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W.A. Kelly and A.M. McCleery
with the assistance of Caroline Copeland

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Intersecting Empires: W. & R. Chambers and Emigration, 1832-1844

Robert J. Scholnick

In his popular Memoir of William and Robert Chambers, William Chambers proudly tells the extraordinary story of how he and his brother Robert created a mighty publishing empire (Chambers 1872). Established in 1832 in Edinburgh, W. and R. Chambers became perhaps the most important publishing house in nineteenth-century Britain; no other publisher did more to bring high-quality, low-cost and useful reading material to the great body of inspiring readers hitherto excluded from print culture. Prolific authors themselves, the brothers became innovative publishers, building a state-of-the-art printing plant in Edinburgh from which they distributed their periodicals, encyclopedias, histories, educational volumes and other works, first from Scotland to England and then around the globe. William’s Memoir traces the pattern of a new kind of social hero: the individual who rises from poverty to wealth and eminence through his own efforts and in the process accomplishes enormous good.

The brothers drew from long-standing Scottish educational and cultural values in building a firm whose global reach and influence remains to be assessed. At the heart of their work was the premise that in the emerging technological world basic literacy was a necessary condition if millions of their fellow citizens were to escape poverty. But while literacy was necessary, the Chambers brothers saw it was by no means sufficient. So widespread was poverty in Britain, they wrote on March 22, 1834 in Chambers’s Edinburgh Journal (hereafter CEJ), their pioneering low-cost weekly, and so “deplorably hopeless (are) the prospects of innumerable families in this country,” that “nothing can or will occur in the natural order of things to relieve them of their embarrassments; we know that even with the advantages given by capital, it now requires an enormous degree of skill...to make anything beyond a modest subsistence in most branches of trade and commerce” (CEJ 3:112, p.63). Although CEJ was an unstamped periodical and so prohibited from commenting on politics, the Chamberses, as I have elsewhere shown, did not shy away from addressing the hard social problems contributing to poverty, including inadequate diet, atrocious housing, poor medical care, unhealthful working conditions, alcoholism, lack of sanitation, especially in the cities, unemployment, low wages, inadequate educational opportunities and the many others (Scholnick 1999, pp.344-355).

As important as making progress on these issues remained, the brothers insisted that only large-scale emigration, particularly to the United States, but also to Canada and the Australian continent, could bring immediate relief to the millions of Britons living in poverty. I will argue that as proponents of self-help and modernization, the Chamberses imaginatively deployed the resources of print culture to promote emigration, becoming its most effective British advocates during the twelve-year period under consideration. One consequence of British migration was the development of a world-wide market for English-language publications, including those produced by W. & R. Chambers.

What, then, was the political and cultural significance of the firm’s continuing campaign to promote emigration, especially to the United States? What does an analysis of its discourse on emigration tell us about the fears and expectations of the emigrants themselves? How did William and Robert Chambers, each a leading Scottish antiquarian, understand the tension between Scottish nationalism and empire? How did they combine realistic warnings of the hardships to be faced in a new land with a vision inspiring enough to motivate the wavering to leave? Can we measure the effectiveness of their efforts? And how did the Chambers brothers as liberals confront the potential moral complications of colonialism, the fact that Britons would dominate and displace native populations?
Embedded in the Chamberses’ treatment of emigration was a core narrative, one in which I courageous emigrant, uprooted by poverty and the search for economic and social opportunities transplant himself and his family to a productive land across the water where he becomes a person: stronger, healthier, self-sufficient, self-governing, but still ready to help other settlers. He must be repressed – and the Chamberses are thinking particularly of their fellow Scots – is the individual’s deep attachment to family, to home and nation. But such losses must be endured if the family is to save itself from destitution. The successful emigrant is portrayed as a social hero, since establishing a home abroad, he opens the way for others. The brothers recognized that emigration threatened the very Scottish traditions that they themselves as writers and publishers were doing much to inscribe in the national memory; however, as exponents of the Scottish Enlightenment with its progressive, evolutionary model of development, they understood that there was no going back to some mythical past.

