The Martineau Society

Sixth Newsletter
October 1996

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1996

This year's Annual General Meeting was again held at Harris Manchester College, Oxford, by kind invitation of the Principal, Revd Dr Ralph Waller. A smaller group than last year - 15 - gathered on 27 July for a friendly and productive meeting. It was good to hear that membership of the Society has now risen to 52 and that Harriet's fame reached Australia a hundred years ago (see the article on the Australian connection later in this issue). We also found ourselves dealing with the kinds of problem faced by a larger society than we were two years ago: for example, how best to spend our surplus funds on improving the Newsletter? How to protect our contributors' copyright? The Charity Commissioners are still reluctant to grant the Society charitable status, but the Committee have reworded the Constitution in such a way as to make it less controversial. There was certainly plenty to think about in the business part of the meeting: not least whether next year's Trail should coincide with the Unitarian General Assembly in April and return to Norwich. Members should have been circulated about this by the time they read the Newsletter.

After the Officers and Committee had been re-elected, the keynote address was given by Dr Waller, who spoke about James Martineau's period of residence in Dublin, and his tolerant response to the sectarian culture around him. This tied in perfectly with the other two papers on James, by Reg Charles and Tony Cross, summaries of whose contributions are included in this Newsletter. The remaining two papers were by Barbara Todd, who entertainingly described Harriet's building projects and residence in Ambleside, and Elisabeth Arbuckle, who recounted the remarkable story of Gaston Martineau's exile from France, following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and his arrival first in Spitalfields, London, and

then in Norwich. Gaston (1660-1726) was Harriet's and James's great-great grandfather, and the information about him forms the first chapter of Elisabeth's eventual new biography of Harriet.

A refreshing light lunch of sandwiches and fruit was provided by the College, which has also offered to host next year's AGM on 12 July. By then we hope to be in the newly refurbished Martineau Room, observed by the newly-restored portrait of James's eldest son, Russell.

SUMMARIES OF PAPERS

Revd Reginald Charles: 'The Theology of James Martineau'

James Martineau was an outstanding theologian of the 19th century with a definite message and vision which was essentially Christian in its content.

For Martineau, Unitarianism meant Christianity. He found Christianity to be pre-eminently a 'personal religion', which established the most intimate and solitary dealings between God and the human soul. He stood for unity: the unity of Creator and Creation, the unity of the discernable reality between him and the mysterious essence that is a fundamental part of it. It has been suggested that he directed the attention of his contemporary Unitarians towards a more mystical and spiritual approach to their faith. His theology was grounded in Theism, defined as a belief in one God as the creator of the universe, and the Saviour and Ruler of mankind; transcendent and free from the limitations of time and space, yet immanent, ie. present and active in time and space. Many would say that he was a modern theologian of his time, thinking out his own systematic theology.

James Martineau saw Will as the ultimate source of the universe executed by a Supreme Intelligence, exercising not just Will, but free Will. He held that all

religion resolves itself into a conscious relation on our part to a 'higher than we', ie. a supreme Mind, above all and expressing benevolence, justice and mercy. Thus, he discerned the unity of God as Cause and God as Perfection within the encompass of a Divine Mind, and a Will which ruled the universe and maintained moral relations with mankind. Martineau was not convinced that the creation was just an isolated act of God, but saw it as a Process, an on-going and everlasting process. Are we able to read into this what today we know as Process Theology? He was pre-eminently the representative of the Religion of Conscience, but also admitted that the mystical side of religious experience also contributed to the Christian idea of 'the ascent through conscience into communion with God.' Martineau believed that Christ, whose voice is Christianity, addresses himself first to the individual conscience.

His comprehension of the word 'incarnation' was of some significance when applied to Jesus of Nazareth, not exclusively, but rather representatively. The concept of the 'incarnation' was valuable as a universal symbol of the divine within the human. He believed in the union of God and man in Christ, resulting in the complete absorption of the human will in the Divine Will, so that it was God who spoke and acted through the human conscience, thus creating a spiritual awareness and a moral relationship with God.

He explained his belief in the Trinity by affirming that the holy Spirit, which was within us, was the spirit of Christ, who was imbued with the Spirit of God, forming the one blessed Trinity.

