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Attitudes of aristocratic New England as expressed in the works of Harriet Beecher Stowe

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Burton C. Kemp

As expressed in the works of Harriet Beecher Stowe
The Attitudes of Aristocratic New England
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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND FOR STOWE'S FICTION

The purpose of the present study is to determine the extent to which the works of Harriet Beecher Stowe reflect the mind of the New England aristocracy. Although the term aristocracy may offer a slight difficulty since we are accustomed to thinking of it in a different sense from its use here, it is altogether fitting for the purpose of this study. Whereas the South had a definite aristocracy harking back to the Old World, with lines clearly drawn between classes, the early New England aristocracy was based first on learning, with the clergy topping the group, and second on long-standing position. This New England group was more sensitive to its position than the aristocracy of the South because, while the position of the aristocratic Southerner went unchallenged, the position of the New Englander was constantly being encroached upon; he was being pushed from his position and it made him uncomfortable. The aristocracy wanted to have the lines clearly drawn. In Elsie Venner, Oliver Wendell Holmes was saying in 1859 that, although there was not the Old World aristocracy in New England, there was an aristocracy that "is merely the richer part of the community."\

Rather than calling this select group the aristocrats, Holmes attached the name "Brahmin" to them. He went on, in his attempt to make a clear distinction between the Brahmin caste and the common man, to say that the two classes could be distinguished not only in intellectual matters but by physiology as well. The Brahmin "is commonly slender,—his face is smooth, and apt to be pallid,—his features are regular and of a certain delicacy,—his eye is bright and quick,—his lips play over the thought he utters as a pianist's fingers dance over their music,—and his whole air, though it may be timid, and even awkward, has nothing clownish." The "common" youth, however, "is perhaps robust but often otherwise,—inelegant, partly from careless attitudes, partly from ill dressing,—the face is uncouth in feature, or at least common,—the mouth coarse and unformed,—the eyes unsympathetic, even in fright,—the movements of the face are clumsy, like those of the limbs." Although written half humorously, there is here more than a grain of earnestness. Ima Herron, author of The Small Town in American Literature, indicates in this book the existence of an upper class when she says:

With its early established indigenous population and its close adherence to the original town system, New England long remained the center of traditions and ideals. Until well into the nineteenth century its

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population included "a tacitly recognized upper class, whose social eminence was sometimes described by the word 'quality.'" No swift changes materially altered its social organization. In its town especially local hierarchies based upon education, public service, and the general acknowledged importance of the clergy had developed from colonial days.

As generations passed the predominantly aristocratic population increased its compact and rigid society into a sort of town life best described in the stories of Harriet Beecher Stowe.3

Among other novelists feeling this aristocracy very strongly might be named William Dean Howells, who, in his Rise of Silas Lapham, traces the inability of wealthy and upright Lapham to make his way into the old family Boston social circles. Suddenly wealthy, he does not have the social background that makes him acceptable to the members of this aristocratic group. Not only are they cognizant of his uncouthness, but he himself feels it equally as strongly.

As late as 1936, J. P. Marquand's The Late George Apley indicates, in satiric vein, the disability of the aristocrats to break away from traditional patterns that have been set for generations. Although they may have felt the call to pursue a new course, they were drawn into the orbit generation after generation. So, too, does George Santayana's The Last Puritan (1936) more philosophically deal with this same class of people.

To Mrs. Stowe, the aristocracy "consisted of the two classes, the magistracy and the ministry. . . . Next to the magistrate and the minister . . . came the schoolmaster; for education might be said to be the ruling passion of the State." Being born of one of the leading ministers of his time, Lyman Beecher, she could identify herself from the very beginning with the aristocratic element. It was possible in the earlier days to break into this select group only if one were blessed with the proper training.\(^4\) Though this was truer at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, as the nineteenth century moved on and wealth began to be used as a means for forcing entrance, the lines were drawn ever tighter. Also, with the diminishing importance of the minister in community life, the aristocrats tended to be those of established and long-standing positions. As is indicated in Mrs. Stowe's novel, Pink and White Tyranny, money alone did not entitle one to enter the select circle, for one of the chief struggles is between the parvenus and the aristocrats.

The first aim of this paper is to show that the writings of Harriet Beecher Stowe embody the attitudes of


\(^5\) One recalls Samuel L. Clemens's obtuseness as regards New England insularity, especially in his "famous" speech in 1877 at the Atlantic Monthly meeting given in honor of the poet, Whittier.
The author was not only in this country, but throughout
sympathy for the name of Stone. At the time of the publication,
almost discovered as a literary production, is almost a
requirement necessary for a great novel, and in consequence
than to her character. While Tom's Cabby, lacking many
more the notes, often giving more space to her own observations
so much of the preacher in her that the continuous nature
less and these deaths destroy her work. There, there is
learned the ability to create a complete novel without need—
of sentiment in all of the Stone's works. In addition, the
mental novel of the period of nearly there is a good deal
in the fact that there has been a turning from the sent-
obliteration. Probably the most important reason for this I see
beaches of Snow has deepened in favor into almost total
from the prominence of popularity and success, however,

often realistic pictures of early New England life.
but they also present, with excellent interest, accurate and
issues that came to the fore in nineteenth-century America.
for not only do they embody many of the controv-
also not deserve the complete obliquity into which they have
to study with, perhaps, indicate that some of her works do
overlooked by the average literary student with little loss.
point of view. Although many of Mrs. Stone's works can be
re-evaluate her writings from a sociological and literary
the aristocratic New England element. The second aim is to
the world, as a great literary figure, on the strength of
that one book. However, when critics took note of its
faults, many of them completely discounted her as a literary
force—again on the strength of that one book. As soon as
the Civil War had passed, readers turned from abolition
literature, and later students knew only the play, Uncle
Tom's Cabin, and criticized the novel and all of Mrs. Stowe's
fiction on that basis. She has even been called the creator
of but a single novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin; some feel, however,
that she would have been better off if she had never written
that book. So far as a lasting literary reputation is con-
cerned, she would most certainly have been better off had
no dramatic version of Uncle Tom's Cabin been written.

Criticisms are too often based on the play, rather than on
the original book. One of the purposes of this paper is to
show that, not only are Mrs. Stowe's New England novels her
most satisfactory achievements from a literary point of view,
but—what is more significant—that she was likewise important
as a forerunner of the coming realism.

Born in Litchfield, Connecticut, in 1811, Harriet
Beecher was truly a "daughter of Puritanism,"6 for her father,
Lyman Beecher, was a strict Calvinist who attempted to bring
his children up in the right way. That he succeeded

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6 Vernon Lewis Parrington, Romantic Revolution in
America, 1800-1860 (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company,
surprisingly well is indicated by the fact that six of his sons eventually followed in his footsteps. Harriet, surrounded by the grimness of a harsh religion, had a most unsatisfactory childhood, as can be gathered from her autobiographical novel, Poganuc People. In the first place, she realized that her father had wanted a boy, a boy with a good set of lungs, who could carry on in the Lyman Beecher tradition from the pulpit. From the beginning she was a shy, introspective child, who sought escape from reality by day-dreaming. It is only natural that she should have been made aware of the place religion should occupy in her life, and that she should have been made aware of her own sins. Religious doubts and fears plagued her throughout her long life. While a reasonably accurate account of her early childhood is presented in Poganuc People, the book was written when Mrs. Stowe was an elderly woman. Although no attempt is made to smooth down the harsher edges of these immature experiences, the reader is, nevertheless, profoundly impressed with the drabness and hardness of childhood, as he follows the author's experiences, through the character of Dolly Cushing, while she relives her girlhood as the daughter of Calvinist, Lyman Beecher, whose religion was so deadly serious that there were no frills, not even any Christmas services, to detract from the awful solemnity of worship. It was, therefore, quite natural for religion to occupy her most serious thoughts to her last days.
Always concerned with the matter of original sin, she was brought more closely to it when Dr. Fisher, Catherine Beecher's betrothed, was drowned without having been brought under religious conviction. The resultant turmoil in the Beecher family made a lasting impression on sensitive Harriet, for Catherine almost turned her back on a God cruel enough to condemn a man so upstanding as her betrothed, especially when Father Beecher interpreted the disaster as a sign that Catherine should look to the welfare of her own soul. This episode formed the basis for one of Mrs. Stowe's later novels, *The Minister's Wooing* (1859).

Becoming interested in writing through contact with Scott, Byron, and the *Arabian Nights*, Harriet turned out her first work at the age of eleven, which, as might be expected, was concerned with religion. The title, "Can the Immortality of the Soul be Proved by the Light of Nature?" seems rather formidable to the present reader, yet, when we remember that this is the sort of thing that she heard day after day around the table, the query does not seem so strange. At thirteen, she was again at work on a literary production, this time a religious play called *Cleon*, its setting being Nero's court.

In 1832, Harriet, now twenty-one years old, found herself removed from her life in New England and placed in direct contact with real and hard frontier life in Cincinnati. In this rough town she spent eighteen years of her life;
where she saw riots, fighting, and mob violence; where she was married, bore several of her children, lived in poverty and was overwhelmed with work; where she saw a siege of cholera that took her youngest child, Charley; where she saw all the other unlovely aspects of life in a new country. Yet, when she won a prize in the Western Monthly Magazine, it was for "A New England Tale," or "Uncle Lot," as it was later called. She thus, in the genteel tradition, ignored these early unpleasant but rich experiences as completely as possible in all her writings. We can only regret that she did not incorporate some of the stark reality of the following letters in her fiction: "It is a dark, sloppy, rainy, muddy, disagreeable day. . . . I am sick of the smell of sour milk, and sour meat, and sour everything, and then the clothes will not dry, and no wet thing does, and everything smells mouldy; and altogether I feel as if I never wanted to eat again."7 Or, again, when telling of the cholera epidemic, in a letter to Mr. Stowe, she writes:

June 29. This week has been unusually fatal. . . . Hearses drivers have scarce been allowed to unharness their horses, while furniture carts and common vehicles are often employed for the removal of the dead. . . . On Tuesday one hundred and sixteen deaths . . . and that night the air was of the peculiarly oppressive, deathly kind that seems to lie like lead on the brain and soul.

July 4. All well. . . . There is more or less sickness about us, but no very dangerous cases. One hundred and twenty burials from cholera alone yesterday, yet today we see parties bent on pleasure or senseless carousing, while tomorrow and next day will witness a fresh harvest of death from them. . . .

With this evidence of her Cincinnati sojourn in mind, it is the more startling to observe the completeness with which she threw off this whole experience (with the exception of impressions later incorporated in Uncle Tom's Cabin) as illustrated in the Household Papers which she contributed to the Atlantic Monthly in later life. Seeming to forget the trials of the frontier woman who was faced with an endless round of work and almost impossible living conditions, she wrote for aristocratic New England words that would have sounded strange to the frontier woman or even the New England women who could not afford servants.

You [women without servants] are all so well that you know not how it feels to be sick. You are used to early rising, and would not lie in bed if you could. Long years of practice have made you familiar with the shortest, neatest, most expeditious method of doing every household office, so that really, for the greater part of the time in your house, there seems to a looker-on to be nothing to do. You rise in the morning and dispatch your husband, father, and brothers to the farm or wood-lot; you go sociably about chatting with each other, while you skim the milk, make the butter, turn the cheeses. The forenoon is long; it's ten to one that all the so-called morning work is over, and you have leisure for an hour's sewing or reading before it is time to start the dinner preparations. By two o'clock your housework is done, and you have the long afternoon

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Ibid., p. 122-3.
for books, needlework, or drawing,—for perhaps there is among you one with a gift at her pencil. . . . I see on your bookshelves Prescott, Macaulay, Irving . . . .

Clearly, Mrs. Stowe was not in a tradition that would treat of the vulgarisms of life. Nevertheless, as will be pointed out in a later chapter, it would be difficult to maintain that she did not recognize the harshness of early New England life and that she did not deal realistically with it in such a novel as The Pearl of Orr's Island.

Though not occupying the place in her memory that it deserved, this frontier settlement forced her to become concerned with the problem of slavery, and here she saw the prototypes of several characters who later found their way into Uncle Tom's Cabin. Of the mob scenes which were becoming more serious in and around Cincinnati, she says:

I saw for the first time clearly that the institution of slavery was incapable of defense, and that it was for that reason that its supporters were compelled to resort to mob-violence. I saw that it was doomed, and that it would go, but how or when I could not picture to myself.

She not only had an opportunity to pay a short visit to a southern plantation, but she was well supplied with stories of the cruelty of slavery from her own servant, Nina, who was spirited away by John Van Zandt (John Van Trompe in Uncle Tom's Cabin).


It was with few regrets, however, that Mrs. Stowe moved to Brunswick, Maine, where her husband was to have a position in Bowdoin. Here she was again among the New England characters that she was later to fictionize. "Yankee" characteristics and a feeling for the thought of her region were always to be her forte. So impressed was she with the Yankees when she wrote to Mrs. George Beecher to tell of the many trials of getting settled in her new home in Brunswick that she was unable to avoid such descriptions as the following:

In all my moving and fussing Mr. Titcomb has been my right-hand man. This same John Titcomb, my very good friend, is a character peculiar to Yankeedom. He is part owner and landlord of the house I rent, and connected by birth with all the best families in town,—a man of real intelligence and good education, a great reader and quite a thinker. . . . Whenever a screw was loose, a nail to be driven, a lock to be mended, a pane of glass to be set . . . he was always on hand. . . .

Just such a character as this was Sam Lawson, a Yankee who, both mentally and physically dextrous, took so much time in completing a task as to almost drive his employer to distraction. Sentimental though her New England tales nearly always are, her deep understanding of Puritan New England enabled her to present authentic pictures of her region. She attempted, she said, to "make my mind as still and passive as a looking-glass, or a mountain lake, and then to give you merely the images reflected there. I desire that you should see the

\[\text{Ibid., p. 135.}\]
characteristic persons of those times, and hear them talk ... at her best, she carries out her intentions in an admirable fashion.

By 1850, the slavery question was causing increased agitation, and with the passing of the Omnibus Bill, there came to her stories of recaptured slaves. Partially as a result of exhortation from members of her family, Mrs. Stowe set herself to the task of writing abolition literature. Although the writing of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, its tremendous success, and its numerous faults are too well known to need reiterating, a good deal can be said in defense of the author. More successful as propaganda than as literature, it lacks form, it is painfully sentimental, and its characters are distressingly overdrawn, yet it deals with a fundamental problem of man caught in a system which he is powerless to fight. Not only was the slave a victim, but the owner himself was part of a system that he could not reject even though he might have wished to do so. Though the death scenes were invariably mawkish, the book is no passionate, ill-considered document; it has thoughtful understanding throughout. 12a

After the success of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Mrs. Stowe documented her story in *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and followed this with *Dred, A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*. The key is only a compilation of cases to prove that her

12 Oldtown Folks, op. cit., p. xxiii.

12a See particularly Chapter XVI for the understanding Mrs. Stowe had of Southern problems and Northern prejudices.
In short and rapid time, the drudgery was left to that her novel
story moved at the time, it might be well to last her novel.

