"ART FOR TRUTH'S SAKE": ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS
AS REALIST, REFORMER, STYLIST

by
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A DISSERTATION
IN
ENGLISH

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of Texas Tech University in
Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for
the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Approved

Accepted

December, 1999
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my dissertation director, Dr. Sherry Ceniza, for the countless hours she put into helping me with this project as well as the graciousness, optimism, and sympathetic support she offered me at all times. As I have told her before, I could not have had a better, more helpful director, and I thank her from the bottom of my heart.

I also want to recognize the other members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Bryce Conrad and Dr. Marijane Davis—thank you for your support throughout this process. Of course, I very much appreciate the many members of the faculty and staff in the English Department at Texas Tech University who offered me advice and support, as well as the helpful staff in the Graduate School who made sure that I met all my deadlines.

Thanks to Pat Smith Nickell who provided me with photocopies of some sources on *The Story of Avis* and helped me work out some problems I had with the Sphinx imagery in that novel. Also, thanks to Carole Carroll who gave me numerous sources on mythology when I was researching *Doctor Zay* and translations of Latin in "Dea ex Machina."

Thanks to the English Department's Scholarship and Awards Committee for the various scholarships I received while I was doing my doctoral work at Texas Tech University, for without that financial assistance it would have been difficult for me to pursue my doctorate so consistently. Thanks to the professors who wrote letters of recommendation for me for those scholarships over the years, including Dr. John Samson, Dr. Bryce Conrad, Dr. Marijane Davis, and, especially, Dr. Sherry Ceniza, for her encouragement to me was what made me brave enough to apply for the scholarships. I also want to offer a special thanks to Dr. Donald Rude and Dr. Carolyn Rude for the Benjamin Rude Memorial Scholarship that I was so honored to be awarded in 1999.

I want to offer a particular word of thanks to the Graduate School at Texas Tech University for the two Summer Dissertation Research Fellowships I received for the
summers of 1998 and 1999. The fellowships made it possible for me to get materials from special collections in Ohio and Massachusetts, and helped support me through my summers while I worked on the dissertation.

Thanks goes to Regina Rush, Special Collections Librarian at the Alderman Library, University of Virginia, for photocopying letters to and from Phelps, and to Edward Gaynor, Associate Director of the Alderman Library, for permission to quote from, reproduce, and transcribe Phelps's letters in my dissertation. In addition, I would also like to thank Matthew Benz, Reference Archivist at the Ohio Historical Society, for the research and photocopying he did from the Washington Gladden Papers concerning Phelps.

I also appreciate Bruce Cammack, the Special Collections librarian at Texas Tech University, who has found and purchased a terrific collection of first edition works by Phelps. Also, Sandy Rivers located several years of issues of *The Independent* on microfilm for me. The efforts of these two librarians in locating these resources was extremely helpful.

Of course, warm thanks goes to my family, particularly my husband, Bryan Privett, who not only supported me emotionally and financially through graduate school, but who also stayed up late nights typing Phelps's essays. I could never forget Austin and Emily, whose constant encouragement (often to the tune of "you haven't finished that chapter YET?!") kept me busy even when I wanted to stop. I owe so much to all of you.
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ABSTRACT

Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (1844-1911) was an extremely prolific writer. During her writing career, which spanned over four decades, she wrote twenty novels and many essays, short stories, biographical sketches, and poems. Phelps felt that writing was both physically and mentally exhausting, and she suffered from ill-health and insomnia throughout most of her life, possibly due to her exertions as a writer. When asked about how to make a living through one's writing, Phelps responds, "Living? It is more likely to be dying by your pen; despairing by your pen; burying hope and heart and youth and courage in your ink-stand" (Chapters from a Life 87). Phelps lived much of her life through her writing, only rarely getting personally involved with the various reform issues she championed, preferring instead to write about the issues to bring them out into the open. She explains, "[T]he impulse of my heart [is] to keep step with the onward movement of human life, and to perceive the battle afar off, charging when and where I can" (252). Nonetheless, Phelps admires the women who do take the public forum and applauds them, stating that their work is not a "Reform against Nature" but an outgrowth of woman's will to survive. When reading Phelps's novels, one cannot help but notice her own socially-innovative viewpoint which demands a new way of looking at nineteenth-century society's traditional standards, continually asking her readers to understand different ways of thinking and new ways of living.

Although Phelps was virtually ignored until the 1980s, since then much more has been written about Phelps's late-nineteenth-century American writing, particularly her better-known novels, The Silent Partner, The Story of Avis, and Doctor Zay. Phelps now is best known for her writing about women's causes, particularly women in the workplace, women's education, and marriage issues. In her own time, however, she was most well-known for her best-selling novel, The Gates Ajar (1868), a story generally classified as
"utopian" in its discussion of the afterlife. It would be extremely simplistic to describe Phelps as merely a "utopian" writer or a "feminist" writer, and it would be incorrect to call Phelps's fiction "sentimental." I would argue that Phelps realistically describes many facets of the American condition in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and that she is interested in pointing out and solving society's problems.

In addition, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps was an extremely well-read, well-educated woman, one whose wide range of knowledge is reflected in her writing. Her novels blend myth, psychology, science, theology, philosophy, allegory, and confessional in such a way as to make her fiction work on several levels of interpretation. Finally, Phelps's writing reflects a wide range of American social ills of her day, making the stories significant in interpreting the social climate of the late nineteenth century. I would argue that Phelps's work often outshines that of her contemporaries, both in style and content. In this dissertation, I show how several of Phelps's works, instead of being merely "sentimental fiction," address important issues of her time and illustrate how Phelps's writing often presents radical views of nineteenth-century American issues. Thus Phelps, in writing "Art for Truth's Sake," as she discusses in her autobiography, may be most accurately called a realist, a reformer, and a stylist.
### TIMELINE

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<td>1790</td>
<td>Judith Sargent Murray publishes &quot;On the Equality of the Sexes.&quot;</td>
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<td>1805</td>
<td>Harvard University becomes Unitarian.</td>
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<td>1808</td>
<td>Andover Seminary founded.</td>
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<td>1810</td>
<td>Moses Stuart (1780-1852) comes to Andover as Professor of Sacred Literature, where he remains until his death in 1852. Stuart introduces the study of German philosophy, philology and Biblical higher criticism.</td>
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<td>1812-13</td>
<td>Friendship arose between liberal Edward Everett &amp; M. Stuart.</td>
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<td>1817</td>
<td>Edward Everett becomes the first person in America to be awarded a Ph.D. Coleridge's <em>Biographia Literaria</em> published.</td>
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<td>1819</td>
<td>Moses Stuart defends doctrine of the Trinity in his <em>Letters</em> to William Ellery Channing.</td>
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<td>1824</td>
<td>Publication of Lydia Maria Child's <em>Hobomok</em>.</td>
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<td>1825</td>
<td>Coleridge's <em>Aids to Reflection</em> published.</td>
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<td>1829</td>
<td>James Marsh published an American edition of Coleridge's <em>Aids to Reflection</em>. He prefaces it with a long &quot;Preliminary Essay&quot; in which he argued for the relevance of Coleridge's beliefs to the state of American theology.</td>
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<td>1830</td>
<td>The American Renaissance's official beginning (1830-1860).</td>
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<td>1831</td>
<td>Alexis de Tocqueville arrives in America for a nine-month visit.</td>
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<td>1832</td>
<td>Emerson travels in Europe, meeting Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Carlyle.</td>
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<td>1833</td>
<td>James Marsh, former Andover student of M. Stuart, publishes translation of Herder, influential work of German biblical criticism. Originally, M. Stuart had asked Edward Everett to do the translation of Johann Gottfried von Herder's <em>Vom geist der ebraischen poesie</em> (1782-3), but Everett declined. Emerson's European tour.</td>
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<td>1834-35</td>
<td>A series of significant essays on Herder are published in <em>The Christian Examiner</em>, Boston's Unitarian quarterly, affecting Transcendentalism.</td>
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<td>1835</td>
<td>Alexis de Tocqueville's <em>Democracy in America</em> published (in English, 1838).</td>
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<td>1837</td>
<td>Emerson presents &quot;The American Scholar&quot; before the Harvard Phi Beta Kappa Society, which Oliver Wendell Holmes calls America's &quot;intellectual Declaration of Independence.&quot;</td>
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1840 Austin Phelps (1820-1890) graduates from Andover Theological Seminary and ordained a Presbyterian minister. Emerson's American edition of Carlyle's *Chartism* published. Orestes Brownson publishes review entitled "The Laboring Classes." Lydia Maria Child moves to New York as editor of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* (1840-1843). First number of the *Dial* appears (1840-44) under Margaret Fuller's and then Emerson's editorship.

1842 A. Phelps marries daughter of M. Stuart, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (1815-1852). A. Phelps assumes duties as pastor of the Pine Street Church in Boston. Theodore Parker (1810-60) accuses the Boston Unitarian Association of hypocrisy involving alcohol.

1844 First child of A. and E. Phelps (the elder) born, August 31, named Mary Gray Phelps.

1845 *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* published. Margaret Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* published.

1847 Edwards A. Park comes to Andover as Professor of Theology. Stays until 1881.

1848 A. Phelps moves to Andover as Professor of Sacred Rhetoric and Homiletics.

1849 Lucretia Coffin Mott delivers "Discourse on Woman."

1850 Park delivers his most famous sermon "The Theology of the Intellect and That of the Feelings" in Boston before a convention of Congregational ministers that included Trinitarian, Unitarians, Old and New Divinity Calvinists--marks Andover's first official departure from belief in the literal truth of Bible, catechism, and creed. First National Woman's Rights Convention held in Worcester, Massachusetts.


1852 M. Stuart dies. Calvin Stowe replaces M. Stuart. In his 1852 inaugural address as Professor of Sacred Literature, he denounces German scholarship and philosophy. E. Phelps (the elder) publishes *A Peep at "Number Five" or, A Chapter in the Life of a City Pastor and Angel over the Right Shoulder*. E. Phelps dies. Mary Gray assumes mother's name, becomes Elizabeth Stuart Phelps. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* published.

1854 A. Phelps marries wife's sister, Mary Stuart.

1855 Publication of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. 
1855  Publication of Louisa May Alcott's *Flower Fables*.

1856  Mary Stuart Phelps dies.
      Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* published.

1857  E.S. Phelps (age 13) publishes first work in *Youth's Companion*.

1858  A. Phelps marries Mary Ann Johnson.

1859  Publication of Sanger report *The History of Prostitution*.

1860  E.S. Phelps has her "awakening"—reads *Aurora Leigh*, DeQuincey and
      Wordsworth.
      Pemberton Mills disaster in Lawrence, Massachusetts.

1861  Rebecca Harding Davis's "Life in the Iron Mills" published in the *Atlantic*.

1862  E. S. Phelps's "first love," Lieutenant Samuel Hopkins Thompson, killed at
      Antietam.
      Emily Dickinson begins lifelong correspondence with T. W. Higginson (who is
      also a supporter of Phelps).

1864  E.S. Phelps's first adult story appears in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in

1865  *Up Hill. Mercy Gliddon's Work*.

1866  *Tiny*. Three Gypsy books.

1867  A. Phelps publishes *The New Birth*, a book in which he describes religious
      conversion as a gradual change of heart.
      Fourth Gypsy book. Last two Tiny books.

1868  *The Gates Ajar*. E.S. Phelps moves into mother's study to write in privacy.
      "The Tenth of January" appears in *Atlantic Monthly*; E.S. Phelps receives
      recognition.
      New England Woman Suffrage Association, headed by Julia Ward Howe,
      formed.
      Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* published.
      Doctors Elizabeth and Emily Blackwell and Dr. Maria Zakrzewski open medical
      school for women in New York.
      14th Amendment giving African-American men the right to vote is passed.

1869  *Men, Women, and Ghosts*.
      American Woman Suffrage Association founded.
      National Woman Suffrage Association founded.
      John Stuart Mill publishes *The Subjection of Women*.

1870  *Hedged In. The Trotty Book*.
      *Woman's Journal* established.

1871  *The Silent Partner*. E. S. Phelps's *Woman's Journal* and *Independent* articles
      on women's issues and ill health appear.
      Washington Gladden hired as the religious editor for *The Independent*.
      Massachusetts governor William Claflin appoints Julia Ward Howe and Mary E.
      Stevens, a Boston realtor, as justices of the peace—they are unconfirmed.
1871 Walt Whitman's *Democratic Vistas* is published.

1873 *Trotty's Wedding Tour, and Story-Book.*
E.S. Phelps lectures on dress reform before the New England Women's Club, published as *What to Wear?*
Opening of Boston University, the first college offering women the Bachelor of Arts degree.
Dr. Edward H. Clarke's *Sex in Education* published.
Mark Twain and Charles Dudley publish *The Gilded Age.*

1874 E.S. Phelps rebuts Dr. E.H. Clarke on women's health, published in *Sex and Education,* edited by Julia Ward Howe.
E.S. Phelps begins work as lecturer at Boston University where she is on staff until 1877.
Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) established.

1875 *Poetic Studies.*
E.S. Phelps establishes Gloucester Temperance Reform Club.

1876 Gives her George Eliot lectures at Boston University.
Builds Gloucester cottage, her "Old Maid's Paradise."

1877 *The Story of Avis.*


1879 *An Old Maid's Paradise. Sealed Orders.*
Francis Willard made president of the WCTU.

1880 Publication of Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady.*

1881 *Friends: A Duet.*
A. Phelps publishes "Reform in the Political Status of Woman," later published in *My Portfolio.*

1882 *Doctor Zay.*
A. Phelps publishes *My Portfolio.*

1883 *Beyond the Gates.*

1885 *Songs of the Silent World and Other Poems. The Madonna of the Tubs.*

1886 Death of friend Dr. Mary Briggs Harris.
*Burglars in Paradise.*


1888 E.S. Phelps marries Herbert Dickinson Ward.

1889 *The Struggle for Immortality.*

1890 *The Master of the Magicians* (co-written by H.D. Ward).
A. Phelps dies.
First volume of Dickinson's poems published.
William Dean Howells's *A Hazard of New Fortunes* and Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* published.

1893  *Donald Marcy.*
E.S. Phelps and Ward build home on 6 1/2 acres in Newton Centre.

1895  *A Singular Life.*

1896  *Chapters from a Life.*

1897  *The Story of Jesus Christ: An Interpretation.*

1899  *Loveliness: A Story.*

1901  *The Successors of Mary the First. Within the Gates.*
E.S. Phelps delivers anti-vivisection address before the Massachusetts Legislature.

1902  *Avery. Confessions of a Wife* (published pseudonymously under the name Mary Adams).
Second anti-vivisection address.

1903  E.S. Phelps destroys most of her letters (as recorded in a letter to Harriet Prescott Spofford).

1904  *Trixyl.*
Last anti-vivisection address.

1906  *The Man in the Case.*

1907  *Walled In: A Novel.*

1908  *Though Life Us Do Part. The Whole Family* (combined effort with eleven other authors).

1909  *Jonathan and David. The Oath of Allegiance and Other Stories.*

1910  *A Chariot of Fire. The Empty House and Other Stories.*

1911  E.S. Phelps dies January 28. Ashes buried in Newton Cemetery--gravestone contains lily motif she designed.

1919  18th Amendment prohibiting sale and purchase of alcohol is passed.

1920  19th Amendment giving women the vote is passed.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE LITERARY LIFE OF

ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS

"It is a gray day, on gray Cape Ann, as I write these words. The fog is breathing over the downs. The outside steamers shriek from off the Point, as they feel their way at live of noon, groping as though it were dead of night, and stars and coast lights all were smitten dark, and every pilot were a stranger to his chart.

A stranger to my chart, I, doubtful, put about, and make the untried coast."

(Phelps, Chapters from a Life 2).

The Novels of Elizabeth Stuart Phelps--Critical Responses

Believing that "moral character is to human life what air is to the natural world," 1 Phelps defends her novels when charged with the crime of writing for "an ethical purpose" by arguing that ethicism is absolutely vital in fiction and that a writer is not a true "literary artist" if he or she believes moral responsibility can be removed from the art:

Fear less to seem "Puritan" than to be inadequate. Fear more to be superficial than to seem "deep." Fear less to "point your moral" than to miss your opportunity.

... Where "the taste" is developed at the expense of "the conscience," the artist is incomplete: he is, in this case, at least as incomplete as he is where the ethical sense is developed at the expense of the aesthetic. . . .

In a word, the province of the artist is to portray life as it is; and life is moral responsibility. 2

In her autobiography, Chapters from a Life, Phelps suggests that because post-Civil-War
America was undergoing extreme upheaval, what she calls "moral struggle," moral reform belongs in American art. She reveres authors such as Harriet Beecher Stowe, whom she calls the greatest of American women, as well as the leaders of reform movements. For Phelps, to tell "the truth," at least the truth as she sees it, is to unveil the human condition to her readers. Phelps's works demand that the reader recognize that ideals of American
behavior and society do exist and that these ideals should be taught and revered. While Phelps herself recognizes these goals of idealistic behavior and mores, extolling the virtues, for instance, of the brave, independent woman and the self-sacrificing, noble man, her "true woman" and "true man," her works also reveal an underlying layer of what some might call "realism." Without a doubt, in the history of Phelps's art can be traced the history of American reformist issues: women's rights, the plight of the factory worker, religious reform, the temperance movement, dress reform, and even the anti-vivisection platform.

Elizabeth Stuart Phelps is more than merely a reformer, however. She is also a fine writer whose works have been under-appreciated for some time. Phelps was extremely prolific and popular during the years she wrote, approximately 1864-1911. Her name appears in various lists of significant writers. Henry C. Vedder's American Writers of Today (1894) includes a chapter on Phelps. Our Famous Women (1884) not only has a chapter on Phelps, but also includes a couple of chapters written by Phelps about other famous nineteenth-century women. Arthur Gilman's Poets' Homes: Pen and Pencil Sketches of American Poets and Their Homes (1879) has a complete chapter on Phelps's childhood and adult homes. In fact, Phelps's autobiography, Chapters from a Life (1896), was reprinted several times between 1896 and 1900 with publication both in America and England, testifying to her continued popularity during that time.

Nonetheless, by the time Mary Angela Bennett published Elizabeth Stuart Phelps in 1939, the first book-length study of Phelps's work, Phelps had faded into the background of literary history to such an extent that Bennett began her foreword to the text:

"Tremendously popular at one time, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps is scarcely known to the present-day reader even by name. So great has been the neglect into which she has fallen that no extended study of her life and work has ever been published." Even with the publication of Bennett's work, Phelps's work continued to be neglected until the 1980s,
when critical attention to women's novels increased. In the second book-length study of Phelps's work, Carol Farley Kessler's *Elizabeth Stuart Phelps* (1982), Kessler reviews the mere handful of works written about Phelps from 1911 to the time of Kessler's publication. Finally, even though Lori Duin Kelly published *The Life and Works of Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, Victorian Feminist Writer* (1983) just one year later, testifying to Phelps's growing popularity in the 1980s, only three of Phelps's novels are in print in 1999—*The Silent Partner, The Story of Avis,* and *Doctor Zay*—with her most famous work, *The Gates Ajar* no longer in print, and little criticism exists of Phelps's substantial literary legacy.

Not only has there been little written about Phelps, but the criticism and biographical information which has been written about her is too often apologetic in tone, stressing that her present-day significance is based primarily upon her writing about women and for women's causes, downplaying her work on other reform issues and her literary skills. In her critical study of Phelps, Kessler writes, "We have, I think, found embarrassing so outspoken an advocacy for women's causes as hers was." Kessler even concludes her book with an apology for Phelps's style, "We regret that social conditions prevented its [her genius'] fulfillment in work stylistically as well as socially superior, but nonetheless we admire her fearless example of depicting socially threatening dilemmas and suggesting revolutionary answers." One reason for this apology for Phelps's stylistic lacks is due to her sometimes flowery prose and heavy use of symbolism and metaphor. In addition, Phelps has lost some twentieth-century popularity because of the religious content of many of her works. However, as I will discuss further, Phelps's tendencies to include numerous literary, historical, religious, and symbolic references in her fiction reflect not only her strong classical education and the cultural mode of the time, but they also reveal her attempt to write not "popular," but "artistic" and intellectually and spiritually engaging works.
Why then have Phelps's works, particularly her later novels, been disregarded? One reason is that Phelps's novels, like the works of many women writers, were ignored by the twentieth-century critics of American literature who were in the process of forming the canon. Elizabeth Ammons explains in *Conflicting Stories: American Women Writers at the Turn into the Twentieth Century* (1992) that women's writing between 1890 and the late 1920s has not been treated fairly by twentieth-century literary critics; in fact, it has virtually been ignored. Ammons describes the typical critical attitude toward American literature and women writers' place in it: "Great American fiction, so the twentieth century critical commonplace has run, is a literature of escape, a literature psychological, symbolic, cut off from topical social and political issues--a fiction fundamentally antisocial and adolescent."\(^9\) Until more recent feminist criticism, this particular reading of "Great American Fiction" seemed to fit, at least if critics focused on specific nineteenth-century writers of the so-called "romance" and left works by American women, like Phelps (as well as works by minorities) "dismissed, scattered, [and] ignored."\(^10\) Before the emergence, relatively recently, of feminist criticism, the American Romance had been defined as America's most important form by those critics interested in establishing the American canon.\(^11\) Richard Chase, for example, author of *The American Novel and Its Traditions* states, "Ever since [Hawthorne's] use of the word ['romance'] to describe his own fiction, it has appropriately signified the peculiar narrow profundity and rich interplay of lights and darks which one associates with the best American writing."\(^12\) With this idea in mind, it is obvious that Phelps's work, which concentrates on social issues and which keeps most of her characters in one basic location, not traipsing off to the West for adventure or going to sea, would not fit the mold of what was considered great, or even good, literature.

Interestingly, Phelps's contemporaries did not feel the same way. In fact, as Susan Coultrap-McQuin explains in *Doing Literary Business: American Women Writers in the*
Nineteenth Century (1990), not only was The Gates Ajar one of the most talked-about books of its time, but Phelps was compared favorably to Nathaniel Hawthorne, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and George Eliot. Unfortunately for Phelps, popularity can be short-lived, and despite her continued success throughout her lifetime, Phelps's star began to fade. The movement toward a critical attitude as detailed by Ammons began during Phelps's last decade, and during the twentieth century, the female writers of realism like Phelps and Mary Wilkins Freeman, instead of being categorized with male writers of American realism like Henry James or William Dean Howells, have been lumped together by the critical world with popular female writers of the so-called "sentimental" or "domestic" novels of the mid-nineteenth century, that "damned mob of scribbling women" so famously referred to by Hawthorne.

Since the majority of the American reading audience in the nineteenth century was made up of women (and women apparently enjoyed reading novels by women), women authors made up the majority of the successful writers. Authors such as Maria Cummins and Susan B. Warner, whose popular antebellum novels The Lamplighter (1854) and The Wide, Wide World (1850) clearly outpaced sales by any male writer, set publication records in America and helped to create the phenomena of the "best-seller." Cummins, Warner, and other women novelists often used some variation on a popular theme. The typical plot included as the main character a girl whose difficulties growing up make her move forward toward independence and greater moral strength, difficulties which usually included the death of her mother, making the girl either the caretaker for younger children or an orphaned, abandoned character. The girl-turned-woman--accurately deemed a heroine since she succeeds against often overwhelming obstacles--after fitting herself for society usually marries, proving herself a success in every way. These novels have often been labeled "domestic fiction" or "sentimental novels" by twentieth-century critics, but as
Nina Baym and other recent literary historians remind us, the terms are often limiting, 
derogatory, and inappropriate.

While the term "domestic fiction" is limiting, indicating that the novel's 
concentration is on the woman's private sphere (and thus may be viewed as having no 
significance in the "larger world" outside that sphere), the term "sentimental," which in 
literary criticism means writing which is mawkish or overly emotional, is often 
unjustifiably used for women's writing. Cathy N. Davidson states, "For most of American 
literary history, virtually every nineteenth-century novel written by a woman has been 
routinely or even automatically described as sentimental, regardless of its actual content, 
tone, style, or themes, while virtually no novels written by men have been given this 
derogatory title." For instance, Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* (1791) and 
Hannah Webster Foster's *The Coquette* (1797) are both considered early sentimental 
novels, but their emphasis on the seduction plot and the sexual double standard makes 
them quite different from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), written 
more than fifty years later. Although it is true that many of the antebellum women's 
novels, so often labeled "sentimental novels," emphasized the emotional effects and often 
melodramatically manipulated the audience to tearful sympathy, Nina Baym points out that 
these novels, which she prefers to term "woman's fiction," are actually a rejection of the 
kind of fiction written by earlier novelists such as Samuel Richardson and Susanna 
Rowson whose works often promoted "trivializing and contemptuous views of women" and which used seduction plots to reveal the difficulties of women's lives. Woman's fiction 
of the antebellum period, while it upheld more traditional domestic views of women's role 
in society, also valued the triumph of the woman in society and affirmed the independent, 
outspoken woman. Thus, while many of the women's novels typically labeled "domestic" 
or "sentimental" fiction fit, to some extent, within the parameters of the labels, these terms
are both restrictive and imprecise, and the labels have, unfortunately, helped prevent
nineteenth-century women's writing from inclusion in the American canon.

According to Baym, woman's fiction changed around the time of the Civil War for
women began to "oppose the domestic ideology rather than cooperate with it."16 In
Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870, Baym
states:

The liberal women who began their writing careers after the Civil War
found the redemptive possibilities of enlightened domesticity to be no
longer credible. The Civil War had demonstrated the feebleness of the
affectional model of human relationships, and the Gilded Age affirmed
profit as the motive around which all of American life was to be organized.
Home now became a retreat, a restraint and a constraint, as it had not
appeared to be earlier; to define it as woman's sphere was now
unambiguously to invite her to absent herself permanently from the world's
affairs.17

Thus, it is inaccurate to lump Phelps's work and other women's writing after the Civil War
in with the novels of the earlier time period because, as Baym explains, this writing no
longer fits the antebellum pattern. Labeling woman's fiction as "domestic" is an attempt to
recognize a pattern of domesticity which involves the development of a young woman in a
domestic setting and which supports certain idealistic and "feminine" qualities—piety,
purity, submissiveness, and domesticity—which Barbara Welter defined as the qualities of
"the cult of true womanhood."18 Although a number of nineteenth-century woman's
novels advocate this view of the "true woman," not all women novelists agree, as an
examination of Phelps's novels and essays readily reveals. While it is true that much of
Phelps's work is written for a female audience and that Phelps frequently made use of
some of the characteristics of domestic fiction in her novels, far more often she
undermines the domestic pattern in some fashion, often creating surprising plot twists:
women who refuse to marry or find themselves happily widowed at the end of a novel,
women who see their old-maid-hood as "paradise" and the gentlemen who enter
"burglars," women whose careers are more than short-cuts to marriage. Thus, while her work was not as well-accepted by the early twentieth century critics, the tendency to lump Phelps in with sentimental writers or ignore her works as "unimportant" based on their lack of social "truth" cannot be supported.

When criticized by contemporary readers for her "stylistically poor" language and over-emphasis on references to religion and faith, it is important to note that many of Phelps's contemporaries, both in America and England, were also using a great deal of flowery language in their writing and that discussion of spiritual matters was much more common in literature, particularly during the early years of Phelps's writing career. Not only was the spiritual life a common part of the everyday conversation, but for women religion had become, in a way, a source of power within women's private sphere.

Beginning as early as the late eighteenth century and continuing well into the nineteenth century, the ideology of separate spheres, public and private, formed in America. Men's place was in the public sphere, women's in the private. The work that women were allowed to perform centered around the domestic, and all the things related to domestic life and the family were considered a part of the private sphere. Since women were considered morally superior to men, women often morally and religiously guided the family; thus, women's personal religious experience began to bolster women to work publicly for religious and moral improvement. Using Christian ideology to support them, women were able to forthrightly challenge social ills such as slavery and alcoholism, relying upon scripture to sustain their new-found positions of power. Baym explains the way religion had entered the private sphere in the mid-nineteenth century as represented in woman's fiction:

During this era many aspects of American religious life were passing into women's sphere, and the churches were actively engaging in humanitarian and reform measures closely allied to domestic ideology. Moreover, in this fiction religious life has been largely severed from its institutional setting.
Even though the heroines are usually churchgoers and professing Christians, their true religious life is interior.\textsuperscript{50} For nineteenth-century women, religion and spirituality transcended the concept of separate spheres to some extent, for although taking part in religion is often a public activity, spirituality is usually a private and personal one, and while social reform is "allied to domestic ideology," the measures taken to reform may be public measures which go beyond the domestic circle.

Not only was religious discussion in fiction fairly commonplace at the time Phelps began writing (despite novels written by the male writers of the "American mythology," such as Herman Melville's \textit{Moby Dick}, which inherently rejected traditional religion\textsuperscript{21}), but her concentration on spiritual matters is unsurprising given her religious upbringing and spiritual environment, growing up as she did as the daughter of a Congregational minister and the granddaughter of both the Professor of Sacred Literature at Andover Theological Seminary and of a well-known evangelical orthodox minister. However, even with this obviously conservative Christian background, Phelps's emphasis on faith and religion in her works most often dealt with the hypocrisy of established religion and the need for new forms of religion for people to face the increasingly complex world of the Gilded Age. In addition, in her utopian novels, which will be discussed in the following chapter, a discussion of the afterlife offers a not-so-subtle criticism of the social conditions of the day in addition to a promise of a better life for women as represented by the utopian heaven she describes.

As mentioned earlier, Phelps's prose, whether speaking of spiritual or secular matters, sometimes becomes what some readers deem "overblown." When discussing spiritual matters Phelps's characters often revert to the traditional archaic terminology of the conservative Christian religions; for instance, especially in her earlier novels, characters say "thee" and "thou" when discussing spiritual matters. In addition to these archaisms,
lines of poetry and hymns pepper the pages of her fiction, and literary, cultural, and historical references ranging from Greek mythology to current scientific theories abound. While twentieth-century readers sometimes find the task of interpreting Phelps's references daunting, for a nineteenth-century audience the text was at the most challenging, and at the least a dialogic incorporation of other voices which gave her works additional depth. For instance, Phelps alters the Greek Atalanta myth for feminist purposes in Doctor Zay and uses the social conventions of the Victorian language of flowers to imply a hidden sensuality in The Story of Avis. In both stories, an understanding of the references and interpretation of their symbolic use provides a deeper understanding of Phelps's themes while providing a complexity which enhanced the nineteenth-century audience's reading experience. Thus, taken in context, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's language should be seen for what it is—a meaningful reflection of the social climate and stylistically in tune with (or perhaps even ahead of) most of the writing of her time period.

Phelps's short stories, popular in their day, were published in several of the major monthlies from as early as 1864 to the year of her death, 1911: Atlantic, Century, Harper's Bazaar, Harper's New Monthly, The Independent, and Scribner's, to name a few. Many of these short stories received critical praise. However, her reputation was made primarily by her novels, especially her early publication of The Gates Ajar and, later on, the novels The Story of Avis, Friends: A Duet, and A Singular Life. Interestingly, her novels were even more popular in England than in the United States. Her style was generally admired by her contemporaries, who often compared her with George Eliot, Mary W. Freeman, and Louisa May Alcott. Perhaps most significantly, Phelps received early recognition from both John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892) and Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1823-1911). Higginson thought Phelps had "more genius" than Louisa May Alcott or Harriet Beecher Stowe. Whittier, a personal friend and frequent correspondent with Phelps, gave Phelps positive feedback and supported her publicly.
However, during the second half of her writing career, many of her literary friends, those who had helped support her, began to die, and her popularity decreased likewise.\textsuperscript{25} Coultrap-McQuin explains that the strain of losing these friends helped add to Phelps's constant health problems:

\begin{quote}
Though there were continued demands for her work, her correspondence with publishers and editors reveals many difficulties in coping with the modern literary marketplace. . . . She was particularly troubled by the increasing impersonality of the marketplace. These concerns were compounded by increasing ill health that made it difficult for her to meet deadlines.

In fact, by the end of her life Phelps's literary career was no longer fulfilling, even though she still enjoyed a moderate degree of success.\textsuperscript{26}
\end{quote}

Even with her marriage late in life to Herbert D. Ward, or perhaps because of this marriage, Phelps's personal life was increasingly riddled with illness and sadness. Thus, in addition to the changing literary marketplace, personal difficulties conspired against Phelps, and her literary reputation began to decline toward the end of her life.

Although Phelps has generally been left out of most discussions of "important" or "significant" American writers since her last crest of popularity peaked in the late nineteenth century, her work fits at least one of the major criteria frequently used by literary critics in their selection of the American canon—she is truly an American writer who deals with American themes. Theories of literature which emerged in the twentieth century conspired to exclude women authors from the canon, as Nina Baym demonstrates in "Melodramas of Beset Manhood." Baym details the major reasons women were excluded: first, male literary critics may have been biased against women writers; second, women's writing was not always very good, particularly since they lacked a formal classical education; finally, later critical theories, as described previously, developed a definition of American literature which was essentially male, excluding women's writing by its essential content.\textsuperscript{27} On at least one of the counts, Phelps can hold up her head--she
was extremely well-educated and had extensive knowledge of the classics. However, other factors go into her exclusion from the canon. The American novel, as defined by Richard Chase, R.W.B. Lewis, and others, was a novel or, more precisely, a romance written about an alienated member of society, an "American Adam," written from the perspective of a slightly alienated member of society, as most white, middle-class writers were by very virtue of choosing to be a writer rather than some more accepted profession. The "true" American novel, as defined by many twentieth century critics, reacts to the "invigorating feeling that a new culture was in the making" and explores this new (male) inhabitant of a new world who leaves the controlling environment of the old world, as represented by the eastern cities, the cultural centers of the nation, and suggested by the traditional home, to explore "strange new worlds" and "boldly go where no one has gone before," as the axiom goes. Baym argues that although these writers were criticizing the so-called consensus of the culture, in fact they were unified in creating a "consensus criticism of the consensus." Women, by virtue of the traditional dual role of wife/mother, are often viewed as the organizers of the familial sphere. and, thus, women characters in many of these male-authored American novels represent the most entrapping elements of society and its systems. Therefore, since the woman in American fiction has represented the very part of American culture which the American man wishes to escape--society--women writers must then be a part of the culture's consensus rather than the criticism of the culture. The question has been: How then can a woman possibly write an American novel? How can Phelps--a model of the conservative, middle-class religious American tradition and by her very so-called "nature" an entrapper of man--write an American novel? I would argue that Phelps, while she never completely escapes her rather conservative, traditional middle-class standards (as, I would argue, many of the so-called "great" American male writers fail to escape, as well), her novels are brimming with female versions of the male American hero and show the feminine counterpart to the
"great" American story. In many of her novels, it is the male character who represents the entrapment of the female character, and it is the male character who makes the woman's world a prison. As a woman writer who can use mythic encounters to symbolize woman's dilemma in the late nineteenth century, in an era when socially-appropriate behavior could be stifling to an independent woman, Phelps's writing represents a voice calling out from beyond the limits of the domestic storyline, demanding changes in American society. both for women and other undervalued members.

Both a Rebel to, and a Subject of, Her Ancestry

In her autobiography, Phelps writes of her life and her books. She states, "The lives of the makers of books are very much like other people's in most respects, but especially in this: that they are either rebels to, or subjects of, their ancestry. The lives of some literary persons begin a good while after they are born. Others begin a good while before. Of this latter kind is mine."

Elizabeth Stuart Phelps was born on August 31, 1844, to Austin Phelps (1820-1890) and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (1815-1852). Phelps's heritage had strong roots both in writing and religious training. Her mother, the first Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, was the eldest daughter of the Reverend Moses Stuart (1780-1852) and Abigail Clark Stuart (1783-1855). Although Phelps's maternal grandmother was mainly known for her lifetime invalidism, a trait which seemed to be passed down through the generations, her grandfather's life and work made a distinct impact on Phelps. A Congregational minister and Chair of Sacred Literature at Andover Theological Seminary in Massachusetts, Moses Stuart died when Phelps was still a young girl, just a few months before her mother's death. In her autobiography, Phelps places his name high on her list of "people who have most influenced me." Perhaps his influence on her life was more historical than personal, for her memories of him are few, but Phelps knew from early on that this grandfather had published many commentaries and had introduced the
first German lexicon into America. Nonetheless, Moses Stuart's forty-two year stint at Andover, where Phelps spent a great deal of her childhood, and his major contributions to Biblical criticism must have made an impression on her. Phelps's mother, Elizabeth Stuart, was an exceptional woman. By the time Phelps's mother was born, Moses Stuart was already well into his career at Andover. Growing up in Andover was not necessarily a liberating experience for Elizabeth, however, for as her young sister, Sarah Stuart Robbins (1817-1910) writes, "[W]e were never legitimate parts of this Andover life." After being educated at Abbot Academy, Phelps's mother Elizabeth went to the Mount Vernon School when she was sixteen, where she began publishing her first articles under the name "H. Trusta." Like her invalid mother, the senior Elizabeth soon began suffering from horrible headaches and other strange symptoms which made her unable to continue school. Unfortunately, the elder Elizabeth Stuart, though improved in health for a while, was plagued by illness throughout her life.

Although Austin Phelps did not have quite as illustrious a parentage as his wife, his family was certainly interesting. His father, the Reverend Eliakim Phelps (1789-1880), was also a Congregational minister, and his mother, Sarah Adams (1793-1845), is barely mentioned by Phelps, but she impressed Austin as being a strong support for his father, and he believed his father's success was due to his mother. Eliakim Phelps established one of the first Sunday schools in his county "much to the disapproval of his deacons."

worked as a pastor, became a principal for Young Ladies' High School in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, and worked as a secretary for the American Education Society. Eliakim Phelps also participated in reform movements; for example, he removed liquor from his house when he decided to organize a temperance society and helped escaped slaves on the Underground Railroad. Austin Phelps reports that his father

was not a conservative, and he was not a radical. . . . But if the course of events compelled him to side with either extreme, he was apt to drift
toward the side of the radical. He refused his pulpit to an abolitionist lecturer, . . . because, he said, his people had rights there which he was bound to respect; but, if a fugitive slave applied to him, . . . he fell back on first principles, and bade his fellow-man welcome.37

Like his granddaughter, Eliakim Phelps often found his reason and his feelings in contradiction. Of him, Kessler writes, "Eliakim Phelps's life seems to have been one of restless questing after external self-validation: he required ever another revival to demonstrate his human worth."38 For a man who was "not distinguished, . . . but an orthodox minister of ability and originality" Eliakim Phelps had an impact on the world and on his children and grandchildren.39 With this kind of hard-working, restless parenting and his own intellectual advancement, it is unsurprising that Austin Phelps grew up the way he did. A very intense child, Austin Phelps agonized about his own life and death and was plagued with self-doubt throughout his childhood and early adult years. He attended several schools, graduating as valedictorian of his class at the University of Pennsylvania. He turned away from his father's brand of spiritual emotionalism, believing that "obedience to an earthly father [was] the appropriate medium of regeneration."40

Austin studied Hebrew and religious studies, finally becoming a minister and later a distinguished professor at Andover University. Like his father before him, Austin Phelps considered a good wife a necessary element for a good man.

Before going to Andover, Austin and Elizabeth Phelps worked at the Boston Pine Street Church for six years. During these years, their first child, Mary Gray (later Elizabeth Stuart Phelps) was born.41 For Austin, the years spent in the pulpit were difficult years. As always, Phelps's father was conscientious in his ministerial duties to the detriment of his own personal feelings and desires, according to Phelps. In her biography of her father, she writes about his Pine Street years: "[T]he wear and tear of natures like his, in a life like his, is as unavoidable as the friction of steel machinery upon silk caught within the wheels. . . . Too modest ever to rate himself as others rated him, too severely
conscientious ever to indulge himself with an achieved ideal, he gave himself to his people utterly." According to Phelps, her father's devotion to his congregation wore him down to the extent that he became physically ill and felt required to accept the professorial Chair at Andover because it "would be less of a physical drain than the pulpit." In his later years, Phelps reports, her father looked back on his ministry with some regret:

The manner in which he regarded his ministry at Pine Street, in subsequent years, was characteristic of him. "I would give anything in the world," he said, in one of his letters to me, "if I could have the opportunity of living over again my six years of ministry at Pine Street Church." Only about a year before his death he says in one of his letters, "I am never able to look back to that period of my life with one particle of satisfaction. My ministry there, as it lives in my memory, was a moral failure. . . ." I need not say that his people formed a very different estimate of his preaching.

This attitude of self-condemnation and perfectionism would make an impression on the young Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, for her father is apparently the model for several of her more self-critical and sickly male characters.

While for Austin Phelps the six years in Boston were difficult, emotionally-wearing years, for his wife they were the "happiest . . . of her life." According to Phelps, after moving to Andover her mother worked relentlessly until her death. A "superior" woman of intellectual gifts, Phelps's mother resumed her literary career in Andover, as well as bearing two more children. After years of silence, Phelps's mother wrote prolifically during her time at Andover, publishing three successful books in two years--The Sunny Side; or, a Country Minister's Wife (1851), A Peep at "Number Five": or, A Chapter in the Life of a City Pastor (1852), and Angel over the Right Shoulder (1852)--as well as two collections of fiction and a series of Sunday School stories. Phelps seemingly believed her mother was perfect, or at the very least, "a remarkable woman." She states, "The genius which was in due time to find a world-wide expression and welcome in 'The Sunny Side,' gave itself in those early years of wifehood and motherhood utterly to
the sweet ingenuities of love. Few women can have brooded over a happier home. She was a home-maker born. In *Chapters from a Life*, Phelps describes her mother's remarkable nature:

I hardly know which of those charming ways in which I learned to spell the word motherhood impressed me most. . . . Now she sits correcting proof-sheets, and now she is painting apostles for the baby's first Bible lesson. Now she is writing her new book, and now she is dyeing things canary-yellow in the white-oak dye--for the professor's salary is small, and a crushing economy was in those days one of the conditions of faculty life on Andover Hill. . . . Now she is a popular writer, incredulous of her first success, with her future flashing before her; and now she is a tired, tender mother, crooning to a sick child, while the M.S. [sic] lies unprinted on the table, and the publishers are wishing their professor's wife were a free woman, childless and solitary, able to send copy as fast as it is wanted. The struggle killed her, but she fought till she fell.

Obviously, Phelps idealizes her mother's domesticity, even as she recognizes the strain it put on her mother's health. Although in her novels Phelps can see the problems caused by overwork for a woman, particularly one who attempts to work outside the home, as she details in *The Story of Avis*, Phelps is still subject to the value system of the nineteenth century which reveres the domesticity of woman and mother. The elder Elizabeth continued to suffer from the ill health which had plagued her since childhood for her entire life. Referring to her earlier illness, Phelps's mother wrote: "Suppressed longings, and unsatisfied tastes, and despised capacities, at length took their revenge. They fretted, and chafed, and wore upon the delicate frame-work that enclosed them, until it gave way. . . . From the very first half hour in which I broke down the barriers of my old system, and took up my pencil, I said, 'Good bye to doctors.'" Thus, while the elder Elizabeth Phelps looked to writing for refuge and healing, admitting that social and familial limitations caused her great distress, her daughter holds up the image of her mother as perfect wife, mother, housekeeper, and writer—a model for women. Phelps writes:
At the time of her death she was at the first blossom of her very positive and wide-promising success as a writer of the simple home stories which took such a hold upon the popular heart. Her "Sunnyside" had already reached a circulation of one hundred thousand copies, and she was following it fast--too fast--by other books for which the critics and the publishers clamored. Her last book and her last baby came together, and killed her.52

While Phelps cannot completely blame her mother's "last book" for killing her, especially as she so admires her mother's intellectual gifts and writing ability, she also cannot completely blame the "last baby," for, like her brother, Phelps also depended upon her mother for life and sustenance. She writes: "I can remember no time when I did not understand that my mother must write books because people would have and read them [sic]; but I cannot remember one hour in which her children needed her and did not find her."53

It is evident from both Chapters from a Life and Austin Phelps that Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's near idolatrous admiration for both her mother and father colored not only what she wrote in these biographic accounts, but also colored nearly everything she wrote about relationships between men and women, about marriage, and about parenting. Despite the fact that Phelps recognizes that her mother was probably killed from the strain of trying to do too much--a modern-day superwoman, she wrote best-selling stories, raised children, was a good wife, and took care of a household--despite the fact that "her last book and her last baby came together, and killed her"; despite the fact that she "lived one of those rich and piteous lives such as only gifted women know, torn by the civil war of the dual nature which can be given to women only"; despite all this, Phelps did not blame her father for her mother's difficult, but short, life.54 In fact, she seemed to revere his ability not only to choose such a wonderful woman for a wife, but to appreciate and love her.
If her father is a noble and saintly man, Phelps's mother is a queen. Both in her fiction and biographies, Phelps reveals her mother as an almost perfect woman. She quotes her father, Austin Phelps, as stating, "To the day of her death she was as much a queen to me as she was the day I married her." Phelps adds, "Something of Mrs. Phelps's strong individuality appeared in her queenly carriage and finely poised head." Phelps's interpretation of her mother as a "royal" figure blends with other descriptions showing her mother's power, dignity, and passion, important traits which would be repeated in some of Phelps's later fictional characters. Phelps writes of her mother:

Bright blood sets itself to dull duty with a throbbing nerve. . . . She poured the opulence of her deep nature right royally and gladly into that one channel of womanly tenderness. The keen intellect which could intelligently criticise the young preacher's sermon on Saturday night was quite able to discover ways of amusing and resting him. . . . Her nature was rich in expedients, in courage, in imagination, and in that womanly common sense whose absence or presence makes the creative intellect either a torment or a blessing to live with. 

Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's belief that these traits, together with her mother's "fine, high fever of aspiration, a silent determination to achieve a supreme result" which had the ability to "make a man divinely happy," were what were necessary for the ideal woman. Departing from the "cult of true womanhood," which claims for its members the qualities of piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity, Phelps had her own set of characteristics which define the "true woman." Phelps's "true woman" must be royal, dignified, intelligent, and passionate--necessary attributes for her ideal woman. Yet, Phelps was full of contradictions, for even as she admires her mother's determination to make her husband happy, she admits that a woman "may die in trying to do so."

Phelps's description of her mother is especially significant in the way it reflects upon Phelps's definition of the "true woman" later in her life. In her 1871 essay "The True Woman," Phelps argues against those who would define the "true woman" as a woman
who "desires and seeks no noisy political existence," "honors the homely virtues and appreciates the quiet dignities of household life," and "merges her life . . . in that of her husband." Here Phelps is not saying that a woman cannot be a "true woman" if she is married and loves her husband and children; she is saying that a woman must not subsume her nature completely in her family. Interestingly, by 1871 when she wrote the essay, Phelps did not see her mother as a "true woman" because, she writes, "'The true woman,' . . . earth has never seen." She presents her argument carefully. The "true woman" will only exist when the world changes:

When might has ceased . . . to constitute right; . . . when women are admitted to their rightful share in the administration of government; when, from the ballot to the highest executive honors and uses, they shall be permitted fairly to represent . . . the interests of their sex; when every department of politics, art, literature, trade is thrown open . . . ; when the state ceases to expend a dollar more for the education of its boys than of its girls; . . . when just about two-thirds of the educated practicing physicians of the world are women; when marriage and motherhood no more complete a woman's mission to the world than marriage and fatherhood complete a man's; . . . when men are as chaste as women, and women as brave as men; when self-reliant men become unselfish, and unselfish women self-reliant. . . --only then can we draw the veil from the brows of the TRUE WOMAN.58

Phelps's mother could not be a "true woman," she might argue, because the world does not allow it. Yet, certainly the elder Elizabeth paved the way for Phelps's view of the "true woman," for she writes in her autobiography, "[A] woman of intellectual power could be the most successful of mothers. . . . It is certain that I very early had the conviction that a mother was a being of power and importance to the world."59 Certainly, Phelps argued that her mother and father were excellent partners, despite evidence to the contrary. Comparing her mother to the winged horse of mythology, she writes, "I do not think that any one who knew the wife of Mr. Phelps's youth will incline to deny that she
was brilliantly adapted to it and to him. Pegasus makes a fine yoke-fellow sometimes, proverbsto the contrary, notwithstanding.\textsuperscript{60}

If her mother was a royal, queenly figure to her, an ideal woman and heroine of her life, Phelps's father was certainly the hero. Of him she writes, "He who becomes father and mother in one to motherless children, bears a burden which men shirk or stagger under; and there was not a shirking cell in his brain or heart. . . . There was hardly a chapter in my life of which he was not in some sense, whether revealed or concealed, the hero."\textsuperscript{61} In her autobiography, Phelps barely refers to the fact that her father remarried two years after her mother's death, and then again two years after the death of this woman.\textsuperscript{62} Moreover, Phelps gives great praise to her father, despite their apparent disagreements over the enfranchisement of woman. She even admits in her "Prefatory Note" to his biography that she "has not thought it necessary to call attention to defects in the character which she has sought to portray." While "defects in the character" certainly must have existed, the greatest problem between Phelps and her father was certainly her own incessant desire to please him. This "hero" of her life was a conscientious, self-critical, religiously conservative man who served not only as Professor of Sacred Rhetoric and Homiletics at Andover, but also held the position of president for the last ten years of his career. He was a man of great power and popularity in the Andover community who dealt with an incident of temporary blindness early in his career which could have cost him his position; yet, like Myrton Ferris in \textit{Walled In},\textsuperscript{63} Austin Phelps came out of his ordeal more powerful than ever with the support of the Andover trustees and his own "unflagging will."\textsuperscript{64} In addition to his teaching, Austin Phelps also published several books of reputed influence in his lifetime. One of the better known of these books, \textit{The Still Hour} (1859), contains summaries of several sermons on prayer. In addition to some guides for hymns and rhetorical theory texts, he also published one book on religious conversion titled \textit{The New Birth} (1867) about the same time as his daughter published \textit{The}
Gates Ajar. However, the essays which probably were most difficult for his daughter to incorporate into her view of her father as the "best of fathers" were his two anti-women's rights essays "Woman-Suffrage as Judged by the Working of Negro-Suffrage" (1878) and "Reform in the Political Status of Women" (1881). Both published about the same time as Phelps was publishing some of her most strongly feminist works, the first was rebutted by Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell in the Woman's Journal.65

Despite her support of women's causes, her success in publishing, and her father's reported misogyny, Phelps continued to care deeply about her father's opinion throughout most of her life. In her autobiography, Phelps records one such incident which occurred after she gave him a copy of her first best-seller:

Unknown to himself, I had dedicated "The Gates Ajar" to him. In this dedication there was a slip in good English, or, at least, in such English as the professor wrote and spoke. I had used the word "nears" as a verb, instead of its proper synonym, "approaches." He read the dedication quietly, thanked me tenderly for it, and said nothing. It was left for me to find out my blunder for myself, as I did, in due time. He had not the heart to tell me of it then. Nor did he insinuate his consciousness that the dedication might seem to involve him—as it did in certain citadels of stupidity—in the views of the book.66

In fact, Phelps did not even show this or any other book to her father until after it was published. When asked why she did not ask "such a rare critic at first hand as [her] father" for help with her manuscripts, she answered that while it could be that he was "a very busy man," most likely it was because of her own "abnormal pride."67 What is perhaps most amazing about Phelps is that in spite of her upbringing, being raised by a man who, though she admired and loved him, was, nonetheless, an outspoken opponent of the women's movement, she was still able to so publicly declare her support of women. In her autobiography, Phelps writes:

It is almost impossible to understand, now, what it meant when I was twenty-five, for a young lady reared as I was, on Andover Hill, to
announce that she should forthwith approve and further the
enfranchisement and elevation of her own sex. Seen beside the really great
martyrdoms and dedications of the "causes" which throb through our
modern life, this seems an episode only large enough to irritate a smile.
Yet I do not, to this hour, like to recall, and I have no intention whatever
of revealing, what it cost me.68

"What it cost" Phelps is never clearly defined, for her admiration of her father would not
let her directly speak against him in a forthright way, but it is clear that Phelps's
relationship with her father was one which was often confused by her own feelings. While
Austin Phelps's character certainly had an impact on his daughter's life and later
representations of male characters, perhaps it is her immersion in the Andover
environment and the religious beliefs of her father and grandfather which were the primary
heritage given her by her male relatives.

The Story of the Story-Teller—A Modern Sappho

Dark Sappho! could not verse immortal save
That breast imbued with such immortal fire?
(Childe Harold. Canto II, Byron)

John Greenleaf Whittier once wrote of Elizabeth Stuart Phelps that she was "an intense
nature--frail but strong--a Puritan with the passion and fire of Sappho and the moral
courage of Joan of Arc."69 According to recent readings of Sappho, she was a Greek
poet who lived on the island of Lesbos most of her life. As the only woman in a group of
classical writers, Sappho was an extremely important model for women poets. Apparently
the author of about twelve thousand lines of verse, almost all lost, she created cultic
hymns, satire, and intensely passionate poetry about women. One entry explains that "her
love for women was suppressed by early commentators and translators, [but] rumors of
unrestrained sexuality persisted."70 The story of Sappho, which was given by Ovid,
translated by Pope,71 alluded to in Byron's "Childe Harold," and repeated in Bullfinch's
Mythology says that Sappho jumped from the top of a peak into the sea due to an
unrequited love affair with a young man named Phaon. The comparison of Phelps to Sappho was not accidental. While it is obvious that Whittier was not trying to call Phelps a lesbian,\textsuperscript{72} what is most important in this comparison is how Whittier defines Phelps as a passionate, artistic woman as well as a brave, independent one.

After her mother's death, Mary Gray took her mother's name, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, and, at an early age, her profession. While she describes herself as a tomboy, many of her earliest memories include being read Wordsworth by her mother. Although she never believed herself as intellectually gifted as either of her parents, Phelps felt that by some hereditary process she had been born a writer: "I said it was impossible to be her daughter and not to write. Rather, I should say, impossible to be their daughter and not have something to say, and a pen to say it."\textsuperscript{73} Her first publication came out in the \textit{Youth's Companion} when she was only thirteen, and although she forgot the title of the story, she never forgot that she received payment for this story.\textsuperscript{74} In \textit{Chapters from a Life}, Phelps reports that her income from this first effort was $2.50, and this $2.50 was just the beginning of her lifelong desire to be self-supporting through her own efforts. She explains, "It is impossible to forget the sense of dignity which marks the hour when one becomes a wage-earner. . . . I felt that I had suddenly acquired value--to myself, to my family, and to the world."\textsuperscript{75}

Phelps's first published works were stories for young people and Sunday school tracts, but her education and experience prepared her for writing longer adult works. Phelps attended a private girls' school in Andover, Mrs. Edwards's School for Young Ladies, but according to Phelps, her father helped oversee the curriculum of the school. She writes:

\begin{quote}
With the exception of Greek and trigonometry--thought, in those days, to be beyond the scope of the feminine intellect--we pursued the same curriculum that our brothers did at college. . . . I was not allowed . . . to inflict myself upon the piano for more than one hour a day: my father
\end{quote}
taking the ground that, as there was only so much of a girl, if she had not unusual musical gift and had less than usual physical vigor, she had better give the best of herself to her studies.\textsuperscript{76} (\textit{Chapters 60-61})

While the instruction Phelps received at Mrs. Edwards's school gave her a fairly broad education, she gives her father the credit for educating her in ways that went beyond the ordinary girl's schooling, both by observation and training. Phelps watched her father in his own studious habits, "scholarly tastes," "high ideals," and "magnificent habits of work." Not only did he encourage his daughter's studies, but he also encouraged her to read works not always at the top of the list for young ladies. Phelps recalls:

\begin{quote}
At sixteen, I remember, there came to me a distinct arousing or awakening to the intellectual life. As I look back, I see it in a flashlight. Most of the important phases or crises of our lives can be traced to some one influence or event, and this one I connect directly with the reading to me by my father of the writings of De Quincey and the poems of Wordsworth.\textsuperscript{77}
\end{quote}

She later states that this year, her sixteenth, she also "happened for [her]self on" Elizabeth Barrett Browning's \textit{Aurora Leigh}. Her father's reading opened for her "the world of letters as a Paradise from which no flaming sword could ever exile me," she says, but reading \textit{Aurora Leigh} was the true source of her enlightenment for in it she discovered her own nature. She believes "[t]here may be greater poems in our language than \textit{Aurora Leigh}, but it was many years before it was possible for me to suppose it."\textsuperscript{78} In \textit{Aurora Leigh}, a young woman must come to terms with inner conflicts tearing her between the life of a single poet and marriage to a suitor, a theme repeated in several of Phelps's stories (and in her life), but most particularly in \textit{The Story of Avis}. Like many women before and after, Phelps believed that a literary career was almost impossible for a married woman, for she saw the difficulties of her mother as she strove to be a perfect wife and mother and "died trying."

As an adult, Phelps insisted on making her own living and being an independent woman. As a young woman, she found it difficult to find a "room of her own" in which to
write. She tells about writing over "an open register," and in the cellar, the attic, and even in the orchard. The younger children of the family were everywhere, making it even more difficult to find a time and place to work. Instead of complaining, Phelps writes, "I hasten to say that no person was to blame for inconveniences of whose existence I had never complained. Doubtless something would have been done to relieve them had I asked for it; or if the idea that my work could ever be of any consequence had occurred to any of us." However, after *The Gates Ajar* was published and her popularity was on the rise, it became obvious to everyone that Phelps must have a place to work. Eventually, she moved into the summer house where her mother had written, and she states, "an out-of-door study is sure to prove your best friend," for like Avis Dobell in *The Story of Avis*, she discovers that its distance from the house is a sure-fire way to avoid interruption of the domestic kind.

Although there is evidence that Elizabeth Stuart Phelps had one "great love" in her younger years, the majority of her young life was spent as the unmarried daughter of Austin Phelps. Living as an adult in someone else's home was not particularly attractive to her, however. In the mid-1870s she began to spend a large part of the summer in the sea community of Gloucester, and she eventually built a cottage near the ocean, a setting which provided her the context for a number of her novels, particularly *An Old Maid's Paradise* (1879) and *Burglars in Paradise* (1886). This cottage provided her with a home far away from the restrictions of her father's house and provided her with some solitude. In one of the few passages where Phelps equates being "shut in" with a positive connotation, she writes, "Shut away from the world, shut in with the sea, I light my lonely fire, and thank God for my own hearth, and for Gloucester shore." Letters describe a great number of visitors to her seaside cottage, including Oliver Wendell Holmes, Whittier, Annie and James T. Fields, and Longfellow. Into this "Old Maids Paradise," a
burglar entered in the form of Herbert Dickinson Ward, son of the editor of The Independent to which Phelps frequently contributed.

In 1888 Phelps married Ward, a man seventeen years younger than she. and "[t]he Old Maids' [sic] Paradise was closed that year forever." Although Phelps's writing about her husband is less than revealing, most historians believe her marriage was not particularly happy. In addition, the works which Phelps published jointly with Ward after their marriage are, in general, more conservative and unsurprising than previous works she had written alone.83 Also, Phelps's novels about relationships between men and women written during the years of her marriage reveal a pattern of resignation which suggests a less than positive attitude toward her own marriage. Carol Farley Kessler goes so far as to say that these later novels offer "no innovative solutions to women's need for fulfillment or equality in relationships with men" and that they merely rework earlier stories.84

However, it would be incorrect to suppose that Phelps lost interest in women's causes or in any area of reform. Even her later novels, sometimes labeled her weakest novels, reveal an intense interest in the rights of women and other types of societal reform. As late as 1904, Phelps went before the Massachusetts Legislature to deliver the last of her three anti-vivisection addresses, and her later novels Confessions of a Wife (published pseudonymously in 1902 under the name Mary Adams) and Walled In (1907) uncover not only a complex and possibly revealing understanding of marital relationships and problems, but they also tackle the difficult issues of infidelity, drug abuse, and invalidism.

In writing her autobiography, Phelps looks back at her years of writing and comments on her sometimes difficult and painful attempts at social reform:

A maker of books with any tendency towards the activities of moral reform may be at some peculiar disadvantage. As I look back upon the last twenty-five years of my own life, I seem to myself to have achieved little or nothing in the stir of the great movements for improving the conditions of society which have distinguished our day; yet I am conscious that these
have often thrust in my study door and dragged me out into their forays, if not upon their battle-fields. The grandfather who belonged to the underground-railway, and the grandfather of the German lexicon, must have contended in the brain cells or heart cells of their unconscious descendant, as our ancestors do in the lives of all of us; for the reformer's blood and the student's blood have always had an uncomfortable time of it, together, in my veins.\textsuperscript{85}

In Phelps, the "reformer's blood and the student's blood" may not always merge peacefully, but the resulting fiction is almost always fascinating and informative, reflecting as it does the cultural movements of her time.
Notes


2 Phelps, *Chapters* 262-63.


7 Carol Farley Kessler, *Elizabeth Stuart Phelps* (Boston: Twayne, 1982) i.

8 Kessler, *Phelps* 133-34.


10 Ammons, ix.


12 Chase 20-21.


16 Baym, *Woman's Fiction* 50.


19 As Phelps notes in "What Is a Fact?" due to ever-increasing scientific research and publication, a religious world-view was no longer the default philosophy by the 1880s. She writes that there is "a general impression that Darwin is to blame, and that geology is at the bottom of the trouble." Phelps, "What Is a Fact?" *Atlantic Monthly* Nov 1880: 676-77. See also Appendix B.

20 Baym 44.

21 R.W.B. Lewis identifies the "American Adam" who was being written about by American authors of the mid-nineteenth century as "an individual emancipated from history, happily bereft of ancestry, untouched and undefiled by the usual inheritances of family and race; an individual standing alone, self-reliant and self-propelling, ready to confront whatever awaited him with the aid of his own unique and inherent resources." R.W.B. Lewis, *An American Adam*, 5. Interestingly, Lewis and others are not ready to identify the domestic fiction novel as a story of Eve.

22 Kessler, Phelps 124-27.

23 Quoted in Kessler 127.

24 Whittier often mentioned Phelps's works in his letters to various friends and acquaintances, including James and Annie Fields, Harriet Minot Pitman, Mary Abigail Dodge, Rebecca Magill (sister of the President of Swarthmore College), and Lucy Larcom. In fact, Whittier's last letter was written to Phelps, dated August 30, 1892, just eight days before his death following a stroke. *The Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier*, Volume III: 1861-1892, Ed. by John B. Pickard (Cambridge: Belknap P, 1975).

25 Phelps's important literary friends who died in the 1880s include James T. Fields, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, George Eliot, and Helen Hunt Jackson. In addition, her brother died in 1883, her best friend Dr. Mary Briggs Harris in 1886, and her father in 1890. Coultrap-McQuin, *Doing Literary Business* 177.

26 Coultrap-McQuin 180.


28 On this subject see Chase, *The American Novel and Its Traditions*; R.W.B.
Lewis, *The American Adam*.

29 Lewis 2.

30 Baym, "Melodramas of Beset Manhood" 129.

31 Phelps, *Chapters 3*.


34 Helen Sootin Smith calls Phelps's illness a "culturally sanctioned way of dealing with repression," and blames "an early acquaintance with the darker aspects of Calvinism" for the "unfortunate psychological effects" (xiv). Kessler notes Smith's explanation and adds a discussion of Carroll Smith-Rosenberg's study on "hysterical women," arguing that the elder Elizabeth Stuart's illness was probably "both product and indictment of her culture" (7).


36 This school later became Maplewood School.

37 Quoted by Phelps, *Austin Phelps 5*.


39 Phelps, *Chapters 5*.


41 Although the exact date is not known, it is assumed by most biographers that Phelps took her mother's name at the age of eight when her mother died.

42 Phelps, *Austin Phelps 54*.

43 Kessler, *Phelps 12*.

44 Phelps, *Austin Phelps 58*.
The most obvious example of this is Myrton Ferris in *Walled In* (1907), a professor of rhetoric who lives as an invalid for a long time. The street missionary Emmanuel Bayard in *A Singular Life* (1895), the professor and unregenerate husband of Avis Philip Ostrander in *The Story of Avis* (1877), and the man-about-town Waldo Yorke in *Doctor Zay* (1882) are also male lead characters who spend significant time suffering from illness.


*Phelps, Austin Phelps* 52.

*Phelps, Austin Phelps* 53.

*Phelps, Chapters* 14-15.

Quoted by Austin Phelps, "A Memorial" 37-38.

*Phelps, Chapters* 12.

*Phelps, Chapters* 13.

*Phelps, Chapters* 12.

*Phelps, Austin Phelps* 52.

*Phelps, Austin Phelps* 53.

*Phelps, Austin Phelps* 53.


*Phelps, Chapters* 12-14.

*Phelps, Austin Phelps* 52-53.

*Phelps, Chapters* 16.
Austin Phelps married one of Phelps's aunts, Mary Stuart, who was very ill with tuberculosis at the time of the marriage. Phelps speculates that this marriage occurred due to Austin's feelings of moral responsibility for his wife's sister, rather than as a domestic partner. His third marriage, to Mary A. Johnson, lasted thirty-three years and "gave him a great deal of happiness." *Austin Phelps* 95-96.

Myrton Ferris, the chair of Rhetoric at his college, suffers from an extensive invalidism due to an automobile accident. Like Austin Phelps, he is aided by the trustees and his students at his school.

*Phelps, Austin Phelps* 65-66.


*Phelps, Chapters* 107.

*Phelps, Chapters* 106.

*Phelps, Chapters*, emphasis added 249-50.


Whittier called Phelps a "Sappho" before the 1897 discovery of papyrus fragments from her poetry and the rewriting of her myth which defined her as a lesbian.

*Phelps, Chapters* 15.

The title and exact date of this work have not been discovered by research at this point.

*Phelps, Chapters* 22.

*Phelps, Chapters* 60-61.
There is evidence that she had a romantic relationship with a Lieutenant Samuel Hopkins Thompson who was killed at Antietam in 1862 when Phelps was only 18.

Kessler reports that the first two of the three co-written works were unsuccessful biblical romances entitled Master of the Magicians (1890) and Come Forth! (1891). The last, A Lost Hero (1891), is the story of an elderly African-American man who saves a town while losing his life.
CHAPTER II

THE AWAKENING TO INTELLECTUAL AND SPIRITUAL LIFE: PHILOSOPHY AND PHELPS

Our book reveals what life is to us. Life is to us what we are. (Phelps, Chapters 260)

The "Natural History" of Elizabeth Stuart Phelps

Elizabeth Stuart Phelps clearly places some of her sympathies with the orthodox Congregationalists at Andover, defending her upbringing, her heritage, and the benefits of growing up in a university town; for Phelps, however, the importance of the Andover community was in the way it "engaged in studying thought." Even though she describes her childhood as relatively cut off from the larger Boston society and isolated from the problems and excitement of the metropolis, she also appreciates the close-knit nature of the Andover community. In her autobiography, Phelps says that she values what she saw as the innocence of her childhood and jokingly denies being "starved for society" as she describes Andover's literary circles and social functions, such as Chaucer Clubs. However, as she reveals in a description of her reaction to a visit to Andover by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Phelps writes defensively about her feelings of loyalty toward the orthodox community's beliefs:

Of course, whenever we found ourselves in forms of society not in harmony with our religious views, we were accustomed, in various ways, to meet with a predisposition similar to that which I thought I detected in Mr. Emerson. . . . [B]y virtue of one's religious views, the man or woman of orthodox convictions, whatever one's proportion of personal culture, is regarded with a gentle superiority, as being of a class still enslaved in superstition, and therefore per se barbaric. Put in undecorated language, this is about the sum and substance of a state of feeling which all intelligent evangelical Christians recognize perfectly in those who have preempted for themselves the claims belonging to what are called the liberal faiths.
Even though here and in other places Phelps clearly places her loyalties on the side of her orthodox community, it is even more clear, both in her autobiography and in her fiction, that she opposes many of the orthodox teachings of the seminary. In her autobiography, Phelps writes:

> Mr. Howells says that he must be a dull fellow who does not, at some time or other, hate his native village; and I must confess that I have not, at all stages of my life, held my present opinion of Andover. There have been times when her gentle indifference to the preoccupations of the world has stung me, as all serenity stings restlessness. There have been times when the inevitable limitations of her horizon have seemed as familiar as the coffin-lid to the dead.⁴

In this passage, the so-called "serenity" of Andover is compared to the serenity of death. The self-contentment of Andover may have been peaceful, but as Phelps well recognizes, time does not stand still and change comes to everything eventually.

On one hand, raised as she was in the seat of orthodox thought, Andover Seminary, Phelps's upbringing was extremely religious and highly conservative. Yet, even her early writing shows the influence of so-called "liberal" notions, the very notions the orthodox Congregationalists had thought they were escaping when they rejected the new liberal or Unitarian ideology of Harvard and founded Andover Seminary as a training ground for orthodox ministers. What were the orthodox Congregationalists at Andover trying to escape? For one thing, the liberals tended to be more open than the orthodox Congregationalists to scientific advances for they did not believe, by and large, in the infallibility of Biblical text. In Barbara Packer's work on the development of transcendentalism, she writes, "Things got so bad . . . that orthodox ministers denounced liberal Christianity as 'the last and most perfect invention of Satan, the consummation of his blasphemies, the most cunning weapon ever forged in the fires of hell.'"⁵ Liberal Unitarians disputed the idea that religion could only come from Biblical texts, teachings, and creeds, and instead stressed the value of an "understanding" of God and the spiritual
life through "progressive illumination," the concept that biblical scripture, instead of being set in stone, is being continually revealed as science and history allow better understanding of the world, creation, and God. Thus, for liberal Unitarians, scripture is open to re-reading and re-interpretation in every era so as to more accurately reflect truth within that contemporary framework. Since many scientists and philosophers of the nineteenth century were liberals, the scientific theories of Darwin and others were more readily accepted by liberal faiths as revealing new aspects of creation instead of as contradictions to Biblical scripture. Liberals questioned orthodox teachings, specifically those about the Trinitarian nature of God and the depravity of mankind which would lead to eternal damnation. Like Emanuel Bayard in Phelps's A Singular Life, the liberals opposed a too-rigid reaching of the scriptures which emphasized a Calvinistic judgementalism and ignored God's goodness. Interestingly, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps believed both in the liberal notion of "progressive illumination" and a "historical Jesus," the orthodox idea that Jesus was a real man who lived in history and was written about in historical Christian documents.

Andover's attempts to keep change at bay would not last. By the mid-1890s Phelps writes in her autobiography that her description of Andover "has a certain historical interest" because it "is now so obviously passing away." The Andover of her childhood--orthodox and austere--necessarily responded to the changing times. Phelps adds, "That Andover remains upon the map . . . one does not dispute; but the Andover of New England theology--the Andover of a peculiar people, the Andover that held herself apart from the world and all that was therein--will soon become an interesting wraith."6

When Phelps's grandfather Moses Stuart introduced the study of German philosophy to Andover during the earlier part of the nineteenth century it had a great impact on the future theologians and ministers training there. Perhaps Stuart would have had second thoughts if he had realized the way that German philosophy was to affect
Congregational thought. After all, the English Romantics, including Coleridge and Wordsworth, were influenced by the German philosophers, as well as their descendants, transcendentalists, who can trace a direct line in philosophical development from the German and British Romantics. One of these German philosophers was Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), considered by many to be the most influential theologian of the nineteenth century, whom Helen Sootin Smith, editor of the 1964 edition (the latest edition) of Phelps's novel *The Gates Ajar*, discusses in the context of her reading of Phelps's novel.\(^7\) Although there is no clear evidence that Phelps read Schleiermacher, his works were studied by the students at Andover and so were available to her. Whether or not Phelps was directly influenced by Schleiermacher, interesting connections may be made between his philosophy and the philosophy Phelps came to adopt. For instance, Schleiermacher believed in a universal "God-consciousness," an inner awareness of "religious feeling" which he maintained provided better proof for the existence of God than traditional proofs, such as Biblical texts.\(^8\) Along with this inner awareness, Schleiermacher also stressed the significance of the individual. By allowing the presence of God to be fixed in every person and giving each individual a certain social power in his or her community, Schleiermacher also gives each individual a stronger relationship to deity than had been allowed by most other Biblical scholars. Thus, in many ways Schleiermacher's ideas of a God-like human are similar to the transcendental notion that man *is* God. Frederick Coppleston, author of *A History of Philosophy*, explains:

Though he refuses to ascribe personality to God, except in a symbolic sense, Schleiermacher lays great stress on the value of the individual personality when he is considering human beings as moral agents. . . . At the same time every individual is a particular manifestation of God, and he has his own special gifts, his own particularity (*Eigentumlichkeit*). It is thus his duty to develop his individual talents. And education should be directed to the formation of fully developed and harmoniously integrated individual personalities.\(^9\)
Like Phelps and many of the reformers of the nineteenth century, Schleiermacher stresses individual self-fulfillment as a major goal. Schleiermacher's philosophies can be seen reflected in many of Phelps's novels as her characters ignore the tenets of the neighborhood congregation and rely on the inward understanding of God to help guide them. Like the Quakers who relied upon an "inner light" and who allowed women a position of power through their personal relationship with God, Phelps's characters, particularly those in *The Gates Ajar*, have an inner awareness of the spiritual and feel themselves qualified to interpret the Bible to fit their needs.

While Phelps grew up in a primarily orthodox community, reading the works of German philosophers and British romantics and creating lifelong friendships with members of the "liberal" faith obviously made their impact on her. As a child, bedtime readings of Wordsworth's poetry led to her eventual deeper study of both Wordsworth and De Quincey, an important phase in Phelps's life which she calls "a distinct arousing or awakening to the intellectual life." As early as the age of twenty, when she began writing her best-selling *The Gates Ajar*, Phelps combined a thorough understanding of orthodox religious beliefs with liberal readings of scripture as she developed a concept of heaven which probably seemed heretical to many of the more orthodox members at Andover. Thus, in many ways Elizabeth Stuart Phelps may seem to be a writer with divided loyalties. Like Schleiermacher, Phelps was able to break away from her orthodox beliefs, those traditional Puritanical forms of belief, which might limit her ability to imagine the infinite. For Phelps, the infinite was merely an extension of the finite--the world, then, was an extension of heaven, and the best way to imagine heaven was to imagine a better world. Thus, Phelps's novels, even when they deal with spiritual issues, most specifically suggest changes that need to be made in society.
The Question of Life after Death

It is true that, for little people, our little souls were a good deal agitated on the question of eternal salvation. (Phelps, Chapters 51)

Michael Wheeler, author of "Tennyson, Newman and the Question of Authority," states, "Of all areas of nineteenth-century English theology, none was more problematic and contentious than that concerning life after death." Certainly, the controversial success of The Gates Ajar (1868) can attest to the contentiousness of Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's views on the afterlife. Its success profoundly affected her writing career, for to be a best-selling author at the age of twenty-four is bound to impact one's life. Although in many ways The Gates Ajar is a much less radical novel than many of Phelps's later novels for it primarily seeks to teach people about better ways of imagining heaven, in so doing it also seeks to reform society by imagining a better world.

The Gates Ajar is the fictional journal of a young girl named Mary Cabot who loses her beloved brother Royal in the Civil War. Devastated and lonely, for her parents had died several years before, she expresses not only her sadness and devastation, but also her criticism of her neighbors and of God. The young widowed Aunt Winifred Forseythe and her small daughter Faith come to stay with Mary to help her through her grief. With Winifred's help, Mary comes to a better understanding of the will of God and of His desire for His people. Winifred's descriptions of a physical heaven which gives people all their hearts could ever desire on earth comforts Mary and others around her as they nurse their own particular fears and grief. Not only did Winifred's description of heaven comfort Mary, but it also comforted the thousands of American readers who had recently lost their husbands and brothers in the Civil War. When questioned about her reasons for writing The Gates Ajar, Phelps explains that she felt inspired to write. Afterward, when she saw through fan letters the great numbers of lives which were touched by her book, Phelps states that she found proof for her own understanding of God's will by looking at "these
signs of human misery and hope." She calls the mourners who gain hope after reading her books her "solemn inspiration," and states, "I have called them the human argument for faith in the future life, and see no reason for amending the term."^5

Mary Cabot is a girl who has been well indoctrinated by her orthodox Christian training. When she hears about her brother Royal's death her first thoughts are not of heaven, but of hell; she says, "Those two words-'shot dead'-shut me up and walled me in, as I think people must feel shut up and walled in, in Hell. I write the words most solemnly, for I know that there has been Hell in my heart."^6 Perhaps the clearest idea of death for Mary is explained in that "walled in" image, for to her death is a blankness or emptiness.^7 She has a "bare, blank sense of physical repulsion from death" (Gates 10). In her attempts to reach behind this blank wall, Mary prays for contact with her brother Royal, "for a touch, a sign, only for something to break the silence into which he has gone." But to this request, "there is no answer, none" (17). Her grief shuts her off emotionally from her community, and the condolence visits of her neighbors and friends feel like an "inquisition" to her, most particularly the visit of one of the more "spiritual" members, Deacon Quirk.

In his desire to "comfort" Mary, Quirk begins by spouting the trite phrases "Afflictions come from God" and "Glory in tribulation [sic]" (Gates 14). As with most people, Mary does not find comfort in the thought that her brother's death is a kind of positive growth experience for her and resents Deacon Quirk's attitude. Unfortunately, he takes this opportunity to bring the subject around to Royal's unlikely redemption, a judgment he makes based on his own understanding of religion. "I believe he never made a profession of religion," Deacon Quirk says, "but there is no limit to the mercy of God. It is very unsafe for the young to think that they can rely on a death-bed repentance... If you cannot say with certainty that he is numbered among the redeemed, you are justified, perhaps, in hoping so" (15). Although Mary has been raised to believe exactly the way
Deacon Quirk believes, in her heart she knows that her brother's personal relationship with God made him better than the Deacon. She writes, "Roy's was no death-bed repentance. but the quiet, natural growth of a life that had always been the life of the pure in heart" (15). Therefore, even before Winifred comes to teach Mary a new religion, she is moved by her heart rather than her head, for she has a type of "God-consciousness" as described by Schleiermacher, and this concept becomes a leitmotif throughout the novel.

In her attempt to imagine where Royal has gone, Mary falls back on the conventional images of the afterlife, images which do not comfort her. She writes, "I know nothing about Heaven. It is very far off. In my best and happiest days, I never liked to think of it. If I were to go there, it could do me no good, for I should not see Roy. Or if by chance I should see him standing up among the grand, white angels, he would not be the old dear Roy. I should grow so tired of singing!" (10). Mary's idea of heaven reflects the conventional religious view, a view which has been created based on a few Biblical scriptures where those in heaven are seen standing in white robes and singing and glorifying God. Mary discovers that this view of heaven is empty and meaningless for her as she tries to adjust to the death of her brother. Winifred's concept of heaven is much more corporeal than the traditional reading of heaven, for, as she explains to her niece, Roy still loves Mary and she will see him again someday when she dies. Mary's surprise that Roy will be visible gives way to greater disbelief when Winifred explains that Roy is waiting to lead her to a lovely cottage in heaven. Winifred asks, "Why, my child, where did you get your ideas of God? Don't you suppose He knows how you love Roy?" (38-39). Since Mary's ideas of God came from her religious traditions, as represented by church member Deacon Quirk and the minister Dr. Bland in the novel, Aunt Winifred's question shows the disdain she has in knowledge only proven by scriptural evidence and religious tradition. Ideas of God must be gained from one's innermost feeling about God, the growth of the holy or sensus numinis of Schleiermacher.
Mary writes a description of one of Dr. Bland's sermons on heaven to further amplify her Aunt Winifred's notions of heaven as quite different from traditional views. In it, Dr. Bland pronounces that heaven is "an eternal state of holiness and happiness." Mary writes:

There was something about adoration, and the harpers harping with their harps, and the sea of glass, and crying, Worthy the Lamb! and a great deal more that bewildered me and dishearted me so that I could scarcely listen to it. I do not doubt that we shall glorify God primarily and happily, but can we not do it in some other way than by harping and praying? (49)

After Mary's derogatory description of Dr. Bland's sermon, she asks Winifred about the scriptural evidence he has proclaimed. His version of heaven, while developed from scriptural evidence, does not take into account the needs of his audience, for he "cannot seem to think outside of the old grooves," as Mary explains. She adds, "I wanted something actual, something pleasant, about this place into which Roy has gone. He gave me glittering generalities, cold commonplace, vagueness, unreality, a God and a future at which I sat and shivered" (51). The need which Winifred addresses, however, is both spiritual and physical; ethereal descriptions will not suffice. Explaining that Dr. Bland's image of heaven cannot be found in her Bible, Winifred continues to describe the heaven which is written on her heart. She adds, "The more I study the Bible . . . and I study not entirely in ignorance of the commentators, . . . the more perplexed I am to imagine where the current ideas of our future come from. . . . That heaven which we heard about today was Dr. Bland's, not God's" (53). When Mary asks about the verses in Revelations which describe harps and choirs, Winifred has a ready answer:

Can't people tell picture from substance, a metaphor from its meaning? That book of Revelation is precisely what it professes to be, --a vision, a symbol. . . . They are not empty symbols. And why God did not give us actual descriptions of actual heavenly life. I don't trouble myself to wonder. . . . I find from these symbols, and from his voice in my own heart, many beautiful things. (54)
Like the liberal theologians, Winifred accepts scriptural evidence only when it can be verified by the voice of God in her heart.

