FAMILY LIFE IN EARLY VICTORIAN PROSE FICTION

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THESIS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE HISTORY OF THE SUBJECT, AND THE METHOD AND PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

There is to my knowledge no available work on family life in Early Victorian prose fiction. There are many works on related subjects; of these, three are most significant. They are G. M. Young's Victorian England[1], C. W. Cunnington's Feminine Attitudes in the Nineteenth Century[2], and Amy Cruse's The Victorians and Their Books[3]. The first of these, Victorian England, is a compilation of chapters written by various persons, examining different aspects of Victorian England, and complemented by a long and excellent summary chapter by the editor, G. M. Young. The chapters entitled "Homes and Habits," written by Mrs. C. S. Peel, "Charity," by E. Lascelles, and "The Portrait of an Age," by G. M. Young, have the closest relation to the present study; but even these chapters do not pretend to make the kind of investigation that this study attempts. They have primarily an historical interest; they are a repository for a great deal of statistical information taken from many and various sources. The chapter on "Homes and Habits," for example, is replete with information about

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1. Young, G. M., Victorian England, London, Oxford University Press, H. Milford, 1936.

2. Cunnington, Cecil Willett, Feminine Attitudes in the Nineteenth Century, London, W. Heinemann, Ltd., 1935.

3. Cruse, Amy, The Victorians and Their Books, London, George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1935.

such things as plumbing, sanitation, furnishings, and rent. Their purpose seems to be largely descriptive.

The second book, Feminine Attitudes in the Nineteenth Century, is a sprightly, and even flippant, though substantial, discussion of the psychological constitution of the Victorian Woman during the whole of the Victorian period. It divides itself over-neatly, and perhaps artificially, into chapters dealing with the consequent decades, each decade being categorically described by an epithet. Its purpose seems to be to examine the manners and etiquette consequent upon the man-ruled society of Victorian England, and to show how they were evolved to give power, by Convention, to man-ruled Woman.

The third book, Amy Cruse's The Victorians and Their Books, is hard to classify--in a way it is a pot pourri. Drawing upon various literary sources and historical records, this book endeavors to be an historical and sociological study.[4] The chapters entitled "The Victorian Reader," "The World of Charlotte Yonge," "The Young Victorian's Library," "The Great Novelists and their Public," "Books from Mudie's," and "The Browns of England" are more closely related to the present study than is the rest of the book.

Many special studies of various aspects of fiction, criticism, economics, history, politics, and biography have, of course,

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4. Its purpose is the same as that of her books on earlier periods: The Shaping of English Literature, London, George G. Harrap and Co., 1927; and The Englishman and his Books in the Early Nineteenth Century, London, George G. Harrap and Co., 1930.

been useful as supplementary information. Among these are included works like Frances Russell's Satire in the Victorian Novel,[5] Matthew Rosa's The Silver-Fork School,[6] and various political, social, economic, and literary histories. Further mention of them here is unnecessary; they are included in the bibliographical lists.

I have limited this study, Family Life in Early Victorian Prose Fiction, in several ways. I have limited it in time to the Early Victorian period as defined by M. Cazamian in his Le Roman Social en Angleterre.[7] Roughly, this is the time between the early '30's of the Reform Bill and Poor Laws and the early '50's after the failure of the Chartist Movement in 1848 and just before the Crimean War.[8] The setting of exact dates is, of course, im-

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5. Russell, Frances Theresa, Satire in the Victorian Novel, N. Y., The Macmillan Co., 1920.

6. Rosa, Matthew Whiting, The Silver-Fork School, Novels of Fashion Preceding Vanity Fair, N. Y., Columbia University Press, 1936.

7. Cazamian, Louis François, Le Roman Social en Angleterre, Paris, Société Nouvelle de librairie et d'édition, 1904.

8. M. Cazamian has reasoned the termination of the Early Victorian period to be between 1846 and 1855:
"Si le Chartisme est terminé dès le milieu de 1848, les esprits, dans les classes dirigeantes, ne sont tranquillisés qu'en 1850 ou 1851. L'Exposition de 1851, qui donne à l'Angleterre le spectacle de sa richesse, est un facteur important de l'apaisement social. La guerre de Crimée, enfin, en 1854 et 1855, ouvre une phase de la vie publique dominée par la préoccupation des événements extérieurs. C'est donc entre 1846 et 1855 que se termine la 'early Victorian period.'"
Ibid., p. 2.

possible. Some of the material considered may lie a year or two outside these limits, and yet in manner, subject, and purpose belong in the period. At least one work considered, Samuel Butler's The Way of All Flesh,[9] although very useful to this study, was written half a century later; as a novel of reminiscence it is particularly elucidating. In general, however, I have limited my primary reading material to selected novels, reviews, and essays written in England, during the period, and about contemporary and domestic English life. The only exceptions to this restriction are Frederika Bremer's novel, The Neighbors,[10] about contemporary Swedish life, and Harriet Martineau's treatise on Society in America.[11] In each case there is a reason for the inclusion of the work. The popularity of Miss Bremer's novels in their English translation by Mary Howitt and the references made to them by the Early Victorian reviewers and critics attest to their importance. Although Miss Martineau's Society in America is descriptive of the society, laws, and customs of America, it is also highly descriptive of the society, laws, and customs of England; for Miss Martineau developed her treatise by comparison and contrast.

I have been limited in the number and choice of novels by

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9. Butler, Samuel, The Way of All Flesh (posthumous 1903), N. Y., Pocket Books, 1939.

10. Bremer, Frederika, The Neighbors, Howitt, Mary, trans., London, George Bell and Sons, 1901. (Preface date 1852.)

11. Martineau, Harriet, Society in America, London, Saunders and Otley, 1857.

their availability to me. Of the important authors, Dickens, Thackeray, Disraeli, Bulwer-Lytton, Mrs. Gaskell, Charles Kingsley, Anthony Trollope, and the three Brontës, I have studied all works written within and about the Early Victorian period in England. Of the lesser writers, Mrs. Gore, Lady Blessington, Lady Bulwer, Frances Trollope, Grace Aguilar, Mrs. Crowe, Mrs. Ellis, Mary Howitt, Charlotte Yonge, Theodore Hook, and Shirley Brooks, I have used representative novels available in the University of Illinois Library and in other libraries by inter-library loan. By reading reviews in periodicals of the day I have also informed myself about the subject matter and treatment of many other novels by these and other novelists. I found The Athenaeum magazine particularly useful in this respect; it contained summaries of the plots of very many popular novels not discussed in other periodicals.

I have limited my reading of reviews to those appearing in The Athenaeum, The North British Review, the Monthly Review, The Edinburgh Review, the Quarterly Review, Fraser's Magazine, and The New Monthly Magazine; and I have supplemented this investigation with reference to Miss Caroline Washburn's doctoral thesis The History from 1832 to 1860 of British Criticism of Narrative Prose Fiction.[12]

I have restricted my reading of treatises and essays to a few contemporary popular works, appearing either singly or in

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12. This study is available at the University of Illinois Library.

magazines: namely, scattered collateral material in the various magazines; Mrs. Ellis's The Family Monitor,[13] a collection of her very popular The Mothers of England, The Wives of England, The Daughters of England, etc.; Bulwer-Lytton's England and the English;[14] Thackeray's The Book of Snobs;[15] Harriet Martineau's Society in America; and Caroline Norton's English Laws for Women in the Nineteenth Century.[16]

I have limited myself in objectives. I have not tried to make an historical study of the Early Victorian family as it may have existed. I have studied family life in Early Victorian England only as it appeared in prose fiction and criticism; I have tried to discover, thereby, what the writers of the period thought the family consisted in, and what its problems and ideals were. I have tried, also, to discover what criticisms of family life they implied or stated.

To accomplish this purpose, I have tried to describe the Early Victorian family as it was presented in the novels, showing its membership, its occupations, its amusements, its duties, its philosophy. This I have tried to do largely by quoting passages

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13. Ellis, (Mrs.) Sarah, The Family Monitor, N. Y., E. Walker, 1848.

14. Lytton, Edward Bulwer-, England and the English, London, Richard Bentley, 1833, Second Edition.

15. Thackeray, W. M., The Book of Snobs, bound with Christmas Books, N. Y., A. L. Burt, n. d.

16. Norton, Hon. Mrs., Caroline, English Laws for Women in the Nineteenth Century, London, printed for private circulation, 1854.

from the novels; I have sought the general among the several, the principle among the examples. I have tried to show how various problems and principles of family life were used for plot material. And I have discussed the criticisms made in novels, reviews, and essays of this typical family. In this discussion I have distinguished between the criticisms which approved of the system, philosophy, or order of the typical family but decried abuses and aberrations within it; and the criticisms which in some degree directed themselves against the philosophy, order, or system, itself. And I have lastly considered these criticisms, and the counter-criticisms which they called forth, in the light of the contemporary reputation of the novel as a medium for the expression of ideas.

I have deemed this study, as I have limited it, worthy of treatment for two reasons. In the first place, the Early Victorian was very conscious of, interested in, and proud of the family as an English institution. Mrs. Ellis, at the beginning of her The Women of England, proudly said:

> It is the domestic character of England--the home comforts, and the fireside virtues for which she is so justly celebrated. These I hope to be able to speak of without presumption, as intimately associated with, and dependent upon, the moral feelings and habits of the women of this favored country.[17]

Bulwer-Lytton, earlier, at the outset of England and the English, attested:

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17. p. 1.

> But your Excellency [Prince Talleyrand to whom the work is addressed] has observed, that all amongst us, save those of the highest ranks, live very much alone. Our crowded parties are not society; we assemble all our acquaintances for the pleasure of saying nothing to them. "Les Anglais," says one of your countrymen, "les Anglais ont une infinité de ces petits usages de convention,--pour se dispenser de parler." Our main element is home; and if you believe our sentimentalists, we consider it a wonderful virtue to be unhappy and disagreeable everywhere else.18

And Charles Dickens, in one of his pleas for humaneness and benevolence, equated the love of home with the love of country:

> The man of high descent may love the halls and lands of his inheritance as a part of himself; as trophies of his birth and power, his associations with them are associations of pride and wealth and triumph; the poor man's attachment to the tenements he holds, which strangers have held before, and may tomorrow occupy again, has a worthier root, struck deep into a purer soil....
>
> Oh! if those who rule the destinies of nations would but remember this--if they would but think how hard it is for the very poor to have engendered in their hearts, that love of home from which all domestic virtues spring....In love of home, the love of country has its rise, and who are the truer patriots or the better in time of need--those who venerate the land, owning its wood, and stream, and earth, and all that they produce? or those who love the country, boasting not a foot of ground in all its wide domain?19

In the second place, the Early Victorian was interested in, and increasingly occupied with, prose fiction. Reading aloud in

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18. Vol. I., p. 11.

19. The Old Curiosity Shop, The Works of Charles Dickens, Vol. VIII, N. Y., Books, Inc., n.d., Cleartype Edition.

the family--from proper and decorous books, of course--was a regular part of family life.[20] It seems to me, therefore, that a study of what the Early Victorian authors had to say in approbation or in criticism of the family might add to an understanding of both the Early Victorian society and its literature.

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20. Witness the family readings in:
Yonge, Charlotte M., The Heir of Redclyffe, N.Y., E. P. Dutton and Co., n. d., Everyman's Library Edition, p. 87.
Brontè, Charlotte, Shirley, N. Y., The Mershon Co., n. d., pp. 70-75.
Gaskell, (Mrs.) Elizabeth Cleghorn, Cranford, N. Y., H. M. Caldwell Co., n. d. pp. 22-25.
For further testimony, see Amy Cruse's The Victorians and Their Books.

CHAPTER II

THE TYPICAL FAMILY: AN EXPOSITION OF ITS FORM, FUNCTION, AND PHILOSOPHY

To speak of a typical Early Victorian family is, of course, to speak of an hypothetical thing. There is at no age, as any judicious critic must admit, a typical, average, or representative anything. And yet one uses, frequently and felicitously, these very terms: representative, average, typical. One feels that they have meanings which are serviceable when both speaker and listener agree in understanding their limitations and imperfections. Perhaps a typical Early Victorian family never existed; one could not be sure. Certainly if it did exist, it was no more conscious of being typical than any modern family would be of being typical of the present period. There were many and very different kinds of families in the period under consideration. They were made up of people who partook in different degrees of intelligence, goodness, greed, priggishness, jealousy, and all the other many human attributes. Yet one may speak both intelligently and intelligibly of a typical Early Victorian family. One may do so because many ideas, attitudes, interests, beliefs, and objectives were held predominantly among all families, although they were certainly not held in common by all. While paying attention to the many varieties of English family life evident in the works of prose fiction studied, this present chapter attempts to define the typical family, to show its form and its function, and to discover the philosophy which guided it. In this attempt, it permits the

works of prose fiction themselves to speak as much as possible.

Two beliefs, so widely accepted that any contraversion of them was indeed a rarity, were the philosophical bases upon which the complex structure of the Early Victorian family was erected. The first belief was religious; and it existed even among those people whose outward life was not manifestly religious. It was that each person born into this world was a soul accountable to God, and that it was the duty of his parents to try to make him acceptable on earth to Society, which was God-ordained, and after death, to God in heaven.

Helen Huntingdon saw a duty to God imposed upon her by the birth of her child:

> "Now I am a wife: my bliss is sobered, but not destroyed; my hopes diminished, but not departed; my fears increased, but not yet thoroughly confirmed; and, thank Heaven, I am a mother too. God has sent me a soul to educate for heaven, and given me a new and calmer bliss, and stronger hopes to comfort me."[1]

Mrs. Hamilton, the exemplary mother in Home Influence, expressed her belief in the same religious duty in her words of instruction to Edward, her sister's child whom she had taken into her home after his mother's death:

> "...the only safety for the young--God's most Holy Word. The influences of your home are based on that alone, my Edward. They appear perhaps to the casual observer as only love, indulgence, peace,

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1. Brontë, Anne, The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, N. Y., The Mershon Co., n. d., p. 189.

> and the joy springing from innocent and happy hearts; but these are mere flowers springing from one immortal root. In God's Word alone is our safety...."[2]

Thereupon she gave him the Bible of her brother, Charles, to carry with him even as she had carried it with her all her life. Elsewhere the same Mrs. Hamilton enunciated the same principle in speaking to a child under suspicion for some mild misdemeanor:

> "I am not so unconscionable as to expect you to have no faults, my dear child; all I wish you to attend to, is more obedience to my commands...disobedience to me is also disobedience to God, for He has commanded you to obey your parents and guardians...."[3]

These are direct expressions evidencing the authors' consciousness of the principle, but an even stronger testimony to the universality of the principle is shown in the exposition and solution of various problems of plot and incident. It was this principle which gave importance to the task of strengthening Guy Morville's character;[4] to the reclaiming of erring Frank Hazeldean,[5] and Vivian Caxton;[6] to the devotion of Mary Raymond to her sadistic

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2. Aguilar, Grace, Home Influence, a Tale for Mothers and Daughters, N. Y., D. Appleton and Co., 1914, New edition. p. 429.

3. Ibid., p. 171.

4. Yonge, Charlotte, The Heir of Redclyffe.

5. Lytton, Edward Bulwer-, "Pisistratus Caxton," "My Novel" or Varieties in English Life, London, George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., n. d., The Stevenage Edition, Vols. I, II, III, 16-18 in series.

6. Lytton, Edward Bulwer-, The Caxtons, A Family Picture, London, George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., n. d., The Stevenage Edition, Vol. II.

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6. Lytton, Edward Bulwer-, The Caxtons, A Family Picture, London, George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., n. d., The Stevenage Edition, Vol. II.

husband;[7] to the succoring of the fallen Ruth;[8] and to the final remorse which settled upon Ralph Nickleby when he discovered the basely-abused Smike to be his own son.[9]

> Die Religion gibt ihm (the Early Victorian) Massstäbe, nach denen er seine Lebensfuhrung gestaltet und nach denen er das eigene und fremde Handeln beinteilt.[10]

The second belief, which was almost universally accepted, and upon which the complex structure of the Early Victorian family was erected, was that by divine ordinance man had been created a superior being to woman, and that society, therefore, was by divine ordinance to be masculine. In the novels themselves, as one would expect, enunciation of this principle was almost non-existant; it was a belief accepted rather than discussed. When it was enunci-

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7. Gore, (Mrs.), Catherine Grace Frances, Mary Raymond and Other Tales, London, Henry Colburn, 1838, Vol. I.

8. Gaskell, (Mrs.), Elizabeth Cleghorn, Ruth, N. Y., G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1906, Knutsford Edition of The Works of Mrs. Gaskell, Vol. III.

9. Dickens, Charles, The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby, N. Y., Books, Inc., n. d., The Works of Charles Dickens, Cleartype Edition, Vol. IX.

10. Lenz, Emma, Das victorianische Lebensideal dargestellt auf Grund der Romane, Tubingen, Christian Guide Press, 1933, p. 69.
See also Crotch, W. Walter, The Soul of Dickens, London, Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 1913, p. 73: "But Dickens was not content merely to point out that Society by failing to educate the young, was in reality breeding criminals. He struck a deeper note when he attacked the cardinal cause of the whole evil, the doctrine of child depravity which had obtained a firm hold upon the pastors and masters of the period. The idea of children then paramount was that of the Murdstones, who would not let David play with any other (sic) because they maintained 'all children to be a swarm of little vipers and held that they contaminated one another.'"

ated in novels, reviews and essays, it was enunciated as a counter-criticism against a plea for various womens' rights. As such it will be discussed later. A reading of any of the novels, however, makes manifestly clear the widespread acceptance of the idea. It shows that boys and men, their ideas and their actions, were the focus of the novelists' interest. Even when the novelist dealt seemingly with the problems and plights of a female character, he dealt with those problems and plights as they involved her relationship with man or men, generally as they concerned her marriage or her behavior as a wife. Caroline Helstone spoke the conventional belief when she said to Shirley:

> "Shirley, men and women are so different; they are in such a different position. Women have so few things to think about--men so many; you may have a friendship for a man, while he is almost indifferent to you. Much of what cheers your life may be dependent on him, while not a feeling or interest of moment in his eyes may have reference to you."[11]

Frances Trollope gave open recognition to it in her own voice in The Vicar of Wrexhill:

> Many female philippics have been penned, I believe, against that manly passion for superiority which leads our masters to covet in a companion chosen for life the temper of mind here described [utter dependence]; but I am tempted to think that this longing to possess a being that wants protection, far from demonstrating a disposition prone to tyranny, shows a nature disposed to love and to cherish, in a manner perfectly accordant to the most perfect beau idéal of married life.[12]

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11. Brontë, Charlotte, Shirley, p. 178.

12. Trollope, (Mrs.), Frances, The Vicar of Wrexhill, London, Richard Bentley, 1837, Vol. I, pp. 64-5.

But perhaps the amplest and clearest enunciation of the belief must be sought in a work of non-fiction. In The Wives of England, the very popular Mrs. Ellis stated:

> With gratitude we ought to acknowledge our belief, that morally and spiritually there is perfect equality between men and women; yet, in the character of a noble, enlightened, and truly good man, there is a power and a sublimity, so nearly approaching what we believe to be the nature and capacity of angels, that as no feeling can exceed, so no language can describe, the degrees of admiration and respect which the contemplation of such a character must excite.[13]

Even in the complaints of Mrs. Norton, whose notorious divorce proceedings and whose trials before English law evoked her startling and bitter English Laws for Women, there was a confession of her belief in the principle.

> "I believe in the natural superiority of man as I do in the existence of a God. The natural position of a woman is inferiority to man. Amen. That is a thing of God's appointing, not of man's choosing....I never pretended to the wild and ridiculous theory of equality."[14]

Consequently, the Early Victorian family, feeling more or less strongly its responsibility for making its members acceptable to Society and to God, and believing in the superiority of man over woman, sought to achieve efficiency by functioning in accordance with these beliefs. It was, first and foremost, masculine and authoritarian in its government. As Mrs. Ellis observed, it was "unquestionably the inalienable right of all men, whether ill

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13. p. 24.

14. Armstrong, Margaret, Fanny Kemble A Passionate Victorian, N.Y., The Macmillan Co., 1938, p. 204.

or well, rich or poor, wise or foolish, to be treated with deference, and made much of in their own houses."[15] When Charles Dickens, in his persistent crusade against unkindness and unlove, reflected the portrait of the Murdstone family in young David's eyes, he was, of course, bringing his reader to anger; but, the anger was directed at tyranny in its derogatory sense rather than at the idea of authority. For, aside from its criticism of abuse, the portrait was typical:

> Firmness, I may observe, was the grand quality on which both Mr. and Miss Murdstone took their stand....Mr. Murdstone was firm; nobody in his world was to be so firm as Mr. Murdstone; nobody else in his world was to be firm at all, for everybody was to be bent to his firmness. Miss Murdstone was an exception. She might be firm, but only by relationship, and in an inferior and tributary degree. My mother was another exception. She might be firm, and must be; but only in bearing their firmness, and firmly believing there was no other firmness upon earth.[16]

Even as each of God's creatures on earth was subordinate to God in heaven, so each member in a family was subordinate to a family lord. In such a family structure, the father was, of course, the most important member.[17] All other members of the

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15. Ellis, (Mrs.), The Wives of England, p. 28.

16. Dickens, Charles, The Personal History of David Copperfield the Younger, N. Y., Books, Inc., n. d., The Works of Charles Dickens, Cleartype Edition, Vol. I, p. 47.

17. Ellis, (Mrs.), The Wives of England, p. 32: "At home it is but fitting that the master of the house should be considered as entitled to the choice of every personal indulgence, unless indisposition or suffering on the part of the wife render such indulgences more properly her due; but even then they ought to be received as a favor, rather than claimed as a right."

family showed him deference, followed his will, and administered to his comforts. Such a typical father was John Pendennis:

> As for John Pendennis, as the father of the family, and that sort of thing, everybody had the greatest respect for him: and his orders were obeyed like those of the Medes and Persians. His hat was as well brushed, perhaps, as that of any man in this empire. His meals were served at the same minute every day, and woe to those who came late, as little Pen, a disorderly little rascal, sometimes did. Prayers were recited, his letters were read, his business dispatched, his stables and garden inspected, his hen-houses and kennel, his barn and pigstye visited, also at regular hours. After dinner, he always had a nap with the Globe newspaper on his knee, and his yellow bandana handkerchief on his face...mother and child were hushed and quiet when Mr. Pendennis walked into the drawing-room, his newspaper under his arm....[18]

Like John Pendennis, the typical father decided everything for his family--everything concerning money, occupation, education, worship, and amusement. Like Mrs. Harbottle's father, a bankrupt, or like Sir George Grindle, he might decide whom his daughter was to marry.[19] He might, like Mr. Cartwright, direct the making of his wife's will.[20] He might, like Theobald Pontifex in Butler's reminiscent novel, control the petty cash of the household and give

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18. Thackeray, William Makepeace, The History of Pendennis, his fortunes and misfortunes, his friends and his greatest enemy. N. Y., Thomas Y. Crowell and Co., n. d., Vol. I, p. 16.

19. Hook, Theodore, The Parson's Daughter; a Novel, London, Richard Bentley, 1835, Standard Novels Edition, No. XLVI, p. 26, and Fathers and Sons, New Monthly Magazine, Vol. LIX, (July, 1840), p. 291.

20. Trollope, Frances, The Vicar of Wrexhill, Vol. III, p. 77.

his wife an allowance for the expenditure of which he held her accountable.[21] He might, like Squire Hazeldean, determine the official family attitude towards a run-away son involved in a love affair.[22] He might, like Sir George Meddows, feel entitled to appropriate his daughter's private inheritance for his own use or abuse.[23] He might, like Mr. Home, determine to whom, and when, his daughter might be permitted to write letters.[24] He might, like Austin Caxton, determine whether or not his wife should suckle her child.[25] He might, like the kind Jacob, require his daughter each week to account to him for all expenditures made

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21. The Way of All Flesh, p. 82.

22. Lytton, Edward Bulwer-, My Novel, pp. 72, 158.

23. Trollope, (Mrs.), Frances, Charles Chesterfield; or, the Adventures of a Youth of Genius, Paris, Baudry's European Library, 1841, p. 314: "'Stop, Clara! Before you answer me in such an accent as that, 'cried Sir George, suddenly interrupting her, 'let me briefly tell you that the loan of the money which I have condescended to sue for rather than command--which, as a father, I unquestionably have the right to do--will be attended with not the slightest risk whatever.'"

24. Brontë, Charlotte, "Currer Bell," Villette, N. Y., The Mershon Co., n. d., p. 342.

25. Lytton, Edward Bulwer-, The Caxtons, p. 13: "'...By the bye, will my Neogilos be brought up like Hector or Astyanax--videlicet, nourished by its own mother or by a nurse?'

"'Which do you prefer, Mr. Caxton?' asked Mr. Squills .... 'In this I always deem it my duty to consult the wishes of the gentleman.'"

through her.[26] He might, like Denby, try to make his daughter "exemplify his idea of excellence and good government."[27] He was, in fact, the ultimate authority in all family matters.

And yet, without losing any of his dictatorial powers, he found it necessary to subdivide his authority for practical purposes. He could, like Mr. Bloomfield, expect his wife to keep house for him, and still reserve the right to criticize her for her way of buying fish.[28] He could, like Arthur Huntingdon, entrust the care and education of his small son to his wife, and, at his own will, and against his wife's, withdraw the son from her care and teach him to drink and swear with the men.[29] In general, he agreed with Mrs. Ellis that the duty of the wife was to be the mistress of the house -- a director or foreman who thought and ordered what her servants should do--always, of course, subject to

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26. Blessington, (Lady), Margaret Gardiner, The Governess, London, Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1839, Vol. I, p. 237: Jacob explained to Clara, whom he was befriending, how he treated his own daughter: "'I require even my daughter Rachael to render me an account, every week, of all disbursements made through her; so that thou, who art even as another daughter unto me...must become punctual and regular in all pecuniary transactions.'"

27. Gore, (Mrs.), Catherine Grace Frances, Ormington, or Cecil a Peer, London, T. and W. Boone, 1852, Second Edition, Vol. I, pp. 27-8.

28. Brontë, Anne, "Acton Bell," Agnes Grey, N. Y., Harper and Brothers, 1903, The Haworth Edition, Life and Works of the Sisters Brontë, Vol. V, pp. 377-9.

29. Brontë, Anne, The Tenant of Wildfell Hall. See also the similar situation in the Greville family in Home Influence by Grace Aguilar.

his will as pleasure.[30] And if he was an exemplary husband, "he was what man should be to woman ever: gentle and yet a guide."[31]

He might also subdivide his authority further among servants hired either by himself or by his wife at his desire; he might, like Rochester, hire a governess to teach his child, and then examine both child and governess himself in the evenings on the subjects of their day's study.[32]

Next in importance in the family was the eldest son, for it was to him that the properties, rights, and control of the family should pass upon his father's death. His birth into the world was a great event, and gave joy to his whole family, even to an old grandfather like Mr. Pontifex, who had been "seriously uneasy lest there should be a failure in the male line of his descendants...."[33] His birth into a family living on its own estate was celebrated with great pomp and ceremony by all the tenantry.[34] And when he grew up to young manhood, he was the family's darling. Like young Carson:

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30. Ellis, (Mrs.), The Wives of England, p. 85.

31. Disraeli, Benjamin, Earl of Beaconsfield, Sybil, or the Two Nations, N. Y., P. F. Collier and Son, n. d., p. 309.

32. Brontë, Charlotte, "Currer Bell," Jane Eyre, N. Y., Dodd, Mead and Co., 1927. p.

33. Butler, Samuel, The Way of All Flesh, pp. 84-5.

34. Gore, (Mrs.), Catherine Grace Frances, Mrs. Armytage; or, Female Domination, Paris, G. W. M. Reynolds, 1836, p. 128: When Mrs. Armytage learned that her son Arthur's child was a girl and not a male heir, she was disappointed. She decided to keep up appearance anyway; but the way in which

> He was the only son, and his sisters were proud of him; his father and mother were proud of him: he could not set up his judgment against theirs; he was proud of himself.[35]

As he matured, he began to share powers in the home, although he remained always subservient to his father. Like Reginald, he might "shoot up into independence," and show his mother that "according to the system of the present day, she had lessons to receive from her son. She, a woman, knew nothing of the world, as now constituted; he, a boy, was comparatively better instructed."[36] He might, like the model Hamilton boys, undertake some of the duties of the head of the house during his father's absence: protecting his mother and sisters, carving at the table, and advising and guiding the younger children.[37] Upon the death of his father, al-

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she curtailed the planned festivities was significant. "The disappointment of the poorer tenants was, however, of brief duration. Mrs. Armytage's attention was roused to the possibility that her mortification might become evident to the neighborhood, by a visit of congratulation from the inevitable proprietor of Mill-Hill; who mingled with his felicitations the expression of an earnest hope that the next child born at Holywell might be a boy. She accordingly gave orders that, although no bells were to be rung, nor beacon, nor bonfire to be kindled, all the expected gratuities should be bestowed, and all the preparations for festivities continued. The ox need not be roasted whole; but it might still be apportioned to the poor. After all, the little find their account in the ostentations of the great."