Matters and persons. Next are her new English cases,

Tell of the Great Plague Spring (1856), as well as short
additional work, where some Captain (1851) and Dred.

Accordant to subject matter. First, of course, are her
better understanding of the various threads into which she.
New English setting for several stories. In order to give a
in this period, she did much of her best work, turning to a
in the plot, she wrote a novel on a whole variety of
rather than of the stage.

Book appears to illustrate the degeneration of the master
book illustrates the degeneration that became over the South.
The pleasant unreal as a character, it more nearly a representation
portrayed by the family. "Dread, the family."
- devotion to the old camp meetings and of the negro's esquise
- dealt to recommend the, "aftermath, as it does," some fine
-story was not overdrawn. The next novel, "next, has a good

In
Pink and White Tyranny (1871) is almost equally as bad. But she did much better work in the social novels, My Wife and I (1871) and We and Our Neighbors (1875). These are particularly important, presenting, as they do, her attitude on the leading questions of the times, especially the question of women's rights. Her short stories and sketches, many of which appeared in the Atlantic Monthly under the pseudonym of Christopher Crowfield, have been gathered into volumes entitled Stories, Sketches and Studies, and Household Papers and Stories. Some of these will be referred to later in this study.
CHAPTER II

ARISTOCRATIC NEW ENGLAND

As was indicated in the preceding chapter, Mrs. Stowe remained the ardent exponent of the New England way of life, from first to last. It is evident from all her writings that New England to her was the hub of the United States, the "seedbed of culture." This for her was not a position that required defense, nor was it a position that required antagonistic forwarding; it was merely a position that was accepted without question. That this attitude early was akin to reverence is indicated in her prize story, "Uncle Lot," or "A New England Tale" (1832), in which she said:

Let me turn to my own land—my own New England; the land of bright fires and strong hearts; the land of deeds, and not of words; the land of fruits and not of flowers; the land often spoken against, yet always respected; "the latchet of whose shoes the nations of the earth are not worthy to unloose." 13

Perhaps, as Miss Gilbertson suggests, it was homesickness that made her choose her subject for this story, that made her pay this tribute to New England, 14 yet it is more likely that she then simply regarded New England as a superior land, for certainly she carried very much the same thought to her


grave. In 1869, it was as a much older woman that she wrote in the preface to *Oldtown Folks*:

New England has been to these United States what the Dorian hive was to Greece. It has always been a capital country to emigrate from, and North, South, East, and West have been populated largely from New England, so that the seed-bed of New England was the seed-bed of this great American Republic, and of all that is likely to come of it.¹⁵

Even though it was New England that furnished seed for other sections of the country, she was not one to encourage this emigration by saying with Greeley, "Go West, young man." On the contrary, she felt that since New England was the land of the enlightened, this was the pleasantest place in which to live, and that anyone who went west was either a missionary whose heart directed him to enter that field, or one who had none of the thoughts of the refined man. In all probability, she had her father in the back of her mind when she wrote her story, "Which is the Liberal Man?" For her father, we remember, had left his comfortable Boston parish to minister to the citizens of Cincinnati, and departed from this town many years later little the richer for his experience. Even though she lived in the West, that area remained for her a vast, uncivilized region into which the rough, homespun person ventured, the one who cared

nothing for the finer things of New England life. James, the self-sacrificing missionary in "Which is the Liberal Man?" sacrificed all with very little compensating recognition in answering his call to the West. A wealthy lawyer friend, called liberal because he donated to charities, early in the story attempted to dissuade James from going west, but to no avail. Speaking first, James said:

I know, if all accounts are true, that my profession is not overflowed in our Western States, and there I mean to go.

And is it possible that you can contemplate such an entire sacrifice of your talents, your manners, your literary and scientific tastes, your capabilities for refined society, as to bury yourself in a log cabin in one of our new states? You will never be appreciated there; your privations and sacrifices will be entirely disregarded, and you will be placed on a level with the coarsest and most uneducated sectaries. I really do not think you are called to do this.

Who, then, is called?

Why, men with much less of all these good things—men with real coarse, substantial, backwoods furniture in their minds, who will not appreciate, and of course not feel, the want of all the refinements and comforts which you must sacrifice.16

James, of course, adhered to his determination to go west, but with the knowledge that he was making a tremendous sacrifice. There might conceivably have been a double purpose in this manner of writing, for Mrs. Stowe might have begun to feel the pull of the West that was taking from her beloved

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16 Stories, Sketches and Studies, op. cit., p. 118.
New England its balance of power, and used this means to convince her readers that New England was, after all, the best place in which to live. More probably, however, she was simply echoing the sentiment held, not only in New England, but in the West as well, that "everything magnanimous and enlightened, had originated in Boston."\(^{17}\) It was not the aristocrat who would willingly give up the advantages offered by New England to go into the West to seek a fortune. At only two periods in her life did Mrs. Stowe feel the enchantment of areas other than New England. Following the example of many of her contemporaries, she went to Europe after publishing *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, was captivated by what she saw, and wrote glowing letters of her impressions. She could not, however, have remained there indefinitely, for she grew homesick on each trip, finding nothing that would replace her native land.\(^{18}\) Late in life, she went to Florida, where she bought an orange grove, in order to rehabilitate her son, Fred. Tired at last of the long New England winters, she was enchanted by the idyllic existence offered her down


\(^{18}\) On one trip abroad she wrote home to Calvin Stowe that she "had found no land, however beautiful, that can compare with home—Andover Hill . . . and an old stone house, brown and queer." The fact that she was in this homesick condition at the time she visited Germany may have contributed to her lack of interest in that country.
among the orange blossoms, in the friendly warmth of the South. But nothing could change her basic prejudice about her own section of the country.

One might imagine, after noting her criticism of the northern capitalist in Uncle Tom's Cabin to the effect that he was just as cruel as the slave owner because he could starve his workers to death,¹⁹ that she would exploit this theme in later works, but such was not the case. That is the only mention she made of the power wielded by the northern capitalist over his workers. Identifying herself, as she did, with the aristocracy, she was blinded to their faults.

John Seymour, in Pink and White Tyranny (1871), was the type of New England man of means in whom Mrs. Stowe delighted. He was wealthy, the owner of a factory, and occupant of the family mansion in comfortable, shady Springdale. Captivated at first sight by Lillie Ellis, the beautiful, if a bit "shop-worn," woman of many affairs who was interested in money before all else, innocent John courted and won her. Completely unsuspecting, because of his own innocence, John was unable to cope with those of no personal integrity:

¹⁹ Harriet Beecher Stowe, Uncle Tom's Cabin (Cleveland, Ohio: Jewett, Proctor and Worthington, 1852), II, p. 21.
It produces kind feelings in Retires and educators and sortes.

It may seem a little thing, but it does a great deal of good.

He and his Research Custom to devote his birthday to

entertaining the workmen. In fact, each and every year it had

Generation back. No mention was made of John Seymour.

The Seymour House was a well-known and respected mansion for

the family whose name they bore for Generations back.

The family whose name they bore for Generations back.

These large homes were of ancestral reputation, and had been in

roots were given evident in the family mansion, for "some of

roots were given evident in the family mansion, for "some of

as a charity in the wilderness." These deep New England

with the little colony or settlement, when it was founded

"descendant of Mr. John Seymour, the pastor who first came

wealthy and from an old and learned family, but he was a

John was the perfect aristocrat, for not only was he
each year for such employee benefits as a reading room.
Although Lillie was extremely opposed to any such ideas, she at last assented to the party. Covering all the furniture, she prepared for the invasion.

Unknown to John, Lillie was a good friend of the Follingabees, a fabulously wealthy couple—suddenly wealthy—who were looked upon by John as "shoddy upstarts." Trying desperately to break into the solid New England social set, of which the Seymours were a part, the Follingabees exerted every means to gain their end.

Dick Follingabee began life as a peddler. He was now reputed to be master of untold wealth, kept a yacht and race-horses, ran his own theatre, and patronized the whole world and creation in general with a jocular freedom. Mrs. Follingabee had been a country girl, with small early advantages, but considerable ambition. . . . Notwithstanding the immense wealth of the Follingabees, there were circles to which Mrs. Follingabee found it difficult to be admitted. With the usual human perversity, these, of course, became exactly the ones, and the only ones, she particularly cared for. Her ambition was to pass beyond the ranks of the "shoddy" aristocracy to those of the old-established families. Now, the Seymours, the Fergusons, and the Wilcozes were families of this sort; and none of them had ever cared to conceal the fact that they did not intend to know the Follingabees. The marriage of Lillie into the Seymour family was the opening of a door . . . 24

It is to be noted that there was no parson in Follingbee's background. Like Holmes, Mrs. Stowe attributes to these shoddy aristocrats most undesirable physical features. 25

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24 Ibid., pp. 393-4.
25 See page 2.
"He was a little, thin, light-colored man, with a yellow complexion and sandy hair; who, with the appendages [a pair of tow-colored mustaches] aforesaid, looked like some kind of a large insect, with very long antennae." While his wife was handsome in her way, she had a lack of sensibilities, of refinements. Neither her ear nor her tongue was delicate. She had read French stories and plays that were not in good taste; she had uncommonly low morals. Along with Oliver Wendell Holmes, Mrs. Stowe suggested that the aristocracy of New England had traits and features that came with generations of development, traits and features that the lower classes could not hope to have. These clearly distinguishable traits both the Pollingsbees and Lillie did not have, and the remainder of the book relates John's struggle to reform his wife, and the Pollingsbee's struggle to break into society. Neither completely succeeded. After bearing John's children, however, Lillie was stricken with an illness from which she never recovered. Through such suffering she was made into a much nobler and finer woman, but still not nearly fine enough to comfortably be the wife of John Seymour. Since she could never be refined enough to be worthy of her position, and since divorces were frowned upon, she died. Before doing so, however, she very considerately accepted religion and gave up her French ways.

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26 Pick and White Tyranny, op. cit., p. 391.
Any other group
was possessed of all virtue, virtue that was bankrupt to
esteezement. One segment of the population, the John
Dependents, whose

drew their SHOP of New England sputially as an
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CHAPTER III

CHARACTERIZATION IN STOWE'S FICTION

The fact that certain of Mrs. Stowe's characters fall into well-defined patterns is not so difficult to explain when we recall the environment in which she was raised. Daughter of a strict Calvinist, she had instilled in her from the beginning clear ideas of the difference between right and wrong. One of her greatest weaknesses as a writer springs from the fact that she was never able to overcome these iron-clad rules that marked the behavior and attitudes of a lady or a gentleman. With so much of the residue of the ministry in her system, she was unable to allow a hero to pursue a course that might have been detrimental to the welfare of a reader for very long. The major reason for the superiority of the New England works is that, instead of being forced to create good or bad characters from her own imagination, characters that had to come up to a certain moral and religious standard, she was able to draw from her memory certain authentic traits and attitudes. To her, a good woman possessed standard qualities wherever she might be found, whether in the South, the North, or in Italy. Consequently, the reader of Mrs. Stowe's works will find that Little Eva appears again and again, once as Mara in The Pearl of Orr's Island, again as Agnes in Agnes of Sorrento, and in
several other places. This type of heroine was made virtuous, high-minded, religious, noble, sympathetic, and sensitive to all wrong. Not only was she possessed of these qualities, but she was ever the evangelist, ready to save an erring soul. Completely serious, this type saw little beyond the necessity for vigilance over the human soul.

She [Mara] was small of stature . . . moulded with a fine waxen delicacy that won admiration from all eyes. Her hair was curly and golden, but her eyes were dark . . . and the lids drooped over them in that manner which gives a peculiar expression of dreamy wistfulness. Every one of us must remember eyes that have a strange, peculiar expression of pathos and desire, as if the spirit that looked out of them . . . dimly comprehended the mystery of life.

Fundamentally in possession of these same qualities, the other type of heroine, exemplified by Nina Gordon of Dred, Sally Kittridge of The Pearl of Orr's Island, and Eva Van Arsdel of My Wife and I and We and Our Neighbors, was more enchanting and coquettish, only requiring love to make her better qualities apparent.

On the other hand, such women as Lillie of Pink and White Tyranny, Mrs. Fellingsbee of the same book, and Audacia of My Wife and I, completely bereft of all redeeming qualities, simply act as foils for the more noble characters. Such characters, simple and transparent, leave nothing to the reader's imagination. All actions can be contemplated in advance.

In the same way, Mrs. Stowe's fiction presented two distinct hero types, one exemplified by Edward Clayton of *Dred*, and the other by James Marvyn of *A Minister's Wooing*. Basically aristocratic, both were possessed of good backgrounds, were handsome, intelligent and noble. The fundamental difference was in the matter of religious convictions. While one type (Clayton) was settled in his acceptance of the teachings of the Bible, the other (Marvyn) was a sceptic who had not reached a conviction that would result in an inner peace. While there was not the slightest doubt that the second type would come to himself before the end of the book, Mrs. Stowe was extremely interested in showing the arguments of the "savers" and the skill with which they handled the situation. Interestingly enough, the two types were introduced into stories which were concerned with different problems. The problem of *Dred* not being primarily religious, the hero entered the story unencumbered by religious doubts and fears; however, since the problem of *The Pearl* was one of religious doubts, the hero's whole childhood and boyhood reflected the doubts that he would have to overcome. That this second type of individual appealed a good deal more to the romantic spirit of Mrs. Stowe is clearly evident. Early in life, her idol had been Byron, and she was all too familiar with his life and unredeemed death. Both she and her father had been vitally concerned
with the fact that his soul had not been saved, and her
father, with tears in his eyes and emotion that almost over-
came him, exhorted his congregation to take warning from
Byron's death and to see to their own welfare. At any event,
this Byronic type was not only quite different emotionally
from the first, but was also physically distinct. Exempli-
ifying the first type, Edward Clayton, emotionally calm and
reserved, is reminiscent of Holmes' Brahmin.

Edward Clayton, the only son of Judge Clayton, and
representative of one of the oldest and most distinguished
families of North Carolina, was . . . tall, slender, with
a sort of loose-jointedness and carelessness of dress,
which might have produced an impression of clownishness,
had it not been relieved by a refined and intellectual
expression of the head and face. The upper part of the
face gave the impression of thoughtfulness and strength,
with a shadowing of malamoly earnestness, and there
was about the eye, in conversation, that occasional
glimpse of troubled wildness which betrays the hypochon-
driac temperament. The mouth was even feminine in the
delicacy and beauty of its lines, and the smile which
sometimes played around it had a peculiar fascination.

Clayton was ideal to an excess; ideality colored
every faculty of his mind, and swayed all his reasonings,
as an unseen magnet will swerve the needle. Ideality
pervaded his conscientiousness, urging him always to rise
above the commonly received and so-called practical in
morals.

James Harvyn, the hero of A Minister's Wooing, is a completely
different figure.

