A STUDY OF THE WORKS OF
CATHARINE MARIA SEDGWICK

DISSERTATION

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By

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CHAPTER I

Catharine Maria Sedgwick (1789 - 1867) of Berkshire County, Massachusetts, wrote six novels, six long didactic tales devoted to the education of young people and social reform, two short biographies, a novella, a travel tale about Canada, four collections of short stories, and two volumes of letters concerning her European trip of 1839. In addition, she contributed one hundred stories, sketches, and didactic tales to various annuals and periodicals. Her first book appeared in 1822, her last in 1857.

During her lifetime she enjoyed both critical and popular success: "No equal this side of the Atlantic" (Poe'), "the first very noted female author in the United States," "second to no living author of fiction," "stands at the head of American female writers," and "the first of America's female novelists." So popular was she that Sartain's Union Magazine in 1851 looking back over her literary career could say, "The time was when every one who read novels at all, was expected to read those of Miss Sedgwick." Her books appeared at a time when

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2 Sartain's Union Magazine, VIII (February 1851), 142.
English fiction and taste dominated the American literary scene, yet she was "one of the few American writers who rose into deserved popularity in their own country, without waiting for the approving sanction of European critics."  

William Cullen Bryant noted that Redwood, her second novel, was held in such high esteem that it had become absolutely dangerous and unsafe not to admire it. One of her didactic tracts Home (1835) reached its twentieth American edition by 1850. Her books were translated into French, German, Swedish, and Italian.

In form and content her novels, tracts, and stories owe much to the sentimental novel of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries both in America and England. In order to understand the tradition that Miss Sedgwick inherited from these novels and modified for her own purpose, it is necessary to examine these earlier sentimental novels. Although it is an over simplification to say that the American novel is merely a continuation in America of the English novel and that James Fenimore Cooper is an American Scott or Miss Sedgwick an American Maria Edgeworth, it is equally wrong to consider the early American

3Athenaeum, op. cit., p. 693.

novel an indigenous form. Both the English and American novel of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are part of a cultural perspective larger than the respective countries themselves.

Though the number of novels published in England during this period was prodigious, most of them have been justly forgotten. Many are no more than a group of tales strung together with an essay or two into a slight narrative framework. There was more concern with particular incidents than with the over-all plot. Like Miss Sedgwick's novels, they contain a plethora of incidents, many with no relevance to the main plot. Many of these incidents were in the novels for no other reason than to provide the novelist with an opportunity to moralize. The sentimental novelist, especially the American sentimentalist as we shall see, considered himself (or more correctly herself since most of these novelists were women) moralist first and novelist second. Miss Sedgwick's purpose, as she stated in preface after preface, was to instruct the reader upon some moral issue. Like the earlier sentimental novelist, Miss Sedgwick was at her best in individual scenes and incidents. The plots which merely provided

5See particularly the prefaces or introductory remarks to The Linwoods (New York, 1835), pp. xi-xii; Home (Boston, 1836), p. 4; Live and Let Live (New York, 1837), p. 1; Morals of Manners (New York, 1846), pp. 3-4; The Boy of Mount Rhigi (Boston, 1847), pp. 5-6; Married or Single? (New York, 1857), p. v.
her with a framework for individual episodes cannot stand close scrutiny. My examination of her novels will show the emphasis she gave to scene over plot. Indeed, Miss Sedgwick's brother Harry suggested to her in 1822 that she write in "disconnected masses, which you can afterwards weave together." Such a method of writing could hardly result in unity of effect in a novel.

Many an English and American novelist imitated Richardson's use of the epistolary form. Such a method had enabled Richardson to render directly "the minds of his characters in the very moment of thinking and feeling." But to novelists after Richardson the epistolary form was merely a convenient tradition, often used with little thought as to its effectiveness. It rendered, according to Herbert Ross Brown, yeomanly service:

To the moralist, it furnished a handy mold into which he could pour his homilies. To the educator, still slightly distrustful of romances, it offered many sugar-coated lessons on a wide variety of edifying subjects. To the sentimentalist, it provided an unrivaled means of depicting every tremor of the feeling heart.

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Although Miss Sedgwick's novels are not in the strict sense of the term epistolary, they do make considerable use of the epistolary form. To give her books an added touch of authenticity in addition to the claim that they are based on truth, she often ends a novel with a letter she had received from one of the characters in the story informing the author and the reader of the fates of the various personages in the novel. When she did use the epistolary form as the main means of narration, she was somewhat uneasy about its artificiality. "Mary Smith," a twenty page story written in the form of a letter by a young girl, ends with the authorial comment, "A pretty long letter, I think, for a girl not eight years old!"  

Novelists after Richardson adopted more than his manner; they adopted his subject matter as well. Pursuit, seduction, and endurance—virtue tested under extreme circumstances—were the main subjects of these popular novels. One of the most typical and popular both in England and America was Regina Roche's The Children of the Abbey (1798, reprinted in America the same year). Caritat's, the most famous of the American circulating libraries in the late eighteenth century, claimed in its blurb of the book that

9"Mary Smith," Juvenile Miscellany, II (May 1829), 134.
few novels have been read with more avidity and few are more deserving an attentive perusal." Earl Bradsher in his study of Mathew Carey, early American publisher, calls it the most popular British novel in America before Scott. Because it is typical of the English sentimental novel and because it provides a convenient model against which one can examine the modifications in the sentimental formula the American novelist introduced, it deserves a brief description.

Amanda, its heroine, is young, inexperienced, chaste, and delicate, the perfect model of the sentimental heroine. She has lost one parent, her mother (she loses her father later in the book), and is sought after by the villainous Colonel Belgrave (Richardson's Lovelace). A penniless governess, she is discovered by the wealthy Lord Mortimer as she reads at the foot of a moss-covered tree, singing a song, and wiping away tears. Mortimer, whose "soul was naturally the seat of every virtue," was able "to wound the softer feelings of her soul." But before the two lovers can be united, Amanda must spend the better part of two volumes escaping from the clutches of Belgrave.

10Brown, op. cit., p. 26 footnote.

11Earl L. Bradsher, Mathew Carey (New York, 1912), pp. 81-82.
Despite the fact that Belgrave ruins her reputation, Amanda's "heart, seasoned in the school of adversity, could bear its sorrows with calmness...." As in Clarissa, there is a struggle between the forces of good and the forces of evil. Amanda can exclaim to Belgrave after he has abducted her, "Monster ... your arts may have destroyed my fame, but my innocence bids defiance to your powers." Good, of course, triumphs; and at the end of the novel, Amanda, "faint but pursuing" and now an heiress, falls into the arms of Mortimer, better off for her ordeal, for her and her brother Oscar's "past sorrows are only remembered to teach them pity for the woes of others. Their virtues have added to the renown of their ancestors, and entailed peace upon their souls ... their example inspires others with emulation to pursue their courses." Belgrave, the gay libertine, becomes the reformed rake who, "overwhelmed with terror and grief ... terror at the supposition of a crime /murder/ which in reality he had not committed and grief for the fate of Amanda," leaves England for the continent where he seeks to forget his horrors in inebriety and finally dies penitent.

The sentimental cliches prevalent in the English popular novel of this period were not uncommon to the early
American sentimental novel. There were, of course, adaptations made to the American setting. The romantic triangle consisting of rich lord—poor ward—libertine colonel was not always possible in a republican society. The conflict between members of different social classes which gave the English novel one of its striking characteristics was often replaced in the American novel by that between members of different political parties (Patriot vs. British sympathizer, Federalist vs. Democrat) or between people of different geographical regions (Yankee vs. Westerner, Northerner vs. Southerner). After the Revolutionary War there was a distrust of things foreign (villains were Europeans or Americans educated in Europe) and a corresponding trust in American customs and traits. European society was thought to be pagan, deceptive to the untutored mind, dangerous to the American. America was morally pure while Europe wallowed in sin. To combat the evil influence of a corrupt society, the American novelist reverenced Home and the Family. The sentimental novel revolving around the theme of seduction—pursuit—endurance gradually emerged as the domestic novel, "an extended prose tale composed chiefly of commonplace household incidents loosely worked into a trite plot involving the fortunes of characters who exist less as individuals
than as carriers of pious moral or religious sentiments."\(^{12}\)

This change is announced most triumphantly in Miss Sedgwick's most popular book significantly entitled *Home*.

The change did not mean that American heroines were no longer in danger of being seduced. They were; but those of Miss Sedgwick's novels were of a hardier stock than their English sisters. The reader was less apprehensive over the fate of their virtue than was the reader of the English sentimental novel. Significantly, when Miss Sedgwick did use the seduction theme, it was often a secondary character, not the heroine, who was the object of the villain's pursuit - Bessie in *The Linwoods* and Jessie in *Married or Single*.

Novels of seduction, however, were still written in America. Both Hannah Foster's *The Coquette* (1791) and Susannah Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* (1794) are rather crude variants of *Clarissa*. In *The Coquette*, Eliza has a Miss Howe in the person of her confidante Lucy and Sanford has Deighton as his Belford. In both books, the seduced heroine who dies is more to be pitied than censured while

\(^{12}\)Alexander Cowie, "The Vogue of the Domestic Novel, 1850-1870," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, XLI (October 1942), 417. Although Cowie is talking about a later period than that under discussion, his definition is still relevant to the earlier years when the domestic novel was beginning to be in vogue.
the seducers are the blackest of villains. The fate of Mrs. Crayton in *Charlotte Temple* parallels Mrs. Sinclair's in *Clarissa*. Both novels are far inferior to English novels modelled on *Clarissa*.

If there were a perceptible change in the emphasis Miss Sedgwick gave to seduction, there was no change in her treatment of another important theme of the English sentimental novel--filial obedience. Richardson again provided the sanction, for the title page of *Clarissa* gives emphasis to this theme: "The Most Important Concerns of Private Life. And particularly shewing. The Distress that may attend the Misconduct Both of Parents and Children in Relation to Marriage." Of all the sentimental cliches and themes that found their way into Miss Sedgwick's books, that of filial obedience was the most common. There are stories of children who disobey the dictates of their parents and children who sacrifice their own happiness in marriage to obey avaricious parents. Most heroines, English and American, would have agreed with Amanda in *The Children of the Abbey*, who was determined "never to

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act in opposition to her father." She was willing to make "any sacrifice ... compatible with virtue and filial duty" but beyond those limits she "must not, cannot, will not step." Mrs. Amelia Opie spoke for the parent when she wrote in *Temper* (1812):

> ... such ... is the conduct of those wise parents who, in order to ensure the future good of their children refuse them indulgences pernicious to their health, or inflict on them salutary punishment regardless of the pain they themselves suffer from giving pain to the resisting and angry child, and consoling themselves with knowing that, though the duty they are performing is even an agonizing one the good of the beloved object requires it of them.

"So constant is ... /the/ recurrence /of this theme/," writes J.M.S. Tompkins, "so varied and picturesque its manifestations, that it is clear we have to do not only with a moral principle, but with a favorite channel of sensibility."14

To the novelists of this period, "sensibility" and "sentimentalism" were key words, reverenced by some authors, damned by others, but considered important by all. According to The *Oxford Universal Dictionary On*

Historical Principles, sensibility in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries meant a capacity for refined emotions, a delicate sensitiveness of taste, a readiness and willingness to feel compassion for suffering, and the ability to be moved by the pathetic. But for the novelist to define the term, says Herbert Ross Brown, was to defile: "For the reader of true sensibility, definition was unnecessary; for the soul devoid of feeling, it was futile." Harriet Lee in *The Errors of Innocence* (1786), however, had no compunctions about being explicit as to what she meant by the term: "... by sensibility I understand a certain sympathy of disposition, which, tho' originally deriv'd from the passions, is meliorated into something gentler and more pleasing than those." Closely allied to sensibility was sentimentalism. The distinction between the terms was a fine one. Sentimentalism seemed to be applied to all varieties of emotionalism. As used by John Locke, sentimental meant one characterized by delicate and tender feelings. It was Sterne, however, who seems to have made the word popular just as it was Sterne who was "the most powerful of the influences which produced sensibility in America." To Sterne, the word

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carried the connotation of savouring delicate sensations.\textsuperscript{17} In Tristram Shandy's world, there is time to stop and feed macaroons to an ass not out of benevolence but out of the "pleasantry in the conceit, of seeing how an ass would eat a macaroon." Sterne taught his century "what an exquisite pleasure might be derived from feeling the pulse of their emotions."\textsuperscript{18}

But it was not long before sentimentalism began to be used for social ends and to arouse social sympathies. It was in this sense of the word that Miss Sedgwick deserves to be termed a sentimentalist. In the series of didactic tracts she wrote, beginning with \textit{Home} in 1835 and ending with \textit{The Boy of Mount Rhig} in 1848, she was interested in depicting social ills. Influence in this direction came, as we shall see, from Dr. William Ellery Channing, but Henry Brooke author of \textit{The Fool of Quality} (1766-1770) was equally influential.\textsuperscript{19} Brooke believed with Shaftesbury that happiness proceeds from within, and that the happiness which we achieve for others reacts on ourselves.\textsuperscript{20} Harry Clinton in \textit{The Fool of Quality} spends

\textsuperscript{17}Edith Birkhead, "Sentiment and Sensibility in the Eighteenth-Century Novel," \textit{Essays and Studies}, XI (1925), 95.

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., p. 106.

\textsuperscript{19}See Dewey, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 379 and a letter from Miss Sedgwick to Grace Ashburner, April 1860, Ashburner Papers, Stockbridge Public Library, Stockbridge, Mass., where she acknowledges her acquaintance with Brooke's novel.

\textsuperscript{20}Birkhead, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 105.
several fortunes on needy people because it makes him happy to do so. Mr. Meekly when he hears of Harry's benevolence cries, "Let me go, let me go from this place, my lord! ... this boy will absolutely kill me if I stay any longer. He overpowers, he suffocates me with the weight of his sentiments." Harry wants no thanks in turn for his good deeds. When he gives money to the villagers in honor of his dead brother, he wishes no rejoicing but rather wants to set them in tears for the loss of his brother. Brooke's theory, like that of Shaftesbury's, is the concept of disinterested benevolence, a most important philosophic theme in Miss Sedgwick's works. We will have more to say of this in a later chapter.

Novelists also extended the term to mean sympathy for and humane treatment of animals. Wanley Penson in the anonymously written novel of the same name (1791) "not in his most wanton moments would ... wittingly wound a worm." The incident of Uncle Toby's freeing the fly in Tristram Shandy was a source of inspiration to Mrs. Judith Murray's Russell who spared some robins in order "that the annals of benevolence may no longer record the Shandian ebullition as a solitary instance." But Mrs. 

21 Quoted in Brown, op. cit., p. 90.
Murray need not have worried. The annals of benevolence were filled with such instances. Miss Sedgwick's "Our Robins" is one in a group of stories she wrote for children that illustrates the theme of kindness to animals.\(^{22}\)

Although sensibility was a less comprehensive term than sentimentalism and lacked the moral connotations given by Richardson, "the meanings frequently overlapped."\(^{23}\) Richardson's use of the term sentimentalism involved an introspection of emotion and motive that ultimately led to a belief in the importance of emotion and feelings for their own sakes.\(^{24}\) While sentimentalism became a term of derision, sensibility or quickness of perception was "regarded as essential to emotional respectability."\(^{25}\) There were even specific signs that indicated one's election

\(^{22}\)"Our Robins," *Southern Literary Messenger*, IV (May 1838), 318 - 321. Also see "Susy's Cow," *The Boys and Girls Library*, IV (Boston, 186_), 1 - 6, "The Widow Ellis and Her Son Willie" and "Old Rover," *A Love Token For Children* (New York, 1839), 9 - 33, 52 - 68.

\(^{23}\)Brown, op. cit., p. 77.

\(^{24}\)Allen, op. cit., p. 43.

\(^{25}\)Birkhead, op. cit., p. 97.
to the cult of sensibility. Foremost, most common, most precious was the tear - Richardson's pellucid tear, or, as it was also described, "the pearly drop of sorrow that hung upon the downcast eye, spangling its fringed lid with the gem of sensibility."[^6] In The Fool of Quality, the text book for the school of sensibility, Harry Clinton "plentifully watered the ground with his tears as he passed." His aunt loved to weep, for it was her happiness, her delight, "to have perfect sympathy in ... Harry's sorrows." Monimia in Charlotte Smith's The Old Manor House (1793) was accustomed to spending several nights in "fruitless tears." Manly tears, like those of Richardson's Charles Grandison, were also common. When Oscar leaves Adela in The Children of The Abbey, "the tears he had painfully suppressed gushed forth." Esther in Miss Sedgwick's Hope Leslie (1827) gave way to hysterical sobbings which in most young ladies "would have been a common expression of romantic distress" (II, 146). Of almost equal importance with the tear was the swoon. In Mrs. Rowson's Sarah; or the Exemplary Wife (1813), an American novel, "Sarah felt something stronger than a mere swoon was needed to do complete justice to her condition when

she saw Jessy with the Marquis. 'The momentary suspension of my faculties could hardly be called a swoon .... I seem petrified ... I remained above half an hour a mere passive machine in the hands of the housekeeper ....'"27

Other signs of sensibility included trances, visions, ecstasies, "... and a variety of emotional delirium tremens."28

Delicacy of feeling, therefore, was the sign of true sensibility. To many novelists, sensibility was a natural virtue. "'Do you think,!'" cries Virginia to Clarence in Maria Edgeworth's Belinda (1801), a novel that greatly influenced Miss Sedgwick's Clarence (1830), "'Do you think, said she, looking up, while a transient expression of indignation passed over her countenance, 'do you think I cannot feel without having been taught?" True sensibility, Clarence believed, was "the parent of great talents and great virtues; and evidently she /Virginia/ possesses natural feeling in an uncommon degree." Sensibility thus became a requisite for other virtues. Both Miss Sedgwick's Jane Elton in A New England Tale (1822) and Ellen Bruce in Redwood (1824) are typical examples of the heroine with delicate sensibilities.

But to many in England and America there was an inherent weakness in the cult of sensibility. It had a "tendency

27 Brown, op. cit., p. 86.
28 Ibid., p. 78.
to relax the mind and suffer it to luxuriate in induced emotions." Some believed that an overindulged feeling could cause one to lose all sense of proportion and loosen the bonds of moral responsibility. American critics were particularly outspoken when it came to attacking sentimentalism. Joseph Dennie's *Port-Folio* warned its readers that "in the enthusiasm of sentiment ... there is as much danger as in the enthusiasm of religion, in substituting certain impulsive feelings in place of practical duties; and the pupils of these refined sentimentalists are too apt to talk of virtue they never practice; to pay in words what they owe in actions ...." Hugh Henry Brackenridge in *Modern Chivalry* (1790) was even more outspoken: "Sensibility is irritable, unpersevering, desponding, extravagant ... the fond love of a refined mind produces silliness, in proportion to the delicacy of the feelings ...." Often the novelist pointed out the dangers of sentimentality. The rationale behind this frequently used device was to secure approval for one's own work under the assumption that if a novelist indicated evils in another's work, then his own novel was above

29 Tompkins, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

30 Quoted in Brown, *op. cit.*, pp. 84 and 95 - 97.
reproach. Lady Delacour in Miss Edgeworth's *Belinda* tells Belinda, "Novel reading - as I dare say you have been told by your governess, as I was told by mine, and she by hers, I suppose - novel reading for young ladies is most dangerous." Dr. X in the same novel points out to Clarence the danger sensibility can have in relaxing the mind: "Upon my word, I think you would make a mighty pretty hero in a novel; you take things very properly for granted, and stretched out upon the sofa, you act the distracted lover vastly well ...." Miss Sedgwick's Gertrude Clarence read but few novels, and then only those by Miss Edgeworth "who has made the actual social world better and happier" (*Clarence*, II, 147). Harry Davis, the hero of Miss Sedgwick's *The Boy of Mount Rhigi*, read no novels at all.

The novelist not only criticized but satirized sentimentalism. The sentimental heroine becomes the object of satire in Miss Edgeworth's short story "Angelina." "It belongs to a certain class of people," she writes, "to indulge in the luxury of sentiment: we shall follow our heroine, therefore, who both from birth and education, is properly qualified to have - 'exquisite feelings,'" Angelina, a romantic girl of sixteen, is searching for a friend Araminta who writes letters with their "garnish-tinselled wands - shackle-scoring Reason - isolation of the heart - soul-rending eloquence," but who turns out to
be the slatternly Mrs. Hodges, who "does not cut bread and butter with the celebrated grace of Charlotte in The Sorrows of Werther." Like the typical sentimental heroine, Angelina bursts often into tears, but "she had not yet acquired the art of bursting into tears upon every trifling occasion." The moral of the story is that it is possible for a young lady of sixteen to cure herself of the affectation of sensibility, and the folly of romance."

Miss Sedgwick likewise satirizes sentimentalism in a short story "An Unsolved Riddle." A stranger approaches the author "with her tragic story - the raw material for my craft - to be woven into a novel of the orthodox size and form ...." She gives the author several letters which "had nothing to do with the story (thus she always designated the tragedy of her life,) but she thought it was most interesting in novels to begin with the childhood of the heroine; and she comforted me with the assurance that I should never have to tax my invention; there were incidents - and all sad enough too - to fill two volumes."31 In this one story Miss Sedgwick manages to satirize most of the sentimental cliches.

Although some novelists might condemn sensibility as a dangerous excess of feeling and some might praise it as the source of all virtues, most novelists agreed that the

function of the novel was to teach conduct by example, the exact motive behind Miss Sedgwick's own conduct books; that the really instructive characters were those that could be "universally substituted"; and that "unless the reader can himself substitute or enter into the character, he cannot properly enjoy it."\(^{32}\) The novelist considered his craft as a job, a business, a means of teaching. Novelists "never forgot that the essential business of education is ethical, the enlightening and strengthening of the mind. In the novel they saw a supplementary instrument to direct tuition of great range and penetration, and they appropriated it to assist in the business of 'good principling.'\(^{33}\) But none of these novelists considered the novel as man's own image, re-created by himself, according to the inner truths he has learned about himself.

Novelists were often critical of novels as being dangerous to the young minds that absorbed them. Miss Sedgwick wrote that sentimental fiction "extinguished some minds, and debilitates others with over-excitement."\(^{34}\)

\(^{32}\)Wanley Penson; or, The Melancholy Man (London, 1791) by Sadler of Chippenham, I, xvi.

\(^{33}\)Tompkins, op. cit., p. 142.

\(^{34}\)Dewey, op. cit., p. 67.
She herself, as a young girl, was "happily exempted from such confections as Mrs. Sherwood's - sweetened slops and water gruels that impair the mental digestion." Miss Edgeworth wished to avoid calling Belinda a novel since "so much folly, error, and vice are disseminated in books classed under this denomination." Mrs. Opie in Temper writes of Clarissa:

Can the death-bed of a Sinclair and the horrible fate of Clarissa, be necessary to teach a young woman to hate vice, love virtue, and detest a villain? And as this otherwise admirable work contains very improper descriptions and scenes of infamy with which it must sully a young woman's mind to be acquainted, I must think that putting this book in the hands of a girl, by way of improving her morals, is like giving a person a wound in order to bestow on them a plaister.

Yet Mrs. Opie employs in her novel many of the Richardsonian devices of which she is critical, illustrating a common inconsistency, if not hypocrisy, in authors' attitudes to novels in general and their own in particular.

Fanny Burney's attitude toward the novel as expressed in the preface to Evelina (1778) was one held by many

35Ibid., pp. 67-68.

36Quoted in W. F. Gallaway, "The Conservative Attitude Toward Fiction, 1720 - 1830," PMLA, LV (December 1940), 1048.
Perhaps were it possible to effect the total extirpation of novels, our young ladies in general, and boarding school damsels in particular, might profit from their annihilation; but since the distemper they have spread seems incurable, since their contagion bids defiance to the medicine of advice and reprehension, and since they are found to baffle all the mental art of physic, save what is prescribed by the slow regimen of Time and bitter diet of Experience; surely all attempts to contribute to the number of those which may be read, if not with advantage, at least without injury ought rather to be encouraged than contemned.

The moralist cannot blind himself to the fact that novels are being written and read. If he cannot bring about desired changes from the strength of his criticism alone, then the best thing is to accomplish such changes as one sees fit by writing his own novel. In the preface to Wanley Penson the author confesses that "the acknowledged intention of all the novels that have ever been published, has been to refine mankind, to quicken their sensibility, and polish their sentiments." But "if skill to increase susceptibility, be the general tendency of novels, and there be a probability that this may be carried to an excess, would not an antidote to their effects be in some cases acceptable?" So runs the attack on novels.
in general and the defense of one's own novel in particular.38

American novelists also employed, as did their English counterparts, the device of attacking the work of other novelists, implying that their own work was free from moral evils. And if their novels did contain the abuses they criticized in others — and usually they did — then there was a good reason for their inclusion. Mrs. Rowson in Charlotte Temple explains to readers weary of the incidents and devices of sentimentalism:

'Bless my heart,' cries my young volatile reader. 'I shall never have patience to get through this volume; there are so many ahs! and ohs! so much fainting, tears, and distress, I am sick to death of the subject.'

... I am writing a tale of truth: I mean to write it to the heart, but if perchance the heart is rendered inpenetrable by unbounded prosperity, or a continuance in vice, I expect it will be thrown by with disgust. But softly, gentle fair one; I pray you throw it not aside till you have perused the whole; mayhap you may find something therein to repay you for the trouble.

"I am writing a tale of truth." Time and again this claim appears on the title pages and in the prefaces of

38According to Robert Bage in the preface to Mount Henneth (1781), criticism of individual novels by reviewers was ineffectual. Novels were often "printed, published, bought, read, and deposited in the ... garret, three months before the reviewers say a syllable of the matter." Tompkins, op. cit., p. 6.
early American novels. It became a standard device in Miss Sedgwick's fiction for, as she wrote in "Truth vs. Fiction," "the unreality of a story weakens the impression" it makes on the reader.\textsuperscript{39} This insistence on the story's veracity was a phenomenon more peculiar to America than to England. In both countries there were several objections to fiction. W. F. Gallaway lists three: first, readers felt that fiction provided mere diversion for the young without anything for the mature reader. Second, and more important, "the novel was supposed to tear down the standards of a conservative Christian morality, to unfit the reader for the humdrum monotony of common life; and to consume the time that might be given to more useful reading or to serious thought." Third, objection was also made on aesthetic grounds, for many of these novels

were mawkish melodramas.

It is to the second objection that I would like to return since it was backed up in America by a philosophy. Eighteenth century neo-classicism was on the whole hostile to the imagination for it seemed to be in conflict with the twin norms of respectability of the period: judgment and reality. The use of the imagination, said opponents of the novel, "developed false ideas of life and rendered the reader ... unfit for the monotony of everyday life." 41 Timothy Dwight felt that novels tend "to fill young minds with fancies and expectations which can never in the natural course of things be gratified or accomplished." 42 Detractors of the novel could (and did) gleefully point out that life presented in the novel could not prepare one to meet the exigencies that arose in daily life. Dwight felt that for the constant novel reader "this world and its uses seem flat, stale, and unprofitable." 43

Particularly in New England and Pennsylvania, it was

40 Gallaway, op. cit., p. 1048.
41 Ibid., pp. 1052 - 1053.
43 Ibid.
believed that novels "related that which had not occurred
and had no basis in actual happenings; they were bundles
of lies and therefore not to be countenanced." The
novel reader might make the transfer from the possible
world of the novel to the actual world of reality. Such
an attempt could only result, according to the critics,
in evil after-effects.

These critical beliefs had the sanction of the Common
Sense or Scottish school of philosophy - the prevailing
metaphysics of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth
centuries. Briefly, the Scottish philosophers believed
that each man possessed a perceptive sense. All ideas -
particularly moral ideas - perceived by this sense were
common to all men in all environments in all ages. Thus
arose the name Common Sense. This philosophy also
went under the name of Realistic philosophy. It put
extreme emphasis on the validity of the actual over the
possible. But great literature, says Hugh Duncan, demands
"the conscious exploration through the imagination of the
possibilities of human action in society." William
Charvat writes that the influence of Scottish philosophy
\(44^{\text{Ibid.}}, \text{p. 211.}\)
\(45^{\text{Leon Howard, "The Late Eighteenth Century," in}}\)
\(\text{Transitions in American Literary History, ed. H. H. Clark}}\)
\(\text{(Durham, North Carolina, 1953), p. 70.}}\)
\(46^{\text{Hugh Duncan, Language and Literature in Society}}\)
\(\text{(Chicago, 1953), p. 70.}}\)
on the novel

is that fiction must take cognizance of the daily realities of the life of the general nun of mankind; yet it must avoid skepticism, pessimism, and immorality - it must idealize the institutions and the virtues which hold society together.  

The novel should be one's guide book to a serious life in a workaday world. That Miss Sedgwick agreed with this philosophy can be seen in the didactic content of her fiction, in her cheerful optimism, in her unwillingness and inability to view accurately social problems, in her extolling of the Home as the institution which would hold society together. Her novels, stories, and tracts were explicit guides for a happy and virtuous life.

To counteract the charge of the novel's immorality and unreality, the novelist insisted on the moral content of the story. Moreover, that novel was thought to be most edifying which praised virtue without describing vice. Further, the novelist claimed his story was based on truth. The world he presented in the novel, therefore, corresponded to the actual world. In theory, at least, there was no difference between the everyday world and the world of the novel.

Herein lies the chief difference between the English and American sentimental novel. This is not to say that

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moral intent is not evident in the English novel. It is; but English novelists such as Mrs. Roche did not feel the obligation to intrude again and again upon the story to explain just what the reader is to gain from a particular episode. In *Married or Single?* (1857) after Jessie's seduction and death, Miss Sedgwick directs her readers to the following postscript on the incident:

> If this sad story serve to expose a prevailing sin, let it have the full weight due to an 'ô'er true tale.'
> Its leading facts are true. Some of the most touching expressions were taken down from the lips of a dying girl, one of the many who are every year in our Christian city corrupted in their youth, and turned aside from the benign purposes of Providence, their fair field of life choked with poisonous weeds, and untimely driven to that bar, where, if mercy is meted to them, justice will be dealt to their destroyers (II, 36).

To Miss Sedgwick, as it was to Mrs. Rowson, the novel was nothing more than a sermon with ample illustrations. Plot was secondary to the lesson. At the end of "Old Rover," Miss Sedgwick writes that, though her young readers may reproach her "with palming off on them as a story what, after all, is none," she will not be disturbed since "I shall not have written, nor they read in vain, if I have introduced any one to be more considerate of animals, more studious of their character, and more just,
forbearing, and kind to them." 

Often she was aware that she was digressing from the main plot line of the story, but such digressions were not useless "if we have strengthened the love of goodness in the breast of a single reader." This semi-apologetic device was by no means original with Miss Sedgwick. Mrs. Rowson, whose writing career has parallels with Miss Sedgwick's, writes in *Charlotte Temple*, "I confess I have rambled strangely from my story; but what of that? If I have been so lucky as to find the road to happiness, why should I be such a niggard as to omit so good an opportunity of pointing out the way to others! The very basis of true peace of mind is a benevolent wish to see all the world as happy as one's self ...." To the moralist-novelist such a statement was entirely defensible and justified. Samuel Knapp wrote about most of our sentimental novelists when he said of Mrs. Rowson:

She cannot be pronounced a consummate artist, nor did her education furnish the requisite qualifications of a highly finished writer. Novel writing as an art, she seems to have considered a secondary object. Her main design was

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to instruct the opening minds and
elevate the moral characters of her own
sex. Fiction was one of the instru-
ments which she employed for this laudable
purpose.50

In the years following the Revolution, American
authors made increasing use of the American experience.
But it was not until James Fenimore Cooper that we had
our first professional novelist writing fiction essentially
American in theme, spirit, and outlook. With Cooper
the American novel came of age. Unlike our earlier novel-
ists, he made his profession solely from writing and was
as widely read in Europe as he was in America. But
Cooper's novels do not lie in the sentimental tradition
as outlined in this chapter. In 1822, one year after
Cooper's The Spy appeared, Catharine Maria Sedgwick pub-
lished her first novel A New England Tale. Her fiction
owes much to the sentimental tradition in England and
America. The general nature of this debt has been in-
dicated. The remainder of this study will concern
itself with an analysis of Miss Sedgwick's writings to
see how she typifies the sentimental tradition in America
during the first fifty years of the nineteenth century,
why she received critical and popular praise, and what
her position is in nineteenth century American literary
history and thought.

50Quoted in Terence Martin, The Emergence of the
Novel in America (unpublished Doctoral Dissertation,
O.S.U., Columbus, Ohio, 1954) p. 74.
CHAPTER II

A New England Tale, Miss Sedgwick's first novel, was published May 7, 1822. Wanting "some pursuit" and feeling "spiritless and sad," in the early months of 1822 she began a tract. She had recently joined the Unitarian Society in New York and felt an intellectual freedom that orthodox Calvinism had not given her. She wished to help others achieve similar freedom and meant the tract as an aid.¹

Although her brothers had urged her in the past to write, she had doubts about her literary talents. In 1821 she wrote her sister Mrs. Watson, "My brother Theo' makes a most extravagant estimate of my power. It is one thing to write a spurt of a letter, and another to write a book."² But as a spinster she realized that the great disadvantage of the single life was that one was "generally condemned to uselessness and Satan availing himself of his great prerogative finds 'mischief still for idle hands to do.'"³ She would spend her spare time, therefore, in writing. She began her story with "no plans," but it

¹Dewey, op. cit., p. 153. Although A New England Tale was anti-Calvinistic in tone, Miss Sedgwick in a letter to Theodore, March 26, 1822, denied that it was meant to be Unitarian propaganda: "There is no Unitarianism, not a hint of it." (Sedgwick Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society). The book, nevertheless, has Unitarian overtones.

²February 1821, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.

³March 25, 1816, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.
soon "took a turn that seemed to render it quite unsuitable for a tract."

It was her brother Harry who persuaded her to publish the tract as a novel. She herself, according to a letter from her brother Henry to Theodore, March 26, 1822, "was unwilling to print at all, and particularly unwilling to do so without your imprimatur." Miss Sedgwick added in the same letter, "... I have a perfect horror at appearing in print ...." When she did agree to publish, she wished the authorship to be kept secret. The first edition was sold to Bliss and White of New York for $200.

Her family greeted the book with much praise and pride. Theodore wrote her, "It exceeds all my expectations, fond and flattering as they were. I cannot express to you with what pride and pleasure my heart is filled. I had no doubt of the result, but hope and anticipation are now converted by the happy reality to fact and knowledge." Harry was no

5 March 26, 1822, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.
6 Ibid. Not until 1844 did her name appear on the title page of one of her books, Tales and Sketches, second series although as early as 1827 her name did appear under the title of a sketch she wrote for The Casket, no. 11, Philadelphia, pp. 412-413, "A New England Sabbath."
7 April 5, 1822, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.
8 Dewey, op. cit., p. 152.
less enthusiastic but more business-like. He wrote her on May 25, 1822, that the book was selling quite well and that the present stock "would soon be entirely exhausted."\(^9\) At the same time L. Higginson of Cambridge, Mass., wrote Harry about the possibility of publishing three thousand copies at half the price of the New York edition "for public good."\(^10\)

In a letter to his sister that Dewey dates as June 1824, Harry raised several objections to Higginson's plan. First, he felt a new edition should be printed under the supervision of a friend. Second, if published as a controversial article as Higginson intended, the book would not be "so useful as it would be if considered simply a literary effort." Moreover a cheap edition would give her "the air of a champion for the liberal party," a prophetic statement in the light of the later didactic tracts that were published in inexpensive editions.\(^11\)

\(^9\)Ibid.

\(^10\)May 20, 1822, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.

\(^11\)Dewey, op. cit., p. 162. Dewey's dating of this letter is probably erroneous. It would seem more reasonable that the date is June 1822, one month after Higginson wrote Harry, not two years. The 1822 date would also explain Harry's statement in the same letter that if a second edition were to come out, "it should come out at once." The second edition did appear in the summer of 1822.
In a letter dated May 25, 1822, Harry wrote her that he would send her "a draft of the Preface for the second edition" for her approbation. In August of 1822, Cummings and Hilliard, Boston booksellers, were considering a proposal for copies of *A New England Tale*. Three weeks later on August 22, B. Minot from Boston wrote to Henry Sedgwick that he had talked to Carter of Cummings and Hilliard about a second edition. Carter would sell the book at a twenty percent commission on copies sold by Cummings and Hilliard and a thirty percent commission on copies sold to other booksellers. (The Sedgwick family paid for the printing of *A New England Tale* as they also did for *Redwood*, her second novel.) Carter thought the price of the novel one dollar was too high; 87 1/2 cents would be better. Minot concluded the letter by saying that Cummings and Hilliard were the best booksellers in Boston for they had capital and enterprise. The second edition appeared in *August*, 1822. A new edition was not printed again until 1852 when Putnam re-issued the novel as part of a complete edition of Miss Sedgwick's works.

Despite Harry's note to his sister on May 25, 1822, that the book was quite popular, sales had declined only a

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12Ibid., p. 152.
13August 3, 1822, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.
14August 22, 1822, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.
few months after its publication. Even William Cullen Bryant's testimonial of the book's success is suspect when one realizes that Bryant was a close family friend of the Sedgwick's and, furthermore, had been encouraged by Miss Sedgwick in 1820 "in my hopes of literary success." Writing of *A New England Tale* in 1867, Bryant said, "I have a copy of the first edition of that work, the pages much thumbed, worn, and soiled, and with loose leaves, ready to drop out when the book is opened attesting the number of times it has been read. *The [sic] New England Tale* became popular immediately; everybody was eager to see it, and it passed into the hands of thousands who were by no means habitual readers of novels, and who found themselves none the worse for having read it." But these words written forty-five years after the book appeared contain more nostalgia than truth.

Perhaps one reason the book was not as popular as Miss Sedgwick's brothers made it out to be was that the top literary reviews of the day overlooked it. Bryant felt that "the religious tendencies of the work might have been the reason for this neglect." Harry wrote her on

15Ibid.
17Ibid., pp. 438-439.
18October 18, 1824, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.
May 25, 1822, that one difficulty in selling the book was "the unfavorable representation of the New England character." In addition, the orthodox did all they could to discourage sales. To the first charge, Miss Sedgwick pleaded guilty, but "as a mistake has been committed, the best correction may perhaps be found in an honest avowal of its cause." To the second charge, she felt that religious cant and sanctimonious pretence had existed in most ages "and have ever been deemed legitimate objects of satire."

B. N. Coles of London wrote Henry Sedgwick in June of 1822 that the book would not go over in England for Miss Sedgwick took religion too seriously. But in October of 1822, John Miller, an agent for British publications, wrote Henry Sedgwick that he was printing the book in London and would pay if the book paid him. To Mathew Carey, the publisher, Miller wrote, "I am reprinting the New England Tale and expect good sales for it."

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20 Ibid., p. 153.
22 Ibid.
23 June 26, 1822, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.
24 October 12, 1822, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.
25 Bradsher, op. cit., p. 87.
made mention of the American objection to the novel's religious character, but the London *Monthly Review* did "not see any good grounds" for these objections. However John Hart in *Female Prose Writers of America* (Philadelphia, 1855, p. 18) wrote that "the original intention of this book [A New England Tale] led the author to give special prominence to topics of a questionable character for a professed novel ...."

There were but few reviews of *A New England Tale*. The *Literary and Scientific Repository and Critical Review* for May, 1822, published a review probably by James Fenimore Cooper, a close family friend at that time. He begins by saying that "a good novel addresses itself very powerfully to our moral nature and conscience, and to those good feelings, and good principles, which Providence has planted within us, constantly to remind us that 'we have, all of us, one human heart.'" *A New England Tale* directs itself to the reader's moral nature and conscience. Moreover, "It is original, natural, and beautiful; written with such purity of taste, style, and purpose; in such affinity with things lovely, honourable, and of good report, that it must be

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acceptable to minds in accordance with itself; and they who
would correct what is evil, cherish what is good, in the
character of the society which it so truly describes,
may be shown in this mirror of just representation, the
weeds that are to be rooted out, and the virtues that are
to be cultivated ...."

One of the pleasures fiction offers, he continues, is
to transport one "to the past and distant ... into condi-
tions which fancy has devised ...." This pleasure, "the
delight of pure imagination," belongs to the province of the
romance." But he doubts whether "the susceptibility of this
excitement is universal." He wonders, moreover, "whether
it is a source of so sweet, so complacement, or so deep
emotions as the other more frequent and familiar exercise
of the imagination ... of those who limit themselves to
the nature 'common to man,' study the characters of communi-
ties, the local peculiarities of separated regions ...."
(These are the same qualities Bryant pointed out three
years later in his review of Miss Sedgwick's Redwood.)
Such fiction, however, need not lack excitement. Those
"who have felt for the peril and forlorness [sic] of
some of C. B. Brown's heroes in their lonely and hazardous
wanderings" will not be disappointed in Miss Sedgwick's
novel for readers will be no less interested, "even if
they are less apprehensive, for the gentle but courageous
Jane [the novel's heroine], armed in her innocence, and impelled by compassion, as she follows her lunatic companions upon her errand of mercy."

