

C H A P T E R T H R E E

The Paper Mill

John Hutchinson thought carefully before putting his quill to paper; so carefully, indeed, it is apparent he was aware of the great stringency of the partners' financial means. Accordingly, he was depending upon their real embarrassment to make possible a better bargain with them than might otherwise have been the case. Dating the letter May 25 (1818) he wrote:

Messrs. Fisher & Duncan; Dear Sirs,

The commencement of the ensuing month will complete the period of six months, the term I agreed for your occupying that part of my property [here a portion of the letter rotted away] . . . Mill free of expence. And as [this is] the last week of your term that is unexpired, I trust you will see the necessity of calling upon me in the course of this week amicably to arrange on the terms you are in future to be upon until you can provide a place of your own.

As it is not my wish in the least to distress or put you out of the way, I expect you will meet me on equal friendly terms and arrange with me on a fair weekly rent as we may mutually agree upon. I remain, sirs, Your Most Obt. Svt. (SA)

The weakness of Fisher's position as the man who was to meet the liability, was in his having no means of knowing what Hutchinson would regard as a fair rent until the period of grace had expired or was too perilously imminent. In all conscience, it was too near. Although no documents have been found showing precisely what then occurred, it is evident from a clue of later date that no amicable arrangement was found possible.

To Hutchinson's deep annoyance, Fisher submitted the question to a Bench of Magistrates for determination as to the best and most equitable solution. The results were surprising for Fisher, if galling for the crafty Hutchinson. The Bench's opinion was that justice would be served by leaving the partners in occupancy of Bank Mill at a rental agreeable to their situation. The interest taken by the Bench in the

paper making scheme was an unexpected outcome and immediately changed the whole plan. The farsightedness of the design to establish the industry in the colony brought enthusiastic endorsement from the Bench. Frederick Fisher found himself

. . . most unexpectedly favoured in a suggestion from the Bench, that Contributors, on public ground, might probably be found to afford such necessary assistance as would allow a considerable enlargement of the manufactory and consequently increased advantage to the colony. (SA)¹

This sign of approval raised Fisher's hopes. What Duncan's opinion of the new development was, does not appear. He might well have been gratified by the prospect of substantial backing, from which he could easily hope to benefit as a key operator. And since it foreshadowed the formation of an influential consortium - for only high officials and merchants in the colony were inclined to subscribe to industries - his proprietary holding might prove to be of special value.

At all events, the past months of effort and tight economy stood in his imagination to yet receive ample compensation in the way of affluence and prestige. Warren, too, giving a practised hand likewise stood to gain from an Establishment-backed enterprise. Hence, they could labour the more willingly and defy hardship.

Frederick Fisher lost little time in initiating the necessary steps to end his dependence on Hutchinson. As there existed unappropriated land with frontage to the stream serving Bank Mill, he requested Governor Macquarie to allocate a site upon which, with Duncan, he could erect a new mill. Macquarie, who appears to have been informed at the same time of the difficulties being encountered in the project by Hutchinson's planned annoyances and obstructions, assented. It may be suspected that some of the magistrates who had Macquarie's ear, had outlined the Fisher-Duncan venture to him.

By this time, Fisher had come to recognize Macquarie for a just and humane individual, as so many others did, and could have felt enormously assured of his support and protection. Even before Frederick attempted to act on the magistrates' suggestion to widen the scope of the paper making enterprise, Hutchinson could hardly have failed

to learn the facts and feel affronted by a 26-year-old upstart's hitting upon so glowing a commercial and industrial possibility, while he, darling of a science-admiring coterie in England, should be reduced to drudging on whatever commissions the hard Simeon Lord chose to put in his way.

So persistently did the amateur chemist pursue a campaign of irritation and harassment against the occupants of Bank Mill, that on June 22 that year, Fisher decided matters had gone too far to be borne in silence. He wrote urgently to Macquarie:

May it please Your Excellency - Persuaded of the irregularity in making applications to Your Excellency but on the days appointed for that purpose, I humbly trust Your Excellency will overlook the same, and impute my doing so to the emergency of the case I have herewith ~~to~~ submit.

In consequence of Your Excellency having been pleased to say that you would take an early opportunity in company with Mr. Meehan [Deputy Surveyor General] to visit the place on which I erected my paper mill² in order to put an end to any interruptions Mr John Hutchinson might occasion to me in the course of my business, I have to acquaint Your Excellency that for these last three days past he has a servant of his at work digging away the foundation from the water wheel and mill under a pretence that he requires from the water wheel a power to grind some Ivory Black by stones, which, if he is not prevented from, I have every reason to apprehend will occasion the entire destruction of the machinery; and as he by doing so is acting in direct violation of the decision of a Bench of Magistrates,⁺ I most humbly trust Your Excellency will afford me such redress as to Your Excellency's judgment may seem fit, in order to prevent his continuing to molest me. Whereas should he persevere it may destroy all my past efforts. . . . (SA)

The wait for succor was relatively long and unnerving for Frederick, who, under strain was inclined to be tempestuous. He

+ Perhaps the Bench which heard the rent dispute.

knew Macquarie was loaded with cares, not only those inseparable from government and his prodigious developmental programme, but cares brought upon him by the machinations of his enemies who abhorred his liberality towards the convict population, and who never rested from their efforts to trap him into some position which could be used against him in Whitehall. The Chaplain of the Colony, Samuel Marsden and some of his principal officials, formed a band of remorseless foes, traitorous and hypocritical towards every humane principle Macquarie's conscience bade him uphold.

