

SCENES FROM SMALL WORLDS

THE CHILD, THE FAMILY AND SOCIETY

IN SELECTED CHILDREN'S PERIODICALS OF THE 1870s

A thesis submitted to the University of Leicester for the  
degree of Ph.D. in Victorian Studies

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## List of Abbreviations

AJ	<u>Aunt Judy's Magazine for Young People</u>
Ch	<u>Chatterbox</u>
GWY	<u>Good Words for the Young</u>
LF	<u>Little Folks</u>
S	<u>Sunshine</u>

## PREFACE

This thesis examines a selection of popular literature for middle-class children written during the 1870s, a period when new genres of secular magazines provided entertaining alternatives to outmoded moralistic journals and cheap, sensational papers. The stories printed in Aunt Judy's Magazine, Chatterbox, Good Words for the Young, Little Folks and Sunshine purveyed orthodox attitudes to children, the family, and society which were designed to explain and justify to the rising generation the beliefs and values that sustained the prevailing social order. Contemporary journal articles on children's literature, child-rearing, education, and religion outlined the social context of children's periodical fiction and indicated some of the changing ideas and current preoccupations which infiltrated stories for children. The aim of this study is to analyze the contribution made by a small group of writers, editors, and publishers of mid-Victorian children's magazines to the informal education of middle-class children.

I was aided in my research by the assistance of Mr. Roy Kirk, the librarian at the Leicester University School of Education, and by Mr. R. J. B. Glanville of Bell and Hyman Ltd. who kindly allowed me access to private correspondence between the editors and publishers of Aunt Judy's Magazine. In addition, Professor James H. Winter and my husband, David Johnstone, read drafts of the thesis and offered criticism which supplemented that of my thesis supervisor, Professor Brian Simon.

## CHAPTER ONE

### CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND THE HISTORIAN

Looking back over their achievements in the nineteenth century, Victorians congratulated themselves for inaugurating the "Age of Children".<sup>1</sup> In no previous era had so much public and private attention been focused on children as a distinct group within the social whole. The Victorian preoccupation with childhood inspired the reform of laws, institutions, and even morals. In retrospect, we understand their concentration on children and child-rearing to form one dimension in their struggle to adapt to a rapidly changing world.

The natural and proper environment of the Victorian child was the family. If Victorian England was not wholly child-centred, it was undeniably family-centred. Family life nurtured those virtues and values which Victorians privately cherished and publicly articulated when the fierce competition and unceasing change of the outside world undermined the individual's sense of integrity and security. The family provided a sheltered enclave where the child absorbed an historically determined definition of self which would sustain him in public life.

With the rise of industrialism and urbanization, the family was under increasing pressure to fulfill the growing expectations and complex requirements of its members. At the same time, the family's role in society appeared to be eroding as alternative institutions usurped its

<sup>1</sup>This is how the Rev. H. Sutton, for instance, designated his times in "Children and Modern Literature", National Review, XVIII (1892), 507.

duties and functions. Against external challenges, Victorians vigorously defended the family's primacy as the foundation of a stable social order.

The importance of studying the family and child-rearing for understanding both social change and cultural continuity is now firmly established. Nevertheless, social historians remain sharply divided in their interpretations of family evolution in the nineteenth century. The historiography of this new discipline charts an erratic course through opposed hypotheses and methodological approaches.<sup>1</sup> All historians of the family labour with sketchy and often unreliable evidence.

The emotional life of a community must always elude the quantifying historian. More than the "reality" of a situation, how people perceive their circumstances determines their response.<sup>2</sup> How did the Victorians themselves see the role and importance of the family in society? How did they attempt to prepare children for an unpredictable future and yet preserve the essential values and virtues which ordered life as they experienced it?

<sup>1</sup>The history of the family is necessarily interdisciplinary, and it is not surprising that historians have employed theoretical frameworks current in their own times with which to understand family organization in past societies. Ironically, just when historians were borrowing most heavily from the social sciences, sociologists, psychologists, and anthropologists were re-evaluating the premises which informed the dominant "structural-functionalist" approaches and began to recognize that the relationship between the individual, the family, and social institutions was more complex than they had conceded. Recent historiographers of the family reassess conventional models of development and posit a dynamic role for the family in society. Rather than merely adapting to external pressures, these historians see the family generating or resisting social and economic changes. For critical surveys of historical research on the family and suggestions for alternative perspectives see: Tamara K. Hareven, "The History of the Family as an Interdisciplinary Field", Journal of Interdisciplinary History, II (1971), 399-414; Arlene Skolnick, "The Family Revisited: Themes in Recent Social Science Research", Journal of Interdisciplinary History, IV (1975), 703-720; E. A. Wrigley, "Reflections on the History of the Family", in Alice S. Rossi, Jerome Kagan, and Tamara K. Hareven, eds., The Family (1978), pp. 71-85; and Elizabeth N. Pleck, "Two Worlds in One: Work and Family", Journal of Social History, X (1976/7), 178-195.

<sup>2</sup>Arlene Skolnick observes that "What people actually do may have little relation to what they think they are doing and what they think they should be doing." Ibid., p. 708.

In the chain of historical and cultural continuity, children represent a weak link whose metal must be tempered to forge the bond between past and future. As each generation succeeds another the older culture must energetically justify its values and beliefs if these are to endure.

In their search for documented attitudes to children, families, and society, it is curious that few social historians exploit the literature through which adults consciously addressed the rising generation. The children's stories written in the past form only one of many avenues through which an individual is inducted into his society, but are often all that survive to document the process by which the adult community conveys the fundamental core of its culture to its children. As one enthusiastic antiquarian of children's books exclaimed: "More than any class of literature they reflect the minds of the generation that produced them."<sup>1</sup> Especially because they seek to influence the heirs of a society, children's stories reveal the aspirations and anxieties which articulate citizens feel for their society and its future. It is of special interest for historians to see, in a society undergoing transformation, how specific groups attempt to preserve and promote those values they perceive to be threatened by change. In such periods, tales for children chronicle the campaign to sustain the prevailing social order. They illustrate the crystallization of amorphous emotional tendencies into rigid formulae. J. H. Plumb made a parallel point when he observed that "The way ideas become social attitudes is one of the most complex problems that face a social historian, and almost all have neglected the influence of children's literature in changing the climate of ideas."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>A. S. W. Rosenbach was quoted by James Frazer, "Children's Literature as a Scholarly Resource: The Need for a National Plan", Library Journal, XXVIII (1965), 4490/1.

<sup>2</sup>J. H. Plumb, "The First Flourishing of Children's Books", Introduction to Early Children's Books and Their Illustrations, ed. Gerald Gottlieb (1975), p. xx.

Undoubtedly, Paul Hazard's exultation that "England could be entirely reconstructed from its children's books" is over-optimistic.<sup>1</sup> All writers, governed by their own social experience, are highly selective in the themes and situations they depict in fiction. Children's authors must be yet more discreet than adult fiction writers, choosing only those scenes their age deems suitable for a young audience. Nevertheless, most children's stories project an image of the domestic circle. Certainly plots are fabrications, but from the settings designed to lend authenticity to the inevitable message many trappings and conventions of typical family life emerge. Though minor details of domestic arrangements are often catalogued in other available sources, they assume enhanced significance in stories which highlight their meaning in daily life. The historian can discover in these tales revealing observations on the nature of children, ideal behaviour patterns, and recommended child-rearing practice. Indeed, children's literature, more than any other historical resource, embodies the dominant ideology of family life. Child-rearing manuals and domestic advice columns offer prescriptions to regulate household affairs, but children's stories show current attitudes to children and child-rearing dramatically applied, albeit in idealized situations. Where else can we see conflicts between parents and children, mistress and servant, child and nurse, or brother and sister concluded in ways that solve the problem and yet satisfy the status quo?

The crucial contribution of children's literature to social history lies in the situations, conflicts and resolutions the authors isolated as fundamental in their attempts to induct a novice audience into its culture. By examining recurring plot structures, social historians can reconstitute those elements of culture which these literary ambassadors from the adult community felt compelled to explain and justify to the rising generation. Through children's stories, historians of childhood

<sup>1</sup>Paul Hazard, Books, Children, and Men, trans. Marguerite Mitchell (1947), p. 147.

and the family gain access to the Victorians' own perception of the family's role in society.

Children's literature does not tell us how children actually behaved in the past nor how their parents reared them. One has only to compare the idealized picture of child life which emerges from children's fiction with memoir accounts of childhood, in their own way equally distorted sources, to realize how children's literature fails to convey the variety and idiosyncrasy inevitable in individual experience. Stories for children record the perceptions of and attitudes to domestic and social conditions expressed in a specialized and stylized form. For this reason, we are less concerned to verify an author's imitation of reality than to disinter his or her particular consciousness of that reality. In using any work of imaginative literature as an historical source one must always be sensitive to the fact that it is a filter through which experience passes. If the historian who wishes to reconstruct the initiation of children into a particular culture can master the complex of forces that determine the form and content of cultural artifacts like children's stories then the historical significance of these documents can be effectively exploited.

Except for a handful of works of genius, children's literature flows in the mainstream of popular culture, which Joseph Banks defines in its widest sense as "patterns of belief surrounding every day experience".<sup>1</sup> Sociologists of literature are careful to distinguish between the market-oriented commodities aimed at a broad spectrum of society and the unique artistic creations read by select groups. John Cawelti sees popular culture as a collective work rather than the individual expression of a single author. Hence, the products of popular culture are closely connected with particular periods and societies.<sup>2</sup> Leo Lowenthal observes that popular

<sup>1</sup>Joseph Banks, "The Challenge of Popular Culture", in P. Appelman et al, eds., 1859: Entering an Age of Crisis (1959), p. 201.

<sup>2</sup>John C. Cawelti, "The Concept of Formula in the Study of Popular Culture", Journal of Popular Culture, III (1969), 382, 387.

literature embodies "typical forms of behaviour, attitudes, commonly held beliefs, prejudices, and aspirations of large numbers of people", but it makes no claim to original insight about its society. It is up to the creative artist to identify and interpret new experiences: "Only after such creative tasks have been performed can the majority of people recognize and become articulate about their predicament and its sources."<sup>1</sup> The original and perceptive insights of one generation become the clichés and truisms of the next, reiterated and re-structured in popular literature in an attempt to answer the contemporary dilemma. Spokesmen for the popular mind interpret the present in a mould of expression cast in the past.

In popular literature convention invariably dominates over pure invention. Cawelti posits a distinction between convention and invention which is particularly germane to the history of popular culture:

Conventions represent familiar shared images and meanings and they assert an ongoing continuity of values. Inventions confront us with a new perception or meaning which we had not realized before. 2.

Almost all Victorian literature was conventional in this sense, as John R. Reed's recent study demonstrates. Reed contends that "In some periods it may be necessary to assume an intellectual posture that makes sense of the world in stylized terms."<sup>3</sup> The nineteenth century, with its bewildering pace of change and social dislocation, was just such a period. Victorian adults propounded formulaic visions of the world not only in books for their children but also in their own entertaining reader matter. They sought comfort in the repetition of familiar themes reinforcing traditional values. The structure of the commonplace offered the security of the known.

Reed maintains that conventions often served to unite adult and child

<sup>1</sup>Leo Lowenthal, Literature, Popular Culture, and Society (1961), pp. xii, xv.

<sup>2</sup>Cawelti, p. 385.

<sup>3</sup>John R. Reed, Victorian Conventions (1975), p. 3.



morality as novelists drew motifs from the traditional tales of folk and child lore.<sup>1</sup> Children's authors tapped the same reservoir of conventions that fed adult fiction, though they rejected many of the specific themes as unsuitable for an immature audience. For instance, the stereotypes of courtship and marriage that formed the staple fare of Victorian light fiction were absent from children's literature. Conversely, those topics fundamental to children's fiction - the experiences of children and sibling relationships - were not prominent in adult literature if Reed's exhaustive survey is a reliable guide. The fact that most Victorian novels ended at the altar does not enhance their value to historians attempting to reconstruct attitudes to family life.

However, though a children's author draws upon his society's standard conventions, he cannot assume that his readers are familiar with and can readily identify common patterns of expression. If conventions represent the cultural idiom of a society, apprentice citizens must learn this language before they can interpret its metaphors. Euphemism, understatement, and implicit judgment will go unappreciated so long as the reader is socially and intellectually illiterate. For this reason, children's authors must clearly explain the meaning and painstakingly fill in the details of common social symbols. They must make audible shared but often unspoken preconceptions of the world so that their readers can learn to identify them. Like the child reader, the historian who discovers these books in later years is a novice. Both child and historian benefit from the explication of cultural assumptions.

Furthermore, the form and content of children's stories must suit the needs and understanding of children. The author of children's stories necessarily begins with a particular conception of the child's nature, his level of comprehension, and his requirements. This "natural history" of children, moulded by contemporary attitudes, determines the structure,

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

style, and tone of each tale.

The social and intellectual innocence of the juvenile audience modifies the literature created for it in a number of ways. On one hand, the inexperience of young readers allows the children's author to present as real an idealized picture of the world, where the adult fiction writer must accommodate his reader's demands for authenticity. Granted, Victorian readers accorded more importance to fidelity to moral truths than to objective social reporting. Reed observes that "The rendering of the world as one sees it is subordinate to the greater purpose of superintending readers' perception of good and evil and counselling proper preferences."<sup>1</sup> Even so, the didactic impulse in children's fiction is less disguised and the social function more obvious than in works meant to divert sophisticated adults.

On the other hand, the author of juvenile fiction who purports to portray the real world has far less scope for independence or idiosyncrasy than the architect of the adult social novel. An unusual social perspective is unlikely to win appreciation from a child reader or his parent. The author's personal expression must be subordinated to the primary purpose of enmeshing the child in a particular framework of beliefs. As one historian of children's literature comments, "It is difficult to imagine how fiction written for children could escape being both cognitive and normative - by implication if not by design."<sup>2</sup> Again, such restraints upon the juvenile author's creativity benefit historians by ensuring that children's stories reflect widely held beliefs and not the novel views of original social thinkers.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>R. Gordon Kelly, Mother Was a Lady: Self and Society in Selected American Children's Periodicals 1865-1890 (1974), p. xiv.

<sup>3</sup>Many historians are reluctant to rely upon great novelists like Dickens or Thackeray as spokesmen for their age. Joseph Banks argues that when novelists consciously become sociologists we can no longer trust the accuracy of their portrayal. He prefers writers like Trollope who speak through their characters rather than about them. See "The Way They Lived Then: Anthony Trollope and the 1870s", Victorian Studies, XII (1968), 177-220.

Personal motivation, too, often distinguishes authors writing for children from those writing for adults. Literary circles generally accord a humble status to the juvenile department. Nineteenth-century children's stories often appeared anonymous, their authors unheralded and doubtless ill-paid for their work. Few children's authors could expect to gain fame or prestige, though the occasional genius won acclaim beyond the precincts of the nursery. The less distinguished writer laboured in obscurity with little more to sustain him than the hope of altruistic satisfaction in filling a need that existed in children.

A further factor differentiating adult from children's literature is the influence of the market. The tastes of the consumer, defined in both spheres by the adult buyer, control more stringently the production of books for children than books for adults. Adults may purchase for themselves books that are enlightening or amusing but which do not altogether conform to their personal view of society or its standards. However, these same adults are likely to be very scrupulous in choosing books for their children. Not trusting children to reject an alternative picture of the world, they take care that the values presented to their children in fiction harmonize with their own. Publishers, too, ever-ready to anticipate approval or censure, will not venture to support work which might alienate their market. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that the children's books of any period which attain a measure of popularity reflect the aspirations, if not the actual practices, of the consuming public.

Thus, the authors of children's stories must mould their creations to suit the ideals of their customers, the limitations imposed by an immature audience, and a necessarily didactic purpose. In these respects, the factors that impinge on literary invention in children's fiction are significantly different from those that affect the production of adult literature. However, these limitations can be assets to the historian provided that he assimilates them into his expectations. On the surface,

children's literature reveals how the adult community expected children to behave, how it assessed their capabilities, and what values it encouraged them to absorb. The manifest content of children's stories shows the world as Victorians wished it to be and wished it to be seen by their children. But beneath the overarching framework of orthodoxy, the historian, gifted with hindsight, can decipher the latent meanings inherent in recurring patterns of conflict and resolution. When we place the creators precisely in their social and historical context we can discover in their stories the emotional and social strategies they employed to reinforce the prevailing structure of family and social life.

# I

Few social historians have exploited the potential contribution of children's literature to their understanding of attitudes to children, the family, and society. Nevertheless, novels, texts, poems, and tracts for children have long excited historical interest. Even in the nineteenth century, antiquarians delighted in reminiscing about the books of their youth and enthusiastically chronicled the development of children's literature.<sup>1</sup> Today, teachers, librarians, and book collectors continue to compile useful collections and accounts of the history of juvenile literature. However, their emphasis is only partially historical. Primarily, they seek to appraise the suitability of the children's books of previous generations for the modern child. Using modern literary or pedagogical standards, they assess the lasting and universal appeal of old tales rather than their meaning in the particular social situation from which they emerged.

<sup>1</sup>In the late nineteenth century, articles reviewing the development of specialized children's literature over the century were common in the major literary journals. The ideas of Victorian children's book reviewers will be examined in the following chapter. The first full-length book devoted to the history of children's literature in England was Mrs. E. M. Field, The Child and His Book: Some Account of the History and Progress of Children's Literature in England (1891).

Such accounts of the history of children's literature fail to avoid the dangerous assumption that only in the present have we discovered the true and universal nature of children, and that in the past misconceptions and superstitions obscured the essential spirit of childhood. Given their premises and goals, it is not surprising that students of children's literature relegate to obscurity books which seem to embody a distinctly obsolete belief system. Yet it is the historian who should appreciate the special usefulness of stories which once amused and instructed children but no longer do so. Too often, chroniclers of children's literary history surmise, with no evidence to support their supposition, that books and tracts for children which now seem tedious or distasteful, never really appealed to children, only to their parents. They tend to dissociate children from the historical milieu in which they lived.

The best historians of children's literature in England, F. J. Harvey Darton and Gillian Avery, escape overly simplistic treatments of their subject.<sup>1</sup> Both authors seek to relate themes in children's literature to social history. Unfortunately, neither adequately documents his or her personal observations about the qualities and significance of the stories.

Darton recounts a five century battle between the "forces of light", representing imaginative literature intended to entertain children, and the "forces of darkness", the gloomy, moralizing stories meant to improve them. The spirit of imagination and spontaneity eventually triumphs in Darton's version of the contest, waged for an image of the child whose nature is both static and modern. Darton focuses on the literary merits of the literature he surveys and he does not always attempt to account for the changes which occurred in the development of children's literature over the centuries. But despite his sometimes ahistorical point of view,

<sup>1</sup>F. J. Harvey Darton, Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life (1937) and Gillian Avery, Childhood's Pattern: A Study of the Heroes and Heroines of Children's Fiction 1790-1950 (1975).

the extent of his scholarship and his familiarity with the development of children's literature, derived from three generations of children's book publishing in the Darton family, is extremely impressive. His observations are succinct, erudite, and perceptive. As the standard and still unsurpassed text of the history of children's literature, Darton's design forms a pattern which most subsequent historians of children's literature emulate.

Attempting to isolate the stereotypes erected for nineteenth-century children to imitate, Gillan Avery's goals appear to be quite appropriate for social history. Avery deliberately excludes from her study the great classics of the nursery like Lewis Carroll's "Alice" books which overshadow most treatments of children's literature and over-emphasize undeniably idiosyncratic views of childhood. In so doing, she rescues from obscurity many now forgotten but formerly widely read works of children's fiction whose values reflect the views of ordinary Victorians. The breadth of her study rarely allows her to venture beyond description, but her acute observations entice the social historian to undertake more detailed investigation.

Both Darton's and Avery's works encompass an enormous range of literature covering a sustained period. They are intent on relating the history of children's literature more than forging that literature as a tool for social history. It is impossible in surveying such scope to correlate specific themes to a particular historical context and yet only under detailed, intense scrutiny does children's literature yield its special contribution to our understanding of its era.

Historians electing to unravel a single strand in the development of juvenile literature have met with greater success in appreciating the social context of their source. Alec Ellis's purpose is to trace the contribution of nineteenth-century children's literature to the extension of literacy.<sup>1</sup> Hence, he focuses on working-class children and their

<sup>1</sup>Alec Ellis, A History of Children's Reading and Literature (1968).

reading. But, because on one hand, the most original and characteristic Victorian children's literature was too difficult and expensive for working-class children and, on the other hand, works written by middle-class writers for poor children reflected already moribund attitudes to children and the poor, Ellis's treatment of Victorian children's literature is restricted. His particular goals lead him to reconstruct a straightforward progression as state education facilitated the establishment of mass media.

The school boy and school girl are popular subjects for students of children's literature.<sup>1</sup> Patrick Howarth traces various facets and social functions of the archetypical public school hero.<sup>2</sup> Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig give similar treatment to the literary representation of girls, though occasionally they mistake the image for the reality.<sup>3</sup> Often imaginative and perceptive, these accounts are are popular rather than scholarly in their approach to source material and evidence.

In recent years, some literary and cultural historians have employed current sociological theory as a framework in which to organize and interpret the stories written for children in past societies. R. Gordon Kelly makes effective use of the theories of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman.<sup>4</sup> Kelly attempts to discover the means whereby a small elite group (which he designates the American gentry class) perpetuated, through its control

<sup>1</sup>See, for instance, Margaret Maison, "Tom Brown and Company: Scholastic Novels of the 1850s", English, XII (1958), 100-103; and Patrick Scott, "School Novels as Source Material", History of Education Society Bulletin, V (1970), 46-56.

<sup>2</sup>Patrick Howarth, Play Up and Play the Game: The Heroes of Popular Fiction (1973).

<sup>3</sup>Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig, You're a Brick, Angela! A New Look at Girls' Fiction from 1839-1975 (1976).

<sup>4</sup>R. Gordon Kelly, Mother Was a Lady: Self and Society in Selected American Children's Periodicals, 1865-1890 (1974). Kelly bases his assumptions on Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman, The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise on the Sociology of Knowledge (1967).

of the children's periodical publishing industry, its system of beliefs and values in the social turmoil of "Gilded Age" America. Kelly's analysis assumes that the theories of Berger and Luckman may be applied to past societies. Summarizing their premises, Kelly accepts that "The worlds inhabited by men can be conceptualized as structured systems of shared meaning, specific to a certain place and time, and consensually maintained." The process of initiating children into this complex of shared meaning is productive both of individual identity and social continuity. In order that the pattern of beliefs ordering any society be maintained, it must be accepted and internalized by the rising generation.<sup>1</sup>

Berger and Luckman's hypotheses about the way individuals are socialized, "society, identity and reality are subjectively crystallized in the same process of internalization", provides a particularly attractive foundation for historians of childhood and the family as well as students of popular culture. To historians of the family and childhood, it conceptualizes the relationship between individual development and the broader range of institutions which compose a given culture. For historians of children's literature, it lends tremendous significance to their documents as vehicles by which the values, beliefs, and attitudes of a whole group, not merely the idiosyncratic ideas of individual parents, are communicated to the young.

Unfortunately for historians, it is impossible to test this hypothesis. We simply do not possess evidence sufficient to prove the internalization by a generation of boys and girls of a particular scale of values. Kelly's theoretical presuppositions imply that children's literature contributes to cultural continuity, but since he is unable to ascertain the effect of his sample of magazines on the late nineteenth-century generation of American youth, he must leave this promise unfulfilled. But even without demonstrating the predictive value of children's literature, Kelly makes convincingly clear how the literature produced in post Civil War America

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. xiv.



served the needs of a particular group at that time.

Another historian of American children's literature, Ann Scott MacLeod, uses the ideas of David Reisman to understand the psychological implications of the values expressed in pre-Civil War children's literature.<sup>1</sup> But MacLeod carefully avoids the problem of determining the efficacy of prescriptive stories in moulding "inner" or "outer" directed personalities and concentrates, instead, on demonstrating how moral tales expressed the hopes and fears of the citizens of a new republic.

In contrast to Kelly and MacLeod, who use modern sociological and psychological theories to understand past societies, David McClelland analyzes children's literature to test his own ideas of the psychology of economic behaviour.<sup>2</sup> McClelland attempts to discover in stories for children the conscious or unconscious transmission of specific psychological qualities from one generation to another. He collected children's readers from various nations and time periods and coded them for "an achievement factor", a psychological need he isolates as a vital dimension of the entrepreneurial personality. Relating his data to subsequent economic development, McClelland infers that high achievement motivation disclosed by themes in elementary school stories relates positively with future rapid economic growth.

McClelland maintains that children's stories "reflect the national aspirations of public figures" and "tend to reflect the motives and values of the culture in the way they are told or in their themes and plots".<sup>3</sup> While his goals allow for historical analysis, his attempt to isolate and tabulate psychological factors in children's texts and, through them,

<sup>1</sup>Ann Scott MacLeod, A Moral Tale: Children's Fiction in America 1820-1860 (1975). MacLeod refers to David Reisman's The Lonely Crowd.

<sup>2</sup>David McClelland, The Achieving Society (1961).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 71, 79.

predict future economic growth is not convincing. Again, a paucity of evidence inhibits the effectiveness of imposing rigorous psychological or sociological theory onto people in the past. A multiplicity of forces bear on the formation of individual personality and render it extremely difficult to specify and quantify the actual contribution of children's literature. To extrapolate subsequent social and institutional trends from a widespread but nonetheless singular early influence would seem impossible.

What we can assess in children's stories is the intent of the adult community to persuade the rising generation of the legitimacy of the values sustaining its way of life. To this end, MacLeod's and Kelly's studies provide inspiring models. But rather than wrestle the documents of Victorian nursery culture into modern interpretations of social development and child psychology, it seems more appropriate to judge the form and content of literature addressed to the young in terms of the contemporary consciousness of its pedagogical and social significance. Informed by current theories of cognitive development, Victorian critics and social commentators rated the formative influence of early childhood reading experience even more highly than modern sociologists and psychologists. The associationist view of learning patterns, which still predominated with many educational thinkers at the end of the century, assumed a direct influence of external stimuli (for example, reading material) on the personality and character of the child. In place of scientific terminology, Victorian thinkers used literary metaphors to conceptualize the infantile mind.<sup>1</sup> Their presuppositions about the implications of cultural media

<sup>1</sup>The ideas and attitudes of Victorian men of letters will be treated in the following chapter but a typical expression of contemporary thought about the importance of children's reading was articulated by [Alexander Innes Shand], "Children Yesterday and Today", Quarterly Review, CLXXXIII (1896), 374: "The mind and memory in early youth are susceptible as melting wax to even fugitive impressions, and anything that lays firm hold of the fancy must leave an indelible mark, and may possibly shape an existence."

offer ample scope for historical analysis of Victorian literary products.

Victorian authors and publishers, as Richard D. Altick observes, "were very conscious of the power they possessed for affecting their readers' attitudes . . . and they saw nothing unethical, and indeed much that was admirable, in inserting their own views into novels and periodicals."<sup>1</sup> Writers and publishers allowed that their work modified adult perceptions of the world about them, but were convinced that the power they wielded in forming the child's vision of reality was absolute. Optimistic that the rising generation could be moulded by literature, the creators of children's fiction were determined to impose their ideas upon the citizens of the future. The values and attitudes they espoused emerge all the more transparently in Victorian children's books because of this confidence.

Clearly, from the stories Victorians wrote for children we learn more about the authors themselves than about the boys and girls who read them. There is a tendency in most discussions of childhood to assume that a child of unrefined nature enters the world and is modified by that world. Yet it is more revealing, historically, to see the child as an invention of the adult world, led to realize and form itself by subtle and implicit understanding of what the world wants of it. The concepts adults attach to the state of childhood satisfy a wealth of social needs extending far beyond the family circle, pervading their view of society as a whole. Hence, any documents which record how adults imagine children to be and how they should be initiated into the mainstream of their culture are crucial to understanding a social system at any point in its history. Children's fiction, and especially fiction meant to appear realistic, cannot fail to illuminate a fundamental dimension of adult mentality.

1. Richard D. Altick, "The Literature of An Imminent Democracy", in P. Appelman et al, eds., 1859: Entering An Age of Crisis (1959), p. 224.

## II

The intellectual origins of Victorian impressions about childhood and the role of literature in society, so far as they infiltrate popular opinion, provide a foundation for the study of children's literature. Historians of children's literature pay considerable attention to the influence of various philosophers, Rousseau, Hartley, and Locke for instance, on the authors of children's books.<sup>1</sup> But it is more productive from the standpoint of social history to regard the content of children's literature as a response to particular social situations rather than as an attempt to apply intellectual theory.

In times of social change and dislocation, people look to organs of popular culture to fortify those values potentially threatened by change. It is remarkable that unusually fruitful and innovative eras of juvenile literary production often coincide with times of social unrest.<sup>2</sup> In such periods, adults hope to reinforce those values which elucidate life as they define it by justifying them to the young. In fiction, they construct situations that incorporate nostalgic memories of the allegedly simple and certain social order of their own youth with the implicit assumption that their readers, exposed to a confusing, changeable world, are comparatively deprived. Children's book writers reaffirm their own loyalty to traditional mores by resolving conflicts in ways that demonstrate the efficacy of a distinct moral code.<sup>3</sup> Thus, even when new genres of children's literature

<sup>1</sup>Darton refers to Locke and Rousseau in outlining the intellectual milieu of late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century children's authors, as do most of his disciples. See also, Sylvia Patterson, Rousseau's "Emile" and Early Children's Literature (1971).

<sup>2</sup>Brian Alderson, an historian and critic of children's literature, made this point during the History of Education Society, Conference on Informal Sources of Education, December, 1977.

<sup>3</sup>The Post-Civil War American children's authors employed this strategy according to Kelly, p. xvii.

flower, the messages and meanings implicit in the stories act in concert with the forces of social inertia rather than social change. Yet they cannot be wholly regressive in intention since, to be effective, children's stories must accomodate and resolve the current preoccupations of the dominant culture.

The hypothesis that original genres of children's literature flourish in periods of social transformation is particularly seminal for understanding that decade in Victorian history when the "equipoise" or stability that characterized the mid-Victorian period began to yield to the more turbulent social climate of the late-Victorian years. While most periods of history are, in some respects, transitional, the 1870s, a decade which historians rarely examine exclusively, would seem to hold great claim to this description.<sup>1</sup> Though changes in domestic life are seldom dramatic, subtle but profound transformations in attitudes to the family's role in society became manifest alongside the more obvious social, political, and economic events of this period.

The 1870s also forms a period of unprecedented expansion in publishing for children. Not only were more books produced, but also new and imaginative genres of children's fiction developed. Historians of children's and other forms of popular literature frequently date the progress of the book trade by the various parliamentary acts of educational reform. Indeed, Forster's Education Act of 1870 is singled out as the catalyst generating the mass audience essential to the modern popular press.<sup>2</sup> Against too

<sup>1</sup>Almost all historians of mid-Victorian Britain date the beginning of the "age of equipoise" precisely in 1851, the time of the Great Exhibition. They are much less definite and unified in their interpretation of its close. Depending on the historian's interest, the Reform Bill of 1867, or the "Great Depression" of the 1870s are chosen to define the end of the period.

<sup>2</sup>Simon Nowell Smith, The House of Cassell 1848-1958 (1969), p. 108 maintains that the Education Act was crucial to the development of popular magazines for children.

simplistic accounts of the relationship between educational reform and mass publishing, Harold Perkin argues convincingly that the popular press developed out of established traditions of working-class culture and rested on the prosperity of the late-Victorian economy.<sup>1</sup> By similar logic, a causal relationship posited between educational reform and juvenile literary production cannot account for the surge of juvenile publishing which actually anticipated the act by at least a decade. Parents who could not afford school fees before 1870 would hardly purchase special children's books and magazines after it.

It seems more plausible to see movements to reform educational facilities and a proliferation of new genres of children's literature as symptoms of a heightened awareness of children and concern for the future of society. The fact that the same individuals often participated in agitating for educational reform and improving children's literature demonstrates that both phenomena reflect a confluence of ideas taking effect in parallel spheres. One such period of educational and literary activity was the late-eighteenth century when men and women vitally interested in new pedagogical theories took to writing stories for children. Thomas Day, Maria Edgeworth, Letitia Barbauld, and Mary Wollstonecraft were among a number of serious intellectuals committed to educational progress and resolved to create completely new forms of juvenile literature to complement their ideas. At the same time, they responded in their educational theories to the particular social situation created by nascent industrialism and an emerging middle class.<sup>2</sup>

The mid-Victorian period was another era of significant intellectual excitement about child development. Again, a significant proportion of the

<sup>1</sup>Harold Perkin, "The Origins of the Popular Press", History Today, VII (1957), 425-434.

<sup>2</sup>I examined the late eighteenth-century stories for children in their historical context in "Children and Society in Eighteenth-Century Children's Literature" (M.A. Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1974).

literary elite wrote articles on education and children's literature and recognized that informal as well as formal sources of education were instrumental in moulding the character of the young. The Rev. I. Gregory Smith spoke for all when he asserted that "Education, in one form or another, should be the great question of every age, seeing that the cultivation of his race is surely the most important work in which man can be engaged."<sup>1</sup> This enhanced consciousness of the needs of children eventually took concrete shape both in educational reform and in a renaissance of children's literature. From mid-century onwards, famous novelists and intellectual critics joined forces with less-known but nonetheless talented writers to create a literature of the nursery adapted to suit new ideas about children and society. The participation in this efflorescence of British juvenile literature of men and women whose social and intellectual horizons extended far beyond the juvenile department lends force to the contention that periods of intense interest in childhood often coincide with times of social change. Pedagogical and psychological theories current in this period rendered intellectuals, artists, and reformers confident that they could influence social development by appealing to the young in schools or in the books they read at home. Changing social, political, and even moral structures made it imperative that they try.

Thus, it would seem that in the mid-Victorian period those who had a stake in the prevailing social order began to take an active interest in the social as well as academic education of the rising generation. Darton describes the mid-Victorian generation of children's authors as "more nearly of the 'ruling' classes. They had a modest feeling of a prerogative audience. They were more widely cultured, more experienced, less provincially minded, or else less disdainful of the provinces."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>[I. Gregory Smith], "Books for Children", North British Review, XVI (1854), 402.

<sup>2</sup>Darton, p. 259.

Moreover, a particular faction of the intellectual and social elite, established churchmen, their relatives and allies, were particularly prominent in secular juvenile literary production. Earlier in the century, Dissenters and the evangelical party of the Church of England were most active in producing books and tracts for the young in a period when most literature but especially children's was belligerently pious. In the mid-Victorian period the heavily religious atmosphere hanging over children's reading began to dispel, but not because religious leaders abandoned the field. At this time, a revival in the Anglican church inspired the clergy to extend the breadth of their influence to secure the Church's position in the nation. Especially as the state exerted increasing control over education, a sphere traditionally claimed by religious organizations, members of the clergy sought new channels through which to reassert the educative function of the Church.

Furthermore, when the formal education of the upper classes was largely confined to the classics and subjects that reacted slowly or not at all to changing public opinion, astute observers realized that it was through the media of informal education, the books and stories boys and girls chose to read in their leisure time, that children received their most influential and abiding impressions about the world. Amid all the furore surrounding educational reform, the Rev. I. Gregory Smith reminded his readers that changing children's thinking was, after all, of paramount importance: ". . . the books by which they are amused and spontaneously educated are surely among the most powerful domestic influences to which children are exposed."<sup>1</sup> Given the contemporary emphasis on the formative influence of early reading, it is not surprising that certain members of a revitalized Anglican church chose to promulgate their new social gospel in entertaining and secular stories for the young. Their bid through nursery literature for the allegiance of the rising generation

<sup>1</sup>Smith, p. 402.



reproduced in miniature those larger struggles and transformations taking place in Victorian society on a grand scale.

Harold Perkin contends that the regeneration of the Anglican Church was a symptom of the increasing class consciousness of the upper class.<sup>1</sup> Through the established church, the aristocracy tried to defend its "class ideals" of deference, honour, and social responsibility against the dominant middle-class values of independence, competition, and individualism. Established churchmen usually acted in concert with the upper classes and shared their world view. At the same time, Perkin interprets the reform of the established church and the Oxford Movement as marking the "professionalization" of the clergy. In his model of the Victorian social structure he identifies professionals as a separate class which was intent upon asserting its own "class ethos" of merit, expertise, and intelligent but disinterested service. Like the upper classes, this group was critical of the prevailing entrepreneurial value system based on self-interest. From the mid-Victorian period onward, the professional men strived to establish a distinct role in their society and to "gentrify" their vocations.<sup>2</sup> As traditional allies of the aristocracy and representatives of the new professional class, Anglican clergymen straddled the boundary separating the upper from the middle classes. Thus, religious leaders were key figures in the restructuring of mid- and late-Victorian society and leading spokesmen for a new ethic uniting the middle and upper classes

<sup>1</sup>Harold Perkin, The Origins of Modern English Society, 1780-1880 (1969).

<sup>2</sup>W. D. Rubenstein disagrees with Perkin's four-class model of society and prefers to structure Victorian society in terms of elite groups. As servants of their clients, Rubenstein argues that professionals were outside class warfare, but, if anything, allied with the most conservative elements of society. Nevertheless, his contention that professional men were primarily concerned with establishing the gentility of their callings highlights their critical position in the transforming Victorian social structure. See "Wealth, Elites, and Class Structure of Modern Britain", Past and Present, LXXVII (1978), 99-126.

under the banner of social service.<sup>1</sup> Children's book writing, editing and publishing formed one part of their astonishing range of activities in mid- and late-Victorian society.

Moreover, if professional religious men represented a synthesis of upper- and middle-class ethics, certain ranks within the complex range of statuses and occupations comprising the middle class became more receptive to their message. When threatened by the amplified political, social, and economic voice of the working class, and by the perception of economic depression, the upper echelons of the middle class began to ally themselves with the upper class, both socially and politically. The forces credited with forging a symbiosis of upper- and middle-class values, the public schools which "manufactured" gentlemen, the agricultural depression which made way for the dominance of a plutocracy, and the formation of a nation-wide "Society" where the landed elite mixed socially with the urban commercial elite, were operative in the 1870s. Still, in so vague a venue as the exchange of values, it is difficult to detect the processes at work.

Again, the children's literature written in this transitional epoch provides a key to the subtle, almost imperceptible, transformations taking place in social thinking. Since children could not be expected to know the old ways of social life and had also to be taught to conform to newer modes, stories for boys and girls had to convey current social decorum in a simple and easily comprehensible form. Hence, the juvenile tales of the 1870s help to guide historians through the increasingly complex labyrinth of social morés.

Nevertheless, mid-Victorian children's literature is not uniformly enlightening to historians endeavoring to understand changing social roles. The most innovative genres of children's fiction were only available to

<sup>1</sup>Desmond Bowen, The Idea of the Victorian Church: A History of the Church of England (1968) insists that clergymen led all other classes in the development of the ethic of social service.

boys and girls of the upper and middle classes. Stories and tracts, which religious organizations showered on poor children, continued to invoke prescriptions and values which the upper classes, themselves, abandoned. As Marghanita Laski observed: "Morality and lugubriousness seemed inseparably tied together, and long after stories for the middle class had assumed an altogether more cheerful outlook, working-class children were condemned by their preceptors to almost unrelieved gloom."<sup>1</sup> Inexperience prevented authors writing specifically for working-class children from describing domestic life in a way meaningful to these readers. Their religious and social purposes inhibited them from empathizing with the emotions, values, and attitudes of working-class culture.

It was when mid-Victorian children's authors spoke to their direct heirs, the children who would carry on the traditions of moral and social leadership that justified the prevailing social order, that their stories encapsulated the nuances and transformations of the dominant ethos. Setting their tales in the kinds of homes with which they were familiar, these authors sincerely and accurately pledged their commitment to that set of values supposed to characterize mid-Victorian England.

However, historians must guard against a simplistic assumption that an author's personal social experience strictly defines his literary constituency. On one hand, as Perkin maintains, an author's vocation allows him to take up the mantle of other social groups and to articulate their ideals in fusion with his own.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, as David Daiches observes, "up to a point . . . it is irrelevant what the class background of a Victorian author was; if he wished to succeed, he had to meet the demands of a particular audience. . . ."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Marghanita Laski, Mrs. Ewing, Mrs. Molesworth, and Mrs. Hodgson Burnett (1950), p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>Perkin, The Origins of Modern English Society, pp. 255-256.

<sup>3</sup>David Daiches, "Literature and Social Mobility", in Istvan Maszros, ed., Aspects of History and Class Consciousness (1971), p. 166.

In the mid-Victorian period, children's authors welded attitudes characteristic of the upper classes, honour, gentility, and social responsibility, onto the conventional outlook of the middle class. They defended the ideals of domesticity, religiousness, and respectability against the forces which they perceived to threaten family life and middle-class integrity. At the same time, they tried in their stories to entice the middle-classes into active participation and interaction with other groups in society in order to unify all classes. Presumably, their stories embodied the social thinking of their audience, for, as Professor Banks maintains, despite its complexity, the mid-Victorian reading and writing public was united in its social evaluation. The life of leisured gentility became the ideal for all.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the stories written for relatively well-to-do children evince the blending of middle- and upper-class attitudes as they coalesced in the mid-Victorian period.

Moreover, the literature designed by authors of broadly middle-class origins for children of their own class illuminates a valuable perspective on how the middle class defined itself and its place in the social structure. Always difficult to locate precisely, the boundaries of the middle ground of the social terrain shifted continually in the mid-Victorian era as new groups claimed membership. In addition, the internal organization of the middle class became more complex. Though a class structure, as opposed to a hierarchy, was mature and operative by the mid-nineteenth century, the "language of class" fell into disrepute, and the terms appropriate to an older deferential society revived in common parlance. Middle-class citizens of mid-Victorian England were more sensitive to and interested in the minute gradations of status, based on occupation, life style, family, and education which divided them from their peers, than in

<sup>1</sup>Banks, "The Challenge of Popular Culture", p. 213.

<sup>2</sup>Asa Briggs, "The Language of 'Class' in Early Nineteenth-Century England", in Asa Briggs and John Saville, eds., Essays in Labour History (1967), pp. 69-71; Perkin, Origins of Modern English Society, pp. 374-5.

the broader economic relationships which united them.<sup>1</sup> Ever anxious to improve their relative position on the social ladder, middle-class individuals emphasized any particulars of their own background that might serve to raise them a rung. Indeed, it is arguable that the middle-class preoccupation with social mobility itself engendered the maze of interwoven criteria defining social status.<sup>2</sup>

The task facing authors endeavoring to satisfy a conglomerate of varying ranks was monumental. Professor Banks identified seven categories of middle-class readers, each of which required distinct qualities in literature.<sup>3</sup> The complexity of the social structure and the ambiguity of social status levels puzzled contemporaries as well as modern historians.<sup>4</sup> Yet the authors of juvenile fiction had to try to impose order on the apparent chaos of the contemporary social formation to enable the child reader to find his place in society and learn how to manage social relationships from that place. Even when they failed to differentiate precisely and consistently between various groups, their very confusion points to regions in the social topography which were mysterious to its inhabitants. Thus, children's stories may not aid in the scientific analysis of the social structure as it actually operated, but they do shed light on the contemporary perception of it.

<sup>1</sup>J. A. Banks, Prosperity and Parenthood: A Study of Family Planning Among the Victorian Middle Classes (1954), describes the middle-class obsession with the "paraphernalia of gentility" which they felt defined and safeguarded their status.

<sup>2</sup>Perkin maintains that the revival of deference and the stratification of the middle class symbolized the middle-class ideal of social climbing and not the resurgence of aristocratic power. See: Origins of Modern English Society, pp. 374-5.

<sup>3</sup>Banks lists leisured gentlemen, professional gentlemen, professional men, manufacturers and tradesmen, clerks, government school teachers, and working farmers as separate departments of the reading public. See: "The Challenge of Popular Culture", p. 213.

<sup>4</sup>Nathaniel Woodard, for example, included a very broad range of society in the "middle classes" he aimed to educate, from artisans and small farmers to professionals and the lesser gentry. He distinguished various grades ostensibly by income but, in practice, by occupation. See: J. R. de S. Honey, Tom Brown's Universe: The Development of the Public School in the Nineteenth Century (1977), p. 50.

Furthermore, since the majority of children's stories centred in the domestic circle, they tended to highlight the family's role in arbitrating society. It was through the family that the child imbibed his first lessons in the behaviour appropriate to his station in life. All contact with other classes and groups radiated through the protective atmosphere of the family to the child. The domestic setting natural to children's fiction assumed enhanced significance in the mid-Victorian period when responsibility for maintaining the social hierarchy increasingly devolved upon the family.

Especially as the volume of traffic up and down the social ladder appeared to swell, those situated at the top wished to regulate the pace of movement in social relations. Since the upper classes feared indiscriminate entry into their ranks and the middle classes craved access to elite social groups, the private home became the arena for all "genteel" social life.<sup>1</sup> A rigidly defined set of qualifications enabled elite groups to control the flow of new members into their midst. It fell to the women within private families to articulate and order the pattern of social relationships.<sup>2</sup>

Most children's authors were female and while they did not consciously set about to outline for their readers the intricacies of the social code or to overtly identify prevailing fashions, they could hardly fail to acquaint children with their basic social obligations. Since the major role of genteel women was to assign standards of social behaviour and train their children to conform to society's rules, issues of dress, deportment, and manners to inferiors and superiors tended to infiltrate the fiction

<sup>1</sup> Leonore Davidoff, The Best Circles: Society, Etiquette, and the Season (1975), analyzes the structure and function of "Society" as it developed in the mid- and late-Victorian period.

<sup>2</sup> Many historians concerned with Victorian women note the central importance of their role in maintaining the social fabric. This female function is central to Davidoff's argument but also discussed by Banks in Prosperity and Parenthood and Duncan Crow in The Victorian Woman (1971).

women wrote for the young.<sup>1</sup> In thus displaying their own status preoccupations, children's authors discarded the stance of objective outsiders and donned the guise of parents socializing their children. Moreover, their stories had meaning for a far larger section than the "upper ten thousand" who participated in the rituals of "Society". Children's authors could hardly have been unaware that their stories spread the gospel of gentility and respectability to those who would never enter the crucibles of public school or soirée. By popularizing the standards of social decorum, children's authors reinforced the authority of the elite social credo.

Even as the wealthy middle class tried to penetrate high society, their less well-off brethren struggled to imitate the life style of their superiors and to dissociate themselves from those below. As stratification within the middle class became more pronounced, so did the gulf separating middle-class values and attitudes from the outlook of the working class. The rigidity of the middle and upper-class behaviour code prevented the wealthy from understanding the lower classes. When the middle classes withdrew in ever increasing numbers to socially exclusive suburbs, geography as well as mentality severed contact with the urban poor. Lack of experience with the poor engendered ignorance which in turn fomented anxiety, especially as the middle classes anticipated the consequences of an enfranchized proletariat.

The men and women who wrote stories for middle-class children betrayed the ambivalence and apprehension of their class regarding those less fortunate. Nevertheless, some authors attempted to bridge the ever-widening gap between rich and poor in fiction designed to acquaint well-off children with the lives and experiences of the poor. Stories set in the alleys and courts of great cities exemplified the way ordinary middle-

<sup>1</sup>In Proper Stations: Class in Victorian Fiction (1971), p. 14, Richard Faber asserts that women authors "within the limits of their experience" were "the most reliable guides to the Victorian social labyrinth".

class citizens viewed the poor and the nature of solutions they envisaged to ameliorate poverty without upsetting the status quo. Even these distorted sketches of working-class life enable the social historian to recover the perceptions and responses of middle-class individuals to the world outside their immediate experience.

Furthermore, stories about poor children juxtaposed conflicting images of the poor and childhood. The archetypal child was, by necessity, upper or middle class. The security of a comfortable, secluded home was indispensable to safeguard his innocence and middle- and upper-class adults found it very difficult to visualize an acceptable childhood in any other setting. As authors tried to coordinate the contemporary ideal of childhood with the perceptions of the poor, the contradictions inherent in their presuppositions about both children and the poor appeared in sharp relief.

Thus, the children's fiction of the 1870s provides a unique index to changing attitudes to childhood and their implications for social relations at all levels, showing the slow mutation of conventions to meet changing conditions within the dominant culture. By concentrating on the specific concerns of middle-class authors of children's stories, during a limited but crucial period, the attitudes, and values, aspirations and anxieties expressed can be understood in their precise social context. From them, we can reconstitute the priorities of ordinary middle-class citizens and examine their subjective responses to the contemporary social situation.

### III

Out of the enormous volume and variety of literature published for the children of the 1870s, magazines were the most innovative and popular format of recreational reading. Their diversity and market orientation renders periodicals the most likely point of access to current attitudes to childhood, the family and society.



For various reasons periodical publications for children offer a more viable resource than the enduring nursery classics for investigating the moral outlook predominating in a society at a given point in its history. Since no single author can be expected to distill and communicate a balanced and complete view of his or her culture, magazines furnish the historian with a wealth of interpretations. Children's magazines employ the talents of the best contemporary writers as well as the legions of undistinguished toilers. The now-forgotten work of these mediocre authors survives to impart the flavour of quotidian existence long after its day has passed. At the same time, the overarching purpose and point of view of the editors and publishers integrate the heterogeneous strands of opinion and expression into a cohesive whole.

Furthermore, children's magazines more immediately mirror public sentiment than do books which are not so pressed to win instant popularity. A modern children's author and historian of children's literature, John Rowe Townsend, accounts for the evanescent nature of a children's magazine:

The turnover of young readers is rapid; they grow up, and while this benefits a book which can hope to find new readers and does not need to retain the old, it makes life very hard for a children's magazine. A magazine is constantly losing readers by natural wastage and it needs to run fast to stay in the same place. <sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, its inherently continuous format enables a periodical to draw its readers into an ongoing cycle of indoctrination. A book, however brilliant, is never allowed this week by week and month by month forum. A book may leave an enduring impression where the magazine story is soon forgotten, but the periodical offers authors, editors, and publishers a capacious net with which to secure their readers' fidelity.

Moreover, while a book must stand as first cast, a magazine can adapt to the changing preferences of its readers. Loyalty to a magazine implies membership and participation in shared experience, fortified by time and continuity. To survive, a magazine must project a personality

<sup>1</sup>John Rowe Townsend, Written for Children: An Outline of English Children's Literature (1965), p. 157.

with which its audience can identify. The sequential format of a periodical allows opportunity for intimacy and interchange between the magazine's personified character and its readers which cements the bond of community between them. The direct response of readers in their letters, plus the rise and fall of circulation guides the editor to steer his magazine into the current of popular opinion and taste. Thus, periodicals articulate and preserve the instant of public sentiment.<sup>1</sup>

From the mid-nineteenth century onward, new periodicals for children appeared in ever increasing numbers, literally flooding the market. Out of this deluge, it is vital to select such examples as consistently represent contemporary thought as well as serve to enlarge our understanding of attitudes to childhood and society in Victorian England. Magazines with large circulations would seem to demonstrate the approval of a significant proportion of the population. But unfortunately, solid figures of sales and distribution of any Victorian periodical are very difficult to secure and even more difficult for a children's magazine. Many of the publishers of mid-Victorian juvenile magazines vanished without trace long ago and much archival material has disappeared over the years. Only in the rare instances where private correspondence survives can we discover clues about the circulations of these periodicals. Even these scarce references to monthly or annual sales are alluded to covertly. As a historian of the Victorian periodical publishing industry surmises: It was apparently not considered good form to reveal circulation figures to the outside world."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Bearing in mind, of course, Lowenthal's argument referred to above that the public reaction to the contemporary situation is cast in terms of past experience.

<sup>2</sup>Alvin Ellegard, The Readership of the Periodical Press in Mid-Victorian Britain (1957), p. 8. Ellegard devised an elaborate formula for computing the circulations figures of early and mid-Victorian magazines from stamp tax returns. But since few children's magazines spanned the years before and after the repeal of this tax in 1855, their circulations cannot be estimated mathematically. Cynthia White, Women's Magazines, 1792-1968 (1968), could only secure circulation figures for the very late Victorian period.

Concrete evidence of the sales and distribution of Victorian periodicals eluded even contemporaries. As late as 1881, Samuel Deacon had to diplomatically persuade the editors and publishers of magazines and newspapers that the revelation of their circulation figures would not harm their reputations and would attract advertising revenue:

For some years past we have made endeavours to furnish our readers with information concerning the circulation of newspapers. We are quite aware that in doing so we are treading on delicate ground, but we have met with sufficient evidence that the reluctance of many newspaper proprietors, whose issues reach really respectable figures, to make those figures known, is gradually disappearing. 1

Children's magazines carried advertisements for domestic products, but in the 1870s, their marketing principles did not treat advertising as a major source of revenue.<sup>2</sup> Since magazine production was not subsidized by advertising revenue, there were no compelling reasons to divulge circulation figures. Though many children's magazine editors airily referred to large sales and immense popularity, they shrank from the crudeness of numbers.

The length of time a magazine survived is another indicator of success and popularity, but again, not a straightforward index. The peculiar nature of Victorian children's publishing and the complex motivation of children's magazine producers undermines the reliability of even this apparently unsubjective source of information. While many mid-Victorian children's magazines were simply commercial products which lived or died according to the whim of popular taste, others were sponsored by patrons for the dissemination of sectarian opinion. Religious magazines often showed enormously long runs, but since they did not have to earn a profit

<sup>1</sup>Deacon's Newspaper Handbook and Advertiser's Guide (1881), p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>E. S. Turner, The Shocking History of Advertising! (1953) describes the conservative suspicion with which magazine and newspaper proprietors viewed prospective advertisers.

there was little commercial pressure to keep abreast of public feeling.<sup>1</sup>

However, although very little conclusive evidence survives to estimate the popularity of mid-Victorian children's magazines, the assessment of contemporary critics provides an excellent and, in the end, more informative substitute. Where mere numbers are silent, the discriminating comments of literary reviewers point up those magazines which earned the greatest repute. The relationship between critic and consumer is not straightforward and therefore we cannot automatically assume that the magazines which critics recommended were the most widely patronized. Indeed, in the mid-Victorian period, the critics' choices were not the most popular. Nevertheless, the intelligent and informed remarks of contemporary children's book reviewers on specific periodicals provide an invaluable guide for selecting those magazines which best deployed approved attitudes to children and society.

On the basis of contemporary critical opinion, a sample of five mid-Victorian children's magazines was chosen to examine intensively. These include Aunt Judy's Magazine for Young People (1866-1885), Little Folks (1871-1937), Good Words for the Young (1869-1877), Sunshine (1862-1923), and Chatterbox (1866-1957). Each of these made unique contributions to British nursery culture, acknowledged by contemporaries and historians of children's literature.

Naturally, the editors of these magazines attempted to reach as wide an audience as possible. Nevertheless, their intended readership encompassed a wide range of status and educational levels. Though none of them deliberately aimed to secure a specific and limited clientele, the nature of themes recurring in individual magazines tended to reflect the interests and preoccupations of different sub-groups of the middle class.

<sup>1</sup>For instance, The Child's Companion; or, Sunday Scholar's Reward appeared under various titles from 1824-1932. The Monthly Messenger of the Presbyterian Church of England began in 1843 and continued until 1924. Early Days; or, The Wesleyan Scholar's Guide was first issued in 1846 and still printed as The Kiddies' Magazine in 1948. Each religious sect issued one or more children's magazine and many lasted more than half a century.

While one magazine commonly treated the increasing demands of society on family life, another concentrated on the threat of downward mobility. The public school boy featured as a major hero type in some journals, the young clerk figured in others. Even when an author wrote for several magazines, he or she frequently slanted their submissions to suit the preferences of individual editors. For instance, the popular Mrs. Robert O'Reilly and the prolific "H.A.F." were regular contributors to many magazines. For Aunt Judy's, they might describe young ladies and gentlemen living in London townhouses, for Little Folks, they wrote of the adventures of carefree country children, yet for Chatterbox, they told readers about the miseries of the poor. Taken together, these magazines display a panoply of middle-class attitudes at all levels. Bald clues furnished by price, subjective hints implied by content, plus the occasional references of contemporary critics indicate the particular status bias of each magazine. Children's book reviewers allocated Aunt Judy's to the refined and well-educated child, whereas the more pious and cheap journals like Chatterbox and Sunshine might serve the lower middle-class boy or girl. Good Words for the Young and Little Folks were less specifically oriented to any particular subsection and suited a broad range of middle-class children.

In order to recapture the reading experience of the regular subscriber exposed to the recurrent yearly cycle of their favourite magazine, the contents of this central sample were intensively examined throughout the 1870s.<sup>1</sup> Each of these magazines projected a distinct corporate personality intended to enlist the emotions of its readers towards a particular moral outlook built up through continuous identification.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>All except for Good Words for the Young which had a shorter run and less stable production cycle than the other journals. The problems and progress of each magazine will be examined in Chapter Three.

<sup>2</sup>In order to avoid gaining an anomalous impression of the mid-Victorian periodical world from the possibly idiosyncratic views of a small number of editors, the central sample was balanced by a survey of their prominent rivals which are listed in the Bibliography.

Every year, the average magazine intended for recreational reading offered its readers two to four full length serialized novels, at least ten and sometimes more than twenty short stories, a number of non-fiction articles, poems, games, and anecdotes. The non-fiction essays index the variety of popular information editors felt would amuse and profit young readers as part of their informal education. But the narrative fiction, which comprised the staple fare of entertaining juvenile periodicals, harbours both objective and subjective documentation of attitudes to childhood, family life, and society. Stories for children, as Kelly observes:

. . . typically proceed from an initial problem or conflict to a satisfactory resolution, and the terms in which these are cast provide the basis for inferences about the ways in which a group defines and symbolizes the principles of order though to structure and sustain a given way of life. 1

Narrative fiction designed to appear realistic sensitively records the vagaries of prevailing sentiment since it must satisfy its readers within the bounds of the public mentality. In contrast, the universality and antiquity of folk and fairy tales and nursery rhymes induce recurring nostalgia in adults so that they endure, unchanged, generation after generation. The very prominence of "time-bound" values in narrative fiction often dooms it to a short life.

Narrative fiction in mid-Victorian children's magazines exhibited great versatility and included adventure stories, school tales, fantasies, religious stories, as well as the conventional domestic tales. The particular attitude towards juvenile fiction that developed in the 1870s endowed many of these genres with enhanced utility for analysts of Victorian social ideals. Contemporary critics insisted that fiction should be as entertaining as it was improving. Therefore, even religious stories cast their gospel in a contemporary mould where earlier evangelical fiction concentrated exclusively on the "other life" and relied on static formulae of events which obscured the details and daily life and social interaction.

<sup>1</sup>Kelly, p. xvi.

Furthermore, since mid-Victorian magazines aimed to serve boys and girls of ranging ages, editors chose stories designed to excite general interest. Even school tales and adventure stories related to the domestic scene with which older girls and boys as well as nursery children could identify. Conversely, late-Victorian juvenile magazines were more specialized. The stories in special girl's or boy's magazines illuminate attitudes to distinct categories of children quarantined in peer groups, but they less effectively serve the history of childhood and the family.

In domestic fiction, as a Victorian novelist defined it, "the events are brought to the evidence of our senses, as consonant with scenes of real life."<sup>1</sup> Domestic tales embodied both a realistic and idealistic image of society, since the authors had to create settings that would seem familiar and meaningful to their readers and yet uplift mundane situations with idealized patterns of behaviour. Problems of socialization and social interaction were core issues in this genre. Of all the fiction written for boys and girls, domestic narratives most faithfully reflected contemporary assumptions about the nature of the child and how it should be integrated with the social whole.

This is particularly true of mid-Victorian domestic fiction when authors recognized middle-class children to be unusually isolated from contact with other social groups and from the adult world. Believing that through fiction middle-class boys and girls received their first and most formative notions about the world beyond their own private homes, authors introduced them to an idealized but plausible model of society. They described in detail conventions of acceptable and unacceptable conduct and the concomitant rewards and punishments a child could expect from adopting alternative modes. Through their depiction of patterns of work and leisure, educational and religious experiences, and the proper relationships between different classes within and outside the home, the authors

<sup>1</sup>G. D. Pitt, the author of many popular novels in the early and mid-Victorian era, is quoted by Louis James, Fiction for the Working Man (1963), p. 197.

of domestic fiction outlined the social milieu of their story-book families and thereby defined for the reader his own place in the scheme of things. Further, they disclosed in overt references or covert omissions, points of tension in the social fabric.

Thus, the authors of domestic stories reconstituted a whole world from the vantage point of a child who existed only within the limits of the contemporary adult imagination. Through this fictional child's eyes we see the inner dynamics of ideal family life, the roles assigned to each member, and relationships and authority structures in operation. For the mid-Victorian children's fiction writer, the family was not merely the only institution capable of transmitting the vital moral values on which the stability and progress of society rested. It was also the ideal regulator of most aspects of social life. In the fictional presentation of reality, the individual became a functioning member of society through his family's interaction with the world outside it. The structure of this story-book world, with its invented situations, conflicts and resolutions, demonstrates how middle-class authors tried to reassert the central role of the family in society.

#### IV

The imagined world of the mid-Victorian children's periodical unfolded before the regular subscriber in a prodigious quantity of fiction, ranging from two or three page tales to full-length novels. The degree to which the Victorian child absorbed its breadth and complexity we can never discover. But to survey this panorama of Victorian society, the historian requires an organizational system which will facilitate the comparison and coordination of disparate elements emerging from individual stories. The constantly recurring themes and situations in periodical fiction call for a measure of quantification lest a handful of vivid or compelling tales outweigh the less dramatic but nonetheless pervasive tone of others.



A checklist or coding system would seem to be the most functional scheme for isolating and comparing components such as plot type, setting, age, sex, and status differentiation of characters, with objective attitudes to child-rearing, morality, religion, education, work and leisure as these emerge from the files of periodical stories. This concept for the collation of large amounts of evidence was derived from a coding system specifically devised by a group of psychologists for analyzing child-rearing manuals.<sup>1</sup> Stewart, Winter, and Jones were intent upon examining the effect produced in subsequent generations by certain methods of child-rearing. Though the goals of the present study of children's literature are entirely different, the checklist approach is extremely useful for managing the variety and extent of evidence supplied by a large sample of children's stories.

The present adaptation of the coding system developed out of the objective statements and structures that occurred in periodical fiction in order that these constituents could be isolated with a minimum of inference. At the same time, it was designed to illuminate those areas of omission, aspects of family life or social structure which authors tended to ignore or suppress in stories for the young. By plotting these elements general patterns emerge in the aggregate evidence which serve to balance and apply a framework to the necessarily subjective nature of children's literature as an historical source.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, it is hoped that a detailed investigation of the contents of selected children's magazines of the 1870s will reveal both the diversity and consensus in middle-class opinion. Many of these magazine stories merit literary analysis. However, only their contributions to social history are pertinent to a study of attitudes to childhood and the family.

<sup>1</sup>Abigail Stewart, A. David Jones, and David Winter, "Coding Categories for the Study of Child-Rearing from Historical Sources", Journal of Interdisciplinary History, IV (1975), 687-701.

<sup>2</sup>The coding system developed for and used in the present study is reproduced in Appendix A.

In this effort, the literary qualities of particular stories signify only insofar as they indicate the social background of author and presumptive reader. Moreover, it is not within the scope of this study to undertake a history of mid-Victorian children's periodicals. Nevertheless, certain details of the production and distribution of mid-Victorian children's magazines are necessary to define their social milieu. As a cultural historian maintains: "Literary works to be understood as cultural artifacts must be understood historically . . . in the context of the groups which produced them and responded to them."<sup>1</sup>

The audience of a magazine is obviously a vital component of its social environment. Though the influence of magazines upon the mid-Victorian juvenile subscriber is impossible to measure, it is important to learn something about the social milieu into which particular magazines were launched. The goals of the creators of children's periodicals can best be deduced if we can picture the sort of child editors and authors saw before them as they worked.

While we can surmise the appropriateness of particular magazines for specific groups by analyzing repeated themes and hero-types in its stories, it is very difficult to define with any accuracy the actual readership of a periodical. There are clues about the audience of mid-Victorian children's magazines but each approach is encumbered with problems of reliability.

Memoirs of childhood would seem to be the obvious recourse for information about the reading tastes of mid-Victorian children, bearing in mind that memoir writers do not constitute a representative census. Unfortunately, the vogue for detailed reminiscences of childhood came a generation after the men and women who grew up in the 1870s.<sup>2</sup> Those memoirs which

<sup>1</sup>R. Gordon Kelly, "Literature and the Historian", American Quarterly XXVI (1974), 149.

<sup>2</sup>Edna Oakshott, Childhood in Autobiography (1960), discusses the motives which prompted memoirs of early childhood experience. The influence of Freudian psychology plus the cataclysmic social changes following World War II inspired artists and intellectuals to recapture the world of their childhood.

do cover the mid-Victorian period are, for the most part, disappointingly silent about their early reading experiences.<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly, adults looking back over their childhood forget or do not choose to remember childish joy over what must appear in retrospect to be a mediocre literary product. One would hope that men and women who later became children's authors themselves would give particular attention to the books and magazines they read when young. Too few retained memories of childhood treasures.

However, the occasional autobiographer acknowledged his gratitude to the magazines of his childhood days. For Rudyard Kipling, bound volumes of Aunt Judy's were a solace during a miserable period of his youth.<sup>2</sup> Alison Uttley remembered her reverence for Chatterbox, "which I knew from cover to cover so that I could repeat long portions from the stories", and which was one of the very few children's magazines to reach the isolated Yorkshire farm of her childhood.<sup>3</sup> Molly Vivian Hughes, the daughter of a London stock-broker, brought Sunshine and Little Folks when ever she had spare pocket money.<sup>4</sup> H. C. Bernard, who came from a well-to-do suburban home, reminisced about Good Words for the Young, which, "in spite of its rather forbidding title . . . formed a refreshing contrast to some of the highly didactic types of periodical literature which had hitherto been considered suitable for children".<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>An annotated bibliography of the memoirs consulted appears in Appendix C.

<sup>2</sup>Rudyard Kipling, Something of Myself (1937; Penguin ed., 1977), p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>Alison Uttley, Ambush of Younger Days (1937), p. 197. Shiela Egoff, Children's Periodicals of the Nineteenth Century: A Survey and Bibliography (1951), p. 20, refers to James Barrie's humorous account of the improving influence Chatterbox had on him as an adolescent.

<sup>4</sup>M. V. Hughes, A London Child of the Seventies (1934; Penguin ed., 1977), p. 139.

<sup>5</sup>H. C. Bernard, Were Those the Days? A Victorian Education (1970), p. 31.

That autobiographers give little or no attention to the magazines of their childhood yet often fully describe their reactions to the books they read underlines the ephemeral nature of periodicals which contrasts with the more enduring impression left by books. The values and attitudes expressed in periodical literature tend to manifest the present whereas a book with any claim to greatness must address perennial human emotions. Hence, magazines may not be remembered so clearly as books, but they do provide a more fruitful foundation for inference about the passing moment of public opinion.

