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MRS GASKELL'S SHORT STORIES AND SKETCHES
IN RELATION TO THE PERIODICALS WHERE THEY
FIRST APPEARED

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Thesis submitted for the Degree of M. Phil., 1972.



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Abstract

This study sets out to consider what influence the periodicals which published Mrs Gaskell's shorter works may have exerted on her writing. From this a distinct pattern emerged; Mrs Gaskell only contributed to periodicals whose ideals and opinions largely coincided with her own, whose editors and/or proprietors she knew and liked, and usually only in response to a request for work. The short stories are considered particularly in the context of the periodicals in which they appeared, but since they have seldom been critically treated apart from the novels, some critical comment is also included.

Chapter 1 introduces the main lines of approach in the thesis, explains its purpose, and discusses briefly past critical work on the short stories and sketches.

Chapters 2 - 5 examine Mrs Gaskell's relationships with the periodicals and their editors in detail.

Chapter 6 draws conclusions from the study, and suggests changes in Mrs Gaskell's attitude to periodical writing.

The Appendix gives a chronological list of Mrs Gaskell's published works,

which illustrates the distribution of her work between various periodicals at different times.

PERIODICALS

- 1841-1842 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1842-1843 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1843-1844 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1844-1845 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1845-1846 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1846-1847 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1847-1848 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1848-1849 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1849-1850 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1850-1851 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1851-1852 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1852-1853 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1853-1854 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1854-1855 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1855-1856 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1856-1857 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1857-1858 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1858-1859 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1859-1860 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1860-1861 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1861-1862 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1862-1863 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1863-1864 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1864-1865 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1865-1866 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1866-1867 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1867-1868 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1868-1869 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1869-1870 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1870-1871 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1871-1872 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1872-1873 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1873-1874 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1874-1875 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1875-1876 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1876-1877 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1877-1878 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1878-1879 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1879-1880 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1880-1881 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1881-1882 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1882-1883 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1883-1884 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1884-1885 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1885-1886 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1886-1887 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1887-1888 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1888-1889 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1889-1890 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1890-1891 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1891-1892 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1892-1893 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1893-1894 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1894-1895 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1895-1896 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1896-1897 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1897-1898 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1898-1899 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.
- 1899-1900 The Boston Herald and Bostonian.

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- Pp.215-265. Sartain's Union Magazine, Harper's New Monthly Magazine, Macmillan's Magazine, Fraser's Magazine and the Pall Mall Gazette.
- Pp.266-331. The Cornhill Magazine.
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Note on References and Editions

References are to the periodicals in the case of Mrs Gaskell's short stories and sketches and to A. W. Ward's Knutsford edition for the longer works. In the bibliography, section C, there is a guide to the placing of the shorter works in the Knutsford edition.

Either the first edition or the most recent revised edition has been used in the case of most other works.

The place of publication is London unless otherwise stated.

Abbreviations for works frequently referred to.

- Altick - R.D.Altick, The English Common Reader, University of Chicago Press, 1967.
- Bićanić - 'A Critical Study of the Serial Fiction of the Cornhill Magazine. (1860 - 1888)', by Sonia Bićanić. Ph.D. thesis, Oxford University, 1960.
- Dickens Letters - The Nonesuch Dickens, The Letters of Charles Dickens, ed. Walter Dexter, 1938, 3 vols.
- Eliot Letters - The George Eliot Letters, ed. G.S.Haight, 1954-56, 7 vols.
- Gaskell Letters - The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell, ed. J.A.V.Chapple and Arthur Pollard, Manchester University Press, 1966.
- Hopkins - A.B.Hopkins, Elizabeth Gaskell, Her Life and Work, 1952.
- Huxley - Leonard Huxley, The House of Smith, Elder, printed for private circulation, 1923.
- Ray - G.N.Ray, Thackeray, The Uses of Adversity, (1811 - 1846), 1955, and Thackeray, The Age of Wisdom, (1847 - 1863), 1958.

Scott - J.W.Robertson Scott, The Story of the Pall Mall Gazette,
1950.

Sharps - J.G.Sharps, Mrs Gaskell's Observation and Invention,
Fontwell, Sussex, 1970.

Thackeray Letters - The Letters and Private Papers of W.M.Thackeray ,
ed. G.N.Ray, 4 vols., 1945-46.

Trollope Letters - The Letters of Anthony Trollope, ed. Bradford
Allen Booth, 1951.

Wright - Edgar Wright, Mrs Gaskell: the basis for re-assessment,
1965.

Preface

I wish to thank the following for assistance during my research - the staff of the John Rylands Library, Manchester, of Manchester Central Library and Manchester University Library, of the Brotherton Library Leeds and Birmingham Reference Library, of the Norfolk and Norwich Record Office, Norwich, and of Dr. Williams's Library, Gordon Square, London.

I am grateful to the following for assistance in tracing manuscripts and supplying photocopies:- Mr. J. G. Sharps, Mr. T. D. Kaye of Trinity College Library, Cambridge, the staff of Princeton University Library, U.S.A. and of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Mrs. Sonia Bićanić, of the University of Zagreb, has kindly given me permission to quote from her Oxford PhD thesis 'A Critical Study of the Serial Fiction of the Cornhill Magazine (1860 - 1888).'

Finally, I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Kathleen Tillotson for many helpful suggestions and stimulating discussions over the past two years.

I. Introduction

Mrs Gaskell contributed to periodicals throughout her writing life, yet to date critics have almost totally ignored her relationships with periodicals and their editors, while they have concentrated on other biographical details. Miss Hopkins, in her study of Mrs Gaskell's relationships with Dickens and George Smith, is the only one to make any contribution in this field, and she has not attempted an evaluation of Mrs Gaskell's writings in the context of the periodicals in which they were first published. Indeed, both the periodicals themselves and Mrs Gaskell's shorter works have received all too little critical attention.

J. G. Sharps's recent book¹ has partly remedied the latter, which he felt had been 'unduly ignored',² but the limitations of his study (distinguishing the elements of observation and invention in Mrs Gaskell's composition) have left several aspects untouched. This book has, at least, begun to redress the balance - all too often, the approach to Mrs Gaskell's shorter works has been as dismissive as Edgar Wright's : " ... a number of the items are of minor importance while a

1 Mrs Gaskell's Observation and Invention, Fontwell, Sussex, 1970.

2 Sharps, p. 14.

few are best forgotten. I see Mrs Gaskell's longer work as being the more important, and I have therefore concentrated on the novels and the 'nouvelles'."¹ He is ready to discount the shorter works as 'pot-boilers',² or 'hack-work'.³ His comments on Mrs Gaskell's relations with periodicals are more often misleading than helpful - "Mrs Gaskell by this time was placating Dickens with occasional stories and reserving her good writing for the Cornhill, which allowed a free hand in composition and content."⁴; "All Mrs Gaskell's work for periodicals, with negligible exceptions, had gone to Dickens."⁵ Elizabeth Haldane, Arthur Pollard, Gerald DeWitt Sanders, and Mrs Chadwick only mention a few of the short stories in passing, and even in Miss Hopkins's detailed and perceptive study many of the shorter pieces are dismissed as hack work, and she deters possible interested readers by such comments as :

It should be remembered that nearly all of the mediocre writing, both fiction and non-fiction, was done for periodicals, on demand of Dickens or some other magazine editor. As such, it betrays characteristic marks of haste: poor construction, lack of accent or too much accent,

1 Wright, p. vii.

2 Ibid, p. 15, p. 16.

3 Ibid, p. 8.

4 Ibid, footnote to p. 16.

5 Ibid, footnote to p. 147

melodrama and sentimentality, undeveloped characters who serve as mouthpieces for the uttering of edifying moral precepts.¹

The importance of periodicals as a means of communication in mid nineteenth century England can scarcely be exaggerated. With the increase in literacy, and cheaper and more efficient methods of producing and distributing literature,² the reading of the mass audience became more important than at any previous time, and it was periodical literature which catered for this growing demand.³

Mrs Gaskell rarely read periodicals herself, but read eagerly what she could. She seems to have regularly seen the Examiner, (the periodical with which her friend Forster⁴ was associated for many years), probably by having copies lent to her by Eliza Fox.⁵ In later years this may have been one of the periodicals sent to her by George Smith.⁶ She considered it "always a generous paper, if it does sometimes praise too much and too indiscriminately and from private personal motives; it never would let an unknown work of genius go without

1 Hopkins, p. 322.
2 See p. 278 below.
3 See pp. 74 ff.
4 Gaskell Letters, no. 408, 9 Jan [1859], to John Forster.
5 Ibid, nos. 34, 40, 69, 79.
6 Ibid, nos. 312, 315.

a hearty good word, whoever was the author or the publisher, or whatever newspapers had been niggardly in their dole"¹ Clearly she relied on the generous loans or gifts of friends, and bound volumes in libraries, for most of her periodical reading.² Smith sent her the Cornhill and Pall Mall Gazette regularly, as well as copies of his Indian papers during Meta's engagement. He also sent books and periodicals which he thought might interest her or which she requested.³ Dickens did not supply copies of his periodicals so generously, it would appear, as Mrs Gaskell wrote to Marianne : "I never see the Household Words, do you?"⁴ Through her friendship with Charles Eliot Norton she saw the Atlantic Monthly regularly,⁵ a periodical to which she considered contributing.⁶

Mrs Gaskell's letters frequently contain references to reviews of her books, but she may be quoting the reports of friends, as she strove to avoid reading them.⁷ She saw copies of Fraser's, the Athenaeum, the Inquirer, the Westminster Review and Blackwood's at intervals.⁸ The Gaskells did not take the Guardian,⁹ but she saw

1 Gaskell Letters, no. 315, [?Oct 1856], to ?W.S. Williams.

2 Ibid, nos. 163, 173, 180, 134a, 359, 386, 475.

3 Ibid, nos. 382, 446, 459, 472a, 586, 438.

4 Ibid, no. 97+, [May 1851].

5 Ibid, nos. 497, 526, 546.

6 See p. 195 below.

7 Gaskell Letters, no. 344, [?11 Feb. 1857], to George Smith.

8 Ibid, nos. 79, 173, 238, 242, 367, 384, 449, 475, 485, 561, 91b, 134a, 446.

9 Ibid, no. 191.

it occasionally.¹ As Mr Gaskell was one of the editors of the Unitarian Herald from its establishment in 1861, his wife may have seen it, but she makes no comments on it in her letters. The only periodical which appeared regularly in their home was The Times,² and even this was given up "just at the most interesting time" to save money.³

She told George Smith in exasperation of her difficulties in seeing new books and periodicals:

I do so like new books, ² and hardly ever see them but when you are so very kind. With a struggle and a fight I can see all Quarterlies 3 months after they are published; till then they lie on the Portico table, for gentlemen to see ...⁴

She confessed to George Eliot that, in order to follow the publication of Amos Barton in Blackwood's she was forced to go

plodging through our Manchester Sts to get every number as soon as it were accessible from the Portico \reading/table⁵

The lengths to which she went to see copies of these periodicals conveys in itself her own eager enjoyment in reading them, evidence strengthened by the comments

1 Gaskell Letters, no. 89.

2 Ibid, nos. 8, 9, 190, 203, 205, 372, 374, 419, 421, 424a, 426, 456, 209a.

3 Ibid, no. 222, ^{24[25]} Dec. 1854, to Eliza Fox.

4 Ibid, no. 438, 4 Aug. [1859]. Mr Gaskell was chairman of the Portico Library for over thirty years.

5 Ibid, no. 449, 10 Nov [1859].

in her letters.

What prompted Mrs Gaskell to begin writing for periodicals? Initially, her contributions were sent in response to requests from friends connected with periodicals,¹ but this alone was not enough. We know that, in the early years at least, she had a stock of short pieces by her,² which suggests that she had turned to writing these naturally and with enjoyment before the opportunity for publication had been presented. Her fame and popularity following the publication of Mary Barton must have resulted in numerous requests for work, more than we now have any record of.³

It would seem that her propagandist spirit in these early years gave her the necessary impulse to publish. In the Preface to Mary Barton she claims :

The more I reflected ... the more anxious I became to give some utterance to the agony which, from time to time, convulses this dumb people; the agony of suffering without the sympathy of the happy, or of erroneously believing that such is the case.

This expresses her desire to inform the public about the lives of ordinary people,

1 See pp. 20, 46, 65, 122 below.

2 See p. 216 below.

3 Some evidence of these requests can be found in Gaskell Letters, nos. 108a, 167a, 237, 394, 396, 399, 500, 519, 568, 638.

and to give moral guidance to those ordinary people through the medium of fiction. These purposes inform all her earliest work and, with them in mind, periodicals were the obvious medium through which to publish.

We have seen that Mrs Gaskell was an avid reader of periodicals herself, and no doubt was aware of their growing importance as a means of communication. The sober reviews were in style, content and price outside the world of the majority of people Mrs Gaskell wished to reach. Therefore she was bound to turn to the weeklies which aimed (perhaps idealistically) to cater for the educated working class. Obviously she would not let her name be associated with the ~~poor~~ quality weeklies, and her principles were sufficiently strong to prevent her from contributing to any periodical whose expressed opinions were incompatible with her own. She was a sufficiently popular writer to afford to be fastidious in her choice.

Thus she was drawn into her career of writing for periodicals. The detailed history of her relations with editors, the developing pattern of her policy in writing for periodicals, and some consideration of the literary merits of her contributions, form the subject of the ensuing chapters.

HOWITT'S JOURNAL, THE SUNDAY SCHOOL PENNY MAGAZINE AND

THE LADIES' COMPANION

Mrs Gaskell's relationships with these periodicals established a pattern she was to follow throughout her life: contributing only when the editor was a personal friend, usually only in response to a request for work, and suiting her writing consciously and purposely to the demands and standards of style and subject matter demanded by each periodical. These three periodicals illustrate the catholicity of her taste in friends, styles of writing, types of story and kinds of subject matter.

i. Howitt's Journal of Literature and Popular Progress

This periodical has a short but interesting history. For several years William Howitt had hoped to establish a periodical for the people. In The Rural Life of England he stated his belief in the power of the periodical press:

If the penny periodicals were, by some means, made to circulate there [in rural districts], as they circulate in towns - the Penny Magazine, and

Saturday Magazine, with their host of wood-cuts and useful facts; and Chambers' Edinburgh Journal, with its more refined and poetical spirit - they would work a great change. Prints and cuts from good originals would awaken a better taste; higher ideas of the beauty of created forms ...¹

The features he stresses - the wood-cuts, useful facts, and "refined and poetical spirit" - were to form the basis of his own journal of "Literature and Popular Progress" nearly ten years later. In 1844 he began contributing to John Saunders's People's Journal which was conducted on similar lines. He became a partner in the concern later, but there were soon differences of opinion. Howitt's wife described Saunders as "that little sneak", and Howitt felt he had been drawn into a contract unfair to himself. Saunders was editor of the journal and took the largest share of the profits, while Howitt felt it was his name which sold the journal and drew able contributors to it, while he also provided most of the material. He attempted unsuccessfully to supplant Saunders as editor, and in December 1846 decided rather recklessly to withdraw from Saunder's Journal and begin his own.

¹ William Howitt, The Rural Life of England, 1838, 2 vols, i., pp. 283-284.

Howitt's Journal was so similar to the People's Journal (with which Howitt was still financially involved) that if one succeeded the other must fail, either way plunging him into financial difficulties. The disagreement continued and was made public; acrimonious statements were made in the rival periodicals.¹ Saunders was declared bankrupt in December 1847, followed by Howitt six months later.

Howitt's Journal was one of the better popular periodicals of the 1840's. It arrived at a time when people were beginning to exploit the market for cheap, popular, good quality, informative miscellanies.² Howitt strove, as had Saunders, to combine the best qualities of his predecessors and rivals. Thus, rather than cater to the lowest tastes of the new literate public, Howitt felt it his mission to provide them with wholesome literature, both informative and entertaining, and included work by many of the foremost writers of the day. The fiction, therefore, has a didactic as well as literary value, as Mary Howitt pointed out to William Carleton:

We like always that some principle should be
illustrated if possible ... this, we think, gives

¹ Many of these were collected and published at the end of vol. vi. of the People's Journal.

² See pp. 74 ff.

an aim and purpose to the writer beyond mere amusement.¹

The Howitts were experts at keeping these two values in an ideal balance, rarely sacrificing one to the other. As their contributions form the bulk of the material in the journal, and set the tone for all other contributions, they gave a high moral and stylistic quality to the journal as a whole.

In many ways it was a significant precursor of Household Words; Dickens's

address to his readers in 1850² almost echoes Howitt's of three years earlier. Also, both began by appealing to the better instincts of the literate artisan - both soon found their works appealed more to a middle class readership.

Howitt's Journal was attractively printed. For 1½d the reader received

a clearly printed journal of fourteen large pages in double columns,

attractively spaced, and embellished with numerous very fine illustrations.

In this respect Household Words with its cramped printing and unattractive

exterior is no rival to Howitt's venture. In addition, there was a two page

supplement of current events, the Weekly Record.

1 J. D. O'Donoghue; Life of William Carleton, 1896, pp. 100 ff.

2 See p. 87 below.

The Journal began with a very good circulation of 30,000, but this soon fell, largely as a result of the Saunders - Howitt controversy. Howitt had to reduce payment to contributors to 10/- per printed page but, mainly thanks to his wide and loyal circle of friends, still succeeded in obtaining contributions from good and suitable writers, including Ebenezer Elliott, Chorley, R. H. Horne, and Mrs Gaskell.

The Howitts' aims for their journal were both positive and limiting, and this also contributed to the decline in circulation. The Journal was devoted "to the entertainment, the good, and the advancement of the public" but is "bound to no class". The editor intends to work where the need is greatest, "amongst the million", in order to "promote their education, and especially their self-education", and states that:

... to the cause of Peace, of Temperance, of Sanatory reform, of Schools for every free opinion; to abolition of obstructive Monopolies, and the recognition of those great rights of the great British people - our most cordial support shall be lent.

This declamatory style and the idealism of Howitt's attitude are more inflated

and less practical than Dickens's. Both emphasize the pure nature of their periodicals, suitable reading for all the family - an important consideration when the significance of a close connection between the adult and junior members of a family was beginning to be appreciated, and when it was common for the better educated to read aloud to those who could not read. Howitt writes:

not a word or a sentiment shall appear in this Journal which the most refined individual may not read aloud in the family circle, or which we would not freely introduce to our own children.¹

These aims were not all successfully carried out. The working-man envisaged by the editors would need to have some very elevated tastes - how many labouring-men would be interested in reading 'Cicero, A Drama', reviewed in No. 9, or could follow the very detailed series 'Physiology for the People' by W. B. Carpenter? How many would be moved to read 'Heroic Odes and Bacchic Melodies' reviewed in No. 7, or 'The Student's Manual' reviewed in No. 6, which gives a vocabulary of English words derived from Greek? There were the Samuel Smiles and Ebenezer Elliotts, who returned from a hard day's work to labour over

¹ 'Address to their Friends and Readers', Howitt's Journal, i, 2 Jan. 1847.

their books and educate themselves, but their numbers were insufficient to support the circulation of the journal. Howitt lacked the intimate knowledge of working-class life, and the ability to divine the interests of working people, which direct much of Dickens's editorial policy. The Howitts tended to include articles appealing to their middle-class acquaintances and fellow-sympathizers with the problems of the lower classes, rather than to the artisans themselves.

To a journal with these praiseworthy but limited aims, whose history is marked by misfortune and upheaval, Mrs Gaskell contributed three of her earliest short stories, all under the pseudonym of 'Cotton Mather Mills Esq.' During their quarrel with Saunders she firmly supported the Howitts, at a time when Harriet Martineau, Douglas Jerrold and Camilla Toulmin amongst others turned against them. The Gaskells' support was acknowledged in a letter from William Howitt, saying "We are greatly obliged to Mr Gaskell for his zealous championship of us".¹ There is also a letter signed 'C.M.M.'² which may be from Mrs Gaskell in the 18 December 1847 number of the Journal, enquiring whether the People's Journal was indeed for sale. It is dated

¹ John Rylands English MS 730/44, 17 Nov. 1847, to Mrs Gaskell.

² See p. 35 below.

Manchester, 6 December 1847.

Mrs Gaskell's loyalty sprang from her personal friendship with the Howitts. In Visits to Remarkable Places Howitt had published her first piece of prose, communicated to him in a letter; a description of Clopton Hall, close to where Mrs Gaskell had been at school at Avonbank.¹ Howitt acknowledged the author as "a fair lady". The letter was evidently written in 1838, and Mary Howitt's reply is acknowledged in Mrs Gaskell's next letter,² in which she enumerates various other places in the Stratford area worth a visit, which Howitt used in the same book - Compton Winyates, Shottery, and Charlecote Hall. She then lists several old country customs remembered from her Knutsford childhood, or which she has heard of in that area, and in fact these were used without acknowledgment by Howitt in ⁽¹⁸⁴⁰⁾ ~~his~~ ^{the second edition of} book published the same year, The Rural Life of England.³ In 1841 the Gaskells met the Howitts on their Rhine tour⁴ and from several letters in which Mrs Gaskell confides feelings and memories to Mary Howitt it is evident that the bond of sympathy between them was close.⁵ In December 1847 Mrs Gaskell and her

1 Visits to Remarkable Places, 1840, pp. 135-139.

2 Gaskell Letters, no. 12, [18 Aug 1838], to Mary Howitt.

3 The Rural Life of England, ch. xvi, 'Lingering Customs', pp. 589-590.

4 Gaskell Letters, no. 15.

5 Ibid, e.g. nos. 8, 12, 616, 617.

husband visited the Howitts, carrying with them the manuscript of Mary Barton¹, and Mrs Gaskell breakfasted with them in May 1849.² In 1848

Howitt claimed that Mary Barton "was written at my suggestion and disposed of by me".³ To some extent at least this was true, for after 'Clopton Hall' Howitt wrote urging her "to use her pen for the public benefit",⁴ and he was responsible for circulating the manuscript among publishers. The Howitts encouraged her greatly in her early years, both by publishing her work and by arranging publication of other pieces in Sartain's Union Magazine in America.⁵ It was, therefore, natural that Mrs Gaskell's earliest short stories should be sent to them. At this stage of her career Mrs Gaskell was very much a protégée of the Howitts.

The pseudonym which Mrs Gaskell used for all her contributions to the journal, 'Cotton Mather Mills', suggests that at this time she was reading about witchcraft persecutions in New England, a theme developed later in 'Lois the Witch'. Cotton Mather was a prominent figure in that history and the name 'Cotton' linked with 'Mills' reflects Mrs Gaskell's absorption

1 Gaskell Letters, no. 18.

2 Ibid, no. 47.

3 Quoted by Carl R Woodring, Victorian Seemings p. 141.

4 Mary Howitt: An Autobiography, ed. Margaret Howitt, 1889, 2 vols, ii, p. 28.

5 See pp. 215 - 216 below.

in the problems of the industrial city, which was to provide the background of two of her three contributions.

The Clopton House sketch - which was not directly solicited by Howitt - was part of a letter suggesting places Howitt should visit to provide material for his book. It records Mrs Gaskell's memories of a visit to the house as a schoolgirl. The effect on her mind of the old, deserted house - the exciting eeriness and mystery of the rooms and the legends associated with the family - is powerfully evoked, and the sketch is full of interesting detail. It is an impressive example of early writing.

'Life in Manchester. Libbie Marsh's Three Eras' began publication in the first volume of Howitt's Journal, on 5 June 1847. The three part serial division is used as a framework for the three distinct movements of the story, called respectively St. Valentine's Day, Whitsuntide and Michaelmas. Each episode is short, of necessity in the small weekly periodical, of two-three pages in length. This neat and clever exploitation of the exigencies of serialization loses its force when the story is reprinted complete in a book.

In 1855 Mrs Gaskell wrote to a clergyman giving some interesting opinions of these early stories - although it is quite likely that the tone of her comments was coloured by her knowledge of her correspondent:

Thank you for your note; it is very pleasant to hear how much you have liked my books. Libbie Marsh is going to be published in a 2s. vol, which Chapman & Hall are making of my stories in Household Words, & other places. I drummed away at them to get this done, for so many friends asked me to have them collected. Moreover I asked them (Chapman & Hall are my present 'thems') to publish L.M. the Sexton's H. & 'Xmas Storms & Sunshine', 'Hand & Heart' (I hope you will like that) & 'Bessy's troubles' (rather good for nothing) in separate little penny or 2d. pamphlets. For these stories are all moral and sensible, - and one or two of the H.W. stories might not so well do for young people. One is an unexplained ghost story for instance. I am glad to hear that these stories are liked by working-men & women in your parts; I sometimes get here the pleasantest little glimpses of their being liked; but I did not know how far Southrons would care for them¹

¹ Gaskell Letters, no. 260, 27 July [1855], to a Clergyman.

'Libbie Marsh' also occasioned a series of letters between Mrs Gaskell and Leigh Hunt,¹ who objected to birds being kept in cages and especially to the innocent cruelty of taking the canary Jupiter to Dunham Woods.

The story is very simple. Libbie Marsh, plain, orphaned and friendless in a new area, makes friends with a sick boy and his termagant mother who lives across the court from her lodgings. Her sympathy and kindness for the boy lighten his sufferings and bring him happiness before his death; her comfort and friendship for Mrs Hall quieten her temper. By these means life also becomes meaningful and enjoyable for Libbie. The merit of the tale chiefly lies in its strongly confident depiction of lower-class life in Manchester. Not only are the 'courts' and houses ably described, but also the habits and pleasures of the people - Mrs Gaskell accounts for the Dixon's extravagant diet: working at their spinning in temperatures of 70° - 80°F. ruins their normal appetite, while it provides them with high wages with which to buy exotic food; the Bank Holiday visit to the woods preceded by the shouting of neighbours across the court on the happy holiday; the labourers'

¹ Gaskell Letters, no. 80, and John Rylands English MSS 730/47 and 730/48.

interest in cage-birds; Mrs Dixon's thickening of the cream with eggs. The sour character of Mrs Hall and the contrasting thoughtless gaiety and coarseness of Annie Dixon are well conveyed. Franky Hall's possibilities as a character are marred by his role in the narrative - he has to be the patiently suffering, pious, sickly-sweet good little boy. The bustling of the Dixons to make tea, and the delight of the operatives in their visit to the country prefigure scenes in Mary Barton, while the following remark closely parallels a scene in North and South:

You can hardly live in Manchester without having some idea of your personal appearance. The factory lads and lasses take good care of that, and if you meet them at the hours when they are pouring out of the mills, you are sure to hear a good number of truths, some of them combined with such a spirit of impudent fun, that you can scarcely keep from laughing even at the joke against yourself. Libbie had often and often been greeted by such questions as "How long is it since you were a beauty?" "What would you take a day to stand in a field to scare away the birds?" etc., for her to linger under any delusion as to her looks.

The Manchester atmosphere is also evoked by the discreet use of local dialect - discreet because it is tempered so that 'Southrons' may understand it:

'Is he always so bad? Whatten ails him?' asked Libbie.
 'Summut's amiss wi' his back-bone, folks say; he's
 better and worse like.'

The didactic purpose of the tale - which Mary Howitt considered so important - is explicitly voiced in the moralizing conclusion and in the strong religious note apparent throughout - Franky enjoys listening to Libbie reading from the Bible, and Mrs Hall is comforted by it after his death. Religious trappings are rather clumsily brought into several remarks:

I doubt I may not tell you here of the anxieties,
 and the fears, of the hopes, and the self-sacrifices, -
 all perhaps small in tangible effect as the widow's
 mite, yet not the less marked by the viewless angels
 who go about continually among us ...

This explicit religiosity also marks Mary Barton and the Sunday School stories: its clumsiness is a token of Mrs Gaskell's inexperience as a writer. There is a straining after effect which never quite succeeds, and which is untypical

of Mrs Gaskell's writing:

... for ever and ever the 'blue sky that bends
over all', sheds down a feeling of sympathy with
the sorrowful at the solemn hours, when the
ceaseless stars are seen to pace its depths.

Mrs Gaskell's eye for natural contrasts which plays such an important part in Mary Barton and North and South is already being put to good use here, in the contrast between the Halls and the Dixons, between Libbie and Annie, between Libbie and Mrs Hall in the coach, between the quiet funeral and the busy streets, between the grimy, dirty Manchester described at the opening of the first section and the lovely day in the country of the Whitsun episode. Yet the contrasts are not as crude and simple as this may imply; for instance:

Far away in the distance on that flat plain you
might see the motionless cloud of smoke hanging
over a great town; and that was Manchester, old,
ugly, smoky Manchester! dear, busy, earnest,
working, noble Manchester.

The industrial city is both these things - an idea to be developed further

in North and South.

'Libbie Marsh's Three Eras' may well have grown out of an incident originally intended for Mary Barton, begun in 1844. The Whitsun holiday visit to Dunham appears in the original rough plan for that novel.¹

A fine balance is kept throughout the story between the sad and the joyful - Franky experiences joy as well as suffering; the happy scenes at Dunham and the gaiety of preparations for Annie's wedding are balanced by Libbie's terrible background (her father killed her little brother in a drunken temper, and the consequent sorrow brought both her parents to an early death) and Franky's death and funeral. This is not merely realistic. It provides, with the reinforcement of the concluding moral, a strong assurance that suffering, death and horror are parts of life, whose existence must be acknowledged but whose pain can be assuaged by time, sympathy, and human understanding. In the didactic stress on Temperance, especially in the conversation between Annie and Libbie in the concluding episode, Mrs Gaskell is explicitly treating a subject emphasized by Howitt in his Preliminary Address.

¹ A copy of this is in the Clement Shorter Collection, Brotherton Library, Leeds. It is also reproduced in Wright, p. 265.

Libbie's down-to-earth philosophy is voiced in the final episode, in a conversation she has with the flightly but good-natured Annie Dixon. Libbie knows she is plain and has no hope of marrying. Instead of pining over this, "fretting and fidgetting after marriage", she has decided to occupy herself "just looking round for the odd jobs God leaves in the world for such as old maids to do" - a practical philosophy which, as this tale has shown, is beneficial to herself as well as to others.

The moral voicing this point is introduced strangely. In a story which so closely resembles Mrs Gaskell's two industrial novels, a Cranfordesque piece of whimsical humour at the narrator's expense, and at the conventions of story-telling, is introduced:

Do you ever read the moral concluding sentence of a story? I never do; but I once (in the year 1811, I think) heard of a deaf old lady living by herself, who did; and as she may have left some descendants with the same amiable peculiarity, I will put in for their benefit what I believe to be the secret of Libbie's peace of mind, the real reason why she no longer feels oppressed at her own loneliness in the world.

She has a purpose in life, and that purpose
is a holy one.

'The Sexton's Hero' is a much shorter piece, appearing on 4 September 1847. With 'Christmas Storms and Sunshine' it was republished for the benefit of the Manchester public baths and wash-houses - not, by today's standards, very creditable to a novelist. In the 1840's, however, when the distress of the manufacturing areas and the poorer classes was urgently felt, such action was wholly admirable. Mrs Gaskell's visits as the minister's wife to the homes of the Manchester artisans made her aware of the squalid and unhygienic way in which many of them lived. In Mary Barton in particular she brought many of these facts graphically and realistically before the eyes of the public.

'The Sexton's Hero' opens with a description of a beautiful scene looking down on Morecambe Bay¹ - an area Mrs Gaskell knew well from her visits to Silverdale. Although from the Gaskell Letters, it would appear that Mrs Gaskell had not visited Silverdale when 'The Sexton's Hero' was written,

¹ Mrs Gaskell gives a similar description in Gaskell Letters, no. 394. The scene is described in even more detail in William Thomas Palmer's Lake Country Rambles, 1902. Ch. viii, 'Over Sands'. This has details of events and scenes similar to those in Mrs Gaskell's story, and describes an accident there in 1846, when nine people died.

in fact the Winkworths record that the Gaskells were there on 3 July 1843, 16 June 1844, and in summer 1847. It is possible they had holidays there at other periods in the 1840's.¹ 'The Sexton's Hero' probably arose from, and may have been written during, the last recorded visit in summer 1847.

A discussion between two friends on the true nature of heroism, full of academic sprightliness of argument and cavilling, is interrupted by the Sexton, who has a personal interest in the topic and asks leave to tell his story. As his rustic dialect breaks into their high-flown speech, a new point of view is immediately brought forward - that of an everyday, rustic, old man's world. The sunlight seems to fade on the sparkling waters of the bay as his narrative continues and the sombre details accumulate. At the end, a typical Gaskellian balance is made - the funeral of a little child is to take place, "just when his playmates are trooping off to school". Mrs Gaskell's point is that heroism and tragedy are all part of our everyday life and should be accepted quietly on those terms.²

Another notable feature of this story is its Wordsworthian tone - no

¹ Letters and Memorials of Catherine Winkworth, ed. Susanna Winkworth, privately printed, Clifton. Vol. 1, 1883, vol. ii, 1886. I, pp. 69, 79, and 123. This information was pointed out by Mrs Elizabeth Kemp of Bedford College, working on a PhD thesis.

² Cf. 'Libbie Marsh's Three Eras'. See p. 27 above.

doubt Mrs Gaskell like so many others felt his influence all around her in the Lakes. It almost unconsciously appears - the Sexton is introduced in terms irresistibly reminiscent of Wordsworth's Leech-gatherer:

It was the Sexton, whom, when we first arrived, we had noticed, as an accessory to the scene, but whom we had forgotten as much as though he were as inanimate as one of the moss-covered head-stones.

Similarly, the tone of the Sexton's narrative, of "emotion recollected in tranquillity", is Wordsworthian.

The Sexton's speech is slow, simple and clear, in a dialect compromised like the Manchester dialect in the previous story, for ease of comprehension. It is ungrammatical and colloquial, full of powerful rustic turns of speech, alliterations and rhythms, which give his account an added flavour and interest:

- ... it was full of as wild a set of young fellows as ever were clapped eyes on; all for fighting, poaching, quarrelling, and such like work. I were startled myself when I first found what a set I were among ...
- He were about as strapping a chap as I was, (I used

to be six feet high, though now I'm so shrunk and doubled up,) and, as we were like in the same trade ... we were thrown together, and took mightily to each other.

- 'The truth, lad, at least, if thou dare not fight, dunnot go and tell a lie about it. Mother's moppet is afraid of a black eye, pretty dear. It shannot be hurt, but it munnot tell lies.'

The climaxes of the story - when Dawson will not fight, and later when he sacrifices his own life in saving the Sexton and his wife from drowning - are the high points of the narrative, but their force is tempered by the years. The overall tone of the Sexton's narrative is quiet, of something experienced a long time ago, still vivid in his memory but subdued by time. The interest is less in the gripping events of the story (the outcome is revealed early on) than in the fascination of the Sexton's character being revealed through his narrative. Mrs Gaskell was to make masterly use of this technique in Cranford, with Miss Matty's tales of her youth.

The Christian element which played such a large part in Libbie Marsh's Three Eras' motivates Dawson's conduct, and the Sexton finds in his Bible

many a text in the Gospel, marked broad with his
 carpenter's pencil, which more than bore him out
 in his refusal to fight. Of a surety, sir,
 there's call enough for bravery in the service
 of God, and to show love to man, without quarrelling
 and fighting.

Although this moral provides the ostensible motive for the narration of the
 tale, it is well subdued in the story - the characters and situations
 interest us far more, the human story predominates. This is one of the best
 examples in Howitt's Journal, and in Mrs Gaskell's writing, of a successful
 blending of didactic and literary values, and it is significant that Mrs
 Gaskell attained it so early in her career.

'Christmas Storms and Sunshine' did not, as its title might suggest,
 appear in a Christmas number of the Journal, but in the New Year edition for
 1848. However, its Christmas spirit and its borrowings from the Dickensian
 tradition of Christmas tales have been frequently commented on.¹ The
 reconciliation of the two families over the Christmas period is the theme;
 the characters, while being well differentiated, are little more than

¹ E.g. Sharps, p. 49; Wright, p. 90.

caricatures, which is unusual with Mrs Gaskell. The religious element which played an important part in the two previous stories helps to bring about the reconciliation - with the words of the carol - singers still in her ears and the memories they have conjured up of old texts, Mrs Jenkins is disposed to be kind to her neighbour, despite all their old differences.

The moral is explicitly stated, that the didactic element may not be missed -

If any of you have any quarrels, or misunderstandings,
or coolness, or cold shoulders, or shynesses, or tiffs,
or miffs, or huffs, with any one else, just make friends
before Christmas, you will be so much merrier if you
do.

From this it is obvious that the story was written for Christmas, and the evidence of the writing suggests that it was probably written in a hurry and rushed off, but arrived too late for the Christmas number. The paste-board characters, the lack of any real depth to the situations and the story, are unlike Mrs Gaskell. It is a disappointment after 'The Sexton's Hero'.

With 'The Sexton's Hero' this tale was republished in the Christian Socialist in March-April 1851. Mrs Gaskell's support for the Christian

Socialists is evident from a letter¹ to William Robson in which she is helping to distribute their pamphlets. Several members and admirers of the group can be numbered among her acquaintances, including William Howitt. He may well have suggested the republication of the Howitt's Journal stories in the Christian Socialist.

Another piece which may be by Mrs Gaskell in Howitt's Journal is a short report of 'Emerson's Lectures' in Manchester. The report is attributed to 'our Manchester Correspondent' and appeared on 11 Dec 1847. A letter in the John Rylands Library from William Howitt discloses that Mrs Gaskell, or possibly one of her husband's pupils, may have furnished this account.² It is known that the Winkworths attended these lectures as well as Mrs Gaskell.³ There is little to suggest authorship; the report is good and quite detailed, and a subjective approach is taken, which one would expect from Mrs Gaskell. However, there is no evidence directly to attribute the short report to her, and it might equally have been written at her instigation by the Winkworths.

¹ Gaskell Letters, no. 67, [c. 20 Feb 1850], to William Robson.

² John Rylands English MS 730/44, William Howitt to Mrs Gaskell, 17 Nov 1847.

³ Letters and Memorials of Catherine Winkworth, ed. Susanna Winkworth, i, p. 126 and p. 130.

Mrs Gaskell's contributions appeared in Howitt's Journal throughout its brief life. Ebenezer Elliott's comment aptly summarizes the journal's successes, and its failure:-

Men engaged in a death struggle for bread will pay for amusement when they will not for instruction. They woo laughter to unscare them, that they may forget their perils, their wrongs, and their oppressions and play at undespair. If you were able and willing to fill the Journal with fun it would pay.¹

The Howitts saw the sense of this, but would not compromise their ideals. Had their financial ruin not come about, the Journal might have continued and possibly adapted itself to a more middle class audience, to which its contents were better suited. Thirty years later Mary Howitt wrote:

The ghost of our Journal is called up before me. We got wrong, I see it as plainly as possible; but then there are so many things in which the best intentioned get wrong.²

The high standards set by the Howitts made their periodical a worthy

¹ Amice Lee, Laurels & Rosemary: The Life of William and Mary Howitt, 1955, p. 176.

² Amice Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

publisher of Mrs Gaskell's earliest works. Even more than Mary Howitt, she had intimate knowledge of the lives of Manchester workers and of common men. While she allowed the didactic aims of the Journal to dictate her themes and subject-matter, her literary skill makes her one of the foremost writers in the Journal, and her stories the embodiment of its highest ideals.

One year after the inception of the magazine in 1830, Wedge claimed that his original hopes, that "the work would begin with happier prospects than the present", had in many respects "been more than realized", as with each Preface, readers were urged to encourage their friends to subscribe to the magazine, a non-profit-making venture dedicated to a worthwhile cause.

The way in which the Magazine has been received by young people generally, ... all show that a work like this was absolutely required. It has been a leading object to supply a variety of articles

¹ Wedge's Preface to vol. 1.

ii. The Sunday School Penny Magazine

This magazine, published by the Manchester District Sunday School Association, was edited by a friend of the Gaskells, Travers Madge, associated with them in work at the Lower Mosley Street School. He was trained as a Unitarian Minister, but refused to take a salaried post, and worked in Manchester for most of his life, when his health permitted. His work mainly lay with the children at the school, and with youths at work in the factories who spared a few of their leisure hours for Bible reading and discussion.

One year after the inception of the magazine in 1850, Madge claimed that his original hopes, that "few works could begin with happier prospects than the present", had in many respects "been more than realized".¹ As with each Preface, readers were urged to encourage their friends to subscribe to the magazine, a non-profitmaking venture dedicated to a worthwhile cause:

The way in which the Magazine has been received by young people generally, ... all show that a work like this was absolutely required. It has been a leading object to supply a variety of articles

¹ Editor's Preface to vol. 1.

suiting to different ages, and to make the Magazine useful, not to scholars only, but also to teachers.

A hint of financial difficulties, overcome by the generosity of some Manchester Unitarians, is only the first of many indications of the magazine's continuing precarious financial state.

The magazine's purpose was to unite Sunday Schools all over the country. Madge acknowledged the difficulty in catering, in one small periodical, for the wide age-range of children attending Sunday Schools. In the Preface to the 1852 volume this is very sensibly assessed:

The young wish for something simple and easy to be understood, captivating to the fancy; those who are older desire to find solid information and food for reflection and nutriment for the religious life; the scholar looks for tales, and sketches, and poetry; the teacher seeks for aid in his task, and hints for his guidance in his labour of love.

These different tastes are usually well catered for, but the tastes of the young take prominence - naturally, as this material would be useful to adults for teaching purposes.

In his first editorial Madge considered that the contents of the magazine should have

the power to reach the heart, to direct and encourage its best pursuits, to invigorate and strengthen its highest purposes and resolutions, and more than all, to cherish its love of goodness and of God.

This was the spirit in which all contributors, including Mrs Gaskell, were to write for the magazine.

Each penny monthly number has twenty-four very small pages printed on poor quality paper and no illustrations. Its quality, its pretensions and its price are lower than those of the two other periodicals discussed in this chapter. Although it was distributed by volunteers and few of its contributions could have been paid for, the magazine was in constant danger of ruin because its circulation was small. In 1851 the Editor hoped that the circulation would rise to 10,000, but at the end of 1853 it was given as only 6,000.

However, of all the periodicals to which Mrs Gaskell contributed, this more than any other must have commanded a much larger readership than its

circulation figures indicate. It must have been used in many Sunday School lessons, was possibly lent by many of the Schools to pupils, and was subscribed to by numerous families who would pass it on to a friend after reading it.

Madge himself was described by John Evans as "simple and unostentatious - earnest, yet quiet and unassuming - pure-hearted, self-denying, indefatigable, in every work that he takes into hand ..."¹ Madge's Sunday evening preaching at Lower Mosley Street was distinguished, wrote Evans, by its "simplicity of style, and excellence of matter". It shows "an enlarged and disciplined mind, and simple earnestness of feeling". The "leading feature of his discourse" was his ability for "simple, clear and unsophisticated illustration", and there is "no straining after effect - no effort made to tickle the ear, or please the fancy".² It was these qualities which Madge brought to the magazine - its unadorned simplicity and clarity and lack of 'talking-down' to the young, are its major features.

Madge's popularity with his pupils was widely acknowledged.

¹ John Evans, Lancashire Authors and Orators, 1850, p. 162.
Mr Gaskell also finds a place in this book, but his wife, surprisingly, does not.

² Ibid, pp. 162-163.

The scholars in other classes longed to be placed in his class. The little ones would run up to him in the street for a kind word ... There was hardly a rough lad in all the school who wouldn't have done anything for him. All his leisure time was passed in the pursuits thus opened to him; visiting the homes of his scholars, taking long country walks with them, having them to tea at his lodgings, and making himself entirely one with them.¹

Although Madge himself wrote little for the magazine, he took great interest in editing it, and the principles which guided his preaching and teaching guided him also in this task. He was personally acquainted with many who wrote for the magazine - their knowledge of his principles and character, as well as of the purposes of the magazine, must have coloured the way they wrote. Harriet Martineau provided some excellent accounts of her Eastern travels; Madge's Norwich friends the Dowsons sent material; Miss H. M. Rathbone provided contributions for almost every number until her death. Madge also looked for suitable material in his reading to reprint for the magazine. "I am marking everything I find that will do for the magazine",

¹ Brooke Herford, Travers Madge: A Memoir, 1867, pp. 13-14.

he wrote in one letter.¹ He brought to the magazine his gift of understanding children and being able to communicate with them. In a letter from Cornwall he wrote:

Never did I love little children as I do now. Their hearts are always open to receive and give. Little do they know the blessings that they give, and this is the chief beauty of their gifts.²

Madge used anything from poems by Tennyson to Addresses by Unitarian Ministers to serve his purpose, but the bulk of the magazine contained original material. Most of the short stories, like Mrs Gaskell's, were specially written for children - the story of Matthew Turner, for instance, 'The Little Ship' and the series 'Flowers from the Garden of Eden'.³ More detailed and complicated are the good and sensible discussions of the role of Sunday Schools, of their teachers, and of teaching methods. A very complex series of articles, 'Helps to Understand the Scriptures',⁴ is a typical example. Topics outside Sunday School which frequently recur are Slavery and Temperance, Natural History, and Travel.