Within that evolutionary model of national development, as Kate Trumpener has written “each historical culture is replaced by the next, most advanced one” (Trumpener 1997, p.29). Th Chamberses were convinced that emigration and the expansion of the Empire represented the nexus in the process of modernization both for Scotland and Britain as a whole. Further, many of the accounts from emigrants that appeared in CEJ tell stories of extraordinary growth and improvement, with the capacity of favorable new circumstances to transform the individual into quite another order of being. Robert Chambers would explore this theme in his anonymous 1844 sensation, Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation, the first fully-worked out treatment of evolution or the development principle to appear in English. There he argued that “The whole train of animated beings, from the simplest and oldest up to the highest and most recent, are, then, to be regarded as a series of advances of the principle of development, which have depended on external physical circumstances, to which the resulting animals are appropriate” (Chambers 1994, p.203). The rapid advances of British emigrants in response to the conducive “external physical circumstances” of their new homes provided a suggestive context for Robert Chambers’s substantive volume of scientific explanation.

The Chamberses’ emigration narrative was fundamentally political, since in depicting the ability of individuals from the lower orders to organize productive, self-governing and prosperous communities in the wilderness, it affirmed democracy. No guidance from the land-owning classes was necessary. CEJ’s consistent recommendation of democratic America as the best destination for the emigrant, despite its reservations about the country’s failure to eliminate the curse of slavery, represented an implicit call for a widening of the franchise in Britain. The Chamberses’ emigration campaign served, then, as a running indictment of Britain itself for failure to provide for its subjects. When, as Stephen Fender has argued, these “tracts, letters and other documents advertising and recording the experience of American settlement” should be seen as constituting a literary form, a “canon,” then the Chambers firm became an important site of the development of a discourse that encompassed the entire Empire (Fender, p.19).

My first section looks at the way the Chamberses developed a discourse based on a shared mixture of enticement, caution, and reassurance to promote emigration, even while acknowledging its risks and difficulties. I then consider the way that the Chamberses countered arguments in opposition to emigration within the Scottish community, particularly those mounted by Thomas Chalmers, leader of the Free Church. Finally, in analyzing the Chamberses’ response to the desperate economic conditions of the late thirties and early forties, I show how they developed a case for a coordinated program of assisted migration. In this sense, the Chamberses’ policy anticipated the position of such “Colonial Reformers” as Charles Buller (See Haury 1987). Prompted by an upsurge in emigration as a result of the economic crisis at home, W. & R. Chambers published a series of highly popular low-cost pamphlets on settling in four major regions: America, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. I conclude with a brief analysis of the Chamberses’ assessment of the costs and benefits for Britain and subject peoples of the imperial project.

Remarkably, in the very first issue of CEJ, published on February 4, 1832, William Chambers identified emigration as a major subject for his new venture. (Robert Chambers would not formally join William for several months.) “For the express use of the poor man,” William wrote in ‘Editor’s Address to His Readers’, “I shall open a continued flow of valuable and correct information for his guidance, should he be disposed or necessitated to emigrate – neither, on the one hand, buoying him up with false hopes, nor, on the other, discouraging him by gloomy anticipation” (“CEJ” 1:1, p.1) That initial issue includes a long article on ‘Emigration’ which claims that since the available publications on the subject are too expensive for members of “the humbler classes,” CEJ, selling for only three half-pence, would meet this pressing need. Chambers saw that a certain number of his readers were considering what might well be the most important decision of their lives: whether to leave Britain and if so to decide where to go, how to get there, and how to manage the complex process. But how could a low-cost weekly start without capital provide expert advice on the subject?

Fortunately, right at home in Edinburgh William Chambers had resources from which to draw. Along with that initial essay on “Emigration” he included a lengthy excerpt from Adam Ferguson’s On the Agricultural Condition of Canada and Part of the United States, a book written under the sponsorship of the Highland Society. Praising Ferguson as someone who “never palavers on any subject, but comes at once to the point; and that is what gives his paper its greatest value” (“CEJ” 1:3). Chambers published lengthy excerpts from the book over the next two months. These evaluate various regions of Canada and the United States for settlement, paying close attention to such questions as soil conditions, suitable crops, land costs, and transportation. Writing with the express purpose of encouraging emigration, Ferguson concludes that “the climate, the soil, the accessibility of North America, with various other circumstances, offer nearly an assurance of success” – both for the “moderate capitalist” and the “frugal, sober, and industrious labourer or artisan.” William concluded his excerpts from Ferguson by promising that CEJ would continue to publish such “solid and useful” information on migration to “the land of Promise” (“CEJ” 1:10, April 7, 1832, p.78).