28 Harriet Beecher Stowe, Dred, A Tale of the Great
Dismal Swamp (Boston: Phillips, Sampson and Company, 1856),

29 Ibid., p. 27.
He was apparently about twenty-five, dressed in the holiday rig of a sailor on shore, which well set off his fine athletic figure, and accorded with a sort of easy, dashing, and confident air which sat not unhandsomely on him. For the rest, a high forehead shaded by rings of the blackest hair, a keen, dark eye, a firm and determined mouth, gave the impression of one who had engaged to do battle with life, not only with a will, but with shrewdness and ability.

He introduced the colloquy by stepping deliberately behind Mary, putting his arms round her neck, and kissing her.

In keeping with his gay, swashbuckling manner of living, he hadn't yet formed any clear conviction in the matter of religion. Given a man with religious doubts, Mrs. Stowe's path was clearly marked. Nor can it be said that her desire to establish in this type of youth a knowledge of and feeling for religion was merely a superficial expression of the preacher in her. She recognized the sea of doubt that was making inroads on the island of faith following the Civil War. Recognizing that men were turning from religion to a worship of money, she was attempting valiantly to turn the minds of her readers back to a simple faith in God. Uneasy also about the new scientific theories, particularly the Darwinian, she took cognizance of the spreading loss of faith.

He [Harry] talks with these Darwinians and scientific men who have an easy sort of matter-of-course way of

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assuming that the Bible is nothing but an old curiosity-shop of bygone literature, and is so tolerant in hearing all they have to say that I quite burn to testify and stand up for my faith . . .

But . . . isn't there some end to toleration? Ought we Christians to sit by and hear all that is dearest and most sacred to us spoken of as a bygone superstition, and smile assent on the ground that everybody must be free to express his opinions in good society? . . .

The other day he [Dr. Campbell] was talking . . . about the absurdity of believing in prayer, when I stopped him squarely, and told him that he ought not to talk in that way; that to destroy faith in prayer was taking away about all the comfort that . . . people had. I said it was just like going through a hospital and pulling all the pillows from under the sick people's heads because there might be a more perfect scientific invention by and by . . .

. . . I feel nervous and anxious, and sometimes wish I could go into some good, safe, dark church, and pull down all the blinds . . . and keep out all the bustle of modern thinking . . .

Such attitudes developed into an obvious evangelism that contributed to the creation of stereotyped characters.

Less than a hero, a third type of male, and probably the most interesting of this group, is typified by Ellery Davenport of Oldtown Folks. A direct descendant of Jonathan Edwards, Davenport was a complete sceptic, even though steeped in the Calvinist tradition. With all the wild, romantic mystery about him of another Byron, he was brilliant and daring, fatal to women, and beyond redemption. Disregarding

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the arguments offered, he was willing to go his own way without a fear; for him, religion simply had no meaning. Pursuing this course throughout his life, virtual madness gradually reduced him until he became involved in a quarrel and was fatally wounded in a duel. To Mrs. Stowe, this lack of spiritual awareness was the greatest tragedy of human existence. Possessed of many qualities assuredly admired by her, Davenport could have only one fate, an early death. Was she cognizant of the fact that the harshness of Calvinism might be driving its own into religious doubt? Surely if anyone were possessed of the knowledge and abilities that would have made a great preacher, this descendant of Edwards was. Whatever her convictions, it was with pangs that she left him thus:

After his death, it seemed, by the general consent of all, the kindest thing that could be done for him, to suffer the veil of silence to fall over his memory.33

It can readily be seen that novels depending on such characters to carry them through often offer a rather flat fare to the reader. Characterizations which are the most delightful, and which deserve more consideration than they are now given, are those of the middle-class New Englander. An interesting indication of Mrs. Stowe's aristocratic attitude is in the fact that characters from this class

were nearly always handled either with condescending sympathy or with humor. Although she placed them on a "folksy" level, they nevertheless have an authenticity that is impossible to deny. These portrayals seem much more spontaneous, drawn as they were from the author's own experiences. Unlike her standard heroes and heroines, these middle-class figures did not have to be constantly inspirational; they could have faults, and they were often humorous. Such figures as Uncle Lot or Uncle Jaw were created simply to demonstrate traits of typical middle-class individuals that Mrs. Stowe had known. Although they had faults that might have appeared serious to their families, they were simply humorous to Mrs. Stowe.

As was previously noted, Mrs. Stowe turned back to New England for the subject of her prize-winning story, "Uncle Lot."[^1] Not only her first commercial attempt, but one of her best, this story is largely free from the faults that characterized many of her later writings. Always episodic in nature (as were most of the novels of her time), those novels are best which are largely a matter of reminiscing, for the rambling is not so distracting. With this tendency for bringing in vast quantities of irrelevant material, she was more successful with the short story form.

[^1]: See Footnote 13, p. 16.
Since most of her novels were first written for magazine publication, and since she was never far ahead of the presses --it was not then necessary to have written the complete work before printing started--her work was extremely uneven in nature. Suddenly recognizing the need of another character, she frequently introduced him without previous introduction, then dropped him from sight, or, what is much worse, devoted whole chapters to developing a side plot up to an interesting point only to dispense with the problem in a few lines.

Unless one reads with great care, one often comes to the end of her novels wondering what happened to some of the characters. Upon re-reading, one is apt to find that the answer is hidden in one line in the middle of a paragraph. In her short stories, such as "Uncle Lot," there is no irrelevant material, and there is consistent development.

A character type in which Mrs. Stowe invariably excelled was Uncle Lot, one of those New Englanders who seemed to delight in being contrary. Attempting to appear miserly and crabbed, he was in reality most free and kindly, as is indicated in the following excerpt:

If you asked a favor of Uncle Lot, he generally kept you arguing for half an hour, to prove that you really needed it, and to tell you that he could not all the while be troubled with helping one body or another, all which time you might observe he regularly making his preparations to grant your request, and see, by an odd glimmer of his eye, that he was preparing to let you hear the "conclusion of the whole matter," which was, "Well, well—I guess—I'll go, on the hull—"
s'pose I must, at least"; so off he would go and work while the day lasted, and then wind up with a farewell exhortation "not to be a-callin' on your neighbors when you could get along without." If any of Uncle Lot's neighbors were in trouble, he was always at hand to tell them that "they shouldn't 'a' done so"; that "it was strange they couldn't had more sense." and then to close his exhortations by laboring more diligently than any of them to bring them out of their difficulties, groaning in spirit, meanwhile, that folks would make people so much trouble.35

He carried on an incessant, good-natured feud with his daughter, Grace, whom he thought the world of, but he was "often finding occasion to remark that 'he didn't see why the boys need to be all the time a-comin' to see Grace, for she was nothing too extraor'nary, after all.'"36 Even though Grace had her way around the house, Uncle Lot made it a point to offer as many complaints as possible before giving in on any particular point, telling her that he wouldn't have it, or that he couldn't afford such foolishness. In the end, however, he not only complied with her wishes, but put in a little extra. Since Grace found herself in love with one "Master James," (a very likable individual), and since the community spoke highly of him, Uncle Lot made it a point to be especially disparaging of James and his accomplishments. Secretly he thought a good deal of James, but only came to that admission


after a determined struggle. After the death of his son, George, a newly-ordained minister who was his greatest pride, Uncle Lot transferred all his affections to James. All ended happily with James and Grace married, James also in the ministry, and Uncle Lot having a good word to say about the world in general.

Equally as good as "Uncle Lot" in point of characterization is another short story, "Love Versus Law." The dominating character here was Uncle Jaw, who lived up to his name by ferocious "jawing" with his neighbors. He would have been miserable if a neighbor, Mr. Jones, had not made a long-standing argument possible by building a fence partially across his line. A healthy quarrel existed over this fence so long as Mr. Jones lived, and was carried on with the latter's daughters (with Miss Silence as the principal antagonist) even after Mr. Jones was in his grave. When Uncle Jaw discovered that his son was in love with Miss Silence's sister, Susan, fresh fuel was added to the controversy, for he immediately accused the girls of chasing his son in order to get his property. Going to call on them in a particularly belligerent mood, he conducted himself thus:

"Well, good morning, Miss Silence," said Uncle Jaw, after having scraped his feet on the scraper, and scrubbed them on the mat nearly ten minutes, in silent determination.

"Morning, sir," said Silence, abbreviating the 'good,'
Uncle Jaw helped himself to a chair directly in front of the enemy, dropped his hat on the floor, and surveyed Miss Silence with a dogged air of satisfaction, like one who is sitting down to a regular, comfortable quarrel, and means to make the most of it.37

Not only did he review their personal quarrel, but he told her that her father had sold a certain property to another neighbor, Deacon Enos, and had then died without having transferred the deed. Although it was true, Silence believed it to be a lie. Later, when Uncle Jaw called on Deacon Enos to spur him into taking court action to get the deed, he was completely flabbergasted at the deacon’s decision to make no claims for the property and to carry on friendly relations with the girls. So impressed was Uncle Jaw with this display of kindness that he made a complete reversal in his own actions, and:

Instead of quarreling in real earnest all around the neighborhood, he confined himself merely to battling the opposite side of every question with his son, which, as the latter was somewhat of a logician, afforded a pretty good field for the exercise of his powers; and he was heard to declare at the funeral of the old deacon, that, “after all, a man got as much, and maybe more, to go along as the deacon did, than to be all the time fistling and jawing; though I tell you what it is,” said he, afterwards, “taint everyone that has the deacon’s faculty, anyhow.”38

Mrs. Stowe delighted in the New England middle-class "Yankee" who had "faculty," faculty being the ability to do

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37 *Stories, Sketches and Studies*, op. cit., p. 56.
anything from putting in a pane of glass to carrying on a theological discussion with the minister. The Yankee who got on in the world was the one who had faculty and thrift; he was as bound to rise "as is a cork in water." This property, which also embraced ambition, extended to both sexes, including the Widow Scudder of The Minister's Wooing.

She was not rich . . . but she was of the much-admired class who, in the speech of New England, are said to have "faculty,"--a gift which, among that shrewd people, commands more esteem than beauty, riches, learning, or any other worldly endowment. Faculty is Yankee for savoir faire, and the opposite virtue to shiftlessness. Faculty is the greatest virtue, and shiftlessness the greatest vice, of Yankee man and woman. To her who has faculty, nothing shall be impossible. She shall scrub floors, wash, wring, bake, brew, and yet her hands shall be small and white; she shall have no perceptible income, yet always be handsomely dressed . . .

Other individuals, such as lovable Sam Lawson, who had abilities in all directions, but who lacked ambition, were a constant source of irritation for the long-suffering wives who asked them to do some work. This type was almost necessary in New England life, however, to act as sort of a counter-balance to all the hustle and bustle of the ordinary person. Just as Talcott could do anything, so could Sam Lawson.

Every New England village . . . must have its do-nothing as regularly as it has its schoolhouse or meeting-house. Nature is always wide-awake in the matter of

39 The Minister's Wooing, op. cit., p. 2.
40 See Footnote 11, p. 12.
compensation. Work, thrift, and industry are such an inceasant steam-power in Yankee life, that society would burn itself out with intense friction were there not interposed here and there the lubricating power of a decided do-nothing—a man who won't be hurried, and won't work, and will take his ease in his own way, in spite of the whole protest of his neighborhood to the contrary. 41

But one had to admire his diverse abilities. As Mrs. Stowe said, "He was expert in at least five or six different kinds of handicraft."42 Besides being expert at these many crafts, he could do passably well anything he put his hands to, from shoeing a horse to mending a clock.

Deeply ingrained in the New England mind was a strong sense of duty and honor that is evident in all of Mrs. Stowe's fiction. No matter how disagreeable or taxing the task, if the New Englander had a responsibility for doing it, he did it.

Miss Whittle was suffered so extremely herself by the conflict of her own earnest, melancholy nature with the theologic ideas of her time, that she shrunk (sic) with dread from imposing them on the gay and joyous little being whose education she had undertaken. Yet she was impressed by that awful sense of responsibility which is one of the most imperative characteristics of the New England mind. . . . 43

Many of the stern New England qualities, as Mrs. Stowe so clearly pointed out, were the result of the rocky

41 Oldtown Folks, op. cit., I, p. 32.
42 Ibid., p. 33.
43 Ibid., II, p. 5.
part of the structure of the group of which Mr. Lawrence was a member. The fact that she did not participate as did the house and her tone of voice, showed the stamp of reality. They came from life, not from a world of imagination. Such characters bear


the crowd or with the crowd, but whatever course he took


and no rear of experience them. He might have gone another


who loved a companion, loved opposition, bad derision and appallings


will be dealt with more fully later. He was an indistinguishable


nothing sort such, deep thinking or potential people. It is a


character, and a mechanism of some thinking. Certainly


happy moments. There was a mixture of laughter in some


regular habits of family characters. Although life and the


mood. Extremely sensitive nature often wore so intriguingly


Indiandact made the thoughtless men of woman very often


the tertian effect is due to and fear of the evidence


unwarranted nature. The struggle with nature, added to


foretold on the indistinct which makes to wear a lasting


of rose-colored glass. The recognized that certain


Germans, and did not always see her section through a set


sold, the hard estimate of the unpromising relation.
Throughout Stowe's novels, there are strange mixtures of sentimentalism and realism, both of which are evident in her characterizations. As a transition figure who was beginning to see life in its bitterest aspects, she was still in the tradition of the sentimentalists, whose bond she had difficulty in severing, and never did sever completely. There is naturally not the realistic detail in Stowe that we find later in Hamlin Garland, or in Howe's *Story of a Country Town*. There are no calloused hands, no careworn faces, yet neither is there the realistic detail in Garland that we find in later writers, such as Hemingway. To Sarah Orne Jewett, new vistas were opened up through an acquaintance with *The Pearl of Orr's Island*. Even in local color stories, Mrs. Stowe was approaching realism in that such characters as Sam Lawson were drawing experiences from real life as well as from fantasy. Mrs. Stowe was not in a crusading spirit when she wrote realistically of New England. Her approach to sex was most squeamish, and although she had the bold seducer villain, most of her novels were virtually sexless. Cast, as they often were, in a common mould, Mrs. Stowe yet had the ability to create characters that move through the pages as surely as do the characters of Dickens.
CHAPTER IV

STOWE'S ATTITUDE TOWARD
THE NORTHERN VS. SOUTHERN SOCIAL STRUCTURE

It was to the old New England theocracy that Mrs. Stowe romantically turned in *Pogamo People, Oldtown Folks*, *The Minister's Wooing* and *The Pearl of Orr's Island*. Although she recognized that the days of the theocracy were past, and that a new era more nearly democratic was at hand, it was with considerable nostalgia that she looked to early New England. With the worldliness that she saw growing about her, her puritan mind longed more than ever to return to the day when the word of the minister was accepted as virtual law. She could look back to a day when a woman had but one love, and did not count each new attachment as simply another conquest, when women had not yet begun to learn French or to take on French manners of flirting. Regardless of her outspoken advocacy of greater women's rights, like Whittier she did not want women to enter into areas that would require outspoken conflict with men. A believer in chivalry so far as masculine treatment of women was concerned, she wanted nothing to reduce the ennobling influence of women, and she insisted that her male characters be willing to be elevated by the evangelical woman. It was to the collapse of the theocracy and the reduction of the minister to a lesser place in society
that she attributed many of the evils of her contemporary New England. In "New England Ministers," an essay appearing in the *Atlantic Monthly*, after recalling the words of a Reverend French, which tell of the reverence with which the minister was once treated, she added:

Some might think it an advantage, if more of the decorum and reverence of such a state of society had been preserved to our day; for this respect paid to the minister was but part of a general and all-pervading system. Children were more reverential to their parents, scholars to their teachers, the people to their magistrates. A want of reverence threatens now to become the besetting sin of America, whether young or old.45

This is not to say that Mrs. Stowe was not critical of the rigid Calvinist beliefs, but on the whole she was drawn to the aristocratic elements formerly existing in the dictatorial position of the minister. In *Oldtown Folks*, Mrs. Dorothea, one of those who had difficulty in cutting ties with the aristocratic thought of England, married a minister simply because he was the nearest thing to nobility that America could boast. In the same book, Miss Mehitable regretted the lack of rigid class lines in New England, romantically longing for a noble to admire.