As hostile to New England Calvinism as was Miss Sedgwick, Cooper concludes his review by answering those who were "miffed" by her satire: "... we think the most amiable and charitable liberality pervades the book; and if there are opinions taught and received in society, which produce the consequences described, we know not who can complain or take offense, that the truth should be told."

Despite praise from family and friends, Miss Sedgwick had—and continued to have during her literary career—"womanish fears" about her talents. She wrote Mrs. Frank Channing after A New England Tale had been published that "if all poor authors feel as I have felt since obtruding myself upon the notice of the world, I only wonder that the lunatic asylum is not filled with them. I hardly know any treasure I would not exchange to be where I was before my cowtracks passed into the hands of printer's devils."28

Again to Mrs. Channing a few days later: "I should be delighted to visit Boston in the course of the summer, but 28Dewey, op. cit., p. 153.
I should neither go nor stay with any reference to my little tract [she considered *A New England Tale* a didactic tract, not a novel.] I protest against being supposed to make any pretensions as an author; my production is a very small affair any way, and only intended for the young and the humble, and not for you erudite pro-di-gi-ous Boston folks."  

She claimed nothing for the book as far as literary merit was concerned. Her one consolation about appearing in print was "that the moral is good, and that to the young and simple in our country towns, if into the hands of any such it should fall, it may be of some service." What concerned her primarily in *A New England Tale* as in all her subsequent work was not the story or the manner in which she told it but the moral.  

She had an ambivalent attitude toward writing. On the one hand she considered herself an amateur whose books were only "a pleasant occupation and excitement" in her life. She confided in her journal for December 17, 1835, that "my author existence has always seemed something accidental, extraneous, and independent of my inner self." The writing of her novels relieved her from boredom, but the novels and


the resulting publicity constituted "no portion of my happiness—
that is, of such as I derive from the dearest relations of
life."32 At times she seemed not the least interested whether
or not she realized any profit from her writings, as Harry's
letter about the cheap edition of A New England Tale would
indicate: "I have no doubt," he wrote her, "that you will
be ready at once to forego all personal emolument in regard
to the New England Tale, and accede to Mr. H's [Higginson's]
request ...."33 In a letter to Mrs. Watson, May 25, 1825,
she mentions a bagatelle [The Travellers] which she is going
to publish: "I meant it for a tract, but Harry thinks I
had better print it for profit, as he says people value a
great deal more what they pay for."34

On the other hand, she wrote her brother Charles on
July 22, 1836, that she was "earning a few hundred dollars
a year, and precious few too." American publishers could
all too easily pirate English novels since the absence of
an international copyright law made it more profitable
for publishers to issue foreign rather than American
titles. They would try to undercut competitors by selling
their edition as inexpensively as possible. Thus Miss

32Ibid.
33Ibid., p. 162.
34Ibid., p. 175.
Sedgwick writes, "... while such a novel; as Rienzi can be sold here for fifty cents as both editions are, I can not hope, even if I should call to my aid the 'cutest stock jobbers of Wall Street, to continue, by any play upon the gullible species, to make much out of my handiwork. However, I am as eager to make money as you are - to make it for me." But the steady decline in retail prices made such a desire difficult to fulfill. In the same letter she tells Charles that her new book The Poor Rich Man and The Rich Poor Man would be out that spring and that "there are good notions suited to the American market in it." In addition, she hoped "to get something from the English edition of The Linwoods." Although there is a certain disparaging of her talents in the letter ("You put me up to making money out of my poor brains"), its tone is far different from the journal entry of the previous year. This is a business letter about money matters from a woman who did not consider writing to

35Ibid., p. 252.
36Ibid.
37Ibid.
concerned about profits. The journal entry of 1835 is that of an amateur writer, the letter of 1836, that of professional.

But if there is some ambiguity as to whether she considered writing a vocation or an avocation, there is no doubt what she thought the function of writing was. In a journal entry for May 19, 1836, she writes:

Sir James Mackintosh /the Scottish Realist/ has an admirable argument for fictitious writing which all who have dabbled in it should cherish: 'Fictitious narrative, in all its forms, epic, poem, tale, tragedy, romance, novel, is one of the great instruments employed in the moral education of mankind, because it is only delightful when it interests, and to interest is to excite sympathy for the heroes of fiction — that is, in other words, to teach men the habit of feeling for each other.'

All fiction serves a moral purpose. It appeals to the reader when it arouses in him sympathy for its heroes and heroines. It teaches its readers to sympathize not only with the heroine in distress but with all mankind. Its moral purpose lies not so much in a particular message the writer wishes to communicate as in its causing man to transfer his feelings for the hero to his fellow man. One theme Miss Sedgwick used again and again was man's mutual dependence on other men: all men are members of the same

38 Ibid., p. 254.
family and must act not out of selfish interests but out of benevolence to one another.

If her writings made any one happier or better, she felt 
"an emotion of gratitude to Him who has made me the medium of any blessing of my fellow-creatures. And I do feel that I am but the instrument."39 It was this consolation that made her "author existence" bearable; it was this conviction that overcame her reluctance to appear in print.

Miss Sedgwick wrote three prefaces to A New England Tale. She tells us in the first preface (March 30, 1822) that she "has made an humble effort to add something to the scanty stock of native American literature." When she came to write the third preface (May 27, 1852) to Putnam's edition of the novel, she admitted that this reason "is now rendered void by the immense and rapidly increasing mass of 'native American literature,'" but that A New England Tale "derives some claim to sufferance from its priority in time."

Her plan, she writes in the first preface, "was simply to produce a very short and simple moral tale of the most humble description," but if in doing so, the tale "has acquired anything of a peculiar or local cast," this should be attributed to her education and to "that kind of accident which seems to control the efforts of those who have

39Ibid., pp. 249-250.
not been the subjects of strict intellectual discipline, and have not sufficiently premeditated their own designs."

In the second preface (July 18, 1822), she defends herself against objections made to the religious tone of the book and her representation of the New England character. The tale "was written under a sincere conviction of its beneficial tendency." It is "this circumstance which has chiefly contributed to the satisfaction derived from the indulgent and liberal reception with which this humble effort has been so kindly greeted." She believed it her duty in this book "to exhibit our religion in its uncorrupted state, and in such a form as to interest the affections and influence the conduct."

The story of A New England Tale is one of the oldest in literature: a destitute orphan lives with her cruel aunt and cousins, who treat her as a servant, and is rescued by her "prince charming," Mr. Lloyd, a Quaker widower. The material in the story is familiar to anyone who has read eighteenth century sentimental novels. There is a seduction scene similar in its incidents to seduction scenes in other novels of the day. There is a duel. There is even a Gothic touch in the heroine's midnight journey through a darkened wood. Virtuous characters are rewarded and poetic justice is meted to the evil ones.
The chief interest in this book, the most didactic of her novels, lies in her moral: a definition of a true Christian. He is not one who merely observes the Sabbath. He has the patience of Job and just as many troubles; he works all day to get bread for his family, yet he never scolds, mutters, or complains. He practices disinterestedness, doing things for others, not for himself. This trait is not merely "an Utopian idea in the reformer," but "the principle, the Spirit of the Christian," although there are "very few who are perfectly disinterested." Jane Elton, the heroine, embodies these virtues. Like many sentimental heroines, she gives away the little money she has to those less fortunate than she, and, following the sentimental creed, performs this act of charity anonymously. She owes allegiance to no religious sect. Her religious counsel comes not from a minister but the light of Scripture. She learns theology "from the joyous light of the sun and the merry carol of the birds" (p. 80). In the morning she would "steal from her bed ... when the songs of the birds were interpreting the stillness of nature, and beauty and fragrance breathing incense to the Maker, and join her

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40 All references to A New England Tale will be made to the standard edition of 1852. There are no changes in the text from the 1822 edition. The later edition has been chosen because of its accessibility. A New England Tale (New York, 1852), p. 170.
devotion to the choral praise. At this hour she studied
the word of truth and life, and a holy beam of light fell
from it on her path through the day" (p. 63).

Her aunt Mrs. Wilson represents the Old Light Calvin­
ism of New England. She had been "one of the subjects of
an awakening at an early period of her life; had passed
through the ordeal of a church examination with great cre­
dit, having depicted in glowing colors the opposition of
her natural heart to the desires, and her subsequent joy
in the doctrines of election" (p. 39). She gives to reli­
gion "a dark and gloomy aspect" (p. 80). Mrs. Wilson is
a hypocrite who observes the law and not the spirit of
religion. To underscore Mrs. Wilson's false sanctity,
Miss Sedgwick points to the fates of her children.
Martha dies, an unrepentant drunkard. Elvira takes money
from Jane under false pretences and runs off with an un­
scrupulous French dancing master. David rifles his
mother's desk and sails for the West Indies blaming his
mother for his actions: "The peril be on your soul. My
mind was a blank, and you put your own impressions on
it; God (if there be a God) reward you according to your
deeds" (p. 226). Miss Sedgwick agrees with David's in­
dictment. To those who believe no one could be so de­
praved as David, she replies, "... he began with a nature
more inclined to evil than good ... his mother's management
had increased everything that was bad in him, and extin-
guished everything that was good ... the continual contra-
diction of his mother's professions and life had led him
to an entire disbelief of the truths of religion, as well
as a contempt of its restraints" (p. 236).

Mrs. Wilson refuses to help her son for there is more
hope for "an open transgressor than ... /for/ one of a moral
life" (p. 215). She tells Jane, "I have planted and I have
watered, and if it is the Lord's will to withhold the in-
crease, I must submit" (p. 216). Such a doctrine is im-
pious to Jane. "You may deceive others," she exclaims,
"but God is not mocked" (p. 217). It is Jane who finally
opens up Mrs. Wilson's heart. "There was that in Jane's
looks, and voice, and words, that was not to be resisted
by the wretched woman; and like the guilty king, when
he saw the record on the wall, her 'countenance was
changed, her thoughts were troubled, and her knees smote
one against the other!'" (pp. 216-217). Jane makes clear
to her that God "cannot be deceived by the daring
hypocrisies, the self-delusions, the refugies /sic/ of
lies, of his creatures" (p. 217). Mrs. Wilson is struck
speechless. Her fate is one that sentimental novelists
reserved for wicked women. "She was finally carried
off by scrofula, a disease from which she suffered all
her life, and which had probably increased the natural
asperity of her temper ... Her mind no human comfort could reach ... the disease was attended with delirium, and she had no rational communication with any one from the beginning of her illness" (pp. 226-227).

It is left to Mr. Lloyd to state the moral, recurrent in most of Miss Sedgwick's fiction: "Do not imagine, dear Jane, that I think it of the least consequence, by what name the different members of the Christian family are called" (p. 236). As long as one lives by the Bible and performs deeds of disinterested benevolence, he is a child of God, a true Christian.

In *A New England Tale* Miss Sedgwick relies too heavily on the sentimental cliches of the eighteenth century. She shows little inventive skill in her incidents and belabors her moral, a failing common to the sentimental novelist.

The style of *A New England Tale* is not particularly noteworthy. The form is often the well worn epistolary. The book lacks balance and proportion. Jane Elton is too good, her cousins too bad. Mr. Lloyd is too honest, David Wilson, too dishonest. The characters seem to have little existence apart from the virtues or vices they represent. The exception is Mrs. Wilson, but one remembers her more as a caricature than as a character. Miss Sedgwick does experiment with a native type, Crazy Bet, but she did not completely realize such a character-
ization until Aunt Deborah Lenox in Redwood (1824). The author uses Crazy Bet as a means to castigate the Puritanical Mrs. Wilson. She is not primarily interested in Bet for herself. A New England Tale, moreover, lacks organic unity. Halfway through the book, Miss Sedgwick drops Jane's other two aunts, although they were to have shared the responsibility with Mrs. Wilson of raising Jane. They are not heard from again. Finally, the character of the time barely makes itself known to the reader.

In reducing Calvinism to pretentiousness, Miss Sedgwick oversimplified New England orthodoxy. Calvinism is not so much satirized as it is caricatured. The Christian life she recommended is the Ideal, as even Jane Elton is forced to admit. Miss Sedgwick failed to consider the realities and practicalities of everyday living.

She herself realized the shortcomings of the novel when she said it was meant not for the erudite of Boston.

41 A journal entry for 1818 mentions a Crazy Sue, a town inhabitant of Stockbridge, who would make a good subject for a short story. Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S. In the preface to the first edition of A New England Tale, Miss Sedgwick writes that she "has attempted to sketch of a real character under the fictitious appellation of 'Crazy Bet.'" Fanny Appleton's diary for July 14, 1835, contains this entry: "While we were at prayers, this morning, Crazy Sue suddenly appeared at the door in an attitude of prophecy /sic/with her hands raised over her head and her eyes glaring mildly enough .... She thinks a good deal of her immortalization by Miss Sedgwick as 'Crazy Bet.'" Selected Letters and Journals of Fanny Appleton Longfellow, ed. Edward Wagenknecht (New York, 1956), pp. 17-18.
but for the young and humble. This perhaps accounts for the book's black and white characters and its oversimplification of Calvinism. Yet *A New England Tale* was daring in its satirizing of orthodoxy, for in Miss Sedgwick's Berkshires, where the scene is set, Calvinism was still alive.

Two years after *A New England Tale*, *Redwood*, her second novel, appeared. The encouragement of friends and family persuaded her to overcome her reluctance to appear in print. In June of 1824 she wrote to Theodore that she had done as well as she could what her friends thought it her duty to do. She was nearly through the second volume, but disclaimed any pretensions to ambition. It would seem that her brothers had decided upon a literary career for their only unmarried sister. After *Redwood* was published, Robert wrote to Theodore that a literary career for Catharine was "just the thing." It was uncertain, "yet the demand for the profession is about calling it into being." It would give one "the most enviable station that society admits." There is evidence to show that so eager were her brothers to start Catharine on a literary career that they paid for the publication of *Redwood*. On

\[42\] June 2, 1824, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.

\[43\] June 18, 1824, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.
September 20, 1824, John Seymour, the printer of Redwood, sent Henry Sedgwick an itemized estimate for the printing and paper of a second edition of the novel. Catharine herself wrote to Henry on October 18, 1824, "I am not stimulated to incur the expense of a second edition," indicating that she and her family had paid for the first edition. She preferred, instead, to let Bliss and White publish the book at any rate Henry thought proper. To guarantee a favorable press, the family turned to its close friend Bryant. Bryant wrote to Henry that the North American Review would review Redwood and do well by it. Miss Sedgwick had dedicated Redwood to Bryant "in token of friendship and admiration of his genius."

Redwood was more of a success than A New England Tale. Shortly after its publication 1,100 copies were sold. Bryant wrote Charles Sedgwick in July of 1824 that in such high esteem was Redwood in New York "that it is absolutely dangerous and unsafe not to admire it." Booksellers, according to a letter from Harry in August of 1824, were saying that it was better than Scott's Regauntlet.

44September 20, 1824, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.
45October 18, 1824, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.
46October 18, 1824, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.
47Glicksberg, op. cit., p. 629.
published the same year. J. E. Hall of Philadelphia wrote Henry on September 7, 1824, that he was glad a second edition was wanted so soon. Henry wrote his sister in October of 1824 that a second edition was not improbable and that what would be left of this future edition would be gone by the time another edition was printed. (There was, however, no second edition.) The sale of Redwood, he told her, was "regular and constant, and as brisk as it had been at anytime after the first orders were sent off."

In France it was thought that Cooper had written Redwood. Upon hearing this, Miss Sedgwick dryly commented, "It is to be hoped that Mr. C's self-complacency will not be wounded by this mortifying news." The Italian edition published in 1830 bears on its title page, "Redwood: Romanzo Americano di M. Cooper." It is interesting that continental critics and publishers believed Cooper to be the author of Redwood for this novel bears little similarity to those of Cooper's novels.

49 September 7, 1824, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.
50 October 5, 1824, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.
52 Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
published before 1824, But in such low esteem was American fiction held, it was inconceivable to Europeans that America could produce another novelist equalling or even approaching Cooper.

The preface to the first edition of Redwood dated June 1824 is revealing. Like her first novel, Redwood concerns itself with the manners and customs of that region of America Miss Sedgwick knew best. Its peculiar province was "to denote the passing character and manners of the present time and place." Each generation draws "upon its own immediate resources for intellectual amusement and direction." She avoided writing about the past for "there is but one individual (Cooper) (whom it would be affectation to call unknown) who has eminent success in the delineation of former periods, or what is called historical romances." She did not feel she could compete with Cooper on his own ground. When she did turn to the historical novel, she avoided writing about regions Cooper had made his own.

If left to the "the bias of our own inclinations," she might have composed, the preface continues, "a tale chiefly of a religious nature." But perhaps thinking about the reception of A New England Tale, she writes, "We do not think that such attempts have heretofore been eminently successful; or that narrative sermons are of a
nature to be particularly interesting." At the same time, she is conscious that the religious principle "is a mighty agent in moulding human character, and it may, therefore, with propriety, find a place in a work whose object it is to delineate that character." Since those ties which bind man to God are more lasting and universal than the bonds of affection which unite man to woman, there should be no reason why "in the fictitious representation of human life ... the greater should be excluded by the less." She does not expect "splendid success, but we are sure that we cannot be deprived of the consolation of having intended well." She will feel rewarded if by her "trivial" labors, she has been able "to cooperate in any degree with the efforts of the good and great." Her only anxiety and one that was to occupy her talents in many of her books and stories was "for the great truths of our common religion, not for any of its subdivisions."

She is attempting in Redwood, the preface goes on to say, "some sketches of the character and manners of the people of this country." America is a land without parallel, "free, happy, and abundant. As such we would describe it - but as no Arcadia, for we have found none." In the final lines of the preface, she states the rationale behind the historical novels of Cooper and her own novels of manners: "the future lives in the present. What we
are, we owe to our ancestors, and what our posterity will be, they will owe to us." The historical novel tells us of ourselves; the contemporary novel of manners will guide the future.

The preface reads much like many eighteenth century prefaces to novels. There are the customary apologies for appearing in print and the avowal of a moral purpose. But there are significant differences. Her novel can be read for "amusement, if not instruction," a claim few of our early novelists would have dared to make. Moreover, she claims for Redwood the negative merit often ascribed to simpletons - "if they can do no good, they will do no harm." Earlier novelists might have agreed with her that their books could do no harm (although critics of the novel often thought otherwise), but few would go so far as to admit that perhaps their books would do no good. She hoped, of course, that readers would derive more than amusement from the book.

What is most interesting in the preface is what she has to say about the narrative sermon. She did not believe that it had been successful in the past, yet when she gave up the novel in the 1830's to devote her time to the didactic tale, it was essentially the narrative sermon she was writing. But in 1824 she did not believe
one could successfully combine narrative and sermon and call the finished product a novel. Or if she did not believe so, her brothers did not, for as she expressed in the preface to Redwood, she was not free to follow the bias of her own inclinations. Moreover there is the evidence of the letter to Theodore on June 2, 1824, that she had done in Redwood what her friends thought it her duty to do. Harriet Beecher Stowe, of course, was able to write a narrative sermon that was both interesting and successful. But Miss Sedgwick believed Mrs. Stowe to be the exception; she wrote for all humanity. "Her books cannot be restricted to any class of readers, nor claimed exclusively by any department of literature."54

Harry Sedgwick believed Redwood to be a decided improvement over A New England Tale. He wrote her on August 24, 1824, "The difference between the first and subsequent works of the same writer is immense."55 The story of Redwood, however, is no more original than that of A New England Tale. Ostensibly it centers around the identity of Ellen Bruce who owns a mysterious casket not to be opened until her twenty-first birthday. Even

53 June 2, 1824, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.
the most naive reader will have guessed at the end of a few chapters that Ellen is Redwood's daughter. But if the story is hackneyed and overly complicated, the characterizations and descriptions show an inventive skill missing in A New England Tale.

Many of the characters, it is true, are stock figures. Ellen Bruce, for example, is the typical sentimental heroine. Like Jane Elton she had grown up "nurtured in the spirit of our blessed religion, without bigotry to any of the forms with which accident, pride, or prejudice has invested it" (p. 133). Like Jane she gives money to those in distress, always remaining an anonymous benefactor. Although Ellen is an admirable model for young girls to follow, she is too perfect, too good for reality, too oblivious to the events around her. She dwells not in the world of reality but in the novelist's world. From her lips drop "the purest sentiments of female virtue." She seems to be uncontaminated by original sin and was

56 All quotations from Redwood come from the author's revised edition, New York, 1850. There are, however, no material changes in the text from the 1824 edition.

57 New York Mirror, I (June 26, 1824), 380.
to orthodox readers and critics a most unreal character, exhibiting "no evidence of a corrupt heart or a defective understanding." In Redwood and Aunt Deborah Lenox, however, Miss Sedgwick has characters who are original and, particularly in Aunt Deborah's case, who interest the reader unlike the characters in A New England Tale, Redwood, the son of a Virginia planter, had lived a life of ease and comfort. As a result his daughter Caroline grows up spoiled and snobbish. When Redwood compares Caroline to Ellen Bruce he sees what she is really like. He realizes her actions and behavior are the result of his failure to educate her properly: "I have destroyed the innocent - contaminated the pure - and my child - my only child - the immortal creature whose destiny was intrusted to me, I have permitted to be nursed in folly, and devoted to the world without a moral principle or influence" (p. 353). He learns that there are objects of pursuit in life higher "than those that perish in the using" (p. 355). At the end of the novel his moral transformation is complete. With a "divine joy" lighting up his face, he finds "rest ... /for his/ wearied spirit." He now feels gratitude "to the blessed

58 Ibid.
Redeemer - the resurrection and the life" (p. 450). Redwood is a convincing character whose moral growth Miss Sedgwick traces well.

Aunt Deborah Lenox is not to be found in sentimental fiction before 1820. From her first appearance, this gaunt woman with her enormous apron pockets and Vermont dialect dominates the novel.

Her height was rather above the grenadier standard, as she exceeded by one inch six feet; her stature and her weather-beaten skin would have led one to suspect that her feminine dress was a vain attempt at disguise, had not her voice, which possessed the shrillness which is the peculiar attribute of a woman's testified to Miss Debby's right to make pretensions which at the first seemed monstrous; her quick gray eyes, shaded by huge, busy eyebrows, indicated sagacity and thought; time or accident, had made such ravages on her teeth, that but a very few remained, and they stood like hardy veterans who have by dent of superior strength survived their contemporaries (p. 31).

But there was in her face "rough and ungainly as it was, an expression of benevolence that humanized its hard features, and affected one like the sunbeams on a frosty November day" (p. 32). She is the self-sufficient American pioneer, grotesque, comic, but of great power and strength. Her language is both simple and racy; Miss Sedgwick attempted to catch her Vermont dialect ("parfect" for "perfect"). The critics praised Miss
Sedgwick highly for her characterization of Aunt Debby. 59

Miss Sedgwick gave readers enthralled by Scott's descriptions scenes of their own land, in this instance the lake country of Vermont. Her description of a thunder storm is one of the finest passages in the book:

The clouds had gathered a portentous blackness, strong gales of wind were rushing over the lake, the rain already poured in torrents, and there were only such intervals between the lightning as served to contrast the vivid flashes with the thick darkness; the thunder burst in loud explosions over their heads, and its fearful peals were prolonged and reverberated by the surrounding hills ... The coachman cracked his whip, and the horses were pressing on at their utmost speed, when a thunder-bolt struck an enormous dead tree a little in advance of them, fired its driest branches, descended the trunk of the tree, and tearing to splinters the parts it touched, laid the roots bare, and passed off across the road. The horses, terrified by the excessive vividness of the lightning, or the flaming tree, or perhaps both, sprang to the left, and before the coachman,

59,"If there be an artist who hopes to surpass Aunt Debby Lennox /sic/ he may as well lay down his pencil and die." The American Ladies' Magazine, II (May 1829, 236; George Morris, author of "Woodman, Spare That Tree," wrote, "The character of Debby is drawn with a masterly pen. It is replete with sound, but uncultured sense, and Yankee peculiarities." The New York Mirror, I (June 26, 1824), 380; Aunt Deborah is "the most original character in the novel." Atlantic Magazine, I (July 1824), 239. Bryant in 1867 wrote of Redwood and Aunt Deborah, "Its success was fully deserved, were it only for the character of Debby Lenox ... a combination of noble and homely qualities so peculiar, yet so probable, and made so interesting by the part she takes in the plot, that as we read we always welcome her reappearance, and she takes her place in our memory with the remarkable personages we have met with in real life." Dewey, op. cit., p. 440.
scarcely less terrified than they, had made an effort to control their movements, they had dashed over the rocks, and carried the coach with them (pp. 24-25).

The most novel element in Redwood is the picture it gives of the Shaker community. The elders of the community wrote her after Redwood's publication expressing their dissatisfaction. The letter was "accidentally destroyed," a regrettable accident since she would have been happy "to do them the justice to place their own contemporaneous comment before the public." But in revising the novel in 1850, she saw no reason for making any changes: "What then seemed to me true, now appears so." Yet her picture of the Shakers is far from impartial. Although their "faith" is "tempered by some generous and enlightened principles, which those who had rather learn than scoff would do well to adopt," many of their "peculiarities" are "absurd and indefensible" (p. 260). Their rites are "the wildest fanaticism," and their members often secure the rights of elders through cunning. Reuben Harrington, the villain of Redwood, is a Shaker elder who "believed

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61 Ibid, p. xv.
that the seemingly upright only wanted the opportunity and
the motive to turn aside from the straight and narrow
path" (p. 265). Reuben is eventually found out "and sent
out to wander upon the earth, despised and avoided, endur­
ing all the misery of unsuccessful and unrepented guilt"
(p. 330). Whether or not her description is fair, Miss
Sedgwick did contribute a piece of Americana and performed
a service in depicting a faith "at a period, and in a
country of constant mutations, where old faiths are every
year dissolving, and new ones every year forming."63

Of particular interest in a novel published in 1824
are the scattered references to slavery. Redwood's father
owned many slaves including Africk, who had been con­
verted to Christianity. On his deathbed, Africk tells
Redwood, "I could have poured out the blood of white
men, till it were a sea like the big waters over which
they brought us. But the voice of God pierced to my
heart, and I was an altered man. And when I prayed
that blessed prayer, that I might be forgiven even as I
forgave others, the fire in my heart was quenched ...
and there was peace --- God's peace" (p. 52). Redwood
believes as Africk that slavery would lead to war. The

63 Preface to the New Edition of Redwood (New York,
1850), p. xv.
dying Africk prophesies, "I hear the wailings of your wives and your little ones /he refers to plantation owners/; and I see your fair lands drenched with their blood" (p. 52). Later in Redwood, Miss Sedgwick herself points out ironically "that our northern people are quite careless of the duty of protecting slave property," for "they manifest a provoking indifference to the rights and losses of slaveholders. Indeed, so notorious is their fault in this particular, that their southern brethren seldom run the risk of an irrecoverable loss by exposing their servants to the danger of an atmosphere infected with freedom; and those among them who possess the greatest abundance of these riches, which emphatically take to themselves wings and fly away, prudently make their northern tours attended by white servants" (p. 442).

If there is much in Redwood that is new, there is still more that is familiar. Like other sentimental heroines, Ellen conceals her love for Westall, a virtue "deserving of the moralist's praise" (p. 153). There is the invidious comparison between the American and the British. Mrs. Campbell says of the fortune-hunting Englishman Fitzgerald, "I have seen many an American shop-boy, many a gawky young farmer, who had more cleverness than such a British officer as Fitzgerald; more
knowledge, more of everything that is essentially respectable" (p. 362). There is a teary reconciliation scene in the best sentimental tradition between Redwood and Caroline who had displeased her father by her elopement with Fitzgerald. There is the claim to authenticity made at the end of the novel:

We fancied we had finished our humble labors, when by a lucky chance a letter written by Deborah Lenox ... fell into our hands. As it was written nearly two years subsequent to the date of these memoirs, and contained some interesting notices of the personages that figure in them, we immediately transmitted it to our printer (p. 456).

Nor is the explicit moral missing. Always present in the history of Redwood's spiritual conversion, it is repeated at the end of the novel in Deborah's letter. It is the belief "that there is no soil so hard bound and so barren but what, if you work upon it long enough, you may make it bring forth some good things at last; not that it will equal that soil which is warm and rich at the start, and is from the beginning diligently opened for the sun of God's grace to shine in upon it, and the dew of heaven to nourish it - a soil like ... your heart, Ellen" (p. 457).

At one point in the novel, Redwood expresses his approval of Miss Edgeworth's The Absentee. The story in his view "is ... always a subordinate part - and the
sense and the spirit of Miss Edgeworth's dialogue—open her books where you will—is sure to instruct and entertain you" (p. 214). Miss Sedgwick obviously concurred with this statement. The story of Redwood is of secondary concern to her. Far more important is the depiction of New England life and scene. That she paid little attention to the story proper and did not care to do better can be seen in her over-use of coincidences, her digressions, her faulty handling of time, and her employment of hackneyed devices. The conclusion in which she parcels out everyone's fate is artificial and unoriginal. She breaks with custom and tradition in that most of her characters speak alike. In Cooper's novels, for example, there is a decided difference in the language of high born and low born characters. Language in a Cooper novel is a badge of social caste. But in Redwood it is difficult to differentiate between Africk's speech and Redwood's. In all, she seems to have followed Harry's advice to write in disconnected masses which could be afterwards woven together.\(^{64}\) The parts of Redwood are much better than the whole.

Reviews of Redwood were favorable. Bryant, who had promised to do well by the novel, entitled his review \(^{64}\)Dewey, op. cit., p. 153.
"American Society as a Field for Fiction." He looked upon Redwood "as conclusive argument, that the writers of works of fiction, of which the scene is laid in familiar and domestic life, have a rich and varied field before them in America." He felt Miss Sedgwick had presented readers "not merely with the picture of what she has imagined, but with the copy of what she has observed." She availed herself well of the differences between native and foreign characteristics. Bryant admits that he had apprehensions "that the moral would be too anxiously and obtrusively brought forward, and pressed with a wearisome frequency and perseverance." But he found few traces of this fault in the novel. He was pleased that Miss Sedgwick connected her countrymen "with much that is ennobling and elevated, with traits of sagacity, benevolence, moral courage, and magnanimity." Such portrayal exalts "our national reputation abroad and improve /s/ our national character at home." He did find elements in Redwood that "remind us too strongly of the machinery of romances." He also criticized the use of coincidences: "The right of novelists to bring about their catastrophes by extraordinary means, has, we fear ... been too long and too universally enjoyed to be taken from them at this day." But, he continues, since "the plot of a novel is little
more than a convenient contrivance to introduce interesting situations and incidents, well drawn characters and fine sketches from life and nature," why need one complain if a novel has all these "unless the manner in which they are connected be such as essentially to impair their effect? If the picture be beautiful, why should we turn our eyes from it to find fault with the frame in which it is enclosed?" When Bryant looked over his review forty-two years later he was "a little amused to see that ... he had dispensed both praise and blame with a magisterial air as if ... he had been the most experienced of critics."  

The Atlantic Magazine for July 1824, published by Bliss and White, the publishers of Redwood, promised for Miss Sedgwick a long career "of still increasing utility and fame." It has been said, wrote the critic, "that America has never produced a female writer of Eminence." But if Miss Sedgwick were not the only exception, she certainly was the brightest. Redwood fulfilled the need for a native American fiction that the reviewer had written about in the May issue of the same magazine.

There he called for a writer "among our own people" who would

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67 Atlantic Magazine, I (July 1824), 234-239.
devote "his ability and apply his acquirements to subjects of domestic interest ...." The literature of a country was its common property and provided a strong bond of national unity. More particularly was this true of a literature whose subject matter was domestic, native in theme and treatment. Thus Redwood whose "materials are purely domestic" seemed to be the very kind of novel he had written about.

The U.S. Literary Gazette recognized her eloquence, imagination, and correct style, but felt because of the stereotyped characters that it was difficult for the reader to "mingle his personal identity with that of the prominent characters and suffer and rejoice with them ...." The London Monthly Review found in it little resemblance to Cooper's novels but still felt it one of the few productions from America "of a superior class." It was a credit to "the female literature of America." The reviewer hoped that "we shall soon be enabled to give notice of its increasing spirit in a number of equal specimens, not only from the North but in all probability from the South American ladies."

68 Ibid., I (May 1824), 130-139, and I (July 1824), 236.

69 U.S. Literary Gazette, I (July 15, 1825), 101.
He was reluctant to admit, however, that it was a distinctly American book. Its chief interest was "its prevailing tone of English taste and feeling."\textsuperscript{70} Blackwoods thought Miss Sedgwick to be a very good female writer, although John Neal, the critic, could not recall the title of the book.\textsuperscript{71} George Morris in the \textit{New York Mirror} wrote that "among the writers of our nation, who prefer to linger on this side of the Atlantic, and add to the reputation of their country, by making it the scene of their stories, and the place in which they are composed, is the author of Redwood." Its pages "breathe the humble beauties of a village life, and describe, with admirable feeling, the changes of the human heart." Although happy with the description of Aunt Deborah, Morris found Ellen "too good for reality."\textsuperscript{72}

Miss Sedgwick was probably most pleased with what Maria Edgeworth had to say. Miss Sedgwick had dedicated \textit{A New England Tale} to her "as a slight expression of the writer's sense of her eminent services in the Great Cause of Human Virtue and Improvement." Although admitting that she was "much flattered by the manner in which my

\textsuperscript{70}\textit{Monthly Review}, CVI (London, April 1825), 430.
\textsuperscript{71}\textit{Blackwoods}, XVII (Edinburgh, February 1825), 201.
\textsuperscript{72}\textit{New York Mirror}, I (June 26, 1824), 380.
writings are alluded to in this book, that I can hardly suppose I am ununprejudiced judge," Miss Edgeworth nevertheless felt Redwood was "a work of superior talent, far greater than even 'The /sic/ New England Tale' gave me reason to expect. The character of Aunt Deborah is first rate - in Scott's best manner, yet not an imitation of Scott. It is to America what Scott's characters are to Scotland, valuable as original pictures, with enough of individual peculiarity to be interesting, and to give the feeling of reality and life as portraits, with sufficient also of general characteristics to give them the philosophical merit of portraying a class."

On August 24, 1824, shortly after the publication of Redwood, Harry wrote his sister that booksellers were "all teasing me to know when another work will come from the author of 'Redwood.' They say it will go as well or better than one from Cooper or Irving." The new novel Hope Leslie did not appear until 1827. It was Miss Sedgwick's first historical novel. Bryant's review of Redwood in 1825 perhaps suggested to Miss Sedgwick the idea of writing an historical novel. Though praising Redwood, Bryant felt that Miss Sedgwick had not "avail-

74Ibid.
ed herself of the more obvious and abundant sources of interest" which should "naturally suggest themselves to the author of a fictitious history, the scene of which should be laid in the United States": the landing of the first settlers and the hardships they endured, the feuds between the colonies, the struggle for independence. "She has passed by all these periods and situations so tempting to the writer of fictitious history, so pregnant with interest and teeming with adventure ...."75
Hope Leslie deals with the settlement of Massachusetts and the Indian wars. The Linwoods (1835), her second historical novel, takes place during the Revolution.

There was in the 1820's a great interest in novels that were concerned with America's history. Much of this eagerness was engendered, of course, by Scott's novels, as popular in America as they were in England. In 1821 in America, Cooper's The Spy duplicated Scott's success. Cooper was not without his imitators. With "'Waverly' galloping over hill and dale; the 'Spy' lurking in every closet; the mind everywhere supplied with 'Pioneers' on the land and soon to be with 'Pilots' on the deep," these followers of Cooper "tried to adapt their plot and style

75 North American Review, XX (April 1825), 245-246.
to the kind of romance which Scott and Cooper had made popular."

In 1820 Miss Sedgwick advised Mrs. Channing to read *Kenilworth*: "We have just laid our hands on 'Kenilworth.' I saluted it with as much enthusiasm as a Catholic would a holy relic. It is now lying beside me, looking so fresh and tempting that I think I deserve some credit for having resisted it thus far." The following year she wrote Mrs. Channing, "I hope you have read the *Pirate* with delight as we have. It certainly is a highly poetical production. Who but Walter Scott could have created such a scene on a barren isle of the Northern Ocean! The world here is divided into the followers of Minna and Brenda. They seem to me the fair representatives of this world and a higher." When she herself turned to the historical novel, it was not without some fear, then, that she was treading upon sacred ground.

*Hope Leslie* according to Bryant was "more widely read then any of her previous novels. He felt that with this book "it was now commonly remarked that"

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Miss Sedgwick's literary reputation was entirely of home-growth, and that her works were admired, and added to our household libraries without asking, as had too often been the case in regard to other American authors, permission from the critics of Great Britain." Mrs. Trollope thought it to be a "beautiful story." John Hart in *Female Prose Writers of America* (Philadelphia, 1852) wrote that *Hope Leslie* "was not only read with lively satisfaction but familiarly quoted and applauded as a source of national pride" (p. 17). Carey and Lea, publishers, were eager to print the book. They wrote to Cooper that *Hope Leslie* had done well. Miss Sedgwick hoped that she would not be overwhelmed by the praise the book received. To her brother she wrote on March 26, 1827, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.


80Frances Trollope, Domestic Manners of the Americans, II (London, 1832), 158.

81March 26, 1827, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.

82November 1827, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S. See however the diary entry of Everet Duyckinck, January 5, 1843, New York Historical Society, "The new edition of *Hope Leslie* /1843/ fell still born."
July 6, 1827, "I hear from all quarters what honestly seems to me very extravagant praise of 'Hope Leslie.' I trust I shall not be elated by it. At present I certainly am not, for I feel too heavily oppressed by her brother Harry was suffering at this time from a mental breakdown and Theodore was exerting pressure to prevent her from marrying so that she might continue to exercise her literary talents "as a great national blessing"/83, too firmly grappled to the earth to mount in a balloon of vanity."84

The subject of the novel was suggested by an incident connected with the Indian massacre at Deerfield, Massachusetts. A young girl had been taken captive by the Indians and married to a chief. She was, after some years, discovered by her family, but refused to return with them, preferring to remain with her Indian husband. In 1821 Miss Sedgwick had met in Canada a descendant of a white woman who, captured by the Indians as a small girl, had married an Indian "and chose his country for her country, and his God for her God."85 This

83Dewey, op. cit., p. 189.
84Ibid., p. 187.
85Ibid., pp. 129-130.
incidental meeting became an important part of the story in *Hope Leslie*.

Her design in *Hope Leslie* "was to illustrate not the history, but the character of the times." But she was not attempting "a full delineation of these times." She felt her ambition in writing the book "would be fully gratified if, by this work, any of our young countrywomen should be stimulated to investigate the early history of their native land."\(^8^6\)

She knew that in writing an historical novel, she was encroaching upon Cooper's territory. She honestly believed that she could not surpass Cooper in this field. Twice in *Hope Leslie*, she pauses to give Cooper praise.

> It is not our purpose to describe, step by step, the progress of the Indian fugitives. Their sagacity in traversing their native forests, their skill in following and eluding an enemy, and all their politic devices, have been so well described in a recent popular work *The Last of the Mohicans*, that their usages have become familiar as household words (I, 118).\(^8^7\)

Later in the novel she writes:

> The mighty master of fiction has but to wave his wand to present the past

\(^8^6\)Preface to *Hope Leslie*.

\(^8^7\)Quotations are from the 1827 edition.
to his readers with all the vividness and distinctness of the present; but we, who follow him at an immeasurable distance— we, who have no magician's enchantments, wherewith we can imitate the miracles wrought by the rod of the prophet— we must betake ourselves to the compass and the rule, and set forth our descriptions as minutely and exactly as if we were making out an inventory for a salesman (I, 210).