1 Brooke Herford, op. cit. p. 64.
2 Ibid, p. 49.
3 1851 volume.
4 1852 and 1853 volumes.

The stories are written not primarily for their literary merit, but to exemplify realistically the moral truths and Gospel teachings they contain. Many seem sickeningly pious today; most centre on tales of incredibly good children living a most unlikely life of suffering, sacrifice and pain, who usually die young, thus providing a fitting climax to the tale. Mrs Gaskell's *Bessy* is a refreshing change. The 'Memoirs of Columbus Oates', 'John Price, a Tale of Real Life', and 'Agnes', are all too typical.¹ Balancing these are a few realistic stories of everyday life with real, credible, dirty-kneed children, such as 'A Holiday Trip by Railway'.² In 'The Worsted Stocking' in the 1853 volume there is interesting use of dialect, as in 'Bessy's Troubles', and the story is powerfully told and interesting.

The didactic element is stressed so much to the exclusion of the literary, that most of the stories do not successfully blend the two as was the case in Howitt's Journal. Mrs Gaskell must have found it difficult to re-orientate herself to this almost exclusively didactic policy, and her stories are not such polished examples of the art as, for instance, those of

1 The first two are in the 1851 volume; the third in 1852.

2 1852 volume.

Miss H. M. Rathbone. From a literary point of view, however, the contributions of Mrs Gaskell and Harriet Martineau far exceed these.

Although Mrs Gaskell is said to have

no sooner settled in Manchester than she 'steadily and consistently objected to her time being considered as belonging in any way to her husband's congregation for the purpose of congregational visiting, and to being looked to for that leadership in congregational work which is too often expected of the "minister's wife",¹

she does seem to have devoted herself with interest to the Sunday School and to visiting the homes of sick pupils - a custom initiated by Travers Madge himself. Numerous reminiscences of her old scholars have been recorded, all full of praise for her teaching, her story-telling, and her charming manner.² She was well practised in the art of inventing simple stories to illustrate the moral point she wished to make.

At the Sunday School she obviously came in contact with Travers Madge.

Although the fanatical and ascetic side of his character was unlikely to

¹ A. Cobden Smith, 'Mrs Gaskell and Lower Mosley Street', Sunday School Quarterly Magazine, Jan 1911, p. 158.
² E.g. 'Recollections of Mrs Gaskell' Christian Life and Unitarian Herald, 1 Oct 1910, p. 496. A Cobden Smith, op. cit.

appeal to her, his approach to children, his simplicity, and earnestness would have drawn her friendship. He is mentioned several times in her letters,¹ and on one occasion she recommended him as capable of writing articles on the trade crisis in Manchester for the Daily News, describing Madge as

a zealous amateur missionary amongst the Manchester poor; perhaps too depressed by constant sight of their misery to write anything brilliant²

The Winkworth sisters were less level-headed in their appraisal of him; claiming that he "exercised a considerable influence over us at this period", and writing, "I have never seen anything approaching to the influence he exercised; the almost worshipping reverence and attachment which he inspired in those around him ..."³ He acted as best man at Emily Winkworth's wedding.

Mrs Gaskell wrote for the magazine at Travers Madge's request - she ceased contributing after he resigned from the editorship in 1852 - and

¹ Gaskell Letters, nos. 109, 506, 916, 96a.

² Ibid, no. 500, 7 Feb, 1862.

³ Memorials of Two Sisters. Susanna and Catherine Winkworth, ed. M. J. Shaen, 1908, pp. 33-34.

because she wished to support a worthy cause, in which she was actively concerned at Lower Mosley Street. In her position it was a creditable action, and Miss Hopkins judges the case too much out of context when she remarks:

It illustrates the author's sometimes too great willingness to use her pen in a worthy cause, to the detriment of her artistic talent.¹

Mrs Gaskell was not only a writer, she was firstly a busy wife and mother and had duties as the wife of a minister. Her sense of duty and her natural inclinations, not to mention her loyalty to Madge, would lead her to contribute to the magazine.

However, the stories do illustrate a facet of her character which Mrs Carlyle, exaggeratedly, described as "an air of moral dulness".² It may at first seem inconsistent with her general gaiety and liveliness, yet she had a deep sense of her own moral and religious duty, and was not afraid to speak out when the occasion demanded. She was unlikely to question the validity of writing such stories for children.

¹ Hopkins, P. 97.
² Letters Addressed to Mrs Gaskell by Celebrated Contemporaries, ed. Ross D. Waller, Manchester, 1935, p. 12, 12 Sept. 1851, Mrs Carlyle to her husband.

However, she did not have a very high opinion of her stories for the magazine, and her critics have concurred with this judgement. She did not take great care in writing for it, declaring she was "having to write upon the very last day for the S. S. Magazine ..."¹ She described 'Bessy's Troubles at Home' as "rather good for nothing",² although in the same letter she seems to have a higher opinion of 'Hand and Heart' - "I hope you will like that". In February 1852 she wrote to her daughter Marianne, "The children who like Bessy's Troubles are great geese, & no judges at all, which children generally are, for it is complete rubbish I am sorry to say".³

The two stories are based on the same concept - the close link between Christ's teachings and the way people should conduct their lives. The story is merely a pleasant vehicle for and illustration of the moral each contains, bringing moral truths and everyday situations in an interesting pictorial form before the young readers.

'Hand and Heart' ran in five episodes from July to August and October to December 1849. This pattern suggests that possibly the first two episodes were originally intended to be complete in themselves - the first episode

¹ Gaskell Letters, no. 112, [?Early Jan. 1852], to Eliza Fox.

² Ibid, no. 260, see pp. 53-60 below.

³ Ibid, no. 114a, [18 Feb. 1852], to Marianne Gaskell.

states the moral theme in the discussion between Tom Fletcher and his mother; the second shows how he carries this into practice. If this was the case, the next three episodes were smooth and skilful later additions.

The story opens briskly, as Tom says, "Mother, I should so like to have a great deal of money". In the discussion which ensues Mrs Fletcher shows herself to be incredibly reasonable, pure and virtuous, the role her part in the plot dictates. She tells Tom he should only want money in order to fulfil some good, wise plan, and that this may be done in other ways. Self-sacrifice, by saving, or by earning money doing things we do not enjoy, and the performance of ordinary acts of kindness, are more worthy means of achieving these aims, because they demand an effort from the individual. In the second episode Tom actively carries out his mother's text, "Silver and gold I have none, but such as I have give I unto thee". He is a perfect little boy, but in the third episode, after the mysterious September break, he is seen indulging in many idle wishes, dreaming of impossible things. His mother brings him down to earth by suggesting a realistic form of pleasure, taking a walk and collecting as many wild flowers as he can. Tom enjoys this,

and on his return takes the flowers to lame Harry. They remind Harry of his youth and give him much pleasure, and Tom also reads to him from the Bible. Tom returns home very pleased with himself, but his ego is deflated when his mother warns him against bragging.

In the next month's episode a significant new turn in the narrative is taken. A year has passed, and Tom's saintly mother dies, leaving the boy in the care of his uncle. With his rough dialect, a new more vigorous path of interest¹ in the narrative is opened -

"We shall, may be, not be so tender with him as you've been; but I'll see he comes to no harm. It will be a good thing for him to rough it a bit with other children, - he's too nesh for a boy; but I'll pay them if they arn't kind to him in the long run, never fear".

Tom goes with his uncle to live in a dingy court in an industrial city, and is welcomed to his new home by angry scenes. Tom quietly performs acts of kindness against this background. Almost as soon as his uncle reaches his house, he is threatening a visit to the Spread Eagle, and the antidote he recommends for grief is alcohol. Tom stoutly refuses this, in line with the

1. cf. 'The Sexton's Nero', p. 30 above.

magazine's heavy stress on Temperance. Throughout his miseries Tom upholds his principles, and by the last episode a revolution in the lives of his relatives has thereby been brought about. Mrs Gaskell's second moral is explicitly stated:

His aunt was learning something, and Tom was teaching, though they would both have been very much surprised to hear it. Whenever, in a family, everyone is selfish, and, (as it is called), 'stands up for his own rights', there are no feelings of gratitude; the gracefulness of 'thanks' is never called for; nor can there be any occasion for thoughtfulness for others when those others are sure to get the start in thinking for themselves, and taking care of number one.

The implausibility of the actions and the characters is basically not important, for the story is a fable. However, the intrusion of realism in the third episode as some of the faults in Tom's character are revealed, followed by the very realistic scenes at his uncle's home, make the earlier scenes very pallid and sickly by comparison. Only after the September gap does Mrs Gaskell seem to have grasped the possibilities of her theme. The

first two episodes are typical of the general run of Sunday School Penny Magazine stories; the last three assert Mrs Gaskell's independence and prominence as a writer.

'Hand and Heart' resembles 'Libbie Marsh' in patterning its story closely to the demands of serialization. Each episode illustrates a distinct step of progress in the plot, in the illustration of the moral. This is not particularly skilful, and probably shows an appreciation on Mrs Gaskell's part of the need to simplify in order to captivate and please her juvenile audience. However, her mind is too subtle for over much simplicity - although the main part of the plot illustrates the simple 'Hand and Heart' theme, the situations contain further possibilities, as she was aware, and which she sketches in brief asides and comments.¹ In this way her stories are given more substance than most of the stories in the magazine, in which the writers tend to confine themselves to one track of thought. Both Mrs Gaskell's stories serve their purpose well within the limitations of the magazine, and need to be seen in this context if their qualities are to be adequately assessed.

¹ See page 51 above.

Over two years were to elapse before Mrs Gaskell's next story, 'Bessy's Troubles at Home', appeared in the magazine.¹ This lapse of time suggests that Mrs Gaskell was not particularly interested in the magazine, and probably only wrote this second story at Madge's prompting. In the intervening years she had established her connection with Dickens and started the Cranford episodes in that periodical, as well as contributed to the Ladies' Companion and Sartain's Union Magazine. These had been busy and fruitful years in which Mrs Gaskell had turned to various new types of story, very different from the early moralizing ones set in an industrial background. It may have been a wrench to return to the pasteboard world of the Sunday School Penny Magazine, but we would expect to find Mrs Gaskell's writing improved by her greater experience. This is the case, despite her adverse comments on the story.

The possibilities latent in simple themes which she began to exploit in 'Hand and Heart' play a major part in 'Bessy's Troubles'. This story also opens briskly, with Bessy bursting into her mother's room with the ticket to Southport. We are immediately introduced to the basic problems - Bessy

¹ January - April 1852.

unwittingly upsets her mother by her thoughtlessness - "your sudden coming in has made my heart flutter so, I'm ready to choke". Mrs Gaskell reinforces this with her own comment: "Bessy was a kind-hearted girl, but rather headstrong ...". Mrs Lee's fears at leaving Bessy in charge are almost prophetic - "Jenny may fall into the fire" - and her main objection is that the sons are

but young lads, and there's a deal of temptation to take them away from their homes, if their homes are not comfortable and pleasant to them. It's that, more than anything, I've been fretting about all the time I've been ill, - that I've lost the power of making this house the cleanest and brightest place they know.

Mrs Lee's ideals, like Mrs Fletcher's in the previous story, are the ones the children are urged to live by. Bessy, however, is a very plausible, fallible, human character, and it is the strength this gives her as a character which makes this story. The first evening everything she plans ends in disaster, in a very realistic way. She thinks people ought to fit in with her plans, but they do not wish to. The youngest child is obviously spoilt, and the two

boys are far from helpful. Back-answering and bickering lead to an unpleasant evening. The harmonizing force is the ugly, plain Mary, very similar to Libbie Marsh:

Mary was not a quick child; she was plain and awkward in her ways, and did not seem to have many words in which to tell her feelings, but she was very tender and loving, and submitted meekly and humbly to the little slights and rebuffs she often met with for her stupidity.

The author repeats the course of events, Bessy's wrong steps, and the moral, in order to make them even more explicit and clear to the youthful readers.

This first episode ends describing Mary's preparations for a happy evening - thus Mary quietly and gently prepared for a happy evening, by attending to the kind of happiness for which every one wished.

In the second episode Bessy has not profited at all from her experience. She decides to make a foot-warmer for her mother, and in order to pay for the necessary wool agrees to spend Saturday cleaning. She is so preoccupied with

her plans that the meal is not ready when the children return from school and work. Mary puts into practice the words of her teacher, making all ready. When Bessy arrives she has no kind words for her younger sister, merely scolding her for not collecting Jenny from the neighbour who was minding her. Bessy's knitting deranges Mary's plans for the evening, but she does not complain. Tom worries Bessy when he repeats her mother's words -

"... with this riot on one side, and this dull lesson on the other, and Bessy as cross as can be in the midst, I can understand what makes a man go out to spend his evenings from home".

The third episode concerns the fateful Saturday. This opens with a clear disquisition on Bessy's selfishness and thoughtlessness in going out cleaning, leaving all the household chores to Mary. Mary does her best, but she always receives the scolding - her brothers and sisters scold her for what are mainly Bessy's faults, and the neighbour scolds her for leaving Jenny with her all the time, when it is only because of Bessy's conduct that this is necessary. She panics because all the work is not done. All the horror of the pain is brought out as Mary scolds herself:

She never knew how it was, but the next moment her arm and side were full of burning pain, which turned her sick and dizzy, and Jenny was crying piteously beside her.

The point of many of the Sunday School Penny Magazine's stories is to disturb children through violence and pain and thereby show them the terrible outcome of bad conduct. The shock and pain in Mrs Gaskell's story are particularly disturbing because the characters have been presented so realistically, but Mary is only another casualty in the long list of children with broken and amputated limbs, maimed for life, or even dying, in the magazine. It is a ~~worrying~~ ^{disturbing} feature of this fiction. Mary is also typical in that she is virtuous, yet she suffers. In most of the stories it is the virtuous child who suffers, while the bad child is brought to recognize his evil conduct through seeing the harm it has inflicted on another.

Mrs Gaskell, however, true to form, does not bring about an overnight revolution in Bessy's character. In the fourth episode, although Bessy has had a nasty shock and been very upset, her selfishness is still paramount - she tries to prevent Mary going to the Infirmary for treatment because by nursing

her she feels she can make amends for her past faults. Jem gently explains to Bessy where she is wrong, and has been all the time, and she makes a valiant effort to restrain her selfishness:

"Now, as far as I can make out, those folks who make home the happiest, are people who try and find out how others think they could be happy, and then if it's not wrong, help them on with their wishes as far as they can".

The moral is reiterated on the final page by no less a figure than the doctor:

"I'll tell you what; never you neglect the work clearly laid out for you by either God or man, to go making work for yourself, according to your own fancies. God knows what you are most fit for. Do that. And then wait; if you don't see your next duty clearly. You will not long be idle in this world, if you are ready for a summons".

and, more briefly,

"Even when you want to be of service to others, don't think how to please yourself".

This black and white moral directed against Bessy is disturbing, because it is an over-simplified ending to a plot of some complexity concerning characters of some depth. Blame could be put on other members of the family for their selfish attitude. Mary, one wishes, had stood up for herself under the scoldings instead of being so painfully meek and mild - although, to be fair, Mrs Gaskell does redeem her from being too sickly and good by showing that she has at least the temptation to answer back and be angry. Even Mrs Lee is to blame for having spoiled Jenny. Each child has an individual character; Bessy knows what is right but does not put her principles into practice. Jem is inclined to be more helpful, like Mary; Tom is disruptive and cruel and far more selfish than Bessy; Mary is helpful and good but a little too young and stupid to do everything just right; Jenny is a spoiled little girl.

Indeed, the fault of the story lies in Mrs Gaskell's achievement: her story is too complex to fit the moral it was intended to illustrate - should she be blamed or praised for this? The characters, their home and their situations are more realistically portrayed than in any other story in this

magazine, but Mrs Gaskell should not have tried to compress them into an explicit moralizing framework; she would have done better to leave the ending open for discussion by the readers.

Both the Sunday School Penny Magazine stories could be used to illustrate that Mrs Gaskell has more than ordinary capabilities as a story-writer. Both show her writing very well in the context of working-class life in an industrial city: she knows how the people talk, the pattern of their working days, how their fires are lit and their meals prepared, how Mrs Forster stores her money in a teapot. Both stories repay consideration, which too few critics have given them - perhaps because they were published in what today would be regarded as an unfashionable periodical. However, it is well worth looking at them in the context of that periodical; it is difficult to sympathize today with this type of moral tale, and only possible by reading the magazine, and making the effort to understand why such periodicals were published and such stories written. More than any other of Mrs Gaskell's stories and sketches these repay being considered in this light.

iii. The Ladies' Companion and Monthly Magazine

This periodical has a chequered history, which reflects more truly than the continued success of Household Words the typical financial difficulties of most periodicals in the 1840's and 1850's. It began in 1849 as a weekly magazine of sixteen pages priced threepence, edited by Mrs Jane Loudon. The pages were large and of good quality paper, finely printed, and some good illustrations were included. This combination of quality and low price was welcomed by contemporary reviewers. The Spectator remarked that it contained

about as much type as the literary weeklies that of yore were published at eightpence, while Mrs. Loudon offers a better-looking paper with wood-cuts for threepence.¹

The journal included reviews of books considered suitable reading for ladies, articles on Female Education, on Popular Science, life in the country and town, biographies of famous women, light historical essays, sections on fashion, art, gardening and embroidery, as well as short stories and occasional poems.

¹ Quoted in the Ladies' Companion Journal, i, 5 Jan. 1850.

Mrs Loudon addresses her readers in the first number, referring to her reputation as a writer on gardening and flowers, and hoping that this new journal will prove a companion

in the drawing-room; in the study; in the dressing-room; in the housekeeper's room; and in the garden.

Generally, women were poorly catered for by British periodicals. In America Godey's Lady Book was devoted entirely to a female audience and most American magazines carried well illustrated fashion articles and sometimes music sheets for the ladies. In Britain the sober reviews and the new cheap periodicals for the working-class ignored the vast female reading audience which must have existed. The Ladies' Companion was intended to satisfy this demand, and is a more genteel and thoroughly British rival to its lavish American counterpart.

From its price and contents the journal seems to be directed at the provincial bourgeoisie - those ladies of sufficient standing to employ servants and pass their time doing fancy-work, in need of being reliably informed of the latest fashions from London and Paris, and interested in exotic

dishes such as 'Almond Posset', 'A Persian Dish', 'Spanish Cream', and 'Truffles and their Uses'. The journal, unlike the two already discussed and unlike the majority of periodicals to which Mrs Gaskell contributed, has no serious intentions, it aims merely to amuse and entertain its select readership. On this occasion, then, Mrs Gaskell was only bound by the limitations of propriety, and by the intentions of entertaining and amusing. This gave her a freedom she had only experienced previously in writing books.

It is hard to imagine that Mrs Gaskell would take great pleasure in reading this periodical. On the one hand she was too much of an intellectual to find its contents interesting; on the other she was prepared to turn her hand to more basic and prosaic domestic skills than the delicate ladies anticipated by the journal. Furthermore, in Manchester, faced with the grim realities of city life and with memories of the terrible days of depression, she must have found the periodical rather trivial.

After the first volume Mrs Loudon left the journal; six months later, it made its transition to a monthly, in the belief that this was "the best way of meeting the wishes of a large and refined public of readers". The monthly

carried a full page hand-coloured plate, usually to the fashion article.

Forty-eight pages were provided for one shilling, as admirably printed and filled as in previous years.

Henry Chorley, reviewer and music critic of the Athenaeum, succeeded Mrs Loudon as editor, at a remuneration which he declared "for the first time in my life, put me entirely at ease in my circumstances".¹ This suggests that the magazine paid well generally, which would have attracted Mrs Gaskell, but it is more likely that she wrote for it at Chorley's request, as he was a personal friend. Hewlett refers to her kindness to Mr Chorley's sick sister,² and she visited Chorley on several occasions.³ On such occasions he would criticize her work, and he was able to help her with legal advice in the troubled period after the publication of the Life of Charlotte Brontë.⁴

It was no disgrace to have fiction published in the magazine - Mrs Gaskell was in the company of such writers as the Howitts, Hannah Clay and Mrs T. K. Hervey. However, for reasons unknown she declined writing for the magazine at its inception under the editorship of Mrs Loudon. In the John

1 Henry G. Hewlett, Henry Fothergill Chorley: Autobiography, Memoir, and Letters, 1873, 2 vols, ii, p. 6.

2 Ibid, ii, p. 254; also Gaskell Letters, no. 190.

3 Ibid, nos. 44a, 100, 185, and 442.

4 Ibid, no. 318.

Rylands Library there is a letter from Mrs Loudon regretting this decision:

Though I am most truly sorry you can't write for
my new paper, I was very much delighted to read
your note, & I hasten to reply to the kind interest
you take ...¹

Mrs Loudon continues by explaining that financial difficulties made it
necessary for her to take the job as editor "though I am fully aware it will
be a most arduous & most laborious undertaking". The friendship between the
two ladies extended to invitations to visit.² It is unlikely, therefore, that
personal reasons discouraged Mrs Gaskell from writing for the journal.

'Mr Harrison's Confessions' is accorded a place of honour - it opens
the first number of the magazine in its new monthly form, and ran anonymously
from February to April 1851. It was Mrs Gaskell's first experience of writing
for an English monthly - the Sunday School Penny Magazine is too small to
count, and Mrs Gaskell had no direct links with the American monthly Sartain's
Union Magazine to which she had contributed two short pieces. She adapted
herself well to its new demands, and 'Mr Harrison's Confessions' deserves to
be considered as one of the best short stories she wrote. The structural

¹ John Rylands English MS 731/112, 20 Oct. 1849, from Mrs Jane Loudon
to Mrs Gaskell.

² Gaskell Letters, no. 620, undated.

pattern provided by serialization is skilfully used, not crudely as in 'Hand and Heart'. There are no abrupt transitions, no cliff-hanging endings, which seem out of place when the serialized short story is republished in book form, simply a natural progress and development.

The reader is not so captivated by the tale of how Dr Harrison wooed and won his wife (the ostensible motive for the narrative but, as so often with Mrs Gaskell, this disguises the real purpose), as by the picture of the society of the little town of Duncombe. The incidents fall naturally into place in this scene, however bizarre and farcical they may seem.

'Mr Harrison's Confessions' began eight months before the tale of the Cranford ladies began to unfold in the pages of Household Words, so that it marks the mid-point in the genesis of that novel. Miss Hopkins is correct in saying that the short story

would lend itself much more readily to dramatization than Cranford has done. The light, satirically humorous tone, with a serious accent that is never allowed to become too serious, is well sustained

But as it is farce it lacks the depth, and therefore

significance of the story to come.¹

Its world is not quite as feminine as that of Cranford, although Dr Morgan tells his young partner that five-sixths of the population are women. The narrator is a man rather than a woman, and it is interesting to see that, as later with Mary Smith, Mrs Gaskell uses an outsider as her narrator, who can give a detached view of the society he becomes involved in. Men's occupations play a prominent part in the narrative, and in the life of the small town. Many of the women are actively engaged in trying to catch men or helping others to do so, which makes the role of the men more important. The vicar, Mr Morgan, Mr Bullock and Mr Harrison play almost as large a part in the narrative as the ladies.

Harrison's profession is quite important to the development of the story. He is the new man with new ideas, contrasting with the older partner Mr Morgan. His profession brings him in close contact with the people of the town, even to the point of witnessing death.

Mrs Gaskell very subtly shows how Harrison is moulded by the town and its

¹ Hopkins, p. 112.

ways. The contrast between his life in Duncombe and his previous student life is first brought out in his soliloquy on the night of his arrival, and emphasized by the visit of his friend Jack Marshland - Harrison abandons his plans to hunt and no longer indulges in the practical jokes he enjoyed as a student.

'Mr Harrison's Confessions' also differs from Cranford in being set in more recent times, although the habits of Duncombe are almost as old-fashioned as those of the Cranford ladies. Dr Harrison's new medical knowledge also brings in a feeling of progress, which is rarely felt in Cranford. However, the small delightful details which make Cranford such pleasant reading are already in use here - in the description of the vicar's home on Harrison's first visit, in Mrs Rose's malapropos use of medical terms and sentimental mourning, in the conversation cards game played at the Miss Tomkinsons' party, in Dr Morgan's careful arrangement of his young partner's study. Miss Caroline claims that her hysterics on hearing of Harrison's multiple engagements "were simply caused by eating pickled cucumber" - a line which might be straight out of Cranford. The tale ends whimsically; Charles, for whose benefit

Harrison has told the tale, has fallen asleep during it.

The plot gradually develops as the web of circumstances slowly accumulates around Dr Harrison. He is blithely unaware of most of the matrimonial plans being made on his behalf; he does suspect Mrs Bullock's crude attempts to engineer an engagement with Jemina, and he senses Miss Caroline's infatuations but pays little attention to them. Mrs Rose, however, is a complete surprise to him. This variation gives interest and suspense.

At the very time when Harrison feels ready to declare his love for Sophy, the climax of the plot is reached in a series of double entendre conversations, which seem to confirm all the hopes of his amorous neighbours. He is soon in disgrace, socially and professionally.

From this point on there is a deterioration in the story. The improbable contrivances of the plot which brought about the climax were acceptable because they were delightful; the dénouement on the other hand is hurried, has all the loose ends brought together in a series of farcically improbable engagements, and depends on an unoriginal but emotionally satisfying plot manoeuvre by which Harrison saves Sophy's life and earns her love. Cranford

is never pure farce like this, we always care for its characters and there is none of this pantomime preparation for the falling of the curtain.

'Mr Harrison's Confessions' is not a light-hearted comedy¹ set in an idealized world, despite its ending. To live in a pleasant country town may be more congenial than to live in the back streets of Manchester, but even in Duncombe there is unhappiness, sickness, death, the sad self-delusions of spinsters, and the pitiful home life of a Jemina Bullock. It is once called "the cruel little town", a description which could never be applied to Cranford, for all its sadness. However, it well fits such bitter scenes in 'Mr Harrison's Confessions' as the unpleasant picnic tea in the old hall, with the bitter war of innuendos between Mrs Bullock and Miss Horsman. Throughout the story Miss Horsman is a thoroughly unpleasant character, who casts a shadow over any scene she may appear in, and who has none of the redeeming qualities of the elder Miss Tomkinson. These scenes of sadness, tragedy and bitterness are seen to be as much a part of life in Duncombe as the pleasant summer outings and quiet tea-parties. This sense of life as it is - albeit that the majority of the story is full of whimsical humour - gives

¹ I would not agree with Miss Hopkins' description of it as "pure farce", Hopkins, p. 112.

the tale its strength and character, and makes the ending Mrs Gaskell gave it uncomfortably unfitting.

Characters are skilfully revealed, not by explicit authorial comment, but through their own words and actions. No comment is necessary when Mrs Bullock declares in Chapter XI

I inherit a little of my late father's taste for books, and must say I like to see a good type, a broad margin, and an elegant binding. My father despised variety; how he would have held up his hands aghast at the cheap literature of these times! He did not require many books, but he would have twenty editions of those that he had; and he paid more for binding than he did for the books themselves.

Mrs Rose, Dr Morgan, the two Miss Tomkinsons, Jack Marshland, the vicar - all have carefully distinguished manners of speaking which reflect their personalities. The comparison of the conduct of Miss Tomkinson, Miss Caroline and Sophy at the Brounckers is similarly revealing, although it is a rather crude example of plot mechanism. Sometimes the contrasts are too obvious and obtrusive, too contrived to be really satisfying. They strain away from the

simple naturalness of the rest of the tale, and reflect an immaturity in the story-teller's art which she had outgrown by the time Cranford was written.

'Mr Harrison's Confessions' finds a congenial place in the Ladies' Companion. Its whimsical humour, stress on female interests and occupations and provincial life, and its general high quality make it fit for publication there. The Ladies' Companion would have proved a congenial periodical for Mrs Gaskell, but soon after 'Mr Harrison's Confessions' came to an end, Chorley left the magazine. In line with her policy of only contributing to periodicals whose editors she was acquainted with, Mrs Gaskell no longer contributed to this excellent magazine. With Howitt's Journal defunct and no personal connection with the Ladies' Companion, Mrs Gaskell was left in mid-1851 with only Dickens's Household Words to write for.

In the history of her relationship with these three periodicals, Mrs Gaskell's life-long policy of writing has evolved. She began writing at the instigation of her friends the Howitts, and always after this wrote for editors she knew, declining invitations to write for other periodicals. The broad range of her interests and friends led to contributions to such widely differing

periodicals as these three. In these early years Mrs Gaskell wrote according to the aims and purpose of each periodical, and showed that even at this early stage she was capable of triumphing over such limitations and writing some of her best work. However, the freedom provided by the Ladies' Companion no doubt contributed to the excellence of 'Mr Harrison's Confessions', and indirectly therefore to Cranford. During this period there is no record of strained relations between Mrs Gaskell and her editors; only with Dickens did she begin to assert her independence as a writer.

HOUSEHOLD WORDS AND ALL THE YEAR ROUNDi. 'Household Words'

The ~~crave~~ for cheap literature for the masses reached its height in the years around 1832. The demand for news of current affairs, springing from intense interest in the movement for Parliamentary reform, made newspapers of paramount importance at that time, and stimulated the habit of reading generally. The desire then was for instruction and information, as is seen in the enthusiastic founding and support for Mechanics' Institutes and Reading Rooms in towns. In 1832 this desire was met in the literary field by the establishment of three cheap weekly miscellanies for the masses - Chambers's Journal, the Penny Magazine, and the Saturday Magazine. Education had improved so that increasing numbers of the lower middle classes and working classes had at least a small amount of reading experience, while improvements in methods of printing and in communications made printed matter cheaper to produce in large quantities than ever before, and more quickly and easily distributed.¹

Of the three cheap, instructive weeklies established in 1832, only Chambers's was a purely commercial venture, and probably as a direct result it outlasted the other two. Chambers's was founded, claimed William Chambers,

¹ See Altick, pp. 81-259, and R. K. Webb, The British Working-Class Reader, 1790-1848, 1955.

"under an ardent conviction of [the] real and fancied imperfections, in the miscellaneous crowd of cheap sheets ..." ¹, at a price which would make it accessible to the better paid members of the labouring community.

In the original Address to his Readers Chambers offered an enormous variety of material:

Literary and Scientific subjects, including articles on the Formation and Arrangements of Society; short Essays on Trade and Commerce; observations on Education in its different branches ..; sketches in Topography and Statistics, relative to Agriculture, Gardening, Planting, Sheep-farming, the making of Roads, Bridges, and Canals; the establishment of Ferries, the best means of Conveyance by Land and Water; Increase of Population; the Uses of Machinery to simplify Human Labour, Manufactures, &c &c.

This does not sound a very appetizing collection, and Chambers's suffered because its contents proved too dry to interest the hard worked labourer. Its sobriety was lightened by a weekly tale, Chambers refusing the sensational fare of the 'vile publications' he set out to oppose - "no ordinary trash about Italian castles, and daggers, and ghosts in the blue chamber, and similar nonsense, but something

¹ Quoted by R. K. Webb, op. cit. p. 77.

really good." Poetry also was sometimes included, and some discussion of current events and preoccupations could be found, although the most controversial issues were usually ignored, and the conclusions of many of the articles betrayed middle-class condescension rather than any true understanding of the attitudes of the labouring classes. The Journal was extremely popular, with second editions being printed in London and circulation at the end of the first year at 50,000.¹

Chambers believed that the majority of copies were sold to members of the labouring classes, but by 1840 he was forced to admit that it was read by only

the élite of the labouring community; those who think, conduct themselves respectably, and are anxious to improve their circumstances by judicious means. But below this worthy order of men, our work, except in a few particular cases, does not go.²

This was even more true of the two periodicals begun in the same year.

Both had ceased publication before Mrs Gaskell began writing regularly for periodicals, but the cause of their downfall is of interest for the light it sheds on Dickens's ideals. Charles Knight's Penny Magazine, a halfpenny cheaper than Chambers's, suffered from being a publication of the Society for the Diffusion of

¹ Altick, p. 335.

² Chambers's Journal, vol. X1, 1840, p. 8.

Useful Knowledge. Knight began by including articles on art, literature, history, and similar subjects, but these soon came to an end, probably at the direction of the Society, who would not have considered such material sufficiently 'useful'. The magazine did have one concession to popular taste, however: it included woodcut illustrations, which were of quite good quality. This no doubt accounted for much of its early success - at one time in its early years the circulation was as high as 200,000 - but a high sale was necessary to cover the costs of production, and not long before it ended in 1846 the circulation was merely 40,000.¹ Those prejudiced against the Society would have nothing to do with its publication, and the contents were too dry and sober to appeal to the masses.

The Saturday Magazine was the production of the S.P.C.K. and greatly resembled the Penny Magazine in form and content, although it laid more stress on religion. The regular sale in 1833 was 80,000, but by 1844 it was no longer remunerative and ceased publication.² After 1846, therefore, only Chambers's Journal of the three original cheap periodicals survived, and none had penetrated for any significant length of time the class for which they were originally

1 Altick, p. 335.

2 R. K. Webb, op. cit., p. 77.

intended. The useful information they contained was eagerly sought in the 1830's, by a working population with few other attainable means of self-improvement, but soon the strength of their desire for such material waned, and circulations fell correspondingly. B. F. Duppa, an active member of the S.D.U.K., admitted this but was content that "other classes have been found who were in want of the information contained in these works, and have benefited by them."¹ Charles Knight, the editor of the Penny Magazine, saw with hindsight that it was impossible to compete with the rival, low quality, cheap periodicals -

The insuperable obstacle to a successful competition with the existing class of penny periodicals is their pre-eminence in external cheapness. They were all founded upon the principle of attraction by low price alone Some who bought them turned away from their filth and their folly; others welcomed these qualities.²

That they were cheap to the eye was possibly, as he says, an advantage; even more so was the fact that these publications were deliberately designed not to be good quality, wholesome productions. As Knight cynically remarks, "The masses ... would not consider ... solid and instructive reading 'value for

¹ R. K. Webb, pp. 78-79.

² Charles Knight, The Old Printer and the Modern Press, 1854, pp. 278-279.

their money' ".¹ He saw that the masses wanted entertainment rather than instruction, and there were many cheap periodicals prepared to exploit the basest desires of the labouring classes. These included lurid accounts of sensational crimes, often embellished with crude woodcuts, banal short stories and apparently never-ending serials with highly romantic or sensational themes. Publications such as Reynolds' Miscellany² and the Family Herald had enormous circulations. Their appetites jaded by their dull, hard work, the working classes required such strong matter to stir them at all. Mrs Gaskell would not have thought of associating with such periodicals, and in 1850 was faced with little choice of suitable publications.

Although many of the monthlies and quarterlies had received Mary Barton favourably, they were not in the habit of publishing themselves work of that type, and as far as is known, none of them approached Mrs Gaskell for work at this time. For her part, in 1849 she seems to have still had a missionary zeal to write for and about working people, and would therefore probably not have encouraged enquiries from a mainly upper-class quarter. Secondly, she had

¹ Charles Knight, The Old Printer and the Modern Press, 1854, p. 287.

² Circulation 200,000 in 1855; see Altick, p. 394.

few friends among the staff of such periodicals at this stage in her career - another factor to discourage her from writing for them. Howitt's Journal had been forced to close, and the Howitts too had failed to capture the interest of the working class. Their weekly was too good for the audience they wished to interest.

Mrs Gaskell seems to have known no-one at Chambers's or Eliza Cook's Journal, but Dickens she had met and admired, and knew that his journal would command both a wide circulation and attract writers of quality like her friends the Howitts. On all these grounds, and because she saw as clearly as Dickens that the labouring class required entertainment as well as imaginative instruction, Mrs Gaskell would have been attracted to write for the new periodical he planned.¹

The great charm of possessing his own periodical to Dickens was that it provided him with a medium of direct, personal communication with his readers, unfettered by the interference of editors or publishers. It also gave him an opportunity to indulge his interest in public affairs openly and provided a

¹ ~~See also~~ ^{see also} pp. 123-24, ~~section iii.~~ below.

suitable vehicle for the short sketches and stories he enjoyed writing. When founding Household Words Dickens was careful to avoid repeating his earlier mistakes as an editor. This led him to demand complete and sole authority for the contents of the periodical - an agreement backed by his controlling interest in the business, and reinforced in the periodical by his policy of publishing all work anonymously, the only name appearing being his own as Conductor. He wanted a team of competent writers, prepared to work in the Dickens style and at his direction, whose work would be acceptable to the public. With his original idea of a 'Shadow' Dickens came perilously near repeating the mistake in the original scheme for Master Humphrey's Clock - a concept too personal and limited to form a successful basis for a long-lived miscellany to which numerous writers would contribute - but fortunately Forster strongly opposed it. The title Household Words was a far better choice. Instead of the cramping framework he had originally conceived, this indicated a broad field of interest and communication and signified the general purposes of the periodical: to be suitable for family reading, miscellaneous in character, but preserving a personal, direct, almost chatty fireside relationship with the reader.

The very popular and successful¹ Christmas numbers, introduced in 1850, were one of the most widely acclaimed features of the periodical. At first they were a compilation of stories by various regular Household Words writers, invited to compose a short tale or poem in line with an ~~outline~~^{outline} sketch provided by Dickens. However, in later years he found the difficulty of assimilating these into one framework almost insuperable, and after 1855 they came increasingly under his control and most of the pieces were written by Collins and Dickens.

There were two rather short-lived additions to the basic Household Words plan - the Household Narrative, a monthly supplement containing a synopsis of current news, a popular feature of cheap periodicals at the time; and an annual Almanac, which did not prove at all popular.

Once the periodical was established Dickens relaxed his constant vigilance. The number of his own contributions declines, although he was always ready to 'strike in' when necessary.² After 1853 the number of his composite articles also declines dramatically.³

Household Words ran smoothly enough until 12 July 1858 when the front

¹ The Christmas numbers of All The Year Round between 1862 and 1865 sold approximately 185,000 - 250,000 copies. Altick, p. 395.

² See p. 18 below (i.e. section ii, p. 18). See p. 116 below.

³ Harry Stone, The Uncollected Writings of Charles Dickens, 1969, 2 vols, 1, p. 51.

page was given over to Dickens's personal 'Statement' about his separation from his wife. In the consequent quarrel with his publishers Dickens determined to destroy Household Words and set up another periodical unconnected with Bradbury and Evans. The dispute was protracted over a year: on 16 May 1859 the property of Household Words was sold to Dickens for £3,550, and the last issue came out on 28 May. Dickens had already begun All The Year Round on 30 April, and the sales of its fifth number trebled those of the last issue of Household Words, published simultaneously.

The two periodicals in appearance were almost exactly the same. Bradbury and Evans started a rival weekly, Once A Week (ironically, one of the titles Dickens had considered for All The Year Round), which cost 3d, offered illustrations, and did not bind its writers by anonymity, but Dickens still felt their attempts to ape his own policies were ridiculous.

What fools they are! As if a mole couldn't see that their only chance was in a careful separation of themselves from the faintest approach or assimilation to All the Year Round!¹

Despite this ridicule, Once A Week was a success,² and was still being published

¹ Dickens Letters, T11, pp. 108-109, to Wills, 1 July 1859.

² Percy Fitzgerald, however, in Memories of Charles Dickens, 1913, p. 201, claims that it was a costly failure.

after Dickens's death. Initially its publishers must have had difficulties, as Dickens bore off with him to All The Year Round most of the valuable, highly trained staff and regular contributors. Once A Week was nevertheless a formidable rival to Dickens, but his immediate problem was his fear of unpopularity stemming from the scandal of his separation from his wife. He overcame both triumphantly.

Certain new features were introduced with All The Year Round - an 'Occasional Register' of short and generally facetious notes on various subjects - and serials were brought into greater prominence. Basically there were no important changes, so that the periodical lacked the novelty and freshness of the early years of Household Words. It is almost impossible to account for a generally felt opinion that somehow it never comes up to Household Words. Fitzgerald, reflecting the opinion of many readers, considered it lacked "the tranquil unaffected simplicity of the old journal",¹ and missed the sense of being an emanation of Dickens's personality. He did not even find the title expressive, condemning it as "barren, cumbersome, and inexpressive ... pragmatical ... and ... uninteresting."² There is considerable truth in these criticisms.

1 Percy Fitzgerald, Memories of Charles Dickens, p. 202.

2 Ibid, p. 196.

It is less easy to identify Dickens with the periodical of the 1860's than with that of the 1850's. Perhaps to compete with his rivals on equal terms, or possibly because he was too immersed in his reading tours to give sufficient attention to the periodical, Dickens never invested All The Year Round with the personal flavour and vitality which was such a marked feature of Household Words. He wrote for it less often than for its predecessor, although he made sure it had a good start by contributing A Tale of Two Cities and the Uncommercial Traveller sketches. He relied on the selling power of his own name and of the big names commissioned to write his serials, rather than on novelties and merits in the periodical itself.

The New Series begun on 5 December 1868 shows very definite improvements on the previous format - an attractive woodcut heading was provided for the first time, a larger type was used, and generally the periodical has a brighter, fresher air. At the same time the Christmas numbers were ended, Dickens claiming that he feared they would become tiresome now there were so many imitations, but it is more likely that the annual task had become irksome to him.

These relatively minor alterations in the format of the periodical over

twenty one years imply that Dickens's original concept was popular and soon became an admired tradition. Many writers referred to All The Year Round as Household Words;¹ the difference between the two was so slight, and their identification with Dickens was so strong. Each number contained 24 pages of small print in double columns, relieved only by the bolder type of the headings. The periodical cost twopence, a price within the reach of the better paid members of the lower classes - in Dickens's article 'The Amusements of the People' in the first number of Household Words he describes servant girls and apprentices enjoying their 3d. or 6d. seats at the theatre. The conformity of each number to a general pattern is astonishing; there were usually six to eight items, of which the majority were articles on topical issues, travel, history and geography, and lighter matter in the form of fiction and poetry interspersed for variety. The change of policy, first towards including long-running serials as often as possible, and later in All The Year Round to always placing the serial instalment first in the number, and often running a short serial alongside it, was more striking because of the general tendency to conformity.

In his Preliminary Word to the first number of Household Words Dickens

¹ See Miss Terry's remark, p. ⁸⁸ below.

aspired to reach "many thousands of people, of both sexes, and of all ages and conditions", but the content of the periodical and its general tone reveal that it was aimed primarily at the middle-class and educated working-class. He stressed that, while striving to present his readers with "the knowledge of many social wonders, good and evil", he would not allow any "harsh tone" to be imparted to the journal, "No mere utilitarian spirit, no iron binding of the mind to grim realities." Instead, he intended to "tenderly cherish that light of Fancy which is inherent in the human breast." Imagination was to colour the articles. The interests were to be as broad as possible, historical as well as topical, world-wide rather than insular. Dickens returned to stress these preoccupations in the third number, in the Advertisement for the monthly news-sheet to accompany Household Words, the Household Narrative.

The intimate connexion between the facts and realities of the time, and the means by which we aim, in Household Words, to soften what is hard in them, to exalt what is held in little consideration, and to show the latent hope there is in what may seem unpromising, needs to be pointed out.

An article in the periodical testifies to the current demand for such a periodical:

"for periodical literature, of a cheap kind, yet containing varied knowledge and information for the people, there is at present an unexampled craving."¹

The circulation began at 100,000 and in its best years was 40,000.² All The Year Round began at 120,000 and consistently had a higher circulation than its predecessor.³ Ellen Terry gave an account of its popularity, when writing of a visit to Paris in the early 1860's:

What was the thing that made me homesick for London?

