

The
Martineau
Society

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Twenty-second Newsletter
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The Martineau Society

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Greetings from the Editor

Readers of this 22nd Martineau Society Newsletter will be struck by the wealth of Harriet Martineau scholarship and professional activities it contains. Earlier work by R. K. Webb, Valerie Sanders, and Elisabeth Arbuckle ushered in a new era of interest in Harriet and her writing that has led to reprints of her work and analyses of her impact on Victorian culture. The proliferation of this material, in turn, makes possible the introduction of Harriet's writing into college classrooms; for example, my Victorian literature class this semester features four tales from *Illustrations of Political Economy* and the novel, *Deerbrook*. I'm pleased to report that students are excited about and engaged with this material – which, again, leads to more new work (papers, theses, dissertations) on this too-long-neglected author. As Newsletter editor, I invite articles, announcements, and information about new work on both Harriet Martineau and James Martineau for the 23rd Newsletter, due by 15 May 2007 (please see contact details on back cover).

Announcement: AGM Norwich, 2007

The Conference and AGM has been provisionally booked with the University of East Anglia, Norwich from Thursday July 19th to Sunday 22nd July 2007. It will follow the now established pattern, starting with a lecture on the Thursday evening, including one or more visits to Martineau-related sites in the city and ending with the AGM on the Sunday.

Norwich is easily reached by air (Norwich airport), by rail from London (Liverpool Street station), and from the north (by rail from Ely or by coach from Peterborough). The University is pleasantly situated a few miles outside the city, based on Earlham Hall, the former home of the Gurney family. There is a frequent bus service between UEA and the city. Cars can be parked at UEA but only with difficulty in Norwich.

Those who attended previous Norwich meetings should note that circumstances have changed at most of the venues and we shall cover some new ground!

Accommodation will be in single rooms with en suite facilities at approx £72 plus Vat per person per day.

Papers are invited on any topic related to Harriet or James Martineau, their family and friends. If you would like to attend, please send a deposit of £50 (payable to The Martineau Society), and the title of any proposed paper, as soon as possible, and not later than 1st March, to the Treasurer at 25 Dyers Yard, Norwich, Norfolk NR3 3QY. You will then receive full conference details and maps.

Editorial: AGM Edinburgh, 2006

The 12th Martineau Society Conference was held 13-16 July 2006 at Moray House School of Education, Edinburgh University. Activities commenced on Thursday (13 July) with dinner followed by Edinburgh Professor Owen Dudley Edwards's lecture entitled "Ken Fielding and Harriet Martineau." Four papers were offered on Friday morning, by Elisabeth Arbuckle, Shu-Fang Lai, Sophia Hankinson, and Deborah Logan. After lunch, the group was treated to an Edinburgh trail led by Scottish Blue Badge Guide, Christine Ure. The Society's Saturday morning Committee meeting was followed by two papers: Aileen Christianson and Ted Hovet. Lunch was followed by another trail, this time a Unitarian trail led by Rev. Andrew Hill of St. Mark's. Saturday's conference dinner featured a birthday celebration for Alan Middleton, followed by a special presentation of readings assembled by Barbara Todd, entitled "In Their Own Words – some favourite readings from Harriet and James". In Barbara's absence, the readings were performed by various society members, including Iris Voegli and Sophia Hankinson. The event was made even more special by Moira Burke, whose singing of traditional Scottish songs was beautifully done and deeply moving. The Conference concluded on Sunday morning with three more papers – by Lucy Townsend, Ruth Watts, and Gaby Weiner, followed by the AGM. The success of this conference is owed to Gaby Weiner and Moira Burke, for their excellent organization, thoughtful selection of activities, and care for everyone's well-being. Many thanks to both of you and to all the participants in this special event.

1. *"A tribute to the Reverend Dr Frank Schulman": Sophia Hankinson*

Our late President, Frank Schulman, prepared well for his death: he told everyone that he had a brain tumour and what he proposed to do about it, and kept us informed of the treatment in exactly the matter-of-fact way which was part of his character.

