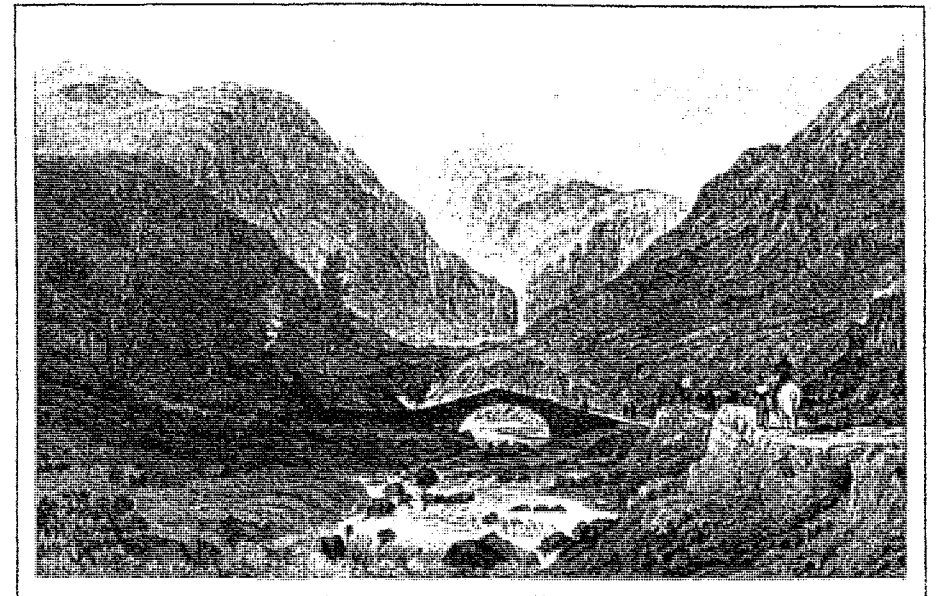


# The Gaskell Society



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**NEWSLETTER**

**AUGUST 1999**

**NO. 28**

### Editor's Letter

Much has been happening in the Gaskell world recently. Firstly we have just held our sixth conference, in London, with over a hundred members attending: the programme was much enjoyed and we hope members will share this by reading the report written by Maureen Horner and Barbara Miller in this Newsletter, and in the next Journal there will be more details and some of the conference papers. We are grateful to all our excellent speakers, also to Janet and Robin Allan who manned the book table and Jean Alston who sat at the receipt of custom, our London members, especially Jane Wilson who planned the London coach tour, and to all who participated.

In the week before the conference a group of about ten members were enlisted by the BBC to assist in making an Omnibus film about Elizabeth Gaskell's work. I think most of you know that BBC are filming *Wives and Daughters*: this is to be shown in four seventy-five minute episodes towards the end of the year. The production team also worked on *Pride and Prejudice*: they have enjoyed making the Gaskell film and are impressed with her writing, but many questions have arisen and it is clear that there is a need to tell people about Elizabeth Gaskell's life and writing. Tim Dunn who works on the *One Foot in the Past* series is directing the Omnibus programme to do just this; he is a Gaskell enthusiast, a recent convert.

We have filmed in Knutsford, Manchester, North Wales and the Lake District and still have a session to look forward to in Rome. We now view TV programmes differently and wonder how many 'takes' there have been to each scene and we are somewhat nervous about our screen personas! We jump to the 'Action!' command and then stand by patiently ready to repeat for camera angles. We hope you will enjoy both film experiences later in the year.

Robert Craig of Sandafayre, a stamp dealing firm in Knutsford who sell mainly via the internet, was surprised to see the signature E C Gaskell in a batch of letters he had bought in Scotland. He invited me to read them. There are six addressed to Miss Fergusson between 1845 and 48: she was governess to the Gaskell children. The last in the series is written from Plas yn Penryn just as *Mary Barton* was published. It is fortunate that Robert Craig recognised their importance and has agreed to sell them to

our Society for £2,000, though they would probably have brought much more by selling them on the internet. We intend to deposit them in John Rylands Library, Manchester. Their discovery is particularly timely for inclusion in the new edition of Gaskell letters being prepared by John Chapple and Alan Shelston, soon to go to press. We are happy to be in a position to make this purchase mainly because of the legacy left to us by Daphne Carrick of Norwich. We plan to show the letters at the AGM meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> September.

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### **The Gaskell Society Conference: The London Experience**

**23 July – 26 July 1999**

by Maureen Horner and Barbara Miller

The Gaskell Conference began unexpectedly, and pleasantly, early on the Manchester/Euston train with the serendipitous meeting of other 'Gaskellians'. We had opted for adding a day on at the beginning of the weekend and thoroughly enjoyed the pre-conference chat with Joan and her set of 'groupies' (concessionary ticket holders travelling together).

