

## *A Few Observations On American Fiction, 1851-1875*

BY LYLE H. WRIGHT

AT the present time, I am engaged in compiling a bibliography of American fiction published in this country between 1851 and 1875. It is to be a continuation of my earlier published work which covered the years 1774 to 1850. In the course of my work, I have visited several libraries known to have good collections in this field. I spent a very profitable month at this Society's Library where one of the outstanding collections of American fiction is to be found, thanks to the efforts of Clarence Saunders Brigham, Director.

During my search, I have brought to light many novels and tales that had dropped completely out of sight. Literary historians will say, I am sure, that some of these titles were better forgotten, but that is a bibliographical impossibility. No doubt, some statistics covering the number of novels written on any one subject will have to be revised upward. Moreover, with a better knowledge of the total output of fiction which falls within the scope of my work—I estimate the total will exceed four thousand titles—the scholar has a much broader view of the literary activity in this field during the third quarter of the nineteenth century.

It is not my purpose here to evaluate these resurrected works or the works of any author in this twenty-five year period. I wish only to offer my observations and venture a few opinions, based on my findings, on a number of out-of-the-way facts, and to discuss a few points not to be found in

literary histories. Before proceeding, however, I would like to touch briefly and lightly on our fiction prior to this time.

Charles Brockden Brown, our first professional novelist, wrote several volumes of considerable merit that earned him a place in our literary history. Yet he was unable to support his family on the income from his writings alone, and several decades were to elapse before an American author could do so. Problems of distribution, promotion, and royalties had to be solved, to say nothing of overcoming the publishers' lack of interest in native products when they could keep their presses busy reprinting sure selling novels from over seas. International copyright was in the very distant future.

The urge to write regardless of reward was not to be denied, and the output of fiction began to increase early in the nineteenth century. By 1850 the number of titles published within the scope of my earlier bibliography exceeded 1700, and, of these, slightly more than 800 were published in the last decade of that period.

As the number of authors increased it was inevitable that capable writers such as Irving, Cooper, and Simms would appear and take their places at the top of the writing fraternity that developed. And not far behind the top-flight authors were several more men and women who are to be found in the American histories of the novel and fiction by Carl Van Doren, Arthur Hobson Quinn, Alexander Cowie, and Ernest E. Leisy.

It is to be observed that the majority of the early writers of fiction, most of whom were of minor stature, adhered to a conventional form frequently based on English models; consequently, they missed much of the romance that surrounded them. They lived in the days of the masted schooners and flying clippers, stagecoaches and the early development of the railroads on which the nation came to

depend for its transportation. The frontier pushing westward was a throbbing movement of humanity bent on finding new homes and a new way of life. Trails were being blazed to the Pacific by the fur trappers and exploring parties, and marauding bands of Indians provided additional news. But very few writers who tried, succeeded in capturing the dash and daring on land and sea of the times.

The minor writers who were responsible for the bulk of our fiction before 1850 used few themes with variations only in locale, and their plots were transparent. No attempt was made at characterization by either major or minor authors, and the latter paid little heed to construction. It is not at all uncommon to find that the gentle and devout heroine had to suffer a multitude of hardships before her rescue, provided of course she had escaped ravishment by the villain, or her lover had not been lost at sea, either of which events was sufficient to cause a languishing decay, climaxed by death. The hero, on the other hand, always made good although occasionally he had to reform to do it, or the denouement established him as the lost son of a prominent family. Villains inevitably came to a bad end—condemned to hang, drowned while attempting to escape, or fatally shot or stabbed in the concluding fight.

From these tales of varying degree of literary merit, and I do not consider all of them literary outcasts, a great deal can be learned about the way of life of the people, the clothes they wore, the food they ate, and their daily gossip. Politics was rarely introduced, whereas religion loomed large, reaching the point of spiritual ardor in some stories. The various reform movements that were springing up in the early nineteenth century were eagerly embraced and the purposes of the reforms driven home by depicting existing evils. The temperance movement in particular received much attention from authors, with Timothy Shay Arthur

pointing the way. The latter is a classic example of an author who ground out one hundred or more books during his lifetime, yet was unable to attain the rank of a literary craftsman. But it can not be denied that his saccharine tales were tremendously popular and influenced the thinking of a large body of his readers.

Of the many catch phrases I found amusing in the early tales, two I consider little gems. Isaac Mitchell wrote in his *The Asylum* (1811), "He had lived till he was a bachelor before he married, he then chose his wife as he would have done a farm, not so much for beauty as convenience." More profound is the one from Nathaniel Parker Willis' *The Legendary* (1828), "I met frequently a young man of a still and collected eye, and a forehead more like a broad slab of marble than a human brow. His mouth was small and thinly cut, his chin had no superfluous flesh upon it, and his whole appearance was that of a man whose intellectual nature prevailed over the animal. He was evidently a scholar."

As the nineteenth century moved toward the halfway mark, names added to the roster of successful authors included among others, Longfellow, Hawthorne, and Melville. (Although Melville's popularity was of short duration at the time, he made a later comeback.) Harriet Beecher Stowe made her debut in print as did Ann Stephens and Emma Southworth, three women destined to become popular writers and mass producers. Along with the solid works available to the ever-growing reading public, were the sensational tales of Ingraham, Bennett, and Judson who headed the blood and thunder writers. Their highly colored novelettes of intrepid scouts, cunning Indians, and brave sailors sold by the thousands. James Monaghan's life of Judson (Ned Buntline), entitled *The Great Rascal* (1952), traces the colorful career of Judson and tells how he mass-produced lurid fiction.

