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Thomas Leader Harman: a gentleman of fortune in mid-nineteenth century Southampton

Thomas Leader Harman is an elusive enigma. ‘That American sprite’ was his soubriquet in his younger days. Settling in Southampton in the grandest of styles in 1838, he was seen as the saviour of the Liberal party in the borough and spoken of as a future Member of Parliament. Within twenty years, he was a virtual bankrupt, forced to return to his native land to live out the rest of his life in obscurity. An attempt is made in this essay to chart his roller coaster journey.

The story begins with our subject’s father, also Thomas Leader Harman. Born in England, he was one of the foremost expatriates in Louisiana, then the newest of the United States following its purchase from France in 1803. He was one of the first directors of the Louisiana Bank, founded in 1805. In March 1805 he was elected, by popular ballot, an Alderman for the *Faubourg Marigny* (the Fifth Ward) in the first municipal elections for New Orleans. The district included the French Quarter and the Cabildo. He accumulated property in the city. Records of slave auctions in the state of Louisiana reveal that between February 1805 and July 1820 he took part in thirty seven transactions involving either individuals or families. The purchase/sale price ranged between $400 and $2,000. In late 1820 or 1821, Harman senior left New Orleans with his family to settle in England. Here, he freed his slaves, an act later interpreted as a humanitarian gesture. We find him in October 1821 in the Bishop’s Waltham church registers as witness to the marriage of Mary Meriton, future sister-in-law to his eldest son. The family relationship was even closer for a fellow witness, Jane Meriton, was almost certainly his sister. Harman senior died in June 1823, aged 47 years, in Everton, a respectable township of Liverpool. He is buried in the graveyard of St George’s Church. Our subject’s mother was Charlotte Gorham, born in June 1786 in Barnstaple County, Cape Cod, Massachusetts. She was the tenth child of Captain Sturgis Gorham and traced her ancestry to New England patriots of the seventeenth century. She died in Bath in 1821.

Thomas and Charlotte had three children: Thomas Leader, born *c.*1814; Francis S, born *c.*1815; and Charlotte Gorham, born 1817. The fate of each was bound up with their father’s will, made shortly before he died. His property lay in Louisiana, a state whose legal system was based on the *Code Napoleon*. Each of the heirs was to receive an equal share, denying the eldest son the right of primogeniture. Property itself could not be devised by will. The heirs could inherit only the proceeds of the sale of property. A specific condition of the will was that no land was to be alienated until the youngest heir came of age. Charlotte’s twenty-first birthday was in October 1838. In the event, the will was executed two and a half years early. A subsequent emancipation act allowed minors at the age of nineteen years to apply to a District Court to be treated as though they had

reached the age of majority. Thomas, bravely enduring the journey to New Orleans, successfully made such an application. Acting with the guardian representing his brother and sister (Nathaniel Cox), he instituted proceedings in the Probate Court of New Orleans to expedite the will. The father's estate was sold by public auction on 9 May 1836. The catalogue belonging to Francis is in the Hampshire Record Office (4M92/N20/16). According to the *New Orleans Bee*, 26 April 1836, this was to be 'one of the most extensive and important sales which has ever been announced in this city and the great advantages possessed by this property from its favourable position cannot but be appreciated by persons desirous of making permanent and profitable investments.' The sale included lots in Camp Street, St Mary Street, Julia Street, St Charles Street, Girod Street, Magazine Street and Carondelet Street. The latter, close to the New State House and the Market House, were particularly desirable. The property was a mix of dwelling houses, vacant lots for development, cotton presses, warehouses, stores and a distillery. Also included was land in the rapidly-developing suburb of Carrollton, made more attractive by the opening the year before of the New Orleans and Carrollton Railroad. In the current buoyant property market, the auction realized $909,500. Thomas himself bought some of the choicest sites. Under the terms of the auction, purchasers paid one-sixth of the sale price in cash. The balance was to be paid annually, without interest, in equal amounts over the next five years.

For several years before taking the inheritance, Harman was able to enjoy an enviable lifestyle. Part of this time was spent in Southampton. He was educated at the school of John Bullar, training ground of many of the town's leaders, where he would have acquired a sound classical and Christian education. His first political memory, revealed in a rare moment of public retrospection, was the nomination of the Whig John Story Penleaze in the pivotal pre-Reform election of January 1830. In autumn 1834 he married Anne Seward Meriton, bringing the two families, both of which had American antecedents, even closer. Born in Bishop's Waltham in 1805, she was the youngest daughter of Captain Richard Meriton of the East India Company. Based in Portsmouth, he made annual voyages to the east between 1780 and 1805. An elder sister was married to the Gosport shipbuilder Thomas White the younger. They were the parents of Jessie Jane Meriton White, known to later generations as Jessie White Mario. Harman was thus second cousin to, and for a time trustee of, the heroine of the Italian *Risorgimento*. Anne was nine years his senior: the 1841 census reduces her age by five years, making a conventionally more respectable age difference. The marriage between Thomas and Anne took place in Paignton, and for three years they lived in south Devon, later moving to Torquay. It was here that their first child, Anna Victoria, was born in May 1837. A collection of bills in Hampshire Record Office (4M92/G8/13, 15, 16) show the couple, before and after their nuptials, spending lavish, unwholesome sums with tradesmen in London, Southampton and Devon. There are indications, however, that Harman had earlier followed more lowly paths as an apothecary's apprentice. Hence the taunts of his political enemies in the early 1840s of being 'your two-penny half-

penny counter-jumping mushroom', an 'ex-bottle-washer' and 'Apothecary Harman'. As he rose, in the full pomp of political power, to nominate one of the Liberal candidates for the borough in 1842 he was saluted with cries of 'more physic – Pill No.3'.

Harman hoped that the sale of his father's property would end any connection with New Orleans: that he should never, even at the most remote period, visit 'that place' again. The principal part of his capital was to be transferred to England, leaving sufficient in New Orleans to produce, under the care of a local agent, an annual income of about £1,500. The Kittnocks estate, near Botley in the parish of Bishop's Waltham, was purchased at public auction in June 1837 for £4,744. It consisted of a large house and two farms totalling 146 acres, advertised as 'an eligible opportunity for investment'. His mother-in-law had been an executor of the former owner (Mrs Jane Wooll) and was the principal creditor of the estate's trustees. This brought charges of connivance by the vendor's solicitor, James Paddon of Fareham, also an executor of Mrs Wooll's will. November 1838 saw the purchase of the paddle steamer *Sir John St Aubyn,* built the previous year and eminently suited for pleasure parties and towing, for over £2,000. It was a joint speculation with his wife's brother-in-law Thomas White. In the same year he bought a small property in Acton, Middlesex, for £60. Hopes however of building up a property portfolio in England were washed away by the financial tsunami that hit the United States in the second half of the decade. New Orleans suffered disproportionally. Scarcity of money rendered the southern states a virtual barter economy. The property market seized up. Rents, where they could be taken, plummeted and mortgages became prohibitively expensive. Banks ceased to trade. Stocks became worthless. Almost all the old Houses in the city failed.

Harman was personally largely immune from the collapse of the financial institutions. His only major loss was the $2,000 worth of stocks he had invested, on the advice of a former friend of his father who worked for Baring Brothers, in the United States Bank. He was far more exposed to the collapse of the property market. The value of his realty in New Orleans halved. Most of those who had bought land at the 1836 auction defaulted before the last instalment was due in 1841. He was badly served by the estate's agent in the city, his maternal cousin Henry William Palfrey. Born in Boston in 1798, Henry had accompanied his father and three of his four brothers to New Orleans in 1803. Henry's maladministration verged on the scandalous, failing to capitalize on the short-term vitality of the cotton market, ignoring opportunities to send remittances to England and reinvesting much of what should have been remitted in toxic real estate. Harman replaced him as agent in September 1837, sending out the youthful Benjamin Thomas, brother to the Town Clerk of Tewkesbury. The close nexus between the two houses was even more dangerous. Palfrey had succeeded Nathaniel Cox as guardian to then still under-age Charlotte. The New Orleans courts had enforced a security of $150,000 by mortgage. By spring 1841, this security was worthless. Palfrey was reduced almost to beggary, struggling to provide bread for his family.

