Martineau's "satisfactory progress in several branches of useful knowledge" - appealing to James to take on his pupils. James agreed and applied himself wholeheartedly to the task but admitted that it "was no slight strain upon my energies." (B M, 308) When, after a year, he eventually responded to a ministerial vacancy of the assistant pastorate at Dublin he took some of the pupils with him and continued to educate them, but found his income reduced. He did, however, manage to marry his former "incipient attachment". The Pastorate went well until the senior minister, Mr Taylor, died and money problems, associated with Church and State - not through poverty - caused James, on principle, to offer his resignation.

In 1832 the family moved to Liverpool and James was rapidly absorbed in the work of Paradise Street chapel. Money was short as his father had warned him and to supplement his income he gave lessons to pupils after school-age. Later he gave lectures on Experimental Chemistry and Physical Astronomy. (1837). In *Life and Letters of Martineau*, Drummond and Upton have noted that "with his scientific tastes it must have been a pleasure ...to him to take part in the public preparations for the meeting of the British Association [for the Advancement of Science], which was held in Liverpool Sept 1837".[6] At their house in Liverpool James turned his engineering talents to the construction of a pump driven by a windmill to raise water for the house. By this time, 1837-9, I. K. Brunel had designed and started to build the Clifton Suspension Bridge, and was half-way to completing the railway between Paddington and Bristol. Brunel went on to build two ships, the *Great Western* and the *Great Britain*, to continue the route from London to New York via Bristol. Meanwhile James had to content himself with a visit to Brunel's second ship which happened to be in Liverpool, the *Great Britain* in Coburg Dock, sailing in a small boat on the

[6] *Life and Letters of James Martineau*, by James Drummond and C B Upton, Vol 1. (London, J Nisbet 1902), p76.

river, and seeing the "'beauty monster' come out of the graving dock"'.[7] If he had been apprenticed with Sir Marc Brunel, what would Martineau have constructed? He might have helped to build Brunel's third ship, the *Great Eastern*.

In 1839 it seems that Martineau became tied up with theology. There was the first Liverpool controversy - Unitarians v. Trinitarians - in which Martineau was a major contributor. His prowess as a theological thinker and debater was coming to the fore and his engineering and scientific abilities were taking second place. Was he becoming bored? Well, he took a year off in Germany while they built him a new church.

In 1840, he was appointed lecturer at Manchester New College but was still involved with the church in Liverpool; he travelled weekly to Manchester, thanks to the railway, and when the College moved to London he extended his journey. This was obviously too much, even for James Martineau, and he resigned the Liverpool pastorate and removed to London (1857). It was not long before he became, in addition to his responsibilities at MNC, an assistant minister at the church at Little Portland Street. By 1860 he was sole minister in charge, and continuing his professorial duties.

Later in the decade, as if life was becoming dull, Martineau was a founding member of the Metaphysical Society (1869) in which his keenness of thought was matched by the intellects of co-members like Prof Tyndall who took him to task for his views on 'Materialism', which Martineau had given as the opening address to the new session of MNC in 1874. Martineau takes up Prof Tyndall's lecture[8] in a further discourse in 1876: one imagines the students and staff struggling to keep awake as he discusses the merits of the atomic theory and the table of chemical

[7] Ibid p129.

[8] 'Materialism and its opponents', *The Fortnightly Review* No CVII (Nov 1), p.187,

fact that he was lodging in Derby with the Unitarian family of the Revd and Mrs Higginson; they had a daughter, Helen, and she and James were taken with each other. In his B M he records a typically Martineau-ish assembly of words, "the incipient attachment which, seven years after, was crowned by marriage, favoured the mood of enthusiasm which impelled me towards the Christian ministry." In other words he was persuaded by his girlfriend to become a minister. If he had been with Sir Marc Brunel he would not have lodged with Mr and Mrs Higginson and would not have met Helen, etc., etc. Perhaps this tongue-in-cheek view of Helen's influence is unfair; after all, there are many examples of cases where an individual is so overcome as to be compelled by the vision of "calling". In fact, he said in a speech at Nottingham in 1876 that "the light was so bright". The following limerick is not intended to be flippant but as a light-hearted analogy of the sort of situation James might have found himself in:

There was a young student at Trinity
Who computed the square of Infinity;
So great were the digits
That he got the figits [*sic*]
And changed from Maths to Divinity.[4]

James approached his father and asked to be bought out from the apprenticeship. Mr Martineau, senior, acknowledged the determination in James' manner and agreed to meet the cost of cancelling the apprenticeship and, in addition, to pay for his college training, but warned James that he might be faced with a life of poverty. There is some evidence that such thoughts about poverty were generally accepted as the situation facing a Unitarian minister, for in the Manchester College Annual Report of the Session 1892/3, the Principal made inquiries of the Students as to the

[4] I cannot find the reference from which this is extracted. – A. M.

elements. And one has to note that Martineau is discussing atomic theory thirty years or so before Neils Bohr (1908) presented his atomic theory.