Household Words. The excitement in the 'sixties over each new Dickens can be understood only by people who experienced it at the time. Boys used to sell Household Words in the streets, and they were often pursued by an eager crowd, for all the world as if they were carrying news of the latest winner.⁴

This shows that the periodicals were also popular with the upper classes, and the popular favour accorded to the journal was backed by professional esteem, for The Times and other newspapers and periodicals would often reprint articles from Household Words and its successor, a fact which testifies to their topicality and general excellence as journalism.

1 'A Time for All Things', Household Words, no. 52.

2 Altick, p. 394.

3 Ibid, p. 395.

4 Amy Cruse, The Victorians and Their Reading, Boston, U.S.A., 1968, p. 173.

The intentions so lucidly and firmly detailed by Dickens - intentions which were fulfilled - have obvious limitations. The brevity of most articles meant that few subjects could be treated at any length, and this only by means of the serialized article. This deficiency is compensated for by the effect it had on the nature of the articles. Instead of being exhaustive and discursive, as were the articles in most of the monthlies, they were (ideally) sharp and sparkling, thought-provoking and informative. Interest rarely flags over the few pages or less allotted to each topic. The style could be stimulating and fresh, and the layman's attention had no time to lapse. This type of journalism calls for a definite style, of which Dickens was a master, and the rudiments of which he impressed on his contributors and his sub-editor.¹

The limitation of space also affected the type of fiction found in the periodical. Eight or ten columns only were given to fiction in each issue, which meant that short stories were common, and anything longer had to be serialized, with all the problems of division, episode suspense and plot and character development which this entailed. Long-running serials became a regular feature only in the last years of Household Words.

98-104.

¹ See pp. A below (~~i.e. section ii, p.~~).

Dickens made no high artistic claims for his weekly, and to some extent he pandered to the rather philistine tastes of his middle-class readers. This accounts for a banality and sentimentality which sometimes strikes readers today, particularly in the fiction and poetry. The standards of taste necessary to make the journal fit to be "admitted into many homes with affection and confidence; to be regarded as a friend by children and old people"¹ inevitably limited the subjects suitable for treatment. Dickens was a very capable reflector of the current taste of his period, particularly in propriety, and this is a major factor in accounting for his popularity and the success of his editorship.

To fulfil all his intentions Dickens and his staff had to keep a very close and watchful eye on the contents of his periodicals. This gave a uniformity to the periodicals, and led them to be closely identified with him as their Conductor. This uniformity of style and manner was undoubtedly intentional; writing to Mrs Gaskell Dickens said: "every paper will be published without any signature, and all will seem to express the general mind and purpose of the journal..."² Household Words seems to speak with one voice - this is slightly less true of All The Year Round, with which Dickens was not so closely concerned. The

¹ Preliminary Word, Household Words, no. 1.

² Dickens Letters, 11, p. 202, 31 Jan. 1850.

combination of anonymity and uniformity frequently led to articles being attributed to Dickens which were in fact by other writers.¹

The articles on matters of topical interest are the most obvious indication that the periodical is aimed at a middle-lower class readership. Many urged the artisan to improve his position, with considerable emphasis on 'self-help'. Fair and reasoned advice on how this might be achieved was given. In the early years Household Words echoed the national cry, so eloquently voiced by Carlyle, of Emigration. Hardly a number passes without some reference to the subject.²

Other articles of immediate interest to readers concerned various aspects of the condition of the poor in Britain. The journal was strongly partisan in all fields where it considered itself to be right, unlike its more staid and careful predecessors of the 1830's³. In almost every number there is some allusion to these concerns - Dickens intended to keep them firmly before the public eye.

Most of the Household Words articles have a metropolitan flavour, reflecting the experience of their writers (who, almost without exception, were Londoners)

1 P. A. W. Collins, 'The Significance of Dickens's Periodicals', Review of English Literature, 11, 1961, p. 59.

2 Most References are, for convenience taken from the early volumes of Household Words, E.g. Nos. 1, 22, 23, 25, 26, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 56, 74, 82, 94, 103, 108, 117.

3 See pp. 74 - 79 above.

and of the majority of the periodicals' readers. Occasionally, however, rural topics are glanced at, particularly improved methods in agriculture.

Information on subjects of less direct concern to the readers is also provided in most numbers - geographical, historical and travel articles predominating. Rather surprisingly, there is very little biography, although there is a large amount of miscellaneous material.¹ In common with the other articles, these were usually interesting, well-written and well-informed.

Discussions of Art are generally the poorest in the journals, and it is as well that these play such a small part in its contents. The most remarkable is Dickens's 'Old Lamps for New Ones' in no. 12, where he makes a vicious attack on Millais' 'Christ in the House of his Parents.' His rancour partly stems from his abhorrence of High Church tendencies,² which at this time he linked with pre-Raphaelitism. It can also be excused if considered in its context - Blackwood's critic, like Dickens, saw little in the picture but "a collection of splay feet, puffed joints, and misshapen limbs", and The Times found it "to speak plainly, revolting."³ Although articles on music, especially in later

¹ See pp. 2-5 above

² E.g. on spiders (no. 54) Sailors' Homes (no. 52), chloroform (no. 59), elephants (no. 62), wind and water (nos. 61 and 62).

² Of interest here is his breach with Harriet Martineau, over his refusal to print anything pro-Catholic in his periodicals.

³ Quoted by James D. Merritt, ed. The Pre-Raphaelite Poem, New York, 1966, p. 18.

years, were considerably better than these, unfortunately the two periodicals usually reflect the rather philistine tastes and opinions of the ordinary, respectable, middle class citizen.

Discussions on the functions of various branches of the State, and on the efficiency of Government, are very frequent, supplying both information and intelligent debate in a form previously all too rare in cheap weekly periodicals for the masses.

Several articles on major topics are run as serials. This tends to give a stronger and more stable structure to the articles, allowing arguments to be developed in full, evidence to be clearly given in detail, conclusions to be carefully drawn, all sides of the discussion to be voiced, and sensible proposals to be advocated, in a way impossible in a single article, the longest of which occupies only 8 columns. Many illustrate different sides of a common theme, or form a series of descriptions which on completion give a very broad coverage to a theme.¹

Each number also contains a poem, rarely more than one, and that generally

¹ e.g. 'Illustrations of Cheapness', 'The Doom of English Wills', 'Bits of life in Munich', 'Cape Sketches', 'The modern Officer's Progress', 'Our Phantom Ship', 'A Child's History of England', 'Shadows'.

of poor quality. Notable exceptions are 'The Dumb Child' (No. 35), 'City Graves' (No. 38), 'The Church Poor Box' (No. 44) and 'A Lay of London Streets' (No. 28).

Few of the best poets of the time are represented, and much of the poetry is spoilt by being strongly moralizing,¹ over-sentimental,² or romantic fantasy³ which seems sadly out of place in the journal.

The fiction, of considerably higher standard, is of two types - the single story in one issue, and the serialized piece. In a letter to Charles Lever⁴ Dickens stated that the ideal length for either was 8 columns. This gave little room for development in the single stories, and in consequence they are generally slight in content but pleasant in tone, some with a rather unfortunate flattening moral ending.⁵ The Victorian relish for the exotica of things Eastern appears in several tales with a distinct Arabian Nights flavour,⁶ while their enjoyment of domestic scenes also gives rise to various stories of suburban romance or village life.⁷ Other tales are exciting or terrible - as in 'A Terribly Strange Bed' No. 109, or 'A Gallop for Life' No.

1 e.g. 'The Two Trees' No. 31; also Nos. 7, 10, 26.

2 e.g. Nos. 1, 12, 22.

3 e.g. Nos. 6, 8. Conventional eulogies in Nos. 3, 87.

4 Dickens Letters, III, p. 164, 12 June 1860.

5 e.g. Nos. 4, 14, 25.

6 e.g. Nos. 5, 74, 91.

7 e.g. Nos. 38, 42, 87, 45, 69, 68.

77, and Mrs Gaskell's 'The Old Nurse's Story' in the Christmas Number for 1852 is one of the most successful. Others are on topical subjects such as Emigration ('The Warilowe of Welland' No. 27), slave-trading (No. 37) or the Irish Potato Famine (No. 17).

Serialization presented problems to many contributors besides Mrs Gaskell. A. B. Hopkins rightly judges that the majority had

either a loose, rather episodic pattern that lends itself to convenient breaks at the end of the number, each instalment being, of course, of a nature to whet the reader's appetite for more: or, an involved plot of rapidly moving incident where each portion works up to a breath-taking climax of doubt, suspicion, mystery, or discovery, and leaves the reader hanging in mid-air until the next week or month.¹

Many novels, however, do not fall into these categories, which illustrates one limitation of Household Words as a vehicle for popular fiction. Novels which depend upon lengthy and leisurely development of character and themes and are neither episodic meanderings nor sensational cliff-hangers could not with success be accommodated - hence many of the difficulties with North and South.²

1 A. B. Hopkins Elizabeth Gaskell, Her Life and Work, 1952, p. 136.
2 ~~See pp. 28-38 below (i.e. in section iii)~~ See pp. 130-137 below.

Most of the serials in the early years run to only three or four numbers, or in some cases to only two in a very deliberate and highly patterned structure of contrast - such is the case in 'The Last of a Long Line' in Nos. 19 and 20. Many of these short serials are of high quality,¹ and many ran to more than the eight columns of Dickens ideal - Mrs Gaskell was not the only offender. The majority revolve around domestic incidents or common experiences - 'The Sickness and Health of the People of Bleaburn', 'The Miner's Daughters', 'The Home of Woodruffe the Gardener'. There are deliberate moral tones in 'Lizzie Leigh', 'The Spendthrift's Daughter' and 'The Three Sisters'. 'The New Zealand Zauberflote' is an interesting legend from one of the new countries, and takes its place beside legends of the Old World such as 'Reinecke the Fox'.

Although fiction plays only a small part in each issue quantitatively, Dickens often stated that the success or failure of a piece of fiction could drastically affect the sales of the journal,² which is some measure of its importance. Dickens was determined that his periodical should differ from its

¹ e.g. 'The Marsh Fog and the Sea Breeze', 'The Island in the River', Cranford.

² As of Mrs Gaskell's North and South and Lever's A Day's Ride.

contemporaries even in the smallest ways: on 11 Feb 1850 he wrote to Wills:-

"I observe ... that Chambers' use the single inverted comma for quotations, and I think its adoption by us decidedly objectionable on that account. There is nothing I am more desirous to avoid, than imitation." ¹

The success of the magazine depended largely on its excellence within the limitations Dickens set. It reached a wide and diverse audience; it was reliably informative; it included original poems and stories. Each number provides a good hour's reading and more, and its provocative and interesting articles leave plenty of food for thought. More than any history book, it gives today's reader a first-hand, graphic and fascinating picture of the preoccupations of ordinary people in the 1850's and of the sort of lives they led.

¹ Dickens letters, II, p. 205.

ii. Dickens as Editor

Much of Dickens's time and energy during the last twenty years of his life was devoted to his editorial tasks. As his son remarked:

nothing better illustrated his indomitable energy and the boundless capacity for taking pains which distinguished him, than the strenuous manner in which the editorial duties of those journals were discharged.¹

The Preliminary Addresses to Household Words and All The Year Round and the Advertisement to the Household Narrative express the constant standards by which he judged material submitted to the periodicals.

The first quality he looked for was Fancy. In the Preliminary **W**ord to Household Words he undertook to "tenderly cherish that light of Fancy which is inherent in the human breast", to show the Romance in common things. This is a central theme in Dickens's first serialized novel in the periodical, Hard Times. To Dickens, Fancy meant not only a pervasive attitude and encouragement of certain types of subject matter, but also a special style of writing which he impressed on all his regular writers. He expected fiction and poetry to

¹ Charles Dickens the Younger, 'Charles Dickens as an Editor', English Illustrated Magazine, vi, Aug. 1889, p. 822.

supply Fancy, but the articles on dry subjects, and the 'process articles' as he called them, could also be made more interesting and entertaining by a style illuminated by fancy and imaginative vitality.

As early as October 1851 Dickens feared Fancy was lacking in the periodical, writing to Wills: "I have been looking over the back Numbers. Wherever they fail, it is in wanting elegance of fancy."¹ Wills replied that Household Words was generally considered more rich in fancy than any of its rivals - much of the failure of Chambers's Journal in not appealing to the working class population stemmed from its dryness and matter-of-factness - and was acknowledged as treating uninviting subjects with more fancy than the other periodicals. Wills also very sensibly pointed out that, although Dickens's ideal is a good one, it is not possible to

sparkle to order, especially writers who have only an occasional sparkle in them. As to the 'Elegance of Fancy' you desiderate, that, I apprehend, is simply impossible as the prevailing characteristic of twenty-four pages of print published fifty-two times a year.²

¹ Dickens Letters, 11, p. 352, to Wills, 16 Oct. 1851.

² R. C. Lehmann, ed. Charles Dickens as Editor, 1912, p. 74, Wills to Dickens, 17 Oct. 1851.

However, this discouraging reply did not deter Dickens, who in his extensive revision and rewriting of contributions strove constantly to supply the quality of Fancy.¹

Besides, Dickens felt that his capable sub-editor lacked this important quality: "Wills is a capital fellow for his work, but decidedly of the Nutmeg-Grater, or Fancy-Bread-Rasper School ..."², but acknowledged that this had its compensations: "Wills has no genius, and is, in literary matters, sufficiently commonplace to represent a very large proportion of our readers."³ This, together with his years of experience in journalism, made his tastes and opinions a good guide to what would 'go' with the periodicals' readers.

In his revision of work submitted to the periodicals, and in his composite articles, Dickens often employed the simplest means to achieve more Fancy; changing the tense of verbs or giving an imaginative framework to an otherwise factual report, with the purpose of gradually engaging the reader's interest and aiding the digestion of the dry statistics and facts. It is significant that the most excellent examples of this occur in the early years of the

1 His purpose is discussed pp.106-107 below.

2 Dickens Letters, 11, p. 216, to Peter Cunningham, 12 May 1850.

3 Ibid, 111, p. 220, to Bulwer Lytton, 15 May 1861.

periodical.¹ Another technique was to relate a particular viewpoint to a fictitious character - Mr Bendigo Buster, the Raven, the Uncommercial Traveller, Charles Knight's 'Shadow'.

In devising titles Dickens made masterly use of his ability to invent punning, intriguing and apt headings for articles and stories, Paradox, alliteration, misquotation, punning - all these techniques and more, often several together, were used to arouse the reader's interest without revealing the serious content of the article. That, as Dickens well knew, would be sufficient to deter many from reading it at all, whereas his method captured their curiosity initially, and with the aid of lively fanciful writing, kept it throughout the articles. Percy Fitzgerald criticized this device, implying that in the hands of Dickens it worked well, but with his less brilliant contributors it was no more than a "deceptive and theatrical system. A clever paper was not considered clever enough unless it received some title of this kind ... The reader is 'trapped' by the title, but undeceived as he finishes his perusal."² There is much truth in this criticism. In later years, as

1 e.g. 'Valentine's Day in the Post Office', no. 1; the series of Views of society from a Raven's point of view, 'The True Story of a Coal Fire', and the numerous lively and inoffensive articles on sanitary subjects.

2 Percy Fitzgerald, Memories of Charles Dickens, p. 229.

Dickens's control over the journals relaxed because he was occupied with other affairs, a general air of decadence, of superficial brilliance disguising increasing banality, began to infect the journal.

Lack of Fancy or the wrong way of trying to achieve it, were often reasons for the rejection of articles, or at best their heavy correction.¹ In some cases, as with the titles, Dickens's idea of Fancy was of a quaint, caricaturing nature, which was not of the highest literary quality, although it would appeal to the great mass of middle class readers of the periodical. Dickens always linked it to a warmth of personality and humour, rarely failing to absorb it into the overall tone of the composition. There are occasions when he fails to assimilate fact and fancy. In 'The Old Lady in Threadneedle Street' Dickens breaks into Wills's matter-of-fact prose with the remark:

The descent into this stronghold - by means of the hydraulic trap we have spoken of - is so eminently theatrical, that we believe the Head of ^{the} Department, on going down with the books, is invariably required to strike an attitude, and to laugh in three sepulchral syllables; while the various clerks above express surprise and consternation.

¹ e.g. Dickens Letters, 111, p. 414, to Wills, 12 Feb, 1865; 11, p. 851, to Frank Stone, 1 June 1857; 11, pp. 401-402, to Charles Mayne Young, 21 July 1852. See p. 113 below.

Early portions of this article furnish brilliant examples of the enlivening of an essentially factual article by the intriguing light of fancy, but here the fancy is insufficiently assimilated into the rest of the paragraph. Percy Fitzgerald described this technique, which was so widely adopted by the 'Dickens School' of writers, as 'Dickens and water'. "Words" he says, "were the counters with which the game was played, and which took the place of thought and feeling."¹ It became a form of exaggeration, used to the point where impressions and observations were caricatured out of any sense of reality. It was an easily acquired journalist's trick, at least at the level at which Dickens's followers appreciated it. The pressure to fall into this style of writing

became all but irresistible. A mere natural, unaffected account of any transaction, it was felt, was out of place; it would not harmonise with the brilliant, bouyant things surrounding it.²

It was little more than a "colouring up for effect, and of magnifying the smallest trifle."³ Dickens was aware of the dangers, and in several letters he points out the fault to a contributor.⁴ In the years when he devoted less time to the journals, such faults often slipped past unnoticed, or were

¹ Percy Fitzgerald, op. cit, p. 249.

² Ibid, p. 170.

³ Ibid, p. 171.

⁴ See pp. ¹³-¹⁴ below.

disregarded because there was insufficient time to rewrite them and nothing better with which to replace them.

Although the principle of Fancy was never to be forgotten, Dickens was also adamant about the accuracy of facts and statistics. The effort to provide fancy was wasted if the facts were incorrect.¹ As the Conductor, with his name alone appearing in the journals, Dickens was strongly aware of his ultimate responsibility for the contents. Where it was found an inaccuracy had been printed, the fault was acknowledged and rectified in a 'Chip'. When Dickens felt his own knowledge was insufficient to judge the accuracy of a paper, he would refer it to a competent authority. Whenever possible, expert knowledge was used as a basis for factual reports. Henry Austin and Michael Faraday both provided material in this way. However, where Dickens knew himself to be correct, no amount of outside pressure would make him change his articles.²

No opinions were allowed in the journals which did not ^{conform} comply with his own,³ although in some circumstances he would insert a note with a questionable article absolving himself from any connexion with its opinions. Morley's

¹ e.g. Dickens Letters,^{II} p. 421, to Wills, 13 Oct. 1852; pp. 454-455, to Wills, 18 March 1853; p. 474, to Wills, 4 July 1853.

² Ibid, 11, p. 234, to Wills, 17 Sept. 1850.

³ Ibid, 11, pp. 721-722, to Wills, 6 Jan. 1856.

paper 'A Doctor of Morals', rewritten by Dickens under the title 'In and Out of Jail', was at fault in containing "many statements utterly at variance with what I am known to have written";¹ all such papers must express the principles already laid down by Dickens, "otherwise I am not only compromising opinions I am known to hold, but the journal itself is blowing hot and cold and playing fast and loose in a ridiculous way."

Dickens was also very vigilant about plagiarism. Often he would recognize, even in a short phrase, a resemblance to something he had read, and the manuscript would then be returned to its author with instructions for revision.²

Dickens's generosity and good-nature are seen in all his dealings with the readers of and contributors to his periodicals. He spent the first months of his editorship rigorously training Wills and his staff into the ways and style of the Conductor.³ To Wills in later years he referred many important decisions, and Wills ran All The Year Round until his retirement with relatively little assistance from Dickens. Dickens relied on his training, experience and good sense to direct the everyday affairs of the periodicals, to choose

¹ Dickens Letters, 11, pp. 453-454, to Wills, 10 March 1853.

² E.g. Ibid, 11, pp. 488-489, to Wills, 18 Sept. 1853; 18 Sept. 1853; 11, p. 250, to Wills, 14 Dec. 1850; 11, p. 687, to Wills, 5 Sept. 1855.

³ Ibid, 11, pp. 454-454, to Wills, 10 March 1853.

papers and make up provisional numbers, which were then sent to Dickens for approval, correction, revision, titling, and decisions on position. Wills and his staff were responsible for sifting out the good material from the mountains of contributions received at the office. The two men seem from their letters to have been on very good terms,¹ and Wills's retirement in 1868 after a hunting accident was a serious loss to All The Year Round.

Dickens both understood his readers and wished to provide them with a medium of wholesome but lively instruction and entertainment. He wanted to be their "comrade and friend", and believed that by kindling the light of Fancy² in their hearts he could "teach the hardest workers at this whirling wheel of toil, that their lot is not necessarily a moody, brutal fact, excluded from the sympathies and graces of imagination; to bring the greater and the lesser in degree, together, upon that wide field, and mutually dispose them to a better acquaintance and a kinder understanding - is one main object of our Household Words." Dickens never considered himself, or any of his contributors, to be above his readers - "And don't think that it is necessary to write down to

1 e.g. Dickens Letters, 11, p. ~~296~~⁶⁶⁹, to Wills, 10 June 1855;
11, pp. 741-742, to Wills, 8 Feb. 1856.

2 See pp. ~~98-104~~⁹⁸⁻¹⁰⁴ above.

any part of our audience. I always hold that to be as great a mistake as can be made."¹ - and would eliminate or revise any article with this attitude.

Dickens's viewpoint, which he imposed on all articles published in his periodicals, was one of "uncompromising humanitarian radicalism".² His awareness that by means of *Fancy* he could make informative articles interesting and readable to these hard-worked people, mirrors his realistic view that when they did have some leisure, they thirsted for easy entertainment, not strenuous intellectual labour. With this constantly in mind he wrote an article for the first number of Household Words, 'The Amusements of the People', and pointed out to Charles Knight in a typically vigorous manner:

The English are, so far as I know, the hardest-worked people on whom the sun shines. Be content if, in their wretched intervals of pleasure, they read for amusement and do no worse. They are born at the oar, and they live and die at it. Good God, what would we have of them!³

This policy was directed by Dickens's deepest feelings, not merely by considerations of what would sell the periodical. He would remove tragic scenes unrelieved by the warmth of sympathy and happiness, reject Harriet Parr's Gilbert Messenger

¹ Dickens Letters, 11, pp. 420-421, to Wills, 12 Oct. 1852.

² Edgar Johnson, Charles Dickens. His Tragedy and Triumph, 1953, 2 vols, 11, p. 717.

³ Dickens Letters, 11, p. 548, 17 March 1854.

because of the "prodigious unhappiness" that might be inflicted on some of his readers by the hero's hereditary insanity,¹ suggest a happy ending to stories for the journals.² If there was to be suffering, he wanted to see some relief from it, some comfort in the ending. As the light of Fancy was to eradicate the bitterness of reforming articles, so a happy ending was to prevent the periodical from becoming tainted with despair and pessimism. That was not the Dickens style, and it was not what his audience wanted to read. The warmth and sympathy which such an attitude gave the periodical, must account for such of the deep affection with which its readers regarded it.

Dickens had a genuine concern for the feelings of individuals. He removed a depreciatory remark about mesmerism from the article 'Health and Education' to avoid hurting the feelings of his friend Elliotson.³ This must have caused extra work and extra expense.

Dickens took a great interest in the work of his promising young contributors, especially the ones who were learning the trade of journalism through the pages of his periodicals . It is difficult to gauge how many of

¹ Dickens Letters, 11, pp. 682-684, to Wills, 22 July 1855.

² E.g. to Mrs Gaskell's 'The Heart of John Middleton', Dickens Letters, 11, p. 250, to Wills, 12 Dec. 1850; also to Miss Jolly, 11, pp. 679-680, 17 July 1855.

³ Ibid, 11, p. 802, to Wills, 28 Sept. 1856.

the unsolicited contributions Dickens read himself. To Miss Coutts Dickens wrote on 14 August 1850 of being "waylaid by a parcel, in dimensions like a spare bed, containing 'doubtful articles' for Household Words."¹ In later years Dickens devoted less time to such tasks, and sometimes regretted not having time to attend to his editorial duties more thoroughly.²

From Percy Fitzgerald's comments on the reception of his first paper at the office, it would seem that many of the contributions by unknown writers were not even read. Forster carried Fitzgerald's paper into the office, and

bade them sternly see to it that there should be no official subterfuges, circulars and the like, it must be considered and read, mark you! At this time it seemed that the journal was a sort of 'mare clausum'. Everyone sent their contributions; whole sacks arrived which it was impossible to deal with. But though it was professed in a 'consolation circular' that the returned paper had been read and considered, it is likely that the judgment was founded on other elements, viz. the subject, title, writing, and perhaps a glance at a page or two.³

The numerous letters which exist from Dickens to contributors are all significantly

- 1 Dickens Letters, 11, p. 226.
- 2 Ibid, 11, p. 480, to Wills, 5 Aug. 1853.
- 3 Percy Fitzgerald, op. cit., p. 4.

either to friends, or to contributors sponsored by friends. Several of the closest circle on the staff relied, in their first contact with Dickens, on his memory of their parents' acting.

The young writers who became known as the Dickens School received minute attention from the Conductor. Mrs Linton justly claims that

To Wilkie Collins he was a literary Mentor to a young Telemachus, and he certainly counted for much in Wilkie's future as a littérateur. I was told by one who knew, that he took unheard-of pains with his younger friend's first productions, and went over them line by line, correcting, deleting, adding to, carefully as a conscientious school-master dealing with the first essay of a promising scholar.¹

Several of the young men have left similar accounts. Dickens's extensive revision, claims Fitzgerald,

was laborious and troublesome, but ... few sensible writers but would have welcomed the opportunity of learning their craft under such a teacher.²

He is proud to recall that

each of the five or six novels I wrote for him was planned

¹ Mrs Linton, My Literary Life, 1899, pp. 71-72. See also Dickens Letters, 11, p. 643; 111, p. 282; 111, p. 304. Compare with his attitude to Mrs Gaskell, an established writer, see pp. ~~below~~ 125-129, and 141-142 below.

² Percy Fitzgerald, Recreations of a Literary Man, 1882, 2 vols, 1, p. 85.

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and debated with him - the characters, the story as it advanced, the embarrassing tangles which he resolved, the very titles. Then every line almost he revised and corrected.¹

Such a policy was only possible with the admiring circle of young writers who developed under Dickens's direction. He depended on them to supply what he wanted, and even to alter their own expressed opinion to make it in line with his own. Naive, inexperienced and rather second-rate writers like Fitzgerald were the competent hacks he needed. It is perhaps significant that the most remarkable of the young journalists, Sala, soon elected to free-lance and extricate himself from Dickens's constant control.

The more experienced writers, accustomed to go their own way and with a reputation of their own to consider, were usually only required to supply the fiction and poetry material, with which Dickens did not so closely interfere. It was solely a matter of experience and inexperience. Once such writers as Collins and Fitzgerald, who had begun as inexperienced writers providing articles for Household Words, began writing serials for Dickens, his attitude towards them

¹ Percy Fitzgerald, Memories of Charles Dickens, p. 5.

changed, and he interfered far less in their work. However, he still kept more close control over their productions than over that of such established writers as Mrs Gaskell, as is evident from Fitzgerald's remarks.

The power Dickens exerted over his young writers was stated by several to be almost mesmeric.¹ They imitated his style, and even copied his practice of writing in blue ink on blue paper. The power was weakened when Dickens was absent from the office for long periods, and there is often a corresponding flatness in the periodicals at such times. The energy, enthusiasm and inspiration his personality created, faded. That his followers accepted his strict disciplining² so unquestioningly is some measure of his influence.

In return for this adulation Dickens gave little more than other editors, apart from the benefit of his criticism. He seems to have paid at the standard rate - prose was paid at one guinea per page, the same rate as the Howitts originally offered for what in their Journal would have been fewer words. Once A Week, the rival to All The Year Round published by Bradbury and Evans, also paid at this rate. Verse received approximately one guinea per half column, and at first fiction was paid at the same rate as other prose. As serials

¹ Edmund Yates, His Recollections and Experiences, 1884, 2 vols, 11, p. 94. Also Dickens Letters, 11, p. 893, to Yates, 16 Nov. 1857.

became more important to the success of periodicals in the 1860's, and more vital to satisfy the demands of its readers, Dickens negotiated separately for them, offering what the writer's name was worth, and sufficient to prevent him writing for another periodical. This more liberal payment for serials in the 1860's was largely the result of the policy of the Cornhill Magazine.¹ Dickens's financial generosity is mainly seen in his determination to pay for everything published, however unknown the writer might be, in his prompt payment, and in his generous loans, advanced on a promise of future work, to such frequent contributors as Sala, Mrs Gaskell, and R. H. Horne.²

The detail and energy Dickens devoted to revision has already emerged. His most detailed and helpful letters were sent to friends who had submitted contributions. To Miss Mary Boyle, a close friend since he had met her at Rockingham Castle, he wrote:

I have devoted a couple of hours this evening to going very carefully over your paper ... and to endeavouring to bring it closer, and to lighten it, and to give it that sort of compactness which a habit of composition,

¹ See p.287 below. ~~Cornhill chapter, section i.~~

² William E. Buckler, 'Dickens the Paymaster', PMLA, LXVI, Dec. 1951, pp. 1177-1180; Gerald G. Grubb, 'The editorial policies of Dickens', PMLA, LVIII, 1943, pp. 1100-1124, and 'Dickens the Paymaster Once More', Dickensian, LI, March 1955, pp. 72-78.

and of disciplining one's thoughts like a regiment, and of studying the art of putting each soldier into his right place, may have gradually taught me to think necessary.... this sort of writing (regard being had to the size of the journal in which it appears) requires to be compressed, and is made pleasanter by compression.¹

Dickens's care in revision, awareness of the limitations imposed by the very size of his periodical, and of the best sort of writing to suit these limitations, are all evident from this letter. In rejecting another paper he remarks that it is "destroyed by too much smartness. It gives the appearance of perpetual effort, stabs to the heart the nature that is in them, and wearies by the manner and not by the matter." This was a misuse of the techniques for enlivening an article - "Airiness and good spirits are always delightful, ... but they should sympathise with many things as well as see them in a lively way." Humanity is what is needed, Dickens shrewdly remarks, a pervading suggestion that the writer has feelings.²

Examples of Dickens's editorial standards abound in detailed letters to contributors throughout his years as an editor. Sometimes his letters

¹ Dickens Letters, 11, pp. 273-274, 21 Feb. 1851.

² Ibid, 11, p. 851, to Frank Stone, 1 June 1857.

illustrate his exasperation at the poor quality of work submitted. In one

letter to Mrs Gaskell concerning some work by an acquaintance he writes,

they are of that intensely dreary and commonplace
description to which, not even the experience of
this place reconciles my wondering mind¹

Papers which his public would not understand and therefore not care for were carefully revised or rejected.² Dickens detested all forms of slovenly writing, deprecating slang,³ dashes and initials,⁴ and "intolerable Scotch shortness put into my titles by the elision of little words."⁵ The absurd 'gentle Reader' formula found no place in his periodicals;⁶ he despised the use of the first person singular in articles,⁷ and condemned as "irritating and vulgar" the use of italics and marks of elision where vowels had been omitted.⁸ Any slovenliness in the printers' work was swiftly criticized.⁹ Dickens took great pains to enliven articles, as has been seen; to make them pointed, clear and expressive, without shortening sentences to the level of a semi-literate audience. All

¹ Dickens Letters, 11, p. 448, 21 Feb. 1853. Also 11, pp. 436-437, to Wills, 24 Dec. 1852.

² Ibid, 11, p. 454, to Wills, 10 March 1853; 111, p. 255, to Bulwer Lytton, 20 Nov. 1861.

³ Ibid, 11, p. 336, to Wills, 10 Aug. 1851.

⁴ Ibid, 11, p. 325, to Wills, 11 July 1851.

⁵ Ibid, 11, p. 209, to Wills, 12 March 1850.

⁶ Ibid, 11, p. 449, to an unknown correspondent, 28 Feb. 1853.

⁷ Ibid, 111, p. 275, to Wills, 2 Jan. 1862.

⁸ Ibid, 11, p. 707, to Wills, 15 Nov. 1855.

⁹ Ibid, 11, p. 363, to Evans, 16 Dec. 1851.

contributors marvelled with Fitzgerald at the "extraordinary ... pains Boz took with the papers of his contributors, and how diligently and laboriously he improved and polished them."¹

This done, Dickens then carefully placed all the articles, so that the correct balance in each number was achieved, and suitable variety and contrasts introduced. Feeling "an uneasy sense of there being a want of something tender" in the second number of Household Words, he wrote 'A Child's Dream of a Star' and placed it in the coveted first position.² On other occasions he introduced a suitable article when the journals were not sufficiently topical.³ These are typical examples of Dickens's readiness to step in and save the falling circulation of the periodicals (as with Hard Times) or to supply a quality lacking in any particular number.

With the fiction there were various problems. Length was one of the most important - Dickens was always urging contributors to compress their matter into the eight columns he considered desirable. With the serials this problem was aggravated further by Dickens demanding that the story be contained within

1 Percy Fitzgerald, The Life of Charles Dickens, 1905, 2 vols, 1, p. 262.

2 Dickens Letters, 11, p. 210, to John Forster, 14 March 1850.

3 Ibid, 11, p. 589, to Wills, 25 Sept. 1854.

a certain specified number of weeks. To Charles Lever he wrote that owing to "the manner of publication ... we ought to get at the action of the story, in the first No ..."¹ The eight columns were almost always over-run. Weekly serialization of this type needed to be very well organised to succeed. Dickens explained to Mrs Brookfield:

The scheme of the chapters, the manner of introducing the people, the progress of the interest, the places in which the principal places fall, are all hopelessly against it. [division into weekly parts] It would seem as though the story were never coming, and hardly ever moving. There must be a special design to overcome that specially trying mode of publication, ... notice how patiently and expressly the thing has to be planned for presentation in these fragments, and yet for afterwards fusing together as an uninterrupted whole.²

George Eliot, probably wisely, refused to write a serial for All The Year Round, saying that "time is an insurmountable obstacle ..."³ Mrs Gaskell's experience with North and South no doubt influenced her decision to write no more long serials for Dickens. Having become accustomed to writing in monthly parts,

¹ Dickens Letters, 111, p. 165, to Lever, 21 June 1860.

² Ibid, 111, p. 461, 20 Feb. 1866.

³ J. W. Cross, ed. George Eliot's Life As Related in Her Letters and Journals, 1885, 3 vols, 11, p. 142.

Dickens himself found writing Hard Times immensely difficult. "The difficulty of the space is CRUSHING. Nobody can have an idea of it who has not had an experience of patient fiction - writing with some elbow-room always, and open places in perspective." he lamented to Forster.¹ After its conclusion he accounted for his exhaustion by saying, "the compression and close condensation necessary for that disjointed form of publication gave me perpetual trouble."² Of A Tale of Two Cities, he wrote in exasperation, "The small portions thereof, drive me frantic ..."³ If Dickens, the master of his art and arbiter of the style of his periodicals, had this trouble, it is hardly surprising that less experienced writers despaired of ever mastering the necessary technique, and turned gratefully to the Conductor for assistance.

During the twenty years of his editorship there were gradual changes in Dickens's policies. The radical and passionate social comment of the early years of Household Words gradually faded into the background until it played a very insignificant role in All The Year Round. This reflected an alteration in Dickens's preoccupations, and a general feeling in the country of less

¹ Dickens Letters, 11, p. 543, Feb. 1854.

² Ibid, 11, p. 602, to Mrs Watson, 1 Nov. 1854.

³ Ibid, 111, p. 110, to Forster, 9 July 1859.

urgency on these questions. Anonymity was strictly upheld until 18 September 1856, when Dickens agreed to a suggestion made by Wilkie Collins that the author's name be put on the advertisements to forthcoming serials. Previously this had been avoided by merely citing the title of a previous novel by the same author.¹

This mirrors an alteration in Dickens's opinion of the importance of serials. In 1856 he still felt that short stories were more important to Household Words than serials -

Now, as to a long story itself, I doubt its value to us. And I feel perfectly convinced that it is not one quarter so useful to us as detached papers, or short stories in four parts.²

In All The Year Round serials became the most important feature, as was formally announced in No. 95. From this time on the serial always appeared first in the number - previously it had dropped into fourth or fifth position after a few episodes. This reflects the current enthusiasm for serials in periodicals, and accounts for much of the difference felt between Household Words and All

¹ Dickens Letters, 11, p. 801, to Wills, 18 Sept. 1856.

² Ibid, 11, p. 801, to Wills, 18 Sept. 1856. Short stories in four parts were favoured because Dickens's periodicals, like Chambers's Journal, were bought by many readers in monthly parts.

The Year Round. The sparkle, verve and variety of the leader articles was lost when this alteration in line with popular taste was made. Often in All The Year Round two serials ran together, leaving little space for miscellaneous articles.

There was some change in Dickens's attitude to poetry. Originally at least one poem was included in every number if at all possible, because Dickens felt that poems were a fine example of the principles of Fancy and Imagination he advocated so strongly. By 1858, however, he came to realize that most of the poems he received lacked these necessary qualities. "Pray, pray, pray, don't have Poems unless they are good. We are immeasurably better without them ..." he instructed Wills.¹

Dickens was an efficient, imaginative, hard-working editor, prepared to cope with humdrum matters as well as provide new ideas, always vigilant as to accuracy, style and taste, and blessed with the ability to understand his public and interpret its needs. "Dickens is not only a man of genius, he is a good business man",² Wilkie Collins accurately remarked. In all matters concerning

¹ Dickens Letters, 111, p. 60, to Wills, 2 Oct. 1858.

² Kenneth Robinson, Wilkie Collins: A Biography, 1951, p. 125.

his periodicals Dickens conducted himself with the integrity and vitality he demanded from his staff, and was truly their Conductor.

... asking for "a short tale, or any number of tales," claiming that "there is no living English writer whose aid I would desire to enlist in my periodical, and the address of Mary Barton" He outlined the main policies of the periodical, explaining that all contributions were to be anonymous, and

the raising up of those that are down, and the general improvement of our social condition. I should not value your help, which your society can hardly spare; and I am perfectly sure that the least result of your reflection or observation in respect of the life around you, would attract attention and do good.

In his year to collect her as a contributor, he offered to travel to Manchester to explain details.

It is interesting, in the light of later developments, that Dickens made no specific mention of length of contributions in this letter. He may have written another letter to Mrs Caskell explaining such details which

1. John Rylands English MS 729/1. Printed with some mistakes in *Dickens Letters*, 11, p. 252; 31 Jan. 1850.
 2. Similar letters were written to other friends, established writers such as Rev. James White, *Dickens Letters*, 11, p. 254, 3 Feb. 1850.

iii. Dickens and Mrs Gaskell

Mrs Gaskell was one of the first Dickens invited to contribute to his new periodical, asking for "a short tale, or any number of tales," claiming that "there is no living English writer whose aid I would desire to enlist in preference to the authoress of *Mary Barton*" He outlined the main policies of the periodical, explained that all contributions were to be anonymous, and that the purpose was

the raising up of those that are down, and the general improvement of our social condition. I should set a value on your help, which your modesty can hardly imagine; and I am perfectly sure that the least result of your reflection or observation in respect of the life around you, would attract attention and do good.¹

In his zeal to enlist her as a contributor, he offered to travel to Manchester to explain further details.²

It is interesting, in the light of later developments, that Dickens made no specific mention of length of contributions in this letter. He may have written another letter to Mrs Gaskell explaining such details which

¹ John Rylands English MS 729/1. Printed with some mistakes in Dickens Letters, 11, p. 202, 31 Jan. 1850.

² Similar letters were written to other friends, established writers such as Rev. James White, Dickens Letters, 11, p. 204, 5 Feb. 1850.

has not survived. It seems more likely, however, that when she wrote 'Lizzie Leigh' Mrs Gaskell had only a vague conception of the limitations of length he so stringently imposed. She wrote as she would for the Howitts.

Dickens's letter arrived at an opportune moment. Howitt's Journal, which had proved congenial, was no more; it was inconvenient for Mrs Gaskell to write solely for American periodicals, and at this stage of her career she was not acquainted with many editors of periodicals where her stories of working-class life would be welcomed. In January 1849 she received two invitations to write for periodicals, the first from Eliza Cook who was establishing her weekly periodical, and the second from Dickens. Miss Cook explained her purposes as

something in the fashion of Chambers, but with fresher blood and more vital activity of principle, to consist of papers calculated to advance the broad interests of Humanity and the social feelings of Morality. Instruction and amusement will be blended¹

Possibly Mrs Gaskell was alarmed by the earnestness of Miss Cook's appeal, or felt shy of writing for an editor with whom she was not acquainted - this would

¹ John Rylands English MS 730/26, 22 Jan. 1849.

have been against her normal practice. She would not have been attracted by Miss Cook's relatively low literary status, and may possibly have already heard through Forster of Dickens's plans for a new weekly periodical. In any case, she elected not to write for Eliza Cook's Journal, but for Dickens, and responded with alacrity to his offer.

'Lizzie Leigh' suited the ideals Dickens had expressed although it was rather longer than he had hoped.¹ He must have been pleased with it, as he placed it in the coveted first position² in the first issue of his new periodical. He suggested an alteration in the plot to Mrs Gaskell which would set Lizzie in a better light. He claimed she should give the child into Susan's arms, and not merely abandon it on the doorstep. Mrs Gaskell complied with her editor's suggestion. On 3 July Dickens wrote her another letter, asking for more contributions,³ but no more was sent until 'The Well of Pen-Morfa', published 16 - 23 November. In the intervening period Mrs Gaskell sent Dickens some work by a friend, but he hoped it would be from her.⁴ There is no record of Dickens's reaction to the change from the industrial scene of 'Lizzie Leigh'

¹ Dickens Letters, 11, p. 207, to Wills, 28 Feb. 1850.

² Ibid, 11, p. 421, to Wills, 13 Oct. 1852.

³ Ibid, 11, p. 220.

⁴ Ibid, 11, p. 225, 7 Aug. 1850.

to the rural one of 'The Well of Pen-Morfa.' Mrs Gaskell's next story, 'The Heart of John Middleton,' combines both.

Dickens made a few slight corrections to this story (probably merely spelling and punctuation), and commented to Wills:

The story is very clever - I think the best thing of hers I have seen, not excepting Mary Barton - and if it had ended happily (which is the whole meaning of it) would have been a great success. As it is, .., [it] will not do much, and will link itself painfully, with the girl who fell down at the Well, and the child who tumbled down stairs. I wish to Heaven her people would keep a little firmer on their legs! ...¹

Mrs Gaskell knew nothing as yet of Dickens's preference for happy endings to the stories he published.² Wills's suggestion that Dickens change the ending was rejected: "I could not think of making so important an alteration in Mrs Gaskell's story without her consent"³ - he treated her differently from the inexperienced young writers who produced the bulk of the material for the periodical. Her work was of a higher standard and did not need extensive

¹ Dickens Letters, 11, p. 250, to Wills, 12 Dec. 1850.
² See p. 108 above.
³ Ibid, 11, p. 250, to Wills, 14 Dec. 1850.

rewriting, and she was an established writer who needed to be carefully treated to be retained as a contributor.¹ However, he seems to have hinted to Mrs Gaskell that the ending would have been better changed, and the alteration would have been made had her letter of consent arrived before the number went to press.²

At this stage Mrs Gaskell was still only contributing occasionally.

'Disappearances' and the first of the Cranford papers were all she offered in 1851. In November she reprimanded Dickens for using a ghost story he had heard her tell as his contribution to the Keepsake.³ In a flippant and facetious apology, he pointed out that ghost stories were common property, and he was therefore not greatly at fault.⁴ This was no serious disagreement, and further Cranford papers quickly followed. Dickens was delighted with them, although he provoked Mrs Gaskell again by removing a reference to him and substituting Hood's Poems - removing the whole force of the debate between Captain Brown and Miss Jenkyns - as he quite rightly considered it an impropriety to have his work praised, with his name appearing at the top of every page of the periodical.

