

WRITING FOR SELF-IMPROVEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT: THE ROLE OF “OUR REVIEW” IN THE YOUNG MEN’S CHRISTIAN INVESTIGATION & IMPROVEMENT SOCIETY

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Brisbane’s Young Men’s Christian Investigation & Improvement Society (YMCIIS) was a Baptist Church organisation. The group was self-consciously male, and the collective aspiration of its members was to become involved in the public affairs of Church and Colony. The Society established its own manuscript magazine in 1895 calling it simply, “Our Review.”¹ “Our Review” provided a venue in which YMCIIS members could develop their writing skills, and in doing so broaden and strengthen a range of other social and professional skills. The magazine embodied, among other things, a significant shift in late-Victorian assumptions about self-improvement through literature. For nineteenth-century colonial culture generally *reading* literature was the primary instrument of self-improvement, but for the YMCIIS *writing* seems to have taken the place of reading as the favoured form of literary engagement, for both moral and practical purposes. In this article I shall indicate how the Society defined its objectives and suggest that the *maleness* of the Society was a factor that facilitated this important shift towards the exploration of writing as a means of self-improvement. I shall suggest, further, that the profession of journalism played a particular role in shaping the Society’s views regarding writing and self-improvement.

The stated objective of the Young Men’s Mission Class, which later evolved into the YMCIIS, was “the mutual improvement of its members, with a view to direct Christian usefulness” (Report South Brisbane Baptist Church year ending 30 June 1882). Throughout the life of the society tension existed between the first and second parts of this formulation. Church deacons, for example, criticised the young men for indulging in mutual improvement activities and ignoring their duty towards Christian usefulness (Report Vulture Street Baptist Church 1 July 1885-30 June 1887). The kinds of activities on which the young men placed great emphasis for self-improvement purposes, and to which they devoted much of their time, were debating, public speaking, and with the establishment of “Our Review,” writing. The ambition of these young men to develop their forensic and written skills raises questions about who might have been their immediate role model or role models, and why were these particular skills so important?

One strong possibility for a role model was Reverend William Poole. Immediately after Poole accepted the pastorship of the South Brisbane Baptist Church, he embarked on a project to increase youth interest and membership in the church. He founded and was the president of the original Young Men’s Mission Class and remained

¹ Manuscript magazines were serials produced inhouse by clubs or societies. They were usually typed or handwritten and their primary function was to provide members with an accessible outlet for their writing.

its president when it became the YMCIIS. While his wife Mary supervised the Young Women's Devotional Class and channelled the energies of its members into sewing circles and fund raising activities for the church, Poole began by providing a series of lectures to the young men. He also gave public lectures. One of his earliest talks was titled "Modern Newspapers" (Minutes South Brisbane Baptist Church 1 July 1880). His knowledge of this subject was extensive since before moving to Brisbane he had worked with Melbourne newspapers such as the *Evening Herald* and the *Age* engaging in employment that had "demanded extreme tact and political knowledge" (*Queensland Baptist* 1 May 1913: 67). At one stage he had even toyed with the idea of entering politics.

After settling in Brisbane in 1880 Poole's interest and involvement in newspapers continued. He became a frequent leader writer for the *Brisbane Courier*, editor of the *Queensland Freeman* and the *Queensland Baptist*, and he was on the Council for the *Queensland Evangelical Standard*.² Poole and other editors of the *Standard* recognised the traditional power of public oratory, and they placed a high value on the forensic skills used in speaking clearly and persuasively at public meetings and the like. They also recognised the power of the press as a means of proselytising and achieving the political and social goals of their church (Morrison 469). This was not new. The Anglican Church in Great Britain had recognised this power for many years. The Church owned and controlled the Religious Tract Society, the large publishing arm which produced long-running and very influential periodicals such as: *Leisure Hour* (1852-1894), *Sunday At Home* (1853-1894), *Boy's Own Paper* (1879-1967), and *Girl's Own Paper* (1880-1906, continuing under variations of title until 1956).

