

AMERICAN AUTHORS AND THEIR PUBLISHERS

BY ALGERNON TASSIN

PART III—WHEN WAR WAS IN THE AIR

THE most delightful occasion of his publishing career, says Derby, was the Fruit and Flower Festival given to authors by the New York book-publishers at the Crystal Palace which had been erected in Reservoir Square. This was in 1855, and naturally it was a moment for retrospect and prophecy. About six hundred invited guests were present, chiefly authors and booksellers.

"Eighteen years ago," said G. P. Putnam, in response to the toast American Literature, "a gathering of authors and booksellers took place in the old City Hotel. Our recently formed association came to the sensible conclusion that it was quite time to have another. The interests of writers, publishers, and sellers of books are daily growing in magnitude and importance, and these interests are and should be identical." Bryant spoke in his happiest manner of the growth of American letters. "After Cotton Mather," he said, "the procession of American authors for one hundred and fifty years was a straggling one; at present they are a crowd which fairly choke the way." J. W. Francis, who had attended three such gatherings in fifty years, thus joined the general jubilation.

In our literary annals the making of books has not been an employment of selfish and inert gratification. This is indeed the offspring of but a recent period among us, but the fact is not less solacing to the pangs of intellectual labour. For much of the salutary change, let all praise be given to the higher culture of the people and to the patronage of our enlightened publishers. I allude to such patrons as the Appletons, the Harpers, Scribner, Wiley and Putnam. I am limited to New York in these specifications. The leading Boston firms are identi-

fied with our national historians, poets, essayists. What Childs and Peterson have done is enough of itself for the renown of Philadelphia. At the primary meeting (in 1802) the venerable Matthew Carey held forth in earnest language persuasive to renewed meetings of a like nature; at the Harper entertainment (1832) similar opinions proceeded from many minds.

The occasion, he said later in his book, was conducted on a scale of great variety and elegance. Those public-spirited publishers, the Appletons, with Wiley and Putnam, rendered the banquet a genial gathering of kindred spirits. As for the growth of public demand, the intelligent and patriotic Putnam had stated that in less than twenty years there had been an increase of about eight hundred per cent.; and the magazine of the Messrs. Harpers now reached the astounding number of one hundred and eighty thousand.

The epithets "public-spirited" and "patriotic" which Dr. Francis applied to Putnam were not universally re-echoed in those days. To some patriots of the book trade, it seemed in those touchy times that the publisher had been engaged in a project distinctly un-American. His senior partner, John Wiley, had allowed him seven years—as Mr. G. H. Putnam tells us—to work it out and see if it would pay. To try to build up in London an agency for American books was all very well, but some people thought that to try to secure equitable literary connections in England was a horse of another colour. Wiley was not impressed with the lack of patriotism in the proceeding, but he had his doubts about its business prudence; and these the seven years abundantly confirmed. His contention was that the labour and

capital involved in introducing English authors to the American public was thrown away, since under the copyright conditions the authorised publishers could not control the books they introduced and the pirate publishers could wait until the market had been created and then flatten their sales. The large policy of Putnam was thwarted by the outcome which Wiley had anticipated, but the former persisted in his heroic endeavour for an honour impossible under the circumstances, and the two men, in 1848, decided to dissolve the partnership. This had been but a half dozen years before the Festival, and doubtless many who sat around the board that night remembered smilingly his abortive treachery to "American interests."

THE TWO HERMITS

"My friends," said Franklin to a committee of Philadelphia gentlemen who waited upon him to complain of his policy, any one who can subsist on sawdust pudding and water, as I can, needs no man's patronage." Franklin gained his point because he put his pudding to the proof. But Thoreau never pulled in his belt to make room for his conscience. His Walden cabin was of the world though not in it; for both in Boston and New York were friends disposing of his wares. Though his whole income during the twenty years he wrote cannot have been large, his simple life was far from going against the grain. "For two years and two months," he wrote, "all my expenses have amounted to but twenty-seven cents a week, and I have fared gloriously in all respects." On so small a budget, he ate no sawdust pudding for the sake of his convictions; for Emerson in Boston and Greeley in New York easily kept him going.

He might perhaps have made a sawdust pudding out of the Boston Miscellanies in which coin the publisher of that periodical wished to pay him for an article; but, thanks to Greeley, he never had to eat his words or any one else's. In New York, Greeley got shrewd prices for many of his papers; and was an ever-

present help in the not infrequent time of trouble occasioned by Thoreau's unbending attitude. With such an agent, indeed, Thoreau occupied a strategic position as hermit.

