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PASSIONATE REBEL: THE LIFE OF MARY GOVE NICHOLS, 1810-1884

The University of Oklahoma PH.D. 1983

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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

PASSIONATE REBEL: THE LIFE OF MARY GOVE NICHOLS, 1810-1884

A DISSERTATION

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degree of

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BY

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Norman, Oklahoma

1983

PASSIONATE REBEL: THE LIFE OF MARY GOVE NICHOLS, 1810-1884

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PASSIONATE REBEL: THE LIFE OF MARY GOVE NICHOLS, 1810-1884

INTRODUCTION

ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

> ...If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.[1]

Mary Gove Nichols was a fascinating woman whose multi-dimensional career affords provocative insights into nineteenth century feminism. Born in rural New Hampshire in 1810, she came to maturity at a time when the role of women in American society was being transformed.[2] Throughout her life she struggled against the increasingly accepted perception of women--The Cult of True Womanhood--which defined women as pious, pure, submissive, and domestic.[3] She witnessed the Jacksonian American world of white males expanding into a truly democratic society where individual effort, skill, and ability determined a man's limits; yet she experienced the shrinking of the female's sphere into an aristocratic image of "the lady," albeit a democratic version achieved through proper behavior. But Mary Gove Nichols refused to accept that new definition or its limits because it would retard women's development and cripple society. She challenged the Cult of True

Womanhood in all its aspects and the institutions in society that refused to allow women to grow along side men to develop a world based on talent and ability, not gender.

Seeking the total emancipation of women, Mary Gove Nichols was a feminist foremother in many areas. Before Elizabeth Cady Stanton challenged the role of women in society, Mary Gove Nichols was living the life of the new woman. Before Susan B. Anthony spoke about women's rights, Mary Gove Nichols had lectured on the subject to numerous audiences. Before Elizabeth Blackwell became the first woman to receive a medical degree, other women including Mary Gove Nichols were practicing physicians. Before Amelia Bloomer advocated dress reform, health reformers and professional women such as Mary Gove Nichols were not only preaching it, but practicing it. Before Lucy Stone made her protest against traditional marriage and kept her own maiden name, others including Mary Gove Nichols had urged women to maintain their own identity.

A half century before Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote about economic independence for women, Mary Gove Nichols and others had specifically addressed the need and offered solutions. More than half century before Emma Goldman and Margaret Sanger challenged women to take control over their bodies, Mary Gove Nichols told women they had a right to their own ova and a right to choose their sexual partners. Almost a century before Virginia Woolf wrote about "A Room of One's Own," Mary Gove Nichols had claimed and won one. A century before Grantly Dick-Read and Fernand Lamaze wrote about painless childbirth, Mary Gove Nichols was teaching it. Over a century before Masters and Johnson

were involved in sex therapy, Mary Gove Nichols and her husband were writing sex education manuals. Over a century before the Boston Women's Health Collective wrote about feminist self-help, Mary Gove Nichols was telling women to take control over their own health and teaching anatomy and physiology. Almost a century and a half before the Wellness Movement, Mary Gove Nichols and others were advocating preventive medicine.

Yet Mary Gove Nichols, a vital and fascinating foremother, has been lost to history. How could this happen? The answer lies primarily in the manner in which historians have approached women's history and the tactics adopted by prominent nineteenth century female reformers. Initial forays into women's history followed the traditional belief in the importance of politics and emphasized the struggle of women to obtain the vote.[4] Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Lucy Stone emerged as heroines of the nineteenth century suffragist movement. Inspiring leaders, they lived with ridicule and disappointment, but courageously persevered through a half century of commitment to the cause. After the Civil War the organized women's movement they led concentrated on the vote, historically a mainline American demand. Eventually women received the vote, their cause had been successful, and these early proponents of suffrage dominate the accounts written of this struggle.

Mary Gove Nichols does not fit such a political framework. She was a radical in the classical definition--her concerns went to the ROOT of women's existence--and she rejected the vote as the cure-all for women that many claimed it to be. She demanded across the

board social and economic changes which were revolutionary in scope and boldly criticized those groups that sought partial answers. They, in turn, stung by such criticism, omitted from their accounts those radicals who challenged their position.[5] Consequently Mary Gove Nichols gained no niche in the pantheon of great suffragists.

Another primary approach to women's history in the nineteenth century focuses on abolitionism.[6] Historians had long been documenting the efforts of antislavery reformers, and the contributions of women to that movement could easily be incorporated.[7] The women's struggle to participate presented a useful historical analogy to emphasize the persistence of unequal treatment of women in the 1960s Civil Rights and New Left movements.[8] The antislavery movement also revealed the network, the "support system," that became the backbone of the early organized women's movement.[9] Sisterhood was powerful. And the movement eventually succeeded; slavery was destroyed.

Here again, Mary Gove Nichols was on the outside. She was not within the network of moral reformers associated with the antislavery movement. Again she rejected a partial solution to a larger problem, black women would still suffer the slavery of sex. She challenged William Lloyd Garrison and claimed that there was a much larger group who were enslaved--all married women--about whom the reformers ought to be concerned. Married women were chattel, did not have property rights or economic opportunity. The fact that children were taken from their slave mothers and sold greatly concerned the abolitionists, but Mary Gove pointed out that white women, including the wives of these reformers, did not have legal custody of their own

children if they choose "freedom" and left miserable marriages.[10] Mary Gove Nichols worked to free all women and again eluded the historians.

In addition to the problems related to the various approaches to women's history, Mary Gove Nichols has been a casualty of history because of the perceived necessity of social movements in the United States to obtain broad middle class support in order to succeed. The vast majority of the early leaders of the organized women's movement were respectable middle class wives and mothers. They couched their pleas within the mainstream American rhetoric and asked only for the extension of political and property rights to women and fair treatment in society, all basic democratic ideals. Hoping to convince others of the justice of their cause, they worked through the system using petitions, tracts, meetings, newspapers, and lectures. They were faithful wives and good mothers financially supported by husbands whose income allowed them the freedom to work to improve the status of women.[11]

It is also important for our historical understanding to remember that the organized women's movement, even in its limited approach, was not successful within the lifetime of the first generation of leaders. The most mined source, History of Woman Suffrage, was first published in 1881 at the height of Victorian America and over thirty years after the beginning of the organized movement.[12] In the essays the editors' memories were unconsciously or purposefully selective. Although some "radicals" were included, their work was selectively praised and then only when it filled a specific need.[13] By this time, Mary Gove Nichols served no political purpose and her work was

omitted. The early leaders of the women's movement had incorporated what was acceptable and useful from her early career, yet now shunned her "notoriety." Their continuing need for respectability and political expediency overwhelmed any inclination to give her the prominent place she deserved among early American feminists. Therefore, the single sentence in History of Woman Suffrage: "Mary Gove Nichols gave public lectures upon anatomy in the United States in 1838" was all the notice these leaders in the 1880s would allow.[14]

When the second generation of suffragists emerged in high Victorian America, they were even more conservative and concerned about respectability than the earlier group. By the 1890s the women's movement had narrowed the goals to the mainline request for the vote and was silent on the more controversial issues that would affect the traditional family structure.[15] The Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), which had a membership larger than any other women's group and about ten times the membership of any suffrage group, distributed the largest amount of literature on women's suffrage.[16] The suffragists had to be especially careful not to offend this conservative, but vital ally.[17] After studying the ideas and strategy of this second generation, Aileen Kraditor and Gerda Lerner concluded that this group "shared the middle-class, nativist, moralistic approach of the Progressives and tended to censure out of existence anyone who did not fit into this pattern." Foremothers who had been "too radical" or "premature feminists" were seldom mentioned.[18] This second generation of suffragists had even less reason to resurrect the contribution of

the radical, premature, notorious Mary Gove Nichols who had never worked for the vote and whom they had never known.

Because the participants within the women's movement excised their own roots, today's historians become entangled in an ironical situation. They often ignore important aspects of the early leaders and write about later radical feminists entirely unaware of the existence of foremothers who often had a broader vision than the later generation.[19] The result is an historical rootlessness that distorts the current work in women's history.

Kathie Sarachild, a contemporary radical feminist, lamented the persistence of a process that excises the radical roots of the women's movement. In a provocative essay, "The Power of History," she recalled her own experience in the late 1960s as a leader of a group of "radical women who initiated the movement's theory, organizing ideas, and slogans."[20] She found that by the 1970s they had been quickly "buried from public consciousness" by liberals who took over and claimed "credit for the radicals' achievements."[21] She decried how quickly radical ideas had been "disembodied" and how "the common standards applied to scholarship and history, of going to the original sources or even referring to them, have been totally disregarded when it has come to the women of the women's liberation movement."[22] Exclaiming that "the origins of the most influential ideas are blurred or suppressed the fastest by those who see them as a competitive threat," she wondered, "how can women's history ever get written if women systematically 'forget' or obliterate the origin of the conceptions that change their lives?[23] Because of her own experience, Sarachild was concerned that

the "new feminist historians" were covering up the radical aspects of the first generation of leaders and urged a return to the original sources. Ironically, she suggested a careful re-reading of the first three volumes of History of Woman Suffrage.[24] What Sarachild did not realize, of course, was that the same tactics which she claimed obscured the work of the 1960s radicals, had been employed by those she labelled nineteenth century "radicals," Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, against the women of the 1840s and '50s such as Mary Gove Nichols.

Mary Gove Nichols was truly a pioneer feminist. She must be reclaimed by the historical record not only for the sake of accuracy, but because of the importance of her challenge to society's definition of the role of women. It is upon such shoulders as hers that the call for women's emancipation has rested again and again, each time extending its scope and pushing back a little further the artificial constraints that society has imposed upon women. As she projected what women could become, Mary Gove Nichols came close to the image of the woman of the future. She fought many losing battles, chose unacceptable allies, changed or redefined her own concepts as she struggled for a workable model, and failed to find the economic means to establish a community where experimentation could improve her insights. But she was a passionate rebel. Ardent, fervent, enthusiastic, and sensual, she opposed authority and broke with established custom or tradition when they restricted women. This is the story of the life and work of Mary Gove Nichols.

Notes to Introduction

[1]Letter from Sir Isaac Newton to Robert Hooke, February 5, 1675, in The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, Third Edition. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 362.

[2]See Barbara Berg, The Remembered Gate: Origins of American Feminism: The Woman and the City, 1800-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Nancy Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Keith E. Melder, Beginnings of Sisterhood: The American Woman's Rights Movement, 1800-1850 (New York: Schocken Books, 1977); and Barbara Welter, Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976).

[3]Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1800-1860," in Welter, Dimity Convictions, pp. 21-41.

[4]A few of the early studies include Mildred Adams, The Right to Be People (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1967); Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States (New York: Atheneum, 1974); Alan P. Grimes, The Puritan Ethic and Woman Suffrage (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967); Aileen S. Kraditor, The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965); and David Morgan, Suffragists and Democrats: The Politics of Woman Suffrage in America (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1972).

[5]Many observers have been surprised how Stanton and Anthony included their critics' statements in their history of the movement. A closer examination of these critics, however may reveal that conservative criticisms were included, not the radical ones.

[6]The direction here came largely from History of Woman Suffrage that stated the antislavery movement was the most important root of the woman suffrage movement. See Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, eds., History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. I (New York: Fowler and Wells, Publishers, 1881), pp. 51-53. The editors also listed the debate over property rights of married women and the "great educational work" of the "able lectures of Frances Wright" and others. Both of these areas have been largely ignored.

[7]Linda Gordon, Persia Hunt, Elizabeth Pleck, Rochelle Goldberg Ruthchild, and Marcia Scott, "Historical Phallacies: Sexism in American Historical Writing," in Liberating Women's History: Theoretical and Critical Essays, ed. by Berenice A. Carroll (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), pp. 55-74,

make an interesting observation: "Psychological interpretations of social movements have come and gone. In the fifties it was fashionable to see the abolitionists as cranks, neurotics, and fanatics who were stirring up a lot of trouble over a problem which otherwise would have been settled amicably. In the sixties the abolitionists returned as admirable, far sighted moral reformers, disturbed by the presence of a social evil. Like the abolitionists, the feminists may again find a more approving audience." (p. 73).

[8]There has been a persistent parallel in the United States between movements to end racism and sexism since the 1830s when the Jacksonian Age removed all "artificial" distinctions between white males and decided to leave only the two "natural" distinctions--race and sex. See William H. Chafe, Women and Equality: Changing Patterns in American Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), Chapters 3 and 4. The important exception to this analogy is the vote.

See also Judith Hole and Ellen Levine, Rebirth of Feminism (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1971), pp. 108-66 and Sara Evans, Personal Politics: The Roots of Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left.(New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977).

[9]Melder calls his chapter on women in the antislavery movement, "A Network of Female Societies," Beginnings of Sisterhood, pp. 62-76. See also Kathie Sarachild, "Consciousness-Raising: A Radical Weapon," in Feminist Revolution, ed. by Kathie Sarachild (New York: Random House, 1978), pp. 144-150.

[10]This last objection was especially threatening after 1852 because it muted the emotional appeal in Uncle Tom's Cabin of Eliza's dramatic escape with her little son Harry after she heard he was going to be taken from her. See Harriet Beecher Stowe, Uncle Tom's Cabin (New York: Airmont Publishing Co., Inc., 1967), p. 56: "If it were your Harry, mother, or your Willie, that were going to be torn from you by a brutal trader, to-morrow morning--if you had seen the man, and heard that the papers were signed and delivered, and you had only from twelve o'clock till morning to make good your escape--how fast could you walk?" This could be paraphrased for a woman seeking a divorce from her husband who could therefore lose her children.

