The Family Herald: A Domestic Magazine of Useful Information and Amusement (1843-1940)

Legend

The Family Herald: A Domestic Magazine of Useful Information and Amusement is a rare book. In the archives of Australia, there are only three extant copies of the weekly periodical altogether. One copy of the magazine, Vol. 72-74 (1893-1894), is at the Museum of Victoria. Apart from that, two universities each hold a copy of the journal: the Deakin University in Victoria holds one copy of Vol. 35 (May 1- Oct. 30, 1875, and the University of Newcastle holds one copy of Vol. 48 (Dec.1881-Dec. 1882). Both of the copies in the University libraries can be viewed by the public, but are not available for loan.

World-wide, according the accessible information on the web, there are approximately less than 16 copies altogether that are available from various booksellers, and this number includes only copies of Vol. XXXIV (1874), and copies of Vol VI, (1857), and also copies of Vol. XIV (1857).

Key points

There is comparatively little information about The Family Herald now available. Unfortunately, most of the records on the publishers and some of the contributors appear to have been now lost for all-time. Some dates are missing or incomplete, and any information on exactly why the magazine was disestablished is not now known. As Troy Bassett (an author for the Victorian Fiction Research Guides,) wrote in an email to the author of this article, “… As far as I know, the records of Stevens and the FH don't exist….“¹ Overall, though, the extant magazines afford the reader of today a valuable glimpse into the British Victorian culture, and into the lives of the ordinary people and their concerns.

In discussing the magazine, this article also traces the beginnings of certain British Victorian movements that prompted reforms within the social milieu, and that later connected to wider social reforms on a national and international basis. The article below also gives a brief overview of the history behind the British penny weekly periodicals, and outlines the segment of society at which The Family Herald was aimed. As well, in discussing the magazine, this article also looks at how the magazine reflected the concepts behind the British Victorian way of thinking; specifically, their ideas about the difference between the women of the various classes, and also about the difference between the sexes— in particular, in relation to the Victorian views on the purity and chastity and “dangerous” sexuality of women, and their perceived and social roles as channels through which property passed—and the differing roles of men and women in society and the home. Most notably, the magazine helped in influencing and shaping the audience for which it was intended, and especially the women.
For many of the female readers, the magazine was the channel through which they learnt of the outside world and the lives of others. In turn, these women then socialised their off-spring.

Introduction

Sitting on a shelf in the Rare Books Collection in the Cultural Collections in the Auchmuty Library at the University of Newcastle, is a wonderful old edition of the Victorian periodical, *The Family Herald: A Domestic Magazine of Useful Information and Amusement, Dec.1881-Dec. 1882*, published in London by William Stevens in 1882. Aimed at a general audience, the *Family Herald* was issued weekly, monthly, and annually, in numbers, parts, and volumes. Each weekly issue of the serial magazine consisted of sixteen quarto-size pages packed tight with fine print, and initially sold for one penny. Years later, the price of weekly issues increased to twopence. The monthly and yearly volumes consisted of collections of consecutive weekly issues in hardcover, with the price of the volume reflecting the number of weekly issues within, plus the additional cost of the binding. The volume in the library’s collection is comprised of twelve months of weekly issues of the serial magazine, and is divided into two parts by the inclusion of a title page and contents index added by the publisher to the beginning of the 1882 section. Unfortunately, the volume in the library is fragile; any title pages that may have been originally attached to the 1881 section are absent, and some of the latter part of the book is damaged and pages are missing.

The copy of *The Family Herald* held by the University affords the reader a glimpse into the culture of Victorian Britain and the lives of the ordinary people, as well as into the development of movements that led to reform within the social milieu: reforms which, as suggested by social historians Sally Mitchell and James Gregory in their various works, eventually connected to wider reforms in Britain and also in the Western world. Mitchell finds that with the Victorian Age, whereas “the customs and values of the established middle-class are preserved in” novels, letters, history, and laws, and the industrial working class “existed as a distinct group with mores and traditions largely established” and “available to us through the work of recent historians,” the “lives of the poor” are recorded—mainly through middle-class eyes—in official parliamentary documents, sanitary and health investigations, and in works by sociologists. Mitchell concludes that, with the poorer classes of the Victorian era, many were still illiterate, and even with those who had some literacy, “These were people [who] were too busy earning and cooking their daily bread to write about themselves, and successful enough at it that no one mounted investigations to find out how they survived [….] They did not lead public lives,” and, moreover, “their women in particular were, in this era, more and more withdrawn from any direct contact with national economic life into an increasingly private sphere.”

As Mitchell points out, “one place that we can gain some understanding” of the class of people who sit “between the two nations”—the established middle and upper classes, and the established industrial class—“is in their own reading matter.” This reading matter is the penny magazines, specifically *The Family Herald* and the *London Journal*. Apart from its intrinsic value and the
implications for historical importance, the library’s copy of The Family Herald could hold an added interest for some: inserted between its pages by a previous owner are a number of candid family photos, and a bundle of £1 and £2 lottery tickets that were issued in Sydney in 1954 by Mr Charles Theodore Tallentire, a NSW State Lotteries Director. Tallentire was appointed in England, and took up the position in 1954, the year that saw the introduction of the £1 and £2 Mammoth Lottery with prize moneys equalling approximately £30 000 and £60 000 respectively.6

An overview of the history of the periodical

Howard Cox and Simon Mowatt give a comprehensive overview of the history of the popular press in Britain.7 According to Cox and Mowatt, in England, the origins of popular periodicals aimed at general audiences goes back to the seventeenth century. Influenced by the political events of the early mid-1600s and the English Civil War, newspapers and journals (“news books”) evolved into widely published pamphleteering. With the reinstatement of the monarchy after the English Civil War, the government immediately moved to constrain the publishing of the manifestly seditious material. Legislation limiting all printing of news publications to specific master printers, and awarding responsibility of publishing official news to the Surveyor of the Press, was passed by way of the Printing Acts of 1662. These Acts effectively suspended free development of the printed word in England. When the Printing Acts lapsed in 1688, periodical publishing resumed and gained forward momentum.8