His connection with Greeley began through Margaret Fuller, who had gone to New York to write for the *Tribune* and to live in its editor's family. Through her letters Thoreau heard much of Greeley, and soon, in 1843, the two men began writing on their own account. Thoreau sent him an essay on Carlyle to place. Greeley wrote him: "I am not sanguine of success and have hardly a hope that it will be immediate, if ever. Dids't thou ever, O my friend! ponder on the significance and cogency of the assurance Ye cannot serve God and Mammon as applicable to literature? In my poor judgment, if anything is calculated to make a scoundrel out of an honest man, writing to sell is that particular thing." It is a pity one has to guess at the significance and cogency of this editorial confidence and upon what experiences it is based. But at any rate, he placed the article with Griswold for *Graham's*. On getting a letter from Griswold announcing that the article was in type and would be paid for liberally, he wrote to Thoreau: "I know well the difference between a publisher's and an author's idea of what is liberally." The author himself spent a year speculating wherein the difference might lie and then complained to Greeley that he had not yet been given a chance to find out for himself. Fortunately Greeley—instead of paraphrasing his previous sonorous remarks by the simple substitution of "publishing" for "writing" to sell—promptly drew on Graham for seventy-five dollars and enclosed it in a letter saying, "Now you see how to get pay yourself another time." As this cheque would have supported Thoreau "gloriously" for about three hundred weeks, he might well have afforded more costly convictions than he had.

Far different was it with another hermit, who paid a well-nigh prohibitive price for his until he died. Like Bayard

Taylor, he was one of the last offshoots of that elder race, the writing printer. "One book last summer came out in New York," wrote Emerson to Carlyle. "It is called *Leaves of Grass*; was written and printed by a journeyman printer in Brooklyn, New York, named Walter Whitman." The author had worked on a newspaper and learned the trade, started a country paper of his own, and in 1848 became editor of the Brooklyn *Daily Eagle* for a short while. He printed eight hundred copies of *Leaves of Grass*, deposited them for sale with dealers in New York, Brooklyn, Boston, and put copies out for review. In spite of the general disapproval of his limited public and the attacks of critics, he sold very few copies. People were used in that day to professional savagery, and prudence had not yet become a reliable asset in the market. Fowler and Wells, of the *American Phrenological Journal*, afterward became his publishers and with better machinery of distribution managed to dispose of a thousand copies of the second edition. In 1860 a reprint of *Leaves of Grass* was made by Thayer and Eldredge of Boston. It was a firm of much better standing, and Whitman seemed at last about to make his bow to the public under the right auspices. But the house failed, with so many others, under the general tightening of funds at the outbreak of the war; and Whitman, after enlarging his public by something less than five thousand copies, found himself again silenced. Unsuccessful in securing a publisher for *Drum-Taps*, he again printed at his own expense. This year he was a clerk in the Indian Bureau, from which position he was discharged by the Secretary of the Interior for having in his desk an immoral book. Harlan had opened the desk and found therein *Leaves of Grass*, which the author was revising for re-publication.

"During my employment of seven years or more in Washington after the war, I regularly saved part of my wages," wrote this libertine to W. M. Rossetti, who had offered assistance, "and though the sum has now become about ex-

hausted by my expenses of the last three years, there are already beginning at present welcome dribbles hitherward from the sales of my new edition, which I just job and sell myself (all through this illness my book-agents for three years in New York successively, badly cheated me) and shall continue to dispose of the books myself. In that way I cheerfully accept all the aid my friends find it convenient to proffer. Though poor I am not in want and I maintain good heart and cheer." Rossetti got up a handsome subscription for the two volumes. Though Whitman was to fare better in his old age, thanks to his English reputation and to American prudery, he remained his own shop-keeper until his death; and the front room of his two-story Camden cottage was piled with all the unsold copies of such editions of his books as were not in the handling of his latest Philadelphia publishers. He always needed simple assistance, however; and, says G. R. Carpenter, the many pecuniary favours extended to him in his declining years he took gratefully and gracefully, like a man who could pay his way no longer.

Though it takes us ahead of our chronology, his career may here be finished. In 1881 his *Leaves of Grass* received at last the ægis of one of America's most distinguished firms. But the second Boston edition under James R. Osgood and Company came to grief like the first, and for circumstances equally beyond the publisher's control. After two thousand copies had debauched America (how curious it all seems now!) a complaint was lodged against it by the Society for the Suppression of Vice. The publishers, says Carpenter, who had taken the volume on the express understanding that the poems about which discussion had previously arisen should be printed without change, now felt alarmed, shrinking timorously from the thought of a trial on such a charge. Whitman agreed to make minor changes, but the Attorney-General's office insisted on more extensive alterations; and the publishers decided to drop the book. In

lieu of royalty they gave Whitman the electrotype plates, and these he put into the hands of a Philadelphia publisher. This firm sold in a single day an edition of three thousand and soon brought out another. No complaint was brought against the book in the lewder Quaker community—perhaps, says Carpenter, somewhat to the disappointment of the publisher, who would willingly have had the book advertised in that way. Even in provincial Washington calmer counsels prevailed, for the postmaster at Boston was forced to re-open the mails to the book, on direction from his superior officers. But the exploitation of Whitman had not been in the name of public interests only, for under cover of all this righteous uproar the plates of the original Boston edition had been bought at auction by an unscrupulous publisher and he succeeded in putting a number of copies on the market. These comedies of our mediæval period make strange reading in our more enlightened age!

