

SOCIOLOGICAL THEMES AND CHARACTERIZATIONS
IN HAROLD FREDERIC'S AMERICAN WORKS

by

Clarence Sturm, B. A.

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INTRODUCTION

The antebellum years to 1900 gave our nation one of its richest periods in American literature. It furnished such well-known writers as Garland, Bierce, James, Howells, and, of course, Twain. Democracy and the common man guided the American life as it experienced a furious transformation of the social structure from rural to urban. The political and social classes of labor and capital emphasized the problems of normal expansion. Enormous corporations and trusts such as Rockefeller's and Carnegie's occupied many writers; others concerned themselves with the new types of politicians and politics brought about by the change from the Webster and Calhoun types to the political bosses like Conkling and Gorman. Immigration brought its own troubles and changes. The impetus of industrial capital and power, the opening of the West, new inventions, and women's rights struggles further added to the difficulties besetting the period. The major party until 1889, the Republicans, were occupied with the tariff while the minor parties, of which there were many, began to emerge as the Democratic party

and were involved with the social and economic difficulties of the labor classes. These, along with the Civil War, created the real and the literary environment for the realistic period in American literature.

Many times writers in such a period seem to be somewhat dated and, subsequently, lose favor when the interests of their readers change. Luckily, however, some writers are revived because a later generation discovers their works and finds that they still have something to offer. Harold Frederic, whose works relatively disappeared shortly after his death in 1898, is one such writer. Carey McWilliams' article, "Harold Frederic: A Country Boy of Genius" in 1933; Charles C. Walcutt's article, "Harold Frederic and American Naturalism" in 1939; and a new edition of The Damnation of Theron Ware in 1924 were the major factors keeping Frederic's works alive until Paul Haines' dissertation in 1945 started the present surge in the study of Frederic's work. Many more dissertations appeared in the 1950's and 1960's; Theron Ware has undergone another edition; the short stories and a novelette have been collected into a recent book, Harold Frederic's York Stories; and Twayne's United States Authors Series now includes a complete study of Harold Frederic.

Harold Frederic and Stephen Crane were two of the

most important of the younger writers of the late nineteenth century. They "were not afraid to discuss poverty, hardships, and the problems of society and religion, and [they] . . . were working toward an instrument of expression which would interpret as well as record."¹ Frederic had a great personal interest in politics which provides the foundation for one novel, Seth's Brother's Wife (1887); his knowledge of history produced such works as In the Valley and his Civil War short stories. The Lawton Girl, concerned with the reform movement of Seth, is a discussion of strikes, mob action, and especially business ethics of the time, from both labor's and management's viewpoints. The Damnation of Theron Ware, Frederic's best work by far, according to most critics, is primarily a treatment of religion; but as in all of his works, the characterization is the important part of the story. Frederic's salient points usually involve man's duties and responsibilities to himself and his fellow man. Indeed, society and its problems are the substance of Frederic. This is why his characterizations are more important than the story, why the pinpointing of the problem is more important than any solution the book

¹Robert E. Spiller et al., Literary History of the United States (New York: Macmillan Company, 1963), p. 1017.

might offer.

Many think Harold Frederic is important as a transitional figure rather than as either a realist or a naturalist. His local-color stories of the Mohawk Valley certainly develop an essential part of his realism. His excellent historical writings also support the realist theory. He was, above all else, an observer and recorder of the common things and centered his work around the rising middle class. As a realist, he was a pragmatist, and the truths he sought were realistic truths with consequences verifiable by the experiences of his characters. It was his purpose to expose the problem and let other men solve it as their intelligence and sense of duty to others directed.

Frederic's naturalism is not so much of the biological determinism as it is a "socio-economic determinism, portraying man as the victim of environmental forces and the product of social and economic factors beyond his control or understanding."² His people are created by their environment and only act when it forces them to break the status quo. The few dynamic characters quite often are the results of the bad in life--greed, lust, avarice, jealousy, and am-

²William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard, A Handbook to Literature (5th ed. rev. and enlarged; New York: Odyssey Press, Inc., 1962), p. 303.

bition. The vacillating characters, his usual type of hero, develop from Frederic's concept of the good in life--duty, love, responsibility, and the genuine desire to help others. Rarely does Frederic breach the tenet of nonpartisanism of the naturalist and pass judgment on one of his characters who are, after all, only pawns of their fundamental social and physical urges.

The romantic element appears in Frederic's haphazard private life more than it does in his stories. He refused, as individual and as author, to see life as entirely pessimistic, as the true naturalist would, and he ended many of his stories in the "happily-ever-after" vein. It shall not be the purpose of this thesis to prove that Frederic is any of these literary types; rather the purpose is to study Harold Frederic's American socio-philosophical novels for their ideas on culture, religion and society. Frederic's is one of the most prolific fictional treatments available concerning civilized man's problems during the turmoil at the end of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER I

RELIGION

Through his reasoning capacity, man has risen above and, to some extent, controls all other known forms of life on earth. His most overwhelming problem, however, remains himself. The basis of man's weakness lies not as much in his mental or physical capacities as in his emotional motivations. The physical needs of food and shelter frequently cause conflicts between men; but, more often, these struggles are the result of man's emotions or abstractions. Man, being unable to solve or explain many of the difficulties confronting him, had to create concepts and institutions, such as organized religion, to help him accept life whenever he could neither explain nor ignore it. This complexity has caused much anxiety and analysis. Since religion's beginning, man has had as much to say about this, his chief creation, as he has about the other powerful motivations of love, hate, loyalty, and similar drives arising from man's least successful venture, that of living with himself and other men.

The writings of Harold Frederic are concerned with a number of social issues, but he is especially concerned with religion, always a serious subject in literature. Frederic might also have been speculating on the popularity of religious topics in hope of finding a lucrative market, an idea that would tend to support the "potboiler" theory about his writings. It is far more likely that Frederic had not been too pleased with his acquaintance with organized religion and wanted to share his experiences, since they seem to be universal in their perspective.

His important experiences with organized religion took place when he was a youth in Utica, New York. One most memorable event happened in 1873 when his parents were honored to open their home to a popular, elderly bishop, Stephen Crane's grandfather, during an important Methodist church function in Utica.³ As a teenager, Frederic did not seem to pay much attention to the esteemed minister; however, this bishop later appeared in Theron Ware as the Presiding Elder who had Theron sent to the unwanted post in Octavius as a form of punishment.

Harold Frederic, a member of the early Methodist

³Thomas F. O'Donnell and Hoyt C. Franchere, Harold Frederic (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1961), p. 33.

Episcopal Church as a boy, probably encountered a type of religion somewhat resembling that described by Brother Pierce in Theron Ware, who suggested that Theron preach "straight-out, flat-footed hell,--the burnin' lake o' fire an' brimstone."⁴ He also attended church during a period of argument which saw a militant minority faction break away from Utica's Corn Hill Methodist Episcopal Church to establish the Free Methodist Church.⁵ The story of this separation appears in "Cordelia and the Moon" (1892) while the tenets and resultant congregation of the militant Free Methodist are the Methodists presented in Theron Ware.

That Frederic understood the power religion can exert over a person who had not practiced his faith for years is very aptly shown in a statement by Douw Mauverensen of In the Valley.

The strange quality of the Roman faith [is]--that its forms and customs, learned in youth, remain in the affections of Papists to their dying day, even after years of neglect and unbelief; whereas in the severe, Spanish-drab Protestantism, in which I was reared, once one loses interest in the tenets themselves, there is nothing left upon which the mind may linger pleasantly.⁶

⁴Harold Frederic, The Damnation of Theron Ware, intro. John Henry Raleigh (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), p. 29.

⁵O'Donnell, p. 25.

⁶Harold Frederic, In the Valley (New York: Charles

Frederic's experience with religion would lead one to believe that he might not have had anything pleasant to linger upon, but certainly the fear and confusion instilled in Frederic would long be remembered. The moral implications involved in his later life with Kate Lyon possibly would have alienated him from most organized religions and must have caused him much personal anxiety.

In addition to the religious influence of the Methodists, Frederic was deeply affected by Roman Catholicism. He grew up in a period when the Irish and Italian immigrants were an important part of the changing New York state. They had come in sizable numbers and had naturally brought with them the Catholic faith, which has almost always been described as a faith looked upon with suspicion and fear by those who are not a part of it. For a time, Frederic had a very good friend, Father Edward A. Terry, who was a young Irish priest with somewhat striking personal views about religion. Father Terry and this friendship were the basis for much found in Father Forbes of Theron Ware. He undoubtedly had other friends who were Catholic; but, more important, was his attachment to Ireland which he visited frequently during his years in England. These attach-

ments, although never giving him the experience of actually being a Catholic, should have given him an appreciable knowledge of the Irish Catholic Church. In his religious-oriented writings, while seeming to favor Catholicism at times, Frederic actually judges neither the Catholic nor the Protestant viewpoints, and his treatment is primarily a superficial one which does not touch upon specific foundations of a religion. The emphasis, rather, is upon the uses people make of religion and its function in society.

"Cordelia and the Moon" and The Damnation of Theron Ware are the works which have a definite religious basis, but many of the other stories include numerous religious commentaries. "Cordelia and the Moon" contains many of the basic ideas of Theron Ware. It is a story which tells something of the split of the Corn Hill Church and gave Frederic experience with writing about "a group of ultra-conservative church members who were more concerned with trifling foibles than with real moral and spiritual problems."⁷ This story also gave him a chance to work with several other ideas that appear again in Theron Ware, such as the new-woman, music in the church services, and especially the beautiful red-haired Cordelia who becomes Celia Madden in the novel. Theron Ware

⁷O'Donnell, p. 112.

is developed entirely around a religious motif. Its major source is Mrs. Humphrey Ward's Robert Elsmere (1888) which dealt with the religion-science question.⁸ The conflict hardly occupies a place in Theron Ware, which presents "an effective series of contrasts in its portrayal of militant Methodism on the one hand, and of a tranquil, easy-going Catholicism on the other."⁹ Another critic had a similar idea about Theron Ware.

Two forms of religious activity are given prominence, the narrow and colorless, but unquestionably native, orthodoxy of the primitive culture-stage in which the greater part of our population still remains, and the more liberal but undeniably alien ideal of the Church of Rome.¹⁰

No matter which of the views is taken, the story is "a realistic rendering of societal relationships."¹¹

Frederic did not deny the importance of religion, but he chose to ignore the nobler reasons for it and used

⁸Robert H. Woodward, "Some Sources for Harold Frederic's The Damnation of Theron Ware," American Literature, XXXIII, No. 1 (March, 1961), 47.

⁹"The Damnation," The Literary News, XVII (May 1896), 142.

¹⁰William Morton Payne, "Recent Fiction," The Dial, XX (June 1, 1896), 336.

¹¹George W. Johnson, "Harold Frederic's Young Goodman Ware: The Ambiguities of a Realistic Romance," Modern Fiction Studies, VIII, No 4 (Winter, 1962-1963), 366.

Schopenhauer's "police force" theory.¹² Father Forbes expresses this all-important idea when he tries to convince Theron to make the best of his faith rather than to criticize it.

What you must realize is that there must always be a church. If one did not exist, it would be necessary to invent it. It is needed, first and foremost, as a police force. It is needed secondly, so to speak, as a fire insurance. It provides the most even temperature and pure atmosphere for the growth of young children. It furnishes the best obtainable social machinery for marrying off one's daughters, getting to know the right people, patching up quarrels, and so on.¹³

Whatever this left out of Frederic's basic concepts is supplied through Dr. Ledsmar's feeling that "a church should exist for those who need its help, and not for those who by their own profession are so good already that it is they who help the church." Ledsmar argues that the Catholics supposedly do not have this problem because of confession and their ability to instill into the guilty person a feeling that no one is hurt except himself if he is insincere in his religious acts.¹⁴

¹²Robert H. Woodward, "Harold Frederic: A Study of His Novels, Short Stories, and Plays" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation Indiana University, 1957), p. 16.

¹³Frederic, The Damnation . . ., intro. Raleigh, p. 246.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 76.

People have always had a variety of reasons for attending, or not attending, a church. The characters in Frederic's stories present a few candid views of this feature of religion. Levi Gorringer of Theron Ware states that he "goes to church from habit and for business reasons."¹⁵ Douw Mauverensen thought of his churchgoing as "wearisome memories" in which he had been "forced to keep awake, and more, to look deeply interested" because his father had been a minister.¹⁶ Mrs. Minster of The Lawton Girl "went to the Episcopal church regularly, although she neither professed nor felt any particular devotion to religious ideals or tenets."¹⁷ A permanent dislike arose between Reuben Tracy and villainous Schuyler Tenny of The Lawton Girl because Tenny had once told Tracy that "what I wanted was not to make any mistakes, but to get into the church where there were the most respectable people who would be of use to me."¹⁸ Kate Minster, also of The Lawton Girl, made a most memorable concluding remark when she said:

¹⁵Ibid., p. 124.

¹⁶Frederic, In the Valley, p. 57.

¹⁷Harold Frederic, The Lawton Girl (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1890), p. 59.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 120.

I sometimes think . . . that it is worthwhile to have an occasional good man or woman altogether outside the Church. They prevent those on the inside from getting too conceited about their own virtue.¹⁹

The introductory chapter of Theron Ware reveals how some of the material motivations involved in the operation of a church can overrule the religious aspects. The members of the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Tecumseh were overjoyed in serving as the hosts of the Nedahama Conference for social, not religious reasons. This joy came primarily from their pride in being one of the largest cities in the district and in having just completed a new church building which contained, as a chief attraction, several one hundred dollar pews. The Ladies' Aid Society gave oyster suppers which "had established rank among the fashionable events in Tecumseh's social calendar,"²⁰ and they wanted everyone in the district to know how rich and important they were. It was the Tecumsehians' prime purpose to select a "fashionable and attractive preacher" to go with their expensive new church because their present minister had "preached dreary out-of-date sermons, and . . . lacked the most rudimentary sense of social distinctions." Be-

¹⁹Ibid., p. 69.