¹ Compare with Dickens's treatment of Wilkie Collins, see pp. 111 - 112 above.

² Dickens Letters, 11, p. 255, to Mrs Gaskell, 20 Dec, 1850.

³ Gaskell Letters, no. 108a, p. 172, to Eliza Fox, [17 Nov. 1851.]

⁴ Dickens Letters, 11, pp. 359-360, 25 Nov. 1851.

Mrs Gaskell, evidently annoyed, demanded that the offending paper be removed from the periodical, but again her letter arrived too late; it had already gone to press.¹ Despite her annoyance, this disagreement did not seriously jeopardise their relationship, and soon Dickens was welcoming the next paper, teasing Mrs Gaskell -

If you were not the most suspicious of women, always looking for soft sawder in the purest metal of praise ...²

From this letter it is evident that he was responsible for naming the papers, and usually provided the chapter and episode divisions.

In January 1852 some financial error was made, which Dickens quickly rectified, commenting at the same time, "how anxiously I am looking for your next communication"³ He declined an invitation to visit the Gaskells while in Manchester on his Amateur Theatrical tour,⁴ and agreed to champion the cause of Thomas Wright as Mrs Gaskell requested, again urging her to send

another article.⁵ These continual requests for work are not mere jokes; Mrs Gaskell's work was greatly in demand at the Household Words office, and Cranford had

1 Dickens Letters, 11, p. 361, to Mrs Gaskell, 5 Dec.1851.
 2 Ibid, 11, p. 364, 21 Dec.1851.
 3 Ibid, 11, p. 372, to Mrs Gaskell, 24 Jan.1852.
 4 Ibid, 11, p. 372, to Mrs Gaskell, 27 Jan.1852.
 5 Ibid, 11, p. 380, to Mrs Gaskell, 25 Feb.1852.

proved popular. On 7 March Dickens was moved to write to John Forster -

Don't you think Mrs Gaskell charming? With one ill-considered thing that looks like a want of natural perception, I think it masterly¹

The next trouble occurred over 'The Old Nurse's Story', sent in November as a possible contribution to the Christmas Number. Only the work of Dickens's best contributors appeared in these special issues. The first drawback Dickens feared was its length.² Then on 6 November he suggested an alteration in the last scene to Mrs Gaskell. All the people in the house should hear the noises and see the phantom child, but in his opinion only the child, the innocent party, should see the other spectres. He offered to alter the story on these lines himself if she wished.³ However, Mrs Gaskell was no longer prepared to accept Dickens's advice unquestioningly and probably could not see the value of the change he suggested. Although Dickens had to accept her objection, he still felt that "the turn is greatly weakened by their all seeing those figures."⁴ She must have been upset, as on 6 December he wrote to

1 Dickens Letters, 11, p. 382.

2 Ibid, 11, p. 428, [Nov. 1852.]

3 Ibid, 11, p. 428, to Mrs Gaskell, 6 Nov. 1852.

4 Ibid, 11, p. 428, to Mrs Gaskell, 9 Nov. 1852.

encourage her not to doubt or disparage her story,¹ but he still considered he was right.²

Again, this difficulty was soon smoothed over, but it was significant as the first occasion when Mrs Gaskell stood firm against Dickens's persuasion. It was one of the first occasions on which his authority had been questioned. In the following year Mrs Gaskell contributed more work than ever, with Dickens assuring her that

you cannot write too much for Household Words, and have never yet written half enough³

Such warm and generous letters to contributors are rare, even for Dickens.

Inviting her to contribute to the next Christmas number, he trusted her judgement sufficiently to write -

I won't give any outline. Because anything that you may like to write in the way of story-telling ... will please me it only needs to be done by you to be well done ...⁴

In a New Year letter he thanked her warmly for her valuable aid in contributing

¹ Manchester Central Library, Archives department, Charles Dickens to Mrs Gaskell, 6 Dec.1852.

² Dickens Letters, 11, p. 434, to Mrs Gaskell, 17 Dec.1852.

³ Ibid, 11, p. 457, 13 April 1853.

⁴ Ibid, 11, p. 490, 19 Sept.1853.

regularly to Household Words in the previous year, during his absence abroad.¹

This ushered in the year in which their relationship was to suffer its most severe test.

In April - May 1853 Dickens had first heard of Mrs Gaskell's plans for North and South, advising her "The subject is certainly not too serious, so sensibly treated." and urging her to continue the story for Household Words.²

He offered to think of a suitable title after seeing some of the manuscript.

In February 1854 he urged her not to worry about dividing the story into parts.

She was to write it naturally, and he would suggest chapter and episode breaks

later, when it was in type.³ Mrs Gaskell had already sent at least the first

nine chapters to Forster for approval. He had urged her to continue with the

story.⁴ Having consulted Forster about the likelihood of Dickens's including

a strike in Hard Times, then in course of publication in Household Words, Mrs

Gaskell referred the question to the author, who assured her he had no intention

of doing so.⁵

By 16 June Dickens had received a considerable amount of manuscript from

¹ Dickens Letters, 11, p. 531, 2 Jan. 1854.

² Ibid, 11, p. 459, 3 May 1853.

³ Ibid, 11, p. 542, 18 Feb. 1854.

⁴ Brotherton Library Leeds, typed copy of a letter from Forster to Mrs Gaskell, 16 Jan. 1854.

⁵ Ibid, Forster to Mrs Gaskell, 18 April 1854; Dickens Letters, 11, p. 554, 21 April [1854]

Mrs Gaskell and was most impressed. He stressed the need for careful division of the story into portions suitable for each episode, and urged her to keep this necessity constantly in mind. He advised her to cut the dialogue between Margaret and her father about the move to Milton and his retirement from the Church to the absolute minimum, fearing that during the long discussion readers would become bored, and in addition the subject was difficult and dangerous. Religious doubt was evidently one kind of controversy Household Words would not meddle with. At this stage Dickens and the printers calculated how much of Mrs Gaskell's writing would provide a suitable length for an episode, and again he offered to suggest a title.¹

Between June and July it appears that some minor disagreement may have occurred between author and editor, as on 22 July 1854 Dickens told his sister-in-law that Wilkie Collins's Hide and Seek was "much beyond Mrs Gaskell, and is in some respects masterly."² Possibly he was not impressed with the batch of manuscript recently received from Mrs Gaskell. Four days later he wrote suggesting more episode divisions, and again requested that dialogue be cut. This was the scene between Margaret, her father, and Mr Thornton,

¹ Dickens Letters, 11, pp. 561-563, 16-17 June 1854.

² Ibid, 11, p. 570, to Georgina Hogarth.

where they discuss the relations between workers and masters, and particularly, strikes. Either Dickens did not see that these discussions were the very meat of the novel, and in this case prefigured the strike scene later, or he realized that they were not suitable for publication in weekly portions, and tried discreetly to warn Mrs Gaskell away from such material. The fifth part, however, the Thornton declaration scene, he approved, despite its length, his reason being, significantly, that "the interest and action are strong." He preferred the more dramatic title North and South to Margaret Hale, and ended his letter by suggesting that publication begin on 2 September, in twenty weekly parts. It seems that Mrs Gaskell had not yet given him any clear direction to divide the story for her, as he again offered to perform this service.¹

Mrs Gaskell replied immediately, stipulating how the advertisements were to be designed, and presumably agreeing to the September publication date.²

On 31 July Dickens wrote requesting her to send back the first batch of manuscript for setting in type. After his experience of her determination over 'The Old Nurse's Story', he carefully worded his offer of alteration - "If I ever have a suggestion to make, I will intimate it on the proof in pencil. You

¹ Dickens Letters, 11, pp. 570-571, 26 July 1854.

² Ibid, 11, p. 572, to Wills, 30 July 1854.

will take no notice of it, if you don't approve of it."¹

The requested batch of manuscript did not arrive, as on 9 August Dickens was suggesting how Wills might tactfully urge Mrs Gaskell to send it.² Once it arrived and was set in type, Dickens was "alarmed by the quantity", fearing the worst -

It is not objectionable for a beginning, but would become so in the progress of a not compactly written and artfully devised story. It suggests to me (but I may be wrong) that the Whitefriars casting-off was incorrect³

These were the foundations for most of the trouble with North and South - Mrs Gaskell was not prompt in sending manuscript and returning proof, the printer's calculations proved incorrect, and the length of the story combined with its discursive nature made it unsuitable for weekly publication.

By the next day Dickens realized Mrs Gaskell had not made the alterations he suggested on 16 June, and wrote curtly asking her to do so - "This is the place where we agreed there should be a great condensation" - there is no

¹ Dickens Letters, 11, p. 573, 31 July 1854.
² Ibid, 11, p. 578, to Wills.
³ Ibid, 11, p. 580, to Wills, 19 August 1854.

evidence to corroborate this statement. He then informed her of a chapter break he had made, at which point Mrs Gaskell has written on the letter "I've not a notion what he means."¹ Her comment is unlikely to refer to the chapter break, but probably refers to his request for compression. She had either forgotten, or disregarded, his letter in June, which makes it unlikely that she had ever agreed to compression at this point.

Dickens wrote in alarm to Wills that if more of North and South were printed each week than had been customary with Hard Times, "we shall ruin Household Words. Therefore it must at all hazards be kept down."² Three days later he commented grimly, "She can't take out too much."³ It did not make matters easier that for much of this period Dickens was on holiday in Boulogne.

Wills apparently felt the difficulties of the situation more acutely than Dickens, and had to be calmed by his superior. Dickens divided the proofs, and there was not time to wait for Mrs Gaskell to approve them before going to press. "As to Forster, put him entirely out of the question and leave the settlement of any such dispute to me ..."⁴ Forster, who had warmly encouraged

¹ Dickens Letters, 11, p. 582, to Mrs Gaskell, 20 Aug. 1854.

² Ibid, 11, p. 581, 20 Aug. 1854.

³ Ibid, 11 p. 582, to Wills, 23 Aug. 1854.

⁴ Ibid, 11, p. 583, to Wills, 24 Aug. 1854.

Mrs Gaskell to write the novel, had been asked to intervene on her behalf, an indication that Mrs Gaskell felt she was being too forcefully and unsympathetically handled by Dickens. Dickens now claims that the main difficulty lies in the printers' incorrect casting-off; had he known how it was to be, he could not in his senses have accepted the story.

The almost unbelievable misfortune of wrong calculations on the part of both Dickens and the printers, was the prime cause of discontent. All might have been well, had Mrs Gaskell submitted quietly to Dickens's ruthless cutting, but she refused to alter her first concept of the novel and have its important theme destroyed. Not once in Dickens's letters on the novel did he comment on this aspect; his only interest was in the strong scenes of dramatic interest. He ignored the basic theme of the problems of relationships between masters and men, and Margaret's growing awareness of its complexity. On 21 September he was criticizing Mrs Gaskell's dialogue, and the following month accounted for a drop in sales by blaming Mrs Gaskell's story - "so divided, [it] is wearisome in the last degree." He now considered that "It would have scant attraction enough if the casting in Whitefriars had been

[Faint, illegible text at the bottom of the page, likely a reference or footnote.]

correct; but thus wire-drawn it is a dreary business."¹

On 29 October Dickens agreed to Mr Gaskell's request that his wife's novel be allotted more space in the periodical.² Dickens had been forced to increase the length of each episode of Hard Times in the last book,³ so Mrs Gaskell was not alone in finding compression at this stage difficult. From mid-November each episode of North and South is longer, and the last two instalments are longer by two pages of Household Words than these.

It would be interesting to hear Mrs Gaskell's side of the story.

Unfortunately none of her letters to Dickens during the course of writing the novel survive, but she was greatly upset by the troubles it caused. Dickens told Wilkie Collins that she had even written to Wills,

saying she must particularly stipulate not to have her proofs touched, 'even by Mr. Dickens.' That immortal creature had gone over the proofs with great pains - had of course taken out the stiflings - hard-plungings, lungeings, and other convulsions - and had also taken out her weakenings and damagings³ of her own effects.⁴

She was in a most unfortunate position. Strongly convinced of the strength

¹ Dickens Letters, 11, p. 598, to Wills, 14 Oct. 1854.

² A. B. Hopkins, 'Dickens and Mrs. Gaskell', Huntington Library Quarterly, ix, 1946, p. 372.

³ John Butt and Kathleen Tillotson, Dickens at Work, 1957, pp. 202-203.

⁴ Dickens Letters, 11, p. 646, 24 March, 1855.

of her story, she was made to feel responsible for two bad mistakes of judgement at the Household Words office. Firstly, the casting-off inaccuracy, and secondly Dickens's failure to see, after reading a considerable amount of the story, that in theme and general purpose it would not suit weekly serialization. It was a fault of judgement he was to repeat later with A Day's Ride and A Strange Story in All The Year Round. For his part, he was not used to the resistance to editorial control maintained by Mrs Gaskell.¹ His first priority was naturally the success of his periodical. With Mrs Gaskell's story the interest lagged and he sensed a fall in circulation, so that he could not allow it to over-run the stipulated length, and in fact probably wished to quickly end it, as later with Lever's A Day's Ride.

It is difficult to see whether North and South did cause a fall in circulation as Dickens claimed. William E. Buckler,² giving figures of the half-yearly profits for the periodical, shows that in the half year during which Mrs Gaskell's novel was published profits did not fall by any significant amount. It did not advance the circulation as Hard Times had done, but Dickens would

¹ See pp. 111 ff. above.

² 'Dickens's Success with Household Words', Dickensian, XLVI, Sept. 1950, p. 201.

hardly have expected that. In All The Year Round Dickens considered himself fortunate to find a novelist capable of maintaining a circulation recently boosted by one of his own novels.

Mrs Gaskell worked hard to have her copy ready in time. Catherine Winkworth described her

writing furiously, thirty pages a week; expects to finish in ten days. Mr. Dickens writes to her praisingly, but he does not please me, and I hope she won't be 'wiled by his fause flattering tongue' into thinking him true and trustworthy, like Mr. Forster.¹

This over-work and Dickens's criticisms, however persuasively and tactfully worded, made Mrs Gaskell dissatisfied with her work. A note of distaste and weariness appears in her letters, which was never equalled even after the troubles with the Life of Charlotte Brontë and her illness while writing Wives and Daughters. After what must have been an encouraging letter from her editor, she replied:

I was very much gratified by your note the other day;

¹ Susanna Winkworth, ed. Letters and Memorials of Catherine Winkworth, 1, p. 472.

very much indeed. I dare say I shall like my story, when I am a little further from it; at present I can only feel depressed about it, I meant it to have been so much better. I send what I am afraid you will think too large a batch of it by this post what I send today is meant to be crammed & stuffed into Janry 20th; and I'm afraid I've nearly as much more for Jany 27.

It is 33 pages of my writing that I send today. I have tried to shorten & compress it, both because it is a dull piece, & to get it into reasonable length, but there were a whole catalogue of facts to be got over: and what I want to tell you now is this, - Mr. Gaskell has looked this piece well over, so I don't think there will be any carelessness left in it, & so there ought not to be any misprints; therefore I never wish to see its face again;¹ but, if you will keep the MS for me, & shorten it as you think best for HW. I shall be very glad. Shortened I see it must be.

I think a better title than N. & S. would have been 'Death & Variations'. There are 5 deaths, each beautifully suited to the character of the individual.²

By this time she did not even care if Dickens altered and shortened it.

¹ See also Gaskell Letters, no. 222, to Eliza Fox, 24 [?25] Dec. 1854.

² Ibid, no. 220, to Dickens, [?17 Dec. 1854]. The last remark suggests that Dickens had teased her about the number of deaths in her stories, see p. 125 above.

In January 1855, as she was preparing her novel for publication in book form, Mrs Gaskell told Anna Jameson some of the North and South troubles.

There seems to have been a series of calamitous misunderstandings -

I made a half-promise ... to Mr. Dickens, which he understood as a whole one; and though I had the plot and characters in my head long ago, I have often been in despair about the working of them out; because of course, in this way of publishing it, I had to write pretty hard without waiting for the happy leisure hours.¹ And then 20 numbers was, I found my allowance; instead of the too scant 22, which I had fancied were included in 'five months';² and at last the story is huddled & hurried up; especially in the rapidity with which the sudden death of Mr. Bell, succeeds to the sudden death of Mr. Hale. But what could I do? Every page was grudged me, just at last, when I did certainly infringe all the bounds & limits they set me as to quantity. Just at the very last I was compelled to desperate compression.³

She asked for advice about expanding the ending, and at this stage added the chapters describing Margaret's later visits to Helstone and expanded the account of her visit to Oxford. Chapter titles, headings and other revisions were made,

1 A remark which almost echoes Dickens's - see p. ¹¹⁸~~26~~ above.

2 In fact, Dickens originally stipulated twenty numbers (see p. 132 above), and eventually Mrs Gaskell was granted twenty-two.

3 Gaskell Letters, no. 225, [Jan. 1855].

all focussing attention on Margaret's development and making it more credible at the end of the novel.

Even after all the troubles with North and South, Dickens still valued Mrs Gaskell as a contributor. Congratulating her on the conclusion of her story, he encouraged her to continue contributing - "I sincerely wish everything between us to be beyond the possibility of misunderstanding or reservation."¹ Despite such warm assurances, things were never the same again between them. Mrs Gaskell had discovered how forceful Dickens was prepared to be with her, and began to see that not all her work was suitable for his periodical; he had found a contributor who refused to unquestioningly accept his editorial directions. They were to be more wary of each other in future, and recognise the limitations Household Words placed on their relationship. Mrs Gaskell's short stories still appeared occasionally during 1855, but Dickens treated her with care -

Half a Lifetime Ago will be well divided, I think, as you propose. I have marked a place at page 235 where the effect would be obviously served by making

¹ Dickens Letters, 11, p. 618, 27 Jan.1855.

a new chapter. Is such a thing to be done with that lady?

If so, do it.¹

She evidently promised a story for the 1855 Christmas number, but did not have it written in time. Dickens was careful not to criticize - it "was not your fault or anybody's ..."² He was obviously not confident about the security of their relationship.

During 1857 Mrs Gaskell contributed nothing to the periodical, but in 1858 the serialization of the 'nouvelle' 'My Lady Ludlow' began, apparently with no difficulties. Dickens's only comment to Wills was, "I hope Mrs Gaskell will not stop, for more than a week at all events."³

In 1859 their relationship was marred by the scandal surrounding Dickens's separation from his wife, and by the editors' unethical conduct in January, publishing a Chip referring back to Mrs Gaskell's paper 'Disappearances' alleging and apologizing for statements she never made.⁴ Mrs Gaskell tried to prevent her name being put on the list of contributors to All The Year Round. However, she continued to contribute to it quite frequently. In December 1859

Dickens offered her 250 gns. for a 22 week serial - an offer which, surprisingly,

1 Dickens Letters, 11, p. 693, to Wills, 25 Sept. 1855.

2 Ibid, 11, p. 719, to Mrs Gaskell, 2 Jan. 1856.

3 Ibid, 111, p. 36, to Wills, 9 Aug. 1858.

4 Gaskell Letters, no. 418, to Charles Eliot Norton, 9 March [1859].

Mrs Gaskell was reluctant to reject!¹ Her experiences with North and South had not completely turned her against weekly serialization. However, in the years that followed she found her new publisher George Smith's Cornhill Magazine a more congenial medium for her short stories and sketches, and apart from several pieces published in Dickens's periodical in 1863 which she could not place elsewhere, there is a significant drop in the number of her contributions to All The Year Round.

'The Grey Woman' proved too long for the Christmas number and had to be published in parts in the New Year, 1861.² Mrs Gaskell still seemed unable or unwilling to gauge the length of story suitable for the weekly periodical. 'A Dark Night's Work' was divided and its title altered by Dickens, obviously by agreement with Mrs Gaskell.³ By this time she must have trusted his judgement in such matters, or possibly did not particularly care about the fate of this story. Dickens accepted her unprofessional methods with a wry smile - "I see that Mrs Gaskell has put a name to her story - at the end, instead of the beginning - which is characteristic."⁴

1 Dickens Letters, 111, p. 139, to Mrs Gaskell, 20 Dec. 1859; Gaskell Letters, no. 452, to George Smith, 27 Dec. [1859].

2 Dickens Letters, 111, p. 193, to Georgina Hogarth, 28 Nov. 1860.

3 Ibid, 111, p. 335, to Wills, 18 Jan. 1863.

4 Dickens Letters, 111, p. 320, to Wills, 21 Nov. 1862.

At this time Mrs Gaskell wrote a strange letter in response to a request for contributions to a new weekly periodical. Despite its hurried curtness, and some inaccuracies - she had written more than six papers for Household Words - the letter may well accurately reflect her feelings at this time about writing for weekly periodicals, and about her relationship with Dickens:

I am not in the habit of writing for periodicals, except occasionally [sic] (as a personal mark of respect & regard to Mr Dickens) in Household Words.

I never fixed any price on what I did then, nor do I know at what rate he pays me. I choose my own subjects when I write, and treat them in the style that I myself prefer. But half a dozen papers in H.W. are all I ever wrote for any periodical as I dislike & disapprove of such writing/for myself/ as a general thing.¹

All in all, Mrs Gaskell considered that she had been allowed considerable freedom by Dickens. She published more work in his periodicals than anywhere else, and contributed almost from the beginning of her literary career until her death. Dickens's editorial policies did not always suit her, and her novel

¹ Gaskell Letters, no. 519, to an unknown correspondent, 11 Dec. 1862.

North and South would have been better not published in weekly parts, but in general Dickens knew that the quality of her work outshone that of the majority of his other contributors. She did not stretch herself to provide outstanding work for his periodicals, soon realizing that her second-rate productions such as 'Crowley Castle' were also accepted.

In the 1850's, before the arrival of the cheap, quality monthlies, Household Words was the most congenial periodical to which Mrs Gaskell could contribute, and it provided the opportunity for publication of the many fascinating journalistic sketches she produced. She was not sufficiently business-like in her dealings with Dickens to satisfy him or Wills - any editor could be annoyed at copy consistently arriving late, or at his suggestions being totally ignored. At the same time, Dickens's impulsive and rather impatient nature, and the cavalier attitude he adopted with most contributors, demanded more of Mrs Gaskell than was perhaps reasonable. Although Edgar Wright¹ may dislike judging Mrs Gaskell from the point of a busy wife and mother who wrote only in what she herself described as her "happy leisure hours", the fact remains that this was how she wrote for a considerable number of years.

¹ Wright, p. 4.

She was also a writer of reputation and some experience before she began writing for Dickens, and her dignity and pride made her stand firm on editorial issues about which she felt strongly. At the end of all discussion, it is irrefutable that Dickens provided a vehicle for her writing at just the right moment, and with his assistance (which she did not always find agreeable) she was forced to become more professional in her writing and in her arrangements with editors.

iv. Mrs Gaskell's contributions to 'Household Words' and 'All the Year Round.'

Mrs Gaskell was in an almost unique position as a regular contributor to Dickens's periodicals. She contributed to them from the inception of Household Words until her death, and was the only contributor of such long standing outside the London circle. Many of the regular writers were 'Dickens's young men', a close-knit social group who followed Dickens's lead in writing lively articles on subjects principally associated with the Metropolis. Mrs Gaskell was never a member of this circle; she rarely met Dickens socially, and then only at large London parties where conversation about the periodical was unlikely to have occurred. Forster was the only person besides Dickens who had an interest in the periodical with whom she had much contact, so that she relied on Dickens's letters and the periodicals themselves to show her what was accepted and desired. As an outsider, she was able to enjoy an independence rarely experienced by the London writers, and she brought to the journals a fresh viewpoint, based on her life in the industrial north and in the countryside, which was outside the experience of most of the regular

contributors.

This unique position was less evident in the early years. Her friends the Howitts had also been invited to contribute¹ to Household Words and had work published there frequently in the early years. In response to their request for further details of what was required,

Dickens explained:

The kind of papers of which I stand most in need are short stories, with such a general purpose in them as we all three have in all we do....Whatever you may write earnestly and at your own pleasure, will be most welcome to me. All social evils, and all home affections and associations, I am particularly anxious to deal with.²

The stress on the need for purpose in the literary content of the periodical, specifically "social evils" and "home affections and associations", dogged their writing and Mrs Gaskell's for some time. It was only as she grew in confidence, and saw this narrow basis of intention broaden as the years passed, that she felt free to abandon ~~them~~ ~~it~~.

1 Frederic G. Kitton, The Minor Writings of Charles Dickens, 1900, p. 111, 19 Feb. 1850. The phrasing of this letter is very similar to that of the letter inviting Mrs Gaskell to contribute.
2 Ibid, p.111, 23 Feb. 1850.

For a time Harriet Martineau vied with Mrs Gaskell in producing stories based on life in the country, but she soon became concerned in writing articles on manufacturing processes. It was in particular the wide circulation of Household Words which attracted Miss Martineau, but soon she came in conflict with the periodical's principles and policies,¹ and ceased contributing.

Mrs Gaskell had some reservations about contributing to Household Words. Although Dickens did his best to dispel these, they foreshadow events later in their relationship. She feared writing would interfere with her domestic obligations - Dickens pointed out that writing a short story would be less time-consuming than writing a long one. She also feared she would be unable to write within the limitations of space imposed by publication in a weekly periodical - Dickens generously offered that a story might be spread over up to four episodes,

1 Harriet Martineau, Autobiography, 1877, [second edition], 3 vols., II, pp. 329 and 419.

1 Letter to Long Collection, New York Public Library, 5 Feb. 1850, misquoting to and quoted from by A. B. Hopkins, 'Dickens and Mrs Gaskell', Washington Library Quarterly, 11, 416, 1946, pp. 357-365.

preferably not more.¹ Clearly, then, Dickens originally intended short stories for Household Words to be complete in one issue, but Mrs Gaskell acted on his generous offer and from the beginning usually provided stories spread over several episodes.

Few writers offered such a variety of work to the two periodicals as Mrs Gaskell - serial novels and 'nouvelles', short stories, articles, poems, and special contributions to suit Dickens's outline plans for the Christmas numbers. Despite this variety of genres, Mrs Gaskell was capable of writing well in each.

Most of Mrs Gaskell's articles were written for Household Words in a concentrated period between June 1851 and August 1855. The first was prompted by a series of articles in the periodical on the Detective and Protective Police - an indication that, at this time, Mrs Gaskell was a regular reader. She relates various anecdotes about mysterious

¹ Letter in Berg Collection, New York Public Library, 5 Feb. 1850, referred to and quoted from by A.B.Hopkins, 'Dickens and Mrs Gaskell', Huntington Library Quarterly, IX, Aug. 1946, pp. 357-385.

disappearances, all stories from the past which might have been solved had the Detective Police existed in those times. The article indicates three important features of her style - her interest in the past, her ability to smoothly relate some of her store of anecdotes within a loose framework, and her relish for the mysterious.

The loose, rambling nature of the article is framed in a suitably informal narrative - "Two more stories of disappearance, and I have done. I will give you the last in date first, because it is the most melancholy; and we will wind up cheerfully (after a fashion)." (p.249) and, in the final paragraph:

Once more, let me say, I am thankful I live in the days of the Detective Police; if I am murdered, or commit bigamy, - at any rate my friends will have the comfort of knowing all about it.

While this article is not of major importance, it is a useful occasional piece - very suitable, with its light-hearted tone and the general interest of its contents, for the purposes of the periodical, while the chatty narrative tone establishes the fireside relationship with the reader which Dickens desired for his periodical.

The interest of the readers in the short piece is indicated by the amount of further information they sent to Dickens, published in the 'Chips' section.¹

A year passed before publication of Mrs Gaskell's next article, 'The Schah's English Gardener'. This also is an occasional piece, the outcome of a conversation with Mr Burton, the gardener at Teddesley Park in Staffordshire, at one time a gardener to the Schah of Persia. Mrs Gaskell probably thought that this would appeal to Dickens as almost every issue of Household Words contained an account of life in another country. A high proportion concerned life in Eastern countries, stressing exotic and quaint features. In contrast Mrs Gaskell's is a very down to earth account, in the style and manner appropriate to ~~the~~ gardener "whose appearance would announce his nation all the world over" (p. 317) -

The dinner was brought in on a pewter tray; but Mr Burton remarked that the pewter dishes were very dingy. (p. 318)

Mr Burton faces numerous problems - racial prejudice, labourers

¹ Household Words, III, 21 June 1851, pp. 305-306, 'A Disappearance'; IV, 21 Feb. 1852, pp. 513-514, 'A Disappearance Cleared Up'; XIX, 8 Jan. 1859, pp. 139-140, 'Character-Murder'.

refusing to work for him because the Schah does not pay them, illness and loneliness. Mrs Gaskell stresses the monotony, degradation and disordered state of life in Teheran, concluding with the comment:

The remembrance of Mr Burton's Oriental life must be in strange contrast to the regular, well-ordered comfort of his present existence. (p. 321)

This short article, while possessing no arresting qualities, satisfied Dickens's demands in being interesting, pithy and lively, and it illustrates Mrs Gaskell's ability to write pointed, concise journalism.

Her first outstanding article appeared in January of the following year - 'Cumberland Sheep-Shearers'. It is an account of a visit to an old-fashioned sheep-shearing at a farm high in the Dales above Keswick. The article is full of amusing observations and asides -

We passed through Keswick, and saw the groups of sketching, boating tourists, on whom we, as residents for a month in the neighbourhood, looked down with some contempt as mere strangers, who were sure to go about blundering, or losing their way, or being imposed upon by guides, or admiring the wrong things, and never seeing the right things. (pp. 445-446)

There are fine descriptions of the walk, the view and the farm, all relying on a few small details to evoke the scene. A friendly, companionable relationship is established with the reader so that asides such as this can be ventured (a technique familiar in Cranford) -

Do you know what a 'master's cupboard' is? Mr. Wordsworth could have told you; ay, and have shown you one at Rydal Mount, too. (p. 447)

The account of the shearing is clear and succinct, and the Dalesman's year is described by the old man who owns the farm. Isabel and Tom provide romantic interest, but even they do not escape the narrator's humorous eye. Mrs Gaskell contrives to arouse our interest not so much in the shearing, as in the details of the house, the land and the people. A way of life is evoked. An atmosphere of plenty, of jovial good will, cleanliness and skill, generosity and humour is conveyed. The sense of warmth, homeliness and colour thus established is very welcome in a January number. 'Cumberland Sheep-Shearers' deserves to be considered as Mrs Gaskell's best piece of journalism for Household Words.

Considering the success of this article, it is surprising that Mrs Gaskell allowed almost a year to pass before having another article

published in Household Words. The cause was probably that during this period she was kept busy supplying chapters of Cranford. 'Traits and Stories of the Huguenots' is another collection of anecdotes and stories concerning the plight of the Huguenots after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The characteristic loose introduction - "I have always been interested in the conversation of any one who could tell me anything about the Huguenots" - is intentionally casual as Mrs Gaskell relied on the relationship it established with her readers to write in a natural, rambling, interesting way. It is unlike the majority of Household Words contributions, which open with a contrived pun or similar artful, rather artificial device to engage the reader's attention. This calls for a type of stylised writing which Mrs Gaskell did not care to provide, and which in her case was unnecessary - she could interest and amuse her readers without it. All her journalism, and many of her stories, in Household Words stand out for this reason alone - she had sufficient confidence in her own abilities not to be drawn into the style of the Dickens set.

Each anecdote is made interesting and personal by the amount of

individual detail allotted to it, and by Mrs Gaskell's fine delineations of the feelings of her characters. This is particularly true in the story of the Lefebvre family. Although she is mainly concerned with a time of tragedy and danger, Mrs Gaskell confidently indulges in a little humour, as in M. Lefebvre's exhortations to his tired horse to hurry home after learning the terrible news of the new persecutions of the Huguenots.

The article is warmed by Mrs Gaskell's sympathetic interest in and understanding of France and the French. While it is not outstanding, it is a competent and interesting piece of journalism, fulfilling Dickens's demands in providing information in a very palatable form.

This article was quickly followed by two more. 'Modern Greek Songs' appeared on 25 February 1854. It has the familiar casual opening:

I have lately met with a French book which has interested me much; and, as it is now out of print, and was never very extensively known, I imagine some account of it may not be displeasing to the readers of Household Words. (p. 25)

Her facts are drawn almost entirely from the introduction to this book, C. Fauriel's Chants Populaires de la Grèce Moderne. It is clear where her own interests lie: "[the] principal interest... [is in] the habits

and customs and traditions of a people whom we are apt to moan over..." (p.25)

As usual, there are some amusing asides - "the mother ... could hardly wait until the improvised song was finished (I have sometimes felt as impatient over an improvised sermon)..." - a clear case of Mrs Gaskell taking advantage of the shelter of anonymity. Similarly, on the custom of courting by throwing an apple or flower : "If the former missile be chosen, one can only hope that the young lady is apt at catching, as a blow from a moderately hard apple is rather too violent a token of love." (p. 26) On occasion she can embellish Fauriel's account with illustrations of her own, including an amusing Lancashire tale.

The article ends neatly and idiosyncratically - "Reading any good ballad is like eating game; almost every thing else seems poor and tasteless after it." (p. 32) The delightful lively writing serves the periodical well, and three months later it was followed by a similar piece, on 'Company Manners'. At first the opening of this article seems muddled, but this conveys the rambling linking of associations in reverie. It begins with Victor Cousin's article on Madame de Sablé in the Revue des Deux Mondes, passes briefly over details of the famous French 'salons'

and hence to advice from French friends on the art of giving a successful evening party. The article, in common with most of its predecessors, draws on Mrs Gaskell's fund of anecdotes and on her deep interest in French life. Mrs Gaskell applies the advice she has received to life in England, thus calling forth such amusing tales as her experience of eating a white kid glove with Vsechamel sauce (p. 325). Many of her remarks contain sound sense, as on furniture, food and the art of being a good hostess. What might have been merely a dry list of advice is enlivened by detail, anecdote and aside into a delightful piece of journalism.

More than a year passed before another article from Mrs Gaskell appeared in Household Words,. 'An Accursed Race' resembles 'Traits and Stories of the Huguenots' in being a collection of details about a persecuted race, the Cagot people. It is a brief, interesting history of their persecution, clearly expressed, but lacking personal involvement on the author's part. This deprives it of the sparkle and interest which fill many of the previous articles. Perhaps Mrs Gaskell was dissatisfied with writing articles for Dickens's periodical - this was the last she contributed to Household Words - and therefore did not put

all her talent and energy into its composition.

Only one more article was sent to Dickens - 'An Italian Institution' published in All the Year Round on 21 March 1863. It is concerned with the history of the Camorra. While being very clear and succinct, it again lacks any infusion of personal interest. Its abrupt ending, unusual in Mrs Gaskell, suggests there may have been interference in the periodical's office.

The article was closely based - to the point of literal translation in places - on Marc Monnier's La Camorra, Mystères de Naples, 1862, a copy of which was probably before her as she wrote.¹ She omits, or briefly summarizes, Monnier's detailed passages, and excludes his passionate denunciations of the Camorra as "une association de gens du peuple corrompus et violents, rançonnant par l'intimidation les vicieux et les lâches". (p. 10) Perhaps with the family audience of All the Year Round in mind, Mrs Gaskell excludes many of Monnier's more colourful details, and makes general observations which comprehend all his exciting and horrifying 'case-study' stories.

¹ Certainly at one time she had a copy - Gaskell Sale Catalogue, item 585.

The article is a skilful weaving together of all the salient details of Monnier's book, but has no life of its own to commend it as one of Mrs Gaskell's better pieces.

These eight articles illustrate Mrs Gaskell's claims to competent journalism, at times rising to excellence. All share an interest in the past, particularly in social history, in the life, customs and traditions of ordinary people. They bear witness to Mrs Gaskell's interest in the Continent, and her particular sympathy with France. Her love of the anecdote, her fund of memories and stories, and her ability to colour an old story or a detail from a book with a wealth of personal detail are all evident. However, her early tentative steps to draw her own attitudes, feelings and observations into her articles - most successfully achieved in 'Cumberland Sheep-Shearers' - were abandoned in the later pieces, although in her work for the monthlies Mrs Gaskell was exposing her personality with ever increasing confidence, a policy which resulted in some of her finest writing. Perhaps she found it difficult to achieve this in the short space of a weekly article - it is perhaps significant that 'Cumberland Sheep-Shearers' is long by Dickens's

standards - and therefore reserved her best journalism for the monthlies. At the same time, matters which were mainly factual, which would enlighten the readers of Household Words, and which would be relatively easy to write in a clear way, were sent to Dickens. Many were synopses of books, a form of journalism Dickens often commissioned from his regular staff (though this was not the case with Mrs Gaskell) as useful fillers. While he may not have been as pleased with them as with some of Mrs Gaskell's earlier articles, he was aware that her journalism was a valuable asset. At its best it could make a weekly issue outstanding, at its worst it was considerably more competent than the majority of contributions he received.

The bulk of Mrs Gaskell's writing for the two periodicals was fiction, although to clearly distinguish between fact and fiction in her work is not always easy. Dry facts are brought to life by some fictitious embellishments, while many of her stories are based on old legends, or a true story she has been told, or an incident or character known to her personally. Apart from the work for the Christmas

numbers, North and South and Cranford, thirteen pieces of fiction were published in Dickens's periodicals, beginning with the first issue of Household Words and ending with 'The Cage at Cranford', published on 28 November 1863.

At first, influenced by the policies expressed in Dickens's letter and in the Preliminary Word, and possibly reinforced by correspondence with the Howitts, Mrs Gaskell's contributions have a moral aim, often explicitly stated. She had been writing more broadly than this before 1850, but presumably felt that she must comply with Dickens's wishes. 'Lizzie Leigh', which opens the first number of Household Words, is concerned with the plight of a fallen woman - or, more exactly, it examines the attitudes of others towards her. Possibly to soften the contemporary implications of her social criticism, or in order to be able to show the outcome of the event after many years have passed, Mrs Gaskell bases her tale thirteen years in the past. It opens on Christmas Day 1836, with the death of Mr Leigh finally relenting and forgiving his daughter. Mrs Gaskell shows how his previous unforgiving attitude - not his daughter's sin - had split the family,

and turned wife against husband. Mrs Leigh goes to Manchester to search for her daughter.

Throughout the story there is explicit stress on the religious elements of the story, particularly in parallels with the Biblical tale of the Prodigal Son. Mr Leigh and his son are both portrayed in a poor light because of their ungracious, relentless condemnation of Lizzie. Susan Palmer is by contrast a source of goodness.

Despite the Manchester setting, Mrs Gaskell is not concerned here ~~with~~ ^{with} solely problems of industrial cities, although the corrupting influence of city life has contributed to Lizzie's downfall. There is little stress on Manchester life to bring the city and its people to life, as in Mary Barton. Instead, Mrs Gaskell is concerned with homes and families, not outside issues. The problem is timeless and not confined to any particular locality.

There is some weakness - the religious stress is rather irksome, and moments of great emotion are not always handled carefully,¹ but

¹ E.g. Lizzie's grief.

the power of the characters and their feelings mitigates for this.

There is some fumbling in the writing which may indicate that Mrs Gaskell was tempted to sidetrack from her main purpose. On page 5 she writes: "I need not tell you how the mother spent the weary hours. And yet I will tell you something". This suggests she was more interested in Mrs Leigh's distress than in ~~her~~ moral theme. The lack of conciseness may have prompted Dickens's remark that the story was "very good, but long".¹

Of all Mrs Gaskell's work for his periodicals, this reveals most clearly her obedience to Dickens's directives. She followed his advice in not allowing Lizzie to completely abandon her child,² and the story's moral theme and social setting comply with Dickens's suggestions. Mrs Gaskell took up his hint that she need not always complete her stories in one number, and 'Lizzie Leigh' divides very naturally into three parts.

¹ Dickens Letters, II, p. 207, 28 Feb. 1850, to Wills.

² Ibid, II, pp. 210, 14 March 1850, to Mrs Gaskell.

The characters live through their speech - the Leighs' dialect, Mr Palmer's Manchester speech - and through the detailed description of their surroundings. They rise above the level of mere instruments in a moral drama, and become credible people.

The early success of this three part tale was not immediately pursued, for it was not until 16 November that 'The Well of Pen-Morfa' began publication, despite pressure from Dickens for more contributions.¹

The vivid details of scenery, observed on Mrs Gaskell's holidays in Wales, are perhaps the finest parts of this two part sketch. Rather than come straight to the point of her story, Mrs Gaskell first sets the context of the narration, and briefly narrates another true tragic story. Nest Gwynn's story is set in the past. Spread over two numbers of Household Words, it gives the impression that it would have been more powerful if, by eliminating some of the superfluties, Mrs Gaskell had condensed it into one episode. Perhaps she was still not sure of

¹ Dickens Letters, II, pp. 220 and 225.

the Household Words limitations of length, and sent the script to Dickens undivided. He, at this time, was still encouraging her confidence and therefore was not likely to suggest cutting on a large scale. Besides, by the standard of much of the fiction published in his periodical, this was a good contribution. The language and dialogue are not as powerful as in the preceding story, perhaps because Mrs Gaskell was not as familiar with Welsh dialect and accent and therefore could not reproduce it as faithfully as Manchester and Lancashire dialect.

The tale itself is a good one, as pathetic and moving as Dickens could wish, but not quite as ably told as he might have wished from Mrs Gaskell. It was quickly followed by another sad story, 'The Heart of John Middleton',¹ divided in three parts but published as one complete unit. Dickens greeted this enthusiastically, although he would have preferred a happy ending.² At this time Mrs Gaskell

1 28 Dec. 1850.

2 Dickens Letters, II, p. 250, 12 Dec. 1850, to Wills.

was quite prepared to accept his advice, and the ending would have been altered had her letter arrived in time.¹ As in 'Lizzie Leigh', although the setting is industrial Lancashire, it is not problems of industrial life which are the main concern, but a timeless moral situation. Particularly vivid are the scenes of John Middleton's degenerate youth, and of his conversion to the Evangelical faith. Middleton himself tells the tale, in suitable rough speech laced with dialect which brings the tale to life. In comparison, Nelly is uninteresting, an inevitable problem in the portrayal of a good character in this type of moral story, and one which at this stage in her career Mrs Gaskell was unable to overcome.

Whether at Dickens's suggestion, or following her own inclinations, Mrs Gaskell left this string of morbid subjects, two of which were dominated and constricted by a moral theme, to turn in late 1851 to the Cranford papers, her most successful contribution to Dickens's periodicals. While these were in progress she wrote nothing else for

¹ Dickens Letters, II, p. 255, 20 Dec. 1850, to Mrs Gaskell.

² It is interesting that even at this early stage Dickens "could not think of making so important an alteration in Mrs Gaskell's story without her consent". Dickens Letters, II, p. 250, 14 Dec. 1850, to Wills.

him, apart from the commissioned Christmas work and a crop of articles, which probably required less concentrated effort in composition than fiction. Apart from 'The Heart of John Middleton', Mrs Gaskell was still not producing short stories complete in one number for Household Words, although a brief look through any of the numbers would have shown her that this was the usual mode of fiction writing published there.

While feeling her work required more than the space possible in one issue, she was not using the necessary serial division to the best advantage.

Perhaps with the completeness and constructional artistry of the Cranford episodes behind her, Mrs Gaskell could see the advantages of planning with serial division in mind. They were first exploited in Morton Hall¹, where the Cranford influence can also be seen in the personalities of the narrator and her sister and in the substitution of the name Drumble for Manchester.

The rambling history of old Morton Hall and its occupants forms the plot of the story. The elderly spinster, Miss Bridget Sidebotham,

1 19 and 26 Nov. 1853.

who performs the task of narrator, lives in her memories of the past and has a love of traditions and old ways; to her the Royalist side was unquestionably in the right in the Civil War, and to pull down the old Hall would be a worse piece of work than the Repeal of the Corn Laws. Her asides are amusing:

We did not choose to ask the common people - many of them were weavers for the Drumble manufacturers, and no longer decent hedgers and ditchers

Mrs Gaskell succeeds admirably in making such prejudiced old characters lovable and sympathetic. Asides such as these, which conflict with the social attitudes of Household Words, are acceptable because they are voiced by harmless old ladies whose actions demonstrate their fundamental goodness - and idiosyncracies are always interesting.