Many authors besides Whitman saw their ambitions threatened with destruction by the suspension of their publishers' credit on the approaching rumble of war. "Bayard Taylor said to me once of a publishing house," writes Marion Harland in her autobiography, "'An honest firm but one that has an incorrigible habit of failing.' The habit was epidemic in the first half of 1861, and among others who caught the trick were my publishers." Even that Midas of letters, Proscott, had experienced, though only for the moment, the general depression of business. The last time he changed his publishers it was because fate itself drove the shrewder bargain. Phillips, Sampson and Company (whose contract was to publish in fifteen volumes and pay him fifty cents a volume) failed in the disastrous year of '59, after having paid him over thirty-five thousand dollars copyright in about three years. But even then his sun pushed smiling through the eclipse, for J. B. Lippincott and Company paid five thousand for the privilege of publishing the works and guaranteed a copyright of not less than six thousand a year.

Though Whitman came near being snuffed out by failure, Melville seems to have been completely ruined by fire. Murray in London had accepted *Typee*, and an arrangement was at once made with the London agent of Putnams for its simultaneous publication in America. He afterward switched to Harpers, who appear to have acquired the rights for *Typee* also. In 1852 the house of Harper was burned down, and in it the whole stock of Melville's books. Thus he fell out at what proved afterward to have been a critical moment for him. Whether despondent or engaged other where, he wrote in the succeeding ten years nothing but a few short stories and only one more romance, which was published in Putnam's magazine.

Both Putnam and Murray seem to have acquired caution from the Poe brand of imagination which purported to be strictly veracious, and before they published *Typee* they required proof that it narrated an actual expedition. It needed no affidavit, however, to assure Putnam that another travel narrative which fell into his hands was based upon real experience. For he himself had suggested the writing of it—after listening spellbound as Brabantio to the recital of the fortunes that had been passed by a stripling Othello, who soon afterward captured all America with his yarn. It was while Putnam was representing his firm in London that he received, in 1847, a call from a young American printer who having walked his way through the Continent was now on his uppers in London with no money for his passage home. He had secured work at a London printing office, says Derby, but had been thrown out through the jealousy of English compositors. Putnam gave him temporary employment, and thus laid the foundation of a life-long friendship. Within the year he published *Views Afoot, Europe Seen with Knapsack and Staff*. By Bayard Taylor. At this time Taylor was twenty-one years old, and he saw his book in demand all the rest of his life.

CHILDS AND BONNER

The appetite of American readers for all sorts of expeditions was just then boundless. Preternaturally concerned so long with feeling their own pulse, they had lately waked to the fact that there were equally interesting ways of ascertaining how much healthier they were than everybody else in the world. It had not been ever thus, for once they had had the keenest palate for a grain of quinine in an ounce of jam and had refused to take the bitter with the sweet. When Cooper returned from abroad in 1833, his friends warned him by the shade of Washington and the memory of Jay to be prudent and not express at an evening party his surprise that the town was poorly paved and lighted; when he ventured to say to a wider public that he thought the bay of Naples of more classic association than the bay of New York, he was accused of a lack of patriotism. But though it was many a weary year before the eagle ceased to scream, with or without pinching, patriots might now un-reproached recollect that they had studied Morse's geography in childhood. It was because George W. Childs recognised their new willingness to enlarge their horizon that he laid the foundation of his fortune—though, to be sure, something else would have done so if that hadn't. Childs, indeed, was one of those that find stepping-stones in every brook. Having been errand-boy and clerk in a Philadelphia book-store and having made there the acquaintance of publishers and learned the rules of the game, he began to play it himself at the ripe age of eighteen. At twenty-one he was publishing under the firm name of Childs and Peterson. Almost their first book was a record-breaking hit. It was Kane's *Arctic Explorations*, and the publisher had more to do with its success than the author. Perceiving that the average American just then was anxious to learn of the outer world if he could keep himself unspotted from it in the learning, Childs persuaded Kane to change the purely scientific account of the Franklin expedition

which he had brought the firm, into a popular narrative. The result was that in one year the royalty amounted to nearly seventy thousand dollars.