Cox and Mowatt note that two journals of the last decade of the 1600s, the Athenian Gazette (March 1691), the Gentleman’s Journal (January 1692), seemed to indicate that there was a market for periodicals containing a wide range of miscellaneous information, and the Gentleman’s Journal in particular could be seen as “Britain’s first example of a genuine monthly magazine seeking a commercial audience.”9 In the early 1700s, publishing activity by the popular press flourished. England’s first daily newspaper, the Daily Courant, was issued in 1702, and a dozen or more like publications soon followed. Then, in 1711, the introduction of stamp duties, specifically ‘taxes on knowledge’ and duties on advertising, put most of the newspapers out of business: this government attempt at control of the press by fiscal means forced the character of British news-based publications to change, and become commercially-orientated.10 One innovation that grew from this situation was Edward Caves’ 1731 production, a monthly journal which he titled the Gentleman’s Magazine, and which was the first time the term ‘magazine’ had been used in connection to the publishing world.11

Caves’ magazine proved hugely popular, and went on to become England’s longest running literary periodical. Cox and Mowatt find that the Gentleman’s Magazine was used as the close model for the flood of journals which followed, and also became the template for many of the nineteenth century one shilling monthly periodicals. Similarly to Caves’ periodical, these later publications were commercially orientated towards specialist audiences from within the middle-classes. Probably
inspired by the success of the Gentleman’s Magazine, one enterprising publisher produced a sixpenny monthly magazine titled the Ladies Magazine in 1770, setting a precedent for attempts by publishers to title magazines exclusively for particular markets, and leading to increased competition amongst publishers to corner a commercial niche in the market. These circumstances, together with the occurrence of the French Revolution in 1789 and the later outbreak of England’s war with France resulted in radical changes in the press. In the atmosphere of political unrest, a rise in stamp duties on newspapers and a sharp increase on advertising taxes together with higher levies imposed on printing paper, led to the revival of an unstamped press with strong contentious views on then current issues, and with an uncompromising message to deliver Britain’s political powers. In turn, this led to the 1819 legislation of the Blasphemous Seditious Libels Act and the Publications Act. The Publications Act widened stamp duties to cover any and all publications that reported or commented on the news, and the increased costs forced many of the existing periodical publications out of business. At the same time, the situation created an opportunity for enterprising publishers to create a market in cheaper periodicals and one penny magazines that did not carry the “news” of the day as such.\textsuperscript{12}

One or two Victorian publishers, though, did skate along the edges of incurring censure through the 1819 Acts. For instance, Punch, a British magazine of humour and satire that was established in 1841 by the publisher Henry Mayhew and the engraver Ebenezer Landells, played with fire and got away without getting burnt so to speak: Punch made not-so-tongue-in-cheek comments on the news of the day and British politics, and aimed barbed stings at political figures and poked fun at the Houses of Parliament, and wrapped this in the disguise of cleverly executed caricatures and cartoons.

**George Biggs (1817-1859)**

The innovative George Biggs (1817-1859), projector and proprietor of the Family Herald, was of a different ilk to Mayhew and Landells, and others, and was the most successful of the enterprising publishers who saw a good business opportunity in producing cheaper periodicals. Biggs saw a need to create a publication that would satisfy a growing demand from the masses for quality reading matter, and sought a relatively inexpensive method of mass producing an affordable educational, enlightening, and entertaining literary-based journal of miscellany that could be widely distributed amongst the working-classes. On his blogspot Yesterday’s Papers, James Adcock writes that Biggs “began as the compositor for the printer [Giovanni Antonio] Galignarni, and […] it was there, according to the Literary Gazette, that he saved “sufficient capital to pay for printing and paper,” and enough money to spearhead the Family Herald, “a species quite new to the to the public when Mr. Biggs venture first saw the light,” and, moreover, “It must be said of the Family Herald that it is the purest reading of all purely amusing penny literature; it is, indeed, a family paper.”\textsuperscript{13} Adcock also cites an article titled “Weekly Romance” that appeared in the Saturday Review, on 8 May, 1856, that “described the serial paper as a weekly giving
…at the small cost of a penny, column on column of spirited romance. The stories are not indeed specimens of very high art, and it is difficult to mistake the class for whom they are especially written. They are obviously meant to find their way into the kitchen; and if mistresses want to know what are the evening studies of their cooks and housemaids, they have only to devote a few minutes to turning over the fascinating pages in question.  

Biggs’ magazine was originally released in London in December 1842 as *The Family Herald or Useful Information for the Million*. The paper, the first journal to use the Young and Delcambre typesetting machine, in which the typesetting, printing and binding process was fully mechanised thus guaranteeing faster mass production at a lower cost than processes previously used in the printing trade, got off to a shaky start due to labour disputes.  

Jeremy Norman reveals that, “The original format was only four folio-sized pages. Because women operated the typesetting equipment its use was opposed by the London Union of Compositors, and the journal ceased publication in this form after only 22 weekly issues.” The journal was successfully relaunched by Biggs in May 1843 as *The Family Herald: A Domestic Magazine of Useful Information and Amusement* and by approximately 1850, circulation in England was estimated at somewhere in the vicinity of 300,000 copies per week. The Jarndyce Antiquarian Booksellers web blurb describes Biggs’ magazine: “The *Family Herald* was a mixture of fiction, poetry, social comment, factual articles, puzzles and advertisements. This periodical, started by George Biggs in 1842, found a ‘self-respecting family’ readership which remained constant despite its absence of illustration and a more moral tone” than that adopted by other publications of miscellany.

George Biggs died in 1859 without heirs or next of kin. According to Adcock, Biggs left an estate worth £70,000 (a large fortune in those days) after bequests, and one of his executors, Benjamin Davy Cousins of Helmet-court, Strand, printer of the *Family Herald*, was also left £7000, and, as well, “Biggs left over 150 bequests; among them were assistants, printers, contributors to the *Family Herald*,” and many “an aged printer or printer’s widow had Biggs’s Printer’s Almshouse Society to thank for pensions of £10 per annum, payable half-yearly.”