"It is a hard struggle for our human nature to give up titles and ranks, though," said Miss Mehitable. "For my part, I have a ridiculous kindness for them yet. I know it's all nonsense; but I can't help looking back to the court we used to have at the Government House in

Boston. You know it was something to hear of the goings and doings of my Lord this and my Lady that, and of Sir Thomas and Sir Peter and Sir Charles, and all the rest of 'em."

"Yes," said Bill, "the Oldtown folks call their minister's wife Lady yet."

"Well, that's a little comfort," said Miss Mehitabel; "one don't want life an entire level. Do let us have a lady among us." 46

Though the lack of the titled aristocracy was cause for nostalgic glances, New England still retained a glow for Mrs. Stowe. A greater democracy held certain advantages, for if an aristocrat were to fail financially, instead of being shunted off the ladder as might have been the case in England or the South, any losses that he might have suffered might be recouped, and in the meantime he would be looked upon with undiminished favor—if he were the proper type of man. The solid aristocrat, typified by Mr. Van Arsdel, of My Wife and I, although losing his fortune, retains his position.

He moves into a modest house, finds (sic) some means of honest livelihood, and everybody calls on his wife as before. Friends and neighbors as they have opportunity are glad to stretch forth a helping hand, and a young fellow who should break his engagement with the daughter at such a crisis would simply be scouted as infamous. 47

46 Harriet Beecher Stowe, Oldtown Folks (Boston: Fields, Osgood and Company, 1869), p. 82.

In the North, the man with the good, sound, aristocratic mind could retain respect regardless of reverses. If he attained success socially and financially but lost his money, he was still highly respected by all who knew him. However, if he lacked the qualities of grace that typified the gentleman, he was unable to enter the sphere of aristocratic life, regardless of worldly belongings. How different this was from the conditions existing in the South where, according to Mrs. Stowe, money was the basis for everything. Harry, in *Dred*, was able to say to Nina Gordon:

*You see, good families sometimes degenerate; and when they get too poor to send their children off to school, or keep teachers for them, they run down very fast... You see, Miss Nina, when money goes, in this part of the country, everything goes with it; and when a family is not rich enough to have everything in itself, it goes down very soon.*

Although Mrs. Stowe's attitude, as will be noted later, underwent some revision in regard to the South after the war when time had lessened her animosity, even before the war she dealt surprisingly charitably with the average individual Southerner. The charity that was evident in her works, however, was so far outweighed in the Southern mind by the disparaging remarks on general Southern culture that it is not difficult to understand the Southern hatred of her. When

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the war was actually in progress her attitudes were typical of the blindly sectional, or if you will, patriotic, for the northern forces could do no wrong and the opposing forces could do no right. Completely unable to find any virtue in the Southern cause, she was unable to see anything but virtue connected with the Northern cause.

Considering her attitude toward the slavery issue, it is at first glance rather surprising that her chief villains of Uncle Tom’s Cabin were both displaced Northerners. We may ask why her vicious and depraved characters were not all Southerners. The primary reason is that, at the time this book was written, she was actually hoping to affect a reconciliation between the two sections. With the tact of a good propagandist, she was making her book harder to answer by not attacking individuals, but the system. The book had quite an inflammatory effect, however, and by the time she came to write Dred she could no longer refrain from lashing out in a white heat at individuals. The fact that she seldom created a completely depraved or cruel Northerner within his own section is indicative of an even more severe censorship of the South than was first apparent. If a Northerner living in his own section were cruel, it was often, as in the case of Oldtown’s Miss Asphyxia, because of misjudgment or misguided sense of duty. Asphyxia’s brother, Crab Smith, was as nearly completely cruel as any of the
northerner characters. It was only when the Northerner went to the South, as did Abijah Skinflint, that all the evil in him was allowed expression.

Abijah was a shrewd fellow, long, dry, lean, leathery, with a sharp nose, sharp, little gray eyes, a sharp chin, and fingers as long as a bird's claws. His skin was so dry that one would have expected that his cheeks would crackle whenever he smiled or spoke ... Abijah was one of those over-shrewd Yankees who leave their country for their country's own good, and who exhibit ... such a caricature of the thrifty virtue of their native land as to justify the aversion which the native-born Southerner entertains for the Yankee. ... For money he would do anything; for money he would have sold his wife, his children, even his own soul, if he happened to have one.49

In contrast to her reasonably charitable attitude in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, she had no scruples in *Dred* against attaching everything evil and contemptible to the Southern aristocrat, Tom Gordon, the dissolute heir to Colonel Gordon. Tom Gordon had all the vices of Simon Legree, but was worse in many ways because, while Legree was a brute by breeding, Gordon was an intelligent, educated aristocrat gone bad, one who had just enough perception of right to recognize his brutality. In an effort to overcome his remnant of a conscience, he only became more cruel. In addition to the Southerner who was wilfully cruel, there was also a group typified by Ben, the negro hunter in *Dred*, who seemed to feel that there was nothing wrong with his actions. Ben "had the best pack of

49 *Dred*, *op. cit.*, I, p. 290.
dogs within thirty miles round; and his advertisements . . . detailed , . , the precise terms on which he would hunt down and capture any man, woman, or child, escaping from service . . , "50 Ben would have defended his choice of profession, probably using the Bible to do so. Being a religious man, Ben decided to attend camp meeting after having brought in a negress whom he had just hunted down with the dogs. When he recollected that there were many negresses yet at large, he almost gave up going to meeting until reminded by his wife that "you ought to 'tend to your salvation afore anything else."51 With this thought in mind, Ben attended the meeting where his voice was heard with all the others singing religious hymns.

There were several ways for Mrs. Stowe to account for the widely different characteristics between the natives of the two sections. Recognizing that New England lacked many of the natural advantages of the South, she gloried in the indefatigable spirit that enabled the Yankees to conquer the cold winters, the rocky, barren soil, and to wrest a good living from the very jaws of an unfriendly nature. Contrasted with the Yankee ingenuity, thrift, and faculty was the inexcusable Southern inefficiency, wastefulness, and

50 Ibid., p. 290.
51 Ibid., p. 293.
laginess, all of which came as a result of slavery and the natural advantages of a good climate and rich soil. In *Dred*, we have a Southerner, Nina Gordon, making the following observations after returning from the North, where she had attended school:

Did you ever see such a dreary place? What is the reason, when we get down South, here, everything seems to be going to destruction, so? I noticed it all the way down through Virginia. It seems as if everything had stopped growing, and was going backwards. Well, now, it's so different at the North! I went up, one vacation, into New Hampshire. It's a dreadfully poor, barren country; nothing but stony hills and poor soil. And yet the people there seem to be so well off! They live in such nice, tight, clean-looking white houses! Everything around them looks so careful and comfortable; and yet their land isn't half so good as ours, down here... some of those places seem as if there is nothing but rock! And then, they have winter about nine months in the year... But these Yankees turn everything to account. If a man's field is covered with rock, he'll find some way to sell it; and if they freeze up all winter, they sell the ice, and make money out of that. They just live by selling their disadvantages.52

In Clayton's answer, "And we grow poor by wasting our advantages," lay Mrs. Stowe's major criticism of the South at this period. Willing to admit that the average aristocratic Southerner was basically sound, and that the Northerner was different only because he had been living under other conditions, she insisted that not only was the system of slavery cruel, irreligious, and unnatural, but that it was also demoralizing to the owner. The South's natural advantages

52 Ibid., p. 187.
of a mild climate and rich soil were being thrown away by the use of inefficient slave laborers who did not, in most cases, have the slightest interest in their work. Lacking incentive, the slave naturally did poor work. Not only was this the case, but the master who was accustomed to having all his work done for him expected a certain amount of waste in the management of his affairs. The Yankee, on the contrary, operated at the very peak of efficiency by doing his own work and by seeking newer and better methods for accomplishing more satisfactory results. Mrs. Stowe early insisted that it was because of adverse conditions that the Yankee was forced to exert his best efforts, while it was because of the Southerner's favorable conditions that he became more lax and satisfied with the status quo. Not only did this potent force, the ownership of slaves, demoralize the aristocrat; it completely devastated the "poor white," for, with the acquisition of a slave or two, this type of person was immediately "inspired with a complete disgust with all kinds of labor."53 He became nothing but a loafer. It was the demoralization brought on when one man completely dominated the life of another that pervaded and undermined the whole social structure of the South and was even beginning to creep insidiously into the North, making workers in that area

53 Ibid., p. 107.
dissatisfied with labor that in the South would be assigned to slaves.

Later in life, however, after Mrs. Stowe had spent some time in Florida where she had bought some land, she formed rather different opinions, believing on several counts not that slavery was any more defensible, but that the average occupant of the South under slavery had not been so adversely affected as she had formerly thought. Whereas, in Dred she said that "Every article wanted for daily consumption must be kept under lock and key, and doled out as need arises,"54 she wrote in Palmetto Leaves (1873)—a series of sketches of her experiences in Florida—"Burglars were unknown; our suggestion that somebody might want to get in nights was only laughed at. In fact, on warm nights, they said, we could sleep with both doors open . . . in Arcadian security."55 Blithely she wrote these lines without mention of her earlier judgment, even launching into a defense of the Southern white and negro.

We should imagine that to labor without wages for generations, in a state of childish dependence, would so confuse every idea of right and wrong that the negro would be a hopeless thief. . . . On the first plantation . . . were about thirty families from all the different Southern States. . . . It was the habit of the family to go to bed nights and leave the house doors unlocked, and often standing open. The keys that

54 Ibid., p. 37.
locked the provisions hung up in a very accessible place, and yet no robbery was ever committed. We used to set the breakfast-table over night, and leave it with the silver upon it, yet lost nothing.\textsuperscript{56}

And she went on at some length to prove conclusively the honesty of the negro who had been brought up in slavery.

At another point she also drastically modified her opinion of the products of the Southern system. A great lover of chivalrous action, in \textit{Dred} she related the story of a most cowardly attack on Clayton to illustrate Southern "chivalry." Clayton had recently rescued a minister from a flogging by Tom Gordon and his men and had gone home, confident that the attack would not be renewed. Growing uneasy, however, along toward evening, he determined to ride over to see his friend. While riding along a forest path, he was struck from behind and knocked from his saddle. After a brief interchange of words, Clayton was knocked to the ground and "Tom Gordon, precipitating himself from the saddle, proved his eligibility for Congress by beating his defenseless acquaintance on the head, after the fashion of the chivalry of South Carolina."\textsuperscript{57} However, during her years

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., p. 491.

\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Dred, op. cit.}, II, p. 136. (Mrs. Stowe was referring to the actual case in which Brooks, a Southerner, attacked Charles Sumner, a northern Senator, on the floor of the Senate, beating him to insensibility. The North was roused to a fever pitch by this dastardly deed, and the South hailed Brooks, Sumner had verbally attacked a relative of Brooks, a Senator Butler.)
in Florida she wrote a letter to the New York Tribune defending
the Southerner against charges that Northerners were
being mistreated by Floridians.

I came down to Florida the year after the war and have
held property in Duval County, on the St. Johns River,
ever since. In all this time I have received not one
insult from any native Floridian.

Duval County is largely settled by Northern people
who have come here since the war, and I have yet to
learn of any act of disbelievingness or incivility as
happening to any Northern settler on the part of the
native Floridians. So far as they are to be observed
in this county, the Floridians are a remarkably quiet,
peaceable, and honest set of people who believe in the
Apostolic injunction, "Study to be quiet and mind your
own business."58

But even if she did form different opinions on these
matters, she retained to the end the idea that the Southerner
was culturally decadent, that New England was the home and
center of all American culture. And in this she reflected
a New England attitude that persists to the present day.59
In her prejudice that New England was the seed-bed of the
United States, Mrs. Stowe was adamant. In Life in Florida
After the War—another sketch of her experiences in Florida
—she mentioned that when told tales of ancient grandeur of
the home the Stowes occupied, and the splendor of the former
occupants, her party felt insignificant in the shadow of a
glorious past, but it was a feeling that did not endure.

58 Ferris Wilson, Crusader in Crinoline (Philadelphia,

59 See Donald Davidson, Attack on Leviathan. See
particularly Chapters VII and VIII.
[She] could not but wonder at the primitive coarseness and roughness of the construction of the house we lived in. The fastenings of the doors were coarse, common iron latches; the rooms were not plastered overhead, but ceilinged with boards, which had shrunk so that the unsightly cracks were visible between. All the wood-work bore marks of unskilled carpentry, and carried us back to the days when a plantation was a little state in itself, depending for all the arts of life on the half-educated slave laborer . . .

There was no evidence of aesthetic tastes in any of the grounds surrounding the cottage. The yard . . . was spotted with little rough buildings thrown up for various purposes of mere convenience, without regard to ornament. 60

Thus we have seen that, although Mrs. Stowe formed more lenient attitudes toward the South upon closer examination, and beyond the heat of propaganda, she remained completely the New Engander to the end. Regardless of the fact that she acknowledged other sections of the country, New England was always to her "the hub of the universe."

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CHAPTER V

STONE’S ATTITUDE TOWARD SLAVERY AND THE NEGRO

Harriet Beecher Stowe’s name is so closely associated with abolition that it is unnecessary to say that she had a complete antipathy toward the whole system of slavery. After noting her attitude toward the South as a whole, we can readily see that she would attack slavery from every possible angle, as being cruel and opposed to the spirit of religion, as being unnatural according to human nature, and as being demoralizing to both the master and the slave, to North and South. Although her critics have attacked her on the grounds that she completely lacked a knowledge of master-slave relationship, she was quick to credit the Southerner with an understanding of and a more natural feeling toward the Negro than was possessed by most Northerners. She recognized the hypocritical attitude of the Northerner who sympathized considerably with the wrongs done the Negro in the South, yet was absolutely repelled by the same Negro when brought into close quarters. Regardless of what critics may say to the contrary, Mrs. Stowe displayed in her first anti-slavery novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, a surprisingly tolerant and generous understanding of the average slaveholder, considering the time and the passion that existed. Basing her attack in this novel primarily on the thesis that slavery was cruel and inhuman, not because the average Southerner wanted to
be cruel, but because the very system often forced a normally kind man to break up a home or be ruined himself, she attributed nearly all of the base brutality to displaced Northerners. She tried to show that the sensitive southern master was a victim of a system, just as was the slave. Faced with either a possible present or future cruelty, recognizing that he might be torn from his family, and, if he were a thinking Negro, recognizing the unnaturalness of one man being a bond of another, the Negro often suffered mentally as well as physically. In her next abolition novel, Dred, A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp, a much more reasoned argument, she showed not so much the cruelty of the system, but rather asserted that slavery was degrading and demoralizing to the master as much as to the slave. Although she delighted in the noble slave, she did not aver that all slaves were noble or intelligent.