There is no doubt that James Martineau was largely responsible for a profound change in Unitarian theology during his lifetime. He could see that the whole basis of theological scholarship was undergoing a change, and he emphasized this in his

own words: 'these constant changes are in the order of Providence and are a part of the appointed growth of the human mind.' In conclusion, are we not, theologically speaking, always in a state of transition?

Revd Tony Cross: 'From Friar to Free Christian: James Martineau's hand in Suffield's "Apostasy"'

Robert Rodolph Suffield (1821-1891) - a prominent Dominican friar - left the Church and Order on Wednesday 10 August 1870, shortly after the decree of Papal Infallibility had been proclaimed. His defection was deliberately timed - he belonged to a Norfolk 'Old Catholic' family, was associated with opponents to the decree and to ultramontanes like Manning who had campaigned vigorously for it. But Suffield always maintained that the decree was not the major cause of his defection. Indeed, he confesses to doubts from the time of his Dominican novitiate in 1860 and it seems probable that he ceased inwardly to be an orthodox Catholic by the late 60s.

Suffield's formation as a Catholic, priest and friar was hardly calculated to ensure stability. His father had ceased to practise his inherited faith and brought up his sons on Rousseauesque principles. Robert was at Peterhouse, Cambridge, from 1841 for less than two years where he was caught up in the Catholic revival in Anglicanism. In the early 1840s he decided to return to the faith of his father's family. After interrupted training in France and England, he was ordained priest in 1850. His success as a missioner/preacher led him, after ten years, to the Dominicans - the Order of Preachers. He became known nationally and abroad for his zeal. So the shock of his defection was correspondingly severe. J H Newman calls it: '...a public distress and scandal to all Catholics...'

In personal turmoil during the 60s, Suffield asked and received permission in 1868 to withdraw to a quieter ministry. He had decided by now that he was a Christian Theist of the Theodore Parker school. He wrote to Martineau on 24 May 1870 asking him to call at Husbands Bosworth to give him counsel. Martineau came. An elaborate and courteous correspondence followed which eased Suffield's difficult transition from Friar to Free Christian.

I believe that Suffield made a shrewd calculation when he wrote to Martineau. He was well aware of Martineau's standing and influence. He must have known that Frances Power Cobbe and F W Newman - thinkers he admired - were Martineau's friends. He may have suspected that Martineau could bespeak a ministerial post for him among Unitarians. So he could not have chosen a more sympathetic and useful mentor. For his part, Martineau was only too happy to assist this celebrated Catholic in his 'conversion' to Free Christianity. The Unitarian leader had had a profoundly disappointing decade in the 60s in his launching of the short-lived 'Free Christian Union'. Now here was a notable convert to the cause. Croydon Unitarians approached Martineau to ask him to recommend a minister for their fledgling church. Suffield had seen, in the Unitarian press, that they were seeking a suitable appointment - so he was quick to respond to Martineau's suggestion that he apply. A busy and successful ministry followed in Croydon and, afterwards, in Reading.

Martineau may possibly have over-estimated his role in Suffield's 'conversion'. Certainly he played a crucial part. But Suffield had shrewdly chosen his mentor - to their mutual advantage and satisfaction.

Professor Elisabeth Arbuckle: 'The Huguenot Heritage: Gaston Martineau'

This is the first part of Professor Arbuckle's paper: later sections will follow in subsequent issues of the Newsletter.

Shortly before his death in 1726, Gaston Martineau, Master Surgeon of Bergerac in Perigord, France, made a will leaving his 'dear and loving wife Marie all and singular my household goods or household furniture,' and specifying that the sum of £550 be placed at interest for her for life - going to his youngest daughter Marguerite (or Margaret) to be invested for her maintenance until she reached 21. Smaller bequests went to others, including his grandson Gaston and the poor of his congregation in Norwich.

Gaston was probably 66 at this time, and the prosaic terms of his quite respectable fortune belie what must have been a remarkable, romantic life story of heroic escape. From sources such as royal edicts, town and church records and published life stories of other Huguenot refugees from the same area as Gaston in southwest France, parts of his history may be guessed at.