35. Gaskell, (Mrs.) Elizabeth Cleghorn, Mary Barton and Other Tales, London, Smith, Elder and Co., 1906, The Works of Mrs. Gaskell, Knutsford Edition, Vol. I, p. 76.

36. Gore, (Mrs.), Catherine Grace Frances, The Man of Fortune, London, Henry Colburn, 1842 Vol. I, p. 95.

37. Aguilar, Grace, Home Influence, p. 77.

though he might be but sixteen years old, like Arthur Pendennis, there sprang up in his breast "a sort of secret triumph and exultation. He was the chief now and lord. He was Pendennis; and all round about him were his servants and handmaids."[38] Just as at his birth, so at his coming of age, there was great celebration. Again, if he belonged to a family living on its own estate, there was celebration among the tenantry, who henceforth would recognize him as a man.[39] But even as a child, as a mere student under a governess or a tutor, and even though governed by his mother, he was looked upon as a man-to-be, and therefore superior to all other members of the family except his father. He was idolized by his mother and was generally, like Steerforth, aware of her adoration.[40] To a sweet, simple woman like Helen Pendennis, he was a promise of relief from the duty of heading her husbandless home:

> It pleased her (with that dismal pleasure which the idea of sacrificing themselves gives to certain women), to think of the day when she would give up all to Pen, and

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38. Thackeray, W. M., Pendennis, Vol. I, p. 26. See also Trollope, Frances, The Vicar of Wrexhill, Vol. I, p. 30. "The grief of Charles [just come of age--the day before] was that of a young, ardent, and most affectionate spirit; but his mother and sisters now seemed to hang upon him wholly, and the Being who alone can read all hearts only knew how deep was the sorrow he felt."

39. Disraeli, Benjamin, Earl of Beaconsfield, Tancred, London M. Walter Dunne, 1904, Earls Edition, Vol. I, p. 6. Trollope, Frances, The Vicar of Wrexhill, Vol. I, p. 6.

40. Dickens, Charles, David Copperfield, p. 282:
"'As you are in no hurry, then,' said Steerforth, 'come home with me to Highgate, and stay a day or two. You will be pleased with my mother--she is a little vain and prosy about me, but that you can forgive her--and she will be pleased with you.'"

> he should bring his wife home; and she would surrender the keys and the best bedroom, and go sit at the side of the table, and see him happy.[41]

From the younger brothers, and particularly from the sisters in the household, he received deference, as will be demonstrated later.

The next in importance in the family were the second, third, and fourth sons. Because they were men, they took precedence over the women of the family, but they were nevertheless definitely inferior to the first son, the family heir. They had to find some means of living; the heir did not. They had to seek their fortunes; the heir did not. As children, they paid deference to their eldest brother; they yielded to his will and judgment, because their parents had educated them to do so. Even as well-intentioned a person as Mr. Yorke, theoretically decrying partiality, unconsciously taught the conciliation of the heir.[42] As mature men, they felt

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41. Thackeray, W. M., Pendennis, Vol. I., p. 89.

42. Brontë, Charlotte, Shirley, p. 119: "He is crossed in the game-look at his scowl. Mr. Yorke sees it, and what does he say? In a low voice, he pleads: 'Mark and Martin, don't anger your brother.' And this is ever the tone adopted by both parents. Theoretically, they decry partiality; no rights of primogeniture are to be allowed in that house; but Matthew is never to be vexed, never to be opposed: they avert provocation from him as assiduously as they would avert fire from a barrel of gunpowder. 'Concede, conciliate,' is their motto wherever he is concerned. The republicans are fast making a tyrant of their own flesh and blood. This the younger scions know and feel, and at heart they all rebel against the injustice: they cannot read their parents' motives; they see only the difference of treatment. The dragon's-teeth are already sown among Mr. Yorke's young olive branches; discord will one day be the harvest."

the difference between themselves and the heir perhaps even more severely:

> "Why--my father was a gentleman," said Egremont in a hesitating tone, "and I was a younger son."
> "Ah!" said Gerard, "that is as bad as being a woman."[43]

They could expect little from the oldest brother other than his aid in obtaining commissions for them in the army or livings in the church,[44] and to him they paid deference as the head of the family-in-large.

The next in importance among the members of the family was the mother. Her primary function was to carry out the will of her husband and administer to his desires and his comforts, and she was usually content to serve in this capacity. She said that "any man who wishes to live in decent comfort with me as a husband must be able to control me."[45] When she explained to her son what he should expect of his wife, she was proud to boast of what she had been to his father:

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43. Disraeli, Benjamin, Sybil, p. 143.

44. Landon, Letitia E., Lady Anne Granard; or, Keeping Up Appearances, London, Henry Colburn, 1842, Vol. I, p. 235: "'Of course her eldest son gets her estates; the youngest will have nothing. They did very right to put him in the navy, for the father's services were great, and he ought to be pushed. That was a matter of chance, however, since Lord Meersbrook could have done nothing for him; he had been abroad ever since his father's death.'
Helen looked at Georgiana, and thought sons were very different to daughters; 'if she were as rich as Lord Meersbrook, Georgiana would have a fortune tomorrow. Dear Mary, too, who was so poorly, and so kind to everyone, how delightful it would be to make her independent!'"

45. Brontë, Charlotte, Shirley, p. 429.

> Then you must fall each into your proper place. You'll do your business, and she, if she's worthy of you, will do hers; but it's your business to please yourself, and hers to please you. I'm sure your poor dear father was as good a husband as ever lived, and after the first six months or so were over, I should as soon have expected him to fly, as to put himself out of his way to pleasure me. He always said I was a good wife, and did my duty; and he always did his, bless him![46]

Even Miss Matty, a member of the delightfully feminine society in Cranford, though neither wife nor mother, was ready to admit that: "a man has a sort of knowledge of what should be done in difficulties, that it is very pleasant to have one at hand ready to lean upon."[47] And, like Mrs. Pendennis, "she spoke about Mr. Pendennis (a worthy little gentleman enough, but there are others as good as he) with an awful reverence, as if he had been the Pope of Rome on his Throne, and she a cardinal kneeling at his feet, and giving him incense."[48] Like the wife of Sir Abraham, she could think her husband the best of husbands, and be not unhappy, although he rarely allowed her to enter his life, which was of the world, and although he did not share his confidences with her.[49] Like Helen Huntingdon, she could confide to her diary that she was glad to have her husband where she could minister to his needs, even though

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46. Brontë, Anne, The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, p. 44.

47. Gaskell, (Mrs.), Cranford, p. 265.

48. Thackeray, W. M., Pendennis, Vol. I, p. 19.

49. Trollope, Anthony, The Warden, N. Y. C., Pratt Institute Free Library, 1932, pp. 273-4.

he had previously perpetrated upon her and her child nearly all the crimes of which husbandhood and fatherhood were capable.[50] Indeed, her life was one of service to man; she was always dependent upon him except "in that state in which alone a woman ceases to be dependent--widowhood."[51] She owned no property, and could legally acquire none of her own. Everything that had been hers before her marriage, and everything that she acquired or produced thereafter--including children--belonged to her husband. Her duties included the bearing of children,[52] the direction of servants, the management of domestic economy, and the management of her children's early education. If her husband was a wise and understanding man, she might enjoy both freedom and power in the direction of the domestic economy.[53] She was aided by whatever servants she could afford--but, like Mrs. Grantley, "inspected her

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50. Brontë, Anne, The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, p. 117.

51. Lytton, Edward Bulwer-, Pelham or the Adventures of a Gentleman, London, George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., n. d., The Stevenage Edition, Vol. XXIV, p. 16.

52. "Currer Bell's 'Shirley'," The Edinburgh Review, Vol. XCI, (Jan., 1850), p. 115: "The grand function of women, it must always be recollected, is, and ever will be, Maternity: and this we regard not only as her distinctive characteristic, and most endearing charm, but as a high and holy office--the prolific source, not only of the best affections and virtues of which our nature is capable, but also of the wisest thoughtfulness, and most useful habits of observation, by which that nature can be elevated and adorned....All women are intended by Nature to be mothers...."

53. Lytton, Edward Bulwer-, My Novel, Vol. I, p. 271: Riccabocca was a wise man in this respect towards his wife, Jemima. He "secretly thought her extravagant, but, like a wise man, declined to look at the house bills, and ate his joint in unreproachful silence."

kitchen, though she had a first-rate housekeeper, with sixty pounds a year; and attended to the lessons of Florinda and Grizzel, though she had an excellent governess with thirty pounds a year."[54] And, like Mrs. Hamilton, she consulted with the governess of her children and directed her in their education.[55]

In addition to performing these practical duties by means of which a woman put into practice the will of her husband, the wife contributed to the welfare of the family by her exercise of delicacy, grace, ornament, patience, service--and the care of the sick. She "painted in water-colours and sang, and made card-racks and penholders, and was called an 'elegant, accomplished woman.'"[56] She "played well on the piano-forte, and better still upon the harp. Her voice, though not of the finest quality, was powerful, and she had been taught to make the best of it; her dancing was exceedingly admired; and she was one of the most accomplished caricaturists that ever sketched eyes, nose, and chin."[57] She exerted a moral influence upon her husband, who, in this mercenary world, was necessarily somewhat tainted by his daily encounters with society in the outer world; she brought him to church, for she

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54. Trollope, Anthony, The Warden, p. 124.

55. Aguilar, Grace, Home Influence, p. 335.

56. Lytton, Edward Bulwer-, My Novel, pp. 77-8. The above is a description of Mrs. Dale.

57. Trollope, (Mrs.), Frances, The Lottery of Marriage, a Novel, London, Henry Colburn, 1849, Vol. I, pp. 128-9. The above is a description of Cassandra de Laurie.

was quick to see his need for help.[58] She exerted a moral influence upon her children in their early years and in their youth; she shielded them from error and grief and guided them to well-being and happiness.[59] She influenced the taste and perception of her company by her refinement and charm which gave "a grace and flexibility to the intellect."[60] Finally, she was always prepared to exercise "woman's loviest attribute, that of a tender and utterly unselfish nurse."[61]

The daughters in the family were the next most important members, the eldest one enjoying a superiority over the younger ones. Like Miss Norleena, "as the eldest of the family, and natural representative of her mother during her indisposition," she would take full charge of the younger children, "hustling and slapping" them about so efficiently that her father would declare that "in understanding and behavior, that child was a woman."[62] Every daughter was expected implicitly to obey her parents, even to the extent of refusing to marry until her father's sanction had been given.[63] She was the helper and pupil of her mother, upon

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58. Ellis, (Mrs.), The Women of England, pp. 13-20.

59. Aguilar, Grace, Home Influence, preface, 1848.

60. Disraeli, Benjamin, Earl of Beaconsfield, Coningsby, or the New Generation, N. Y., R. F. Collier and Sons, n. d., p. 235.

61. Aguilar, Grace, Home Influence, p. 386.

62. Dickens, Charles, Nicholas Nickleby, p. 434.

63. Cunnington, C. W., Feminine Attitudes in the Nineteenth Century, pp. 81, 91.

whose pattern she modelled herself for future wifehood and motherhood. "Her life was mainly domestic. She regarded her mother with awe and her father with fear; the one inspired her with pity, and the other with meekness."[64] With her mother she made charitable visits to the less fortunate people in her parish teaching the young and caring for the old and sick. She ministered to the comforts of the men in the house in any ways she could devise.[65] She was accustomed "to fill an inferior place, to give up, to fall back, and to be as nothing in comparison with" her brothers.[66] Like poor little Bella, she might even be told to keep her young brother quiet by allowing him to continue his amusement of pulling her hair.[67] She might, like little Emmaline, believe it her duty to protect her brother by taking upon herself the blame for all his misdeeds; indeed, the problems resulting from such excessive and misguided devotion were the subject of about one third of at least one long novel.[68] Or, like Lucy Grant, she might constantly serve her brother whom her mother adored, because "To him, and to his good, she was taught to refer every action of her life."[69]

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64. Ibid., p. 111.

65. Lytton, Edward Bulwer-, The Caxtons, Vol. II, p. 557.

66. Ellis, (Mrs.), The Wives of England, p. 25.

67. Lytton, Rosina D. (Wheeler) Lady Bulwer, Cheveley or the Man of Honour, London, Edward Bull, 1839, Third Edition, Vol. II, p. 164.

68. Aguilar, Grace, Home Influence.

69. Ellis, (Mrs.), Sarah Stickney, Temper and Temperament; or, Varieties of Character, London, Fisher, Son, and Co., n. d. 1846, Vol. I, "The Managing Wife," p. 15.

Generally, like Jemima, she learned to pay deference to her brother's more practical and more capable mind; when in a small way she attempted something outside her proper sphere of action and within her brother's, such as the reading of the state of the share-market to her father, she discovered her limitations.[70] Certainly, like little Florence,[71] or Amy,[72] she devoted herself wholly to an ailing or invalid brother, and lavished her love upon him. Her life in the home was one of service; the goal she was expected to attain was marriage. Failure to marry made her a continued burden and responsibility to her parents, and afterwards, to her brothers, into the house of whom, like Miss Murdstone,[73] or Jemima Hazeldean,[74] she might be introduced with indifferent success.

Servants in the home, and especially those who had been employed many years, were considered almost as members of the family. A reviewer of the day defined their general status when he wrote:

> We speak, of course, with reference to those strong ties of family attachment which the many good and (if well treated) faithful servants exhibit towards the house in which they become domiciled.[75]

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70. Gaskell, (Mrs.), Ruth, p. 327.

71. Dickens, Charles, Dealings with the Firm of Dombey and Son, N. Y., Books, Inc., n. d., The Works of Charles Dickens, Cleartype Edition, Vol. XIV.

72. Yonge, Charlotte, Heir of Redclyffe.

73. Dickens, Charles, David Copperfield.

74. Lytton, Edward Bulwer-, My Novel.

75. "Maid Servants", Fraser's Magazine, Vol. XXVIII, (Nov., 1843), pp. 564-5.

Although displeased instead of pleased, Miss Martineau agreed that the English servant often felt the strong ties of family attachment:

> In England, servants have been so long accustomed to this subservience; it is so completely the established custom for the mistress to regulate their manners, their clothes, their intercourse with their friends, and many other things which they ought to manage for themselves, that it has become difficult to treat them any better.[76]

These servants, domiciled, and willing to think of themselves as part of the family must have represented a rather large part of the total population; for according to Mrs. Ellis, the families of the great mass of the population of England which was connected with trade and manufacture were restricted to the services of from one to four domestics.[77] Sometimes they gave advice and counsel to members of the family, as did the faithful old Sally when the problem of introducing Ruth to the Pensons' friends arose.[78] Sometimes, like the faithful Peggotty, they enjoyed power of both love and discipline over the young children.[79]

The governess, although hired as an educator and brought to live in the home, was of least rank in the family. Actually she was treated as a menial; even the servants, among whom she was

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76. Martineau, Harriet, Society in America, p. 143.

77. Ellis, (Mrs.), The Women of England, p. 8.

78. Gaskell, (Mrs.), Ruth.

79. Dickens, Charles, David Copperfield.

theoretically not classed, often snubbed and abused her. Like Clara, she might even have to endure "stale bread, salt butter, and skim milk, with bad tea," because of the meanness of the cook; if she complained of this treatment she might be informed that the lady of the house "never troubles her head, nor knows nothing whatsoever of the matter."[80]

Usually she had little power of discipline over her girl pupils; over her boy pupils she had even less. If these charges of hers were sufficiently spoiled to begin with, as they frequently were, she might be made more uncomfortable than usual; for then they might enjoy the sport of tormenting their governess. Like Agnes Grey, she might find that:

> Master Tom, not content with refusing to be ruled, must needs set up as a ruler, and manifested a determination to keep, not only his sisters, but his governess in order, by violent manual and pedal applications; and, as he was a tall, strong boy of his years, this occasioned no trifling inconvenience. A few sound boxes on the ear, on such occasions might have settled the matter easily enough; but as, in that case, he might make up some story to his mother which she would be sure to believe, as she had such unshaken faith in his veracity--though I had already discovered it to be by no means unimpeachable--I determined to refrain from striking him, even in self-defence; and, in his most violent moods, my only resource was to throw him on his back and hold his hands and feet till the frenzy was somewhat abated. To the difficulty of preventing him from doing what he ought not, was added that of forcing him to do what he ought. Often he would positively refuse to learn, or to repeat his lessons, or even to look at his book. Here, again, a good birch

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80. Blessington, (Lady), The Governess, Vol. I, p. 71.

> and might have been serviceable; but, as my powers were so limited, I must make the best use of what I had.[81]

Like Ruth Pinch, whom Tom Pinch rescued from her position as governess, she might find that the antagonism and interference of children, parents, and servants alike defeated any chance of success in her work.[82] She also learned that she was expected to do many things besides teach children. Like Clare, she might be expected to do needlework, and maid service for her mistress; to permit the amorous attentions of impetuous young men guests of the family; and to act as an intermuncio in the clandestine affairs of her employers.[83] Like Louisa, she might be required to lend her purse money at various times to her employer--who might completely forget the loan; to be "generally useful"; and "to carry all the shawls and umbrellas" whenever she walked with members of the family.[84] And, when the family travelled, she occupied a seat in a corner of the carriage with her back to the horses, or she sat outside the carriage--"when there was nothing to see, but much to

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81. Brontë, Anne, Agnes Grey, p. 380.

82. Dickens, Charles, The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit, Books, Inc., n. d., The Works of Charles Dickens, Cleartype Edition, Vol. II, p. 580, Tom explained Ruth's difficulties as a governess: "'She is as well bred, as well taught, as well qualified by nature to command respect, as any hirer of a governess you know. But when you place her at a disadvantage in reference to every servant in your house, how can you suppose, if you have the gift of common sense, that she is not in a tenfold worse position in reference to your daughters?'"

83. Blessington, (Lady), The Governess, Vol. II, pp. 145-6.

84. Ellis, (Mrs.), Temper and Temperament, "The Imprisoned Mind," Vol. II, pp. 25, 39.

be endured."[85] Her life was restricted almost wholly to her occupations within the home, for she was permitted few vacations; she was required to be available for duties at all times; she was paid very little above her board and room; she was not allowed to entertain visitors; she was restricted in her participation in activities even within the home which she served. She might find, like Ruth Pinch, that:

> The lady of the establishment was curious in the natural history and habits of the animal called Governess, and encouraged her daughters to report thereon whenever occasion served; which was, in reference to all parties concerned, very laudable, improving, and pleasant.[86]

Her position was certainly not an enviable one.

Just as the family itself was masculine and authoritarian in its government, so was the family-in-large to which the individual family belonged as a member and to which it looked for aid and preferment. Like the House of Monfort, the family-in-large often:

> made it a rule that all admitted to be members of the family should help each other; that the head of the House should never, if it could be avoided, suffer any of its branches to decay and wither into poverty. The House of Monfort also held it a duty to foster and make the most of every species of talent that could swell the influence or adorn the annals of the family. Having rank, having wealth, it sought also to secure intellect, and to knit together into solid union, throughout all ramifications of kinship and cousinhood, each variety of repute

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85. Ibid., p. 39.
See also Brontë, Anne, Agnes Grey, p. 423.

86. Dickens, Charles, Martin Chuzzlewit, p. 139.

> and power that could root the ancient tree more firmly in the land.[87]

Normally, the oldest son was possessor of the property, or of the estate if there was one, and was head of the family-in-large. As head of the family-in-large, he received deference from the people in the other member families, often from those much his senior in years. Like Barnes Newcome, he might be an odious person,[88] or like Arthur Pendennis, a thoroughly likeable one;[89] but in either case when he became head of the family, he received deference from his aunts, uncles, and cousins alike. Even the wealthy and haughty Mrs. Armytage herself, "strongly attached to her own family and its interests, and regarding Sir John Maudsley as head of the house, and heir-presumptive to Holywell in case of failure of her own issue, entertained a high regard for him and all his generation."[90]

Consciousness of the family-in-large, and the typical pride in family helped to secure the individual against complete disaster when his member family suffered misfortune; for the family-in-large supplied deficiencies within member families. In the family lacking a father, and having no son sufficiently grown to

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87. Lytton, Edward Bulwer-, What Will He Do With It?, London, George Routledge and Sons. Ltd., n. d., The Stevenage Edition, Vol. I, II, pp. 404-5, Vols. 27-28 in Series.

88. Thackeray, William Makepeace, The Newcomes, Memoirs of a Most Respectable Family, Boston, Estes and Larriat, 1883, Thackeray's Complete Works, Vol. I, The Peoples Edition, p. 241.

89. Thackeray, W. M., Pendennis.

90. Gore, (Mrs.), Mrs. Armytage, p. 47.

take his place, one or more brothers of the widow's husband advised and guided her. Thus, Major Pendennis was summoned from the comfort of his London life to aid Helen Pendennis when her very young son, Arthur, was on the verge of a mesalliance, to "entreat, command, the wretched child to give up this most deplorable resolution."[91] Thus, though with less affection and willingness, Ralph Nickleby arranged the destinies of his brother's widow and her two children, brought them to London, and attempted to free himself of their incumbrance by placing both Nicholas and Kate in positions where they could be self-supporting.[92]

Similarly, in a family lacking a mother, until the father remarried, one or more sisters of the man might assume the mother's position; often a sister was introduced into the home, the wife still living. Thus Ethel Newcome, despite her complete contempt for her brother Barnes, entered his home after his divorce had been granted, because she felt that she could be of service to Barnes's children.[93] Thus, also Mrs. Chick was established in the house of the dying Mrs. Dombey,[94] and Miss Murdstone in that of David's remarried mother.[95]

The family-in-large also aided or supported bachelor members

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91. Thackeray, W. M., Pendennis, Vol. I, p. 4.

92. Dickens, Charles, Nicholas Nickleby.

93. Thackeray, W. M., The Newcomes.

94. Dickens, Charles., Dombey and Son.

95. Dickens, Charles, David Copperfield.

like Augustus Orlevie,[96] maiden sisters like Jemima Hazeldean,[97] and orphaned nieces or nephews like Agnes Willoughby, Mary Raymond, Guy Morville, and David Copperfield.[98] Needy relatives of the wife very rarely, and then only by suffrance, were aided or supported by the family. The responsibility for them lay with the family to which the wife had belonged before her marriage. Thus, such a case as that of Uncle Jack, Mrs. Caxton's enthusiastic, impractical brother, is almost alone.[99]

The typical family, as a unit, observed the demands and requirements of the Church. "The Church, when allied with the State, assumed dominion not only over it [marriage] but over the Home as

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96. Trollope, Frances, The Lottery of Marriage. Julian, the heir, supported Augustus, his cousin, until his (Augustus's) marriage; after the marriage, Julian settled £ 400 a year upon him.

97. Lytton, Edward Bulwer-, My Novel. Squire Hazeldean, her brother, boarded her in his home rent free, gave her a dowry, and officiated at her wedding.

98. Trollope, (Mrs.), Frances, The Widow Barnaby, London, William Glaisher, n. d. Agnes was supported alternately by her great aunt Betsy and her aunt Barnaby.
Gore, (Mrs.), Mary Raymond. Mary was adopted by her uncle and married off as soon as possible.
Yonge, Charlotte, The Heir of Redclyffe. Guy was taken into the home of the Edmonstones and treated as one of their own children.
Dickens, Charles, David Copperfield. David was taken into the home of his great aunt Betsy Trotwood who later adopted him.

99. Lytton, Edward Bulwer-, The Caxtons. Uncle Jack was taken into Austin Caxton's home, supported, and treated as a member of the family.

well."[100] The daily reading of prayers by the head of the house before the assemblage of the entire family and their servants was typical, as represented in The Newcomes:

> I do not sneer at the purpose for which, at that chiming eight-o'clock bell, the household is called together. The urns are hissing, the plate is shining; the father of the house, standing up, reads from a gilt book for three or four minutes in a measured cadence. The members of the family are around the table in an attitude of decent reverence; the younger children whisper responses at their mother's knees; the governess worships a little apart; the maids and the large footmen are in a cluster before the chairs, the upper servants performing their devotion on the other side of the side-board; the nurse whisks about the unconscious last-born, and tosses it up and down during the ceremony.[101]

The whole family was religious in its church attendance; as Bulwer-Lytton noted:

> It appears (and this is highly satisfactory) by this evidence on Sir A. Agnew's Committee, that the sabbath is generally observed by all orders except the poorest, that churches are filled as soon as built, and that even those seats reserved for the working classes are usually thronged.[102]

Many a husband and wife, like Mr. and Mrs. Garnet, "went out to church every Sunday morning as punctually as the half-hour, and again in the evening as soon as they had had tea, taking care that the maid-servant--they had but one--went to church in the afternoon, about which she was always regularly questioned, even to the

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100. Russell, Frances, Satire in the Victorian Novel, pp. 181-2.

101. Thackeray, W. M., The Newcomes, p. 150.

102. Lytton, Edward Bulwer-, England and The English, Vol. I, p. 322.

text, so that they did their duty as Christians, these worthy people."[103] Even the servants were often required to join in the attendance.[104]

The women of the family performed offices of charity in the parish. Like Lady Everingham, they superintended schools, organized societies for relief, and gave their personal attention to "individual cases of suffering or misfortune," "melted the obdurate, inspired the slothful, consoled the afflicted, and animated with her smiles and ready phrase the energetic and the dutiful."[105] The young girl growing up in the family learned to "become serious and religious," "tend schools and visit the poor," and be "kind to her mother and brother."[106] Even a family whose women members were primarily interested in worldly wealth, respectability, and appearances, maintained the pretense of religious conformity. As haughty a woman as Lady Anne Granard, who kept up appearances at all costs, supplemented her regular and fashionable attendance at church by participation in the fanciest of all religious charity,

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103. Ellis, (Mrs.), "The Imprisoned Mind," Temper and Temperament, Vol. I, pp. 173-4.

104. Dickens, Charles, Nicholas Nickleby, p. 176. Tom, reading an advertizement for servants, noticed the requirements: "'Three serious footmen...Cook, housemaid, and nursemaid; each female servant required to join the Little Bethel Congregation three times every Sunday--with a serious footman. If the cook is more serious than the footman, she will be expected to improve the footman; if the footman is more serious than the cook, he will be expected to improve the cook.'"

105. Disraeli, Benjamin, Coningsby, p. 136.

106. Thackeray, W. M., Pendennis, Vol. II, p. 342.

the fancy fair[107]—which was about as useful as the intense missionary actions of a Mrs. Jellyby.[108]

The typical family strove to be conventional as well as pious, and therefore acceptable to Society.[109] It tried to live at its proper caste level; for to pretend above its rank was to question the ways of Providence, and was therefore sinful. The whole of the book, Lady Anne Granard, was directed against a woman's endeavor, not merely to rise in the world, but to live above her caste.[110] The most forceful expression of this acceptance of the

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107. Landon, L. E., Lady Anne Granard, Vol. II, p. 168, Lord Deersbrook's attorney described the fancy fair most aptly: "'A fancy fair is a new kind of charity, my lord; or, strictly speaking, a new mode of dispensing it, by employing the wits and fingers of our wives and daughters in making all sorts of fidfads, which turns your house into a Babel, sends your servants to Ackermann's, or the haberdasher's, ten times a day for coloured paper and pasteboard, fancy edging, beads and braid, card-racks and hand-screens, dolls' heads and purse-clasps--in short, things without end, as I know to my sorrow.'" For a detailed picture of a fancy fair, see Frances Trollope's The Vicar of Wrexhill.