By 1850, American fiction had achieved a place in the literary world, even if its influence was hardly perceptible across the sea. Hundreds of novels and short stories had been published, many of which were acclaimed and widely read. The endeavors of the early authors demonstrated that American writers could produce stories which met with public approval, a fact that encouraged others to tilt their quills in a field crowded with the works of English authors; a situation that was to exist for some time to come. For instance, Harper's summer list of books for 1874 in *Publishers' Weekly* offered thirteen novels of which only one was by an American; the remainder were of English origin.

The United States at mid-nineteenth century faced an exciting future. Its east and west boundaries were two oceans, its southern limit had recently been established with our neighbor below the Rio Grande, and the peaceful settlement of the Oregon question and the creation of the Oregon Territory, marked the boundary in the Far Northwest. The population of the nation was slightly more than twenty-three million inhabitants.

Our history reveals that the mid-century was the eve of great changes in the political and social life of the nation as well as in the economic life. What was expected to be a lasting peace proved to be but a lull between two wars. Even though the rumblings of the slavery question were not yet loud enough to give cause for general alarm among the people, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was only two years away.

In 1851, Nathaniel Willis published his *Hurry-Graphs; or, Sketches of Scenery, Celebrities and Society*. The opening remarks to his review of "Los Gringos" by Henry A. Wise, furnishes us with an opinion of the transition taking place in contemporary literature: "Conversational literature, or books written as agreeable people talk, is the present fashion with authors and passion with readers. Herman Melville,

with his cigar and his Spanish eyes, *talks* Typee and Omoo, just as you find the flow of his delightful mind on paper. . . . In writing a book, now-a-days, the less you 'smell of the shop' the better it sells. . . . It is the 'spirit of the time' to get rid of hindrances and 'nonsense.' In diplomacy, straightforwardness has stripped the artichoke of etiquette down to a palatable pith. . . . In society, late balls and formal suppers are yielding to early 'receptions' and light entertainment. In dress, ceremony has quite given way to comfort and convenience. . . . Under this new franchise, numbers of gifted men, hitherto only known to their friends, are extending their acquaintance to the whole reading world. Any body who can talk agreeably to six, has only to put his thoughts down as he talks them, and he is as agreeable to ten thousand as he was to six."

Five years after Willis' book, in a little known story, *Despotism, or, The Last Days of the American Republic*, published in New York, 1856, the author pays high tribute to fiction and its role in the life of man. The tale has been attributed to Reuben Vose, presumably the same man who wrote and published the campaign life of Lincoln in 1860. At one point, Invisible Sam, one of the characters, is carrying on a conversation with the spirit of Washington on the state of the country and its probable ruin. He turns to the spirit of the Goddess of Fiction and says, "To you, the Goddess of Fiction, I propose this question: Will you aid me to save the nation?" The Goddess of Fiction replies, "Half the world has been civilized by me. I lead all nations to the highest enjoyments of this life. By my aid you shall save the nation from secession, from popery, from anarchy, from demoralization, from despotism, and you shall guide the whole country upward in civilization, in union and happiness. My mission is to redeem the world, and to claim attention to the cause of truth and virtue." This certainly pays fiction

about as high a tribute as could be received, and when the great works of the centuries are considered, the statement does not seem quite so exaggerated.

The next twenty-five years was to see many aspirants for literary honors attempt to prove Willis' point, wittingly or not. A flood of novels and short tales poured from the presses, some very good, more of them on the average to mediocre in quality but widely read, and the remainder very poor yet finding some market. It was a quarter century of rapidly changing events, the magnitude and scope of which furnished the writers with a wealth of material even to this day.

Sentimental fiction was much in vogue having come to full flower during the fifties. It continued to bloom even if somewhat faded until the closing years of the century, giving way reluctantly to realism which crystalized in the works of Eggleston and Howells in the seventies. The most popular and successful exponents of sentimental fiction were women: Emma Southworth, Maria Cummins, Mary Jane Holmes, Augusta Jane Evans Wilson, and Susan Warner, to mention only five of the better known. Fred Lewis Pattee in his *The Feminine Fifties* (1940), provides us with an excellent study of the era and the part the "mob of scribbling women" had in the drama being enacted. Men too, particularly the clergy, tried their hand at domestic fiction, but they just could not mass-produce tears like the women.

There was one field of writing that women with one or two exceptions only, had not yet ventured, and that was the domain of the tall-tale and humorous story. Alongside the feminine sentimentalist there thrived a growing band of men which included Orpheus C. Kerr (Robert H. Newell), Joseph Baldwin, Petroleum V. Nasby (David R. Locke), John Phoenix (George H. Derby), and a host of others, who produced a brand of robust humor and sly tall-tale, typi-

cally American, undiluted by either foreign influence or drawing-room amenities. The humorists of my period are dealt with in Walter Blair's *Native American Humor, 1800-1900* (1937), where samples of their work may also be found.

The blood bath the nation was compelled to undergo in the sixties had greater impact on our fiction than any previous event, including the great westward migration to the California mines. Many novelists approached the factual when writing of the war, and decided shades of realism appear. Perhaps this was because more authors participated in one way or another in the war than went "to see the elephant," or because the war had some effect on every family in the country; whereas only a few people had more than newspaper or book knowledge of life beyond the Great Plains. In any event, character sketches were beginning to emerge and the romance of battle was giving way to the more brutal aspect of war. Realism was in the making.