**James Elishama Smith (1801-1857)**

Biggs’ will would seem to indicate that he was a philanthropist at heart. Philanthropic nature notwithstanding, for Biggs, *The Family Herald* was purely a business venture. Mitchell notes that Biggs, being a far-seeing publisher, hired at the outset “an editor with some standing in the working class.” The British journalist and religious writer, the ultra-radical and mystic James Elishama (Elijimat) Smith (1801-1857), who was also known as Shepherd Smith because of his religious-spiritual writings in his journal, *The Shepherd*, was the first editor of *The Family Herald* (1843).
Smith came from humble beginnings, and had graduated from University of Glasgow. Educated for the Presbyterian ministry, Smith also had a leaning towards the unconventional, and at various times had become involved in mystic movements and unorthodox religions and various “isms.” At one stage he had followed the Owenite movement, which had been set up by the mystic-spiritualist Robert Owens, and he lectured in “Owenism” and also edited the “eschatological-Owenite journal Crisis”: Smith soon became disenchanted with the Owenite teachings and broke away to promulgate his “religion.” In his need to satisfy his personal principles, Smith blended the diverse beliefs with which he had been influenced and his philosophies and “own ideas on gender and sexuality,” and developed “a new theology of ‘Universalism’,” which he promoted in his own journal, The Shepherd, and also through his many other writings which he published elsewhere.

In his journal, The Shepherd, Smith also included letters from a friend and fellow socialist of Robert Owens, the English spiritual-mystic, educational reformer, socialist and progressive thinker James Pierrepont Greaves. Greaves, a follower of Jacob Boehme, was influenced by German transcendentalism and also by Thomas Taylor, William Law, and the philosophy of Neo-Platonism and had developed unconventional philosophies as a consequence of his educational experiences. He described himself as a “sacred socialist,” and advocated and practiced a type of modern-mysticism which he called “vegetarianism,” of which a vegetarian diet and hydrotherapy (water drinking), and celibacy, and other health practices, formed a spiritual and mystic dimension. Greaves movement, which was sometimes also called “vegetable-eating” or “abstaining,” had its beginnings in occult mysticism, and was intended to educate, and to improve health and attitudes, and lead followers to explore the “internal inner sense.” In 1836 Greaves formed a philosophical society known as the “London Aesthetic Society,” (and later, also a utopian spiritual community and progressive school which ran from 1838 to 1848). Smith, a friend of Greaves, attended some of the meetings of the London Aesthetic Society with the intention of exploring the “internal inner sense,” and together with his family, followed Greaves’ philosophies for some months.

James Gregory points out that from Smith’s writings in The Shepherd, it would appear that Smith appreciated Greaves’ “insights and mystical endeavours,” but was critical of Greaves’ vegetarianism philosophies. Smith’s attitude was based not on ignorance, but on experience, and in a letter that appeared in The Shepherd, he wrote:

We have lived for several months at a time on vegetable food, refrained from spirits of any material kind for two years, and scarcely tasted ale or beer, or any fermented liquor once-a-week during that time; we have even injured our health by abstinence. We have tried every species of food that our circumstances would admit of, except uncooked, so that we can judge for ourselves, but we cannot pretend to judge for other men. At present it is not a social question, it may become one.
Gregory adds that Smith felt that vegetable-eating “might have its benefits,” and had sometimes recommended the diet to “people of ’plethoric habits’,” but, for Smith, there could be “no universal condemnation of meat-eating,” though animal cruelty, and a lack of respect for animals, was not to be tolerated. Smith, writes Gregory, recognized a basic difference between his own Universalism and what he described as “mysticism, Spiritualism and asceticism,” and he had “strong reservations about the language and the emphases” of the followers:

Smith objected to vegetarianism because of the extremism that was involved, extremism which he had witnessed for himself from the rigorous regime enforced by Wroe on his followers and his acquaintance with several water-drinkers and vegetarians. He [Smith] referred to the ‘domestic tyranny’ of these temperance fanatics. He knew of ‘more than one instance of abstainers refusing even a mutton chop to their wives in a state of bodily infirmity’—a comment reflecting the prevailing wisdom that people in poor health required animal foods.

Smith’s attitudes, and his writings in The Shepherd, show him to be a temperate and deep-thinking man. Smith’s bizarre career, and his wide range of knowledge on various subject matters of interest to Victorian British people, allowed him to easily connect with The Family Herald’s readers. He successfully edited and established the penny magazine, and remained associated with the paper until his death in 1857. As the editor, especially in the magazine’s early years, Smith’s particular brand of spiritual universalism and his personal beliefs and opinions came through quite strongly in his correspondence to readers. The editorials and correspondence pages in The Family Herald feature many inquiries and answers about philosophy, philanthropy, science, theology, universalism, socialism, astrology, phrenology, medical matters, diet, family, health and hygiene and mental well-being, and personal and legal matters and advice, and discussions about temperance and dietetics, peaceful living and marital matters, and even vegetarianism with which, as already pointed out earlier in this paper, Smith himself had had experience while under the influence of his friend Greaves.

Gregory argues that while it might be “a seemingly marginal phenomenon, vegetarianism actually involved much that was of concern to the culture of Victorian Britain.” The Victorian age was one that was worried about overpopulation, environmental catastrophe, and the ethics and health risks of industrialized food production. The working-class diet became a subject of concern through anxieties about public health, urban poverty, and national efficiency. The vegetarian diet was adopted by working-class radicals, and those who were unable to afford little other than vegetables, and even though it was far from being a “central” concern for most people, it was not neglected by the mainstream: “The vegetarian movement was a topic of debate and interest in the nineteenth century “amongst people from all walks of life and occupations.” In fact, all those subjects broached in The Family Herald’s correspondence pages were topics of debate and interest in the nineteenth century, for these were the nineteenth century concerns that were reflected in the British Victorian peoples
practices and attitudes, and that eventually led to levels of social reform; but as Gregory points out, “Through a study of its hygiene, religious, zoophilist, radical and ‘fadical’ aspects, a study of the diet is a study of the Victorian culture.” More recently, historians have situated temperance, vegetarianism and other life reforms as precursors to the “new social movements,” as a moral physiology which was an inevitable response to social injustice.

It is clear from the types of things discussed in correspondence pages in the 1881-1882 volume of *The Family Herald* in the library that Smith’s practices in the earlier editions of *The Family Herald*, set precedents for the tone of the correspondence pages of the later editions of the magazine, and long after Smith had passed away. Moreover, vegetarianism was a broad movement. It continued on into Edwardian times, and even has implications for religions and some schools of thought of today, and is also a subject that sparks debates and discussions on various other considerations—to name but a few examples; animal cruelty and ethics, health and attitudes, consumerism, economics, national production and world trade, for instance. As well, according to Gregory, one can get a sense of vegetarian activity in America and the British colonies (especially Australia) through letters, paragraphs and articles published in the present-day British vegetarian journals.