The scattered and scanty references to childhood reading of boys and girls who grew up in mid-Victorian middle-class families make it impossible to draw any firm conclusions about the average literary experience. The few examples we do have indicate that magazines, often more than one, were an accepted, regular feature of middle-class nursery life. Middle-class parents, avid periodical readers themselves, may have been more willing than upper-class parents were to purchase separate magazines for their children. Aristocratic children, if their recollections can be trusted, mainly read the classics of the nursery - Maria Edgeworth, Mrs. Barbauld, Lewis Carroll, and Charles Kingsley - in their fathers' libraries. It is possible that in households with complete libraries and long traditions of book-buying and book-reading, upper-class parents would feel little compulsion to introduce modern and apparently frivolous magazines for their children to read. Certainly, parents who still possessed the books of their own youth would pass them on to their children. Moreover, upper-class autobiographers delighted in self-flattering memories of precocious reading ability and infantile preferences for works of enduring excellence.

In addition to memoirs, correspondence columns and responses to magazine-promoted contests form another avenue towards identifying the Victorian child reader. These features were an original departure in mid-Victorian children's magazines designed to draw the readers into a more

active participation in its format. At best, letters to the editor, contest entries, and original contributions reveal the age, sex, locality, school, and sometimes even religious affiliation of the readers. For instance, Little Folks regularly sponsored essay competitions and stipulated that contestants volunteer their names, ages, and addresses (which indicate the regional distribution of the magazine) and verify their entry's originality with the co-signature of a "responsible person". Since many children chose their clergymen, teachers, or governesses to notarize their contributions, we see the religion and style of education of many Little Folks' readers.<sup>1</sup>

Other magazine editors were much more circumspect than the Little Folks staff in revealing information about readers. "Aunt Judy's Correspondence" divulged little more than the modest pseudonyms of her subscribers, though the letters indicate the hobbies and leisure pursuits of readers. Chatterbox and Sunshine frequently printed stories by their readers but identified only the names and ages of successful contributors. Good Words for the Young did not invite reader submissions.

However enlightening correspondence columns and contest entries may be for outlining the preoccupations, pastimes, and literary accomplishments of some magazine readers, their value in identifying typical subscribers

<sup>1</sup>The "Little Folks League of Honour" revealed the names, addresses, and ages of around thirty successful candidates per year in the early 1870s and well over two hundred "honoured members" towards the end of the decade as editors recognized the success of this mode of approaching readers. According to the editor, over one thousand children regularly entered each month's contest. Scanning the "honour role", it appeared that the average age of Little Folks readers was between eight and fifteen (though presumably very young readers would have small chance of winning a literary contest) and that it circulated all over Great Britain and in scattered locations abroad. But over the years, certain names occur repeatedly, indicating either that these readers were unusually talented or that the number and quality of entries was lower than the editor chose to admit. However, since at least one memoirist recalled entering and winning a Little Folks essay competition, we can assume that real children did participate. See: Mary Cholmondeley, Under One Roof (1918), p. 79.

must not be overestimated.<sup>1</sup> Even assuming the veracity of editorial claims to overwhelming responses to their contests, only the best (and possibly most prestigious) examples appear and may or may not be representative of the average reader. For example, Cassell's Publishing Company notoriously claimed a more genteel clientele than they actually attracted and this urge for social distinction may distort the evidence reaped from Little Folks' contests.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the mid-Victorian juvenile magazine subscriber remains an undefinable component of the periodicals' milieu. Their personal responses to the magazines are not available to historians.

Perhaps more revealing of a magazine's social significance than the actual readership are the authors' and editors' assumptions about their audience. The authors themselves were, no doubt, uncertain about the social position and life experience of their readers. But since each magazine tended to project a certain style of life, the authors must have assumed that their readers were familiar with its customs. By collecting and comparing the objective elements of the stories such as settings, fictional fathers' occupations, the numbers of servants, and the ages of heroes and heroines in these magazine stories we can reconstruct the Victorian child as the author conceived him to be.

The popularity among Victorian readers of "high life" settings for recreational reading adds a dimension which complicates any straightforward equation of fictional life style with the readers' life experience. Nevertheless, as George Gissing observed, middle-class, as opposed to working-class, Victorians had a remarkable appetite for reading about

<sup>1</sup>Historians are coming to exploit this sort of resource. See, for instance, Stuart Hannabus, "Information Clinic: The Correspondence Columns of the Boy's Own Paper, 1894-1895", Library Review, IV (1977), 279-285.

<sup>2</sup>Ellegard, p. 36, notes that while Cassell's claimed an upper middle-class and gentry circulation for the Illustrated Family Magazine its style and content reflected the interests and tastes of the lower middle-class reader.

themselves.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, children's authors, in particular, had to limit their recourse to fashionable settings for their stories lest they confuse the majority of their readers. If they wished to inculcate certain moral and social patterns in their audience, they had to illustrate their ideals in situations that would be meaningful and familiar to the readers. But their desire to raise the level of middle-class values and attitudes may have led some authors to describe a life style slightly higher than the way they really imagined their readers lived.

Obviously, the background of the authors limited their ability to portray social situations realistically. As already argued, children's literature is a social product, shaped by a complex of forces at work in society. The author's location in the social scale, in part determines the values he absorbs and in turn incorporates into his work. Hence, his social experience is an integral component of the social environment of children's literature, but, again, one that is difficult to determine precisely.

The personality of the average contributor to mid-Victorian children's magazines is almost as elusive as the identity of the typical reader. Since some of the most famous and established children's writers actively participated in the children's periodicals of their day, certain details of their family background, education, and professional experience are available to historians. Yet the majority of magazine contributors remain obscure. We can ascertain little more about them than their names, or pseudonyms and initials.<sup>2</sup> As for the legions of anonymous writers, only their stories survive to mark their presence in the world.

<sup>1</sup>George Gissing's remarks were paraphrased by Louis James, "The Rational Amusement: 'Minor Fiction' and Victorian Studies", Victorian Studies, XIV (1970), 196.

<sup>2</sup>Appendix B lists the names and pseudonyms plus whatever biographical information exists about the prominent contributors to the sample of mid-Victorian children's periodicals. Since the majority of stories were anonymous or pseudonymous, for the sake of consistency in the text only the title of the story, the journal volume and page reference will be listed.

Though the individual personalities are now blurred, it is the consensus that authors expressed in their stories for children which gives children's magazines their peculiarly "time-bound" quality. The commonplace attitudes, ideals and perceptions of workaday children's writers may add little to the literary pretensions of the periodicals, yet they do capture the texture of emotional responses to the situation of the moment.

Moreover, though each magazine had its corps of authors who wrote the featured serial novels which determined the singular personality of the journal, less famous writers often wrote for more than one magazine, contributing an underlying consistency to the world view expressed in most mid-Victorian secular juvenile magazines. An archetypical image of the child and the family forms the core of the mid-Victorian magazine world. Fictional models of domestic arrangements, unless overtly critical or baldly satirical, indicate the author's tacit acceptance and likely satisfaction with standards of family life which recur throughout all the periodicals. Thus, ideals of domesticity emerge distinctly from the repetition of stereotypes. Yet we often learn as much about Victorian attitudes to the family from those aspects of domestic life which the authors consciously or unconsciously suppress. While they may not explicitly outline to their child readers the problems they perceived to confront the equilibrium of the family and the ascendancy of the middle class, their apprehensions and anxieties lie in the interstices of their domestic constructions. The solutions they offer to recurring family conflicts reveal those problems the author wished to resolve in fiction at least.

Furthermore, when authors peer beyond the horizon of the middle-class family to the lives of groups in society at large, their depiction of ideal social interaction illustrates the ways in which middle-class men and women perceived and tried to defuse threats to their way of life. Though the accuracy of their presentation of life in higher or lower



spheres than their own may be conditional, and the solutions they propose to social problems may seem tame and ineffectual, authors articulate the wishful thinking of concerned middle-class citizens who were disturbed by contemporary social trends and hoped to mend flaws in the social fabric without altering its pattern. These stories written for children endow historians with an invaluable record of how certain Victorians perceived their society as it was and as it should be.

From the fragments of life depicted in mid-Victorian children's magazines, we can piece together a whole world organized around the child. Following this fictional prototype of childhood as he travels through the layers of intimacy and interaction that together constitute his society, we gain a unique perspective on how writers tried to integrate publicly expressed attitudes with private practice. In expecting the reader to identify with invented heroes and heroines, they ask the child to define himself and mould his behaviour according to their image of childhood. The reader shares the experiences of archetypical boys and girls as they interact first within the inner circle of their family, then in the larger sphere of servants and relatives attached to the household, and finally, the outer perimeter of child-life where they meet other groups and social institutions.

The authors of children's fiction viewed their world, as it were, through a reversed telescope. Within the circle of sharp focus, the child and his family, their image is clear and the details are well-defined. Beyond this inner circle, their vista is dimmed, their perceptions confused. This telescopic vision probably represents the way many middle-class Victorians observed their society.

The children's periodicals of the 1870s emerged from a background of changing attitudes to children and the role of the family in society on one hand, and from new ideas about the power of literature to mould the mentality of the rising generation on the other. This thesis examines the attempt to socialize middle-class children through literature specifically

aimed at them during this decade. It is hoped that an investigation of this literature will shed light on the means by which children's authors, acting as representatives of a section of the adult community, and within the context of contemporary attitudes to children, attempted to promote and perpetuate a particular system of values in a dynamic social situation.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CHILDHOOD'S CHAMPIONS: THE CRITICAL RESPONSE TO VICTORIAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

The mid-Victorian child fortunate enough to be born into the upper and middle classes was a literate child. Educational advances in the eighteenth century laid the foundation of universal literacy for those children whose parents could afford to pay for their schooling. More and more children could read. Yet the question of what these children should read became a pressing problem only in the mid-Victorian period. Victorians attributed to the power of the printed word immense potential for good or harm. No one could be certain what impact it could have on the infant sensibility, especially in an age when new forms of literature proliferated. In this context, leading intellectuals and literary critics played a vital role as arbiters of taste and morality, articulating new attitudes to children and the early reading experience.

In the mid-Victorian period, general prosperity and technological advances contributed to an unparalleled expansion in the book trade. With prosperity came increased leisure and a greater tolerance for pure amusement. The demand for entertaining reading spread through all sections of society, but it was the middle classes who responded most enthusiastically to new kinds of cheap literature. While the upper classes continued to pay the artificially maintained price of thirty-two shillings for the novel of the hour and the working classes imbibed their own street literature as well as the improving tracts provided by their social superiors, the middle classes consumed the shilling and railway

novels, the yellow-backs and magazines.<sup>1</sup> Publishers, aided by innovations in paper-making, printing and engraving, and liberated from the restraints of advertising duty, stamp and paper taxes could now serve this enormous market.<sup>2</sup>

Children's books multiplied more rapidly than any other category of literature. In 1860, the London Quarterly Review expressed its satisfaction with the abundance of new books available to the young reader: "It seems that the numerical increase of such books goes on in a higher ratio than any other class, and that in the literary market children's books always command the surest sale."<sup>3</sup> Of children's periodicals alone, over one hundred new titles appeared in the 1860s and 1870s.<sup>4</sup>

The advent of a commercial industry specializing in entertaining juvenile publications was, in itself, evidence of the more indulgent attitude to children which characterized the mid-Victorian period.

<sup>1</sup>The dictatorship of the circulating libraries supported the prohibitively high price of three-decker novels since their interest lay in encouraging book borrowing rather than book buying. Though publishers could not afford to offend bulk purchasers like Mr. Mudie they avoided confrontation by issuing novels in monthly parts or cheap reprints. James J. Barnes, Free Trade in Books (1964), p. 96. observes that the middle classes responded to prosperity by buying a greater quantity of cheap literature.

<sup>2</sup>High speed presses and stereotyping enabled publishers to mass produce literature cheaply. The railways facilitated mass distribution. But the abolition of the "taxes on knowledge", the duty on advertising in 1853, the stamp tax in 1855, and the tax on paper in 1861 opened the doors for "free trade in literature".

<sup>3</sup>"Children's Literature", London Quarterly Review, XIII (1860), 470. In 1871 the Publishers Circular found that the "largest number of new books in any one division in any one month is that of Juvenile Books in November." These results were cited by the Bookbuyer's Guide V, (1871), v.

<sup>4</sup>Sheila Egoff's bibliography of nineteenth-century children's periodicals lists in chronological order most but not all of the new children's journals begun in the mid-Victorian period. See Children's Periodicals of the Nineteenth-Century: A Survey and Bibliography (1951).

Parents were willing to spend their money to please their children. Moreover, since increasing numbers of their children survived, middle-class parents were hard-pressed to keep their numerous offspring quietly entertained. For a class wary of public forms of amusement, the private domestic reading circle was still a major focus of recreation. Circulating and public libraries served the adult reader but not until the 1880s did juvenile departments in public lending libraries begin to offer comprehensive service.<sup>1</sup> Middle-class parents were obliged to purchase books and magazines for their sons and daughters.

However, the rapidly expanding Victorian middle classes were not experienced consumers of literature. Their tastes were the object of ridicule and dismay to their better-educated social superiors.<sup>2</sup> In preference to the expensive volumes of permanent literature, middle-class families consumed scores of cheap, mediocre magazines, not meant to endure but only to divert the passing moment.

Periodicals catering to children were temptingly cheap. For the price of a single illustrated children's book, middle-class parents could furnish a whole year's entertainment for their children by subscribing to a magazine. At a penny to a sixpence per issue, children's periodicals were a bargain.

<sup>1</sup>As late as 1886, the librarian of the Free Public Library in Nottingham promoted the still new idea that libraries ought to cater to the needs of young readers and outlined a system for establishing juvenile collections. See: J. Potter Briscoe, "Libraries for the Young", Library Chronicle, III (1886), 45-48. Young people were allowed access to public lending library services after 1850 but only a few libraries contained special juvenile collections. Manchester began a juvenile department in 1862 and Birkenhead in 1865. The Religious Tract Society and the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge also lent books from their usually small and religiously oriented collections. Alec Ellis, Library Services for Young People in England and Wales 1830-1950 (1958), recounts the development of children's libraries.

<sup>2</sup>Mark Pattison, for one, lamented the narrow-mindedness of the middle-class book-buyer in "Books and Critics", Fortnightly Review, XXII (1877), 672.

Yet critics could not observe the progress of mass publishing without a degree of apprehension. As literature devolved into a consumable commodity, the elite literary journals began to pay attention to the quality of literature available to society's heirs apparent. Even before the flood of cheap mass-produced books and magazines threatened to drown discriminating taste, a small number of "higher journalists" attempted to advise those who supervised the reading of the rising generation during its first and formative literary experiences. In serious appraisals of the contemporary state of juvenile literature, these men and women pleaded for the child's right to high quality and honestly entertaining books and periodicals. They articulated fresh attitudes to children, encouraged innovative authors, prodded publishers to experiment with new genres of children's literature and urged parents to appreciate their child's need for entertainment in his recreational reading.

The intervention of "the articulate classes, whose writing and conversation make opinion"<sup>1</sup> marks a unique phase in the progress of children's book production. As Mark Pattison described him, the reviewer held "an educational office . . . above that of any professor or doctor".<sup>2</sup> It was the primary function of the literary reviews to umpire the great debates of the age. Their contributors played the part of "literary intermediaries", popularizing intellectual theory and relating it to current social conditions in terms which the well-educated general reader could comprehend.<sup>3</sup> Children's literature earned a place in these journals

<sup>1</sup>Michael Wolff, "Victorian Reviewers and Cultural Responsibility", in P. Appelman et al, eds., 1859: Entering an Age of Crisis (1959), p. 269. Wolff describes the role of critics in the great quarterly reviews and, while his essay does not touch on children's literature, his remarks about the function of critics are pertinent to those essayists who wrote about children's books in the Victorian period.

<sup>2</sup>Mark Pattison, p. 667.

<sup>3</sup>J. A. Banks, "The Challenge of Popular Culture", in Appelman, pp. 199-214. Banks summarizes Wolff's argument and adds the observation that without the special contribution of elite journalists, "The contact between makers of opinion and public generally would have become attenuated to the point of extinction."

alongside other issues of fundamental importance to the nation as a whole. The men and women who commented on children's books in the Victorian period believed implicitly that the first books a boy or girl encountered printed an indelible pattern to which all subsequent ideas and impressions about the world would conform. The moral welfare of the rising generation seemed poised in the balance as each week's press imposed some new stimulus upon the youthful imagination. Notwithstanding the diversity of religious and political opinion represented by the various quarterlies, from the Anglican and Tory Quarterly Review to the liberal and metaphysical Nineteenth Century, the children's book critics were unanimous in opposing outmoded catechisms that stifled children and unwholesome romances that corrupted them.

These citizens of the republic of letters did not confine their intellectual interests to the juvenile department. They were active participants in the larger world of Victorian ideas about literature, art, education, religion and society.<sup>1</sup> Before a general audience they brought their wide intellectual horizons to bear on the discussion of children's books. Their essays expressed a current of common preoccupation about child development and postulated the social and psychological implications of the juvenile reading experience. Moreover, they were not content merely to criticize and recommend. Some of these intellectuals were personally involved in the production of children's books and

<sup>1</sup>To name a few of the men and women who wrote essays about children's literature, Lady Eastlake, who wrote for the Quarterly Review, was an influential art critic. William Roscoe was the book reviewer for the National Review and contributed his opinions about children's books to the Prospective Review. Alexander Hay Japp, a Contemporary Review commentator, was a prominent scholar and literati. I. Gregory Smith, a North British Review contributor, was a divine, as was Bennett G. Johns, a Quarterly and Edinburgh Review critic, who was also deeply committed to the cause of educational reform and chaplain to the Blind School.

magazines as literary consultants, publishers, editors or authors.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, in the mid-Victorian period, children's literature formed part of the mainstream of Victorian culture, even in some instances, high culture. A more specialized world of children's literature and book reviewing developed in the late Victorian period. The children's literature expert, acting as a guide for the narrow audience of parents, teachers and librarians, owed the evolution of his specialty to the standards and tastes set by the wider interests of the earlier, mid-Victorian critics.

The direct influence on parents and publishers of the comments and opinions of children's book critics is impossible to ascertain. As a vanguard of public opinion, their articles index the momentum of ideas from original thinkers to those who ultimately act upon ideas. We cannot know if middle-class parents read the quarterly reviews or chose literature for their children according to their advice, or whether specific authors paid heed to critical strictures and demands. Nevertheless, these critics raised the tone of children's book discussion from a low level of complacency and indifference. They brought to the forefront of public attention the new attitudes to children and the future of society and emphasized the crucial responsibility of those who created and chose the mental nourishment of the young.

Before the mid-century proliferation of books and magazines specifically designed for young readers, children's books were so rare and expensive that the problem of choice scarcely existed. Children read

<sup>1</sup>For instance, Ann Mozley, who wrote for Blackwood's, edited the Magazine for the Young, Alexander Strahan wrote about children's literature for the Contemporary Review and published Good-Words for the Young. Dr. Japp, another Contemporary Review children's book critic, advised both Strahan and James Henderson, the publisher and editor of Our Young Folks Weekly Budget. Stella Austin, a British and Foreign Review essayist, translated and popularized German nursery literature. In addition to his other interests listed previously, the Rev. B. G. Johns wrote articles on natural history for children's magazines. James Greenwood, who wrote about children's literature for St. Paul's, was the author of numerous books of legends and classical adventure. In addition, Dickens, Thackeray and Ruskin wrote both for and about children.



and re-read the small number of books available and graduated very quickly to general adult literature. As a popular Victorian children's author, describing the scarcity of books in her youth, recounted:

Not only had no children many books, but everywhere children had the same. There was seldom any use in little friends lending to each other, for it was always the same thing over again: Evenings at Home, Sandford and Merton, Ornaments Discovered and so on. 1

Despite the existence of a large population of literate boys and girls craving entertainment, publishers were slow to recognize the commercial potential of the juvenile market. They hesitated to support the innovations of original authors, preferring to reproduce the tired genres of previous generations. "An inherent conservatism existed in British publishing", observed a children's book historian,

This was frequently reflected in the lack of confidence on the part of publishers in the sales potential of new authors of children's books. There appeared to be little appreciation of the features in children's books which were likely to appeal to the reading public. 2

Parents, too, were slow to demand for their children's reading the pleasure and entertainment they looked for in their own. Cautiously they clung to the classics of their own childhood.<sup>3</sup> Very few children's books reflected the new attitudes to children that were beginning to take

<sup>1</sup>Mrs. Molesworth [Enis Graham], Carrots: Just a Little Boy (1876; new ed., 1891), pp. 112.

<sup>2</sup>Alec Ellis, A History of Children's Reading and Literature (1968), p. 66. Brian Alderson made a similar observation but also attributed the sluggishness of early Victorian children's publishing to the envy and laziness of parents in "Tracts, Rewards and Fairies: the Victorian Contribution to Children's Literature", in Asa Briggs, ed., Essays in the History of Publishing (1974), p. 248.

<sup>3</sup>The longevity of certain children's books was due most likely to the nostalgia they induced in adult buyers. Some like Thomas Day's Sandford and Merton (1783-84), or Mrs. Sherwood's The Fairchild Family (1828), continued to be reprinted even when the beliefs they espoused were distinctly outmoded and even at odds with prevailing taste. A Victorian critic, Edward Salmon, found the perennial popularity of Sandford and Merton puzzling: "...whatever its merits in the eighteenth century, the book is not suited to the requirements of the nineteenth, and the strange thing is that it has lasted so long." "Literature for the Little Ones", The Nineteenth Century, XXII (1887), 565.

hold of the imaginations of perceptive Victorian artists and intellectuals.

While the commercial trade in children's books stagnated, juvenile literature became the preserve of specialized interest groups whose prime motives were neither economic nor aesthetic. The evangelicals and utilitarians, so opposed philosophically yet curiously similar in their earnest didacticism, did not fail to grasp the opportunity of speaking directly to impressionable young minds.

The religious organizations like the Religious Tract Society, the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge and associated secular publishers such as F. Houlston, dominated the field of children's publishing in the early Victorian period. The purpose of religious children's authors was primarily to save souls and incidentally to teach the rudiments of literacy. From the turn of the century the lugubrious productions of evangelicals beamed out warnings of hell-fire and lost souls in badly written anecdotes and sermons made graphic by crude woodcuts.

The evangelical revival which prompted these early children's books and magazines fostered intense interest in children and reinforced close family life.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, it concentrated on preparing the child for a better world to come at the virtual exclusion of the everyday world around him.

Even at the height of evangelical influence in early Victorian society, critics objected to the "ministering child" formula in juvenile literature, arguing that by making precocious youth the means of converting mothers, fathers and neighbours, authors trivialized religion and undermined the authority of elders and betters.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, acute commentators

<sup>1</sup>Paul Sangster in Pity My Simplicity: The Evangelical Revival and the Education of Children (1963), maintains that evangelical families were intensely child-centred.

<sup>2</sup>[Lady Elizabeth Eastlake], "Books for Children", Quarterly Review, LXXI (1842/3), 54-83. Lady Eastlake was one of the first in a long line of critics who scorned the religious books imposed upon young readers.

rejected the dramatic punishments contrived by evangelical writers to frighten children into submission:

Is it right or proper to put such balderdash to children,  
and to imbue them with such extravagant notions of what  
gigantic evils may befall them if they make the smallest error? 1

Equally intent upon converting the young, the utilitarian's contribution to children's reading was scarcely less grim, if more practical and worldly, than the productions of evangelicals. The heirs of the tradition of eighteenth-century didactic writing for children attempted, through periodical literature, to ready the child to take his place in an industrial and commercial society. Their enlightened antecedents, committed reformers like Maria Edgeworth, Thomas Day, Mrs. Barbauld and John Aikin, incorporated then current pedagogical theory into an original genre of children's literature specifically designed to answer the requirements of their particular social situations. Determined to separate the state of childhood from association with the culture of the lower orders, they banished folk tales and chapbooks from the nursery so that children might become acquainted with the reality of their own world portrayed realistically in the books they read.<sup>2</sup> But by the Victorian period, the energy and idealism characteristic of the eighteenth-century didactic authors had evaporated. Their descendants could only construct staged "conversations" to draw together undigested lumps of miscellaneous fact.

<sup>1</sup>"Juvenile Literature", British Quarterly Review, XLVII (1868), 142. Lady Eastlake recounted the example of a girl who was so discouraged in her attempts to be moral and good by the books she read that she gave up her efforts all together. See "Books for Children", p. 75.

<sup>2</sup>Marjory Lang, "The Parent's Assistant (1796): A Document of Social Education", History of Education, VII (1978), 21-33, examines tales by Maria Edgeworth as examples of the late eighteenth-century socialization of children.

The most typical and famous examples of the utilitarian style were the "Peter Parley Annuals". Originally the creation of the American writer, Samuel Griswold Goodrich, these were soon translated by English imitators and pirates to suit a British audience.<sup>1</sup> The Quarterly Review mercilessly exposed the idiocy of Peter Parleys and cried shame upon the tradesmen who imported them. "Utterly regardless of their high responsibility, and looking only to the individual gain arising from a legal piracy, English booksellers reprint and republish the very worst of these Transatlantic abominations".<sup>2</sup>

During the reign of the "cramchild" school in secular children's publishing, critics complained that it was neither fair nor efficacious to disguise the schoolmaster in books which children read after their arduous concentration in the school room. "The divine principle of leisure" was as much a child's right as an adult's.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, critics feared that mere fact-mongering stifled genius and inhibited deep understanding of the nature of things. Neither evangelical preachers nor utilitarian pedagogues satisfied the real needs of children:

For on taking a retrospective view of the juvenile libraries of the day, it is very obvious that there are a set of individuals who have taken to writing children's books, solely because they found themselves incapable of any other, and who have no scruple in coming forward in a line of literature which, to their view, presupposes the lowest estimate of their own abilities. 4

<sup>1</sup>English booksellers found that the American slang and democratic statements of the original Parleys alienated the British audience so they edited and revised them, even reversing Goodrich's message in some cases. Not surprisingly, Mr. Goodrich resented the interjection of English pirate and came to England to secure compensation. F. J. Harvey Darton in "Peter Parley and the Battle of the Children's Books", Cornhill, n.s. LXXIII (1932), 542-558, related Goodrich's experiences in England and the contract he finally arranged with Darton's grandfather.

<sup>2</sup>[Lady Eastlake], "Books for Children", p. 70. Chauvinistically, she assumed that their continued popularity in England was due to the "better efforts of those who have adopted his pseudonym".

<sup>3</sup>[Bennett G. Johns], "Books of Fiction for Children", Quarterly Review, CXXII (1867), 62, defended fiction as a vital component of the child's literary diet.

<sup>4</sup>[Lady Eastlake], "Children's Books", Quarterly Review, LXXIV (1844) 25.

One of the tasks of the first children's book critics was to uproot the stubborn belief that writing for children was a lower incarnation of literary life, requiring second-rate talents. They wanted parents and publishers to appreciate that a child was not inferior to but different from an adult and required a different literary diet:

A genuine child's book is as little like a book for grown people cut down, as the child himself is like a little old man. 1

But the prejudice that childhood reading should be merely instructive preparation for adulthood was hard to dislodge. Even in 1860, children's book reviewers had to uphold the juvenile author as in no way inferior and perhaps superior to his colleague in the "higher flight" of literature:

It is out of comparison easier to write for the generation contemporaneous in experience with ourselves, for whom our notions and language possess a ready significance, than for a generation towards whom we have to turn backwards the steps of our intelligence and sympathies, lest we should outstrip their capacities or their knowledge. 2

However, the critics contributing to the "high brow" reviews could find no contemporary children's fiction which satisfied their standards. When so few really talented and well-educated men and women chose to address the young reader, many critics recommended books that, while not specifically designed for children, were thought to enlarge their mental horizons. The mediocre juvenile stories might serve the boy or girl of impoverished imagination and intellect, but the gifted child must be allowed the inspiration of books which raised him above the everyday world.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>"Teaching Through Pastime", London Review (1860), p. 304. The author of "Children's Literature", London Quarterly Review, XIII (1860), 500, emphasized the same point, arguing that adults should not try to mould children after themselves but to enter the child's mind.

<sup>3</sup>This point was made by a great many writers on children's books. All were concerned with the child of genius rather than the ordinary child. This preoccupation with the gifted child underlines the elitist criteria which motivated much of their criticism. See [Ann Mozley], "On Fiction as an Educator", Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, CVIII (1870), 452; and [Stella Austin], "Books for Children", British and Foreign Review, XVII (1844), 74-79.

In old fairy tales, critics sought to retrieve the kind of stimulation they felt the child needed. New attitudes to childhood found closest affinity with the oldest of traditions.

The defense of the fairy tale was, even in the early Victorian period, an old struggle. Early in the century, Romantic poets rebelled against the regimentation of children's reading and the banishment of traditional folk tales. Lamb's well-known denunciation of the "cursed tribe of Barbaulds" is worth repeating for his implied assumption that childhood reading predetermines the character and capacities of the mature personality. "Think what you would be now", he wrote to Coleridge in 1802, "if, instead of having been nourished by good wives tales, one had stuffed your head with natural history."<sup>1</sup> Certainly Coleridge agreed, for in 1797 he had written to Thomas Poole, "From early reading of fairytales and about genii, etc., etc., my mind had been habituated to the vast, and I never regarded my senses in any way as the criteria of my belief."<sup>2</sup> Wordsworth, too, joined their lamentation for the eclipsed fairy and folk tales, writing in The Prelude:

Oh! give us once again the Wishing Cap  
Of Fortunatus and the Invisible Coat  
Of Jack the Giant-Killer, Robin Hood,  
And Sabra in the Forest with St. George!  
The Child, whose love is here, at least, doth reap  
One precious gain, that he forgets himself.    3

Meanwhile, scholars throughout Europe were recording the stories and legends of a fading folk culture. But not until the Victorian men of letters discovered in fairy tales a unique moral value did imaginative fantasy earn a wide public in the nursery. Wrote one reviewer of a new

<sup>1</sup>Lamb's letter to Coleridge is quoted by Michael C. Kotzin, "The Fairy-tale in England, 1800-1870", Journal of Popular Culture, IV (1970), 134.

<sup>2</sup>Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Earnest Hartley Coleridge (1895), I, 16; cited by Kotzin, p. 134.

<sup>3</sup>The Prelude, Stanzas 364-369, quoted by Kotzin, p. 135.

edition of Grimm's tales in 1853:

A considerable per contra to any aspect of triviality is the superior moral tendency . . . of these tales to that of the professedly moral fiction. The former are less selfish and worldly-wise than the latter, -more truly good, and more spontaneous in their goodness. 1

The germinal contribution of the disciples of romanticism to the development of children's literature was the notion that childhood was a time of wonder and fancy and that the child's imagination must be nourished by his books. The re-evaluation of imagination as a positive quality was accompanied by new conceptions of learning patterns and mental development.

Earlier in the century, pedagogical theorists derived their conceptual models of mental development from the associationists who saw education as a straightforward exchange between the senses and external stimuli. To accord with this philosophy, approved literature would order the child's impressions about the world into a logical sequence, thus laying the foundation of a rational and orderly adult mind. Yet even when the next generation of intellectuals rejected the rationalistic children's literature that these ideas induced, static models of mental development persisted. For instance in the Quarterly Review of 1842 the author, who emphatically denounced utilitarian fiction, still viewed the young mind as finite:

It is in filling a child's mind as in packing a trunk: we must take care what we lay in below, not only to secure for that a safe place but to prevent it from damaging what is to come after. 2

By the 1860s images of boxes, closets and blank sheets to be filled vanished as more animated, more dynamic models of the growing young mind, inspired by Romantic conceptions, captured the intellectual imagination. Now the Quarterly Review criticized those who saw the child's mind as an "empty cupboard" in which to "cram squares and cubes of knowledge".

<sup>1</sup>Quoted by Kotzin, p. 145.

<sup>2</sup>[Lady Eastlake], "Books for Children", p. 61.

Instead, it preferred the metaphor of an acorn representing the child's mind with all its powers latent.<sup>1</sup> Another commentator in the London Quarterly Review objected with equal vigour to outmoded pedagogical concepts:

We must not think of the child's mind as a vessel, which it is for us to fill, but as a wonderfully organized instrument which it is for us to develop and set in motion. He will be well or ill-educated, not according to the accuracy with which he retains the notions which have been impressed upon him from without, but according to the power which he puts forth from within. 2

The notion that the child's mind contained unknown powers in embryo convinced intellectuals and writers that it was not necessary to reduce the scope of ideas in children's tales to suit an immature audience. Good writers need not, indeed, should not write down to children. Even if they do not understand everything they read, their minds naturally stretch towards great truths. Profound mysteries inspire in them awe and reverence.

Such aspirations are not easily appeased with vapid and minute trivialities, either about the physical or moral world - with the dry common-place of Frank and Rosamund, or even more interesting discussion in Sandford and Merton. 3

Astute critics insisted that there was no danger that children would invest literal faith in the chimerical wonders of fantasy.

But there is a danger that children brought up to imagine they know what is true, and nothing but what is true, and to have no sympathy with the invisible, should end by feeling nothing and believing nothing but objects of sense. 4

This emphasis on the potential of the child's mind gave enhanced creative significance to the art of writing for children. English authors of the stature of Ruskin and Thackeray joined such popular

<sup>1</sup>[Bennett C. Johns], "Fictions for Children", Quarterly Review, CXII (1867), 57.

<sup>2</sup>"Children's Literature", pp. 486/7.

<sup>3</sup>[I. Gregory Smith], "Books for Children", The North British Review, XXI (1854), 410.

<sup>4</sup>[Stella Austin], p. 81. Charlotte Yonge was equally concerned that "reasoning" with children and explaining everything to them in literature dampened their natural mysticism and reverence. "Children's Literature of the Last Century", Macmillan's Magazine, XX (1869), 229-237.



European writers as Hans Christian Andersen and Trollope in creating new fairy tales designed to enlarge the child's imagination and to encourage humanitarian sympathies.

Moreover, many agreed with Dickens that "in a utilitarian age, of all other times, it is a matter of grave importance that the fairy tale should be respected."<sup>1</sup> New attitudes to children manifested by alternative genres of juvenile literature grew out of the adult reaction against the cast-iron materialism of an industrial age. The resurgence of interest in folk lore was in part fuelled by the desire of adults to escape from the social and political reality of an age of doubt and insecurity to a fantasy world where universal human values and natural justice ordered existence.<sup>2</sup> When evangelicals inflated the sordid and utilitarians dwelt on the mundane aspects of human existence, the world of faery offered parents a means of shielding their children from a premature knowledge of contemporary society. The British Quarterly Review in 1868 articulated an increasingly common impulse to quarantine children from reality:

In these days of hard work and money grubbing men have to begin life at an early age; and it takes but little experience to destroy the fairy fabrics of childhood's fancy. Why then should there be all this preaching and prating about the terrible depravity and wretchedness of humanity to greet the awakening intelligence of the young mind and to supply it with food, the digestion of which is both painful and laborious? 3

By the mid-Victorian period Romantic conceptions of the child's nature had filtered through the middle classes, inspiring parents to a new appreciation of their children and their duty towards them. Rather than hurry their children's progress towards rational adulthood as

<sup>1</sup>Charles Dickens, "Frauds on the Fairies", Household Words, VIII (1853), 97. Dickens was concerned that the moralizing influence of his contemporaries might pervert the true spirit of fairy tales.

<sup>2</sup>In his introduction to Marion Lockhead, The Renaissance of Wonder in Children's Literature (1977), Trevor Royle suggests that adults sought refuge from their anxieties in "the lordly world of faery".

<sup>3</sup>"Juvenile Literature", British Quarterly Review, XLVII (1868), 139.

enlightened eighteenth-century parents endeavoured to do, perceptive mid-Victorian mothers and fathers recognized childhood as a fleeting period of innocence and faicty in a bustling materialistic world. They took pains to shelter this innocence.

Furthermore, the concept of childhood purity triumphed over the evangelical insistence on original sin. The notion that children were depraved savages whose will must be broken yielded to a belief that children were sensitive beings with a simple unquestioning faith:

We would rather believe that the more experience grown-up persons have of children, the more satisfied will they become of the purity and simplicity of their nature. They abound in imagination and feeling; the saddest tale will amuse and lead them to laughter or tears. Moreover, their predisposition is to be good rather than naughty; they are easily susceptible of divine teaching, and full of religious faith. 1

Too much conscious exposition of doctrine and attempts to demonstrate religious principles might well impair the spontaneity of childish faith. Nothing destroyed the inborn reverence of a child so quickly as reasoning with him, argued the London Quarterly Review.<sup>2</sup> The child's implicit faith and obedience to his parents naturally preceded his later unquestioning belief in God. Thus, fairy tales were infinitely preferable to evangelical stories, which proved to the child his own and all human depravity, or to utilitarian narratives, which justified every act of obedience. Even if fairy tales did not explicitly teach religious truth, they reinforced the child's uncomprehending but implicit belief in supernatural justice and prepared his mind to apprehend a wider horizon beyond his own little sphere:

At least it may serve to take away a child from constant inspection of himself, his own special goodness or evil, and carry him outside the narrow circle of his own errors, follies and conceits. 3

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>2</sup>"Children's Literature", London Quarterly Review, XIII (1860), 472-482.

<sup>3</sup>[Johns], "Books of Fictions for Children", p. 70.

For thoughtful parents a revitalized children's literature offered an invaluable ally in the crusade to protect childhood innocence and reinforce non-materialistic values. Contemporary child-rearing advice stipulated that the child should be removed from the adult world: "They should be reared in a calm and healthful atmosphere as far aloof as possible from the restless world of their elders."<sup>1</sup> If the child was to be cloistered within the home and family circle, books and magazines provided for the sheltered middle-class boy or girl a window on the world which displayed only those scenes deemed acceptable by adults. The function of literature as an alternative to experience made the choice of suitable reading material a highly charged responsibility. Warned the London Quarterly Review in 1860:

Other problems in life seem to call for solution with greater importunity; but the growth of a young soul, and the maintenance of its innocence and happiness are at stake here; and the parent who acts as if the selection of a book for his child demanded no judgment, and involved no responsibility, is guilty of neglecting one of his most important functions. 2

Critics were acutely sensitive to the formative influence of early childhood reading:

The effect of a first novel or tale is incalculable and opens a new world, no matter how silly it appears when rediscovered with mature taste. 3

While children's book reviewers defended the child's right to relaxation and amusement in reading, they insisted that much more stringent standards were necessary for judging children's books. Children were indiscriminating readers yet even the lightest novel, which an adult would forget in a moment, could make an indelible impression on the child's mind. "What he sees printed in black and white, the child in his innocence adopts."<sup>4</sup> Critics placed the

<sup>1</sup>"Social Influences on the Rising Generation", The St. James's Medley (1862), p. 263.

<sup>2</sup>"Children's Literature", p. 471.

<sup>3</sup>[Ann Mozley], "On Fiction as an Educator", Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, CVIII (1870), 449.

<sup>4</sup>"Juvenile Literature", British Quarterly Review, XLVII (1868), 139.

onus of responsibility for regulating childhood reading directly upon parents, especially when the age of free trade in literature dawned mid-century. As Richard Henry Horne exhorted: "The real reform must begin with the parents. Directly they begin to think, the publisher will feel it and respond."<sup>1</sup>

As publishers at last began to recognize in the juvenile market an enormous ~~potential~~ for profit and to crowd the bookstalls with colourful, imaginative fiction for children, the role of the critic underwent a subtle transformation. While early Victorian critics tried to liberate boys and girls from prisons of evangelical and utilitarian preaching and lamented low standards of juvenile authorship, their mid-Victorian counterparts welcomed a new generation of talented, well-educated children's writers. "The modern school is wholesome, pure and refreshing", asserted the British Quarterly Review in 1868.<sup>2</sup> But if a widening scope of children's publishing released the spirits of imagination and invention, it also unleashed new and pressing dangers to the immature sensibility.

What gave an urgent intensity to the supervisory role of children's book critics and parents was the proliferation of cheap sensational papers, trashy novelettes and penny dreadfuls. Since the 1850s, the so-called "gutter press" began more and more to converge on the juvenile market. Although penny fiction aimed directly at the market of errand boys and apprentices, contemporary commentators warned middle-class parents against complacent security over the moral steadfastness of their own sons and daughters while such insidious but alluring entertainments were so readily available. James Greenwood, in "Penny Packets of Poison", fulminated against the dreadfuls which were, to his mind and most of his middle-class colleagues, the certain cause of the moral ruin and criminality of juvenile delinquents. But since "upwards of a million of these weekly pen'orths of abomination find customers", Greenwood was certain that more

<sup>1</sup> Richard Henry Horne, "A Witch in the Nursery, Household Words, LXXVIII (1851); reprinted by Salway, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> "Juvenile Literature". p. 129.

respectable youths bought them as well.<sup>1</sup>

The hysterical reaction of journalists and critics to the penny bloods and their supposed consequences was typical both of the Victorian belief in the immense power of the printed word and their perception of social problems. Refusing to recognize that poverty, urban overcrowding and narrow economic opportunity lay behind the rise of juvenile crime, middle-class journalists seized upon the sensational penny paper as the cause. Naively, they accepted the confessions of juvenile convicts who swore their own crimes were imitations of the escapades of their romantic highwaymen heroes.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, they failed to see that escapist stories, unrealistic and badly written as they were, brought a little colour into the lives of boys locked into unrewarding jobs from an early age. Though Greenwood at least seemed aware of the miserable life led by factory lads, he rather callously dismissed them as even poorer specimens than their fathers had been. To Greenwood, the cunning publisher, and not the employer, was the most guilty exploiter of

...hundreds of boys out of whom constant drudgery and bad living had ground all the spirit of dare-devilism so essential to the enjoyment of the exploits of the heroes of the Turpin type, but who still possessed an appetite for vices of a sort that were milder and more easy of digestion. <sup>3</sup>

What offended critics most about the sensational stories was their challenge to the status quo and the precocious independence and potency of their juvenile heroes. Middle-class Victorians found in these adolescent rebels an uncomfortable contradiction of their romantic and

<sup>1</sup>James Greenwood, "Penny Packets of Poison", The Wilds of London (1874), reprinted in Peter Haining, ed., The Penny Dreadful; or, Strange, Horrid, and Sensational Tales (1975), pp. 357-361.

<sup>2</sup>Greenwood was not alone in assuming the authenticity of these juvenile "confessions". Edward Salmon in Juvenile Literature as It Is (1888); [Francis Hitchmen], in "Penny Fiction", Quarterly Review, CLXXI 91890, 150-171; and [Bennett G. Johns], "Literature of the Streets", Edinburgh Review, CLXV (1887), 40-65. take them as face value.

<sup>3</sup>James Greenwood, "The Penny Awfuls", St. Paul's Magazine, XII (1873), 163.

nostalgic images of childhood purity and innocence which were inseparable from a state of weakness and dependence.<sup>1</sup> Literature which exalted the cheeky capable juvenile hero they felt to be especially dangerous to their own well-educated and well-protected children. A story in the respectable Kind Words for Boys and Girls, published by the Sunday School Union, illustrates the complex fears typical of middle-class response to the dreadfuls.<sup>2</sup>

A manly sailor discovers his young friend, Tom, an apothecary's assistant, morally sinking under the influence of penny trash. When he scolds him about his untidiness, neglect of duty and rudeness to customers, Tom sulkily replies: "We're all equal."

"Are we indeed?" asks Charlie, "Then you just smooth your hair and wash your face, and go to Lord Ashburton's and say you have come to dine with her ladyship! I fancy the butler would soon teach you we are not all equal."

Charlie teaches Tom a lesson by disguising himself as a legendary brigand and, by terrifying poor Tom, deflates his borrowed bravado. "E.M.W.'s" solution to the problem was to dispose of the dreadfuls and substitute inspiring biographies of great men and stirring history.

Many critics and counsellors favoured similar solutions. The author of "Boys and Their Ways" appealed to the good sense of his clearly upper and middle-class boy readers:

How vastly more interesting the "Lives of the Queens of England" by Miss Strickland, or the lives of Drake and Raleigh, Cavendish and Dampier, than all the vamped-up memoirs of highwaymen and rovers which ever issued from a degraded press. <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The disparity between the ideal of childhood cherished by middle-class adults and the realities experienced by working-class children forced to struggle for their existence from a very early age informed the movement to reform conditions of childhood. Well-intentioned idealists tried to impose the conditions of innocent isolation from adults and the protection which their own children enjoyed onto working-class children who were already independent and experienced. The problems of youth workers are discussed in Margaret May, "Innocence and Experience; the Evolution of the Concept of Juvenile Delinquency in the Mid-Nineteenth Century", Victorian Studies, XVII (1973), 7-30 and Deborah Gorham, "The 'Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' Re-examined: Child Prostitution and the Idea of Childhood in Late-Victorian England", Victorian Studies, XXI (1978), 353-379.

<sup>2</sup>E. M. W. "Penny Dreadfuls", Kind Words for Boys and Girls (1879), 46-47.

<sup>3</sup>Boys and Their Ways, By One Who Knows Them (1880), p. 206.

Edward Salmon, one of the first journalists to specialize in children's literature, aimed to help parents inoculate their children against cheap sensational weeklies, which were, to his mind, "by far the most serious question of literature for the rising generation". If only children could acquire a taste for high quality moral literature, parents need not fear for them in later years:

Parents may take it for certain, if they adopt proper measures at the outset, they will deprive reading of the great danger which it possesses for the young. Start the child on the road of honour and truth, and prepare its mind for the inception and comprehension of sound principles. That is what it is necessary to do in these days of high pressure and sensationalism. 1

Salmon also recommended censorship to check the spread and "pernicious influence" of sensational papers. However, even though unscrupulous publishers defamed the respectability of the book trade and corrupted public taste, their more responsible brethren balked at reviving controls which might endanger the precious freedom of the British press.

Alexander Strahan was one of these. He did not believe that censorship would protect the purity of the rising generation and was prepared, instead, to provide alternatives that would uplift the minds of Britain's boys and girls. Nevertheless, his Good Words for the Young, at sixpence a month, was beyond the pockets and capacities of working-class boys and girls. He was pessimistic about the possibility of rescuing poor children from the lure of pulp literature:

Neither do we see that good literature for the young could possibly except in very rare cases, make any sort of successful appeal to the sons and daughters of parents who read the Police News and the London Clipper. The alarming and dispiriting part of the case is the gradual spread, upwards in what is called the social scale, of this sort of trash. 2

Strahan and like-minded publishers, editors and authors in the mid-Victorian period concentrated on a wealthier and better-educated audience in the hope that at least upper and middle-class children

<sup>1</sup> Edward Salmon, "Literature for the Little Ones", Nineteenth Century, XXII (1887), 563.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Strahan, "Bad Literature for the Young", Contemporary Review, XXVI (1875); ed. Lance Salway, Signal, XX (1976), 89.

might be protected from immoral literature if there were honestly entertaining alternatives available. Critics felt that good magazines, even more than good books, were "the most effectual means of occupying the ground against hurtful publications".<sup>1</sup> Moreover, children's periodicals provided the "healthy variety" which child-rearing manuals increasingly stressed as requisite to a well-regulated childhood.<sup>2</sup> In reviewing the large number of respectable, entertaining periodicals which first appeared in the 1860s and 1870s, critics were very enthusiastic. The British Quarterly Review, in 1868, extolled the new departures in periodical publishing for children: "Taken together they are highly creditable specimens of the juvenile literature of the day, and irresistible evidence of the improvement of tone and style, which has of late taken place in the writing for the young, which used too often to be done in a sadly negligent and slipshod style."<sup>3</sup> In a very exacting critique of contemporary magazines, wherein Fraser's, MacMillan's, and St. James were barely tolerated and Belgravia, London Society and Argosy dismissed outright, the Church Quarterly Review paid tribute to the magazines produced for young readers: "Children's magazines ought to thrive more than they do, considering the real delight they are."<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, in the secular children's magazines of the mid-Victorian period, there was much to admire. These journals represented a cross-section of writing for the young in what is universally recognized as a "golden age"

<sup>1</sup>Charlotte Yonge, What Books to Lend and What to Give, (1887). Though herself the editor of a magazine for young people, Miss Yonge's Monthly Packet was far removed from the battle against popular literature.

<sup>2</sup>For instance, in Children and What to do with Them (1881), p. 109. the anonymous author emphasized that a "variety of amusement and employment" was essential for happy and healthy children. [Alexander Hay Japp], "Children and Children's Books", Contemporary Review, II (1869), also stressed the need of children for variety in their reading.

<sup>3</sup>"Juvenile Literature", p. 149. Mrs. Gatty, W.H.G. Kingston and Edwin Hodder were singled out for special praise along with their magazines; Aunt Judy's, Routledge's Every Boy's Magazine, and Merry and Wise.

<sup>4</sup>"Magazine Literature", Church Quarterly Review, III (1876/7), 388.



of children's literature. In magazines, great literary talents, like George MacDonald, Charles Kingsley, Lewis Carroll and Juliana Ewing spoke alongside less enduring but equally popular contemporary writers such as W.H.G. Kingston, Charlotte Yonge, Jean Ingelow and Ascott R. Hope.

In this period, writing for children began to emerge as an art, and not merely a venue for religious and secular instruction. The status of the juvenile author in the literary world improved as writers of reknown not only in the juvenile sector participated in creating British nursery literature. Dinah Mulock Craik, the famous author of "John Halifax Gentleman"; Eliza Meteyard, or "Silverpen"; Henry Kingsely; W.S. Gilbert; and Sir Douglas Straight, as "Sidney Daryl" for instance, wrote stories and articles for adult magazines as well as children's periodicals. At the same time, talented writers like Juliana Ewing and Mrs. Molesworth were specializing in children's literature, not as a lower flight, but as a separate but important department of the republic of letters. Certainly, writers like George MacDonald and Lewis Carroll, though they were active in Victorian intellectual circles, are remembered only for their contributions to British nursery culture.<sup>1</sup>

One manifestation of the growing respectability of juvenile authorship was the increasingly common practice of signing stories and articles. Children's stories in early Victorian magazines were invariably anonymous. Since message dominated originality, any sign of individuality on the part of the author was irrelevant. But in the mid-Victorian period, more authors were willing to acknowledge their contributions, demonstrating pride in their literary accomplishment. Moreover, for Lady Barker, and Lady Lamb, the Hon. Mrs. Greene and the Hon. Blanche Dundas there was little fear that

<sup>1</sup> Henry Steele Commager in "When Majors Wrote for Minors", Saturday Review, XXXV (May 10 1952) asserts that the participation of great authors in juvenile literature was usual in the era before the Twentieth Century. However, in England, this interpenetration of adult and juvenile authorship was significant only in the mid-Victorian period. In the years before and after, the number of well-known novelists writing for children as well as adults was comparatively slight.

acknowledged authorship would compromise their social. Untitled but gifted literary women gained the professional confidence to publicize their identities. The editors of most high quality children's magazines were eager to promote the literary reputation and social prestige of their authors.

Even when literary figures did not confine their attention to the juvenile department, they were sensitive to the special requirements of a young audience. In the mid-Victorian period authors and critics delineated the ethical and practical criteria of professional children's story writing. As in the past, women dominated this field, but by the 1860s and 1870s, well-educated female writers saw in writing for children a literary role to which their traditional expertise most suited them. Critics agreed that female writers were more accurate and perceptive expositors of the domestic sphere than male authors. "The most successful female authors," wrote the London Review,

are those who have drawn upon the topics that lay closest at hand, and submitted them to the investigation of the microscope. There is no generalization, or reasoning, of a practical kind in these works; but they contain an abundance of quiet and vivid surface observation, acute guesses at profounder truths, and heaps of conventional commonplaces which men generally overlook, or are incapable of appreciating. <sup>1</sup>

In so far as women writers accepted so limited an appraisal of their abilities (and there is no reason why authors such as Mrs. Ewing should) they felt that they were most qualified to describe the world to children. Mrs. Molesworth, the "grand dame" of late Victorian nursery literature, began writing for juvenile periodicals in the mid-Victorian period. In a series of articles outlining the code of her vocation, she strenuously defended the children's author as an artist with a "peculiar gift" and a specialized area of expertise. "There is a wild idea afloat that an 'embryo author' may test his or far more frequently her - power

<sup>1</sup>"Female Novelists", The London Review (1860), 137. This article was a review of one of Eliza Meteyard's books.

if a debut in writing is made by first doing so for the Young."<sup>1</sup>

In her view, the creator of tales for the young must be able to see the world through a child's eyes, yet use his or her adult experience to shield the young reader from any "precociously saddening or wisening" incidents. "And if the responsibility of writing any book is grave, surely the gravest of all is that of writing for children? While you must amuse and interest, you should all the time be lifting; yet above all without preaching."<sup>2</sup>

An assessment of Mrs. Molesworth's personal fulfillment of these ambitious standards is best left to contemporary critics. In a lengthy eulogy of "the best story-teller for children England has yet known", Edward Salmon tried to account for Mrs. Molesworth's genius: "She has written little, except fairy stories, which in some shape or other has not come within her own experience." He went on to describe how her love for children enabled her to enter their minds, to sympathetically expose their foibles and fears:

She is an almost infallible guide to the eccentricities of child nature, and analyses the working of a child's brain in a manner that explains doubts which the child itself is either incapable or afraid of attempting. 3

Juliana Ewing, whose pre-eminence in British children's literature even Mrs. Molesworth acknowledged, was equally serious in her attitude to children's authorship.<sup>4</sup> Her ideals for her own work were extremely ambitious, and, in her criticism of other children's authors, she took a hard line against those who settled for moral or literary mediocrity.

<sup>1</sup>Mrs. Molesworth, "Story Reading and Story Writing", Chamber's Edinburgh Journal, 6th Series (1898), 773.

<sup>2</sup>Molesworth, "Story Writing", Monthly Packet, LXXXVIII (1894), 164.

<sup>3</sup>Edward Salmon, "Literature for the Little Ones", p.575.

<sup>4</sup>Mrs. Molesworth wrote a tribute to Ewing shortly after her death. See "Juliana Horatia Ewing", Contemporary Review, XLIX (1886), 675-86.

Questioning the ethics of an immensely popular "street arab" story teller, she wondered whether "Brenda" has any sense of the grave responsibility of promulgating unusual views of social morality.<sup>1</sup> Yet she had no patience with hacks who took up well-worn themes with no talent or new insight to recommend them:

We wish few things more earnestly in the interests of literature for the young than that writers could be disabused of the belief that a great subject sanctifies any defects in the treatment of it, could be brought to believe that exaggeration, feebleness, and absurdity are never so injurious as when they profane high and holy subjects. 2

Few Victorian children's authors could make as legitimate a claim to literary greatness as Mrs. Ewing. Yet even while gifted children's writers aspired to establish their profession in the art of literature, they could not, and did not, ignore the essential task of educating the young.

In so far as they succeeded in edifying as well as entertaining children, juvenile books and magazines played a key role in the informal education of Victorian boys and girls. Periodical articles and essays explored subjects not then included in formal curriculae. Subjects like natural history, geography, history, and foreign culture were especially popular. They also acquainted children with the occupations and manufacturing processes that contributed so importantly to nineteenth-century British economic life, yet were so often ignored in formal education. Even the most recent technological advances, such as telephones, "electric machines" and cameras were described in juvenile magazines.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>[Juliana Ewing], "Book Notices", Aunt Judy's Magazine, XIII (1876), 188.

<sup>2</sup>[Ewing], "Book Notices", AJM XII (1875), 509.

<sup>3</sup>Little Folks ran a series of practical articles on how to construct these devices. See Little Folks, n.s. VIII (1878).

Though such articles treated mechanical investigations as hobbies, they may have helped to offset the anti-scientific anti-practical prejudice current in the prestigious educational institutions. Even so, the presentation of practical topics was not overtly vocational.

In addition, the periodical fiction of this period concealed a healthy dose of miscellaneous information. That authors felt obliged to interject so much instruction into stories ostensibly meant to entertain showed a lingering remnant of the evangelical and utilitarian mistrust of pure fiction. Skillful authors, like Ewing and Yonge, were able to integrate elements of historical, geographical or scientific knowledge into the setting and action of their tales. But mediocre authors too often interrupted the flow of narrative with sporadic lectures or digressions that made up in quantity what they lacked in concision.

Historical themes were prominent in those magazines which frequently used second-hand material or translations from European authors. Historical romances, like penny dreadfuls, were a legacy inherited from the early Victorian adult literary market. Though initially these tales were unabashedly escapist, in the 1840s and 1850s historical novels enjoyed tremendous popularity among middle-class adults, especially when novelists like Bulwer Lytton claimed scholastic parity with serious historians such as Carlyle. By the mid-Victorian period, however, adult interest in historical fiction flagged. According to Sir Leslie Stephen, even Scott passed from the drawing room into the school room.<sup>1</sup> Though mid-Victorian parents found historical novels too tedious for their own recreational reading they still valued them for their children's education and improvement. The belief that this sort of fiction contributed to general knowledge allowed expressly moral magazines to include rousing adventure and

<sup>1</sup>James C. Simmons, The Novelist as Historian (1973) describes the role of historical fiction in popular English literature. He quotes Sir Leslie Stephen on p. 53.

stirring romance in the guise of history.

Contemporary reviewers certainly recognized the vital contribution children's periodicals and books made to the informal education of British youth. Edward Salmon observed that:

The truth is that boys especially gain most of their information apart from what they are taught at school, from the stories that they read; and this fact lends a new responsibility to the fiction which is produced for them. Probably half the boys who do interest themselves in historical, acientific, or naturalistic subjects have acquired the taste from stories in which these subjects were touched on. 1

Yet for a female contributor to Blackwood's in 1870, the role of books and magazines in a girl's education was absolutely crucial:

If women, learning fact in a slipshod, innacurate, unattractive way, are at the same time cut off from fiction, as by some strict, scrupulous teachers they are, where is the wonder if their interests alike stand at a low level. 2

Although children's fiction conveyed much objective information, the central function of the stories in children's magazines was to introduce young readers to the attitudes, ideals and relationships of their own society. To present society in a believable yet idealized form was the goal of those juvenile authors who created original fiction in a contemporary setting. The London Quarterly Review labelled these ostensibly "realistic" stories "the genre painting of the child's picture gallery; and which are designed primarily for amusement, but incidentally to familiarize the little reader with the world in which he lives, and to make him understnad his own position in it."<sup>3</sup> Edward Salmon particularly valued domestic tales for children for these reasons:

I can conceive of no story so likely to be both beneficial and interesting as that which treats everyday facts in a light fairy-like manner - a blend of the two kinds of fiction, in short, in which the real is merged with the ideal, and as the real should only be concerned with the good, goodness would secure the advantage of ideal education. 4

<sup>1</sup> Edward Salmon, Juvenile Literature, p. 203.

<sup>2</sup> [Ann Mozley], "On Fiction as an Educator", Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, CVIII (1870), 157.

<sup>3</sup> "Children's Literature", p. 487.

<sup>4</sup> Salmon, "Literature for the Young Ones", Nineteenth Century, (1887), 579.

Critics and social commentators did not doubt that it was primarily through the lens of fiction that the protected middle-class child formed his notions about society. "Their actions, their sympathies, their thoughts, their ideas of right and wrong, are moulded as much by their reading as by contact with the world."<sup>1</sup> Since contemporaries attributed such pervasive influence to magazine reading in the social education of young people, the anxiety occasioned by "false visions of the world" conveyed by pulp literature is not surprising. The urgency of their task to provide alternatives inspired the creators of a new genre of juvenile literature to wield the power of the printed word not merely negatively, to replace insidious fiction with innocuous entertainment, but positively, as a lever with which to uplift the minds of the rising generation of middle-class children and to broaden their social and moral horizons. In this endeavour, critics applauded them.

For a brief period from the 1860s to the early 1880s, the critics and creators of children's literature seemed to be mutually sustaining. The books and magazines written for the young embodied the high standards of originality and literary excellence which critics demanded. Critics, in turn, cooperated with the juvenile book trade by taking an enthusiastic interest in the children's literature being produced in their own day. They were satisfied that the best contemporary stories for children were healthy without resort to obtrusive moralizing. They continued to warn over-zealous authors that moral and social training must emanate from action, situation and choices within the stories themselves and not be merely superimposed upon them. "The best children's authors," observed the London Quarterly Review, "are content to let the story carry its own moral and leave the interpretation to work itself out in due time in the little reader's mind."<sup>2</sup> Salmon insisted that "Virtue must be proved

<sup>1</sup>Salmon, Juvenile Literature, p. 209.

<sup>2</sup>"Children's Literature", London Quarterly Review XIII (1860), 484.

superior to vice, not by sermons but by circumstances that can leave no doubt on the young mind as to its superiority."<sup>1</sup>

The most talented mid-Victorian children's authors took their ethical responsibilities very seriously, imbuing their tales with a moral and religious spirit embodied in a vivid social context. Critics could not doubt that the refined and gifted child could find ample nourishment for his imagination and intellect in the tales of Juliana Ewing or George MacDonald. Nevertheless, men and women attempting to discover the preferences of real children ruefully observed that the really exquisite pieces by these authors soared far above the comprehension of ordinary nursery children. Practical reviewers like Edward Salmon, Charlotte Yonge, and Mrs. Molesworth had to concede that the most sensitive and perceptive children's literature probably appealed more to adults than to children.<sup>2</sup>

However, it was the average middle-class child and his parents who decided the fate of children's magazines. MacDonald's "At the Back of the North Wind" and Ewing's "Six to Sixteen" later became enduring nursery classics, but the magazines that first published them in serial form could not wait for the gradual growth of public recognition.<sup>3</sup> They lived or died according to the whim of contemporary customers. As will

<sup>1</sup>Salmon, Juvenile Literature As It Is (1888), p. 218.

<sup>2</sup>Edward Salmon wrote of Aunt Judy's Magazine, wherein Juliana Ewing's stories appeared every month, that "it frequently took up a position far above the nursery", and though he felt that "Dr. (sic) MacDonald's very original ideas about child nature" were often sound, he, too, wrote above the heads of young children. See "Literature for the Little Ones", pp. 577, 573. Charlotte Yonge reserved Mrs. Ewing's stories for her "drawing room" readers in What Books to Lend and What to Give (1887), pp. 34-40. Mrs. Molesworth agreed that Mrs. Ewing's perceptive observations were more appreciated by adults than children. See "Juliana Horatia Ewing", Contemporary Review, XLIX (1886), 675.

<sup>3</sup>"At the Back of the North Wind" was serialized in Good Words for the Young (1869/70) and "Six to Sixteen" appeared in Aunt Judy's, X 1872.



be seen, many excellent children's magazines of the mid-Victorian period failed to win the loyalty of a sufficient number of boys and girls. Perhaps serialized children's literature could not maintain the high standards intellectual critics demanded and still make a profit. Or perhaps the literary discussion of the critics was too lofty to influence a mass audience. More likely, the consumers of children's magazines failed to appreciate the contribution of the literary elite to their reading and stubbornly refused to accept an aesthetic ideal imposed upon them from above. At any rate, developments in children's periodical publishing and book reviewing in the late-Victorian period suggest that the particular goals of early magazine producers and critics were superseded by more urgent demands.

By the 1880s, the working class was beginning to exercise its political and economic power and to threaten the status quo. As in the mid-Victorian period, the semi-independent working-class youth was an object of considerable anxiety to middle-class reformers. The authorities, worried by industrial competition from without and dissension from within, sponsored religious and patriotic youth groups in a bid to submerge class competition in nationalistic enthusiasm.<sup>1</sup>

In the literary world, the same impulse led some critics and publishers to modify the elitist criteria that informed their formerly strict aesthetic standards intended to refine middle-class taste. Now they wished to speak to a broader spectrum of the juvenile population. They grew ever more alarmed at the burgeoning literature of crime. The attention of some critics and publishers shifted to a wider front in the battle against the dreadfuls. Even the august Edinburgh Review began to take

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John Springhall describes the aims and strategies employed by the promoters of late-Victorian youth groups in Youth, Empire, and Society: British Youth Movements, 1883-1940 (1977).

heed of the "Literature of the Streets":

Carry the war into the enemy's camp: flood the market with good wholesome literature instead of the poisonous stuff to which the helpless purchasers are now condemned. 1

Moreover, by the 1880s the generation herded into state schools by the Education Act of 1870 was literate and beginning to influence the literary market. Critics like Salmon expressed determined optimism that the working-class juvenile, whom earlier publishers and reviewers seemed willing, if reluctantly, to abandon to the bloods and romances, could actually be won by magazines of the right sort:

The one real antidote to these poisonous sheets - which are patronised chiefly by the sons of working men, the future masters of the political situation, is the Boy's Own Paper, the only first class magazine which has forced its way into the slums as well as the best homes. 2

The Boy's Own Paper achieved a phenomenal success in fighting the dreadfuls, not from the lofty region of high class literature, but in hand to hand combat on their own ground. The editor, G. A. Hutchinson, imitated their format, appearance, even typeset to lure "blood and thunder" addicts, but substituted well-written, robust tales for the manufactured rubbish of sensational weeklies.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, although the Boy's Own Paper was financed by a religious organization, the Religious Tract Society wisely chose, in a period of growing secularization, to disguise its identity under the imprint of the "Leisure Hour Office".<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>[Bennett G. Johns], "The Literature of the Streets", Edinburgh Review, CLXV (1887), 63. It is interesting to note that the Rev. John's earlier article for the Quarterly Review in 1867 was solely concerned to oust the moralizing didactic literature of the early Victorian period, so that intelligent and imaginative children could find real interest and pleasure in their recreational reading.

<sup>2</sup>Salmon, Juvenile Literature, p. 184.

<sup>3</sup>It is interesting to note that in the early 19th century when strict moralists disapproved of the chapbooks read by children and rural adults of the lower orders, Hannah More borrowed the appearance of the chapbooks to attract readers to her Cheap Repository Tracts.

<sup>4</sup>Patrick Dunae, "Boy's Own Paper: Origins and Editorial Policies", The Private Library, IX (1976), 120-158, analyzed the R.T.S. minutes and described Hutchison's battle to overcome the conservative reluctance of his employers.

The B.O.P. and its sister publication, the Girl's Own Paper, unconditionally captured the juvenile market. In its first year of publication, 1879, the Religious Tract Society estimated the readership of the Boy's Own Paper to approach six hundred thousand.<sup>1</sup> The Girl's Own Paper, introduced a year later, claimed to have reached "a circulation equalled by no other English illustrated magazine published in this country".<sup>2</sup> In 1884, Charles Welsh, a collector and historian of children's books, conducted a survey of the reading interests of adolescent school attenders. From nearly two thousand replies, the B.O.P. and G.O.P. won over two thirds of the magazine readers, leaving thirty or so other periodicals to divide the remains of the market.<sup>3</sup>

No doubt, Welsh's results were predetermined. He conducted his survey through the school system and, presumably, respondents were encouraged by supervising teachers to make their choices appear as irreproachable as possible. That Dickens, Scott, and Shakespeare headed both the boys' and girls' lists of favourite books casts some doubt on the sincerity of the replies. Nevertheless, it is significant that a children's book authority condescended to research, first hand, the literary preferences of boys and girls, rather than to impose his own tastes and standards upon the young. Though Salmon appreciated the limitations of Welsh's survey, he took comfort from the results: "Boys and girls equally have proved that they recognize and appreciate the best in literature, whether or not they always read it."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>2</sup>Salmon, Juvenile Literature, p. 195. Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig estimate that the Girl's Own Paper probably had an average circulation of one hundred and sixty thousand. See Your a Brick, Angela!: A New Look at Girls' Fiction from 1839-1975 (1976), p. 73.

