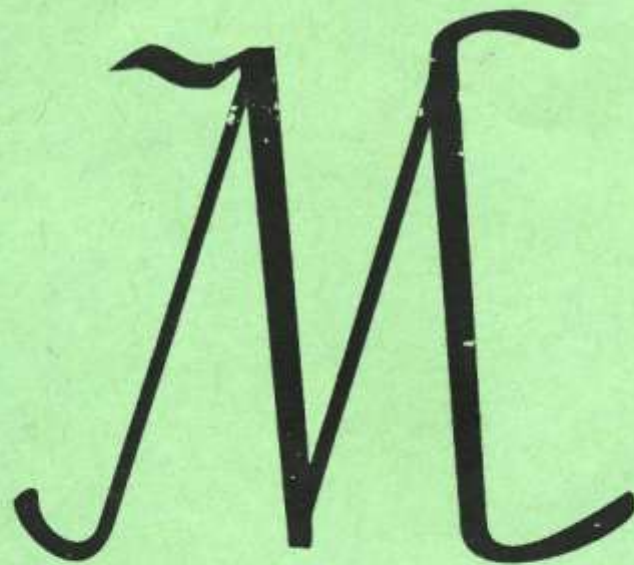


The  
Martineau  
Society



**Fourteenth Newsletter**  
**January 2001**

**THE MARTINEAU SOCIETY**

President: Revd Dr Frank Schulman  
Vice-President: Professor R K Webb  
Chairman: Ms Barbara Todd  
Secretary: Mr Alan Middleton  
Treasurer: Mrs Iris Voegeli  
Membership Secretary: Mrs Sophia Hankinson  
Newsletter Editor: Dr Valerie Sanders

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### **EDITORIAL**

This main event of the last few months for Martineau scholars was the James Martineau centenary conference held at Harris Manchester College, Oxford from 15-18 August 2000. This brought together people from the United States and the United Kingdom, Unitarian ministers, James enthusiasts and Harriet enthusiasts, in an atmosphere a good deal more cordial than the circumstances in which James and Harriet conducted the final decades of their relationship. A full report of this meeting appears below.

Next year we shall be returning to Norwich for our annual general meeting and conference in August, while the following year exciting plans are afoot, thanks to Barbara Todd, for a full celebration of Harriet's bicentenary in the highly appropriate location of Ambleside.

### **NEW OFFICERS**

At the Annual General Meeting in Oxford this year Professor Elisabeth Arbuckle resigned as Chair of the Society and was replaced by Mrs Barbara Todd – who has the uniquely privileged position of living in Harriet's house, The Knoll, at Ambleside. We are deeply grateful to Elisabeth for her staunch support of the Society, her regular trips to England, and unfailing attendance at the annual meetings. We wish her continuing success with her new biography of Harriet, and appreciate the work she has put into investigating sites for commemorative plaques and raising money for the one to Harriet in Ambleside.

### **NOTICEBOARD**

- ❖ Congratulations to our President, Revd Dr Frank Schulman, on the completion of his M.Litt at Oxford on James Martineau's theory of worship as seen in his theology. Frank reports that he greatly enjoyed the time spent with James's writings, and is sorry to see its end.
- ❖ Exciting news too from Deborah Logan of Western Kentucky University. Broadview Press have accepted her one-volume reprint of four of the *Illustrations of Political Economy*, and Northern Illinois University Press have accepted her edition (with long critical introduction) of *Harriet Martineau and America's Martyr Age* – a selection of Harriet's writings on America, as well as a book to be called *The Hour and the Woman*. An extract from the latter is included in this Newsletter.
- ❖ The childhood section of *Harriet Martineau's Autobiography* is one of the texts included in Valerie Sanders's *Records of Girlhood: An Anthology of Nineteenth Century Women's Childhoods* (Ashgate, 2000).