William Stevens

When *The Family Herald*’s proprietor George Biggs died in 1859, the magazine continued as usual, possibly first under Benjamin Blake, and then under the proprietor and publisher William Stevens. Under Stevens, *The Family Herald* did not alter as such, but it also sought to broaden its scope. According to the Victorian Fiction Research Guide website, when a new rival magazine, *Bow Bells*, came on the scene in 1862, Stevens introduced some changes to the production of *The Family Herald*. The magazine “began to aim principally at a female readership from the respectable working- and lower-middle-classes,” and also to rely more “heavily on contributions from women writers.”

As well, “in addition to the penny weekly paper obtainable from local news agents and tobacconists,” it became “available by post in a sixpenny monthly edition with a coloured cover,” and this further increased the magazine’s sales. At the same time, “Stevens launched a series of supplements, including the *Family Herald Extra Numbers* listing healthy outdoor pursuits and indoor amusements for both boys and girls, and *Family Herald Handy Books* of the ‘How To’ variety with cookery to the fore.”

Like Biggs before him, though, Stevens sought to keep down the costs of labour down. The publishers were not acting from altruistic motives towards the readers. They were simply in the business to make money. This unique (British) Victorian periodical was aimed at the rapidly growing masses that, according to Mitchell, were made up by a segment of the population that “clustered around the boundary between working and middle classes” and included “the petty bourgeoisie and the labour aristocracy” and those “whose literacy qualified them” to become shopkeepers, tradesmen and artisans, accountants, engineers and technicians, dressmakers, tradeswomen and superior servants,
and innkeepers, for example. These were people who sought a better class reading material than the normal run of penny magazines that were on the market. Of these better class penny magazines, The Family Herald (1843-1940) and the London Journal (1845-1912), “were read by people whose aspirations, expectations, and opportunities were changing.” Mitchell advises that, “Mid-nineteenth-century England was a family-centred church-going nation in which one-third of all girls and women had jobs outside the home and nearly half the population stayed away from church on any given Sunday.” These magazines provided for a specific readership that sat between the established middle-class and the industrial working class, and was one which sought social and financial betterment through education, enlightenment, and self-improvement.

Mitchell suggests that The Family Herald and the London Journal “provided, both intentionally and unintentionally, the commonly shared information, attitudes, and emotional reactions that delineate respectability”; and she further finds that the letters from the readers in the correspondence pages of these periodicals “crossed class lines defined either economically or socially,” and “reveal their conscious mobility in seeking better-paid jobs and higher positions, and are testimonies to the fact that the readers “actively sought to learn about the values and standards and mechanical details of a life that was new to them.”

Mitchell offers an explanation of this mass audience in relation to the women of the period: “The mass audience was drawn from the most rapidly expanding segment of the population,” and which developed in response to an increasing economic growth which, in turn, “increased the opportunity for mobility. Urbanization—with the 1852 census, more than half of the population of England was, for the first time, living in cities—altered the pattern of social relationships. Family structure had been changed […] consequent to the industrial revolution: women lost their primary economic function and men took on the role of provider.” Consequently, women took on more and more of the responsibility for the home duties and child supervision, and had little leisure for reading, and was, “to an extent, socialised through what she read,” and, in turn, “the woman isolated at home with caring to children, socialised the next generation.” As well, many women of this class worked outside the home as artistes, needle-workers, milliners, factory-hands, shop-workers and in post offices and as typists, as upper-class servants, for example—and also had little leisure time for reading. In all cases, women of this class read The Family Herald and the London Journal, magazines that were commonly accepted as self-improving, and that also provided them with some escapism from the reality of their daily lives. Both these magazines reflected the Victorian middle-class attitudes and moral standards, and were literary productions potentially aimed at shaping values and moral standards and “habits of mind” in respectable families, and, in particular, in respectable women, in a world that was rapidly changing, and in a constant state of flux.

In her book The Fallen Angel: Chastity, Class, and Women’s Reading 1835-1880, Sally Mitchell gives an overview of the commonly held attitudes of the middle-class Victorians. In the Britain of the nineteenth century, “middle-class moral standards” were “informed by the idea of
feminine purity.” In popular attitudes, the ideal woman was pure, chaste, and virtuous. Purity was a natural virtue, and chastity was one of the scriptural virtues, but “When applied to a woman [...] ‘virtue’ and ‘physical chastity’ were interchangeable terms.” But no matter how virtuous a woman may be, she is physically changed with the loss of her virginity. Nevertheless, in the nineteenth-century middle-class England, women were seen as spiritual creatures. Their morality was “in general superior to that of men,” for their whole lives were spent in self-sacrifice (“the most conspicuous element of a virtuous and religious character,”) “performed in obedience to a sense of duty.” Men were seen to be of a coarser nature which lacked the moral superiority of a woman’s “special nature.” Men could, “regrettably,” get “carried away by lust and therefore partly excused on grounds of non-premeditation,” whereas for a woman “whose sexual desires were weak or non-existent the offense had to be deliberate: a conscious and knowing choice of evil over good.” These attitudes were based on an older concept of a woman’s “role in relation to property.” As an unmarried and chaste innocent, a woman was valuable to her father. A woman was valuable to a husband if he could ensure she was chaste and virtuous and remained so in both thought and act. In both scenarios, a woman was “the channel through which property was passed”: “A man can be sure that his name and estate will be passed on to those of his own blood only if he has absolute possession of a woman’s body,” and if there is no inheritance then it is still his right and natural desire “to be certain of the paternity of the child he supports.” But even if there are no children from the marriage, then it is still his right and natural desire to be certain of his wife. A woman’s sexual experience outside of the marriage bed might possibly confuse the issue at any level.

When a woman falls from her purity there is no return for her—as well one may attempt to wash the stain from the sullied snow. Men sin and are forgiven; but the memory of a woman’s guilt cannot be removed on earth. Her nature is so exquisitely refined that the slightest flaw becomes a huge defect. Like perfume, it admits no deterioration, it ceases to exist when it ceases to be sweet. Her soul is an exquisitely precious, a priceless gift, and even more than man’s a perilous possession.