In one important aspect, however, she surpassed Cooper. Hope Leslie is a far more natural and convincing heroine than any of Cooper's and is Miss Sedgwick's most outstanding characterization. She does not respond automatically to given situations as do Jane Elton and Ellen Bruce. Yet in one respect she is like them. She "permitted her mind to expand beyond the contracted boundaries of sectarian faith. Her religion was pure and disinterested; no one, therefore, should doubt its intrinsic value, though it had not been coined into a particular form, or received the current impress" (I, 180). Miss Sedgwick contrasts Hope to Esther, the typical sentimental heroine whose affections are "deep, fixed, and unpretending, capable of any effort or any

88 The Ariel, III (December 26, 1829), 141, accused Cooper in The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish (1829) of plagiarizing Hope Leslie since both novels contained episodes of white girls being abducted by Indians and married to a chief. But such incidents were common in the captivity narratives of the times. Alexander Cowie, The Rise of the American Novel (New York, 1948), p. 776.
sacrifice that was not proscribed by religious loyalty; but no earthly consideration could have tempted her to waver from the strictest letters of her religious duty, as that duty was interpreted by her conscience" (II, 149). Hope, on the other hand, "took counsel only from her heart, and that told her the rights of innocence were paramount to all other rights" (I, 174). She has an "elastic spirit" (II, 96), that enables her to adapt herself quickly to any situation. At one point in the story she is rescued from a group of rowdies by a drunken sailor who believes her to be his patron saint Petronella. In order to escape, Hope does not tell him otherwise: "Protestant, as she was, she unhesitatingly identified herself with a Catholic Saint" (II, 94). Esther feels Hope allows herself "too much liberty of thought and word: you certainly know that we owe implicit deference to our elders and superiors; we ought to be guided by their advice and governed by their authority." But Hope believes that for advice, "it needs to be very carefully administered to do any good," and as to authority, "I would not be a machine to be moved at the pleasure of anybody that happened to be a little older than myself" (I, 262). Hope is indeed a most happy and novel creation on Miss Sedgwick's part. She represents a new kind of
heroine. Thackeray had thought that Scott's Rowena was "icy, faultless, prim, niminy-pimininy," that Scott, "for all his hearty realism, was bound by the silly conventions of the romance: the blondes whom romantic heroes lead to the altar are rarely 'women of heart, soul, character, and withal, true womanliness'; but the brunnettes are." Although Hope's curls are bright, she is not Scott's or Cooper's icy heroine; she represents "true womanliness."

The action of Hope Leslie centers around the persecution of the Indians by the Puritan oligarchy. It was her only major work in which she concerned herself with the Indian in a white society. The American attitude toward the Indian in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was an ambivalent one. Roy Harvey Pearce in his study of the American Indian analyzes this ambivalence:

89 Perry Miller, The Raven and the Whale (New York, 1956), p. 305. Miss Sedgwick said about Thackeray's Henry Esmond: "... his Countess ... is but an oversweet pretty woman, with all the instincts and all the weaknesses of the weakest maternity; and Beatrix is but his other phase of womankind, and neither have the merit of being natural." Dewey, op. cit., p. 345.
Americans who were setting out to make a new society could find a place in it for the Indian only if he would become what they were - settled, steady, civilized. Yet somehow he would not be anything but what he was - roaming, unreliable, savage. So they concluded that they were destined to try to civilize him and, in trying, to destroy him, because he could not and would not be civilized. He was to be pitied for this, and also to be censured. Pity and censure were the price Americans would have to pay for destroying the Indian. Pity and censure would be, in the long run, the price of the progress of civilization over savagism.  

Miss Sedgwick in the person of Hope pities the Indian because of the debilitating effect society has had on him and because of his subsequent loss of nobility. Yet she felt it the duty of the white man to Christianize and civilize the Indian. If the Indian resisted, force was necessary. The Indian, in turn, retaliated. Savage and horrible as these Indian raids were, they were not without sufficient cause.

The Indian, before the advent of the white man, led a life "marked with innocence and good deeds." The white man, as Magawisca, the noble Indian maiden, tells Hope, had spoiled the Indian, who came to possess, as

90 Roy Harvey Pearce, The Savages of America (Baltimore, 1951), p. 53.
Miss Sedgwick writes in another story, "the common vices so generously communicated by the whites to the vanishing race in exchange for their wood lands and bright streams." In trying to make the Indian part of society by giving him land and making him free, the white man was giving the Indian that which was already his. "We cannot take as a gift," Magawisca says, "that which is our own; the law of vengeance is written on our hearts: you say you have a written rule of forgiveness - it may be better if ye would be guided by it; it is not for us: the Indian and the white man can no more mingle and become one than day and night" (II, 230). "My people," she tells her white accusers, "have never acknowledged your authority" (II, 164).

The Indian, therefore, moves westward, disappearing from...
the sight of the white man. "The white man cometh -
the Indian vanisheth" (II, 173). But eventually the
white man catches up with him. The outcome is clear.
The Indian, as Miss Sedgwick recognized, belonged to
a vanishing race; he was doomed. Magawisca is one of
the last of the Pequots. Yet despite her apparent
sympathy for the Indian's plight, Miss Sedgwick still
felt it the duty of the white man to civilize the
Indian. She tells the reader in a note at the end
of the novel, "... we cannot but hope that the present
enlightened labours of the followers of Eliot /the
apostle to the Indians/ will be rewarded with such
success as shall convert the fainthearted, the cold, and
the skeptical into ardent promoters of missions to the
Indian race" (II, 263).92 Americans, as Roy Harvey
Pearce writes, pitied the Indian's state "but saw it
as inevitable; they hoped to bring him to civilization
but saw that civilization would kill him."93

Miss Sedgwick's Indians are, for the most part,
idealized. She wrote in the preface to Hope Leslie that

92Miss Sedgwick's Uncle John was a missionary to
the Indians, but he never reaped any harvest. "His
Indians," wrote Miss Sedgwick, "had lost the masculine
savage quality, the wild flavor, and had imbibed the
dreg-rixes of civilization, without in the least pro-

93Pearce, op. cit., p. 64.
in her Indian portraiture "we are confined not to the actual, but the possible." Magawisca, the most fully-drawn Indian in the book, typifies the high nobility and fine sensibility of the Indian. When Monotto, her father, is about to behead Everell, the hero, whom Magawisca, Hope, and Esther all love, Magawisca intervenes and her arm is severed. In the confusion that follows, Everell escapes, but "all - the dullest and coldest - paid involuntary homage to the heroic girl, as if she were a superior being, guided and upheld by supernatural power" (I, 137). She refuses Sir Philip Gardiner's evil suggestion that she give his page Rosa to the Indians, saying that man cannot touch life. "Life is nought but the image of the Great Spirit; and he hath most of it who sends it back most true and unbroken, like the perfect image of the clear heavens in the still lake" (II, 117). Sir Philip's heart quails "before the lofty glance and unsullied spirit of the Indian maiden" (II, 117). At her trial, "her erect attitude, her free and lofty tread, and the perfect composure of her countenance, all expressed the courage and dignity of her soul" (II, 157). Finally, Miss Sedgwick allows Magawisca to utter one of the important ideas in the novel: the equality of all under God. Magawisca points to her mother's grave
and in "a voice of deep pathos," tells Hope, "here is my mother's grave; think ye not that the Great Spirit looks down on these sacred spots, where the good and the peaceful rest, with an equal eye? Think ye not their children are His children, whether they are gathered in yonder temple where your people worship, or bow to him beneath the green boughs of the forest?" (II, 13). The question that is left unanswered, however, is that if Miss Sedgwick believes in this equality, thinks it makes no difference where one worships, why, then, is there any need to Christianize the Indian?

But not all Miss Sedgwick's Indians are like Magawisca. Her father is portrayed as a cruel man obsessed with the idea of revenge. Sooduck, the Indian in Redwood, has "a visage in which brutal sensuality was mingled with a fierceness that neither time nor events could tame" (Redwood, p. 287). In "Amy Cranstoun" she speaks of one of the Indians who captures Amy as "an exception to, rather than a specimen of his race. His aspect was that of a man of peace and gentleness." On the whole, she idealized particular Indians but not the Indian in general.

One remembers *Hope Leslie* for particular scenes - the Indian raid, Magawisca's trial, Hope's capture by and escape from the Indians - rather than for its total effect. To promote suspense she resorts to the "cliff-hanging" device: "... while our heroine is hastening onward with a bounding step and an exulting heart, a cruel conspiracy is maturing against her" (II, 207) or "There we must leave him [Governor Winthrop] to achieve, in due time, an object involving most momentous consequences, while we follow on the trail of our heroine, whose excursive habits have so often compelled us to deviate from the straight line of narrative" (II, 189).

The ending is hurried and clumsy, similar to the way she ends *A New England Tale* and *Redwood*: "Events have already meted 'fit retribution' to most of the parties who have figured in our long story. A few particulars remain" (II, 256). Much of the sentimental paraphernalia is still present: the epistolary form, the cardboard hero, the sentimental secondary heroine, the conflict between parent and child over marriage, the attempted seduction and pursuit, and the delicacy with which love is treated ("... we hold it a profane intrusion for any ear to listen to the first confessions of reciprocated happy love," II, 256). Her villain Sir Philip Gardiner is an English Catholic disguised as a
Puritan. For Miss Sedgwick, who shared the prejudices of her day (anti-Catholic, anti-Puritan, anti-English) with her fellow Americans, Sir Philip's villainy is triply assured. As in most sentimental novels, evil cannot triumph over good: "Even in an involuntary comparison of himself with the simple jailer," Sir Philip "felt that genuine goodness, dimmed and sullied though it may be by ignorance and fanaticism ... rings true at every trial" (II, 123). Sir Philip is a most interesting villain for Miss Sedgwick based him on an actual person, Sir Christopher Gardiner. She was the first novelist to make literary use of Sir Christopher although her treatment of him departs from history. In her novel, for no apparent reason, he has come to America to help Thomas Morton of Merrymount. She never explains his villainy.95

What she says of orthodoxy in Massachusetts is fairer in *Hope Leslie* than it was in *A New England Tale*. Sismondi, the Swiss historian, however, felt she was unduly harsh to the Puritans. He could well point to a statement made early in *Hope Leslie*: "... how far is

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the present age in advance of that which drove reformers to a dreary wilderness! which hanged Quakers! which condemned to death, as witches, innocent, unoffending old women! But it is unnecessary to heighten the glory of day by comparing it with the preceding twilight" (I, 16). Although critical of Calvinism and Puritanism, she felt that the name "Pilgrim should be redeemed from the puritanical and ludicrous associations which have degraded it in most men's minds ..." (I, 19-20). The Pilgrims had come forth "an exiled and suffering people ... in the dignity of the chosen servants of the Lord, to open the forests to the sunbeam, and to the light of the Son of Righteousness; to restore man - man, oppressed and trampled on by his fellow - to religious and civil liberty, and equal rights" (I, 105-106).

She wrote Sismondi on March 15, 1828,

I meant to touch their character with filial reverence. Their bigotry - their superstition and above all their intolerance were too apparent in the pages of history to be forgotten. But these were the vices of their age, and they were only partially disengaged from the chain that bound their contemporaries. They deserved, in a good degree, the opinion you have entertained of them. They had a most generous and self-devoting zeal to the cause of liberty, so far as they understood it, but they were still in the thraldom of Judaic superstition, and adhered steadfastly, as unhappily a
majority of their descendants do, to Calvin's gloomy interpretation, even now the popular dogma in our enlightened country. 96

To her brother Robert she wrote on July 6, 1827,

I was very much gratified, the other day, by a formal note of thanks from Robbins here /Lenox/, as 'one of the descendants of the Pilgrims,' for the manner in which I had treated them. I wanted this assurance from one of the leal. 97

Hope Leslie is the best of Miss Sedgwick's novels. Its first hundred pages describing the Indian raid on the Springfield settlement are as fine as any pages in Cooper. She accurately draws the customs of early New England. In her use of the Pequots and Massachusetts history, she introduced some element of novelty in a field that was already beginning to be over-crowded. Her picture of the Indian is fair and sympathetic, as well as typical, exhibiting both the "censure and pity" common to much American thought on the subject at her time. And in Hope Leslie, she created a heroine far more natural and convincing than most American heroines before her. The novel well deserves the praise the North American Review bestowed on it: "The authoress of 'Hope Leslie' ... has been ... completely successful.

96 Dewey, op. cit., p. 192.
97 Ibid., p. 188.
She has had the industry to study the early history of New England ... and the talent to combine the results of her researches with the embellishments of her own resources, and present to us the whole, a beautiful work, to verify our theories, to enliven our ancestral attachments, to delight, instruct, and improve us.98

The *Western Monthly Review* felt she deserved credit "for having manufactured the savage material into a new shape," but thought Magawisca bore no resemblance to a squaw.99

*Godey's Lady's Book*, reviewing the novel on its reissue in 1842, found that Miss Sedgwick brought to her task "a vivid power of conception and a happy talent of delineation and characterization." They were happy to see her "devoted to so patriotic an object as that of increasing the interests of the American people in the history of their own country."100

Instead of following *Hope Leslie* with another historical novel as might have been expected because of its success, she turned in *Clarence* (1830) to a field of fiction relatively new: a contemporary novel of manners set in New York City. Lyle Wright points out 98 *North American Review*, XXV (April 1828), 412-413. 99 *Western Monthly Review*, I (September 1828), 289-295. 100 *Godey's Lady's Book*, XXV (November 1842), 249.
that between 1830 and 1839 only seven other novels of city life were published. Miss Sedgwick believed Clarence had "a great deal more in it than anything else I have written ...." To Mrs. Channing, she wrote on March 14, 1830, "This /Clarence/ treats of the present times, topics that concern everybody, and the follies of the day. The scene is chiefly in New York, hazardous ground I am aware, but, at the same time, it seems to me of more popular interest than a tale of the olden times, which has more romantic facilities." Her brother Robert sold the copyright of an edition of Clarence (two thousand copies) to Carey and Lea for $1200. Miss Sedgwick was satisfied with this arrangement for it assured her "compensation and a good publisher." It was as much as Carey and Lea could afford to give her. They wrote her "that the cheap reprints of popular English novels have reduced the value of copyright productions"; Miss Sedgwick, however, felt that the success of Hope Leslie had raised the reputation of her works. Although she believed

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103 Dewey, op. cit., p. 207.

104 Ibid., p. 205.
Clarence was "better adapted to the general taste of novel-readers" than anything else she had written, it was the least read of her novels. No new edition appeared until 1849 when Putnam began reissuing her complete works.

Her debt to Maria Edgeworth is most apparent in Clarence which is modelled in part on Miss Edgeworth's Belinda (1801). Mrs. Layton in Clarence, the proud, beautiful, and selfish socialite, is a pale version of Miss Edgeworth's Lady Delacour, who believes she is dying from a cancer gnawing at her breast. The theme of the two books is basically the same: the contrast between the fashionable world and the domestic world. Miss Sedgwick's description of Gertrude Clarence could well be a description of Belinda: "Practical, efficient, direct, and decided - a rational woman - that beau ideal of all devotees to the ruling spirit of the age - utility" (I, 239-240). Both heroines had been brought up and educated in the country. Both were fond of reading; Gertrude, indeed, preferred Miss Edgeworth, "the beneficial genius who had made the actual social world better and happier ... who by a motion of her wand could create an imaginative world, and disclose a possible,

105 Ibid.
106 Ibid., p. 443.
107 Quotations are from the 1830 edition.
but unattainable beauty" (II, 147). Both girls conducted themselves with "prudence and integrity," but their characters had yet to be developed by circumstances. To effect this development, Mrs. Layton supervises Gertrude's further education and entrance into the world of society, Lady Delacour, Belinda's. Both older women provide admirable contrast with their young charges. The secondary plots of both Clarence and Belinda are more interesting than the rather conventional love story of Gertrude and Gerald Roscoe and Belinda and Clarence Hervey (both Gertrude and Belinda conceal their true identity from their suitors.)

The theme of Clarence was to interest greatly later sentimental novelists: the hypocrisy and artificialities of city life. One was in danger of being blinded by the glare of the fashionable world which "like the reptile that fascinates its victims by the emission of a brilliant mist ... is encircled by a halo fatally dazzling to common senses" (I, 51). Gertrude's visit to the Browns illustrates the dangers of city life. Mr. Brown had been a journeyman tailor who aided by his thrifty wife "rapidly advanced his fortunes." Befitting his new station in society, he moved his family from their Chatham street home to a luxurious mansion on Broadway. The parlor of this new home is immense, "overloaded with costly, ill-

assorted, and cumbersome furniture, where the very walls, all shining and staring with gilt frames, and fresh glaring pictures, seemed to say, 'we can afford to pay for it.'" Mr. and Mrs. Brown, however, receive their closest friends in a basement apartment "furnished with the well preserved luxuries of ... [their] best parlor in Chatham street - the only luxuries they ever had enjoyed. There were the gaudily painted Windsor chairs - the little, round, shining, mahogany candle-stand - the motherly rocking-chair, with its patch-work cushion - the tall brass andirons - the chimney ornaments, wax fruit, plated candlesticks, and China figures - and edifying scripture prints, in neat black frames, adorning the walls." Mr. Brown "was seated on a table, cross-legged, his shears beside him, and his goose at the fire, putting new cuffs on an old coat - his help-meet the while assorting shreds and patches for a rag carpet!" If the Browns had remained uncontaminated by their new wealth, their son Steve had not. He "had forfeited his father's favor by his idle and expensive life, and was just now exiled from his home, and under his father's ban." Says his mother, "It's having a rich father that's ruined poor Steve - never was a better heart - never - but the poor boy has fallen into bad company, and thinking he must get the old man's money at last, he's gone all lengths" (II, 56-59). Better
to be poor but happy and honest than wealthy but unhappy and idle - a theme Miss Sedgwick used in her didactic books. As an antidote to "the vacuity, the flippancy, the superficial accomplishments, the idle competitions, the useless and wasteful expenditures" (II, 196) of city life, Miss Sedgwick proposes the home and family ties. "Do not imagine," writes Gertrude to a friend at the end of Clarence, "that I have become a devotee to society, even though it be of the most elevated and attractive character ... the family is the inner temple, where our highest gifts and best affections must be consecrated, and will be rewarded. And in all my prosperity, it is my earnest desire and purpose, to preserve my mind from undue elation - to perform the serious unostentatious duties of a Christian woman - to walk humbly with my God" (II, 285-286).

Clarence reveals Miss Sedgwick's skill as a social historian and anticipates her work in the didactic tracts of the 1830's. In the person of Louis Seton, the artist, she casts an accusation at society for neglecting the poor and needy:

I was taken to the alms-house, and placed with the maniacs, supported by public charity. I cannot now, when all other evils have lost their power to wound me, look back without shuddering,
on that period when neglect, injudicious treatment, privation, darkness, a sense of wrong, conscious degradation, misery in every form, exasperated my disease. Oh, Gertrude, is it not strange that men rioting in luxuries, and still more strange that those who are blessed with quiet homes of health and happiness, should permit their brethren suffering under the visitation of the severest of physical evils, to languish in the receptacles of poverty - in the dungeons allotted to crime? (II, 130-131)

In addition to scenes of poverty, there are descriptions of masquerade parties, excursions to the country, soirees, and courtroom trials.

She attempted to show in Clarence that class distinctions were due only to wealth and not to any virtues or intellectual powers. Wealth created class distinctions, as John Adams pointed out, because "riches attract the attention, consideration and congratulations of mankind ... there is more respectability, in the eyes of the greater part of mankind, in the gaudy trappings of wealth, than there is in genius or learning, wisdom or virtue." This is what leads to luxury and extravagance. The upper classes are no more wasteful than other people, but the wicked way of the world demands that they must always remain a certain degree above the less rich in their displays of power to spend.\(^{108}\) Money alone could

not make a gentleman. Nor could hereditary aristocracy assure one of being a gentleman. The only kind of gentleman Miss Sedgwick recognized was the "Christian" gentleman, Richardson's Sir Charles Grandison, the man of feeling, as opposed to the Chesterfieldian gentleman, the fine gentleman. Royall Tyler in his play The Contrast (1787) presented both kind of gentlemen. His play "was the representation of rugged, native American gentility in contrast to the effete and wicked Europeanism of Chesterfield."\(^{109}\) The American gentleman bore as much resemblance to George Washington as he did to Sir Charles Grandison. Whenever Miss Sedgwick mentioned Washington in The Linwoods she felt a sense of awe.\(^{110}\) In Cooper's The Spy, Washington's whole appearance was that of a gentleman.\(^{111}\) Miss Sedgwick was as outspoken as Tyler in her condemnation of the Chesterfieldian gentleman. She writes in Clarence, "Each individual /in America/ has a right to his own eminence, whether his sires commanded the heights, or drudged obscurely in the humblest vale of life; but the artificial distinctions still influence our imaginations, and the spell has not been dissolved by the repeated detection of the pretensions of imposters with foreign manners, and high-sounding

\(^{109}\)Ibid., p. 56.

\(^{110}\)Preface to The Linwoods, p. xii.

\(^{111}\)Cady, op. cit., p. 129.
titles who have obtained the entree of our fashionable circles" (I, 214). She would not even go as far as Cooper, who believed a "good family in America meant 'ancestors who have been chosen to fill responsible stations.'"\(^{112}\) She extolls in *Clarence* the virtues of American simplicity over European artificiality: "My predilection, I confess, is in favour of my own countrymen; they may have a less polished exterior, but they seem to me, to have more independence of manner, more naturalness, and simplicity" (I, 196). The sentiment is similar to that expressed in the tag-line of *The Contrast*: "You will please to observe, in the case of my deportment, the contrast between a gentleman, who has read Chesterfield and received the polish of Europe, and an unpolished, untravelled American."

Contemporary in time and setting, *Clarence* relies more than any of her previous novels on all the sentimental devices of the previous century. The story includes among other things blackmail, mistaken identity, stereotyped characters, secret papers, overheard conversations, and relatives returning from the dead. The themes of parental avarice and filial obedience are conspicuous. \(^{112}\)Quoted in Cady, *op. cit.*, p. 116.
Of the former, Miss Sedgwick says, "Of all the mortifying spectacles of civilized life, I know none so revolting as a parent - a mother - who is governed by mercenary motives in controlling the connubial destiny of a daughter" (I, 146). Of the latter, she writes, "There is a limit to parental rights - you do not owe and you must not yield a passive and destructive obedience to the authority of your parents" (II, 114).

Clarence reveals a flagging of Miss Sedgwick's narrative power. Scenes she had used in her other novels she uses again with slight changes in Clarence: the rescue from drowning, for example. The endings of Redwood and Clarence are identical. Redwood closes with a letter from Aunt Debby informing the reader of the fates of the various characters. Clarence ends with this note: "We do not know that we can conclude more satisfactorily, than by two authentic letters from the principal personages of our narrative. The one written during the summer following the last events we had recorded, and the other some months later, when time had matured and somewhat mellowed the feelings we have described" (II, 275). Miss Sedgwick failed in Clarence to unite successfully an account of contemporary times and a story that is hackneyed, overly romantic, and, even for her time, cliche-ridden.
The *North American Review* admitted that the story of a novel no more represents the book "than a bony skeleton does a body in the bloom and vigor of health," but went on to say that Miss Sedgwick in *Clarence* attempted "to do what the highest genius could not accomplish, to give a highly romantic interest to events occurring in our own prosaic age and country." She should not try to give such a coloring to her plots "for the web of life in our Western World is too coarse to bear the embroidery of romance." Her excellence, the reviewer thought, consisted "in her strong sense, her feminine feelings, her powers of description, her vigorous and beautiful English, her touching eloquence with which she pleads the cause of humanity, and above all, the keenness of her observations and her skill in delineating the lights and shadows of characters." The *American Monthly Magazine* praised her for the characterizations in *Clarence*. Although the characters in the book were "common enough" in America, up to her time they had "been drawn in their deepest colors only in the scene of the old world."*

*Clarence* did not duplicate the success of *Hope Leslie*. Dismayed by its reception, she returned in her next novel

\[113\] *North American Review*, XXXII (January 1831), 73-95.

\[114\] *American Monthly Magazine*, II (July 1830), 280-284.
The Linwoods (1835) to the historical romance with which she had achieved her greatest success. The North American Review in its notice of Clarence had begged her "to continue her labors in the neglected vineyards of her own native land." The Linwoods; or Sixty Years Since" in America resembles in certain particulars Waverley and The Spy. Like the former, it opens with a visit to a fortune teller and its subtitle, "Sixty Years Since," is the same as Scott's. Like The Spy, the setting is the highlands of the Hudson and its hero, like Cooper's, is trapped in his father's house. Her purpose in The Linwoods, as it was in Hope Leslie, was "to exhibit the feeling of the times, and to give her younger readers a true, if slight impression of the condition of their country" during the Revolution. "Historic event and war details," she wrote in the preface, "have been avoided; the writer happily ... /is/ aware ... /such/ effort would conceal the weak and unskilled woman." She hoped her impressions would deepen her readers' "gratitude to their patriotic-fathers; a sentiment that will tend to increase their fidelity to the free institutions transmitted to them." She trusted that The Linwoods would be acceptable to a public which constantly manifested an indulgent

115 North American Review, XXXII (January 1831), 94.
disposition towards native literature.

Ostensibly The Linwoods deals with divided loyalties during the Revolutionary War. Actually the involved love triangles occupy most of the reader's attention. Jasper Meredith, a Tory sympathizer, seduces Bessie Lee, a naive country girl. He plans, however, to marry Lady Anne Seton, who is in love with Herbert Linwood. Spurned by Lady Anne, Jasper turns his attention to Isabella Linwood, who is in love with Bessie's brother Eliot. A further complication is that Mr. Linwood is a Tory, but Isabella, Herbert, and Eliot are Patriots. This situation, of course, allows Miss Sedgwick to make much of the theme of filial obedience. Bessie writes to Isabella, "I hope he /Herbert/ has renounced his whiggism; for if it must come to that, he had better fight on the wrong side (ignorantly) than break the third commandment" (I, 60). But Isabella is proud that Herbert "has honestly and boldly clung to his opinions, to his own certain and infinite loss" (I, 66).

Although the novel takes place during wartime, Miss Sedgwick kept scenes of seiges and capture to a minimum. She knew her female audience would not be interested in details of battle. She explains her omission of such

Quotations are from the 1835 edition.
scenes and details through a letter Herbert writes Isabella: "Do not imagine I am going to send you a regular report of the battle. With all due deference to your superior mental faculties, my dear, you are but a woman, and these concernments of 'vile guns' must for ever remain mysterious to you" (I, 165). She does, however, introduce many historical characters, "immortal names," but with such worshipful respect on her part that they seem hardly real. She writes in the preface about Washington, "It may be permitted to say, in extenuation of what may seem presumptuous, that whenever the writer has mentioned Washington, she has felt a sentiment resembling the awe of the pious Israelite when he approached the ark of the Lord." She was in a position to give realistic descriptions of Washington and his wife (whose appearance in The Linwoods marks the first time an American novelist used her as a character) since she had first hand information of the President and his lady from her father who had been on intimate terms with them. She writes also of the "unnumbered good deeds" of LaFayette "who has filled up the measure of human benevolence by every manifestation, from the least to the greatest" (II, 133).

The Linwoods, however, is essentially a domestic novel on the theme of what constitutes a proper and happy marriage. She will not have written in vain, Miss
Sedgwick tells us at the end of the novel, "if I have led one mind more highly to appreciate" the responsibilities of marriage "and estimate its results ... if I persuade even one of my young countrywomen so to reverence herself, and so to estimate the social duties and ties, that she will not give her hand without her heart, nor her heart till she is quite sure of his good desert who seeks it" (II, 285-286). Nor will she have written in vain if, above all else, "I save a single young creature from the barter of youth and beauty for money, the merely legal union of persons and fortune multiplying among us, partly from wrong education and false views of the objects of life, but chiefly from the growing imitation of the artificial and vicious society of Europe" (II, 286). She advises her young readers "to imitate our heroine in trusting to the honourable resources of virtue and talent, and a joint stock of industry and frugality, in a country that is sure to smile upon these qualities, and reward them with as much worldly prosperity as is necessary to happiness, and safe for virtue" (II, 286). "All a woman need know," she writes, "is how to take good care of her family and of the sick" (II, 19).

Although Isabella has "very dark hair," (certainly an innovation in the sentimental novel), she resembles in conduct Hope Leslie of the "bright curls." She is an
adventuresome, daring heroine and like Hope rescues someone from jail. Obviously Miss Sedgwick was trying to duplicate the success of Hope Leslie by giving her readers a heroine similar to Hope. Edgar Allan Poe, however, was more impressed with Bessie Lee, the typical Scott or Cooper heroine in distress. Poe, who thought The Linwoods to be Miss Sedgwick's best novel, found Bessie to be "one of the most effective personations ... in our fictitious literature, and she may lay claims to the distinction of originality - no slight distinction where character is concerned. It is the old story, to be sure, of a meek and trusting heart broken by treachery and abandonment, but in the narration of Miss Sedgwick it breaks upon us with all the freshness of novel emotion." He was most pleased with the description of Bessie's mental breakdown. Miss Sedgwick was well able to describe insanity in realistic terms since she had seen both her mother and brother Harry die as a result of mental illness. Poe felt that those pages describing Bessie's journey to New York to find Jasper were passages "which no mind unimbued with the purest spirit of poetry could have conceived, and they have often made me wonder why Miss Sedgwick has never written a poem."117

He thought her style to be excellent, except that occasionally there was a "discrepancy between the words and character of the speaker - the fault, indeed, more properly belongs to the depicting of character itself." Yet her style is often artificial and sounds strained as in the love scene between Eliot and Isabella:

Eliot seized her hand, and withheld her. "No, no, not yet - Miss Linwood, I am playing the hypocrite - it is not alone my anxiety for my sister that torments me - that made your prediction of happiness sound to me like a knell." He paused, and then yielding to an irresistible impulse, he impetuously threw himself at Isabella's feet. "Isabella Linwood, I love you - love you without the presumption of the faintest, slightest hope - before we part for ever, suffer me to tell you so."

"This is so very strange, so unexpected," she said, in the softest tone of that voice whose every tone was music to her lover's ear - "in one short week - it cannot be!" (II, 220-222)

Young hearts must have palpitated at this declaration of love, so beautiful, so romantic, and like much in the sentimental novel, so very unreal. Such a declaration of love as this probably lost Miss Sedgwick a husband. In the 1820's she was engaged to Harmann Bleeker, a partner in her brother Theodore's law firm. Theodore encouraged the match. Bleeker, however, broke the engagement sometime before 1827, writing her that "if the love she had so vividly depicted in her fiction/should be expected from him he felt that he could never find so exalted a sentiment." Pittsfield Sun, June 21, 1876, p. 1. Also see Alfred H. Guernsey, "Memories of Distinguished Authors," Harper's Weekly, (October 14, 1871), pp. 970-972 and Dewey, op. cit., (cont)
Critical reception of The Linwoods was mixed. The New England Magazine rightly felt the plot unskilful and the story improbable. But the reviewer did believe that the book "fully sustains the author's former reputation, which is saying a great deal when we remember how high that was." The London Monthly Review called it "one of the most refined novels we ever read, both in conception and execution" and thought Miss Sedgwick to be "the first female writer in this department [the novel]... that America has produced." "We hope," wrote the American Ladies' Magazine, "all who delight in exhibitions of truth, beauty, and virtue in their fairest and most interesting form, will read 'The Linwoods' attentively." "The best of her novels," wrote The Athenaeum. Although Bryant said

In 1827 Theodore objected to a match with another man. He reminded his sister that family and friends "serve to bind you to that spot [the single life] and confine you within that circle in which all these blessings are enjoyed." He could not "willingly anticipate any contingencies" which might deprive the family of her literary talents. Dewey, op. cit., p. 189.

120 New England Magazine, IX (November 1835), 381.
121 London Monthly Review, XXXVIII (October 1835), 211.
122 American Ladies' Magazine, VIII (November 1835), 653.
that edition after edition was called for, Harper's, her publisher, brought out only one edition. Harper's contract, a standard one for her time, called for the book to be published in two volumes. She was to receive one thousand dollars, half of it before publication, the other half after, plus one half the net profits if they exceeded one thousand dollars. After eighteen months, she could include the novel in an edition of her works. If Harper's plates were used, one half of the profits would go to them. By May of 1836 there were five thousand copies in print. By July of 1841, according to her own accounts, she had received from Harper's $1,348.29. It was natural to think that another novel would be soon forthcoming, but in 1835, for reasons to be discussed later in the chapter, Miss Sedgwick abandoned the novel as a form and did not return to it until twenty-two years later.

Why after an absence of over twenty years did she go back to the novel? When a new edition of Clarence appeared in 1849, The Albion, A British, Colonial, and Foreign Weekly Gazette remarked, "Though long since recognized as a standard writer, her works had almost gone

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124 Dewey, op. cit., p. 444.
125 Harper and Brothers, New York, MS Records.
126 November 25, 1841, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.
out of print; for it is one thing to acknowledge merit, and quite another to enjoy it - one thing to claim for Miss Sedgwick a high place in American literature and quite another to purchase and read her writings. As it is, however, the business of publishers to proportion supply to demand in the matter of new editions, it may fairly be presumed that the public taste is returning home after its somewhat eccentric wanderings.¹²⁷ Important and revered as she had once been, Miss Sedgwick in the late 1840's and early 1850's had lost much of her popularity. She had during these years what she did not have in the 1820's and 1830's - considerable competition from America as well as from Europe. The novel-reader's market was now "supplied by such producers as Dickens, Thackeray, Charles Reade, and Mrs. Gaskell (all honor, praise, and love be to her), and our own popular writers in this department."¹²⁸ Perhaps she was trying to recapture her audience with something new, but Married or Single? did not take "her from that comparative retirement into which her name and fame had fallen."¹²⁹

Or perhaps she meant Married or Single? to serve as her final statement on a subject of great personal

¹²⁷ The Albion, VIII (New York, October 6, 1849), 477.
¹²⁸ Preface to Married or Single?, p. v.
¹²⁹ Harper's New Monthly, XXXV (October 1867), 665.
interest to herself: the role of the unmarried woman in society. Herbert Ross Brown writes that "in feminine fiction, the old maid might be expected to receive more generous treatment than the old bachelor, but she had few champions to present her motives with sympathy." She too often appeared as a virago, a shrewish aunt, or a comic relief. But Miss Sedgwick believed that

if a woman misses her highest destiny, if she cannot fold her heart in the bonds of conjugal affection, fortified by congenial education, taste, and disposition, if she cannot vitalize her union with a religious sentiment, then

... teach her that she can prepare her soul for its eternal destiny without marriage - that she can be a sister, friend, and benefactor; and that to do her duty within the wide compass of these relations is far more honorable in the judgment of man, than to be a mismated wife and incompetent mother, condemned to stagnation instead of progress, and finding the last only and miserable consolation in the resignation to an indissoluble tie (II, 82).

So runs her defense of the unmarried state in Married or Single. More importantly, it stands as a defense of her own single life.

Her correspondence tells us little as to why she wrote this novel, but it expresses her dissatisfaction with it Married or Single?, coming as it did after the death

130 Brown, op. cit., p. 107.

131 Quotations are from the 1857 edition.
of her favorite brother Charles in 1856, "cost her a great effort to complete."\(^{132}\) To her niece Kate she complained of a "miserable feeling of incompetence for my task," but occasionally "my old desire of success gets the better of me."\(^{133}\) To her friend Dr. Orville Dewey, she wrote in March of 1857, "Is it not rather a folly at my time of life (she was 68) to perpetrate a novel without any purpose or hope to slay giants, slavery, or the like, but only to supply mediocre readers with small moral hints on various subjects that come up in daily life?"\(^{134}\) But *Married or Single?* was not without its purpose: to make her young friends "receive the fruits of her observation of the defects and wants of our social life with ingenuousness, and perhaps with some profit ...."\(^{135}\) The book "will not have been in vain, if it has done anything towards raising the single woman of our country to the comparatively honorable level they occupy in England - any talk to drive away the smile already fading from the lips of all but the vulgar, at the name of 'old maid.'"\(^{136}\)

Under the circumstances, reviews of the novel were better than one would expect. She wrote Dr. Dewey after its publication, "All I now hope - my spirits are rather


\(^{133}\) Ibid., p. 369.

\(^{134}\) Ibid.

\(^{135}\) Preface to *Married or Single?*, p. v.

\(^{136}\) Ibid., pp. vii-viii.
low - is that my friends may not be mortified either by
the silence of the critics or their comments. The public,
of course - and the public is right - takes no account of
the sad and wandering states of mind in which you have
written. But don't feel bad for me, my dear friend ....
My happiness is not at the mercy of success or failure."

The North American Review thought Married or Single? to be
"the best of the series that bears her name." The
Christian Reviewer although recognizing that her genera-
tion of writers "is now fast passing away" and commenting
of the fact that the story was "spun out to a tedious
length," still wished that "all works of fiction were as
pure in their moral tone as are these volumes...."

The Albion, however, was surprised "that a lettered
teacher, with such high moral aims and such unquestion-
able ability ... should think she is doing Virtue a ser-
vice by unmasking Vices which fatally pique the curio-
sity, but which do not and need not fall within the exper-
ience of many of her pupils...." Much of the story, it
felt, belongs "to the school of literature which the daily
press has been busily ministering of late, in verbatim
reports of scandalous trials."

In berating Miss

139Christian Review, XXII (October 1857), 645.
140The Albion, XXXV (August 15, 1857), 393.
Sedgwick for recommending virtue by describing vice, the reviewer sounds like an eighteenth century American critic of the novel.

English critics, still piqued by her description of England in *Letters from Abroad* (1841), could ask of *Married or Single?*, as did the *Athenaeum*, "... what is there not in this novel?" Their answer: "Simply not a spark, not a syllable, not a sentiment, such as remind us of the right Miss Sedgwick, whom English readers have long ago learnt to love."*141* Gentleman's Magazine found the book to be "disfigured by more than the usual number of faults of style peculiar to novels emanating from the pens of trans-Atlantic ladies."*142* The "faults of Style," however, can be blamed on the printer of the English edition. Disturbed as she was by the appearance of *Married or Single?*, Miss Sedgwick was more than distressed by "that horrid English copy." The shabby printing job was mortifying enough. "But do you know what else they have done?" she wrote her niece on July 20, 1857. They omitted the preface, which, being the greater part written by H. /probably Harper/ I was sure was worth print-

*141* *Athenaeum*, (London, August 22, 1857), p. 1057.


*143* This was not the first time Miss Sedgwick received help on the preface to a novel. Harry and Theodore helped her on the draft to the second edition of *A New England Tale*. Dewey, *op. cit.*., p. 152.
ing; changed the matter, all the captions to the chapters, inserted running-titles for the chapters, and varied the text - how much I do not know, but on two chance openings I found two most mortifying alterations."\textsuperscript{144} The English reprint, as she wrote to a friend in England, "made my stomach heave."\textsuperscript{145}

\textbf{Married or Single?} is the poorest of Miss Sedgwick's novels. The book shows little planning on her part. There are so many plots and sub-plots that it is difficult to decide which is the main plot. She piles incident on incident. Scenes she used in other novels find their way into \textbf{Married or Single?}; Jessie's journey to New York to seek her seducer has its parallel in \textit{The Linwoods}. The sentimental paraphernalia is quite evident: several pairs of lovers, characters with mysterious pasts, seduction of a young girl who eventually dies, a young man falsely imprisoned, and the epistolary form. She idealizes the hero and heroine making both rather vapid.

Like \textit{Clarence}, which it resembles, \textbf{Married or Single?} is most interesting for what Miss Sedgwick has to say on some of the issues most important to the sentimental

\textsuperscript{144}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 371.

\textsuperscript{145}July 20, 1857, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.
novelist. On the subject of the fallen woman, she places the blame more on society than on the girl or her seducer. She writes of Jessie's seducer:

Where was he who was to answer for her fate? Sapped in luxury – seeking a fresh pleasure for every passing hour – received among 'respectable men,' who knew his courses of life as if untainted, and – God help us! – by mothers as a fit associate, a coveted husband for their daughters, for he belonged to the 'best society,' he was 'high-bred,' and 'very elegant,' and 'so fascinating,' – we quote, not invent the correct phrases ... This is the stale old world complaisance repeated here (II, 26).

Jessie is "one of many who are every year in our Christian city corrupted in their youth, and turned aside from the benign purposes of Providence, their fair field of life choked with poisonous weeds, and untimely driven to that bar, where, if mercy is meted to them, justice will be dealt to their destroyers" (II, 36). The society to which Horace Copley, Jessie's seducer, belongs is termed a "Vanity Fair" (II, 172). As in Clarence society is the villain. Grace writes Mrs. Herbert that the atmosphere in the city is "vitiating." Life there is "characterized by the monotony and infinite tediousness of mediocrity, by a vulgar and childish struggle" for expensive show (I, 159-160).

Married or Single? affords Miss Sedgwick her best opportunity to write on a subject uppermost in the minds
of the domestic novelists: marriage. A child should be guided by his parents, but "when it comes to the great event /marriage/ on which her character and true prosperity, the welfare of soul, body, and estate, mainly depend, the mother ... must not lift a finger, but must stand back, and wait on time and chance" (II, 202). She uses as her example Mrs. Tallis whose father had prevented her marrying a penniless artist. "And so the good seed sown abundantly in her heart lay dormant; and vanity and levity, the bad weeds of frivolous society, sprang up, and grew apace" (I, 233). Such is the result of listening to a parent's advice on whom to marry, Marriage was, for the sentimental novelist, a divine institution in which God's "infinite blessing ... gives strength to weakness ... takes the bitter from disappointment, the sting from sorrow." It is, in one word, Heaven, and its vows should not be taken lightly. It is "the central point, whence all the relations of life radiate, the source of all political and social virtue" (II, 81). The domestic novelist considered divorce a taboo. There could be no compromise in a "bankrupt marriage." If one "ignorant of his pilot, goes to sea in a ship, unseaworthy and without ballast, deserves the wreck he meets, surely those who enter into the most sacred, complicated, and hazardous relations of life rashly, deserve the chastisement they provoke" (I, 18). The sentimentalist
often used a child to keep a marriage together. When the Tallis' marriage is threatened, Augusta Tallis pleads with her husband, "For the sake of our child, let us maintain friendly relations, and live decently in the world's eyes." Little Elise Tallis, "a guardian angel, lent to keep sacred the marriage vows," stretches out her arms and with "childish fondness," says, "Here is one arm for you, and one for father so I tie you together" (I, 232). Tears gush forth from the errant husband's eyes. Novelists, writes Herbert Ross Brown, "were shameless in their enlistment of children to bring about the happy endings which crown most domestic tales."^146 Children, according to Miss Sedgwick, were "God's messengers. Woe to the mother whom they do not persuade to rectitude" (II, 77).^147

Slavery, a topic of vital interest in the 1850's, is also a topic of concern in Married or Single. Grace Herbert cries out, "Oh, my country! my country! How long are you to suffer this shame? (II, 16). But Miss Sedgwick did not feel Grace's sentiments were common. Most people, she believed, would agree with Mrs. Herbert who wished "to avoid involving myself in this inconvenient

^146Brown, op. cit., p. 303.