The narrative is skilfully patterned by the thematic use of the curse, giving an interesting sense of impending doom. Alice Carr's curse on the Mortons at the time of the Reformation is seen working itself out until it is finally exorcised by the marriage of a Morton and a Carr, and the demolition of the old Hall. The end of the first episode is a natural watershed in the story.

The tale includes thrilling scenes as well as poignant and pathetic ones. Traces of Cranford are found everywhere - in the humane gesture of the narrator and her sister shielding the poverty of Miss Phillis and the young Lord from the prying eyes of the villagers, and in the Mary Smith humour of

... in which [bonfire] they burnt a figure, which some called old Noll, and others Richard Carr : and it might do for either, folk said, for unless they had given it the name of a man, most people would have taken it for a forked log of wood.

The many fine details of the tale, its careful structuring, disguised by the easy flow of the garrulous, naïve narrative, make this a fine short story. John Forster certainly considered it so, disagreeing with the author's belief that the second chapter was inferior to the first, and commenting that he found the whole tale a pleasing unity, with "the sad and the smiling ... charmingly intermixed".¹

This fine tale was followed by an even more delightful piece, 'My French Master'.² This, like 'The Squire's Story' written for the

1 Brotherton Collection, Leeds University, copy of part of a letter to Mrs Gaskell, 21 Nov. 1853.

2 17 and 24 Dec. 1853.

Christmas number of 1853, was based on a Knutsford reminiscence,¹ although Mrs Gaskell adds to the portrait considerably. As so often occurred in the articles, history is viewed from the standpoint of how it affects the individual, and there is further evidence of Mrs Gaskell's interest in French life.

The story opens no. 195 of Household Words as the first item, the second part appearing in the following number as the second item. This was Dickens's custom with serials (until they became of paramount importance in All the Year Round). If he considered they were good enough, offering a sufficiently interesting and lively opening to a number, they began on the opening page, later episodes appearing gradually ~~gradually~~ further and further on in succeeding issues. It was a considerable honour to open a number - the usual position for fiction being in the middle of the number as the third or fourth item - and one which Mrs Gaskell frequently enjoyed.

The plot of 'My French Master' is interesting in itself, and

1 Esther Alice Chadwick, Mrs Gaskell : Haunts, Homes and Stories, 1913, pp. 20 - 22, headed the belief that M. de Chalabre was based on M. Rogier, the Knutsford dancing-master in Mrs Gaskell's youth.

much more might have been made of it. Instead Mrs Gaskell chooses to give a careful and delicately depicted portrait. The setting is rural, peaceful and pleasant, in contrast with the turbulent life in France which seems so far away across the Channel. Death occurs, but is accepted quietly; very little disturbs the quiet and even tenor of life.

There are two distinct movements in the story, accentuated by the division into episodes, as in 'Morton Hall'. The first half leads up to a pinnacle of hope. M. de Chalabre's life is traced from his first arrival in England as an exile, earning his living by giving French lessons, to the glorious day in 1814 when he returns to France optimistic that his title will be recognised and his lands returned. The second episode opens with his pathetic return to England, sad and disillusioned, and the way in which his hopes are fulfilled in the most unexpected (and almost incredible) way. This dénouement is so pleasant and 'right', with its genial reconciliation of wistful hopes and desires, that on this occasion the reader willingly suspends disbelief.

The story is full of a quiet ironic humour - in the childhood memories of M. de Chalabre's extreme civility and politeness, in the happy life of the young girls on the farm, in the cypher conversations of their parents, in M. de Chalabre's care with his boots, and in the eventual tying together of the opposing elements at the end. It is all told with such evident warmth and affection that it is a pleasure to read.

The tragic events, along with the more pleasant ones, are mediated through the narrator, as in 'Morton Hall' and, more significantly, in Cranford. The lapse of time also serves to soften the harshness of events. The narrator's voice is used to control the story, to give a certain detachment yet a first hand view, and, because of the type of characters used as narrators, to provide an urbane viewpoint. 'My French Master' is an exquisite piece, standing out brilliantly in its Household Words context, and one of Mrs Gaskell's best creations.

Having noted the significant amount these two stories owe to techniques learned from composing Cranford, it is interesting to see

what may be its general influence on the periodical in 1853. There is more fiction set in rural and peaceful surroundings than in previous years. 'The Great Saddleworth Exhibition' in no. 184, although it is ^a more factual and contemporary sketch than a story, resembles Cranford with its ironically humorous, sympathetic narrator and the spinster ladies who resemble the inhabitants of Cranford. 'The Blankshire Hounds' (no. 201) is in many ways a sort of mirror image of 'The Squire's Story', and 'A Leaf from the Parish Register' (no. 198) centres on an exciting incident marking the very ordinary life of a parish clerk in a rural area, who tells his story at a quiet and fairly even pace. As for Miss Matty, Time has tempered the original feelings and excitement.

The rural society, and interest in country customs and rural characters, which may well stem from the popularity of Cranford, are also found in some of the articles. 'North Country Courtesies' (no. 187) is an amusing account of the quaint rules to be observed at the Ladies Assembly at Derby in the mid-eighteenth century. 'The Light of Other Days' (no. 192), 'Walking in Wales' (no. 181) ~~and~~

and 'Flower Bells' (no. 188) may all owe something to the Cranford influence. The propagandist reforming note is sounded less frequently and with less power this year - possibly because Dickens was abroad for much of the time and, busy with Bleak House and Hard Times, devoted less time to the periodical¹ - and the picturesque historical and rural contributions have more play. Although the evidence is scant and circumstantial, this is the clearest example of Mrs Gaskell's writing having any influence on the contents of the periodical.

While occupied with North and South Mrs Gaskell contributed no more stories to Household Words. On 6 October 1855 'Half A Lifetime Ago' began publication. There were some difficulties over the division of this story into parts. Apparently it was divided by Wills, Dickens suggesting that the first section be divided into two chapters, provided Mrs Gaskell agreed² - there were few writers whose opinion he felt it necessary to consider in this way.

1 He left Wills much of the work to do, see Dickens Letters of this period.
 2 Dickens Letters, II, p. 693, 25 Sept. 1855, to Wills, and II, p. 691, 21 Sept. 1855, to Henry Morley.

In 'Half a Lifetime Ago' Mrs Gaskell rewrote the tale of 'Martha Preston', published in Sartain's Union Magazine in February 1850.¹ The original six pages of Sartain's were expanded to nineteen of Household Words.

The most obvious change is in the title, and in the names of the characters. Martha Preston becomes Susan Dixon; Thomas, Jane and Johnnie Preston become William, Margaret and Willie Dixon; William Hawkshaw becomes Michael Hurst. The name 'Preston' is kept in the second version, but only as the name of a doctor, and two new characters, Peggy and Mrs Gale, are introduced, while William/ Michael's wife is developed into the character of Eleanor Hebthwaite. The site of the farm is also moved slightly, and it seems larger and more important than in the original story.

The Sartain's story opened with a lengthy and pleasant description of the route from Grasmere to the Preston's cottage,

¹ See pp. 221 - 222 below.

written as though the narrator is taking her reader by the hand on a walk along the familiar road. However, the revised version introduces the reader immediately to the main character and concentrates on the significance of the new title - an interest in events of the recent past which is common in the short stories. There is then a fine analysis of the Cumberland and Westmoreland statesmen, who would be of great interest to Mrs Gaskell because they were characters fast disappearing.¹ These details assure the reader of the author's confident depth of knowledge of her characters and their lives.

There is a perceptible change in the narrative tone. The original narrative was chatty and companionable, well sprinkled with comments in the first person. This is how the narrator introduces his story:-

Now listen to me while I tell you what I heard of the inhabitants of that cottage during the last thirty years. Sit down on this felled tree, and while the noonday hum of busy insects in the wood mingles with the hum of the bees in yonder hives, I will weave together what I have learnt of "Martha Preston."

¹ See the opening of 'The Last Generation in England', p. 220 below.

The revised story has a natural narrative tone. The narrator is unobtrusive and not individualised. The illusion is given that the story tells itself - there is a more dramatic rendering of events not mediated through a narrator figure. Dialogue between the characters replaces the earlier synopsis of events. The result is that the original version seems a rather dull, colourless sketch of the plot of the second version; Mrs Gaskell has developed dramatic techniques of story-telling, and now knows when these are more suitable than the use of a narrator as a mediating figure. The dramatic method does require more space - a paragraph in the original may be expanded to as much as a page of dialogue in the second version.

The second story does not stress the traditions and ancestry of the Prestons as does the first, nor does it expand at length on Martha/Susan's parents. Some significant factual changes are made. In the 1855 version the present state of the house is compared with its cleanliness and brightness in Susan Dixon's day. In the original version quite the opposite contrast was drawn, comparing the cottage's

neglected state in Martha's time/with its well-tended and happier state now, with signs of children about. We are prepared for the picture of neglect by Jane Preston's impatience with her daughter's slipshod ways. While this trait allows Martha to devote more time to her young brother, it is not an admirable part of her character, which is probably why Mrs Gaskell changed it later.

Instead of the detail about how Martha failed in her mother's eyes, the second version concentrates on Susan's cool and inhospitable reception of visitors in her old age, how hard she works on the farm, and hints at a mystery to account for this. This leads naturally to her story.

The difference in age between the two children is extended from eight years in the original to ten in the revised version, a slight alteration which makes the boy's early dependence on his sister and her motherly care of him even more credible. The period William/Micheel stays at the farm is also lengthened to good purpose, giving more time for the romance to develop.

Susan is a more interesting character than Martha, who was described as

...a fine young woman, quiet, steady, and calm in her manners, but with a warm, sensitive heart, and a character full of imagination.

Susan

...had been a strong, independent, healthy girl; a clever help to her mother and a spirited companion to her father; more of a man in her (as he often said) than her delicate little brother ever would have.

- a comment which prefigures later events.

Susan's mother dies after Michael comes to the farm, whereas Martha's died when the girl was only fifteen. This allows her to play a more important part in 'Half a Lifetime Ago', for it is she who extracts the important promise from Susan always to care for her little brother, and who in her death-bed speech throws ominous light on the boy's weak state and the rough treatment he receives from his father and Michael. Henceforth the reader is presented with numerous scenes illustrating Susan's divided affections, pulled one way towards her brother and the other towards Michael.

The scenes of courtship, with their ominous hints of later

events, are some of the most delightful in the story, and are lacking entirely in the original. The more leisurely development in Household Words allows characters and situations to be explored in greater depth, and the reader does the exploring himself, rather than merely accepting the conclusions of the narrator.

Although William Hawkshaw proves to be unworthy of Martha, at first the reader receives a favourable impression of him, whereas Michael Hurst's selfishness early betrays itself. While courting Susan, he meets and is clearly attracted by Eleanor Hebthwaite. We also learn of Willie's jealousy of Michael. The stage is now set for the swift succession of calamities which form the climax of the action.

William Dixon dies swiftly of fever, which also affects Susan and Willie - this is dramatically more effective than the "calm sinking into death" of John Preston followed by Johnnie catching the fever. It allows Willie's insanity to take some time to be apparent to Susan; Susan's promise is also more credible, and more important and binding, than was Martha's.

One of the most moving scenes in the story is where Susan first becomes aware of her brother's insanity, while the baser side of Michael's nature is also revealed as he breaks the news to her roughly and cruelly. Dramatic possibilities are exploited here which were only latent in the original.

Both suitors suggest that the idiot boy should be sent to a lunatic asylum, but in the second version more is revealed about Michael's character and motives (the underhand visit to Kendal)

The revised story also gives details of the two lovers' different reactions to their estrangement. Michael soon forgets it in hard work, while Susan is upset for several days, then sorry for having given in the original version.

In the original story William's reaction to the situation is claimed to be the result of his upbringing; no such easy judgment is made in the 1855 version - Michael's loathing of Willie is a development of his former antipathy to the boy, and Michael

...had always considered the good penny her father could give her in his catalogue of Susan's charms and attractions. But of late he had grown to esteem her as the heiress of Yew Nook. He too should have land like his brother.

The revised version also gives Susan room to expand on her objections to lunatic asylums; as a result her fears seem reasoned and well-founded, and Michael's disregard of them is base and selfish.

The love of Michael and Susan is naturally contrasted in the later version, so that the division between them emerges gradually for the reader, rather than being presented as the flat conclusions of the narrator. We can now see, rather than accept passively, the "great gulf between their souls".

The revised story also gives details of the two lovers' different reactions to their estrangement. Michael soon forgets it in hard work, pride in his harvest, selling the lease of his farm for a good price, and then celebrating with some friends, including Nelly Hebthwaite. Susan is upset for several days, then sorry for having spoken so harshly - we hear of no regrets on Michael's side. The final separation, after Michael's worldly sister Mrs Gale remonstrates with Susan, is seen to be inevitable.

More detail of events following the separation is given in the second story. The strength of Susan's love is emphasized by her going

to see Michael once more, unobserved by him. This also reinforces our impression of his debased character : he is drunk, foul tempered, and flogs his horse.

Eventually the mad child dies - in the revised version this is ironically and poignantly seen as an answer to Susan's prayer : after all she has sacrificed for him, she feels in the end that she has been a party to his death. Susan's grief after the final rift with her fiancé is made more credible than Martha's by her periods of self-doubt : did she really do the right thing? She realizes that by following the hard path of duty she has made a decision which many people would regard as foolish. As in most human dilemmas, there is no easy solution.

Both stories end with Johnnie/Willie dying with some apparent signs of intelligence - presumably introduced so that the heroine's sacrifice seems more obviously worthwhile. After this point the lives of Martha and Susan diverge even more sharply. Martha dreams of the past, and shuns society in case she should meet her lover; Susan shoulders her responsibilities, becomes an excellent farmer, and

although rather harsh mixes with her neighbours at markets and is respected by them. Both women accumulate wealth, and there is a very pathetic scene in the revised version where the natural consequence occurs : a young man runs after the ugly Susan for her money, and is sent indignantly on his way. All Susan's troubles and hard work have caused her to age prematurely, as she well knows.

Martha one night rescues a young boy from the snow, William's son. He visits her at the farm and grows up under her influence rather than under that of his selfish and mercenary father. Martha helps the boy to marry; he and his wife come to live with her and brighten her life. However, this dénouement seems weak, contrived and lifeless compared with that used in the revised version. Susan finds her former lover dead on the fells. This is one of the finest pieces of writing in the tale. Susan hears a cry for help. Before leaving the house she methodically makes preparations - there is no romantic dash into the stormy night. Having dragged Michael's body back to the farm, she sits over him through the night, thinking of how things might have been. In the morning she rides to the Hurst

farm -carelessly tended - and the contrast between Nelly and Susan is powerful, inviting as it does comparison with Michael's assessment of their relative merits in their youth. Susan's troubles and hard work have aged her prematurely; Nelly still retains some of her fresh youthful beauty. The contrast between Martha and her rival does not have the same powerful depth of significance.

Susan breaks the news of Michael's death but, before she can leave the house, has a paralytic stroke. Nelly's virtues emerge - she carefully looks after Susan, and returns with her to Yew Nook.

The circle here is more complete and the conclusion more satisfying than in the original version. The outcome and reconciliation are both more dramatic and more credible.

Just as the original story had stressed religious elements - John Preston's cares on his death-bed for his children, Martha feeling guided by God to find her lover's child, and feeling strengthened by prayer and hymns in caring for her idiot brother - so the revised version characteristically ignores this in order to present the drama in human terms.

Finally, the use of dialogue in the second story allows Mrs Gaskell to make excellent use of dialect, reinforcing the credibility of the characters.

Mrs Gaskell clearly took advantage of the greater space in Household Words to develop and exploit to the full her Sartain's

story. Instead of focussing upon moral issues and plot, as in the first version, she carefully concentrates on character, choosing

every technique of story-telling with assured confidence. Susan Dixon in particular is a fully realized character. From her experience

in writing Cranford Mrs Gaskell learned the art of using particular detail to convey aspects of character - the clap-board episode is the finest example in this tale. Cranford's series of episodes

developed into a concentration on the character of Miss Matty, viewed in her milieu. Although her personality is very different from Susan

Dixon's, it too emerges through her actions, her dialogue, her style

of speech - her timidity is revealed in the flutterings of her speech,

while the pointed directness and passionate power of Susan's style

reveal her independence, her firmness, her forthrightness, and her

emotional sensitivity. The self-questioning of both characters helps to save their essential goodness from becoming insipid.

Cranford, and other writing for Household Words, may also have made Mrs Gaskell aware of the use to be made of the divisions imposed by serialization in giving a structure to her story. No sense of strain is felt here in the dividing of the story - whatever the worries may have been for Dickens and Wills.

This very successful quiet but powerful tale was followed one year later by 'The Poor Clare', a melodramatic tale employing Mrs Gaskell's love of the supernatural.¹ It may well have been intended for publication in the numbers for December 1855, but was not finished in time, and was wisely held over until the following December.² Mysterious tales were good material for Christmastime, with families gathered round the fireside and bitter weather outside.

1 See p. 206 below.

2 Dickens Letters, II, pp. 719 - 720, 2 Jan. 1856, to Mrs Gaskell.

The tale is narrated by an ordinary person, a sober lawyer, whose head was not to be turned by vague stories and rumours, and this gives the story plausibility. True to his occupation, he searches out all the facts, and substantiates all the evidence before presenting it. The next fiction for the periodical was 'My Lady Innes',

The scenes in Lancashire and Antwerp are confidently depicted, and the crowd scenes in particular are skilfully controlled, benefiting from the experience of North and South. Bridget Fitzgerald and the lawyer are fully conceived characters, but Lucy Gisborne fails, mainly because of the limitations of her role in the narrative. She seems insipid, and the contrast with her 'double' is so shocking that neither seems natural, and the double sensationalised, not being assimilated into the narrative as are the ghostly figures in 'The Old Nurse's Story!'. lower classes, a function which it does

The rambling nature of the story - both through time and space - is co-ordinated and given credence by the figure of the narrator.

1. Dickens Letters, III, p. 36, 9 Aug. 1850.

2. These are fully set out by Sharpe, pp. 276 - 277.

The impersonal narration of 'Half a Lifetime Ago' would not have been suitable here, an indication that Mrs Gaskell was aware of the

benefits and disadvantages of various techniques of story-telling.

'The Poor Clare' is an able piece of work, but not outstanding.

For Dickens it was an appropriate short serial, full of colour, incident and thrills, to run through the December weeks.

The next fiction for the periodical was 'My Lady Ludlow', published between 19 June and 25 September 1858. From the tenor of Dickens's remark to Wills that he hoped "Mrs Gaskell will not stop, for more than a week at all events",¹ it would seem that Mrs Gaskell was writing the story as she went along, and this would account for the inconsistencies² in the text. Most critics consider the story badly planned, all commenting on the long digression which breaks up the tale, the Clément and Virginie episode. This occupies one third of the space, and is included as an illustration of the unfortunate effects of educating the lower classes, a function which it does not really fulfil. It has been suggested that Mrs Gaskell used it as

1 Dickens Letters, III, p.36, 9 Aug. 1858.

2 These are fully set out by Sharps, pp.. 276 - 277.

a space-filler, although there is no suggestion in any of her or

at this time 'My Lady Ludlow' was mid-way through publication in Dickens's extant letters that she had to provide any pre-arranged

Household Words, but the tone of Mrs Gaskell's letter to Norton number of instalments.

suggests that by 25 July she had completed writing it, and had already
Many critics have, I believe, misinterpreted Mrs Gaskell's

arranged for its republication in Round the Sofa.¹ Thus it is clear letter to Charles Eliot Norton of March 1859,¹ in which she says -

You know about our going abroad, and that I got money

for it &c, by selling Lady Ludlow &c...

This refers to the sale of this story and several others to Sampson Lowl

solely mercenary objectives. Nor is it clear that it was written in the for publication as the collection of stories Round the Sofa. This is

piecemeal manner which Dickens's remark suggests.

clear from her use of the words "sold" - Dickens paid for contributions

Given that the tale was not written solely for financial gain,

to Household Words on the basis that the author retained rights of

it is worth considering its artistic values. The narrator, Margaret

republication - and of "Lady Ludlow &c", which suggests that more

Dutton, declares it is no story, having neither beginning, middle

than this one work was involved. The dates would corroborate this -

her end. There is no reason why this comment should be taken especially -

on 25 July she wrote to Norton :

some of Mrs Gaskell's best creations could be so described, and the

Given 105£ & two months - (I am republishing my Household

reader can Words Stories, under the title of Round the Sofa, - to

get this money -) and 3 people, - & where can they go at

tale, where character is more important than plot. The whole part of

1 Gaskell Letters, no.418, 9 March [1859].

1 Gaskell Letters, no. 401, 25 July [1859]. The transaction with Sampson Low is also referred to in letter 414, [February 1859], to Anne Rowson.

1

the middle or end of October?

At this time 'My Lady Ludlow' was mid-way through publication in Household Words, but the tone of Mrs Gaskell's letter to Norton suggests that by 25 July she had completed writing it, and had already arranged for its republication in Round the Sofa. Thus it is clear that it was not the money Mrs Gaskell received from Dickens which was required for the trip to Heidelberg, and it was not written with solely mercenary objectives. Nor is it clear that it was written in the piecemeal manner which Dickens's remark suggests.

Given that the tale was not written merely for financial gain, it is worth considering its artistic values. The narrator, Margaret Dawson, declares it is no story, having neither beginning, middle nor end. There is no reason why this comment should be taken seriously - some of Mrs Gaskell's best creations could be so described, and the reader can take this hint to settle to a rambling, Cranford-like tale, where character is more important than plot. The main part of 'My Lady Ludlow' fulfils this promise, but the Clément and Virginie

1 Gaskell Letters, no. 401, 25 July [1858]. The transaction with Sampson Low is also referred to in letter 414, [February 1859], to Anne Robson.

episode is totally different. It is a very good example of an exciting story, full of incident, holding the reader's interest throughout in Mrs Gaskell's best manner. It concerns the French Revolution, giving full rein to Mrs Gaskell's love of France, its history and people. Had 'My Lady Ludlow' been, in the Round the Sofa style, a collection of tales within a framing tale, the digression would not be so poorly assimilated into the whole. It may have been one of the stories in the "desk drawer", but what could have prompted Mrs Gaskell to publish it at this stage? Dickens would have welcomed it on its own - short stories packed with incident and with a tendency to the melodramatic were just what he required, and they formed the bulk of the fiction he published. As it is, the episode breaks up the tone of 'My Lady Ludlow', spoiling its many excellent features - the characters of Lady Ludlow and Miss Galindo, the quiet Cranforesque humour, the depiction of a pattern of life slowly adapting. Was Mrs Gaskell experimenting with a mixing of genres? Did she originally intend to include more tales of the Clément and Virginie type within the slow-moving account of life in Lady Ludlow's household? Was

this simply a case of a blunder caused by over-hasty composition?

Did she need it as a filler, to comply with Dickens's requirements of length? Whatever the answer, the tale is marred.

This long story was quickly followed by 'The Sin of a Father',¹ a title which Dickens probably provided as the story was republished under the title 'Right at Last'. The change of title is significant - the second emphasizes a moral framework for the tale, while the earlier one has the enticing, mysterious title which Dickens liked to employ, to engage the reader's curiosity and draw him into the story.²

The tale contains both elements. The mystery surrounds the character of the husband, but the solving of the mystery is not the end of the tale - Mrs Gaskell goes on to show us that marriage and the lives of the two main characters are improved once there is no deceit dividing them. The moral interest is of far greater importance than the solving of the mystery, and this is one example of Dickens's

contrived titles misleading the reader, and possibly making him feel

An example of the technique working to advantage is Dickens's

'The Sin of a Father', see pp. 201 - 202 below.

1 27 Nov. 1858.

2 See p. 101 above.

cheated and dissatisfied with the tale.¹ Mrs Gaskell was probably annoyed by her editor's interference, and was right to change the title when it was republished. The story itself is of minor interest : it holds the reader's attention in a quiet way, but is soon forgotten and by no means outstanding.

Almost one year later Dickens received for his new periodical All the Year Round his best short story from Mrs Gaskell - one which, ironically, was not written specifically for him.² We have seen that Mrs Gaskell was apparently unwilling to be associated with the successor to Household Words.³ In a letter to Norton of 9 March, probably 1859, Mrs Gaskell tells him of a long story she is writing, which she "could not compress ... into less than 200 pages, - upwards of 100 of which are already written."³ She would like to publish the tale entire in America, possibly in the Atlantic Monthly, believing it would not bear weekly splitting into numbers. She

1 An example of the technique working to advantage is Dickens's

'A Dark Night's Work', see pp. 201 - 202 below.

2 8 Oct. - 22 Oct. 1859.

3 Gaskell Letters, no. 418.

claims it is "not very good; too melodramatic a plot; only I have grown interested in it, and cannot put it aside." - a remark which should not be taken too seriously ; she frequently played down her belief in the value of her stories when writing to others, and the fact that she could not put it down suggests she was very absorbed in it, a recommendation in itself.

Was this story 'Lois the Witch'? The manuscript¹ is 119 pages long, too short to be the story referred to in the letter to Norton.

However, there was time for Mrs Gaskell to cut the story before it began publication in the autumn, and she would probably have done this to eliminate the melodramatic elements she refers to, of which there is no trace in the published story. Rewriting may also have been necessary to make it more amenable to splitting in parts for periodical publication. The Houghton manuscript also has the title clearly written in Mrs Gaskell's hand, reflecting her keen interest in the story, and possibly her dissatisfaction the previous year with Dickens's title for 'Right at Last'. It would be natural to want to publish a

¹ At the Houghton Library, Harvard.

story based on American history in America rather than England, and it is possible that she had already done so once.¹ It is hard to see what other story could have been referred to in the letter to Norton. The only one which in length and style fits this description is 'A Dark Night's Work', but this was not published until four years later. On the whole, the evidence points to it being 'Lois the Witch'.

Mrs Gaskell had apparently been interested in the theme of the Salem witch trials for some time. In her early days as a writer she had adopted the pseudonym 'Cotton Mather Mills'. In 1856 she received a letter from J.G. Palfrey in which he says that there is only one copy of Calef's More Wonders of the Invisible World in London, but promising to send her, on his return to America, as much material as possible on the Salem trials.² Mrs Gaskell's deep interest in the subject and familiarity with the historical facts, the length of time spent thinking about and planning the story, and the possibility that it was thoroughly revised, account for its structural perfection.

Her customary skill with dialogue (here using a form of religious

¹ 'An Incident at Niagara Falls', Harper's, June 1858. See pp. 235-236 below.
² John Rylands English MS 731/81, ? 21 June 1856.

dialect, with which Lois's simple speech is in powerful contrast),

with evoking scenes and atmosphere (very powerfully created is the

The story I am going to relate is true as to its main facts,
closed, in-growing society of Salem), and with developing convincing

characters, are all seen here. The concentration of the tale is

This basis in fact is by no means unusual in Mrs Gaskell's short
intense; there are no superfluous details; an intricate web of dark
stories, but it is reinforced by the framework of the narration.

hints and forebodings spreads through the story, and the frenetic

Considerable space is given to a slow-moving account of how the tale
atmosphere of the community is so finely created that such sensational

came to be told to the author. A pleasant, sunny atmosphere is
events as Manasseh's 'possession' and Lois's trial are its natural

created within which hints of a dark mystery intolgue the reader.

outcome. It is one of the most powerful and compelling short stories

The beginning of the story complies with this atmosphere, but

Dickens ever published in his periodicals - perhaps even rising above

swiftly the tale moves to a sensational, evil and horrifying climax.

Wilkie Collins's famous serials for Dickens of the same type - and

The climax is complete, and convincing - more so than in 'My Lady

one of Mrs Gaskell's most brilliant creations.

Ludlow'. The story is very well handled, and has some remarkable

Mrs Gaskell's reluctance to publish with Dickens is evident

comes, but its overall effect is not as powerful as that of 'Lois the
from the long gap between 'Lois the Witch' and 'The Grey Woman'.¹

Witch', perhaps because we are not so involved in the lives of the
His request for a serial came to nothing.² 'The Grey Woman' could

characters as in the earlier story. The thrills of the plot blow
scarcely fail to be an anti-climax after its predecessor. The

interest is the characters.

1 5 - 19 Jan. 1861.

2 Dickens Letters, III, p. 139, 20 Dec. 1859, to Mrs Gaskell.

1 John Rylands English MS 976.

manuscript opens with a statement not included in the published
The manuscript bears numerous corrections, not in Mrs Gaskell's

version :
hand, to errors of style and punctuation. This suggests careless

The story I am going to relate is true as to it's main facts,
composition, and as to the consequence of those facts from which this
tale takes its title.¹

This basis in fact is by no means unusual in Mrs Gaskell's short
a good story for Dickens's periodical, although too long for inclusion
stories, but it is reinforced by the framework of the narration.
in the Christmas issue for 1860, as originally intended.

Considerable space is given to a slow-moving account of how the tale

Mrs Gaskell's final story for Dickens was 'The Cage at Cranford'.²

came to be told to the author. A pleasant, sunny atmosphere is
why should she write this, so long after the Cranford episodes had
created within which hints of a dark mystery intrigue the reader.
ceased publication? Could it have been as a celebration of ten years

The beginning of the story complies with this atmosphere, but
having passed since Chapman and Hall published the complete Cranford
swiftly the tale moves to a sensational, evil and horrifying climax.

and the last episode appeared in Household Words, while there is no
The climax is complete, and convincing - more so than in 'My Lady
evidence in the letters of either Mrs Gaskell or Dickens to suggest
Ludlow'. The story is very well handled, and has some remarkable

that this was the case, it is the sort of idea which would appeal to
scenes, but its overall effect is not as powerful as that of 'Lois the

Wife. The familiar figures are there, although Miss Matty is of less
Witch', perhaps because we are not so involved in the lives of the
importance to this story than Miss Pole, and the novelty of situation
characters as in the earlier story. The thrills of the plot blur
as similar, with numerous references to the familiar Cranford
interest in the characters.

Dickens's Letters, III, p. 195, 26 Nov. 1860, to Harriet Martineau.

1 John Rylands English MS 876.

background and Cranfordesque witticisms. Yet the tale remains awkwardly outside the main creative stream of Cranford; it has never been included as one of the episodes in that book and it would not fit in. To the readers of Dickens's periodical it may have brought pleasant memories of the unfolding of the early episodes of the book, a good story for Dickens's periodical, although too long for inclusion in the Christmas issue for 1860, as originally intended.¹

Mrs Gaskell's final story for Dickens was 'The Cage at Cranford'.² Why should she write this, so long after the Cranford episodes had spread over many months they gave the periodical a certain atmosphere ceased publication? Could it have been as a celebration of ten years with which they all complied and to which they added. 'The Cage at Cranford' depends on this atmosphere, but it is no longer there. This almost indefinable life-giving air is absent, and this perhaps accounts for the failure of the story: for in itself it has no great defects, that this was the case, it is the sort of idea which would appeal to him. The familiar figures are there, although Miss Matty is of less importance to this story than Miss Pole, and the comedy of situation is similar, with numerous refer^ences to the familiar Cranford

¹ Dickens Letters, III, p. 193, 28 Nov. 1860, to Georgina Hogarth.

² 28 Nov. 1863.

³ 24 Dec. - 27 March 1863.

⁴ Dickens Letters, III, p. 320, 27 Nov. 1860, to Wylie.

⁵ See p. 248 below.

background and Cranfordesque witticisms. Yet the tale remains awkwardly outside the main creative stream of Cranford; it has never been included as one of the episodes in that book and it would not fit in. To the readers of Dickens's periodical it may have brought pleasant memories of the unfolding of the early episodes of the book, yet it is not written to stand on its own, and is too far removed in time for the atmosphere created ten years earlier to carry over. While the earlier Cranford episodes were running in Household Words, although spread over many months they gave the periodical a certain atmosphere with which they all complied and to which they added. 'The Cage at Cranford' depends on this atmosphere, but it is no longer there. This almost indefinable life-giving air is absent, and this perhaps accounts for the failure of the story, for in itself it has no great defects.

It was preceded by a story which more truly deserves to be considered as Mrs Gaskell's last offering to Dickens, 'A Dark Night's Work',¹ for which he supplied the 'Dark' of the title.² This was a successful addition, whatever Mrs Gaskell may have thought of it.³

1 24 Jan. - 21 March 1863.

2 Dickens Letters, III, p. 320, 21 Nov. 1862, to Wills.

3 See p. 248 below.

It conveys the sense of mystery and evil which is fully sustained by the tale.

From 'Lois the Witch' Mrs Gaskell was aware of the possibilities of the slow, cumulative opening to an exciting tale. Here the life of a respectable country attorney is created, from which we understand his son's growing difficulties in conforming to his standard. While it is hard to sympathize with Wilkins, we can understand his character, and the murder becomes almost inevitable. We learn of Dunster only through Wilkins, and know so little of his personality that the murder is significant only as it affects Wilkins and his daughter : it is not exploited to elicit sympathy for Dunster.

In comparison with her father, Ellinor is not an interesting character, although she links the narrative. Like Molly in Wives and Daughters, she becomes involved in sinister events and deceit against her will, but in the belief that she is helping someone close to her. Unlike Molly, her goodness is not interesting, and we cannot enjoy her and sympathize with her to the same extent. She is dwarfed by the personality of her father - in her final novel Mrs

Gaskell balanced her characters with greater skill. Because Ellinor is rather dull, the end of the story is an anti-climax.

This was not a particularly happy conclusion to writing fiction for Dickens. The story has many good points, but lacks the power or delicate perfection of some of Mrs Gaskell's earlier contributions. There were editorial difficulties. Dickens expected a story in six parts - Mrs Gaskell ran to nine - and there were problems of division into episodes.¹ Such arguments run throughout their publishing relationship, yet Mrs Gaskell must have been content most of the time, for she rarely took the opportunity to publish elsewhere. She learned, partly from experience and partly in response to Dickens's criticisms, what he required, and how to cope with publishing in a weekly periodical. In return, she surprised him by providing unexpected material, new to him and his readers, the Cranford works being the best examples, and some of the most outstanding stories and articles he was fortunate to publish. 'The Cage at Cranford' seems a

¹ Dickens Letters, III, p. 335, 18 Jan. 1862, to Wills; III, p. 336, 29 Jan. 1863, to Wills.

wistful postscript to their relationship; a recollection of the period when their association was perhaps closer than at any other time.

a letter from Dickens explaining the outline plan, and to Mrs Gaskell

The best examples of Mrs Gaskell using a pre-conceived Dickens plan and transcending it are her contributions to the Christmas numbers. In 1850 Dickens did not have a special extra number for Christmas, but the usual issue for Christmas week contained items on a Christmas theme. There was no overall plan, although several of the items reflected the periodical's great interest at this time in life in other countries.

The idea of a special extra issue for Christmas began in 1851, and continued without interruption until 1868. This issue had some cohesion, with the idea of "What Christmas is..." but there was no firm editorial control. In 1852, however, Dickens began to invest the Christmas number with a special flavour. It was half as long as the regular issues, and cost correspondingly more. It was given a special title - "A Round of Stories by the Christmas Fire", and a linking device was thus introduced similar to the framework of

Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. This system may have influenced Mrs Gaskell in organizing Round the Sofa. Regular contributors were sent a letter from Dickens explaining the outline plan, and to this Mrs Gaskell responded with one of her finest supernatural stories, 'The Old Nurse's Story'. This is the only ghost story in the Christmas

Mrs Gaskell immediately plunges into her tale, told by the old Nurse in the kind, chatty way one would expect - "You know, my dears, that your mother was an orphan, and an only child ..." The story looks back to the time when the narrator was young - a familiar step back in time in Mrs Gaskell's short stories - and she tells the story to the children of Miss Rosamond, the child who figures in the story. It is set in Northumberland, at the foot of the Cumberland fells, but Mrs Gaskell does not spend long describing the scenery. She devotes her energies to evoking the atmosphere of the large, gloomy, sinister old house in which the main events take place.

The cosy scene by the fireside, the homeliness of the narrator, the warmth and normality of life 'below stairs' and in the nursery emphasize through contrast the mysterious and terrifying events.

... suggested a small alteration at the end, with which Mrs Gaskell did not agree. Dickens Letters, II, pp. 435 and 436.

Mysterious details accumulate - the strange noises, the organ playing itself, the deserted wing of the house, the historical background to the story, leading up to the climax at the end. The story is finely constructed, the suspense never falls, and the atmosphere is brilliantly evoked.¹ This is the only ghost story in the Christmas issue, and well in keeping with the Christmas spirit Dickens invoked.²

The following year saw two contributions from Mrs Gaskell in the Christmas issue, which built upon the success of its predecessor with the title "Another Round of Stories by the Christmas Fire". This contains a thrilling ghost story, 'The Old Lady's Story', which includes a haunted room, a ghost, and an exotic and mysterious stranger who has a sinister ability to bewitch his victim. Compared with 'The Old Nurse's Story' it is sensational and less well constructed - the highest pitch of excitement is reached too early, with the result that the dénouement is disappointing : the man's motives are not as interesting as the rest of the story has led us to expect. It

1 Mrs Gaskell loved and was well practised in the art of relating ghost stories. See Dickens Letters, II, p. 359, 25 Nov. 1851, to Mrs Gaskell.

2 He suggested a small alteration at the end, with which Mrs Gaskell did not agree. Dickens Letters, II, pp. 433 and 434.

illustrates poor construction and lack of subtlety in handling dramatic effects, faults which Mrs Gaskell did not make.

Mrs Gaskell provided 'The Squire's Story'¹, a delightful tale based on a highwayman who lived unsuspected at Knutsford in the eighteenth century. Mrs Gaskell tells her story concisely and clearly, with a full recognition of the amusing irony of the situation. The chatty narrative tone familiar to many of her short stories and articles is evident here. At the end she writes :

Will any of you become tenants, and try to find out this

mysterious closet? I can furnish the exact address to

any applicant who wishes for it.

This amusing open ending, involving the reader in the narrative, is characteristic of Mrs Gaskell when handling such material. The story is written confidently in the Cranford atmosphere, the last episode of this having been published in the periodical in the same year.

'The Scholar's Story' is translated by Mrs Gaskell from a

1 Dickens wrote to Mrs Gaskell, encouraging her to contribute, and refusing to give her any outline, as anything she wrote would be sure to please him. Dickens Letters, II, p. 490, 19 Sept. 1853.

collection of Breton ballads made by M. de Villemarqué. Like 'Bran', published on 22 October 1853, it is written in rhyming couplets in a highly stylised ballad form, the essence of which in this case is repetition with variation. This conveys successfully the unearthly nature of the subject. By the poetic standards of Household Words, both poems are quite outstanding, but they have little importance compared with Mrs Gaskell's prose works.

Following these successful contributions to the Christmas numbers, five years passed inexplicably before she wrote any more for them.¹ This may have been because in these years Dickens imposed a much tighter framework on the Christmas numbers, and most of the material was either written or inspired by him. Mrs Gaskell may not have been content to submit to such tight control.

'The Manchester Marriage' appeared in the issue for 1858, which bore the general title 'A House to Let'. Mrs Gaskell's is a very moving story, long but well told, quietly holding the reader's interest.

¹ With the possible exception of the poem 'A Christmas Carol', published for Christmas 1856, which may be by Mrs Gaskell.

The emotion is well conveyed, and not overdone. This is a fine example of Mrs Gaskell remaining in firm control of her materials, and making the most of what is a slight story.

With the introduction of All the Year Round in 1859 the policy for Christmas numbers changed again. They now contained 48 pages, twice the amount of an ordinary number, at twice the cost. The title in 1859 was 'The Haunted House', which Mrs Gaskell, with her love of ghost stories, would have responded to eagerly, whatever her relations with Dickens at this period. She wrote for it 'The Ghost in the Garden Room', a title which only refers to the framework - the ghost of a Judge who haunts the Garden Room tells the story to a solicitor. It is much the longest story in the issue and perhaps the best.

When the tale was republished its title was changed - a title to fit Dickens's framework no longer being necessary - to the subtly symbolic 'The Crooked Branch'. From the manuscript¹ the style appears to have been corrected by the reader at the All the Year Round

¹ In Manchester University Library.

office, but in the last sentence of the story there is a small correction - "sorrowful" is altered to the stronger "broken-hearted", - in blue ink, and it may be by Dickens himself.

The tale is set on a small farm in the North Riding of Yorkshire, an area whose scenery and people Mrs Gaskell knew well. Particularly noteworthy is the portrayal of the two old people, built up by details of their quiet, everyday lives and by the simplicity of their dialect speech. Their niece Bessy is also a remarkable creation for she is a good character who, like Molly Gibson, is likeable, convincing, and interesting. Each step in the degeneration of Benjamin is carefully plotted, remorselessly accumulating until some fatal action is seen to be inevitable. When it comes, Mrs Gaskell is in firm control of the drama. As she can control the drama from noisy fighting to the deathly quiet in which Bessy becomes aware of Benjamin's presence, so she controls the reader's emotions. We are in suspense - we can only guess what the old people upstairs saw and heard - until the final heart-breaking moment at the trial when they are forced to tell their secret. The poignant, beautiful tale is

yet another of Mrs Gaskell's excellent contributions to the series of Christmas numbers. One is led to wonder whether knowing Dickens expected something extra good for these issues, led Mrs Gaskell to write so well.

Four more years passed before she wrote any more for a Christmas issue, 'The Grey Woman' being too long for the 1860 number. This was for 'Mrs Lirriper's Lodgings', one of the most famous and most successful of all the Christmas numbers.¹ Mrs Gaskell's story, 'How the First Floor went to Crowley Castle', is set in the late eighteenth century, and follows the fortunes of the inhabitants of the castle. It contains sensational features - the character of Victorine, poisoning, the marriage of Theresa - as well as domestic, which centre on the Duke's first wife, Bessy. The story is interesting, but Mrs Gaskell fails to involve the reader closely in the lives of her characters, as she had so successfully in 'The Ghost in the Garden Room'. Moreover, the contrivances to fit the tale into Dickens's frame are too involved and bewildering - they become a mere device, and not a convincing one.

1 Dickens letters, III, p. 378, 24 Jan. 1864, to Wilkie Collins.

1863 had seen 'A Dark Night's Work', 'The Cage at Cranford' and 'Crowley Castle' published in All the Year Round, all rather disappointing as Mrs Gaskell's last fiction contributions to Dickens's periodical.

She now had the Cornhill in which to publish her best stories, and she was deeply involved in writing longer works. She had, in the best sense, outgrown the possibilities his periodicals presented.

(conducted verbally). Percy Fitzgerald is but one writer who seems to

In conclusion, what can be drawn from the history of this publishing relationship? It is clear from the comments of Sala, Morley, Fitzgerald and Collins that Dickens exercised greater power over his staff, and took greater liberties with their work, than with other contributors. It is also clear that he interfered less with fiction - particularly serials - than with articles. Although at first sight Mrs Gaskell's relationship with Dickens may seem more stormy than that of any other contributor, it should be remembered that she was in an almost unique position. She was an established

writer, not only in periodicals, before beginning to write for

Dickens Letters, II, p. 518, 17 Nov. 1855, to Mills.

Dickens; she was older and more experienced than many of the other

contributors and therefore less impressionable; she was one of the few women who wrote for him ; she lived far from London and all discussion about her work had to be conducted by letter (although much of the correspondence has been lost, we have better records of this editor-contributor relationship than of any other connected with Dickens : there are no similar records of disagreements with other contributors conducted verbally). Percy Fitzgerald is but one writer who seems to have caused Dickens considerably more trouble than Mrs Gaskell, without inspiring the same respect, and without producing such valuable work for the periodical.

Mrs Gaskell is always named among the few most famous contributors to the two periodicals, and Dickens's desire to have her name on the list of contributors to All the Year Round is but one example of his awareness of her importance to him. His exasperated exclamations need to be read in this context. More often than not, he was "Delighted to hear of Mrs Gaskell's contributions".¹

¹ Dickens Letters, II, p. 518, 17 Nov. 1853, to Wills.

Similarly, Mrs Gaskell has recorded more adverse than favourable comments about Dickens's editorial policies, but this is only natural,

and she still continued to send him work. She was very fastidious

in her choice of periodical publishers and, although in the early

1850's his was the only periodical which appealed to her, soon many

others were open to her, yet she continued to send the bulk of her

work to Dickens, including some of her finest writing. One can only

think that they were aware that, on the whole, their publishing

relationship was both congenial and fruitful, and mutually beneficial.

