

ROBERT LYON MILNE

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Robert Lyon Milne, known in early Swan River Colony as ‘Robert Menli Lyon’ (*Menli* being his anagram for Milne) made a brief but highly significant appearance here during a long career shrouded in mystery and characterised by (mostly) high-minded but invariably thwarted schemes. The tricks he played with his name, amusing as they may have been to him, are a curse for the historian. His exact origins in Scotland's Morayshire, where he *said* he was born, cannot be traced and the details of his obscure death in an inner London slum in early 1874 would have been lost had it not been for a brief notice in the Adelaide newspapers. It is not clear whether, as he variously hinted, he was a former clergyman or a military veteran or both (i.e., a military chaplain). What is clear is that he was someone of *first-rate education*, being well versed in ancient Hebrew as well as Latin and Greek, a persuasive writer and orator, a tenacious *litigant* and a tireless publicist of good causes. His empathy with the Aborigines at Swan River motivated him to reconcile the feared outlaw, Yagan, and collect the first reliable information about his people. He subsequently mounted a one-man campaign to persuade the settlers that *compensation* should be paid to the Aborigines for the taking of their land if justice was to be done and racial conflict avoided.

Leaving the colony in early 1835, Milne spent the following years as Professor of Latin and Greek at Port Louis College, Mauritius before returning to the eastern colonies. In Adelaide in 1838 we find him trying to set up an agricultural bank in association with the

Boucher brothers, principals of a fraudulent London-based banking operation, subsequently known as the 'Moorgate Street Bubble'. In Sydney in early 1840, where he had published a pamphlet on Aboriginal rights the previous year, we find him trying to establish an Aboriginal mission at newly-settled Port Phillip with a government land grant. In 1841 he is back in Adelaide where in September he is thrown into prison for a £6,000 debt incurred in his name by one of the Boucher brothers. In August 1845 he initiates the publication in Adelaide of *Australiana*, a short-lived religious journal notable for its tirades against Roman Catholicism. In 1846 he is once again declared insolvent. In early 1853 we find him first at Ballarat, where he may have tried his luck at the diggings, and then in a Melbourne temperance hotel. From there he bombards the Secretary of State for Colonies with lengthy missives (later published in Melbourne at his own expense), promoting a new colony called 'Albertonia' in the Murray River basin, a new scheme for colonial constitutions, and action to counter French imperial expansion in the Pacific.

Back in Adelaide in the mid-1850s, we find him standing unsuccessfully on two occasions for the colony's first House of Assembly, but representing the ratepayers of Port Adelaide on local issues. He is arrested on a number of occasions for drunk and disorderly behavior and sued for non-payment of wages. Returning to London in the late 1850s, he pursues his last grand scheme, railway development, only to find that there is little interest back in Adelaide. From the late 1850s he disappears entirely from view until the British census of 1871 reveals him as living in a cheap rooming house in Covent Garden, London. Three years later he dies there, aged 84, leaving generous legacies to his friends amounting to almost £15,000, together with his land and other property at Port Adelaide.

With nothing in the way of memoirs, letters or other personal writings to explain the erratic trajectory of his life, Robert Lyon Milne must always remain a man of mystery. One moral of his strange tale is that not everyone with a little capital but a great deal of energy and enterprise was assured of success in the Australian colonies. Perhaps Milne was just unlucky. If he had lived long enough, the land he purchased at Port Adelaide in 1841 might have seen him a millionaire instead of a virtual pauper. How odd it is, then, that he should be best remembered (if, indeed, he is remembered at all!) as a champion of Aboriginal rights at Swan River Colony!

Tracing Robert Lyon Milne's early life and career is made even more difficult by the fact that *Milne* (which seems more likely than Lyon to have been his family name) was not common in Morayshire but certainly more common than Lyon. However, he was not one of the three Robert Milnes born there in 1789 or thereabouts and there is no record of a Robert Lyon. The possibility arises, however, that he was the illegitimate son of a Lyon father and a Milne mother who, according to custom, took his mother's name, and whose superior education was paid for by his well-to-do father.

