

## Letter From Ebenezer Syme to John Pascoe Fawkner Concerning The 'Gold Diggers' Advocate and Commercial Advertiser

Only isolated copies have survived in libraries of the Diggers' Advocate which was published from late 1853 to August 1854. George Black, G. E. Thomson and H. R. Nicholls, who conducted it, were leading goldfields radicals. This letter is from the Fawkner Papers.

Melbourne, July 6, 1854

My Dear Sir,

An apology is due to you for the apparent want of courtesy which Mr Black has shown in not writing to you, & acknowledging your kindness in sending the MS of your interesting history, as well as in transmitting the slips you requested. But I can assure you that this is only apparent — not real. Mr Black has been laid aside for some time with a serious attack of inflammation in the lungs, & has been reduced very low in consequence. And as he was recovering he received intelligence by the Queen of the South of the death of his wife in England, to whom he was much attached, & whose loss he has severely felt. In consequence of this illness, many things have been neglected in connexion with the paper, at least in the department of correspondence which Mr Black himself attended. As I hold my appointment on the Argus, & can only devote a limited amount of attention to the Advocate, I have not been able to supply Mr Black's place in this respect, though the circumstances of the paper now induce me to write to you on this occasion. When you sent the MS, the paper was in a precarious state, owing to the sudden appearance of winter, & the necessity of employing pack-horses. Had that necessity continued, the paper must have gone down; & in that event, your MS was, on my advice, not inserted, as it seemed to me wrong to take advantage of a proposal which you cd only have meant in prospect of the paper continuing & so finishing the series of your articles. We deemed it just to you to retain the MS till a better prospect dawned. That prospect has come. The new Postage Act having fixed a quid pro quo for taking newspapers, it seemed to us fair to try them, & sent our country papers through that medium. The Post-master General not only offered no objections, but every assistance was rendered by the officials at the Post Office. This has continued for several weeks, & has enabled us to keep square with the Herald people who still print it. Attempts have been made through the government to prevent the P O from taking our papers; but without effect. The P M General seems resolved to carry out the act, whether it be to their disadvantage or otherwise. Now, all that the paper needs is a little capital to get an office of our own. We receive about £120 weekly from the sale on the Gold Fields, £100 of which goes for printing. We can print it ourselves for £40. See what a profit the Herald has, & what a saving we cd effect. That saving would be profit. Franklyn (printers' broker) offers to fit up an office for from £400 to £500 — half cash, half bills. What we should save from the Herald would pay this in a few weeks. Can you possibly help us? I put the question thus frankly to you in Mr Black's behalf, for I have faith in the concern if it were on its own legs, & because I deeply sympathise with the noble effort Black has made to create an organ for the diggers. I have no share in the paper, & have not been able to pay so much attention to it as I could have

wished, or as I shd do were its success placed beyond doubt by having the requisite machinery. I believe that with £500 it cd be made both a powerful organ of opinion, & a paying speculation. You can protect yourself by the limited partnership plan or by lending us the machinery, holding it in your own name. It never was in such a promising state. Its establishment on the gold fields is long since a fixed fact; & a little money wd make it a bona fide property. With my best respects to Mrs Fawkner, & wishing you a pleasant sojourn at Sydney, I remain

My dear Sir

Yours faithfully E. Syme

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