108. Dickens, Charles, Bleak House, Books, Inc., n. d., The Works of Charles Dickens, Cleartype Edition, Vol. XIII.

109. Perhaps as good a definition of Society in its Early Victorian sense as any I know is the brief one in Frances Russell's Satire in the Victorian Novel, p. 181:
"By Society is meant that powerful but intangible influence that has a name but no local habitation. It is in effect a federation of homes, organized on the caste system. Known as 'fashionable,' or 'polite,' its concern is with the lighter side of man's life; with his recreation if a worker, or his amusement if a drone. In view of the fact that it is particularly the feminine domain, with the corollary that Woman's Place is in the Home, She, as a satirized class, belongs here as appropriately as anywhere."

110. Landon, L. E.

caste system, however, was not given by the novels, but by the political economy of the day. The overworked and underpaid laborers, child and female factory laborers, and the economic systems of laissez faire and laisser passer attested to an acceptance of a belief which novelists like Dickens (in Hard Times[111]), Charlotte Brontë (in Shirley), Disraeli (in Sybil), Mrs. Gaskell (in Mary Barton and Ruth), and Charles Kingsley (in Alton Locke and Cheap Clothes and Nasty),[112] cried loudly against as a diabolical idée fixe in the mind of Society.

To live below its rank was also to sin, and to be irresponsible to Society. Even such a mild and delightful society as that at Cranford prided itself on its aristocracy, and refused to associate with members of a shop-keeper, and hence lower class.[113] The ideal procedure was neither to presume, nor to neglect the duties becoming one's station, but to maintain one's rank or improve it. In the Society-conscious world of Early Victorian England, whose great deity was Mammon,[114] the nearest means of im-

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111. Dickens, Charles, Hard Times for These Times, N. Y., Books, Inc., n. d., The Works of Charles Dickens, Clear-type Edition, Vol. XII.

112. Kingsley, Charles, Alton Locke, Tailor and Poet, An Autobiography, London, Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1911. bound with Cheap Clothes and Nasty.

113. Gaskell, (Mrs.), Cranford, pp. 11, 21.

114. Lytton, Edward Bulwer-, England and the English, Vol. I, p. 120. As early as the beginning of the period under consideration, Lytton noted the Mammon worship which Thackeray, the Brontës, Kingsley, Carlyle, and many others were to declare against: "As the first impression the foreigner receives on entering England is that of the

proving the rest of one's family was marriage. Like Trevanion, a man with ambition might marry a fortune to begin his career as a statesman and then give his daughter in marriage in order to further his career by means of "the alliance of that house in England which is most necessary" to him.[115] As Thackeray wisely observed, the number of marriages made for the purpose of social elevation was appalling. In Pendennis, he said:

> And if every woman and man in this kingdom, who has sold her or himself for money or position, as Mr. Pendennis was about to do, would but purchase a copy of his memoirs, what tons of volumes Messrs. Smith, Elder, and Co., would sell.[116]

The romantic view of marriage for love was one which the novelist repeatedly had to justify. Convention thought the idea foolish; successful marriages were matters of cold reason, not of emotion. As the curate Malone said in agreeing with Moore:

> If there is one notion I hate more than another, it is that of marriage; I mean marriage in the vulgar, weak sense, as a mere matter of sentiment; two beggarly fools agreeing to unite their indigence by some fantastic tie of feeling--humbug! But an advantagious connection, such as can be formed in consonance with dignity of views, and permanancy of solid interests, is not so bad--eh?[117]

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evidence of wealth, so the first thing that strikes the moral inquirer into our social system is the respect in which wealth is held: in some countries Pleasure is the idol; in others, Glory, and the prouder desires of the world; but with us Money is the mightiest of all deities."

115. Lytton, Edward Bulwer-, The Caxtons, p. 263.

116. Vol. II, p. 358.

117. Brontë, Shirley, p. 19.

The typical family might well say "It is noble!" as did Mrs. Edmonstone when she thought that her nephew Philip was holding himself aloof and was attempting to avoid Laura because he found himself in love with her; she rich, he poor--a mere captain.[118]

In addition to living at its proper caste level, the individual family tried to make itself acceptable to Society by preserving what was called respectability, a term in very great use among the Early Victorians. According to a story entitled "Respectability. A Sketch," the respectable was the profitable;[119] according to Bulwer-Lytton, "the current meaning of 'respectability' may certainly exclude virtue, but never a decent sufficiency of wealth."[120] According to Disraeli, respectability was "realizing such an amount of what is termed Character by a hypocritical deference to the prejudices of the community as may enable them, at suitable times, and under convenient circumstances and disguises, to plunder the public."[121]

To preserve this respectability, the family had to do several very definite things, and to avoid doing others. It had to maintain financial stability. Father and sons had to avoid wastefulness, gaming, profligacy, and other vices which destroyed wealth.[122]

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118. Yonge, Charlotte, The Heir of Redclyffe, p. 139.

119. Fraser's, Vol. XVI, (Oct., 1837), p. 417.

120. England and The English, Vol. I, pp. 31-2.

121. Disraeli, Benjamin, Coningsby, p. 391.

122. Ellis, (Mrs.), The Wives of England, pp. 56, 60-63. According to Mrs. Ellis the two qualities in a husband of which the wife might have the greatest dread were speculating or gambling, and intemperance.

Young men like Guy Morville, Frank Hazeldean, and Samuel Poole had to be rescued from debt and dissipation.[123] The women in the family helped to maintain financial stability by avoiding extravagances and by practicing domestic economy. Like Miss Matty Jenkyns, they might practice economy in small matters as well as in large ones; they might be careful and chary in the use of candles.[124] And yet, the family had to keep up appearances--like Colonel Pompley, who "so successfully achieved the difficult art of uniting economy with show," that it was difficult to give "an idea of the extent to which Colonel Pompley made his income go."[125] All members of the family had to dress properly,[126] for dress was important for appearances; and in general they had to appear elegant and refined in all that they did. Like Miss Pole, they might modestly say of themselves, "I imagine we are none of us what may be called rich, though we all possess a genteel competency, suffi-

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123. In: Yonge, Charlotte, The Heir of Redclyffe.
Lytton, Edward Bulwer, My Novel and What Will He Do With It?

124. Gaskell, (Mrs.), Cranford, pp. 89-90.
See also Brontë, Anne, Agnes Grey, in which Agnes described the economies of her parents' home: p. 360: "Our clothes were mended, turned, and darned to the utmost verge of decency; our food, always plain, was now simplified to an unpreceded degree--except my father's favorite dishes...."

125. Lytton, Edward Bulwer-, My Novel, Vol. I, pp. 395-6.

126. Lytton, Edward Bulwer-, What Will He Do With It?, Vol. I, p. 131. Darrell reprimanded Lionel for not dressing for dinner:
"No, but let me not offend you if I take advantage of my years and our relationship to remark that a young man should be careful not to let himself down below the

cient for tastes that are elegant and refined, and would not, if they could, be vulgarly ostentatious."[127] The modest and discreet pleasure of feeling so respectable was one of the rewards of Respectability.

To preserve respectability, the family had to maintain a reputation of sexual morality. A woman not only lost caste irretrievably for herself by being free in love, like the helpless child Ruth, who had to suffer all her life for having been seduced and betrayed,[128] but she lost caste for her family as well. Of course, the family like the Avenels, used all means to avoid the disgrace, and used any lies or pretences which they thought might serve to prevent a loss of caste.[129] A woman also lost caste both

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standard of his own rank. If a king could bear to hear that he was only a ceremonial, a private gentleman may remember that there is but a ceremonial between himself and--his hatter!'"

127. Gaskell, (Mrs.), Cranford, pp. 283-4.

128. Gaskell, (Mrs.), Ruth. Ruth was sympathetically treated in the novel. Although she met friends in the Bensons, she was quickly lost, and cast out by the neighborhood, when her secret was at last discovered. Examples like Ruth and Mrs. Barton's sister (in the same author's Mary Barton) are few in the literature of the period, for fallen women were not proper subjects for any consideration. Even a pale picture like that of Nancy Sykes, (in Charles Dickens's The Adventures of Oliver Twist, N. Y. Books, Inc., n. d., The Works of Charles Dickens, Cleartype Edition, Vol. V.) as we shall see later, met with disapprobation.

129. Lytton, Edward Bulwer-, My Novel, Vol. II, p. 77: Lennie learned, after reading Avenel's letter, that he was the son of the dead Nora, sister to Jane whom he had all along thought his mother. He was embittered by the letter and swore that he would keep out of the Avenel's way and not sully their reputation. As it all turned out in the end--happily, of course--Nora had been married,

her own and that of her family--by even polite association with improper persons. Like Blanche Amory, she could not with impunity be seen talking to "men with whom no girl should have an intimacy," for "No good mother would let her daughter know those men, or admit them within her doors."[130] Not only, like Genevra, would she suffer by accepting presents from a man to whom she was not even engaged,[131] but, like Mary Barton, she had to remain modest and waiting even though the man was not likely to make a second declaration of love, because she had misunderstood and refused his first one.[132] If she was completely delicate and respectable, she was not forward even in her thoughts; she followed the advice which Helen's aunt gave her niece:

> "It is not, indeed, to be supposed that you would wish to marry any one, till you are asked; a girl's affections should never be won unsought. But when they are sought--when the citadel of the heart is fairly besieged--it is apt to surrender sooner than the owner is aware of, and often against

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but had died before her marriage had been disclosed to her family; her husband, a man of position, had not known of the birth of the child. When Nora's family, assuming Nora a fallen woman, had buried her, they had given the child to her sister who had passed it off as her own and her husband's. This had been done for the sake of respectability.

130. Thackeray, W. M., Pendennis, Vol. II, p. 309.

131. Brontë, Charlotte, Villette, p. 84.

132. Gaskell, (Mrs.), Mary Barton, pp. 151, 163, 201. Ultimately Mary Barton did receive another proposal from Jem, which she accepted eagerly. But she had long feared that she would not receive one, for she had denied him once. Even believing that her hopes were small, she felt that she could not take the iniative and explain herself to Jem.

> her better judgment, and in opposition to all her preconceived ideas of what she could have loved, unless she be extremely careful and discreet."[133]
>
> It was her duty, as a wife, to love her husband, but it was her duty, as a lady, to do so without passion.[134]

Although the men in the family were permitted some latitude in their sexual conduct, they were permitted no involvements because of this freedom, for an involvement entailed a loss of caste. When young Carson told Mary that he "thought we could be happy enough without marriage," he did not fear that his family might think or speak harshly about him; but when he proposed marriage to her because she would not yield to his proposals of illicit love, he could merely hope that "in a year or two my father will forgive me."[135] Like Mrs. Bellingham, a mother might tolerate her son's affair with a sixteen-year old girl, but be outraged at the very idea of a connection.

> We may as well drop all dispute as to the young woman's manners; but I suppose you do not mean to defend your connection with her; I suppose you are not so lost to all sense of propriety as to imagine it fit or desirable that your mother and this degraded girl should remain under the same roof, liable to meet at any hour of the day?"[136]

To preserve respectability, members of the family had to fulfil some intellectual requirements. Like Jane Bruff, each woman

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133. Brontë, Anne, The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, p. 103.

134. Cunnington, C. W., Feminine Attitudes in the Nineteenth Century, p. 108.

135. Gaskell, (Mrs.), Mary Barton, pp. 156-7.

136. Gaskell, (Mrs.), Ruth, p. 89.

in the house endeavored to be "perfectly well versed in all that is now considered absolutely essential to the education of a young lady...competent as a scholar, a linguist, an artist, a musician, and even if it came to that, as a 'philosopher'."[137] For just as it was always the woman's duty to charm the guests and visitors of the family, it was also her duty to entertain them. And, like Mrs. Sherrick, formerly a famous opera star, and now married to "a man of spirit" who absolutely forbade her to sing in public, she was more than welcome to perform for guests in her husband's home.[138] The men in the family were educated in the conventional way: first a tutor, then a Public School, then the University, and then a tour.[139]

To preserve respectability the family had to entertain properly, showing benevolence by its condescension to those beneath it, and modesty by its deference to those above it. The duty and the manner of entertaining requisite for respectability or gentility was a family matter, rather than an individual one.

> "A single man can lodge in a garret and dine on a herring; nobody knows, nobody cares. Let him marry, and he invites the world to witness where he lodges and how he dines. The first necessary a wife demands is the most ruinous, the most indefinite superfluity; it is Gentility according to what her neighbors call genteel. Gentility commences with the honeymoon;

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137. Hook, Fathers and Sons, New Monthly Magazine, Vol. LVIII, (Nov., 1840), p. 299.

138. Thackeray, W. M., The Newcomes, pp. 236-7.

139. See below, pp. 53-55.

> it is its shadow, and lengthens as the moon declines. Then the honey is all gone, your bride says: "We can have our tea without sugar when quite alone, love; but in case Gentility drop in, here's a bill for silver sugar-tongs!"140

During the Early Victorian period the family discovered that entertaining with dinners in the home was becoming increasingly more conventional, and whenever possible, it supplied itself with the services of an excellent cook for these dinners.[141] It often complemented these dinners with a dance, a musical, or merely an assembly, the success of the latter depending upon the individual brilliance of the several guests. Frequently, and particularly by people who wished to make a show, a lion was introduced to the company; any unusual, exotic, or notable person. The place of the lion in society was both criticized and satirized.[142] Conde-

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140. Lytton, Edward Bulwer-, What Will He Do With It?, Vol. I, pp. 475-6.

141. Disraeli, Benjamin, Tancred, Vol. I, p. 7. "The cooks are like the civil engineers, since the middle class have taken to giving dinners, the demand exceeds the supply."

142. London, L. L., Lady Anne Granard, Vol. I, p. 315.
"But she (Lady Anne) wants, of all things, some kind of lion, 'cried Helen,' a Turk, or a Rajah, dressed in satin, who eats with his fingers, or she would put up with a distinguished author, I believe, if she could get one; or the Chinese lady, or a Welch harper, if he had white, silky hair. She would rather have Sir William Honeywood Hales Courtenay than anybody, a great deal; but he is in prison, and they won't let him out, dear heart! That with his moustachios, his long beard, his richly embroidered crimson dress, and his Maltese cross and sword, he would be invaluable.'"
Other amusing satires upon the social lion may be found in Trollope's Charles Chesterfield, Blessington's The Governess and Thackeray's The Newcomes.

scension to inferiors, too, was necessary, for kindly condescension was a certain indication of gentility. It was graceful "to assume the dignified, yet patronizing attitude, to which none but the leaders in society have any right."[143] Like Mrs. Nickleby, the whole family should take the initiative in recognizing its inferiors, thereby putting the inferiors at their ease and showing them that it was "willing to take notice of" them.[144] Conversely, though of course without presuming, it should put itself in a position to be taken notice of by its superiors.

Having very definite objectives for itself and its members, and feeling the strength and right of Convention, the family required a conventional system of education for its children. At home, both young boys and girls were taught simple reading and writing, the rudiments of foreign languages, moral precepts, and miscellaneous matters by their governess, who instructed them according to the directions of their mother. In the home of an average well-to-do family, like the Murrays, the parents employed a governess to educate their children in the pursuance of definite and somewhat superficial objectives:

> For the girls she [Mrs. Murray] seemed anxious only to render them as superficially attractive and showily accomplished as they could possibly be made, without present trouble or discomfort to themselves; and I was to act accordingly--to study and strive to

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143. Trollope, Frances, The Lottery of Marriage, Vol. II, p. 3.

144. Dickens, Charles, Nicholas Nickleby, p. 550.

> ...mure and skills, instruct, refine, and polish, with the least possible exertion on their part, and no exercise of authority on mine. With regard to the two boys, it was much the same; only instead of accomplishments, it was to get the greatest possible quantity of Latin grammar and Valpy's Delectus into their heads, in order to fit them for school--the greatest possible quantity at least without trouble to themselves.[145]

The girls in such a family were taught whatever their governess could teach of the polite accomplishments; their purpose of the education was to make them charming, polished, and graceful in society; the boys were taught at home merely in preparation for the later conventional phases of their education at school and university. To this home education for girls, separate instruction by the mother and even by the father and brother might be added, if, like Blanche, the girl was favored by an interested and capable family.[146] To the home education for boys was added instruction in

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145. Bronte, Anne, Agnes Grey, p. 416

146. Lytton, Edward Bulwer-, The Caxtons, pp. 361-2.
"My father has had to rummage his library for books, to feed (or extinguish) her desire for 'farther information;' and has promised lessons in French and Italian--at some golden time in the shadowy 'By-and-By' which are received so gratefully that one might think Blanche mistook Télémaque and Novelle Morali for baby-houses and dolls. Heaven send her through French and Italian with better success than attended Mr. Caxton's lessons in Greek to Pisistratus! She has an ear for music, which my mother, who is not a bad judge, declares to be exquisite. Luckily there is an old Italian settled in a town ten miles off who is said to be an excellent music-master, and who comes the round of the neighboring squirearchy twice a week. I have taught her to draw...and she has already taken a sketch from nature, which, barring the perspective, is not so amiss; indeed, she has caught the notion of 'idealising' (which promises future originality) from her own natural instincts...."

strictly masculine occupations, like hunting and riding, so that, like Guy Morville, the young boy would be an accomplished young gentleman, and therefore a source of pride to the head of the house, even before he went away to school.[147]

Many girls received no secondary education other than a continuance and extension of the home education which they had received as children, their governess, if capable like Agnes Grey, remaining with them as both instructor and companion until the time of their marriages.[148] In such cases, the polite accomplishments were extended to include singing, playing on the piano or the harp, needlework, painting, modern languages, botany, conchology, and all the other adornments which have been mentioned already as the requisites of feminine gentility. Some girls, however, were sent to day schools or boarding schools for their education, sometimes entering quite young. Frequently orphans and recalcitrant children, like Jane Eyre and Emmeline Fortescue, were sent to boarding schools to be got out of the way.[149] Illegitimate daughters, like Barnes Newcome's children by Mrs. Delacy, and like the lovable Esther Summerson, were sent away to school for the sake of appearances, and for the purpose of giving them an education by

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147. Yonge, Charlotte, The Heir of Redclyffe.

148. Brontë, Anne, Agnes Grey.

149. Brontë, Charlotte, Jane Eyre., Jane was sent to a boarding school because her aunt to whom she had fallen charge resented her, illtreated her, and therefore found her recalcitrant.
Aguilar, Grace, Home Influence. Emmeline was just barely saved from being sent to a very rigorous girls' school because of apparent recalcitrancy.

means of which they could support themselves later on as governesses.[150] In fact, the practise of educating illegitimate daughters to be governesses was so common that Charlotte Brontë allowed one of her haughty characters to defend the production of female bastards on the grounds of utility.[151] Wealthy parents, and indeed many parents who were not wealthy, sent their girls to fashionable schools, although a reaction against the fashionable girls' school was nascent. At these schools, usually combinations of day and boarding establishments, like Miss Monflather's Establishment, the girls were taught the usual accomplishments suitable for young ladies; meanwhile they were protected from the world, and particularly from men, until they should be ready to make their debuts to Society.[152]

The secondary education of the boy of the family followed a conventional pattern. After leaving his governess, he began work with a tutor in order to prepare himself for school. This tutor

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150. Thackeray, W. M. The Newcomes, p. 316.
Dickens, Charles, Bleak House, p. 20.

151. Brontë, Charlotte, Shirley, p. 295:
"'I remember,' continued Mrs. Pyror, after a pause, 'another of Miss H's observations, which she would utter with quite a grand air. "WE," she would say--"WE need the imprudencies, extravagances, mistakes, and crimes of a certain number of fathers to sow the seed from which WE reap the harvest of governesses. The daughters of tradespeople, however well educated, must necessarily be underbred, and as such unfit to be inmates of OUR dwellings or guardians of OUR children's minds and persons. WE shall ever prefer to place those about OUR offspring, who have been born and bred with somewhat of the same refinement as OURSELVES"'."

152. Dickens, Charles, The Old Curiosity Shop, pp. 220-225.

might be a local person like Richard Westbrook,[153] or Parson Dale,[154] or a young man especially employed to teach him, like Louis Moore.[155] The tutor's duty, in any event, was to qualify the boy for school. At school, the boy did not receive a solid or useful education. He learned to construe a little Latin and Greek, without necessarily becoming proficient in either language, and to recite some scripture lessons. Under good conditions, at the end of five or six years at school, he would have progressed to be "a fine scholar, and have at least as much classical learning as a gentleman in the world need possess."[156] At school he formed friendships. His association with other boys of reputable rank was generally considered the most worthwhile part of his school education; not only was it supposed to teach him sportsmanship, but also it was supposed to enable him to make advantageous connections, for at school he was supposed to learn to be a good leader and a gentleman.[157] These suppositions about the Public School made the typical family exert itself to give its boys a school education as conventionally fashionable as it possibly could. It was because these very beliefs were current and effective that even Millbank, "whose opinions were of a very democratic bent, sent his son to Eton, although he disapproved of the system

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153. Trollope, Frances, Charles Chesterfield.

154. Lytton, Edward Bulwer-, My Novel.

155. Brontë, Charlotte, Shirley.

156. Thackeray, W. M., The Newcomes, p. 57.

157. Ellis, (Mrs.), Temper and Temperament, "The Imprisoned

of education there."[158]

At the university, which differed from the Public School only in degree, the boy continued his classical education because it was "a very admirable thing, and one which all gentlemen should enjoy."[159] That is to say, he continued studies in "Greek, Latin, and French, mathematics and rhetoric."[160] In addition, he complemented his education by visits with friends during the vacations, and, if possible, by a continental tour after graduation. For, as Monmouth pointed out to Coningsby, "there were two educations, one which his position required, and another which was demanded by the world."[161] His education completed, the young man was then ready to be married and to become the head of a typical Early Victorian family.

The works of prose fiction from which most of the foregoing quotations have been taken illustrate many aspects of Early Victorian family life. They concern themselves with many kinds of families, and with families belonging to different social groups. And yet, I think, they define the typical family at the same time. That is to say, they indicate what structure and philosophy were

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Mind," Vol. I, p. 195: "He (Samson Garnet) had been sent early to school, and to a good school too; for, being an only child, his parents thought their money well bestowed in making him a gentleman."

158. Disraeli, Benjamin, Coningsby, p. 42.

159. Ibid., p. 185.

160. Gore, (Mrs.), The Man of Fortune, p. 140.

161. Disraeli, Benjamin, Coningsby, p. 185.

common to all families and were approved by Society. They demonstrate that the typical family believed that it was ordained by God to be masculine and authoritarian in government, and subservient to, and dependent upon, Society. They demonstrate further that it lived conventionally and conservatively, and worshiped Wealth, Rank, and Respectability on earth.

CHAPTER III

CONSERVATIVE CRITICISM OF FAMILY LIFE

The typical Early Victorian family as described in the preceding pages represents what the Early Victorian thought was the ideal. Every conservative Englishman then wished to make his family conform to that ideal. But, of course, he was not always successful; he was human, and was subject to human error. Consequently, even the man who accepted the institution of the typical family as right and desirable was aware that individual abuses often disrupted the family order. What was the fault? Why did the family suffer? What could be done? Such were the questions he asked. And he wanted them answered, for he wanted to be able to restore order. How did the novelist, the reviewer, the essayist help him? What answers did they give? What were their criticisms?

Most of the Early Victorian novels of family life approved of the typical family; they approved of its form and structure, and they approved of the philosophy which guided it. They used the typical family as a focus not only of interest, but also of moral purpose.[1] That is to say, they used it as a standard by which to measure the individual families whose histories they told: they compared and contrasted the happy, conventional, typical, family

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1. Washburn, Caroline, The History from 1832 to 1860 of British Criticism of Narrative Prose Fiction. Miss Washburn has demonstrated that the demand of the critics throughout this part of the nineteenth century was for realism and morality in fiction.

with the unhappy, disrupted family. Consequently, the novels were much alike in structure; this formula admitted of only two main patterns. One pattern showed the inevitable tragedy which resulted when a conventional family suffered disruption or disorganization; the other pattern showed the happiness and serenity which resulted when a disorganized or disrupted family was made whole and conventional again.

The tragic solution of the main problem in Mrs. Armytage, for example, gave emphasis to Mrs. Gore's belief in the conventional family order. Mrs. Armytage, a proud, domineering woman, continued in control of her grown children and the family fortune and estate, instead of yielding the headship of the family to her son Arthur, as Convention would have required. The results were tragic, for the ultimate restoration of the normal order came too late: the daughter died of a broken heart, the son and his wife were made unhappy, and ultimately Mrs. Armytage herself died deeply repentent.[2] On the other hand, the happy solution of the problems of the Hazeldeans was accomplished by the restoration of the typical order. The son, away from his parents, was led astray; he gambled, fell into the hands of money-lenders, signed notes against his expectations of inheritance, and finally became involved with a

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2. Gore, (Mrs.), Mrs. Armytage.
A similar tragedy due to a similar cause was expressed in Frances Trollope's The Vicar of Wrexhill in which tragedy was the result of inheritance being left to a woman, naturally weak and gullible, instead of to the young son just of age. Although the solution at the very end restored the family order, again it came late and had to come at the expense of the Mother's repentence and death.

woman. He reformed in time, however, and was rescued from his perils. At last he brought happiness to himself and to his family by returning to them and by marrying the daughter of a neighboring family.[3] Of course, the solution of every problem in every novel was not so pat as these examples might imply. In fact, a novel made up wholly of pat solutions, happy or tragic, was almost invariably a poor novel. And yet the formula really was general. Even the authors of better novels used it less obviously. Instead of melodrama and pointed moral lessons, they substituted realism and subtly implied moral lessons.

Early Victorian novels of family life, although they accepted the typical family, were critical in that they exposed abuses and aberrations within it. The number and kind of abuses and aberrations which they exposed were not many, but they were much reiterated.

One group of criticisms concerned the family-in-large--particularly with respect to its duties towards dependents, with respect to matters of inheritance, and with respect to the family reputation in Society. Novelists made frequent criticism, both openly and by implication, of the meanness often displayed by the family in the performance of its obligations towards relatives, particularly towards orphaned children. Mrs. Gore blamed Sir Charles and Lady Raymond, for example, because they neglected a family duty to their niece:

> A sense of duty had determined Sir Charles,

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3. Lytton, Edward Bulwer-, My Novel.

> in the first instance, to become the guardian of his orphan niece; and a sense of duty continually reminded Lady Raymond that a girl possessed of no more than three thousand pounds must not be brought up with expensive habits or ambitious pretensions. Mary accordingly ran little chance of being spoiled in Brood Street or at Farley Manor; she was snubbed by the governess, slighted by her cousins, and sneered at by the upper servants; though pointed out by the Raymonds to strangers as "a very sweet girl, whom we regard as one of our own."[4]

Bulwer-Lytton enlisted his readers against Mrs. Avenel when he allowed good Parson Dale to try in vain to persuade her to pay half of Lennie's expenses at college--Lennie was her grandchild, mistakenly thought illegitimate. Parson Dale promised to pay the other half himself, but Mrs. Avenel's answer was:

> "I say I will provide for him. I say that you may 'prentice' him in any distant town, and by and by we will stock a shop for him. What would you have more, sir, from folks like us, who have kept shop ourselves? It ain't reasonable what you ask, sir."[5]

Charlotte Brontë vigorously blamed Jane Eyre's aunt, Mrs. Reed, for her meanness in disposing of her niece.[6] She also blamed Lord Tynedale and Mr. Seacombe for their meanness and their reluctance to educate their sister's orphaned child, William Crimsworth.[7]

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4. Gore, (Mrs.), Mary Raymond, pp. 6-7.

5. My Novel, Vol. I., pp. 312-313.

6. Jane Eyre.

7. Brontë, Charlotte, "Currer Bell," The Professor, N. Y., The Mershon Co., n. d., p. 3: "My uncle Crimsworth, an astute mercantile man, took the opportunity of writing a fierce letter to the candidate, stating that if he and Lord Tynedale did not consent to do something toward the

To this list of persons criticized for similar abuse or neglectfulness many more might be added. Dickens censured Ralph Nickleby[8] and the Murdstones[9] for their meanness and neglect, and lauded by contrast John Jarndyce,[10] and Betsy Trotwood[11] for their magnanimity and benevolence as guardians. Frances Trollope approved the Mobrays for taking Rosalind Torrington into their home as one of their own children,[12] and disapproved Martha Barnaby for taking her niece Agnes Willoughby into her home and then treating her as a menial.[13] Grace Aguilar highly applauded the exemplary Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton for caring for their orphaned nephew and niece exactly as they cared for their own children.[14]

Two other and very important problems of the family and of the family-in-large involved inheritance. One of these concerned expectations. Society greatly esteemed a man of rank in the fam-

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support of their sister's orphan child, he would expose their relentless and malignant conduct toward that sister, and do his best to turn the circumstances against Mr. Beaconbe's election. That gentleman and Lord T. knew well enough that the Crimsworths were an unscrupulous and determined race; they knew also that they had influence in the borough of X----; and, making a virtue of necessity, they consented to defray the expenses of my education."