Reflecting his deep commitment to the subject, William Chambers decided not only to use the writings of others, but to become an expert himself. He understood that CEJ would become the most trusted source on emigration only if it could develop an authoritative voice of its own. In ‘Emigration—Upper Canada’, published on May 5, 1832, he sensibly recommends the areas between Lakes Ontario and Erie as the best region for those intending to farm in Canada; the essay offers a step-by-step guide on what to take, how to pack, and what to buy on arrival. Documenting the need for skilled craftsmen and operatives as well as farmers, he concludes by asserting that “industrious men of every class may look forward with confidence to an improvement in their situation, as may save enough from one season’s work to buy land themselves in settled townships” (“CEJ” 1:14, p.109).

The next month CEJ wisely cautioned readers not to go to Australia. Writing in response to a number of requests for an evaluation of the suitability of Van Diemen’s Land and New South Wales for settlement, William Chambers – and he more than Robert seems to have written on the subject – warned on June 9, 1832 of the difficulty of the long voyage, the overcrowded conditions, the low morals of the convict settlers, and poor prospects for the farmer: “Almost no country has been so shamefully overpopulated as New South Wales,” he asserted. “Books have been written to decay settlers; and it is lamentable to state that they have been too often successful.” Far better to look “across the Atlantic, to the United States and Upper Canada, as places where [settlers] will never lack a humble and comfortable subsistence, provided they be but industrious; and they will, in almost every case, have the gratification of leaving their families in a state of comparative ease and competence,” he advised (p.149). Here too William’s advice was on target; the historian of British
emigration Charlotte Erickson has concluded that at this time the “obstacles placed in the way of prospective small farmers in Australia were enormous”. (Erickson 1994, p. 180).

Chambers flatly told his readers on December 7, 1833 that America offered the best opportunities for the settler. His remarks came by way of an introduction to E. H. Flint’s important book Geography and History of the Western States (1828), from which CEJ published extensively. Chambers brought the astounding news that “Beyond the Allegheny Mountains, in the United States there lies an immense inhospitable to the British, and consisting of the finest land in the known world. In this significance of this and similar letters in CEJ it must be said that the editors were selective.

That is not to say that the Chamberses minimized the difficulties of settling in a new land or in a new country. They warned of the need for careful planning. All “foolish, visionary schemes” were sure to fail. And they warned of the need for careful planning. All “foolish, visionary schemes” were sure to fail. And they warned that “the unscrupulous promoters and land speculators out there ready to duped the unwary. On

Even while the Chambers brothers understood the risks of starting a new life, they also saw the opportunities that came with it. They encouraged others to come and take advantage of the new opportunities. They wrote about the benefits of migration to America, describing it as a way to escape poverty and distress.” (p. 364). The author’s formal language and articulate style made their arguments convincing.

The Chamberses themselves were not the only ones to see the benefits of migration. Many other social reformers and writers supported the idea of migration, seeing it as a way to escape poverty and improve one’s life. However, they also recognized the challenges that come with migration. They encouraged others to be careful in their planning and to consider the risks involved. The Chamberses’ belief in the benefits of migration was reflected in their own lives, as they themselves moved to America and set up successful businesses.

Although the Chambers brothers initially conceived CEJ as a periodical addressed to Scottish readers, it quickly found favor throughout Britain. Nevertheless, in recommending emigration, the Chamberses saw all around them the profound dislocations as a result of the on-going Scottish emigration. They saw the need for careful planning and a willingness to work hard.

In conclusion, the Chamberses’ work illustrated the benefits of migration, the need for careful planning, and the importance of hard work. Their beliefs and experiences resonate with modern times, as migration continues to be a significant issue. The Chamberses’ work serves as a reminder of the opportunities and challenges that come with migration and the importance of careful planning and hard work.
men, textile weavers or day laborers. The Scottish Poor Law before 1843 was notoriously hostile to the provision of poor relief for the able-bodied unemployed, though in practice modest doles were often given” (Devine 1992, p.6). William Chambers would seem to be addressing precisely such dislocated workers and farmers when he bluntly offered them a choice: One could stay at home and starve or go to North America and become a new person.