^147In Miss Sedgwick's "Crescent Beach," Sartain's Union Magazine, I (November 1847), 212-219, Juliet drowns herself to save her mother's marriage.
subject of slavery. No one disapproves of slavery in the abstract more than I do. I fear it is wrong" (II, 17). It was disturbing to her convenience and comfort to upset the status quo and take a definite position. "All life is a compromise," Mrs. Herbert believes. "It is not so much matter what is in the mind, as that its balance should be preserved" (I, 250). It is compromise that "cuts all the gordian knots now-a-days" (II, 239). Although Miss Sedgwick disapproved of Mrs. Herbert's stand, she was no abolitionist. Up until Married or Single?, with few exception, she had skirted the controversial issue of slavery. Not once in her writings did she "give aid and comfort to the abolitionists." It was her silence on slavery that cooled her relationship with Harriet Martineau, who thought Miss Sedgwick "wanted courage, and shrank from using her great influence on behalf of her own convictions."  

Miss Sedgwick's faults as a novelist are many. She had little sense of balance or proportion. In Clarence and Married or Single? the scene is so crowded with


149 Harriet Martineau, Autobiography, ed. Maria Chapman, I (Boston, 1877), 378.
characters and incidents that the main plot line is all but lost. Yet complexity of incidents seems to have been a desired trait in a novel, for The New York Mirror found the plot of Clarence to be "sufficiently involved to keep curiosity on the alert throughout."

Like so many of her contemporaries she believed it necessary to fill two long volumes before her hero and heroine could be united. The heroine's "maidenly reserve" was often the reason for this prolongation. As she wrote to William Sharpe on July 8, 1841, it never occurred to her that there could be more or less than two volumes.

The Boston Pearl in its review of The Linwoods argued for shorter novels, but knew that such a desire was a vain one since it seemed to be necessary for a modern work of fiction to be measured for its size. Miss Sedgwick's tendency to moralize on as many subjects as possible also contributed to the length of her novels.

The structure of her fiction is often awkward. Her stories begin too leisurely and end too hurriedly.

Characters are sometimes dropped in the middle of a book.  

150 New York Mirror, VII (June 19, 1830), 394.  
151 July 8, 1841, Ashburner Papers, Stockbridge Public Library.  
152 Boston Pearl, V (March 12, 1836), 207.
not to be seen or heard from again. Her long fiction contains so many digressions "in which we are called back so often ... to a detail of antecedent events while the progress of the action is suspended" or else is barren in spots "as if written with a view to get at the succeeding parts as speedily as possible."\textsuperscript{153}

Miss Sedgwick had little inventive skill; her \textit{forte} did not lie "in that artificial complication of plot, which is necessary to sustain the interest of a long story";\textsuperscript{154} she repeated basic situations and used outdated plot devices and sentimental cliches: parental avarice, filial obedience, stock characters, benevolent deeds on the heroine's part, mysterious wills and strangers, midnight journeys to lonely woods, claims for veracity, and the epistolary form. One significant difference from the English sentimental tradition is her treatment of the seduced maiden. Miss Sedgwick either dispenses with her or relegates her to a secondary position. She is never the heroine. American heroines "had to be drugged, tricked, coerced, mesmerized, hypnotized or otherwise ensnared, for never of her own free will\textsuperscript{153}\textit{Atlantic Magazine}, I (July 1824), 236, a review of \textit{Redwood} and \textit{Boston Pearl}, V (March 12, 1836), 207, a review of \textit{The Linwoods}.

\textsuperscript{154}J. G. Palfrey, "Miss Sedgwick's Tales," \textit{North American Review}, XLV (October 1837), 475.
Like so many of her contemporaries, she glorified the home, marriage, and the domestic virtues. No matter where her novels took their readers - into a Shaker community, an Indian burial ground, New York society, or the battlefields of the Revolution - they always returned them to the home. The enemy to home and family alike was the city, the spawning ground for vice and corruption. Though her heroines often found the city alluring, they always returned to the country. In the bulk of nineteenth century American domestic fiction, the old country homestead was a familiar symbol of moral order and happiness. The home was thought to be a peculiarly American institution. *Brother Jonathan* spoke of the domestic scenes in *Hope Leslie* as specimens "of the kind of descriptive literature, which needs no protection from an international copyright law to keep foreign competition out of the market."*156* If the home were typically American, than anything which threatened it was considered non-American. Miss Sedgwick's villains,

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*156*Brother Jonathan, III (September 17, 1842), 90.
therefore, are foreigners, and she describes the city as
infested with European ideas.

Critics praised her novels for their distinctly
American spirit. Their world was not that of kings
or princes but of the humble beauties of village life. The <i>Ladies's Repository</i> spoke of them as "real" books, unlike the artificial novels of Europe. Edward Everett hailed her trip to Europe in 1839 as "living proof that there is a mental cultivation in America equal to the brightest and purest of their own."

In her later prefaces Miss Sedgwick emphasized the
American spirit of her works. In the preface to the
1849 edition of <i>Clarence</i>, she reviewed the work she had
done in the novel since 1822. She was aware that the
success of her early books "was owing to the fact that
but a few fellow workers divided the favor of my countrymen with me." In the intervening years since her first "unaspiring" novel appeared, "many gifted native writers have enriched our romantic literature." Although she did not believe that her "home and artless products" - and her adjectives are carefully chosen - could compete with the "rich foreign fabrics" of European fiction,

157 New York Mirror, I (June 26, 1824), 380.
158 Ladies' Repository, XVII (September 1857), 564.
159 April 29, 1839, Stockbridge Public Library.
they did relate to American history and conditions, "while the English novels illustrate a very different stage of civilization from ours; and the French romances portray that which we trust ours will never reach ...." She expressed the hope that the new editions of her works would find "readers who will relish a book for its home atmosphere - who will have something of the feelings of him who said he would rather have a single apple from the garden of his father's house than all the fruits of France." In the preface to Married or Single? she expressed the thought that there were "those who will relish better a glass of water from our own fountains, than a draught of French concoction, whose enticing flavor but disguises its insidious poison." Her choice of adjectives to describe her novels - artless, homey, trivial, unaspiring, humble - are as much expressions of American moral superiority, simplicity, and naturalness as opposed to European moral inferiority and artificiality as they are expressions of her own humility.

Yet Miss Sedgwick's novels have genuine merit. Her characterizations of women are particularly noteworthy. In Married or Single? she classifies heroines as "lean-to's" or "go-ahead's." The former are "compounded of amiability, docility, and imbecility," had "soft blue eyes, or brown waving tresses, if she be blonde or brunette, dimpled hands, and delicate feet," stood
on a pedestal and was worshipped until she was twenty, and would be "a devil of a drag for a wife" (II, 121). She was Miss Sedgwick's Lucy Wendall, "a fair-skinned, fair-haired, blue eye girl, of a most modest, quiet, engaging demeanor." She was Jane Elton, Ellen Bruce, Bessie Lee, and Jessie Manning. But Hope Leslie has "rich brown hair." Her eyes appear "gray, blue, hazel, or black, as the outward light touched them, or as they kindled by the light of her feelings" (I, 178). And Isabella Linwood's tresses are black. Hope and Isabella are "go-ahead's," antitheses to the clinging vines or "lean-to's." If they seem conventional today, they were not in Miss Sedgwick's time. They surpass Cooper's and Brown's heroines. Many reviewers recognized that incidents in her novels were forced, "but let the incidents be granted, and Miss Sedgwick puts such charming people into them, and makes them talk and act so characteristically, and with such ideal propriety, that in our sympathy with their just and natural feelings, we forget that they are in improbable situations."161

Her descriptions of places are accurate and obviously pleased an audience eager to know more about its country. In


confining herself to those regions she knew best and in portraying the manners and customs of these places, she anticipated local colorists and regionalists of the later nineteenth century.

Her historical novels are as good as Cooper's. The London Monthly magazine was sure that Hope Leslie was the work "of a man full of sterling good sense - thinking and speaking not by the rules of art, but by the laws of nature - a close observer and an able painter, and lifted far above common prejudices, and casting from him the fetters of bigotry, religious and political." 162 A. D. Jones in The Illustrated American Biography (III, New York, 1855, 496) attributed the Leather-Stocking Tales to her. Her compliment to Cooper in The Linwoods was "a deserved compliment from one of high genius to another of no less claim alike honorable to either." 163 In Hope Leslie, which still circulates today in Stockbridge according to Mrs. Wilcox, librarian at the Stockbridge Public Library, she gave readers an authentically well-drawn picture of Massachusetts in the seventeenth century. The North American Review still found it in 1849 to be the only successful novel

162 Quoted in The Ariel, II (May 3, 1828), 4.
163 Boston Pearl, V (March 12, 1836), 207.
based on Massachusetts' early history. 164

Her style is sometimes excessively romantic, as in the courtship scene in *The Linwoods*. She did, however, try to follow Scott's example by adapting language to the speaker's character. She was most successful in this respect with Aunt Deborah in *Redwood*. Though critics carped at her faulty plotting and romantic excesses, they conceded to her an excellence of style. If Cooper were the American Scott, Miss Sedgwick was the American Miss Edgeworth, although Poe felt she surpassed Miss Edgeworth in being the more womanly. 165 The title implies that not only did she possess a command of language but also that she relied too heavily on outworn narrative devices. Her use of antiquated plots and sentimental cliches kept her from lasting popularity. She was eclipsed in the 1840's by novelists who did not depend as she often did on threadbare plots and incidents. Because she avoided sensationalism and melodrama, she was not read by those interested only in adventure and cheap dramatics. She was more widely read by women than was Cooper, but was not so popular as were Mrs. Warner, Mrs. Southworth, or Mrs. Finley, sentimentalists of the mid 1800's. Fredrika Bremer, the Swedish feminist

164 *North American Review*, LXVIII (January 1849), 205.

165 Poe, op. cit., pp. 180-181. Others who compared her to Miss Edgeworth were *The American Ladies' Magazine*, II (May, 1829), 234; *New York Review*, I (June 1825), 34-37, in which Bryant said she excited the imagination more than Miss Edgeworth; *North American Review*, XLIII (January 1836), 194, which thought the moral strain in her writings higher than in Miss Edgeworth's.
and novelist, found her "a clever writer for a restricted social group - lower middle classes," "people of small means and narrow circumstances - a class which has not yet worked itself up." Miss Bremer, however, was probably thinking more of Miss Sedgwick's didactic books than of her novels. But there were few critics and readers who hesitated to place Miss Sedgwick among the foremost of American writers.

Miss Sedgwick occupies a place somewhere between the sentimental novelists of the late eighteenth century and the domestic novelists and novelists of manners of the middle and late nineteenth century. Not only because of her position as one of our first native novelists but also because of the intrinsic merits of her fiction - particularly her characterizations - does she deserve to be numbered in the ranks of important, if not major nine-


teenth century American writers. She was an honest novelist avoiding the easy path to fame by the use of sensationalism and bringing to her fiction accurate descriptions of her native New England and her adopted home New York. Hawthorne's letter to William Ticknor that "America is now wholly given over to a d_____d mob of scribbling women" and that he would have "no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash"168 did not apply to Miss Sedgwick. She was in Hawthorne's words "our most truthful novelist."169

168 January 19, 1855, Quoted in Caroline Ticknor, Hawthorne and His Publisher (Boston, 1913), p. 141.

169 Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Bald-Summit," A Wonder Book, (Boston, 1851), p. 196. Miss Sedgwick's own comments on Hawthorne are quite interesting. She had met him when he was living in Lenox. She admired the analysis of character in The House of Seven Gables and thought there was "a marvelous beauty of diction" in the novel. But she still considered it a failure. She felt none of the characters possessed any "essential dignity ... to make them worth the labour spent on them." Phoebe was the novel's only redemption. The book affected her "like a passage through the wards of an insane asylum." Though it had "the unity and simple construction of a Greek tragedy," it lacked "the relief of divine qualities or great events." She wrote that Hawthorne took "savage delight in repeating and repeating the raw head and bloody bones of his imagination." In her younger days she might have liked the book, "but as we go through the tragedy of life we need elixirs, cordials, and all the kindliest resources of the art of fiction." Dewey, op. cit. pp. 328-329. The Marble Faun reminded her "of a peep-into Bluebeard's chambers at the theatre in my childhood - a glimpse of unintelligible horror. It is a cruel endowment of the children of his imagination." Ibid., p. 378. She termed The Marble Faun "a villainous lame story." The only character that (cont.)
Despite critical and financial success, Miss Sedgwick gave up the novel as a form after the publication of *The Linwoods* to write a series of volumes on manners and morals designed for Sunday School reading. She believed, as she later wrote, that moral education was not keeping pace with intellectual education and that "a teacher of morals and manners is needed in the homes" of our future citizens. She wished to write books that would be more directly concerned with the good of society than was the sentimental novel. Her mind, "in order to put forth its full strength," needed "to be excited by the sense of having undertaken to impress some weighty doctrine of 169 (cont.) caught her sympathy was Hilda. April 1860, Ashburner Papers, Stockbridge Public Library. Miss Sedgwick believed that art should have a practical purpose, but she saw no such purpose in Hawthorne's work. She recognized his genius but felt he was not putting his imagination to its best use. Phoebe, Priscilla, and Hilda were similar to her own heroines and came in for praise from Miss Sedgwick, but she could not recognize their surroundings or their companions. Her world was essentially optimistic in outlook; Hawthorne's was not. Hawthorne's sense of original sin escaped her. His characters were aware of original sin; hers were not. Though both she and Hawthorne had come from the same Calvinistic background, she was able to throw over completely her Puritan heritage. As a result her characters exhibited "no evidence of a corrupt heart or of a defective understanding." *New York Mirror*, I(June 26, 1824), p. 380. Evil was almost entirely absent in her world, villainy unmotivated. She wrote from a Unitarian point of view, Hawthorne from a Calvinistic. With her optimistic attitude, she had a difficult time in understanding Hawthorne, and as her remarks indicate, she never did successfully or completely understand him.

practical philanthropy; and all experience speaks against
the attempt to enforce a single moral of any kind by a
fiction extended to any great length." She had prece-
dence for her change in form from novel to tract. Mrs.
Rowson, author of Charlotte Temple, had given up the novel
to become a school teacher. "I shall devote my leisure
hours," wrote Mrs. Rowson, "to preparing a set of pro-
gressive lessons in reading, for the youth of my age,
from five years old to ten or twelve .... To be a school-
mistress even a novelist must abjure novels."172

Miss Sedgwick had long expressed dissatisfaction
with the novel as a form. In 1825 she wrote, "I am in-
volved in intimacies that occupy too much of the time
that should be used for better and higher purposes than
the mere chit-chat, that however innocent or amusing
makes no impression on the events of life - leaves no
trace behind...." Her own inclination lay not in
contriving fictitious happiness or misery but in writing
a story chiefly of a religious nature. Her heart re-
verted "to the real and bitter sorrows that cloud our life,

171 J. G. Palfrey, "Miss Sedgwick's Tales," North
American Review, XLV (October 1837), 475.
172 Quoted in Martin, op. cit., pp. 75-76.
173 May 1825, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.
and my thoughts to the happy homes where goodness, love, and intelligence mock the brightest tints of my pencil."174

Realizing her own deficiencies at inventing incidents, Miss Sedgwick saw that in the didactic essay she could dispense with plot exigencies and concentrate on those manners and morals that would make the American home a repository of true Christianity. The sentimental novel consisted of improbable situations against realistic backgrounds. But if the situation from which the moral was drawn was unreal itself, how real and important could the lesson seem to the reader? In the didactic tract, the plot necessities and unreality of the novel would be absent. She could concentrate on the moral. No longer would she have to spend her time getting her heroine in and out of dungeons.

From the outset of her career, Miss Sedgwick thought of writing in terms of the didactic tract. Her change in medium was not sudden. In 1829 she considered turning to children's literature: "I know how to interest their minds and affections - but that is the preached word - to write a sermon is a more difficult matter."175 The review of one of her early stories "The Deformed Boy" must have made an impression on one not interested in a literary reputation: "The literary rank


175Quoted in American Ladies' Magazine, II (May 1829), 236.
of such works /children's literature/ does not hold up to authors the reward of distinguished fame, but there is none of the walks of literature in which a benevolent and accomplished mind may dispense more gratification, or confer more sure and lasting benefits."\footnote{176} She perhaps also paid attention to what the \textit{Knickerbocker} wrote in 1834, "Something, we think, should be done to correct the feculent tide of uninstructive matter which sprawns itself over this country from the foreign press."\footnote{177} A year later her first didactic tract, appropriately entitled \textit{Home}, appeared. When it quickly became a success, she wrote her brother Charles, "... the success of that little book has been a great pleasure to me, because it strengthens my hopes of doing some good to my fellow creatures, and it invigorates my resolution - to work from ever so good a motive without success is not inspiriting."\footnote{178} She continued in the same vein when she wrote Dr. Channing in 1837 that she was thankful she was not "now working for the poor and perishing rewards of literary ambition. Unattainable they might be to me, but whether so or not they are not my object."\footnote{179} She had tasted the pleasure

\footnote{176} American Journal of Education, I (July 1826), 448.  
\footnote{177} Knickerbocker, IV (December 1834), 502.  
\footnote{178} May 1836, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.  
\footnote{179} Dewey, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 271.
of reputation, knew what it was worth, and was aware it was "not one of the ministers of the inner sanctuary."\textsuperscript{180} She felt a confidence in the didactic tract that she had not known with the novel. Certainly the praise given her longer fiction did not give her as much joy as did the letter from the Rev. Dr. Bellows, who wrote after reading one of her tracts \textit{The Boy of Mount Rhigi}, "I feel stronger, happier, more hopeful, wiser, this weary Monday morning for the reading and taking into my heart this delightful and heavenly story, and you will not be sorry for this."\textsuperscript{181}

One can speculate on other possible reasons as to why she abandoned the novel. She never felt completely at ease with it. She believed Cooper and Scott were her superiors in the historical novel, the genre with which she had her biggest success. Popular as \textit{Hope Leslie} and \textit{The Linwoods} were, she did not think she could again duplicate their success. She explained in the preface to the latter that her sub-title "Sixty Years Since" did not mean that she expected \textit{The Linwoods} "would take place with the 'sixty years since' of the great Master \textit{/Scott/}." Such a thought would be "insane vanity."

\textsuperscript{180}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 205.

\textsuperscript{181}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 311.
She was not satisfied with *Clarence* and was rarely pleased with any of her novels. "That is the misfortune of a familiarity with fine works," she wrote Charles on March 7, 1830, "carrying your taste so far ahead of your capacity."\(^{182}\) The doubts she had in 1822 still assailed her in 1830: "I shall never get the calm nerves of a regular-bred author, and I quake and tremble on every fresh appearance."\(^{183}\) But with the didactic tract, she did not have to fear what the critics might say. These books were for young children, and as long as their lessons were clear, nothing else mattered. She honestly believed herself "too exclusively a domestic creature to undertake to write anything beyond those little essays for the bettering of humble life for which my experience fits me."\(^{184}\) The didactic tracts she referred to endearingly as "my little school books." But with the writing of the "novel-booky," as she wrote Mrs. Childs in 1830, "I am not in love."\(^{185}\)

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\(^{184}\) April 18, 1841, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.

\(^{185}\) *Dewey, op. cit.*, p. 264, and letter to Mrs. D. L. Childs, June 12, 1830, Boston Public Library.
CHAPTER III

The immediate cause for Miss Sedgwick's change from the novel to the didactic tract was the letter the Rev. Henry Ware, Jr., a leader in the Unitarian movement and professor of theology at the Harvard Divinity School, wrote her on January 31, 1834. He proposed a scheme for a series of books intended for Sunday School Libraries which would offer the public "an exhibition of the practical character and influence of Christianity, illustrating its principles, its modes of operation on the heart and character, and the manner in which men may avail themselves of its power and peace." Such a project could best be accomplished, he felt, by "a series of narratives, between a formal tale and a common tract, so as to present to view an image, a portrait of the Christian religion according to our understanding of it, and at once enlighten readers by a familiar exposition of principles, and improve them by a display of their modes of operation." The narrative sermon could be developed to great advantage in describing "the nature and efficacy of faith, the doctrine and duty of regeneration, the whole theory of the religious life in education, in the relations of life, in temptation, etc., etc."
Ware had plans of finding several people "who would each write one or more numbers" to be published monthly under the general title *Illustrations of Christianity*. As an alternative he suggested that Miss Segwick undertake the whole series. "You could hardly be engaged," he wrote her, "in a more useful service or one of deeper interest."^1

Miss Sedgwick did appear as a contributor to *Scenes and Characters Illustrating Christian Truth* published by James Munroe of Boston in 1835. Her selection was *Home*, one of her most popular books, and although she did not do the entire series, the writing of *Home* marked a new phase in her literary career. In the thirteen years that followed she devoted herself almost exclusively to the didactic tract and tale.

Miss Sedgwick was the logical person for Ware to call on. Not only were they friends, but her name was also "sufficient to give any work, to which it is prefixed, a passport to Public favor."^2 A book by her was certain to reach a large audience. Moreover, she was able to present "a portrait of the Christian religion according to our understanding of it." Both she and Ware were Unitarians. Although all her writings were free from doctrinal prejudices and upheld no one religious sect


^2*American Ladies' Magazine*, VIII (November 1835), 653.
over another, she was interested in the propagation of her faith. Her first two pieces of fiction had, however, indicated her anti-Calvinistic views. A New England Tale presented Calvinism as a hypocritical creed, a faith chained to the letter of Christianity and not freed by its spirit. Jane Elton represented the new humanism that found religious expression in Unitarianism. "Mary Hollis," her first short story, appeared in 1822 under the auspices of the New York Unitarian Books Society and contained the same sentiments as A New England Tale.

The movement from an orthodox to a liberal brand of Christianity had been signified in Boston and Cambridge in 1805 when Henry Ware was appointed Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard. The western part of the state, however, was still under Calvinist domination. It is no coincidence that two anti-Calvinistic novels of the nineteenth century, A New England Tale and Oliver Wendell Holmes' Elsie Verner (1861), have Berkshire settings, for Miss Sedgwick and Holmes, even as late as 1860, had discovered

3 See the letter she wrote her brother Theodore, March 26, 1822, concerning A New England Tale: "There is no Unitarianism, not a hint of it" in the book. Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S. Not once in her writings does she make explicit reference to Unitarianism.
among the Berkshire hills "a Calvinism which was far from
dead."  

Miss Sedgwick's repudiation of Calvinism sprang from her early impressions of orthodoxy that she remembered from Sundays spent at the Old Meeting House. "There were gloomy observances, Puritan customs that could have been maintained only among a people to whom a pillory was an every day matter, and martyrdom a familiar thought." As a child she dreaded Dr. West, Stockbridge's Calvinist minister, "and certainly did not understand him .... He was then only the dry, sapless embodiment of polemical divinity." Both her sisters, Miss Sedgwick wrote, "suffered from the horrors of Calvinism ... believed its monstrous doctrines."  

In 1809 when she was twenty, Miss Sedgwick joined Dr. Mason's church in New York City. She had first heard him in Stockbridge where he had "thundered away in a sermon of an hour and a half upon the doctrine of


5"Our Old Meeting House," Knickerbocker, LVII (February 1861), 159. Channing's biographer finds the roots of Channing's repudiation of Calvinism in "those early impressions of the lugubrious tones of a rusty voice croaking messages of doom in any icy, rattling, half-ruined church." David P. Edgell, William Ellery Channing (Boston, 1955), p. 5

6Dewey, op. cit., p. 60.

7Ibid., p. 68.
substitution, every eye fixed on him in the deepest attention." Although she found his eloquence charming, she felt only repugnance for his message. "The degrading nature of his views concerning God, and their stern cruelty toward man, together with his fierce intolerance of opposite opinions" repelled her. But Calvinism was "from her previous observation and deep training, the only way of expressing the deep sense of religious observation which underlay her whole nature." 

She first became acquainted with Unitarianism when Dr. William Ellery Channing ministered to her father on his deathbed in January of 1813. At that time she was "utterly destitute of those holy affections which should be so completely incorporated with our being as to become a part of it." The strong devotion she had for her father did much to make Unitarianism acceptable to her. He told her that "if he understood Mr. Channing's belief, it agreed with his better than any other clergyman's in Boston, and should it please God to restore him to sufficient health, it should be his first act to

8Ibid., p. 64.
9Ibid., p. 93.
10Ibid.
11Ibid., p. 94.
devote himself to Him." On January 15, 1813, Channing administered the sacrament of union to the Church "in the most solemn and affecting manner." Miss Sedgwick was quite moved by the ceremony: "Oh, may I never be ungrateful for the blessed privilege of being allowed to watch the varying looks, and hear the tender accents of our beloved parent. Our excellent brothers are devoted, and I sometimes feel, when we are all assembled around our father, as if our sainted mother watched and approved us."

So deeply impressed was she with Unitarianism "that no difficulties, no sacrifices of feeling will deter me from making every effort to profess such privileges as I am indeed unworthy of." Yet for some time she did not profess Unitarianism as her faith. The major drawback for allying herself with a Unitarian church was the want of zeal she found in that faith. She could not understand the cold indifference of Unitarianism. She did not realize that the Unitarians

\[12\] Ibid.

\[13\] Ibid.

\[14\] Ibid., p. 95.

\[15\] January 3, 1813, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.
had little desire to proselytize and even less to organize themselves into a sect. Dr. Channing, Unitarianism's most eloquent spokesman, desired "to escape the narrow walls of a particular church." He regarded himself "as belonging not to a sect, but to the community of free minds, of lovers of truth, of followers of Christ, both on earth and in heaven." Circumstances, however, forced the Unitarians to form into a group, although Channing remained opposed to such organization.


17 In 1815 Jedidiah Morse of the orthodox Andover Theological Seminary in Newton, Mass., printed a pamphlet on Boston Unitarianism excerpted from Thomas Belsham's biography on Theophilus Lindsey, the English Unitarian. The excerpt came from second-hand sources and did not actually represent Boston Unitarianism. Channing spoke out to refute Andover's charges that Unitarianism was atheistical. He said that man was not abject before God and that the hallmark of this Liberal Christianity was unity in toleration. Moses Stuart of orthodox New Haven attacked the Unitarian concept of the Unity of God. Andrews Norton of Harvard answered him. Dr. Leonard Woods, professor of Christian theology at Andover, upheld the doctrine of depravity. Henry Ware replied to him. In 1816 the Harvard Divinity School was organized along Unitarian lines. The thrust from Andover had forced the Liberals to disclose themselves and form the Divinity School. Finally in 1825 the diverse liberal churches met at the Federal Street Church in Boston, and the Unitarian Association was born. The Unitarians thus committed themselves to a creed against which the transcendentalists revolted. Because the Unitarians tried to keep disputations with the orthodox Calvinists from breaking out into the open, to outsiders they seemed to have assumed an air of indifference. Moses Stuart upon his arrival in Boston in 1810 noted this coolness: "Before I came here, I had no idea, that these regions were so near the North Pole! Cold, distant, benumbing as death ... Let any man be (cont)
In 1821, Miss Sedgwick wrote to Mrs. Channing about this seemingly indifferent attitude:

I am a little surprised that your good people of Boston do not feel more interest in this scion from their stock (the Unitarian Church in New York), and you will not impute to me prejudice or bigotry if I venture to say to you that their indifference seems to me to indicate a want of zeal which should always be the fruit and aid of a good cause. Devotedness to religion can not be abstracted from that mode of it which we believe true and best. While those of the orthodox faith are traversing sea and land, forsaking brethren and sisters, and houses and lands, and penetrating the untrodden wilderness, those of a 'purer and more rational faith' seem neither to lift their hands or breathe their prayers for its propagation ... I confess this luke-warmness is a stumbling block to me, and if you can remove it, you will (if my vision is not in fault) remove a blot from your escutcheon.

17 (cont.)warmly engaged for religion here, & he is at once a Hopkensian /sic/ or an enthusiast." Quoted in Edgell, op. cit., p. 241. As late as 1840 this trait was still prevalent. George Templeton Strong was certain that Unitarianism would never be the religion of the great mass of people. On January 26, 1840, he noted in his diary, "This cold-blooded system of combining the minimum of belief with the maximum of license will not take. It never can be a popular religion. Men are carried into it by the impulse that takes them out of the Church into dissent, though with by far the greatest number the impulse is not strong enough to carry them beyond the first stage." Nevins and Thomas, op. cit., I, 125-26. The best account of the history of Unitarianism in New England is William Fenn's "The Revolt Against the Standing Order," The Religious History of New England (Cambridge, Mass., 1917), pp. 75-135.

A few weeks later she again wrote Mrs. Channing protesting that it was not her ardor or Channing's devotion and fidelity that she doubted, "but it is a general indifference, which I hear complained of by your own friends."¹⁹ Even after she joined the Unitarian Society she still deplored this "want of zeal." To Mr. Wheaton in London she wrote on March 15, 1829, "I do not know that the cause of Unitarianism as such makes any very rapid progress ...."²⁰ Nor did her fervor diminish in later years. In 1845 she wrote Dr. Bellows, "Unitarianism has accomplished one portion of its mission and done that duty well. It fought a good battle in the outset with orthodoxy. But the work of peace is better than the work of art and we have now to prove there was something worth fighting for."²¹ Certainly this missionary spirit made her the logical choice for Ware's intended series.

By April 10, 1821, Miss Sedgwick had stopped regular attendance at Dr. Mason's church. His creed and articles of belief were "unscriptural, and very unprofitable, and ... very demoralizing."²² It was still difficult,

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 116-117.
²¹October 29, 1845, The Bellows Papers, M.H.S.
²²Dewey, op. cit., p. 119.
however, for her "to give up the privilege and happiness of church membership." But no longer could she lend sanction "to what seems ... gross violation of the religion of the Redeemer, and an insult to a large body of Christians entitled to respect and affection." She was determined to become a Unitarian even if such action meant her being "debarred communion with the orthodox churches." If such were the result, "I must try, and I shall, with the blessing of God, bear the privation with meekness, trusting that He who is my hope, and Savior will own me as His disciple."

Anything was better than insincerity. To conceal her sentiments was a prudence bordering "too closely on hypocrisy."  

It was not until late 1821 or early 1822 that she did join the Unitarian Church of New York with her brother Theodore and his wife. As late as December 5, 1821, she still attended sporadically Dr. Mason's church for on that date she wrote Mrs. Channing that she had heard Mason's farewell sermon the previous Sunday. It was only a few weeks after she had become a Unitarian that she started writing *A New England Tale* contrasting

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24 *Ibid.*, p. 120.

"the dykes of dogma" with the enlightened, rational, and liberal articles of Unitarianism. It was the spirit of Unitarianism, unity in toleration, that pervaded her writing and thinking. On May 2, 1852, she wrote her niece, "That God should look with more favor on any individual because he is a Catholic or a Protestant seems to me incredible, that the infinite Father of all should respect the fences and pens set up by his short-sighted creatures! Some of these, no doubt, are far better for us than others, but no one nearer to His love than another."26 This was the philosophy by which she lived and wrote.

There is little doubt but that she was influenced in her thinking by Dr. Channing. She was familiar with his works and admired him personally. To Mr. Wheaton in London she wrote on March 15, 1829, "He has published two sermons within the last six months of the highest order. Do you not, even from the proud old world, turn to him with pride?"27 After Channing's death in 1842 she wrote his sister that he had always been "a bright point to us all." He had fulfilled completely his mission on earth. "His spirit lives, to teach, to elevate, to comfort. It

26 Ibid., p. 338.

27 March 15, 1829, Manuscript Letter, Pierpont Morgan Library.
pervades his works, and they will go to thousands ....
He was sent with a divine commission ... and now, though
departed, he surely is not dead."28 To the prominent
Unitarian minister Dr. Orville Dewey, she remarked that
Channing "liked our anti-conventionalism - our free ways
of going on - our individual independence of thought and
action ... Died! what a word, with its moral associations,
to apply to the passage of such a spirit into the immortal
world!!"29

The two shared similar views. They both believed in
one Invisible Church to which all followers of Christ
belonged regardless of sect. In a discourse entitled
"The Church" delivered on May 30, 1841, at the First
Congregational Unitarian Church of Philadelphia, Channing
made his final utterances on the Visible and Invisible
Church. "It is not men's coming together into one
Building," he told the congregation, "which makes a
church." He himself would feel nearer "to some pure,
generous spirit in another continent whose world has
penetrated ... /his/ heart, whose virtues have kindled
... /him/ to emulation, whose pure thoughts are passing

29Ibid., p. 283.
through ... his mind" than to someone seated next to him in church with whom there was no common feeling, who calls the disinterestedness he honors "weakness or wild enthusiasm." It would not be a surrender to the fiction of the imagination to say that all Christians form one body, one church "just as far as common love and piety possess our hearts." Nothing can be more real than this spiritual union. "There is one grand, all-comprehending church; and if I am a Christian, I belong to it, and no man can shut me out of it."30 He had, as he said in 1828, "no anxiety to wear the livery of any party."31

Hope Leslie like Channing "permitted her mind to expand beyond the contracted boundaries of sectarian faith. Her religion was pure and disinterested" (I, 180). Mr. Lloyd in A New England Tale thought it not of the least consequence "by what name the different members of the Christian family are called" (p. 236). Ellen Bruce in Redwood "grew up nurtured in the spirit of our blessed religion without bigotry to any of the forms with which accident, pride, or prejudice

30"The Church," Channing, op. cit., VI, 204-205.

has invested it" (p. 133).

Equally important in Channing's and Miss Sedgwick's thought is the idea of disinterested benevolence. The concept was a common one in English ethical thought where the dispute was between those who believed self-love to be the motive of all human actions and the followers of Shaftesbury who looked upon disinterestedness as a requisite for ethical actions. The sentimental novelists quickly adopted the notion that happiness comes from within and that the happiness man achieves for his fellow man reacts upon himself. The Rev. Dr. Samuel Hopkins, a wide reader in the sentimental novel, took over this belief from Shaftesbury and the sentimentalists and put it in a theological setting. Man naturally acted out of self-love and it was only the gift of grace that enabled him to act disinterestedly. If the man who was disinterestedly benevolent "could know that God designed, for his own glory and the general good, to cast him into endless destruction; this would not make him cease to approve of his character; he would continue to be a friend of God, and to be pleased with his moral perfection."32 He would be willing to be damned for the greater glory of God. Channing rejected this belief.

32Hopkins, The System of Doctrines, quoted in Edgell, op. cit., p. 73.
but retained faith in disinterested benevolence as the perfection of God's qualities in man.

Miss Sedgwick's characters often perform disinterested acts of benevolence. To Jane Elton in A New England Tale such a deed was "the spirit of the Christian" (p. 170). A disinterested action, wrote Miss Sedgwick in Clarence, "is a demonstration to the spirit of its alliance and communion with the divine nature - an entrance into the joy of its Lord" (II, 190). Thus the elder Clarence rejoices when his son, unaware of his father's identity, takes him in and gives him a home. His son is acting disinterestedly. Clarence had found "what he believed did not exist - a disinterested man" (I, 66).

Miss Sedgwick's didactic books form two distinct categories. The first includes Home (1835), The Poor Rich Man and The Rich Poor Man (1836), and Live and Let Live (1837). The element common to all three is that the incidents are all woven around the main characters of each book. The second includes Means and Ends (1839), The Morals of Manners (1846), and Facts and Fancies (1848). In these books incidents are independent of one another. There is no continuous story line. In addition there are two collections of short stories intended for Sunday School reading, A Love Token for Children (1839) and Stories For Young Persons (1841), two didactic novellas, The Travellers (1835) and The
Boy of Mount Rhiei (1848), a moral tract, "A Short Essay To Do Good" (1828), and a biography, Memoir of Joseph Curtis (1858).

The didactic books owe as much to the popular instruction books of the 1830's and 1840's as they do to the sentimental novel. These guide books taught what constituted proper behavior in the home, the sacred shrine of middle class American life. Miss Segwick's first three didactic tracts illustrate the elements of a happy home life. The second group are manuals of proper behavior in the home and are directly indebted to the fashionable etiquette books of the day.

These guide books were considered to be more American in spirit than the novels of the period which still drew heavily on the English sentimental tradition. The domestic author thought of the home as a distinctly American institution. Arthur Schlesinger in his study of American etiquette books in the 1830's and 40's points out that "with the nation passing through a period of unsettling social change, moralists feared lest the ancient pillars of individual integrity and family virtues be destroyed...."33 The home became a stabilizing influence in this changing society and had few

spokesmen so eloquent in its praise and so popular as Miss Sedgwick. Harriet Martineau in the Westminster Review for 1838 emphasized the national character of Miss Sedgwick's first three didactic books. They "have met the national mind," she wrote, "and warmed the national heart." With these books Miss Sedgwick has given her readers "the first true insight into American life." They were signs of "a new and better time" in American literature. Up to this time American authors were prone to imitate European (particularly English) models. "Nothing could come of this but inferiority, insignificance, whether in literature or in anything else." But in these didactic tales there is "the vigorous beginning of a national literature; the first distinct utterance of a fresh rational mind, telling, not what it ought to see in obedience to old methods of looking, but what it does see of actual life on its own soil."34

But the "actual life" mirrored in these books is one the sentimentalist fashioned to fit the dreams of his readers. No matter how much the moral tracts and conduct books differed from one another in details, they

were all optimistic in outlook. Fortune and happiness were always within reach of the reader if he only followed the advice these books offered. The ideals that the authors presented were those of their readers and were easily recognized as such. Yet the characters who served as illustrations of these ideals were "too preeminently good; so good, in fact, that as models they were discouraging to the virtuous aspirations of the best-intentioned persons in the world; being marks so high as to be above all reasonable emulation."\(^3^5\)

If parents despaired of imitating these virtuous characters, they saw no reason why their children might not learn from them and pattern their lives after them. It was to children that sentimentalists directed the bulk of these moral tales: the Pansy series, the Pollyanna books, the Five Little Peppers series, Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm, and Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch. Miss Sedgwick dedicated more than one of her didactic books to her young friends or young country-women.\(^3^6\) These books were popular gift items at birthdays and holidays and were given the child with

\(^3^5\)Knickerbocker Magazine, XXXI (January 1848), 67.

\(^3^6\)The Boy of Mount Rhigi, Live and Let Live, Means and Ends, and Morals of Manners.
much good advice as to what he should gain from them. But often the child would put the book on a shelf, unread, for when he opened it "and found ... /himself/ gravely addressed as 'young friend' and lectured upon cooking, washing, ironing, nursing, bread-making and bed making," he would feel "as the countryman did when he came into the city and visited a museum abounding in birds and other natural curiosities! 'Where,' said he, 'are the patriarchs, and prophets, and martyrs, and all such? I can see birds enough any day!'"

Parents were quick to censure in these tales whatever they felt unsuitable for their children. An author who neglected the parents' sentiments could find himself unread and unbought. The author avoided or else approached cautiously unpleasant and controversial subjects. He cloaked the darker aspects of poverty in the refulgent sunlight of optimism. He compromised when it came to controversial issues, but was outspoken on movements endorsed by the majority of his readers, such as temperance leagues. Miss Sedgwick was not deaf to her audience's wishes. When writing Home, she altered

37 New Yorker, III (July 20, 1839), 285.

38 Of Clarence, Miss Sedgwick wrote, "... it is better adapted to the general taste of novel-readers...." Dewey, op. cit., p. 205. Of The Poor Rich Man, "... it is intended for popular consumption" and "... there are good notions, suited to the American market, in it." Ibid, pp. 254 and 252.
upon the publisher's advice, the scene showing the Barclay family spending a Sunday by the sea, for the majority of her readers would have objected to using the Sabbath as a day for holiday excursions. The scene becomes merely a Sunday stroll.\footnote{Miss Martineau on America," American Quarterly Review, XXII (September 1837), 42. Miss Martineau wrote of this alteration, "If she was converted to the popular superstition ... no more is to be said. If not, it was a matter of principle which she ought not to have yielded. If books are to be altered, an author's convictions to be unrepresented, to avoid shocking religious prejudices, there is a surrender, not only of the author's noblest preogatove, but of his highest duty." Quoted in Vera Wheatley, The Life and Work of Harriet Martineau (Fair Lawn, New Jersey, 1957), p. 158.}

Wholesome reading as her books were, the conservative \textit{Ladies' Repository} warned its readers that her liberal views in religion were a cause "of deep regret" to the devout and though one might gain much instruction from her writings, "due caution" had to be taken.\footnote{\textit{Ladies Repository}, I (November 1841), 351.}

Children were not the only audience for these books. Domestics and laborers read them since they described the middle class life for which they themselves were aiming. In a democracy it was entirely possible for them to raise themselves socially and economically. The instruction books prepared them for this new life; the domestic novel promised it to them. Although the Horatio Alger series did not appear until the end of
the century, its spirit was present earlier. The poor would find the books comforting, for the sentimentalists presented poverty as a happy way of life. The poor were actually rich for they would inherit the kingdom of heaven. In the meanwhile the possibility of material prosperity in this world was held out to them in these books.

