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An Introduction to Harriet Martineau's Lake District Writings

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AN INTRODUCTION TO HARRIET MARTINEAU'S LAKE DISTRICT WRITINGS

by Michael R. Hill

THIS COMPILATION presents an engaging, insightful, and inspiring smorgasbord of essays (and one didactic tale) selected from Harriet Martineau's Lake District writings from the mid-1800s. As a source of inspiration, the English Lake District has been profitably mined by scores of writers, including Martineau. The selections included here are more or less available (usually less) in scholarly and rare book collections, but are not generally obtainable for a pleasant armchair read at home or, as Martineau would certainly encourage, to tote along in one's knapsack on a weekend ramble among the lakes and hills of Cumbria. The majority of the selections were penned prior to Martineau's full-length *Complete Guide to the English Lakes* (1855) and happily reflect her immediate first encounters with the topography and social life surrounding the English lakes. While the collection stands on

its own, it by no means includes all of Martineau's works related to the Lake District. Avid readers will thus augment their "traveler's library" with copies of Martineau's 1855 *Guide*, her *Autobiography* (1877), and a relevant set of detailed Ordnance Survey maps. The *Guide* and the Osgood edition of the *Autobiography* (with its useful index) can still be had, at some expense, from rare book dealers.

As Martineau's texts remain the best introductions to her work and worlds, there remains little for an editor to do. As far as practicable, the selections are arranged so as to first introduce Martineau's more immediate surrounds in Ambleside, and then widen more generally to the Lake District as a whole (thereby playing somewhat footloose with chronology: for example, her essay on "The Lake District," written in 1848, is here placed *after* her 1850 series, "A Year at Ambleside"). Where terms or names are seemingly obscure, especially to American readers such as myself who are not steeped in the byways and byplay of English literary criticism, I have provided, where possible, brief annotations in the endnotes sufficient to ease one's recourse to the standard reference sources in local libraries. Martineau generally assumed, of course, that her readers were familiar with the cast of literary lights with whom she associated and occasionally frolicked. It remains only for this introduction to identify Martineau's skills as a descriptive writer, to sketch the outline of her happy first decade in Ambleside (during which most of the items were written), and to indicate something of the background and publishing history of each selection.

GEOGRAPHER AND SOCIOLOGIST

Harriet Martineau (1802–1876) became an experienced geographical and sociological observer and accomplished writer well before she took up residence in the Lake District. Her recognized place in the literary pantheon is the subject of an ever-growing number of readily available scholarly monographs, including notable recent additions by Deborah Logan (2002a) and Caroline Roberts (2002). Martineau's pioneering sociological acumen is now also well documented and widely accepted (Hill 1989; Hoecker-Drysdale 1992; Hill and Hoecker-Drysdale 2001; Deegan 2003), if not yet beyond perverse, recalcitrant disputation (e.g., Connell 1997; Hamilton 2003). Her fundamental observational principles and insights are fully and delightfully illustrated in the first methodological treatise in the social sciences: *How to Observe Morals and Manners* (1838a). No methodologist has yet improved on Martineau's core observational dictum: "The grand secret of wise inquiry into Morals and Manners is to begin with the study of THINGS, using the DISCOURSE OF PERSONS as a commentary upon them" (Martineau 1838a, 73). This said, her outstanding aptitude as a student of physical and human landscapes per se are somewhat less well recognized.

Martineau's topographical gifts are clearly and strongly revealed to readers of *Society in America* (1837), *Retrospect of Western Travel* (1838b), and, in a later work, *Eastern Life, Present and Past* (1848). Indeed, in that Martineau is now established as the first woman sociologist, we can also rec-



Fig. 2. Harriet Martineau, 1833 (from Martineau's *Autobiography*)

ognize her as an early woman geographer. In *How to Observe Morals and Manners*, she emphasized the importance of landscape description. To travelers, she advised, “those who do not draw should also note scenery.” The reason being that “a very few descriptive touches will bring back a landscape, with all its human interest, after a lapse of

years; while, perhaps there is no memory in the world which will present unaided the distinctive character of a succession of scenes" (Martineau 1838a, 235).