There were other Robert Milnes in Scotland and Australia to confuse the historian's trail with false leads. In Scotland there was a Revd Robert Milne, Presbyterian army chaplain at Fort St. Gorge near Inverness. In Sydney in the early 1840s there was a Captain Robert Milne who turns out to have been a ship's captain who died in 1846. In Adelaide there was a Robert Milne, J.P., landholder of Dry Creek, Highercombe, who acted as Deputy Returning Officer for Yatala in the first elections for the House of Assembly in 1857 and died in 1866. Then there was a Robert Lyon Milne who with his servants and two drays took up a station in 1838 on the Onkaparinga River and kept a diary there. References in

the diary to the name Boucher and its termination in 1841 when we know he petitioned for insolvency suggest that he is our man, but there is more tracing to be done. Finally, there was a Robert Lyon Milne named after *our* Robert Lyon Milne who most likely befriended the former's parents, George and Elizabeth Milne, on board ship between Melbourne and Adelaide in August 1854 and assisted Elizabeth after she was widowed a few years later. Pat Milne's husband, Howard Milne, is descended from that George Milne's brother.

Milne's extensive Biblical as well as classical knowledge suggests that he may well have been an Episcopalian cleric or schoolmaster in Scotland, although no record has been found so far of this. In Adelaide he was *referred to* as 'Revd', although he never seems to have *signed himself* as such. Alternatively, he may well, as his 1871 census description had it, have 'been a soldier'. In 1859 he wrote to an Adelaide newspaper defending his use of the title 'Capt.' but without specifying *where* and *when* he had served and with which *regiment*. At other times he implied that he had served at Waterloo. At Swan River Colony, George Fletcher Moore initially referred to him as 'Capt.', believing he had served with the 42nd Regiment, but British military records (notoriously difficult to use) have not confirmed this so far. What *can* confidently be said is that Milne, at different times, liked to be *thought of* as a cleric or a soldier and that his writing reflected strong theological and classical influences.

Another problem is posed by his *nom de plume* 'Aristides' (after the aristocratic Athenian statesman and rival of the democrat, Themistocles) which was used by Milne in his letters to newspapers and other writings from 1839. This name was commonly used in the Australian colonies, with other examples to be found in the Sydney *Gazette* of the early 1820s and Brisbane's *Moreton Bay Courier* of the late 1850s. At Swan River, Milne had

earlier used the *nom de plume* 'Philaeth' (love of truth) when writing to *The Perth Gazette*. This was also commonly used.

Robert Lyon Milne's brief time at Swan River Colony was first highlighted by Mary Durack in her account of the Shaw family, *To Be Heirs Forever*, and more recently by Henry Reynolds, Bevan Carter and my own doctoral student Ann Hunter in his role as champion of the Aborigines. However, no-one so far has looked at what happened to him after Swan River.

Arriving on the *Marquis of Anglesea* in August 1829 with an indentured servant and family, he was recorded by the authorities as 'Robert Milne' but quickly changed his name to 'Robert Menli Lyon'. Allocated 3,813 acres of land known as Location 4, Upper Swan, by Governor Stirling on the basis of assets now estimated to have been worth £286, he never seems to have farmed what later became known as 'Belvoir'.

Introduced at Fremantle in February 1831 to Capt. William Shaw, who had failed to acquire a grant of land, Milne offered him *half* his allocation at Upper Swan. Inspecting the land for himself, Shaw found that his portion, consisting mostly of rock and sand, was virtually useless. It was, if you like, a Scotsman's gift. However, when Shaw politely declined, Milne then offered him the entire property and Shaw happily accepted. Milne was subsequently allocated more than 3,000 acres in the Avon Valley and purchased land at what is now Midland and Rottnest Is. as well as having town allotments in Perth and Fremantle.