The conference activities started immediately with amusing anecdotes of the filming process by the BBC who had been filming the society's activities all over the country during the previous week. It was here that the group members had learned the finer techniques of an actor's life such as: how to wear the same clothes for three weeks and walk in single file, although our actors had to make up their own scripts). We imagine this must have caused undue problems for society members!) Joan regaled us with the details in her own inimitable way and we knew our trip was to be filled with the usual mix of Gaskellian revelry and knowledge.

On arrival at the LSE at Bankside the view from our room was impressive, the river running through the city, separating yet linking the areas, an insistent life-force spanning so many centuries with its own part to play in personal histories. Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, Wordsworth on Westminster Bridge, so much of Dickens' writing tied up in the river, and here we are ready to cross and re-cross the river during our stay.

Having firmly attached ourselves to the 'Virgin groupie party' the unexpected result was a visit to the Savoy Theatre (organised by Jean

Alston) to see Noel Coward's 'Hay Fever' – a hysterical, madcap contrast to Elizabeth Gaskell's world. A thoroughly enjoyable treat in a beautiful little theatre. Despite the unfortunate accident in the back of the taxi on the way back to our temporary residence at Bankside, when Joyce almost knocked herself unconscious, precipitating a night at Guy's Hospital, (the lengths some people will go to get an insider's view of a London hospital) the evening was a great success. We were all very relieved when Joyce was returned to the fold to enjoy the rest of the activities and was found enjoying the grandeur of St Paul's the following day.

Friday was spent in an orientation exercise, this being our first stay this side of the Thames, in Southwark. The day was spent by us in an exploration of St Paul's Cathedral in anticipation of the planned guided walk in the area the next day. It seems certainly the most splendid of Wren's creations, a lifetime in the building, and the repository (in memoriam) of so many eminent people, for instance Sir Philip Sydney. During her research of Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell visited the Deanery and almost certainly the Cathedral. If so, we are sure she would have felt a similar sense of the grandeur, and possibly made comparisons with the more simple, plainer churches she would be accustomed to worship in.

Southwark itself is interesting, this being where Chaucer's pilgrims began their pilgrimage to Canterbury, starting from the Tabard Inn. It is difficult to separate fact from fiction with so many writers, Dickens famously, referring to actual areas. Dickens, of course, would have been very familiar with the streets and alleys travelling to and from his lodgings in Lant Street.

The Conference started in earnest at 4.30 prompt on Friday. The beginning was formal and stiff as it often is at these affairs, but very quickly over tea and biscuits the stiff and formal exchanges, the discussions about the journeys, turned to topics of a more congenial nature. The warmth and camaraderie of the delegates soon shone through as friendships were renewed and new ones forged. An air of expectation and excitement reigned when the first speaker began.

Linda Hughes (*see Book Notes*) began the academic part of the programme unexpectedly alone because Michael Lund was prevented from attending by a family crisis. Her lecture was a lively, energetic, stimulating leap into

the conference. She covered her topic with true verve, style and professionalism. A seamless lecture and impossible to tell she had expected to share her spot with her absent colleague.

The evening meal was excellent and the two following talks, although less formal, were nonetheless as stimulating. Firstly, Chiyuki Kanamaru sated our curiosity with the relevance of Gaskell for Japanese readers. She stressed the importance of Elizabeth Gaskell's portrayal of character and exploration of emotions for her students, particularly its contrast to Japanese literature. Her gentle personality and genuine love for Gaskell melted our hearts.

Last but not least, Sylvia Burch gave us a tour de force of Southwark, taking us through a very useful local map of the area suggesting places to visit and things to do. She certainly whetted the appetite for the joys which would greet us on 'the morrow'.

Saturday morning lectures began at 9.15 am with contributions from Larry K Uffelman, Dr Dorothy Collin and Dr Andrew Sanders. A full morning of work.

Professor of English at Mansfield University, Pennsylvania, Larry Uffelman talked to us about the difficulties of the editor/writer relationship between Dickens and Elizabeth Gaskell. He showed how the demands of the serialization process produced difficulties for both the editor Dickens, who wanted to focus on the economic division between the North and the South, which was the mission statement of his magazine, and the author Elizabeth Gaskell who was far more concerned with the development of her main character, Margaret Hale. As Pope-Hennessy commented, Dickens had his own rules – movement and action was essential in a first instalment, and early introduction of plot was important. She also commented, "Mrs Gaskell never learnt to accept his rulings and was infuriated when *North and South* was cut". The lecture revealed, with the aid of graphs, how Mrs Gaskell reworked her plot moving it from a pastoral/romance to a novel of development and growth in the female character Margaret Hale, and he also showed how she accommodated Dickens' demands with her reworking of the text. It was a stimulating session and for those of us who have yet to experience the pleasure of reading of the novel, it gave us an appetizer. For those who have read the work, the lecture, I am sure, would encourage a re-read.