As evidence of what was possible, CEJ published a letter from a recent settler in Upper Canada (Ontario). The letter, for whom the authenticity of the editor was careful to vouch, appeared in two parts, on June 15 and 22, 1833: “The following letter has been put into our hands by a gentleman from the midst of this city, and as it cannot fail to be of service to many of our readers, we readily afford it space. It is the composition of a person who very lately emigrated to Canada.” The migrant, a, his mother, his ostensible addressee, that “we are all in the very best health, and in all likelihood in a short time, [will] have in this country every comfort we could desire.” Apart from describing his excellent agricultural prospects, he outlines the opportunities for craftsmen: “We have very few mechanics here; indeed, I know of none except two smiths, who also have land; one shoemaker and a tailor employed by the storekeepers who receive twelve dollars a-month, and board, but the man is generally half the week drunk. In my opinion, no man can do wrong in coming into the country who is industrious and sober, and who is not amply remunerated for his labour at home; for it is beyond doubt that the Canadas have as great natural advantages as the United States, and are running the same race in prosperity, and to greatness.” The settlement is composed of free and independent individuals who regularly join together to help another in such tasks as home construction and stump clearing. What has emerged is a flourishing civic culture – the writer himself volunteers as school teacher. (CEJ 2:72, June 15, 1833, p.169, p.168)

In this way, CEJ sought to counter fears of a cold, friendless wilderness, by offering instead myth of frontier life as a kind of return to a pastoral age where native and settler alike come to live harmoniously together. On February 13, 1834, CEJ relayed the strategies used by a generous Canadian Indian to a group of recent settlers, the M’Dougalds, to discover a fertile meadow which they later add to their holdings. “Friendly and faithful”, the Indian attaches himself to the family, exchanging venison for farm products. The report’s author, a Captain M’Diamand, expresses his “hope...that no untoward accident will occur to mar this beautiful picture of sylvan life, the M’Dougald colony will wax stronger and stronger, till every section of the prairie is forced to yield tribute to the spade and the plow.” (CEJ 3:105, Feb 1, 1834, pp.3-4) Without necessarily doubting this story, one must note what it conceals; as one scholar observed, “for Canada’s indigeneous population, the nineteenth century was a disaster” (Martin 1999, p. 533).

The Chalmerses deployed such letters – and the tremendous opportunities for growth and transformation that they described – as a major weapon in the battle against such conservatives as the theologian Thomas Chalmers, leader of the Free Church. In his 1832 book, On Political Economy, Chalmers warned in Malthusian terms of “a besetting limit, which the mighty tide of advancing population tends to overpass, and which, being impassable, throws the tide back again upon general society; charged, as it were, with a distress and disorder that are extensively felt throughout the old countries of the civilized world.” The only legitimate response was not emigration, but Christian charity, hard-work, and self-discipline in sexual matters. Chalmers argued that emigration schemes, which were bound to fail in any event, would only discard “moral restraint” among the poor.” Chalmers recognized the secular state, which had increased legal poor relief, was actually doing more good than harm, Chalmers insisted, as one scholar has summarized his position, that “fundamental social authority had to be shifted from the secular State to the national Church Establishments. The Christian communal ideal alone would save the nation.” (Brown 1982, pp. 194-202)

More than anything, the Chalmerses cited the extraordinary success of their fellow Scots and others in settling the vast, empty spaces of North America in responding to such social and religious conservatism. On June 30, 1832, CEJ attacked what it called the “detestable theory” of Malthus by insisting “that there are immense tracts of land, islands, and even continents, which till this hour, are lying in nearly their primeval state, with the soil untouched since the beginning of the world. So boundless are these almost uninhabited territories…that, if proper means were used, they would yield food, clothing, and a place of residence to more people than all the ancient settlements of the human race at present contain...And the seventeen millions of human beings belonging to that little island that has raised up such an alarm, might be transported to the banks of one of the mighty rivers in the United States, and it would hardly be known…Send us over your whole population (says an American writer); we have plenty of room for you all and hundreds of millions more.” (CEJ 1:22, p.169). Given the significant differences in wages between the United States and Britain, as well as the seemingly boundless opportunities of the North American continent, the case for emigration could not be clearer. The challenge for writers and editors committed to the cause was to develop a means to reach and convince those most in need of leaving home to do so.