Mitchell explains that according to Victorian thinking, a woman was seen in one of two ways. One; “A seduced woman is the helpless victim of a superior male,” and could find her way back to redemption and acceptance either through religion, moral thinking and wise choices, or through death which is a form of spiritual atonement. Two; “A fallen woman is weak, capable of sin” and, therefore, is “responsible for her own destiny.” If a woman had a sexual experience before or outside of marriage, she had fallen from her state of purity, and, so, there was “no return for her,” and she could “never be returned to ordinary society.” A man was not naturally pure, and, therefore, could not lose his virtue even if he “tumbled in the hay with a cottage girl or visited a brothel.” According to Mitchell these double-standards were, “as the Victorians were fond of saying, “created by nature, not only by society or literary conventions,” for when a woman loses her virginity she is forever changed,
“and in a situation peculiar to her sex.” 56 Regardless of his sexual activity, a man is never physically changed as such, and, therefore, always is and has been “in a situation peculiar” to his sex. These attitudes also acknowledge woman as a physical creature capable of sexual irregularity, and this allows a direct contradiction of terms that embody the Victorian double-standards—whereas a woman had to be protected from her own sexuality, a man did not. Mitchell writes, “For a woman to want to control her own body—to dispose of it or authorize its use as she saw fit—interfered with the property rights of her husband or father.” 57 Protected by prudery, women were kept innocent until marriage. After marriage, women were protected by their husbands from the world of men, from the world of business and finance and economics and dealings, on the grounds that her nature was too pure and too delicate, too fragile, to permit her involvement in such worldly issues. Moreover, all women had to be protected from novels that were deemed “not fit for women to read” because morally debilitating—in truth, that might inform her too forcibly about various aspects of life and wreak havoc with her innocence and sensibilities. 58 Mitchell suggest that the “Victorians did not deny that the idealization of feminine purity was a political weapon,” and she cites the Saturday Review 1867; “Chastity is merely a social law, created to encourage the alliances that most prompt the permanent welfare of the race, and to maintain women in a social position which it is thought advisable they should hold.” 59 Mitchell also points out that the “definition of woman as naturally pure—and the sexual politics that accompanied it—was a function of class and time,” for, “despite the existence of an apparent moral consensus, standards of behaviour differed from class to class,” as did “some of the presumptions that governed attitudes towards female chastity.” 60 For instance, in the early nineteenth century Britain an upper-middle-class or elite woman could indulge in sexual irregularities without damaging her social status, and all through the nineteenth century in England many women of the lower-classes “were known to be sexually active.” 61

Earlier in this paper it was said that both The Family Herald and the London Journal reflected the Victorian middle-class attitudes and moral standards, and were literary productions potentially aimed at shaping values and moral standards and “habits of mind” in respectable families, in a world that was rapidly changing. But there was a difference between the class of women who read The Family Herald and the London Journal, and the upper-middle classes. 62 Upper-middle-class women tended to marry early for they “were linked to society only through their relationships with their fathers and husbands” and property. The class of woman who made up the readers of these magazines tended to marry later because they were linked to society through their own and their husbands’ roles as working-middle-class people, and, as such, in order to be able to afford to marry they had first to establish themselves.

Whereas in The Family Herald and the London Journal, and in particular in The Family Herald, men might be reminded of their place in society and their social duties and their duties towards their families through the philosophical and self-improvement essays and articles, in the stories and serials and in the essays and articles women were constantly being reminded of their
proper duties in the home and towards their husbands, and of their morality and expected behaviour as a woman, and what to expect if they lowered their moral standards or allowed themselves to be taken in by a man who might not have a woman’s best interest in mind. Yet, in one way, the women authors who contributed to *The Family Herald* in particular seemed to have some interest in trying to teach women how take care of themselves and their moral interests.

Mitchell notes that in some of the stories included in both magazines, and in especial those stories written by women contributors, the female characters were inclined to be strong and showed signs of having a mind of their own, and some could prove capable in the long run of building a life of their own. In the correspondence pages of *The Family Herald*, the various editors actually encouraged real-life women who wrote in to them to be strong, and to consider choices that would enable them to take care of themselves in a world filled with danger for the unsuspecting or too trusting woman. Yet such attitudes in women, no matter whether attributed to characters in sentimental stories or glimpsed in real-life women, went against the old values that were deemed by most men to be “proper and right” for their wives and daughters, and challenged the attempts by the editors of both the *London Journal* and *The Family Herald* to keep respectable women in what was considered by men to be a woman’s place in society and, in especial, the home. Being a woman was indeed hard work, and this was made evident to women readers in the pages of *The Family Herald*. Of the two periodicals, though, *The Family Herald* was the most popular and the less puritanical and moralising and judgemental, and the less “trashy” by reputation—of the two magazines, the *London Journal* was given to producing racier fiction—but also the less serious. Contrary to the practice of the *London Journal*, *The Family Herald* did not produce full length scientific articles rather gave this type of information in snippets that could be more easily understood and absorbed, and so more enjoyable to the readers. Of the Victorian periodicals in general, *The Family Herald* was the less “extreme” and less “sensational,” the more family-orientated, the more understanding and supportive of women generally, though moralising nevertheless.

Beginning with the example and the tone set by the original editor of *The Family Herald*, the tolerant and understanding James Elishama Smith, the later editors of *The Family Herald* addressed their female readers (working-middle-class women,) with the same respect as they would a woman of the higher class. The editors wrote “for the shopkeeper’s daughter with the assumption that her moral standards were the same as those of the higher class.” Mitchell finds that *The Family Herald* is fairly open in “verse and nonfiction”: there is “no preaching,” and there are no “stories about the horrible fate of women who fall,” but at the same time the magazine does not “completely ignore the sexual side of human existence”; there are “chilling reminders” of the potential hazards for innocent women who might blunder unwarily into certain situations. As well, writes Mitchell, “The correspondence column offers consoling advice to women who have taken part in carefully-worded activities, and also “offers consoling advice” for those who might have unwisely participated in “anticipating the marriage day,” and she concludes: “The *Family Herald*, then, recognized sexual
irregularity but did not print stories about it. On the other hand, it did not completely avoid dangerous topics” as did other magazines “intended for the same audience.”