Miss Sedgwick's first important didactic tract was significantly titled *Home* and with its successors became the model for much of the domestic sentimental fiction that was to follow in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Originally published in 1835, *Home* had by 1839 reached its fifteenth edition. It was reissued thereafter in 1837, 1839, 1841, 1845, 1846, 1850, 1852, 1854, 1859, 1865, and 1890 and was one of the "better" sellers of the nineteenth century. In France in 1875 A. Gael published *Le Foyer*, "scenes de la vie de famille Aux Etats-Unis ouvrage imite de 'Home' de Miss Sedgwick." It was an easy book to imitate; its formula was quite simple.

The domestic tale centers around the fortunes of a family. *Home* is the story of the family life of the Barclays. Each incident in the book illustrates the

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41 Lott, op. cit., p. 318.
42 Widener Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
Christian foundation of their home life. In their first evening in their new home, the Barclay family kneels and dedicates their home "to Him 'who setteth the solitary in families,'" and from that day, their home is "hallowed by domestic worship" (p. 13). Barclay governs his home in accordance with Christian social law. Each child is taught that he has a duty to perform not only for his brothers and sisters but also for whomever he meets in the outside world. As a contrast to the Barclay home, Miss Sedgwick shows us the Anthon household with its atmosphere of self-love and lack of discipline. The Dickensian scene at the Anthon dinner table serves to point the book's moral:

Two of the girls briskly cleared the table, piling the plates together and dropping the knives and forks all the way from parlor to kitchen; while the other children impatiently awaited the process, one thrumming on the table, another rocking back on the hind legs of his chair; one picking his teeth with a dropped fork, and another moulding the crumbs of bread into balls, and all in turn chidden by the much-enduring mother. Finally appeared a huge blackberry pudding, hailed by smacking lips, and set down amid the still standing paraphernalia of the first course, and the wreck of mustard, cider, etc. A mammoth bit was scarcely passed to the father when Laura cried out, 'Help me first to-day, mother; 'cause Anne was helped first yesterday (p. 47).

43 Quotations are from the 1835 edition.
The table manners of the Anthon children are the very sins against which the etiquette manuals warned. The Barclay children, however, are never found wanting "in the gentle courtesies of the social man - in that politeness which comes from the heart, like rays from the sun - nor in the very soul of good breeding, Christian grace and gentleness (p. 49). The Anton children, one is not surprised to learn, come to no good.

The Barclay family is a large one. In addition to seven children and various in-laws, there is also little Biddy Phealan, taken in when her family is carried off in an epidemic, and Emily and Harry Norton, children of Barclay's partner. When objections are raised to taking in these two, Mrs. Barclay explains, "If it were more the practice ... for those who have homes to extend the blessing to those who have them not, there would be little occasion for orphan asylums, and the charity now done by the public would be more effectively done in private families" (p. 98). If all individuals were like the Barclays, writes Miss Sedgwick, "there would be no wanderers, no outcasts ... All would be linked together in the bonds of natural affection and Christian love, - the bonds of unity and peace" (p. 102).

The center of action in Home is, of course, the home itself. No domestic novel was complete without a kitchen scene, for if the parlor is the symbol of the Home where
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the family meets to dedicate the hearth to God, the kitchen is the center of activity in the home:

Never, we believe, was there a pleasanter scene, than the home of the Barclay's; - Martha, the queen bee, in her kitchen, as clean as any parlor, or as (to use the superlative degree of comparison) the kitchen of the pale, joyless Shakers; her little handmaidens in her school of mutual aid and instruction, with their sleeves rolled up from their fat, fair arms, their curls tucked under their caps, and their gingham aprons, learning the mysteries of cake and pastry manufacture, pickling, preserving, and other coarser acts; while another little maiden, her eyes sparkling and her cheeks flushed with exercise, might be heard plying her broom 'up stairs and down stairs and in the lady's chambers,' and warbling songs that might soothe the savage breast, for they breathed the very soul of health and cheerfulness (p. 110).

Although Home is made up of small domestic crises such as Emily's inability to make a bed, Miss Sedgwick does introduce a brief love story. Charles Barclay is in love with Emily, but learns that she is in love with his brother Wallace. But there is no triangle, for Charles knows well the lesson the home teaches. He contemplates Wallace's happiness "not only without a pang of envy, but with gratitude to Heaven that what was denied to him had fallen to his brother's lot" (p. 134). His "power over the most selfish and exorbitant of the passions" comes from the natural and unchanging relations .... The vital principle of the religion of Christ, the pervading element of the divine nature, love, was the informing spirit
of the Barclay's home." It enables each "to transfuse ... his existence into a brother's, - to weep when he wept, and to rejoice when he rejoiced" (p. 134). Such behavior is presented as a fine example of disinterested action.

For the noble Charles there is but one reward, death. His death scene with its tears and religious sentiments, is in the best (or worst) sentimental tradition. Charles comforts his little sister telling her it is not hard to die, "not if we love God, not if we believe the promises of Christ ... I am going home to a home like this, for love is there; to a better home than this, for there, there is neither sickness nor sorrow" (p. 154). To Emily he says that in Heaven "we shall be one family" (p. 155). The home life as preached and practiced by the Barclay family is only a preparation for a better life in God's family in His home in Heaven.

With Charles' death, Miss Sedgwick concludes the story, but not without first emphasizing the moral:

We have seen Mr. Barclay's home at its first consecration; we have seen it when the tender lights of blissful infancy fell upon it; when it was filled with the life activity and hope of joyous youth; when the poor and the orphan were gathered under the wing of its succoring charities; when pecuniary losses were met with tranquility and dignity; when social pleasures clustered round its hearthstone; when sons and daughters were given in happy marriage; but never have we seen an hour so blessed, as that which bore the assurance that death hath no sting, the grave no victory, in the home of the Christian (pp. 157-158).
The success of Home is not difficult to account for. American society had its foundation in the home, and in the idealized picture of the Barclay household, readers could see the roots that constituted the basis for a happy American Christian home. The Boston Observer and Religious Intelligencer called Home "a perfect gem without flaw or blemish." It was "so full of moral and religious truth that no one can read it without catching some good influence."^44 The North American Review knew "not a more beautiful example of the facility and grace, with which the power of woman's intellect may be thus exerted, than is presented in ... 'Home.'" The reviewer could think of "no production ... in which the soundest moral lessons are more attractively conveyed," The scenes in the book "will win for their accomplished author a more enduring title to the public gratitude, than any romance or poetry can give; and if her whole attention should henceforth be exclusively applied to them, she would only enhance her pure and exalted fame."^45

Miss Sedgwick took the advice of the North American Review and devoted the next thirteen years to the writing of didactic tracts. She began The Poor Rich Man and The

^44Boston Observer and Religious Intelligencer, I (April 30, 1835), 142-143.

^45North American Review, XLI (October 1835), 444.
Rich Poor Man, the second of her home series, in the late spring of 1836. She did not think it would be so good as Home or "as strong an illustration of my subject (poverty and riches) as I hoped to have made it, but then I think there are good notions, suited to the American market, in it." She wanted her brother Charles to urge upon Harper, her publisher, "the policy of letting it be known to their correspondents in New England country towns what sort of thing it is, intended for popular consumption, that it may at once be for sale in the country towns. If I should continue the series, this may be important. Ask Webster if he will take fifty, or less, as you think proper, to sell on commission." By November 25, 1841, she had realized $1,520.32 from the book. It was reissued in 1837, 1838, 1839, 1840, 1842, 1843, and 1847. Miss Sedgwick accounted for its success by saying the book was "like bread-stuff, or like the satinetts and negro-cloths, to be a little more modest in my comparison, suited to the market, the thing wanted."

46 Dewey, op. cit., p. 255.
47 Ibid., p. 252.
48 Ibid., p. 254.
49 November 25, 1841, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.
As didactic as its predecessor, The Poor Rich Man contains more incidents and had a love theme running through it from the beginning. Where Home concentrates solely on the domestic virtues, The Poor Rich Man deals more with problems of general social interest.

Its heroine, Susan May, became the model for later domestic heroines of Miss Sedgwick and other sentimentalists. Susan May showed that it was both simple and satisfying to rear a large family and dispense charity on almost nothing at all and always with a big smile. She is happy and rich not because she is "lapped in luxury, and ... every day seeking some new and expensive pleasure," but because in some obscure place she is using her facilities and seizing her opportunities "of doing good, never to be known and praised by the world, but certainly recorded in the book of life" (pp. 84-85).\(^1\) She never "separated the idea of duty from the deep abiding happiness that resulted from its performance" (p. 94). Although the Barclay family had been able to support a menage of fifteen, Susan May and her husband are not; yet "while we have no money to give away," she tells Harry, "... of such as we have we can give, and hope for the Lord's blessing upon the gifts" (p. 87). So fortified, the Aikins take into their

\(^1\)Quotations are from the 1836 edition.
household, already numbering nine, the little M'Elroy boy whose mother is a drunkard.

Many of the sentiments expressed in *Home* reoccur in *The Poor Rich Man* and in almost the same language. Underlying the story is the belief in the brotherhood of all men: "... if persons were more zealous to employ the means of little kindnesses to their fellow-creatures, if they considered them as members of their own family, really brothers and sisters, how many burdens would be lightened, what a harvest of smiles we should have on faces now sour and sterile" (p. 33). As in *Home*, the city is compared unfavorably with the country. One can only pity those shut up within the city, Miss Sedgwick writes, "deprived of the greatest of all luxuries, which even the poorest country people enjoy - sweet air, ample space, pure water, and quiet only broken by pleasant sounds" (p. 39).

The city had little to recommend and was particularly dangerous to those who had poor upbringings. The story of Paulina Clark is an example. Susan May finds her childhood friend Paulina in New York City, hysterical and drunk. Blinded by wealth she had come to New York; "temptation was on every side; and no wonder," she tells Susan May, "that such a poor weak creature as I fell. There was nothing to bind me to virtue" (p. 135). Only a family life in which the domestic virtues were instilled in the child
at an early age could prevent one from being contaminated by the evil influence of the city. Paulina, however, has been "brought up by an ignorant mother, in ignorance and the excessive love of pleasure. She was pretty and she was flattered at home and abroad" (p. 168). Her love of pretty things "was one of the most efficient causes" of her destruction (p. 168). In addition to being an alcoholic, Paulina is also a fallen woman. Her fate is death, and she dies amid many tears and much advice: "But, alas, for those who leave their preparation for the deathbed! who defer to a few suffering hours the work for which life is given" (pp. 166-167). Her last words were to become familiar in domestic sentimental fiction: "Dear me! if I had only realized how soon it would come to this, I should have lived so differently" (p. 169).

The immediate concern of the book is poverty. As the title states, it is the poor who are rich. Poverty becomes a virtue; wealth leads to unhappiness and an early grave. It mocks one with its emptiness. Miss Sedgwick looked upon poverty almost as a necessity, for "if there were a perfect community of goods, where would be the opportunity for the exercise of the virtues of justice, and mercy, humility, fidelity, and gratitude" (p. 39). Poverty becomes for Miss Sedgwick not the absence of wealth but the want of these virtues. She thus talks of the "poor of all
"classes" (p. 40), those poor in physical wealth and those poor in virtues. Still she holds out the promise of material prosperity to all: "the prizes are open to all, and they fall with equal favour. The poor family of this generation is the rich family of the next" (p. 111). The sentimentalists accepted "without critical scrutiny the sanctions of the philosophy of acquisition ... They dangled the tempting bait of material prosperity before the eyes of every reader" although they insisted that wealth was not necessary for happiness. In the same breath they comforted the poor for the wealth they did not have and which, furthermore, was not necessary and promised them this same wealth in the future.

In an age of increasing prosperity, Miss Sedgwick could say with all the optimism so common to the sentimentalists that "in this country nobody sinks into deep poverty — slumps through ... except by some vice directly or indirectly" (p. 178). There is no factor in American society that produces poverty. It is the result of failings within the individual. The laborer, for example, does not make the most of what he has. There would be "no telling what a nation, with our institutions might become, if the domestic virtues were better understood and

\[52\] Brown, op. cit., p. 361.
practiced by the labouring classes - if their foundations were laid in religion ... if every opportunity were seized for improving them in knowledge, and in the practice of the preserving virtues. The rich here can make no separating lines which the poor cannot pass. It is the poor who fence themselves in with ignorance and press themselves down with shiftlessness and vice" (p. 154). The redistribution of goods and wealth could do nothing to alleviate poverty, for poverty had nothing to do with money but with virtues. Riches, as she does not tire telling the reader, "Riches consist not in the abundance of possessions, nor poverty in their scantiness" (p. 147). If there were more families like the Aikins, "the rich would feel less exultation in their wealth, the poor that there was no degradation in their poverty" (pp. 154-155).

The sermon she preached in The Poor Rich Man was similar to Channing's thought on poverty. Riches were not measured by wealth, but, as Channing pointed out in a temperance address in Boston in 1837, as long as wealth was "the measure of men's importance ... so far there will be a tendency to self-contempt and self-abandonment among those whose lot gives them no chance of its acquisition."^54

^53 She herself uses the word "sermon" on p. 178 to describe the book's message.

^54 "Address on Temperance," Channing, op. cit., II, 315.
Like Miss Sedgwick, he did not think "the difference between the rich and the poor, in regard to mere physical suffering, so great as is sometimes imagined." More rich than poor die from over-eating. Though the poor may be overworked, the rich are often the victims of ennui, "a misery unknown to the poor, and more intolerable than the weariness of excessive toil." The condition of the poor certainly deserves one's sympathy, "but let us not, by exaggeration of its pains, turn away our minds from the great inward sources of their misery." The domestic affections "may and do grow up among the poor, and these are to all the chief springs of earthly happiness." To have a sound moral judgment "is of more value in education, than all the wealth and talent ... and if, by our labors, we can communicate this moral soundness to the poor, we shall open among them the fountain of the only pure domestic felicity." There exist, then, for the poor "provisions for happiness; and ... their happiness has a peculiar dignity."

Neither Channing nor Miss Sedgwick could free themselves of thinking of people in terms of groups. Neither had really experienced the problems of the poor and thus they could afford to treat them rather

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55 "Ministry For The Poor," Channing, op. cit., IV, 267-270.
cavalierly. Both the minister and the moralist comforted the poor into thinking they were better off than the rich, but they offered no suggestions as to how to feed, clothe, and house the poor. They felt that the poor must help themselves by rising above their conditions through the acquisition and cultivation of the domestic virtues. Chief dependence for the alleviation of poverty should be placed on moral and religious principles "more direct and powerful means than legislation." That Miss Sedgwick believed the poor should help themselves can be seen in Susan May's advice to Agnes: "Better, my child, to trust to diligent, skilful hands, than to widows' societies, and so on; leave those for such as can get nothing better, while we use the means of independence that Providence has given us" (p. 84). And if one should fail, then "we can try again" (p. 84). Miss Sedgwick frowned upon organized charity for it did not go far enough: "there is much to be done for our fellow creatures ... besides giving gifts to the worthy." Something should be done to encourage poor, homeless, friendless creatures to repent and reform. To those who scoffed at the notion of these

57 "Ministry For The Poor," Channing, op. cit., IV, 270.
people reforming, she replied, "If that is true, a part of the sin must lie at our doors who afford them no help" (p. 142). Channing felt the rich could "indulge their disinterested benevolence toward the poor by giving the depressed classes a chance to rise above their stations as individuals and through individual education awaken to new horizons." Both thought of charity as an individual not a collective action. The rich should help the poor for both were linked in one chain to God.

If the poor cultivate the domestic virtues, then they will be on the way to acquiring material prosperity. At least this was true in fiction, if not in fact. Mr. Beckwith in The Poor Rich Man is so impressed with the benevolent acts of the Aikins that he builds a new home for them in a desirable neighborhood and at a low rent. Aikin tells his children when they move in, "You will not mutilate and deface, as most children do, shaving the door with penknives, breaking windows, and destroying every way. So you see, that virtue and good habits, and manners (which are the lesser virtues), are not only in the highest sense treasures, they are

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58 Edgell, op. cit., p. 195.
money to you" (pp. 177-178). The poor must show they are industrious and honest before material prosperity can be theirs. To those not as fortunate as the Aikin family, Miss Sedgwick holds out another promise. "The whole of it is," Uncle Phil says, "you must do your duty thoroughly, and then you'll be contented in this world, and happy in the next; and poverty or riches won't make a straw's difference either way" (p. 179).

The book ends on this comforting note: "There is nothing low in poverty ... the greatest, wisest, and best Being that ever appeared on earth had no part nor lot in the riches of this world; and ... for our sakes, he became poor" (p. 179).

Miss Sedgwick maintained in The Poor Rich Man that poverty could be traced not to an evil in society but "directly or indirectly to vice" within the individual. But if one imitated Susan May or Harry, one could overcome vice. If one lived the good Christian life, then it was possible to gain worldly riches. This idealistic theory was not without its critics. The American Monthly Magazine believed "her excellent little book would have been far more valuable had she aimed at a higher mark, and tried to arrest the gangrene where its poison is more deeply seated, and of wider influence than in the lower classes of society."59

59 American Monthly Magazine, N.S. II (November 1836), 516.
Melville in June of 1824 published a short story that was a bitter indictment against the optimism of *The Poor Rich Man* and other books of its kind. His title intentionally recalls Miss Sedgwick's: "Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs."

The poor of America, wrote Melville, because of their "delicacy of pride ... suffer more in mind than the poor of any other people in the world." This pride "nourished by our own peculiar political principles" prohibits the poor from accepting "what little random relief charity may offer" and furnishes them "with the keenest appreciation of the smarting distinction between their ideal of universal equality and their grindstone experience of the practical misery and infamy of poverty." He could think of no more preposterous assumption of mankind than "the criticism made on the habits of the poor by the well-housed, well-warmed, and well fed." "If ever a Rich Man speaks prosperously to me of a Poor Man, I shall set it down as - I won't mention the word."  

urged Americans to buy it. "Who would venture to say," its critic asked, "that there is a man who is doing a patriot's work more effectively than" Miss Sedgwick? It agreed with Harriet Martineau that Miss Sedgwick had fallen upon a vein "from which the treasures of our future literature are to be wrought." The American Quarterly Review was pleased with her shift from novel to didactic tract: "To do practical good - to make the rising generation wiser or better - or to conduce to the amelioration of the lot of suffering humanity - is above and beyond the aim of the novelist." The Maine Monthly Magazine found moral beauty in the book "which will commend itself to the hearts of those who read it. We think no one can lay it down without being improved by the perusal and feeling it to be a 'comfort' that the fair author is their countrywoman." 

In writing to the Rev. William Ware in March 1837, Miss Sedgwick mentioned that she hoped "to have a little kitchen cabinet book out this spring." On the final day of March she "put the last word to ... the first draft

62 North American Review, XLV (October 1837), 481.
63 American Quarterly Review, XXI (March 1837), 18.
64 Maine Monthly Magazine, I (February 1837), 384.
65 March 15, 1837, Ashburner Papers, Stockbridge Public Library.
of 'Live and Let Live.' She thought it would do some good, but did not expect for it the popularity of The Poor Rich Man. "It will offend some and shock many, but I am satisfied that it is in the main right, and in the consciousness of having written in the hope of doing some little good to the high and humble, I commend it to God's blessing."66

Her contract with Harper's called for one half the net profits if they exceeded one thousand dollars. She was to receive, in addition, five hundred dollars before publication and five hundred dollars after. Harper would also publish a cheap edition, if she requested, three years later.67 By November 25, 1841, she had received in profits $1,015.14. The book went through twelve editions by 1839.68

Live and Let Live: or, Domestic Service Illustrated was probably inspired by Mrs. Trollope's Domestic Manners of the Americans (1831) which drew attention to the incompetency of domestic help in the northeastern United States.

Although a slight love story between Lucy Lee and Charles Lovett provides some narrative interest, the book is far more didactic than Home or The Poor Rich Man. Like 66 Dewey, op. cit., p. 256.

67 Harper and Brothers, New York, MS Records.

68 November 25, 1841, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.
these two books, *Live and Let Live* glorified the domestic virtues. "The poor are not poor," Miss Sedgwick writes, "while they can ... raise the minds of their children above mere animal gratification, to a comprehension of the true riches of affection - the pure happiness of home" (p. 109). So strongly did she believe in the influence and importance of the family that she ventured to say "that when our family communities are perfectly organized the Millennium will have come" (p. 120).

The main concern of *Live and Let Live* is made explicit in its sub-title, *Domestic Service Illustrated*. Dedicated "to my young countrywomen, the future ministers of the charities of home," the author hoped "that this little volume will do much for its momentous subject." She will be satisfied if it rouses "more active minds than mine to reflection upon the duties and capabilities of mistresses of families ... if it makes any feel their duties and obligations to their 'inferiors in position'; if, in short, it incites even a few of my young countrywomen to a zealous devotion to 'home missions'" (p. vi). Her purpose is twofold. First she wishes to instruct young girls of all classes in the duties of the home. Second she wants to change the "very general false estimate of domestic

69 Quotations are from the 1837 edition.
life, its positions, its trials, and its duties" (p. 18).

Miss Sedgwick in *Live and Let Live* offers the housewife as the new heroine in our literature. She points to the great housewives of classical literature: "... if our young ladies want the example of heroines to redeem domestic offices from their vulgarity, to *idealize* the housewife — let them remember Andromache, and Desdemona, and sundry others" (p. 92). The qualities the sentimentalist demanded of her heroine were "little short of appalling." Miss Sedgwick would have required of her heroine that she be cook, scullery maid, seamstress, nurse maid, and chamber maid. She must have the strength to ward off the villain with one hand and prepare cake batter with the other.

Mrs. Hyde, Miss Sedgwick's spokesman in *Live and Let Live*, explains the rationale of training a young girl to be a "jack of all trades." Mrs. Hyde tells Lucy when she comes to work for her, "I do not confine any person to a single department ... if a woman spends years in nothing by cooking, when she has a family of her own,

how will she know how to take care of her house, take
care of her children, make their clothes, etc.? or, if
she spends ten years in the nursery, she will not know
how to cook her husband's dinner. My girls all get
married after a while; and I wish that, while they are
serving me, they should have that sort of education
that will enable them to make their own homes prosperous
and happy" (pp. 187-188). The American Quarterly Re-
view, however, felt that servants should not be quali-
fied for every duty. Division of labor, it argued, leads
to perfection in every branch.71

Most criticism of the book was levelled at what
Miss Sedgwick said about the rights and duties of ser-
vant and employer. The servant problem in New York
City in the 1830's and 40's was acute. Mrs. Felton,
who spent two years in the United States, said that em-
ployers complained that their Irish help assumed airs
upon their arrival in this country and took so serious-
ly the equalitarian philosophy of the time that they
insisted upon being called helpers rather than servants.72
Karl Bernhard, Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, who visited
America in 1825 and 1826, wrote of the impudence of ser-
71American Quarterly Review, XXII (September 1837),
256.

72Mrs. Felton, American Life (London, 1842), pp. 68-69.
vants who considered themselves the equals of their employers. 73

Miss Sedgwick sided with the servants. "The women of this country," Mrs. Hyde tells Mrs. Ardley, "of every grade, are independent, self-directing beings. The employers have certain unquestionable rights" (p. 80). Miss Sedgwick reveals the chaotic conditions that exist in a home when an employer looks upon his employee as his inferior. Mrs. Ardley does not provide fires in her servants' rooms, for "servants are accustomed to cold rooms." 74 (p. 116). When Lucy catches cold, Mr. Ardley remonstrates.


74 It seemed to be a misconception in the nineteenth century that the poor preferred cold weather. Melville in "Poor Man's Pudding" writes, "This ill-ventilation in winter of the rooms of the poor - a thing, too, so strongly persisted in - is usually charged upon them as their disgraceful neglect of the most simple means to health. But the instinct of the poor is wiser than we think. The air which ventilates, likewise cools. And to any shiverer, ill-ventilated warmth is better than well-ventilated cold." Melville, op. cit., p. 176-177. As late as 1901 sentimentalists agreed with Mrs. Ardley. Alice Hegan Rice's Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch (New York, 1901), opens with these lines: "My, but it's nice an' cold this mornin'! The thermometer's done fell up to zero!" Mrs. Wiggs made the statement as cheerfully as if her elbows were not sticking out through the boy's coat that she wore, or her teeth chattering in her head like a pair of castinets" (p. 3).
with his wife: "I hope the poor child has not suffered from the cold room; you should have thought of that, Anne." But Mrs. Ardley's excuse is that she cannot think of everything. Her husband's eyes had at last opened to the "shocking neglect of our duty for people of our condition not to provide for the comfort, no, the actual wants of those they employ. I do not wonder servants are always ready to change their places, hoping for something better, no doubt" (pp. 119-120). Mrs. Ardley was not lacking in indulgence or liberality. "We know," Miss Sedgwick says, "that the general low character of domestics and their perfect independence involves the mistress of a family in much inevitable perplexity. But the fault is not all the domestic's. We believe the difficulty would be materially lessened if young women were educated for their household duties, and if they carried into their relation to their domestics the right spirit; if they regarded them as their 'unfortunate friends,' whom it was their religious duty to instruct, to enlighten, to improve, to make better and happier" (p. 120).

At one point in Live and Let Live, Miss Sedgwick writes, "We hope we shall not be accused of imputing all the blame to the mistress, because it is our ungracious task to illustrate her shortcomings" (p. 120). But some critics found her too biased in favor of the
servants. The *New York Review*, which had found *A New England Tale* disgusting because of its sectarian bitterness, spoke with frankness on two faults in *Live and Let Live*. The first, the reviewer believed, was common in her later writings: "It is a leaning to the side of ultra-democratic sentiments." It was far more important "to instruct the people in the duties, and to warn them of the dangers of liberty, than to minister continually to that overweening sense of rights" which soon passes into "the licentious spirit of Liberty above Law, begetting discontent with established and necessary distinctions and subordinations and hatred towards the richer classes." There was no need for the author to spread among her countrymen "a sense of social equality and popular rights." The critic felt that "the democratic element in our social system is in no danger of being overborne and weakened by any antagonist force." Miss Sedgwick would be doing more good "in restraining, purefying, and guiding it /the democratic element/ in safe and rational channels, in administering needful warnings and cautions." Second, the reviewer found the book "too partial, one sided." It was this kind of book "we should wish to keep out of the hands of a numerous class of servants" for it could give them wrong ideas and stir up discontent. "This is precisely one of those cases in which a half-truth is a great
lie."75

The American Quarterly Review was unhappy with the scene in which Lucy tells Mrs. Hyde that she sometimes felt when her brother's head was resting on her bosom "as if we were worshipping together." Mrs. Hyde replies, "Oh, how much better is this true worship, than formal prayers and set days" (p. 186). Such expressions according to the reviewer could offend orthodox Christians who have set days for prayers.76

The majority of the reviews, however, were quite favorable. The critic for the American Monthly Magazine began his review by apologizing, for "a bachelor critic ... may be esteemed as rather apochryphal authority touching the mysteries of the kitchen and matters of domestic economy in general." But the moral aim of the book was so obvious "that, in its perusal, we think of nothing else." Each a bachelor critic had to admit that such works "must do good."77 Godey's Lady's Book

75New York Review, I (October 1837), 456-457. Arthur Schlesinger writes that "though etiquette manuals granted that the yeasty republican spirit, fortified by the many other opportunities for employment, often rendered the servants themselves intractable, they placed the chief onus upon the mistresses who, unaccustomed to authority, used it tyrannically." Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 24.

76American Quarterly Review, XXII (September 1837), 256.

77American Monthly Magazine, X N.S. IV (October 1837), 395-396.
entreated "every good lady, and every lady who wishes to learn how to do good to read this book." It was the hope of Knickerbocker that Live and Let Live "will rouse female minds to reflection upon the duties and capabilities of mistresses of families."79

Dr. Channing was extravagant in his praise. He wrote Miss Sedgwick in the summer of 1837:

I can not, without violence to my feelings, refrain from expressing to you the great gratification with which I have read your 'Live and Let Live.' Thousands will be the better and happier for it; thousands as they read it, will feel their deficiencies, and resolve to do better .... Your three last books, I trust, form an era in our literature. May you be strengthened to go on, and expose the errors in our social system.80

Miss Sedgwick was gratified by his encouragement. She thanked heaven she was not "now working for the poor and perishing rewards of literary ambition. Unattainable they might be to me, but, whether so or not, they are not my object." Since the physical world needs to be subdued "to the wants of the human family, there is an immense moral field opening, demanding laborers of every class, and of every kind and degree of talent." Neither pride nor humility should keep one from this work. "No one can feel as I do the imperfection of the labor I achieve; but I do gratefully

78 Godey's Lady's Book, XV (September 1837), 140.
79 Knickerbocker, X (July 1837), 86.
80 Dewey, op. cit., p. 270.
feel that it is something done in the good cause, and such a
Godspeed as yours, my dear friend, gives me heart and courage
to proceed."81

When Means and Ends; or, Self-Training was published in
the summer of 1839, the New Yorker placed it with that class
of books "which it has recently become fashionable to
read and therefore profitable to publish."82 Having treated
the major virtues in the first three didactic books, Miss
Sedgwick turned next to the minor virtues - manners. The
series beginning with Means and Ends is a fine example of
the behavior manuals and etiquette books of the time.
Arthur Schlesinger has found twenty-eight such manuals
appearing in the 1830's, thirty-six in the 1840's, and
thirty-eight in the 1850's, "an average of over three
new ones annually in the pre-Civil War decades."83

"Andrew Jackson's elevation to the White House in
1828," writes Schlesinger, "was a political outcropping
of deeper human stirrings .... the country's new political
and economic situation meant the opportunity for little
fish to grow into big ones.... Unlike former times,
ordinary folk now felt they could make of themselves what

81 Ibid., p. 271.
82 New Yorker, VII (July 20, 1839), 285.
83 Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 18.
they would."84 As Miss Sedgwick reminded her "young friends" in *Morals of Manners* (1846), "It is not ... as in the old world, where one man is born with a silver spoon, and another with a pewter one, in his mouth. You may all handle silver spoons, if you will. That is, you may all rise to places of respectability" (p. 61). "The prizes are open to all, and they fall with equal favour" (*The Poor Rich Man*, p. 111). With an etiquette book in hand, Miss Sedgwick pointed out in *Means and Ends*, one could become genteel in far less time than the conventional three generations, "too slow a process in these days of accelerated movement" (p. 150).85 In their zeal to better themselves materially, the "ordinary folk ... never lost sight of the fact that self-respect also demanded they climb toward higher social levels. The passion for equality, in other words, found expression in the view that all could become gentlemen, not that gentlemen should cease to be."86 "You have it in your own power," she wrote in *Means and Ends*, "to fit yourselves by the cultivation of your minds, and the refine-

85 Quotations are from the 1839 edition.
86 Schlesinger, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-17.
ment of your manners for intercourse, on equal terms, with the best society in our land" (pp. 15-16). The way to social success was through training in conduct and manners. To young women, in particular, the etiquette books were keys that would open the doors to social respectability. These manuals enlisted the aid of many of the prominent writers of the day: T. S. Arthur, Lydia Sigourney, and Mrs. Sarah Josepha Hale. Conduct books were of two kinds, "one upholding the time-honored conceptions of manner as 'character in action,' the other elaborating the view ... that manners are a set of rules to be learned." 87

Means and Ends begins with a definition of education: "What ever calls forth your affections and what ever improves your manners, is a part of your moral education (pp. 9-10). As she pointed out in the preface to The Mysterious Story-Book (1856), moral education had not kept pace with academic education. What was needed was a teacher of morals and manners, and that was what she tried to be in her conduct books. Yet she knew manners and morals could not really be taught; all she could do was to provide hints and illustrations of manners in action. It was the world "within - the world which you can modify and regulate, that makes your character and

87 Ibid., p. 19.
destiny - and not the impassive world without" (p. 35).

In setting herself up as a teacher of the young, Miss Sedgwick was following the example of Mrs. Rowson and Hannah Foster. The latter had written in the dedication of The Boarding School; or, Lessons of a Preceptress To Her Pupils (1798), "The author has employed a part of her leisure hours in collecting and arranging her ideas on the subject of female deportment." Miss Sedgwick was also following the advice Dr. Channing had given in "Remarks on Education" (1833). No office was higher, he felt, "than that of a teacher of youth, for there is nothing on earth so precious as the mind, soul, character of the child. No office should be regarded with greater respect. The first minds in the community should be encouraged to assume it." It was to be the "elevation of the soul" that education aimed for. The essence of self-education was "to instruct us in our duty and happiness, in the perfection of our nature, in the true use of life, in the best direction of our powers."

Education for Miss Sedgwick also meant practical education. Housewivery, for example, was a "must-have" for

90Ibid., pp. 179 and 188.
a young woman's proper education. It "requires intelligence, judgment, firmness, and order." It demands energy and care. "It is graced by generosity, disinterestedness, and cheerfulness" (p. 73). She gives hints on how to cook vegetables and meat, how to bake bread, and how to make soap. She warns her readers that there is no "royal road" to domestic economy, that one must apply strength, mind, and conscience to it, and profit from failure. Domestic education is the *sine qua non* that allows one to enjoy "the high and elegant pursuits" of life (p. 122).

Another "must-have" for a proper education is Health, "and one of your first duties is to study the laws that govern it - this is *physical education*" (p. 39). In *The Poor Rich Man* Miss Sedgwick devoted many pages to the advice the doctor gives Charlotte: bathe every day in cold water, change garments at night, get plenty of fresh air, wear flannel drawers the year round "for in no other way can the skin be kept of a warm and regular temperature" (*The Poor Rich Man*, pp. 48-49). Miss Sedgwick was suspicious of medicine for, while it sometimes cures and alleviates, "does not the patient often resort to it, and resort to it in vain, when, if he had studied and obeyed the laws of physiology, he would not have needed the aid it cannot give." (*The Poor Rich Man*, p. 180). Her medical knowledge came from Andrew Combe's *Principles of Physiology Applied to the*
Preservation of Health (1834), "an admirable book, which is already introduced into many of our schools, and which we earnestly wish every young person in our land would read and study" (Means and Ends, p. 43). So extensive was her debt to Combe that she wrote in Means and Ends, "In the foregoing chapters on health, I have quoted entire passages from Dr. Combe, without marks of quotation, trusting to my frequent references to him to absolve me, from the charge of any intention of appropriating his well known property" (p. 70).

Miss Sedgwick had sent Combe in May of 1837 a copy of The Poor Rich Man. He wrote her in June of 1837 that it was only "by impressing the young with useful truths that the greatest ultimate effect upon society is to be

Andrew Combe was the brother of George Combe, the phrenologist. Prevented by illness from the practice of medicine Andrew Combe "had recourse to those hygienic and curative measures which judicious friends and his own experimental observations taught him to be the best adapted to his condition. He accordingly sought in travel and change of climate and scene, and in obedience to dietetic rules, that relief which mere bed-chamber practice, with its routine of drugs, so generally fails to give to the delicate, and especially the consumptive invalid." He made a record of the effect of these various agents of hygiene on his own person and published it in 1834 as Principles of Physiology issued by Harper and Brothers in 1834. By 1850, over sixty thousand copies had been printed. The Life and Correspondence of Andrew Combe edited by George Combe (Philadelphia, 1850), pp. vi-vii.
produced; and on that account I am peculiarly anxious to
see physiological information made a part of the ordinary
instruction communicated to the more advanced pupils at
school and academies - and, if possible, still more anxious
to see its important applications to the promotion of hu-
man happiness inculcated in the example of parents and in-
structors." He felt her "valuable little book will teach
a useful lesson" to parents and children and will lead
many to "trace to their own conduct many of the evils which
they now blame on Providence." He thought she could do "more
infinite good by writing such another story as The Poor Rich
Man."²

Halfway through Means and Ends Miss Sedgwick reaches
the subject of good manners. She is critical of some
etiquette books for they "proceed from modern antiques who,
unconscious of the state of society in which they live,
would mark it /the country/ off into classes after the
fashion of the old world ... by introducing European eti-
quette" (p. 144). These etiquette books were written for
ladies and gentlemen, but since these terms imply class
distinctions, she would substitute "men and women" (p. 144).
Good manners mean not "the polished manners of the most
highly educated and refined of other countries, nor the
²Ibid., pp. 223-224.
deferential subservience of their debased creatures," but "respect for your fellow-beings; a reverence for them as God's creatures and your brethren" (p. 145). Reverence, as she wrote in *Morals of Manners*, is the "one quality of mind which more than all others gives the right tone, modification, and expression to manner" (p. 5). One manifests reverence through respectful manners. Good manners, she continues in *Means and Ends*, are the results of "the spontaneous modesty, self-denial, and respect for others, which ought to spring from the heart" and are one of the "must-haves" of an educated person" (p. 149).

Her optimism is apparent in what she says about poverty, "The fact is undeniable, that, in our happy land, there is very little suffering from poverty. Except in cases of destructive vice, prolonged sickness, or rare misfortune, there are, in the country parts of the United States, no hungry to feed, no naked to clothe, none cold to be warmed" (pp. 262-263). Even in the crowded cities, "there is no suffering save that which comes from ignorance, or vice, or imbecility; and ninety-nine hundredths of this is among foreigners" (p. 263). With her insistence upon character and self-education the only cause of poverty she could see was failure in the individual to develop his moral virtues. If the individual has the ability to reform himself, then poverty ceases. Organized charity, therefore, would be
superfluous. Experienced people, she writes, "will tell you that infinite harm is done by alms-giving, and that habits of lying, laziness, and dependence, are kept up in the parents, and generated in the children, by encouraging them to live upon the supplies of charity, instead of working for the rewards of industry" (p. 263). There is, furthermore, a more effective kind of charity than alms-giving; there is "the charity which costs time, thought, and trouble ... both to the giver and receiver" (p. 264). Such charity consists in searching out "in filthy streets, up broken stairways, or in dark cellars, the dirty wives of drunken husbands, to inquire into their condition, to put them in a way of earning bread, instead of begging it, to persuade them to send their children to school, or to service" (p. 264). Such an act, of course, is of a disinterested nature.

One of the most illuminating chapters in Means and Ends is on woman's rights. This subject was hotly debated in the nineteenth century. The first Woman's Rights Convention was held at Seneca Falls, New York, in July of 1848. Its Declaration of Sentiments began, "The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward women, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her." Miss Sedgwick, 93 Quoted in Papashvily, op. cit., p. xiii.
however, saw the problem in different terms. She believed women were not making the most of the rights they did have. Women must qualify themselves "for the exercise of higher powers than women have yet possessed, before they can be entrusted to you; and ... when you are thus qualified, they cannot long be withheld from you" (p. 269). Women must educate themselves "by enlarging the bounds of ... observation; by making ... feelings subordinate to ... reason; by transferring dependence from others" to themselves (p. 269). Even when women have done these things, they still do not have the right "to lead armies, harangue in halls of legislation, bustle up to the ballot-boxes, or sit on judicial tribunals" (p. 270). These are the privileges of men, and "men and women are destined to different departments of duty" (p. 270). Women, however, can help at home to form men's characters. What does it matter that a woman is excluded from politics and the court "if the wisdom and virtue manifested there is the result, in some good part, of women's work?" (p. 271).

Miss Sedgwick addressed herself to the subject of woman's rights on more than one occasion. In "Might versus Right" and "Full Thirty" she argues that women are often better managers of property than men and that the wife should have
control of her own property. She is critical in "Fanny M'Dermot" of society's double standard toward the sexes. It is "irrational and unchristian to tolerate certain vices in men for which one proscribes and hunts down women." Women, moreover, should have more say when it comes to marriage. Failure of society to allow a woman free choice as to whom she will marry often perverts "God's own most blessed institution."