<sup>3</sup>The results of Welsh's survey were reproduced in Salmon, Juvenile Literature, pp. 14-35.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

With the success of the Boy's Own Paper, the children's magazine industry entered a new era. Children's magazines became more uniform as rival publishers sought to imitate the B.O.P. and G.O.P. formula. Manly boys and lively school girls dominated fiction designed to attract adolescents exercising their freedom as consumers.

Moreover, while earlier magazines tended to divide the market in terms of social status, the late-Victorian journals differentiated their audience by sex and age groups. School boys and girls had separate magazines, so did very young children. In magazines like The Rosebud, Little Wide Awake, Our Little Dots, and The Child's Pictorial the presentation of innocent childhood persisted and intensified. Artless infant "pickles" and "madcaps", their lisps and baby talk lovingly transcribed, abounded. The publishers of this genre of nursery literature concentrated commercial appeal on an audience still dependent on adult whim, unable to form or exercise its own tastes in literature.<sup>1</sup> This nostalgia for childhood perhaps reassured adults that "Innocence" was securely preserved in the ambit of inarticulate infancy, just as interest in fairy tales sought to rediscover a folk innocence. Story-book children acted out a contrived innocence for the satisfaction of adult onlookers.

Curiously, as the "innocent child" convention ripened and even decomposed in the late-Victorian period, children's book critics indulged in nostalgia of a different sort. No longer was the intellectual authority on children's books a reformer, popularizing educational theory and calling for innovation. Contributors to literary reviews emerged as antiquarians, chronicling the development of children's literature over the century and eulogizing the old didactic tales whose authors, not ashamed to instruct, were motivated by altruistic purpose and not desire for fame or wealth. Moreover, the dry, matter-of-fact tone of eighteenth-century children's

<sup>1</sup>At the risk of ahistorically imposing modern taste upon the past it seems impossible to believe that children could enjoy tales which described the innocent follies and endearing traits of nursery children which were the main component of Mrs. Sale Barker's Little Wide Awake.

authors may have relieved discerning tastes cloyed by the sentimental sweetness of late-Victorian stylized childhood. The Quarterly Review, in 1896, astringently observed that "We doubt whether the marvellous multiplication of books for the young has increased the sum of juvenile enjoyment."<sup>1</sup> He argued that rarity increased delight and called for reprints of Maria Edgeworth, Mrs. Barbauld, and Thomas Day.

A colleague in the Contemporary Review was equally disgusted with the modern child's library, glutted with gaudy, endlessly reproduced, monotonously similar books and magazines. He doubted "whether magazines instil a good deal of knowledge by stealth" and feared that the infant magazine reader might never advance higher in literary taste:

The mind becomes satisfied with a very low standard of art, and a very physical species of pleasurable excitement, and it is perfectly content never to look into a book for any higher pleasure. 2

The disappointment of late-Victorian critics with the then current varieties of children's literature contrasted sharply with the optimism and enthusiasm of their predecessors. For mid-Victorian critics, retrospectives of old fashions in children's story writing only served to underline the superiority of the modern style. Conversely, the late-Victorian children's book reviewers rediscovered in the moral tales of the past a nobility of purpose missing from the light-weight, flippant children's stories of their own day. The Quarterly Review fondly remembered the earnest Evenings at Home series produced by Mrs. Barbauld and her brother, John Aikin, as the "forerunner of the periodicals and journals which now cater indefatigably for the tastes of all sorts and conditions of juveniles."<sup>3</sup>

By the late-Victorian period, critical opinion as expressed in the august literary quarterlies came full circle and, in the face of a children's

<sup>1</sup>[Alexander Innes Shand], "Children Yesterday and Today", Quarterly Review, CLXXXIII (1896), 379.

<sup>2</sup>H. V. Weisse, "Reading for the Young", Contemporary Review, LXXIX (1901); reprinted by Salway, p. 360.

<sup>3</sup>[Shand], p. 386.

literature almost wholly commercial and recreational in orientation, called for a return of the plainly didactic. The intellectual elite no longer actively participated in creating children's books and magazines, fertilizing juvenile reading with ideas from a wider literary milieu. Their successors chose instead to re-read and promote the classics of their youth.

In 1890, Edward Salmon felt obliged to defend contemporary children's authors from the unreasonable complaints of elite critics:

Juvenile literature is condemned in the vast majority of cases, not because it does not rise to the level of the ordinary everyday book from Mudie's, but because it is not fit to take a place on the shelf beside the classics. The test applied is one under which most books published these days would be found wanting. Writers for the young have come to thoroughly appreciate the importance of the work they are called upon to perform. <sup>1</sup>

Salmon appreciated the sincerity of late-Victorian children's authors and the suitability of their stories for the needs and tastes of the young. But more demanding literary critics would not compromise their highflown ideals of juvenile literary excellence. When the best children's books were merely innocuous, the literary reviews no longer took interest in the contemporary state of children's literature. Children's book reviewing became the domain of experts, among whom Edward Salmon could well claim primacy. Parents seeking guidance in choosing books and magazines for their children could turn to specialist journals like the Parent's Review or the Library Chronicle, whose contributors' concern with childhood was perhaps more practical than philosophical.

The archetype of childhood invoked by the intellectuals who wrote on children's books was unrealistic and their standards of literature worthy of the ideal child was difficult to attain. Yet the comments of critics at each stage of the evolution of children's literature in the nineteenth century adds to our understanding of how changing attitudes to children

<sup>1</sup>Edward Salmon, "Should Children Have a Special Literature?" Parent's Review (1890); ed. Lance Salway, Signal, XVII (1973), 97.

transformed the juvenile book trade. Their essays pointed out the horizons to be explored by the pioneers of a new genre of juvenile entertainment.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### BEHIND THE SCENES: THE PRODUCTION OF MID-VICTORIAN CHILDREN'S MAGAZINES

During Chatterbox's "Diamond Jubilee" in 1927, its second editor, F. J. Harvey Darton, described his magazine as belonging to the "great early period of English magazines - the sixties, when many a magazine of now world-wide fame came into being".<sup>1</sup> The periodical format was familiar to mid-Victorian children, but the new magazines created for them in the 1860s and 1870s represented a new approach to juvenile readers. While earlier journals assumed a captive audience, the editors and publishers of secular children's magazines in the mid-Victorian period began to recognize the prerogatives of children as consumers. At the same time, they placed an enhanced emphasis on the state of childhood and the power of literature to mould it, and endeavoured to amplify their influence in society by appealing directly to the citizens of the future. In this experimental period of commercial magazine production, the creators of entertaining juvenile magazines exhibited exuberance and optimism, and endured the trials and errors inevitable in charting new territory.

In contrast to their precursors, mere spokesmen of sectarian opinion, the mid-Victorian magazine editors and publishers aimed to please their audience with a commercially viable product. Even so, they were not enslaved by market demands. The flourishing sensational papers and cheap novelettes, cynically showered on the juvenile population, gave a

<sup>1</sup>[F. J. Harvey Darton], "Sixty Years of Chatterbox", Chatterbox (1927), p. 186.



lamentable indication of what would sell. This pulp literature was not specifically tailored to the needs and tastes of children, but came second-hand from the adult literary market. The mid-Victorian children's magazine producers aspired not merely to discover and exploit the preferences of their audience, but also to uplift juvenile literary taste and to create a demand for wholesome entertainment. They were determined to impose their own moral and aesthetic standards upon the rising generation.

In the expanding mid-Victorian literary market, editors and publishers were confident that they could produce profitable commercial magazines without compromising their ideals and expectations. Unfortunately, the unprecedented and unsurpassed literary excellence some of them achieved was not always matched by commensurate financial success. Although each magazine set out to reach the vast public of literate boys and girls, the expertise and predispositions of its creators tended to magnetize distinct sections of the juvenile population. Financial success depended less on intrinsic quality than on the accuracy with which editors and publishers identified their particular market and accordingly fashioned, priced, and promoted their magazine. Many worthy periodicals foundered because their producers failed to recognize the precise limits of their audience. Others succeeded because of the shrewdness or the tenacity of their editors and publishers.

The tension between editorial idealism and commercial pressure is most dramatically manifested in the history of Aunt Judy's Magazine for Young People. No Victorian children's magazine was welcomed more warmly by critics. "We look upon this as the high-class magazine for children. Without disparaging the others, we may say that we know of none of its class equal to it from a purely literary point of view," wrote the book and magazine reviewer for The Queen, a select journal for ladies, in 1872.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The Queen: Ladies' Newspaper and Court Chronicle (13 January 1872), p. 27.

Mrs. Molesworth placed Aunt Judy's at the top of her list of "Best Books For Children" in the Pall Mall Gazette: "No magazine for children, in my opinion, has ever approached to 'Aunt Judy' in excellence and absolute freedom from anything objectionable."<sup>1</sup> Most gratifying of all was the warm support of John Ruskin who took in the magazine himself.<sup>2</sup>

Yet the accolades of critics alone could not assure economic success for the publisher of this exemplary children's journal. Only once in its nineteen-year run did the magazine yield a profit. The unflagging optimism and determination of its editors, Mrs. Alfred Gatty and her daughters, and the generosity and loyalty of its long-suffering publisher, George Bell, kept this magazine afloat year after year. In a memoir of his father, Edward Bell tried to account for Aunt Judy's lack of financial success:

. . . though it was received with great enthusiasm and regularly supported by some thousands of Mrs. Gatty's readers, its appeal was to rather a select class and it never gained the wider popularity which can only be obtained by consulting the tastes of various social levels. 3

The fortunate minority who discovered Aunt Judy's received very good value in return for their patronage. For only a sixpence, its subscribers purchased sixty-four well-printed pages of original, carefully selected literature written by the best children's authors of the day. Lewis Carroll, Hans Christian Andersen,<sup>4</sup> Ascott R. Hope, and the original "Aunt Judy", Mrs. Gatty's daughter, Juliana Horatia Ewing, were among the distinguished

<sup>1</sup>Mrs. Molesworth, "Best Books for Children", Pall Mall Gazette (29 May 1887), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Christabel Maxwell, in Mrs. Gatty and Mrs. Ewing (1949), p. 221, recounts Ruskin's relationship with the Gattys.

<sup>3</sup>Edward Bell, M.A., George Bell Publisher: A Brief Memoir (1924), p. 54.

<sup>4</sup>Mrs. Gatty personally recruited Hans Christian Andersen for Aunt Judy's and he and she conducted a gracious correspondence. However, though twenty-five of Andersen's stories were translated for Aunt Judy's, Andersen only received payment, ten pounds, when Bell's published a separate, collected edition of his tales. See Elias Bredsdorff, Hans Christian Andersen (1975), p. 260.

contributors. The illustrations were specially commissioned from well-known artists, including Gordon Brown, Frederick Keyl, and Randolph Caldecott. No extraneous filler swelled its bulk. The articles on natural history, philosophy, religion, and science were serious and thought-provoking essays which bear witness to the editor's high expectations of her readers' intelligence and education.

Mrs. Gatty's expressed object was to "lead the young to find interest and pleasure in contemplative thought" and, though fiction formed the staple fare of Aunt Judy's, she earnestly promised that "parents need not fear an overflowing of mere amusement."<sup>1</sup> There was neither frivolity nor condescension in Mrs. Gatty's attitude to her readers. She spared no pains in securing the best literature available for them. In describing her mother's labourious efforts, Juliana Ewing averred that:

The "magazine work" was, from beginning to end, a labour of love and the terms on which the editor lived with her contributors and child correspondents, if not very business-like, were perhaps very well adapted to a periodical of so domestic a nature and so educational in its aims. <sup>2</sup>

As Mrs. Ewing's words suggested, Aunt Judy's was very much a family undertaking, a public form of the private manuscript magazines which were common leisure pursuits among well-educated middle-class Victorian families.<sup>3</sup> Many members of the large Gatty family contributed stories, articles, or music to the magazine. When Mrs. Gatty died in 1873, her daughters, Juliana and Horatia, assumed editorial duties. Juliana Ewing gave up editing in 1876 so that she could contribute more fiction to the magazine. Horatia Gatty continued to edit Aunt Judy's until 1885, when

<sup>1</sup>[Margaret Gatty[, "Introduction", Aunt Judy's Magazine for Young People, I (May 1866), 2.

<sup>2</sup>Juliana Ewing, Introduction to Parables From Nature, by Margaret Gatty (1888), p. xvii.

<sup>3</sup>The Gatty family had their own private family magazine, apart from Aunt Judy's, which they conducted from 1864-1868. Another example was "The Powder Magazine", edited by Mrs. Ewing's close friend, Eleanor Lloyd, and privately printed and circulated among a very select group of two hundred and fifty subscribers.

Juliana died and Horatia no longer had the spirit to continue. Even the title of Aunt Judy's bespoke its intimate domestic character, a quality which Bell later regretted:

It is doubtful whether the title with its purely domestic origin was well adapted for a publication which had to depend for its existence on a continuous accession of new subscribers who were not necessarily familiar with the original. 1

The Gatty's relationship with Bell's, too, was a family friendship spanning three generations, which in part accounts for Bell's loyal subsidization of a losing venture.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, at every step in Aunt Judy's progress, the high ideals entertained by its creators were hampered by financial considerations. Neither Mrs. Gatty, the well-educated and refined wife of a Yorkshire rector, nor her publishers had the background and experience necessary to promote a popular magazine. Bell's was a very respectable and established firm, connected through its religious and scholarly publications with eminent Anglican clergymen, Oxford and Cambridge dons, and public school headmasters. Aunt Judy's represented their only venture into secular periodical publishing and Bell seemed reluctant to employ the huckstering techniques necessary to secure popular renown. For instance, he did not attempt to circulate Aunt Judy's in America where other publishers of English children's magazines found a receptive and lucrative market.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Bell, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup>The sacrifice for the sake of friendship worked both ways. Mrs. Ewing made very little money from her popular children's books, but when Ruskin encouraged her to join with him in revolt against publishers, she resisted the temptation because of her personal friendship with the Bell family. See Gillian Avery, Mrs. Ewing (1961), p. 35.

<sup>3</sup>Good Words for the Young, Chatterbox, Little Folks, and Sunshine were exported to the United States and reviewed in American literary journals. Richard L. Darling, The Rise of Children's Book Reviewing in America, 1865-1881 (1968) provides a comprehensive list of all the children's books reviewed in American periodicals.

The extensive correspondence between the Gatty family and George and Edward Bell chronicles the day-to-day friction between the idealistic ambition of Aunt Judy's creators and the conservative prudence of its publishers.<sup>1</sup> The Reverend Alfred Gatty did not share Bell's delicacy on the issue of promotion. His letters constantly urged his publisher to undertake a more aggressive marketing policy:

The Public as a body are no judge of literature, they accept what is thrust upon them by persistent advertising. . . . The Public believe in the publisher far more than in themselves or the author and what he does not think worth pushing they conclude is not worth buying. 2

He appeared to blame Aunt Judy's financial insolvency on the diffident attitude of its publishers. He had no doubts as to its superiority, "The Press admits this," he wrote to Edward Bell: "If your father would feel a little confidence in AJM I think it would prosper more . . . . Everyone pushes but ourselves, and impudence gets the lead."<sup>3</sup>

For her part, Mrs. Gatty was particularly anxious to extend the readership of Aunt Judy's. She received from Bell's ten pounds per month for every ten thousand readers and, like many another middle-class Victorian literary woman, wrote to supplement a family income severely strained by the claims of maintaining social position and the expense of respectably launching its sons.<sup>4</sup> She was also ambitious to widen her own

<sup>1</sup>The Gatty's letters also reveal an interesting perspective on the progress of other children's magazines of the 1870s. The correspondence examined for the present chapter was located at George Bell and Sons, Publishers Ltd., London.

<sup>2</sup>Alfred Gatty to George Bell, 22 October 1870.

<sup>3</sup>Alfred Gatty to Edward Bell, 12 January 1872.

<sup>4</sup>The Gatty boys were educated at Eton, Winchester, Charterhouse, and Marlborough. School fees were a constant anxiety to Mrs. Gatty and both she and her husband repeatedly begged Bell's for advances.

and her daughter's literary horizons. Nevertheless, she resisted any temptation to sacrifice her moral principles and literary standards merely to increase circulation. For instance, in 1870 she rejected a manuscript from a popular, but less than refined, author. She explained to George Bell that the story "if accepted, would raise the circulation of AJM to twenty thousand new subscribers at the expense of losing the eight thousand we now have!"<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, her efforts to recruit the best authors and illustrators were hindered by Bell's fairly low rate of payment, ten shillings per page for original contributions and five shillings for translations and "scissor work". She had to turn down the overtures of the rising young humourist, W. S. Gilbert:

I thought we could not afford to be hampered by a two guinea a page man when we can have Mrs. Ewing for 7/6. I have told him too that I was sure he wouldn't like me as an Editor when he found I wouldn't buy pigs in pokes but reserved a right of judgement on each MS. 2

In searching for a perfect balance between morality and high quality entertainment, the editors of Aunt Judy's repeatedly rejected the manuscripts of famous, established authors when they failed to satisfy their critical standards:

Miss Hart avowed she wants to earn more money for charity, but sent a long story that was good for nothing . . . . You know what we got from Miss Strickland and Miss Craik, not worth having. 3

Horatia Gatty was equally fastidious:

I cannot trust Miss Carey. "Heriot's Choice" is fearful twaddle. . . very far from refined in taste. Mrs. Molesworth is too old-fashioned to adapt herself to my needs. Miss Peard has that advantage that she will alter and do what we want and always writes like a lady. 4

<sup>1</sup>Margaret Gatty to George Bell, 20 January 1870.

<sup>2</sup>Margaret Gatty to George Bell, 2 October 1870.

<sup>3</sup>Alfred Gatty to George Bell, February 1868.

<sup>4</sup>Horatia Gatty to George Bell, undated. The authors referred to were popular serial novelists in the more expensive children's magazines and adult miscellanies. Those who contributed frequently to the sample of periodicals consulted are listed in Appendix B.

The editors of Aunt Judy's were obsessed with maintaining its refinement and gentility, determined through their magazine to raise the tone of juvenile literary taste and broaden the minds of their readers.<sup>1</sup> Such expectations seemed to presage disillusionment when potential readers failed to respond, as Alfred Gatty's comment indicated: "If Aunt Judy's must die it is simply because the Public is not sufficiently educated and refined to appreciate her."<sup>2</sup>

When Bell's finally unloaded their unprofitable burden in 1881, Juliana Ewing expressed her regret in terms that reveal the attitude of Aunt Judy's creators towards their public:

I am very sorry to hear you have decided to give up AJM as I do not think it has a substitute in periodical literature and though I am no depreciator of the "present day" and think "young people" show many hopeful and pleasant signs of "Progress", there is a certain tone of highmindedness and refinement in which the fast rising generation seem to me hardly the equals of the preceding one. I lay a good deal of the blame for this on cheap and nasty literature. The Miss Yonge and Miss Sewell school I cannot regret, for it was too narrow to be truly wholesome, but I do think a highminded and refined periodical can ill be spared and am tempted to wish AJM had had a last chance at 1s/- like the Monthly Packet. 3

Magazines of the calibre of Aunt Judy's confronted the recurring dilemma of high ~~production~~ costs which had to be balanced against the necessity of popular prices. Possibly a higher price might have secured a profit for Bell's instead of the small loss which accumulated over the seventeen years they issued the magazine. Indeed, the new publisher, David Bogue, proposed to double the price and would have done so had not

<sup>1</sup>In her biography of the two literary talents of the family, Mrs. Gatty and Mrs. Ewing (1949), Christabel Maxwell suggests that when the younger daughter, Horatia, became editor, the social status of contributors weighed more with her than their literary accomplishments and consequently the magazine became more staid and dull: "This may have been due to the preference on the part of an editor for an eclectic band of contributors. All her life she had a nice appreciation of the card case and the lure of great names. (p. 230)."

<sup>2</sup>Alfred Gatty to George Bell, undated.

<sup>3</sup>Juliana Ewing to George Bell, 4 May 1881.

John Ruskin intervened with a one hundred pound guarantee to safeguard the original price of sixpence per number.<sup>1</sup> The Monthly Packet, to which Mrs. Ewing referred, survived for nearly half a century, though its circulation never rose above sixteen hundred, because its founder and editor, Charlotte Yonge, was content to speak to a small elite group who could afford the monthly shilling.<sup>2</sup> Miss Yonge, herself, in recommending Aunt Judy's to her readers, implied that the magazine merited a higher price tag:

Aunt Judy's Christmas volume is a charming one this time. . . . We hope that this excellent little magazine will continue to be well supported, for there really is nothing so well fitted for children between seven and fourteen. It does not look well for our schoolrooms that the circulation cannot continue at so low a price as sixpence. It would be far better if the elders would give up some one of the trashy, sensational, novel-mongering magazines for the sake of giving children anything so really useful and suggestive. <sup>3</sup>

However, magazines like Aunt Judy's and its nearest rival, Alexander Strahan's Good Words for the Young were ambitious to extend the benefits of high quality, moral literature beyond the narrow clientele of upper middle-class and gentry children to which they were, perhaps, best suited. The fact that the two best children's magazines competed for the patronage of an audience too small to support a popularly priced periodical may account for the uncharitable comments with which the Gattys described the rival magazine. "I have seen Good Words for the Young," wrote Alfred Gatty

<sup>1</sup>Maxwell, p. 232. Unfortunately, even Ruskin's generous assistance did not avert bankruptcy for Bogue by July of 1881. Earlier, in 1877, Bell raised the price of Aunt Judy's by two shillings a year. The Editor explained the reason for the increase in "Aunt Judy's Correspondence", Aunt Judy's, XV (1877), 191: "The cause of the change has simply been that the public has not bought a sufficient number of the Magazine to repay the publishers for the cost and trouble of bringing it out, so they had no alternative between giving it up altogether and raising the price. They have decided on the latter course, trusting that those who care to read it would rather pay two shillings a year more than not have it at all." Aunt Judy's had two more publishers, Allen's and then Hatchard's, before it finally ceased publication in 1885.

<sup>2</sup>Amy Cruse, The Victorians and Their Books (1935), 43, estimated the circulation of The Monthly Packet.

<sup>3</sup>"Hints on Reading", The Monthly Packet, LI (1877), 95.



in 1868:

I don't think it will affect us much. It is too childish . . . no literature of any character and must be exorbitant in cost. . . . AJ is much more refined than GW which is meant to be more funny than I expect it will be found. 1

Later, Horatia ruefully observed that Good Things "only makes me more sorry that the 'Boys and Girls of England' are left to take it in - in place of AJM. I can't think such cuts and literature will do much to elevate their taste."<sup>2</sup> The Gatty's were hardly disinterested observers. Nevertheless, the Church Quarterly Review agreed with their assessment: "Aunt Judy . . . really commands first class juvenile writing and is much better than Good Things."<sup>3</sup>

Even if Good Words for the Young could not match consistently the literary quality of Aunt Judy's, its founders, Alexander Strahan and Dr. Norman MacLeod, were as ambitious and idealistic as the Gatty's. As a young man beginning his publishing career, Strahan sought out and entreated Dr. MacLeod to join him in creating non-sectarian magazines "containing (as Dr. Arnold puts it) not so much articles of a religious character, as articles of a general character written in a religious spirit."<sup>4</sup> MacLeod was one of Queen Victoria's Chaplains in Scotland, but was disillusioned by the vitriolic wrangling within the Presbyterian Church. He dedicated his working life to smoothing doctrinal differences and uniting Christians in a harmonious and active religious community. As editor of Good Words, he deliberately brought together contributors of diverse religious opinion,

<sup>1</sup> Alfred Gatty to George Bell, 2 November 1868.

<sup>2</sup> Horatia Gatty to George Bell, c. 1875. By this time Good Words for the Young had changed its title to Good Things for the Young of All Ages.

<sup>3</sup> "Magazine Literature", Church Quarterly Review, III (1876/7), 388. In an extremely critical article on the rise of periodical literature, this journal singled out Aunt Judy's for unstinted praise.

<sup>4</sup> Alexander Strahan, Norman MacLeod, D.D.: A Slight Contribution Towards His Biography (1972), p. 11.

Trollope, Kingsley, Dr. Stanley, and even, though he abhorred Roman Catholicism, a priest. He used all the elements which made "secular" magazines attractive, good fiction, general literature, and genuine science, "treated in a right and therefore religious spirit." Against his many critics, MacLeod justified his tactics:

I believed that if our cheap, religious publications were to exercise real influence upon our intelligent mechanics, much more upon that immense mass which occupies the middle ground between the extreme "Evangelical" party on the one side, and the indifferent and skeptical on the other, they required to be made much wider, manlier, and more humane, ie., more really Christian in their sympathies than they had been. 1

Strahan and MacLeod brought the same social goals and non-sectarian spirit to their children's magazine. Strahan introduced Good Words for the Young with a promise to "supply such literature as will not ignobly interest, nor frivolously amuse, but convey the wisest instruction in the pleasantest manner."<sup>2</sup> MacLeod, the first editor, made clear that the audience he wished to address was not the "Simon Pure" good boys, but

. . . bigger boys - the hobbledehoy - the half and half between lad and boy - the one-third 'big fellows' - the sensible sort of boy, and not a muff - the boy who relishes fun, but relishes sense also - the boy who would not, perhaps, read twenty volumes of a cyclopedia for the sake of "information", yet would gladly read a paper now and then in this magazine to acquire it. 3

In every respect, from the quality of printing and illustrations to the originality of its literature, the first volume of Good Words for the Young was Aunt Judy's equal. Indeed, they shared many authors. Eliza Tuckett, Madame Guizot de Witt, Mrs. Hart, and Austin Clare wrote for both magazines. In addition, Strahan, an active and respected member of the intellectual and literary community, was able to recruit for his children's

<sup>1</sup>Strahan quoted a letter written to him by MacLeod. Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>Strahan's expressed goals were cited by F. A. Mumby, Publishing and Bookselling (1956); revised ed. Ian Norrie (1974), p. 228.

<sup>3</sup>Norman MacLeod, D.D., "Talks with the Boys about India", Good Words for the Young (1872), p. 116.

magazine. some extremely well-known novelists and journalists. Charles Kingsley, Dinah Mulock Craik, William Brighty Rands, and W. S. Gilbert regularly contributed stories, articles, poems, or illustrations to Good Words for the Young, and promoted the magazine from an ephemeral status to permanent literature. The bound volumes of Good Words for the Young and Aunt Judy's were valued long after the magazines ceased publication.<sup>1</sup>

Good Words for the Young probably gained a larger circulation than Aunt Judy's. When Jean Ingelow befriended Juliana Ewing and wished to bring her talents before a wider audience, she suggested that Mrs. Ewing contribute a story to Good Words for the Young.<sup>2</sup> Understandably, the loyal Mrs. Ewing declined the offer. Certainly, Strahan's flamboyant style of promotion eclipsed Bell's conservative timidity and the Gatty family viewed the progress of their rival with dismay. "I believe Good Words for the Young to be very inferior of A.J. but Strahan makes a sale for it by pushing it," wrote Alfred Gatty, as he urged Mr. Bell to "cram a little powder and shot into A.J.".<sup>3</sup>

But Bell had good reason to treat Strahan and his promotional techniques with caution. In 1869, when Bell was ill, Strahan persuaded his partner, Mr. Daldy, to enter a cooperative venture which ultimately left Bell's with a ten thousand pound debt to the printer.<sup>4</sup> Despite this fiasco,

<sup>1</sup>M. Vivian Hughes in A London Child of the Seventies (1934; Penguin ed., 1977), p. 72, and H.C. Bernard, Were Those the Days? (1970), p. 31, recalled bound volumes of Good Words for the Young in their nursery libraries. J. Potter Briscoe, a pioneering children's librarian, recommended that juvenile library collections include both Aunt Judy's and Good Words for the Young, even though, when he wrote, neither magazine was in print. See "Libraries for the Young", Library Chronicle, III (1886), 47.

<sup>2</sup>Maxwell, p. 108. Ewing did contribute stories to Little Folks and the Monthly Packet, even while she wrote for Aunt Judy's.

<sup>3</sup>Alfred Gatty to George Bell, October 1870.

<sup>4</sup>Bell, George Bell, Publisher, p. 80. Fortunately for Bell's, the printer, Mr. Spalding, was a wealthy and benevolent man who took over some of Strahan's multifarious projects and debts and thus relieved Bell's of their liability.

Edward Bell was able to appreciate Strahan's altruistic motives:

Strahan was a Scotsman with high ideals, much natural ability and an attractive personality. . . . His ideas of the function of a publisher were laudable, even grand, but they were not tempered with prudence. He paid his authors highly and aimed at popularity with low prices. 1

For all his ambition and talent, Strahan could not avoid financial disaster. In 1872, Good Words for the Young and several other of Strahan's magazines, passed to Henry S. King. But even under new management, Good Words for the Young did not prove profitable. Frequent changes of editor, title and format over its seven-year existence chart a relentless search for the successful commercial formula.<sup>2</sup> The Bookbuyer's Guide suspected its financial instability after only one year of publication:

We may be wrong (and we hope it is so), but we imagine that Good Words for the Young, edited by Mr. MacDonald, has not met with the success it deserves. We confess to reading it from end to end, as it appears, and that is more than we can venture to do with its graver and older brother, Good Words. 3

As the Bookbuyer's Guide announced, the popular fantasy writer, George MacDonald, whose genius contemporaries valued above that of his friend, Lewis Carroll, became editor when Dr. MacLeod could no longer manage the burden of editing both Good Words and its junior. However, despite his creative flair, MacDonald could not match MacLeod's strong and purposeful editing. His own child novels, serialized in Good Words for the Young, maintained its literary reputation, but the quality of short stories and articles contributed to the magazine declined under his management.<sup>4</sup> The Gattys remained unimpressed by these reorganizations,

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Good Words for the Young appeared as A Feast of Good Things for the Young of All Ages, published by Henry S. King, in 1874; Good Things: A Picturesque Magazine in 1875, when Strahan took it over once again; Good Things: The English Boys and Girls Magazine in 1876; and finally, Strahan's Annual in 1877.

<sup>3</sup>Bookbuyer's Guide, IV (1870), xv.

<sup>4</sup>MacDonald edited the magazine for two years and then abandoned the magazine when he went to visit America in 1872. He continued to contribute stories thereafter.

sensing the entrepreneurial figure of Alexander Strahan behind the scenes. As the famous new editor of Good Words for the Young was being publicized, Margaret Gatty asked Edward Bell for the latest inside information about her rival:

Ask your father what this means - a bona fide change of management or a mere change of names - Strahan continuing manager as your father says he has been all along? I hold it is an imposition on the public to hang out false colours in this way. 1

However, if the Gattys were hostile towards a magazine which trespassed upon their own preserve of well-to-do upper middle-class children, they were encouraging and cooperative with magazines which served the lower echelons of the middle class. For instance, their relations with the Reverend J. Erskine Clarke, editor and proprietor of Chatterbox, The Children's Prize, and Sunday Reading for the Young, were very friendly. Indeed, Mr. Gatty even solicited advice about the financial management of Aunt Judy's from the proprietors of Chatterbox. Later, he tried to allay the consternation of his own publisher. He explained in a letter to George Bell that

Mr. Johnston was only recommended by Mr. E. C. [Erskine Clarke] on the L.s.d. question. He had said the Aunt Judy's ought to pay and leave a profit if ten thousand sold. We concluded that he might suggest some cheaper markets for its getting up, - as to his literary taste, that was never a consideration. 2

Chatterbox and The Children's Prize were not to be compared with Aunt Judy's, as the patronizing tone of Mrs. Ewing's reviews of these journals intimates:

Chatterbox and the Children's Prize literally bristle with pictures. Many are beautiful, many are vulgar, but the popular standard in art is probably well-known by those who designed the covers for each. . . . The letterpress is conscientiously done, and though the original work cannot be of the first order, it is careful, sincere, and pleasant. Both volumes are rich in well-chosen anecdotes and excerpts from old sources; heart-stirring ones to illustrate the heroic; and pithy ones on domestic

<sup>1</sup>Margaret Gatty to Edward Bell, October 1869. Mrs. Gatty may have been jealous that Strahan paid George MacDonald six hundred pounds a year, while she earned, at best, one hundred and twenty pounds from Bell's.

<sup>2</sup>Alfred Gatty to George Bell, 7 March 1868.

virtues. We hold that there cannot be a more legitimate or useful way of illustrating the illustrations of this class of periodical. Such old wives' tales of worldly and unworldly wisdom if they are not watered down in the telling, stick very fast in the memory. Mr. Erskine Clarke does good work in this as in other ways for the people. 1

Evidently, Mrs. Ewing felt that Mr. Clarke's publications suited children without the advantages she assumed her own readers enjoyed. But her admirer, John Ruskin, was not so sure. While visiting one of the cottages on his estate, he perused the reading material in the possession of the children. After reading a didactic story in the Children's Prize, he recorded his reactions in Fors Clavigera:

. . . my immediate business being to ask what effect this story is intended to produce on my shepherd's little daughter, Agnes?

Intended to produce, I say: what effect it does produce I can easily ascertain; but what do the writer and learned editor expect of it? Or rather, to touch the very beginning of the inquiry, for what class of child do they intend it? "For all classes," the enlightened editor and liberal publisher doubtless reply. 2

Ruskin, himself, felt that the behaviour problems of carriage-owning people had no relevance to the lives of poor children. At the same time, he doubted if wealthier children would appreciate it: ". . . in families which keep carriages and footmen, the children are supposed to think a book is a prize which costs a penny?"<sup>3</sup>

Ruskin's difficulty in imagining an appropriate audience for the Children's Prize illustrated the quandary faced by many mid-Victorian magazine producers in trying to accurately assess the nature and needs of the boys and girls they wished to reach. The Rev. J. Erskine Clarke launched Chatterbox and the Children's Prize while he was a vicar in a poor parish in Derby because he was disturbed by the low literature read by the juveniles among whom he worked. He proposed to provide inexpensive

<sup>1</sup>"Book Notices", Aunt Judy's, XIII (1875), 123.

<sup>2</sup>John Ruskin, Fors Clavigera, LV (1875), 35.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

but moral alternatives, so from 1866 he issued Chatterbox at half a penny a week.

If the socio-economic status of Chatterbox heroes was an indication, Clarke aimed his magazine at all classes of boys and girls, but concentrated on the lower middle class. He even included tales obviously directed at servants, perhaps in the hope that middle-class employers would offer their servants the weekly Chatterbox after their children had read them. Occasionally village schools used Chatterbox as a reader.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that independent working-class juveniles, without zealous adult supervisors, would volunteer their precious coppers for the moral stories of Chatterbox when more alluring literature was readily available.

According to many historians of popular reading habits, the penny journals issued in the early and mid-Victorian period for the edification of the working class were actually patronized by the lower middle class.<sup>2</sup> Chatterbox was probably a case in point. Certainly its lessons of hard work, temperance, isolated family life, and respectability would appeal to the reader destined for a future as a shopkeeper or clerk. Moreover, although Chatterbox stories were frequently set in the slums and alleys of large cities, the almost sensational accounts of poverty, sin, and drunkenness were not calculated to enlist identification from the really poor reader but to win sympathy from fortunate children. At the same time, graphic accounts of poverty might gratify a lower middle-class perception of their own separateness from the masses below them.

<sup>1</sup>F. J. Harvey Darton related that no slang or even contractions were allowed in Chatterbox stories because of its secondary role as a school text. See "The Youth of a Children's Magazine", Cornhill, n.s. LXXII (1932), 559.

<sup>2</sup>This point was made by Raymond Chapman in The Victorian Debate: English Literature and Society, 1832-1901 (1968), p. 72, and James J. Barnes also speculated that lower middle-class families purchased the cheap, "improving" journals their superiors published. See Free Trade in Books: A Study of the London Book Trade Since 1800 (1864), p. 118.

Despite Ruskin's condemnation of the wrong-headed morality purveyed by journals such as Chatterbox, more practical and realistic critics had softer words for the efforts of Mr. Clarke. Charlotte Yonge recommended it for school and parish libraries.<sup>1</sup> Edward Salmon felt that Chatterbox was probably nearer to the level of the average nursery than the matchless Aunt Judy's and that its lessons were thoroughly sound:

No undue sentimentality characterizes this as it characterizes so many children's magazines and its editor has adhered firmly to the irreproachable principles which he set forth in his first number. <sup>2</sup>

Clarke's aspirations for Chatterbox appear to have been unconditionally altruistic. He had that boundless energy and exuberance common among the clergy during the revival of the Anglican Church in the mid- and late-Victorian period. He led a very successful career in the Church, not only as an active vicar in Derby and later Battersea, but also as an Honary Canon of Winchester and Southwark, and Chaplain-in-Ordinary to Queen Victoria, Edward VII, and George V.<sup>3</sup> Notwithstanding the demands of his calling, his literary activity was truly outstanding. In addition to his three children's magazines, Chatterbox, the Children's Prize, and Sunday Reading for the Young, Clarke edited the Parish Magazine, Church Bells, Good Stories (a series for working-class readers), and numerous books of short stories and sermons.

Chatterbox was his most successful and famous undertaking. He not only founded and edited it, but also financed its inauguration out of his own pocket. Evidently, Clarke was personally well-to-do; profit was not his major consideration. Indeed, he subsidized his magazines for many years until they achieved a regular market. In 1868, he confided to his

<sup>1</sup>Charlotte Yonge, What Books to Lend and What to Give (1887), p. 108.

<sup>2</sup>Edward Salmon, "Literature for the Little Ones", Nineteenth Century, XXII (1887), 577.

<sup>3</sup>Who Was Who (1927).



friend and colleague, the Reverend Alfred Gatty, the financial details of his publications. Gatty quoted Clarke's letter as a lesson to his own publisher:

The Prize has only cleared itself this Xmas though it has had a great sale for several years and seems likely to keep up at one hundred thousand a month now, in spite of the terribly bad book times that prevail. Chatterbox was a loss of above seven hundred pounds last year, but is hopefully increasing. The old Parish Magazine, too, has crawled up to over eighty thousand so that I am a sort of example of the value of holding on and sticking to it. 1

Chatterbox eventually gratified Mr. Clarke's hopes and became almost a national institution. Clarke edited it until 1901 and the magazine continued until 1957. Chatterbox bore the imprint of Canon Clarke's forceful personality throughout, as his editorial successor testified. F. J. Harvey Darton described Clarke as

. . . a burly Englishman with a fine voice, very like the typical portraits of John Bull, suitably to his simple, robust ideals. He looked like the proper founder of Chatterbox, and he gave the magazine a personal, individual character which, in spite of necessary but imperceptible changes of thought and in methods of reproduction, it has tried to keep ever since. 2

In an essay for The Cornhill Magazine in 1932, Mr. Darton left a remarkably detailed account of the early days of Chatterbox which reveals a great deal about Clarke's relations with his business partner, publishers, managers, authors, and illustrators.<sup>3</sup> If Clarke's motives in founding Chatterbox were benevolent, his leadership appears to have been thoroughly despotic. Though the Chatterbox employees represented a spectrum of religious affiliation from Roman Catholic to Calvinist, Mr. Clarke's own

<sup>1</sup> Clarke's letter to Alfred Gatty quoted by Alfred Gatty to George Bell, February 1868.

<sup>2</sup> [F. J. Harvey Darton], "Sixty Years of Chatterbox", Chatterbox (1927), p. 186.

<sup>3</sup> F. J. Harvey Darton, "The Youth of a Children's Magazine", Cornhill, n.s. LXXII (1932), 552-566. Since he did not wish to "puff" Chatterbox in another journal, Darton delicately disguised the title of the magazine and the names of the producers. Mr. Clarke was styled "Mr. Osborne", Mr. Johnston, the business partner, became "Mr. James", etc.

religious and moral views dominated the enterprise. His partner, Mr. Johnston, was a prosperous engraver and blockmaker who confined his attention to the illustrations which were, if not outstanding, at least original pieces commissioned specifically for Chatterbox. Over all other aspects of Chatterbox production, Mr. Clarke's rule, even from distant Derby, was unchallenged.

Since Chatterbox was published for its proprietors, Mr. Clarke retained final control even over printing, sales, and distribution. According to Darton, Mr. Clarke's religious bias alienated the first Chatterbox publisher, William McIntosh, a Dissenter who produced a good many pious tracts, booklets, and magazines.<sup>1</sup> The Chatterbox contract passed in 1871 to William Gardner, a Quaker turned High Churchman, who was more willing to enter into Mr. Clarke's spirit and to cooperate with his management.

Mr. Clarke's editorial hand weighed most heavily upon his authors. He assumed entire responsibility for every word printed in Chatterbox, exerting the powers of his office with little regard for the feelings or intentions of the writers:

If a story contained a good idea with poor trimmings, [Mr. Clarke] cut the trimmings away bodily, or re-wrote them. To make his views prevail, he added as well as took away.

Contributors had no say in the matter. The point as well as the length of the MSS lay entirely in the editor's hands and he was a ruthless surgeon. He was marvellously ingenious in hiding the wounds, but I think many a writer must have deemed his baby a changeling when he saw it in print - which was only after publication, for no proofs were sent; in fact, acceptance or rejection was often not notified. 2

How different was Mr. Clarke's autocratic editing from Mrs. Gatty's gentle and painstaking efforts with her authors. But Mr. Clarke's contributors

<sup>1</sup>"He was a Dissenter, harmless but convinced; and though "Mr. Osborne's' Anglicanism for children was not in the least militant, the old village church and good vicar did turn up pretty frequently." Darton, p. 556.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 558.

did not possess the literary or social prestige of Mrs. Gatty's and presumably they did not expect tactful handling.<sup>1</sup>

Ironically, the original contributors, who provided the bulk of Chatterbox stories and articles for many years, Mr. Clarke recruited from his own circle of friends. The Reverend George Stanley Outram, J. F. Cobb, Esq., H. G. Adams, the naturalist, and "H. A. F.", an amazingly prolific author, contributed one or more stories, translations, or articles every week for the first two decades of Chatterbox's history.<sup>2</sup> Even so, Chatterbox never had a formal literary staff and the writer who wished to contribute had to be willing to surrender his creation to Mr. Clarke's discretion. Mr. Clarke rarely allowed authors any sign of their identity beyond initials or pseudonyms and even his own contributions were anonymous in order that the "Chatterbox" personality would remain consistent.

His successor defended Mr. Clarke's dictatorial methods of editing, arguing that his "moral standpoint was widely held and writers who shared it were quick to find their market." Moreover, Darton added, "the editor of a children's magazine is in a peculiar position of trust and vigilance." Nevertheless, it is plain that Mr. Clarke's zeal was not merely a matter of tact and responsibility; it amounted to a mission:

He went beyond his explicit ideal of supplying good stuff to oust bad by the strength of mere excellence. What he was really anxious about was not so much the making of young criminals as the possible diminution of young Christians. 3

<sup>1</sup>"Ascott R. Hope", a regular Aunt Judy's contributor, took a philosophical stance on the plight of the anonymous author whose identity was submerged in the periodical "We". "It is in the lower and more mechanical workshops of literature, of course, that the author must consent to being clipped, filed, and brushed; but even editors who should know better are found playing the literary barber." See A. R. Hope Moncrieff, A Book About Authors: Reflections of a Book-Wright (1914), p. 236.

<sup>2</sup>Darton suggested that the original Chatterbox contributors collaborated with Mr. Clarke in starting the magazine and presumably shared his aims and philosophy. "H. A. F.", contributed a new story every week to Chatterbox, even while she contributed frequently to Aunt Judy's and Little Folks. In fact, a story she wrote for Little Folks, III (1872), called "Our New Errand Boy", reappeared in Chatterbox (1879).

<sup>3</sup>Darton, p. 557.

Hence, every ~~story~~, anecdote, and article was heavily spiked with "an intolerable degree of aggressive piety".

Clarke's religious interjections did not entirely stifle Chatterbox's commercial popularity, which Darton credited to the talents of its assistant manager, who had a sure instinct for the preferences of the Chatterbox republic. Despite Clarke's autocratic rule, his employees, printers, authors, and illustrators were remarkably loyal and dedicated to the magazine. Indeed, it was a discomfitting task for the new editor in 1901 to gently discourage persistent contributors who were mentally living in the 1870s. For instance, Darton mentions a "schoolmaster in Rutland who every month used to submit about a hundred moral or facetious or moral facetious anecdotes."<sup>1</sup>

Clarke relied heavily on very short articles and snips from other contemporary journals to supplement the serial and short stories printed in Chatterbox. Darton explained that "juvenile magazines suffer from a permanent bullimy or ox-hunger for short fill-ups."<sup>2</sup> Most magazines resorted to "scissor work" to extend their original material. In order to keep production costs within the limits of his very low market price, Clarke was obliged to find inexpensive ways of filling the eight closely-printed pages he offered young readers each week. Translations and anecdotes borrowed from American or European sources were cheap or even free.<sup>3</sup>

Obviously, even though penny and half-penny magazines were cheaper to produce than the sixpenny journals, they had to achieve larger sales in order to survive. It is appropriate that as a representative organ of

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 561.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>J. F. Cobb, Esq. was Chatterbox's indefatigable translator, adapting the historical tales or adventures of German and French authors for serial publication. Since international copyright law was in its infancy in the 1870s, it is unlikely that these authors, many of whose names do not appear with their pirated stories, benefited financially from their appearance in the pages of Chatterbox.

lower middle-class values, Chatterbox should have a readership roughly ten times that of Aunt Judy's, whose elite clientele formed a much smaller proportion of the population.<sup>1</sup> The editor of a magazine similar in intent and style to Chatterbox estimated that he required a circulation of fifty thousand in order to continue. In the first issue of Sunshine, in 1862, the Reverend Dr. W. Meynall Whittemore urged his readers to promote the magazine among their friends and neighbours by distributing handbills. "Is it not a good thing," he asked them, "to have Sunshine in the parlour, in the kitchen, in the school, in the workshop, and everywhere?"<sup>2</sup> Horatia Gatty objected to this sort of tactic for boosting sales as "an American style", but, since Sunshine lasted until 1928, Whittemore's strategy must have served his purposes.

Like the Rev. J. Erskine Clarke, Dr. Whittemore was a clergyman of astonishing energy and literary activity. In addition to Sunshine, he edited successively the Sunday Scholar's Magazine, the Youth's Companion, Golden Hours, the Sunday Teacher's Treasury, and the Little Star. Although Chatterbox must have been a serious rival to Sunshine, Dr. Whittemore applauded Clarke's efforts in serving the young: "Mr. Clarke is untiring in his schemes of usefulness," he remarked in Golden Hours.<sup>3</sup> In the large market for penny and halfpenny magazines, competition from

<sup>1</sup>From reference within various letters between the Gatty family and George Bell, it appears that Aunt Judy's averaged about eight thousand readers, reaching perhaps ten thousand during its best years 1874-76. No solid figures exist for Chatterbox, but since Clarke told Mr. Gatty that his other journals circulated at eighty to one hundred thousand, it seems reasonable that Chatterbox attained a comparative circulation by the 1870s.

<sup>2</sup>"Editorial Notice", Sunshine (1862), p. 48. Dr. Whittemore's editorial remarks were almost exclusively confined to solicitations of this sort. He also asked his readers to persuade local booksellers to display Sunshine: "Who can say No to a smiling little girl, or a cheerful little boy, when they say, "Please take in Sunshine. . . ." "We have a great opinion of what children can do," he told his readers in Sunshine (1866), p. 16.

<sup>3</sup>Golden Hours (1864), p. 70.

each other may not have worried these benevolent clergymen in their contest with the dreadfuls. Initially, Clarke and Whittemore even shared the same publisher, William McIntosh. However, though Clarke's insistent Anglican point of view soon alienated the nonconformist publisher, Whittemore's Low Church orientation evidently did not.<sup>1</sup>

Churchmen of varying religious affiliation joined Clarke and Whittemore, all determined to increase their influence by producing magazines that boys and girls might read every day and not just on Sundays. Naturally, a decidedly religious spirit infused all these journals, but their creators intended them for recreational reading. In 1876, the Church Quarterly Review advised its Anglican readers that "We no longer have a monopoly of cheap literature and must make our literature as attractive as the undesirable literature in flaming covers."<sup>2</sup> That the Religious Tract Society and the Sunday School Union conceded the child's right to light entertaining fiction demonstrated how far more permissive attitudes to childhood had penetrated the dominant religious institutions. Kind Words for Boys and Girls, edited by Benjamin Clark and published by the Sunday School Union, was comparable to the best entertaining magazines issued by secular publishers; so was its Young Days. Both Sunday School magazines were lavishly illustrated and employed the popular authors, W. G. Kingston, Ascott R. Hope, and Mrs. Eiloart, whose stories featured also in secular magazines like Aunt Judy's and Little Folks. The Religious Tract Society made strenuous efforts, despite their prejudice against fiction, to renovate the Child's Companion and Juvenile Instructor, which it first issued in 1824. Though still a very improving magazine by commercial standards, it did contain real stories rather than the cautionary

<sup>1</sup>In "Magazine Literature", the Church Quarterly Review, III (1876/7), 387, objected to Whittemore's religious stance in Golden Hours: "The dread of Romanism seems to be their chief moral."

<sup>2</sup>"Sunday School and Lending Library Literature", Church Quarterly Review, III (1876), 60.

anecdotes of earlier numbers. Nevertheless, not until it inaugurated the Boy's Own Paper in 1879 did the Religious Tract Society produce a truly entertaining juvenile periodical.

A good deal of "editorial barrel-scraping" enabled these well-intentioned organizations to produce their magazines for a penny or halfpenny per issue. The American children's magazines were mercilessly mined for stories and filler articles.<sup>1</sup> Bible history puzzles, anecdotes, borrowed illustrations and animal stories fattened the monthly offering.<sup>2</sup> These journals catered mainly to the poorer members of the middle class who wanted cheap but moral reading for their literate children. They also tried to attract a wealthier clientele with their higher priced annual volumes. Well-bound, gilt-edged, their creators promoted them as suitable gifts for "drawing room" children. The Religious Tract Society insisted that its Child's Companion was "adapted alike to children in the gentleman's lodge and the cottage home".

Although a more tolerant, sympathetic attitude to childhood emerged from the established church's magazines for children, nonconformist editors and publishers exhibited no such change of heart. The Child's Friend, of 1872, produced by the Primitive Methodists, greeted its readers in the New Year's number with this grim message:

The new year will be the last year some of you will spend on earth. Yes, it may be that even before the birds begin to sing their sweet spring songs, or the star-like primroses cover the mossy banks, that you will be called to lie beneath a little grassy hillock. Dear young friend, if such should be your lot are you ready to die? Have you given your young hearts to Jesus? 3

<sup>1</sup>The Child's Own Magazine, yet another Sunday School Union production, cheerfully admitted its debt to the high quality American journal, Our Young Folks and, in 1872, reprinted a story by Harriet Beecher Stowe for its readers.

<sup>2</sup>Charlotte Yonge did not approve of mixing religion with amusement. In What Books to Lend and What to Give (1887), p. 109, she recommended Sunshine, but pointed out that "the Bible questions are too like riddles".

<sup>3</sup>[William Lister, ed.], "A New Year's Letter for Children", the Child's Friend, n.s. II (1872), 3.

The Little Gleaner, published by the inveterate generator of tracts, F. Houlston and Sons, regaled its readers in 1866 with a diverting serial about a respectable working man whom Providence punished for his youthful cruelty to birds by bringing him seven dumb offspring.

Despite the arrival of so many moral but entertaining magazines for children in the mid-Victorian period, the old-style religious periodicals continued apace, still forming the greater part of all publishing for the young. Every sect or break-away faction had its children's magazines, many of which lasted well into the twentieth century. Missionary records abounded along with temperance magazines, like the Band of Hope Review. These magazines were easily distinguished from the secular juvenile journals by the meagreness and crudity of their illustrations and their small format.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to imagine these journals gaining commercial success when equally cheap, but far superior penny and halfpenny magazines were available. Yet Dr. Barnardo successfully subsidized his famous refuges with a very gloomy little magazine entitled successively Father William's Stories (1866-67), The Children's Treasury (1868-81), and Our Darlings (1881-1935).

If the pious, sectarian magazines managed to keep afloat in the buoyant market for periodicals of the mid-Victorian era, so did their opposites - the cheap, sensational papers. Two experienced manufacturers of dreadfuls, E. J. Brett and W. W. Emmett, turned their entrepreneurial talents towards the boy market in the 1860s. The more financially successful of the two, Brett, anticipated his rival and launched the Boys of England in 1866. He soon claimed a circulation for it of one hundred and fifty thousand.<sup>2</sup> Emmett followed in 1867 with the Young Gentleman's Journal. Competition grew fierce as every year Brett and Emmett added

<sup>1</sup>Octavo volumes were standard in the secular magazines, but the religious publications retained the 24mo size.

<sup>2</sup>E. S. Turner, Boys Will Be Boys (1946; rev. ed., 1975), p. 69.



new titles, almost indistinguishable from one another, to their string of boy's journals.<sup>1</sup> Charles Fox, "Ralph Rollington" (pseudonym of William Allingham) and G. Raynor (S. D. Clarke) were a few of the many vying for the pennies of British youth.

In their adopted guise as juvenile publishers, these men often gave lip-service to the prevailing insistence on moral literature. Brett promised his readers (or perhaps only their parents) that Boy's of England aimed "to enthrall you with wild and wonderful but healthy fiction".<sup>2</sup> He even issued the Boy's Sunday Reader in a short-lived bid to divert the sabbatarian interest. Despite these counterfeit ploys, cheap boy's papers bore more resemblance to old-fashioned street literature than to the new generation of respectable children's magazines.

The proprietor of Our Young Folks' Weekly Budget, James Henderson, stood midway between the hostile ranks of boy's sensation writers and the highminded children's authors. He joined the rakish crew of penny-a-liners in the taverns and edited a boy's paper himself - the Boy's Herald. At the same time, he was friendly with the idealistic publisher, Strahan, and the eminent critic, Alexander Hay Japp. It was when Dr. Japp was acting as Henderson's literary consultant that Robert Louis Stevenson's Treasure Island appeared as the Young Folks' serial.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>In 1868, Brett launched Young Gentlemen of Great Britain and Emmett, Young Gentlemen of England. The next year, 1869, saw Emmett's Young Briton and, in 1870, Sons of Britannia. On the same day of 1872, both firms instigated new adventure magazines - Brett's Rovers of the Sea and Emmett's Rover's Log. The rivalries and camaraderie of boy's fiction writers and publishers was recounted by Ralph Rollington, A Brief History of Boy's Journals (1913).

<sup>2</sup>E. J. Brett, Boys of England, I (1866), 2.

<sup>3</sup>Strange as it may seem in retrospect, this tale by "Captain George North" did little to boost Henderson's sales. According to E.S. Turner, Boys Will Be Boys, p. 92: "To Henderson the story was worth no more than the ten shillings per thousand words he paid for it." His readers were very critical apparently. Stevenson's later tales, "The Black Arrow" in particular, had more success in Young Folks because they were better adapted to the periodical format.

It is also interesting to note that Henderson gave Harmsworth, later Lord Northcliffe, his start. Harmsworth's Amalgamated Press eventually absorbed many commercial children's periodicals.

In appearance, Our Young Folks' Weekly Budget resembled the sensational penny papers with its eight large newsprint pages filled with four columns of tiny print. In its early years, the fiction consisted of fairy tales, innocent if stirring adventures, and humorous stories. Edward Salmon distinguished it from the pulp juvenile literature, recommending it for boys along with Routledge's Every Boy's Magazine and the Sunday School Union's Young England (formerly Kind Words for Boys and Girls).<sup>1</sup> However, the Quarterly Review consigned it to a lower level of literary evolution even than Brett's magazines: "The best that can be said of them is, that they are comparatively harmless; the worst, that no boy is likely to be better for reading them."<sup>2</sup>

By the late-Victorian period, when these reviews appeared, the proportion of adventures and romances in Young Folks increased as Henderson adapted to the tastes of his maturing audience. The title changes of Young Folks over its history suggest that Henderson found a loyal market in the 1870s and strived to follow his original clientele as they grew up. By 1891, Young Folks was called Old and Young and it ended its life in 1897 as Folks at Home.<sup>3</sup>

If Our Young Folks' Weekly Budget was tolerated by some critics, it was still not in the same league as the deluxe magazines for children. Though excellent magazines like Aunt Judy's, Good Words for the Young, or Edmund Hodder's Merry and Wise (1865-72) won the hearts of critics, they somehow failed to attract ordinary middle-class children from com-

<sup>1</sup>Edward Salmon, Juvenile Literature As It Is (1888), p. 188.

<sup>2</sup>[Francis Hitchman], "Penny Fiction", Quarterly Review, CLXXI (1890), 169.

<sup>3</sup>Sheila Egoff made this observation in Children's Periodicals of the Nineteenth Century (1951), p. 21. Clarke's Sunday Reading for the Young followed a similar evolution, shedding its strictly juvenile status for a general family orientation in the late-Victorian period.

fortable homes.<sup>1</sup> The cheaper pious magazines like Chatterbox and Sunshine probably won a large number of these readers. But it was left to the enterprising firm of Cassell, Petter, and Galpin to exploit the full market potential of the vast audience of young middle-class readers. With Little Folks, Cassell's achieved the winning balance among idealism, morality, and a powerful commercial appeal, without succumbing to the sensational tactics of penny thrillers. Cassell's historian, Simon Nowell Smith, attributed Little Folks's success to its being "one degree less didactic, less obtrusively pious, less goody-goody than the rival publications of the Sunday School Union, the Religious Tract Society, and the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge."<sup>2</sup>

The firm of Cassell's had long been associated with the cause of popular education. John Cassell, together with other early-Victorian publishers like Knight and Chambers, was dedicated to bringing respectable reading to working men to counterbalance what was to his mind the seditious and licentious literature of the street. He continued to address the educational needs of the working classes, but had, by mid-century, widened his commercial orientation to include a wealthier and better-educated audience. His Illustrated Family Paper, begun in 1853, exemplified Cassell's formula for success - light fiction, amusing articles, and plenty of pictures.<sup>3</sup>

After Cassell's death, his partners, Petter and Galpin, inherited his association with popular education and the upwardly mobile Cassell's

<sup>1</sup>Merry and Wise, published by Hodder and Stoughton, was equal in quality to the best sixpenny juvenile magazines and featured many of the authors who wrote for Aunt Judy's, Little Folks, Chatterbox, and Good Words for the Young. The flyleaf on the volume of 1872 listed favourable notices from critical journals such as the Athenaeum, the British Quarterly Review, the Eclectic Review, as well as the Evangelical Magazine.

<sup>2</sup>Simon Nowell Smith, The House of Cassell 1848-1958 (1959), p. 128.

<sup>3</sup>Smith, p. 127 related Cassell's prescription for the Quiver, another of his popular family magazines, as one article addressed to the intellect, one to the heart, one literary, and one juvenile tale.

constituency. Noting Cassell's earlier contribution to respectable working-class reading, the contemporary publisher, Curwen, observed in 1873 that "latterly Mssrs. Petter and Galpin have launched out into a vastly superior style of book-publishing."<sup>1</sup> Alongside the ever-popular encyclopedias, natural histories, and respectable periodicals, the firm began to produce text books for public schools like Marlborough, Harrow, and Uppingham.

Observing movements in English educational reform, Cassell's planned their entry into juvenile publishing while the Liberals agitated for state intervention in elementary education. According to Simon Nowell Smith, Mr. Galpin was fond of quoting the official figures of school children as comprising the Cassell's constituency.<sup>2</sup> By the time Little Folks appeared in 1871, the House of Cassell was well-versed in the techniques of appealing to a wide audience with educational but amusing periodicals. This extensive experience in popular magazine publishing probably ensured the ultimate success of Little Folks during a period when so many equally good periodicals failed.

Initially Little Folks cost only a penny a week, with a sixpenny monthly issue in coloured wrappers. Evidently the more expensive format proved more viable, for in 1875, Cassell's dropped the weekly numbers and concentrated on subscribers who could afford sixpence a month for their recreational reading.<sup>3</sup> By size and price, Little Folks belonged to the league of first-class periodicals like Aunt Judy's and Good Words for the Young. However, the Little Folks approach to its readers was much less

<sup>1</sup>H. Curwen, A History of Booksellers Old and New (1873), p. 270.

<sup>2</sup>Smith, p. 128.

<sup>3</sup>Yet it is possible that even Cassell's experienced the common difficulty of juvenile publishers in correctly predicting the size of their market. Smith discovered seven thousand bound semi-annual volumes listed in Cassell's "trade sales" in 1875. Though this did not mean Little Folks was not proving successful, it does indicate a certain degree of over-optimism on the part of its producers. Ibid., p. 107.

demanding. It offered light entertainment that required a minimum of mental exertion. In contrast to the earnest aspirations of Mrs. Gatty and Dr. Norman MacLeod to uplift the minds of middle-class children, the first editor of Little Folks, Bonavia Hunt, appealed to the middle-class spirit of independence and activity, promising parents that Little Folks aimed to teach children "to think and do a little for themselves".<sup>1</sup> He fulfilled this promise by inviting his readers to contribute stories, puzzles, games, and essays. This profitable strategy not only filled pages but also generated excitement and participation from young readers. Moreover, many of the articles, unlike the arid philosophizing of competing journals, outlined practical procedures for do-it-yourself experiments, hobbies, and parlour games.

Altogether, Little Folks was cheaper to produce than its similarly-priced rivals. It contained a smaller component of original fiction, and, though Cassell's was generous to authors, the Little Folks contributors were not so famous and thus perhaps not so expensive as Aunt Judy's or Good Words for the Young's authors. Furthermore, since Little Folks's chief claim to renown was as an illustrated magazine, its editors made lavish use of Cassell's huge stock of wood engravings and electrotypes, packing over five hundred pictures into a half-yearly volume. Instead of commissioning well-known artists to illustrate the stories, the Little Folks editors employed their authors to "write to" pre-existing engravings.<sup>2</sup> Even so, Little Folks did not descend to the "fill-page" tactics of the low priced religious magazines like Chatterbox. Almost all of its written material was original.

<sup>1</sup> "A Few Words of Preface", Little Folks, I (1871), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Simon Nowell Smith, p. 106, related an anecdote about W. H. G. Kingston's struggle to adapt a sea story he was writing for Cassell's to plates depicting pre-Napoleonic warships. He was obliged to invent an incident, extraneous to his own story line, which would justify the accompanying illustration.

The Little Folks staff contrived to minimize production costs yet simultaneously deployed an extremely efficient marketing campaign. John Cassell was a master of the Victorian art of "puffing"; his firm's expertise in the techniques of promotion gave it an advantage over more conservative companies. Little Folks fly-leaves, vaunting endorsements from sources as varied as the Queen, Graphic, and the Evangelical Magazine, appeared as inserts in rival children's periodicals like Aunt Judy's and Chatterbox. Even the texts of Little Folks stories were laced with reinforcing advertisements for the magazine and other Cassell's publications.

Little Folks was decidedly a Cassell's production, profitably combining all the talents and experience of its team of writers, editors, advertisers, and managers. In this respect, it differed from the other respectable children's journals which reflected the intensive labour of dedicated individuals like the Reverends Clarke and Whittemore, Dr. MacLeod, and Mrs. Gatty. In contrast to the marked editorial continuity of Chatterbox, Sunshine, and Aunt Judy's, Little Folks changed editors frequently. Bonavia Hunt founded and edited Little Folks until 1875 when he was promoted to the Illustrated Family Magazine. George Weatherly took over until 1879, leaving Little Folks to initiate the Boy's Newspaper, Cassell's short-lived answer to the Boy's Own Paper. Ernest Foster became the new editor. Despite the periodic reorganizations of the Cassell's staff, the editorial voice of Little Folks remained consistent. This was doubtless due to the behind-the-scenes control of Clara Matéaux and Madeline Bonavia Hunt, who contributed the serialized novels and often signed their stories "by the Editor".

In accordance with Cassell's policy of serving as wide an audience as possible, irrespective of class or religious boundaries, Little Folks consciously purveyed a broadly religious but non-sectarian moral outlook. Its production staff represented a range of religious opinion. The first editor, Bonavia Hunt, took Holy Orders while still a Cassell's employee

and eventually became an active parish priest.<sup>1</sup> Cassell himself had been a Nonconformist, Petter was a devout Evangelical, while Galpin was a "middle-of-the-road" Anglican.<sup>2</sup> Though few of the commercial magazines for children in the mid-Victorian period were aggressively dogmatic, their religious teaching was drawn on an Anglican backcloth. The non-sectarian approach of Little Folks probably amplified its appeal to the middle classes. Alongside endorsements from the Evangelical Magazine, and the Christian World, Little Folks boasted the plaudits of the popular Baptist preacher, Charles Spurgeon, who wrote in the Sword and Trowell: "Little Folks surpasses all competitors for thorough-going fun and real interest."<sup>3</sup>

In addition to a broad foundation of social and religious interest, Little Folks catered to all ages of boys and girls. With special large-print stories and pictures it drew very young readers, while the serials, contests, and articles attracted older children.<sup>4</sup> This sensitivity to various age-grades of childhood formed yet another instance of the Cassell talent for assessing and serving its audience.

The successful, market-oriented approach employed by the Little Folks staff was noted and approved by practical critics like Charlotte Yonge, who judged Little Folks to be "a somewhat superior article",<sup>5</sup> and Edward Salmon, who compared it to similar American children's magazines:

<sup>1</sup>While he was taking a Bachelor of Music at Oxford and preparing for ordination, which took place in 1878, H.D. Bonavia Hunt edited the Quiver concurrently with Little Folks. See Who Was Who 1916-1928 (1929).

<sup>2</sup>Smith, p. 127, describes how Cassell became disturbed by the sectarian squabbling among dissenting sects and encouraged his wife and daughter to rejoin the Anglican church. Petter, too, found his religious opinions at variance with his work and resigned in 1883 because he felt that fiction had become too prominent in Cassell's publications.

<sup>3</sup>Little Folks fly-leaves, inserted in every volume, listed Spurgeon's recommendation.

<sup>4</sup>Little Folks contests were limited to those aged sixteen and under. Most of the competitors were twelve to sixteen, though occasionally a younger reader was successful.

<sup>5</sup>Charlotte Yonge, What Books to Lend, p. 108.

"Little Folks is one of the few English children's magazines which at all approach in beauty and general merit the American St. Nicholas or Harper's Young People."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, it was the trade papers like Deacon's Advertisers' Handbook, the Bookbuyer's Guide, and the Publisher's Circular, rather than the literary journals, that were most enthusiastic about Little Folks.<sup>2</sup> For instance, the Publisher's Circular greeted the first bi-annual volume in June 1871 with this exuberant notice:

Little Folks is about the prettiest, neatest, wisest, nattiest, and best illustrated magazine for little people that we have ever met with. It is good without being silly and conveys suitable information in an acceptable way. 3

With its balance between instruction and amusement, idealism and commercialism, Little Folks was admirably suited to survive the passing of "the great early period of English magazines" and carry on into the twentieth century. In its Diamond Jubilee Issue of 1931, Lord Northcliffe claimed that he had been "brought up on Little Folks".<sup>4</sup> It is appropriate that his Amalgamated Press should have absorbed Little Folks along with so many other successful organs of popular entertainment.<sup>5</sup>

When looking back over the generous supply of good, moral periodicals for mid-Victorian boys and girls, what is remarkable is the sense of social responsibility and public service exhibited by the publishers and editors. Even in so commercial a periodical as Little Folks, economic motivation did not outweigh didactic purpose. The earnest and even grave manifestos of these producers of respectable children's magazines demonstrated their

<sup>1</sup> Salmon, "Literature for the Little Ones", p. 577.