Poole's background in newspapers, his political acumen and experience with public meetings and his presidency of the group makes it highly likely that he was the guiding force in the activities of the YMCIIS. His background also qualifies him as a tangible link between this group and its central interest which was the politics of the church. The preoccupation of the young men with this area can be seen in their essay contributions to "Our Review": by far the two subjects most popularly written about were parliamentary politics and religion. In one essay titled "Christians and Politics" the contributor, A. J. Oliver, makes a direct link between the two, arguing that it is important for Christians to be involved in parliamentary politics (1: 47-48).

The establishment of "Our Review" was a major initiative of the group and stands as a practical example of how the members honed their skills for involvement in public affairs. Another observation of the group shows that in 1895, the year that the manuscript magazine was established, most of the members who were old enough registered to vote. The age range of those who registered spanned from the youngest at eighteen, Llewellyn Stephens and Robert Samuel Ross, to the oldest at twenty-nine,

² *Brisbane Courier* 29 September, 1913; *Queensland Baptist* 1 May 1913: 67-68, 1 April 1913: 56-57; William Higlett, "Rev. William Poole," *Forum: Baptist Historical Society of Queensland* 30: 3; Allan A. Morrison, "Religion and Politics in Queensland (to 1881)," *Journal* [The Historical Society of Queensland] 4.4 (1951): 466.

Percy Proctor. Poole also registered to vote that year.³ Although 1895 represents a period of industrial unrest the situation was not something peculiar to that year, suggesting that the impetus for YMCIIS members to cast their votes came not from external but from *internal* factors such as the activities and increased solidarity of their group during this year. The conscientious way in which the YMCIIS members undertook their parliamentary responsibilities is demonstrated in Edward Holliday's recommendation concerning gambling. He urged "all candidates at the next General Election be sounded on the question" ("Our Review" 1 [1895]: 32). Elsewhere in the same issue, Llewellyn Stephens observed the scope for discussion and debate offered by newspapers and suggested how individuals could use this resource to educate themselves on electoral issues in order to become informed voters:

Every school of thought is represented by some organ, and by watching the papers we have clearly laid before us any question of public interest presented from twenty points of view, by as many trained and able writers, who comment on each others views in our presence, and so, by our votes, we can decide any question in an intelligent manner. (27)

In view of the time that YMCIIS members devoted to activities that would improve their written and speaking skills and their keen interest in parliamentary politics, it is clear that members YMCIIS saw their involvement in the organisation as a means to improve the skills they required in order to fulfil their aspirations of involvement in the politics of church and colony.

The push by members to become involved in parliamentary politics highlights the group's exclusively male focus, while the gender bias of the membership indicates a determination to protect this central purpose from what they may have perceived as interference or distraction. Observation of the dynamics within the Society shows that male professionalism also expressed itself in more or less oppressive forms of masculinism. One of the members, twenty-nine-year] old Percy Proctor, was a short man of approximately five feet four inches, a vegetarian, and a member of the Theosophical Society.⁴ The perceived "femininity" of these characteristics provided occasion for the ridicule of other members. The strongest example of a personal swipe at Percy Proctor is a poem written by "Half-a-Brick," which appears in the column "As Others See Us" established to provide some scope for humour through "gently

³ Electoral Rolls: Llewellyn Stephens. Electoral District of Brisbane South, 1900: 88; Robert Samuel Ross. Electoral District of Brisbane South, 1899: 82; Percy Proctor. Electoral District of Woolloongabba, 1900: 54; Rev William Poole. Electoral District of Brisbane South, 1895: 76; Edward Holliday. Electoral District of Brisbane South, 1896: 42; John Bond. Electoral District of Brisbane South, 1899: 10; Edward Beazley Gretton. Electoral District of Brisbane South, 1899: 38; Lonsdale Gretton. Electoral District of Brisbane South, 1899: 38; Albert Joseph Phipps. Electoral District of Brisbane South, 1899: 76; Leonard Stiles Rich. Electoral District of Brisbane South, 1895: 60.