The story begins in the last half of the 16th century, when Continental wars of religion sent a stream of refugees to British shores (Edward VI of England in 1550 had granted French- and Flemish-speaking Protestants the use of St Augustine's chapel in Austin Friars in the city of London). The French-speaking part of this foreign congregation soon moved to St Anthony's chapel in Threadneedle Street, which stood nearer the Bishop's Gate and Spitalfields, the rural village where silk-weavers from Lyons and Tours would settle in the following century. Meanwhile, in France, the followers of John Calvin, members of the Reformed Church, became known as Huguenots - a term of disputed origin.

Huguenots were alternately patronized and persecuted. By the Edict of Nantes,

in 1598, Henry IV of France granted them rights and privileges, and for almost a century they enjoyed a relatively peaceful co-existence with Catholics. Matters changed at the end of the Thirty Years' War. Louis XIV had been frightened by the beheading of Charles I of England, in 1649, and suspecting the Huguenots of republican sympathies, he now began to quash their rights and privileges. They were forbidden to hold offices, practise a profession or belong to a guild, and at home they were required to call on Catholic midwives, send their children to Catholic schools, and to call on Catholic priests at times of death and burial.

Measures controlling the Huguenots' secular life formed a prelude to the hated dragonnades: in 1681, French dragoons (quartered in Huguenot homes) began to destroy Huguenot churches and to arrest the ministers. Reprisals by Huguenots in 1683 led to a campaign of outright violence. In Poitou, for example, dragoons tore down houses, burned books and threw household goods into the streets, while town officials looked on. Huguenot men were marched to prison tied to horses' tails or in chain gangs. Huguenot women and children were mistreated, and sympathetic Catholics were forbidden to help. By law, Huguenots were not supposed to leave France, but thousands escaped to havens in Holland, England, America and other Protestant lands. Louis XIV's huge army now made any policy of accommodating the Hugenots unnecessary, and he moved to revoke the Edict of Nantes.

Between 1681 and 1720, an estimated 200,000 Huguenots fled from France, 40,000 or 50,000 to England and probably 15,000 to London, a city of half a million people in 1700. This last wave of immigrants to Britain was the greatest for almost a hundred years. In fact, soon after the start of the dragonnades, Charles II issued a brief for a public collection for Huguenot relief. He also invited

Huguenots to settle permanently in English towns to practise their trades and handicrafts.

James II officially continued his brother's policy, when he took the throne in February 1685 - just eight months before the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. But James objected to the Huguenots' 'anti-monarchical principles' and threatened to force the French Church in Threadneedle Street to conform to the Church of England. Nor did any word of the dragonnades appear in The London Gazette, the official newspaper. Copies of a book by the French Protestant minister Jean Claude: Account of the Persecutions and Oppressions of the Protestants in France (1686) were burnt by the public hangman. Public sympathy for the Huguenots, however, resulted in the collection of over £42,000 for their relief.

For two centuries after the Revocation, dramatic accounts of Huguenots who had fled from France appeared in Britain. Among them are three accounts of young men who escaped from the same town or area as Gaston Martineau. In The Memoirs of a Protestant Condemned to the Galleys of France for his Religion (published at Rotterdam in 1757, then translated into English by Oliver Goldsmith and reissued in English six times in the 19th century), Jean Marteilhe, from Bergerac in the province of Perigord, relates his harrowing life as a galley slave. Born in 1684, Marteilhe left Bergerac fifteen years after Gaston, his fellow townsman. Fearing capture by the Duke de la Force, whose castle lay three miles from Bergerac, Marteilhe and a friend walked through woods at night, northward towards Paris, from where they hoped to reach Holland. To avoid detection, they wore their extra clothes and put their knapsacks out of sight, trying to merge with parties of locals as they went.

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The second, slightly later, Huguenot escape story begins with the arrival in Geneva of a young university student whose father had left Bergerac in 1685, the year of the Revocation. The Life and 'Memoires secrets' of Jean des Champs (1707-1767) tells of his father's 'ancient and honourable' Huguenot family, who had produced magistrates, philosophers and warriors 'for the service of France'. The father was forced to flee to Geneva and later settled in northern Germany. The son became a journalist and translator of the ideas of the German enlightenment, living at the court of Frederick the Great for ten years and later serving as a link in the refugee network between England and the Continent.