These reformers did not like to be told that they were "oppressors." Abolishing slavery would change life for the Southern white man and hopefully the black man, but the antislavery reformers were not interested in any causes that would make drastic changes in their own personal lives. See Alice Rossi, ed., The Feminist Papers: From Adams to de Beauvoir (New York: Bantam Books, 1973), p. 273; Aileen S. Kraditor, Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and His Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850 (New

York: Vintage Books, 1969), p. 46; and Gordon, et al., "Historical Phallacies," pp. 65-66.

[11]See Blanche Hersh, "'The Slavery of Sex': Feminist-Abolitionists in Nineteenth Century America," (Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, 1975). Hersh who studied fifty-one first generation feminist-abolitionists pointed out that during the antebellum period they did not publicly question "the importance of the family as the central institution of society, or woman's primary responsibility as wife and mother." (p. 377) They accepted the Cult of True Womanhood, protesting only the concept of woman as submissive. Even though many of these women had reformer (some even feminist) husbands, "both husbands and wives, however, combined radical egalitarianism with conservative morality and conventional views of sexuality." (p. 379) They "rejected the few radicals who questioned legal marriage and advocated free love and often birth control and kept them at a safe distance from the women's movement." (p. 377) Hersh specifically excluded from her study "other antebellum reformers like Mary Gove Nichols, whose free love ideas shocked and alienated her feminist contemporaries" as "consistent with their exclusion from the movement." (p. 262) Yet, ironically, the first generation leaders in the women's rights movement "practiced health reform at home and preached it outside" and "were involved in some manner in the crusade to instruct women in physiology and hygiene....It was a constant and persistent interest." (pp. 350-51)

[12]Many historians have noted the problem of working too exclusively with History of Woman Suffrage. See Rossi, ed., The Feminist Papers, p. 281, and Gerda Lerner, The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 4.

[13]Two examples are Frances Wright and Victoria Woodhull who were selectively praised because both served specific purposes for the movement.

[14]Stanton, et al., History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. I, p. 37. It is interesting that Paulina W. Davis, herself a lecturer on anatomy and physiology in the 1840s and an intimate friend of Stanton and Anthony, in her "A History of the National Women's Rights Movement, for Twenty Years," published in 1871, detailed a chronology that began with Frances Wright, then Ernestine Rose, wrote, "In 1837, Mary S. Gove commenced lecturing on Woman's Rights, especially her right to a thorough medical professional course. Her lectures were productive of untold good to women, wakening them to a desire for health and mental culture, and to a higher conception of motherhood." (p. 11) Davis died in 1876, several years before the History of Woman Suffrage project was begun, yet her history which was largely incorporated by Stanton, Anthony, and Gage was edited down to a single sentence on Mary Gove Nichols. By Davis' original chronology,

Mary Gove Nichols was the first native-born American woman to speak on women's rights.

[15]Kraditor in The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement states that the second generation "took pride in the fact that their movement was in the mainstream of American history, seeking to realize and further the ideas of the Founding Fathers, but not to replace those ideals or overthrow the government or glorious republic brought forth by their ancestors." (p. 211)

[16]Andrew Sinclair, The Emancipation of the American Woman (New York: Harper and Row, Publisher, 1965), pp. 222-29, and Stanton, et al., History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. IV, pp. 1046-7.

[17]When Susan B. Anthony was introduced by Frances Willard to an 1881 WCTU convention, some of the members walked out. See Edward T. James, ed., Notable American Women: A Biographical Dictionary (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), Vol. III, p. 616. In 1890 a state WCTU wanted Susan B. Anthony to bring a suffrage convention to their city, but requested that "no speaker should say anything which would seem like an attack on Christianity." Anthony wrote Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, "They never seem to think we have any feelings to be hurt when we have to sit under their reiteration of orthodox cant and dogma. The book is all on one foot with the dear religious bigots--but if they will all put together with us for suffrage we'll continue to bear and forebear, as we have done for the past forty years." Ida Husted Harper, Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony (New York: Arno and The New York Times, 1969), Vol. II, p. 678. See also Barbara Leslie Epstein, The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism and Temperance in Nineteenth Century America (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1981).

[18]Lerner, The Majority Finds Its Past, p. 4, and Kraditor, The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement.

[19]For an example of the problem this rootlessness creates, see the discussion of the 1890-1920 and the 1960s radical feminists in, respectively, Frances Arich Kolb, "The Feminist Movement, 1890-1920," in Women's Studies: The Social Realities, edited by Barbara Bellow Watson (New York: Harper's College Press, 1976), pp. 203-246, and Lerner, The Majority Finds Its Past, pp. 44-5.

[20]Kathie Sarachild, "The Power of History," in Feminist Revolution, ed. by Sarachild, pp. 13-43.

[21]Ibid., p. 13.

[22]Ibid., p. 14.

[23]Ibid., p. 15.

[24]Ibid., pp. 30-37.

CHAPTER I

THE CIRCLE BEGUN

> Bear with me, O friend! and I will show you the circle completed. You shall see the golden chain of the Divine Providence by which I have been drawn upward....Upward, ever upward, I have been drawn.[1]

The year was 1812. In Goffstown, New Hampshire, two year old Mary Sargeant Neal was being taken by her father to a school that an "ancient Scottish maiden lady" ran. She remembered the occasion clearly because her father was leaving that day to join his regiment; the United States was again at war with England. Conflicting emotions of sadness and joy warred against each other in the small child; her father was leaving, yet she was eager to learn at the new school. She clung to him. Trying unsuccessfully to encircle his huge hand with her tiny one, she had to settle for holding on to two of his fingers. It had rained the night before and frequently her father had to lift her over the puddles of water as they walked to the school house. When they reached their destination, he lifted her up for a good-bye kiss. "Daddy, when you have killed all the Tories, you will come back?" she asked. "Yes, my little maid," he answered. But it was three years before William Neal returned and Mary had "quite forgotten him, and

was much embarrassed when a tall, handsome gentleman, with a bosom full of ruffles" hugged her and insisted that she was "his little maid."[2]

Mary Neal's first memories which were related to her father and to education reveal the significance both had in shaping the woman she would become. William Neal was not only her father, but her hero. He gave her the intellectual sparring most men gave only to their sons. His favorite authors were Volney, Voltaire, and Thomas Paine, and he had Mary read to him regularly and delighted in using various texts to launch philosophical questions around which he could weave his eloquence and freewheeling intellect at her expense and also for her edification.[3] Praising her for arguing sensibly, yet teasing her for crying when she could not best him or convince him to share her own rigorous inner convictions, he told his daughter that she was "quite out of the common highway for women" and though she was "better than the best of them," she too frequently ended "an argument with an inundation."[4]

Mary was training her mind with a worthy adversary because her father's freethinking and ready oratory reduced many grown men to silence and anger. He was known as the "village disputant" and so loved to argue that he would take on anyone, debating on "both sides of a question with equal ability, and in the same hour."[5] She later realized that "he lived in a kind of intellectual gymnasium" with "no object but to sharpen wits already inconveniently thorny."[6] His love of eloquence and intellectual gymnastics damaged "his reputation and the prospects of the family" because William Neal was not a

Christian, yet lived in orthodox and Federalist New England.[7] His flagrant arguments against the dogma of Calvinism subjected the family to community disapproval. But William disputed for his own amusement as he admitted and not always out of the fervour of conviction. Mary wrote much later, "It was painful to me to feel then and know now, that my noble father was a sophist; that he loved to triumph, almost as well as to convince."[8]

Being married to William Neal was not easy for Rebecca, Mary's mother, yet life had never been easy for her. As the eldest of seventeen children on a frontier farm she had always had to help with all the chores including yoking oxen, loading firewood, and harvesting hay. The hard work placed on her young shoulders had not embittered her, however, and she cheerfully recounted stories from her childhood.[9] Rebecca had been twenty-one when she married William, a widower nearly twice her age, and she had to care for his children as well as the children they had.[10] "A most alarming worker," she embodied the Protestant work ethic, and her husband frequently proclaimed, "If the creation had been her business, she would have made but half day's work of it."[11]

Rebecca, a practical woman of much strength and energy, little appreciated her husband's unpopular ideas because support of the family loomed larger. What seemed unnecessary mental games cost the family friends and financial success. As a result she tried to squelch these same tendencies when she saw them developing in her young daughter. Mary recalled, "My mother's school for me was work--my father's was books."[12] Although her mother was "much to be prized

for her good sense" and "her loving devotion to her family", Mary concluded she was "her father's child" and was drawn toward his "education, wit, eloquence, integrity, and dominant political ability."[13]

Although Mary was influenced by her father's freethinking and her mother's abundant energy, she had difficulty in relating to her siblings and the two families of children teased and tyrannized her. She felt neglected, unloved, and a misfit in the midst of a large family that she perceived to be intelligent, talented, beautiful, and hard-working. She was neither "useful nor ornamental."[14] Her mother frequently told her that she was "a fright," that her skin was "yellow as a squash," her nose "large enough for two," and her eyes "were not mates."[15] Her older half sister, however, was very beautiful and "resembled a bouquet of delicate, pink rose-buds and lilies of the valley." This lovely creature laughed at Mary and mimicked her stooping walk. She would put her comely face next to Mary's at the mirror and taunt, "Pore over your books, Mary, and frighten all the men by being a Blue. I am pretty enough to get a beau without taking a book for bait." Mary admired her sister's beauty and claimed that she never envied her, yet little wonder that she did not have any great affection for her sister.[16]

Feeling that her looks pained people, Mary became so shy that she could not look directly into the face of others, and "did not know the color of anyone's eyes, except those dearest" to her.[17] The ugly duckling would outgrow the bashfulness, the crossed-eyes and squint, and the stoop, but those early perceptions of self resulted

in a miserable childhood. She concluded, "I had never a childhood, my earliest youth was a darkened and painful old age."[18]

Because she was unable to do the tasks her mother assigned, her feelings of inadequacy grew. Indeed she later claimed that the region of the head that the phrenologist labelled self-esteem was in her "hollow, and...always sore."[19] She lamented, "If I washed the dishes, I broke them; if I watched the oven, the cakes were sure to be burned." Yet she kept trying until her "head swam," her vision blurred, and life became so miserable that she contemplated suicide.[20]

To compensate Mary sought freedom in the outdoors. She loved to run and romp, but her mother abhorred such behavior in daughters who should be "miniature women."[21] The strong willed daughter frequently clashed with her mother who felt it her "most imperative duty" to crush individuality.[22] She could not even find solace in the dances and song fests which her sisters attended because she "could neither sing nor dance."[23]

Mary Neal did excel at school and there she felt a sense of worth. In her first winter in public school, she received special attention because of her spelling ability. She clearly recalled being lifted onto a chair and being so bashful that she wanted to hide her "small self" in her "very small shoes." But as "ambition in a child is never more at white-heat than in the Spelling Bee," she outspelled the oldest scholars, some of whom were twenty years old. Soon she was at the head of the class, "a proud distinction."[24]

Possessing an amazing memory, she could read something twice and remember it.[25] Her father, however, would not let her learn to

write or have paper and pen. At the age of five she wanted desperately to write a book. Since she "thought that a book could be written on one sheet of paper," she was crushed when her father would not allow her "to have this much coveted treasure." So she made up verses and memorized them "in a sort of despairing hope" that somehow she could get that sheet of paper on which to write her book.[26]

When she was six years old she decided to secretly teach herself to write. First she tried to learn to write her name, but had trouble with the r in Mary. For a while she wrote her name May, but at last she conquered the r and was very proud of herself. By the time she was seven, she "could write very badly, but legibly."[27] Her next feat was to memorize every word in Walker's Pronouncing Dictionary. She was extremely troubled to discover that there was a larger dictionary, and that she had "not really learned all the words in the English language."[28]

Academic excellence, however, brought no parental praise. Her mother had "no use" for learning beyond the basics which she labelled "the veriest do-nothingness in the world."[29] Rebecca's practical attitude was understandable; even Mary realized that "she did not believe in reading and writing and scholarship generally. Why should she? They did not help her to get a living."[30] Because life was often a struggle for Rebecca, she had little energy to give her daughter the love and sympathy which she craved. Mary bemoaned the fact that she could not lean upon her mother because "she gave her strength to earn food and clothing" and had nothing left for her.[31] Within her family, with the exception of her maternal grandmother and

an occasional kind word from her father, Mary had little companionship.[32] She lamented, "No one seemed to have any conception that the little, ugly, neglected cross-eyed one had any soul or sensibility."[33]

Because the world around Mary Neal seemed terrible and harsh, she made a "fairy realm of fancy." In her dreams she "created a world of beauty and enchantment" and she lived in this ideal world. She "shrank from the coarse, hard actualities of life," and bathed her "fevered spirit in a bliss of imagination."[34]

But the real world often cruelly invaded her reveries and forced her to deal with it. When Mary was twelve, her beautiful twenty year old sister became seriously ill. The minister came to battle for her soul and stayed to wrestle with her father's unbelief. The Methodist circuit preacher converted Mary's sister, promising her rest in a heaven resounding with her beloved music. The father, however, unable to believe in a God who would take away his lovely daughter, lashed out at the hypocrisy of "a religion whose professors held slaves, sold rum, made war, and hung men instead of putting them to useful service and keeping them from mischief."[35] Consumption claimed Mary's sister while she lay in the arms of the young minister. Stunned at her first acquaintance with death, Mary could not cry, but just stared at the "lovely clay."[36] But William Neal's stony silence was deafening.