But Frederick's realizing Macquarie's predicament did not help him endure Hutchinson's spite. He could only think that all he had striven so hard to earn had gone into the paper-making project and was in jeopardy by the mischief of a rum-soaked villain. He may well have equally feared the violence of his own anger and have wondered how far he might go before his restraint collapsed. This, Hutchinson could hope for.

Two months dragged out without Macquarie's putting in an appearance. Somehow Fisher managed to maintain the mill in operation. Experimental runs had to be made, the raw material had to be collected, and modifications here and there were needed if processing was to be efficiently carried on. And money was scarce. The conditions were not such as to give his co-workers confidence, and often, it would seem, Duncan was irked by the constant labor and the uncertainties which had followed the exhilaration of the Magistracy's benevolent interest.

The evidence suggests that Duncan was a man who asked little from life; but that little had to be reliable. Anything less made him uneasy and restless. With money low and Hutchinson bent upon wrecking the plant or perhaps provoking Fisher into some irretrievable folly of violence, the time was one of gloom and discouragement. Perhaps Lachlan Macquarie was not going to worry his head about Fisher and Duncan.

At that dark moment, Fisher took courage to follow the advice of the Bench of Magistrates and approach the public for subscriptions. If a new mill site were eventually allotted by the Governor, entailing extra financial commitment, it had best be met by an influx of outside money. As his ideas burned in his brain, Frederick assisted Warren and

Duncan inevitably himself gaining valuable insight into the 'mystery' of making paper, perhaps even to the stage of himself performing the feat itself and moulding the material from the finely-divided waste. Immersed in the work, the evil of Hutchinson would dim in the glow of achievement. The small clever hands could flash about while the alert mind crystallized plans for approaching the more eminent citizens of the colony. Wealth and rank did not intimidate Frederick who had in his London years been so close to the heart of it as to even unconsciously express its atmosphere. While he deferred to power, because there was no alternative, he bore a consciousness of his own not inconsiderable ancestry - an ancestry aristocratic in its skills and in its closeness to human genius. He might defer to the highly placed, but he was not servile.

By July 22, Frederick had formulated a prospectus, the preamble of which consisted of the magistrates' commendation to expand the paper-making project to take in investment capital. Very likely, it had already circulated among the eminent persons of the settlement. The prospectus, in a fine hand, -

. . . presumes so far as to submit to public consideration the under statement and Estimates affecting that object, and to make appeal for subscriptions, by way of loan, upon ~~which~~ the Conditions and Premises undermentioned; or such of like import and tenor as may be hereafter considered more proper and effective . . . (SA)

Somewhere during his childhood he had heard it said that one of his forbears had been responsible for the preparation of the text of Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream for ~~the~~ performance at Cripplegate. He could not know the truth of the claim; but liked to think it correct, and himself had a penchant for majesty in prose.

The Prospectus proposals fell under six headings:

- 1) Loans should be in units of £5 each;
- 2) Security of repayment with interest to be effected by Deed vesting the whole property of the concern in the subscribers;
- 3) The concern to be subject to the control or particular direction of the subscribers;
- 4) Loans to be discharged out of profits;

- 5) Subscribers to approve all improvements to the business;
- 6) Subscriptions to be payable into the bank and used as determined by the subscribers. (SA)

It could be said the terms gave too much to the prospective subscribers in placing the manufactory in their hands and permitting its operation to be subject to their discretion in so complete a way. But the main significance of the conditions lay in their honesty. Security being the prime note, the prospectus could not fail to appeal among those hard-headed creatures who dominated the colony officially, socially and commercially.

The estimates presented figures on the basis of a more ambitious plant than the one already in operation at a cost of £69.13.0. Fisher costed as follows:

	£
Making the Water Wheel	25
Cogg wheel and pinion	11
New engine, about 5 stone	20
Stuff chest	5
Moulds and felts	25
New Press	13
Coaching planks and blocks	2
Repairs for old press	2
Nails	3
Copper for Feat	5
do. for heating the Size	7

For another £50 were to be provided a drying loft, finishing room and a feat room, all to be constructed of "wattles and mud to be covered with bark", a hut with brick chimney, a dam, new sluices "&c.". The total outlay was estimated at £168; but if an even larger engine - "eight stone engine and mill complete" the cost would be increased to £178 since there was a difference of £10 in the cost of the 5-stone and the 8-stone engines.

Signatories to the prospectus included the Judge Advocate, John Wylde (later knighted), D'Arcy Wentworth, surgeon and Magistrate who at various times occupied important administrative posts in the Colony and

ereation shall be made to prove not undeserving of
the confidence reposed in and the favorable prospects
thus opened to -

Frederick F. F.

Mr. Judge Robt. Mylde	2	10 -	Thos. Mylde	5 -
James Smith	2	10 -	James	£5 -
John Piper	5		John Piper	£5
Robert Lennings	5		Thos. Palmer	£5
R. Crook	5		Chas. Tompkins	£5
James Lennings	2	10 -	Thos. Lennings	£5
Thos. Lennings	5		Thos. Lennings	£5

11 12 13
Archives of Office
N.S.W.
Reproduction Rights
Reserved

Supreme Court Papers
Bundle 22
Miscellaneous.