Bankruptcy, with the enforced sale of his estate at the depth of the depression, would have brought both families to the edge of the financial precipice. The only solution, enforced ruthlessly by Benjamin Thomas, was to convey absolutely the whole of his property, debts and all, to Harman.

Given the fluidity of the market, money did flow intermittently to England. But it was unpredictable. At one time, Harman would be greatly in pocket. At another, he would not know where the next penny was to come from. There was no accord between the availability of funds and his need for money. As a consequence, credit became a way of life. The first casualty was his English property. The Kittnocks estate was sold in January 1840 to James George Boucher of Shedfield for £5,183, any profit having been swallowed up by unavoidable and extensive repairs. It had been a poor investment as ten-year leases, with their full term to run, protected the tenants against rent increases. The steamer *Sir John St Aubyn* was sold in January 1842 to the Limehouse firm of Alfred and John Blythe, only to sink the following January at the entrance to the Kowie River in South Africa.

It is against this background that Harman's life as the model of a successful English gentleman is to be viewed. He left Torquay in 1838 to rent, at a fearsome £125 per quarter, Hendon House in Middlesex. Built in the sixteenth century, reputedly the residence of the cartographer John Norden, it had been enlarged in the late eighteenth century by Sir John Soane. It was assessed at 47 windows. Extensive gardens allowed Mrs Harman to indulge her passion for gardening, with 600 pots of plants and prized collections of fuchsias and standard roses. Nine acres of land were farmed. Their second child, Florence Meriton, was born here in 1838. The family moved to Southampton in April 1839, their belongings transported in four caravans pulled by ten horses. Westwood House was taken on a lease from George Alexander Fullerton. Harman told his relieved New Orleans agent that 'we find our expenses very much diminished'. A contemporary sales catalogue (Southampton Archives SC 20/3/2/13) however, in which the property is described as 'in every way perfect and suitable for the reception of a family of the first distinction', suggests that it palled but little in contrast to Hendon House (figure 1). The house was assessed at 41 windows. It stood in a 43-acre park of 'picturesque beauty'. The grounds included a lawn with conservatory, shrubberies intersected by walks, vinery, entrance lodge, seven-stalled stables, coach house for three carriages and separate laundry, brew house and wash house. The imminent opening of the railway to London brought the capital within five hours travelling time even with the unfinished section to Winchester. 'It is', Harman confided to Benjamin Thomas, 'in every respect what we have ever wished for.' In June 1839 he considered purchase of the property, which was then for sale, until dissuaded by his New Orleans agent. The family's social pretensions matched the stage upon which they acted. They owned two coaches, with coachman, footman and groom resplendent in blue livery with velvet collars. They were assessed for armorial bearings. Harman owned a dress coat and

Figure 1. Westwood House, c1839

sword. The eldest son, born here in 1839, was given the dynastic forenames Thomas Leader. The father's social credibility was such that he was part of the delegation of three that presented the town's congratulatory address in 1840 to the Queen on her marriage, kissing the royal hand *et al.* He performed a similar role following the birth of their first child the following year.

To the beleaguered Liberal party in Southampton, the arrival of Harman was the coming of the Messiah. He possessed social and cultural attributes lacking in the traditional leadership of the local party. He was affable, amiable, urbane and courteous. He was well read, with a library which grew to between 1,500 and 1,800 volumes. A catalogue, published in 1842 (Hampshire Record Office 4M92/G8/30), suggests the breadth of his literary interests: antiquities, biography, botany, fine arts, history, miscellaneous literature, natural history, novels, tales and romances, poetry and drama, politics and political economy, religious subjects, statistics and topography, voyages and travels. His journal subscriptions mirror this eclecticism - *Punch, Pictorial Times, Art Union, Living Age, Eclectic Magazine, Illustrated London News, Chambers' Journal, Chambers' Miscellany, Penny Magazine, Athenaeum, Edinburgh Review*, as well as the more specialist *Homeopathic Times, Christian Reformer, Evangelical Review* and *National Anti-Slavery Standard.* He owned a gallery of engravings and prints, including portraits of those Liberal icons Lord John Russell, Lord Durham, John Hampden, Lord Byron and George Thompson. He had high connections in London as a member of the Reform and Free Trade Clubs and through the

lawyer Alexander John Baylis, himself a member of the Radical Club and initial choice to be Harman's New Orleans agent. As a Congregationalist, he was active in nonconformist matters. Above all, Harman was a political enthusiast, a man to whom the excitement of an election was an aphrodisiac. Within a few months of his arrival, he shares platforms with the Liberal elite, often acting as chairman, eclipsing such stalwarts as the Lankesters. In April 1840, he chairs an Anti-Corn-Law-League meeting addressed by their star performer Sidney Smith. He is equally active, along with Richard Andrews, in the Southampton Reform Protection Association.

It was natural that when the *Hampshire Independent,* newspaper of the Liberal party in the town, faced closure it was to Harman that its creditors turned. It had been founded in March 1835 to counter the Tory *Hampshire Advertiser,* owned by John Coupland and edited by the rotund George William Lauder. The first proprietor of the *Independent* was the irascible John Wheeler, scion of a Manchester newspaper family, brother to Charles Henry Wheeler then of Winchester (editor of the works of Shakespeare and the first to arrange the plays according to their setting in time) and latterly confidential reporter on the leading Whig daily paper the *Morning Chronicle.* The intermediary between Wheeler and the speculators was John Easthope, chairman of the London and Southampton Railway, MP for Banbury and owner of the *Chronicle.* Wheeler, acting as his own editor and publisher, brought the paper to ruin through headstrong and reckless behaviour. In one 12-month period he faced 13 actions for libel. A succession of mortgages and loans notwithstanding, he became bankrupt in February 1840. The creditors, led by two of the original speculators Joseph Hill and Joseph Lankester, together with William Brooks as assignee of Wheeler's estate, negotiated the transfer of the paper. The sale was completed on 27 October 1840, Harman paying £1,000 for the copyright and £931-12*s*-0*d* for the printing presses, type, paper and other effects. The associated job printing business was purchased at an independent valuation. The offices – 41 Above Bar – were rented from Hill and Lankester for £80 *per annum.* To escape the restrictive covenants, Harman moved the offices to 52 Above Bar in February 1841. It was originally taken as an underlease from the former occupier, the auctioneer and wine merchant Henry Withers, to whom the extensive cellars were rented back as a wine store. The stables were ripped out to accommodate the printing office. The main lease was held by William Knowles Rogers, owner of the Red Lodge Nursery and a Tory, from whom Harman took the lease directly in 1842 at £95 *per annum.*

The first decision of the new proprietor was the editorship of the paper. With no newspaper experience, and a literary style as flat as cardboard, he could not be his own editor. Easthope urged the retention of the charismatic, if flawed, Wheeler, provided that his contract, as paid editor on a month's notice, was sufficiently tight to curb his indiscretions. His concern, expressed in an interview with Harman's solicitors James Sharp and Edward Harrison in August 1840, was that 'if Wheeler was off the *Independent* he would have no other resource than to

sell himself to the Tories or would exert his untiring energy till he succeeded in getting up some other organ or publication by which to annoy and harass those who bought the *Independent*, and indeed that he had avowed his intention if possible not to leave Hampshire.' Determined to be unfettered by the past, Harman cast Wheeler off. The replacement was Jacob Jacob, former printer, publisher and bookbinder of Winchester and owner of Jacob's Circulating Library opposite the Piazza on the High Street, correspondent of the *Hampshire Advertiser* and defeated Liberal candidate for the Ward of St Thomas in 1839. Leading articles were bought in from the Metropolitan press. His successor, in August 1842, was Thomas Lawrence Behan of the London-based *Observer,* a barrister educated at Trinity College, Dublin. Jacob stayed on as manager of the Winchester department.