In contrast, Dr Dorothy Collin, Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Western Australia who has published papers on *North and South* and *Cranford* in the British Journal Literary Magazine, gave us some insight into the lives and financial difficulties of the Publishers' Readers. She demonstrated how hard it was to survive without the professional status which other professionals such as those in Medicine and the Law enjoyed. She raised some interesting issues about the possibility, or even the probability, of being an objective reader of other people's work when they were writers seeking publication of their own work.

Dr Andrew Sanders took 'the graveyard' slot (his words!). However, nobody slept through his exceptional lecture, where he stimulated and educated his audience about the difficulties writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century had in writing about 'life in earnest'. He enthralled us with snippets of information concerning the 'mission' statement in 'Household Words' which was first published in January 1850. He told us that Dickens was delighted with the story of *Lizzie Leigh* and paid £20 to Elizabeth Gaskell for the work. *Lizzie Leigh* addressed the issue of 'fallen women', a topic of some concern to him and the story conformed to the mission statement of 'Household Words'. Although Elizabeth Gaskell 'enjoyed' a somewhat tempestuous relationship with her publisher, they emerged from their difficulties to advertise *Hard Times* and *North and South* together. Dr Sanders' ideas kept us buzzing throughout lunch.

We opted for the walk on Saturday afternoon around the St Paul's area, and had the most beautiful day for the sightseeing. Our Blue Badge guide, Alison, had noted our particular literary interest and had much to show us. Being Saturday afternoon, and moving within the City 'square mile', the area was actually deserted and perfect for our stop/go movement. There was no fear of bumping into or being bumped by others with more urgent business than ours. We wandered up and down narrow, hidden alleyways to light upon 'Chop Houses', or gems of churches. Wren's architectural style evident time over time, still strong, yet elegant in line. The Cornhill, of course, connects directly with Mrs Gaskell, the Regency houses also reminders of her visits to this metropolis. We found coffee houses – each developing its own specialist coterie – gossip houses – political cliques and so on. The numerous blue plaques are an insistent reminder of the City's literary significance.

Saturday evening was a joy. Jenny Uglow was so interesting, sharing her experience of being an adviser to the BBC on its adaptation of *Wives and Daughters*, this production to reach our television screens around November. Especially interesting was the video Jenny had acquired for us showing extracts from the programme, allowing us a preview of characters, dress, and presentation of plot. Meeting Jenny was a real highlight for us and for many other people. A member from New Zealand, Eileen Turner, said that it had been particularly wonderful meeting Jenny as it had been the reading of the biography of Mrs Gaskell which had motivated her to join the society and added an enjoyable dimension to her life.

Sunday began with Dr Joanne Shattock who highlighted the difficulties some female writers experienced in plying their craft. Mrs Oliphant, for instance, was prolific in output (101 novels) but needed to 'read' other writers to make a living. Clearly, some were not as 'fortunate' as say, Eliot (who lived, Mrs Oliphant remarked, in a 'mental greenhouse') or, indeed, Elizabeth Gaskell. The relationship between those wishing to be published and those in control of publishing was obviously problematical.

Margaret Beetham, in contrast, talked about the reader as opposed to the writer. Her topic was 19<sup>th</sup> Century women's interest magazines, her analysis of their content, and perhaps their placing of women in particular roles. So women are treated as shoppers, followers of fashion, consumers of print, 'learning' how to control the household and manage the servants. Women then seemed to be caught up in and entrapped within an unstable femininity. Certainly food for thought here.

Howard Gregg gave us, to complete the morning's work, an interesting paper on the serialization of Trollope's *Orley Farm* which firmly established his reputation as a major writer. In this long novel he skilfully interwove several themes such as the position of women in society and the practice of law. His flawed heroine elicited mixed reactions among his readers. Howard's talk gave a useful comparison between contemporary writers and their serial writing and was a stimulus to read more Trollope.

After lunch a quiet hour was spent in dawdling down to the river, finding a seat, and watching its flow, a very pleasant interlude between the morning's lectures and the highlight of the afternoon – seats at the Globe to see *Antony and Cleopatra* performed in true Shakespearean mode, with

an all-male cast. We thoroughly enjoyed the performance and the experience of an authentic re-creation of the play and theatre. Chiyuki Kanamaru summed up the whole experience as embodying "the energy of England".

Sunday evening's dramatic presentation lived up to every expectation. Written by our own matchless Joan and enthusiastically delivered by an all-star cast, the professionalism of the players both educated and amused us with their excellent rendition. They gave life to the professional relationship which existed between George Smith, publisher, and his clients. Well done everyone. A standard has now been set for a Gaskell finale.