8. Nicholas Nickleby.

9. David Copperfield.

10. Bleak House.

11. David Copperfield.

12. The Vicar of Wrexhill.

13. The Widow Barnaby.

14. Home Influence.

ily, that is, the man who would inherit both title and money; but it emphatically censured a man who reckoned openly, or at least not discreetly, on his expectations. With the wisdom of Sidonia, the family might say "I hope he does not dream of inheritance.... 'Tis the most enervating of all visions."[15] For, like Frank Hazeldean, who signed post obits to a usurer in order to disembarrass himself of debts, a young man, by counting upon his expectations, could bring only grief to his family.[16] Even a family itself was censured for living upon its expectations. Like the Kenwigses, the members of a family were wrong to calculate upon an uncle's will for future preferment, and, like the Kenwigses, they might be deemed worthy of that inheritance only after they had ceased to anticipate it.[17] Like the Pecksniffs, ever expectatious,

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15. Disraeli, Benjamin, Coningsby, p. 206.

16. Lytton, Edward Bulwer-, My Novel, Frank's fault was one of necessity, as he thought, and finally admitted a happy solution after much distress. The following dialogue showed the effect of such an idea upon the good Squire: Vol. II, pp. 191-2: "The Squire pressed his son to his heart--heart so large, that it seemed to fill the whole width under his broadcloth.
'My dear Frank,' said he, half blubbering, 'it is not the money; but you see, it so vexes your poor mother; you must be careful in future, and, zounds, boy, it will be all yours one day; only don't calculate on it; I could not bear that--I could not indeed.'
'Calculate!' cried Frank. 'Oh, sir, can you think it?'"

17. Dickens, Charles, Nicholas Nickleby, Mr. Kenwigs's feelings upon Mr. Lillyvick's marriage--which, of course, destroyed all expectations--were humorously touching. p. 649:
"'My pleasantest feeling, all the time that child was expected,' said Mr. Kenwigs, mournfully, ' was a thinking, 'If it's a boy, as I hope it may be; for I have heard its uncle Lillyvick say again and again he would prefer our

they might be justly punished with severe rebuke and shame, as well as disappointment.[18]

A second criticism involving inheritance demonstrated the impropriety and unwisdom of bequeathing wealth and estate to an incapable person, generally a woman. Mr. Mowbray, for example, was wrong to will his wealth and property to his wife. He thought that because he had been penniless and his wife had been wealthy before their marriage that in justice he should make her his heir. But such a will was wrong; it was unconventional. And Frances Trollope, like Sir Gilbert Harrington, wanted the reader to know that it was. Mrs. Mowbray was not competent to be the head of her family, just as Mrs. Armytage was not competent to be the head of hers.[19] She remarried, becoming the wife of a demoniacal vicar. To him she gave obedience, and at his request willed all her property to him. Dire tragedy for her children was averted, however, by Sir Gilbert's intercession, just before her death; Sir Gilbert had her make out a new will in favor of her son Charles. The family order was thus restored.[20]

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having a boy next, if it's a boy, what will his uncle Lillyvick say? What will he like him to be called? Will he be Peter, or Alexander, or Pompey, or Diorgeenes, or what will he be?'...when I see him such an infant as he is, and think that uncle Lillyvick, as was once a going to be so fond of him, has withdrawed himself away, such a feeling of wengeance comes over me as no language can depicter, and I feel as if even that holy babe was a telling me to hate him.'"

18. Dickens, Martin Chuzzlewit.

19. Gore, (Mrs.), Mrs. Armytage.

20. The Vicar of Wrexhill. The account of Mowbray's will is in Vol. I, p. 104.

The exemplary hero, Guy Morville, wrote a will which Miss Yonge wished her readers to admire, a will both proper and judicious, and observant of the interests of the family-in-large. Dying, and not knowing whether his pregnant wife would give birth to a boy or a girl, he made a provisional settlement. The most significant part of the settlement was that in the event of a male child the estates and properties would go to the son under his mother's guardianship, but that in the event of a girl child, the estates would go to Guy's cousin Philip, and a sum of money would be settled upon the mother and daughter.[21]

Another whole group of criticisms involved the family and society, directing its attack chiefly upon pretension, fashion-following, and the struggle to keep up appearances. The whole of the book Lady Anne Granard, or Keeping up Appearances was a criticism of a family abuse--social hypocrisy. Although the criticism of the haughtly Lady Anne was softened a little by her final suffering and partial repentence, most of the novel sharply attacked her for various practises by means of which she managed to keep up appearances.[22] The same criticism was stated succintly by

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21. Heir of Redclyffe, p. 463. Amibel was glad of these arrangements because she objected to the idea of rearing a daughter to be a wealthy heiress.
For a similar reason, Mrs. Trollope (in The Lottery of Marriage) disapproved of the will which gave Mrs. Codrington control of a large estate inherited by her daughter. In this case, the woman sought to dissipate the income on herself while hoping to make a remarriage before her daughter's coming of age.

22. Landon, Letitia. Lady Anne skimped on household expenditures: she underheated her house; she underclothed her children. She also borrowed money with no intention of repaying it; she ignored the bills of tradesmen.

Dickens in a description of Mr. Halderton:

> A few successful speculations had raised him from a situation of obscurity and comparative poverty, to a state of affluence. As frequently happens in such cases, the ideas of himself and his family became elevated to an extraordinary pitch as their means increased; they affected fashion, taste, and many other fooleries, in imitation of their betters, and had a very decided and becoming horror of anything which could, by possibility, be considered low. He was hospitable from ostentation, illiberal from ignorance, and prejudiced from conceit. Egotism and the love of display induced him to keep an excellent table: convenience, and a love of good things of this life, ensured him plenty of guests.[23]

Charlotte Brontë generalized upon this particular abuse and implied that it was a common one:

> "Living costs little," said I to myself," in this economical town of Villette, where people are more sensible than I understand they are in dear old England--infinitely less worried about appearances, and less emulous of display--where nobody is in the least ashamed to be quite as homely and saving as he finds convenient. House-rent, in a prudently chosen situation, need not be high."[24]

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23. Dickens, Charles, Sketches by Boz, N. Y., Books, Inc., n. d., The Works of Charles Dickens, Cleartype Edition, Vol. XI, p. 349.

24. Villette, p. 328. Again in The Professor, Miss Brontë compared the Belgian with the English household to the latter's disadvantage for the same reason, pp 144-5: "I have seen a degree of sense in the modest arrangement of one homely Belgian household, that might put to shame the elegance, the superfluities, the luxuries, the strained refinements of a hundred genteel English mansions. In Belgium, provided you can make money, you may save it; this is scarcely possible in England; ostentation there lavished in a month what industry has earned in a year. More shame to all classes in that most bountiful and beggarly country for their servile following of Fashion; I

A second group of criticisms concerned marriage--a matter of family life susceptible of abuse, and consequently suitable material for plot or incident. The novelists made a number of different criticisms; they recognized that marriage was properly a concern of the whole family, and not merely of the individual. But they deplored some marriage motives, and they deplored the exercise of tyrannical authority. Foremost among practices which they condemned was the making of a marriage for purely mercenary reasons, even though superficially the family might make pretension of other motives.[25] It is difficult sometimes to tell whether the novelist was criticizing the system by which marriages were made, or whether he was merely criticizing malpractises within the system--malpractises which could be corrected without changing the system. Some authors, like Thackeray, were quite sharp and persistent in their attacks upon the mercenary marriage; often they seemed to question the family's right to authority. Others, less realistic and more perfectionist, placed the blame upon the individual family, upon the abuse of authority. All agreed, however, that, regardless of the agreeableness of a well-monied match, a marriage made for money alone was an evil--a very common evil in Society. Thackeray defeated Major Pendennis's views on marriage by having Arthur reject them and act against them; but

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could write a chapter or two on this subject, but must forbear, at least for the present."

25. Russell, Frances, Satire in the Victorian Novel, p. 182: "Peacock is interest not only in this matrimonial bargaining but in the accompanying insistence on a decent disguise."

Thackeray gave these views the best expression possible by having the Major utter them, for the Major was a very likable sort of reactionary:

> "You are heir to a little independence, which everybody fancies is a doosid deal more. You have a good name, good wits, good manners, and a good person--and, begad! I don't see why you shouldn't marry a woman with money--get into Parliament--distinguish yourself, and--and, in fact, that sort of thing. Remember, it's as easy to marry a rich woman as a poor woman: and a devilish dear pleasanter to sit down to a good dinner than to a scrag of mutton in lodgings. Make up your mind to that. A woman with a good jointure is a doosid deal easier a profession than the law, let me tell you. Look out; I shall be on the watch for you: and I shall die content, my boy, if I can see you with a good lady-like wife, and a good carriage, and a good pair of horses, living in society, and seeing your friends, like a gentleman."26

Generally, however, Thackeray was more outspoken; he had Ethel remark sharply:

> "Made his fortune? yes....that is the cry. There never were, since the world began, people so unblushingly sordid! We own it, and are proud of it. We barter rank against money, and money against rank, day after day. Why did you marry my father to my mother? Was it for his wit? You know he might have been an angel and you would have scorned him. Your daughter was bought with papa's money as surely as Newcome ever was. Will there be no day when this mammon-worship will ever cease among us?"27

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26. Pendennis, Vol. I, pp. 368-9.

27. The Newcomes, p. 343. Elsewhere Ethel further remarked, p. 292:

> "I think, grandmamma...we young ladies in the world, when we are exhibiting, ought to have little green tickets

He spoke also for himself in the same tone:

> Perhaps the best use of that book, the "Peerage," is to look down the list, and see how many have bought and sold birth, how poor sprigs of nobility somehow sell themselves to rich City Snobs' daughters, how rich City Snobs purchase noble ladies --and so to admire the double baseness of the bargain.28

Not only Thackeray, Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, and Anthony Trollope attacked the mercenary marriage;[29] almost all writers, significant or merely popular, joined in the criticism. Mrs. Gore said ironically:

> She was an ugly girl, if he recollected rightly--but what then?--In the choice of an heiress, people must not be too fastidious.30

And Rosina Lytton, bitterly ironic, said:

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pinned on our backs, with 'Sold' written on them; it would prevent trouble and any further haggling, you know. Then at the end of the season the owner would come to carry us home."

28. The Book of Snobs, p. 29. Again in The Newcomes, Thackeray spoke his own personal comment upon the marriage of Barnes and Clara, Vol. II., p. 208: "A bad selfish husband had married a woman for her rank: a weak, thoughtless girl had been sold to a man for his money; and the union, which might have ended in a comfortable indifference, had taken an ill turn and resulted in misery, cruelty, fierce mutual recriminations, bitter tears shed in private, husband's curses and maledictions, and open scenes of wrath and violence for servants to witness and the world to sneer at. We arrange such matches every day; we sell or buy beauty, or rank, or wealth; we inaugurate the bargain in churches with sacramental service, in which the parties engaged call upon heaven to witness their vows--we know them to be lies, and we seal them with God's name."

29. Russell, Frances, Satire in the Victorian Novel, p. 183.

30. The Man of Fortune, Vol. I., p. 240.

> ...and he justly considered that the father of three daughters, however beautiful they were, ought not to be fastidious about the agreeability or amiability of any man who had a rent-roll of £ 8000 a year.[31]

Letitia Landon, too, disapproved of the doctrine which she put into the mouth of Lady Anne:

> "You never shall be the wife of that young sailor! No! not if his brother endowed him with half his fortune. On that point my mind has been made up for years. The two sons-in-law I have and the one I expected to have were only sons, and either only or eldest sons shall ever enter my family.[32]

From the criticisms of these lesser writers,[33] however, some of the sting was withdrawn. These writers did not permit their heroes and heroines to marry for wealth, but made them marry for other and more laudable reasons; fortuitously, however, the marriages thus made eventually, happened to be blessed with wealth and property. Cheveley, for example, though a good, noble, just, and beloved man, was genteelly a veritable Croesus.[34]

Another criticism, very closely allied to that of the mercenary marriage, was directed against the Society marriage: a man and a women were forced to marry for rank, or they were prevented from marrying because of the lack of rank. The novelists criticized the

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31. Cheveley, Vol. I., p. 104.

32. Lady Anne Granard, Vol. I, p. 301.

33. To the many lesser critics should be added the names of almost all the other authors studied.

34. Lytton, Rosina, Cheveley.

Society marriage for the same faults for which they criticized the mercenary marriage. Both showed the abuse of family authority. Theodore Hook wished his readers to deplore Lady Frances's attitude towards her son's love for Emma Lovell, the parson's daughter. Indeed, this wish was easy to grant, for Lady Frances used very foul means to break up the attachment: she tampered with her son's mail, lied to him and to Emma, and purposely compromised her son with the woman of her choice when he was drunk. Her reason for her actions was that Emma belonged to a family of lower caste than her own. Hook's criticism seemed both commendable and sincere. It was not, however, for George did marry Emma only after he had lost his prospects of inheritance, and Emma had inherited money and rank from a conveniently obliging aunt.[35] Lady Blessington sympathized with Clara Mordaunt whose lowly position as a mere governess was a barrier to the course of her love for the worthy Seymour: Lady Blessington implied that Social principle unjustly compelled Clara to refuse to marry her beloved when suddenly he had become the very important Lord Seymourville, and hence had acquired rank above her. But Lady Blessington did not criticize effectively--she avoided, rather than confronted, the problem. She made possible the desired marriage of Clara and Seymour by the introduction of a deus ex machina, an obligingly distant relative from whom Clara inherited sufficient wealth and rank to satisfy Convention.[36] Many other authors like these two did lip-service to the criticism

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35. The Parson's Daughter.

36. The Governess.

of snobbish marriage--others, like Charlotte Brontë, who dared to have Rochester propose to Jane in spite of the difference between their ranks,[37] were more sincere. The sincere critics[38] were in the minority, however. Even Disraeli did not let his Sybil overcome her objections to marrying above her rank; before he let her be married to Charles Egremont, he first made her the heiress of the Marlay estates and discovered that she was of noble birth.[39]

Another criticism was directed against marriages which sons or daughters contracted against the will of their parents or without their parents' knowledge. Such marriages, or even engagements, opposed the established order and were hence deemed improper and unfair to the family. Although Miss Yonge wished her readers to believe that Philip and Laura were "meant for each other," and al-

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37. Jane Eyre.

38. Thackeray, in The Newcomes, may be considered sincere. He did have Ethel release Farintosh, who did not want to be released, and who insisted that he had enough rank for both of them, and who asserted that he could stomach Barnes and the rest of the family, and its humble origin. Farintosh protested; Ethel insisted, adding kindly that he might say that he jilted her. He said it. Finally Ethel, thoroughly sickened with title-hunting, rank-chasing, and all the snobbishness which Thackeray hated, was purified into a woman Thackeray could love. Thackeray then gave her to the likable, untitled, unwealthy, and very worthy Clive.
In all probability, Mrs. Gaskell was sincere in her denunciation of Mrs. Bellingham's objections to Ruth (in Ruth) on the grounds of her inferior rank, for Mrs. Gaskell made no attempt at a "satisfactory" union; rather she concluded her story by having Thurston Benson rightly and forcefully blame and reject Bellingham when Bellingham tried to see Ruth once again.

39. Sybil.

though she finally did marry them to each other, she severely censured them for the wrong which they had committed by becoming secretly engaged. Much suffering, anxiety, and near tragedy were the natural results of the unconventional secrecy.[40] Grace Kuiler thought the same belief: the eighteen year-old Caroline Hamilton, almost guilty of a run-away marriage, came home to her parents, confessed all, and condemned herself repentently. Now clearly seeing the right, Caroline ennobled herself in Miss Kuiler's eyes by saying to her mother:

> "...on my knees, solemnly, sacredly I swear, I will never marry without papa's and your consent. I dare no longer trust myself; I have once been rendered blind by that sinful craving for freedom from all authority, for unchecked independence of thought and word and deed, and never, never more will I stand forth in my own weakness...."[41]

Mrs. Trollope condemned the secret marriage by having Fanny Thornton, who had engaged herself secretly to Augustus Oglevie, feel shame and remorse for her unconventional conduct when, with poetic justice, Augustus proved himself to be a mere adventurer by making

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40. Heir of Redclyffe. When Philip told Laura of his love for her and received her love in return, he refused her suggestion that they get her parents' consent on this seemingly plausible grounds: "'I ask no more without your parents' consent; but it would be giving them and you useless distress and perplexity to ask it now. They would object to my poverty, and we should gain nothing; for I would never be so selfish as to wish to expose you to such a life as that of the wife of a poor officer; and an open engagement could not add to our confidence in each other. We must be content to wait for my promotion. By that time'--he smiled gravely--' our attachment will have lasted so many years as to give it a claim to respect.'" pp. 259-60.

41. Home Influence, p. 164.

another marriage which he deemed more advantageous.[42]

The forced marriage which was possible under the authoritarianism of the family order was deemed an abuse, and as such most novelists inveighed against it. Colonel Bruff wished to force his daughter Jane to marry Mr. George Brindle:

> "Well," said Colonel Bruff, "one word is as good as a thousand--I don't mean to hurry on the affair needlessly--and I don't want to force your inclinations; but you must eventually marry George Brindle--it is an affair settled."[43]

The rest of the novel concerned itself with the righteous frustration of such an unwarrantable exercise of authority. By making the prospective bridegroom unworthy and deceitful, Hook emphasized how evil coercion would have been. Even more skillfully, Mrs. Gaskell assailed the forced marriage by showing the difficulty caused by Mr. Bradshaw's attempt to compel a marriage which otherwise would have taken place naturally and happily. Although ultimately Jemima and Mr. Farquhar did marry for love, they married only after much useless disappointment and frustration. Because of her father's autocracy, indeed, Jemima's spirit was at one time badly bruised:

> She would so fain have let herself love Mr. Farquhar; but *this* constant manoeuvring, in which she did not feel clear that he did not take a passive part, made her sick at heart. She even wished that they might not go through the form of pretending to try to gain her consent to the marriage, if it involved all this premeditated action and

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42. The Lottery of Marriage.

43. Hook, Theodore, Fathers and Sons, p. 146.

> speech-making--such moving about of every one into their right places, like pieces at chess. She felt as if she would rather be an Oriental daughter, where no one is degraded in their own eyes by being parties to such a contract.[44]

Mrs. Trollope even more vehemently denounced the forced marriage. The story of the machinations by which Cartwright and his new, misguided wife attempted to compel Helen to marry Cartwright's cousin, Corbold, was fantastic and disgusting. Mrs. Trollope vigorously and intentionally revolted the reader's sensibilities by having Cartwright plot to lock Helen and Corbold together in a room when the house was empty; everyone else being out of doors at the charity fancy fair which Cartwright had arranged.[45] When Arthur Pendennis said "Will you take me, dear Laura, and make our mother happy?" Thackeray made Laura's reply a criticism not only of forced marriages, but also of marriages merely engineered by persons of authority in the family.[46] Laura, despite her love for Pen, refused his proposal and denounced his reasons and objectives in offering marriage; later she found it necessary to explain her refusal to Pen's mother, who failed to understand. Mrs. Pendennis was the well-meaning, conventional, short-sighted person; Laura, the superior, intelligent one whom Thackeray admired.

To these criticisms of marriage-abuses the criticism of the false or pretended marriage must be added. The false marriage ob-

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44. Ruth, p. 238.

45. The Vicar of Wrexhill.

46. Pendennis, Vol. I, p. 352.

viously and grossly disfigured the conventional pattern for marriage then as now.[47]

In general, the criticisms involving problems of marriage were criticisms of abuses within the order, and were directed against Mammonism, snobbish pride, deception, tyranny, and hypocrisy. In other words, they implied that neither the typical family nor the institution of marriage was at fault, but rather that individual persons were often stupid, abusive, or vicious.

Another set of criticisms was directed against abuses involving the position and function of religion in the life of the family. The novelists in general criticized the failings and shortcomings of the established Church--the sloth, luxury, and lack of seriousness characteristic of many of its curates and parsons, like the three curates in Shirley,[48] but, like Charlotte Brontë, they were ready to say:

> Let England's priests have their due; they are a faulty set in some respects, being only of common flesh and blood, like us all; but the land would be badly off without them; Britain would miss the church, if that church fell. God save it! God also reform it![49]

The most forceful criticisms of religion as it affected the family were usually directed against dissenter groups, or against emo-

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47. A typical denunciation of the false marriage occurred in Mosina Lytton's Cheveley. Mrs. Lytton told of the wealthy, despicable de Clifford who posed as a peasant to win the love of a peasant girl, Mary Lee; married her under a false name; had a child by her; and then deserted her.

48. Brontë, Charlotte, Shirley. The three curates were Malone, Sweeting, and Donne.

49. Ibid., p. 235.

tionals like the evil vicar of Trexhill[50] and the misguided, and hence dangerous, mother of Alton Locke. Kingsley denounced the Vital Christianity to the severity of which young Alton Locke was subjected:

> It seemed a set of doctrines, believing in which was to have a magical effect on people, by saving them from the everlasting torture due to sins and temptations which I had never felt. Now and then, believing in obedience to my mother's assurances, and the solemn prayers of the ministers about me, that I was a child of hell, and a miserable sinner, I used to have accesses of terror, and fancy that I should surely wake next morning in everlasting flames.[51]

Miss Aguilar protested against the austere Sabbath which was representative of the Evangelical discipline imposed upon society[52] and the family; and by contrast extolled the way the unexceptionable Hamiltons observed the day:

> With regard to themselves and their children they pursued a plan, which many religionists, might, perhaps, have condemned, and yet its fruits were very promising. Their great wish was to make the Sabbath a day of love, divine and domestic; to make their children look to it with joy

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50. Trollope, (Mrs.), The Vicar of Trexhill.

51. Kingsley, Charles, Alton Locke, p. 6.

52. Young, G. M., Victorian England, p. 5: "Evangelicalism had imposed on society, even on classes which were indifferent to its religious basis and unaffected by its economic appeal, its code of Sabbath observance, responsibility, and philanthropy; of discipline in the home, regularity in affairs; it had created a most effective technique of agitation, of private persuasion and social persecution....The Evangelical discipline, secularized as respectability, was the strongest binding force in a nation which without it might have broken up, as it had already broken loose."

> and anticipation throughout the week as a day quite distinct in its enjoyment from any other; and for this reason, while their children were young, they only went to church in the morning, the afternoons were devoted to teaching them to know and to love God in His works as well as Word, and their evenings to such quiet but happy amusements and literature, as would fill their young hearts with increased thankfulness for their very happy lot.[53]

Another group of criticisms assailed abuses and errors in the education of young people. Many of the novelists argued for a greater understanding of the problems of education, and for a greater interest and endeavor in solving them; at the same time, many of these writers did not attack the system itself, although most of them did. The distinction between the criticism of individual error and of the system itself is not always easy to make.[54] It is probably best made with respect to the individual family's motives and objectives in training its children and in sending them to schools. Dickens, for example, criticized Mr. Snawley for sending his wife's two little boys to Wackford Squeers's academy, Dotheboys Hall. Mr. Snawley reasoned that his wife would not be tempted to spend upon her sons the money for which he had married her, because Dotheboys Hall allowed no vacations and countenanced no communications from the pupils to their parents--except a Christmas form letter.[55] Charlotte Brontë likewise criticized

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53. Home Influence, p. 165.

54. For criticisms of the system itself see Chapter IV.

55. Nicholas Nickleby, p. 25. Dickens also criticized the Murdstones for sending David to Mr. Creakle's school for the same reason (in David Copperfield.) Likewise, he criticized even the proud Mr. Dombey, who had a sort of

Mrs. Reed for sending Jane Eyre to Lowood school to get her out of the way and to humble her.[56]

Charles Kingsley criticized the cousin of Alton Locke for his motive for attending Cambridge as "the only method yet discovered for turning a snob (as I am, or was,) into a gentleman; except putting him into a heavy cavalry regiment."[57] Similarly, Disraeli ridiculed the elder Millbank, who did not believe the members of the aristocracy any better than manufacturers like himself, for sending his son to Eton because the Public School was the accepted medium for the education of a gentleman's son. Although young Millbank realized his father's ambitions for him and was accepted by Coningsby and his friends, Disraeli really denounced the purpose for which he had been sent to Eton.[58]

Frances Trollope criticized Thomas Chesterfield for being "too proud of the learning thus bestowed upon his son [tutoring by the vicar] and too grateful for the manner in which it was done, to dream of questioning its usefulness,"[59] and for being willing therefore to make undue sacrifice of himself and the rest of his family. He wished to mortgage his farm, which was the whole of his wealth, in order to send his son to school.

The most virulent attacks upon education, however, assailed

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fondness for his son--or rather for the idea of a son. Mr. Dombey truly did not want to be bothered with the boy (in Dombey and Son.)

56. Jane Eyre.

57. Alton Locke, p. 105.

58. Coningsby.

59. Charles Chesterfield, p. 14.

the system itself, at least in part.[60]

Another whole group of criticisms concerned the positions, duties, and functions of the various members of the family. One of the most important of these was the attack upon the profligacy, extravagance, or tyranny of a husband and father; almost every novel writer introduced at least one culpable lord and master. Sometimes the actions of such a man and the consequences of them furnished the main plot of the novel. Cheveley, Mary Raymond, and The Tenant of Wildfell Hall are cases in point. In each novel, the author complained of the husband's want of good will and understanding, and turned the whole book into a criticism of his vices, which she implied to be common in Society.[61] In many other novels, the main plots of which developed other themes, the tyrannical husband was the subject of incidental censure. Ruth attacked the tyranny of Mr. Bradshaw; Aspen Court, that of Henry Wilmslow; The Old Curiosity Shop, that of Quilp; Susan Hopley, that of Aytoun;

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60. See Chapter IV.

61. In Cheveley (by Rosina Lytton), Lord de Clifford was guilty of physical brutality towards his wife and of public humiliation of her. He kept a mistress under the same roof with his wife, and made his wife subservient to her. He persecuted her, also, for the innocent attentions which their gentlemen friends showed her. Through all, the wife remained with him, for she had no choice but to remain. Her release from oppression came only with his death.

In Mary Raymond (by Mrs. Gore), Mr. Merstham persecuted his wife with unfounded jealous accusations. Although she remained faithful to him and refused to abandon him, at length he strangled her.

In The Tenant of Wildfell Hall (by Anne Brontë), Arthur Huntingdon had affairs with another woman in his own home, abused his wife, and debauched his son. Although his wife ran away from him, she returned when he was ill and submitted herself to more indignities. Her rescue came only with his death.

The Newcomes, that of Barnes Newcome; The Parson's Daughter, that of Harbottle; and Home Influence, that of Greville.[62] Still other novels, like Dombey and Son and Shirley, criticized the husband, less melodramatically and perhaps more convincingly, for a lack of understanding as well as of benevolence. Thus Dombey could see his wife die in childbirth, and feel elation at the same moment

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62. In Mrs. Gaskell's Ruth, Mr. Bradshaw by severe discipline, drove his son to become a thief and nearly wrecked his daughter's life by trying to force her marriage to a business friend.

In Shirley Brooks's Aspen Court: A Story of Our Own Time, N. Y., Stringer and Townsend, 1856, Henry Wilmslow wasted an estate, brutalized his wife and his three daughters. He was prevented from continuing physical abuse upon his daughters, and from endeavoring to sell one of them to a wealthy, old man only by the intervention of outsiders.

In Charles Dickens's The Old Curiosity Shop, Quilp, a sadist who persecuted anybody he could, brutalized his wife and mother-in-law for sport.

In Mrs. Catherine (Stevens) Crowe's Susan Hopley; or, the Adventures of a Maid-Servant, William Tait, Edinburgh 1842, Aytoun through jealousy which had been fostered by his refusal to allow his wife to speak freely with him, persecuted both his wife and an innocent man. He even shot the man because of his unfounded suspicions and was saved and humbled eventually only through the goodness of his wife.

In W. M. Thackeray's The Newcomes, when Barnes Newcome got a divorce from his wife, on the charge of duplicity, and gained the custody of the children, every witness sided with his wife, testifying that Barnes had been guilty of gross cruelty and wife beating.