The tone of the paper became less strident, less gratuitously confrontational once Wheeler had left. Jacob and Behan as editors faced only one libel action. The paper became allied to the cause of religious dissent. The former proprietor, however, continued to cast a shadow. As Easthope had prophesied, he sold his talents to rival newspapers, writing Whig leaders for the Portsmouth-based *Hampshire Telegraph* and Tory squibs for the *Hampshire Advertiser:* in the vocabulary of contemporary newspapermen, he was a 'Swiss', a man who will write on either side of a question for pay. During the 1841 election he sold his soul to the Tories, uncovering the secrecy which surrounded the *Independent* (he called the anonymous editor 'the man in the iron mask') and branding its proprietor a liar, a calumniator, a fool and a cowardly slanderer. 'It is said', Wheeler wrote in an open letter to Harman in June 1841, ''those whom we injure we hate". I am sadly afraid you are the example to this rule.'

The curtain was drawn on the first act of Harman's life in Southampton by his departure from Westwood in March 1841, owing £200 in rent 'which must be paid immediately', and struggling to pay two life assurance policies that were due. The immediate cause of the crisis lay in the affairs of his wastrel younger brother. Alone of the Harman siblings, Francis had returned to the city of his birth. Here, in league with the estate's sub agent R H Brunet ('a great scamp' according to Benjamin Thomas), he siphoned off money to finance an unsupportable lifestyle for himself and his young wife. In March 1841, Benjamin Thomas had to raise several thousand dollars 'to answer certain expenses and speculations some in real estate – and some in Horse flesh – so utterly extravagant and irrational that I am really ashamed to mention them to you. I thought at the time your Brother had lost his senses.' Harman vented his anger on the blameless agent: 'I do not see why I am to pay for <u>'his current expenses'</u> while my own are left unpaid. If you think I have expressed myself too warmly you must make allowance for the daily annoyance to which I am subjected – and as I flatter myself that <u>I</u> really have some <u>credit</u> to lose it is of no slight importance to <u>me</u> that any of my <u>current expenses</u> should remain unpaid. If I do not hear from you by the steamer of the 10th I shall be quite <u>frantic</u>.'

The move of house came as an immense relief to Benjamin Thomas, who had urgently counselled economy. ‘Nothing has given me greater pleasure than the decision you and Mrs Harman have made to remove from Westwood’. Economy, however, is relative. The new property, rented at £200 *per annum* from Samuel Edward Toomer, was Avenue House in Rockstone Place (figure 2). It was later the residence of the Director-General of the Ordnance Survey. The Harman family were the first occupiers. If their lifestyle changed, it did so imperceptibly. The house was assessed at 41 windows. Four male servants lived in. The furniture was newly commissioned, made in fashionable but expensive mahogany. The grounds were smaller than at Westwood but included a sizeable garden and a greenhouse rented at an extra £10 *per annum.* The carriages and horses were maintained, stabled (in the absence of a coach house or stables) with Mary Secker of Belle Vue Place.

The first examination of Harman’s standing within the Liberal party came in the general election of July 1841, a contest that became a byword for venality and corruption. Ironically, he was without a vote, registered for a property he no longer occupied. Harman had a specific role. It fell to him to vet the potential candidates and to introduce to the electors whoever should be chosen. Commercial men he believed should represent a commercial constituency. His first choice was Captain Charles Edward Mangles, owner of five ships and a director of the Royal Mail

Figure 2. Avenue House, Rockstone Place, 1849

Steam Packet Company. Francis Cooper, a radical politician with Chartist leanings, was dispatched to London to induce him to stand. His running mate, also approached through Harman, was E J Hutchins, nephew and business associate of Sir John Guest, manager of the Dowlais ironworks. Harman was at the heart of their election campaign as vice-chairman of the joint Liberal committee and active canvasser for Mangles. A petition against the Tory victory produced two Parliamentary enquiries. A witness at the enquiry of July 1842, Harman argued that he would rather see the borough disfranchised than witness a repetition of the events of that election when ‘money was given so freely that parties who formerly used to vote without bribery then made up their minds not to do it.’ There was no party monopoly. The cabinet maker H Snelgrove of 3 East Street attached an apologetic note to his bill of £182 for the new furniture at Avenue House (Hampshire Record Office 4M92/G8/21).

‘I am sorry I was not at home this day when you called but I was not long after and have been waiting for the whole of the afternoon expecting you. I would

> willingly have called on you but know it is not pleasant for me to refuse you the little favor you require after receiving so many from yourself. I informed you I promised Mr Martyn and Bruce [the Conservative candidates] because I considered my Bread as we are principally supported by persons professing Conservatism not on account of our political professions for we have professed none. I again repeat I am grieved I cannot give you the little favor.'

It is a moot point whether Harman was a possible contender for the epresentation. This was said to have been a *quid pro quo* for his rescue of the *Independent.* George Lauder blamed personal frailties for a perceived reticence: 'and yet, though he has toiled, and waited, and PAID for the distinguished honor of being one of the MPs, even he has not the courage to make the 'proud stand' he so glibly prates of.' It was a truism that Sir John Barker Mill had talked of Harman for the town and Harman had talked of Barker Mill for the county (Barker Mill was one of the original subscribers to the *Independent*). Threats – bravado or not – made by Wheeler to stand against Harman were thought to have been a deterrent. He addressed an open letter in June 1841 'To Thomas Leader Harman, Esq. MP that is not to be'. There is nothing from his own side, however, to suggest that this is anything but character assassination.

A new election was ordered, held in August 1842 with four new candidates. Harman reprised his role as intermediary between potential candidates and the borough. The first Liberal candidate, whom Harman nominated, was a man in his own image. George Thompson was a radical, a free trader and a slavery abolitionist who, in the 1830s, had been an anti-slavery missionary in the United States. In February 1842, with Harman as chairman, he had addressed an audience of nearly 4,000 at an anti-corn-law meeting in the refurbished Carriage Bazaar of Richard Andrews. The second choice, Mr St John, failed to stand. He was replaced by Lord Nugent, a younger son of the Marquis of Buckingham, mediated by [now Sir] John Easthope. Harman chaired the joint committee.

The election was a tame affair, both parties fearing the consequences of further Parliamentary enquiry. For Harman, the summer of 1842 was anything but tame. As proprietor, he was in law personally responsible for what appeared in the paper. He was thus vulnerable to any miscalculations by his editor. Jacob made two costly errors. The first was an allegation that party politics had intruded into a Town Meeting in November 1841 to address the Queen on the birth of an heir. A criminal information was filed against Harman in the Queen's Bench, heard in 1842, by the petulantly Tory Mayor Peter Dickson. It was he who, in February 1842, barred the Southern Counties Anti-Corn-Law-League (of whose organising committee Harman was chairman) from meeting in the Guildhall and refused to deploy the borough police to protect the adjourned meeting in the Long Rooms. It was in consequence of this that Richard Andrews offered his Bazaar for the speech of George Thompson. The second error of judgment put Harman in fear of his life. Jacob, in an article of 14 May 1842, charged John Sadleir Moody, a county magistrate and keeper of the Martyn canvass books in 1841, with perjury

before the Parliamentary election committee. This was the mistake for which the Tory campaign managers had been waiting. His brother, the solicitor Thomas Henry Croft Moody, called at the office of the *Independent* to demand an apology from Harman as proprietor. Refusal to print a retraction provoked a visit from R B Smith, on behalf of John Sadleir, to challenge the proprietor to a duel. Harman unsurprisingly declined. That evening, John Sadleir broke into the premises of the Southampton Club (of which Harman was a member but not Moody), an imitation of the London clubs 'for the exclusive use of Noblemen and Gentlemen' according to its advertisements. It shared premises with the *Hampshire Advertiser* at 169 High Street. Here Moody posted Harman 'a calumniator, a poltroon and a coward'. Harman, in panic, approached the borough magistrate Joseph Lobb to bind the parties to keep the peace. The affair not only cost Harman over £200 in solicitor's bills but it also came close to excluding him from the social circle in which he was trying to ingratiate himself. The management of the Southampton Club engineered his dismissal, along with three other Liberal members. Two months later, he was blackballed from the South Hants Cricket Club, of which R B Smith was Honorary Secretary. This of course was part of the Tory strategy, and Lauder gloated in its success: 'Bred an apothecary, but falling into a small independence, he assayed a stand in society, to maintain which was difficult and perilous – he was in fact a climbing man and therefore stood on dangerous ground.'