<sup>2</sup> Little Folks was the only children's magazine listed in the first number of Deacon's Newspaper Guide and Advertisers' Handbook (1881) which was intended to encourage manufacturers to advertise in popular periodicals.

<sup>3</sup> This "puff" from the Publisher's Circular appeared as an advertisement in the Bookbuyer's Guide, V (1871), v.

<sup>4</sup> H. Darkin Williams, "The Editor's Den", Little Folks, CXIV (1931), 12, quoted Lord Northcliffe's endorsement along with many other "men and women now occupying high positions in society and in the State... ."

<sup>5</sup> In 1931, Cassell's sold all their periodicals. Amalgamated Press took over Little Folks at that time.



sincere intention to endow the rising generation with an improving and entertaining literature. They would not dilute their principles merely to woo young readers and, while willing to amuse children, they were not ashamed to instruct them at the same time. They laboured to fulfill critics' and parents' ideals of what was wholesome and excellent in children's literature. Moreover, though competition behind the scenes grew fierce as individual magazines struggled to capture wider markets, the fact that they advertised and recommended their rivals suggests that editors and publishers of respectable periodicals attempted to present a public face of unity and cooperation against their less scrupulous foes in the penny dreadful trade.<sup>1</sup>

The producers of mid-Victorian children's magazines carried their public spirit beyond the domain of literature. The scale of charity work carried out by these men and women, publicly through their magazines or privately, was outstanding and underlined the policy of social service which their stories so frequently preached. George Bell founded a Boy's Home to care for and train vagrant London children.<sup>2</sup> The Reverend Dr. Whittemore and Canon Clarke, as befitting their vocations, were active Samaritans. In a memorial to his colleague, the Reverend W. T. Holden praised Dr. Whittemore's work in Ragged Schools and observed that he was the first clergyman to organize formal training for Sunday School teachers.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Aunt Judy's "Book Notices" recommended Chatterbox on more than one occasion and welcomes the arrival of the Boy's Own Paper in 1879. Both Aunt Judy's and Chatterbox carried advertisements for Little Folks. The editor of Merry and Wise recommended Sunshine, the Children's Prize, and Little Folks to his readers. Little Folks occasionally carried advertisements for Chatterbox.

<sup>2</sup>Edward Bell, George Bell, Publisher, p. 118. The Gatty family regularly contributed to this institution and it is likely that George Bell was the model for Mrs. Ewing's fictional philanthropist in "The Miller's Thumb", Aunt Judy's, X (1873).

<sup>3</sup>W. T. Holden, Rector of Whipsnale, "In Memorium", in Lessons from God's Flower Garden; The Substance of the Flower Sermons, by the late Rev. W. Meynell Whittemore, D.D. (1894), p. 12.

Clarke managed to find the time and funds to establish a girls' school in Battersea and the Bolingbroke Hospital on Wandsworth Common.<sup>1</sup>

Mrs. Gatty's idea to subsidize cots for boys and girls in the Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital represented a novel project for a children's magazine, one which was soon imitated by many others. Her readers contributed generously and, in addition to the girls' cot and the boys' cot, the St. Petersburg and Indian subscribers to Aunt Judy's supported their own hospital beds for sick poor children. In memory of Mrs. Gatty and, later, Mrs. Ewing, the loyal readers endowed in perpetuity a bed in the High Gate convalescent home. Regular reports on the children who inhabited these beds and the names of those who contributed to their maintenance became a regular feature of the magazine. "Aunt Judy's Cots Reports" made the readers' benevolent activities more personal and meaningful. In addition to the cots, Aunt Judy's sponsored a Hospital Works Society which solicited clothing, toys, scrap books, etc. to donate to regional hospitals for children.

Sunshine borrowed Aunt Judy's cot idea, establishing "Willie's Sunshine Cot" in memory of Dr. Whittemore. Typically, when Little Folks stepped on the charity bandwagon its projects were altogether grander and more ambitious. The Little Folks Ward in East London was its first large undertaking in 1881 and, by 1901, the Little Folks subscribers raised twenty thousand pounds to build the "Little Folks Home" for convalescent children at Bexhill.<sup>2</sup>

These subsidiary projects not only demonstrated the personal commitment of the creators of mid-Victorian secular children's magazines to public service, but also served to involve the readers in benevolent activity. Through their participation in magazine-sponsored charities children gained early experience in organized philanthropy, learning to

<sup>1</sup>Darton, "Sixty Years of Chatterbox", lists Clarke's charitable activities.

<sup>2</sup>"The Editor's Den", Little Folks, CXIV (1931), p. 13, contained a retrospective of Little Folks' readers accomplishments in charity.

distinguish deserving candidates for relief and the best ways to administer charity.

It is important to note that these projects were undertaken in the spirit of social service and not overtly justified by religious significance. They were designed to inculcate in middle-class children a sense of responsibility for the poor. While the specifically religious magazines exhorted their readers to perform acts of kindness, their emphasis was on the individual's spiritual progress. Good works were milestones along the path to salvation and were not construed as the ethical responsibility of a well-off social group to help those less fortunate. It was secular magazines which aimed to enlist their middle and upper-class readers in active social service.

Given the civic spirit imbuing children's magazines and the fact that committed churchmen, clergymen, their wives and families, were so conspicuously active in editing and writing them, it would seem plausible that the educative and social impulses of a revived church had found, in secular and entertaining children's magazines, a new route to the public mind.<sup>1</sup> Religious leaders had long recognized the propagandistic potential of literature, especially in periodical form. As early as 1836, John Henry Newman remarked ironically: "I am sure we shall do nothing until we get some ladies to work to poison the rising generation."<sup>2</sup> By the mid-Victorian period, the Established Church regretted opportunity lost when they had allowed Dissenting opinion to dominate the production of religious children's literature. The Church Quarterly Review in 1876 warned its readers

<sup>1</sup>All five of the sample of mid-Victorian children's magazines were edited by clergymen, their wives, sisters, or daughters. In addition, clerical families appear to dominate story-writing as well (See Appendix B). This is not to overlook the obvious economic incentives which perhaps prompted the "literary" wives and daughters of clergymen to earn "pin money" writing for children's magazines.

<sup>2</sup>Newman was quoted by Gillian Avery, Childhood's Pattern: A Study of the Heroes and Heroines of Children's Fiction 1770-1950 (1975), p. 125.

not to underestimate the influence of doctrinal preaching in literature for the young:

. . . we think it quite possible that the Dissent into which young people trained in Church schools used to lapse twenty or thirty years ago, was rendered attractive, not only by their awakened spiritual needs, which the Church System was not then expansive enough to satisfy, but by the whole drift of their reading, which made Conversion, whether through Church or meeting, the paramount matter of importance. <sup>1</sup>

Yet even though the Dissenting and Evangelical factions within the religious community had dominated the field of religious children's publishing for so long, their rivals did not choose to compete with them on the same ground. The mood had changed by the mid-Victorian period, both in the religious world itself and in the children's publishing trade. Narrow theological debate now took second place to the "idea of the Church" and its mission in society.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, sensitive observers of children felt that overtly to indoctrinate them with specific tenets of creed was ineffective and inappropriate. It was far better to speak to children through stories they enjoyed and came to voluntarily than to imprison an unwilling and unreceptive audience only on Sundays.

Hence, although the new generation of churchmen who took up their pens for more entertaining purposes embraced their personal religious philosophies as ardently as any Puseyite or Evangelical, they muted religious controversy in their stories for boys and girls. Instead, they propounded a world view where social and religious ethics fused indivisibly. The spirit of Christianity subtly and almost imperceptibly pervaded every aspect of family and school life in the story book world, though the Church, as an institution, rarely figured prominently. The chief difference between

<sup>1</sup>"Sunday School and Lending Library Literature", p. 56.

<sup>2</sup>Attacks on alternative English sects were rare in entertaining periodical fiction for children but the Roman Catholics were still considered fair game for condemnation, even by Tractarians like Charlotte Yonge. E. R. Norman, Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England (1969) argues that "anti-Catholic sentiments were among the most important religious and political catalysts of the nineteenth century."

the aggressively pious children's authors of the early Victorian period and their mid-Victorian successors was the ability of the latter to animate religious and moral values in ordinary domestic scenes. Just as the "extra curricular" charities involved the magazine reader in active participation in socially beneficial projects, the magazine tales demonstrated Christianity at work in the world.

The clerical editors of secular children's magazines seemed to be acting in concert with many of their colleagues anxious to extend the circumference of pastoral duty in a bid to save the Church from social irrelevancy. In the early-Victorian period, the small but influential clique of "Broad Churchmen" warned their fellows that the incessant wrangling within the religious community dangerously weakened the fibre of Christian society. The aim of this group was to stretch the creed of the Established Church in order to reincorporate those who rejected particular tenets of dogma. Only then could the State Church take an active and leading role in a unified society.

To this aim, the religiously and socially isolated middle class presented the chief challenge. A successful appeal to the middle class might shatter their moral complacency and draw them away from Dissent. An Anglican middle class, with influence over the working class, could extend the authority of the Church, reintegrate society, and, thus, avert class warfare.

But new strategies and new spheres of activity were essential if a re-awakened Anglican Church was to overcome the moral insensibility of the wealthy classes in English society. Those who chose to promote the gospel of social service to the middle classes through secular children's magazines may have limited their commercial opportunities by concentrating on too narrow a market. But as part of a campaign of religious leaders to socialize the rising generation of middle-class children to a contemporary version of "noblesse oblige", their logic appears to be justified.

Moreover, the apparent growth of secularism in English society, the indifference to religion displayed by many well-educated citizens, alarmed all factions within the Established Church. Increasing state authority in elementary education seemed to presage a rupture between religion and education. Thomas Arnold, Nathaniel Woodard, and F. W. Brereton, though their specific religious affiliations differed, were united in their implacable opposition to purely secular education. They were among the first men prepared to take active steps to establish special schools to provide Christian education for middle-class children and to reassert the educative function of the Church.<sup>1</sup>

Whether or not they deliberately set out to win adherents to the Church of England, there seem to be obvious parallels between the motives and actions of the clerical editors of amusing children's magazines, the Reverends Clarke, Hunt, Dr. Whittemore, Dr. MacLeod, and the Gatty family, and their colleagues involved in formal education. The ostensibly secular periodicals for children provided a new channel for the pedagogical impulses of churchmen and one whose influence was potentially greater than that of institutions of formal education. Children who read secular magazines were a more receptive audience because a voluntary one. Attractive and exciting stories might enlist their attention and sympathies more effectively and more meaningfully than sermons or school room lectures. At the same time, magazines could enter private homes barred to the official emissaries of established religion. The editors of mid-Victorian children's magazines grasped, whether consciously or unconsciously, the potency of a "mass" medium of instruction and entertainment to reinforce their position as leaders, not merely or even primarily of the religious community, but of society as a whole.

Of course we cannot presume to quantify the success of their attempt to imprint a specific world view upon the rising generation. Nor can we

<sup>1</sup>J. R. de S. Honey, Tom Brown's Universe: the Development of the Public School in the Nineteenth Century (1977) describes the philosophies and goals of Arnold, Brereton, Woodard, and other clerical headmasters.

measure their achievement in shielding middle- and upper-class children from the taint of the dreadfuls. Clearly, their effectiveness rested on their ability shrewdly to assess and cater to the interests and needs of their audience. As we have seen, many failed to stretch their nets wide enough to gather in all middle-class boys and girls. However, by entering the world which mid-Victorian children's authors, editors, and publishers constructed in their magazines, we can trace the evolution of their attitudes to the individual child, his relation to his family, and through his family to society, and thereby piece together their model of moral and harmonious social life.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE CHILD: A VICTORIAN IDEAL

Aunt Judy's Christmas Volume for 1870 included a vignette describing a learned astronomer who named his daughter Alcyone, after the star believed to be the pivot of the universe. When this frail child dies the great man loses his life's centre. He no longer works, and instead, prays for death to re-unite him with Alcyone. "Though once famous, like a shooting star his death left no gap and was barely noticed." (p. 444)."

While more lachrymose and abstract than the average periodical tale for children, "Alycone; A Child's Allegory of a Star" (AJ VIII: 1870) reveals the organization of the juvenile story-book cosmos. The child stands at the centre, his family and then the diverse social universe orbit around him. It symbolizes further the peculiar urge of Romantic Victorians to fix the child like an eternal star in a state of enduring perfection in the midst of a corrupt and chaotic world wherein human achievement is fleeting.

The futility of this literary exercise is obvious. Childhood is necessarily transitional; the individual child cannot remain cloistered from his society. Even so, few Victorian writers were able to resist the charms of their age's invention of childhood. The treatment of children in Victorian literature expresses not only contemporary attitudes to children but also, in telling manner, Victorian society's evaluation of itself.



Historians have argued that the origins of the cult of childhood were more secular than religious and that the religious community perpetuated harsh unsympathetic attitudes to children long after their worldly brethren adopted more tolerant views.<sup>1</sup> Whatever its intellectual genealogy, the worship of innocence accorded agreeably with the sentiments of many prominent mid-Victorian religious thinkers, who furnished abundant theological arguments to justify their stance. Some compared the child to Adam before the Fall, others chose to invoke the image of the infant Christ.<sup>2</sup> In an article on "Baptism", the Dean of Westminster, A.P. Stanley, wrote for Nineteenth Century, he celebrated children as:

... the regenerating, sanctifying element of every family, of every household, of every nation...He saw, and we may see, in the natural, simple, unconstrained acts and words the best antidote to the artificial, fantastic, exclusive spirit.

In Stanley's explanation, the holy rituals of baptism "acknowledge the excellency and value of the child-like soul."<sup>3</sup>

Developments in intellectual and religious theory overtly informed the ideas of reviewers of children's literature, as we have seen. Children's authors were not, in general, as rigorous or as consistent thinkers as their critics. Even so, in the juvenile periodical fiction of the 1870s, prevailing romantic ideas about the child's innate goodness triumphed over alternative views of the child, such as the environmentalist "tabula rasa" or the evangelically-revived doctrine of infant depravity.

<sup>1</sup>David Grylls makes this point in Guardians and Angels: Parents and Children in Nineteenth-Century Literature (1978). Grylls maintains that Romantic ideas assailed the Puritan notions of original sin that persisted throughout the nineteenth century. Lawrence Stone, in The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800 (1976), concurs, arguing that the resurgence of the evangelical spirit after the relaxed religious atmosphere of the eighteenth century revived negative attitudes to children and harsh methods of child-rearing. George Boas, in The Cult of Childhood (1966), attributes the development of child-worship to Enlightenment ideals which elevated the child alongside the 'noble savage', to Romanticism, and also to certain strains in Christian ideology.

<sup>2</sup>Boas, p. 41.

<sup>3</sup>A. P. Stanley, "Baptism", Nineteenth Century, VI (1879), p. 701.

Intellectual tradition defined the particular coloration of the child

motif in Victorian literature, but it was the contemporary social situation that conditioned its use in fiction designed to socialize children themselves. It was incumbent upon children's authors to communicate to the rising generation what the world expected of them and what they in turn might expect from the world. Received notions about the child and society did not simplify their task.

For any age, the child must always symbolize the future. But by the mid-nineteenth century, rapid social change left Victorian parents and the older generation generally with a diminishing capacity to predict the skills and expertise children might require in the time ahead. A more complex society necessitated a prolonged social apprenticeship. Nevertheless, Victorians resisted the implications of incessant social innovation and sought, in literature addressed to the young, to perpetuate the customs and values that underpinned the social order.

In order to protect the innocence of children and at the same time maintain the pattern of the social fabric, it was imperative that children learn their place in an ordered hierarchy of family and social life. To the ever-apprehensive middle- and upper-class Victorian the prospect of a self-confident younger generation challenging the prevailing status quo was as appalling a spectre as an aggressive working class demanding equality. The uniformly negative response of British travellers to American children betrayed their anxiety about democratic principles applied to age as well as class relationships. The American dedication to the future seemed to predispose its youth to audacity and disrespect. Theresa Yelverton, for example, refused to countenance American young people as children at all:

... the child in the full sense attached to that word in England - a child with rosy cheeks and bright joyous laugh, its docile obedience and simplicity, its healthful play and disciplined work, is a being almost unknown in America. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Theresa Yelverton's memoir, Teresina in America (1875) I, 263, is cited by Richard Rapson, "The American Child as Seen by British Travellers, 1845-1935", The American Quarterly, XVII (1965), 521.

Above all the sins of childhood, Victorian commentators most despised precocity. They took care to ensure that their own children were cocooned in innocence and incapacitated by ignorance.

Intellectual Victorians recognized parallels between the temporary state of childhood and the perennial condition of the poor. Children and the poor were united in weakness, ignorance and dependence on their elders and betters. Their tastes and mental organizations were similar. William Caldwell Roscoe voiced a time-honoured analogy when he wrote in the Prospective Review:

The child is constantly compared to a nation in its early stages, and with this he has much in common; but with the poor he has more; the simplicity of older times - not that of morals, but that of ideas lingers in the bases of society; they are the preservers of traditions, with which they have the most in common, and are the faithfulest depositories of the imaginative fictions of childhood. 1

But the twisted strands of ideas about children and the poor led to a curious paradox in Victorian thought. If children required protection and security to preserve their innocence and dependence, then childhood was a privilege not all could experience. Those classes in England thought to be most child-like could not guarantee innocence and therefore could not afford the luxury of childhood. Precocity and early independence were inevitable when a child had to struggle to keep itself.

The social and political as well as intellectual concomitants of the Victorian ideology of childhood had important implications for the development of children's literature in the mid-Victorian period. It restricted an author's choice of ideal character types to a narrow spectrum of relatively well-to-do children and it limited their access to socially relevant themes. A popular writer such as Mrs. Molesworth, who contributed regularly to Aunt Judy's and Little Folks, fastidiously laundered her stories

<sup>1</sup>William Caldwell Roscoe, "Children's Fiction", Prospective Review (1855); reprinted by Lance Salway, Peculiar Gift: Nineteenth Century Writing on Books for Children (1976), p. 26.

of any "precociously wisening or saddening experience" lest she jeopardize "the very innocence and happiness [of children which] furnish the strength they too will surely require for their own struggles and difficulties."<sup>1</sup> Children's authors confronted the same dilemma that faced Victorian parents. How could childhood be at once a state of perfect innocence and freedom from care and at the same time a stage of induction into the world? How could they persuade the young to accept and conform to the rules that ordered their society without resort to preaching or coercion? Absolute freedom for a child, even in fiction, was unthinkable and especially so for a society where the code of acceptable behaviour was so rigorously ritualized. Children's authors had to devise appropriate strategies in their stories to limit the child's scope of activity and to compel his allegiance to the status quo.

Their response to this challenge took two forms. On one hand they ascribed to the ideal child a set of innate characteristics, basically allied to the interdependent concepts of innocence and gentility, that guaranteed his conformity to the prevailing code of behaviour. On the other, they confined the child of fiction to a tiny private domain encircled by his family. The features of this miniature sphere authors drew in glowing colours to entice their heroes to remain well within the charmed circle. Outside this narrow compass, they blurred the details so as not to disturb the innocent tranquility of their readers with unpleasant reality. Nevertheless, their ominous hints of danger and sadness beyond the vale of childhood were sufficient to force a young hero or heroine to accept gratefully the counsel of his elders and betters. As long as he remained under their care and true to his innocent nature, he could act out his childish dramas free from harm.

<sup>1</sup>Mrs. Molesworth, "Story Writing", The Monthly Packet, LXXXVIII (1895), 163.

The structure of events within the story-book world provided negative and positive reinforcement to acceptable conduct, but the most effective means to encourage conformity to a given pattern of behaviour was to inspire emulation. If children's authors wished their readers to identify with their young protagonists, to share their trials and learn their lessons, they had to make their characters credible and attractive to real Victorian boys and girls. Though they created ideal types, dictated by the moral priorities and social preoccupations of their day, their artistic pretensions impelled them to do more than animate paragons. Increasing use of the first person narrative technique in mid-Victorian children's fiction underlined the aspirations of many authors to explore the personality of the child in a child's own terms, to see the world through his eyes. In so doing, they attempted to mould the behaviour of their readers and, more important, to condition their feelings and motives. They attributed attitudes and qualities to their protagonists which, they hoped, the reader would absorb.

In drawing their young characters, mid-Victorian children's authors stood mid-way between the strictly didactic authors of the early Victorian period whose protagonists and antagonists acted out abstract virtue overcoming vice, and the merely amusing writers of a later period who idealized and generalized child nature. The author of "The Watch" (AJ XV: 1876) brought a rather unattractive hero to his reader's attention, but explained to them the reasons prompting his choice:

It was once the way to write no stories about boys who were not represented as patterns of all kinds of merit. Now the fashion veers in another direction; and if we are invited to think the best of mischievous and unruly urchins, why should we not try to see some good in those whose faults are of a different complexion (p. 473)?

Another contributor to Aunt Judy's, the author of "The Miller's Thumb" (AJ X: 1873), opposed the unthinking assumption that children were all alike, united in an Eden of joy. She argued that innate characteristics of individual personality were present at birth and ultimately deterministic:

That this is against the wishes and theories of many excellent people has nothing to do with its truth. If all children were the bluff, hearty, charmingly naughty, enviably happy utterly simple and unaffected beings that some of us wish and therefore assert them to be, it might be better for them, or it might not - who can say? That the healthy, careless, rough and ready type is the one to encourage, many will agree, who cannot agree that it is universal, or even much the most common. It is probably from an imperfect memory of their nursery lives that some people believe that the griefs of one's childhood are light, its joys uncomplicated, and its tastes simple (p. 387).

Authors who aspired to remain true to child nature, as they conceived it to be, conceded the follies of youth and the faults of individuals. Within the broad outlines established by convention, talented mid-Victorian children's authors laboured to create unique and complex personalities. Only a handful of children's authors were able to transcend stereotype and create memorable child characters, but even the less successful attempts of their colleagues evinces the sincere ambition of the mid-Victorian generation to recapture what it felt like to be a child.

### The Private World of Childhood

The author of "A Visit to Toy Town" (AJ XIV: 1876) laboriously transposed the Puritan "Pilgrim's Progress" odyssey, long a children's classic, to suit the mid-Victorian view of childhood's journey. In a dream, little Rosie meets Good Child who leads her over Lesson Book Lane, Reading Road, Grammar Gate and so on until they reach the promised land of Toy Town. What lies beyond Toy Town, Good Child cannot explain for "that is grown-up land so I don't know much about it (p. 441)". The sunny vale of childhood commands the horizon, he has no need to penetrate the mysterious regions of future life so long as he remains Good Child.

Liberated from the awesome responsibility of preparing himself and his soul for the great beyond, the "Good Child" of the 1870s periodical tale embodied much less vehement virtues than his "Simon Pure" antecedents.

He did not have to achieve goodness and purity by struggling against his depraved inheritance and the corruption of the world. His goodness was a gift of nature and, in his early days, he should know no evil. In stories about relatively young children, authors contrived to protect the child's birthright of innocence by strictly limiting the experiences of their heroes in the world. There are no villains in such tales, nor are there serious sins or vices. The author of "At the Back of the North Wind" (GWY: 1869/70) averred that the innocent child had no need of worldly wisdom. Through the voice of his allegorical deity, North Wind, he asks his pure young hero, Diamond, "Why should you see things...that you wouldn't understand or know what to do with? Good people see good things, bad people, bad things." Age and false wisdom, the author implies, prevent adults from understanding God's ways, whereas Diamond "was not older, and did not fancy himself wiser, and therefore understood her well enough."

There is an evident strain of anti-intellectualism in the worship of childhood ignorance as it issues from children's periodicals tales. Reason and rationalizing interfere with the instinctive moral sense an ideal child possesses inherently. Davy Chalmers, the hero of "A Star in the Dustheap" (LF n.s. I: 1875) at eight years cannot reckon his own age or tell his surname but has an infallible sense of right and wrong. Armed with only his purity, he undertakes a perilous journey to London to find his nurse, and though he wanders through the roughest quarters of the great city, his innocence is a talisman protecting him from corruption. He simply cannot comprehend the experiences he encounters. As the author points out: "If Davy had been a cunning lad, or if a bright lad for his age . . . he might have pieced together the day's happenings, but he wasn't and so just fell asleep (p. 162)."

The view that children were innocent by nature was so firmly established by the 1870s that few authors felt obliged to stress it. This certainty overturned the regimen of religious indoctrination, the fundamental duty of fictional parents a generation earlier. Now it was the duty of parents to

preserve the gift of heaven in their children. Indeed, heaven, implied the author of "My Pink Pet" (AJ XVIII: 1878), is "Farther off ... in middle age than in early childhood, when it is easier for us to believe in what we cannot see, when no clouds have come between us and the true sky beyond (p. 23)." The child's unreasoning faith was superior to the more laboured and complex creed of the adult.

It was the unshakeable faith itself that children's authors so admired in their young heroes and heroines. They did not concern themselves in the early stages of a child's religious progress whether he or she comprehended received ideas about divinity. Even belief in fairies was an approved prelude to faith in God, for it paved the path to natural acceptance of the supernatural. The clergyman, Mr. Egremont, in "Tibbie's Tea Things" (GWY: 1870) is unwilling to disturb Tibbie's belief in the magical powers of her tea set: "With the unreasoning faith of females she believes the tea cup can make sick people well." Only when she grows up does her "unreasoning faith pass away with other childish things" and adheres to the proper object of worship.

Certainly the spontaneous piety of the child is infinitely preferable, in the minds of many children's authors, to the empty formulae of learned religion, most especially Roman Catholicism. Even in tales set in foreign lands or in the past, for instance the Renaissance Italy setting of "Little Batista" (S:1878), a zealous author could not resist a dig at the "Whore of Babylon". Batista does not know how to pray in a formal sense but, the author interjects, "I think God would be better pleased with the little boy's honest purposes that went floating up to him on the breath of music, than had Batista been able to say the strange foreign words he had been taught to call his prayers (p. 22)."

The Anti-Catholicism pervasive in Sunshine stories is still gentle compared with the raging condemnation in earlier children's literature. For the most part the Evangelical spirit, insisting on constant introspection and impeccable religious motivation for every act, evaporated from the



secular periodical fiction, at least, of the 1870s. The carefree heroes of magazine tales give scarcely a thought to religion beyond the ritual of bed-time prayers. Authors assume a child's inherent religious susceptibility to be sufficient. Naturally religious, a young child is not ready for serious contemplation of theology. Thus the authors of "Dolly and Squeaks" (LF IV: 1872) or "The Old Red Prayer Book" (AJ VIII: 1870) smile tolerantly upon children sleeping through morning service. In "A Flat Iron for a Farthing" (AJ IX: 1871), children make "Church" their Sunday game without invoking their creator's censure. The gloomy Sunday is a thing of the past in the periodical world. Children's authors promote a new pattern of Sabbatarian custom to make religious observance congenial to childish tastes. For the happy Swayne children in "Ursula Swayne's Troubles" (GWY: 1870) "Sunday is a day of gladness, not of sad restraint (p. 334)." They read entertaining stories, have special family dinners, and go for walks with Papa "who was never so amusing as at Sunday tea-time."

Moreover, devout as many of these authors undoubtedly were, the moral schema they embraced referred to the secular, rather than the religious order of things. Humanitarian ethics sanctioned the virtuous behaviour of their heroes and heroines. Rather than exhort their readers to obey God's laws, children's authors showed that anti-social acts hurt the living.

Thus, instead of outward displays of piety, the moral imperatives of mid-Victorian children were to love their parents and, because of that affection, to strictly obey their wishes. Father's worry, or worse, mother's sorrow were the ultimate deterrents to the boundless mischief of high-spirited but well-meaning boys and girls. The "pale faces" of their mother and father were all the punishment Johnnie and Lizzie required to teach them obedience in "How Some Disobedient Little Folks Got Lost in the Air" (LF III: 1872). Mama's disappointment that her children betrayed her trust and neglected their duty to obey their nurse sobers Maudie and Geoffrey when they return from their "Children's Journey" (GWY: 1870).

The delicate sensibility of the story-book child, his sensitivity to his parents' feelings, was virtually the only inhibition on his freedom within the bounds of his private domain. The madcap formula in children's fiction was standard by the 1870s and became excessively common thereafter. Writers overextended themselves trying to outdo the range of destructive mischief instigated by charming infant rogues. Priceless vases, conservatory windows, cook's Sunday bonnet and countless other valuables fall victim to innocent gambols. So long as the accidents are unintentional and honestly admitted, story-book heroes and heroines receive no punishment. The assumption of perfect innocence and guileless motive allows authors to view even grave sins like stealing or fraud in a tolerant light. In "Old Drab Gaiters" (LF I: 1871), little Dolly steals the gardener's lunch as a prank, while in "How Alice Graham Tried to Get a Hundred Pounds for a Black Pigeon" (LF I: 1871), a group of well-to-do children steal a poor cottager's pigeon and kill it in their attempts to dye it black in order to fool an eccentric pigeon fancier. In both cases a gentle explanation of the pathos of the people they inadvertently hurt suffices to reform the little miscreants.

Even the delicate web of adult social life occasionally ruptures under the barrage of infant mischief. The author of "Pretending" (AJ X: 1872) adopts a confessional style to recount in the first person how she and her five-year-old twin offended their mother's guests by **mimicing** their idiosyncracies of speech. Mother is very sorry since she understands about "betending", but the children themselves set matters right by inviting the injured parties to a special nursery tea with "fat rascals" and "lots of sugar".

A child's right to make-believe games was statutorially defended by enlightened adults of the 1870s. The author of "Children" in Chambers Journal (1863) averred that "It would be cruel and unnatural were it even possible to rob children of this faculty of invention and shamming, and to narrow and confine their lives and enjoyments within the four bare walls of

fact."<sup>1</sup> The child's imagination was sacred to children's authors as well, many of whom took revenge in their stories on the evangelical strictness that may have blighted their own childish fancies. The sensitive, dreamy boy, or more commonly, girl, misunderstood by siblings or servants, was a popular type whose creators insisted that he or she deserved tender solicitude to guide his or her talents into socially acceptable channels. In "The Missing Bon-Bons" (LF n.s. VI: 1877), Maggie has difficulty distinguishing reality from fantasy. When her sister's sweets disappear during her mother's absence, the eldest sister accuses Maggie of stealing. She cannot defend herself for she cannot honestly remember what became of the candies. The evident sympathy of the author towards a child's sense of justice, especially against the serious charges of lying and deceit, promotes minor domestic friction to high drama. The conflict abates when mother's investigation proves her younger daughter's innocence.

Parents, especially mothers, in fiction had the capacity to appreciate and protect their child's faculty of imagination, but they could not share in its fantasies. It was this consciousness that children dwell in a world all their own, a realm irretrievably lost to adults, that explains why the mid-Victorian children's author relegated adults to the background of their tales. Earlier in the century Romantic poets celebrated the child's special qualities and urged that they should be left alone with their thoughts, untrammelled by constant adult supervision. Especially in the country, the child had a unique spontaneous communion with nature in which adults could not participate. Victorian writers and intellectuals transmuted the Romantic protest against adult intrusion upon the child's world into an orthodox perspective until, by the mid- and late Victorian period, even popular child-rearing manuals routinely advised parents to allow their children solitary access to Nature. The author of Children, Their Health,

<sup>1</sup>"Children", Chamber's Journal, XIX (1863), 178.

Training and Education maintained that, for a child

... the Book of Nature is the best book, and if he is permitted to go forth among the wonders of Creation, he will gather instruction from the eye, the ear and by all his senses. The child, when left to himself, manifests a true philosophical spirit of inquiry. 1

Children's authors both respected and exploited the natural tastes and sympathies for flora and fauna they and their contemporaries believed the child to possess. In contrast to their didactic antecedents who always included an encyclopedic mentor to guide their young heroes and heroines through the natural history of their environment, mid-Victorian children's authors allowed their characters to wander freely in gardens and fields and indulge their joys and fancies. The author of "Our Field" (AJ XIV: 1876) donated an abandoned pasture to her family of imaginative siblings where they enacted make believe adventures and, on their own, amassed impressive knowledge of wild flowers, herbs and mosses. Though they largely dispensed with adult pedagogues, the mid-Victorian children's authors could not resist the temptation to presume upon the child's identification with flowers and animals to teach a variety of lessons. Anthropomorphic tales, where a dog, a mouse, a squirrel or a cat for instance became protagonists, were light-hearted, yet still in the mainstream of informal education.

While there were elements of old-fashioned "fact mongering" in some of these nature tales, moral education is pre-eminent. The splendors of Creation as they appear in juvenile magazine tales in the 1870s are not something to dissect scientifically. Nature is not a force to master technologically. It is a benign environment that accords with the child's innocence and **purity**, from which he imbibes glimmerings of divinity, and wherein he can wander free from harm. The innocent Jan of "The Miller's Thumb" (AJ II: 1873) has no need of medicine ~~or~~ toys in the healthy windswept plains of his childhood. His innate artistic genius develops as he makes paintings out of coloured leaves, sketches pigs in a neighbouring

<sup>1</sup>Children, Their Health, Training and Education (1879), p. 123.

farm, and watches the sun rise and set. In contrast, his guilt-ridden father, who abandoned the infant Jan to foster parents, welcomes the bustle of the city:

To have been alone with his thoughts in the country would have been intolerable. The fields smack of innocence, and alone with them, the past is apt to take the simple tints of right and wrong in the memory (p. 580-581).

The city represents in children's fiction a range of experiences and temptations alien to child nature. City children, contemporaries concurred, were more likely to be precocious or worldly than their country cousins.<sup>1</sup> The evils of the city necessitated constant vigilance to protect children from contamination. Even in the idealized world of children's fiction, the urban child's realm is circumscribed by guardians and attendants. He cannot roam city streets the way he might country lanes. At every turn temptation or danger beset him. In "Only a Penny" (LF III: 1872) a little girl, away from her country home, feels the urge to steal for the first time when alluring shop window displays catch her eye. "All this was new to me," the author explains through her heroine's confession, "for in my old country home there were no shops, and I never had the need of money to wish for it before (p. 369)."

Residual evangelical suspicion of the City as the root of evil combined with the Romantic association of children and nature to produce the overwhelming predominance of rural over urban settings in the periodical tales of the 1870s. Though the Census of 1851 proved England to be largely an urban nation, the fictional vision of child life continued to be a rural idyll.<sup>2</sup> Children's authors seemed incapable of imagining

<sup>1</sup>In "Social Influences on the Rising Generation", the St. James's Medley (1862), pp. 289/90, compared the innocent country child to the young urban sophisticate whose fancy costumes and juvenile balls destroyed "the simplicity of thought and feeling that ought to exist in childhood."

<sup>2</sup>Raymond Williams in The Country and The City (1973), p. 216, cites the Census of 1871 which showed that over half the English population were town dwellers and after 1871, resided in towns of over 20,000 people.

ideal childhood in any but a rural environment. Whether or not they believed their readers to be intimate with bucolic joys, they evidently wished to make a country childhood part of their reader's imaginative experience. They urge their readers to pity urban children like Agnes, a London clergyman's daughter in "A May Day Story" (AJ: 1872) for whom "... spring hedges and banks, meadows and woods, were like a book ... [which] ...she might dream of, but never open...(p. 401)." They invite their audience to participate as initiated members in blackberry gatherings, hay harvests, nutting expeditions, may pole dancing and winter skating with the **implicit** assurance that these traditional pleasures were still universal components of childhood.

But there were more than aesthetic, nostalgic and moral impulses behind the consistent choice of rural settings for children's tales. Magazine story writers added a social evaluation to the contemporary reverence for rural innocence. Alongside his birthright of goodness and purity, the child of fiction was innately genteel. Rural settings allied young heroes and heroines not only to the moral order of country life, but also placed them in the social order of a paternalistic hierarchy. Country estates and rural vicarage homes proclaimed a young hero's respectable social status.

Portraits of idealized children, heroes and heroines of physical beauty and personal charm living in idyllic settings, served a variety of functions for their creators. The genteel child's innate sense of honour, his inability to lie or deceive, relieved the author of the discomfitting task of restraining his character with harsh discipline. Putting a positive construction on his noble character, an author could view high spirits and naughtiness as an essential part of a finely bred personality. In "A Great Emergency" (AJ XII: 1874), a dog fancier philosophically excuses the adventurous runaway hero, remarking, "The better the breed, the gamier the beast (p. 40)." Exploration of his impeccable motives, even when his actions are wilful or mischievous,

enabled authors to demonstrate to their readers what a child should be and how he should feel. Intended to inspire emulation, these story-book heroes and heroines also prove the justice of the prevailing social order by displaying the personal attributes that merit privilege and leadership. In "Into the Mischief Again" (LF n.s. VII: 1878), even the bovine farm labourers can appreciate the special qualities that distinguish little Courcy from their own children:

They had an instinctive sense of the exceeding preciousness of this bright young life, and could form some notion of what he must be to the grandfather and grandmother . . . This spirited little fellow, with his winning ways and love of fun and daring, was felt to be cast in a finer mould than most; it was no bit of common earthenware, but a piece of porcelain, more costly, and therefore to be more tenderly handled (p. 263).

There was a danger that excessively overwrought depictions of glamorous children might alienate readers who could only compare themselves unfavourably to their story-book idols.<sup>1</sup> However, most authors were careful not to discourage their readers' identification with fictional protagonists. Their heroes and heroines were not young aristocrats. They came from refined and comfortable homes, perhaps wealthier than the average reader's own, but not so remote as to preclude emulation. Moreover, their conception of innate gentility was ambivalent enough to afford middle-class readers the hope that they might be one of nature's elect. For instance, the servant in "Little Katie's Friend" (LF VII: 1874) pronounces Katie a "natural lady" even though her hardened aunt and cruel, gluttonous cousin are hardly worthy preceptors of the social graces. "Some on us is born ladies, and some on us is made into ladies by fine clothes; and every now and then there's a lady springs up natural-like in out-o'-the-way places (p. 314)."

Always defined vaguely, even in children's fiction, gentility could be a source of middle-class insecurity, fostering doubts in the reader's

<sup>1</sup>Evidently Mrs. Molesworth feared that readers might suffer from reading too many stories about remarkably endowed and privileged children. This anxiety did not prevent her from creating some of the most idealized heroes of this genre. Her remarks were noted by Cadogan and Craig, You're a Brick Angela, a New Look at Girls' Fiction from 1839-1975 (1975), p. 55.

mind about his own qualifications. But it could also be a source of comfort, assuring readers that their personal identity and sense of refinement was inalienable even in adversity. The popular formula of the well-born foundling showed that the seeds of gentility flourished even in the stoniest ground. "Wee Willie Winkie" (LF n.s. III: 1876) and Jan of "The Miller's Thumb" (AJ XI:1873) are both children of mysterious origins, adopted respectively by a rough Cornish fisherman and a coarse miller. Both display from the first their innate refinement, instinctively avoiding the companionship of the common children around them. Willie "seems to see much more in heaven and earth than was ever visible to the matter-of-fact folk around him (p. 212)" and even Jan's feeble-minded foster mother can see the difference between Jan and her own rough brood:

She knew enough of the manners and customs, the looks and intelligence of the children of educated parents, to be aware that there were 'makings' in those who were born heirs to developed intellects, and the grace that comes of discipline, very different to the 'makings' to be found in the 'voolish' descendants of ill-nurtured and uneducated generations (p. 195).

In the end both foundlings find and claim the position in life their inborn attributes qualify them to fill.

The ideal child of juvenile periodical fiction possesses from birth the potential for ideal citizenship and social leadership. His nature predisposes him toward goodness, but this did not signify that he was free from faults or immune to temptation. Mid-Victorian children's authors scrupulously distinguished between the follies of childhood and the shortcomings of individual personality and tactfully handled both within the context of their tales. They demonstrated an appreciation of the various stages of child development and allowed that a young child, however much he may wish to be good, may not be capable of controlling his behaviour at all times. The author of "Tim's Tin Can" (LF V: 1873) excused her five year old hero's disobedience, explaining:

He was too young to have any distinct idea that it was his own disobedience which had brought him this trouble, but now he began to have a vague idea that the wisdom of older people was to be respected (p. 220).



Childish fears warrant especially sympathetic treatment. The authors who treat the irrational fears of little children, whether of animals, the dark, or strangers, try to show their readers that these failings are both common and conquerable. The hero of "Like a Little Man" (LF VII: 1874) or the heroine of "Alone in the Dark; or, Gertrude's Victory" (LF IV: 1874) overcome their fear of the dark, not all at once, but gradually, with encouragement from their parents. Lois in "My Pink Pet" (AJ XVI: 1878) is too shy and reserved to find pleasure in company and buries herself in fantasies built around a treasured pink shell. "I could not bear being laughed at, and I intensely dreaded my brothers getting hold of my favourite (p. 30)", the author confesses. In the first person, this author enters into her heroine's abject misery when her sister accidentally breaks the shell. Lois learns through her experience to trust her sister's love for her and to attach her affection to her siblings rather than mere objects.

Writers of tales for mid-Victorian children's magazines, then, encouraged their readers to combat their childish peccadillos and failings, but they decidedly discouraged children from attempting to assume the airs and independence of adults. "Independent Eric" (LF n.s. II: 1875), the eight-year-old son of a Cornish country gentleman, is impatient to escape the nursery company of his four-year-old twin brothers and go to public school. But when his mother allows him to experiment during a day of complete independence, he finds he is incapable of dressing himself, mending his toys or feeding himself. Frustrated and disgruntled, Eric gratefully relinquishes his "independence". Similarly Beatrice, in "A Little Mistake" (LF n.s. IV: 1876), longs to be thought 'plucky' so, instead of going along with her nurse to meet her mother in Bradford, Beatrice alone travels with her little sister. The two girls end up in Bradford, Yorkshire instead of Bradford-upon-Avon, are mistaken for two new pupils and are taken to a dreadful girls' school. Instead of saving the price of her nurse's train fare, Beatrice's fiasco engenders considerable worry and expense for her mother. In the end, she must acknowledge her ignorance and dependence.

Most of these lessons against premature independence are light-hearted. No serious events transpire and the mishaps are more amusing than tragic. But sober-minded authors wished to impress their readers with a firm sense of their own vulnerability in a dangerous world and to impel them not to venture beyond their family territory. Gipsies and tramps figure frequently as child thieves, sometimes taking only their victim's clothes, other times recruiting them as labourers or beggars. "Poor Nelly" (LF n.s. VI: 1877) is abducted by an evil servant to replace her absent employer's dead child. Without friends or relations, Nelly is helpless. The author warns her readers:

Children are taken such care of, and always have so many kind and loving hands to tend them. They are dressed, and undressed, and fed and taught, and led out and played with, and praised and scolded, and they are hardly ever left alone (p. 161):

For the most part, children's authors were reluctant to frighten their young readers or to inform them too graphically about the evils of the world. The anthropomorphic tale, where the reader identified with the adventures of an appealing little animal, proved the most agreeable vehicle for demonstrating the value of home protection. "The Mouse That Went to See the World" (LF n.s. VIII: 1878) is a typical example of this convention. The hero encounters terrible dangers in the form of cows and cats and traps. His experience teaches him to appreciate his comfortable little home:

The world is full of traps and gins baited with toasted cheese to tempt the simple, but it is not such a bad place for some, the great and the wise, who have eyes to see ... small creatures were intended to fill small corners where the great ones can't come; let everyone keep to his corner (p. 238).

This double-edged message preaches contentment to all small, simple creatures, whether their dependence is a temporary function of age or the permanent position of the humble. At the same time it offers children at least the prospect that their time in the world will eventually come.

Innocence and Experience

"The world is very evil", wrote G. M. Young, imaginatively entering the Victorian mind: "An unguarded look, a word, a gesture, or a novel, might plant a seed of corruption in the most innocent heart, and the same word or gesture might betray a lingering affinity with the class below."<sup>1</sup> Though Young explicitly described the Evangelical world view, his words set out the problem faced by all Victorian children's authors, a problem exacerbated by the Romantic polarity of innocence and experience. As we have seen, mid-Victorian children's authors wholeheartedly subscribed to the doctrine of childhood purity and in their stories shielded young children from a corrupt world. At the same time, they aspired to show their readers the experiences of child characters in the process of becoming socially defined individuals, adjusting to the world and, in time, taking their place in society.

It was a commonplace of mid- and late-Victorian fiction for adults to employ the image of innocent children as a lash with which to flay contemporary society. The inexorable result of the convention of the pure child in an evil world was the death of innocence, whether corporeally or spiritually. Rather than attempt to project the future of the child in a changing society, they resorted incessantly to the formula of early death. If innocence triumphed in this way it was only by default. It was a bleak forecast of the future that Victorians embraced if their ideal of human perfection was unfitted by his nature for life in his own society. Analyzing the bathetic use of obligatory youthful deathbeds, an historian of Victorian conventions indicted the society that so relished them: "This exclusion of the child from the corrupting ways of adulthood, suggests a growing consciousness of the nature of that society's failure and is, to a

<sup>1</sup>G. M. Young, Victorian England: Portrait of an Age (1953), p. 13.

large extent, a confession of decline.<sup>1</sup>

It was neither fair nor productive to consign the rising generation to oblivion. Moreover, the death of a child in adult fiction had little to do with his personal development. Children were usually minor characters whose demise furnished the ultimate punishment for errant adults. Writers for a mature audience were less concerned with the problems of children themselves than they were in contemporary social dilemmas.

In children's stories the emphasis is reversed. Children's authors had to maintain continuous commitment to their juvenile characters whose experiences form the essence of their tales. Social issues appear only as a framework with which to teach traditional moral responses. In periodical tales, authors indicate territories of moral and physical danger so that their readers might find the path to harmonious and fulfilling life.

Certainly it was not the intention of mid-Victorian children's authors to dissuade their readers from ever growing up. The 'Peter Pan' syndrome came later. Since the underlying rationale of writers of children's tales was to explain and justify the prevailing social order, they could hardly depict growing up as a process of inevitable corruption. Nevertheless, the transition to adulthood was a theme few children's authors were able to handle altogether successfully. Most of them preferred to concentrate on the child's world, moving into the separate realms of boyhood or girlhood, but leaving adulthood shrouded in mystery.

In many ways adulthood served for mid-Victorian children's authors as the replacement for the afterlife of evangelical children's fiction. Portentious augurs of trials and sorrows to come shadow even the lightest tales of carefree childhood. Much as they wished to nurture blissful happiness in youth, they did not care to leave their readers ignorant of their good fortune or its fleetingness. The nostalgic lament of the

<sup>1</sup> John R. Reed, Victorian Conventions (1978), p. 168. Peter Covenay made a prior and more thorough analysis of the psychological implications of the Victorian literary image of childhood in Poor Monkey; the Child in Literature (1957).

narrator of "Lizards" (AJ XI: 1873) is typical:

Seventeen years have come and gone since I paid my last visit to my friends, and since then I have had a large share of trouble, anxiety, and suffering, but often through hours of weakness and loneliness, the memories of those free childish rambles rises fresh as a pleasant dream; and though I may never again be permitted to turn a fresh page in the book I used to love so dearly, the recollections of what I have read there will be ever one of my richest treasures (p. 186).

The causes of trouble and sorrow are seldom specified. The reluctance of children's authors to imperil their reader's innocence and happiness with graphic accounts of adult misery is understandable in view of their conception of child development. Nevertheless, their vague hints may have been more disturbing to their readers than explicit information. Thus presented, the future became unknown and frightening and recurring references to "poor dear mama" or images of brave gentlemen cheerfully shouldering mysterious burdens of sorrow only added to the general impression of menace. What authors did make clear was that childhood was the time to prepare one's character for storms ahead. Just as the author of "Lizards" drew on her stores of childhood pleasures to console her in unhappiness, the author of "The White Shell" (AJ X: 1872) warned her readers that a **cruel** or thoughtless act in childhood may poison future life:

O children, remember that a fault of to-day, the action of a moment, remains a grief for ever - a standing stain, which, if you do forget for a while, will be brought back to you in the end (p. 677).

The obvious elements of self-pity and nostalgia for the loss of childhood's spontaneous joy was a fixture of all Victorian fiction. But children's authors turned the convention to didactic account. The fall from innocent grace is inevitable, therefore they used their tales to impart to their audience some sense of what they might expect from the world and how they should judge it. It is important to stress that it was a generalized world view and not a particularized analysis of contemporary society that emerges from these children's tales. The "Wonderful Spectacles" (LF IV: 1872) presents a forceful exposition of the cosmic outlook underlying juvenile periodical fiction. On her birthday, a seven-year-old girl is so thrilled by all her presents and the wonderful time she had

with her friends that she crows to her mother: "I don't think I shall ever be unhappy again! Do you think I shall, mama (p. 10)." Her mother gently points out that mere presents will not preserve her happiness even while she is little and still less so when she is older. That night she dreams of visiting a fairy palace. There the Queen of the Fairies gives her some spectacles that turn the glittering palace into a wretched hovel, the beautiful fairies into crones and cripples.. The Fairy Queen tells her that the lenses of the spectacles represent "Disappointment" and "Experience" and that when she is older she will not be able to remove them. Next morning her mother interprets the true significance of the dream of "Wonderful Spectacles": "I'll try and show you how to use them properly, for though we all have to wear them, it very much depends on ourselves how much they affect the brightness of things around us. (p. 12)."

Their suspicious and apprehensive view of the world made it imperative that children's authors warn their protected readers not to trust their own untutored impressions. The lesson of Maria Edgeworth's classic eighteenth-century tale, "The Purple Jar", still had relevance in the 1870s. Many authors merely transposed the elements of poor Rosamund's sorrow when the beautiful jar she chose above sensible shoes was, after all, only a chemist's flask containing nasty liquid. "Learning Not to Judge from Appearances" (LF I: 1871) reproduces Edgeworth's pedagogical methods even while it mutes the rationalistic heartlessness. Seven-year-old Barbara humiliates herself and her parents when she grandly offers a shilling to a shabbily dressed woman visiting her mama. The woman is really a great lady who spurns outward show in order to devote all her resources to philanthropy. Her father resolves to teach his daughter a lesson, offering her a choice between a gaudy picture book and a plainly bound volume. Barbara's disappointment when she discovers the worthlessness of her choice is so heart-rending to her parents that they console her with a strawberry tea.

Tales of circus or sea life were the most popular means of disabusing children of alluring but dangerous fantasies. The child who runs away from home to partake of glamorous adventures with jolly sailors or

glittering circus dancers invariably discovers brutality, hardship, poverty and dirt behind the facade of tinsel. The titular heroine of "Maggie's Disobedience" (LF I: 1871), after a one-day stint as a circus dancer, "learned a lesson which made her more loving and obedient to her dear parents, and more thankful for the comforts of her home (p. 15)."

Naturally children's authors did not expect their readers to emulate the exploits of their misguided adventurous heroes and heroines. They did intend them to profit by vicarious experience and apply the lessons to more quotidian circumstance. Though they scrupulously avoided controversial subjects which might damage their readers' innocent confidence, they tacitly agreed with the author of "Children" in Chamber's Journal that "A certain amount of experience is necessary to teach a child its proper place and its limited power, and to reconcile it thereto."<sup>1</sup> In tales about young children a narrow range of experiences sufficed to secure conformity to lenient expectations of infantile virtue. The interim stage of development, an age grade for which the Victorians lacked precise definition, was more problematic. Authors had to show how their ten to sixteen-year-old heroes and heroines shed the carefree ways of childhood and adjusted to the stringent code of contemporary social decorum.

The ways in which children's authors depicted the formulation of ideal character is symptomatic of their attitudes to the methods and goals of child-rearing, their view of the family, and their outlook on the world. Even though they idealized child characters and invested the most fundamental moral and social virtues in child nature, they recognized personality problems that existed in individuals and that grew more pronounced as the child grew older. Girls could be selfish or jealous, boys wilful or impetuous and these characteristics left unchecked could disrupt family and ultimately social harmony. Authors rejected both material rewards and

<sup>1</sup>"Children", Chamber's Journal (1863), p. 178.

corporal punishment as vulgar and ineffective incentives or deterrents. Moreover, they were unwilling to dim the sentimental image of the family by making parents the agents of formal punishments and rewards. They effected the reform of fictional characters by showing how transgressors of the moral code brought misfortune upon themselves and their loved ones. Conversely the virtuous acts of young heroes and heroines strengthen their families. "The world" deals out justice to the individual. The family is passive but the manipulation of sentiment surrounding it serves to heighten the psychological force of punishment and reward.

That experience proves the best teacher is a universal truism prevalent in all children's literature. Mid-Victorian children's authors, however, rejected the simple logic of cause and effect that distinguished cautionary tales in the past. The boy who plays with matches in the periodical stories of the 1870s does not burn himself. He is far more likely to hurt his adored baby sister as in "Eddie's Disobedience" (LF VI: 1873) or his prized pet rabbit as in "Not I!" (LF I: 1871). In "Claude's Temperance Lesson" (Ch: 1870), sampling his father's wine did not occasion Claude's own misfortune. His tipsy four-year-old brother suffers an accident which leaves him permanently handicapped. The guilt attendant on hurting a loved one branded a psychological wound the miscreant would never forget.

But even a 'once-removed' relationship between crime and punishment was too straightforward for most mid-Victorian children's authors. According to their lights, the world is a mysterious realm harbouring hidden dangers. Once an individual strays from the path of duty and conformity he is vulnerable to punishment from unforeseeable quarters. A predictable relationship between cause and effect was not sufficient to communicate their convoluted sense of cosmic order. Moreover, mere behaviour modification through positive or negative reinforcement did not satisfy their ultimate goals. They used the events of their stories to effect far-reaching personality reform. The protagonist whose character



does not meet their ideal must radically alter his or her outlook, restructure his or her motives and responses as a result of bitter experience. "Alice's Jealous Cousin" (LF II: 1871) is a typical example of a formula reproduced in all these magazines. The central character, Carrie, is a competitive, clever girl, consumed with jealousy of her good and pretty cousin, Alice. First person narrative technique reinforces the reader's identification as Carrie describes her feelings of resentment in many minor frictions. The conflict climaxes when Carrie, to demonstrate her independence, disobeys her mother and visits a friend. What Carrie does not know is that her friend has scarlet fever. Carrie infects her whole household and, thus, brings about the death of her beloved youngest sister. "I had needed a sharp lesson to show the wickedness of my pride and truly I had one", confesses the author penitently. That the lesson had virtually nothing to do with the fault did not trouble this author or her conventional colleagues.

Authors allocate rewards consistent with this world view. When Isobel in "A Very Ill-Tempered Family" (AJ XIII: 1875) makes a supreme effort to control her temper and persuades her brother to stay home, she "saves" his life. Had he departed in anger to London he would most certainly have perished in a train accident in which all the first-class passengers died. The heroine of "The Great Waterfloods" (LF n.s. III: 1876) saves her own life in a similarly indirect way. During a violent storm she conquers her own timidity and bravely goes to comfort her crippled cousin. Later she learns that the hut she had cowered in alone has been struck by lightning.

Clearly, the Puritan concept of Providence operated beneath the surface of these formulaic tales. Even though children's authors in the mid-Victorian period wished to liberate children from the inheritance of original sin, they did not free them from the assumption of absolute personal responsibility. Concentrating on one individual, authors almost cavalierly disposed of younger siblings to sculpt the character of their

protagonist. The idea that "great things hang on little hinges" was the underlying message of many tales and forms the motto of a long serialized novel, "Little Hinges" (LF n.s. VIII: 1878). The precocious tom-boy heroine, Charlie, constantly disrupts the peace of her family with her wilful quarrelling and disobedience. Her loving parents give her every encouragement to reform her errant ways, but Charlie requires a change of heart in circumstances beyond her family's control. During a family crisis, Charlie disobediently greets a visitor who has the power to resolve her father's troubles. But Charlie's unthinking prattle gives this gentleman, the owner of the bank her father directs, the wrong impression and he leaves **angry** and disappointed without seeing Charlie's father. Wrongly accused of embezzlement, her father must go to Australia to support his family. Meanwhile, mother and children face a life of radically reversed circumstances, dependent on the charity of relatives. But Charlie's faults are not cured, nor are her trials over. Taunting her little brother with cowardice in another disobedient escapade, Charlie leads him to tumble into a pond. Consequently, little Bertie catches his death. Before he finally expires, he protests in delirium against her charge and the author wrings her heroine's and reader's hearts in this lachrymose scene:

What would she give now, never to have spoken those unkind words which had grieved him so greatly as to keep other thoughts out of his mind even when he was dying? Ah! dear children, do think of poor Charlie and remember that her sad case may be yours. Your brother or sister is strong and well now, but if he or she were to be taken ill and die, what would you not give to recall the unkind words and actions that you knew to be so grievous! Stay them before it is too late (p. 138).

On the surface, there appears to be little difference between this sort of warning and the harangues that religious magazines continued to level at their readers. Nevertheless, the source of fear this author wields is not for personal safety or salvation. She manipulates family feelings to twist the emotions of her readers. Moreover, Charlie's psychological nemesis is not directly related to God's will, nor is her soul being prepared for another world. Charlie's tragic experiences prepare her

to conform to and fulfill the requirements for life in her own society. When her father finally returns from Australia, he pronounces a newly subdued and chastened Charlie to be "much improved". The implicit conclusion of this child novel is that all the troubles Charlie inflicted indirectly upon her innocent family were worth the price of her rehabilitation.

A counterpointed theme in this convoluted novel gives a positive example of conduct to readers. Charlie's gentle sister, Edith, through her unselfish acts and sensitivity to other's feelings, paves the way to the restoration of domestic security. Edith's patient kindness to an unpleasant invalid child so touches the heart of this unfortunate child's father that he confesses his own guilt in the bank fraud that ruined Edith's father, who can then return to his position with his reputation once more intact.

The child reading this or similar tales in his entertaining magazine was not asked to contemplate the way that the mysterious Being ordered events so as to punish the sinful and reward the good. Children's authors did not try to teach him to predict the consequences of his actions good or bad. Knowledge of the world they felt to be beyond their readers' and even their own understanding. The security of the home was the reward and the ideal which emphasized the chaos and uncertainty in the world outside. What authors did demonstrate in the course of their stories was a model of behaviour and an outlook towards the world which would secure the best interests of the individual, his family and ultimately society. In contrast to their fond tolerance of childish follies and naughtiness, mid-Victorian children's authors imposed rigorous standards of behavior and motive on their older juvenile characters. Boys and girls had separately defined codes of honour which authors tested in distinct circumstances. Heroines found their challenges in the context of home and family life. Boys moving away from childhood entered a new world. In both spheres of activity inside and outside the home, heroes and heroines displayed or attained the attributes of character that qualify

them for their future social and sexual roles.

### The Girl at Home

A mid-Victorian commentator on children and their reading confined his attention strictly to the male moiety of the child population with the excuse that, whereas boys inhabit their own world with distinct interests, rules and experiences, girls are merely in transition between childhood and adulthood: "With them, from the moment of emerging from the nursery to the auspicious moment of 'coming out', too often is all a dreary blank."<sup>1</sup>

Recognizing that girls and their day-to-day problems were too commonly ignored, a new generation of writers for girls made a spirited attempt to create meaningful and dramatic tales in their magazines. They tried to inflate the passive virtues of ideal girlhood - self-sacrifice, patience, and forbearance - to heroic proportions, to elevate domestic conflicts to monumental trials, and to infuse excitement into the home front and fire their readers with zeal to fulfill woman's mission. Nevertheless, the narrow compass of a respectable girl's life severely limited the range of themes authors could draw upon. The only experiences a heroine could encounter outside the family without compromising her innocence and purity took place in private girls' schools. Some were virtual prisons, others surrogate homes, but all were exclusive of the world outside. The vast majority of periodical tales for girls concentrated on a heroine's experiences within her home and her relationships with members of her family. In the well-to-do environment of the typical story-book household, it was difficult for authors to claim tangible roles and duties for their heroines that did not impinge on their mother's domain. Temptations to selfishness, frivolity and idleness beset young ladies of fiction. To give young female protagonists aspirations and a sense of usefulness and

<sup>1</sup>Rev. I. Gregory Smith, "Books for Children", The North British Review XXI (1854), 403.

importance to their families without encouraging ambition for independent achievement was the challenge facing the author of domestic stories for girls.

Since girls, as mothers, would perpetuate in their own families the prevailing domestic ideals, it was doubly important that authors enlist the allegiance of their young female readers. Curiously, though, these periodical contributors did not address their readers ~~or~~ treat their heroines as wives and mothers in training. A Victorian young lady's complaint that "girls are not educated as if they were one day to be women, but as if they were always to remain girls" applied to their informal education, conducted through entertaining magazines, as well as their formal schooling.<sup>1</sup> The marriage of a heroine is virtually unheard of in the sample magazines, intended for six to sixteen-year-olds. That heroines would surely become wives and mothers (or perhaps not so surely in those days of 'surplus' middle-class women) may have been the implicit assumption of their creators. But in the meantime, authors groomed their fictional young ladies for service in the families of their birth.

"The dependent daughter was one of the fundamentals on which the mid-Victorian home was based", wrote W. L. Burn in The Age of Equipoise.<sup>2</sup> Certainly, advice manuals, popular periodicals, and even novels exhorted young ladies to devote their lives to helping their ~~mothers~~ and entertaining and serving their fathers.<sup>3</sup> However, the family relationship that children's authors most emphasized in their stories for girls was not the duty of child to parent but the sibling bond between brother and sister.

<sup>1</sup>Miss Mudie's objection was cited by Josephine Kamm, in Hope Deferred: Girls' Education in English History (1965), p. 167.

<sup>2</sup>W. L. Burn, The Age of Equipoise (1964), p. 251.

<sup>3</sup>Mrs. Caroline A. White, "Mamma's Right Hand", The Household (1866), 365-368, or Mrs. G. S. Reaney, English Girls, Their Place and Power (1879), are typical sermons on filial devotion.

The reverence a daughter owed her parents was a rubric laid down in undisputable Biblical law and social orthodoxy. But a brother's precedence over and his claims upon his sisters were not canonized. When Frank in "A Brave Heart" (S: 1873) protests that "Eve was made to wait upon Adam...", his sister quickly counters, "Ah! but Adam and Eve were husband and wife, we are only brothers and sisters. It does not say that Cain's sister waited on him, and I don't believe she did (p. 98)." After the familiar equality of nursery days, the changing relationship between growing girls and boys in a family could engender resentment, misunderstanding, and acute irritation if undirected. Children's authors outlined a sisterly code of conduct that minimized strife between brothers and sisters and preserved the vital calm of their homes. Through kindness and forbearance, girls set the tone of the sibling liaison; through service to their brothers they elicited the protective chivalry due them. The love a sister inspired from her brother created a permanent bond, welding a boy's heart forever to his family, however far he may wander in later life. Moreover, though authors do not overtly develop the analogy, a girl's tactful combination of deference and guidance prepared both her and her brother for their future marital relationships.

"Girls are of No Use!" (Ch: 1874) was the facetious title which set off the mood of a Chatterbox tale. William taunts his sisters with their apparent uselessness but discovers their worth when he comes home on the servants' day off to find a cheerless tea set out hastily by the charwoman, no "snowy cloth", and the fire cold. All have a good laugh as William teases, "Of course we can't do without you... Anymore than we can do without our slaveys. You are our slaveys, we want you in that way (p. 407)."

In the context of a family joke, a boy might refer to his sister as a substitute servant and require her services to mend his clothes, repair a kite or sailboat. But most authors were careful to distinguish a sister's services from a servant's. The duties of companionship and

guidance were more consistent with their ideals of model girlhood. Young Effie, in "A Party at Number Five" (LF n.s. I: 1875), dedicates her leisure to devising games to divert her brother, George. The children have recently moved from the country to London, and have only a back yard to play in and no friends. George is bored and lonely and wishes to meet the neighbours immediately. As a female, Effie grasps the intricacies of social intercourse more quickly than her brother. "That is not the fashion in London. Indeed, Georgie," she explains, "It would be too forward, what people call pushing - and no one would like us for it, or really wish to know us. (p. 108)." Eventually Effie wins companions for her brother by saving the neighbour's cat. Her kindness secures an invitation to the party next door.

Heroines were to make home life as pleasant as possible for their brothers. They were also to encourage their brother's success in his activities outside the family. "Grace's Essay" (AJ IX:1871) exemplifies a popular structure of events which points out the indirect path to feminine achievement. Grace is a gifted writer but it is not her literary talents but her deficiencies in piano playing and courtesy that her governess emphasizes. She is constantly compared unfavourably to her cousin Henrietta, whose unselfconscious grace charms all she meets. When the governess sets an essay competition, Grace confidently hopes for redress. As it happens, little domestic duties retard her progress and on the last night before the deadline, brother Jack entreats her to help him study for an examination. Grace relinquishes her chance of personal success to guarantee her brother's. She loses the essay competition but wins her mother's esteem. "You were quite right to help your brother. I would far rather see you kind and helpful than have you gain ever so many prizes; and I am very glad you can forget yourself for him (p. 494)."

Authors emphasized the qualities of "unselfconsciousness" and self-forgetfulness in their heroines. To exercise feminine influence girls must be insensible of their power. "Princess Lina" (AJ XIII:1875) learns

this lesson. Her many brothers chivalrously concede all the wishes of their only sister, but Lina's wants are small. But when she overhears her mother telling a friend that Lina seems to know so well how to exercise her rights and that she has a civilizing effect on the boys, Lina instantly becomes conscious of her power and spoils it. She commands her brother to accompany her on a walk and when he refuses she independently sets off alone. Fortunately she meets the new curate and tells him her grievance. He laughs at her interpretation of her mother's words:

"Rights of women in the nursery! What is the world coming to (p. 479)."

His own gentle solicitude to his sister and his explanation of their relationship, "Who could forget one who never forgets others and never seems to remember herself (p. 480)?", convinces Lina to resume her former undemanding ways of securing her "rights".

The contemporary issue of women's rights enters the children's periodicals only in jokes. But the threat to the status quo resulting from girls aspiring to realms beyond the traditional distaff warrants sterner treatment. When "Cornelia Clinker Tried to Exercise Her Reason" (LF I: 1871) she brings nothing but trouble and chaos. Cornelia is a great student who plans to attend university. Visiting her country cousins, she criticizes the feminine governess, whose curriculum does not satisfy Cornelia's academic tastes. What is worse, Cornelia disobeys her aunt. Because Mrs. Brown gave her no reason for a veto on visiting a certain poor family, Cornelia concludes that there can be no real harm in it. She goes ahead with her independent charitable mission and consequently infects herself and the household with scarlet fever. The maligned governess nurses her back to health. Her aunt enunciates Cornelia's lesson for the benefit of readers: "I think you may now see, Cornelia, how a little advice and direction from an older and wiser person is worth more than the ideas which you can form in your own mind from what you call the exercise of your reason (p. 228)."