"I look back with genuine pleasure upon my experience as a publisher," wrote Childs. "I was more than prosperous in acquiring the friendship of so many worthy men among the publishers, booksellers, and authors with whom I came in contact. I have personally known and corresponded with all the writers who have given us an American literature. I visited Washington Irving several times at Sunnyside; he would go to sleep at dinner, but his guests understood his physical weakness and respected it. Longfellow I knew well and entertained him at my home, and when in Rome I passed several weeks with him and his family. Lowell, Emerson, Holmes, Motley, Prescott, Bancroft were valued friends. Prescott had his last photograph taken for me." A large part of Childs's library consisted, indeed, of presentation copies. Nor were his literary friendships confined to authors. Ticknor and Fields were old friends. G. P. Putnam printed a letter in which he warmly acknowledged the prompt and cheerful manner in which Childs gave him his name as security for one hundred thousand dollars in the hour of adversity. It is a pleasant picture—Irving and Childs, author and publisher alike, supporting Putnam as he slowly worked his manful way back to prosperity.

Childs tells an amusing story of the establishment of *Harper's Magazine* in 1850. "I can recall a solemn conversation in the office of the Harpers, then on Cliff Street. The four founders of the great firm were present. I was one of a group of Philadelphians and we were discussing the first number of Harper's new monthly. It seemed so certain to us that the publication would be a failure. 'It can't,' said one Philadelphian emphatically, 'it can't last very long.' The only successful magazines then published in the United States were in Philadelphia—*Graham's*, *Godey's*, *Sartain's*, and *Peterson's*."

"In 1833," says J. G. Bennett in his memoirs, "the periodical press was represented only by the *Knickerbocker*, the *North American*, the *Philadelphia Saturday Courier*, and the *New York Mirror*; besides these there was not a single firmly established literary journal in the whole country." By 1850, however, Philadelphia complacently saw a sturdy brood around her and felt herself not unreasonably a dispenser of the right Promethean ichor. And in her brief heyday, she sounded her note of triumph to the stars. But the Niobe of cities, she has seen herself bereft both of the seat of government and of literary dictatorship. Yet still she triumphs, for though her rivals accuse her of Philistinism she knows they know she has retained the better part. She may still boast—and does, as high as heaven—that her peculiar nourishment makes the best of circulations.

"I do not know," wrote Greeley of the Cary girls, "at whose suggestion they resolved to migrate to the city and attempt to live here by literary labour; it surely was not mine. Remember that we had then scarcely any periodical literature worthy of the name outside of the political and commercial journals. I doubt that so much money was paid in the aggregate for contributions to all the magazines and weeklies issued from this city as were paid in 1870 by the *Ledger* alone. The publishers of 1850 hardly paid a tithe of the prices now freely accorded to favourite writers; they paid what they could." Leland says that Phoebe and Alice stayed for a while at that literary rendezvous, Bixby's Hotel, but Mary Clemmes writes that from the first they had a home and began to make a circle of their own.

I have heard Alice tell how she papered one room with her own hands; and Phoebe, how she painted the doors, framed the pictures, and brightened things up generally. The nearest approach to the first ideal blue-stocking reception ever reached in this country was their Sunday evening reception. Mr. Greeley never missed an evening when in

the city, used to drink his two cups of sweetened milk and water, say his say, and then suddenly vanish. In manner he was not unlike Dr. Johnson. Then there were Whitelaw Reid of the *Tribune*, and R. W. Gilder of the *Hours at Home*, and George W. Carleton, the prince of publishers, whose elegant new book house on Broadway has already become the resort of literary and tasteful people. Robert Bonner, too, came constantly and was their faithful friend until their death. He has made illustrious the proverb, there is that scattereth and yet increaseth.

Robert Bonner, who was to become a horn of plenty to all scribblers of any reputation whatever and to all people of any reputation whatever whom he could bribe to scribble, began life, like so many other editors and publishers, as a printer. He bought the *Ledger* and set out to domesticate it. His design, like Addison's, was to make his paper the companion of the coffee cup. His first spectacular enterprise (however pallid it may seem to-day) was to engage Mrs. Sigourney as a regular contributor. Then, in 1855, he harnessed that young meteor, Fanny Fern. Soon his list embraced all the writers of the day—Everett, Bancroft, Bryant, Beecher, Bennett, Greeley, Raymond, Halleck, Mrs. Southworth, Mrs. Stowe, the Cary girls, George D. Prentice. As well as Lady Bountiful to authors, he was the father of modern advertising; and like P. T. Barnum he had a large constructive imagination. Leland, at that time editing the *Illustrated News*, of which Barnum was one of the proprietors, properly sizes up the showman's genius. "Of all the men I met in those days in the way of business, Mr. Barnum, the great American humbug, was by far the honestest and freest from guile or deceit. (Here, if you please, is the bitterest drop in the cup of both publishers and authors!) To engineer some grotesque and startling paradox into tremendous notoriety was more of a motive with him than his desire for dollars. He was a genius like Rabelais, but one who em-

ployed business and humanity for material instead of literature."