It is no doubt with relief that Harman left Southampton with his family in September 1842 to give his personal attention to affairs in New Orleans. Tories doubted that he would be seen again. Harman thought his absence would be for no more than a season: items of linen were left with the laundress. In the event, the family did not return until July 1847. Arriving in New Orleans – that 'delightful place' – in December 1842, they occupied a vacant house in Carrollton, six miles above the city on the banks of the Mississippi, part of the property acquired from Henry William Palfrey the previous year. It can be identified as the Palfrey Summer House, built in 1835-6 as a retreat from the yellow fever that closed New Orleans between July and October. A galleried seven-bay house, topped by a belvedere providing a clear vista to the Mississippi River, it stood in the middle of formally-landscaped gardens. For an English family even Carrollton was unsafe during the fever season. The following summer a house was rented from Judge Debling in Sheildsborough on the Bay of St Louis, a watering place sixty miles north. In November 1844, the family quit New Orleans for the more temperate climate of Cambridge, near Boston, in Massachusetts. Dana House was rented from Harvard College. Built in 1823, and the childhood home of Richard Henry Dana junior (author of *Two years before the mast*), it had become the first astronomical observatory of the college, with a revolving cupola added to the roof to accommodate one of the telescopes. The observatory moved out in September 1844. 'Our house', Harman told Benjamin Thomas, 'is all we could wish – our neighbours are very agreeable'. Amongst these was the only Palfrey brother to have stayed in his natal city. John Gorham Palfrey was one of the religious, social and intellectual leaders of New England. Dean of the Faculty of

Divinity of Harvard College, Unitarian minister, former editor of the *North American Review* and member of the Massachusetts legislature, 1842-3, he was to become a member of the United States Congress in 1847. He was probably responsible for the renting of Dana House, which stood on the college campus, to his cousin. Close by lived Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, to whom in November 1846 Harman presented a recently-published book of poems by the wife of Benjamin Thomas. Harman enrolled as a student in the college, studying law, and attended the church of the Shepard Congregational Society. Two children were born in Cambridge: William Lewis, who died aged 17 months of cholera, and Jane M three years later.

Harman made three unaccompanied visits to New Orleans, in February to May 1845, March to June 1846 and January to April 1847. Despite a slow amelioration in economic conditions, Harman could not escape the financial morass. The move to Dana House, rented unfurnished, exhausted his available resources. There was no offset from New Orleans. His high-maintenance and flood-prone property in Carrollton was impossible to sell and difficult to rent at any kind of profit. The affairs of his brother, now moved to Bloomingdale in New York, worsened. He had to be rescued by the purchase of his New Orleans property, well below its real value, in return for a quarterly allowance. His untimely death in March 1845 brought further entanglements. Thomas became guardian of his children and administrator of his New York property. Debts here exceeded $3,000. He counselled the widow to sell the furniture and ‘go and board in some cheap place.’ The niceties of polite correspondence evaporated. Letters addressed originally to ‘My dear Mrs Francis’ degenerated through ‘Dear Madam’ to ‘Madam’. It took threats of legal action before the estate was settled.

An exile from Southampton for three years, Harman maintained close ties with the town. Avenue House remained his responsibility for the first 18 months. Despite advertisements in the Southampton, Salisbury and London papers and the estate agent’s description of it as a ‘cheerful house’, it remained unlet. It was not reoccupied until summer 1845. R H Perkins ascribed this to an almost total lack of demand for large houses in the town. Broken window panes testified to some vandalism. The furniture, most of it less than two years old, went to public auction in August 1842 along with the china, glass and choice wines. The dining room furniture was not sold until November and the drawing room furniture until March 1843. The collection of pictures remained *in situ*. After innumerable delays, Harman quit the tenancy in March 1844. The owner, Samuel Edward Toomer, refused either to let the pictures be removed or to take possession of the house until the one and a half year’s rent arrears were paid off.

The *Hampshire Independent* remained Harman’s responsibility. General oversight was given to James Sharp, who held Harman’s power of attorney. Day-to-day management was vested in the publisher: William Brooks until his appointment in October 1845 as Secretary to the abortive Southampton, Petersfield and London Direct Railway Company and then John Richard

Canaway, promoted from reporter. He was succeeded in this post by Henry Pond. Harman was sent the profit and loss accounts, the banker's accounts and copies of the *Independent, Advertiser* and *Morning Chronicle* by every steamer or packet. There were two issues, however, which demanded the direct intervention of the proprietor. Behan was a lacklustre editor. Complaints reached Harman in spring 1845 of his lengthy absences from the town, the want of energy and spirit in the leading articles and the deficiency of local news. For three years he had been without a borough vote. He was given an ultimatum: to reside in the town, to devote himself exclusively to the *Independent* and to be more proactive within the Southampton Liberal party. A clear distinction was to be made in the operation of the paper between his own department, undertaking its editorial management and correspondence, and that of Canaway, who was to devote himself to the reporting of meetings and the collection of news. James Sharp was instructed to take advice from Sir John Easthope should a new editor be required. Behan agreed to comply, postponing a solution to the fundamental problems of a weak editor.

The relatively poor circulation figures of the *Independent* left it vulnerable to innovations made by its main Hampshire rivals, each of whom (with the exception of the *Hampshire Chronicle*) had a larger sales base, and to new competition. Harman was approached in summer 1845 to fund an increase in size of the paper, a defence against the recent enlargement of both the *Telegraph* and *Advertiser*, the latter of which was now also publishing a second edition. Harman authorized Brooks to proceed 'as economically as you can'. A double cylinder printing machine was purchased in London, requiring an additional wing to be added to the Printing Office. The cost - £457.5*s.*3*d* – was above what Harman had budgeted for, swallowing up his New Orleans remittances and forcing consideration of a mortgage on the paper. A second enlargement in March 1846 followed an increase of the *Advertiser* to eight pages. This, as Canaway explained, allowed the keepers of beer shops, public houses and coffee shops to accommodate two customers at the same time by cutting the paper in half (Southampton Archives D/Z 1202). An additional threat came from John Traffles Tucker, former publisher of the *Independent,* negotiating the printing and publication of a second Liberal newspaper in the town. The cost, which required only the purchase of more type, was met by an increase of the cover price to 6*d.*

These were issues that could be confronted *in absentia*. Changes to the political balance in the middle years of the decade made his personal presence essential if he were to capitalize on the re-emergence of the Liberal party. In January 1846, writing from New Orleans, he is sounding out James Sharp on the new political dynamics to be anticipated from Peel's decision to repeal the Corn Laws. He took the opportunity to cast a speculative line into the waters.

> 'My present position is such (it is not easy to explain fully in a letter) that I am desirous if possible of establishing some claim for services upon our friends should they return to power and with this view have thought that could no

> more eligible candidate be found I should be willing to come forward in conjunction with any other person agreeable to the electors – paying my share of the legal expenses. I must confess that I should not anticipate success knowing the nature of the Southampton constituency, but would of course do the best I could to achieve it.'

The specific suggestion was that he partner the established Liberal candidate, J R Beste, a Botley landowner of whom Richard Andrews was patron. As a Roman Catholic, he faced the defection of a great many Dissenters, especially Wesleyan Methodists. Harman believed that his impeccable nonconformity would restore these to the fold. Sharp's reply does not survive, but was clearly a douche of cold water.

Harman made a brief return to England between August and October 1846 to deal with newspaper business and to meet his late brother's creditors. He attended Richard Andrews's annual workmen's feast, now a major event on the political calendar, reassuring the audience that America had not changed him since his last appearance. 'Everything in his travels in the new world confirmed the views he had then held'. He assured Benjamin Thomas, on his return to Cambridge, that 'we do not require any inducements to return to Old England, which we are resolved to do the moment the way seems clear.' The final incentive was the prospect of government patronage. 'From letters which I found here', he wrote the following May to Peter Maxwell, his New Orleans agent, 'I am led to believe that I should find no difficulty in procuring a desirable situation from the Government were I in England. We have therefore decided on returning by about the 1 July.'