The family decided to leave Goffstown because the death of Mary's sister engulfed the house in sadness; her brother went off to school creating more loneliness; and "progress" had ruined her father's

fishing grounds when the cottonmills moved in.[37] The Neals' new home was in Craftsbury, in northern Vermont, an isolated, cold, and dark place with deep snows and dense evergreen forests. Miserable, lonely, and homesick, Mary became seriously ill. The doctor was called and bled her, but for the next two years she was sickly and depressed.[38]

In this dejected state of mind, her thoughts turned to religion. She "wanted atonement" and "longed to make sacrifices" that would give her peace from the "vague, indefinable remorse" that she felt.[39] One day in her fifteenth year, she was sitting at the back of the house watching the late afternoon sun stream through the nearby forest, and felt the "sense of pardon" for which she had longed. She declared, "I forgot that I was sick...that the wings of my spirit were weighted down with many sins. I only remembered that God was merciful and omnipotent." But her "beautiful state" soon vanished and she was wretched again. Tempting fate, she walked into cold brooks and through snow drifts hoping to develop pneumonia and die.[40]

The only joy she found was in her studies, but family financial problems prevented any formal education. When she received some money from her brother to buy a much needed new dress, Mary used the money to pay the $3 tuition to attend the school of the Presbyterian minister's wife. For a time she was very happy and devoured her "studies with the appetite of one starving."[41] But when her knowledge surpassed the teacher's, the Presbyterian minister accused the precocious scholar of speaking disrespectfully to his wife and asked her to leave the school.[42]

Still hungry for learning, Mary sought books wherever she could. A Quaker schoolbook, The Monitor, which she borrowed during this period greatly influenced her life. The volume told of the early history of the Society of Friends and their unique beliefs. Miserable about the brevity of her previous religious experience, Mary still yearned "to make some atonement."[43] She read that she must take up her cross and deny all her "vain loves:" in other words, her "taste for beauty was to be crucified." According to her interpretation of the Quakers, "a dress without an ornament, a language singular and strange" would set her "apart from the world, satisfy God," and make her "a happy Christian."[44]

Mary Neal decided to become a Quaker even though she had never talked to or seen a "live" one, and there was no Quaker meeting in her town to join. This decision served several purposes for the new convert. First, it allowed her to get out of a painful association, for she had been attending the Presbyterian Church of which the teacher's husband was minister. Her experience with that "false wife" had humiliated her and she wanted "to die of consequence of it." Since she could not, she "could die to them" by becoming a Quaker and separating herself from their world.[45] She could also create a church of her own making. No local church group had made her feel at home, yet she longed for a religious commitment. Now she could people her church from her "world of fancy" and with the heroic early pioneer Quaker martyrs she had read about in her book.[46] After a few months she was known as a Quaker and her "peculiarities accepted as a matter of course."[47]

It looked as if Mary Neal had found a perfect solution for her spiritual needs, yet it involved sacrifice and for an ex-ugly duckling it was a difficult one. She must accept the Quaker plainness. Mary's hair had become her crowning glory and was now an abundant rich brown which curled in beautiful ringlets. Gone were the crossed-eyes and squint, and her eyes were a bright and pretty deep-blue. She lamented, "to comb back my luxuriant curls straight over my forehead, and twist my hair in an immense knot in my neck, was a great sacrifice." But for religious peace she was willing to crucify vanity. "I did not reason," she conceded, "I only wanted to love, to worship, to believe, and I did all blindly."[48] Her mother, who belonged to the Universalist Church, was furious with the decision. Her father settled the matter, however, when he declared, "The Christians are a poor sect, but I believe that Quakers are the best of the bunch" and gave his consent for her to become a Quaker until she became "wise enough not to be a Christian."[49]

Mary Neal had solved these spiritual problems and her health reflected a new happiness, but the family faced a major financial crisis. With high hopes her father and another man had entered the stoneware business, but the partner absconded with the profits, leaving Neal to pay the debts. When his warehouse burned, local gossips accused him of arson. After thirty days at the sheriff's office for failure to pay his debts, he was released. To settle his accounts, he cut one hundred cords of wood and Rebecca and Mary made heavy woolen socks and gloves to sell in Canada.[50]

As Mary approached adulthood, she yearned to become more "useful." When she returned to Goffstown for a visit, she found some medical books in a friend's library. Curious, she read them and when she returned home tried to obtain more. Her eldest brother was studying medicine and sometimes left at home his Bell's Anatomy which she began to read in secret. One day when her brother was explaining the circulation of the blood, he made some mistakes. Without thinking, Mary corrected him. Soon the truth was out. Her brother ridiculed her for such "unwomanly conduct" and thereafter hid his medical books from her.[51] Her medical education stymied, she turned to the study of French and Latin.

An elderly neighbor to whom Mary read Plato and her own stories advised her to prepare for a teaching career. She began the process "with great palpitation and perturbation" because she had to get a recommendation from the Presbyterian minister who had censured her. Summoning up all her courage she approached him; much to her surprise, he received her pleasantly, said she would be a good teacher, and gave her a flattering recommendation. Next she had to appear before the town committee which consisted of a lawyer, a merchant, and a mechanic who examined prospective teachers. First, she had to make a pen from a goose quill, something she had never done before. Then she had to write her name. Questioned about religion, grammar, and geography, she had to work math problems and spell some difficult words. She passed all the tests and the committee approved her as a teacher. At last Mary Neal felt she could be useful.

Unfortunately, there were no teaching jobs available for several months so she helped her mother sew and busied herself writing stories, essays, and poems, some of which were published in the Boston Traveller, a weekly paper which had a New England circulation. Not only was she thrilled to see her work in print, but the friendly editors gave her the medical books that were sent to them for review.[53] She then exchanged these volumes with a local doctor and thus continued her secretive studying.

When summer came Mary received an offer to teach. Timidity and stubborn pride caused her immediate problems, however, when a committee of local women, wanting to check her qualifications, called on her. Feeling she had already been thoroughly tested and approved, she refused to see them, explaining that she saw no reason why she should have to be examined a second time. The women were very upset until she finally called on them and smoothed their ruffled feathers. Because she believed that she had acted correctly, it was painful to recant and she recorded that this first lesson in diplomacy had been largely an exercise in hypocrisy.[54]

A nice place to stay came with the job and Mary did not "board round among the scholars" as teachers often had to do so the community could cut down on expenses.[55] Her father had re-established his reputation and credit, and with her mother's needlework and her small teacher's salary, they were again solvent.

These were good times for Mary Neal. But as she approached her twentieth birthday, she realized that there was one flaw in this world she had created to meet her needs. At this time members of the

Society of Friends were disowned if they married out of the Society, yet there were no Quakers in Craftsbury. In the autumn of 1830 an uncle, who had joined the Friends soon after Mary's conversion, invited her for a visit. A brick-maker, her uncle lived near her old home in New Hampshire and had a close friend, Hiram Gove, whom he was most anxious for Mary to meet.[56]

Tall, handsome, and pious, Hiram Gove sought a wife. A hatter, he had a pleasant home in nearby Weare which had been founded in the 1770s by the Quakers.[57] Ten years older than Mary and unfashionably dressed (even for a Quaker), he did not impress her.[58] Her first feeling "was one of deep and most decided aversion" and she thought his aura could only be described as "meanness."[59] But Hiram was pleased with Mary and began pursuit. He was attentive, yet unobtrusive, and enlisted friends to the cause. In "a whirl of persuasions" which literally made her dizzy, Mary Neal consented to marry Hiram Gove.[60]

Immediately she regretted her decision and could "never describe the horror" that she felt after she had promised to become Hiram's wife.[61] After several agonizing days she felt she had to break the engagement, but when she told Hiram he was so distraught and miserable that she felt she had "to be sacrificed." Trapped when the prospective bridegroom, whom her uncle recommended, received her parents' consent to the marriage, Mary had only one "glimmer of relief", a desperate hope that she would die before her wedding day.[63]

Instead of relief, more agony came when she became attracted to one of Hiram's friends, a young man who embodied the vision in her daydreams. When Hiram overheard them repeating "impassioned poetry" his whole appearance said, "I can kill," but his words were few.[63] He reminded Mary that they were engaged and "spoke solemnly of the curse of broken vows" before he called in some Friends to remind her that Quakers "regarded a broken engagement as a sin of the blackest dye."[64] Hell was a "flaming reality" to Mary then and she believed its torments awaited her if she broke her word.[65] After copious tears, much anguish, and fear for her eternal soul, Mary again surrendered and agreed to marry Hiram even though she "dreaded and abhorred" him. Her marriage, or "martyrdom" as she described it, took place on March 5, 1831.[66] She dramatically recorded, "this wedding day and ceremony involved more suffering than any Hindoo (sic) suttee that ever shocked our Christian world."[67]

Trapped in a loveless marriage in which "each hour seemed an eternity of misery", Mary found that her fantasy religion also evaporated.[68] Quakers discouraged association with non-Quakers so her relationships were very limited. Soon she found that real Friends did not possess "the Christian perfection" the storybook ones had.[69] Though the members of the meeting were hard working people, very few had "classical tastes and cultivation" which meant that they had very few books that she could borrow. Too soon she had exhausted the entire supply of acceptable Quaker reading material. In the past she had written to escape from her loneliness, but the Friends looked upon

her writing "with great aversion" since they believed poetry was "a sort of black art" and fiction was "downright lying."[70]

Members of the Society of Friends were greatly concerned about the private lives of their members and felt duty-bound to discipline or reprimand those who departed from the Quaker testimonies.[71] They not only disapproved of Mary's "literary tastes," but also criticized her for using a "language entirely unlike the mass of Society."[72] She had adopted the peculiar language of the Quakers when she converted, but claimed these Friends used "thee" and "thou" ungrammatically. Birthright Quakers bristled and told "mean, gossiping stories" about this upstart convert.[73]

When Hiram Gove suffered a financial setback soon after they were married, economic survival was added to Mary's other problems. There are always two sides to any troubled marriage, and unfortunately Hiram did not record his version. He apparently had trouble adjusting to his new responsibilities. Mary did record her feelings, however, and she felt that she had been doubly cheated. Not only was Hiram not the fulfillment of her romantic daydreams, now he was unable to support her.

Mary at first responded to this unhappiness with her previous pattern of illness and contemplation of suicide. Eventually her "power to suffer was exhausted," and resigned to her fate, she tried to cultivate the spirit of self-sacrifice and "strove to have no will."[74] Drawing on her skill with the needle, she found comfort and financial assistance in sewing and often stayed up until the early hours of the morning to finish her work.[75]

In March 1832 Mary gave birth to a daughter, Elma Penn Gove. Though her daughter was "the child of sorrow, of tears, of unutterable misery," Mary now centered all her love on her.[76] She was pregnant four more times in her marriage to Hiram, but all ended in miscarriages or were stillborn.[77] With an unusual reticience, she believed that "the maternal portion" of her life was "too bitter to be told" because she had "endured all the sufferings of maternity, without its solace."[78]

Perhaps it was because of her unfruitful childbearing or her own ill health that Mary Gove became "possessed with a passion for anatomical, physiological, and pathological study."[79] Why or how it happened was unimportant to her, she just knew that her intense desire for knowledge enabled her to overcome shyness and seek "assistance from scientific and professional men."[80] Her collection of medical books grew and each night she took them to bed and studied till she fell asleep. During the day she stole every chance she could to learn "the mysteries of our wonderful mechanism," the female body.[81]

Notes to Chapter I

[1]Mary Gove Nichols, Mary Lyndon or, Revelations of a Life: An Autobiography (New York: Stringer and Townsend, 1855), p. 15. Although she used a fictional last name, this book is essentially the story of Mary Neal Gove Nichols' life until 1848. Foe and friend alike agreed on that. Thomas Nichols, in defending the book, declared, "...the fact is that it is an actual life, even to minute particulars, and to the very conversations, and the literal copying of letters. It is not, therefore, in the least degree a work of imagination or artistic skill....Mary Lyndon lived itself; and its great merit is in its being perhaps the only actual copy of a real life, in incident, thought and feeling." Nichols' Monthly, August and September, 1855, p. 200. Henry J. Raymond, in attacking the book, said she should have used her own name because as a work of fact, which it was, not fiction, "it would have done no harm." New York Times, August 17, 1855.

The only place where I can document that it deviates from the known facts is that she simplifies her family background and the story of her childhood by not having her father previously married and makes her half brothers and sisters full ones.

A more difficult problem is the use of any autobiography as source material. Allen Davis in his study of Jane Addams concluded that all autobiographies bear "a close resemblance to fiction" (p. 157). Often the autobiographers to make their point distort facts, alter the story, or simply have faulty memories. Several biographers of American women have mentioned this problem, but it is a universal problem of any biographer--how accurate is the "self-styled public image" (Hill, p. 6) that a person projects in his or her autobiography? See William C. Spengemann and L.R. Lundquist, "Autobiography and the American Myth," American Quarterly,XVII (Fall, 1965), 501-19, and Karl J. Weintraub, "Autobiography and Historical Consciousness," Critical Inquiry, I (June, 1975), 821-848, for a general treatment of autobiography. Other studies that deal with this problem individually are Allen F. Davis, American Heroine: The Life and Legend of Jane Addams (London: Oxford University Press, 1973); David M. Kennedy, Birth Control in America: The Career of Margaret Sanger (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970); Mary A. Hill, Charlotte Perkins Gilman: The Making of a Radical Feminist, 1860-1896 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980); Stephen Butterfield, Black Autobiography in America (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1974); and Robert F. Sayre, The Examined Self: Benjamin Franklin, Henry Adams, Henry James (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964).