In Theodore Hook's The Parson's Daughter, Harbottle, a coarse, boorish man, entertained jealous suspicions of his beautiful, refined wife, Fanny. He persecuted her and contrived the death of the man he suspected.

In Grace Aguilar's Home Influence, Greville rejoiced at the birth of his son with "such rejoicing as to fill his wife's heart with an agony of dread; for he swore that he would make his boy as jovial a spirit as himself, and that her namby-pamby ideas should have nothing to do with him." p. 83. He carried out his vow, agonizing his wife and dissipating his young son.

because the child she had borne was a son and heir. He was unable to understand how unfair and inconsiderate he had been and was being to the wife he was losing.[63] Like Mr. Welstone:

> He thought, so long as a woman was silent, nothing ailed her, and she wanted nothing. If she did not complain of solitude, solitude, however continued, could not be irksome to her. If she did not talk and put herself forward, express a partiality for this, and aversion to that, she had not partialities or aversions, and it was useless to consult her tastes. He made no pretense of comprehending women, or comparing them with men: they were a different, probably a very inferior, order of existence; a wife could not be her husband's companion, much less his confident, much less his stay.[64]

Another similar group of criticisms was directed against the son in the family, particularly for profligacy and wastefulness. A boy was expected to have some spirit, but he was expected also to be discreet. Major Pendennis said of an attachment of his nephew's, "If it were but a temporary liaison...one could bear it. A young fellow must sow his wild oats, and that sort of thing":[65] but a boy was censured, like John Reed, when his dissipation interfered with his duties, or cost much money.[66] He was censured for

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63. Dickens, Charles, Dombey and Son.

64. Brontë, Charlotte, Shirley, p. 41.

65. Thackeray, W. M., Pendennis, Vol. I, p. 118.

66. Brontë, Charlotte, Jane Eyre, p. 90. Bessie expressed this criticism:

> "Oh, he is not doing so well as his mama could wish. He went to college, and he got--plucked, I think they call it: and then his uncles wanted him to be a barrister, and study the law: but he is such a dissipated young man, they will never make much of him, I think.

the same faults that his father was, for he was being prepared to take his father's place. He was criticized, like Frank Hazeldean, already mentioned,[67] and "other heirs" mentioned in Tancred,[68] for the extravagance and unkindness of post obit liquidations. Substantial parts of many books, in fact, were devoted to the criticism of these and similar vices which the author considered all too prevalent in young men. The Man of Fortune, for example, concerned itself with nothing but the cause and cure of the profligacy of a spoiled, fatherless heir.[69] Other books, like Pendennis, My Novel, and Bleak House, occupied themselves greatly with the same problem.[70]

. . . . . .

"Missis looks stout and well enough in the face, but I think she's not quite easy in her mind; Mr. John's conduct does not please her--he spends a deal of money."

67. See footnote 16, p. 62.

68. Disraeli, Benjamin, Tancred, Vol. I, p. 15: "Other heirs apparent of a rich seignory would soon have removed these difficulties. By bill or by bond, by living usury, or by post-obit liquidations, by all the means that private friends or public offices could supply, the sinews of war would have been forthcoming."

69. Gore, (Mrs.), Vol. III, p. 295. Mrs. Blair's dying speech was:

"It is I who am the cause of poor Reginald's ruin. I courted riches for him. As a child, I accepted dependence for him in the house of a cruel, heartless man.--When he attained the object of my desires, I seemed to worship him the more,--worship my only son the more--that he was rich and great; and instead of checking his faults, or attempting to mature his judgment, gave way to all his caprices, and allowed him to grow up in utter hardness of heart!"

70. In Pendennis (by W. M. Thackeray), the diverting of Arthur from a wild and impractical attachment began the struggle of his education for life. Only when through Laura's

The abuses of authority by the proud or fashionable mother have been commented upon. Women like Lady Frances Sherringham, Mrs. Armytage, Lady Anne Granard, Mrs. Mackenzie, Harriet Vining, Mrs. Codrington, and Mrs. Bellingham were all censured for their haughtiness, pride, and tyranny.[71]

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assistance Pen was finally purged of his last young blood tendencies, was Thackeray willing to call him matured.

In My Novel (By Edward Bulwer-Lytton), the stabilizing of Frank Hazeldean, along with the salvation of the ambitious Randal Leslie, furnished a large part of the plot.

In Bleak House, Dickens preached a well-known sermon on the fate of the shiftless boy (Richard Carstairs).

To this list, of course, many others could be added: Henry Fortescue in Home Influence, (Grace Aguilar); Steerforth in David Copperfield (Charles Dickens); Charles Chesterfield in Charles Chesterfield (Frances Trollope); Frederick Stephenson in The Widow Barnaby (Frances Trollope); Philip Firmin in The Adventures of Philip, N. Y., A. L. Burt, n. d., (W. M. Thackeray); Vivian in The Caxtons (Edward Bulwer-Lytton); George in Fathers and Sons (Theodore Hook); etc.

71. In The Parson's Daughter (Theodore Hook), Lady Frances Sherringham did all she could to prevent her son from marrying Emma Lovell. She instigated calumny against Emma, got her son drunk and had him propose to a lady of her choice, opened and withheld letters, employed spies, and got both her son and herself into debt in the process.

In Mrs. Armytage (Mrs. Gore), Mrs. Armytage broke up her daughter's love affair and tried to wreck her son's marriage.

In Lady Anne Granard (Letitia Landon), Lady Anne dissipated her husband's wealth by extravagance, ran into debt for which she was arrested, tried to force her daughters into fashionable marriages, and died, somewhat repentent, but still plotting other schemes.

In The Newcomes (W. M. Thackeray), Mrs. Mackenzie, known as "The Campaigner", contrived Clive's marriage to Rosie, ruined their marriage by her ranting, hellion behavior when the Colonel's bank failed. Clive finally turned her out of his house.

In The Managing Wife (Mrs. Ellis), Harriet Vining having caught and married the spoiled Horace Grant, proceeded to rule him and wreck their home.

And finally, a whole group of miscellanious criticisms involved abuses in numerous family relationships. One of the most significant of these criticisms attacked the undervaluing, the subjection, and the unnatural treatment of girls. Dickens criticized Dombey for ignoring Florence and for resenting Paul's affection for her.[72] Mrs. Gore criticized Mrs. Armytage for her lack of interest in her daughter Sohpia, who died of a broken heart.[73] Mrs. Gaskell criticized Mr. Bradshaw for his undervaluing of Jemima and her sisters.[74] In each case, the author emphasized the injustice done by such neglect, and endeavored to make the reader feel sympathetically that the abused or neglected daughter was, as a feeling person, as important a human value as her brother who was not neglected. Indeed, Grace Aguilar openly condemned the practise of making girls subservient to their brothers, and implied that the practise was a prevalent one. The main plot of Miss Aguilar's novel, Home Influence, concerned the woes of Ellen Fortescue who shielded her brother and suffered most bitterly for his faults; Ellen had been instructed by her dying mother, who had

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In The Lottery of Marriage (Frances Trollope), Mrs. Codrington wasted her daughter's income and used all possible means to prevent her daughter's debut from interfering with her own attempts at remarriage.

In Ruth (Mrs. Gaskell), Mrs. Bellingham broke up her son's affair with Ruth, and kept him from being as little unkind to the seduced girl as he would have been of his own accord. Her paying off of Ruth and her sending her away drove the girl to attempt to commit suicide. Thurstan Benson rescued her.

72. Dombey and Son.

73. Mrs. Armytage.

74. Ruth.

always most grossly neglected her in favor of the brother, to take care of him and to serve him.[75] Anne Brontë, too, criticized the subservience of girls to their brothers. The dialogue between Agnes Grey and her pupil, Tom, is an eloquent commentary:

> "Surely, Tom, you would not strike your sister! I hope I shall never see you do that."
>
> "You will sometimes: I'm obliged to do it now and then to keep her in order."
>
> "But it is not your place to keep her in order, you know...."[76]

Another family relationship much criticized because of abusive practices was that of the governess to her employers and to her charges. Without questioning the necessity and utility of the governess in the home, novelists repeatedly and severely criticized the English family for its ill-treatment and undervaluing of its governesses. So important were the problems of the governess that at least three major novels, Jane Eyre, Agnes Grey, and The Governess, concerned themselves wholly with her; and others, like The Lottery of Marriage, The Newcomes, Martin Chuzzlewit, The Managing Wife, Shirley, and What Will He Do With It? discussed her incidentally.[77] The purpose of the criticism was well summed up

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75. Another instance of this criticism might be seen in Louisa Gradgrind's marrying of Bounderby in order to help her brother Tom, which sacrifice Dickens condemned (in Hard Times.)

76. Brontë, Anne, Agnes Grey, p. 372.

77. The governesses treated were: Jane Eyre in Jane Eyre (Charlotte Brontë); Agnes Grey in Agnes Grey (Anne Brontë); Clara Mordaunt in The Governess (Lady Blessington); Margaret Stockton in The Lottery of Marriage (Frances Trollope); Mrs. Mason in The Newcomes (W. M. Thackeray);

by Lady Blessington in a letter to Mrs. Fairlie. Lady Blessington wrote:

> I am very gratified by what you tell me of Miss Lane's approbation of 'The Governess'. It was my anxious wish to point attention and excite sympathy towards a class from which [more is] expected and to whom less is accorded, than to any other. It has always struck me that no situation is so painful as that of a Gentlewoman constantly occupied in the difficult task of forming the youthful minds, and instilling not only all the rudiments of education, but what is of infinitely more importence, those principles on which the [happiness] here and hereafter, of her pupils must depend; made exposed to the neglect, rudeness, or jealousies of those who confide to her the most sacred of all trusts, the minds of their children.78

Even in the typical family, as described in Chapter II, the lot of the governess was a hard one, and was generally deplored.

The third family relationship occasionally criticized was that of parent and child; the abuse attacked was parental tyranny. Mrs. Gore criticized a popular belief in parental authority stated by Miss Margaret: "The authority of parents over a child cannot be either wilful or capricious."[79] Grace Aguilar's Mrs. Hamilton, the model mother, "could not bear, nor could her husband, the system which prevailed in some families of their acquaintance, that their

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Ruth Pinch in Martin Chuzzlewit (Charles Dickens); Miss Berkeley in The Managing Wife (Mrs. Ellis); Mrs. Pyror in Shirley (Charlotte Brontë); and Arabella Crane in What Will He Do With It? (Edward Bulwer-Lytton.)

78. Sadlier, Michael, The Strange Life of Lady Blessington, Boston, 1933, p. 240.

79. Mrs. Armytage, p. 70.

children could neither receive nor write letters to each other, or their intimate friends, without being shown to their seniors.... Perfect confidence in their home they had indeed instilled, and that confidence was never withheld."[80] Most novelists, however, accepted as right the dominance of children by their parents and believed that the child owed complete obedience as a duty. Even in such cases as that of Mr. Gradgrind, when the parent's judgment was at fault, the novelist did not question the parent's right of authority or exonerate the child from obedience.[81]

All of these criticisms of abuses and aberrations within the family order were alike in one respect. They did not question either the rightness or the practicability of the typical family as a great English institution; instead, they tried to demonstrate that the lack of understanding, love, and benevolence in some individuals was the cause of various hardships and miseries in family life. Of this kind of criticism, the master was Dickens,[82] who, "Although he was an affectionate father..seems to have ruled with a rod of iron in his own household."[83] Dickens repeatedly

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80. Home Influence, p. 244.

81. Dickens, Charles, Hard Times. Even Gradgrind, to whom all children, even his own, were little pitchers to be filled full of facts, was condemned for a lack of understanding rather than for acting beyond his authority.

82. Fraser's, "Charles Dickens and David Copperfield," Vol.XIII, (Dec. 1850), p. 698. The reviewer gave as the reasons for Dickens's popularity "above all, because of his deep reverence for the household sanctities, his enthusiastic worship of the household gods."

83. Oliphant, James, Victorian Novelists, London, Blackie and Son, Ltd., 1899, pp. 30-31.

except when he felt the family order or part of it attacked or unfairly represented.[87] He did, however, make repeated criticisms with feeling and conviction of one individual abuse in particular: the neglect and ill-treatment commonly shown by the family to the governess.[88]

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poses kept them alive...."
"Charles Dickens and David Copperfield," Fraser's, Vol. XIII, (Dec. 1850), p. 698: "Probably there is no single individual who, during the last fourteen years, has occupied so large a space in the thoughts of English folk as Charles Dickens."
"Master Humphrey's Clock," Athenaeum, #680, (Nov. 7, 1840), p. 888: "...it is life-like and bustling, and therefore good for one's amusement; it comes from a sound head and heart, and therefore fitted for one's improvement: and accordingly, as 'Master Humphrey's Clock' has already its thousands upon thousands of readers, we beg leave cordially to recommend it to the Million."

87. A writer in The Edinburgh Review, for example, criticized Mrs. Gore's Women as They Are because he thought it a misrepresentation of an ideal and therefore dangerous. Article VI, Vol. II, (July 1830), p. 459:
"We see no useful end that can be gained by associating the unimpeachable discharge of domestic duties, with so much that is unamiable and ridiculous in the character of Lady Lilfield. There is nothing in the example of such persons so dangerously attractive as to require the antidote of such a vehement current of ridicule as Mrs. Gore has directed against them. We cannot see the laudable purpose of sneeringly remarking, that 'so bright an example of domestic merit--and what neighborhood cannot boast of its duplicate?--was naturally superior to seeking its pleasures in the vapid and varying novelties of fashion.' Mrs. Gore, we dare-say, does not mean to affirm that matronly waltzing is more to be admired than matronly attention to the 'seven substantial children,' or that it is better to give a ball than to establish a school; but she is bound to take care that others do not draw these inferences from her expressions. We know many who combine the most unimpeachable discharge of domestic duties with a reasonable participation of the pleasures of society...."
See also Chapter IV for other counter-criticisms.

88. The reviewer of Lady Blessington's The Governess, Athenaeum, #633, (Sat., Dec. 14, 1839), prefaced his review of the

novel by many long remarks on governesses in general. He accused England of stupidity and folly in her ill-treatment and degradation of this class of person. He said that by seeking to hire governesses cheaply in the market and by treating them as menials, England was fast deteriorating in respect to education.
p. 942: "The fathers of families, if they have some glimmerings of the truth, have rarely leisure to watch over the education of their sons; and the daughters are committed to the care of females utterly disqualified by their own intellectual deficiencies, if not by their presumption, for the task."
p. 943: "The first guarantee for her incapacity--the first injustice to which she is exposed--is the utter disproportion of her remuneration."
p. 943: "The low social position of the governess is still further determined by the coldness and the neglect of her employers. True it may be, that the presence of a stranger and a hireling, at the domestic fireside, must often be an unpleasant restraint; if this be so, it is still but a small price to pay for those who cannot or will not educate their children themselves. Parents have no right to bring a cultivated and a sensitive female under their roof to mortify and degrade her; if they want her services, they must not rob her of any part of her just reward; and of the stipulated board and lodging. If the governess be indeed fitted for her task, she will have sense and discretion to avoid becoming an unnecessary restraint on the heads of the family; and her acquirements will add to the pleasures of the domestic circle, rather than detract from them."
p. 943: "To do justice to her merits, to confer on her the desirable efficiency, she should be treated with all the delicacy and respect which custom exacts between well-bred equals. The governess is not the subordinate, she is the associate of the mother; and this the children must be made to feel, or their future characters as rational beings will suffer for the neglect."

"The Nursery Governess" Athenaeum, #933 (Sept. 13, 1845), p. 902: "Elevate 'the nursery governess' in principles and habit, and there must be a corresponding elevation in the pupils. Of all duties, hers are the most important: it is she who forms the future men and women. Yet parents go on in the old track, insensible of their own responsibility in the choice of instructors, and as negligent of moral culture, as if there were no such thing in the world."

"Vanity Fair and Jane Eyre," Quarterly Review, Vol. LXXXIV (Dec. 1849), p. 177: "She must be a saint, or no woman at all, who can rise above those perpetual little dropping-water trials to which the self-love of an average-

Most of the essayists, too, like the reviewers, accepted the family order without question. The other writers who were of the opinion that the mere correction of abuse was not enough, but that the revision of some principles of the order was necessary will be discussed later.[89] Representative of the majority group was Mrs. Ellis, whose works were most popular, and to whom the conventional reviewers referred with praise.[90] She approved of the conventional

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ly-placed governess is exposed. That fearful fact that the lunatic asylums of this country are supplied with a larger proportion of their inmates from the ranks of young governesses than from any other class of life, is a sufficient proof how seldom she can."

See also: "Mothers and Governesses," Athenaeum, #1021 (May 22, 1847), p. 548; "On the Social Position of Governesses," Fraser's, Vol. XXXVII (April, 1848), pp. 411-414; "Hints on the Modern Governess System," Fraser's, Vol. XXX (Nov. 1844) pp. 571-584; "Queen's College--London," Quarterly Review, Vol. LXXXIV (March, 1850), pp. 364-384.

The usual reviewer seems to have echoed the public opinion which resulted in the organization of the Governesses' Benevolent Institution, 1843, later called Queens College. (This institution was the start of the present-day system of education for English girls of the upper middle class:

"The first important step in opening the doors of a sound, higher education for women was taken when Queen's College, London, was opened in 1848. This college had its origin in a Governesses' Benevolent Institution, founded in 1843, thus affording some evidence that the higher education of English women grew out of the great need for better-trained governesses." Goodsell, Willystine, A History of the Family as a Social and Educational Institution, N. Y., Macmillan Company, 1915.)

89. See Chapter IV.

90. Cruse, Amy, The Victorians and Their Books, p. 339: "The ideals of the orthodox party were well summed up in a series of books written by a certain Mrs. Ellis, which were immensely popular, and were constantly quoted with respectful admiration."

family and exhorted her readers to look upon it as an ideal. She approved its paternal structure and the principle of masculine superiority upon which it was founded.

> One important truth sufficiently impressed upon your mind will materially assist in this desirable consumation--it is the superiority of your husband, simply as a man. It is quite possible that you may have more talent, with higher attainments, and you may also have been generally more admired; but this has nothing whatever to do with your position as a woman, which is, and must be, inferior to his as a man.[91]

And yet Mrs. Ellis could speak of "that worst of all slavery, the fear of a husband."[92] She recognized the superiority of boys and men,[93] although she was aware that they often became "selfish, dom-

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The popularity and number of these books about women written by women may be seen in the review of "A Plea for Women," Athenaeum, #853 (March 2, 1844) p. 189: "It is no unimportant sign of the times and of the tendency of opinion, when books multiply on one particular subject, we have counted on 'our library table,' within a short period, not less than sixteen works having reference, in some direct form, to the present condition of women--her 'mission,' her 'influence,' her power to 'regenerate society,' her rights, claims, duties, vocation, education, and so forth."

Other books similar to those of Mrs. Ellis's in subject and in the conventional point of view expressed are: Mrs. John Stanford's Woman: In her Social and Domestic Career; Mrs. Hugo Reid's A Plea for Women; J. J. S. Warton's The Exposition of the Laws relating to the Women of England; Emilie Carlen's Woman's Life (this, however, is a didactic novel); Letters to my Unknown Friends, by a Lady; J. W. Parker's Woman's Mission: and the essays of Mrs. Jameson, Characteristics of Women, Memoirs of Women, and Commonplace Book.

91. The Wives of England, p. 10.

92. Ibid., p. 8.

93. The Mothers of England, p. 91: "In the first place, then, let it be remembered, that boys must be humoured to a certain extent. Both boys and men require this, and they

ineering, and tyrannical to the other sex," because their mothers had been indulgent.[94] She felt it "an unspeakable privilege enjoyed by the women of England, that in the middle ranks of life, a married woman, however youthful or attractive, if her own manners are unexceptionable, is seldom, or never, exposed to the attentions of men, so as to lead her affections out of their proper channel."[95] She warned "the women of England back to their domestic duties," asserting that a woman's sphere was her husband's home.[96] She deplored rebellion of children, and taught that parents should exercize complete control over their children.[97] She accepted that it was a husband's privilege to introduce members of his family into his home and that it was the wife's duty to bear their "well-meant interference" amiably.[98] The only way in which she was perhaps a little different from the reviewer was in placing the responsibility for a happy home upon the woman, and in one way or another exonerating the man from blame: if a man was tyrannical, his mother had spoiled him by indulgence; if he was merely fretful, his wife did not recognize and perform her subservient duty towards him.

All of the criticisms thus far enumerated, whether made by the novelist, the reviewer, or the essayist, were conservative and

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have a right to expect it from women."

94. The Wives of England, p. 25.

95. Ibid., p. 48.

96. The Women of England, p. 14.

97. The Wives of England, p. 6.

98. Ibid., p. 12.

conventional. Although some of the writers quoted in this chapter were often non-conventional in their criticism of the order itself, the particular criticisms under consideration here were conventional ones. That is to say, some writers were both critics of abuses within the order, and critics of the order itself. The latter type of criticism is discussed in the next chapter. The conventional or conservative criticisms -- the ones discussed in the foregoing pages -- deplored abusive practices within the institution of the family; they did not criticize the institution itself. They seemed to reflect the opinions of the general public of Early Victorian England.

CHAPTER IV

RADICAL CRITICISMS AND REACTIONARY COUNTER-CRITICISMS OF FAMILY LIFE

Although most of the Early Victorian critics were conventional and conservative in their ideas about family life, and believed in the structure and philosophy of the typical family, some few critics were not wholly satisfied that the English ideal was without fault. These few writers doubted whether the mere correction of individuals was enough; they believed that some revision of basic principles was necessary. Yet, they were not revolutionaries; they did not act either with great zeal or great confidence. They behaved decorously, very like other Early Victorians--not like the Romantics of the 1820's. They did question sporadically, however, whether some chronic and common ills of family life were not resultant, at least in part, upon the very structure and philosophy of the typical family; they questioned the rightness and justice of some generally-accepted principles.

These critics of the order were few in number, and restricted in the range of their criticism. They seldom attacked a principle with violence; and they questioned only a few principles. Generally, they were not far from conventional. Even so, they were the men who thought in advance of the age in which they lived.

Perhaps the most significant among the criticisms, or questionings, made by the writers in this group were those which lamented the restrictions and limitations forced upon Woman: socially,

intellectually, and legally.[1] Although the critics did not venture seriously to argue the equality of man and woman, they did argue for various degrees of freedom for woman. They argued for freedom, because they doubted one principle of the Early Victorian Society: the God-ordained superiority of man.

Works of non-fiction like Caroline Norton's English Laws for Women and Harriet Martineau's Society in America demonstrated the injustice done to women before the law. They attacked particularly the facts that a woman could possess no property; that she was unable to divorce herself from her husband, or even live apart from him; and that she had no rights to her children if her husband divorced himself from her.[2] Caroline Norton, whose divorce trial

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1. Calverton, V. F., Sex Expression in Literature, N. Y., Bone and Liveright, 1926, p. 217: "Without political rights, scarcely more than a chattel before the law, in fact as a wife a form of property almost unprotectedly subjected to her husband's disposal, woman had to display her virtues in invulnerable array."

2. Goodsell, Willystine, A History of the Family as a Social and Educational Institution, p. 429: "Up to the year 1857 the English law took no steps to remedy the hard position of married women with respect to their property disabilities. But in that year an Act was passed partially to protect the property of a deserted wife. "(This Act allowed her to retain any property she might acquire after having been deserted.)
Not until 1882 was woman given free rights over her property while she was married.
Also, p. 447; "the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 perpetuated the same inequality of rights in respect to divorce as had previous legislation and practise." (The act gave freedom to the man if the wife was adulterous. It gave freedom to the wife if the husband was adulterous--if he was also cruel to her or had deserted her for two years.)

was notorious, wrote a long and impassioned essay against the degraded position of women.

> ...the wonderful indecency of our divorce trials,--the incredible fact that the woman accused is allowed no direct defense, and cannot appear by counsel on such occasions--the loth and reluctant admission (and that of very recent date) of the right of a mother to her infant children,--are alike odious and incomprehensible...in the English laws which wreck a woman's whole destiny; in the law which permits the most indecent and atrocious libel against her, without a chance of legal defense,--in the law which countenances and upholds far worse than cheating at cards, and renders null and void a contract signed by a magistrate, because that contract was made with his wife,--in the law which gives a woman's earnings even by literary copyright, to her husband,--in the whole framework, in short, of those laws by which her existence is merged in the existence of another, (let what will be the circumstances of her case;) and by which Justice in fact divests herself of all control and responsibility in the matter--England sees nothing worthy of remark.3

And yet, Caroline Norton did not wish to be thought revolutionary. Even though she questioned a basic principle in English family life, she did not think of herself as a revolutionary; in fact, she did not wholly deny the principle and the rightness of man's superiority. "That I write," she said, "is written in no spirit of rebellion; it puts forward no absurd claim of equality; it is simply an appeal for protection."[4] Her implication, indeed, was that the Early Victorian ought to make laws which would limit his

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3. English Laws for Women in the Nineteenth Century, printed for private circulation, 1854, pp. 21-2.

4. Ibid., p. 2.

power rather than extend woman's.[5]

Like Caroline Norton, Harriet Martineau was dissatisfied with the legal status of women in England. In her book, Society in America, she preferred American divorce and property laws to English ones--although she believed that the laws concerning women were bad the world over. "In no country, I believe," she wrote, "are the marriage laws so iniquitous as in England, and the conjugal relation, in consequence, so impaired."[6] Among the American laws which she approved were those insuring woman's right to own property, the reciprocity of all marriage vows, and an even degree of accessibility to divorce laws by rich and poor, and by man and woman alike; she deplored the absence of such laws in England.

Although reviewers and essayists throughout the Early Victorian period usually ignored the question of woman's legal rights--or else treated it lightly and superficially--at least two magazine articles somewhat mildly criticized English laws for women with respect to the system of the family itself. The first article appeared in 1841 in The Edinburgh Review; it admitted that "the wish expressed on behalf of women to attain some influence on legislation is not altogether causeless and unreasonable. Legis-

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5. Mrs. Norton asked ironically: "Are we to believe that the gentlemen of Great Britain are so jealous of their privilege of irresponsible power in this one respect, that they would rather know redress impossible in cases which they themselves admit to be instances of the grossest cruelty and baseness, than frame laws of control for themselves such as they are willing to frame for others?" English Laws for Women, p. 15.

6. Vol. III., p. 123

lation has been less friendly than Society--and they have real grounds of complaint against the existing state of the law with respect to the relations of husband and wife."[7] The article specifically pointed out the unfairness of laws respecting property and respecting the children of separated couples. "Although, therefore," the writer argued, "the law has been slightly reformed, it cannot yet be said to deal impartially with both sexes. It is not yet cleared from the imputation of having too much the impress of man's legislation, and of favouring the father at the expense of the mother's rights. It does not yet recognize equality of right in the two parents. On the contrary, it vests all authority in the father, till the mother, by appeal to a court of justice, can obtain a participation. This seems to us unjust."[8] The second article appeared in 1855, at the end of the Early Victorian period. It protested against the inequality of men and women before the law; it attacked the discrimination against women and the poor with respect to the accessibility of divorce; and it offered a sad commentary upon the moral state of the typical English home:

> It is not much to the credit of the husbands of England to say that if the wives of England could obtain divorces on the grounds that their partners had been guilty of simple adultery, half of the said wives would apply for them.[9]

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7. "Rights and Conditions of Women," The Edinburgh Review, Vol. LXXIII, (April, 1841), pp. 207-8.

8. Ibid., p. 208.

9. "The Law of Marriage and Divorce," Fraser's Magazine, Vol. LII, (August, 1855), p. 149.

A few novels, like Cheveley, Ruth, and The Newcomes, likewise criticized the injustice done to women before the law. They questioned the rightness of masculine authority over woman, and so questioned a basic principle of the typical Early Victorian family. Lady Lytton's Cheveley, indeed, fairly bristled with indignation.