The third story, Memoirs of the Reverend Jaques Fontaine 1658-1728 (written in Dublin in 1722, then translated and abridged in the 19th century as A tale of the Huguenots [New York and London]) tells a similar tale of persecution. Born in the old province of Saintonge, Fontaine studied to be a Protestant minister at Bordeaux. When he was 25, he inherited a large wine-producing estate. Because the dragonnades were wreaking havoc in nearby Poitou, he determined to take his year's cargo of wine to the north to sell. After hairsbreadth escapes from the pursuing French, he reached England. There he became a trader and preacher, continuing a chequered career.

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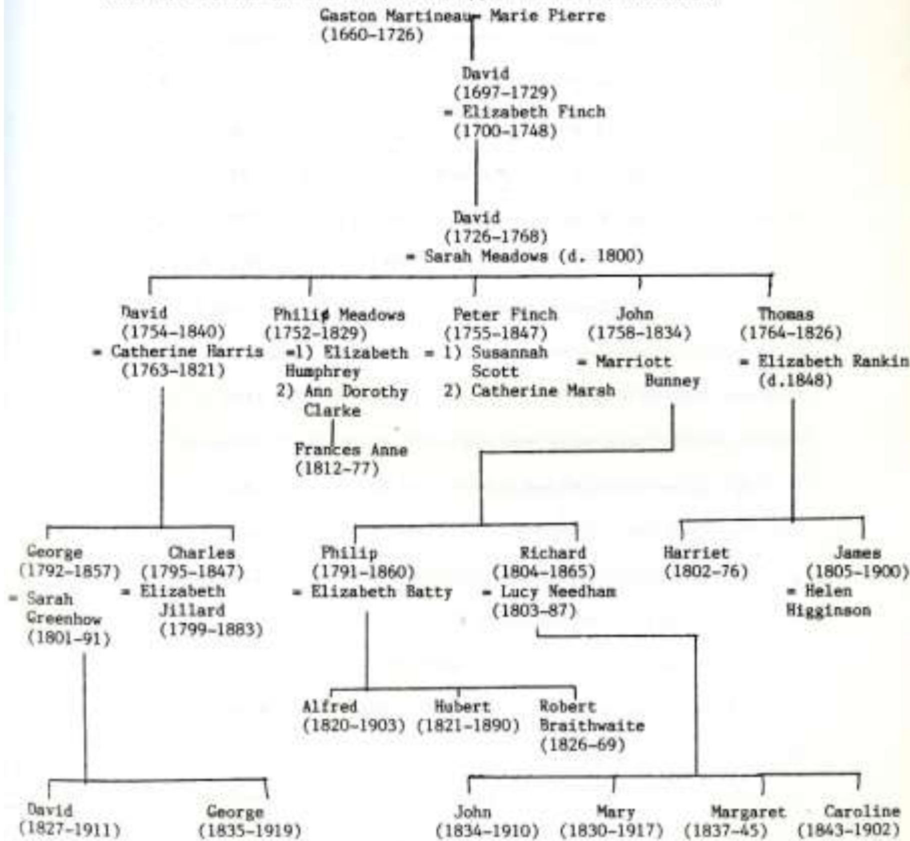
Hundreds of such stories can be surmised from letters and Huguenot family records, and a sprinkling of French names henceforth appears on the rolls of churches and towns in Protestant countries throughout the world.

FAMILY TREES

To help us fathom the intricacies of the Martineau circle, a branch of their family tree will now become a regular feature of the Newsletter. For beginners, here is the basic outline. Detailed sections will appear in subsequent issues.



QUERY from Denis Martineau:

Can anyone give information about Charles Gaskell Higginson? He was clearly related to Helen Higginson (1804-1877), the wife of James Martineau, and to her brother Alfred (1808-1884), who was the husband of James Martineau's youngest sister Ellen (1811-1889). Charles Gaskell Higginson wrote a letter from The Knoll on 12 June 1917.

QUOTATION from the NRO Patteson papers, 4 November 1769

Mrs Martha Patteson to her son John, aged 13 (the gaps are holes in MS):

'Messrs Stannard & Taylor are broke for above 50 thousand Pound...Many families, widows and orphans will suffer prodigiously by...amongst whom is my poor friend Mrs Martineau. She has 20 [000 pounds?] in their Hands & I doubt will never see much of it again. Think [?what a great] loss this must be to a poor Woman whose Tears were not dry'd for the best of Husbands, whose Circumstances were not affluent & who has 5 sons and 2 daughters to Educate & put into the World.'