²⁰Frederic, The Damnation . . ., intro. Raleigh, p. 6.

cause of this preacher, they had lost the new cashier of the Adams County Bank to the Presbyterians.²¹ God must certainly have been watching the proceedings, for Tecumseh received what was probably one of the least adequate of all the preachers available.

Another theory concerning Theron Ware is that "the force and interest of Mr. Frederic's book [Theron Ware] . . . lie in the presentation of the seamy side of creed and dogma."²² Such a comment is true only in the idea that people and their creations have usually been judged more on what they do than what they say or stand for. One can hardly deny that, as Father Forbes tells Theron, "fear of hell governs them both [Catholic and Protestant], pretty much alike."²³ However, not all would view hell as Alice did after a brief stay in Octavius. "The Puritan's idea of hell is a place where everybody has to mind his own business."²⁴ Her comment was the result of the church trustees refusing to allow her to receive milk delivery on Sunday mornings.

²¹Ibid., p. 7.

²²"Recent Fiction," The Nation, LXIII, No. 1627, September 3, 1896, 180.

²³Frederic, The Damnation . . ., intro. Raleigh, p. 242.

²⁴Ibid., p. 14.

The trustees, being of the dissident and militant minority who remained with the strict rule of primitive Methodism, also took the flowers from her bonnet. These administrators were strongly against the running of the city's street car line on Sunday even though it would have been a convenience for the parishioners . This last comment reminds one of the Sunday Blue Law controversies of today. These church trustees, having gained their positions by virtue of their holding the church mortgages, were both devious and humorous in order to illustrate some of the foibles of man and his religion. They manipulated the church funds to their benefit, were unfair to Theron, and two of them cheated the only decent one of the three trustees out of a large sum of money. Ironically, all of this was done in the name of religion and according to their interpretation of the guiding rules of their church. The following comment by Brother Pierce is a superb picture of his overall character; it is also delightfully humorous.

This place is just overrun with Irish, . . . They've got two Catholic churches here now to our one, and they do just as they blamed please at the charter elections. It'd be a good idee to pitch into Catholics in general whenever you can. You could make a hit that way. I say the state ought to make 'em pay taxes on their church property. They've no right to be exempted, because they ain't Christians at all. They're idolators, that's what they are! I know 'em! I've had 'em in my quarries for years, an' they ain't got no idee of decency or fair dealin'. Everytime the price of stone went

up every man of 'em would jine to screw more wages out o' me. Why, they used to keep account o' the amount o' business I done, an' figger up my profits, an' have the face to come an' talk to me about 'em, as if they had anything to do with wages. It's my belief them priests put 'em up to it. People don't begin to reelize,--that church of idolatory'll be the ruin o' this country, if it ain't checked in time.²⁵

Brother Pierce was also strongly against music being a part of the church services and "preachin' that our grandfathers were all monkeys."²⁶

Another revealing aspect of man's foolishness concerning religion is well-expressed in Seth's Brother's Wife. Seth, given the task of preparing his newspaper's religious column, tried to renew the public's interest in such writing by selecting excerpts from the best ministers of the period. This "elicited denominational protest from certain pious subscribers"²⁷ in such numbers that the practice was abandoned for his old methods. One of these had been to select, in a sufficient number, a group of articles from another paper and set up a continual cycle of these since, as the editor states, "Nobody knows the difference."²⁸ Tom Watts

²⁵Ibid., p. 30.

²⁶Ibid., p. 29.

²⁷Harold Frederic, Seth's Brother's Wife (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887), p. 134.

²⁸Ibid., p. 129.

suggested that Seth make predictions such as, "There is a growing desire among the Baptists to have Bishops, like other people," or that the Pope will soon give the United States more Cardinals. Watts's premise was that "it doesn't hurt anybody, and it makes you solid when the thing does happen."²⁹

Frederic effectively contrasted the near poverty conditions of the early Protestant churches and ministers with the richness of the Catholic churches and their well-educated priests. Ironically, at that time the Protestant churches served the wealthier people and the Catholic churches, the poorer groups. This was especially so in Frederic's New York, where most of the immigrants were Catholic laborers. Today one can still see remnants of these differences in the slums of cities and in the rural areas.

The scientific theme, especially Darwinism, of the period was well developed through Dr. Ledsmar, but Frederic himself was probably not convinced that Theron was correct in his assumption that science would do away with churches in a "universal scepticism."³⁰ It is also doubtful if many people would agree with Father Forbes' statement that in

²⁹Ibid., p. 130.

³⁰Frederic, The Damnation . . ., intro. Raleigh, p. 244.

their religions, people are "still very like savages in a dangerous wood in the dark, telling one another ghost stories around a camp-fire!"³¹ John Henry Raleigh pointed out that;

The Damnation is concerned not so much with the religious as with the cultural. It is one of the many anomalies of the novel that while most of its principal characters are connected with a religion, no one, except Alice Ware, seems to believe in God, at least in any literal sense.³²

The conclusion to be drawn from Frederic's views on religion then is that, in support of Father Forbes' idea, "of all our fictions there is none so utterly baseless and empty as this idea that humanity progresses."³³ Man, not his religion, is the problem and shall remain so until he can better control himself and his environment.

³¹Ibid., p. 243.

³²Ibid., p. xvii

³³Ibid., p. 224.

CHAPTER II

POLITICS

His career as a journalist involved Harold Frederic in the politics of two continents. New York fills the more important part of his political writings, which are as much universal observations as regional studies. The last fourteen years of Frederic's life were spent in London as a New York Times foreign correspondent. In this position it was his task to interpret the news of Europe for the American public. Upon arrival in England, he established himself as a noted journalist almost immediately through his daring in covering a cholera epidemic in France. The resultant story, "Down Among the Dead Men," gained him the respect of other newsmen and several men of importance who helped him join an influential club in London. This club was more beneficial to Frederic professionally than socially. Other continental assignments directly produced two non-fiction works. The Young Emperor was a biographical sketch of William II of Germany; and The New Exodus, a novel about the Jewish pogrom of Alexander III, was so strong that the Russians asked him

never to return to their country. His other European writings include various articles and stories treating English and Irish politics and life. However, like all of his European works, these articles and novels have been overshadowed by his American oriented works which are better in content and artistry.

Frederic's interest in American politics centered around the Mohawk Valley of New York State. An avid historian, Frederic did his best work when he was writing about his beloved valley and his personal experiences; but his ideas are universally applicable in their concern with another of man's weaknesses--that of the inability of governing himself satisfactorily. Historically, Frederic's stories are concerned with New York's part in the Revolutionary War and the Civil War. The New York election of 1882 is also very important, especially from the standpoint of Frederic's personal involvement in it as the editor of the influential Albany Evening Journal. His maternal grandmother Ramsdell had told him many stories of the Revolutionary War as it affected the Mohawk Valley. Her tales sparked part of the concern in Frederic which led to his novel In the Valley. While less than ten years of age, Frederic witnessed many of the effects of the Civil War on the people of Utica and in the Valley itself. His short stories are Frederic's means

of telling what he saw and heard and felt. Indeed, most of these stories are told through the viewpoint of a young boy. Frederic acknowledged the biographical intent when he wrote:

These stories are by far closer to my heart than any other work of mine, partly because they seem to me to contain the best things I have done or ever shall do, partly because they are so closely interwoven with the personal memories and experiences of my own childhood.³⁴

Later, as a newspaperman, Frederic was involved in the Industrial Revolution as an interpreter of the news and politics of that era. While editor of the leading Albany newspaper, Frederic developed friendships with some notable politicians and political organizers. The most important of these was Grover Cleveland, who was first governor of New York, thanks to Frederic's help, and later the President of the United States. Another important influence was Horatio Seymour, governor of New York during the Civil War and a resident of Utica. Besides his grandmother's stories, Frederic's chief interest in the Revolutionary War stemmed from a speech by Seymour at the Oriskany Centennial celebration in Utica on August 6, 1877. Seymour urged the people of New York to inform the public of New York's history in order to overcome "an old New York complaint" about the ex-

³⁴Harold Frederic, "Preface to a Uniform Edition," In the Sixties (New York: J.J. Little & Co., 1897), p. vi.

cessive claims by the New Englanders for their part in our national history. The ex-governor felt that New England had succeeded in this pretension primarily because it had produced so many popular and biased historians. Frederic attended the speech as a reporter for the Utica Observer; he left inspired to write his book of the Mohawk Valley's part in the Revolution.³⁵

The book was to have "for its central feature the battle of Oriskany."³⁶ Ten years passed before Frederic finally completed and published his historical novel, In the Valley, in 1887. However, "The Blakelys of Poplar Place," Frederic's first short story, and his first article, "The Mohawk Valley During the Revolution" were both written before the novel and contained much of what appears in the book.³⁷ The novel, an historical romance, gives, in addition to the reasons in the Declaration of Independence, several other causes for the War, especially as it began in and affected the Mohawk Valley. The most important of these was the problem of the class struggle which was complicated

³⁵O'Donnell, pp. 39-40.

³⁶Frederic, "Preface . . .," p. vi.

³⁷Woodward, "A Study . . .," p. 19.

somewhat by the nationality conflicts because the Irish, Dutch, Scotch, French, Germans, Indians, Negroes, and English were all represented in the valley. The Palatine-Germans created the largest segment of the population; they were also the most strongly opposed to English rule. As it became more evident that the English planned to extend their type of aristocratic rule to the colonies, General Herkimer of the local guard stated, as he recalled the suffering of the people in the old country:

We have made a new home for ourselves over here, and we owe no one but God anything for it. If they [the English] try to make here another aristocracy over us, then we will die first before we will submit.³⁸

The valley had little happen in it for years, but with the death of a strong and popular local English leader came the definite class struggle between the workers (non-English) and the non-workers (the English) and their advocates. The backcountry towns only knew of the struggle as it touched them personally, but the cities such as Albany were alive with discussion of the trial of Zenger, the Stamp Act crisis, and the Boston Massacre. Douw Mauverensen, the main character of In the Valley, also discovered that it was not the radicals who were doing the talking but the leading men of

³⁸Frederic, In the Valley, pp. 116-117.

the time.³⁹ Surprisingly enough, religious differences were mentioned but were entirely secondary to the national cause and was limited to local area prejudices and arguments. The quartering of soldiers, the sending over of criminals as settlers, the wanton practices of disposing of land to English aristocracy, the poor attention to colonial needs and wants, and the British desire to discourage settling in favor of big trading companies for ease of taxation purposes⁴⁰ all worked together to help kindle a national feeling which, once begun, could not be stopped. Frederic did attempt to present arguments for both sides, but he never achieved any real success for Britain's case. In the Valley tends to place Frederic among the writers who, while certainly not condemning colonial actions, felt that the colonies wanted self-government and chose any opportunity to achieve this end, even revolution.

The Negro slaves of In the Valley presented all the common views of their race. Some were hard workers, some were lazy and drunkards, while others were scoundrels and thieves. They were religious; and they were loyal, even to death as in the case of Tulp, Douw's personal slave. Douw,

³⁹Ibid., pp. 189-190.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 185-186.

who thought of the Indian as a drunken loafer, could not understand the Indian's attitude that he was better than the Negro. Frederic actually concerned himself very little with the Negro and his problems even in the Civil War stories. The focus of these stories is, rather, upon the effect the war had on the population who did not go to war. Edmund Wilson states that:

His [Frederic's] stories of New York during the Civil War reflect the peculiar mixture of patriotism and disaffection which was characteristic of that region and for which Seymour was so forthright a spokesman. Due to this, these stories differ fundamentally from any other Civil War fiction I know, and they have thus a unique historical as well as literary importance.⁴¹

New York supplied more soldiers per population than any other Union state and, at the same time, put up "perhaps the strongest opposition to the Republican administration."⁴² It was also during this time when the Draft Riots of July, 1863, occurred in New York City. The immigrant Irish rioted against the draft and the Negroes who fled to New York and competed for the Irishmen's jobs. These riots, briefly mentioned in some of Frederic's stories, are important in the

⁴¹Harold Frederic, Harold Frederic's Stories of York State, foreward Thomas F. O'Donnell, intro. Edmund Wilson (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1966), p. xiii.

⁴²Ibid., p. xi.

spirit of the times. In The Copperhead, a novelette, Frederic tried indirectly to support Seymour's Civil War politics. He directly tried to present a basic tenet of American Democracy which lets a man believe what he wants so long as he does not harm anyone but himself. Because of Jee Hagadorn, a religious fanatic turned political radical, the normally quiet country people turned into a mob who burned down the Copperhead's (Abner Beech) house before they realized how wrong they were. Another of Beech's greatest crimes was that he had gained his knowledge and opinions from books and not from the heart.⁴³

The novel [The Copperhead] paints, furthermore, a chaotic picture of upstate attitude and prejudice which, perhaps better than many a contemporary history, reveals the temper of the time.⁴⁴

It is Abner's refusal to compromise which "reveals that type of political courage characteristic of Horatio Seymour."⁴⁵ But Frederic was primarily revealing the Mohawk Valley for what it was during the 1860's, "a stronghold of

⁴³Robert H. Woodward, "Mohawk Valley Folk Life During the Civil War," New York Folklore Quarterly, LXIII, No. 2 (Summer, 1962), 109.

⁴⁴Abe C. Ravitz, "Harold Frederic's Venerable Copperhead," New York History, LXI, No. 1 (January, 1960), 43.

⁴⁵Ibid.