The landscape, she found, opens most fully to pedestrians: to travelers who *walk* from place to place. "The wisest and happiest traveller is the pedestrian," Martineau observed. "If gentlemen and ladies want to see pictures, let them post to Florence, and be satisfied with learning what they can from the windows by the way. But if they want to see either scenery or people, let all who have strength and courage go on foot" (Martineau 1838a, 63). When Martineau moved to the Lake District, she became an ardent walker, making long trips into the surrounding hills, virtually every morning and sometimes before dawn. This fundamentally independent mode of transport fit both her personality and her purpose. "The pedestrian traveller is wholly free from care," and, she continues:

There is no such freeman on earth as he is for the time. His amount of toil is usually within his own choice,—in any civilised region. He can go on and stop when he likes; if a fit of indolence overtakes him, he can linger for a day or a week in any spot that pleases him. He is not whirled past a beautiful view almost before he has seen it. . . . He can reach almost every point his wishes wander to. The pleasure is indescribable of saying to one's self, "I will go there,"—"I will rest yonder,"—and forthwith accomplishing it. (Martineau 1838, 63)

A well-seasoned observer and an energetic walker, Martineau explored her world—and the extraordinary landscapes of the Lake District—with enthusiasm, integrity, and perspicuity.

Martineau first saw the Lake District in 1838 while en route to Scotland to complete on-site research for a series of topographical notes for Charles Knight's then forthcoming edition of Shakespeare's works:

I therefore agreed to join a party of friends, to attend the meeting of the British Association at Newcastle first, and then proceed to the Lake District, which I had never seen, and into Scotland, visiting both Western and Northern Highlands. It is always pleasant, I find, to have some object in view, even in the direction of a journey of pleasure: and this was supplied to me by Mr. Knight's request that I would explore the topography of Shakspeare's Scotch play now; and of the Italian plays when I went to the continent the next year. (Martineau 1877, 1:429)

The trip to Scotland provided Martineau with an indelible example of “the pleasure of a gradual approach to celebrated or beautiful places.” She wrote:

The first time that I felt this was on a pedestrian tour in Scotland, when I was at length to see mountains. The imagination of myself and my companion had fixed strongly on Dunkeld, as being a scene of great beauty, and our first resting-place among the mountains. The sensation had been growing all the morning . . . and we traversed it so freshly and merrily as to be quite unaware

that we were getting towards the end of our seventeen miles. . . . We were deeply engaged in talk, when a winding of the road brought us in full view of the lovely scene which is known to all who have approached Dunkeld by the Perth road. We could scarcely believe that this was *it*, so soon. We turned to our map and guide-book, and found that we were standing on the site of Birnam wood; that Dunsinane hill was in sight. . . . (Martineau 1838a, 65–66)

Martineau's notes on the physical locations in *Macbeth* appear in volume 2 of *The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakspeare*, edited by Charles Knight. It was a congenial project: "I do not know whether any of the air of the localities hangs about those notes of mine in Mr. Knight's Shakspeare," she wrote, "but to me, the gathering up of knowledge and associations for them was almost as pleasant work as any I ever had to do" (Martineau 1877, 1:429).

The *Macbeth* project further sharpened Martineau's observational and descriptive skills, and, crucially, it introduced her, albeit as a serendipitous consequence, to the beauties of the Lake District wherein she would purposefully and independently choose to settle and build her home several years later.