Not only does *The Gates Ajar* dispute notions that the spiritual afterlife must be limited to the images contained in the Bible, but the novel also concentrates on the value of the *individual* woman or man. In the afterlife, according to Winifred, each person will be able to continue to be her own person. Mary confronts Winifred about an "awful thing" Dr. Bland stated in his sermon, that in heaven there would be no concealed thoughts. Winifred, noting that Dr. Bland's position is mere conjecture, maintains that the Bible would never presume to argue that people would lose their individual thoughts, for in losing individual thoughts one would lose one's individuality, and to lose one's individuality is to lose one's soul. Winifred states:

> The dead minister's supposition would destroy individuality at one fell swoop. We should be like a man walking down a room lined with mirrors, who sees himself reflected in all sizes, colors, shades, at all angles and in all proportions, according to the capacity of the mirror, till he seems no longer to belong to himself, but to be cut up into ellipses and octagons and prisms. . . . Besides, wherever the Bible touches the subject, it premises our individuality as a matter of course. (55)

In *The Gates Ajar*, Winifred can only speculate about the state of the individual after death because the novel does not venture into the territory of the fantastic by allowing Mary to visit heaven or to see the ghost of her brother Royal. Nonetheless, through Winifred Phelps emphasizes the significance of the individual and illustrates the way that each soul will become more fully individual in the afterlife. Winifred does not fear death, for she states that she believes she will "find in [her]self wonderful new tastes and capacities" in the afterlife (76). In commenting upon the importance of the individual to God, the novel also comments upon the significance of each individual man and woman in society and the value of developing formerly undeveloped "tastes and capacities." The relationship of the individual to the community and to God is an important concept in the novel, as it is in
Schleiermacher's *Toward a Theory of Sociable Conduct* (1799). In this work, Schleiermacher identifies each individual as a sphere within a larger community sphere. Each individual sphere interacts with adjacent individual spheres, having an impact upon every other sphere, because as the spheres interact, their interaction creates a motion which necessarily impacts surrounding spheres. In fact, the "outline and profile" of society constantly changes because of the movement of the individual spheres within the community. By allowing the presence of God to be fixed in every person and giving each individual a certain social power in his or her community, Schleiermacher also gives each individual a stronger relationship to deity than had been allowed by most other Biblical scholars. Likewise, in *The Gates Ajar*, Phelps understands that the individual, namely Winifred, can have an important, even life-changing, influence on her community. For as Winifred moves in the community, touching the lives of the other spiritually-needy people, she also causes the outlines and identity of the community to change.

Along with this idea of individuality comes a notion that spiritual bodies and physical bodies are similar. In *The Gates Ajar*, Mary's initial ideas of life after death reflect traditional orthodox ideas—she believes that spiritual bodies in heaven will float around, never needing sleep or food, and that they will be virtually unrecognizable. Winifred argues that in heaven the spiritual body will look very similar to the physical body. Mary asks what our bodies will be like in heaven, to which her aunt responds, "They will be as real as these. . . . What would be the use of having a body that you can't see and touch? A body is a body, not a spirit" (79). Like the transcendentalists who believed in the "primacy of the individual and the superiority of the creating spirit to any forms it has generated,"19 Phelps blurs the distinctions between the spiritual and the physical and elevates the significance of the individual, whether on earth or after death.

Winifred's alternative reading of heaven comforts Mary. Mary is both surprised at her aunt's audacity and thankful for an alternate approach which comforts. Like Phelps
herself, Mary does not completely reject the "church of her youth," for she continues in attendance at the local Congregational church, but her understanding changes as she continues to be guided by her aunt. Like Phelps, who states in her autobiography, "To be quite honest, I should say that I have not retained all the beliefs which I was taught—who does? But I have retained the profoundest respect for the way in which I was taught them," Mary lets the structure of the local church serve as an arena for her religious beliefs, following in her Aunt Winifred's spiritual shoes. Mary writes in her journal that Winifred has put together a Sunday-school class made up of young girls from the poorer parts of town, mostly children of church members: "I find that she is a thoroughly busy Christian, with a certain 'week-day holiness' that is strong and refreshing, like a west wind. Church-going, and conversations on heaven, by no means exhaust her vitality" (Gates 98). Aunt Winifred's notions of the spiritual life involve action in the community. She takes her role as an individual seriously; with an almost missionary zeal, she seeks to influence as many people as possible in her community, and while she is at it, she also hopes to change the boundaries of her community.

Winifred's first lessons to the girls in her Sunday school class involve the question of eternity, and during the class discussion Aunt Winifred promises one girl that a long-desired piano will be available for her in the afterlife. In bewilderment, the girls argue with Winifred that they cannot own such material possessions as pianos in heaven. One girl imagines, unhappily, that heaven is a dreary place where everyone just stands around. Another exclaims, "I always just supposed . . . that you just floated round in heaven—you know—all together—something like jujube paste!" Upon describing this scene to Mary, Winifred (who unlike Phelps does not have a living father or long-standing orthodox heritage to justify) openly criticizes traditional religious beliefs, especially those pertaining to the afterlife:

46
Now, weren't those ideas alluring and comforting for young girls in the blossom of warm human life? They were trying with all their little hearts to 'be good,' too, some of them, and had all of them been to church and Sunday school all their lives. Never, never, if Jesus Christ had been Teacher and Preacher to them, would He have pictured their blessed endless years with Him in such bleak colors. They are not the hues of his Bible. (99)

Phelps uses the opportunity offered through the fictional character of Aunt Winifred to condemn the orthodox church's reluctance to "open up" heaven, to make it acceptable to young people as well as older people. Heaven for these young people needs to be large enough to hold the things that would make it heavenly for them, even pianos.

Through the character of Winifred, Phelps is able to reveal her own inner turmoil surrounding the traditional beliefs of her orthodox heritage. Although Phelps never publicly challenges or criticizes her orthodox ancestry, Winifred not only privately challenges orthodoxy, as she does in her conversations with Mary and the girls of her Sunday school class, but she also stands up to the patriarchal authorities of the church. After presumptuously criticizing Dr. Bland's impossible sermon on heaven, Winifred eventually confronts Deacon Quirk face-to-face and stands her ground while respectfully arguing with the church leader's religious ideas. Deacon Quirk begins the conversation by questioning Winifred's religious background; when he discovers that she is a member of the orthodox church, he deigns to have a "little religious conversation" with her. He begins the argument with an attack of her suggestion that heaven will contain instrumental music, since Winifred was so bold as to suggest that one of her girls might be able to play a piano in heaven. To Winifred's question about his own expectations of the activities in heaven, he responds, "Glorify God . . . and sing Worthy the Lamb! We shall be clothed in white robes with palms in our hands. . . . We shall be engaged in such employments as befit sinless creatures in a spiritooal [sic] state of existence" (103). Not only does Phelps immediately illustrate Deacon Quirk's ignorance by his poor language skills, but she also
comically juxtaposes the image of the man in his straw hat and old, worn clothing standing in a potato field with his own description of his future state in heaven. When Winifred questions him about his own possible satisfaction with such a state, Deacon Quirk is momentarily surprised into candor, but before he is able to spend much time contemplating the unlikelihood of his comfort in a white robe, he returns to his role as church leader. As Winifred continues to grill Deacon Quirk, Phelps describes her as a "white, finely cut woman, with her serene smile and rapt, saintly eyes--every inch of her, body and soul, refined not only by birth and training, but by the long nearness of her heart to Christ" (104). Her dialogue is educated and logical, while Deacon Quirk's language is mixed with ungrammatical constructions, mispronounced words, and platitudes as he cautiously evades her most clever points. He states, "I dare say you're a good woman, Mrs. Forceythe, if you do hold such uncommon [sic] doctrine, and I don't doubt you mean well enough, but I don't think that we ought to trouble ourselves about these mysteries of a future state" (105). Although Mary is angered by Deacon Quirk's dismissal of Winifred, her aunt calls him "amusing" and accepts the conversation as a kind of "experiment."

Mary's aunt is not afraid to discuss her spiritual beliefs with anyone who wants to talk. Winifred continues to have conversations with Mary, local youngsters, including Deacon Quirk's son, and even has the chance to deny being a Swedenborg to Deacon Quirk, but it is during Dr. Bland's trial of faith that Winifred is able to have the most impact. After losing his wife in a terrible accident, the church minister, Dr. Bland, comes to recognize that his descriptions of heaven and discussion of the afterlife will not suffice to heal the pain of loss. In her journal, Mary writes:

No Greek and Hebrew "original," no polished dogma, no link in his stereotyped logic, not one of his eloquent sermons on the future state, came to his relief. These were meant for happy days. They rang cold as steel upon the warm needs of an afflicted man. Brought face to face, and sharply, with the blank heaven of his belief, he stood up from before his
dead, and groped about it, and cried out against it in the bitterness of his soul. (143)

At this point, Dr. Bland is ready to hear Winifred's comforting words which, while not directly from the pages of the Bible, seem to spring, nonetheless, from some feeling about God and the afterlife. He asks her to tell him about her idea of heaven, "like a man and like a minister, hardly ready to come with all the learning of his schools and commentators and sit at the feet of a woman" (144). Even in his time of greatest spiritual need, the orthodoxy of his training rebels against Winifred's liberal notions, as he replies, "This is a somewhat novel train of thought to me. . . . I hope it may not prove an unscriptural one. . . . Some passages may be capable of other interpretations than I have formerly given them. No matter what I wish, you see, I must be guided by the Word of my God." When Winifred responds, "I hope you do not think that I am not guided by the Word of God. . . . I mean to be," one can readily see that two different meanings can be ascribed to the phrase "guided by the Word of God" (144). On one hand, Dr. Bland explores with orthodox zeal the scriptures and commentaries of the Bible; on the other hand, Winifred explores the Word of God as it has been written on her heart. This meeting between the two extremes is won by the woman, for not only does Dr. Bland burn his draft of the sermon on heaven, he also preaches, Mary records, with a "certain indefinable humanness" which seems to have started in him after his discussion with Winifred. Phelps exposes, through Winifred Forseythe, her own dissatisfaction with the orthodox conventionalism of her upbringing and offers an example of a strong, independent, spiritual woman succeeding in a public, albeit spiritual, way.

Once Mary has put off her spiritual blindness and replaced it with greater spiritual understanding, she is ready to be left alone. As Winifred succumbs to some mysteriously fatal illness, the reader learns that Mary will not be left entirely alone, for her aunt's symbolically named child, Faith, will be left in Mary's care. In addition, Mary is left not
only with a faith in life after death, but she is also left with a greater understanding of life on earth. The distinction between the spiritual and physical realm fades for Mary, for she perceives the afterlife as an invisible world separated from the visible by a gate, standing ajar, as the only thing dividing the two. She writes, "That is the substance, this the shadow; that the reality, this the dream" (157). In a nod toward the conventions of the "sentimental novel," Winifred's death-bed scene has its share of emotion and piety as she faces the afterlife and a long-awaited reuniting between herself and her husband. The moment of Winifred's death is triumphant as the sky blazes and brilliant colors jet "up to the zenith." (159). This "transcendental moment" is intended to illustrate to the reader the joys that await the dying, especially since Winifred looks toward the window and with her last breath sighs, "why, John!" as she apparently meets the face of her beloved husband waiting for her. Winifred's view of heaven gives her a drastically different approach to death than was supported by the orthodox view. Her subjective approach to the scriptural evidence on the afterlife, her strong-minded individuality, and her ability to influence other individuals and the community make her life seem to Mary and the other younger members of the community a life of promise and fulfillment. Through Winifred Foreseythe, Phelps is able to reflect some of her own rather complex philosophies about religion and the afterlife even as she uses the messages in the novel to argue for social change.

In *The Gates Ajar*, Phelps's first utopian novel, Phelps illustrates not only how she desires heaven to be, but she also gives a glimmer into her version of the earth—a place where individuals can be their own best selves, where a woman can stand up to a man on an intellectual and spiritual level, and where a woman, like Mary, can grow old with hope for both the physical and spiritual future. Like the character of Winifred in *The Gates Ajar*, and, it seems, like Phelps herself, Schleiermacher was often accused of trying to turn religion into an essentially subjective belief, one which reflected the desires rather than the truth. Perhaps where Schleiermacher has the greatest impact upon Phelps is in his idea of
historical religion. Not only did Schleiermacher argue for a more contemplative approach to religion, but he also argued that traditional religions cannot remain static entities. Schleiermacher seems to say that change—as necessitated by the "free movement of the spirit" which resides inside all people, but particularly inside those who are seeking God—is vital to religion. Considered in relation to Phelps's own views about religion and the validity of traditional structures or beliefs, especially looking at her non-traditional approach to heaven, Schleiermacher's philosophy becomes most enlightening, particularly as Phelps deals with religion in *The Gates Ajar*. It is significant to note that while the novel scrutinizes the afterlife, Phelps is primarily interested in using the novel to "console women for their loss, not only of loved ones, but of fulfillment as well." As Phelps writes in her autobiography:

> Useless suffering is the worst of all kinds of waste. Unless He created this world from sheer extravagance in the infliction of purposeless pain, there must be another life to justify, to heal, to comfort, to offer happiness, to develop holiness. If there be another world, and such a one, it will be no theologic drama, but a sensible wholesome scene.

**The Immortality of the Soul**

> Love is "the greatest thing in the world," and love will claim its own at last. The affection which is true enough to live forever, need have no fear that the life to come will thwart it. The grief that goes to the grave unhealed, may put its trust in unimagined joy to be.

*The Gates Ajar* was a fairly realistic account, written in journal format, of a girl's struggle to come to terms with the death of her beloved brother. In the novel, Winifred Forseythe contemplates the enlargement of a person's individuality in heaven, but besides the one glimpse out the window at the moment of her death when she evidently sees her husband, descriptions of heaven are all purely speculative and imaginary. In Phelps's next two novels about the afterlife, *Beyond the Gates* (1883) and *The Gates Between* (1887),
she closes the gap between the purely speculative and the experiential. Although each novel uses a different device to place its characters in the spiritual realm, each is both a philosophical treatise on the afterlife and a work of social criticism.

In *Beyond the Gates*, another Mary, this one older and from a larger family, apparently dies and, in her spiritual body, follows her father's ghost to the heavenly realm where she experiences life much more fully and richly than she had ever experienced it when she was alive. Mary comes to realize that while she had fooled herself when she was alive into supposing she led a rich and satisfied life, her life was actually full of unrecognized heartache and disappointment. Just as Mary begins to discover great fulfillment in heaven, she awakens to discover that her heavenly life had only been a fever-induced dream. Although *Beyond the Gates* is probably the least philosophically suggestive of the three Utopian novels, several points are interesting.

In this novel, as is speculated by Winifred in *The Gates Ajar*, Phelps describes the heavenly body as being both body and spirit. At the moment of her apparent death, Mary is able to walk very slowly across the room to her father. The weakness of her long illness affects her movement, and she tires easily as she follows him out of the house and down the street. The heavenly spiritual bodies that she sees are able to hover above the ground, and Mary discovers her own ability to float with her father's help and his order to "rise quickly!" The narrator, apparently Mary herself, explains:

I struggled at his words, for he seemed to slip from me, and I feared to lose him. I struggled and struck out into the air; I felt a wild excitement, like one plunged into a deep sea, and desperately swimming, as animals do, and a few men, from blind instinct, having never learned. My father spoke encouragingly, and with tenderness. He never once let go my hand. I felt myself, beyond all doubt, soaring—slowly and weakly—but surely ascending above the solid ground.24

Although her spiritual body tires, and even requires sleep, it is free from pain. However, these "heavenly" bodies are not subject to the same scientific laws that the physical bodies
are, for they can walk on top of the water, suggesting a possible explanation for Jesus's exhortation for Peter to follow him across the water in faith. Like Peter, Mary is unable to walk on top of the water, but she must be pulled in a boat by another spirit, until the skill can be taught her. Being more than physical bodies, the spiritual bodies are able to appreciate things never understood on earth, such as concerts of color and the loveliness of the earth's bounty. Nonetheless, the spiritual needs of the bodies are not entirely met by spiritual things, for the spirits in heaven do have needs, not only for beauty, but also for friendship and love.

As suggested by the earlier Utopian novel, *The Gates Ajar*, the spiritual individual in *Beyond the Gates* is organically developed in the afterlife. Mary's father explains, "Each comes to his own by his own. . . . The nature is never forced. Here we unfold like a leaf, a flower. He expects nothing of us but to be natural" (*Beyond the Gates* 47). Thus, the development of each spiritual individual is at its own pace; individuals do not arrive in the afterlife at the same spiritual level or with the same understanding. This organic development is associated with the concept of freedom in Mary's mind:

> If nothing were expected of us but to be natural, it was the more necessary that it should be natural to be right. I felt the full force of this conviction as it had never been possible to feel it in the other state of being, where I was under restraint. The meaning of *liberty* broke upon me like a sunburst. Freedom was in and of itself the highest law. . . . "As nearly as I can make it out, Father," I said, "henceforth I shall be responsible for my nature. . . . Of course I'm not to be called to account for what I start with here, any more than I was for what I started with there. That would be neither science nor philosophy." (48-49)

By no stretch of the imagination could this philosophy be called Calvinistic, for we have neither the predestined nor the lost. Mary recognizes that her faith and obedience had been underdeveloped on earth, but her lack of perfection is not held against her in heaven. However, that does not mean that no one goes to what is often called "hell" in Phelps's version of the afterlife.
In her autobiography, Phelps writes, "Of hell we heard sometimes, it is true, for Andover Seminary believed in it--though, be it said, much more comfortably in the days before this iron doctrine became the bridge of contention in the recent serious, theological battle which has devastated Andover."\(^{25}\) By the mid-1870's, Andover Seminary was having conflicts with several Congregational ministers and graduates of the seminary over the issue of future punishment. While many believed in future punishment, especially of the particularly despicable element of society, just as many theologians argued that the "heathen," those who had never been told about God, should not receive eternal punishment for something that was a result of the neglect of the Christian population. Phelps's position seems relatively clear in _Beyond the Gates_. Hell is not a place--it is a state of mind. In _Beyond the Gates_, the "lost" are tied, ghostlike, to their former homes and towns, unable to join in the spiritual pleasures of heaven. Mrs. Mersey, a good woman who visits the lower realm in order to save a few, explains their problem to Mary: "They loved nothing, they lived for nothing, they believed in nothing, they cultivated themselves for nothing but the earth. They simply lack the spiritual momentum to get away from it. It is as much the working of a natural law as the progress of a fever... They have their choice" (77-78). Mary describes the myriad of pursuits these unhappy spirits engage themselves in:

Some bought and sold; some eat and drank; others occupied themselves in coarse pleasures, from which one could but turn away the eyes. There were those who were busied in more refined ways:--students with eyes fastened to dusty volumes; virtuosos who hung about a picture, a statue, a tapestry, that had enslaved them; one musical creature I saw, who ought to have been of exquisite organization, judging from his hands--he played perpetually upon an instrument that he could not tune: women, I saw too, who robed and disrobed without a glint of pleasure in their faded faces. There were ruder souls than any of these--but one sought for them in the dens of the earth. (75-76)
After Mary sees what happens to these "ruder souls" after death, she is particularly surprised to meet one she had labeled "Worse than Wasted," Marie Sauvee, a French girl she had worked with and tried to influence for good. Mary's first surprised outburst, "You--HERE!" is met without surprise or hostility by Marie, who tells Mary that she was "the first person I ever loved" (112-14). Marie explains that she did not get to heaven because she deserved it, but because of her great love for Mary. Upon hearing this, Mary repeats her phrase, "It is neither Christianity nor philosophy." seemingly equating the two. However, what Mary discovers in the course of the novel is that Marie's explanation involves both Christianity and philosophy.

Along with Phelps's vision of heaven, Beyond the Gates addresses some aspects relating to women's lack of fulfillment on the earth and offers a heavenly measure of redemption from early romantic disappointments. Early in the narrative, Mary describes herself tellingly:

I was an unmarried, but not an unhappy woman. I had reached a very busy, and sometimes I hoped a not altogether valueless, middle age. I had used life and loved it. Beyond the idle impulse of a weary moment, which signifies no more than the reflex action of a mental muscle, and which I had been in the habit of rating accordingly, I had never wished to die. (6)

Although Mary describes herself as "not an unhappy woman," she reveals in this paragraph that she has occasionally had suicidal thoughts, although she was too busy and preoccupied to spend much time on them. Her "solitary" life, which she describes as extremely busy as she spent her time helping others, is one which is concerned with "the outward life" of one who is "in the habit of being depended upon" (6-7). While she enjoys being needed, her bustling lifestyle appears to be a way to avoid spending much time in self-contemplation. With apparently infinite time for soul-searching, Mary begins to recognize a loss she had not previously comprehended--the loss of love:
I must admit that in experiencing the immortality of being, I found that I experienced no less the immortality of love. Had I to meet that old conflict here? I never asked for everlasting life. Will He impose it, and not free me from that? I will be patient. I will have trust. But the old nerves are not dead. The old ache has survived the grave. (187)

Only here at the end of the novel does Mary reveal that she is still suffering from a loss, but in this heavenly realm, all such needs are satisfied. Her long-ago lost love appears, nameless and faceless, explaining to Mary that he has been freed from his marriage contract by his earthly wife's remarriage. The two apparent soulmates prepare to receive a blessing from God for their eternal contract, "and by His blessing lifts our human love into so divine a thing that this seems the only life in which it could have breathed" (194). A love this divinely perfect cannot exist in Phelps's novel, however. The reader discovers that the entire novel has been a dream sequence, for Mary at this point awakens from her heavenly dream, saying, "Oh, Mother, I have Heaven in my heart at last!" Then she suddenly breaks into tears when she realizes that everything was a dream. Mary's mother tries to comfort her, delivering the words "You will live" with an irony not common in Phelps. Mary is not to be allowed eternal happiness, but is given instead her disappointing life and dissatisfaction. While the novel only barely addresses the needs of the nineteenth-century woman, it is perhaps most significant in the way it emphasizes the importance of individual and social growth in the community. The afterlife in Beyond the Gates is merely a dream; the reader is left to question the validity of Mary's vision.

In fact, it is only in her last utopian novel, The Gates Between, that Phelps allows a complete vision of heavenly love to reach its fulfillment. Phelps uses no journal or dream-sequence in this novel; in The Gates Between the main character explains, step by step, the process he goes through immediately following his death. In the novel, Esmerald Thorne, a prominent physician who is a good doctor, but a poor husband and worse father, dies suddenly in a carriage accident. Like the lost souls in Beyond the Gates, immediately following Esmerald's death he finds himself tied to one location, the street where he
formerly worked. He tries to reach his house so that he can see his wife, Helen, and comfort both himself and her, but no amount of protest will enable him to reach her side. Once Esmerald is finally able to see Helen from a distance, he faints with love and fear for her, but upon awakening, Esmerald discovers himself transposed into a strange land. Apparently, his great love for his wife enables him to finally leave the physical street where he was formerly trapped and to reach the heavenly realm, but because of his own distaste for the spiritual and his personal arrogance, Esmerald does not feel very welcomed in the spiritual world. He struggles for a time in the novel with his lowered social place in this spiritual society, until his own child arrives (apparently after dying from some sudden illness) and Esmerald is compelled to care for him. Taking on the maternal role of caring for his child offers Esmerald a measure of redemption. He eventually begins to mature, and thus, when his wife finally meets him in heaven, Esmerald is ready to meet her halfway.

Of the three utopian novels, The Gates Between is most clearly illustrative of the heavenly realm and is also the most clearly critical of the message society sends to humankind. Although Esmerald Thorne thought himself a giant among men, in actuality, he is only a good doctor. Although he claims to love his wife Helen with great passion, he actually ignores her, for he disregards her request to care for their son's illness, a decision he regrets when his son follows him to heaven not long after Esmerald's accident. In the end, Esmerald cries "Forgive me, Helen!" bowing and sinking in front of his wife, broken-hearted as he remembers his last meeting with her on earth.26 Changed, made new by his experiences after death, Esmerald wants to be a servant to his wife and child, and this change makes him acceptable, not only to heaven or to his wife, but also to society at large. For Phelps's discussion of Esmerald's changes, brought about by his experiences he has in the afterlife, are a commentary on the changes she sees that need to be made, not in heaven, but in American society.
In both these novels, Phelps's philosophy is consistent with that of the liberals.

Helen Sootin Smith states:

Liberal Christianity framed a dynamic and subjective religious faith by stressing the immanence of God, the humanity of Christ, and the perfectibility of man. Humanity afforded, through analogy, the best clue to the nature of God. Emphasis fell on man's natural goodness, not his fallen nature, and, by extension, on the possibility of securing his redemption through a humanitarian improvement of his earthly condition. Elizabeth Stuart Phelps responded to these currents of liberal theology, but added . . . the one ingredient missing from most liberal theology: a concrete promise of personal immortality.27

Both novels offer a description of immortality which is physical, practical, and natural. The immortal body is just a better version of the earthly one; the immortal spirit is an organic nature, forming each individual into its best possible version of itself. However, most importantly, the Gates novels offer a utopian vision which suggests ways of improvement on the earth. In her earliest novel, The Gates Ajar, Phelps concentrates her reform efforts on the unbiblical principles of the orthodox ministers, but in her second and third utopian novels, she offers encouragement for women whose romantic relationships have gone awry, either through disaffection or neglect. While Beyond the Gates offers little hope for the character Mary, it does propose a shift in the "normal" way of viewing home, family, and marriage, allowing all of these to continue or even be created in the afterlife. In Esmerald Thorne, however, Phelps creates one of the most transformed of all her male characters. By taking a domineering, arrogant, and masculine character and changing him into a servant-like character who is forced to replace his wife in his son's life, Phelps offers a suggestion for the improvement of society. When Phelps writes in her autobiography, "'Beyond the Gates' and 'The Gates Between' were written in maturer life than the first; I have a little tenderness for these two dreams of the life to be" (271), it is tempting to wonder, "Is this 'life to be' she refers to the afterlife or the near future?"
"My Dearest Hero"

Perhaps, on the whole, I have written nothing which I should be so sorry to have seriously misunderstood, or am so glad to know that I am finding friends for, as the last story,--"A Singular Life." . . . The story . . . came out of the depths of the sea, and of a heart that has long loved the sea-people. Bayard is my dearest hero.²⁸

Although Phelps was extremely concerned throughout her writing career with the role of women in American society, particularly with the role of women in the professions and as a wife, one of her most interesting later novels barely reflects this interest. Instead, Phelps uses a male hero, Emanuel Bayard, the counterpart of the "true blue" and heroic characters Atalanta Zay and Avis Dobell, to illustrate the injustices of American society. Although A Singular Life (1895) is not a novel about the afterlife, like the previous three novels discussed, it contains the natural progression of Phelps's philosophical and religious beliefs as developed from the time of The Gates Ajar to the mid-1890s when A Singular Life was published. Of all these novels, it is the most clearly critical of orthodoxy and middle-class values; yet, perhaps because it is the only one of these four novels written after her marriage, it is also the least concerned with the middle- and upper-class woman's position in marriage and society. Instead, it comments on the difficult position of the poverty-stricken women and wives of alcoholics, almost negating any issues of inequality that might arise when middle-class Americans marry. Nonetheless, A Singular Life blatantly criticizes a society which ignores the tragedy of poverty and alcoholism and which valorizes the status quo.

A Singular Life is the story of a Christ-like man who rebels against the traditional structures of the orthodox Congregationalist church and the complacent attitudes of the middle- and upper-class members of society who easily accept all conventional rules of society. Emanuel Bayard, born in the village of Bethlehem, Massachusetts, to a woman named Mary who eloped with a poor carpenter and minister named Joseph, is sent by his
wealthy Bostonian uncle to an orthodox Seminary named Cesarea after the biblical community. At the Seminary, Bayard quickly proves himself one of the top students, impressing all the professors, particularly Professor Carruth, one of the most important of the professors. The Professor, as Bayard fondly thinks of him, is the stereotypical academic--absorbed in his own theological studies into the "State of the Unforgiven after Death" and the "Nature of Eternal Punishment" (topics which hold special scorn for Phelps), he ignores most matters of the heart. Thus, Professor Carruth does not recognize when Bayard and his daughter, the lovely and "royal" Helen Carruth, who always wears purple garments and carries herself like a queen, begin to fall in love. Their love begins slowly, developing over the course of several years.

Upon graduating from the Seminary, however, Bayard hits a crisis point. Still considering themselves "not lovers, . . . hardly friends" at this point, Bayard confesses to Helen the difficulty he has been having with receiving his license to preach from the Seminary. The Trustees of the school have found what they believe to be a flaw in Bayard's theology. Standing up for his own beliefs, his own individual interpretation of the Bible, Bayard refuses to completely support the creed of the Seminary. When a church he has been preaching at, the First Church in Windover, offers him the chance for a full-time position, some of the Council members from the Seminary take the opportunity to ensure that he will not be offered the position. Bayard's crime? A failure to accept the doctrine of the Trinity, a lack of willingness to accept eternal damnation for the lost, and a denial of the infallibility of the Biblical texts. Interestingly enough, these are all beliefs which caused the separation of the orthodox and the liberal Congregationalists in the early nineteenth century. Like Schleiermacher, Coleridge, and the liberals, Bayard rejects the necessity of a completely literal translation of the Bible. His view, which is more open to scientific theories and which accepts some doctrines seemingly contradictory to scripture,
seems heretical to the Council from the Seminary, but his view was actually quite common in that time period and is reflected in the opening chapters of the novel.

In the opening of the novel, Phelps prepares her audience for both scientific and philosophical discussion: "There were seven of them at the table that day, and they were talking about heredity" (1). The conversation between the seminary students includes references to Huxley and Darwin. Although orthodox Congregationalists at the time may have been resistant to discussions of evolution and the Descent of Man, liberal Christians often accepted recent scientific theories as a part of the "progressive illumination" of God's truth. Since nature was to reveal God, then man's interpretation of nature, as seen through the lens of science, must also necessarily reveal God. Also, if knowledge of God was based more on feeling than on intellectual knowledge, no scientific discovery should have the power to disturb one's feeling of the holy. Thus, when the seminary students engage in intellectual discussion of the Descent of Man, the reader senses that a change is taking place in the seminary. Like Andover, which experienced a liberal upheaval during the 1870's, Ceserea's students are revealing, through their discussion, the impact of liberalism on the orthodox school.

Even though Bayard is jokingly labeled a "heretic" early in his school career, his dismissal from First Church comes as a major shock to Bayard, who had believed that in standing up for his beliefs he was being true to himself and to his principles, a behavior which would have been approved by Emerson and the transcendentalists. Standing before the congregation, "tall, white, still, with that look-half angel, half human. . . . His dazzling eyes blazed for an instant upon his tormentors, then fell upon his people and grew dim" (73). Bayard finds out that regardless of his own personal magnetism or his love for God, the traditionalists are mainly interested in his willingness to conform to their creed. This incident is eerily reminiscent of another one described by Jacob Henry Dorn in Washington Gladden: Prophet of the Social Gospel. In the mid-1870's.
a Congregational minister named James F. Merriam, a "bright young graduate of Yale College and Andover Seminary" was about to be ordained as a pastor at the Congregational church in Indian Orchard, Massachusetts. He had already preached for a Connecticut church and had been well-received by everyone. In addition, like Bayard, his family were long-time members of Congregational churches. Unfortunately, when the council, which included Washington Gladden, a Congregational minister who many call the founder of the "Social Gospel" movement and who also wrote for The Independent at the same time as Phelps, met to examine and install Merriam, many of them went overboard on the examination process. Despite the attempts of the more moderate Gladden to protect Merriam from censure, Merriam was eventually voted against because several of the local Congregational clergy pushed the issue of future punishment, one of the issues about which Bayard was accused of being "unsound." Like Merriam, Bayard is well-respected and supported, at least by a certain contingent of the local population. However, Professor Carruth, who admires Bayard's preaching and scholarship, if not his theology, tries to be a friend to Bayard, but he does not support him in gaining the First Church ministerial position. Fortunately, along with an older member of the Council, who serves as moderator at Bayard's ordination-gone-wrong, many members of the church and town support him. The moderator and church members support Bayard because they believe him to be a good man of integrity and honesty, as well as an intelligent and thoughtful preacher. But some of the townspeople support him for a much less orthodox reason.

On his way to his ordination, Bayard comes upon a street brawl between two drunken sailors. Bayard steps in, quivering "with holy rage," and stops the fight with a face "as white as a star." Phelps describes Bayard's striking one of the sailors: "At that moment, before one could have lifted the eyelash to see how it fell, a well-aimed blow struck the brute beneath the ear. He fell" (58). Afterward, the two fighters and their
audience discover that Bayard has come to their town to try out for the First Church position, so they decide to go and listen to his message. The townspeople are drawn by Bayard's honesty and his toughness; knocking out one of the meanest town drunks is no easy task and so Bayard gained the townspeople's respect. This interaction between Bayard and the drunken members of the town is the first step on Bayard's missionary trip after losing the First Church position. When some of the members of First Church ask Bayard to stay in Windover and begin a new church with their support, Bayard decides to take them up on their offer.

At first, Bayard is devastated by the loss of the much-desired pastoral position in the First Church of Windover, but when he discovers a ministry of his own he puts down roots in the poorer section of town where he works with the sailors, street people, and alcoholics of the harbor community. He sets up his own church in run-down Angel Alley in a former "sailors' dance-hall of the darkest dye" (105). He feels "called" to work among the lower class, where he feels he can do some good as he ministers as much to the people's physical needs as to their spiritual. On top of his disappointment in not being ordained, Bayard's uncle disinherits him for turning away from the Orthodox faith. Bayard is not a perfect man. He misses the luxuries of life and detests the poverty of his surroundings; yet, he does not give up his role as minister to Angel Alley even when he realizes that his lack of personal fortune will most likely prevent him from marrying Helen Carruth. Bayard feels utterly alone, but turns to the work in Windover, which he begins to realize needs a great deal of work, especially in the area of alcohol abuse.

The scene which convinces Bayard of the need for temperance reform in Windover comes when a fishing vessel loaded with drunken sailors wrecks on the rocks near the town. The accident, the spectators tell Bayard, was completely avoidable. The cause: the drunkenness of the crew. Describing Bayard's attempt to help the men when two jump overboard, Phelps writes, "Thank God for that wasted liberal education.--yes, and liberal
recreation,—if it teach the arm, and fire the nerve, and educate the soul to save a drunken sailor now" (122). Unfortunately, one man is killed when he is dashed against the rocks, but Bayard manages to save the other, Job Slip, the same man Bayard hit during the street fight. Job and others tell Bayard that Job's life was not worth his sacrifice, "I wasn't worth it," Job confesses, for Bayard almost drowns trying to save Job. Bayard replies in a loud voice, "Then be worth it!" and wins the admiration and devotion of many that day, particularly Job Slip himself.

When Bayard realizes the enormity of the drinking problem in his town, he sets out on a crusade to conquer its "evil" effects. He preaches against drinking from the pulpit and actively tries to cause the closure of the bars in town. The narrator describes the scene:

He captured for them the elusive statistics of the subject; he confronted them with its appalling facts; he pecked them with incidents such as the soul sickens to relate or to remember. He denied them the weak consolation of condoning in themselves a moral disease too well known to be the vice of the land, and of the times. (144)

Although there are other churches in Windover, no "respectable" church ever takes on the temperance issue because of the political implications. As Bayard will eventually discover, the alcohol businesses in town carry a great deal of clout. Bayard is persecuted on all sides—the saloon-owners threaten him and burn his church; the wealthy First Churchers accuse him of misbehavior when he is seen taking a street girl out of a house of ill repute; and his former friends from the seminary turn their backs on him because of his "bad" theology. One of the angriest families in town is the Trawl family, owners of one of the more popular bars, and Ben Trawl, the hot-headed son of the bar-owner, vows vengeance against Bayard for his temperance preaching. Of course, Ben Trawl does not hate Bayard only because of the temperance preaching; he has personal reasons for his dislike, as well, for Trawl sees Bayard as his rival in romance. Bayard is living in the spare room of a
widow woman and her daughter, Jane Granite. Jane is an uneducated lower-class young woman, not particularly beautiful, and she waits on Bayard as if he were a king. Although Bayard never really recognizes Jane's value as a woman, probably because he sees her in a servant role, Trawl immediately realizes Jane's adoration for Bayard and becomes angry and jealous. Trawl looks for ways to hurt Bayard, even going so far as to plan a secret and murderous attack on him, but he fails, at least at first.

In the meantime, Bayard continues his work in Windover. He asks to place the church in the worst part of town, and the church people choose a former hot spot in Angel Alley, the most degraded street in town, home to saloons and houses of ill repute. The location and goals of this church in Angel Alley were very similar to the "social settlements" created in the late nineteenth century in inner-city areas which were attempts to relate the poor, uneducated, and unchurched population of the area to the church.33 At Angel Alley, the church members place an electric light above the door of the church which beckons the residents of the alley and its neighboring hovels to come visit "The Church of the Love of Christ," instead of a house of "demon rum." Bayard is successful. Many former drunks, particularly Job Slip, fall under Bayard's spell, and convinced that alcohol is hurting their health, their families, and their relationship with God, they give up drinking. Bayard is so successful that he manages to have several bars closed. As community tension rises, particularly the growing hatred directed at Bayard by the liquor concerns, Bayard begins to see his role as that of warrior for right. Like the temperance warriors of his day, he views most of the social disease of the community--poverty, illness, wife-beating, child abuse, homelessness, and prostitution--as directly caused by alcohol.34

Unfortunately, the saloon contingent of town sabotage Bayard's church by setting fire and destroying it from within. However, all is not lost. Bayard's uncle, seeing his success in Windover and finally reconciled to his nephew's role as "home missionary," does not cut Bayard out of his will entirely. Instead, he leaves Bayard his nice Boston
home and library. Bayard is able to sell the home and use the profits to re-build the church, bigger and better than ever with a smoking room, library, music room, and bowling alley. Not only that, but with the money Bayard inherits, he finally feels free to propose marriage to the beautiful and stately Helen, whom he has loved for several years.

At this point, Helen, who up to now has been a spunky, self-proclaimed heretic who laughs in the face of seminary trustees and jaunts off regularly to Boston to visit with friends, turns into a sweet little woman who will do anything for her man. While their relationship up to the marriage proposal is rather sexual and definitely passionate, providing Bayard with a great deal of burning lust and sinful thoughts and giving the narrator the opportunity to compare Bayard's sufferings with Christ's sufferings, once they are engaged to be married they act like a sedately platonic couple. Hearing rumors of a personal attack on Bayard, Helen decides to move up their wedding date. In a fairly secret ceremony, Bayard and Helen marry. A few days later, they both appear at the grand opening of the newly-built church. Just when it seems the danger has passed, Trawl makes good his threat and hurls a huge rock at Bayard, knocking him out and cutting a hole through his chest to damage his lung. Bayard's lungs are too much damaged, probably because of the previous near-drowning incident, and he cannot recover from the injury. Many of the most notable members of the town want to serve as pallbearers and attend his funeral, but it is too late to do Bayard any good. Windover is left with a huge rent in the fabric of the town as this Christ-like man goes to his heaven.

Bayard, who Phelps considered her favorite hero, is arguably the best of all her male characters. Compared to Avis's Philip Ostrander, Bayard is a good husband and a good man; compared to Doctor Zay's Waldo Yorke, Bayard is a hard-working, strong-minded community leader, much like Dr. Zay herself. Bayard seems to have learned the lessons of Esmeralda Thorne. When Phelps writes in "The True Woman" that the new woman must have a new man, Phelps must have had someone like Bayard in mind. Like
Christ, he is passionate, brave, and loyal to himself and those he loves, and still he is a nurturing character.

Several issues come to mind when dealing with *A Singular Life*. One issue is the idea of the New Age which Phelps seems to be promoting as she nears the end of the century. Many books about the Gilded Age had been written during the previous decade, but Phelps is not interested in writing about the Gilded Age. Instead, she deals with the tough issues of old versus new. As American society waves good-bye to the nineteenth century, Phelps points forward to the dawning of a new century. In *A Singular Life*, not only do we have a new man, one who is almost fit to partner with a new woman, but we also have a new church, one which departs from the orthodox or conventional and accepts more liberal and non-traditional forms.

The character of Emanuel Bayard is most obviously patterned after Christ. Like Christ, he devotes his life to trying to teach people how to be saved, although Bayard concentrates more on saving people from a life of destitution and alcoholism than he does on saving them for eternity. In addition, Bayard becomes a self-sacrificial character in the story as he gives up his life to save others. His blazing eyes and brilliant transcendence attract the people of Windover like moths to a flame, but instead of being burned up in his light, Bayard gives hope and comfort to the sailors and their families. The narrator describes Bayard: "His eyes took on their dazzling look; like fine flash-lights they shot forth a brilliance as burning as it was brief; then their calm and color returned to them. Helen watched the transfiguration touch and pass his face with a sense of something so like reverence that it made her uncomfortable" (166). Not only does he "transfigure" himself, but other comparisons to Christ in the novel abound. For instance, the character of Lena is really named "Magdalena," like the Mary Magdalene character in the Bible, a woman of ill repute. However, the most important feature in Emanuel Bayard's
characterization appears to be his relationship to Washington Gladden and the Social Gospel movement of the late nineteenth century.

Washington Gladden (1844-1918) was a Congregational minister, first in Massachusetts and later in Ohio, whose ideas of a "Social Gospel" became extremely influential in the late nineteenth century. In *A Singular Life*, Emanuel Bayard identifies himself with the movement:

"Oh, when I think about it!—Predestination, foreordination, sanctification, election, and botheration,—and never a lesson on the Christian socialism of our day, not a lecture to tell us how to save a poor, lost woman, how to reform a drunkard, what to do with gamblers and paupers and thieves, and worse, how to apply what we believe to common life and common sense—how to lift miserable creatures, scrambling up, and falling back into the mud as fast as they can scramble—people of no religion, no morals, no decency, no hope, no joy—who never see the inside of a church." (153)

What was the Social Gospel? Although it had its roots in the antislavery movement, prohibition, and other contemporary reforms, the Social Gospel, as defined by Washington Gladden, "was a religion that laid hold upon life with both hands, and proposed, first and foremost, to realize the Kingdom of God in this world."36 Like Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, Gladden wrote for *The Independent*. In fact, he was the religious editor for about four years in the early 1870s, the same years Phelps contributed so heavily. His articles on the contemporary religious and philosophical ideas of the day could not have failed to be noticed by Phelps, and her character, Bayard, seems to get a lot of his ideas from Gladden. For instance, like Bayard, Gladden lectured on literary texts, instead of always using the Bible as a proof text. Also, perhaps Phelps was thinking of Gladden when she had Bayard paying for the installation of a bowling alley at the new Angel Alley, for Gladden supported the installation of checkers, chess, backgammon, and bowling areas into the church buildings, saying that all these were appropriate ways for people to enjoy themselves in a church building. But perhaps it was in his views of the role of the church.
that Gladden had the most impact on Phelps, for as Dorn writes, "Since the church existed not to rescue individuals from a sinful world and prepare them for heaven but to herald and assist the transformation of earthly society into the Kingdom of God, its vision must extend beyond the spiritual needs of the individual Christian to the challenges and progress of that Kingdom."37

In the final analysis, perhaps that is what Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's works are trying to do--attempting to teach through her works an ideal version of the world. Although she clearly believes in "Life Everlasting," Phelps just as clearly would like to mold the earth into the image of heaven. Thus, many of her works are idealistic, revealing a utopian world where a man can change his nature to become fit for his self-sacrificing wife and where a woman can re-create their lost love. While Phelps's novels do not avoid the ugliness of the world as she illustrates poverty, vice, and murder, even then Phelps offers a view of life which contains hope:

Life, I believe, teaches most of us some one lesson supremely above all others. The literary artist will make over to the world that illumination which fate has kindled to the fairest flame in his own soul. He may "sketch" or "etch," he may "report" or "photograph," he may be realist or romanticist, he may have the light touch or the strong one--but he will portray what he knows, and little else. Imagination is built upon knowledge, and his dreams will rest upon his facts. He is worth to the world just about what he has learned from it, and no more.38
Notes

1 The term "natural history" is often used in relationship to subjects such as zoology and botany when they are discussed in a nontechnical way. In the nineteenth century, with the rise in scientific research and publication, a tremendous number of texts were published about the "natural history" of various species, such as Thomas Beale's *The Natural History of the Sperm Whale* (1839) and Charles Darwin's *A Natural History of the Mammalia* (1847). Phelps frequently uses this phrase to suggest the development and/or evolution of a thing or person as described by the natural scientists of the nineteenth century. For instance, in the novel *Doctor Zay*, the character Yorke believes he loves Doctor Zay, but as she proves to him that he does not understand her development as a woman and a doctor, Phelps writes that Yorke "knew nothing of the natural history of doctresses." Phelps, *Doctor Zay* (New York: Feminist Press, 1987) 92. For a discussion of Darwin and Phelps, see Bert Bender, "Darwin and 'The Natural History of Doctrresses': The Sex War Between Howells, Phelps, Jewett, and James," *Prospects* 18 (1993): 81-120.

2 Phelps, *Chapters* 25.

3 Phelps, *Chapters* 49-50.

4 Phelps, *Chapters* 24-25.


6 Phelps, *Chapters* 25.


8 Since Schleiermacher's time, critics have since labeled this inner feeling or awareness of the holy the "sensus numinis." Robert F. Streetman defines the *numinis* as "the essentially religious element in religious experience, prior to, and apart from, any rational and moral overtones it may accrue, as it develops itself in experience and history." It also means "the Holy." The sensus numinis, therefore, is "the power by which one apprehends the presence of the numinous [holy] dimension in any religious experience, regardless of how simple or complex that experience may be." Robert F. Streetman, "Romanticism and the Sensus Numinis in Schleiermacher," *The Interpretation of Belief: Coleridge, Schleiermacher and Romanticism*, Ed. by David Jasper (New York: St. Martin's P, 1986) 105.

I will return to Schleiermacher's ideas of "harmoniously integrated individual personalities" when I discuss Phelps's view of women as a necessary part of society with important functions and individuality.

Although there seem to be some obvious similarities between the beliefs of the Quakers and those of Schleiermacher, it is unlikely that there is a strong connection between the two. The Society of Friends was established by an English religious leader, Charles James Fox (1624-91); Friedrich Schleiermacher was raised as a member of the Pietists, a German religious group which advocated a revival of the devotional ideal in the Lutheran Church in the 17th-18th centuries. Although Schleiermacher was influenced by his pietist upbringing, his philosophical development and publication antedates the establishment of the Society of Friends.

Phelps, Chapters 17.

Streetman 112-13.


Phelps, Chapters 128-29.


Phelps continually uses the image of being "walled in" or "hedged in" in her novels.


Packer 369.

Phelps, Chapters 51.

Kessler, Phelps 35.

Phelps, Chapters 129.

Phelps, Chapters 129-30.

Phelps, Beyond the Gates (Boston: Houghton, 1897) 36-37. Hereafter in this chapter, quotes from Beyond the Gates will be cited parenthetically in the text.
25 Phelps, *Chapters* 53.


27 Smith xxiv-xxv.

28 Phelps, *Chapters* 272-73.

29 Phelps, *A Singular Life* (New York: A. Wessels, 1901) 44. Hereafter in this chapter, quotes from *A Singular Life* will be cited parenthetically in the text.

30 The *sensus numinis*, as defined in Streetman.


32 Interestingly, the Indian Orchard church, unlike First Church in *A Singular Life*, decided to keep Merriam as their minister anyway.

33 Dorn 95.

34 A later chapter will cover the historical temperance movement in more detail.

35 Of course, it is interesting to note that Bayard is only a husband for a few days before his murder. He does not really have the opportunity to fail in this capacity.


37 Dorn 79.

38 Phelps, *Chapters* 235.
CHAPTER III
"THE FINGERS OF THE WORLD"
LABOR REFORM AND CLASS ISSUES

I am distinctly aware that such sympathies with the moral agitations of our day as have touched me at all, have fed, not famished my literary work. (Phelps, Chapters 256)

Phelps and the Working Class

In the winter of 1860, the Pemberton Mill, one of four large textile mills in Lawrence, Massachusetts, just three and a half miles from Andover, caved in and burned to the ground, taking the lives of a number of factory workers among which included many young women. Even though Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's brother was younger than she, being of "the privileged sex," as Phelps says, he was allowed to view the horrible tragedy while Phelps was required to stay at home and imagine the destruction. She writes:

With blanching cheeks we listened to the whispers that told us how the mill-girls, caught in the ruins beyond hope of escape, began to sing. They were used to singing, poor things, at their looms,—mill-girls always are,—and their young souls took courage from the familiar sound of one another's voices. They sang the hymns and songs which they had learned in the schools and churches. No classical strains, no "music for music's sake," ascended from that furnace; . . . but the plain, religious outcries of the people. . . . "Heaven is my home," "Jesus, lover of my soul," and "Shall we gather at the river?" Voice after voice dropped. The fire raced on. A few brave girls sang still. . . .

This somewhat poignant version of the catastrophe became the basis for one of Phelps's best-known short stories, "The Tenth of January," and in it Phelps reveals early on her aspiration to reform what she views as one of the great injustices of American society.

"The Tenth of January," published in The Atlantic Monthly in 1868, was an important milestone for Phelps because it was the first publication to offer her literary
recognition, as she explains in *Chapters*. The story records a few weeks in the life of one of the mill workers who is destined to die in the accident. The main plot of the story is that of lost love, for the disfigured heroine of the story, Sene, knowing that her fiancee Dick is in love with another woman (less worthy, but unscarred and beautiful), sacrifices herself, offering the other woman a chance to escape the mill when the rescuers can only take "one more." Underpinning Sene's heroic self-sacrifice is the knowledge that the man she loves is unworthy, for he and his new love seemingly forget about Sene, leaving only Sene's old and feeble father (and the sympathetic reader) to care about Sene's death at the end. Perhaps more important, though, than this tragic love story and its statements about relationships between men and women is the fact that this story is one of the first to realistically portray the working class setting in America. In this story Phelps begins to address the problems of the laboring class: child abuse, alcoholism, poverty- and work-related diseases, and promiscuity.

Phelps was only twenty-four when she published "The Tenth of January," but already she had observed the differences between the relative life of leisure belonging to the middle and upper classes and the world of the working classes. By the end of the Civil War, American society had begun making significant economic changes; the balance of power between rich and poor, rural and urban had shifted. At the end of the nineteenth century, America could no longer be called a Jeffersonian democracy, a land of rural farmers and "natural" gentlemen. Instead, the United States was primarily an urban nation, with the majority of Americans living in urban areas. Alan Trachtenberg in *The Incorporation of America* (1982) discusses the three decades following the Civil War and the way heightening corporate control influenced society by escalating differences between labor and management and widening the gap between rich and poor. This time period, often called "The Gilded Age," was noted for its increasingly materialistic attitudes as well as for controversy and struggle among the laboring classes, which led to the
development of labor unions and the Populist Party by the end of the nineteenth century. According to Trachtenberg, "The Gilded Age marked a significant increase in the influence of business in America, corresponding to the emergence of the modern corporate form of ownership." Tremendous strides had been made in the development of technology, and "factories, railroads, and telegraph wires seemed the very engines of a democratic future." Changes in the economic system of the United States following the Civil War and this rapidly-developing technology were reflected in some of the literature of the time period, and for many American writers the machine began to represent the complications of the Gilded Age.

Trachtenberg explains the fear that many Americans faced as they began to recognize the tremendous changes taking place around them. For instance, one Eastern politician, Charles Francis Adams, Jr., brother of Henry Adams, stated, "It is useless for men to stand in the way of steam-engines." The inevitably increasing mechanization became more and more a normal way of life for Americans, and some felt that this rising reliance on technology was a part of the evolutionary cycle from "simple tools to intricate machines." Many dime novels reflected the preoccupation with machines, with boy inventors creating robots and remote-control devices as early as 1865. Trachtenberg explains the way the machine symbolized the age:

The image of the machine . . . proved to be a complex symbol, increasingly charged with contradictory meanings and implications. It was not only the cause of abundance, but also responsible for poverty, slums, wretchedness of industrial conditions. . . . In the language of literature a machine (railroad or steamship) bursting on a peaceful natural setting represented a symbolic version of the trauma inflicted on American society by unexpectedly rapid mechanization.

The machine was a "complex symbol" for Gilded Age writers because not only could it represent a kind of violation or rape of nature and society, but in addition, the machine was seen as a "human benefactor," relieving man from "the bondage of labor."
Trachtenberg adds, "Modern technology was mankind's civilizing force driving out superstition, poverty, ignorance." While many American writers viewed the technology of the age as a negative force, others saw it as the greatest contribution to the age. Phelps's attitude fell somewhere between the two extremes, demonstrating an ambivalent position, for she was not averse to having characters in her novels cooperate in the technological system, yet she also often personifies the machines themselves, giving them a kind of symbolic man- or woman-eating power. For instance, in The Silent Partner, the machines which the millworkers rely upon for their livelihood occasionally turn upon the operators, such as when a young boy is caught in the gears of the machine by his torn clothing. For Phelps, technology was a necessary evil, an evolutionary step in America's development, but it was a necessity which often turned against the laboring class. When Phelps wrote about the lives of laboring class men and women, her goal was to indicate the very real problems which existed in society as well as to suggest a course of improvement.

In Phelps's novels, she particularly noted the differences between the lives of working class women and middle- and upper-class women, those who were "born in a dream," as one of her wealthy young ladies exclaims. This "dream" in which the wealthier classes of Americans lived involved a life of relative leisure with little work, plenty of food, a comfortable home, and time. It was this element of time, in fact, which allowed the middle and upper classes the luxury of novel-reading and benevolence. Like many American writers, Phelps was deeply entrenched in her middle-class mindset, even though she wanted to see the lives of the laboring classes improved. The primary method of helping the poor and homeless which Phelps suggested in her writing was to give them access to the arts and education and, through educational and social instruction, to help them rise to the middle-class level. While her idea was not completely unfavorable, she assumed an inherently superior attitude for the middle class toward the laboring class.
Phelps was not alone in her middle-class thinking. According to Nina Baym in her introduction to the second edition of Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870, during this time period when novels by women dominated the market, at least in popularity, the nation, by and large, was a middle-class republic. Baym explains:

To put it in simplified . . . terms: the United States was conceptualized as a republic—one of three recognized types of political government, the others being aristocracy (monarchism) and despotism. National survival was a matter of universal importance in this scheme, because the panorama of world history disclosed that no republic had ever lasted for very long. At that moment, in fact, the United States was the only existing republic.

From an economic standpoint, national existence demanded the development of national wealth. . . . The poor by definition produced no surplus. . . . The rich exhausted their surplus in nonproductive display. . . . Only middle-class people industriously produced.

America's (primarily) middle-class readership thus believed that the middle-class was absolutely necessary to the survival of America in order to avoid falling into the opposing political traps of monarchism or despotism which the wealthy and poor might, for economical reasons, incline toward. Phelps often reflects many of the typical middle-class attitudes toward the poor, despite her often radical approach to labor reform.

In her novels, perhaps Phelps reveals these attitudes most clearly when she shows differences between laboring class women and "genteel" women. Most often, her gentlewomen are not subjected to the same kinds of degrading circumstances or "unseemly" behavior which surrounds the working class women. Phelps's fiction reveals a common ideology of the time, for poor women were usually viewed with disdain by wealthier women: they were viewed as dirty, uneducated, rude, and most of all, very likely "impure" or "dishonest." In City of Women, Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860, Christine Stansell discusses the differences between the classes. She writes:
Between the founding of the republic and the Civil War, a new conception of womanhood took shape in America, preeminently in Northeastern towns and cities. Within the propertied classes, women constituted themselves the moral guardians of their families and their nation, offsetting some of the inherited liabilities in their sex. Laboring women were less fortunate: The domestic ideals from which their prosperous sisters profited did little to lighten the oppressions of sex and class they suffered. They were also more troublesome, since their actions—indeed, their very existence as impoverished female workers—violated some of the dearest held genteel precepts of "woman's nature" and "woman's place."17

According to Stansell, nineteenth-century middle- and upper-class women were standing upon the pedestal of what Barbara Welter terms "the cult of true womanhood," whose qualities were piety, purity, domesticity, and submissiveness: their virtuousness had to be without question, their reputation blameless. This blanket of protection (which also provided a kind of patriarchal control) over women, keeping them in their proper private spheres, did not extend to the laboring classes, however. While the middle class might find it shocking to see a female acquaintance performing paid work, especially "man's work," not one of these same people was at all shocked to see laboring class women performing rough work. Despite her middle-class heritage, Phelps notes a basic "sisterhood" which exists between women of all classes, for in several of her works, well-educated and cultured women "stoop" to perform tasks considered unladylike, and poor women "rise above" their "uncouth manners" to become "true women," at least true women as Phelps defines them.

In several of Phelps's short stories, essays, and novels, such as "The Tenth of January," "The Lady of Shalott," "What They Are Doing," Hedged In, and The Silent Partner, Phelps attempts to capture the condition of the laboring class. While Phelps is sometimes more didactic than necessary in her presentation of these conditions, she recognizes that the poor have a need not only for basic necessities such as food and shelter, but also for beauty, culture, and intellectual stimulation. In fact, in all her major works on class relations, Phelps illustrates how the poor can be helped to rise through the
intervention of an outside force, usually a beneficent and caring woman. Since benevolence was an acceptable way for a woman to contribute to society outside her traditional role in the home, benevolent societies for the poor, homeless, orphans, and so-called "fallen women" were established throughout the nineteenth century. However, benevolent societies sometimes kept their middle- and upper-class patrons at a distance from poverty and the people. Throughout her works, Phelps illustrates the value of knowing the people individually, for she seems to believe that it is not enough to donate money, establish orphanages and other charitable institutions, and pass out tracts and aid baskets from a distance.

Even though there was a need to do something about the thousands of abandoned street children and unwed teenaged mothers, benevolent institutions were not always well accepted by the working class. According to Stansell, many of these institutions, such as the Children's Aid Society in New York, believed that taking children out of their natural families and placing them in institutions where they could avoid juvenile delinquency and learn "proper behavior" through strict regimen could cure the problems caused by poverty. Stansell describes one such institution, the House of Refuge, one of the New York Children's Aid Society's early juvenile reform facilities: "[T]he House had been based, in theory, on the power of geometrically ordered architecture and strictly regimented routines to reorder inmates' habits; in practice, its staff freely used solitary confinement and corporal punishment to force the recalcitrant into compliance with the forces of reason." While not all of these institutions, or "asylums" as they were often called, used this type of behavior on its occupants, to many of the poor all such benevolent institutions were prisons, shutting away their occupants while protecting the "better classes" from association with the poor. Phelps illustrates this attitude through the protagonist of Hedged In, for young Nixy Trent runs way from her tenement because she fears being sent to one of these "sylums." Throughout her novels, Phelps argues for real interaction
between people and for major changes in the economic system which underpays the hardest working members of society.

In considering the best way to make changes, Phelps often referred to ideas presented by Phillips Brooks (1835-93), a Boston clergyman and writer, one of the people Phelps admired the most. Conversations with him appear to have greatly influenced Phelps's attitude toward the materialistic society in which she lived. In fact, Phelps indicates that Brooks was her role-model for Christian Bayard in *A Singular Life*:

He [Phillips Brooks] began to talk about the duties of the upper to the lower classes of society, and of the Christian to the irreligious. He spoke rapidly, then earnestly, then eagerly, hotly, without fear and without reproach, like the Christian Bayard that he was... He scathed the fashionable classes for their follies, and flung a kind of holy scorn at the paltriness and cowardice which excused itself from contact with the suffering and the loathsomeness of the lower world. To my surprise, he spoke of the Salvation Army in language of deep respect... With sacred indignation he rebuked the heathen of the West End, who cared neither for their own souls nor for those of other men.

In her works, Phelps tries to take up the standard set by Brooks as she presents the "fashionable classes," the "heathen of the West End," as hypocritical and foolish, understanding nothing of the real differences between their lifestyles and the lifestyle of the working class. Characters such as Perley Kelso in *The Silent Partner* are led to enter the homes of the poor and to eat the food they eat in order to come to a better understanding of poverty.

Throughout her life, Phelps desired to effect changes in the social system. She wrote dozens of articles for periodicals such as *The Independent*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and *Harper's*, and many of these articles concerned millworkers and seamstresses, especially the way girls and young women gave up their lives and health for measly salaries which could not support themselves or their families. Phelps did not see her writing as sentimental, but realistic, for she showed the world how the poor and laboring classes live.
Nonetheless, while Phelps allowed a modicum of change in her laboring class women characters, allowing many of her working class heroines to escape the cycle of poverty and promiscuity, she still recognized class differences because, as a member of the middle class, Phelps never succeeded in completely throwing off her middle-class value system. From her earlier novels like *Hedged In* where a teenage unmarried mother is transformed into a model of Welter's form of "true womanhood" to her later works where servants, such as Puella in *Burglars in Paradise*, are presented as both comical and devoted to the "fine lady" who runs the house, Phelps's laboring class women are still, despite her radical statements of class reform, presented as different from the so-called benevolent and heroic middle-class women who populate her novels. Although a laboring class woman can rise above her station in Phelps's novels, she can only do it through education and social training; in other words, she must look and sound like a refined lady in order to be accepted as an equal by Phelps's middle-class characters.

Besides the obvious factors--money, class, education, and environment--one primary difference between the poor and the wealthier women in the nineteenth century is the fact that the middle- and upper-class women did not *need* to work while the poorer women had to work to survive. However, by the time Phelps began writing novels after the Civil War, the necessity of work for women began encroaching on the middle class. So many male workers were lost to the nation during the Civil War that the women, widows and daughters of the dead and disabled soldiers, began seeking employment outside the home at an ever-increasing rate. Women, who had previously been supported in comfort by husbands and fathers, were left without a source of income, and formerly middle-class families found themselves in poverty. Unfortunately, as Phelps describes in an early essay, "What Shall They Do?" opportunities for employment for women were extremely limited. An educated woman might hope for a teaching career, while the literary-minded could possibly, like Phelps, succeed in writing, but by and large, most
women, especially the uneducated ones, were reduced to working as seamstresses or in factories, particularly textile factories of the kind that Phelps writes about in "The Tenth of January" and *The Silent Partner*. Phelps offers an illustration in an 1867 *Harper's* essay. "What Shall They Do?"

Jane, for instance, is looking about for means to support herself. . . . Jane has been at home for a while helping her mother, but her father is in debt, and the boys are growing, and she feels that she had better be at work. What shall she do? She can not teach, for she doesn't know enough. . . . Factory work is not to be thought of, and nothing offers, to her thinking, but plain sewing. "Plain sewing!" Oh, the dreary pictures folded up in those two words! The stooping figure, the circles under the eyes, the contracting chest and growing cough, the weary sight and weary fingers, the remorseless stitch, stitch, stitching through the summer days.

In this passage and others, Phelps particularly focuses on the health risks associated with sewing. Very few of these women worked as seamstresses for the wealthy; instead, they took in "a little sewing," if they were lucky, and worked in inner-city sweatshops if they were not. According to records, about 2,500 women were registered as seamstresses in Massachusetts by 1837, and this field expanded toward the end of the century. Conditions in many of the factories were unhealthy, and the pay for seamstresses was abominably low, barely enough to keep a person alive. Both male and female employees of the mills protested the low wages and bad work environment, and by 1871 when Phelps published *The Silent Partner* strikes were not an uncommon event.

In her novels about social change for the laboring class, Phelps argues for transformation of the American economic system, a system that creates a cycle of poverty. As illustrated in an earlier work, *Life in the Iron Mills* by Rebecca Harding Davis, it was nearly impossible for a member of the laboring class, no matter how well-intentioned, to rise above the poverty level. In Davis's story, even though Hugh Wolfe has artistic abilities which provide him with a potential escape route, he is unable to escape the trap of dishonesty into which poverty forces him. Like Davis, Phelps was unable to imagine an
escape for most lower-class people, probably because she saw that it was unrealistic to believe that everyone would be able to receive the kind of educational and cultural opportunities she believed were necessary for true reform. In fact, some of Phelps's characters die in their attempts to fight their way out of that system. However, Phelps's most seriously reformist novels, such as Hedged In, The Silent Partner, and A Singular Life, offer glimmers of hope for laboring class characters who have intelligence and determination and who are able to rejuvenate themselves, usually through religious rebirth.

Phelps's realistic and artistic portrayals of the working class and her emphasis upon education, reform, and economic independence for women laid groundwork for later works, such as William Dean Howells's A Hazard of New Fortunes and Jacob Riis's non-fiction work How the Other Half Lives, both published in 1890, which also portray the harsh realities of the lives of the poor. Although some would say that Phelps concentrated on the emotional and sentimental aspects of the lives of the poor, the interesting characters and plots in her fiction never went beyond the borders of good taste for her nineteenth-century middle-class audience; instead, her novels were intended to motivate her mostly female audience to actively participate in reform movements. Perhaps Phelps had in mind the words of Paulina Wright Davis at the 1850 Woman's Rights Convention: "It is one thing to issue a declaration of rights or a declaration of wrongs to the world, but quite another thing wisely and happily to commend the subject to the world's acceptance, and so to secure the desired reformation." It is one thing to ask for radical reform and quite another thing indeed to expect society to listen.

"Nobody's Child" and Teenage Pregnancy

Just two years after the successful publication of "The Tenth of January" and The Gates Ajar, Phelps came back onto the scene with a novel which looked closely at class issues, Hedged In (1870). The novel opens with a visit by the narrator to the
appropriately-named Thicket Street, the site of the former home of the protagonist of the story, Nixy Trent. Phelps argues against the belief that a person's genetic make-up determines a person's worth and class. Instead Phelps emphasizes the impact of the environment on her lower class characters, for a description of Thicket Street's tenements, saloons, and houses of ill repute are the focus of this first part of the novel. In addition, by contrasting the first chapter "Thicket Street: As It Is" with the second chapter "As It Was," Phelps argues that the years between the two chapters, presumably at least a decade, have seen no major improvements made in the slum neighborhood. Things always stay the same in these impoverished areas, she seems to be saying, no matter what kinds of benevolent societies the upper classes might form, because the people on Thicket Street are indeed trapped. They do not receive the kind of help they really need: educational, spiritual, and moral rejuvenation. *Hedged In* illustrates the life of one of Thicket Street's inhabitants, Nixy Trent, as she chooses to leave her poverty-stricken neighborhood and find "some folks" who will provide her with a chance to avoid the disreputable future which looms before her. Although the novel contains several middle-class conventions, it remains a surprisingly realistic look at the lives of the nineteenth-century poor.

As stated, the Thicket Street environment is important to the novel since Phelps begins with a picture of the street as it exists at the "present time" of the novel. The narrator describes it as an alley, "long and narrow, sloped over a slimy hill to the water." The street is filthy, but it is not just the inhabitants who make the street unappealing, for the fetid wind blows in from the fishy wharves and the street is in shadow almost all day. Everywhere images of death, decay, and deformity prevail. The trees on Thicket Street are mostly dead, and buildings are ramshackle, "tipsy," and "sunk with the descending grade" (3). Likewise, the neighborhood's inhabitants are degenerate and disfigured, not only morally, but also physically. Through the voice of the narrator, Phelps matter-of-factly illustrates the lack of love and attention given to the babies and children in this
neighborhood: "The sidewalk being a single foot-path only, there was generally a child under a wheel or a hoof; they may have accounted for the number of dwarfs, and gashed, twisted, 'unpleasant bodies' which struck the stranger's eye" (2). Babies are seen heaped together with garbage on the sides of the road, and children "swarm" in front of the buildings like insects. Thus we should not be surprised, the narrator seems to be saying, that babies are viewed as disposable items in this neighborhood. Children are unwanted, because their presence almost ensures further poverty.

The poverty of Thicket Street was not a rarity, unfortunately, but this degree of poverty with its emphasis on class was not prevalent in so-called classical American literature before this time. Twenty years after the publication of Phelps's *Hedged In*, Jacob Riis's photographs and descriptions of the New York slums in *How the Other Half Lives* shocked society with detailed evidence of the overcrowded tenements owned by greedy and respectable members of high society. While Phelps does not go so far as to indict the owners of the ramshackle apartments on Thicket Street, she is clearly appalled, and wants her readers to be appalled, at the crowded, unsanitary, and indecent conditions of many of the boarding houses. In the first chapter of *Hedged In*, the narrator reports visiting No. 19, the former home of the protagonist, Nixy Trent:

The alley, at the last census, reported between eighteen and nineteen hundred souls. The accommodations varied from four persons to four families in a room. No. 19 was a very old house, shabby even amid the shabbiness. . . . I asked from the rag-picker the privilege of visiting the second front seaward corner room, and the girl piloted me up the crooked stair.

"Many occupants?"
"Fourteen. . . . It's the biggest tenement in the house: jammed, you bet!" (4)

Upon arriving in the room, the narrator continues to describe the filthy environment of the "full and foul" room where "[b]abies were numerous and noisy [and] several women were drunk" (5). Although the as-yet-unnamed narrator notes the lack of polite social
convention in Thicket Street, she is most concerned with pointing out that the alley is not a life-affirming environment. After all, the most significant feature of No. 19 is the same feature which causes Nixy Trent so much pain in the next chapter, a "certain dull stain, which bore a rude resemblance to a spider" that discolors the wall near where Nixy formerly slept. The narrator discovers that this stain is rumored to mark the place where a "gal murdered her baby" many years before (5). This stain will come to symbolize both temptation and shame for Nixy.

The main plot of the novel begins in the second chapter where the reader finds Nixy Trent at only fifteen the frightened and depressed mother of a new baby. It is interesting that so young and conventional a woman as Phelps was at the time she wrote the novel could write such a matter-of-fact description of the teenage mother. Phelps writes, "She was a young thing . . ., "not turned sixteen," with the expression even of a much younger child. . . . She was comparatively alone; that is to say, there were but three people in the room besides herself and her child,—a child sick with measles, a woman drunk, and a woman washing; the room was filled with unclean steam" (12-13). Nixy has little shame, for she has no parents to teach her morality and she has not heard in Thicket Street that there is any sin in her behavior. In fact, in this early part of the novel Nixy is not criticized by Phelps or anyone else for her sexual activity. Instead, Nixy's most "evil" deed is the lack of love she feels for her new baby. The fact that Nixy has no mother becomes significant in the novel. Like the heroines of Baym's "woman's fiction," Nixy is a young girl thrown into the world without a mother or family to make her own way. Nixy, however, discovers in those around her mother substitutes, such as Lize, an older friend who serves as mid-wife and nurse to Nixy, and later, Margaret Purcell, the kindly woman who rescues Nixy. Moreover, because of Nixy's own abandonment early on—raised by a so-called "uncle," sold to a boarding-house owner, and "adopted" by a drunken and abusive woman—Nixy has no childhood memories of love and nurture, no domestic
recollections which could serve as the basis for her own ability to mother and love another. "Nixy was nobody's child; she could remember as much as that," (16) and her hope throughout the early chapters of the novel is to find "some folks" to give her work and opportunity.

Nixy has no love for the child, for the child is only a burden to her. She never thinks of or mentions her sexual activity; in fact, the "facts of life" are not mentioned at all in this book except in a round-about way as Nixy's "sin" or "shame." Nixy does not even mention the father of the child. For Nixy, the baby is to blame for the problems she suffers after his birth: her temporary physical incapacitation as she recovers from childbirth, the loss of her waitress job because a "Re-spectable first-class dining-saloon" must keep its standards, and her inability to find any kind of shelter or employment with the baby in tow (34). Lying on her cot, Nixy resents the light which streaks through the torn curtain of her window and thinks, "Sometimes they struck the baby, and she wished that they would hurt him; he cried as if they did, and she was glad of it. The baby was so dreadful to her!" (14) For Nixy, the only hope of escape from her situation seems to be the death of the child, and she stares at the spider-shaped blood stain as she tries to find a way out of her predicament:

[S]he fell to speculating a little, idly, on the ease with which she could squeeze the baby up against the wall; it would not be difficult to squeeze the breath out of it altogether. This did not strike her as a thoroughly pleasant thing to do; but the longer she looked at the stained wall, the more familiar the idea seemed to grow to her. . . . She could have sworn to it, as she looked, that the red spider was weaving a red web all about her and about the child. (28)

The image of the web being woven around Nixy symbolizes entrapment, like the many images of hedges, walls, and thickets which repeatedly occur in Phelps's fiction. In this novel, Phelps uses two major symbols of entrapment: first, the spider web which tries to weave a bloody spell around Nixy, to entice her to moral degradation as a child-murderer.
and which, furthermore, attempts to bind Nixy forever to the downwardly spiraling path of moral and physical degradation which appears to be her only path once she gets pregnant: and second, the title image, repeated later in the novel, of being "hedged in" and away from the middle-class society which continually shuts her away from any hope of social upward mobility.

Just as Nixy begins to feel trapped by the red murder-stain, she realizes that she is "not that," not a murderer, and immediately begins to look for an alternative method of escape from her predicament. At fifteen, Nixy's greatest fear appears to be being sent to what she calls the "sylum," for when she was younger she spent some time in an orphanage and she has known other girls to be sent to a home for unwed mothers. To Nixy, these places are prisons where she would be literally hedged in, and so she leaves No. 19 to try to find a place with "some folks" to care for her and the baby. Phelps provides her readers with a wide variety of characters in the inhabitants of Thicket Street: drunken women, "respectable" saloon-owners, a kind-hearted Lize who nurses Nixy, and the disreputable Moll Manners who is clearly headed down the path toward "the devil," to which one "might as well go to . . . one time as another time,--for go ye must!" (42). Nixy's favorite Thicket Street neighbor, however, is the Frenchman M. Jacques whose singing and strumming on the guitar provide for Nixy the only ray of hope in a dark world. Interestingly, M. Jacques not only metaphorically offers Nixy escape, for his music transports her away from her dark fantasies, but he also furnishes her a tangible means to leave Thicket Street.

In his "well-brushed red wig, worn in spots on top," M. Jacques symbolically expresses hope and faith to Nixy (36). His belief "in three things,--Rousseau, woman, and his guitar"--is neither the popular evangelical Christian belief of the American middle class nor the "popish" and foreign Catholicism which the main part of the middle class feared (36-37). Instead, he is simply a good man, one who helps and loves others with what
Phelps describes as "a species of chrysalis Christianity," and M. Jacques's music strikes Nixy "as if she had been a transparency." Phelps writes, "Nixy liked M. Jacques, partly because he was an old man and a pure one, partly because, when he sang to her, she forgot that she lived in Thicket Street" (37). Probably the most important aspect of M. Jacques, however, is the love he has for his deceased wife, a "femme tres blanche" (39). In M. Jacques's love for his deceased wife, possibly the first of the women clothed in or described as "white" which repeatedly occur in Phelps's novels, he is able to display love for Nixy by giving her all the money he has to help her leave Thicket Street.

When Nixy leaves with her baby, she discovers the meaning of shame for the first time, for almost no one is willing to give her the smallest amount of help. A "fallen woman," although still a child, Nixy cannot get work and lives as a homeless person, sleeping on benches and in corners and begging for food. The nameless baby becomes an increasing burden for Nixy. Interestingly, the first person outside of Thicket Street who offers Nixy any semblance of kindness is given by Phelps a number instead of a name. Like the innumerable millions of poor working class people, the bus driver of No. 23 becomes known to Nixy and the reader as a simple number. When he finds Nixy taking refuge in the warmth of his empty bus, he runs her off, but later he and his wife allow Nixy to sleep in their home and eat with them. It is at this point that Nixy discovers one of the interesting paradoxes of the class system--she comes to believe it is easier to get help from the poor than from the wealthy:

Nixy knew better than to ask for breakfast . . . at the door of one of the houses whose haughty shadows had repelled her . . . . Any one observing her closely would have noticed that she selected rather a shabby street, and, all things considered, the shabbiest dwelling in it, for her errand. It is one of the whims, or instincts, of the poor, to beg favors of their kind. It is also one of their whims . . . never to seem hungry under a stranger's roof. (48)
Thus, when Nixy coincidentally winds up at the home of No. 23, a cosy little house without an extra bed and with barely enough food to spare, she is drawn to the happy wife and mother, Marthy, recognizing that this "must be a very happy house" (54). For the first time, Nixy sees the image of the "true woman" as described by Barbara Welter, one who is happy and contented in her domesticity, and Phelps writes that Nixy understood "the pure loves of wife and mother," saying to herself, "If I was like that... maybe I'd like the baby without trying" (54). Of course, Nixy is not "like that," for she is an unmarried, uneducated teenage mother, and she finally comes to realize that "it was about time to be rid of the baby" (55). Releasing herself from the bonds of motherhood is, at least at first, a fairly easy task for Nixy, for she simply chooses the most beautiful and wealthy home she passes and leaves the baby on the doorstep. The narrator comments:

We talk of "instinctive maternal affection." I cannot learn that Nixy, when she left her child... upon the massive steps of the gabled house, experienced any other than emotions of relief. To be sure, when the child's little fingers fumbled feebly over her face, she thought that his hands were soft, thought of Marthy and her baby, and so was reminded of 23, and of being reported as a vagrant, and that it was quite time to be away. With little regret she kissed her child,--for the first time and the last. She had done by her own flesh and blood as the world had done by her. It seemed to this poor little mother rather a fair arrangement than otherwise. (57-58)

Without the burden of the baby, Nixy is free to pursue "honest" work, but Nixy is still puzzled as to whether she should return to Thicket Street without the baby and continue in her former career as waitress or attempt to build a new life in what she calls "this world of pure men and women" (59).

The concept of purity becomes very important in the novel. As a young, unmarried mother, Nixy cannot find work and those who attempt to help her not only keep their children away from her to avoid her possible evil influence on them, but they also barrage her with questions and advice intended to put her in her place or teach her to avoid future immorality. One woman comments, "I suppose you know how wicked
you've been," in an attempt to reform Nixy, and everyone tells her how difficult her road will be with the child. Without the baby she is able to find a job--ironically, caring for another, albeit wealthier, new mother--but her chance to succeed as a domestic servant fails when her employer, Mrs. Zerviah Myrtle, learns that Nixy is the girl who recently abandoned a baby. After this discovery, Mrs. Myrtle dismisses Nixy in order to avoid any possible contamination of her "innocent children," as if Nixy's sexual activity were a virus which could be caught. Of course, as a properly benevolent woman, Mrs. Myrtle does consider Nixy's reform, saying:

I do not wish to hurry you away--into mischief. I suppose you can reform, and be better, and all that. If it weren't for the children--but how could I feel it to be right to put my Fanny under your influence? . . . We could not, you see, sacrifice our own offspring to your reformation, though it would be very Christian and beautiful. So I do not see how I can do more than to forgive you for your ingratitude in so dreadfully deceiving me; which I do. (67)

Mrs. Myrtle's forgiveness, of course, means very little to Nixy, for Nixy at this point in the story is primarily concerned with her immediate physical needs, and leaving the relative luxury of the Myrtle servant's quarters becomes a major hardship for Nixy, who is still recovering from her own childbirth experience. Going out again to try to find shelter, food, and employment takes a tremendous toll upon Nixy's health.