Abolitionism, religious fundamentalism, and intellectual provincialism, and it was dedicated to the preservation of its beliefs."⁴⁶ Politically, few of the short stories are important. "The Deserter" condemned the draft processes and the inconsistent and impersonal treatment of deserters. Unfortunately, it offered no solution to the problem which remains with us even today.

Frederic, only a child during the Civil War, naturally, had no personal politics at that time. He was, however, very much influenced, later, by Seymour's political concepts and practices.

When the time came for him to take pen in hand to write of politics--to sketch fictional problems involving integrity versus compromise or honesty versus deceit--Harold Frederic recalled with both love and enthusiasm the ethic of Seymour and saw fit to immortalize these principles in fiction revolving about life in the up-state New York region.⁴⁷

In Horatio Seymour, Frederic further "perceived incarnation of that moral integrity and intellectual stability which had been immersed by the devious politics of a stammering era."⁴⁸ Frederic grew up during a time of great change politically, religiously, socially, and economically. It was a time of

⁴⁶Woodward, "Mohawk Valley . . .," pp. 107-108.

⁴⁷Ravitz, "Harold Frederic's Venerable . . .," p. 37.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 36.

transfer from an agrarian society to an industrial one, from rural to urban, from highly religious to somewhat apathetical. New York was undergoing a great influx of immigration that brought the Irish and Italians in enormous numbers. It was a period of trusts, monopolies, and quick fortunes. Many forces worked together to lessen the religious and moral fervor once so strong in Frederic's country--the war, city life, a mixture of ethnic groups, economic desires and, of course, Darwinism. From the turmoil and activity, Frederic produced two books which dealt with the political questions of the time, Seth's Brother's Wife (1887) and The Lawton Girl (1890).

Rueben Tracy of The Lawton Girl expressed somewhat fully Frederic's concerns on the private level.

But I am sick at heart over bigger matters--over the greed for money, the drunkenness, the indifference to real education, the neglect of health, the immodesty and commonness of our young folks' thought and intercourse, the narrowness and mental squalor of the life people live around me--.⁴⁹

One ironic point about the entire work is that Tracy, a non-religious man, led a much more useful life than the religious people of the story. Also, it was he, not the ministers, who actively tried to better the lives of those around him. The

⁴⁹Frederic, The Lawton Girl, p. 113.

reformer such as Tracy had appeared earlier in the form of Robert Ansdell of Seth's Brother's Wife. According to Robert H. Woodward, Frederic's friend Grover Cleveland "himself may be seen in Richard Ansdell in the novel."⁵⁰ This entire novel is based upon Frederic's own experience during Cleveland's election to governor of New York in 1882.

Through Seth Fairchild, Seth's Brother's Wife tells about the use and importance of Frederic's own career in New York politics. Seth, like Frederic, became the editor of an important paper just in time to battle a political machine much like the one Cleveland had to defeat. In his dissertation, Woodward made a complete comparison between the characters of Seth's Brother's Wife and the actual events. Frederic especially brought out many of the unsavory elements of politics in this book. Albert Fairchild represented the politician who wanted to buy his votes. Abram Beekman was the backcountry political boss who was honest to a point and was not above compromise, if it were in his favor. Another criticism concerned the practice of buying corrupt newspaper editors. The convention in the story also illustrated how the public is sometimes duped through inner-

⁵⁰Woodward, "A Study . . .," p. 225.

party politics. Frederic did not think the situation hopeless, though, because he included his hero, the honest reformer Ansdell. Frederic was as much concerned with the apathy of the voters as with the quality of the politician. In writing the book, he hoped to do something about Seth's complaint to his brother Albert.

I [Seth] believe that your methods and aims--by 'your' I mean your wing of the party--are scandalous, corrupting and ruinous. I believe that if some check is not put upon the rule of the machine, if the drift of public acquiescence in debased processes of government is not stopped, it will soon be too late to save even the form of our institutions from the dry rot of venality.⁵¹

Nevertheless, in a story where "the word 'honesty' in politics is a purely relative term,"⁵² Frederic managed to keep his sense of humor during the convention itself where the politicians who came to Tyre avoided the dangerous well-water, brought their own whiskey and threw the food at each other if it did not "attract their metropolitan tastes."⁵³

The Lawton Girl is Frederic's crusading book against the ruinous trusts and monopolies and stock market practices which were manipulated by a few unscrupulous men whose major aim was to make money at someone else's expense. The silver

⁵¹Frederic, Seth's . . ., p. 225.

⁵²Ibid., p. 221.

⁵³Ibid., p. 261.

question and the evils of the tariff, which still exist today, were again brought out but became quite secondary to the lack of ethics in business and local leadership which, to Frederic, were ruining our nation at that time. "To get for himself what somebody else has got"⁵⁴ was the guiding principle in everything. Frederic placed the blame for the ills of those years primarily on the corrupt businessmen and on poor leadership. To the trusts, Frederic wanted to deal "a staggering blow . . . to the system and to the sentiment that rich men might do what they liked in American politics."⁵⁵ The tariff, to Frederic, was "that bombproof cover under which these men [evil rich] had conducted their knavish operations."⁵⁶

When Boyce, a misguided lawyer in The Lawton Girl, considers entering politics, he condones a concept of social Darwinism which is interpreted as:

the only logical code of behavior to which the ambitious public servant can profitably subscribe: 'To eat others was the rule now, if one would save himself from being devoured.'⁵⁷

⁵⁴Ravitz, "Harold Frederic's Venerable . . .," pp. 41-42.

⁵⁵Frederic, The Lawton Girl, p. 380.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ravitz, "Harold Frederic's Venerable . . .," p. 42.

Frederic, through Reuben Tracy, held a completely different idea of politics although he saw the reality of the present state of politics.

'Politics' ought to embrace in its meaning all the ways by which the general good is served, and nothing else. But, . . . it has come to mean first of all the individual good, and quite often the sacrifice of everything else.⁵⁸

To this Frederic added a warning to the politician that he should be careful not to attach too much "importance to the honor and of the profit of the place he holds, and [not] to forget its responsibilities."⁵⁹ Throughout, Horatio Seymour's "sacred concepts of Duty, Responsibility, and Integrity"⁶⁰ for the public servant guided Frederic's ideas as he developed his exciting, truthful, and forceful studies of the problems of that era. He certainly felt that environment or circumstance was not sufficient reason for the atrocities committed by many of the elected officials and rich men; but, on the other hand, he did not condone the foolishness of mob action as a satisfactory means of protest. The mob in "The Copperhead" was basically political while the one in The Lawton Girl was caused by economic reasons. In this group of

⁵⁸Frederic, The Lawton Girl, p. 109.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ravitz, "Harold Frederic's Venerable . . .," p. 43.

his fiction, Frederic had not only, with Bierce and Crane, freed "the war story from the patriotic mire in which it floundered during the seventies and eighties,"⁶¹ but he had also begun his realistic works in hopes of becoming a reformer so that he might help his fellow citizens to keep America healthy and strong politically, morally, and economically.

⁶¹Woodward, "A Study . . .," pp. 72-73.

CHAPTER III

FREDERIC'S STORIES AND PEOPLE

Characterization, as has been pointed out before, is the most important element in the sociological novels of Harold Frederic. The problems in these novels center around the nature, function, and effect of a society on the people who, after having created it, become manipulated by it. His people usually exist to confront or to exemplify various social issues, many of which still face us today. The solution to society's problems, according to Frederic, lay in the adherence to the ideals of duty, honesty, integrity, and responsibility to others as well as to ourselves. Frederic's characters are or eventually become victims of themselves and their society. Some who do not adhere to the ideals of human existence are destroyed, but more often the innocent are the ones who suffer while the guilty go unpunished because of the lack of justice for many of the social wrongs. Pride and deception cause the greatest flaws in the lives of Frederic's characters, although love, greed, drink and ambition present their

deteriorating factors.

Frederic's usual major character is the ambiguous hero. Even though each of these is developed in a different societal environment, he shares the common faults of too much pride and self-deception. He always deceives himself, but not those around him. Theron Ware is, of course, Frederic's masterpiece in the ambiguous character, but Seth Fairchild, Hod Boyce, and Douw Mauverensen are individual creations of this type of protagonist. This study of Frederic's characterization is an examination of each story, its people, and its environment.

In the Valley

Unlike Frederic's other sociological novels, In the Valley is an historical-romance novel dealing with the racial and class struggle in the Mohawk Valley before and during the Revolutionary War. The Valley's major population group were Palatine Germans; the rulers were the English; but the Dutch, Scotch, Irish and French were all represented. The Indians naturally had a large population group, but they were of little importance. Slavery at that time was strong in New York; therefore, there were a few Negroes who acted basically as character types. Tulp, Douw Mauverensen's personal servant, plays a crucial role in the story and exemplifies an

important theory of Frederic's about loyalty and sacrifice. The Valley life was made even more complicated by the religious differences and the various languages of these ethnic settlements. Fortunately, during the war, the people put aside their prejudices and concentrated on the common foe.

William Dean Howells, although pleased with some of Frederic's works, had little praise for In the Valley. He wrote that the novel is:

a fresh instance of the fatuity of the historical novel as far as the portrayal of character goes The people affect us like persons of our generation made up for the parts; well trained, well costumed, but actors, and almost amateurs.⁶²

Robert H. Woodward agreed with Howells when he stated in his dissertation: "The novel is concerned with historical action rather than with characterization, and it has been applauded by historians as a worthy treatment of a noble theme."⁶³ An earlier critic felt "the merit of Mr. Frederic's novel lies almost wholly in his careful research into the various elements . . . which composed the society of the Mohawk Valley."⁶⁴

⁶²William Dean Howells, "Editor's Study," Harper's, LXXXI (October, 1890), 800.

⁶³Woodward, "A Study . . .," p. 38.

⁶⁴"Fiction," The Literary World, XXI, December 6, 1890, 473.

O'Donnell and Franchere have made the most recent contribution to the theories.

Considered simply as an account of an episode in American political and military history, then, In the Valley is successful. But Frederic was concerned with the social history of his valley as well, and so the novel abounds in authentic sidelights on the everyday life, customs, and traditions of the Mohawk Valley Germans and Dutch, in pre-Revolutionary days.⁶⁵

One critic was more taken by the romance than the history of the novel. He stated that:

Mr. Frederic sets a romantic story in the historic framework of New England disaffection and revolution, which he has had the art to connect by a slender thread with the revolution of 1745 in the old country . . . , but the chief concern of the author has been with his romance.⁶⁶

The story of the Mohawk Valley goes through several stages before the war, but each part is important and quite often shows an astute power of observation and interpretation by Frederic. In the course of the novel, Frederic finds many things to blame for the disquiet in the Valley. His final idea is that "the Revolution in New York was really a civil war, with its own local dimensions: not a war of rebels against king, but of class against class."⁶⁷

⁶⁵O'Donnell, p. 87.

⁶⁶"Novels of the Week," The Athenaeum, XCVI, No. 3291, November 22, 1890, 696.

⁶⁷O'Donnell, p. 84.

Language conflicts have always been a factor in stimulating the prejudices and mistrust among people, and the Valley was no exception. For many years Dutch was thought to be the language which would dominate the colony in the future. In addition to Dutch, there were also Rhenish peasant dialects; Irish and Scottish perversions of English; Indian phrases; lingo of the slaves; and the curious expressions of the Yankees from the East, "the most villainous jargon ever heard."⁶⁸ People from the Providence and Connecticut settlements, however, began to move into the Valley in large numbers and their English language slowly became the common tongue. The feelings of much of the population toward the English is expressed in the following statement by Mr. Stewart: "The cries are German, but the oaths are all English."⁶⁹ The dislike for the English grew in the Valley because, although their language united the people, the English also tried to impose their aristocratic system over the other nationalities. Some of the Dutch and German residents were "meanspirited enough to accept" the reflections of Sir John Johnson and the Butlers, and they tried to make up for their "lack of birth" by imitating and

⁶⁸Frederic, In the Valley, p. 40.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 12.

"fawning for the friendship of their critics."⁷⁰

In the Valley is Frederic's examination of some of the ways one remains a foreigner even in the country of his birth. Although Douw Mauverensen was a second generation American, he felt like a foreigner because of his inability to speak proper English. Another reason goes back to his childhood when he was made to follow the old Dutch custom in which children had to wear a leather apron. Such a problem still exists for America's Spanish-speaking population, and for the Negro his customs and speech, in addition to his color, keep him alienated.

When the Valley was first settled, there was little class distinction because all lived in the squalid conditions of the pioneer. After the French and Indian Wars, the Valley experienced some twenty years of peace. It was this period which saw the rise of the new social structures. While living in the Valley's day-to-day life, Douw was not able to perceive any real change in the people. The awareness of the changing times came upon his return from a trip for an English fur company into the wilderness of Michigan during his early twenties. He noticed an ever widening "gulf between the workers and idlers." It was "part social, part

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 40.

religious, part political." The division separated "servants from employers, sons from fathers, husbands from wives," and Douw discovered that it had separated himself and Mr. Stewart.⁷¹

In the early years the Johnsons were the only aristocrats in the area, but with improved transportation and communication came new families each year who held themselves only slightly lower than the Johnsons. Douw Mauverensen was able to move freely in either society; as the adopted son of Mr. Stewart, he was an aristocrat; and, as the son of a deceased Dutch Reformed minister, he was of the lower classes. Following his line of condemnation of the intellectual isolation of his Valley, Frederic was extremely severe in his treatment of the aristocrats because they preferred to drink and hunt rather than to turn to the education which was available to them. Mr. Stewart, a very well-educated man, was Frederic's tool for his discussion of how men allowed the attraction of out-of-door life to outweigh the pleasures of a book. These men eventually come to disaster because "they allowed uninformed prejudices to lead them into a terrible course of crime against their country and their neighbors, and [they] paid their estates or their

⁷¹Ibid., pp. 148-149.

lives as the penalty for their ignorance and folly."⁷²

These men only wished "to play the aristocrat, to surround themselves with menials, to make their neighbors concede to them submission and reverence."⁷³ They were able to succeed at this for many years because the magistrates, the sheriff, the constables, the assessors and other office holders in Tyron County took their orders from the Johnsons. The open opposition finally brought forcible resistance by the Whigs, and the threats of the use of the dreaded western Indians by the Tories. This then brought the Mohawk Valley to war.