It was not the learning that authors objected to in their misguided



bookish heroines so much as the unfeminine ambition that so frequently accompanied it. In "The Song of Harmony, and How Laura Tried to Sing It" (AJ IX:1871), the author shows how an intelligent, high-minded **girl** could channel her learning and ambition to better serve her family. Inspired by Pythagoras's "Music of the Spheres" theory, Laura strives to smooth all notes of discord between herself and her teasing brothers. She succeeds in quelling her own irritation and establishes a warm cooperative relationship with the boys. Later, when their various careers take them to India, South America and the high seas, Laura's influence knits "a web of closeness that distance cannot undo (p. 667)". Thus, an ideal sister like Laura could hope to counteract those economic, social and imperialistic currents that separated family members and dispersed them throughout the country and the world.

But personal ambition directed outside the family inevitably conflicts with a story-book girl's primary obligations. The would-be artist character occurs frequently since sketching and drawing were feminine activities relevant to the experience of a reader of genteel education. "Honor Bright" (Ch 1878) is convinced she has real talent, so she devotes all her time to drawing and allows her overworked brother to take on her household responsibilities as well as his school work. In the end, an Italian master discovers Brian to be the artistic genius of the family and Honor finds her own reward in the love of her motherless little brothers and sisters.

Another story, "The Children of St. Nicholas" (AJ XIV:1876), overturns the conventional resolution but not the message of this formulaic plot. Corinne cherishes the hope that her brother will become a painter like their dead father. Throughout her childhood, Corinne shields her brother from her aunt's scolding, hides his faults, and even represents her own pictures as his. But when a gentleman learns the truth of her skill he patronizes her and she becomes a great artist. With her gift she is able to support her weak and unworthy brother even in adulthood.

Setting her tale in France, the author of "The Children of St. Nicholas" could allow her orphaned heroine to earn her own living without challenging the sexual division of labour. In the English social context, middle-class heroines virtually never contribute anything to their own or their family's support. Fathers and brothers retain an inalienable obligation to maintain their female relatives. In view of their aggressive defense of female duties inside the home, it is not not surprising that authors do not encourage outside paid occupations for unmarried girls. What is curious is the scant attention they pay to their heroine's governesses. Children's authors preferred home training to outside schooling for the girls of their tales. In this context they frequently refer to a resident governess but seldom describe her. The popular pathetic figure of the governess in contemporary adult novels and magazine articles suffered a fate which many of the middle-class girls reading children's periodicals might one day share. Nevertheless, children's authors were evidently reluctant to acknowledge this aspect of a girl's future. In a rare instance of a heroine becoming a governess, a loyal chivalrous brother in "Was He a Coward" (LF n.s. V:1877) rescues his sister from her unhappy situation and establishes her as mistress of his own home.

It was not just the unpleasant prospect of a girl serving in a family not her own that discouraged close scrutiny of governesses in children's fiction. The peculiar position a governess occupied in her employer's family was complex and difficult to handle tactfully.<sup>1</sup> As an educated woman superintending the education of young ladies, a governess's duties overlapped with a mother's. As we shall see, children's authors allowed no interference in the maternal bond. Moreover, a bad governess could do immense harm. In "Six to Sixteen" (AJ V:1872),

<sup>1</sup>For a discussion of the position of the Victorian governess see M. Jeanne Pedersen, "The Victorian Governess: Status Incongruence in Family and Society" in Martha Vicinus, ed., Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age (1972), 3-19.

an irresponsible, novel-reading governess, hired for only a few months, enflames the romantic fancies of an adolescent girl. Mathilda takes many years to overcome the ill-effects.

Governesses, then, are not role models in girl's fiction, even though their age and circumstances may affiliate them more closely with their pupils than a girl's mother. When a plot demands the appearance of older young lady to be a sympathetic guide, they usually choose an aunt, whose social position accords more naturally with the heroine's own.

Like governesses, school mistresses are not obvious role models for heroines or readers of periodical tales. However, their characters are more distinct than the personalities of household governesses. Because a girl going to school was temporarily out of her mother's care, the "tone" established by a school mistress was of the utmost importance to a girl's development. The anxiety about inadequate and even harmful schools for middle-class girls issued from children's magazines as well as the contemporary periodical press.<sup>1</sup> The preference of children's authors for home education was a conservative response to the deficiencies in provision for female education. It also reflected their ambivalence about the proper goals of female training. Most authors agreed with Mrs. G. S. Reaney who wrote in 1879: "It is at home in the daily, hourly, home life, that the English girl gathers her experience and fits herself for the large sphere of usefulness and influence to which her womanhood entitles her."<sup>2</sup> Thus, they considered alternatives to domestic education for their heroines only when their parents were overseas or their personalities created problems

<sup>1</sup> Harriet Martineau, for instance, condemned the ubiquitous 'select establishment for young ladies' which pandered to parent's social aspirations but did little for the pupil's mental or physical culture. She praised the examples of good girl's schools in America and France and insisted that there was no need for state intervention to supply education for middle-class girls. See "Middle-class Education - Girls", Cornhill, X (1864) 549-568.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. G. S. Reaney, Englsih Girls, Their Place and Power, (1879), p. 22.

at home. Boarding school was a punishment for the haughty and wilful "Little Empress Joan" (LF n.s. II:1875), Kate of "Kate Leicester's School Days" (S: 1874) and Ursula of "Ursula Swayne's Troubles" (GWY:1870). All of these heroines went to ostensibly acceptable institutions, but all encountered disturbing experiences with other girls of a character they would not have met in their own homes.

A similar conflict occurs in "Two Fourpenny Bits" (LF n.s. IX:1879) when a spoiled West Indian girl, the niece of the exemplary school mistress, disrupts the pure atmosphere of Chelmsleigh House. Before Louie Lincoln's arrival Mrs. Midhurst accepted only six pupils so that all would remain "healthy and happy and good." So domestic is the character of the school that the author protests "...indeed, I am hardly correct in calling it a school, for Mrs. Midhurst's little establishment could scarcely be reckoned as one. (p. 2)."<sup>1</sup> There are few rules at Chelmsleigh House "...for Mrs. Midhurst says it is a bad plan fencing children round with laws - it is almost like inventing faults for them to commit (p. 4)."

In contrast to Mrs. Midhurst's liberal regime, the two spinsters who run the dreadful girl's school in "Six to Sixteen" (AJ X:1872) delegate an intrusive French governess to supervise constantly their pupils and allow them no privacy or leisure. Confined to small, crowded, ill-ventilated rooms and regimented urban promenades, the health and spirits of Eleanor and Margery rapidly decline. Girls as much as boys, this author insists, need space and exercise and a measure of freedom and trust if they are to be healthy in mind and body.

<sup>1</sup>This author's negative defense of her fictional "little establishment" accords with the modestly genteel aims of the typical Victorian private school mistress which M. Jeanne Pedersen examines in her article, "School Mistresses and Headmistresses: Elites and Education in Nineteenth-Century England", Journal of British Studies, XVII (1975), 135-162. According to Pedersen, school mistresses aspired to a "leisured amateur role in a secluded, quasi-domestic setting."

The content of a girl's education was not of major interest to the children's authors of this period. Professional training was irrelevant to them since they did not envisage their heroines undertaking paid occupations. They accepted the ~~conventional~~ curriculum of languages, drawing and dancing without comment on its deficiencies. More important than the syllabus was the manner in which teachers conducted their lessons. In "Aunt Tabitha's Waifs" (LF VIII:1874) the heroine's spinster aunt is an inspired teacher whose patrons trust that their daughters "might be grounded not only in book knowledge, but also in that less easily obtainable knowledge of kindness, thoughtfulness, and pleasant gentle manners (p. 85)". In the opinion of most of these authors, girls schools, where they are necessary, should foster feminine graces and virtues alongside academic accomplishments. No heroine, however talented, is encouraged to excel in any one subject. Overall proficiency and well-rounded accomplishment is the goal of the story-book girl's education. Thus, in "Ursula Swayne's Troubles" (GWY: 1870), M. Jeanneton pays no attention to the clever competitive Ursula who outranks all other students. But when she accidentally upsets an inkstand he reprimands her sharply: "Awkwardness is not pardonable in a woman (p. 334)." He takes an interest in her after she saves his pretty little daughter from a bull. His advice to her rearranges her priorities about a young lady's proper aims. Succeed in the little things in life, he tells her, and do not wait for great opportunities to show your talents.

Female writers sympathized with heroines like Ursula whose talents and yearnings seemed to outdistance the compass of their probable futures. They usually treated the ambiguous longings of adolescent girls seriously but directed them into traditional channels, discouraging personal ambition without dampening spiritual aspiration. In "Christmas Holidays at Everton" (AJ X:1872), a visit from her lively and well-educated young aunt transforms Maude's mental horizon:

Now to Maud, for whom life had, till now, meant nothing more than the trivial round of everyday occupations- lessons, walks, needlework, and storybooks - such talk seemed to open a whole new world, and a world so large and full of interest that the old one, in which she had lived contentedly until now, appeared, when contrasted with it, quite intolerable in its narrowness and pettiness (p. 630).

She finds it difficult to readjust to the dull vista of her secluded country life and longs for challenge. Aunt Fanny, herself, has actively battled against the despondency of a potentially idle, well-to-do life style and tries to give Maude the benefit of her experience. Her advice is not to resist or change the circumstances of life but rather to alter one's perception of it. Duty is the only route to fulfillment, Aunt Fanny reiterates, but duty need not be onerous:

...people who think very much of duty, and who have got hold of the notion that duty and pleasure are opposite things, are apt to argue in this way: "If this is my pleasure, it can't be my duty. I must live to do my duty, and so I must give up pleasure in general, and this pleasure in particular", and so they deprive themselves, and very often other people too, of pleasure, and neglect their duty at the same time (p. 492) .

Great opportunities for heroism may befall any one of us and we must be ready to meet them, Aunt Fanny continues, but even if the grand test of character never transpires, by doing well in small day-to-day trials, we shall fulfill our duty.

However, though these authors repeatedly emphasized the importance of the small duties a girl performs in her home, they were at a loss to delineate them specifically. The task was easier in the modest household typical of a magazine like Sunshine. Irene, the principle character in "The Brave Heart" (S:1873), "liked to be useful, and in those many small household matters which one servant is obliged to neglect, Mrs. Garland found her adopted little daughter a valuable assistant (p. 50)". Irene cheers her injured brother, minds the little girls and even has a moment of dramatic heroism when she saves the baby from a fire. But like so many heroines "not content to lead the idle, commonplace life that some girls do (p. 4)", Irene must learn patience and contentment with her lot in life.

A writer addressing the problems of the daughters of prosperous homes strained to devise meaningful occupations for her heroines. In "The Girls of the Square" (AJ XIV: 1876), the author contrasts a quartet of heroine types to show how young ladies in similar material circumstances might experience life altogether differently according to their attitude. Pearl, the favourite, is a busy, happy girl helping her mother, playing with the children and entertaining her brothers and father. Her friend, Lily, is decidedly "blue". She singlemindedly pursues "self-culture" and ignores the needs of her family. Her ultimate goal is to serve her family in some large way but "by-and-by was long in coming, and meantime all pleasant household duties seemd to have slipped from her - such duties as helped to fill Pearl's day, making her an important member of the household, one whose presence was necessary to the happiness of the others, and whose absence would be felt by all (p. 592)". Polly, another girl in the London square, is an "old fashioned girl", brought up with her sister by an over-protective grandmother. She is too timid but has the potential for womanly virtue: "Polly's independent actions were few. She followed her sister's lead in all things - or thought she did, being in this and every other time in her life, quite unconscious of her own gentle influence...(p. 330)." Whereas Polly at least has Hester to serve and submit to, Eva, an only child, is idle and lonely. "The thought in her mind was that if her mother had lived, she too would have had someone to 'fuss for', for mothers know that daughters cannot be happy unless they have some niche to fill in their home, something depending on them, and which concerns the comfort and well-being of the family. In Eva's luxurious home everything was done for her (p. 269)."

"The Girls of the Square" exemplifies the domestic tale of girl life, bringing together the various temptations and malaises that might afflict an upper middle-class girl. The central event of this story is a literary competition instigated by the literary Lily. In the end none of the contestants proves Lily's hypothesis that girls are capable of a

"sustained mental effort", and the reasons behind their individual failures highlight each girl's weaknesses and strengths. Lily finishes her poem, but, in her haste and untidiness, misplaces her poem. Her mischievous brothers secretly substitute their own satirical doggerel to humiliate her. Eva, never given any responsibility, cannot summon the determination to finish hers. Polly is so dismayed at competition with her adored sister that she destroys her poem and preserves the harmony between them. Pearl makes her endeavour a family game and produces a fine piece but disqualifies herself because she perceives an unfair advantage from the help of her Oxford-educated brothers. When the literary judge, Lily's Uncle Rivers, reads the counterfeit of Lily's submission, she is embarrassed and ashamed but swallows her pride and admits her faults. Her friends vote her the prize, not for her literary talent, but for her good nature. A reformed Lily gratefully accepts a tribute to a common "domestic virtue".

Despite their sympathies for the frustrations of well-educated and well-off young ladies, the tame resolutions mid-Victorian authors proposed and the ambiguous roster of duties they indicated did not convincingly fill "the dreary blank" the North British Review discerned. Nor could contemporary commentators devise alternatives. The vituperative "Girls of the Period" controversy, sparked by Mrs. Lynne Linton's articles for the Saturday Review in 1868 castigated the modern girl for her superficiality and frivolity. A more sensitive social analyst, writing for MacMillans' Magazine in 1869, answered Mrs. Linton's complaints, explaining that girls were unfitted by their education and social position to enter any sphere of activity beyond the whirl of morning calls, balls, and tea parties. "We know ... none better ... the deep degradation of the life we live; but none but God and our own hearts can tell how bitter is the struggle in most cases before we submit in utter hopelessness to the



yoke imposed upon us by fashion".<sup>1</sup>

Authors of domestic tales for girls were so constrained by their own ideals of genteel home life, even in fiction, that the possibility of a girl extending the circumference of her experience and activities was not to be entertained. Even charity work, a traditional outlet for feminine energy, was problematic since it might bring a protected girl into contact with the poor before she was mature enough to resist contamination. As we have seen in the case of *Cornelia Clinker*, authors objectified moral contagion by the physical threat of disease. Moreover, zeal for charity could interfere with domestic duties. In "Maude's Discipline" (AJ VIII:1870) Agnes, a clergyman's daughter, ignores her cousin while she visits poor parishioners. Her mother rebukes her neglect of Maude: "My dear...never put a work of charity in the place of a simple duty; you will always find self at the bottom of that...(p. 376)".

The authors of domestic tales for girls sensitively delineated a heroine's passage from the gay irresponsibility and high spirits of childhood to the subdued gentle character of a model young lady. Many of these story-book girls were fully-drawn individuals, with unique dispositions, talents and faults. But since the ideal of feminine virtue lay in self-restraint and conformity, the individual girl character usually devolved into a stereotype. Moreover, try as authors might to stir their readers' emotions, their choice of plots was not conducive to excitement. Reviewing the works of female authors of domestic dramas, Edward Salmon commended the achievement of a few, but wistfully observed that: "Girl life hardly lends itself to vigorous and stirring treatment in the manner that boy life does".<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>[Penelope Holland], "Two Girls of the Period. I. The Upper Side", MacMillans' Magazine, XIX (1869), 323-331; quoted by Nana Rinehart, "'The Girl of the Period' Controversy", Victorian Periodicals Review, XIII, nos. 1 and 2 (Spring and Summer, 1980), 5.

<sup>2</sup>Edward Salmon, Juvenile Literature As it Is (1887), p. 124.

Nevertheless, though ordinary life at home was difficult to enliven, mid-Victorian authors of periodical stories managed to devise situations to test their heroine's womanly virtues in dramatic circumstances. When death and disaster combine to threaten her family's unity and integrity even the most delicate girl in fiction can rise to the challenge. As we shall see, in fulfilling a mother's role, a girl could become simultaneously a true heroine and a woman in service to her family.

### The Boy's World

In his home, the boy in children's periodical fiction was a privileged creature. In contrast to his sister, who had to begin to contribute to the domestic environment as soon as she left the nursery, the boy was a passive recipient of the peace and love that infused his family. Authors tolerated a boy's pranks and mischief long after they required sedate and decorous conduct from girls. Certainly they expected their young heroes to treat their sisters kindly, but they excused a certain amount of tyranny over sisters and even overlooked the occasional outburst of rudeness. The conciliation and yielding necessary to stabilize the sibling bond issued entirely from the sister's side. This sexual differentiation in child-rearing protocol was the norm in most domestic magazine tales. The author of "Benjie in Beastland" (AJ VIII:1870) raised a lone protest against its injustice:

Perhaps when the boys of a family are naturally disagreeable, the fact is apt to be too readily acquiesced in. They have license that no one would dream of according to the girls, but it may sometimes be too readily decided that boys will be boys in the most obnoxious sense of the term. . . . (p. 459).

Few young masters were as cruel and thoughtless as Benjie, who mistreated every living thing he encountered. Nevertheless, children's authors and child-rearing theorists concurred that girls learned the lesson of self-sacrifice more easily than their brothers. The St. James's Medley, for instance, held that a boy ". . . is usually born "masterful", as nurses say, and . . . reigns a little king in the nursery with sisters

ever ready to give up their own will and pleasure to the little potentate." Authors and theorists could be comfortable with this ostensibly inequitable arrangement because it was of limited duration. "The poor little dethroned monarch," continued the commentator for the St. James's, "when first landed in a public school, must suffer many a hardship before he finds his level."<sup>1</sup>

Sooner or later, every boy will face his trial in the world outside his family. The school represents the first test of his character. In fiction, the values a boy absorbs from his home environment and the love he receives from his parents and siblings bind him to his family and give him the strength and integrity that will sustain him in his ordeal. Many authors pity their young heroes as they send them into the fray. Frank, in "Gilbert's Shadow" (LF V:1873), is overjoyed at the prospect of going away to school, but his creator disabuses her readers of any similarly fanciful notions: "Poor Frank", she interjects, "his knowledge of school life had been chiefly drawn from books, where the romance of school life rises like cream to the top, and all the milk and water and chalky sediment falls to the bottom (p. 324)."

Perhaps such intimations were consolation for the many magazine readers, boy and girl, who would never participate in the prestigious adventure of boarding school experience. Though the "public school boy" was, in reality, a member of a minority elite, he became the "type characteristic" of English fiction for children and adults.<sup>2</sup> The editors and authors of the magazines surveyed for this study did not aim at an exclusive school boy market. The school boy "type" had social relevance for a group far larger than the public school population. Moreover, heroes in children's periodical tales attend grammar schools as well as public schools and it is a measure of the triumph of the public school ideal that, in fiction,

<sup>1</sup>"Social Influences on the Rising Generation", The St. James's Medley (1862), p. 290.

<sup>2</sup>J. R. de S. Honey makes this point in Tom Brown's Universe, (1977), p. 163.

there is little difference between these institutions. The mythology was so well-established and the conventions so well-worn that female authors could assume the guise of reminiscing old boys and slant their "memories" to suit their own didactic purpose. Thus, the anonymous female author of the "War of the 'Roses'" (LF n.s. VIII: 1878) began her tale:

Never mind how many years ago it is now since I was a little fellow at a big school, and had just got over my first attack of homesickness, and was beginning to take pride in the fact that I was emancipated from the girls' schoolroom, and had learned to take the rough as well as the smooth without wincing (p. 144).

Despite their avuncular tone and vicarious indulgence in school boy lore, the typical school story in the magazines of the 1870s portrayed a serious ordeal. So ominous was the vista of a boy's life at school in some tales that one might ask why authors so willingly consigned their tender heroes to such a fate. It was not the prospect of social advancement that lured them, for authors establish their heroes' gentility and social status by their birth and home education. Nor was the classical curriculum an attraction. The formal content of public or grammar school education was not an issue in these tales. Authors sent a boy character away to school because the enforced separation from home and family was a crucial catalyst to his metamorphosis. It was essential to the authors' social and moral design to show how a boy rose to the challenge of life outside his family without sacrificing his moral integrity. As Edward Salmon observed, ". . . school stories may discharge a very important function in assisting boys to overcome the trials and resist the temptations of school life."<sup>1</sup>

According to a recent historian of the public school, parents who could afford the fees invariably sent their sons away to school, in spite of the real threat of disease, moral contamination and cruelty, because ". . . of the emergence of a powerful new value in Victorian society which the family was itself powerless to generate: manliness."<sup>2</sup> This explanation

<sup>1</sup>Edward Salmon, Juvenile Literature as It Is (1888), p. 84.

<sup>2</sup>Honey, pp. 208/9.

applies, within limits, to the situation in fiction as well. Yet the masculine traits encouraged by mid-Victorian school boys tales differ from the definition of manliness that held sway in the later period. Moral courage rather than physical prowess distinguished the school boy hero of the 1870s. The mid-Victorian generation of authors did not feel the repugnance for "effeminate" emotions or passionate friendships that revolted their successors. They allowed their heroes to express deep feelings and even tears in times of stress and encouraged their attachment to worthy individuals. It was the peer group "en masse" that gathered their suspicion and censure. If, as historians frequently state, the public school taught boys to exclude their family in favour of the peer group and to submerge their individuality in the team, this was a trend that children's authors resisted.<sup>1</sup> In the most typical formulae of school stories, the hero is isolated not only from his family but also from his peers. He resists pressure from his schoolmates, bears their taunts and accusations and remains true to his own code of honour. As the perfect type of moral and social leader, he eventually wins the respect of his fellows.

The school, as it figures in the children's fiction of the 1870s, does not offer an alternative to the domestic socialization of boys. Rather, it tests the ability of boys to internalize and act upon the moral truths they learned at home. Authors conceded that boys must learn to live in the public as well as the private realm... Thus, when delicate little Reggie in "Reginald's First School Days" (LF VI: 1873) takes leave of the nursery and prepares to go to school, he announces to his nurse, "It's going into the world, and my father says it is well for a boy to learn his level early (p. 362)." The school as a little world beyond the enveloping and protecting family was a favourite analogy. How the boy fared in this world depended chiefly upon his own performance.

<sup>1</sup>Rupert Wilkinson, The Prefects: British Leadership and the Public School Tradition (1964), argues that the public school experience taught boys to value themselves only as a member of a team, to refer their own judgment to that of the group and to rigidly separate family life from school life.

It was part of established school protocol that the school boy community should be self-governing and to this children's authors tacitly assented. A boy had to find "his level" among his fellows without the intercession of authority and sometimes this brought unfortunate consequences to a sensitive lad. The headmaster in "Roses From Thorns" (LF n.s. X: 1879) explained to Harry's guardian why the delicate child's health and spirits suffered at school:

We have a mixed lot you know, and some are very rough. We masters cannot interfere much, or try to set things right that go on in playtime, without doing more harm than good. So I was obliged, though very sorry to do so, to leave Harry to fight his own battles, which were sometimes, I fear, too much for him (p. 259).

When headmasters declined to superintend, it fell to individual leaders among the boys themselves to regulate the conduct of the school community. Those readers who did not attend proper public schools could mimic the example of Rupert, the hero of "A Great Emergency" (AJ XII: 1874). The son of a deceased Army officer, Rupert is a model young gentleman, but his mother could not afford the fees of a large public school. Fortunately the family lives near an old and famous grammar school where the sons of gentlemen mix with boys from trading and farming families. Dismayed by the dirty and dishonourable habits of some of his school mates, Rupert forms a committee and draws up a "code of honour":

The code of honour was to forbid a lot of things that had been very common in the school. Lying, cheating over bargains, telling tales, bragging, bad language, and what the code called "conduct unbecoming schoolfellows and gentlemen." There were a lot of rules in it, too, about clean nails, and shirts, and collars and socks, and things of that sort. If any boy refused to agree to it, he had to fight with Thomas Johnson. (p. 15).

However, this author makes clear that the most effective teacher of honour is not the fists of Thomas Johnson but the ridicule of the satirical Weston. The narrator of the story, the noble Rupert's own brother, learns very quickly not to boast about his illustrious ancestors. "Fifty thousand preachers in fifty thousand pulpits could never have taught me so effectually as Weston's ballad . . . (p. 19)".

Another school boy hero who forms a society to police his school's moral tone finds that "party spirit" does not answer the need. Carteret's innocent "Union Jacks" (Ch: 1873) resort to violence and injustice when the school bully forms a rival gang. The end result is a general brawl. Only one boy, the true hero of the tale, has the integrity to stand aloof from both parties, even though Carteret is his friend and champion.

If school is a microcosm of the world and a preparation for life in society, the hero has to learn to resist peer pressure. Public opinion, while a powerful lever of social control, was not the ultimate moral arbiter in these tales. Under the aegis of a noble school leader, individual boys might gain the inspiration to strive to be pure and good. The encouragement of his head boy raises the spirit of George in "March Winds and May Flowers" (S: 1874) more than an unjust accusation by his headmaster debases it. But boys collectively, according to most of these authors, are more easily swayed to evil by temptations and threats, than they are persuaded to good by praise. One bad character is more likely to poison his peer group than the group is to reform him. In "The Two Blackbirds" (Ch: 1878) school boys taunt a new arrival from the West Indies about his pro-slavery attitudes, but they are soon seduced by his ample pocket money and join him in drinking and gambling. The boy that these authors admire most has the courage to set his own goals or defend an unpopular cause in spite of the opinion of his peers.

Thus, the typical plots of school boy tales show the hero battling temptation and injustice alone. "Harry Maxwell; Or, School Boy Honour" (LF n.s. IX: 1879) exemplifies the "false accusation" formula. When charged with poisoning the master's dog, Harry refuses to defend himself or accuse another. He is expelled from school and suffers loneliness and disgrace in silence. However, Harry's nobility and kindness and even the remembered benevolence of his dead father, an Indian army officer, inspire others to come to his defense. Peter, a ne'er-do-well poacher, was touched by Harry's consistent courtesy in the past. He empathizes with

Harry's ordeal and explains the situation to an equally disreputable mate:

'Tis their character genelman looks to, you see, and the disgrace of it all! Even a little boy as is a genelman born and bred knows 'tis a bad business to get into such a **scrape** as to be sent away from school . . . it sticks to 'em, don't ye see, it sticks to 'em (p. 99).

Peter's friend, who witnessed the actual crime and remembered the kindness that Harry's father showed him as a young soldier, before his descent into drunken criminality, is persuaded to set things right. Mark's testimony compels a confession from the true culprit and Harry's name is cleared. Like a Christian gentleman, Harry forgives and shakes hands.

Harry and his kind, under duress, summon the moral courage to remain true to their innately genteel natures. The example of fortitude they set for their fellows was certainly a more effective means of reform, in the opinion of authors, than authority imposed from above. Even if readers could not personally emulate these noble heroes, it was important that they at least learn to recognize his type in a leader.

Another pervasive formula dramatizes the problem of choosing worthy acquaintances. The uncontrolled social relationships in a large school worried many of these female authors. "Tom's Opinion" (Ch: 1875), for instance, shows how misleading the popular assessment of character could be. When two new boys appear at his school, Tom, the narrator, instantly proclaims Harry, the son of a baronet, to be a "brick" and Hodgson, a poor widow's son, to be a cad. Harry displays all the stereotyped virtues of a boy hero: prowess at games, generosity, cleverness, ease of manner, and high spirits. The studious, reserved Hodgson does little to dislodge Tom's first opinion. Gradually, though, Tom suspects that Harry cheats in his lessons and is shocked when his idol wilfully breaks house rules. At the same time, he discovers Hodgson's secret devotion to his mother and sweet invalid sister and admires his ambition to provide a respectable life for them. Hodgson is content to do right in God's eyes and does not care for the good opinion of his fellows. Eventually Tom learns to respect Hodgson's quiet brand of courage more than Harry's conspicuous bravado.



Choosing worthy goals at school was as important an issue in these magazine tales as choosing acquaintances. In this dimension of a hero's experience authors were less concerned with his occupational choice than with his social and spiritual development. As we shall see, a boy's future career depended on his opportunities, personal inclinations, and his father. Moreover, authors designed their heroes' school experience, not as a prelude to personal achievement and success in the world, but as a preparation for moral citizenship. They were suspicious of boys like "Clever Frank" (LF n.s. X: 1879) who succeeded at school by deceit and swindles and went on to cheat his employer in similar fashion. In contrast to Frank's meteoric rise and ruin, his brother Geoff, ". . . got on what the world might call only fairly well. He had always been a plodding, industrious, conscientious sort of boy, with no wonderful talents, but with good ordinary abilities. He made no shine in the world except among his kindred, where he shone in an act of self-denying kindness that earned him their warmest gratitude (p. 276)". After his clever brother serves his term of imprisonment for embezzling, Geoff interrupts his own career to accompany his brother to America and establishes him in a new life.

The true hero of the mid-Victorian school boy story sacrifices personal ambition and public esteem for the sake of others. "Hero Bob" (LF n.s. IV: 1876) strives to earn the admiration of his peers in acts of bravery. An aspiring young soldier, he is determined to win the scholarship so that he can go to Woolwich and a glorious army career. But in helping his honourable friend, a poor clergyman's son, to win the scholarship, Bob fulfills a more mature and durable sense of heroism.

This type of school boy hero held fast to standards of personal integrity and honour in the face of peer pressure to conform or succeed. The private quality that authors most valued in their heroes and that was most vulnerable to the jibes of mocking school boys, was the individual boy's religious convictions. Ever since Tom Brown threw a pillow at a

bully who jeered at the pious little Arthur, the trials of religious boys among impious mates was a standard theme in school boy tales. Like Tom Brown's creator, astute children's authors in the mid-Victorian period realized that religion had to be made attractive to the school-aged boy reader, who was unlikely to be convinced by old-fashioned boy saints.

The author of "Glory" (AJ XIII: 1875) tries to make religion relevant to the school boy's situation. Gilbert, the hero, is a clever, generous boy, a leader in the school, anxious to retain his peer's admiration. His brother, Oswald, is withdrawn, conspicuously pious and, the author implies, hypocritical. Oswald's gloomy face and continual scoldings make no impression on Gilbert. "Indeed, he did his brother real harm . . . for Gilbert had often felt he could not bear 'to set up for good', if it would be necessary to become like Oswald first (p. 391)". Gilbert pursues a fleeting brand of "Glory" on the playing fields until at last he overtaxes his strength. His health ruined, Gilbert tries to come to terms with a less than glittering future and to reconcile his love of life and vigour with religious principles. At this crisis in his life, it is not his canting brother who comes to his rescue, but a kindred spirit and fellow house leader. Long articulates a "muscular" brand of Christianity, designed to appeal to the manly school boy hero. Speaking out "like a man", Long explains his religious beliefs to Gilbert:

I don't think St. Paul would have done half the good he did, or got on with fellows as one sees he used to do, if he had tried to be, or pretended to be, a muff. Those Roman soldiers did not like him because he was a saint, but because he was (there's no putting it in Bible language) a gentleman and a plucky fellow. Well, it seems to me that we, up at the top of this place here, should be as good in everything as we can, set an example in play, as well as work and morality, or whatever they call it, if we want to make it plain that to care about right and wrong does not make one a muff; and while one is trying to work for that, it all fits in somehow, and one feels afraid of nothing. Everything the fellows respect one for is a help for God's glory, I take it. Our life here is jolly, and why on earth need we take it into our heads to be miserable because all this is only for a time, but to lead us to something that is better still? Mayn't we thank God, and take what he gives us (pp. 402/403)?

The analogy of school days to earthly life is inescapable. There is no need to "turn your eyes up and your nose down" to be a good boy or a good man, Long assures Gilbert. By participating actively and joyously in the life before him and setting a worthy example to his peers, the moral and social leader of the school community or society at large does God's work on earth.

In their manly school boy heroes, authors of secular periodical fiction coined an ideal social type and placed him before their readers as a model to emulate and a leader to follow. Even if a story book hero's experiences at his public school did not have direct personal relevance for a reader, the discrete insular world of the fictional school allowed authors to foreshadow some of the pitfalls awaiting any boy away from home for the first time. In a situation analogous to the world but still separated from society, heroes could exercise their leadership qualities in a community of equals. For these reasons, the school setting dominated fiction for boys in the mid-Victorian children's magazines.

However, the kinds of apprehension authors betray about their young male characters leaving home and family to go to school has significance for other events in a boy's life. The young man beginning his working life is more alone and vulnerable than even the tenderest school boy. No rules constrain his freedom, no head boy reminds him of his duty. The attractions of the society of his peers are more insidious because they are completely uncontrolled. The young clerk requires prodigious stores of internalized virtue to overcome the temptations of independent working life. The author of "March Winds and May Flowers" (S: 1874) aired her fears about Julius, an orphan whose uncle encouraged him to leave school early and begin to make his way in the world. A studious old bachelor, Uncle Richard gives Julius complete liberty in the evenings after work:

Now this freedom was not exactly good for him. He was a tolerably steady boy, well principled and averse to anything low; still, the liberty to choose his own companions, and to join them in anything they chose to suggest, exposed him to temptations he sometimes found it hard to resist (p. 42).

Julius lacks the courage to decline his companion's invitations to questionable places of amusement and gradually sinks into debt. He even succumbs to the urge to pocket a fee meant for his uncle.

Fortunately at this nadir of his moral progress, his sympathetic sister elicits a confession from him. Effie sacrifices her own little hoard to clear her brother's debts but prompts him to admit his crime to Uncle Richard. With a clear conscience, Julius is able to make a fresh start in the right direction.

Another tale about workaday tribulations, "Little Sid" (Ch: 1874), contrasts the characters of a young commercial traveller and a public school boy. The hero, Sid, suffers an accident at school which renders him permanently crippled. Just as he is beginning to adjust to his handicap, his apparently wealthy father suddenly dies and leaves him a penniless orphan. His aunt, a poor but worthy widow, willingly adopts Sid, but his cousin resents the young intruder, whose superior education and demeanor distinguish him as a gentleman. Though just beginning his professional career, Wil is already entangled with debts and deceit. He pretends to his mother that his work absorbs all his time and masquerades his lavish expenditure as necessary to maintain the reputation of the firm:

You see. . . a commercial must do things which an ordinary clerk need not do. He must - in fact - he can't help spending money. If he goes about pinching and being niggardly, why of course men would say the firm couldn't afford to pay him, and that wouldn't do (p. 291).

Meanwhile Sid bears his trials bravely, pathetically studying so that he might qualify as a school usher. Wil is secretly amazed by Sid's fortitude and comes to him when dishonour threatens to overcome him. At this climax, Sid readily signs over to Wil the small legacy his father's executors secured for him and thus clears his cousin.

Though the two examples outlined above do not show the young working man as an admirable hero type, there were tales where a clerk exhibited the same manly virtues that distinguished the glamorous school boy hero. In "Roger Grave's Decision" (Ch: 1870), a young clerk resists the temptation

to follow his companions to more lucrative openings and gives up his marriage plans so that he can help his employer during a financial crisis. He uncovers the deception of an untrustworthy accountant and claims an important position in the firm and wins his bride.

For the most part, however, it is not the so-called employee virtues - diligence, perseverance, punctuality and loyalty - nor the achieving qualities of the self-made man that these authors promote in fiction. They revere the qualities of leadership, fortitude, self-sacrifice and moral courage that the school boy displays more dramatically than the young clerk ever can. But both types of hero need the moral sustenance of a happy and secure home environment to carry them through their trials and adventures in the world. Even when immense distances separate him from his loved ones, the hero carries within him the moral virtues his family represents. The emphasis on domestic values intensifies as authors acknowledge that the young males of middle-class families might well be dispersed throughout the world. Emigration, we shall see, is generally a family undertaking in the magazine tales of this period, but the author of "Rollo" (S: 1879) sends her hero out to the colonies alone.

There are some penalties attending even upon national prosperity, and not the least of them is that with prosperity the population increases, and there is not room for all of us to dwell in the land, and hence comes ever more and more of those terrible partings, which at the time seem scarcely less sad than death itself (p. 137).

Rollo becomes a valuable citizen of his new world because the love of his parents and especially his sister fosters his moral integrity. But even though Rollo conducts himself admirably, his creator contrives to send his sister to join him and recreate the family setting in a new land.

New Zealand or Canada or even a London counting house were a long way from the private world of innocent childhood. Authors recognized that the boy needed a period of isolation from his family in order to develop the qualities of independence and courage he needed to make his way in the world. The school represented a ritualized "rite of passage" which diverted away from the family all the tensions inevitably attending the

transition between childhood and adulthood.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, even though boarding school life had relevance only to a minority of readers, it was an essential component of the growing-up process in the boy's story-book world. In one dramatic stroke the fledgeling school boy leaves his carefree childhood and happy family to enter a new life and take on a new status. The values and virtues of his younger days in the secure bosom of his family become crystallized in his memory and internalized in the core of his character. Thus, if while a boy at home he enjoyed license and privileges and the loving solicitude of his parents and sisters, it was necessary preparation and consolation for his future struggles in school and in the world.

<sup>1</sup>J. R. de S. Honey applies van Gannep's observations about pre-literate societies to the public school situation. See "Tom Brown's Universe", in Brian Simon and Ian Bradley, eds., The Victorian Public School: Studies in the Development of an Educational Institution (1975), p. 22.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE HOUSEHOLD AND FAMILY

An eminent representative of orthodox opinion, Lord Shaftesbury, placed the family at the heart of Victorian civilization when he wrote:

There can be no security to society, no honour, no prosperity, no dignity at home, no nobleness of attitude towards foreign nations, unless the strength of the people rests on the purity and firmness of the domestic system. Schools are but auxiliaries. At home the principles of subordination are first implanted and man is trained to be a good citizen. 1

Because of its centrality in Victorian society, the ideal of the family became the main symbol of the cultural mythology which sustained the prevailing way of life and which it was the function of children's literature to communicate to the young. It was a panacea for all social ills, a vigilant sentinel of fixed hierarchy and ordered ritual, the proper regulator and arena of social intercourse, a haven for purity and innocence, and the restorer of the worldly and weary. The intensity of all the aspirations and expectations that focused on the family made its health and vitality a matter of the gravest public concern.

So many virtues and beauties gilded the image of the Victorian family that its actual shape and location in the social whole was obscured. Historians now seek to discover the "behind-the-scenes" reality of the Victorian family and their interpretations are as various as their sources. The volubility of Victorians on the subject of the family furnishes abundant evidence to support any number of theories and diagnoses.

<sup>1</sup>Lord Shaftesbury was quoted by Anthony S. Wohl, ed., The Victorian Family: Structure and Stresses (1978), p. 9.

One group of social historians senses an atmosphere of "explosive intimacy" behind the Victorian ideal of domestic harmony.<sup>1</sup> They suspect that tensions between family virtues and worldly values strained the internal relations between family members. The tight, claustrophobic domestic circle allowed insufficient scope for individual development and the manipulation of sentiment surrounding the family built up enormous psychological pressure which had to find release outside the family.

Other historians contend that the nineteenth-century family adjusted favourably to the claims of modern industrial society<sup>2</sup>. It shed its outer layers of relations and dependents so that it was mobile and flexible enough to adapt to economic and social currents. It relinquished distracting exterior functions the better to concentrate on

<sup>1</sup>O. R. MacGregor's pioneering study of family breakdown, Divorce in England: A Centenary Study (1957), began the effort of historians to sift the reality of Victorian domestic life from the broadcast image of it. W. L. Burn's "selected Victorianism" in The Age of Equipoise (1964), was an enlightening historical exercise which warned historians not to take at face value the domestic propaganda of Victorians. Other historians, with the aid of not necessarily representative memoirs and novels, claim to have demonstrated that the Victorian ideal of family felicity was a sham disguising cruelty and exploitation. See, for instance, Stephen Kern, "Explosive Intimacy: The Psychodynamics of the Victorian Family", History of Childhood Quarterly, I (1974), 238-248; Priscilla Robertson, "Home as Nest: Middle-Class Childhood in Europe", in Lloyd de Mause, ed., History of Childhood (1975), pp. 407-427; and Lawrence Stone's epilogue, "Facts Interpretations and Post-1800 Developments", to his study, The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500-1800 (1977), which adds to the general impression of a rather brutal Victorian family.

<sup>2</sup>The adherents of Parsonian sociology put the most positive interpretation on the development of the nineteenth-century family, but recent historians reject their confident assumption of progress as too simplistic. Arlene Skolnick in "The Family Revisited: Themes in Recent Social Science Research", Journal of Interdisciplinary History, V (1975), 703-719, explains why the sociological theory of the 1950s and 1960s was insufficient to encompass the complexity of family development in history and outlines the most recent ideas of social scientists. Walter Houghton used Victorian literary sources rather than modern sociological theory to discover the Victorian family in The Victorian Frame of Mind (1957) but his sources lead him to the aspirations of Victorian thinkers rather than the real social situation. Philippe Ariès, in Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life, trans. R. Baldick (1962), offers a convincing analysis of family adaptation to modern conditions, though he does not celebrate the change.



affection and security to protect its young and comfort its alienated and dislocated members. "The nineteenth-century cult of the home", as one historian observes, "expressed the hope on which bourgeois society has always rested - that private satisfaction can compensate for deprivations suffered in the realm of work."<sup>1</sup>

Analyzing the structure and functions of the Victorian family, some historians tell a story of decline and loss of power as specialized institutions usurped the family's authority as school, workshop, church, hospital, reformatory, and asylum. The family was unable to meet the challenge of urban industrial society. The defense of the family in the nineteenth-century was merely a "rearguard action", a vain attempt to preserve an obsolete institution.<sup>2</sup>

An alternative point of view holds that the Victorian family divested itself of one set of economic and social functions only to substitute another series of services. Under the auspices of "respectability" and "gentility", two concepts vague enough to afford wide interpretation and manipulation, the middle- and upper-class family became the major agent of social control and the seat of civic virtue.<sup>3</sup> The rigorous domestic discipline, self-imposed upon affluent and ambitious families, served to disguise the chaos and uncertainty of social relationships elsewhere in their society. The privilege of controlling access to private domestic gatherings gave the family dominion over the social hierarchy.<sup>4</sup> Only through the family and a carefully formulated pattern of life could

<sup>1</sup>Christopher Lasch, "The Emotions of Family Life", New York Review of Books, XXII, no. 19 (27, Nov. 1975), p. 40.

<sup>2</sup>Frank Musgrove, "The Decline of the Educative Family", Universities Quarterly, XIV (1960), 377.

<sup>3</sup>Christopher Lasch argues that the "forces of organized virtue" established the family's predominance in upholding decency. See: "What the Doctor Ordered", New York Review of Books, XXII, no. 19 (18 Dec 1975), 51.

<sup>4</sup>Leonore Davidoff, The Best Circles: Society, Etiquette, and The Season (1975), analyzes the social code, arbitrated by private families, which controlled access to the elite stratum of Victorian "Society".

social standing be improved or maintained. This put great pressure on middle-class families to ensure that their domestic life conformed to the moral and aesthetic standards their superiors deemed "genteel", or at least "respectable". Though these concepts originally served to divorce moral and social from economic status, they came increasingly to imply a certain level of expenditure and to engender a constantly inflating life style.<sup>1</sup> The family's economic functions then changed from producing goods and services to consuming them.<sup>2</sup>

So many conflicting aims and claims no doubt bewildered contemporaries as well as historians. Victorians worshipped domestic privacy and self-sufficiency yet, to proclaim their gentility, introduced strangers to serve at the very hearth of their homes. They dedicated the family to spiritual and non-materialistic values yet simultaneously enslaved it to consumerism in aid of "keeping up appearances". They quarantined their children in a private world to preserve their purity from contamination by lower class culture yet those who could afford to employed working-class servants to care for them. They withdrew from the public arena of social relations into private insular enclaves and then proceeded to draw in "Society" after them.

The children's literature of the period reflected the contradictions inherent in the Victorian ideology of the family, but children's authors tried to devise strategies in fiction to answer the contemporary dilemma of the middle-class family which was beset by conflicting aspirations and expectations. In their stories for children, fiction writers constructed a hierarchy of priorities that ordered the complex duties and loyalties which came within the thrall of family life and made them coherent and

<sup>1</sup>J. A. Banks, Prosperity and Parenthood: A Study of Family Planning Among the Victorian Middle Classes (1957).

<sup>2</sup>Patricia Branca, in Silent Sisterhood: Middle-Class Women in the Victorian Home (1975), argues that middle-class wives and mothers were responsible for leading their families through the social and economic transformations that redefined the economic functions of the family.

mutually reinforcing. Central to this hierarchy were the best interests of children.

In the world view promulgated by domestic periodical tales for mid-Victorian girls and boys, the family appeared as the only institution capable of protecting and nurturing children. All other claims upon family resources had to yield to this primary obligation. The intensely child-centred family was, apparently, the obsession of the times. At least one contemporary commentator wondered if the modern parent's worship of children did, after all, produce the most worthy citizens. Mary Carpenter observed that

. . . when we look into the details of family management, and see how constantly the children are made the one paramount object, how the mother's health, the father's convenience, the claims of relations, - all are made to yield to their wants, their amusements, their lessons, we cannot wonder if selfishness is added to arrogance. 1

Although the children's authors of the 1870s gave precedence to child nurture, they conceded that the family had an important role to play in society as well. Moreover, provided that external duties did not supersede internal obligations, the family's social responsibilities could contribute importantly to the education of its children. Ideally, the child absorbed from relations within his family a pattern of social life to which all his subsequent interaction would conform.<sup>1</sup> The fictional representation of exemplary domesticity outlined for the child his expectations of life style and the attendant responsibilities appropriate to his station in life. The protected middle-class child could not learn these lessons in the world at large. The family was the proper instrument of social training, parents the most suitable models for emulation.

How the children's authors of the 1870s described their fictional families and where in the social formation they placed them manifested transforming images of the family and ideals of social and self-definition.

<sup>1</sup>Mary Carpenter, "Our Modern Youth", Fraser's Magazine, LXVIII (1863), 121.

Since their audience was middle-class, children's authors drew most of their models of family life from various subsections of that class. Furthermore, the changing domestic customs of the mid-Victorian years affected the middle class more than any other. Children's authors acknowledged that well-to-do middle-class families would adopt the gracious style of living formerly reserved for the aristocracy. Household servants, sea-side holidays, public schools for boys and governesses for girls, and country homes discreetly dissociated from the work place had become essential components of middle-class aspiration, though not necessarily middle-class experience. These elements of the "paraphernalia of gentility" figured prominently in mid-Victorian children's fiction.

Moreover, in the domestic fiction of the 1870s, the middle-class family was no longer the narrow, inward-looking cocoon of the early Victorian period. Privilege and prosperity entailed social obligations, especially to dependents and social inferiors. Children's authors outlined for their readers the duties and activities which justified social position and retained for the family the right to arbitrate community affairs.

But even as they encouraged their readers to look upward for examples of culture and refinement, personal discipline and moral leadership, they retained the traditional middle-class assurance that domestic virtue derived from the family life of their own class. To demonstrate this conviction, children's authors frequently criticized aristocratic parents who put their public duties and pleasures before their private obligations to their own children.

Titled families rarely appear to advantage in children's tales. Opposition to the pattern of upper-class family life had long precedent in literature for middle-class children and the mid-Victorian juvenile

magazines carried on the tradition, more habitually than indignantly.<sup>1</sup>

The author of "Snap's Two Homes" (AJ XIII: 1875) related with more pathos than anger her tale about the contrasting experiences of her hero, a mongrel puppy, in his two homes. Snap's first mistress was the daughter of Lady Broomie, a fashionable gentlewoman who was careful to do her duty by her children but reserved her attention and affection for her pedigreed dogs. During the London season, Sybil became ill and, while her mother joined the select society at Brighton, she died. Snap ended up in the Home for Lost Dogs until he was chosen by the wife of a London doctor as a gift for her two children. He soon became a much-loved addition to the happy, middle-class household. The author connected her two plots by contriving a meeting between Lord Broomie and Mrs. Bayley. The great landlord, clever legislator, and strong politician took time out from his busy schedule to thank Mrs. Bayley for caring for his dear departed daughter's pet. The author exonerated Lord Broomie by describing his longing to join his daughter in heaven.

While mid-Victorian children's authors tempered their criticism of the upper-class family, there was a general consensus among them that too much wealth and too exalted a social position sapped the vitality and endangered the unworldly innocence of children. Spoiled by servants and neglected by their parents, aristocratic children in fiction were precocious, haughty, and lonely. Without specifically drawing the connection, children's authors implied by repeated instances that the hot-house atmosphere of opulent households invited crippling diseases. Tales like "The Man in the Cart" (AJ IX: 1871) aimed to dispel any envy that happy, healthy middle-class children might feel for their social superiors. The heroine, a country doctor's daughter, wistfully gazed at a glamorous young countess,

<sup>1</sup> Attacks on the aristocracy dated from the eighteenth-century moral tales for children. The radical democrat, Thomas Day, and his more moderate colleague, Maria Edgeworth, criticized the frivolity and dissipation of the aristocracy. From an entirely different perspective, evangelical authors like Mrs. Sherwood perpetuated the onslaught on aristocratic morality and privilege, exposing their sinfulness and godlessness.

languidly reclining in her private carriage. But Albinia's admiration turns to pity when her mother tells her that this young lady is motherless, crippled and miserably discontent.

Lingering condemnation of the injustice of primogeniture provokes another formula of fictionalized family conflict. Lord and Lady Arncliffe of "Roundwood" (Ch:1872) and the servants, tutors, and governesses they hire spoiled the eldest son and never allowed him to forget that he was the heir. As a result he was a conceited dilettante, whose shortcomings emerged more sharply when compared to his modest, honourable cousin, a clergyman's son. Similarly, Mr. and Mrs. Craig in "Before the Wind" (Ch:1872) lavished all their love on an unworthy eldest son. Since Gerald would inherit the estate, they educated him at a public school but left their younger son at home with a governess. Fortunately, the Christian governess taught James to rise above his resentment and find consolation in prayer.

The moral regeneration of this family transpired through catastrophe. Gerald, through his own wilful disobedience, took the sail boat out during a storm and disappeared. The now presumptive heir, James won the love and respect of his parents during Gerald's absence. Meanwhile Gerald is forced to earn his passage on a ship bound for Australia. Labour and hardship contributed to a reformation of his character and when he returned he was more appreciative of his good fortune.

Despite their sporadic censure of aristocratic regimens of childrearing, it was not the intention of secular children's magazines to undermine the authority of social leaders. Titled individuals in fiction often set a peerless example for inferiors and readers. Lady Arncliffe of "Roundwood" (Ch:1872) may have been an indifferent mother, but she was a model gentlewoman:

Tall and very elegant and with such perfect ease of manner that her tone did not seem to vary whether she was speaking to the very highest or lowest in rank. Nor was it outward courtesy alone that charmed; but the tenderest care for other's feelings, and a knowledge of what the poor suffer, which was quite wonderful in one who had been brought up amid every luxury and indulgence (p. 210).

In depicting the family lives of the upper classes, the authors

of periodical tales aimed to demonstrate that the wealthy and titled did not necessarily possess the key to happiness and virtue and that exalted social position carried obligations that could interfere with domestic harmony. Lord and Lady Arncliffe of Roundwood love their country home and like the "fashionable sort less and less", but ". . . fashion orders rich people to leave the country when it is at its most beautiful, and to go through a certain amount of dinners and exhibitions and so to London they go (p. 210)."

At a time when the top echelons of the middle class began to merge socially and politically with the aristocracy, children's stories reflected the symbiosis by giving the plutocracy and aristocracy essentially the same treatment. The "true bond of loving sympathy without which home is scarcely home" is missing from the domestic life of both. Moreover, children's authors imply, barrenness and ennui inhibit the realization of satisfaction for the overly affluent. For instance, "Marion's Choice" (AJ XIII: 1875) offers this portrait of a rich banker's home:

Placemere was the name of my uncle's house, a nice commodious, new-fashioned place, standing in pleasant grounds, not over grand, but thoroughly comfortable. Nobody understood better than my Uncle Fred how to surround himself with everything that makes life easy and luxurious. The best cook, the best dinners, wines, furniture, books, pictures, flowers, and horses that money could purchase were to be found at Placemere, and yet with all this my uncle was not content: he had lost his only child, and wishing if possible to fill up the void, he prepared to adopt me, provided I took his fancy (p. 582).

But money cannot buy Marion. She chooses her poor but genteel grandmother over her selfish, wealthy uncle.

Though the upper middle class was prey to the ills of the aristocracy, they were not necessarily subject to the discipline and duties that regulated the lives of the landed elite. Children's authors reserved a special lesson for the "captains of industry", namely, that social service justifies privilege. The country gentry inherited dependants along with its estates, and custom prescribed its obligations towards them.

The urban elites, children's authors insisted, should follow the lead of their superiors, not by copying their life style and fashions, but by fulfilling the obligations of leadership towards their employees. In "Nailton Factory" (Ch: 1871) Mr. Otway invests his social aspirations in his son, buys him a country seat and educates him at Oxford: "There, if anywhere, a man who is only rich soon comes to be despised: and the poorest man, if only he have a large heart, finds friends (p. 67)." Hence, while mingling with his betters, the boy imbibes a spirit of social responsibility and rejects his father's plans to make him a landed gentleman. Instead, he devotes his learning and leisure to projects of rational recreation to improve the lives of the Nailton factory hands. Similarly, Ida, the heroine of "Aunt Millicent's Charge" (S: 1876) resists her mother's dream of making her an accomplished ornament and shows her true gentility by helping the poor and creating a harmonious home atmosphere.

The old evangelical formula of the converted child leading its parents to salvation reverberates through these latter-day tales. But the gospel is more secular than religious: its message promulgates social service.

The children's authors of the 1870s decidedly opposed the divorce of wealth from social responsibility and social control. Presumably the 'nouveau riche' in England had the omnipresent example of conscientious elite groups to direct them to the path of duty. Children's authors evidently preferred to imagine the well-to-do English middle class family setting a beneficial example and seeking out deserving candidates for relief among their poor neighbours, rather than flaunting their riches in vulgar ostentation. Social climbing drained the resources and energies of middle-class families which ought to flow back to their employees. In most cases they conspired to ignore the social status obsessions of the middle-classes or to ridicule them mildly in anthropomorphic tales. In "The Diary of a Tortoise-Shell Kitten" (LF II: 1871), a pretty newcomer



makes herself objectionable to a distinguished dog of ancient lineage with her alternating flattery and snobbery. She fawns on the rich relations and slanders the servants until she finds herself exiled. Toots, the hero of "Toots and Boots" (AJ XIV: 1876), comfortable and pampered by his bachelor Captain, is an accomplished rationalizer when homeless cats apply to him for assistance.

In a more sober mood, children's authors imputed to wealthy West or East Indian regimental families all the frivolity and license of irresponsible prosperity. The social situation surrounding these families in fiction is utterly artificial. They have no contact with native society beyond their abjectly sycophantic servants and nothing to justify and occupy their leisure but shallow inbred social life. Their privilege carries no redeeming obligation.

Ultimately it is the children of such families who suffer most. The indolence produced by hot climates and slave-like servants is inimical to the health and character of young people and introduces a taint which poisons their moral outlook. The innocent son and daughter of Major Villiers learn the meaning of the word "Spoilt" (AJ XV: 1877) when they meet the appalling de Courcy Seymour, newly arrived from India. His ineffectual mother excuses his villainous treatment of English servants by citing the numerous disadvantages of Indian nurses, but it is clear that she herself is equally spoilt.

More serious treatment of this theme occurs in "Two Fourpenny Bits" (LF n.s. IX: 1879) and "The Two Blackbirds" (Ch: 1877). In both cases the children of West Indian officers shamefully mistreat servants, bribe their peers with overabundant pocket money, and betray the vices and worldliness of precocious adults. In "Six to Sixteen" (AJ X: 1872) Margery Vandaluer escapes any lasting corruption from Indian army life when her parents die of cholera and she goes to live in a Yorkshire vicarage. But even at six years old she has witnessed a baser side of social relations than her surrogate sister, the vicar's noble-minded

daughter, believes possible. In India she saw "gentlemen lie...like the proverbial pickpocket" and "customers cheat as much as shopkeepers" and a great deal of frivolous gossiping "society", but she knows almost nothing of family life or mother love until her guardian adopts her. Indeed, the only cure children's authors envisaged to rehabilitate the characters of spoiled West or East Indian transplants was to remove them from the languid tropical environment, and from their parents if need be, and integrate them into the salubrious atmosphere of a good English home with relatives or, failing that, a boarding school.

This is not to suggest that the children's authors of the 1870s resisted the implications of English colonial expansion. On the contrary, they saluted the family who settled in foreign parts and established a facsimile of English country life in the colonies. Canada and Australia were the most popular choices since their absence of a serving class necessitated hard work and outdoor exercise with no distractions to intimate family life. The vigorous Australian settler's life provides a tonic to the ills of a pampered London family in "The Young Berringtons; or, The Boy Explorers" (LF n.s. VI: 1877). Captain Berrington, who has carved out a fortune sheep-farming, is about to meet his suddenly impoverished brother and his family. Warning his own stalwart sons and daughters that their cousins are accustomed to butlers, footmen, housekeepers, nurses, horses and carriages, and plenty of company, he remarks stoically:

They'll not have much of that out here; they will have to be their own servants, or consider themselves fortunate if they can hire an Irish girl or get a black gin to do the rough work (p. 36).

Forced self-reliance and rousing adventure eventually dispel the indolence of the haughty selfish cousins and even improve the health and character of their hypochondriac mother.

Another emigrant family finds fulfillment of a different sort in Ceylon. In "From Peril to Fortune" (LF n.s. V: 1877), when Captain Selwyn discovers that his uncle's unwise speculations have drastically reduced his inheritance, he resolves to invest the remainder in one of

England's numerous colonies. With him, the reader takes an instructive journey through Africa and Asia. But once settled, he assumes all the obligations of family man and social leader:

A sense of responsibility - a consciousness that they were there, not merely to make money, but to exercise a beneficial influence on their children and all around them - regulated the lives and conduct of Captain and Mrs. Selwyn; and the blessing of God rested on them and theirs (p. 359).

In England or in her colonies, the model family finds satisfaction and happiness in intimate family life and the exercise of benevolence.

The cumulative message of children's periodical tales extended a promise to readers that true fulfillment did not depend upon exterior conditions of wealth and position. Respectability derived from the practice of domestic virtue and was a status open to all. This universal attribute contributed an underlying unity to a society of distinct and ordered grades. Thus, the author of "A Star in the Dust Heap" (LF n.s. I: 1875) invited her readers to witness the evening's occupation of a Count and Countess:

A fine fire was blazing in the grate; and two chairs drawn close beside it, with a newspaper resting across one and a work basket on the other, showed that these high and mighty people, who had caused such a sensation in the town, had spent their evening very much like many other of the respectable inhabitants of the place, in reading and working over a sociable cup of tea (p. 148).

By similar logic, the vices of the wealthy degrade them as much as the poor. In "The Two Blackbirds" (Ch: 1877), Perry Guest, a clergyman's son, wonders how the "swell" West Indian Captain he so admires could associate with low criminals. "After all, my boy", Dr. Guest explains to him, "there may not be so much difference between the company one meets dog fighting, drinking and betting down at the 'Crown' in Lowminster, and the company one meets horse-racing, drinking, and betting in the Park at Goodwood (p. 143)."

However, although the children's fiction of the 1870s might seem to perpetuate the literary mythology of middle-class moral superiority, it was not an undifferentiated middle class that the authors commended to their readers. They made their social preferences abundantly clear by casting their scenes of domestic behaviour in the lesser gentry and

professional strata of their story-book hierarchy. Gentry family settings were perennially popular choices for children's story writers because this allowed them to depict leisured, educated parents devoting their undivided attention to child-rearing in a rural environment. Mid-Victorian children's authors extended this favoured group to include professional families. The cachet of birth and wealth were no longer self-sufficing guarantors of social prestige and influence in the mid-Victorian period. Children's authors now had to show that their ideal families sought active involvement with the community and undertook roles that reinforced their position in the social order. As social mediators, standing between but independent of the aristocracy and the commercial and manufacturing middle-classes, the "new gentry" and the traditional gentry families coalesced the virtues of both and added a new value to the synthesis - social service.<sup>1</sup>

Clerical families were particularly blessed in domestic stories, partly because so many of the authors and editors of periodical fiction themselves issued from this background. Moreover, the parson and his family were ideally situated to serve as worthy examples of family life for a broad middle-class audience. Clergymen stood outside the usual reckoning of class boundaries by income and birth, yet their social standing was unassailable. Their incomes were modest but secure and justified by their participation in community affairs. Moreover, the whole family shared the obligations defined by the father's occupation.

It was their unique social position and moral qualities and not their religious associations that elevated the clerical family to the apex of idealized society. Their family life, in fiction, differed little from that of doctors', lawyers', or country gentlemen's families. Vicarage children were as naughty, vicarage mothers as tolerantly forgiving, and

<sup>1</sup>George Kitson Clarke, in The Making of Victorian England (1962), pp. 252-274, used the term "new gentry" to describe the consolidation into one caste of traditional gentlemen and those whose claim to gentility rested on education and profession.

the vicar himself as kind but remote as any other "typical" storybook family. But their easily identified prestige, refinement, and gentility made them natural leaders while their position in and relationship to the community made everyone from the squire to the cottager accessible to their influence.

The Awkwright family in "Six to Sixteen" (AJ X: 1872) is a typical example of the clerical family in children's periodical fiction. The whole family pursue with enthusiasm an intense intellectual and artistic life. Family collections of curiosities, local flora and fauna and the much prized scrapbook of outstanding artistic achievements chronicle the mental culture of the children. But despite their private and self-sufficient domestic felicity, Mrs. Awkwright will not allow her children to neglect the claims of society. They must graciously entertain well-to-do acquaintances, just as they regularly visit poor parishioners. From their continuous daily contact with their neighbours derives their influence in the parish. One example suffices to show how a model clerical family might exercise social control. During a village fair, Jack and Clement Awkwright supervise the giving of prizes to the local children. Though generous adults wish to reward arbitrarily the prettiest children, the vicar's sons make sure that the best Sunday scholars and best behaved children get first choice. The affair is light-hearted but it highlights the key position the clerical family occupies in society. Because of their intimate knowledge of the poor and their social connections with the wealthy, clergymen and their wives and children reinforce the traditional hierarchy and ensure the moral integrity of the community by administering the flow of charity from rich to poor. The Awkwright children in "Six to Sixteen" were not free of private failings, but in their creator's fond opinion, they and their parents were worthy of general emulation.

The ideal family in the children's fiction of the 1870s radiated a dignified corporate image appropriate to its exalted place in the community and, by its behaviour and the proper execution of its social duties,

justified both the prestige and influence it enjoyed. At the same time, the equilibrium of the family symbolized, in microcosm, the maintenance of a harmonious social order. This domestic harmony relied on a network of interlocking responsibilities that sustained both collective and individual identity. Within each fictional family, the authors drew distinct constituencies of duty and allocated them separately to various members of the household.

The sexual and social division of labour in the story-book family developed out of transforming attitudes to work and leisure, education and religion and the rigid segregation of private from public realms of activity that emerged in the mid-Victorian period. Fathers represented the changing, challenging world outside. They provided essential support for the family but their participation within it was marginal. In contrast, mothers represented enduring virtues, the moral and religious principles that sanctified the family and preserved the children's purity and innocence. Household servants reinforced the dignity and authority of both mothers and fathers in fiction and freed them to pursue their higher callings. All was well in the story-book domestic world so long as fathers, mothers, children and servants kept within the bounds of their areas of privilege and expertise and did not impinge on the rights of others or neglect their own appointed tasks. But even in fiction the family was subject to the perennial perils of illness, death and downward social mobility which could damage its equilibrium. A father's death or the failure of his business jeopardized the economic security of mothers and children; but a mother's death threatened the emotional foundation of the family. An examination of the separate treatments of fathers, mothers and servants in mid-Victorian periodical fiction for children will show how children's authors interpreted the internal operation of the middle-class family, how they perceived threats to its integrity, and what strategies they employed to maintain its stability.

The Head of the Household: The Victorian Father

The most remarkable event in the children's story book world was the default of the strict authoritarian "paterfamilias". In the didactic domestic tales of the late eighteenth century, the infinitely wise fathers of fiction were constantly in their children's company, correcting their behaviour, directing their activities, and explaining the wonders of the natural world. The father's pedagogical role and authority in child-rearing inflated in early Victorian children's literature as evangelical authors added religious lessons to his syllabus. Canonized by writers like Mrs. Sherwood or vilified by apostates like Samuel Butler and Edmund Gosse, the domestic tyrant was the apotheosis of the stereotyped Victorian family. The laws of the land and the laws of God authorized his monarchy in the domestic kingdom, and popular literature perpetuated it. Yet, in the children's fiction of the mid- and late-Victorian period, the father emerged clipped and pruned to play a more sympathetic but now supporting role in domestic dramas.

Never a vanguard of public opinion, children's fiction, in so popular a format as magazine serials, merely reflected revised attitudes to the father's role and authority which were well established by the 1870s. In the early and mid-Victorian period, domestic advice journals like the Mother's Magazine expressed alarm at the erosion of paternal participation in child-rearing. The editor of this magazine wrote in 1864, "We have . . . received appeals from conscientious mothers asking why we do not say more about the responsibilities of him who is emphatically called 'the head of the family'."<sup>1</sup> The editor promised to give more attention to the duties of fathers, but, in the end, could only devise a negative, passive role for fathers, and advised them not to hinder their wives' influence over their

<sup>1</sup>British Mother's Magazine (Jan. 1864, p. 1) quoted by Barbara Fass Leavy, "Fathering and The British Mother's Magazine, 1845-1864", Victorian Periodicals Review, XIII, nos. 1 and 2, (Spring and Summer, 1980) p. 10.

children's development.<sup>1</sup>

By the 1870s, the writers of stories for children did not attempt to reassert the paternal role by showing fathers as dominant or even equal partners in the business of raising children. Fictional fathers in children's periodical tales were usually kind and affectionate but remote from their children. In contrast, adult fiction, by the bitterness of its critique, kept alive the spectre of paternal brutality, long forgotten in the children's department. Whatever horrors transpired in the privacy of real middle- and upper-class homes, commonplace and publicly expressed sentiment favoured a father who deserved, not his children's fear, but their respectful love.

A compound of ideological, economic, and social changes contributed to the dramatic transposition of the father's stature in public opinion. Throughout the nineteenth-century, the masculine virtues and services, primarily related to work and formerly integrated with family life, were progressively excluded from the intimate domestic circle as Victorians sought to protect the family from the incursion of the outside world. The father's economic roles, which absorbed most of his time and energy, no longer related to the internal operation of the family. Women were more financially dependent on their husbands, but husbands, at the same time, depended more upon wives for spiritual consolation. The ideal of the family was suffused with maternal virtue. The father, tainted as he was by contact with the world, could only detract from the domestic environment. He had to depend upon his wife to transmit spiritual and moral values to his children. Mrs. Ellis, a popular authority on domestic affairs, regretted that "Fathers of families in the present day . . . are, for the most part, too deeply engaged in the pursuit of objects widely differing in their nature from those which belong to the moral discipline of the home."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>Mrs. Ellis, Mothers of England: Their Influence and Responsibility (1844), quoted by Leavy, p. 14.



Moreover, as middle-class occupations became more diversified and professional, fathers were no longer able to pass on their skills and knowledge to their sons. It was the masculine aspects of child-rearing that external agencies such as schools absorbed.