SIGNATURES TO FISHER'S PROSPECTUS, 1818, showing Frederick's own
writing at top. The third name on the left side is that of Simeon
Lord.

--- In the possession of the Archives Office of N.S.W.

exaction shall be made to prove not undeserving of
the confidence reposed in and the favorable prospects
thus opened to

Frederick Fisher

Mr. Judge 2d. Mylde	Subs. 2	10.	Thos. Mylde	5
James Smith	2	10.	James	5
John Piper	5		Thos. Palmer	5
Robert Jennings	5		Chas. Tompkins	5
A. Crook	5		John Connell	5
Wm. D. O'Connell	2	10.	Wm. D. O'Connell	5
Wm. D. O'Connell			Wm. D. O'Connell	5

1 2 3
Archives of Office
N.S.W.
Reproduction Rights
Reserved

Supreme Court Papers
Bundle 22
Miscellaneous.

SIGNATURES TO FISHER'S PROSPECTUS, 1818, showing Frederick's own
writing at top. The third name on the left side is that of Simeon
Lord.

--- In the possession of the Archives Office of N.S.W.

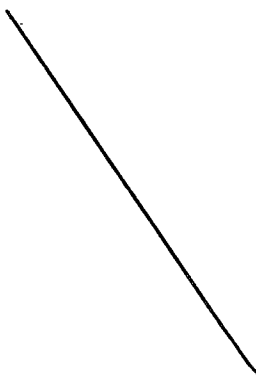
FRAGMENT of Frederick Fisher's Paper Mill Prospectus

with signatures of the leading men of the colony.

(State Archives)

became Colonial Treasurer; Simeon Lord, W. H. Moore, solicitor, later to become acting Attorney General; the notorious eccentric and miser, Samuel Terry; Captain John Piper, a president of the infant Bank of New South Wales, Robert Jenkins; Thomas Wylde, father of the Judge Advocate and himself Clerk of the Peace and Solicitor General; Edward Eager, lawyer and ex-convict; Jas. Brooks, Thomas Rose, Thomas Palmer, John Connell, N. Campbell Jnr. and Charles Thompson, father of Australia's first native born lyric poet. One signature so far undecipherable. (See PLATE)

All were men of substance besides being leaders in their respective callings, so that Frederick Fisher must have been almost overwhelmed by the response, which amount to promises of an aggregate £100.⁵ His first elation was the best antidote for the pessimism of his helpers. True, the signatures were merely promises; but who could doubt that men of such prominence and wealth - men who knew all too well the colony's extreme need of the enterprise - would keep their promises? The array of signatures on the prospectus could not have



been more inspiring had each of them been the Duke of Wellington's. For Fisher it seemed permissible now to believe past shame was certain ere long to be redeemed in success and material gain. The dream of becoming somehow re-united with his family had persisted throughout the three years of his exile and now seemed vividly possible of realisation.

But the signatures on the prospectus spelt out increasing responsibility. Each told him he was backed to implement his proposals. And although Bank Mill was capable of producing merchantable paper -- the first to be manufactured on the Australian continent -- no time must be lost in preparing for the erection of a more commodious mill as soon as Governor Macquarie should redeem his promise; and in commissioning the making of the new engine agreeable to the amount promised in the loan subscriptions.⁴ The great pioneering effort appeared destined for triumph against the malice of John Hutchinson.

Between stretches of duty at the mill, Frederick would no doubt have canvassed outlets for its current and future yield. Who, more than ex-convict, creole Robert Howe, printer and publisher of the quasi official Sydney Gazette would have a special professional interest in the paper manufactory?

Likewise, many others in a town where waste wrapping paper, salvaged from its original use as cargo packaging in shipments from Britain, found the material of practical use and a worthwhile investment.

In the weeks to follow, in the assurance that the financial backing for the larger mill would duly materialise, Frederick Fisher pressed forward with the necessary arrangement for the construction of the plant under the more practised supervision of George Duncan.

It was not until September, the month after Fisher became clerk to the Provost Marshal, that Governor Macquarie rode out

with James Meehan to inspect Bank Mill and to go into the question of providing a new site for the expanded paper making business. Macquarie had more on his mind than merely shielding the infant industry from the envy and malevolence of Hutchinson, whose disposition was well enough known to him. Meehan surveyed the terrain while Macquarie, always avid for information of use to the colony, was shown the paper-making plant ~~by Fisher and Duncan~~. He may even have witnessed a display of the expertise of the feat by Duncan.

The Governor, requiring all the necessary assurances ^{that} there existed a warrant for his special patronage, supplementary even to the list of distinguished subscribers who were all closely associated with him, would not fail to perceive indisputable promise for the budding industry. To encourage its advancement, he stood prepared to dare the frowns of the authorities in London.

Satisfied, and well aware of the appeal of the scheme to his officials, Macquarie selected on Meehan's expert advice a new location for the project. In this, Macquarie showed a measure of cunning, for the area allocated to Fisher and Duncan in their own right was upstream of the Bank Mill situation, although adjoining. Two advantages were inherent in the choice -- the first, re-location of the existing machinery would be facilitated; and secondly, that the up-stream position effectively guaranteed first access to the water and obviated any interference with the water power by Hutchinson or anyone else.