Most people believed that "distinctly British settlements, like those of Massachusetts and Virginia" were more powerful than New York, and that they played a more important part in the Revolution.⁷⁴ But Frederic felt this to be untrue. His narrator, Douw Mauverensen, states that "we of New York have chosen to make money, and to allow our neighbors to make histories."⁷⁵

When war came, the people of the Valley had little choice in the end but to fight on one side or the other. For

⁷²Ibid., p. 43.

⁷³Ibid., p. 122.

⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 122-123.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 419.

a long while there were three groups in the Valley: the Whigs, the Tories, and the largest group of all, the apathetic neutrals. Frederic repeats this complaint of public apathy in several of his other works. St. Leger ended the apathy, however, when he "published . . . general orders offering his Indians twenty dollars apiece for the scalps of men, women, and children!"⁷⁶ Burgoyne's plan was to sweep victoriously down the Valley "raising the Tory gentry as they progressed." Had he succeeded, "he would have held the whole Hudson, separating the rest of the colonies from New England, and having it in his power to punish and subdue, first the Yankees, then the others at his leisure.

"Oriskany prevented this!"⁷⁷

Frederic built all of this around the personal lives of several fictitious characters, and many historical eighteenth century figures such as Sir William Johnson, Abraham Broeck, Philip Schuyler, Nicholas Herkimer, the terrible Joseph Brant, and even the ill-fated Benedict Arnold.

The narrator and major character is Douw Mauverensen. It is through his eyes and story that Frederic presents In the Valley. Douw is fortunate enough to leave his poverty-

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 329.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 420.

ridden home where his mother and seven other children existed on the barest necessities. When his father died, Douw's family was forced to move by the new minister who begrudged them even a short use of the furnished residence, and he certainly did not intend to share any of the monetary offerings of the circuit's congregations. One of the ways Mrs. Mauverensen was able to care for her children and eventually "pay for her homestead and farm" with enough for her old age was to allow Mr. Stewart to care for Douw and formally adopt him at eight years of age. There is certainly little lacking in the development of Mrs. Mauverensen. She is alive and believable as the honest, bustling, resolute, domineering, helpful, and overbearing mother.⁷⁸

Douw was raised as an educated aristocrat by Mr. Stewart and was trained to take over the management of Stewart's estate. Partially because of a misunderstanding with Mr. Stewart, Douw accepts a position as the manager of an English trading company in Albany. Stewart reluctantly concedes that Douw, like most of the Dutch people, was born to be a trader, merchant or man of affairs. He belonged to the "useful rather than the ornamental order of mankind; . . . he [Mr. Stewart] would have me [Douw] to be a soldier or

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 272.

an idler with racehorses and a velvet coat."⁷⁹ Mr. Stewart felt Douw's choice of career inferior to his education and position in life.⁸⁰ Douw, however, really had little choice.

The changes wrought in Douw's life were partially his own fault, but most of the things that happen are almost beyond his control. His antagonist, Philip Cross, brought the joy of his life to him and took it away also. Douw and Philip met when they were both about ten. The first time they met, they fought. Philip won the fight, but he still had to leave the orphaned Daisy with Mr. Stewart to raise as a sister for Douw. Daisy was the daughter of a Palatine German couple whom Bellêtre killed in the French and Indian raids in the early part of the century. Philip found the three-year-old child wandering amidst the panicked Germans. He wanted to raise her, but his father, Major Cross, disappointed the boy and left the child with Mr. Stewart.

The next time Philip and Douw met was shortly before Douw's leaving on the long journey to the Great Lakes region. Douw becomes the victim of a verbal defeat this time. One of the most forceful parts of the novel is at this point in the story. The beautiful Daisy is introduced to the

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 108.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 173.

thrill of wealth, fancy clothes, makeup, and jewelry by an over-dressed ex-favorite of London court-life, Lady Cross.⁸¹ Her husband, Jonathan Cross, an organizer of Douw's journey, so aptly predicted the effect of that night on Daisy.

Innocent--yes, no doubt; but, do you know, she will never be the same girl again. She will never feel quite the same pretty little Mistress Daisy, in her woolen gown and her practical kerchief. She will never get the taste of this triumph out of her mouth. . . . ideas have been put into her head that will never come out.⁸²

Douw left on his journey without telling Daisy that his love for her had gone beyond that of a brother. As he left, Douw thought, "It seems to me that then and there I said farewell, not alone to pleasant friends, but to the Daisy of my childhood and youth."⁸³ He had been childish and peevish the night of the farewell party and was worse on his return. The somewhat more mature Douw returned home to find no one waiting for him. They were at another party. In his absence, Daisy and Mr. Stewart were both taken by the charms of wealthy society's leisure. The return is probably the most superb portion of the entire novel. Few stories have so fully caught the pain and misunderstanding that

⁸¹Ibid., p. 77.

⁸²Ibid., p. 96.

⁸³Ibid., p. 99.

changes life because people are unable to communicate their true feelings. Douw was caught in such a happening. He failed again to tell Daisy of his love and lost her to Philip. She, too, had no choice through Douw's inaction. She had been torn between the glamorous life of Philip and Lady Cross and "her own innate womanly repugnance to the shallowness and indulgence, not to say license, beneath it all."⁸⁴

Douw once said, "I am not so sure that people can fall in love at first sight. But never doubt their ability to dislike from the beginning."⁸⁵ He certainly had just cause to feel this way about Philip Cross. In a fit of anger after being informed in a very roundabout fashion of Daisy's marriage plans, Douw rushed into the night to fight Philip Cross for the second time. However, there was no fight between them this time because Douw's loyal servant, Tulp, is almost killed when Philip throws him into a ravine. Another defeat for Douw. Through pride and hurt, Douw decides to leave Mr. Stewart, whom he feels now also prefers Philip. Even though Douw and Mr. Stewart resolve their problems, Douw is too proud to remain in his valley home. He stays with his decision to go to Albany where he proves to be a successful

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 151.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 76.

businessman for Jonathan Cross and his English fur company.

It is interesting to note that both Mr. Stewart and Douw lost their loves to the Crosses. Frederic summed up Stewart's love story in one of the most revealing lines in the novel. "She only pleasantly remembered him; he never forgot her till his death."⁸⁶

It is also interesting to find that Frederic, in almost all of his stories, was unable to give any of his major characters both parents. Daisy was an orphan, Philip's father raised him, Douw's father died when Douw was a child, and Thomas Stewart was the dispossessed, illegitimate son of the Duke of York and Albany.⁸⁷

Shortly before the war Douw had the misfortune to meet Philip at a reception at the lieutenant-governor's in Albany. Philip had now turned to drink and was much changed except for his bad manners. He accused Douw of trying to entice his wife into an affair. The fight was avoided this time. Philip eventually has to leave his home in the Valley because of his extreme Tory attitudes. Before he goes, he sends his wife back to Mr. Stewart's. The scene of Daisy's leaving Philip and the effect on Mr. Stewart is another of

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 25.

⁸⁷Ibid., pp. 22-23.

the better episodes in the book.

The war comes and Douw again meets defeat in a fight with Philip. This time he is brutally beaten after being shot by Philip during the American defeat at Quebec. The last time they meet is at the Battle of Oriskany. It is here that Frederic makes his reader dislike the weak Douw Mauverensen the most. Douw finds Philip wounded but is unable to kill him even when Philip tries to shoot him with a hidden pistol that luckily misfires. To the regret of all, Douw attempts to carry Philip back to his home and Daisy. Philip, however, does not arrive safely. Tulp, the servant Philip almost killed years before, saw him and pushed him into the same ravine that Philip had thrown him into. Thus, the story has a happy ending. The Americans won the battle and Douw was able to marry Daisy without any feeling of guilt, for he had tried his best for Philip although no one would have been happy had he succeeded.

In the course of the novel, several of Frederic's opinions appear that are repeated in some of his other books. The Negro is presented not only as a slave in this story but also as a human being, one who possibly enjoyed life more than the white man. The Negro had close family ties; he was happy with little, sang a great deal, and was either very useful, or completely useless; and he was often

the victim of drink. Drink for Frederic appears again and again as the most destructive factor in many people's lives. It caused the downfall and defeat of the English; and, after laziness, it was the greatest weakness of the Indian.

Frederic's view of the Irishman in this book was not very approving. "There is no Irishman so poor or lowly that he will not, if possible, encourage some still poorer, lowlier Irishman to hang to his skirts."⁸⁸ The Englishman was seen as the:

historic fierce, blood-letting islander, true son of the men who for thirty years murdered one another by tens of thousands all over England, nominally for a York or a Lancaster, but truly from the utter wantonness of the butcher's instinct.⁸⁹

The trappers and hunters were rough, coarse, usually drunk, insolent, and lazy from our point of view but industrious and contented from theirs.⁹⁰ And, Frederic's favorite target, the New Englanders "were too much akin in blood and conceit to the English not to have in themselves many of the disagreeable qualities which had impelled us all to revolt against British rule."⁹¹

⁸⁸Ibid., pp. 121-122.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 237.

⁹⁰Ibid., pp. 126-127.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 294.

Perhaps, as the critics say, the characterization is weak, but Frederic has included so much in the novel that it does not seem to be lacking either in story or character. The weakness of the book is that it is often too flowery and verbose. But it must be remembered that this is only his second novel.

Seth's Brother's Wife

Harold Frederic's first novel, Seth's Brother's Wife (1887), was a contemporary story written "to learn what it was really like to cover a whole canvas."⁹² The critics feel that Frederic's characters are much better in this book than in his second novel, In the Valley. Frederic was probably inclined to agree with them even though he thought that he had more control over his people in these early stories than in the later ones.

In Seth's Brother's Wife I had made the characters do just what I wanted them to do, and the notion that my will was not altogether supreme had occurred neither to them nor to me. The same had been true of In the Valley, where indeed the people were so necessarily subordinated to the evolution of the story which they illustrated rather than shaped, that their personalities always remained shadowy in my own mind. But in The Lawton Girl . . . the people took matters into their own hands quite from the start.⁹³

⁹²Frederic, "Preface . . .," p. viii.

⁹³Ibid., pp. viii-ix.

His ability to write effective characterization is improved in his later works, but Seth's Brother's Wife still has much to offer the reader. It begins some of the ideas that Frederic carries throughout his works. It is the most strongly autobiographical, and it has an entertaining story built around some of the most interesting, even if not well-developed, characters.

William Morton Payne's comment in 1896 formed a basic idea concerning most of Frederic's writing beginning with Seth's Brother's Wife.

Mr. Frederic has aimed to produce a great typical picture of American life, and an unerring instinct has taught him that such a picture must be concerned with the life of a small community rather than the more attractive but also more sophisticated civilization of the great cities.⁹⁴

Vernon Louis Parrington interpreted Seth's Brother's Wife as "a drab tale of farm life in upper York State, as bitter as any tale of the western border. It is a story of defeat, of flight from country to town."⁹⁵ Mr. Parrington's interpretation has been accepted, at least in part, by most of the critics since then because the story lends itself well to

⁹⁴Payne, p. 336.

⁹⁵Vernon Louis Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought, Vol. III: 1860-1920 (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1930), p. 288.

such an idea, but to stop there does the book an injustice.

Robert Woodward compares Seth with Flaubert's Madame Bovary because he thinks the "main lines invite comparison." Woodward's main intention, however, is to illustrate "the difference between continental naturalism and the naturalism of Frederic."⁹⁶ According to Woodward, the naturalism of Frederic makes man "a tool of forces--economic and biological in Seth's Brother's Wife."⁹⁷ He goes on to say that Frederic felt environment and chance make men what they are. He states that the naturalism of Frederic does not go to the "chemico-physical equations of Theodore Dreiser," nor to the animal instinct level of Frank Norris. "But it is only the superior man who can stand up against the oppressive forces of the hardships of farm life."⁹⁸

Charles C. Walcutt took the idea that Frederic's was a concept of determinism which transforms a colorful or picturesque setting "into a force which has considerable influence upon the characters and activities."⁹⁹ The environment of farm life is also all important for these theories of

⁹⁶Woodward, "A Study . . .," p. 84.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 41.

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 81.

⁹⁹Charles C. Walcutt, "Harold Frederic and American Naturalism," American Literature, XI (March, 1939), p. 13.

Walcutt. Seth, for Woodward, "illustrated Frederic's thesis that the man with ideals, with good moral fiber can develop despite rural environment."¹⁰⁰

The story "explores the condition of two kinds of morality, public and private." Seth, the irritating, naive and conceited protagonist in this story, is "saved from ugly moral consequences by providential chance rather than by his own strength of will."¹⁰¹ It is the first of Frederic's works which treat the subject of public apathy. He begins his theme of the necessity of the individual and the office holder or seeker to be honest and responsible in politics and profession. In this story he turns to the newspaper profession and its duty to be truthful to the public. This is especially so in the case of a large, influential newspaper such as the Chronicle for which Seth worked in Tecumseh. He also treats a political campaign, the outcome of which is determined by Seth's handling of the newspaper. It is in Seth that the strong autobiographical elements appear, for Seth duplicates much of Frederic's own part in the real campaign of Grover Cleveland when he was elected governor of New York.

¹⁰⁰Woodward, "A Study . . .," p. 89.