During Nixy's final foray as a homeless girl, Phelps heightens the contrast between the city and the country, as well as the contrast between realism and romanticism. The American romantic period, with its emphasis on reclaiming the past, was coming to a close, and American realism, influenced by European literature, was just beginning to be a part of the American literary scene, but Phelps straddles the two periods interestingly. As Nixy roams the countryside, she notes the beauty and harmony of nature and the way it offers life to all kinds of creatures, for "[i]t was, to her fancy, purity, rest, renovation. It was, in her own language, 'chances'" (72). However, just a short time of tramping around
the countryside brings Nixy to the conclusion that nature does not offer a poor girl the same "chances" it offers the insects and birds: "[T]he girl traveled about in the beautiful autumn weather, searching for someone to help her to "stay honest" for seven days... [S]he generally fell to wondering why the world should be full of butterflies and yellow leaves, and no place in it for a girl who never saw either before" (72-73). Recognizing immediately the romantic possibilities inherent in the lovely autumn countryside and Nixy's helpless position, Phelps pointedly rejects romantic solutions for Nixy's situation. Unlike romantic stories where poor girls are discovered to inherit great wealth from distant relatives, Nixy's difficulties will not be solved so easily:

Nothing romantic happened to Nixy; nobody offered to adopt or endow her, educate or marry her. . . . Men and women who would have wept over her at a prayer-meeting sent her on her lonely, tempted way without a thought. . . . She was perfectly pale, and her mouth had drawn at the corners like the mouth of a person in a fever. . . . On a background of Roman ruins she would have been as effective as a rich romance; against a Yankee fence she was simply painful. (73-76)

Nixy is situated in the natural world but is unable to find her own place in it: she belongs to the city, not to the country, and her ability to survive in either environment, at least at this point in the novel, seems doubtful. The reality of Nixy's situation is too painful to be romantic. People turn Nixy away from their doors for fear of hearing "some dreadful story," because the true stories, the ones of girls like Nixy, abandoned by mother and father and raised on the streets to become another child-abandoner, are both difficult and painful for the hearer. Yet, just as Nixy is about to give up hope of living an "honest life" and "finding some folks," she meets the second "white" character in the book, teenaged Christina Purcell, who, Christ-like, wears pure white garments and saves Nixy by inviting her into the Purcell home and accepting Nixy as an equal.

If Christina, "so white, so safe, so comfortable" (76), is purity incarnate in the novel, her mother, Margaret Purcell, is a real woman with flaws. The narrator describes
Margaret as a fascinating woman, one who "never headed a 'cause,' delivered a lecture, wrote a book, had a 'mission'' (81), but one who, nonetheless, plays the most important role in Nixy's apparent regeneration. Not only is Margaret Purcell an interesting and intelligent woman, she is also an unhealthy woman. The narrator states, "[S]he has been a sick woman, and long sick; her cheeks lack tint, her hands life; she has worn old dresses on occasions, her own hair always; I believe that her features are irregular, her figure emaciated. She is also a widow, and widows . . . are apt to become monotonous, romance growing rusty in them with their bombazine" (81-82). An ordinary woman, and a believable one, Margaret Purcell shows more practical, middle-class sense in her treatment of Nixy than any other character in the novel, for she does not romanticize her, but attempts to treat her fairly, even as she is aware of the possible negative impact of Nixy's spotted past on her own unspotted daughter Christina.

By the time Nixy meets the Purcells, she has started to become cynical, and she has begun to realize both the "shame" of her "wickedness" and the hopelessness of escaping the descending path back to Thicket Street and a "dishonest" life on the streets. Nixy looks at the Purcells and ponders the differences in the classes and the various roles of the people she had met in her own life:

She wondered if Mrs. Myrtle were more religious than Monsieur Jacques; if the lady here with the white daughter were religious; if it were because people were white and religious that they all turned her from their doors; then, abruptly, how she would look sitting in the light of a porcelain lamp, with a white sack on. . . . She remembered with a regret as keen as if she had fallen from heaven . . . her life as her life had been a year ago; remembered her dream about the hill, and all the paths which blocked her down. Was her story marked upon her face, that nobody . . . should want her? Was she scarred, stained? . . . The hand of every man was against her. All the world held up its dainty skirts. All the world had hedged her in. (84-85)

Despite Nixy's "stained" past, she wonders at the fate which placed her on Thicket Street and left the beautiful "white" Christina only purity and goodness for a heritage. For Nixy,
Thicket Street is the only real home she knows, but for her it not only represents her poverty-stricken past and the situation which led to her pregnancy, but it also represents a future "unresptied, unpitied, unreprieved" which "piled on her fancy like years in hell" (86). If God is responsible for Thicket Street and for Nixy's early abandoned years, she thinks, then perhaps God has forsaken not only Nixy, but all mankind. "I'd like to know if God hain't got any folks," Nixy wonders (86). However, Margaret Purcell's pity or humanity or, perhaps, her own sympathy for a fellow-sufferer, causes her to offer Nixy a place to rest. Margaret's "code of etiquette," unlike the code of many of the other middle-class characters, includes Nixy, and she treats her as a guest in her home, despite the fact that Margaret distrusts Nixy's intentions and history. Not only does Margaret Purcell accept Nixy as a guest, she goes one step further and places the girl in her best guest chamber, the gray room. The grayness of the room, neither black nor white, reflects the ambiguity of the awkward situation between Margaret and Nixy. Symbolically, Margaret's attitude toward Nixy is gray, neither loving nor hating her, and her understanding of "correct behavior" in the situation is likewise fuzzy. Moreover, Nixy at this point in the novel is neither as black-hearted as society would make an unrepentant unwed mother and child abandoner, nor is she as pure-hearted as her personal sense of innocence and her admiration of Christina would lead one to believe. The "gray" protagonist of the novel, Nixy Trent, even as she becomes gradually more morally upright and pure-hearted, still has a black stain on her heart caused by her sexual immorality and her lack of love for her own child; thus, Nixy begins to wears a black dress to symbolize the sin in her life.

Of course, Phelps lets the reader know early in the novel that Nixy is not an "ordinary" laboring class teenager; she is one of those whose countenance and behavior retain some semblance of purity and innocence despite her environment and actions. Early in the novel, Phelps describes Nixy as a child-like young woman whose eyes retain an innocence surprising in one her age and with her experience. Nixy's appreciation of the
religious tunes which M. Jacques plays upon his guitar also illustrate to the reader her susceptibility to the beautiful and spiritual. His playing " Depths of mercy! can there be/Mercy still in store for me?" suggests to Nixy the mercy which might be available to her (21). Even Margaret Purcell notices the "curious mingling of rough and elegant grammar in Nixy's language," suggesting that she has not been completely degraded by her circumstances, but that she has instead picked up on some of the qualities of the "better" classes even in her short association with them. Interestingly, even though Margaret is representative of the type of middle-class woman with the least amount of pretension and strongest belief in equality, she still finds herself concerned both with Nixy's role in the house and with the behaviors which really only reflect Nixy's lack of manners: "Then, should Nixy be child or servant, or both? Either was a wretched arrangement; both, intolerable. She would make heavy cake; she would talk bad grammar; she would eat with her knife; she--" (116). Although Phelps seems to want to show possibilities for reform for Nixy, she does not ignore the very real social differences which often prevented middle- and upper-class women from becoming involved with the poorer classes. In this text, Phelps displays what seem to twentieth-century readers ridiculous questions of manners and social mores, but Margaret's attitude reflects typical fears many may have experienced about associating with the laboring class.

All the things which seem to concern Margaret Purcell relate to the domestic realm, but this should not be surprising given that, according to Stansell, "[w]omen viewed domesticity and true womanhood as a means to regenerate a class-divided city." Thus, by teaching Nixy proper domestic habits and by training her in piety, purity, and submissiveness, Margaret could do something to re-make Nixy and fit her for society. Perhaps Margaret's greatest internal conflict comes when she questions her own ability to work with Nixy, despite the entrenched middle-class morality and arrogance which Margaret seems to recognize as flaws in herself. Margaret also questions whether she can
do something with Nixy and whether she can, at the same time, keep Christina from being negatively influenced by Nixy's presence in the house. An interesting stylistic device used by Phelps in the novel is letters written between Margaret and Jane, the narrator of the story. These letters serve to summarize events which take place over longer periods of time and reveal Margaret's internal conflicts. In a letter Margaret writes to the narrator, Jane, she reveals her early attitude toward Nixy:

And so I made an affliction of that poor girl? Jane, I suppose I did! In my theory she was unbounded blessing! In my practice she was bitter burden? Exactly. . . . I took her at first very hard. To begin with, she had lung fever. . . . But think of it, Jane! Lung fever! Right there in my pretty gray room! . . . I own I was mortified. For, at the moment, I had felt so aggrieved, afflicted, cross with the girl. Instead of going straight upon my knees to thank Heaven that it wasn't small-pox! (123-26)

Later in the same letter, Margaret reveals the changes which have come about in her heart because of Nixy's presence in her household: "In this house and in this town the girl shall command, if I can control it, the trust and the respect that are due to a spotless woman. . . . At least, I do not mean ever to trip her by doubt of mine. What is gone is gone; let the past bury its own for Nixy and me" (128). Margaret wishes for Nixy to lose her "stain" so that she can be an independent woman, freed from her past. In addition, although Margaret had dreaded the laboring class girl's rough manners, eating with a knife and so forth, she states, "I have not been able to lay my finger upon a thread of coarseness in that girl" (134). Thus, Nixy Trent is not the coarse girl Margaret had feared, but a girl on her way to becoming a "lady."

Five years pass and Nixy, now called Eunice, grows into a beautiful, intelligent woman; surpassing Christina in her studies, Eunice Trent becomes the schoolteacher for the local elementary school. Margaret writes Jane (the narrator) that she had encouraged the idea of independence and self-support in Eunice because, as "the idea of self-support . . . grew into that of self-respect," Eunice turned naturally to employment. Instead of
making Eunice into a nineteenth-century "true woman," Eunice is beginning to fit Phelps's model of the independent and intelligent true woman. Margaret writes, "[S]ince she is quite competent for the undertaking, I should have considered it a great mistake to discourage it; not because she sprung from what, with a stupid sarcasm of ourselves, we are fond of terming 'the laboring classes,' but precisely as I should encourage it in Jane Briggs, Christina, Fanny Myrtle" (152). Like women in several of Phelps's later novels, Eunice is a model for the middle-class reader of a working woman, and Margaret's letter suggests that not only the working class needs to work.

While outwardly Eunice appears pure and respectable, she now feels a taint on her heart, for she regrets the abandonment of her child. Her eventual integration of the now five-year-old son into her life affects not only Eunice and the household, but the entire community. This reintegration process begins when Eunice encounters Lize, the woman who mothered and nursed her through her pregnancy and delivery. With this meeting comes Eunice's reassessment of her own place in society, for she cannot help but see the vast differences between her own educated, middle-class standing and that of Lize, who is traveling, gypsy-like, across the country with a "panorama." In addition, Eunice actually experiences a sense of embarrassment at being caught talking to Lize, but more to the point, Eunice fears the discovery of her past and the existence of her child. As she expects, Christina overhears the conversation, and Eunice is forced to confront her own feelings of guilt and shame about the child she abandoned. Against the advice of Margaret Purcell, Eunice removes her son from the orphanage and brings him to live in their house. In a series of events which seem unrealistic at best, Eunice loses her job as school-teacher only to be returned to work by the School Board and, eventually, accepted by the parents of the schoolchildren. Margaret and two other well-respected members of the community who are sympathetic with Eunice's situation are able to successfully argue to the school board that Eunice had not "yet corrupted beyond repair the impressionable infant minds" of
the town (205). With the support of her good friends, Eunice, despite the "Scarlet Letter" which she wears and the judgmental eyes of the town, remains at work and eventually wins over her opposition. Once again "hedged in" by middle-class society, Eunice understands that she cannot be both an accepted member of this class to which she has aspired--in which she must be, beyond a doubt, a gentlewoman of unspotted past--and a mother to her child. Unfortunately for the plot of *Hedged In*, at this point the story loses some strength, for Phelps resorts to allowing the little boy to die, giving Eunice the support of the community for the grieving mother and allowing Eunice to continue as a woman whose "Scarlet Letter" is not so obvious.

Once Phelps re-creates Eunice into a respectable woman and rids her of the reminder of her past in the form of her little boy, there is very little remaining in the novel to remind the reader of Eunice's laboring class heritage until the father of her child comes to visit Eunice. For both Dick (the child's father) and the reader, this is the point in the novel when the reader is supposed to realize that all people have the potential to change their genetic programming. Eunice, now completely different from her former self, when she was known as Nixy, is as different from Dick now as Nixy was different from Christina earlier in the novel. Her transformation is complete, and Dick recognizes that they are not on the same level any longer. He states, "I beg your pardon. . . . I see I'm not fit to stand talking here to a lady like you're grown to be. . . . I ain't the good-for-nothing I was in old times; I thought I'd like to kind o' get you off my conscience, and spruce up and live like better folks" (245). Dick's intention was to come to Nixy and offer marriage, to "make an honest woman of her," but once he sees the reality of the situation, he backs down apologetically. Eunice behaves maternally toward Dick, perhaps betraying some of Phelps's own class condescension; no longer of the same class, Eunice sees herself as an adult talking to a child. Although Dick has made his own kinds of changes and has grown in one way, Eunice has become a lady, a completely different person from who she was.
In a direct attack upon the argument which states that one's genetic heritage is the most important factor in the development of one's nature, Dick states, "I thought a lady was a born-thing like, afore. But, for aught I see, you're as fine as any of 'em" (246). Thus, Phelps presents her final argument for the importance of environment in the development of the person. Nixy/Eunice has overcome all odds and has become a genteel lady. Transformation complete, Eunice Trent finally removes her black dress and clothes herself in white at the end of the novel.

The narrator states at the end of the novel that Eunice Trent is a heroic character for she "was capable of very complex things; had certain heroic, stony elements in her which make women famous in pestilence, war, famine" (261). Eunice returns to Thicket Street to try to reclaim, or perhaps re-create, a part of her infamous past, but she passes along the street unrecognized. In fact, when she boards the No. 23 bus, that kind-hearted man does not recognize her, seeing her only as a rare high-class occupant. When Eunice attempts to pay back M. Jacques for his help, she finds that she is too late because he has only very recently died--unloved, unattended, and unmourned. While Eunice regrets that she did not arrive in time to help M. Jacques in his last hours, there is no sense that this scene is intended to draw sympathetic tears, but that, in contrast, it is included to show in a realistic manner the way many of the worthy poor finish their lives. Although Eunice cannot save M. Jacques, she does take Moll Manners, one of the women from Thicket Street who had tried to encourage Nixy to give in to the "devil," out of the gutter and take her to the hospital of the Magdalen Home so that Moll can die of consumption on clean sheets, Moll's dying wish. With Moll's request come two persuasive implications: that the poor can appreciate simple comforts and that everyone else does not have enough appreciation for these comforts. With Eunice Trent completely transformed into a true "lady," little remains, plot-wise, for her. She cannot marry, for how would a conventional man deal with a woman who was not completely pure? While several of Phelps's later
heroines, such as Perley Kelso in *The Silent Partner*, live full, complete lives without marriage, in this early novel Phelps does not even allow Eunice this happy ending. Finally dressed in the white dress which she had worn to Christina's wedding, Eunice kneels by her bed in prayer and collapses in saintly death with her arms around a wooden cross. Phelps leaves the cause of Eunice's death intentionally vague, for it is the image of her prone body at the cross which is supposed to strike the reader most forcefully. As a martyr for the "fallen woman" who is hedged in on every side from society, Eunice Trent provides an interesting early look at the American class system and social mores.

"We Are Not Cruel, We Are Only Asleep"

In 1871 when Phelps published *The Silent Partner*, perhaps her most well-developed exploration of the laboring class, she was personally crusading for two major issues over and above everything else: she was involved in the women's rights movement and was also, interestingly enough, arguing the pros and cons of women in the workplace, particularly female seamstresses. In *The Silent Partner* and many other essays and short stories, Phelps argues that women need an occupation which will offer them healthy exercise of the mind and body, not occupations which, like sewing, are tedious, mind-numbing, and posture-destroying. While several essays and short stories Phelps published in 1871 concentrate on the woman sewing in the home, *The Silent Partner* takes a look at the lot of the women (along with men and young children) who work in a textile mill in Five Falls, Massachusetts.

When Phelps published *The Silent Partner*, the textile and garment industry was still relatively young. Until 1851 when the first practical sewing machine was patented by Isaac M. Singer, most sewing for the home was done completely by hand. However, even before this time a fairly active industry for men's clothing began to form, primarily in New England, and a great deal of the work was jobbed out to women who worked from home.
Early sewing machines were too expensive for the average family, so few homes owned one until the end of the nineteenth century. However, the ready-to-wear garment industry was enormously affected by the advent of the sewing machine. Shops grew into small factories, buying several machines and training operators to use them either in the tenement house where the shop was located or at the operator's home. At the time of the Civil War, government contracts for uniforms helped establish a number of large assembly-line garment factories to produce textiles and clothing, and by the 1880s, the ready-to-wear menswear industry was firmly entrenched. On the other hand, the women's clothing industry was much slower to take off. For one thing, women could, after all, sew their own clothing, and wealthy women still had the fashionable seamstresses who could create French-inspired one-of-a-kind creations. The women's clothing industry did not begin to flourish until the 1890s when the popularity of the Gibson girl helped convince women to purchase readymade shirtwaist dresses. The growth of the garment industry caused new problems for labor. While some women sewed piece-work from home, a particularly low-paying occupation, many women and men, often immigrants, either worked long hours in sweatshops in major urban areas for very low pay or, if they were fortunate, obtained work in a factory which paid better. Often, however, as seen in Phelps's "The Tenth of January" and The Silent Partner, these factories offered dangerous and unhealthy working conditions with very few benefits or chances for advancement in the profession.

The two issues of women's rights and women's sewing intersect for Phelps, not only in The Silent Partner and other novels, but also in the series of columns she wrote for The Independent that year. The Independent was a major New York weekly periodical which in the early 1870's claimed a circulation close to one million readers and the highest advertising dollars of any periodical in the country. Although the periodical had been established as a Congregationalist organ and the publisher and most of its editors were
Congregationalist, by 1870 *The Independent* had taken on a less denominational tone. When Washington Gladden was hired in 1871 to become its religious editor, spiritual and moral issues began again to be at the forefront of *The Independent*’s contributions. Phelps’s articles, combining strong social criticism and advocating women’s rights, women’s work, and better working conditions—and calling upon the "Christianity" of her reading audience in supporting these noble social reforms—fit in well with *The Independent*’s goals and Gladden’s Social Christianity perspective.

In the August 10, 1871 *Independent* article, "The Song of the Shirt," Phelps bemoans the fact that sewing, that "automatic, nerve-destroying motion of the needle, continued hour upon hour," always falls on the shoulders of the women in a household. She writes, "It is a popular fiction that men leave this branch of industry to women because it is healthful, light, and easy. It is an unpopular fact that it is so exhausting to the nervous force, and so unique in its demands upon the patience, that men will not touch it." In this essay, Phelps argues that sewing, even sewing for the family, keeps women from pursuing reading, writing, or any other task they might wish to pursue, and that the job should be left to paid professionals. Nonetheless, Phelps certainly does not support the underpaying of these paid professionals, who were often women who sewed piecework at home or in sweatshops. In "What They Are Doing," Phelps writes about the 35,000 "sewing-girls" in New England who make six cents for a shirt (after providing her own thread) and ten cents each for linen coats. She adds the statistic that only thirty-five of 8,000 employed women had an occupation which would support them. and she quotes the Massachusetts Bureau of Labor as saying that "statistics prove beyond doubt that most fallen women have been compelled to their fall by poverty. They sell their womanhood for bread to sustain life." In "The Lady of Shalott," one of Phelps’s better-known short stories, Sary Jane sews at home to support herself and her sister, the so-called "Lady" of the story, an invalid who has not been outside her home since the age of five when she was
thrown downstairs by her mother. The "Lady of Shalott" lives in a fantasy world and has difficulty understanding her sister Sary Jane:

Sary Jane had red hair, and crooked shoulders, and a voice so much like a rat-trap which she sometimes set on the stairs that the Lady of Shalott could seldom tell which was which until she had thought about it a little while. . . . Her crooked shoulders Sary Jane had acquired from sitting under the eaves of the palace to sew. That physiological problem was simple. There was not room enough under the eaves to sit straight. Sary Jane's red hair was the result of sitting in the sun on July noons under those eaves, to see to thread her needle. . . . As for Sary Jane's voice, when one knew that she made nankeen vests at sixteen and three-quarter cents a dozen, _that_ was a matter of no surprise.38

Although the "Lady" in this story is confounded by the reality which is Sary Jane's life, the reader is disturbed by the image of crooked Sary Jane sewing away her life on "nankeen vests at sixteen and three-quarter a dozen." However, if a life of sewing is no healthy, beautifully "domestic" career for a woman, then neither is factory work, at least under the conditions which Phelps writes about in her novel _The Silent Partner_ (1871).39

Perley Kelso, the spoiled only child of a "gentleman manufacturer," and Sip Garth, one of the workers in the Kelso mill, are characters in _The Silent Partner_ who mirror each other in several ways. Just as Nixy Trent wonders why she was born in Thicket Street when Christina was born to wear white dresses in a loving home in _Hedged In_, Phelps places _The Silent Partner's_ characters Perley and Sip in direct contrast with one another in order to force the issue of the importance of environment and education on the outcome of the human being's fate. Both Perley and Sip are strong-minded and attractive individuals, both are courted by gentlemen only to refuse their offers, opting instead to remain single in order to better pursue their goals, and both continue on a reform-minded track at the end of the novel. When the two characters meet for the first time, Phelps creates a dramatic contrast between the two women: Perley is sitting in warm and dry comfort inside the santalina-scented cushions of her carriage watching Sip, who battles the
gusty wind and sleet. Sip "struck out with her hands as a boxer would; sometimes she pommelled with her elbows and knees like a desperate prize-fighter" (17). Perley. meanwhile, sits comfortably in her carriage letting her fiancée Maverick and friend Fly Silver talk. It is clear early in the story that Sip is a fighter and that Perley has been a silent watcher; yet, this meeting sets up the conflict in the story, for after becoming friends with Sip, Perley does not remain silent and still, but becomes a fighter, too.

In *The Silent Partner*, Phelps establishes her most clearly radical statement on class differences through the friendship of Perley and Sip. As a wealthy woman of society, Perley Kelso had been raised to believe in her own superiority and the superiority of all members of her class over the laboring class. The narrator explains, "With the exception of her servants, her seamstresses, and the very little members of a very little Sabbath-school class, . . . Miss Kelso had never in her life before . . . exchanged a dozen words with an example of what Maverick Hayle was pleased to term the *hoi polloi.*" Sip Garth, however, quickly puts Perley in her place, insisting that there is no difference between the classy theater Perley frequents and the Blue Plum, the theater Sip attends when she can. Perley remarks, "'But the theatre is no place for you, my poor girl.' She felt sure of as much as that. She had dimly understood as much from her father and the newspapers. No theater patronized by the lower classes could be a place for a poor girl" (24). Sip, on the other hand, knows that the two theaters are simply variations of the same type, and she also realizes that as a member of the lower class, she cannot escape the " riffraff" either in work or play. Sip responds:

I want to know why you tell me the Plum is no place for me? What kind of a place is this for you? . . . You don't know: but I do . . . . I tell you it's the plating over that's the difference; the plating over. At the Plum we say what we mean; and we mean bad enough, very like. We're rough, and we're out with it. Up at this place they're in with it. They plate over. The music plates over. The people plate over . . . . I put it to you honest, if I haven't seen and heard that in that grand place tonight--all plated over--
that's no more fit for a lady like you seem to be to sit and see and hear, than it's fit for me and the like of me to sit and see and hear the Plum. (29-30)

The idea of things being "plated over" suggests Gilded Age imagery, although the term "Gilded Age" really did not come to be applied to the period until a couple of years later when Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner published *The Gilded Age* (1873).

According to Sip, the only difference between the upper-class and lower-class theaters is the fine veil of manners and money which screens the underlying reality from the view. Sip's conversation with Perley disturbs Perley because it forces her to think about difficult issues, but continued interaction with Sip and other workers in the mill begins to transform Perley's life and attitudes.

When Perley Kelso's father dies, she comes into ownership of the mill in partnership with Maverick Hayle and his father. From Sip, Perley learns that the mills are not the superior democratically-run establishments that she had always believed them to be, and that the mill-workers are not the "well-paid, well-cared-for, happy set of laboring people" that she had been taught to imagine (64). Perley's introduction to tragedy (through the death of her father) and poverty (through conversations with Sip) has a profound impact on her, for like many of her class, she is not accustomed to discomfort. Perley says, "I feel like a large damask curtain taken down for the first time off its cornice. . . . All in a heap, you know, and surprised. . . . And I'm not used, you know. Maverick, to feeling at all; it's never been asked of me before" (39). After learning of the obstacles Sip and the other millworkers face daily, Perley struggles against the limited role she is given by Maverick and his father in the running of the mill. Although she is only a "silent partner," Perley eventually gains a voice, releases herself from her engagement to Maverick, and moves toward a more active involvement in mill reform.

Perley's metamorphosis from a self-centered, uninformed young woman to an active labor reformer happens gradually over the course of the novel, and the narrator
describes the conditions in the factory town of Five Falls in order to illustrate Perley's initial attitude toward the factory workers. The narrator directly contrasts Perley with the mill people at the beginnings of both the second and the fourth chapters by contrasting the reactions of all the characters to the town. Factory bells awaken not only the mill people but also Perley, and these bells represent the hurried drudgery of the workers' lives. However, Perley is not summoned to work by these bells, a point which is made clear by her reaction to the bells: "Nothing is more conducive to one's sense of personal comfort than to live in a factory town and not be obliged to answer factory bells. This is especially to be said of those misty morning bells" (34). As Perley turns over in bed and covers her head with thick blankets, the narrator personifies the ringing bells and the rushing footsteps of the workers: "The bells shiver in sympathy with the steps, and the steps shiver in response to the bells. . . . The bells grow cross and snappish,—it is so cold. The steps grow pert and saucy,—it is so cold. Bells and steps, in a convulsion of ill-temper, go out from hearing together" (35). For Perley, Five Falls is a comfortable place to live, and her only role in the town, at least before the death of her father, is to create work for the townspeople: "She put on Five Falls for a few months every year as she put on a white dress,—a cool thing, which kept wash-people busy" (42). Like the white dress which has a primarily decorative purpose and which keeps people busy in an attempt to keep it looking fresh and clean, Perley's purpose in Five Falls had always been decorative. Although Perley Kelso begins the novel as a spoiled wealthy woman whose major role in life was giving wash-people something to do, her role begins to change as early as chapter four after Perley visits Sip's house.

If the description of Five Falls in chapter two is written primarily from Perley Kelso's point of view, in chapter four, Phelps gives us a new description of Five Falls and its mill workers from their perspective. For the workers, Five Falls is a place where mill workers get up early, go to work, shiver and try to stay warm, and finish the day in a cold.
damp room without enough to eat. Just as Phelps personifies the bells in the second chapter, here she objectifies the mill workers:

If you are one of "the hands" in the Hayle and Kelso Mills . . . you are so dully used to this classification, "the hands," that you were never known to cultivate an objection to it, are scarcely found to notice its use or disuse. Being surely neither head nor heart, what else remains. Conscious scarcely, from bell to bell, from sleep to sleep, from day to dark, of either head or heart, there seems even a singular appropriateness in the chance of the word with which you are dimly struck. Hayle and Kelso label you. There you are. The world thinks, aspirations, creates, enjoys. There you are. You are the fingers of the world. You take your patient place. The world may have need of you, but only that it may think. Aspire, create, enjoy. (71)

This objectification of the mill workers is important, for it illustrates the attitude many of the owners have toward their employees: the mill workers are tools, there to make life easier for everyone else. That Phelps disapproves of this attitude is obvious, for she moves from the symbolic to the general, describing the working conditions endured in the mill by one of these generic "hands," and finally to the specific, when Perley visits Sip. Phelps describes this generic worker in second person, describing the possible day's routine, "You hang up your shawl and your crinoline, and understand, as you go shivering by gaslight to your looms, that you are chilled to the heart, and that you were careless about your shawl, but do not consider carefulness worth your while by nature or by habit; a little less shawl means a few less winters in which to require shawling" (72-73). Phelps then contrasts the deathly chill of the loom with the stifling heat of the weaving-room: "The engines respire into the weaving-room; with every throb of their huge lungs you swallow their breath. The weaving-room stifles with steam. . . . The windows of the weaving-room are closed; . . . a stir in the air will break your threads. There is no air to stir. You inhale for a substitute motionless, hot moisture" (73-74). Whether working at the loom or in the weaving room, Phelps says, the life of the mill hand is, at the very least, uncomfortable, as the worker endures painful feet and back, discovers wet, stinky lint in
her hair, eyes, throat, and lungs, and survives burning eyes throughout the day and night. Phelps ends her description of this mill hand's life: "You are a miserable little factory-girl with a dirty face" (77).

While this "miserable little factory girl" is a generic character—she could be any one of hundreds of mill hands—Phelps switches from description and commentary to narrative again with Sip's reaction to Perley's visit to her house. Arriving home from the mill, dirty and tired, Sip finds that Perley has already started a fire and made herself at home. From Sip, Perley learns the facts of life for mill-workers: about the dry, rasping cough they call "cotton-cough," caused by cotton fibers being breathed all day and settling in the lungs; about children being born deaf because of their pregnant mothers working up until their birth; about women who drink themselves to death, run around on the streets, and sometimes "do worse." Getting to know Sip makes Perley more determined to make changes in the operation of the mill. Leaving Sip's house, "Perley Kelso stepped out . . ., from the damp little stone house, with something of the confusion of the time upon her. Her head and heart both ached. She felt like a stranger setting foot in a strange land. . . . It even occurred to her that she should never be very happy again, for knowing that factory-girls ate black molasses and had the cotton-cough" (98). Immediately afterward, she meets the second character who provides an argument against the working conditions of the mills, and Perley discovers that not only young women, but also young children work in the mills.

Bub Mell provides both comic relief and a sense of tragedy as Perley comes to learn the brevity of a child's life in a mill town. Eight-year-old Bub, "filthy and ragged" (99), has been working in the mill, despite the fact that children under the age of ten are not supposed to, and he appears to spend his free time chewing tobacco, catching rats, and looking for other "opportunities" to make money on the street. Perley is surprised that he is not in school, because he "got so large they give it up," and, in a burst of benevolent
zeal, she proceeds to take him to his home so that she can speak to his parents about his wild behavior (102). What she finds there becomes the basis for much of Perley's newfound enthusiasm for mill reform. The mother dying of consumption, the odor of the small room, the seven out-of-control and fretful children, the flooded cellar—all the facts of Bub's existence are difficult for Perley to comprehend. Mr. Mell, Bub's fierce, sullen father, relates to Perley the circumstances of their impoverished condition, circumstances which Phelps has taken directly from the reports of the Massachusetts Bureau of Labor. Because of his involvement in strikes where he had been turned out of factories, Mr. Mell is unable to find steady work, and even when he does work, he finds that he cannot make enough to support the family without sending his children to work. In this passage, Phelps clearly wants to point out to her reader the reality of the situation for a good many mill hands, for by including the factual "testimony," she builds an increasing sense of believability in her story. Of course, the reality was that many of these people died early deaths because of their dangerous living and working conditions.

Of all the tragic characters in the story. Bub Mell is perhaps the most tragic for his young life is cut short through his work in the mill. Phelps provides the details of Bub's last morning, beginning the chapter with a refrain on the morning bells and the loveliness of the summer morning in Five Falls. The morning dew baptizes the town and offers an innocent environment for Bub to play in before heading to work:

To pluck a Five Falls morning in the bud, one should be up and in it before the bells,—like Bub. Until the bells are awake, there is a stillness and a cleanliness about the place that are noticeable; ... about the very tenements on East Street, washed and made shining by the quiet little summer shower that fell perhaps last night, like old sins washed out by tears; ... about the little cascades at play like babies upon the bosom of the upper stream; ... about the slopes of buttercups and clover which kneel to the water's edge with a reverent look, as if they knelt for baptism. (203-04)
Into this Edenic place Bub Mell bounds, innocent and puppyish, to catch rats. When Bub finally arrives at the mill he has an injured finger and torn pants caused by his rambunctious activities. No longer the innocent puppy, Bub's removal from the innocent pre-bells Five Falls into the adult working world brings him anger and "an extra shade of age and evil" (209). At this point, Phelps allows the reader admittance to some private notebook pages which are being written by Stephen Garrick, one of the supervisors of the mill. These notebook pages contain further statistics from the Bureau of Labor, and they give details on the cost of juvenile delinquency to the taxpayer, approximating that each juvenile offender costs the state an average of two hundred and fifty dollars to keep in prison. Phelps creates an additional argument for reform with this discussion of juvenile delinquency and taxpayer costs. Although Garrick is not uncaring, his notebook reflects social and economic attitudes toward the children of the laboring class which Phelps finds deplorable, especially when contrasted with the lives of the working poor. Of course, the reality was that juvenile delinquency was a problem in urban areas, as Stansell explains:

The family wage economy, in which parents and children pooled their individual earnings toward a common subsistence, was the basis of urban working-class life. . . . Family loyalties, however, did not always win out over the temptation. . . . The tensions between the meager independence of wage work and the pull of family loyalties defined one dimension of working class life. This tension helps to explain the problem of juvenile crime.42

Thus when Bub, in an argument over tobacco, gets caught in the machinery of the mill, the narrator states with poignant irony that Bub "has saved the State his two hundred and fifty dollars," for his death not only saves taxpayers the cost of reforming him, but it also makes very little impact on the world around him (215). Bub's life is of very little importance, and even for his father, Bub's death is mostly significant in that it offers the chance that "damages" might be paid to the family. It is important to note that while working class families relied upon the earnings of their children, children were not really an economic
advantage to poor urban dwellers. Stansell writes, "The children, who should be
protected within the domestic sphere, were instead encouraged to labor in the streets.
where they 'graduate in every kind of vice known.' Children's presence on the streets was
thus not a symptom of poverty, but a cause." Phelps sees Bub Mell as a symptom of
poverty, but she recognizes that society often sees the Bub Mells of the world as the
cause. Phelps writes, "Life, like everything else, was quite too young for Bub. He has got
so old, he has given it up" (215-16).

Perley's interaction with the poor members of her community opens her eyes, and
she comes to realize that she only has wealth because she was born into wealth, not
because of any inherent goodness or worthiness in herself. She exclaims:

You do not understand . . . you people who work and suffer, how it is with
us! We are born in a dream, I tell you! Look at these rooms! Who would
think--in such a room as this--except he dreamed it, that the mothers of
very little children died for want of a few hundreds and a change of
climate? Why, the curtains in this room cost six! . . . If you cry out to us,
we only dream that you cry. We are not cruel, we are only asleep . . . I
never knew until to-night what it was like to be poor . . . I thought it was
a respectable thing, a comfortable thing; a thing that couldn't be helped; . . .
a thing that must be, just as mud must be in April. (127-28)

This great epiphany--of the real differences between the poor and the rich--causes Perley
to re-think her position at the mill. As "silent partner," she has no control over the
decisions or day-to-day operations. She sees that when her partners decide to spend some
extra money on building a new mill, the mill hands continue to suffer with low wages and
long hours. Perley's interaction with the mill hands allows her access to talk of strikes,
and she insists on making changes at the mill, but her attempts are curtailed by Maverick
and his father. Perley suggests improvements like those made in other mills--a library,
relief societies, half-time schools, and housing for the workers--but Maverick accuses her
of lacking a real business mind. In a direct insult to Perley, Maverick remarks:
If we don't bankrupt ourselves by reflecting ever risk that the great concerns choose to run, some soft-hearted and soft-headed philanthropist pokes his finger into our private affairs, and behold, there's a hue and cry over us directly. . . . You run all over Five Falls alone on a dark night, very improperly, to hear mill-people complain of their drains. . . . One would think. . . . to hear and to see you, Perley, that there were no evils in the country but the evils of the factory system; that there were no poverty but among weavers earning ten dollars a week. Questions which political economists spend life in disputing, you expect a mill-master. . . . who doesn't care a fig about them--to settle. (134-36)

Maverick, obviously a representative of the status quo in the novel, has no interest in making any real changes in the mill, and he has no interest in enforcing regulations. When Perley asks him about the illegal practice of allowing children, like Bub, to work in the mill, Maverick blames the practice, perhaps rightly, on the parents: "[N]obody. . . . can conceive of the dodges these people invent to scrape and screw a few dollars, more or less, out of their children" (137). In frustration with Maverick, Perley tries to get him to understand the way she sees the mill hands, comparing her own "empty, idle, foolish hands" to the work-worn hands of the laborers (139), but her attempts go nowhere.

When Perley realizes that she will not be able to influence Maverick to improve the conditions at the mill, Perley decides to strike at the class issue from the societal level. Of all of Phelps's characters, Perley Kelso is perhaps the one who changes most drastically from beginning to end. Perley is like a butterfly emerging from a chrysalis. The young woman who sat back in her scented carriage cushions and tried to understand why anyone would take a walk in the rain no longer exists. In her place, by mid-novel, is '[a]n eccentric young lady [who] buried herself in Five Falls ever since the old gentleman's death, broke an engagement, and was interested in labor reform" (185). Now that Perley sees that the differences between members of the classes are due to accidents of birth, she attempts to place all her friends, from both classes, on the same level by inviting them all to a party at her house. Perley's society friends, the Silvers and Van Doozles, intermingle with Sip and the workers from the mill. Phelps writes of the working-class guests:
With the exception of a little plainness about their dress (plainness rather than roughness, since in America we will die of bad drainage, but we will manage to have a "best suit" when occasion requires) and an air of really enjoying themselves, they did not, after all, leave a very different impression upon the superficial spectator from that of any thirty people whom Fly Silver might collect at a musicale. (225-26)

Since Perley's high society friends have had as little experience with the working class as Perley had before the circumstances of the novel occur, they are puzzled as to how to treat the Five Falls guests. Perley, who has been regularly inviting the factory workers to her home for social entertainment, explains that she treats all her guests the same, and then begins to play something from Beethoven to those gathered. Despite the assertion from Miss Van Dozle that "[t]he people cannot appreciate Beethoven," all the guests, rich and poor, listen sensitively (229). Throughout the evening, Perley clearly illustrates the similarities between her upper- and lower-income guests, and takes every opportunity to "show off" the mill hands' possibilities for growth through education which she has been giving them at every opportunity through frequent social gatherings. However, her "Society" guests, by and large, cannot accept Perley's attempts to equalize the classes. They bemoan her "death," as far as "Society" is concerned, and label Perley "exceedingly original," "a literary character," and "morbid." Perley does not see herself as a great reformer, however, but as a person who simply comes to know and understand her neighbors and friends. Phelps suggests that this kind of "benevolence" is the kind which will have an effect upon the world.

By the end of the novel, the reader finds Perley and Sip both clearly freed from the situations in which they were immersed at the beginning of the novel. Perley no longer feels ties to "High Society," and she continues her unconventional friendships with the mill hands. After breaking her earlier engagement to Maverick, she later refuses another suitor, Mr. Garrick, on the grounds that she has too much work to do to abandon it all for
the "trade" of marriage. Likewise, Sip Garth also refuses marriage, saying, "I'll never marry anybody, Dirk. I'll never bring a child into the world to work in the mills" (287).

After the tragic death of her deaf and blind sister Catty, Sip is free to leave the mills, and Perley's protegee finds herself a street preacher at the end of the story. Perley writes, "There was nothing saintly about Sip. No halo struck through the little court upon her doorstep. Florence Nightingale or the Quaker Dinah would not have liked her. She was just a little rough, brown girl, bringing her hands together at the knuckles and talking fast" (294). The "religion" that Sip preaches, however, is not as much the message of soul salvation as it is the message of society salvation. In a move bound to please the middle-class, peace-loving audience, Sip preaches against revolutionary responses to the social inequities, saying, "[H]e knows where the fault is, and where the knot is, and who's to blame, and who's to suffer. And I tell you he knows there'll never be any way but this way to unsnarl us all" (298-99). Sip tells the people of Five Falls to change their hearts, and in time, she states, God will fix the world. Because Sip is "one of them," she can reach them and make changes, and like the many preachers of the "Social Gospel" whom Phelps reveres, Sip Garth will reach the masses while Perley Kelso, no longer silent, attempts to transform the hearts and minds of management and society.

"Woman as the Sea Has Made Her"--The Women and Fishermen of Gloucester

In 1896 Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (now "Ward") wrote to the editor of *Ladies Home Journal* concerning an upcoming novel by Kipling. She was concerned that the novel her husband, Herbert D. Ward, was working on would be duplicated by Kipling. She writes:

Mr. Ward has *both* the material and the gift combined to write the one unprecedented Gloucester fisherman's novel. Mr. Kipling (I remember) staid in Gloucester three or four days in a boarding house. Mr. Ward has
lived here for ten summers,—and I for twenty. While we do not presume to
match Mr. Ward's gift as a writer against the reputation and power of
Kipling, yet I do feel that his store of experience, combined with a real
genius for all nautical affairs and for their description will go for something;
and that his novel is by no means doomed.\footnote{45}

In this letter, Phelps reveals the extent to which she will use her literary reputation to help
her husband's publishing career, for her main purpose is to discover something of Kipling's
plot or motif so that Ward would not accidentally duplicate the story. Interestingly,
however, Phelps herself had already written works which might be dubbed "Gloucester
fisherman novels." Her twenty summers in Gloucester served her in good stead to give
her an understanding of the seacoast life, and in several of these short stories and novels,
particularly \textit{The Madonna of the Tubs} (1885)\footnote{46} and \textit{A Singular Life}, Phelps's fishing-town
setting offers her the opportunity to explore motifs of family, loss, and survival through
simple endurance as poor fisherman families struggle to live on the Massachusetts coast.\footnote{47}

Phelps devotes an entire chapter of her autobiography to the town of Gloucester,
the town near where she spent those twenty summers, but nonetheless she still sees herself
as an outsider to the town, one of those "idle folk" who "are weak on the topics of main-
sheets, and jib-hanks."\footnote{48} Despite the fact that Phelps believes that Gloucester is "the most
adorable spot in this part of the world in which to spend the summer," she acknowledges
that her words might be offensive to the fishing-folk whom she so admires. She calls
herself one of the writers who puts "Gloucester adoringly into the magazines out of the
impulses of our loyal and loving hearts, and are hated accordingly of all men for the
tribute's sake."\footnote{49} If she is hated, it is not because she brings visitors to the town, but
because she realistically writes about the poverty, drunkenness, and misery of the
Gloucester fisherman's life. In one story, however, a Christmas version of the tale, Phelps
illustrates how love and sympathy can help overcome the poverty and sadness inherent in a
Gloucester fisherman's wife's life.
In *Madonna of the Tubs*, one of Phelps's favorite short stories, originally published in *Harper's* as a Christmas story but later published in book form, a wealthy young summer Fairharbor visitor sees, through an artistic eye, the love and beauty of a washerwoman's life. Fairharbor, modeled on Gloucester, is host to numerous summer visitors, for nineteenth-century urban dwellers often traveled to the seaside or mountains to cool off in the hot summer months. The summer visitors include various types: middle-class families who come for a short time, just during the hottest months; fashionable women with their French maids and landaus; "distinguished visitors" who help raise property values by their presence; and the regulars, long-term summer boarders who stay June through November every year. One of these long-term boarders, an idle Boston beauty named Miss Helen Ritter, comes to understand the value of generosity; however, she is not the typical wealthy patron of the poor. Just as Phelps points out in earlier stories, in this story she asserts that distant, snobbish benevolence does not help people the way real human caring does. The narrator describes Helen: "She was not given to too much consideration of the lot of her fellow-men perhaps; her sympathies were well regulated, but not acute. [S]he was not a philanthropist by avocation; she took people as they came, or went--good-naturedly enough, but not uncomfortably; she had a touch of the irresponsibility belonging to professional artists." Helen has her laundry done by a local washerwoman, Ellen Jane Salt, wife of Henry Salt, fisherman, and mother of six children. Phelps points out the decency with which Helen treats the Salts, for she not only talks to the fishing people with the same " amiability" she uses with everyone, but she also pays her bill promptly and does not ask of Ellen Jane unreasonable tasks. Helen is contrasted with another summer boarder, Mrs. Hannibal P. Harrowstone (whose name undoubtedly is meant to be humorous), another "idle thing" who is sillier than Helen Ritter, for she wears her thirty-thousand dollar diamonds everywhere she goes, for fear of their being stolen. Yet, this "luxurious" woman, on the ground that "one must not make
paupers," had donated three dollars for the widows of fishermen drowned the previous
year. Phelps ridicules her kind of patronage, for Mrs. Harrowstone does not see the
people in town as anything more than servants, put there to wash her lace and flounces.

Phelps is much more sympathetic in her description of Ellen Jane and her home.
Although she has a "busy voice, pitched like the American feminine voice of her class,"
she is a loving generous, clean woman with great personal pride (22). Her cottage has a
parlor, for as the narrator states, "Whether his debts be paid or his soul saved we need no
stop to inquire; he will attend to that presently; meanwhile, a parlor or your life!" (24).
Decorated as well as it can be under tight money conditions, the Salt's parlor is clean and
attractive with a gilt-framed picture, a Bible, and a copy of Harper's. In addition, this
room contains a melodeon, substituting for the piano Ellen Jane had wanted to purchase,
and a framed photograph of the Salt's disabled son, Rafe, whose face, like his name,
reminds one of an angel. These two last items represent both the wealth and poverty of
this small cottage: too poor to buy a piano, the melodeon provides musical entertainment
and culture for the Salt's; Rafe's portrait reminds visitors of Rafe's beauty and disability,
apparently caused by a shock to his mother's system when her husband's fishing boat sank.
In fact, Phelps writes, "Ellen Jane Salt did not pass for a heroine, but she had aches
enough and ailments enough to have put Miss Ritter or Mrs. Hannibal P. Harrowstone
under treatment from a fashionable physician for the rest of her life" (33). Although
Phelps primarily focuses on the women in this story, she describes Henry Salt as a tough,
but generous, seaman who spends many of his summer days serving as voluntary lifeguard
for the boarder children who go out boating. Although Henry was a "sober man, for the
most part," he does occasionally drink more than he can handle, and Phelps makes him a
sympathetic character who does the best he can to take care of his family. Thus, the Salts
strive for middle-class standards, and Helen Ritter, looking around the crowded cottage at
the large family, disabled child, and exhausted parents, wonders what keeps these people contented with their lot.

Ellen Jane tells Helen that she has had a "happy life," despite the difficulties. Ellen Jane elaborates: "Henry and me have had a happy life--him a fisherman, me a washer-woman--six children--and Rafé--and poor. Well, there! there's been times poor don't say it--and hard. It's been pretty hard. But you see, my dear, me and Henry like each other. I suppose that makes a difference" (34). In the Salts, Helen Ritter recognizes an inherent grace--a faculty of knowing how to live life well--which she appreciates. She watches Ellen Jane holding her invalid child, Rafé, and thinks, "The Madonna--of the Tubs" (35). Although Ellen Jane is poor, Helen sees her as a kind of blessed and heroic mother figure and later thinks, "If this were a story in need of a heroine, ... it is a vacant position which I should not be asked to fill. And yet I'd be my washer-woman to be" (48). Helen believes she would trade places with Ellen Jane just to experience that kind of love and contentment. However, the Salt's contentment is not to last forever, for when Henry Salt is apparently drowned at sea, the Salts must rise to the challenge and carry on, emotionally and financially, without him.

According to the story, hundreds of fisherman are killed every year off the coast of Massachusetts; the three dollars donated by Mrs. Harrowstone cannot do much to help the widows and families of these dead men. In November, when the news of Henry Salt's death is brought, the rest of the Salt family do what they can to support themselves. Ellen Jane does what she can to find washing in the winter-time after the summer visitors have left, her daughter works in a net factory, and even little Rafé finds work as a model for a portrait painter, but there is no money for meat, winter clothes, or Christmas. At this point in the story, the Christmas-time message becomes obvious--little Rafé in the corner with his crutches reminds the reader of Dickens's Tiny Tim, and when Helen Ritter's cart-load of Christmas presents, food, and clothing arrives, the picture is almost complete.
Helen makes her gift generously and without the condescending attitude that unfortunately often accompanies philanthropy. The narrator states:

\[\text{Not one of the poor souls knew, which was the best of it, that the young lady had never done such a thing before in all her life. She had done it now in her own "way"—that whimsical, obstinate, lavish way that sometimes was so wrong and sometimes so right, but this time was so sweet and true. Was it her heart that told her how? For her head was painfully uneducated in sociology. She had not a particle of training as a visitor to the poor. . . . She was simply acquainted with her washer-woman, and had approached her as she would any other acquaintance, according to the circumstances of the case. . . . As a human being to human beings, Helen Ritter had come. (73-74)}\]

If Helen Ritter gives without thinking of her own elevated generosity, then it is also clear that although the Salts appreciate the gifts, they are not beggars and they have pride. She writes, "It was a brave, self-helpful family; she knew them; not a drop of pauper blood rolled in the veins of their sturdy bodies. Ghastly poverty had got them; worse was before them; but if any desolate woman and her babes, thrust into their fate, could breast it and not go under, these were they" (74). In addition, Ellen Jane continues to show Helen the kind of courtesy a lady would show to her visitor—she takes her hat and cloak and offers her hospitality. Phelps shows through these two characters that women of any class can be friends, for Helen holds Ellen Jane in her arms and comforts her while the bereaved woman tells of her great loss.

Of course, since this is a holiday story, Henry Salt surprises his family by arriving on the doorstep, alive and well. Phelps recognizes the romance of her ending, for she writes, "The material of novelists and poets and playwrights, elsewhere woven of air or webbed of fancy to appease the burning human desire for 'a good ending' to a smart fiction, becomes in Fairharbor, now and then, . . . the startling fact" (85). Fisherman live and die by the sea; some men do not drown, but live to row for six days near death with frozen hands that may never work again. Although this is obviously a "happily-ever-after"
type of holiday story, unlike many of the stories Phelps writes, Phelps does not ignore the realities of the situation. She touches on drunkenness, reveals poverty, and decries the hardship the widows of the fisherman endure, for as Ellen Jane proclaims, "It's hard being a woman in Fairharbor" (36). Ten years later with the publication of *A Singular Life*, Phelps would offer a look at the Gloucester fishermen and the struggles of the women and tells an even more tragic story of their lives.

When Phelps wrote to Bok in 1896 about her husband's potential novel about the Gloucester fisherman, she had already published a full-length book based in a fishing town like Gloucester, *A Singular Life* (1895). Not only does this novel explore various philosophical and theological movements of the nineteenth century, as discussed in the previous chapter, but it also delivers a clear message on class differences in a fishing community, Windover, based upon Gloucester. While these Windover fisherman are not factory workers, their low pay and employment in a blue collar industry, as well as the high percentage of immigrant and minority sailors, creates an interesting environment for Phelps to comment on class relations. In addition to the fisherman, the novel contains examples of laboring-class women working. Not only does the novel again illustrate what Phelps believes is the more productive and truly philanthropical way to help people in need, but Phelps uses, for the only time in her novels, a male character who serves as the active agent in the community's transformation.

In the novel, the town of Windover is the rough fishing-town where Emanuel Bayard, a religious man of God, goes to work. Upon arriving in town, Bayard discovers an intense fight in progress on the street of Angel Alley. The narrator states that "[t]his was so common an incident in that part of the town that the residents had paid little attention to it," but Bayard is disturbed by the violence and stops to ask for a policeman. After being told that policemen do not come near this part of town, he decides to take matters into his own hands and stops the brawl before a small child, the son of one of the
men fighting, gets hurt. The narrator comments on the behavior of the bystanders as well as the two men, saying that they were "somewhat seriously belaboring each other, to their own undisguised satisfaction and the acclamation of the bystanders" (57). Phelps illustrates the coarseness of the Angel Alley residents by having the men swear at each other and the onlookers make crude comments. Bayard is only described as "the stranger" in this scene, and his strangeness sets him apart from the people on the street who are dirty and fierce. This scene in the novel provides a backdrop for the changes which Bayard will make in the town, particularly the Angel Alley region, as well as for the changes which occur in Bayard's own life.

In his role as "street missionary," Bayard brings both culture and religion to the poor fisherman and their families while he gradually becomes "one of them." The music he leads in his ministry, the ideas about morality, truth, and beauty he preaches to them, and the way he treats his meeting house like a social club, instead of a "house of God," all help influence the neighborhood and enable them to move toward a higher sense of morality. While Phelps's idea of a "higher sense of morality" is squarely based in nineteenth-century middle-class values, she nonetheless does one thing in this novel that she has not done before--she has her well-educated protagonist blend with the people. When Bayard loses the First Church pulpit and the support of the Orthodox church leaders, he must support himself on the small amount his supporters are able to scrape up for him. He lives in the house of one of his poorer parishioners, a widow named Mrs. Granite, and his room is unluxurious, especially for someone who lived with wealth most of his life. Bayard finds it difficult to endure the uncarpeted floors, straw mattress, and general lack of furniture in his room, but his acclimation to poverty helps him to understand his people better. Nonetheless, he sees this decrease in salary in its relationship to society, for he states, "I don't move in good society any longer. I am not expected to know anything about its customs" (151). Because Bayard was accustomed to
wealth and privilege, his drop in social status has caused him some discomfort which he reveals from time to time, but his relative rise in status in his community serves to offset this change somewhat. Although Bayard never quite becomes "one of them," his lifestyle creates a hardship for him which makes him more understanding of the local fishermen and their families than he would have been otherwise.

The narrator's description of the Angel Alley area of the town includes many realistic elements revealing the lifestyle of the fisherman and the others who live in the area. The fisherman, for instance, seems to spend his time alternating between drinking and going out to sea:

Angel Alley was full, that night. Half a dozen large fishermen were just in from Georges'; these had made their trip to Boston to sell their cargoes of halibut, haddock, or cod, and had run home quickly on a stiff sou'easter, or were unloading direct at their native wharves. . . . Americans, Scotch, Swedes, Portuguese, Italians, Irish, and Finns swung up together from the wharves and swarmed over the alley, ready for a song, a laugh or a blow, as the case may be; equally prepared to smoke, to love, to quarrel, or to drink, liable to drift into a prayer-room or a bar-room, just as it happened, and there was small space to doubt which would happen; . . . men who turned neither to the right nor to the left who lingered for neither men nor gods nor women, but pushed, with head thrust out like a dog's on the scent, straight on to the first saloon that gaped at them. (177-78)

The men live hard lives because their life at sea is dangerous, difficult, and lonely. Those who are married might come home and go straight to their families, but oftentimes, even these, like Job Slip, the eternal drunkard and friend of Bayard, are called into the saloons until they wind up back home, with a tremendous temper and out of money. Angel Alley "overflowed with abomination," for not only saloons, but also brothels and gambling halls offered their temporary pleasures to the weary fisherman. Phelps feels sorry for the women, like Lena in this novel and those in Hedged In's Thicket Street, who are forced by circumstances to a life as a prostitute. She says that "[g]irls with hard eyes and coarse mouths strutted up and down the alley in piteous numbers." so when Lena, one of the girls
who has one foot in the brothel and another in Bayard's church, seems to be called to turn
to prostitution, Phelps, through Bayard, offers her hope. As Lena walks the street, "she
did not answer when one of the girls called her," but when Bayard calls her into the church
building, saying, "Isn't it better for you in here, than out there?" she comes. Later, on "one
of the nights when girls like Lena are too easy or too hard to find" (297), Bayard goes to
find her and save her from a life of prostitution. Unlike other fallen women, Lena is able
to turn around and lead a clean life, eventually becoming a heroine in events which lead up
to and follow the attack on Bayard. Although Lena is a poor street girl and former
prostitute, Phelps pits her against Bayard's attacker--her hands around the attacker's throat
in a death-grip, she almost strangles him and winds up nearly drowning herself. Now
living a "decent" life, sharing a home with an old widow and working in a gunpowder
factory, Lena proves herself a strong, loyal woman who is finally worthy of Bayard's
gesture of respect when he lifts his hat to her.

If life for Lena improves, the lives of the wives and widows of the fishermen of
Windover are generally a sad lot. When a fishing vessel founders on the rocks off-shore,
one old woman becomes symbolic of all the wretchedness of the women in the town
whose sons, husbands, and fathers drown at sea:

The old woman's bare hands were clenched together, and her lips shut like
iron hinges. Bayard wondered at her massive silence. It was something
primeval, solemn, outside of his experience. . . . The old woman stood on
the summit and on the edge. . . . Black against the darkness, stone carved
out from stone, immovable, dumb, a statue of the storm, she stared out
straight before her. She seemed a spirit of the wind and wet, a solemn
figure-head, an anathema, or a prayer: symbol of a thousand watchers
frozen on a thousand shores: --woman as the sea has made her. (110, 118)

For the women of the town, the sea is the enemy even more than it is the source of
livelihood. Phelps writes that the women had a fatalistic attitude toward the sea--it was
their life: "But to the women of the sea this anguish was as old as life itself; to it they were
born, and of it they were doomed to die; they bore it as they did the climate of the freezing Cape" (110). Bearing this kind of life makes the Windover women tough like Mrs. Granite, Bayard's landlady and a long-time widow who manages to survive despite her lack of income. Like Ellen Jane Salt in *The Madonna of the Tubs*, the women of Windover are survivors.

Apart from the character of Sip Garth, who in *The Silent Partner* leaves the mill to become a street preacher, no protagonist in Phelps's novels comes as close to identifying with the laboring classes as Emanuel Bayard. Even though he eventually inherits a small amount of money after his uncle's death, enabling him to marry the daughter of a seminary professor, he stays close to the people, perhaps because of his own poverty, which stretched out over the course of several years, and because of his relationships with the townspeople. At the time of Bayard's tragic death, the reader discovers that he was given a royal funeral and burial and that "the city thronged to show him reverence" (424). Instead of allowing the "superior and respectable persons" who came to pay their final respects go in first to the service, those who were nearest to him had the places of honor:

> It was said that hundreds of sunburnt men had stood waiting in the street since midnight for the opening of the doors, and the chance to enter. Then, there had passed up the steps of Christlove Chapel the great mass of the neglected and the poor, the simple and the sodden and the heart-broken, and those who had no friends but only that one man... The fishermen of Windover, and the poor girls, the widows of Windover, and her orphaned children, the homeless, foreign sailors, and the discontented laborers from the wharves poured in. (424-25)

To make even clearer the important place Bayard held in the community, Phelps ends the novel with a scene of a summer visitor questioning one of the residents about the sign of public mourning, for the fishermen flew all the flags at half-mast that day. No longer the "stranger," as Bayard was when he first came to Windover and broke up the fight, Bayard is now separate from the summer visitor and aligned with the fishermen. Phelps states.
"The fishermen had done him this honor, reserved only for the great of the earth, and for their own dead mates; and most sacred for these last" (426). Thus, Bayard has become one of "their own dead mates," and by becoming more like those he taught and served, he comes the closest to representing Phelps's own attitude of the way the social system can and should change.

Through these stories of the working class, Phelps reveals her attitude toward the labor reform movement as well as some of her own middle-class biases. In almost every case, Phelps combines a Christian perspective with her fervent conviction that the lives of women are usually the most devastated by poverty. While there is no evidence that Phelps actively involved herself in the labor reform movement or joined one of the labor parties of the nineteenth century, she was an outspoken advocate through her writing for the rights of the poor and homeless, factory workers and seamstresses, unemployed men and employed women. In her attempt to be "an accurate truth-teller."54 Phelps strove to tell an "immortal story" like Hugo's *Les Misérables* which "raised the mortal cry of the despised and rejected against the deafness of the world."55 Always Phelps wanted to change the heart, to make her readers understand, the way Perley Kelso understands, that "[t]here are few things that they do not need. . . . It is a hungry world."56
Notes

1 Seven hundred fifty workers were in the mill at the time of the collapse, and the fire was started accidentally by one of the rescue party. According to one source, eighty-eight were buried by the collapse of the building and many more were burned in the subsequent fire. Mari Jo Buhle and Florence Howe, Afterword, The Silent Partner (New York: Feminist P, 1983) 355-86.

2 Phelps, Chapters 90-91.


4 She writes that this recognition was the "first recognition which I received from literary people," Phelps, Chapters 92.

5 Like the lead character Deborah in Rebecca Harding Davis's Life in the Iron Mills (1861), Sene is hunchbacked and desperately loves one who cannot reciprocate. Some critics, including Buhle and Howe, believe that Phelps was influenced by Life in the Iron Mills, published anonymously in The Atlantic Monthly, to write about the Lawrence mill accident. Buhle and Howe 373.

6 A note on race in Phelps's fiction. Interestingly, although during the mid-nineteenth century race relations presented a significant social question, Phelps rarely addresses the issues of race. She reveres her friend and part-time neighbor Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-96) calling her a "genius" and the "foremost woman in America," whose novel Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852) Phelps considered one of the greatest works in America. In addition, Phelps had great respect for Lydia Maria Child (1802-80), a distinguished abolitionist whose work in race and gender issues was at the forefront of those nineteenth-century movements, saying of Child, "[S]he impressed me as a strong and lofty personality, so far above the usual social human being that her solitude and the sparseness of her environment seemed to partake of the character of luxuries which most of us were unfit to share" (Phelps, Chapters 182). It appears certain, therefore, that Phelps had sympathy for the abolition movement.

In one of Phelps's rare short stories which deals with race, "A Lost Hero" (1891), published in an independent volume and co-authored with her husband Herbert Ward, a poor and heroic old black man helps a young white boy save a train from derailment following an earthquake. In this story, the "once muscular slave" heroically chops down a door with an ax so that he can find the "torpedoes" used to stop trains, but when his foot catches in the track rails he "[gives] his manly soul to God" even as he succeeds in stopping the train from derailment. Phelps and Herbert D. Ward, "A Lost Hero" Youth's Companion 5 Jun. 1890: 305-06. Later republished in a separate volume, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps and Herbert D. Ward, "A Lost Hero" (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1891). In this and other short stories about race relations, Phelps does not so much seek for reform, but
for understanding between the races. She writes very little about African-American issues, even less about Native Americans, and she mixes the immigrant Europeans, as she does with the Windover fisherman in *A Singular Life*, all together in a lump with all the laboring classes of New England, but by and large, Phelps was a product of her culture--she had the heart of a social reformer, but she sought reform in those areas with which she had familiarity. Thus, Phelps concentrated on the rights of mill workers, since she lived and worked near a major mill town; she wrote about the dangerous lives of Gloucester fishermen, for her years in the fishing community had made an impact upon her; and she worried about the role of women in society, because as a woman she saw the constraints society placed on her gender. Instead of criticizing Phelps for avoiding the race issue, we should appreciate the fervor with which she entered the discussion of social change in America.

7 The novel by Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner, *The Gilded Age* (1874) is often credited as the source for this title.


9 Trachtenberg 38.

10 1868. Quoted in Trachtenberg 44.

11 Trachtenberg 44-45.

12 Trachtenberg 38-39.

13 Trachtenberg 42.


15 David S. Reynolds notes, "Contrary to the once-held view that the antebellum literary scene was dominated by sentimental, so-called feminized writings, my research has revealed that about 60 percent of all fiction volumes by Americans between 1831 and 1860 were adventurous, sensational, or satirical, while just over 20 percent were domestic or religious. About 70 percent of the fiction volumes written in these three decades were by men, 23 percent by women." Reynolds, "From Periodical Writer to Poet," *Periodical Literature in Nineteenth-Century America*, Ed. by Kenneth M. Price and Susan Belasco Smith (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1995) 36. Nonetheless, as Nina Baym points out in her introduction to the second edition of *Woman's Fiction*, women writers may have been in the minority, but their work dominated the nineteenth-century equivalent of best-seller lists. Baym, introduction, *Women's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870*, 2nd ed. (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1993) xi.

16 Baym "Woman's Fiction" xxiii.

According to Phelps, Phillips Brooks held a ministerial position at Boston's Trinity Church until he was appointed the Bishopric of Massachusetts. *Chapters* 188.

Phelps, *Chapters* 189-90.


Massachusetts "Tables of Industry," reported in Buhle and Howe 365.


Phelps, *Hedged In* 2. Hereafter in this chapter, quotes from *Hedged In* will be cited in the body.


See Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*.

These pure and noble "white" women in Phelps's stories usually wear brilliant white clothing and demonstrate many of the qualities of Welter's so-called "cult of true womanhood." These "white" women definitely have the qualities of purity and piety and they seem to represent a kind of female ideal in the stories. Interestingly, many times the "white" woman character is not a perfect character, but someone that others respect because of her purity.

It is important to note that Welter's "true woman," who is full of piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity, is quite different from Phelps's concept of the true woman, for Phelps believes the qualities of dignity, intelligence, and passion are the most valuable qualities for a woman. Phelps often writes about Welter's version of the true woman, and she expresses some admiration for her, but the submissive woman is never Phelps's primary heroine.

Stansell 214.

32 Several of the essays Phelps published in *The Independent* beginning in 1871 were also published, nearly simultaneously, in the *Woman's Journal*, the women's suffrage publication edited first by Mary Livermore (1820-1905) and later by Lucy Stone (1818-1905).


34 Dorn, *Washington Gladden 53-54*.

35 Gladden's Social Christianity is discussed in Chapter I.

36 Phelps, "The Song of the Shirt," *The Independent* 10 Aug. 1871: 1; and *Woman's Journal* 2 Sep. 1871: 35. See also Appendix A.

37 Phelps, "What They Are Doing," *The Independent* 17 Aug. 1871: 1. See also Appendix A.

38 Phelps, "The Lady of Shalott," *The Independent* 6 Jul. 1871: 1. See also Appendix C.


40 One might take the image of the "white dress" one step further and relate it to the purely decorative role of women who live up to the image of Welter's "cult of true womanhood."

41 Phelps footnotes her description of Mr. Mell's narrative with the note, "Mr. Mell's 'testimony' may be found in the reports of the Massachusetts Bureau of Labor" (111). Phelps's reliance upon the Bureau of Labor here and later in the novel helps to authenticate her descriptions.

42 Stansell 52-53.

43 Stansell 202.

44 Kipling's so-called "Gloucester fisherman's novel" was *Captains Courageous* (1897), a story of a boy's growth to manhood and life as a Gloucester, Massachusetts.
fisherman. The novel is reportedly the result of Kipling's visit to America and short stay in Gloucester.


46 The various biographical accounts have some discrepancies in the publication date for The Madonna of the Tubs. It seems to have been published first in Harper's New Monthly Magazine, December, 1885. The copyright date for the book publication is 1886.

47 Ironically, Phelps's themes in these stories are completely opposite to Kipling's themes. While Kipling's Captains Courageous expresses his admiration for the American capitalistic economic system, illustrating the value of American daring which propels the adventurous soul to seek fortune and power, Phelps's novels, particularly A Singular Life, express the melancholy of the life of the fisherman's family waiting for the sailor who may never return from sea as well as the poverty which is the lot of a majority of the families.

48 Phelps, Chapters 199.

49 Phelps, Chapters 200.

50 Like Kipling, writers and artists often visited the attractive sea-side port for its ambiance.

51 Phelps, The Madonna of the Tubs (Boston: Houghton, 1896) 12-13. Hereafter in this chapter, page numbers from The Madonna of the Tubs will be cited in the body of the text.

52 Phelps uses an interesting pairing of names in this story. "Ellen" is a derivative of "Helen," and many of Phelps's women with royal characteristics are named "Helen." "Ellen Jane," therefore, seems to be a working-class version of "Helen," just as Ellen Jane, the character, might be viewed as a working-class version of the wealthy Boston Helen.

53 Phelps, A Singular Life 56. Hereafter in this chapter, page numbers from A Singular Life will be cited parenthetically in the body of the text.

54 Phelps, Chapters 259.

55 Phelps, Chapters 264.

56 Phelps, The Silent Partner 301.
CHAPTER IV
"HE'S ALWAYS KIND WHEN HE'S SOBER":
CRUSADING FOR TEMPERANCE

I believe that the miseries consequent on the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors are so great as imperiously to command the attention of all dedicated lives; and that while the abolition of American slavery was numerically first, the abolition of the liquor traffic is not morally second.

(Phelps, *Chapters* 251)

The Woman's Temperance Movement and Suffrage

In her autobiography, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps recounts one particular day during the 1870s when she and a friend were driving along the main industrial street of the seaport community of Gloucester, Massachusetts, and came upon a crowd standing outside a tavern. A large portion of the crowd consisted of women, "white to the lips, every woman of them," crying, cursing, and praying. Phelps soon discovered that inside the tavern, which was owned, apparently, by one of the so-called "better" men in the community, an argument had escalated into a brawl, which then ended in murder. This scene, likely the source for a similar scene in *A Singular Life* (1895), is described by Phelps in great detail: the scorn and dread of the women who felt victimized by the behavior of drunken men, the horror of the widow left behind with twelve children, the pity of her neighbors and of Phelps, and even Phelps's sympathy for the murderer, "a very young man . . . of a self-respecting family." After spending time in the neighborhood with the widow, trying her best to help out, Phelps decided to get involved, in a very direct and personal way, in the movement to outlaw alcoholic beverages. Phelps writes, "That Gloucester murder . . . did for me what all the temperance conventions and crusades of America . . . had failed to do. All my traditions went down, and my common sense and human heart came up." Joining a host of other women who had seen the effects of
alcoholism on the working class and whose own families had been devastated by this addiction, Phelps "gave [her] sympathy without paltry hesitation to the work done by the women of America for the salvation of men endangered or ruined by the liquor habit"4: she began publicly preaching against drinking, personally speaking with alcoholics who wished to quit, and she became a part of the women's temperance movement which had started in the 1840s with other reform movements and had begun to flourish in the 1870s, continuing through the early twentieth century until Prohibition.

Several of Phelps's novels, short stories, and essays written between 1875 and 1900 reflect her interest in the temperance movement, and a few, particularly the novels Friends: A Duet (1881) and A Singular Life (1895), employ one character's involvement in the temperance movement as a major plot device. In these novels, characters discover for themselves the social problems of drunkenness, and they get involved in a personal way in the fight to save men and women (usually men) from their personal demons. In an 1881 essay from The Independent titled "The Argument from Experience," Phelps argues the necessity of closing what she calls "grog-shops" in order to save society from the immorality and criminality which is caused by alcohol abuse.5 Phelps writes:

As long as eighty-five per cent. of our prisoners owe their incarceration to drunkenness; as long as there is in our cities one licensed place for the sale of liquor to every one hundred and seventy inhabitants; as long as sixty thousand persons a year in this country die drunk or from the effects of drink, there is no other side to the matter. The grog-shops must be shut. . . . He is either criminally ignorant of the facts or criminally indifferent to them who can deny this.6

In this essay, Phelps argues from a perspective which sees intemperance as a great social "sin," for drunkenness causes criminal behavior as well as injuring the health of the chronic drunk. She was not alone in her belief. According to Sean Wilentz, author of Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850, throughout the mid-1800s progressively more Americans begin to associate drinking with
poverty. John Comerford, a nineteenth-century leader in the General Trades Union and a businessman, said "that of all the causes of poverty and ignorance other than low wages . . . 'there is none more preeminently conspicuous than that of alcohol." Phelps also appears to view drunkenness, particularly among the laboring class, as a stumbling block to the poorer members of society who wished to improve their lives, and for this reason, if for no other, Phelps's interest in the temperance movement was compatible with her great interest in labor reform. Although for twentieth-century readers Phelps's preoccupation with closing the "grog-shops" seems, at times, irredeemably moralistic, Phelps's discussion of the problems associated with drunkenness and her characterizations of fictional temperance workers not only aid her argument for labor reform, but they also connect her, in a way not obvious to modern readers, to other women arguing for women's rights and suffrage. Elizabeth Stuart Phelps "believe[d] in women," and for her, as well as for many other women, the closing of the saloons was a necessary step toward improving the lives of American women. As I will explain further, Phelps's involvement in temperance work places her squarely in the middle of the nineteenth century women's rights movement. In order to help the reader better understand the way the temperance movement is compatible with the women's rights movement, I will briefly summarize the connections between the two movements.

Because of the unpopularity of twentieth-century Prohibition, temperance workers have been historically viewed as judgmental and moralistic; however, as several recent writers have shown, the temperance movement was an important part of the fight for woman's suffrage and increasing political power. From the beginning of the American women's rights movement, alcohol abuse had been targeted by suffragists as a significant cause of poverty, spousal and child abuse, and prostitution. In addition, one popular argument against women's suffrage was that voting-day polls were often the center of "unseemly" behavior as pollsters attempted to buy votes with alcoholic drinks. Thus, in
more ways than one, the sale of intoxicating beverages was considered by many
nineteenth-century women to be a social ill which negatively impacted the lives of women,
and many of the women's rights leaders saw alcoholism as a barrier to women's
independence. Speaking at the 1851 National Woman's Rights Convention, Ernestine L.
Rose described a drunken husband who ruined his family's life:

[W]hen at his nightly orgies, in the grog shop and the oyster cellar, or at
the gaming table, he squanders the means she helped by her cooperation
and economy to accumulate, and when she awakens to penury and
destitution, will it supply the wants of her children to tell them that owing
to the superiority of men she had no redress by law; and that as her being is
merged in his, so ought theirs to be?\textsuperscript{10}

Rose argues that drunken husbands place an undue burden on their families, a burden
caused by the economic hardships over-indulgence and dissolution create. Rose asks, "Is
it fair for a woman to suffer from her husband's misbehavior simply because she lacks the
legal power to act?" Thus, the argument \textit{against} male intemperance goes hand-in-hand
with the argument \textit{for} more economic and legal power in marriage for women. The
"drunken husband" argument was sometimes used by the suffragists to support their desire
for the vote, for illustrations like Rose's above helped dispute the idea of male superiority
even while it proved that many men, the dissolute, for instance, did not have the needs of
their wives and families foremost in mind. Carried to its logical conclusion, it seemed
obvious to the suffragists that since men did not always make the best decisions for their
wives, women should have the power to vote for themselves.

Although women's rights and temperance reformers primarily focused on male
drinking and the way it negatively affected women and society, many women also drank.
In \textit{City of Women}, Christine Stansell explains the problems presented by drunkenness in
the lower-class community, particularly as it affected women:

Drunkenness was not only a male problem. Both sexes drank throughout
the day: men at work, when they could . . . and at grog shops in the
evenings; women at local groceries and in each other’s rooms; men and women together in their rooms, on the streets, and at local bawdy houses and grog shops. Drunkenness carried different consequences, however, for men and women. Drunken men were familiar figures to their wives, annoying, often frightening in their belligerence, but an accustomed burden to bear. . . . A drunken woman, however, was a likely subject for corrective beating. . . . Drunken women were often bad housekeepers who disregarded men’s domestic needs; these lapses made female insobriety not a common foible that women shared with men but a cardinal sin.11

Stansell here explains, in a somewhat tongue-in-cheek manner, a popular nineteenth-century reaction: a drunken man was a violent, unpredictable, but often socially-acceptable figure, at least in the working-class community, but a drunken woman was a perversion of the domestic order. Although Phelps, like many of the female women’s rights leaders, usually discussed the problems of the drunken man (for like Rose and others Phelps was interested in promoting women’s suffrage and economic independence), Phelps also recognized the problem of drinking women. In novels such as Hedged In (1870) and The Silent Partner (1871), Phelps described women, like Moll Manners, whose intemperance left them in the gutters, and the novels describe the addiction which helped lead women, like Catty in The Silent Partner, to a life of prostitution and death. However, Phelps did not subscribe to the point of view (related by Stansell) which viewed female insobriety as "a cardinal sin" which primarily affected men as women selfishly drank and avoided housework. Instead, Phelps concentrated on the ways insobriety, both male and female versions of the addiction, destroyed women’s lives. Phelps’s discussion of alcohol prohibition must be understood within the context of the larger women’s movement, for she was most concerned with the effect of alcohol on women’s lives, an effect she discusses quite realistically in her novels. In fact, Phelps’s true-to-life treatment of alcohol abuse supports her claim (and mine) that Phelps is primarily a realist as she shows the squalid lives of alcoholics and alcoholism’s detrimental repercussions on women.
Just as the early women's rights movement was strongly connected to the abolition issue, and in fact, the suffrage movement is usually considered to be an outgrowth of the abolition movement, the early women's rights leaders also considered the temperance issue a major one. Recognizing drunkenness as a social problem, Elizabeth Cady Stanton promised a group as early as the 1852 state convention in Rochester that the Woman's Rights movement would address the claims of women wanting changes in liquor laws. Stanton listed reform measures to be taken and petitions she wished to put forth:

1. Let no woman remain in the relation of wife with the confirmed drunkard. Let no drunkard be the father of her children. Let no woman form an alliance with any man who has been suspected even of the vice of intemperance; for the taste once acquired can never, never be eradicated. . .

2. Let us petition our State governments so to modify the laws affecting marriage, and the custody of children, that the drunkard shall have no claims on either wife or child.

3. Let us touch not, taste not, handle not, the unclean thing in any combination. Let us eschew it in all culinary purposes, and refuse it in all its tempting and refined forms.

4. With an efficient organization, lectures, tracts, newspapers, and discussion, we shall accomplish much.12

Interestingly, Stanton avoids any mention that women drank, too; it was not important for her purpose. Nonetheless, it is important to note here that as early as 1852 the extreme measure which the 1870s temperance workers eventually promoted--complete abolition of alcoholic beverages--was being advocated. The antebellum Woman's Rights movement viewed the temperance platform as an inextricable part of their claim: women required the vote not only for equal rights, but also to enable women to pass laws which would protect themselves and their families from the inadequacies of men.

While there were some differences of opinion about the best way to achieve their primary goals, most women's rights supporters before the Civil War had been actively working for both universal suffrage and temperance reform, but with the disappointment of the Fourteenth Amendment, ratified in 1868, which gave black men the vote without
including women (black or white), the larger movement began to split. In *Two Paths to Women's Equality: Temperance, Suffrage, and the Origins of Modern Feminism*, Janet Zollinger Giele presents a picture of the way the temperance movement and the women's suffrage movement worked together for women's rights, even as the two movements split and began to take separate paths:

> [T]wo paths to women's equality began to diverge during the antebellum period: one, more closely allied with family and religion, was to be followed by the post-Civil War woman's temperance movement; the other, more secular and oriented to government and the law, was to be taken by the woman suffrage movement. Common to both was a fundamental belief in the strength and power of women that was drawn from everyday civil, domestic, and religious experience.\(^\text{13}\)

The women's rights movement from its beginning up to the Civil War had combined the issue of suffrage with other areas of women's rights, such as dress reform, women's educational opportunities, women's work outside the home, and property laws, but in 1869, after the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment, the woman's suffrage leaders began to recognize that they needed a new approach to gaining the vote for women. However, the movement fractured as leaders began to emphasize alternate routes to woman's suffrage and two separate suffrage groups were established: the National Woman Suffrage Association, led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, and the American Woman Suffrage Association, founded and led by Lucy Stone and her husband Henry Blackwell, along with Henry Ward Beecher and Julia Ward Howe. The National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) leaders, disappointed with the fact that the Fourteenth Amendment ignored the woman's suffrage issue and only gave black men the right to vote, responded rather radically, promoting sweeping change with a federal amendment to the constitution and a concentrated focus on woman's suffrage, disallowing men from membership in their organization. They also began a journal, *The Revolution*, which explored various radical ideas, such as free love. However, their strategy was too
radical for many woman's suffrage supporters, including Stone and Blackwell, so these more conservative women's rights activists founded the American Woman's Suffrage Association (AWSA), in part to disassociate themselves from the radical NWSA, which was sometimes viewed as racist and anti-family. The AWSA tended to be more conservative all around, particularly in its approach to women's suffrage, emphasized gaining suffrage on a state-by-state basis and concentrating more heavily on the domestic issues of women's rights, including temperance and so-called "home protection." Taking a pragmatic stance toward woman's suffrage, the NWSA more or less disassociated itself from the temperance movement altogether, despite Stanton's earlier strong prohibition stance, and concentrated its efforts almost entirely on gaining the vote for women.

While both groups were interested in all facets of the women's rights issue, many felt that the time was right to intensify the fight for a constitutional amendment giving women the vote, believing that when women were able to change laws, many of the women's rights issues would be solved. In *Declarations of Independence: Women and Political Power in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction*, authors Barbara Bardes and Suzanne Gossett discuss the way the women's movement began to escalate after the Civil War: "Congressional debates over suffrage began with the 1866 resolution to grant suffrage to women in the District of Columbia; attempts to vote by Victoria Woodhull, Susan B. Anthony, and Virginia Minor generated extensive publicity; and there were books and speeches on all sides of the issue." When Wyoming, a territory which had already given the vote to women, was admitted as a state in 1869, the struggle for women's rights through suffrage heightened even further, for women suffragists saw that their goal was well within reach. So much had been written on the subject that in a July 13, 1871, essay in *The Independent* entitled "The Gist of the Matter," Phelps wrote:

"I am not here," said a petitioner in the State House at Boston, a few months ago, "to argue the right of women to the ballot. It seems to me.
sir, that it is too evident to argue. I have always said that I could find in this controversy nothing to reason against." This is very much the mood of mind in which one undertakes at this advanced stage of the "irrepressible" question to fling one more drop of ink upon its much-bespattered scroll. . . . If truth were like spring showers, there would be very little left to do toward the elevation of women now; the air is electric with the theme; we should have had a thunder-storm by this time.  