Officially the London conference ended on Sunday evening. However, some of us had opted for the Hampshire tour on the Monday. For us the day was pure pleasure, although for some there was work ahead. A group of Gaskellians have been involved, as we know, in the Omnibus programme on Elizabeth Gaskell and were to be filmed at The Lawn, Holybourne, in the house which Elizabeth Gaskell had negotiated to buy as a gift for William. There was a poignancy attached to being at the house which she did not have the opportunity to enjoy. The peace and tranquility was overwhelming. The attraction of the house and area was all too evident.

We moved on to Chawton for lunch and our last visit of the weekend, Jane Austen's home. This was the perfect end to a perfect weekend.

There was so much to do and experience at the London conference that it is impossible to single out particular events and say 'this was special'. For us, and others we know, simple meeting people, sharing the same interest in Elizabeth Gaskell, putting names to faces, and the whole atmosphere, including the choice of location were all important. We parted already looking forward to the next series of meetings beginning in October.

## William Gaskell and the Pressures of Work

by Alan Shelston

We hear a lot about the pressures of stress in the contemporary world, and in particular about the problems caused by the often conflicting demands of work and family. An entry in the Minute Book of the Trustees of Cross Street Chapel suggests that this is not an entirely new phenomenon. The minutes of the meeting of the Trustees on 1 May 1854 record the fact that the trustees had received a communication as to 'the desirability of the Revd Wm Gaskell having a respite from his ministerial duties to enable him to recruit his health'. As a consequence it was resolved 'that Messrs Sidney Potter, Vincent Potter and Thomas Bankes be requested to wait upon Mr Gaskell to inform him of the readiness of the Trustees to enter into an arrangement to enable him to absent himself for a time from his ministerial duties, during two Sundays on which they can have the Chapel closed for being beautified – also to inform Mr Gaskell that it is the intention of the Trustees to call the Pewholders together, in a short time, to confer with them.'<sup>1</sup>

As minister, William Gaskell would not have been present at this meeting, and the minute is an interesting indication of where power truly lay at Cross Street. However respected the minister might be, ultimate authority for the Chapel's affairs lay with the Trustees. We do not know what William was suffering from, but there are regular references to her anxieties about her husband's well-being in Mrs Gaskell's letters. 'I wish that Mr Gaskell *looked* stronger, - he never complains or allows that anything is the matter with him' she writes on one occasion, and on another she tells us that he suffered intermittently from 'spasmodic asthma, for which curiously enough, no air does so well as Manchester smoke' (GL 439a).<sup>2</sup> It seems likely however that William's need for respite from his duties on this occasion was as much as anything the result of a number of pressures which came together at the same time and affected his general well-being.

In 1854 William was technically still the junior minister at Cross Street where, since his appointment in 1828, he had worked in partnership with John Gooch Robberds.<sup>3</sup> Robberds died on 21 April 1854 and was buried five days later: one of the last acts which William performed before taking his leave was to preach his funeral sermon. The fact that the trustees were prepared to grant him leave at this time, effectively leaving the Chapel

without a minister, suggests that the need must have been a serious one. Cross Street was a very demanding post in all sorts of ways, and at the next meeting of the trustees, on 28 June, they set about seeking for a replacement for Robberds, a process completed by the appointment of the Reverend James Panton Ham in September. This is a clear recognition of the urgency of the situation. Robberds' death would seem to have been sudden (the Minute Book pays tribute to 'the efficiency of his ministerial services which he discharged even to the Sunday preceding his decease'), but according to the Minute Book he too had been given 'two or three months' sick leave in 1852: by this time Robberds was over sixty and it seems probable that his partner increasingly took the greater burden of the work.

There was another issue relating to the Chapel which will have intensified the pressure on all concerned. In a letter to Mary Green, wife of the Knutsford minister Henry Green, written in the same May of 1854 Elizabeth writes "We don't know what the 'Chapel' means to do. We hear this is likely to be sold to the Town-Hall and Mr Gaskell says I must not be impatient & ask questions about anything for 'it is considered impertinent in a minister's wife'."<sup>4</sup> There is no record of what this statement refers to but it would seem that the status of Cross Street Chapel itself was not entirely secure during the rapid development of Manchester in the nineteenth century. Geoffrey Head, the current Chairman of Trustees, tells me that the possible sale of the Chapel to the Corporation was a 'recurrent theme' for much of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The Chapel occupied a very desirable site in the centre of the city, abutting onto the old Town Hall at a time when the corporation were looking to extend it. Eventually the decision was taken to build a new Town Hall altogether and thus we have Waterhouse's magnificent neo-Gothic building on Albert Square. But this was more than ten years later and it should be remembered that some of the city fathers were also members of the Cross Street congregation. Not only would William have been anxious about who Robberds' successor might be, it is quite conceivable that he could have taken his leave in the knowledge that the very future of the Chapel of which he was minister was in doubt.

