Victoria Vanquished: The Scottish Press and the Failure of George Grant's Colony

by Brian P. Birch

While increasing numbers of English, Scots, and Welsh were attracted to Kansas after the Civil War—there were over seven thousand English or Welsh born in the state in 1870 and over fifteen hundred Scots—they tended to spread themselves more widely and thinly than other immigrant groups so that relatively little is known of them or why they came. Even where they did gather together in colonies as at Wakefield and Runnymede, these soon declined, often in discord, and left behind little record. Yet Kansas, with Colorado, was the state most frequently reported in British newspapers and journals in the 1870s as a field for emigration, and it seems clear that what was said of the state from time to time in the British press did much to influence the size of the flow of emigrants from Britain. As Winther has noted, the British press, and particularly the magazines for the affluent country gentlemen who perceived investment and sporting opportunities in Kansas, were generally complimentary towards the state.

But not all such reporting ran in favor of Kansas or of the various attempts to establish British colonies there. Nowhere is this better seen than in the case of George Grant's Victorian colony where the fullness of the coverage in the Scottish newspapers of the dissensions between the settlement's promoters and those who saw Kansas in a harsher light, did much to stifle its growth.

George Grant, born in 1822 in northeastern Scotland, the son of a poor crofter, had been apprenticed in the drapery trade before rising rapidly to become a leading silk merchant and partner in the well-known firm of Grant and Gask of Oxford Street, London. He was reputed to be tall and handsome, as well as successful as a businessman, but with his health weakened by his late forties and with a desire for new adventures, he decided to make a tour of America in 1870 or 1871.

Impressed by the opportunities for land development and speculation he saw in the West, he had decided by 1872 to give up his London business in order to establish a colony of Scots and English farmers in Ellis County, Kansas. That he should have chosen America for his colony appears to have been influenced by his previous business contacts there. That he chose Kansas resulted largely from the publicity being given to the state by the newly formed Kansas Pacific Railway which was anxious to find settlers for its vast land holdings. During that part of his tour through Kansas, Grant was shown some of these lands by the Kansas Pacific agents and a deal was negotiated in October 1872. By it Grant was to acquire nearly forty square miles of land just south of the railroad southeast of Hays City. Made up of alternate sections between the government's homestead lands, Grant paid $10,000 down for this large tract, with the rest on mortgage.

He planned to profit handsomely in two ways from developing his colony: by attracting other farm settlers, mainly from Britain, to settle much of the tract, and by

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1. The 1870 federal census shows that the British with 9,003 made up the third largest contingent of foreign born after the Germans (12,775) and the Irish (10,931). The most useful source on the British in Kansas is Oscar O. Winther, "The English and Kansas, 1865-1900" in John C. Clark, ed., The Frontier Challenge: Responses to the Trans-Mississippi West (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1971). Some information on the Welsh can be found in Phillips G. Davies, ed., "Welsh Settlements in Kansas," Kansas Historical Quarterly 45 (Winter 1977): 48-89. There is no similar overview of the Scots in Kansas.


developing his own large stock ranch. One part of the scheme would complement the other since a ready market for some of the grain produced on the colonists' farms would be provided by the "best breeds in horses, short-horn and other cattle, sheep and hogs" with which Grant would stock his ranch.  

It soon became clear that he was enjoying only limited success in selling or renting much of his land to the groups he most wanted to attract from Britain—the small farmer and the sons of the more wealthy class. Therefore, Grant's second aim of creating a large stock farm under his own control came to dominate the whole scheme. As a result, when he died prematurely in 1878, only his ranch was at all properly established and even then was on a much smaller scale than he had envisaged. The colony of small British farmers he had dreamt of settling across Ellis County was too thinly scattered to survive. Grant is therefore remembered more as the person who introduced thoroughbred cattle to America and less, as he would have preferred to be remembered, as the founder of a major permanent British settlement on the plains.  