LIVING IN THE LAKE DISTRICT

Martineau recovered, at the end of 1844, from a long, debilitating illness and confinement (Martineau 1844;

1877, 1:443–81). She confirmed her recovery with a change of scene, moving from Tynemouth to the Ambleside region, and quickly determined to make the Lake District her permanent home, living there from 1845 until her death in 1876. A new and independent era opened in her life. Of her first experiences in lakeland, she confided:

I have been spending a delicious month on Windermere,—at Wansfell, (Mr. W. Greg's) & my friends in that neighbourhood made a plan for me which I could not resist, to take rooms at Waterhead (by Ambleside) for the whole summer & Autumn. I have done so, & shall be close by the Gregs and Davys, & within easy walks of the Arnolds, Wordsworths & Fletchers. Very many friends mean to visit us this summer. I wish you would. The delight of that month at Wansfell was unspeakable. (Martineau to Milnes, 22 February 1845, in Sanders 1990, 106–107)

And, after having built her home, The Knoll, she wrote to another friend:

When you come here and see my perfect paradise of a home, and my dear neighbours, and have witnessed my daily life of honorable toil and gay enjoyment of both work and ease, I think you will feel a sort of surprise that there is on earth a lot of good so unmixed. The new experience of freedom from care,—of perfect ease of body and mind,—as new to me as Heaven itself could be—loses none of its wonder as yet. (Martineau to Wedgwood, 3 August 1846, in Arbuckle 1983, 90)

Martineau—hearing impaired, and without husband, college education, family fortune, or inherited position—had put it all together. Hers is a middle-class feminist success story of independence, hard work, self-discipline, and remarkable perseverance. The building of her home “went off without a difficulty” (Martineau 1877, 1:502). During the wonderfully full decade from 1845 to 1855, a period largely free from illness and pain, she exuberantly followed her inclinations, wrote what she liked, and visited as she pleased. Her day-to-day experiences repeatedly “confirmed my satisfaction with my independent plan of life” (Martineau 1877, 1:496).

When Martineau built The Knoll, the Lake District was already an established Mecca for friends and admirers of William Wordsworth and his circle, a brilliant set of Lake District “lights.” To the growing list of lakeland callers, Martineau attracted her own illustrious visitors. For example, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Charlotte Brontë made notable, if brief, visits. Martineau met Emerson in 1836 during her travels in America—he “invited me to be his guest, in the midst of my unpopularity,” she recalled. Emerson returned the favor, visiting England in 1847:

Mr. Emerson did come. He spent a few days in February with me; and, unfavourable as the season was for seeing the district,—the fells and meadows being in their dunnest haycolour instead of green,—he saw in rides with a neighbour and myself some of the most striking features in the nearer scenery. I remember bringing him, one early morning, the first green spray

of the wild currant, from a warm nook. . . . It was a great pleasure to me to have for my guest one of the most honoured of my American hosts, and to find him as full as ever of the sincerity and serenity which had inspired me with so cordial a reverence twelve years before. (Martineau 1877, 1:549)

It was for Martineau a memorable event, and she recalled it when writing to Emerson five years later, in 1852: “I have been over Loughrigg today, (you remember the mountain opposite my windows), & in returning found, & brought home, just such a sprig of wild currant as I got for you when you were here at the same time of year” (Martineau to Emerson, 25 February 1852, in Sanders 1990, 121).

From within England per se, Martineau was visited with great frequency by many luminaries of the current literary scene. Her Lake District writings are chock full of names and literary associations familiar to students of English literature. Details of many such visits are found throughout her *Autobiography* and her correspondence (Arbuckle 1983; Sanders 1990; Burchell 1995), but one visit that bears particular note is the pilgrimage made by Charlotte Brontë. When *Jane Eyre* appeared in 1847 under Brontë’s pseudonym, Currer Bell, Martineau identified strongly with the novel and admired the work of the unidentified author:

Can you tell me about “Jane Eyre,”—who wrote it? I am told I wrote the 1st vol: and I don’t know how to disbelieve it myself,—though I am wholly ignorant of the

authorship. I cannot help feeling that the writer must know not only my books but myself very well. My own family suppose me *in* the secret, till I deny it. With much improbability of incident, it is surely a very able book (outside of what I could have done of it;) and the way in which the heroine comes out without conceit or egotism is, to me, perfectly wonderful. (Martineau to Wedgwood, 18 February 1848, in Arbuckle 1983, 95–96)