⁴ This character sketch has been constructed from various criticisms of him that appear in articles throughout "Our Review" 1: 35, 36; 2: 72.

insinuated" idiosyncrasies of members ("Our Review" 1: 3). Concerned over misuse of the column by "Half-a Brick," twenty-one year old Edward Holliday, editor of "As Others See Us," parried his verbal pugilism with a counter punch in the form of another poem in which he requested "Half-a-Brick" and other contributors to refrain from being too personal ("Our Review" 1: 36).

A link between the group's maleness and the exploration of writing as a means to self-improvement can be established by examining both the role of "Our Review" in the YMCIIS and the impact that profession of journalism had on the young men's views regarding writing and self-improvement. The two objectives of "Our Review" were: "1. To cultivate the Art of Literary Composition. 2. For the discussion of questions relating to Theology, Politics, Art, Science, Literature, etc., etc." ("Our Review" 1: verso page). The first objective establishes the society's belief that writing skills could be improved, while the second explains the reason for developing these skills. Regarding the first objective, Holliday maintained that "it is true, of course, that some people have a natural aptitude for the easy and graceful expression of ideas in writing; but it is not true that it may not be cultivated, or rather, may not be acquired to a more than passable extent" ("Our Review" 1: 7). The secret, he believed, was practice, but practice along the "correct lines" (1: 8). In both volumes of "Our Review," the editor reviewed books that he felt would provide the best guidance. They were *English Lessons for English People* by Dr E.A. Abbott and Professor Seely; *How to Write Clearly* by Dr Abbott (published by Seely & Co for 1/6); and *Longman's School Composition* by David Salmon (1:7, 2: 24). Holliday also expected the fellowship of the magazine to facilitate mutual improvement among the Society members:

A magazine constituted as this one is, affords a splendid field for the practice of English Composition, and, moreover, furnishes an inducement to write. It is out of the question to speak of exercising the power of composition for its own sake. It is in the sociality of a good magazine that the best inducement will be found. Here we meet with comrades of our own calibre, with the common bond of union—the desire for mutual improvement. While but appearing to join in the sociality of the magazine, we are acquiring facility in composition, and educating ourselves to some purpose. ("Our Review" 1: 4)

One may assume that when Holliday referred to members joining in "the sociality of the magazine," he was not only referring to the person-to-person interaction between members in their roles as editor, contributors and production assistants, but also as readers of the magazine. Concerning the latter there is no evidence to suggest that "Our Review" was duplicated for distribution to its members for solitary reading. The existing two volumes are loose leaf with the pagination pencilled onto the top of each page. This, and references within the magazine to meetings being set aside to read "Our Review," suggests that it was read in much the same way as a group of people might read a single copy of a regular newspaper. Sections of the magazine were probably divided up among the members present at the meeting, then exchanged with one another

until each member had the opportunity to read all the sections. "Sociality," it seems, also extended to being on paper. Within the pages of "Our Review" there is a culture of written interaction: contributors debated topics, presented research and expressed their views to one another.

Although reading for self-improvement was encouraged, it appears that it was for the secondary purpose of keeping abreast of events and opinions. Through reading, members had a supply of material that they used to flesh out in inter-club and home debates as well as in magazine contributions. Whereas the art of writing is a well-discussed topic, one of the few references to reading appears in Holliday's response to "Recorder's" praise of his book reviews. Holliday warned against blindly accepting opinions expressed in book reviews. He also asserted that by only reading reviews and not consulting the book the reader becomes guilty of superficial reading. His next comment incorporates some nineteenth-century debates concerning reading: study versus superficial reading and classics versus transient modern titles:

The aim of a good reader is not to read as many books as possible within a given time, but to *study* books. Anything more detrimental to mental culture than the habit of racing through books it would be difficult to conceive. A young man will derive more intellectual power by studying works which have already influenced the world, than by reading as many as possible of contemporary works, ninety percent of which will be unknown ten years hence. ("Our Review" 2: 11)

The question why the Society chose writing as a means of self-improvement can be identified by asking what it was that the members were seeking to improve in themselves. Many of the contemporary literary societies encouraging reading for self-improvement defined this in cultural terms, and they mostly focused on the classics. Members of the YMCIIS, on the other hand, were more interested in developing their analytical and conceptual skills so that they could strengthen their debating prowess come their involvement in public affairs.