The streamside limits of the new location were fixed by the Governor, there and then, as sufficient for the time being. The next essential move, he considered, was to examine and adjudicate on the dispute between Fisher and his partner and Hutchinson. With the parties before him, presently, he studied their testimony and gave a ruling.⁵ When he rode away with James Meehan, Macquarie left a much heartened Fisher. If the young entrepreneur could go on a while longer, squeezing out a dollar here, a dump there, withal perhaps tightening his own belt to a mere spartan victualling, there would be every hope that the paper making project could be

brought soon to a satisfactory outcome.

It was more difficult to fire Duncan with enthusiasm. None of it was new to him, as a tradesman; and he was no visionary. Justifiably from his standpoint he could but rue the elapse of three quarters of a year with no material benefits to hand. Ahead, he plainly saw, lay a drag of great toil before the original mill could be replaced by a larger one. He could reasonably complain that the plan for expansion came too close on the heels of the initial effort and before the full benefit of the work done had been obtained. In order to bring the more grandiose scheme to fruition he could see nothing better for renewed drudgery than the bare means of subsistence. And Duncan liked his wages, his small luxuries. The assistant, Warren, was not obliged by any contract to stick it out and was at liberty to depart at any moment he found better paid, if less familiar occupation.

Warren continued with the mill; and because the wavering and disgruntled Duncan was doing work he best knew how to do, he too, carried on. The time was favourable, thought Frederick, to start collecting the subscriptions, because now he could point out what Macquarie had done in the interests of the enterprise. At whatever opportunity he could find, released from his routine employments, he certainly would deferentially present himself to signatories and solicit their cash. Some of them were agreeable; others, the evidence permits it to be said, became inaccessible, or evasive on the point whether the moment was as propitious to call in the capital as Frederick liked to believe.

Had the site allocated by Macquarie been satisfactorily dimensioned? Granted, the water course limits had been fixed; but what of the lateral limits? If the Surveyor General's deputy, overworked as he was, had not drawn up the plan for registration, how could the terms of the prospectus be implemented in so far as it proposed to secure the promised loans by vesting the assets

of the concern in the subscribers under Deed?

These were valid objects^{ion}. Frederick was too knowledgeable in law through his employment with the Provost Marshal not to acknowledge it to be so. He was in a quandary, knowing he could only invite suspicion by insisting upon receiving the cash before a legal groundwork had been prepared. How could he lose sight of the fact that his being a convict, never ceased to weigh with those who themselves had risen from that status into wealth and eminence? They had shed none of their suspicion; they had not risen in the world by permitting latitude to those whose circumstances forbade Fisher and his kind from possessing the means to meet the outlay for the re-planned project. They could only be seen as opportunities for themselves; not calls to take personal risks of loss.

It was futile for Frederick to argue respectfully that he was entitled to some measure of trust -- and some subscribers did trust him -- since he had financed the smaller mill and his equity was being left in the pool, quite unsecured, against the claims of more affluent subscribers, in the event of loss.

Still, it was no great matter to request James Meehan to expedite the full documentation of the streamside allocation in order to satisfy objectors. But Meehan, however hardworking and friendly to Fisher, had his limitations. He was overwhelmed with the amount of work entailed in his jobs of surveying and collection of Quit Rents, which kept him out of town for a great proportion of his time. He had to be hot on the heels of explorers opening up new tracts of land to meet the hunger of the incipient aristocracy. He had to stand in for John Oxley during the latter's absences in explorations. The business of the Surveyor General's office with its small band of assistants had grown within a few years into a crushing burden, which the Mother Country's parsimony would not relieve. All work was deeply in arrears. Besides, Meehan was a poor administrator at best, a fact which his health, failing steadily under the long years of hardship in the inhospitable

bush, facing perils and constant discomfort helped to worsen.

Importuning of Meehan by Frederick produced no response, either because the deputy Surveyor General was out of town on duty, or in town but buried under a deluge of correspondence and clerical work which all the goodwill in the world and his own acknowledged devotion to duty could hardly cope with. Everything was urgent; so it was merely unfortunate that Fisher was obliged to wait until his turn came.

These setbacks in his efforts to establish his business venture were a severe trial to his finances and his patience. In the protracted uncertainty he could neither wish for nor even offer any sound excuse for terminating preparations for the brassfounding of the various items of the mill machinery. Less vague was the procrastination of some of the signatories to his prospectus in producing their promised cash. This might be supposed to end when James Meehan should convey to him the precise details of the new site on the Botany stream. Not until December 7 was Frederick able to obtain some documentary substantiation of Macquarie's allocation, when Meehan wrote from Macquarie Fields, the rough certification :

Frederick Fisher, Paper Manufacturer, near Sydney, having applied to me relative to the situation on the stream between Sydney and Botany Bay whereon he intends erecting his machinery for paper making, saying as a subscription has been entered into for him to enable him to carry on the said paper manufacture - and that it is his wish that any and every interest which he now has or may hereafter have shall be transferred by him in trust to such subscribers so as to secure to them the repayment of their money, &c.