Previous writers on the Grant venture have commented little on the reasons for the failure of Grant's plan to attract British colonists. Raish believed that the reports of the string of difficulties the first settlers faced—the severe winters of 1873-1874 and 1874-1875, the summer droughts, the grasshopper plague of 1874, and a devastating prairie fire—deterred many in Britain who might have later joined the colony.  

Winther in addition believed that Grant's early death, only five years after the colony's founding, discouraged those already there so that an estimated peak of three hundred colonists—itself probably an overestimate—in 1876 fell to less than half that number by 1880 two years after his death.  These would appear, however, to be only partial explanations for the colony's virtual stillbirth, and other reasons for its failure to more quickly establish itself should be sought in Britain from where Grant hoped to gather his recruits.

It seems clear from a study of the press reports of the scheme and the promotional literature which Grant put out that he aimed mainly to attract colonists from his native Scotland rather than from England but that the Scottish press remained generally unsympathetic to the scheme. Furthermore, the efforts of his agents in Edinburgh, Liverpool, and London who were to handle

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4. New and Attractive Fields for Emigrants, Victoria, Important Information Concerning the Best and Cheapest Farming and Grazing Land in Kansas...etc., Victoria (no imprint), 8.
7. Several of the newspaper items quoted here can be found in a collection of clippings made by Curror, Grant's Scottish agent, and now kept in the Kansas State Historical Society Library. See D. Curror, " Scrapbook of clippings concerning Victoria, 1872-1874." Others were only revealed by a search of relevant files at the National Newspaper Library, Colindale, London.
enquiries from potential colonists were marred by dissension; such was the case when his main agent in Scotland quickly doubted the soundness of the scheme and publicized his revolt against it in the Scottish press.

Much of this discord focused on the outcome of Grant’s invitation, at the outset of his plans, to a group of prominent Scottish agriculturists and others to visit Kansas to survey his lands and make their report known in Scotland. The report spoke very favorably of Grant’s scheme, but it attracted much criticism in Scottish newspapers—not only from Grant’s erstwhile agent—but also from Scotsmen who knew something of Kansas from visits there. It would have been a brave and foolhardy Scot who ignored this brief but virulent barrage against Kansas in the Scottish press. Few were prepared to do so, and Grant’s attempts to organize a succession of emigrant parties, mainly from Scotland, to Victoria came to nothing much beyond a first group that left in the spring of 1873 followed by a few smaller parties.

This first party had set sail before these problems surfaced. Grant had returned to Britain in late 1872, having inspected and made preliminary arrangements for the purchase of land for his colony. He spent the next months severing his business ties in London, publicizing his settlement scheme and getting together the first group of colonists. At that time Grant’s goal was mainly achieved through personal contacts, most of whom were persons of some wealth and standing. With Grant at its head, the party set sail from Glasgow on the SS Alabama on April 1, 1873. Also on board was a consignment of livestock for Grant’s ranch. The long voyage to New Orleans and up the Mississippi was not without mishap, but all arrived safely in Victoria seven weeks after departure. Grant spent the next six months, prior to returning to Britain, helping the colonists settle in and establishing his own ranch before winter came.

During his absence from Britain plans still went ahead in both Scotland and England to attract more adherents to the scheme and to organize further emigrant parties. The first publicity brochure had been issued early in 1873 while, in the previous year, agents had been appointed to handle enquiries from, and negotiations with, would-be colonists. D. Curror of Curror and Cowper, with offices in Edinburgh, was to cover Scotland while a London architect, R. W. Edis, would deal with potential settlers from England. Mr. A. MacDonald, the British agent of the Kansas Pacific in Liverpool was also to publicize the

8. The early colonists included the Hon. Walter Maxwell, Captain Charles Prescott, son of Sir George Prescott; Major Wilson; Dr. Cameron; and “many other prominent gentlemen,” see St. Louis Dispatch, August 24, 1873.
scheme and arrange passages for settlers. Since Grant did not expect to get all of his colonists from Britain he appointed a New York agent as well. 10