¹⁰¹O'Donnell, pp. 74-75.

Parrington chose his theme from the observations of the two outsiders in the Valley. Frederic inserted a few of his own criticisms about farm life, but only to create the depressing conditions of the decayed farm and dynasty of the Fairchilds. The comments by Isabel and Albert are the views of big city people who do not understand the Valley life and society. Even the bitter remarks by Annie Warren's dying mother were not against country living but against the severity of the life she had lived after leaving Massachusetts. Her feelings can be discounted, however, because she had never had a chance for happiness, not really because of the area, but because of the people she had known. The dissatisfied comments by Seth can also be discarded as the views of the typical young person who is trying to convince himself to leave the farm. Seth himself acknowledged that he would never forget the pleasures he knew in the solitude of his farm life. Likewise he shall also never forget the frustrations and bitterness that he endured between those moments of peace and satisfaction.

That Frederic apparently could feel a great affinity for the country and yet maintain his severe tone, not only in this story but throughout all of his work, implies that he was capable of being somewhat objective in his negative arguments. To argue for the good things in life often leads

to sentimentality, something which does not enter Frederic's writing, not even in the overly patriotic moments in some of his historical stories. This setting becomes and remains the main character in Frederic's works. Its harshness creates the tone and society required to survive in the Valley.

The comments of the unhappy Isabel give the clearest and most severe picture of the Valley society. She became angry with people who talked of country life's romantic and picturesque side. She felt the nineteenth century was a time for the cities and that this was not the time "when a man could live in what the poet calls daily communion with Nature and not starve his mind and dwarf his soul."¹⁰² The snobbish Isabel could never accept the rough, vulgar, unwashed and untidy men her husband was trying to influence to vote for him. The most complete view she gives about farm life comes when she helps convince Seth to go to the city. She feels that it is impossible to know and accept:

men without an idea beyond crops and calves and the cheese-factory; women slaving for a houseful of men, devoting their scarce opportunities for intercourse with other women to the weakest and most wretched gossip; coarse servants who eat at the table with their employers and call them by their Christian names; boys whose only theory about education is thrashing the school

¹⁰²Frederic, Seth's . . ., p. 33.

teacher, if it is a man, or breaking her heart by their mean insolence if it is a woman; and girls brought up to be awkward gawks, without a chance in life, since the brighter and nicer they are the more they will suffer from marriage with men mentally beneath them--that is, if they don't become sour old maids.¹⁰³

Seth does not always see farm life much more optimistically, but at least his is a compassionate feeling and not one of extreme bitterness like Isabel's. Seth told Albert that to be allowed to stay inside whenever he wishes is "about the only reward there is at the end of a farmer's life."¹⁰⁴

The story in Seth's Brother's Wife revolves around Seth Fairchild and his life as he changes from the unsophisticated farm boy into a successful newspaper editor. Frederic uses for the first time his typically handsome, tall, broad shouldered, naive hero. Seth's only differences from Douw Mauverensen, Theron Ware, Hod Boyce, and Reuben Tracy are the color of his hair and eyes and "his walk showed familiarity with ploughed ground."¹⁰⁵ Seth is the first of the characters who goes through a period of enlightenment which makes him a very disagreeable and unlikeable person. However, no matter how bad the character

¹⁰³Ibid., pp. 32-33.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p. 58.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 19.

becomes, the reader's sympathies always remain with him in hopes that he will become a better man eventually, and he usually does. Another common trait of all the main characters is their fondness for reading and their attempts to better their lives through their intellect. Each must also take a journey to gain the knowledge so necessary for him to succeed as a man. Seth takes his trip to Tecumseh; Douw goes to Michigan and Albany, Reuben Tracy goes to New York City; Hod Boyce traveled, studied and lived in Europe; and Theron Ware received his final illumination on his drunken spree in New York City.

Seth is also the first of Frederic's characters who thinks because he has discovered the intellectual life that he is better than the woman he loves. During one of his egotistical spiels with Isabel, the reader sees very clearly the type of person into which Seth is developing.

My career is in the city, in circles where Annie would not be at home. She is a dear, good girl, as you say But you must admit she is--what shall I say?--rural. Now that I have got my foot on the ladder, there is no telling how far I may not climb. It would be simply suicide to marry a wife whom I perhaps would have to carry up with me, a dead weight.¹⁰⁶

He could not have been more wrong about Annie as he later discovers. Philip Cross harshly but truthfully meets such

¹⁰⁶Ibid., pp. 170-171.

a disappointment in Daisy; Hod Boyce felt the same way about Jessica Lawton; and Theron Ware most cruelly develops an even worse attitude about Alice. One cannot help but think that this is the way Frederic was beginning to feel about his own wife in view of what he eventually did.

Seth's life in the big city began with the hopes and dreams of all those who leave home looking toward the promise of something better. But even before he leaves, like Pip in Great Expectations, he finds that the goodbyes are somehow not what they should be. From his relatives he had received much advice about what he should not do. "Indeed his head was full of negative information, of pit-falls to avoid, temptations to guard against. But on the affirmative side it was all a blank."¹⁰⁷ Seth immediately did all the wrong things. He kept the wrong company, especially that of Tom Watts; he drank too much; and, worst of all, he did not try to improve himself once he mastered the tasks assigned to him which were "almost as unintellectual and mechanical as the ploughing and planting."¹⁰⁸ Seth had had little control over all that had happened to him so far. His two brothers decided his choice of career. He became dependent

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 107.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 132.

upon Albert for much of his money; and his best friend in Tecumseh did him more harm than good. Seth was saved professionally by the benevolent character, Richard Ansdell, "a dynamic idealist-reformer."¹⁰⁹ Then, with a great deal of convenient coincidence, his new help, and his changed attitude, as Frederic himself had done, Seth rose from the humblest post to be editor of the Tecumseh Chronicle.

In his private life Seth did not fare so well. He could clearly see where his responsibilities and duty lay as the editor of the Chronicle, but he remained "a conceited, presumptuous, offensive fool"¹¹⁰ in his personal relations.

He would generally end [his thoughts about his sister-in-law, Isabel] by reproaching himself for ever entertaining the idea of a mild flirtation with his brother's wife. Not that there was anything wrong in it, of course.¹¹¹

The affair ends when Albert finds the two together on the night of his murder. Seth finally becomes aware of his indiscreet actions and proposes to Annie later that night.

Frederic has so well presented the characters in this book that it is difficult to agree with the critics.

¹⁰⁹O'Donnell, p. 75.

¹¹⁰Frederic, Seth's . . ., p. 229.

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 191.

He does not develop them as well as those in The Damnation of Theron Ware, but they are certainly useful and interesting people. Isabel is the first of his intelligent and beautiful temptresses. She causes much trouble, yet she is rewarded in the end instead of punished for her deeds. She becomes the wife of Ansdell when he, instead of Albert, is elected to Congress. Annie Warren Fairchild is the first of his loyal, pretty, quietly intelligent, domestic women. She is followed by many others in the short stories and especially Alice of Theron Ware.

Few writers have ever presented better pictures of country people. Lemuel Fairchild is excellent as the failure as father, businessman and farmer. Sabrina, the old maid aunt who is obsessed with returning the Fairchild name to its place of importance in the Dearborn County, is alive as the reader sees her temper tantrums, habits formed after so many years, and her joy of living in a wealthy home again. The maid, Elvira, is equally good as the servant and frustrated lover of Milton Squires. Squires is vivid as the perverted, lazy farmhand with lewd pictures on his wall. He is better as Albert's dishonest lieutenant in his political schemes, but he is best as the country murderer who "plans the thing in cold blood, and goes at it systematically with

nerves like steel"¹¹² only to turn into a pathetic creature when caught. The two brothers, John and Albert, are both good creations, but they seem secondary to the other major characters in this entertaining and interesting story.

John did present another side to Parrington's argument. It was his intention one day to write a leader about the indifference of the cities toward the youths who flee to it with high hopes only to drift into the saloons because of society's lack of concern. The reader usually becomes so involved in the solemn setting and the serious tone of the story that he overlooks much of the humor Frederic has to offer. There are two especially good examples in this story. One is Seth's first drunk, where he sinks under the table after he tries to undress for bed in the saloon. Even better, though, is the entire chapter in which Frederic treats the country funeral proceedings under the "dictatorship" of the undertaker.

In this book, Frederic had stressed the moral and ethical duties in newspapers, politicians and in one's self. He then wrote his historical-romance which has already been discussed. His third novel treats the duties and responsibilities demanded by the economic aspects of society.

¹¹²Ibid., p. 388.

The Lawton Girl

Frederic stated that The Lawton Girl suggested itself "at the outset as a kind of sequel to Seth's Brother's Wife."¹¹³ He returns to his contemporary society and its development in the Mohawk Valley since the days of the Revolutionary War. Setting, which is the most unifying element of Frederic's American stories, again plays a major role. Frederic's make-believe area includes mainly his cities and towns of Tecumseh, Octavius, Juno Mills, Sidon, Tyre and Thessaly, which is the city of importance in The Lawton Girl. Frederic was lamenting the spiritual death of the town. The old seminary had fallen into ruin and the townspeople felt "no sense of loss." They now prided themselves "in the material aspects of Thessaly."¹¹⁴ Even though two-fifths of Thessaly's population was of foreign birth, Frederic avoided the nationality conflicts in order to stress class and economic problems of that era.

Kate Minster, Rueben Tracy, Horace Boyce, and Ben Lawton represent:

the vague distinctions of social class which have developed naturally in the days since Douw Mauverensen and his middle class peers destroyed the thread of an

¹¹³Frederic, "Preface . . .," p. viii.

¹¹⁴Woodward, "A Study . . .," p. 107.

idle aristocracy in battle on a slope only a few miles from the Minster ironworks.¹¹⁵

Kate is of the aristocracy; Rueben Tracy is the industrious, honest middle class; Ben Lawton is the lower class, and Horace Boyce is something of an outsider, like Isabel in Seth's Brother's Wife, who fits into the local society between Rueben and the Minsters.

The real struggle of the novel lies in the economic needs and drives of the classes. The breakdown of the combatants is owner-management-laborer. The owner expects to be protected by the loyalties of the management. The laborers expect the management to protect their jobs. Therefore, the story narrows itself to the battle within the middle class management. The rest of society depends upon their honesty, loyalty and efforts to make a better society for all. Once more Frederic returns to his theme of the necessity for responsible ethics, private and public, in the people who run the nation.

The book is actually a treatment of the nineteenth century conflict raised by William Graham Sumner's "defense of unrestricted competition as a law of nature" in his What Social Classes Owe to Each Other and Lester Ward's "attack

¹¹⁵Donnell, p. 91.

on the premises of the prevailing laissez-faire philosophy" in his Dynamic Sociology.¹¹⁶ Wendover, Tenny and Horace Boyce display the extremes of Sumner's viewpoint while Rueben Tracy was endowed with Ward's social philosophy. Frederic's story of the conflict between these ideas is well worth reading.

In the business portion of the story Frederic brought out several significant observations about human nature. One of the most interesting of these was mentioned by Tracy in a conversation with Horace.

That would be an interesting thing to trace, wouldn't it?--the law of the human mind which prompts people to boost a man as soon as he has shown that he can climb without help, and to pull down those who could climb well enough with a little assistance.¹¹⁷

Frederic's greatest concern, though, was with the attitude that "all business consists in getting other people's money."¹¹⁸ The humanitarian Frederic could not convince himself that the world is really a struggle of the survival of the fittest, and he proceeded to defeat the evil forces through his idealistic Rueben Tracy who "had come to know about Carlyle after everybody else had ceased reading

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 93.

¹¹⁷Frederic, The Lawton Girl, p. 40.

¹¹⁸Ibid., p. 233.

him."¹¹⁹

The Lawton Girl brought a new feature to American literature of that time. Certainly mild in comparison with the topics in today's books, Frederic's novel was "at least five years in advance of the 'sexual question' mania, and the promiscuous intercourse of the sexes was not considered acceptable subject-matter for 'copy' when the book appeared."¹²⁰ The title of the book comes from this feature of the story. Jessica Lawton, one of the five daughters of old drunken Ben Lawton, had been seduced by Horace (Hod) Boyce. She left Thessaly and went to Tecumseh to have her child and to live the life of a disgraced woman.

The general attitude of the villagers of 'Thessaly,' male and female, toward a girl whose history they partly know and partly conjecture to have been that of Jessica Lawton gives one the effect of an instantaneous mental photograph.¹²¹

Frederic actually has few references to this aspect of her life except to show the cruelty of those around her. When Jessica innocently offered her sister Lucinda a chance to escape the squalid home of their father, the shocked Lucinda

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 102.

¹²⁰Frank Danby, "Mr. Harold Frederic's New Novel," The Saturday Review (March 21, 1896), p. 295.

¹²¹"Talk About New Books," The Catholic World, LI, June, 1890, 402.

tells her to ask the lazy flirt, Samatha, "I ain't on the lay myself."¹²² The only other reference to her past life comes at a time of intense depression in which Jessica dreams of the pretty clothes and the happier nights of the big city life she had lived for years. The "slightly daring overtones"¹²³ many critics see in the story are more what they make of them than what Frederic does. Jessica Lawton is more like Hester Prynne than Sister Carrie.

Jessica's "environment had not caused her to deteriorate morally or spiritually; rather, she had been strengthened."¹²⁴ One could only admire the girl for returning to Thessaly to live down her old life. Even more admirable is her attempt to create a type of social club for the factory girls who might otherwise suffer as she had. Frederic described her as being an attractive young woman "who knew her way about, who was likely to be neither cheated nor flattered out of her rights, and who distinctly belonged to the managing division of the human race."¹²⁵ At the end she

¹²²Frederic, The Lawton Girl, pp. 95-96.

¹²³O'Donnell, p. 90.