Martineau could have been an engineer or an atomic physicist given the right encouragement and education. With his ability for writing maybe he would have contributed some good books on engineering. But would such books need, in the words of J T Sunderland writing about James, "men with trained intelligence" to understand them? We can conclude that he would have done well whatever he did and who knows what he might have designed and constructed as an engineer? And he might not have fallen out with his sister Harriet.

Harriet Martineau's "Historiettes" by Shu-Fang Lai: Part One of Two.

Harriet Martineau has generally been identified as a Victorian political writer, an advocate of social reform and progress, and a miscellaneous woman journalist. She was mostly referred to and studied for her many informative and encyclopedia-like articles such as *Studies in Health, Husbandry & Handicraft* (1861). Her familiar essays are wide-ranging yet closely related to general life. She wrote for moral purpose, a utilitarian spirit, and to earn her living. As for the most dominant genre, fiction, she spoke frankly of her self-disparagement, when she wrote her own obituary and deposited it with the *Daily News* in 1855: "None of her novels or tales have or ever had, in the eyes of good judges or in her own, any character of permanence. The artistic aim and qualifications were absent; she had no power of dramatic construction; nor the poetic inspiration on the one hand, nor critical cultivation on the other, without which no work of the imagination can be worthy to live."

She had liked the brevity of the *Political Economy Tales* written at an early age, and the way in which "the doctrine" furnished "the plot," but at last she "felt warned to leave off writing" such tales. Yet she added a

footnote later, confessing that she *did* go on to write "some historical fiction for *Once a Week* against her own judgment and only to gratify Mr. Evans and Mr. Lucas, the proprietors and editor."[1]

At the conference of the Martineau Society in 1993, Oxford, I discussed how she joined *Once a Week* because of her differences with Dickens. I have then given a brief review of her different series of articles, their contents and the pen names she used. In this paper based on my talk to the society's 2005 meeting, I would like to concentrate on her "Historiettes" also in *Once a Week*. Because of limited space, instead of going into textual details of the five serial stories, I will focus on her creative process, how she devised them in such a particular genre, her ingenuity as well as impediments considered by the editor who corresponded closely with her. My study of Harriet Martineau at work on her "Historiettes" relies much on my discoveries of the important manuscripts, kept in the special collection of Birmingham university library, known as "Martineau Papers." They are mostly autograph letters (indexed as HM 566-609) by the editor of *Once a Week*, Samuel Lucas, and have never been edited or discussed by any critic before.

On 20 May 1859, Lucas wrote to Charles Knight, asking if he could invite Harriet to write for *Once a Week*. In the letter he says "I should value most highly both her name and her pen" as he appreciates her work, *The Thirty Years' Peace*.[2] Consequently on 2 June 1859, Lucas wrote to Harriet in reply to her consent: "Of one thing I can assure you that you will encounter no obstruction on my part to the faithful statement of any historical fact nor any controversial prejudice against truth of any kind, though the object of our Miscellany carries us wide of religious and political disputations." And he had the greatest confidence in her giving the journal

[1] Martineau, *Biographical Sketches*, 4th ed. (London: Macmillan, 1876) xxii.
[2] HM 568.

"valuable help in your [her] own way."[3] What Harriet thought of her involvement in the new journal can be clearly detected in her letter to Fanny Wedgwood (on 18 November 1859) in which she is open about her new commitment.