Return he did. First he rented one of the houses owned by Richard Andrews in St James's Crescent, Winchester. The Dana House furniture, worth £100, was shipped over, some of it needing the attention of an upholsterer in London Wall. He attended the Independent Chapel in Winchester, at which his landlord also worshipped, and subscribed to Winchester Mechanics' Institution. Harman's sixth child, Alice Gorham, was born in Winchester in October 1847, although baptized by the Reverend Thomas Adkins at Above Bar Chapel, Southampton, three months later. By October 1848, the family was back in Southampton, renting 17 Carlton Crescent for £82 *per annum* from the Tory coachbuilder Richard Callaway (figure 3). They quit this residence in May 1851, moving to 52 Above Bar, at the rear of the newspaper offices. A well-appointed house, approached from a separate entrance on Spa Road, it comprised large drawing and dining rooms, library, five bedrooms, kitchen, scullery and offices, with an excellent cellar, garden, courtyard and gighouse (a small stable for a light two-wheel carriage). The house had been taken in February 1841. A condition of the rental agreement from May 1847 onwards was that two of the bedrooms were reserved for Harman's use whenever he pleased. This occasional overnight use was sufficient to give him a vote for the borough. The family itself lived here from 1852

until 1857. By then, the property was in the ownership of Mr Dilly, its purchaser in June 1853 on the death of William Knowles Rogers.

Figure 3. 16-21 (now 17-22) Carlton Crescent, Southampton

Political horizons were wider in 1847 for a progressive Liberal like Harman than they had been in 1842. A Liberal Administration, under Lord John Russell, held power in Westminster. Within a few months of his return, the Liberals had captured the Parliamentary representation of the borough. Brodie McGee Willcox, co-founder and managing director of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company, and Alexander Cockburn, barrister, counsel for the petitioners of 1842 and former Recorder of Southampton, had been returned unopposed at the general election. Liberal triumphs in the November 1847 municipal elections, giving a clear majority in the Corporation, sealed the monopoly. It was essential, if Harman were to benefit from the newly-acquired power of his *quondam* friends, that the *Hampshire Independent* be revitalized. On the eve of his departure from Cambridge, Harman confided to Sharp: ‘I fear that as long as I am away Behan will not pay that attention to the paper that he might, and that my absence will be an excuse to the higher powers for not doing anything for me.’ Personal supervision failed to galvanize the fundamentally lazy Behan. In April 1848 he was replaced by Timothy Falvey, whose political credentials as former Anti-Corn-Law-League lecturer, radical activist and soulmate of Richard Andrews more than counterbalanced his editorial virginity. His salary was performance-related, giving him an additional 10% on every £100 made beyond the first £300 of net annual profit. Six years later Behan took government patronage to become editor, manager and publisher of the *London Gazette*, taking with him J R Canaway The posts were virtual sinecures, characterized in the 1889 *In memoriam* to Timothy Falvey as ‘no work; plenty of time to do it in, and good pay for doing it.’ In September 1869, Harman wrote to Edward Harrison: ‘I see Behan is gone. They say we should not speak ill of the dead, but I certainly do not think he is a loss to any one.’

The new power in the borough was Richard Andrews, elected Sheriff in November 1848 and Mayor in November 1849, an honour he held for three consecutive years. The political bond between Harman and Andrews, although

strained at times, had been close from the beginning. Both were radical Liberals, free traders, Congregationalists in religion and first-generation Sotonians. Andrews had facilitated the purchase of the *Independent* by underwriting, under the terms of the Stamp Act, the payment of advertising duty and any losses from the publication of libels. He averted financial disaster in January 1849 by taking a £500 mortgage on the paper. The charges that Harman was only 'the nominal proprietor' and that Falvey was 'the Mayor's editor' may have been overlain with political bias but were underscored with more than a hint of truth. Harman was present at the most public of Andrews's performances. He acted as his helpmate during the reception of the exiled Hungarian leader Louis Kossuth in October 1851. He attended the select and highly-publicized banquet at the Pagoda, Andrews's weekend residence in Winchester, and the next day (Sunday) accompanied Andrews and Kossuth to morning service at the cathedral. It was Harman who, the following month, accompanied the Kossuth *entourage* to Cowes on the baggage steamer *Earl of Malmesbury* to connect with the *Humboldt en route* to America. They shared refreshments at the Vine Hotel. The most intimate connection between Andrews and Harman came in their membership of the 12-strong Liberal Patronage Committee in the town. It controlled appointments in the Customs House, the Coast Guard, the Mail Packet Department of the Board of Admiralty, the Inland Revenue, the Register Office, the Post Office and the Commission of Land, Assessed, Property and Income Taxes. Harman was chairman and Andrews the acknowledged *eminence grise.* The relationship was tested in August 1853 when the political turncoat Edward Shakell charged Harman with reneging, under pressure from Andrews, on a promise to appoint his son to a vacant clerkship in the Customs. George Lauder exacted the maximum of publicity. '[Harman] is made literally the serf of a man whom he despises in his heart. But he is his bond slave – his goods and chattels – his Uncle Tom – and he cannot escape from the threatening lash that waves over him.'

Overlying this intra-borough relationship was that between Harman and Alexander Cockburn. As a lawyer representing an aggressively commercial constituency, Cockburn was the more vulnerable of the sitting members. A succession of government appointments, each requiring a by election, gave the impression that he was using the borough to advance his legal career. In 1850 he was elected Solicitor-General (and knighted); in 1851 Attorney-General; in 1853 reappointed Attorney-General following a short Conservative intermission; and in 1854 Recorder of Bristol. Harman was chairman of his election committee in 1850 and 1853. In 1854 he seconded his nomination. In 1851 he had been absent in America. A general election was fought in 1852. Harman was chairman of the Joint Liberal Committee and nominated Cockburn. The subsequent Parliamentary enquiry, in March 1853, into Tory charges of bribery, corruption and treating reveal the central role played by Harman. He organized approaches to those whose votes had not been promised. He wrote letters to undecided outlying voters. He organized flies (light horse-drawn vehicles on hire) on election day to convey supporters to the polling booths. He accompanied Cockburn on all

of his canvasses to ensue observance of the *minutiae* of the anti-bribery legislation (Willcox did not canvass, appearing in the town only two days before nomination). Overarching all, Harman controlled the Liberal election money. Cockburn explained the workings of the system to the Parliamentary committee.

> 'That nothing wrong should be done, I requested Mr Harman to take exclusively upon himself the management of the financial affairs of the election…. I said the professional gentlemen have enough to do to conduct the legal matters, and I wish that the financial affairs should be in the hands of the gentleman who should be responsible to me alone; and although I had the most perfect confidence in Mr Harman, yet, knowing that candidates were responsible for the expenditure at elections, I said that he ought to know exactly how that expenditure took place, and therefore, instead of paying a sum into my bankers to be drawn upon by my agents from time to time, I said I should expect him to lay before me the various details of the expenditure, and that I would furnish him with the money from time to time as he wanted it.'

That money (£600 from Willcox and £675 from Cockburn) went into Harman's personal account at the Hampshire Bank, mixed up with his own monies. Disbursements were made over the counter of the *Independent.*

Once in power, it was through Harman that Cockburn and Willcox made known their wishes on the distribution of small government patronage. This could lead to conflicts of interest. In May 1853, Willcox directed Harman to obtain a clerkship for the son of John Rushworth Keele. This honoured a promise made after the 1847 election. He counselled care as Andrews is known to be antagonistical to Keele: 'my colleague and I have nothing whatever to do with your municipal quarrels, although most unjustly and thoughtlessly we are made to suffer from them.' (Hampshire Record Office 4M92/G8/35).