Notwithstanding the general inefficiency and childishness of negro servants, there often are to be found among them those of great practical ability. Whenever owners, through necessity or from tact, select such servants, and subject them to the kind of training and responsibility which belong to a state of freedom, the same qualities are developed which exist in a free society.61

We should also note that Mrs. Stowe did not impart to all her negro characters admirable qualities. Under the

auspices of such a master as Simon Legree, the oppressed, if given the opportunity, could become the most brutal oppressors.

Legree had trained them in savagery and brutality as systematically as he had his bulldogs; and, by long practice in hardness and cruelty, brought their whole nature to about the same range of capacities. It is a common remark, and one that is thought to militate strongly against the character of the race, that the negro overseer is always more tyrannical and cruel than the white one. This is simply saying that the negro mind has been more crushed and debased than the white.

... The slave is always a tyrant, if he can get a chance to be one.

Although Mrs. Stowe recognized the attachments that often existed between the master and slave, she accepted the fact that the good master was completely a victim of circumstances, and, in spite of his good intentions, was sometimes forced to part with a devoted slave whom he loved, assuaging his conscience with the promise that the slave would one day be bought and returned to his happy home. Occasionally such love existed between master and slave, as existed between Uncle Tom and George Shelby, that the master would actually expend much time and money in the attempt to recover such a slave. The faithful, religious slave was her favorite, and the love that such a slave held for the master or mistress is exemplified by Old Tiff in Dred. He followed his mistress, Sue, through all adversity, constantly clinging to and protecting her up to the very hour of her death. Old Tiff

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belonged to the Peyton family, an ancient aristocratic group, who, although now reduced to the most abject poverty, still felt it more strongly than Old Tiff. When the daughter ran away with a worthless "poor white" who was traveling through the country, Tiff went with her with complete loyalty, although he utterly despised the husband, and felt infinitely superior to him. Tiff would have preferred death to unfaithfulness to his mistress.

His mistress was a Peyton, her children were Peyton children, and even the little bundle of flannel in the gum-tree cradle was a Peyton; and as for him, he was Tiff Peyton, and this thought warmed him and consoled him as he followed his poor mistress during all the steps of her downward course in the world. On her husband he looked with patronizing, civil contempt. He wished him well; he thought it proper to put the best face on all his actions; but in a confidential hour, Tiff would sometimes raise his spectacles emphatically, and give it out, as his own private opinion, "dat dere could not be much 'specked from dat an 'scription of people."  

As was mentioned before, Mrs. Stowe's principal later argument for abolition of slavery in Dred was that decay to a whole social structure was absolutely inevitable wherever the system of slavery was allowed to exist and flourish. Certain tasks were naturally relegated to the slave, usually all manual tasks, whether they were household duties or farm duties. The slave was not interested in doing his task in the most efficient fashion; he was only interested in getting

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63 Dred, op. cit., I, p. 108.
by. The master, therefore, expecting inefficiency, became negligent in the administration of his affairs and he became lazy. He refused to do any sort of labor that might be thought to be the duty of a slave. Lack of proper work resulted in free time, and those, such as Tom Gordon, who had a natural tendency to loose living, put this free time to bad use. This type of aristocrat fell into complete moral degeneration under the system, but if the aristocrats were affected by it, the "poor whites" were completely ruined. Such was the case of John Cripps, husband of Sue Peyton.

He was the son of a small farmer of North Carolina. His father, having been so unfortunate as to obtain possession of a few negroes, the whole family became ever after inspired with an intense disgust for all kinds of labor; and John, the oldest son, adopted for himself the ancient and honorable profession of a loafer. To lie idle in the sun in front of some small grog-shop, to attend horse-races, cock-fights, and gander-pullings, to flout out occasionally in a new waistcoat, bought with money which came nobody knew how, were pleasure to him all satisfactory.4

And not the least of the evils of slavery was miscegenation, a good deal of which appeared in Mrs. Stowe's novels. For were these cases unfounded on fact, for Mrs. Stowe had heard from her servant, Eliza, while living in Cincinnati, that Eliza's master had been the father of all her children. Such things were particularly unfortunate

when the child knew its parentage as did Harry, a character in Dred. Harry was the son of Colonel Gordon, hence the half-brother of the brutal Tom Gordon and beautiful and benevolent Nina. Recognizing his debt to Harry, Colonel Gordon spared nothing to give him a good education, but never told the other children of his parentage. He arranged for Harry to buy his freedom after Nina no longer had need of him, and Harry became overseer of the plantation as well as personal guardian of Nina and her affairs after the death of the Colonel.

There had existed an enmity between Tom and Harry since childhood, for Tom seemed to sense Harry’s superiority and did everything in his power to make Harry feel the humiliation of his position. The slave in this situation had a feeling completely different from that of any other human being, either white or black.

Lisette, I’m just like the bat in the fable; I’m neither bird nor beast. How often I’ve wished that I was a good, honest, black nigger, like Uncle Pomp! Then I should know what I was; but now, I’m neither one thing nor another. I come just near enough to the condition of the white to look into it, to enjoy it, and want everything that I see. Then the way I’ve been educated makes it worse. The fact is, that when the fathers of such as we feel any love for us, it isn’t like the love they have for their white children. They are half ashamed of us; they are ashamed to show their love, if they have it; and then, there’s a kind of remorse and pity about it, which they make up to themselves by petting us. They load us with presents and indulgences. . . . I feel that I am a Gordon.65

65 Ibid., pp. 73-74.
As might be expected, the slaves of good masters are depicted by Mrs. Stowe as being willing, like Dred, to make any sacrifice for the welfare of their masters. Harry was willing to sacrifice his own freedom, if necessary, so long as Miss Nina needed him. Only when a master perpetrated a grave injustice did the slave prove recalcitrant.

It should also be recognized that Mrs. Stowe did not issue a blanket indictment of all the Southern slaveholders as being bereft of humane feeling. In fact, the kindest of all the masters in her novels were Southern to the core, and on the plantations of such individuals existed the easy familiarity and the happy-go-lucky life of the slave that the Southerner himself was so proud of. Always, of course, there was in the background an uneasiness on the part of both the slave and the master, for the master with good sensibilities recognized the injustice of the situation and was constantly admitting it, but saying that he was a victim of the system, or was doing as some Southern preachers were, rationalizing about the situation, or finding a defense in the Bible.66 Again, some Southerners recognized the wrong

66 Chapters XLI and XLII of Dred offer an interesting discussion of one of the causes of the split in the Presbyterian church. Father Bonnie, a Southerner, expresses his opinion thus: "I thank the Lord that I am delivered from the bondage of thinking slavery a sin, or an evil, in any sense. Our abolitionist brethren have done one good thing; they have driven us up to examine the Scriptures, and there we find that slavery is not only permitted but appointed,
that was being done but stubbornly resisted all outside attempts to remedy the situation. And in this outside attempt to rectify a wrong, Mrs. Stowe recognized that there was presented a vast and complicated problem, for what was to become of these liberated slaves? Were they to go north where they would be treated as equals and taken into homes and industry? St. Clare, a realist in every sense, raises these and similar questions:

They will have to go north, where labor is the fashion... and tell me, now, is there enough Christian philanthropy, among your Northern States, to bear with the process of their education and elevation?... could you endure to have the heathen sent into your towns and villages, and give your time, and thoughts, and money, to raise them to the Christian standard?... If we emancipate, are you willing to educate? How many families, in your town, would take in a negro man and woman, teach them, bear with them, and seek to make them Christians?... If I wanted to put Jane and Rosa to a school, how many schools are there in the Northern States that would take them in? How many families that would board them?... You see, cousin, I want justice done us. We are in a bad position. We are the more obvious oppressors of the negro; but the unchristian prejudice of the north is an oppressor almost equally as severe.

Mrs. Stowe had grave doubts as to the philanthropy of the North both here and in her later novel, Dred. She felt that

enjoined. It is a divine institution. If a Northern abolitionist come at me now, I shake the Bible at him, and say, 'Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?' Hath not the potter power over the clay, to make one lump to honor, and another to dishonor? I tell you, brethren, it blazes from every page of the Scriptures. You'll never do anything till you get on to that ground." While this argument was undoubtedly used many times, Mrs. Stowe, in the attempt to make her readers understand her point, made Bonnie's argument ludicrous.

67 Uncle Tom's Cabin, op. cit., II, pp. 76-77.
the ideal system of emancipation would be to have it carried on in the South by Southerners, and though there were serious arguments against such a plan, Clayton, a Southerner, outlined what he considered a workable system.

In my view, the course of legal reform, in the first place, should remove all those circumstances in the condition of the slaves which tend to keep them in ignorance and immorality, and make the cultivation of self-respect impossible; such as the want of education, protection in the family state, and the legal power of obtaining redress for injuries. After that, the next step would be to allow those masters who are so disposed to emancipate, giving proper security for the good behavior of their servants. They might then retain them as tenants. Under this system, emancipation would go on gradually; only the best master would at first emancipate, and the example would be gradually followed. The experiment would soon demonstrate the superior cheapness and efficiency of the system of free labor; and self-interest would then come in, to complete what principle began.68

Although in Dred and during the actual conflict, Mrs. Stowe loosed some bitter tirades against the South, on the whole, she displayed remarkably good sense in the matter of slavery. After the war, when the slaves had been freed and agitations for immediate suffrage were rife, Mrs. Stowe joined with her brother, Henry Ward Beecher, in advocating that the Negro should first be educated to use the ballot and to take care of himself before being thrown upon the public as a voter. She thought, rightly, in opposition to such men as Charles Sumner, that the Negro was not yet ready to take his position as a full citizen. She also recognized

68 Dred, op. cit., II, p. 15.
that the problem of mollifying the Southerner, and the whole
problem of reconstruction would be lessened if the Negro were
kept away from the polls for a time. At very best, there was
often bloodshed at the polls in the South, and if immediate
suffrage were granted the slaves, there would be even more
bloodshed.

No two books could possibly attain the popularity of
Uncle Tom's Cabin and Dred without being an expression of a
large portion of contemporary thought. It is useless at this
point to reiterate at any length the obvious flaws that exist
in these books; however, it is worthwhile to point out again
that the critics often do not remember the novel Uncle Tom's
Cabin, but level their guns on faults of the play of the
same name. Regardless of its faults, faults that nearly
any critic would readily admit, the American public is missing
an experience that is impossible to get from any other source
by continuing to ignore this book and simply poking fun at
such incidents as Eliza crossing the ice. There is the
gigantic tale, tremendous in scope, of one of the very
important eras in American development. Regardless of the
fad that has developed of viewing the book with condescending
scorn, when the unprejudiced reader goes to the book, the
characters still have the power to call up all the emotion
that existed for readers of 1862. That Mrs. Stowe missed
enduring greatness from the literary standpoint when she
handled this problem of one race in complete subjugation to another is evident, yet neither are the books without literary interest and value. Both *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred* are valuable for those who wish to form an idea of the New England sentiment that existed during the height of the slavery controversy.
CHAPTER VI

STOWE'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE WORKING CLASS

One might suppose that since Mrs. Stowe was so concerned with the oppressed slaves of the South, and since she made such a statement as was previously quoted about the manufacturer starving his workers, she would go on to exploit this very fertile field. But such was not the case. Apparently forgetting her years of extreme poverty in the period before she had won fame with her abolition novels, she ignored the workers or tended to treat them with a good deal of condescension. Throughout her novels, she regarded the lower classes either with pity or with humor; never with honest understanding. Although some of her finest sketches describe such people as Sam Lawson, who was lazy, humorous, yet had faculty, she always treated their faults lightly.

In Pink and White Tyranny, John Seymour, the benevolent factory owner who married a social butterfly who had absolutely no feeling for anything but wealth and luxury, was genuinely concerned with the betterment of his workers, and expended great effort in giving them things they needed. He seemed to feel that if he could give them such things as a library, and could hold Sunday School for them once a week, that he would be making them genuinely happy. But his creator, Mrs. Stowe, never went with him down where his workers lived in order to describe conditions, and she never

68a Supra, Footnote 19, p. 20.
once indicated what the workers themselves might be thinking of their employers. John's greatest struggle, perhaps, was to win his wife's support in his philanthropic enterprises.

He could not enjoin her to accompany him to conduct his Sunday School, because the workers were too smelly and she and John might "catch smallpox or something."

"Pooh! Lillie, child, you don't know anything about them. They are just as cleanly (sic) and respectable as anybody."

"Oh, well! they might be. But these Irish and Germans and Swedes and Danes, and all that low class, do smell so, you needn't tell me, now! that working-class smell is a thing that can't be disguised."

"But, Lillie, these are our people. They are the laborers from whose toil our wealth comes; and we owe them something."

"Well, you pay them something, don't you?"

I mean morally. We owe our efforts to instruct their children, and to elevate and guide them. Lillie, I feel that it is wrong for us to use wealth merely as a means of self gratification. We ought to labor for those who labor for us. We ought to deny ourselves, and make some sacrifices of ease for their good."

John's sacrifices amounted to little more than his Sunday afternoons, although, as he informed Lillie, his family had been accustomed for years to throw their home open annually, on John's birthday, to all of his workers in order that the workers might be "refined, educated, and softened." When he expressed hopes of doing that again, of opening his house

better by saying that she had no idea how such conditions existed.

portrayed as sustainable for the workers, the simple derided by her workmates. On hearing those objections, Mr. Stowe ex-
took the material back to her shop where the dress was made
which turned women came to her. Stowe for measurements and then
shelves were intolerable. Later it was discovered that a very

conditions were little better than that of the American

reformers should have her dress made by English workresses whose
test arose from newspapers and their ladies. That a woman
British, when she was measured for a dress, hoped or pro-

seen before repeated by social conditions in reality.

Europe and Britain, the expressed distress condition
in her expressions concerning poverty, starvation, people of
problems, we do not know how she was. In her formal essays and
she didn't feel that it would be good to discuss such
honestly didn't recognize lower classes problems, or another
showed them inside their well-kept homes. Whether she

if the wealthy merely gave them a smile, or on occasion,
more than understanding pieces with no sensitivities, saturated
immunological. To Mrs. Stowe, the working women were little
without either touching or touching her, or treating her
not once in her novel introduced a working man as such.