> The lower class of English women wait upon their lords and masters and perform for them offices of manual labour which would convince a South-Sea savage how remiss his squaw was in the wifely virtues of industry and endurance. It is true, that the upper class of wives are of necessity, exempt from this species of humiliation; but it is also true, that their degradation and subjection only assumes a different form and manner: inferiority is still the unmistakeable badge of the order. With us, the luxurious expenditure of a man is 'de rigueur," while the mere necessaries of a woman are furnished by accidental and fortunate superfluities. The extravagance of fathers and sons is always to be atoned for by the economy, privation, and self-denials of mothers and daughters.
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> English women have but one privilege--they may devote their lives to the education, welfare, and care of their children, without ever being able to obtain one single conventional or legal right over them, while the father, be his vices what they may, or his neglect ever so unnatural, still possesses by our wise and moral laws, the whole and sole control over the unfortunate little beings who may be destined to feel all the disadvantages of his power, without reaping any of the benefits of his protection.10

Later on in the same book, Lady Lytton again indulged her fury, with Cheveley as her spokesman. Cheveley, annoyed at the indignities shown to Lady de Clifford by her husband, remarked to Mrs.

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10. Vol. I., pp. 276-7.

Seymour:

> "It is too bad," said Cheveley, leaning his forehead upon his hand; "but don't you know, that in this, our moral country, private vices are always merged in public virtues? With one man's vices no other man has a right to interfere: above all in the treatment of wives, for a wife is a man's own exclusive property, an ambulating chattel, for whose comparative value the law has recently established a tarriffe; for I read in the police report, a few days ago, that a fellow having severely beaten his wife, and his donkey on the same day, the worthy magistrate fined him fifteen shillings for the latter outrage, accompanied with a lecture on cruelty to animals; and added another five, for the former, but lesser misdemeanour."[11]

And yet, Lady Lytton was not a revolutionary. It is true that she did declaim against the unfairness of the law to women, but it is also questionable whether she believed in the equality of men and women any more than Caroline Norton did;[12] she solved the problems of her heroine, Lady de Clifford, by giving her in marriage to

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11. Ibid., Vol. III., pp. 181-2.

12. Rosina Lytton's assertion is reminiscent of Mrs. Norton's; Lady Lytton wrote: "Were women but true to themselves and to each other, their position as human beings would be widely different from what it is now, and ever must be, while they continue satisfied with being the degraded nonentities they are at present. I am no advocate for the ridiculous and immoral chimera, called 'Rights of Women,'--for they have no rights--or at least none that can or ought to empower them to fill those masculine niches in the world, which would authorise them to kill their fellow-creatures as soldiers, cajole them as statesmen, or cheat them as lawyers. A woman's proper and only empire is her home, and unless her nature could be physically changed--that is, unless she could cease to be woman--it never can or ought to be any other; but still there should be some cruelty to animal act that would extend its protection to her in that sphere." Cheveley, Vol. II., p. 271.

Cheveley, the typical English gentleman at his best: wise, kind, and rich.

Ruth, which was unfavorably reviewed by the Early Victorian reviewers because it told "a story of a fallen woman...not fit for the reading of pure and modest members of the same sex,"[13] assailed the principle of marriage which declared the husband sole possessor of his wife's children. Ruth, after having been seduced, betrayed, and deserted, became frantic when she learned that her seducer had discovered where she was: "She had a firm conviction--not the less firm because she knew not on what it was based--that a child, whether legitimate or not, belonged of legal right to the father."[14] Mrs. Gaskell's criticism was indeed significant: when Bellingham tried to see his six-year old child, Thurstan Benson, whom the Early Victorians criticized for "acquiescing in a deception,"[15] rose above the law, drove Bellingham from his house, and damned the legal rights which an English gentleman could exercise to gain control of the child.

In The Newcomes, Thackeray, who was critical of the order itself in several ways, attacked the conventional attitude towards woman; he assailed her legal dependence upon man, and consequently the basis of her marriage bond. In telling the story of the divorce of Sir Barnes Newcome from his wife Clara, Thackeray wrote bitterly:

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13. Cruse, Amy, The Victorians and Their Books, p. 271.

14. pp. 287-8.

15. Cruse, Amy, The Victorians and Their Books, p. 271.

> The debates of the House of Lords must tell what followed afterwards in the dreary history of Lady Clara Pulleyn. The proceedings in the Newcome Divorce Bill filled the usual number of columns in the papers,—especially the Sunday papers. The witnesses were examined by learned peers whose business —nay, pleasure—it seems to be to enter into such matters; and, for the ends of justice and morality, doubtless, the whole story of Barnes Newcome's household was told to the British public. In the previous trial in the Court of Queen's Bench, how grandly Serjeant Rowland stood up for the rights of British husbands! with what pathos he depicted the conjugal paradise, the innocent children prattling round their happy parents, the serpent, the destroyer, entering into that Helgravian Eden; the wretched and deserted husband alone by his desecrated hearth, and calling for redress on his country! Rowland wept freely during his noble harangue. At not a shilling under twenty thousand pounds would he estimate the cost of his client's injuries.[16]

And he accused England as well as Sir Barnes:

> Why should Sir Barnes Newcome's conscience be more squeamish than his country's, which has put money in his pocket for having trampled on the weak young thing, and scorned her, and driven her to ruin? When the whole of the accounts of that wretched bankruptcy are brought up for final audit, which of the unhappy partners shall be shown to be the most guilty?[17]

A few novelists criticized the inferior social and intellectual position forced upon women by Convention, and so criticized the typical family which taught women that they were inferiors. Rosina Lytton, who in Cheveley deplored the law's opinion of women,

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16. Vol. II., pp. 317-8.

17. The Newcomes, Vol. II., p. 220.

in the same novel further assailed the Conventional opinion of women. Although as indicated before, Mrs. Lytton was not an equalitarian,[18] she objected that by principle the typical family allowed no powers to woman. "It would save a great deal of trouble to enquiring foreigners," she wrote, "if, for the future, lexicographers would insert opposite the word 'home'--a place for keeping wives and children; 'mutton chops'--food for ditto."[19] "Most husbands seem to think," she declared, "that if their wives have a second idea, the world cannot be large enough for them both, any more than two suns can shine in one hemisphere."[20] Lady Lytton declared that this contempt for woman's intelligence and industry was characteristic of men in Society at large, as well as in the family circle:

> Englishmen politely banish rational conversation in female society, as being beyond the comprehension of their protempore companions; and as, twenty years ago, the generality of grown persons invariably spoke to children as if they thought them fools, and so often made them that which they had supposed, the same effect from the same cause (despite the march of intellect), may sometimes be produced upon adults now.[21]

Mrs. Gaskell, too, whose whole novel Ruth undertook the defense of an abused and seduced young girl, and berated Society for tolerating the seducer and for punishing the seduced, rebelled against the principle that a wife live according to her husband's

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18. See p. 101, footnote 12.

19. Cheveley, Vol. III., p. 31.

20. Ibid., Vol. I., p. 3.

21. Ibid., Vol. I., p. 272.

word. Mr. Bradshaw, a stern but not vicious husband and father, determined to prosecute his son for theft--not appreciating that his son had been driven to theft by the very austerity of family discipline. Convention demanded that Mrs. Bradshaw accept her well-meaning husband's decision. Mrs. Gaskell, however, disagreed with Convention; and she made the meek Mrs. Bradshaw summon courage to say:

> "I have been a good wife till now. I know I have. I have done all he bid me, ever since we were married. But now I will speak my mind, and say to everybody how cruel he is--how hard to his own flesh and blood! If he puts poor Dick in prison, I will go too. If I'm to choose between my husband and my son, I choose my son; for he will have no friends, unless I am with him.[22]

Thackeray, who has already been spoken of with respect to criticisms made of English laws against women, usually defended women against Society. Sometimes his criticisms were directed against individuals or individual vices;[23] sometimes his criticisms seemed to condemn as tyrannical and stupid the whole structure of the English family and Society. The following passage from The Newcomes belongs to the latter class:

> Now, say people quarrel and make up; or don't make it up but wear a smirking face to society, and call each other "my dear" and "my love," and smooth over their countenances before John, who enters with the coals as they are barking and biting, or who announces the dinner as they are tearing each other's eyes out? Suppose a woman is

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22. p. 404.

23. See those in the preceding chapter, p. 66 ff.

> ever so miserable, and yet smiles, and doesn't show her grief? "Quite right," say her prudent friends, and her husband's relations above all. "My dear, you have too much propriety to exhibit your grief before the world, or above all, before the darling children." So to lie is your duty, to lie to your friends, to yourself if you can, to your children.
> ....
> Suppose a little plant, very frail and delicate from the first, but that might have bloomed sweetly and borne fair flowers, had it received warm shelter and kindly nurture; suppose a young creature taken out of her home, and given over to a hard master whose caresses are as insulting as his neglect; consigned to cruel usage; to weary loneliness; to bitter, bitter recollections of the past; suppose her schooled into hypocrisy by tyranny--and then, quick, let us hire an advocate to roar out to a British jury the wrongs of her injured husband, to paint the agonies of his bleeding heart, (if Mr. Advocate gets plaintiff's brief in time, and before defendant's attorney has retained him,) and to show Society injured through him. Let us console the martyr, I say, with thumping damages; and as for the woman--the guilty wretch!--let us lead her out and stone her.[24]

Both Anne and Charlotte Brontë resented the Conventional attitude towards women. Although it is true that Anne Brontë made her heroine, Helen, return to the despicable Arthur Huntingdon, to care for him, in his illness, it is also true that Miss Brontë was brave enough to sanction Helen's original escape with her child.[25] Charlotte Brontë was even more outspoken. In Shirley, she complained that "A lover masculine, so disappointed, can speak

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24. Vol. II., p. 187.

25. The Tenant of Wildfell Hall.

and urge explanation, a lover feminine can say nothing: for if she did the result would be shame and anguish, inward remorse for self-treachery."[26] And in the same novel, she deplored more seriously the Conventional attitude towards women:

> Look at the numerous families of girls in this neighborhood: the Armitages, the Birtwhistles, the Sykes. The brothers of these girls are everywhere in business, or in professions; they have something to do: their sisters have no earthly pleasure, but an unprofitable visiting; and no hope, in all their life to come, of anything better. This stagnant state of things makes them decline in health: they are never well; and their minds and views shrink to wondrous narrowness. The great wish--the sole aim of every one of them is to be married, but the majority will never marry; they will die as they now live. They scheme, they plot, they dress to ensnare husbands. The gentlemen turn them into ridicule; they don't want them; they hold them very cheap; they say--I have heard them say it with sneering laughs many a time--the matrimonial market is overstocked. Fathers say so likewise, and are angry with their daughters when they observe their maneuvers; they order them to stay at home. What do they expect them to do at home? If you ask--they would answer sew and cook. They expect them to do this, and this only, contentedly, regularly, uncomplainingly, all their lives long, as if they had no germs of faculties of anything else; a doctrine as reasonable to hold, as it would be that the fathers have no faculties but for eating what their daughters cook, or for wearing what they sew. Could men live so themselves? Would they not be very weary?[27]

In The Professor, too, Charlotte Brontë severely condemned the Conventional position of woman. Even death she thought was preferable.

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26. p. 83.

27. Shirley, pp. 306-7.

> "Monsieur, if a wife's nature loathes that of the man she is wedded to, marriage must be slavery. Against slavery all right thinkers must revolt, and though torture be the price of resistance, torture must be dared; though the only road to freedom lie through the gates of death, those gates must be passed; for freedom is indispensable. Then, Monsieur, I would resist as far as my strength permitted; when that strength failed, I should be sure of a refuge. Death would certainly screen me both from bad laws and their consequences.[28]

All of the criticisms thus far enumerated questioned the rightness of the generally-accepted belief that man was ordained by God a being greatly superior to woman. They questioned that belief somewhat timidly, to be sure, for they were not themselves convinced that the sexes were completely equal.

As already discussed, the Early Victorian novelists, reviewers, and essayists attacked abuses in the typical educational system; but some of them also attacked features of the system itself. One of the aspects of education which they attacked was the Public School. They accused it of being a snobbish institution--one which taught its pupils little more than to be snobbish and extravagant. At the beginning of the period, Lytton asserted that the aims of the Public School were faulty ones: they were but another example of the "influence which our aristocracy obtain over every institution--every grade of our social life--from the cradle to the grave."[29]

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28. pp. 190-1.

29. <u>England and The English</u>, Vol. I., p. 234. See also Vol. I., pp. 233-4.

Thackeray, although he did exhibit some fondness at length for Grey Friars, making it a sanctuary for old Colonel Newcome, could not help criticizing the low educational standards of the Public Schools. He agreed that Clive's case was a typical one:

> "He [Clive] has acquired in five years, and by the admirable seestem [Sic] purshood at your public schools, just about as much knowledge of the ancient languages as he could get by three month's application at home."[30]

Nor was Thackeray willing to believe that the Public School taught "the beauties of equality" by having boys live together. His criticism was much the same as Lytton's:

> They say at public schools Princekin is taught the beauties of equality, and thrash-

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"In the first place the large portion of the boys at a public school are the sons of what may be termed the minor aristocracy--of country gentlemen--of rich merchants--of opulent lawyers--of men belonging to the 'untitled property' of the country: the smaller portion are the sons of statesmen and of nobles. Now each parent of the former class thinks in his heart of the advantages of acquaintance and connexion that his son will obtain, by mixing with the children of the latter class. He looks beyond the benefits of education--to the chances of getting on in the world. 'Young Howard's father has ten livings-- and young Johnson may become intimate with young Howard, and obtain one of the ten livings.' So thinks old Johnson when he pays for the Greek which his son will never know. 'Young Cavendish is the son of a minister--if young Smith distinguishes himself what a connexion he may form!' So says old Smith when he finds his own son making excellent Latin verses, although incapable of translating Lucan without a dictionary! Less confined, but equally aristocratic, are the views of the mother.--'My son is very intimate with little Lord John: he will get, when of age, into the best society!--who knows but that one of these days he may marry little Lady Mary!'" But, said Lytton, these dreams were not realized.

30. The Newcomes, Vol. I., p. 90.

> ed into some kind of subordination. Psha! Toad-eaters in pinafores surround Princekin. Do not respectable people send their children so as to be at the same school with him; don't they follow him to college, and eat his toads through life?[31]

Dickens's observations upon the schools of England are very well known. His direct criticism of the aims and objectives of The Public School were probably never better expressed than with respect to the education of Richard Carstairs:

> "I thought it much to be regretted that Richard's education had not counteracted those influences, or directed his character. He had been eight years at a public school, and had learnt, I understood, to make Latin Verses of several sorts, in the most admirable manner. But I never heard that it had been anybody's business to find out what his natural bent was, or where his failings lay, or to adapt any kind of knowledge to him. He had been adapted to the Verses, and had learnt the art of making them to such perfection, that if he had remained at school till he was of age, I suppose he could have gone on making them over and over again, unless he had enlarged his education by forgetting how to do it."[32]

Grace Aguilar, although perhaps not ready to generalize upon the Public School system, was willing to blame it, at least in part, for the viciousness of Greville:

> Left at a very early age his own master, with a capital estate and large fortune; educated at a very large public school, at which he learned literally nothing but vice, and how effectually to conceal it; courted and flattered wherever he went, he became vain, overbearing, and extravagant; with no

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31. Ibid., Vol. II., pp. 158-9.

32. Bleak House, p. 157.

> pursuit but that of gambling in all varieties, even hunting and shooting could not be thoroughly enjoyed without some large bets depending on the day's sport.33

A reviewer of William Johnston's England As It Is declared:

> His discussion of the merits and disadvantages of public schools is entitled to praise for its moderation, ingenuity, and common sense. On the whole, Mr. Johnston doubts the good effects of our public school system.34

William Johnston's criticisms of the schools were radical:

> Such I believe to be very generally the course of the moral habits of English public schools, out of which much good and much evil are evoked--much that tends to the encouragement of manliness and the repression of dangerous sentimentalism--much also that tends to selfishness, scorn, and disregard of what is simple, kind, and good in human nature.
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> .....
>
> It appears to me that one great disadvantage of all large schools is, that boys have only the society of boys, and thus lose a thousand opportunities of unconsciously gaining knowledge in familiar conversation with grown-up relatives and friends.35

Although the popular, growing interest in the subject of national education did not necessarily imply an attack upon the Public School, nevertheless, it implied that people were beginning to recognize that the Public School was inadequate. Hence the reviewer of W. F. Hook's pamphlet, "On the Means of rendering more Efficient the Education of the People," could say with justifiable pride:

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33. Home Influence, p. 83.

34. The Athenaeum, # 1213, (Jan. 25, 1851), p. 104.

35. Ibid.

> For upwards of fifteen years, The Athenaeum has steadily advocated the necessity of a system of National Education, superintended by the State and subject to the same responsibilities as the other function of Government.[36]

A second aspect of education which some critics of the order attacked concerned the teaching of girls. As indicated in the previous chapter, many writers considered the fashionable girls' school an abuse of the system which typically and ideally required girls to become charming, graceful, and politely accomplished. Other writers were more radical: they condemned the fashionable school, not always because it failed to teach the polite accomplishments of a lady, but sometimes because it did teach them. In other words, they questioned the validity of the typical family system with respect to its purposes in educating girls; they clamored for more practical and less superficial instruction for England's future wives and mothers. Dickens, for example, disliked the Minerva House, "a 'finishing establishment for young ladies,' where some twenty of the ages from thirteen to nineteen inclusive, acquired a smattering of everything, and a knowledge of nothing; instruction in French and Italian, dancing lessons twice a week; and other necessaries of life."[37]

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36. The Athenaeum, # 977 (July 18, 1846), p. 729.

37. Sketches by Boz, p. 315. Two other interesting satires of the form and function of a fashionable girls' school were inserted into The Old Curiosity Shop: Miss Monflather's school, and Miss Wackles's school. The latter Dickens described as follows: pp. 58-9:
"...there Miss Sophia Wackles resided with her widowed mother and two sisters, in conjunction with whom she main-

Miss Martineau, too, had little respect for the system of education for women, either in America or in England.

> Female education in America is much what it is in England. There is a profession of some things being taught which are supposed necessary because everybody learns them. They serve to fill up time, to occupy attention harmlessly, to improve conversation, and to make women something like companions to their husbands, and able to teach their children somewhat.38

The fact that an increasing number of Early Victorians were questioning the wisdom of the kind of education typically given to girls is shown by the attitudes of the reviewers. For example, the reviewer of William Langsdale, the Cotton Lord, agreed with Mrs. Stone, the authoress, and quoted her words:

> "A modern fashionable education seems to be the perversion of everything reasonable, at least for the middle class of Society.-- We are supposed to be ignorant...that Ladies' fingers could contaminate themselves by compounding mixtures of butter and flour

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tained a very small day-school for young ladies of proportionate dimensions; a circumstance which was made known to the neighbourhood by an oval board over the front first-floor window, whereon appeared, in circumambient flourishes, the words 'Ladies' Seminary'; and which was further published and proclaimed at intervals between the hours of half-past nine and ten in the morning, by a straggling and solitary young lady of tender years standing on the scraper on the tips of her toes and making futile attempts to reach the knocker with a spelling-book. The several duties of instruction in this establishment were thus discharged. English grammar, composition, geography, and the use of the dumb bells, by Miss Melissa Wackles; writing, arithmetic, dancing, music, and general fascination by Miss Sophy Wackles; the art of needle-work, marking, and samplery, by Miss Jane Wackles; corporal punishment, fasting, and other tortures and terrors, by Mrs. Wackles."

38. Society in America, Vol. III., pp. 107-8.

> and suet; and as to shaping and seaming such garments as from their universal adoption we may fairly suppose to be most useful--this was never dreamt of. Plain sewing was forbidden by the rules of the school...by far the greatest portion of time was given to bad music, worse drawing, and trumpery fancy-work....[39]

The reviewer of The English Wife: a Manual of Home Duties asserted:

> This is another of those attempts, now almost daily made, to supply the radical deficiencies of English education by books of instruction, offering short cuts and bye paths to a sera sapientia. It is now pretty generally understood, that young women are committed to matrimony and its cares, ignorant of every thing connected with the duties of their new station: but the world had not yet discovered that such ignorance is but a part of their manifold deficiencies. It is not merely an unacquaintance with facts which disqualifies, but far worse, an habitual frame and constitution of mind, produced by false notions in their instructors of the requisites of female education. It is not merely that women are taught nothing that is useful, but they are so hedged in by restrictions, that the intellect itself is crippled,--that they are incapable of judging soundly of the facts with which after experience may bring them acquainted. Girls are shut out from all that mutual instruction which boys acquire out of school, as well as from the benefit of that desultory reading which forms the most useful part of the ordinary acquirements of men....[40]

The author of an essay in Fraser's Magazine, "An Inquiry into the state of Girl's Fashionable Schools," joined in attacking false ladyism, hypocrisy, unintelligence, and snobbishness as a deplor-

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39. The Athenaeum, # 779 (Oct. 1, 1842), p. 846.

40. The Athenaeum, # 795 (Jan. 21, 1843), p. 58.

able characteristic of the fashionable school.[41]

But the most significant criticism of the typical system of education was made not directly against either the Public School or the fashionable school; it was made against the theory which determined, and distinguished between, the methods for the character-training of boys and girls. It was made by Anne Brontë:

> "I beg your pardon, Mrs. Graham, but you get on too fast. I have not yet said that a boy should be taught to rush into the snares of life, or even willfully to seek temptation for the sake of exercising his virtue by overcoming it; I only say that it is better to arm and strengthen your hero, than to disarm and enfeeble the foe; and if you were to rear an oak sapling in a hothouse, tending it carefully night and day, and shielding it from every breath of wind, you could not expect it to become a hardy tree, like that which has grown up on the mountainside, exposed to all the action of the elements, and not even sheltered from the shock of the tempest."
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> "Granted; but would you use the same argument with regard to a girl?"
>
> "Certainly not."
>
> "No; you would have her to be tenderly and delicately nurtured like a hothouse plant--taught to cling to others for protection and support, and guarded as much as possible from the very knowledge of evil. But will you be so good as to inform me why you make this distinction? Is it that you think she <u>has</u> no virtue?"
>
> "Assuredly not."
>
> "Well, but you affirm that virtue is only elicited by temptation; and you think that a woman cannot be too little exposed to temptation, or too little acquainted with vice, or anything connected therewith. It <u>must</u> be, either that you think she is essentially so vicious or so feebleminded, that she <u>cannot</u> withstand temptation--and though she may be pure and innocent as long as she is kept in ignorance and restraint, yet, being destitute of

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41. <u>Fraser's Magazine</u>, Vol. XXXI (June, 1845), pp. 703-713.

> real virtue, to teach her how to sin is at once to make her a sinner, and the greater her knowledge, the wider her liberty, the deeper will be her depravity; whereas, in the nobler sex, there is a natural tendency to goodness, guarded by a superior fortitude, which, the more it is exercised by trials and dangers, is only the further developed--"
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> "Heaven forbid that I should think so!" I interrupted at last.
>
> "Well, then; it must be that you think that they are both weak and prone to err, and the slightest error, the merest shadow of pollution will ruin the one, while the character of the other will be strengthened and embellished--his education properly finished by a little practical acquaintance with forbidden things. Such experience to him (to use a trite simile), will be like the storm to the oak, which, though it may scatter the leaves and snap the smaller branches, serves but to rivet the roots, and to harden and condense the fibers of the tree. You would have us encourage our sons to prove all things by their own experience, while our daughters must not even profit by the experience of others. Now I would have both so to benefit by the experience of others, and the precepts of a higher authority, that they should know beforehand to refuse the evil and choose the good, and require no experimental proofs to teach them the evil of transgression. I would not send a poor girl into the world, unarmed against her foes, and ignorant of the snares that beset her path; nor would I watch and guard her till, deprived of self-respect and self-reliance, she lost the power or the will to watch and guard herself; and as for my son--if I thought he would grow up to be what you call a man of the world--one that has 'seen life,' and glories in his experience, even though he should so far profit by it as to sober down, at length, into a useful and respected member of society--I would rather that he died tomorrow! rather a thousand times!"42

A few writers like Thackeray and the Brontës--and to a lesser

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42. The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, pp. 24-5.

extent, Mrs. Gaskell and Bulwer-Lytton--dared to denounce the injustice of the power of Society over the family. That is to say, they did not believe that Society had a right to control and rule the family. They doubted the very idea of Respectability. It is true that when Thackeray criticized the mercenary marriage--as discussed in the preceding chapter--he was criticizing an abuse in the family order; but he was also criticizing an aspect of the order itself, when he implied that families arranged or did not arrange marriages not because of inherent mercenary desires, but because they felt compelled to act in accord with the doctrines of Respectability.[43] It was the respectable person who was the Snob, and one may imply, therefore, that it was respectability which gave rise to snobbishness.

> It is among the <u>respectable</u> classes of this vast and happy empire that the greatest pro-

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43. <u>The Book of Snobs</u>, p. 106: Thackeray blamed Snobbishness for making unhappy many in the "middle rank" by preventing their loving and marrying. He said when Punch is king, there will be no more old maids and bachelors. "The Rev. Mr. Malthus shall be burned annually, instead of Guy Fawkes." He declared that snobbishness prevented marriages in the "middle rank" all too often, p. 108: "What was it that insulted Nature (to use no higher name), and perverted her kindly intentions toward them? What cursed frost was it that nipped the love that both were bearing, and condemned the girl to sour sterility, and the lad to selfish old-bachelorhood? It was the infernal Snob tyrant who governs us all, who says 'Thou shalt not love without a lady's maid; thou shalt not marry without a carriage and horses; thou shalt have no wife in thy heart, and no children on thy knee, without a page in buttons and a French <u>bonne</u>; thou shalt go to the devil unless thou hast a brougham; marry poor, and society shall forsake thee; thy kinsmen shall avoid thee as a criminal; thy aunts and uncles shall turn up their eyes and bemoan the sad, sad manner in which Tom or Harry has thrown himself away."

> fusion of Snobs is to be found...perhaps there is not one in ten of those houses where the "Peerage" does not lie on the drawing room table.[44]

Like Thackeray, Charlotte Brontë abominated the despotism of respectability. Although she did not declaim specifically against the doctrine, she selected for her heroines and heroes, unconventional people who paid no heed to respectability. She commiserated with, rather than censured, Rochester for attempting bigamy;[45] and she laughed with Shirley at Shirley's uncle, Mr. Simpson, and his ideas upon respectable marriage.[46] And like Charlotte, Emily Brontë denied that Society had a right to power over the family. Most of her novel, Wuthering Heights, entirely ignored society; Heathcliff and Cathy and Convention did not mix.[47] And Anne, in The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, implied a distaste for the power of Convention.[48]

Mrs. Gaskell in Ruth denied that Society had a right to interfere in matters of the family; she enlisted the readers' sympathies with Ruth, who was of course condemned by Society when the kindly Bensons who had shielded her could no longer preserve her

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44. The Book of Snobs, p. 30.

45. Jane Eyre.

46. Shirley.

47. Brontë, Emily, (Ellis Bell), Wuthering Heights, N. Y., The Hershon Co., n. d.

48. Although Helen did come back to Arthur, and although Anne Brontë did have Helen say that she came back as a duty to her marriage, still Miss Brontë made the reader sympathize with Helen and disagree with her reasons for returning to her worthless husband.

secret. By having Ruth at last win the respect and love of the whole community because she almost alone dared to nurse tirelessly those stricken by a terrible plague, Mrs. Gaskell really said not that Ruth had again become worthy of Society, but that Society had learned to understand Ruth. Society at last had risen above Convention.

Even though Lord Lytton's better novels, like those of the Caxton series, were uncritical of the family order, Lord Lytton did denounce the power of Society in his England and the English. In this work he criticized the caste system of English society.

> But wealth is the greatest of all levellers, and the highest of the English nobles willingly repair the fortunes of hereditary extravagance by intermarriage with the families of the banker, the lawyer, and the merchant ....By this intermixture of the highest aristocracy with the more subaltern ranks of society, there are far finer and more numerous grades of dignity in this country than in any other. You see two gentlemen of the same birth, fortune, and estates--they are not of the same rank,--by no means!--one looks down on the other as confessedly his inferior. Would you know why? His connexions are much higher![49]

In the same book, Lord Lytton also criticized the idea of Respectability:

> But who is this elderly gentleman, with a portly figure? Hush! it is Mr. Warm, "a most respectable man." His most intimate friend failed in trade, and went to prison. Mr. Warm, in early life, seduced a young lady; she lived with him three years; he married, and turned her off without a shilling--the connexion, for a married man,

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49. Vol. I., pp. 25-6.