### **THE MARTINEAU SOCIETY ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

The Martineau Society this year joined forces with the group of James Martineau scholars gathered at Harris Manchester College, Oxford, to honour the centenary of James's death and celebrate his life and work. Having known less than I should about James, I certainly came away much better informed than I had been about his life, work, and personality. Beginning with a Presidential address from Professor R K Webb, who talked about James Martineau's relationship with John Henry Newman, the conference

combined opportunities to talk and socialize, with a varied series of papers on many different aspects of the Martineaus' life, work and relationships. Dr Nicholas Shrimpton from Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, provocatively reviewed Harriet's position in the literary canon, seeing her as more than an exceptional journalist, but as someone occupying a unique role as a female sage. He stressed her role in her own lifetime as a moral exemplar, renowned for her steadfast powers of endurance (in illness, for example), but argued that she is now best seen as a writer of practical and orderly prose. He showed us another side of her writing, however, which illustrated her sense of the romantic turmoil and strangeness of living in the Lake District: her account of a storm on the fells in her *Guide to the Lakes*. Her feminism, he concluded, was consistently based on the elimination of differences, and her self-constructed 'sage' role allowed her to say things that were all the more striking coming from a woman rather than a man.

Valerie Sanders and Carol Keller both reconsidered the relationship of Harriet and James – Carol with some impressive visual aids – and tried to work out why it had gone so badly wrong. Less familiar aspects of the quarrel in their later life were aired, such as Harriet's opposition to James's new position at Manchester New College in 1857, and his unsuccessful application for the Chair of Moral Philosophy at University College, London in 1866. My impression of the breakdown is that Harriet had invested a lot more emotional capital in their relationship, and was the more devastated (and therefore bitterer than James) when it irretrievably collapsed. Carol used the model of a three-Act play to illustrate the key events in their relationship, arguing that Harriet cast James in an

antagonistic role, also rejecting the essentially urban world in which her surviving siblings lived, when she settled in Ambleside. Dr Deborah Logan (part of whose paper is included in the *Newsletter*), discussed some of Harriet's relationships with other Victorian women writers, including Maria Weston Chapman, Margaret Fuller, Charlotte Brontë and Elizabeth Gaskell, concluding that she essentially admired active qualities in women, especially those associated with nursing and healing. Her connection with Gaskell Deborah saw as a 'missed opportunity': it seems surprising, she suggested, that Harriet disliked Gaskell's *Ruth*. The wide range of her practical, social and political interests was further developed by Barbara Todd, who considered Harriet's work as a farmer and gardener; Professor Anka Ryall, who focused on *Life in the Sick Room* and *Letters on Mesmerism*; and Professor Elisabeth Arbuckle, who discussed her response to the American Civil War (again, see a letter article in the *Newsletter*).

From the James scholars we heard from Alan Ruston on James's quarrelsomeness and character, his remote and austere image, his intolerance of atheism and agnosticism, and his behaviour as a controversialist: neither he nor Harriet was of a conciliatory nature. Frank Schulman agreed that James was a man of unswerving integrity, but argued that he was tolerant of intellectual differences, and believed that religious ministers should be knowledgeable about the sciences. Like Harriet, his career had been to say what he thought, whatever the personal cost. From Revd. Andrew Brown we heard about his hymns; while Jeremy Goring talked about James's relationships with FD Maurice and FW Newman. Revd Dr Ralph Waller, Principal of Harris Manchester, who once again kindly hosted the event, invited us to a drinks reception on the first evening, and also set a high standard for the delivery of papers with

his introductory talk on 'James Martineau, the critical mind and the will to believe'. On the final evening, the conference rounded off with a flourish with papers from another group of eminent scholars: Professor Ken Fielding talked on 'James, Harriet, and the Unitarians, and Thomas and Jane Carlyle,' and Revd. Ann Peart on 'Struggles with feelings – rational religion and emotion in the letters of Helen Martineau (nee Bourn)' – using unpublished manuscript letters from Harriet and James's sister-in-law, 'the other Helen,' widow of their eldest brother Thomas, and subsequently wife of Edward Tagart. Finally, Dr David Wykes of Dr Williams's Trust, reviewed James's involvement with the controversial University College appointment in 1866. The event closed with a service in celebration of James Martineau's life, led by Revd Tony Cross. A selection of the papers will be published in *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Association* edited by Alan Ruston in 2002. Meanwhile we are very grateful to David Wykes in particular for all the hard work that went into the organization of this excellent conference, and to Dr Waller and Harris Manchester College for the pleasant and comfortable surroundings in which it took place.