It is easy to see from the foregone arc Mrs. Stowe

Good times, little was completely preserved.

and grounds andout the key to establish the employees a
that in America her best friend might be her seamstress, that
she was as innocent as a child in her actions.

In her sketch, "The Seamstress," Mrs. Stowe exhorted
her readers to pity the poor, to give them work whenever
possible and to pay them on time for all work performed.
The principal characters are the widowed Mrs. Ames—who had
fallen in estate at the death of her husband—and her two
faithful daughters. Needless to say,

... the best face is put on everything. The little
cupboard in the corner, that contains a few china cups,
and one or two antiquated silver spoons, relics of better
days, is arranged with jealous neatness, and the white
muslin window curtain, albeit the muslin be old, has
been carefully whitened and starched, and smoothly
ironed, and put up with exact precision; and on the
bureau, covered by a snowy cloth, are arranged a few
books and other memorials of former times, and a faded
miniature, which, though it have little about it to
interest a stranger, is more precious to the poor widow
than everything besides. 70

The poor Mrs. Ames, too ill to sit up most of the time, was
forced to make her living as a seamstress. One of her
daughters worked in a private home, while the other, though
affected with an incurable illness, helped with the sewing.

Mrs. Ames is sitting up, the first time for a week,
and even to-day she is scarcely fit to do so; but she
remembers that the month is coming round, and her rent
will soon be due; and in her feebleness she will stretch
every nerve to meet her engagements with punctilious
exactness. Wearyed at length with cutting out, and
measuring, and drawing threads, she leans back in her

70 Harriet Beecher Stowe, Stories, Sketches and
Studies (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin
chair, and her eye rest on the pale face of her daughter, who has been sitting for two hours intent on her stitching. With the greatest pity, Mrs. Stowe drew out this heart-rending scene to the very end, showing how the rich, often thoughtlessly unkind, did not always pay the bills on time. Even if they did mean well, the wealthy simply did not understand the dire circumstances of such people. Mrs. Stowe's reasons for writing this are as follows:

...because we think there is in general too little consideration of the part of those who give employment to those in situations like the widow here described. The giving of employment is a very important branch of charity, inasmuch as it assists that class of the poor who are the most deserving. It should be looked on in this light, and the arrangements of a family be so made that a suitable compensation can be given, and prompt and cheerful payment be made, without the dread of transgressing the rules of economy. It is better to teach our daughters to do without expensive ornaments or fashionable elegances; better even to deny ourselves the pleasure of large donations or direct subscriptions to public charities, rather than to curtail the small stipend of her whose "sandle goeth not out by night," and who labors with her needle for herself and the helpless dear ones dependent on her exertions.

Mrs. Stowe always showed a good deal of concern over the fact that the working women of America were reluctant to go into homes as servants, that many of them seemed to prefer the factories. A good deal of this difficulty she laid at the door of slavery, for she felt that women had a natural distaste for work associated with slave labor. Another

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reason was that there was no well-defined distinction between
the classes of the North as there was in the South or in
England. The trials to the mistress of a house were there­
fore many, for:

They [the servants] are for the most part the raw,
untrained Irish peasantry, and the wonder is, that,
with all the unreasoning heats and prejudices of the
Celtic blood, all the necessary ignorance and rawness,
there should be the measure of comfort and success there
is in our domestic arrangements.73

Her conclusion was that it was the duty of the American
mistress to accept the situation as it was and to try to act
as a missionary for the "ignorant and uncultivated people"
who were the servants.

It is needless at this point to examine Mrs. Stowe's
treatment of such working people as Sam Lawson, who will be
discussed more fully later.73a It is enough to say that with
her such individuals stepped out of any particular class to
become instead simply humorous characters drawn to exemplify
a particular regional type. Money matters were not of serious
concern to these individuals, for, though they hardly worked
enough to keep a home; nevertheless there families seemed to
get along comfortably. Although Mrs. Lawson was an extremely
long-suffering individual who had to work all hours to make
up for Sam's lack of ambition, the author emphasized only the
humor of the situation.

73 Harriet Beecher Stowe, Household Papers and Stories
(Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1896),
p. 99.

73a Infra, p. 103.
On her attitude toward the underprivileged of her own region, Mrs. Stowe stands most in censure. In this she is not alone, for one finds few criticisms of the factory system of the period coming from the pens of New England writers. It is a paradox often found in many ardent reformers, or perhaps a lack of proper perspective, that enables them to see evils at a distance but not close at hand. Witness the abolitionists of the time who shouted lustily about the slaves, but paid no attention to sufferers of their own region.
CHAPTER VII

THE FEMININE QUESTION IN STOWE'S FICTION

Not only was Mrs. Stowe concerned with freeing the Negro of the South from the bonds of slavery; she was intensely interested in freeing the women of the nation from social bonds almost as humiliating. In this attitude she was far ahead of her day, for most members of both sexes believed that woman's place was the home. In every way, women were relegated to a position far inferior to that of the man. In My Wife and I, Harry Henderson acted as a spokesman for her when he said, "Well, let you and me do what we can to bring in such a state of things in this world that it shall no longer be said of any woman that it was a pity not to have been born a man."74 Such a wish doubtless was expressed again and again, for women were denied at this time—the 1870's—most of the rights men considered inalienable. At the time My Wife and I (1871) was written, only one area in the United States—Wyoming, which gave complete suffrage in 1869—granted suffrage to women. As late as 1900, no New England state, in fact no eastern state, granted equal voting rights to women, an indication that Mrs. Stowe was, in this case, in opposition to New England sentiment, and further indication lies in the fact that, as late as 1853, Boston and New York were scenes of actual physical violence.

to women suffrage leaders. It is almost unbelievable to present readers that, in the year 1880, such words as those of Rev. Knox Little should issue from the pulpit. Speaking in the Church of St. Clements, in Philadelphia, Rev. Little spoke as follows:

God made himself to be born of a woman to sanctify the virtue of endurance; loving submission is an attribute of woman; men are logical, but women, lacking this quality, have an intricacy of thought. There are those who think women can be taught logic; this is a mistake. They can never by any power of education arrive at the same mental status as that enjoyed by men, but they have a quickness of apprehension, which is usually called leaping at conclusions, that is astonishing... To her husband she owes the duty of unqualified obedience. There is no crime which a man can commit which justifies his wife in leaving him or applying for that monstrous thing, divorce. It is her duty to subject herself to him always, and no crime that he can commit can justify her lack of obedience.

Just such attitudes undoubtedly impelled Mrs. Stowe to write her essay, Lady Byron Vindicated (1870), though it was in novels such as My Wife and I (1871) and We and Our Neighbors (1875) that she allowed herself free expression on the whole issue of the freedom of women. Qualitatively, critics have relegated these two books to a rather low position in the scale of her writings; nevertheless, they warrant reading for their expression not only of the woman question but of other problems besetting New England at the time. There is

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76 Loc. cit. (For further indication of the New England attitude, especially on divorce, see Edith Wharton's Age of Innocence.)
which have very little relation to the narrative. Way of falling into the hands of her characters, letters no real resolution of the problem. Personal letters and a great deal of space to develop a character's situation, then dropped, as in absence of sorrows, etc., slow, deepened.

Katherine's uncle was prominent in whom Miss E. needed a lecture. With him from the book. Thus, in the end, our Methodist, Mike.

She and the weakness of introducing a character with more time and thought, the author might have rethought other weaknesses. It is impossible to say whether or not rapid writing to keep pace with the press had much to do with depth of her self or her parent. Then we may suppose that women trodged on the farm with no way of escape save through work, but there is a deep understanding of the problem of a comparatively deformated woman that we find in later, more realistic her work quite naturally avoided the caustic damped hands, the

Hamlet garners' main traveled roads, written years later. Carpenter's bars, some approaches a realism that points to the book's, but, when deafferent with the new type of woman. Some moralizing that detracts from the general qualities of a weakness of structure, a sentimentality, and rather the
questions ranging from the shoddy aristocracy, with their
deplorable French airs, to the evils of strong drink. Regardless of Mrs. Stowe's original intention in writing the books—to write purely social novels—she had not gone far before she expressed very definite views on the woman question. The narrative revolves around the person of Harry Henderson, to whom we are introduced when he is a child. Harry grew up and attended college in the usual fashion, met and married the beautiful Eva Van Arsdale, after getting a position on a newspaper in New York. Remembering his vow to do what he could to make women feel that it was not a pity to have been born women, he soon began to write articles in defense of that sex. He had formulated very definite ideas on the subject. Anything that he could do to forward the cause of women, while yet insisting that they maintain their femininity, he did. He thought that it was completely illogical to bar women from exerting their influence in politics, for was not the gentle hand of the mother the ennobling and adhesive influence in the family? Would not the family suffer if the mother were suddenly deprived of any influence in the family? Wouldn't the brutish human qualities become immediately more apparent if it were not for her softening nature? And finally, was not the nation simply a collection of many families? He summed his attitude as follows:

The woman question of our day, as I understand it, is this: Shall MOTHERHOOD ever be felt in the publis
administration of the affairs of state: the state is nothing more nor less than a collection of families, and what would be good or bad for the individual family would be good or bad for the state. . . . Woman of this brooding, quiet, deeply spiritual nature, while they cannot attend caucuses, or pull political wires, or mingle in the strife of political life, are yet the most needed force to be for the good of the state. I am persuaded that it is not till this class of women feel as vital and personal responsibility for the good of the State as they have hitherto felt for that of the family, that we shall gain the final elements of a perfect society. 77

Harry presented Mrs. Stowe's own attitude rather clearly, indicating the line that she was to follow throughout the remainder of the two books. She felt strongly that women could exert a good influence on government by casting their ballots at the polls, but she disagreed sharply with most of the suffragists who wanted every right, including that of holding public office. Just as she was in favor of gradual education for the slaves before allowing them complete suffrage, so she advocated gradual suffrage for women. She thought that it would be a mistake for women to plunge suddenly into politics for several reasons. Running for political office, a woman would be exposed to all sorts of attacks. Again, men had been educated to politics and voting for a long time, while women had simply not paid any attention to such matters. Since women had been protected and sheltered for so long, they should be educated and

77 My Wife and I, op. cit., pp. 36-37.
trained for the new duties before undertaking them. Not only did she advocate eventual suffrage, she also believed that women should have all the property rights of men, should be allowed an equal education, and should be allowed to hold any job that they desired, except politics. Harry became Mrs. Stowe's advocate as he pushed and wrote for greater women's rights, but, unfortunately, he found, before being long in the city, that there was a type of woman reformer most distasteful to him and to all others of his opinions. This was the type who attempted to place herself immediately into a man's sphere, one who became unwomanly, who would "put on men's clothes and live a man's life." Like Whittier, Mrs. Stowe was disgusted with this type of woman, and when she created the character of Audacia Dangyereyes, who invaded Harry's office and sat on his desk, much to his confusion, she probably had in mind the Grimke sisters or the Claflin sisters (more likely the latter), for it was just at that time that Victoria C[laflin] Woodhull was so much in the news as a presidential candidate, and for being, as she was termed, defender of "female prostitutes." It is a little sad to see Mrs. Stowe joining her enemies to denounce a fighter for women's rights in such a fashion as this:

    Now, look here, bub! [says Audacia] I'm just a-going to prove to you, in five minutes, that you've been writing about what you don't know anything about. You've been assertin', in your blind way, the rights of woman to

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78 Ibid., p. 112.
liberty and equality; the rights of women, in short to do anything that men do. Well, here comes a woman to your room who takes her rights, practically, and does just what a man would do. I claim my right to smoke if I please, and to drink if I please; and to come up into your room and make you a call, and have a good time with you, if I please, and tell you that I like your looks, as I do.\(^79\)

The experience of meeting Audacia was for Harry "a moral shower-bath," as he called it. He hadn't imagined that this was the sort of women whom he had been championing in his paper. Dazedly going to see sensible Bolton, who was older and more experienced, he informed his friend that "it was woman as woman" that he had been championing, and not this sort. "If I had believed that granting larger liberty and wider opportunities was going to change the women we reverence to things like these, you would never find me advocating it."\(^80\) Reassuringly, Bolton convinced him that all reformers had more trouble with their friends than their enemies (a conviction probably shared by the Claflin sisters and any others who might have read this), that there were always insane people who ran principle into the ground.

So don't be ashamed [said Bolton] of having spoken the truth because crazy people and fools caricature it. It is true, as you have said, that women ought to be allowed a freer, stronger, and more generous education and scope for their faculties. It is true that they ought, everywhere, to have equal privileges with men; and because some crack-brained women draw false inferences from this, it is none the less true.\(^81\)

\(^79\) Ibid., p. 151.
\(^80\) Ibid., p. 255.
\(^81\) Loc. cit.
Throughout her novels, Mrs. Stowe portrayed the woman as almost an object of worship to males of the slightest breeding. Nothing was allowed to remove her from that nearly spiritual zone. There could be nothing unladylike in a woman walking up to a ballot box and inserting a ballot, thought Mrs. Stowe. In fact, a woman would have an ennobling effect on the polling places, for men would be forced to be gentlemanly, but if she allowed herself to be insulted, provoked to unwomanly conduct, by running for office, she would be doing the whole nation more harm than good. It was all because of women's ennobling quality that she proposed co-educational institutions for American youth, for the mere association in the schoolroom would dignify and strengthen boys in the ways of good. New Englanders were slow to accord their women a place equal to that of men.
CHAPTER VIII

STOWE'S ATTITUDE TOWARD FOREIGN CULTURES

At the time of her great new popularity, Mrs. Stowe found herself with finances that allowed her to do as many writers were doing. She traveled, first to England and later over to the continent, where she visited extensively. There was in America at this time a tremendous interest in the cultures of England and the continent, an interest which, although not shared by all Americans, was evident in the frequent trips abroad by American writers\(^2\) and in such works as Emerson's *English Traits* and Hawthorne's *Marble Faun*. Sharing this interest, Mrs. Stowe began, while sojournng in Italy, a historical, Italian romance, *Agnes of Sorrento*. Although Forrest Wilson, in *Crusader in Crinoline*, believed that this work was merely a piece of snobbery designed to get her into the circle of writers who had already achieved some notice with writings based on Italy, this stricture is merely conjecture.\(^3\) Whether or not her attitude expressed snobbery, it is true that, although this particular novel is her weakest work of fiction, it is not without interest. Here, however, her weaknesses as a writer

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\(^2\) Virtually all major writers of the period traveled abroad save Thoreau and Whitman.

of fiction are most evident, for in dealing with a region
with which she was only superficially acquainted and with a
people she knew nothing about, her characters are even less
convincing than her most stereotyped creations in other
novels. She hit upon her theme when she and a group of
friends were contesting with stories to pass away the time,
and she enjoyed the result so much that she developed a
novel.