> I have accepted engagements with "Once a Week," and refused them for Thackeray's Magazine [the *Cornhill*], brilliant as was the invitation of Smith & Elder, and tempting the field opened. I don't believe theirs *can* answer, and I don't fancy Thackeray as an editor: and his £4,000 a year can't affect his quality in that way. I doubt his power of industry for *such* work; and I doubt his temper. I don't like Mag[nes]; and I would not have written for *any* but that Dickens's conduct to Bradbury & Evans (for whom I have much respect and regard) roused my indignation, and made me wish to serve them, if possible. It has been such a hit! M[r] Lucas (editor and *Times* reviewer) writes in the most open way about my lucky series having at *once* decided and secured the signal success of "Once a Week." I am almost ashamed of the popularity of such very homely and easy things. *Entre nous*, I am not going to confine myself to them: I don't want to *appear* every week, and seem to take so large a part; so I have chosen a *nom de plume* under which a quite different sort of articles will appear, at least while I have no article for the "Edinburgh" on hand. I have told *nobody* this; so you will not let it get out, please."[4]

In this letter we see what she thought of Thackeray and the policy of lavish remuneration, and that she preferred writing for the *Edinburgh Review*. She did not altogether pride herself on her series, in spite of the "signal success" of *Once a Week*, and she even felt "ashamed of" the kind of "such very

---

3 HM569.

4 Elisabeth Arbuckle, ed., *Harriet Martineau's Letters to Fanny Wedgwood* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford UP, 1983)182-83.

homely and easy things." But in another letter (20 October 1860) she speaks cheerfully of her meeting Lucas and proprietor of *Once a Week*:

> Mr Lucas is a very accomplished man, as you might judge by his review of Hawthorne's "Transformation" in the *Times*. We discussed "Once a Week" through and through, and arranged for further proceedings, if I am able. It is a highly successful affair, which I should rather wonder at, but for the illustrations. When Millais' engagement with the "Cornhill" is concluded (I believe it is) he devotes himself (in the illustrating way) wholly to "Once a Week." One pleasant thing in that connexion is the capital books one gets. Mr Evans sent me last year all their Cyclopedias, such a comfort for reference!"[5]

No doubt with the useful Cyclopedias and Lucas's assured approval of "faithful statement of any historical fact nor any controversial prejudice against truth of any kind," she was able to work out her many informative and encyclopedia-like articles. She wrote on request of the editor. In an early letter written in 8 June 1859, Lucas discusses what she might do, listing "The Farm of Two Acres" (that he values for being a recent experience), memories of public men or women (in which he trusts her "capacity to grasp and analyse actual characters"), articles on some Chinese anecdote, Hospital sketches (for she would "know best the malleableness" of the materials), and American papers (for Lucas himself is "deeply interested in the U. S. and on their earlier history" and "almost claim[s] to be an authority"). Yet he also "hesitate[s] to welcome any papers in a serial form, except in the inevitable serialism of fiction," and "especially want[s] short articles"; he says " I have but a small room to whip my cat in, and am obliged to urge brevity as far as compatible with effectiveness in all

[5] Arbuckle 195-96.

my contributions."[6] She followed the editor's suggestions from 1859 to1862, till she decided to experiment on serialization of fiction.

Her ingenious genre, what she calls "Historiettes," are in fact short tales in an historical setting which require the reader to question the attitudes and behaviour of a few of the chief characters. To *Once a Week* during Lucas's editorship, she contributed "Sister Anna's Probation," "The Anglers of the Dove" "The Hampdens," "Son Christopher" and "Family History" subsequently, all under her own name; and with the exception of the last, they overlapped her serial articles written under the pseudonym, "From the Mountain." [To be continued.]

"James on Harriet" by Valerie Sanders

In 1845, the year Harriet was celebrating her return to health by mesmerism and James was doubting what this meant, Jane Carlyle visited the James Martineaus' 'pie-crust sort of house' in Liverpool, where she reported to her husband that "James appeared to be still fighting it out with his conscience" (*Newly Selected Letters,* 2004, p. 116). She doesn't specify in relation to what, but added it would do him good to be led into "some sort of wickedness". She also noted that he seemed very "near kicking his foot thro the whole Unitarian Concern already!"

These comments perhaps make James and Harriet seem closer than they appeared at that time: both conscience-ridden and critical Unitarians poised on the edge of their mature middle-age, and with a taste for controversy. Both were morally upright and anxious to do the right thing, and both avoided "'wickedness" in the sense of sexual scandal. They were, however, prickly characters who were severely tested by the breakdown of their relationship, which this paper considers from James's perspective.