Between 1865 and the end of the period under discussion, American fiction was on the threshold of its greatest change since its inception nearly one hundred years previously. Authors of sentimental and light romances lost a great deal of ground to writers who brought a much more analytical approach to their creations and to those who were exponents of local color. New names appeared during this time that loom large in our literary histories today: De Forest, Harte, Eggleston, Howells, Mark Twain, and Henry James. Great changes too had been wrought in the nation. The social order of the South had been swept away, a state of chaos prevailed, and Union forces were stationed throughout the area to remain until the late seventies. The North, little injured in the conflict, was soon to resume its industrial expansion, with but slight pause for the panic of 1873.

I would like to speak briefly on a few of the novels that used contemporary events as their thesis. Those that I



have singled out to illustrate the subjects will not be found, for the most part, in our histories of fiction, or are rarely mentioned in the more specialized studies. This has been done purposely, on the basis that the major authors and a number of the minor ones are treated in the histories now available. Furthermore, I am not prepared at this time to suggest that any revision of former conclusions may be necessary. I do know that there are more novels on certain subjects than were previously known to exist, but how much if any this will change present concepts, I am not able to say now.

In a little more than two hundred years, the western frontier of the colonies had been pushed to the Pacific Ocean. California was declared a territory of the United States in 1846, and the northwest boundary dispute between England and this country was resolved in the same year. Two years later, the area between California and the newly established northern boundary was declared the Oregon Territory. Settlers were already traveling the Oregon trail in fairly large numbers; but with the discovery of gold in California in 1848, a veritable stampede developed the following year with more than one hundred thousand "forty-niners" arriving by land and sea.

The West in fiction prior to these developments covered the vast area of America from the Alleghany to the Rocky Mountains, and loosely embraced the Southwest. This was the West of James Hall, Timothy Flint, Caroline Kirkland, William G. Simms, Robert Montgomery Bird, and Cooper's *Prairie*. While the "Far West" soon became the West, the basic characteristics of California's argonauts and Oregon's settlers were similar to those of the pioneers of the earlier West: rugged individualism, flamboyant spirit, and to a lesser degree an irreverence in the approach to life. A society soon developed on the gold coast that refused to be

influenced by traditions from over the seas, had little to do with Atlantic seaboard customs, and, in its early phase, had little regard for law and order, other than that which it established for itself.

Little of this, however, was reflected immediately in American fiction. Prior to 1850 there was only a handful of tales that touched on the Far West, and these were of the lurid type, resorting to the use of "gold" in their titles to catch the eye. George W. Peck's *Aurifodina; or, Adventures in the Gold Region*, an anonymous tale entitled *Amelia Sherwood; or, Bloody Scenes at the California Gold Mines*, and Charles Averill's *Kit Carson, the Prince of the Gold Hunters*, and its sequel *Life in California*, were among the earliest separately published tales to appear; but none succeeded in creating the color and atmosphere of life at the mines. Even Averill, who was an experienced writer, in his *Life in California* confined the action more to robbers than to gold mining.

In 1850, among the tales issued, the most misleading title was William Beschke's *The Dreadful Suffering and Thrilling Adventures of an Overland Party to California*. This is a story of the formation in New Orleans of a group which adopted the name California Phalanx. At St. Louis they outfitted with mules for both riding and packing, discarding the traditional wagons for the sake of speed. The group reached the Platte by Christmas, wintered there, and that concluded the story.

One of the earliest published novels which had been written by a man who had actually been to the mines and dug for gold, was Leonard Kip's *The Volcano Diggings, a Tale of California Law* (New York, 1851). Kip was a trained lawyer and had been admitted to the bar at Albany, New York, before he traveled to California in 1849. We have his factual account in *California Sketches, with Recollections of*

*the Gold Mines*, published at Albany in 1850. His novel was published anonymously; but a penetrating reviewer of the *Boston Courier* speculated, "The author must have been there." The story depicts the mines fairly well; Kip's attention, however, is focused on lynch-law, and he develops an episode leading up to the near hanging of an innocent man to illustrate the injustice of such practice. The *New York Spirit of the Times* and other journals reviewed it very favorably.

Another little known author, George Payson, born in 1824, the son of the Reverend Edward Payson, of Portland, Maine, journeyed to the mines in 1849 and did not return until 1851. He studied law after his return and settled in Chicago. His first novel, *Golden Dreams and Leaden Realities* (New York, 1853), is a well written story in the first person, of the trip around the Horn and of experiences at the mines. His descriptive passages are particularly fine and executed with considerable restraint.

To pass on toward the end of the period on which I am speaking, we come to Rossiter W. Raymond, better known as a mining engineer and writer on technical subjects than as the author of a boisterous western novel of gold mining, stagecoaching, holdups, and a few shootings. His tale *Brave Hearts* (1873) was written under the pseudonym of Robertson Gray, and includes all the ingredients of a class A cinemascope. The story opens at the stage-line's home station in Knucklesville, a mining camp in the foothills of the Sierra. Raymond tells of the trial of Harrison Howe who shot "Knuckles" for whom the town was named because the latter had jumped his claim. The jury was persuaded to reword its first-intended verdict of "Served him right," to "Died a natural death by the discharge of a pistol." Raymond emphasized his satire by pointing out that the verdict sounded more like one rendered at a cor-

oner's inquest than at a trial by jury. "But form," he goes on, "was of little account, and everybody understood what the jury meant when, instead of finding one fellow guilty, they simply found the other fellow dead."

Later in Raymond's story, it is related that great care was taken in the selection of a site for a cemetery on a spot not likely to be required for mining operations. He then says, "it has happened within my knowledge that a funeral procession, arriving at the open grave, was warned off by the jubilant sexton, who had 'struck a vein' while digging, and 'located a claim.'" The relatives of the deceased insisted upon a share because they maintained that the prospecting had been done under their orders.