The changes which became apparent in middle-class families by the mid-Victorian period had long prevailed in upper-class households. Aristocratic fathers routinely delegated to their wives and servants the responsibility for disciplining their children.<sup>1</sup> Preoccupied with political and social affairs, early Victorian peers spent little time with their children and sent their sons away to boarding school at an early age. However, the pattern of upper-class inheritance ensured that the aristocratic father preserved his ultimate authority over his children, choosing his son's career and his daughter's husband.

In middle-class families, fathers could not so confidently assume their enduring precedence. The kinship network in middle-class families was more flexible than in upper-class families. Hence, there was more occasion for conflict between generations. Nevertheless, when sons expected to inherit the family business or when their professional training incurred long-term dependence, their fathers retained control. Moreover, the structure of both middle- and upper-class households, with servants, wives and children isolated from the outside world and absolutely dependent upon the master for their support, reinforced the dominance of the father.

<sup>1</sup>David Roberts, "The Paterfamilias of the Victorian Governing Classes", in Anthony S. Wohl, ed., The Victorian Family: Structure and Stresses (1978), pp. 58-81, describes the characteristics of early Victorian upper-class fathers and shows how the pattern of authority they established in their own households reinforced the hierarchy of school, university, army, government and Church.

<sup>2</sup>Leonore Davidoff, "Mastered for Life: Servant and Wife in Victorian and Edwardian England", Journal of Social History, VII (1973/4), 406-428, discusses the hierarchy based on service and subordination which perpetuated masculine authority inside as well as outside the home.

Yet, even while economic and social changes radically altered the popular conception of paternal obligations, though not necessarily paternal authority in fact, the legal definition of a father's power over his wife and children changed very little. The "Children's Charter" of 1889 mitigated the most flagrant abuses of paternal hegemony and gave children a legal status. Until then, a father's custody of his children had been held inalienable.<sup>1</sup> However, changes in attitude and practice frequently outpace legislative amendment. As a recent historian of parent/child relationships remarked: "Legislation fixes the borderlines of what society will permit: about the large shifting hinterland of customs, opinions and moral ideas it has very little to say."<sup>2</sup>

The restructuring of paternal roles owed more to the reinterpretation of divine law than secular law. The rise of the father's status and authority in domestic life paralleled that of evangelical religion. According to current histories of the family, devout Victorian fathers revived the harsh, puritannical methods of child-rearing and reasserted paternal dominance in reaction against the more permissive modes of child-nurture promoted by eighteenth-century intellectuals.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>For a detailed discussion of Victorian family law see "The Rights and Duties of Parents" in Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt, Children in English Society, Vol. II: From the Eighteenth Century to the Children's Act (1973), p.

<sup>2</sup>David Grylls, Guardians and Angels: Parents and Children in Nineteenth-Century Literature (1978), p. 45.

<sup>3</sup>Grylls attributes the resurgence of parental harshness to Victorian Christianity and its decline in the late nineteenth century to secularization. In his thesis, tolerant attitudes to children derive, not from religion, but from secular ideological movements like Romanticism. For adult literature, which is his focus, his arguments are convincing. However, in the children's literature of the 1870s, Christianity was a motive force conditioning attitudes to children as well as parents. Lawrence Stone, The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500-1800 (1977), takes a similar stance. In his section, "Facts, Interpretations, and Post-1800 Developments", Stone argues that the paternalistic punitive attitudes to child-rearing, inspired by evangelical religion, were still in the ascendant until the 1870s. If this is so, it seems curious that the tide had turned in educated opinion and even children's literature decades before.

Sanctioned as God's proxy in family matters, the early Victorian father represented a vengeful God.

By the mid-Victorian period in enlightened circles the punitive Jehovah was no longer the God of childhood. Religious teachers, especially those of a 'High' or 'Broad' Church persuasion, promoted a benevolent and protective deity to young children. Even the popular survivals of evangelical nursery lore, Ann Taylor's Cautionary Verses and the venerated Fairchild Family by Mrs. Sherwood had to adapt to mid-Victorian evaluations of child psychology. Later editions were expurgated to moderate their depiction of God and fathers.<sup>1</sup>

There was a symmetry, then, between the literary personification of the Deity and the fictional representation of fathers. God was certainly not absent from the children's fiction of the 1870s but authors felt it less necessary to invoke divine retribution upon innocent children than had their forebears. Similarly, the mounting reaction against corporal punishment of children robbed fathers in fiction, at any rate, of their punitive authority.

However, the literary fashions for the depiction of God and fathers did not proceed in perfect parallel. Mother was a more likely representative of a tolerant, forgiving God. Thus, she absorbed naturally from the father much of his divine sanction, even if she used absolution and not punishment to gain her ends. Moreover, that daily reminder of patriarchal predominance, the ritual of father leading the assembled household in domestic devotion, seldom occurs in mid-Victorian children's tales, although it was still common practice in many upper- and middle-

<sup>1</sup>The Christian Observer in 1856 objected to Mrs. Sherwood's "morbid cravings" for the brutal and macabre. The new edition of 1902 divested the book of its canings, funerals, rotting corpses and gibbet scenes. Ann Taylor changed her lines, written in 1804, "For God, who lives above the skies/Would look with vengeance in His eyes. . ." to "For could Our Father in the skies/Look down with pleased or living eyes. . ." in 1866 to satisfy complaints voiced in The Atheneum. Grylls, pp. 91, 193.

class families.<sup>1</sup> The sentimental tableau of sleepy children praying at their mother's knee replaced the formal ceremony in periodical fiction. Authors acknowledged that piety was a feminine attribute and occasionally intimated that fathers had lost touch with their Creator. For instance, in "Aunt Tabitha's Waifs" (LF VIII: 1874), Winnie worries most about her father's destiny when it appears that both parents have died at sea. Her devout mother was always ready for death, but her father's business worries left him little time for meditation. In another story, "Pattie Thorne" (S: 1871), the author inferred that a father's worldly shrewdness inhibited his ability to accept God's message. Mr. Thorne, a successful banker, irritably rebuffs Pattie when she reads the Bible to him. But she takes comfort when the shock of bank failure reduces him to passive idiocy. Pattie feels that God found it necessary to "reduce his natural cleverness" so that he could enter heaven as a little child.

Neither parent in the children's stories of the 1870s retained the omniscience ascribed to the elders in early Victorian children's fiction. However, the mid-Victorian mother's intuition amounted to virtually the same thing. A good mother was never wrong about her children. Now and then, even the best father was. He could not possess the intimacy and natural sympathy that guided a mother's judgment. The delicate matter of a growing girl's temperament was too much for the father of "Little Empress Joan" (LF n.s.II: 1875). Mr. Pairpoint, "who scarcely understood Joan's peculiarity of disposition, persisted in believing that she was giving way to a mere whim, and must be dealt with accordingly. (p. 34)." Despite his wife's remonstrations, he sends Joan to a strict girl's school, under the impression that "home rule is not strict enough for her." This decision proves very nearly disastrous for the sensitive girl.

<sup>1</sup> Hugh McLeod, Class and Religion and the Late Victorian City (1973) gathered from memoir sources that family prayers still figured importantly in middle- and upper-class homes in the late nineteenth-century.

When popular sentiment placed so high a premium on feminine innocence, delicacy, and purity, even fictional fathers rarely dared to interfere with the rearing of daughters. Even in the choice of a daughter's husband, an event seldom depicted in children's fiction, the father's prerogatives are controversial. In passing, some authors hint that a daughter's unwise marriage may occasion a rift in family relations. In "The Peace Egg" (AJ X: 1872), a squire's daughter marries a brave, but poor captain. Her father is disappointed and disowns her until his grandchildren, innocent of the family quarrel and even of their true relationship to their crusty old neighbour, cause a reconciliation. In other cases, the authors usually show that a girl who marries against her father's advice brings about her own ruin. In "Nailton Factory" (Ch: 1871), a wealthy manufacturer's daughter runs off with a young clerk who is an intemperate gambler. Inevitably, her husband abandons her in poverty. But, although the daughter's disobedience caused her unhappiness, the author more severely reproaches the father who allowed his daughter to die without help or forgiveness. The conclusion offers some reparation for her suffering. In his old age, her father's grief deepens his religion and he adopts her eldest son as his heir.

Although a fictional father's participation in his daughter's development was marginal, the case was different with sons, especially when the range of their activities overreached the narrow compass of their mother's jurisdiction. Father's punitive power, resting in abeyance, can be summoned in extreme cases. In "Gilbert's Shadow" (LF V: 1873) Captain Bowen intercedes when it appears that one of his sons is lying. But once aroused, his paternal anger is hasty and unjust. Captain Bowen wrongly reprimands and withdraws his trust from mischievous Frank, when the quieter, secretive son Gilbert is the true culprit. Mrs. Bowen cannot deduce immediately the facts of the case, but she knows her son's honest character well enough to accept without question his tearful avowal of innocence.

The author of this tale attributes Captain Bowen's intermittent harshness to his military background:

The discipline of Captain Bowen's whole past life in the army had made him stern and resolute in the punishment of wilful sin and above all treachery; though in everything else, as regarded his children, he was gentle and compassionate as could be. (p. 338).

It is revealing that the author chose to couch Captain Bowen's authority in martial rather than religious terms. A regimental disposition was not likely to encourage the confession which Mrs. Bowen eventually receives and which enables her to restore family peace.

These examples illustrate that the majority of children's magazine editors and writers implicitly assumed that a father's masculine temperament disqualifies him from performing the delicate tasks of modern child-rearing. Mother, aided by prayer and empathy, is a more capable moral guide. Authors do not convey such sentiments by comparing mothers and fathers to the latter's disadvantage, but rather by omission. In the fiction of the 1870s, father is frequently absent throughout the action of the plot.

The only consistent defence of the old-style patriarchal family issues from Chatterbox. Perhaps under pressure from that masterful bachelor editor, the Rev. J. Erskine Clarke, Chatterbox authors often impute to the father the moral and religious leadership of the family while mothers tend to be sickly or frivolous. But even in Chatterbox stories, the patriarch is in retreat. The father has lost the executive authority to enforce his superior judgment. A typical example of the Chatterbox treatment of fathers occurs in "Alice's Son" (Ch: 1872). A prosperous and prudent shopkeeper marries, late in life, a pretty, boarding-school educated young woman from a rather disreputable family. Anxious to please his young wife, he submits to her every whim and even, as the title suggests, relinquishes authority over their son. Against his advice, Alice spoils the boy and invests in him all her social ambition. The parents' argument about their son's future exposes the disparity between the moral concept of a gentleman and its social connotations. The old shopkeeper's "moral

gentleman" is archaic and barely relevant to his modern equivalent. Thus, when Alice expresses her wish to educate her son to be a gentleman, her husband counters: "My dear. . . I have always wished him to be a gentleman. His grandfather and great-grandfather were gentlemen - honest, and upright, and kind to everybody; rich and poor; and I have tried my best to be a gentleman myself -". His wife replies: "But I mean independent, John - not a tradesman. He's our only one; and we shall have a tidy little fortune to leave him. Need he go into business I mean (p. 395)?" Though the husband holds all the legal and economic authority necessary to impose his will, the sentimental power his wife wields triumphs. Inevitably, the boy turns out a wastrel and, with the inexorable logic of Victorian fiction, abandons his widowed mother to the workhouse.

This basic plot structure recurs in Chatterbox in various guises and settings from homely farms to Scottish estates. But the message remains the same. The overturning of the Biblical family hierarchy presages moral ruin in succeeding generations. Yet, even Chatterbox authors cannot envisage an effective role for fathers in the contemporary family. The prosperous apothecary in "Mercer and Sons" (Ch: 1873) is utterly bewildered that his wife and children should despise the home above his shop which had satisfied his family for four generations:

He could not understand why girls might not be well educated, and well dressed, without craving to get out of their own position and into a higher one. His own mother, whom he had always looked upon as worthy of imitation in every respect, had had a pride in that home, and had lived and died there. His sister had married comfortably and happily in their own station. Why then should his daughters despise what others had prized (p. 287)?

But he yields to pressure from his children, girls and boys, to buy an estate, and ruins his health commuting to work so that they might be genteely insulated from base "trade" associations. The defence of paternal authority is a rear guard action in a contest already decided. In Chatterbox's version, the abdicating father is pitied but never condemned.

More typical authors did not consciously emasculate fathers or negate paternal prerogatives. But they were reluctant to admit even a shade of masculine brutality into the domestic circle. How, then, could authors avoid an emotional show of strength in which the father must be shown as either a thundering tyrant or a weak, indulgent figurehead? To deflect generational conflict, especially that between fathers and sons, authors devised a number of strategies. Their most common tactic, and one which mirrored contemporary practice, was to send a potential rebel away to school even before discord erupted. For both boys and girls, the school represented a convenient harbour for fractious children who disrupted family harmony.

Alternatively, a father's professional duties allowed him to be removed from the fray. Though Captain Merrivale was capable of controlling fiery Phillip's tantrums, the author of "The Merrivale's Cross" (AJ XI: 1873) contrived to send ~~the man~~ away capturing slavers off the coast of Africa. **A** sobering brush with experience was a more efficacious deterrent to a young miscreant than the imposition of external discipline. Phillip only improved after he had engineered his own nemesis.

Another tactic was to consign a harsh, demanding masculine character to an earlier generation or lower social class where more enlightened modes of child nurture had not penetrated. It was his grandfather's rule that so oppressed Gerald in "Better Than the Mighty" (LF n.s. I: 1871). The author insisted that Gerald's own father had possessed a sweet generous nature. In "Ned Wilton's Victory" (LF n.s. I: 1875) a blacksmith is the tyrant. Resisting the petitions of both the schoolmaster and the clergyman to allow his son to continue his education, this father forced his sensitive, studious son to follow his trade. A propitious bout of illness gives him time to reflect and alter his decision.

"Ned Wilton's Victory" shows another dimension of the father/son theme in children's literature. The dramatic confrontation between an illiterate father and an educated son illustrates how competing institutions



trespassed on the traditional rights and duties of fathers and exacerbated generational conflict. In this and in similar stories, the author's sympathy follows the aspirations of youth. This is not to suggest that children's authors condoned filial rebellion, even when the father was manifestly stubborn and wrongheaded. Ned must serve a year's apprenticeship in his father's workshop before the author liberates him for a higher calling as a village school master. Nevertheless, this tale signals the common consent among children's authors, at least, that the privileges of paternity no longer included automatically the right to determine a son's vocation.

When the contest was between learning and ignorance and enacted in a social class below that of most readers, an author could resolve discord in the son's favour and still not undermine the authority of middle-class fathers. In the upper and middle ranks of society, the momentous matter of a son's career becomes a more highly charged issue. No father in the learned professions could persist in assuming that he could transmit personally to his son the ever-inflating core of expertise essential to qualification as a practitioner. But fathers were still responsible for giving their sons a start in life and professional education prolonged a son's dependance upon his father.

Francis Davenant in 1870 published a guide entitled "What Shall My Son Be?" and specifically outlined current occupational prospects.<sup>1</sup> He urged parents not to determine a son's career until he was old enough to show his "natural bent" but he conceded that appropriate training required considerable advance planning and financial resources.

The different resolutions proposed in fiction to this dilemma depend upon the philosophical outlook of individual children's magazines, but all authors expressed sympathy for a son's desire to choose his own career. In "Self" (Ch: 1870), Mr. Woodford, a successful surgeon but not the most

<sup>1</sup>Francis Davenant, MA, What Shall My Son Be? Hints to Parents on the Choice of a Profession or Trade and Counsels to Young Men on their Entrance into Active Life (1870).

empathetic of fathers, is determined to pass on his professional practice. As his sons show no inclination to become surgeons, he forces his poor orphaned nephew to succeed him. Though Walter secretly longs to become a soldier and finds the prospect of a medical career repellent, it is typical of the Chatterbox stance on filial obedience that the hero gracefully acquiesces and even finds personal fulfillment in doing his duty. Naturally, the recalcitrant sons come to no good and must rely on Walter for their bread.

If Chatterbox authors were blandly confident that obedience and submission would secure well-being, more perceptive authors had their doubts. The bravest and most sensitive treatment of discord between fathers and sons is found in "We and the World" (AJ XVI: 1877; AJ VII: 1878). In this serialized novel, a good-hearted but insensitive yeoman squire is utterly incapable of understanding the yearnings of his bookish youngest son, Jack. Public school and inheritance shape the future of Jem, the eldest and favoured son. But, although Jack longs to be a sailor, he is earmarked early in life for office drudgery. Though the author empathizes with her hero and tells the tale through his voice, she allows him only the occasional murmur against his father's obstinacy. On one occasion Jack philosophizes:

Few things are harder to guess at than the grounds on which an Englishman of my father's type "makes up his mind"; and yet the question is an important one, for an idea once lodged in his head, a conviction once as much his own as the family acres, and you will as soon see him parted from the one as from the other (p. 329).

Against such a resolute will, the gentle, sympathetic mother's persuasion is fruitless.

But rather than depict a direct confrontation between this father and son, the author transfers the boy's resentment to the wretched school to which his father, in his ignorance, consigns him. When the iniquity of Crayshaw's Academy finally dawns on the father, he admits his mistaken judgment and ultimate responsibility:

I blame myself unutterably, and I hope I see my way to such a comfortable and respectable start in life for you that these three ~~years in that vile~~ place may not be to your permanent disadvantage (p. 451).

However, he sticks to his original plan to article Jack to his uncle and Jack submits reluctantly. But Jack knows that his education has not prepared him for success even as a clerk and feels at a disadvantage beside his less intelligent but now more polished brother. Considering all this, he decides to run away to sea. Even in this the author stresses that unselfish motives prompt him. He justifies his escape by telling himself that his articling fees would overreach his father's already strained income. Confident in the moral justice of his plans, Jack still excuses his father as he prepares for his midnight departure:

. . .parental blunders and injustices are the mistakes and tyrannies of a special love that one may go many a mile on one's own wilful way and not meet a second time (p. 470).

Although the author furnishes abundant evidence to indict the father, she compels her hero to apologize for his defiance throughout the tale. Mutiny is never entirely pardoned even in extenuating circumstances.

The consensus among those few children's authors who dared to broach the highly-charged subject of fathers and sons in conflict was that a son owed his father, even a father whose judgments were fallible, the utmost loyalty and respect. For his part, a father was morally obliged to discover his son's temperament and capacities and match this with appropriate training and opportunity. Ideally, a father would follow the example of Colonel Grey in "Rollo, the Rover" (S: 1879) who allowed his son time to deliberate on his future and then supported his decision even when it necessitated their parting. Rollo's headmaster endorsed the logic of his eventual choice, to become a colonial sheep-farmer, and in a lengthy lecture, described the predicament facing contemporary middle-class boys who wished to retain their claim to gentility:

I think on the whole, he said, that the boy is right in wishing to go out to one of our colonies; it is quite true that almost every profession here is overstocked; and there is so much competition that he might overtax his brain, for he is not very quick and clever at his books, and sooner than be left behind, would work desperately hard. In the profession which he has chosen there is far less brain-work needed; book-learning is of small account; and what tells most are the things which he does possess - energy, cheerfulness, quickness in an emergency, a love of animals and a great power of managing them, and last but not least, a strong, active frame. I think he will turn out the very man for a colonist (p. 94).

Provided their fathers could buy them a homestead, choosing the life of a colonial farmer removed middle-class boys from competition for occupations and status on the home front. However, the dispersal of the family over large distances was not a prospect authors readily entertained. They assumed that fathers wished their sons to succeed them but could not force them to. The easiest solution was to inspire emulation.

The naval or military officer was a particularly attractive role model for youthful readers. The martial virtues - defence of the weak, honour, and courage - were important components of the hybrid concept of gentility. But, in the children's periodical fiction of the 1870s, the more aggressive, warlike attributes of the military leader were subsumed in chivalry. A true gentleman divests himself of any rough, masculine mannerisms in the company of his wife and children. Though the status of the military and its attendant qualities were on the ascendant and would come to dominate boy's fiction in the late Victorian period, the children's authors of the 1870s took care to domesticate their military

heroes. Almost all were retired to pleasant country estates. Active military service or even barracks life never enters the children's periodical fiction of this period, with one notable exception: "Jackanapes" (AJ XVIII: 1878), a tear-jerking story of military glory in Crimea. Even in "Jackanapes", comradeship and self-sacrifice are the strongest virtues.

On the home front, "Captain" or "Colonel" prefixing a father's surname established his family's social position more precisely than the bland "Mr.", yet less extravagantly than an hereditary title. Moreover, a military father could draw on the analogy of regimental discipline to enlist the cooperation of his son in aid of domestic order. Common virtues like obedience, forbearance, self-sacrifice and piety, tinged with military imagery, gained heroic stature in the eyes of aspiring young soldiers in such tales as "Halt!" (Ch: 1878) or "Into the Mischief Again" (LF n.s. VII: 1878).

It was in the service of gentility rather than patriotism that the children's authors of the 1870s exploited the idolatry of boy readers towards soldiers and sailors. While professional fathers attracted the respect of the reader, they could not command the charisma which emanated effortlessly from the commanding officer. However, authors found little to glamourize in the businessman's life and they evidently sympathized with an active boy's distaste for office work of any sort. "Catch me perching myself on a high stool, with a pen stuck behind my ear!" exclaims a grammar school boy in "March Winds and May Flowers" (S: 1874). A public school boy in "Brave Little Heart" (LF n.s. IV: 1876) is equally disgusted when circumstances force him "to grind away at money making as businessmen were compelled to do (p. 371)". Pity was the most fervent emotion authors could elicit for those condemned to a life of 'business'. The young hero of "Halt!" (Ch: 1878) explains that his father, disqualified by his lameness from joining the family military tradition, ". . . laughs and says he's got to make the money for the rest of them to spend. It was hard for him to be tied by the leg and have to do the money grubbing and sit up in a musty old office on a high stool, when he's got as much of a soldier's heart as any of them (p. 11)."

In their treatment of business fathers, children's authors betrayed their ambivalence towards worldly success in the marketplace. They wished to set their tales in well-to-do surroundings while ignoring material foundations. The qualities of individualism, ambition, even ruthlessness necessary for success in their competitive society could not gain entry to the domestic circle. The wealth of the world washes into the family through fathers, but children's authors do not condescend to penetrate its mysteries. They frequently contrived to ignore or suspend a father's daily odyssey to the city, not necessarily to reintegrate the nuclear family, but rather to announce its gentility. The most felicitous of happy endings occurs in "Rachel's Visit to Devonshire" (AJ XII: 1874) when the father retires from his London business to a country estate.

Mr. Whitbread had made some very judicious arrangements about his business but what it was we do not know and possibly should not understand if we were told. (p. 716).

The evident distaste for base economic detail which children's authors betray was apparently endemic among the middle and upper classes, much to the dismay of a commentator in the Saturday Review:

In families not engaged in business there is no possible reason why the children should not know a good deal about income and expenditure. A profound mystery is generally made of the subject. The consequence is that the young people think their father is a sponge full of gold dust, out of whom as much money as possible is to be squeezed. They are often greatly surprised when upon his death they find how little remains to be divided among them. <sup>1</sup>

Children's stories did little to extend the economic education of their readers. If anything they fostered the squeamishness of the would-be genteel towards trade and commerce. Genteel poverty in the story-book world is morally preferable to ostentatious wealth. The author of "Honor Bright" (Ch: 1878) implies that Mr. Bright's "trust and reliance in other people's honour" (p. 195)", though it ruined him, proves him to be a better man than the successful but conniving financier. By contrast, moral bankruptcy attends the rising fortunes of Joseph Ashleigh in "Margery" (AJ X: 1872):

He was a cold, hard man, who as a manufacturer in a well-known midland town, had wrung his fortune out of badly paid, cruelly worked men, women and children, and had transplanted himself and his money, to create a small kingdom for himself here by the sea, grinding his people down with a rod of iron, before which all must bow (p. 172).'

Moral evaluations of this nature are relatively rare in the children's periodical fiction of the 1870s. The reluctance of children's authors to judge the character of their fictional fathers in part explains his relegation to the background. Fathers represent the world outside which has no relevance to story-book family life. His alternation between private and public realms renders his character difficult to portray convincingly and impossible to integrate fully within the family context of children's fiction.

<sup>1</sup>"Boys at Home", Saturday Review (21 August 1875), p. 238.

It is perhaps because of the incompatibility of a man's occupational persona and his domestic character that authors frequently made bachelors their professional role models. If they wished to depict a man actively pursuing his professional capacity as a doctor, or minister, or even a benevolent businessman excelling in kindness and service through his work, authors usually dissociate him from any family connections.

The "Vicar of Stormanton" (Ch: 1872) reduces himself to near starvation in his efforts to help the victims of a bank failure, but he could not have made this sacrifice had he a wife and children to support.

Similarly, Mr. Funnyman in "Brave Little Heart" (LF n.s. IV: 1876) dedicates his life to aiding impoverished families, partly to compensate for the loss of his wife and child many years ago.

Moreover, authors willingly concede that the father's involvement in commerce and career both limits and inhibits his capacity for intensive, solicitous child-rearing. There is no criticism implied when the author of "Marcia's Home" (Ch: 1875) describes the minimal contact a banker has with his children:

Mr. Tradthorpe was such a busy man that, except on Sundays, the children saw little of their father, and beyond choosing schools for the boys, tipping them now and then, and generally giving a good-natured glance into the school-room before starting for the City in the morning, he had but small share in their lives. (p. 262).

Mr. Tradthorpe never punished his children and confined his guidance to pleasant dissertations over dessert. If his children were somewhat selfish and quarrelsome and insufficiently religious, it was the fault of his indolent, semi-invalid wife. The father, himself, was not accountable.

The division of labour between the sexes in Victorian society determined the father's role in children's fiction. Just as a woman had to withdraw from the marketplace to protect her gentility, the father in the stories of the 1870s had to be freed from all domestic chores and duties to retain his masculine authority. Although children's authors, in their delicacy, eschewed the world of work and money, they did not undervalue its rewards. The principal fact that his wife and children

inhabited a private and privileged realm, even if distinct from his own, underscored the father's personal stature in the family as well as his social status. In subtle ways the authors of children's stories indicated clearly that the household functioned in his service. No longer a domestic tyrant, the fictional father of the 1870s is an honoured and paying guest in the home, deserving all the comfort and devotion his dependents - wife, children, and servants - can proffer.

In order to preserve the father's immunity from domestic entanglements, children's authors kept him separated from the quotidian events of family life. He presided over the special times; dessert hour, Sundays, Christmas and summer holidays. On such occasions he rejuvenated himself in play with his little boys and girls, while mothers looked on passively. A father also initiated unusual hobbies and pastimes which emphasized the breadth of his knowledge and accomplishment. The learned Major Buller in "Six to Sixteen" (AJ X: 1872), an expert entymologist, led his children on collecting expeditions. Mr. Torkington demonstrated the art of drawing landscapes from memory in "The Torkington's Holiday" (LF II: 1871) while Colonel Grey in "Rollo the Rover" (S: 1879) instigated a sensory development game. The examples of improving pastimes conducted by story-book fathers are legion and reveal how a father's pedagogical functions moved from the vocational to the recreational.

In the family home, father inhabited a hallowed territory. The ubiquitous "country squire" father type, with no obvious business cares, invariably retired to his study throughout most of the action. While mother in her drawing room was always available to children in need, father was never disturbed. Thus, when his daughter disappears, a neighbouring child and her governess hesitated to rouse the father of "Poor Nelly" (LF n.s. VI: 1877):

Mr. Underwood was not a studious man, notwithstanding which fact, when in the library, he was considered to be on his own ground, and not to be lightly intruded upon, after the custom of gentlemen (p. 232).



Even a clergyman in "Aunt Millicent's Charge" (S: 1876) "Does not like to be bothered by trifles". Mr. Grey gives his sister complete charge of his children and Millicent in exchange shields him from the triviality of child-rearing. However, when she discovers that one of the boys has lied, the seriousness of this occasion warrants seeking her brother's advice.

Thus, although he spends the majority of his time in proximity to his family, the professional gentleman, clergyman, or doctor, or the leisured gentleman is no more intimate with his children than the man of business. The distance between a father and his children is qualified by the demands of his occupation, but is nevertheless based on a less than perfect empathy with the child's world.

In a well-managed home of the sort idealized in children's fiction, a wife superintended the daily timetable to quarantine her husband from any influence or activity that might irritate or degrade him. This included the careful management of his contact with children and servants as well as social acquaintances. The exemption of men from domestic and social duties, in the opinion of a recent historian of housework, reinforced their dominance over women:

Freedom from the responsibility of maintaining these particular boundaries or even of perceiving them is one of the rewards of power positions. The enforcement of basic order can be ignored because it can be delegated to other. <sup>1</sup>

A father in "Six to Sixteen" (AJ X: 1872) may dismiss the whole operation of contemporary social relationships as "the tyranny of the idle over the occupied" because he can pass on the responsibility for regulating it to his wife. Moreover, in describing this father's olympian disdain for "Society", the author, a woman, willingly salutes his superiority.

However, though children's authors acknowledged women's subordination to men, as shown by their acceptance of the overt status of the duties assigned to each sex, they demonstrated the dependence of a husband upon his wife's managerial skills in the many tales where the father is a

<sup>1</sup> Leonore Davidoff, "The Rationalization of Housework", in D. L. Barker and S. Allen, eds., Dependence and Exploitation in Work and Marriage (1978), p. 125.

widower. Without a wife and mother to his children, a father is pitifully incompetent in coordinating domestic life. Mr. Sinclair in "Brave Little Heart" (LF n.s. IV: 1876), suddenly bereft of his wife and his fortune, is unable to comprehend the inevitable reduction of his life style:

Now although Mr. Sinclair was by no means a selfish man, he was not proof against discomfort and irregularity, and everything in the house seemed to be neglected now (p. 373).

Even though the author mitigates her criticism in this passage, the weight of evidence developed throughout the tale establishes Mr. Sinclair as a proud and bitter man, disregarding his daughter's feelings and health as she strives to satisfy his demands. Yet, the author would have her readers believe, his claims are not selfish, but only a father's due, even if he no longer provides the material foundation of comfort.

A widower left with very young children rarely succeeds in nurturing them single-handed. The nature of his failure underscores the authors' ambivalence towards the father as child-rearer. While one might expect the single father, without the feminine influence that tempers sternness, to be harsh with his children, the fictional widower errs on the side of coddling. The indulgent father in "Our Cousin Namby Pamby" (LF n.s. II: 1875) allows his boy and girl to run wild, trusting the goodness in their young hearts. Though his sister compares them unfavourably to her paragon nephew, he defends his own: "Sam had a mother's love, my lass, and my poor bairns have had to do without one (p. 233)."

The single father tries to compensate his children for the loss of their mother's gentleness and love; they in turn furnish him with a facsimile of wifely companionship and affection. In his motherless home, Mr. Underwood abandons the usual protocol of formal domestic life so that his little daughter might enliven his dinner hour. To him, "Poor Nelly" (LF n.s. VI: 1877) is a "toy" and a "plaything":

It never occurred to him, poor man, that she required training; still less that it was he who should train her. She had a kind good-natured nurse who taught her how to read and write and hem pocket handkerchiefs, and who spoiled her as much as any nursemaid ever spoiled any little girl (p. 4).

Thus, even when the death of his wife compels a father to spend more time in the company of his children, his actual attention to rearing them is very little greater than if his wife still lived. The single father in fiction delegates their social and moral training to a female relative, a servant, governess or clergyman, optimistic that these individuals are temperamentally or professionally better equipped to socialize children than he.

However, authors frequently hint, a widower is not always competent to judge child-rearing deputies. If Nelly's nurse merely spoiled her, Olive's nurse in "Into the View" (LF n.s. VII: 1878) neglects her altogether. Olive's father, a busy doctor, embittered by the loss of his wife, ignores her and her brother because they revive painful memories. As a result of their abandonment, even the children's appearance compromises the family's social status: "Neither of the children were what we should call well-dressed for a gentleman's children - and a perfect gentleman their father was", remarks the author, "but they had no mother, and they had the peculiar indefinite forlornness in the details of their dress which motherless children are apt to have (p. 240)." It is significant that the author emphasizes that this father, even though he failed miserably by his children, still remained a perfect gentleman. His social and self-definition lay outside the family, which ideally would reflect and reinforce it.

The fact that external conditions determined a father's status and authority allowed authors to expose his vulnerability and mistakes in rearing children without fundamentally undermining his claim to deference. It also enabled authors to draw more varied, if not detailed, portraits of fathers. Fathers' characters in fiction ranged from the teasing romp to the withdrawn bookworm, while mothers' personalities, incubated in the uniform atmosphere of the stereotyped family, always remained the same. Her conduct legitimized the family, the father's did not.

On the whole, the fathers in children's fiction participate only marginally in the activities of household routine and child-rearing. The authors' willingness to exempt men from domestic responsibility is symptomatic of changing attitudes to paternal roles and the family organization itself. An eminent historian of the family concluded that the Victorian family depended upon a cluster of external conditions, few of which were acknowledged by orthodox opinion.<sup>1</sup> It appears from an analysis of the children's periodical fiction of the 1870s that children's authors tacitly included the father's contribution among these. By his exertions outside the family he provided the foundation upon which the family rested. But within it, he no longer served.

#### The Heart of the Household: The Victorian Mother

An exceptional Victorian woman who escaped her conventional upper middle-class family background, Florence Nightingale, complained that

. . . women never have a half hour in all their lives. . . that they can call their own, without fear of offending or hurting someone. Women have no means given them whereby they can resist "the claims of social life". They are taught from their infancy upwards that it is a wrong, ill-tempered action and a misunderstanding of "women's mission" if they do not allow themselves willingly to be interrupted at all hours.

The family uses people, not for what they are, nor for what they are intended to be, but for what it wants them for - its own uses. 2

The rigidly circumscribed position middle- and upper-class women occupied in Victorian society which so oppressed Florence Nightingale was a direct consequence of the changing functions and new specializations of the family. Only a woman possessed the qualifications to execute the range of duties

<sup>1</sup>O. R. McGregor, Divorce in England: A Centenary Study (1957). McGregor contends that the ideal Victorian family was an artificial construct which depended upon prostitution, the subjugation of women, evangelical religion, and prosperity to sustain it. When these conditions no longer prevailed the family ideal crumbled.

<sup>2</sup>Florence Nightingale is cited by Duncan Crow, The Victorian Woman (1971), p. 43.

incumbent upon the mid-Victorian family and only through the family could she realize her womanly potential. Outside the family she had no identity.

The enhanced emphasis Victorians placed on domestic virtues unquestionably raised the social estimation of women who were mothers. By the same token, the popular image of mother reflected the aura that surrounded Romantic childhood, so that the tableau of mother and children radiated purity and innocence. Public worship of mothers in art and literature, both popular and elite, became more and more devout in an attempt to perpetuate maternal virtue when the distractions of fashion and "society" tempted women from their children.<sup>1</sup>

Woman as mother was sacrosanct, but her position in public estimation grew more precarious as the responsibility for regulating social interaction widened the circumference of her influence beyond the confines of the nuclear family. The periodical press accorded considerable judicial authority to women, but grudged her any executive power. "Society is what she makes it", blandly asserted a contemporary journalist, "We talk and walk and shake hands with men of all classes and conditions. . . . Every woman decides for herself with whom she will or will not associate, and what shall or shall not be respectable."<sup>2</sup> But while they celebrated women's definitive moral force and congratulated their age for liberating it, any attempt to legitimize her power, to vote her economic or legal

<sup>1</sup>Walter Houghton analyzes the swelling crescendo of literary homage paid to women in the mid-Victorian period which perhaps climaxes in Coventry Patmore's hymn to the "Angel in the House" in The Victorian Frame of Mind (1957), pp. 341-393. Helen Roberts treats the representation of women in art in "Marriage, Redundancy, or Sin: The Painters View of Women in the First Twenty-five Years of Victoria's Reign" in Martha Vicinus, Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age, arguing that painters pleased their market by making womens' position in the patriarchal family seem attractive.

<sup>2</sup>Mrs. G. S. Reaney quoted an unidentified journalist in English Girls, Their Place and Power (1879), p. 23.

status, met with alarmed opposition.<sup>1</sup> Such organs of conservative orthodoxy as The Saturday Review expected women to exercise their moral and social authority not via formal statute but through the informal agency of their own peerless example, their privilege to select and reject acquaintances and their influence over their lords and masters: "All Men want the corrective influence of social opinion and it is chiefly women who create that opinion."<sup>2</sup>

Mothers and matrons, under the auspices of the family, were the recognized umpires of social interaction. The individual woman's credentials for social arbitration depended on the status of her family. It was up to her to consolidate the social position her husband's occupation and income defined. What made middle-class women's task so formidable was the enigmatic nature of gentility and respectability. In common parlance these were not achievable goals so much as intrinsic elements of personality exhibited by behavior. Women had to exude the status their husband's income might or might not warrant; they had to seem born to what they aspired to become.

Ultimately the dilemma middle-class mid-Victorian women confronted derived from their efforts to coordinate their primary maternal duties with their social obligations. The contemporary periodical press disparaged middle-class women for abandoning their traditional role in vain pursuit of social prestige. Their assessment largely informs the modern historian's

<sup>1</sup>"Women's Civilizing Influence", Bow Bells III, (1865), p. 427 maintained that nations rise and fall in direct proportion to the status of their female citizens. In an anonymous article, "In Her Teens" Macmillan's Magazine X; (1864), p. 219, Dinah Mulock adopted a male stance to argue the same point and to demonstrate that women actually possessed more real responsibility than women's rights advocates recognized. Through their influence over male kin women's most effectively deployed their power. "Spare us a gynocracy!" she implored.

<sup>2</sup>"The Modern Mother" Saturday Review (1875), p. 110, indirectly blamed the "insolently rampant" corruption of society on women who failed to employ the privilege of their hospitality as an agency of social reward and punishment.

view of middle-class women.<sup>1</sup>

The children's periodical press offers an alternative perspective on the position of middle-class women in the family and society. Although they never depart from the conventional, female children's authors exemplify the efforts of middle-class women themselves to weave a consistent image from the disparate strands of ideals and expectations their age demanded of them. Children's authors deployed all the sentimental and emotional artillery at their disposal to command the allegiance of the rising generation to their ideal of genteel womanhood. No one but a lady could execute the range of duties embraced by the story-book mother. All the qualities children's authors wished to instill in their readers - gentility, and refinement, forbearance and selflessness, true Christianity and sympathetic benevolence - emanated from mothers.

It was the moral concerns of ladyhood that preoccupied children's authors more than the social niceties. The virtues that distinguished the lady, as children's authors defined her, were applicable to all aspiring candidates. Authors hesitated to codify the qualities of social position but they often implied a mother's gentility to be of long precedent and usually contrived to establish her in surroundings that displayed her moral qualities to advantage. Child rearing had priority over all other claims upon a mother's time and talents, but the execution of her social obligations, to her peers and to the poor, contributed to her children's moral and social education.

<sup>1</sup>Professors Joseph and Olive Banks, Feminism and Family Planning (1964), Duncan Crow, The Victorian Woman (1971), Jonathan Gathorne Hardy, The Rise and Fall of the British Nanny (1972) all more or less assume the veracity of the media-projected image of Victorian women as idle status symbols. Patricia Branca in Silent Sisterhood (1975) is one of the few historians to delineate a specific account of the household chores middle-class women had to perform and shows that the cliché the press promoted could only apply to a tiny majority of exceptionally wealthy middle-class women.

Thus, children's authors defined and defended in fiction womens' special constituency. But, in so doing, they encumbered her character with expectations so ambitious and virtues so ethereal that only a paragon could fulfill them. As a result, mothers' personalities varied little from story to story. For instance, the author of "The Two Blackbirds" (Ch: 1877) recites a litany of a mother's virtues to stimulate her readers' appreciation:

And you know, a good mother means a great deal, though (thank God) it is not at all an uncommon thing. It means untiring patience, ready sympathy, smile answering smile, and tear to tear, a grave heart keeping anxiety, at any rate, out of sight, no headaches, no 'nerves', no fancies, no thought of self, constant prayers, - things that seem impossible, and yet that spring naturally from a heart full of mother's love (p. 2).

As this passage eloquently manifests, passive virtues are intrinsic and organic elements of the story-book mother's nature. The mothers in children's fiction do not accomplish in their own right a specific roster of duties. Rather they emit the emotional energy which enables the other household members to execute their tasks. They are indispensable but inert personifications of the domestic ideal. Their generalized virtue saturates the entire household environment and submerges individual character.

The Victorian predilection for sanctifying the home and family infiltrates the children's periodical fiction of the 1870s where mothers are domestic deities. Mother is omnipresent and all-forgiving. She is the "deus ex machina" of children's tales, not actively involved in conflict but with unfailing powers to resolve, explain and absolve.

The parallels between the fictional representation of God and mother had contemporary pedagogical significance. In the experience of early childhood, faith in mother precedes faith in God. The child first confesses at his mother's knee before he learns the consolation of private prayers. It is as dangerous and futile for a child to harbour secrets from his mother as it is for an adult to try to deceive God. In tales for very young children, the formula of "the guilty secret"



is standard. "Eddie's Disobedience" (LF VI: 1873) typifies this theme. Eddie secretes a box of stolen matches from his mother's knowledge and accidentally sets his baby sister ablaze. In children's fiction, mother and God can only intervene when summoned. Though "The Sparrows Saw It" (Ch: 1871), Heinrich, the hero, can only exculpate his life-long guilt, begun with a childish theft, when he finally confesses to his mother and to God and requests their guidance.

Mother and God are allies in children's fiction. A loving maternal figure exemplifies divine love, and through it a child imbibes religious truth. Mrs. Guest in "The Two Blackbirds" (Ch: 1877) overcomes the resistance of a spoiled and neglected child and, with gentle and affectionate persuasion, plants the first seeds of religious faith in her heart. "Mattie had taken the first steps into that outer court called 'Mother love' through which we children pass into the light of 'Our Father' (p. 22)," author intoned.

Thus, even in a clerical family like the Guest's, it is the mother and not the Reverend father who conducts the religious education of the children. So confident are children's authors in the qualifications of a good mother to nurture a child's spontaneous faith that they have no need to draw institutionalized religion into their tales. The mother's faith is unworldly and unintellectual. In "The Phantom Islands" (S: 1876) little Celia falls asleep and lands in the world of day-dreams. Her guide shows her an image of her father's favourite day-dream - a huge Elizabethan mansion, but he cannot conjure a vision of her mother's constant dreams, for these are holy thoughts of heaven. The pure mother in children's fiction is the most suitable religious teacher, for her religious spirit is of the same genus as theirs - sunk deep in feeling, free from bonds of logic, and unassailable by doubt. Years ripen her passive faith and even her death does not dim the spiritual glow she kindles in her children. Audrey Seymour, the heroine of "Brave Little Heart" (LF n.s. IV: 1876) draws the strength to face and consolation to bear her trials from her

mother's diary, "which breathed of that true religion which had been characteristic of her mother's life (p. 323)."

In addition to her powers of religious influence, authors endowed their story-book mothers with the special privilege to invoke divine intercession on her family's behalf. A woman's prayers are more effectual than a man's activity in "Little Empress Joan" (LF n.s. II: 1875). When Joan is lost in London, Mr. Pairpoint combs the streets in a fruitless effort while his wife remains at home. "But who can doubt that her fervent agonized petition was Joan's eventual protection, when her father's search failed to find her. (p. 352)."

Children's authors, then, conferred divine authority, not to punish, but to protect children, upon their fictional mothers. If the God of childhood was a benevolent deity, mothers were accordingly affectionate and tolerant superintendents, magnanimously oblivious of the disorder and destruction resulting from childhood mischief. Orthodox opinion, by the 1870s, celebrated innocent high spirits and cherished childhood as a period of carefree happiness. Mothers were to safeguard this crucial stage of individual development. Even so, the author of "Harry Selby's Hatred" (LF VII: 1874) felt obliged to defend a lenient affectionate mother against potential critics:

Some said Mrs. Selby spoiled her children, but I do not know; she made them happy, and I do not think there were more obedient children in the whole village than hers were, although she did let them have a bear hunt in her parlour, and ruled by soft words when some mothers would have used harsh ones (p. 135).

Similarly, Mrs. Thornton in "Pet's Difficulties" (S: 1875) was "one of those delightful persons who scarcely know how to grumble":

Her one aim seemed to be that of making every one around her as happy as she could, and she had the idea...that children should never if possible be thwarted, and so if they rushed from the garden into the drawing room with boots neglectful of the door-mat, or if they set up a barricade against imaginary enemies with her best chairs, her remonstrance was so gentle it was seldom heeded. . . 'One cannot put old heads on young shoulders' she would say consolingly to the much-tried house-maid who came in to rearrange the furniture (p. 4).

Clearly, domestic assistants were an indispensable adjunct to mothers in the child-rearing regimens advocated by children's story writers. Only a mother liberated from the arduous tasks of housekeeping could smile upon the real disorder and destruction children's authors were fond of perpetrating in fictional play-acting. Only with the leisure and detachment to study the intricacies of a child's personality, could a mother like Mrs. Branning in "Little Hinges" (LF n.s. VIII: 1878) "read the secrets" of wayward Charlie's heart:

Had it not been so, [Charlie] would have been taken for a hopelessly bad child and driven by mismanagement to be what her manner led strangers to think she was (p. 3).

The vital affective role mothers played in the children's fiction of the 1870s made it imperative that children associate only positive emotions with her. The child-rearing methodology that this generation of children's authors endorsed was a more cerebral than physical activity. If children were innately good they still required a kindred spirit to elicit their native qualities and mould them in socially acceptable ways. Through her intensive and solicitous child-rearing and religious indoctrination, the story-book mother constructed a web of trust and reverence binding her children permanently to her and impressing her influence indelibly upon their characters. Her power over her children ultimately derived from the build-up and manipulation of sentiment surrounding her. Especially for her sons, soon to venture into the world, mother personified conscience. Once a boy internalized all that she represented, the mere incantation of the word 'mother' conjured sufficient emotive power to halt temptation, or comfort distress. In the end, some authors imply, her psychological influence carried more weight than external force. For instance, in "Glory" (AJ XIII: 1875) a pious school boy scolds his impetuous brothers to no avail. "And yet he had been wavering, and one gentle allusion to his mother would probably have persuaded him where threats worked the other way (p. 394)."

A boy's primary relationship with his mother is the single most decisive influence in his life. To the author of "Boys and their Ways" (1881), school boys are all alike, individual personality is visible only at home, and even there, a father's influence pales beside that of a mother:

. . .the true character is seen even more clearly in his relations with his mother. If he goes to her knee with all his confessions, all his little secrets, all his fancied wrongs, all his misdeeds - if he never fails in his tenderness towards her, in his deep love and reverence - then, whatever may be his follies or faults I shall not despair of him. The boy who loves his mother will, by virtue of that love, be born harmless through the fiery trials of the world. . . (p. 11/12).

In the children's fiction of the 1870s school represents "the fiery trials of the world" and poses the first challenge to a mother's dominance over her son's life. In this vital competition for a boy's allegiance, children's authors weigh and coordinate the various forces acting upon their hero's character from a mother's point of view. In domestic periodical fiction, mother casts the mould which forms her son's character, the school tests its mettle. Good mothers accept the inevitability of parting with their sons so long as this is not premature. School is no substitute for a mother's early training. A boy sent too young to school cannot profit by the experience and, like little "Harry Gwynne" (LF IV: 1872) suffer terrible hardship. They have no internal resources to sustain them through the trial. In contrast, "Harry Maxwell" (LF IX: 1879) is able to attend a local day school conducted by a clergyman. Mrs. Maxwell is thus able "to keep her bright, high-spirited young grandson a few years longer under her own eye instead of sending him off, all young and untried, to one of those much dreaded large public schools (p. 37)." In "The Old Work Box" (AJ IX: 1871) a French mother anxiously scans the countenance of her son, returning from his first term at school. She finds him more manly but "with the same child-heart she'd struggled to preserve. . . Her prayers and the principles she's striven to inculcate, had shielded her children under the grand test of contact with the world. A school is life in miniature, with its strifes and its temptations (p. 181/182)."

Once she is satisfied that her moral principles are permanently embedded in her son's character, a wise mother values the special lessons the school furnishes him. In "The Union Jacks" (Ch: 1873), a pious widow's early training gives her young son the moral courage to resist the peer pressure of school life, but she recognizes that her delicate, clever boy will have to live in a world of competition and challenge. Hence, she will not allow him to shirk the extra-curricular sports which would prepare him to face future trials. "Games teach you to be strong and quick and ready", Mrs. Grace tells Arthur, "and you will never be a useful man unless you learn that, even though you may beat every one else in your learning (p. 222)."

The school makes a boy a man by exposing him to rigorous experiences not to be found in the sheltered atmosphere of home. It does not compete with the family or supplant a mother's influence but rather reinforces them. The school becomes the focus of a boy's life during his tumultuous passage to adulthood. The home, then, crystallizes in the schoolboy's memory, permanently associated with the happiness of childhood. Thus, despite the temerity authors express through the voices of mothers, they recognize no alternative for socializing a boy of the middle or upper classes, provided his parents can meet the school fees.

However, although public school prestige was well-established by the 1870s, in domestic children's fiction the school is not a hatchery of embryonic gentlemen. Christian gentlemen almost invariably have genteel mothers whose training inoculates them against corruption from their less-refined schoolmates. Wyckham College in "Phillip Dene of Dene's Court" (S: 1877) does not make a gentleman from a trademan's son. In contrast, Phillip, the hero, has the innate charm, pride and instinct of a noble character, but school life does not develop these. He only becomes a "firm, consistent, upright Christian gentleman" when his aunt, a surrogate mother, comes to live at Dene's Court. In "March Winds and May Flowers" (S: 1874), a motherless schoolboy has a repellent character but his spending money lures companionship, "plenty of 'tin' helps a boy on wonderfully (p. 154)" observed the author, casting mild aspersions on the

aggregate schoolboy character.

Even if his moral character remains unblemished, the genteel boy acquires from school life vulgar vocabulary and mannerisms which he must learn to shed when he returns home. Schoolboy George in "Hoyle's Hole; Or the Yellow Carnation" (LF n.s. I: 1875) "was not a bad fellow - far from it - but he showed the rough side of his character sometimes at home which, it may be observed, showed bad taste and bad feelings, too (p. 77)". Likewise, Frank infests "Poor Nelly" (LF n.s. VI: 1877) with his vulgar schoolboy slang, much to the dismay of his stiff, unsympathetic aunt who laments, "I think schoolboys had better not be at all, or be altogether; I mean never leave school once they go to it (p. 2)."

Yet, despite vestigial fears of contamination from school, evasively represented by slang, authors conceded that a boy left too long in his gentle mother's care would either be too timid and soft to make his way in the world, or would soon overreach his mother's jurisdiction. In either case, boarding school provided a salutary complement to home rule. When a visiting nephew tries the patience of a spinster aunt in "Cousin Jack; Or a Holiday by the Rhine" (AH XVI: 1878), she consoles herself with the assurance that "school will cure him. There is always a hope for spoilt boys, there is none for spoilt girls (p. 503)."

In a girl's life, school is not an acceptable alternative to domestic education in the opinion of the majority of magazine contributors. The fear of social contamination they express obliquely with reference to boy's schools is blatant in their treatment of boarding schools for girls. The private academy for young ladies exposes girls to intimate contact with an eclectic social milieu which they would never encounter in their own homes. In contrast to their brothers, girls do not profit but suffer from a brush with experience. In "Kate Leicester's Schooldays" (S: 1874) wilful Kate becomes the unwitting object of the machinations of a social climbing widow's daughter who exploits Kate's purse and prestige. In "The Two Fourpenny Bits" (LF n.s. VIII: 1878), a corrupted West Indian girl, until her expulsion, poisons the pure atmosphere of Mrs. Midhurst's

home-like school.

If circumstances do not compel a family to board out their daughters, a story-book heroine's removal to school is a punishment. An intractable girl like Ursula in "Ursula Swayne's Troubles" (GWY: 1870) is sent to school when her moods and sulks upset the equilibrium of her home. In most cases, a girl's school days are over when she sufficiently appreciates the privilege of home life.

Girls in children's fiction, then, usually remain subject to their mother's dominion and, since one day they will be mothers themselves and mould another generation in turn, the influence of their mothers on their characters is doubly vital. That only a gentlewoman can rear a young lady is the consensus among the mid-Victorian generation of children's authors. The creator of "Little Empress Joan" (LF n.s. II: 1875) tests this hypothesis by placing her heroine for a time under the care of a strict, efficient widow. Mrs. Thornton successfully battled misfortune and brought up her sons creditably, but somehow her very success in managing as a single woman negates her gentility. Unlike Joan's gentle mother, Mrs. Thornton was "of the old school". She "never trusts children" and objects to "soft" mothers who bring up their girls in "idle shiftless ways". She is determined that Joan learn to make her way in the world, despite her son's protest that the refined and lady-like Joan will never have to succeed independently. To toughen Joan's character, Mrs. Thornton forces her to read aloud horrifying descriptions of crime and murder from the newspaper which revolt delicate Joan's sensibilities. Like Mrs. Thornton's own feminine daughter, Joan breaks under this regimen and runs away.

Mothers had to shield their daughters from any taint of worldliness yet at the same time convey a sure knowledge of social distinctions and obligations. If her daughters appeared ill-dressed and ill-mannered it reflected disadvantageously upon a mother and ultimately undermined family status. When tomboyish Charlie in "Little Hinges" (LF n.s. VIII: 1878) dresses her own hair and independently rushes to greet a visitor,

the newcomer rebuffs her: ". . .if that child is a specimen of what one may expect from her mother, I am sure I have no desire to make her acquaintance; an ill-bred, ill-behaved, impertinent child, with such a dreadfully untidy head of hair," sniffs Miss Thorne (p. 198). Naturally Mrs. Branning is equally appalled by her daughter's appearance.

On the other hand, a mother who concentrates on her daughter's fashionable education to the exclusion of her moral training utterly fails as a mother and even compromises her own status as a lady. The bustling and slightly vulgar Mrs. Buller in "Six to Sixteen" (AJ X: 1872) has none of the easy assurance and disdain for fashion that characterize the moral gentlewoman:

She would have taken a great deal of trouble that her daughters were not a flounce behind the fashions, and was so far-seeing in her motherly anxieties that she junketed herself and Major Buller to many an entertainment where they were bored for their pains, that an extensive acquaintance might assure to the girls partners, both for balls and for life when they came to require them. But after what fashion their fancies should be shaped, or whether they had wholesome food and tender training for that high faculty of imagination by virtue of which, after all, we so largely love and hate, choose right or wrong, and year and for year, adapt ourselves to the ups and downs of this world and spur our dull souls to the high hopes of a better - anxiety on these matters Mrs. Buller had none (p. 71).

In deference to the youth and innocence of their audience, children's authors generally ignored the social dimensions of a lady's activities. Nevertheless, they acknowledged that a mother's social experience was not without value. A minority of tales, those perhaps suited to older girls, touch on the delicate subject of choosing appropriate acquaintances. Lady Ann in "Lost and Found" (Ch: 1879) gently steers her daughter, recently introduced to "society", away from the frivolous fashionable people that she comes into contact with. "Mrs. Marlow's parties are so very gay", she warns, "and one meets. . .I won't say bad people, far from it - but people who seem to think gaiety and pleasure are the only things worth living for (p. 134)." Alternatively, the mother in "Maude's Discipline" (AJ VIII: 1870) recommends people who may not charm but who are thoroughly worthy characters: "Never let a person's want of refinement make you act or feel unkindly towards them", Mrs. Wilmot advises Maude, "Rather



win them by your gentleness and courtesy, and remember though a rough exterior is, I admit, a great disadvantage, and sometimes a fault, it often hides a warm true heart, that may stand us in good stead some day when mere worldly friends held aloof (p. 378)." Through a combined strategy of embargo and diplomacy the women of children's fiction enact the procedures of careful social regulation for the edification of readers.

Of the social lessons communicated through children's periodical stories, those devoted to philanthropy most excited children's authors. Voluntary social service represented one of the few socially acceptable outlets where women could channel their expanding leisure and education and achieve prominence. As we shall see in a later chapter, children's authors endorsed the activities of organized philanthropic institutions such as Ragged Schools or children's hospitals, which channelled the charity of the rich to serve specific purposes for the poor. But magazines still betray residual suspicion of impersonal charity. In their tales, they preferred to dramatize the practice of benvolence through mothers.

In country settings, story-book mothers routinely visit district poor and distribute nourishing food and uplifting advice to their poor neighbours. However, the city offers more instructive settings for the methodology of charity. Urban mothers encourage the natural sympathies of their children for the poor urchins they chance to view on their supervised walks in city parks. But in the city, where social relations are chaotic, it is important that the urban "lady bountiful" demonstrate the justice of the social order both through her words and her actions. In "London Daisies" (AJ XII: 1874), Lisa's mother praises her sensitive little daughter's concern for two poor girls but forbids contact with them. Lisa learns that Jenny and Becky long to go to school and proposes to share her governess with them, but her mother explains, "things look best in their own places. . . And as for Becky learning French or English grammar, Lisa - why that is your work, and she'd find it as hard to do as you would to mind the twins, or as I should to 'break my back over a mangle'

as Mrs. Becky does (p. 357)." As a substitute to Lisa's plan, her mother places Jenny in a training school for nurses and Becky in a board school. Children in fiction do not practice benevolence independently, as their "Goodchild" ancestors of early Victorian juvenile literature did. Their personal responsibility to the poor, authors repeatedly urge, extends no farther than kind thoughts and feelings which their mother translates into benevolent action.

Mothers were the foremost agents of social justice in the children's story-book world. Nevertheless, even in pursuing merciful errands, fictional mothers did not have to neglect their homes and children. Ideally, a mother coordinated her roles as chatelaine and benefactress and effectively fulfilled both. Mistress of a prosperous household, the middle-class woman of children's fiction wielded considerable consumer authority. She had the discretionary power to reward deserving dandies with her patronage. Blanche's mother in "The Yellow Carnation" (LF n.s. 1: 1875) seeks out a respectable poor widow to do her laundry while she and her children are at the seaside. In "What Johnny Laid Down" (LF n.s. X: 1879), a benevolent lady who "loved to take the sweepings of humanity and sift them for a jewel every time she was in want of a page boy (p. 238)", lifts a ragged crossing sweeper out of destitution into a comfortable life of service in her home. Aunt Olive in "Gracie's Puzzle" (S: 1877), hires an impoverished gentlewoman to sew her husband's shirts and pays her a generous wage:

She was always careful for other people's labour; it was not right, she said, to take advantage of the poor and to get them to do things because they happened to be in want (p. 153).

Her control of the domestic economy offers the moral gentlewoman the opportunity to extend her moral influence beyond the confines of her home.

In these and countless other examples of domestic benevolence, women exercise social responsibility both compassionately and rationally. In every case they carefully verify the merit of their beneficiaries, not only for the sake of justice, but also to ensure the unblemished characters of those who will serve them and their children in their homes.

The varied domestic activities mothers undertake in the course of juvenile dramas all contribute to the moral welfare of her children. As she expands her beneficent influence beyond the narrow boundaries of the nuclear family, she simultaneously extends the social education of her sons and daughters. Her good works do not earn her respect so much as reveal her innate goodness and gentility. It was her impeccable moral character that enables the story-book mother to transmit to her children the inner strength which would sustain them in future life.

However, the full complement of qualities that popular literature, including children's magazines, attached to "the lady" included several that rendered the fictional mother extremely vulnerable. One was her health. The gentlewoman in fiction has a delicate constitution, and, though the model mother never complains, her hold on life is precarious. The other is her lack of marketable skills. Faced with calamity, the fictional mother has no economic resources to maintain her family's life style. Yet her susceptibility to misfortune in no way undermines the position of ladies and mothers in children's fiction. The intended function of tales where economic insecurity or demographic instability jeopardizes the family is to reassure readers that safety and virtue lie in the code of behaviour the ideal mother exemplifies. Children's authors, thus, contrive to draw strength even from their fictional mothers' weaknesses, to prove that even death or poverty cannot efface her enduring legacy.

The defenselessness of the middle-class wives and mothers in the face of financial disaster alarmed their champions and critics alike. In the 1870s the dramatic bank failures and market collapses of nascent industrialism were recent memory and, combined with the spectre of depression, intensified middle-class feelings of insecurity. Assuming as many of her detractors did, that middle-class women were merely idle and frivolous ornaments, utterly dependent upon their husbands, what would become of them if their husbands died or their businesses collapsed? "You have a genteel family reduced at once to the most galling poverty; not merely the

poverty of the poor, but the poverty of the genteel poor, an infinitely sadder and more intolerable thing", answered Bow Bells in 1865.<sup>1</sup>

Women's rights advocates like Bessie Raynor Parkes and Barbara Bodichon tried to lobby for increased educational and vocational opportunities to equip women to face economic calamity. Those unwilling to countenance genteel women at work in the world had little practical advice to offer, beyond reiterating the importance of domestic skills. "No household knowledge is out of place, or a disadvantage in these days of emigration and speculation when the most delicately-nurtured young lady may find herself settled in the bush, or one with expectations reduced to absolute necessity, with only a few hours bridging the two extremes of her fortune", observed Mrs. Caroline White.<sup>2</sup>

The plight of suddenly impoverished women and children was a common theme in the periodical fiction of the 1870s and touched the most tender feelings of children's authors. Though they sympathized with the conditions of the perennially poor, their treatment of the genteel poor was more poignant because more heart-felt. Belle and Lily in "Links of Kindness" (S: 1870) express appalled disbelief that a lady might starve alone without servants, but their mother explains, "Indeed, it may be so...and when a lady is poor, and has to go without a servant, and fire, and good food, she feels it more than anyone because she has been accustomed to all these (p. 53)." What was worse, there were so few solutions to the problem. In "Gracie's Puzzle" (S: 1871), Mrs. Shirley is too delicate to undertake any occupation.

And the children, what could they do? Had they been brought up as poor people's children, Belle and her sisters might have gone out as little nurse girls or maids-of-all-work, and so have earned their bread, and Frank might have become a small errand-boy, but as it was they had not more than half-finished their education, and knew little of useful occupations beyond hemming and pocket handkerchiefs (p. 27).

<sup>1</sup>"Poor Genteel Women" Bow Bells, III(1865), p. 91.

<sup>2</sup>Mrs. Caroline A. White, "Mama's Right Hand" The Household, III (1866), 367.

Even with a 'finished' education, a lady would soon have realized, as did Audrey in "Brave Little Heart" (LF n.s. IV: 1876) how pathetically ill-rewarded were her skills in fancy work or teaching.

Notwithstanding the inescapable conclusion that their refined mothers and genteel children were not well-adapted to meet the vagaries of fortune, children's authors offered no practical solutions. In so conservative a medium it is not surprising that radical proposals for extending womens' education are absent. When Bessie Rayner Parkes herself contributed to Little Folks and Good Words for the Young she scrupulously avoided controversial subjects. But even the traditional solutions advocated by conservatives, the training of women in household economy, do not attract children's authors. Nor do they concern themselves with the causes of ruin. Bank failures, unwise speculations or the death of a father, which account for their fictional family's predicament are all beyond the control of their heroes and heroines.

An issue that children's authors did address was the ability of the family to retain its integrity and values in adversity. Handling the theme of downward social mobility sensitively and tactfully, they assuaged the haunting fear of the middle classes that only a thin film of wealth distinguished them as individuals from the faceless masses below. While material prosperity, contributed by the father, might vanish, the stirring qualities with which a mother imbues her family are permanent. Thus, although the family in "Honor Bright" (Ch: 1878) became rather shabby in their poverty, their gentility is instantly apparent:

Yes, even the bland waiter recognized the three tattered and splashed little urchins 'as young gents' after all; . . .and pretty Lady Jane naturally recognized the same fact still more rapidly. . .the bright, honest young faces, and frank, easy bearing, and that nameless something about all the children - the hallmark which stamps the true silver be it never so ill-kempt, and separates it from the most highly-polished electro in the world (p. 239).

The formula of downward social mobility offered children's authors an opportunity to display the heroism of women and to test the strength of their qualities. In adversity women discover hidden reserves that sustain them, and their families throughout their trials. These reserves derive

not from unusual talents but from the same feminine virtues - Christian submissiveness, forbearance, and selflessness - that distinguished them in wealth. Even in poverty, women remain the moral, not the economic support for the family, although in one story a heroine manages to contribute to her family's income, not by the usual sewing or teaching but by, of all things, writing children's stories for magazines!

The most important role of fictional mothers in radically reduced circumstances is to protect their children and the status of the family which wealth no longer guarantees. The story-book mother responds to adversity by drawing her children even closer to her and prohibiting contact with her new and potentially contaminating neighbours. Only thus does the destitute gentlewoman in "Roses from Thorns" (LF n.s. IX: 1879) preserve her son's purity. He explains to his guardian, "Mother didn't like my going into the streets with other boys, and she could not send me to school, so I was with her generally, and did what she wanted when she was ill, and she said I was not like other boys (p. 4)." The children of the genteel poor in fiction are utterly isolated but their gentility remains intact.

In her self-imposed seclusion the story-book mother finds consolation and ultimately salvation through her intimate relationship with her children, especially her sons. Widow's sons are fired with holy ambition to re-establish their mothers in appropriate surroundings. Indeed, the only form of social mobility within the middle class which the children's authors of the 1870s allow is that of a widow's son successfully regaining the position in life for which his breeding and virtue qualify him. "The Widow's Son" (Ch: 1870) shuns the society of his peers and singlemindedly pursues his ambition to become a successful doctor and establish his mother in a luxurious home. Similarly, "Harold Ruthven" (LF n.s. V: 1877) gives up his dream of becoming a soldier and becomes a clergyman so that he might comfort and support his mother in her old age.

In the estimation of children's story writers the woman who strives to consolidate her family's status in times of hardship and enriches the home atmosphere with her gentility fares better than the woman who seeks to elevate her status with newly acquired wealth. In "Tom Heriot" (LF n.s. IX: 1879), a mother who married above her own rank and, after her husband's death, resents her children as encumbrances upon her now narrow resources, earns a well-deserved fate - oblivion. When her sons leave home to make their way in the colonies, they forget her altogether.

A woman's immortality resides in the qualities she inculcates in her children and the loving and reverent memory she inspires. Nothing so dramatically demonstrates a mother's value to her family as her death. Children's authors frequently resort to this dramatic device in their efforts to reinforce the moral and emotive power of their fictional mothers. Analyzing the phenomenon of a mother's death in children's fiction from the standpoint of the sociology of women's roles, it is possible to discern a practical as well as sentimental function for this conventional strategy. As an historian of domestic work observed of the Victorian household structure:

Only when the . . . wife is abruptly removed from the household and the well-oiled wheels of domestic machinery grind to a halt does the superior[the husband and father] realize just how important such services really are.     1

In children's fiction, the abrupt cessation of a mother's vague but crucial services to her family demonstrates in poignant fashion to the widower, his children, and the reader, how central and irreplaceable is the position of the mother in the family. Moreover, in tales of domestic ordeal, the dramatic removal of the protective mother allows young heroes and heroines opportunity to rise to the challenge of adversity.