[6] HM570

Both the Martineaus were in fact fairly restrained in how they spoke of each other publicly. For all the emotional drama of their relationship breakdown, neither discussed it in much detail in their autobiography, or in other places. The main sources of comments by James about Harriet occur at the beginning and end of their relationship: in the brief notes he made about Harriet's youthful letters of the 1820s and 1830s when he transcribed them; in his "Biographical Memoranda" after her death in the 1870s; and in the letter he wrote to the *Daily News* in 1884. Living twenty-four years longer than Harriet, he had the last word- several times over. But perhaps the most famous instance of his criticism was what he said about the Atkinson letters in the *Prospective Review* - the review which caused the final collapse of this already precarious relationship.

James and Harriet - like most siblings -spent relatively little of their long life-span actually living together. While separation initially intensified their bond, it later caused them to misunderstand each other, or else just drift apart. It must have made a difference that James married young and had a large family, while Harriet was dependent on a range of alternative relationships: friends, maids, other siblings, and nieces.

What most interested James in his sister's letters, of which he made transcripts was Harriet's intellectual progress as a reader and thinker. Mostly his transcriptions are factual, without personal comment: for example: 'Harriet thinks of writing about war, vindicating her condemnation even of defensive war' (30 October 1823); but there is an increasing emotional and critical involvement, as in his comments on her publishing plans in December 1825: "About her <u>large book</u>, she has many fears; but lays herself out for earning something by small ventures. She cares little or nothing about *literary reputation*, and much for giving full expression to her own strong convictions." This was of course a remarkably prophetic

comment, showing that James had an early awareness of Harriet's potential to cause trouble.

The first real sign of any difficulty between them comes with their apparent misunderstanding over John Hugh Worthington, the friend to whom Harriet became engaged in 1826, without, apparently, clearing it beforehand with James. For a while longer she was willing to accept his reading of her work, though two distinct viewpoints emerged, with James predictably taking the more purely ethical stance, and Harriet a wider imaginative pleasure in the act of writing. Their relationship survived her long illness of the 1840s and apparent cure by mesmerism, though clearly they had drifted further apart during this time because of his contempt for mesmerism, and the religious conservatism and intensity he had acquired after his stay in Germany in 1848-9. He had refused to let Harriet practise mesmerism on his dying son Herbert in 1846: his wife Helen said rather ambiguously: "Had Harriet's will been followed before, mesmerism wd have had the credit of his recovery; & now God will save him...if it is his will" (letter to her sister, Emily Higginson Bache, 18 Feb 1846). Even over the life of a sick child, ideological stubbornness seems to have divided the siblings.

Allegedly James wrote the review of the Atkinson Letters to protect Harriet against a worse treatment from a reviewer not related to her. He did not intend to insult her personally, and he tried to concentrate his fire on Henry Atkinson, rather than on Harriet; but the whole tone of his article is undoubtedly sardonic and scathing. He makes fun of the pair of them, even if Atkinson is the main target. It was not only his philosophy James disliked, but his English syntax -though "Miss Martineau too seems to have begrudged him his fair fame, and by a tyrannical exercise of mesmeric sympathy reduced his English to the standard of her own." Was this some sort of backhanded compliment, given that Harriet was famous for her plain

and sensible style, while Atkinson was notorious for his convoluted and metaphysical ramblings? "Reduced" however implies some form of impoverishment. Worse than this, though, was his famous attack on his sister for humbling herself before such a charlatan: "It seemed a kind of fascination," he recalls. "With grief we must say that we remember nothing in literary history more melancholy than that Harriet Martineau should be prostrated at the feet of such a master. Surely this humiliating inversion of the natural order of nobleness cannot last."

Possibly James was jealous that he had lost his place as her most trusted intellectual partner and adviser. Atkinson was much younger than Harriet, so he was more of a younger brother than a father figure. James himself claimed, in his *Daily News* letter, that the real cause of their disagreement was over the preservation or destruction of private letters. James declined to destroy his, which meant that communication between them became more and more brief and spasmodic. Her letters, according to him, became "notes, ever fewer and more far between..." until finally this "preliminary minor excommunication," as he called it, caused him not to hear of the major one until rumours reached him from other sources (Bosanquet, 240).