How much Raymond embellished events that led him to recount such a trial or the happenings at the cemetery, provided, of course, that any similar events ever occurred, I do not know. Both episodes do reflect the raw life of lusty characters at the diggings, and such events would not have been too unusual.

James Weir, of Kentucky, opened his historical novel *The Winter Lodge* (1854), which was a sequel to his *Simon Kenton, or, The Scout's Revenge* (1852), with an interesting and bold assertion: "The Far West? We have no Far West now, gentle reader. Since the reapers have gone forth to gather the gold harvest of California, this familiar cry has been stricken from our vocabulary." And a little later, "Five years ago, it was considered a long and perilous, and almost lifetime journey to the Pacific; but at the cry of gold for the gathering, it became a holiday jaunt even for women and children. . . . Now, to go to California is an every-day affair, too tame even to produce excitement."

There is no indication that Weir ever made the overland trip, and it is doubtful that of the many who did up to 1854, few considered it a holiday jaunt. The railroad that was to

girdle the continent was yet fifteen years away. By the end of 1875 however, great changes had been wrought in the West from Chicago to San Francisco. Vigorous minds had come out of the region to contribute in no small way to the world of letters; and the publishing business had grown rapidly. In 1873, the San Francisco Mercantile Library could boast a membership of two thousand and a yearly circulation of 88,751. The new West was becoming literate.

By the middle of the century, the beat of the abolitionists' drums for emancipation, while yet faint, was picking up in tempo. Novelists who supported the cause weaved the evils of slavery into some semblance of plot or would point it up by digressive discourses. Writers sympathetic to the southern viewpoint countered by presenting the charm of plantation life and contrasting the well-being of the slaves to the poor conditions of the factory workers in the North. Caroline Rush called attention in her *Dew-Drop of the Sunny South* (1851) to the use of young girls in the factories, and advocated such conditions that "the forlorn creature, who must now work sixteen hours out of the twenty-four, can earn a comfortable living in eight hours, and use the remaining time for recreations." This very pious novel then tried to develop the thesis that the slaves were well off in comparison.

It remained for Harriet Beecher Stowe to bring the whole subject into the open with her explosive *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The tremendous circulation of the book and the repercussions from it rocked the nation. No one book or combination of books created the furor and consternation both in high and low places that her work engendered; and ironically, she had no such intention when writing it. Her *Dred* that followed four years later, while well received by a large audience, did not duplicate the impact of Uncle Tom.

The South's awareness of its dependence on the North for books and even for publication of its own authors' works, is well expressed in a number of editorials in *De Bow's Review* during 1850. In addition, various groups were proclaiming the need of a southern literature, a need that became acute with the growing flood of abolition literature. The publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* compelled southern writers and sympathizers to take up the pen in earnest in an effort to counteract the book's effect. According to Jeanette R. Tandy in her "Pro-Slavery Propaganda in American Fiction of the Fifties," fourteen proslavery novels were published in the space of three years following Stowe's work. The plots were stereotyped, the southerner always convinced the northerner how wrong he was concerning slavery. In fact, if the arguments had been accepted on a national scale, slavery would have spread to the North because the reasoning was built on the premise that slavery was beneficial to society.

Caroline Rush was one of the first to accept the challenge of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* with her *The North and South; or, Slavery and Its Contrasts* (1852). Her opening chapter is similar in thought to other authors who attempted to answer the Stowe book: "I do not for a moment imagine that anything I can write can equal in style, logic or depth, that far-famed work of Mrs. Stowe, which has aroused a nation's sympathy." This negative approach was common in the southern literature that attempted to defend slavery, and it blunted the critical imagination of its authors. Mrs. Rush then attacked with highly-wrought expressions and "closed with dangerous sophistry." She made her most telling point by creating a doubt in the reader's mind as to whether Mrs. Stowe believed what she asserted, and if she did, "she knows little or nothing of slavery as it really exists in the South." This was completely nullified when

she concluded that Mrs. Stowe did not comprehend or sympathize with the "slavery of the North."

Mrs. Rush further remarked that it had "been my fate, from early childhood, to mingle much with abolitionists;" and that she believed what she had heard. Later, she spent three consecutive years in the South and observed plantation life first-hand which enabled her to annihilate *Uncle Tom's Cabin* with: "From the facts that I have gleaned, I have drawn inferences, and these inferences condemn Mrs. Stowe's book as an unjust and unfaithful picture of southern life and characters." William L. G. Smith also rushed to the defense of slavery with his *Life at the South; or, "Uncle Tom's Cabin" As It Is* (1852). Allibone states that 15,000 copies sold in fifteen days.

Mrs. Emily Clemens Pearson wrote several antislavery novels and also championed temperance. In her *Cousin Franck's Household* (1853), she developed the plight of the "poor whites" of the South who, she said, were "not an accident of the slave system, but a necessary result, bound to it by the immutable law of cause and effect." A chapter heading "What was behind the Black Curtain" in her novel *The Poor White; or The Rebel Conscript* (1864), proved to be not comparable to the connotation of modern curtains; but it would have lent itself as well for propaganda purposes.

Another book that was highly praised as one "inspired by a conscientious desire to contribute to the triumph of justice, and the preservation of the Union," was Epes Sargent's *Peculiar. A Tale of the Great Transition* (1864). It has been dismissed today as worthless literature, but it affords a good example of contemporary fiction with the power to stir emotions. Three months after publication, the *American Literary Gazette* announced that "*Peculiar*, which has passed through ten editions in this country, is announced for republication in London by Messrs. Hurst & Blackett."