After a long ministry in Houston, Texas, his idea of retirement was to take up a ministry in England. It was to Horsham that he came with Alice in 1988, with equal success. He was ('head-hunted' no doubt) resident Chaplain at (then) Manchester College, Oxford from 1989 to 1995, and during that time visited Norwich on several occasions to preach at the Octagon Chapel when that pulpit was vacant (making the 300-mile round trip in the day). His sermon on William Smith MP was particularly memorable, but we did not know then that he had embarked on a further academic career with a thesis on the Unitarian Struggle for Equality (in which Smith played a leading part). Studies of Charles Wellbeloved and James Martineau followed, (earning him DPhil, MA and BA degrees, in that order).

It was on one of his Norwich visits that Frank was the first person asked for advice in the formation of the Martineau Society. He promptly supplied a list of colleagues he knew would be interested, through which we were privileged to acquire as our first President R K Webb and the help of many distinguished experts 'across the pond'.

II. *"A Tribute to the Reverend Dr Frank Schulman" by Alan Middleton*

Our President, the Revd Dr Frank Schulman, died on 4 January 2006 of brain cancer, peacefully and painlessly, according to a message from his wife Alice. I got to know Frank very well during my years as Chair of the Chapel Society of Manchester College, when he was Chaplain to the Society and his wife, Alice, was very active as Secretary to the Society. We had many good times together and, although they returned to the USA in 1995 Frank was always pleased to come back to England, and especially Oxford. He added MA and DPhil to his qualifications during his six years in Oxford. I received an email from Frank in September [2005] in which he says it all:

'I'll relate a short story. When I announced my retirement from Emerson Unitarian Church in 1987 I had no idea what I would do next. I thought of a small church (so I could preach, visit members, and study) in New England. Through Peter Godfrey I wound up in Horsham, and then to Oxford. I told Ralph once that had an angel come down to me,

after my retirement, and offered me any wish, and gave me a month to think about it, I couldn't have thought of anything as nice as what happened. It was the crown of my career, sheer joy from beginning to end.¹

III. "A Tribute to the Reverend Dr Frank Schulman" by Rod and Iris Voegli

For the last three years we have taken holidays in Houston whilst our daughter has been living and working there and consequently we have had the pleasure of often visiting Frank and Alice at their home in the Woodlands where our daughter's workplace was located. We enjoyed lunch or afternoon tea together and then spent time discussing Frank's latest project, exchanging books and materials, debating Martineau Society business or revisiting Frank's vast collection of books. During our visit at Christmas 2005 holidays, we learned the sad news that Frank had died. Alice invited us to visit however, and we had the opportunity to meet members of the family and his long-time friend the Reverend Terry Sweetser, Vice-President of the North American Unitarian Universalist Congregations who delivered the eulogy at the Emerson Unitarian Church service on Sunday January 8th to celebrate Frank's life. We learned that Frank was born in Nashville. His father was a refugee from the pogroms in Russia, his mother an American from a Methodist family, but the whole family attended the synagogue. Frank served in the US Navy during the Korean War and later attended universities in Nashville, Oklahoma and Harvard Divinity School where he met Alice at church in Boston, and they married in 1954 when they had both finished their degrees. After serving in churches in America, notably his 25 years at Emerson, Frank and Alice arrived in Britain. Before his death Frank urged his friend to end the eulogy with some words from James Martineau, high on Frank's list of heroes, who lived the truth that, "we are not sent into this world to be idle."

¹ Peter Godfrey is a Unitarian minister (at that time in London). Ralph Waller is Principal of Harris Manchester College. Emerson Unitarian Church is in Houston, Texas.

Featured Article: "Harriet Martineau's *Historiettes*," part two of two, by Shu-Fang Lai

By 1862 Harriet, aged sixty and a well-established journalist who had [by then] published most of her books, returned again to the genre [fiction] she had once pursued in youth, but for which she lacked confidence, as stated in her self-authored obituary for *Daily News* written in 1855. Her *Historiettes* for *Once a Week*, therefore, are important evidence in proving whether she could achieve "the artistic aim and qualifications," and gain "the power of dramatic construction," "the poetic inspiration" and "critical cultivation" in work of the imagination, the supposedly ideal elements which she outlines in her autobiography. Shortly after Charles Reade abruptly concluded his serialization of "A Good Fight" (1 Oct. 1859), she was approached on Lucas's request to take up the task. Reade's sensational story was not in the editor's favour and caused his and Reade's discord. The editor turned to Martineau whom he must have thought a more reliable and admirable hand. On 21 Oct., he wrote to her to discuss the possibility of her writing fiction again as well as her inviting Mrs Gaskell on his behalf:

As for Fiction, you are right—this is an weak point, and though I have some expectations in this behalf, if you could encourage me to hope that you yourself—but I must not urge you to any unwelcome office or direct you from the most practical questions which now interest you—only I will say, that if you do again recur to Fiction, think of me. Moreover as regards Mrs Gaskell I shall be truly obliged by your good offices. I do covet her pen and confide in your diplomacy.¹

She did not recur to fiction again till 1860. Lucas's letter written on 1 Sept. includes six pages of "Apropos of *Historiettes*," [in which he] proposes tentatively:

The Times of the Commonwealth can never bore their interest and the resistance to Charles the First may furnish me or two subjects. I have never seen in English fiction a satisfactory type of the Parliamentary leader of those days nor a personage as Pyen or Elliott or Vone or Marten... and picturesqueness on the battlefield on the practical sagacity of these men in the adaptation of men's hands has never been clearly discerned till recently, except perhaps by

¹ HM 577.

Warterton. If as I have often desired I was to bring out a volume of English examples in the conduct of public affairs, I should find in the Commonwealth Times such models....¹

Martineau was induced to do so, and her first historiette, "Sister Anna's Probation," seems to originate from Lucas's wife's idea. On 2 March 1861, Lucas wrote to say: "I like Mrs Lucas's suggestion as to be a story turning on convent suppression--for the very reason you give that this theme concerns us equally now -- and don't think I want to push it aside if I mention something else."² Based on their common interest in "convent suppression," "Sister Anna's Probation" is about a young woman who in the sixteenth century is led by the largely corrupt Church to become a nun, when she is gradually coming to see that she is in love with a young man. Through her own honest independence and the general welcome for the dissolution of the monasteries (also perceived as corrupt), the heroine escapes from having to submit. In the light of Harriet's complaint at Dickens's prejudice against Roman Catholics, what are we to make of this story? The readers are surprised to find on this occasion, she takes so human and feminine a view of Anna's dilemma, and we should be critical that everything is rather simplified. The love story does not accord with the obituary she wrote for Brontë in the *Daily News* (6 April 1855): her heroines "fall in love too readily, too vehemently, and sometimes after a fashion which their female readers may resent." Here in Harriet's own story, we see how her heroine falls in love, if not "too readily, too vehemently!"

However, "Sister Anna's Probation" makes a significant contrast to Reade's serial, "A Good Fight," which is about the boyhood, youth and marriage of Gerhard, the father of the fifteenth century theologian and scholar, Erasmus. It was to express Reade's personal experience of the misery caused by "the celibacy of the Clergy" demanded by the Roman Church. Both serials deal with similar conflicts between religious love and earthly love; both express both the writers' indignation about what they perceived as the emotional inhumanity of religious practice. Both sought to transform their rebellious ideas or forthright criticisms on "enforced celibacy" and "convent suppression" into more acceptable expressions, for example, the settings are in the Middle ages (Reade's

¹ HM 583.

² HM 585.

story even sets in a foreign place in a little Dutch town). Yet the major difference between the two serials lies in their approaches to novel writing—Reade adapts sensationalism while Martineau aims for realism. This explains why Lucas responded differently, as he often made clear his objection to the sensational approach in fashion during the mid-1850s. One of the most significant features of Martineau's series, I suggest, is her determination to write in "a natural language" but not in the usual "half scripture and half slang" that other historical novelists used. Lucas wrote to praise its "testable merits" and its "clear characterization of healthy women... as true in their misunderstanding."¹

Lucas was most satisfied with the first serial. Yet, regardless of "the opinions of two circles only, which are favourable and cheering," the decline of the sale of the magazine was a discouragement. Perhaps "this type of fiction is too quiet and sober for the taste of our readers," explained Lucas. He went on to ask for a second tale, "for one is hardly sufficient for a fair experiment."² As soon as the serial concluded, Lucas wrote in praise of the story and Millais's illustration for the last installment:

You will be greatly pleased with Millais's concluding illustration which is extremely beautiful. And let me add the satisfactory information that the verdict is very encouraging to the writer of the story. I cannot say that it has told upon our circulation—but various people (from whom I did not expect such a cordial approval) have spoken about it to me in the warmest terms. People are impressed especially with its truthfulness as a picture of the convent life of the time—and I know one young Lady who has read it under the impression that it was wholly a narrative of actual occurrences.