In compliance with his request I hereby certify that I accompanied His Excellency the Governor to take a view of the place who was then pleased to fix limits which he was to receive on the stream next above the situation assigned to Mr. John Hutchinson, but no lateral limits were then fixed but no doubt a necessary portion of land will be assigned so as to accommodate the proprietor . . . (SA)

This piece of information might settle any doubts the intending subscribers could have about Frederick's bona fides, but it still was of no value for the preparation of a Deed, since it offered no description of the land that could be a legally acceptable basis for security.

Fisher was already too experienced in the drawing up of documents not to perceive the weakness of his position; but until the nebulous prospect of his receiving a more satisfactory title materialized he would have to make the best of things. Above all, there was need to pacify the restless Duncan, who during the past months had not been without contact with the neighbouring and disturbing Hutchinson. It was not unreasonable to assume that the latter would craftily seek from Duncan all possible information relating to the craft of making paper. More, indeed, he would milk from Duncan's mind essential knowledge of the mechanisms he understood so well. It was a foregone conclusion also that the vengeful chemist would exert every effort he could to undermine Duncan's confidence in the Bank Mill effort.

If there were reasons other than reluctance on the part of prospective subscribers known to Hutchinson to accept an unsoundly-drawn agreement, Hutchinson would insinuate them to the vacillating Duncan. For one thing, Hutchinson might hope to gain largely from acting the spy for his lukewarm patrons. Subtle and deadly as it was, and applied unremittingly in the absences of Frederick, with the encouragement of signatory Samuel Terry, the campaign might all too easily wear down Duncan. Other factors were at work, ~~also~~.

.

Governor Macquarie's enemies had worked only too well against him in London, misrepresenting his administration in many ways, lying deliberately when it suited them. They were confident that by the time their victim could vindicate himself from the vast distance, no one would be much interested, or they might imagine affairs in Port Jackson to have become much worse in the interim. Communications were slow. Dispatches were often lost with cargoes - facts which worked in favour of the anti-emancipist malcontents who were ambitious to strip convicts of every indulgence, every opportunity of rehabilitating themselves socially and financially.

It was galling for those who had never been found out or who had never been subjected to the extreme economic pressures which produce lawbreaking, to find convicts freely at work in the colony, privileged by 'exemplary behaviour' to put their native talents to productive and profitable use. The colony was a penal settlement, they maintained. But Macquarie had made it a happy hunting ground for rascals while the free, the unblemished, had to stand by and watch wealth go into the wrong hands. They could persuasively make out, the public mores being what they were in the aftermath of the Napoleonic War and the ferocious struggle which followed for supremacy in trade, that the condition of the colony was such as no true Christian should countenance. Besides, with the industrial revolution under way and the contagion of trade buccaneering raging through the nation, it was imperative to draw the line sharply between the minions of evil and the natural elect of God.

So persistent was the clamour that Whitehall felt something should be done. The Prince Regent, the future George IV paused sufficiently in his gluttonies to agree that the answer could be found only by an inquiry into the administration of the colony by a commissioner. He appointed John Thomas Bigge, whose chief recommendation was his bias in favour of the social picture as it then existed in Britain. In other words, he was on the side of money and what it represented. He would inevitably uphold the authority of successful rapacity and the tyranny of the superstition of hereditary (and nouveau riche) aristocracy.

Bigge was a lawyer who had tasted a little authority himself and seems to have entertained immeasurable hopes of exaltation. He could hardly betray the class he identified with.

J.T. Bigge, it was arranged, should arrive at Port Jackson in 1819. Meanwhile, he would be assiduously briefed in the Colonial Office, making the acquaintance of Macquarie's eloquent foes, and not surprisingly becoming well convinced of the magnitude of that individual's pernicious and misguided humanism. He was to remember when making his widely-scoped investigations that

. . . the settlements in New Holland, not having been established with any view to Territorial or Commercial advantages, must chiefly be considered as Receptacles for offenders . . . So

long as they continue destined by the Legislature of the Country [Great Britain] for these purposes, their growth as Colonies must be a Secondary Consideration . . . The First Object of your Enquiry should be to ascertain whether any and what Alteration in the existing system of the Colony can render it available to the purpose of its original Institution . . . Transportation to New South Wales is intended as a severe Punishment applied towards Crimes, and as such must be rendered an object of real Terror to all Classes of the Community . . .

If the place-seekers around Macquarie had not already known the official home government aversion to allow the common people into the sacred preserves of property acquisition, the news of Commissioner Bigge's appointment reaching Port Jackson ahead of him, reminded them to bear in hope. How few of them were unconsumed with desire to shine in the royal eye was apparent in the endless difficulties faced by the amiable Macquarie. Suddenly, the aspiring realised they must not be found in any way aiding and abetting the setting up of industries which would compete, however slightly, with those of their masters in the Old Country. Certainly they should not support the commercial activities of convicts, however attractive and essential their commodities might be. Holders of high positions would make themselves particularly vulnerable to Britannic wrath by disregarding a sentiment so fundamental to the British ruling classes' master-race delusions. The yen for high-sounding titles, too, was dearer to them than the Kingdom of God, since discovering no intrinsic value in themselves they might make shift with the adulation of others that a title usually commanded.

Businessmen like Simeon Lord, Samuel Terry and Samuel Marsden could little care about the frowns of the overlords as long as pelf streamed their way. The first two made little pretension of importance aside from the greatness of their wealth. The third had his own pious formula for reconciling an immoderate greed for material possessions with the Will of the Almighty. One felt appreciated to be spared penury.