Supplied by Rachel Young, whose friend Dr Ursula Priestley found it.

Malcolm Martineau

In reponse to the query in the last Newsletter, about the concert pianist Malcolm Martineau, Denis Martineau replies: 'According to the 1972 edition of the family book, he was born in 1960. His father was the Very Revd George Edward Martineau, Dean of Edinburgh, 1962-7, who was a member of the senior branch of the family.' He is descended from George Martineau (1835-1919), grandson of David (1754-1840), elder brother of Harriet and James's father, Thomas.

VISIT TO AMBLESIDE: 1-4 APRIL 1996

Following the success of last year's Martineau Society Trail to Norwich, we decided to be more ambitious this year and stay in the Lake District from 1-4 April. We were a small group - Sophia Hankinson, Alan and Janet Middleton, Valerie Sanders, Richard and Johanna Boeke, and Rod and Iris Voegeli: joined by local residents Barbara Todd, Maureen Colquhoun and Ken Fielding- but this meant we could visit houses and museums together without looking too much like a coach-party. We stayed in comfortable accommodation at the Charlotte Mason College in Ambleside, a few minutes' walk from the Knoll, Harriet Martineau's house where Barbara and Maureen live; and amazingly, for the Lake District, were extremely lucky with the weather. It didn't rain; it was bright and sunny without being too hot, and was perfect for walking.

Our first full day began with a visit to the Knoll, by kind invitation of Barbara and Maureen. We sat in Harriet Martineau's sitting-room, which still has an unimpeded view across the Lakeland landscape, and drank coffee, much as Charlotte Bronte and George Eliot must have done on their visits in the 1850s. The Knoll has now been divided into two houses, but is still very spacious, with an attractive terrace and garden at the back. Led by Barbara, we walked across the fields to Fox How, the Arnold home, where long after Dr Thomas Arnold's death in 1842, his widow and children lived as Harriet's neighbours. We were warned that the present owner, the Revd Doreen Harrison, would let us see the garden, but not the house; but after showing us the grounds and inviting us to pick some of the great yellow carpet of daffodils, she opened up the sitting and dining rooms, which were recognizable from the Arnold family photographs sometimes reprinted in biographies of Matthew. We were very grateful for this mark of trust, and for

the opportunity to see inside an important literary house not generally open to the public.

On our way to a pub lunch, we passed a series of houses once inhabited by Wordsworth's daughter and son-in-law, Dora and Edward Quillinan, and by Thomas de Quincey. The afternoon was spent touring Ambleside itself and seeing the workmen's grey stone cottages in Ellerigg Road established by the Windermere Benefit Building Society (founded by Harriet) before going on to the Armitt Trust Library, which has a substantial holding of Martineau material. In the evening, Sophia and Valerie recorded interviews about Harriet with Radio Cumbria, who had already heard about the Society from Barbara, and were keen to publicize the connection with Ambleside.

On the second day, the emphasis was more on Wordsworth, with visits to Dove Cottage and Rydal Mount; a chance to explore Grasmere, and a special talk by Robert Woof in the Wordsworth Trust Library. Apart from literary manuscripts and pictures, the library has a chair embroidered by Harriet, and last owned by Selina Martineau (nee Simpson, 1832-1912), Harriet's cousin, once removed, by marriage to Gaston Martineau (1829-1915). This branch of the family were wine-merchants, living in Wimbledon.

We also looked at the Museum, and visited Grasmere, before returning to Ambleside for dinner and a farewell evening at the Knoll. Everyone had been asked to prepare a short reading of anything by or about Harriet. With a glass of wine in our hands, the sitting-room room lit with candles and decorated with vases of white tulips, we could not have rounded off the visit more magically. The readings revealed the great range of her interests, and the warmth and affection her visitors felt for her. The trail itself was more or less a reconstruction of the round of

literary visits that eminent Victorians of the mid-1850s might have paid, and we's like to thank the modern representatives of the Arnolds, Wordsworths, and especially Harriet Martineau, for making our stay so memorable and special.