\*

### **BARBARA AND THE BRONTE SOCIETY**

The October number of the *Bronte Society Gazette* carries a report on the annual excursion of the Society in June, which was this year to the Lake District. The following extract describes their visit to The Knoll:

By the time we reached pretty Ambleside, the weather had improved and soon we had the pleasure of a visit to The Knoll, home of the Victorian writer on political economy and social

issues, Harriet Martineau. Charlotte had been an admirer of Martineau and the two had met in London. Charlotte visited her at The Knoll, but after Harriet had professed a dislike of Charlotte's novel, *Villette*, there was a cooling off of relations. Barbara Todd, who is one of the owners of The Knoll, gave an enthusiastic talk on Harriet Martineau's life and work. She also, very kindly, allowed us to have a look around her sitting room. After her interesting talk she was presented with a gift on behalf of the Bronte Society members.

The *Gazette* also carries a nice photograph of Jill Greenwood of the Bronte Society presenting Maureen with some thank-you gifts in the garden of The Knoll.

#### **HARRIET AT WELLESLEY**

The next item follows on very conveniently from the previous one, as Barbara received the following letter from a Bronte Society member, Mary A Haigh of Wellesley, who visited The Knoll, and responded with this description of Anne Whitney's statue of Harriet Martineau at Wellesley College, the prestigious women's university in Massachusetts:

'I went to Wellesley College Archives in the Clapp Library and had a wonderful time researching Anne Whitney's beautiful statue of Harriet Martineau (1883). The curator provided me with books and articles and photographs. Most of the information came from *The Story of Wellesley* by Florence Converse (Little Brown, 1915); and a 1600 page biography (a definitive study – unpublished) – manuscript in the archives of the College, by Elizabeth Rogers Payne, of the life of Anne Whitney – sculptor.

The statue was housed in College Hall, a magnificent piece of architecture. It, and the Hall, were destroyed by fire in 1914.



Maria Weston Chapman, friend of Mrs Whitney, requested (paid for?) the statue, but it remained in the possession of Miss Whitney



until Mrs Chapman's death. Anne gave it to Wellesley College in 1886.

Harriet in stone became a 'spinster aunt' to the students. Freshmen were properly matriculated when dragged through the rungs of Harriet's chair. May day at Wellesley was a day for fun and frolicking. It became a tradition to scrub and decorate their favourite 'genius' statue, Harriet. She represented a 'woman of heroic size, of force and tranquillity.' She was scrubbed for 28 years (seniors only; other students were allotted lesser statues). After the fire, the rolling of hoops became established and a tradition was born. The winner would be the first to marry, and she was promptly thrown into Lake Waban. This event is still held on May Day.

Anne Whitney got her likeness of Harriet from an interesting photo. She strived to represent her in her prime as she may have been when she visited Boston, Massachusetts in 1835 to lecture on social reform and abolition. She was 33 years old at the time.'

#### **Elisabeth Arbuckle: Harriet Martineau and the Civil War**

[Part I of a paper given at the Martineau Society annual conference].

In the Boston Public Library, where Maria Weston Chapman deposited the tantalizing remains of her friend Harriet Martineau's collected letters and documents, lie a series of 'Notes from the Scribble Diaries' with a memo as the first entry for 1856: 'Who is A? Lincoln?' Who indeed?

From 1836, when she sailed out of New York harbour in the *Orpheus*, Martineau had prided herself on being an authority on Americans from different regions of the then United States and



GEORGE WATSON, MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

especially on the intricacies of American national politics. Most of her informants, like Maria Chapman, were radical abolitionists who were regularly to post copies of American newspapers, pamphlets and books to wherever she was living in England.

Not long after she had arrived in New York state in 1834, Martineau had an interview with Vice-President and later President

Martin Van Buren. While she stayed in Washington, D.C., in the winter of 1835, she was invited to dine at the White House, and sat next to President Andrew Jackson, discussing the governments of England and France with him. (Later, in the Capitol building, she witnessed an assassination attempt against the President that 'threw the old soldier into a tremendous passion.')