Mary Gove Nichols was unique in so openly presenting her actual life story, as she perceived it. In contrast, the very successful contemporary writer Sara Willis Parton used her pen name "Fanny Fern" and then entitled her autobiographical novel published in 1854 that attacked traditional marriage and its burden on women, Ruth Hall,

putting a double barrier between herself and her story. See Ann D. Wood, "The 'Scribbling Women' and Fanny Fern: Why Women Wrote," American Quarterly, XXIII (1971), 3-24.

I have used Mary Lyndon as a source aware of the complex ramifications that any biographer must face using an autobiography.

[2]Thomas Low Nichols, Nichols' Health Manual: Being Also A Memorial of the Life and Work of Mrs. Mary S. Gove Nichols (London: E. W. Allen, 1887), p. 2. Her father must have been the ardent patriot Mary said he was for he was forty-four years old in 1812. See Irving T. Richards, "Mary Gove Nichols and John Neal," The New England Quarterly, Vol. 7, June, 1934, p. 336. Mary Neal was born on August 10, 1810.

[3]T.L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 17.

[4]M.G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 18.

[5]Ibid., pp. 10 and 17.

[6]Ibid., p. 17.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Ibid.

[9]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 15.

[10]Herald of Health, April, 1881, pp. 37-8. Apparently William Neal's first wife died. Her sister helped care for Mary after she was born when Rebecca was sick. (Herald of Health, May, 1881, p. 49). Had a divorce taken place, this would be unusual behavior. Also a separation would have prevented William's marriage to Rebecca. It is unclear from the evidence how many surviving children William and his first wife had. Mary states that her eldest half sister was fifteen years older than she was. She also mentions a second half sister. One of these or another half sister died of consumption (Herald of Health, June, 1881, p. 63). Mary said that one of her sisters married the son of Dr. Gove, their family physician in Goffstown, who was a British Tory and had come to the United States in his youth. She does not comment if this Dr. Gove was any relation to the Hiram Gove from nearby Weare that she married (T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 2). Of the three children Rebecca and William had, the eldest was a boy who died of consumption "just as he reached manhood", then Mary, and the third was most likely a boy (Herald of Health, April, 1881, p. 38 and June, 1881, p. 63, and M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 7). From the evidence available William Neal fathered at least six children who survived infancy over the probable age spread of nineteen years from the two marriages.

[11]M.G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 10.

[12]Herald of Health, May, 1881, p. 49.

[13]Ibid., April, 1881, p. 38.

[14]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 21.

[15]Ibid., p. 9.

[16]Ibid., p. 32.

[17]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 18.

[18]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 15.

[19]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 19.

[20]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, pp. 21-22.

[21]Ibid., p. 21.

[22]Ibid., p. 20 and T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 12.

[23]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 9.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Ibid., p. 13.

[26]Ibid., pp. 13-14.

[27]Ibid., p. 19.

[28]Ibid., p. 14.

[29]Ibid., p. 13 and M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 88.

[30]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 95.

[31]Ibid., p. 21

[32]Ibid., p. 16.

[33]Ibid., p. 21.

[34]Ibid., p. 10.

[35]Ibid., p. 40.

[36]Ibid., p. 41.

[37]Ibid., pp. 43 and 49. T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 8.

[38]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 65.

[39]Ibid.

[40]Ibid., p. 68.

[41]Ibid., p. 71.

[42]Ibid., p. 72.

[43]Ibid., p. 73.

[44]Ibid., p. 74.

[45]Ibid.

[46]Ibid., p. 75.

[47]Ibid., p. 77.

[48]Ibid., p. 75.

[49]Ibid., p. 77.

[50]Ibid., p. 96. See also pp. 91-99, 102-3. Although Mary Gove Nichols does not mention this business venture, in The Herald of Health, April, 1881, p. 38, she wrote, "My father had skill in many employments. He took to gardening while his brothers became farmers. My father built himself a house, of which he was the architect. He raised on a small portion of land all that we needed of maize, vegetables, melons, etc., with the smaller fruits. He had a corn mill, half a salmon fishery, and he learned the art of making shoes and boots, and employed men in making them."

[51]Mary Gove Nichols, Experience in Water Cure: A Familiar Exposition of the Principles and Results of Water Treatment, in the Cure of Acute and Chronic Diseases, Illustrated by Numerous Cases in the Practice of the Author; With an Explanation of Water-Cure Processes, Advice on Diet and Regimen, and Particular Directions to Women in the Treatment of Female Diseases, Water Treatment in Childbirth and the Diseases of Infancy (New York: Fowlers and Wells Publishing, 1852), p. 21.

[52]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, pp. 100-2.

[53]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 21

[54]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 106.

[55]Ibid., p. 104.

[56]Ibid., pp. 117-19.

[57]Federal Writers' Project, New Hampshire: A Guide to the Granite State (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Riverside Press, 1938), p. 478.

[58]William Henry Gove, The Gove Book (Salem, Massachusetts: Sidney Perley, 1922), pp. 204-5.

[59]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 119.

[60]Ibid., p. 120.

[61]Ibid.

[62]Ibid., p. 121.

[63]Ibid.

[64]Ibid., p. 122.

[65]Ibid.

[66]Ibid., and Gove, The Gove Book, p. 205.

[67]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 122. Suttee is "the act or custom of a Hindu widow willingly cremating herself or being cremated on the funeral pile of her husband as an indication of her devotion to him." See Webster's Third New International Dictionary (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1966), Vol. III, p. 2304.

[68]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 125.

[69]Ibid., p. 126.

[70]Ibid., p. 125.

[71]Although she never stated there was any Quaker pressure on her, Mary gave up the "use of snuff and tea" soon after she married. She had been taking snuff for seven years. She wrote, "I most sincerely pity any one who uses tobacco in any form. It requires great moral courage to break the spell that binds one to the loathsome indulgence. But people can never be justified in committing suicide. After leaving the use of tea, I became enslaved by coffee, and almost lived upon it. This injured me greatly, and I finally abandoned it because I found I could not perform my duties as a teacher if I continued its use." Health Journal, and Advocate of Physiological Reform, October 21, 1840, p. 98.

[72]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 126.

[73]Ibid.

[74]Ibid., pp. 125 and 127.

[75]Ibid., p. 127.

[76]Ibid.

[77]Ibid., and Thomas Low Nichols and Mary S. Gove Nichols, Marriage: Its History, Character and Results; Its Sanctities and Its Profanities; Its Science and Its Facts Demonstrating Its Influence as a Civilized Institution on the Happiness of the Individual and the Progress of the Race (Cincinnati: Valentine Nicholson & Co., 1854), p. 265.

[78]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 127.

[79]M. G. Nichols, Water Cure, p. 22.

[80]Ibid.

[81]Ibid., p. 23.

CHAPTER II

I WAS A BEING

> I felt that I must have occupation, incessant and absorbing, or my soul would canker, or burn its way through my body....I began to see that I was a being--that I had the right first to live, and second to enjoy life in some degree.[1]

The Panic of 1837 created much economic havoc in New England and resulted in widespread unemployment and numerous factory shutdowns.[2] Hiram Gove, a hatter, was sucked under financially and as his situation worsened he became psychologically as well as economically depressed. Mary feared "he had some dreadful disease of will--a sort of spiritual paralysis, that made him unable to act for any useful purpose." She also faced a crisis in her own life. In her seventh year of an unhappy marriage, suffering from poor health, continual unfruitful childbearing, and having to provide financial support for the family, she felt she must have an all consuming occupation or her "soul would canker, or burn its way" through her body.[3]

Frustrated and desperate, the Goves thought a change of place would help, give them a new perspective, a chance to start fresh again. Several Quaker relatives had moved to Lynn, a well known shoe

manufacturing center on the Atlantic seacoast ten miles north of Boston.[4] Although the Panic of 1837 had resulted in two thousand workers being laid off in Lynn, the new Eastern Railroad that connected Boston and Salem and passed through Lynn was about to be completed and all were optimistic that it would restore economic opportunity to the community.[5] Thus the Goves moved to Lynn, Massachusetts, in 1837.

Hiram's economic prospects did not improve much and Mary's assistance was still vital. She had become reconciled to helping out financially, but wanted to do something that she enjoyed. She no longer found any solace in needlework, indeed, it had become "murderous", and ill, wretched, and unable to sit up, she had lain in bed sewing. Now that they were in a larger town, Mary told Hiram that she wanted to open a girls' school because teaching was what she "loved next to writing."[6] And besides, Elma, now six years old and still an only child, ought to be in school with other children. Hiram objected because he did not think teaching school was as profitable as needlework, but she persisted. As the struggle continued, a transformation began in Mary and she felt that she "was a being" and had the right not only "to live", but "to enjoy life to some degree." Reminding Hiram that she had served him as "long as Jacob served for Rachel," she declared that now she must do her "own work."[7]

Bold as her words were, she found that "slavery" was "no preparation for freedom," and she did not have the strength yet to act in defiance of her husband. The ordeal took its toll and she became seriously ill. When she recovered, Hiram relented and allowed

her to open a school. Perhaps he had heard of the recent success of Mary Lyon in establishing Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in South Hadley, Massachusetts.[8]

Excited about her prospects, Mary Gove announced the opening of her school for young ladies on Broad Street near the Mechanicks' Bank. Her curriculum included the usual courses as well as needlework, and she promised the parents of potential scholars to pay special attention "to the habits and manners" of her charges. Board was $2 a week, and tuition per quarter varied from $2 for the "common English branches" to $4 for the "French branch."[9] She soon had a profitable school and was much healthier and happier as she contemplated being able to buy more books and hire some assistants which would give her more time to study.[10] "A strange, wild joy" seized her at the prospect of "having a broader field of study and reading."[11]

Though the school was an initial success and more profitable than needlework, Mary Gove's dream of economic independence failed to materialize. She did not have enough students to justify the salary of an assistant and had to do all the teaching, caring, and feeding of the students. Hiram locked her fees in a chest and kept close watch over the proceeds; she had to get permission from him for every cent she spent. He frequently refused to give her the money she had earned to buy books or paper. When he approved of a necessary expense, he "very unwillingly" unlocked the chest and gave her the money.[12]

Finally "worn to the quick by bondage" and unable to endure it any longer, Mary asked Hiram for a separation. Furious, he reminded her that she had no legal rights and promised that if she left him

he would blast her name. "The brand of infamy" would "fall heavy and hot" upon her, and he would take their child, as legally a child belonged to the father. The vehemence of his threat stunned her. Yet concerned for the welfare of her daughter and her "name's sake," she decided to "remain the property of a man who could find it in his nature to taunt" her thus.[13] But Mary Gove had become conscious of a new strength. As an individual soul she was "responsible to God, and not to one called my husband."[14]

Although Mary was not strong enough to break free from Hiram, she vowed not to be so weak as to complain to others. Submitting to her fate, she tried to make the best of a miserable situation.[15] She threw herself into teaching and writing, and her literary productions increased sufficiently to give her local recognition. Hiram, unable to find "some useful occupation," was frequently home and underfoot, and Mary felt "haunted by him", seldom knowing the "blessing of being alone."[16] Her growing number of non-Quaker friends increasingly irritated him. When he found her playing Checkers with a young literary friend as Elma delightedly watched, he castigated her in abusive and violent language for "playing a game with a young man" in front of their daughter.[17] She had tried hard to accept her fate. But after this episode and further jealous outbursts, when Hiram approached or laid his hand on her, "a convulsive spasm" ran through her body giving her "indescribable pain." Try as she would, she "could not overcome it."[18]

Living at a time in which the sphere of the middle class woman was shrinking and isolating her in the home, Mary Gove struggled

against it.[19] To always live in a world in which Hiram Gove was her whole life and her master was inconceivable. He had not been able to provide the basic necessities for the family, and then got in her way when she tried. There had to be some way for her to break the bonds of this shrinking world; she wanted to know more about the world, not less. These thoughts were always present in the back of her mind and drove her out on a rainy night to hear the latest reformer who had come to Lynn to save the world. Maybe he could show her a way out of this dilemma.

Lynn, like much of New England at this time, was a place of much reform activity.[20] Religious enthusiasm to save mankind permeated the air. Perfectionists with their urgent, native, and optimistic appeals announced that the Kingdom of God was at hand, if only the enlightened people would join together to educate and convert the rest.[21] Revival techniques and language were applied to a multitude of campaigns to improve society, from ending slavery to humanizing penal institutions, from educating the masses to prohibiting alcohol. Though Mary Gove would eventually be involved in many of the reforms of her day, the crusade that made the strongest appeal to her at this time was the popular health movement.