With The Family Herald, the stories are sentimental, and mostly Victorian tear-jerkers, but some end in smiles and sighs and wedding bells and “happily-ever-afters.” But, either explicitly, or by implication, many of the love stories also carry a certain amount of social criticism, and show “why love is dangerous.” In some, the heroine commits the “sin” of foolishly confessing her love before the wedding day, to the (usually rich) man who is paying her attention, and as a result she loses him altogether—the moral to the story being, “beware of sweet-talking men.” In others, the trusting young woman falls in love with a man of a higher class than herself, foolishly admits her love too early (before the ring is on her finger), loses him as a result, and then follows him and struggles with poverty trying to make ends meet, only to see evidence that he is already committed to some woman other than herself, and she sickens and then dies in a place he either owns or governs. Mitchell argues that “This makes possible an agonizing recognition scene at the end. Successful martyrdom provides a subversive triumph: since women are morally and emotionally finer than men, men’s power can be attacked by bringing them to their knees with guilt and remorse and consciousness of their failings.”

In still other stories, some hitherto church-abiding maiden from a good family commits the sin of actually submitting to the man after falling into the terrible trap of listening to his flattery, and then dies as a result (usually, though, her death is “happy in the religious sense” because it sets the record straight through a form of spiritual atonement) while the man who “ruined” her gets off lightly if he is rich, and goes on his merry way “gaily singing,” or, if he is not rich, he goes blind or insane as a result of his social misdemeanour. Mitchell argues that this pattern “depends on the presumption that women who fall from purity are responsible for their own destiny; the moral purpose is to give the reader insight into men’s designs and stratagems so that she may resist them.” At the same time, the editors of The Family Herald appeared to adopt the attitude that even if a woman makes a mistake, all is not lost, for she can always redeem herself in some way; and through wise decisions and right choices she could lead herself back towards a moral life and safety and security, and then happiness would soon follow as a natural consequence. But never once in any of these stories or correspondence pages is the actual sexual act involved in a woman’s fall from purity even hinted at, rather it is skirted around in delicately framed words, and the innocent woman who reads them never gets to find out what a woman’s fall from purity is exactly.

Like The Family Herald, the London Journal also allowed stories about sexual irregularity, but with a difference. Those in the London Journal are mostly more realistic in one sense, and some are inclined to be sensation-seeking, others are harsh, and can be judgemental and moralising, and some are critical of the system, and others criticise the characters themselves as men and women. The message mostly sent to women readers of the London Journal is, that if they suffer some moral misadventure it is their own fault in some way. Either they have done something they should not have, or have failed to do something they should have, or have entertained social aspirations beyond their
station, or placed these aspirations first above their morality. Other stories place the blame on men who go against societal mores, against what is acceptable to society, or who fail to fulfil their social or matrimonial or familial duties in some way. Some of these types of stories exonerate and pity the woman in the situation even though she may have acted immorally under the circumstances. In yet other stories, the woman’s fall is due to outside forces, she is a victim, and her fall is “treated as a social problem rather than a religious one.” According to Mitchell, this last scenario “makes us see women as weaker vessels, and who must therefore be protected, and not as individuals who can be criticized for their errors.” Nevertheless, the woman caught in these circumstances usually dies. She is “punished by death, except in rare instances” where she is rescued by some benevolent male. The message in this, writes Mitchell, is that “Men may alter events; women are simply acted upon” and most of the seduction stories in the London Journal “share this motif.” Unlike the London Journal, though, The Family Herald did not run matrimonial advertisements. On the part of the London Journal, Mitchell argues, this “can be seen as an attempt to fill a second role ordinarily taken by a social group instead of a magazine, even though there was, apparently, no machinery for actually putting people in touch with one another.”

**Distribution**

The reading material in The Family Herald never claimed, and never could have been considered to be, high art, but, along with the London Journal, it was most widely read publication in England. Mitchell notes both these journals as being, “significantly, neither cheap reading of the crime-and-passion variety nor women’s magazines, but family magazines.” The Family Herald was the first of the English story-papers, which had several story supplements. As well, it was the eldest of the family-orientated magazines, and featured the word “family” in the title. The motto of The Family Herald was: “Interesting to all—offensive to none.” Whereas the London Journal attempted to satisfy readers’ appetites for sensational fiction, The Family Herald was framed by a common ideology of domesticity and family consumption, and the publication was considered to be affordable, amusing, pure, of good value, and accessible to even the humblest of families. 

Below the Printer’s Mark—an engraving of Britannia—on the title page to the 1882 section in the library’s copy of The Family Herald, is an announcement that the magazine in all its forms can be purchased not only from all “booksellers and dealers in periodicals” in Britain, but also “may be had of the following colonial and foreign agents” in Adelaide, Bombay, Brisbane, Calcutta, Capetown, Grahamstown, Hobart Town, Launceston, Madras, Melbourne, Sydney (2 agents), Toronto (Canada), Berlin, Boulogne, Dresden, Heidelberg, Lisbon, Moscow, New York, Paris, St. Petersburg; and by order, of all colonial and foreign booksellers. Nowhere is anything said about the magazine being printed in a language other than English. Moreover, the subjects covered in The Family Herald are specifically aimed at those people who possibly have some inherent or perceived attachment to the British culture. For Australians, the point here is that for all that it was a Federation and a nation in its
own right, Australia was not an independent sovereign nation, rather it was regarded by many as a British colony until the mid-part of the twentieth century. Up until the mid-1960s most white Australians were British subjects and, as such, travelled under British passports. In fact, even for years after *The Family Herald* had gone out of print, many white Australians identified as British, and were influenced in some part by all things British. *The Family Herald* was a part of the home amongst the working-middle classes in Australia, and presumably would have played a part in influencing the attitudes and ideas of the ordinary Australian people. *The Family Herald* dominated the mass market for many years. Its popularity could be attributed to the fact that it catered to a wide range of readers regardless of class, gender, and locality, and was much-loved by its reading audiences in England and Australia alike.

Each weekly issue followed the same format and layout: 1. A verse; 2. *The Story-teller* (consisting of short stories and serialised novels); 3. The editor’s notices; editorial letters to correspondents; small advertisements for various works of literature; home-spun philosophy delivered in essays and articles; 4. *Family Matters* (made up of general advise, discussion of the proper duties of family members to each other, and the place of the various family members in the home and in society, moralising, recipes (for both meat dishes and vegetarian dishes); 5. *Scientific and Useful*— household and farm hints and data; 6. *Statistics*, this section mainly consists mainly of trivia and general knowledge; 7. *Varieties*, this section is mainly made up of all sorts of general knowledge, information, anecdotes, odds facts, and jokes; 8. *The Riddler*—a section containing various riddles and mind puzzles; 9. *Random Readings* (a mixture of everything, with a short verse is inset at the bottom of the first column). There was something in each issue for every member of the family, and in the stories even the children and siblings got along well together and helped each other. The factual and didactic material in the content of the work is wrapped in a cloak of domestic ideology. Apart from the Printer’s Mark on the header on the first page of each weekly issue, *The Family Herald* contained no illustrations. Its popularity arose from the perception amongst the masses that it provided something for everyone, and that all the readers were more or less equal in that they all read the same things—these were the things and subjects which interested them as a class of people who sought self-improvement and financial and social betterment through education, which was in part available through informative and amusing reading material.