It appears that the members of the Society perceived journalists as the most articulate sector of the community and that they sought to emulate the working environment, culture and practices of journalism through their use of "Our Review." In his essay contribution to "Our Review," which he titled "The Press," Llewellyn Stephens described newspaper editors as "trained" and "lynx-eyed." Another contributor, "Stylus Swift," argued that "much of the religious, moral, political, fiscal, and social reform which has been accomplished, has become, through the Press . . . actively propagated, and . . . brought to a successful issue" (2: 11), while "Recorder" maintained that "the 19th century imperatively demands that the man who wishes to influence his day and generation shall be able to wield his pen with proficiency" ("Our Review" 2: 9). These and other comments show that the YMCIIS members esteemed the skills of journalists and envied them the means they had at their disposal for influencing the public mind. The stated objectives and expectations of "Our Review" seem to indicate that the YMCIIS was trying to replicate the culture of larger

newspapers and magazines. One model could have been Sydney's *Bulletin*, in particular "The Red Page" which, according to David Carter and Gillian Whitlock, encouraged debate, literary self-consciousness, and group identification (119).

Newspaper editors and journalists were frequent guest speakers at the various literary and debating societies and they took a keen interest in promoting self-improvement to the community. Acting Editor of the *Brisbane Courier* E.J.T. Barton was guest speaker at the Petrie Terrace Baptist Church Mutual Improvement Association. He presented a paper titled "Books and Reading" and at the conclusion of his talk he emphasised to the members of his audience that if they wished to achieve self-improvement, writing as well as reading was required. His paper shows that the provenance of the idea for using writing for self-improvement was in journalistic practices and traditions:

It is very useful, after reading each work to write out, in order, your ideas about it. You may give a sketch of the leading characters, or of what you regard as the leading thought of the book which is more important; but be sure you write something of your own, and do not take up another book till you have done so. These appear to be simple matters, but they are of great consequence to those who read with a purpose, and I hope that all members of this Mutual Improvement Society are or will become such readers. (*Queensland Freeman* 15 July 1887: 12-13)⁵

This could easily be the sort of counsel an editor would give to a cub journalist. As textbooks for journalists only began to be published some years later there is an absence of contemporaneous handbooks to refer to for verification. As I have already demonstrated during this period journalists and those aspiring to the profession relied primarily on a combination of advice literature on reading and on writing. Although there was a lack of handbooks for journalists, there was no shortage of newspaper and magazine articles on aspects of journalism. Some earlier examples appear in London's *Saint Paul's Magazine* edited by Anthony Trollope; they include: "The Trade of Journalism" (1 [1867-8] : 306-18); "Anonymous Journalism" (2 [1868]: 217-30); and "Provincial Journalism" (3 [1868-9]: 61-73). At the turn of the century English journalist and novelist Arnold Bennett discussed the distinctness of journalism as a category of writing and the purposes of the different types and editions of newspapers. He offered insight into the motivation of journalists as well as the way in which the consumer should read newspapers. Some examples of his advice editorials in *T.P.'s Weekly* include "Journalism and Human Nature" (13 November 1903: 770), and "Newspaper Reading" (31 July 1903: 274).