Phelps indicates here that she and others believed the necessity of woman's suffrage was unarguable, and many agreed with Phelps. Even Mark Twain, sometimes noted for misogynist statements, was not opposed to the vote for women. In a short essay entitled "The Temperance Crusade and Woman's Rights," published the same year as his *The Gilded Age* (1875), he describes the temperance and suffrage workers as "thoroughly justifiable":

> They find themselves voiceless in the making of laws and the election of officers to execute them. Born with brains, born in the country, educated, having large interests at stake, they find their tongues tied and their hands fettered, while every ignorant whisky-drinking foreign-born savage in the land may hold office, help to make the laws, degrade the dignity of the former and break the latter at his own sweet will.  

Although many believed woman's suffrage was "too evident to argue" and believed "voiceless" women should be given a voice, still others believed women did not need the vote, and the woman's movement was considered by many conservative American men and women a radical movement which could topple the American economic system and uproot families. The now-split women's rights movement and the two movements' various emphases reflected the diversity of the American public on the "irrepressible question" of woman's suffrage.

The two women's rights groups mentioned earlier, the National Woman Suffrage Association and the American Woman Suffrage Association, sometimes took different routes to reach the same goal, however, and movements like the Women's Christian Temperance Union were often more closely associated with the ideals of one group than
Similar (and often overlapping in membership) in many ways to the ideology of the American Woman Suffrage Association, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was established in 1874, and although some temperance women did not want to associate with the suffrage movement, with the naming of Francis Willard as President of the WCTU in 1879, a position which she served until her death in 1898, the temperance movement grew in power and strength as it "enlarged [the] religious, social, and political role for women."19 Like Phelps, the WCTU was an advocate for the rights of the poor. It also served an important role in gaining woman's suffrage, despite the common view of temperance women as simply singing, praying evangelists. Although the WCTU often used "moderate and conciliatory language" to push forward its agenda, in part to satisfy its primarily religious, church-going membership, its goals were progressive rather than regressive.20 The WCTU strove to improve society and, particularly, to improve the lives of women. In addition, both Phelps and the WCTU hoped "to put teeth into law enforcement" by gaining the vote for women, enforcing laws already in existence, and making new laws to help prevent poverty, negligence, abuse, and crime stemming from indulgence in alcoholic beverages.21

Despite the fact that some temperance women had no interest in women's suffrage (and many suffrage women had come to believe that the temperance issue was irrelevant), many, including the WCTU under Willard's leadership, supported and promoted the women's movement in ways which were sometimes overt and at other times subtle. Temperance women, including Phelps, combined the public and private spheres.22 The "separate but equal" view of male and female roles in the nineteenth-century helped create a popular concept of separate spheres of influence. Men exercised their power in the public sphere--employment, political power, and law-making were the male prerogative. Women, on the other hand, concentrated their influence in the private or domestic sphere--educating children, keeping "proper" morals, and seeing to housework. Barde and
Gossett explain in *Declarations of Independence*, "It was the political culture that defined woman's role as a citizen and established the boundaries that kept women in the private sphere."23 Many women, including writers such as Phelps, felt imprisoned by this concept of spheres. Writing is, after all, a very public endeavor, and this intersection between public and private is, according to Bardes and Gossett, a frequent issue in nineteenth-century American fiction's discussion of women's power.24 In an 1873 essay from *The Independent*, Phelps describes a female preacher, Sarah Smiley, and argues that a woman who speaks publicly about her beliefs is *not* inappropriate or "out of her sphere." Phelps writes:

> Out of her sphere? If Sarah Smiley is out of her sphere, then no worn mother, wearily singing her baby to sleep, is in it. If she be out of her sphere, then no praying wife on earth, whose long life's sacrifice has saved her husband's ruder soul . . . is in it. Such a woman is in her sphere as Wesley was, as Whitefield, as Beecher, or as Paul; as the birds of the air are, as the lilies of the field, as the cloud on a mountain-top. . . .25

For many of these women, such as Phelps, spheres were not rigid structures, subject to political laws or social opinions. For Phelps, a woman's sphere was as large as the woman's "nature" made it. Of course, Phelps did not simply "arrive" at this opinion; years of work by other women and men, particularly those involved in various nineteenth-century reform movements, paved the way for her ideas.

Involvement in reform movements, such as the abolition movement in the early nineteenth century and the temperance movement of the later nineteenth century, revealed the obvious intersections between the two spheres. As Bardes and Gossett elaborate:

> [T]he same responsibilities that the culture defined as domestic, and therefore nonpolitical, could force a woman into the public world. . . . Obeying the cultural injunction that called on women to meet a higher standard of morality and spirituality, many women found themselves persuaded by the abolitionists that slavery was an abomination and that it was a sin to do nothing toward stopping it.26
The same could be said about prohibition and the temperance movement. Phelps and other supporters of the temperance movement believed that changes made in the nation's liquor laws could directly affect women's domestic life, their private sphere, by protecting women from abusive alcoholic husbands and poverty. The temperance movement, particularly influential organizations like the WCTU, also created female political and social leaders. Women like Frances Willard and Mary Livermore spoke before large audiences on issues related to temperance, women's equality, and suffrage. Giele states that Willard, whose statue was placed in the national capitol in 1905, was "one of the most famous woman lecturers and writers of her time." While Willard was in many ways representative of the more conservative approach to women's rights, her voice nonetheless reached a tremendous number of hearers in her nearly twenty years of service as president of the WCTU. Mary Livermore, another well-known woman who spoke in favor of both suffrage and the temperance movement, was the editor of the Agitator, a suffrage periodical, one of the editors of the Woman's Journal, the first president of the Illinois Woman Suffrage Association, the president of the Massachusetts WCTU (1875-1884), and the president of the American Woman Suffrage Association. Despite their commonalities, I have found no evidence of friendship between Willard and Phelps; on the other hand, Phelps knew and highly respected Livermore. Willard and Livermore were not the only women who became leaders during this time period, but they are representative of the way many women involved in the WCTU and the American Woman Suffrage Association became popular leaders and advocates of women's rights and women's suffrage in the nineteenth century, the kind of female role models Phelps and others wanted for the nation, despite their attachment to the more conservative values of these two reform movements.

The temperance movement also supported women's rights by reaching more people and smaller communities than the suffrage groups were able to reach.
instance, women's rights leaders often used the "taxation without representation" argument, like the nation's forefathers, to argue for women's suffrage, saying that female property owners should not be taxed on their property if they are unable to elect representatives or vote on laws. While this woman's suffrage argument proved powerful for the middle and upper classes, it held little power for non-property owners. On the other hand, Willard and the WCTU were able to reach more working-class women, not by arguing for the vote as a tool for taxpayers and property owners, but by arguing that woman's suffrage provided women political power against irresponsible, alcoholic, abusive men. Suzanne M. Marilley, author of Woman Suffrage and the Origins of Liberal Feminism in the United States, 1820-1920, writes, "Willard introduced a 'feminism of fear.' She argued that the ballot would help women obtain the security they needed to live without fear." Marilley adds:

Willard's emphasis on women's physical vulnerability graphically portrayed the injustices women suffered due to their unequal political condition. She described a Cincinnati bishop's amazement that women were more willing than men to sign a petition to ban the traffic in liquor, and that poor women were the most eager of all. . . . "That was a wonderful lesson to me," said the good Bishop, and he has always believed since then that God will give our enemy into our hands by giving to us an ally still more powerful--Women with the ballot against rumshops in her hand.  

Thus, by persuading the public that voting women could pass laws against the liquor lobby, the temperance movement was able to convince a number of citizens, both male and female, that woman's suffrage would be a positive move for the nation to protect women and close grog-shops. Not only did the WCTU reach the working class, but in many small communities it was the only vehicle for women's rights available. Mary Livermore, writing in 1894 to Alice Stone Blackwell, explains the sadness she felt at the loss of the Suffrage League in her small town:

We have no Suffrage League in Melrose. In three years, we lost by death and removal every member of sense and influence belonging to the League,
nearly forty in all . . . All who remained were members of the W.C.T.U., and in my absence they voted to disband, and unite with the W.C.T.U., which they did. I haven't the heart to start another. We have a W.C.T.U. of nearly 400 members, and I don't know of one who is not a suffragist.34

In smaller communities and among working class women, the WCTU provided a connection to women's rights through the influence of Willard and others who viewed women's suffrage as absolutely essential to the improvement of women's lives.

The temperance movement also aided the women's rights movement by promoting woman's suffrage as the best way to change liquor laws, aiding her transformation into a "public" woman, even while maintaining an ideology which promoted the needs of the family and the woman's private domestic sphere. Thus, the woman's suffrage issue began, slowly, to be viewed by many as not a radical feminist statement, but as an obvious and necessary national requirement. For instance, Willard often used conservative tactics to convince her audience that woman's suffrage was essential. Marilley writes of Willard, "[H]er speeches reveal how she led female temperance reformers away from prohibitionist goals and the sometimes violent consequences of prayer protests to suffrage and social activism. She replaced risky behavior and high-cost goals with the radical but less militant aim of winning the vote."35 Instead of marching and organizing strikes or prayer protests against tavern owners, Willard led her group toward the idea of gaining the vote so that women could change the liquor laws; thus, the WCTU had an important role in the woman's suffrage movement as it built upon and supported the women's movement of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

Reformists in both movements, women's suffrage and prohibition, at times became too extreme to appeal to the average American. Paulina Wright Davis noted this potential problem as early as 1850 when she stated at the first National Woman's Rights Convention in Worcester, Massachusetts:
It is one thing to issue a declaration of rights or a declaration of wrongs to the world, but quite another thing wisely and happily to commend the subject to the world’s acceptance, and so to secure the desired reformation. Every element of success is, in its own place and degree, equally important; but the very starting point is the adjustment of the reformer to his work, and next after that is the adjustment of his work to those conditions of the times which he seeks to influence.36

Davis tells the women's rights supporters that they must try to work within the culture, not against it. Likewise, Phelps, an admirer of Lucy Stone and Mary Livermore, appears to support the slower-moving, more conservative approach of the American Woman Suffrage Association and the WCTU to woman's suffrage, for like them, Phelps does not argue for drastic, militant measures. Instead, even when supporting the sometimes radical views of the feminist movement--such as married women using their maiden names, changes in women's dress, alterations in the marriage ceremony, and women working outside the home--Phelps seems to argue for a gradual, almost organic movement of society toward equality between the sexes. In addition, Phelps, like Willard and other women's rights leaders of the WCTU and the American Woman Suffrage Association, uses the language most likely to appeal to a primarily moderate Christian audience. As she writes in "The Higher Claim," an 1871 essay from The Independent:

Whatever else may be said of the movement for enfranchising women, it has reached a point at which it commands respect. . . . It is no figure of speech to say that the "woman question" is the most tremendous question God has ever asked the world since he asked, "What think ye of Christ?" on Calvary. . . . Quietly, gradually, powerfully in the hearts of timid women and magnanimous men an "agitation" is becoming a consecration; a problem is solving into a creed.37

Phelps uses the language of religion to remind her readers of what she would term as the basic Christianity, righteousness, and morality of the woman's movement. For Phelps, the enfranchisement of women (as well as the prohibition of alcohol) is an obvious goal for American society, and by appealing to the morality and Christianity of her reading audience, she, like the temperance movement, was able to reach a more conservative
audience which might have been "turned off" by the radical Woman's Rights leaders. When reading Phelps's novels which decry alcoholism and support prohibition, it is important to see not only that she views alcoholism as a major barrier to improving the lives of the poor, but also that her involvement in the temperance movement is closely connected with the goals of the American Woman Suffrage Association and their move toward women's rights.

**Alcohol Abuse and Immorality in Phelps's Earlier Novels**

Since temperance work was most popular in areas where the so-called "frontier" churches flourished—Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian—perhaps it is not surprising that Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, a Congregationalist with Unitarian and Episcopalian ties, was ambivalent toward the temperance movement during her first three decades of life. Before the incident outside the tavern described in her autobiography, she had not participated in the temperance movement. Phelps writes:

> I had read, of course, like other intelligent people, of women who entered rum-shops on moral and religious errands; in fact, I think once in Andover, when I was a very young lady, I personally besought a liquor-seller in behalf of some ruined family in which I was interested, to abandon the error of his ways. . . . But as for what is known in this country as the Temperance Movement, it was an unfamiliar to me as the gossip of Tahiti. I was reared in circles which pursued their own proportion of Christian charity in their own ways, and which knew but little of this form of ethical progress. In a word, I was without education for that kind of service to humanity; and I had, hitherto, paid no more attention to it than any woman of society.

Phelps reveals that she did have some sympathy and knowledge of the problem of alcoholism, even though she pursued it in her "own ways," and this is evidenced in two of her earlier novels, *Hedged In* and *The Silent Partner*. Both novels illustrate the pervasiveness of drunkenness in the lower class and show peripheral female characters whose dissolute behavior, usually drinking mixed with sexual promiscuity, helps lead them
to an early grave. Although Phelps does not make direct reference to temperance reform or prohibition in these two novels, they clearly reflect her later interest, for the novels reveal a belief (as a member of the middle class herself) that drunkenness is a lower-class behavior which leads to negative consequences, both for society and the individual.

Phelps's early novel *Hedged In* (1870) includes drunkenness as a fact of life for the poor people who live on Thicket Street. Drunken men and women are a common sight in Nixy Trent's tenement-house room which she shares with many men, women, and children. The narrator describes the scents of the room, saying that Nixy, a teenage unmarried mother, slept next to an open window "to give the girl a breath of something a tone fresher than the double allowance of gin and tobacco consequent on the return of the 'men-folks.'" Most of the people in her room are "hard workers or heavy drinkers," and they beg "by means of dice and a little rum," giving Nixy plenty of privacy, despite the number of people in her room, for they medicate themselves to heavy sleep each night (29, 31). Even Jacques, the friendly Frenchman who gives Nixy some money and teaches her something about kindness, occasionally drinks, but he "never got drunk before Thanksgiving" (36). For Nixy and the other people in Thicket Street, drunkenness is a way of life.

Of course, it is not only the men who drank; women drank, too. One of Nixy's early childhood memories is of a woman "who 'adopted' her,—that was the one who got drunk every Tuesday, and beat her with the bottle Wednesday mornings" (16-17). Like the five-year-old girl in Phelps's short story "The Lady of Shalott" who is thrown by her mother "downstairs one day, by mistake, instead of the whisky-jug," crippling the child for life, Nixy is emotionally and spiritually crippled by the abusive environment in which she is reared. Thicket Street itself seems tipsy, for the tilted, crooked houses are described by Nixy as "drunken" and their roofs are "dancing dizzily about her" in the middle of the night when she finally decides to escape from the poverty-stricken neighborhood. Nixy
knows she must escape, because Thicket Street is especially poisonous to women, as she sees when she looks at her acquaintance, Moll Manners.

On Thicket Street, girls grow up to be women much too soon, and young women become old long before their time. The availability of alcohol, educational limitations, abusive family situations, and a lack of good jobs for young women in poverty-stricken communities often led very young girls to prostitution. Premarital sexual activity was often treated indifferently in many lower-class communities, for the attitude toward chastity was not the same among the poor as it was in the middle and upper classes. In City of Women, Christine Stansell explains this difference in attitude. In the middle class, which Phelps belonged to, any woman who was known to engage in sexual activity outside of marriage, regardless of the circumstances, would be considered "ruined," an adjective which had grave consequences for the woman. However, for the poor, a woman was not necessarily considered "ruined" just because she was sexually active; a woman had to become a prostitute in order to be "ruined." Thus, after Nixy gives birth to a baby out of wedlock, she is somewhat surprised that she loses her job at the dining saloon; she does not see herself as a "loose woman," merely as a young mother who needs a job.

Nixy's meeting with Moll Manners on the street provides complication to the story, for Moll has crossed the line that exists, even on Thicket Street, between "respectable" and "ruined," and Moll's suggestion that Nixy is walking on the road to ruin provides Nixy the impetus to escape Thicket Street.

One nineteenth-century study of New York City prostitutes discovered a number of reasons women turned to prostitution. Two of the major reasons were hardship, caused by a lack of male support, such as widowhood or single parenthood, and inclination, particularly an attachment to alcohol and easy life. Although Phelps never clearly states that Moll is a prostitute, her behavior is suspiciously "loose." Moll Manners has lost the ability to blush, her eyes are "bright," and both her laugh and her shadow are
"sharp," suggesting a cunningness which is reflected in her appearance, as a girl who is too knowledgeable about survival on the street (9, 40). Of course, "Moll" is also a slang word for prostitute. Thus, when Moll stops Nixy on the street in the middle of the night and offers Nixy the chance of a job in the concert-saloon where Moll works, the reader, as well as Nixy, knows that Moll is offering Nixy the chance for a job which could lead to her "ruin" with its ready access to alcohol and sexual license. The meeting between Moll and Nixy is particularly significant because it suggests similarities between the two young women—one already "ruined," and the other on the road toward immoral behavior and "ruin." Moll asks Nixy what she is going to do now that she has a child and has lost her job. When Nixy answers, "I--don't know," Moll replies, "Worse for ye! That's always the way. Nobody knows. I didn't know" (41). Moll recognizes the similarities between their positions. Like Moll, Nixy has found herself in a predicament which seems to have no choices left which would allow her to "stay honest," as Nixy says. Interestingly, Moll's suggestion that Nixy apply at the concert-hall appeals to Nixy. Nixy thinks, "[T]here had been good girls known in concert-halls; one could be what one liked; it was easy work and comfortable pay: it looked warm behind the lights" (41).

Nixy, like many young girls who moved from poverty to prostitution, is drawn by the comfort and relative prosperity of this potential employment, but Nixy also realizes that, once drawn into this lifestyle, it would be a difficult trap to escape. Barde and Gossett describe the "bawdy houses" of the nineteenth century, places which "sold cheap liquor to patrons of the 'lowest' sort: free blacks, journeymen, apprentices, sailors and women on the loose--courting girls, prostitutes and runaway wives. The bawdy houses catered to sexual license, male rowdiness and bonhomie and to working people's love of drinking and dancing."44 Thicket Street's "concert-saloon" was apparently such a place, for it flings "ugly mirth" into the street, and Nixy instinctively knows that this employment would bring her into contact with drinking, sexual promiscuity, and "ruin." for she says.
"But I want to stay honest. There must be somewheres else! . . . There must be folks! There's honest things to do, and I'll hunt till I find 'em!" (41-42). However, Moll tells Nixy that she has no other choices: "'Ye'll hunt till ye die,' called Moll from her shadow. 'Might as well go to the devil one time as another time,--for go ye must!'" (42).

Shuddering and springing herself away from Moll and the shadow outside the concert-hall, Nixy runs down the street where the houses reel about her drunkenly and sets her face "towards the open country" (43).

Near the end of *Hedged In*, Nixy is able to use her new life and blameless reputation to help someone else. Returning to Thicket Street, dressed in her "honest" clothing and looking the picture of respectability, Eunice, as she is now known (for at this time she goes by her full name, a name which mirrors her change from a young girl who is a "nobody" to a proper and decent woman), gets the chance to help Moll Manners, whose short years of fast living have brought her "to the devil," perhaps sooner than she had hoped. Eunice was walking up Thicket Street when she meets Moll Manners again:

"[S]he came upon a miserable figure of a woman lying half in the gutter, half upon the filthy sidewalk, with her head upon her arm. Some children were using her as a target for apple-cores and pebbles; a drunken fellow, in passing, kicked her heavily out of his way (274). Eunice stops to help Moll, and discovers that Moll is dying from consumption, but her fall into the gutter is representative of her moral fall through drink and sexual license. Moll turns to Eunice, showing her "emaciated and livid" face, and sneers:

God's folks indeed! . . . I'd like to see God's folks, nor yet their Master, trouble themselves about me! . . . Once a day I crawl down stairs--this way--on my hands. At night I crawl up. I'm dying like a dog, and starving too,--and damned besides. How many o' 'God's folks' do you know as would take me in and let me go to hell from their fine houses,--curse 'em! (275)
Eunice tells Moll, "There are places. There are folks," and she takes Moll out of the gutter to an asylum, the same place she had been so afraid to go when she was known as "Nixy," so that Moll can "die like a decent woman" between clean sheets, instead of on the side of the alley in Thicket Street (276). Moll, lying in a clean, white bed, refuses the benevolent religion and hope of salvation delivered to her by Mrs. Myrtle, the same woman who had so piously refused Nixy employment in her own "decent" home. Moll says, "I'm too sick to hear religion,—much obliged to you. That dress of yours rustles all kind o' through my head. Is that a prayer-book you've laid along down there on my feet? It's awful heavy to me" (278). However, although Moll shows no interest in traditional religion, she is interested in the practical matters of life and death, especially in life after death, for in an echo of The Gates Ajar, Moll uses her last breaths to ask, "Is there any of them--the folks--God's folks you tell on--the other side?... If I thought there was--" (280). Eunice does not respond verbally, but feels the answer coming back from Moll's spirit, now separated from her body in death, as "she seemed to hear, the echo, the breath, the shade, of another whisper,—"If I thought there was--" (280). Thus, despite Moll's "ruined" status in life, caused by excess drinking and promiscuity, Moll is granted the possibility of salvation in the novel, showing the possibility for all to be rescued from their dissolute behavior, if not on earth then in heaven.

Although Hedged In is one of Phelps's early and, perhaps, less successful novels in terms of complexity and character development, she provides an interestingly realistic portrayal of poverty, class differences, and teenaged pregnancy, particularly considering Phelps's youth and the kinds of novels which were being written at the time this novel was published. In addition, as I will discuss in a later chapter, the character of Nixy Trent transcends ordinary class boundaries placed on women, for with help, despite her laboring-class upbringing, she is allowed to rise, illustrating the amazing potential women have when given educational opportunities and freedom to work outside the home. According
to Phelps. However, as Phelps points out, the laboring class cannot "rise" if they are burdened by both lack of education and an addiction to alcohol.

If Moll Manners's death illustrates a kind of redemption in Hedged In, Phelps's novel The Silent Partner, published the following year, shows another woman, Catty, debased by poverty, drunkenness, and sexual promiscuity, who becomes a kind of Christ figure in the novel, eventually suffering a martyr's death. When the lead character, Perley Kelso, a factory owner and member of the "privileged" classes, gets to know Sip Garth, Catty's sister and one of the workers in Perley's mill, Perley comes to recognize that Sip is her own counterpart—what Perley might have been like if she had been born into poverty and had to work her entire life. However, when Perley meets Sip's hearing-impaired and mute sister, birth defects apparently caused by the mother's factory work late in pregnancy, Perley encounters the shameful side of poverty, for Sip's sister, Catty, is certainly not "respectable." Sip describes Catty: "She runs away, don't you see? Sometimes she drinks, don't you understand? Drinks herself the dead kind. That ain't so often. Most times she just runs away about streets. There's sometimes she does--worse." Catty, a poor young woman with no sense of hearing, no ability to speak, and an impaired mental ability, spends what free time she has away from the cotton mill finding whatever pleasure she can find. Eventually, Catty also loses her sense of sight, brought on by a disease she caught in her job as a wool-picker. Thus, all Catty's physical and mental disadvantages are directly related to her poverty and factory work. Drunkenness and promiscuity, at least in Catty's case, are simply side-effects of a life without hope. After losing her vision, Catty's behavior does not change. Sip says, "She's dreadful restless since she left off workin', and gets about the street a'most as easy, for aught I see, as ever. She's so used to the turns and all. . . . There's nights I sit and look for her to be run over and brought in. There's nights she gets at liquor" (196). Despite Catty's disreputable behavior, strange appearance, and impairments, Perley attempts to treat Catty just as she
treats the other, more respectable working-class members of the community, even inviting Catty to her "society social" with Perley's "high-society" friends, the Van Doozles and the Silvers. Unlike benevolent heroines in Phelps's later novels, however, Perley does not try to "save" Catty by discouraging her from drinking alcohol; she simply treats her with respect.

Catty is trapped by her poverty, physical disabilities, and even her lifestyle of drunkenness and promiscuity, and again in this story, as in *Hedged In*, the only escape from this trap is death. The narrator describes Catty as "[w]alled up and walled in now from that long mystery which we call life" (191). Although the walls around Catty—particularly her poverty and disabilities—seem to be impassable, Catty feels that the walls of her own home are to blame for her feeling of entrapment. Like a cat, Catty manages to find ways to escape her house night after night, prowling the streets; the escape she finds in her drinking and promiscuity are only temporary escapes, however. Catty says to her sister (using sign language), "I thought I was going to get out. . . . But where shall I stop? . . . I can't go round and round. Who will stop me, Sip?" (268). Catty's eventual final escape from her house leads her to death, for she is caught by a terrible flash flood. Confused by the rising water in her home, Catty leaves the house, despite her promise to her sister to stay safely inside, and ends up on the bridge over the river. A massive group of logs, loosened from its mooring by the rising water, tears down the river and knocks the bridge out, taking Catty with it. The narrator describes Catty's tragically symbolic death:

Type of the world from which she sprang.--the world of exhausted and corrupted body, of exhausted and corrupted brain, of exhausted and corrupted soul, the world of the laboring poor as man has made it, and as Christ has died for it, of a world deaf, dumb, blind, doomed, stepping confidently to its own destruction before our eyes. . . .
On the empty ruin of the sliced bridge, two logs had caught and hung, black against the color of the water and the color of the sky. They had caught transversely, and hung like a cross. (277-78)

Catty's escape leads to her death, another kind of "escape," for Phelps believed in the redemption of all people, and Catty's redemption in the bridge accident is symbolized by the log cross left at the scene. Although Sip is saddened by her sister's death, she is strengthened to make changes in her own life, for Catty's death also empowers Sip to begin a new life. Sip turns down a proposal of marriage, swearing she will never bring children like Catty and herself into the world to suffer in poverty and illness, and Sip goes into the streets, not to drink and carouse as her sister did, but to become a street preacher who talks to the working-class people and tries to lead them to a spiritual life, although she does not preach against alcohol abuse.

In both novels, *Hedged In* and *The Silent Partner*, Phelps recognizes the interplay between the "grog-shops" and the street, between alcoholism and poverty, but she does not specifically lecture against drinking. In fact, in both novels Phelps clearly concentrates on women who drink and does not really touch upon the issues which most concerned the women's rights leaders: abusive husbands and destitution caused by alcoholism. It is not until after she experienced the incident outside the tavern and began to take a role in the temperance movement that she writes about the problem of male drunkenness.

**From Hearth to Public Arena**

For several years, Phelps worked actively for the temperance cause in Gloucester, the Massachusetts sea-side community where she lived and where the tavern murder occurred which made such an impact on her. According to her autobiography, for several years after this incident Phelps devoted a great deal of energy to reforming the drunkards of Gloucester. She began her work by entering the saloon where the murder had occurred and speaking to the clientele. She reported that the men and women in the tavern listened
politely, with attention and respect "as if they had never heard a message of mercy before in all their lives, and never might again." For three years Phelps performed this work, a work which she found extremely rewarding. She writes, "[Life] has never given me another hour when I felt that I had found the chief privilege of existence, as I felt when I forgot myself and pleaded with Heaven for those miserable men." Phelps began giving temperance lectures at the local Reform Club and met many men whose appeals for help she attempted to answer.

Of all the things she saw, Phelps seemed most stirred by the women whose husbands were attempting to stop drinking. She writes of the visions which were blazoned in her memory—"the look of a manly fellow when he has been sober for two years; the expression in the eyes of his wife, and a word or two she said; the sobs of a man who had 'broken his pledge'"—but perhaps she is most moved by the "the way the women looked!" She writes of one incident in particular when a woman asked for help:

Touching beyond words were the appeals of the women. One, I remember, walked miles to my house,--and she was quite unfit for walking,--to beg me, in their superstitious way, to "stop her husband drinking." For I was sometimes accosted on the street by strange men, who would detain me respectfully to say: "I hear when you talk to folks they stop drinkin'; I wish you'd talk to me!"

This woman pulled up her sleeve and showed me big, purple bruises on her beautiful arm and shoulder. "He's always kind when he's sober," she urged, "but I wish you'd talk to him. He peeked in at the window last night at the club to see you. . . . He said he wanted to go in and listen, but he dastent, for he felt ashamed. . . . [H]e says, --

"'Jane, I wisht I was a better man;' an' I says,"--

"'Tom, I wisht you was!' and he says he'd like to have you talk to him--so I come down. . . . For he never hits me when he's sober, and he likes the baby, and so I thought I'd come."}

Phelps was appalled at the husband's brutish treatment of his wife, but she blamed the alcohol on his behavior, as did the man's wife. Perhaps Phelps's foray into temperance work seems somewhat elitist, for even her descriptions of her work make her sound a little
like a "great lady benefactor." Nonetheless, it was this "hands-on" experience which gave Phelps the impetus and experience to write the story of Reliance Strong and her own genteel temperance work in *Friends: A Duet* (1881).

The protagonist of *Friends*, Reliance Strong, is a young woman whose interest in the drunkards in her community gives her a sense of purpose, like many of the temperance workers. When Reliance learns of her husband's accidental death in the opening pages of the novel, she is left completely bereaved. Reliance feels a great sense of loss, for she apparently loves her husband deeply. However, she soon discovers a work which helps fill her time and makes her feel "useful." Reliance Strong has led a carefully sheltered life, so when she discovers that there is something worse in life than death, she takes it seriously. Finding Janet, the household servant, crying, Reliance tries to discover the reason for her sorrow:

"It's my father," she said.
"Is he dead, Janet?"
"Ma'am--no; he's worse than dead."

Reliance had asked the question with a weary sadness, which reacted into a dull sense of surprise at Janet's business-like reply. The lady had heard people talk about griefs worse than death. . . . It seemed, indeed, that a drunken husband might be worse than a dead one. (23)

Reliance is soon to find out why a "drunken husband might be worse than a dead one." For Janet's father, Mr. Griggs, has been sent to jail. Janet explains:

"He was arrested," began Janet again. "He broke a man's jaw, and he like to broke my mother's arm. He didn't mean to, but he was flyin' round that tempestuous with the rollin'-pin,--our rollin'-pin is rather heavy. But *she* won't complain on him. Father's tried to reform,--that's what they call it when you stop drinkin'. But he says if he had friends to help him, like some folks do, he'd hold out. But he gets discouraged. (24)

After hearing Janet's poignant story, Reliance visits Janet's aggrieved mother, beginning the heroine's foray into "neighborhood benevolence" which the narrator explains has been the "solace of widowed and idle women from generation to generation," as well as a
"natural" consequence of coming to understand "the griefes of other people" (25). Instead of being victimized by her own tragedy, Reliance learns to feel useful to others.

Reliance's sense of usefulness is extremely important to her development of character. At the beginning of the novel, Reliance Strong seems consequential merely in the light of her relationship to her husband, John Strong, who, although dead from the beginning of the novel, has a spiritual presence which powerfully presides over the novel. Without a family of her own, Reliance moves in with her husband's widowed mother; as two women alone (except for a couple of servants), they keep one another from complete loneliness. However, once Reliance realizes that she can be useful to others, she begins to feel a real sense of identity and purpose. The narrator states:

[T]his, the third [winter] since her bereavement, was perhaps the busiest of her life. One need not be saying much, to be sure, in saying that, for the lives of women like this young creature are not often burdened with care. Mrs. Strong, however, did occupy herself in earnest. . . . She had plunged heavily into the Poor Relief work of the town. . . . The discovery that a young lady as ignorant as herself of the woes of her fellow-men (and up to this point as indifferent to them) could make a sober man out of a drunkard, or a self-respecting citizen of a beggar, or a virtuous woman of a castaway, awed her. . . . Reliance, in short, gave herself up to the people who seemed to need her the most, and the inevitable consequence followed; her need of them became the predominant fact in her life. (45-46)

The feeling of being useful and needed by people who were so easily helped by her "light sacrifice" gives Reliance a sense of identity apart from her identity as "Mrs. John Strong" (46). Thus, when Charles Nordhall, her husband's best friend, begins to fall in love with Reliance, she has no time for him or for a relationship, for not only does her lifelong love for her dead husband keep her from loving another man, but her feeling of responsibility and commitment to the poor members of her community keep her too busy to daydream about romantic relationships. Although Reliance misses Nordhall's friendship and help when he takes a European trip and looks forward to his return, "She thought of this event with less excitement than she expended on the movements of Janet's father, or of a little
shoe-shop girl she cared about, who had fallen into gay company" (47). The narrator elaborates on Reliance's lack of passion for Nordhall: "The heart holds one passion at a time" (47). The "grave delights" of her benevolence work--"an evening school her highest dissipation, a temperance society her wildest pleasure, a mission prayer-meeting her keenest comfort"--take the place in Reliance's life of any kind of romantic relationship (46). Her desire to be useful is replaced by a real need--the needs of the poor drunkards of the community. Thus, both Reliance's relationship with her mother-in-law and her relationships with various working-class members of her community seem to provide sufficient companionship as well as a sense of self-value.

As the novel progresses, the "duet" of the novel's title becomes more apparent, for the two lead characters, Reliance and Nordhall, are like dancing partners moving to two different tunes with conflicting tempos and moods. The "Nordhall plot" consists of his increasing passion for Reliance; he alternately approaches her and hints at his feelings, then backs off and lets her have space to grieve and work among the drunkards. The "Reliance plot," on the other hand, revolves around her continuing self-reliance, as she learns to take care of herself, first without her husband, then, after the death of Madame Strong, without her mother-in-law, and her continuing philanthropic work. Nordhall does not seem to completely understand Reliance's commitment to her work, however. Instead, Nordhall views her work as it reflects upon Reliance's suitability as a "true woman" (using Barbara Welter's definition of the word, as characterized by piety, purity, domesticity, and submissiveness). He tells Reliance, "I am glad you are saving drunkards. It is a womanly, Christian work. You are doing it like a woman and a Christian" (57). Nordhall notes, however, that philanthropy has "changed" Reliance. Believing that all women need a passion, Nordhall believes that Reliance has "taken philanthropy as a passion" in replacement for her need for love (57). He adds:
You perished for love, I say! We all do, in our measures. You had received--and given--more than one woman's share. When you were left without it,--when your trouble came,--you needed a substitute for happiness. . . . You have found it in benevolence. . . . You starved for love. . . . You have it everywhere you go. You treat poor people as if they were human--and you too. That is the highest bid that can be made for their affection. They give it. You are overwhelmed with it. You needed love. You have found it in its most alluring and its most illusive form. You have too much of it! (58-59)

Thus, Nordhall reveals his jealousy of the attention Reliance gives to her "poor people," and he domineeringly criticizes her for her behavior even as he praises the "womanliness" and "Christianity" of it.

One of Reliance's major goals in her newly-found benevolence work is to help men to "reform." Early in the novel, Reliance's maid Janet defines "reform" saying, "Father's tried to reform,—that's what they call it when you stop drinkin'" (24). Reliance Strong devotes herself to reforming the men of the community, but most particularly she works with Mr. Griggs, Janet's father. Mr. Griggs's character often becomes the voice for the other "reformed men" of the community, for he talks to Nordhall and explains the way Reliance, despite being such a "lady," is able to help the working-class men:

"She is such a--lady!" said Mr. Griggs. "I never had a--lady--kind to me before."
"So that's what's the matter with you," said Nordhall, dreamily regarding the ex-drunkard.
"Sir?"
"It is the strangeness of it, is it, that helps you? The--refinement; the elevation; the inclination from such a height to such a"--He stopped.
"It is her being such a--lady," repeated Mr. Griggs, perplexedly, but with a touch of doggedness, "and me being such a--raskill. Those are the two points in my mind, sir. And she cares whether I get drunk." (72-73)

Although Nordhall does not really understand Reliance's passion for reforming drunkards, he reveals his fascination with this part of her character through conversations with Mr. Griggs and others. As the novel progresses, Nordhall comes to believe that Reliance's work elevates her even more over other women, and over himself, than her other qualities.
Despite this fact, in the novel, Nordhall becomes a distraction for Reliance and one of the major reasons she ends up quitting her reform work.

Like many women of her time, Reliance cannot devote herself completely to her benevolence work, despite her "passion" for it, for her domestic duties get in the way. Nordhall, in an attempt to understand Reliance's work with Griggs and others and with some sense of sympathy for Griggs, tries to help Griggs pay his bill at a grog-shop. Griggs is afraid that he will be drawn in by his own lust for alcohol or coerced to drink by former comrades in the tavern, so he asks Nordhall to accompany him. Unfortunately, Nordhall is injured inside the grog-shop, so Reliance, feeling responsible for Nordhall's injuries, ends up nursing him through his recovery. The narrator reports:

Some women yearn over a sick man like a mother over a wounded child. Reliance was one of these women. Nordhall's life was in danger. It is probable that she saved him. Her consciousness that he had risked it while helping (however reluctantly) to protect her pet drunkard and to further her heart's work, of course gave a certain personal intensity to the brooding maternal care which she would have expended upon anybody thrown in this way against her mercy. She felt a little as if she had killed him. (72)

Unfortunately, the nursing she provides for Nordhall leaves her little room for her "heart's work," and although she regrets the time away from it, Reliance does not resent Nordhall's illness. Nonetheless, as soon as Nordhall is well enough to go home, Reliance pours herself back into her reform work: "The day that Nordhall left the house, she put on her bonnet and went to a temperance society, a business women's reading room, and a mission prayer-meeting. The next day she called on five "reformed men" and three sick girls, and attended a conference of cooperative visitors" (85).

Reliance Strong re-enters her work again with passion, and she comes to prefer the entertainment of the "mission meeting" to other more genteel social events (115). Nordhall teases her about her "philanthropic attentions," until she invites him to attend a
mission meeting, and there both Nordhall and the reader get their first real glimpse at
Reliance's "other" life:

He was in a low, small room that had served as counting-room for some
mills; it had been bought by what are called "the temperance people."
among whom, alien as she was to them by social surroundings, by
ecclesiastical connections, by instinctive and acquired tastes, by everything
but a highly-cultivated conscience and an independent type of religion,
Reliance Strong had found herself at home, and made herself of value.
(120-21)

Despite the class and religious differences which Nordhall immediately recognizes as
setting him (and in his view, Reliance) apart from the others in the room, Reliance feels "at
home"--comfortable, useful, and welcomed. The motif of "home" in Friends and other
novels by Phelps is significant for many of Phelps's characters long for a "home," a "room
of their own" to quote Woolf, in which they can feel confident and at ease. For characters
in her utopian novels, the Gates series, home is found in the eternal life; in other novels,
home is an "old maid's paradise," a little cottage by the sea away from family and social
custom; but for Reliance, home is this "low, small room" where she helps drunkards
"reform" and "stay honest." In all cases, home then, for Phelps, is a place where one can
be useful and can be oneself.

Not only does this passage recognize the significance of this place to Reliance, but
it also shows an understanding of the sometimes negative portrayal of temperance women
which Phelps recognizes both here and in her 1881 article from The Independent, "The
Argument from Experience," where Phelps calls temperance work "repulsive,
disheartening, and unpopular." In this passage, however, the narrator notes that the
temperance meetings made a positive impact on the community. For instance, in Friends,
Nordhall comments on what he has seen in the meeting: "So this is a specimen of what is
meant in the newspapers by the temperance work? I've never thought about it. I
supposed it meant speeches and women with spectacles" (125). Reliance responds to
Nordhall with a combination of humility and pride, for she denies that she is a "specimen" of the work, saying she is "only one woman trying to help a few people in her own way" (125). Not only do Phelps's words indicate her praise for this sort of independence, she also gives Reliance the voice to speak for the thousands of temperance workers in the world:

"Why, there are women all over the land, all over England and Scotland, the hem of whose overdresses I'm not worthy to touch!" She tried to laugh. "There are women banded together, twenty thousand strong in this State alone, and so all over the country, pledged to make the salvation of drunkards and the extermination of the drink-traffic the solemn object of their whole lives,—women who sacrifice, and hope and bear, and do, and pray, and who don't dare to be alive unless they can 'rescue the perishing.'" (126)

Phelps uses Reliance and Nordhall in this passage and the following one to comment on the widespread temperance movement. Although she does not name the WCTU, she does emphasize the significance of the movement to abolish the alcohol traffic which Phelps believed was "not morally second" to the movement to abolish slavery. After hearing Reliance's praise of the temperance movement, Nordhall comments, "What a book could be written about it,—a great appeal, a prophecy!" (126). In her reply, Reliance, like Phelps, compares temperance work to the movement to abolish slavery, and makes a prophecy for a future temperance novel:

[T]he time is not yet ripe. Some one will do for these poor slaves what Harriet Stowe did for the black ones, I think,—I am sure. And literature will be the richer by another superb moral idea. But not yet, not yet. We are not ready. I doubt if any order of genius could take the twang of the temperance lecture out of such an effort now. We have not reached the literary stage. (126-27, emphasis added)

Perhaps Phelps's novel A Singular Life (1895) was meant to reply to Nordhall's question, but in Friends (1881), after proclaiming the necessity for Reliance's philanthropic life and
her "call to arms" in favor of the temperance movement, Phelps practically drops the issue following this scene.

Once again, Reliance has to put aside her reform work for domestic duties, this time in order to nurse her dying mother-in-law. On the doctor's instructions, Reliance and Madame Strong travel to the mountain town of Bethlehem for several months, a place where Reliance is released from all society and temperance obligations, as well as being somewhat free from Nordhall's attentions. When he comes to visit Reliance and Madame Strong on one of his infrequent holidays, Reliance tells him, "I haven't spoken to a soul, since I've been here. . . . You can't think how lovely it is! I haven't had an invitation. . . ., and I haven't made a call, and there isn't a drunkard in Bethlehem!" (151). Despite Reliance's former "passion" for her work, she seems happy to have a respite from all the problems. Unfortunately, even with the mountain air Madame Strong does not recover, and the two women return to their home where Reliance takes care of her mother-in-law until her death. In this part of the story, the narrator reinforces the idea of Reliance's self-reliance. Not only does she enjoy her time away from "the drunkards," but she politely lets Nordhall know that she also appreciates the distance from her "problem" with him--his avowed and unrequited love for her. For Reliance, a relationship with a man is not worth (at least at this time) the sacrifice of her time, energy, and attention.

Following Madame Strong's death, Reliance feels completely cut off from the world and from her family, for her mother-in-law was her last link with her husband; without family ties, she attempts to heal her loneliness with "spasmodic" philanthropic work as Nordhall magnifies his romantic attentions (195). Although Phelps claims that this story has "no plot" and that it is only interesting to readers who "love women," she does add a complication at this point of the novel with the fall of Griggs, her "pet drunkard" (197, 86, 72). The reader learns the power of a "good lady" who sets her mind to reforming drunkards when Reliance, bent on a mission of redemption, goes to Griggs to
turn him from his path to destruction. Apparently, Griggs had taken a hot tea from another man, but unbeknownst to him, the tea had some alcohol in it. This drop of liquor turned the former "reformed" man into a lunatic, "as insane as any man in Bedlam, and as innocent as any out of it" (198). His friends come searching for Reliance, "the Lady." for they believe she can save Griggs from himself. One friend, Mr. Babbs, says, "[I]f he ain't got home he'll drink himself dead before to-morrow noon. There's that danger when they've sworn off so long, and break sudden" (199). Another man asserts, "I wish the Lady knew it; she'd manage him" (199). "The Lady," Reliance, leaves her comfortable home and hearth, taking Mr. Babbs and Janet with her, and goes into the streets to find Griggs and take him home:

She was intensely excited by the sickening scenes through which she passed, by the responsibility of her errand, and by the deadly cold itself. Mr. Babbs walked a little in advance of them; the two women followed him in perfect silence; he glancing in at sights from which he shielded them, passing from saloon-door to saloon-door, with that trained scent for his man which the recovered drunkard possesses. (201)

Although Reliance had spent several years in meeting houses and prayer rooms and at temperance meetings, she had never gone out into the streets to do the "dirty work" of the temperance movement. Phelps refuses to allow Reliance to be an "ordinary" middle-class woman with charitable intentions. However, despite the fact that Reliance is able to turn Griggs from his dangerous path to ruin, the narrator here reveals Reliance's lack of preparation for the "real" job she had taken. Ironically, although Reliance is not prepared, she is able to help Griggs. Perhaps Nordhall is correct when he surmised that Griggs was influenced by Reliance's oppositeness as compared to the people he was accustomed to, for all she has to do is touch his arm and ask him to leave:

She stepped in like a spirit; she was as pale, and seemed to shine. It was all done in a minute. It seemed to her afterwards a very simple thing to do; not at all heroic, or dangerous, or dreadful. She only put her ungloved hand upon his arm, and said in her distinct, "pure womanly." voice,
"Your daughter and I are here. We will take you home. Shall we come now? I think I would, if I were you." . . .

He obeyed her. She thought he would. (201-02)

While this scene appears to hopelessly bow to Phelps's odd attachment in this story to the "true lady" who is able to heal with a touch of her hand, Phelps recognizes that Reliance also lacks the personal requirements to handle all the realities of the work she has taken on. After nursing Griggs through his delirium tremens until five in the morning, Reliance returns to her home only to fall deathly ill from a mysterious nervous ailment. Although Reliance has become somewhat self-reliant, she seems unable to handle any strenuously difficult situations which her reform work might place before her.

As Reliance recovers, she continues to use her benevolence work as a diversion, but at this point in the novel, the work seems little more than a hobby to her. After sending a friend to the mission, "with a view to discovering the exact merits of the last disagreement in the temperance society," she finds herself wondering if she can ever live up to her name, to be "quite strong, and able to be of use to anybody again" (218). Nordhall continues his never-ending attack on her defenses as he seeks to convince her to marry him. Reliance's illness makes her acutely aware of the differences between what she sees as woman's "gentleness" and man's "strength," but she knows that she might still overcome Nordhall, "Let her be as velvet as she would,--keep him back by the giant strength of gentleness. His love was iron. He was a man. Silken thread and metal fibre should have it out" (220). She does keep him back, but she is unable to continue her benevolence work, a fact which "gave her idle and depressed hours" (233). Reliance seems to reflect Phelps's own feelings of ambivalence toward relationships between women and men, for Reliance, like Phelps, views these relationships as fulfilling some basic physical and psychological needs even as they raise barriers between a woman and her work.
Unable to continue her work and feeling cut off from all her friends, including Nordhall, whose proposal she had spurned once again, Reliance realizes "that she had no claim on anybody anywhere in a world full of shared sorrows and united joys" (238). Loneliness overtakes Reliance, and the feeling of usefulness she had formerly gotten from her benevolence work, her great passion in life, seems to have drawn to a close since she is now too ill, or too afraid, to continue. However, near the end of the novel, Reliance "crept out among her poor people" to try to give, or gain, some sympathy. Griggs, her "pet drunkard," comes to her and tells her that she must not do the work any more because of her poor health, but instead of depressing or upsetting Reliance, he helps her come to an understanding of her role in her community and her need for help of a different kind. Griggs makes a deal with Reliance:

Mrs. Strong, if you'll go away somewhere,—among folks that ain't poor and don't drink,—and try to get better, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll reform myself without you! I'll reform myself and every live man I can get hold on, from Cranby's to the sea! I will, so help me God! . . . I've got it in me to do a sight of that sort of thing I've never put my shoulder to, yet. Mebbe I've depended too much on you,—on a lady—on a lady's help. (238-39)

Despite his assertion that Reliance is only "a lady" and that "she's nothing but a woman, after all! And I'm a strong, well man!" obviously meant humorously for Phelps knew as well as anyone that Griggs was a poor match for many women in moral strength, Griggs's promise touches Reliance. Recognizing that she is perhaps not, after all, so different from the "poor people" she helps, for she, too, has her demons--loneliness, self-doubt, and neediness--she replies, "I'm glad you said you would pray for me; I shall like to think of that I need help, too, Mr. Griggs . . . as much as the poor men. We all need one another in this hard world" (239). Although Reliance appears to arrive at a sort of epiphany about her relationship to the people around her, and her words seem to indicate that she might approach her benevolence work in a highly practical way in the future, the last few pages-
of the novel are somewhat disappointing to the modern-day reader, for they point out that what Reliance has actually discovered is her need for companionship, for instead of uncovering her personal strength or usefulness in society, Reliance concludes that she, like everyone else, needs others. The special "other" for Reliance appears to be the unlikely Nordhall, for she eventually gives in to his marriage proposal, despite misgivings, perhaps because of this feeling of need she has.

Counting on her own wealth and social friendships to give her pleasure, aspects of her life which had not helped her get through her grief when her husband died, Reliance decides to plan a vacation with a society friend, a trip through the South followed by a summer in Switzerland. She mentally proposes to "come home, start a hospital for poor girls, and save every drunkard in Salem!" (240), as if using her money and position to help others would be as good as her own hands-on involvement. However, Reliance just as quickly forgets these plans when she finally decides to accept Nordhall's proposal of marriage on the last page of the novel. Throughout the book, Phelps gives the reader a portrait of a developing woman, perhaps even a "portrait of a lady" which might be a response to Henry James's unfavorable portrait of Isabel Archer in The Portrait of a Lady (1880), published the previous year. While both female characters, Isabel Archer and Reliance Strong, are beautiful society women who receive many proposals of marriage, Reliance is an illustration of a woman who remains true to her first love, her husband John Strong, and who devotes a great deal of her passion to a work which helps society, instead of devoting her passion to herself and undeserving men.

Perhaps Phelps's intention is to show the development of an independent woman, for Reliance waits many years before finally accepting Nordhall's proposal, and Reliance grows in self-assurance and understanding in this time. However, Friends remains a flawed novel, for Reliance's decision to marry Nordhall appears to come out of nowhere and, indeed, seems to reflect a weakness in Reliance, for instead of becoming completely
self-reliant, she falls into Nordhall's arms with an "expression of entreaty, wild as an eternal regret," indicating her own possible feelings of disappointment in her misplaced passion and loneliness. Perhaps in a desire to keep the novel from having "the twang of the temperance lecture" (127), Phelps attempted to resolve the story with a so-called happy ending. The dance between Nordhall and Reliance is complete: "Was that an outline, white as a wraith, real as a woman, mistily moving among the budding trees? Did it retreat? He advanced. Did it hasten? He pursued. Did it wave him back with that rare dignity? Too late now!" (254). Thus, although the dancing duet between the two main characters comes to a close, the reader is left with the knowledge that the relationship between the two will not be a perfect one, for Phelps concludes the novel. "It was heaven on earth, at least, to him. If to her it was earth after heaven, what cared he?" (255).

"The Sin of the Nation"

Fourteen years after the publication of _Friends_, Phelps responds to Nordhall's call to action, providing her reading public with a temperance book which she might have hoped would be "a great appeal, a prophecy!" One of her last books, _A Singular Life_ (1895), works on many levels, offering a discussion of various philosophical and Christian movements of the late nineteenth century, as well as an interesting discussion of class differences in the Gilded Age, but it could easily be argued that the primary purpose of the novel is to argue for the prohibition of alcohol and to support active involvement in the temperance movement. As discussed in previous chapters, the hero of _A Singular Life_, Emanuel Bayard, moves to a small fishing community, Windover, similar to the Gloucester of Phelps's experience, where he proceeds to preach to the lower class members of society, including a number of fishermen. Bayard's desire to "close its dens" does not make him popular in the small town, either among the poor or the rich, for the poor do not want their lifestyle altered or their livelihood taken away, while the rich do not want the
status quo disrupted. Bayard speaks out for the temperance workers of the nation—a male voice speaking for so many of the nation's women including the author herself. Phelps may have, in writing *A Singular Life*, felt that she was making literature "richer by another superb moral idea," just as Harriet Beecher Stowe had done fifty years previously.⁵⁴ Although many have seen both Stowe's and Phelps's novels as "moralizing" and "sentimental," Phelps herself believed that the exploration of problems in society, including problems of "moral struggle," were a necessary element of any realistic portrayal of American society.

In her autobiography, Phelps devoted several pages to a discussion of the definition of "art." In this discussion, she argues that realistic portrayals of society's problems ought to be considered art, and she felt that her own writing was just such a realistic portrayal. While many critics, both Phelps's contemporaries and current readers, might not all consider Phelps's works completely "realistic," most would agree that her concern with "moral struggle" flows throughout most of her better works of fiction. In *Chapters from a Life*, Phelps explains her interest:

> The last thirty years in America have pulsated with moral struggle. No phase of society has escaped it. It has ranged from social experiment to religious cataclysm, and to national upheaval. I suggest that even moral reforms, even civic renovations, might have their proper position in the artistic representation of a given age or stage of life. I submit that even the religious nature may be fit material for a work of art, which shall not be refused the name of novel *for that reason*. Such expressions of "ethicism" are phases of human life, are elements of human nature.⁵⁵

Perhaps *A Singular Life*, of all Phelps's novels, contains the most fully developed exploration of "social experiment," "religious cataclysm," and "national upheaval."

Interestingly, Phelps had discontinued her active involvement in both woman's suffrage and the temperance movement several years previously; yet, *A Singular Life* possibly provides the most impassioned plea for reform of all of Phelps's novels.
Although Phelps and others most frequently portray temperance workers as women, for women did make up the majority of WCTU members, many men, as evidenced by the existence of the politically-active Prohibition Party, also favored the temperance movement. Instead of creating a female temperance worker along the lines of Reliance Strong in *Friends,* Phelps created a male character, Emanuel Bayard, who could preach to the lower-class members of Windover society and argue for the closing of the town's taverns. Bayard's introduction to the problem of drinking happened on his first day in Windover. In a scene reminiscent of the one Phelps relates in her autobiography, Bayard sees a fight in progress outside a tavern on the day he arrives in town. The fight is representative of many of the temperance workers' arguments for prohibition, for the men are not only in a murderous rage, but one of the men fighting threatens to injure his own small child and the women in the audience feel victimized by the men's behavior. The little boy asks his father, Job Slip, to stop fighting, begging, "Marm says to please to stop! She says to ax you to please to stop, and come home wiv you' little boy!" The father does not follow his son, but instead, his face "turned a sudden, ominous purple, and before any person of them could stay him his brutal hand had turned upon the child" (58). The women watching the affray shout out, "Hold him, somebody! He'll kill the child!" and "the girl in the reefer," who we will soon discover is Lena, cries, "He'll murder it! Oh, if I was a man!" (58). The fear of abuse led the women in the community to band together to hold women and children strong against the abusiveness of drunken men. Yet, Bayard does not at this time recognize the incident as being anything more than an isolated incident. It is not until the shipwreck of the *Clara Em* that Bayard comes to understood the "evil" of alcohol in the lives of these local fishermen.

When the *Clara Em* wrecks just a short distance from the shore, Bayard helps pull the people of the community together to save the lives of the shipwrecked sailors. What he does not know, at least at first, is that the sailors on board are all drunk, a circumstance
which seems suicidal in this instance. When Bayard asks why the ship is in full sail and why the nearly new fishing boat crashed in familiar waters, Bayard is finally told, "The crew of the *Clara Em* is all drunk" (120). After risking his life, Bayard manages to help save Job Slip, but Job feels that Bayard's effort was useless, for Job feels his own life is useless and not worth saving. Seeing so many lives and so much property damaged and lost at sea makes Bayard re-think his position on drinking alcohol. As a religious man taught in an Orthodox Congregational school, Bayard would not likely have had any prior training in temperance work, but when he sees the problems caused by drunkenness in the community, he jumps on the temperance bandwagon. He speaks before the locals in Angel Alley, telling them to close all the "dens" of the town. Admitting his own lack of experience in the area, Bayard states, "I shall need your help and your advice, for I am not educated in these matters as I ought to be. I was not taught how to save drunken men in the schools where clergymen are trained" (145). His old friend and school-mate Fenton, who becomes the minister at First Church in Windover, even warns Bayard against preaching too dogmatically against the liquor interests, for he calls Bayard's sermon "a pretty serious experiment" which he believes is "ill-advised" (151-52). Fenton adds, "What do you propose? To turn temperance lecturer, and that sort of thing? I suppose you'll be switching off your religious services into prohibition caucuses, and so forth" (152). Although Bayard denies any such plans, in fact, his preaching becomes more and more aimed toward the prohibition cause.

Bayard spends a great deal of his time "saving" drunkards from the taverns. Like Mr. Griggs in *Friends*, after a full year of sobriety, Job Slip is also "drugged" with a tainted drink, and it sends him into temporary insanity:

> There was a well, in a yard, by the fish-flakes, and a dipper, chained, hung from the pump. It came Job's turn to drink from the dipper. And when he had drunk, the devil entered into him. For the rim of the dipper had been maliciously smeared with rum. Into the parched body of the "reformed
Instead of it taking the purity and goodness of "the Lady," as it did when Griggs falls off the wagon in Friends, in A Singular Life it takes the patience and love of a good man. Job, like Moll Manners in Hedged In, believes he will go the devil, despite all his hard work, for he feels completely trapped by the addiction inside him. Yet, like Moll and Griggs, Job is given another chance, for Bayard, after telling Job to "Take my hand," delivers "the words of the shortest sermon in the minister's life": "Now climb up again, Job! . . . I'm with you!" (316). Like Griggs, Job Slip drunk is a danger, not only to the community and himself, but to his family. His wife and child, little Joey, are afraid of him when he drinks, and when sober, Job realizes that he does not want his family ashamed of him. It is this revelation, along with the love and support of Bayard, that finally causes Job to stay sober.

Throughout the nineteenth century, particularly before the 1870s when the temperance movement began to make such an impact on society, it was common for men to drink throughout the day, even at work, particularly working-class men. In Chants Democratic, Wilentz describes the freely-flowing alcohol in New York City during the early nineteenth century, saying that in many professions employers gave out liquor to employees, sometimes as part of the day's pay. While various early temperance movements began to make an impact on this practice as the century passed, remnants of this behavior hung on throughout the nineteenth century. In A Singular Life, particularly through the character of Job, Phelps demonstrates the pervasive influence of alcohol on the lives of the sailors, for the high proportion of single men in these communities made saloons quite popular and the nature of the job itself—long, dull days at sea and away from shore—conducive to over-indulgence of alcohol. In Job, Phelps illustrates the difficulty a man might have who wants to "reform" and "stay honest."
Bayard does not only help the fishermen who wish to reform themselves; he also helps Lena, one of the street girls of the community. Like the "loose" girls in Phelps's earlier stories, *Hedged In* and *The Silent Partner*, Lena has good intentions and a (mostly) pure heart, but her dissolute behavior has already led her to "ruin." While Lena had been attending Bayard's church, Christlove, for some time, at one point she stops attending, and Bayard is drawn to look for her. As Bayard wanders the dark and foggy streets, the narrator states, "It was one of the nights when girls like Lena are too easy or too hard to find" (297). After midnight, Bayard finally discovers Lena's hiding place: "Bayard, who had returned on his track to Angel Alley, halted before the door of a house at the end of a dark court, within a shell's-throw of the wharves. His duty had never led him before into precisely such a place, and his soul sickened within him" (298). This "den," like the ones described by Bardes and Gossett in *Declarations of Independence*, was apparently such a place—if not a house of prostitution, then a "bawdy house" which catered to drinking and sexual license. Disregarding his own personal loss of reputation, Bayard enters the building and removes Lena, who talks to him without raising her eyes, for she is no longer "bold," the common adjective used to describe Lena, but ashamed. With Bayard's encouragement, Lena succeeds better than any other "fallen woman" character in Phelps's fiction, for she not only lives past the end of the novel, not suffering the death that most "ruined" women suffer in nineteenth-century literature, but she also performs heroic deeds. Lena is responsible in warning Bayard and others about the plot against Bayard's life and she is even responsible for capturing his murderer.

By the end of the novel, a large group of Gloucester citizens are angry with Bayard because of his efforts to close the taverns. He was so successful that many of them began to seek revenge by plotting against him. Lena exclaims, "I tell you his life ain't worth a red herrin', no, nor a bucketful of bait, if them fellars has their way in this town! . . . It's the loss of the license done it. It's the last wave piled on. It's madded 'em to anything. It's
madded 'em to murder" (375). Not only had Bayard convinced many of the local men to stop drinking altogether, but he also fought the source—the taverns themselves. Because of his political efforts to prohibit the sale of alcohol, many bars had closed: "Folks said a man couldn't make a decent living there any longer" (376). His activity for prohibition angers so many of them that they secretly plot his murder.

Bayard recognizes that his religion is not the religion of his forefathers nor of his seminary training. He has had to learn what he needed from temperance literature. In a discussion with his former professor (now father-in-law), Bayard reveals the differences between the romantically inappropriate methods of the seminary training and the practical preparedness he needed to work in Angel Alley. Stating that he has "successfully offended the liquor interests of the whole vicinity," Bayard tells the Professor that the only way to deter the "liquor interests" is through the direct methods of the temperance movement:

"The ecclesiastical methods do not shut up the saloons," said Bayard gently. "Angel Alley is not afraid of the churches."
"I am not familiar with the literature of the temperance movement," observed the Professor helplessly. "It is a foreign subject to me. I am not prepared to argue with you."
"You will find some of it on my library shelves," said Bayard; "it might interest you some time to glance at it." (386)

Thus, he says, the traditional methods of restraining vice which have been used by the churches for centuries do not work. Although, ironically, Bayard resorts to books to teach the Professor, he asserts (as does Phelps) that only direct action and intervention work to curb the problem of alcoholism and close the bars. Even at the last, in the face of a threat against his life, Bayard speaks before a large crowd and preaches against drinking alcohol: "It is not your sin alone," he said firmly. "It is the sin of seaport towns; it is the sin of cities; it is the sin of New England; it is the sin of the Nation;--but it is the sin of Windover, and my business is with Windover sins" (405). Through this speech, Phelps
speaks to the nation of its sin--of allowing the further sale and distribution of alcohol. For Bayard, as well as for Phelps, the sin is in the suffering of the people:

Bayard saw Job Slip, pale with the chronic pallor of the reformed drunkard--poor Job, who drank not now, neither did he taste; but bore the thirst of his terrible desert. . . . Mari [Job's wife] was there, incapable and patient, her face and figure stamped with the indefinable something that marks the drunkard's wife. And Joey, serious and old--little Joey. (406)

Job's alcoholism left a mark on his entire family. With the murder of Bayard, the "sin of the Nation" leaves a mark on the entire community, for he was killed by a former tavern owner who hated Bayard and his preaching. Unlike the bartender who invites Phelps into his home and allows her to speak inside his tavern to the drunken men and women of the community, most of the bar-owners in Windover despise Bayard and everything he stands for, for his preaching against drinking made them lose customers and then a license.

Bayard's passion for his work is not a substitute for romantic passion, as seemed to be the case in Friends, for his passion for reforming fishermen continues despite his love for Helen Carruth. In fact, in Emanuel Bayard, Phelps delivers a man who passionately works and passionately loves, and his care and compassion for the drunkards and poor members of the community is not a hobby to be discarded, but a way of life. Thus, when Bayard is killed, he becomes a martyr for the temperance cause, and the novel becomes a treatise on the necessity of alcohol prohibition, as well as a commentary on women whose lives are devastated by the impact of alcoholism.

For Phelps, like many others who argued for temperance reform, the link between drinking and immorality had been clearly established. As Giele writes, "In their understanding of the connections between violence, sexual abuse, and drunkenness, the WCTU presaged modern feminist discoveries that alcohol abuse, prostitution, cruelty, pornography, and delinquency of women are often linked." By arguing to stop the sale of alcohol, Phelps was also supporting the cause of women, not only working-class
women whose abusive drunken husbands left the family destitute, but also middle- and upper-class women whose lives had been affected by this problem. The goals of the two groups, both fighting for woman's suffrage, came to fruition more than a decade after Phelps's death, for the Eighteenth Amendment for national alcohol prohibition came in 1919 and woman's suffrage was achieved with the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. Nonetheless, the movement of women to reform society, whether through the WCTU, the American Woman's Suffrage Association, or the National Woman's Suffrage Association, made a tremendous impact on society, and because of their work, great changes in attitude, as well as law, occurred for several decades. Phelps's novels chronicle the changes in attitude which occurred and help reflect the climate of her times.
Notes

1 Phelps, *Chapters* 201.

2 Phelps, *Chapters* 205.

3 Phelps, *Chapters* 206.

4 Phelps, *Chapters* 206-07.

5 Phelps, "The Argument from Experience," *The Independent* Apr. 28, 1881: 1-2. See also Appendix A.

6 Phelps, "The Argument from Experience" 1.


8 Phelps *Chapters* 250.


11 Stansell 80.


13 Giele 28.

14 One reason the NWSA was viewed as racist was because they accepted donations from George Francis Train and used the money to found *The Revolution*. Unfortunately, although Train considered himself a feminist, he had a reputation as a racist, so his association with the NWSA, despite the financial rewards, was not necessarily a beneficial one for the NWSA. In fact, in 1870 Train was jailed for giving an incendiary speech supporting Irish independence, and *The Revolution* failed shortly
thereafter.

Despite theoretical differences between the NWSA and the AWSA, in 1890 the two movements combined, forming the National American Women's Suffrage Association or NAWSA. See Eleanor J. Bader, "Women's Newspapers" 629; Linda J. Borish, "Suffrage Movement" 861; and Lisa M. Fine, "Women's Movements" 935, all from The Oxford Companion to Women's Writing in the United States, Ed. by Cathy N. Davidson and Linda Wagner-Martin (New York: Oxford UP, 1995).

15 Giele 60.


19 Giele 67.

20 Giele 107.

21 Giele 104.

22 Giele 64. Note: Temperance women were not alone in doing this. Even earlier, the abolition movement provided women with opportunities for public speaking and writing which helped enlarge the woman's sphere.

23 Bardes and Gossett, Declarations of Independence 3.

24 Bardes and Gossett 11.

25 Phelps, "In Her Sphere," The Independent Apr. 17, 1873: 482.

26 Bardes and Gossett 11.

27 Giele 64.

28 Giele 76.

29 On Sept. 6, 1871, Phelps wrote to Livermore, asking for her to give a lecture in Andover, writing, "I have fifteen names on the petition; can get a dozen more perhaps. I think you might get a hundred. I find a great deal of well-intentioned timidity, waiting only for a little light let in by the right hand--less outright opposition than I expected."
Since Phelps was extremely involved in woman's suffrage at this time and not very interested in the temperance movement this early, more than likely the petition and speech Phelps mentions relate to issues of suffrage or woman's rights. Phelps, letter to Mary Livermore, 6 Sept. 1871, from the Papers of Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (MSS 6677), Clifton Waller Barrett Library of American Literature, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library.

30 Giele 64.
31 Marilley 102.
32 Marilley 107.
33 Alice Stone Blackwell was the daughter of Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell and an editor of the *Woman's Journal*.
35 Marilley 108.
38 Giele reports that WCTU membership was proportionally greater in small cities and towns along the middle Atlantic seaboard and in the midwest, areas of the country where the Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian churches were strongest (89). Nonetheless, Mary Livermore was president of the Massachusetts WCTU from 1875 to 1884, a fact which suggests that Massachusetts, Phelps's home state, had an active temperance movement (86).
39 Phelps, *Chapters* 205-06.
40 Phelps, *Hedged In* 20. Hereafter in this chapter, pages from *Hedged In* will be cited parenthetically in the body.
41 Phelps, "The Lady of Shalott," *The Independent* 6 Jul. 1871: 1. See also Appendix C.
42 Stansell 174-76.
43 Stansell describes a report done by a Dr. William Sanger, published as *The History of Prostitution* (New York, 1859), which surveyed a number of prostitutes in New York to determine specifics about their backgrounds and motivation for becoming
prostitutes. According to Sanger, 25% stated that personal hardship had caused them to turn to prostitution and almost 25% of the prostitutes gave their answer as "incline" when asked why they became prostitutes. He often quotes the girls as referring to their own desire for alcohol as causing this inclination: "S.C.: this girl's inclination arose from a love of liquor. E.C. left her husband, and became a prostitute willingly, in order to obtain intoxicating liquors which had been refused her at home." Stansell, City of Women 172-78.


45 Phelps, The Silent Partner 84. Hereafter in this chapter, quotes from The Silent Partner will be cited parenthetically in the text.

46 Phelps, Chapters 209-10.

47 Phelps, Chapters 210.

48 Phelps, Chapters 214.

49 Phelps, Chapters 214-15.

50 Phelps, Friends: A Duet (Boston: Houghton, 1881) 16. Hereafter in this chapter, quotes from Friends will be cited parenthetically in the text.

51 Phelps, Chapters 251.

52 In fact, in my own copy of the novel, the original unsigned owner of the text noted at the end of the last page, "Finished Sept. 25, 1881. I think the Conduct of Nordhall and Reliance is unnatural."

53 Phelps, Friends 126.

54 Phelps, Friends 126.

55 Phelps, Chapters 265.

56 Phelps, A Singular Life 58. Hereafter in this chapter, quotes from A Singular Life will be included parenthetically in the body.

57 Wilentz, Chants Democratic 54, 146-47.


59 Phelps, Chapters 107-09.

60 Giele 100.
"Send your girls away from home. It will do them good.
Urge them into the world. . . . Help them into the broad ways of active life, and into the brisk air of healthy competitions and acquisitions.
They will strengthen for it, body and brain and soul.
Train them from infancy to 'be' something."

(Phelps, "Unhappy Girls," The Independent 27 Jul. 1871: 1)

"Unhappy Girls"—Moving out of the Home and into the Public Sphere

Despite Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's life-long bouts with ill health, including a sometimes incapacitating insomnia and a heart condition which manifested itself in her later life, she was a strong proponent of a healthy, outdoor, out-of-home lifestyle with both mental and physical exercise for all women. From the time she was small, Phelps had been encouraged in this belief by her father, who believed children, both boys and girls, should not be pushed to study too intensely but should be given time to pursue various activities. In her autobiography, Phelps writes, "I was an out-of-door girl, always into every little mischief of snow or rainfall, flower, field, or woods or ice; but in spite of skates and sleds and tramps and all the west winds from Wachusett that blew through me, soul and body, I was not strong; and my father found it necessary to oversee my methods of studying." Despite his often misogynist views, Austin Phelps advocated an improved education for girls, enabling Phelps to achieve and learn more than many young girls her age. For instance, he limited her piano practice to one hour a day, encouraging her to vary her activities, and he was also instrumental in choosing the textbooks and courses studied in his daughter's school, allowing her to follow practically the same course of study that her brothers later had at college. Perhaps without intending to, Austin Phelps promoted
his daughter's radical views for he provided his daughter with a wide range of reading materials, and Phelps claimed that his introduction of the works of Wordsworth and De Quincey helped bring to her "a distinct arousing or awakening to the intellectual life."5 Thus, Austin Phelps encouraged a wide-ranging educational background which taught her a great deal about the world outside of Andover, and it was her ability to understand the wider world around her which would lead her to her beliefs about society. Despite her father's encouragement and interest in Phelps's somewhat atypical "female education,"6 Phelps began to chafe at the restrictions made upon her time and energy as she grew older.

Though Phelps seemed to have been given more freedom to study, write, and "play" than the average young woman at that time, she had seen around her the "walled in" conditions under which many women lived. For instance, while she admired her own mother's ability to juggle the roles of successful author and successful wife and mother, she nonetheless believed that her mother, a "gifted woman," had been weakened by overwork, for "[h]er last book and her last baby came together, and killed her."7 Phelps observed that most young unmarried women during this time were expected to stay home and help their mothers with domestic duties, at least until they married, at which time they were required to take over the management of their own households. The home, then, instead of being a place of refuge and source of comfort as many defined it in the nineteenth century, became for many women a place of confinement, keeping women within its walls "in their sphere," and preventing them from reaching their potential. Phelps viewed this domestic practice as both limiting for women and wasteful for society, for it kept women from contributing their skills and talents in ways which could benefit all of society.

Phelps's reading of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (1856) when she was sixteen made a tremendous impression upon her inquisitive mind, and while its
influence is most obvious in her novel *The Story of Avis* (1877), its impact can be felt in a great many of her essays and novels. Phelps writes:

> There may be greater poems in our language than "Aurora Leigh," but it was many years before it was possible for me to suppose it; and none that ever saw the hospitality of fame could have done for that girl what that poem did at that time. . . . [W]hat Shakespeare or the Latin Fathers might have done for some other impressionable girl, Mrs. Browning . . . did for me.

> I owe to her, distinctly, the first visible aspiration (ambition is too low a word) to do some honest, hard work of my own in the World Beautiful, and for it.⁶

Phelps was not inspired by male writers, literary "fathers," but by a woman who insisted that women think for themselves. In *Aurora Leigh*, the title character argues early in the novel-length poem that she does not want to submerge herself in her husband's life, but instead wants to have an individual life and be appreciated for her talents. Aurora says, "But *me*, your work / Is not the best for,--nor your love the best, / Nor able to commend the kind of work / For love's sake merely. Ah, you force me, sir, / To be over-bold in speaking of myself;-- / I, too, have my vocation,—work to do."⁹ Like many of the women Phelps later writes about, such as Perley Kelso and Sip Garth in *The Silent Partner*, Aurora Leigh sees herself as a woman with a "vocation," a job which she cannot carry out if burdened with a husband and family. Aurora says, "If I married him, / I would not dare to call my soul my own,"¹⁰ and like so many of Phelps's characters, Aurora believes that a wife must give up the dream of a career or vocation and live for her husband.

Phelps began to imagine the possibilities for women in a world which allowed a woman to "dream and dare."¹¹ While there is no clear indication that she did a great amount of domestic work in her own life, Phelps had also felt the limitations of being a woman, for she felt that her writing career was not taken seriously in her home, particularly when she was first beginning to publish religious and children's texts in her twenties. She writes, "I had no study or place to myself in those days; only the little room
whose one window looked upon the garden cross, and which it was not expected would be warmed in winter. . . . I . . . made the best of my conditions, though I do remember sorely longing for quiet."12 With four younger brothers in the house, Phelps found it difficult to find a peaceful place to work. However, even though she recognized her own domestic limitations, she did not at first presume to ask for a better place to work or special consideration of her new career, perhaps because she believed that her family would feel that a writing career was a "second-best" career choice for a woman. Phelps writes of herself: "A girl who is never 'domestic' is trial enough at her best. She cannot cook; she will not sew. She washes dishes Mondays and Tuesdays under protest, . . . and dusts the drawing-room with resentful obedience. . . . I am more than conscious that I could not have been an easy girl to 'bring up.'"13 Despite her denial that her parents were in any way to blame for her difficulties in her early years of writing, by the time Phelps was in her early twenties, she had developed strong convictions about the absolute necessity of exercise and education for women (as well as strong negative feelings toward "woman's work"--housework), and, like the women's rights supporters of her time, Phelps cultivated an intense interest in the role of women in society, in the public sphere.

For a large part of 1871, the same year she published The Silent Partner, Phelps wrote about women's issues in a weekly column for The Independent. In "Unhappy Girls," Phelps begins a discussion of the reasons for female dissatisfaction, "Upon a candid examination, I believe it would be found that there is more downright misery among young women, between the ages of eighteen and thirty, than among any other class of people."14 Why are they unhappy? After having their eyes opened to the world through reading and a formal education, girls return home, where they are not given an outlet for their intellectual abilities. Instead, they help their mothers and suffer from the stifling rounds of housework, sewing, and childcare which is the lot of most women once they reach adulthood. In "Unhappy Girls," Phelps writes about an imaginary young man facing
Arguing against the common belief that men and women were vastly different in every way, including abilities and needs, Phelps strongly believes that "women have, in general, . . . very much the same tastes with men":

If any man doubt this, let him try it. Let him pause in his education four years, five, six before he ought. Let him come home from the school-room with his young head half full of the love of great deeds and great men, great principles and great facts, and his young heart high with great hopes and dreams. . . . Let him put away his books upon the shelf; he may as well. Tomorrow his mother will make cake, and he shall stone the raisins. No, nor need he take them down the next day. Why, my dear sir, there is pickling on Wednesday!15

While this imaginary domestic man may have seemed humorous to many of her readers, for Phelps and other women the situation facing women was not a laughing matter. The crux of Phelps's argument is based upon her belief that men and women have many of the same desires and needs. She believes that "the ordinary lot of the ordinary young woman is unnatural" because it ignores the fact that women have the same "obligations of young human nature" as men. These needs, the needs of "self-management, self-support, and self-investment," are basic, inborn needs. Phelps writes, "The best and broadest use of these powers in obligatory upon them. This public opinion denies to women. Individuality is the birthright of each human soul. This society crushes out of women."16

In another essay published in The Independent that year, "What They Are Doing," Phelps presents a host of women who have not let society crush them and who have supported themselves in meaningful work. She writes, "If women are disqualified by Nature from following any trades but those of housekeeping, sewing, teaching, or marriage, 'unhappy girls,' starving seamstresses, under-paid teachers, and loveless wives are not and will not be the worst consequences."17 Phelps presents one example after another of women who have succeeded in jobs ranging from the real estate business to blacksmithing, from the dry goods business to the lumber yard. Of course, Phelps is only
continuing the argument begun by the early women's rights supporters like Abby Price, who stated, "Woman should, if she chooses, become acquainted with the mechanical trades. . . . The professions, also, should open to such as may choose. The study of Law, of Medicine, and of Theology, would, of course, well befit her character, if to them she were attracted." 18 Twenty years later, Phelps was able to discuss the many women who had fulfilled Abby Price's dream by going into business for themselves or entering professions, and she argued that these women's success defied societal claims that women were "unfit" for work outside the home. "Facts are stubborn things," she concludes, thus arguing that a woman's aptitude for non-domestic work is a "fact," no longer a theory as it had been when Abby Price and others were discussing it. 19

Perhaps one of the most powerful nineteenth-century arguments against the capabilities of women in the work force was that they lacked the physical strength to endure work outside the home. In "Rights and Relativities," Phelps questions, "Since woman's 'rights' will ultimately be measured by her abilities, and since her physical weakness stands first and foremost athwart them, a frowning and mysterious shadow, it devolves upon us to inquire more patiently, Is woman's present state of bodily inferiority a disability, or an incapacity? A thing of habit, or a thing of nature?" 20 In this essay, she explores the reasons for women's perceived lack of strength, and, as usual, Phelps argues that domestic duties such as sewing and ironing are physically as demanding as many jobs called "men's work." She writes:

By what laws of comparison do we infer that a woman who can stand at the ironing-table ten hours a day, with the thermometer at 98 degrees in the shade, her stove on full draught, and the windows closed, lest the irons cool, cannot practice the stone-mason's trade for lack of physical strength? Did it ever occur to you that the woman who can sweep a room can drive an omnibus? That the dust she takes into her lungs on Saturdays may possibly be as injurious to them as the oversight and lifting of trunks which would fall to herein the character of a baggage-master? 21
It is significant that Phelps argues here against the inevitability of domestic work as the only possible vocation for women (and she includes paid sewing work in this category). Work was important for women because it fulfilled those human needs for "self-management, self-support, and self-investment." Women needed to be independent from men, according to Phelps, and they were more than capable of doing so. Phelps takes up the argument begun by Lucretia Coffin Mott and other women's rights supporters which said that women have had the capacity to be both powerful and self-supporting for hundreds of years.

In her "Discourse on Woman," delivered in 1849, Lucretia Coffin Mott used an interesting persuasive device. While biblical scripture had traditionally been used to argue against women's rights, Mott relied heavily on biblical scripture to refute traditional patriarchal arguments against the advancement of women, thus using scripture for subversive purposes. Mott begins, "There is nothing of greater importance to the well-being of society at large--of man as well as woman--than the true and proper position of woman." This "proper" position is not the position assumed to be proper. In fact, Mott points out the fact that biblical scripture contains many stories of women who were powerful leaders, such as Deborah and Miriam in the Old Testament and female prophets and companions of Jesus in the New Testament. Mott elaborates:

In the early ages, Miriam [Exod. 15:20] and Deborah [Judg. 4, 5], conjointly with Aaron and Barak, enlisted themselves on the side which they regarded the right, unitedly going up to their battles, and singing their songs of victory. We regard these with veneration. . . . Coming down to later times, we find Anna [Luke 2:36], a prophetess of four-score years, in the temple day and night, speaking of Christ to all of them who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. Numbers of women were the companions of Jesus [Matt. 26:55].