1. Sartain's Union Magazine

It was Mary Howitt who had first urged Mrs Gaskell to contribute work to Sartain's. On 20 October 1849 she solicited a second contribution:

I received last week a letter from Mr Hart one of the Editors of Sartain's Union Magazine in America begging me to obtain from you another article. I know you do not like to be bothered about these things & in no way do I wish to make it disagreeable to you, but that is his request & I know it would oblige the proprietors of the Magazine greatly & also be creditable to me. He has sent me for you 12 for the last article which printed into four pages ...

Sartain's Union Magazine, Harper's New Monthly Magazine,

Macmillan's Magazine, Fraser's Magazine and the Pall

Mall Gazette

These four magazines received work of Mrs Gaskell's between 1849 and 1865, in years when the bulk of her work was being published in Dickens's periodicals and, after 1860, in the Cornhill Magazine. Sartain's and Harper's are both American magazines - the only foreign magazines to which Mrs Gaskell contributed original work.

i. Sartain's Union Magazine

It was Mary Howitt who had first urged Mrs Gaskell to contribute work to Sartain's. On 20 October 1849 she solicited a second contribution:

I received last week a letter from Mr Hart one of the Editors of Sartain's Union Magazine in America begging me to obtain from you another article. I know you do not like to be bothered about these things & in no way do I wish to make it disagreeable to you, but that is his request & I know it would oblige the proprietors of the Magazine greatly & also be creditable to me. He has sent me for you 4£ for the last article which printed into four pages ...

If dear friend, you incline to get another four pounds - or even more perhaps you can send me the article - for I presume it is already written & is one of those many manuscripts which lie in a certain desk drawer & may have lain there for years - in the course of the real work ...¹

'Martha Preston' duly appeared anonymously in February 1850. Sartain's provided a useful medium for publication for Mrs Gaskell after the failure of the Howitts' own magazine and before the arrival of Household Words - once this appeared no more was sent : it was more convenient to do business in England than in America, Dickens's new periodical proved congenial, and tended to pay better than the £1 per printed page she received from Sartain's.

The magazine was originally founded in New York in July 1847, named after the American Art-Union, an organization for the popularization of Art. However, the magazine was not officially connected with this body, and it did not prosper. It included no more plates than many of the already prosperous American magazines, such as Godey's Lady's Book, Graham's, and Peterson's. In late 1848 it was bought for \$5000 by Sartain and Sloanaker,

¹ John Rylands English MS 730/43.

who moved it to Philadelphia. John Sartain, one of the foremost illustrators and engravers of the time, had been associated with Sloanaker on the recently defunct Graham's Magazine and claims that he was reluctant to sink capital in the new venture. He was advisedly cautious, for in 1851 business manager Sloanaker left, and when the magazine ended in August 1852 debts had accumulated which Sartain took seven and a half years to repay.¹

The failure is almost inexplicable; there were able contributors and editors and Sartain's work in the pictorial department of the magazine was unrivalled until the advent of Harper's in 1850. There were simply too many magazines of the same type in the field. Mrs Kirkland, the original editor of the magazine, was joined by Professor Hart when it moved to Philadelphia, thus his request for work from Mrs Gaskell must have been made as soon as he took office. Mrs Gaskell's first contribution to the magazine was made before his time, 'The Last Generation in England' 'by the author of Mary Barton' appeared in July 1849. This was probably solicited after the meeting of Mary Howitt and Mrs Kirkland in early autumn 1848.²

¹ John Sartain, The Reminiscences of a Very Old Man, New York, 1899, pp. 218-223.

² Mary Howitt: An Autobiography, ed. by her daughter Margaret Howitt, 1889, 2 vols., ii, pp. 44-45.

Unlike Harper's, Sartain's always prided itself on the originality of its contributions. However, the importance of the Art sections of the magazine - which is reflected in the allocation of expenditure, the total for 1849 being \$34,592.75 of which only \$7,174 went to the literary department and the editors - detracted from the value placed on literature, and consequently the standard of fiction is not very high. Tales tend to be moral and sentimental, and the best come from Europe. Many of these must have been sent through Mary Howitt. Besides such American stories as Roanake: Or Where is Utopia? Mrs Gaskell's stories stand out for their very Englishness, as also does a delightful series of sketches by Harriet Martineau, 'A Year at Ambleside'. Mrs Kirkland had made her name with a collection of sketches about life in Western America, which was just emerging as a factor in American literature, especially in the Knickerbocker magazine. Unfortunately she contributed little of real value in this field to Sartain's, and spent much of her time sending back reports of her travels in Europe. With a glance at the type of fiction prevalent in the magazines of the time, influenced by the enormous success of Godey's Lady's Book, an editorial in the January 1850

number declares that Sartain's

has sedulously excluded from its pages the whole brood of half-fledged wittlings with fancy names - the Lilies and the Lizzies - the sighing swains and rhyming milk-maids of literature, who are ready to contribute any amount of matter, prose or verse ... Articles appearing in Sartain are not of an ephemeral character, but such as are destined to take their place in the permanent literature of the country - such as instruct as well as amuse the reader, and profit while they please.

Unfortunately this is more of an ideal than a reality. The magazine is gay and lively in spirit, but has little fundamental seriousness and the contributions from European writers are easily the most outstanding.

'The Last Generation in England'¹ is usually criticized solely from the point of view of its value as a fore-runner of Cranford, although it well deserves to be viewed independently. To many readers of Sartain's it must have been their first experience of anything from Mrs Gaskell's pen. It would have struck these American readers particularly as a short, whimsical sketch, little more than a series of reminiscences strung together, about life in a

1 July 1849, "By the author of Mary Barton".

lost era, in the world they or their ancestors had left behind them. They would have been even more readily nostalgic than an English audience of the same date, and, because the distance from the events was in their case one of distance as well as time, more curious and interested in what Mrs Gaskell has to relate. Whether the piece was specially written for the magazine or was among the pile in the desk drawer to which Mary Howitt referred, Mrs Gaskell could not have chosen a more appropriate subject to send to Sartain's.

The sketch also contains an explicit statement by Mrs Gaskell of an interest and preoccupation running throughout her work:

... even in small towns, scarcely removed from villages, the phases of society are rapidly changing; and much will appear strange, which yet occurred only in the generation immediately preceding ours.

There are numerous quaint anecdotes now familiar from Cranford which, all gathered together in a few pages, must have seemed even more quaint to the distant Americans. The good-humoured glance at this or that long-familiar memory and the lightness of the treatment easily convince us of the writer's interest and enjoyment in her subject, but the reader is left decidedly

outside and detached from all that is being revealed - which he certainly is not in Cranford. Already apparent at this early stage of her writing career are Mrs Gaskell's ease and elegance in handling her materials, her delicacy in description, her story-telling art, and the graceful fluidity of her style. These qualities stood her in good stead in all her attempts at occasional journalism, of which many were eminently successful.

'Martha Preston' was republished with some changes in Household Words between 6 October and 20 October 1855 as 'Half a Life-Time Ago' and has already been considered.¹ Here it suffices to comment that it follows Mrs Gaskell's previous sketch for Sartain's in looking back to events of the recent past, to values and attitudes fast disappearing. The detailed description of the Lake District countryside which opens the story may have been a concession to her American readers. The narrative tone is easy, gossipy, unpretentious, and the narrator makes clear her position as intermediary - she is passing on a tale she has heard, giving the story almost the value of folk-lore. It is quite likely that it was based on fact, as Mrs Gaskell did visit Skelwith Bridge in the summer of 1849 and lodged with a stateswoman. With her knack of finding

¹ See pp. 176 - 188 above.

interesting local stories she may well have heard a story like this one during that visit. At the very least, her knowledge of the area and its people gives a confident assuredness to her account.

It is both interesting and significant that both of Mrs Gaskell's contributions to Sartain's were later reworked and published in England. No doubt she felt free to do this as Sartain's with its small circulation was unlikely to have been read in England. However, it also suggests that these pieces were either early writings from the desk drawer, or were written hurriedly, although Mrs Gaskell was aware that their substance would bear more careful and extended treatment.

ii. Harper's New Monthly Magazine

Later in 1850, in June, 'Lizzie Leigh' was reprinted from Household

Words in the New York magazine Harper's which, because it pirated material

from English periodicals, wrongly assigned Mrs Gaskell's anonymous

contribution to Dickens. The Harper brothers had developed the most successful

publishing business in North America largely through reprinting English works

for American readers. In many cases this had been done without any form of

payment being made to the English authors, a policy which was both possible

and good business, thanks to the lack of any copyright law between Britain

and America. Literary piracy took place on both sides of the Atlantic - several

pieces from American periodicals appeared in Bentley's Miscellany. In

America there were numerous wholly eclectic magazines supported entirely by

this policy. N. P. Willis wrote in the prospectus to the Corsair, which he

had originally intended naming the Pirate, that its editors intended to take

advantage

of the privilege assured to us by our piratical law

of copyright; and, in the name of American authors

(for our own benefit) 'convey' to our columns, for

the amusement of our readers, the cream and spirit
of everything that ventures to light in England,
France, and Germany.¹

Piracy alone however was no guarantee of success; the Corsair itself lasted only for one year, in company with many other eclectic magazines. Furthermore, it was a policy which angered many American writers, who could not command decent rates of pay for their own work when such a wealth of material was available at no cost from England.

Fletcher Harper's editorial at the end of the first six months of the magazine naturally emphasizes the creditable side of the policy pursued by his magazine; he states that Harper's

was presented in the belief, that it might be the means of bringing within the reach of the great mass of the American people, an immense amount of useful and entertaining reading matter, to which, on account of the great number and expense of the books and periodicals in which it originally appears, they have hitherto had no access.

It was certainly a successful idea, largely thanks to the care with which

¹ Quoted in Frank Luther Mott, A History of American Magazines, Cambridge Mass., 1957, 5 vols., i, pp. 356-357.

selection was made, wholly in tune with the popular demand, and the lavishness of the paper and illustrations used. At this time the monthly sales were 50,000 and still increasing, and the magazine's average monthly circulation between 1850 and 1865 was 110,000.¹

The magazine contained poetry, fiction, articles on exploration, travel, and social and domestic life - subjects which reflect the main preoccupations of the Harpers' publishing department. Politics were eschewed, and left to Harper's Weekly which began in January 1857.

The magazine was originally founded solely as a useful advertising medium for Harper's books and described by Fletcher Harper as a tender to the publishing firm's business.² Until the eighties no advertising but Harper's appeared in the magazine, and there was also the chance of giving extracts and sample illustrations from forthcoming books. It soon outgrew these original purposes, and began publishing original work by both American and English writers, although throughout the century it remained almost entirely dependent on English novelists for its serials - Dickens, Thackeray, and

¹ James Playsted Wood, Magazines in the United States, New York, 1956, p. 77, and F. L. Mott, op. cit., ii, p. 11.

² J. Henry Harper, The House of Harper - A Century of Publishing in Franklin Square, 1912, pp. 84-85.

George Eliot predominating. It was not that America had no eminent writers - Hawthorne, Poe, Emerson, Melville, Longfellow, Lowell and Harriet Beecher Stowe were all writing - but there was no writer whose popularity even approached that of the great English novelists, and as these English writers had made the Harpers' fortune and were mainly associated in America with their name, it was natural that their magazine should be so biased. They were widely criticized in rival magazines, whose patriotic cries¹ probably masked their true complaint, that the success of Harper's was injuring their own circulations. However, the Harpers responded swiftly to this criticism, and began paying for advance sheets from Britain and including American material, especially in the three special departments 'The Editor's Drawer', 'The Editor's Easy Chair' and 'The Editor's Table'. The names of English periodicals from which articles were taken were originally printed conspicuously at the head of each, but within a year this was discontinued, making the magazine less obviously piratical. \$ 2000 each were paid for Little Dorrit and The Virginians; Trollope received £700 for Sir Harry Hotspur, Wilkie Collins £750 each for The Woman in White, Man and Wife and The Moonstone.

¹ E.g., Graham's Magazine, xxxviii, March 1851.

But payment for advance sheets did not always prevent publication in other American magazines, as the series of indignant editorials on the New York Tribune's reprinting of The Virginians shows. The prices paid to English authors seem very generous, but it should be remembered that these covered both serialization and book publication rights.

The illustrations were often, as with Sartain's, a more expensive item than the literature. Engravings cost from \$300 to \$1000 each. All the prosperous magazines had plates, so it must have been worthwhile and profitable. In the fifties the 144 pages of Harper's carried an average of 50 cuts per number.

Harper's was the outstanding periodical success of the mid-century and helped to revolutionize the pattern of periodical publishing in America. It followed the Knickerbocker in asserting the importance of New York as a centre for magazines, and during the fifties New York superseded Philadelphia and Boston as the greatest publishing centre in America.

The first original work from Mrs Gaskell in Harper's was probably 'The Siege of the Black Cottage', published anonymously in February 1857. It is

ascribed to her in Charles A. Durfee's Index to 'Harper's New Monthly Magazine'¹ possibly from evidence in Harper's account books which in itself would be quite conclusive proof. There is nothing in the piece to prove it is not her work, and much to suggest the contrary. The style is as simple, flexible and flowing as Mrs Gaskell's; it is an English story showing knowledge of English ways and styles of speech and is therefore unlikely to be by an American author; it is the sort of story which would have appealed to Mrs Gaskell, but this is little indication; there are vivid, graphic touches which typify much of Mrs Gaskell's writing, the smallest details are noted down to give an impression of the heroine's tense state of mind. The description of the cottage, the heroine's strange but very human act of putting the cat safely upstairs in the bed when the ruffians are threatening from outside, the humour in the grim situation, are all traits of style which one expects from Mrs Gaskell. There is also circumstantial evidence to suggest that we might expect a contribution from her to Harper's at this time. Sampson Low, who was made Harper's British agent in 1847, had been involved with Mrs Gaskell in

¹ Charles A. Durfee, Index to Harper's New Monthly Magazine, Alphabetical, Analytical, and Classified, Volumes 1 to LXX, Inclusive from June, 1850 to June, 1885, New York, 1886, pp. 235, 255.

publishing the English edition of Maria S. Cummins's Mabel Vaughan in September 1857. It is therefore possible that while associated with Mrs Gaskell over this book he suggested that she contribute to Harper's.

'The Doom of the Griffiths' appeared in January 1858. If the reference in the letter below is to this story, as it is generally taken to be, then there is evidence that Low was asking for work from Mrs Gaskell as early as 1856, which makes her authorship of 'The Siege of the Black Cottage' even more likely.

The story, per se, is an old rubbishy one, - begun when Marianne was a baby, - the only merit whereof is that it is founded on fact. But at Mr. Sampson Lowe's earnest entreaty I promised it to Messrs Harpers more than a year ago; - and, of course I relied a little on payment; (though what that is to be, I have not a notion;) and when Mr. Lowe, (whom I have found out in other things to be rather a 'tricky man',) took such care not to acknowledge the receipt of the story in London, until he had sent it off to America, - coupled with rumours of Messrs Harpers' insolvency, I became suspicious, and determined to outwit the sleek old gentleman, &

have my tale back, if it could not be paid for¹

In 1857 there was a period of general depression in America, but Mrs Gaskell had no reason to worry, as the Harpers took careful measures and weathered the storm. Norton evidently looked into the matter on her behalf, as she thanks him in this letter for all he has done. As Marianne was born on 12 September 1834, the story was probably written in the 1830's. Mrs Gaskell criticizes it more harshly than most of her critics. The plot would be of interest to Americans - a tale and legend of days long past in the old country, the very material for stories which their own land lacked. The dialogue is natural, and at the very least the narrative sustains the reader's interest. This is in marked contrast to many of the stories by native writers in the magazine, which are lifeless, stilted and boring for the most part. Mrs Gaskell's historical imagination and relish for the sensational can both be seen in 'The Doom of the Griffiths'.

I have always felt much interested by the traditions which are scattered up and down North Wales relating to Owen Glendower ...

¹ Gaskell Letters, no. 384, [7] Dec. [1857], to Charles Eliot Norton.

she writes,

and I fully enter into the feeling which makes
the Welsh peasant still look upon him as the hero
of his country.

This sympathy with both the ingredients of her story and with the Welsh
character combine to produce a story which is more than "rubbishy".

The curse laid on Rhys ap Gryfydd and its working out have the very
qualities which would appeal to Mrs Gaskell, the much-admired fireside
story-teller. The whole of the story is written as for oral delivery, the
story-teller deftly leading the listener into the tale, captivating his interest
with the stirring words of Glendower's curse, then conducting him into the
Griffith country - the same technique as was used to open 'Martha Preston'.
Indeed, the story may well be a local tradition heard during one of Mrs
Gaskell's Welsh holidays. According to Meta Gaskell, it was written "at Plas
Penrhyn near Tremadoc, where the author often stayed with her cousin Mr
Samuel Holland ..."¹ It is set in the same area as 'The Well of Pen-Morfa'.

J. G. Sharps notes mistakes in the story which are probably compositorial - with

¹ Clement K. Shorter, ed. The Novels and Tales of Mrs Gaskell,
1906-1919, II vols., ix, p. xii.

the tale being printed in America Mrs Gaskell had no opportunity to correct proofs. He notes "Augharad" appears where "Angharad" would be more likely, and "Ynysynhanarn" for "Ynyscynhaiarn".¹

The dankness and forbidding nature of the countryside is a sensational and rather crude technique, prefiguring the grim events to come and reflecting the melancholy and morbid state of the hero's mind. It contrasts with the cosy homeliness of Nest Pritchard's home.

Because the curse is given at the opening of the tale, the reader is well aware of the outcome of the story. Thus his interest is not held by the question 'what will happen?', but rather by 'how will it happen?'. The objectivity of the curse is superseded by a growing interest in the personalities involved in it. Mrs Gaskell carefully traces the lives and upbringing of her two principal characters, Owen and his father Robert Griffiths. This heavy documentation may seem tiresome at first, but it is not there merely to set the scene. Mrs Gaskell makes the drama and the murder plausible in human terms.

¹ Sharps, p. 268.

The romantic love of Owen and Nest is warmly and sympathetically told. After the pages devoted to Owen's early life, with the sinister step-mother and her sly destruction of the love and trust between father and son, the sunshine which surrounds the lovers breaks significantly into the narrative. No explicit remark is necessary; this change of atmosphere is self-explanatory. The scene is now set for the working out of the curse, and although like Owen himself the reader never loses sight of the relentless fate carrying everything forward, Mrs Gaskell also carefully makes the outcome natural and realistic. She provides us with all the details of the action, with all the thoughts running through Owen's mind, with his attempts to free himself from the curse which are all foiled by accident. This makes the story not merely one of splendid two-dimensional figures in a legend, but of human beings caught in a very human situation. The naturalness of the characters and the story, despite the sensational elements already noted, is reinforced by small realistic touches typical of Mrs Gaskell - the introduction of Welsh phrases (as when the hostess of the inn quotes an old Welsh proverb), the detail about the countryside and landscape which illustrate her familiarity with the area,

the note that the sweetbriar planted by Owen and Nest can still be seen, Nest's blue stockings from Llanrwst fair - all these details accumulate to make the story humanly credible.

The tale is marred at times by excess of passion which Mrs Gaskell fails to adequately control, or over-sensational details. The melodramatic discovery of the two lovers by Squire Griffiths is a typical example, and the description of Owen sitting

on the dank ground, his face buried in his hands,
and his whole strength, physical and mental, employed
in quelling the rush of blood which rose and boiled
and gurgled in his brain as if it would madden him.

Similarly the detail of the baby's death,

At that moment the upturned, filmy eyes rolled
convulsively - a spasm passed along the body - and
the lips, yet warm with kissing, quivered into everlasting
rest.

However, this over-sensationalism would naturally form a part of the storyteller's art. His intense interest in his subject and desire to make the most of every detail in the story would naturally call for such details and

over-statement. To the listener, bewitched by the narrator's voice, spell-bound in the magic world of the curse and the legend, there may well be no sense of strain at such points. From such evidence, it seems very likely that the story was part of Mrs Gaskell's repertoire of tales to be told by the fireside in the evenings, which was transposed into print with insufficient adaptation to the different medium.

The tale ends with most impressive brevity, and ballad-like simplicity:

They sailed into the tossing darkness, and were
 never more seen of men.
 The house of Bodowen has sunk into damp, dark ruins;
 and a Saxon stranger holds the lands of the Griffiths.

There may have been another contribution from Mrs Gaskell's pen to Harper's in June 1858, 'An Incident at Niagara Falls', where it is attributed to her. At this stage piracy was rarely practised by the magazine, so it is quite likely that the story is hers. However, it seems strange that, after successfully contributing stories based on English life to American magazines for a number of years, she should decide to compete with American writers on

their own ground. She had recently finished editing Mabel Vaughan, of course, which might have suggested such a plan to her - incidentally the name of Mrs Gaskell's narrator, Madame Percival, is also that of a character in that novel - and she could have heard the tale originally from one of her American friends. However, it still seems unlikely that she would write about something she had no personal acquaintance with. The report of the rescue at the falls is graphically given, and the conduct of the rescuer, refusing the collection made for him by the onlookers but willing to sell them some walking sticks he has made, would appeal to Mrs Gaskell, but one feels that she would probably have made a better job of telling the story. She was certainly capable of doing so. Thus, while the magazine ascribes the piece to Mrs Gaskell, the evidence of the story itself would not lead one to think it was hers.

Neither of these American magazines can have exerted any influence on Mrs Gaskell's writing. They provided ^a convenient opportunity to earn money, and she followed her policy of complying with requests from friends for contributions, but there is no question that she ever identified her work with

the tone and style of these periodicals - indeed, there is no evidence to

suggest that she ever saw any copies of them.

a unique piece of work from Mrs Gaskell, being something between an obituary notice and a memoir. Hamilton's Magazine was the result of several years of consideration about a periodical on the part of Susan and Alexander Hamilton and their friends. In 1834, the year in which their first notable success, Hamilton's Edinburgh Hall, was published, Isaac Todhunter suggested the brothers make a periodical. He advocated, Alexander informed Daniel, "a weekly, or at any rate a fortnightly publication - not, however, rather like a magazine than a newspaper ...". Alexander, encouraged by Sir James Stephen, was enthusiastic, thinking "a thing of that kind might be got up to an enormous sale if made tolerably cheap, 1s. or 1s. 6d." Daniel, however, opposed the idea, believing the successful establishment of a London branch of the firm to be of paramount importance, and warning against involving the firm, which was only just beginning to prosper, in large financial risks and extra labour. By 1839 these objections no longer had any force: Daniel was dead, the London

U. L. Graves, Life and Letters of Alexander Hamilton.

1870, pp. 69-70, 26 May 1855.

iii. Macmillan's Magazine

In December 1863 'Robert Gould Shaw' appeared in Macmillan's Magazine, a unique piece of work from Mrs Gaskell, being something between an obituary notice and a memoir. Macmillan's was the result of several years of consideration about a periodical on the part of Daniel and Alexander Macmillan and their friends. In 1855, the year in which their first notable success, Kingsley's Westward Ho!, was published, Isaac Todhunter suggested the brothers begin a periodical. He advocated, Alexander informed Daniel, "a weekly, or at any rate a fortnightly publication - made, however, rather into a magazine than a newspaper ...". Alexander, encouraged by Sir James Stephen, was enthusiastic, thinking "a thing of that kind might be got up to an enormous sale if made tolerably cheap, 1s. or 1s. 6d."¹ Daniel, however, opposed the idea, believing the successful establishment of a London branch of the firm to be of paramount importance, and warning against involving the firm, which was only just beginning to prosper, in large financial risks and extra labour. By 1859 these objections no longer had any force; Daniel was dead, the London

¹ C. L. Graves, Life and Letters of Alexander Macmillan, 1910, pp. 69-70, 26 May 1855.

branch was successfully functioning, and there had been several important publishing successes. As early as 4 June 1858 Alexander was confiding in his friend MacLehose his plan of establishing a quarterly magazine.¹ This idea was abandoned and Tom Hughes's suggestion of a monthly magazine was developed instead.²

Macmillan's contains work by most of the greatest writers of the second half of the nineteenth century and A. J. Gurr claims that it soon developed into "the most respected and respectable magazine of 'serious' literature and comment of its time."³ The same factors which made the Cornhill a feasible proposition contributed to Macmillan's early success⁴ which, while it never equalled the phenomenal success of its rival, was steady and considerable.

The Bookseller commented in October 1860:

Macmillan's Magazine has reached a second volume, and has been eminently successful. Cheap enough to meet all requirements, the proprietors yet set about the work on sound commercial principles, viz. to make it remunerative. They calculated upon an average circulation of ten thousand, and they have reached

1 C. L. Graves, Life and Letters of Alexander Macmillan, 1910, p. 117.

2 Ibid, p. 130.

3 A. J. Gurr, 'Macmillan's Magazine', Review of English Literature, vi, 1965, p. 39.

4 See pp. 266 - 267 below.

fifteen. Fifteen thousand copies of a monthly magazine of the sterling quality of Macmillan's is a great fact in literary history, because the work is, on the whole, one that only the higher class of readers will care for ... it requires an educated mind to appreciate its excellence.¹

Alexander realized that serialization was a profitable way of publishing, both in promoting sales of the periodical in which serialized novels appeared and in boosting sales of the novel when published later in book form. Also, in the members of his 'Round Table' Thursday night meetings, Alexander had a group of some of the most eminent writers of the time eager to provide material for his new venture. Macmillan's was neither such a radical departure as the Cornhill - it followed the old Blackwood's format and had only 90 pages and no illustrations - nor paid as well (Masson received only £300 for being editor and the general rate of pay was £1 per printed page,²) but Alexander was not disturbed by the arrival of his rival in the shilling monthly field. He realized that in aims and type the two magazines were totally different.³ Events proved him correct. Macmillan's is a serious and sober magazine, of high quality,

1 The Bookseller, 27 October 1860, p. 613.

2 A. J. Gurr, 'Macmillan's Magazine', p. 54, note 1; p. 41.

3 C. L. Graves, op. cit. p. 137.

with the contents common to the established monthlies - political comment, literary reviews, a serial, a topical article, a poem. It never placed its emphasis so heavily on its literary content as did the Cornhill, but continued with the proved recipe for success, a miscellany. Like Fraser's, Macmillan's was non-partisan.

Mrs Gaskell was approached to contribute by Hughes when the quarterly was envisaged, and agreed.¹ Yet later she seems to have changed her mind:

... I shall answer Mr Masson's letter in the negative, for I can't do all, and do well. I am sorry to disoblige Mr Hughes, but I don't care 2d for Mr Masson.²

She contemplated sending her friend W. W. Story's Roba di Roma papers to Macmillan's if the Cornhill did not want them,³ which suggests that she looked on the magazine not as a recipient of her best work, but of work refused elsewhere. It is not at all clear why 'Robert Gould Shaw' should have been published in Macmillan's. There is evidence that Alexander wrote to Mrs Gaskell on 18 January 1862 on the subject of the American Civil War,

1 John Rylands English MS 730/45, 3 July 1858, Thomas Hughes to Mrs Gaskell.

2 Gaskell Letters, no. 442, [?1 Oct. 1859], to George Smith.

3 Ibid, no. 440.

deprecating the idea of sending Garibaldi to assist the North, whose cause his magazine advocated.¹ What did Mrs Gaskell write to him to provoke this reply? Had she suggested writing an article on this subject for Macmillan's? Unfortunately her side of the correspondence is lost. Alexander's letter may have grown out of the publication in 1862 by his firm of Colonel C. A. Vecchj's Garibaldi at Capera, which contained an introduction by Mrs Gaskell. However, although almost two years were to elapse before her article on Shaw appeared in the magazine, she knew from this letter that the magazine was sympathetic to the cause of the North and would, therefore, comply with the sentiments she expresses in her article.

It is easier to see what prompted her to write the article, from the evidence of two letters. The first was written to Mrs Shaw in August 1863 -

I know as well as any one that he died nobly doing his duty, 'laying down his life for others', th~~y~~^s showing the greatest love possible ...²

She had known the Shaw family since 1855, and had evidently corresponded with Mrs Shaw.³ The political side of the article is echoed in a letter to Charles

¹ C. L. Graves, op. cit., p. 184.

² Gaskell Letters, no. 530, 29 Aug [1863].

³ Ibid, nos. 493, 530.

Eliot Norton of 4 July 1864:

... I always do want to have the FACTS if I can, on which your opinions are based. I fully believe you, because I know you; but what facts am I to give in answer to such {things}\speeches/ as this. "It is a war forced by the Government on the people, the {conscription} orders for enlistment are not readily or willingly responded to, and the army is principally composed of mercenaries - German for the most part. 2ndly It is a war for territory; the pretext of slavery is only a pretext with a large majority; a few more enlightened have it really at heart ["], and then they refer to the Emancipation proclamation only setting the slaves of rebels free, - Again the reports of the luxury of New York, & the great extravagance of living there, make many say the Nation does not suffer, \but riots while the hired army is slain by thousands. / {Again} Again they ask me by what force - standing army, or military government - the rebel provinces if once reconquered, are to be held? I know that all these questions arise out of the wicked mistatements of the 'Times' - but they are difficult to answer ...¹

The combination of personal feelings about Shaw's death, and the recognition of the opportunity it offered to answer many of the rumours she refers to

¹ Gaskell letters, no. 551, 4 July 1864, to Charles Eliot Norton.

Norton in this letter, provide the material and the guiding purpose behind this article. Her account of Shaw's life is brief, crisp and unclouded by the sentiment evinced in her letter to Mrs Shaw. Mrs Gaskell recounts with moving restraint the facts of the battle at Fort Wagner and Shaw's death.

The political and propaganda purposes forbid sentiment; the circumstances of Shaw's death provide a human focus for the facts. It is a unique, and well written, example from Mrs Gaskell's pen.

iv. Fraser's Magazine

Six months later, between April and June 1864, another almost unique piece of writing from her appeared in Fraser's Magazine - 'French Life', a brilliant piece of occasional journalism. Fraser's (1830-1882) was a long-established and famous magazine. In its early days, under the editorship of William Maginn, it was provocative and sprightly, daring and outspoken, aligned with no particular political party. It set out to challenge the pre-eminence of the Tory monthly Blackwood's, which in format it greatly resembles. Fraser's provided 134 closely printed pages for 2s 6d. It published some of the best of the early work of Carlyle and Thackeray.

In 1847 it was purchased by John Parker, a member of the Broad Church movement, and under his influence its character changed. It published Kingsley's Yeast, Mill's Utilitarianism and Non-Intervention. The daring progressiveness of the early days was tempered further when J. A. Froude became editor in 1861. The magazine became more staid and serious, although it did courageously publish Ruskin's 'Unto This Last' papers after they were discontinued in the Cornhill.

Froude's biographer Waldo H. Dunn claims that he was an admirable editor. He had in particular an unusual sense of timeliness, and believed that a magazine should stimulate thinking on vital subjects of immediate concern. To this end he published many articles which ran counter to his own opinions.¹

However, throughout the period of his editorship, Froude regarded it as a secondary concern to his main work as an historian.

The magazine never had the large circulation of the shilling monthlies, but under Maginn it reached sales of 8,000 and more. By 1861 this had dropped considerably, and Froude was satisfied when sales rose to over 3,000.²

Political and topical issues are of more importance than literary matters. Fraser's is one of the few magazines which we know Mrs Gaskell read frequently and generally admired.³ With Froude as a personal friend, it is strange that she did not write more for the magazine. Possibly the clue lies in one of her letters:

1 Waldo H. Dunn, James Anthony Froude. A Biography., Oxford, vol. i, 1961, vol. ii, 1963, i, p. 4.

2 Dunn, ii, p. 328.

3 Gaskell Letters, nos. 89, 238, 384, 485, 561.

if you can indeed set up such a Magazine as Fraser's,
 bringing an earnest spirit of godliness (Unitarian instead
 of High Church) ...¹

Was this merely a slip of the pen, putting 'High' for the more suitable 'Broad'
 Church, or did Mrs Gaskell genuinely consider the magazine's tendencies to be
 High Church, and therefore as the wife of a Unitarian minister prefer not to
 contribute to it?

Froude had been a friend of the Gaskells for some years, yet the one
 piece of work Mrs Gaskell published in his magazine appeared there rather as
 the result of accident than design. In June 1863 Mrs Gaskell wrote to her
 daughter Marianne:

I am sorry that MSS has gone to Mr Froude, as I
 don't like his having to take Mr Smith's refuse
 for old friendship's sake. But I have done my best
 to remedy this by writing to Mr Froude to bid him
 send the MSS back to Mr Smith, & to desire {him}
 \the latter/ to seal it up at once, & send it to
 me, care of W[.] Shaen. At any rate, dear [.]
 you did your best, but I am very angry with Mr
 Smith [.] Don't you have anything more to do with

¹ Gaskell Letters, no. 638, to an unknown correspondent.

it, love. Mr Smith did quite right to refuse it, as it's one probable great merit was it's novelty, and as there had been previous articles on the subject it had no longer the recommendation of novelty - but then he should never have presumed to settle to whom I would like to have it sent. I said when I saw that he had gone right against my distinct desire, & called a night's work a dark night's work, that I wd never publish with him again; & this confirms me. I do not think he ought to have done it¹

The reference here is probably to 'An Italian Institution' or a paper on the same subject. Thus 'French Life' was not the first piece of Mrs Gaskell's work received at the Fraser's offices.

When she began work on 'French Life' later in 1863 she thought of "sending this to Mr Froude to make up for the 'Camorra' - that unlucky piece of work/²"

In October of the same year Froude wrote to her welcoming a contribution on the lines of 'French Life':

You could not possibly have proposed a more pleasant subject for Fraser's. The most beautiful story

¹ Gaskell Letters, no. 524, to Marianne Gaskell, [1 June 1863].

² Ibid, no. 532, 20 Sept[1863], to George Smith.

suffers from periodical publication ... The desultory variety of notes made when travelling ... appears on the contrary to the best advantage in pieces and the appetite for more returns healthy & vigorous with the recurring months. When will you begin? Longman has bought Frasers & I hope we shall be able to offer you something better worth your acceptance in the way of pay than was possible under the old régime¹

There is evidence that 'French Life' had been in contemplation for some time.

Meta Gaskell, according to Clement Shorter, claimed that part of it was

written at Avignon where she, Mrs Gaskell, Florence and Julia passed a few

nights in 1863 en route from Paris to Rome.² In September of that year fifty pages

of 'Notes of a Wanderer', the original title for 'French Life', were written,

and described as "all sorts of odd bits, scenes, conversations \ with rather

famous people in Paris /, small adventures, descriptions &c &c met with during

our two last journeys abroad in Brittany Paris, Rome, Florence ..."³

In the same letter Mrs Gaskell claims to be working on her 'Life and Times

of Madame de Sévigné', which was never published. It is possible that notes

1 John Rylands English MS 730/32, 20 Oct. 1863.

2 Clement Shorter, ed. Novels and Tales, viii, p. xi.

3 Gaskell Letters, no. 532, 20 Sept. [1863], to George Smith.

made for this work were incorporated in 'French Life', providing some of its most memorable sketches.¹

Edgar Wright (p.38) claims 'French Life' is the published version of the diary Mrs Gaskell kept on holiday in 1862. There is no evidence to substantiate this, either in Mrs Gaskell's letters or in Letters and Memorials. J. G. Sharps (p.459) notes discrepancies in dating and other matters which were unlikely to occur if Mrs Gaskell had a diary to refer to. The Winkworths on several occasions comment on her remarkable and graphic memory, and it is more likely that she relied upon this than on a diary.

Mrs Gaskell, in the company of various members of her family, visited Brittany and Normandy in spring 1862, as well as in 1853, and journeyed from Paris to Rome in spring 1863. Her observations about various aspects of life in France and the French are used in 'French Life'. Its journal form allows some of the many excellencies of her letters to appear in a printed form, notably the close relationship she usually establishes and assumes with her correspondents. The reader is immediately drawn into the account by the

¹ Gaskell Letters, no. 509b, 23 July 1861 [1862], to Catherine Winkworth gives an account of the 1862 visit including work on Madame de Sévigné which tends to support this theory.

abrupt opening, joining the "we" who "went" today along the Boulevard Sevastopol." The journal form is convenient to use in conjunction with serialization, and provides a useful framework for notes and digressions. In addition, many of the most excellent features of Mrs Gaskell's style and manner are called forth by this subject and its method of treatment, making her series of holiday reminiscences interesting and readable. Her ability to find the telling detail, to include the reader's reactions in her own so that he comes to identify himself with the narrator, her enthusiasm and lack of affectation or pompousness, the artless naturalness of her account as though the comments and descriptions are being given to well-known friends, the vitality of her sketches and story-telling, the zest with which she seizes on an anecdote or old legend and relates it (totally absorbed herself, she succeeds in captivating the reader's interest) - all these qualities combine to produce one of her most memorable pieces of writing.

While the account is in many ways rambling in content, as the journal form allows it to be, the style is in general impeccably lucid and precise. A point which in former years would have been greatly elaborated is here clearly

and simply expressed:

It is a great gain in all material points; a great loss to memory and to that kind of imagination which loves to re-people places.

- exactly the kind of imagination Mrs Gaskell has, as is amply illustrated by this article.

The description of Madame A _____'s salon, its uninviting coldness, is sketched briefly, significant details evoking the whole atmosphere. The minimum of comment is made - "but it was a room to be looked at rather than used". ~~of~~ The draperies of the bed, she chattily confides:

I dare say would prove to be faded if one were to see them close, in full country daylight; but which look like a pictorial background to the rest of the room.

She is amused by the old French custom of receiving in bed, elaborating this with several short, amusing anecdotes.

Mrs Gaskell is confident not only of the material being treated, and of her own ability to treat it, but also of the tastes, feelings and reactions of her readers. With this confidence she can give full rein to all the conflicting feelings she has about such subjects as Madame de Villette - farce,

sympathy, deep seriousness, affection all play across the surface of the anecdotes she relates.

Her quiet, dry humour illuminates many a comment:

it is rather flat to sit from two to five or thereabouts in our company dresses, and company faces, all for no use

I really am becoming a convert to this idea, and can take my glass of eau sucrée as well as anyone before going to bed But I think it is a drink for society, not for solitude. Inspired by the example of others, I relish it; but I never tipple at it in private.

Mrs Gaskell's observations about the old streets of Paris reflect her ambivalent attitude to progress; like Scott she loves the old for its associations, its colour, its memories, its traditions,¹ while at the same time she is aware that progress brings necessary material improvements. Of

"the narrow streets of the older parts of Paris" she remarks, "the smells there are insufferable - a mixture of drains and cookery, which makes one loathe one's food".² But in almost the same breath

¹ "I do like associations - they are like fragrance, which I value so in a flower." Gaskell Letters, no. 384.

² Ibid, no. 609b, includes a similar comment.

she turns to what catches her imagination: 254
"Yet how interesting these old streets are! Picturisque
surroundings always have this effect on her. of the
Place Royale she confides (establishing closeness with the reader),
"I have always liked the looks of this stately old place: so full of historical associations too."

Then, again, the quietness of it charms me ..." Her imagination takes flight,
although her practical eye is struck by the unhealthy servants' quarters -

The front rooms were charming, in their old-
fashioned stateliness; but if I lived there I should
be sorely perplexed as to where my servants were to
sleep.

One day she and her companions take a day's trip to St. Germain. On
seeing the Aqueduct de Marly Mrs Gaskell wonders what it is about it which so
charms the eye. Such rambling asides are delightful when we feel we are in
such pleasant and congenial company. We can share Mrs Gaskell's surprise,
wonder and delight at the view unexpectedly come across at St. Germain, smile
with her in her boldness in asking for provisions at the Café Galle, smile at
her as, bored with the others' sketching, she "struck up an acquaintanceship
with one of the gardeners, and with a hackney-coachman" who tries to over-charge
her on a visit to the ruined palace of the Sun-King at Marly.

In the May number she sets off for a few days in Brittany. The beauty
of Chartres Cathedral moves her beyond speech; Vitré inspires her to some

⁴ ~~Gaskell Letters, no. 509b, includes a similar comment.~~

lively description of its narrow, picturesque streets and ancient houses. She is fortunate enough to spend the night in the house (now an hotel) where Madame de Sévigné lived for a time. The atmosphere and character of this house are captured in the vignettes, of the servant girl mending linen by the window, heedless of the ostler outside trying to catch her attention, of the old woman topping and tailing a basket of gooseberries and shouting to someone in the street below. Yet to Mrs Gaskell's imaginative mind

the great corridor looks empty and strangely deserted.

Somehow, I suppose that as soon as I heard the name of Tour de Sévigné, I expected to see a fair, plump lady, in hanging sleeves and long light-brown ringlets, walking before me wherever I went, half turning her pretty profile over her white shoulder to say something bright and playful.

How ^{regrettable} ~~regretful~~ it is that the Sévigné work was never completed and published.

Equally delightful is the account of the next day's visit to Les Rochers.

From here there is a jump in time to February 1863, and a change of mood.

The bright, bustling scenes at Vitré give place to a moving and deeply felt short memoir of Madame de Circourt, known and greatly admired by Mrs Gaskell.

The sadness is lifted a little, and the transition smoothed, by M. de Circourt's anecdote about the Montmorenci who refused to sleep in Madame de Sévigné's old room at Les Rochers because she was a Jansenist.

The sketch continues with some gripping reminiscences of the Reign of Terror, similar in type to the Clément and Virginie episode in 'My Lady Ludlow'. Mrs Gaskell's relish for ghost stories, which so disturbed Charlotte Brontë, incorporates a relish for the horror, violence and terror of these tales. Furthermore, this period in French history has always fascinated the English, who would have been enthralled by Mrs Gaskell's excellent evocation of the atmosphere and fears of the people of the time. We are brought to a more mundane level by the less interesting discussion about French and English marriage which ends this monthly portion.

The June sketch opens with several miscellaneous matters for comment, and the interest picks up again as the travellers reach Avignon, battling against the mistral. It is typical of Mrs Gaskell to single out the statue of Jean Althen for attention, rather than concentrating on the usual tourist places. In the evening, cosily settled by a fire, watching sparks fly out

of the wood, she is reminded of a fairy story she heard on the Isle of Man. Then she begins reading a book, and tells the story of the terrible life and death of the Marquise de Gange. This tale forms the central part of the sketch. In the morning she goes to Ville-Neuve to see the portrait of the unfortunate lady.

The sketch ends as abruptly as it began, with the entry:

A telegram from Marseilles. A boat starts today
for Civita Vecchia.

The reader must have put down Fraser's with a sigh.

'French Life' is one of the most beautiful pieces Mrs Gaskell ever wrote, remarkable for its breadth of interest, awareness and understanding, outstanding as a piece of stylistic journalism. It deserves more attention than it has received from critics, as it brings us very close to Mrs Gaskell herself. Indeed, it is her personality as narrator which makes the piece. One can only wish that she had lived to write more in this very congenial genre.

It is possible that 'French Life' was not Mrs Gaskell's sole or first contribution to Fraser's. J. G. Sharps (p.612) refers briefly to Mrs W. E.

Houghton's discovery of 'Shams' by E.C.G. in the February 1863 number of Fraser's. Although these initials would fit Mrs Gaskell's, and must be rare, the evidence of the article itself would not suggest her authorship. This article pre-dates the Camorra troubles and work on 'French Life', but if it was by Mrs Gaskell it would make George Smith's act of sending the Camorra article to Froude more reasonable - knowing Mrs Gaskell had recently contributed to Froude's magazine he would have thought of sending it to him. However, this is very problematical evidence.

The subject of the paper, the shams and hypocrisies practised in daily life, would have interested Mrs Gaskell, but she was capable of making far more of it than has 'E.C.G!'. The references to Dr Johnson, to the French and the use of French words in English, the use of a gossipy male narrator which barely disguises the fact that the writer is a woman (she must be to have such intricate knowledge of women's clothes and to spend so much time discussing this one aspect of the subject), the disgusted remarks about artificial laces and other stuffs which reflect ideas expressed in her letters to her daughters, all suggest that Mrs Gaskell may well be the author. On the

last page, however, there is a short remark which it is impossible to believe that Mrs Gaskell ever wrote:

it is to be hoped that if American squabbles produce a scarcity in the cotton market, those persons who are able and willing to pay high prices may have a chance of obtaining genuine articles for their money.