She became *friends* with former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, John Marshall, and with other distinguished statesmen. Finally, after leaving Washington, she spent several days at the home of eighty-three-year-old former President James Madison. The ailing old Virginia gentleman talked to her for hours, citing anecdotes of his long career in government. On one occasion, she moved across the room to give him a rest, but he followed her and continued to talk. In South Carolina, her next long stop, she was entertained by presidential hopeful, John Calhoun, who tried to convert her to

'nullification,' the notion that individual states could nullify the laws of the federal government (a root cause of the American Civil War).

After a stay in new Orleans, Martineau journeyed up the Mississippi River on a paddle-wheel steamer to be the houseguest for three weeks of Henry Clay's daughter in Kentucky. Clay – another presidential hopeful – came over every day to talk while she was there.

Once she had arrived home in England, Martineau lost no time declaring her position on American slavery, in her two books on America, *Society in America* and *Retrospect of Western Travel*, in 1837 and 1838, and in her essay for the *Westminster Review* of December 1838, 'The Martyr Age of the United States of America,' celebrating the heroes and heroines of the American abolitionist movement. Her next major anti-slavery publication (in 1840) was the historical romance, *The Hour and the Man*, about the black Haitian leader, Toussaint L'Ouverture.

In the following decade, Martineau's writing focused on numerous other issues. She was not on the original staff of the London *Daily News*, launched in 1846 as an organ of liberal reform and counterblast to the powerful London *Times*. According to Martin Crawford in *The Anglo-American Crisis of the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, 'opinions which *The Times* sought to represent were ultimately responsible for shaping the political and economic decisions upon which Anglo-American progress depended.'<sup>1</sup> Martineau was to take up the challenge of disputing *The Times'* accuracy and especially its sympathy with the South in the American Civil War.

In July 1852, Martineau stepped almost casually into the role of American specialist on the *Daily News*, beginning an illustrious, 17-year career. Her first leader (or editorial) on America concerned the illegal imprisonment of coloured seamen arriving at Southern ports on British ships; her next was on her old friend Henry Clay, and her third was on Franklin Pierce, Democratic candidate and later fourteenth President of the United States. Under the vacillating Pierce, the so-called Kansas-Nebraska Act was passed, leading to virtual war in the territory of Kansas between pro-slavery and anti-slavery settlers.

The growing tension in the United States, with the threat to Britain's cotton supply, heightened the importance of Martineau's familiarity with American affairs. By the early 1860s, when the Civil War had started, British fears over cotton and the defiant posturing by some leaders of the American North brought a strong public backlash in Britain in favour of the Confederacy. The proprietors of the *Daily News* divided over the issue of support for the slave-holding South, or the anti-slavery North, but editor Thomas Walker, relying on Martineau's American expertise, held firm for the North.

After the war, the then managing editor of the *Daily News*, Sir John Robinson, praised Martineau as a newspaperwoman and quoted from a speech by W. E. Forster, that it was 'Harriet Martineau alone who kept public opinion on the right [i.e pro-North] side.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Martin Crawford. *The Anglo-American Crisis of the Mid-Nineteenth Century. The Times and America, 1850-1862* (Athens, GA: U of Georgia Press, 1987) 19

<sup>2</sup> In *Fifty Years of Fleet Street, Being the Life and Recollections of Sir John R. Robinson*, ed Frederick Moy Thomas (London: Macmillan, 1904); and see *Harriet Martineau's Autobiography, with Memorials by Maria Weston Chapman* (London: Smith, Elder, 1977) 3405

Almost without exception, every leader on America Martineau wrote for the *Daily News* mentions slavery. Although at first slightly unfocused, the leaders soon demonstrate effective journalistic strategies. During the war, for example, she demonizes the South, eulogizes the North – especially the abolitionists – and targets *The Times* as whipping boy. Before the war, she had tirelessly pointed to the quasi-legal western expansionism, the new freesoil movement and the slavery-related aggression in central America. (In one of the most notorious cases of pro-slavery aggression, an American filibuster [i.e., freebooter], William Walker, conquered Nicaragua in order to reintroduce slavery). By the time the Civil War started in 1860, Martineau was in full control of a sweep of background information, and she enjoyed the support of her editor to speak her mind. Ironically, she was often forced to rely on *The Times* for up to date news of events.