After relating many stories of important female leaders in the Bible, Mott makes a statement which contains the essence of her argument--the reason for her including so
many biblical scriptures in her "Discourse on Woman": "It is important that we be familiar with these facts, because woman has been so long circumscribed in her influence by the perverted application of the text, rendering it improper for her to speak in the assemblies of the people." Thus, Mott says, many years of misuse of biblical scripture has resulted in the silencing of women, a point Phelps continues in an 1872 essay in The Independent, "A Talk to the Girls." Insisting that young women must have a mind of their own, must disregard both societal and parental pressure to conform to the domestic prison, she states unequivocally, "Set up distinctly on some hill-top in your heart the one simple principle that it has been the world's blunder, not God's intent, to refuse to woman nature anything to which human nature has a right; and model your individual circumstances by it, in your individual way, as best you can." Thus, Phelps says, it is not the biblical scriptures which are to blame for women's debased status in society, but society's misreading and misapplication of that scripture. Phelps aligns herself with Mott and argues that the powerful women of the Bible also had to transcend societal convention. Naming the same women Mott names (and adding more contemporary examples), Phelps continues:

But who will hem the pillow-cases? That is an old, old question. Undoubtedly Deborah's grandmother asked it, and the mother of Miriam, and the neighbors of Anna the Prophetess; Joan of Arc unquestionably heard it; and Elizabeth Fry, and Elizabeth Browning, and Florence Nightingale, . . . and the rest for whose sakes the world can well afford to hem its own pillowcases.

By using biblical scripture to support women's rights, Phelps, Mott, and others were able to deliver an acceptable version of the radical statement that women must be allowed to pursue self-fulfillment through education and vocation.

While Phelps and other women's rights supporters argued that women can and should work outside the home and that this kind of work will help them become more satisfied with their lives, many opponents argued that women were incapable of
controlling their finances. In another 1871 essay from *The Independent*, "Women and Money," Phelps responds to this argument, one which had begun in the earlier part of the century with the debate over women's property rights. Phelps writes, "Pecuniary dependence upon men tends to make women weak, cowardly, ignorant, and childish, if not worse. Pecuniary authority over women tends to create in men over-weaning self-confidence and self-assertion." The question (however sarcastically intended) becomes, "Queens in the gardens of life, how shall they stoop to soil their fingers with filthy lucre? Used to gather lilies, how shall they handle 'greenbacks'?" Like so many of Phelps's arguments, her answer to the assumption that women are unable to handle their money is based on real-life examples:

The business women of today are breaking new sods on rocky soil, where only the winds of emergencies have been used to carry seed. The war was one of these gusts. We well remember the stately testimony of the *North American Review*, in 1864, to the "skill, zeal, business qualities, and patient and persistent devotion exhibited by those women who manage the truly vast operations of the several chief centers of supply. . . ." Does any man sanely imagine that the "feminine soul" which collected, controlled, and expended fifteen millions of dollars for the use of the sick and wounded soldiers in our war will falter before the mysteries of a monetary report? By using real-life, memorable examples of ways women have controlled financial situations, Phelps is able to argue her point more successfully. It is not "business 'qualities' which women lack," she says. "It is business 'opportunities." Phelps continues, "As long as men monopolize the conduct of trade they monopolize women."

Yet, despite Phelps's constant support of women in the workplace, she does not ignore the very real problem of women's ill health. Although Phelps argues in "Rights and Relativities" that women are just as able as men to perform many of the jobs traditionally called "masculine labor," blaming society for crushing individuality out of women and making women fearful about leaving the protection of the home, she nevertheless agreed with the general belief that a good many women had health problems which interfered with
their lives. From her own personal experience, Phelps knew that illness could keep women from pursuing occupations of any sort, for at times, especially later in her career, she was unable to work because of health problems, particularly insomnia. According to Phelps, there were four main causes of women's chronic illness—their dress, their occupations, their unhappiness, and their education. Women's "common occupations" and their "neglected brains" both help make women unhealthy, she says. Domestic work, particularly sewing, keeps women at home and sedentary and prevents them from gaining the healthy consequences of the open air and a "change of scene." Likewise, according to Phelps, women's stilted education, which in the nineteenth century often concentrated on domestic training over intellectual study, brought about "female illiteracy." and the damage to the mind was reflected in the body.

Like many of the women's rights advocates of the previous two decades, Phelps also concentrated on the problems caused by women's dress, for she believed that women's style of clothing was bad for their health, an argument she continued in the August 31, 1871, essay "Men and Muscle" and her much longer prose work, *What to Wear?*, adapted from a speech delivered at the New England Women's Club in 1873 before being lengthened into a short book. In "Men and Muscle," Phelps briefly details the physical problems created by women's dress, such as "the murderous thinness and scantiness of her underdress; the effect of the absence of flannels, and the custom of baring the neck and arms, upon the sensitive tissues of the lungs and heart: . . . [and] the clasp of a rack of steel and whalebone about all the vital organs of the body," all physical discomforts which, according to Phelps, harm women's bodies. These same arguments had been made almost twenty years earlier when the women's rights activists, following the lead of Amelia Bloomer, publisher of the temperance paper *The Lily*, promoted a new type of dress for women which would be both healthier and less constricting for women. According to
Because they were pioneers and because appearing in public to support the cause of feminism was unconventional, those who participated in the early woman's rights movement were from the beginning very sensitive and self-conscious about their personal appearance. They understood implicitly that clothes have meaning, that they can be used to communicate complex messages that testify to such things as the wearer's social class, gender, personal relationships, political opinions, and attitudes toward the body. Some of them were determined to try to use the metaphorical power of clothing to promote the struggle for equal rights.36

The "bloomers," as this new style of clothing was called, were less constricting and less conventional than the typical woman's dress of the time, and despite (or perhaps, because of) the fact that the clothing was viewed as a symbol of the woman's rights movement and enabled women freer movement, the outfit was only worn for about five years between 1850 and 1855, when the last holdout, Susan B. Anthony, quit wearing bloomers. Not only did the bloomers fit more comfortably, but they also did not use the yards of cloth and dozens of accessory material which were a mainstay of women's traditional clothing. Phelps believed that the traditional, elaborate style of clothing worn by women in her era forces them to spend too much time on their clothing, sewing, repairing, and planning outfits. In "Where It Goes," Phelps explains,

The average young woman expends enough inventive power, enough financial shrewdness, enough close foresight, enough perturbation of spirit, enough presence of mind, enough patience of hope and anguish of regret upon one season's outfit--I had almost said upon one single street suit--to make an excellent bank cashier or a comfortable graduate of a theological seminary.37

Phelps believed not only that simpler clothing styles like bloomers would allow women time to concentrate on more important matters than clothing, but also that caring for women's ruffles and pleats took up a great deal of energy. She even wrote, "I once saw a young lady ride the whole way from Portland to Boston in the car without once leaning
back against the cushioned seat, so that she should not tumble her black silk sash.”

Thus, conventional methods of dress, education, and occupation were neither healthy nor beneficial for women because they restrained her, like her whalebone corsets, into a tightly-defined category which, like most clothing, did not fit every woman.

Asserting that "[g]ood health is expected of a man" while "[i]ll-health is expected of a woman," Phelps continued to describe the problems causing the poor health of the nation’s women:

> When we consider what an intricate system of defiance to all known physiological laws a woman's dress has become; the tender age at which this defiance begins, and the relentless pressure of it upon the formative and the recuperative energies of the constitution; ... when we consider the extent to which the common occupations of a woman deprive her of the open air of exercise, of change of scene, of acquaintance with the world; ... when we consider the unlimited influence of the mind upon the body, of happiness upon health ... --shall we find it a matter of surprise that women as a race are diseased and feeble?  

Obviously, Phelps placed the blame for women's poor health on a variety of causes, all with their basis in society's demands upon women. She believed that women's over-emphasis on fashion and women's lack of stimulating outlets for their intellectual and physical capacities made them unhappy, and this unhappiness caused their general malaise and, often, chronic illness. Thus, if a woman was fortunate enough to get a good education, she often ended up wasting it, either because she became too preoccupied with society and fashion or because she became trapped in a domestic situation as a daughter or wife, which required her constant attention. In "Where It Goes," Phelps continues:

> Boys and girls begin by being astonishingly alike. Up to a point they go hand in hand. The first thing we know the road splits, and, before one can tell what has happened, or why, or how, he is tripping down his side of it, she hers, and off they go, "waving their hands for a last farewell" to that community of faculties, tastes, and interests that ... alone can constitute ... equality between two people. Mature life, which develops the man, stunts the woman. He goes on. She stands still. He unfolds. She
drops. . . . This is especially noticeable among what we call "educated" men and women. 40

Her "wasted" education "stunted" her, pushing her down into complacency and mediocrity.

Aware that her education was the basis for her own radical ideas about women's place in society, Phelps argued that women should receive not a secondary education, but an education equivalent in every respect to that of a man. Earlier supporters of women's education had often used the "Republican Motherhood" argument, as defined by Kerber and others, to curry support for women's education. 41 According to this argument, women must be educated primarily in order to raise future intelligent citizens of the country; however, this argument was often applied as a way to gain support for women's education in general, not just for what women could teach their children. For instance, as early as 1790 Judith Sargent Murray, while maintaining the Republican Motherhood argument that women needed a solid education in order to better raise children, had also forcefully argued in "On the Equality of the Sexes" that the domestic tasks of needle and kitchen work were not enough for "the fertile brain of a female." She believed that the apparent deficiencies in women's intellectual capacities were caused by the inequities in education: "the one is taught to aspire, and the other is early confined and limited." 42 She believed, like Phelps in the next century, that women were restrained, kept from success, with their "domestick [sic] employments" which oppressed her and kept her from enjoying friendly, learned communion with her husbands and sons. 43

By the time Phelps was writing her novels and essays, women's educational opportunities had expanded a great deal, partly due to the influence of the Republican Motherhood argument. A couple of colleges in the first half of the nineteenth century had experimented with co-education, and educational opportunities for women increased rapidly in the decades following the Civil War as women's colleges opened across the
nation. Few established colleges would admit women, however, in the nineteenth century. and the ones that did were considered either ground-breaking or foolish, depending on the perspective.

With the cry for increasing opportunities for women in higher education, controversy arose in the form of E. H. Clarke's *Sex in Education* (1873), a book which took the view that too much education and over-use of the "cerebral powers" would weaken the reproductive systems of women and thereby endanger women's health. Not unexpectedly, Clarke's book caused quite a stir, particularly among women's educational advocates like Julia Ward Howe, whose *Sex and Education: A Reply to Dr. E. H. Clarke's Sex and Education* (1874) included a chapter by Phelps. In this chapter and in her 1874 essay from *The Independent*, "A Word for the Silent," Phelps argues against Clarke's contention, stating that the doctor's theory should not be mistaken for a medical treatise.44 Phelps makes two major points in her essay. First, she says, Dr. Clarke is a man, and although he is a physician, he only treats sick women; therefore, he has no experience either as a healthy woman or in treating healthy women, so his theories are suspect. Phelps states, "Thousands of women will not believe what the author of 'Sex in Education' tells them, simply because they know better." Her second point is that Dr. Clarke's logic is flawed. In detailing Clarke's logic, Phelps points out the ridiculous nature of his conclusions:

- **Sumption:** All women ought to be incapable of sustained activity.
- **Subsumption:** Some women whom I have known are incapable of sustained activity. Miss X became an invalid soon after leaving school. Miss Y was injured by gymnastic exercises, fell under my care, and will never be well. . . .

Conclusion: All women are incapable of sustained activity, but proved especially incapable of sustained brain activity; and, since it would cost Harvard College several millions of dollars to admit them, co-education is a chimera. . . .

Or, to put it in another form, more compactly:
As long as girls are in school they are (with exceptions so rare that I have had great difficulty in finding them) in excellent health. When girls leave school they fall sick. Therefore, it is over-study which injures girls.45

Speaking to "hardworking, ambitious girls," Phelps suggests that it is more likely the "change from intellectual activity to intellectual inanition" which causes girls to descend into poor health in their twenties. Believing that "systematic brain exertion" has a "healing influence" and that girls suffer from the discovery of their own personal uselessness in the world, Phelps argues that society's low expectations for a woman are most likely to make her an invalid. She writes that a woman is "[m]ade an invalid by the change from doing something to doing nothing." Phelps ends her essay with a final gibe toward Clarke--a prophecy about his own immortality in the world of science. She writes of his work, "[W]omen will remember him when the work which he undertook to do shall be long forgotten. Through it the whole character of that work is vitiated and its influence marred."46

In her essays, Phelps spoke directly and quite radically to her audience about changes which needed to be made, particularly regarding woman's rights and education. In her novels, Phelps moved from the theory and supporting facts of her essays to realistic fictional accounts which clearly displayed her belief that women needed healthy, meaningful outlets for their creative and intellectual abilities. While her early novels, such as *Hedged In* (1870) and *The Silent Partner* (1871), present professional women who choose to remain single, in her later novels, particularly *The Story of Avis* (1877) and *Doctor Zay* (1882), Phelps attempted to show the consequences when women combine marriage with a profession. In these novels, Phelps explores both the necessity of education and a career for women and the possibilities for women who wish to combine career and marriage.
The Independent Career Woman

As early as 1870, Phelps was using her novels to make arguments for women's rights issues. In *Hedged In*, Margaret Purcell writes to the narrator that her protegee, Eunice Trent, had been working as a school teacher in the neighborhood school for a year, and that Eunice had been "growing ... into the idea of self-support as she grew into that of self-respect."47 Margaret does not wish for Eunice to become an "unhappy girl," for she encourages her at all times to develop "self-management, self-support, and self-investment," the basic human needs Phelps lists in her 1871 essay "Unhappy Girls."48 Despite Margaret's enthusiasm for Eunice's journey toward self-support, she does not, however, encourage the same kind of movement in her own daughter, Christina, even though Margaret claims to believe in the theory of women's work for all, including her daughter. In addition, Eunice is not destined to represent the professional woman, for although she remains single and concentrates on her teaching job, Eunice is never courted by a man and she is killed off by Phelps at the end of the novel. Of course, Eunice is not intended to represent the professional woman; she is only intended to represent what the laboring class can become if it reaches its potential. Thus, *Hedged In*, while it presents a sample of Phelps's early attitude toward self-support for women, is incomplete in its discussion of women's work and education.

On the other hand, Phelps's novel *The Silent Partner*, published just one year later, explores much more fully the ways women can contribute to society through non-domestic work. For example, Perley Kelso, the wealthy heroine and factory owner in *Five Falls*, not only rejects her gentleman suitor, Maverick Hayle, but she also later rejects the advances of a more worthy suitor, Stephen Garrick. Perley cannot marry anyone, for she says, "The fact is ... that I have no time to think of love and marriage, Mr. Garrick. That is a business, a trade, by itself to women. I have too much else to do ... I cannot spare the time for it."49 Her rejection is not based on a lack of love, but on her own conviction
that married women have no time to pursue outside interests, much less to participate in reform activities and business ventures. Perley continues, "If I married you, sir. I should invest in life, and you would conduct it. I suspect that I have a preference for a business of my own." Even though Perley expresses a brief sadness at her own decision to remain single, for she recognizes that "she might have loved this man," her regret is very slight. Of all the working women Phelps writes about, perhaps Perley has the most simplistic approach to the complicated issue of the working woman and marriage--simply never marry and have no regrets. Few of Phelps's characters, however, are allowed to "get off" so easily.

Chapter five of Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's novel The Story of Avis (1877) begins with a turning point in a sixteen-year-old girl's life--the "phosphorescent" moment when she arrives at an important realization. The moment comes when Avis reads Aurora Leigh, in which a young woman chooses to pursue her own poetic career at the expense of a romantic relationship. Phelps portrays this scene, this "moment when aspiration [laid] a coal of fire upon [Avis's] young dumb lips," with strong, images: the apple-orchard, the "ripening grain" with its "sinuous, feminine motion," and the corn silk "like the hair of babies, tangled and falling." Avis grows up to be an aspiring artist, one with a great deal of artistic potential. Unfortunately for Avis's career, she falls in love with Philip Ostrander, an attractive university student who later becomes a popular professor at the local university, and despite Philip's assertions that Avis will never have to sacrifice herself for marriage, she learns that, just as she had always believed, and just as Perley Kelso had argued in The Silent Partner, a career and marriage cannot work together for a woman. In The Story of Avis, Phelps combines the conventions of a romance novel, often undercutting these conventions, with symbolic language, particularly flower symbolism, in an interesting way to provide another contextual level through which to understand the novel's underlying meaning.
The societal emphasis on defining the "ideal woman" as mother and caretaker is particularly significant in the novel because this socially-constructed message correlates so closely with one of the ways in which Phelps uses flower symbolism and metaphors of nature in *The Story of Avis*--to represent the ideal domestic woman. Nineteenth-century women were supposed to keep the home and garden lovely and comfortable so as to make the paths of her husband and children easy, an argument with which Phelps struggles sporadically throughout her writing career, for after all, she had the example of her own mother, a woman who never sacrificed the needs of her family for her career, despite her short-lived success. In nineteenth-century texts, the garden often serves as a perfect place for the "ideal" woman to find suitable self-fulfillment while cultivating beauty in the domestic setting, and, as such, the garden setting in *The Story of Avis* becomes a particularly poignant symbol for the young woman's "proper" setting as inscribed by culture. In *The Story of Avis*, however, Phelps shows her heroine as a woman who never intends to be this ideal woman; in fact, Avis says, "I cannot accept the consequences of love as other women do," because Avis believes herself to be different from other women (68, emphasis added). The "ideal" woman marries; Avis intends not to marry, for as she explains, "Marriage... is a profession to a woman. And I have my work; I have my work!" (71) Avis's work, her art, is not just a hobby, but a vocation. After reading *Aurora Leigh*, young Avis goes to her father and states, "I want to be educated as an artist and paint pictures all my life," to which her father scoffs, "I can't have you filling your head with any of these womanish apings of a man's affairs" (33). Thus, while Avis understands the value of an education, her father typifies a common patriarchal response to women. Wanting his daughter to conform to the standards of the "ideal" woman, he states that Avis may go to Florence "like other educated young ladies," but he does not understand her idea of an artist's education or profession (34).
Fleeing the "garden" of her home, Avis does indeed go to Florence to study. While her mother, now dead, was "a restless, glittering, inefficient thing, like a hummingbird turned radical" (21), and Avis's father believes his daughter to be a "carrier-dove" whose nature will make her return to her point of origin, Avis is actually a "rara avis," a rare bird who is more at home in the wild (in a freer, less rule-bound society) than under cultivation. In Florence, Avis does indeed receive an art education, despite her father's misgivings. Once there, Avis is confronted with the shortcomings in her American education, for she "is handed the fate of most American art-students. . . . She simply spent two years unlearning, that she might begin to learn" (37). Living in a studio among the doves of Florence, Avis gains a "disciplined imagination" and her education helps mold her into a promising new artist (37). Her profession becomes her "lover," at least while she lives in Italy (38). Avis, the artist, seems to be completely "set" in her new life--an unconventional artist living an unconventional life. However, when she returns to American society, particularly her small hometown, Avis is drawn back into society's conventional attitudes, and she begins to change once again.

Phelps as Stylist in The Story of Avis

Interestingly, whenever The Story of Avis uses images of birds, Avis is being described as a fairly independent woman, self-sufficient and unconventional. However, when the narrator begins concentrating on the flower images in the story, the emphasis seems to shift from self-sufficiency to domesticity. Phelps's stylistic artistry shines particularly well in this novel. In The Story of Avis, Phelps uses gardening as a metaphor for the domesticated, culturally ideal woman, contrasting the garden with Avis, the free-roaming bird. Avis's Aunt Chloe performs a vital function within the novel because she represents a certain kind of American woman--the domestic woman. When Aunt Chloe enters the novel, she brings with it an "economical, old-fashioned temper" and a "sense of
superior personal sacrifice," as Avis tells her best friend Coy (15). But more important in any reading which looks at the floral symbolism in this novel is Aunt Chloe's "refined passion for flowers" that colors the text whenever Chloe is present on the page (26).

Chloe spends most of the novel (whenever she is not instructing Avis on the fine art of sewing or housekeeping) pruning and planting in her garden. Aunt Chloe brings a kind of cultivation, a strong capacity to adapt, and an intense desire to nurture in Avis the ability to settle into the kind of lifestyle Chloe represents. Avis, however, does not wish to adapt. In addition, Aunt Chloe acts out her inner desires through her garden; thus, when feelings begin to kindle between Avis and Philip Ostrander, the narrator states that Aunt Chloe's "geraniums were promoted to the garden, and Aunt Chloe's soul to the seventh heaven of tender garden cares and hopes and fears" (53). With the transportation of the geraniums from the house to the garden, Chloe, believing that the seeds of passion are now planted and the ground for marriage, that "garden spot," sufficiently prepared, signifies her hopes for Avis. These geraniums represent Chloe's wish that Avis would be a "normal" woman and settle into the traditional role of wife and mother. Thus, in Chloe, Phelps delivers a character who supports the cultural conventions even while Phelps signals their potential dangers.

Chloe believes strongly in conforming to society's ideals. Unlike her aunt, Avis believes that not all women are the same—not all should marry. Interestingly, however, deep down Chloe once wished for a profession of her own, for she says, "My dear Avis. . . . I have thought sometimes--if I could begin life over, and choose for my own selfish pleasure, that I would like to give myself to the culture and study of plants. I should be--a florist, perhaps, my dear; or a botanist" (114, emphasis added). At one time, Chloe had wanted to work in the public sphere as a researcher rather than assume her domestic role: pruner and cultivator. Note, however, the negative inflection she gives to the concept of a woman pursuing a career—it is a "selfish pleasure." rather than a human need. Thus, Aunt
Chloe is not a completely subjugated representation of women in The Story of Avis, but instead she is an example of the sacrifices women make in order to conform to society's requirements for women. Chloe embodies the social standard which attempts to mold each woman into the same limited shape; she is the cultivated garden—once wild, now tamed—where the ideal woman can funnel her desires for self-fulfillment toward more socially acceptable and domestic capacities.

Besides this use of the garden and cultivation to symbolize the ideal woman, Phelps also uses flower symbols to explore situations and characters throughout The Story of Avis. One of Phelps's favorite flower symbols in the novel is that of apples—trees, orchards, and blossoms—symbols she carries into another of her novels about women struggling to maintain independence, Doctor Zay (1882). In Doctor Zay, the heroine drops an apple blossom on the road to indicate the path that Yorke, the future husband of the heroine, should take—a sign he takes as a personal message. In The Story of Avis, however, Avis often escapes to the apple orchard to read and reflect. It is in the apple orchard, a place as "silent as a convent," that Avis first reads Aurora Leigh (30-31). Later in the novel when Avis's romantic feelings for Philip Ostrander are first beginning to stir, Phelps makes a comparison between the budding apple trees and the temptation story from Genesis:

The boughs of the budding apple-trees hit the glass with slender finger-tips, and reddened if one looked at them . . . the air was full of the languors of unseen buds . . .

He could understand, Ostrander thought, why it was given to the first man to woo the first woman in a garden. Out of all the untried moods of the new heavens and the new earth . . . that could have taught that perfect primeval creature the slow, sweet lesson of love's surrender, like the temper of one budding flower? (56)

The blushing blossoms, the romantic feelings which were stirring in Avis as they bloomed in the orchard and outside the garden studio where Avis worked on Philip's portrait, were
being transfigured into the fruit of temptation. Avis's temptation is just as dangerous as Eve's temptation in the Garden of Eden. By giving in to Philip's romantic overtures, Avis is in danger of losing herself and her art, a fact that she guesses, but eventually dismisses, early in their courtship. The novel clearly foreshadows Avis's eventual destruction in an early scene between Philip and Avis. Walking upon the rocks with Avis, Philip carries a bird which had injured itself by flying into a lighthouse. Looking "like a young Scandinavian god," Philip checks within his coat to see how the bird is doing when Avis asks, "I hope all is well with the poor thing," but although he answers her, the narrator reveals that in actuality, "the bird upon his heart lay dead" (49). Like the self-destructive bird on Philip's heart, Avis seems destined to destroy herself if she engages in a romantic relationship with Philip.

The courtship between Avis and Philip is without a doubt the most sexually-charged courtship in Phelps's fiction. For instance, the image of bees fertilizing crimson clover provide multiple layers of meanings. Avis notices the bees in the clover on the day she first reads *Aurora Leigh*, and her opinions on the sexual generosity of the clovers is a direct result of her reading: "Black and brown and yellow bees made love to crimson clovers. How they blushed! She should think they would. They were too lavish of their honey, those buxom clovers, like an untaught country lassie with a kiss" (30). Avis believes that any woman who is too quick to love and marry is throwing away her freedom and potential for growth. Both the bee/male sexuality and clover/female sexuality reappear throughout the novel. Immediately before Philip proposes to Avis the first time, he notices "the bees on the weigela" (62), and after his proposal, Phelps records, "As they stood there, the humming of the bees in the weigela-bush reverberated, and seemed to fill the world" (64), for men's work and men's sexuality controlled nineteenth-century society. In a walk with Philip the next day, Avis outwardly appears to stand strong against Philip's attempts to woo her into marriage; however, as Phelps writes, "Her foot fell upon the
bruised clover with a martial rhythm. The whole force of her, soul and body seemed to garrison itself" (66). Her strength, like the clover, is damaged. After Philip's departure, Avis falls in weakness upon the ground only to realize that Philip has returned. This time, unfortunately, his steps are those which have "crushed the clovers" (72), signifying that he has gained power in their struggle.

In contrast to the fertile and sensual clover in Avis, the narrator uses the daisy throughout the novel to allegorize innocence, virtue, and protection. When early in the novel Avis goes out to the apple orchard to read *Aurora Leigh*, the narrator thoroughly describes the orchard scene, setting the stage for later events in the novel. The narrator explains that the daisies in the apple orchard line the walls of the farm house "like the virgins in the Bible story, carrying each a burning lamp" (30). In the biblical parable, the ten wise virgins bring extra oil with them so that they can wait through the night for the arrival of the bridegroom. These innocent, virginal daisies, however, appear to be protecting Avis instead of watching for her bridegroom as they "held their lamps aloft to light the going of her impetuous feet" (32). At least, Avis believes that the daisies will protect her because later, when Philip follows her into this same orchard, she keeps a "cordon of tall daisies" between herself and Philip as he tries to convince her to marry him (67). Avis sits "quivering behind the daisies" and asserts "I could never make you happy," but her actions belie her words, for she rises, "sweeping down the daisies," and stands "swaying and uncertain" (67-68). Like the crushing of the clover, the falling of her protective daisy garrison signifies her encroaching weakness. Again Philip forces Avis into an ever-increasing defensive position by placing his elbow in the flowers (68). Avis tries to keep her daisy chain intact, but her innocence is no longer being protected by the fallen daisies. She must depend upon the remnants of her inner strength. It is significant that the daisy and clover imagery, symbolizing both innocence and sensuality, basically disappear after chapter seven, because not long after her marriage to Philip, Avis gradually
loses her innocent belief in a true and committed love between herself and Philip. Phelps's use of imagery in these passages attests to her stylistic artistry, for almost all these passages may be read on more than one level. On one hand, Philip is simply a man courting a woman; on the other hand, he is using sexual power in a forceful way which is both compelling and repellent to Avis. When the daisies fall, so, seemingly, does Avis's resistance to Philip.

Avis's refusal to marry Philip is not based on a lack of love or desire, but on her belief that she should never marry, that she needs to remain single in order to work on her art. She tells Philip, "I am not a woman to make you--to make any man happy" (67). When Philip insists that she can continue her art even after they are married, Avis elaborates her position against marriage:

I cannot accept the consequences of love as other women do.... How can you know what my dreams are?.... You are using a language that you do not understand. My ideals of art are those with which marriage is perfectly incompatible. Success--for a woman--means absolute surrender, in whatever direction. Whether she paints a picture, or loves a man, there is no division of labor possible in her economy. (68-69)

While Avis appears to stand firm in her conviction to never marry, eventually she is worn down by Philip's continual proposals and her own romantic desire for him. Philip returns, after a brief stint in the Civil War and a serious injury, and perhaps Avis's pity for his condition also becomes a factor in her acquiescence. Nonetheless, after confessing to him, "I suffer . . . because I love you," Philip is able to break down Avis's last fortresses built against him, and she agrees, despite her own better judgment, to marry him. Of course, Philip's false promise to her is also a motivator, for he seduces her with promises, "Only let us love, and live, and work together. Your genius shall be more tenderly my pride than my little talents can possibly be yours. I shall feel more care for your assured future than
you ought to feel for my wrecked one" (108). Avis comes to him with "palms pressed together as if they had been manacled" and the two marry (110).

Probably the most important floral imagery in *The Story of Avis* is that of the rose, the symbol of love. In *Avis*, the various images of roses usually represent feelings of love or a loss of those feelings. In one interesting scene in the novel, Avis experiences a hallucination after drinking an alcoholic beverage:

> A sunbeam, upon an empty chair in a student's alcove, focussed upon a child's shoe and a woman's ribbon. A skull ground a rose between its teeth. Bees, upon a patch of burning July sky, wooed a clover. . . . In a thicket of wild-briar a single rose-leaf had fallen upon a gray stone, across which, and over the miniature clearing in the mimic forest, the tattered and fringed light lay. (81)

The first image, that of the child's shoe and woman's ribbon in an empty chair, suggests the relationship between a mother and child; this scene is juxtaposed harshly with the second image of the skull crushing a rose in its teeth. Along with the amorous bee and clover, a now familiar symbol in Phelps's story, this medley of flowers combines signs of motherhood, sexuality, and death, thus serving as a warning to Avis against traditional marriage. The dream, while cautioning Avis against traditional marriage, suggests to Avis that her only hope will lie in her inner strength if she chooses to pursue a romantic relationship. Despite this warning, Avis marries Philip, and almost immediately, she begins to let domestic work take the place of her career, her art.

From the time of the marriage in *The Story of Avis*, the narrator begins using a great variety of rose imagery to represent Avis. For instance, Avis paints roses on china and uses pink and rose colors to decorate her home. When Coy visits Avis's home, she notices Avis's tendency to combine feathers with roses in a unique combination, saying, "Is this the china she painted? How like Avis! At first you don't understand it, then it bewitches you. See, every piece has a feather on it,--a different feather! . . . That rose-
curlew on the creamer is like—a singing-leaf, I think" (130). Early in the marriage, Avis still believes she can combine her own work, painting, with her domestic duties, so she symbolically combines the bird, representing her artistic freedom, with the rose. As the marriage begins to turn sour and Avis loses her passion for Philip, the rose-red colors of Avis's home and clothing, her color of choice, begin to pale. The floor of the lounge holds a carpet of "faded roses" (172); likewise, her own room has faded in color (187). Even in her choice of clothing Avis seems to dull. When they are first married, Avis chooses to wear a bright carmine wrapper, a color Philip likes so much that she decides to wear it only for him (133). But, as the years go on and her disillusionment with Philip increases, she puts away the carmine hue for a rose-colored bathrobe (206), as if she were discarding her young, vibrant self, the part of Avis that is artistic, creative, and free from societal conventions, to put on the role that both Philip and society expect. Avis has become the thing she had refused to become—a domesticated wife.

Later in the novel, Philip recounts a similar and strangely allegorical story to his university students about a hunting expedition he undertook in which a rare bird, our rara avis, and a cactus play a main role. Scenes of birds—birds flying into lighthouses, birds soaring free overhead, and birds dying in Philip Ostrander's overcoat—work as symbols for Avis's life in the novel. In Philip's story, the rare white bird, unknown and unnamed to science, circles the cactus and lands on its tip. Philip tells his students that the bird was unafraid of him, and says that she taunted him, saying, "Catch [me] if you can!... Marry my choicest tenderness to your dull future if you will" (136-37). Philip is overwhelmed by a combination of feelings of desire and compassion for the bird and becomes convinced that killing her would be wrong. Ironically, when Philip seduces and weds Avis, the human counterpart to the rare bird, he effectively kills her uncommon artistic ability.

Thus, the story of the white bird landing on the cactus and Avis's earlier dream of a cactus at sunset both illustrate Phelps's use of an underlying passion and sensuality in Avis, along
with a suggestion of the possible destructive capabilities of male sexuality upon Avis's extraordinary talent.

Avis gradually becomes a domesticated, nurturing woman in the novel, as she raises her children and tries to nurse Philip through various illnesses. No amount of nurturing could keep Philip from destroying himself; however, so when he becomes ill Avis and Philip travel to Florida, and the flowers, plants, and trees in the novel subsequently change in kind and substance. No longer is nature a beneficial force; rather, it becomes dark and brooding. As Philip and Avis sail down the river in Florida, hopeful of Philip's recovery, Avis sees signs of overgrowth and rot all around her:

Dead days stalked by her, as the dead trees stalked down the strange and silent shores. . . . Her past arose with its grave-clothes on. . . . On either hand the forest glided by,—the awful forest in which no man trod. . . . Their little boat hung, the only sign of breathing life. . . .

This "eternal forest," which seems far away from the sea to Avis, locks Avis away from the life-force of the sea. For a while, Philip's health seems to improve along with their marriage relationship, and orange blossoms and bursting pomegranates with their promises of generosity and life abound (223). But the promise is false; Avis begins to notice dead trees again (229), and the orange blossoms begin to hang wearily upon the trees (231). Philip's health worsens and, eventually, he dies in the "supernaturally dark" woods (238). Avis's torturous journey into the forest--walking through "skulking" swamps and crossing feet-cutting Spanish bayonet--to find Philip parallels her marital struggles and undercuts the value of her apparent acquiescence and metamorphosis into a domestic "cultivated" wife (239). Her self-denial has not helped anyone. Nature seems a malevolent presence: only the live-oak protects Philip until Avis's arrival (239-40). Interestingly, immediately before Avis finds Philip, the rose-curlew, a shore-bird "tall, slender, and haughty," enters the swamp. Similar to the decoration on china that Avis paints early in her marriage, this
bird is a combination of the rose and the bird—an allegorical representation of the possibility of combining two opposing worlds. The narrator does not make this combination easy for Avis, for "they [the birds] looked less like birds than breathing roses" (240). Avis is still primarily a domesticated creature; she will never be able to return to her former "natural" state.

The narrator undermines the sadness of Philip's death scene with the behavior of the bird. Avis appears truly distraught at Philip's demise, but the actions of the rose-curlew suggest her true internal response, making the moment of his death a triumphant one for both the rose-curlew and for Avis:

As she knelt, gathering his head upon her breast, the sun arose upon the wilderness. . . . He had not suffered much, he said, nor long. And he felt sure she would come; he had not doubted for a moment. . . . Then he asked her to lift him a little more upon her arm, and if he tired her too much. After that he seemed to sleep lightly. . . .

"Love, if I ask it, will you kiss my breath away? When I speak again, will you kiss me on the lips?"
"Oh, my darling! oh, my darling! Yes."

"Avis!"
When she lifted her face, the rose-curlew hung overhead, palpitating with joy. (241)

Avis's inner soul cannot help reverberating with joy at the breaking of her chains.

Although Avis does not come out of the experience unscathed, her psychical meeting with the bird allows Avis to return to her home by the sea and to life. Avis does not become the embodiment of the independent woman by the end of the novel, but she passes her hopes on to the next generation through her wishes for her daughter, Waitstill, believing that Waitstill and her "sisters" will be able to find meaningful self-fulfillment.

Although Phelps was concerned with the message in her novels as she supported the importance of women's work outside the home through novels such as *The Story of Avis*, the artistry of her writing in this novel is particularly noteworthy. Like many
American writers of the late nineteenth century, Phelps wanted to write not only a novel with a message, but a "good novel," perhaps even a "great America novel." The Story of Avis was one of Phelps's personal favorites, particularly the character of Avis, whom she considered her "favorite heroine." Even with the stylistic beauty of this novel, making this novel one of her most popular, some nineteenth-century critics found the idealization of the independent working woman in The Story of Avis difficult, but not impossible, to digest. Susan Ward explains that Phelps's ability to combine the socially-acceptable traditional woman with the new woman was one of the main reasons her books were palatable to her readers, adding, "Their very palatability to an audience with a basically conservative ideology helped to spread Phelps's message." Although Avis appears to be a happy wife and mother, Phelps's discussion of the sacrifices professional women must make in order to marry makes The Story of Avis a novel which artistically pleads for women's rights to self-fulfillment and self-support through education and career.

The Myth of the Woman Doctor

Many women in the nineteenth century, including Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, believed strongly that more women needed to enter the medical profession as doctors. Interestingly, this may have been one arena upon which many women agreed, whether or not they were suffragists or supporters of women's rights, for many women in the nineteenth century, with its Victorian sense of morality, felt uncomfortable with a male doctor. Despite support from many women, very few medical schools allowed women to attend, and while a few medical colleges for women had opened, many were not recognized by state medical societies until after the Civil War. Like Dr. Atalanta Lloyd, better known as Dr. Zay, many women who wished to pursue a medical career studied in Europe, where schools were slightly more amenable to co-educational study. There were a few real American pioneers, of course. Elizabeth Blackwell, for instance, who in 1849
was the first woman in the United States to receive a medical degree, attended Geneva Medical College in New York. She challenged others to help overcome the bias against women in the medical profession and, with her sister, Dr. Emily Blackwell, and Dr. Maria Zakrzewska, she opened a medical school for women in New York in 1868. In addition to the general difficulties women had if they wanted to enter the medical profession, medicine as a profession was in a tremendous state of flux during the second half of the nineteenth century. Homeopathy, a medical theory which "rejected most of the 'heroic' methods--bleeding, cupping, and purging--for a more 'natural' treatment of symptoms through very small doses of medication" was rising in popularity and presenting a new challenge to traditional medical theories. Because homeopathy was viewed as more "natural" and less invasive, many women and members of the urban upper class preferred doctors who practiced homeopathic methods over traditional methods. In fact, Phelps was a great advocate of homeopathy, and she wrote several essays, short stories, and novels where homeopathic medicine was praised. One of the most clearly sympathetic is her novel *Doctor Zay*.

Mythology casts a long shadow of influence over Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's novel *Doctor Zay* (1882), particularly the mythology surrounding the figure of Atalanta, one of the great female hunters of ancient literature. Unlike some other fiction which used women doctors as significant characters, Phelps does not ridicule her doctor, but idealizes her, making her more than a "regular" woman and giving her the almost supernatural powers of mythological heroines. Zaidee Atalanta Lloyd, more conveniently known as "Dr. Zay" to her patients, like the Atalanta of the myth, seems more powerful than other mortals. Throughout the novel, she consistently out-documents, out-works, and out-races all the other people in the backwoods of Sherman, Maine, holding firm against the forces of nineteenth-century society which encouraged women to marry and give up careers. Like Atalanta, Dr. Zay is eventually "caught" by a man who would not ordinarily be equal to
the chase. After twelve chapters of meetings and romantic confrontations between Dr. Zay and Waldo Yorke, her suitor, in which the doctor repeatedly refuses Yorke's marriage proposals, Dr. Zay seems to finally accept Yorke's offer in the last chapter, even though the ending is somewhat ambiguous and the actual marriage does not occur within the confines of the novel. Phelps's use of references to mythological stories throughout Doctor Zay offers an expanded perspective of Phelps's personal views toward marriage for professional women, even as it serves as a stylistically multi-layered backdrop for the story.

Dr. Zay, the virginal, professional heroine, avoids domestication and its trappings, marriage and childbearing, at least until the end of the novel when, as a thirty-year-old woman plagued with increasingly poor health, she seemingly goes against her nature to accept Yorke's proposal. In this novel, the man is the socializer and domesticator: Yorke periodically tempts Dr. Zay with trips to Boston to listen to good music and urges her to leave the "wilderness" of the small town for the allure of the big city and its society. In contrast, Dr. Zay is the doctor, while Yorke is her patient, reversing the typical gender-based roles and complicating the love story in the novel. Even though Dr. Zay does eventually give in to Yorke's temptations through her acceptance of his marriage proposal at the end of the novel, Phelps's use of mythology serves to subvert the apparently "happily-ever-after" ending. From the very beginning of the novel, Phelps indicates that the conclusion of the novel is not as straightforward as it may seem.

Waldo Yorke, a wealthy Boston socialite and non-practicing lawyer, discovers that he has inherited some property in the small town of Sherman, Maine. The "insignificant legacy" left to Yorke by his "myth of a dead uncle" involves not only shares of shipping, timber, and lumber, but (although Yorke does not know it yet) also the opportunity to meet and fall in love with Sherman's most "imposing" tenant. Dr. Zay, as she is known. Yorke meets Dr. Zay in an unusual way, for he is her patient following a buggy accident.
Therefore, his position as a patient is an uncomfortable position for a man in his time, but it is a position which is certainly no less uncomfortable for many women when they must have a male physician, a point Phelps hammers in over and over in this novel. Like many female invalids, he spends his recovery time anticipating Dr. Zay's visits to his sickroom with increasingly more anxiety; his visits with her seem to be the one break in his long day. Later, during his first visit to her office, he notices "signs of embarrassment in her" as he aggressively uses the office visits for casual flirtation (121); he realizes that their relationship has taken on a new color, has become more personal and ponders the implications of this change:

It seemed to him that he was taking her up in new and unknown conditions, like the second volume of a novel. He turned the leaves with a dull uneasiness. Something in him urged, "Throw the book down!" He searched his soul for power to arise and do so. He found there only a great compulsion, as silent and as terrible as the thread in the hand of Lachesis, which he knew would bind him down to read on to the end. (126)

Thus, the narrator indicates that Yorke's fate is predestined, that he must and will pursue a relationship with Dr. Zay to discover more about the woman and the doctor; however, this relationship is not necessarily fated to be a pleasant one, but more likely to leave him with "uneasiness." After forthrightly admitting his love to Dr. Zay, Yorke urges her to "[s]uppose you could love me . . . in the course of time, after a good while," but even as he urges, his "lot, like a Pagan fate, moved on in its destined way to its appointed end" (208). This insistence upon the fateful "appointed end" in Doctor Zay foreshadows a less than ideal relationship between Yorke and Dr. Zay and suggests that, for many women, the societal mandate to marry leads to an inevitable conclusion—unhappiness and disappointment as women find it impossible to combine marriage and profession.

Although the novel is primarily presented from Yorke's perspective, Phelps's task throughout Doctor Zay is to show the plight of the professional woman in nineteenth-
century society, particularly the plight of the woman doctor; thus, while she regards Yorke's fate with some degree of pity, Phelps is more concerned with Dr. Zay's attitude toward the marital relationship. Despite Dr. Zay's professionalism throughout the novel, the narrator describes her as a "feminine" woman with strength and endurance. Dr. Zay's clothing becomes significant in the novel. Like many of the early women's rights supporters who opposed the wearing of the "bloomer" costume for fear that it would make them look masculine, Dr. Zay does not wear pants or bloomers when she conducts her business, but proper, for a woman, business attire—a plain, dark dress. Yet, during Yorke's first social visit to Dr. Zay's parlor, her "personal space," he notices that she wears a feminine violet gown decorated with "fluttering" ribbons and lace, a distinct difference from her usual business attire. In observing her "transformation" from the formal business dress to the "individuality" of her "dainty feminine gear" in which she floats around the room, he also notes a statue of Psyche (155-57). In Greek mythology, Psyche was a beautiful maiden, sent to live in a magnificent building on a pinnacle to be loved and worshipped by Cupid. After several mishaps, eventually Psyche was given immortality so that her relationship with Cupid could be perfect.61 Bulfinch explains the way Psyche is often used in allegory:

The fable of Cupid and Psyche is usually considered allegorical. The Greek name for a butterfly is Psyche, and the same word means the soul. There is no illustration of the immortality of the soul so striking and beautiful as the butterfly, bursting on brilliant wings from the tomb in which it has lain, after a dull, groveling, caterpillar existence, to flutter in the blaze of day and feed on the most fragrant and delicate productions of the spring. . . . In works of art Psyche is represented as a maiden with the wings of a butterfly.62

The bronze statue of the winged maiden not only parallels Dr. Zay's own butterfly-like appearance and behavior, but also prepares the reader for Dr. Zay's conception of the ideal marriage, which she explains to Yorke as they converse in her parlor. Dr. Zay says,
"There is an element of twinship in all absolute marriages"; of course, she has only known three "absolute" marriages, she admits (160). In her preference for the ideal, Dr. Zay suggests an affinity for the story of Cupid and Psyche, the perfect and beautiful lovers who are eventually "twinned" through Psyche's metamorphosis to immortality. Psyche's metamorphosis, like that of a butterfly, symbolizes the change which might occur in a relationship between two perfectly-matched individuals.

This scene is not the first in which Dr. Zay is described as a butterfly, for when Yorke first meets her, he believes "he had here some society girl, whose whim it was to be unfashionable" who "had no more fear . . . than a butterfly released from a chrysalis" (23). Like the butterfly, Dr. Zay is a free creature, both "striking and beautiful," who is not content with the "groveling" lifestyle of the caterpillar; thus, Psyche allegorizes for Dr. Zay the free soul and the potential of an ideal marriage between the "new woman" and "new man" which contains the element of equality so vital to the only kind of marriage with which she could be satisfied. She tells Yorke, "Next to the love between man and his Creator . . . the love of one man and one woman is the loftiest and the most illusive ideal that has been set before the world" (241). However, although Dr. Zay admires the notion of ideal marriage, she is much more practical than that. She continues to reject Yorke's proposals of love because she recognizes the lack of the "ideal" in their relationship. Dr. Zay's nature is reflected in the mythological associations Phelps creates in the novel. The "higher" element in Dr. Zay admires Psyche, but throughout the novel the doctor is more often connected with Atalanta, the boyish maiden who eventually succumbs to the temptation of the golden apples.

Various stories are recorded of Atalanta, but one of the most famous, and the one Phelps appears to refer to in Doctor Zay, is the one in which Atalanta loses a race because she stops to pick up golden apples thrown along the course. These apples prove a fateful temptation for Atalanta for, like Eve's temptation in the Garden, Atlanta's attraction to the
fruit determines her soul's fate. While there are many good sources for this myth, the best for this reading is Ovid's *The Metamorphosis* because of his more detailed descriptions of Atalanta and the race. In the story, Atalanta is always described the same way: a "girl warrior" who carried her weapons confidently and whose face "had features which in a boy would have been called girlish, but in a girl they were like a boy's. Even though she was "boyish," many men loved her on sight, and since she had been warned away from marriage by Apollo, who told her she would "lose [her] own self" if she married, she attempted to hide from suitors in "shady woodlands" where she occasionally engaged in life-and-death races for her hand in marriage. Since Atalanta was so swift, her competition always lost the race; unfortunately for the competitor, losing this race meant immediate death. Nonetheless, Atlanta had a great many lovelorn men attempt to beat her in this race. One of these was Hippomenes, a handsome youth of distinctive parentage. In order to win the race, Hippomenes prays for help from Venus, who slips him three magical, golden apples. During the race, Hippomenes throws the apples down one at a time. The first two times Atalanta stoops to pick up an apple, she loses very little time in the race, but the third time, Hippomenes throws the apple just far enough off the path to make Atalanta lose the race. In this way, Hippomenes wins her hand in marriage. An understanding of this myth and the way Phelps uses it in the context of Doctor Zay makes the novel not only more accessible, but it also becomes clear that the novel is both highly sophisticated and multi-leveled.

Like the mythological Atalanta, Dr. Zay is often described as a superior specimen who contains some of the forcefulness and strength ordinarily attributed to men in combination with the "fineness" often desired in women of the time. Dr. Zay raises drowned lumberjacks from the dead through resuscitation techniques and struggles with crazed men for revolvers. In one scene, she is described as if she is preparing for war, "drawing on her gauntleted gloves" as she walks out with a "decisive step" and salutes
Yorke on her way down the drive (97-98). Her extremely professional, business-like manner is perceived as unfeminine by Yorke, who thinks, "He wanted to be talked to, as if she had been like other women" (59). In another place, as Dr. Zay talks to patients, Yorke thinks, "[S]he possessed a power which was far more masculine than feminine, of absorption in the immediate task" (133). At the same time, he comes to believe that she is "the bravest woman [he] ever knew, the strongest woman and the sweetest" (238). Phelps tries to create in Dr. Zay an ideal combination of the best traits attributed to both men and women; this combination proves attractive to others, especially Yorke.

Another interesting observation lies in the fact that Dr. Zay, like Atalanta, lives in the "shady woodlands." Yorke is repulsed by the four miles of forest bordering the small town; this forest serves, like Atalanta's protective woodlands and Avis's cordon of daisies, as a physical barrier between Dr. Zay and society. Yorke, on the other hand, perceives the forest as a negative barrier:

"Now they have called that poor girl out again!" He pictured the desolate Maine roads. A vision of the forest presented itself to him: the great throat of blackness; the outline of near things, wet leaves, twigs, fern-clumps, and fallen logs; patches of moss and lichens, green and gray; and the light from the lonely carriage streaming out; above it the solitary figure . . . , courageous and erect. (62-63)

But while Yorke fears for Dr. Zay as she travels through the forest to make her house calls, Dr. Zay seems to have little fear of the woodlands, and, in fact, she says that she moved to the small town "for a complexity of reasons which might not interest him," but which include the "terrible . . . need of a woman by women, in country towns" (74, 75).

She does admittedly miss some aspects of society, for she confesses, "I do miss the concerts" (79). In spite of some regrets, overall Dr. Zay welcomes her life in the small, isolated town, for here she believes she can fulfill the "deeply romantic" American promise "that in this new land, untrammeled by history and social accident, a person will be able to
achieve complete self-definition." She realizes that as a doctor in Boston society, she would most likely be rejected as a woman or encouraged to become a doctor in name only—a professionally-trained individual who, like Yorke or Dr. Grace Breen in William Dean Howells's *Dr. Breen's Practice*, dabbles, but does not do.

Some comparisons also exist between Waldo Yorke and Hippomenes, the youth who eventually wins the race against Atalanta. Yorke is "a distinguished-looking young man" with "a rather well-shaped head," "well-born eyes, and well-bred mouth" (9). Hippomenes, too, is obviously well-born, for he boasts to Atalanta:

Race against me, and if fortune gives me the victory, you will feel no shame in being beaten by a man of such distinction—for my father was the Megarian Onchestius, and his grandfather was Neptune: so that I am the great-grandson of the king of the ocean, and my courage is in no way inferior to my birth. At least by birth, both men are worthy of the women's attention and both feel that they should be able to convince any woman to love them. This self-confidence is evidently appealing, for both Atalanta and Dr. Zay express doubts as to their determination to never marry. The women's ambivalent feelings toward the men who eventually win their hand in marriage are similar in nature, especially in Ovid's version of the myth. Ovid describes Atalanta as being "not sure whether she would rather win or lose." Atalanta spends several paragraphs of the story wondering whether she should throw the race to spare Hippomenes's life:

"His youth . . . stirs my pity. . . . On top of that, he loves me, and thinks it worth while to risk death in order to marry me. . . . No, stranger, go while you may, leave my home. . . . The conditions for marrying me are too cruel. No other girl will refuse to wed you: a sensible one might well pray for the chance.

Will he then die, because he wanted to live with me? Will he suffer a death he has not deserved in return for his love? . . . If only you would agree to give up the contest, or if only you were faster, since you are so completely mad!"
Likewise, Dr. Zay gradually warms to Yorke and begins showing some interest in his attentions. However, both the mythical and fictional Atalanta stand to lose a great deal by marrying, most particularly, their independence. Both women avoid marriage because they realize that the change from single life to marriage necessarily causes a change in the woman. No longer able to be herself and live only for herself, the woman loses self-sufficiency and becomes a new person, not necessarily the woman the man loves.

Like Atalanta, Dr. Zay repeatedly warns Yorke away from a relationship. At first, she believes his declarations of love are symptoms of a nervous disorder. She tells Yorke, "In a few months you will find it easier to let me alone than to shatter your nervous system over me in this way. Nothing could be worse . . . for those spinal symptoms" (210). At a later meeting, after Yorke's full recovery, they both realize that their feelings have deeper significance than mere "spinal symptoms" suggest. Dr. Zay realizes that she has met the fate predicted by Apollo: "I have lost my self-possession," she cries, "I have lost--myself" (231). Dr. Zay goes on to explain to Yorke the danger she believes lies in a marriage relationship with a professional woman of high ideals:

Oh, women of my sort are thought not to reverence marriage, to undervalue it, to substitute our little personal ambitions for all that blessedness! . . . Oh, it is we who know the worth of it!--we who look on out of our solitary lives. . . . I will not have any happiness that is not the most perfect this world can give me. . . . I should scorn to take anything that I feared for, or guarded,--to look on and say. At such a time, such a consequence will follow such a case. Then he will feel so and so. And then I shall suffer this and that,--and to know, by all the knowledge my life's work has brought me, that it would all come as I foresaw,--that we should ever look at one another like the married people I have known. . . . Years ago, I said, I will never suffer that descent. (241-42)

Dr. Zay desires only an equal marriage. After explaining the dangers inherent in the marital state, Dr. Zay goes on, like Atalanta, to advise Yorke to find another woman: "If I had been like the other women--Oh, I am sorry you have wasted all this feeling on me. If I had been some lovely girl, who had nothing to do but to adore you,--who could give you
everything . . ." (243). The main obstacle to her accepting Yorke's proposal, she explains, is that he has "been so unfortunate as to become interested in a *new kind of woman*" (emphasis added 244). Dr. Zay continues:

> The trouble is that a happy marriage with such a woman demands a new type of man. By and by you would chafe under this transitional position. You would come home, some evening, when I should not be there . . . You would reflect, and react, and waver, and then it would seem to you that you were neglected, that you were wronged. (244)

Like Atalanta, Dr. Zay pities Yorke's feelings for her, because she believes she will never be happy with an unequal love or with the kind of man who needs, she believes, a "true woman" of the tradition from which she speaks in "The True Woman," an essay first published in 1871 in *The Independent*. The "true" woman, Phelps believes, will only exist when society changes: "[W]hen just about two-thirds of the educated practicing physicians of the world are women; . . . when men are as chaste as women, and women as brave as men; when self-reliant men become unselfish, and unselfish women self-reliant . . . only then can we draw the veil from the brows of the TRUE WOMAN." Thus, Dr. Zay is the "new woman" who needs a "new man"; it is not until the very end of the novel, after the destiny of Atalanta has been carried out in more detail, that Dr. Zay decides whether or not she has found her "new man."

Throughout the novel, Yorke and Dr. Zay engage in several "races" which symbolically connect the plot and characters to the Atalanta myth. The shift in power from Dr. Zay to Yorke in these races parallels the shift in the Atalanta myth even as the power shift reinforces the competitive nature of the relationship between Yorke and Dr. Zay. The first of the races comes at the beginning of the novel when Yorke loses his way upon approaching Sherman. He initially meets Dr. Zay outside an old farmhouse and notices her "healthy step, even and springing" as she walks toward her buggy and unties her horse "with the quickness of a practiced driver" (17-18). After asking for directions,
Dr. Zay instructs him: "I am going to Sherman. If your horse is not too tired to keep
distantly in sight, my phaeton will direct you without further trouble" (19). As her
basket phaeton races away, Yorke is scarcely able to keep her "distantly in sight," and so
he is relieved when she drops the metaphoric apple blossom on the road to help him take
the right turn at the crossroads (24-26).

Dr. Zay's fast-moving buggy catches up with Yorke. His driver hears a horse
approaching and remarks, "There ain't but one horse in these parts that can overtake the
sorrel," and pulls over so that Dr. Zay can bring Yorke something he left behind. Rushing
off "dexterously," Dr. Zay "whirled away" after handing Yorke his belongings--another
"win" for Dr. Zay (215). While Phelps does not develop this scene as a race per se, she
uses it to remind the reader that Dr. Zay is still superior to most others, both mentally and
physically. It is during the final pages of the novel that Dr. Zay eventually is "caught" by
Yorke, for Yorke blatantly compares his subtle triumph (gained by the sneaky method of
climbing into her stopped buggy and hiding himself in the blankets) to Atalanta's final race:
"I have overtaken Atalanta this time. She stopped for a leaden apple,—for a revolver ball,
--and I got the start. Do you suppose I am going to forego my advantage so soon?"
(254). Yorke finally wins and his success is not only physical, in claiming a place in her
buggy and the right to "take the reins" or control the courtship ritual, but also
psychological, for it is after his "triumph" that she seems to give up the "race."

It is interesting that each of Yorke's proposals, in which he aggressively attempts
to strip all her excuses from her, are increasingly more difficult for her to defend against.
Perhaps what is more important, at least in understanding Dr. Zay's eventual acquiescence
to Yorke's marriage proposal, is understanding that Dr. Zay's health becomes increasingly
weaker throughout the novel. At the beginning of the novel, she is strong, both physically
and psychologically, and she does not admit to any corresponding feelings for Yorke, but
treats him somewhat patronizingly, for when he declares his love, her only response is to
say she believes him to be ill and in need of additional medical treatment. During the second section of the novel, however, when Yorke returns to Sherman in the dead of winter as a well man, she seems much weaker. He has heard rumors that Dr. Zay has been ill, and his proposals of marriage take advantage of her weakness. However, it is only during the final section of the novel that she overtly returns his love. At this point in the novel, the balance of power has shifted, and it is obvious that Yorke has become the stronger (at least physically) of the two characters. Not only has Dr. Zay been ill for a while, but Yorke surprises her at a moment when her defenses are down as she attempts to recover from the emotional disturbance caused when she wrestles a revolver away from a crazed man. Her disequilibrium shows itself, not only in her trembling, gasping, and faintness, but in the faltering language Dr. Zay uses as she asks for aid from Yorke: "I--Mr. Yorke--will you please--to take--the reins?" (252-53). His strength is apparent to her, and she leans on him for support, then finally accepts the relationship he has been thrusting upon her, almost as if she finally believes he is the "new man" to match her "new woman."

Interestingly, even as she surrenders her soul and body into his hands, she refuses to trust the control of the phaeton to his inexperienced hands, saying, "I believe--in--you. . . But I don't believe in your driving. . . . Give me the reins! If you don't mind--please." to which Yorke responds happily, "I don't care who has the reins . . . as long as I have the driver!" (257). This control issue is extremely important for understanding the ending, for immediately after this scene, Phelps writes:

Yorke accompanied the doctor, without hesitation, to her own rooms. She experienced some surprise at this, and vaguely resented his manner, which was that of a man who belonged there, and who intended to be where he belonged. He held the office door open for her to pass through, and then shut it resolutely. . . . In the uncertain light she looked tall and far from him. He felt that all her nature receded from him at that moment, with the accelerated force of a gathering wave. (257)
This particular passage gains in significance when one realizes that it comes immediately before his final proposal and her supposed acceptance; everything about this passage predicts, at the very best, an unsuccessful marriage between Dr. Zay and Yorke or worse (or perhaps better) a rejection of Yorke's offer by Dr. Zay. That is why it is so surprising when, on the next page, the following sequence occurs:

"It is not too late," she panted. "You can save yourself from this great risk. You can go. I wish you would go! This is not like simple happiness, such as comes to other people. It is a problem that we have undertaken—so hard, so long! . . . If we fail, we shall be the most miserable people that ever mistook a little attraction for a great love."

"And if we succeed"—he began, unabashed by this alarming picture. She gave him one blinding look.

"Come," said Yorke, passing his hand over his eyes. "You have had your way long enough. My turn has come. . . . "What do you want?" she asked humbly. (257-58)

In this sequence, Dr. Zay makes a final attempt to fend off Yorke's advances, but "humbly" gives in to him at the end, apparently because of his insistence on success. It is easy to see why readers such as Kessler believe that Dr. Zay is simply "ground down" at the end of the novel. However, one might argue that Dr. Zay does not actually accept Yorke's proposal—what she accepts, in the last few lines of the novel is his invitation to kiss him of her own free will:

"I don't want to feel as if I were taking a sort of—advantage. If you put me off one minute longer, I—shall. I shall take all I can get. I shall like to remember, all my life, that you came to me first, of your own accord; that you loved me so much, you would grant me this—little proof."

He held out his arms.

"Is that all?" she whispered. With a swift and splendid motion she glided across the little distance that lay between them. (258)

In this interaction, two specific things take place: first, Yorke admits his lack of control over his physical responses, saying that he will take advantage of her (probably through kissing her, since that is what he seems to want from her) if she does not submit to him;
second, Dr. Zay is happy to give him a kiss of her own free will. While it could be easily argued that since Dr. Zay does not actually say she will marry Yorke—perhaps all she gives Yorke is a promise of love and a kiss, thus displaying the significance of the italicized "that" in the final paragraph—more than likely, the traditional reader response to the ending is correct. Not only does the entire novel lead up to the idea of a marriage between the two, but Dr. Zay's personal sense of morality, as demonstrated in her reaction to the pregnant and unwed Molly and other situations in the novel, would probably prevent her from bestowing an engagement kiss upon the lips of a man she never intended to marry. In addition, the Atalanta myth would also suggest a reluctant woman who is predestined for a certain, but doomed, marriage.

Like the mythical Atalanta, Dr. Zay is physically and emotionally attracted to her suitor and wavers, at times, in her insistence upon remaining a single, professional woman. Yorke's persistence is not the only thing that forces open a chink in Dr. Zay's glacial armor, because, for Dr. Zay, Yorke's presence offers her the tempting taste of society and culture for which she often longs. Upon his second trip to Sherman, Yorke notices with greater distaste the stifling face of the woodlands:

The forest . . . turned its December expression upon him like a Medusa, before which the bravest pulse must petrify. . . . The silence was profound; the desolation pathetic; the cold deadly. It was like the corpse of a world. . . . His whole soul sank before it. he thought of the lives barred in behind it, bound to their frozen places like its icicles. He thought of the delicate nerve, the expectant possibility, the bourgeoning nature—
"Poor girl!" he said aloud. (218-19)

Perhaps no one in Sherman is as aware as Yorke of the way a small town and lack of society can affect one used to its stimulating effects. In the middle section, Yorke and Dr. Zay talk, and Phelps writes that Dr. Zay "hunggrily" asks for more details of the Christmas opera, to which Yorke exclaims, "Confess you are starving in this snowdrift!" (235). With the discovery that Dr. Zay misses some aspects of society, Yorke is able to penetrate
deeper into Dr. Zay's soul and to maintain a stronghold on her heart, which he later takes full advantage of when she is weakened by illness and emotional distress.

Some readers question why Dr. Zay would agree to marriage with Yorke, but I believe the answer lies, not only in the Atalanta myth and Dr. Zay's hunger for society, but also in Phelps's own knowledge of the loneliness and isolation endured by those who endure illness. Jean Ferguson Carr points out that Phelps "suffered a physical breakdown in 1877 after writing The Story of Avis" and that she "was a semi-invalid much of her life." Michael Sartisky adds that some of Phelps's characters represent "a distinct ambivalence in Phelps's feminist position about marriage, an attitude possibly influenced by her own declining health and consequent declining independence in the years following the composition of The Silent Partner." Although Phelps is several years older than Dr. Zay's thirty during the writing of the novel, Phelps understands the desolation and dependence which often accompanies the single life of the invalid; thus, as Dr. Zay's health declines during the course of the novel, her resolve also wavers. The connection to Atalanta, her health and vitality, begins to weaken to the point that Dr. Zay finally loses a contest of wills. Therefore, the vital single woman's strength is limited by her ability to stay healthy and self-sufficient.

Dr. Zay is Atalanta, not Psyche; she does not obtain the perfect marriage, a marriage of "twinship," but a marriage to a man she often pities, sometimes admires, and occasionally resents. Unfortunately, the marriage of Atalanta and Hippomenes in mythology is short-lived. Due to some offense they give Venus, she turns them into a pair of lions who come to pull Cybele's car; thus, their romance is struck down almost before it begins. Perhaps Phelps predicts something even more than unhappiness for Dr. Zay and Yorke. More than likely, she predicts utter failure; they will "be the most miserable people that ever mistook a little attraction for a great love," as Dr. Zay warns on the final page.
Like Philip Ostrander in *The Story of Avis*, Yorke has more confidence in his ability to adapt to marriage with a "new woman" than he has true capacity.

In *Doctor Zay*, Phelps uses mythology to provide double meanings to the text. Therefore, while Phelps's *Doctor Zay* may appear to be more conformist than some of her earlier novels, in fact, it subverts its own conventional ending. Elizabeth Stuart Phelps was one of the most popular writers of her era, partly because of Phelps's ability to combine her unconventional opinions with her traditional upbringing. Perhaps this connection with the "Old school" and fascination with her own insight into "the modern world" explains Phelps's skill at incorporating mythological images subtly into *Doctor Zay*; because of her subtlety, Phelps has managed to write yet again another novel which argues for the value of selfhood over conventional, domestic arrangements and, yet again, manages to remain, as Henry C. Vedder, author of *American Writers of To-Day* (1894) says, "one of the most intense, the most high-purposed, the most conscientious in her art."
Notes

1 Phelps, *Chapters* 250. This phrase is a part of Phelps's "creed": "I believe in women; and in their right to their own best possibilities in every department of life."

2 Phelps, *Chapters* 60.

3 For instance, Austin Phelps displays negative views against women (as well as racist views against the newly-freed African-Americans) in his essay "Woman-Suffrage as Judged by the Working of Negro-Suffrage" (1878) and even more negative views of women in "Reform in the Political Status of Women" (1881), both published in his collection of essays, *My Portfolio*. "Woman-Suffrage" was also republished in the *Woman's Journal*, where it received rebuttals from Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell. In this essay, Austin Phelps compares the woman's suffrage movement to what he sees as the failed efforts of the freedmen, saying that if people are not able "even to understand" the ballot, they should not have the vote (92). In "Reform," Austin Phelps seems to directly confront his daughter, writing, "Once fill a young woman's mind with the notion that it is a . . . nobler distinction to be a successful author than to be the happy mother of children. . . and you can no longer find a place of honor in her thoughts for the mission of either daughter, wife, or mother" (110-11).

4 "[W]ith the exception of Greek and trigonometry--thought, in those days, to be beyond the scope of the feminine intellect--we pursued the same curriculum that our brothers did at college." Phelps, *Chapters* 60-61.

5 Phelps, *Chapters* 17.


7 Phelps, *Chapters* 12.

8 Phelps, *Chapters* 65-66.


11 Phelps, "Victuarae Salutamus." *Songs of the Silent World and Other Poems* (Boston, 1885) 99.

12 Phelps, *Chapters* 100-01.

13 Phelps, *Chapters* 103-04.
14 Phelps, "Unhappy Girls," *The Independent* 27 Jul. 1871: 1. See also Appendix A.

15 Phelps, "Unhappy Girls" 1.

16 Phelps, "Unhappy Girls" 1.

17 Phelps, "What They Are Doing," *The Independent* 17 Aug. 1871: 1. See also Appendix A.


19 Phelps, "What They Are Doing" 1. See also Appendix A.

20 Phelps, "Rights and Relativities," *The Independent* 7 Sept. 1871: 4. See also Appendix A.

21 Phelps, "Rights and Relativities" 5.

22 Phelps, "Unhappy Girls" 1. See also Appendix A.


24 Mott 76-78.

25 Mott 78.

26 Phelps, "A Talk to the Girls," *The Independent* 4 Jan. 1872: 1. See also Appendix A.


28 Phelps, "Women and Money," *The Independent* 24 Aug. 1871: 1. See also Appendix A.

29 Phelps, "Women and Money" 1.

30 Phelps, "Women and Money" 1.

31 Many of the letters Phelps wrote to her friends detailed her sleep problems. To one she writes, "I have been an invalid and great sufferer from insomnia for three years, so that writing is a heavy burden" (15 Feb. 1882). Three years later, she is still suffering, for
she wrote to Whittier, "No sleep--no sleep. And no work. Who was it who said: 'I try to bear it?!' Oh--I remember: Longfellow; when his wife died (16 Mar. 1885). Papers of Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (MSS 7797-e), Clifton Waller Barrett Library of American Literature, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library.

32 Phelps, "Men and Muscle," The Independent 31 Aug. 1871: 1. See Appendix A.

33 Phelps, "Men and Muscle" 1.


38 Phelps, "Where It Goes" 1.

39 Phelps, "Men and Muscle" 1.

40 Phelps, "Where It Goes" 1.


43 Murray 35.


47 Phelps, Hedged In 152.

48 Phelps, "Unhappy Girls" 1.

49 Phelps, The Silent Partner 260.

50 Phelps, The Silent Partner 262.

51 Phelps, The Silent Partner 260.


56. Bardes and Gossett 134.

57. Phelps writes in her "brief creed," "I am uncertain whether I ought to add that I believe in the homeopathic system of therapeutics. I am often told by skeptical friends that I hold this belief on a par with the Christian religion; and am not altogether inclined to deny the sardonic impeachment! When our bodies cease to be drugged into disease and sin, it is my personal impression that our souls will begin to stand a fair chance; perhaps not much before." *Chapters* 251-52.


60. Phelps, *Doctor Zay* 8. Hereafter in this chapter, quotes from *Doctor Zay* will be included parenthetically in the body.

61. Lachesis is one of the fates described in mythology. Her job was to cut the thread of life.


64. Dr. Zay's comment here reflects Phelps's own personal experience. In a letter to Whittier following the death of James T. Fields, Phelps wrote, "Such a marriage there has hardly been since Eden. It was the absolute thing. I never knew but three marriages in my life, that seemed to me ideal; this was the best of the three." 2 May, 1881. Elizabeth Stuart Phelps collection. Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

65. Louisa May Alcott also wrote a short story entitled "Psyche's Art" in 1868. In the story, the sculptor Psyche Dean forsakes art in order to pursue domestic household
duties and care for her sister. She later finds herself a "newly found" artistic power. According to Elaine Showalter, Alcott leaves the ending of the story open "for those who can 'imagine a world outside of a wedding-ring.'" Elaine Showalter, Introduction, *Alternative Alcott: Louisa May Alcott* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1988) xxxvii.

66 Since Bulfinch's *Mythology* was published in the United States well before Phelps wrote *Doctor Zay*, it could easily be assumed that Phelps, a well-educated woman, had knowledge of the text. However, many of her language choices and descriptions seem to come so directly from Ovid that it seems evident that she had some knowledge of the account of Atalanta in *The Metamorphosis*.


69 Ovid 241.

70 Ovid 241.

71 Ovid 241-42.

72 Phelps, "The True Woman" 271-72.

73 A phaeton is a light, four-wheeled carriage, but, interestingly, this word also derives from mythology. Phaeton or Phaethon was the son of Apollo who was given the opportunity to drive the sun chariot around the heavens for one day. Unfortunately, Phaeton is not able to control the chariot, sets the Earth on fire, and has to be destroyed by Jupiter in order to save the world.

74 Note the possible significance of this scene when related to the Phaeton myth. Like Apollo reluctantly handing over the sun chariot to Phaeton, Dr. Zay temporarily gives Yorke control of driving the basket phaeton, but as he proves himself unable to handle it and given to self-destructive driving, she must resume control of the reins. Fortunately, Yorke does not have to be destroyed like Phaeton was in order to learn a lesson--or does he?


"Weddings are always very sad things to me. . . . The readiness with which young girls will flit out of a tried, proved, happy home into the sole care and keeping of a man whom they have known three months, six, twelve, I do not profess to understand."

(Phelps, "No News," *Men, Women, and Ghosts* 1869) "I Do Not Expect to Marry": Women and Marriage in the Nineteenth Century

Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's autobiographical work, *Chapters from a Life* (1896), is less autobiography than it is biography, for more than half of the book is taken up with tributes to various "influential" New Englanders, among which include the poets John Greenleaf Whittier and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the publisher James T. Fields, the novelist (and Phelps's one-time neighbor) Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Oliver Wendell Holmes, all people Phelps considered friends. In addition to these tributes, Phelps provides descriptions of the seminary town of Andover, Massachusetts, and its people, as well as portraits of her close family members. However, embedded within this book of tributes are brief self-betraying passages which reveal her personal feelings about her evolution from a professor's daughter into a writer of realism, proponent of reform, and supporter of women's rights. For instance, despite her undoubtedly genuine admiration for her father, Phelps admitted:

It is almost impossible to understand, now, what it meant when I was twenty-five, for a young lady reared as I was on Andover Hill, to announce that she should forthwith approve and further the enfranchisement and elevation of her own sex. . . . I do not, to this hour, like to recall, and I have no intention whatever of revealing, what it cost me. 2
By the time her autobiography was published, Austin Phelps had been dead five years;³ in fact, many of the people she wrote about were past being hurt by anything she had to say.⁴ Despite this fact, Phelps seems to want to depict her subjects, people she had admired throughout her life, in glowing colors. Phelps is, however, provocatively reticent about one of the most peculiar relationships in her life--her 1888 marriage to Herbert D. Ward. It appears that, in fiction, Phelps was able to write realistically, but when it came to personal matters, she preferred to keep silent about the truth.

Considering Phelps's stance on marriage which she blatantly revealed in her essays and novels, it is surprising that she chose to marry. Novels such as The Silent Partner (1871) and The Story of Avis (1877) clearly reveal her own belief that career-oriented women should not marry. Regardless, Phelps, at age forty-four, chose to marry Ward, a twenty-seven-year-old writer who had been plagued with poor health for many years, leaving many present-day critics curious as to the reason she decided to marry. Her reason is liable to speculation since Phelps was less than open about her decision. Despite his relative youth (he was seventeen years younger than Phelps) and poor health, Ward was a man of "unusual cultivation and markedly original view," facets of his character which would have appealed to Phelps.⁵ Furthermore, her own ill health and the death of so many close friends and family members may have made Phelps more acutely aware of the passage of time, perhaps leading her to a kind of "mid-life crisis" decision to marry the youthful Ward. Interestingly, while Avis's words, "I do not expect to marry," might be echoes of Phelps's viewpoint in 1877, just a few years later, Phelps was beginning to show signs of regret for her decision to remain single.⁶ In a May 14, 1882, letter to John Greenleaf Whittier, Phelps confides to her long-time friend, "We ought each of us to have married somebody when we were young. But, as you say, it is too late now. Always excepting 'Mr. Ashley,' the hod-carrier."⁷ Phelps was not "reduced" to the hod-carrier, but many have questioned her decision to marry Ward. Phelps had known Herbert D.
Ward, son of the publisher of *The Independent*, William Hayes Ward, since he was a child, and despite their marriage, Phelps continued to treat him in a motherly fashion, calling him "the boy" in letters to his father and writing pleading letters to publishers to consider his work for her sake. At least at first, Phelps seemed contented enough for she reported that the first few years of their marriage were happy, writing to Whittier that Ward was "a very good husband—far better than . . . deserved or expected." Perhaps it is not so surprising that Phelps chose to marry; she had, after all, achieved some sense of power and independence by her mid-forties and may then have decided, like Avis, to take the chance of giving up her art for marriage.

On the other hand, given Phelps's beliefs about marriage and the fact that she was seventeen years older than her husband, rumors of marriage problems were to be expected; however, the closest reader of *Chapters from a Life* will not find any hint of marriage difficulties in its pages. These hints can be found in her private letters, but since Phelps wrote her friends and asked them to destroy her letters before she died, one might surmise that more had been written which was destroyed with these letters. Mary Angela Bennett's early biographical work on Phelps (1930) describes the heyday the media had when news of Phelps's marriage came out, writing, "The terror of the newspapers proved to have been a very rational one," for the newspaper made an issue of Phelps's change of heart regarding marriage and the large age difference between her and Ward. Bennett also provides excerpts of letters which illustrate problems in the marriage, and she concludes that the marriage "was not a success," for Ward spent a great deal of his time traveling, an activity Phelps treated "philosophically." Interestingly, eerily coincidental similarities exist between Phelps's relationship with her husband and Avis's relationship with her husband in *The Story of Avis*. For instance, like Avis, Phelps attempted to use her personal influence to advance her husband's career, which always paled in comparison with hers. Also, like Philip Ostrander in the novel, Ward's ill health and "nervousness" led
him to travel to the south without Phelps, trips which, as Kessler notes in *Elizabeth Stuart Phelps*, Phelps appreciated because they "freed her mind from the anxiety that inhibited her writing."12 Less coincidental (and more frightening) is the comparison Phelps herself makes in several inscriptions in books to her husband where she signs, "To my husband Herbert D. Ward, from Avis."13 This personal identification with Avis seems to be a sure sign that her marriage to Ward was fraught with problems, for like Avis, Phelps may have felt that she put her art aside to take care of domestic duties. Besides hints in her residual correspondence, the clearest indication of marriage problems can be found in Phelps's fiction. Undoubtedly, Phelps's sympathy always lay with the problems of women in society, not only women's employment, education, and dress, but particularly with women's relationships with men. While many of Phelps's works speak to various areas of societal reform, almost every work deals with some aspect of the woman in society. It is particularly interesting to note the dedication with which Phelps pursued the subject of women and marriage, both before and after her own marriage.

In *Elizabeth Stuart Phelps*, Carol Farley Kessler breaks Phelps's fiction about marriage into three categories: in novels written up to 1877, women refuse marriage; during the period 1877-1886, women are unhappily married; and in the works written in 1887 and afterward, because of her marriage to Ward, Kessler says, "no critique of marriage was possible;"14 thus Phelps, according to Kessler, is less radical in her later novels as she writes about the married woman as a fixture of American society. If one accepts these general categories, one might generalize that Phelps's earliest attitude was more "feminist," to use a contemporary word, while her later works tend to "give in" to the dominant patriarchal attitude. Many critics, including Kessler, prefer the works written in the first and second periods, perhaps because they follow current feminist ideology most closely. While, in a general way, these categories do seem to fit Phelps's pattern, it is simplistic to place all her work into these three categories or to expect all
works written during those years to conform to the pattern. Although Phelps certainly created more single protagonists in her early writing and more married women (usually unhappy ones) in her later fiction, several exceptions in her novels exist. For instance, *Doctor Zay* (1882) was published in Phelps's "middle period," and although the protagonist certainly resists marriage, by the end of the novel she appears to agree to marriage with a less-than-perfect man. Certainly, while Phelps's later novels contain several examples of women who passively submit to marriage and the domestic life, not all do. Phelps's anonymously-written novel *Confessions of a Wife* (1902) and her long short story "His Wife" (later published in book form as *Avery*) are critiques of marriage which are every bit as revealing as her earlier work *The Story of Avis* (1877), which had been written before her marriage. I would argue that Phelps does not "give in" to a conservative ideology, but instead the later novels reflect her own growing personal struggle with loneliness and an acceptance of the possibility that a passionate relationship (in her society, read "marriage") provides some outlet for many women's romantic and nurturing feelings, emotions which were not completely satisfied by education, employment, or reform work.

Even in Phelps's earlier fiction, she does not casually dismiss marriage as a possibility for all women. In fact, her attitude toward marriage in her novels reflects a lifelong belief that marriage in her society was problematic for women. Many nineteenth-century women recognized that they gave up their individuality and freedom with marriage, yet at the same time marriage provided a kind of social power for women. One vivid illustration of married women's lack of independence can be seen in the property laws of the first half of the nineteenth century. Women with property at that time had to give up all control of it upon marriage, since a married woman's property was legally owned by her husband from the moment she said her vows. The women's rights supporters felt very strongly that these laws had to be changed, for as Ernestine Potowski
Rose stated at the National Woman's Rights Convention in Worcester, Massachusetts (1851):

"[T]axation without representation is tyranny," yet [woman] is taxed without being represented. Her property may be consumed by taxes to defray the expenses of that unholy unrighteous custom called war, yet she had no power to give her veto against it. From the cradle to the grave she is subject to the power and control of man. Father, guardian, or husband, one conveys her like some piece of merchandise over to the other. At marriage she loses her entire identity and her being is said to have become merged in her husband.15

While these property laws gradually changed on a state-by-state basis throughout the century, leaving women, finally, some legal control of their property, women nevertheless gave up much autonomy in marriage. As Rose had said, women still were expected to merge their identity in that of a husband, but many women were so accustomed to this loss of freedom that they accepted it without argument. Lucretia Coffin Mott stated in her "Discourse on Women" (1849), "She has so long been subject to the disabilities and restrictions with which her progress has been embarrassed, that she has become enervated, her mind to some extent paralyzed; and, like those still more degraded by personal bondage, she hugs her chains."16 Yet, not all women "hugged their chains," and many nineteenth-century women such as Phelps rebelled against the "bonds of womanhood" (using Sarah Grimke's and Nancy Cott's terminology). These bonds were perceived as particularly chafing in marriage, and many women felt that they were enslaved by society's restrictions. The woman's rights supporters of the mid-nineteenth century had been arguing that if women were as degraded as the law made them, then women would not be worthy of men. Two decades later, Phelps continued the argument, quoting John Stuart Mill from The Subjection of Women (1869):

What marriage may be in the case of two persons of cultivated faculties, identical in opinions and purposes, between whom there exists that best kind of equality, similarity of powers and capacities, with reciprocal
Phelps took Mill's dream of marriage to heart. In many of her novels, she openly criticizes marriages, such as Avis's marriage to Philip Ostrander in *The Story of Avis*, in which the woman must give up her autonomy and submit to her husband's will in order to satisfy him. For Phelps, even the marriage ceremony itself is at fault, for it holds outdated wording, "written in a bygone age, for a bygone type of society." In an essay from *The Independent* entitled "A Dream within a Dream" (1874), Phelps argues that wedding ceremonies should require both man and woman to "promise to be considerate each of the other's happiness, above all other earthly claims" and "promise to assist each other in [their] mutual and individual life's work." As can be seen in her fiction, however, Phelps recognizes that this ideal of marriage does not exist. The large number of unhappy marriages in her novels and short stories attest to her own personal experience that marriage was an unhappy state for most women she knew.