Aged 40 and capable of hard physical work, Milne transported goods and mail between Fremantle and the Upper Swan, acting as his own boatman and keeping up with the latest news in the colony. More land came his way when he fenced Robert Dixon's grant of land, known as 'Spring Mount' and went on to acquire it through the courts in lieu of payment. Indeed, Lyon greatly occupied himself with litigation. He sued his indentured servant, William Nairn, for the cost of bringing him and his family out from London, eventually recovering £100 for breach of a contract (which the Commissioner believed Nairn had not understood when he signed it). In another case involving the sale of his two Perth allotments when the purchaser successfully argued that the agent had not dealt with the bidding in a proper manner, Milne took it upon himself to address the court. This is how *The Perth Gazette* described the incident:

Mr. Lyon stepped forward to harrangue [sic] the Bench, when the Commissioner called out warmly, 'Lyon, be silent: you are not known in the proceedings before me, and I will not hear you unless as a witness, and on your oath'.

Not long after his arrival at Swan River, Milne began to bombard first the Colonial Secretary in Perth and then the Secretary of State for Colonies in London on a wide range of issues including immigration, the need for convict labour and what to do about the Aborigines. He offered to lead an expedition to the north, where the Aborigines had told him there were rich lands, lakes and rivers. He offered to take 500 immigrants each year for an annual payment of £10,000, to be repaid with interest after twenty years. More than anything else, however, he wrote about the Aborigines, declaring

in simplicity of manners, generousness of disposition, and firmness of character, they very much resemble the ancient Caledonians, and were the disbelievers in Ossian to become acquainted with them they would almost be persuaded to the opposite opinion, so much do

the inhabitants of the Australian forests resemble the race whose ballads were sung by the bard of Morwen.

As settlement expanded and Aborigines began to lose their food resources by the fencing of paddocks , the driving away of marsupials and other game and the ploughing up of beds of tubers which had provide the bulk of the native diet, Milne was acutely aware of the potential for bloody conflict. At a public meeting at Guildford on 26 June 1832 he warned the settlers:

Reflect. You have seized upon land that is not yours. Beware, and do not, as a people, add to this the guilt of dipping your hands in the blood of those who you have spoiled of their country.

Having convinced Governor Stirling and Military Comandant F.C. Irwin that the Aborigines could be conciliated by conversion to Christianity and that Yagan, Dommera and Ningina should not be put to death but placed in his personal care, he explained to the Secretary of State what he had said:

I urged that they were guilty of no crime but that of fighting for their country. We call their deeds *murder*, so might they ours; but the fact was that they had a *right* to make war after their own manner.

Besides, they were now *prisoners of war*; and to put prisoners of war to death, in cool blood, was contrary to the law of nations and usages of war.

Milne then spent five weeks with them on Carnac Is. in late 1832, accompanied by two military guards. Learning a good deal of their language and recording their beliefs and way of life, he was acutely embarrassed when they escaped to the mainland. He subsequently told Stirling that in another two weeks he would have been able to use the men to negotiate a treaty of peace between the settlers and the Aborigines. At the same

time, he emphasised that *their* acquisition of English and his own acquisition of *their* language would facilitate all future communication between the two races.

The other positive outcome of the experiment was a four-part series published in *The Perth Gazette* in March 1833 entitled ‘A Glance at the Manners and Language of the Aboriginal Inhabitants of Western Australia’. The first systematic attempt to understand the Nyoongah, it elicited hostile responses from some readers who thought that Milne took an overly romantic view of these brutal savages. ‘My enemies may sneer, lampoon and defame’, he imperiously responded. ‘I regard them not’.

Some months earlier, Milne had proposed to the Agricultural Society a series of eleven recommendations as a blueprint to regulate future relations with the Aborigines. An important element of this plan was that the Legislative Council should pass a Bill

for the more effectually securing to them the rights and privileges of British subjects; together with the unmolested possession of those which naturally belong to them as the Aboriginal inhabitants: namely unrestricted fishing upon the rivers, even after the adjacent lands have been [al]located and also hunting upon lands that have not been reclaimed.

When the Agricultural Society in late 1833 deferred discussion of the recommendations, Lyon published them in *The Perth Gazette* on 11 January 1834, remarking that

the sooner the *national* rights of the Aboriginal inhabitants are recognized by some regular deed or charter, the better it will be for them, and the British colonies in this hemisphere.