The broken family in fiction reflects the precarious situation every Victorian family faced and against which there was no defense. Curiously though, fathers rarely die in the course of a child's tale. If the plot

<sup>1</sup> Leonore Davidoff, "Mastered for Life: Servant and Wife in Victorian and Edwardian England", Journal of Social History, VII (1873/4), 422.

demands a father's decease, it forms a preliminary detail, describing unemotionally a family's predicament. But the morbidity of mothers in children's stories is truly astonishing. As with the figure of the child in adult fiction, in children's tales the emotions surrounding mother could be amplified limitlessly for the maximum dramatic effect. Children's authors manipulated the feelings of their readers unmercifully in their efforts to beatify mothers. Guilt and love and fear combine to force the child in fiction to conform to his mother's message. Thus, the mother in "Sam Birkett" (LF n.s. VIII: 1875) moans to her recalcitrant son: "Oh, my boy, my foolish boy! If only you knew, you may not have mama very long, you should not sulk with her! (p. 222)". The boy carries an enduring memory of his dying mother's lecture and grows to be a virtuous and successful man.

Boys preserved the image of their mother as a talisman against the temptations and evils they would encounter in the world. But it was up to girls not merely to internalize their mother's image but to become its reincarnation. The death of mothers in children's fiction provides the only possible opportunity for a heroine to test her strength of character. Children's authors recognized no "rite of passage" in a girl's life to equal the place school furnished in a boy's. "Society" and "coming out" feature rarely in stories for young readers and do not, in any case, elicit the qualities authors wished to emphasize. But a girl's attempt to replace her deceased mother musters all her resources and focuses them on the home front.

Thus, a girl's passage to adulthood in children's literature is instantaneous and painful. "Circumstances had swept away her happy childhood more surely than years could have done" observed the author of "Brave Little Heart" (LF n.s.IV: 1876) when her mother's sudden death leaves Audrey to manage an impoverished household, rear young children, comfort her father and guide her wilful schoolboy brother. Yet before her swift promotion to womanhood, the author warns portentously, "Audrey was not a wonderful unnatural child" but "just such a pleasure-loving



creature as I think I see bending over this page (p. 35)." Pattie Thorne (S: 1871), Millicent in "Aunt Millicent's Charge" (S: 1870), Janet in "The Sisters" (Ch: 1876) and many other heroines earn their womanhood by martyrdom. The weight of adult responsibility crushes their childish high spirits. Sleepless nights erase their youthful vitality. As with their mothers, illness is a girl's ultimate justification and defense. Only in delirium do authors allow their heroines to remind insensitive fathers and brothers of the scope of their self-sacrifice.

The crucial position a mother occupies is most explicitly manifested by her absence and the struggles of her daughter to compensate. To perpetuate feminine domestic virtues in the next generation children's authors elevate them to heroic proportions. But they cannot define the mystical source of woman's strength. The author of "A Banished Monarch" (LF VI: 1873) assured her readers that young Mona's "motherly feelings" and "womanly ways. . . developed all unconsciously" through her devotion to her father and brother and that she learned "to forget self in the general good" (p. 187)." Another author stirred her readers' aspirations to glorious womanhood. In "Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh" (LF n.s. X: 1879), Winnie selfishly pursues her own ambitions and ignores her mother's dying request. The author laments:

Oh! what a refreshing rill would her young life have been with her mother's last words and her mother's own meaning as her life's motto, in that household without a centre, throbbing through the day with loving kindness for them all. True, they had faithful Susan, but. . . other than servants fingers must weave the thread of gold into a household (p. 344).

Girls grow into women inevitably but only merit the status of mother through a selfless metamorphosis. Women find their fulfillment, not as individuals, but through the family.

From an examination of the dramatic representation of womanhood, meant to inculcate ideal virtues in the young, we see that the cult of motherhood was in no way inconsistent with the subjection of women to a narrow and stylized way of life. Despite the respect paid to the ideal mother and lady in the files of children's periodical fiction, this prestige

did not accrue to women personally. It was an attribute of their gender, a natural force acting through them. Children's authors, in unison with public opinion, paid homage to women as mothers and exalted motherhood to the summit of the story-book world, but they allowed women no other role in society.

### The Hands of the Household: The Servants

The prosperous, middle-class family which formed the basic cell of the children's story-book world was private and self-sufficient. Yet, at the same time, it was extended beyond the nuclear grouping of father, mother, and children by the omnipresent household servants. Story-book children almost invariably had a nurse. Housemaids, cooks, and gardeners completed the setting of genteel middle-class status in the fictional household, though few real middle-class families could afford this full complement of staff.<sup>1</sup> The liberal sprinkling of servants in the homes of fictional middle-class families was not merely gratuitous dream-mongering on the part of children's authors. These domestic tales served an important function for their mid-Victorian, middle-class child readers. The delineated an ideal hierarchy within the servant-extended family which in turn served as a microcosmic model of a harmonious, interdependent social order. As emissaries from the lower ranks of the social order, servants completed the family's social spectrum. Their presence allowed young heroes and heroines to experiment with different modes of social behaviour and to interact with a different social class while still in a protected, controlled environment.

Children's stories, by routinely ascribing a triumvirate of resident servants to their fictional homes, reflected inflating middle-class expectations of gracious living. The employment of servants was an index

<sup>1</sup>Patricia Branca, in Silent Sisterhood (1976), p. 40 analyzes middle-class incomes, servants and wages and population figures to refute the assumption made by most social historians that mid-Victorian, middle-class families were invaded by legions of servants.

by which contemporary commentators as well as modern historians distinguished subtle shades of middle-class status.<sup>1</sup> Children's authors wished to establish the gentility of their fictional families in order to qualify them as models for middle-class readers. Servants were indispensable confirmers of status. Moreover, by outlining in the context of fiction the proper relationship between master and servant, children's authors furnished their readers with a blueprint of ideal social life in the domestic setting.

Many middle-class families were inexperienced employers of servants and required tactful guidance to handle the intrusion of strangers into their most intimate daily life. In contrast to upper-class households which had always included resident servants, domestic help was a relatively recent innovation in middle-class homes. In the confined quarters of middle-class houses, the relationship with servants was more intense and potentially more fraught with friction than in the spacious aristocratic mansions.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the upper-classes were able to hire older, experienced servants whose duties were specific and established by custom, but the middle-classes could afford only young, untrained girls to be general servants.<sup>3</sup> Middle-class families had to learn behaviour appropriate towards social inferiors living with them and the reciprocal services and responsibilities which maintained the master/servant bond. Furthermore, they

<sup>1</sup>Citing Rowntree's authority, that it was the keeping of servants which divided the middle from the working class, many historians use the number of servants hired by a household as a rough indicator of status. See, for instance, J. A. Banks, Prosperity and Parenthood: A Study of Family Planning Among the Victorian Middle-Classes (1954), pp. 70-73.

<sup>2</sup>J. F. C. Harrison, The Early Victorians, 1832 - 1851 (1971), p. 110, describes the spatial arrangements of middle-class homes that put master and servant in particularly intimate contact.

<sup>3</sup>Theresa McBride, "As the Twig is Bent: The Victorian Nanny", in Anthony S. Wohl, ed., The Victorian Family: Structure and Stresses (1978), pp. 49-50 examines census data which reveals that, in 1871, 51% of the young women hired as nurses were under 20 and 23% were under 14. McBride argues that many middle-class households, though they could afford only one or two servants, would place first priority on nursemaids.

had to train their servants in their tasks, supervise their moral conduct, and teach them to exhibit the deference due their employers.

Evidently, the contemporary periodical press overestimated the number of servants middle-class households actually hired. Elite social critics, anxious about the competition posed by the affluent life style of the upper middle class, condemned all middle-class families for abandonning their primary obligations by their pursuit of fashion and status.<sup>1</sup> For instance, in 1875, the Saturday Review castigated the "Modern Mother":

Nurses, governesses, schools in turn relieve her of the responsibility and irksome duties of maternity. She see her little ones at their state hours, and for the other twenty-three leaves them to receive their first indelible impressions from a class she is never tired of disparaging. As the girls grow older, the women by whom they are moulded may become higher in the social and intellectual scale, but they are no more than before subordinated to the mother's personal supervision. 2

Though most middle-class women, in fact, cared for and trained their own children, the potential erosion of a mother's role, when alien influences intervened between her and her child, aroused anxiety about the moral and physical health of children.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the relationship between a servant and his employer's child was a delicate and precarious one. The socially superior child was still, due to his youth and dependence, subject to servant authority over many aspects of nursery routine. Contemporary child-rearing manuals recognized the problem but offered their readers only fuzzy ideals, rather than specific advice. The anonymous author of Children and What to do With Them counselled mothers that:

Above all, children should be polite and nice in manner towards servants and inferiors generally. The teaching of children here is a little difficult. With them the line is so fine drawn between politeness and familiarity. In explaining the difference

<sup>1</sup>Branca, pp. 22, 23, argues that contemporary journalists regularly "mistook their audience". They assume the spending patterns possible for only a tiny minority of the middle-class to be general and proceeded to advise or criticize middle-class readers accordingly.

<sup>2</sup>[Eliza Lynne Linton], "The Modern Mother", Saturday Review (1875), p. 109.

<sup>3</sup>McBride, p. 52.

we are not unlikely to get into a kind of fog ourselves for the truth is, their minds are so innocent at present respecting grades and station and position, that people are "all alike" to them. And then we are open in teaching a necessary lesson, to impart also a very unnecessary one of pride. <sup>1</sup>

In the households of fiction, children's authors clearly articulated the ideal division of labour and responsibility between mistress and servant. They emphasized the subordination of the servant and the authority of the mother most strenuously in matters of child-rearing. Mothers were the single most important personage in the lives of young heroes and heroines and therefore children's authors were reluctant to admit that a truly warm and intimate relationship could exist between a child and his nurse, so long as his mother lived. Moreover, the nurse who significantly influenced a child's developing character inevitably cast doubts on the primary bond of intimacy between the mother and child. Thus the nurses in children's periodical tales were minor, background figures. At best, she was a comical character; at worst, pathetically ineffectual, like the nurse in "A London Fairy" (AJ X: 1872) who tries to console a sick child, bitterly disappointed at missing the Christmas pantomime, with accounts of the marvellous fortitude of her former charges.

Furthermore, the intensely solicitous child-rearing methods which these children's authors promoted required a sensitive and knowledgeable practitioner. Nurses were too coarse and uneducated to nourish the spiritual and emotional aspects of a genteel child's nature. The child-rearing manuals of the period feared that a stubborn nurse might rend the delicate web of trust and affection which the mother carefully spun. The author of Children, Their Health, Training and Education (1879) advised readers to ensure that their nurses were free of prejudice and willing to learn, for old methods of child-rearing could be detrimental to a child's development. (p. 11).

<sup>1</sup>Children and What to do With Them (1881), pp. 97/98.

Such fears surface occasionally in children's fiction. The nurse in "My Sister Bliss" (AJ XII: 1874) persecutes an only and motherless child who builds a fantasy around an imaginary sister. The father intercedes and berates the nurse for her "want of comprehension in totally failing to understand imaginative children." Later the nurse lets off steam to the housekeeper and reveals her out-moded attitudes to children. "In my day", she sniffs, "such talk about Blisses and that, and not being alone when there wasn't no one with her, wasn't called imagination, it were called story-telling, and treated as such (p. 144)". In another tale, servants complain below stairs about the child-rearing methods of their new mistress, who tries to overcome with gentleness and patience her stepson's rejection of her. It would be better to "box his ears and have done with it" concur cook and housemaid in "Lionel's Stepmother" (LF n.s. II: 1875).

Ideally, servants, in the guise they assume in children's fiction, were best left out of the psychological dimensions of child-rearing. But a good nurse excelled when the child's needs were merely physical. Spirited Courcy of "In the Mischief Again" (LF n.s. VII: 1878) belittles his nurse and disobeys her, though he displays honourable deference to the wishes of his grandparents. When he is ill, however, his nurse takes precedence:

The hastiness and occasional asperity of manner which she sometimes displayed in his days of health and strength and never-ending mischief were laid aside now and her disregard of herself and attention to his slightest want made her most valuable in the sick room (p. 323).

Authors divided the labours of child-rearing between nurse and mistress to reinforce the mother's gentility and enhance her efficiency in the vital aspects of child-rearing. They invested in servants all the undignified aspects of child care and reserved for the mother's jurisdiction the grand horizons of morality and religion. Servants nag and scold little miscreants while mothers laugh at mischief and speak seriously about higher things. Around nurse gather all the unpleasant associations of daily discipline and routine. The author of "In Dolly Land; or Tidy's Dream"

(LF III: 1872) takes on the persona of a fond mother to observe her heroine's attitude towards her nurse:

I rather think she often fancied Martha, her nurse, was provided - for the purpose of crossing her will and frustrating her plans (p. 254).

The buffer of servants between children and their parents also served to release the pressure of childish high spirits and divert any confrontation with authority. When "The Balcony Boys" (AJ XI: 1875) disrupt the neighbourhood with their amusing antics, only the authority of the cook and parlour maid is on trial, so the author allows that "boys will be boys". But once their parents return from their holidays, the mischief quickly comes to an end.

Similarly, authors could expend the insolence of an impetuous and ill-mannered child relatively harmlessly, if only a servant bore their cheek. The feeble nurse in "Amelia and the Dwarfs" (AJ VIII: 1870) sighs when her charge reduces her clothes to tatters, "You seem to think things clean and mend themselves Miss Amelia." "No, I don't", said Amelia rudely, "I think you do them; that's what you're here for (p. 209)." No children's author would allow even so roguish a child as Amelia to address her mother in such an unseemly fashion. Finally the child receives her well-deserved punishment, but not at the hands of nurse. Nurses may whine and complain, but, in fiction, they may not punish or reward.

In light-hearted tales of mischief, cooks, gardeners, game-keepers and housemaids are fair game for teasing and tormenting. The little mistresses and masters of magazine tales, however innocent they may be about the ways of the world, never doubt their own social superiority. The presence of servants living in their midst is a constant reminder of their gentility; thus authors do not trouble to teach their heroes or readers domestic humility. Manly little Robin in "The Peace Egg" (AJ X: 1872) is not daunted by the unfriendly reception of a housekeeper when he and his siblings, dressed as mummers, arrive at the front door. "You are only the servant . . . Go and ask your master and mistress if they wouldn't like to see us act" he orders her. Instantly mollified by his imperiousness, the

housekeeper complies, muttering, "Well to be sure . . . their dresses are pretty too. And they seem quite a better sort of person, they talk quite genteel, I might ha' knowed they weren't like common mummers (p. 113)."

The transcription of a common dialect, like that of the Yorkshire housekeeper above, is a common device of authors that establishes a servant's comic demeanor and differentiates him or her from the major characters whose speech is impeccable. Furthermore, this allows authors to display the rich variety of folk culture otherwise absent from the cultivated homes of fiction. The mother in "The Peace Egg" talks 'Yorkshire' to her servants. In another tale, "Honor Bright" (Ch: 1878) the children's nurse imparts some of the flavour of their dead Irish mother's home:

It was only in the nursery that nurse let herself indulge in the brogue; among the ~~other~~ servants she kept a watch on her tongue, and was pretty successful in her imitation of their Cockney talk, which she called "the English", for she knew by experience the contempt with which "them Hirish" are generally treated below-stairs (p. 179).

So long as the servants in fiction are firmly subordinated to the supervision of parents, authors allowed their heroes and heroines access to the tales, myths and superstitions of "Olde England" through servant characters. Indeed, contemporaries generally acknowledged servants to be superior raconteurs, much better able to retain the traditional integrity of tales than educated people.<sup>1</sup> It is nurse's tale that incites "Willie and Mary's Search for Fairyland" (AJ XIV: 1876) and Blanche, George and Alice's adventure with the fairy on "Wish-Day" (AJ XVI: 1878). Associating folk and fairytales with the comic and minor characters of their stories, authors need have little fear that their readers would attach undue credence to delightful fantasies. Thus, they could indulge, in good conscience, their heroes' and readers' enjoyment, in the company of uneducated

<sup>1</sup>William Caldwell Roscoe, for instance, remarked that "Your boy prefers his nurse's version of the fairy-tale to your own; she always puts in the same words in the same places, and this is a great matter." See, "Fictions for Children", The Prospective Review (1855); reprinted in Lance Salway, A Peculiar Gift: Nineteenth Century Writings on Books for Children (1976), p. 26.



and simple servants, the traditional lore of England.

There is more cause for alarm when servants communicate to children elements of contemporary working-class culture. In "Wee Willie Winkie" (LF n.s. III: 1876), the motherless son of a busy doctor avidly pursues "some very trashy books, the property and present of cook" and "had got his brain quite mystified between the real and the unreal (p. 179)." The situation climaxes when he escapes his boarding school to run away to sea and live out fiction-inspired fantasies. Only then does his neglectful father intercede.

On the whole, children's authors of the 1870s conceded that young children might be more akin in taste and temperament to servants than to their parents and that relatively well-to-do young protagonists would spend a large proportion of their daily lives in the company of servants. However, as children grew older their moral and social requirements superseded their physical needs and servants grew less and less qualified to minister to more complex demands. What is worse, children left too long in the care of servants might begin to acquire, by imitation, the unrefined habits and customs of uneducated inferiors. Motherless Reginald in "A Flat Iron for a Farthing" (AJ IX: 1871) adopts servants' slang and other bad habits by way of his old nurse. His father is soon prompted to arrange for Reggie regular lessons with the rector.

Reggie's mother died at his birth, but, had she lived, it would have been her responsibility to ensure that her children remained uncontaminated by the "low habits" of servants. "A Bad Habit" (AJ XIV: 1876) enlarged upon this theme. The heroine, Selina, is visiting her impeccably bred godmother and is told, to her chagrin, how vulgar and graceless are the mannerisms she has copied from her mother's servants. Her chances of maturing into a good-looking lady, Lady Elizabeth lectures her, would be slight if she continued to mimic the tossing, pouting ways of "a servant out on Sunday walking":

When little girls flounce on the high road, it only looks ridiculous; but when you grow up, you'll never have a clean petticoat or be known for a well-bred woman behind your back, unless you learn to walk as if your legs and your feelings were under your own control...(p. 141).

Warming to her subject, Lady Elizabeth continues:

Underbred and ill-educated women are, as a general rule, much less good-looking than well-bred and highly educated ones, especially in middle life; not because good features and pretty complexions belong to more to one class than to another, but because nicer personal habits and stricter discipline of the mind do (p. 144).

This author travesties the customs and attitudes of servants through the absurd posturing of her little protagonist. However, her implicit object in this tale is to castigate Selina's socially ambitious mother. This woman, originally from a wealthy manufacturing family but elevated through an advantageous marriage, affects a "nervous condition" which prevents her from being with her children. Hence, they are left to the servants. Her social acquaintances, introduced through the character of Selina's dearest chum, an over-dressed, vulgarly materialistic daughter of a railway magnate, are equally idle and pretentious. Though such details of social status emanate from the background, the accumulated evidence indicts the mother. The unfortunate influence on Selina's deportment of the servants is merely a symptom of more serious malaise.

If, however, the mother of fictional children is dead, authors may divert some, but not all, of the affection and reverence surrounding her to the child's nurse. Nurse Bundle is a surrogate mother to Reggie in "A Flat Iron for a Farthing" (AJ IX: 1871). His affection for her is life-long but has none of the affective power over him that even the portrait of the mother he never knew assumes. Davy Chalmers in "A Star in the Dust Heap" (LF n.s. I: 1875) transfers to his old nurse Martha the love and trust he had placed with his mother before her death. But Martha cannot protect him from his heartless relatives who take him away from her.

Again, if the mother is incapacitated by illness, an author may permit the nurse to take a more prominent role in child-rearing. In "Better than the Mighty" (S: 1871):

It was Judith who oftenest soothed Claudia's childish troubles for her mama was so often tired and ill that her little Patience had to be her comforter rather; Judith was always ready to listen. She had been Claudia's nurse and attendant for three years, and loved her young charge with all the warmth of an affectionate nature (p. 19).

Reversing the usual flow of religious teaching, this modest servant transmits the spirit of true Christianity to her superiors:

It was from Judith that Claudia first learned those precious Bible stories that children love to listen to, for Judith was an earnest humble-minded Christian, and it might be that her consistent life was not without its effect on her gentle mistress. Mrs. St. John said but little, but she seemed to have a growing interest in the things belonging to another world, and often when Judith was talking in her own simple way to Claudia, she would come into the nursery unperceived and sit down and listen too (p. 19).

Inexorably, Mrs. St. John's religious preoccupations prelude her death a few chapters along.

But even the most virtuous nurse cannot compensate for the loss of a mother. The peerless Judith has no influence over Claudia's brother, Gerald, who becomes uncontrollably wilful after his mother's death. In a similar tale, "Pet's Difficulties" (S: 1875), the hard-working and doggedly religious Rachel does her best by her charge but cannot achieve the ideal:

. . .the pity was that she had a cold, reserved manner, and a stern way of speaking, which concealed the warmth of her heart, and checked any expression of affection that might be felt towards her (p. 3).

The staid and orderly routine of Pet's house contrasts sadly with the uproarious, warm atmosphere created by the lenient, gentle vicar's wife next door.

Moreover, Pet does not revere her nurse as she might a mother. She speaks sharply to Rachel and complains of her as "a cross old thing" to her indulgent father, who does not try to correct her insolence. Rachel's jealous possessiveness dampens Pet's joys and it takes the persuasion of a neighbouring lady, Miss Percival, to demonstrate to Pet the depth of Rachel's devotion. But Pet's difficulties are not over until her father makes Miss Percival her new mother.

A mother's emotional influence over a child is life-long, but a nurse passes from a child's life when the nursery is outgrown. In memoirs the parting with nurse occasioned considerable trauma, but in fiction such scenes are suppressed. In a rare discussion of a nurse's source of authority, the author of "The Merrivale's Cross" (AJ XI: 1873) clearly outlines the temporary nature of her influence over a tempestuous boy:

Nurse's reign of terror was over; he had feared her once. She used to master him when he was less; she used to tie him and Beatrice to opposite bed posts when they became unruly; but since Phillip had been to school, he had outgrown Nurse's authority, and the wholesome fear in which he used to hold her (p.689).

Conflicts between children and servants, especially in the absence of a mother, recur frequently in the children's magazines but excite little comment from the authors. Conflicts between mistress and servant are correspondingly rare and are treated very seriously. The housemaid in "Little Hinges" (LF n.s. VIII: 1878) who began to treat Mrs. Branning with disrespect because Mr. Branning was suspected of fraud earns instant dismissal. Gossiping servants, authors imply, act as a moral police force, ever anxious to discover and exploit the failings of their employers. In "A Very Ill-Tempered Family" (AJ XIII: 1875) the children learn through their nurse how a neighbour's servants deride him behind his back and how their aunt's tragic history became a mere "nursery tale" bandied about by the servants. Isobel takes the hint that her own behaviour must be exemplary to escape lampooning by the servants of the square.

Mistress/servant relations are most strained in fiction when an elder daughter, through the death of her mother, suddenly becomes responsible for managing a complex household. Lady Elizabeth in "A Bad Habit" (AJ XIV: 1876) related her difficulties when at sixteen she took charge of a retinue of servants:

. . .most of our servants had known me from babyhood, and it was not a light matter to have the needful authority over them without hurting the feelings of such old and faithful friends. But, on the whole, they respected my efforts, and were proud of my self-possession (p. 146).

Lady Elizabeth was well-trained to perform her duties. At less exalted social levels, the problems between a young mistress and servants were more acute because relationships were more intimate and the gap between servant and served grew threateningly narrow. "Pattie Thorne" (S: 1871) has great difficulty eliciting obedience and respect from the one servant left to her suddenly motherless and impoverished family. "Honor Bright" (Ch: 1878) receives regular scoldings from her old nurse because she fails to rise to the challenge of managing the home and family on a much reduced income. Winnie in "Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh" (LF n.s. X: 1879) expects her general servant to clean and cook and care for the children while she pursues her passion for painting. All three girls eventually learn to delineate the boundary that separates a lady's work from a servant's and to recognize the legitimate claims of each province.

Through fictional situations, the children's authors of the 1870s furnished the training and vicarious experience their readers, future mistresses, might require to manage their own servants. As Aunt Olive pointed out to her niece who strenuously objected to doing servant's work in "Gracie's Puzzle" (S: 1877):

"...Belle, you will be a woman some day, and every true woman should know how to guide her household, and how can she do that if she has not learned in girlhood?" . "Ladies only give orders, and see that they are carried out", persisted Belle, laying the emphasis on the first word. "My dear child, a real lady is not the helpless sort of being that you picture her; and you would be a very poor mistress if you could not, if need be, tell your servants not only what to do but how their work should be done (p. 90)."

This children's author advanced the managerial education of her middle-class readers and rebutted the popular mythology of the idle, ornamental lady. But moral education was the paramount object of the contributors to children's magazines in the 1870s. They decreed that the social and moral obligations upon women who employed servants were barely less than her responsibility to her children. Indeed, the socialization of children

and servants had much in common.<sup>1</sup> In story-book households a disciplined routine imposed by elders and betters united children and servants and ordered their daily lives. The children's timetable of meals, lessons, exercise and play chimed with the servant's schedule of duties. A mother made sure that her children's appearance bespoke their station in life. Similarly, she exercised control over her servant's demeanor. With their ideals of deferential subordination from servants, children's authors could not condone a servant's taste for "finery". In "Our Barbara" (GWY:1870), when the narrator employs a highly efficient but untrained Scotswoman as a general servant, she immediately banishes all the ribbons and trinkets that adorn Barbara's costume.

Moreover, both children and servants owed unquestioning obedience to the head of the household. In return, the masters proffered protection and support. In "Links of Kindness" (S: 1870), the author described the ideal relationship that should exist between employers and servants. When a visiting charwoman remarks on the unusual benevolence of two little girls in the household, the cook enthusiastically agrees:

Ay, they are and good ladies too...and so is their mama and their papa; why, he just has a thought for us all; we're all like his children, and the young ladies are learning it all (p. 2).

The dependence of servants and the responsibility of their employers is a life-long commitment. Ideally, a mistress virtually inherits her servants, bringing them from her family home - maid, nurse or cook - so that no real strangers impose on her new married life. A new servant is as rare in children's fiction as an evil one. The constant invocation of "faithful" and "old" applied to servants does more than confer gentility upon the mistress and master by the implication that their servant-owning status is long established. It also suggests the long-term, non-contractual bonds between master and servant. Faithful servants loyally follow their mistresses into poverty, eagerly accepting more onerous duties and even refusing wages when times are bad. In return, the family continues to support servants even when they are too old and feeble to work. In "The

White Shell" (AJ X: 1872) when Adelaide observes the painfully slow progress of an old gardener, her hostess must agree but explains to the child:

Yes, it is more looking than doing now; but my dear, we do not throw off an old servant like an old garment, when worn out and useless. Ben's home is here till he finds one in another world (p. 682).

Once children have clear in their minds their relative superiority to servants, they can begin to learn, from their parent's example, the consideration servants deserve and the responsibilities they entail. Authors convey their message of domestic paternalism through admirable characters rather than sermons. They entice readers to emulate the manner of an attractive, manly young midshipman in "Gilbert's Shadow" (LF V: 1873) who "had generally a pleasant, civil speech, or an innocent joke ready for whatever servant addressed him (p. 212)."

What is more, servant's accounts of their own homes give wealthy children their first experience, albeit second-hand, with the lives of the poor and underprivileged. Nurse Elsie's sad remarks in "Little Hinges" (LF n.s. II: 1875) about the bleak Christmas her own family were having while the rich Branning children enjoyed warmth, abundant presents and luxurious food, provoked the sensitive Edith to appreciate her good fortune and her parents to help Elsie's family. Servants living in their homes give children a chance to exercise their benevolent impulses in a controlled protected environment. In "Santa Klaus and His Dealings with Bobby" (LF VII: 1874), a dream, where Santa fills the stockings of more needy boys and girls than he, enlightens little Bobby. He abandons his cruel torment of the illiterate kitchen maid, donates his own Christmas money to her, and teaches her to read. As a test to Emily's maturity, Mrs. Lethbridge in "Sulky Susie" (LF VIII: 1874) allows her daughter to train a young servant. Emily is eager to teach Susie and her mother encourages her enthusiasm:

Yes, my child, you may teach her many things, and remember that she will always be learning something, either good or bad, from your example; so let your actions and your words be consistent, that alone is difficult work sometimes (p. 235).

Mrs. Lethbridge's advice to Emily outlines the reciprocal discipline that servant-keeping enjoins. Emily may direct the activities of her maid, but Susie's constant presence will regulate Emily's own conduct.

The servants who figure so numerous in the background of most children's periodical tales provide a vehicle for the author's social message. Fictional households demonstrate how traditional paternal benevolence might operate in every private family that employs servants. In the estimation of children's periodical contributors, the ideal relationship between social classes is the close bond of master and servant. The master guarantees the servant's physical and moral security; the servant reinforces his master's prestige by performing the undignified, mundane tasks of daily life. The mutually beneficial services that link master to servant in a hierarchical relationship exemplify the social order in its most efficient and just aspect.

Thus, the ideal of private social behaviour as mid-Victorian children's authors described it united the upper- and middle-classes at the intimate threshold of domestic life. By creating fictional models that clarified the proper order of relationships and duties and by posing resolutions to potential conflicts between various members of the extended households of the story-book world, the authors of middle-class children's periodical tales attempted to prepare their middle-class readers to uphold the dignity of genteel life. They outlined not only the expectations of rising living standards but also the concomitant responsibilities.



## CHAPTER SIX

### PITY FOR THE POOR

The self-contained world of child and family life in mid-Victorian juvenile magazines was curiously untouched by the urban landscape of an industrialized England. While the servants and farm workers of a paternalistic rural order played their appointed roles, the urban workers of a modern "class" society were conspicuously absent from these tales. The authors and editors of magazines for middle-class children assumed that their readers had no personal experience of work and deprivation and had little knowledge of the poor. Naturally, they were reluctant to encumber buoyantly sentimental tales of happy child-life with sobering sermons on grinding poverty. In common with most of their class, they had difficulty reconciling their ideals of childhood and genteel domesticity with the actual circumstances of working-class life.

Nevertheless, the earnest producers of respectable magazines for middle-class children were not content to leave their readers entirely ignorant of their less fortunate compatriots. The consistently serious purpose underlying much of the fiction printed in these magazines was to broaden the social imaginations of middle-class children and to inspire in all of them a sense of responsibility and a desire to serve and improve their society. If the middle-classes were to be drawn into active and effective participation in social affairs, it was essential that they gain some knowledge of groups outside their daily lives. Yet how could authors dispense the harsh facts of urban poverty without unduly upsetting the delicate feelings of their readers or nullifying, by jolting contrast,

the moral and emotional sensitivities which ordered the fictional world of middle-class domestic life? They solved this dilemma by encapsulating carefully worked scenes of destitute childhood in separate magazine stories.

The "street arab" genre, in which a poor child was the protagonist and the vicissitudes of poverty constituted the plot, became a regular feature of even entertaining secular magazines for children. Tales about ragamuffin orphans, pathetic crossing-sweepers, match sellers, and chimney sweeps were specifically designed to acquaint middle-class readers with the miserable lives of the poor and to awaken their benevolent instincts. Moreover, carefully examining the characters of poor heroes and heroines, explaining their predicaments and satisfactorily resolving their problems in the course of a child's tale allowed authors to teach elementary lessons in the practice of philanthropy. From stories that engaged his emotions and sympathies, a reader might learn how to distinguish the deserving from from the undeserving poor and how best to administer relief.

These fictional expositions of destitution conveyed to middle-class children contemporary conservative attitudes to the poor and, hence, were ruled by strict rules and conventions. Any radical or unorthodox proposals or democratic sentiments in tales about the poor were not likely to find a sympathetic hearing from the editors and proprietors of magazines for children. "Ascott R. Hope", who wrote light-hearted, school boy tales for Aunt Judy's and other popular children's periodicals, ventured to write equally amusing, "realistic" stories about poor children. But he found the religious strictures and well-worn stereotypes which dominated tales of humble life to be so constricting, that he abandoned the field. "In books for this market anything like liveliness or truth to nature falls flat, other qualities being required by the clerical or official patrons that are the chief distributors of such wares," he commented in retrospect.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>A.R. Hope Moncrieff (Ascott R. Hope), A Book About Authors: Reflections and Recollections of a Book-Wright (1914), p. 7.

A children's writer who dared to transgress literary convention and elevate with intelligent, though hardly revolutionary, observations the standard treatment of the poor in children's fiction invited criticism from the squeamish guardians of the middle-class child. Juliana Ewing wrote a spirited rebuttal to the complaints of a correspondent who objected to certain passages in "The Miller's Thumb" (AJ IX: 1873):

. . . we are parted theoretically by about a century and if she wants people drawn as she would like them to be instead of as they are, she should take in the British Workman as a study of the poor, and she will find plenty of goody tales about children to suit her. But she won't do much to solve the overwhelming questions connected with the masses, and I don't think will get deep in the even more important matter of the education of the young. 1

The authors who chose the theme of "pity for the poor" were conscious of performing a vital service by supplementing the social education of middle-class children. Moreover, despite the commonplace character of most tales about the trials and tribulations of stylized and appealing little paupers, they were, in the mid-Victorian period, outstandingly popular.<sup>2</sup> They drew upon a sentimental, indeed an almost sensational, interest in the plight of the poor that invigorated their heavily moralistic and didactic messages.<sup>3</sup> The commercial success that rewarded the emotional intensity of these mid-Victorian "street arab" stories revealed increasing curiosity about the poor. Such stories and novels

<sup>1</sup> Juliana Ewing to Horatia Gatty, 19 Dec. 1872, Gatty Papers, Hunter Archaeological Society, Central Library, Sheffield. I am indebted to Diane Bailey who directed my attention to the contents of this letter.

<sup>2</sup> Mawkish stories about poor children sold in the thousands to middle-class parents who bought them as "Sunday reading" for their children. Gillian Avery, in Childhood's Pattern: A Study of the Heroes and Heroines of Children's Fiction, 1770-1950 (1975), pp. 112, 117, notes that such works as Mary Louisa Charlesworth's Ministering Children (1850) sold 122,000 copies by 1870, and "Hesba Stretton's" Jessica's First Prayer (1867) sold 1½ million by the end of the century.

<sup>3</sup> Back-street settings were not altogether uncongenial sources of entertainment as well as improvement. Brian Harrison suggest in "Philanthropy and the Victorians", Victorian Studies, IX (1966), 360 that charitable activities were important recreational outlets for middle-class women, legitimizing "slumming" excursions which could be as diverting as they were shocking. By similar logic, "street arab" stories might be "respectably" sensational.

furnished middle-class readers with vicarious experiences they could not, and to the authors' minds, should not seek to discover for themselves. For instance, as the author of "Busy Bee" (S: 1870) followed her little heroine through the crowded backstreets of London, she was well aware that she led her readers into unfamiliar and dangerous territory:

You could not have gone into it in reality, supposing that you lived near enough to do so, because it was in such a poor, low neighbourhood, that it would not have been safe or proper for you to walk about in it (p. 13).

In another story, "Lisa's Dream" (AJ VIII: 1870), so totally ignorant of the poor did the author think her little hero and her readers that she resorted to the nebulous metaphor of diamonds and coal to convince the incredulous boy that he and a bedraggled London crossing-sweeper were in fact made of the "same stuff".

The realization that England was composed of "two nations", each with its own territory, culture, and experience, was no longer a startling social observation by the 1870s. The exodus of the middle classes from crowded centres to socially homogeneous suburbs determined the social geography of every large English city. In the early Victorian period, the condition of the urban working classes condemned to filthy, disease-ridden slums in northern industrial towns absorbed the energy of most social investigators and reformers.<sup>1</sup> However, by the mid-Victorian period and especially after the hard years of the late 1860s, "outcast London" became the focus of humanitarian attention.<sup>2</sup> The division between classes was more pronounced in the metropolis than in any other English city. Poor neighbourhoods were bereft of resident social leadership and there

<sup>1</sup>J. F. C. Harrison describes the conditions of industrial working-class families and the efforts of reformers to ameliorate them in The Early Victorians, 1832-1851 (1971), pp. 55-86.

<sup>2</sup>Gareth Stedman Jones, in Outcast London: A Study in Relationships Between Classes in Victorian Society (1971), contends that the London poor posed the most serious threat to Victorian civilization in the mid- and late-Victorian period.

were few economic links between rich and poor in London.<sup>1</sup> The absence of natural connections between the upper and middle classes and the working class engendered a breakdown in traditional methods of charity and social control. The imbalance that characterized the social landscape of London forced the poor to rely on haphazard charities and prompted the rich to shower alms on the East End to supplement, when pressing need outstripped the resources of local ratepayers, the inequitable and malfunctioning Metropolitan Poor Law.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the furore attending the passage of the Reform Bill in 1867, it was not the political power of the newly enfranchised working class, a group which appeared to be stable and rational in the prosperous mid-Victorian period, that worried the governing and social elites. What most alarmed mid-Victorian observers was the incidence of urban pauperism. To the social critics of the 1860s and 1870s, pauperism meant improvidence, mendicity, crime, ignorance, and vice, and was the cause not the result of poverty. It implied the moral failure of individuals rather than the structural malfunction of the system. In this period, there were no systematic investigations of the scale of poverty. Contemporary commentators were content to explain the existence of persistent poverty with economic theory.<sup>3</sup> If destitution appeared to be rising, it was because disorganized charity, indiscriminate alms-giving, and an arbitrary

<sup>1</sup>Analyzing the social and economic structure of mid-Victorian London, Jones, pp. 239-240, demonstrates that London society was dominated by the upper class and the older professions, lawyers, doctors, military officers, civil servants, and clergymen, who lived in socially discrete, fashionable districts. The economy of London was run by struggling small masters rather than industrial magnates.

<sup>2</sup>Because the Metropolitan Poor Law levied rates by district, the lowest rates were paid by the richest householders, while the poor neighbourhoods had spiralling rates which nevertheless could not fill the needs of the local poor. The founders of the Charitable Organization Society called for a common Poor fund in the city which would dampen the tendency of the West End to give out of charity what they ought to pay in rates. Ibid., pp. 250-251.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 10-11.

Poor Law demoralized the working classes. As the situation stood, "clever paupers" could gain more by exploiting loopholes in the Poor Law and appealing to a multitude of charities than they could earn by their labour.<sup>1</sup> This triumph of mendicity discouraged the respectable poor from maintaining their independence by honest effort. The founders of the Charitable Organization Society were confident that if "scientific" methods of investigation and administration were applied to the practice of philanthropy, the worst abuses of the current system would be eliminated and pauperism would disappear. To this end, according to the Reverend Samuel Barnett, it was crucial to bring rich and poor together in personal contact:

If instead of official giving, we can substitute the charity of individuals given in adequate amounts, and to those who are proved to be in need, but given by individuals to individuals, those who give and those who receive will be better for the meeting: human sympathy will add power to the gift, and break down the barrier which makes each class say, "I am and none else besides me." 2

To religious thinkers, the isolation of the "dangerous classes" from contact with social and moral leadership began with their alienation from organized religion. The Church of England sounded its own call for social unity both to avert class warfare and to reassert its own social relevance. The religious census of 1851 awakened the social conscience of the religious community by revealing the "heathen" condition of the urban working classes. The fact that nearly fifty percent of the people of this most self-consciously Christian nation stayed away from Church or chapel on Census Sunday was a shameful testimony of pastoral neglect.<sup>3</sup> Committed churchmen

<sup>1</sup>Jones, p. 251, describes how the middle and upper-classes envisaged the poor as a ceaselessly mobile group, travelling from parish to parish, from stone yard to soup kitchen, in their efforts to avoid work.

<sup>2</sup>Samuel Barnett, "Outdoor Relief", Poor Law Conference (1875); quoted by Jones, p. 253.

<sup>3</sup>Moreover, Church of England clergymen were dismayed to discover that half again of those who did attend a religious service went to chapel rather than church. Nonconformists exploited this information to agitate for disestablishment. Owen Chadwick, The Victorian Church, I (1966), pp. 363-369, describes the controversy surrounding the religious census.

felt that only a national church could reintegrate all social classes into a united Christian community. In the mid-Victorian period, they tried to justify their mandate as the spiritual conscience of all Englishmen by actively serving the whole society. Though the ardent efforts of Anglican clergymen during the "Golden Age" of parochial work" may have accomplished little to reclaim the masses for the Church, vestiges of their policy to promote a Christian commonwealth of united, mutually dependent classes survive in magazines for middle-class children.<sup>1</sup> Children's authors and editors fully appreciated the crucial necessity of re-educating the middle classes to their social responsibilities.

The existence of the genre of "poor child" tales was in itself evidence of the particular social climate of mid-Victorian England. These stories for middle-class children dramatized the circumstances of urban poverty that preoccupied contemporary journalists; almost all were set in the backstreets of "outcast London" and peopled with the casualties of the economic and social system. But what is most enlightening to social historians is the way children's authors described the poor, interpreted the social problems of their day, and proposed solutions in the context of fiction. If the prominent politicians, charity organizers, and social reformers of the mid-Victorian period were unable to see the structural causes of poverty, children's authors were even less adept analysts. Their response to poverty and misery was emotional rather than intellectual, their solutions were idealistic rather than practical, and their social vision was conservative rather than reformist. The ultimate design of their stories was to show their readers how to alleviate the distress of the deserving poor without questioning the justice or upsetting the balance of the social order.

<sup>1</sup> Desmond Bowen, in The Idea of the Victorian Church: A History of the Church of England (1968), maintains that historians should measure the success of the Anglican revival in the mid- and late-Victorian period by its evident influence over the middle classes.

In the 1878 volume of Sunshine, a sermon by the reverend editor entitled "Great and Little" indicates a heightened awareness of the national importance of the lower classes. To demonstrate his argument, this dedicated clergyman compares the masses to the billions of microscopic corals which, though invisible to the human eye, are crucial to the perpetuation of oceanic life:

It has been the great error of historians, statesmen, and politicians to lose sight of this truth. They only look at the whales, the big fish, and seem to consider these as the monarchs of the deep sea of politics, and they alone have the right to swim there. But in the meantime what do we hear of the progress of the people, the industrial classes, the small fish? They are the true monarchs of this great and wide sea of politics after all. They form the strata by which the geologists of history will hereafter mark the progress of this age, and classify all its products, and on the basis of which all future society will develop itself. Take care of the poor, and the rich will take care of themselves. Evangelize the masses and they will give tone and temper to the age and to the country, determining the characters of its leaders far more than the leaders that of the masses. (p. 111).

Behind this retreat into analogies taken from current natural history is an urge to classify and reduce the chaotic to detached abstraction. It is significant that this author refrains from pursuing his Darwinian imagery to include the unsettling implications of struggle and survival. On the contrary, he implies that the social hierarchy derives from the natural order and is therefore functional and inevitable. Even while he insists that the lower classes will ultimately determine the political destiny of the nation, he urges his middle-class readers to direct through their influence over the lower classes the evolutionary progress of morals.

This rousing cry to action on behalf of the masses contrasts strangely with the mood of another writer who also tries to characterize the poor "en masse" by the use of natural similes. The author of "About a Fly" (GWY: 1870), while describing the habitat and life cycle of household flies, lapses into a discussion of human tenderness:

In helping your fellow man, woman, or child, you may meet with that rarest of graceful things, a grateful heart, while yet expecting nought; you act out of the energies of a loving nature, as if saving a fly, you simply gratify a benevolent instinct for, in truth, no one loves a fly, nor may we suppose that . . .



the fly has a heart at all. In aerial nature they are the million, the great untaught, unwashed, democratic, self-willed; destitute of the constructive, imitative, or ornamental faculties for which other winged things are noted (p. 348).

The pessimism of this passage restates in moral terms the economic determinism still current in the mid-Victorian period.<sup>1</sup> The system may allow opportunity for individual advancement, but it cannot effect the improvement of the whole class. It also echoes the evangelical conviction that humankind, in the mass, is corrupt and evil and poverty is the inevitable wage of sin. Only the individual soul has the potential for salvation.<sup>2</sup>

Because of their faith in the individual and suspicion of the group, philosophers of charity continued to endorse personalized solutions, despite the scale of social problems. Children's authors, too, preferred to look at individuals rather than the aggregate. Even the collective term "working classes" dissatisfied the author of "The Last News of the Fairies" (GWY: 1870): "As if the 'upper' classes did not work hard enough sometimes," she countered (p. 256). Furthermore, exciting human sympathy in and devising solutions to the problems of isolated orphans was far easier than tackling the statistical aspects of social reform. Complex and distressing social evils were not, in any case, considered appropriate topics for a juvenile audience.<sup>3</sup> To single out the individual, to focus

<sup>1</sup>According to Jones, pp. 2-6, the Ricardian and Malthusian assumptions about the relationships among wages, rents, and population overshadowed the political and economic thinking of most statesmen and public servants until the 1880s. Even though advanced economic theorists formulated more optimistic, dynamic models of economic development in the 1870s, their ideas did not penetrate orthodox opinion until much later.

<sup>2</sup>Ian Bradley, in The Call to Seriousness (1976), pp. 119-134, outlined the philosophical stance and religious motivation of evangelical philanthropists.

<sup>3</sup>Juliana Ewing was more outspoken in her stories for children than most of her colleagues. In a letter to her sister, the editor of Aunt Judy's Magazine, she humorously described her aged aunt's reservations about her latest story, "Sunflowers and Rushlight" (AJ XXI: 1883): "I fear it has rather scandalised my aunt . . . she is obviously shocked at the plain speaking about drains and doctors, and thinks that part

sharply on his character, and to describe his unique qualities enabled children's authors to comprehend the poor, who, when seen in the mass, seemed indistinguishable from one another to the middle-class observer.

Thus, children's authors used a "case study" strategy to enlist the sympathies of their readers. But they did not ask their middle-class audience to identify with poor protagonists. There were no first person narratives in this genre. Even when an indigent hero or heroine displayed the most stalwart virtues, authors did not expect their readers to emulate their characters so much as to acknowledge their worthiness. These tales highlighted how different and separate were the lives of the poor from the readers' own sheltered existences. Exhortations directly addressed to the audience, like the one in "Hard-Hearted Tim" (LF III: 1872) for instance, - "Think of that little folks in warm clothes who read beside big fires - think of the little folks out in cold street, crippled, hungry and ragged, and give them your kind thoughts. . . (p. 75)" - served to reinforce the sense of foreignness surrounding the regions inhabited by the poor. Children's authors accepted inequality even in the lives of children and did not attempt to minimize differences in circumstances and experience. The author of "Jim" (AJ XV: 1877) contemplated but did not pass judgment on the chasm which separated her hero, a circus acrobat, from the children who so admired his performance:

There was nothing tangible . . . but the sawdust and the glitter and a little mound of earth, and yet so impassable. . . . Only six feet of space between him and the children who had never known cold or hunger in their lives, and yet he could never get beyond or higher than the ring - never reach their happy height, although he stretched his arms across the space between them to their very utmost (p. 231).

Historians of child welfare movements argue that middle-class reformers defined the needs and capacities of children in terms appropriate to their own offspring and arbitrarily imposed these standards upon

ought to have been in an essay - not in a child's tales." Christabel Maxwell cited her letter in Mrs. Gatty and Mrs. Ewing (1949), p. 237.

working-class children who were not necessarily innocent or dependent.<sup>1</sup> Certainly, children's authors had no doubt that a prolonged childhood in protected, comfortable surroundings was ideal and that, without these optimal conditions, childhood, as they conceived it to be, scarcely existed. Nevertheless, they did not attempt to infantilize their poor child characters. Given the dictates of their circumstances, the indigent hero or heroine had to relinquish the carefree irresponsibility that was the birthright of well-to-do children and singlemindedly struggle for independence.

Little Amy in "Busy Bee" (S: 1870) is a typical story-book pauper. When her mother dies, Amy assesses her situation and devises a strategy to avoid "the Union":

Though Amy was but a child in years, she was, in some respects, a woman in experience, and was now arranging another home for herself, as easily as a richer little girl would have decided what playthings to buy a new doll. She had also acquired much of the reserve common to older people, and was wise enough to be silent about her intentions, lest she should be hindered in carrying them out (p. 90).

Childhood is brief for Amy and other destitute boys and girls who people similar tales. The little crossing-sweeper who leads Diamond home in "At the Back of the North Wind" (GWY: 1869/70) calls him "kid", though scarcely a month separates their ages. "But she had to work for her bread and that so soon makes people older," the authors reasons. Many of the penniless paragons who successfully overcome their social handicaps never appear as "children", in the middle-class sense, at all. When crisis precipitates their abrupt passage into adulthood, childhood is not merely postponed; it is gone forever. Authors rarely devise solutions that enable their protagonists to return to innocent and dependent childhood in a happy ending. On the contrary, they allow their poor heroes and

<sup>1</sup>For examples of this line of reasoning see Margaret May, "Innocence and Experience: The Evolution of the Concept of Juvenile Delinquency in the Mid-Nineteenth Century", Victorian Studies, XVII (1973), 7-30, and Deborah Gorham, "The 'Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' Re-examined: Child Prostitution and the Idea of Childhood in late-Victorian England", Victorian Studies, XXI (1978), 353-379.

heroines to grow up, sympathize with their desire for independence, and applaud their valiant efforts to escape the ignominy of state welfare institutions or the degradation of crime.

Thus, mid-Victorian children's authors employ distinct sets of criteria to judge the merits of poor as opposed to well-off children. While they vote their poor boy or girl characters a measure of autonomy and responsibility denied their wealthier protagonists, they expect truly deserving poor heroes to live up to a pattern of exemplary behaviour, fortitude, self-sacrifice, and resolution which far exceeds their demands on the "typical" story-book child. Would-be candidates for upper and middle-class patronage have to prove their worthiness and demonstrate their willingness to give up pleasure, company, and recreation while they pursue respectability.

"Little Anna; Or, The Story of a Bottle of Medicine" (LF V: 1873) is a story about self-help and delayed gratification. When her widowed German mother falls ill, Anna takes over the management of the market garden, carries the produce to the town, and sells it all by herself. But despite her evident resourcefulness, Anna does not entirely satisfy her creator's exacting expectations. Anna has two pigeons which she dearly loves and is reluctant to sell, even though she cannot afford to buy medicine for her mother. She forms a plan to leave her pigeons on trust with the doctor until she can save enough to repay him. The kind doctor is willing to help industrious little Anna but his wife is more methodical in the practice of benevolence. She insists that if Anna truly wished to help her mother and deserve favours from others, she must overcome her own selfish whims and give up the birds for good. Anna makes the sacrifice and gains nourishing food as well as medicine for her mother. In the end, she retrieves her pigeons too because she has proved herself worthy of help.

Another deserving heroine, the invalid Annie in "March Winds and May Flowers" (S: 1874) is thrilled and grateful when she receives a

hand-me-down dress, "too shabby even for morning wear" for its original owner. Annie puts it away for Sundays and holidays, though, as the author carefully points out, Annie never takes holidays and is only too pleased to work for her subsistence.

That leisure and recreation were fitting rewards for the industrious and independent was an axiom the middle classes used to justify their own increasing resort to pleasure in the mid-Victorian period. They extended the benefits of their new philosophy of leisure to middle- and upper-class children, and even defined play as an integral component of child life, and games as essential preparation for healthy adult (male) character. However, they viewed the idle hours of unsupervised and uncivilized working-class children in a different light. For them, free time would only lead to temptation and mischief. The inconsistency of ideas about children of different social classes emerged clearly from the serialized novel, "Into the Mischief Again" (LF n.s. VII: 1878). The author allowed her gentry-born hero, Courcy, generous leeway for his pranks and games. On one of his escapades, Courcy gleefully watched a performing monkey, and, oblivious to his nurse's strictures, followed the organ grinder all the way to the town. Courcy's attraction to this entertainment seemed innocent enough to the author, but she condemned another little onlooker, ". . . an unscrupulous errand boy . . . eager for any amusement by the way, and indifferent to the fact that he was wasting his employer's time in an unconscientious manner . . . (p. 92).

Though the middle classes in the mid-Victorian period were beginning to overcome their suspicion of recreation for its own sake, they remained hostile to traditional working-class pastimes.<sup>1</sup> Brutality to animals, when it appears in children's fiction, is entirely a working-class vice,

<sup>1</sup>For a description of the development and interpenetration of middle- and working-class patterns of recreation see Peter Bailey, Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885 (1978).

indicative of their uncivilized tastes. The upper-class predilection for blood sports usually passes without comment. On the rare occasion when a hunt figures in the plot, in "Halt!" (Ch: 1876) for instance, the author suppresses any scruples. Moreover, in contrast to the early Victorian authors of cautionary tales who assumed all children delighted in cruelty and who devised fitting retribution for young savages, mid-Victorian children's authors take their middle class readers' love for animals for granted. They even ask their readers to identify with animal characters. But, in tales of humble life, the common run of village boys are merciless sadists. They drown kittens, rob nests, and torture puppies merely for sport. Spirited little Renie in "A Brave Heart" (S: 1873) banishes all thoughts of her own safety to rescue a hapless puppy from the "common rough-looking boys" who claim that they own it and therefore may treat it as they wish. Though the author laments their cruelty, she does not bother to reform them in the course of her tale. Once the dog is safe in her heroine's care, his persecutors are forgotten.

However, there are among the poor characters in mid-Victorian children's fiction exceptions to the general rule that the lower orders lack compassion for brute creation. The poor hero who distinguishes himself from his peers by his kindness to animals has the potential for social redemption and is worthy of sustained interest from author and reader. Sometimes a love of animals is the only saving grace a neglected child possesses. "Sulkie Sue" (LF n.s. III: 1876) is unkempt, uncared for, and unloved, but her potentially good nature shows in her love of animals. "Nobody's Child" (Ch: 1872) lavishes her affections on the stray dogs running wild in her slum neighbourhood. Though "Ben: 'A Rough Diamond'" (LF n.s. II: 1875) is uncultured, graceless in manner and hasty in speech, ". . . his heart was a rough diamond, shining brilliantly through the one spot of it which had been worked on and polished - his love for little children and for animals and helpless things (p. 395)."

These examples dramatize the reasoning behind contemporary reform

movements such as the R.S.P.C.A.<sup>1</sup> They illustrate the optimism that a young pauper, who is capable of civilized behaviour towards animals, may be amenable to general character reform. All these poor protagonists distinguish themselves by extraordinary acts of bravery. Ben attracts the attention of his patron-to-be by saving his dog from drowning in an ice-encrusted pond. Sulkie Sue rescues a neighbour's child and is adopted into the family. Polly, "Nobody's Child", sacrifices her own life to preserve the life of a younger child.

The poor juvenile hero who was exceptionally virtuous or brave could overcome the legacy of vice and sin that middle-class commentators routinely attached to the poor. While children's authors liberated middle-class children from inherited original sin, they could not so easily free poor children from the inherent corruption of their backgrounds. "Out of the Grey, Into the Gold" (LF n.s. VIII) provided a graphic example of the tendency to equate innocence with wealth and sinfulness with poverty.

The author sets the scene with a description of a gay, sea-side town, adorned with pretty sailboats and picturesque donkey-carts. She then focuses on the little donkey drivers: ragged, dirty, and forlorn, a sad contrast to their daintily-dressed patrons. "Ay! some in the gold, some in the grey; such is life, the life of the great, bustling, toiling, pleasure-loving world (pp. 174/5)," muses the author philosophically. Billy Brown and George Splat drive six-year-old Kitty about the town. Kitty has a gold half sovereign, a birthday present from her grandfather, and wishes to give it to her drivers, but her nurse tells her that grand-

<sup>1</sup>Brian Harrison maintains that the R.S.P.C.A. was founded on the hope that if the working classes could be persuaded to treat animals kindly then their general docurum would improve. The fact that complaints about upper-class brutality to animals were a tiny percentage compared with charages against cab drivers or dog fighters indicates that moral improvement of the working class and not necessarily humanitarian concern for animals motivated the founders of the R.S.P.C.A. See "Religion and Recreation in Nineteenth-Century England", Past and Present, XXXVIII (1967), 98-125.

father will be very angry if she so thoughtlessly gives his gift away.

The next day, Sunday, George and Billy hide a "dark secret". George found Kitty's money left behind in the carriage and thinks it alright to keep it, since Kitty offered it before. But the boys feel guilty, and idle about at home, "tattered, dirty, and berefooted, as on other days, ashamed to be seen out in the clean well-dressed Sunday world. (p. 176)." Grandpapa seeks them out in their backstreet neighbourhood and demands that they return Kitty's coin. In the exchange between Kitty and the two poor boys, the author assumes the Kitty's freedom from temptation means that she is innocent and good, and, though she is sympathetic to the poverty of Billy and George, she assumes that their subjection to temptation makes them guilty: "Kitty in the gold, while these poor waifs must plod on in the grey of poverty, of sin (p. 177)." Their redemption comes when the stern but kind Grandpapa buys each boy a new suit of clothes and leaves them to the superintendence of a resident gentleman ". . . who helped them to climb step by step up out of the grey into the gold of a good, true, honest life (p. 178)."

In the contest of the "doctrine of respectability", the confusing logic of "Out of the Grey, Into the Gold" becomes comprehensible. Since middle-class citizens gauged their own intrinsic virtue by "appearances", it is hardly surprising that they should judge the motives of the poor on the same scale. It is a rare middle-class author who commands the sensitivity to remind her readers that the poor may not possess the requisite needle and thread to mend their dishevelled rags. But even the sympathetic author of "Busy Bee" (S: 1870) stresses her little heroine's love of order and her admiration for the neat appearance of a neighbour's cellar home. The resident of the cellar, Old Biddy, "imitating the example of her betters, affected to make light of Amy's approval, and pointed out all the defects of her habitation, in order to prove that it was not half as good as it ought to be (p. 107)." Middle-class authors assume that the deserving poor will at least try to emulate those attributes their superiors practice.



Cleanliness, a desire for independence, and a willingness to help themselves are among the attributes that distinguish the deserving poor.

Moreover, authors, surveying the unknown and overwhelming masses of the poor, emphasize their distance and dissociation from the destitute as a reinforcement of middle-class integrity and moral superiority. Their own reverence for the individual and fear of the group explains their strategy in fiction to lift the rare and special poor child out of the mob. To their minds, even the most virtuous child cannot resist for long the inevitable contagion of evil by association. Thus, when Jan, in "The Miller's Thumb" (AJ XI: 1873), is kidnapped from his country home by the "Cheap Jack" and Sal and forced to earn his living "scriving" on the streets of London, "his learning was altogether of evil":

Perhaps because they wished to reconcile him to his life, or perhaps because his innocent face and uncorrupted character were an annoyance and reproach to the wicked couple, they encouraged Jan to associate with boys of their own and neighbouring courts.

Many people are sorry to believe that there are a great many wicked and depraved grown-up people in all great towns, whose habits of vice are so firm, and whose moral natures are so loose, that their reformation is practically almost hopeless. But much fewer people realize the fact that thousands of little children are actively, hideously vicious and degraded. And . . . though it is more painful, it is more hopeful. It is hard to reform vicious children, but it is easier than to reform vicious men and women (pp. 645/6).

Fortunately, Jan acquires sufficient cunning from his street education to escape his jailors and avoid permanent contamination.

Middle-class authors assume that, like Jan, the worthy individual will struggle valiantly to escape his miserable condition and cut himself off from contact with his peers. They frequently stress the isolation of the deserving characters. "Happy Connie Warmheart" (LF VI: 1873) alienates his fellow workers by his teetotalism. The little heroine of "Father's Dinner" (Ch: 1877) scrupulously obeys her mother's warning and shuns the company of Betsy, whose slatternly appearance objectifies the chaos of her morals. Amy, in "Busy Bee" (S: 1870), "had been brought up in better habits than most children of her class; and though far from being polished herself, she shrank from the low, disreputable ways to which so many

around her were addicted (p. 92)." By similar logic, Faith and her mother are considered to be deserving by a philanthropic young doctor because ". . . they seemed to be very quiet, well-conducted people, who scarcely spoke to anyone (p. 3)."

Being proud, the deserving poor endeavour to preserve a semblance of respectability and to disguise their poverty. This leaves them less visible than the clamouring beggars who advertise their indigence and accost passers-by. But, children's authors urge, it is important that would-be benefactors make the effort to seek out the worthy. There is no point in assisting the habitual mendicant who would only persist in idleness. In "Violet's Shilling; Or, the Spirit of Undone Good Deeds" (LF VII: 1874), a good fairy takes Violet on a dream excursion through the homes of struggling poor families. But while she raises Violet's social consciousness, she warns her that ". . . it is no real charity to give to professional beggars (p. 199)." The fairy advises Violet to donate her shilling to recognized charitable agencies who are equipped to judge worthy recipients. A mere child could not have the experience necessary to distribute his little bounty to advantage. In "A Flat Iron for a Farthing" (AJ IX: 1871), Reggie's first experiments in philanthropy fail due to his naivety. He falls victim to the wiles of a counterfeit blind beggar.

The object of mid-Victorian periodical stories about poor children was to teach the rudiments of "scientific" philanthropy, not to inspire well-meaning but ignorant children to distribute their pennies among the poor. Certainly authors encouraged children to sympathize with the poor, but they cautioned their readers that kind thoughts were all they should offer until they were older and wiser. According to the economic theories current in the 1860s and 1870s, improperly applied charity could do untold mischief to the social and economic equilibrium. The stern organizers of mid-Victorian philanthropic associations would not, perhaps, have endorsed the sentimental and unrealistic attitudes to poverty that some children's authors advanced in their stories. Nevertheless, in line with

the contemporary philosophy of charity, most children's authors took a cautious stance and tried, in their stories, to steer a course between the prodigality of impulsive alms-givers and the impersonal administration of state welfare. They were especially reluctant to recommend the subsidization of able-bodied men whose authority within their own families and whose claim to respectability rested on their ability to attain comfortable self-sufficiency through their own unaided efforts. The author of "All About a Brick" (Ch: 1879) adopted a suspicious tone towards the importunities of a strong, healthy young man when he insisted that he could find no work and his family was starving. Rather than satisfy the suppliant's request with charity, the narrator offers to pay him a shilling for each hour he carries a brick on his outstretched arm around the square. This "make work" scheme turns the tide in the young man's fortunes. His persistence attracts the attention of so many on-lookers that eventually one of them offers him a respectable permanent position.

Most children's authors were so optimistic that the truly industrious could find appropriate occupations that the chronically unemployed received scant attention in the files of children's periodicals.<sup>1</sup> Ever anxious to justify the prevailing social order, children's authors looked to the particular rather than the general causes of poverty. They attributed the indigence of fictional paupers to individual human failings or accidents of fate rather than fluctuations in the trade cycle, inadequate wages, or urban overcrowding. A father's illness or death provided common explanations for distress. Addiction to drink, exclusively a working-class failing in children's fiction, visited poverty upon innocent wives and children.

"Eustace Carroll's Sketch" (Ch: 1878) is a typical example of a temperance tale for the middle-class reader. Outside a public house,

<sup>1</sup>David Owen observes that the recognition of unemployment as an inevitable by-product of industrialization and not a result of individual inadequacy did not really emerge until the late nineteenth century. See English Philanthropy, 1660-1960 (1964), p. 212.

Eustace Carroll sketches the pathetic expression of a poor child waiting for his father to rouse himself from a drunken stupor. Eustace attempts to check his angry feelings, remembering ". . . that he, with his refined tastes and many kinds of amusement, could form no idea of the temptation that drink might have for this man, with his smaller advantages of fortune and education (p. 102)." He leaves his sketch as a wordless lecture to the reprobate who is so ashamed that he renounces his evil habit. Five years later, Carroll returns to the scene and finds a prosperous-looking cottage with a neat garden and his sketch, framed as a standing reminder, above a cheerful hearth. The reader is left to infer that the drink caused the poverty and not the reverse.

Thus, behind the honest sympathy many of these stories display towards the poor, there remains an implicit conviction that poverty is inevitable so long as men are weak and sinful. With help, the exceptional individual might escape his condition. In a society of natural justice and benevolent patronage, his opportunity will surely arise. But any large-scale project to better the condition of the masses is a foolish dream. This is the theme of "The Miser's Niece" (GWY: 1873). The heroine is a penniless orphan, dependent upon her wealthy uncle for her education and support. But he reduces her allowance so drastically that she must become a genteel servant to the clergyman's family with whom she lives in order to continue her schooling. Though her school fellows mock her uncle's parsimony, Rosalie understands the utopian vision that compels her uncle to scrimp and save and to deny them both the comforts of prosperity. But on his deathbed, "the miser" realizes the futility of his dream. In trying to help all men in the future, he has helped none in the present. He urges Rosalie to use his legacy more wisely. She dedicates herself to educating gentlewomen who, like herself, faced sudden and unforeseeable poverty.

The mass of mankind, then, manufacture their own downfall through their sinfulness, improvidence, and idleness, and, thus, have no right to importune the wealthy. But against accidents of fate which upset the

orderly routine of an individual or family who are otherwise independent, the benevolence of the wealthy is legitimate insurance. However, even during times of crises, natural disasters, or epidemics, when it is every man's duty to alleviate widespread distress, authors warn readers that the overflowing generosity of the wealthy may demoralize and enervate the recipients and thereby do more harm than good. This is what the good Squire Amnaby, the rector, the doctor, and the school master discover when fever infests their village in "The Miller's Thumb" (AJ XI: 1873). The tax on their time, labour, and resources increases after the pestilence has subsided because of the demoralization of the villagers:

People who had really suffered, and whose daily work had been unavoidably stopped, but to whom idleness was so gratifying, that they preferred to scramble on in dismantled homes, on the alms extracted by their woes, to setting about such labour as would place them in comfort. They that large class - the shiftless - was now doubly large . . . (p. 530).

Lest his village become a "mere nest of lazzaroni" the squire takes a lesson in political economy from the doctor, a "head-headed" Scotsman. He stays the bountiful hand of the rector and limits his own donations to payment for labour.

To draw the line between ministering to the legitimately needy and merely abetting the improvident and idle was an exacting task for mid-Victorian children's authors.<sup>1</sup> Most preferred to side-step the controversial aspects of philanthropy. They ignored the "legitimate" Poor Law cases who could expect what, in the authors' minds, they deserved - the workhouse. Instead, stories focused on the defenseless widow or orphan whose claim to compassion and humanitarian charity was clear and categorical. The sympathy of these authors, most of them women themselves, for the vulnerable widow and her children who lacked a male protector was boundless. Aid to a dismantled poor family did not impair the operation of the

<sup>1</sup>Even some of the self-confident founders of the Charitable Organisation Society had difficulty drawing the line between "underserving state paupers" and "deserving charity cases" according to Owen, p. 221.

social system since even the sternest author did not expect a woman to rear and provide for her children single-handed. It was more important that the widow fulfill her maternal duties than prove her breadwinning capacity. Though authors hesitated to admit that a workman's wages might be insufficient, they conceded the fact that the pitiful sums earned by a laundress or sempstress could not support a family. Inevitably, the struggling single mother succumbs to ill health and then may accept assistance from the charitable without shame.