James also maintained that he was always willing to make up, but that it was Harriet's fault the quarrel continued: his *Daily News* letter refers to "my sister's liability to oscillate between extremes of devotedness and antipathy" (241). For his part, the old associations of childhood should have been enough to preserve them against a permanent falling out, and in his Biographical Memoranda, he leaves the door open, as it were, to reconciliation, though by this time it was too late. "My affection for my sister Harriet survived all reproaches & mistakes; and, if she had permitted, would at any moment have taken me to her side for unconditional return to the old relation. "There is no such parallel farewell comment from Harriet about

anyone other than James the child, as her *Autobiography* avoids discussing the final collapse of their relationship in any detail.

In many ways both Martineaus come across as guarded, and stopping short of an uncontrolled outburst about the other. Private letters, especially Harriet's offended tone towards her sister-in-law Helen, tell us more about the emotional undercurrents of this collapsing relationship than the more formal statements in reviews and autobiography. The gaps in both cases are intriguing. One would like to know what Harriet's view of James was when she was dying, and whether James was really able to accept Harriet's atheism as not in itself the cause of their separation. Essentially his last word on Harriet was an affirmation of his own rightness of principle. He insisted that the breakdown was not his fault, and that he would have been happy to resume the old friendly relationship, notwithstanding their differences. At the same time, he seems to have felt the move towards reconciliation needed to come from her. As it never did, he went on distributing both praise and critical analysis with what now seems an imperturbable detachment. Pride and stubbornness were persistent family characteristics on both sides.

"Two Victorian Lives: Rachel and Ellen Martineau" by Elisabeth Arbuckle

In summer 1859, Rachel – Harriet Martineau's next elder sister – came to Ambleside with her friend, Jane Pilkington, while Harriet was immersed in writing for the *Daily News*, *Once a Week* and at times long pieces for the *Edinburgh Review*. Letters flew back and forth between Harriet and Henry Reeve, editor of the *Edinburgh* and a younger cousin of the Martineau sisters. "Rachel was surprised that you remembered her

---

Note: James's 'Biographical Memoranda' (unpublished) are in Harris Manchester College Library, Oxford, as are the transcripts of her letters; his *Daily News* letter is included by Theodora Bosanquet in her *Harriet Martineau: An Essay in Comprehension* (London: Haslewood Books, 1927), pp. 218-41.

existence," Harriet commented wryly to Reeve. "I have sent Rachel your message of remembrance, & I have no doubt of her reciprocating it." Rachel and Ellen – their younger sister – had arrived at The Knoll one after the other. Harriet continued, "Rachel looking as old as can be, almost, -- really as old as I look, though she is very well; while Ellen never looks to me a day older than when I saw her last."

Rachel, in middle age, no longer posed a threat to Harriet as their mother's favorite, a part of Harriet's unhappy childhood carefully chronicled in the *Autobiography* now printed and stored at the printer's until her death.

Painful memories of childhood form a leitmotif in the first two "Periods" of *Harriet Martineau's Autobiography*. On one occasion, for example, Harriet accuses her mother of always favoring Rachel, is summarily sent to bed and told to say her prayers – and for the only time in her girlhood *does not* say her prayers.

Harriet's *Autobiography* also describes happier times in the family. Ellen – nine years younger than Harriet and eleven years younger than Rachel – is the primary object of Harriet's affection. As Harriet and Rachel grow up, they learn plain and fancy sewing from an old nurse, study French with their eldest sister, Lissey (Rachel always being thought "bright") and have other lessons from their elder brothers, Thomas and Henry. For a short period, Harriet and Rachel go to school under Mr. Perry, a "Regency pedagogue [in his] black coat...grey pantaloons, and powdered hair," too gullible for the rowdy boys in the class, but perfect for teaching girls. Under Mr. Perry, Harriet absorbs the classical principles of composition that were to provide the basis for her remarkable writing career. Later, we catch glimpses of Elizabeth Martineau and her daughters sewing together and taking turns reading aloud from historical and religious works. Harriet and Rachel study Italian and try to translate Petrarch's sonnets. When Elizabeth

goes to Newcastle for the birth of Lissey's first baby, Harriet – significantly – feels *happy* to stay with Rachel.

As a difficult teenager, Harriet was sent to stay with the Rankin family at Bristol, where her aunt ran a school assisted by her clever daughters (where Ellen later studied). Rachel also spent several months at Bristol, possibly assisting in the girls' school but not then thinking of earning her own living. In family letters, Rachel appears at her aunt's teatable enjoying herself and diverting her morose uncle Rankin, who has failed in business.