According to the editor's testimony, the story was not considered repulsive by readers, but impressive because of its "truthfulness as a picture of the convent life of the time." Martineau soon finished the second story, "The Anglers of the Dove" (the river Dove), which was equally well received. It is about the secret plots of Roman Catholic supporters of a captive Mary Queen of Scots in remote sixteenth-century Britain. The story is told partly from the point of view of a bewildered village girl, Polly, and partly from the point of view of the famous Bess of

¹ HM 393.

² HM 594.

Hardwick who, with her husband George Talbot, the 6th Earl of Shrewsbury, were the "gaolers" of Mary Queen of Scotland when she was imprisoned (1569-84) in one or other of their estates. It is notable that Martineau's voice breaks through at the very end when she speaks of the Huguenot silk weavers of Spitalfields who have been so persecuted by French Roman Catholics. She believes in *justice*, which includes resisting persecution. Lucas was pleased with the story:

I think the Anglers of the Dove excellent and can guess at the labour it has cost you. At least there is one recompense in prospect. These historiettes republished as I assume they will be with Millais' illustrations will be highly popular and I expect profitable. You have not in the least lost your original vein of fiction. It is still sui generic and significant of your force of character and breadth of thought.

Such a hearty compliment offers important evidence for re-discovering and re-evaluating Martineau's faculty of novel writing. Though only one of her Historiettes for *Once a Week* has been reprinted, *The Hampdens*, and it was not profitable as the editor predicts in this letter, the stories are sufficient to show Martineau's merits--her "force of character and breadth of thought."

"The Hampdens" was not as well-regarded as its precedents. Lucas did not reserve his opinion about his disappointment:

I will tell you frankly I do not like [it] as well as either Sister Anna's Probation or the Anglers of the Dove. From its deficiency of action it did not afford the same opportunities for Millais, and I should have preferred if the authoress of the story had rested less exclusively with the female characters. But though this is my grumble I have been so much out of sorts lately that I can hardly trust my judgment for the assurance that it is well founded.¹

The next one, "Son Christopher" was improved, and Lucas said he liked it much.² It was about this time that the proprietors of *Once a Week*, Bradbury and Evans, were "ill alternatively or otherwise impracticable," and the magazine suffered financial difficulty. As Lucas told her, the chief difficulty stemmed from such artists as Millais, whose "extravagant prices" they no longer could afford. He admits in a letter: "We have never paid even a third of the sum you [Martineau] mention for Sensation

¹ HM 599.

² HM 600.

Novels" and the remuneration is "too much for even the most popular Magazines to support."¹ After this serial, Martineau contributed no articles or serials during 1864, while in mourning for her niece Maria. The final Historiette, "A Family History" appeared in 1865, the time when Lucas was about to resign from the editorship.

Valerie Sanders's thorough and helpful study of Martineau's fiction in relation to other Victorian novelists traces the critical response to them, some negative and some favourable, some persuasive and some arguable. Like Sanders, most critics mainly deal with the early period (between 1832 and 1846) and hardly at all with those of *Once a Week*. The value of these stories lies in showing how Martineau, as a mature and veteran journalist, did not greatly change her standards of fiction writing over time. "It puzzles me wholly," she told Erasmus Darwin (in a letter of 12 August 1862), "I know by the labour I put into them, that they can't be very good; yet people say that I do it as well as thirty years ago! I don't believe this at all."² The stories deserve further research in order to understand what led to their success at the time, why they are now unread, and what might bring about their recognition today. For now we may need to stand by Charlotte Brontë's comment, "She is not a person to be judged by her writing alone, but rather by her own deeds and life."³

Should Martineau, who played such an important part in forming *Once a Week*, take the blame for its financial failure? Are we to accept the verdict of a contemporary who, in reviewing Carlyle's *Reminiscences*, pounced on his allusions to her with relish? "Carlyle's treatment of her," he writes, "is more just. Her unbounded conceit and belief in herself, fostered by her foolish adorers, who lent themselves to blow out her flame, are let off gently enough." "Her sayings and doings and her conceits, are buried for ever under the sands of time."⁴ He must also have noticed how Carlyle praised what he called her "considerable talent," for being like that of "a quite shining Matron of some big Female Establishment, mistress of some immense Dress-shop."⁵ The Historiettes are enormously important in order to throw some light on

¹ HM 630.