Just such a business imagination had Bonner. With boundless fertility he conceived scheme after scheme to keep the attention of the public riveted on his paper. Once he got twelve clergymen to write twelve stories; and the storm of discussion between those who deemed it undignified for a clergyman to add to his income (or even to seek to make both ends meet) and those who thought it wasn't, sold thousands of copies. He paid Henry Ward Beecher twenty thousand dollars for a commonplace novel; he published the *Life of General Grant* by his father; he paid Dickens five thousand dollars for a short story. When President Grant and Beecher got into difficulties, each in a different way, Bonner turned a trick that Machiavelli would have envied—he advanced equally his loyalty and his ledger by publishing correspondence prepared merely as an evidence of good faith and necessarily for publication.

THE SKY-ROCKET TWINS

Bonner offered Fanny Fern one thousand dollars a story, in order to get her to write for him. A short time before she had been drawing two dollars a column, space limited, as regular contributor to the Boston *True Flag*. After a while her breezy and zigzag style began to attract some little attention outside of Boston. Derby says that her only income for the support of herself and her child had been six dollars a week, the combined amounts received from her regular weekly contributions to the *Olive Branch* and the *True Flag*, when an offer from a New York paper enabled her to ask more. She raised her price to five dollars a column and then to twelve. Then, much to the chagrin of Boston, she broke her engagement without any notice and contracted to write exclusively for the New York paper. But the pay proved not as actual as it had been alluring, and after some experience with husks the prodigal child—much to the joy of Boston—returned. Derby and

Miller, the New York publishers, provided the turning-point in her career. "I had occasion to look over the newspaper exchanges," writes Derby, "and it occurred to me that the sketches of Fanny Fern if gathered together and published could not fail to meet with a popular demand. (Derby all his life was poking among the slag of the newspapers for book material, and he uncovered some valuable nuggets—it was he who afterward collected the sketches of Mrs. Partington and Widow Bedott; and of Uncle Remus, which Appleton published in 1881.) I therefore wrote to the then unknown author (note the New York scorn of the idol of Boston!) addressing her as Fanny Fern and directing my letter to the Boston *True Flag*. My proposition was ten cents per copy for all sold, or one thousand dollars for the copyright." Fanny took a chance on the royalty. The book was called *Fern Leaves from Fanny's Portfolio*. Derby advertised it lavishly and spared no expense to create a sensation; and in one year it sold eighty thousand copies—within two she had received ten thousand dollars. How fortunate was Fanny to trust in her star!

Just as dashing in temperament and in career was her brother, N. P. Willis; and both of them carefully cherished their personalities. Their father had been publisher and editor of the *Recorder*, the oldest religious paper in New England. Nathaniel was the typical scion of ministerial stock. His social success was as brilliant as Byron's, and his mere presence intoxicated the impressionable. Accustomed in London, where for some time he was American correspondent, to be the flaming centre of Lady Blessington's group of rapt female seraphs who adored and burned, he came back to New York prepared to direct with a firm and jaunty baton the swelling chorus. See the Conquering Hero Comes. It swelled. "Next door to us," wrote Leland, "lived a family in which were four daughters who grew up to be famous belles. It is said that when the poet, N. P. Willis, visited them, one

of these young ladies, who was familiar with his works, was so overcome that she fainted." Alas, there are no ladies now who swoon at too much brilliance, any more than there are poets who, like Keats, swoon at too much beauty! Even the word has gone out. Possibly this, too, is one of the many sad results of the commercialisation of literature.

"The literary career of Mr. Willis," wrote Stoddard, "was more brilliant in its beginning than that of any other American author. We had no literature then to speak of, and to write in the face of British insolence demanded as much courage as confidence. The attitude of the American mind and the absence of the critical faculty in this mind are apparent in the sensation created by the early poems of Willis. Where Bryant was diffident, reserved, ascetic, Willis was confident, bustling, and extravagant." Later writers, austere reprimanded by some publishers, have advertised their works with their personalities; the trick is by no means a modern or even an American one. It may even be contended that Solomon began it. But life was not all coruscation for Willis. "Of all the editors whom I chanced to know in my early years," pursues Stoddard, "he was the most watchful for and considerate of young writers."

LITERATURE AND SOUTHERN LADIES

The bitterness of the literary era just before the war has been referred to, but there was another side. Marion Harland says that in 1855, when she began to extend her career beyond local bounds, the literary guild of America, though it harboured some professional jealousies it is true, exhibited much kindness to the newcomers.