Even as CEJ confronted such conservatives as Chalmers, so too did it have to acknowledge the very real pain that emigration brought with it – such as to those who left home and those who remained, particularly in Scotland. The fact is, that as a result of the high proportion of the population that left home, “no other industrial society in Europe experienced such an emmoration” as did Scotland, over the course of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth (Devine 1992, p.2). And so on May 18, 1833, CEJ published ‘Emigration’ by James Hogg, the ‘Ettrick Shepherd’, which opens with a long dirge or lament: “It is long since that emigration from the Highlands commenced; for, when clanship was abolished as far as government edicts could abolish it, the poor Highlanders were obliged to emigrate. But never till now did the brave and intelligent Borderers rush from their native country, all with symptoms of reckless despair. It is most deplorable. The whole of our most valuable peasantry and operative manufacturers are leaving us. All who have made a little money...are hurrying from us as from a place infected with the plague. Every day the desire to emigrate increases.” Most tellingly, however, Hogg lets slip the confession that “If I were not the very individual that I am, I should be the first to depart. But my name is now so much identified with Scotland and Ettrick Forest, that...I cannot leave them!” He then tells the affecting story of an old peddler who secretly pays the fares of the oldest sons of a large family so that all might sail together to America.

In a footnote the editors comment that “We willingly give insertion to this communication from Mr. Hogg – for, though the prejudice of place should never interfere to a great extent with the prospects which an individual may have of bettering himself through emigration, it cannot be denied that there is a sentiment of a sacred, and in one point of view, most useful kind, in one’s attachment to one’s native country; which sentiment appears to us to be developed in a most touching manner by our respected correspondent.” Still, as the Chalmerses went on to argue, reason must prevail: It “behoves every man, whose conditions or prospect requires it, to remove to one of those countries calculated to afford him a large and liberal reward for the degree of exertion he puts forth.” A person who “can barely support himself and his family by working ten hours per day in Britain can earn twice that amount while working fewer hours in Canada.” However “abstractly amiable the love the place of our nativity may be,” it is “an idea which certainly creates hordes of paupers, and ought therefore to be put aside by men of rational understanding” (CEJ 2:68, pp.124-125).

Again, the best way to counter this and other reservations about the emigration process was by printing emigrants’ letters. For instance, one writer, after testifying to his “excellent” health since he has settled in Canada, speaks of the pleasure he takes in “the idea of vigorous activity” and praises the rapid improvements in roads and other requirements of civilization. He describes the country side and the “intolerable fertility” of the soil constantly amaze him. If only he had come earlier, he would be “twice the man of substance that I can be by the same amount of capital now.” Commenting that the letter can be trusted since it was not written for publication, the Chalmerses praise those “intrepid men who are entitled to win the world they are seeking. It is they who are laying the foundations of opulent families beyond the Atlantic, and it is they who will deserve the thanks of succeeding generations” (CEJ 111:112, March 22, 1834, p.64).
A letter from the Inverness Courier appearing in CEJ on July 1, 1837 put the issue square. The author too has felt that “sever patriae, a love of home, that fosters almost unceaseful attachment to scenes of childhood.” But “while your overcrowded population are in want of sustentation, and while the necessities of life are here to be had in abundance, it is an insult to the standing of your countrymen, if not a proof of moral guilt, that the blessings provided by Nature should be so overlooked, and that so many should remain at home, trusting to public charity for support, and, it may be, callously wrapped in indolence and want of energy.” Warning against leasing a land company, which might place newcomers on the “very outskirts of civilization,” be offer practical advice on how to purchase a farm. Lamenting “the destitution that threatens ye highland population,” he concludes that only emigration can relieve destitution.