Moreover, many deserving widows in children's periodical tales are refugees from a better walk of life and whose downfall comes through no fault of their own. They already espouse the values of their betters and withdraw in pride and despair from associating with their new neighbours. In "Paul Proudman" (Ch: 1878), Susan, brought to a delapidated dwelling by her husband's drinking and abandoned there by his death, refuses to join the idle, gossiping women of the court. She valiantly battles the grime of her wretched abode and struggles to support her children as a laundress. However, she cannot afford to educate them without help from her late husband's wealthy relations. Mrs. Jennings, in "Raggles, Baggles, and the Emperor" (LF III: 1872), suffers a similarly undeserved fate. She and her pretty twin children live in a cottage in Canterbury until the good Mr. Jennings disappears at sea. Then Mrs. Jennings must seek employment in London. She wears out her health and spirits trying to support her children and protect them from the dangerous inhabitants of their disreputable neighbourhood.

Authors had no difficulty in demonstrating the worthiness of their impoverished widows. The problem was to devise a permanent solution to their destitution, to set them in the path of respectable independence. The narrator of "Faith's Father" (LF n.s. V: 1877), having discovered a deserving woman and child, former residents of "Paradise Row", Wapping, now languishing in a North-East London slum, put their case to the readers:

What was the best way of helping them? It was quite evident that they belonged to the decent poor; that class of persons which is one of the most deserving in the country, and to whom it is most desirable that help should be rendered; at the same time it is the class which is most difficult to reach, because the members of it do not flaunt their poverty in our faces, but rightly endeavour to appear as neat and respectable as possible. The help, too, that they require is that which is hardest to give, viz., "helping them to help themselves." That is the aid which everyone, more or less requires, and if, my dear young readers, you will only endeavour to give this kind of help to those about you, you will be happy indeed. (p. 7).

In material terms, Faith benefits little from her association with the narrator of this story. What she gains is a knowledge of her "other Father". The double meaning attached to "Faith's Father" parallels her growing faith in God with her unshakable conviction that her earthly father will one day return. A series of wonderful coincidences vindicate Faith's faith in both her fathers.

To saturate the poor hero or heroine with the power and principles of Christianity is the first duty of the story-book benefactor, and one which set in motion the mechanisms of social and religious redemption. Once Faith learns about her other Father she soon spreads the Word to a sour old cobbler living in her court. Willie hadn't thought about religion since his wife and child died many years ago, but Faith's chatter and winning ways change his heart and presently Willie is helping his neighbours, entertaining the court children, and enjoying a life of new contentment. It is Willie who stops the hard-hearted landlord from seizing Faith's mother's furniture and pays the back rent. It is he who organizes a tea and kite-flying expedition for the local children. He also takes Faith on a day-trip to her former home where she meets a sailor with good news about her father. Willie's many Samaritan activities are the natural outcome of his awakened religious sensibilities:

As soon as ever a person begins to think of God, the Great Father of all mankind, so soon most assuredly does he begin to think of busying himself in the service of mankind, so soon does he begin to think of helping others (p. 132).

Religious teaching, then, helps the poor to help themselves by transforming their attitude to their circumstances and inspiring them to

better the lives of those around them.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the Christian poor often find an earthly reward for acts of human kindness. Old Betty Frost, a country fruit and vegetable seller, takes in "Jack and His Dancing Pig" (LF n.s. II: 1875). Though Jack had been abused by his cruel master in London, under Betty's care he grows into a pious and respectable citizen. When Betty grows too feeble to work, Jack supports her. Another runaway London foundling, "Dick" (Ch: 1878), finds a humble but respectable home in the country. Miss Brigg's neighbours warn her not to trust this unknown and untaught city urchin, but she takes him under her wing anyway. Dick rewards her confidence by risking his life to rescue from thieves the hundred pounds Miss Briggs put by to secure herself a place in the Home for the Aged. Like Jack, Dick also supports his mistress in old age. By lending a hand to an unfortunate child, both old women ultimately secure the means to a respectable and independent old age. This happy result expresses the authors' implicit assurance that good people meet with good fortune and, of course, Christian principles make good people.

Thus, religious teaching is the primary service that the well-to-do and well-educated can render their less blessed neighbours. In the children's fiction of the 1870s, authors assume the poor to be virtually ignorant of religion. Even otherwise exemplary poor mothers in fiction are incapable of transmitting to their children the rudiments of Christianity. But the poor girl or boy is gratifyingly receptive to religious training from his elders and betters. Like contemporary Anglican churchmen, children's story writers were optimistic that the poor were not actively hostile to religion but merely benighted.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The confidence children's authors invested in religious teaching accords with Brian Harrison's observations about the motives of Victorian philanthropists - "...religious evangelism and social amelioration were seen as cause and effect at a time when poverty was supposed to result largely from moral failure." See Philanthropy and the Victorians, p. 356.

<sup>2</sup>The confidence that the poor would willingly attend religious services if only there were enough churches near them inspired the burst of church building in the early and mid-Victorian period. But the necessity of supporting these new churches by pew rents created a new dilemma, since the poor could not afford the fees and had to crowd into the few free benches. See Chadwick, pp. 326-336, for a discussion of the Anglican response to urban overcrowding.



Moreover, many authors shared the regret of urban clergymen that church attendance had become synonymous with social pretension, thus obliterating the true spirit of Christianity. When "Lost Berty" (Ch: 1871) seeks warmth and shelter in a nearby Church, an overdressed and overfed woman scolds the vergers: "if you have all the scum and riff-raff of London in your Church, I shan't come to it (p. 170)." According to many of these authors, fashion-conscious and narrow-minded congregations drove the poor from the few churches in their vicinity. As a result, the poor were alienated from religion altogether. The author of "Sulkie Susie" (LF VIII: 1874) infers that the poor consider religion an indulgence of the rich. The poor folk idling about the seedier sections of Liverpool merely laugh when a gentlewoman asks them which Church a neighbour attends: "...He ain't quality to go to Church!" one sneers. Similarly, in "Busy Bee" (S: 1870), ragged Polly challenges Amy's belief that God watches over all of them. "He may see 'em, p'raps," said Polly, rather doubtfully, "but it ain't to be supposed that he troubles Hissself about what we does, specially when He's all the gentlefolks to look after (p. 12)." The notion of an omnipresent deity rather troubles her, "... 'taint nice He's a'looking after you and watching you as the perlice does (p. 44)." But in the end, Amy manages to overcome her companion's reservations, not by dogma and discourse but by her consistent cheerfulness and kindness.

If the children's authors of the 1870s tacitly conceded that the expansion of urban populations had outstripped the efforts of Churchmen in the past, they saluted the conscientious clergymen of their own day, who laboured in poor city parishes. In addition to spiritual enlightenment, the penniless widows and neglected orphans of periodical tales who apply to the Church receive concrete material assistance. In this popular literature for middle-class children, the Church and Church-related organizations represent the proper channel for philanthropy, the only institutions able to legitimize charity with moral and religious justice. State agencies were incapable of assessing the merits of individual petitioners or

responding to particular circumstances.<sup>1</sup> State welfare robbed benevolence of its vital personal and emotional content. In "Nobody's Child" (Ch: 1873), a dustman's widow tells Polly how her poor late husband came to adopt the child he found abandoned in the dustheap:

No, Mother, I can't see. . .taking the little 'un to the House! I can't bear the thought of such a pretty innocent little thing growing up without ever a kind word, pretty dear! and being sent out into one of them horrid little places where there's little to eat and plenty of work and hard words; just the very things to drive a poor girl to the bad (p. 107).

In the same tale, an abandoned wife and mother, denied poor relief because she does not belong to the parish, is on the point of suicide. Polly leads her to the Church where she finds comfort in the service, receives a load of coals and a promise of help from the vestry. In "The Story of a Christmas Tree" (LF n.s. IX: 1879), Maggie acknowledges the special obligations which devolve upon a clergyman's daughter. She cheerfully donates her Christmas money to subsidize a family of orphans, while her more callous brother resents his responsibilities and asks why they do not go into the "House". Maggie replies with a shudder, "You haven't been into town lately, Philip; you forget what "the House" looks like. Besides their father made them promise they wouldn't before he died (p. 23)."

Poor characters in story after story reiterate their creators' distaste for the workhouse, so remote from human sympathy. The heroine of "Hope's Secret" (S: 1878) is too young to understand the significance of charity, but "...the workhouse, she knew was a place inhabited only by the poorest of the poor (p. 132)". In respect for her readers' sensibilities, the author of "A Star in the Dustheap" (LF n.s. 1: 1875) draws a curtain over her vulnerable orphan hero's episode in the Union:

<sup>1</sup>Children's authors invariably amplify the cruel and heartless aspects of state welfare institutions. Contemporary philanthropists agreed that the Poor Law officers did not discriminate between the deserving and the undeserving poor but many felt that the Poor Law administration was too lax rather than too harsh. See Own, p. 217.

We do not intend to dwell on Davy's life in the workhouse. It was the blackest and most hopeless era in his whole life, when even his child-like belief in the goodness and mercies of God was almost quenched in the darkness of the moment (p. 99).

In contrast to their emphatic rejection of state welfare institutions, many children's authors direct their readers' attention to the good work of voluntary organizations, many of which were founded under the auspices of the Church. Ragged schools, children's hospitals, training ships, boys' homes, or industrial schools offer the only hope of salvation for the numerous crossing sweepers, match sellers or chip boys who figure in so many tales. The author of "Jem and His Cat" (LF n.s. II: 1875) cheerfully consigns her hero (and his cat) to life in a ragged school where he finds love and personal supervision from its kind mistress.

There are in these days, thank God, many such refuges in great cities, where neither poverty nor ignorance are a bar to entrance, and where little children are suffered to enter in just as they are and drawn out of the mire of their sad lives into a happier and holier atmosphere (p. 60).

The Bloomsbury Children's Hospital takes in "Nelly and Jo" (LF VIII: 1874) when their parents, "some of the lowest of their class", desert them. The doctor places them with a motherly widow and supports them until Jo enters the Navy and Nelly returns to the hospital as a nurse. The St. Giles's Refuges were the subject of "A Day in a Training Ship" (Ch: 1870). Urging readers to support these organizations, the author outlined the options: "We, in England, have already tried one system with our destitute children. We have let them alone until they drifted into criminal life, and became inmates of our prisons, where they dragged out a hopeless and wasted life, a burden on honest men (p. 105)."

According to this author, the "laissez-faire" attitude to the poor was bankrupt. Abandoning the innocent victims of poverty to arbitrary state welfare or to the sporadic impulses of charitable individuals served neither the needs of the poor, nor middle-class interests, since their casualties and failures inevitably became public dependents one way or another. Loosely-organized, volunteer agencies catering to selected individuals from specific categories of indigents, sick children, incipient delinquents,

novice criminals and the like, seemed to offer a viable alternative. Hence, in stories and articles, as well as magazine-sponsored subscription drives, the children's periodical press enthusiastically supported a variety of specialist charity organizations. Children's hospitals and clothing societies were popular outlets for largesse. Children's authors drew comfort from the overflowing coffers of charitable institutions, confident that they could effectively channel the generosity of the rich to the most deserving and needy cases. The luxuriant growth of these societies in the mid-Victorian period was hailed as the triumph of "voluntary action over state intervention".<sup>1</sup>

Evidently, the reservation many critics and field workers voiced - that the diffuse and intermittent alms broadcast by private charities were wasteful and ineffectual - did not dampen the optimism of the editors and authors of children's magazines.<sup>2</sup> Children's authors were not sufficiently knowledgeable or experienced to assess the actual achievements of private philanthropy in mitigating the social problems of their age. While Victorians enforced a fine moral pragmatism upon their choice of deserving individuals, their wider view of poverty was emotional and inductive. Moreover, confident as they were that the deserving individual would find the help he needed to better his condition, children's story writers did not express utopian hopes that human enterprise, public or private, could eradicate poverty altogether.<sup>3</sup> Within the narrow limits of their social

<sup>1</sup>Owen, p. 164. He also notes that subscribing to particular charities was a "social imperative", more in terms of fashion and convention perhaps than conscience, in some cases.

<sup>2</sup>Owen observes that the premises upon which the Mid-Victorian philosophy of charity rested placed so heavy a burden on private enterprise, that however well-endowed or well-organized, volunteer charity could never fulfill its mission. Towards the end of the century, men like Canon Barnett, one of the founders of the Charity Organisation Society, became reconciled to state intervention and criticized former colleagues for blindly resisting the inevitable. Ibid, p. 240.

<sup>3</sup>Such an outlook was characteristic of the Evangelical philanthropists according to Bradley, p. 118. Whatever the religious persuasion of individual benefactors, Evangelical attitudes coloured the nineteenth century tradition of charity. Owen contends that Evangelical sectarianism conditioned the extreme specificity and proliferation of volunteer agencies. Ibid, p. 95.

vision, their sympathy for the poor was sincere. However, the moral development of their readers was the primary goal of their stories, even those about the poor. Responsibility for their less fortunate compatriots added a vital dimension of discipline to the lives of the well-to-do. Personal service to the poor justified their privilege. Thus, learning their social and moral obligations was a vital component of the informal education of middle-class children. Children's authors designed their stories to enlarge readers' sympathies, to take the young away from selfish preoccupations by directing their thoughts to others.

Juvenile periodicals furnish endless examples of how consideration for the poor could have a salutary influence on the personalities of middle-class boys and girls, even if this sentiment never translates into meaningful 'service'. Some authors are not above invoking the pitiful poor to persuade intransigent young children to conform to the relatively undemanding rigors of nursery routine. For instance, in "Ethel and Nelly; or, What Became of Some 'Horrid' Pudding" (LF IV: 1872), Ethel learns to appreciate her good fortune and her pudding when she sees how poor Nelly relishes what she rejects. But beyond the correction of childish peccadillos, reminders of their responsibilities to the underprivileged are effective remedies for more serious character flaws, particularly the middle-class sins of selfishness and social ambition. In "The Man in the Cart" (AJ IX: 1871), a little girl enviously aspires to the luxurious life style of a countess until her mother redirects her attention towards the undeserved suffering of a neighbouring poor family. Through self-denial Albinia learns to overcome her tendency to avarice. As her mother assures her, "...if we know how to give out of our necessities (as we often call our own most superfluous fancies), we shall find it easy and pleasant to give out of our 'abundance' (p. 532)." In another tale, "Miss Green's Tip" (Ch: 1878), Duncan is in danger of becoming a selfish dandy and his sister Clara a frivolous young lady of fashion until a shipwreck awakens their consciences and forces them to give up their self-indulgent whims in order to help an orphaned and penniless child.

Benevolent activity, then diverts excess middle-class wealth away from investment in vain social pretensions and inoculates middle-class morality from debilitating dissipation. The author of "Links of Kindness" (S: 1870) directly relates the domestic economy of Belle and Lily's parents to their exemplary methods of child-rearing and their ability to help the poor.

The juvenile parties given at the Howard's were not grand, Belle and Lily's dress was simple, and there were some of their young friends whose parties were more costly, and whose dress was richer, who were rude enough to taunt the little girls about the simplicity of theirs. But Belle and Lily knew why their parents were acting thus, they knew that if they had no luxurious suppers there were poor children faring all the better for it (p. 3).

In keeping with their philosophy of "living for others", Mr. and Mrs. Howard make up in time and attention what they withhold in indulgences from their children. Moreover, Belle and Lily gain more real pleasure and excitement by participating indirectly in their parent's charitable projects than they would from extravagant entertainments. Saving their pocket money to help lively Joe McGarrical go to school or the lame little Johnny Bryan visit the country adds real interest and meaning to their lives.

Humanitarian interests also provide consolation for the heroine of "Clyst Barton" (Ch: 1875). Allie Clifford must leave her lovely Devon home when a kind aunt offers to adopt her to assist her financially-harassed father. She is miserable in smoky Manchester until her aunt introduces her to a poor child who has never seen the country. Contact with Sue teaches Allie that the opportunity to help people is what makes life in the city tolerable.

Rosalie Penderton's experience in "The Miser's Niece" (GWY: 1873) shows how philanthropy enriches the lives and bolsters the social stature of the practitioners. Rosalie, formerly a friendless introvert, receives a large inheritance and thereby is able to fulfil several of the projects she has dreamed of in secret. Helping her disadvantaged fellow schoolmates, she wins the admiration of her peers and the loving gratitude of her

beneficiaries:

. . .the real amiability and benevolence of her nature, which had been so concealed by her many misfortunes, was now clearly revealed by the sunshine of prosperity (p. 599).

The moral of this story promises enhanced prestige and influence to those who exchange their inward-looking self concern for generous attention to the needs of others.

Yet while outlining the emotional attractions and compensations of philanthropy, children's authors were careful to clarify the proper motives of a would-be benefactor. The rich do not give to the poor for personal aggrandisement. They do not even seek, overtly at least, to guarantee their own salvation. A religious rationale lingers beneath the surface in many tales, but the social gospel predominates. For instance, "The Chip Boy" (LF VII: 1874) chronicles the character rehabilitation of a selfish, wilful little girl who eventually becomes a model philanthropist. As the story opens, Cherry's father, a wealthy lawyer, discusses with his wife an honest-looking poor boy selling wood chips in their square. "Some of those children that are there in the streets uncared for would make splendid characters if they were in good hands (p. 380)," he remarks. But little Cherry cannot understand why her parents should care about ragged children, and why they refuse her extra sweets and pocket money and yet give it to the poor. She is angry when her mother bakes a cake for the chip boy and tucks a shilling inside. Spitefully, she substitutes a bad shilling for the good one. The next day, her father tells her that the poor boy is in prison, arrested trying to buy port for his invalid sister with a bad shilling. Filled with remorse Cherry confesses and her father rectifies the injustice and undertakes the boy's education. Cherry learns her lesson and henceforth dedicates her life to acts of anonymous charity.

Only at the end of the story does the author insert a religious moral:

She knew now that she had really something to do with the countless little folks whose lot was cast with her poorer neighbours, since rich and poor alike are to share one home in the end, as the children of one Father in heaven (p. 382).

The Christian message of "The Chip Boy" promises the ultimate unity of all mankind. There is no suggestion that the rich benefactor might earn by his good works a privileged position in divine favour. Benevolence is the duty of the wealthy, not a matter of religious self-interest, nor a personal indulgence. Recurring references to anonymous acts of good-will teach readers that charity must not be employed as an opportunity for public display or advertisement of one's virtue. In "The Merrivale's Cross" (AJ XI: 1873), the doctor, Mr. Steadyman, explains to a grateful Mrs. Merrivale why he cannot convey her thanks to Mr. Beauchamp, who saved her son from drowning and sent many anonymous gifts during his convalescence:

This is only one a thousand similar instances that I could tell you of, my dear madam; but Mr. Beauchamp is a gentleman of unbounded charity and unostentatious kindness, and he keeps his good deeds secret and will not allow them to be talked of (p. 746).

Evidently children's authors suspected that philanthropic activists might easily have become smug and self-congratulatory. Moreover they might abuse their position of power over the poor. The author of "Other People's Shoes" (AJ XIV: 1876) observed that: "The greater number of people, even benevolent people, like to tyrannize and have their own way about the doing even of their deeds of charity, and the dispensing of their alms (p. 655)." Certainly the autocratic evangelical "lady bountiful" had earned a bad reputation, which Dicken's infamous "Mrs. Pardiggle" immortalized. The children's periodical contributors of the 1870s recognized the danger that would-be do-gooders might alienate the poor more by unsympathetic and unskilful meddling than by outright neglect. The charitable relationship has two aspects, authors remind readers; the poor have feelings and dignity which even their patrons must respect. Through the voice of an impecunious character, some authors imaginatively reconstruct how a poor person himself might view his situation and how he might justly resent the unfeeling interference of well-to-do busy-bodies. In "London Daisies" (AJ XII: 1874) a spunky little waif bristles when she recounts to a friend how an officious gentleman scolded her mother for



neglecting her schooling. "Schooling indeed!" the little speaker tossed her head scornfully, "I'd like to see how much he'd get hisself if he had to break his back with a mangle, and his husband was out o' work, and he'd got two everlasting children to mind - and that's mother and me (p. 353)!" Similarly, a respectable and independent cress-seller in "Busy Bee" (S: 1870), old Biddy, waxes indignant at the supercilious attitudes of middle-class district visitors:

. . .some of they visiting ladies does give themselves such airs. They seem to think you don't know nothing more than a baby! I've had two or three on 'em here at different times, telling me that I didn't ought to have meat more than twice a week, and that gruel would be better for me than tea; and asking me what I did with my money, and where I went on Sundays - as if I was any concern of theirs!

The last one that came bothering me . . .was a young thing about eighteen, with a hat and feathers on, and a light silk skirt trailing on the ground after her. I knowed her very well by sight. She was Mr. Hardies', the great brewer's daughter, and had just left her boarding school. What could she understand about my troubles? Or what right had she to order an old woman like me? . . .Don't want none of their charity while I can earn a crust of bread for myself. Besides, a trumpery sixpence now and then doesn't pay one for putting up with their impertinence (p. 124).

What Biddy needs is not insulting advice, but the sympathetic interest she receives when her little friend, Amy, brings her Ragged School teacher to visit. Miss Spinks tactfully draws Biddy into the religious community by inviting her to a mother's meeting where songs, simply-told Bible stories and sincere friendship make up a pleasant evening's entertainment. Soon she and Amy are regular church attenders. Later, when Biddy falls ill, and cannot work, her connection with Miss Spinks is invaluable. Miss Spinks administers a small fund furnished by ladies who trust her discrimination, so she is able to help Biddy through her time of need.

Little Amy, too, finds her salvation through this charity connection. Her affectionate nature and eagerness to learn favourably impress Miss Spinks. When Amy attracts the attention of a wealthy young gentlewoman, by returning her lost gold bracelet, it is Miss Spinks who recommends Amy's sterling character. Thus, Miss Ethel gives Amy a position as pupil teacher in a school for poor children which she founded and manages. Biddy and Amy then have a secure source of income and a respectable home in the

school residence.

A long-term relationship with a sympathetic patron who superintends moral and social training and guarantees an appropriate occupation is the ideal solution to the predicament of an individual pauper child. Only the means by which authors bring together their poor protagonist and his saviour vary in these scenarios. Sometimes a daring rescue, an unusual act of self-sacrifice, or a demonstration of honesty attracts the attention of a charitable gentleman or lady. Occasionally a benefactor catches a young offender on the point of temptation and arrests his descent into crime. In "How Phil Earned a Shilling" (LF VIII: 1874), the hero succumbs to the enticements of a companion who promises him a shilling if he steals a watch. But Phil's conscience overrules his greed. He returns the watch and gains a friend.

However, while the point of contact may derive from a multitude of situations, the fictional pattern of benevolence, once set in motion, is uniform. The patron first investigates the character and circumstances of his protégé. Then he undertakes his education, whether in an industrial school, in apprenticeship to a tradesman, or as an under-servant in his own home. Impulsive or arbitrary acts of benevolence have no place in the careful routine of charity these mid-Victorian children's authors espouse. As the model philanthropist, Mr. Howard, explains to his daughters: "I never give to poor people without inquiring. We must not only be generous with our money, we must give our time and trouble as well, else we may do harm where we mean to do good (p. 17)."

Authors' demands on their fictional benefactors are as rigorous as their expectations of the deserving poor. Their ideal benefactor personifies the 'professional' attitude to charity which developed in the mid-Victorian period. The middle-class 'case-worker' might not command the vast assets of the traditional aristocratic patron, but his expertise and personal contact with the poor rendered his effort more worthwhile than unmethodical munificence. A patron had to be willing to pledge an enduring commitment to his protégé and to make practical plans for his future. Mere handouts

would only encourage dependence on charity. To train an individual to perform a useful role in society was a laudable achievement.

Yet, however promising or virtuous a candidate might prove, his education was not designed to raise him above his appointed station in life. While children's authors were seldom so blunt as Lord Shaftesbury, who exhorted his ragged school pupils to "stick to the gutter", they customarily fixed their heroes and heroines in respectable positions within their class of origin.<sup>1</sup> The unusual hero might ascend into the lower middle-class as a pupil teacher or office boy, but the large majority of deserving paupers were happy to become domestic servants. The mutually beneficial relationship between master and servant perfectly suited the social designs of mid-Victorian children's authors because it perpetuated traditional paternalism between rich and poor and it furnished a domestic solution to social problems. For homeless girls, especially, contemporary social reformers endorsed domestic work in a moral, "homelike" atmosphere both as preparation for future roles in service or marriage and protection from contaminating street life.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, domestic servants probably represented the only contact many authors and readers had with another class.<sup>3</sup> Thus, when "Sulkie Susie" (LF VIII: 1874) finished her training in the Albert Industrial School, her original patroness hires her to wait upon her daughter. Similarly, in "The Lost Watch, Chain, and Seale" (Ch: 1874), when Mrs. Montgomery decides to rehabilitate the little girl who took her watch, she sends her to the training school for servants which she patronizes and afterwards hires her as a nurse.

<sup>1</sup> Lord Shaftesbury is cited by Owen, p. 149.

<sup>2</sup> Leonore Davidoff argues that "The symbolic power of cleansing or ordering rituals in warding off the dangers of social displacement was applied with intensity to those women and girls who had not family to place them..." The only respectable alternative for women who had no homes of their own was to serve in the home of another. See: "Mastered for Life: Servant and Wife in Victorian and Edwardian England", Journal of Social History, VII (1973/4) pp. 413-414.

<sup>3</sup> Jones observes that the domination of London charitable reform movements by professional men meant that those who took the keenest interest in the welfare of the poor had no economic connections with them except domestic service, p. 270.

Perhaps these authors recommended formal training schools for neglected waifs in order to ease the transition between the undisciplined state of hand-to-mouth destitution and the comfortable but confining status of domestic service. At any rate, only a few authors trouble to follow their novie servant's subsequent experiences to see how well he or she adapts to a new way of life or how the mistress introduces a cultural alien into her morally immaculate household. "Janet's Brooch" (Ch: 1877) is one story which treats this situation. Young Janet is the orphan mistress of a well-to-do Scottish home. Out of kindness, she hires Bridget, a willing and industrious child who "come from a bad lot". Her brother Angus, a solicitor, reprimands Janet's impulsiveness and the other servants stay aloof from the unfortunate Bridget. Naturally, when Janet's brooch disappears, Bridget is the prime suspect. Instantly, ". . .the old cook and young waiting maid came to Janet to say they were not going to stop in a suspected house, and either they should leave or the mistress should send 'that girl' home (p. 253)." Reluctantly, Janet dismisses Bridget but finds her another job in the hospital. Later, when the brooch turns up, Bridget is cleared and given five pounds in reparation, but is too much needed at the hospital to return to service. The resolution of this story furnishes a lesson for employers rather than employees: "Janet has learned to be less hasty in well-doing even, and Angus has widened his ideas as regards his poor neighbours (p. 255)." Though the author defends the innocently maligned servant in this tale, she indicates some of the frictions that might arise between an outcast pauper child and 'respectable' servants. Most authors, however, overlook such minor impediments and exhibit a rather extravagant faith in the ability, let alone the inclination, of middle-class households to absorb extra domestics in the cause of social improvement.

The range of solutions that mid-Victorian children's authors devised to mitigate the desperate poverty of their indigent characters was circumscribed by their vision of a stable social order. Emigration was a common escape route for impoverished middle- and upper-class fictional

families, but was a rare recourse for the poor hero. In "Harry Maxwell, or, School Boy Honour" (LF n.s. IX: 1879), kind Mrs. Maxwell and the vicar pay a penitent poacher's passage to Canada. As a farm servant to a relative of Mrs. Maxwell's, Bill makes a new start on an honest life. But Bill was not a child, and, even in a new land, traditional paternalism prevails.

In fact, emigration societies increasingly sent London Workhouse children overseas.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps mid-Victorian children's authors doubted that pioneer communities could provide the care and personal supervision that poor children required and deserved. At any rate, no emigration schemes are represented in the files of those periodicals under examination.

A more common conclusion, though hardly a solution, to the predicament of juvenile mendicants was death. "Jack's Elder Brother" (LF n.s. VI: 1877) exemplifies this morbid formula. Jack is a neglected crossing sweeper who first learns about the Christian gospel from a Ragged School mistress. Inspired to do good works, he saves a fellow orphan from a careening cab, is run over himself, and joins his "Elder Brother" in heaven.

Certainly death provides a convenient trap-door for disposing of problematic heroes and, thus, exploiting readers' emotions. No doubt, an otherworldly reward for little Jack satisfied his pious creator. But the remarkable morbidity of pathetic street arabs in fiction is an inadvertent admission of society's failure to integrate its most vulnerable members. Charlotte Yonge's dry comment - "the sure reward of virtue is a fatal accident" - is a just dismissal of these juvenile melodramas.<sup>2</sup>

One would not expect to find in magazines for middle-class children startling innovations or radical proposals for social reform. The limited

<sup>1</sup>Neil Sutherland, Children in English-Canadian Society 1850-1950 (1974), describes the not altogether successful efforts of Canadian relief agencies to situate juvenile immigrants.

<sup>2</sup>Charlotte Yonge's comments were levelled specifically at Canon Farrar's Eric; Or, Little By Little (1858), but seem applicable to all the lachrymose religious stories. She is quoted by Brian Alderson, "Tracts, Rewards, and Fairies: The Victorian Contribution to Children's Literature", in Asa Briggs, ed., Essays in the History of Publishing (1974), p. 267.

perspective of children's authors on the problems of the poor and their narrow compass of correctional manoeuvre reflect the commonplace outlook of contemporary philanthropists such as C. S. Loch. Loch, the secretary of the Charitable Organization Society, based his programs on the principles of self-help, neighbourly supervision, personal knowledge and human understanding. He doggedly opposed state intervention long after it was an accomplished fact in most areas of social service.<sup>1</sup> Though many children's authors and magazine editors were active field workers in the benevolent enterprises their stories and articles advertised, they were in no position to judge whether received ideas on charity were practicable or already obsolete.<sup>2</sup> They merely accepted conventional approaches and dramatized them in fiction.

The "street arab" stereotype was hardly realistic and fictional solutions to his problems (except ironically his death) were even less so. But we cannot indict mid-Victorian children's authors for their failure to transcend orthodox opinion. The immediate object of children's story writers was to inspire their readers' interest in the poor. Appealing portraits of helpless orphans and deserving widows plus satisfying or tear-jerking conclusions were perhaps better calculated to win sympathy than stark and depressing realism. Moreover, in the mid-Victorian period destitution still seemed, to most upper and middle-class observers, to be an isolated and not endemic threat to the social equilibrium. In the 1890s, social critics formulated broad sociological and environmental explanations of poverty which replaced the individualistic and moralistic view of mid-Victorian commentators. Yet, though objective analysis rather than moral judgment coloured late Victorian journalistic descriptions of the poor, fear and not guilt became the dominant emotion of the rich toward

<sup>1</sup>Owen, p. 226.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter Three for a description of the charitable activities of magazine proprietors and editors.

the poor.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps because the poor were no longer seen in a sentimental light, the poor child theme became less and less common in children's literature in the late-Victorian and Edwardian period.<sup>2</sup>

In the mid-Victorian period, when the "street arab" tale was at the apex of its popularity, most members of the middle and upper classes had confidence in the status quo, and could spare some pity for the poor. Children's authors designed all their stories to illustrate their vision of the prevailing social order; their tales about the poor attempted to demonstrate its justice and thus ensure its stability in perpetuity.

<sup>1</sup>Jones, pp. 285-288, describes the attitudes to chronic poverty which developed in the 1880s and 1890s as social investigators discovered the appalling extent of destitution. Economic and moral explanations for poverty changed to "biological and ecological" ones as theorists concluded that the experience of generations of urban poverty degraded the physical and mental as well as moral constitution of its victims.

<sup>2</sup>Gillian Avery attributes the decline of the street arab formula to improved living conditions for the poor and the success of the temperance movement. See Childhood's Pattern: A Study of the Heroes and Heroines of Children's Fiction, 1770-1950 (1975), p. 120.

## CONCLUSION

"Looking Back" (AJ X: 1872) was an Aunt Judy's story which epitomized the blend of nostalgia and conservatism typical of secular periodical fiction for children in the 1870s. The narrator recalled a disastrous episode in her childhood when she fed her new-born rabbits rhubarb leaves and they all died. Only the mother rabbit survived:

She had been wiser in her generation, and, refusing the dangerous novelty, stuck to her parsley and lettuce leaves like a good old Tory; leaving the young and rash to perish in their hasty pursuit of something new. It was a lesson to me not to travel new roads, and make experiments, without the advice of older and wiser heads than mine (p. 742).

Like this old rabbit, the "Toryism" of children's story writers was an intuitive and emotional response to the experience of domestic life. But unlike her, the producers of entertaining magazines were not content to leave their young to find their own way in a dangerous world without the voice of experience to guide them. In sympathy with the leaders of society and institutionalized religion, children's authors were satisfied with the prevailing order of things and designed their tales to preserve the status quo. At whatever age or social level, exemplary protagonists respected and emulated the attributes of their betters without aspiring to join them. Child characters revered the advice and wishes of their parents, but did not exchange prematurely their innocent happiness for precocious independence. Middle-class families followed the pattern of gracious living, private discipline, and social responsibility that distinguished their genteel superiors, but were proud to retain their respectable middle-class status. Similarly, the deserving poor adopted



the industrious, orderly ways of the middle classes, but were content to serve them. All these magazine stories explained and justified the value system underpinning the dominant culture and reinforced the social order in its broad outlines. The authors of children's stories wished their readers to accept their fictional world as a realistic image of society as it was. They did not advocate reform, nor did they attempt to prepare the young to live in a changing world.

Nevertheless, if children's authors did not attempt to peer into the future, neither did they try to bring back the past. They took pride in the progress of their civilization, its industry and empire, its institutions, even its manners and morals. Non-fiction magazine articles celebrated new colonies and recent inventions just as the stories popularized tolerant attitudes to children. Few children's authors joined the scolding author of "My Godmother's Picture Book" (LF III: 1872) when she compared the mid-Victorian generation with the children of her own day:

I think we were taught more honest shame about certain things than I often see in little boys and girls now. We were ashamed of boasting, or being greedy, or selfish; we were ashamed of asking for anything that was not offered to us, and of interrupting grown-up people, or talking about ourselves (p. 346).

Most authors felt that children deserved the carefree existence they depicted in their stories. They treated with fondness the fears, trials, and errors of little children and were unwilling to admit any unattractive traits or serious sins into the private world of childhood. Rather than preach at their readers, mid-Victorian children's authors asked them to identify with admirable social types whose behaviour and motivation accorded with contemporary ideals of childhood.

Yet, despite their lenience towards little children, these authors expected unflinching moral rectitude and ethical sensibility from older boys and girls. Social harmony was seen to depend on the individual knowing his place and fulfilling his duty. The social order itself was satisfactory, but there was always the potential for the improvement of

All in all, children's authors were confident about the efficacy of the moral code they presented to young readers in the 1870s. Certainly, they suppressed the discussion of those aspects of contemporary social life which were too complex or disturbing for the child reader, just as any adult generation selects and stylized the content of the social education of the young. Nevertheless, there were conflicts unresolved, areas of confusion, and moral inconsistencies even in the discrete and insular world of children's fiction. In consonance with the organization of Victorian society itself, the various elements of the story-book world were compartmentalized by age, sex, and social status. Only when we try to weave together the disparate strands do we see the flaws in the fabric. They we see that children and adults, boys and girls, rich and poor inhabited separate realms, ordered by distinct rules and codes of conduct and that children's authors were not able to integrate all these categories into a comprehensive whole.

Very few authors could portray convincingly the process of a child growing up and becoming part of society. Some crystallized child life in golden vignettes. Others depicted the passage to adulthood with artificial suddenness; loss and pain were the inevitable attendants of maturity. It is curious that, for all their vigorous defense of the primacy of the family, these authors could not show a boy or girl gradually maturing within a harmonious and stable domestic setting. The intrusion of worldly catastrophe, bankruptcy, illness, or death, within the family, or else the ritualized separation of the school boy from his family seemed to be indispensable catalysts to transform the innocent, shateled child into a sober, responsible adult.

This inability to come to terms with a child growing up did not derive merely from the impoverished imaginations of children's authors, nor from the requirements of dramatic fiction. It stemmed from an ideological impasse endemic in a society which sentimentalized the

imaginative freedom of children, yet imposed rigid social constraints upon adults; a society which simultaneously worshipped individualism and conformity. The spontaneity of children was both revered and feared. The isolated nuclear family guarded the child's innocence and controlled his youthful high spirits. In this enforced segregation from the world, the archetypical Victorian child remained pure and puerile.

The protective function of the family was emphasized above all other domestic roles and duties in the children's fiction of the 1870s. To an age that idealized the family as a haven of peace of security, the idea of harsh parental authority forcing conformity to society's rules was repugnant. Mothers and fathers in mid-Victorian domestic fiction were not necessarily less effective moulders of child character than the stern parents of early-Victorian children's books. But later authors preferred to amplify the emotional power of mothers, fathers, and siblings rather than to invoke the punitive potency of the paterfamilias in order to enlist the child's cooperation. Having rejected the doctrine of original sin in favour of romantic faith in childhood goodness, the writers of the 1870s were more willing than their predecessors to believe that children were well-intentioned and well-behaved and had little fear that sparing the rod would spoil them.

Mid-Victorian children's authors rested their aspirations for the future of society on the ability of the family to imbue its children with socially desirable qualities. That they assumed the child of genteel parents to be intrinsically honest, considerate, and conscientious implied subtle connections in their minds among virtue, birth, and breeding. Virtue was less a key to social mobility than the inherent attribute of established social position. Lenient attitudes towards the children of refined, well-educated people rested on the presupposition that novice citizens, future social leaders, were nurtured during their apprenticeship in the optimum moral surroundings.

Conversely, the hero without a family, or whose family was handicapped by illness, death, and poverty, was not only expected to relinquish his rights of childhood; he also had to be superior to his environment. To demonstrate his worthiness, the poor protagonist had to be capable of supporting himself, immune to temptation, and willing to sacrifice himself for the sake of others. Yet, notwithstanding all his moral qualities, no virtuous hero found his social or religious salvation singlehanded. In every case, a benefactor helped him to his deserved position of comfort and security. Thus, even while children's authors applauded the spirit of independent self-help, they were not willing to dispense with the interdependence of social classes which rendered their society just and which enabled the well-to-do to earn their prestige and privilege.

Ultimately, then, children's story writers based their hopes for the perpetuation of social stability on the moral fibre of individuals rather than on visions of large scale social reform. They emphasized selflessness, responsibility, and service as a counter to the competitive spirit of their times, but advocated improvement only within the lineaments of the prevailing social organization. Moreover, though they offered comforting examples of individuals facing life's predicaments and mastering the repercussions, children's authors furnished no prescriptions against the perennial threats of downward social mobility and death. They did not construe misfortune as the direct consequence of sin, nor did they always connect tribulations to God's will. Whatever its origin, the trial that caste and circumstance ordained strengthened the individual who bravely confronted and conquered it.

Thus, despite their self-confident assurance of the justice and efficacy of the contemporary social system, mid-Victorian children's authors harboured a residual suspicion of the world. Steadfast discipline was required to create order out of chaotic and unceasing change. The editors of respectable magazines for middle-class children aimed to

inculcate in their readers a sense of personal integrity and social responsibility. This paramount endeavour united them against those who would exploit the passions and ambitions of youth merely for profit. Mr. Edmund Hodder, whose high quality but short-lived magazine, Merry and Wise, was typical of these mid-Victorian children's periodicals, spoke for all his colleagues when he addressed the child of 1867:

. . . you live in a favoured land and a favoured age. . . but bear in mind that the increase of privilege brings increase of responsibility and danger. In literature, in the maxims of society, in religion, everywhere, the wheat and tares are growing together and we need to be very careful in our choice of books, and friends, and amusement, but above all, in our way of life (pp. iii/iv).

In common with Mr. Hodder, the Reverend Doctors Whittemore and MacLeod, the venerable Canon Clarke, and the highminded Gatty family compiled morally sound but entertaining fiction to attract the allegiance of middle-class children and to stimulate them to good and noble purposes. Their magazines were as different as the individual personalities that created them, but agreed in their fundamental assessment and depiction of society. Whatever influence they may have had in moulding the characters of the children they served, they left to historians a unique legacy which records the commonplace but nonetheless fervent hopes and fears of the generation of the 1870s.

APPENDIX A: CODING CATEGORIES FOR THE STUDY OF CHILDREN'S FICTION  
AS AN HISTORICAL RESOURCE

The generalizations about the stories published in the selection of mid-Victorian children's magazines examined for this thesis were drawn by checking each story against the coding categories listed below. The stories checklisted were those with a sustained plot and resolution of conflict. The many vignettes, anecdotes, and sermons included in these magazines were not suitable for this sort of analysis. Not every story encompassed the range of detail about education, religion, work and leisure patterns, and socio-economic status represented in the checklist. Moreover, no objective coding system could capture the nuances of attitudes that make children's literature so valuable a source for social history. The checklist system employed to facilitate the exploitation of children's periodical stories as historical resources was designed to identify recurring formulae, without pretension to quantitative analysis. By comparing the age, sex, and social status of the hero or heroine with the emphasis of various virtues and failings, the allocation of rewards and punishments, styles of child-rearing and education, we can see the different expectations with which authors regarded younger and older boys and girls and rich and poor children. The recurring patterns of conflict and resolution show not only the authors' preoccupations and anxieties but also the strategies they employed to allay them.

## A. NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE

1. First person
2. Third person
3. Reminiscence
4. Light-hearted adventure
5. Ordeal

## B. GENERAL SETTING

1. Rural
2. Urban
3. Colonial
4. European
5. Sea or wilderness

## C. SPECIFIC SETTING

1. Home and immediate surroundings
2. School
3. Ship
4. Workplace
5. Holiday/visit

## D. PROTAGONIST

1. Boy under six
2. Girl under six
3. Boy six to twelve
4. Girl six to twelve
5. Boy twelve to eighteen
6. Girl twelve to eighteen
7. Man
8. Woman
9. Group
10. Animal

## E. SUPPORT

1. Family
2. Siblings
3. Peer group
4. Mixed (age, sex, class)
5. Servants
6. Parents not involved
7. Mother not involved
8. Father not involved

## F. ANTAGONIST

1. Peer
2. Poorer character
3. Wealthier character
4. Servant
5. Sibling
6. Parent
7. Parent substitute
8. Teacher
9. Natural forces
10. No antagonist

## G. CONFLICT

1. Childhood problem
2. Interfamily relationships
3. Downward mobility
4. Natural disaster, war
5. Death or illness in family
6. Poverty
7. Family separation
8. Character development
9. Occupational choice
10. Temptation

## H. RESOLUTION

1. Hero conquers fault, or learns lesson
2. Hero overcomes obstacle
3. Hero saves or protects
4. Hero rises through his exertions
5. Hero emigrates
6. Hero dies
7. Hero is saved or vindicated
8. Hero is helped to security
9. Antagonist reformed
10. Antagonist dismissed
11. Family reunited
12. Hero grows up

## I. VIRTUES EMPHASIZED

1. Innocence
2. Obedience
3. High spirits
4. Sensitivity
5. Piety, spirituality
6. Creativity, imaginativeness
7. Loyalty
8. Honour
9. Honesty
10. Responsibility, self-control
11. Bravery
12. Independence, initiative
13. Perseverance, industry
14. Ambition
15. Cleverness
16. Dutifulness
17. Submissiveness
18. Forgiveness
19. Selflessness
20. Benevolence

## J. VICES

1. Cowardice
2. Vulgarify
3. Precocity
4. Disobedience
5. Cruelty
6. Impatience, carelessness
7. Lack of self-control
8. Wilfulness, obstinacy
9. Selfishness
10. Lying
11. Stealing
12. Pride, vanity
13. Discontent, social ambition
14. Secretiveness
15. Laziness
16. Cleverness
17. Practical joking
18. Revenge
19. Drunkenness
20. Gossiping

## K. PSYCHOLOGY

1. Virtues or faults achieved
2. Virtues or faults innate
3. Childish traits distinguished from adult characteristics
4. Individual personalities developed
5. Child nature idealized and generalized

## L. REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS

1. Derive directly from action
2. Dream or supernatural sequence
3. Administered by authority
4. Rewards are material
5. Rewards are psychological
6. Rewards are social
7. Return of loved one rewards hero
8. Punishments are corporal
9. Punishments are legal
10. Punishments are social
11. Punishments are psychological
12. Illness punishes hero
13. Death or illness of loved one punishes hero
14. Peer group administers justice

## M. JUSTIFICATION FOR MORAL BEHAVIOUR

1. Religious
2. Ethical
3. Functional
4. Conventional

## N. CHILD-REARING

1. Both parents
2. Mother mainly
3. Father mainly
4. Servant mainly
5. Relative or older sibling
6. Peer group agent of socialization
7. Teacher agent of socialization
8. Social superior agent of socialization
9. Parents neglect children or fail in child-rearing

## O. FAMILY DEMOGRAPHY

1. Both parents alive
2. Both parents dead
3. Father dead
4. Mother dead
5. Father absent
6. Mother absent
7. Children live with kin
8. Number of children
9. Servants are resident

## P. WORK

1. Boys help in house
2. Girls help in house
3. Children contribute to income
4. Children are self-supporting
5. Father works in home
6. Father works away from home
7. Mother works in home
8. Mother works away from home
9. Boy begins career
10. Girl begins career

## Q. LEISURE

1. Family leisure stressed
2. Play confined to siblings
3. Play confined to peers
4. Play free/unsupervised
5. Play restricted/supervised
6. Child plays alone
7. Children's parties figure
8. Adult social life figures
9. Annual holidays featured



## R. EDUCATION

1. At home by parents
2. At home by governess or tutor
3. Public school
4. Girl's school
5. Village school
6. Grammar school
7. Boys at school, girls at home
8. Boys and girls together
9. University

## S. RELIGION

1. Anglican
2. Nonconformist
3. Unspecified religious tone
4. Church figures in plot
5. Respect to other creeds
6. Hostility to other creeds
7. Protagonist led to faith
8. Protagonist leads others to faith

## T. SOCIAL GROUP

1. Aristocracy
2. Gentry/rentier
3. Professional
4. Clergy
5. Military or naval officer
6. Businessman/Manufacturer
7. Trade
8. Unspecified wealthy
9. Unspecified poor
10. Formerly wealthy
11. Formerly comfortable
12. Rural independent
13. Artisan
14. Labourer
15. Clerk
16. Soldier/sailor
17. Colonial farmer
18. Poor widow
19. Servant
20. Artist/musician

## APPENDIX B: PROMINENT CONTRIBUTORS TO SELECTED MID-VICTORIAN CHILDREN'S MAGAZINES

Anonymity was the dominant convention among nineteenth-century periodical contributors and the rule in children's magazines. However, signed stories and articles became more common in mid-Victorian children's journals, especially those like Aunt Judy's and Good Words for the Young which wished to establish literary reputations and Little Folks which aimed to build up reader-loyalty to popular authors. Nevertheless, pseudonyms, initials, andonyms ("By the author of 'Dora Selwyn'" for instance) were still the most common styles of signature. In tracing the identities of obscure Victorian children's authors, the British Museum Catalogue, the Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books, compiled by Judith St. John (Toronto, 1975), and the New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature: Vol III, 1800-1900, revised by G. Watson (1969) were helpful for assigning authors to popular magazine serials. S. Halkett and J. Laing's Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous English Literature, (revised ed., 1926-1934; supplement, 1952 and 1962) and W. Cushing's Initials and Pseudonyms: A Dictionary of Literary Disguises (1885-8), though both concentrate on adult writers, occasionally identified children's authors.

Biographical information about Victorian children's writers was equally elusive. The Dictionary of National Biography, 63 vols. (1885-1900) and Who Was Who, 1897-1915 (1916) and 1916-1928 (1929) ignored children's writers unless they were outstandingly popular or contributed importantly to other fields. More useful were Samuel Austin Allibone, A Critical Dictionary of English Literature and British and American Authors Living and Deceased, 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1891; supplemented by J. F. Kirk, 2 vols. 1891) and Robin Myers, ed., A Dictionary of Literature in the English Language from Chaucer to 1940, 2 vols. (1970). Roger Lancelyn Green's Tellers of Tales (1965) occasionally offered clues about popular Victorian children's authors.

At the Conference on Victorian Children's Periodicals, held in Worcester, August, 1977, Brian Alderson, the Chairman of the Children's Book History Society, suggested that students of children's literature collaborate in an effort to compile guides to the total contributors of fiction, articles, poetry, and illustrations to Victorian children's periodicals. The following list is a small contribution towards that endeavour. The number of casual and sporadic contributors to Victorian children's magazines even during one decade was stupendous and it was not within the scope or aims of the present study to pursue them. However, a selected list of the prominent authors who contributed importantly to one magazine or regularly to several might aid the efforts of other researchers in Victorian children's literature.

- |  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Atteridge, Mary Ellen.   | LF<br>GWY |
| Barker, Lady Mary Ann (later Lady Broome).<br>Daughter of the Hon. W. J. Stewart, Island Secretary of Jamaica. Married Captain G. R. Barker (d. 1860), then Sir. Frederick Napier Broome, Colonial Secretary of Natal. Superintendent of the Kensington School of Cookery, 1874-5. | GWY       |
| Beaucoeur, Jean.   | LF        |
| Betham-Edwards, Matilda Barbara. (Author of "Kitty")<br>Niece of Matilda Betham, an early nineteenth-century literary woman. Wrote many novels for women and completed her aunt's literary biographies of women writers.   | LF<br>S   |
| Bowen, Mrs. C. E.  | S         |
| Buckland, Anna J.<br>Daughter of the Very Reverend N. Buckland, Dean of Westminster. Principle of a large school for girls in Reading intended to prepare girls for the Oxford and Cambridge examinations.   | LF        |
| Butt, Geraldine.   | AJ        |
| Camden, Charles.   | GWY       |
| Careless, L. M. (The Author of "Brave Lisette")  | LF        |
| Carey, Annie. (The Author of "The Autobiography of a Lump of Coal")  | LF        |
| Carey, M. R. (The Author of "The Old Uncle's Home" and "Isobel's Difficulties")  | AJ        |

Carrington, George. Graduated from St. Alban's Hall, Oxford.	AJ
Clare, Austin.	AJ GWY
Clark, Mary Senior.	AJ
Craik, Dinah Mulock. (Author of "John Halifax, Gentleman") Daughter of a nonconformist minister. An extremely popular novelist.	GWY
Cobb, James F., Esq., F.R.G.S. (J.F.C.)	Ch
Coster, George Thomas. Author of temperance hymns and articles on Sunday schools.	LF
Cupples, George. (The Author of "The Green Hand") Author of boy's adventure stories.	GWY LF
Cupples, Mrs. George. (The Author of "Tappie and Her Chicks")	GWY LF
Dutton, Mary. (Y.S.N.) (The Author of "Scattered Seeds")	AJ LF
Dundas, Hon. Mrs. Daughter of Sir William Boothby, Bart. Married the Rev. and Hon. Charles Dundas.	AJ
Ewing, Juliana Horatia Daughter of the Rev. Alfred Gatty and Margaret Gatty (editor of <u>Aunt Judy's Magazine</u> ). Married Major Alexander Ewing.	AJ LF
F., H.A.	AJ Ch LF
France, K.	AJ
Gaye, Selina. (Author of "Courage and Cowards") Daughter of the Rev. Charles Hicks Gaye. Educated in the classics and modern languages by her father.	AJ S
Gilbert, William. (Author of "King George's Middy") A naval surgeon until he retired to literary life. Father of W. S. Gilbert, who illustrated his children's books.	GWY
Goddard, Julia.	LF
Goldney, G.	AJ
Greene, Hon. Mrs. R. J. (Author of "Cushions and Corners") Daughter of the third Baron Plunkett. Married Richard J. Greene, son of the baron of the Court of Exchequer.	LF

- Hart, Elizabeth Anna. (The Author of "Poems Written for a Child") AJ  
 Daughter of the Rev. Edward Smedley, cousin of "Lewis Carroll, GWY  
 and sister of the novelist, Menella Bute Smedley. Married LF  
 a retired Indian Army officer and J.P.
- Hering, Jeanie. LF
- Hodder, Edwin. (Old Merry). (The Author of "Fireside Chats LF  
 with the Youngsters", "Tossed on the Waves", "The Junior  
 Clerk" and "On Holy Ground")  
 A career in the civil service coincided with his literary  
 activities which included editing the children's magazine  
Merry and Wise (1865-1872). Lord Shaftesbury chose him to  
 edit his letters and papers.
- Hunt, Madeline Bonavia. (The Author of "The Little Red Shoes") LF  
 Sister of the Rev. H. G. Bonavia Hunt, editor of Little  
Folks.
- Ingelow, Jean. GWY  
 Popular novelist and poet.
- Ker, David. GWY  
LF
- Kingsley, Henry. GWY  
 Brother of the Rev. Charles Kingsley (who also contributed  
 occasionally to Good Words for the Young). Edited the  
 Edinburgh Daily Review from 1870-1872.
- Kingston, W. H. G. LF  
 Son of a merchant in Oporto. Supported the emigration  
 movement. Extremely popular and prolific author of boy's  
 adventure stories. Edited Kingston's Magazine for Boys  
 (1859-1863) and The Union Jack (1880).
- Lamb, Lady Louisa Mary Caroline. AJ  
 Daughter of Sir H. Durrant. Married Major Sir Archibald  
 Lamb, Bart.
- Low, Lieut. Charles Rathbone. GWY  
 Indian naval career.
- MacDonald, George. GWY  
 Began his career as a Congregationalist minister but  
 alienated his congregation with his unusual religious  
 views. Edited Good Words for the Young from 1870-1872.
- MacQuoid, Katherine S. GWY
- Manning, Anne LF  
S  
 According to Charlotte Yonge, Women Novelists of Queen  
Victoria's Reign (1897), her father was of "the higher  
 professional class" and she led an "eventless life".  
 A prolific writer of historical romances for children.

- Marshall, Charles (Heraclitus Grey).  
A sporting journalist. LF
- Martin, Mrs. A. H. (The Author of "Into the View") LF
- Masson, Flora.  
Daughter of prominent intellectual and editor of Macmillan's Magazine, David Masson. AJ
- Matéaux, Clara. L. (The Author of "Home Chat")  
Behind-the-scenes editor of Little Folks. LF
- Meteyard, Eliza. (Silverpen). GWY  
A poet and extensive contributor of articles on antiquarian and industrial art topics and sanitary reform to various mid-Victorian periodicals.
- Molesworth, Mrs. (Enis Graham). AJ  
One of the most popular of all Victorian children's authors. LF  
Daughter of a wealthy merchant. Married Major Molesworth but separated from him and supported herself and children by writing.
- Moncrieff, Robert Hope (Ascott R. Hope). AJ  
Popular writer of boy's school stories.
- O'Reilly, Mrs. Robert. ("The Author of "Daisy's Companion") AJ  
Ch  
GWY  
LF
- Outram, G. S. (G.S.O.) Ch  
Rector of Redmile. LF
- Parkes, Bessie Raynor, later Mrs. Louis Belloc. GWY  
Daughter of Joseph Parkes, barrister and Taxing Master LF  
to the Court of Exchequer. Chiefly known for her work with Barbara Bodichon in aid of extending women's rights. Edited the Englishwoman's Journal.
- Peard, Frances Mary. (The Author of "Unawares" and "The Rose Garden") AJ  
Daughter of Commander Shouldham Peard, R.N.
- Perkins, Mrs. Sue Chestnutree. (The Author of "Tom's Opinion") Ch
- R., S.T.A. Ch  
LF
- Rand, William Brighty (Matthew Browne) (Henry Holbeach) (The Author of "Lilliput Levée") GWY  
Journalist.
- Roberts, Margaret. (Author of "Mademoiselle Mori", "On the Edge of the Storm" and "Sydonie's Dowry") AJ  
Daughter of the Rev. Henry Latham, M.A.
- Rowe, Richard (Edward Howe). (Peter Possum). GWY  
A dramatist and journalist who died in extreme poverty. Many of his books were published posthumously.

Seguin, Lisbeth G.	GWY
Stantiall, A.G. (A.G.S.) Regular contributor to the <u>Children's Friend</u> .	LF
Straight, Sir Douglas (Sidney Daryl). Edited the <u>Pall Mall Magazine</u> with Lord Frederick Hamilton.	AJ
Tuckett, Elizabeth. (The Author of "Zig-Zag")	GWY
Viti, Carlo.	Ch GWY
Whittemore, A. E. (Netta Leigh) "The Author of "Soldier Harold" and "Dora Selwyn") Wife of the Rev. Dr. Whittemore, editor of <u>Sunshine</u> .	S
Zimmern, Helen. Contributed to many English and German periodicals, including the <u>Atheneum</u> . Translated legends and biographies.	AJ GWY

## APPENDIX C: MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD READING

The contemporary response to the literature of the past is difficult to discover and especially so when the literature in question is popular but forgettable, and the readers, because of their ages, are barely literate and certainly not publicly articulate. The following memoirs were scanned in an attempt to discover clues about the audience for mid-Victorian children's literature. The sample was selected from William Bates, ed., British Autobiographies: An Annotated Bibliography of British Autobiographies Published or Written Before 1951 (New York, 1968). His section on writers was thought to be most promising since literary figures might pay more heed than other celebrities or diarists to the books which formed their early impressions. Edna Oakshott's bibliography, Childhood in Autobiography (1960), Gillian Avery's The Echoing Green: Memories of Regency and Victorian Youth (1974), and Joan Simon suggested additional sources.

Acland, Eleanor. Goodbye for the Present: The Story of Two Childhoods: Milly, 1878-1888, and Ellen, 1913-1924. 1935.  
Remembers her Sunday reading: Mrs. Mortimer's Peep of Day and Line Upon Line. Her mother read aloud Kingsley, Scott, Dickens, and Stevenson.

Allen, J. Archibald. One of Ten, By Number Nine. 1929.

Agate, James Evershed. Ego. 1935.

Son of a well-to-do cotton manufacturer's agent, Agate's father was very strict, supervised all the books his children read, and allowed no magazines, which he considered to be rubbish, to enter his home.

Belloc-Lowndes, Marie Adelaide. I, Too, Have Lived in Arcadia. 1942.  
Daughter of women's rights activist and children's author, Bessie Raynor Parkes, she remembers few children's books except the evangelical Peep of Day and Line upon Line which her Wesleyan nurse gave her to read, without her mother's knowledge.

Barnard, H.C. Were Those the Days? A Victorian Education. Oxford, 1970.  
Praised Good Words for the Young, which he read in bound volumes long after the magazine had ceased publication, and Mrs. Ewing's stories.

Benson, E. F. Our Family Affairs. 1920.

Blomfield, Mrs. Mathena. Nuts in the Rookery. 1946.  
Mentions her fondness for several popular Victorian children's books as well as the enduring classics.



Brown, Jean Curtis. To Tell My Daughter. 1948.

Daughter of a Presbyterian minister, she had special children's books to read in her father's library. She was given pocket money specifically to buy Little Folks.

Buchan, Susan (Lady Tweedsmuir). The Lilac and the Rose. 1952.

Born to an aristocratic, intellectual family, she was allowed unrestricted access to her father's library. She remembers an eclectic childhood reading experience, including the pious street arab stories, such as Little Meg's Children and Froggie's Little Brother, as well as Mrs. Molesworth, Kipling, and Andrew Lang. She also took in several children's magazines, including Aunt Judy's and the American St. Nicholas: "In my youth we had wonderful magazines, the best of which was Aunt Judy's in which appeared some of Juliana Horatia Ewing's stories as well as miscellaneous articles on history, poetry, flowers, and objects of the seashore (pp. 43/44)." To her mind, Ewing's Madame Liberality was the best children's story ever written.

Carbery, M. Happy World: The Story of a Victorian Childhood. 1941.

Though she recalls meeting "Lewis Carroll" at the home of Lord Salisbury, she mentions no children's books besides the classics.

Cholmondley, Mary. Under One Roof. 1918.

In his Shropshire rectory, her father read aloud Dickens, Scott, Thackeray, Edgeworth, and Jane Austen. Her mother was very careful about their reading matter and chose mostly German children's books. However, they were allowed Little Folks and her talented sister won a prize in a Little Folks essay competition. This sister died young and left Mary her diaries, including personal reviews of her books. She had this to say about Charlotte Yonge's novels: "All Miss Yonge's books are very young lady-like, too good, too dull, and too high church. All so exclusively written for schoolroom girls. I hate them (p. 82)."

Corke, Helen. Neutral Ground. 1912.

Recalls Chatterbox.

Creston, Dorner. Enter a Child. 1939.

Dark, Sidney. Mainly About Other Boys. 1925.

Davison, Dorothy G. M. Three Children at Home. Oxford, 1933.

Douton, Agnes Maud. A Book with Seven Seals: A Victorian Childhood. 1928; reprint edition, 1974.

Dugdale, Blanche. Family Homespun. 1940.

Revered her mother's talent for choosing the right books, Edgeworth, Mrs. Molesworth, Harriet Martineau: "The faintest flavour of slang condemned a book, and everything she read had to pass her standard of good English (p. 137)."

Guthrie, Thomas Anstey (F. Anstey). Long Retrospect. 1936.

Son of a military tailor of low church affiliation, his early reading was confined to moral children's books. He remembered the Fairchild Family, Ministering Children as Sunday reading, plus Sunday at Home and Good Words for the Young, both of which were "fairly to our taste (p. 24)".

Hughes, M. Vivian. A London Child of the Seventies. 1934; Penguin edition, 1977.

She bought Sunshine and Little Folks with her own pocket money and had bound volumes of Good Words for the Young for Sunday reading.

Humphreys, A. L. When I Was a Boy. 1933.

Son of a dissenting minister, his choice of books and magazines was limited to religious publications, The Infant's Magazine, The Child's Companion, and The Children's Friend. When he was older, however, he bought Sunday at Home and the Boy's Own Paper with his pocket money.

Jackson, Annabel Huth. A Victorian Childhood. 1932.

Read the old children's classics in the upper-class family library, as well as the newer books by Mrs. Ewing and Mrs. Molesworth, Jean Inglew and George MacDonald. "I am thankful that I had parents who simply would not let me read most of the books that were published as suitable for children, for the average, though better than it is now, was often poor (pp. 43/44)."

Keeble, Sir Frederick William. Polly and Freddie. 1936.

Recalls only the classic boy's adventure stories by Marryat, Mayne Reid, Cooper, and Ballantine.

Kent, William. Testament of a Victorian Youth. 1938.

In his Methodist childhood home, he remembers reading The Young Soldier. "Probably all other juvenile periodicals were denied us (p. 21)."

Kipling, Rudyard. Something of Myself: For My Friends Known and Unknown. 1937; Penguin edition, 1977.

Bound volumes of Aunt Judy's were treasured and Mrs. Gatty's Parables from Nature inspired his first literary efforts.

Hamilton, Lord Frederick. The Days Before Yesterday. 1922.

His Sunday reading, including Bishop Wilberforce's Agathos and Mrs. Sherwood's Little Henry and His Bearer, remained most vivid his memory.

Hardy, Violet Agnes Evelyn. As It Was. 1958.

Homan, F. In the Days of Long Ago. 1912.

Hopkinson, Evelyn. The Story of a Mid-Victorian Girl.. 1928.

Housman, Lawrence. The Unexpected Years. 1936.

Lubbock, Percy. Earlham. 1922.

MacDonald, Greville. Reminiscence of a Specialist. 1932.

The son of George MacDonald, he defended his father's children's fantasies, but did not mention Good Words for the Young, which his father edited.

Mallock, W. H. Memoirs of Life and Literature. 1920.

Martin, W. W. Chequers Inn. 1929.

May, James Lewis. Thorn and Flower. 1935.

Scott, Thackeray, Edgeworth, Dickens, and Eliot formed his childhood reading.

Moberly, C. A. E. Dulce Domum. 1911.

The clerical family that apparently inspired their friend, Charlotte Yonge's Daisy Chain, Moberly recalls their delight in recognizing themselves in her books.

Monkhouse, Muriel J. Ancient History. 1938.

Her father owned a printing company in Edinburgh and the household abounded in books and magazines. Her mother's favourite was Aunt Judy's but her own was Chatterbox. She also took in Little Folks, the American St. Nicholas, and The Picture Magazine. On Sundays she read The Leisure Hour, Sunday at Home, The Quiver, and Household Words.

Nevison, H. W. Changes and Chances. 1923.

Born to a very strict family, only Sunday at Home and the Penny Magazine were allowed. His father considered Shakespeare, the Arabian Nights, and fairy tales immoral.

Oliver, Edith. Without Knowing Mister Walkley. 1938.

Peck, Winnifred. Home for the Holidays. 1952.

Reminisces about her disappointment when she asked her mother for Mrs. Molesworth's latest novel, Herr Baby, and her mother bought, by mistake, a depressing German story. She also remembers how the romantic invalid heroines of The Daisy Chain by Charlotte Yonge and What Katy Did by S. C. Woolsey made her envy delicate friends.

Pollock, Alice. Portrait of My Victorian Youth. 1971.

She preferred boy's literature to girls and her favourite magazine was the Boy's Own Paper.

Read, Herbert E. Annals of Innocence and Experience. 1940.

The son of a Yorkshire country farmer, he remembers wishing for more books to read but his was not a literary household. He had an old copy of the eighteenth-century classic, Evenings at Home plus some of the Victorian pious children's stories such as Little Meg's Children.

Reid, Forrest. Apostate. 1926.

His strict nurse supervised all his reading. Early Days, a Sunday magazine, was the only periodical he recalled. He remembered a serial story printed in this journal which first awakened his poetic longings. The story was about pilgrims but its religious intention entirely missed him.

Russell, Rt. Hon. G. W. E. Fifteen Chapters of Autobiography. 1914.

He had few children's books, but unlimited access to his father's library.

Smythe, Dame Ethel. Impressions that Remained. 1919.

Describes the impact on the military community at Aldershot when Major Ewing and his wife, Juliana, came to live there.

Soskice, Juliet M. Chapters from Childhood. 1922.

Stanley, Arthur G. The Smallest Drum. 1936.

Starkie, Enid. A Lady's Child. 1941.

Another aristocratic child who remembers few children's books, but precocious enjoyment of adult books in her father's library.

Stevenson, Robert Louis. Memoir of Himself. 1912.

Thirkell, Angela. Three Houses. 1931.

Uttley, Alison. Ambush of Younger Days. 1937.

Chatterbox was a favourite magazine. She also enjoyed Sunday at Home and the street arab stories such as Jessica's First Prayer, Christy's Old Organ, and Alone in London by "Hesba Stretton".

Wallas, Ada. Daguerrotypes. 1929.

Whipple, Dorothy. The Other Day. 1936.

Yates, Agnes. Putting the Clock Back. 1939.

Though brought up in a Quaker home, she read the evangelical Ministering Children and the tractarian, Daisy Chain.

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Good Words for the Young (1870-1875).

Little Folks, I-VII (1871-1874); n.s. I-XII (1875-1879).

Sunshine (1870-1879).

##### B. Supplementary Sample

Boys of England, I (1867).

The Children's Friend, n.s. XIII (1873).

The Children's Treasury, V (1872).

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The Juvenile Instructor and Companion, XXIII (1872).

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The Little Gleaner, XIII (1866).

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<sup>1</sup>Place of publication London, unless otherwise noted.

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