Sargent received one hundred pounds from the publishers and William Howitt did a preface. Professor Newman, of the London University, "a scholar and writer, says of *Peculiar*: "The wide perusal of the book would be very profitable to England. The variety and novelty of character seem to me admirable. The secondary people are not dry sticks, but photographically expressed. . . . The book absorbed me too much for my other studies and letters, so that in fact I saw it best to stick to it and finish it off.' "

It is to be observed that proslavery novels rarely developed or even touched on the actual issue of freedom. On the other hand, the abolition novels cried for emancipation without giving much thought to the problems that would confront freed slaves and former owners, economically, socially, and morally. True, a few mentioned an utopian idea of a colony in far away Africa, transportation provided; but as we know, little came of it.

The output of fiction during the war years of the sixties declined very little. The actual conflict supplied background material for many novels and was the central theme of a few. Some writers produced stories that stemmed from actual experiences, while others merely retold what they had learned from witnesses; a few ignored the event entirely. Authors predicted victory and those of the North assumed without question that it would bring reunion, such as suggested by Mrs. Delphine Baker in her short allegory, *Solon; or, The Rebellion of '61*, published in Chicago, 1862. In this, she indicated the beginning and ending of the war, and the consequent reunion of the North and South. In the same year Benjamin Wood published his typical novel, *Fort Lafayette; or, Love and Secession*. The story brings together former Yale classmates at Riverside manor outside Richmond. Beverley Weems is host and close friend of Harold Hare and Arthur Wayne, both northerners. The



men regret that developing tensions between the North and South will ultimately cause them to take up opposing arms. Hare is in love with Beverley's sister Oriana Weems and she with him. In due time, Weems and Hare meet on the battlefield of Bull Run, the northerner is wounded and captured. Oriana nurses him back to health and helps him to escape. To further develop the tragedy of war, the author introduces the scene of brother against brother. During the thick of battle, a Union soldier shoots a Confederate, catching the falling body he recognizes him as his brother. He in turn receives a fatal wound, and at the conclusion of the battle, his body is found, still holding on to his dead brother.

Few writers were as blissfully unaware of the war as Mrs. Sarah Dana Greenough, wife of the Boston sculptor, Richard Saltonstall Greenough. Her novel *Lilian* was published in about the middle of the war. Among other subjects she brings in an Indian fight—and Indians had given way to the slaves in the early fifties—and then takes the reader to Rome, far removed from the tragedy at hand. It lacks much to approach good literature but I cite it as an example of escapist fiction.

The theme of A. O. Wheeler's novel, *Eye-Witness; or, Life Scenes in the Old North State* (1865), was that of the hardships of Unionists who resided in the South during the war, primarily women sympathizers. He stated in his preface that the book had actually been written two years prior to publication at the time the events occurred. Due to lack of knowledge, very few authors ventured to treat this theme.

The war continued to be fought in fiction on a partisan basis for years after peace had settled on the nation. The problems of reconstruction and the agitation caused by carpet-baggers did not lend themselves to quick healing of the wounds of the South, and the unreconstructed writers

were not the best nurses. Some of the latter, like Mrs. Sallie F. Chapin in her novel *Fitz-Hugh St. Clair, the South Carolina Rebel Boy; or, It Is No Crime To Be Born a Gentleman* (1872), were most outspoken. The title reveals the approach and tone, and the story lashes the North with no uncertainty. More subtle novels are exemplified by the anonymous tale of "a lady of Warrenton," entitled *The Princess of the Moon. A Confederate Fairy Story*, published at Warrenton, Virginia, 1869. Written ostensibly for children, it cleverly forgives the South while condemning the North.

On the eve of the Civil War what was the nation reading? Who were the popular authors in the preceding years? These questions were answered as early as 1860. The *Boston Post*, apparently stung by Sydney Smith's taunt, "In the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book?", prepared a series of articles on the subject and compiled a table to illustrate the circulation of the most popular authors. From the table of fifty-three entries, which include juveniles, text books, medical and religious works, I have extracted the information relating to literature. The complete table may be found in the June 15, 1863, issue of the *American Publishers Circular*, where it was reprinted.

Washington Irving's works	800,000
Uncle Tom's Cabin	310,000
The Lamplighter	93,000
Fern Leaves	96,000
Arthur's works	1,000,000
Ingraham's Pillar of Fire	90,000
Marion Harlan's works	125,000
Miss Warner's works	150,000
Cooper's novels (present annual sales)	50,000
Doesticks series	77,000
Bayard Taylor's works	150,000
Ik Marvel's works	70,000

It is to be noted that of the twelve authors recorded above, the men slightly edge the women; but the total for *Uncle Tom's Cabin* exceeds any other individual title reported. Arthur's 1,000,000 is not surprising, inasmuch as his name was virtually a household word during his lifetime, and in 1860 when only fifty-one with twenty-five years ahead of him, he had been writing for nineteen years.

Prior to the year 1800, only four American women had ventured to write fiction. In the next three quarters of a century, they were to become pre-eminent in this field of American literature. The *Weekly Trade Circular*, reporting in January, 1872, on the preceding year's business, stated that nearly three-fourths of the American novels that year had been written by women, and also credited them with the best novels.

Today, we give little thought to the fact that women occupy cabinet positions, sit in the legislative halls, perform at the operating table, or explore the secrets of the microbe; they are judged on ability not sex. This recognition was not obtained easily or quickly. The Woman's Rights movement began early in the nineteenth century and its exponents continued to wage a militant campaign for equal rights for several generations. Between 1850 and 1875, the spirit of some of the Woman's Rights women reached fever pitch as reflected in their publication appropriately labelled *The Revolution*. This publication ran through eight volumes from 1868 to 1872. Closely associated or identified with it were such prominent reformers as Susan B. Anthony and Julia Ward Howe. Part of their slogan printed under the masthead of the early volumes reads: "Men, their rights and nothing more; Women, their rights and nothing less."