Regrettably, there was not the political will to make this happen, although Stirling was to use Miago of the Upper Swan group to broker a peace with the Murray River people after the ‘Battle of Pinjarra’.

In the meantime, the momentum of racial conflict had inevitably gathered pace. At a meeting of settlers at Guildford in June to organise punitive raids against the Avon Valley tribes who had recently killed some white stockmen, Milne thought it necessary to deliver a long and forceful address which, as Henry Reynolds (who quotes it extensively in *This Whispering In Our Hearts*) has pointed out, constitutes one of the high points of colonial rhetoric in support of Aboriginal rights and the need for a treaty.

Settler antagonism towards Milne, especially from those with pastoral interests in the Avon Valley, can only have increased after the Guildford meeting. Initially regarded him as a harmless *crank*, some settlers were now beginning to think of him as a dangerous *lunatic*. Although he made no public comment on the so-called ‘Battle of Pinjarra’ of 28 October 1834, it would be surprising if he did not make his strong disapproval known at a time when it was felt that the blacks had been ‘*taught a lesson*’. No doubt it was this antagonism that helps explain his dramatic expulsion from the Agricultural Society at its meeting of 7 November that year, which had an unusually large attendance.

The case against him was that while at the Survey Office the previous day, inspecting his own letter to Stirling of 18 February 1831 about his transfer of his original land grant to Shaw, he had taken the opportunity of ‘interlining’ [i.e. amending] it, ‘so as materially to affect the sense and meaning’. W.K. Shenton, who was in the Survey Office at the time, told the meeting that he had witnessed this, as did the clerk who promptly accused Lyon of amending the letter, only to be told by him that it was *his* letter and that he had every *right* to do what he *pleased* with it!

At this point, Lyon jumped up on the table, exclaiming: ‘Gentlemen, I’m thunder struck! – astonished!’ Called to order and returning to his place, he explained that his action amounted to no more than correcting an ‘untruth’ in his own letter. ‘*Surely*, gentlemen,’ he told them, ‘you will not condemn me for adhering to the *truth*’. At the same time he believed that his ‘persecution’ over the letter was due in some degree to his connection with public affairs: he ‘had not been pleasing in many respects to *those in office*’. A strong show of hands supported his expulsion, *The Perth Gazette* subsequently arguing that if the alterations to his letter had escaped detection, they ‘would have affected the tenure of landed property of a considerable value’. To support its point, it printed side by side Lyon’s letter and the letter as amended by him. This is the original letter:

I trust Your Excellency will be pleased to take into consideration that I have resigned a favourite grant, the second choice that was made in the Colony, in favour of another, without any consideration, but merely on the ground of serving him and promoting the general interests of the Colony; that therefore, though an original settler, I am now without a foot of land on this side [of] the Mountains. with the exception of my town allotments; that even there I have been shut out from the banks of the River, through the miscarriage of Mr. Shaw’s letter to the Surveyor General.

The amended letter ran:

I trust Your Excellency will take into consideration that I have (*conditionally*) resigned the greater part of a favourite grant, the second choice made in the Colony, in favour of another, without any (*thing that deserved the name of*) a consideration, but merely on the ground of serving him and promoting the interests of the Colony; that therefore, though an original settler, I (*shall be if I oblige Mr. Shaw any further*) without a foot of land on this side [of] the Mountains, with the exception of my Town allotments; that even there I have been shut out from the banks of the river, through (*Mr Shaw’s neglect or*) the miscarriage of (*his*) letter to the Surveyor General.¹

By means of his amendments, Lyon appears to have *qualified* what had originally been a *generous favour* to Shaw, now suggesting that the latter had paid him at least something

¹ *The Perth Gazette*, 15 November 1834.