A few examples from the *Daily News* might help to illustrate Martineau's rhetorical strategies. In January 1856, with characteristic indignation, she charges *The Times* with believing that the President's discussion of Constitutional provisions for slavery are mere irrelevancies, just when 'the most significant crisis of the union has arrived.' When Martineau had decided to travel to America, she prepared herself by reading the American Constitution. Because she understood the separation of powers and states' rights in the American government, she could scoff at *The Times*' stupidity over American Senate and House functions in relation to Kansas,

Five months later, in late May of 1856, three events shocked the American nation. A pro-slavery mob sacked and burned Lawrence,

Kansas, the territorial capital. Next day, Representative Preston Brooks of South Carolina caned Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, a Northerner, in the Senate chamber. Two days later, John Brown and his men slaughtered five pro-slavery settlers at Pottawatomie Creek in Kansas.

By September 1856, Martineau was attacking *The Times'* ignorance of American institutions and geography without let-up. In fact, as Martin Crawford points out, *The Times* was confused and provoked by the fighting in Kansas and had already begun to lose any grasp of developing events in the United States.

[to be continued]

**Deborah Logan: 'Not fine ladies, but true-hearted Englishwomen': Harriet Martineau's Feminism**

[Part I of Deborah Logan's paper from the Martineau Society conference in August. Using modern feminism's links between the personal and political as a starting point, its aim is to explore Martineau's feminism through her relationships with famous British and American women].

In 1833, Martineau wrote: 'The true humanizing influence of woman will never be fully experienced till she becomes wise in thought, independent in action, and able to build up the charities in life on the foundation of principles ascertained by herself' (Sanders, *Letters*, 40-1). Education prepares and enables women to prove their worth; in turn, political representation must be earned through intelligent citizenship; ideally, both will lead to social change favourable to women. But women must first prove their worthiness to assume those privileges readily granted by men to men; and,

although Martineau acknowledges the unfairness of this arrangement, she remains focused on devising strategies for subverting that social custom.

One strategy rests with citing examples of intelligent, strong-minded women as proof of what women can achieve. In 1837 she wrote:

We hope to obtain a revision in parliament of all laws regarding Woman; to set a watch on all legal proceedings which relate to woman; and to expose her whole state [...] The doubt is whether able women enough can be found to aid our beginning: *for women must work out their own redemption.* (Sanders, *Letters* 164)

The last phrase highlights a shrewd political insight in its recognition that freedom cannot be granted by those in power; rather the oppressed must claim for themselves the status that is rightfully theirs. 'I repudiate all abstract doctrines of rights,' she says, 'all *a priori* arrangements for *giving* a position, - a position being a thing that must be earned' (Sanders, *Letters*, 164).

In my view, Martineau is herself an exemplary role model whose life and career stand up unflinchingly to scholarly and feminist scrutiny. She aligns her principles with her practice to an enviable degree, representing a feminist legacy of strength, intelligence, and social commitment while maintaining respectability. Her attitudes towards other famous women of the period are also revealing — Mary Wollstonecraft, for instance, a feminist of whom Martineau disapproved. Her opinion on how *not* to be offers as much insight into her feminism as do the women she regards as worthy of emulation. Despite her 'disposition to honour all promoters of the welfare and improvement of Woman,' Martineau asserts, 'I never could reconcile my mind to Mary Wollstonecraft's writings, or to



whatever I heard of her' (*Autobiography*, I, 399). Wollstonecraft parades her private problems under the guise of political activism: 'I decline all fellowship and co-operation with women who injure the cause by their personal tendencies. The best friends of that cause speak from conviction of the truth and not from personal unhappiness (*Ibid*, I, 400-01).