On the other hand, the alternative to marriage was to remain single, and to be single was to be stigmatized by society as an "old maid." At least in marriage a woman had the running of a household and the limited power that domestic employment afforded her, but as a single woman, many women were expected to live with family members as unpropertied dependents. As early as 1774, Judith Sargent Murray recognized the dilemma many women faced:

"A young lady, growing up with the idea, that she possesses few, or no personal attractions, and that her mental abilities are of an inferior kind, . . . will, too probably, throw herself away upon the first who approaches her with tenders of love, however indifferent may be her chance of happiness, least [sic] if she omits the present state of grace, she may never be so happy as to meet a second offer, and must then inevitably be stigmatized with that dreaded title, an Old Maid, must rank with a class whom she has been
accustomed to regard as burthens upon society, and objects whom she might with impunity turn into ridicule!  

Sargent argues that girls are so afraid of the appellation "old maid" that they might marry simply to avoid it. The stereotypical "old maid" or "spinster" was often ridiculed in literature—she was thin, near-sighted, and critical, all negative traits at the time. With these stereotypes, it is no wonder girls sometimes believed that marriage was an affirmation of their attractiveness. The negative attitude toward single women continued throughout the nineteenth century. Authors such as Elizabeth Stuart Phelps and Rose Terry Cooke strove to counteract this negative stereotype by painting a positive portrait of single women as valuable, contributing members of society who often chose not to marry. For instance, Phelps provides her audiences with attractive single women, like Perley Kelso in The Silent Partner who receives not one, but two, proposals of marriage, which she refuses so that she can better continue her career as a factory reformer. Following the Civil War, Americans were, perhaps, ready for a new vision of the single woman, for the loss of so many American men left a generation of women without husbands.

By the early twentieth century, the "old maid" stereotype had been partially substituted by that of the "New Woman." The New Woman was a young, single, assertive career woman who was alternately depicted positively as adventurous or negatively as "mannish." Carol Smith-Rosenberg describes the New Woman in her book Disorderly Conduct as a professional, privileged white woman, usually unmarried, who was born in the latter half of the nineteenth century and who unconventionally rejected domesticity for a professional life. Phelps seems to argue, in both her essays and her fiction, that a woman's marriage status is not the defining element in her character; rather, a woman's inner qualities define who she is. Her female characters do not typically fit the stereotype of Smith-Rosenberg's "New Woman" or Barbara Welter's "Cult of True Womanhood." In fact, Phelps's typical female protagonists, if one can generalize her characters, tend to fit
the category which Phelps herself defined in her 1871 essay from *The Independent* entitled "The True Woman."

**What Is a "True Woman"?**

The "Cult of True Womanhood," as it has been termed by Barbara Welter, was a concept promoted by the antebellum white middle class to define the proper role for women. Welter defines the characteristics of the True Woman as piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity, and not only did novels advocate this ideal of woman, but women's magazines and sermons of the time also promoted it. While many of the post-Civil-War women such as Phelps felt constrained by the concept of the True Woman, some of the earlier women's rights advocates used the ideals of the True Woman to further the cause of woman's suffrage. For instance, in her "Discourse on Woman" (1849), Lucretia Coffin Mott argued that women were *not* trying to "act the man" when they worked for their enfranchisement, but instead that women needed help to reach their goal "in order that she may become a 'true woman.'" She continues:

> As it is desirable that man should act a manly and generous part, not "mannish," so let woman be urged to exercise a dignified and womanly bearing, not womanish. Let her cultivate all the graces and proper accomplishments of her sex, but let not these degenerate into a kind of effeminacy, in which she is satisfied to be the mere plaything or toy of society, content with her outward adornings...22

Mott plays on the cultural ideas; instead of refuting the ideals of the "Cult of True Womanhood," she admits them and claims that woman's suffrage and woman's rights will not topple the social order, but enhance it. Eventually, however, many women recognized that the ideals of the "True Woman" kept women in their "separate sphere," and these women asserted that the traditional emphasis on women's domestic duties limited women's ability to participate in political or social activities outside the home and church.
The argument for women's extended sphere gradually infiltrated literature more and more. For instance, following the Civil War, many writers such as Phelps and Louisa May Alcott began to find an audience for a new kind of heroine—the "tomboy heroine." Phelps's *Gypsy Breynton* series, a series for children which Phelps published from 1866-67, centers on an "out-of-doors girl," not unlike Phelps herself, who rambles through the countryside, coming home with her torn skirt covered with dirt. Likewise, the more well-known Jo in Alcott's *Little Women* (1868) plays "like a boy," taking the male villain lead in the girls' plays and romping with the boy next door. The typical tomboy character was clearly *not* pious, submissive, or domestic, and as she grew up, she retained adult versions of her tomboy characteristics. These female characters, the "tomboys" all grown up, rebelled against the status quo, finding the conventions of the "True Woman" impossible to tolerate. The "tomboy" or New Woman believed in frequent exercise and took long walks or rowed out into the ocean alone. She took on jobs which were not typically viewed as "woman's work." She wore unconventional clothing for comfort, rather than dressing in the latest fashion. She was not afraid to voice her opinion. She did not enjoy domestic jobs, only performing domestic tasks when circumstances made it necessary. This new girl, not Welker's "True Woman," began to represent a new ideal of the American woman toward the latter decades of the nineteenth century.

In Phelps's essay, "The True Woman," published in *The Independent* in 1871, she insists that the typical "True Woman" has been "manufactured" to "man's convenience." This "True Woman" is an "enormous dummy" whose purpose is to prevent women from reaching their fuller potential, for she says:

"The true woman" of popular speech is the gauntest scarecrow ever posted on the rich fields of Truth to frighten timid birds away. . . . To say that the empty and powerful figure to which we have attached this royal name is patched up by men, and by those women who have no sense of character
but such as they reflect from men, . . . is to state one of those propositions whose proof does not add much to its potency.25

As stated in a previous chapter, Phelps's "true woman" does not fit the pattern of the domestic, submissive, pious, and pure "True Woman." In fact, it can be argued that Phelps does not intend her "true woman" to conform to any fixed model at all, for she says:

[T]his entire notion of regulating the position of women by conformity to an established ideal of womanly character is . . . almost without the bounds of sober argument. The womanly character is no more the property of the world--to count, weigh, measure, bottle, label--than the manly character. Every time that a man assumes to indicate to a woman the character of her "sphere" he offers her an insult. To use that homely phrase which has no graceful counterpart, it is none of his business what her sphere is.26

Thus, for Phelps, a "true woman" is one who only conforms to her own inward character or personality, not to the established ideal, which was simply society's attempt to limit her "sphere." Phelps argues with the concept that woman has a fixed nature, writing:

Our ideals of [woman's nature] are, par excellence, fictitious and contingent. The traits which we attribute to it we have just as much reason to consider inherent in it as we have to consider duplicity and dishonesty inseparable from the negro character; no more. . . . It will not be in this generation, nor in the next, that we can justifiably assert that we have any acquaintance with what it is in the "nature" of woman to do or to be.27

What then does Phelps assert about the "true woman"?28 A "true woman" is one who is equal to a man in every way, who would participate in politics, the arts, and literature, whose "intellectual culture" is as excellent as a man's, whose education is as important, who wears comfortable clothing and shares "in public usefulness." and who is not completed by marriage and motherhood, but instead is strong and self-reliant. Looking at Phelps's fiction, one can find numerous examples of women who meet some, but not all, of the criteria for her "true woman"; of course, as Phelps herself states, "The true woman, earth has never seen" and will not see until society admits women into the masculine domain.29
One of the earliest of Phelps's so-called "true women" appears in *The Gates Ajar* (1868) in the form of Mary Cabot's Aunt Winifred Forceythe, a "white, finely cut woman, with [a] serene smile and rapt, saintly eyes," a youthful widowed woman with a young child. Aunt Winifred takes matters into her own hands when Mary is left alone, and she comes to live with Mary and teach her about heaven. Before meeting her Aunt Winifred, Mary remembers things she had heard about her aunt: "I know . . . that she spent her young ladyhood teaching at the South;--grandfather had enough with which to support her, but I have heard it said that she preferred to take care of herself." Mary discovers Winifred Forceythe to be a sparkling, compassionate woman who is never impulsive (unlike some of Phelps's less mature protagonists), but who is not afraid to speak her mind. Aunt Winifred is extremely well-read and well-educated, for neither translating Greek biblical text nor studying philosophy are outside the realm of her education, and her knowledge and understanding are far superior to anyone in the small town where she and Mary live. Although Winifred is spiritual, her unconventional religion is one of the main focuses of the novel. She began by studying Swedenborg, but moved to Congregationalism, while all the time believing in her own ability to interpret biblical scripture. In addition, Winifred teaches others to imagine for themselves a heaven which makes them happy; thus, Winifred's religion is not the pious, patriarchal religion of the "ideal woman," but is instead a personal religion reflecting her own inner needs. In addition, in *The Gates Ajar*, Phelps foreshadows her later essay "The True Woman" with her description of Winifred Forceythe's morning walks with the local minister, Dr. Bland:

He always likes to talk with her. A woman who knows something about fate, free-will, and foreknowledge absolute, who is not ignorant of politics, and talks intelligently of Agassiz's latest fossil, who can understand a German quotation, and has heard of Strauss and Neander, who can dash her sprightliness ably against his old dry bones of metaphysics and theology, yet never speak an accent above that essentially womanly voice of hers, is, I imagine, a phenomenon in his social experience.
Clearly, Phelps believes that an intelligent woman ought to be as intellectually stimulating to men as that kind of man is to a woman. Winifred Forceythe is both a highly intelligent woman and a woman who speaks with authority. Although Winifred seems to be a woman who had always been strong and self-reliant, many of Phelps's female characters must go through life-altering events in order to reach that point.

In *Hedged In* (1870), Phelps shows how a girl from the streets can become a self-actualized individual. As Christine Stansell points out in *City of Woman: Sex and Class in New York, 1780-1860*, the ideals of "true womanhood" only held true for genteel women. Working class women (as well as men) were often viewed as immoral and depraved, for as Stansell writes, "On their errands of mercy into the tenements, evangelical men and women encountered patterns of womanly behavior and child rearing that clashed with their deepest-held beliefs. . . . Antebellum domesticity--at least in its urban form--emerged within a field of class antagonisms." Thus, not only were poor women not expected to conform to the ideals of the so-called "True Woman," but they were believed to be incapable of becoming that ideal, for class, as Stansell views it, was considered biologically determined. In her novel *Hedged In*, Phelps again argues against society's creation of a template for a "True Woman" by demonstrating the many ways genteel society set up roadblocks to prevent women from becoming that ideal, particularly by preventing working-class women from being treated like "ladies." Nixy Trent is introduced in the story as a poor, uneducated, unspiritual teenage mother, but she grows, with the help of a woman, into a well-educated, productive, spiritual individual. In many ways, Nixy, or Eunice as she is known later in the story, repudiates society's fixed ideal of womankind, proving that a woman does not have to be a "born lady" in order to convince society that she is a "true woman." By the end of the novel, Eunice has become the epitome of the pious and pure woman; the story's purpose seems to be to prove that a woman who has been impure in her ignorant youth can overcome her past. She had
"certain heroic, stony elements" in her life, and her life is described as "simple," "patient," and "peculiar." She is not submissive to any man, but she does submit to her mentor, Margaret Purcell; while she may not be domestic, Eunice never complains about domestic duties. Ironically, Eunice Trent probably fits the ideals of what Welter terms the "Cult of True Womanhood" better than most of Phelps's other female characters, but because Phelps creates her from a poor, working-class girl, Phelps is able to use the character of Eunice Trent to make a radical statement about the so-called "True Woman" and the ability of the white middle class to make blanket predictions about working-class women.

If in these earlier novels Phelps's women conform, to some extent, to the stereotypical "True Woman," in later novels, Phelps seems to more clearly refute these ideals, supporting her own larger definition of the "true woman." For instance, Perley Kelso in *The Silent Partner* (1871) is not a "True Woman" in any sense of the word at the beginning of the novel. In fact, when Perley is first introduced, she is obviously self-centered and undomestic, and she only seems to care about the scent of her carriage seats. She has what Mott described as a kind of "effeminacy," in which she is satisfied to be the "mere plaything or toy of society, content with her outward adornings." However, as the novel progresses, she becomes more and more the epitome of what Phelps valorizes: she participates in politics and is interested in art and literature, she works diligently for public usefulness, and she chooses not to marry so that she can continue her work. By the end of the novel, the townspeople describe Perley as "[a]n eccentric young lady, [who] buried herself in Five Falls ever since the old gentleman’s death, broke an engagement, and was interested in labor reform." As she becomes a reform-minded woman, Perley Kelso fulfills her own ideas of what is valuable in the world. Likewise, Avis Dobell in *The Story of Avis* (1877) seems to reflect a great many of Phelps's own personal values. Like Phelps and her "tomboy heroine" Gypsy Breynton, as a young girl Avis likes to climb trees and hates sewing seams with a passion. As Avis grows up, her aunt's attempts to teach Avis
domestic arts, such as cooking, embroidery, and household management, go to waste, for once Avis decides she wants to be an artist, all her attention begins to focus on her art. She knows that she is "not just like other women," she "will never yield, like other women," for she is not the stereotypical "True Woman" who is submissive and domestic. and she says, "Marriage ... is a profession to a woman. And I have my work." Avis recognizes the differences between herself and other women, and like Perley Kelso, Avis does not wish to give up her work, in her case her art, for marriage. Unlike Perley, Avis does eventually give in and marry, and because of this decision, she does not advance in her professional life. Even though Avis's career does not come to fruition, she plants the seeds of independence and self-sufficiency in her daughter, Waitstill, passing the holy grail to her, so that her generation can fulfill the promise of her mother's. Although Avis marries, both Perley and Avis are good examples of Phelps's ideal of American women—women who contribute to "public usefulness," participate in the public sphere, and who are both strong and self-reliant.

These are not the only women in Phelps's novels who belie the regulated position which Phelps believed society wished women to fit into; in fact, in almost every case, Phelps's women refute the ideals of the "Cult of True Womanhood." Some characters, like Reliance Strong in Friends (1881), begin as stereotypical "True Women"—pious, pure, submissive, and domestic—but end, because of significant circumstances in their lives, as women both strong and self-reliant, as this character's name suggests. Reliant lives for her husband; yet, as she discovers upon her husband's death, her "True Woman" traits are not sufficient to carry a woman along alone. Her work for the drunks in the neighborhood and participation in a temperance group help give her a sense of identity, usefulness, and self-reliance. Ultimately, although she does decide to remarry at the end of the novel, she does not remarry in order to find completion in a man—instead, she considers the man more an equal partner. Likewise, Dr. Atalanta Zay in Doctor Zay
(1882) is a woman who needs no man to complete her life. She works in a "man's job" as a physician, a career for which Phelps felt women were more qualified than men. Dr. Zay does not display many stereotypical feminine characteristics at all, for she does not "fuss" over her patients, but treats them coolly and professionally, much like the stereotypical "all-business" male doctor. Like Avis, she has no desire to marry, for she feels complete in herself. In fact, it is only after Dr. Zay has been ardently pursued that she finally gives in to Waldo Yorke's romantic attentions, eventually falling in love with him and, apparently, marrying him. In almost every case, lovelorn men pursue these intelligent, independent women, and in many cases, the men become the "villains" of the novel because they are seen as distractions from the life the women wish to lead.

Although in her early novels Phelps has a tendency to treat women positively and give men the villain's roles, in later novels she is more likely to portray some of her female characters negatively. For instance, in Walled In (1907), Phelps offers two different female characters, both with ties to the male protagonist, Professor Myrton Ferris, whose ill health is a major plot element in the novel. In contrast to The Story of Avis where Avis's husband hurts and embarrasses her with his flirtatious behavior, in Walled In it is the wife who flirts and does not appreciate her husband. After Myrton's tragic automobile accident, he lives as an invalid for several years. While his wife Tessa, an attractive woman, goes boating with various young local college students, expending all her female attractiveness in an effort to gain admirers for her clothing and her wit (two "talents" Phelps had small admiration for), Myrton spends his time in bed, suffering from pain and insomnia until a relative, Honoria Tryde, a Florence-Nightingale-like nurse, comes to take care of him. Just as Tessa does not fit the "True Woman" pattern at all, for she is self-centered and dishonest, the character of Honoria undercuts the pattern.
Honoria is self-reliant and strong, and she cares more for her work for the poor in a charity hospital than she does for anything else, at least until she falls in love with Myrton Ferris. The narrator describes her early in the novel:

Sweet was not at all the adjective which he was inclined at first to apply to Honoria. Her face was compact and reserved--more so than is usual with women of her still young years; she could not have been much, if anything, over thirty; closely below her smile, which did not sink in, so to speak, lay the molded gravity which is inseparable from strength... The professor would have found it impossible to select the color of her eyes, but he noticed that her mouth was generous, and that her coloring was pale and lambent; she had the complexion that seems to be lighted from within, rather than from without. She was not--no, she was not in the least like Tessa.41

Like Dr. Zay, Honoria is a brave, professional medical woman. In Honoria's case, she is not a physician, but she has more skill than many doctors. However, while Phelps makes Honoria a self-reliant professional woman, she does not attempt, as she does with Dr. Zay, to make her unmaternal or undomestic. The narrator describes Honoria as both motherly and professional: "She observed like a surgeon; she brooded like a mother... Her sympathy and devotion outran his most silent want. [Myrton] was half aware that she had a certain professional pride or ambition about his case... Honoria fought like a general for his recovery; he obeyed her like a soldier."42 Honoria is both doctor and nurse, soldier and mother; in this character, Phelps attempts to combine maternal instincts with professional behavior, for she believed the nursing profession was one of the noblest. In an 1899 essay written to nurses and published in The Independent, Phelps wrote, "It is much to represent the ideal of your profession. May it be more to represent the ideal of yourselves! You hear a great deal said to you about the nobility of your calling, and you should... Think of your profession highly that it may make and keep you high. Dwell on it nobly that you may ennoble it."43 Perhaps of all traits, Phelps thought most highly of the "noble" woman who for Phelps had greatness of character, high standards, and showed
excellence in everything she did. Part of this nobility was, for Phelps, to have higher standards of conduct than other people; thus, it is not surprising that Honoria behaves honorably to both Myrton and Tessa, even after Tessa's drowning death.

While none of these women is exactly the same and none attempt to "regulate the position of women," all share a common goal—fulfilling their own character on a more equal plane with men. Neither submissive nor "mannish," these women attempt to make themselves their own best selves. Although they sometimes fail at their attempts to be "all they can be," for many of these characters deteriorate into only domesticity and into "effeminacy," as Lucretia Coffin Mott terms it, all these women are more or less unconventional characters who refute the template of the "Cult of True Womanhood." Of course, as Phelps seems to argue throughout her writing, a "true woman" needs a "true man," but a true man is impossible to find.

A Single Woman or an "Old Maid"?

Although Phelps argues against the ideals of the "True Woman" which keep her in her proper sphere, she nonetheless does have an idea of what a "true woman" really is. Her "true woman" is, as stated previously, her best self—noble, self-reliant, and strong. However, at least in her earliest novels, Phelps appears to believe that a woman cannot be her best self if she marries. Therefore, in order for many of her female characters to develop themselves more fully they must refuse to marry, refusal being a much different activity from not marrying by default, despite the fact that the end result, a single life, was the same. Of course, not marrying carried with it its own particular stigma. The "old maid," as many stereotyped her, was not particularly well respected, and many women felt that they were giving up on a home of their own if they refused to marry, for at the very least, marriage provided a woman with a household to run. Perhaps because of the way single women were treated in nineteenth-century society, few works of fiction presented
the older single woman in a positive light. Many novels, of course, following the domestic pattern were based upon the young single woman who gains her independence and self-reliance only to find romantic love and eventual marriage at the end of the story. In contrast, Phelps had a rather different view of the single woman, maybe because she had some personal role models, "[l]egends of the feminine triumphs of past generations," which were handed down in her Andover home town. In her autobiography, Phelps writes of these women:

A lady of the village, said to have been once very handsome, was credibly reported to have refused nineteen offers of marriage. Another, still plainly beautiful, was known to have received and declined the suits of nine theologues in one winter. Neither of these ladies married. We watched their whitening hairs and serene faces with a certain pride of sex, not easily to be understood by a man. When we began to think how many times they might have married, the subject assumed sensational proportions. In fact, the maiden ladies of Andover always, I fancied, regarded each other with a peculiar sense of peace. Each knew--and knew that the rest knew--that it was (to use the Andover phraseology) not of predestination or foreordination, but of free will absolute, that an Andover girl passed through life alone. This little social fact, which is undoubtedly true of most, if not all, university towns, had mingled effects upon impressionable girls; for the proportion of masculine society was almost Western in its munificence.45

Thus, Phelps did not grow up with a negative view of the "old maid." Instead, she admires these independent women, even as she subtly brags that she herself would have had no lack of suitors in Andover with its high percentage male population. Perhaps because of these role models, these magnificent single women, Phelps was able to describe a variety of positive unmarried role models for women in her fiction. These women chose to remain single, usually because it afforded them greater independence and self-sufficiency, but many remained single because they believed it was better to remain single than to marry for any reason other than love. With these characters, Phelps clearly reveals
her own skeptical attitude toward marriage, for she believed many women who would be happier single married for the wrong reasons.

In Phelps's first three major novels, *The Gates Ajar* (1868), *Hedged In* (1870), and *The Silent Partner* (1871), Phelps gives several examples of happily unmarried female characters. Of the secondary characters who are married in the books, two are widowed (although they seemed to have had happy marriages), with only two, the beautiful Christina Purcell in *Hedged In* and the frivolous Fly Silver in *The Silent Partner*, briefly described as newly-married women. It seems that Phelps, at least during this time in her life, was unable to realistically portray a good marriage, and her characters reflect this bias. For instance, in *The Gates Ajar*, Mary Cabot remains single throughout the novel—there is no mention of a romantic relationship. Many critics have commented on the strangely close connection between Mary and her dead brother Royal, and they suggest that she loves her brother in an unnatural fashion. Mary longs to be with Roy, and once she begins to understand the concept of heaven as her Aunt Winifred explains it to her, Mary wishes to go to heaven and live in the house her brother will have prepared for her there. Although this relationship seems a little too close, there is no hint of anything but a loving familial relationship between Mary and Roy. Mary, in her grief, does not think of romance and marriage. Her small-town life offers her, really, no choices in terms of marriage and husband. Realistically speaking, during this time period shortly after the Civil War, it was probably not unusual for there to be very few single men of marriageable age. Thus, it is possibly not important, in terms of plot, that Mary had no suitors. What is important, however, is that Phelps chose to write a novel which completely focused on one woman's spiritual awakening, brought about by another woman, instead of focusing on a man-woman relationship.

Likewise, in *Hedged In* (1870), Eunice Trent also remains single. She cannot marry, of course, according to social rules, because as an unmarried mother, she is a
"loose woman" of "no principles." On the other hand, Phelps does offer Eunice a chance to marry in the form of the young man who was the father of her child, for he comes to see her and offers to marry her. Once Dick sees her, now a well-educated, spiritual woman, he says, "I thought mebbe as I had n't done very well by ye, and, seein' as I'm just about ready to live a decent life and settle down, I'd hunt ye up and marry ye; but, by gracious, Nix! ... I'd as soon think of marryin' that!" as he points to the moon. Eunice does not consider marrying Dick, most likely because of their very different lifestyles and social status, but, in actuality, she does not seem to understand the concept of marrying. Eunice even has problems when her close friend, Christina, decides to marry. When Christina tells her she is engaged to Dr. Burtis, Eunice remarks, "I never should have thought of such a thing!" Christina Purcell, the daughter of Eunice's guardian and savior, comes very close to being a stereotypical "True Woman," for she is both domestic and submissive, and her idea of marriage is to marry the first man who asked her, admitting that she "admires" him. When Eunice asks Christina if she loves Dr. Burtis, Christina answers, "As nearly as I can make out, I love the doctor. He says I do. It seemed a great pity to contradict him. He knows a great deal more than I do. Now, I never should have known that in the world, if I had n't been told of it!" While the narrator seems to admire Christina in some ways, she seems more puzzled by an attitude which would accept marriage without whole-hearted romantic love and which would be willing to give up independence for the kind of domination Dr. Burtis appears to be ready to command. In addition, Eunice's bewilderment is clear as she admits, "I suppose I cannot understand these things." The narrator understands Eunice's confusion better than Christina's acceptance of the marriage when she describes Eunice's attitude: "The sacredness of that white thing, a happy woman's happy love, confused her like a new language. She did not know any words to use in speaking of it. It was something foreign, far, beyond seas of things, from her life." Perhaps it is not surprising that neither Eunice nor the narrator...
Phelps does not argue for or against marriage in any very direct way in either of
the two previous novels, but by the time she wrote The Silent Partner in 1871, she seemed
to have formulated very clear ideas about the negative consequences of marriage for
women. In The Silent Partner, both Perley Kelso and Sip Garth refuse marriage offers
and remain single. Sip Garth's decision not to marry is certainly not based on a lack of
romantic feelings, for in fact, as the narrator writes, "All young colors and flushes and
tremors, hopes and fears, longing and need, broke now out of the brown curtain of Sip's
face. In the instant she was a very lonely, very miserable little girl, not by any means over
twenty-three, and the young man had eyes so cruelly kind!"51 It is very clear to Sip,
however, even at her young age, that she cannot marry Dirk. She tells him:

"I'll not marry you," said the girl feebly; "I'll not marry anybody. Maybe it
isn't the way a girl had ought to feel when she likes a young fellow," added
Sip, with a kind of patient aged bitterness crawling into her eyes. "But we
don't live down here so's to make girls grow up like girls should, it seems
to me. . . . I'll never bring a child into the world to work in the mills. . . .
I'll never bring children into this world to be factory children, and to be
factory boys and girls, and to be factory men and women. . . ."52

Although Dirk promises Sip that their children would not have to grow up to be factory
children and he argues that "[o]ther folks marry," she refuses him, using a variation on the
lament of so many of Phelps's female characters, "I'm not other folks."53 Interestingly,
although Dirk swears to Sip that he will "have no other girl if I can't have you" and that he
is a "true man" who has "loved [her] true," not far into the novel, the reader discovers that
Dirk has already begun "going out" with another local girl.54

Like Sip, Perley Kelso also has proposals to refuse, two in fact. At the beginning
of the novel, she is engaged to Maverick Hayle, with whom she shares ownership of the
local textile mill, in partnership with Mr. Hayle, Maverick's father. After Perley gets a
taste of silent partnership with Maverick and his father, she recognizes not only that she does not love Maverick, but also that she could not bear to have the same "silent" role in their marriage that she had in the mill. She tells him:

I feel as if there had been a growing away between us for a great while. . . . I was fond of you, Maverick. I promised to be your wife. I do not think I could ever say that to another man. The power to say it has gone with the growing away. There was the love and the losing, and now there's only the sorrow. I gave you all I had to give. You used it up, I think. But the growing away came just the same. I do not love you.55

Despite Maverick's protestations (or perhaps because of them) that "[y]ou women do not understand yourselves any better than you do the rest of the world!" Maverick is not able to convince Perley to marry him.56 Fly Silver eventually becomes Maverick's wife, a position to which she is "suited," the narrator says, but Perley, on the other hand is more suited for her "dreary work."57 Later in the novel, Perley meets a man, Stephen Garrick, who seems to possibly possess the characteristics which would make a good husband for a woman like Perley—he is strong, and he understands the reform work she does. Her "peculiar, rather . . . public"58 life made him admire her more. for he works with her to improve the lives of the factory workers, and he appears to love Perley deeply. In fact, Garrick does not love Perley in spite of her work; he loves her because of it:

He had seen the shining of her rare, fine face in such strange places! In sick-rooms and in the house of mourning he had learned to listen for the stealing, strong sweetness of her young voice. They had met by death-beds and over graves. They had burrowed into mysteries of misery and sin, in God's name, together. Wherever people were cold, hungry, friendless, desolate, in danger, in despair, she struck across his path.59

However, even though he wants to marry her and accept her as she is, Perley refuses Garrick as well. As Garrick turns to look into her eyes, he exclaims, "I see no room for me there!"60 There is no room because Perley's life is too full of her work. She tells him, "I have no time to think of love and marriage, Mr. Garrick. That is a business, a trade, by
itself to women. I have to much else to do. As nearly as I can understand myself, that is
the state of the case. I cannot spare the time for it."61 She adds, "Women talk of
loneliness. I am not lonely. They are sick and homeless. I am neither. They are
miserable. I am happy. They grow old. I am not afraid of growing old. They have
nothing to do. If I had ten lives, I could fill them! No, I do not need you, Stephen
Garrick."62 Perley does not want to be a "silent partner" any more, and Perley has "a
preference for a business of [her] own."63 Despite her curt refusal, the novel concludes
depicting the relationship between Perley and Garrick as somewhat open-ended,
suggesting a possible future relationship between them. He tells her, "I shall wait for
you," to which the narrator adds, "Perhaps he will. A few souls can."64 Both Sip Garth
and Perley Kelso recognize that marriage would interrupt their work, even marriage to a
so-called "true man." They do not need a man to complete their lives.

If these works treat the single life seriously, one pair of novels, An Old Maid's
Paradise (1879) and Burglars in Paradise (1886), treats the concept of the "old maid"
humorously. In An Old Maid's Paradise, a thirty-six-year-old woman (interestingly, about
the same age Phelps was when she published the short novel) who lives with her brother
and his family suddenly decides she wants a home of her own. Her brother suggests, "Get
married," to which Corona replies, "I can't afford to support a husband, till the panic is
over." Later, Corona's sister-in-law says, "Write a book.... It will divert your mind.
You're morbid."65 Despite a number of well-intentioned, albeit somewhat impractical,
suggestions, Corona decides the best thing to do is to build herself a house with the "five
hundred dollars and some pluck to spare."66 The story humorously continues by taking
slight jabs at genteel society and convention while Corona plans and builds her home by
the seaside. Interestingly, when Corona goes to an architect to begin planning her home,
he shows her a set of simple blueprints for a house called "the Old Maid's House." After
hearing the name, she says, "I will have that house."67 Corona and her housekeeper.
Puella Virginia, and later a friend named Mary, live together as "old maids," confusing their friends and relatives, for no one seems to know what to "do" with women who live "alone." However, for Corona, Puella, and Mary, the seaside home is a "paradise," into which a metaphorical serpent by the name of Mr. Sinuous comes. The narrator states, "There was never an Eden without him. And he had come. . . . The Serpent stayed to dinner." Mr. Sinuous beguiles Mary, and she leaves with him, eventually marrying him, and as the summer comes to a close, Corona and Puella end by closing up the seaside home. Phelps ends the humorous story on a bitter-sweet note. Corona and Puella come to realize that paradise cannot last forever, for as Corona thinks to herself, "It will still be there. Death, change, denial touch us all; sun and frost will burn and freeze; the wind raves and the calm comes; but the sea is there." Her lovely home of her own is not comfortable enough to endure the harsh Massachusetts seaside winters, so she boards up the house and moves back in with her brother and his family, returning to the conventionally unappealing "old maid's life."

In *Burglars in Paradise* (1886), written seven years after *An Old Maid's Paradise* and two years before her own marriage to Herbert D. Ward, Corona and Puella return to the seaside "paradise" only to discover that there are burglars in the neighborhood and that they have broken into Corona's home. All their thoughts are for preservation of the home and their person, so Corona and Puella contrive various humorous preventative measures to run off burglars. However, when the house is broken into yet again, Corona must deal with her own financial ruin—the burglar has taken her money, and now she has nothing with which to pay the bills. A constant refrain in this novel is Corona's self-sufficiency, for she decides that she cannot rely upon a man to save her or her home from the burglar, thinking, "[I]f she had any one to call on to track her own burglars for her, he would probably be a very busy person; his rest would be more important than hers; and she should be perfectly wretched if she could not do such a thing herself and save him the
trouble." Corona views all the men who come into her home as "invaders" or possible burglars, whether it is the local police officer or reporters. After discovering that almost every man she meets who offers to help her is full of jargon and only wishes to take more of her money, Corona comes to believe even more fervently in the necessity of self-sufficiency and feminine strength. However, once the burglary is solved, Corona begins to feel lonely in her "old maid's paradise." The narrator states, "It was lonely in Paradise; but it was lovely in Paradise; there, as so often elsewhere, the two came near to being the same thing. Corona, after the agitations of the summer, sank back upon the cushion of her solitude." Into this lonely/lovely setting steps a former unnamed beau who tells Corona about the recent death of his wife and daughter. As Corona and her old flame detail the reasons for their earlier split, they begin to argue about a possibility for a future. Corona says, mirroring Perley Kelso from *The Silent Partner*, "I've learned so well, so very well, how to live without you." However, they decide that he will take on the role of neighbor and friend, a man who helps Corona ward off the loneliness she had been feeling, and while the two do not marry in the book, there are indications that he and Corona eventually will marry. Corona discovers several things about herself and several things about men: that friendship is important, that "a neighbor made a difference," and that men have abilities to perform jobs that make even independent women's lives much easier. As Corona comes to accept this friend into her heart more and more, she gradually discovers that "the most dangerous housebreaker of all [had] climbed up to Paradise."

In *Burglars in Paradise*, in particular, Phelps reveals her conflicted feelings toward the single life, especially as she recognizes the loneliness which awaits single women in society. Although she wants to believe in strong, self-sufficient women. Phelps nonetheless has personal reservations about the value of remaining single, especially as she gets older. Yet she also recognizes that very few women who marry stay happy throughout their lives, particularly intelligent, self-sufficient women. Marriage might work
for women who do not wish to leave the private domestic sphere or those who, like Christina Purcell in *Hedged In*, have no ambition or intellectual capacity for a career. For other women, however, marriage requires too much sacrifice, Phelps seems to say. Until society can offer women the equivalent of "true men," few women may safely marry.

**Marriage to the "True Man"**

Throughout Phelps's novels, she provides hints of what the "true man" might be like—the man who is worthy of a woman like Avis or Perley Kelso. In almost every case, however, the male characters in Phelps's novels fail to live up to any standards Phelps would create for a "true man." Although Phelps never did define the "true man" in so many words, in one short contribution to the *Ladies Home Journal* in 1894 Phelps identified the qualities of the ideal husband. The question was "What are the masculine qualities most likely to insure married happiness to a wife?" Phelps responded:

This one thing I write unto you love-bewildered girls: you can trust your happiness, other things being equal, to a tender man. By this I do not mean a man who makes a good lover. All men make good lovers while they are about it. The expressions of courtship go for little. . . . How many roses does he bring? are his letters affectionate? These matter less than it would be possible to make you believe. But what kind of son is he to an aged or a lonely father? Is he patient with an unattractive, an ailing, even a nagging mother? Do you know how he treats his sister? . . . Marry the man who is permanently thoughtful, kind, unselfish, sympathetic, tender, true and gentle. Marry the man who will prove the husband's deeds as tender as the lover's words."

In several of Phelps's novels, she illustrates men who would like to be or who pretend to be this tender husband, but who, in most cases, fall short of the requirements. Predictably, these would-be "true men" make their wives miserable, or, if the marriage does not occur in the context of the novel, enough hints remain to suggest that the marriage will be unhappy.
For instance, in *The Story of Avis* (1877), Avis, a fairly well-respected artist, wants to remain single, believing, like Perley Kelso in *The Silent Partner*, that marriage is work to a woman. Unlike Perley, Avis eventually gives up her idea to stay single, because Philip Ostrander fools Avis into believing that he is a "true man." Unfortunately, he is not, and Avis ends up very unhappy. It becomes obvious early in the novel that Philip does not fit the definition of a "good husband." Philip's poor treatment of his aged mother, living all alone in New Hampshire, is a sure sign that he is a man who is not tender, according to Phelps, making it clear that Philip will not be a good husband. For instance, even once Philip and Avis are married, he does not take Avis to visit his mother because, supposedly, he believes his mother would enjoy a visit in July more. Actually, Philip is avoiding a visit to his mother, for when Avis and Philip receive word that his mother is deathly ill, they go to visit her and it is then that Avis recognizes his neglect of his mother. Avis thinks, "Poor, narrow, solitary home! Poor, plain, old mother, watching so long for the son who had not come." When Avis tries to talk to her mother-in-law about the reasons they had not visited before, Mrs. Ostrander reveals, "I'm glad you had a pretty wedding. Philip thought it was too cold for me to go. He was always careful to think when I would take cold," and Avis begins to have some idea of her husband's treatment of his mother. She thinks, "Had Philip--Philip, whose tenderness was like the creation of a new passion in the world--somehow, somewhere, in some undefined sense, neglected his mother,--his old mother, sick and alone?" Avis describes Philip as "tender," but it becomes increasingly evident in the novel that he is *not* tender. For if he was, he would have treated his mother more considerately. In addition, the narrator reveals Philip's skill in the art of courtship, for he uses circumstances to promote a relationship with Avis. However, in two separate scenes, Philip's actions symbolically reveal his potential to destroy love and people. For example, in one scene Philip takes an injured bird from Avis, hiding it under his cloak for protection, where he "slipped his hand very tenderly under his shaggy coat." Despite his
supposed tenderness with the bird, "the bird upon his heart lay dead." Later, when he is given a rose from a young woman, he inadvertently steps on the rose twice. Phelps's expertise as a writer is exemplified in her control of the imagery in these scenes. In both scenes, the latent brutality in Philip is revealed through his symbolic violence to an emblem of romantic love, the red rose, and his unknowing smothering of the bird which represents Avis's self. Philip has the potential, which he eventually fulfills, to kill the romance between himself and Avis as he murders her artistic hopes and dreams. As Phelps illustrates, not only is it extremely difficult for Avis to continue with her art at the same intensity which she had before marriage, but also life becomes very difficult with a man who is not a "good husband."

The marriage between Philip and Avis serves to remind readers of the dangers of marrying a man who is not tender. Very few of Phelps's other novels illustrate so clearly the problems which exist in marriage; in fact, in some of her novels, the reader must read between the lines to discover Phelps's attitude toward the male characters who work so hard to woo the female protagonist. For instance, in Doctor Zay (1882), Dr. Atalanta Zay wishes, like Avis, to stay single, but she is eventually worn down by Waldo Yorke, who fools her into thinking he is a true man. Yorke insists that he wants her to continue her profession after her marriage, a declaration that readers of Phelps will have heard before from Philip Ostrander. Yorke states, "I told you long ago . . . that you should not be expected to surrender your profession. I should be ashamed of myself if I could ask it of you. I am proud of you. I feel my heart leap over everything you achieve. It is as if I had done it myself, only that it makes me happier." Yorke does not appear to be threatened by Dr. Zay's authority or position, perhaps because he is a member of the idle rich with a token law degree which he feels no need to use. He even says to her, "Why, what kind of fellow should I be, if I could approach a woman like you, and propose to drink down her power and preciousness into my one little thirsty life.--absorb her, annihilate her.--and
offer her nothing but myself in exchange for a freedom so fine, an influence so important. as yours?" Like Avis, Dr. Zay pities Yorke's feelings for her, because she believes she will never be happy with an unequal love or with the kind of man who needs. she believes. a "true woman" of the tradition from which Phelps speaks in her essay "The True Woman." Dr. Zay recognizes that she is not this "True Woman," but is a "new kind of woman" who needs a "new type of man," and Dr. Zay does not believe, at least until Yorke convinces her on the last few pages, that he is this "new type of man." His final pleas for her love, coming to her when she is weak due to illness, finally convince Dr. Zay that Waldo Yorke is "more of a man than [she] thought." The reader assumes they will marry, but they will not be happy, because it is clear that Dr. Zay was correct earlier in the novel--Waldo Yorke is not this "new type of man." He is too traditional and too emotionally weak to provide the kind of supportive husband Dr. Zay will need to continue in her work.

Another novel presents a future marriage with a man who could be a "true man," but who is probably not. Like Doctor Zay, this novel carries the spectre of The Story of Avis in the background, with refrains of a loss of independence and the mastery of husbands over their wives continuing a counterpoint with its main themes. In Friends: A Duet (1881), the main character Reliance Strong was once happily married, but she spends the novel trying to learn how to deal with her widowed state. Instead of allowing her to remain widowed and continue her work among the poor drunkards in her community, her husband's best friend Charles Nordhall begins to court her, against her wishes, and over the course of the novel, Reliance appears to be worn down by his proposals until she finally agrees to marry him. Is he a true man? There are many clues that he is not. for he most appreciates Reliance when she engages in clearly domestic, "womanly" behavior and is most bothered by her benevolence work in the "public sphere." Clearly, Nordhall is not a true man because he wishes to keep Reliance on the pedestal of the Cult of True
Womanhood, saying, "As for himself, he chose the crumbs fallen from that dear, denying life, sweeter to him and richer than the feast of a goddess with her god. This was his way of being true." Thus, Nordhall is a traditional man who wants a stereotypical "True Woman," not one of Phelps's kind of true women. Despite Reliance's eventual acceptance of his proposal, she recognizes that she has not found "paradise" in him, for "paradise," like in An Old Maid's Paradise, is more comfortable without a serpent or burglar. The final lines of the novel declare that Reliance's face, following the accepted proposal, is "wild as an eternal regret," and the narrator concludes, "It was heaven on earth, at least. to him. If to her it was earth after heaven, what cared he?" Thus, although Nordhall is loving and kind, it is clear that he is not a "true man."

Some men are able to become "true men," or at least become a close equivalent to it. In The Gates Between (1887), a utopian novel told from a man's perspective, the narrator makes it clear that Dr. Esmerald Thorne has not been a good husband to his long-suffering wife, but when he dies with this "sin" on his head, he is forced to deal with problems in his life before he can rise in heaven. It is obvious in the novel that while he has been a good doctor, his marriage has not been happy. Only after he has been taught a lesson in heaven, leading to his taking care of his own child in heaven, serving as both mother and father to the small boy, is Dr. Esmerald Thorne able to grow in spiritual strength and nobility. When his wife arrives in heaven, he finally has risen to become a "true man" and can finally give his wife what she needs. Likewise, in A Singular Life (1895), Phelps presents the closest illustration of a happy marriage, the relationship between Emanuel Bayard and his wife, Helen Carruth, a lovely, noble woman, but not a professional or career woman. She is intelligent, well-educated, undomestic, and cultured, and she does not intend to marry. Helen does, however, eventually fall in love with Emanuel Bayard, and although she resists marriage almost as heartily as any of Phelps's other characters (like so many of them, she attempts to prolong the engagement as long as
possible), Helen does eventually decide to marry him. Helen seems to be, in fact, a "new woman." Independent, adventurous, and somewhat frivolous, she nonetheless is able to make sacrifices for what she sees as important, especially sacrifices for Emanuel. It is easy to see how Emanuel Bayard might fit the standards, at least to a small extent, of the "true man," for he devotes his life to his work even while he loves his wife with a sincere, passionate devotion which does not appear to depend upon any domestic or submissive qualities she might have hidden away. However, it is important to realize that while Emanuel Bayard is Phelps's "favorite hero" and he and Helen appear to have a happy marriage, he does not live long enough after their marriage to make her unhappy. After all, many of the marriages in Phelps's novels seem happy--in the beginning. It is only after the reality of the relationship sets in, after the husband begins to take advantage of his wife, that the discontent sets in and the wives realize their mistake in marrying.

"Unhappy Girls" and Unhappy Women: Drowning in the Misery of Marriage

Phelps's "true woman" is usually a strong, "out-of-doors" woman, and as mentioned earlier, many of her female characters take long walks by the seashore or go out into the ocean, alone, rowing, perhaps to illustrate their feminine strength. However, the motif of a woman and/or man going boating in the ocean flows like a threat through several of Phelps's novels and short stories. In almost every case, Phelps provides variations of the same theme: occasionally, someone drowns or almost drowns, but other times, one of the characters must save another character. The boating appears to be symbolic of testing nature and the elements, but the drowning, of course, symbolizes being overcome by overwhelming events. Of course, Phelps herself spent a great deal of time at the seashore. Like the character in An Old Maid's Paradise, Phelps built herself a seaside home where she spent many summers writing, entertaining, and, most probably, rowing.
She knew the sea, and she was fascinated by its rapid changes from calm to stormy. For Phelps, the ocean serves as a gigantic metaphor for the condition of the heart; whenever one of her characters wanders out into stormy weather, he or she seems to be taking chances with his or her life. Although one of these rowing stories, "No News," was written very early in Phelps's career, most of them are later additions to her criticism of marriage, proving even more clearly that Phelps's fiction cannot be so clearly placed into narrow categories, for despite the fact that this fiction was written during Phelps's final period when, according to Kessler, "no critique of marriage was possible."85 the works clearly identify the problematic nature of men's and women's romantic relationships in late-nineteenth-century American society.

In "No News" (1868), a couple's marriage is clearly suffering.86 Although the two have not been married very long, once the wife, Harrie Sharpe, has had several children and a household to manage, she is no longer interesting or attractive to her husband, a well-educated and arrogant doctor. Harrie is not happy with their relationship, for she is a dreamer who is not well-suited to the domestic life. The narrator states that Harrie would row herself out on the sea and sit on the cliffs where "she would finish the selvage seam; but the sun blazed, the sea shone, the birds sang, all the world was at play,—what could it care about selvage seams? So the little gold thimble would drop off, the spool trundle down the cliff, and Harrie, sinking back into a cushion of green and crimson sea-weed, would open her wide eyes and dream."87 Like so many of Phelps's women, Harrie is not a domestic woman, and she is not interested in sewing. Her husband, Dr. Sharpe, does not seem particularly concerned about her lack of attention to the sewing, for he "loved seeing her in the boat at sunset."88 In fact, he loved her "as unselfishly as he knew," but he was not a noble husband.89 Therefore, when an attractive single woman, Miss Dallas, once Harrie's friend, comes to visit, Dr. Sharpe selfishly spends too much time with the friend, taking long boat trips with her, because Harrie is busy with sick children and the friend is
interesting and intelligent. Unbeknownst to Dr. Sharpe, a particularly serious fault since he is a doctor, Harrie becomes seriously ill, and while he is out boating, Harrie wanders away from the home in a fever, almost dying. Dr. Sharpe and Miss Dallas hear a cry in the fog which called "like a ghost," and in fear, they return to the shore to find Harrie missing, her boat gone and the fog still very heavy, a "dead weight." At the end of the story, Dr. Sharpe comes to realize how much his wife means to him, now that he has almost lost her, and he apologizes to her, promising never to neglect her again. In "No News," the fog on the sea serves as a warning of danger and appears to represent the deadness of a marriage without communication. Until the near-death of Harrie, her husband seems prepared to drift along in a loveless marriage, like the song Miss Dallas sings:

Drifting, drifting on and on,
Mast and oar and rudder gone,
Fatal danger for each one,
We helpless as in dreams.

In a similar story, Avery (1902), Phelps provides another example of a sick, unhappy wife whose husband ignores her illness and leaves her near death. In this story, the boating incident is part of the main character's hallucination, instead of being a real event. Marshall Avery has little patience with his wife Jean's serious heart condition. He is so caught up in his own problems and so inconsiderate of hers that he goes to the dentist for relief of a toothache while she is experiencing a heart attack. Phelps introduces some "modern medicine" by having Avery anesthetized at the dentist's office. and while under anesthesia, Avery experiences a hallucination that is so real that he believes it to be true. "[H]elpless as in dreams," Avery escapes from the dentist's office with a group of bachelor friends to enjoy a boating trip without telling Jean where he was going, even though he knows it is wrong to do so. Unfortunately, the brief trip becomes a tragedy when they are hit by a great storm, and he almost perishes at sea. In the hallucination.
Avery believes that his neglect has caused his wife's death, and upon awakening from the anesthesia, he becomes frantic with worry and rushes home to apologize to his wife for his inconsiderate behavior. His wife is, in actuality, on death's door. When Avery arrives home, he discovers the doctor, Esmerald Thorne from *The Gates Between* (1887), performing a life-saving procedure on Jean. Although Avery does not appear to deserve a second chance, he is given it as he discovers his own inner cowardice in his fear of facing his wife's illness and the problems in their marriage. Ironically, it is Dr. Thorne who insists that both Jean and the marriage are worth saving,convincing Avery to complete a "miracle of love" and repair the damage to Jean and the marriage. For this husband, the fantasy sea voyage was a trip of self-discovery, and upon returning, he vows to become a different, more tender and considerate man.

The final story in this group, and probably the best of the three, is "Dea ex Machina" (1904). In this story, Phelps presents another unhappy husband and wife. This time, the man is an older minister, not a young, vibrant, newly-married man. The Rev. Luther Goodspeed is introduced in the novel feverishly fighting the elements in a small boat. The narrator describes him as daring the ocean: "[I]t might be said that a species of insane joy possessed him. His muscles were tense with delight; every nerve quivered rapturously. . . . 'Nothing can make a catboat safe!'" Goodspeed wishes for more adventure in his life, and he longs for death-defying experiences which make him feel that he is really living, unlike the way he feels when he is at home with his invalid wife. When Goodspeed capsizes in the ocean, a "summer lady" who "knew nothing of the natural history of the winter parson" rescues him from drowning. Goodspeed soon discovers that the "summer lady" is a doctor, and he persuades Dr. Eunice Thorpe to treat his wife, who suffers from hypochondria more than anything else. Dr. Thorpe's intervention in the Goodspeed household creates "[a] new earth, if not a new heaven." He and Dr. Thorpe begin spending time together, rowing, walking, and driving, and
Goodspeed thinks of his new friend as "a new metaphor": "She was climate. She was atmosphere. She was escape. She was freedom. With her came uncounted respite and reliefs; through her accession opened little vistas of rest, something that he dares not call hope, and yet for which there seemed no duller name." Mrs. Goodspeed is not the least bit jealous of their relationship; however, when Goodspeed and the doctor almost drown in a boating accident, his wife is almost killed from the shock. If Goodspeed does not recognize the dangerousness of his relationship with the doctor, certainly Dr. Thorpe does. She thinks, "She dared neither forecast nor ignore the probable consequences of this day's events. She felt the sense of immaturity in human experience, or aloofness from the plan of life, which comes at times to every unwedded woman. 'They are married,' she thought; 'I am not. I should not have interfered.'" At the end, the noble doctor leaves Goodspeed, allowing him to return to his wife. This story uses both interesting dialogue and symbolism throughout to reveal the triangular relationship between the three characters, and it does the best job of these three short stories in avoiding the easy ending and in providing tension. In addition, "Dea ex Machina" illustrates the conflict in the single woman, for although she enjoys having a friendship with a man, she eventually discovers that her behavior is inconsiderate, and Dr. Thorpe leaves the relationship with some regret. In all three of these stories, "No News," Avery, and "Dea ex Machina," a couple's unhappy relationship leads one of the two to spend time in a boat, but near-drowning experiences all serve as turning points in the couples' lives, leading, in all three cases, to the man changing his ways and vowing to spend more time with an invalid wife.

This theme is turned around in one of Phelps's later novels, Walled In (1907). In this story, it is not the man who goes rowing to escape his invalid wife, but the wife who goes rowing to escape her ill husband. Obviously, this marriage had problems even before Myrton Ferris's automobile accident, but when he finds he must stay in bed for an indefinite period, Ferris becomes an invalid and an insomniac. His wife, Tessa Ferris, on
the other hand, is a frivolous, fun-loving woman who understands that her attractiveness is her strong suit, especially when she wears her favorite butterfly-covered dress. Like a butterfly, she engages in flirtatious behavior, flying from admirer to admirer. Although she has been warned against this behavior, particularly flirting with the young university students at the school where her husband is a favorite professor, she continues to seek adventure through romantic encounters, usually canoeing trips, which become increasingly dangerous, and Tessa's attitude toward Myrton escalates into sarcasm. When he asks her to stop her affairs, saying, "I must ask you--once and for all--to stop this thing. It is discreditable, and it can't go on. . . . There is such a thing as common prudence and decorum. . . . You will get yourself talked about," Tessa defends herself, saying, "Do you mean to insult me? . . . I haven't done anything wrong! . . . The president is an old poke! . . . He is nothing but a diplomat. I am a child of nature." Despite her claim to the contrary, Tessa is not the "child of nature" she believes herself to be. In fact, nature itself, in the form of the river, destroys her.

The narrator describes the river as having a "sinuous and lethargic" current, and the river "gave the impression of a dual nature, half vicious and half benign." The narrator foreshadows the danger of the river to Tessa, and Tessa's lack of attention to this danger is symbolic of her own lack of attention to the problems existing in her marriage. When she goes out in her canoe, "the paddle moved idly, and without the unresisted attention which is as necessary to the handling of a canoe as it is to the salvation of a soul," or to the salvation of a marriage, Phelps might have written. Despite the warnings of her young male companion, Tessa insists on standing in the canoe, reaching over, and pulling up a water lily. Her companion warns her that if she were to capsize in the midst of the lilies, "whose long, strong stems, thick pads, and waxen blossoms protested powerfully against the intrusion of the canoe," they would have a difficult time saving themselves. As she sits in the canoe and surveys the beautifully dangerous scene
around them, Tessa imagines that the lilies are alive: "As far as the eye could go, the strong stems of the lilies writhed; they had substance like that of flesh, and one wondered if like it they had sentience. . . . [T]he lily at her throat became unfastened and fell."105 As Tessa watches her dropped lily floating down the river, getting caught in a current, she sees a butterfly land on the flower:

While she turned her slow neck a yellow butterfly dipped to the whirling lily, and when it would have risen, one wing dragged in the water. Its little struggle was an instant, immeasurable thing, scarcely worth attention in a world full of human woe and wrong; yet the two in the canoe watched the butterfly, nor could they have told why, till the insect and the flower were submerged.106

In this scene, which foreshadows Tessa's eventual drowning death, Tessa imagines the horror of drowning, asking how deep the water is and whether the lilies would choke her: "Would they twist about you and drag you? If you were sinking, but you had a chance to get out--somebody to help you--they would keep you under, they would hold you down. I am sure of it. . . . You would look up and lie there strangling, and you could be saved, but they wouldn't let you!"107 Despite Tessa's very real fears of the water lilies, they seem to call her; unfortunately, the water lilies win in the battle for Tessa, and she drowns.

Although Myrton Ferris is supposed to be the long-suffering invalid husband in this novel, at times the reader may feel more sorry for Tessa, for even though she does not act honorably, she does attempt to gain some sense of independence in her married state, even if her independence is at the cost of her honor. Ferris is not a perfect man; however, when he later marries his nurse and Tessa's step-sister, Honoria, we know that it is only because he is an invalid that they are able to stay together happily. Male youth and invalidism provide some sense of equality in marriage in many of Phelps's novels, and perhaps in Phelps's life, for these qualities help the woman add some of her own strength into the union.
Clearly, Phelps's attitude toward marriage was conflicted at best, as represented in her fiction. However, in many ways Phelps still seems to support the status quo of marriage and family, for she valorizes happy marriages between "noble" women and "true" men. In some of her novels and short stories, one must read carefully to recognize the techniques she uses to undercut the conventions of her time. It is important to realize, however, that writing as she did in the late nineteenth century in a community of writers who knew one another and in a society which honored certain standards, it would have been difficult for Phelps to have been completely honest about her attitude toward marriage, particularly in the years following her own marriage to Ward. Although Kessler argues that Phelps could not directly write about marriage problems after 1888, as I have shown, she did write a few critiques of nineteenth-century marriage after this time, although these were mostly written in her last decade of life when her marriage was probably too far gone to worry much about saving it. Of all these critiques of marriage, perhaps none is so scathing as her single pseudonymously-written novel, *Confessions of a Wife* (1902). This novel, written entirely in journal form, a form Phelps had used successfully with *The Gates Ajar*, is not an obviously autobiographical novel in plot, for although it is a most revealing statement about unhappy marriage, the husband in the novel is a drug addict who abandons his wife. Interestingly, Phelps was a fan of Thomas De Quincey's autobiographical account of his own drug addiction in *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, and this novel seems to be an attempt to show "the other side," the wife's viewpoint of life with a drug addict. What seems very possibly autobiographical, however, are the emotions of the narrator, Marna Trent, both when she shows the way she was seduced by Dana Herwin and, later, as she desperately seeks to repair her torn marriage.

Although Phelps never admitted to writing *Confessions of a Wife*, her authorship seems undeniable. In the first major work written on Phelps, Mary Angela Bennett's
Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (1939), Bennett claimed that Phelps wrote the novel and there has been no dispute of the matter since that time. Bennett reports that Edward Johnson Phelps, Elizabeth's younger brother, confirmed her authorship in a November 21, 1936, letter to Bennett. In addition, Bennett writes, "In spite of her consistent denial of its authorship, it is undoubtedly hers. Even without her brother's positive statement of her authorship, the internal evidence is enough to convict her. The style is unmistakably hers and the sentiment. . . ."109 Carol Farley Kessler also acknowledges Phelps's authorship of the novel, and she explains Phelps's use of a pseudonym: "To avoid again being subject to the hostility *Avis* had aroused, Phelps used the pseudonym 'Mary Adams.' 'Mary' was the Christian name her mother had given her, 'Adams' her paternal grandmother's family name. But in spite of her efforts at anonymity, the *Woman's Journal* alleged that she had written the *Century* serialization."110 I agree with both critics that *Confessions of a Wife* had to have been authored by Phelps, not only because of the evidence they provide, but also because of the consistency of its themes and motifs with Phelps's other novels.

*Confessions* begins with Marna Trent, a fairly young, wealthy daughter of an ex-governor, who lives in a large house surrounded by beautiful gardens and high walls covered with broken glass. Like the characters in *Hedged In* and *Walled In*, Marna is trapped—not trapped in poverty like Nixy in *Hedged In* or trapped by illness and insomnia like Myrton Ferris in *Walled In*, but trapped by society's expectations of a genteel woman. Marna says that she is supposed to be a "proper" girl, but she hates proper behavior and likes "to wear golf-skirts, and not to give an account of myself, and to run about the grounds in the dark."111 Marna recognizes her "split personality," and calls her other self a "Wilderness Girl." She writes, "There never was a civilized woman who had more of the 'forest primeval' in her than I, and never one who was less suspected of it" (34). Marna resents the walls around her house, for they keep her isolated from the world:
Why, if I were a man, I should be outside, in the clubs, the streets, the theaters,—God knows where,—doing bohemian things, watching people in the slums, going to queer places with policemen, tramping up and down and watching the colored lights on the long bridges, taking tremendous walks out into the country, coming home at any hour, with a latch-key, and wearing a mackintosh... But I am a girl; and I stay in the garden. (10)

Like so many of Phelps's women, Marna does not think she is suited to marriage. She writes, "[W]hen a man chooses a Wilderness Girl, he must not expect her to be precisely like all the other girls, and, in my opinion, he should treat her accordingly" (55). When Dana Herwin, her father's secretary, begins to court her, Marna writes a warning letter to him:

The world is so full of women! I read the other day that there are forty millions in this country. I think if you really would exert yourself, you might manage to love some other one of them. And then you and I would both be quite happy. You are not a dull man (I grant you that), but you don't seem to understand my point in the least. It is not that I have a highly developed aversion to you. It is that I do not wish to love any man—-not any man. (27-28)

Later, Marna writes in her journal, "I do not wish or mean to marry this man—nor any man; no, not any man. That is my nature" (44). While Marna makes the same claims that Perley, Avis, Dr. Zay, and other Phelps characters make, she does not appear to have the conviction behind her claim. Marna is not a person with a profession. She claims she wanted to be a writer, but that after four rejections, she has given up on the idea. Thus, although Marna seems to be serious when she claims she does not wish to marry, she is rather easily swayed by Herwin's romantic entreaties perhaps because of her own lack of a sense of purpose.

In the first few pages of the novel, Marna confesses one of her great flaws, and this flaw appears to be the reason Marna eventually decides to marry Dana Herwin, a man who does not have the qualities of a good husband which Phelps's describes, but who is very handsome. She writes, "I'm afraid I was born a heathen for beauty's sake... I have
never loved any person who was not beautiful" (3). Mama not only is a slave to beauty, but she also, like so many of Phelps's female protagonists, has extremely contradictory feelings about love and marriage. Interestingly, Mama repeats a version of the Atalanta myth, one she is translating from the French, in the first few pages of the novel. As in *Doctor Zay*, in *Confessions* the Atalanta myth represents the superior woman who is chased by men and eventually caught through trickery. However, in this French version, instead of the woman being a fast runner (or a fast buggy driver, as in *Doctor Zay*), the woman is rowing in the sea; thus, just as in the other critiques of marriage mentioned earlier, Phelps returns to this motif of the woman at sea as she describes a sea-princess rowing in a river:

So she floated out in her shallop upon the river, nor would she let any person guide the shallop, neither her men nor her maidens, but loved the feel of the oar, and the deference of it to her own soft hands... And she was a fair princess, though a haughty, and many men crowned her in their hearts, but to none of them did she incline. And certain knights took boats and sought to overtake her upon the river, for she seemed to drift. But when they drew nearer to her, drifting, they perceived that she was rowing, and, row they never so sturdily, she did keep the shallop in advance of them, nor did she concern herself with them, for she was a princess, and she had the sea in her heart, while they were but knights, and contented themselves with the river. (4)

The sea-princess is eventually overtaken by a prince as he approaches her with muffled oars while she hides from him. She discovers that she has lost her oars, so the prince takes her into his boat. Of this story, Marna writes, "I never had any patience with Atalanta," probably because Atalanta seems to give up too easily, but like the princess in the story, Marna gives up to Dana Herwin after only a brief battle.

The narrator describes Herwin as handsome, but the reader soon discovers that while Herwin often acts tender, he is actually overbearing. *Marna* is put off by what she calls his "Heir-to-the-Throne-in-Disguise manner," talking in a steady voice and acting very self-assured (12, 15). He also assumes that Marna cares for him, and he sneaks up on
her and kisses her in the garden, a behavior which both irritates and fascinates Marna. Eventually, however, Marna begins to be fooled by his polite and attentive behavior, and she considers his courtship manners as "very thoughtful and kind" (29). Herwin is thoughtful to Marna's father, and of course, his handsome looks help convince Marna that his inner beauty must match his outward appearance. (29, 79). However, Marna recognizes very early in their relationship that Herwin, like herself, has a dual nature. If she is part "proper girl" and part "Wilderness Girl," then Herwin might be said to be both a "modern man" and a "savage." She describes him:

He has the bewilder ing beauty of a pagan god (I mean, of course, one of the good-looking gods), but he has the exasperating sensitiveness of a modern man. And then, he has the terrible persistence of a savage. I think he would have been capable of dashing whole tribes to war for a woman, and carrying her off on his shoulder, bound hand and foot, to his own country, and whether she loved him or hated him wouldn't have mattered so much--he would have got the woman. (31-32)

Marna fears his "terrible persistence" and resents his insistence that she wear a wedding band. To Marna, the ring is like a shackle. She asks Herwin, "Why need I be a prisoner at all? I'm sure I can love you quite as much without rings" (56). Once she gives in to wearing the ring, she says that the ring "seems to cut into my finger, and to eat my flesh like fire." She adds, "I feel as if I were led, a prisoner. It seems to me like handcuffs" (59). However, Marna reconciles herself to the feeling of ownership which the ring conveys, and she also seems to reconcile herself to marriage.

Throughout the novel, Marna reveals the difficulty she has in getting along with her hard-to-please husband, for she eventually discovers that he is not as kind as he had seemed before they married. In one revealing page of her journal, Marna describes an instance when she had not pleased her husband, and she tells him that she is trying, even though she is not "used to mending stockings," for her servants have always done these jobs. She admits to him, "All my being has become a student in the science of love: and all
my art is to learn how skillfully to make you happy" (107). Mama is much like Avis in her reaction to her husband; she seeks to please him and feels responsible when he is angry. She writes, "No woman ever forgotten the first time that the man she loves speaks sharply to her; of that I am sure" (106). Despite short periods of relief from her husband's overbearing behavior, Mama eventually decides, "I cannot deceive myself, or call things by opalescent names, any longer! My husband is not kind to me, he is not kind!" (145). She writes that he causes her pain at all times (148). This lack of kindness or tenderness throughout their marriage goes a long way to kill the love Mama feels for Herwin, but when he leaves her, she is still devastated.

The novel continues with Herwin's lack of love for his wife, an illness, his use of painkillers, and his eventual abandonment of Mama, all of which support the previous evidence in the novel that Herwin is neither a "true man" nor an appropriate husband for Mama. Mama must learn to come to terms with her husband's disappearance, an event which would have been quite shameful in the early twentieth century, and she deals with the hurt and embarrassment she feels. Eventually, Mama discovers that her husband has been away from her for so long because he has become a drug addict; his earlier illness set up an addiction to opiates that he could no longer control. However, while Herwin is gone, Mama and the local doctor, Robert Hazekon, begin to develop a close relationship, as he helps Mama recover from her loss and secretly helps Herwin to recover from his drug addiction. Mama describes Dr. Hazekon as a "good, unselfish man." and says, "Of such is the tenderness that the whole wide world might see and be the better for" (296). When Herwin eventually returns to Mama, subdued, chastened, and repentant, she recognizes that, as a noble woman, she must accept Herwin back and deny her love for the good doctor. She states, "All the awful power of the marriage tie closed about me,—its relentlessness, its preciousness,—not to be escaped" (315). Mama cannot appreciate the twist fate has dealt her—she finally finds love with a worthy man, only to discover that this
man is so worthy that he sacrificed their possibility for love to save her husband. With echoes from Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879; English translation 1906), Marna thinks, "We are all dolls, . . . and fate plays with us" (320).

In an attempt to repair what had been broken, Marna and Herwin recommit to one another with wedding vows, leaving Robert Hazelton behind. The novel ends, however, with a possibility for a future for Hazelton and Marna, for Herwin sinks into serious illness. Thus, Phelps leaves the reader with an open ending and a conclusion that not only is marriage difficult, but that even the best of men and women sometimes fall into drug abuse and unfaithfulness. For Phelps, ideal marriage between noble men and true women was a chimera; however, she seems to argue that men and women may become better people through the attempt to work through their relationships, despite the fact that women usually lose something of their independence. Thus, for Phelps relationships between men and women were complex and fascinating, and like John Stuart Mill, she would probably agree that the ideals of society and marriage must change so that society can move forward: "The moral regeneration of mankind will only really commence when the most fundamental of the social relations is placed under the rule of equal justice, and when human beings learn to cultivate their strongest sympathy with an equal in rights and in cultivation."112
Notes


2 Phelps, *Chapters* 249-50.

3 Phelps published a biographical tribute to her father the year following his death. Perhaps she felt that she had given him enough glowing accolades in this work to make up for any oblique criticism which might appear in her autobiography. Phelps, *Austin Phelps: A Memoir* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892).

4 In 1896, when *Chapters from a Life* was published, almost all of Phelps's close friends and family members had died. According to Kessler, Phelps's favorite brother Stuart died in 1883, and only one of her brothers was alive when her father died in 1890 (*Phelps* 79). Among subjects for Phelps's "portraits" who had died include: Lydia Maria Child (d. 1880), James T. Fields (d. 1881), Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (d. 1882), John Greenleaf Whittier (d. 1892), Phillips Brooks (d. 1892), and Oliver Wendell Holmes (d. 1894). Harriet Beecher Stowe died the same year, 1896.


6 Phelps, *Avis* 97.

7 Letter from Phelps to Whittier, May 14, 1882, from the Alderman Library Collection.

8 Phelps to Whittier, Jan. 20, 1889, Essex Institute.

9 Kessler, *Phelps* 78.

10 Bennett, *Elizabeth Stuart Phelps* 88-89. According to Bennett, the *Boston Herald* even insinuated that Phelps should have been marrying Herbert D. Ward's father, a widower who was only a few years older.

11 Bennett, *Phelps* 92.

12 Kessler, *Phelps* 120.

13 The dedication continues, "October 20th, 1910. Home. The sun was kneeling to dusk across the Sweet Home valley. Page 310." Inscription in the front of Copy 1 of *The Empty House, and Other Stories* (1910), in the Barrett Library, University of Virginia. Other similar inscriptions which have Phelps signing herself as "Avis" include the following: "To my dear husband from Avis. Newton Highlands. April 29th 1893," inscription in *Donald Marcy* (1893); "To Herbert from Avis. August 31st, 1909. Home."
In memory of two Clydes," inscription in Copy 2 of *Jonathan and David* (1909); "To the man in this case. My dear husband from Avis. September, 1906. Home. The first copy," inscription in Copy 1 of *The Man in the Case* (1906); "To my husband Herbert D. Ward. Avis. September 17th, 1909," inscription in Copy 1 of *The Oath of Allegiance, and Other Stories* (1909); "To my dear husband from Avis his wife. April 1901. Home. 'The great drama of marriage moves on . . . always gathering the power and the pathos and the preciousness that belong to no other situation in human life,'" inscription in Copy 2 of *The Successors of Mary the First* (1901); "'And God went with them. Page 38. To my husband. Avis. March 20th, 1896. Home. Newton Centre. With Easter love. 'I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that believeth on me . . . shall live,'" inscription in Copy 3 of *The Supply at Saint Agatha's* (1896); "To my dear collaborator, from the other one. Avis his Wife. Home. October 1st, 1904," inscription in Copy 2 of *Trixy* (1904); "The first copy. To my dear Husband from Avis his Wife. October the twenty-second, 1901. Two days after. Home. Newton Centre. Dudley Street. 'Sunshine,'" inscription in Copy 1 of *Within the Gates* (1901). All at the Barrett Library, University of Virginia.

14 Kessler, *Phelps* 83.

15 Ernestine Potowski Rose, Speech at the National Woman's Rights Convention, Worcester, MA, 1851; reprinted in *Man Cannot Speak for Her* 106.

16 Lucretia Coffin Mott, "Discourse on Women," 1849; reprinted in *Man Cannot Speak for Her* 88.


19 Phelps wrote in a letter to Whittier about the marriage between James T. and Annie Fields, "I never knew but three marriages in my life, that seemed to me ideal; this was the best of the three." May 2, 1881. Papers of Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (MSS 6697-e), Clifton Waller Barrett Library of American Literature, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library.


22 Mott, "Discourse on Woman" 79-80.

23 See Elizabeth Segel's article, "The Gypsy Breynton Series: Setting the Pattern


25 Phelps, "The True Woman" 1.

26 Phelps, "The True Woman" 1.

27 Phelps, "The True Woman" 1.

28 Note: In order to avoid confusion, throughout the remainder of the text I will use lower case "true woman" to identify Phelps's description and upper case "True Woman" to identify Welter's description.

29 Phelps, "The True Woman" 1.


34 Stansell, *City of Women* 64.


36 Mott, "Discourse on Women" 79-80.

37 Phelps, *The Silent Partner*.


40 Phelps, *Walled In; A Novel* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1907).

41 Phelps, *Walled In* 104-05.

42 Phelps, *Walled In* 194-95.

43 Phelps, "A Talk to Nurses," *The Independent* 29 June 1899: 1736-38. From an address to the Training School of the Hospital in Newton, Mass.
44 Lucretia Coffin Mott, "Discourse on Women" 80.

45 Phelps, Chapters 29.

46 Phelps, Hedged In 243.

47 Phelps, Hedged In 254.

48 Phelps, Hedged In 255-56.

49 Phelps, Hedged In 283.

50 Phelps, Hedged In 256.

51 Phelps, The Silent Partner 285.

52 Phelps, The Silent Partner 287.

53 Phelps, The Silent Partner 288.

54 Phelps, The Silent Partner 289.


56 Phelps, The Silent Partner 162.

57 Phelps, The Silent Partner 302.

58 Phelps, The Silent Partner 255.

59 Phelps, The Silent Partner 255.

60 Phelps, The Silent Partner 257.

61 Phelps, The Silent Partner 260.


63 Phelps, The Silent Partner 262.

64 Phelps, The Silent Partner 263.


66 Phelps, An Old Maid's Paradise 11.


70 Phelps, *Burglars in Paradise* 132.


73 Phelps, *Burglars in Paradise* 220.


75 Phelps, *Avis* 144.

76 Phelps, *Avis* 145, 146.

77 Phelps, *Avis* 49.

78 Throughout *The Story of Avis*, Phelps uses bird imagery to symbolize Avis. Of course, "avis" means bird.

79 Phelps, *Doctor Zay* 238.

80 Phelps, *Doctor Zay* 239.

81 Phelps, *Doctor Zay* 244.

82 Phelps, *Doctor Zay* 240.

83 Phelps, *Friends* 232.

84 Phelps, *Friends* 255.

85 Kessler, *Phelps* 83.


87 Phelps, "No News" 8.

88 Phelps, "No News" 9.
89 Phelps, "No News" 10.
90 Phelps, "No News" 32.
91 Phelps, "No News" 35.
92 Phelps, "No News" 29.
94 Phelps, "No News" 29.
96 Phelps, "Dea ex Machina" 304.
97 Phelps, "Dea ex Machina" 304.
98 Phelps, "Dea ex Machina" 308.
99 Phelps, "Dea ex Machina" 310.
100 Phelps, "Dea ex Machina" 313.
101 Phelps, Walled In 222-23.
102 Phelps, Walled In 160-61.
103 Phelps, Walled In 161.
104 Phelps, Walled In 163.
105 Phelps, Walled In 165.
106 Phelps, Walled In 165-66.
107 Phelps, Walled In 166.
108 None of Phelps's biographers have ever suggested that Phelps or her husband had a drug addiction problem. However, there are suggestive passages in both Phelps's fiction and autobiography. In The Story of Avis, for instance, Avis takes some Eau de Fleurs d'Oranger, which Kessler reports is a strong orange brandy. However, Avis's response to the substance seems more like a drug-induced hallucination than a dream brought on by alcohol (95). In addition, in her autobiography, Phelps comments: "De Quincey's Opium-Eater was a prose poem, which stands for all time one of the greatest
pathological contributions of genius and of suffering to literature. There is a vision yet to be recorded—whether in prose or in poetry, in fiction or in philosophy, I sometimes wonder—which shall disclose the action of another drama... The abstainer from anodynes who starves for sleep, but does not feed on poison (God forbid that you dare to blame him if he does, though you may safely revere him if he does not!), lacks the gorgeous, narcotined imagination of the great Englishman whereby to tell his story; but if it is ever told, it will be a better one for the world to hear... Avoid dependence upon narcotics as you would that cycle in the Inferno where the winds blow the lost spirit about, and toss him to and fro—returning on his course, and drive back—forever. Take the amount of sleep that God allows you, and go without what He denies; but fly from drugs as you would from that poison of the Borgias which cunningly selected the integrity of the brain on which to feed. Starve for sleep if you must; die for lack of it if you must; I am almost prepared to say, accept the delirium which marks the extremity of fate in this land of despair,—but scorn the habit of using anodynes as you hope for healing, and value reason. This revelation is sealed with seven seals" (238-39). In both accounts, Phelps seems to suggest some personal familiarity with drugs, whether her own experience or someone else's. It is certainly not beyond the realm of possibility that Phelps or Ward (or even her father, Austin Phelps, whose insomnia and ill health were also well-known) used laudanum or some other drug as a sleeping draught because drugs such as opium and cocaine were relatively easy to get in this time period. In fact, many people who would not let liquor "pass their lips" would use drugs in order to go to sleep without ever considering the repercussions. Toward the end of the twentieth century, about the time Phelps wrote her autobiography, the negative impact of drugs was beginning to be researched and doctors were beginning to warn their patients against use of drugs. Nonetheless, it is likely that Phelps knew something about the negative impact of drug abuse, beyond what she had read in De Quincey's Confessions of an English Opium Eater. One could easily speculate that her husband's long illnesses and prolonged absences were partially the inspiration for Confessions of a Wife.

109 Mary Angela Bennett, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps 93-94. Bennett is highly critical of this novel, however. She continues the quoted passage, "... but both are so exaggerated as to become almost caricatures. It is as if she found an outlet there for the pent-up emotions of many years. The story except in its larger aspects is not autobiographical. Certainly many of the details cannot have been within the scope of her experience. It is a shamelessly pitiful tale of wedded misery with the inevitable promise of a happier future to leave a pleasant taste in the reader's mouth. It speaks well for Mrs. Ward's critical judgment that she never acknowledged the authorship of this book. It adds nothing to her reputation from any point of view" (94).

110 Kessler, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps 107-08. The Woman's Journal article which claimed Phelps's authorship can be found in Woman's Journal 12 July 1902.

111 Phelps, Confessions of a Wife (New York: Century, 1902) 7. Henceforth in this chapter, quotes from the novel will be cited parenthetically in the body.
CHAPTER VII

CONCEALING HERSELF BEHIND HER AUTOBIOGRAPHY,

REVEALING HERSELF IN HER FICTION:

SOME CONCLUSIONS

It is an ancient and honorable rule of rhetoric, that he is the greatest writer who, other things being equal, has the greatest subject. He is, let us say, the largest artist who, other things being equal, holds the largest view of human life. The largest view of human life, we contend, is that which recognizes moral responsibility, and which recognizes it in the greatest way.

(Phelps, *Chapters 263*)

Almost any discussion of the works of Elizabeth Stuart Phelps generally deals with her interest in women's rights to education, to opportunities for work, and to happiness at home and in society, but it is clear that Phelps is more than simply a "women's writer." Her novels of American realism also show societal problems such as class differences, labor problems, and alcoholism, all issues which she believed to be serious societal concerns in the years she was writing, between 1865 and 1910. This was an era of great change and progress in America; however, despite Phelps's concentration on the serious social evils which she wrote about, she was not unhopeful, for most of her novels, while they rarely end in a traditional "they-got-married-and-lived-happily-ever-after" fashion, offer hope for future generations.

Perhaps this "hopeful, yet sad" ending is best represented by *The Story of Avis* (1877). After Avis's husband Philip dies, Avis returns home with the recognition that her artistic ability has been depleted and she has lost her former popularity. "'It is of no use,' said Avis wearily. 'my pictures come back upon my hands. Nobody wants them--now. They tell that my style is gone. Goupil says I work as if I had a rheumatic hand. . . . But the stiffness runs deeper than the fingers.'" However, despite her loss--of her artistic
ability and of her husband--Avis finds promise in her daughter, Wait. Reflecting a passage from early in the novel when Avis, still single, had argued with Philip, saying passionately, "I have my work!" she now looks to Wait, and as she "snatched the little girl." she cries, "I have my child!" Although the narrator is doubtful that Avis will be able to succeed in helping her daughter avoid all her own "blunders," the narrator does suggest that Wait's generation may be able to achieve what Avis and her generation could not--to "dream and dare." As Avis figuratively passes Wait the holy grail at the end of the novel with her reading of the story of Launcelot and Galahad, she assures us that "[t]his is [s]he by whom the Sangreal shall be achieved." Thus, Phelps believes that the next generation will be able to do things that Avis's generation only dreamed of.