Brontë, still disguised as Currer Bell, sent Martineau a copy of *Shirley* in 1849, accompanied by a note declaring that “C.B.” sent the book “in acknowledgment of the pleasure and profit” she derived from reading Martineau’s novel *Deerbrook* (1839). Between the appearance of *Shirley* and *Villette*, Brontë’s final novel, Charlotte visited Harriet in December 1850. To George Lewes, who questioned whether Brontë correctly understood his views on Catholics, Martineau wrote: “Do you mean that she thinks you favour the Catholics? That is not like her. She is coming to me on Monday for a *cosy* winter visit; & we shall talk over all things whatever, I suppose;—& that among the rest; & I shall hear what she thinks” (Martineau to Lewes, 10 December 1850, in Sanders 1990, 120). Martineau later recalled, “our intercourse then confirmed my deep impression of her integrity, her noble conscientiousness about her vocation, and her consequent self-reliance in the moral conduct of her life. I saw at the same time tokens of a morbid condition of mind, in one or two directions . . .” (Martineau 1877, 2:24).

Brontë subsequently pressed Martineau to write a

review of *Villette*, but was deeply stung by Martineau's forthright critique and consequently rebuffed her invitation to make a repeat visit. As fate would have it, Brontë was the younger woman, but it was Martineau who wrote her obituary for the *Daily News* (reprinted in Martineau 1869, 44–50).

By January 1855, Martineau's old ailments returned; she wrote her *Autobiography*, and waited for death. The final curtain was far from down, however, and she produced a considerable body of work after this time. As Vera Wheatley (1957, 358) put it: "For the next ten or eleven years, her unremitting labour with her pen would have been remarkable enough in a perfectly healthy woman." Martineau's health never fully returned, however, and she increasingly curtailed her visitors, sharply limiting their number and eventually admitting only her closest friends and kin. Martineau died in 1876, no doubt in some sympathy with Mary Wordsworth who had once quipped, at age seventy, that the worst thing about living in the Lake District was that "it made one so unwilling to go" when death finally approached.

BACKGROUND AND PUBLISHING HISTORY

All of the selections in this compilation intersect at Ambleside, and dovetail with Martineau's larger *Autobiography* and *Complete Guide to the English Lakes*, thereby greatly

enriching our appreciation of her talents as a topographer and social observer. Yet, with the exception of the two extracts from Martineau's *Autobiography*, the selections in this compilation were separately prepared and issued largely in disparate publications from 1848 to 1861, most during the oftentimes productive and generally pain-free period of Martineau's later life. The following inventory, arranged in chronological order, provides a brief commentary on the context and publishing history of each selection.

Frolics with the Hutchinsons

The essay reprinted here appeared originally with the prosaic title "The Hutchinsons in Grasmere." In her much later essay on "Lights of the English Lake District," however, Martineau referred to the earlier essay as "Frolics with the Hutchinsons," and I have here restored that more lively title. The article describes the visit of a singing troupe from the United States and details Martineau's central role in looking after the quartet and arranging the concert they gave at Ambleside. The account was prepared as the first of a three-article series on "Lake and Mountain Holidays" for the *People's Journal* (Martineau 1846a, b, c). The final two installments detail Lakeland rambles more or less recounted elsewhere in other writings, but Martineau's portrait of the Hutchinson quartet is a fairly singular account. William Howitt and his wife, Mary Howitt, were copartners with John Saunders in the production and editing of the *People's Journal*, a magazine oriented to popular education for

members of the working classes, and Martineau contributed several articles during the first years of publication. She was not on particularly friendly terms with the Howitts—indeed, she readily kept her distance:

An . . . unintelligible claim to my friendship has been advanced in print by the Howitts. I can only say that I do not remember having seen Mrs. Howitt more than twice in my life, and that I should not know her by sight: and that I have seen Mr. Howitt about four or five times:—three or four times in London, and once at Tynemouth, when he came with a cousin of mine to cool himself after a walk on the sands, and beg for a cup of tea. This he and Mrs. Howitt have represented in print as visiting me in my illness. Such service as they asked of me in London, (to obtain a favourable review of a book of Mr. Howitt's in which he had grossly abused me) I endeavoured to render; but I really was barely acquainted with them; and I was glad the intercourse had gone no further when I witnessed their conduct to their partner in the *People's Journal*, and in some other affairs. I so greatly admire some of their writings, in which their fine love of nature and their close knowledge of children are unmingled with passion and personal discontent, that I am thankful to enjoy the good their genius provides without disturbance from their unreasonable and turbulent tempers. (Martineau 1877, 1:313)

In addition to several meditations on largely political matters (most published under the series title “Survey from the Mountain” during 1846), her treatise on *Household*

Education (1849) was partially serialized first in the *People's Journal*, also during 1846–1847. In commencing her “Survey” articles, she noted:

Sitting here in my quiet home, in the quietest of valleys, or crossing the mountains which close it in, I watch the ways and fortunes of the world; and with so much interest, that I sometimes long to seek for sympathy by saying what I think and feel of the world's ways and fortunes. Will you permit me to send you monthly some of the comments I cannot help making as I read of human life and its affairs? (Martineau 1846d, 303)

This was work she enjoyed: “I do like writing for that Journal,—the host of readers are so earnest!” (Martineau to Fanny Wedgwood, 3 August 1846, quoted in Arbuckle 1983, 91).

The Lake District

Close reading of this essay reveals numerous precedents, illustrations, and turns of phrase that subsequently appear not only in “A Year at Ambleside” (1850) but also in Martineau's *Complete Guide to the English Lakes* (1855). Her easy recycling of phrases, examples, and even whole passages explains part of her astonishing efficiency as a writer. Nonetheless, each telling of a favorite example provides Martineau with opportunities for shifts in nuance and perspective. When she occasionally repeated selected accounts nearly verbatim, the new *context* in which an old story is

retold tends generally to deepen the weight and significance of the example. By 1855, Martineau was acquainted more intimately with the lakeland region, and the encyclopedic character of her *Guide* makes it a landmark in tourist writing equally as interesting as William Wordsworth's earlier *Guide to the Lakes* (1835). Travel guides aside, "The Lake District" is a fresh, compact geographic description revealing a comprehensive grasp of Martineau's new environs, without burdening the reader with the prosaic detail required in a full-blown travel guide per se.

In 1846, having recovered her health, Martineau set herself the ambitious task of learning thoroughly the physiography surrounding her newly adopted home:

I set myself to learn the Lake District, which was still a *terra incognita*, veiled in bright mists before my mind's eye: and by the close of a year from the purchase of my field, I knew every lake (I think) but two, and almost every mountain pass. (Martineau 1877, 513)

Her lakeland travels garnered almost immediate utility in her writing. Work on the essay, published by Charles Knight as "The Lake District," began in August 1848. Martineau (1877, 2:4) recounts that at that time "I was writing 'Household Education,' and I had promised him [Charles Knight] an account of the Lake District, for the work he was publishing called 'The Land we live in.'"

The Land We Live In comprises fifty-seven individually prepared chapters on various institutions, cities, and regions

of the British Isles. Knight expressed the coordinating theme, in comparing the perspective of historical writers to those of his own age, thus:

But *we* have also to look upon many things, some of which are scarcely picturesque, some wholly modern, but which have the elements of grandeur in their vastness and their moral influences. The course and offices of government, legislation, and the administration of justice; the halls of science, art, and letters; the seats of education; the emporiums of commerce and manufactures; the havens of maritime power; the material improvements of our day viewed in connexion with the moral; the manners and social characteristics of the people. All these features, and many more which it is better here to suggest than enumerate, make up the wonderful whole of "The Land we live in." Be it our aim to seize upon the most permanent and most universal of these features; in the desire to amuse as well as to inform,—to advance all safe and benevolent progress,—to nourish a just patriotism.