Local administration was an adjunct to local politics. Harman was similarly active here. Whilst living at Westwood he had served as Overseer of the Poor for the Tything of Portswood. In November 1841 he had been elected a Guardian of the Poor, an appointment cut short by his return to America. After coming back to Southampton, he was elected a Commissioner of Waterworks and a Guardian of the Poor at the All Saints Easter vestry in 1850. His experiences under the Southampton Incorporation had deterred him seeking a second term as Guardian until then: 'the abuses he then witnessed were such that nothing could have induced him to go there again under the old system, which was a nuisance and a disgrace to the town'. His new term was the first under which the town came under the direct control of the Poor Law Commissioners. It was an exciting year. A more rigid and accountable regime was introduced, although a harder one for those in receipt of relief. The collectors were brought to account with vouchers regulating the workhouse expenditure. Book-keeping was improved. Debts amounting to £2,700 were written off in order to close the books. Attempts were made to enforce the better attendance of Guardians, amongst whom Harman

was one of the most assiduous. The fees and salaries of the medical staff were rescheduled. A committee, of which Harman was chairman, engineered the resignation of Francis Cooper as parish surgeon for dictatorial and unbecoming behaviour. He was an active member of the committee overseeing the expansion of the workhouse following the gift of land in St Mary Street by the will of John Butler Harrison. A second term was denied Harman by his temporary absence in America at the time of the election. In March 1855 he was elected one of the two Borough Auditors for the ensuing year.

Participation in local government spilled over into charity work. Harman was on the committee of the Southampton Ragged Schools and of the Royal South Hants Infirmary. In the latter, he sided with those who wanted liberalisation. He supported extension of voting rights from 2-guinea to 1-guinea subscribers in order that the Infirmary should no longer resemble ‘a close borough’. He was one of those who welcomed the Bishop of Winchester on his inspection of the new hospital chapel in October 1858. Harman was active in charities supported as Mayor by Richard Andrews: member of the local committee to promote the 1851 Great Exhibition, collector for All Saints parish on behalf of the fund established to help dependants of the victims of the sinking of the steamship *Amazon* and friend of the Southampton Mutual Improvement Society. His wife, along with Mrs Kell and the Misses Clark of the High Street, was a collector for the annual American Anti-Slavery Bazaar held in Boston.

Election to the Town Council conventionally represents the apogee of local prestige. The glittering prize fell to Harman in November 1850 when the elevation of George Laishley to the honour of Alderman created a vacancy in his home ward of All Saints. Richard Andrews’s seat in the same ward similarly fell vacant. Harman replaced Laishley, coming top of the poll with 200 votes, standing on the sound Liberal platform of efficient and economical municipal administration. He became one of the Liberal foot soldiers in the Council chamber, proposing in November 1851 both the vote of thanks to the Mayor (Richard Andrews) and the appointment of James Blatch as Sheriff. He was elected on to the Watch Committee, reappointed in 1852. For Harman, however, the prize was ultimately tarnished. Shortly after the 1852 Corporation elections, Harman and the newly-elected Mayor Joseph Lankester were charged by the veteran Tory councillor W J Le Feuvre with being disqualified to sit in the chamber. This was grounded on a clause in the 1835 Municipal Corporation Act which forbad councillors from accepting paid employment on Corporation business. Harman was charged with profiting from the printing of Corporation bills by the *Independent.* Le Feuvre threatened a *qui tam* (or common informer’s) action which would render Harman liable to a £50 penalty for each infringement. With the sword of Damocles hanging over him, Harman simply and – in Le Feuvre’s words – ‘very judiciously’ abstained from the Council. His last appearance was on 23 November 1852. He was excused the customary fines for non-attendance. He stood for re-election in November 1853, but, with his three Liberal colleagues, was defeated. Joseph Lankester did not capitulate so weakly. He forced Le Feuvre into a series of

ruinous legal actions, culminating in his accuser's defeat in February 1854. Ostensibly this victimisation was to reduce Corporation jobbing. It fits more readily into Tory harassment of the Liberals, co-ordinated by Le Feuvre and Colonel (later General) Stanley Bullock, in the wake of the 1852 election defeat.

For erstwhile supporters of the Anti-Corn-Law-League like Harman, it was a natural progression to become supporters in the late1840s and early 1850s of the National Parliamentary and Financial Reform Association. The backbone of the Southampton branch, founded in November 1849, were those ex-Leaguers who now formed the political clique surrounding Richard Andrews. Harman moved the resolution for its establishment at the inaugural meeting. His views were those of the Association, pledged to economy in government and Parliamentary reform: extension of the suffrage, vote by ballot, three-year Parliaments, abolition of property qualifications for MPs and redistribution of seats. The Association, as Richard Cobden, one of its Vice Presidents, admitted in 1853, really ended in nothing. But it left a legacy which was to transform the face of Southampton. Integral to its aims had been the creation of county votes through freehold land societies. It was a simple concept. Members' subscriptions established a common fund, used to purchase eligible building land. This was retailed at wholesale prices to subscribers in lots which, when developed, would be worth a minimum of 40 shillings a year, the criterion for a county freehold vote. The subscriber had the option to build on the lot or to let it as a building lease. The County of Hants Freehold Land Society, formed in February 1850, originally had as its principal gaol the penetration of urban Liberal voters into the Southern Division of the county. It was responsible within the first five years for three allotments on the outskirts of Southampton: nine acres of Shirley Park, part of the grounds of Shirley House, in 1852; six acres of the Freemantle estate in 1853; and ten acres of the Bevois Mount estate at the top of the Avenue in 1854. The rival Conservative County of Southampton Freehold Land Society, established in June 1852, was responsible *inter alia* for the apportionment of the Freemantle Park estate around Waterloo Road and the Cliff.

The County of Hants Freehold Land Society had the *Hampshire Independent* at its epicentre. Harman was the first president, a post he held until May 1859. He was also a trustee. Its secretary was William Brooks, former publisher. Falvey, Canaway and Henry Pond, respectively editor, publisher and reporter, were on the committee of management. Subscribers could register at the newspaper offices. The first six shares were bought by the president for 6 shillings. Under society rules then in force this guaranteed an allotment. By the time of the Shirley Park allotment, the rules had been changed from allocation by seniority of membership to allocation by ballot. Harman received none of the 76 allotments created. It was probably scant recompense to have one of the new streets, Harman Place, named in his honour (figure 4). Fifty eight allotments were drawn in Freemantle. Harman's name was the last drawn out of the ballot (lot no.58). He acquired lot no.34 in the 80-strong Bevois Mount allotment.