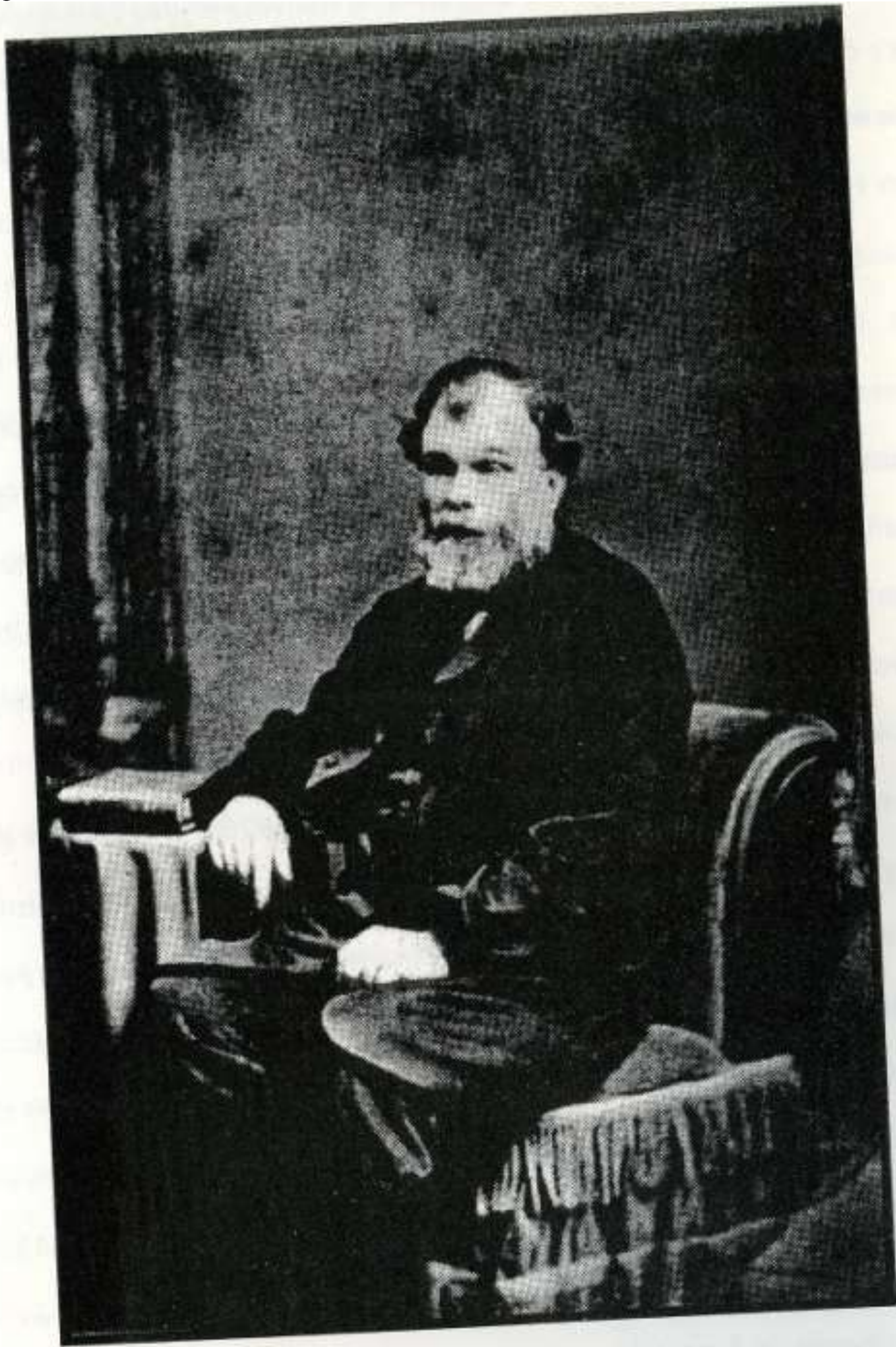
Valerie Sanders

MARTINEAUS DOWN UNDER

The name of Higginson is familiar to Martineau addicts: Revd Edward Higginson (1781-1832) was the Unitarian minister at Derby in whose family James lived while an engineering student; whose eldest daughter Helen was eventually to marry James in 1828 when he became assistant minister at Dublin; and whose son Alfred became a surgeon at Liverpool and married Ellen, James and Harriet's youngest sister. But two other Higginson sons became Unitarian ministers. The youngest, Henry (1812-73), entered Manchester New College, but trained as an engineer; when in 1849 he emigrated with his wife Sarah (nee Hill) and several of her family to Melbourne, Australia, it was in this capacity that he was employed, becoming Chief Clerk of the Land Office in 1852. The official 'Map of the Province' bore his name, but in 1853 he resigned; in 1855 he was Secretary to the Port Railway.