The letter to Mary Green indicates a more immediate cause for anxiety on the domestic front. The Greens were great family friends of the Gaskells, and Mrs Gaskell opens with a matter of concern about her children: "I have been in a great fright this last fortnight about the scarlet fever. It

broke out about 3 weeks ago ... all around us; within 50 yards in one case; and two nurseries were swept bare by the terrible scourge within 300 yards." She cancels a visit by her friend Mrs Shaen, and her infant child, and after much activity "packed Hearn and the children off, clothesless, for all their clothes were at the wash" to Poulton-le-Fylde ("there was no known case of S.F. there"). Scarlet fever, of course, held terror for Victorian parents, and Mrs Gaskell had been susceptible to fears for her children ever since the death of her son Willie, in infancy: William's health problems whatever they were, would have been insignificant compared with this.

William recuperated at the home of a fellow clergyman in Hampstead, returning to Manchester in June. He resumed his duties, only to go down again "with this tiresome influenza" at the end of the year (GL 202, 204, 222). But the appointment of Mr Ham failed to provide a long-term solution. Ham was a controversialist who would seem never to have settled in at Cross Street and early in 1859 he resigned at short notice to take up a post at Essex Street in London. A letter from Mrs Gaskell to Charles Eliot Norton records that Ham's new post had first been offered to William, - 'Mr Gaskell has been asked to go to Essex St London' - but that he has turned it down, for 'there must be some much stronger reason other than a mere increase of income before it can be right to pull up the roots of a man of his age.'<sup>5</sup> She goes on to suggest that again her husband's health is threatened, and that history may be about to repeat itself. Once again William is to find himself in sole charge at the Chapel:

So his colleague Mr Ham goes (... and we women Gaskells are none of us sorry, - oh! For some really spiritual devotional preaching instead of controversy about doctrines, - about whh I am more and more certain *we can never be certain in this world.*) And as he goes off directly Mr Gaskell will have all the work to do for some time, whh I am sorry for as this is the time of year when his digestion always gets wrong. I have been trying to put in the fine edge of a wedge to get him a longer yearly holiday, - if only for once - after thirty-one years of pretty hard work he should have it. The worst is he dislikes change and travel so very much; and if he gets a holiday I am afraid he will spend it in his study, out of which room by his own free will he will never stir. (March 9, 1859; GL 417).

Again the trustees set procedures in motion to select another minister. This time they came up with James Drummond, a young man for whom it was his first appointment, but who was unable to take up the post until June 1860. For the moment then William was once again doing 'all the work', a fact recognised by the trustees when they voted him the sum of £50 'for his additional services during the absence of a colleague and for enabling him to obtain assistance in the discharge of his ministerial duties.' (Minutes, 7 March 1860) Drummond was to prove much more to Mrs Gaskell's liking than his predecessor: in another of the unpublished letters she describes him as, 'a small slight young man with a lovely complexion, beautiful steady looking eyes, and an expression of goodness such as I have seldom seen equalled'. She goes on: 'I think him very sweet and good in private life, but rather feel as if I were his mother, & might advise and order him about; but in the pulpit I feel like a child learning from a disciple' (to Edward Everett Hale, 14 December 1860). This last was high praise from someone who was known not to like sermons, and sadly but appropriately it was Drummond who was to preach her funeral sermon at Knutsford some five years later. For all Mrs Gaskell's concern about William's health, it was hers that was to give out so suddenly. Drummond himself went on to a long and distinguished career of service to the Unitarian ministry, ultimately becoming principal of Manchester College, then established in London.

In Mrs Gaskell's comments we sense, not for the first time, her irritation at the demands made upon her husband by his work at Cross Street, and not for the first time we suspect that he has been caught in the crossfire. If he withdrew into his study it may well have been as a place of sanctuary. But clearly the asthma and the indigestion were, as we would say, stress-related. William, whose unstinting service to Cross Street was only the first amongst his many activities and responsibilities, undoubtedly thrived on a busy and demanding life: his ministry at Cross Street continued until the year of his death in 1884. His physical discomforts were perhaps the price that had to be paid.

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<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to the Trustees of Cross Street Chapel for permission to quote from the Minute Book for the Meetings of Trustees, and to Geoffrey Head, Chairman of Trustees, for information about the Chapel's situation in the nineteenth century.

<sup>2</sup> References, by letter number, to *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, ed. Arthur Pollard and J A V Chapple, Manchester (1966) are identified as GL and included in the text.

<sup>3</sup> The terms 'senior minister' and 'junior minister' were current at the time and have been adopted by Gaskell biographers. But the minutes invariably refer to the Cross Street ministers as 'co-pastors', and it is not clear that any distinction of status, as distinct from chronological seniority, was at issue.

<sup>4</sup> This letter, dated 17 May 1854, and the letter to Edward Everett Hale cited below, are amongst those currently being prepared for publication by Professor John Chapple and myself in a supplementary volume to *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, ed. Arthur Pollard and J A V Chapple, Manchester (1966).