Mary Gove was not alone in being in poor health and unable to find relief or cures. The state of medicine in the United States was primitive. Doctors had very little formal education and most learned their profession through a brief apprenticeship with a practicing physician.[22] Because medical science lacked a theory to explain the cause of disease, there were many schools of medical

thought emphasizing diverse treatments. The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal listed sixteen different varieties of doctors in 1836.[23] Because there was "no standard--no real science of medicine, no absolute or acknowledged authority," everyone did what was "right in his own eyes."[24]

Thus with medicine far from an exact science and America "a country of many and violent diseases," the state of health was poor.[25] The national death rate of 30 to 35 per 1000 was more than three times the modern figure.[26] Half the deaths were from the population under twenty, and twenty per cent died from lung diseases.[27] As the cities grew, deaths from contagious diseases greatly increased and epidemics of cholera and yellow fever regularly struck the major cities.[28] Life expectancy in Massachusetts during the 1850s was 38.7 years for males and 40.9 years for females, and that was several years longer than the national average.[29]

Jacksonian America had a basic distrust of the expert. When the regular doctors could not help turn the tide of disease and death, Americans turned from the orthodox medical practice that still used bloodletting, purgatives that contained mercury, and bitter pills to the "irregular" doctors who if they did not cure, at least did not cause further harm.[30] With the reform climate pervading the atmosphere and medical knowledge offering no single or simple panacea for death and disease, the popular health movement was born. The ideas that it advocated were as old as the ancient civilizations, but a modern Pythagoras, Sylvester Graham, appeared in the 1830s to endow the

campaign with the evangelistic zeal of a moral crusade that promised a hygienic millennium.[31]

Sylvester Graham was somewhat miffed at the small crowd that attended his lecture in Lynn that rainy night in 1837.[32] He could blame the inclement weather, but wondered what had happened to the large crowds that had so eagerly attended his lectures in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia in 1832 when people were so fearful because the cholera epidemic that had devasted Asia was on its way to America.[33] He would never forget the first night when he received for one lecture the same fee as he had previously earned in six months as a Presbyterian preacher.[34] He had started out preaching against alcoholism until he discovered that twice as many were killed by "downright gluttony."[35] Since that time he had travelled far and wide trying to save the health of the people with his Graham System.

Graham looked around the sparse group gathered before him. How could he communicate his message? How could he make more people realize that health reform was basic to all the other reform efforts vying for attention; that healthy people were essential for the perfected society? Convinced that God had created people to be healthy, he preached that the body would be, if properly cared for. Disease did not result from fatalistic, external causes such as God's displeasure or the intervention of an uncontrollable fate. Poor health resulted from the abuse of the body and ignorance of the natural laws that governed it. The cure for disease was in working with, not against, the body and allowing nature to heal the body. Prevention, of course, was even better than cure.[36]

As Graham described his system he kept coming back to one woman who listened more carefully than the others. He explained that the Graham System consisted of a diet of "vegetables and fruit, eaten in as near their natural state as possible." To aid digestion, food was chewed thoroughly, and consumed slowly in a cheerful atmosphere. Only three meals a day were allowed. Seven hours of sleep on a good hard bed--feather beds were considered "highly injurious"--and loose bedclothes were recommended. Daily exercise and bathing, a rather revolutionary and some considered dangerous suggestion, rounded out the program that was advocated as an antidote to disease.[37]

Essential to the vegetarian diet was whole wheat bread which had been recommended as far back as Hippocrates for "its salutory effects upon the bowels."[38] Attacking the lack of nutrients in the white bread of the day, Graham accused the "public bakers" of adding "chemical agents" or "even chalk, pipe clay and plaster of Paris... to increase the weight and whiteness of their bread."[39] Concerned that the duties which the mother had traditionally performed were increasingly the work of private or public servants (i.e. bakers or butchers), Graham insisted that "the wife, the mother only" was to be entrusted with the holy task of breadmaking.[40]

Mary Gove sat stunned, then her excitement mounted as she listened to what Sylvester Graham said. She had been giving lectures on anatomy and physiology to her students, and she had been reading medical books for years. But now all her earlier study fell in place. It had been "comparatively unimportant" for her to know the

"mechanism of the human stomach" while she "knew nothing of the causes which deranged its function and produced disease."[41]

Now she understood why dyspepsia, dysentery, and gout were such widespread and serious complaints among Americans. And no wonder, because they ate frequently and abundantly, daily menus included four meals a day and featured three meats and three desserts per meal. Food was hurriedly devoured and "gobble, gulp, and go" commonplace. Pork in its various forms was the mainstay of the menu; foods were fried in deep puddles of grease and the few vegetables were frequently overcooked. Water and milk were often contaminated.[42] Many nineteenth century health problems resulted from these poor dietary habits. Since doctors knew little about nutrition and could only prescribe laxatives and emetics, the health movement made a positive contribution to the nation's health. The Graham System would increase the likelihood of a healthy body with a stronger immunity system to fight against some diseases and to prevent others.

Mary Gove became an eager convert to the Graham System and declared that he was "one of the greatest benefactors the world ever had."[43] Graham Boarding Houses had earlier been established in Boston and New York City based on his system and now she advertised her school in the Graham Journal of Health and Longevity as a "Graham Boarding School."[44] Other women had also found the Graham System, a simple diet at low cost, no hot food, and few dishes to wash, very appealing as it freed them from "kitchen drudgery." Though the mother had to make the bread herself, it had to be at least a day old, so she could make several days' supply at one time. Her position was

idealized as she was praised as being second only "to the Deity."[45]

Mary Gove zealously went to hear all of Graham's lectures and was disappointed when he left Lynn to carry his message elsewhere.[46] She had also been interested in another feature of the Graham System, less known then as now, and that was his belief that people weakened their natural system through abuse of sex. Graham followed tradition when he spoke out against adultery and fornication, but he broke new ground when he publicly spoke and wrote not only against masturbation but against "sexual excess within the pale of wedlock."[47] Mary Gove, frequently pregnant and trapped at this time in a loveless marriage, must have rejoiced to hear this part of Graham's program. While he did not set an absolute limit on the frequency of sexual intercourse within marriage, he recommended that "the healthy and robust" should limit it to once a month and never more than once a week.[48] In a way, nature aided this rule he stated, for marital sex became boring. Each became "accustomed" to the other's body and "their parts no longer excited an impure imagination."[49] Too much sexual desire was a sign of ill health, and he advised men to sublimate their desires by going "to the gymnasium" and "swing upon and climb the poles, and ropes, and ladders, and vault upon the wooden horse."[50] For Mary Gove, here was a scientific justification to say "NO" to Hiram.

Her conversion to Grahamism gave Mary Gove's earlier study "vitality and consequent usefulness", but it was Dr. William Alcott who opened the door for her to a much larger world.[51] Alcott had

studied medicine seeking to cure his tuberculosis which had handicapped his teaching career. Though he received a diploma from Yale Medical School, the "wilderness of pills and powders" presented in class did not improve his health.[52] Disappointed with his unproductive medical education, he experimented with his own system and when his health improved, he used the findings in his medical practice. A strict vegetarian, he advocated fresh air and exercise; deciding that nature was the best healer, he administered as "little medicine as possible."[53]

Alcott only briefly practiced medicine before he returned to his earlier love, educational reform.[54] Like Graham, he believed that the body was originally created healthy and if people obeyed natural physiological laws they would be as they were intended to be. But first people must be educated as to what those natural laws were. In his campaign to introduce the teaching of anatomy and physiology, Dr. William Alcott became the most prolific writer in the health movement, publishing over one hundred books on physiology, anatomy, diet, hygiene, and ethics. In February 1837, he formed the American Physiological Society in Boston which met every month to hear lectures on physiology, to get acquainted and learn from each other's ailments and cures, and to promote popular health knowledge.[55] Surprisingly, given contemporary customs, more than one third of the members of the American Physiological Society were women; they were included because the men realized that as the food preparers their education was essential.[56]

The education of women concerning nutrition and physiology had been sadly neglected largely because of limited knowledge and attitudes toward education of women in general, but also because the doctors "most eminently qualified to instruct" the women paid little attention to their desire to learn.[57] Many doctors and ministers felt the sphere of woman was in the home, not in the lecture room, and certainly not at the podium.[58] When the Grimke sisters who had grown up on a Southern plantation spoke in public about the evils of slavery, the orthodox New England Congregational ministers strongly reacted.[59] Their "Pastoral Letter" issued on July 28, 1837, rebuked females "who so far forgot themselves as to itinerate in the character of public lecturers and teachers."[60] It was still being debated if women, even those who risked their lives as missionaries, could pray in public.[61]

Values and virtues conflicted. Many in society felt that women should not assume places of authority. The newly espoused need for women's health education conflicted with the virtue of female modesty and ignorance concerning the functioning of the human body. Sylvester Graham had given several lectures just for women, but some people objected that "some of the subjects were of a nature too delicate to be treated" by a man or before a mixed audience.[62] The solution seemed obvious to one inquirer who asked in the Graham Journal, "Would it not be well that some intelligent and tallented (sic) ladies should qualify themselves for the business of lecturing to their sex? It is perfectly feasible." They could learn science just as men could and teach it "with as much effect, and perhaps, with more propriety."

Then the call was issued, "Will not some of our intelligent and enterprising women take hold of this matter, and enter upon the important work of enlightening their own sex on this topic." They would be well received within the physiological societies that were spreading rapidly and would find "a vast and interesting field...before them, all unoccupied and, yet ripe for the harvest."[63]

In nearby Lynn there was indeed a woman who was uniquely prepared to answer this call--Mary Gove. She was already teaching physiology and anatomy in her girls' school that was based on the Graham System. She responded quickly. The next issue of the Graham Journal announced that "The Ladies Physiological Society of Boston propose having a course of lectures on Anatomy and Physiology, by Mrs. M. S. Gove, of Lynn, to commence on the first Wednesday in September at 3 o'clock P.M. at the Marlboro Chapel. One lecture a week."[64]

Alcott, long concerned with the social problems involved in men lecturing to women on anatomy and physiology, endorsed Mary Gove heartily because he was convinced that "she is one whom Providence is calling to this work." He felt she possessed the necessary scientific knowledge and other "laudable" qualifications, including "her benevolence, her zeal, her devotion to the cause of truth."[65] A Lynn physician, Dr. Silas Durkee, who also knew her declared that she was "amply qualified to give much valuable and important information to others of her sex upon the subject of Anatomy and Physiology, as connected with the principle of health and longevity."[66] Even with such endorsements from doctors, it was a radical step when

Mary Gove began her new career as a female health lecturer in Boston in the fall of 1838 because she was the first woman to lecture publicly to women on anatomy and physiology.[67]

Notes to Chapter II

[1]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 129.

[2]See Samuel Rezneck, "The Social History of An American Depression, 1837-1843," American Historical Review, XL (July, 1935), 662-687.

[3]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 129.

[4]William H. Gove, The Gove Book, pp. 206 and 209.

[5]Rezneck, "Social History," and Alonso Lewis, History of Lynn, Essex County, Massachusetts, including Lynnfield, Saugus, Swampscott, and Nahant, 1620-1864 (Lynn: George Herbert, 1890), p. 405.

[6]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 129.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Mary Lyon established Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in South Hadley, Massachusetts in November, 1837. See Elizabeth Alden Green, Mary Lyon and Mount Holyoke: Opening the Gates (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1979).

[9]Graham Journal of Health and Longevity, April 14, 1838, p. 128.

[10]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 129.

[11]Ibid., p. 130.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid., p. 131.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Ibid., p. 137.

[17]Ibid., p. 136.

[18]Ibid., p. 137.

[19]See Nancy Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835 (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1977) and Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860," American Quarterly, XVIII (Summer, 1966), 151-174.

[20]Many Lynn Quakers were involved in the reform efforts although the Lynn Quaker meeting would soon split over the slavery issue. Sarah and Angelina Grimke lectured to their "first large mixed audience" in Lynn on June 21, 1837, which led to the infamous "Pastoral Letter" the next month. Abby Kelley was a Quaker schoolteacher in Lynn and already active in the local anti-slavery society. She launched her anti-slavery lecture career from Lynn in 1839. Lydia Pinkham and her family were active in the anti-slavery society of Lynn. Wealthy Quaker James Buffam's house in Lynn was a station on the Underground Railroad. Frederick Douglass and the Hutchinson Family Singers also lived in Lynn at this time. Nowhere, however, does Mary Gove mention any of these people. This seems unusual as Mary Gove was still a Quaker at this point and surely their paths crossed at meeting. She does indirectly mention attending an anti-slavery meeting in a letter written from Boston in 1840. (Our sources for this period of her life are limited to material relating to the health movement and she was not active in the anti-slavery movement.) Abby Kelley wrote to Mary Gove when she was editor of the Health Journal and Advocate of Physiological Reform, addressing Mary as "My Dear Friend." Lydia Pinkham's daughter Aroline married William Henry Gove, a distant relative of Hiram's in 1882 at Lynn, Massachusetts. See Health Journal and Advocate of Physiological Reform, August 26, 1840, p. 74; Gerda Lerner, The Grimke Sisters (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), p. 168; Jean Burton, Lydia Pinkham Is Her Name (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Company, 1949, pp. 16-18; Irving T. Richards, "Mary Gove Nichols and John Neal," The New England Quarterly, VII (June, 1934), p. 344; and William H. Gove, The Gove Book, pp. 204-5.

[21]On Reform and Perfectionism; see: William McLaughlin, Modern Revivalism: From Charles Grannison Finney to Billy Graham (New York: Ronald Press, 1959); Timothy L. Smith, Revivalism and Social Reform in Mid-Nineteenth Century America (Nashville, Tenn: Abingdon Press, 1957); John L. Thomas, "Romantic Reform in America, 1815-1865" in David Brion Davis, ed., Ante-Bellum Reform (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1967); Alice Felt Tyler, Freedom's Ferment: Phases of American Social History from the Colonial Period to the Outbreak of the Civil War (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1944); and Ronald G. Walters, American Reformers, 1815-1860 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978).

[22]On the state of medicine in the first half of the nineteenth century, see: Joseph F. Kett, The Formation of the American Medical Profession: The Role of Institutions, 1780-1860 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968); Richard Harrison Shryock, Medicine and Society in America, 1660-1860 (Ithaca, New York: Great Seal Books, 1962); and Richard Harrison Shryock, Medicine in America: Historical Essays (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966).

[23]See Russel B. Nye, Society and Culture in America, 1830-1860 (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1974), p. 338.

[24]Thomas Low Nichols, Forty Years of American Life (London: J. Maxwell and Company, 1874), p. 226.

[25]Ibid., p. 224.