**Contributors**

Other than for the material in editorial and correspondence pages and advice columns which were mostly written by the various editors and proprietors, many of the items, stories and articles and essays in *The Family Herald* were published anonymously. But some contributors of the stories and serials, some of whom were recognised writers, were acknowledged by name, or by initials, or by pseudonyms. A few of the better-known contributors are as follows:
James George Stuart Burges Bohn (1883-1880), editor, compiler and publisher of catalogues, and the author of a few well-known works, contributed to *The Family Herald* for many years. The son of John Bohn a London book-seller, James was educated at Winchester, and afterwards was sent to Europe to perfect himself in German and French. On his return to England, James helped his father in the book-selling business. He acquired a great knowledge of books, and eventually set up his own book-selling business. His business premises attracted bibliographers and scholars and some of the most learned men of the day. Even so, his ventures proved to be not all that successful, and he turned his attention to writing. Bohn’s catalogue amounted to bibliographic reference works. In 1840 he published a 792-page catalogue that included nearly complete lists of works by well-known authors amongst whom were Daniel Defoe and Thomas Hearne. In 1857 he prepared a 704-page catalogue of theological books in foreign languages for David Nutt, and enriched the catalogue with original notes. Later in life, while working for his friend, the publisher Nicholas Trübner in Ludgate Hill, London, he compiled several catalogues of Brazilian, Mexican, Portuguese, Spanish, Latin, French, and German books.

Charlotte Mary Brame (1836-1884), a sentimental writer and well-known English novelist who sometimes presented under various pseudonyms, most notably as Bertha M. Clay, also contributed to *The Family Herald* for many years. Her books were hugely popular mass reading. Born in Hinckley, Leicestershire, the eldest daughter of Benjamin and Charlotte Agnes Law, the Master and Matron of the Union Workhouse in Hinckley, Brame was brought up as a devout Catholic. She was educated at convent boarding schools, and later worked as a governess. The *Victorian Fiction Research Guides* website allows the following information: 84 When her father passed away in 1859 leaving a large family of young children, Charlotte returned home to Hinckley to help her mother. At age twenty-seven years, she married Phillip Brame, and the couple went to London. There, Phillip Brame set up as a wholesale jeweller. He proved to be a poor businessman and a drunkard. The London business failed, and the Brames moved first to Manchester in the late 1860s, then to Brighton on the mid-1870s, before moving back to Hinckley in 1879 where Philip Brame suffered increasingly from drunkenness and mental illness. Throughout their marriage, Charlotte herself suffered poor health. The couple had seven children, all of whom were born between 1865 and 1876, but only four lived to maturity.

A prolific English author of mystery novels and “sentimental stories with a touch of sensation,” because of her disastrous marriage, Brame found herself forced to support her family through her writing. Brame wrote in excess of possibly two hundred works. According to her biographer, Gregory Drozdz, Brame’s fictions were invariably set in the Leicestershire country-side, which she knew well, and English country-houses. Drozdz writes:
Against this milieu, she reworked the theme of love in all of its multifarious aspects—old love, young love, jealousy, suspicion, misalliance, and improvident marriage. High morals such as honour, a sense of duty, and self-sacrifice are lauded as the greatest of virtues. The books also contain strong descriptive passages, some of which are drawn from her associations with Leicestershire... Her literary endeavours, in a male-dominated field, her works of charity, and her personal stamina and resilience, in the face of family tragedy and ill health, represent a triumph in adversity.85

According to the Victorian Fiction Research Guides website, Brame’s career as an author of romantic fiction “can be read as an attempt to compensate both psychologically and financially for domestic troubles.”86 Despite the fact that her books were very successful and very well-known, or perhaps because of it, Brame’s work were openly pirated, and because of this, her earnings were severely diminished by piracy, and she found herself in straightened circumstances. Brame died suddenly from heart trouble in late 1884, leaving only an encumbered estate of about £1000. Many of Brame’s works continued to be published after her death.87

Brame began her long career in writing when she was only a teenager, and signing herself under her own name of “Charlotte Law.” She began by publishing in the Lamp, a “penny weekly Catholic literary miscellany which was founded at York in 1850 by T.E. Bradley,” which was “‘devoted to the religious, moral, physical and domestic improvement of the industrious classes’.” 88 During her career, Brame wrote numerous articles, poems, and short fictions, as well as longer works and full-length novels. Brame also contributed a number of works to other magazines and journals as well as the Hinckley and Leicester newspapers and sent fiction to The Family Herald, which in itself brought her a large audience. As mentioned earlier in this paper, with the appearance of competition on the penny magazine scene in 1862, Stevens immediately moved to expand The Family Herald’s readership. Then, a decade later than his initial expansion,

Stevens moved to exploit further the value of the title by recycling the work of his fiction authors in The Family Herald Supplement and the series of ‘Family Story-Teller’ volumes, the former specializing in original novelettes and the latter full-length novels reprinted from the magazine columns. For this reason, since few contributors to the penny story papers aspired to having their serials reprinted as triple-decker novels for the circulating libraries, Stevens preferred both to purchase absolute copyright of works of fiction rather than serial rights only, and to publish them either anonymously or over initials or a pseudonym.89
The Victorian Fiction web-site alleges that “This was indeed the case with Brame,” whose stories in The Family Herald “always appeared above the initials ‘C.M.B.’, and whose financial interest in them ended with their serial publication (see her daughter’s letter in App. A).” Nevertheless, the Victorian Fiction web-site allows there is circumstantial evidence to suggest that Stevens valued Brame, and remunerated her handsomely for her contributions. According to this website also, Brame’s contributions to The Family Herald “tend to be written in the first person, have domestic settings among the middle-class, and, whilst drawing to sentimental conclusions, reveal many touches of comic realism on the way. In these respects they are quite different from the more melodramatic serial novels as represented by Dora Thorne,” which is credited with being Brame’s most frequently cited and reprinted work. After Brame’s death, American authors began to write books in imitation of Brame’s style of writing as Bertha M. Clay: “Large as the readership of Brame’s fiction must have been in Britain and its colonies, during the last ten years of her life, and for at least a quarter of a century afterwards, the American audience for her work seems to have been many times greater.