The group advocated the ending of unhappy marriages and other radical departures from the socially-accepted scheme of things at the time. An article in the December

23, 1869, issue demanded that "this wholesale shooting of wives' paramours should be stopped." And it went on to speculate as to the public reaction if "women should decide to shoot their husbands' mistresses." The article concluded by praising Mr. Beecher and Horace Greeley for their stand in connection with the Richardson and McFarland affair which precipitated the discussion. Two years later Anne Crane Seemuller permitted the husband in her novel, *Reginald Archer*, to shoot the man who had wronged his wife. But she introduced an anticlimax by having the husband blow his own brains out.

It is not surprising to find woman's rights propaganda in the novels by women. The authors, however, were much more feminine in their treatment of the subject than their sisters on the platform or the writers for *The Revolution*. No suggestion of bitterness or hatred toward men is left with the reader. There is a puckish approach in *Man's Rights; or, How Would You Like It?* (1870), by Annie Denton Cridge. Her short story is done in a series of five dreams. Men are drawn doing the housework and attending a lecture on Man's Rights; women run the shops, make the laws and control the purse strings. Then the reader learns in the last sentence that it all happened on Mars. In a similar vein with only the story treatment differing is *The Angel Over the Right Shoulder*, by Elizabeth Phelps, a little tale published eighteen years previous to *Man's Rights*. The husband in Miss Phelps' story attempts to show his wife that housework need not be so great a task if only she would have a systematic plan of operation. His plan was a complete failure. Mrs. Laura J. Bullard, in 1856, set out to demonstrate in her lengthy novel *Christine; or, Woman's Trials and Triumphs*, the steadfastness of women to their cause. Christine argued and expounded her beliefs on woman's rights until she drove her relatives to having her committed to an asylum in an

effort to change her mind. When they offered to obtain her release in exchange for the promise to abandon the whole thing, she refused.

Needless to say, the male contingent of authors were very much aware of the tempest around them. A few, like Daniel T. Wright in his *Mrs. Armington's Ward; or, The Inferior Sex* (1874), were of the opinion that woman's sphere should be determined by her talents, which Wright limited to household management; others were more forthright in agreeing that women were entitled to equal rights. Men also poked fun at distaff problems as in Robert B. Roosevelt's *Progressive Petticoats; or, Dressed to Death* (1874), which is a humorous satire on women's medical knowledge, managing household accounts, and rearing children. Among the burlesque parodies was Charles Webb's *St. Twel'mo; or, The Cuneiform Cyclopedist of Chattanooga*, published in New York by Webb at the time *St. Elmo* was sweeping the country. Any one who has read the latter will enjoy *St. Twel'mo*, which is an exceptionally fine travesty. Even the comment on T. S. Arthur's *Cast Adrift* in the June 7, 1873, issue of *Publishers Weekly* was appropriate to the times. It presumed, uniformly adverse testimony to the contrary, that there must be some good mothers-in-law in the world, and enquired if a book on a good mother-in-law might not be a profitable venture for a publisher.

Satire or stricture were no impediments to the growing mass of fiction by women. Peterson and Brothers of Philadelphia announced in 1871 an uniform edition of forty-three volumes of Ann Stephen's works; Eliza Dupuy had at least forty to her credit; Emma Southworth led the pack with more than fifty-two titles; while Harriet Beecher Stowe limped along with an even dozen for the twenty-five year period, but since she had hit the jack pot early in the game she did not feel compelled to turn out one or two novels a year.

That books of humor were not women's forte is evidenced in the fact that the names of only five appear before 1875 who had written books that might be classed in this genre. Ann Stephens and Caroline Hentz with their *High Life in New York* (1843) and *Aunt Patty's Scrap-Bag* (1846), respectively, were the pioneers, but the trail held little appeal for women. In the next quarter century, only three wrote anything of note: Mrs. Frances Whitcher, *Widow Bedott Papers* (1856); Virginia W. Johnson, *Travels of an American Owl* (1871); and Marietta Holley, *My Opinions and Betsey Bobbet's* (1873).

Mrs. Mary Clemmer Ames' summation of the weaknesses in women's writings in her *Memorial of Alice and Phoebe Cary* (1873), is most discerning. She pointed out that Alice Cary as a literary artist suffered "as so many women in this generation do, for lack of thorough mental disciplines and . . . lack of that practical training of the faculties which is indispensable to the finest workmanship." Unfortunately, Mrs. Ames did not profit by her own analysis because her three novels *Eirene*, *His Two Wives*, and *Victoire*, are heavily larded with sentimentality and religious fervor.

The first American minister to have his fiction published in book form was Enos Hitchcock, Congregational clergyman. His *Memoirs of the Bloomsgrave Family* (1790), and *The Farmer's Friend* (1793), apparently met with little demand, inasmuch as neither went to a second edition. This is not always conclusive but only indicative, because the size of the edition has bearing on adequacy to meet the anticipated demand. However, Belknap's *Foresters* and Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry* were published between the appearance of Hitchcock's two works and both required several editions over the years. Thus it was demonstrated in the formative years of our fiction that good books without too much moralizing and preaching would find their

way into the hands of a large reading public. These first clerical attempts in the field of fiction were intended to instruct and improve the reader's mind morally and spiritually. This approach became the common denominator for much of the clerical fiction, but Hitchcock's style was improved upon by later writers who did not hesitate for emphasis to delineate the seamier side of life.