In all frankness and with a swelling of heart that is both proud and thankful I aver that no other order of men and women is so informed and permeated and coloured with generous and loyal appreciation of whatever is worthy in the work of a fellow-craftsman, so little jealous of his reputation,

and so ready to assist the lowliest member of his guild in the hour of need. Authors were not so plentiful then as to attract no attention in a crowd of non-literary people. Men and women who had climbed the heights sent back a cheering hail to those at the foot of the hill. I had many letters of encouragement from George D. Prentice, the poet-editor known of all men as friend and helper of youthful writers; and from Grace Greenwood, and Mrs. Sigourney, then on the retired list of American writers.

Marion Harland was writing after sixty years of literary life, during which she had borne a lily in her hand which had disarmed all malice. Sometimes, too, it had blotted out the landscape—for it was at the period of her first ventures that scribblers' squabbles were at their shrillest in New York. Furthermore she had been fortunate, too, in compiling, almost at the outset, a cook-book which had sold ten editions in ten months, and merrily soars at present beyond the million mark. (Mrs. Harland's publisher, by the way, said he accepted her cook-book only to bribe her into giving him a novel subsequently!) Success coupled with distance make soft lenses for aging eyes. Mrs. Sigourney, whose span was 1791-1865, was as tranquil and as hale as Mrs. Harland when she reviewed a very different career. "At an age surpassing three score and ten I still pursue literature with undiminished delight and unspectacled eyes. But with the exception of the initiatory volume sheltered under the patronage of my venerated friend Mr. Wadsworth, scarcely any profit has accrued to my literary labours in this vicinity or indeed in the whole of New England. On the contrary, some severe losses have occurred. To the States of New York and Pennsylvania I am mainly indebted for the remuneration of intellectual toil."

Some of her escape from the jealousies of her period, Marion Harland owed to her remoteness from the literary rialtos of New York and Philadelphia. Her recollections of the beginning of her career are a contribution not only to the

history of Southern book-trade conditions but to the psychology of youthful Southern authoresses.

The principal bookstore in Richmond at that time (1853) was owned by Adolphus Morris. Though he was an intimate friend of the family, it was with sore and palpable quakings of the heart that I betook myself to the office of the man who took on dignity as a prospective publisher. It was positive pain to tell him I had been writing under divers signatures for the press since I was fourteen. The task grew harder as the judicial look I have learned to know since as the publisher's perfunctory guise, crept over his handsome face. He had patronised me from the moment I had said I had written a book. I have become familiar with this phase of publisherhood, also, since that awful day. When later I received a refusal, to my flayed sensibilities it was brutal. I see now that it was business-like and impersonal. Were I a professional reader I should indite one as brief and not a whit more sympathetic. But *Alone* was my first book, and a sentient fraction of my soul and my heart.

Her father determined to have Morris publish the book at his expense; but, although the leading publisher of Richmond, Morris had not the facilities to do so himself and had to print it at Philadelphia. Derby's account of his first dealings with that heavily weighted genius, Augusta Evans Wilson, shows also that publishers (especially Yankee ones) were expected to treat Southern ladies with a due sense of the honour conferred upon them of social position and of sex. Her cousin, a fiercely moustached person, accompanied her to the office and confessed later that if Derby had not accepted her manuscript it had been his firm intention to thrash the publisher. But *Beulah* was accepted, and the authoress became a guest at Derby's house instead. When the Civil War broke out she sent him, in 1863, by a blockade-runner via Cuba, a copy of her novel *Macaria*, published in Richmond. Derby arranged with Lippincott for its publication. To the surprise of both of

them, one Michael Doolady, who had received a copy through the lines, had printed and nearly ready for publication five thousand copies.

I called upon Doolady and asked what copyright he intended to pay the author. He replied that the author was an arch-rebel, was not entitled to copyright, and would receive none. He finally agreed to pay me a royalty on all copies sold, and in consideration of this Lippincott withdrew the proposed edition. Late in the summer of '65 a lady closely veiled called at my office and said, "Mr. Derby, do you not know me?" Knowing well the familiar voice, I said, "Augusta Evans, is that you?" She had just arrived by steamer from Mobile, and I said that she must go at once to our home. She replied that she had come on with one of her brothers, who had been badly wounded, and that he was sitting on the steps outside. I told her he would find an excellent nurse in my wife. Then noticing her attire, I suggested that a new dress and bonnet would not be out of place, the styles of ladies' wearing apparel having changed considerably. She said her father had lost everything and she had no money to replenish her wardrobe. I then told her for the first time that she had considerable money for copyright received on *Macaria*.