In 1859 she supplied the preface to Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon's Women and Work. She argued that the only qualification for labor "should be the stamp of citizenship." Women should have the right to work and not "be resolved into non-entities" who have no effective existence in the republic. If a woman does not have a trade, she should excel in the domestic arts. If she does charitable work, she should be paid as much as a man. But she does not claim for women the right of suffrage, nor would she "wish to see women lawyers or divines, so far as officiating in public

94 "Might versus Right," Sartain's Union Magazine, VI (January 1850), 75-80; "Full Thirty," The Token (Boston, 1837), pp. 212-246. Miss Sedgwick thought Americans could learn a great deal from the German whose wife had "an inextinguishable right to half the joint property of herself and her husband." Letters From Abroad To Kindred At Home, I (New York, 1841), 223.

95 "Fanny M'Dermot," Godey's Lady's Book, XXX (February 1845), 78.

96 "New Year's Day," Columbian Lady's and Gentlemen's Magazine, V (February 1846), 88.
is concerned, but surely they can be ministers, messengers, and servants of Christ, in prisons, hospitals, and in all charitable institutions." Their first duty, however, is to insure for their family a true Christian home. To her husband, the wife should be not a drag but a help-meet. Neither here nor in Means and Ends does she ask for equal rights, but she does suggest that if women are educated in the way she has outlined so as to attain moral and intellectual rights, they will then come into possession of social and political rights. The home, therefore, becomes the center of political as well as moral and social influence.97

She concludes Means and Ends by saying that the book can only "inspire ... with a desire to improve" onself; the actual work must come from the individual. "Again and again, I repeat it, there are none educated but the self-educated" (p. 277). Self-education must have as its foundation religion. If all actions are consecrated by a religious spirit, "there may be altars in your hearts, and your homes may be temples of God" (p. 278).

The statement in Means and Ends that there were no class distinctions in America "certain and permanent, but those of education and character" (p. 15) brought the charge of

"radicalism" from the Whiggish New York Review which had found Live and Let Live "ultra-democratic." The critic disliked "an appearance of quiet taking-for-granted that ultra-democratic sentiments are the only philanthropic ones, as if a man that did not hold them could not hold his fellow-men in true love and respect ...."\(^98\) The New Yorker had few kind words to say of the book. The subject matter was trite and had been "repeatedly handled by writers superior to the one before us." It felt that what she advocated, "mingling of all classes /\ tends to a mingling and even destruction of all the conventional forms."\(^99\) The Boston Quarterly Review was quite astute in its notice. What it said was true of her other didactic tales as well. It recognized that Miss Sedgwick "loves democratic institutions and sympathizes with the people," but was not herself truly democratic. "She seems not to have fully comprehended the real evil of existing society, and does not perceive that the remedies she proposes can at best but partially mitigate it; but she aims well ...." The magazine also attributed to her "the besetting sin of our age, "overrating moral and religious education as distinct from intellectual education. Truth does sanctify, the critic wrote, but, he

\(^{98}\) New York Review, V (July 1839), 226-227.

\(^{99}\) New Yorker, VII (July 20, 1839), 285.
added, it is "the truth which is known, for the truth which is not known is to us as if it were not." 100 The Baptist Christian Reviewer, on the other hand, wanted "more discriminating views on the subject of religion." 101

The United States Magazine and Democratic Review, an organ of the "Young American" movement that repudiated English domination of American Literature, found Means and Ends "thoroughly American and Democratic - words that we regard as altogether synonymous ...." 102 The Unitarian Christian Examiner noted that a Boston review thought the book not democratic enough, while a New York review thought it much too radical. The reviewer found it "an agreeable, plain, matter-of-fact, truth telling book." 103 Godey's Lady's Book compared Miss Sedgwick's pen to the Philosopher's Stone which "can transmute all it touches to gold, or what is worth more than fine gold .... The book is one of the best things for the young which has issued from our press." 104

100 Boston Quarterly Review, II (July 1839), 389-390.
101 Christian Reviewer, IV (December 1839), 625.
102 United States Magazine and Democratic Review, VI (August 1839), 127.
103 Christian Examiner, XXVII (September 1939), 134-135.
104 Godey's Lady's Book, XIX (October 1839), 191. It is worth noting in light of Godey's review that the Pilgrim Sunday School Library of the First Unitarian Society in San Francisco listed in its Catalogue for 1861 Means and Ends.
It was no surprise that Godey's was so complimentary. Mrs. Sarah Josepha Hale, its editor, "considered it one of her bounden duties to recommend these writings /manuals of social decorum/ as soon as they were published." Mrs. Hale wrote of Miss Sedgwick, "... she remains among the front rank of those earnest and sincere writers whose talents have been employed for the purpose of doing good and whose works have obtained a great and deserved popularity." Graham's Magazine predicted that Means and Ends would "pass to a third and even fourth and fifth edition." The Corsair, which printed extracts of the book, found it a "capital guide in giving the essentials of real respectability and happiness."

The next manner book did not appear until seven years later, in 1846. Morals of Manners; or, Hints for Young... Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 18.


Graham's Magazine, XXI (July 1842), 60.

The Corsair, I (June 15, 1839), 218-219.

In the intervening years Miss Sedgwick travelled to Europe. Her observations of her trip published as Letters From Abroad to Kindred at Home were extremely popular. It earned for her from Harper's in one year what The Linwoods had in six. By November 25, 1841, she had received from Harper's $1308.32. November 25, 1841, Sedgwick Papers, M. H.S. It was generously excerpted in many magazines particularly The Select Circulating Library containing the Best Popular Literature including Memoirs, Biographies, Novels, Tales, Travels, Voyages, etc. published by Adam Waldie (cont.)
People (published by Putnam) is a slight book, only sixty-three pages, and says little that Miss Sedgwick had not already said in Means and Ends. She was interested in its success "because I think it will do some little good to our district school children. The school committee in New York have /sic/ ordered ten or twelve hundred for distribution in the families of the children." The thesis 109 (cont) In Philadelphia. She had not been at all anxious to publish it. On April 18, 1841, she wrote to Mrs. Jameson in England, "I have been working at my journal to get it ready for the printers because everybody here said I must do it and without having finished any work, I am heartily sick of it and have lost the little courage I began with. April 18, 1841, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S. Nor did she expect large sales. To William Sharpe in England she wrote on July 8, 1841, "I have little expectation that the book will attract attention beyond those who may have some interest in the writer and certainly not in your country as your people for the most part do their travelling for themselves and cannot be expected to take much interest in the superficial observations of one quite new to the aspect of things in the old world so familiar to them. However I trust Mr. Mason will get rid of a sufficient number of the book to save him from loss." July 8, 1841, Ashburner Papers, Stockbridge Public Library. In 1841 she also supplied a biography of the poetess Lucretia Maria Davidson for a collected edition of her works. She wrote that readers "could imitate Lucretia Davidson's meek self-sacrifices by relinquishing some favorite pursuit, some darling object, for the sake of an humble and unpraised duty; and, if few can attain her excellence, all may imitate her ingenuity, humility, industry, and fidelity to her domestic affections." Poetical Remains of the Late Lucretia Maria Davidson (Philadelphia, 1841), p. 90. In 1843 Miss Sedgwick wrote the preface to Selections from the Writings of Mrs. Margaret M. Davidson (Philadelphia, 1843). Mrs. Davidson spoke of the preface as being "another link to the chain of favours which your kind and disinterested heart has accorded to your very sincere friend and admirer, Margaret M. Davidson" (p. vii). 110 December 6, 1846, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.
of the book is that reverence and respect are "the secret spring of all good manners" (p. 9). Religious reverence leads to worship of God and to all things connected with religion. From religious reverence follows respect for parents and fellow men.

The book consists of little hints for good manners: "The civilization of different countries is measured by the amount of soap they consume" and "One might find a vulgar, ill-bred person in rich and fine clothes, but there is no well-bred person with slovenly hair, neglected teeth, or blackened nails" (pp. 10-11). Even such a simple habit of using one's allowance to buy a shoe brush or similar item can lead to a plentiful crop of virtues ... neatness, diligence, order, economy, and self-denial" (p. 14). She lists the do's and don't's of good behavior, always making clear that bad morals come from bad habits acquired when one is young. She concludes by pointing out that only character can make one respectable, not position or wealth: "... you may be a lawyer, or doctor, or clergyman - you may be farmer or mechanic - you may be rich or poor, and you will be respectable if you have made good use of the mind God has given you .... But if you neglect to use your talents, be they ten or one, if you are not honest and true, if you are not kind-

Quotations are from the 1846 edition.
hearted, if you have not good manners, you may be President of the United States, you may be the wealthiest man or women in town or country, but you will not be worthy of respect" (pp. 62-63). The Christian Examiner could not "but regard with the highest respect one who subordinates sentiment and fancy to the ends of homely but needed instruction." It believed Miss Sedgwick would "have the thanks of many an American mother."112

Facts and Fancies for School-Day Reading, the sequel to Morals of Manners, was published by Putnam in 1848, Among the topics she discusses are personal cleanliness ("make the outside worthy the true and good spirit within," p. 14), public property (keep your hands off from whatever adorns those grounds provided at the expense of the public to enjoy," p. 62), proper family environment ("alas for those poor children whose homes are places of danger and degradation to them, for at home should be learned the first principles of goodness," pp. 175-176), and self-education (by keeping one's eyes and ears open, one can educate himself, for America is "the country of self-made men" p. 200).113 There is little in the book

112 Christian Examiner, XXXII (January 1847), 146.
113 Quotations are from the 1848 edition.
that she had not already said before. *Sartain's Union* Magazine believed she had "never written anything more delightful...." Knickerbocker, which had thought that some of the characters used for illustrations in the earlier books so good that they were discouraging models, did not find this fault in *Facts and Fancies*.  

These six books comprise Miss Sedgwick's major didactic works. There are, however, other books which may be classified as didactic. In 1825 she published *The Travellers*, based on her journey to Canada in 1821. A children's book, it relates the adventures of Edward and Julia on a trip with their parents in Canada. Throughout the book are scenes illustrative of many of the themes one finds in the later didactic works. Edward's mother tells him when they are visiting a Catholic hospital, "Take notice ... that when the precepts of the Christian religion are strictly applied, they produce the same fruits; no matter by what name the particular faith is called, Catholic or Protestant" (p. 109). When the children give their spending money to an unfortunate

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114 *Sartain's Union Magazine*, II (February 1848), 94.
115 *Knickerbocker*, XXXI (January 1848), 67.
116 In April of 1825, Miss Sedgwick wrote her sister, "I shall send 'The Travellers' to you ... you will recognize my old journal." Both the letter and the journal are in the Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S. On May 25, 1825, she wrote her sister, "I have got a bagatelle /The Travellers/ which I shall publish....I meant it for a tract, but Harry thinks I had better print it for profit, as he says people value a great deal more what they pay for," Dewey, op. cit. p. 175.
woman, their mother says, "I have now more confidence that their hearts have that good soil into which the roots of virtue may strike deeply, and they now know the full cost of a charitable action which is performed by the voluntary and deliberate sacrifice of personal indulgence" (p. 116). The story ends with Miss Sedgwick expressing the hope that the reader will remember that Edward and Julia "possessed a treasure that fadeth not away, in the consciousness of having rendered an essential service to a fellow-creature; a consciousness that strews roses in the path of youth and age - not 'the perfume and suppli ance of a moment,' but those amaranthine flowers that exhale incense to heaven" (pp. 132-133).

In 1828 she published in The Christian Teacher's Manual a short story entitled "A Short Essay To Do Good" or "Christian Charity." The story itself was published separately the same year. It urges the reader to "consider all those Christians, who manifest a love to their Heavenly Father, and obedience to his well beloved Son, our Savior; and of such do not ask if they be Presbyterian, Unitarian, Methodist, or Catholic; but regard them as Christians, fellow Christians, servants, and friends of one Master . . ."117 The lesson is a familiar one in Miss Sedgwick's writings.

She also published two collections of short stories intended for Sunday School libraries, *A Love Token for Children* (1838) and *Stories For Young Persons* (1841). Since most of the stories in those collections are of the same nature as the conduct books, I have included discussion of them in this chapter rather than in the next which will take up her short stories. Of particular interest in *A Love Token* are "Our Robins," "Old Rover," and "Mill-Hill." "Our Robins" originally appeared in *The Southern Literary Messenger* for 1838 with this prefatory note from the editor: the story is, "in the language of the writer on Sunday schools, 'a touching and instructive lesson to young readers.'"¹¹⁸ It preaches a lesson old in the annals of sentimental fiction, kindness to animals, and ends with the message: "...happiest are those who find their best reward, not in the praise they receive, but the good they do."¹¹⁹ "Old Rover" illustrates the moral aim of the collection. "I fear," she writes at its close, "I may have tired my young readers, and they may reproach me with palming off on them as a story what, after all, is none; but I shall not have written, nor

¹¹⁸ *Southern Literary Messenger*, IV (May 1838), 318.
they read in vain, if I have introduced any one to be more considerate of animals, more studious of their characters, and more just, forebearing, and kind to them" (p. 68).\textsuperscript{120} The story exists only for the moral.

The only story in the collection that has substance is "Mill-Hill." Emma, its heroine, does "good deeds that others, for want of thought (and perhaps faith) rather than time or heart, do not do" (p. 80). In one important respect does Emma differ from sentimental heroines before her. "She had - do not be shocked, my gentle readers - red hair. Depend upon it, all young ladies, be they good and lovely, and even pretty ... do not have - except in books - 'auburn hair,' or 'flaxen,' or even 'rich brown!'" (p. 81). Emma's day is a busy one. An orphan, she keeps house for her uncle, teaches school, and in her spare time is the village tailor. She also considers it her duty to take care of all needy people. Into Mill-Hill comes an influx of Irish whom the villages regard as savages. Emma expects no trouble from them "if we only treat them right" (p. 81). To set an example, she takes under her wing Anny Ryan, an orphan. Emma teaches her to include in her daily prayers the motto she taught her: \textit{"It is good that I have been afflicted,"} words that

\textsuperscript{120}Quotations are from the 1838 edition.
may be applied to everyone "who rightly lays to heart the natural trials of life" (p. 136).

Emma has less success with Justyn Hill, whose father "was an ill-tempered and intemperate man; his mother idle, shiftless and slatternly." These are vices enough to destroy a family "without the parents being false, dishonest, or cruel" (pp. 120-121). Justyn wanders from job to job, falls into the hands of bad companions, robs his employers, and in turn is robbed and beaten by his companions. He makes his way home to die. His deathbed utterances are similar to Paulina's in The Poor Rich Man: "Oh mother! mother! ... if you had only sent me to Miss Emma's Sunday school when she wanted me to go, I should never have gotten into this trouble" (p. 125). Miss Sedgwick asks her readers to "pray pause, and reflect, and think of poor Justyn before you take the first wrong step" (p. 125). Justyn's death provides Emma's Sunday school class a heaven-sent opportunity from which to draw a moral. Emma tells her pupils:

Your existence is given to you in a land that may be called the poor man's country. In other countries people are driven by ignorance to vice, and by hunger to crime; but here instruction is offered to all; here labor calls out for hands; here ingenuity and perserverance are sure of reward; and here nothing but your own fault, no, not even such parents as Justyn's can keep you from the society of the good and respectable. Then go ahead, my dear children (pp. 134-135).
In this land of opportunity the individual is able to determine his own destiny regardless of his background or environment.

*Stories For Young Persons* (1841) was intended as a sequel to *A Love Token*. Like the latter collection, the stories are didactic: "As it is the vocation of an old lady to advise, and ... the destiny of school girls to be advised, I ventured to infuse a little of this medicinal quality into my evening's entertainment" (p. 39). The story is of little concern to her; it is the moral that is important. She writes that "Ella" "contains no striking incidents, but it may serve to show you that our happiness depends chiefly on the state of our own hearts; and further, that in most circumstances we may improve the virtue, and consequently, the happiness of those around us" (p. 111). She admits in "Small Losses" that it takes her time to get to the point of the story, but "it is not the first nut you have had trouble in cracking to get at the meat" (p. 116).

Nor is she subtle in announcing the moral: "I venture, in conclusion, to borrow a sentence which contains the whole meaning of my story" (p. 112), or, "I will not bother you with that drag to the vehicle, a moral to my story; but if I were writing to a less...

Quotations are from the 1841 edition.
sharp-sighted young person than you, I would say, avoid careless habits" (p. 124), or, "I will not write out the moral of my story .... I do not doubt my readers have sagacity enough to perceive" and the moral follows (p. 163).

Of particular interest in this collection is "The Deformed Boy." When it appeared in hard-covers in 1826, the American Journal of Education expressed the belief that there was no genre which could afford more gratification to an author or confer more benefits than children's literature. The North American Review thought the story inculcated "the purest morality, that which rests upon consistent religious principles ..." The story is an account "for the benefit of some of our young friends of a few acts of particular goodness that have chanced to fall under our own observation, in the hope that their love of virtue may be augmented by contemplating its lovely aspects and certain results" (p. 9). It is a tale of poverty and suffering, but Miss Sedgwick does not go into the "melancholy" history of the poor "for we would not cloud the cheerful faces of our young readers with unnecessary sadness" (p. 15).

122 American Journal of Education, I (July 1826), 448.
123 North American Review, XXIII (July 1826), 212.
Mrs. Aiken in the story thought "that as God in His kind providence had seen fit to exempt her from the sore evils of life, she was bound to testify her gratitude by doing all in her power to mitigate the sufferings of others" (p. 15). She therefore performs an act of disinterested benevolence by helping Dicky, the deformed boy. If Miss Sedgwick digresses in the telling of the story, she feels no need of apologies "if we have strengthened the love of goodness in the breast of a single reader" (p. 16). The moral is that God will provide, but His benevolence can be speeded and aided by man's benevolence to his fellow man. In helping others man can truly be said to have been created in the image of his maker.

The critics received both collections favorably. Of A Love Token, the Ladies' Companion wrote that in it Miss Sedgwick was "ever alive to the interest and the welfare of the rising generation."\textsuperscript{124} The lessons she taught, according to the American Monthly Magazine, require "a philosopher to teach; but when taught, as in these domestic parables ... /they are/ worth all the encyclopaedias that ever were invented."\textsuperscript{125} The Knickerbocker hoped A Love Token would "be widely cir-

\textsuperscript{124}Ladies' Companion, VIII (January 1838), 147.

\textsuperscript{125}American Monthly Magazine, N.S. V (January 1838), 97.
culated among our young friends as a New Year's gift," and did not doubt that in the future Miss Sedgwick would "enjoy the reputation of having been, preeminently the moral benefactress of the first nation of freemen on the globe." The New York Review hoped the circulation of A Love Token would not be limited to Sunday Schools. The New Yorker wrote, "It cannot fail of achieving popularity and usefulness wherever it shall become known." Only the Christian Examiner had unkind words to say of it: "One of her faults, we think, is a tendency to make her favorites a leetle too perfect and inimitable .... it is a pattern very delightful to behold, and very profitable to imitate; though at the same time a dash of imperfection would make it more lifelike and probable." The New Yorker's review of Stories For Young Persons was typical: "full of moral instruction and heart-wisdom."

In 1848 Miss Sedgwick began what was to be a new series of books published by Charles H. Pierce "for the young people of our country - for that ground in

126 Knickerbocker, XI (January 1838), 75-76.
127 New York Review, II (January 1838), 251.
128 New Yorker, IV (December 1837), 621.
129 Christian Examiner, XXIV (March 1838), 133.
130 New Yorker, XI (March 27, 1841), 30.
which we sow hopefully and with promise." Far less didactic than *Home* or *The Poor Rich Man*, *The Boy of Mount Rhigi*, the new book, has a definite moral purpose. It was written "to awaken in those of our young people who have been carefully nurtured, a sense of their duty to those who are less favored" (p. 5). Its theme is not new in her writing: "the better a man is, the more does he feel for those who have wandered out of the right way" (p. 28). She will not have written in vain if the book "invigorates the faith of the fortunate, and saves from despair but one of the wretched" (p. 7).

The setting of the story is Miss Sedgwick's own Berkshire country. The book traces the fortunes of two boys, Harry Davis and Clapham Dunn. Harry is the counterpart of the sentimental heroine. He is "a fair-haired, fair-skinned boy of fifteen, with rather noble features, expressive of truth, decision, and good temper" (p. 14). He is also "no novel reader" (p. 246). Clapham has been brought up by a father who makes him work, lie, and steal for him, and "if I don't, he tries to drown me" (p. 19).

131 Quotations are from the 1848 edition.
Harry's mother had taught her children to respect and reverence all men and to meet death not with tears but with a quiet resignation. When Lucy dies from eating unripe plums, (a scene affording Miss Sedgwick an opportunity to discuss proper diet), "Mrs. Davis's calmness, her faith, and her gentle submission ... converted this chamber of death into the vestibule of heaven. Death did not appear to these children the king of terrors, but a messenger of love who had come to take their dear little companion to happiness and immortality, and to inspire them with a faith and hope that taught them how to value and how to use life" (p. 97). Lucy's death scene is typical of such scenes in nineteenth century sentimental fiction:

Lucy at this moment opened her eyes.... There was even a slight movement of her lips to kiss her mother, and, as her mother pressed hers to her, she faintly but imperceptibly smiled .... /Clapham/ rose and knelt by Annie. Lucy spread out her little hand so as to embrace both theirs. At this moment, the setting sun shone out from a cloud, and its rays fell, like a halo, around little Lucy's fair hair .... They all felt as if they were near the visible presence of God. The curtain that hides the other world was slowly rising, and they felt the beautiful reality of the goodness and love to which the precious child was going. It was not death. It was life - immortal life. A solemn but not painful feeling pervaded them. No one stirred or moved, till Lucy looked from one to the other, and then rested her eye on Harry, and he seemed unconsciously
to answer to the glance in saying, 'How I love you darling!' She replied, slowly, feebly, but with perfect distinctness ... 'We - all - love one another!' These were the last words she spoke ... the stars began to appear, she sank to her rest as quietly as if it had been to her night's sleep (pp. 95-96). [132]

Clapham, under threats from his father, steals Mrs. Davis' purse. When the sheriff searches the Dunn house, Mr. Dunn puts the purse in Clapham's bed, and Clapham, as so often happens to young men in Miss Sedgwick's fiction, is arrested. Clapham's stay in jail allows Miss Sedgwick to digress on a subject of the utmost concern to her, penal reform. She herself was an active member in the Female Department of the New York Prison Association and Home from 1848 to 1863. [133] On Sunday afternoons she would read to the

[132] "There was a reason why readers demanded - and writers repeated," writes Helen Papashvily, "these harrowing accounts of dying children. Of all the grievances nineteenth century feminists had or thought they had, a real and terrible one lurked in the old worn phrases: 'raised seven and lost seven' ... 'I kept two of my eight.' If a woman was to endure this double tragedy - the loss of a precious individual and the negation of her creativity ... and remain sane, the experience must be given some form and meaning ... to the degree that words and phrases and conceptions can perform such alchemy.

"The domestic novel offered this glorification in the child only lent by God, the baby angel, the fading flower, the little ones too good for the world's wickedness." Papashvily, op. cit., p. 194.

[133] An account of her connection with this Association is in Dewey, op. cit., pp. 419-425.
prisoners. In *The Boy of Mount Rhigi* she expresses indignation at what jail conditions had been like earlier in the century: "The proved guilty and the possibly innocent in close companionship! Few improvements had then been made in the jails. They were strictly places of punishment. Correction and reformation were words almost unwritten in the penal code. The criminal was then considered a hopeless outcast, not, as now, a weak, neglected unfortunate brother, to be pitied and cared for; not, as now, an infirm child, to be restrained because dangerous, to suffer because disobedient, and to be restored to trust as soon as he deserved it" (p. 159).

The story ends with Clapham's release from jail and his discovery that he is not Dunn's son, but the child of respectable parents lost at sea.

The book was popular, new editions coming out in 1850 and 1862. In a letter to Mrs. Minot in 1849, Miss Sedgwick wrote that the book was not to be

134 "These Sunday afternoons, in which I endeavor to mingle some social pleasure with the elements of moral teaching, really seem to be an enjoyment to these poor creatures," Dewey, *op. cit.*, p. 309.

135 Dickens in his visit to New York in 1842 was repelled by the city's penal institutions. He wrote in *American Notes* of a prisoner flung down in a heap upon the ground "with his head against the bars like a wild beast" and another standing at the door of his cell, grasping for breath, with his hand thrust through the bars. *American Notes For General Circulation* (Paris, 1842), pp. 115-116.
had in any New York book stores. She also told Mrs. Minot that she had been visited by a member of the New York School Committee who wished "very much that an edition should be published to be sold within 30 cents which is the price the school libraries here pay for my books and which their by-laws do not allow them to exceed."¹³⁶ The Rev. Dr. Bellows thought it now safer for children "who may not always have even a father's care - when such books are extant, and waiting to throw their mantle of purity and protection over them."¹³⁷ Godey's called it "a beautiful story ... with a moral that should be learned by all classes and ages."¹³⁸ The Christian Examiner did not think The Boy of Mount Rhigi would add to her reputation as an author, but it "will cause her benign influence, already so widely felt, to be extended."¹³⁹ Knickerbocker hoped to see the book widely discussed, and Sartain's wished more such volumes would follow whose aim is "to benefit the young, upon whom

¹³⁶ January 20, 1849, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.
¹³⁸ Godey's Lady's Book, XXXVIII (May 1849), 368.
¹³⁹ Christian Examiner, XLV (November 1848), 464.
... all the hopes of the country depend."  

In the preface to The Boy of Mount Rhigi, Miss Sedgwick indicated that it was to be the first in a new series of books, but by 1849 she had changed her mind. To Mrs. Minot she wrote on February 11, 1849, "I received a most civil letter from Mr. Pierce and Crosby and Nichols [publishers of the 1850 edition/... who apparently think that I have engaged to write the whole series of books! - I shall dissuade them of that idea by return mail."  

The Boy of Mount Rhigi was to be the last of her "little school books." In 1849 she began to bring out under the auspices of Putnam a complete edition of her works.

Critics had made the charge that the characters in her didactic books were too good to be true, too impossibly perfect to be models of proper behavior and conduct. One could marvel at their goodness but only despair of imitating it. Miss Sedgwick had offered Lucretia Davidson as a real model, but Miss Davidson's main preoccupation was not the practice of disinterested benevolence or Christian charity but the composition

140Knickerbocker, XXXII (November 1848), 457; Sartain's Union Magazine, IV (May 1849), 350.

141February 11, 1849, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.
of verses. In the life of Joseph Curtis, however, Miss Sedgwick had the opportunity to write of a true Christian, a man whose career was an exemplary one for young people. After his death she published the Memoir of Joseph Curtis: A Model Man (1858). 142

Curtis, who was active in juvenile work in New York City, wrote Miss Sedgwick in 1837 "that, in all his experience, he had never witnessed so much good fruit from the publication of any book as from that of the 'Poor Rich Man.'" 143 Miss Sedgwick dedicated Morals of Manners and The Boy of Mount Rhigi to him as "one who has devoted, and is devoting, a good portion of his life, without the reward of money, or the fee of celebrity, to the advancement of our young people, the hope of our country." The Memoir is filled with incidents exhibiting Curtis' "pure and beautiful nature" (p. 77). As a boy he possessed tenderness of heart and consideration for others, although the latter is doubtful when

142 In Putnam's Monthly for 1853 Miss Sedgwick wrote an article on her friend Mary L. Ware whom she offered to her readers as "the heroine of domestic life." She felt that "tens of thousands of daughters, wives, mothers, and benefactors, may learn from her how to sow ... because her field was on the plane of our common experience." If Curtis were the perfect model for young boys to follow, Mary L. Ware was the perfect model for young girls. "Mary L. Ware," Putnam's Monthly, I (April 1853), 370-382.


144 Quotations are from the 1858 edition.
one considers the illustration Miss Sedgwick gives. He once filled the jug of a drunkard with brine for he "was too thoughtful in his kindness to minister to destructive appetites" (p. 13).

Since the Memoir takes up topics discussed in her earlier didactic works, it can be considered as a coda to her moralistic writings. Miss Sedgwick looks to the parent and the home "to correct the pressure of city life and to temper this haste to be rich." It is the parent's business "to train his son to a love of the country, to a right estimate of the superior stability and dignity of agricultural life" (p. 29). She especially emphasizes to her young readers that possession of Curtis' traits of honesty, industry, and ingenuity is a more certain capital than money, "a capital without risk, always finding some business to enter upon, come what may, crisis, panic / the country was recovering from the panic of 1857/, or adversity of any kind" (p. 107).

Curtis was not to be outdone by Susan May or the Barclays in his charitable work. He cared for an epileptic brother, an aged mother, seven sisters, many children, and waifs he picked up in the streets. Even the death of two of his own children and a failing business did not prevent his aiding others. "He had," in the words of a sister, "an eye to see every suffering, and a heart to
supply every want, and this in the midst of his domestic cares and duties" (p. 40).

In this work Miss Sedgwick vindicated herself against the criticism that her characters were too "preeminently good" to be real, too perfect to serve as models. The Rev. Dr. Bellows could think of "no life more worthy the imitation and respect of men" than Curtis' (p. 200). Miss Sedgwick wrote of him, "As this memoir of Joseph Curtis has been written mainly to preserve him in the grateful remembrance of the children he loved and taught, and to impress his example upon them, we wish especially to call their attention to those qualities that formed the broad foundation of his useful life. They are attainable by all" (p. 191). His virtues were those of William Barclay, Susan Way, Mrs. Hyde, Emma, and Harry Davis. In all of her didactic works Miss Sedgwick offered her readers characters whose virtues they should cultivate and whose lives they should use as patterns for their own.

The National Era wrote in its review of the Memoir that it was "much to speak of any one as a model man. The elements of character for such a one are various, and must be blended in due proportion. The usual danger is dwelling so prominently on some one particular trait or excellence, as to overshadow all the rest." But the
example of Joseph Curtis "deserves to be held up for imitation. It were to be wished that many such men were everywhere found throughout our wide spread land."\textsuperscript{145}

As literary works, Miss Sedgwick's didactic books have little to recommend them. They were often hastily and sometimes carelessly written. The London Literary Gazette approved of what she said in Morals of Manners but not the way she said it: "Need we reiterate that too much pains cannot be taken with books for children."\textsuperscript{146}

But these tales were not meant to be judged by literary standards. They were no more nor less than propaganda, an outgrowth of the propaganda pamphlets issued before and during the American Revolution. As was true of the political pamphlets, these didactic books were "written, not for the aggrandizement of any person, organization, or state, but to persuade people to act on their own behalf for their moral and physical betterment."\textsuperscript{147}

As the nineteenth century progressed, fiction became blatantly used for special interest groups. The use of

\textsuperscript{145}National Era, XII (August 26, 1858), 134.

\textsuperscript{146}Literary Gazette (London, September 19, 1846), p. 807.

\textsuperscript{147}Lyle Wright, "Propaganda in Early American Fiction," Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America, XXXIII (1939), 98.
fiction for purposes of propaganda for a special group or particular idea was not, however, without its critics. Miss Sedgwick judged her didactic books by only one criterion, their usefulness. In 1838 Horace Mann was planning his "Common School Library" in Massachusetts. "He conceived of school libraries as having two sections: books for adults which the children could bring home to their parents, and books for the children themselves." His future sister-in-law Elizabeth Peabody sent him Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales* as a possible book for the children's section. Mann replied, "I have read several of the 'Twice-Told Tales.' They are written beautifully - 'fine' is the true word. But we want something nearer to *duty & Business*. Miss Sedgwick has her eye on the true point." Her name was included in the final list of authors for the library.

148 John Motley, the historian, wrote in 1847, "We have been a little fatigued with the reforming tendency of writers of fiction, the authors who are for changing everything, abolishing everything in existence .... Certainly the world should be reformed, but not entirely by novel writers .... Slavery must be abolished, in­temperance must be annihilated, the prisons, the schools, the hospitals must all be overhauled; Congress must be purged, the White House swept clean; the press, the pulpit, and the courthouse looked after .... but all these topics are not necessarily good material for the novelist." *North American Review*, LXV (July 1847), 89.


Her didactic books set the trend for much of the domestic and sentimental fiction of the last half of the nineteenth century. Their heroines were the forerunners of Pollyanna, Pansy, and Mrs. Wiggs. The domestic tales of Miss Sedgwick and later authors centered around the home, particularly the parlor and the kitchen, and thus localized and domesticated the eighteenth century sentimental novel which often took to the road for its action. When Mr. Beckwith in The Poor Rich Man builds the Aikins a new home, Harry Aikin's first question to his family is, "Where shall we begin first, at the kitchen or parlour?" (p. 173). The kitchen realism so common in her tales was easily imitated by later authors who grafted it on to the already existing plot line of the earlier sentimental novel. Now villains threatened the existing happiness of heroines not only with seduction but also with foreclosure of the mortgage.

The one quality common to all domestic fiction in the nineteenth century is its militant optimism. In the 1830's and 1840's, it had become a national virtue. To most Americans the future seemed bright, the millennium around the corner. Readers then would have had no difficulty in agreeing with Mrs. Wiggs whose only comment when her house burned was "Thank God, it was the pig instid
of the baby that was burned.\textsuperscript{151} The sum and substance of the sentimental philosophy "lay in keeping the dust off ... rose-colored spectacles."\textsuperscript{152} The sentimentalists believed in the adage, "In the mud and scum of things,/ Something always, always sings."\textsuperscript{153} Even tears were "illumined with heart-sunshine."\textsuperscript{154} Perhaps the reason for the popularity of these domestic sentimental tales can be found in what the clerk Leon tells Emma Bovary in \textit{Madame Bovary}: "Noble characters and pure affections and happy scenes are very comforting things. They're a refuge from life's disillusionments."

Not even when the country was on the brink of financial disaster, as it was in 1837, did the sentimentalists lose their faith in the optimistic creed. By the spring of 1837 the "cardhouse" of speculation had collapsed. George Templeton Strong wrote in his diary for that year, "Terrible state of things out of doors. Merchants failing by dozen. Some fear that all the banks will stop payment. We are on the

\textsuperscript{151}\textit{Rice, op. cit.}, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{152}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{153}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{154}\textit{Elizabeth Wetherell (Warner), Queechy (New York, 1852)}, p. 642.
eve of a change, a revolution in business matters but it is a change that cannot be effected without shaping the whole fabric to the very foundation ...."\(^155\) Captain Frederick Marryat, the English novelist, noted unemployed mechanics on the streets "with the air of famished wolves." His portrait of New York during the depression is quite graphic:

Not a smile on one countenance among the crowd who pass and repass; hurried step, some worn faces, rapid exchange of salutations, or hasty communications of anticipatory ruin before the sun goes down. Here two or three are gathered on one side, whispering and watching that they are not overheard .... The violent shock had been communicated ... through the country to a distance of hundreds of miles, Canals, railroads, and all public works, have been discontinued, and the Irish emigrant leans against his shanty, with his spade idle in his hand, and starves as his thoughts wander back to his own Emerald Isle.\(^156\)

Miss Sedgwick wrote to her niece in April, 1837, "You can have little idea, who are surrounded by those who have been accustomed to live upon the fruits of their labor, of the confusion and dismay produced here by the general bursting of bubbles, and the consequent failure of the means of actual support. The people are ... not blue, but purple. The panic pervades the

\(^{155}\)Nevins and Thomas, op. cit., I, 55-56.

\(^{156}\)Captain Frederick Marryat, A Diary in America (Philadelphia, 1839), p. 16.
community. The dry-goods' shops are almost deserted ... and you will see the line of counters, with clerks on one side walking up and down like so many ghosts, and no buyers on the other. Even Broadway, to use the slang phrase, feels it. This is the season ... of spring butterflies - the gay season of Broadway - but now it is almost dingy as it was in the cholera season. Nothing is talked of but 'who has failed to-day?' and the buried carcasses of to-day are covered by the fresh ones of to-morrow.157

Yet the stories she wrote at this time indicate little awareness of the implications to society of the panic. In her public writings, at least, she maintained the sentimental creed of optimism. In an article for the New Yorker (1837), "Who, and What, Has Not Failed," she admitted that people lost much through the financial failure; still she will give to her readers "the results of my observations /on who and what has not failed/ in the hope that it /sic/ may lead others to look beyond the shadow of this eclipse." Books, nature, kindness and fidelity in domestic service, and eternal riches have not failed. "Riches may take to themselves wings and fly away, but the love of parents, of brothers

and sisters, the beauty and joy of infancy, the riches which Heaven has ordained and watches over, never fail." She had little sympathy for those who speculated and lost. In "New Year's Day," a story about the panic of 1837, she upbraids Mercer who had speculated. He "had weakly yielded to the first temptation to join the rash and wicked throng who 'make haste to be rich.' He had departed from the principles which he had adopted as the rule of his life - the principle that fortune is the legitimate result of labor and the representative of the economical virtues, and that it stands low in the scale of human felicities."

Dr. Channing had not been greatly disturbed by the panic. He felt certain that "people will find out, at length, that money is not the supreme end of the social compact." The panic was only a means of showing people what true riches were. It proved that honest poverty was better than hollow wealth. If one modeled

158 "Who, and What, Has Not Failed," New Yorker, III (June 17, 1837), 199.

159 Miss Sedgwick's own brothers were in 1825 engaged in speculation. The failure of their business venture might have contributed to Harry's breakdown. Dewey, op. cit., p. 174.

160 "New Year's Day," Columbian Lady's and Gentleman's Magazine, V (February 1846), 85.

161 Quoted in Edgell, op. cit., p. 186.
his life after Susan May's, he could feel confident that all would be fine in the end. Financial failure was one of those specks of dust one had to brush off his rose-colored glasses. The cause of the panic, according to the sentimentalist, lay in the fact that people put the wrong value on wealth and that they were not cultivating the domestic virtues.

But it did not occur to Channing or Miss Sedgwick that the cause might lie within the framework of society itself. The true nature of poverty escaped her. No matter how sympathetic Miss Sedgwick was to the poor, she could not get away from her patrician upbringing. The poor were her social inferiors; she spoke and thought of them in condescending terms. She wished to help them, but her solution was ineffectual. It could work only in the limited world of the sentimental novel. Rather than face an unpleasant subject, she advocated compromise or promised a bright tomorrow. She viewed facts in a beautiful but imperfect light. The sentimentalists "regarded the America of their own day as a mere vestibule to Utopia. They preferred to dwell in a cozy cloudland of sentiment, secure in a haven of dreams."  

162 Cautious as Miss Sedgwick had been in

162 Brown, op. cit., p. 359.
Clarence about the doctrine of perfectibility, she concluded her literary career with the portrait of the model man, the perfect man. If one only patterned his life upon him, then all social problems would vanish. It was as simple as all that.

Harriet Martineau correctly accounted for the optimism of the sentimentalists when she wrote of Miss Sedgwick, "She praised or was silent." This was the national failing. George Templeton Strong could write of "the indifference with which right and wrong are looked on by people in this land and generation, of their insensibility to the truth that there's any distinction between the two that can't be excused and palliated and diluted and done away with." Richard Henry Dana was more specific with reference to Miss Sedgwick. He wrote to Dr. C. S. Henry in May of 1838, "As to Miss Sedgwick, I have not read the particular work /The Poor Rich Man or Live and Let Live/. And

163 "The most sanguine believer in perfectibility is in danger of forgetting the capacities of man, and giving up his creed altogether when he looks upon the actual interests and pursuits that occupy him." Clarence, II, 72.


165 Nevins and Thomas, op. cit., I, 283.
the reason why I have not read that and several of Miss S_______'s works is that she never interests me in her books. She wants refinement, deep thought, knowledge of human nature; her men and women all stand on one leg - I mean one apiece; and her views, political and religious, are superficial and erroneous.\textsuperscript{166}

But these were minority voices. To Fanny Appleton, a distant cousin and the second Mrs. Longfellow, she was "a female St. John, breathing forth, on all who come near her, an atmosphere of goodness and love that is irresistibly winning and heart-warming .... There is no human creature she will not bless with some corner of her great heart .... More and more does she wind round your heart-strings, adapting herself to the feelings of every age and mood beyond any person I ever saw."\textsuperscript{167} One reader in 1851 wrote Miss Sedgwick that if he could, he would devote all his life to the circulation of her books, "which I think would be doing God service, and one of the best missions yet undertaken, and would be more to hasten forward the millennium ... than all the sectarian preaching in the land ... I have got our Unitarian minister to say he


\textsuperscript{167}Wagenknecht, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 52-53.
will give a copy of 'home' to every couple he marries.'

Bryant likewise testified to the power of her didactic books over the feelings of their readers: "Mr. Wesley Harper, one of the brothers who established the great publishing house ... which published several of these minor works of Miss Sedgwick, was in the practise of revising the proof-sheets before they were sent to the press. In performing that office, he once remarked to me that he was fairly carried away from weeping profusely. I can assure the reader that it is no easy feat to draw tears from the eyes of a veteran proof-reader.'

To most Americans Miss Sedgwick was the moral conscience of the nation in the decades before the Civil War. She was the spokesman for American family life, the upholder of the home and the domestic virtues. But her approach to the problems of the day - particularly poverty - was no more effective than that provided by a pot of chicken soup or a jar of calf's-foot jelly. Social problems in America as the country reached the mid-point of the nineteenth century required more than the well-meaning solutions of the amateur social critic. No longer was it enough for one to aim well. Good intentions had to be replaced by positive action.