Interested in the Italy of the 15th century much more
than the Italy of the present, she was completely lost in
the past when she stood on the streets of Rome or Florence
contemplating the ancient works of architecture. While she
loved the old world, she "noted the universal filth, the
universal affliction of goitre, and the many large-headed
idiot children."34 Certainly not always complimentary in
her reaction to contemporary Italian civilization, she was
happiest when carried away with thoughts of past grandeur.
The Italians she saw were, in the main, money-grabbing,
ragged urchins, and, if they were adult, incompetent as
well. When she was taking a trip, the carriage driver con-
sistently demanded more money than was due.

I must not forget to remark that at every post where
we changed horses and drivers, we had a pitched battle
with the driver for more money than we had been told
was the regular rate, and the carriage was surrounded

34 Ibid., p. 391.
with a perfect mob of ragged, shock-headed, black-eyed people whose words all ended in "ino," and who raved and ranted at us till finally we paid much more than we ought, to get rid of them. 85

So ill at ease did she feel with these people that, whenever an Englishman or Frenchman came into view, he was immediately pounced upon as a friend. At one inn in which she stayed, the "hostess was a little French woman, and that reassured us." 86 Yet, when she reached Rome, she could say:

Over five thousand English travelers are said to be here. . . . Rome is a world! Rome is an astonishment! Papal Rome is an enchantress! Old as she is, she is like Minon de L'Enceles,—the young in love with her. 87

We must not assume, therefore, that contemporary Italy was completely distasteful to her, for she was able to write to Mr. Fields, her publisher, "Agnes of Sorrento was conceived on the spot,—a spontaneous tribute to the exceeding loveliness and beauty of all things there. . . . To me, therefore, it is fragrant with love of Italy and memory of some of the brightest hours of life." 88 But, in the light of other observations, we may safely assume that it was the wonderful companionships and the romantic spell of the past that


86 Ibid., p. 299.

87 Ibid., pp. 300-301.

The problem that would have had the most appeal, the book was an appeal to the reader, although this book was awarded sympathy and character to one character in a manner most dismally

Excessively adequate in nature, the book contrasted
to the thoughts of this man.

Prudence, she was wanted necessarily and more than one was lost. Then she comprehended her time to return and was only interested in saving her soul. For she was sure at once that not at least support the love of the overbearer.

David doubt about the Roman revolution, perplexed by the knowledge of his own country and consequently, would. The camel of another desert, doubting, drawer blurted.

"He was the caller of little Greece, his text was cut out of place on literature pattern of light verse, "he was," a European pattern. and in the extremity Joaune, general, a European pattern as well, in the manner strange. For he was secret in love with ages, and within the person of his correspondent, the Roman prosecco, was a branch. The forces of oppression when governing the Roman empire--and the forces of good--rather severe and the fortresses.

The book would have been the love story of the earthly human, perverted by the small power at that time in contact. Perfection and loved the dancing camel, dosed possessing from his heights or a supposed extra relation made, secret of noble birth.

As anticipated her, in need of some help, she wrote a love story
is only developed incidentally and is allowed to evaporate at the end. Perhaps it was because this and many of her stories were first serialized in magazines and because she often found herself writing each chapter against a deadline that they lack balance. A great deal of space was devoted to Father Francesco's unrequited love and his inward struggle, enough space to make this a major rather than a minor element; yet, after building up interest in him in this fashion, she suddenly seemed to forget about him and allowed him gradually to fade out as an important feature. Besides being enamored of ancient Italy, this New England daughter of the Calvinist religion had another reason for turning to the past. It would have been rather difficult for her to reconcile her own religious beliefs with those of a contemporary heroine sympathetically, for the anti-Catholic sentiment had persisted in New England minds up to her own day. Hence, Agnes was a Puritan.

Kneeling before the shrine, [she] was going through with great feeling and tenderness the various manuals and movements of nightly devotion which her own religious fervor and the seal of her spiritual advisers had enjoined upon her. Christianity, when it entered Italy, came among a people every act of whose life was colored and consecrated by symbolic and ritual acts of heathenism. The only possible way to uproot this was in supplanting it by Christian ritual and symbolism equally minute and pervading. Besides, in those ages when the Christian preacher was utterly destitute of all the help which the press now gives in keeping under the eye of converts the great inspiring truths of religion, it was one of the first offices of every saint whose preaching stirred the heart of the people, to devise symbolic forms, signs, and observances, by which the mobile and fluid heart of
the multitude might crystallize into habits of devout remembrance. The rosary, the crucifix, the shrine, the banner, the procession, were catechisms and tracts invented for those who could not read, wherein the substance of pages was condensed and gave itself to the eye and the touch."

In this fashion, she could speak sympathetically of these people who were simply living in an unenlightened age, according to the best dictates of their conscience.

In trying to live the highest kind of religious life, Agnes was led by Father Francesco to believe that any love for her Cavalier, Agostino Sarelli, was irreligious and she, therefore, attempted to put him out of her mind. Agostino, while loving Agnes, was also torn with religious doubts, but of a different nature. He had seen his home taken from him, his brother murdered, and his retainers robbed, all under the jurisdiction of the Pope, the leader of his mother's religion. He was, therefore, forced to turn his back, not on the whole culture of his own country, but only on the debased leaders of the church of Rome.

In the mind of our young nobleman there was a double current. He was a Roman, and the traditions of his house went back to the time of Mutius Scaevola; and his old nurse had often told him that grand story of how the young hero stood with his right hand in the fire rather than betray his honor. . . . Agostino read Plutarch, and thought, "I, too, am a Roman!" and then he looked on the power that held sway over the Tarpeian Rock and the halls of the old "Sanctus Senatus," and asked himself, "By what right does it hold these?" . . . he asked himself, as he

locked on the horrible and unnatural luxury and vice which defiled the Papal chair and ran riot through every ecclesiastical order, whether such men, without faith, without conscience, and without decency, were indeed the only authorized successors of Christ and his Apostles?  

To Mrs. Stowe, the answer was easy. These people lived in an age when the choice was only between the Romish church and infidelity, before "Luther flared aloft the bold, cheery torch which showed the faithful how to disentangle Christianity from Ecclesiasticism."  

While it first appeared to Agnes that Agostino was an infidel for the reason that he rejected the Roman church, she later learned that he was as deeply religious as herself. This revelation, however, only came after she, too, was enlightened about the papal seat in Rome. In acting as he did, Agostino was resolving Mrs. Stowe's personal problem, for neither was condemning the art, the music, the general cultural background of Rome; they both loved it. But they were turning their back on the religion that was corrupting this noble land. Only by turning to the past, as she did, was she able to present these extremely religious people as representatives of the best element in their own country.

Turning now from Mrs. Stowe's opinions of Italy to her opinions of France, we find that she altered her opinion


drastically between her visits to France and the writing of
Oldtown Folks (1869). While she admired many of the French
people whom she met, and while she had the pleasantest ex-
periences in France, her Puritan mind could not accept any
part of the French culture that seemed degenerating through
lack of religion. French literature was degenerate, as were
French morals, and she staged a steady fight against any of
these corrupting influences entering her beloved New England,
for she felt that the whole of New England was changing be-
cause of the influx of foreigners, and by foreigners she
seemed to mean every other race but the English. In Poganuc
People, in which she reminisces of her own childhood, she
traces the beauty of the country and the charity of the
people of an earlier day, when she writes regretfully:
"Within the past fifty years, while this country has been
filling up with foreigners of a different day and training,
these old customs have been passing away."92

Puritan morality was disappearing with this passage
of old and pleasant customs. The actions of the women were
becoming disgraceful, a situation almost completely due to
the influence of the French. In nearly all of her books,
from Oldtown Folks to We and Our Neighbors, Mrs. Stowe never
missed an opportunity to charge her readers, both young and

——— 92 Harriet Beecher Stowe, Poganuc People (New York:
Fords, Howard and Hulbert, 1878), p. 156.
old, to avoid French literature and French ways, at all cost. *Oldtown Folks*, founded upon Calvin Stowe's recollections of his childhood, was told through the person of Horace Holyoke. The main thread of the story follows the adventures of the orphans, Tina and Harry Percival, who were adopted by harsh individuals from whom they had to escape before making their way to Oldtown. Jonathan Rossiter, brother of the woman in Oldtown who took Tina under her wing, offered this advice on the rearing of Tina:

> The French helped us in our late war; for that I thank them; but from French philosophy and French democracy, may the good Lord deliver us. They slew their puritans in the massacre of St. Bartholomew, and the nation ever since has been without a moral sense. French literature is like an eagle with one broken wing. What the Puritans did for us English people, in bringing in civil liberty, they lacked. . . . Meanwhile, our young men who follow after French literature become rakes and profligates. Their first step in liberty is to repeal the ten commandments, especially the seventh. Therefore I consider a young woman in our day misses nothing who does not read French. Decorous French literature is stupid, and bright French literature is too wicked for anything. So let French alone.93

In *Pink and White Tyranny*, discussed in another chapter,94 the frivolous and vain wife of John Seymour becomes a symbol of the American woman who tries to pattern her life after the French. John, it will be remembered, was the steady aristocratic business man, enchanted by this feminine

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94 See Chapter VI, pp. 65-66.
charmer, who, after the French manner, numbered her lovers
by the dozens and, unknown to innocent John, was after a
man with money so that she could live in style. After his
marriage, John was introduced rapidly enough to the French
ways.

In France, the flirting is all done after marriage,
and the young girl looks forward to it as her intro-
duction to a career of conquest. In America, so great
is our democratic liberality, that we think of uniting
the two systems. We are getting on in that way fast.
... The girls must go to the French theatre, and be
stared at by French débauchées, who laugh at them while
they pretend they understand what, thank Heaven, they
cannot.95

Lillie's whole plan had been and still was to "flirt till
twenty a l'Americaine, and then marry and flirt till forty
a la Francaise."96 During John's unpleasant introduction
to his wife's French ways, he received many shocks. On
seeing how men were attracted to her, he first naïvely
thought that his wife was perfectly innocent in the matter.
His greatest sorrow came, however, when he found that Lillie
lied, lied on every occasion when the truth was difficult.
In this, she was following a French maxim to the effect that
"Every woman lies—obliging lies—venial lies—sublime lies
—horrible lies—but always the obligation of lying."97

95 Harriet Beecher Stowe, Pink and White Tyranny
(Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1871), p. 332.
96 Iloc. cit.
97 Ibid., p. 338.
These customs were completely foreign to John Seymour who, brought up in a New England atmosphere, thought that truth, honor, and loyalty were virtues never to be tampered with. Little did he know that to the French "Lying is . . . the very foundation of language, and truth is only the exception;"98 Since Lillie did not learn the French system by direct contact, she got much of it from the French novels that no good girl would think of having in her house. Thus did Mrs. Stowe attack French culture as a degenerate thing to be avoided first and last. Yet, in her personal life, she loved France with its pleasant, cheerful homes, and on her trips she had felt at home with the French, while feeling most uncomfortable with the Italians. Not only had she taken pride in her accomplishments in the use of the language, but she had allowed her children to spend a good deal of time in France, with, apparently, no apprehension as to their welfare. In this matter she may have felt that the weak needed protection, but that she and her family could associate with these people without absorbing any of the undesirable qualities; however, it is more probable that at the time of her visits to France (the first in 1854) she was ignorant of the French ways, and by 1869, when she began to attach them most strongly, she had come to the belief that they were to be avoided, one and all.

98 Ibid., p. 338.
The only other culture to which Mrs. Stowe was exposed, and with which she dealt at any great length, was that of the British Isles, and, as might be expected, she looked upon it as a dreamland. She had to visit all the spots made familiar through her reading of Sir Walter Scott, whom she worshipped and tried to imitate. In nearly all her comments on England, she spoke of its charms. She was captivated by the architecture, the people, and the very landscape. She was lost in the romance of the past, touring the country, and she admired things and people all the more because they reminded her of old history acquaintances. "She [the Duchess of Sutherland] is, taking her all in all, one of the noblest-appointed women I ever saw; real old English, such as one reads of in history; full of nobility, courage, tenderness, and zeal."99 As she returned to America from one of her trips abroad, she remarked, "Almost sadly, as a child might leave its home, I left the shores of kind, strong old England -- the mother of us all."100 This was an attitude, a love that never faltered throughout her life, although she was deeply hurt at the English attitude toward the Civil War, for she felt that the English should take up the good fight on the side of the North. When they did not do so, she

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100 Ibid., p. 204.
felt a good deal like a hurt child; she could not believe
that there could be such treachery on the part of the people
whom she loved so deeply.

Mention of other countries is slight and incidental,
for, though Mrs. Stowe traveled in Germany and searched for
evidences of Goethe, her quest was probably more for Calvin
(her husband) than for herself. Having little to say about
the country, she was evidently not impressed favorably or
unfavorably. Nor did she make many comments on Spain, though,
when she did, she attacked that country on religious grounds.
Since she never visited Spain, she had no direct knowledge of
it, but it is doubtful if she would have modified her rather
harsh opinion, for she would have entered the country with
preconceived and deeply-ingrained religious attitudes.
While she could love Italy for its past, she was not
familiar enough with Spanish culture even to be mildly
interested. In consequence, she could use Spain only as a
device to prove the worth of Calvinism.

Calvinism is much berated in our days, but let us
look at the political, social, and materialistic
progress of Calvinistic countries, and ask if the world
is yet far enough along to dispense with it altogether.
Look at Spain at this hour, and look back at New England
at the time of which I write,—both having just finished
a revolution, both feeling their way along the path of
national independence,—and compare the Spanish peasantry
with the yeoman of New England. . . . the one set made
by reasoning, active-minded Calvinism, the other by
pictures, statues, incense, architecture, and all the
sentimental paraphernalia of ritualism.
If Spain had had not a single cathedral, if her Murillos had been all sunk in the sea, and if she had had, for a hundred years past, a set of schoolmasters and ministers working together . . . would not Spain be infinitely better off for this life at least . . . 101

It was quite natural that Mrs. Stowe should have expressed unqualified approval of England. Was not that the land which had always had the closest affinity with New England? Had it not given most to the New England culture? It was also natural that regions under Catholic domination should receive but guarded praise, if praise it could be called, for religious tolerance had never been a strong part of New England life, especially among the ministerial group. In order to write of Italy sympathetically, Mrs. Stowe had of necessity to turn to an age long past, with its central emphasis on religion.

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101 Oldtown Folks, op. cit., p. 65.
CHAPTER IX

MRS. STOWE AS A FORERUNNER OF THE REALIST MOVEMENT

Mrs. Stowe has been so long treated as a local colorist that, for those who have not read all her works, it is difficult to speak of her as a realist in any extended sense of the term. True, there is much that is sentimental in her works, as well as much that should properly be classified as local color, but when the sentimental passages have been cleared out there still remain in her New England novels some of the most realistic passages to be found in any contemporary writing. The general tone of these novels is not one completely of sweetness and light. There is all of the hardness of nature and religion that moulded these early New Englanders; there is the narrowness of life, the bitterness of a struggle to live, that shaped the Yankee into the shrewd, hard-working, unbending individual that he was. In mature life, Mrs. Stowe climaxed all her work as a novelist by writing a book, Poganuc People, that was built around her own childhood experiences. As Dolly, she recalled the emptiness of her child’s world, her longing for the love and affection that was denied her, before pulling herself up short with the admonition that, "It must not be imagined, however, that Dolly had an unhappy childhood."102 It was an

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adult's world in which Dolly found herself, and little girls were not noticed, save in extreme circumstances.