Although the first party had been largely made up of acquaintances and personal contacts, Grant and his agents hoped to attract later settlers by publicizing the scheme widely in British newspapers and by issuing promotional materials. The first report on Grant’s proposed settlement to appear in a British newspaper was published early in December 1872 in The American Settler, a small circulation, recently established London weekly aimed to promote British emigration to all parts of the United States. Written by MacDonald of the Kansas Pacific Railway, the article was clearly intended to forward the interests of both Grant and the railroad. It spoke of the numerous farms of various sizes which Grant could offer for sale to British settlers, and promised that the railroad would do “all that money and forethought can do to make Victoria the most attractive point in the Far West for British Emigrants.” 11

A few days later a much more substantial and probably a much more widely read article appeared on Grant’s scheme in The Courant, a leading Scottish conservative paper which claimed a wide readership amongst “the nobility, clergy, gentry, professional and trading classes in Edinburgh and throughout Scotland.” 12 Pointing out that he had already attracted some wealthy adherents to his colony, Grant stressed that he now wished to select further settlers “from a class known in England as small farmers.” 13 He also spoke of his plans to establish his own livestock farm of fifty thousand head at Victoria which would complement the farms in the colony, since the ranch would “offer a home market for very much of the grain produced upon the entire estate.” Nevertheless, at this stage his prime aim was clearly to attract more British farm settlers to Victoria.

While The Courant carried this long article and The American Settler continued to publish shorter favorable comment on Grant’s scheme, no other major British newspaper took up the story. 14 It is difficult to believe that this was because Grant and his agents did not seek the publicity those newspapers could provide. It seems more likely that editors chose not to publish such reports, comments, and letters because the British press at that time was generally unsympathetic towards promoting emigration from Britain to the United States, and particularly to the western states. If it carried any comment on emigration to the American West, the British press generally, in the early 1870s, stressed the drawbacks rather than the opportunities. It was not only the major national dailies which carried comment on the hazards of emigrating to the American West, like the London Times which in March 1872 published letters on the severity of the Kansas climate. 15 Even local newspapers had taken up much the same theme. The Invergordon Times, for example, with a small readership in the eastern highlands of Scotland regularly featured emigration reports from its two correspondents in America, one located in Virginia, the other in Williamsport, Kansas. When the paper’s Kansas correspondent in January 1873 described the state as “a paradise for farmers” it drew an immediate rebuttal from the Virginian contributor who warned his Scottish readers that “if you go west with the notion that money can buy you such pleasant homes as you see at home, you will be disappointed. . . .” 16

With the British press generally antipathetic to spreading word of Grant’s scheme, it was only The Courant with its readership largely restricted to the Scottish lowlands which followed his progress. Grant had to resort more fully to issuing his own promotional material. A first pamphlet had appeared in 1872 and was followed a year later by another giving a much fuller account of the potential of central Kansas for settlement. 17 In the first of these, as in his newspaper interview in The Courant, Grant outlined the dual nature of his proposed colony with farms for wheat, fruit, and stock raising available to settlers to complement his own large stock enterprise. In true promotional fashion the pamphlet also spoke in glowing terms of “the champagne air” of Kansas and of the generous provisions to be made for easy farm purchase and development. Not only would each settler be entitled