¹²⁴Woodward, "A Study . . .," p. 110.

¹²⁵Frederic, The Lawton Girl, p. 13.

gave into "the strange, formless impulse"¹²⁶ and admitted that she still loved Horace Boyce even though he had ruined her life. She dies trying to help the father of her illegitimate son. In his "Preface to a Uniform Edition," Frederic stated that the killing of Jessica "was a false and cowardly thing to do."¹²⁷ Jessica Lawton is especially good because she acts like a woman and not as a character in a story. Frederic's purpose in this type of story is to examine man's code of behavior which lets him avoid many of his moral obligations, as Hod Boyce did.

Men set up bars, for instance, against a brother who cheats at cards, or divulges what he has heard in his club, or borrows money which he cannot repay or pockets cigars at feasts when he does not himself smoke. But their courts of ethics do not exercise jurisdiction over sentimental or sexual offences, as a rule.¹²⁸

Harold Frederic might well have heeded his own words in this story. In the same year that The Lawton Girl was published he met and fell in love with Kate Lyon with whom he established a second household without dissolving his first.

The story, although named for Jessica, was the story of Horace Boyce and his enlightenment. One critic stated

¹²⁶Ibid., p. 410.

¹²⁷Frederic, "Preface . . .," p. ix.

¹²⁸Frederic, The Lawton Girl, p. 218.

that he did not know of a contemporary character in American fiction to compare with "the weak, boasting, bragging, lying type of native coxcomb,"¹²⁹ Horace Boyce. Kate Minster thought of him as being "like all the other young men you see in New York nowadays." She described him as being "rather tall, with light hair, light eyes, light mustache, light talk, light everything."¹³⁰ Horace Boyce had a completely different viewpoint of himself and his importance.

Perhaps he [Benoni Clark] would be glad to have a young, active, and able partner, who had had the advantage of European study. Or it might be--who could tell?--that the young man with the European education could go in on his own account, and by sheer weight of cleverness, energy, and superior social address, win over the Minster business. What unlimited opportunities such a post would afford him! . . . he [would] be the only young man in Thessaly who had been outside his own country, the best talker, the best-informed man, the best mannered man of the place-- . . .¹³¹

Frederic gets much humor from Hod Boyce throughout the story. A good example of this comes when Hod thinks of his train journey from New York on which his share of the conversation with the Minsters "had been not only the proverbial lion's, but more nearly that for a whole zoological

¹²⁹The Catholic World, p. 403.

¹³⁰Frederic, The Lawton Girl, p. 65.

¹³¹Ibid., pp. 31-32.

garden."¹³² After Theron Ware, Hod Boyce, as the naive, bumbling apprentice villain, is Frederic's best developed character. He is another of Frederic's heroes like Seth Fairchild, Philip Cross and, later, Theron Ware who are created so that the reader is always concerned with them emotionally. Anxiety, sympathy, pity and often disgust are the common feelings. Only rarely does Frederic allow the reader to relax in a quiet moment of happiness or success.

Frederic's interesting people are never limited to being his major characters. This is true of the drunks in all the stories. In Seth, Seth Fairchild, himself a heavy drinker for a time, worked with a very talented man who let drink ruin his life. In the Valley had the English who lost the war because they carried whiskey barrels instead of powder. It also produced the delightful guide, Enoch Wade, who was a firm advocate of drink when he wasn't working; and, of course, the Indians and Negroes also liked their alcohol. The Lawton Girl has three men whose lives are ruined by drink. Squire Gedney, a key figure in Rueben Tracy's success, is one of Frederic's best creations. "The worst of his [Ben Lawton's] getting drunk was he was so pesky good-

¹³²Ibid., p. 27.

natured the next day."¹³³ However, his need for liquor ruined his and his family's lives. Hod Boyce's father had also become a drunkard. In all of his American novels, the major character has a drunken spree, usually at the time of his enlightenment.

The women of Frederic's works are always interesting even if sometimes inadequate for their parts. The old maids such as Tabitha Wilcox in The Lawton Girl and Sabrina Fairchild of Seth are both excellent characterizations. The women in the major roles are the ones who seem to defeat Frederic. They all have beautiful faces, a love for music, striking eyes, and are quite intelligent; however, they are somehow never able to act very intelligently. Daisy of In the Valley marries unwisely and martyrs herself in her duty as a wife. In Seth, Isabel encourages a foolish flirtation out of boredom while Annie is again the quietly suffering martyr. Jessica Lawton is unable to free herself of her love for the foolish Hod Boyce, and Kate Minster is a pleasant foreshadowing of the unpleasant Celia Madden of Theron Ware. Alice Ware, another of the self-sacrificing wives, calmly accepts anything her husband does because she loves him. At times Frederic's women become tiresome, but

¹³³Ibid., p. 90.

only because he has placed them either on a pedestal or at the feet of their men. Neither place is very desirable. Most of his women usually perform their roles adequately; however, except for a few like Isabel and Celia, they are secondary to the men in the story.

Frederic linked The Lawton Girl to his other stories through the characters as well as setting. Mrs. Minster was a great-grandchild of Douw Mauverensen. From Seth Frederic carried over Rueben Tracy, John Fairchild, Father Chance, Dr. Lester and Reverend Mr. Turner to take active parts in this story. Seth and Annie Fairchild, Abe Beekman, and Richard Ansdell, as well as several of the Lawton girls, are mentioned again but are given very minor parts.

Some critics feel that Frederic was one of the first authors to answer the need of an American writing for America. Examples of this attitude can be found throughout his works. The best example of his national fervor in The Lawton Girl comes in his disgust with the mob action of the time.

This is a free country, but just because it is free, we ought to feel the more bound to respect one another's rights. There are countries in which, I dare say, if I were a citizen, or rather a subject, I might feel it my duty to head a mob or join a riot. But here there ought to be no mob; there should be no room for even thought of a riot. Our very strength lies in the fact that we

are our own policemen--our own soldiery.¹³⁴

This did not make Frederic against labor and for management; he was, rather, for the men themselves and for the good of all society. Our present government should heed his advice for helping people. "If you want to help people, . . . help them in their own way, and not insist, instead, that it shall be in your way--which really is no help at all!"¹³⁵

Civil War Stories

Harold Frederic is frequently referred to as a local-color writer. Robert Woodward stated that Frederic's Mohawk Valley stories "constitute a significant contribution to the regional literature" that Twain, Harte, Eggleston and a few others had begun after 1860.¹³⁶ The geographical area of Frederic's fictitious counties of Dearborn, Jay and Adams resemble Utica, New York, and vicinity where Frederic lived his first twenty-eight years. Frederic developed an entire group of short stories and a novelette whose tales treat his Mohawk Valley during the days of the Civil War. Edmund Wilson said these stories of Frederic's did away with much

¹³⁴Ibid., p. 444.

¹³⁵Ibid., p. 202.

¹³⁶Woodward, "A Study . . .," p. 45.

of the then contemporary attitude toward the Civil War which had been "much melodramatized, and romanticized."¹³⁷

These short stories gave Frederic the chance to prove that he did not need an entire book to develop some of his best stories and characters. The War itself is in only one of the stories, "A Day in the Wilderness;" all the others are developed around the problems of the homefront. In several of the stories Frederic added new ideas to his moral and ethical responsibility themes of the three preceding novels.

The best of these stories is his novelette, The Copperhead, which many critics feel is second only to The Damnation of Theron Ware. It is the story of Abner Beech, who is alone in his attitude toward the South. He "bears both insult and violence with dignity--even the defection of his son who enlists in the ranks of what Abner Beech considered the unholy cause of the Union."¹³⁸ Beech was much like Mr. Stewart of In the Valley. Both were educated, honest, and successful men in Valley society. Stewart was ruined physically; Beech, financially. Stewart's adopted son, Douw, abandons him; and Beech's son, Jeff, also leaves

¹³⁷Frederic, Stories of York State, p. xvi.

¹³⁸O'Donnell, p. 105.

home to fight for the opposite side. The rugged Beech survived even the mob action that Agrippa Hill society sent against him. Abner would not have been successful, however, if he had not had the loyalties of a small group around him made up of his wife, his adopted son Jimmy, three servant girls, and Timothy Joseph Hurley, a fighting Irish farmhand. Besides the Beech family, Frederic excellently creates his religious fanatic Jehoiada "Jee" Hagadorn, the abolitionist leader and his family. There is romance and tragedy which all comes to a happy conclusion over the smoldering ashes of what had been Abner Beech's home.

This is one of the most nationalistic of all of Frederic's works. He is strongly criticizing the people who live in Agrippa Hill. They are part of a nation whose Constitution guarantees the freedom of speech yet they turn into a mob (with much less reason than the mob in The Lawton Girl) to destroy Beech's property. The idealistic Frederic is not able to close the story with Beech stranded in his barn with everything lost--his son, his friends, and his home. Instead, the last chapter is spent with Frederic's hopes for the nation to collect itself and rebuild what it has destroyed. Jeff Beech returns home safe, Jee Hagadorn comes to apologize to Abner, and the townspeople gather to build a new house. Frederic's message is that "America is

a unit, despite the discords which arise from mass hysteria in moments of national crisis."¹³⁹

"Marsena" is almost as well-known as The Copperhead and has been called ultra-American by one British reviewer.¹⁴⁰ It requires a special place in Frederic's fiction, for it is entirely too cruel and without the hope of his other stories. It contains some biographical materials that Frederic learned when he was a photographer, but these are more of a technical nature and have little to do with the story itself.

Marsena Pulford is one of Frederic's last steps before Theron Ware. Marsena is an artist with an undisclosed past. He is also one of Frederic's typical heroes in appearance and makeup as a "poor, melancholy, romantic photographer."¹⁴¹ Marsena enlists, as do several more of the young men of Octavius, to go to his death "not of patriotism or principle"¹⁴² but at the urging of the pretty, and talented Julia Parmalee.

Julia has a great many of the characteristic that

¹³⁹Woodward, "A Study . . .," p. 49.

¹⁴⁰"Novels of the Week," The Athenaeum, CVII, No. 3574 (April 25, 1896), 543.

¹⁴¹Woodward, "A Study . . .," p. 62.

¹⁴²O'Donnell, p. 106.

make up Celia Madden. Both are beautiful, both are musically talented, and both are intelligent but foolish. The lightness with which Frederic presents Julia and her flirtations, which usually end with her lover in the army, does not at all prepare the reader for his abrupt ending. Julia visits a field hospital where Marsena and Lt. Dwight Ransom, her fiance, lay dying. She does not recognize the two men she sent to war. They tell her who they are, and her only comment is about how they have changed. She leaves the hospital taking with her all the reader's hate and Colonel Starback, her newest admirer--or is it possibly her newest victim? Woodward felt that "the story is a tragedy" if the focus of the story is Marsena, but if it is on Julia, "the story is a satire."¹⁴³

In "The Deserter" Frederic uses his "fatherless boy" to give certain views the predominantly omniscient author cannot give effectively. He used this technique in all of his Civil War stories except "Marsena" in which the narrator is never identified. Many of these boys exhibit an autobiographical element of Frederic's youth, just as Job Parshall does in this story and Harvey Semple in Theron Ware. The comparison with Job involved the work on a dairy farm

¹⁴³Woodward, "A Study . . .," p. 63.

such as Frederic's stepfather had in Utica. Job "prepared the cows for milking and learned to warm his chilled hands by burying them in a bin of oats."¹⁴⁴

The story concerns Frederic's severe criticism of the conscription processes of the nation during the Civil War. In order to pay the miserly Elisha Teachout the \$300 mortgage on their farm, Mose Whipple took his place in the Army. This was a common practice during the Civil War. Neither Mose nor his father, Asa, cared for material things and had preferred to fish and loaf. Frederic chose them to show that even the poorest element of society requires attention and sympathy. In winter quarters at Brandy Station at Gettysburg the slow-witted Mose had trouble with his sergeant and was unable to get a leave. He finally deserted. This time Frederic has treated the problem of loyalty to one's self over his loyalty to his country. Everyone locally understood that Mose had been driven to desertion "not by cowardice and disloyalty to the Union, but by loyalty to his father."¹⁴⁵ Even Deputy Marshal Norman Hazzard understood this and refused to arrest Mose. This "conflict

¹⁴⁴O'Donnell, p. 27.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., p. 105.

of the individual versus the government"¹⁴⁶ is a major theme of this story. Frederic felt that the officers and administrators of government should not be so impersonal in their jobs. The characterization of Mose and Asa Whipple and Norman Hazzard are among Frederic's best creations. The story remained in the Mohawk Valley near Four Corners, Juno Mills and Octavius except for the Whipple's flight into the forests near Canada. "The Deserter" presented its message clearly without the pessimistic tone some of the Civil War writers would have taken. "Ambrose Bierce would have revealed in the ironic possibilities of the situation; but Frederic was not the ironist like Bierce or Stephen Crane" so he ended this story happily.¹⁴⁷

"A Day in the Wilderness" is the story of a fatherless drummer boy, Washington Lafayette Hornbeck, whose home was Juno Mills. Lafe is involved in a battle in Virginia through which he encounters Red Pete, a deserter and a bounty hunter. Pete robs the dead and dons the uniform of either side freely. He deserts over and over again and reenlists as a draft-substitute for the money. An unbelievable coincidence brings Lafe together with his cousin, Lt.

¹⁴⁶Woodward, "A Study . . .," p. 57.

¹⁴⁷O'Donnell, p. 106.

Lyman Hornbeck, from Ohio. It is an entertaining story written for young boys, but it is far below anything else Frederic had written in his American stories. Only a few of the European stories are worse.