Once Dolly remembered to have had sore throat with fever. The doctor was sent for. Her mother put away all her work and held her in her arms. Her father came down out of his study and sat up rocking her nearly all night, and her noisy, roistering brothers came softly to her door and inquired how she was, and Dolly was only sorry that the cold passed off so soon, and she found herself healthy and insignificant as ever.103

Even the church reflected the austerity of this existence, for, since the Presbyterian or Congregationalist was the Beecher's church, whose members did not believe in celebrating Christmas as did the Episcopalians, young Presbyterians were strictly forbidden to attend any of these glorious Episcopal Christmas services. Adult severity in religious matters was passed on to the children. Everyone was given to understand that the function of religion was serious. From the very earliest age, Dolly's thought were turned to the importance of the struggle on earth, if one were to achieve heaven. The fear of one who had not yet felt the divine impulse and was not, therefore, felt to be select of God was great. It was a happy day for Dolly, therefore, when "She went up to her father's study and fell into his arms, saying, 'Father, I have given myself to Jesus, and he has taken me.'"104 One who was thus able to solve religious doubts was lucky, but

103 Ibid., p. 9.
104 Ibid., p. 208.
even those who felt themselves saved still struggled with
their problems long and resolutely, for they wanted truth,
however harsh it might be.

They never expected to find truth agreeable. Nothing
in their experience of life had ever prepared them to
think it would be so. Their investigations were made
with the courage of the man who hopes little, but deter-
mines to know the worst of his affairs. They wanted no
smoke of incense to blind them, and no soft opiate of
pictures and music to lull them; for what they were
after was truth, and not happiness, and they valued
duty far higher than enjoyment.105

And so they took delight in sitting in the hardest seats,
listening to the longest sermons, and, because the adults
expected from children the same sober face toward things
religious that they themselves had, children did not play
on the Sabbath before sunset.

Brought up and nurtured on a continual struggle with
the land, the climate, or the sea, religious harshness was
the sort of thing these New Englanders thrived on. Old
Zeph Higgins, known to all Paganus for his crustiness,
independence, and resourcefulness, delighted in a struggle,
especially when he was going to vote against the majority
party, the Federalists.

As soon as there were faint red streaks in the
winter sky, Zeph's sled was on the road, well loaded
up with cord-wood to be delivered at Colonel Davenport's
doors; for Zeph never forgot business nor the opportunity
of earning an honest penny. The oxen that drew his

105 Harriet Beecher Stowe, Oldtown Folks (Boston:
sled were sleek, well-fed beasts, the pride of Zeph's heart; and as the red sunlight darted across the snowy hills their breath steamed up, a very luminous cloud of vapor, which in a few moments congealed in sparkling frost lines on their patient eye-winkers and every projecting hair around their great noses. . . . The cutting March wind was blowing right into his face; his shaggy grizzled eyebrows and bushy beard were whitening space; but he was in good spirits—he was going to vote against the Federalists; . . . Zeph was a creature born to oppose. . . .

Zeph had taken a thirteen-acre lot so rocky that a sheep could scarce find a nibble there, had dug out and blasted and carted the rocks, wrought them into a circumambient stone fence, ploughed and planted, and raised crop after crop of good rye thereon. He did it with heat, with zeal, with dogged determination; . . . There was a stern joy in this hand-to-hand fight with nature. He got his bread as Samson did, his honeycomb, out of the carcass of the slain lion.106

Because the winters were long and cold, a good deal of Dolly's time during this period had to be spent indoors, where there was little to occupy the attention of a child. Not only were her toys few and crude, but almost the only reading matter to look at and browse through were the long, dry religious tracts with such titles as "An Appeal on the Unlawfulness of a Man's Marrying His Wife's Sister." With great delight, one day she found a copy of the Arabian Nights, which "transported her to foreign lands, gave her a new life of her own; and when things went astray with her," she would go to the garret to lose herself in this magic book.107 So Dolly grew up witnessing her father's struggles to save the

106 Pogemue People, op. cit., p. 65.
107 Ibid., p. 121.
souls of the good people around Paganus, until at last she went to Boston where she met and loved a young man, an experience which finally resolved her troubles.

Several years before she brought herself to write Paganus People, Mrs. Stowe had begun composition of The Pearl of Orr's Island, but had put the manuscript aside to work on another New England story, The Minister's Wooing, which was also somewhat auto-biographical, for in it evidences of her own and her sister Catherine's religious doubts appear. This second narrative relates how, after Catherine had lost her betrothed at sea, she refused to worship a God who would condemn a man so great in deeds to damnation. Though attracted strongly to the religion of Calvinism, Mrs. Stowe was constantly pulled away from the doctrine of selection to a religion of free will. A few months before The Minister's Wooing was begun, this whole matter of religious discipline was again brought sharply to focus by the drowning of her son, a student at Dartmouth. Unreconciled, Mrs. Stowe was probably attempting to resolve her own religious problems in recreating Catherine's situation. When James Marvyn, the gay young doubter, was supposedly lost at sea, both his mother and his fiancée were plunged into grief, doubly hard to bear because of the knowledge that he was unsaved. Mrs. Marvyn, like Catherine, was unreconciled until finally convinced that God is actually love. Mary responded to the
wishes of the minister, Mr. Hopkins, after convincing herself that she might save her soul as well as that of James by marrying both the minister and his religion. Mary, however, returned in the nick of time, and, after being released from her promise to marry the minister, Mary wed her true lover. Structurally as weak as many of Mrs. Stowe's poorer novels, this book is of interest primarily because of its religious problems. It hasn't, however, the bleak realism, the ring of authenticity, characterizing her three best works, *Poganuc People, Oldtown Folks, and The Pearl of Orr's Island.*

*The Pearl of Orr's Island,* praised by such people as Whittier and Sarah Orne Jewett as one of the finest New England stories ever written, is indeed one of her best. Again, Mrs. Stowe was not picturing a land of milk and honey. There is the wail of the wind over a relentless ocean that often gave up its dead. So great was the struggle against the elements that hardship was demanded at every hand. The natives, watching the return of a ship one evening, witnessed familiar tragedy when she was caught in a gust of wind and split in two. Of the victims washed ashore, three were carried into the house of Zeph Fennel. One was already dead.

He was lying in a full suit of broadsloth, with a white vest and smart blue neck-tie, fastened with a pin, in which was some braided hair under a crystal. All his clothing, as well as his hair, was saturated with seawater, which trickled from time to time, and struck with a leaden and drowning sound into a sullen pool which lay under the table.
In the room above lay the dead man's wife, still alive but breathing her last, while the single healthy survivor, little Mara, was only seven months old. As the two gossips in the room watched death as an interesting interruption in their lives, one of them, Aunt Roxy, "surveying the still, white form contemplatively with her head in an artistic attitude," observed, "She'll make a beautiful corpse." The pity of the situation was not in the death of the two parents; death was a matter of course to be accepted with resignation. The unfortunate aspect was that the infant had to survive in a hard world, all the harder because she was an orphan.

But babies will live, and all the more when everybody says that it is a pity they should. Life goes on as inexorably in this world as death. It was ordered by THE WILL above that out of these two graves should spring one frail, trembling autumn flower,—the "Mara" whose poor little roots first struck deep in the salt, bitter waters of our mortal life.

Thus was the child initiated into life. She was fortunate in being taken into the kind Pennel family, who were criticized rather severely because, when Mara was three years old, she had not yet been taught to work. "'Mis' Pennel oughter be trainin' of her up to work," said Mrs. Kittridge. 'Sally could oversew and hem when she wa'n't more'n three years old; nothin' straightens out children like work.'

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109 Ibid. p. 55.
110 Ibid., p. 8.
111 Ibid., p. 35.
It was not long before other victims of the sea, a mother and child, were washed ashore to break once more the monotony of the lives of the occupants of Orr's Island.

Again, the mother died, while her small boy survived. Again, Aunt Roxy and Mrs. Kitttridge, on hand for the funeral of the mother, engaged in conversation:

"There . . . [said Miss Roxy] I wouldn't ask to see a better-lookin' corpse. That ar woman was a sight to behold this morning. I guess I shook a double handful of stones and them little shells out of her hair,—now she reely looks beautiful. Captain Kitttridge has made a coffin out o' some cedar-boards he happened to have, and I lined it with bleached cotton, and stuffed the pillow nice and full, and when we come to get her in, she reely will look lovely."

"I s'pose, Mis' Kitttridge, you'll have the funeral tomorrow,—it's Sunday."

"Why, yes, Aunt Roxy,—I think everybody must want to improve such a dispensation. Have you took little Mara to look at the corpse?"

"Well, no, [said Miss Roxy] . . . Mis' Fennel's gettin' ready to take her home."

"I think it's an opportunity we ought to improve," said Mrs. Kitttridge, "to learn children what death is. I think we can't begin to solemnize their minds too young."

And so, as the children were taken in to view the corpse, Mrs. Kitttridge "stooped and placed the child's little hand for a moment on the icy forehead. The little one gave a piercing scream, and struggled to get away;"

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112 Ibid., p. 55.
113 Ibid., p. 56.
bad sign to the hardened realist, Mrs. Kittridge, who saw in
the child's reaction a tendency to vanity and hatred of any-
thing serious. When Aunt Roxy pointed out that Mara wasn't
like some children; that she wasn't rugged, and had always
been scary, Dame Kittridge said:

"Well, then, she ought to be hardened," . . . "I
tell ye, children's got to learn to take the world as
it is; and 'tain't no use bringin' on 'em up too tender.
Teach 'em to begin as they've got to go out,—that's my
maxim."114

It was because "life on any shore is a dull affair" that
Mrs. Kittridge looked forward to the funerals that occurred
in her house as "a species of solemn fate, which imparted a
sort of consequence to her dwelling and herself."115 Into
such an atmosphere, where funerals were solemn entertain-
ments, were Mara and the other orphan, Moses, cast and there
forced to make their lives. Only the minister, Mister Sewell,
a man who had retreated into these surroundings to live out
his life in contemplation of an unfulfilled romance—his abor-
tive elopement with a beautiful daughter of a wealthy West
Indian planter—was able to look about him with something
akin to amusement.

[He] took a quiet pleasure in playing upon these simple
minds, and amusing himself with the odd harmonies and
singular resolutions of chords which started out under
his fingers. Surely he had a right to something in

114 Ibid., p. 57.
115 Ibid., p. 58.
a sermon he had heard given by a person standing
who summarised the directed creed very aptly in re-creating
or calvinism, and the distinctly expressed statement or sam lawson,
believing development a young man growing up in the very shadow
more to reflect on determinism in the violent reaction against
the attitude expressed by characteristics, arising from those who
the whole reflection problem is indented in the variance

of order new anything themselves. This, at first, the understanding of
beyond pointing out that atomic policy is concerned with the
math theories of this chapter, with a discussion of this book
her husband. If it's pertinent, is not worthwhile to continue the
period, but this time reveals through the conclusions of
atomic policy, which is again reminiscent of an earlier

phenomena of the third of the. Shows, three best works.

such fortification sense to deny. Such fortification sense to

It is overtook the sentimentalist, one finds a thing of
no longer considered, worth the time of literary students.

immediate. It is unimportant that such a novel is shunted aside,

This, then, is the atmosphere of the present of our's

addition to the limited select...
we was free, voluntary agents. But nobody ever had got out, and nobody would, unless the Lord reached down and took 'em. And whether he would or not nobody could tell; it was all sovereignty. He said there waint one in a hundred,—not one in a thousand,—not one in ten thousand,—that would be saved. Lordy massa, says I to myself, ef that's so they're any of 'em welcome to my chance. And so I kind o' ris up and come out . . . 117

While such religious severity is hard to believe in this day, it was extremely real to people of Sam Lawson's period.
CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION: ARISTOCRATIC PATTERN IN STOWE'S THOUGHT

Though in Mrs. Stowe's fiction are found certain conflicting views (which have already been indicated), on the whole she followed a consistent line of thought throughout her life. Like others of her time, she lagged slightly behind her fellow writers in later life, while earlier she forged somewhat ahead on such matters as the woman question. In this paper I have shown that the pattern of Mrs. Stowe's thought followed that of the aristocratic New Englander. Like other New Englanders she resented the influx of religious doubt developing in her beloved region, and longed for the golden past. She resented the foreign elements invading New England to upset a pattern of living that had existed for so long and had been so congenial. She resented foreign intrusion whether the intruders were persons or ideas. The knowledge that the Irish were taking over duties, though often menial, was a thorn in her side, as were the Catholic religion and the scientific theories that tended to weaken religious belief. As she felt the press of modern civilization, she turned nostalgically to the past for reconciliation. Aggressively sectional throughout her life, she looked to other regions to find conditions warranting active criticism. Thus, except for the brief mention noted in
Uncle Tom's Cabin,\textsuperscript{118} she overlooked the oppression that existed among the workers of the North, as did most of her contemporaries, and viewed these sufferers with condescending sympathy. With other writers of her time, as well as later writers, she noted the struggle of the aristocrats to maintain a superior position against the shoddy rich who were constantly beating at the closed door of social New England, and she helped in the fight by ridiculing such climbers with their low moral standards, complete lack of ethical standards, and cheap French airs.

As a social force, Mrs. Stowe was the most powerful figure of her century, for her \textit{Uncle Tom's Cabin} aroused a nation as no other single work could have done. While not so important from a social point of view, \textit{My Wife and I} and \textit{We and Our Neighbors}, in which Mrs. Stowe asked for greater women's rights, present an interesting picture of the sentiment on this subject existing in New England at the time. In stumping for greater rights for women, she still wanted the movement to progress slowly by evolutionary means. Although she did not want women to enter public life by running for office, she did want them to attain a position that would enable them to be self supporting if necessity demanded it.

\textsuperscript{118} See Footnote 19, page 20.
Politically, Mrs. Stowe was a follower of Lincoln, and even when supporting radical ideas, she occupied the conservative wing. In her anti-slavery sentiment, she was in favor of allowing the South a chance to work out its problems, and after the war she was willing to grant amnesty to the South and to hold out the hand of peace by not granting immediate suffrage to the Negroes. She longed for real peace and unity after the war was over.

Branded a sentimentalist and, at best, a poor local colorist, Mrs. Stowe has almost faded from American book lists. It is, indeed, unfortunate that this is the case, for as I have shown in the course of this paper, in her three best New England books, Poganuc People, Oldtown Folks, and The Pearl of Orr's Island, listed in order of merit, and, to a lesser degree, The Minister's Wooing and My Wife and I, crystal clear images of part of a century are presented. Not only are they valuable for those interested in religious problems, they are also rewarding for those who wish to get a clear, even though less than comprehensive, view of an important age in American life. For these reasons, Harriet Beecher Stowe does not merit the comparative oblivion into which she has fallen.
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