(which was actually against the law) and asking Stirling not to ‘oblige ... Shaw any further’ with (presumably) more land. While Lyon’s action was high-handed in the extreme, transgressing gentlemanly standards of the time (as well as today’s archival protocols, of course), its import hardly justified the high-minded outrage expressed by the Society’s members. It was as if history was repeating itself and *Aristides* being ostracised once again.

Milne was not forced to leave in the way that the Italian-born Anglican missionary Louis Giustiniani was four years later by his original sponsors, including Irwin, but he was aware of the mounting hostility towards him and no doubt decided there was no more future for him at Swan River Colony than there had been for *Aristides* in Athens. After a number of announcements in the press that he was departing the colony and some indications that he was bound for Van Diemen’s Land, he left in early 1835 for Mauritius after mortgaging property consisting of ‘Spring Mount’, the 3,000 acres in the Avon Valley, 200 acres of river front at Guildford and a house and land in Fremantle.

In Mauritius, still as Robert Menli Lyon, he served for the next few years as Professor of Greek and Latin at Port Louis College, but otherwise little is known of his time there. The one report we have is from the Quaker missionary, James Backhouse, who was returning to England in late 1838 after a lengthy and comprehensive tour of the Australian colonies to report on the situation of the Aborigines. Backhouse heard Milne speak publicly about the Aborigines at Swan River Colony and obtained copies of two letters he had written, later publishing them in the *Papers and Proceedings of the British and Foreign Aborigines’ Protection Society*.

In Mauritius, Milne also met Charles Boucher, a canny entrepreneur who, with his London-based brother, Frederick, had hatched a plan for an *Australasian Loan Company* that would accept deposits from migrants about to leave Britain for Australia, making bills to the same value available through a colonial agency. Travelling with Boucher and his wife from Mauritius, first to Hobart and then to Adelaide, Milne reverted to ‘Robert Lyon Milne’ which he then remained until his death. In November 1838 he established *The Australian Agricultural Bank*, offering an extraordinary 25% annual interest on deposits. In the high-minded advertisement that invoked the Scottish tradition of financial acumen, Milne wrote of the Bank’s proprietors that ‘while they make no pretences to *immaculate disinterestedness* ... instead of rendering their own interests *paramount*, they have *almost sacrificed* them to those of the public’.

Designed to stimulate agriculture in a colony where, instead of the productive balance between land, labour and capital anticipated by Edward Gibbon Wakefield’s scheme of ‘scientific colonisation’, there had been unproductive speculation in land and houses. Accordingly, the Bank may have seemed a good idea. However, there was no mention in the advertisement or the prospectus of *directors*, *shareholders*, or the form of *security* to be offered to depositors. The scheme was quickly sunk when the Bank of Australasia in Sydney, which Frederick Boucher falsely claimed to have employed him as Secretary in its London office, disassociated itself from the initiative that it was supposedly backing. While Milne himself was not accused of fraudulent intentions, he was portrayed in the Adelaide press as one of the instigators of a ‘bubble bank’ who had been a fool rather than a knave and was now obliged to compensate bill-holders who had been ‘bubbled’.

Frederick and Charles Boucher’s machinations in London through the British and

Australasian Bank and in Australia were subsequently publicised as ‘The Moorgate St Bubble’.

In the wake of this fiasco, Milne went to Sydney where in January 1840 he tried to capitalise on British humanitarian concerns for the Aborigines in the wake of the June 1838 Myall Creek massacre to form a self-supporting missionary establishment. Initially, his focus of interest was in the far north of what is now Queensland, but it subsequently moved to the Port Phillip district where settlement was threatening to dispossess Aborigines on an unprecedented scale. Governor Sir George Gipps was sympathetic at first to Milne’s group, but his attitude hardened when they appeared unlikely to raise significant funds and supporters in their own right. When he announced himself unwilling to grant them a tract of land, the scheme foundered. All that survived of this endeavour was a pamphlet that Milne published anonymously in Sydney a year earlier entitled *Australia: An Appeal to The World on Behalf of the Younger Branch of The Family of Shem*, introduced by these lines purportedly by ‘Aristides’:

So greatly have Australia’s sufferings
Moved me, that, impell’d by sorrow, I came here
To tell them, undismay’d, to earth and skies.
I heard the voice, I heard the loud lament:
I saw the tears upon her sable cheeks.