For Phelps, this hopefulness was as much a part of the "truth" she wished to write about as was her realistic portrayal of social problems. The realists of the nineteenth century, including novelists as diverse in viewpoint as Gustave Flaubert, George Eliot, William Dean Howells, and Henry James, took for one of their goals the realistic portrayal of characters in unsentimental settings, and in such works as Phelps's *Hedged In* (1870), she makes it quite clear that she is trying to write an unsentimental portrayal of Nixy Trent, a poverty-stricken pregnant teenager, by refusing to place her against romantic backdrops, writing, "On a background of Roman ruins she would have been as effective as a rich romance; against a Yankee fence she was simply painful." Despite her attempts to write realism, many, such as William Dean Howells, accused her of writing for an "ethical purpose," which they felt opposed the realistic purpose. Phelps wanted to write about "truth," but her difference with Howells and others was that her definition of "truth" was not the same as theirs. She elaborates:

A literary artist portrays life as it is, or has been, as it might be, or as it should be. We classify him as the realist, the romanticist, or the idealist; though I am not sure but our classification is more defective than his ability to meet it. . . . The quarrel arises when the artist defines his subject, and
chooses his medium. The conflict begins when the artist proffers his personal impression as to what life is. . . . If I may return to the definite words,--our difference is not so much one of artistic theory as of the personal equation. Our book reveals what life is to us. Life is to us what we are.

Arguing that those who only write "art for art's sake" are missing the boat, Phelps says that although reform tracts such as her *What to Wear?* (1873) cannot be considered art, for they are "in no sense, literature, nor even literary art," works written for an ethical purpose may indeed be considered art. She writes:

> Since art implies the truthful and conscientious study of life as it is, we contend that to be a radically defective view of art which would preclude from it the ruling constituents of life. Moral character is to human life what air is to the natural world;--it is elemental. . . . The moral element, it cannot be denied, predominates enormously in the human drama. The moral struggle, the creation of character, the moral ideal, failure and success in reaching it, anguish and ecstasy in missing or gaining it, the instinct to extend the appreciation of moral beauty, and to worship its Eternal Source,—these exist wherever human being does.

Thus, for Phelps, the "moral element" is a primary element in character development and plot, and this moral element can be seen in all her works of fiction. Although it can be argued that many of her novels go farther than just treating the moral element, for they sometimes moralize, and some of her novels succeed better than others, Phelps appreciated artistic literature, and she always attempted to create artistic works which do more than mere moralizing.

Not only was Phelps a realist, but she was a reformer, as I have shown throughout this dissertation. Her works often decry social situations which she believed needed to be improved, and they also offer solutions for these problems, solutions which usually involve men and women becoming involved in the lives of others and making real changes. It does appear that her earlier works are more hopeful for real change than her later novels, perhaps revealing some personal disappointment with societal progress in her latter decades of life. Yet, Phelps continued to speak out for change throughout her life, even
though she often changed the platforms upon which she concentrated. In the late 1860s through the early 1880s, Phelps actively argued along with the woman's rights supporters that women needed to be given more opportunities to education, careers, and equality in marriage. Her column in *The Independent* in the early 1870s contains some radical statements of women's rights. In the 1870s through the 1890s, she was involved in the temperance movement, and she supported changes to the laws, even going to far as to do some temperance preaching in the saloons herself. The beginning of the twentieth century saw Phelps changing her focus to the issue of vivisection (animal experimentation which often involved exploratory surgery on still-living animals), and she even presented anti-vivisection legislation before the legislature of Massachusetts. Her story *Trix y* (1904) revolves around intelligent, loving dogs whose mute cries for help often resemble women in society who are voiceless without the vote and who depend upon their "masters" to save them from their inhumane situations. Phelps, however, did not feel that she was meant to be a public speaker for these issues, and in her autobiography, she offers something of an apology for her own lack of real activity among the "agitators" of her age: "My intellect may go with them, and my heart may throb for them, but my time and vitality have always been distinctly the property of my ideals of literary art; ideals which are not the less imperious to me, because I know better than any of my critics how impossible it has been for me to reach them." Despite Phelps's active, outspoken involvement in some of these issues, she believed that she was, above all, a literary artist.

The artistry in Phelps's fiction is, at times, quite superb. Her novels are often intertextually complex, providing underlying symbolism and overlays of mythological characters even as she references philosophical and poetic texts throughout her fiction, as she does in both *The Story of Avis* and *Doctor Zay* (1882) so skilfully. Although the novels which are currently in print, *The Story of Avis*, *Doctor Zay*, and *The Silent Partner* (1871), are arguably her best novels, several of Phelps's novels which are no longer in
print deserve a larger audience. Even in early works such as *The Gates Ajar* (1868) and *Hedged In*, Phelps's ability to incorporate imagery gives these novels remarkable complexity. Some of her later novels, such as *A Singular Life* (1895), *Confessions of a Wife* (1902), *Avery* (1902), and *Walled In* (1907), all long-neglected, deserve new readings and interpretations. Despite Phelps's "moral stance," her novels compare favorably with other American realists such as Howells and James, and more of her novels need to be in print so that students can work with Phelps when studying American realism.

In addition, because very few of Phelps's essays are currently accessible unless one goes to the trouble to go back to their original publications, I am incorporating a number of her essays which I have referenced in this text for reference purposes.\(^{12}\)

In all her fiction, Phelps reveals something about herself as she discloses her own views of life: "Life is several other things, we do not deny. It is beauty, it is joy, it is tragedy, it is comedy, it is psychical and physical pleasure, it is the interplay of a thousand rude or delicate motions and emotions. . . . An artist can no more fling off the moral sense from his work than he can oust it from his private life."\(^ {13}\) In her fiction, Phelps combines both her own sense of "truth," of "life," which includes the "moral sense," with her skill as a stylist as she shows the complexity of the world as she sees it. Interestingly, perhaps Phelps reveals the most about herself, her dreams and ideals, in her fiction rather than in her autobiography, for it appears that she is most confident in the fictional worlds which she creates. Phelps's fiction builds a portrait of herself which is different than the carefully-constructed image she reveals in her autobiography and in her biography of her father, *Austin Phelps*. For instance, in neither of her personal biographical accounts does Phelps discuss her boyfriend who died in the Civil War, her four years as lecturer at Boston University, her secretive courtship and wedding to a much younger man, Herbert D. Ward, or her marriage problems. Knowledge of this information, so carefully hidden
from the casual reader, tells the Phelps scholar something of the woman, but despite the
self-image which she chooses to create, I find her secretiveness most revealing.

After opening her autobiography with the paragraphs with which I opened this
dissertation, Phelps, "a stranger to [her] chart," concludes Chapters from a Life with a
highly suggestive passage. I close this account with her words and question whether the
"broken recollections" of her autobiography conceal while revealing, as she intends.
Elizabeth Stuart Phelps may not choose to tell her readers much about her personal life,
but in novels such as The Story of Avis and Confessions of a Wife, it seems that she truly
does.

The fog was breathing off Cape Ann when I put my pen to the first
words of these broken recollections. The coast was hidden. The sea was
calling. He asked grave questions.
The fog is breathing over the inland rolling country as I write this
closing page. The blue and purple mists of a soft November storm, that
cannot make up its mind whether to stay or go, smoke far along the valley.
The outlines of the woods and distance are blurred as if with an imperious
brush. Half of the meaning of the gentle scene is hidden. The sea is too
many miles away to hear him. I am the one who does the calling, who asks
the questions now. But strong silence answers me.

Since out of life we all learn a few things well, we find it natural to
try to make them over to other lives; and we should choose for our telling,
not the most brilliant lessons, but those that have been educative to
ourselves; those that will make it easier to live; and more possible to live
happily, and with the eyes focussed upon a true horizon.

Perhaps, in my honest soul, I am wondering if these fragments will
have done as much as this for any reader of all the patient number.

But the mist is on the hills, as on the valleys, and the outlines of the
landscape all are hidden. I can see but a little way.

Is it the fog that reminds me? Perhaps! But that, or something
else, drags out of my pen the poignant words of Zangwill, who said of a
certain writer that "he had concealed himself behind an autobiography. If
one has done as much as that, perhaps one has met the chief conditions of
the case."
Notes

1 Phelps, *The Story of Avis* 244.


3 Phelps, *The Story of Avis* 245.


5 Phelps, *Hedged In* 76.

6 Phelps, *Chapters* 257.

7 Phelps, *Chapters* 259-60.

8 Victor Cousin (1792-1867) wrote, "We need religion for religion's sake, morality for morality's sake, art for art's sake." *Cours de Philosophie* (1818). Proponents of the "art for art's sake" movement wanted to remove the "ethical purpose" from art, saying that a work of art should stand on its own and be admired for its artistic merit alone.

9 Phelps, *Chapters* 257.

10 Phelps, *Chapters* 261-262.

11 Phelps, *Chapters* 252-53.

12 See Appendices A, B, C, and D.

13 Phelps, *Chapters* 263.

14 Phelps, *Chapters* 277-78. Israel Zangwill (1864-1926) was a British-born author who wrote both realistic and satirical novels about Jewish life.
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Note: The following are works by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps. An attempt has been made to find the first publication date for all works, as well as publication dates for any works published since 1950. Original publication dates are given first. If a work has been re-issued in recent years, that publication date follows.

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Andover Historical Society.

Boston Public Library: Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts.

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Harvard University: The Houghton Library.

The Rutherford B. Hayes Library: Mary and William Claflin Papers.

The Huntington Library.


Swarthmore College: Friends Historical Library.

University of Virginia: Clifton Waller Barrett Collection, Manuscripts Department, Alderman Library.

Yale University: The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Published Correspondence to Phelps

The following works are not written by Phelps, but they include letters written to Phelps, often in response to an earlier letter.


**Secondary Sources**


Boys and girls begin by being astonishingly alike. Up to a certain point they go hand in hand. The first thing we know the road splits, and, before one can tell what has happened, or why, or how, he is tripping down his side of it, she here, and off they go. "waving their hands for a last farewell" to that community of faculties, tastes, and interests, that possible (sometimes practical) likeness of mental and moral caliber which alone can constitute, in any sufficient sense of the term, equality between two people. Now and then a woman "cuts across lots," and now and then a man goes honestly out to meet her; and occasionally, through thickets, and over rocks, and across briars, the two clasp hands with an appreciation of mutual need, and a fitness for one another, and a content with one another which would have been unattainable had they gone on tossing roses and flying kites at each other across the growing distance of their several ways. But this is only that happy exception which proves the sad rule.

Mature life, which develops the man, stunts the woman. He goes on. She stands still. He unfolds. She droops. He puts himself at compound interest. She does well if she save he principal intact.

This is especially noticeable among what we call "educated" men and women.

Mary and Josiah, at the high school or academy, keep step like drilled soldiers. Mary, in fact, is inclined to effect the Euclid lesson in less time than Josiah; and Mary will graduate the higher rank in Greek. At the Shakespeare elocution clubs they will take turns at the five-dollar prize. If Josiah's composition on the principle of the cog-wheel is read at the exhibition, Mary will write the parting hymn. (Even at the base-ball match, one...
August evening, Mary will be "pitcher," and Josiah must look to his laurels, or she will carry her "side" in spite of him.)

If they chance in a medical college together, Mary will be quite sure to bear the first honors over his head.

But Mary seldom chances in the medical or alas! in any other college. Josiah plunges into calculus and Descartes. Mary subsides into custards and dishwater. In fifteen years he is a college professor, or a state surveyor, or the principal of the Young American Idea. In fifteen years--fifteen? in five!--the chances are that she will not read the daily papers.

Apparently, the girl started in life with the same chance of intellectual growth as the boy. What became of it? To all powers of observation and inference she seemed to bring, at the start, as much mental stock as he to their joint corporation. Where did it go?

Said the Hon. George B. Hoar, before a committee of the Massachusetts legislature, in 1869.

"In the town where I was born and educated, and where we had pretty good schools and pretty good scholars, the girls were always at the head of the classes. My friend who has preceded me and my friend who sits on the committee perhaps could tell you something of a lady who fitted me for college, of whom it was said by the late President Everett that she could fill any professorship in Harvard College. Under her tuition the university used to place students who were suspended for a time; and she kept them up with their classes in every study, doing a work which would have been divided among a dozen male teachers in the college. She was one of the few persons in this country who are said to have read the 'Mecanique Celeste' in the original, without the assistance of the translation of Dr. Bowditch; a Greek and Latin scholar to whose studies Aeschylus and Homer and Virgil were familiar; well acquainted, too, with the languages
and literature of modern Europe; who could tell naturalists, like Tuckerman and Gray, some things about their own studies which they were glad to hear."

If there are such women as that among us—and where we hear of one there are, of course, a dozen "mute inglorious"—what becomes of them? Why, if they marry, do they sink into nursery-maids and cooks; and why, if they do not marry, do we find them—for we do find them—rusting life out in sewing-circles and strawberry festivals? Why do they go so far and stop?

"Why?" said a keen-eyed woman, to whom I once propounded the problem; "where?" sharply. "It's plain enough where. Women's wits go into their clothes!"

After long, patient, and assiduous study, I am inclined to think—unable to find for the worse a better reason—that she was partly right.

We hear a great deal about the money it takes to effect a well-dressed woman. I wish we were oftener reminded of the brains it takes.

The average young man walks into his tailor's twice a year, pays a bill, and has coats and pantaloons and vests. That is all he knows. He requires shirts, and somebody makes him shirts. He thinks no more. Will he have a hat? Behold! a piece of felt, with a galloon\(^1\) string. It does not flop over his forehead. It will never twitch off his back hair. It does not blow into his eyes. Its elastic cannot blister his neck, or produce depressions of the cerebellum. It will not be out of date before the summer is over. It is seldom or never a matter of anxious reflection. It is a fixed fact, like yesterday's dinner or the last election.

The average young woman expends enough inventive power, enough financial shrewdness, enough close foresight, enough perturbation of spirit, enough presence of

\(^1\) Definition: A braid or ribbon, as of cotton or silk or of gold or silver thread, used for trimming or binding.
mind, enough patience of hope and anguish of regret upon one season's outfit—I had almost said upon one single street suit—to make an excellent bank cashier or a comfortable graduate of a theological seminary.

If you doubt the truth of this statement, just take in for yourself, with the "cricket's eye," the first young girl you may meet down town. How fearfully and wonderfully made! How do you suppose those bias folds, and double box-plaits, and fluted ruffles, and corded bands, and shirred waists, and paniered skirts, and bowed, and flounced, and tied, and corded, and laced, and buttoned, and spangled, and fringed, and folded, and dotted, and hunched and bunched, and horrible mysteries got together?

There was maneuvering enough expended upon the dressmaker to have elected a representative, and concentration of mind upon the seamstress intense enough to have withstood a Wall Street panic, and headache enough put into the sewing-machine to have mastered "Porter's Human Intellect." And now it requires care enough to keep herself together to save a soul.

I once saw a young lady ride the whole way from Portland to Boston in the care without once leaning back against the cushioned seat, so that she should not tumble her black silk sash.

A barber told me that he "curled a young lady" once for a ball; "and she had two hundred and forty-seven curls when she was done. And I began at ten o'clock in the morning, and I never got through with her till nine o'clock at night!"

Dr. Dio Lewis tells of a being who put four hundred and twenty-five (I think) yards of trimming upon one single dress.

"We get no Christ from you," said Romney Leigh. "And, verily, we shall not get a poet, in my mind."

And, verily, when society has reduced women to such straits as this, one hardly understands such a fact as Elizabeth Barrett Browning.
Four hundred and twenty-five yards! Conceive of the Hon. Charles Sumner or Professor Longfellow in four hundred and twenty-five yards of trimming! Imagine the speech on San Domingo, or the Psalm of Life, written in a black silk sash tied in a snarl to the author's coat-tails, he pausing at every classic metaphor, or at the close of each martial stanza, to see if he had tumbled himself behind.

Fancy Brown-Sequard at a consultation in two hundred and forty-seven curls. Picture him timing the pulse of a dying man with one hand, and tightening his hairpins with the other.

It is a threadbare experiment of outraged taste to fire broadsides of ridicule at women's dress; but it is neither fair play nor fair logic to do "only that and nothing more." Women are what men have made them. You had the first chance, sir. "Our hour is not yet come." It is quite as much your fault as ours that you write epics while we hem frills; and that you support the family while we punch stiletto holes in a piece of cambric, or prick yards of muslin into embroidered "insertin'," to encircle our necks and arms withal.

From the time that a girl-baby is put into a flimsy muslin upper skirt, with three frills and a bow to it, and a boy-baby into a solid piece of blue flannel, with a sailor-collor and brass buttons, to the day when Mary leaves school and begins (alas! poor Mary!) to "do her own sewing," the girl's mental force is imperceptibly, insidiously, poisonously draining away into the covering of her poor, little, innocent, beautiful body. By that it is "time for her to be married"; and then the last state of that woman shall be worse than the first.

Men dress to please themselves. Women dress to please men. A man's attire has regard to his comfort, his convenience, his means, his business, his whereabouts, his health, his happiness. A woman's has regard to the whims, the fancies, the weakness, the admirations, and the passions of men.
It is surprising that it should be necessary to make the assertion that this is neither a natural nor a Christian state of things; that it is perverted and Pagan! that, because we are used to it, we are not, therefore, adapted to it; that it is as false as it is familiar, and as dangerous.

If they were not the most obvious truths which require the most demonstration, and the superfluous applications which oftenest cry for neglect, it would be a mere impertinence to remind the world at this stage of its history that the greatest blunder it has ever committed is the assumption that woman is made for man. But the world, like the school-boy, "knows perfectly well--only forgets."

Under the blessed dispensation of Jesus Christ, a man is just as much the help-meet for the woman as the woman is meet for and help to the man. Under the dry and dusty old-time Jewish prejudice, which sticks like this year's drought, that woman loseth her life, misses her purpose, fails of her final cause, who does not study to make herself useful and attractive to men; and--mark the inevitable corollary--by the very least elevating powers of attraction which she can exert or to which they can respond.

I call them the least elevating. They might well demand a stronger term.

Run your eye over any "female" seminary that you may chance upon, and how often would you find a girl to whom you would say that it has ever occurred to inquire why it is that she should put ten rows of velvet in a "Grecian pattern" on the bottom of a dress, while her brother has his coat bound once with a silk braid, and then calls it a "gimp," and never knows the difference to his dying day? Why she wears four feathers, several yards of ribbon, a piece of lace, cambric flowers, and a vail [sic] upon her straw-hat; and he only a lute-string band pinned straight around the crown? Why her hat tips over her nose, and his stays on his head? Why she is burdened with a pink parasol, and he goes hand-free and burned and happy? Why he may freckle from forehead to chin, if he likes; and why she locks herself into her room and cries when she discovers the tenth,
upon the bridge of her nose? Why he should wear comfortable loose coats, and she uneasy tight basques? Why he is in broadcloth, she in transparent muslin? Why her pretty neck is bare, his decently covered? Why she pays four dollars for a lace collar, he twenty-five cents for a linen? Why she is pinched into corsets, and he is not? Why his shirts are made into plain bands, and every article of her underdress is trimmed? Why her very handkerchiefs are reduced to a seamless, useless mass of fine embroidery and lacework, to which he would refuse the dignity of a mosquito netting? Why, in short, all the use of dress is his, the fuss hers? The sense his, the nonsense hers? The beauty—I hesitate. Man is not a graceful being; but in this cultivated year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and seventy-one, his very stove-pipe hat and sack coat yield the field to the unparalleled and unapproached and unapproachable deformity of women's attire.

It takes more and worse than brains to dress as women are expected to dress. It takes morals.

That few pure-minded women know or think, in donning the latest modes, that they have sprung from the corrupt ingenuity of Parisian harlots only makes the matter worse. Good women ought to think. It is their duty to see, not to ignore, to exile, not to overlook, an immodest style. The mischief and misery will never be remedied till they do. Bad women think, meanwhile, and society responds to the thinker, irrespective of moral quality.

These are sharp, plain words in which to put a very sad, subtle truth; but they are the sad and subtle truths which require sharp, plain words. This would be no place to say them if they were said in their place.

If every woman who has the training of young girls in her hands would teach them, as fast and as far, as slowly and as finely, as carefully and as tersely as she can that the entire past and present theory of feminine dress is a degradation to a good woman and an
opportunity to a bad one, she would do more toward saving the world than any pulpit but the New Testament, and than any preacher but St. John.

When the world learns that there is worse than no reason why women should sacrifice any more time, money, strength, intellect, or modesty to their dress than men, we shall have ten women citizens, scholars, inventors, sculptors, artists, poets, scientists, and rulers where it would be impossible, in the nature of things, to find more than one now.

"I think you hardly allow margin enough," interrupts a thoughtful woman, looking up from her sewing at me here, "for the inside women."

"What do you call the inside women?"

"Those who cannot be artists and poets and--"

"They can be citizens, at least. I said scholars and citizens."

"Well--perhaps. And--isn't there a goodness in the influence of women's dress upon the world? It is very bad, I know; but it isn't all bad."

"Good women will make goodness out of anything. If women ever ennoble society on a wrong principle, the credit belongs not to the principle, but to them. Any principle which demands that one-half of the world shall influence the other half, primarily, by physical beauty and its adornment is degrading both to its subjects and its objects, and, therefore wrong."

My friend took up her sewing silently, and while she was musing the fire burned; then spake I with my tongue:

"I more than suspect that some plain, neat, sensible, and graceful costume--differing in the two sexes only so much as the necessities of society and the finer instincts of women shall require--will be at some time devised for general street, house and business wear; that women will, in due time, be no longer in peril of life every time they step from a horse-car, or of dropping the baby every time they go up-stairs, or of a rheumatic fever every time they walk out in the rain, from their long, entangling skirts; or
of social ostracism if they wear no streamers upon their heads, or of that most dire calamity, not being "popular in society," if they cannot command a good dressmaker.

Of course, being in Rome, meanwhile, we do, more or less--Heaven send it may be less and less!--as the Romans do.

These "bloodless revolutions" in society come on tiptoe, and some conformity to established standards of propriety or elegance is as necessary as flannels in an east wind. As long as we cannot change the temperature, we must, in a measure, adapt ourselves to it. Nevertheless, every woman who has so far pulled her sex back into the Dark Ages as to put on one of the dragging, uncleanly, senseless street dresses which disfigure this spring's fashion-books has done a deed of which she ought to feel ashamed. And, notwithstanding, the day may come when no refined and respected maid or wife would be seen in what will be called a fashionable outfit in any country town in the lead this very summer.


Upon a candid examination, I believe it would be found that there is more downright misery among young women, between the ages of eighteen and thirty, than among any other class of people.

So far from this being a surprising condition of things, the wonder is rather that it should be so seldom credited, so imperfectly understood, and so unwisely received by the more fortunate portions of the world.

The ordinary lot of the ordinary young woman is one of the most miserable and unnatural things in comfortably civilized life; and society will never adjust its distorted angles with any approach to proportion till some radical change is effected in it.
"You are quite right," writes a friend. "I have known women myself who have repeatedly refused to marry because they will not reproduce in the lives of their daughters the sufferings of their own early years."

A wide-eyed creature, with a smile like a wild-brier bud, and a voice like a canary's, comes peeping over your shoulder to read these words; and you life, perhaps, your fond paternal eyes: "Unhappy girls, indeed! What will you do with her?" What I do with wild-briers and canaries--nothing more. You show me the joy of birds and roses--only that. I grant you the charm of a perfume and the strength of song--nothing else.

Your little daughter is happy as babies and bees are happy--not otherwise. Let her hum about your declining days and coo in your fond ears. It almost seems as if bird or bee or baby would do as well. But let her be. Perhaps the world has need of her. I admit her as I admit a kitten. But it is not with her that I have to deal. She does not happen very often. More generally the kitten answers in her stead. She is not the ordinary girl.

Let me say, in passing, that a young woman who really finds in the common lot of young women genuine happiness does so in one of two ways. Either she is too frivolous to appreciate anything truer, deeper, more worldly--in other words, she does not know any better than to like it; or she gains, by means of that sheer sacrifice of self-culture and self-reliance, which is inculcated upon her as the chief end of woman, around which all the sanctities of her affections and authorities of her religion are trained to grow, the compensation which always attends the dignity of even mistaken service. She is happy by simple virtue of self-abnegation. The hight [sic] and depth, the why and wherefore, the whither and where, do not concern her. She may have wasted her life; but, having lost it, she has gained it. She may have misplaced it; but, having missed it, she has found it. In short, she is happy because she does not know that she ought not to be.

"God's sacred pity touched the grand mistake."
But yet it is not with her that I have to deal. *She* is not the ordinary girl. The ordinary girl, I repeat, is an unhappy creature.

If any man doubt this, let him try it. Let him pause in his education four years, five, six before he ought. Let him come home from the school-room with his young head half full of the love of great deeds and great men, great principles and great facts, and his young heart high with great hopes and dreams. (The smallest of us see the world so large when we step into it, like the burning face of a magnified moon, seen through a forest on an eastern hill!) Let him put away his books upon the shelf; he may quite as well. Tomorrow his mother will make cake, and he shall stone the raisins. No, nor need he take them down the next day. Why, my dear sir, there is pickling on Wednesday! Will he snatch an hour to refresh his Horace? But it is washing-day. Will he secure that last review of Darwin before the magazine goes to Cousin Maria? There is nobody to set the table, my dear. Can't you just step down? Will he be off for a tramp in the woods on this wiry morning, every vein aglow and every nerve in tension for a breath of wild life to strike him through? We have the sewing-circle today. There are one hundred biscuit to be buttered first. Run and get your apron, please. Will he go to sea, or on a mission, make shoes, study medicine, banking, law, Gospel, trade? Will he make a million or a poem? A statue or a carpet-sweeper? Sir, your mother has been looking forward for years to the time when she should have you at home to relieve her of her care. Your father cannot spare you. Your little sisters are growing up, and need a brother's guidance. Charity begins at home—yes, and duty, and all zest, hope, dreams, aspirations; yes, and end there. Take up your cross and follow them. Is not the kitchen wide enough? Will not the sewing-room contain your grandest meanings? Can you doubt that you are meeting, in the nursery, all the high intent of life?

I repeat, let any man try it. Let him find himself in a few years' lapse a wearied, worried, stiffened thing; grown into his treadmill; rusting out in brains and wearing out in
body; a patient dependent in his parents' house; a mature man, with about the rights and under most of the restrictions of a child; an unpaid housemaid: perhaps (Heavens knows!) an unthanked and unconsidered drudge. Let him understand that marriage only can relieve him from his position; and that even marriage shall be to him in the main but a continuance of the same; and that even this relief it is not in his power to lift finger to bring within his horizon. Let him appreciate as only a sensitive woman can the peculiar annoyances of a situation in which one is even supposed to be in attendance upon the pleasure of a "lover loth who lingers long." Let him find himself approaching thirty, without a dollar of his own, without prospect of future self-subsistence, or acquaintance with any trade or business which can support him, or a hope of any, to preserve his old age from wretched and unwelcome dependence. Let any man try this, I say, if he wonder why women are not happy.

But it is said: The condition which you represent is not possible, for women have not the same tastes as men. A woman will not feel to be deprivations many customs which to a man would be galling in the extreme.

This I deny. Women have, in general, I believe, very much the same tastes with men. No woman ever failed to feel the deprivations of the life which I have depicted, except from pure pressure and warp of a long training to it and seclusion in it. A woman finds no adaptation to her "taste" in such a life but such as the prisoner found in "Picciola." Would free man have stooped to cherish a weed in the crack of a jail pavement? "Galling in the extreme?" It might be to a man. The language only struggles to express what their lot is to many women. It cannot attain unto the height [sic] of the settled hopelessness, the outraged sensitiveness, the sense of misfit and mishap in all their fine young purposes, the fierce questioning of Heaven and despair of earth, which I have seen in the faces of thoughtful women a hundred times.
But again it is said: All laws hit hard somewhere; every beneficence inflicts some pain; no custom can be adjusted smoothly to every member of society; and, since in general the natural position and employment of women must be in their husbands' or fathers' homes, a certain amount of ill-adaptedness and discontent cannot be avoided in the interval wherein the natural limits of the two overlap. There are rough seas between girlhood and wifehood from which no pilot can inevitably secure the sailor. In the main, a woman's duties are at home; and, in general, her happiness ought to be.

This again I deny. Whatever may be said of married women (and "that," as Mill says of the aberration of moral feeling, "is too weighty a subject to be discussed parenthetically and by way of illustration"), the duties of the unmarried woman are not at home.

I do not refer now to those cases in which invalid or indigent parents require the personal presence and care of their children, except to say that such claims are no more binding upon the filial affection of a daughter than upon that of a son, and that it does not devolve one whit more upon Sarah to leave her store or studio to meet them than upon William to leave his ship or sell out his oil-wells.

Housekeeping and home-staying are no more compulsory upon the consciences and lives of women as women than shoemaking upon the moral principle of men as men. On whatever ground all girls should be housekeepers all boys should be tinsmiths or fishermen. In the nature of things, there is no more claim upon a woman to be her father's housekeeper or her brother's seamstress than to be his hostler or his bootblack. If John should remain with his mother to help about the sewing, so should she; not otherwise. If it is incumbent upon him to expend a dozen of his young years in making preserves, it may be upon her; but not otherwise. It is a selfish affection, a sickly sentimentality, and a terrible error of parental judgment which says to the young man: "Go, life is before you; cut your way; leave your mark; make for yourself an honest independence and an honored
name; tax all the force, all the beauty, all the largeness of your being, that the world may help you, and you the world; no sacrifice will be too great for us to make in aiding you to this grand end; no separation too bitter; we shall watch and smile, and take our gray hairs to the grave in the joy of your success." And to the young woman: "My dear, we cannot spare you now; wait a while; wait a long while; wait a lifetime, perhaps. Give us your self --your young energies, and ingenuities, and the diversion of your brightest hours and the devotion of your gravest; your gifts and graces; your patience and smiles; your opportunities of growth and gain; your chance of usefulness or fame. Life is before you, too--lifting like a golden mist; your young eyes are alight with it. But turn away. Wait a while. Wait a long while. Even wait till the color has faded and the chill sunk down. It is not for you. It may allure you; but we know better. You may long for it; but our sheltering roof is your abiding-place. We have need of you."

And this brings us back. I said that the ordinary lot of the ordinary young woman is unnatural.

"If there is anything vitally important to the happiness of human beings," it has been said, "it is that they should relish their habitual pursuits."

But this is not all. Happiness is not the most natural thing in this world; nor the most important.

"Rights? Oh! yes," said an old countryman, "I won't deny but women has rights. They're human critters. I'U own they've got rights; but they ain't men's rights!"

"They're human critters." We are apt to forget it. But they really are. The large abilities and disabilities, the great means and ends of life they possess in common with their kind to an extent in which the distinctions of sex are an impertinent and unimportant consideration. The pertinence and importance of these distinctions are secondary to the great family likeness of human nature. Women are made in the image of God before they are made in the image of Eve.
Now the position to which we remand young women is one contrary both to the needs and the obligations of young human nature.

The powers of self-management, self-support, and self-investment are the inherent needs of the maturing man or woman. The best and broadest use of these powers is obligatory upon them. This public opinion denies to women. Individuality is the birthright of each human soul. This society crushes out of women. "He who lets the world or his own portion of it choose his plan of life for him has no need of any other faculty than the apelike one of imitation." This exalted trait the world has "expressed to gold-leaf" in its girls. The delicate woof and lustrous coloring of that most delicate and lustrous web, the feminine conscience, have been wound about the bare bitterness of the thing till it has become a difficult matter to explain to a rational young woman that life not only allows but demands of her that she should follow her own judgment in the selection of her work, that she is mistress of her own faculties and queen of her own uses.

"I should like to be a doctor or a lawyer, to preach or to paint, to buy or sell or get gain, to have any place in the active world, any share of its definite struggles and rewards and helpfulness," cry the patient eyes of hundreds of these quiet "home-girls." whose praise is in the mouth of everybody. "But mother would not like it. I am not as happy as I wish I were. I feel as if there were a mistake about me somewhere. But father says I am doing right. I seem to myself to be stepping on tiptoe over a mine of something that I may not touch. I feel unused, untried, unsounded. But brother Edward says he cannot spare me. Like poor Charley Lamb, I 'once thought life to be something, but it has unaccountably fallen from me before its time.' But Sarah says I'm just run down, and need quinine."

This is not of nature nor of grace. It is a distortion and a wrong. In any but a woman we should not need to have it pointed out. Turn the tables. Reverse the coin. Suppose that Raphael had refused to gaze into the divine eyes of the Sistine Mary because
his mother advised him not to. Or that Milton had not entered Paradise because his father thought he'd better not. Or that Mr. Field had let the Cable go, to please a first cousin, who thought he had enough to do at home.

It is often urged that young women, in the dependent and uneventful life of their mothers' homes, can find sufficient outlet for their "spare life," and effective anodyne for their discontent, in acts of charity. Heaven knows what would have become of them, my friend, if they had not made that discovery long ago! "Outlet and anodyne!" Yes, but effective and sufficient!

I say again: Let any man try it. "To practice it [charity] usefully," says the author of the "Subjection of Women" (a book which no reading woman in the land should rest till she has seen), "or even without doing mischief, requires the education, the manifold preparation, the knowledge, and the thinking powers of a skillful administrator. There are few of the administrative functions of government, for which a person would not be fit who is fit to bestow charity usefully."

"I long ago came to the conclusion," said a thinking woman, who has, as we say, tried "both kinds," "that the natural way of assisting the suffering and needy is through the legitimate avenues of a settled business."

Behold, we have the poor always with us! Through the legitimate avenues of a settled business, if at all, we must relieve the suffering and meet the needs of young women. Their lives lack that "greatest possible centralization of information and diffusion of it from the center" which is the mainspring of all true government, either of society or of the individual, and which in this work-a-day, bread-and-butter world can be generally secured only by the discipline of a work-a-day, bread-and-butter, profit-and-loss occupation.

It ought to be just as much of a disgrace or affliction to a parent not to have provided means of apprenticeship to a business for his daughter as for his son. It should
be just as much of a mortification to a young woman to find herself unqualified, at a suitable age, for some kind of trade as it is to a young man. A girl ought to feel as much ashamed of every year that she passes in needless dependence upon her parents' bounty as is her brother.

To the speculative masculine minds interested in the advantages or disadvantage likely to accrue to the masculine half of the world from such a state of society instances will occur of women, trained on the "protection and dependence" theory, sinking in latter life a dead weight into the struggling youth of an overworked and underpaid man; planting their pretty, helpless feet on every growth in his prospects of ease; tearing with their graceful, helpless fingers holes that no tailor can mend in his pocket; often, in the pleasant names of pleasant kinships, turning his life to bitterness, and depriving him of its richest rights and dearest hopes--instances so numerous that I think even the political economy of such a mind will hardly be prepared to weigh against them those benefits which men may derive from the attentions and presence of such women in their homes.

Let us cease this foolish prattle about the sweet seclusion and the modest shelter of a deformed and wasted and wasting existence.

Send your girls away from home. It will do them good. Urge them into the world. "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world; but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." Help them into the broad ways of active life, and into the brisk air of healthy competitions and acquisitions. They will strengthen for it, body and brain and soul. Train them from infancy to "be" something. There shall repay you no more a parody of the possibilities of young womanhood--sickly, moody, dwarfed, and twisted; but "a new creature." Drop that sentimental clinging and that false fondness which grants your grown daughter only the privileges and immunities of a child in her teens. Aid her to "put away childish things." Teach her that character comes of contest, fineness of friction,
innocence not of ignorance; healthy womanhood—even as healthy manhood—from a hand-to-hand battle in the very thick of life.

"The Song of the Shirt" Tuesday, August 10, 1871.

Girt in my guiltless gown, as I sit here and sew,
I see that things are not indeed as to the outward show.

. . . . . . . . . . . .

And some I see . . . sit still and say but small,
That can do ten times more than they that say they can do all.

So sang Surrey—if Surrey it really was—“In Behalf of a Woman,” three hundred years ago. That “uncertain author” struck no uncertain note; it rings as well in the buzz of a Wheeler & Wilson age as in the days when talents and tapestry, floss-silk and fitness for life, were synonymous terms to women.

It seems to us very natural—it is, at least, very significant—that the craft of using the needle has so far in the history of the world been almost exclusively practiced by women.

Whether this has been of choice or of necessity, on the part of women, may appear a very trivial question; but it will be found worth proposing, I think, by any one who considers the interests and happiness of women to be of sufficient importance to justify the exertion.

In the beginning, we read of the first man and woman that “they” sewed fig-leaves. Can we not picture Adam fretting over his clumsy needle? Is it not easy to imagine how he frowned when his thread knotted? Is it difficult to understand how the fussy, petty business annoyed him? Were it a venture to guess how soon beyond the gates of Eden he discovered that it made him nervous to sew? One can almost hear him—shaking his huge shoulders and hurrying off to his gardens, where no doubt Eve would have liked to go too—explaining to her how much more suited to her weakness of body and delicacy of
soul it was to thread needles in the tent than to be a tiller of the ground; and how clearly it 
was intended by divine and injured will that she should henceforth make the aprons.

When one considers the character of the disadvantages attendant upon this 
particular kind of toil, it ceases to be a problem in the higher mathematics how it has come 
to devolve distinctively upon women.

It is a popular fiction that men leave this branch of industry to women because it is 
healthful, light, and easy. It is an unpopular fact that it is so exhausting to the nervous 
force, and so unique in its demands upon the patience, that men will not touch it.

In most other departments of labor a divided responsibility is occasionally shared. 
Ellen will often harness the horse for herself or Frederick. Frederick never does the 
week's mending for Ellen. Ten women will bring up the wood or draw the water to one 
man who will sew on his own buttons. Many a mistress of a family is familiar with the use 
of the spade and hoe. What master of the house knows how to darn his stockings?

It is the peculiar and unreasonable exclusiveness of the demands of the work-
basket upon women which constitutes largely their unfortunate effects; for that they are 
unfortunate is patent to the eyes of any but those historic personages of whom fame has 
made it known that the chief defect in the visual organs is one of moral inability.

Really, we do not think of it very often. But it is almost too bad! Five thousand 
six hundred and seventy stitches in a shirt! Six, twelve, eighteen, how many shirts in a 
year! Seventeen dresses a season for a family! A flounce for almost every stitch that 
Grover & Baker saves! Twelve pairs of stockings in the mending basket on Thursdays! 
One or two pairs of little feet trotting in three-cornered tears in little trousers as regularly 
as sundown! All the under and outer clothing, all the chamber and table linen, for a 
wearing, tearing family to be made and mended, ripped and basted, often by one set of 
hands!
It is a discovery which most men and some women never make that the amount of sewing made necessary by the wants of any average family is in itself nearly if not quite enough to occupy the working-hours of a paid seamstress the year round.

It is a reflection which seldom strikes any of us impressively that the woman upon whom this devolves is pursuing probably, in addition, the labors of a mother, the business of a housekeeper, the service of a nurse, the "profession" of a cook, the "accommodation" of a housemaid--if, indeed, she is not giving music lessons or writing for the newspapers besides.

But how do women do it? Heaven knows how they do it; but Heaven knows what happens when they do it! She sets her teeth--such a woman as that; she draws her breath hard; she lays her head to the wind. One day she drops. A fullbreed on the racecourse goes down as suddenly. Pick her up. Carry her off. We say she had never a strong constitution, drop a tear over her motherless children, and go our ways.

"My friends," said a good minister, at the funeral of one of these racers--a woman as simply murdered by overwork as if she had been drugged with laudanum; a woman who ran from child to husband, from husband to child, from both to the sewing-circle, from there to the vestry tea-party, from all to the subscription-list, and back again in time to get supper--"my friends, the deceased was an estimable woman. She was contented with her sphere. Her interests were merged in the welfare of her husband and home. Her heart found scope for its activity in the cares and affection of a mother. It is an impenetrable mystery to us why such a woman should be cut down in the flower of her prime and taken from her desolated home!"

Impenetrable mystery! If that was an impenetrable mystery, it is an impenetrable mystery why men fall dead under the fires of Sadowa or a galley-slave drops at the oars!
"I was the eldest daughter, and mother had so much to do and the family was large, so I sat and sewed. She didn’t realize. Perhaps I did need more exercise. I’ve never been well since then." How often we hear it!

That the ill-health of women is owing more largely to their confinement at the sewing-table than to any other one cause is a circumstance the truth of which can be verified by a reference to the bills of mortality among sewing-girls, or by conversation with a few candid physicians, or even by a patient investigation of the well and ill-fare of any woman to whose other departments of labor is added that of seamstress for several persons.

"You cannot sew, you know, unless you are happy." quietly observed a woman acquainted with care and sorrow. "You have so much time to think."

Do we often consider how much of the morbid misery of women follows upon the "time to think" implied in that automatic, nerve-destroying motion of the needle, continued hour upon hour? Are we apt to note thoughtfully that wearisome crook to the spine and contraction of the lungs? The close air of the sewing-room and the strained force of the eyesight?

Prose and poetry alike have hitherto thrown a sentimental glow about the use of the needle in woman’s hands. From Mrs. Browning pathetic cry

What’s art to a woman?  
To ‘broider the long clothes, and neat little coat,  
To Dream and to dote

down to such balderdash as

Give me the fair’ane, in country or city,  
Whose home and its duties are dear to her heart.  
Who cheerfully warbles some rustic ditty  
While plying the needle with exquisite art.  
The bright little needle, the swift-flying needle,  
The needle directed by beauty and art!
literature has decoyed her to the work-table, as to the most exalted object possible to her aspirations, and public prejudice has tied her there. By the needle she is taught that she shall acquire a husband’s love and retain a child’s devotion; through it she is trained to expend her first and freshest energies. She shall never read the new poem till her wristband is finished. A bankrupt man is scarcely more disgraced than a woman with a ragged child.

Yet, if an overworked woman is asked to indicate the feather which breaks her patient camel’s back, she will reply without hesitation that it is the number of stitches which life requires of her in a year.

Is it not conceivable that when a woman has done enough she has done enough? Is it not possible that the authoritative addition of one entire department of industry to her responsibility irrespective of her previous employment is a mistake? Is there really any reason why a woman “should do two things where a man should do one”?

While we remain in a world where clothing must be made, worn, marred, and mended, it can be done in one of three ways, let us remember. The peculiar unhealthfulness and undersirableness of the task can continue to be deliberately shuffled off from the strongest shoulders upon the weakest, and actually superimposed, as a natural duty, upon one set of hands, whether already full or empty.

Or the making of garments, like the making of shoes or hats, shall fall entirely into the hands of paid professional workers.

Or men shall bring their minds to bear upon the possibility of their sharing under like premises this amount of superabundant and clamorous toil with women.

For reasons herein but briefly suggested, I always regret to see a new enterprise started for the instruction of women in the ingenuities of the needle. We have quite enough of such advantages already. Women are in far more danger of sewing too much than too little. The competition in the department of paid labor has already choked it.
Death and ruin already feed themselves to feasting out of the crowded ranks of haggard women, who vainly court life and honor with the shine of a little needle point.

That philanthropist who has the good sense to make of a poor girl a farmer or a shoe-dealer does more for her and for her sex than if he had “encouraged” a dozen sewing-women.

"What They Are Doing," Thursday, August 17, 1871: 1.

When we reflect upon the pressure brought to bear upon women to induce them to attempt self-support by the use of the needle, in preference to all other avocations, and when we reach the actual results of such a preference, astonishment drowns itself in perplexity.

When we read in influential papers that "the young women of--. however well they may be taught in other respects, are not skillful needlewomen; if they were, they could have what they so often fail to find--remunerative work. . . . They might be employed, and at good wages, if they could do anything!" and when we learn that there are thirty-five thousand sewing-girls in New York and Brooklyn; when we know that one of these girls will receive the munificent sum of six cents for making a coarse shirt, and find her own thread; when we are told that she is paid the princely consideration of ten cents apiece for making linen coats; when we notice the enormous profits to accrue to her from finishing shirts at five shillings for the dozen; when we read of that woman who fell in convulsions in the vestibule of a New York church after service, needing, said the physician not medicine, but something to eat--crying out deliriously as she revived. "Eight cents! eight cents! eight cents! I wish I could get it done! Eight cents! eight cents!!"--the woman of whom it was found that she was sewing garments, of which she could make but three in a day, for the royal compensation of eight cents apiece--when we think on these things, our hearts die within us.
Women are neither angels nor archangels, seraphim nor cherubim. They must eat and drink, or to-morrow they die. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom which the chivalrous taste of society has selected for them.

What shall be done with them?

"Woman have no business talent." That is an old story. "No executive ability." We are familiar with the charge. "Unfit for the avenues of active trade." We have heard of it. "Incapable of the extensive management of money." A threadbare assertion; but, however trite, if true, a really terrible one.

Let us remember the surplus of 70,000 women, "anxious and aimless," in the State of Massachusetts; that the female population of Edinburgh exceeds the male by nearly 19,000; of Glasgow by 10,000. Unless men are prepared to invent and women to accept some method by which this margin of feminine life shall be provided for by masculine labor, a sufficient variety of avenues of self-support becomes so serious a necessity to women that we can but stand astonished at the logic which would deny it. If women are incapable of filling these avenues, it would seem either that the Creator had made a vital mistake in his calculations somewhere, or that we, in our barbarous times, had fallen off from the ideal of that higher and earlier Chines civilization which quietly put poor little girl-babies "anywhere, anywhere out of the world." at so early a stage in their history that the problem whether they should teach the district school for three hundred a year or go out to sew for families in the avenue at thirty cents a day could never vex them.

If women are disqualified by Nature from following any trades but those of housekeeping, sewing, teaching, or marriage, "unhappy girls," starving seamstresses, under-paid teachers, and loveless wives are not and will not be the worst consequences. Duchatlet asserts that of 8,000 lost women "only thirty-five had an occupation that could support them. Fourteen hundred had been precipitated by destitution into this horrible life." It is the opinion of the Massachusetts Bureau of Labor, expressed through its last
report, that "statistics prove beyond doubt that most fallen women have been compelled to their fall by poverty. They sell their womanhood for bread to sustain life."

Is this state of things a necessity? Are women incapable of following and of succeeding in honest and lucrative occupations?

Perhaps we have not often taken the trouble to inquire? Perhaps we have inclined to take it for granted that a good business woman is an anomaly? Testimony is at command. A little patience will sift it. Few of us I think, are aware (why is it?) of what women are really doing at our very elbows, in these quickening days. Let us see.

In a thriving town in the vicinity of Boston, where homesteads pass freely from hand to hand, we find a lady who has for years been doing a good dry goods business on her own account. What more natural than for our young merchant to engage in the commerce of houses and real estate now and then? What more sensible than that, finding herself to be the possessor of some fancy and some skill in that direction, she should take to herself a partner and the real estate business? This she has done. Her sign and cards have signified but recently that these novel "real estate brokers" await your pleasure; and already heavy orders and extensive confidence are said to reward the courage and common sense of this exemplary woman.

In the capital of a stout-hearted if not very broad shouldered little New England state one of the best blacksmiths in the city is said to be a young woman; she works side by side with her father, of whom she acquired her trade.

In one of the territories we find two young women, sisters, running a blacksmith's shop upon their own account. In the crude condition of the region the undertaking was as necessary as it seemed natural and as they have made it respectable. The girls dress in a Bloomer costume, and shoe a horse with ease and skill.
I think it is Detroit which boasts of the woman who took out a contract for macademizing [sic] a road, engaged her workmen, kept them to time, and conducted them and her road safely and successfully through her agreement.

The same woman, if I am rightly informed, has more than once moved barns and other buildings on contract, with composure and dispatch.

In Wisconsin two girls, whose works rise up and call them blessed, have for six years managed a farm of one hundred acres, and supported their father and mother from its proceeds.

The same state estimates that there are in all two thousand women at work this year in its generous fields.

Iowa and Indiana contain two hundred women working farms on their own account successfully.

In one of the largest cities in the country a "young, pretty, and accomplished" lady has opened an extensive boot and shine store. Her clerks are all young women, and her trade is reputed to be of the briskest.

Of a woman in Washington Territory we learn that she has just returned from a trip to China, where she carried a cargo of lumber. "She is said to be sharper," observes the source of the information, "than any other mill-owner on Puget Sound, and got at least $10 more per thousand feet for lumber than was ever paid at Hong Kong before."

Of an extensive dry-goods establishment in New Jersey we are told that it is managed entirely by two ladies, and that their credit in the large business centers is of the soundest and highest. We are given to understand that they set up in business eight years ago, on a capital of from one to two thousand dollars; and that they control a stock now worth from twenty to thirty thousand in ladies' furnishing and fancy goods.

A young woman in Lewiston, Maine, has been fitting herself, under excellent promise, for the profession of a dentist. In the heavier work, which requires active
muscles and steady eye, her employer has long since been accustomed to call upon her for very effective assistance.

A ladies' life insurance company, all the employes [sic] of which are to be women, is forming in London.

And here we run against another Wisconsin woman, (surely that energetic state is the woman's "Earthly Paradise"), who supports a sick husband and his old grandfather off from a forty-acre farm.

And again from New Jersey. What says one of her lading papers? "Our entire newspaper is the work of young ladies, and every type is set by them - advertisements and all - and the 'maker-up' is a young girl. And we have no foreman in the newspaper-rooms, a young lady acting in that capacity."

Shall we omit to notice the testimony of the president of the Michigan Agricultural College as to the experiment of admitting women to the institution, when he calls it in "the highest degree successful," and "their progress in study exceptionally rapid"?

Or that of Judge Howe, of Wyoming, touching the service of women in the jury-box?

"I am prepared to endorse fully and unqualifiedly the excellent results that sprang from the influence and presence of women in the jury-box; nor have I been able, with the closest observation, to detect the least objection or unfitness in women to serve in that capacity. On the contrary, the court has reason to believe that the introduction of her refining and humanizing influence into our courts will mark a new and improved epoch in the administration of justice."

Or shall we impanel [sic] Jenkins into our service, to call our attention to the munificent salaries received by some of the lady editors of New York? To the princely profits of some of last season's lady lecturers? (If he spoke of $4,000, or whispered of $20,000, who would "tell"?) To the pecuniary value of the skill of a few such women as
Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell and Dr. M. E. Zakrzewska? Or to the reflections incident upon
the existence of that respected lady physician of the homeopathic school whose practice
reached the agreeable figure of $17,000 last year.

And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of the lady elected a
year ago to be superintendent of schools in a large town in Vermont, who has fulfilled the
duties of her position so acceptably that she has been unanimously re-elected, with a
substantial consideration of $90 extra voted in her favor; of the surgical services of Dr.
Mary Putnam in the recent French war; of the "average audience of one thousand persons"
collected Sunday by Sunday to hear the Gospel preached by a woman in a Connecticut
city; of the "ladies' well" in the oil country, contracted for and managed entirely by
women, pumping, it is reported, one hundred and fifty barrels of oil in a day, and said to
yield just now the pleasant profit of five hundred dollars every twenty-four hours; of the
woman who rows a ferry daily across the Mississippi; of the forty women having editorial
connections with the New York press; of the woman who is custom-house officer at a
port in Victoria; of the soldier's widow (and a Confederate, too) in Georgia, whose
inheritance from her husband's estate was a kit of shoemaker's tools, and who accepted
both them and the situation by taking to the leather-bench herself; of the woman
overseeing the binding in one of the largest printing houses in St. Louis, of whom the
proprietor says, "I could not supply her place with six men"; of the young lady student in
the State University of Missouri of whom we are told that she has taken the first prize for
Greek scholarship; of the lady who bore away the chemical prize from two hundred and
thirty-nine candidates in the University of Edinburgh--or would have done so, if it had not
been discovered that her sex would forbid her receiving it; of "the noble and motherly
woman of seventy years" who is the chaplain of the Kansas State Prison; of the woman
elected lecturer on diseases of the eye in the medical department of Howard University; of
the one hundred women graduated from our colleges the last year; of the first-class
clerkships to which the Postmaster-General has appointed four women, "accomplished linguists and translators," at the same salaries which men clerks of the same rank receive; of the young woman who has purchased one hundred and sixty acres of public land in Montana under the Preemption Bill; of the "business success" which we are apt to connect with a few such names as Nilsson, Hosmer, Ream, Dickinson, Stowe, Bonheur, Eliot, Sand.

Are women unfitted for success in active life?

Facts are stubborn things.

"Women and Money," Thursday, August 24, 1871: 1.

No one has done more to "point a moral or adorn a tale" of late than that gentleman of whom we have read who was arrested for beating his wife. "Sir," said he, haughtily, to the sheriff, "I have read Ancient and Modern History, and I have rode on a peddler's cart thirteen years; and I think I know something of human nature, and when my wife ought to be whipped!"

Precisely this gentleman's course of argument is followed by the man-world in the assumption that women are disqualified by inscrutable Providence from ability to control the pecuniary interests of either themselves or their families.

Generally her dependence upon men in all matters pertaining to the use of money is the last mistake in the relation of the sexes to a realization of the degradation of which a woman will sensibly awaken. So thoroughly has the pernicious effect of dependence saturated society!

"I have read Ancient and Modern History." says the man.

"The baby doesn't allow me time to read." sighs the woman.
"The management of money implies a wisdom which you lack, and a contact with the world which will brush the bloom from your whiteness," says the man, "Leave it to me."

"You know human nature," assents the woman. "If I can't go to a broker's, you may as well take it."

Hence we see the relation of ward and guardian—a provision for the indiscretion of children—"one to carry and added to" the maturity of an intelligent woman—, and we see an unnatural thing.

Not to dwell—for the sake of all "good men and true," whose consideration of the enforced helplessness of women in this particular touches the hights [sic] of nobility and delicacy—upon the opportunities afforded by the habit men have acquired of keeping the bag of society in their own hands, for the occurrence of those instances when women are brought to want by the peculation of trust-funds or the failure of injudicious investments (and these are the least of the "wrang o't"), the present theory of the proper business relations of men and women is injurious in the extreme to both parties. And to which the most it were difficult to say; probably men are in reality the greater sufferers from it.

Pecuniary dependence upon men tends to make women weak, cowardly, ignorant, and childish, if not worse. Pecuniary authority over women tends to create in men over-weaning self-confidence and self-assertion, arrogance in their treatment of and a thorough lack of respect for the sterling qualities in the character of women.

That this assertion will be instinctively disputed is perhaps the most impressive proof of its accuracy. Men have so thoroughly wrapped themselves in a gracious and dilettante recognition of the beauty of the womanly character that they are for the most part honestly unaware, perhaps, of the extent to which they distrust its force.

It is customary to urge the retention of women in a condition of pecuniary dependence upon men on the ground that they are citizens of a higher country, heirs of a
richer inheritance, wafted by spiritual tides above adaptations to a realm of the earth, earthy. Queens in the gardens of life, how shall they stoop to soil their fingers with filthy lucre? Used to gather lilies, how shall they handle "greenbacks"?

Created for the larger uses, why crouch to the less?

I have but to say, as I have said before: Let any man try it, if he will discover why. Let the man strung to earth's finest issues--the poet, the artist, the man with "all his music in him"--make experiment of this, exalted and exalting condition into which he is so ready to bind the sensitiveness of women. How soon would the fine gold--more precious than "the wedge of Ophiz"--become dim? How soon would the colors dry on the palette, the poem turn prose, the song die a natural death, the sentiment and the sentimentality of life mingle and blend past distinction!

It is nothing more nor less than affectation, in a world like this, to underrate the importance of the commercial aspects of life. The pecuniary independence of a hod-carrier is a sacred right. Among the struggling and ignorant classes of society the county jail has not the terrors of the town poorhouse. Women are not exalted, but degraded, in the world's actual everyday esteem, by their incapacity, whether real or imaginary, forced or voluntary, to control the "wherewithal" by which "all these things shall be added unto them."

I venture to say that that woman who undertakes thoroughly, quietly, and ably to manage the disposal of either her own property or of her share in the common family funds commands from a candid man more of the respect due from individual to individual than the prettiest ignorance, indifference, and incapacity could possibly call forth from him. He learns to prefer an equal to a dependent, a woman to a child, the allegiance of a comrade strong enough to stand alone to the clasp of a tendril that "can but clasp or die." Men are quite as quick to appreciate common sense about common things in women.
when it is forced upon their attention, as they are to lift the hat to a golden curl or bare the head to a mother's lullaby.

The effect of the present intricate dependence of women upon the pleasure and the pockets of men cannot fail of an injurious effect upon all the family relations. Every time that a child sees his mother made the claimant and the recipient of money from the hands of his father he sees that which more or less degrades her in his observant mind to a level with himself. Every time that the "head" of a family suffers himself to speak of affording his wife "an allowance," of "regulating" her expenses, of "giving" her the means of self-support, her sons and daughters are taught to feel that she is but a "child of larger growth," to a greater or less extent disqualified from the common responsibilities of maturity. That caustic English critic hit an appalling, however (let us hope!) infrequent, fact who called our attention to the number of young men whose feeling toward their mothers settled early in life into a simple state of "sentimental pity."

Woman's capacity for the management of money, like her capacity for most departments of activity, which [text is lost here].

It is a truth which few of us recognize that in those directions in which women have hitherto been compelled to exhaust their energies they have exhibited business talents of a very high order. It is seldom that a man who deserves anything better has occasion to complain of the "extravagance" of his wife. The average woman practices, in the average responsibilities of an average household, a shrewd calculation of cause and effect, a close contrivance of means to ends, a brisk patrol about possible exigencies, and a sharp lookout for coming crises in the family welfare. of which, I believe, it would be found that few men, in their present state of development, are capable.

Hitherto the business skill of women has quietly sown itself from generation to generation in this one domestic growth. The business women of to-day are breaking new sods on rocky soil, where only the winds of emergencies have been used to carry seed.
The war was one of these gusts. We well remember the stately testimony of the *North American Review*, in 1864, to the "skill, zeal, business qualities, and patient and persistent devotion exhibited by those women who manage the truly vast operations of the several chief centers of supply (of the Sanitary Commission) at Chicago, Boston, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and New York"; and that they had "unfolded a new page in the history of the aptitudes and capacities. . . . To collect funds," we were told. "often taxed their ingenuity to the utmost." But "nothing came amiss, and nothing failed to come. . . . It is universally conceded that to Mrs. Livermore and Mrs. Hoge are due the planning, management, and success of this truly American exploit."

And we well remember the characteristic comment of Gail Hamilton upon this testimony!

"Men, have you read this paragraph? Please to read it again! Think of all your inveighing against female extravagance and incapacity, and read it again. . . . You have the very essence of business tact in 'nothing came amiss, and nothing failed to come'; and the very essence of economy in 'always enough and none too much'; and the crowning glory . . . in 'the ordering of all this was in the hands of women.'"

Can we honestly believe that Mrs. Hoge and Mrs. Livermore are unfitted to pass judgment on the character of an equipment bond, or vie with the higher orders of intellect which occupy themselves with five-twenties and the quotation of console in London?

Does any man sanely imagine that the "feminine soul" which collected, controlled, and expended fifteen millions of dollars for the use of the sick and wounded soldiers in our war will falter before the mysteries of a monetary report?

Does any one really think that even the wife of a country minister, who will educate a family of ten children on a salary of six hundred dollars, would be unable to keep her head straight at a broker's?
It is not business "qualities" which women lack. It is business "opportunities." As long as men monopolize the conduct of trade they monopolize women. Few refined women whose names are on our suffrage petitions can compete with success or propriety in the prize-fight conducted each day at a broker's counter. It devolves upon women to make their opportunities before they can evince their capacities. Woman must come to the rescue of women.

We are in sore need of able and refined women to undertake the business of banking, of brokerage; to qualify themselves for the direction of railroads and mines; to become as familiar with the control of real estate and assurance interests as they have hitherto been with the best method of sweeping Brussels or the surest receipt for the satisfactory coloring of pickles.

"Men and Muscle," Thursday, August 31, 1871: 1.

In the introduction of women to the competitions of a self-supporting life, we are met by an immediate and powerful difficulty.

The physical strength of men gives them, at the start, a serious advantage. Their capital of muscle and sinew is at once the gift of Heaven and the care of earth. By the simplest principles of political economy a man has as much right to reap the profits of it as of any other capital; reap them he always has and does; if this great stock in trade must, in the nature of things, remain forever in its present proportions in his hands, reap them he always will.

"The ill-health of women," said an able and experienced physician, "is, after all, a puzzle to me. I cannot satisfy myself with any sufficient and philosophical explanation of it."
Probably the sufficiency and philosophy of any such explanation are beyond the limits of anything but a medical treatise to discuss; probably no medical treatise has as yet compassed them.

Undoubtedly, however, there are four causes for the feeble health of women, any one of which is enough to account for an immense amount of it.

The first in order of consideration is their dress. First, perhaps, in point of importance, their occupations. Add to these their unhappiness and the character of their education. We should have in the sum total the sufficient reason for the crippling of a world of Hugger-Muggers. If men were put under only these four of the conditions which limit women, they would find the proportions of their superior vigor reduced to an extent the effect of which upon their character, it is no flight of the imagination to say, would be revolutionary.

When we consider what an intricate system of defiance to all known physiological laws a woman's dress has become; the tender age at which this defiance begins, and the relentless pressure of it upon the formative and the recuperative energies of the constitution; the murderous thinness and scantiness of her underdress; the effect of the absence of flannels, and the custom of baring the neck and arms, upon the sensitive tissues of the lungs and heart; the check to all even circulation of the blood and healthy condition of the skin inflicted by the imperfect and compressed covering of her feet and hands; the unhealthy heat of the head, consequent on the manner in which custom requires her to collect her hair into a wad of padding at the base of the brain; the clasp of a rack of steel and whalebone about all the vital organs of the body; the straight-jacket snap with which the seams of her dress meet about her shoulders, arms, and chest; the results inevitable upon making the hips the pivot upon which her heavy clothing is hung, and the fulcrum upon which all the motion of her body must swing in walking—if, indeed, we apply that term to the infantine toddler with which women are driven to get about the world; above
all, the unreasonable and cruel custom which compels her to drop heavy skirts about her lower limbs and feet, thus endangering her life on all occasions, her health on any but a dry summer day, and her self-reliance forever; (We may quote in this connection the opinion of a well-known New York physician:

A short succession of sudden trips, mis-steps, or blunders will speedily exhaust even the strongest man. And there is no doubt but that the present style of long skirts for ladies' dresses—requiring, as it does, constant, uncertain, often unsuccessful efforts to snatch the skirt away from the advancing feet, to keep them from tripping the getting into stages and ascending stairs in crouching, unsteady attitudes, holding up the dress meantime; and all similar spasmodic efforts, require such a fearful expenditure of nervous energy that it is of itself sufficient in many cases to bring on a train of the most distressing symptoms.)

when we consider the extent to which the common occupations of a woman deprive her of the open air, of exercise, of change of scene, of acquaintance with the world; of the extent to which they are adapted to produce all the varieties of sedentary disease; when we consider the unlimited influence of the mind upon the body, of happiness upon health, and the brooding morbidness and acute suffering which the lives of women so largely induce in them—shall we find it a matter of surprise that women as a race are diseased and feeble, and are bestowing upon the world a future legacy of diseased and feeble children? Shall we wrap this ruined creature away in a shawl to die, and say, with sorrowful assurance: Behold woman "as God made her"?

Woman as God made her? As man and the Devil and her own cowardice have made her! God never made such women as are cradling the next generation in this land to-day. Side by side with "female illiteracy" female feebleness is running a race among us. Neglected brains and tortured bodies are working their own work in their own sure way upon our actual and possible mothers. Thoughtful physicians are perplexed and alarmed. Huxley and Darwin cannot save us. We are a beautiful, useful, and elevated order of animals; the world has done the right thing by us; it has stalled and fed us; it has petted
and praised us; who can complain? It may be inconvenient to find the animal's resentment of some mistake in the treatment resulting in the deterioration of the stock, and the loss of its valuable traits; but it is very logical, it is severely natural, it all came about somehow from "protoplasm," and beyond "protoplasm" who shall dare to speculate?

But perhaps the most significant of the patent causes of woman's physical inferiority is the education to which she is subjected. A man is trained to be strong. A woman is trained not to be. Good health is expected of a man. Ill-health is expected of a woman. In this simple difference lies coiled a complex influence. The expectations of society are to an all but mathematical extent the limits of the individual. What others look for in us, that we are. The world's theory of us is our fact. We know ourselves generally only as our neighbors guess at us.

It remains for us to learn how far the physical disabilities of woman are necessary or contingent to her.

Savage people, and ruder ages are and were ignorant of the accident of much physical inferiority which civilized women of to-day consider the substance of existence.

Yet have neither Bushwomen nor Pilgrim mothers ever been the index of their own physical powers; for women have never yet been mistresses of their own physical training. Man's muscular Christianity is an impulse, woman's a response; his a system, hers an appendage; his empirical, hers experimental.

Will a woman go to the office in a sleet-storm, or run for the doctor on a dark night, or meet the burglar at the back door? Who knows? Upon her tiniest listening ears fell the hint that it was graceful and becoming in woman to "be timid." Will she chop wood, manage a sail-boat, go blue-fishing, look after the baggage, when a man is about to do it for her? Who can tell? It was grown with her growth and strengthened with her strength that these things are as far beyond her "sphere" as the glory of the Southern
Cross. how shall we say what she can or what she cannot, where lies her margin, where her text? Her strength and her weakness are alike, at present, abnormally developed.

"Rights and Relativities." Thursday, September 7, 1871: 5.

If, instead of giving to the world the valuable fragment which Sir William Hamilton called his lectures on metaphysics, he had occupied his remarkable intellect with the political problem of womanhood suffrage and its kindred questions, it is probable that, in default of the legacy which he left us in that much-needed term, the Relativity of Human Knowledge, we should have been favored with another quite as necessary and quite as apt--the Relativity of Female Strength.

Since woman's "rights" will ultimately be measured by her abilities, and since her physical weakness stands first and foremost athwart them, a frowning and mysterious shadow, it devolves upon us to inquire more patiently. Is woman's present state of bodily inferiority a disability, or an incapacity? A thing of habit, or a thing of nature? A result, or a process? Do we over or underestimate it, or do we nor [sic] estimate it at all? Do we take it for granted, rather, labeled for use or abuse, as an apothecary takes laudanum from his shelf?

I think a little reflection will convince us that many if not most of the directions in which women now expend themselves demand as much actual strength as many if not most of the departments of what is called "masculine labor": and that the confessed inferiority of female strength when it is turned into these departments is, to a noteworthy extent, the weakness of novelty and the disqualification of ignorance.

Singularly enough, and yet not singularly at all, women themselves are the last to comprehend this. Exceptional or unfamiliar facts never strike them as their own possibilities. Possessed by the consciousness of weakness, native and acquired, the distinction between the native and acquired loses its outlines. Theoretically, society lifts
from their shoulders its heaviest loads. Theoretically the "light afternoon work" of the world falls to them. They accept the theory. They know that their burden is greater than they can bear, yet feel that any other burden would be a mountain to this mole-hill. "This is the way," says the voice of the people; as though it were indeed the voice of God, they walk in it. Take a single instance of a conversation I stumbled upon the other day. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear its counterpart any day. The speakers were both women.

"I'm trying to get along without my girl. I had engaged her; but it seems like murder to take her away from Mrs. B. I haven't the heart to send for her. She's all the help that poor creature can get; and she has twenty boarders in her house to-day, and four little children of her own besides. One's a baby, born last May. She never was a strong woman. She looks like death this summer. I believe she is dying, myself. It's enough to kill any woman. I'm sure I don't wonder. You never saw such a face. It's like a ghost. She isn't fit to take a boarder across her doorstep; but she's anxious to do and very ambitious to get along, and they're poor, you see."

"But where is her husband?"

"Oh! he keeps the tin-shop downtown."

"Why doesn't he support the family?"

"Well, you see, he's just beginning; and he don't make it very fast, and it's a growing family. She feels as if she must help, anyhow."

"Help? It seems to be he that only 'helps.' She supports the family. Why don't they change work, if she is killing herself with hers?"

"What?"

"Why doesn't she learn the tinsmith's trade; and he learn how to keep twenty boarders, and take care of four children, with one ignorant assistant? If he is a strong
man, he could probably bear it awhile. At any rate, it might save her life, if it is not too late."

"Oh! well," with a puzzled laugh, hardly sure whether the speaker expected some recognition of an original joke, "women can't do much unless it's housework, you know--especially mothers; they're not strong enough, I don't think!"

That colporteur\(^2\) would perform a truly Christian work who would circulate among women a tract bearing these questions:

How much more power of endurance does it require to mow a field in the sun on a July day than to cook three meals for twenty men and a family of children over hot coals?

[The following text is torn and fragmented] If [word missing] work is more exhaustive to the system than [words missing] and dairy-work, why it is said that [words missing] of the women in our insane asylums are farmers' wives?

How does it happen that a woman has not the "physical strength" [words missing] the carpenter's trade who is [words missing] in washing "for a living"?

How much more muscle is [words missing] lifting ladders, and adjusting joists, [words missing] striking nails than for wringing blankets and scrubbing overalls?

By what laws of comparison do we infer that a woman who can stand at the ironing-table ten hours a day, with the thermometer at 98 degrees in the shade, her stove on full draught, and the windows closed, lest the irons cool, cannot practice the stone-mason's trade for lack of physical strength?

Did it ever occur to you that the woman who can sweep a room can drive an omnibus? That the dust she takes into her lungs on Saturdays may possibly be as injurious

\(^2\) Definition: A person who goes from place to place distributing or selling Bibles, religious tracts, etc.
to them as the oversight and lifting of trunks which would fall to herein the character of a
baggage-master?

What is to prevent the woman who can faultlessly superintend the "house cleaning"
of a large establishment from qualifying herself to be an "able and ladylike" railroad
conductor?

Does it require more physical strength to be a bookkeeper or bank-clerk eleven
hours a day than to take care of a baby twenty-four?

Is a woman who can take a large family through the scarlet fever without
assistance likely to find herself too weak in body to bear the physical burdens incumbent
upon the profession of a lawyer?

Ought not any woman who is able to be her own nursery-maid to be able to
harness a horse?

Is it any more unpleasant business to harness a horse than to be a nursery-maid?

Does not every housekeeping and home-working woman perform tasks as
uncleanly, as distasteful, as much calculated to render her coarse, uncomely, unrefined,"unladylike" as the large majority of those from which she is debarred by fear of these
results?

Is it any more unbecoming a respectable woman to be a bricklayer, in a safe and
modest gymnasium costume, than to waltz in a low-necked dress at an evening party?

Are most honest occupations from which public sentiment excludes women more
foreign to the self-respect of a woman than most to which she is secluded?

How do we know for what women are physically qualified till we have undertaken
to learn, rather than to assume?

Conceding what we must, ought we not, for woman’s sake—which means for man’s
sake and the world’s—to claim what we may of the quality of the female physique?
Are we justified—at least, in the present stage of the world's education—in assuming that we have fixed its "Relativity"?

"A Talk to the Girls" January 4, 1872.

"Will I not answer them just once in THE INDEPENDENT?"

Now, this is the dreadful day on which my study-table is dusted.

I pause; I ponder; I investigate; I despair.

Girls, if it were not for that study-table I doubt if I ever should.

To be quite frank with you, I am very much in sympathy with the good minister who was met in the vestibule by the cheerful brother who had taken such comfort and instruction from the morning's sermon. It was a very superior sermon; a remarkable sermon; a sermon calculated to improve the spiritual condition of any hearer; and "Pray, sir," said he, cordially, "what was the text of your discourse?"

For truth compels me to state that, if most of the writers of the pleasant little letters which are lost in that wilderness, my study-table, would simply sit down and read what I have said to and about women in THE INDEPENDENT patiently over again, they would find a better solution of their difficulties than any which I can superadd to those papers.

You will remember, my dear girls—Easterners, Westerners, from North and from South—whose troubled and earnest eyes look up at me from my paper Sahara, that we must ultimately solve perplexities by principles, not by incidents, by the telescope as well as the microscope; that we adjust our front-yards; that if a thing is true, the presumption is that it is true for us in our own lives and for our own uses; and, if you will remember this long enough, we may perhaps travel through Sahara with some profit both to ourselves and to the duster.
What went we out for to see? White letters, a little note in blue, MSS, more MSS, green letters, pink letters, scented letters, blotted letters, letters from the avenues and from the prairies, letters of respectful severity, generous thanks, miserable uneasiness, downright distress; more MSS, verses this time--never mind! the more the better. I thank you, girls, for the whole of them, individually and collectively, and wish with all my heart that this crooked and stiff-necked generation could see, as you and I have seen, the interest which its girls are taking in woman's new "right to be a woman."

"I am one of your 'unhappy girls.'" . . . Mother thinks it unwomanly that I do not like to sew." . . .

"Will you tell me if there is any value in these rhymes? For, if 'Heaven has qualified me to write a poem,' I'll never 'hem another towel' as long as I live!"

"I am supported by my friends. I cannot use my eyes; my sisters read to me. I am not satisfied; I see no way into life but to marry a commonplace man."

"Our reading, thinking Western girls, to whom your sharp sayings do not apply. are troubled that such sweeping assertions should be made."

"Now that I have told you my history, do you wonder that I say: Heaven send the time when a woman is not educated solely for marriage!"

"I would like to earn for myself. I sent a little article to the --, and got five dollars for it; since then I have sent them flying in all directions, but with fatal results. Shall I try again?"

"I have come to the conclusion myself that it is not morally right to leave the subject of dress, as it is now left, to the undisciplined consciences of undisciplined women."

"I have no objection to a woman's shoeing a horse. I should rather wash dishes and take care of children."
“My mother insists upon keeping me with her; still gives me every opportunity for reading and study. I am now engaged in ‘sweeping my sister’s ingrains.’ I wish that I knew just what is best for me to do with myself.”

“It stirred us up, us girls; and we talked it over among ourselves. It has quite unsettled my former views. Most of us are only daughters of parents in comfortable but not affluent circumstances—families where but one servant is kept, and where there are many things depending on the tasteful touches which come only from the hand of the daughter,” etc.

And so on through the pile.

One little lady in particular, a bright young graduate of Michigan University, excites my respect and sympathy. Her manuscript, from which I have already quoted, is a wail of earnest and honest bewilderment. She calls it “Who will hem the pillow-cases?” and asks: “Is there no way out of the tangle?” and strikes, I believe, the cardinal point of difficulty in the minds of most girls, who, having become more or less convinced that the lives young women generally lead are best neither for themselves nor for the world, yet fail to see or feel their way to any others. “Will you not show girls,” she begs, “the other side of the question (for there must be another side)—show noble-hearted girls, who are trying to make the most of themselves, in spite of the many drawbacks, that even though the pictures go unpainted, and the poem unwritten, by patient continuance in well-doing, they may still make their lives ‘one grand, sweet song’?”

No, my dear young friend, I shall do no such thing. Girls need no such showing. There is not a particle of danger but they will see the other side. They always do; they always have. It is because I hope that they will some time learn to see all sides that I present them one, and only one. We must keep the balance of power at some rate. Truth is like the moon, remember: only one side of it turns earthward while it is young. We must live under the crescent before we can welcome the sphere. It is not the moon which
lacks symmetry, but the mind which frets and fears lest the dimmed three-quarters be
forgotten in the shining quarter, the full, averted face in the profile, yesterday and to-
morrow in to-day. Heavenly doctrine has its phases, like other heavenly bodies. Take
them as they come. When you see it painfully climbing the east, lift up your eyes to the
light of it, and be glad. Do not go round behind the hills, and sit down to keep watch and
guard upon the other side.

In short, and in plain prose, girls, the “other side” in a matter like this of the
elevation of woman generally takes care of itself. The might of old acquaintance, the dead
weight of old customs, the drag of old prejudices are powerful allies, committed forever to
“the other side” in the eternal contest between the old and the new, and have their places,
unquestionably, in controlling the “two spirits between whose endless jar justice resides”;
but it is not your place. Your young hands have other work to do. Your young eyes are
needed elsewhere. Be patient, then, with an apparent neglect of many aspects of this
question of a woman’s true duties to God and to herself. Because I urge you to go into
the grocery business, do not infer that I would have you send your parents to the poor-
house. Because I advise you not to hem pillow-cases, do not assume that we must all
sleep on pillow-cases with a ragged edge. Because the frivolity of shallow women must
be denounced, do not conclude that the denouncer never saw a sensible girl. Look at this
thing with two eyes; take a clear, high sweep of vision; fill your lungs with mountain air,
before you speak to the conviction of your own soul or another. Set up distinctly on some
hill-top in your heart the one simple principle that it has been the world’s blunder, not
God’s intent, to refuse to woman nature anything to which human nature has a right; and
model your individual circumstances by it, in your individual way, as best you can.
Nobody can help you much. You must work out your own salvation, with fear and
trembling, since it is God that worketh in you. The women of to-day, especially the young
women of to-day, have their lines fallen to them in lonely places. You will find struggle.
doubt, opposition, bewilderment, discouragement, your stepping-stones to higher things.
Your sense of security in decision will often leave you. The serene level of easy
dependence will roughen to you. Many a time you will find your brain "a' in a muddle,"
and your conscience in a comatose condition. Wash dishes till you die, and the world will
leave you in peace. Undertake to "seek your fortune," and the air chills about you; the
thermometer falls; the winds rise; the sand blows about; friends mourn over you, pray for
you, weep for you; you do not quite know if you are reprobate or a martyr; you cry.

Stern, warning friends, I am not Night!
Sweet, flattering friends, I am not Day!

and, weary of the struggle, you perhaps yield it with a sigh wherein the bitterness of
disappointment runs a little acrid; and that most pitiful result, a woman skeptical of her
own sex, follows as fast as may be.

Now, my dear girls, guard against this. Make up your mind what you believe, and
abide by it. Your conscience is your own; follow it. Your convictions are your own; act
upon them. Your life is your own; live it. In more classic language, "Be sure you're right,
and go ahead!"

Here let me say that, while I would not advise you--far be it from me!--to despise
either the golden letter or the blessed spirit of the Fifth Commandment, you should be
warned that you may be in danger of becoming morbidly and unnecessarily sensitive to the
preferences of your parents in the choice of your life's work. You owe them filial
reverence and affectionate care? To be sure; but what are filial reverence and affectionate
care? Society throws a vast poetic license around those words. Why do they mean one
thing for you, another for your brother? Why should the present one set of claims to you,
another to him? Why may they frown on your individual development, and smile on his?
Exact from them a reason why they may fling open to him the gates of active usefulness,
which they close and bar to you! Demand of them an impartiality as broad as Nature's
and as kind! You may ask it as conscientiously as you say your prayers; but you may rest assured that you will not have it without the asking. For

Oh! the lad may gang to see the world,
The lass maun stay at hame!

It is the world’s old way of thinking; and to many of the world’s best people the old ways are the only ways, and must so remain till death doth them part. One generation goeth and another cometh, and the two can no more see the same things in the same proportions than they can wear the same spectacles. “The grown man and the youth,” says a great historian, “rarely comprehend each other.” It does not by any means follow that the man is always wrong, and the youth is always right. Indeed, says the same keen observer of life, it is “an inversion of the order of Nature when the old are wrong and the young are right”; but it follows that this may be so, and the history of the world’s deepest reforms teaches us that this sometimes must be so. Cautiously take this into the account in the formation of your opinions. Acknowledge tenderly to yourselves that your dearest advisers and guardians may not recognize the dawn of the day in which you live and move and have your being. Bear to think that their gray hairs may go the grave without its light upon them. Gently understand that they may be fatally mistaken in their judgement of what is best for you. Learn to remember that your maturing convictions cannot always follow theirs. It is best to do this honestly. It is safe to do this tenderly. It is wise to do this early. Your reverence for your parents is far more secure if you look such facts fearlessly in the face. All affection is safer if it is weighed in the balances of courageous justice. Draw the line respectfully and affectionately between their convictions and yours. Agree to differ wholesomely from them. Teach them that, if you amass a fortune, you do it as unto the Lord no less than you give the “little tasteful touches” to their home; that, if you paint a picture, it shall be their happiness as well as yours; that, if you . . . their honored lives . . . through you. It is no light or easy task; but it is a task which is set to
many a thoughtful and devoted daughter standing at the brink of life to-day. The world has yet to learn what daughters are made for; and daughters only can instruct it.

But who will hem the pillow-cases? That is an old, old question. Undoubtedly Deborah's grandmother asked it, and the mother of Miriam, and the neighbors of Anna the Prophetess; Joan of Arc unquestionably heard it; and Elizabeth Fry and Elizabeth Browning, and Florence Nightingale, and Baroness Burdett Coutts, and Prof. Maria Mitchell, and the rest, for whose sakes the world can well afford to hem its own pillow-cases, or even to hire a seamstress, if need be. There seems to be no dearth of pillow-cases by their default. It is a shifting question, and the fashion of it passeth away. Who will embroider tapestry? Who will run the spinning-wheels? Who will overcast and hem and run, and backstitch? Go to the factory-loom for your answer, and hear the voice of Elias Howe, what it sayeth!