<sup>5</sup> Ham's appointment to Essex Street is recorded in the Trustees' Minute Book, but there is no mention there of the approach to William Gaskell. The post was a prestigious one, but its appeal to Ham, who would not seem to have been short of ambition, would have been much greater than it was to the older man.

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**Gaskell Society South-West Group**  
**Report of Meeting on 6 May 1999**

Seventy people came to hear Professor Peter Skrine speak on 'Rediscovering Mrs Gaskell' and found his clear enthusiastic scholarly exposition much to their taste. He began with his own discovery of her novels, illustrated her mastery of the art of story-telling by quoting from the opening of four novels and moved on to demonstrate the depth and subtlety of much of her writing. In this way he made it impossible for us to accuse her of being 'sentimental and dated'.

At this point we were led away from a possible view of Mrs Gaskell as a provincial writer only concerned with the industrial miseries of the North-West to be made aware of her large cosmopolitan circle of friends ranging from wealthy German-Jewish industrialists in Manchester to literary salons

in Paris and Rome and the farmers and landed gentry of the Cheshire countryside.

Professor Skrine ended with a summary of her work, quoting from a letter to Marianne in which she stresses the need to 'think eagerly of your story until you see it in action' when 'words, good simple strong words will come'.

The number and variety of the questions from the audience showed their genuine response. Coffee afterwards made it possible for people to stay and chat. They were very interested in the Journals, and the most common response was, 'We had no idea of the academic level of the Society'.

Mrs Irene Wiltshire, the Membership Secretary, gave a short introduction to the Society, and we were very grateful to her and her husband for making the journey.

The meeting was held as a joint lecture with the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution who very kindly hosted it in their lovely building in Queen Square. Mr Victor Suchar, the Convenor of the Literary and Humanities Section of the Institution very kindly chaired the meeting and we owe a great deal to him for his interest. We also enjoyed the visit by Debbie Lee, a BBC researcher beginning to put together ideas for a documentary on Elizabeth Gaskell to coincide with the showing of *Wives and Daughters*. She obviously enjoyed herself as she missed her train back to London and had to stay the night.

Programme for 1999

**SATURDAY 20 NOVEMBER** 2.30 pm Kay Millard, Secretary of the Bath Unitarian Fellowship, will speak on 'Mrs Gaskell and Religion' at 16-17 Queen Square.

**21 NOVEMBER** The Bath Unitarian Fellowship is making the theme of its worship 'A Celebration of Elizabeth Gaskell', and we are all welcome to join them.

Hospitality could be offered, or Bath has a wonderful selection of hotels, if you wanted to make a weekend of it and do some Christmas shopping.

For information contact Mrs Rosemary Marshall, 138 Fairfield Park Road, Bath BA1 6JT (01225 426732)



## Book Notes

by Christine Lingard

**Brantlinger, Patrick. *The Reading Lesson: the threat of mass literacy in nineteenth century British fiction.*** Bloomington and Indianapolis:

Indiana University Press, £15.99 (paperback)

- analyses the fear held by many novelists about the negative causes of reading, the growth of the mass pulp fiction from Horace Walpole to H G Wells, and the Frankenstein theme in fiction (cf Chris Baldick's *In Frankenstein's Shadow*, 1987). Gaskell though only briefly mentioned is considered contradictory in her treatment of the educated working classes in Mary Barton.

**Gross, John (editor). *The New Oxford Book of English Prose.*** Oxford University Press, £25.00.

This extensive anthology of English, American and Commonwealth writing ranges from Malory to Kazuo Ishiguro and has six pages devoted to Elizabeth Gaskell (including the Dr Johnson v Boz passage from *Cranford* and Charlotte Brontë's admission to her father that the sisters had a book published). Contemporary selections include Darwin, Dickens, Newman, the Carlyles, Emerson, Trollope, Kingsley, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, George Eliot and Henry James. The extracts are all from works intended for publication, not letters, but including fiction as well as traditional literary prose and biography.

**Mitchell, Charlotte. *Caroline Clive. Victorian fiction research guide 28.*** University of Queensland, 1999.

Anyone interested in the minor characters mentioned in the Gaskell Letters might be interested in the 28 page introduction to this bibliography of Caroline Clive, the author of the sensational best seller *Paul Ferroll* (1857), whom Elizabeth knew from her visits to Ellen Tollet of Betley Hall, Staffordshire, her sister-in-law. She died when her clothing caught fire from a candle in 1873. There is a letter from Mrs Clive to Elizabeth Gaskell in the John Rylands University Library of Manchester.

*For Autumn Release:*

By University Press of Virginia: **Victorian Publishing and Mrs Gaskell's Work.** Linda K Hughes and Michael Lund

## Links in a Chain that Connect Elizabeth Gaskell with Marianne North

by Barbara Brill

I have recently been reading the journal of Marianne North, *A Vision of Eden*, published by HMSO London in 1950. She is the celebrated painter of flowers who travelled the world between 1847 and 1870 in search of plants, painting them flowering in their natural habitats. These paintings are now displayed in the Marianne North Gallery in a building she had specially designed for this purpose in the grounds of Kew Gardens.