Derby frequently visited Mrs. Evans at her home near Mobile, and she never had cause to complain of the Yankee publisher whom her cousin came near thrashing for not treating with due deference a Southern lady who was honouring him by consenting to be published. She wrote to Lippincott, "I have always been profoundly grateful for the generous and chivalric action in behalf of an unknown rebel, who at that period was nursing Confederate soldiers in a hospital established near "Camp Beulah" (so named in honour of her book). Not had she any reason to complain of the generosity and chivalry of other Yankee publishers. (Let us hope her fierce cousin lived to be told of it.) Of G. W. Carleton she wrote, "I should like the world to know how noble and generous he has always been to me. When pur-

chasing the stereotype plates of my earlier books, he told me he was obliged to pay so much for the plates of *Macaria* that he could only allow me a moderate percentage on the future sales. Subsequently when *St. Elmo* and *Vashti* had been published, he said that the sales of the volumes justified him in increasing the percentage on *Macaria*. From that period until now he has done so, and the increase was his own voluntary, generous impulse."

SOME OTHER ANTE-BELLUM PUBLISHERS

George W. Carleton (of whom Alice Cary also wrote, "He has been very generous to me. I like him and you will") was a successful publisher—says Derby—without learning the trade; and in this respect he resembled Daniel Appleton, Robert Carter, and Charles Scribner. His first publication after establishing the firm in 1857 was a little poem by Aldrich, and he followed it with *Nothing to Wear*, by William Allen Butler. From so cautious a beginning no one could have foreseen that he would spend ten thousand dollars in advertising a translation of *Les Misérables*. Out of this and Hugo he made a great deal of money, but when he tried Balzac he found to his cost that the American public had not grown up as far as that. Derby tells us that his store was the rallying place of the brightest and most popular humourists of the day—possibly one of the indications that the American public was not ready for the *Comédie Humaine* was the great number of professional humourists it supported then!—and that Artemus Ward and Josh Billings were among his authors. At the noonday hour they would all adjourn to Pfaff's celebrated German restaurant, near Bleeker Street, the rendezvous at that time of the self-styled Bohemians.

Of these Mr. Howells gives us a glimpse in his *Literary Friends*. He had come out of the West to New York by way of Boston in 1860, gazing with ardent parochial eyes on gods and half-gods.

I lost no time in going to the office of the *Saturday Press*. The Bohemia of New York was but a sickly colony, transplanted from the mother asphalt of Paris and never really striking root. What their ideas were in art and in life it would be very difficult to say; but in the *Saturday Press* they came to violent expression, not to say explosion, against all existing forms of respectability. If you were in the habit of rendering yourself in prose, you shredded your prose in very brief paragraphs that gave a quality of epigram to the style. The *Saturday Press* was clever, and attacked all literary shams but its own. It never paid in anything but hopes of paying, vaguer even than promises. I went to the office of the *Saturday Press* in New York with much the same feeling I had in going to the office of the *Atlantic Monthly* in Boston, but I came away with a very different feeling. I found there a bitterness against Boston as great as the bitterness against respectability. That night I went to the beer-cellar once very far up Broadway, where I was given to know that the bohemian nights were smoked and quaffed away. I stayed, hoping vainly for worse things till eleven o'clock, and then I rose and took my leave of a literary condition that had distinctly disappointed me. As I listened to the wit that did not seem very funny and thought of the dinner with Lowell, the breakfast with Fields, the supper at the Autocrats, I felt that I had fallen very far.

Carleton wrote three volumes of travels, yet seemed, in spite of it, to be able to keep the publisher's point of view separate from the author's. Mr. Henry Holt, in his article on the "Commercialisation of Literature," seems to agree with Mr. Robert Yard that the great danger of the publisher is that his temperament and the conditions under which he works will tempt him to forget that he is also a merchant and cause him to overestimate the actual market for the really fine work of literature. Mr. Holt recalls that the first Appleton said to that splendid gentleman, his son William, "The only misgiving I have regarding your success after I am gone, arises from my having noticed in you some symptoms of literary taste."

Daniel Appleton had come to the publishing business not by way of printing but direct from bookselling. Perhaps never having in this way caught the fever of art for art's sake which publishers pleasantly fancy they are peculiarly susceptible to, he had a keener sense of values. At any rate, he had a vivid recollection of shelves of unsalable books; and he had begun his career without unduly exposing himself to it, building up his large business without greatly gambling in futures. Derby says his first book was *Daily Crumbs*, and his greatest literary enterprise—indeed, the greatest of any American publisher up to that date—was the *New American Cyclopedia*. His first book was about three inches square and half an inch thick, though it contained one hundred and ninety pages—in after years the firm obtained a copy of it by advertising that they would exchange for it the largest book they had published. Their *Cyclopedia* was compiled in sixteen volumes in about six years, in spite of the interruption of business by the Civil War; and if it was no venture by reason of the literary taste it tempted, it certainly could not have risked more in one basket if it had been.