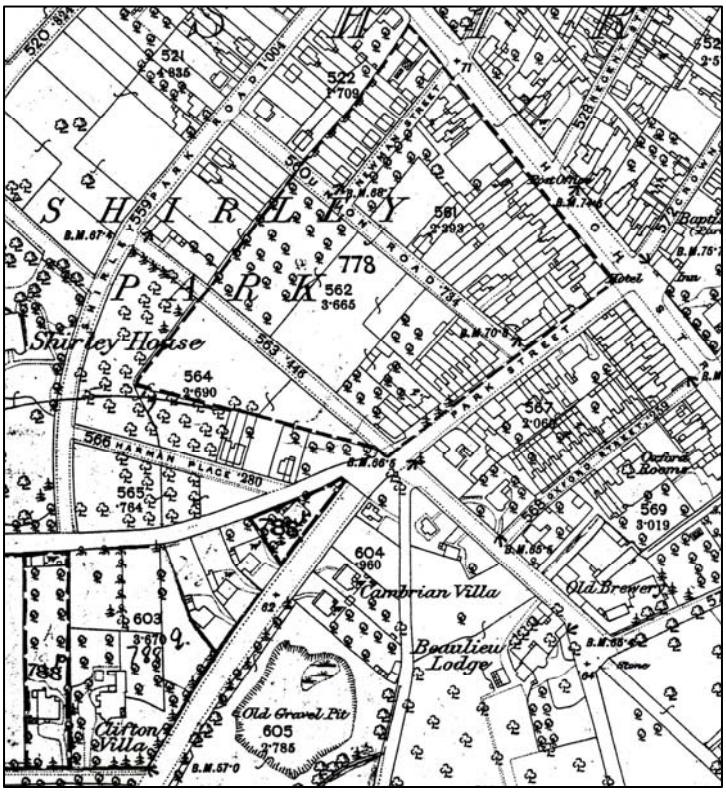

Figure 4. Harman Place, Shirley Park, 1869

The financial basis of Harman's life in Southampton disintegrated within a few years of his return to the town. The optimism of mid-1847 soon evaporated. He wrote to his New Orleans agent Peter Maxwell (himself about to be destroyed by the failure of a Liverpool house with which he traded) in October: 'I hoped not to have had occasion for any of my New Orleans funds on this side – but in consequence of the dreadful state of the money market here I find it impossible to get money, even from those indebted to me, much less to get any accommodation for even the shortest time.' The final breakdown came through the tortuous unfolding of the marriage settlement of his sister Charlotte, dated 21 October 1839, the eve of her marriage to Henry William Eaton, silk broker and Conservative Mp for Coventry 1865-80 and 1885-7, created 1st Baron Cheylesmore on leaving the House of Commons. The trustees of the settlement became increasingly polarized. On one side stood the Eatons with their relative the Greenwich whale and seal oil merchant Henry Enderby, characterized by Harman as a blackguard, a bully and a man 'to have made money his God'. On the other side stood Harman and his London solicitor A J Baylis. Benjamin Thomas had been recommended as the estate's New Orleans agent by Baylis, an appointment thought to have worked against the Eaton interest. Particular exception was taken to his vesting of the forfeited Palfrey state into the hands of Thomas alone rather than jointly with Charlotte. This was to circumvent the limited property rights of married women under state law. Relations between the two siblings broke down, Charlotte's attitude being seen as 'more like that of a hard creditor towards an indifferent party than that of a sister towards a brother for whom she felt the slightest affection.' In an Eaton-inspired *coup d'état*, Ambrose Lanfear, a sharp New Orleans entrepreneur, became the family's agent in 1843. Returning to England, and purchasing a solicitor's practice in Birmingham, Benjamin continued as confidential adviser. Matters took an unexpected turn as Harman was about to leave for England in 1847. Fearing that the unregulated actions of his fellow trustees had exposed him to prosecution, with the possible ruin of his family, Baylis entered Chancery proceedings against

all his co-trustees. The case, ‘Baylis *v* Enderby’, threatened to overwhelm Harman, who could barely afford the costs of defending the action. An out of court settlement was reached in September 1849 which effectively saw the end of his New Orleans property.

The unravelling of Harman’s financial position became clear for all to see in 1850. In the summer, sureties were approached to pay life assurance policies that were falling due. Richard Andrews, who had stood surety for £200 in 1847, now refused him protection, fearing the open-ended nature of his liability. ‘As to Andrews’ behaviour it is the extreme of shabbiness but I have long learned to expect nothing from him.’ At the end of the year the Southampton booksellers Andrew Forbes and Thomas Knibb took Harman to the County Court for unpaid bills dating back to 1847. The relatively small amount of the debt - £31.11*s*.2*d* – was disproportionate to the public loss of credit. A second County Court appearance followed in March 1854 as Charles Loveder recovered the £2.19*s*.3*d* owed for repairs and decorations at the *Independent* office the year before. A third court appearance, this time in Winchester, had been narrowly avoided in 1853 as Dr Behr, proprietor of the exclusive Hyde House School, sought payment for Thomas Leader junior’s tuition fees. When in 1855 Harman faced a vexatious libel action by the Reverend George Bradshaw, in which the liberty of the press was at issue, a public appeal was launched to help him meet the legal costs.

The only hope of a meaningful income came from the *Hampshire Independent*. A profit was taken only in exceptional years, and then on the back of advertising revenues. The years of railway mania, with directors legally obliged to advertise their schemes in three successive issues of the county press, proved a windfall. Harman regretted that it was not six issues. In most years there was a loss or at best a nominal profit due to the job printing department. The only option remaining was to realize the capital tied up in the paper. Willcox had joined Richard Andrews in January 1849 as co-mortgagee, advancing a further £1,000. Unlike a mortgage taken seven years earlier by the Hampshire Bank, the 1849 mortgage was never repaid. In December 1851, Harman took the more desperate decision to sell a fourth share in the paper to Jacob Jacob, now conductor of its virtually autonomous Winchester department. He paid £650 and, during Harman’s extended visit to America, was given the management of the publication, business and accounts of the paper and of the printing department. He moved to Southampton, taking a house in Hanover Buildings, with his only son William Henry, then 21 years old and whom his father was keen to advance in the business. Although drawing a small salary, it was only by improving the fortunes of the paper that Jacob could make his investment profitable. Strict economies were introduced, enforced by personal attention to all aspects of management. Relations with the editor, hitherto left largely to his own devices, degenerated into personal abuse. To Falvey, the new co-proprietor’s mercenary habits, the product of a man who has ‘spent his life dreaming of money-bags’, would bring the paper to ruin.

The partnership of ‘Harman and Jacob’ was dissolved in January 1852. Jacob recouped his purchase money. The repercussions of this unhappy episode became intertwined, through the person of Richard Andrews, with the far bigger controversy over the reform of St Cross Hospital in Winchester. The controversy can be followed in ‘The Winchester connections of Richard Andrews, 1843-59’ in no.13 of this *Journal.* Andrews, in alliance with the disreputable Anglican clergyman the Reverend Henry Holloway, pursued the Hospital’s former Master the Earl of Guilford for alleged misappropriated of funds totalling over £300,000. The campaign was prosecuted through the columns of the *Independent*. Jacob became an apologist for Lord Guilford. He was given unlimited access to the *Advertiser*, both directly as ‘An Occasional Correspondent’ and indirectly through his son who had supplanted Henry Moody as official Winchester correspondent: ‘the hand may be that of Esau, but the voice is Jacob’s voice’. W H Jacob was launched on a Winchester career that led to the Aldermanic bench. The paper war, a regression to the days of John Wheeler, allowed Jacob to take revenge for the ignominy of the failed partnership. Harman was portrayed as a subservient pauper. ‘Protect us from those *desagrements* – as the French call them – debts and duns, and those unpleasant refreshers, County Court summonses, as also from what be a humiliation to an ‘independent’ man, knocking for years in vain at the doors of the Whig Treasury’ (July 1853).

The latter was a particularly well-aimed barb. There had been rumours of government reward but none had been fulfilled. An influential appointment under the Local Courts Act was speculated in the latter days of 1846. An Inspectorate of Education was dangled in front of Harman in May 1847. After initial hesitancy, as a dissenter and proprietor of a paper lukewarm in its attitude to the inspectorate, he decided to accept the post if offered. In autumn 1851, Richard Andrews sought the impending office of Receiver of St Cross Hospital from the Attorney-General on behalf of his impoverished ally: ‘to fix a decayed and used-up political instrument on the Hospital funds’ in Jacob’s interpretation. When created, the post was given to the Winchester surveyor James Comely. Government patronage through the Southampton patronage committee also eluded Harman. His claims to the office of Sub-Distributor of Stamps, becoming vacant in October 1850, were considered unimpeachable. But Richard Andrews, mercenary in his choice of friends, had determined to give the post to Henry Abraham, a recent convert to Liberalism. The appointment was vetoed by the Borough Members, denying Harman the £300 that Abraham had agreed as compensation. The office was finally given to Timothy Falvey, an arrangement which, in Andrews’s reported words, ‘served for <u>poor</u> Harman as well’, being an effective increase in his editor’s salary. The Sub-Distributorship was conducted at the *Independent* offices.

The final two and a half years of Harman’s life in England saw the collapse of his world. The endgame was played out with Harman and his family living in Winchester. He rented from Lady Day 1857 the Pagoda in St James’s Crescent,

now available as Richard Andrews had built Lucerne Villa as a new weekend residence in the city.