At Norwich, Christmas is celebrated by Harriet and Ellen singing duets, preparing toast by the fire and reading out a "long medley" of a letter from Rachel. At the time of Harriet's abortive engagement, Rachel offers her sympathy. And she gives Harriet "valuable criticism" of her early tales. When James moves to Dublin before his marriage, Rachel goes to keep house for him.

After Thomas Martineau dies and the family business fails, Elizabeth claims that if her sister-in-law, "Aunt Lee," lives with them, she will have enough for herself and Rachel. Rachel nevertheless negotiates for a position as governess to a family at Kidderminster at £80-100 a year, while Ellen asks to go as unsalaried nurse to Lissey's children at Newcastle and Harriet occupies herself with sewing and writing. After the success of *Illustrations of Political Economy*, Harriet seems less resentful of Rachel, though a note of disdain towards her sister can creep into her letters.

In the late 1830s or early 1840s, Rachel was to open a girls' school at Liverpool that became popular with Unitarian families. One of her pupils in 1846 was the eldest daughter of Fanny and Hensleigh Wedgwood, called Snow. When Harriet visited Rachel's school, she watched the girls dancing and hoped to take Snow for a walk, she told Fanny, "to have some talk with her.... I did this with Blanch and Bertha Smith yesterday [nieces of Harriet's friend, Julia Smith] and have bespoken Snow for the next turn."

Rachel's continuing success may be judged by Elizabeth Gaskell's excited letter to her daughter Marianne in 1852 telling that another daughter, Meta, was going to school, "to Miss Martineau's...on hearing that Miss M. had a vacancy, as I always felt that hers was the only school that would do for Meta...& [Meta] is to learn dancing, Italian, German, & music."

Ellen married Alfred Higginson, a surgeon and the younger brother of James's wife, Helen; like James and later Rachel, the Higginsons lived at Liverpool. As a traditional Victorian wife, Ellen is often seen caring for sick infants, sharing the care of her mother and – after 1855 – taking her turn to stay with Harriet. Yet Ellen may well have taught in Rachel's school and published a book, *The English School-Girl: Her Position and Duties*, by Mrs Alfred Higginson, with an introduction dated Liverpool, 1858. Harriet, Ellen's daughter, was to become a favourite with her aunt.

Rachel's success as a governess and as head of a school illustrates the crucial role *teaching* played as virtually the only career open to unmarried or widowed middle-class Victorian women. Among the Martineaus' cousins, Catherine Turner evidently ran a small school for working-class girls in the 1830s, where Harriet planned to send the orphan slave child Ailsie. Fanny Martineau of Bracondale, the only child of their wealthy uncle Philip Meadows Martineau, ran a school not meant for middle-class girls (as noted in a tract by Sarah Austin), but "for the education of a few girls of the shopkeeping and artisan class." Annie Clough, who came to live with her mother at Ellerigg in Ambleside (the Cloughs were also connections of Julia Smith's) carried on just such a school.

Unmarried women with more modest financial resources fared less well. Isabella, one of the clever Rankin sisters, worked as a governess for a wealthy Jewish family in 1839, but suffered ill health. By a later employer, Isabella was described as a "Lackadaisical governess." And Harriet was

disgusted when their Aunt Margaret Rankin died leaving Isabella and her sisters only tiny legacies. Harriet liked to think of herself as *teacher* of the nation, and *like* Rachel's, but *unlike* Isabella's, her life seems to have been both fulfilling and independent.

Book Review by Gaby Weiner

Harriet Martineau's Writing on the British Empire, 5 vol, 2004, edited Deborah Logan, London: Pickering & Chatto, Price: £450/$675, ISBN 1 85196 768 0

When I first started researching Harriet Martineau in the early 1980s at the encouragement of the feminist scholar and activist Dale Spender, there was hostility from some quarters to my project. It was thought that in the attempt to reclaim women for history, certain women were more worthy or 'interesting' than others; for example, those of humble origins and/or who could illuminate the lives of the mass of women hitherto 'hidden from history' as Sheila Rowbotham (1973) had put it, and/or those who had led romantic lives and/or were among the literary greats etc. Harriet Martineau did not seem to fit into any of these categories. Yet, I persevered, as did others (many of whom are members of the Martineau Society) to become fascinated by the woman and her work, astounded by the level of her eminence among contemporaries and mystified by her comparative neglect by historians and political and literary commentators. Deborah Logan has been another such scholar, and we should be grateful to her in two ways in particular, regarding these volumes: first, for expanding the availability of Martineau's writing for new and wider audiences; and second, for offering an insightful biographical overview which incorporates much of the newest scholarship and conceptualisation of Martineau and her achievements.

