for the cost of the Sudan expedition. This particular complaint was compounded in a savage cartoon in July 1885, depicting Sir Saul Samuel dealing with Jewish financiers over a loan for the colony, with one of the lenders suggesting that they should lend the sum, since the borrower (meaning the colony), although obviously extravagant, 'has plenty property, and ve'll own it all one of these fine days.'⁴²



The N.S.W. Loan.

MR. HAVE 'EM ON TOAST ABRAHAMS. "SO, SIR SAUL, YOU WANT FIVE AND A-HALF MORE MILLIONISH! VAT FOR?"
 SIR SAUL: "WELL, TO PAY FOR KILLING THE SOUDAN GOATS AND THE RABBITS, AND FOR MAKING THE RAILWAYS."
 MR ABRAHAMS: "VAT RAILWAY? YOU MEAN THE RAILWAY FROM SUAKIM TO BERBER?"
 SIR SAUL: "NO, THE NEW SOUTH WALES RAILWAYS."
 MR MONTMORENCI ISAACS (aside): VELL, ABRAHAMSH, VE BETTER LET HIM HAVE THE MONISH. SHORTLY, HE'S A VILD EXTRAVAGANT YOUNG MAN, BUT HE HAS PLENTY PROPERTY, AND VELL OWN IT ALL ONE OF THESE FINE DAYS."

Cartoon, *The Bulletin*, 25 July 1885.

From all that has been considered above, it is quite clear that other historians have generally been rather kind to the *Bulletin* in the matter of its antisemitism. The magazine did engage in stereotyping Jews as avaricious exploiters of gentiles, clannish, especially in their money-lending activities, and alien and ugly in appearance. There were initially some occasions of praise of Jews, but in a number of these cases the remarks were qualified, usually with a sting in the tail. The so-called bantering comments about Jews were

almost invariably much sharper than those addressed to all other minority groups, except perhaps the Chinese. The *Bulletin* did indeed subsequently attack so-called Jewish international finance, and it did increase its hostility during the years of economic depression and as a result of the Boer War. However, much of the poison of its comments arose *before* these developments and much of it was directed at the *local* Jewish community. Other treatments of the *Bulletin's* antisemitism of the nineteenth century have obviously not taken sufficient account of the details of its content in its first five years of operation.

NOTES

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19. Ibid, 21 August, 1880, p. 1.
20. Ibid, 15 July 1882, p. 8.
21. Ibid, 13 November 1880, p. 6; 5 August 1882, p. 3; 28 July 1883, p. 12; 25 April 1885, p. 10.
22. Ibid, 20 August 1881, p. 15; 24 January 1885, p. 12; 28 March 1885, p. 12.
23. Ibid, 24 December 1881, p. 8.
24. Ibid, 13 November 1880, p. 12.
25. Ibid, 18 March 1882, p. 5.
26. See, for example, items in ibid, 31 March 1883, p. 5; 29 September 1883, p. 12.
27. Ibid, 13 November 1880, p. 12.
28. Ibid, 3 July 1880, p. 4; 22 January 1881, p. 3.
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