From the time of Hitchcock's early efforts to the year 1875, the increase in the number of fiction-writing clergymen was tremendous. Even clergymen's wives authored several novels. Sometime between 1875 and the end of the century this flow virtually dried up. I made a cursory search to see if this phenomenon had been examined and explained, but I found nothing satisfactory. Furthermore, Lewis Leary's index to *Articles on American Literature* does not refer to a single article on the subject of American fiction by the clergy, or on the clergy in American fiction.

What motivated the clergy to turn to fiction? There are three basic reasons I believe, and several subheadings could be developed under each; but the main reasons were the need to supplement income, the desire to teach a larger audience than a congregation, or the desire to express one's views on religious questions or reform movements; any one of these could have been predominant. I have yet to examine a novel by a clergyman whose primary purpose was to entertain.

The fortunate clergy who presided over wealthy parishes were little troubled by financial problems, but they were in the minority. On the other extreme were those who held parishes so small and poor that they were able to obtain only enough pledges to support their families in the barest fashion. This is confirmed in many of the stories that cover a span of years of a minister in a small community. He receives from members of his congregation a ham, a fowl,

or other items of food, as welcome additions to a meager table. If he was a family man, and the majority of them were, his troubles were even greater. Men accepting calls to out-of-the-way churches were truly dedicated, and their efforts to write were not prompted so much by the possibility of fame and fortune, as by the need for the necessities of life.

The bulk of clerical fiction leaves much to be desired, and the hunt for a literary masterpiece is fruitless, even though there are a few readable books in this class. Characters are, for the most part, without dimensions and conversations are stilted. No doubt many of the events related stem from actual circumstances, and the whole constitutes embroidered autobiography. Nevertheless, the reader obtains a good view of the itinerancy or of village life and customs of the period, for the writers are not prone to gross exaggerations. A good example is Lucius D. Daniel's *Life in the Itinerancy, in Its Relations to the Circuit and Station, and to the Minister's Home and Family* (1856), the title of which tells the story.

In 1859, the sermons on the Book of Esther by the Reverend William Anderson Scott, of San Francisco, were published. He was of the opinion that the press was a powerful auxiliary to the pulpit and that authorship was good for the pastor because writing required study which broadened knowledge. If the works of the pastor were presentable "then his influence may be extended from a thousand to fifty thousand, and instead of preaching to a congregation of a few hundred members, he may preach to a whole continent for many generations." There is a decided similarity in Scott's reasoning and Willis' earlier contention of talking to six or to ten thousand. I doubt if Scott had fiction in mind when he propounded this philosophy, but it is as applicable to fiction as to more serious religious writings.



In the preface to *The Judd Family* (1869), the Reverend John Scotford offers his reasons for writing a novel on Christian baptism. He states that there is nothing available in narrative form on infant baptism, the many works on the subject are in a sermonizing style unattractive to the mass of readers "not favored with the mental discipline needed to enable them to follow the author," and such a book is also needed by pastors. Furthermore, he points out, sermons are ephemeral in their influence regardless of how good they may be, and soon pass out of the mind.

Frederick William Shelton, an Episcopal clergyman, had written fiction prior to 1850, and his first novel, *Salander and the Dragon*, was published in that year. His second one, *The Rector of St. Bardolph's; or, Superannuated* (1853), covers a fifty year period in the life of the rector in a parish on the south side of Long Island. His next venture was *Peeps from a Belfry* (1856), a collection of short stories including one entitled "The Model Parish." In this he depicts an ideal parish from the viewpoint of the minister. It is so contrary in many ways to the picture presented in the novels, that I believe Shelton was severely rebuking church members who were too critical of their ministers.

George Canning Hill, journalist and author of several novels, develops the politics within a parish in his *Our Parish; or, Annals of Pastor and People*, published anonymously in 1854 and re-issued three years later as *Our Parish; or, Pen Paintings of Village Life*, with the author's name on the title-page. This is the story of a minister who after twenty years in one parish was unable to overcome the machinations of a little group determined to dismiss him. Several novelists develop the evils and injustice of dismissal, but ministers could not be quite so forthright. It is to be observed, though, that the clergy dared say more in writing than they did from the pulpit.

Turning from the clergy's personal troubles to the broad field of religious controversy as reflected in American fiction, we find many ministers in the thick of battle. I am of the opinion that they enjoyed a good argument, particularly the bolder element, as a form of recreation; at least it diverted their attention from problems close at hand. Of the many issues in which they took part, I believe the Baptist controversy over immersion led the list. Amos Cooper Dayton's *Theodosia Ernest; or, The Heroine of Faith* (1857), advocating immersion, was responsible for several novels being written in answer to it. The prefaces frequently dealt with the author and the stories attempted to prove how wrong he was in his belief.

The laity also took up the cudgels in the various controversies, and when they wrote on religion they were not at all reticent in expressing their opinions on any faith not their own. No Protestant denomination was overlooked, nor were the Quakers, Mormons, or Catholics. The Catholics especially came under heavy fire and some of the anti-Catholic fiction was most vicious in its attack.

I have made no effort at this time to determine how many of the authors in the bibliography I am working on were clergymen; but without doubt Edward Payson Roe was one of the most successful. His first novel, *Barriers Burned Away* (1872), which is laid in Chicago at the time of the fire, met with such success that even he was surprised. Consequently, his second novel, *What Can She Do?* (1873), after selling 12,000 copies in three months, convinced Roe that he should devote full time to writing. His action brought forth severe criticism and the accusation that he had abandoned his calling for something less worthy of him. He wrote his answer in the preface to *From Jest to Earnest* (1875). He there contends that he was still teaching the gospel even though not in the conventional manner of

taking a text and preaching to a congregation. He then asked the unnamed editor of a religious journal who had criticized him in print, "Did it ever occur to the Christian editor, that, perhaps, the Master knows what kind of work each one can do best, and that, if we will only follow His leading, we will at last find our own little niche and the work we can best perform?" He likens his novels to sermons and says "if the audience will take home its teaching, I am content to be neither seen nor thought of." Roe subjugated his purported reasons for writing novels sufficiently to produce stories more entertaining than most of those by his fellow clergymen.