As the title suggests, this set of volumes concerns Martineau's writing about imperial matters, and in particular, on the relationship between Britain

and her colonies (past and present). The five volumes present collected writing of Martineau around specific themes and locations. Volume one contains a selection of 'didactic' tales from Martineau's most noted work *Illustrations of Political Economy* (1834) which focus respectively on South Africa (*Life in the Wilds*), West Indies (*Demerara)*, and Ceylon (*Cinnamon and Pearls*). The final tale in this volume is entitled *Dawn Island* (1845), and is set on a fictional Pacific island. Taken not from the *Illustrations*, but from an Anti-Corn Law League publication written more than a decade later, it puts the case for "the imperial civilising mission elsewhere perverted by martial force, native exploitation and trade monopolies" (Logan 211). Volumes two and three of the set offer a reprint of *Eastern Life Past and Present* (1848) which records Martineau's impressions as a traveller in the Middle-East mid nineteenth century when British imperialism was just beginning to exert its influence. Volume four focuses on Martineau's writing about Ireland at its most desperate times, and includes a political economy tale, (*Ireland*) and two longer works *Letters from Ireland* (1852) and *Endowed Schools in Ireland* (1859), while volume five focuses on a range of writings concerning India and the influence, often seen as malign, of the East India Company.

Martineau's greatest challenge, as Roberts (2002) shows, has been the volume of her work and its eclecticism, which makes it difficult for us to comprehend the full extent of her literary achievements. Moreover, the "immersion of her work in the immediate" (Roberts 2002: 5) has led to its often being considered relevant only to the Victorian age and of relatively minor interest elsewhere. The achievement of this set of volumes is thus, that it takes much of the effort out of the search for Martineau texts, by providing an insightful selection of writing on specific themes, together with sufficient (but not too much) introductory and explanatory material providing context and illumination.

Martineau was not typical of Victorian writers on Empire, as Brantlinger points out in the preface. Martineau expressed liberal imperialism in its best light: for example, as conscientious and responsible, free of racism, aware of, yet not threatened by, cultural difference, and having the advancement of civilisation as a whole, as the ultimate goal. Moreover, she had an immense and curious intellect, a burning ambition to make an impact, immense energy levels during her most productive periods, and much confidence in her writing and skills of persuasion. And she was superb at writing for the knowledge-thirsty public of her era.

> One of Martineau's strengths as a writer was her ability to synthesise the minutiae of ordinary, practical details with abstract theories and philosophies in order to present a comprehensive perspective, thus placing special interest groups in the context of a larger independent whole (Logan, 2004: xxiv-xxv)

The insight that Logan brings to her portrayal of Martineau is in taking her seriously as an important intellectual force, and in recognising the implications and value of her shifts of interest over her most productive decades – from the religious and literary to the political and philosophical. Important though Martineau's energy, intellect and popularism were to her achievements among her contemporaries, the recent resurgence of interest in her as a key thinker comes from the USA where the fusion of a number of themes of her work – anti-slavery, the woman question, social and political commentary on mid- nineteenth- century America etc. – have combined to produce her as an important analyst on the past and bridge to the future. We have here the publication of an important (if expensive) set of writing on Empire and another set is due out in May 2005 on Martineau's writings on British history and military reform (also edited by Deborah Logan). I would like also to see a similar set on education, on which

Martineau also had much to say. But perhaps that is more of a 'British' interest!

References

Logan, D. (2005) *Harriet Martineau; Writings on British History and Military Reform*. London: Pickering & Chatto.

Roberts, C. (2002) *The Woman and the Hour: Harriet Martineau and Victorian Ideologies*. Toronto: U. of Toronto Press.

Rowbotham, S. (1973) *Hidden from History*. London: Pluto Press.

Newsletter Contributions

Articles, book reviews, letters, notes and observations gor the next Newsletter should be sent to Dr Deborah Logan, Western Kentucky University, 1, Big Red Way, Bowling Green, KY 42101-3576, USA.
E-mail: Deborah.logan@wku.edu

NB The usual contact address list is suspended for this issue pending updating.