A study of later handbooks reveals how little the strategies recommended in earlier times changed over the years. Barton's advice to the mutual improvement society

⁵ The page run in the *Queensland Freeman* for Barton's paper is 713 but owing to a reproduction fault the reference pages 12 and 13 quoted here appear as 2 and 3 in the copy of the journal cited.

to read with a purpose and to practise writing is echoed throughout later handbooks. *The Feature Writer's Handbook: with a Treasury of 2,000 Tested Ideas for Newspapers, Magazines, Radio, and Television* (1958) is an example of a handbook that as its subtitle indicates recommends the more traditional journalistic practices. The author discusses purposeful reading and advises trainee journalists that if they are to improve their own writing style they must actively respond to good writing: "Read-read-read! Old advice? yes. But it's still needed. . . . Read Charles Dickens and see how he describes his characters. Analyze today's best seller. To sum up: Respond to good writing wherever you find it" (Harral 5-6).

In a comparatively recent handbook, *Journalism for Beginners* (1977), the author articulates the importance of practising writing:

If you make a habit of sitting at your typewriter each day and typing a paragraph or so, or even a few sentences . . . you will find that gradually one idea leads to another . . . This is not only good discipline for making yourself write but it will give you confidence in your ability to think 'around' subjects, pulling out every angle and every aspect of each one. (Quinn 8)

Implicit in the last statement, and in Barton's plea, is the notion that writing is a tool for developing certain analytical and conceptual skills. One of the contributors to "Our Review," who entered under the *nom de plume* of "Blakey," wrote this about the subject:

The habit of committing our thoughts to writing is a powerful means of expanding the mind, and producing a systematic arrangement of our views and opinions. It is this which give [sic] the writer a vast superiority as to the accuracy and extent of his conceptions over the mere talker. No one can ever hope to know the principle of any art or science thoroughly who does not write as well as read upon the subject. (1 [1895]: 93)

The group was explicit about the importance it attached to the cultivation and expression of original thoughts and opinions. Under a list of its objectives on the verso page of the first volume of "Our Review" there appears a list of six rules that contributors were bound by. The second rule reads that "it shall be compulsory for all members to furnish an original contribution, either signed or anonymous." "Open-Eye" explains why this was important and hints that critical thinking predicates originality: "Every member should make a point of ventilating a new idea. However brief may be his remarks, each speaker should strive to shed a little fresh light on the subject under discussion. Let us avoid vain repetition and aim at clothing our ideas with a little originality. Else we rouse no dormant thought and remain forever in a state of self-satisfied ignorance" (2:67).

Another interest this group had in common with journalists was current affairs. If what they wrote about in "Our Review" is an indication of the subject scope of their reading it appears that they were quite preoccupied with newspaper reports. The editor of "Our Review" explained that the column "From Month to Month" had been established to assist members to acquire "a thorough knowledge of contemporary history" (1: 2). Contributors to this column were required to write a summary of newspaper reports on local as well as overseas politics and events and give opinions on each. Extra incentive was offered to members to contribute to this column by making it into a competition (1: 2). Reverend Poole was the judge of this section and only winning entries were included in "Our Review." This strategy of using newspapers as the primary means for keeping abreast of local and overseas events and opinions was advocated by Arnold Bennett a few years later in his editorial, "Newspaper Reading":

The enlightened newspaper reader will make a regular practice of reading opinions which are not his. . . . It [the *Times*] is still, for example, the one 'field of honour' where public men are agreed to meet together for the purpose of 'having a row'—in other words, fighting a duel by correspondence. . . . In a reference library a row of annual volumes of *The Times* weekly edition is one of the most interesting and genuinely useful features. (*T.P.'s Weekly* 31 July 1903: 274)

The Society demonstrated its strong belief in the benefits of a manuscript magazine by urging other literary and debating societies to follow its example. In the "Introduction" to the first volume of "Our Review" the editor anticipated that "so great will be the force of the example, that the organs of Literary and Debating Societies will be numerous." Although the YMCIIS was under the impression that it was the first literary and debating society in Queensland to establish a manuscript magazine (1: 1), this was not the case. At least two years earlier a manuscript magazine titled "Valley Venture" was being produced in Brisbane by a Presbyterian society called the "Valley Religious and Literary Association" (*Evening Observer* 26 October 1893: 2). Nevertheless, the YMCIIS actively promoted the benefits of a manuscript magazine to other literary and debating societies thus ensuring its use in more societies.