Mrs Gaskell would never have condemned Manchester's great product, cotton manufactures, as 'sham goods' and advocated silk and wool instead. On this strong ground, and in the belief that Mrs Gaskell in 1863 was capable of far better writing than this, and would have produced it for Fraser's, I believe 'Shams' is not likely to be by her.

everything.

The paper took an independent line, and based its success on quality rather than

the type of journalism which would ensure a large circulation. Besides the

Fraser's, p. 124.

v. The Pall Mall Gazette

Finally, in the last year of her life, Mrs Gaskell may have contributed to George Smith's evening newspaper the Pall Mall Gazette. This paper was founded in 1865, under the editorship of Frederick Greenwood but, despite being well received, it was not a financial success for some time. Robertson Scott describes it as "aristocratic", with the

tone of the club window, of the smoking room, of the House of Commons and of the drawing room. You read your column or column and a half of the vigorous polished matter, read it with relish. It is keen, scholarly and trenchant. You feel you are reading the work of a man who knows all the ins and outs of the question he is handling, that he is a man with a cool head, a strong intellect, and a powerful pen, that he is a man who has cleared his mind of all cant, and that, with strong common sense, he possesses wit, a calm and perhaps cynical temper which sees through everything.¹

The paper took an independent line, and based its success on quality rather than the type of journalism which would ensure a large circulation. Besides the

¹ Scott, p. 126.

excellent writing to be found in the articles on contemporary issues and news items, there was material of a lighter vein to be found in the paper, usually written by contributors known to Smith and Greenwood through the Cornhill Magazine. Such writers included Anthony Trollope, George Eliot, and Mrs Gaskell.

The first articles which may be by Mrs Gaskell appeared as a series of 'Columns of Gossip from Paris' in March and April 1865. These dates almost coincide with those of her visit to Madame Mohl - she stayed with her from 12 March to 20 April.

There is certainly nothing here, as with 'Shams', to suggest that the three articles are not by Mrs Gaskell. J. G. Sharps (pp. 528 - 529) notes various parallel references between these three articles and Wives and Daughters which Mrs Gaskell was writing at the same time. Also, personalities mentioned by Mrs Gaskell figure in Madame Mohl and Mrs Gaskell's letters of the same period. The only drawbacks from this theory are that it seems strange that Mrs Gaskell should commit herself to more work when she was already both tired and ill writing Wives and Daughters and having difficulty keeping up to schedule with that. However, in response to a request from Smith she would probably

have offered something of this kind, which would be quickly dashed off. There is little literary merit in the pieces, but they are quite interesting reports of social life in Paris. They nowhere rival 'French Life' in quality.

The second series of articles which may be by Mrs Gaskell are the 'A Parson's Holiday' letters in the correspondence section of the paper. In all there are five letters, all but the fourth bearing the initials 'M.N.' They are supposedly written by a Dissenting minister. There is the quiet, ironical humour one would expect from Mrs Gaskell, springing from close observation of human character. It is possible that the young parson's desire to relax away from his parishoners reflects Mrs Gaskell's own feelings; she would certainly understand the situation.

Mr Gaskell certainly enjoyed getting away from his parishoners and relaxing on holiday. In May 1852 Mrs Gaskell wrote to her daughter Marianne refusing a Miss Banks an invitation to join the family party on holiday at Silverdale on the grounds:

... I find Papa does not like the idea of having a stranger in the house in holiday time when you know he likes to play pranks, go cockling etc. etc. and feel at liberty to say

or do what he likes I think you may fancy how Papa would feel constrained and obliged to be 'proper'."¹

These clear parallels between her personal experience and 'A Parson's Holiday', though obviously not unique to Mrs Gaskell, combined with other factors strongly suggest her authorship.

The evidence to suggest she was writing for the Pall Mall at this time lies mainly in a letter to her daughter Marianne, probably of 2 September 1865, mentioning Smith's request for "another letter-article for Pall Mall Gaz, by return of post."² The description "letter-article" would certainly fit these five, and the date is right - the following Tuesday, 5 September, the last of the articles appeared in the paper. J. G. Sharps/notes various parallels of names here and in other works by Mrs Gaskell, a feature of her work.³

In some ways the writing recalls Cranford, with the humour of situation, farce, the self-deception of the minister as he indulges in a little gambling "as a scientific experiment." The places used, the seaside and the Continent, would of course be well known to Mrs Gaskell, but this would hardly single her out as the writer.

¹ Gaskell Letters, no. 122a, to Marianne, [4 May 1852.]

² Ibid, no. 582, [2 Sept. 1865.]

³ Sharps, pp. 532-533.

Again, it is amazing to find her still writing odd pieces when her letters show her to have been very occupied on Wives and Daughters and family matters,¹ even to oblige Smith.

Mrs Gaskell established no long connections with any of the periodicals here discussed, nor is there evidence of any significant influences of their editors on what she wrote, but it is interesting to see how in all these cases personal feelings and the influence of friendships affected both what she submitted and the care with which she prepared her work. On each occasion she seems to have sent contributions as a result of a direct request to do so, usually from an acquaintance. There is little evidence to suggest why Mrs Gaskell should send 'Robert Gould Shaw' to Macmillan's, but with Fraser's it is difficult to see why she did not contribute more. Perhaps Fraser's pressed her for work too late; once busy on her last novel she had little time to devote to good writing, as the two pieces she may have sent to the Pall Mall Gazette show. Indeed, the most interesting fact to emerge from this chapter is that so little of Mrs Gaskell's work in these sixteen years was published

¹ See pp. 327 below.

outside the periodicals she patronized more than any others - the two edited by Dickens and the Cornhill.

The 'Cornhill' and its Contemporaries

The establishment of the Cornhill Magazine and Fraser's Magazine

In late 1859 marks a revolution in the history of periodical publishing. The Fraser's and Cornhill were not entirely new, nor was the price, but the combination of lower cost, better material, and the lack of any rivals in the field initially, made their success and longevity assured.

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Fraser's Magazine and its successors had earlier in the 1850's and 60's.

Previous chapters have shown how the need for cheap, wholesome material for

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THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE

i. The 'Cornhill' and its Contemporaries

The establishment of the Cornhill Magazine and Macmillan's Magazine in late 1859 marks a revolution in the history of periodical publishing. The scheme of these periodicals was not entirely new, nor was the price, but the combination of these two factors was, and this together with the readiness of the public for such material, and the lack of any rivals in the field initially, made their success and importance assured.

They filled a void in the field of periodical publications, just as Chambers's Journal and its successors had earlier in the 1830's and 1840's. Previous chapters have shown how the need for cheap, wholesome material for the masses was supplied, while such publications as Reynolds' Miscellany provided reading matter for those of less education and coarser tastes. At the other end of the scale, the upper echelons of society were catered for

by the expensive reviews, such as the Quarterly and Edinburgh Review, which cost six shillings in 1834, or the monthly magazines established in the wake of Blackwood's - such as Fraser's and the Monthly Magazine, costing two shillings or two and sixpence. Others, such as the New Monthly, cost three shillings and sixpence.

The idea of a monthly magazine priced one shilling was not new. In 1845 Douglas Jerrold established his own shilling magazine, an octavo size publication of ninety-two pages with printing right across the page, and illustrations by John Leech. The contents were radical in their politics and entertaining rather than instructive. The magazine was intended to be mainly devoted to a consideration of the social wants and rightful claims of the PEOPLE.¹

The main feature was a serial novel by Jerrold, to which almost a quarter of the space was given. There were also poems and short stories of very poor quality, and political articles written in a crude, tub-thumping, declamatory style typical of the whole magazine, and distasteful to any educated reader. The reviews and engravings are the most praiseworthy

¹ Douglas Jerrold's Magazine, Editor's Prospectus to vol.i.

features.

A lively and interesting style is seen to consist here of short, simple sentences, frequently punctuated by exclamations and rhetorical questions and answers. Thus articles tend to have little rationality - though they treat serious subjects, they do not treat them seriously. In comparison with such writing the qualities of Dickens's periodicals and Howitt's Journal are increasingly outstanding.

It lasted only until 1848. Although in price it anticipated the Cornhill and Macmillan's, its aims and projected readership were very different, and no true comparison can be made between them.

A more successful and longer lived publication was Tait's Edinburgh Magazine. This began in April 1832 - a new series beginning as early as February 1834 - and lasted until May 1861. There is the familiar Blackwood's format for the seventy-six pages of each number, which include as regular features a Political Register and Literary Register. There are no illustrations, and the main emphasis is on political and contemporary social issues. Fiction and poetry are included, but not serial fiction.

In June 1834 Tait's circulation is said to be

far above all the other monthly periodicals sold in
Scotland, taking their aggregate together.

and

already equal, even in Scotland, to three times that
of the Edinburgh Review or Blackwood.

which means it was probably around the 24,000 mark. Although this editorial
claims that Tait's is

adapted by its contents and execution, to the most
cultivated class of readers

it is certainly not intended for as cultivated an audience as, say,

Blackwood's, and in this resembles the Cornhill. No doubt the coming of the

classy new monthlies in late 1859 brought about its downfall. At that time

it had changed very little, still being preoccupied with political issues,

and literary reviews. Only sixty pages were provided for a shilling, but

some serial fiction was included. Altick¹ is mistaken in pricing it at two

shillings and sixpence in 1859 - on the cover of volume xxvi the monthly price

is still given as one shilling.

1 Altick, p.319.

The Cornhill is very different from Tait's in its more luxurious format and its stress on literary rather than political contents, but in terms of value for money Tait's comes closer to the 1859 monthlies than any of the other magazines considered here.

The sub-title of Ainsworth's Magazine¹, which began in January 1842, is a fair indication of its contents - 'A Miscellany of Romance, General Literature, and Art', edited by Ainsworth and illustrated by Cruikshank. It combines features of the two magazines discussed above, for in format it resembles Douglas Jerrold's while in content it is closer in quality to Tait's. The main-stay of the magazine is Ainsworth's serial novel, which takes a quarter of the space. There are no serious intentions here, however, unlike Tait's, it is merely "hearts full of fun to the brim".² As pure entertainment it is good value and good quality, and there is very liberal use of good illustrations - as in the article on 'Strawberry Hill' in the number for March 1842. The price was originally one shilling and sixpence, but was raised with the third number to two shillings to cover the increased

1 For details of this magazine see S. M. Ellis, Harrison Ainsworth and his Friends, 1911, 2 vols, i, pp.430-432, ii, pp. 3-33, 61-71, 74, 131-132.

2 Ainsworth's Magazine, i, 'L'Envoy', a poem by T.R.B.

size of the magazine. At this time Ainsworth was at the height of his popularity, and the magazine was successful, having a circulation of 7,000 in June 1842. The following month the magazine was enlarged again and its price increased to two shillings and sixpence. From this point on troubles began. Ainsworth bought Bentley's Miscellany, and concluded Ainsworth's in 1854, having allowed the latter to degenerate in its last years. The illustrations and 'Lady's Page' had gone, and the contents were little more than a series of instalments of several works of fiction¹.

Very different is the celebrated Blackwood's Magazine, first published in Edinburgh in 1817 and ^{still} continuing ~~until 1890~~. It has 126 octavo pages of small print in double columns, with no illustrations. The articles are very miscellaneous and range from the flippant to the deeply serious. Volume 1xxxv (January - June 1859) includes as serial fiction What Will He Do With It? and The Luck of Ladysmede. Reviews take a prominent place - Adam Bede has a long review in the April number, and Carlyle's Frederick the Great is reviewed in February. Articles range over 'Burmah and the Burmese', 'How to Boil Peas', 'An Angling Saunter in Sutherland', and 'The Witch of Walkerne'.

¹ S. M. Ellis, Harrison Ainsworth, ii, pp.9, 15, 56-57, 71, 111-112, 131.

Topical issues are discussed - 'Our Relations with the Continent', 'The New Parliament and Its Work', 'The Cry for Reform'. Satire and burlesque are also prominent and very good - this is a field which became a Blackwood's tradition in the early days under Lockhart and 'Christopher North', and which few of the other monthlies enter.

The difference between the Blackwood's of 1860 and the Cornhill can be illustrated by their respective treatment of the voyage of the 'Fox' in 1860¹. This was an expedition which set out to discover what had happened to Sir John Franklin's Expedition to the Arctic, a subject of great public interest and one which figures in almost every periodical in the early months of 1860. The Cornhill has a long article, a transcript of a journal kept by a member of the expedition, which gives vividness and spontaneity to the account, further embellished with some very fine illustrations and maps. Blackwood's is a much drier assessment altogether, giving detailed facts about the two expeditions. It is more factual but, to a layman, far less interesting. This is typical of the differences between the two magazines,

¹ The Voyage of the 'Fox' in the Arctic Seas, by Capt. M'Clintock was published in December 1859. See Athenaeum review, No. 1678, 24 Dec. 1859, pp. 843-846.

and stems from the fact that the Cornhill was intended as a popular magazine, rather than one for a highly educated and discriminating minority.

Fraser's, established in 1830, has already been assessed, and is of the more serious Blackwood's type. Its aims and policies changed greatly over the years, and in 1859 it was primarily a literary magazine, including both original works and reviews. Interest in contemporary affairs is not as great as in previous years, but is still represented. Each number has 128 pages in the familiar Blackwood's format. There are no illustrations.

In 1859 Harrison Ainsworth was editing the New Monthly Magazine which went through several series between 1814 and 1884. He had bought it in 1845, and removed himself from Ainsworth's for the purpose.¹ It looks very similar to Ainsworth's Magazine and each number has 126 pages, but it differs in that serious articles are very important. Fiction, poetry, reviews and articles on various subjects make its contents varied and miscellaneous.

From this brief survey it is evident that the Cornhill and Macmillan's in 1859 provided a new type of magazine. Readers could then buy for one shilling what previously would have cost two shillings or more. They were

¹ S. M. Ellis, ii, pp.111-115.

offered in the Cornhill the miscellaneous non-political contents of the established monthlies, better serials, short stories and poems by better writers than in any other contemporary magazine, and the work of the best and most popular journalists and artists of the time. Certain of the monthlies had some of these features; none combined them all as the Cornhill did, nor gave such good quality for the price. The importance given to good literature - novels, short stories, and poetry - is unprecedented. As Huxley remarks, the novelty of Smith's scheme

lay in uniting the popular lure of the serial with the literary work of the more serious reviews, and this at the ordinary price of the serial part alone or of the cheapest of the magazines alone.¹

Its significance in 1859-1860 cannot be exaggerated.

That the publishers of the established magazines feared the newcomers is evident from this letter, written by Joseph Munt Langford to John Blackwood:

I am pleased to hear that you have good things in prospect for Maga - the opposition is strong just now but there is no fear that she will be shaken from her pre-eminence. Macmillans have sold 10,000

¹ Huxley, p.89.

and are reprinting - still the thing is a failure and has made no impression. Thackeray's name has not met a single approval in my hearing - everyone thinks it bad and the letter which you will see they are circulating widely is very weak¹

However, by 17 March 1860 the Cornhill was out, and G. H. Lewes was writing to his son Charles

The Cornhill Magazine ... is the greatest success of any magazine ever published in this country. It sells 100,000 copies - whereas Blackwood which is the first and best magazine only sells 8,000 ...²

Macmillan's presented more of a threat to the established monthlies than the Cornhill, being closer to them in type. The Cornhill, with its more popular appeal, probably damaged the circulation of the quality weeklies rather than the monthlies. It is also significant that the monthly shilling part-issue of novels began to die out with the advent of the shilling monthlies.

Between 1859 and 1867 eleven reputable magazines, many imitating the Cornhill, were established, specializing in serial fiction. Magazine serialization was the most important form of publication for most of the major

¹ Eliot Letters, iii, p.207, 18 Nov 1859; Langford was manager of the London branch of Blackwood's 1845-1881.

² Ibid. pp. 274-275, 17 March 1860.

Victorian novelists, the Dickens periodicals, the Cornhill and Blackwood's being most prominent.

The numerous monthly magazines which sprang up in the wake of the Cornhill usually aimed at being more popular, and divided the market, cutting the circulation of the pioneers and limiting themselves to only a small slice of the cake. William Tinsley, who established his own magazine in 1867, illustrates this from his own experience:

About the time I started it there was a rage amongst the publishers for shilling magazines, and I was one of the foolish sheep who rushed through the gap into the next field, and did not find the food so plentiful as it was in the field I had left - ...however, having got into the new pasture, foolish pride would not allow me to go back. And yet there were more magazines in the wretched field than there were blades of grass to support them.

He lost "over three thousand pounds on the first twelve numbers".¹

Before the advent of the Cornhill and its followers, however, the prices of the quality monthlies were prohibitive to many who were, nevertheless,

¹ William Tinsley, Random Recollections of an old Publisher, 1900, 2 vols, i, pp.323-324.

greatly interested in their contents. Such people were faced with either reading them at the subscription reading rooms, clubbing together to buy them, or making do with the quality weeklies, in particular Household Words. The popularity of the subscription reading rooms is in itself, as Altick suggests¹, evidence of the numbers who had to resort to such measures. That there was a public for the new shilling monthlies, therefore, cannot be doubted.

But was the publishing world ready to cater for this demand? Why had the idea not been tried before? Its very ambitiousness must have deterred many, for if the costs of production were to be covered a huge circulation was necessary. The risk of losing large sums of money was one which many publishers could not afford to face. By the end of the 1850's, however, the time seemed ripe, as was forecast in an article in Blackwood's in January 1859. It may be taken to reflect the opinion of many in the publishing world - possibly George Smith and Alexander Macmillan even read it. The writer sees the development of mechanical processes of printing in the nineteenth century

¹ p. 319.

as not less extraordinary, not less revolutionary,
 than the impulse and the development which it [literature]
 derived successively from the creation of an alphabet and
 from the invention of printing.

No single invention or development has been responsible for this, but a

concurrence of an immense number of new applications
 and new arrangements¹ that have tended to diffuse
 education, and not only to cheapen, but also to improve
 and to enrich books, in a manner previously unexampled.
 The stereotypic process has been perfected; steam has
 been applied to the printing-press; the printing-press
 has been so elaborated that it is possible to throw off
 20,000 copies of The Times in an hour; paper is improved
 and cheapened; various societies have been making the
 greatest efforts to popularise knowledge; we have been
 doing our best by 'grants in aid' and competitive
 examinations to raise the standard of education; while,
 keeping equal pace with these appliances, Government has
 abolished the stamp on newspapers except for postal purposes,
 the duty on advertisements has been abrogated, and there is
 every prospect that very speedily the paper duty, the last
 of the taxes on knowledge, will go with the rest²....The art

1 For details of some of these see Bićanić, pp.9ff; also relevant sections in Altick, and R. K. Webb, The British Working-Class Reader 1788-1848, 1955.

2 The paper duty was abolished in 1861. The production of paper was also cheapened by manufacture using esparto grass instead of rags after 1857.

of wood-engraving has been revived, and beyond our expectation ~~is~~ refined ...

Nor ought it to be forgotten that the railway, and the telegraph, and the penny postage ... enormously increase~~d~~ the number of readers and of themselves create a literature¹

These innovations made it possible for publications of the size, cheapness and quality of the Cornhill Magazine to be produced.

¹ Blackwood's Magazine, lxxxv, Jan-June 1859, p.98.

ii. George Smith and the 'Cornhill Magazine'

The two publishers who took advantage of the coincidence of these factors were George Smith and Alexander Macmillan. The histories of the establishment of their respective periodicals are interestingly similar.

The firm of Smith, Elder was established in 1816, as booksellers and stationers, and began publishing three years later.¹ Young George Smith began his apprenticeship with the firm at the age of 14, and in 1843, when still only 19, he persuaded his father to give him control of the publishing branch of the business. Within a year the full responsibilities of the firm rested with him, for in 1844 his father retired from the firm through illness, dying in 1846, and Elder also retired.

All Smith's biographers stress his love for publishing, Lee saying that it

invariably afforded Smith a means of distraction from the pressure of business cares elsewhere. Its speculative

¹ The history of Smith, Elder and Company and of George Smith have been quite thoroughly recorded in George Smith: A Memoir, with some pages of Autobiography, printed for private circulation, 1902, and by Leonard Huxley and J. W. Robertson Scott.

character, which his caution and sagacity commonly kept within reasonable limits of safety, appealed to one side of his nature, while the social intimacies which the work of publishing fostered appealed strongly to another side.¹

He became closely acquainted with many whose books he published, including Leigh Hunt, Ruskin, Charlotte Brontë, Mrs Gaskell and Thackeray.

In 1847 Charlotte Brontë sent the manuscript of The Professor to Smith, Elder, and thus began the relationship which was to establish Smith's reputation and success as a publisher.² Smith met Charlotte Brontë in 1848 and remained her friend and adviser until her death. Through her, he came to know Mrs Gaskell and Harriet Martineau, and to publish their works, and also Thackeray, whose writings Smith had first been introduced to and delighted in at one of Tegg's coffee-house sales of book 'remainders' when still an apprentice.³ Smith, who had made an unsuccessful bid for Vanity Fair in 1848, was delighted when in 1850 Thackeray asked him to publish his Christmas book The Kickleburys on the Rhine. Thus began a friendship which

1 Sidney Lee, in George Smith: A Memoir, with some pages of Autobiography. Printed for private circulation, 1902, p. 26.

2 Smith's account - 'Charlotte Brontë' in George Smith: A Memoir.

3 Huxley, pp. 66-67.

was to culminate in their association with the Cornhill Magazine, and to end only with Thackeray's death. However, only with his connection with the Cornhill Magazine did Thackeray make Smith his sole publisher.

Smith was associated with two papers linked with the Indian affairs of his firm - the Overland Mail and the Homeward Mail - but plans for an English newspaper in 1854, Thackeray's Fair Play, came to nothing.

Smith was never dependent on the profits of publishing. Besides the firm's successful Indian agency, he also made a profitable business of ship-owning, and as sole British distributor for Apollinaris mineral waters made a cool £1½ million from a total outlay of only £3,000.¹ His disinterested love of culture and literature is seen most obviously in the Dictionary of National Biography, a colossal work begun in 1882 under the directorship of his trusted Cornhill editor, Leslie Stephen, and on which Smith lost at least £70,000 on an outlay of £150,000. G. M. Trevelyan described it as "the best record of a nation's past ... that any civilisation has produced".² It was the culminating triumph of Smith's career as a publisher.

1 Scott, p.9, pp.102-104.

2 Quoted by Scott, p.243.

In the early months of 1859, when the crisis in the firm's affairs caused by the Indian Mutiny in 1857 was over and the firm in a secure financial state once more, Smith turned his attention to a new project, the Cornhill Magazine. Like the Macmillans, he had contemplated publishing a periodical (Fair Play) in the mid-fifties, and been forced to abandon that project until freedom from business anxieties gave both the leisure and the capital necessary to embark on it in 1859.

Smith claims that the idea of the Cornhill "flashed suddenly" to his mind, "as did most of the ideas which have in the course of my life led to successful operations".¹ His plan was for an illustrated, quality, shilling monthly combining the best qualities of the reviews and of periodicals serializing fiction. The serials were to be from Thackeray's pen. However, Smith had difficulty finding an editor of sufficient experience and reputation. Tom Hughes declined, as he was already closely allied with Macmillan's. In April Smith had another burst of inspiration -

Why not Mr. Thackeray, and you yourself do what is necessary to supplement any deficiencies on his part

¹ Scott, p. 63, For Smith's account of how he started the Cornhill see his essay 'Our Birth and Parentage', reprinted from the Cornhill in George Smith: A Memoir.

as a man of business? Think of the writers who would
be proud to contribute under his editorship.¹

Thackeray accepted the post at a salary of £1,000 per annum. His name would
serve both to help sell the magazine and to entice contributors to it. He
had some experience of editorial work and of years as a contributor to
periodicals of all kinds, and knew many of the most important writers and
journalists of the day.

Smith was evidently aware² that Thackeray would be unreliable in
attending to the business details of the job. An editor such as Dickens,
uniting so many of the qualities useful to the task, was a rarity, but Smith
was quite prepared to do the business work himself, leaving to Thackeray what
he could do better than anyone else - the purely literary side of the work.

Thackeray's name for the magazine, which he thought had "a sound of
jollity and abundance about it",³ was taken from its place of publication.
At the time it was ridiculed,⁴ but the imitators of the Cornhill imitated its
title too, and soon there was a Temple Bar, a Belgravia, a St. Paul's and

¹ Scott, p. 65.

² See p. 283 above, and p. 285 below.

³ Thackeray Letters, iv, p. 156, no. 1418.

⁴ E.g. Eliot Letters, iii, p. 210.

St. James's.

It seems that both proprietor and editor had a right of veto¹ on all contributions, an arrangement made by Smith, as

I had a sufficient knowledge of Thackeray's wayward and erratic judgment, which made him liable as Editor to be influenced by totally irrelevant circumstances, to know that this was absolutely necessary.²

This division of responsibility between editor and publisher was common in periodical management of the time.

The success of the first number was phenomenal, 120,000 copies being sold, and Thackeray's salary was doubled immediately. The new magazine had been eagerly awaited. Although the first number is dated January 1860, in fact it came out in time for Christmas 1859 - a propitious moment which must have had a marked effect on sales. The first number was also a remarkably good one. It included the first instalment of Trollope's Framley Parsonage, which proved one of the most popular and successful novels ever serialized in the Cornhill, and of Thackeray's novel Lovel the Widower. Thackeray was "half delirious with joy" at the success of his magazine, wrote Fields in

¹ Thackeray Letters, iv, p. 172, no. 1438.

² Huxley, pp. 108-109. Events proved Smith's caution to be well-advised - see Huxley, p. 109.

Yesterdays with Authors.¹ Trollope wrote to Thackeray shrewdly of the first number -

I certainly do conceive that nothing equal to it of its kind was ever hitherto put forth -

The great aim in such a work should be, I think, to make it readable, an aim which has been so constantly lost sight of in a great portion of the pages of all magazines. In your first number there is nothing that is not readable ... and very little that is not thoroughly good reading.²

The magazine was well received. Reviews were full of praise, the Morning Herald claiming that

The Cornhill Magazine will completely satisfy the expectations of the public ... it is one of the marvels of the time that so much material, and of so excellent a quality, can be provided at so moderate a price.³

The Examiner made the important point that

it contains as many pages as a half-crown magazine, they are well filled with clear type, but not printed

¹ Thackeray Letters, iv, p.168, note 82.

² Trollope Letters, p.55, no.80, 28 Dec.1859.

³ Morning Herald, Friday 23 Dec.1859, p.3.

in double columns ...¹

There were some troubles with the early issues, notably with the rate charged for advertisements, but these were soon settled.

The rates of pay to contributors were very lavish - "to recklessness", according to Smith, "no pains and no cash were spared to make the magazine the best".² Record sums were offered to Tennyson and George Eliot, and Thackeray claimed he had been paid more for Philip than for anything he had ever written, by £100 per number.³ However, it should be remembered that such prices included both rights of serialization and certain negotiated rights of publication afterwards, often with the possibility of rights to use the copyright abroad. Also, the sums paid by Smith were not grossly inflated when one considers the quality of writer they were offered to. He was rather unlucky with some of his deals - Romola did not live up to his expectations nor to its writer's reputation, and Mrs Beecher Stowe's Agnes of Sorrento was a poor offering. There was a dramatic drop in the level of payments when Leslie Stephen became editor.⁴ Smith gives some details of

1 Examiner, 24 Dec 1859, p.821.

2 Scott, p.70.

3 Thackeray Letters, iv, p.136, no.1395, 29 March 1859, to William Duer Robinson.

4 Bićanić, pp.238-239.

the expenditure in the early years in 'Our Birth and Parentage':

the largest amount expended on the literature of a single number was £1,183 3s 8d. (August 1862), and the total expenditure under that head for the first four years was £32,280 11s., the illustrations costing in addition £4,376 11s.¹

Thackeray's letter to contributors gives a detailed consideration of the aims of the magazine, and, as Gordon Ray suggests, it significantly "glances at the radical animus of Dickens's later work"²

You, then, who ask what The Cornhill Magazine is to be, and what sort of articles you shall supply for it? - if you were told that the Editor, known hitherto only by his published writings, was in reality a great reformer, philosopher, and wise-acre, about to expound prodigious doctrines and truths until now unrevealed, to guide and direct the peoples, to pull down the existing order of things, to edify new social or political structures, and, in a word, to set the Thames on Fire; if you heard such designs ascribed to him - risum teneatis? You know I have no such pretensions ... We hope for a large number of readers, and must seek, in the first place, to amuse and interest them.

¹ George Smith: A Memoir, p.114.

² Ray, ii, p.294.

Fortunately for some folks, novels are as daily bread to others; and fiction of course must form a part, but only a part, of our entertainment. We want, on the other hand, as much reality as possible - discussion and narrative of events interesting to the public, personal adventures and observations, familiar reports of scientific discovery, description of Social Institutions ... there is hardly any subject we don't want to hear about, from lettered and instructed men who are competent to speak on it ... If we can only get people to tell what they know, pretty briefly and good-humouredly, and not in a manner obtrusively didactic, what a pleasant ordinary we may have, and how gladly folks will come to it! If our friends have good manners, a good education, and write in good English, the company, I am sure, will be all the better pleased ... At our social table, we shall suppose the ladies and children always present ...¹

This last remark is one of the most important, for Thackeray was anxious about anything risqué or controversial. He declined a proposal from Lord John Russell to 'work' the Cornhill's readers 'in a Whig sense' on Italian liberty, and his old associate Mahony accused him of 'namby-pambyism' when he carefully excluded all personalities from contributions sent by his Bohemian

¹ Thackeray Letters, iv, pp.159-161, no.1422, 1 Nov. 1859, to 'A Friend and Contributor.'

friends. The fear of being risqué was the greatest bugbear of the Cornhill, as of most periodicals throughout the nineteenth century. Thackeray defined his fears in a letter to Mrs Browning, declining 'Lord Walter's Wife':

You see that our Magazine is written not only for men and women, but for boys, girls, infants, sucklings almost ... there are things my squeamish public will not hear on Mondays though on Sundays they listen to them without scruple. In your poem you know there is an account of unlawful passion felt by a man for a woman - and though you write pure doctrine and real modesty and pure ethics, I am sure our readers would make an outcry, and so I have not published this poem ...¹

Thackeray returned 'Mrs General Talboys' to Trollope on similar grounds.

Thackeray's policies were upheld and continued by Leslie Stephen,² when again it is clear there was a conflict between the editor's tastes and his duties - "I object as editor, not as critic, i.e. in the interest of a stupid public, not from my own taste"; "excuse this wretched shred of concession to popular stupidity; but I am a slave ...".

Thackeray kept firm control over the general policies of the magazine

¹ Thackeray Letters, iv, pp.226-227, no.1498, 2 April 1861.

² See his letters to Hardy over Far From the Madding Crowd, R. L. Purdy, Thomas Hardy; A Bibliographical Study, 1954, pp.338-339.

and avoided anything he could not himself countenance, such as slave-advocacy.¹

Controversy was not avoided on all fronts, however. Numerous quite strongly-worded attacks on British defence plans were made during Thackeray's period of editorship, many thorough, detailed and carefully argued, by eminent men. Higgins's Paterfamilias letters beginning in May 1860 aroused great public interest. They boldly attacked the present state of public school education in England, especially at Eton, and suggested various reforms. Ray considers these Cornhill papers helped to bring both public and parliamentary attention to bear on the question.²

Robert Bell's 'Stranger than Fiction' in the August 1860 number was also controversial, but most public protest was aroused over Ruskin's 'Unto this Last', a series of papers beginning in August 1860 criticizing orthodox political economy. These eventually, but reluctantly, had to be stopped. Fraser's courageously agreed to continue the papers, but there too they had to be stopped after vociferous public outcry.

Thackeray also kept a firm control on the stylistic quality of the

¹ Thackeray Letters, iv, p. 172, no. 1438, 23 Jan. 1860, to George Smith.

² His authority is Edward Mack, Public Schools and British Opinion Since 1860, 1941, Ch. 1.

contributions. He wrote to Henry C. Penwell,

I regret that the enclosed clever verses will not
suit us: but I am too old-fashioned to let rhymes
like 'wrath' and 'North' appear in our Magazine.¹

He wrote a similar letter, full of suggestions for stylistic improvements,
to the Misses Jones.²

Thackeray favoured amateur contributions, having a theory that every
man, whatever his profession, might be able

to tell something about it which no one else could
say, provided the writer could write at all: and he
wanted to utilize this element.³

but in fact, as Trollope says⁴, he came to rely almost exclusively on
professional contributions. Unlike Household Words, the Cornhill nurtured
very few young talents. When amateur work was included, Thackeray went to
considerable lengths to retouch it, bringing it in line with the scholarly
and gentlemanly tone which was his ideal for the magazine.⁵

1 Thackeray Letters, iv, p.192, no.1464, 10 July 1860.

2 Ibid, iv, p.225, no.1497, 1 April 1861.

3 Sir Henry Thompson, quoted by Ray, Thackeray Letters, iv, p.177,
note 7. Also Letter to Contributors, pp.288-289 above.

4 Trollope Letters, pp.57-58, 13 April 1860, to Catherine Gould.

5 For examples of letters about contributions, see Thackeray Letters,
iv, pp.149-150, 153, 157-159, 162-172, 177-178, 183, 184, 189, 190,
192, 206-207, 225-229, 236, 244, 256-260. For an instance of the care
Thackeray would take in correcting and improving contributions, see Cornhill,
Jubilee number pp.28-34.

Thackeray edited the Cornhill for more than two years, but he was not entirely happy there. The position greatly increased and stabilized his income, giving him a security he had not known previously. Smith never harassed him, and his position enabled him to help many of his old journalist acquaintances. Yet the job was always a nagging worry to him - he disliked hurting the feelings of contributors by rejecting their work,¹ and it sometimes cost him "a morning's peace and a day's work"² to refuse a contribution - too great a sacrifice of his talent and peace of mind, even for his princely salary.

Trollope describes him as

the kindest of guides, the greatest of rulers, and
as a fellow-workman, liberal, unselfish, considerate,
beyond compare.³

but also felt he was fitted neither "by his habits or temperament"⁴ for the job of editor. Thackeray himself admitted to being unmethodical:

The fault of the delay is here and not at the Post
Office. I am woefully irregular about my papers:

- 1 See the Roundabout Paper 'Thorns in the Cushion,' Cornhill, ii, July 1860.
- 2 Thackeray Letters, iv, p. 260, no. 1535, 18 March 1862.
- 3 'W. M. Thackeray', Cornhill, ix, Feb. 1864, p. 134.
- 4 Anthony Trollope. An Autobiography, Introduction by C. Morgan, 1946, p. 170.

and have an Irish amanuensis who is woefullier so.¹

Between them they often lost papers - 'Under Chloroform' (April 1860 but originally intended for the first number) suffered this fate.

Ill throughout the period of his editorship and, like Dickens, besieged with begging letters which he found it difficult to ignore, Thackeray found it increasingly difficult to "do Editor's work - wh. is to read & judge, not to write".² In his letter of resignation to contributors and correspondents, Thackeray indicated some of the drawbacks of the "thorn-cushioned editorial chair",

Those who have travelled on shipboard know what a careworn, oppressed, uncomfortable man the captain is. Meals disturbed, quiet impossible, rest interrupted - such is the lot of captains. This one resigns his commission. I had rather have a quiet life than gold - lace and epaulets.³

Thackeray had thought of withdrawing from the editorship as early as July 1861, when the circulation dropped sharply with the end of Framley Parsonage. He drafted a letter to Smith which was never sent, saying

1 Thackeray Letters, iv, p.181, no.1450, 15 March 1860, to Henry Thomas Buckle.

2 Silver Diary, 12 March 1862, quoted by Ray, ii, p.320.

3 Thackeray Letters, iv, pp.258-260, no.1535, 18 March 1862.

There does not live a man for whom I entertain a greater personal regard and confidence ... But about Authors, Artists, Articles, we have such a difference of opinion that I own the future to me is very glum.¹

Thackeray feared his own popularity was waning with the public,

I think Trollope is much more popular with the Cornhill Magazine readers than I am: and doubt whether I am not going down hill considerably in public favour ...²

He did not resign finally until March 1862³, when again there was disagreement over the contents of the magazine. Smith then ran the magazine with Frederick Greenwood as co-editor and G. H. Lewes as literary adviser. In 1864 Lewes retired,⁴ and Greenwood acted as editor until 1868. Between 1868 and 1871, when Leslie Stephen became sole editor, Dutton Cook and Smith conducted the magazine jointly.

Thackeray as an editor had his drawbacks, but it cannot be doubted that he gave something to the Cornhill which it never had after his

¹ Ray, ii, p. 320, MS letter, 9 July 1861, to George Smith.

² Thackeray Letters, iv, p. 236, no. 1504, 24 May 1861, to Mrs Baxter.

³ Ibid, p. 256, nos. 1532 and 1533, 4 March 1862, 6 March 1862, to George Smith, and pp. 258-260, no. 1535, 18 March 1862.

⁴ For details see pp. 299-301 below.

resignation. His guiding policies and choice of contributions set a liberal, gentlemanly tone to the magazine which was rarely abandoned throughout its early history. His own contributions set the example, despite the fact that the fiction he published there was definitely below the standard of his earlier works - as, indeed, he was aware.¹ The Roundabout Papers, puzzling, sparkling with wit, yet filled with deep thought and experience under the superficial banter and irony, gaiety and worldliness, are perhaps what one misses most in the magazine after his death, and it is what they reflect of the personality of their creator which is missing from the leadership of the magazine. He was a figure-head, a leader, if only nominally in some respects, who provided an inspiring example to all contributors. The various editors after his death tried in vain to recapture some of the old magic. One strong steady figure is still there, that of George Smith. He could provide the good business sense and the money, but he did not and could not give a lead to contributors as Thackeray had. What Thackeray gave is indefinable, as enigmatic as the Roundabout Papers themselves, but it is unmistakably there.

The Cornhill never again attained the enormous sales of its first

¹ See p. 295 above.

number, and soon its dwindling circulation was causing anxiety. The loss of Thackeray was a severe blow, then there was increased competition as imitators sprang up in the wake of the success of the Cornhill and Macmillan's, especially as many of these magazines were prepared to pander more to the popular taste than had their predecessors. By the time Stephen became editor, sales were down to one fifth of those of the original number.

Part of the reason for the Cornhill's fall from popularity was pointed out by Richard Monckton Milnes after seeing the first number -

Obliged for and pleased with No. 1. It is almost too good for the public it is written for and the money it has to earn. How you, the contributors, and the publishers are to be paid out of it is economically inconceivable!¹

As Ray says,² the Cornhill probably had a greater circulation than the other monthlies, but its costs of production must have been correspondingly higher - it paid better, it was larger (128 pages to Macmillan's 80), it was better printed on better paper than most, and it had good illustrations. For many readers it was, as Monckton Milnes suggests, too dry and serious - they wanted

¹ Thackeray Letters, iv, pp. 169-170, no. 1434, 27 Dec. 1859, R. Monckton Milnes to Thackeray.

² Ray, ii, p. 299.

fiction, and were not particularly concerned about its quality - and some of of the Cornhill's successors were prepared to supply this.

Dickens's All the Year Round - weeklies generally had greater circulation than monthlies - may have reached a circulation of 300,000, but its circulation fluctuated quite widely.¹ Good Words, a sixpenny monthly, began with a circulation of 25,000 and by 1862 this had reached 110,000. The Bookseller for September 1861 gives details of the monthly sales of periodicals of a Liverpool bookseller, Mr Gilling, commenting "Perhaps in the provinces there is no establishment where so general and miscellaneous a stock of books and stitched serials is to be found". The Cornhill's sales - 2,000 - even outstrip the total monthly sales of the popular weeklies All the Year Round and Chambers's Journal, each selling 1500. 260 Macmillan's were sold, 500 Temple Bar, 350 St. James's, 1500 Good Words and 150 Blackwood's.² At that time, if Mr Gilling's sales are at all representative, the Cornhill's popularity was unrivalled by any other quality periodical.

Smith's lavish prices were probably not uneconomic when sales were at the 100,000 mark. Unfortunately sales did not long remain at this level, as

1 Edgar Johnson, Charles Dickens. His Tragedy and Triumph, 1953, 2 vols, ii, p.947.

2 Bookseller, 31 Jan.1862, p.10, 'Liverpool Booksellers.'

is evident from several letters written to Smith by G. H. Lewes during his period as literary editor. In late 1862 Lewes wrote to Smith:

I understood from you originally that the Magazine was rather a pet object with you than a mere commercial venture ... one must make up one's mind as to the kind of circulation aimed at. That of the London Journal would be more profitable - but not so gratifying If the magazine were trashy, I should not suffer in reputation but I should in conscience, unless you initially said "let us be trashy or anything else so that we can extend our circulation". Now that you never would say, it is too dead against your own tastes and instincts. Therefore I set my desires on keeping the character as high as possible under the conditions of wide circulation - a difficult problem certainly, but one that ought to be solved.

Lewes believes that in the 1860 volumes the problem was solved, with more varied contents. He thinks the first measure must be

to recover our character. Let writers feel a pride in appearing in our pages, then we shall secure as wide a circulation as possible.

If we change our tack we must make a striking change - address a new public, or offer new attractions. If we

keep our present tack, we must ~~set~~ ^{set} all sail ...

Thus, even among the Cornhill staff, it was thought that Smith ran the magazine as a hobby, on which he was prepared to lose money. To some extent this was probably the case, but Smith was too shrewd a business man to continue long with an unprofitable concern. ~~And~~ ^{It} is interesting to see how soon the problem faced the editors of how to keep up the circulation without lowering the standards of the magazine. Eighteen months later Lewes wrote a more pressing letter:

... only two courses remain open to you. The idea of an editorial "great name" being wholly unacceptable. The steady decline ... may be accounted for on grounds

1. of its no longer possessing a distinctive character
2. of its not having any one source of remarkable interest.

W. C.'s new story¹ may possibly supply the second want, at least to some extent, but should it do so, the present condition must recur as soon as the story ceases - unless it could be followed by one equally attractive and that, as you know, is a very uncertain ground of expectation. This is the evil we have often felt - and must be felt as long as fiction is the one great object in a periodical.

¹ I.e. Wilkie Collins's Armadale.

Lewes saw that the circulation of the first number could not possibly have been maintained, even had Thackeray remained editor, although "the loss of his editorial name was a loss of prestige, which added to the many concurrent causes of decline". In the circumstances Lewes suggests two courses of action:

either to continue producing the same kind of magazine at the lowest cost which prudence permits - or thoroughly to remodel the Magazine, to give it once more such a distinctive character as that with which it started ...¹

He recommends that the present rate of payment be maintained, the number of illustrations be reduced, and that £600 a year be saved by his own retirement; this would considerably reduce the costs of production. Lewes duly retired, but the other measures he recommends were not adopted.

Thus during the 1860's the magazine suffered some financial difficulties, but its policies and high quality were maintained despite such problems, giving it an unblemished reputation in the eyes of the reading and writing world.

¹ Bićanić, pp.255-260. MS letters from the Smith, Elder papers at John Murray.

iii. Contents and Contributions 1860-1865

Established writers were attracted to the Cornhill by the money Smith offered, and by something less tangible. Comparison with other contemporary magazines has shown that in 1860, in quality, in opportunities, in remuneration, in the possibilities of wide circulation, and in the liberal treatment of writers, it had no rival.¹ Matthew Arnold, a frequent contributor, spoke for many when writing to his mother of his Oxford lecture on Heine:

I have had two applications for the lecture from magazines, but I shall print it, if I can, in the Cornhill, because it both pays best and has much the largest circle of readers.¹

The Cornhill falls into no set pattern during these six years, and is remarkable for its freshness and spontaneity. It is dominated by the figure of Thackeray; those who succeeded him made few attempts to change his policies. The suggestions made by Lewes² were not followed, and the only radical alteration appears to have been an unsuccessful one - the 'Survey of Literature, Science and Art' which began in July 1862 and came to an abrupt

¹ 16 June 1863, quoted by Lee, George Smith: A Memoir, p.31.