[26]Robert Riegel, Young America, 1830-1840 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1949), p. 303. The Statistical Abstract of the U.S. 1981, p. 69 lists (on 1979 data) the death rate as 8.7 per 1,000 population with a life expectancy for men of 69.9 years and 77.8 for women.

[27]Riegel, Young America, p. 303.

[28]Cholera became epidemic in many major American cities in 1832, 1849, 1850, 1854, and 1866. Yellow fever epidemics occurred in 1841, 1850, 1853, and 1855. See Nye, Society and Culture, p. 340, and Charles E. Rosenberg, The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962).

[29]Nye, Society and Culture, p. 339.

[30]For a good discussion of the "irregulars", see William G. Rothstein, American Physicians in the Nineteenth Century: From Sects to Science (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972.

[31]No book length study of Sylvester Graham has yet been written. An important study of his thought is Stephen W. Nissenbaum, "Careful Love: Sylvester Graham and the Emergence of Victorian Sexual Theory in America, 1830-1840." (unpublished Ph.D dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1968). Several articles have been written including Mildred Naylor, "Sylvester Graham and the Popular Health Movement, 1830-1870," in Medicine in America: Historical Essays. See also John Blake, "Health Reform" in The Rise of Adventism: Religion and Society in Mid-19th Century America edited by E. S. Gaustad (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), pp. 30-49; Gerald Carson, Cornflake Crusade (New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1957), and Sidney Ditzion, Marriage, Morals and Sex in America: A History of Ideas (New York: Octagon Books, 1975).

[32]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, pp. 28-9.

[33]Nissenbaum, "Careful Love," p. 119. See also Charles E. Rosenberg, "The Cholera Epidemic of 1832 in New York City," Bulletin of the History of Medicine, XXXIII (1959), 37-49. In five months

(September 1830 to January 1831) 4,588 deaths from Cholera were reported in Moscow. Roderick E. McGrew, Russia and the Cholera, 1823-1832 (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), p. 161. See also Roderick E. McGrew, "The First Cholera Epidemic and Social History," Bulletin of the History of Medicine, XXXIV, no. 1 (January-February, 1960), 61-73.

[34]Naylor, "Graham," pp. 239 and 237. In New York he was paid $200 to $300 a night as compared to the $300 for six months preaching he had received in 1829.

[35]Shryock, "Graham," p. 112. Poor health plagued Graham's early years and several times he was not expected to survive. At sixteen he began to show symptoms of consumption. He tried to teach, then entered Amherst in 1823 at the late age of twenty-nine, but was expelled and had a nervous breakdown. Putting his life back in order, Graham married his nurse and in 1826 was ordained a Presbyterian minister like his father and grandfather before him. Like many health reformers, his interest in the subject was partly motivated by his own previous poor health.

[36]Nissenbaum, "Careful Love," pp. 168 and 119.

[37]Graham Journal, April 18, 1837, p. 17.

[38]Carson, Cornflake Crusade, pp. 46-7.

[39]Graham Journal, May 2, 1837, pp. 38-9.

[40]Blake, "Health Reform," pp. 39-40.

[41]Mary Gove, Lectures to Ladies on Anatomy and Physiology (Boston: Saxton and Peirce, 1842), p. vi.

[42]See Carson, Cornflake Crusade, p. 32; Nye, Society and Culture, p. 349; and Robert Lacour-Gayet, Everyday Life in the United States before the Civil War, 1830-1860 (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1969), p. 44.

[43]M. Gove, Lectures, p. vi.

[44]Graham Journal, April, 1838, p. 128.

[45]Hebbel E. Hoff and John F. Fulton, "The Centenary of the First American Physiological Society Founded at Boston by William A. Alcott and Sylvester Graham," Bulletin of the Institute of the History of Medicine, 5 (October, 1937), p. 701.

Grahamism tended to be a family commitment because it would be difficult for a 1830s housewife to base her meals on this sparse and plain menu if her husband disapproved. Conversely, the husband

would have to convert his wife if he wanted to be served this non-traditional fare.

Charles Lane, the British reformer who stayed at the Bronson Alcott home which was based on the Graham System, remarked that breakfast included bread, apples, and potatoes. He wrote, "There being scarcely any dishes to be washed, females can all remain (at the table, and) conversation of a useful and interior kind is generally mingled with our physical increment." See Franklin Sanborn, Bronson Alcott at Alcott House, England, and Fruitlands, New England (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: The Torch Press, 1908), p. 25.

[46]Gove, Lectures, p. vi.

[47]Nissenbaum, "Careful Love," p. 14.

[48]Ibid., p. 15.

[49]Ibid., p. 178.

[50]Ibid., p. 180.

[51]Gove, Lectures, p. vi. Dr. William Alcott was the cousin of Bronson Alcott.

[52]James C. Whorton, "'Christian Physiology': William Alcott's Prescription for the Millenium," Bulletin of the History of Medicine, 49 (Winter, 1975), p. 469. Alcott entitled his autobiography Forty Years in the Wilderness of Pills and Powders, or, the Cogitations and Confessions of an Aged Physician (1859).

[53]Whorton, "Christian Physiology," and Louis B. Salomon, "The Least Remembered Alcott," The New England Quarterly, (March, 1961), p. 89.

[54]Hoff and Fulton, "Centenary," p. 691.

[55]Ibid., p. 696.

[56]Ibid., p. 729.

[57]Over a decade later the physicians were still trying to decide whether to lecture to the women. See The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, Vol. 41, October 10, 1849, p. 206.

[58]Mary Gove was aware of this feeling and wrote, "The question has often been asked, why I should deviate so far from what is considered the appropriate sphere of woman in our country, as to meddle with those studies which form the subject of this little volume." M. Gove, Lectures, p. v. Angelina Grimke wrote in 1837, "It is wonderful how the way has been opened for us to address mixed audiences, for most sects here are greatly opposed to public speaking

for women..." in Gerda Lerner, The Grimke Sisters from South Carolina: Pioneers for Woman's Rights and Abolition (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), p. 169.

[59]Lerner, Grimke Sisters, pp. 189-90.

[60]From a Pastoral Letter, "The General Association of Massachusetts (Orthodox) to the Churches Under Their Care," 1837, in Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Gage, editors, The History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. I (New York: Fowler and Wells, Publishers, 1881), pp. 81-82.

[61]Narcissa Whitman, a missionary to Oregon in the 1830s, suffered the difficulties of pioneer life for she was in the first group of white women to cross the Rocky Mountains. She lost her only daughter and her own health before she and her husband, medical missionary Dr. Marcus Whitman, were massacred by the Indians. She wrote, "in all the prayer meetings of this mission the brethren only pray. I believe all the sisters would be willing to pray if their husbands would let them. We are so few in number, it seems as if they would wish it, but many prefer the more dignified way. My husband has no objection to my praying, but if my sisters do not, he thinks it quite as well for me not to." As quoted in Barbara Welter, "The Feminization of American Religion: 1800-1860," in William L. O'Neill, editor, Insights and Parallels: Problems and Issues of American Social History (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Burgess Publishing Company, 1973), p. 318.

[62]Hoff and Fulton, "Centenary," p. 702.

[63]Graham Journal, August 4, 1838, p. 248.

[64]Graham Journal, August 18, 1838, p. 272 and repeated in the next two issues.

[65]Ibid., and T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 27.

[66]Ibid.

[67]Stanton, et. al., History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. I, p. 37, and John B. Blake, "Mary Gove Nichols, Prophetess of Health," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, Vol. 106, (June, 1962), p. 233.

CHAPTER III

A RIGHT TO SPEAK

> ...I have a right to speak on proper subjects, in a proper manner, before a mixed audience. They would let me cry fire with no disgust at all but now when an evil worse than a thousand fires is abroad, some will cry "shame on a woman for speaking before men, setting herself up as a teacher when Paul expressly forbids a woman's teaching."[1]

When Mary Gove joined the lyceum movement she was participating in an American institution that swept the country in the 1830s that was popular from both sides of the podium.[2] People were "beginning to hunger for more refined pleasure and increasing knowledge."[3] Ralph Waldo Emerson, himself a lyceum lecturer, praised the breadth of possible topics; the lyceum was "a panharmonicon--every note on the longest gamut, from the exploration of cannon to tinkle of a guitar" and "a pulpit that makes other pulpits tame and ineffectual."[4] The unique thing about Mary Gove's presence in the lyceum movement was that she was female, it was 1838, and she was behind, not in front of, the lectern.

Mary Gove, like the early female abolitionists, had to fight for her right to speak as a woman as well as to lecture on a controversial topic. One of those pioneer reformers, also from Lynn,

Abby Kelley, told an early Woman's Rights Convention in 1851 that "bloody feet, Sisters, have worn smooth the path by which you have come hither."[5] One of the first pair of those "bloody feet" belonged to Mary Gove who pioneered in the field of teaching women physiological knowledge that would eventually lead to the understanding of their anatomy and finally to control over childbearing. The fight, however, would be long and difficult.[6]

Though Mary Gove had prepared herself through many years of study on the subject, she took her new career very seriously and took speech lessons from Professor Bronson to increase her effectiveness.[7] She carefully divided her material into twelve lectures and charged one dollar for the series, but tickets for a single lecture could be purchased at the door from Hiram, who kept the proceeds, for 12½ cents each.[8] Although she was concerned that even that nominal charge was beyond the means of some women, she was determined to be a professional at her work and that meant charging a fee.[9]

The growing interest in the popular health movement and its unique need for a woman to lecture to women were reflected in the crowds of 400 and 500 that Mary Gove drew. Her lectures proved more "successful than was anticipated by its warmest advocates."[10] Anna Breed, a Lynn Quaker schoolteacher, attended the first three lectures and wrote her friend, Abby Kelley, of the success of Mary Gove "in her new sphere." She exclaimed that Gove "appears better than I ever saw her in any other situation. She is censured, ridiculed, and misrepresented, of course; but as she has a pretty good share of independence, I think she will not be much affected by the sarcasm inflicted upon

her."[11] Another Lynn reformer wrote Kelley about Gove's lectures and declared that she was "disappointing everybody by her success."[12]

Aware that many doctors opposed her work, Mary Gove shrewdly praised those physicians who had assisted her quest for knowledge; they had helped her "to tread a path hitherto little explored by woman."[13] Medical college faculty and other physicians encouraged her, loaned her medical books, offered her anatomical drawings to illustrate her lectures, and allowed her in their labs to watch dissections.[14] Dr. J. V. C. Smith, a prominent doctor and editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal for over twenty years, wrote letters of introduction for her to several physicians in other cities. Carefully stating that "her voice is alone for ladies," he believed if women learned "the principles of their own organization, it will greatly redound to their own happiness and the comfort of all practitioners of medicine."[15]

The Graham Journal of Health and Longevity judged Mary Gove "capable of giving instructions on the topics she had introduced" and "very acceptable in her manner as a lecturer."[16] The Graham Journal reported on ten of the twelve discourses, "of course, omitting the 10th lecture to unmarried ladies and the 11th to married ladies."[17] Gove's course on female anatomy and physiology was based on Dr. William Alcott's The House I Live In (written for school children) and the principles of Sylvester Graham. Unlike Graham, she gave credit when she borrowed the ideas of others and saw herself not as an originator, but a disseminator. Her role was to teach her sisters the best and most recent physiological knowledge.[18] Alcott, however,

declared that "though in her Lectures to Ladies Mrs. Gove appears to disclaim originality, yet she certainly does not want for originality in one respect; we mean for a female" lecturing on these subjects and he alluded to "her moral courage or Christian boldness."[19] Pleased when she gave a free lecture in Marlborough Chapel and 2000 attended, he exclaimed, "A new spirit is roused. Her hearers, especially the friends of physiological science, begin to take courage."[20]

In her lectures, Mary Gove stressed the importance of the study of anatomy and physiology because she believed that "a vast, an incalculable amount of suffering" was "the result of ignorance, not of willful error."[21] Expounding the ideas of Graham and Alcott that disease was not an "immediate visitation from the Almighty," but came as a result of breaking the natural laws of health; she stated that the goal of physiologists was "prevention" of illness.[22] Adding little to their basic theories, she applied them specifically to women whom "the evils of civil life" had victimized more than men. Society had denied women "outdoor exercise," made them "in many instances mere dolls and pretty things," and loaded them down with "absurd and ridiculous" fashionable clothing.[23] Gove was especially concerned about the practice of "tight lacing" and lashed out against the corset which deformed the female body.[24] She lamented, "O that the customs of society would let females out of prison. O that they might be allowed to rid themselves of the torment and torture of a style of dress fit only for Egyptian mummies."[25] Why, she asked, were women "servile slaves to customs they might reform" and why did they "ape

the wasp, when the freedom of grace and ease" were possible if they adopted the "true Roman elegance" of the free, full and swelling waist, the graceful folds of the floating robe."[26]

Borrowing from the evangelists in a way a male health reformer never could Mary Gove exclaimed, "I, who was once a sinner, have now seen the light, and am saved." The "grasp of death" was upon her "vitals" because she had started wearing the corset at the age of fourteen. Though she was "doomed," she must "awaken females everywhere" before it was too late for them. Her sacrifice of "misrepresentation and abuse" would be worth it if she could "loosen the death grasp of the corset, and send the now imprisoned and poisoned blood rejoicing through the veins of woman."[27]

Throughout her career Gove used the tactic of tying her demands for the improvement of woman's status to other prominent national concerns.[28] In this instance she used the reformers' interest in temperance and declared that tight lacing was "doing an amount of mischief in our land, fully equal to that wrought by alcohol" and that public sentiment should be marshalled against it.[29] Also worried about why "sensible ladies...pinch their feet, under the false notion that it is genteel to have small feet," she exclaimed, "Genteel--is it genteel to have corns, to have a shapeless mass of a foot, that would frighten an anatomist?" But she exhorted, "Trust me, ladies, this fashion of pinching the feet is cruel, unnatural and dangerous; besides, it destroys elegance in the walk, and makes our ladies totter and hobble along like a cripple or a fettered criminal. Let us have more room in this world."[30]

Mary Gove consistently believed that men and women must work together to improve women's status.[31] Dress reform must also be a mutual effort. Aware of the effects of ridicule and censure upon dependent women, she realized that if men called those who gave up tight lacing "dowdy," not many would have "independence enough to survive even such a remark." Men and women, therefore, must join together to rid society of this ill.[32]

She appealed to women to replace their ignorance with information and pleaded, "Let woman use her energies, let her attain that moral and intellectual elevation which is her right." She must reach "that height where men can not look down upon her, if they would" and must "nobly resolve that she will have a science, that she will be no longer a plaything, a bauble." When woman developed "the greatness of her intellectual strength" then there would be a new era in human history.[33]

The women who attended Gove's first series of lectures thought her talks had been so informative and helpful that they wanted to give her "some testimonial of their respect" for her important pioneering endeavor. They decided a watch would be a very practical gift for a lecturer. Some had wanted to give her a gold one, but since she was a member of the Society of Friends, they felt that silver seemed more appropriate, as it "would be valued more for utility than ornament."[34] It really made little difference what kind of watch they gave her because Hiram quickly confiscated it.[35]

Mary Gove was now successfully launched on her new career. She had been able to receive acceptance partly, according to Dr.