The optimism expressed in "Our Review" for the future direction of the manuscript magazine in the Society, and indeed Queensland, belied the faltering existence of the YMCIIS itself. Owing to the symbiotic relationship between magazine and Society, the magazine could only survive if the Society remained intact. (The magazine provided a reason for the members of the Society to write while the Society provided the magazine with a captive audience of readers and contributors.) By 1895 the group's demise was imminent. It seems that the Baptist ministry was concerned that the Society had taken on a life of its own that was not consonant with the objectives of the church. An inquiry was recommended into the Society's debates and the matter was to be brought to the attention of the deacons (Minutes Vulture Street Baptist Church

Meeting 19 June 1895). No reason was documented in the minutes for the inquiry, but presumably it was the subject scope that concerned them.

One topic creating some friction among the YMCIIIS members, which could well have been reported to the deacons, was "remarriage of divorcees." The contributor, writing under the name of "Open Eye," reported that Edward Holliday had announced that he had boycotted the meeting as a protest against the "class of subject" treated that afternoon (1: 68). Various other accounts indicate that church leaders were never entirely happy with the direction taken by the young men's group. As early as 1887, when it was still the Young Men's Mission Class, a comment was made in the church report that the second part of the original statement of objective, (namely, "Christian usefulness") was not being met. The following complaint was documented in the same report: "As yet the Mission has not done much beyond providing for the mutual improvement of its members, but the end and view of its existence will not be reached until the young men will be led to more direct work for Christ" (Report. Vulture Street Baptist Church 1 July 1885-30 June 1887).

The Church's answer to this dilemma appeared to be in the Christian Endeavour Society which developed as something of a rival to what were perceived as the self-indulgent mutual improvement societies. A fervent editorial in *The Queensland Freeman* exclaimed that "it cannot be insisted on too strongly that the Society of Christian Endeavour is the [sic] first and last and always a 'Religious Society'." This Society maintained a literary interest, but it always remained subordinate to the original focus of Christian endeavour. It was described as having "social and literary and other features . . . [but was] not a social nor literary Society" (15 Feb. 1888: 9). The South Brisbane Baptist Church, the home of the YMCIIIS, established a Christian Endeavour Society. As the new Society gained in momentum it is likely that the YMCIIIS increasingly came to be viewed as a renegade Society. There is no further mention of the YMCIIIS after the request for an inquiry was documented in the Vulture Street church minutes on 19 June 1895 and the last existing issue of "Our Review" is 29 June 1895. Thus it appears that the YMCIIIS was disbanded, and "Our Review" was the accompanying casualty.

The other main criticism of the YMCIIIS was its exclusion of women. "Recorder's" defence to attacks over this was a denial:

Some time ago it was publicly stated that our members made no effort to publish abroad the fact that on certain Sundays ladies were admitted to our meetings. The inference was that although this custom had been instituted the presence of ladies was not desired!! There never was a greater mistake made. As a matter of fact announcements regarding the innovation have been freely circulated, the institution has been continually referred to from the pulpit of the S[outh]B[risbane] Baptist Church, and special stress has been laid on its existence at all social and other gatherings held under the auspices of the Society . . . At the same time it must be admitted that, personally, our members make

little effort to secure the attendance of the gentler sex, and thus increase the popularity of the institution. ("Our Review" 2: 67)

Pressure to include women was building. Members' attitudes towards considering female membership were noticeably influenced by their society's interaction with some of the other contemporary literary and debating societies. Reports of their visits appeared in the column "Kindred Societies." The feature that most impressed the YMCIIS delegation during a visit to the Woolloongabba Scientific Literary and Debating Society was that two women opened the debate that was scheduled for that meeting. In his account of the visit "Stylus Swift" reported that:

During the debate our members, who had been courteously invited to speak took occasion to compliment the Woolloongabba Soc on the ability shown by their lady members, and to express their conviction that our own society would benefit considerably by the admission of the more loquacious sex. This was a rather sudden conversion of at least two of the deputationists, and speaks well for the persuasive eloquence of the Woolloongabba ladies. ("Our Review" 1: 53)

Apparently the speaker who offered these congratulations had on an earlier occasion "fought tooth and nail" against the proposal to include women in the Society ("Our Review" 1: 69). The speaker's comments may or may not have merely been an exercise in diplomacy while in the presence of the host society. Nevertheless pressure to make these comments was there, and it was occasioned because of the interaction between the two societies. It is also interesting to note another more subtle manoeuvre by the YMCIIS to avoid pressure to open its ranks: the alteration to the subtitle of "Our Review" in volume two is very telling in this regard. In volume one the banner reads: "Our Review: the Organ of the South Brisbane Young Men's Christian Investigation and Improvement Society." In volume two words have been neatly crossed out of the subtitle so that it becomes: "Our Review: the Organ of the South Brisbane Christian Investigation Society." Whereas the rest of the magazine is typewritten, the banner is written in calligraphy. To completely redo the banner would have been time-consuming and costly. The crossed-out words leave the reader pondering as there was no announcement to declare the change in the title or scope of the society. It seems that although the group succumbed to the pressure to include women in its activities, if only for the sake of a much-needed increase in patronage ("Our Review" 1: 95), it never actually granted them official membership. The crossing out of those few crucial words appears to be an attempt by the Society to be less overt about its exclusively male membership. This may have had something to do with their intention to enter the second volume in the manuscript magazine competition where it would be on display to people outside the immediate group who may have been critical of them for not allowing female membership.

The year after the YMCIIS was disbanded, a meeting was held at the South Brisbane Baptist Church for those interested in forming what was to become the South

Brisbane Literary and Debating Society. Familiar names of members from the YMCIIIS appear in the report of this event but the most striking feature of the meeting is the large representation of women (*Flashes* [Brisbane] 30 April 1896: 14). This new society quickly established itself as a parliamentary literary and debating society and it is interesting to note that as a sign of the coming times, its first ministry consisted of both men and women (*Evening Observer* 22 May 1896: 4).

An epilogue to this article offers an answer to a final question: Were the youthful aspirations of the men in the YMCIIIS realised in their professional lives? Llewellyn Stephens, son of newspaper proprietor, businessman, politician and Baptist deacon Thomas Blackett Stephens and one of the youngest members, became a Member of the Legislative Assembly. Llewellyn began his career as a law clerk and later became a solicitor (Electoral rolls; *Brisbane Courier* 12 September 1934: 10). Edward Holliday, the editor of "Our Review," was a clerk until his early death at the age of thirty four (Death Certificate 1904). Percy Proctor, the butt of the group, was also a clerk. Robert Samuel Ross, the other youngster of the group, and Albert Phipps worked in the publishing industry as printer and compositor respectively. Ross left his father's printery in Brisbane and became a journalist. Examples of his work include a discussion of John Henry Nicholson's *Halek* in "The Red Page" of the *Bulletin* (4 October 1923), and a pro-socialist article titled "A Socialised Press" in *Both Sides* (July 1920: 9). Occupations of two other members, who were not mentioned by name in this paper, were warehouseman and chemist, and several other members were not in paid employment up until 1899. (Data about occupations ceased being included on the electoral rolls after this year.)

It appears that the collective aspiration of the members of the YMCIIIS was to fulfil their ambition to enter the public affairs of church and colony. This at the very least meant becoming informed voters and critical thinkers. The function members ascribed to the Society was that of a practice ground to improve their forensic and written skills. Perceiving journalists as skilled and articulate commentators and adjudicators of events, they sought to emulate the working environment, culture and practices of journalism through their use of "Our Review." They used writing as the means to develop their analytical and conceptual skills, and this idea seems to have derived from the traditions of colonial journalism reinforced by a generous serving of colonial masculinity.

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