² See pp. 299 - 301 above.

end in April 1863. A major feature of the magazine is the space given to good quality illustrations - at least two full page ones are included in every issue. Established artists, often friends of Thackeray and Smith, such as Leighton and Millais, contributed illustrations between 1860 and 1865, and the illustrations were so good that the Cornhill Gallery (a collection of the best) was published, a copy of which at some time found its way to the Gaskell household.¹

The Roundabout Papers usually appear at the end of numbers, but they do not appear in every issue. The serials do not appear in any set place each month, and poetry is published irregularly, as though only included when good.

Each number usually has two serials which vary in length and are interspersed with articles of varying seriousness and some short stories. Some articles are light, amusing essays, others are serious discussions of important matters, or factual dissertations on subjects of general interest. The poetry and articles generally are of a higher standard than in any other contemporary magazine. Reviews are wisely avoided most of the time, as very

¹ See Gaskell Sale Catalogue, Manchester Central Library, item 207.

able reviews were provided in the more expensive monthlies. There seems an easy maintenance of good quality, a good-humoured urbanity and openness of mind, an elegant lucidity, about every number. The aggressiveness characteristic of Dickens's periodicals is rarely found here¹, and there are none of his impassioned cries for justice and action, even on subjects the writers feel strongly about. The facts are given in a lucid and concise manner, arguments are well-reasoned and are left to speak for themselves. The scope of the monthly gave room for articles of all lengths, and pictures and diagrams could be used to illustrate them.

The subjects are mainly of middle-class interest, and are usually thorough and detailed - 'The Morality of Advocacy' in No. 16; the etiquette of the three professions, as in 'Medical Etiquette' in No. 44. The firecracker attacks on abuses in Society which are characteristic of Household Words were well suited to the nature of that periodical and its audience. They briefly sketch a vivid picture, often exaggerated, but sufficiently stunning and truthful to claim public attention. The Cornhill is of a very different nature, precisely because it is a monthly rather than a weekly. It achieves

¹ See Thackeray's letter to Contributors, pp. 288-289 above.

other effects, in different ways. It has less immediacy than the weekly in response to current events, so it eschews news almost entirely and concentrates on general trends and policies. It addresses itself to intelligent and discerning people, has room to present all sides of a case, and from them to draw conclusions. Household Words has numerous articles on prisons and prisoners, usually in the form of eye-witness accounts; the Cornhill also looks at this important social question, but in articles such as 'The Irish Convict System' in No. 16 it puts the pros and cons of various systems of penal treatment, giving examples to illustrate its points. It is concerned with the intellectual side of questions to which Dickens and his contributors vividly drew attention.

The short story is not as common in the Cornhill as might be expected, for one would think the space allowed by the magazine and the quality of its readership would attract short story writers. Such as do appear are very good, and Mrs Gaskell's 'Cousin Phillis' is outstanding. 'A Winter Wedding-Party in the Wilds' in No. 3 is very like Mrs Gaskell's writing in its lively style and scenes, brilliant evocations of the lovely snow-covered

countryside and of the contrastingly warm, merry festivities of the wedding-party. Like many of Mrs Gaskell's stories, it is set in the past, its narrator reminiscing about her youth, re-living her experience as a visitor to this country area, unused to the ways of its people and hence viewing them with fresh eyes. The short stories, like the novels, are of all types, with two predominating - the sensational, highly-coloured, romantic ones¹ on one side, and the pleasant, rather humdrum domestic stories² on the other. The latter are generally more successful. These domestic tales need the space provided in a monthly such as the Cornhill to develop their leisurely narratives and charming situations: they would be ruined if chopped up for serializing, as would be necessary in a weekly. The sensational stories are good examples of their kind; at the very least narrative interest is never lost, and the characters and scenes succeed well in their highly-coloured, two-dimensional way.

It is difficult to add anything to Mrs Bićanić's thorough and interesting study of the serials in the Cornhill. Again, the domestic stories in these

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- 1 Examples include 'The Portent' Nos.5-8; 'Horace Saltoun' Nos.14-16; 'The Shallowell Mystery' No.30.
 2 Examples include 'Monsieur Babou' No.63; 'Mrs. Archie' No.44; 'Brother Jacob' by George Eliot Nos.55-56; 'The Stage Queen and the Squire' Nos. 17-19; 'Bab Lambert' No.22; 'Tid's Old Red Rag of a Shawl' No.62.

six years are better than the sensational ones. Mrs Gaskell greatly admired Framley Parsonage -

I wish Mr Trollope would go on writing Framley Parsonage for ever. I don't see any reason why it should ever come to an end, and every one I know is always dreading the last number. I hope he will make the jilting of Griselda a long while a-doing.¹

There are obvious similarities between the works of the two authors, and Trollope greatly admired Mrs Gaskell and wished to meet her, but unfortunately this did not prove possible.²

By 1859 Trollope had written nine novels, of which the last six had been quite successful. Framley Parsonage made him a popular and widely-read writer in a few months, and also gave a good start to the Cornhill. It had been written in a hurry - Trollope originally offered Smith short stories³, but was asked to provide a novel for the opening number.⁴ Such short notice was a shock to Trollope, for he strongly preferred finishing a novel before having any of it published⁵, and had no experience of writing serials. He

1 Gaskell Letters, no.456, 1 March [1860], to George Smith.

2 Trollope Letters, nos. 239, p.155, and 282, p.174.

3 Ibid, no.76, p.52, 23 Oct.1859, to Thackeray.

4 Anthony Trollope: An Autobiography, pp.131-132.

5 Ibid, pp.132-133.

was also astonished at the price (£1,000, more than double what he would receive for Castle Richmond¹) and amazed

that at so late a day [six weeks before printing] this new Cornhill Magazine should be in want of a novel!²

He concluded that it was Thackeray's "habits of procrastination" which had caused this last-minute crisis.³ There is probably some truth in this - we have seen how Thackeray was notorious for being unbusinesslike, and at this time he had only Level the Widower to offer the Cornhill, a reworking of an old play he had written, which would hardly serve as the main fiction attraction.

Trollope was very satisfied with his connection with the Cornhill.

He became a friend of Smith and Thackeray and contributed three more novels to the magazine.⁴

George Eliot's experience of serial-writing for the Cornhill resembles Mrs Gaskell's in that both were very sympathetically and generously treated

1 Anthony Trollope: An Autobiography, p. 132.

2 Ibid, p. 133.

3 Ibid, p. 134.

4 Brown, Jones and Robinson; The Small House at Allington; and The Claverings.

by George Smith. She read part of Romola¹ to Smith, who was so impressed he promptly offered her £10,000 for it, but she provided only fourteen parts, not the sixteen she had agreed with Smith, which disrupted his organisation. Although George Eliot sent her novel to the printer already divided in parts, she did not provide, as had Trollope, an unvarying number of pages.² Thus it was possible, at least in these early years, with the indulgent Smith, to have greater flexibility in the length of parts than had been possible, for instance, in the weekly Household Words,³ and even, in exceptional circumstances, to alter the number of parts originally agreed upon. In 1866 she sent Smith the manuscript of Felix Holt, but he did not feel justified in paying the £5,000 for it which she demanded - an indication of how things had changed in Cornhill.

A novel of a totally different kind was Wilkie Collins's Armada which began in November 1864, running almost concurrently with Wives and Daughters. Smith bought the entire copyright for £5,000. Lewes had hoped, in vain, it would stimulate sales of the Cornhill,⁴ and it certainly had this effect for

¹ For full details of the history of the composition of Romola see Bićanić, pp.190 ff, and G. S. Haight, George Eliot: A Biography, Oxford, 1968.

² Bićanić, p. 202.

³ Cf. Mrs Gaskell's troubles with the serializing of North and South, pp.130 - 137 above.

⁴ See p. 300 above.

Harper's Magazine in America where it was published simultaneously.

Armadale, an interesting departure for Collins from weekly to monthly serialization, is a sinister, mysterious novel; not very subtle in its use of contrasts between the four main characters, but for all its crudities, interesting reading. Collins had a well established reputation by 1864 and had experience of writing serials for Dickens's weeklies. Armadale relies particularly on the dramatic implications of the intrusion of evil, sinister happenings and characters into very ordinary English lives and scenes, and also has a quality not found in the other serials - one which, had Thackeray been editor rather than Greenwood,¹ would probably have been expurgated² - a disturbing voluptuousness, a half-suggested, half suppressed element of sexual passion, which has its figure-head in Miss Gwilt.

Trollope and Collins's novels represent the two types of fiction found in the Cornhill. Mrs Gaskell's Wives and Daughters, a domestic and pleasantly normal story in comparison to its companions Armadale and Margaret Denzil's History, is of the Trollope type. Where they had little trouble providing the requisite parts for their serials - Trollope because

1 Greenwood had recently contributed a mediocre sensational story to the magazine, Margaret Denzil's History.

2 See p. 290 above.

of his mechanical methods of writing, Collins because of his experience with serialization - Mrs Gaskell relied upon the generous attitude of Smith to his authors, as exemplified in his treatment of George Eliot.

comparatively little there. 'Gleanings of Europe' appeared in the second number (February 1860), then over two years elapsed before 'The Wives of Weymouth' appeared in No. 1862. After a space of over two years 'Gleanings of Europe' was serialized in the three numbers of December 1863 - February 1864, and in August 1864 River and Harbour began publication.

We have seen that the Cornhill offered more space to contributors than any other contemporary periodical. Yet for a paper she has frequently been charged with hack-writing, Mrs Gaskell shows little concern for remuneration.² The quality of the periodical and the literary company she would keep would undoubtedly have appealed to her Cornhill, as would the prospect of wide circulation and the advantage she would meet with in her own freedom. By 1860 she was an established writer, who did not wish to have her work altered by readers or editors. She had disagreements with Dickens over this in the 1850's,³ and by 1860 had sufficient confidence

¹ The only contributions to Cornhill by Mrs Gaskell were in 1860 and 1864, including 'Gleanings of Europe' and 'The Wives of Weymouth'.
² See pp. 310-311.
³ See pp. 125-126.

iv. Mrs Gaskell and the 'Cornhill Magazine'

Considering the unparalleled and unprecedented advantages offered to writers by the Cornhill, it is surprising that Mrs Gaskell published comparatively little there.¹ 'Curious if True' appeared in the second number (February 1860), then over two years elapsed before 'Six Weeks at Heppenheim' appeared in May 1862. After a space of more than a year 'Cousin Phillis' was serialized in the three numbers for November 1863 - February 1864, and in August 1864 Wives and Daughters began publication.

We have seen that the Cornhill offered more money to contributors than any other contemporary periodical. Yet for a writer who has frequently been charged with hack-writing, Mrs Gaskell shows little concern for remuneration.² The quality of the periodical and the literary company she would keep would undoubtedly have appealed to Mrs Gaskell, as would the opportunities of wide circulation; but the advantage she would most appreciate was freedom. By 1860 she was an established writer, who did not wish to have her work altered by readers or editors. She had disagreements with Dickens over this in the 1850's,³ and by 1860 had sufficient confidence

1 She made 24 contributions to Household Words between 1850 and 1858, including Cranford and North and South. See Appendix.

2 See pp. 316 below.

3 See pp. 122 - 146 above.

in her own judgement and ability not to wish for interference of this kind. Instead we find her coolly judging the intrinsic merits of what she is writing, and hence deciding which pieces are worthy of the Cornhill, and which will find a more suitable home elsewhere. The Cornhill also allowed freedom of space which she had rarely met before. In all the weeklies she had suffered from the pressure of space, particularly in serialization - in the Cornhill writers were allowed greater freedom of length and were not confined to so few pages. In a publication of 128 pages this was, of course, a feasible proposition, where it was not in one of ten or twelve pages. Where Dickens required weekly parts spread over eight months, the Cornhill required monthly parts, which could be of varying lengths, spread over eighteen months. To Trollope this would have been no great advantage, as he always tried to finish his novels before publication; but Mrs Gaskell wrote on a very tight schedule, just keeping ahead of the printer, and this extra time would have been very attractive to her. The advantage from a stylistic point of view, as Wright observes, was that

For someone like Mrs. Gaskell, whose novels developed

slowly and depended on depth of detail and observation rather than dramatic incident, the long monthly parts and the extra year allowed for completion were infinitely preferable.¹

The second draw of the Cornhill was Mrs Gaskell's close friendship with its proprietor, George Smith. Previous chapters have shown that Mrs Gaskell almost exclusively sent work to periodicals whose editors she was acquainted with, very often in response to a personal invitation to do so. Smith was probably the closest friend she had in literary circles. For his part, Smith has been seen as a generous publisher, who greatly valued the friendships his business incurred and had many friends among writers and artists of the day.

They became acquainted through Charlotte Brontë. Miss Brontë, who was very satisfied with the service Smith and Williams gave her, had urged Mrs Gaskell to change her publisher to Smith, Elder, but it seems that it was not until 1855, after Charlotte's death, when Mrs Gaskell agreed to write her friend's biography, that she was brought into contact with Smith.

¹ Wright, p. 194.

As Miss Brontë's publisher and friend, he had numerous letters from her, valuable personal reminiscences of her, and when Mrs Gaskell was away from London and required further local information, he would find it for her himself, and was frequently the means of introducing her to a useful contact. His business sense and publishing experience aided her in avoiding libel, and directly after publication, when libellous indiscretions in the book aroused controversy, and Mrs Gaskell was inaccessible in Rome, he tactfully managed affairs, with Mr Gaskell's assistance, so that as much as possible was settled before her return.¹

Almost from the beginning of their business correspondence over the Life, personal notes and remarks about family matters passed backwards and forwards, and by the end of 1857 their friendship seems both firmly established and frank. Naturally, Smith was the publisher of the Life, and henceforth became Mrs Gaskell's main publisher. He offered her £600 for the biography, which she tactfully suggested was not sufficient - in itself an indication of the frank and open nature of their correspondence,² and

¹ Letters to Smith concerning the Life of Charlotte Brontë: Gaskell Letters, nos 241-387, passim. There is no correspondence extant from Smith to Mrs Gaskell.

² Cf. her correspondence with Dickens, which rarely goes further than business.

eventually paid her £1,000, of which she wrote significantly,

I am most sincerely & heartily obliged to you for it.

As money it is very acceptable, just now, but I am even more touched by the kindness & liberality, which will always make me feel beholden to you ...¹

Smith's generosity was reciprocated by Mrs Gaskell. In June 1859 she wrote to Smith saying that Sampson Low² and Co. had offered her £1,000 for a three volume novel.³ In December of the same year she writes, presumably about payment for work in the Cornhill -

Either you or I are rather blundering; I can't tell which. I don't want, & what is more I would not take a penny more advantageous terms than Mr. C. D. offers.⁴

and proceeds to give a list of work she is then engaged upon. It would seem that she was not very pleased with the £2,000 for Wives and Daughters, when she heard what other Cornhill novelists were receiving - "I am the less scrupulous since I heard of Wilkie Collins' 5000£"⁵ - but there is no

1 Gaskell Letters, no 387, 17 March [1858], to George Smith.

2 She mistrusted Sampson Low, having had previous dealings with him over works published in America - see Gaskell Letters, nos. 384 and 414.

3 Ibid, no. 430, 2 June [1859], to George Smith.

4 Ibid, no. 451a, 23 Dec. [1859], to George Smith.

5 Ibid, no. 582, [2 Sept. 1865], to Marianne Gaskell.

evidence that she mentioned this to Smith. Perhaps she felt his generosity in the past - providing her with loans, paying in advance, giving advice on literary and other matters - compensated for this relatively low price.

Mrs Gaskell's novel proved more of a draw than Collins's:

Wives and Daughters constrained ~~me~~ to take up the periodical in which the quiet tale month by month unwound itself, - in contrast with fictitious matter to all appearance far more artful, and certainly, in regard to spicery of incident, far more 'sensational' (as the word runs).¹

The letters between 1857 and 1860 are less frequent than during the writing of the Life, and chiefly concern family and personal matters. By this time Mrs Gaskell evidently felt sufficiently close to Smith to begin introducing writers to him.² In 1859 she sent some of her friend W. W. Story's Roba di Roma papers to Smith for possible inclusion in the Cornhill. From Mrs Gaskell's brief account of their contents,³ the papers seem very suitable for the Cornhill, but they never appeared there. Possibly Smith was

1 Athenaeum review of Wives and Daughters, no. 2001, 3 March 1866, pp.295-296.

2 See Gaskell Letters, nos. 407, 412, 434 and 556.

3 Ibid, no. 440, 19 Sept. [1859], to George Smith. Also letters 441, 442, 443. All the papers were published in the Atlantic Monthly.

deterred by the fact that two of the papers had been published already in the American periodical the Atlantic Monthly.

From the tenor of some of her replies to Smith, it would seem that his letters were as liberally sprinkled with details of his own family life and remarks and questions about hers.¹ The two families visited each other as often as possible. Smith continued with Mrs Gaskell a practice he had maintained with Charlotte Brontë, sending her books and magazines and even executing various commissions for her in London. All were gratefully received.² His generosity and thoughtfulness in sending her The Mill on the Floss caused her to exclaim with typical exuberance:

Oh Mr. Smith! your grandfather was a brick, and your grandmother an angel ... If I lived near Cornhill I wd go and pay you a call of two hours & a half long, and offer to read to you in the evening,³

Even when she was in France he sent magazines to her.⁴ It says much for Smith that, with his busy life, he took the trouble to perform such acts of kindness.

¹ See particularly Gaskell Letters, nos. 410, 432a, 442.

² E.g. ibid, no. 434, 29 June [1859], to George Smith.

³ Ibid, no. 462, [5 April 1860], to George Smith.

⁴ Ibid, no. 586.

Only two matters seem to have marred their friendship, and in both Mrs Gaskell seems over-sensitive. Her letters are filled with similar exclamations and violent, vivid reactions to news and situations - indeed the naturalness and vivacity of these are among the most pleasurable qualities of them - but they should not be taken too seriously. In the first case Smith seems to have presumed too much on the closeness of their relationship, when he sent 'An Italian Institution' to Froude¹ of Fraser's Magazine after finding it unsuitable for the Cornhill. Mrs Gaskell objected to him taking this liberty without consulting her first.² 'An Italian Institution' was eventually published in All the Year Round. In the same letter she criticizes Smith for changing the title of 'A Night's Work' to 'A Dark Night's Work' when he published it as a book in May 1863. It was Dickens who had originally changed Mrs Gaskell's title when the story was serialized in All the Year Round, and it was natural for Smith to keep that title - which in any case is a great improvement on Mrs Gaskell's - when he republished the story.

Despite her vow then never to publish again with Smith, their cordial relations were soon re-established, but it is possible that this incident

¹ Froude was also a personal friend of Mrs Gaskell's.

² See pp. 247-248 above.

helps to account for her entire output of short stories and sketches after this date, apart from 'Cousin Phillis', going to other magazines.¹

Smith was generously patient with such outbursts from Mrs Gaskell, as is well illustrated by a passage in his Reminiscences, which shows his character at its best. Although Mrs Gaskell was satisfied with the arrangements Smith made after the uproar caused by libellous remarks in the Life Of Charlotte Brontë, she reproached him for not having warned her of their danger before publication - "I had of course done this very thing" writes Smith,² but he generously refrained from saying "I told you so", knowing it would give her "keen discomfort". However, he thinks she realized her mistake later, and atoned for it by sitting up half the night in Paris copying a pamphlet he wanted for the Pall Mall Gazette.

There are three principal reasons why Mrs Gaskell contributed so little to the Cornhill. In the first place, she mistrusted Thackeray. She first saw him in 1852 at the Free Library,³ and one month later she met him and attended his lectures on the English Humourists, which she pronounced

¹ It is more likely that Mrs Gaskell chose to send these contributions to other magazines because neither in quality nor length were they suitable for the Cornhill.

² Huxley, pp.76-78.

³ Gaskell Letters, no.131, [4 Sept.1852], to Marianne Gaskell.

"delightful".¹ In 1853 she dined with him again -

Mr. Thackeray dined here on Friday, & I saw him at the Milmans the day before. You can't think how gentle & kind & happy he is - he won't hear a word, or a joke against the Americans ...²

These good first impressions of his character served to temper her judgement of him when, in later years, he was rude to the Brontës. She never entirely forgave Thackeray for his neglect of Mr Brontë after Charlotte's death, when a kind word from the man he and his daughter so greatly admired would have meant so much.³ Thackeray never gratified Mrs Gaskell's wish, and had he known of her solicitude probably would have been indignant at such interference. This, and other rebuffs from him, made Mrs Gaskell very wary of approaching him. When she wrote to Smith suggesting he publish the Roba di Roma papers she explained:

They want me to write to Mr. Thackeray but in the first place I am not at my ease with him; & in the second place the only letter I ever did write to him was never answered ...⁴

1 Gaskell Letters, no. 135, [2 Oct. 1852], to Marianne Gaskell.

2 Ibid, no. 161, [? June 1853].

3 Ibid, nos. 239 and 322.

4 Ibid, no. 440, 19 Sept. [1859], to George Smith.

She expanded on these statements in a later letter, probably at Smith's request -

I don't mean to make any complaint about his not answering my letters (Meta reminds me there were two -) but only to tell you, in your private capacity the fact. One note enclosed a letter from Mrs. Story to 'Annie Thackeray' ... And the other was a note telling him of Miss Brontë's death, which I had just heard of - & was very much shocked & very unhappy about, & asking him if he would write a line to Mr. Brontë, who, I knew had so overbalancing a measure of pride in his daughter's fame, that a letter of sympathy from T-- wd do much to comfort his grief. He never replied to either of these notes of mine, nor did he ever write to Mr. Brontë. Now please understand this is no complaint on my part, only a belief that somehow or another my luck is against me in any intercourse with him, ... - and my only feeling about not doing any thing you ask me \for the Magazine/ is because I don't think Thackeray would ever quite like it, & yet you know it would be under his supervision. Please to understand how much I admire him, & how I know that somewhere or another he has got a noble & warm self, - only I can't get near it ... However, we will put all this feeling down to foolish superstition, & your kindness has been true reality, - so I will try, and do my best -

(only I know he won't like it, & we shall come to grief somehow, -) and write as well as I can, - only need my name be put to them, - that has been half the battle in H.W. No one knew that it was I that was saying this or that, so I felt to have free swing ...¹

From this letter it is clear that it was at an invitation from Smith rather than Thackeray that she contemplated writing for the Cornhill, and she finally decided to do so very reluctantly, her friendship for Smith outweighing her mistrust of Thackeray. Her clever and witty 'Curious if True' appeared in the second number of the magazine, but it is perhaps significant that her next, 'Six Weeks at Heppenheim', did not appear until May 1862, just after Thackeray resigned from the editorship. The anonymity she desired was part of the policy of the Cornhill.

There is little evidence in Thackeray's letters and papers of his opinion of Mrs Gaskell, but he did express disapproval at the way she freely used his name in the Life.²

Secondly, a large proportion of her work would not have suited Thackeray's intentions for the magazine, as set out in the Letter to

¹ Gaskell Letters, no. 442, [? 1 October 1859], to George Smith.

² Sir Frederick Pollock, Personal Remembrances, 1887, 2 vols, ii, p.57.

Contributors¹ and Address to Readers. Her **S**ocial problem novels and stories connected with industrial cities, which had won her fame and reputation, would not suit the gentlemanly, upper middle class tone of the periodical.² Wives and Daughters, of course, falls into this pattern, but in 1859 Mrs Gaskell was better known for such controversial books as Mary Barton, North and South, and Ruth. Indeed, Mrs Gaskell's association with the Cornhill and alignment with its policies during the last years of her life may partly account for the withdrawal from preoccupation with the problems of industrial life in her work during this period.

Thirdly, these six years were very busy ones for Mrs Gaskell. Between 1860 and 1862 she was engaged in writing Sylvia's Lovers for Smith, Elder. This would help to account for the two year gap between 'Curious if True' and 'Six Weeks at Heppenheim'. After this date, several letters to Smith show her at work on various pieces. The first was written in late December 1859, when evidently Smith had reconciled her to writing for the Cornhill and she began calling it "our" Magazine. She compared it with Macmillan's, undoubtedly voicing the opinion of many readers:

1 See pp. 288 - 289 above.

2 See Bićanić, pp. 44-45.

We are delighted with our type, & that we don't print in double columns which is so trying to the eyes;¹

At this time she was engaged on three pieces of work, and openly discusses whether they are good enough for 'C.M.' or must go to Dickens -

1st in order of time was begun a story, 120 pages of which are written & have been this year & a half; not very good, & that would not be above a 1 vol in length. It is not good enough for the C.M. - I am the best judge of that, please, - but might be good enough for H.W. ... 2nd a story of perhaps 40 (of my pages) long. Begun & I think good; intended for C.M.; but delayed because of extreme dislike to writing for Mr. T. & also because I do want to make it as good as I can, & so only write at it in my best moments. (It is a great pity it was not done for Xmas time.) 3rdly The Specksioneer in 3 vols ...²

On February 1st 1862, having completed the first two volumes of Sylvia's Lovers, she explained her plans to Mr W. S. Williams for a series of articles on Mme de Sévigné, "who had been like a well-known friend to me all my life".

¹ Gaskell Letters, no. 446, 2 Nov. [1859], to George Smith.

² Gaskell Letters, no. 451a, 23 Dec. [1859], to George Smith.

Chapple and Pollard identify these works as possibly, respectively, 'A Dark Night's Work', 'Curious if True'; the last is Sylvia's Lovers.

But I think my MSS. promises to be very interesting,
and I am rather unwilling to send it to All the Year
Round to be broken up into bits ...¹

Six weeks later she had written the first chapter but Smith had evidently
requested a story immediately, and the result was presumably 'Six Weeks at
Heppenheim'.² Her next letter to him suggests that he wanted the Sévigné
articles for the Cornhill,

Next - I don't think you a bit 'greedy' about Mme de
Sévigné, - but I think you may be 'reckoning without
your host' i.e. without your editor, whoever he is to be.³

However, these articles were unfortunately never published, and the manuscript
has not been found. In September of the following year she was still working
at it, and had plans for 'French Life' and Wives and Daughters.⁴ Work began
seriously on Wives and Daughters in May 1864, by which time Mrs Gaskell had
its sequence of events and main characters clearly in her mind.⁵ From this
time on, as she is engaged in writing the novel, there is increasing evidence

1 Gaskell Letters, no. 499, 1 Feb. [1862], to W. S. Williams.

2 Ibid, no. 501, 18 March 1862, to George Smith.

3 Ibid, no. 502, 28 March [1862], to George Smith.

4 Ibid, no. 532, 20 Sept. [1863], to George Smith. At this time Mrs
Gaskell thought of sending 'Cousin Phillis' to All the Year Round.

5 Ibid, no. 550, 3 May [1864], to George Smith.

of illness and tiredness: - "I am so tired of spinning my brain, when I am feeling so far from strong!";¹ "I have had such bad head aches, (before I went to Fryston), - that I am behindhand with Wives and Daughters";² "... I am so badly behindhand in Wives and Daughters. All these worries about Alton do so incapacitate me from writing".³

Besides the illness which troubled her during the last two years of her life, Mrs Gaskell was occupied in many family matters. Her daughter Florence was married; she took her daughters on many visits in England and tours abroad; she bought a house, Alton, referred to in the last extract above, intending it as a retirement home for herself and her husband. She was also occupied relieving hardship in Manchester, after the American Civil War ended cotton supplies. All these, on top of her daily household cares, reduced the amount of time each day she could give to writing.

Finally, it is possible that Mrs Gaskell submitted more work to the Cornhill than was accepted. We have seen that 'An Italian Institution' was originally sent to Smith for consideration, and that 'French Life', had not Smith annoyed Mrs Gaskell by his conduct over that article, might well have

1 Gaskell Letters, no. 561, 20 Feb. [1865], to George Smith.

2 Ibid, no. 576, [23 Aug. 1865], to George Smith

3 Ibid, no. 575a, [22 Aug. 1865], to Marianne Gaskell. Mrs Gaskell was ill while at Madame Mohl's - see no. 565.

appeared in the Cornhill. Of the other short stories written during this period, it is unlikely that Mrs Gaskell would have considered their quality sufficient for the Cornhill, and several are obviously written to order ('How the First Floor went to Crowley Castle') or, in the case of 'The Cage at Cranford', were already associated with Dickens's periodical.

These stories in the Cornhill have received more attention from critics than the majority of those published earlier and elsewhere, and there is little I would add to what has already been written. 'Curious if True' has been more neglected than the rest, but this has recently been finely appraised by J. G. Sharps.¹ He succeeds in revealing its fairy-tale qualities, and the beauty of its conception - Mrs Gaskell had hoped it would be ready for publication at Christmas,² and, considered as a Christmas story, it is the best she ever wrote.

'Cousin Phillis' is an excellent example of a story which benefited from the space provided by the Cornhill, rather than being "broken up into bits" as would have been necessary in All the Year Round, for which it was originally

¹ Sharps, pp. 331 ff.

² See p. 325 above.

³ See Gaskell Letters, no. 532.

intended.¹ The leisurely manner in which the plot develops, revealing subtleties of personality and significance in words and actions, would have been ruined by such a process. Mrs Gaskell seems to have been writing it during publication² - and this led to some slips³ - but these are too slight to detract from the superior quality of the work - the finest of Mrs Gaskell's short stories.

'Six Weeks at Heppenheim' has the same sunny, happy atmosphere as all her contributions to the Cornhill. With Wives and Daughters she was able to take advantage of the same generosity in Smith as had George Eliot, suiting the length of her novel to her structural needs rather than to any fixed number of pages prescribed by an editor. Unlike George Eliot, Mrs Gaskell did not send her manuscript to ^{the} Cornhill already divided into parts. In only one place, page 515, the manuscript bears Mrs Gaskell's indication of a chapter - "Please, end of chapter". Otherwise it is completely unmarked, or, as on page 900, divisions are marked by another hand. Mrs Gaskell had sent batches of North and South to Dickens for division, at his suggestion, and presumably had the same arrangement with Smith and Greenwood. However,

1 See Gaskell Letters, no. 532.

2 Ibid, no. 545, 1 Jan. [1864], to George Smith.

3 Sharps, p. 427.

North and South's chapters are merely numbered, whereas Wives and Daughters' have special titles for each chapter. Either someone added these at Cornhill or, more likely, Mrs Gaskell added them herself to the proof sheets, having seen how the manuscript had been divided.

Without the manuscript, it is impossible to tell whether she followed the same procedure for 'Cousin Phillis', and the lengths of each of its four sections vary just as they did in 'Lois the Witch' which she divided herself,¹ and in Wives and Daughters, which was divided for her.

Mrs Bićanić's study shows that Mrs Gaskell was the only novelist in the Cornhill who so completely disregarded the serial divisions.² The freedom in writing which this gave her was, no doubt, greatly appreciated by Mrs Gaskell, and it has no detrimental effect on her novel.

One can only regret, from the point of view of Mrs Gaskell's writing, that she died so soon, or that the Cornhill began so late. Had she striven for the quality the Cornhill demanded (as her letters show that she did) in earlier years, we might now have from her pen more stories of the quality of

¹ See Wright, p. 238.

² See Bićanić, pp. 116 ff. Cf. Trollope, who consistently provided 48 pages of manuscript for his Cornhill novels.

'Cousin Phillis', more novels of the standard of Wives and Daughters.

Charting the course of the novel's development in the early stages
 that she adopted certain conventional patterns. The narrative style is
 sending you only to those particular parts of the story which are
 contact, via a held throughout the narrative. The narrative style is
 people in London from the...
 only write for periodicals...
 important occurred...
 criticism...
 yesterday...
 stories.

she simply preferred her work to be...
 policy of giving...
 standard...
 references...
 frequently...
 as...
 frequently...
 George...

VI. Conclusion

Charting the course of Mrs Gaskell's contributions to periodicals reveals that she adopted certain consistent policies. The attitude with which she began, sending work only to those periodicals with which she had some strong personal contact, was upheld throughout her writing life. As her contact with literary people in London grew this became less of a limitation. In addition, she would only write for periodicals whose editorial line on issues she considered important concurred with her own, and whose conduct was irreproachable. Her Unitarian connections, for instance, probably prevented her from contributing to periodicals with High Church bias, while they may have helped to attract her to Dickens.

She strongly preferred her work to appear anonymously¹ - the Howitts' policy of giving authors' names in their Journal was overcome by the use of a pseudonym.² She soon began to demand increasing freedom from editorial interference, first establishing this principle with Dickens. At the same time she frequently depended on her editors' discrimination in such technical matters as titling and division into episodes. This may stem from the fact that she

1 Anonymity "has been half the battle in H.W. No one knew that it was I that was saying this or that, so I felt to have free swing." she told George Smith. Gaskell Letters, no. 442, [? 1 Oct. 1859].

2 See p. 20 above.

rarely saw the periodicals to which she contributed,¹ and this unfamiliarity with their contents meant she could not gauge with confidence a suitable length for episodes. It may also have been the outcome of her experience, particularly with Dickens, of the difficulties of discussing such points by letter.

It has become evident that she took the temper of her relationship with periodicals very much to heart, more so perhaps than many other writers. This could cause her to cease writing for the periodical concerned, although her irritation was usually short-lived.² She thrived in a congenial atmosphere - congenial in the sense of being friendly, encouraging, and providing wise and just criticism of her work, guidance and suggestions, in the manner she often demanded from her friends. The Howitts seem to have accepted her work merely with admiring praise; under Dickens's firmer handling (which she sometimes resented) she was encouraged to examine her work critically. At the same time, the freedom he allowed her was of enormous benefit. At the beginning of her career she seems to have seized the opportunity to write in his and similar periodicals as the best organs through which to voice her views,³ but the scope Dickens gave her to

1 See pp. 7-10 above.

2 See pp. 127, 129, 247-248 above.

3 See pp. 11 and 79 above.

write 'anything',¹ encouraged her to explore her ability in other fields.

Dickens's generosity and Household Words' anonymity allowed her to experiment and develop at an important stage in her career. She grew in confidence, and used them as a sounding-board for a wide variety of short stories, articles, and even poems.

Mrs Gaskell's derogatory comments about the limitations imposed in writing for periodicals reveal her awareness of them, but she was also alive to the advantages. A minor consideration was that it provided a useful source of income. More important, as Charlotte Brontë pointed out,

We all know that it is not precisely advantageous to a really good book to be published piecemeal in a periodical - but still - such a plan has its good side: North and South will thus be seen by many into whose hands it would not otherwise fall.²

Similarly, despite her obvious enjoyment in her family, her home and her domestic obligations, she was exasperated sometimes by the limitations these imposed on her career as a writer. She acknowledged this frankly to Dickens before beginning to write for him, and he cleverly pointed out that the

¹ See p. 129 above.

² MS letter in Manchester University Library, 30 Sept. 1854, to Mrs Gaskell.

composition of short pieces for a periodical would disrupt her home life less than the writing of long works.¹ Mrs Gaskell explained the ambivalence of her views to Eliza Fox:

...women, must give up living an artist's life, if home duties are to be paramount. It is different with men, whose home duties are so small a part of their life

I am sure it is healthy for them [women] to have the refuge of the hidden world of Art to shelter themselves in when too much pressed upon by daily small Lilliputian arrows of peddling cares; it keeps them from being morbid...

I have felt this in writing ... but the difficulty is where and when to make one set of duties subserve and give place to the other.²

It was a question she discussed with Charlotte Brontë³, and which provided an interesting page of comment in her biography.⁴

Mrs Gaskell attributed the careless errors in Sylvia's Lovers, and presumably in her other works, to her "busy life", for she often had to lay aside manuscripts for weeks and even months, and suffered many/
interruptions

¹ See p. 149 above.

² Gaskell Letters, no. 68, [c. Feb. 1850.]

³ Letter from Charlotte Brontë quoted by Hopkins, p. 316.

⁴ Mrs Gaskell, The Life of Charlotte Brontë, vol. vii of the Life and Work of Charlotte Brontë and her Sisters, 1914, [Haworth edition], pp. 348 - 9.

when writing.¹ With these pressing cares it is remarkable that she produced so high a proportion of work of good quality.

Finally, it is necessary to consider how much of Mrs Gaskell's writing was done with the requirements of a particular periodical in mind. Although we know that at one time she may have had a collection of unpublished stories by her,² the majority of her stories and articles give the impression of having been written to the tone, audience, and space available, of a particular periodical. Apart from the 'Camorra' piece, there is no evidence of her work being circulated from periodical to periodical, and she was furious at the cavalier way in which this was done.³ This suggests that her writing, or at best the selection from pieces already written, was directed to a particular periodical. As none of the periodicals guided her specifically on what to write - the nearest she came to this was in writing for Dickens's Christmas numbers⁴ - there are no cases where this can be deduced with absolute certainty. One relies on knowledge of the sensitivity of Mrs Gaskell's responses, awareness of her desire to do her best for the periodicals to which she was loyal, and a belief in her serious attitude to her work. ~~The~~

¹ Gaskell Letters, no. 537, to Dr James Dixon, 14 Nov. [1863].

² See p. 216 above.

³ See pp. 247-248 above.

⁴ See pp. 204-211 above.

The earning of money was rarely, if ever, the prime motive for writing these short works, as the remarks of many of her critics suggest.¹

This study will have achieved its object if it has revealed the dangerous over-simplification of many critics' responses to the large proportion of Mrs Gaskell's work written specifically for periodical publication. It will have proved worthwhile if it has revealed some of the too little known delights of Mrs Gaskell's shorter works, if it has illustrated their value in the surroundings of their original publications, if it has strengthened belief in Mrs Gaskell's responsible and conscientious attitude to all her writing, not least the shorter works, and if it has proved the importance of her relationships with periodicals and their editors to her writing career.

¹ See pp. 6, and 191-192 above.

[1850. *The First Life of Gaskell*, William Knight, (second edition)

includes part of Gaskell letters, no. 12, without acknowledgment.

This is not included in the first edition, 1850.]

[1840. *Visits to Remarkable Places*, William Howitt,

includes 'Clopton Hall', by "a fair lady".]

APPENDIXChronological list of Mrs. Gaskell's works

This is intended as a reference guide to the chronological sequence of Mrs Gaskell's published works, and is also useful in illustrating the distribution of her work between different periodicals at various stages of her career.

Items in square brackets are pieces not first published in periodicals; those in round brackets are novels originally serialized in periodicals; titles prefixed by an asterisk denote poems, and those prefixed by a question mark are of uncertain authorship.

To 1847

Jan. 1837. *'Sketches Among the Poor. No. 1' with Mr. Gaskell.

Blackwood's.

[1840. The Rural Life of England, William Howitt, (second edition) includes part of Gaskell Letters, no. 12, without acknowledgement. This is not included in the first edition, 1838.]

[1840. Visits to Remarkable Places, William Howitt, includes 'Clopton Hall', by "a fair lady."]

1847

- 5, 12, and 19 June. 'Libbie Marsh's Three Eras'. Howitt's Journal.¹
 4 Sept. 'The Sexton's Hero'. Howitt's Journal.
 11 Dec. ? 'Emerson's Lectures', by "our Manchester correspondent."
Howitt's Journal.
 18 Dec. ? Letter signed "C.M.M." Howitt's Journal.

1848

- 1 Jan. 'Christmas Storms and Sunshine'.
Howitt's Journal.

[Mary Barton.]

1849

- July - Aug. and 'Hand and Heart'. Sunday School Penny Magazine.²
 Oct. - Dec.
 July 'The Last Generation in England'. "by the author
 of Mary Barton." Sartain's Union Magazine.

1850

- Feb. 'Martha Preston'. "by the author of Mary Barton".
Sartain's Union Magazine.
 30 March, 'Lizzie Leigh'. Household Words.³
 6 and 13 April.
 16 and 23 Nov. 'The Well of Pen-Morfa'. Household Words.

¹ All Howitt's Journal contributions appeared under the pseudonym Cotton Mather Mills.

² All contributions to this magazine under Mrs. Gaskell's name.

³ All contributions to Household Words appeared anonymously.

28 Dec. 'The Heart of John Middleton'. Household Words.

[The Mootland Cottage.]

1851

Feb. - April 'Mr. Harrison's Confessions'. Anon. Ladies' Companion.

7 June 'Disappearances'. Household Words.

(13 Dec. - 21 May 1853. Cranford. Household Words.)

1852

Jan. - April 'Bessy's Troubles at Home'.
Sunday School Penny Magazine.

19 June 'The Schah's English Gardener'. Household Words.

Christmas Number 'The Old Nurse's Story'. Household Words.

1853

[Ruth]

22 Jan. 'Cumberland Sheep-Shearers'. Household Words.

22 Oct. *'Bran'. Household Words.

19 and 26 Nov. 'Morton Hall'. Household Words.

10 Dec. 'Traits and Stories of the Huguenots'.
Household Words.

17 and 24 Dec. 'My French Master'. Household Words.

Christmas number 'The Squire's Story'. Household Words.

Christmas number* 'The Scholar's Story'. " "

1854

- 25 Feb. 'Modern Greek Songs'. Household Words.
- 20 May 'Company Manners'. Household Words.
- (2 Sept. - 27 Jan. 1855. North and South. Household Words.)

1855

- 25 Aug. 'An Accursed Race'. Household Words.
- 6 - 20 Oct. 'Half a Lifetime Ago'. Household Words.

1856

- 13 - 27 Dec. 'The Poor Clare'. Household Words.
- 27 Dec. } * 'A Christmas Carol'. Household Words.

1857

- Feb. ? 'The Siege of the Black Cottage'.
Anon. Harper's New Monthly Magazine.
[ed. Mabel Vaughan, by Maria S. Cummins.]
[The Life of Charlotte Brontë.]

1858

- Jan. 'The Doom of the Griffiths', "by Mrs. Gaskell".
Harper's New Monthly Magazine.
- June ? 'An Incident at Niagara Falls', "by Mrs. Gaskell".
Harper's New Monthly Magazine.
- 19 June - 25 Sept.
'My Lady Ludlow'. Household Words.
- 27 Nov. 'The Sin of a Father'. Household Words.
- Christmas Number 'The Manchester Marriage'. Household Words.

1859

[For the collection of stories Round the Sofa Mrs Gaskell composed the Frame and 'The Half-Brothers'.]

8 - 22 Oct. 'Lois the Witch'. All the Year Round.¹
 Christmas Number 'The Ghost in the Garden Room' All the Year Round.

1860

Feb. 'Curious if True' Cornhill Magazine.²

1861

5, 12 and 19 Jan. 'The Grey Woman'. All the Year Round.

1862

May 'Six Weeks at Heppenheim'. Cornhill Magazine.

[Pref. Garibaldi at Caprera, by Colonel Vecchj.]

1863

24 Jan. - 21 March. 'A Dark Night's Work'. All the Year Round.

Feb. ? 'Shams'. by "E.C.G." Fraser's Magazine.

21 March 'An Italian Institution'. All the Year Round.

Nov. - Feb. 1864 'Cousin Phillis'. Cornhill Magazine.

28 Nov. 'The Cage at Cranford'. All the Year Round.

Dec. 'Robert Gould Shaw'. "by Mrs. Gaskell".

Macmillan's Magazine.

Christmas Number 'How the First Floor went to Crowley Castle'.

All the Year Round.

[Sylvia's Lovers.]

-
1. All contributions to these periodicals appeared
 2. anonymously.

1864.

April - June. 'French Life'. Anon. Fraser's Magazine.

(Aug. - Jan. 1866. Wives and Daughters. Cornhill Magazine.)

1865.

25, 28 March and 25 April.

? 'Columns of Gossip from Paris'. Anon. Pall Mall Gazette.

Five letters to the Editor between 11 Aug. and 5 Sept.,

C. The Works of Mrs Gaskell

? 'A Parson's Holiday'. Signed "M.N." in correspondence columns of

E. Criticism on Mrs Gaskell

Pall Mall Gazette.

i. Books

ii. Articles

Posthumous Publications.

F. Criticism on Periodicals and Editors

'My Diary'. Composed 10 March 1835 - 28 Oct. 1838.

ii. Articles

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i. Books

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 - ii. Articles

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 - i. Books
 - ii. Articles
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