July 3, 1863, is the night of "The Eve of the Fourth." It is the last day of the Battle of Gettysburg. The night is solemn except for the firecrackers of the children. There is little that would express anything jovial about the holiday the next day. It is here that Frederic has presented his poignant scene at the post office where the population of the area is gathered quietly waiting for the newest list of casualties to be posted after the day's fighting. The story is told by a man looking back on his fatherless childhood. The man, Andrew, was with Miss Stratford, the schoolteacher, the night she received word of the death of her lover, DeWitt Hemingway. Frederic is not satisfied with the effect at this point. The message turns out to be erroneous. The elation of Miss Stratford is shortlived for she soon realizes that now her suffering and anxiety must continue until he returns to stay or really does die.

"My Aunt Susan" is the story of Ira Clarence Blodgett whose mother, Emmeline, has died while his father is away in the war. It is a most depressing story in which Frederic has the Juno Mills people creating their own stories about

"Aunt" Susan's past. The woman is very self-sufficient, as are many of Frederic's widows or husbandless women. The bitterness of the story is not even relieved when the Colonel returns. It seems that Susan was jilted by him for Emmeline. Frederic leaves only a spark of hope that Susan will relent and accept both the boy and his father. The excellent characterization of Susan is only rivaled by Aunt Em of "The War Widow."

Sidney Trumbull looking back on his youth tells Aunt Em's story. Sidney was visiting his grandfather Arphaxad Trumbull during the Battle of the Wilderness in May, 1864, and Cold Harbor in June, 1864. Abel Jones, "a private soldier and a worthless husband of an undemonstrative daughter,"¹⁴⁸ Em, died in the first battle. Alva, the oldest son of Arphaxad, died in the second battle. Arphaxad went to Cold Harbor, Virginia, to get the body of his son, an officer, but hardly gave a thought to Abel when he had died. Em showed no emotion toward her father's favoritism. She, indeed, showed no emotion at all until the wife of Alva arrived for the funeral. No one in the immediate family had even expressed any sympathy to Em over her loss, but it was entirely different with Alva's wife. Only after

¹⁴⁸Woodward, "A Study . . .," p. 54.

Arphaxad discovered that the Army had given him the wrong body did Em's wrath and sorrow reveal itself. Arphaxad intended to return the body for burial in an unknown plot because it was an enlisted man. Woodward contends that:

the contrast between Alva and Abel dramatizes the great social hierarchy in the Valley; the two widows--the ladylike, educated Serena and the work-horse Aunt Em--intensify this contrast.¹⁴⁹

The story ends with the two women sharing their grief with one another. It is a note of sympathy and understanding and hope for the solution of the differences between men and their social levels. Nothing else brings people together as much as sorrow. Quite often good comes from the sorrow, but our world shall remain unhappy if it is really the link between the classes.

The Damnation of Theron Ware

The Damnation of Theron Ware, called Illumination in its English edition, is the culmination of Harold Frederic's work. It is the book which placed him among the better novelists of his time and still maintains some recognition for him. Since it was first published in 1896, Theron Ware has elicited many theories and comments from the critics. One fascinating point about the book is that it adapts itself

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

to all of the interpretations, yet remains no more than the actual damnation of the Reverend Theron Ware.

One critic called it "one of the subtlest studies of moral disintegration that have been made."¹⁵⁰ Another says "Theron Ware is nothing if not human."¹⁵¹ Spiller wrote that The Damnation of Theron Ware is "the study of a personal religious crisis."¹⁵² In almost all of his works Frederic gave the environment much importance. Theron Ware is certainly no exception, as William Morton Payne pointed out in his article.¹⁵³ Few critics will deny that Theron's enlightenment would have been different had he been sent somewhere other than Octavius. Everett Carter had perhaps the most interesting contribution in his lucid remark:

The torment of Theron struck a new note: the note of a modern tragic irony which regards man and his society as mere delusive appearances, and the cosmos as hostile and malignant.¹⁵⁴

There have also been many theories concerning the

¹⁵⁰Payne, p. 336.

¹⁵¹"Literary Chat," Munsey's Magazine, XV, June, 1896, 378.

¹⁵²Robert E. Spiller, The Cycle of American Literature (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), p. 218.

¹⁵³Payne, p. 336.

¹⁵⁴Harold Frederic, The Damnation of Theron Ware, ed. with intro. Everett Carter (Boston: Howard University Press, 1960), p. xvii.

classification of the novel. It has much to offer the realist, such as local-color and a study of the common man, but as Carter says in his introduction:

Just as the novel pioneers in subject, so does it give evidence of shifts in technique away from the realistic and towards the symbolic and the mythical; away from the social and towards the individual.¹⁵⁵

Carter felt that Theron Ware indicated the "symbolic realism" which has become such a literary force in the twentieth century. An earlier critic stated in August, 1896, that the novel was "impressionistic" and is "based on an element in life peculiarly appreciated by the modern mind--relativity."¹⁵⁶ A great many critics like to call Frederic a naturalist, but Charles C. Walcutt felt that Theron Ware was not a naturalistic novel even though it does "begin with suggestions of a deterministic philosophy." He says that Frederic is unable to achieve "the scientific detachment and dispassionate comprehension of social pressures which are, in some degree at least, essential to naturalism."¹⁵⁷ Walcutt did agree with an earlier critic who

¹⁵⁵Ibid., pp. xxii-xxiii.

¹⁵⁶Charlotte Porter Boston, "Notes on Recent Fiction," Poet Lore, VIII (August, 1896), 460.

¹⁵⁷Walcutt, p. 22.

called Theron Ware "a masterpiece of psychology"¹⁵⁸ when he stated that "as a psychological study of a personality, The Damnation of Theron Ware has very considerable merit."¹⁵⁹

The identity of the American was a highly contested point around the turn of the century. Harold Frederic, although living in England, was one of the first to champion the American's cause, but he was not very successful in his battle until the advent of Theron Ware. Frederic's opinions were not much akin to those of Henry James, who was also in England at that time. The two at least agreed on the basic need to discover the Americans. A critic of the Edinburgh Review thought that Theron Ware had an overdose of "that intellectual arrogance which seems inevitable when culture is administered to the raw American."¹⁶⁰ Robert Lovett identified the problem of Theron Ware as being "one to which the American is peculiarly susceptible." The difficulty arises from the "superiority of the pioneer" giving way to

¹⁵⁸"Novels of American Life," Edinburgh Review, CLXXXVI, April, 1898, 400.

¹⁵⁹Walcutt, p. 21.

¹⁶⁰Edinburgh Review, p. 403.

the "inferiority complex of the provincial."¹⁶¹ The critics leave much unsaid concerning this aspect of Frederic's writings. The influence of European culture on the American, naturalized or native, creates diverse personalities, the extreme being the enigmatic Celia Madden, who has developed an inane conglomeration of various European philosophies through her education. Theron Ware becomes the victim of the Old World thought through Celia, Father Forbes and Dr. Ledsmar.

Frederic used a love story in almost every story he wrote. Most of his lovers are on the verge of an illicit affair. Douw Mauverensen wants to take care of Daisy, another man's wife. Seth Fairchild almost makes love to Isabel, his brother's wife. Jessica Lawton has an illegitimate child and endures hints that she had been a prostitute. The love stories in Theron Ware are still more complicated. Theron is married to Alice but falls in love with Celia Madden. Celia is suspected of having an affair with Father Forbes, and she invites the married Theron into her unusual rooms for the thrill of a flirtation with a married minister. There is also implied cause to suspect an affair

¹⁶¹Harold Frederic, The Damnation of Theron Ware, intro. Robert Morss Lovett (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1924), p. xi.

between Levi Gorringer and Alice Ware. From The Lawton Girl Frederic takes the symbolic flowing gowns of Kate Minster and dresses Celia Madden in them as she plays with Theron's emotions. Everett Carter had much to say about the sexual idea in Theron Ware. He wrote, "This bringing of the power of sex from the background to the foreground of realistic fiction was the most striking aspect of Frederic's break with his tradition."¹⁶² One of Carter's main ideas is that the fall is "of intellectual America from innocence into knowledge."¹⁶³ It is also Carter's opinion that the fall is a sexual one and that this sexual idea binds together the book's four kinds of knowledge: sexual, scientific, aesthetic and religious.¹⁶⁴

The Theron Ware first introduced is a conscientious, devoted and promising young Methodist minister. Theron had never known extreme poverty or hardship and had never really had a defeat until the Nedahama Conference in Tecumseh. Here he was almost assured the lucrative and esteemed post of Tecumseh. Theron was not to succeed this time however. Certainly, he was the best qualified minister in regards to

¹⁶²Frederic, The Damnation . . ., intro. Carter, p. xxi.

¹⁶³Ibid., p. xxi.

¹⁶⁴Ibid., p. xviii.

his preaching and social capabilities; but, as he later learned from Sister Soulsby, the Presiding Elder refused Theron the post because he had incurred some personal debts in his previous position.

From the very outset Frederic has turned everything against Theron. Even Alice, who had made his life so pleasant, failed Theron when he needed her. Theron had to accept his failure and try to convince his wife to do the same instead of receiving her sympathy. Thus, Octavius had already begun its deterioration of Theron before they met. It had put a rift in his relations with Alice that continued to grow, especially after he meekly accepted the trustees' order that Alice should no longer wear the roses in her hat. Alice, however, approached Octavius with a rather childish attitude that persisted until it was too late to help her husband.

Before he came to Octavius, Theron had not been bothered much by the economic and political aspects of running a church. Here he had to adjust, and he would have had it not been for his susceptibility to the total environment. Everything about Octavius was alien. It was urban and he was rural. It was largely Catholic and he was Protestant. It was materialistic, especially the men who ran his church, and he had not been taught about this in his

years at the seminary. In fact, the seminary had prepared him poorly in comparison with the education of Father Forbes. His experience with women--if anyone's could--had not included anyone like Celia Madden.

Theron Ware changes from the man who was at first "unsophisticated and delightfully fresh and natural" into the conceited man who thought he had been reborn "a Poet, . . . a child of light, a lover of beauty and sweet sounds, a recognizable brother of Renan and Chopin--and Celia."¹⁶⁵ Among Reverend Ware's new experiences were many unexpected revelations. One of these was that Catholics were human beings and believed in God and life as much as the Protestants. Frederic, a Protestant in his youth, tried to show here that the religious prejudices of people are foolish since all religion is man-made to supply a sociological need. Even though the Catholic Church references contained many symbols, Frederic did not develop them into anything very meaningful. He preferred always to stress his characterizations.

Michael Madden, the favorite character of several critics, gives the best account of Theron's change. When

¹⁶⁵Frederic, The Damnation . . ., intro. Raleigh, p. 236.

the Wares first arrived in Octavius, Michael, a Catholic, thought the Protestant Theron's face made "one believe in pure thoughts and merciful deeds. I will not credit it that God intends damning such a man as that, or any like him!"¹⁶⁶ His face became that of a "barkeeper" for Michael. For the scientist, Dr. Ledsmar, he became the symbolic serpent. The key to Theron is in Michael's statement when he warns Theron to return to his own people. "You are entirely deceived about yourself."¹⁶⁷ It is this deception that Theron sees as an "illumination."¹⁶⁸ Not even at the end does Theron escape this illusion.

The once affable minister had never "been more sensible of the charm of his own companionship"¹⁶⁹ than shortly before he left his wife, profession, and everything but his conceit and oratorical ability. His separation from Alice was partially her fault, but she cannot be blamed alone. In the earlier books Douw's childish hurt and anger lost him Daisy while Philip Cross blamed her for his failure to progress more socially. Theron Ware is more like Seth

¹⁶⁶Ibid., p. 301.

¹⁶⁷Ibid., p. 302.

¹⁶⁸Ibid., p. 221.

¹⁶⁹Ibid., p. 280.

Fairchild in that he feels that he has become too intelligent for his wife's now seemingly weak mentality. Theron proceeds to prepare himself for flight with the rich Celia through an almost systematic alienation from Alice and his beliefs. Yet, he will now allow his wife the only pleasure she had in Octavius. He falsely accuses her of having an affair with Levi Gorringer, who has supplied all the flowers for her garden. Alice still endures Theron because of her love and responsibility toward her husband.

A close analysis of the story will show that Celia and Theron have broken almost all ten of the Commandments. Celia has become something of a pagan through her philosophies of art, life and religion. She was also a most belligerent child, especially after she returned from school. The strongest hints of adultery and pagan worship come in the scene in Celia's room during her mock seduction of Theron. Theron attempts to commit suicide during his drunk which is financed by church funds. It is he who is accused of trying to cause trouble through his gossiping. He also becomes very materialistic in addition to desiring the Madden wealth and the sophistication of his educated "friends." Although Celia and Theron come nearest to committing adultery, Levi Gorringer is presented as the man coveting another's wife. The other Commandments are only

hinted at and the guilt for them must be shared by several.

Frederic's use of the journey to knowledge is repeated again in this story. Theron has become degenerate by the time of his two-day drunk. He has turned away from all that Frederic holds necessary for our society to exist. He has ignored his duty and responsibility to his wife, his congregation, his profession and, most of all, to himself. As Celia tells him, "what you took to be improvement was degeneration."¹⁷⁰

Frederic has given in this book another example of a man leaving his boyhood as he did with Seth and Douw. They go on to become men and successes, but for Theron Ware one sees only more problems ahead in his new job.