10. This was R. L. Fowler of Cobbe and Fowler, attorneys in Wall Street, New York.
14. The American Settler carried two further reports on Grant’s scheme in 1873, on March 1, 4, and October 1. MacDonald, the Kansas Pacific agent also made much of Grant’s colony in the advertisements he placed in The American Settler for the railroad in the summer and fall of 1873. These advertisements also announced a Prince Albert colony under formation farther along the Kansas Pacific line with a first party planned to leave for it in August 1873.
16. The Invergordon Times, January 7, 1873, p. 4, and February 26, 1873.
17. New and Attractive Fields carries no imprint for date and place of publication, but D. Curror’s pamphlet was definitely published in 1873. See, D. Curror, Scotch Enterprise in America, Mr George Grant’s Great Property: Victoria in Kansas, The Central State of the United States, An Explanation to an Enquiring Scotchman who contemplated Emigration (Edinburgh: Colston & Son, 1873). For a later publication, printed in 1874, see English Enterprise in America, Notes Addressed to Investors and Settlers Concerning the Estate of Victoria, (Ellis County, Kansas, U.S.) The Property of Mr George Grant. (Late of the firm of Grant & Gask, now Gask & Gask, Oxford Street, London). (Edinburgh: John Lindsay, March 1874), p. 21.
This type of map (top) was used by colony promoters to encourage emigration. At least one of the pamphlets published in Scotland included such a map with Grant's holdings marked off in blue sections. The modern map (below) places the colony's location within the state.
to a town lot in Victoria, at the heart of the colony, but there would be access by the railroad to the best markets at "reduced rates of fares and freight." Even "a commodious building for the temporary reception of newcomers free of charge" was provided to ease one's arrival. The second promotional pamphlet repeated much the same information although it now stressed the advantages of the area for stock raising rather than farming, suggesting that Grant already recognized that he would not be able to attract the number of colonists he had originally hoped. Lengthy extracts from several reports on Kansas were included to lend credence to Grant's claim that "this new country will ere long become second to no State of the Union." Statements like these, however, would not greatly increase the numbers interested in settling in Grant's colony while the British press remained unwilling to more widely publicize it. And so unimpressed were the newspaper editors with Grant's scheme that the departure of the first party of colonists went entirely unreported in their columns.

This press silence was partially lifted a few weeks later although in a way which was to do little good to the hopes of Grant, and MacDonald of the Kansas Pacific, to attract many more settlers to Victoria. With plans to despatch a second group of colonists in 1874, Grant had made arrangements just before he left for America in 1873 to send out a party of leading Scottish agriculturists to survey and report on the potential of the Victoria area for Scottish settlers. This party was to consist of Curror, Grant's agent in Edinburgh, who was also a prominent farmer, and five others of his choosing, all with farming experience in Scotland. Grant was to add two others to the party, his London agent, Edis, and a naturalist with farming knowledge.

It was intended that Curror's party would leave Scotland for Victoria in August 1874 and complete their survey by the autumn with Grant already in Kansas. All transportation and other arrangements were to be made with the Kansas Pacific by MacDonald. For this purpose Curror and the other members of the party met MacDonald in Edinburgh on July 1, 1874. This conference clearly did not pass off well because immediately after it Curror announced the cancellation of the party's imminent departure for Kansas. The news of the cancellation was reported in the Scottish press so that all Scotland knew of the divisions amongst the promoters of Grant's colony. But the reasons for Curror's abrupt cancellation of the survey visit were not reported. The disagreement which led to the cancellation probably centered on the desire of MacDonald and the Kansas Pacific, which was paying a major part of the costs, that the inspection team should report on the potential of a much wider area of its lands, about 540 square miles, than those that Grant was selling. To Curror this seemed to be an impossible task given the few weeks available for the party to complete its survey, and it was not for the benefit of Scottish emigrants so much as to the advantage of the Kansas Pacific.

As events unfolded it would probably have been best for Grant and the whole future of Victoria if the plan for a survey party had been shelved at this point. MacDonald, however, decided to pursue the wider tour of inspection on behalf of the Kansas Pacific and got together a new team, including three from the party which Curror had planned to lead and who were still willing to go. This new party was to be led by R. S. Skirving, one of the original team, and would include two others from that party—Bethune and Ferguson. That is, only Curror and two others had dropped out. Although Edis, Grant's architect, was still included and a Mr. J. Churchill from Dorset in southern England was added, the new survey team had clearly lost much of its Scottish agricultural expertise. Indeed, in New York four Americans were added to the party by Grant—two businessmen, one of which was his land agent there, and two journalists. Clearly, the Scottish farmers were outnumbered. But this party, unlike Curror's, was not intent on making a detailed survey and was, in fact, only to spend sixteen days around Victoria before issuing a glowing report on the district.