The burden of domestic care will devolve on women exclusively as long as women exclusively are ready to bear it. It will subject itself to the ordinary rules of division of labor just as soon as women decide that it shall. Three-fifths of it, at a modest estimate, can easily be carried without the four house-walls; but women must carry it. Science stands ready to help them, and the industrial arts are their police detail. To weave every thread of cloth worn by her family with her own hands was once the first duty of woman. Now, it would as soon occur to her that she was under religious obligations to make her husband's boots. The day will come when she will no more conceive it necessary to make his shirts than to spin his broadcloth or to cut out his rubbers.

We live and learn. When we have learned to live, it will be no longer necessary to put these blinders of domestic claims upon fresh young women who incline to shy from the beaten track of womanly lot.

Meanwhile--ah? yes, meanwhile--while the father disapproves, and the mother wipes her eyes, and all the world shakes its gloomy head--what shall you do? Not the
thing which you can do most peacefully; not the thing which you can do most easily; not
the thing, necessarily, which you might do most naturally; not the thing which is expected
of you, because it is expected of you; not the thing which other people do, because other
people do it. Do only, and do bravely, and do faithfully that thing which you judge--not
with your brains alone, not with your heart alone, but with your heart in your... be right
for you; and Heaven’s blessing go with you, whether you are a sculptor or a nursery-maid,
an orator or a cook!

The fault which I have to find with most of you is that you largely neglect close,
logical, stern thought about the vital interests of yourselves and your sex. You feel your
way to your niches in life. Where your heart throbs there you stop, if you stop under fire
of every gun in the battery of reason and justice. What I ask of you is, to go and reason
together, till you can remember to count yourselves among your creditors in the selection
of your work and use. We are not commanded to love our neighbor more than ourselves.
The conjunction in the second great Commandment is its keystone.

A word in season, and in closing, bright-eyed friends! Whatever else you do, do
not assume that you must write for the press. Given a dozen girls, there are not likely to
be any more of their number found qualified for successful authorship than of the same
number of young men--perhaps one in the dozen, perhaps none. Yet, turn those dozen
girls out into the world to earn their own living to-day, and eleven out of the twelve will
send a MS. story or poem to the editor of the most scholarly magazine in the country
within a week. Out of the dozen boys, perhaps three will fly the same pretty, delusive kite
a while; nine will go to sweeping stores, and making brackets, and starting hot-houses,
and making shoes, and supporting themselves and their parents and two sisters, before you
can turn around. “If the verses are not poetry, I must sit down and hem aprons to the end
of my life!” writes one bewildered little girl, quite as if there were only poems and aprons
in the world; and when I tell her to study medicine, or turn bookseller, or work on a farm, does she do it?

Yes, now that I think of it, I remember one—just one. She did it. She put aside her papers; she bore to think that the literary world could live without her; she locked up her desk, and went into her father’s medical office, and wrote: “I go to Philadelphia next year, and am glad from the bottom of my heart that I have made the choice I have.” And when I saw her name on the title-page of a little Sunday school book, the other day, had I any doubt that it was a better book than she could have written if she had tried, in her untrained, uneasy, unadjusted state of three years ago? And did I not say: All good chance go with her—pill-box and pen!

Make up your minds, girls, that to stand behind a counter, or sell strawberries, or apprentice yourself to a wholesale druggist, or engrave on wood, or dig potatoes worthily and successfully is better and nobler than to write a third-rate poem or meander through an idle story; and that the world can well afford just now to dispense with a dozen of such authors as you stand a highly reasonable chance of proving to be, in exchange for one refined, clear-headed, true-hearted, and successful business woman: and—

But Mrs. O’Collins’ airy form rises gracefully against the horizon of Sahara. The feathers of her duster wave ominously over the little oasis where my inkstand and my elbow rest. “An’ is it arl thim papers I would have he burn oop?”


It was Lincoln, if I remember rightly, who gave us the famous dictum on the slavery conflict: "Sir, on such a question as this there is no other side."

There are but few problems of human discussion of which this can be said; but there are a few, and the power to discover what and where these are is one of the "proximate principles" which go to form a leader. To wake every morning, as was
maliciously said of a great man, with the conviction that everything is an open question is a tendency fatally synonymous with a growing intellectual culture, unbalanced by an increased spiritual refinement. Nothing is easier than, through excess of tolerance, to make unmerciful mistakes.

The Temperance agitation to-day involves two or three distinct departures, of only one of which can it be fairly and fearlessly said that there is no other side. The right of one set of sober men to impose private sumptuary laws upon another may be problematical, and my attempt to rebuke the friend upon whose table I find the wine which I do not taste would be an insufferable impertinence. If his be in any sense a consecrated life, it is not for me to cast a doubt upon his Christian sincerity in a matter upon which he may have reflected as intelligently and acted as conscientiously as I. It is as much my duty to respect his decision (assuming always, be it remembered, that it is a dedicated, not a worldly one) as it is to abide by mine. I should be as much to blame if I offended the laws of hospitality by criticising the morale of his table as I should if I did not leave it with sad and deepened determination not to alter that of my own. It hardly seems necessary for abstainers to step aside from their ranks to chatter on this point, which is as clear-cut as a star to people of intelligence, tolerance, and acquaintance with varied social conditions; and, for the rest, they must live and learn.

One thing, however, would seem to be past dispute. Somehow the sale of liquors must be checked. Something must be done to close the grog-shops. A power bold enough to be strong and strong enough to be bold must shut the door, as God shut the door for Noah which he could not or did not move himself. If moral suasion, and Christian example, and medical treatment, and public sentiment, and the pledge, and the red-ribbon clubs, and the prayer-meeting puff about these gaping gates like the breath of babies, the tornado that shall beat them back must come; and whether it come by the law or the Gospel, who shall be offended?
The power that will do the thing, whatever it be, is the power that must do it. As long as eighty-five per cent of our prisoners owe their incarceration to drunkenness; as long as there is in our cities one licensed place for the sale of liquor to every one hundred and seventy inhabitants; as long as sixty thousand persons a year in this country die drunk or from the effects of drink, there is no other side to the matter. The grog-shops must be shut. At any cost—whether of public interference or private self denial, whether the law goes on the statute book or the wine comes off the dinner-table—by some means the grog-shops must be shut. He is either criminally ignorant of the facts or criminally indifferent to them who can deny this.

Granting as much (as the truly humane, or those who desire to seem so, are usually ready to do), we are met—yesterday, to-day, and forever—by the presumption that prohibition does not prohibit. I call it a presumption, for the facts will bear me out in saying that it is impossible to condemn as unenforced law; and that wherever the law has been enforced the relative drunkenness of a community has enormously decreased.

The late Judge Shepley, of Portland, himself not a prohibitionist, told me that there was no question but that the Maine Law had been a success everywhere outside of the cities, where, in his judgment, it failed. In other words, the law had been enforced in the country; it had been unenforced in the towns. Its effects depended, not upon the nature of the law, but upon the nature of the execution.

This is too long a question, however, to be more than approached in a newspaper column, and my object in touching at all here upon a matter involving so much study, fidelity, forbearance, candor, and good sense as the present state of the temperance movement is to suggest chiefly the immense value of experience as a factor in forming one's opinions upon this difficult and delicate subject.
Lecky has said that deficiency of charity is apt to be deficiency of imagination. It may be said that deficiency of imagination is at the root of most of the mistakes of well-intentioned people. The absence of imagination as a motive power in morals is one of the most extraordinary, as it is one of the dreariest revelations that life makes to us. For the greater part of men it may safely be said that they are absolutely unable to conceive of positions which they have never occupied.

Whether or not virtue be a matter of latitude and longitude, force of argument is practically a matter of personal attitude and many a moral truth has sprung from individual emergency.

"I was not a Prohibitionist to begin with," said a woman familiar with the present forms of temperance effort to a scholarly and eloquent man, whose name is a national possession. "It took three years' work to make me so."

"I have been one for twenty years," he said, quickly. "And do you want to know what brought me there? It was following a dear friend from rum shop to rum shop at midnight, night after night, in vain. That settled the matter for me."

I trust I shall not be thought to forget the exception—among whom the true, the beautiful, and the good may, of course, be found, and should, of course, be honored—if I venture the assertion that, as a rule, they are not the people who know much about drunkards who oppose faithful legal experiments on the liquor question. They are not likely to be the men acquainted with the prevailing modes of grappling with this great public disgrace; not the men who go down into the reform club, and lend the luster of their spotless names to its blotted rolls; not the men who take the "reformed man's" arm on his way by the fifteen drinking-hells that he must pass to get home from his prayer-meeting;

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not the men who follow him into the saloons, when he has eluded them, or watch for him
in dangerous streets or on dangerous days (as the pure and courageous Robertson
watched to save miserable women); not the men who hunt up the poor fellow in the police
station, and get him a doctor, and help him out with his first fine, and reinstate him at his
work, and stand shoulder to shoulder with him through the fight. These are not the men
from whom we hear the most about the inequality of sumptuary restrictions, and the
importance of true temperance, and moderate indulgence, and personal liberty, and so on.
Nor is it apt to be the woman who has brought the whole sway of her womanly
prerogative, her social ease, her personal charm, her delicate bearing, her cultured thought
and trained sympathy—all to bear like light upon the salvation of even one abandoned
drankard, and the woman who has brooded over him like a mother for the first terrible
months of his recovery, who has seen him every day, who has prayed for him every hour,
who has guided him like an angel and guarded him like a woman, and recreated his
diseased and desperate will, and made a man out of that brute, only to see him sucked
under and drawn down before her even, and the slow, painful, but precious effects of
Christian sympathy destroyed in a moment by a "beer" seller at a "licensed" counter—this
is not the woman who is most sensitively alive to the social necessity of offering wine to
her guests.

Nor, alas! is it the silent man whose mythical wealth can never buy him a home
without a shame, because of the lad he lost, no one can say just when or where or how;
nor is it the woman with the haughty, haggard face, that we can almost select at random as
the face of a drunkard's wife. These are not the people who find it somehow natural to be
more keenly aware of the objections to any implacable attack upon the easy dissemination
of intoxicants than of the reasons, edged and burning as the sword of flame, why such
attacks should be made, and made without compromise, and made to succeed in God's
name.
Experience is a searching illuminator of the intellect, as well as a marvelous chastener of the will and heart. The opinions of men and women who have given their lives to a work so repulsive, disheartening, and unpopular as that which we call the Temperance Reform have a value which we who hide behind our ease, or shield ourselves with our inadequacy, or look on through the eye-glasses of our inertia, or quiver beneath the yoke of our helplessness cannot afford to underrate. Until we will, unless we can go and do likewise, the testimony of a dedicated life should stand apart for us with something of the sacredness of a spirit's. To sneer at it is ignoble. To respect it is a duty. To learn from it is a privilege. There is a certain presumption indefinable as the evidence of consecration in favor of its conclusions. Against all mere worldliness of motive this presumption is immense.
"What is a Fact?" November 1880: 676-85

This is a noisy age. The dreamer can find no sacred silence in which to hide his fantasy. The thinker may double-lock his study door, but the winds of heaven will pilfer his thoughts from him through the window, and the birds of the air will carry the matter; if they do not, the world concludes that there was none to carry. The believer, too, is tremulous to the vibrations of the atmosphere. His mysticism and quietism come by the hardest. If he have a faith, he feels that he must believe aloud. On every hand, the air is quick with clamors. The "advanced mind" shouts to the scientist. The theologian thunders at the infidel. The ecclesiastic menaces the liberal Christian. The philosopher sneers at each.

Representing none of these wise and urgent people, the writer of this fragment is moved to say a word concerning that considerable portion of humanity who walk outside the circle of this portentous amphitheatre, yet near enough to be alert to its contests, as well as deafened by its din. To these honest, quiet, and thoughtful people, who in all militant eras press nearest to the combatants, constituting at once their busiest critics and truest friends, and who to-day are possessed of all the refinements of sympathy and recoil characteristic of the age, I mistake not, as if the main question in dispute were one uncommonly easy to ask and uncommonly hard to answer.

It seems a long time ago that our great-grandfathers were crossing lances over the doctrine of imputed sin, or the souls of infants condemned by predestination and foreknowledge absolute to an eternal hell. A damned baby at best was a theory. Nobody ever saw one.
This is not the age of theory; hence we long since took our babies to be blessed by One who thought it worth while to mention the fact that of such are the kingdom of heaven. Thus we care no more whether we are to be punished for the sin of Adam, having enough of our own to look to, to say nothing of the additional doubt whether Adam himself can be called a fact. This, we find, is the age of fact. No one asks to-day, What is your theory? but, Where is your fact?

So, at least, it seems to these good people of whom I speak, who compose what we call "the masses" of the church and the world. The young man of business, who sits under your preaching from Sunday to Sunday, reverend sir, watches you with a keen but yet with a slightly saddened eye. Whether this be an age for the encouragement of faith or the preservation of doctrine he is not sure. Whether he has fallen upon an era of inductive or deductive reasoning he does not know; it is probable that he does not care. But that forces which he does not understand are threatening faiths that he reveres, he does know; and for this, in a downright, manly fashion, he does care very much indeed.

The thoughtful woman at the head of the crowded Bible class which has given such celebrity to your Sunday-school is puzzled, too. She no longer finds Barnes's Notes adequate to the religious difficulties of her observant, critical, restless pupils; she no longer teaches, either, that the world was made in six days, or that the majority of the human race are doomed by a loving Father to an eternal struggle with a lake of material fire. She has heard the authenticity of the Fourth Gospel and even the original authorship of the Golden Rule called in question. She has a general impression that Darwin is to blame, and that geology is at the bottom of the trouble. She finds this, however, less satisfactory as an argument than might be, when her pet convert, nineteen wise years of age, announces that he will immediately become a free-thinker, on the ground that next to immorality, there is nothing he so much prays to be delivered from as superstition. Perhaps she learns, as
some of us have, to assume in general the marked uselessness of discussion with the initial moods of "emancipated minds."

So, perhaps, our friend, the young pew-owner, feeling himself unable to hold his ground with the fellows at the club, yet all the fonder of the faith which he cannot defend, as the father is of the child whom he sees surrendering to a stealthy disease, saddens a little more and more, but joins himself to the great rank and file of the silent believers, who try to be good fellows, and hope the Lord will clear things up some day. He thinks it would be natural to be able to give good reasons for believing anything so important as the Christian religion,—good business reasons, that were clear as the code of ethics on 'change, and as much to be respected, whether obeyed or not,—but finds no such reasons causing such respect, and gradually ceases to look for any.

Is it not safe to say that a part of the difficulties which our friends meet would be relieved, if they could more distinctly, or at least more clearly, define in their own minds some starting-point?—without agreement upon which it is impossible to debate differences of either judgment or feelings, and for lack of which so many of our religious discussions are as wasted as the powder and blood of Malvern Hill.

The average religious argument of to-day takes, perhaps, some such form as this,—the disputants, we may suppose, not having reached that stage of familiarity with each other's views at which controversy is tacitly and mutually conceded to be no accretion either to friendship or to faith.

The believer—we use this term and its opposites as, on the whole, less objectionable and more precise than any others which existing religious conflict has popularized—the believer begins by timidly expressing a hope that the unbeliever has "found Christ," or "is a Christian," or "is a man of faith." The unbeliever promptly and not at all timidly expresses his complete dissent from every point of conviction involved in these phrases. He may do this arrogantly or sadly, honestly or shrewdly, earnestly or
flippantly, gently or maliciously, but he does it with decision. He speaks of scientific paradoxes in the "poem of Genesis," of the morals of the Old Testament saints, of the physical impossibility of miracles, of the discoveries of geology, of personal imperfections in the character of Jesus, of the superior nature of Socrates, of the howling dervish, the negro revivals, and the damnation of children,—an article of faith which he asserts is generally wrought into the creeds of Christian churches of the present day, and, secretly disavowed by kind-hearted but hypocritical people, who have not the courage openly to combat so monstrous a doctrine.

At this point, the believer strikes in rather warmly, and if he does not reply that such ignorance on any other vital point of contemporary difference would condemn his opponent to the strongest criticism of intelligent people, is tempted to do so, and feels a little out of temper and a little penitent, and suggests that the Bible is an inspired book, written by God for men and through men, and that we must expect to find difficulties in it, and earnestly and pointedly asks, Where will you find, on the whole, a better book for the guidance of human weakness?

The unbeliever replies that there is much fine poetry in the Bible, but more bad argument, Oriental superstition, and confused metaphor; that many men are inspired; that Goethe was a divine man; and that Browning's Paracelsus is as much a work of inspiration as the Song of Solomon, and far more moral. He adds that it is impossible to reconcile God's sovereignty with man's freedom in any such make-shift manner as that adopted by the theologians, and that God either created sin, or he did not; that if he did he was not benevolent, and if he did not he was not omnipotent; and that we are made to cultivate our manhood, express our individuality, and study the secrets of nature.

The believer suggests that it may be possible we do not, as finite beings, understand all the mysteries in the nature of an infinite God; that it is not to be wondered
at if we must leave some points unexplained; that this is perhaps a part of the discipline necessary to fit us for the eternal life.

The unbeliever hastens to say that of the eternal life we know absolutely nothing.--we cannot conceive of either beginning or end; that we are here and know it, but further than this we have no right to infer. We may cherish immortality only as a "solemn hope" (the believer's eyes fill, and he mentally ejaculates, "Poor fellow!"), or we may expect to be as the beasts that perish, and live on in the forces of nature, and the resurrection of the seasons, and the memories of unborn generations, and so on, but that geology is making every hour discoveries which are to revolutionize belief; that hope, faith, love, and the energies of imagination are beautiful fancies, but rocks are facts, and therefore (as nearly as the believer can understand) he urges that we cling to the rocks.

The believer suggests that rocks are cold comfort; to the bereaved, for instance, or the remorseful.

The unbeliever replies, vaguely, that he is not sure, either, that we comprehend the difference between infinite or finite--Finite? Infinite? He is not certain that there is any infinite, or that he himself--in short--is finite--but that science-- And so on, and so on.

Now, all this is firing wild. There is no gold in the target. There shows no target in the mist. If we set our aim in a fog-bank, who is to decide whether we have hit?

The believer may seek to "save" the unbeliever in this fashion till "the eve of the day of the Last Awaking,"--he will only irritate. The doubting may try to "reason" with the trusting on this wise, till his tongue returns to the dust that he claims his kin to,--he can only depress. The disputants have served from the most elementary of the principles of logic. They have discovered no major premise in common. They must agree upon something before they can disagree intelligently about anything. There can be no dispute without a basis of harmony. "We may never, perhaps," as Hamilton says, "arrive at truth, but we can always avoid self-contradiction."
Let us now suppose, as it is the object of this paper to suggest, that these two equally earnest people ask of each other, at the outset of all sincere and serious discussion, one simple question: *What is a Fact?*

The believer, we will assume, happens to put the query. The unbeliever hesitates. Neither of the disputants are psychological scholars. Both are intelligently educated. The unbeliever is the more accustomed of the two, probably, to sophistries of discussion. He perceives the importance of the point, and hesitates. It is one of the maxims of civil law that definitions are hazardous. After a thoughtful pause, he replies, with the blunt courage of common sense, which is quite as apt to hit the truth as the sharply refined point of the artist in philosophical language, that he should say a fact was a thing that could be verified.

To this the believer, without hesitation, agrees. All he claims, he adds, is that religion is a matter of fact as well as science. Grant this, he urges, and we can pursue our discussion. Deny it, and the sooner we agree to disagree the better. The believer's own vision has begun to clarify, and this closer exactness of definition, and his method of expression intensifies.

The unbeliever replies, with animation, that it is impossible to put religion and science upon the same foot-hold. We have, he urges, reached the age of reason—at last. It is no longer practicable for intelligent men to bend their necks to the yoke of superstition. We deal no more with a realm of fancy. Jesus was a rhapsodist. Christianity was full of poetry. It appealed to the imaginative era. We have passed by the birth-time of great poets. Literature acknowledges it. We do not now write epics. We invent the phonograph. Machinery, discovery, action, have replaced reverie, credulity, and dreams. We no longer pray. We telegraph. We have no time to sing psalms. We are engaged in the artificial propagation of fish. Why should we attend church when we can observe the spontaneous generation of animalculae in a bottle of boiled water?
At this point the listener smiles, and the speaker breaks off with some irritation. He sees nothing to smile at. He is very much in earnest. These are serious subjects which he has mentioned. He is indeed more logical than he had seemed, and abruptly turning upon his opponent says,—

You ask me for my facts. I find them in the investigation of nature. Observe them. They alone are worthy of confidence. We seek, we study, we combine, we infer.
The human mind was created--

By whom? interrupts the believer.

Consistently, the unbeliever replies that he does not know. The powers of nature, formerly called God, have not yet fully revealed themselves to our ken. I believe nothing that I do not understand. I will not accept what I cannot prove. This is the first duty of the human reason. Many should receive only what he knows. I find myself a mysterious being in a mysterious condition. My business is to investigate my condition. Whether there be another world is none of my concern. No eye has seen it, no foot has returned from it, no voice has spoken from it; it is an absolutely unproved, and therefore unprovable, hypothesis. I find myself in the present world. I have occupation in the study of my limitations. There are mountains, the sea, the stars, the earth. There are geology, astronomy, the nautical sciences, the study of human diseases, the mysteries and cultus of the physical organization. I learn from the fossil and the scalpel. The telescope and the microscope, the chart and the battery, command my attention. These give me the undeniable. Exact investigation presents me with my facts. Beyond a fact I am not justified in going.

Where is God? Can you handle him? What is prayer? Go weigh it for me! An immortal soul? My microscope has never revealed it. A fact is a thing revealed or revealable to my senses. Science alone is knowledge. Religion is superstition.
Superstition is bondage. I decline to be fettered. Christianity is slavery. I choose freedom. Exact thought is my master.* And thus, and thus, and thus.

As the discussion waxes, the believer is oppressed more and more with the hopelessness, but not the helplessness of his effort. In proportion as he learns the difficulty of dissuading a man from views hardened as they are acquired by the friction of dissent from hereditary faiths, he gains nerve for his own processes of thought, and muscle for his own maturing belief. If nothing more comes out of the conversation, his faith at least is stouter for it. If he has not "converted" the free-thinker, he has himself become a better Christian.

He who believes much has always the advantage over him who believes little or nothing. Faith is the positive, as skepticism is a negation. He who affirms intelligently and earnestly carries by a sheer moral propulsion, as irresistible as the channel of Niagara, a power, not unlike the primal awe of nature, over him who denies.

Let us hope that our believer, enlightened in his own dimness by his contest with another's darkness, returns upon his antagonist a few ringing words, to which there can be no more convincing reply than the eternal and unassailable finality: I do not agree with you.

You seek, the believer says, the truth,—the whole and holy and invulnerable truth. I seek no other. You desire a religion of facts. I also wish the same. You demand that we construct belief from reason. I, too, prefer a reason for my conclusions. You claims that you alone possess a basis of fact, since you only restrict yourself to what is known. You claim that you find the known alone in physical manifestations, their formulae and solutions. I deny your claim.

*Author's footnote. "He could not accept Christianity," said Renan of Spinoza (I quote from memory), at the recent celebration in honor of that philosopher's memory. "He could not thus surrender his liberty. Descartes was his master"! 379
I deny your claim, because (you will pardon me) of what seems to me its *ignorance*. You forget, or you have never learned, that truth is no niggard, and that science is a broad and bounteous term. It is not alone in the hard bosom of the rock that the Eternal rests. It is not only in the fumes of the laboratory that the breath of the devout seeker exhales. There are trained intellects that are not occupied with the germ theory, or with the latest treatise on the parasites of an unfortunate plant. There are students, as there are scholars, of other than material knowledges. You forget that there are to be found other than the physical sciences. You forget that the history of these other sciences commemorates much of the highest order of intellect, the most precise training, the most generous culture, the most candid research, and the purest sacrifice of self in the investigation of truth that human life has known.

You forget, in short (or you have never learned), that the MENTAL SCIENCES EXIST. You have not remembered that there is a philosophy of *mind*, as there is of *matter*; that there is a philosophy of *soul*, as there is of *sense*.

One need not be a very learned person to recall the facts that the sciences of ethics, of intellectual philosophy (even of theology, though for the sake of controversial comfort we may waive that irritating illustration), have still respectable positions in the world of thought, quite in rank with mathematics or chemistry. It has slipped your mind, for the moment, that there is a study of *Metaphysics* as well as of *Physics*. You have not articulately understood that a sufficient culture overlooks neither the existence of these two forms of human knowledge, nor their relative importance and adjustment to each other.

And this leads me to say (once more I pray your courtesy) that I deny your claim because of what seems to me its *arrogance*.

One need not be very learned, I repeat, to understood something of the debt which the students of matter owe to the students of mind. You and I are not learned, only
intelligent people, and the intelligent have heard something of Socrates, of Aristotle, of Bacon; of him who (humanly speaking), it might be said, created exact thought, of him who developed, of him who reconstructed it. Mental science, as we know, was by centuries the elder born, and father of physical science, in any modern signification of the word; as the brain is the creator and guide of the movements of the hand or foot.*

To ignore the parental influence of metaphysical upon physical study is a species of filial ingratitude which it is impossible to describe by a smooth adjective. The very processes of thought by which you are trained to investigate the material fact, you owe to ancestral centuries of mental discipline and to apostles of mental science. You speak of conscious and sub-conscious cerebration. You deny the mental entity which you once called a human soul. What enables your prompt lip to utter the challenge? Whence comes your power to deny?

I do not express these things in philosophical language, for, as I have reminded you, we are neither of us learned people, but I desire to make you understand in a plain and direct fashion that which I desire to say. Is it becoming, I ask, is it the modesty of wisdom, for the instrument to ignore the influence? Shall the microscope and the retort say to the eye or the hand, "We have no need of thee"? Shall the probe say to the surgeon, "Go to! It is I who tear or torture, as it is I who heal and save"? Speaking of his scientific confrères, one of the most distinguished physicians whom this country has known said, "They cannot account for the 'I'."

In short, it seems to me that when a man exalts the science of things which are seen and touched over the science of that which sees and touches; when he prefers to mistake a convolution in the brain for that by which the convolution becomes able to

*Author's footnote. Indeed, the believer might add, we are told by scholars that the father of modern intuitionism was the father of modern mathematics as well. Descartes was the first of our scientists to study mind in the dissecting-room.
think, feel, and act,—nay, by which alone it is enabled to make the mistake; when he
selects the less for the greater, the lower for the loftier, matter for mind, brain for soul, he
exhibits the presumption of the servant, sent by his master to cash a check of important
value, who struts as if the money were his own.

I object to your claim because, once more, I perceive it to be a degrading one. It
is not necessary to be great ourselves to know that the great natures of the earth have
been believing natures. Even you and I can remember that music, poetry, art, philosophy,
literature, nay, physics itself, owe something to faith. It is not easy to forget that
Beethoven, Mozart, Bach, Handel, Haydn, Milton, Dante, Wordsworth, Raphael and
Michael Angelo, Plato and Immanuel Kant and Leibnitz, Goethe and Shakespeare, Kepler
and Newton, were believers in the existence of God and the immaterial nature and
immortal destiny of the human spirit. It might be comparatively easy to prove that you
and I had no souls; to deny one to these people I have mentioned were to go as far as
anything could, perhaps, to prove that you are right, and that we, at least, are destitute of
any.

Degrading, I say,—degrading to the deeps below all that is truly fine, all that is
delicately observant, all that is highly reverential, all that is nobly receptive, all that is
capable of assimilating the ideal, the beautiful, the lofty, and the large in human history,—is
that view of human mystery which your claim presents. It may be either the cause or the
consequence of this view that you flippantly ignore the testimony of the great teachers of
human life. You decline to sit at the feet of the prophets, priests, and kings of the world.
You turn your back upon the heights; on art, on inspiration, on intuition, on imagination,
on aspiration, on song, on the sources of all that makes men clear and keen in brain,
refined and pure in heart. For remember that if you seek to share these things they are no
longer properly yours. They are not, they never were, they never can be, the products of a
materialistic philosophy. If this is not clear to you, it seems to be that your location quite
as well as your attitude puts a finely and simply outlined truth out of perspective to you. He who climbs, sees. "To him, as to Moses," says a French scholar, "secrets unknown to the rabble are revealed upon the mountain-top."

You sit, then, and adjust yourself to the valley. You burrow, you dig, you descend. Choosing the company of the lowest forms of manifestation, you will find that the influence of their atmosphere is upon you. If a human mind keeps the exclusive society of vegetables and insects and fossils, is it to be wondered at that it fails to see the transfigured cloud which veils, while defining, the motions of the eternal sun? If a man's corroding ambition is to be quoted as an "authority on potato bugs," he may be a sensitive appreciator of Locke's Essay on the Understanding, or the "Excursion" of the Lake Poet, or the Gospel of John; but does it surprise us if he is not?

Pardon once more my plainness if I tell you that I cannot accept your claim, because it seems to me not unlike the scoff of the demonstrator in the dissecting-room. His business leads him to handle flesh. How, then, should God be a spirit?

I have somewhat, too, to affirm. You have called my attention to your facts; I should be glad to acquaint you with mine. Yours I accept; it is your conclusions which I refuse. I do not question the evolution of the species, or the zymotic theory of diseases, or the existence of the last comet, or the possibilities of the photophone, or the discoveries of psycho-physics as affecting the criminal or the insane. Physical science is welcome to do her best or her worst by helpless spectators like yourself or me. A fact is a fact, though it deal with the lowest phases of nature, and truth is holy, whether she hide in a stalactite or an epic, a jelly-fish or an oratorio, a vivisection or a prayer. I accept your facts, retaining the liberty to draw my own conclusions. I only ask that you (retaining, of course, the same liberty) accept my facts before we close or continue this discussion.

Of this, then, I would remind you. The manifestations of mind are at least as much to be respected as the manifestations of matter. He was a real philosopher who gave to
his book the title, Man in his Connection with the Human Body. What we think and feel
is as genuine as what we see and touch. If I handle a chair or table, my thought of them is
as individual as the table or the chair. If I take a pen to write these words, that which
creates the words is as real as the pen. "I am the soul of the music," said a musician, when
his string snapped. "Though the strings are all broken, the music is there." Let me add
(for you will remind me that I do not touch the pulse of your difficulty) that my thought is
as real as the brain-cells by whose activity I am empowered to think it.

Thus, if I listen to music which dissuades me from temptation, or lifts me from
gloom, or leads me to despair, these emotions exist as much as the ivory of the piano keys.
or the catgut of the violin, or the gray matter in the cerebrum which the piano, the violin,
and the emotion set in agitation. I am at least as justified in assertion, as you in denial of
these facts. Explain them as you will. I offer them as facts. As such—until you can prove
that "thought is phosphorus and phosphorus is thought," without the predominant action
of your mind in making that hypothesis—they ought to be by you respected.

There is a form of the mental life which we call spiritual. This is the highest, as it
is the finest, phase of the mystery that we name existence. Coleridge expressed what I
mean when he said that "faith is itself a higher reason, and corrects the errors of reason as
reason corrects the errors of sense." As the physical life is revealed by its phenomena, as
the mental life possesses its expression, so the spiritual life has its manifestation. This is a
fact. As such it is to be respected.

As we depend upon the senses to make clear to us the presence of the sunrise, as
we rely upon the reason to explain to us the nature of a thought, so we lean upon faith to
reveal to us the nature of a spirit.

While the eye brings to us the color of the dawn, it can do no more; the optic
nerve of an idiot, though it quiver in precise obedience to the laws of his physical
organism, for threescore years and ten, will never reveal to him the rapture of the morning.
Sense and reason must act together. So the reason, left to itself, informs us of the character of the thought or of the feeling which we have about the sunrise; then it comes and there it must come, against its limitation. The intellect of a skeptic, though he cultivate it till he is in his grave, will never produce a prayer for the guidance, or endurance, or delight of the day that is about to be his. Reason and faith must work together. So, we might add, faith, as a disconnected faculty, cannot result in true devotion. Unless guided by reason, the devotee may become a howling dervish, or a hysterical nun. The sense, the mind, and the spirit must live together.

Like the life physical, like the life intellectual, the spiritual life, while yet confessing an interdependence upon these other forms of life, possesses, like them, an individual existence.

"My soul to me a kingdom is." In this kingdom there are laws: there is obedience or disobedience; there is anarchy or order; there is the separation of government; there is the history of growth or decline. This is a fact. As such it is to be respected.

A broken physical law involves its penalty. A denied intellectual law implies a punishment. A defied spiritual law presumes its retribution.

Leap into the ocean; no opposing law of salvation interfering, you will drown.

Defraud the hours of rest for study or for dissipation; you lose the mental power of controlling natural sleep. Contest against that surrender of the soul to its Creator which we call the religious life; the religious life withdraws itself from you. Unbelief closes over the willing unbeliever, like the waves of the sea or the tides of insomnia. These are facts. As such they are to be respected.

Again: the great law of development is the law of action. Every natural power grows by exercise. Any school-boy knows that he can create the iron ball of muscle on his arm only by the use and training of the muscle. Any college girl understands that the various faculties of the brain, the mathematical skill of the accountant, the acquisitive
power of the linguist, the obedient memory, or what is called the conservative power, of
the historian, as well as the rhythmical facility of the poet, the manual dexterity of the
musician, and the balanced imagination of both, become serviceable only through action.
as they become through inaction inert. As with the brawn, as with the brain, so with the
spirit.

To exercise spiritual power, is to develop and strengthen it. To disuse it is to
repress or extinguish it.

Now then, I ask you to remember that we who believe, speak to you out of a
condition whose government you have defied or ignored; and that we speak of a faculty
whose exercise you have disused. If we mention the spiritual life, we mention that of
which you are not a citizen, but an exile; whether by deliberate choice or chance
misfortune is not to the immediate purpose,—you are exiled. You have not the citizen's
right of judgment concerning our affairs. You are incompetent to criticise this life,
because you are not in it. Thus, too, if we refer to spiritual power, we refer to that which
you do not possess, because you do not train it; whether by accident or design is not at
present to the point,—your spiritual faculties are uneducated. You are disqualified from
apprehending truth by means of powers which you have atrophied by disuse. These are
facts; as such they ought to be respected.

Within this spiritual life, by means of exercised spiritual faculties acting upon and
acted upon by our reason, we who believe cherish certain spiritual facts. God is one of
these facts. The immortality of human souls is another. The responsibility of conscience
is yet a third. The hope of a happy life everlasting is to be counted. The reasonableness of
Revelation we add. To the saneness and usefulness of prayer we have attested. To the
power of the personal life of Jesus Christ we thrill to witness. To the facts of forgiven sin
and comforted bereavement we bear testimony. Is not a penitent and christianized thief as
demonstrable as a clam or a comet? Is not the ecstasy of a martyr as real as the fagots

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that burn him? Is not the resignation of the desolate mourner as much a matter of proof as the coffin or the marble sleeper over which he weeps?

And yet but once again. As the body has its senses, so has the soul. Burns speaks of "those senses of the mind" by which great religious truths are apprehended. Spiritual truth is received by spiritual powers. Spiritual fact is perceived by the spiritual eye, heard by a spiritual ear, handled by spiritual touch. "The true saint," says Dr. Holmes, "can be entirely apprehended only by saintly natures."

We share with you the experience of the exercised physical senses, by which you and we alike perceive the physical fact. You do not as yet share with us—nor we lay no claim to what is called "saintship" in asserting this—the experience of the trained spiritual sense by which we receive the spiritual fact. To this extent and for this reason, are you as far qualified for making intelligent deductions from our premises as we for drawing such from yours?

In asking you to answer this, as an act of judicial fairness, we cannot refrain from adding that it would seem natural for a broad-minded and intelligent man to feel a certain discontent with the partial nature of this development. He who trains his body and exercises his brain, and stops there, is imperfect, unbalanced, crude. He who has not sought to develop his spiritual nature is a half-educated creature.

Spiritual growth is the flower of the human growth. In spiritual character we find the highest, finest, and most complex form of the species. All other nature, whether physical or mental, is embryonic to spiritual nature. Spiritual culture is the culmination of human education.

We ask, therefore, evidences of this culture, as the first qualification in any man towards his becoming a critic of such nature, such power, such character, or their philosophy. Failing of this culture, your science should, we submit, grant to our science the respect of ignorance, if not the attention of the student.
We have known invalids, prisoners of their inert muscles during all the bloom and brilliance of life. Some late-found medical inspiration, some personal surrender of devotion on the part of a friend, some unexpected joy or unimagined grief, or even some electric alarm has allured, or shocked, or startled the sick man to his feet.

The power of motion was not dead, but slept. Late and loath though they be, the great flexile and extensor actions of the great muscles begin. Between the grave of his life and the grave of his death the man partakes of a resurrection.

Such a discovery of blessedness, we may suppose, comes to him who, after the sluggishness, or willfulness, or disease of unbelieving years, is led by the late cultivation of his spiritual faculties to the possession of spiritual truth.

Facts before which his intellect has been a blank illuminate his consciousness. Mysteries at which he sneered become shrines before which he kneels. Powers which he has not hitherto revealed magnify his nature. Hopes which he has never known irradiate his life. Contrition that he has not understood permeates his heart. Tenderness which he has never approached gives pathos, as it gives purity, to his past. A future of which he has never dreamed intensifies and glorifies his present. He learns the value of his own being, and experiences the friendship of God. In the closing days of his history, as in the final scenes of the apocalyptic vision, there are "new heavens and a new earth."

It is not generally known that the Lady of Shalott lived last summer in an attic, at the east end of South street.

The wee-est, thinnest, whitest little lady! And yet the brightest, stillest, and all such a smiling little lady!

If you had held her up by the window—for she could not hold up herself—she would have hung like a porcelain transparency in your hands. And if you had said, laying her gently down, and giving the tears a smart dash, that they should not fall on her lifted face, "Poor child!" the Lady of Shalott would have said, "Oh, don't!" and smiled. And you would have smiled yourself, for very surprise that she should outdo you; and between the two there would have been so much smiling done that one would have fairly thought that it was a delightful thing to live last summer in an attic at the east end of South street.

This perhaps was the more natural in the Lady of Shalott because she had never lived anywhere else.

When the Lady of Shalott was five years old, her mother threw her downstairs one day, by mistake, instead of the whisky-jug.

This is a fact which I think Mr. Tennyson has omitted to mention in his poem.

They picked the Lady of Shalott up and put her on the bed; and there she lay from that day until last summer, unless, as I said, somebody had occasion to use her for a transparency.

The mother and the jug both went down the stairs together a few years after, and never came up at all—and that was a great convenience, for the Lady of Shalott's palace in the attic was not large, and they took up much unnecessary room.
Since that the Lady of Shalott had lived with her sister, Sary Jane.

Sary Jane made nankeen vests, at sixteen and three-quarter cents a dozen.

Sary Jane had red hair, and crooked shoulders, and a voice so much like a rat-trap which she sometimes set on the stairs that the Lady of Shalott could seldom tell which was which until she had thought about it a little while. When there was a rat caught, she was apt to ask, "What?" and when Sary Jane spoke she more often than not said, "There's another!"

Her crooked shoulders Sary Jane had acquired from sitting under the eaves of the palace to sew. That physiological problem was simple. There was not room enough under the eaves to sit straight.

Sary Jane's red hair was the result of sitting in the sun on July noons under those eaves, to see to thread her needle. There was no question about that. The Lady of Shalott had settled it in her own mind, past dispute. Sary Jane's hair had been--what was it? brown? once. Sary Jane was slowly taking fire. Who could not, to sit in the sun in that palace? The only matter of surprise to the Lady of Shalott was that the palace itself did not smoke. Sometimes, when Sary Jane hit the rafters, she was sure that she saw sparks.

As for Sary Jane's voice, when one knew that she made nankeen vests at sixteen and three-quarter cents a dozen, that was a matter of no surprise. It never surprised the Lady of Shalott.

But Sary Jane was very cross; there was no denying that; very cross.

And the palace. It measured just 12 by 9 feet. It would have been 7 feet post--if there had been a post in the middle of it. From the center it sloped away to the windows, where Sary Jane had just room enough to sit crooked under the eaves at work. There were two windows and a loose scuttle to the palace. The scuttle let in the snow in winter and the sun in summer, and the rain and wind at all times. It was quite a diversion to the Lady of Shalott to see how many different ways of doing a disagreeable thing seemed to
be practicable to that scuttle. Besides the bed on which the Lady of Shalott lay, there was a stove in the palace, two chairs, a very ragged rag-mat, a shelf, with two notched cups and plates upon it, one pewter teaspoon, and a looking-glass. On washing-days Sary Jane climbed upon the chair and hung her clothes out through the scuttle on the roof; or else she ran a little rope from one of the windows to the other for a drying-rope. It would have been more exact to have said on washing-nights; for Sary Jane always did her washing after dark. The reason was evident. If the rest of us were in the habit of wearing all the clothes we had, like Sary Jane, I have little doubt that we should do the same.

"The Christmas of Sir Galahad," The Independent Thursday, December 7, 1871: 1

When a fancy fashioned neither after the inductive nor the deductive methods, attributable neither to natural selection nor to protoplasm, definable by no law of contradiction nor of excluded middle, presents itself to the public acquaintance nowadays, it is apt, as we all know, to receive rather a sorry welcome. And when, after the sadly tardy discovery of the Lady of Shalott, in South street, one of those remarkable rumors, credence to which is at once a danger and a delight, stole about town, it stole on tiptoe, looking over its shoulder meanwhile at corners with one soft shy eye on the police and another on the daily press, and a startled glance at the fashionable churches, and a tender shudder at the shadow of the "Institute," and its beautiful finger at its lips--making thus slow progress, and, for every warm-hearted faith which it shook by the out-stretched hand, leaving two doubts to close ranks behind it.

Such as it is, however, and for what it may mean, this is the whisper. It would be found, so it is said, had we the eyes that see or the ears that hear either signs or sounds of such a matter, that certain of the old romances which we have been accustomed to regard as finished and fated for all time are, in fact, re-enacting and repeating themselves, with a
timidity amounting almost to stealth, in the chilling and alien climate of our modern civilization: that steam has not scorched out valor, nor the telegraph overtaken chivalry. nor universal suffrage extinguished loyalty that the golden years did not go dumbly to their graves, as we are wont to think; that they have arisen, like Lazarus, with their chin-cloths on, acquainted with things unlawful to utter—reserved, still visitors, shunned and strange. It is breathed that there somewhere walks the earth today the Blameless King; it is hinted that there somewhere hides the Mismated Queen; it has been said that at times the Vanished Knights of the Round Table gather together in strange guise, to stranger conclave; that a student familiar with their story would be well puzzled should he stumble upon them; that Sir Percivale has been seen in a Pennsylvania coal-mine; that Bohort was discovered in New York one day, in a bricklayer's apron, with a trowel in his hand; that Isoude the Fair was all but identified in a hospital at Washington during the War of the Rebellion; that Launcelot, penitent and pale, may be heard, if one is so fortunate as to trace him, in the form of a certain street preacher, but little known, who gathers ill-favored men and women about him in an unsavory part of the town at the decline of the Sunday afternoon; that Guinevere is rumored to spend much time alone in a chamber looking toward the west, engaged in keeping a certain watch which has been set her, for a peril and a promise which no man knows; that Arthur himself filled a post of high official importance at Washington not long ago, and, escaping identification through two terms' service, disappeared suddenly and mysteriously from public life; that, in short, a Romance never did, nor ever will, but is adjudged to be the only immortal thing on earth, save the soul of man.

As much as this, in common with a few others, so far favored, I had heard and forgotten, till chance threw the whole chain of pretty dreams before me, by lashing one link around my very hands. All much as this I found myself compelled to recall with more
than common thoughtfulness when I came face to face with Sir Galahad at a butcher's stall, last Christmas morning.

Did you ever know a lost knight to be found until a woman tracked him? Is it, therefore, surprising that if it had not been for Rebecca Rock, Sir Galahad Holt would have escaped recognition completely, and the modest number of men and women now admitted to the secret of the discovery have gone the hungrier and the sadder for the lose?

It was always a matter of deep scientific speculation to Rebecca Rock why, when she came to town to find work in the neck-tie factory, she should have chosen lodgings in the second back corner of 16 1/2 Primrose Court. She would say: "If I had hit on the western side!" or, "If I had been able to pay the rent of that room opposite the factory!" or, "How near I came to settling on the little south attic of 17!"

And she sat and mused upon it with a puzzled face. If, indeed! What an "If" it was! Such an If as there would have been in the world if that other Rebecca had taken the wrong road and missed of meeting Isaac in the desert at the act of the sun; or if Eve had lost her way in the shrubbery of Eden, and just happened not to find Adam till nobody knows when!

Perhaps, two, such an If as there would have been in Heloise had never gone to school to Abelard, or Di Rimini had never seen her lover's face? The world would have lost a grand temptation. So much as that, Rebecca Rock, cutting "foundation" into strips for the public neck, eleven hours a day, confusedly felt; but she had never heard of Heloise, and if she had been obliged to sit beside Francesca Di Rimini in the necktie factory she would have shrunken in the wounded wonder of a snow-drift from a foot-mark.

How long it was before Galahad Holt, coming home from the organ factory at seven o'clock to his solitary ground-floor lodging at 16 1/2, noticed the tall woman in the blanket shawl, who came in a little later and passed his door in going up-stairs; how long before a sense of anything more than tallness and a shawl occurred to him; how soon he
noticed the outline of her arm when the shawl fell from it, as she laid her large, strong hand upon the banisters; when he first observed the regular, calm echo which her step left upon the croaking stairs; when first he met her carrying a pail of water from the Court, and instead of feeling moved to carry it for her, only thought how evenly she carried it for herself; when first she smiled at suddenly observing him; when first he gravely said good-morning; when first he gravely joined her if they chanced upon the same side of the street in passing to and fro from work; how first he gravely learned to discuss with her the fall in wages, and the wind we had on Saturday, the rise in coal, and the sunset there would be tonight; and when first he gravely came to feel that wind and fuel, sun and pay-day were no longer common matters for the common world in consequence. but a heritage of his and her discovery, ownership, and wealth, is not accurately known.

Strictly speaking, he himself knew accurately nothing. He worked, he ate, he slept; he shut himself into his lonely lodging (it was so singular, said all the Court, in Sir Galahad to board himself!); suns rose and set; she smiled and came and went: but he knew distinctly nothing. Nothing till, once upon a Sunday afternoon, he followed her to a little mission church they knew, sat on a wooden bench and watched her sing; but left in the middle of the chorus, and went abruptly home. He shut and locked the door; he stood still in the middle of the room.

"God bless her!" he said aloud. But he sat down and covered his face with his grimy, princely hands, and flushed as if he had done her a deadly wrong.

Had he the right to take a woman into his swept and garnished heart, even long enough to bless her in God's name and let her go? "It would turn to curses," said Sir Galahad, "upon us both. I will not bless her." Now he turned his head, at this, and saw her coming up the Court. "I will not, will not!" said Sir Galahad. But all his soul rose up and went to meet her, and laid its hands upon her head in benediction. And when Sir Galahad felt within himself that this was so, he fell upon his knees, and there remained till
midnight. And in the morning he arose with a countenance as calm as ever knight wore in love or death or victory, and went away in his blue overalls to work, with his dinner-pail upon his arm, and nodded gravely to Rebecca; but smiled little and spoke less.

And so the Lady Rebecca, grieved and puzzled in her heart, would have dropped a tear or two upon her foundation strips, but for a heat upon her cheeks that burned and dried them all the day; and so at night, being feverish and wakeful, and, stepping down into the Court at an early hour for fresh water, she came suddenly upon a woman clambering into Sir Galahad's low window.

So she dropped her pail, and, in the icy swash that fell about her feet, sat down to catch her breath.

There, in the mud-puddle which the chilly water made, Sir Galahad found her sitting, when he had shut his window, had turned the key in his door, had come out, and had stopped and stood beside her.

That's my wife, Rebecca, I've just locked in, in there," said Sir Galahad, standing in the starlight. "Will you come to the window and take a look at her?"

"I'd rather not," said Rebecca from her mud-puddle; but she rose, and shook the spatter from her clothes.

"Very well," said Galahad.

"You never told me," said Rebecca, picking up her pail, "that you had a wife. Sir Galahad!"

"I never thought of it till yesterday," said Galahad. "I ought to have. I ask your pardon, Miss Rebecca. She's crazy."

"Oh!" said the Lady Rebecca, stretching out her strong, large hand; but she drew it back, and hid it in her shawl.

"And takes opium," said Galahad Holt, patiently. "and is up to pretty much everything. It's going on six years now since she left me. But she keeps a coming on me.
unexpected. The ground floor's saved a deal of talk and shame, I think; don't you? I thought I'd best keep house for her, all things taken in't the count; don't you? Sometimes I think she'll slick herself up a little and stay. But in a day or two she's off. She's got the Old Un in her head to-night," said Galahad.

"It's very hard; it's very, very hard!" Rebecca moaned.

"Rebecca Rock," said Sir Galahad, solemnly, "it's a curious place and time to say it; but I think there'll never come a better--"

"Oh! no," said Rebecca.

"And I may as well out with it, my girl, first as last, and once for all, and tell you how, if you'd been my wife, instead of her, I couldn't have loved you truer nor more single in my heart than I love you in the sight of God and these here stars this wretched night. And I'm a married man!"

"Oh! yes, yes!" said Rebecca.

"But I'm a married man," said he.

"People unmarry," said she.

She looked in a frightened way about the Court, at the stars, at the pump, at the mud-puddle; she gasped and thrust her hand out, but drew it back within her shawl. Sir Galahad did not touch it.

"I suppose," said Sir Galahad, very slowly, "as I could get divorced from Merry Ann. I've thought o't. I thought o't yesterday a long while. But it seems to me as if I'd better not. She'd be a coming back, ye see. Any ways, she'd be a living on this living arth. We might be meeting her face to face most any day. It seems to me, Rebecca, as if it was again Natur for me to marry any woman while Merry Ann's a living creetur. How does it seem to you?"

"Galahad Holt," said Rebecca. "I'm not so good as you, and I'm very fond of you."

"For God's sake, don't tell me o't!" cried Sir Galahad.

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"Well, I won't," said Rebecca.

"For, if it's agin Natur," said Sir Galahad, lifting his face to the stars above Primrose Court, "it's agin God. And rather than be agin them two I'd be on't the safe side, it seems to me."

"Very well," said Rebecca.

"So I think we'll wait," said Sir Galahad, taking off his hat and holding out his hand.

"Is the safe side always the right side, Galahad?" asked Rebecca.

"I don't exactly know," said Sir Galahad, with a puzzled face.

"Nor I," said Rebecca; "but I think we'll wait."

"Some folks wouldn't," said Sir Galahad. "But I don't see as that makes any odds."

"No," said Rebecca. So they shook hands, while Sir Galahad stood with his hat off beneath the stars; and the lady Rebecca picked up her veil from the mud-puddle, and went up-stairs; and Sir Galahad went to the grocer's to get a little tea for his wife; and the world ran on as if nothing had happened.

Now the world had been running on quite as if nothing would ever happen again for four years, when Sir Galahad's Christmas came. And the Lady Rebecca had walked alone to the neck-tie factory; and Galahad had kept house on the ground floor; and Rebecca had lain sick of a deadly fever, and Sir Galahad had lost six months' wages in a strike; and the man's face had grown gaunt, and the woman's old, and his had pinched and hers had paled;--yet their hands had never met since they stood by the pump in the starlight; nor had Sir Galahad's knightly foot once crossed the croaking stairs which bore the regular, calm feet of the Lady Rebecca to the solitary second back corner of 16 1/2; nor had he said, "God bless her!" when she sung at the little church, lest, indeed, his whole soul should rise up perforce, and choose cursing for blessing and death for life.
And if Di Rimini had worked beside Rebecca at the neck-tie factory, she would have learned a royal lesson. And Abelard might well have sat at the feet of Galahad, making organs with his grimy hands. And if Eve or Isaac had wandered into the first floor front, or second back corner of 16 1/2, on a lonesome, rainy evenings, they would have wept for pity, and smiled for blessing, and mused much.

Now, it was on a rainy evening, with melting snow upon the ground and melting chills upon the wind, that the Lady Rebecca, crooked and crouching by her little lamp, sat darning stockings for Sir Galahad—a questionable exercise of taste, we must admit. She had not even offered to embroider him a banner, nor to net him a silken favor, nor to fringe so much as a scarf for the next tournament to be held in Primrose Court. She had only said: "Will it be proper?" And he had said: "Ask the landlady." And the landlady had said: "Law, yes!" And the Lady Rebecca had said: "Bring all you have." And Sir Galahad said: "I haven't got but two pairs to my name." And so here she was, crouching and darning and crooked, by her little lamp, when a knock startled the door of the second back corner of 16 1/2 till it shook for fright to its sunken hinges, and the Lady Rebecca shook for sympathy till she opened the door, and shook on her on [sic] account when she had.

For Sir Galahad Hold stood in the door, erect and pale.

"I did not hear you on the stairs!" gasped the Lady Rebecca.

"I couldn't come up them stairs in my boots someway," said Sir Galahad. very huskily. Now the Lady Rebecca did not altogether understand in her own mind what Sir Galahad meant; but she saw that his feet lay bare and white upon her threshold—since, indeed, poor man! she had his stockings—and a fancy as of patient pilgrims came to her, and a dream of holy ground. But she said:

"Did you come to get the stockings?" But Sir Galahad answered solemnly:

"Did you think I'd cross the stairway till I came for you? Merry Ann's down below, Rebecca. Will you be afraid to step down with me?"
Where would Rebecca have been afraid to step with him? She followed him down the stairs, which would have croaked, it seemed, but could not, beneath Sir Galahad's solemn, shining feet.

Merry Ann was below, indeed—at length upon Sir Galahad's floor, before the cook-stove, a sickening, silent heap. A little shawl was tied about her head, and her face was hidden on her arm.

"I but just come in and found her," said Sir Galahad, in his commonplace, unromantic way; "and I thought I'd tell you what had happened, Rebecca, before the coroner was called. I don't think it was a fit. She'd walked a distance, I can't but think, and hoped to have caught a look at me. Poor Merry Ann!"

"Poor Merry Ann!" said Rebecca Rock, with all her heart. She had fallen on her knees beside the dead, and had dropped her face into her hands.

"And now, Rebecca," said Sir Galahad. "Now, Rebecca—" But when he saw her on her knees he dropped beside her and said no more. And when the landlady came in they did not ask her if it were proper; but she said "Law, yes!" as if they had, and turned her face away.

"And now, Rebecca," said Sir Galahad again—"now the grave is covered decent, and the room is swept, and the storm is over, and I've waited four year for you honest, in the sight of God and the stars o' Heaven, and Christmas comes o' Monday—"

"Very well," said Rebecca.

"I don't seem," said Sir Galahad, "to have the words I thought I had to say, my girl. I'd got so used waiting; hadn't you? I do not rightly see my way to take it natural and safe. I think I'd not like, nor dare, my dear, to have it any other day than Christmas Day: would you?"

I was glad there was no wind on Christmas, and that the snow lay drifted over from a little, laughing storm; and that the sun brooded with golden wings in Primrose.
Court; and that the town was full of holly; and that the Lady Rebecca had a spray of myrtle in her large, firm hand, when she walked with Sir Galahad to the minister's front door.

And when I met Sir Galahad at the meat-stall, buying steak for dinner, and saw the eyes and smile he carried in the sight of God and Christmas Day, I bethought me of the records of the spotless Knight; how he--tried, stainless, and alone--was found worthy to be the guardian ("pure in thought and word and deed") of the blessed cup from which our Lord drank the last wine which should touch his lips till he drank it new in the kingdom of the Father; how his mortal eyes behold it, pallid in red samite, treasured by "a great fellowship of angels["]; how his mortal hand laid hold of it and Heaven, and his mortal name grew to be a holy thing upon the lips of men forever; and how since then "was there never one so hardy as to say that he had seen the Sangreal on earthy any more."

"Sir Galahad," said I, "you have found the Sangreal, and I have found you!"

But he, smiling, shook his head.

"I don't feel altogether sure. It seems to me a man don't known what he's found 'till he's learned to bear his happiness as he bore his longing for't, and his waiting, and his loss. But I can't help hoping, somehow, that I'm fit to be married on a Christmas Day."
APPENDIX D

SELECTED CORRESPONDENCE (1871-1900)

Documents from University of Virginia, Alderman Library,
in Approximate Date Order

1. [no year date]  
   Washington  
   30th March

   My dear Mrs. Fairchild:  
       I am sorry--thank you--and I should have liked to come. But you see it is  
       geographically impossible.  
       Yours most cordially,  
       E.S. Phelps

   June 15, 1867

   My dear Mr. Ticknor:  
       Dolly and I have just brought up your "involved" note, and have been meditating  
       thereon.  
       If you really feel any decided hesitancy about the book, please say No, without  
       qualification or demur, and don't bother yourself to read it over again. I should hardly  
       care to "present to the firm" anything which had a serious doubt of yours to start with.  
       If however, you wish to see me about it, I will go into town. I had not intended to  
       make another ["advent"?] in your vicinity, until I felt my last hour approaching and I am  
       afraid they are far ahead--and cause to make my "everlasting farewells." I presume,  
       however, that a short talk would be more to the point than fifty letters and if convenient to  
       you will call on Tuesday, probably between eleven and one. If it rains Tuesday, the first  
       pleasant day.  
       I wish you were up here [ ] and all out in the grove where the wind is blowing.  
       If I [err?] you, please be ready to tell an "unvarnished tale." I shall not be startled  
       or afflicted.  
       Yours very truly,  
       E.S. Phelps

3. [town name?]. Saturday.  
   August 3, 1867

   My dear child:  
       Your little note came safely and promptly yesterday morning and we were glad  
       enough to see it.
The girls and Mr. [] seem to have obliterated from your mind all memories of your journey. Write us some particulars how you prospered at [], whether you changed cards, how you liked your book, and whether you had dinner enough. When you come home, mark your trunk with Papa's name on a card; or rather ask [] to ok it for you.

Papa says you and [] may settle it between you about the length of your visit. I want you to stay as long as it is but, and enjoy yourself, but I want you to come home as soon as you want to, for I miss you all the time. Be careful of your [], your over-doing, and especially your bedtime. Don't sit up till midnight [] for a [prank?]. Don't go to that President's []. It is too late. Be very careful. If you get sick, all your fun is gone. It doesn't pay to be careless.

I am very glad you are having such a nice time. Thank [] for making it so pleasant for you. All send love to her; and much love to you. Tell [] I meant to have sent her a book, but forgot it. I guess she's none the worse off though.

With a world of love--
Your sister,
Lill

Dec. 21 1867

Dear [Sir?):

Thank you for Mr. Alger's "Friendships," which promises to be very entertaining.

I am obligated also, for the letter from Miss. [Ingelson?], which, with her picture. I shall value much.

Very hastily, and truly.
E. Stuart Phelps

5. Andover, Mass
March 7, 1870

My dear [Sir?):

I thank you for your kind interest in "Hedged In;" especially for your appreciation of its religious views, as indicated in the little notice which you sent me.

I enclose the autograph for which you ask, and am very truly yours.
E.S. Phelps

6. Andover, Mass
Sept. 6 1871

Dear Mrs. Livermore:

When, and for what, will you give us that lecture? Please name a time--or times, and a choice, if possible. I hope we shall have some [campaigning?] here, but we think, if
you please, that we had better begin with you; there has been promise of your coming, so long.

I have fifteen names on the petition; can get a dozen more perhaps. I think you might get a hundred. I find a great deal of well-intentioned timidity, waiting only for a little light let in by the right hand--less outright opposition than I expected.

In the house of our friends there is grumbling about [Buster?]; they want the Woman's Journal to let him alone.

Please write at your earliest convenience.

Truly yrs.

E.S. Phelps

7. Andover, Mass
12th Dec 1878

Dear Madame:

You will find a list of my publications at my publisher [], Houghton, Osgood & Co, Boston. But the [floating?] Children's Stories have never been collected, and are scattered through old numbers of "Young Folks," "St. Nicholas." "Wide Awake." &c.

yours truly,

E.S. Phelps

P.S.

Ah yes, I remember some of these were--I had forgotten, in "Trotty's Story Book."

8. Letter to Whittier

Andover, 7th December 1879

Dear friend:

You do not know how much it added to my enjoyment of a hardly-[ ] and dearly-bought pleasure at the [ ] Breakfast, that you waited to speak with me; nor how much I [guessed?] that the words could be so few.

Dr. Holmes and Mr. Longfellow have been very kind to me. But no one is just like you. I saw that you were suffering perhaps for sleep, that day, and was glad for your sake when you left. I did not know you were going when Annie Fields went, or I should not have [ ] the few minutes more.

Of course you remember what Carlyle said to Browning when the latter asked if he had read his book; and doubtless I deserve the same answer for presuming to ask you if "Sealed Orders" reached you.

Don't feel that you must say one word about those gathered stories. But as you always are so kind in acknowledging everything whether you like it or not, I thought I would venture to make sure--not having heard from it--of the arrival of my little book in your always gentle, even if overcrowded hands.

Dear Mr. Whittier, I am always

respectfully and sincerely your friend,

E.S. Phelps
My dear Madam:

In answer to your biographical inquiries about my public work, I would say, that I wrote some dozen Sunday School books and many magazine tales before the publication of the Gates Ajar in--I don't know exactly--when, 1869, I think; but the Dictionaries of authors [and one or two others] will give you dates that I do not carry in mind. Of the S.S. books, and [juvenile], now are of special note in my [as having had what is called "success," among such [except the two sets of "Gypsy" and "Tiny" books. Eight in all. I think the first magazine story I wrote which brought me recognition from literary people was "The Tenth of January." Printed in the Atlantic.

"The Gates Ajar" was by far the most popular of all my books, and I have myself little doubt that it has done the most good; though it seems as far away from me now (as a piece of workmanship, I mean) as if someone else had done it. Indeed, I was but little past twenty when it was written, as it was [not?] published for some years after writing. I can only say that that [sic] I have tried to say something which I thought was needed in all my books, but that the manner of saying it pleases myself best (since you ask) by far, in "Avis." I regard that story as altogether my best in the literary sense of the world. My heart goes with its purpose too, most unreservedly.

Of the poems:--I hardly know how to answer you. I don't value my own poetry very much. I never should have written it if I had not found, to my genuine surprise, that there were those who wanted it. Such as it is, my best verses, I think, are scattered all over the magazines and [papers?] printed since the volume; "Poetic Studies" appeared. One that I like best is a [miner's story?] called "Stronger than Death," and [was?] printed in Harper's Magazine. [Since I think I have?] answered your questions. I am sorry you have not a better subject for your paper, and any []. [Thanks for your?] kind appreciation of my work.

Yours most truly,

E.S. Phelps

"The Gates Ajar," "Hedged In," "Silent Partner," [&tc?] have been, as you perhaps know, translated in different countries. I think of the "Gates," there were English, French, Italian, German, and Dutch Editions. The sale of that book in Great Britain exceeded those in America.

9.

[letter to "friend," dated 2-11, no year. Very probably written to Whittier, based on the content. Although originally I thought the date had to have been after Struggle for Immortality was published, probably 1889-90, when I noticed that she signed with her maiden name, I re-thought this date. In addition, she writes that she is still in her "thirties." It either says that the "thirties are still here" or the "thirties are still new." That places the letter between 1874-1884. Actually. Struggle was first published in 1884, so it is a slight possibility. Her reference to a "Paper on Immortality" might be "A Plea for Immortality," published in Atlantic Monthly, February 1880.]
Andover 11th February

Dear friend:

Yesterday a letter from Mrs. [Claflin?] told me that Mr. Whittier said a kind thing about "Elizabeth's Paper on Immortality" -- and-- I want to say him how very [] was the kindness.

The paper had brought me letters from strangers and none from friends; and I was trying to make up my mind that I was too sick to write--that I must not print invalid work--but be content to lie awake all night and look at the ceiling all day; and not spoil the little I have already done by what Goethe (speaking of Schiller, wasn't it?) called "Pathological Writing." That is not an easy conclusion to come to, while the "thirties" are still [here?].

Dear Mr. Whittier, I thank you, and I wish you would always call me Elizabeth. I seldom hear the name. I think only my Grandfather ever used it for me. I am "Lily" at home, and once I had a friend who called me "Lesbeth"; but she was false to me. I like the round ring of the whole word.

I am wondering how you are? Sometime when you feel just like it perhaps you will let me know? I have thought of you every day lately, for a long time; for some one of those unattainable reasons which influence human friendships. I wonder what they are? And when we shall know, why, without apparent cause the personality of one friend more than another is most urgent with the heart, at this or that time.

We miss Mrs. Claflin, do we not? She is good to the soul's care, and true. Annie Fields, I see somewhat; but my time is all occupied with the medical experiments of the [winter?] and it is almost impossible to meet any friends.

I'm trying, wherever a day comes with sleep behind it to write a little story in friendship. I cannot say what I believe. No one [else?] would believe. It is easier to be a martyr for the truth than to be called a sentimentalist because of it. Here is a scrap that came from the work--attempted. I wonder if it is always wise to suppose such things? [] they have [] [] place by themselves; only, as [neither?] tries to illustrate experience which rises above the mood. I send two -- different aspects of the same situation; or different situations of the same [ideal?]. Why should I trouble you? [] that you are always so indulgent to my [verses?]. But don't feel that you must write one word. If you think you wouldn't print them, please say so. But otherwise don't trouble to say anything at all.

God grace and peace be with thee!

Yours always, sincerely, E.S. Phelps

10.

Andover, 15th April, 1880

Dear Mr. Ford,

I am in receipt of your check for the story: "[Leikei?] in Prison," for which I thank you.

Do just as you please about when you print it. As long as I am paid, I have no choice further, in this case. Sometimes one has a reason for making a thing hurried. It is true, and you were thoughtful to speak of it.

I intend to give you, by degrees, some more stories, but to promise six in one year, seems to me hardly safe. Nothing is so hard for me to write as children's tales. I always
plan far and wide my best strength for them. You can promise the six (if health permits) provided I am not [limited?] to give them all next year. Yet again, I may be able to do so-and there it stands. I have found it a wise rule, in my literary life, not to advertise what I was not absolutely sure I could do.

If out of the double you can contrive an advertisement useful to you and perfectly honest and leaving me the necessary freedom of my ill condition, you may publish one.

Do with this story as you please. I am glad you like it.

Truly yours,

E.S. Phelps

11.

[This letter does not have a year date. James T. Fields died in 1881, so very probably this is May 2, 1881.]

Andover 2nd May

Dear Mr. Whittier:

I was moved several times to write you how sick Mr. Fields was, thinking for some reason, that you did not exactly know, and when I heard how the news of the end shocked you, I wished I had. We missed you there the day we met to carry him for the last time "out to ride," (I thought of the long rides he had been taking every day) but knew you would be there if you could. Mr. Longfellow was there, and Dr. Holmes, and a few of his nearer friends. And the house was filled, I know not by whom.

Aimie did not leave her room, and I stayed with her while the rest were at Mt. [Abam?]. I have been to her almost every day since. She is braver than I like to see her; more rebellion or less calm would argue better for the future. But she is well, and Alas! She is young. Such a marriage there has hardly been since Eden. It was the absolute thing. I never knew but three marriages in my life, that seemed to me ideal; this was the best of the three. For him, he has had a merciful escape from a lingering torture, for the disease is put down as the most pain known to the human [frame?]; he had two weeks of suffering, as you will have heard; then he strengthened and got out and to ride and even for a short walk. I saw him on [Winter?] St. on Saturday: he had walked from Houghton's; he rose before me like a ghost suddenly, and held out his hand smiling, silently and brightly; but he was pale and his breath was short, and he moved his hands like a person long ill. His hands were all that looked dead to me afterwards. We always say it, and it is usually false, but this time it is true, that the dead face was beautiful, and like life--the only death I ever saw that did not haunt me. He knew what was coming, feared nothing, and seemed ready. Few of us are as ready, I think. His "practical Christianity" was instructive and [systematic?], and the half that he did for those who needed will never be known. I remember how firmly he held to his faith in what he believed to be truth, and how reverently he spoke of "Our Saviour," as I never heard another Unitarian. Oh, it is well with him, but for her--I wish she could die. But God loves her best, I suppose, after all, and knows what he is about, with her. She spoke of hearing from you. I hoped to have written more and more to her husband, but am too ill to get the words and the
thoughts together. This will just show you that I have been thinking of you and am your friend E. S. Phelps.
whether you mean only that you do not care to indicate any wish about it. Please let me remind you that you can't "let it drop" without suffering the consequence of it at the hands of the thousand and one biographers who will start like mushrooms to speak of a life so dear to numberless thousands of people. It will be done, of course. You will not think that I am urging my own poor power upon your thoughts in referring to the matter again but only that I beg you to think it carefully through, and give the sad and sacred privilege to some friend whom you yourself shall choose and authorize. Perhaps this is tacitly already done, and that what I have said is an untimely aside. But if not, pray think of what I have said—doing only just as your heart inclines, about thinking of myself in that connection, at all.

You will come to me, this summer, I know. You won't disappoint me? We will write of it later.

I write in my study alone, on the third of these wild, wet days. I think of you in yours,—and hope that Phoebe and the dog have been in. And wish I [may?] see Phoebe or the dog! These lonely [ ] are not [richly?] dear friend. God never meant them. We ought each of us to have married somebody when we were young. But, as you say, it is too late now. Always excepting "Mr. Ashley," the hod-carrier.

Annie Fields sails soon, I believe. I have seen her but once for six weeks, though in Boston every day. Poor girl!

I went to walk to-day, in the [drive?] and [blow?], after being in bed almost all day. I took a basket and Daniel Deronda, and we went after flowers if you please. Daniel got lost and [ ] a ditch as black as the Styx, and about as deep to get to me, though he is as afraid of the [ ] as Oscar Wilde is that women will be fond of him. You should have seen us, plunging about that fiend after innocence, under an umbrella—the dog shivering and drenched but stopping to smell of each blue violet separately, like an aesthete—and I grimly paddling through the sodden grass after those depressed looking flowers. They hung their heads like sentenced criminals, and I [ ] am ready to swear that they crowded up a little to get under my umbrella.

Daniel was put to bed like a [sybarite?], after his [ ] by a [ ] register, but I haven't thought of my wet clothes since.

I begin to remember that it is a little damp.

Dear friend, may God bless you now and forevermore.

It is a comfort to hear from you—but do not write when it hurts you.

Affectionately your friend,

E.S. Phelps

I send you the only thing (except the Longfellow lines) that I have written this whole winter. Is it not a useful life? Don't feel obliged to say you love it—either the life, or the verse.

Thorns

As we pass by the roses
  Into your finger-tip
  Bruise you the thorn.
Quick. at the prick you start

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Crying: "Alas, the smart!
Farewell, my pleasant friend.
Wisely our way we mend
Out of the reach of roses."

Oh, we pass by the roses!
Where does the red drop drip?
   Where is the thorn?
Piercing into my breast
Up to the hill 'tis pressed.
Scatheless, I sketch my hand;
Strong as their roots I stand,
And dare to trust the roses.

15.
[Letter to Mr. Ward—probably editor of Independent and father of Herbert Ward]

East Gloucester, Mass.
10th July 1884

Dear Mr. Ward:

Please send me the formal line of permission to reprint, with others in a volume,
my poems published in your paper.

This was written, overlooked and never sent.

Meanwhile. I need the proof of "Eurydice,"
in time for this reprint for the [] Market. Please.

Sincerely yours,
E.S. Phelps

I have just got it "into my head" that you are going to the East. For how long a stay?
And who fills your place—for my purpose—in the "Independent"? I wish you most heartily
a very good voyage, and safe and glorious return. E.S.P.

16.
To Whittier:

Andover, 16th March 1885

My dear friend:

I venture to send you by the mail a little book of the poems of E.R. [Hill?] (whose
name you will see in Atlantic and Century) which I think it will give you real pleasure to
look over. I must trouble you to return it for it is a gift copy to me, and there are none to
be had; the book was since published, he says he is "waiting to do better." He has been
Professor of English in California University: but now is living in an Ohio village, doing
literary work for an [ ], while his wife cares for an aged father. I have never seen him, but
have had a most interesting correspondence with him. It occurred to me— as it often has—
that I wished you might read the poems. They seem to me to have rare quality. If you
like any of them enough to say so, and would be willing I should tell him, it would give me pleasure. He seems to me just in a place where a self-distrustful nature needs encouragement and stimulus. His prose is quite as good as his poetry.

The book is hard to get. Someone in Baltimore paid $15 for a copy--as they are never in the market. I hope you will like him!

I confess I made this partly an excuse to hear from you. For I do want to know how you are. When shall I ever see you? Are you suffering more than usual? What can I do for you?

I have nothing to say of myself. "[] the way [intelligible phrase]." No sleep--no sleep. And no work. Who was it who said: "I try to bear it!"? Oh--I remember: Longfellow; when his wife died.

Do let me hear if you can, something of yourself.
always, faithfull yours, E.S. Phelps

17.
To Mr. McClure

East Gloucester, Mass. 15th Sept 1885

Dear Mr. McClure:

I have not been able to touch pen to paper yet; having had a very sick summer. All I can say is: I will do the best I can, when I can, to meet my conditional engagement to send you a story.

Very truly yours
E.S. Phelps

[Note at top "I answered"]

18.

Andover, Mass.
15th May 1888

Dear Dr. Ward:

I have so many things to say, I shall probably say nothing of any consequence -- a feminine trick.

Finish your poem. It is fine, and I like it. I didn't know you could do such things. I hope you will do many more. Thank you for the extra copy.

Second:--I feel rather "crushed" by it, about the [] I send to the Independent this week, for Decoration Day. I hardly "darst." But:--

Third:--If you are about to leave the [paper?] [] perhaps you won't see them!

Fourth:--I am sorry you are. And I am glad you are. It is a pity, and it seems a necessity. And its too bad.

Fifth:--I hope Herbert told you that I invited you to come here if you can to Andover from the Oriental Society. I am keeping house now, and free to entertain, and had plenty of room and a hearty welcome for you. I am sorry--and I was sorry. Instead I hope you will see me at Gloucester sometime.

I wanted to see you at this time, to talk over your boy's plans. But I hardly can put in a letter all I should have said. I wish I had it in my power to bless his young life for this
next year, by a small part of the comforts which his health requires and which he won't get
out of the A.M.A. and Alabama. But I hope God will be behind the decision -- and
comfort and success within it.

Cordialy yours,
E.S. Phelps

East Gloucester, Mass.
May 13, 1889

My dear Sir:

Will you kindly provide me with one copy each of one or two articles of mine
which have appeared in your Review within a very few years, and which I have lost track
of, among my [papers?]?

I especially want: "The Struggle for Immortality," and was there not one more?
Something about Spirituality?

I have "What does Revelation reveal?" and I don't care for the fragments, used in
Symposium discussion--only for the full and finished articles. I am thinking of collecting
them for a book, and have mislaid "copy."

I am sorry to trouble you. You will greatly oblige

Yrs tr:

Elizabeth Stuart Phelps
(now E.S.P. Ward, E. Gloucester, Mass.)

East Gloucester, Mass.
18th August 1890

[8-10-1890]

Dear Mr. McClure:

There is immediate need of copy for the last chapter (XXIII) of "Come Forth."
The only nearly complete copy of proof we ever had has gone to England,--and that had
to be pieced out by mss. So we are left without any [text cut off by copier].

I applied to the [Phil-a-?] repeatedly, and at last obtain what they have printed as
"The End"--which has left out [] my end--my whole final chapter.

This is an unpardonable thing in them, or in whoever did it, and has disturbed me
much.

Will you please do all you can, now, to rectify the mistake by sending me by return
mail, some kind of copy of the short closing chapter--that which follows [Lahara &
Leagauer?] and others after the resurrection of Lazarus. I think it is the XXIII. I have not
an hour to lose (If Mr. McClure is not at home sick his agent please attend to this request
at once?)

In great haste

yours very truly,

E.S.P. Ward

East Gloucester, Mass
18th August 1890

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Messrs Bacheller & Johnson

Gentlemen:

I have finished the first draught of a [Christian?] [paper?] for you; and am this day cashing your check because it happens to be convenient for me to get to the Bank. The mss. may not reach you for a few days as it is to be revised yet. It may not come exactly to your word limit; but it is long enough--and it is the quality, not the quantity that I write by. When a thing is said, I never "pad" to force it out. I cannot. I have done my best under heavy odds to give you the best I can, at this time.--The generous check--did it!

yours truly

E.S.P. Ward

Dear Mr. Bok:

The tribute to my father is written. It will soon be revised and sent you. It is my custom to receive payment on receipt of the mss. and I have no doubt it is the custom of your paper to give it. I have done my best, "against the grain," so far as I am autobiographically [concerned?]--and hope it may seem [photocopy unreadable and part of it cut off at this point]


Dear Mr. Bok:

I send the proof. Do not publish without my corrections! They are vital to the text.
Have you received Mr. Ward's story? I [earnestly?] hope you will publish it, and let him hear from it, before long. It is a good story. The touch of politics won't hurt the women readers, but it is quite fashionable to-day; and the home element is strong, and [ ] pure; and helpful. Hundreds of [strokes?] away your readers will have done such things for brothers, and will be touched at the recognition of their sacrifice.

I should, personally, be greatly disappointed if you did not take the story; for we think it specially adapted to your [columns?] in certain ways. Very truly yours,

E.S.P. Ward


25. [1cent postcard mailed to Mr. Bok at Ladies Home Journal]

The revise of my paper on my father has come; and is found correct. Hence I do not send it back, but keep it for personal reference.

E.S.P. Ward
Newton Centre, Mass
March 7th 1895


26. Newton Centre, Mass
Telephone.
Newton Highlands, No. 19.
May 27th 1895

Dear Miss Rice:

I wish I could answer your question; but I am afraid I know just about as much as you do about the origin of the "[]", and no more. I have never been able to trace it out.

Very truly yours,

E.S.P. Ward

[bottom says written to Virginia A. Rice]

27. [1cent postcard mailed to Mr. Bok at Ladies Home Journal]

Do please send me copies of that paper on my father, Professor Phelps. I have asked, but have not had one.

Kindly send me three, addressing:

(Mrs.) E.S.P. Ward
East Gloucester, Mass

June 10th, 1895

Dear Mr. Bok:

In business confidence. Mr. Ward says I may write to you myself about a little matter of his which is near my heart—and that is Kipling's Gloucester novel. I have believed for years—and this discovery makes no difference in my expectation—that Mr. Ward has both the material and the gift combined to write the one unprecedented Gloucester fisherman's novel. Mr. Kipling (I remember) staid in Gloucester three or four days in a boarding house. Mr. Ward has lived here for ten summers, -- and I for twenty. While we do not presume to match Mr. Ward's gift as a writer against the reputation and power of Kipling, yet I do feel that his store of experience, combined with a real genius for all nautical affairs and for their description will go for something; and that his novel is by no means doomed. But:—he had laid aside this summer for special reasons, to work at it. w/o work--and then discover too late that he had at all struck ice on Kipling's plot, or motif, would be fatal. My point is this: -- can you, and will you, before you sail, do one or both of two things for me? Will you give Mr. Ward, in confidence, something of Kipling's Gloucester plot? Or will you kindly allow him, or us, to communicate directly with Kipling by letter, on the subject, and also give us his address? I know he is "difficult," but perhaps that will be the straightest and frankest way. What do you think? Some knowledge of the scheme of the story I feel that we must hear, somehow, before Mr. Ward throws away the venture of a whole year's work.--I don't know what he will do with the book—that is not the point—that will settle itself (he has another offer for a serial). I am confident that he can execute it in a way which will command a good place for it—but I want to know his "right of way," if only for my own personal ease of heart in the question. I worry a little over such things if they are not quite clear through--

The Mss. of "Paradise Found" goes to you by express this a.m.. I think it remarkably interesting,—far more so, than mine were, of the same kind—more "go" to it. Any changes required which are practicable, I am sure he could make if necessary. but I hope they won't be many. He has had hard work to compress the material of a long story into the proportions you prefer for your paper, and it seems to me he has done it rather skilfully, considering the difficulties both artistic and mechanical. I am sure you will like the story; and I hope you'll tell him so in (after crossing over) your graceful way. He has tried to please you, and to fill your [columns?] acceptably; and not a sentence--not a comma--in the story has been carelessly inserted. It is conscientious [workmanship?] at least.

If this "goes," you'd better try him sometime at a [ ] of building a house. He has "[]" material, and of [] for that, --now, almost a universal human situation! We had, like the parrot and the money, "a ____ of a time" over our house.

Very truly yours,

E.S.P. Ward

There is as much misery in feet and fiction! Does anything [] better than fun!