On the first page of the book the name of Gawthorp Hall, home of the Kay-Shuttleworths, caught my eye and I was interested to read that Marianne in her youth spent many summers there. I went on to learn that her father was a descendant of the third Lord North of Kirtling and was MP for Hastings in the 1850s, and her mother was the widow of Robert Shuttleworth of Gawthorp Hall who had been tragically killed in a carriage accident, leaving her with a delicate daughter, Janet, who later became heiress to the Gawthorp estate. Marianne was one of the three children of this marriage, her brother Charley being two years older and her sister Catherine eight years younger. Their step-sister Janet became a dearly-loved member of a united family. Janet spent a lot of time at Capesthorne Hall, home of her cousin Mrs Davenport, Elizabeth Gaskell's friend. It was at Capesthorne that Janet, when she was 24, met Dr Kay, the industrialist, who, after their marriage, added his wife's maiden name to his title when he was made baronet in 1849. He was twelve years Janet's senior, and these were the Kay-Shuttleworths who became friends of Elizabeth Gaskell and introduced her to Charlotte Brontë.

Mrs North died in 1875 and Marianne became the mainstay of the household, much relied upon by her father to whom she was devoted. She encouraged him to travel abroad with the family, firstly on the Continent; it was on these travels that Marianne began painting flowers in water-colours. While they were in Switzerland in 1863 Marianne and her sister, Catherine, met 'two young Oxford lads', and it was this meeting that provides the next link in the chain. One of 'the lads' was John Addington Symonds, who fell in love with and married Catherine. It was shortly after their wedding that Elizabeth Gaskell met them as she tells in her letter to her publisher George Smith (GL 556) of Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>, 1864:

'Do you know two very clever people just made one? ... John Addington Symonds ... who took no end of honours at Oxford, & is witty clever, really brilliant – and Catherine North, daughter of the M.P. for Hastings, even more full of genius – well, on their wedding journey they have been writing a paper on Christmas – which looks to me very clever and Mr Symonds wants to know if it can go into The Cornhill for January (her is a writer in The Saturday – a regular writer). I have only got it by this morning's post and will send it on by this evening's; only I knew it was time for 'making-up' the next month's Cornhill – and that not one hour was to be lost, so I write anyhow to catch this morning's post; and will write again on my own business in a day or two.

Yours most truly  
E. C. Gaskell

Thoughts on Xmas in Florence 1863  
By John Addington Symonds  
110 words in a page  
32 pages  
3,520 words in the whole paper.

Mr Symonds took the Newdegate and a double first. But he might be very dull for all that; only he is not.'

This letter is also contained in J A V Chapple's *A Portrait in Letters* to which Mr Chapple has added the comment:

'We may again suspect that she did not guess what lay behind this particular marriage; If by any chance she did know, the theme of a man struggling to suppress his own homosexuality would undoubtedly have been 'an unfit subject for fiction'.' (p 150)

Knowing that the Symonds were also friends of Robert Louis Stevenson and his wife Fanny, whom they met at Davos, where both men were seeking a cure for tuberculosis, I was pleased to find this interesting passage in *The Violent Friend*, a biography of Fanny Stevenson by Margaret Mackay, published in 1968, in which the biographer writes that Fanny made these comments to Stevenson's friend, Sir Sidney Colvin:

'Louis and Mr Symonds are, so to speak Siamese twins'.

Margaret Mackay continues:

'Symonds was one of the few homosexuals among Stevenson's friends and consorted with Swiss peasants. In time Louis observed to Colvin that to be with him was 'to adventure into a thornbush', but his mind is interesting.'

Fanny might have been expected to hobnob with Mrs Symonds while their husbands were fraternising but the two women disliked each other. Stevenson described the lady thus:

'For Mrs S I have much pity but little sympathy. A stupid woman, married above her, moving daily with people whose talk she doesn't understand.'

What a different opinion from Mrs Gaskell's!