The differences between Martineau and Wollstonecraft are not based on political or social theory, which are actually quite similar, but on the disparities between their private and public practice. Wollstonecraft's tragic love affairs, illegitimate children, and attempted suicide validate critics' charges that women can never be equal to men because they are chained to biological functions and excess emotionality. Martineau argues that professional women have a particular responsibility to behave in ways that will disprove notions of women's 'inferiority' and instead illustrate their capacity for 'cool-mindedness.' Wollstonecraft's failing is in her inability to practise privately what she reached publicly, making her 'a poor victim of passion, with no control over her own peace' (AB I:400). As Martineau knows from her own frequent brushes with notoriety, society's unforgiving stance towards nonconformists offers all the more reason why women must be doubly vigilant in their private and public activities if they are ever to improve their status.

One of the women she regards as 'morally as well as intellectually competent to the most serious business of life' is American abolitionist Maria Weston Chapman. The first exchange between the two women is distinctly inauspicious: Martineau receives a letter from Chapman charging that she is clearly being beguiled by her pro-slavery hosts. Martineau responds with vigour,

yet Chapman – who is 'not a little fanatical' – persists in cultivating her alliance with the abolitionist movement. When Martineau later formally declares her support of abolitionism it is largely because of Chapman's challenge that she align her practices with her principles. As a prick to Martineau's conscience, as effusive in her praise as she is quick in her criticism, Chapman proves to be Martineau's best friend in the truest sense of the term.

Each woman recognizes in the other a powerful ally in an era when few women were inclined to risk social ostracism for their principles. Unequivocal commitment to principle is the first lesson Martineau learns of Chapman, and high principles are what also draw Chapman to Martineau: 'being what her works proclaimed her to be, I knew our lives could not fail to be of one substance, nor our lot of being cast in together' (*Memorials*, 144). Martineau's admiration for Chapman, the 'most glorious woman I ever knew, or heard, or read of,' who evidences a 'Union of the highest intellectual and moral attributes,' suggests that Chapman comes closest to realizing Martineau's ideal of a woman whose life is ruled by her commitment to the greater good rather than by her obsession with personal crises.

American feminist Margaret Fuller aligns less with Martineau's assessment of Chapman than of Wollstonecraft: Fuller, too, is brilliant, articulate, and badly behaved. Theirs was a relationship vexed, according to Martineau, by Fuller's 'bad manners and self-delusions' (*AB* 2:73). Of Martineau, Fuller writes, 'I suppose Miss Martineau says just whatever she thinks of the Bostonians as she does of all things and persons without regard to effects. Little importance should be attached to a person like her.' Their

ideological disagreements include Martineau's abolitionism, which Fuller thought coarse and vulgar, and Fuller's transcendentalism, which Martineau regarded as pedantic and self-indulgent. Fuller condemns *Society in America* as 'that abolitionist book.' In contrast, Martineau pronounces *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* 'Beautiful!' but regrets Fuller's sterile intellectualism, which made her 'insensible to the vital interest and importance... of her own country and people.' Following her tragic death, Fuller's example of wasted potential seemed to Martineau especially poignant; to Emerson, she wrote: 'Well: it is a life full of instruction, and of very sorrowful interest; - as thorough a revelation of woman's needs as I know any where; and the most affecting, as being exemplified in one who should have done and enjoyed so much' (Sanders, *Letters* 122).

[Harriet's relationships with Elizabeth Barrett and Charlotte Bronte will be discussed in the next Newsletter].

### **A Fragment**

Ron Fiske writes: 'My neighbour has been stripping the many layers of his wall-paper, back to the newspaper lining which is mostly dated 1837. Among the fragments is: -

'IMPORTANT TO MISS MARTINEAU. The \* -ortland Courier (an American paper) says that the young ladies of that town have formed an anti-matrimonial society.'

\*- torn away – probably one letter, perhaps 'p'.

[presumably this is a dig at her Mathusian sympathies, which was the way the press liked to depict her, but if anyone else has any thoughts about it, do write in!]

**The Martineau Guest House**

Following the article in the previous Newsletter about the Martineau Guest House at Tynemouth, the owners, Christine and Roger Ponton, have kindly sent us this illustration. They report that the Guest House was voted North Tyneside Guest House of the Year by North Tyneside Tourism. They also have their own website on

*w. w. w. martineau - house . co. uk*

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### NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS:

Articles, book reviews, letters, notes and observations, for the next Newsletter should be sent by the end of May to the Editor:

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