Frederick Fisher might have hesitated to believe that the men who had promised spontaneously to make loans to his mill would fail him. It was even less credible that they should procrastinate, deceive and repudiate where their word had been given.

reached

If any whisper had ~~reached~~ Fisher that the failure of the bulk of the loan money to be subscribed was very likely due to the impending arrival of the Royal Commissioner, he may have been inclined to disown it as fanciful, in spite of his direct knowledge of the mentality of the rich at Home. But then, did he even suspect, while he was being fobbed off with one specious reason or another? Most of his promises had come from men highly placed, whose loyalty to their principles must never come into question.

In truth, Frederick was in debt on account of the new mill, a situation fraught with risks to his status as a Ticket of Leave convict.⁶ Worse, gaol was the destination of debtors, though his thoughts had probably not strayed so far. However, the prospect of easing Duncan's anxieties for material gains was beginning to fade. John Hutchinson and his crony, the Pits Row [Pitt Street] usurer, Terry, could impress upon Duncan at their leisure, the advantages of employing skill and knowledge under more immediately affluent patronage. It is not improbable that Hutchinson prevailed upon Terry to back him in securing an opportunity to eliminate Fisher from the paper manufactory, for the destruction of the Duncan - Fisher partnership was precisely their aim.

The paper maker, congenitally insecure and endlessly yearning for security and material rewards was ill-conditioned to resist the powerful blandishments those schemers were capable of. Terry himself, could have seen the advantage of withholding his promised subscription, not merely from his own miserliness and the non-appearance of an impeccable Deed, but because his association with Hutchinson must have persuaded him that the chemist had already well and truly demonstrated for Simeon Lord a measure of ingenuity.

It could not have been the intention of the conspirators to dispose of Duncan, whom they considered too valuable as asset to sacrifice. Not only was he a skilled paper maker, but he had to be the means of getting rid of Fisher. The weakening

of Duncan would be the prelude to a total victory, they might have supposed. Had Duncan been less concerned with his selfish ends he could not have failed to realise the real reason for Hutchinson's pressure to win him over, even ^{long} before those reasons were made brutally clear. Initially, he may have resisted, vaguely moved by Fisher's own faith that ^{as clerk to the Provost Marshal} kept him poring over writs to be copied and the law processes as far as he was responsible, to be word and letter perfect. However, Duncan was dealing with accomplished ~~William~~ ^{Trickster} who presently played their master stroke by introducing into the plot Thomas Clarkson, a baker, of Hunter Street, ⁷ from where the dough mixer could glance down upon the Angel Inn where Terry spun his webs of intrigue and negotiated his financial deals.

Clarkson, it was made to appear, desired to erect a flour mill on the site Macquarie had allotted to Fisher and Duncan. In due course, since Duncan could not by himself conclude such a matter, Frederick was approached. Evidently he refused even to consider transferring the land and his mill already in course of erection. He may have doubted that the proposal to erect a flour mill was genuine, knowing, in company with the general population, the untrustworthy character of the men through whom Clarkson came on to the scene.

Duncan then took the crucial step of breaking off his partnership with Fisher, and on February 2, 1819, Clarkson pursued his advantage by appearing with a Memorandum of Agreement between himself and Duncan, under which the latter was to transfer to Clarkson his interest in the mill site for certain considerations.

Duncan's withdrawal from the partnership shattered Frederick Fisher's hopes and nullified all his past efforts and sacrifices for the paper making scheme. He was loaded with debts on account of the mill, into which he had been trapped by the failure of a number of the signatories to honour their promises. His position was now perilous. Without Duncan the collapse of the venture was complete and there could be no way through the business itself in its unproductive condition of re-designing, of liquidating the debts incurred for the enlargement of the concern.

Apparently, Clarkson did not object to Fisher's knowing the contents of the proposed agreement with Duncan. Fisher's having copied it for future reference is conclusive of that. It is guessed that Clarkson allowed Duncan a short period of grace before signing, if he was inclined to do so, during which Frederick and his feckless partner would be free to wrangle. The wily Clarkson was confident that the issue would be entirely favourable to the designs of Terry, Hutchinson and himself.

Clarkson himself was already proprietor of a streamside allotment next below Hutchinson's, so that his wish to obtain the allotment allocated to Fisher and Duncan was very likely argued on the basis that its being closer to the source of power served the flour mill purpose better.

Fisher could well have supposed that the proposed agreement between Clarkson and Duncan implied inclusion of himself in the future consortium, which would mitigate the disappointment and possible loss arising from dissolution of the old partnership. His dilemma made such an interpretation ^{the} more acceptable one. There was nothing to be seen in the document, however, on which such hopes could firmly rest:

MEMORANDUM of an AGREEMENT made and entered into this [undated] day of February, 1819 between Thomas Clarkson of Hunter Street, Sydney, Territory of New South Wales, Baker, of the one part and George Duncan of Bank Mill near Botany in the Territory aforesaid, Paper Maker, of the other part, witnesseth that the said Thomas Clarkson undertaking to build a Mill and Machinery for making paper on that part of the run of water or water stream situated between Sydney and Botany Bay and next below the allotment assigned by His Excellency Lachlan Macquarie Esquire, the present Governor, to the said Thomas Clarkson and also for the sum of five shillings of lawful money in hand paid by the said Thomas Clarkson to the said George Duncan at or before the signing of this Instrument in writing, he the said George Duncan doth by these presents assign, transfer and make over all his right, Title and

and interest and Expectancy in a certain allotment situated at the aforesaid land stream next above the situation assigned to Mr. John Hutchinson which said allotment was promised by His Excellency Lachlan Macquarie . . . to one Frederick Fisher and George Duncan, and it is further agreed between the said parties that the said Thomas Clarkson is to pay such debts as remain unpaid for machinery of the Paper Mill and the said Thomas Clarkson doth agree to build a complete mill for manufacturing paper on the allotment assigned by His Excellency . . . to him and to allow the said George Duncan ten shillings per week for provisions and ten shillings in money for his services in completing the said mill and machinery until the expence of building the mill and all other incidental Expences relating or appertaining thereto are repaid by the profits arising from the trade or business of Paper Manufacturing and when the whole expence is paid then the said George Duncan is to have one third share of the business of paper making aforesaid which share is to expire and not be transferable at the decease of the said George Duncan and the said George Duncan doth hereby undertake and agree to execute any such instrument in writing which may be required or hereafter thought necessary by the said Thomas Clarkson for the better securing of the said George Duncan's share in the run of water situate next above Mr. John Hutchinson's allotment herein transferred and sold by the said George Duncan as witness our hands . . . (DG)

The scheme behind the preparation of the document was extremely cunning. In providing for payment of the outstanding debts incurred in establishing the Fisher - Duncan mill, Clarkson and whomsoever he represented aimed at overcoming any lingering scruple Duncan might harbour which could prevent his signing the agreement. He would be enabled to excuse his basic betrayal of Frederick by claiming his action extricated the young man from a serious predicament. At the same time, that particular provision may have been devised to mollify

Frederick. Another feature of the proposals probably intended to trick Fisher was the seemingly contrived inference he might be tempted to draw from the statement that Duncan was to receive a third share of the business at a given time, and no mention is made as to who will be other partners, saving of course, Clarkson.

Now since Fisher remained proprietor of the other half interest in the site assigned for the original partnership, he might have considered it obvious it would count for something in the proposed new arrangement. How else could the proponents hope to make their intentions effective? Of what use would the site be to Clarkson unless he, Fisher, assented? Perhaps he found himself unconvinced that it was intended Hutchinson would be included as nominee of Lord and Terry.

Unhappily, Frederick was only too deeply conscious that the paper manufacturing project was not being wrecked - it was being seized by ruthless men backed by great wealth and driven by insatiable greed. However he might try to rationalize the situation as a lunatic does his own ~~unpleasant position~~ ^{delusionary position}, he must make the best of it as far as his stubborn nature would allow. He had shown the way, he consoled himself, but it was not what consolation should have been, for he was plainly to be deprived of a measure of the dream^{ed} of rewards of his venture. On the other hand, against the unpleasant prospect of working under the eyes of the commercial bandits he believed to be behind the move, there was the assurance that their involvement at least meant backing by the two reputedly most wealthy men in the colony. He was not of a nature to spurn even a crumb if a banquet was denied him.

On February 2nd, 1819, in the presence of Richard Palmer, the undertaking was signed by Clarkson and Duncan, Frederick Fisher also signing as a witness.

Within a very short time Frederick was to be completely disillusioned as to what role he would play in the envisaged enterprise. In his chagrin he wrote to Governor Macquarie setting out the circumstances and quoting the agreement entire:

. . . Memorialist finding the greatest difficulty in collecting the Sums from the Gentlemen who had signed

their names as subscribers to defray the expence of building a paper mill was induced to consent to such agreement and also in consequence of Mr. John Hutchinson and Mr. Samuel Terry using their endeavours to persuade his late partner Duncan to dissolve his co-partnership with Memorialist.

That after the execution of the beforementioned agreement Clarkson refused entering any arrangement with your Memorialist other than giving him a small sum of money for his interest . . .⁸

(DG)

The dream was over; the perfidy almost crushing. Yet, in spite of his appeal to Macquarie, Fisher knew in his heart that the Governor was powerless to interfere in the affair. It might be a blatant piece of legal chicanery perpetrated under the name of business, but there was no room ^{to object} to what men might freely do under the law. Duncan had every right (except a moral one, perhaps) to dispose of his interest. Could he not have reflected upon Frederick's self denial, his passionate commitment which was to benefit them both, had it not been for the failure of those who should have set a good example?

But as he thought about developments his emotions quietened, tamed by the intellectualism which was his most distinguishing attribute. Perhaps Clarkson had been too clever, too concerned with trying to carry off a trick to perceive what should have been clear to him then, as now it was suddenly clear to Frederick: if he had been bought off cheaply as to his 'interest', that euphemism for the toil and strain, the loss and blasted hopes which had gone into the mill, the half interest Frederick retained in the land itself made him master of the situation.

The confederates, Fisher saw, had overplayed their hand. With a lightening of the heart he saw that Clarkson, too ready to play the game of far more accomplished tricksters would be outwitted in his turn. In the face of the contemptuous offer of so mean a sum for his 'interest', Frederick, acquisitive and penny-pinching by nature, and by late necessity and ambition frugal to miserliness, set money at naught. Only pride ruled him.