Harriot Hunt who was just beginning her career as a female physician and had boarded with Mary Gove in Lynn in 1838 when she made professional visits there, because "the public tolerated a Quaker woman as a public speaker." Though Hunt was not a Grahamite, she had been very impressed with Gove as "a lecturer on physiology" because she "was excellent...fluent and correct in expression, and spoke with enthusiasm and power."[36] Others agreed with Hunt's evaluation and Gove was asked to repeat the lectures again in Boston. Even though it was winter, she had a large class of ladies "from the first families of the city." This second class also wanted to present her with a gold watch at the conclusion of the series. This time, a step ahead of Hiram, she asked them to give her money instead so that she could buy some anatomical plates which "would benefit the cause more."[37]

Armed with letters of introduction from prominent Boston physicians who approved of her work, Mary Gove embarked on a full lecture schedule giving courses in Lynn, Haverhill, Philadelphia, Nantucket, Providence, Newark, and New York City, most of which had established health societies. In Providence Gove did "wonders" and her audience doubled to an overflow crowd of 800 by her third lecture. She was praised for "laboring to enlighten her own sex in a knowledge of those truths which most concern themselves to know."[38]

Along with the grateful accolades, however, came angry condemnation. Whenever women "leaped from their spheres", many newspaper editors tried to force them back with accusations that shocked most middle class women. The year before the New Hampshire Patriot had called the female abolitionists "old hens" and accused them of

wanting to end slavery because they were unable to catch white husbands and thought they might "stand a chance for a negro."[39] Because Mary Gove wanted to inform women about their bodies, some New York editors who could not see "the difference between gratuitous obscenity and physiological truth" assailed her in "approbious (sic) terms in the plea that these physical truths are wanting in decorum and as improper for women to know."[40] The New York Herald "attached her virulently and misrepresented her shamefully--inventing for her words she never uttered, and lectures she never gave."[41] Others censured her because "health was a matter for doctors, and a woman teaching women human physiology was going out of her sphere." Some felt that "nature was nasty" and certainly not a topic for a woman to teach.[42]

Although to the outside world she was more acceptable as a lecturer because she was a Quaker, to the Society of Friends--long accustomed to hearing women speak on spiritual matters within the meeting house--she was an embarrassment. They criticized her new career, tried her in their Quarterly and Yearly Meetings, and censured her for lecturing "to the dissatisfaction of Friends and others, and to the reproach of our Society."[43] Mary Gove reflected philosophically, "What a chequered scene has been my life--misunderstood, misrepresented, abused. But men mean better than they do." The Quakers excommunicated her because "they knew no better" and she hoped they would become more enlightened. She was thankful that her censure was only for "lecturing on science."[44]

Though saddened by the Quaker's limited vision, Mary Gove was not deterred and continued lecturing throughout 1839. When she published for the first time on health subjects, the criticism increased because she boldly joined Graham in writing about masturbation, a topic a woman should not even be aware of, much less discuss. Wishing that she could "be excused from this duty", but feeling called to address the hidden issue, she felt that parents must be educated concerning this practice which was "sapping the foundations of the health of our youth" and issued a thirty-six page pamphlet entitled, "Solitary Vice: An Address to Parents and Those Who Have Care of Children."[45]

According to the Fifth Annual Report of the State Lunatic Hospital at Worcester, Massachusetts, masturbation was second only "to alcohol in producing insanity."[46] Adding the female perspective to Grahamism, she stated that masturbation was not just a male problem because "among the insane admitted into lunatic hospitals from this cause, the proportion of females is nearly as large as that of males."[47] This vice invaded "all ranks" and could lead to prostitution; special vigilance had to be maintained at female boarding schools.[48] Because some physicians were too timid to tell parents "the habits of their children," Gove felt she must speak out "to save" them.[49] Horace Greeley, editor of the New Yorker and a Grahamite, wrote of her pamphlet, "We cannot too earnestly recommend ...this...very guarded essay on a subject which has recently attracted much attention."[50]

Mary Gove continued publishing on other medical topics in 1839 and 1840. She sent four articles to the editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, Dr. J. V. C. Smith, the prominent physician who had written several letters of recommendation for her. Fearing her work would not be accepted if the author was female, she had not revealed her identity and had signed them "A.B." Dr. Smith published them and unsuccessfully tried to find out who A.B. was because they were "some of the best articles" he had ever received.[51] Torn between wanting to be known as the author or being able to continue publishing, Mary Gove made the difficult decision to remain anonymous.

Her life had changed drastically in a short time, yet she felt useful and fulfilled doing this pioneer work. But the combination of travelling, lecturing, and writing, her unsettled relationship with Hiram, and the censure of the Quakers and others wore on Mary's delicate health. Her tuberculosis re-activated, she hemorrhaged in early 1840 and despaired of "ever writing or reading another letter." She could not risk the rigors of public speaking and moved to Worcester, Massachusetts, to prepare her lectures for publication.[52]

The work was interrupted when she became the editor of a periodical that succeeded the discontinued Graham Journal. The publisher of the new Health, Journal, and Advocate of Physiological Reform was another consumptive, Joseph S. Wall, a young Quaker, who like Gove, had been censured for his reform activites.[53] Through the Health Journal Mary Gove reached another audience interested in health reform and advertised her lectures. A woman who had heard

her give the lectures "which had excited so much interest wherever they had been delivered" praised her for her clear intelligent explanations, chaste language, and for meeting "the wants of that class of the community for whom they are intended--the mothers and daughters of our land." Although public opinion considered it "vulgar in the extreme" for "delicate, refined woman" to study the laws of life, this writer concluded that only the "ignorant, and those who consider woman as the plaything and servant of man" could "in the nineteenth century, entertain such degrading sentiments."[54]

The Health Journal, like so many reform journals, had financial problems and soon changed from weekly to semi-monthly publication.[55] In an attempt to bolster reader participation, Mary Gove appealed in evangelistic style to her readers to send in testimonies concerning saved health. Since so few responded to her call, she concluded that it must be "an event to write for a paper" and decided to give her "own experience" to pave the way. Many times in the future she would argue for a reform through a revelation of her own personal experience. But in October 1840 she used this technique for the first time in her writing when she published an account of how Grahamism had saved her life and given her a usefulness she had never dreamed possible.[56]

The Health Journal's inability to become solvent forced Mary Gove to return to lecturing in late 1840. Her health had improved, but she was concerned that it would not hold up under the demands of travel and public speaking. Graham had had a physical

breakdown in early 1840 and had been ridiculed for abandoning his own program for sound health.[57] Mary Gove staunchly defended Graham, all too aware of how a lecturer could embark on the "perilous course of over exertion." If the class was small the lecturer had to "work beyond his strength or leave unpaid bills." At Troy and Albany she had recently had to speak for three and four hours a day to meet expenses. Criticized for over extending herself, she lashed out, "In the name of mercy, what do such folks want? Do they want the world to perish for lack of knowledge? If they really love truth and wish to see it promulgated...in humanity's name let them keep silence, and complain no more of those who labor."[58]

Mary Gove spent several months in Philadelphia in early 1841 and was busy lecturing to the large number of intelligent women she found there.[59] Pushing against tradition was still painful for her, however, and she confided to her diary, "How little...does the world know of the 'lava tide' of my existence--of the anguish that is the consequence of my position."[60] Yet a reformer must expect this because "the man or woman who leaves the track that others tread will suffer."[61]

Convinced that men and women must work together to reform society, she boldly lectured on the "Circulation of the Blood and Tight Lacing" to a mixed audience in Philadelphia in February 1841. Only four years before, the clergy had risen in protest when the Grimke sisters addressed a "promiscuous audience" about the evils of slavery, now Mary Gove was speaking on women's undergarments! Though male reformers encouraged her to take this step, she was frightened.[62] At the first lecture her "tongue clave" to the roof of

her mouth and she "trembled and grew sick at heart." But she rallied and finished the lecture, though "the audience was silent as death." Two nights later she again addressed a mixed audience and redeemed herself. Ecstatic, she recorded, "I rose out of myself, and above myself. My friends were delighted; even my husband, who would not praise, or hardly approve me...smiled."[63]

Deciding that she was not a born reformer, Mary Gove had been "all nerves and each nerve" was sensitive "to the pitiless pelting of the storm."[64] But she challenged, "I have a right to speak on proper subjects, in a proper manner, before a mixed audience," and asked why they would let her "cry fire with no disgust at all but now when an evil worse than a thousand fires is abroad, some will cry, 'shame on a woman for speaking before men, setting herself up as a teacher when Paul expressly forbids a woman's teaching.'"[65]

Mary Gove had interlaced her lectures on anatomy and physiology with exhortations for women to rise up and throw off the chains of ignorance about their bodies that kept them slaves. But in Baltimore in 1841 she became one of the first women to lecture directly on women's rights.[66] Her speech included a demand for married women's property rights, the education of women, and the right of freedom of "tho't and action."[67] She had read Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, but turned for additional ideas to the man she thought had first spoken "for woman in this country"--John Neal.[68]

Labelled the "most picturesque literary character of a picturesque era," John Neal's influence extended to Nathaniel

Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Walt Whitman, and Margaret Fuller as well as Mary Gove.[69] That "wild fellow, John Neal" had almost turned Hawthorne's "boyish brains with his romances," and Poe ranked him "first, or at all events, second among our men of indisputable genius."[70] Longfellow helped Neal publish True Womanhood, and urged him to write his autobiography.[71] Fuller invited him to lecture to her students at Providence on the future of woman and was impressed with his "fervid eloquence, brilliancy, endless resource, and ready tact."[72]

The self-reliance of John Neal's widowed mother had early convinced him of the ability of woman, and he had long been interested in women's rights. As early as 1823 he had spoken on the slavery of women and the next year he had written that women should be treated "like rational beings--not like spoilt children."[73] Neal devoted a section of his autobiography to "Woman's Rights and Woman's Wrongs" and had never relaxed his "efforts in behalf of women, as our equals, our co-efficients, and co-equivalents."[74]

Distant relatives, John Neal and Mary Neal Gove were close friends in the 1840s, and she considered him a mentor as well as intimate confidant.[75] Though many misunderstood her, she wrote the sympathetic Neal, "I shall yet have a name and place among the benefactors of our race. I know this and I know too thou will not call me egotistical for saying so."[76]

John Neal publicly praised Mary Gove as a woman "of remarkable strength and simplicity" and declared that she was "not only one of the sturdiest and most faithful, but one of the cleverest"

of the followers of Sylvester Graham. She was "doing for Woman, what Graham has long been trying to do for Man," and he concluded that since she was "the honester of the two," she was "likely to do more good." Yet if Graham had done nothing more than inspire her, Neal though this was enough "to entitle him to the heartfelt acknowledgements of every husband, father, and every brother of our country."[77]

Mary Gove was getting ready to publish a book, Lectures to Ladies on Anatomy and Physiology, in 1841 and was especially concerned about married women's property rights. She had read her Baltimore women's rights speech to New York Judge Hertell who had unsuccessfully introduced a married women's property bill to the legislature in 1836.[78] He had assured her that it would pass at the next session. Unfortunately, it did not pass until 1848.[79] Without basic property rights, Gove wondered how a married woman could ever improve her situation because no matter how hard she worked "a tyrant or a sot" could take all his wife earned and leave her penniless.[80] A Boston printer offered to print 1000 copies of her book for $300, and if she sold them for a dollar each she could make a nice profit. She wanted control over the dividend from her own effort and brain! The well known lawyer, Robert Rantoul, warned her that she had no legal rights to her own manuscript because legally it belonged to her husband.[81]

In August 1841, Mary Gove wrote to John Neal, who was also a lawyer, and instructed him to burn the letter after he read it because she was a "proud woman."[82] Wanting a second opinion, she

asked if there was any way to keep control of her book because Hiram, who thought that the married women's property rights were "a doctrine of the Devil," would not relinquish his rights to it, even though she offered to pay his business debts from the proceeds.[83]