The separate chapters were initially published as numbers of Knight's *Weekly Volume* series, and issued subsequently as a handsomely bound four-volume set. The general aim was to provide authoritative, inexpensive, interesting, and attractive materials for the instruction and betterment of working-class readers (much along the lines as the *Penny Magazine* issued by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Information, a reform-oriented organization in which

Knight played a significant role and that also courted the publication of Martineau's earlier didactic tales). It bears notice that Martineau (1877, 1:428) claims credit for having been instrumental in thinking up the "Weekly Volume" scheme in the first place, with the idea being somewhat later implemented by Knight. Each installment was profusely illustrated with drawings and usually included a well-executed plate, adding substantial visual interest to the accompanying text. The illustrations that accompany Martineau's essay are classic examples of the picturesque style then in vogue (Peterson forthcoming). In launching *The Land We Live In*, Knight was likely encouraged by the success of a similar project, a six-volume series of essays on *London*, published in 1841, which did for the prime city what he now envisioned for the British Isles as a whole. The first edition of the bound volumes of *The Land We Live In* was not dated, but Rivlin (1947, 102) suggests that the work appeared incrementally, from 1847 to 1850. Inasmuch as Martineau's contribution appeared in volume 2, and was not commissioned until 1848, a publication date of late 1848 or early 1849 is a plausible conjecture.

Our Farm of Two Acres

Many aspects of Martineau's life may be seen metaphorically as experiments. As a writer, she experimented with new forms of imaginative writing, including didactic fiction to teach the principles of economics. But she also conducted real-world experiments and "Our Farm of

Two Acres” and “The Cost of Cottages” are two prime examples. Once having thought through a pragmatic problem, and having outlined a plan of action to accomplish stated ends, she was virtually compelled by some inner force to bring her ideas into pragmatic realization. Her life became an experiment, a *demonstration* of how to live independently, thoughtfully, rationally, and in social harmony—if not in intellectual agreement—with one’s neighbors. “Our Farm of Two Acres” demonstrates, with grace, brevity, and somewhat more convivial social insight than Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden* (1854), how a single woman might simultaneously increase her personal independence and social usefulness.

The pastoral, comforting imagery of “farms” and “cows” danced temptingly in Harriet’s head at an early age. She reports that, as a youngster of five romanticizing about death, she contemplated various schemes of escape from a situation in which she perceived that “nobody else cared for me,” and in one such plan she clearly equated farming, rural life, and cows as a suitable haven:

I used to lean out of the window, and look up and down the street, and wonder how far I could go without being caught. I had no doubt at all that if I once got into a farm-house, and wore a woollen petticoat, and milked the cows, I should be safe, and that nobody would inquire about me any more. (Martineau 1877, 1:14)

But, years later, after Martineau undertook her complicated experiment in small-scale agriculture, inquiries and

onlookers were frequent. "In 1848 (I think it was) I had begun an experiment of very small farming, which I never intended to become an affair of public interest" (Martineau 1877, 2:33):

At first, we were abundantly ridiculed, and severely condemned for our methods; and my good servant's spirits were sometimes sorely tried: but I told him that if we persevered good-humouredly, people would come round to our views. And so they did. First, I was declared deluded and extravagant: next, I was cruel to my live stock; then I pet them so that they would die of luxury; and finally, one after another of our neighbours admitted the fine plight of my cows; and a few adopted our methods. At the end of a year's experience, I wrote a letter, by request, to an Assistant Poor-law Commissioner, who was earnest in his endeavours to get work-houses supplied with milk and vegetables, by the labour of the inmates on the land. To my amazement, I found my letter in the "Times," one day while I was at Bolton. How it got there, I know not. Other papers quoted portions of it which, separated from the rest, gave rise to wrong impressions; so that I found it necessary to write a second letter, giving the result of a second year's tillage; and to issue the two as a small pamphlet. I need say nothing here about our method of farming, as the whole story is told in that pamphlet. I may simply add that we go on with it, very comfortably; and that my good farm-servant is a prosperous man. Strangers come every summer to see the place as a curiosity; and I am assured that the invariable remark is that not a foot of

ground is lost, and not a sign of neglect appears in any corner. (Martineau 1877, 2:34–35)