This was the moment Fisher's opponents had gambled on to give

them victory. It was also the moment when it became possible, by virtue of Clarkson's shouldering of the debts under legal agreement, signed and sealed, for Frederick to act without fear. To give the mountebanks untrammelled possession of the new mill site, whatever Clarkson and his associates might wish, would be unthinkable. The agreement bound Clarkson and company to settle the debts of the mill and thus remove a peril not to be thought of, but where was he, Frederick, required to surrender his proprietary half interest in the site itself? In such circumstance, it mattered not how Clarkson and Duncan arranged their affairs or where they set up their future mill; the Fisher share in the Macquarie assigned site would prevent its being of use to them.

This was the course he took and to that extent was the victor when he left the Lachlan Swamps,⁹ the first man in Australian history to have organized the actual manufacture of paper, for however brief a time.

NOTES

1. Fragment of a document (dated July 23, 1818) found among Fisher's private papers after his death, whence they passed into the custody of the Supreme Court.
2. When referring to his mill, Fisher always means the paper-making machinery itself, the construction of which he initially financed.
3. The subscription list in the portion of the prospectus is not totalled and may even be incomplete. There is room to suppose that the promised loans would have amounted to £100 as the full amount solicited, as this would permit Fisher to include his equity of £68 in the original equipment to make the total capitalisation £168.
4. It seems beyond dispute that Fisher and Duncan produced paper before they attempted to expand the capacity at the suggestion of the Magistracy. On July 29, 1820, only 17 months after dissolution of the Fisher - Duncan partnership, the Sydney Gazette issued an advertising supplement on paper which a brief editorial note in the main body of the issue stated to have been produced in the colony. No other particulars were given. In view of the comment made in the same journal on February 5, 1827, referring to Worrall's trial and Fisher's character, the present writer considers it certain that the paper of the supplement of 1820 came from Bank Mill and had been held in stock owing to the coarseness and dark colour and the irregularity of the sheet size, awaiting an opportunity for its utilisation. No other reference has been found concerning manufacture of paper at that period. Hutchinson was later claimed to have produced 'white' paper, of which no example seems to now exist. Both Howes, father and son, who owned and edited the Sydney Gazette, knew Fisher well and apparently admired him.
5. Macquarie's ruling, ~~which was~~ is not known; but it is significant that Hutchinson's destructive assaults against Bank Mill ceased.
6. Debtors were bundled into Sydney Gaol without ado, thus being placed in a more helpless position than ever, there then being no

hope of discharging their indebtedness. Instead, they fell prey to the desperadoes who filled the rough building, and besides, were required to victual themselves. Their having no means to do so little troubled the authorities. The system was no worse than it was in the Mother Country, they could argue. Therefore it was tolerable (so long as one did not have to experience it).

Even remand prisoners were not officially provided with food, and many would have famished but for the compassion of officers at Sydney Police Office in supply^{ing} at their own expense, loaves to destitute prisoners. This outlay reached such proportions that Francis Rossi, Chief of Police, was obliged to petition the government for reimbursement of the private expenditure.

Sydney Gaol at the time is stated to have been about forty feet long and twenty feet wide, accommodating well over a hundred persons of all ages at any time, in conditions of utmost squalor. The plight of the inmates may be judged from a letter written from the gaol to the Colonial Secretary, on August 25, 1825, by W. P. Davies, a nephew (as he claimed) of the celebrated founder of the co-operative movement in Great Britain - Robert Owen, of New Lanark! Davies complain^{ed}g he had been incarcerated for a 'trifling debt' of £15. He now found himself friendless and had scarcely eaten for three days. 'My uncle,' he commented, 'would feel much grieved if he was to hear of his nephew in a gaol without a shoe to his foot of any kind, or yet anything for his sustenance.'

(SA)

7. Thomas Clarkson seems to have been the person referred to by Dr. Robert Townson, LL.D, of Bunbury Curran (near Campbell Town) in a letter to the Colonial Secretary, July 27, 1825, complaining of being systematically robbed by certain convict servants, whose latest depredation had cost him 1,500 lbs. of flour. He suspected one of the thieves to be Michael Cooke and supposed he transferred the stolen goods 'very likely to his mother in law, Mrs. Clarkson, baker, Hunter Street [Sydney]. She was not long ago sentenced to the Coal River [Newcastle] as a receiver . . . John Pearce (long time my servant) now one of your constables can tell you who this Mr. Clarkson is . . . Cooke was convict servant to

Clarkson and then married ~~one~~ one of his daughters . . . ' (SA)

Dr. Townson was one of the persons suspected of complicity in the deposing of Governor Bligh. His residence, Varro Ville, still stands. Thomas Clarkson's bakery seems to have been located at the northerly beginning of Elizabeth Street, Sydney.

8. The word 'giving' may have been intended to mean 'offering to give' as subsequent events suggest. The document is incomplete and it is therefore impossible to tell what Fisher asked Macquarie to do to assist him. As there is no date on the surviving portion the memorial may be part of a draft sent to the Governor. The time however, is indicated in the text itself.
9. The site of Bank Mill has been identified as existing between the present Todman Avenue and Duke Street, Anzac Parade, Kensington. The ponds in nearby Centennial Park form part of the original and extensive system of lagoons and stream of the Lachlan Swamps.