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CHAPTER IV

Miss Sedgwick was one of the most popular and prolific authors of short stories and sketches in the first half of the nineteenth century. She wrote altogether one hundred and twelve pieces for gift books, periodicals, newspapers, books, and special collections. As a contributor to the first American gift book, The Atlantic Souvenir (1824), she was a pioneer in the field of gift book writing, furnishing pieces for five of its eight issues as well as contributing to eleven of the fifteen issues of another early annual, The Token. It is an overstatement, however, to classify her as Fred Lewis Pattee does as an "annual-ist" since only forty of her pieces originally appeared in gift books.

She also contributed forty-eight pieces to periodicals in the years between 1829-1858. Her remaining stories and sketches appeared in newspapers, anthologies, and in hard covers as separate publications.

Up to 1838 most of her short work was done for the gift book, only five pieces appearing in periodicals as opposed to thirty-two in gift books. After 1838 periodical contributions rose to forty-one while gift book items fell to eight.

Fred Lewis Pattee, "Catharine Maria Sedgwick," American Literature, X (March 1938), 102-103.
This difference is indicative of the lowering of standards in the gift book and the correspondingly higher standards and pay of the periodical. The history of the gift book in America is brief and somewhat spectacular. Gift books were elaborately ornamented books with illustrated stories and poems, so named because they served as Christmas or New Year's gifts.

Gift books "appealed to the eye and the heart rather than to the mind; they were handsome and costly; they were 'artistic' and 'refined.' They met a demand for 'culture' and showed the purchaser that his country could produce - and would support - its own painters, engravers, and authors."² No gift book was complete without "a mezzo-tinted wreath, a chromolithographed garland, a scroll, or a sunburst in which the donor might subscribe his and the recipient's names and a suitable sentiment in copperplate handwriting."³ The decor of these books was of more importance than their contents. Gift books "existed principally for the elegant color plates and steel engravings


to which the text often served merely as an explanation. Publishers generally spent three times as much on the so-called embellishments as on the printed matter and twice as much again on the bindings of watered silk, flamboyantly stamped gilding, embossed leather, or varnished papier-mâché with inlaid mother-of-pearl. These embellishments, as George Templeton Strong noted in his diary for June 11, 1824, were strong selling points: "What ridiculous fools the New York literati are as regards books! There was an old copy of some trashy old work or annual, which I would not have taken as a gift," but since it had decorations and engravings, it sold for more than it was worth. Only Once with contributions by Lowell, Bryant, Whittier, and Miss Sedgwick sold for twice as much with engravings as without.

The content of the gift book was highly sentimental and romantic. Gift books were "the last authorized asylum for elegant insipidity." Stories were set in

5 *Nevins and Thomas, op. cit.*, I, 24.
6 *Only Once* (New York, 1862). The cost was fifty cents. There was a twenty-five cent edition but without the engravings.
7 *North American Review*, LVIII (April 1844), 487.
distant times in far off lands. Illustrations were gawdy: "Steel engravings or water color, the plates were at harmony in their rampant sweetness—florid landscapes; female figures, generous-breasted and olive eyed; tableaux in the pastoral, or delicately amorous, or pathetic veins." The titles of these gift books were appropriately sentimental and romantic and appealed to the feminine mind: The Magnolia, The Dewdrop, Gem of the Season, The Thought Blossom, The Jewell, The Garland, The Moss Rose, The Honeysuckle, The Pearl: or Affection's Gift, and The Snow Flake.

Between 1824 and the Civil War Years more than one thousand gift books appeared. They ranged in price from thirty-seven cents for muslin bound numbers to twenty dollars for folios. The Atlantic Souvenir, with a circulation over ten thousand, sold for $2.75, $3.75, and $4.50. The centers of publication were the large Eastern cities: New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. The scale of pay to contributors was not especially high. For two and a half pages of verse in the Atlantic Souvenir for 1827 Washington Irving received a copy of the gift book valued at $1.67.

The Legendary paid one dollar a page for prose and The Religious Souvenir two dollars. Miss Sedgwick received more than fifty dollars for the five stories she wrote for the Atlantic Souvenir. The most popular of gift book writers, judging from her many appearances in the different annuals, was Lydia Sigourney with two hundred and twenty-five items; Hannah Gould follows with one hundred and fifty-three, Mrs. Emma C. Embury with one hundred and twenty-eight, and Miss Sedgwick with forty-seven. 9

Because it was expensive to produce engraved prints, publishers were reluctant to discard plates after they had been used. Stories and poems, therefore, were often written to fit plates that had already served for other pieces. Such a practice did not help the literary caliber of the gift book. To reduce cost even more, unscrupulous publishers would issue the same gift book under different titles. Thus The Amaranth for 1849 appeared as The Garland in 1850, The Keepsake of Friendship in 1851, The Magnolia in 1852, The Token of Friendship in 1853, The Casket in 1854, and Memory’s Gift in 1869. Publishers could get away with this fraud because most gift books were valued more as ornaments than

9Of these forty-seven, seven originally appeared in periodicals and newspapers. For further information on the gift book and fees see Thompson, op. cit., p. 22; J. Albert Robbins, "Fees Paid to Authors by Certain American Periodicals between 1840-1850," Studies in Bibliography, Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia, II (Charlottesville, Va., 1949), 95-104; and Bradford A. Booth, "Tastes in Annuals," American Literature, XIV (November 1942), 299-302.
as books to be read. They were "no more fit for daily reading than the horsehair chair sofa or the polished table of the heavily curtained parlor were suited to everyday use. For reading the family wanted a book in which it could be absorbed for some time, one to hold it together as a harmonious intellectual unit evenings on end after early supper." Moreover, the reader of the gift book was usually not the purchaser. Thus the receiver of the book was not able to examine it before its purchase.

Since publishers were content to re-use old plates, authors who wished to appear in print with something new turned to a different medium, the periodical. Readers found that for the price of one gift book they could receive twelve monthly illustrated collections of stories and poems, in addition to news, gossip, and advice. The Ladies' Garland, for example, offered its subscribers "Literature, Instruction, Amusement, and Female Biography" for one dollar a year. As public taste "began to turn from the imaginary and the ideal to the actual there no longer existed that detachment to which a publication printed at yearly intervals of necessity catered .... When

10 Hart, op. cit., p. 89.
political and social inquiry began to spread, the romantic enthusiasm expressed by the annuals was on the wane."¹¹ Contributors turned to the magazine which paid more and reached a wider audience than the gift book. Miss Sedgwick's career well illustrates this change. In 1838 she contributed, as a token of appreciation for getting a free copy of the magazine, a short piece, "Passages From A Journal At Rockaway," to the *Southern Literary Messenger*. She wrote the editor that she usually was not in the habit of writing for periodicals less dignified than the annuals.¹² But the increasingly low standards of the gift book caused her to turn to the increasingly popular magazine. Before 1840 the bulk of her short pieces appeared in gift books, after 1840, in periodicals.

Although less decorative and less expensive than the gift book, the periodical was not too different in content. Both contained romantic stories, but there were more articles intended for the entire family in the periodical than there were in the gift book. Magazines such as *Southern Literary Messenger*, *Knickerbocker*, and *The Democratic Review* appealed to men as well as women. But there were magazines addressed

¹¹Thompson, op. cit., p. 5.

¹²"Passages From A Journal At Rockaway," *Southern Literary Messenger*, IV (September 1838), 573.
mainly to women. The "fountainhead" of publication for women's magazines was Philadelphia. Here the indefatigable Sarah Josepha Hale edited Godey's Lady's Book and Rufus Griswold helped edit Graham's Magazine, two of the most important women's magazines of the century.
Louis Antoine Godey, the proprietor of Godey's, boasted that he retained the services of several prominent American authors who were paid "the highest rate of renumeration offered by any periodical in the country." 13 This was about two dollars a page, but competition forced rates up. Graham's offered leading authors twelve dollars a page for prose and fifty dollars for long poems. Godey's and other magazines followed suit. In 1843 Charles Sedgwick answered Griswold's request for an article by his sister saying she had agreed to write it at the Godey rate of five hundred dollars for forty-eight pages. Godey's was paying ten dollars a page to keep her; Griswold agreed to pay this rate if she would write for Graham's. She appeared in five issues of the magazine at the price she asked. 14

13 Quoted in Branch, op. cit., pp. 111-112. Both Graham and Godey "boosted the value of literature." Godey paid Mrs. Sigourney five hundred dollars annually for three years for the use of her name on the title page of Godey's although she had no part in the editorship of the magazine. "She was simply selling 'name value' ...." Ibid., pp. 136-137.

14 May 6, 1843, Griswold Papers, Boston Public Library.
There is another explanation behind her shift from gift book to periodical. Up to 1835, the year she turned to the writing of didactic tracts, sixty per cent of her short pieces were stories. After 1835 the percentage dropped to thirty-two although the number of stories increased from seventeen to twenty-six. The other sixty-eight per cent represent sketches and didactic pieces. The change from short story to sketch and article coincides with her change from novel to didactic tract. The sketch and article provided her with more of a chance for moralizing than the short story.

Women spent their leisure time not only reading magazines and gift books but writing for them. By paying two dollars for a goose quill size pen, or five dollars for a condor size, a woman could become an author. Miss Sedgwick had to smile at a girl's refusal in "The White Hills in October" to publish her journal. "Hesitancy to write for the public because not fitted for the task" was a novelty. 15 Timothy Flint wrote in the Athenaeum for 1835, "No country manifests such infinite forth-puttings of the

15 "The White Hills in October," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, XIV (December 1856), 44.

cacoethes scribendi as ours ... strange! that with a hundred thousand such writers we should not soon accumulate the richest of all literatures.

Miss Sedgwick satirized the amateur author in "Cacoethes Scribendi." Mrs. Cowland who "fancied no conversation could be sensible or improving that was not about books" comes across several gift books. She reads them "as perchance no one else ever did, from beginning to end - faithfully. Not a sentence - not a word was skipped. She paused to consider commas, colons, and dashes .... and when she closed the book, she felt a call to become an author, and before she retired to bed she obeyed the call, as if it had been, in truth, a divinity stirring within her."

In her zeal she persuades her entire family to write. When her mother declines because she cannot spell, Mrs. Cowland happily explains, "Spell! - that is not of the least consequence - the printers correct the spelling." Mrs. Cowland has no difficulty in finding subject matter, for she divides the world into two parts - authors and subjects and, to her daughter's dismay, uses her own family as subject material. Alice suf-

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fers from her mother's literary activities since the townspeople are suspicious of anyone living under the same roof with an author. So afraid of books does Alice become that "the last Waverley novel actually lay in the house a month before she opened it." In her haste to become an author, Mrs. Cowland does not remember "that in literature ... the most exquisite productions are wrought from the smallest quantity of raw material." Mrs. Cowland's enthusiasm is contagious, and the story ends with a picture of her two foolish sisters actively engaged in writing: "Miss Sally's pen stood emblematically erect in her turban; Miss Ruth ... had overset her inkstand, and the drops were trickling down her white dressing, or, as she called it, writing gown."\(^{17}\)

One reason why so many amateurs fancied they could write was that the formula for short fiction seemed quite simple. The same plots, devices, and incidents appeared in story after story. So alike was most short fiction of the time that publishers were able to get away with issuing the same gift book repeatedly, for the reader could never be sure if he had read the story before or one similar to it.

\(^{17}\)"Cacoethes Scribendi," \textit{Atlantic Souvenir} (Phila., 1830), pp. 17-38.
In "The Tremulous Formula: Form and Technique in Godey's Fiction," Joseph Satterwhite examines Godey's short fiction. What he says of Godey's is equally true of fiction in other magazines and gift books. The decades between 1830 and 1860 regarded fiction as an unexacting literary form without a scrupulous technique of its own. Most writers considered short fiction as truncated novels. Mrs. Hale thought of the short story as "a shrunken novel, containing all the complications of the latter, but, because it was crowded into a far smaller container, being far more complicated and ingenious .... For the principles of selectivity, compression, and design ... authors substituted condensation, abridgement, and abbreviation." The short story was "simply fiction forced into conformity to magazine restrictions."

One result of such a theory was stock characterization in the short story for there was little space in which to develop character. Heroines were like Lucy Arnott in Miss Sedgwick's "Jacot: An Adventure on Board the St. George," "alone in the world with her parrot, but with a


19 Ibid., p. 102.

most happy, sweet, and cheerful disposition ...."²¹ And if a heroine did not have a feathered friend for company, she had aged parents or younger brothers and sisters to care for. She was like Lizzie Percival in Miss Sedgwick's "New Year's Day," who, although poor, gives presents to her family, helps a widowed lady, suffuses charm wherever she goes, and becomes engaged, all in one day.²² In any event heroines were "fair-skinned, fair-haired, blue-eyed ... of a most modest, quiet, engaging demeanor."²³ Heroes were always noble in thought and deed. Villains resembled the postmaster in Miss Sedgwick's "The Postoffice," "a man of short stature and spare body, with a weasleface and eyes glowing like a rat's."²⁴

A second result of this concept of the short story was that there was rarely enough space for details. Thus in "The Eldest Sister," Miss Sedgwick writes, "The narrow limits of our story will not permit us to enter into any of the details of Clifford's fashionable train-


²²"New Year's Day," THE TOKEN (Boston, 1836), pp. 11-31.


²⁴"The Postoffice," GRAHAM'S MAGAZINE, XXIII (August 1843), 65.
ing."\(^{25}\) She cannot go into details in "St. Catherine's Eve" about Clotilde's heresy: "Our story has already swelled beyond due bounds."\(^{26}\) "We have not space to relate Annowon's fate," we are told in "Amy Cranstoun,"\(^{27}\) and in "A Reminiscence of Federalism" she "resolutely ... had to/ pass over the multitude of anecdotes" that occurred to her.\(^{28}\)

When she did provide details, Miss Sedgwick felt guilty about using up her most precious space. "Fanny M'Dermot" does not get beyond three pages when Miss Sedgwick intrudes: "We have gone too much into detail; we must limit ourselves to the most striking particulars of our story."\(^{29}\)

Another feature of short fiction of the time is the claim authors make for the story's veracity. In "Truth vs. Fiction," a dialogue between Miss Sedgwick and a friend, the author tells her friend she is going to write a story based on fact. The friend replies


\(^{26}\)"St. Catherine's Eve," Ibid., p. 231.

\(^{27}\)"Amy Cranstoun," The Magnolia (New York, 1836), p. 175.


\(^{29}\)"Fanny M'Dermot," Godey's Lady's Book, XXX (Jan. 1845), 16.
that such foundations are "so narrow that you are compelled to run your structure far up into the air ... However strong the assurance may be of a fact foundation, there is always uncertainty attached to a fictitious narrative ... in my mind there's all the difference in the effect of a real and imaginary character."\(^{30}\)

At times this claim for veracity was not without justification. "Romance in Real Life" was based on the experiences of Hector St. John Crevecoeur and his children at the end of the Revolution. The meeting with the shipwrecked officer, his commission to search for the Crevecoeur children, and the discovery of Crevecoeur's daughter are all true. The tale concludes with the remark that "it is a true story, and its materials must be received from tradition, and not supplied by imagination."\(^{31}\) The Robinson murder of Mr. Suydam in New York in 1840 provides the basis for "Wilton Harvey."\(^{32}\) "Uncle Bob" who appears in


\(^{32}\)"Wilton Harvey," Tales and Sketches, series two (New York, 1852), p. 245.
Miss Sedgwick's reminiscences of her childhood is Uncle David in the story of the same name.  

So common is this claim that we might note some of its appearances in Miss Sedgwick's short fiction: "An old friend once described to me the following scene, of which ... he was an eye-witness, and desired me to record it," "The following account, received from a friend, we have ventured to transcribe, and prepare for publication," "I shall refer you to actual living examples—no fictions," "We, therefore, request our readers will believe our story, and we pledge them the word of a faithful biographer that we will not add a single fictitious circumstance to embellish it," and "This intrinsic dignity [of veracity] I claim for the subjects of my humble tale." In


38 "The Village Postoffice," *New Yorker*, IV (November 4, 1837), 514.
"The Catholic Iroquois" an innkeeper who knew one of the characters in the tale tells her the story. So common had the device become in the nineteenth century that when an author did base a story on fact, he often had a difficult time convincing his readers of its truth. In "The Chivalric Sailor" Miss Sedgwick writes, "The assertion that a tale is founded on fact, is a pious fraud of story tellers, too stale to impose on any but the very young, or very credulous. We hope, therefore, not to be suspected of resorting to an expedient that would expose our poverty without relieving it, when we declare that the leading incidents of the following tale are true." 39

The basic plot of Miss Sedgwick's short fiction can be traced back to Clarissa. Marriage and the relation between child and parent were her chief concerns as they were Richardson's and the whole school of sentimental authors. Satterwhite in his account of Godey's fiction lists the major patterns he finds in that magazine's short stories. The first is the pining or decline pattern in which a young girl forbidden to marry by a cruel guardian or ambitious parent lingers away or


else, after much mental anguish, marries the man of her choice. Agnes Harper's mother in Miss Sedgwick's "Scenes From Life in Town" makes her marry a man she does not love, and her happiness is ruined forever. Agnes' marriage was "a mere external form into which affection never breathed a living soul." The situation is similar in "The Village Postoffice." Lina wishes to marry for love, but her stepmother wants her to marry for social advancement. "The Unpresuming Mr. Hudson" satirizes the ambitious parent. The story tells of "the trials of a pretty young girl who is chaperoned to watering-places by a silly, expecting, and ridiculous mother." "Matty Gore" is an excellent illustration of the trials and tribulations a young heroine must endure before achieving happiness. Matty cares for her aged father, a stock situation in sentimental fiction. She wishes to marry Russel Milner, but Gore disapproves of the match and tells Matty that if she marries Russel, she cannot enter his home again. Matty believes it her duty to remain with her father, "that in all circum-


stances the precept, 'honour your parents,' required the surrender of her own wishes to her father's." Gore brings into his home a common-law wife; more than before, Matty feels she should stay to protect him: "If I could but save him ... I would relinquish every earthly hope; I am weak, but for such a work, there is strength that will be made perfect in my weakness." Incensed by her attitude, Gore orders her from his home, and she subsequently marries Russel. Her troubles, however, are far from being over. Russel and her little boy soon die, but Matty bears up under this grief for "anything may be borne, but sin and separation from God." On her way back to her father's home, Matty is robbed. Things have not gone any better with Gore. His wife has been unfaithful with his son who eventually commits suicide when he learns that he has unwittingly robbed his father. This series of misfortunes brings Gore back to his senses, and reconciled with Matty, they move from the city to the country. The Bible, whose commandments Gore had scorned, no longer seems to him "a mere piece of furniture." Matty "now only shows she has suffered by her ready and deep sympathy with all who suffer. Her losses on earth are her treasures in heaven ... and though 'poor, she maketh
Another story on the theme of filial obedience is "The Country Cousin." During the Revolution Anna and Emma, two sisters, nurse back to health a British soldier. Anna marries him much against her father's wishes and is "cast out from his door, commanded never again to enter his presence /;/ every name of dishonor was heaped upon her, and while she lay on his doorstep, fainting in her sister's arms, for Emma, in spite of his commands supported her, the last sounds she heard were her father's curse." Her baby is born blind and her husband goes back to his regiment and promptly forgets her. Emma is willing to enter into a loveless marriage her father desires if doing so will soften his attitude towards Anna. Sometime after these events, McArthur, Anna's husband, is struck by a sudden illness, "that monitor, so friendly, so necessary to human virtue, the messenger of Heaven." Upon his recovery he seeks out his wife. On his way to the sisters' home, he passes a graveyard where he sees

44"Matty Gore," The Religious Souvenir (Hartford, Conn., 1840, pp. 50-90. The story was published under the name of Miss C. E. Sedgwick, but the incident in the story taken from The Travellers points to Catharine Maria Sedgwick as the author. Miss C. E. Sedgwick was her sister-in-law, Mrs. Charles Sedgwick, who published several stories and books.
an apparition of his wife in white. He later discovers that it was no ghost he saw, but rather his wife making a visit to the grave of her little baby who had died. Reunited to Anna, McArthur becomes a faithful husband.45

Many other stories deal with marriage and filial obedience. In some, the child pays heed to the parent's advice. In "The White Hills in October" Mary is adamant about obeying her father: "I cannot marry with my father's disapprobation. I cannot and I will not." In some instances obeying the parent is the wisest course of action. Lady Ann Harvey45 "The Country Cousin," The Token (Boston, 1830), pp. 153-193. In the Sedgwick Papers at the Massachusetts Historical Society there is an incomplete manuscript of a short story concerning divided loyalties during the Revolution. Colonel Lee sees the image of his "dead" wife in a graveyard. She had been separated from him by some Indians. The image in the graveyard is no apparition, but his wife sleeping by the grave of their recently dead child. This same scene appears in "The Country Cousin," although the events leading up to the scene are quite different. On the back of the manuscript is the phrase, "The ghostly part of the story true." In the manuscript itself, Miss Sedgwick wrote, "This singular circumstance is well authenticated and but for the explanation which truth has compelled us to give might have been woven into a ghost story capable of encountering the skepticism that at the present time seems as effectual a ban against all unearthly visitants as ...." The manuscript stops at this point. Although she gave up the story, she retained in "The Country Cousin" the method of narration (in both stories an aunt is the narrator), the time, and the graveyard scene. All else is different.

46 "The White Hills in October," op. cit., p. 45.
in "The First Love" falls in love with a penniless artist whom her father sends to Rome to complete his studies, pointing out to both daughter and suitor the absurdity and difficulty of such a match. For a while Ann is in despair, but fifteen years later is a happy wife and mother of four children. She gives the news of the artist's death not a second thought.\(^47\) The situation is just the reverse in Married or Single? in which Augusta Tallis, also in love with a penniless artist, listens to her father's advice, deserts the artist, marries the man of her father's choice, and see her marriage become a failure. In "The Irish Girl" William Maxwell falls in love with Margaret, an Irish Catholic. His father, a bigoted Puritan, will have nothing to do with the Irish. Rather than displease his father, William breaks his engagement and marries another girl. Despondent, Margaret commits suicide. The blame is laid upon Maxwell, not his son, for "it's his father's rule upon him."

\(^47\)"The First Love," Sartain's Union Magazine, IV (Feb. 1849), 81-84.

\(^48\)"The Irish Girl," The United States Magazine and Democratic Review, N.S.X (February 1842), 129-140.
While most heroines had only a displeased parent or guardian to face, Jessie Blair in "Owasonook" has a whole village and church to which she must answer. Jessie is the orphaned ward of the hypocritical Deacon Nathan Bay, "among the sturdiest in belief, the least scrupulous in practice." In order to secure her sizeable inheritance, Bay marries her to his step-son. When she protests, he tells her, "What has a girl of fifteen to do but obey the will of her elders?" When the son dies the Deacon, still desirous of her fortune, writes Jessie an incriminatory letter offering marriage. Soon afterwards, Jessie falls in love with Archy Henry, a fine young man but not a member of the church. The jealous Deacon warns Jessie, "Marry Archy Henry, and you will be ruined in this world — ruined in the next. Look for excommunication now, and poverty forever." Although Jessie does not wish to marry Archy outside the church, for secured by its iron grasp "she felt in all simplicity of heart a reverence for the authorities of the church," she eventually does marry him, and the Deacon, true to his word, calls Jessie before the church and deprives her of membership. "The displeasure of the church was to her the sure sign of the displeasure of her Divine Master." From that time on, happiness
is unknown in the Henry home. "Temporal and spiritual ruin were raining down on the young couple, and to poor Mrs. Henry's susceptible conscience and excited imagination they came in the form of judgments for the violation of her church covenant." Jessie's health fails; she sinks into deep dejection. But by a happy coincidence on which readers could always rely to end a story happily and speedily, Archy finds the Deacon's letter which Jessie had thought burned. The Deacon's villainy is exposed and Jessie is reinstated into the good graces of the church, but not until Archy addresses the church elders: "If she has violated the letter of your laws, who has better kept their spirit?" For Jessie's suffering Heavenly reward will be hers: "I don't know about your rules here," says Archy, "but I am sure she is, and will remain in good standing and full membership with the church above."

A variation of the "pining" or decline pattern is the abnegation pattern wherein the heroine gives up love and happiness to care for a parent and subsequently dies of grief or bears up with Christian fortitude. "Matty Gore" is an example of both patterns. Grettel in "The Beauty of Boninberg"

49 "Owasoook," Sartain's Union Magazine, VI (June 1850), 399-407.
stays in the village to care for her aged mother instead of going to America with her sweetheart. Her life consists in "working for others and caring for others." Agnes Gray in "Old Maids" breaks off her engagement to Orne when she overhears declarations of love between Orne and her sister Lizzy. Orne turns out to be shiftless and unable to support Lizzy and his children. The burden of support, therefore, falls upon Agnes who devotes "the fruits of all her toils to Lizzy and the education of her children." Rosy in "The Postoffice" goes to America with her mother, leaving Dennis, her fiancé, to care for Sir Philip's deformed son. When her father asks why Dennis is not going with her, Rosy replies, "Never, never, father; he is duty-bound to Master Edward. It's the nearest duty we must do. I'll go with you, mother - I will, and I'll say never a word against Dennis doing God's bidding ... Should I that love him before all things, stand between him and his duty?" Rosy's patience and Dennis'  


51 "Old Maids," op. cit. This story is similar to the anonymous "Some Passages in the Life of an Old Maid," The Token (Boston, 1828), pp. 259-278.
faithfulness to duty are, of course, rewarded, and the story ends with the two lovers reunited.\textsuperscript{52} In the second part of "Romance in Real Life" the French ambassador falls in love with Marie, but is engaged to her best friend. He marries the friend who dies a year later leaving behind a request that her husband now marry Marie. The noble wife forsakes life for the happiness of others.\textsuperscript{53}

Even when the heroine does marry, all is not the primrose path. The third kind of marital story is the domestic tragedy. In this story the husband is reckless, as is McArthur in "The Country Cousin" or is a drunkard as in "Mary Hollis."\textsuperscript{54} Usually illness, death, or a spiritual conversion brings him back to the family hearth. Women also could stray. In "A Berkshire Tradition," Miss Sedgwick presents the story of Lucy Freeman. While her husband is at war, Lucy is unfaithful. Colonel Freeman does not blame Lucy for her errant ways: "I, who was her earthly

\textsuperscript{52}"The Postoffice," \textit{Graham's Magazine}, XXIII (August 1843), 61-67.

\textsuperscript{53}"Romance in Real Life," \textit{op. cit.}

\textsuperscript{54}"Mary Hollis" (New York, 1822). This, Miss Sedgwick's first short story, was published in hard covers by the New York Unitarian Books Society.
providence, should have preserved her from temptation, and not thrust her into it .... Surely, if a mortal's penitence can expiate sin, she has washed hers out by months of continual tears - by days and nights of untold misery. My life henceforth shall be devoted to her - if she lives." The "if" is a big one, for when a wife has transgressed, her fate is usually death. Lucy manages to live on for a while, and the Colonel cares for her as a child not as a wife, for she had "divorced us - broken for ever our marriage bond." First her baby dies and then Lucy herself in a teary deathbed scene:

'My friend! - father! - husband!' she faintly articulated, 'may I call you husband?'
'Oh Lucy! - dear wife! - yes!'
'You have forgiven me?'
'Forgiven! - don't speak that word - you are dearer to me than my own soul .... Don't speak of the past ....'
'My husband .... dearest - best - we are again united!'
'Yes, my wife,' he answered, 'for ever and for ever!'
A gleam of joy shot through her eyes, a heavenly brightness overspread her whole face, it came and went like a flash of lightning, but it left an in-effaceable impression on those who saw it. To them it was a preternatural light - a visible token of God's presence.  

Often Miss Sedgwick resorts to the use of an angelic child to bring husband and wife together.  

Mrs. Ryson in "Crescent Beach" has become infatuated with Mr. Reed. On the day she plans to run off with Reed, her young daughter Juliet, aware of the situation, mysteriously drowns. Juliet "had fulfilled her mission - she had saved her mother's honor, and passed to immortality." Her death saves the Ryson marriage.  

In all these stories, Miss Sedgwick presents the reader with the basis for a happy marriage. One should enter it with a full sense of its duties. Marriage was not, she believed, a commodity to be bought and sold on the market; it was a divine institution. Perhaps her simplest statement on what constitutes a good marriage can be found in "Look Before You Leap." Love without reason is perilous, "reason without love inadmissible; and the only sure basis is love sanctified by reason."  

Although marriage was a principle topic in Miss Sedgwick's short fiction, it was not the only subject that interested her. Several of her short pieces offer a contrast between country and city life. City living is fraught with temptations. Because of a lawsuit that drove him from the country, John Gore went to  


New York City where he fell in with "clamorous skeptics" and unscrupulous friends and thus precipitated the sad events that follow. Matty writes her father, "Those who live in cities where nothing but man's hand is seen, may forget God, especially if there is temptation about them, to lure the eye and enchant the ear." In sentimental fiction it is the simple natural life in the country that the author lauds over the complex, artificial, and corrupt life in the city. In the city man is apt to lose his sense of disinterested benevolence "in the eager competition and artificial pleasures of the city." Country living, moreover, suits the "mass of our people, for it is rational, most moral, and inexpensive."

To present the contrast between the two modes of living Miss Sedgwick often uses the plot device of having a country cousin visit her city cousin or have

58 "Matty Gore," op. cit., pp. 57 and 75.
59 "An Excursion To Manchester," Sartain's Union Magazine, I (September 1847), 111.
60 "The Falls of Bash-Fish," New Yorker, VI (January 26, 1839), 292.
such a visit reciprocated. Ella in the story of the same name visits her wealthy city cousins who are ashamed of her and snub her. They had not learned "that there are families and individuals throughout the country as intelligent and refined as those in our cities." In "Country Pleasures" Lucy goes to the country for a vacation. She writes her father in the city, "... here are no riches, no slaves, no gems, no gold trees, and silver birds. But here are kind hearts, - the kindest in the world, - and minds taught to perceive the wisdom and goodness that appear in God's works."

One reason why Miss Sedgwick deemed country life superior to city life was that in the country there was not the pressing desire to accumulate wealth as quickly as possible. Wealth, as readers of sentimental fiction knew, easily led to unhappiness. Money, Stanley in "Wilton Harvey" says, "is not...happiness or the representative of happiness!" The curse of

61"Ella," Juvenile Miscellany, VI series 3 (Boston, 1834), 73-95.

62"Country Pleasures," Juvenile Miscellany, IV series 3 (Boston, 1832), 89.
heaven falls "on those who make haste to be rich, forsaking toilsome enterprise, patient labour, and the appointed ways of ingenuity and industry for the legerdemain of visionaries and speculators."63

Although Miss Sedgwick pities those "condemned by conventional life, or the artificial conditions of society" as found in the city and termed city dwellers prisoners "who hunger and thirst after the green meadows and misty mountain tops,"64 life in the city was not without some virtues. "These two hundred thousand inhabitants of our great city (New York) are not quite deprived of the joyous influences of the season."65 There are many places in the city where one can enjoy the beauty of spring. The New York Fountains and Astor Baths "are ministers to the great mass, whose minds are reached only through their sensations."66 If man built the city, God had not entirely forsaken it. Yet it was the country she called "the Temple of God."67

Several of Miss Sedgwick's stories are concerned with Catholicism. George Templeton Strong expressed

63"Wilton Harvey," op. cit., pp. 50 and 68.
popular sentiment when he wrote on July 23, 1844, that Catholicism in America could not expand "without offending the prejudices of the nineteenth century." These prejudices took many forms: the burning of the Ursuline Convent in Charlestown, Massachusetts in 1834, the publication in 1836 of Maria Monk's violently anti-Catholic Awful Disclosures, the appearance two years earlier of Samuel F. B. Morse's influential Foreign Conspiracy Against The Liberties of the United States, which advocated an Anti-Popery Union, and the organization in 1845 of the Know-Nothing party whose aim was to keep from American shores "the jealous influence of all foreign Powers, Princes, potentates, or prejudices." One reason for this anti-Catholic attitude was that most people considered Protestant Christianity a part of the American experience. They feared that an influx of Catholics in America would see the domination of Washington of the Papal See and the disappearance of the American dream. Ithuel Bolt in James Fenimore Cooper's The Wing-and-Wing (1842) spoke for most Americans when he said that "ceremonies, and images, and robes, and ringing of bells, and bowing and scraping ... was no religion at all...."
At the same time there was in the nineteenth century a curious fascination and interest in the externals of the Catholic Church. Georgiana Bruce Kirby, a governess at Brook Farm, wrote, "It was easy for me to indulge in a little sentiment about crosses, rosaries, cathedrals, and madonnas." Several of the inhabitants and visitors of Brook Farm embraced Catholicism: Isaac Hecker, Orestes Brownson, Sophia Ripley, Sarah Stearns, and George Leach. Even Dr. Channing was "amazed ... at the infinite variety of machinery which Catholicism has brought to bear on the human mind; at the sagacity with which it has adapted itself to the various tastes and propensities of human nature" ("On Catholicism," Channing, op. cit., II, 275).

Popular novelists, as J.M.S. Tompkins points out of authors in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, were "very conscious of the picturesque attractions of convents, vows of celibacy, confession and penance; they ... were/ seduced by the emotional possibilities of the situations that can be based on these usages; but they seldom fail/ to make it quite clear that they regard/ the usages as

71 Georgiana Bruce Kirby, Years of Experience (New York, 1887), p. 182.
superstitious and irrational ...."72

Miss Sedgwick's comments on Catholicism reveal both her interest in and misunderstanding and distrust of it. What appealed to her in Catholicism was what she found sentimental in it, homage to the Virgin. This was "the most poetic and tender feature of Catholicism."73 She often compares heroines to the Virgin. Lucy in "The Country Cousin" is "so like that meek representative of all spiritual purity and womanly tenderness, the Madonna...."74

Many of the rites and symbols of Catholicism interested her. In "A Sketch" she writes, "There is sometimes much good in the confession of the Catholic church - a tangible form is given to the vague and phantom floatings of the mind."75 She speaks of the crucifix in "The Little Mendicants" as "that most thrilling symbol, around which the thoughts of desertion and sympathy - of sin and pardon - of death and external life cluster - the symbol that brings

72Tompkins, op. cit., p. 274. Mrs. Kirby, although interested in Catholicism, thought it "quite another thing to give up my right to private judgment, my right to think at all, in fact, on matters of any moment, and walk backwards into the mental inaction and spiritual tyranny of the church!" Kirby, op. cit., p. 182.


75"A Sketch," Godey's Lady's Book, XXVI (January 1843), 19.
down the monarch to the level of the poor, that raises the poor above all earthly thrones." In Hope Leslie, The Travellers, "Imelda of Bologna," "The Irish Girl," "A Huguenot Family," "Mill-Hill," and "The Catholic Iroquois," she introduces the crucifix for dramatic effect. When in Bologna she was impressed and moved by a crucifix before which people "laid down their burdens ... performed their act of worship and humiliation, and ... departed." She liked to enter a Catholic Church "in the gray of the morning while the real people that glide in and drop down before the images and pictures are as shadowy as the pictures themselves." A Catholic vesper service represented to her "the very poetry of worship." She felt that the Church skilfully made use "of the offices of their religion to harmonize with the wants and spontaneous feelings of man."

Yet her understanding of the religious life was faulty. She did not think nuns were proper teachers.

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77 Letters From Abroad To Kindred At Homes, II (New York, 1841), 128-129.
78 Ibid., II, 8.
79 Ibid., II, 143.
80 Ibid.
for young girls. "You may imagine how well fitted to prepare girls to be wives and mothers, and effective members of society, these poor wretches must be, who know the world only through their sighs and unavailing regrets." In her description of a nun's profession, she laments over young minds "before judgment is instructed by experience" being "led to shackles they can't unrivet." The ceremony seemed more of a loss than a sacrifice, for nuns excluded from their lives "forever nature's manifestations of God's wisdom and infinite love." Miss Sedgwick left the ceremony "in some confusion of mind between the sympathy ... she/ naturally felt for an act of seeming conscientious, religious devotion, and the condemnation of that act, proceeding from a Protestant education." The confusion was dispelled upon her entering a friend's home: "How much happier, how much richer is this ... as I looked around upon the family scene, than the sterile life of a convent." The life of a nun was one of "gloom and sterility, in fancied subservience to a stern Deity to be propitiated by penances and mortifications." The life of a Protestant lay sister of mercy was, by

81 Ibid., II, 188.
contrast, "a cheerful, loving, filial service, rendered to a benign Father."  

Her misunderstanding of Catholicism was one reason for her anti-Catholic bias. Emilie's conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism was "an emancipation from the shackles of rites and forms, and an enlargement of her charities .... It was simply a passage to a free service, and a wider horizon of hope and love." In "Le Bossu," a story of the times of Charlemagne, Miss Sedgwick writes of the wicked Fastrade, a devout Catholic, "Nothing could better illustrate the impotence of external religion than this proud woman, reeking with crime, and teeming with cruel purposes, worshipping the image of perfect benevolence," the crucifix. Prayers and penances were only the "lying doctrine of a perverted religion and false priesthood."  

Her anti-Catholic feelings never assume the proportion of those of Maria Monk or Samuel Morse. Her attitude can, perhaps, best be seen in her description of Mrs. Ray in "The Irish Girl." Mrs. Ray, a Puritan,  


thought it "a dreadful thing to be a Catholic, and pray to saints, and worship images, and so forth." Yet like Mrs. Ray, "Miss Sedgwick's "strong sense of right triumphed over the prejudices of education and society."85

If Catholics, in her estimation, violated the spirit of Christianity, Puritans did likewise. Her portrait of the Puritan is not a flattering one: Mrs. Wilson in *A New England Tale*, the stern Mr. Maxwell in "The Irish Girl," and the hypocritical Deacon Bray in "Owasonook." In "Amy Cranstoun" she satirizes Puritan discipline. Amy had "a wonderful facility in committing to memory ungodly ballads and soul-enslaving songs, but a sort of intellectual dyspepsia when she attempted to digest sacred literature. She never repeated an answer correctly in the assembly's catechism; and though she did not, as is reported of those afflicted by the Salem witches, faint at the reading of that precious little treatise entitled 'Cotton Milk for Babies,' she was sure to fall asleep over it, the very opposite effect to that intended by the author of this spiritual food."86

The Westminster Confession in like manner had no more effect on Phoebe in "A Berkshire Tradition" than if she were repeating - 'Dickery-dickery dock,' or any other of Mother Goose's lyrics."\(^7\)

Though Miss Sedgwick often pictures orthodox Calvinism as a bigoted creed with gloomy observances, she does present Puritan virtues as conscientiously as she depicts its vices. Mr. West, the minister in "A Berkshire Tradition," is "marked by a sensibility that gushed forth in sympathy for all his people: the just and unjust - saints and sinners, all shared a heart wide enough for all."\(^8\) The Catholic James Maxwell says of the Puritan Mrs. Ray and Mr. Richards, "Sure, Mr. Richards, if there were more like you and the old lady - God bless her - there would be an end of cruelty and hate, and love would bind all hearts together - even your people's and mine."\(^9\)

Her most interesting and eloquent story on Puritanism is "Mary Dyre." This somber tale of religious toleration appeared in The Token for

\(^{89}\)"The Irish Girl," *op. cit.*, p. 140.
1831 with the following note:

We have passed by ... tempting themes, to present a character in its true and natural light, as it stands on the historic pages without the graces of fiction, or any of those aids, by which the romance writer composes his picture – exaggerating beauties, placing them in bright lights, and omitting or gracefully shading defects. There are manifestations of moral beauty so perfect that they do not require, and will not endure, the aids of fiction, as there are scenes in the material world, that no illusion of the imagination can improve.90

"Mary Dyre" is one story that can well make the claim for veracity. When reprinted in hard covers in 1890, there was a brief prefatory statement to the effect that although Miss Sedgwick had "little opportunity of becoming acquainted with the people called Quakers," she had given much care in her "examination of original records."91

Mary Dyre was a Quaker minister expelled from Boston in 1659 with the warning that if she returned, she would be hanged. Her sense of religious duty brought her back to Boston and in 1660 she was executed. The Puritans themselves persecuted in England, had become the persecutors. The Quakers instead of an

90"Mary Dyre," The Token (Boston, 1831), p. 295.
91For an account of the story of Mary Dyre see Rufus M. Jones, The Quakers In The American Colonies (London, 1911), pp. 80-87.
asylum found in Boston "a prison, and were destined, for their glory and our shame, to suffer as martyrs ...." Mary Dyre was "a noble sufferer in that great cause, that has stimulated the highest minds to the sublimest action; that calls its devotees from the gifted, its martyrs from the moral heroes of mankind; the best cause, the fountain of all liberty - liberty of conscience!" 92

All Miss Sedgwick's short pieces no matter what their subject are didactic and sentimental. She used both precept and example to further her didactic intent. Satterwhite points out that authors "were seldom content to trust unexplained narrative and a welter of irrelevant material was frequently interpolated to point a moral." 93 At the end of a sketch or tale Miss Sedgwick often restated the moral. 94

More often than not the story existed only for the moral. "A Tale With A Moral" could well stand as the title of most of her short fiction. 95 She called "Full Thirty" a "homily," and in "Small Losses" mentioned

92Mary Dyre," The Token (Boston, 1831), p. 312.
her habit of "prosing story telling." At times she felt self-conscious about this didacticism. She concluded "Romance in Real Life" with the statement that "there is nothing in the termination of our tale to indemnify the lover of romance for its previous dullness...."97

No moral lesson was too trivial for her to teach. She exhorted her readers in "Susy's Cow" to be grateful to the cow "as a benefactress, and consider well her gentleness, patience, intelligence and affection, and you will not laugh at our little friend Susy for calling her company ...."98 From her first story in 1822, "Mary Hollis," which preached temperance, to her last tale in the 1860's, "Susy's Cow," her tales and sketches were didactic.