The political disintegration of the Liberal party in Southampton became clear in 1856. Sir Alexander Cockburn resigned his seat in November following appointment as Chief Justice of Common Pleas, with a peerage. Well-tested processes were set in motion. Harman was in London when the vacancy became known. He contacted Captain Mangles, who had been cultivating an interest in the borough since his defeat in 1842. It was an unpropitious time. Many town Liberals had invested in the projected broad gauge railway to Salisbury, gateway to an extensive broad gauge network in the Midlands and south Wales. Mangles was a director of the South Western Railway Company, vigorously defending its Southampton monopoly. He declined to stand, a decision later ascribed by Harman to cowardice. With the natural succession broken, Harman drew up a list of possible candidates, from which emerged the names of Serjeant Pigott, Edwin James (both lawyers) and Thomas Mathias Weguelin, a Russian merchant and director of the Bank of England. They were invited to a public meeting of Liberal voters, presided over by Harman. It appeared an open process. In fact, it was preconcerted to produce a single candidate, Edwin James, the choice of Cockburn and Harman's counsel (acting without taking fees) in the libel case brought by George Bradshaw. A second selection meeting was demanded, at which both James and Weguelin were declared the official Liberal candidate: James by the main meeting under Harman's control and Weguelin by a breakaway meeting under the chairmanship of Joseph Clark. The shambles proved too much for James. He simply left the town in the middle of the night. It was to fill this vacancy that Richard Andrews came to stand. Harman was both instrumental in Andrews's selection, introducing him to the selection meeting at the Victoria Rooms, and his chief support during the lengthy election campaign. He organized the canvass and nominated Andrews on election day, claiming that his candidate would head the poll by an immense majority. This, as he surely knew, was whistling in the wind. Andrews, having lost government support, came bottom of the poll, defeated decisively by the pro-Palmerston Weguelin and the Tory Edward Butler.

Liberal unity in the borough was at an end. It fell to Harman to try to produce reconciliation. Underlying the futility of the 1857 by-election, a general election was called a few weeks later. Harman campaigned for the sitting members, Willcox and Weguelin, seconding the latter's nomination. They were successful but the schism remained. George Lauder told his readers: 'To render quiet and easy such a lively lot of Liberals it will take a brighter genius than Mr Harman's, even had he the wand of Prospero for this special occasion.' April 1859 was the last election that Harman fought. He chaired meetings in support of the sitting members, this time against the carpet-bagger Digby Seymour who stood on the tail of the Andrews' interest. Weguelin was defeated by the new Tory radical. Harman saw it as the end of an era. He wrote from America in 1863 to Edward Harrison: 'What I told our party at the election of 1859 they appear to look upon

as the real state of affairs. Nothing appears to have been thought of but the 'money interests' of individuals. All great principles were ignored then and now we see the result – a miserable place merchant in the place of Cockburn'.

The burden of debts accumulated over many years by the *Independent* finally crushed its proprietor. No new money was coming into the business. Competition was increasing through the success of low-price London daily and weekly journals. During the 1857 election the Weguelin camp had started the *Southampton Free Press*, under the editorship of the radical Francis Cooper. There were rumours of a merger with the *Southampton Examiner* of James Charles Cox specifically 'to ruin Mr Harman and the *Independent'.* In April 1858, Harman took the 'considerable pecuniary risk' of reducing the cover price by 2*d*, and introduced door-to-door deliveries early on Saturday morning. None had any effect. His freedom of financial action was seriously curtailed in mid 1855 by the appointment of trustees, of whom William Brooks and Samuel Payne can be identified. The final act, however, came in September 1858 when the London paper merchants Richard Johnson and Co threatened bankruptcy in order to recover the £298.2*s.*2*d* owed to them: £200 on a debt executed seven years earlier and the balance for the supply of paper since then.

There was no escape. Willcox and Weguelin (the latter of whom had taken over Richard Andrews's share of the loan) threatened foreclosure of the £1,500 mortgage. An appeal to his brother-in-law Henry Eaton, referring to attempts by himself and 'Mrs H' to obtain employment, was met by surprise that he should consider help from such a quarter. An attempt to set up a joint stock company failed. The only option, however unpalatable, was the sale of the newspaper. He wrote in distress to Edward Harrison in October 1858:

> '[The sale] would leave me without a single farthing or the prospect of ever bettering myself, and would at the same time involve in ruin my sister in law Miss Meriton … I know the circumstances under which I bought the paper and the sacrifices I have made to keep it for the Liberal party during the 18 years that I have had it, and with one trifling exception I have had no assistance whatever from the party – and it does seem hard to have to part with it now …. I have never spared myself in money when I had it as you and Mr B[rooks] know – and have never received a single farthing from anything I have ever done. I have tried in every quarter to find some employment during the last 10 years but have been unsuccessful – and I can see no prospect before me but actual beggary should everything now be sold.'

The sale was treated entirely as a matter of pounds, shillings and pence. Harman was prepared to let the paper go to the highest bidder, contemplating an offer to John Coupland, who for several years had cast avaricious eyes on his local rival. The *Independent* was sold in April 1859. The proceeds went towards reduction of its debts. It is a nice irony that the final act, the winding up of the trustees, was

performed by William Brooks. He had been a signatory to the original indenture of October 1840.

Harman slipped out of Southampton with his family on 14 June 1859, an occasion made the more poignant by the death in London a month earlier of their second daughter Florence Meriton. His departure in September 1842 had been marked by the presentation of a silver candelabrum, weighing 200 ounces and costing 200 guineas, engraved with his armorial bearings and the borough arms. Over 1,000 well-wishers had attended the Long Rooms ceremony. In 1859, he was seen off from the dockside, as he was to board the *Bremen* to the United States, by the lone figure of Edward Palk. On behalf of a number of personal friends, he presented Harman with a purse of sovereigns and a letter.

Harman lived in Boston, almost an exile in the land of his birth, until the dawn of the twentieth century. He was appointed Secretary to the Post Master of Boston, the government appointment he so long desired, although at 'a miserable pittance'. It was doubtless obtained through the influence of John Gorham Palfrey, who held the Secretaryship between 1861 and 1867. In a series of Boston trade directories up to the 1890s, Harman is listed as 'Post Office clerk', latterly at the Hotel Marion. The 1880 federal census sees him living with his wife, who died in April 1889 aged 84 years, and two unmarried daughters, Anna and Alice. Thomas Leader junior (known in the family as Leader) served on the Unionist side in the Civil War, seeing action at Charleston and Savannah. On enlistment as a Sergeant in the Massachusetts 13th Light Artillery Battery in October 1862 his occupation is given as proof reader. He later held a commission in the Massachusetts 55th Infantry Regiment (a coloured regiment). After the war, he was in business in New York. Research has so far failed to establish the date and place of the death of the head of the family. This very obscurity is a sadly ironic end to the life of one once so prominent in Southampton.

A postscript to this essay is afforded by a collection of letters, dated between 1864 and 1869, to Edward Harrison, his former solicitor and political friend. It is an unrepentant Harman. He maintains a fascination with Southampton politics. He receives the *Independent* regularly, although to his disgust from 1864 he has to pay for them. He is delighted when George Thompson, on a lecture tour of America, stays within seven doors of him. He is forever short of funds. Bills from Southampton tradesmen are still unpaid in 1869. Harrison is cajoled into sending article of clothing for the family that cannot be obtained in Boston. He is rarely reimbursed: 'the enormous increase in the price of every article of consumption has taken every farthing to keep one's family – rendering it out of my power to put by anything to send' (September 1866). He devises stratagems to avoid paying customs duties. He asks Harrison's assistance in redeeming his last life assurance policy, beseeching that he obtain the best possible price. He writes on half a sheet of letter paper as that is the only postage he can afford. Above all, he is nostalgic. 'I know nothing in the world that I so long for as to be able to get

back to England, if only for a short time, and see you and have a good talk with you' (June 1869).

It would have been a revelation to sit in on the conversation. Few men knew more of the secret history of mid-nineteenth century Southampton politics.

Sources of Illustrations

Figure 1 Sales catalogue: Southampton Archives SC 20/3/2/13

Figure 2 Philip Brannon, *The Southampton drawing book, or graphic delineations of Southampton & its neighbourhood,* [1849], engraving 16. Portcities Southampton 806

Figure 3 Portcities Southampton 2213

Figure 4 Ordnance Survey 25 inches to 1 mile, Sheet LXV.6, 1869. The street disappears from directories in 1909. It was obliterated by The Shirley Bedding Company

Acknowledgments

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