In his address to readers, Lyon hoped to played on their consciences, ‘soliciting one of the least of the crumbs that fall from your table, on behalf of Him who is daily *loading* it with all the *luxuries* of life’. His final rhetorical flourish was typical Milne hyperbole:

The writer is determined to live on bread and water till the salvation of [the Aborigines of] Australia be accomplished. Assist him in the great work if you can; but waste not your

time trying to gratify vain curiosity by idle conjectures respecting his name. Let it suffice that you hear ‘The voice of one crying in the Australian wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight’.

While re-printing earlier letters and articles, the pamphlet included a detailed description of Lyon’s dealings with Yagan from their time on Carnac until the latter’s treacherous murder in July 1833 by a white youth. An example of Lyon’s superior powers of observation and expression is his evocative description of the Nyoongah warrior. His first-hand knowledge of the Aborigines was also made clear in this passage:

I have seen them in almost all the common walks of life – I have met them by accident in the lonely desert – I have met them by appointment – I have walked and conversed with them – I have eaten, I have drunk, I have slept with them – I have performed the meanest offices for them when they were sick – I have taken the spear from them when quivering with rage – they have bathed my neck with tears of gratitude – and after all this I am to be told that I have no premises on which to ground my conclusions and form an estimate of their character?

Returning to Adelaide from Sydney in June 1840, Milne bought a parcel of land at Lefevre’s Peninsula, not far from Port Adelaide and about ten miles from Adelaide itself. Installed in Adelaide’s debtors’ gaol for a £6,000 debt incurred in his name by Charles Boucher, he was still able to enjoy what one visitor described as ‘a well-furnished room, with reading desk and other conveniences’. February 1846 saw him petitioning once again for insolvency. Not surprisingly, he became a vigorous campaigner against imprisonment for debt!

Attracted to Ballarat in 1853, no doubt by the prospect of making his fortune on the diggings, Milne by 1854 was living in a temperance hotel in Elizabeth St., Melbourne, where he addressed his apparently boundless energy to a new set of schemes. The first was a new colony to be called ‘Albertonia’, consisting of the Murray River basin from its

headwaters in the east to the sea in the west. Offering his services to the British government as Viceroy without salary if he was allowed to pursue his own policies, Milne's letters on the subject to the Secretary of State for Colonies were published by him in Melbourne later that year. Highly critical of the Wakefield scheme as it had played out in South Australia, Lyon advocated an alternative system that would make land available to settlers at a low annual rental. Somehow he managed to persuade no less than 12,000 people to sign a petition calling for the establishment of the new colony, but the idea was to fall on deaf ears in London.

At about the same time he issued an extraordinary tract entitled *The Approaching Crisis of Britain and Australia; The Evils and the Remedies of the Present Modes of Colonization, Emigration, and Transportation*. Consisting once more of letters sent to the Secretary of State for Colonies, it was premised on the belief that for various reasons, notably their resistance to the renewal of convict transportation, the Australian colonies were moving rapidly towards political independence and that a constitutional solution had to be found before they severed their connection with the mother country. While accepting that there was a continued need to transport criminals from Britain, he emphasised the desirability of an alternative location.

For all Lyon's good intentions, it is clear that the Colonial Secretary in Melbourne who forwarded his letters to London, and the Colonial Office who received them in a steady stream, quickly came to regard him as little more than a nuisance. Local support for a new colony in the Murray River area developed in the early 1860s, suggesting that on this issue, Lyon was before his time, but it is more difficult to explain why his ideas about colonial constitutional reform were not taken more seriously. Perhaps it was simply that

he lacked a powerful patron who could ensure a sympathetic ear at Whitehall. Like so many other failed plans and schemes, they have not been of interest to historians.