I turn now to the final years of the 1830s and the first few years of the next decade, when the worst economic contraction of the century brought new attention to the subject of emigration. Initially, we have seen, CEJ presented emigration as an individual decision; it is the individual who must take responsibility for improving his lot by saving enough money to relocate, decide where to go, and how to get there. But the Chalmbers saw that all of that took a certain sophistication – and demanded a high order of literacy. And the fact was, there were all too many individuals, particularly in Britain, who simply could not read. But these were precisely the people who had the most to gain. And so CEJ called for the development of a coordinated national effort in which all concerned parties – the colonies themselves, the British government, and the various private stock companies – would work together to assist those in need of emigration. In fact, the numbers of emigrants were increasing dramatically, rising from 62,000 in 1839 to 90,000 in 1840, and 118,000 in 1841. Even so, the Chalmbers regularly argued, such numbers remained insufficient.

In a leader on “Emigration” published on May 1, 1841, CEJ commented with some exasperation that even with a recent increase in the numbers of people leaving, if matters were properly managed ten additional emigrants would be leaving for every one who now leaves: “When we recollect that there is that superabundance of hands which lowers wages to a rate comparable to bare existence, and causes a wide-spread deterioration of physical and moral circumstances; while there, across a certain breadth of sea easily traversed by vessels, lands of almost incalculable extent and fertility lie ready for occupation and offer highly remunerative employment to any number of labourers, we cannot help feeling a certain degree of surprise at the general apathy on the subject.” It was time to make promoting and assisting emigration a national priority: “With such inestimable facts [of opportunities] before us, we repeat that it is truly surprising how little the subject of colonial emigration is agitated. Why the prejudices – those grand rudiments of future free and civilized people – should not, to use a common phrase, be made the most of, pass us our comprehension. Whether the blame is imputable to the colonies themselves, or the home country, it is not for us to say, but the fact is clear that there is an error somewhere. What we should wish to see is a thorough awakening on the subject,” with “active measures” taken by all parties. The need was for “a sound, a continuous, and methodic principle” of promoting and sustaining emigration (p. 117). In that essay the Chalmbers pointed particularly to the exceptional opportunities in Australia – which it documented by quoting extensively from a letter, dated July 23, 1840, from a recent settler in Melbourne to his father in Scotland. (CEJ: 10:483, p.117)

As a result of the collapse of the American economy in 1837 and 1838, the Chalmbers turned now to an analysis of prospects for emigrants in Australia. An article published on May 12, 1838 on ‘Emigration to New South Wales’ remarked that “Our attention has repeatedly been drawn, both by public writers and private communications, to that part of the Australian continent, known by the name of New South Wales; but not being altogether satisfied with the arrangements of supplying convict labourers to the colony, or the accounts given of the social conditions and the prospects of the settlers, and also fearing that the trouble and expense of transit would be greater than could possibly be encountered by the majority of persons in the humbler walks of life, we have hitherto abstained from saying a single word on that subject. Causes for objection having now in great measure been removed, we propose to present our readers with two or three articles descriptive of the New South Wales colony, and the chances of success which would attend a removal thither. We are the more inclined to take up this question, in consequence of the state of affairs in Canada and the United States of America, which are too well known to require particular notice. While thus the door of American migration has shut, that of Australian migration has opened; and we may expect to see as steady a flow of settlers proceeding to New South Wales, as ever set in for Upper Canada or Michigan.” (CEJ: 7:328, May 12, 1838, p.124) CEJ followed with two articles appearing on May 19, 1838 and June 30, 1838, on New South Wales – with precise instructions on how to obtain free passage and establish oneself in farming.

The promise of assisted emigration to Australia is perhaps best reflected in a report, ‘Condition of a Cluster of Highland Emigrants in New South Wales’, published on July 17, 1841. It is based on “a private letter from the Rev. Dr. Lang to Mr. John Bowie W. S., Edinburgh.” At home on the Isle of Skye, these emigrants were among the most wretched of the wretched. In fact, they were forced to live along with their own cattle in miserable housing – with a diet composed almost exclusively of potatoes (a crop that would fail later in the decade). The men were already internal emigrants, forced to travel south in the spring in search of whatever work could be found. These families are unable to save anything for emergencies or for old age. But now, after only a year in Australia, their modest farms in the community have become profitable and they need not share their homes with their domestic animals. The children already attend school; the long train of illegitimacy is in the process of being broken. There can be no doubt that “the original settlement had been completely successful,” CEJ asserts, “when we consider that but a year had elapsed from the commencement of the settlement, we can not doubt that a few years will see a cluster of miserable Hebridean peasants transformed into a set of farmers equal to those in the average districts of their native country.” (CEJ: 10:494, July 17, 1841, pp.204-05) The lesson for social policy could not be clearer: poverty is a consequence of circumstance, not character.