In addition to their didacticism her shorter pieces are invariably sentimental. Miss Sedgwick continually put characters into situations that were bound to bring tears to the reader's eye.

Arabella St. Clair in "The Bridal Ring" falls in


97"Romance in Real Life," op. cit., p. 277.

love with the faithless Clayborne who asks her to marry him. She feels it her duty, however, to care for her father. Clayborne gives her a ring which Arabella considers sacred as the marriage vow. Clayborne leaves Arabella, goes to Europe, and becomes engaged to another woman. He writes Arabella requesting that she return the ring and consider their engagement broken. Arabella refuses; her strength begins to fail, she becomes weaker daily, and slowly pines away. Before her death, she removes the ring and asks that it be sent to Clayborne's wife. Her father curses her lover, but Arabella

raised her head from the pillow, and clasp her arms around her father's neck, drew his head down to her bosom saying, 'Oh father, as you hope to be forgiven; as you are thankful to God for giving peace to your dying child, take back those horrid words and forgive him - father, forgive him.'

When her father does retract his curse, Arabella dies, a sweet smile hovering on her lips.99

Equally sentimental is "The City Clerk."100

Charles Hathaway leaves his country home to earn

99 "The Bridal Ring," The Token (Boston, 1833), 223-246.

his livelihood in a city store in order to support his crippled father, his mother, and sister Ruth. He is falsely arrested for a crime Otis, another clerk, commits. When his family hears of his imprisonment, Ruth comforts her parents: "'Come here, mother - kneel down here - we'll trust him /Charles/ with our Father and his Father; we'll commit the case to Him, and then we shall feel better!' And the still small voice of their prayer arose and God was there." Accompanying this text is an illustration of Ruth kneeling on the floor, her face buried in her father's lap.\footnote{Ibid., p. 37.}

As a devoted sister, Ruth goes to the prison to stay with Charles. The turnkey is impressed by the scene of these two innocent children together in a dark jail: "There they are, with a pirate one side of them, and a murderer the other, enjoying themselves. If that aint innocence, I don't know what is. I declare, if I don't see the angel of the Lord with them - the same as walked the Fiery Furnace."\footnote{Ibid., p. 40.}

With their children both in prison the Hathaways prepare Thanksgiving dinner. They are thankful that...
they have such honest faithful children. Otis finally confesses and Ruth and Charles return home in time for Thanksgiving. Hathaway miraculously regains the use of his withered arm and is able to embrace Charles.

Arabella St. Clair and Charles Hathaway are not so much human beings as they are angelic creatures. They are representations of religious sentiments. When reduced to its basic elements, the sentimental story becomes a parable on how to live the good Christian life.

In her short pieces as in her long ones are the themes of disinterested benevolence and the brotherhood of all men. "An Apologue" is an allegory showing that those who pursue happiness for themselves do not find it, but those who look for it for others do find it.103 "Leisure Hours at Saratoga" teaches that disinterestedness takes no holidays.104 The abyss between poverty and affluence, we are told in "A Contrast," should be "filled up as far as may be by kind words, and kinder deeds."105


104 "Leisure Hours At Saratoga," U.S. Magazine and Democratic Review I (January 1838), 194-203.

takes several forms, from the simple kindness of the stranger in "The Postoffice" providing Rosy with money for postage, to the cheerfulness of the dying Harriet in "Truth vs. Fiction" who up to her last breath is thinking of and acting for others, to Juliet's suicide in "Crescent Beach" to keep her parents' marriage together.

Characters seem to search for affliction and unfortunate situations to provide themselves with opportunities to act disinterestedly. Mary in "Country Life" receives the news of her fiance's blindness with "a strange sense of pleasure." She felt ... as if there would be such happiness in ministering to him, in divesting his condition "of its common miseries," in being the medium to his mind and heart and the light lost to his eyes.\(^{106}\) Often characters feel their own self-importance in performing their benevolent deeds although such a feeling is not true disinterestedness. Cousin Frank in the story of the same name is on hand at every town emergency. So valuable is his presence to the villagers that he does not marry, for marriage "would be like giving to an individual an exclusive right to the sunshine."\(^{107}\)


The theme of the brotherhood of all men is most conspicuous in the Catholic stories. Emilie on her death bed tells Father Clement in "A Huguenot Family" that "there is but one faith, one hope, on the death-bed; dividing lines end here." Although she is a Protestant, Father Clement buries her in consecrated ground for as he tells Eugene, her son, "... your mother's life of good deeds has expiated her error of faith; perhaps ... unshed tears, tears stayed by love and charity, may wash out these light stains in the soul." Eugene exclaims, "Oh, Father Clement, you are not a Catholic, you are nothing but Christian."

"Truly, my son," Father Clement replies, "I would be nothing else. Every other name is subordinate to that, and I would that all others were abolished, and that his disciples were known and bound together, by that on earth, as they will be in heaven."108

Both Mrs. Ray in "The Irish Girl" and Dr. West in "A Berkshire Tradition" have this feeling of brotherhood toward all men. Mrs. Tutor in "The Country Cousin" as "Christian, friend, and benefactress ... well illustrated the generous doctrine of equality ... 108"A Huguenot Family," op. cit., pp. 191 and 193.
and every one who needed the tender charities of life from her was her 'brother and her sister.' In the person of Mrs. Tutor, Miss Sedgwick joins the themes of disinterested benevolence and universal brotherhood.

Perhaps the story most typical of the sentimental fiction of the age is "Fanny M'Dermot," which appeared as a two part serial in Godey's for 1845. The moral was "to set forth dangers to which many are exposed, and vices which steep the life God has given as a blessing in dishonor, misery, and remorse." Sentimental authors commonly used this device of prefacing the story with ominous preludes of calamity to come.

Fanny, a sixteen-year-old orphan, lives with her aunt, but their relationship is not at all friendly. Miss Sedgwick quickly passes over this part of Fanny's life: "We have gone too much into detail; we must limit ourselves to the most striking particulars of our story." Unskilled in the ways of the world, Fanny is seduced by Stafford, a wealthy


110 "Fanny M'Dermot," Godey's Lady's Book, XXX (January and February, 1845), 15.

111 Ibid., p. 16.
young man attracted by her helplessness and innocence. The first installment ends with Fanny and her baby being deserted by Stafford, who, like Montraville in Charlotte Temple, believes he has taken care of them "as if simplicity, contentment, and a good name, were marketable articles, to be trafficked away for a few jewels, laces, and silks."\textsuperscript{112}

The second part begins with Fanny's wandering to the Emly home to seek employment. By the long arm of coincidence, a most indispensable device for the sentimental author, Augusta Emly is engaged to Stafford. Fanny finds no haven there, for Mrs. Emly believes in hiring only respectable people. Fanny finds employment difficult to secure for she refuses to lie about her past: "We will be true - we will keep our vow to God ... He is merciful; Jesus was merciful, even to that poor woman that was brought before him by cruel men; and if nobody will take us in on earth, God may take us to Himself - and I think he will soon."\textsuperscript{113}

When Stafford's deed is revealed, Mrs. Emly blames Fanny and defends Stafford. Augusta upbraids her for this inconsistency. Why should he not also be condemned, she asks; he "loaded with God's good gifts ...

\textsuperscript{112}Ibid., p. 20.

\textsuperscript{113}Ibid., p. 80.
made a prey and victim of a trusting, loving, defenseless woman," but it is she who is "cast out of the pale of humanity." Mrs. Emly's reply is typical of the compromise sentimentalists made with society's moral values: "There does seem to be an inconsistency, but it appears different when one knows the world." 114

Fanny's days on earth draw swiftly to a close. At a party Stafford is attending, Fanny wanders in delirious, sees her betrayer and, before the assembled guests, forgives him. Stafford leaves and Fanny flees after him into the pouring rain. Neglected and cold, her baby dies, and Fanny is held by the police for his abandonment. She dies soon afterwards. "God is good," she murmurs on her death bed. "I forgive - God - Heaven is love. My baby - yes - God - is good." 115 Miss Sedgwick ends this highly tearful and sentimental story with this note: "In that unfailing goodness the mother and the child reposed forever." 116

Although notices of her short pieces were few, they were usually most favorable. The Token for 1835 was "further recommended" by the American Monthly

114 Ibid., pp. 82-83.

115 Ibid., p. 83.

116 Ibid., p. 83.
Magazine for tales by Miss Sedgwick and Miss Leslie, "about which we need not speak, as the authoresses' names are sufficient."\(^{117}\) The same periodical on the occasion of a review of another annual with a story in it by Miss Sedgwick wrote, "No American writer surpasses this lady in the unbidden and indescribable proprieties of language, exquisite truth of sentiment, and in short all the fine qualities of mental and moral taste, so to speak, which form the basis of elegant literature."\(^{118}\) "Le Bossu" was "very well done" according to the *New England Magazine*. "The events are somewhat improbable, but the descriptions are beautiful, and the style is graceful and animated, rising sometimes into great splendor and elegance." The battle scenes reminded the critic of *Ivanhoe*.\(^{119}\) *Arthur's Ladies Magazine* found the stories in *Tales and Sketches*, series two, "too good to be lost and forgotten."\(^{120}\) Not all the reviews were this complimentary. The *Southern Literary Messenger* thought it rash of Miss Sedgwick

\(^{117}\) *American Monthly Magazine*, N.S. II (October 1836), 406.

\(^{118}\) *Ibid.*, I (February 1832), 154.

\(^{119}\) *New England Magazine*, III (December 1832), 511.

\(^{120}\) *Arthur's Ladies' Magazine*, III (February 1845), 101.
to publish the first series of Tales and Sketches so after The Linwoods since the stories were inferior to the novel. The New World's review of "Wilton Harvey" was rather spiteful. The magazine had published the first few installments of the tale, but discontinued "because Miss Sedgwick, or her publisher, saw fit very courteously to prevent us, from going on with what we had begun, by taking out a copyright. The proceeding was particularly superfluous, since we should cheerfully have complied with any request to desist from republishing it [the story had already appeared in Godey's]." The review which followed this note was somewhat bitter in tone. The story was "quite on a level with the general run of stories written by Mrs. Everybody and Miss Nobody .... We quite agree ... in thinking that the best of Miss Sedgwick's works are the little stories entitled 'Home,' 'Live and Let Live,' etc. These are admirable; and if she wishes to keep up a rather exaggerated reputation, she will work out that happy vein." The Knickerbocker reviewing The Pearl for 1837, however, was quite pleased with her short

121 Southern Literary Messenger, II (January 1836), 124. Poe, who thought highly of The Linwoods, is possibly the author of this view.

122 New World, IV (June 4, 1842), 367.
pieces: "It has evidently been the aim of the several writers - among whom are Miss Sedgwick, Mrs. Sigourney, Mrs. Gilman, and others of like repute - to inculcate valuable moral and religious lessons." ¹²³

Fred Lewis Pattee writes of her stories and sketches that her "pious philosophy was everywhere evident ∊/ her moralized endings, her prim avoidance of everything not in most proper form and repute ... ∊/allowed her/ to circulate in the most Puritanic parlors." ¹²⁴ The popularity of her short pieces is indicated by the fact that they usually appeared as the leading contributions to the annual or periodical, were often singled out for attention in the prefaces to gift books, and at a time when most contributions appeared anonymously, were usually signed. Sixty-two of her sketches and stories appeared under her own name, five each under the phrase "by the author of Redwood" and "by the author of Hope Leslie," and two under the penname of "Stockbridge - S." Only twelve contributions were anonymous. She was a financial asset to any periodical or gift book.

Her short fiction is not very distinguished. Exigencies of space meant stock characterizations, the piling up of incidents, over use of coin-

¹²³ Knickerbocker, VIII (October 1836), 499.
cidence, and lack of proper detail. Occasionally, she gets an idea for what might be an interesting tale, but it is usually submerged under heavy sentimentalism and didacticism. "Crescent Beach" employs a Jamesian theme, but Juliet is no Maisie. She is only the agent to bring about a happy and moral ending. In "Daniel Prime" she treats a Hawthorne theme, the effect of a single passion on a man, but here the idea is lost in the story's unbelievable melodrama. "Berkeley Jail" poses the interesting psychological question as to whether a man is guilty of a murder he wished committed but did not commit himself. But instead of developing this theme Miss Sedgwick devotes most of her space to a farcical escape scene.

The dialogue in these tales is quite artificial. What Satterwhite finds true of Godey's writers in general is true of Miss Sedgwick in particular: they

When a character in one of Miss Sedgwick's stories expresses astonishment as a series of incredible events completely without connection, Miss Sedgwick observes, "She may be pardoned if she (being only sixteen) deemed the coincidences startling ones." Godey's Lady's Book, VIII (May 1834), 220. Quoted in Satterwhite, op. cit., p. 109. I have not been able to find a copy of this issue of Godey's.


moved "in a cloud of elegant synonyms, and at the expense of simplicity and naturalness."\(^{128}\) Although her language is never offensive, her death bed scenes are lush with the language of elegance and sentiment and with all the pauses and dashes in the right places. Her dialogue is often stilted as in these "impromptu" words in "The Eldest Sister": "Come in, Theresa ... you interrupt me no more than the passing stream is interrupted by the shadow of the pretty flower that waves on its banks."\(^{129}\) Rufus Griswold, however, noted of her style that it was "colloquial, picturesque, and marked by a facile grace which is evidently a gift of nature."\(^{130}\)

In her voluminous output of short pieces Miss Sedgwick was attuned to the times. "The sudden rise of the periodicals ... created a tremendous demand for short sentimental fiction by popularizing it with a huge audience not fully exploited. Neither publishers nor readers expected skill or even proficiency of their authors, and the middle decades of the century became the age of the second-rate writer."\(^{131}\) Miss Sedgwick was aware that the material in gift books

\(^{128}\) Satterwhite, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 111.

\(^{129}\) "The Eldest Sister," \textit{op. cit.}, p. 183.


\(^{131}\) Satterwhite, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 113.
and women's magazines was "water-gruelly,"\textsuperscript{132} but if this was what the public wanted, then she was willing to supply its demand.

\textsuperscript{132}Dewey, op. cit., p. 261.
CHAPTER V

Herbert Ross Brown writes that "the most conspicuous failure of the sentimentalists was their inability to solve the irrepressible problem of slavery."\(^1\) Most sentimentalists would have preferred to ignore this vexing issue. They were much like Mrs. Herbert in Married or Single? who particularly wished "to avoid involving myself in this inconvenient subject of slavery. No one disapproves of slavery in the abstract more than I do. I fear it is wrong; and I know enough of political economy to know that it is the most expensive mode of labor .... But you know I stand on delicate ground" (II, 17). To take a positive stand meant the sentimentalist ran the risk of alienating part of her audience.

Many felt, no doubt, optimistic about the future as did George Templeton Strong, who wrote in his diary on December 30, 1848, about the possible rupture between the North and the South on the slavery question, "But it's not worthwhile to worry oneself with moping.\(^1\)Brown, op. cit., pp. 367-368.

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over the melancholy possibilities of the future. I'm contented and happy now, and they are fools who taint present happiness by looking forward to chances of evil which may not come, and which Man cannot avert if its coming be ordained."2

Miss Sedgwick's attitude on this issue is a curious one. Certainly her belief in the brotherhood of all men and in humanitarian benevolence indicated disapproval at least in the abstract. Although she was outspoken when it came to questions of penal reform and treatment of domestics and although she took up the cause of Louis Kossuth and the oppressed Hungarians even after Kossuth was exposed as a charlatan,3 she did not involve herself with the problem of slavery.

Her relative silence is puzzling. She had the reputation of being a "blue-stocking," a reformer, and Stockbridge, her home, "was a center of reform enthusiasm."4 Her brother Theodore, for example, was "radical free trader"; her nephew Theodore, Jr., believed slavery to be "the greatest question which

2Nevins and Thomas, op. cit., I, 339-340. Italics are mine.


4Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Age of Jackson (Boston, 1945), p. 332.
agitates or can agitate the Republic." The Sedgwick family, moreover, had fired Fanny Kemble with sympathy for the slaves and had urged her to publish an anti-slavery book _A Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation_, that did not appear, however, until 1863.

Miss Sedgwick's correspondence is not wanting in references to slavery. To her niece Kate on June 18, 1833, she wrote from Richmond, Virginia, "There is nothing, of course, offensive in slavery as we see it in this hotel ... the slaves that I see about the streets and in the country look to me downcast or surly, but this may be fancy." A week later from Warm Springs, Virginia, she wrote that the attendants are good. "This is one good of this horrid blight of slavery which seems to me far worse since I have seen it." Before her trip South she wrote Dr. Channing on May 20, 1833, about a publication and translation of an article on slavery by Sismondi, "I have hoped that you might ... write a review of it, as it is a subject that transcends almost every other in its importance to the interests of humanity ..." But she was not overly

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5 _Ibid._, pp. 154 and 429.
6 J. C. Furnas, _Goodbye To Uncle Tom_ (New York, 1956), pp. 32 and 35.
7 Dewey, _op. cit._, pp. 233-234.
8 _Ibid._, p. 235.
9 _Ibid._, p. 231.
pessimistic about the future. To her niece she wrote on March 2, 1845, "This result of the Texas question is most disheartening. I see nothing for us but letting the South fall off by its own dead weight ... Who can tell what is to be the fate of the country. I do not despair ...."

What disturbed her most about the slavery issue was its effect on the Union. Harriet Martineau remembered "Miss Sedgwick starting back ... and snatching her arm from mine when I said, in answer to her inquiry, what I thought the issue of controversy must be. 'The dissolution of the Union!' she cried. 'The Union is sacred and must be preserved at all cost.'" Miss Martineau found the Sedgwick family to be not only "constitutionally timid" but also worshippers of "the parchment idol - the act of Union .... They did not yet perceive ... that a human decree which contravenes the laws of Nature must give way when the two are brought into conflict." She particularly thought Miss Sedgwick's behavior on the slavery issue strange, "for Miss Sedgwick and others of her family have on occasion spoken out bravely on behalf of the liberties of the republic,"

\[10\] Ibid., pp. 292-293. Italics are mine.
when they were most compromised ... her nature \(\text{had, however,}\) was a timid and sensitive one; and she was thus predisposed to the national failing .... She praised or was silent." Miss Martineau believed she "wanted courage, and shrank from using her great influence on behalf of her own convictions .... \(\text{She}\) shared the northern caution, if not the sectional vanity, which admired and upheld, as long as possible, the men of genius and accomplishment who sustained the intellectual reputation of New England."\(^{11}\) It was this difference in point of view that caused relations between the two women to cool.

Miss Sedgwick's belief in the sacredness of the law kept her from joining the ranks of the abolitionists. To circumvent the law was wrong. The abolitionists' cause might be just but their means were unlawful. "You may rest assured," says Mrs. Herbert in *Married or Single?*, "that I do not approve of any interference with the laws. Women's duty is clear on that point. I am, therefore, not pleased with Grace's proceeding, and above all, with her bringing

\(^{11}\) Martineau, op. cit., pp. 376-378.
the runaway /slave/ here" (II, 17).

Perhaps her position on slavery is best summed up in the extract she quotes with approval from Dr. Dewey's funeral sermon on Joseph Curtis:

Mr. Curtis was so strenuous a believer in the sacredness of the law, that his anti-slavery sympathies never went along with the abolitionists; but in all that could be done under, or with the consent of law, no man exceeded him in anti-slavery feeling and zeal.12

Miss Sedgwick did feel that some explanation was necessary to account for her silence. "You will not misunderstand me," she wrote Mrs. Channing on March 10, 1860, "nor imagine that I do not feel heartily in the great question of humanity that agitates our people. It seemed to me that so much had been intemperately said, so much rashly urged on the death of that noble martyr, John Brown, by the abolitionists, that it was not right to appear among them as one of them."13

12Memoir of Joseph Curtis, pp. 59-60.
13Dewey, op. cit., p. 378. In this same letter, Miss Sedgwick explained why she turned down Eliza Follen's invitation to attend a meeting of the Anti-slavery Society: "... I shrunk from being with her on an occasion to her of the most elevating excitement which I did not partake."
Even as the country came closer to war, Miss Sedgwick did not lose her optimistic faith. She did not see the implications of South Carolina's secession from the Union: "As for that bullying State of South Carolina, one would not much care," she wrote to her niece on December 7, 1860. "As C. (cousin C.) says, 'Let the damned little thing go!' ... It has been a little wasp from the beginning!" On January 5, 1861, she wrote to Mrs. Russell, "I cling to the Union as an unweaned child does to its mother's breast. But it seems to me we should stand in awe, and only pray that God's will may be done in this great matter." And on February 27, 1861, to Mrs. Channing, "I have not yet come down to the level of the despairing of our country. On the contrary, I have strong hopes, perhaps confidence in the future."

The Civil War was to her a moral battle. She wanted to live to see it end, to see "how order is to be brought out of the present confusion; how these adverse principles are ever to be harmonized; how

14 Ibid., p. 387.
15 Ibid., pp. 388-389.
16 Ibid., p. 389.
peace and good neighborhood are ever to follow upon this bitter hate." She was willing to see South Carolina "humbled in the dust," for Southerners "can only be cured of their frenzy by being made to feel their impotence." She retained her optimism almost to the very end; she was able to find "consolation for havoc and wide misery in the many probable good results of this purgation." 17

As the war progressed, however, she became less confident and optimistic. To Mrs. Minot she wrote on July 6, 1862, "... in this terrible baptism in blood I feel that we are one people. Oh that the angel of peace might be sent to that field of slaughter to cry 'enough.'" 18 She was more despairing in tone two years later when on August 5, 1864, she wrote Bryant, "We have all been wrong and done wrong, north and south, east and west. Why not act like sensible Christians in common affairs? Let bygones be bygones - declare some boundary - agree upon some mode of settlement? What is the use of fighting like Kilkenny cats?" 19 What she was advocating was compromise, a word which, as she wrote on

17 Ibid., p. 392.
18 July 6, 1862, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.
19 August 5, 1864, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.
an earlier occasion, "has a bad savour when truth and right are in question."^{20}

Although Miss Sedgwick "did not use her pen to give aid and comfort to the abolitionists,"^{21} she does make some references to slavery in her writings. The story of Africk in Redwood (1824) does present one with the plight of the slave. But even Redwood who calls slavery "a curse," feels it a "peculiar" notion for one to give his slaves freedom (pp. 154-155). In Married or Single? there is an incident about a runaway slave. Although Miss Sedgwick was sympathetic with Grace's desire to aid the slave, she also felt as Mrs. Herbert did, who believed keeping a fugitive slave was interfering with the law. Moreover, Married or Single? was not written, as the preface tells us, with the hope of slaying "giants, slavery, or the like." In "Our Burial Place," Miss Sedgwick points with shame to a plot separate from the main one in which "the colored people are laid apart ...."^{22} In her description of a trip to the falls of St. Anthony in Missouri, she writes that what pleased her most in St. Louis "was the absence of all


^{21}Stearns, op. cit., p. 536.

^{22}"Our Burial Place," Knickerbocker, VI (November 1835), 391.
the obtrusive signs of what we consider the only misfortune of Missouri - the only obstacle to its future pre-eminence - slavery."  

In 1853, she contributed an article to an anti-slavery anthology, Autographs For Freedom. The proceeds of its sales were "devoted to the dissemination of light and truth on the subject of slavery throughout the country." Among the contributors were Harriet Beecher Stowe, Horace Mann, John Greenleaf Whittier, and Horace Greeley. Miss Sedgwick's selection "The Slave and Slave-Owner" makes the point that the slave owner is worse off than the slave for he sees the "curse of slave-ownership" upon his ancestral possessions. "The slave looks forward with ever-growing hope to the struggle that must come. He joyfully 'smells the battle afar off.' The slave-owner folds his arms, and shuts his eyes in paralyzing despair. He hears the fearful threatenings of the gathering storm. He knows it must come, - to him fatally. It is only a question of time!" The story ends with the question, "Who would not rather be a slave than a slave-owner?"

23 "The Great Excursion To The Falls of St. Anthony," Putnam's Monthly, IV (September 1854), 325.

24 "The Slave and Slave-Owner," Autographs For Freedom (Boston, 1853), pp. 24-27.
At one time Miss Sedgwick began a short story about slavery but never completed it. The setting is the south, one of her few stories to take place in this region. Several southerners and northerners are conversing. A New Engander suggests that slaves be put on equal educational levels with the whites, but a southerner objects saying that the north has no right to interfere in the slavery question. At one point in the conversation, the northerner says, "It is a natural belief that the Negro race is inferior. It is admitted that this belief is natural - are not all degraded and oppressed people rated by their oppressors below themselves?"

The principle of superiority, writes Miss Sedgwick, "has its foundations in the principle of self-love .... That the black is different from the white cannot be controverted. But the differences must not be mistaken for inferiority." One of the arguments she proffers is that white and Negro children do equally well in school. "Would this be possible if their faculties were inferior?" Only when the Negro learns he is a slave does his ardor for learning diminish.

At this point in the story Miss Sedgwick writes,

The uncompleted MS titled "Some Pages of a Slave Story Begun and Abandoned" is in the Sedgwick Collection, M.H.S.
"But we have perhaps extended these remarks too far - our readers may remind us that it is our craft to write for their amusement and to allow them to extract instruction for themselves (the moral of the fable ....) However, this parenthesis is crossed out in the MS/ if perchance so valuable an essence can be obtained from the light material of a tale." Before dropping the discussion of slavery entirely, Miss Sedgwick writes on the margin of the MS, "I have changed my opinion. I now believe there are not merely obvious differences between the races - but that the African is inferior to the Caucasian. But that is no argument for slavery."26

It would seem that she abandoned the story from fear of offending some of her readers or from a change in attitude. Certainly these few pronouncements in print about slavery (one story devoted to the problem out of over a hundred short pieces she did write) indicate a change in attitude might have arisen from her trip to the South in 1833. That she did consider the slave the white man's inferior can be seen in what she says about her Negro nurse Mumbet: "She was a remarkable exception to the general character of her race. Injustice and oppression have confounded their moral sense; cheated as they have been of their liberty, defrauded at wholesale of time and strength, what wonder that they allow themselves petty reprisals ... for, though they now among us be free, they retain the vices of a degraded and subjected people." Dewey, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

26 Although this story is undated, her change in attitude
certain amount of moral cowardice on her part.

Miss Sedgwick's reticence in print on the slavery question had one advantage. She did not employ the cherished weapons of the sentimentalist: "pleasant escape, artful dodging, cunning evasion, and comfortable compromise."\(^27\)

The sentimentalist was not unlike Jasper Meredith in *The Linwoods* who "had an instinctive dislike of definitions, as they in Scripture, who loved darkness, had to the light. He was fond of enveloping his meaning in shadowy analogies which, like the moon, often led astray, with a beautiful but imperfect and illusive light" (II, 9). "Bathed in the refulgent rays of sentiment," writes Herbert Ross Brown, "even the most barren aspects of the American landscape were thus gilded and transfigured."\(^28\)

When it came to "the darker aspects of the new industrialism" the sentimentalist either ignored them or softened them "in the warm glow of optimism."\(^29\)

\(^27\)Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 368. Among the suggestions the sentimentalist offered as solutions to slavery were "colonizing Africa with Christian Negroes" and graduate emancipation, "the indeterminate period of ... waiting ... to be sweetened for the slaves by the ministrations of the benevolent female." *Ibid.*, pp. 267 and 277.


Miss Sedgwick, for example, believed that nobody in America "sinks into deep poverty ... except by some vice, directly or indirectly" (The Poor Rich Man, p. 178). The only poverty she could find she attributed to vice or disease. She comforted the poor by telling them they were better off than the rich, yet she held out to them the promise of wealth: "The prizes are open to all, and they fall with equal favor ... the poor family of this generation is the rich family of the next" (The Poor Rich Man, p. 111). "She gave the 'Poor Man' wealth."30 The sentimentalist accepted "without critical scrutiny the philosophy of acquisition"; they "dangled the tempting bait of material prosperity before the eyes of every reader." They enveloped "the new industrial order in an aura of approval," unmindful of its dangers and pitfalls.

Though Miss Sedgwick thought the rich man's wealth hollow and temporary, she was indignant at outcries made against him: "Providence has bound the rich and poor by one chain ... If there were none of these

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30 "In Memoriam," an anonymous poem written in August 1867 upon the occasion of her death. Ashburner Papers, Stockbridge Public Library, Stockbridge, Mass.
hateful rich people, who, think you, would build hospitals, and provide asylums for orphans, and for the deaf and dumb, and the blind" (The Poor Rich Man, p. 178). "The enterprise and success of the merchant," Mr. Aikin tells his daughter in The Poor Rich Man, "gives us employment and rich rewards for our labour. We are dependent on them, but they are quite as dependent on us" (p. 178). "The Poor, the Rich alike her friends."31

Her remarks on poverty reveal the shallowness of her understanding of the economic problems of her time. Despite her apparent sympathy for the poor and her promises to them of prosperity, she fundamentally believed that they should be aided as poor rather than encouraged to ascend to higher status.32 The performance of a disinterested act was of more interest to her than any revision of the social system. She talked complacently about the poor and lamented over their moral degradation. But she was like Channing who "did not thoroughly sympathize with the intensely practical

31Ibid.

problems of those who were literally hungry or whose bodies were so prostrated by mistreatment that they could not think of being men." Miss Sedgwick sympathized but did not empathize with the poor.

At times she deplores comfortable compromises because they involve compromising on moral issues: "The comforts and luxuries of life, its roast-beef and plum-pudding, are the oil that keeps the machinery of society in operation. They are the bribes that sustain the unflinching faith of the sectarian, and the partizan zeal of the patriot at Washington. The arguments of the Southern cotton-planter and the Northern manufacturer may be reduced to this element" (Married or Single, I, 246). Yet in the same novel she voices the popular faith in compromise. Life is "all a compromise" says Mrs. Clifford (II, 215). "But come," says Alice, "we will compromise - compromises cut all the gordian knots now-a-days" (II, 239). There is no inconsistency here, for Miss Sedgwick could and did believe in the moral laxity of compromise and in its power to do away with unwelcomed problems. Her silence in print on the slavery issue is perhaps the biggest compromise.

33 Edgell, op. cit., p. 135.
she made between her beliefs and those of her readers. "She praised or was silent."

But this is not the only inconsistency in her thought. In *Clarence* she warns that even "the most sanguine believer in perfectibility is in danger of forgetting the capacities of man, and giving up his creed altogether when he looks upon the actual interests and pursuits that occupy him" (II, 72). Yet she paid little heed to her own warning as she presented in book after book perfect heroes and heroines as models for her readers to imitate.

Miss Sedgwick was particularly outspoken on penal reform in *The Boy of Mount Rhigi*, *Married or Single?*, and "The City Clerk," and was quite active in prison work in New York. Yet when Dr. Pomeroy wrote her about the establishment in her own home Stockbridge of a Home for Discharged Convicts, Miss Sedgwick objected: "... that you and other judicious, and thinking, and patriotic members of our village society should have banded together to introduce into our still pastures and by our sweet water-courses, amid our flocks of defenseless sheep and lambs, these state-prison wolves, is, I confess, a mystery to me." The "well-being of the virtuous and moral part of the community" might be endangered.\(^{34}\)

Sentimentalists were also guilty of facile optimism. There was no misfortune that did not have at least one silver living. As we have seen, Miss Sedgwick could see only good emerging from the depression of 1837 and she even looked for good results as consolation for the havoc of the Civil War. Villains presented only temporary threats to heroines, for heroines were predestined for a happy life. Even a dastardly villain like Sir Philip in *Hope Leslie* quaked before the presence of innocence and good.

The Great Fire of December 16, 1835, "a splendid spectacle" in the words of George Templeton Strong,\(^3^5\) which consumed forty city blocks in New York, left damages estimated between sixteen and twenty million dollars, bankrupted insurance companies, and made destitute widows, orphans, domestics, and elderly people, was no great misfortune to the sentimentalist. Miss Sedgwick was aware of the fire's devastating effects, as her journal entries for that date indicate. Yet she could also write in her journal, "Some fine morals may rise the phoenixes of this fire. The poor may learn that, though the individual rich man has no humanity, \(^3^6\)

\(^3^5\) Nevins and Thomas, *op. cit.*, I, 8.

his wealth - Heaven-directed - must wander to the poor; and this striking manifestation of the instability of human possessions must, in all our eyes, amazingly depreciate their value."37 The fire was important to her not because of the damages it left but for the opportunity it gave her to moralize.38

Sister Mary Michael Welsh in her study of Miss Sedgwick writes that her "novels are not read today, not because they have lost interest, but because the flood of literature pouring over our country is so great that it has caused the older literature to be forgotten or set aside."39 But Miss Sedgwick's popularity was on the wane during her own lifetime. She herself in the prefaces to the revised edition of Clarence (1849) and Married or Single? (1857) took note of this loss in popularity. Although it is true that Hope Leslie and Home were "better sellers," none of her books were "best sellers."40 Putnam, which began in 1849 to re-issue her works in a standard edition as a tribute to her position as one of our first important

37Ibid., p. 250.

38On January 11, 1836, Miss Sedgwick wrote to Fanny Appleton giving her a description of the fire and mentioning that it would make a good background for a story. Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S. The story "Full Thirty" points out the dangers of insurance investments. Mrs. Orne's fortune is lost because she had invested in an insurance company that went bankrupt because of the fire. "Full Thirty," The Token (Boston, 1837), pp. 212-246.


40Mott, op. cit., pp. 317 and 318.
novelists, abandoned the project after only three volumes had appeared presumably because of lack of sales. The long interim during which she wrote only didactic tracts saw the rise of many other popular novelists with whom she had to compete. The didactic tracts could not vie in interest with the romantic novels of the time. For a reading public that grew up during those years Miss Sedgwick was a moralist, not a novelist. When *Married or Single?* was published in 1857 *Harper's New Monthly* wrote, "A new generation of readers has come upon the stage since the publication of *Hope Leslie* and *Redwood* won an enviable rank for the author of these volumes among the most honored writers of fiction in English literature."\(^41\) When she died in 1867 the same magazine said, "... she was the first very noted female author in the United States," never seriously challenged until *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1851-1852). By 1840 "the more modern school of American writers were becoming known, and although Miss Sedgwick published ... "*Married or Single*" ... it did not withdraw her from that comparative retirement into which her name and fame had fallen."\(^42\)

\(^{41}\) *Harper's New Monthly*, XV (March 1857), 549.

\(^{42}\) *Ibid.*, XXXV (October 1867), 665.
Although a few of her works were reissued after her death - as late as 1891 there was a new edition of *Home* - she was all but forgotten in the last decades of the nineteenth century. In the 1890's her family made plans for an edition of her works, but were unable to compile a complete list of her writings. One title that appears in their list is *Historical Sketches of the Old Painters* (1841) written by Mrs. Hannah Parnham (Sawyer), 1780-1865. Moses Coit Tyler wrote to Charles Rockeman on July 12, 1890, concerning a complete edition, "The very titles, as I look over your list, have an almost classic flavor ...." Her works were anything but of current interest. It was finally decided by her family that "a complete edition would be too expensive and not saleable but well selected volumes ought to be popular." But no volumes ever appeared.

Sister Mary Michael's statement would lead one to believe that Miss Sedgwick's books have intrinsic literary interest as works of art. It is true that *Hope Leslie* and, to a lesser extent, *The Linwoods* are not deserving of the oblivion that has befallen them.

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43 July 12, 1890, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.

44 Undated letter, 1890, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.
They are as good as Cooper's historical fiction and in the description of female characters even better. But most of her novels suffer from antiquated plots and a heavy dependence on sentimental cliches. Her didactic books possess relatively little literary merit and with their zealous optimism and idealized heroes and heroines give one a distorted conception of the social problems of her time. Henry Dwight, writing to Rokeman on November 5, 1908, thought that even Miss Sedgwick's factual statements on social conditions "seem today like fiction." Her children's literature is outdated by modern standards. Her short stories suffer from an excess of sentimentality and bad planning.

Perhaps the most important reason for her neglect today is her approach to reality. The reality of Hawthorne's and Melville's fiction consists in the investigation and analysis of those basic problems that affect man's relations with himself and with those around him. Unlike Miss Sedgwick and the sentimentalists they were interested in presenting people and things not "as we should like to have them" but "as they are." Miss Sedgwick's reality, however, consists of a "kitchen realism." She chronicles the daily

\[45\] November 5, 1908, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.

\[46\] Brown, op. cit., p. 364.
life of her heroines, the clothes they wear, the food they eat, the homes in which they live. In rewarding characters with happiness and prosperity she reflects "the aspirations cherished in thousands of hearts." She promises her readers an escape from reality. She predicts in her didactic books that if man cultivates the moral and domestic virtues the millennium would come. But instead of the millennium came the Civil War, a conflict she and other sentimentalists found difficult to cope with. In their concern with an Ideal world, the sentimentalists could give only facile answers to basic human problems. Optimism and compromise were their solutions.

If her books and those of her sister-authors are not read today, it is because the twentieth century has found its own kind of domestic fiction in "soap operas," columns to the lovelorn, television plays, movies, pulp magazines, and the lending library novel. They provide the same happy endings, the same escape from reality, the same promise of a better tomorrow as did the sentimental novel.

When Miss Sedgwick died in 1867 there appeared on August 2 of that year an anonymously written poem "In Memoriam." In its final stanza the poet writes,

"The memory sweet of all she gave ... Shall bloom unwithering o'er her grave."⁴⁸ Although her works are forgotten today, the kind of thing she wrote with its philosophy of optimism lingers on in the twentieth century's counterpart to the domestic sentimental novel. Though she did not originate this genre, she did much in making it popular.

Literature was only an episode in her life. It never fully engrossed her time, thought, or sympathies. She never cared for fame or sought it. Her dearest profession, as she wrote in her journal for December 28, 1834, "is the love of my friends."⁴⁹ Yet she was one of the important literary figures of her time, certainly our first important female writer. When, in 1851, Hawthorne asked Oliver Wendell Holmes to help him on a committee to judge manuscripts for a writing contest in Albany, Holmes in his acceptance letter mentioned Miss Sedgwick for the third member of the committee "as the most natural person to look to."⁵⁰

Not the best or most popular of nineteenth century sentimental novelists, she was one of the most honest. Guilty at times of sentimental excesses, she never went

⁴⁸ Ashburner Papers, Stockbridge Public Library.
⁴⁹ December 28, 1834, Sedgwick Papers, M.H.S.
to the extremes of later novelists. When she wrote she was always guided not by the desire of fame or fortune but by a wish to aid others. If her help was often ineffectual, she did, in the words of one critic, aim well. As a pioneer in American fiction with Brown, Cooper, and Irving, she deserves consideration by anyone investigating the literature and thought of the early republic.

\[51\textit{Boston Quarterly Review, II (July 1839), p. 389.}\]
A Chronological Bibliography of the Works of Catharine Maria Sedgwick

1822

A New England Tale (New York, Bliss and White), reissued in 1822, 1852, and 1856.

"Mary Hollis" (New York, Van Pelt and Spears), reprinted for the Union Ministerial Association, Concord, New Hampshire, August 1834.

1824

Redwood (New York, Bliss and White), re-issued in 1850.

1825

The Travellers (New York, Bliss and White), reprinted as "Canadian Travellers" in Tales For Young People Above Ten Years, ed. Mary Russell Mitford, II (London, 1835), 1-133.

1826

"The Deformed Boy" (Boston), reprinted in Stories For Young Persons (New York, 1841), pp. 9-38.


1827

Hope Leslie (New York, White, Gallaher, and White), re-issued in 1842, 1862, and 1872.


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"Saturday Night," Juvenile Miscellany, I, number three (Boston), 31, reprinted in Stories For Young Persons (New York, 1841), pp. 146-152.

1828


1829


"Mary Smith," Juvenile Miscellany, II (May), 110-134.

"Scenes at Niagra," Youth's Instructor /sic/ and Sabbath School and Bible Class, N.S. I, number three (June), 39.

1830

Clarence (Philadelphia, Carey and Lea), re-issued in 1849 and 1852.


1831


1832


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