Readers of The Courier who were following the progress of the colony probably would not have been too surprised that the survey party's report came out so much in favor of Scottish settlement in this part of Kansas. MacDonald had, in fact, already prepared the way for the report. Fearing that Curror's statement on the cancelled inspection tour would cast a shadow over Grant's scheme just at the time when he needed favorable publicity to

18. English Enterprise in America, 10.
19. The Scotsman, Edinburgh, April 1, 1873, reported the sailing of the SS Alabama but made no mention of Grant and his party on board.
20. These were A. Bethune, a prominent farmer from the Scottish lowlands with experience of steam cultivation, a Mr. Smith from northern Scotland with experience of cattle raising as well as general cultivation, like R. S. Skirving who also had a scientific background. J. Ferguson was included because of his farming and civil engineering knowledge, while a Mr. Clay brought in experience of sheep farming.
21. As MacDonald later reported of the meeting: "I was informed by Mr. Curror that unless certain definite and suitable arrangements could be made, the party he had formed would not go out." The Courier, November 20, 1873, p. 7. MacDonald only states in the published correspondence that there were two "difficulties" which Curror wanted settled before he would agree to lead his party without specifying what these were. He also claimed that he substantially removed one objection and that it was agreed that the second should be held over until the party reached Kansas.
22. The Scotsman, July 29, 1873, p. 3.
Grant had been a successful merchant prior to his interest in Kansas lands. In this 1890 view of Oxford Street, London, the name “Charles Gash & Co Silk Mercers” is still visible about three-fours across the left-hand side of the street, high on the side of the building once occupied by Grant and Gash.

... recruit colonists, MacDonald got a reply published in the columns of the same newspaper pointing out that Curror’s statement “is not strictly correct. Three of the party, as originally organized, have declined going this autumn for private reasons; the rest, however, have left for Kansas and Colorado. . . . They go upon the invitation of the President and Directors of our Company, to inspect Victoria . . . and also the region of country traversed by our line from Kansas City to Denver, Colorado.”23 Even while the visiting experts were still on their way to Kansas, MacDonald was taking the opportunity offered by the editor of The Courier to publicly anticipate how favorable their findings would be:

The value of a report from gentlemen of their standing, and under the circumstances under which it will be made, cannot but be of the first importance to intending emigrants who are pestered with all manner of circulars. . . . In leaving these gentlemen perfectly free as to what they shall or shall not say about our lands, we feel quite confident as to results. The Kansas Pacific Railway is the main thoroughfare through Kansas. . . . The land on both sides of the road is well drained, and entirely free from endemic disease. . . . well watered, and covered with the richest grasses. The climate is salubrious . . . the winters are quite as mild as in Morayshire [on Scotland’s sheltered east coast], snow seldom lying on the land for more than a few hours. . . . The object of the visit of these gentlemen is to verify these statements put forth by us and regarded for the most part as ‘travelers’ tales’ . . .

The Skirving party completed its inspection in early September, and on October 16 The Courier, following on the heels of several American newspapers, carried the visitors’ brief but glowing report on Kansas and, in

23 Ibid., August 14, 1873, p. 3.
particular, on Grant's estate. It was their view that his "extensive property is possessed of extraordinary resources, and offers a very inviting field for agricultural enterprise." Even though seen at the driest time of the year, "we find that the grass, which looks withered and burned up, is in fact a natural hay which feeds as well as when green. Sheep, cattle and horses (like the native buffalo) eat it readily and fatten quickly upon it. ... We are well assured that the land may be most profitably cultivated, and is capable of producing every kind of crop...."