> was not respectable. Mr. Warm is a most respectable man; he pays his bills regularly--he subscribes to six public charities--he goes to church with all his family on a Sunday--he is in bed at twelve o'clock. Well, well, all that's very proper; but is Mr. Warm a good father, a good friend, an active citizen? or is he not avaricious, does he not love scandal, is not his heart cold, is he not vindictive, is he not unjust, is he not unfeeling? Lord! sir, I believe he may be all that; but what then? everybody allows Mr. Warm is a most respectable man.50

To this list of criticisms should also be added the complaint of Alton Locke, who could see no reason in the caste system and in its power over people:

> "Why have I not as good a right to speak to her, to move in the same society in which she moves, as any of the fops of the day. Is it because these aristocrats are more intellectual than I? I should not fear to measure brains against most of them now; and give me the opportunities which they have, and I would die if I did not outstrip them. Why have I not those opportunities? Is that fault of others to be visited upon me? Is it because they are more refined than I? What right have they, if this said refinement be so necessary a qualification, a difference so deep--that, without it, there is to be an everlasting gulf between man and man--what right have they to refuse to let me share in it, to give me the opportunity of acquiring it?"51

One might be tempted to add Disraeli to this list of radical critics because of such a statement as:

> "I am your elder brother, sir, whose relationship to you is your only claim to

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50. Ibid., Vol. I., pp. 110-1.

51. Kingsley, Charles, Alton Locke, p. 59.

> the consideration of society."
>
> "A curse on the society that has fashioned such claims," said Irremont, in a heightened tone: "claims founded in selfishness, cruelty, and fraud, and leading to demoralization, misery, and crime."[52]

Despite his liberal political ideas, however, Disraeli was ever impressed by rank and caste, and by the power of Convention. Codlingsly was a satire, but a justifiable one.[53]

Even more significant than the radical criticisms were the replies made by the defenders of the order. Not only did the conventional reviewer answer specific accusations, but he also placed himself on the defensive against an even vaguely implied accusation. Thus, sometimes he attacked a point of view which was not radical, merely because he feared the possibility that some reader might see radicalism in it.

There were almost no counter-criticisms of the attacks upon social despotism or upon the educational system. In the first case, as already demonstrated, the critic implied, rather than stated, his objections to social despotism--often too subtly for them to be recognized as radical. With respect to education, little was said against the radical critic because most conventional people would have agreed with him, had they been actively enough interested in the problems of education. The conventional system of education remained because of lethargy rather than determina-

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52. Sybil, p. 161.

53. Thackeray, William Makepeace, "Codlingsly" by D. Shrewsberry (in Novels by Eminent Hands), Boston, Estes and Lauriat, 1883, Thackeray's Complete Works, Vol. VI, The People's Edition.

tion.

The great bulk of counter-criticism consisted of replies to those radical assertions which clamored for more freedom for women. The reactionary reviewer wrote condescendingly about women. He commented upon the excellences which belonged particularly to woman, praised her for them, and limited her to them. The article on the "Rights and Conditions of Women," which began as a review of a number of books published on the "education, rights, and conditions of women," and which developed into a treatise on the woman question, assumed this point of view:

> The theory of the mental equality of the sexes, has not wanted eminent supporters. Plato says there is no natural superiority of man over woman, except in strength. Professor Dugald Stewart is of the same opinion, and thinks that the intellectual and moral differences which we observe, are only the result of education. Voltaire thinks that women are on a level with men in every talent but invention. With all due deference to these high authorities, we cannot subscribe to their views.
>
> It will not be denied, that, be they assignable to education or nature, great differences do exist between the moral and intellectual characteristics of the two sexes. Of these differences, the following appear to us to be the most remarkable:--women have less of active, and more of passive courage than men. They have more excitability of nerve; and with it, all those qualities which such excitability tends to produce. They are more enthusiastic--their sympathy is more lively--they have a nicer perception of minute circumstances....They are inferior in the power of close and logical reasoning. They are less dispassionate--less able to place their feelings in subjection to their judgment, and to bring themselves to a conclusion which is at variance with their prepossessions. They have less power of combination and of

> generalisation. They are less capable of steady and concentrated attention--and though their patience is equal, if not greater, their perseverance is less.
> .....
> It cannot be argued with any plausibility, that to education rather than to nature man owes that mental superiority over woman, the existence of which cannot be denied.54

A writer in The Athenaeum in reviewing the "Report of the Commissioners of the Employments of Children, &c.; with Appendices, &c." digressed into a discussion of the woman question. He thought that he argued on behalf of women; but his argument was really conventional. He declared that Woman's place was the home; and that man was a brute to make woman work and so unfit her as an educator of children. Man, he said, should arrange society so that woman could have her proper sphere, so that she could stay at home and exercise her afore-described powers and virtues:

> The press has lately teemed with works of which the condition, the destiny of women is in some form or other the subject,--"Woman's Mission,"--"The Women of England,"--"The Wives of England,"--"The Daughters of England,"--"Woman and Her Master,"--"Woman, her Rights and Duties," &c. &c. It is the popular theme of the day. Open one of these books--or indeed open any book whatever, of morals, physics, travels, history,--they tell us, one and all, that the chief distinction between savage and civilized life, between Heathendom and Christendom, lies in the condition and treatment of the women; that, by the position of the women in the scale of society, we estimate the degree of civilization of that society; that, on her power to exercise her faculties and duties aright, depends the moral culture of the

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54. The Edinburgh Review, Vol. LXXIII, (April, 1841), pp. 192-3, 195.

> rising generation.--in other words, the progress of the species. They assume as a principle, that in every class of Christian society there is what is called domestic life, and that this domestic life supposes as its primary element--the presence, the cares, the devotion of woman. Her sphere is home, her vocation the maternal (not meaning thereby the literal bringing forth of children, but the nourishing, cherishing, and teaching of the young). In all relations between the sexes, she is the refiner and the comforter of man; it is hers to keep alive those purer, gentler, and more genial sympathies, those refinements in morals, in sentiment, in manners, without which we men, in this rough, working-day world, would degenerate (do degenerate, for the case is not hypothetical) into mere brutes....55

Another reviewer stated the reactionary opinion by praising Madame de Wahl, the author of Practical Hints on the Moral, Mental, and Physical Training of Girls at School, for having "no sympathy with the Amazons:"

> We have heard so much recently of woman's mission, woman's rights, and wrongs, woman's position, and so forth, that it is quite a relief to meet with a common-sense, practical view of the subject of female education--education in that large sense which is necessary to fit a person for the discharge of the grave and active duties of life and a safe commerce with the world. Madame de Wahl--while fully convinced of the importance of her theme--has no sympathy with the Amazons who wage war upon society in championship of their sex. Her idea is, that women are what they make themselves. She does not, however, enter largely into the vexed questions of woman and her master versus man and his mistress. She confines herself chiefly to plain educational hints--and her hints, we may add, are lessons which may

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55. The Athenaeum, # 803 (March 18, 1843), p. 257.

> be advantageously taken to heart. We may safely commend her little book to the careful attention of mothers and governesses.[56]

The reviewer of Lady Morgan's Woman and Her Master tried to make his criticism acceptable to liberals and conservatives. He suggested that the education and illumination of man were preferable to legislation on behalf of woman:

> The condition of woman compared with that of man, her relative position in society; be it that of savage families,--of semi-barbaric nations,--of nomade tribes,--of civilized or Christian people, affords a subject of vast philosophical and moral importance. How that position is affected by war, literature, and religion,--how by physical conformation and maternity,--how by woman's innate and imperishable qualities, are questions that open up a wide field for most curious speculation. How far too it might be safe to legislate on her special behalf, particularly in an extremely artifical state of society, or whether, it would be safe at all to venture the least step in the way of experiment, are inquiries which appear to be susceptible of very nice conduct. But after all, we imagine, the preferable conclusion would be this, that the higher the condition, intellectually and morally speaking, of either of the sexes, so will be that of the other, by a law of natural reciprocity and reaction; and therefore that it is wisest to direct such positive measures as are intended to ameliorate, reform, and exalt society at large, immediately to the stronger and more obvious party. Woman's nature and interests, as we apprehend, not being the same as man's, yet by no means opposed, but only parallel and equivalent,--distinct spheres being measured and weighed,--it seems to be the more advisable course to endeavour to contrive such regulations as will guide and illuminate the Master;

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56. The Athenaeum, # 1049 (Dec. 4, 1847), p. 1243.

> and then, perhaps, we shall find small cause for entertaining fears concerning the rightful dominion and the legitimate province of the Mistress.[57]

The author of "The Rights of Women," a review and discussion of various conventional books by and about women, praised the works because they esteemed the high standard of the English home and family--among the books considered were Mrs. Ellis's The Women of England, and The Wives of England, and Mrs. Jameson's Characteristics of Women, and Memoirs of Women. The critic said:

> We hope--nay, we proudly believe--that the honourable freedom of our women may long be made to rest on those only foundations which can keep it secure against change--the purity, the harmony, the genial brightness of our English homes....[58]

The reviewer of Conings by for Fraser's Magazine was a reactionary. He objected even to the dedication of the book to Disraeli's wife: "Anything in worse taste it has never been our fortune to encounter." What particularly displeased him about the dedication was the contiguity of "most severe of critics" and "perfect wife."[59]

The author of a dual review: Mrs. Norton's A Letter to the Queen on Lord Chancellor Cranworth's Bill and Margaret Fuller Ossoli's Women in the Nineteenth Century, opposed the emancipation of women:

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57. Monthly Review, Vol. II, (June, 1840), pp. 204-5.

58. Quarterly Review, Vol. LXXV (Dec., 1844), p. 122.

59. "Mr. Benjamin Disraeli, M. P.," Fraser's Magazine, Vol. XXXI (June, 1845), p. 728.

> The contrast in the spirit with which the works before us are written, is remarkable. The American lady is full of passionate aspirations after a noble and ideal marriage,--the true heart union and life companionship between man and woman. The English matron pleads bitterly and querulously for the right of divorce.
> .....
> The position of women has, within the last twenty years, undergone great modification. An immense and daily increasing proportion of women have no "domestic sphere," as it is called, but are obliged to turn out into the world and earn their own living. Is this the kind of "emancipation" that is sought?[60]

Many other reviews like the foregoing ones appeared throughout the period.[61]

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60. The Athenaeum, # 1446 (July 14, 1855), p. 811.

61. Among the many other reviews, the following are of particular interest:
The review of Woman's Mission by J. W. Parker, The Athenaeum, # 610 (July 6, 1839), p. 503. The reviewer asserted that woman's influence "ought to be private and domestic" and that "woman mistakes her station, and descends from her sphere, when she mingles in the contests of political strife, or displays herself in the arena of religious controversy."
"Letter of Advice From an Experienced Matron to a Young Married Lady," Fraser's Magazine, Vol. XXXIX (April, 1849), pp. 397-405. This article is a travesty upon the "authoritative" advice of women who seek rights.
"Currer Bell's 'Shirley'," The Edinburgh Review, Vol. XCI (Jan., 1850), p. 154: "Men in general, when serious and not gallant, are slow to admit woman even to an equality with themselves; and the prevalent opinion certainly is that women are inferior in respect of intellect. This opinion may be correct. The question is a delicate one. We very much doubt, however, whether sufficient data exist for any safe or confident decision. For the position of women in society has never yet been--perhaps never can be--such as to give fair play to their capabilities. It is true, no doubt, that none of them have yet attained to the highest eminence in the highest departments of intellect." The argument which followed

Of particular interest, however, are the Early Victorian criticisms of Cheveley and of some of the Brontës' novels. From the reactionary's point of view, all of these novels were effectively written and dangerous. The reviewer for Fraser's Magazine who discussed Cheveley admitted that Lady Lytton had written from personal experience, but he hoped that she had exaggerated. He refused to believe that the evils described in the novel existed in actual England:

> We should also hope that the picture of Lord de Clifford's mother is overcharged, at least in the circumstances of her conniving at the profligacies, or rather pandering to the vices of her sons. Instances of this kind may have occurred, but surely not to the shameless degree here exhibited.[62]

This review, however, was moderate. A year later in the same magazine, in an essay entitled "What's What," Cheveley was again discussed, this time less leniently. Now the critic refuted Lady Lytton's arguments that woman be given more freedom.

> Lady Bulwer, in Cheveley, has warmly asserted the rights of her sex to a higher

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was both smug and spurious. By asserting that women have produced no Bacon, no Newton, no Milton, he argued that women were therefore inferior. The fallacy of this argument is patent.

The review of Letters to my Unknown Friends, The Athenaeum, # 995 (Nov. 21, 1846), p. 1188.

The review of A Plea for Women by Mrs. Reid, The Athenaeum, # 853 (March 2, 1844), p. 189. The reviewer said that all claims of the authoress were just and would eventually be realized. He criticized her, however, for not recognizing "the inexpediency of such a change at this time." He asserted that the public mind should be prepared, both sexes trained, for such changes.

62. Fraser's Magazine, Vol. XIX (May, 1839), p. 623.

> intellectual culture, and a more independent social position, than at present enjoyed by them. Eager at all times to meet the wishes of those to whom civilization is so largely indebted, mankind, at least that portion thereof particularly addressed by Lady Bulwer, would, we are confident, embrace and carry out her ladyship's views, were these but once shown to be calculated for the improvement of the moral and social condition of women. But the widest possible difference of opinion exists not between the lords of creation and their fair fellow-creatures, but among the ladies themselves; a very large and sound-thinking proportion of whom agree with Mrs. Butler, that to discharge the functions of good wives and good mothers is "the highest, holiest end of woman's being." We shall not presume to determine so delicate a question; yet we may without much hesitation declare, that if mankind must choose between the education which trains women to become good wives and good mothers, and that which fits them for shining in poetry, philosophy, and science, they will prefer the former method of teaching.[63]

A writer in the Monthly Review was even more blunt:

> Lady Bulwer's "Cheveley" was a scandalous publication,--that is to say, it dealt in revelations, no doubt highly coloured, which supplied a host of readers, with family and personal matters exactly suited to the taste of scandal-mongers. As a fiction it neither ranked high in regard to pure moral sentiment, nor as a skillfully constructed tale....[64]

A writer in Fraser's Magazine a few years later, in referring to Lady Lytton's novels, employed an argumentum ad hominem in assailing Lady Lytton's plea for justice for women:

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63. Fraser's Magazine, Vol. XXI (April, 1840), p. 459.

64. "The Budget of the Bubble Family," Monthly Review, Vol. III, (Nov., 1840), p. 444.

> Poor Lady Bulwer-Lytton! if she had not been verifying the old adage about the counsel and the client, she ought incontinently to scratch out the eyes of her advocate. A better case for the unfortunate husband could not possibly be made out.[65]

And still later in reviewing Lady Lytton's The School for Husbands, a writer in The Athenaeum, a magazine usually rather just and fair in its criticism,[66] employed the same fallacy for the same purpose:

> By way of last word and warning, let us put it to Lady Bulwer-Lytton, whether she can mend her position either as an authoress or as an individual by exposing her private quarrels and rancours to the curiosity of the circulating libraries?[67]

Perhaps the most significant of the reactionary criticisms was that made of Jane Eyre in the Quarterly Review. "The author-

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65. "Anti-Coningsby," Fraser's Magazine Vol. XXXI (Feb., 1845), p. 219.

66. In the review of Cheveley, The Athenaeum, # 596 (March 30, 1839), p. 235, the critic, although perhaps not a radical himself, was rather tolerant. He refused to say much about Cheveley because it was a fiction mixed with factitous matter, but he did agree that Lady Lytton's complaint was valid, though futile: "In the present state of society, and of the world's opinion, we doubt whether the wisest and most temperate appeal of a wife against her husband, would obtain for her either a candid hearing, or an impartial sentence. No amount of patience, forbearance, and assiduous discharge of ungrateful duties on the one side, or of inconstancy, cruelty, tyranny, and selfishness on the other, would procure for a notoriously injured woman more than a cold and contemptuous pity....Moral England does (to use our authoress's own phraseology) make grammatical distinctions in the decalogue, and metes out its judgments on the male and female delinquencies with most unequal measures."

67. The Athenaeum, # 1264 (Jan. 17, 1852), p. 81.

itative voice of the Quarterly was felt by many to have decided the question of Jane Eyre's morality. A good many years were to pass before any young lady could admit that she had read and enjoyed the book without bringing down shame on her own head and on the heads of her parents."[68] Although the reviewer recognized the power of Jane Eyre, she was shocked by the book, thought it dangerous, subversive, and unchristian. That the reviewer, Miss Rigsby, was a woman is of interest. The severity of her reactionary ideas about her own sex was greater than that of the average conventional criticisms made by men:

> It is a very remarkable book: we have no remembrance of another combining such genuine power with such horrid taste.
> .....
> Jane Eyre is throughout the personification of an unregenerate and undisciplined spirit, the more dangerous to exhibit from that prestige of principle and self-control which is liable to dazzle the eye too much for it to observe the inefficient and unsound foundations on which it rests. It is true Jane does right, and exerts great moral strength, but it is the strength of a mere heathen mind which is a law unto itself. No Christian grace is perceptible upon her. She has inherited in fullest measure the worst sin of our fallen nature--the sin of pride... We do not hesitate to say that the tone of mind and thought which has overthrown authority and violated every code human and divine abroad, and fostered Chartism and rebellion at home, is the same which has also written Jane Eyre.
> .....
> We cannot help feeling that this work must be far from beneficial to that class of ladies whose cause it affects to advocate. Jane Eyre is not precisely the mouthpiece one

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68. Cruse, Amy, The Victorians and their Books, p. 365.

> would select to plead the cause of governesses, and it is therefore the greater pity she has chosen it: for there is none we are convinced which, at the present time, more deserves and demands an earnest and judicious be-friending.[69]

The review for Fraser's Magazine of The Tenant of Wildfell Hall was conventional. It admitted the effectiveness of the work, but censored it for coarseness:

> It is, taken altogether, a powerful and an interesting book. Not that it is a pleasant book to read, nor, as we fancy, has it been a pleasant book to write; still less has it been a pleasant training which could teach an author such awful facts, or give courage to write them. The fault of the book is coarseness....[70]

The critic agreed that The Tenant of Wildfell Hall was justified in exposing a husband's profligacy, although he was sure that the public would find the book unnecessarily bitter. The use of the diary he thought shocking but permissible; but he asserted that no decent wife would have recorded the swearing which was found in Helen's diary. He further questioned, as a typical family man, the validity of Helen's being attracted to Gilbert; Helen was so much better educated than Gilbert, and belonged to a higher class of society.[71]

The reviewer of Villette for The Athenaeum praised the novel

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69. Rigsby, "Vanity Fair--and Jane Eyre," Quarterly Review, Vol. LXXXIV, (Dec., 1848), pp. 163, 173-4, 176.

70. "Recent Novels," Fraser's Magazine, Vol. XXXIX (April, 1849), pp. 423-4.

71. Ibid., p. 426.

but objected to its preachiness. He also objected to Currer Bell's habit of allowing her women to be won by obstreperous men: by doing so, Currer Bell did not help the cause of women in which he assumed she was interested. And "remembering Currer Bell's former novels," he protested "against such perpetual expositions of grief dealt with and care overcome."[72]

The radical criticisms of family life and the reactionary criticisms which they evoked from many reviewers were but a very small part of Early Victorian writing. Only a few principles of the typical family organization were criticized at all, and these usually moderately. The most significant objection to the family order, the objection that woman was limited unfairly to a petty sphere, called forth counter-criticisms effective enough to keep public opinion, with respect to the typical family, static throughout most of the period.

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72. The Athenaeum, # 1320 (Feb. 12, 1853), p. 186.

CHAPTER V

THE LITERARY REPUTATION OF THE EARLY VICTORIAN NOVEL

To understand the importance of family life in Early Victorian prose fiction and to estimate the significance of the various criticisms of family life, one must know something of the reputation of the novel as an art form in the period. One should know what the Early Victorian expected from the novel, how important the novel was in his life, and what other factors determined the form and purpose of narrative prose fiction. An unpublished dissertation by Caroline Washburn--The History, from 1832 to 1860, of British Criticism of Narrative Prose Fiction--is very helpful as a repository for part of this information. To the general conclusions which she has drawn, however, it will be helpful to add specific illustrations of contemporary criticism with respect to the popular novel.[1]

The novel became suddenly popular during the Early Victorian period, attracted many authors, and sought to comply with public taste. As David Masson has pointed out, when the Waverley novels

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1. Miss Washburn's dissertation, available at the University of Illinois Library, which is concerned with a large subject, is primarily interested in the history of criticism of prose fiction, new and old, as it developed from 1832 to 1860. Miss Washburn paid particular attention to what kinds of fiction were in vogue, what principles of criticism were in evidence, and what sources of criticism were available. Her study was not limited to the contemporary novel, but concerned rather the British reaction to prose fiction in general, and her conclusions were that throughout the period there was strong plea for realism and for morality in fiction.

were at the height of their popularity in the 1820's, narrative prose fiction was not nearly so popular as it was suddenly to become in the next decade. According to figures which he took from the records in the British Museum Library of the novels published in England each year, the increase in popularity was sudden and astonishing. In 1820, he noted, there were "standing on the shelves of the British Museum Library as having been published in Britain" for that year 26 novels represented by 76 volumes. In 1830, there were 101 novels written represented by 305 volumes. From 1830 until the end of the period this increased productivity was maintained. In 1850, there were 98 books represented by 201 volumes, and in 1856, approximately the end of the Early Victorian period, 88 books represented by 201 volumes.[2] Such a sustained increase could mean but one thing: a large general public had become interested in reading fiction.

Whenever a public shows a new interest and is willing to pay to have that new interest satisfied, there inevitably arises a group of people who seize upon the opportunity of making money by satisfying it. In Early Victorian England, the people who seized the opportunity offered by the new interest in fiction were the publishers, the booksellers, and the proprietors of lending libraries. Naturally, as business men, they sought rather to please than to educate, for that way profit lay. The critics, on the other hand, had to content themselves with reviewing what was

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2. Masson, David, British Novelists and their Styles, Boston, Willard Small, 1892, pp. 218-19.

presented to the public and with deploring the production of trash. In respect to the problem of the critic, it is interest ng to take notice of the comments by the writers in one magazine alone, The Athenaeum. These plaintive comments eloquently describe the popular novel. In 1840, a reviewer complained that light literature was pernicious because it prevented people from reading more thought-provoking work--because it effeminated public taste. He further complained that the popular novel represented the bulk of contemporary literature.

> This is a serious drawback on the modern diffusions of literature, when the publication of trash becomes more profitable than the enriching a nation with works of intellect and research; "the trade" is not to be blamed if, like other trades, it follows the market. The author's profit on the higher species of literature is thus rendered too small to encourage production, and genius and talent are fairly driven from the field.[3]

Another reviewer in the same year criticized the popular novel, directing his attack particularly against its lengthiness.

> Here is a novel in one volume; a volume it is true, of six hundred and forty pages! The novel routine, however, is thereby broken through, and the circulating library is emancipated. The objections to the old form of publication are manifold. Ingenuity must occasionally fail to tuck up a story comfortably in that old bed of Procustes, "three volumes post octavo" and where ingenuity is successful, it is rarely indeed that the work does not suffer...stuffing, to give a Falstaff-like rotundity to a poor, forked

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3. Review of Sketches of Young Couples, The Athenaeum, # 651 (April 18, 1840), p. 313.

> thing whose natural proportions would better suit the housing of a magazine....All that under the present system is required by the publisher is, a catching title, (either for the novel or for its author, and better still for both,) with nine hundred pages of dead weight or any weight to justify the cost of advertizing,--for the quality of the goods is of as little importance as that of Peter Pindar's razors.[4]

In the next year a writer deplored "that thoughtless rapidity of composition, which has destroyed the chances of more than one sister novelist to rank with the Edgeworths and the Austens."[5] And in 1844, a reviewer again pronounced his dislike of the long novel which publishers and librarians sponsored. He said in praise of a group of short stories by Mrs. Bremer:

> They belong to a class of fictions so especially in favour with ourselves, however distasteful to publishers, and those arbiters of literary taste--the keepers of cir-

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4. Review of The Man At Arms: A Romance, The Athenaeum, # 670 (Aug. 29, 1840), p. 682.
   See also the review of The Dowager, The Athenaeum, # 681 (Nov. 14, 1840), pp. 889-900. The reviewer began his criticism with an assertion of the importance of literature as an index to society, p. 899: "...it embraces no less than the whole round of their moral existence, and throws a strong light on their institutions, their habits, their present capabilities, and their future prospects." Then he added that literature changed as society changed. Declaring that a new market had opened to literature, that the standards of literature had fallen, that the publisher rather than the author had become the judge of fiction, that the public read much rather than well,--he accused England of intellectual effeminacy, arising out of a long peace and steady national prosperity.

5. Review of Who Shall Be Heir?, The Athenaeum, #691 (Jan. 23, 1841), p. 76.

> culating libraries-- that we must utter a brief sentence or two, on behalf of the short story.[6]

Two years later, the reviewer of The Step-Mother said:

> While the popular mind is awakening to hear, never was the popular teaching which speaks by fiction at so low an ebb. The passion for literary fame has yielded to the mere love of literary reputation (which is not the same thing); the self-respect of genius to a cold calculation of gain. The taste for the high and pure is exchanged for a sordid ministry to what is corrupt in feeling and vicious in intellect. It is of the class, not the individual, that we are speaking now. Is the literary conscience extinct amongst our novel-writers? Have they deposed Art?... An idle, vulgar, unmeaning literature like ours of to-day must give place to something higher and nobler, before the better sympathies and purer cravings that are abroad....[7]

And even at the end of the period, the writers in The Athenaeum were making the same complaints against the popular novel. The reviewer of Agnes Valmar tersely said:

> "Agnes Valmar" is the type of certain classes of novels which just now are particularly abundant,--novels written apparently by persons who, seeing that others have written trash, think they themselves cannot do much worse, and therefore make the attempt.[8]

In these quotations may be recognized a general criticism which was reiterated throughout the whole period: a distaste for the trashy or trivial prose narrative.

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6. Review of The H-- Family; Trälinnan; Axel and Anna: and Other Tales, The Athenaeum, #872 (July 13, 1844), p. 645.

7. The Athenaeum, # 963 (April 11, 1846), p. 370.

8. The Athenaeum, # 1375 (March 4, 1854), p. 277.

Reviewers and critics in general adopted two points of view. On the one hand, as instanced above, they deplored what the booksellers had done to debase the novel as an art form; on the other, they reviewed each particular novel by the standards of public taste. In the second case, they judged the work with respect to its verisimilitude and its moral tone. But the two attitudes were really at cross purposes, and the reviewers had to vacillate. When they deplored the mediocrity of popular novels, they were really defending narrative prose fiction as an art form against the abuses which it had suffered because of the practices of the bookseller; then they spoke with pride of former great authors, usually of Scott and Jane Austen. When they leniently criticized according to popular taste, they looked upon the novel--the popular novel--as a valid but trivial art form. In this latter case, they judged according to standards which, for the most part, were negative; that is to say, they required that the novel be not incredible or subversive. And they assumed that the positive purpose of prose narrative was merely to please and to teach conventionally accepted ideas; serious thought, they felt, should be reserved for the serious form of composition--the essay. To reconcile these two attitudes, I think, is impossible. One can merely understand that they both existed--that they represented a vacillation of opinion. A writer in the North British Review seemed to understand this peculiarity of the office and duties of a reviewer with respect to the popular novel:

> Although reviewing ephemeral works of fiction is not our principal object, any more than reading them is our usual occupation,

> they yet can hardly be neglected with impunity by a Review which means to do its duty by the public. No kind of writing has more influence over the daily and domestic thoughts of a people.9

The increased popularity of the novel attracted many persons to become authors. The prices which the publisher paid for novels for public consumption, although not extremely high, were sufficient to be tempting both to those persons seeking to maintain themselves solely by writing fiction and to those of title and rank who wanted or needed extra money. As early as 1835, Nathaniel Parker Willis reported:

> Lady Blessington's new book (The Two Friends), makes a great noise. Living as she does twelve hours out of the twenty-four in the midst of the most brilliant and mind-exhausting circle in London, I only wonder how she found the time. Yet it was written in six weeks. Her novels sell for a hundred pounds more than any other author's except Bulwer's. Bulwer gets fifteen hundred pounds, Lady B. four hundred, Honourable Mrs. Norton two hundred and fifty, Lady Charlotte Bury two hundred, Grattan three hundred, and most others below this.10

In 1847, a writer in Fraser's Magazine estimated that the average author earned £ 300 yearly from his publishers.[11]

The Early Victorian's interest and pride in the family has already been mentioned.[12] The publisher evidently recognized the

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9. Article 10, North British Review, Vol. I (Aug., 1844), p. 545.