I found a further link in the chain of connections with Marianne North when I read of her meeting with Mr & Mrs Agassiz in America. Louis Agassiz was a Swiss-born American and Professor of Natural History at Harvard and known to Mrs Gaskell's friend, George Allman, Professor of Natural History at Edinburgh and the husband of Elizabeth's old friend, Louisa Shaen, a man who could have been the inspiration for Roger Hamley in *Wives and Daughters*. In February 1864 Elizabeth took an ailing Meta for 'bracing air' in Edinburgh, staying with the Allmans. She appealed to Charles Eliot Norton to assist in a book search:

'Can you get for me VOL 1 of Elliott's Proceedings, - a Charleston book of Science Dr Allman wants *very* much to refer to in finishing some work of his own, - and Trubner cannot get it. Dr Allman is known to Agassiz who would perhaps help in the search.' (GL 546)

Marianne North met Mr and Mrs Agassiz at a picnic in West Manchester, Boston, where they -

'sat and talked for a long while under the shade of a cedar tree. Mrs Agassiz and I agreed that the greatest pleasure we knew was

to see new and wonderful countries' ... 'Mrs A. was a most agreeable woman married to the clever old Swiss Professor who was a great pet of the Americans who were then just fitting up a new exploring ship for him to go on a ten-month voyage to Cape Horn and the Straits of Magellan to hunt for pre-historic fish in comfort.

Marianne's comments on the Professor were:

'He spoke funny broken English and looked entirely content with himself and everyone else.'

This is certainly a meeting that Elizabeth Gaskell would have appreciated as her interest in botany and natural history was keen and she was a great admirer of Charles Darwin.

Darwin is the final link in the chain of connections with Marianne North, who wrote in her journal:

'He (Darwin) was in my eyes the greatest man living, the most truthful as well as the most unselfish and modest, always trying to give others the credit of his own great thoughts and work. He seemed to have the power of bringing out other people's best points by mere contact with his own superiority. I was much flattered at his wishing to see me and when he said I ought not to attempt any representation of the vegetation until I had seen the Australian which was so unlike that of any other country, I determined to take it as a royal command.'

Marianne North's journey to Australia was her last. After 1883 she remained at her home in London and faced failing health. In her last years, her niece Janet, daughter of her step-sister, Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, was with Marianne until her death in 1890. Mrs Gaskell mentions Janet in a letter to Lady Shuttleworth (GL 231) and sends her love to her.

It is within the bounds of possibility that Marianne and Elizabeth may have met at Gawthorp or Capesthorpe when Janet was small.

### South of England Branch

Meetings during the remainder of 1999 are as follows:

**SATURDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2 pm** Francis Holland School  
'Mrs Gaskell and her Christian Socialists' – Brenda Colloms

**SATURDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2 pm** Francis Holland School  
'Crime and Mrs Gaskell' – Hill Slavid

Please note that both these dates have been altered from those originally arranged.

Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, London SW1W 8JF, is a few minutes walk from Sloane Square Underground Station (District Line).

Those who wish to do so meet for lunch together before meetings held at Francis Holland School. Neither the Royal Court Tavern nor Peter Jones cafeteria where we have met in the past have been entirely satisfactory. Brenda Colloms and Howard Gregg have investigated 'The 12 Restaurant', part of the Sloane Square Moathouse (Royal Court Hotel) next to the Royal Court Tavern on Sloane Square and recommend that we try it for lunch before the remaining two meetings this year.

They will need to know in advance the number who will require lunch. It is a very pleasant restaurant. We would have a section reserved for our use and could stay from 12 noon until we leave for the meeting. There are good cloakroom facilities.

If you wish to have lunch there prior to the meeting it is necessary that you should write or telephone to me as follows:

By Saturday 4 September for the meeting on 11 September  
By Saturday 13 November for the meeting on 20 November.

Dudley J Barlow

### **Paper Proposals are Invited**

Paper proposals are invited for the 2000 meeting of the Research Society of Victorian Periodicals, "Victorian Encounters: Editors and Readers", to be held in London on 20-22 July 2000. All students, teachers, and scholars interested in publishing history and the Victorian press are invited to participate. Proposals or abstracts (maximum two double-spaced pages) on any topic relating to the Victorian periodical press and a two-page (maximum) C.V. should be sent to:

**Julie F Codell, Director, School of Art, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85287-1505, USA**  
**Fax: 480 965 8338. E-mail: Julie.Codell@asu.edu**

The abstract and C.V. may be mailed, faxed, or e-mailed. The deadline for proposals is 15 December 1999 (postmarked or transmitted).

The RSVP London conference fee is £80, which includes teas, coffees, and a business lunch. Cheques should be made out to Birkbeck College. Inquiries and conference fees should be directed to:

**Diana Hodgson, Birkbeck College, 26 Russell Square, London WC1B 5DQ.**  
**Tel: 0171 631 6674. Fax: 0171 631 6688.**

The scheduling of the London RSVP conference has been co-ordinated with a conference of related interest, "Feminist Forerunners: The New Woman in the National and International Periodical Press, 1880 to the 1920s", to be held in Manchester from 24-26 July 2000. Inquiries should be forwarded to:

**Ann Heilmann, Department of Humanities and Applied Social Studies, Crewe & Alsager Faculty, Manchester Metropolitan University, Alsager Campus, Hassall Road, Alsager, Cheshire ST7 2HL.**  
**Fax: 0161 247 6374. E-mail: A.Heilmann@mmu.ac.uk**