Noting also the healthfulness of the area and the availability of domestic water, bedding stone and "ready markets for every description of produce" afforded by the railroad, the authors of the report concluded that "so convinced are we that the settlement of Victoria will rise rapidly in market value, that we have ourselves made investments in it...."

On the day that the report of the Skirving inspection party appeared in The Courier, Currow wrote to the editor again to deny any involvement with it or to give support for the views it contained. He referred readers to his own statement on Victoria in that newspaper a few months previously where he said that he and his fellow agriculturalists would make a survey on which "emigrants might depend." 25 It had been impossible to make that survey, but he now stressed that the Skirving report was not the outcome of that survey but of a much inferior one. Three weeks later and in response to letters he had received from intending colonists, Currow had another letter published in The Courier explaining that he expected to obtain some more reliable information for them on the state of Grant's project from Grant himself, who was expected back in Scotland shortly. Until then he asked readers to ignore the Skirving report and "to suspend their judgement and action in reference to this field of emigration till that information is obtained." About the same time he also published a lengthy pamphlet detailing the types of information that intending emigrants to Grant's colony would need on the climate, soil, water, markets, and other conditions before making a sound decision on whether to buy land and settle at Victoria. 26

Some controversy and ongoing story, the editor of The Courier now published other letters he was receiving on the suitability of Grant's colony in particular, and Kansas in general, for Scottish emigrants. In one, a Mr. D. Edie, a reader in Fife on the east coast of Scotland, complained that Victoria, which Skirving had so highly praised in a talk published in The Courier, had proved "a very plain of death" to his neighbors, the Seth family, ten of whom had left for Kansas in the spring of 1873. 27 Stating that they were "the healthiest large family I have known," Edie reported that they had "hardly well settled in Kansas when the diphtheria fever of the country attacked them," carrying off the mother, two daughters, and a son. Edie concluded, "the above facts cannot be too widely known," and he advised fellow Scotsmen to stay at home and "bear the ills we have than fly to others that we know not of."

Taking this to be an attack on his own honesty and judgement, Skirving immediately replied. 28 There could be no truth in Edie's claim about the Seth family because "no family emigrated from Fife last spring or at any other time to Victoria, and I am utterly ignorant to whom he alludes...." If misfortune did befall this family elsewhere in Kansas then it was unfair to blacken Victoria's good name with it.

If the statement has any truth in it at all, I doubt not that unfortunate family must have settled far from Victoria, in some of the unhealthy 'bottom lands.' Some of the rivers in Mid-Lothian [lowland Scotland] are rendered not very salubrious from the pollutions received from manu factories. Would a family to take fever and die on the banks of one of these would [he] think it fair to say that Invernesshire [highland Scotland] had a deadly climate?

With neither combatant in this latest round of the contest prepared to concede to the other and with the editor of The Courier willing to see the correspondence on Kansas continue, it was Edie's turn to reply. Claiming that he was one "who wishes to have the bad as well as the good side of emigration presented to his fellows," and demanding that Skirving "apologise for his hasty letter... if he be the honourable man I take him to be," Edie reiterated in his second letter the tragedy of the Seth family and appended the opinion of Kansas held by

24. The report was issued in Victoria on September 15, 1873, under the names of the three Scottish agriculturalists; Edwards, Clark, who was one of the New York businessmen invited to join the party by Grant, and Charles Prescott, one of the first colonists. It was subsequently republished in The Courier, October 16, 1873, The Scotsman, in Grant's own promotional material, and in several American newspapers. Edie, as Grant's architect, laid out the town of Victoria.

25. The Courier, October 18, 1873, p. 8.

26. The Courier, November 8, 1873, p. 5; D. Currow, Scotch Enterprise in America, Mr George Grant's Property, Victoria in Kansas (Edinburgh: 1873), 22.