The farm operation increased Martineau's independence in direct and practical ways, significantly reducing her household's previous dependence on local shops and suppliers for fresh meat and produce. And, it was fun! "I am enjoying, as my third interest, my little farming. O! it is so pleasant,—our fine cream and butter, and hams and bacon, and fowls and eggs,—and vast prospects of vegetables and fruit to come" (Martineau to Wedgwood, 2 January 1849, in Arbuckle 1983, 102–104). The magazine version of "Our Farm of Two Acres" appeared in *Once a Week* during July 1859, and was reprinted in Martineau's *Health, Husbandry, and Handicraft* in 1861. A later pamphlet edition, according to Rivlin (1947, 110), was published in the United States in 1865.

A Year at Ambleside

Martineau's remarkable book of months appeared serially over the course of 1850 in *Sartain's Union Magazine of Literature and Art*, published in Philadelphia by John Sartain and edited by John S. Hart and Mrs. Caroline M. Kirkland. Kirkland was a noted abolitionist, pacifist, and writer. "In its earliest days under K[irkland]'s leadership the *Union* was considered one of the best family magazines of its kind" (A. Roberts 1980, 472). Poetry, essays, and fine art prints surrounded Martineau's monthly "Ambleside papers."

Americans today will particularly recognize the name of Edgar Allan Poe, whose posthumously published essay on "The Poetic Principle" appeared in the October 1850 issue. Close readers of "The Lake District" will note Martineau's revisiting of several themes and examples, but the exposition in "A Year at Ambleside" is essentially temporal (month by month), whereas the organization of "The Lake District" is fundamentally spatial (quadrant by quadrant). The factual bases of several vignettes recounted in both essays are subsequently fictionalized for use in "The Highest House in Wathendale," the one example of didactic fiction included in the present compilation.

Having, by 1850, completed the construction of her house and established her financial situation, Martineau began contributing to various causes and projects, and such she did with the proceeds from writing her "Ambleside papers," as the following letter to Ellis Gray Loring (a Boston lawyer whom Martineau met during her US travels) reveals:

It is very long since I wrote to you: & now I have a favour to ask of you. Messrs Sartain of Philadelphia owe me money for contributions to their Magazine. I write by this same post to request them to pay to you £20 of the balance in my favour. What I have to ask of you is to be so kind as to receive this sum, & to pay half of it to Mr. Garrison for the benefit of "the Liberator," & the other half to "the Anti-Slavery Standard."—I hope it will turn out all right. I have no reason what ever to doubt it. I wrote 12 papers at their & Mrs. Kirkland's

request; & they duly paid me for the first three. Seven more are now printed, I suppose; & their value being £35, I suppose there is no doubt of your getting the £20. (Martineau to Loring, 23 October 1850, in Burchell 1995, 80)

Thus, by writing about the physiography and society of Ambleside, Martineau actively linked the Lake District to her vigorous support of abolition in the United States. The latter topic, it should be noted, has been recently explored in substantial depth by Deborah A. Logan (2002b).

The Highest House in Wathendale

This story appeared in *Household Words*, a well-known journal edited by Charles Dickens, in July 1851. Martineau's contributions to this journal were unsigned, but Anne Lohrli (1973, 360) provides authentication of Martineau's authorship. Martineau contributed to *Household Words* during its first year of publication, 1850, and thereafter submitted articles on a regular basis. "Mr. Dickens sent me an invitation to write for 'Household Words,'" Martineau (1877, 2:25) recalled "That kind of work does not, in my own opinion, suit me well; and I have refused to write for Magazines by the score; but the wide circulation of 'Household Words' made it a peculiar case; and I agreed to try my hand." Her last contribution appeared in 1855—by which time Dickens's virulent anti-Catholic stance had become to her personally intolerable.