At the end of his preface to *From Jest to Earnest*, Roe announced that the novel was scheduled to be reprinted in England, "and not as a 'pirated' captive." The *Publishers Weekly* two years earlier had announced that duplicate plates of Roe's second novel had been ordered by a London house from Dodd & Mead, and interpreted this as an indication of the growing popularity of American literature in England. In the September 18 issue of the same periodical it was pointed out that Roe's popularity which led to books selling in the tens of thousands was "because they appeal to a large class of the community, who like novels when they are so wholesome and safe as are his." Appleton states that Roe's books sold more than a million copies in this country alone.

It is worthy of note that publishers between 1850 and 1875 became increasingly aware of a potential market for books suitable for teen-agers; and thereby created a screening problem for me. Not all the publishers were as certain about the category as was Lee and Shepard of Boston and New York. They usually advertised titles under the headings juveniles or for youth. Their "Maidenhood Series" was intended for teen-agers and their publicity was explicit.

For example, their release covering *Our Helen* by Sophie May, a pseudonym of Rebecca S. Clarke, and *That Queer Girl* by Virginia F. Townsend, stated both "will be welcomed by many a maiden who finds that between grown-up people's books and those for mere children, this series just supplies her wants."

If the publisher had difficulty in determining the author's intention, he begged the question by publicizing the book as safe for older boys and girls "but will be enjoyed equally by adults." Even a reviewer occasionally was in a quandary whether the book should be considered for the "in-betweens." Whenever I was unable to determine the classification easily, or had not found any helpful contemporary advertisements or reviews, I retained the title in my bibliography. I know this troublesome group will result in "not in Wright" because more than one author wrote juveniles, "in-betweens," and adult novels. We need a complete bibliography of youth's literature, which includes some of our best literature.

Earlier I mentioned a few of the popular authors before the Civil War. From information in issues of *The Nation* and *Publishers' Weekly* during 1872, we learn what the public was reading after the war. There were three authors whose works were most in demand at the public library: Mrs. Emma Southworth, Mrs. Caroline Lee Hentz, and Mrs. Maria J. Holmes, in that order. The writer of the article in *The Nation* contended that readers of this class of literature were not the book-buying class, and went on to say, "After all, the true test of popularity in authors is not found among readers of this class. It is and always will be evidenced by the dog-eared volumes of Shakespeare, or Bunyan, or Defoe, or Dickens, which turn up generation after generation in houses where no writer of the day ever penetrates." Contemporary authors could draw little encouragement from such sweeping condemnation of their efforts; but the public

was not impressed and readers continued to buy the books they preferred.

*Publishers' Weekly* also supplied information about the circulation of a public library near Boston. Of every one hundred books charged out, forty-five were fiction, thirty-five juvenile fiction, and twenty of all other descriptions. The library in question—not named—contained neither the works of Mrs. Southworth nor Mrs. Hentz, but it was conceded that they would have been in as great a demand there as in Boston, even though their omission was not explained. In the absence of those two, the three most popular authors were listed as Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, Mrs. Adeline Whitney, and Miss Louisa May Alcott. The most frequently read books were *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Miss Maria Cummins' *Lamplighter*. Listed next in order of demand were Regina Roche and Anna Porter, followed by Mayne Reid, Charles Reade, Dickens, Cooper, Charlotte Bronte, A. S. Roe, Dinah Mulock, Wilkie Collins, Maria J. Holmes, T. S. Arthur, and Jane Austen. The last group mentioned included only one American, Nathaniel Hawthorne. The three designated masters of fiction and their most popular works were Dickens' *Old Curiosity Shop*, Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter* (with the remark that not many books were more read than this one), and Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*.

Publishers in the third quarter of the nineteenth century must have surmised that some day, somebody would attempt a bibliography of the fiction they published. Concluding that the work should not be made too easy for that person, they frequently changed titles of novels when bringing out new editions—much more so than in the 1774-1850 period of my earlier bibliography. Other publishers entering into the spirit of the hoax, sold or swapped plates, with the result that the same story can be found under three

different titles with three different imprints. When in the preparation of my first bibliography I found the imprint of the Philadelphia firm of T. B. Peterson and Brothers, I could reasonably assume it was the end of the cycle for that work. Peterson Brothers published first editions of very few fiction writers.

A few random observations gathered from various sources will suffice to close this paper. The National Temperance Society, publishers of both adult and juvenile fiction, announced in 1873 that their thirty-six new publications brought their total to three hundred and three items. They estimated over 19,000,000 pages of tract and newspaper material had been published by them since their initial issue.

In 1874, it was estimated that the number of books published in Boston in an average year was between three and four hundred titles, reaching a circulation of 2,000,000 copies. This would seem to indicate that Boston had not slipped as much in the publishing business at that time as some present-day studies have indicated.

The fad for publishers "Libraries of novels" was spreading rapidly in the seventies, with nearly all the major houses maintaining at least one. On the other hand, gift books, so popular for many years, were rapidly losing favor and were soon to disappear. Many American authors had made their debut in the fancy-bound annuals and gift books.

By 1875, the population of the United States approximated 40,000,000, a gain of nearly 17,000,000 in twenty-five years. Books continued to pour from the presses to meet the insatiable thirst of fiction readers, one that has not been quenched to this day.

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