10. Sadlier, Michael, Lady Blessington, p. 203.

11. "The Condition of Authors in England, Germany, and France," Fraser's Magazine, Vol. XXXV (March, 1847), p. 286.

12. See pp. 7-8.

extent of this interest, for the popular novel which he published was concerned mainly with various aspects and various problems of family life. As Amy Cruse has suggested, the influence which Queen Victoria indirectly exerted in fashioning this public taste was probably a large one:

> Not that the Queen was a great reader, or aspired to lead the literary fashions of her reign; in this, as in many other things, she influenced her subjects not so much by specific acts as by the general fashion of her life and conversation. She set a high standard of morality; and her people responded by demanding books whose morality was perhaps over-emphasized. Her family life was well-ordered and affectionate; and domestic stories became the means of conveying those ideals of nobility and heroism which had been found previously only in wild and romantic melodrama. She had strong prejudices, which she did not hesitate to make known; and this helps to account for the fact that the Victorian reader was more apt than any of his predecessors or successors to make a tremendous outcry when a book was published which offended his sensibilities.[13]

A reviewer in The Athenaeum recognized the public's interest in family life as a subject for prose fiction and was even annoyed by it.

> From North Ronaldsbay to South Foreland, from parliament-house to publican's, from study to smithy, an epidemic fever prevails about the "practical;" men of sense, men of genius, pseudo-politicians, and fop-philosophers,--nay, our very poets, with their monotonous cricket--chirrup about fireside joys, as if in their idea of heaven the whole glowing scope of heaven's pavement

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13. Cruse, Amy, The Victorians and Their Reading, p. 13.

were cut down to a hearthstone.[14]

A writer in The Edinburgh Review in the same year also recognized public taste; however, he endeavored to think well of it:

> The mine which Richardson opened is one that appears to us unexhausted and inexhaustible. The mere novel of manners soon becomes obsolete. Hence the oblivion which has already closed over most of the novels of "Fashionable Life," in spite of much ill applied vivacity and perverted talent for observation. But the novel of real feeling, while seemingly not more pretending, advances claims to no ephemeral reputation....In life as it is, lies the true empire of modern fiction; in that life within life--the thoughts, feelings, aspirations, which the study of a single family will reveal to us--(latent to the common eye, yet, individualizing each with separate attributes of power, weakness, beauty, deformity)--lies its true philosophy, --its metaphysics that dissects and analyzes --its poetry that embodies and re-creates.[15]

And in 1853, a writer in The Athenaeum indicated that the general public was still clamoring for "domestic literature":

> The taste of the miscellaneous public for what may be called domestic literature seems to be extending on every side. Here is a work containing an immense variety of original articles, hints, facts, figures on household economy, education, cottage gardening, together with many interesting and amusing sketches, moral tales, family secrets, and other recondite and familiar matters--once the exclusive property of ancient housewives, and now the daily wisdom of the many of both sexes.[16]

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14. Review of Guesses at Truth, The Athenaeum, # 155 (May 19, 1838), p. 355.

15. "Lady Blessington's Novels," The Edinburgh Review, Vol. LXVII (July, 1838), p. 356.

16. Review of The Family Economist, The Athenaeum, # 1326 (March 26, 1853), p. 386.

As already stated, the reviewers criticized the novel from two points of view. Sometimes they considered the novel a trivial kind of literature whose purpose was ephemeral, and sometimes they considered the novel a significant art form which had fallen upon evil days. It is necessary to understand what specific criticisms were made in accordance with each of these points of view if one is to understand the significance of criticisms of family life made in prose fiction. Most of the reviews were written in accord with the assumption that a novel was a valid, though trivial and ephemeral, form of literature. A writer in The Edinburgh Review remarked:

> Novels are now so numerous, that whatever may be their claims to a permanent reputation, they are scarcely regarded by the public in any other light than as ephemeral publications. They are read rapidly and soon forgotten; and the tale of one week is almost obliterated from the mind of many a reader by the novelty of the next.[17]

The novel was expected to be amusing, pleasant, realistic, and not immoral or subversive. It was not expected to consider social, religious, philosophic, or other serious material. In the words of one critic, "The one legitimate end of novel writing is amusement; and if, in the conduct of a story, matter of edification arises, it should be regarded merely as a godsend: for whenever the secondary purpose of instruction is designedly run after, the effort inevitably is made at the expense of the amusement. Reli-

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17. "Recollections of a Chaperon," The Edinburgh Review, Vol. LVII (July, 1833), pp. 403-4.

gious novels, satirical novels, political novels, are ever the worse for their religion, satire, and politics."[18] Serious material was the proper province of the essay or treatise, not of the novel, whose readers were not the proper audience for serious discussions. A review objected to Mrs. Trollope's The Vicar of Wrexhill because its subject matter was serious and unpleasant, and therefore not suited to fiction.

> In her last novel she plunged over head into the abominable sink of slavery; here, again, she is up to the neck in another kennel of corruption,--"The Vicar of Wrexhill" being a tale written for the express purpose of showing up the errors (as she esteems them) of a sect increasingly prevalent and powerful among us--the Evangelicals....No one can suspect us of an undue disposition to favour Mrs. Trollope--or of the slightest wish to see subjects so dark and painful as she prefers to treat of, brought before the public by the means of Fiction. Her wand (Fiction's not Mrs. Trollope's), had we the controlling will, should conjure up only "Shadows of beauty, shadows of power," and leave whatsoever is coarse and squalid, debased and debasing, to sleep out its sodden sleep in the limbo of commonplace reality....[19]

Another review likewise objected to Mrs. Stone's The Young Milliner because of its serious purpose, and furthermore found it necessary to blame Dickens for his part in subverting the novel from its pleasant course:

> ..."Oliver Twist" of Dickens; since then we have had poor laws, Puseyism, and other vexed questions done into fiction; and now Mrs.

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18. Review of Timon, But Not of Athens, The Athenaeum, #659 (June 13, 1840), p. 469.

19. The Athenaeum, # 517 (Sept. 23, 1837), p. 708.

> Stone, following the lead of the Report of the Children's Employment Commission, and the indignant and earnest protest it has excited, puts forth her statement of the case in a rather maudlin story. It cannot for an instant be supposed, that we reject the humanity of any sincere intention to assist "the desolate and the oppressed:" our columns have long borne witness, we hope, on the side of the enlarged and tolerant charities; but we no more like to see the grievance-trade intruding itself into the literature of leisure, than the rags and sores of a hospital taken as subjects for pictures.20

A writer in Fraser's Magazine commented that the novel in England "has been deeply infected with the utilitarianism of the times."[21] The Fair Carew was given a favorable notice because it avoided the fault of dealing with serious material, and because it therefore practised one of the virtues of light literature:

> There are no pit-falls to entrap the unsuspecting reader into discussions on the "law of Entail and Primogeniture," the "Corn Laws," the "Poor Laws," or any law

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20. The Athenaeum, # 810 (May 6, 1843), p. 437.

21. "Pleasures, Objects, and Advantages of Literature Indicated," Fraser's Magazine, Vol. XXVII (Jan., 1843), pp. 39-40.
See also the review of John Drayton, The Athenaeum, # 1245 (Sept. 6, 1851), p. 948: "Novels faithfully represent the prevailing tendency of public taste. Some years ago they condescended to deal with nothing less transcendental than the sumptuous boudoirs of beautiful countesses,--the dinner parties of noble dukes--with details both of the dishes and of the company,--the heart-rending struggles of mammas and daughters to cross the shining portals of "Almack's":--they have now taken up an entirely different line. They seek for their heroes and heroines in the streets and gutters,--paint life in factories,-- and discuss their lodging-houses, daily struggles and privations with the minuteness and zeal formerly bestowed on the "gilded saloons" and "superb equipages" of the aristocracy."

> of nature whatever transformed into a hobby:--and to those who take up a novel in the innocent hope of finding it one, it is well in these days to be certified of the fact.22

First Cousins, on the other hand, which incorporated a protest against the marriage of cousins, was unfavorably received by the reviewer, indignant at the introduction of "topics like these":

> To inventions of this class, no plea of doing good--no power in their display--can ever reconcile us. The hospital, the lunatic asylum, should be patent to our men of science, our judicial authorities, our philanthropists,--but to bring topics like these into play as matters of circulating-library pastime, is a practice which must coarsen all who partake in it, and which (not to speak too seriously) may demoralize some.23

Reviews of Lady Catherine Long's Sir Rowland Ashton and Charles B. Taylor's Margaret objected to the inclusion of religious material.[24] Further illustrations are perhaps unnecessary.[25]

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22. The Athenaeum, # 1257 (Nov. 29, 1851), p. 1248.

23. The Athenaeum, # 1242 (Aug. 16, 1851), p. 870.

24. Sir Rowland Ashton, The Athenaeum, # 878 (Aug. 24, 1844), p. 771: "But we cannot agree with her in the more general principle on which her novel is written, that fiction is a good medium for religious instruction."
Margaret, The Athenaeum, # 853 (March 2, 1844), p. 119: "It is impossible now-a-days to escape from religious controversy, seeing that it is poked at us by versifiers in their prefaces,--symbolized by our historical painters..." and also by novels like this one is the implication.

25. Among very many other criticisms of the same kind, the following in The Athenaeum are particularly interesting.
Review of Mrs. Trollope's A Romance of Vienna, # 566 (Sept. 1, 1838), p. 618: "Though its pages may not contain any scenes so objectionable as some in the 'Vicar,'

The novel was expected also to be realistic. It might seem to a present-day observer that to beg for realism in one breath

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they are throughout pervaded by the characteristic offences of that work--the same malicious and busy appeal to every narrow and bad prejudice. Having demolished, as she imagines, Dissent in her 'Domestic Manners of the Americans,' and Catholicism, in her 'Paris and the Parisians,' and Calvinistic Protestantism in her 'Vicar' aforesaid--Mrs. Trollope here sets herself to show up Judaism in Austria."

Review of Mrs. Trollope's Charles Chesterfield, # 726 (Sept. 25, 1841), p. 740: "Hence the demand for novels, and hence the peculiar character they have assumed. The novelist no longer writes with the ostensible motive of amusement alone. Oh no! he has far higher aims!--His characters are all personified facts; his dinner-parties and tea parties are so many social truths mises en action; his conversazioni are tilting-matches between antagonist systems of politics or morals: or perhaps, with more unity of design, he devotes his three hot-pressed volumes to the illustration of some pet theory of his own--his diamonds and his flowers (like that many-coloured tablet in the German Fairy-tale,) weaving themselves to initiated eyes, into the stern characters of some abstract truth."

Review of Mrs. Bremer's Brothers and Sisters, # 1076 (June 10, 1848), p. 572. The review praised Mrs. Bremer's work but lamented her interpolated discussions of communism. "These, moreover, are eminently times when the public good may be consulted by reserve no less than by random effort--when the vocation of Art may be yet more than ever to provide rest and refreshment for minds aching amid grave and momentous struggles. Such rest, it is needless to say, implies the banishment of all discordant matter.... But if every tale is to be made a sermon, who shall secure the world against every sermon being made a tale? Fusion means only confusion, where there is no separation of tasks."

Review of Charles Delmer, # 1347 (Aug. 20, 1853), p. 990: "This anonymous novelist seems to aspire to follow in the wake of Miss Martineau, Mr. Disraeli, and the Rev. Mr. Kingsley,--and devotes his tale to setting forth and contrasting political philosophies, in place of writing a story that men and women would desire to read, in spite of the Toryism, Chartism, Whiggism, Radicalism, Christian Socialism, or other doctrine there expounded and set forth."

and to deplore serious sociological study in another was to be inconsistent to some extent. Yet many an Early Victorian did both things. He asked for realism--but for pleasant, painless realism. Except for some incidental features,[26] Frederika Bremer's Swedish novels pleased him and he was thankful that Mary Howitt was translating them into English:

> What we import of foreign literature, as of foreign grain, rarely answers for seed, or takes root and flourishes in our soil. Mrs. Bremer's works seem to be an exception. No foreign novels in our remembrance have attained such popularity in this country. They have hit the English taste for reality, or its close resemblance, and for common sense visible in the midst of fiction. They treat of domestic incidents and characters, open up to us new scenes and ways of living, all foreign to us, but all bearing the impress of an accordance with reality, and with a reality we can understand and enter into.[27]

He thought Mrs. Bremer excellent, particularly for the realistic way she treated family life. He even compared her to Jane Austen:

> The translation of a tale like the above, [The Home: or, Family Cares and Family Joys] by an English wife and English mother, is good service done to her country. We prefer "The Home" to "The Neighbors." It does not, indeed, contain any character so original and high-toned as "ma chère mere," nor, perhaps, any passage equal in its humour to the autobiography of Miss Hellevi Hausgiebel; but it is more consistent, more probable, and less sentimental,...to speak more to the purpose of the novel--we have here no "hair-breadth 'scapes" nor extravagant vicissitudes--but

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26. See p. 149, footnote 25.

27. Article 7, North British Review, Vol. I (May, 1844), p. 168.

> simply the every-day trials befalling a Judge's family of five daughters and a son: the originals of which are our familiar friends. Who has not known a Louise, "our eldest," with her thrifty ways, her sound principles and her grave airs--as good a manager as she is a wise lecturer? Who has not been acquainted with a Petrea, disturbed by genius enough to render her uneasy without making her distinguished?
> .....
> ...the Mother. Nothing more delicate, or womanly, or beautiful, is to be found in domestic fiction than her character: and we like it none the less for a certain touch of romance and sentiment not altogether English....It is impossible, indeed, to read this book as a piece of make-believe. We have had nothing so simply life-like since Galt's "Annals of the Parish"--no picture of female nature so finely touched since Miss Austen's.28

He liked Bulwer-Lytton's The Caxtons except for the melodramatic story of Vivian.

> In the introduction of this same Vivian, his adventures, and their solution, centres the melo-dramatic interest of the tale; or--to state matters more plainly--resides its weak point. So easily and harmoniously flows the general current of the family chronicle, that we feel incidents, however forcible, so forced to be a serious disturbance.29

He criticized Charlotte Brontë for what he considered her tasteless exaggerations and excessive criticisms of social institutions.

> Again, we are assured by persons who received their education (and a very good education Miss Brontë herself proves it

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28. The Athenaeum, # 811 (May 13, 1843), pp. 457-8.

29. Review of The Caxtons, The Athenaeum, # 1148 (Oct. 27, 1849), p. 1083.

> to have been) at the school to which she was attached in Brussels, that nothing can be more unjust than the aspersions she has thrown in "Villette" on that establishment, and on the excellent persons who managed it. The three curates who figure in "Shirley," conspicuous for different degrees of folly, vulgarity, and impertinence, are, we are told by Miss Brontë's biographer, three gentlemen well known at the time in the neighborhood of Howarth [sic], who have had the good taste to accept this caricature as a joke. But if the habits of social intercourse, in personal peculiarities, and even the arrangements of charitable institutions, are to be exhibited to the world at large in the colours of an auto-da-fé--bedaubed with gamboge and emblazoned with devils--the novelists will become a pest to literature, and they will degrade, as some of them have already degraded, their talents to the service of malignant passions, calumny, and falsehood.30

And, although he admitted the excellence of Thackeray's irony, he said "it is a weapon which he uses far too exclusively. He has shown himself, as we have already said, a satirist--but not an artist."31

The novel was expected furthermore to be compatible with conventional morality. Consequently, a reviewer could consider Pendennis an "unlucky creation":

> Seriously, Pendennis is an unlucky creation. His virtues and vices are all dubious, and on a small scale; we meet with so many like him in real life, why should we have him forced upon us in ideal life?

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30. "The License of Modern Novelists," The Edinburgh Review, Vol. CVI (July, 1857), pp. 154-5.

31. Review of Vanity Fair, The Athenaeum, # 1085 (Aug. 12, 1848), p. 795.

> .....
> When he [Thackeray] does depict a whole-hearted passion--such as Dobbin's love for Amelia, or Helen's love for her son--he makes us feel that it is ridiculous in its excess.
> .....
> We suppose there is not one father in ten who would trust his daughters with Joseph Andrews, nor one husband in a hundred who would be pleased at finding his wife in tears with Tom Jones on her knee.
> .....
> However that may be, we adjure any writer of the present day by all he holds most dear--his reputation and his pocket--never, even with the highest moral purpose, to write a book of which it cannot be said that le père en permettra la lecture à sa fille.32

And Mrs. Ellis thought it wise for a mother to be careful what books she allowed her daughter to read, for "A novel read in secret is a dangerous thing...."[33] The reviewer of Mrs. Grey's The Young Husband for The Athenaeum succinctly stated the moralistic requirement:

> The morality of modern English novels requires to be sharply looked into;--it has become false, morbid, and nonsensical. There is nothing more fatal to literature than the introduction of pinchbeck virtues and imitative fine sentiments, and in this respect Mrs. Grey is a great offender.34

Further illustrations are perhaps unnecessary.[35]

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32. "W. M. Thackeray and Arthur Pendennis, Esquire," Fraser's Magazine, Vol. CLIII (Jan., 1851), pp. 86, 76, 87.

33. The Mothers of England, p. 106.

34. The Athenaeum, # 1411 (Nov. 11, 1854), p. 1364.

35. Among many reviews, the following are of particular in-

terest: Review of Mrs. Trollope's Uncle Walter, The Athenaeum, # 1305 (Oct. 30, 1852), p. 1169. The reviewer had described the main character as even more "objectionable" than the Widow Barnaby. "Now, we put it to Mrs. Trollope whether such are the fitting materials and the fitting dramatis personae to be offered as the elements of light fiction, under the guarantee of a lady's penmanship, for the entertainment of her own sex."

Review of Mrs. Gaskell's North and South, The Athenaeum, # 1432 (April 7, 1855), p. 403: "She deals with difficulties of morals needlessly, and too fearlessly, because, as we have again and again said, the riddle propounded cannot be solved in fiction; and because by all one-sided handling of such matters,--when passions become engaged and generous feelings are persuaded, and when the temptation must be dealt upon as cruel, in apology for the offence,--there is always a danger of unmooring the eager and the inexperienced from their anchorage...to thrust them forward in fiction...amounts, in deed, if not in purpose, to a wilful 'playing with fire.' It should be added, however, that the tenor and tissue of our author's writings are such as to satisfy us that no wilfulness has been in her mind, but an earnest, if mistaken, desire to do good."

"Parisian Morals and Manners," The Edinburgh Review, Vol. LXXVIII (July, 1843), pp. 116-7: "The tone of mind, or state of feeling left by a book, is the true criterion of its tendency; and the class of novelists, of which MM. de Bernard and Balzac are the chief, too often leave their female readers languid, restless, dissatisfied with domestic life, and apt to view with an extremely lenient eye any sort of tie or connexion which promises to satisfy the vague, undefined longing which agitates them."

Review of Mrs. Gore's The Banker's Wife: or, Court and City, The Athenaeum, # 832 (Oct. 7, 1843), p. 900: "Though less amusing, perhaps, this is a sounder book than some others of Mrs. Gore's fictions. Too often, when the authoress has most busily occupied herself in the denunciation of worldliness-always her creditable object--the pleasures and usages she condemns have been painted with a gusto calculated to neutralize the effect of her admonition."

Article 5, North British Review, Vol. VII (May, 1847), p. 111-12: "If, in the works before us, there be anything which would necessarily injure the moral tone of the mind; which tends to unsettle its feelings, or relax the firmness of its principles; we are bound, by our regard to the health of our liege lord [the Public], to interpose our official sentence of warning."

Review of Morley Ernstein, The Athenaeum, # 760 (May 12, 1842), p. 452: "Why excite, with intimations

Some of the criticism was made on the assumption that the novel was a valid and significant art form, that it was a true mirror of actual life, and that it was an important medium for the discussion of ideas. But criticisms made from this point of view were rare and somewhat timid. In 1843, a writer in The Edinburgh Review compared the "good novel" with a play by Aristophanes:

> The best information regarding the domestic habits of the Athenians is to be found in the plays of Aristophanes; and if the learned were asked what additional book by some Greek or Roman author they would prefer, we believe the majority would vote for a good novel--it being generally agreed that more is to be gathered touching the manners, moral, and even ordinary modes of thinking, of a people from their lighter works of fiction, than from set histories with all their dignity, or moral essays in all their prosiness.36

And in 1858, J. C. Jeaffreson proudly asserted that the novel had grown to be a significant and important literary form:

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that vile scenes are gauzed over--that naughty conjunctions might have been displayed, had our author chosen?"

Review of The Secret History of a Household, The Athenaeum, # 1429 (March 17, 1855), p. 314: "It is much to be regretted that authors should betake themselves, as a matter of choice, to illustrate crime and intrigue, when so many subjects of lawful interest, offering 'ample room and verge enough' for all purposes of fiction lie open before them."

Anyone who desires more illustrations of the demand either for morality or for realism should consult Miss Washburn's thesis, mentioned before.

36. "Parisian Morals and Manners," The Edinburgh Review, Vol. LXXVIII (July, 1843), p. 115.

> The art is no longer a despised one; it is not devoted to the fabrication of indelicate and dangerous love-stories, capable only of amusing silly women, and tickling the sensuality of vicious men; and no longer is it given over to the guardianship of the meanest writers of sterile imaginations and gross instincts; but it takes under its cognizance every subject that interests the intelligence or arouses the affections of man.[37]

But perhaps an even better, and probably a more sincere, expression of criticism made from this point of view appeared in 1848 in The Athenaeum. The writer said in praise of Mary Barton:

> How far it may be kind, wise, or right to make Fiction the vehicle for a plain and matter-of-fact exposition of social evils, is a question of limitations which will not be unanimously settled in our time....But we have met with few pictures of life among the working classes at once so forcible and so fair as "Mary Barton."[38]

From the foregoing evidence, one may make several generalizations concerning the literary reputation of the Early Victorian novel. During the period, the novel became suddenly popular, attracting a large reading public; it was sponsored by booksellers, proprietors of lending libraries, and publishers who were able to pay authors to write long and facile novels catering to the public taste. It dealt largely with subjects of most common interest-subjects concerning problems of family life referable to the experiences of the average person. It bewildered and perplexed the

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37. Jeaffreson, J. Cordy, Novels and Novelists from Elizabeth to Victoria, London, Hurst and Blackett, 1853, Vol. II, p. 305.

38. The Athenaeum, # 1085 (Oct. 21, 1848), p. 1050.

critics, who had to consider it either as a light and inferior form of composition with its own special virtues and validity, or as a worthy art form grossly abused. Consequently it evoked two streams of criticism. One asked little of it other than that it be amusing and pleasant, that it not attempt the exposition of serious or philosophical ideas, and that it be realistic and conventionally moral. The other deplored the trashiness of the popular novels and the system of mass production which propagated them. Both points of view were important in determining and limiting the treatment of family life in the Early Victorian novel. The critic who considered prose fiction a trivial form of literature denied it the right to make radical criticism, or, indeed, even to discuss serious matters. The critic who considered prose fiction inherently worthwhile, although much debased by contemporary writers, was reluctant to encourage radical criticisms of family life. He was afraid that the writers, who he thought had already debased an art form, if encouraged, might endanger the English institution of the family.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

The typical Early Victorian was interested in, and proud of, the family as an English institution. He accepted as right its structure and its function, for he believed in the philosophy upon which it was founded: God had created man superior to woman--superior not only in physical powers but in intellectual ones also; consequently God had determined that man was to be the master of Society and hence of separate social units or groups like the family. As the master of a family group, a man of course had responsibilities--responsibilities both to God and to Society, which was God-ordained; he had to make himself and all the members of his group acceptable to both. His means for making them acceptable were clearly defined; they required him only to be unquestioningly conventional in all that he or his family did.

The Early Victorian was interested in the English family, and he was proud of it. And it soon became apparent to publishers and booksellers that he liked to read about it. Consequently, during the Early Victorian period, there was a great rush to the literary market of novels of family life. Many people were encouraged to write novels; people of rank, who, because of their extravagances were always in need of money, and people who sought actually to earn their livelihoods by writing. Great numbers of women from both classes contributed. Almost all of the authors wrote to please the reading public. The result was that there were produced each year

scores of novels whose plots consisted of trite domestic problems and conventional solutions. These novels were generally uncritical. Of course, they had to show conflict in order to develop plot; but the conflict very rarely implied any criticism of the typical family, of the conventional order. Rather it showed how discord, and hence wrong, resulted when any member of the conventional family acted malevolently, heedlessly, or otherwise unconventionally.

With this great mass of prose fiction the Early Victorian reviewer dealt in two ways. On the one hand, he deplored it because it was trivial, because it really did tell nothing, because it was frequently melodramatic, and puerily emotional, and because it was a far cry from the works of Jane Austen and Sir Walter Scott, great works which he easily remembered. On the other hand, he tried to criticize it as a new kind of literature with a validity all its own. Requiring that it be neither unconventional nor unrealistic in manner or matter, he applauded it if it amused or diverted the reader. In general, he, too, like other Early Victorians, was satisfied with the institution of the family as it was; he, too, was willing to extol the conventional order.

There were some writers, however, in the Early Victorian period, who, although conventional in most respects, were individual enough upon occasion to attack some conventional beliefs or doctrines. Furthermore, some of them were good writers, and were therefore likely to influence their readers. The critic felt himself obligated to warn the public against these authors, or at least against the unconventional ideas expressed in their writings.

The result was that writers like the Brontës, Thackeray, and Mrs. Gaskell met an initial resistance to the popularity which they inevitably were to enjoy. Thackeray was attacked for his excessive satire, the Brontës for their coarseness, and Mrs. Gaskell for her discussion of indelicate subjects.

In general, the Early Victorian was proud of the typical family, and he resisted criticisms of it, or of the system which had generated it. He readily enough agreed that the novelist should be a critic of life: he was completely willing that the novelist should attack profligacy, tyranny, unkindness, and other vices to which authoritarianism is liable. He wanted to teach the despot who ruled the conventional family to be wise, understanding, and benevolent. But he did not want the despotic power curtailed; he approved of the authoritarian structure of the family. He was, therefore, very fond of the works of Charles Dickens, and was quick to appreciate them.

Although the Early Victorian was willing that abuses within the family order be criticized, he was unwilling that any part of the order itself be attacked. He had little cause for complaint, however, for the attacks made upon any aspects of the form, function, and philosophy of the family were both few and timid. Only one question may be said to have received much critical attention: the question of woman's subjugation in Society. The battle fought over this issue for the time being was won by the conservatives. It was, however, won by kindly conservatives. Although they agreed that God had determined man in every respect to be woman's master,

and although they accepted unquestioningly the rightness of a man-ruled society, they allowed woman a sphere of her own in which she might excel. The fact that all the excellences thus assigned to woman were virtues and qualities which man had no desire to claim for himself, might be urged against the generosity of these critics. Nevertheless, their admission that woman had curious moral and ornamental powers was enough for the time being. Resplendent in her excellences, woman continued to be man's lackey.

It would be interesting to speculate what might have been the reasons that radical criticisms of family life were so few and so timid as they were in the period, especially when hundreds of books dealing with family life were being put into the hands of an avid reading public, and when also for the first time in over a century there was a queen on the throne of England. Was Early Victorian England so convinced of its own perfection that it could not be broad-minded towards new ideas, so that instead of broad-mindedness, it could at best substitute smug patience and condescension? Had the doctrine of Utilitarianism in some deformed shape been superimposed upon the philosophy of the family? In other words, were the people convinced that the God-ordained system had been given pragmatic sanction and was therefore <u>all the more right</u>? Were the feeble efforts of the few radical critics of female subjection rendered almost dry by the heated counter-criticisms made by women themselves, women particularly like Mrs. Ellis? Was the power which the popular novel placed into the hands of the publishers and the booksellers used consciously to prevent radical criticism? Were the booksellers afraid that Convention would not allow the douce

members of the typical family to read anything but conventional literature?

Doubtless each question deserves an affirmative answer, and implies a reason why, in the 1830's, 40's, and the first part of the 50's, England suddenly and voraciously began to read novels of family life, and yet managed to discourage and resist what scant radical criticism was produced. It would be wrong to say that any of these reasons was the only reason, and it would be impossible to determine precisely their relative importances. But certainly all were significant. Satisfied that its conventional views were divine and utilitarian, Early Victorian England was little given to self-criticism. Prose fiction, largely the property of the publishers and booksellers, was forced to follow rather than to lead public opinion. Consequently family life, although the subject of most of the contemporary prose fiction, was little criticized during the Early Victorian period.

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