"The Highest House in Wathendale" is the only

example of Martineau's fiction included in this compilation, but its place is well deserved. It illustrates vividly how Martineau drew directly on personal experiences to construct didactic tales. Her surveys of the mountain country, encounters with peddlers, visits to auctions, and concerns for the general health and well-being of her community all find utility and purpose here. Her social-psychological analysis of the pros and cons of "pledges" made at revivals and meetings of teetotalers is especially perceptive.

Two Autobiographical Reflections

Martineau began serious, concerted work on her *Autobiography* in 1855 when, faced with a recurrence of earlier symptoms of illness, she presumed that she would soon die. Her presumption was, in this instance, quite wrong. Two short excerpts are included here, as preface ("On Society and Independence") and conclusion ("The World and the Terrace: Two Views from the Knoll"). Both "essays" capture her sense of independence and privacy combined simultaneously with an extraordinary regard for the affairs of the wider world. Readers interested in further details of Martineau's life generally, and in Ambleside in particular, are well advised to pay special attention to the *Autobiography*—it is replete with references to the Lake District. Without the spur of quick demise, she might never have completed her memoir—she added nothing to it during the last twenty years of her life. The *Autobiography* was published posthumously, in accord with Martineau's instructions, in 1877.

The Cost of Cottages

Two essays included here are striking in providing windows on Martineau's life in Ambleside some five years after the completion of her *Autobiography*. The first, "The Cost of Cottages," is a sort of "progress report" on an experimental project begun in 1848 when she conceived the idea of putting small-scale farming to a practical test. As part of her "farm," she built a stone cottage for a Norfolk couple who in return conducted many of the day-to-day chores. She soon thereafter widened the project, to include good, healthful cottages for working-class families. And, there was more at stake than just good housing: this was also an investment scheme in which Martineau took a direct, personal, and profitable hand (see Martineau to Wedgwood, 21 November 1855, in Arbuckle 1983, 135). Published initially in *Once a Week*, in January 1860, Martineau reprinted the essay the following year in her *Health, Husbandry, and Handicraft*.

Lights of the English Lake District

The second post-*Autobiography* essay addresses the disparate array of writers and personalities identified traditionally as "the lake poets." Martineau published "Lights of the English Lake District" in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1861. At nearly sixty years of age and increasingly ill, Martineau looked out from the terrace at the Knoll, presumably, and still saw the wider world in her mind's eye—as earlier noted in her *Autobiography*: "the magnificent coast of Massachusetts in

autumn, or the flowery swamps of Louisiana, or the forests of Georgia in spring, or the Illinois prairie in summer. . . .” At the least, she put pen to paper with her American friends clearly in mind. Looking back on the past fifteen years of her life in the Lake District, she recalled—for her American readers—*anecdotes and characteristics of the major literary figures she either knew firsthand or remembered through her studies: Elizabeth Smith; the Wordsworths; Robert Southey; Samuel Taylor Coleridge and his son, Hartley; Thomas De Quincey; Mrs. Hemans; and the Arnolds, among others.*

AN INVITATION

It is high time to put aside introductions and turn instead to Martineau’s texts. Read now her simultaneously appreciative, critical, and prescriptive commentaries and visit the Lake District as her vicarious guest. Look outward from your respective terrace, wherever it may be—in Massachusetts, Louisiana, Georgia, or Illinois—to gaze on gentle Loughrigg, the rushing Rotha, the high crest of Scawfell Pikes, the winding road up Kirkstone Pass. With maps in hand, retrace her routes, hear the waterfalls, smell the blossoms, observe her neighbors. Rise with Martineau at dawn, walk the streets of mountain villages, feed the cows, collect the eggs. Make life a true and meaningful experiment—observe, take notes, try new schemes, build new worlds.

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