² Arbuckle 229.

³ Letter to J. Taylor, 1 Jan. 1851; T. J. Wise and J. A. Symington, *The Brontës: Their Lives, Friendships and Correspondence*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Shakespeare Head Press, 1932) 3:192.

⁴ G. B., Review of Thomas Carlyle's *Reminiscences*, *Temple Bar* 62 (1881): 27.

⁵ Thomas Carlyle, *Reminiscences* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997), eds., K. J. Fielding and Ian Campbell, 140.

Martineau's creative mind: they should *not* be buried forever under the sands of time and there should one day be a collection of them.¹

Conference Paper:

"Harriet Martineau and some of her contemporary female writers" by Ruth Watts

Harriet Martineau was chiefly known for writing either non-fiction or fiction as a vehicle for conveying facts which otherwise were difficult to comprehend. In doing so she strayed into what was then considered to be 'masculine' areas of writing. She appreciated scientific method – another supposedly 'masculine' trait – and was interested in science. Two contemporary women writers who wrote on science were Jane Marcet and Mary Somerville.² It is interesting to see Martineau's reactions to these women and the links between their lives and work.

Jane Marcet (1769-1858), well-educated and from a wealthy commercial background, married Dr Alexander Marcet, a Swiss graduate of Edinburgh University who became a physician at Guy's Hospital and an enthusiastic chemist. Whilst raising her family of four children, she also published her first and most popular book, *Conversations on Chemistry*, exploring the new science much developed by Joseph Priestley and John Dalton. Later Marcet wrote on other physical sciences and political economy. She used conversation between the kindly, but knowledgeable Mrs B and two teenage girls of different and developing characters, to expand on these topics. They learnt science through simple experiments, trial and error, a careful building up of knowledge and investigating issues of everyday science which enabled them to gather useful household tips such as how to remove stains from clothes or treat burns.³

Marcet's major books were principally directed at girls although they were read as 'teach yourself' books by thousands of those who could read. Michael Faraday, for example, famously attributed his start

¹ I have made the proposal to a publisher who is now considering the possibility of a reprint of them in a volume with Millais's original illustrations.

² For further detail see Ruth Watts, *Women in Science: a Social and Cultural History*, London, Routledge, forthcoming.

³ Jane Marcet, *Conversations on Chemistry* 2 vols. (London, 1806) passim.

in chemistry to reading Marcet's *Conversations*. Her books sold in thousands in Britain, continental Europe and the USA. Marcet was able to regularly update her works as, living a lively social and intellectual life in the heart of London, she knew and regularly conversed with the leading exponents of the day on these topics. She was also able to illustrate her books, having been tutored by Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Lawrence. Her networks included many Unitarians (although it is not certain if she became one), and those generally interested in humane, scientific and social reform. She was great friends with Mary Somerville who did become a Unitarian.

Mary Somerville (1780-1876), despite being born into a well-to-do Scottish family, was largely self-educated. Nevertheless, her friendships with leading literary and scientific figures of the Scottish Enlightenment in Edinburgh and subsequently, after her second marriage (to Dr William Somerville), with similar people in London, stimulated and supported her later career in writing books which conveyed the latest knowledge in a wide range of science and mathematics in clear, understandable form. Between them, her major books brought new French mathematical analysis and astronomy to Britain, showed how a wide range of contemporary scientific ideas interrelated and pioneered ways of writing on physical geography. Somerville's books, too, were published in thousands in Britain, continental Europe and the USA and were constantly updated, helped by personal friendships with scientists and by others eagerly corresponding with her because they wanted their latest discoveries to be noted in her books.

What did Harriet Martineau think about these women? She acknowledged her debt to Jane Marcet for using fictional methods to convey political economy and praised her for stimulating economic reforms and promoting 'intelligence in the middle classes of England, both causes close to Martineau's heart. Yet, while congratulating Marcet for opening 'an entirely fresh region of ideas [in chemistry] to the mind of the rising generation' of her day, she condescendingly referred to such knowledge as glib and dogmatic, an accusation she was later to suffer herself. On Somerville, likewise, Martineau balanced great praise with some qualifications. She acknowledged her intellectual efforts, while