27. The Courier, November 11, 1873, p. 7. Chairing a meeting of the East Lothian Farmers' Club in southeast Scotland a few weeks after his return from America, Skirving took the opportunity to steer a discussion on Scottish farm tenants' rights towards the advantages of emigration to Kansas and Grant's colony for Scottish settlement on which, to judge from the newspaper report, he gave a lengthy lecture. See The Courier, November 8, 1873, p. 5.

28. Ibid., November 12, 1873, p. 8.
another of his neighbors who had lived there for seventeen years and found it to be "a d-d unhealthy place." Others now joined in the attack on Skirving. James Kerr, who had a letter on Kansas published in The Courant before the Skirving report appeared, wrote a second in response to Skirving's challenge to the authenticity of some eye-witness accounts Kerr had quoted on the unsuitability of Kansas for Scottish settlers. Earlier he had attacked Grant as "either a --- or a --- to propose such a place for people from either Scotland or England." Now he cautioned Scotsmen against "deciding to set out for what Mr. Grant calls 'those green prairies...threaded with dark belts of timber...a joy for ever.'"

Perhaps most significantly Kerr revealed that in his previous letter he had quoted from a Thomas Smellie, late of Colorado and now living in England, who had likened Kansas and Colorado to "a howling wilderness." Because Smellie believed that by offering Grant, Skirving, MacDonald, and others so much space in his newspaper, the editor of The Courant was supporting "a decided movement towards inducing emigrants to go to Kansas and Colorado," Smellie now put out three reasons against emigration.33 First, Scottish emigrants could not overlook the climatic extremes on the plains. Skirving's visit had been made in August and September, "a suitable time to go for the purpose of reporting favorably on the country, but a most unsuitable time as a test of the other ten months." Secondly, Scotsmen should ignore inducements to buy land there when there was an abundance of free government land and "hardly any worth settling on." Thirdly, shipping costs generally made both crop and stock production unprofitable so that if "intending emigrants...think they have many troubles in the old country, they will find them but the cube root of what are in store for them in the new."

With the reputation of the Kansas Pacific Railway as well as the future of Grant's colony threatened by this increasingly bad newspaper publicity, MacDonald, as the railroad's British agent, again felt he had to go into print to support the Skirving report against "these slanders of Kansas." Two letters appeared from him only a few days after Smellie's broadside against emigration. In the first, MacDonald attacked the fickleness of Curror as the author of so much of the public discord over the Grant colony. By condemning the Skirving report and "publicly attacking in November the trustworthiness of gentlemen in whose judgement and ability he expressed the greatest confidence last June," Curror could be counted amongst those "slanderers of Kansas." In his second letter, MacDonald extended his condemnation of these slanderers to Edie, Kerr, and Smellie but felt that "Scotsmen have not the gumption the world gives them credit for" if they believed this slander against the knowledge and experience of men.

29. Ibid., November 15, 1873, p. 8. In a later letter which appeared in The Courant, November 21, 1873, p. 3, Skirving admitted that new information had confirmed Edie's claim that some of the Seth family met their deaths on the way to Victoria, and that he actually met the survivors there. Clearly this admission did not help the pro-Kansas side of the controversy in Scotland.
31. Ibid., November 17, 1873, p. 2. Smellie's earlier letter had appeared in the same paper on October 30, 1873.

32. Ibid., November 20, 1873, p. 5, and November 25, 1873, p. 8.
like Skirting. The claims of Edie and Kerr that Kansas was too unhealthy or otherwise unsuitable for settlement could be dismissed as "without sufficient ground" for further debate. On the other hand, MacDonald could recognize that Smellie's complaints, based on several months' residence in the West, might carry more weight with readers and could not be so lightly dismissed. Instead MacDonald tried threats. Stating that Smellie must know that his claims about the coldness of Kansas winters, the depressed state of the cattle trade, low crop prices, and the slowness of Americans to buy land in Kansas are "hearsay evidence ... utterly false and libellous," MacDonald ended by warning Smellie "and others about bringing charges against the agent of a company like ours.... If he repeats this... he may be brought to book, not in the columns of a public newspaper, but in a court where the law of libel punishes its offenders."