The family maintained Unitarian connections, however, and when Melbourne Unitarian Church (established 1853) parted company with its first minister, Henry Higginson was invited to take his place in 1857. The church was thereafter 'The Melbourne Unitarian Christian Church', and for a few years flourished; but soon after began to fall away, and Henry's health declined. In 1861 'a number of

Sarah Higginson (nee Hill)



Henry Higginson

members seceded... and held weekly services in the Mechanics Institute' (according to the history of the church 'The Halfway House to Infidelity', 1990). Henry died in 1870.

This information was supplied by Mrs Sue Woods, who, as a great-great nice of Sarah Hill, knew of the Martineau connection. She also sent a notice from the Melbourne 'Age' of the funeral of Mrs Edith Martineau Walker on 12 January 1996. In due course Mr Don Walker, her son, wrote, not (as might have been expected) tracing Martineau descent through a Higginson ancestor, but telling an even more interesting tale. His great-great-grandparents Stephen Cuming and Jane Sweet from Truro married in 1845 and named their first daughter Martineau after Harriet. Stephen wrote in his diary: 'This child was named after the Liberal Poet and Writer Harriet Martineau', and Mr Walker lists ten other descendants given the name, including his own daughter.

He explains that Stephen and Jane, born in the 1820s, would have grown up hearing of the Reform Act, the Factory Acts, the New Poor Law and setting up of the workhouses, the Tolpuddle Martyrs, the Mines Act and the Chartists. They may have known at first hand the food riots in Cornwall in the 1840s, but must have been self-educated, and read and discussed Harriet's writings. In 1852 they emigrated to the Ballarat goldfields. After a fight, Stephen, called to give evidence at a commission of enquiry, testified: 'I would go in for manhood suffrage and payment of members... in fact I would go in for the six points of what we used to call the Charter, in England.'

Edith Martineau Walker (born 1899) remembered her great-grandmother Jane saying that, for all the hardships of life in a tent on the goldfields, she felt freer there than in Cornwall. Mr Walker adds that Stephen and Jane 'having only four

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children at a time when families were unrestricted perhaps also shows their appreciation of Harriet's teachings...at least our family's name shows something of Harriet's influence.'

How pleased Harriet would be! We are most grateful to Mrs Woods and Mr Walker for supplying another dimension to Martineau research.

-Sophia Hankinson

NEW BOOK ON HARRIET MARTINEAU

A new book by Shelagh Hunter, Harriet Martineau: The Poetics of Moralism, has just been published by the Scolar Press at £40 hardback. Sally Shuttleworth, who reviewed it in the Times Literary Supplement of 16 August 1996, commented that 'It would be difficult to over-estimate Harriet Martineau's fame and influence in the Victorian period', though she has 'long been a writer whose works are often cited, but rarely read.' The book is not a biography, but an analysis of Harriet's work, stressing her intellectual development and largely omitting the fiction and discussion of the Autobiography in literary terms. Shelagh Hunter argues that the Illustrations played a distinctive role in the evolution of sociology as a discipline. The reviewer, however, regrets that more is not made of her invalidism and physical experiences. 'Her life is full of paradoxes,' Sally Shuttleworth observes, citing the contrast between her energetic globe-trotting, and years in bed as an apparently hopeless invalid.

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E MAIL NUMBERS

Some members of the Society are now on 'e' mail, as listed below. If you would like your 'e' mail number to be included in the next Newsletter, please let the Editor know.

Christine Penney, University Library, Birmingham: c.l.penney@bham.ac.,

Sophia Hankinson: sophia@marjom.ftech.co.uk

Other contributions to the Newsletter are welcome: articles and book reviews especially. Please send them to Dr Valerie Sanders at the University of Buckingham, Buckingham MK18 1EG (not on e mail, I'm afraid!)