Very different was it with Derby, who was always giving himself grandly, and—one is glad to be able to write—without loss, to his literary appreciations. It was in 1853 that Derby established himself as publisher in New York City, and during the eight years that the firm Derby and Miller continued they published more than three hundred volumes by American authors, most of them new books. Derby had the usual publishers' delight in "discovering" talent (a word which, applied in after years, diffuses a generous glow over what had been merely a business speculation). "In the year '54, soon after I had established myself in the book-publishing business in Nassau Street, a pleasant-looking young man called on me one day with a small manuscript of verses which he desired me to publish. That was my first acquaintance

with Thomas Bailey Aldrich. He called on me a few days later (trembling, as he afterward told me) to learn the reader's opinion of his first effort. I told him I would print and publish a small edition. There was not much money in it to either author or publisher, but there was no loss." Derby tells an amusing story of how a friend of the author's tried to boom the book by asking at all the bookstores in town for a copy. He did this with success until he got them all to lay in a small stock, but over-reached himself at last and was forced through a miscalculation to buy a dozen copies. How often does a friendly turn turn in the hands of the turner against himself!

The one that Derby tried for two scribbling friends of his had, though abortive, less painful consequences.

It is a curious and strange fact that the three most famous of American journalists were not on speaking terms with each other up to the time of their deaths. Bryant and Thurlow Weed had never spoken to each other. They had been arrayed against each other politically. Introducing the matter to Bryant one day, I said that the friends of both felt that the time had arrived for them at least to recognise each other. I said I happened to know that Mr. Weed was anxious to become on friendly terms with all his former political adversaries, and mentioned the fact of his having been a pall-bearer at the funeral of Horace Greeley, notwithstanding that they had not been on speaking terms. Mr. Bryant listened to me in silence. Then slowly raising his clear grey eyes to mine he said, "Blessed are the peacemakers—". He paused for a moment or two; when I said, "Well, for they shall see—" He suddenly arose from his seat and left me saying, "Not yet, not yet!" The last time I saw him alive was the fatal day he was overcome after his oration on the unveiling of the statue of Mazzini in Central Park. On his way home he called to see me about his contract with the publishers of his *History of the United States*, which he had left with me for inspection.

A BEST SELLER OF TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO

BY BRANDER MATTHEWS

WHEN we consider the dominating influence which women exerted upon fiction in the nineteenth century in every modern language, and when we recall the specific qualities which fit women for novel-writing—their minuteness of observation, their delicacy of perception, their habitual seeking for concealed motives, their subtlety of sentiment—we may well wonder that they did not earlier adventure themselves in an art for which they were admirably equipped. Yet it is not until long after the epic had modified itself into the romance and even until after the romance had begun to transform itself into the novel that women made bold to enter on a rivalry with men in this work, for they had special gifts of their own.

It is to be noted also that it was not until they took up the pen themselves to portray life from their divergent point of view that prose-fiction began to be peopled with its proper proportion of female characters. It is true that a woman was the exciting cause of the siege of Troy, and yet the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are essentially masculine narratives, written by a man about men and for men; and so is the *Æneid* also, although the pale image of deserted Dido emerges dimly in a single episode. The fair ladies who figure in the romances-of-chivalry occupy a large space in these impossible tales, but they are only sublimated shadows devoid of substance and reality. There are women a-plenty in the little novels of Boccaccio, but they are as summarily outlined as the men—even if Boccaccio's contemporary, Chaucer, had a keen eye for feminine foibles. Rabelais shrank from women with monkish dislike; and they in their turn have been repelled by the broad and robust fun of his sprawling story. Cervantes set before us men only; and in his care-

less masterpiece we catch only the fleeting flutter of a petticoat. When at last the hour was ripe for the romances-of-gallantry Mlle. de Scudéry proved herself at least as prolific as her brother and at least as extravagantly artificial and as elaborately tedious.

It was one of the contemporaries of Mlle. de Scudéry who was to reveal the ability of a woman to tell a story about a woman specially for other women. And we may hail Madame de La Fayette, the writer of the *Princess of Cleves*, as the earliest of women-novelists, the first in point of time, and only a little less than the first in point of achievement. We may call her, if we choose, the mother of the modern novel; and we can count among her children, Jane Austen and Maria Edgeworth, George Sand and George Eliot.

I

Marie-Magdeleine de la Vergne was born in Paris on March 18, 1634. She came of a good family; her father had friends at court, and her godmother was a favourite niece of Richelieu's. She was still a child when her father died; and she was only sixteen when her mother remarried. Her stepfather was the Chevalier de Sévigné, uncle of the Marquis de Sévigné, who died young and whose widow survived to reveal herself as an incomparable letter-writer. As a result of the mother's remarriage, the daughter became acquainted with Mme. de Sévigné, who was nearly ten years older; and their affinity of taste and of character caused this acquaintance to ripen speedily into a rich and enduring friendship. It was perhaps through their intimacy that the younger woman came to know Ménage, a scholar who posed as a man of the world and who delighted in the frequent composition of