Yet another contributor to The Family Herald, Bertha Henry Buxton, née Leupold, (1844-1881), was born to German parents, William Leupold, a London merchant, and his wife Theresa who was well-known in musical circles. A British novelist and children’s author, Buxton began writing as a child of eleven. While she was a student at Queen’s College in Tufnell Park, London, she amused herself by writing stories for her schoolfellows. Bertha’s parents were keen travellers. As a child, Buxton went everywhere with them—to America, Germany, and Holland—and was well-travelled by the time she was fifteen years of age. Buxton, a keen writer, married at sixteen years of age, but still continued with her literary work. After fifteen years marriage Buxton was deserted by her husband and left destitute, and in 1875 she turned to her writing to support herself and her children.

The website Women in the Literary Market Place 1800-1900, gives the following information on Bertha Henry Buxton:

Buxton’s novels feature strong female characters, and recurrent themes include English-European relations and blindness; she collaborated several times with the blind author W. W. Fenn. In a letter, Buxton tells Bentley of favorable reviews of her Jennie of ‘The Prince’s’ and asks for confirmation that 500 volumes of the first edition were sold. She suggests that she should contact "the Baron" directly about a Tauchnitz edition of Jennie and asks Bentley for advice on how to approach the subject.

A prolific and successful author, Buxton wrote under her own name in the latter period of her life. One of children’s books, More Dolls, is illustrated by Mr. T. D. White, and dedicated to the
Princess of Wales. Buxton died suddenly from heart disease when she was thirty-eight years of age, at Claremont Villa in St. Mary’s terrace, Kensington, London.

Watts Phillips (1825-1874), British illustrator, novelist and playwright, was born in Hoxton in the East End of London. Phillips was the nephew of renowned water-color artist Giles Firman Phillips. At his father’s urging, Phillips studied art for some years. As an artist, Phillips mainly lived in Paris. There, he led a the “boulevard life,” and immersed himself in art, history, and literature. There too, he became friends with Alexandre Dumas, Victor Hugo, and like others, and worked as an illustrator for lithographers as well as an occasional foreign correspondent for English papers, and also wrote his own works. Three of his plays, Joseph Chavigny (1855), The Poor Strollers (1856), and The Dead Heart (1857) were accepted by Benjamin Nottingham Webster, proprietor of the Adelphi Theatre. Joseph Chavigny and The Poor Strollers were well acclaimed. But the Adelphi audiences were not used to Phillips’ style and reception was mediocre, so Webster delayed staging The Dead Heart. In 1859 Charles Dickens published the first installments of his work, The Tale of Two Cities. Similarities between Dickens’ work and Phillips’ play gave rise to an argument over whether Dickens had plagiarized The Dead Heart and used it as a model for The Tale of Two Cities. This argument prompted Webster to immediately stage The Dead Heart in 1859. Phillips’ play was a great success, and was given the stamp of royal approval: Queen Victoria and Prince Albert saw it twice.

Henrietta Eliza Vaughan Stannard, née Palmer, (1856-1911), British novelist, feminist journalist, first president of the Writers’ Club (1892), and president of the Society of Women Journalists (1901-3), was the daughter of an army officer turned rector of St. Margaret’s in York, England. She married Arthur Stannard, A.M.I.C.E. at Fulford, York, in 1884. Their marriage was blessed with one son and three daughters.

Stannard began her career as a novelist in 1874, by writing for The Family Herald under the pseudonym “Violet Whyte.” Stannard stayed with The Family Herald for ten years. During that time, Stannard contributed many long serials and approximately forty-two short stories issued as supplements to the magazine. A prolific writer, Vaughan also wrote sentimental stories for other magazines, authored well over a hundred novels, and penned sixty light, amusing books about army life. Many of her army books were published under the name of “John Strange Winter.” Stannard first began using this pseudonym when the publisher refused to bring out her books Cavalry Life (1881) and Regimental Legends (1883) under a female pseudonym. Many of her fans presumed she was a man. The work that assured her popularity as an author, Bootles' Baby: a story of the Scarlet Lancers, was first published in the Graphic in 1885, and sold about two million copies within the first ten years of its publication. After this success, Stannard wrote, in quick succession, over one hundred stories with military life for their setting. Stannard continued to write her stories until her death in 1911. John Ruskin (1819 –1900), draughtsman, watercolourist, prominent social thinker and philanthropist and leading English art critic and art patron of the Victorian era, was an avid admirer of
Stannard’s work. Ruskin once wrote of Stannard, as “John Strange Winter,” as "the author to whom we owe the most finished and faithful rendering ever yet given of the character of the British soldier." For some time, Ruskin and John Strange Winter were constantly in correspondence with each other, and she visited him at Sandgate in 1888. In 1891, Stannard established a penny weekly magazine, *Golden Gates*, the title of which was altered in 1896 to *Winter's Weekly*. The magazine, *Winter's Weekly*, continued until 1895.

Due to the fragile health of Stannard’s husband and their youngest daughter, the family took up residence at the seaside in Dieppe in 1896. Stannard wrote many articles about Dieppe, and which greatly increased Dieppe’s popularity. The municipality presented her with a diamond ring in recognition of her services to the town. When Stannard returned to London in 1901, she retained a house in Dieppe for a summer residence until 1909. In 1911, Henrietta Eliza Vaughan Stannard died at York House, in Hurlingham, Putney, from complications following an accident. She was cremated, and her ashes were interred at Woking crematorium. Despite her productivity and popularity as a writer, she died almost penniless, leaving only £547.

For reasons not now known, after 117 years of successful publication, *The Family Herald* was disestablished in 1940. It is likely that with the advent of war and the changing times and conditions, people’s attitudes altered and opportunities not hitherto available were realisable, and the periodical that had been established in the early Victorian era simply ceased to exist in a market now flooded with domestic magazines and any amount and variety of reading matter.

**Dr. Jo Parnell**
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