

PIONEER AUSTRALIAN JOURNALIST

CAREER OF GEORGE HOWE

To The Editor

Sir—The appointment of the first Commonwealth Government Printer, as announced in the "Commonwealth Gazette" last week, recalls that it was on May 11, 1821, that the first Government Printer in Australia, George Howe, died. Howe was the pioneer of journalism in this country, and was the editor-printer of the first Government "Gazette" (published 1802), containing the General Standing Orders, which served as laws for the colony at Port Jackson. On March 5, 1803, he issued "The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser," the first Australian newspaper. His motto, "Thus we hope to prosper," circumscribing a view of Sydney Harbor, appeared at the top of the front page. Born in 1769 at St. Kitts, in the West Indies, George Howe, like his father, became a printer and had, as he claimed, a classical education. As a young man, he discussed the politics of George III. so unfavorably that he found it expedient to migrate to London to escape being embroiled in the American Independence question. There he found employment as a printer's assistant, but the solid anti-Jacobinism of "The Times" disagreed with the young Irishman's palate. What calling he pursued until 1800 is doubtful, but that year, bearing the alias of George Happy, he was transported to New South Wales under sentence for seven years, probably for some political offence. On arrival at Sydney he metamorphosed himself as George Howe, and Governor Hunter had him installed as printer of the official journals of the day. It was Howe's own enterprising spirit which prevailed upon Governor King to sanction the collecting and printing of the General Orders. King gave him a salary in 1802, and a pardon on June 4, 1806. This last gracious act deprived him of

This last gracious act deprived him of the rations to which he was entitled while technically still a convict, and cast him upon his own very slender resources. He prospered and was wealthy enough to become one of the original founders of the Bank of New South Wales; but his prosperity was short lived, for in 1819 we find him doggedly persevering to keep the "Sydney Gazette" going, in face of dire penury. Upon his death his sons carried on the business, and one was for a time the Government Printer and editor of the "Tasmanian Gazette" in the southern colony. As no monument adorned his father's grave, this son had a marble memorial erected in Howe's printing office, bearing the simple inscription:—"In memory of George Howe, a Creole, of Saint Kitts: born 1769, died May 11th, 1821, aged 52. He introduced into Australia the art of printing, instituted the 'Sydney Gazette' and was the first Government Printer. Besides which, his charity knew no bounds." This is the epitaph to Australia's "William Caxton," and surely greater men have lacked so noble a one.—I am, Sir, &c.
W. A. THOMAS, Fullarton.