Theron's second chance came through the Soulsbys, who secured a job for him in the spring as the superintendent of a land and real estate company in Washington Territory. The flowers were coming back as Theron and Alice left on another journey. However, for Alice it is a sad journey. Theron is still not mature, and he has regained his self-confidence and conceit, for he envisions himself going to Washington, D. C. as a senator, but Alice knows her husband and tells Sister Soulsby, "Oh, it isn't likely I would come

¹⁷⁰Ibid., p. 327.

come East. Most probably I'd be left to amuse myself in Seattle."¹⁷¹ The main point in the novel is, as Father Forbes says, "there is nothing new anywhere."¹⁷²

Frederic has indeed presented the public a masterpiece in The Damnation of Theron Ware. He has used symbolism freely throughout the book--journeys, statues, serpents, music and especially characters. He developed such an array of interesting characters that the critics have never really given a thorough examination to all of them. Both Soulsbys are splendid, but Sister Soulsby requires the greatest attention in the story as she fulfills much of Frederic's conception of the new woman and the theory of "the worship of the maternal idea . . . the deepest of our instincts,--love of woman, who is at once daughter and wife and mother."¹⁷³ She and Brother Soulsby also live according to another idea that was expressed through Father Forbes.

The most powerful forces in human nature are self-protection and inertia. The middle-aged man has found out that the chief wisdom in life is to bend to the pressures about him, to shut up and do as others do.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹Ibid., p. 349.

¹⁷²Ibid., p. 177.

¹⁷³Ibid., p. 261.

¹⁷⁴Ibid., p. 245.

This statement is also the basis for one critic who felt that "Theron Ware is a Nonconformist minister."¹⁷⁵

Dr. Ledsmar is an important character in the story, but both he and the influence of science are not as satisfactory for study as the Madden family, exclusive of Celia. She requires a study which can include the ideas of art and philosophy which she tried to follow. After studying Celia one might be inclined to agree with Dr. Ledsmar who said, "all art, so-called, is decay."¹⁷⁶

Harold Frederic's "book of the year" (1896)¹⁷⁷ is a book of characterization. It is also a deterministic novel. The Damnation of Theron Ware is a serious treatment of American society, its beliefs and disbeliefs, its culture and its people at the end of the nineteenth century.

¹⁷⁵Edinburgh Review, p. 396.

¹⁷⁶Frederic, The Damnation . . ., intro. Raleigh, p. 81.

¹⁷⁷Ibid., p. xxviii.

CHAPTER IV

HAROLD FREDERIC

Harold Frederic was born in Utica, New York, in 1856. He lived in the Mohawk Valley for nearly twenty-five of his first twenty-seven years. He was very fond of and quite familiar with the New York settings and environment of his most popular and better works.

Many commentators try to make one believe Frederic lived a hard life as a child because his father was killed in an accident in 1858, but this could hardly be true because his industrious mother married again in 1860 even though she, through her seamstress business, provided quite adequately for her family. Frederic's work indicates that he gave much thought to his life without a father. Almost all of his stories include a fatherless boy. No doubt, he did have to work as a child, but his tasks of delivering milk and doing other errands for his parents' dairy and woodyard business were apparently not too difficult since all the boys of the stories seem happy and satisfied. Frederic himself was misleading in regards to his education. In his "Preface to a

Uniform Edition" in 1897, he stated that he had left school at the age of twelve, yet the Advanced School in Utica listed Harry H. Frederic as one of its graduates in 1871,¹⁷⁸ at which time he would have been fifteen.

The next two years he spent working for local photographers, one of whom he quit, another fired him for carelessness, and the last, Abner B. Gardner, taught him "the technical knowledge of photography reflected in his later fiction, notably 'Marsena,' in which a minor character, the photographer's assistant, is a miniature self-portrait."¹⁷⁹ In 1873, Harold Frederic went to Boston where he again worked for a photographic firm. He was back in Utica by 1875 without having gained a liking for New England and even less for the New Englander, as can be seen in several of his short stories and In the Valley. Because of an eye affliction requiring him to limit his actions for a time, Frederic became interested in writing and newspaper work instead of photography. By the end of 1875, he had become a proof-reader on the Utica Morning Herald. In December of the same year, he changed to the Utica Observer. The Observer published his first story "The Blakelys of Poplar Place. A

¹⁷⁸O'Donnell, p. 30.

¹⁷⁹Ibid., pp. 31-32.

Legend of the Mohawk" in 1877. Also, on October 10, 1877, Frederic married Grace Williams at the bedside of Grace's mother, who died two days after the wedding. He was so impressed with the strange circumstances of his wedding ceremony that he chose to share it with his readers in The Damnation of Theron Ware.

Frederic became editor of the Utica Observer in 1880 and, within two more years, the editor of the Albany Evening Journal. It was in Albany that Frederic shared an important part in the New York state elections of 1882 which he somewhat duplicated in Seth. Twenty-one days after taking over the Republican Evening Journal, Frederic announced that the paper was bolting the ticket and supporting the Democratic candidate, Grover Cleveland. A friendship between Frederic and Cleveland, as governor of New York and later President of the United States, grew from this support and subsequent success of Frederic's action as the new, twenty-six-year-old editor of the powerful Albany newspaper. Frederic's success was to last until 1884 when the paper was sold to a new owner, who dismissed Frederic and returned the paper to its Republican viewpoint. June of 1884, found Frederic, his wife, and his two daughters sailing for London, where his new position as a foreign correspondent for the New York Times awaited.

In July, less than a month after his arrival in London, he covered a cholera epidemic in Southern France which gave him his articles under the title of "Down Among the Dead Men." These articles gained him the respect of his colleagues and readers alike. Everett Carter said, "His daring and courage . . . made him the forerunner of the next generation of romantic foreign correspondents."¹⁸⁰ This somewhat heroic act and his acquaintance with Grover Cleveland opened the way for Frederic's acceptance into the Savage Club, an important club in London at that time.

Frederic never neglected his newspaper work for his fiction; he was, nevertheless, intensely interested in developing his capacity for writing fiction. His greatest desire was to produce "a narrative which should have for its central feature the battle of Oriskany."¹⁸¹ Inspiration, or the lack of it, makes or breaks many aspiring talents.

Harold Frederic has often been accused of potboiling because of his inspiration.

In 1885, after I had been in a year in London, the fact that a journalist friend of mine got two hundred and fifty dollars from the Weekly Echo for a serial story, based upon his own observations as a youngster in

¹⁸⁰Frederic, The Damnation . . ., intro. Carter, p. iii.

¹⁸¹Frederic, "Preface . . .," p. vi.

Ireland, gave me a new idea This appeared to be a highly simple way of earning two hundred and fifty dollars, and I went home to start a story of my own at once.¹⁸²

Frederic's attempt at this point was unsuccessful, as he wisely pointed out, "simply because I did not know how to make a book of any kind."¹⁸³ He resolved at this point to write an entire book to learn how to actually write one.

From this came Seth's Brother's Wife. Subsequently, Frederic learned how to write a novel and was able to complete in eight months his historical novel, In the Valley, involving the battle of Oriskany. It can hardly be said that Frederic wrote strictly for money since the idea for In the Valley had been with him for almost ten years. The stigmatism related with potboiling is often a questionable point of criticism in determining what is or is not literature. Even Shakespeare wrote with financial gain as his main purpose.

Frederic had two major reasons for needing more money than he received from the New York Times. The first of these was naturally his wife, Grace, and their children. Two children had died, but the Frederics had four others, Ruth, Ruby, Hereward and Harold. The only child mentioned very

¹⁸²Ibid., p. vii.

¹⁸³Ibid., p. viii.

frequently was his eldest, Ruth. She often accompanied him and helped him in his work. She appears in his fiction as the niece in The Market Place.

Frederic's major trouble, like those of many of his major characters, was caused by a second woman. In 1890 he fell in love with Kate Lyon. With her, he established and somehow maintained a second household until his death eight years later. He had three children by Kate Lyon.

He divided his time between his two households; as a rule he devoted the weekends to Grace and her children and the rest of the time, or at least the part of it when he was not at work in the city, to Kate.¹⁸⁴

Almost from the beginning, Kate exerted a strong influence in and possibly on his writings. The Return of the O'Mahoney has a great many allusions to Kate, her family, and to the part of Ireland in which her relatives still lived. Supposedly, March Hares contains some truth about the way Harold and Kate met, and many of the later stories contain women named Kate. The presence of Kate naturally caused Grace to become more unhappy than she deserved to be. Frederic's women characters were usually of two kinds: the not-so-beautiful, quiet and dutiful but boring type, Grace; and the svelte, intelligent and daring woman, Kate. The differences

¹⁸⁴O'Donnell, p. 68.

became clearer in his work now that Frederic's life included these two types in reality. He was always the moralist in his works as he argued with himself for and against each kind. Theron Ware contains the best examples of his inner-conflict.

Harold Frederic's best writings were those he set in the Mohawk Valley, but he gave three of his last four books, four of ten novels in all, European setting. He probably gained such an attachment to England through his work as a journalist. In a letter to T. H. Huxley, Frederic states, "my chief business, and training, is that of the unhappy man who has to watch, and pretend to understand, everything that happens every day, all over Europe."¹⁸⁵ Apparently, it was not altogether a pleasant one, but Frederic's life should not have been entirely unsatisfactory, for he belonged to several clubs. Through these he met and talked with many of the important men and writers of his time such as Henry James, whom he disliked,¹⁸⁶ David Lloyd George, Parnell, James M. Barrie, W. E. Henley, and others. In 1888 he had met William Dean Howells, whom he admired greatly.

¹⁸⁵William Randel, "A Letter from Harold Frederic to T. H. Huxley," Victorian Newsletter (Spring, 1963), p. 27.

¹⁸⁶Donnell, p. 155.

For eight years, Frederic wrote his newspaper reports and fiction works, combated creditors, and pursued publishers for payment until, finally, in August, 1898, he suffered a stroke. He should have stopped his working for a time, but "he would have his cigars and pipe, his brandy, and [his] rides in the country."¹⁸⁷ He died on October 19, 1898, at Homefield, where he lived with Kate. He had made few arrangements for his families for, in his stubborn nature, he refused to believe that he would die. Frederic's death brought Kate other problems. She was a Christian Scientist and had brought a healer to him when he lost faith in his doctor. After his death, Kate and the healer, Mrs. Ellis, were tried for manslaughter but were found innocent of any criminal intent.¹⁸⁸

Undoubtedly, Harold Frederic, journalist, novelist, world traveler, and friend of President Grover Cleveland, was extremely well-qualified as a spokesman for his time. He had known life at its best in fame and success and had been an observer of it at its worst as a journalist. He had loved and had been loved. He had lived a life as interesting as those he describes in his works.

¹⁸⁷Ibid., p. 71.

¹⁸⁸Frederic, The Damnation . . ., intro. Lovett, p. iii.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that Harold Frederic's chief concern in his American novels and stories is clearly sociological. Even in the stories where historical fact could have become a strong deterring force, Frederic resisted and maintained his examination of society and its problems. Although his stories frequently imply that man's behavior never changes, Frederic apparently felt that society could be improved through a devoted sense of responsibility in the leaders of all the class divisions of society. To do this, according to Frederic, man needs to develop stronger feelings of morality, honesty and justice in every facet of life.

Frederic's treatment of American society was developed around a single environment, the Mohawk Valley in the state of New York. Because of the universality of Frederic's topics, however, the stories could have their literary settings anywhere in the world. His society is filled with men whose only desire is to further their own interests through the misuse of man's social and physical needs of

religion, politics and economics.

Religion, according to Frederic, had been created for very good reasons. Problems arise, however, when one religious group views another with suspicion and hate because of differences in church services and tenets. Instead of allowing religion to do the good for which it was intended, man has quite often turned it into a selfish social function such as Frederic examines in the Methodists of Theron Ware. Frederic blamed the ministers and leaders of the faiths more than the people for the failure of religion to provide for the needs which originally created it.

For Frederic, the world, not just the Octavius Methodists, is ruled by the active self-interested groups. Because of apathy the average citizen does nothing until he becomes personally threatened or involved, as were the people in the Mohawk Valley during the Revolutionary War. Even when apathy is overcome, as it was in The Lawton Girl, people frequently lose their fervor for reform when they cannot be the leaders or when they must do the work themselves. Also, for a reform movement to survive, it must do something that the people want as well as need.

Frederic did not think that society could continue satisfactorily if it observed the Darwinian theory concerning the survival of the fittest. The Lawton Girl was

written around this idea. One's profession demands even more integrity and responsibility than religion and politics because his immediate existence is directly dependent upon his business abilities and practices. Also, unlike his religion, one's business practices usually affect the lives of other people. Frederic's concern was with this world and the function of the people who exist in it. As long as the leaders of society do not accept their duties, Frederic felt that the rest of society has little choice except to fight to survive, even if it must resort to mob action. Struggle between men is not a natural state. It is caused by some moral, political, physical or economical deficiency which only a concerned people can overcome through compassion, honesty and morality from all.

The individual was, above all else, the actual concern of Harold Frederic. He felt that each person must be held accountable for his actions, as a member of his society. Man cannot blame environment or other influences if he has a choice. Theron Ware and Horace Boyce both chose the wrong way and they were punished, but not nearly enough. Life is usually not as lenient as Harold Frederic. Human beings have always lived by various codes because the individual allows atrocities that could not exist if man lived by God's rule instead. Hod Boyce did not marry Jessica Lawton, yet

she was condemned to a life of shame while the code allowed him to live without any kind of punishment. The financiers nearly ruined the livelihood of an entire town, but they received no punishment. As long as any man fails to accept his responsibilities and act with complete dedication to the principles of honesty and morality and duty, he shall remain in a world of strife no matter how advanced his art, science or education.

The final conclusions of this thesis study can only be that Harold Frederic's works are indeed worthy of the revival his stories are now undergoing. His topics are those found in serious literature. They are the subjects found in such writers as Howells, Dreiser and James. He united his stories through setting and characterization, which alone warrants much attention, especially in such a powerful and enduring book as his The Damnation of Theron Ware. Harold Frederic was not a great writer. His books have structural flaws, but few readers would notice these faults because Frederic always entertains his reader with an interesting and often impressive story in spite of its serious intent of helping man better himself.

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