Milne's next initiative in 1856 involved the land that he had bought near Port Adelaide in 1841 and surveyed and drained for industrial use. The *Milunga and North Arm Company* offered shareholders a stake in the development of the 134 acre site for wharves, shops and warehouses which he believed was better suited to be Adelaide's port. However, the scheme seems to have been doomed to failure from the beginning, located as it was on the wrong side of the river and accessible only by boat. Milne also made the mistake of not appointing an agent in Adelaide to sell the shares and not informing one of his office-bearers that he been appointed to the position. Interestingly, he let it be known that any profit to be made would be devoted to the Aborigines who otherwise seem to have no longer interested him.

As a ratepayer for the Hundred of Port Adelaide, Milne served as Chairman of Commissioners, claiming in 1851 to have secured the franchise for his fellow ratepayers to exercise in the first elections for the Legislative Council. Despite his efforts, however, this local government position was the highest public office he ever managed to attain. Two attempts to be elected to the first House of Assembly in 1857 were overwhelmingly defeated at the polls and his subsequent hope to represent Port Adelaide was publicly ridiculed.

In what seems to have been a final attempt to develop a money-making scheme, Milne visited England in 1858 to promote railway construction in South Australia. In 1851 he had unsuccessfully petitioned the Legislative Council to extend the Adelaide City and Port

Railway to service his own land. Now he was dealing with railway promoter and tycoon, Sir Morton Peto, who offered to advance £2,000,000 to South Australia to build railways and to chair a company to carry out the work. Revealing this at a public meeting in Adelaide on 4 July 1859, Lyon tried in vain to have the proposal presented as a petition to the House of Assembly. Subsequently, Peto became involved in the British financial crisis of the early 1860s and was declared bankrupt in 1866.

From the late 1850s, Lyon disappeared from public view, but must have returned to England where he was recorded in the national census in early 1871. The rooming house at 19 Crown Court, Covent Garden that he shared with *twenty-three* others (including two policemen, a clerical tailor, a lithographic printer, a perfumer's assistant and a milliner's assistant, all much younger people) was in a run-down part of inner London where rents were low. Some indication of the company he was keeping in his final years can be gathered from his will, dated 19 February 1874, which was witnessed by Samuel Chapman Dean of Battersea, 'Toy Dealer', and John Henry Pakenham Marsh of Reigate, Surrey, 'Dramatic Agent', to whom he bequeathed 'all my lands in Australia and all my property'. Bequests of £1,000 p.a. were left to six individuals and smaller bequests to two others. Curiously, in a codicil of the same day, Milne went on to make further generous legacies of £1,000 p.a. to no less than six people and of £200 per annum to a further four. His estate, however, was entered as being worth £20, or less than the cost of burying him. Was this yet another example of Scottish generosity?

Lyon was an enigmatic character who defies easy analysis. It is tempting to conclude that he was either a great genius or a great fool, or perhaps both. The similarly bewildered

George Fletcher Moore can have the final say. This is what he wrote in his journal by way of an assessment after a visit from Lyon on 26 April 1833:

In the evening Mr. Lyon, the writer of those essays about the natives in our newspapers, came here on some law business. I do not know what to make of him. He is either a much *better* or much *worse* man than he seems. He is either somebody in *disguise* or incog[nito], or else he is a very great *hypocrite*. He is said to have been a man of *war* (in the 42nd Regiment); [and yet] his words are the words of a man of *peace*. He speaks as if he would wish you to believe him a zealous, disinterested '*missionary*' in concealment, or unconfessed. *Some* of his acts do not seem so *disinterested* - averse to litigation, yet always involved in it; professing *puerile* simplicity, yet arguing with the casuistry of a Jesuit; affecting a great knowledge of the languages. - I recollect staring at him one day not a little when he suddenly asked what I thought was the force of the particle 'Eth' in the first verse of the Hebrew bible - yet this man has been a common or uncommon boatman plying on the river here. A great financier, he proposed an admirable scheme of a bank, which was to enrich us all: the *only difficulty* in which was that the Govt. was to lend us £100,000!!! I think he must be some schoolmaster gone crazed or somebody, in short, touched in the attics. In short, did I say? In long[,] rather.

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