Not that such threats would silence the critics. Only the editor of The Courant could, in effect, do that, and he was close to making that decision. Curror was given one final opportunity to respond to MacDonald's attack on him, but he chose only to list all those aspects of Kansas, its climate, soils, crop prices, and markets on which Scotsmen would need more information before deciding to settle there. 50 Once wells were sunk, shelter belts planted, prairie fires controlled, markets established, and houses erected "in which Scottish folk could dwell" then this part of Kansas could become, in Curror's view, "an abiding-place for civilised [sic] beings." Likewise, Edie and Smellie chose calming language in their final responses to MacDonald's threats. 51 They could, of course, afford to lower the temperature of the debate, and merely repeated their cases against emigration to Kansas, because their objective—to sow seeds of doubt about the wisdom of Grant's colony—had been achieved.

Even the conservative journal, The Farmer, in an article about Grant's colony which was published at about the same time that the correspondence in The Courant was being drawn to a close, noted "a kind of division in the camp of Kansas" and largely repeated criticism of the inadequacy of the Skirting report as the basis for deciding if Scotsmen should join the colony. 52 Three weeks later The Field, a London-based countryman's magazine which kept a correspondent permanently in the American West, carried a report of his visit to Victoria. 53

Pointing out that Grant was about to depart for England "with the purpose of returning in the spring with a large party of colonists," the article presented a generally favorable picture of the progress that Grant and his wealthier colonists had made in stocking their lands with good quality cattle and sheep. Unfortunately, The Field's readership would not provide the considerable number of small farmers Grant sought. Additionally, neither the decision of The Courant editor to close the correspondence on the colony on a strongly anti-Kansas note nor the failure of any other British newspaper to take up the story of Grant's progress with his colony helped his plan to attract more settlers. As a result, the small parties of emigrants that later set off for Victoria did so without publicity, and little more was heard of them, or of Grant, in Britain.

Without the numbers of settlers he really hoped for, Grant had to give more attention to stocking his own land and disposing of other land for stock farms to wealthy colonists, rather than to small crop Scottish farmers. 54 By 1875 the future was seen essentially in terms of developing ranches for "the landed gentry of England and the wealthy merchants of the United States," even though small numbers of British settlers trickled in each spring over the next few years. 55 As such, the progress of Victoria was no longer of any interest to the Scottish or English press. When letters appeared in The Field early in 1877 complaining of the grasshoppers and low profits which plagued Kansas farmers, their correspondent revisited Grant's colony only to be disappointed by the limited progress made since his visit three years previously. 56 Grant's venture had turned out to be little different from those of many other land speculators who relied more on favorable publicity than evidence of progress to give them success. Four years after the establishment of the colony The Field correspondent saw little evidence of cropping, and Grant still held most of the range. With only five of the original thirty families of colonists still living around Victoria he pronounced that he was "a profound disbeliever in English colonies here." It was a sentiment that, in their silence, was shared by all British newspaper editors.

53. Ibid., November 24, 1873, p. 7.
54. Edie's final letter appeared in The Courant, December 2, 1873, p. 3, with Smellie's following two days later on December 4, 1873, p. 7.
57. In February 1876, for example, the American Agriculturist published an illustration of the cattle canal being constructed to house one thousand head on Grant's ranch. American Agriculturist 25 (February 1876): 60.
59. The letters appeared in The Field on January 27 and February 10, 1877, the article by the magazine's correspondent appearing on March 10, 1877, p. 279. Because the article was unfavorable to the colony MacDonald, the Kansas Pacific Railway agent in England, wrote a refutation which appeared in The Field, April 7, 1877, p. 412.