The upsurge in interest in emigration at this time, the Chalmbers reported on June 5, 1841, was prompting many readers to write them requesting personal guidance on emigration matters. Since it would be impossible to respond individually to each letter, they decided to publish four pamphlets: Emigration to Canada and Other British American Possessions; Emigration to the United States; Emigration to Australia; and Emigration to Van Diemen’s Land and New Zealand, each selling for three half-pence. These “poor-man’s guides” to emigration were incorporated in Information for the People beginning with the 1842 edition. The pamphlets were drawn from articles that had appeared in CEJ. Their purpose was both to help individuals considering migration and to “convey to those who remain some knowledge of the regions to which so many of their friends and fellow-countrymen have removed.” (Information for the People, p.674) “It is gratifying to see a thorough awakening on the subject,” with “active measures” taken by all parties. The need was for “a sound, a continuous, and methodic principle” of promoting and sustaining emigration (p. 117). In that essay the Chalmbers pointed particularly to the exceptional opportunities in Australia – which it documented by quoting extensively from a letter, dated July 23, 1840, from a recent settler in Melbourne to his father in Scotland. (CEJ: 10:483, p.117)

Each of the four pamphlets warns potential emigrants to be prepared for “the drawbacks attending first difficulties”, but tells them not to be discouraged, since, “by patience and enterprise the settler will unquestionably possess a competence, along with the blessing of mental tranquility, and be relieved of all fears respecting the rearing of his family in a state of decent independence”. (Information for the People, p. 690) Indeed, “British North America is a country placed in infinitely better circumstances at the present moment than any part of Great Britain and Ireland,”
and to emigrate to Canada, or any other British colony, "is simply to remove...to another part are rendered more so by the unprincipled conduct of the natiives which are employed to collect Great Britain...Except for the drawbacks attending first difficulties, there is no substantial obstacle. Justice also is administered in a foreign language...and the courts are so few, that districts that are larger than Scotland have hardly one each". (Information for the People, II, p. 602).

Economically, the Chamberlins estimated, the cost of administering the empire for the British themselves...America for purchasing land is far more efficient than the Canadian. Canada is not yet self-sufficient, and although it reaps a government's annual income of six millions annually to the colonies" (p. 602). Further, the system does not benefit the downright and frank in their behaviour, less ceremonious, and are in every way more independent. Colonies either, since they are kept in "a state of tutelage, and cannot, without a very great change, cut people in their thoughts and actions than the Generality of English and Scotch. From all that...in their state of affairs, start forward on a course of prosperity." The artificial restrictions on economic activity in the colonies inhibit their development. Why support the colonies, why possess an "immense" than any people on the surface of the earth." Without naming them, the pamphlet responds: "It appears to us, that the only real advantage derived by Britain from her colonies, is the in such recent publications as Bell's Men and Things in America (1838) and Brothers' The Unidentified means to send large masses of her population as emigrants to vast and fertile territories. States of North America as They Are: Not as They Are Generally Described: Being a Cure where their settlements become the nurseries of future independent and civilized nations. In this Radicalism (1840) that attempt to "liberate the American nation, in the gross, and to hold up not on the state of England' civilization; and it is only matter of deep regret that, by proper management and abolition of all restrictions, the colonies are not rendered more valuable and less expensive to the mother country" (p. 602).

In short, for the Chamberlins, the sooner the colonies became free and independent nations the better. Yet, in the meantime, as what we might call "liberal imperialists," they supported emigration and settlement as an activity that would at one and the same time relieve the burden of poverty at home and bring the best of the advanced British civilization - with its respect for the freedom of religion, free expression, and the rule of law, to far reaches of the globe. And just as they sought to bring characteristic Scottish values of education and literacy to Britain, so too would the Chamberlins bring those values to everyone in the expanding empire. In that sense, the expanding British empire and the growing publishing empire of W. & R. Chambers intersected.

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