John Neal could not change the laws and Mary Gove could not wait to get the legal rights to her book because she needed the income. Published in early 1842, the book was well-received. The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal wrote: "Mrs. G. has occasionally been brought in contact with the strongholds of prejudice and opposition, but we believe she has uniformly grappled with them successfully." Comparing her writing style to "the Doric order--remarkable for plainness and strength," they predicted that the book "published under the supervision of one of the most accurate scholars and eminent men in the profession" would "receive a wide circulation through the country."[84] Dr. William Alcott's The Library of Health and Teacher on the Human Constitution declared, "Mrs. Gove's book is out, and has merit enough, at any rate, to excite opposition."[85] A second review appeared in the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal which concluded that "Mrs. Gove's power lies chiefly in oral efforts, and that in writing she is less forcible, and therefore less interesting, than when speaking out, untrammelled, from the full fountain of a kind heart." He criticized Gove, "not to wound her feelings or to humble her ambition," but because she had drawn "too much from those who were altogether her inferiors in knowledge." The reviewer thought Grahamism was the "most grossly absurd...of all the great farces of the day in which vulgar minds have been made the tools of charlatans and prating

mountebanks," and pleaded with her not "to engage a passage in a sinking ship." He did not want to appear "ungallant," however, so he cordially urged his readers to buy her book.[86]

Mary Gove did not have much time to worry about any wound that critique might occasion because she had another vital question for John Neal in February 1842--what was "the Law respecting Divorce and children?"[87] Her relationship with Hiram had to be severed because he was making her physically ill. When he was present she still had "nervous fits" and "terrible convulsions" and even his letters caused her to shake. Her doctor told her "that no medicine but that of the soul" would help.[88]

She felt she had to leave him, but feared his earlier threat about taking Elma from her. She also had no money with which to make her escape because Hiram controlled her earnings and would not give her even "the smallest portion." Here, she wrote, was "the key to the dungeon of woman--man owns the property." Without money, she could not leave Hiram.[89] Ironically, while one of her classes had debated whether to give her a gold or silver watch because she was a Quaker, she had desperately wanted to leave him and go where she "should see no Quakers for a season" because "their forms and peculiar asceticisms had gradually ceased to be important, and some had grown irksome" to her. When the class finally decided to get her a pretty purse containing $35 in gold to buy anatomical plates, it was "manna from heaven," because she used the money to leave Hiram and go home to her parents.[90]

Hiram Gove did not understand the permanence she intended in their separation, but she "fully intended never to live with him, or submit to his rule again, unless he forced" her to by taking her daughter. Not only was she supporting the family, but she was putting her husband through the Washington Medical College of Baltimore.[91] She was "willing to work for him as a bond slave" if she had to and even give him her earnings, "but the punishment of living with him was like Cain's," greater than she could bear.[92]

Mary felt that she must be rid of Hiram and wrote him that she "was convinced there could be no marriage where there was loathing instead of love."[93] Thinking her insane, he immediately came to Lynn to confront her. She begged her father "to make terms" for her. William Neal was able to frighten Hiram "in his pocket" because he had lent him money that had never been repaid. Neal told him "to leave town within twenty-four hours" or he would sue him for the money. He also forced Hiram to sign an agreement not to claim any of Mary's future earnings.[94] Although Hiram left town, Mary was not yet rid of him.

Notes to Chapter III

[1]Letter from Mary Gove to John Neal, April 4, 1841. In Richards, "Nichols and Neal," pp. 347-8. Underlined in the original.

[2]See Carol Bode, The American Lyceum: Town Meeting of the Mind (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956).

[3]William Ellery Channing, Memoir of William Ellery Channing, Vol. III (Boston: William Crosby and H. P. Nichols, 1848), p. 87.

[4]Edward Waldo Emerson and Waldo Emerson Forbes, eds., Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Vol. 5, 1838-1841 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1911), pp. 280-1.

[5]Margaret Hope Bacon, "I Speak for my Slave Sister": The Life of Abby Kelley Foster (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1974), p. 159.

[6]Almost a century later Margaret Sanger led the campaign to a major victory. Like Mary Gove, Sanger believed the key to any real freedom for women was in physiological knowledge of the workings of their bodies and control over childbearing. They both had great hope for the future world when women did have control over childbearing. Margaret Sanger's Woman and the New Race (New York: Brentano's Inc., 1920) especially seems to echo much of what Mary Gove advocated.

[7]Health Journal, November 4, 1840, p. 102. See also Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, July 29, 1840, pp. 396-8; and August 26, 1840, pp. 49-51.

[8]Hoff and Fulton, "Centenary," p. 703. In the early years of the lyceum movement the usual price for a single lecture was 25 cents. Each lecture was cheaper if one bought a ticket for the whole course. The most frequent charge for a complete series was $1.50. See Bode, Lyceum, p. 188. Margaret Fuller charged $20 for her series of ten "Conversations" (1839-1844), but that was for a select small group of women and more like a tuition fee for adult education. Rossi, The Feminist Papers, p. 148.

[9]Graham Journal, October 27, 1838, p. 338.

[10]Ibid., October 13, 1838, p. 325.

[11]Anna Breed to Abby Kelley, November, 1838. Abby Kelley Foster Papers, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

[12]William Bassett to Abby Kelley, November 12, 1838. Abby Kelley Foster Papers, American Antiquarian Society.

Abby Kelley had made a short speech in May 1838 to a "promiscuous" audience, but she did not begin as an antislavery lecturer until May 1839. See Jane Pease, "The Freshness of Fanaticism: Abby Kelley Foster: An Essay in Reform" (Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Rochester, 1969). Perhaps it was the letters that Kelley received from her friends in November 1838 about Mary Gove's success that encouraged her to start out as a lecturer.

Kelley was not really in the same category as a lecturer as Gove. The antislavery movement paid her expenses as its agent and she had to survive largely on donations, whereas Gove was a professional lecturer who was able to charge a fee from her hearers. Also Kelley, even long after she was a "come-outer" from the Quaker Church, used their tradition of not giving prepared speeches, but arising and speaking when the Spirit moved them. She frequently began her speeches, "I have not been accustomed to address meetings of this kind. It is not my vocation to make speeches, or to string together brilliant sentences, or beautiful words" (1840) or "I did not come intending to address you" or "I do not rise to make a speech" before making her speech. See Lillian O'Connor, Pioneer Women Orators: Rhetoric in the Ante-Bellum Reform Movement (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), pp. 62-3.

[13]Graham Journal, October 27, 1838, p. 338.

[14]Gove, Lectures, p. vi and T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 22.

[15]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 25.

[16]Graham Journal, October 13, 1838, p. 325.

[17]Ibid., January 5, 1839, p. 20.

[18]Gove, Lectures, p. 205.

[19]Library of Health and Teacher on the Human Constitution, May, 1842, p. 156.

[20]Ibid., November, 1848, p. 357.

[21]Gove, Lectures, p. 11.

[22]Ibid., pp. 18 and 20.

[23]Ibid., p. 27.

[24]George Combe, the Scottish phrenologist who toured the United States in 1838-40, wrote that his daughter "attended one of Mrs. Gove's lectures to ladies. The subject was the effects of tight lacing and bad ventilation. The lecture was good, and the attendance was about 300, all females." This entry was dated December 21, 1839.

See George Combe, Notes on the United States of North America during a Phrenological Visit in 1838-9-40 (Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1841). Vol. II, p. 216.

See John S. Haller and Robin M. Haller, The Physician and Sexuality in Victorian America (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1974), pp. 146-174. The Hallers concentrate on the post Civil War period in their history of the corset and physicians' warnings against it. They do not discuss the work of Mary Gove.

[25]Gove, Lectures, p. 53.

[26]Ibid., p. 54.

[27]Ibid., p. 97.

[28]Stating that these issues were important, she used contemporary concern about temperance, health reform, abolitionism, Fourierism, Water-Cure, Swedenborgianism, marriage reform, "Manifest Destiny," and in England "the Eastern Question" as departure points to plead for the even greater importance of the improvement of the status of women, half of the human race.

[29]Gove, Lectures, p. 104.

[30]Ibid., pp. 61 and 63.

[31]Ibid., p. 104.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Ibid., p. 57.

[34]Graham Journal, January 19, 1839, p. 37.

[35]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 155. When Mary's father was later arranging their separation, he asked Hiram to return the watch as a sign of his "manhood." Hiram refused (p. 159).

[36]Harriot K. Hunt, Glances and Glimpses; or Fifty Years Social, Including Twenty Years Professional Life (Boston: John P. Jewett and Company, 1856), p. 140.

[37]Graham Journal, January 19, 1839, p. 37.

[38]Ibid., February 15, 1838, p. 69.

[39]As quoted in Lerner, Grimke Sisters, p. 146.

[40]Graham Journal, May 25, 1839, p. 181.

[41]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 22. George Combe wrote about Mary Gove's lectures: "She is a lady of unquestioned character, and her lectures were attended by most respectable persons of her own sex in this city (New York). No gentlemen were admitted. The advantages of this instruction are self-evident, and every real friend to human welfare must wish her success; Bennett's 'Morning Herald,' however, to its own deep disgrace, has published what he pretends to be reports of her lectures, pandering to the grovelling feelings of men, and alarming the delicacy of the ladies--an effectual way, in this country, to stifle any new attempt at improvement. I have inquired into the character of the lectures, of ladies who heard them, and they declare Bennett's report to be scandalous caricatures, misrepresentations and inventions." Combe, Notes, Vol. II, p. 32.

[42]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 87.

[43]Nichols' Journal, September, 1853, p. 45.

[44]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 23.

[45]Health Journal, September 16, 1840, p. 86. I have been unable to locate a copy of this pamphlet.

On Graham's treatment of masturbation, see Nissenbaum, "Careful Love." Also see H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr., "The Disease of Masturbation: Values and the Concept of Disease," Bulletin of the History of Medicine, Vol. 48 (Summer, 1974), pp. 234-248.

[46]Gove, Lectures, pp. 223 and 220.

[47]Ibid., p. 223.

[48]Ibid., p. 225.

[49]Ibid., p. 232.

[50]Health Journal, October 21, 1840, p. 99.

[51]Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, December 18, 1839, pp. 297-299; February 19, 1840, pp. 24-27; February 26, 1840, pp. 43-45; and August 26, 1840, pp. 49-51. Letter from M. S. Gove to John Neal, February 29, 1840 in Richards, "Nichols and Neal," p. 345.

[52]Letter from Gove to Neal, Ibid.

[53]Health Journal, February, 1843, p. 27. The break of Wall and Gove from the Society of Friends can be followed by noticing the method of dating the Health Journal. The first issue carried the Quaker form of dating--Fourth Month, 1840. The next month used both systems, Fifth Month (May) 13, 1840. Soon they left completely the Quaker designation of months by numbers and adopted the regular usage.

[54]Health Journal, April 1, 1840, p. 3.

[55]Ibid., September 23, 1840, p. 90.

[56]Ibid., October 21, 1840, p. 98, and November 4, 1840, p. 102.

[57]Graham had written a series of letters concerning his sickness that were published in the Health Journal beginning in the July 29, 1840 issue and in almost every issue thereafter until his concluding letter in the October 21, 1840, issue.

[58]Health Journal, December 2, 1840, p. 110.

[59]Letter from Mary Gove to John Neal, April 4, 1841. In Richards, "Nichols and Neal," p. 347.

[60]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 23.

[61]Ibid., p. 24.

[62]Letter from Gove to Neal, April 4, 1841. In Richards, "Nichols and Neal," p. 347.

[63]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 24.

[64]Letter from Gove to Neal, April 4, 1841. In Richards, "Nichols and Neal," p. 348.

[65]Ibid., pp. 347-8. Underlined in the original.

[66]Who accomplished "firsts" in women's history is still largely tentative because of the state of our knowledge. I have found only one woman, Frances Wright in 1829, who actually lectured on improving women's status before Mary Gove lectured in 1841. Wright returned to Europe in 1830 and did not come back to the United States until late 1835 where she stayed until 1839 and returned to Europe, although she made frequent crossings in the next decade. Thus Mary Gove would be the first native born American woman to lecture on women's rights. See A.J.G. Perkins and Theresa Wolfson, Frances Wright, Free Enquirer (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1972).

[67]Letter from Mary Gove to John Neal, July 3, 1841. In Richards, "Nichols and Neal," p. 349.

[68]Ibid., and Letter from Mary Gove to John Neal, April 4, 1841. In Richards, "Nichols and Neal," p. 346.

[69]Fred Lewis Pattee, The First Century of American Literature, 1770-1870 (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1935), p. 283. See Margaret Fuller, Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli, Vol. I (Boston: Phillips, Sampson and Company, 1852), pp. 181-2; Joseph Jay Rubin, "John Neal's Poetics as an Influence on Whitman and Poe,"

The New England Quarterly, June, 1941, pp. 359-362; Windsor Daggestt, A Down-East Yankee from the District of Maine(Portland, 1920); and Benjamin Lease, That Wild Fellow John Neal and the American Literary Revolution (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1972).

[70]Lease, Neal, p. vi. and Southern Literary Messenger, May, 1849, p. 294.

[71]Lease, Neal, p. 200.

[72]Fuller, Memoirs, p. 181. Neal was impatient with Fuller's Woman in the Nineteenth Century when it appeared. He wrote her March 4, 1845, "You go for thought--I for action....I tell you that there is no hope for woman, till she has a hand in making the law--no chance for her till her vote is worth as much as a man's vote." Original letter in Houghton Library, Harvard University. Printed in Bell Gale Chevigny, The Woman and the Myth: Margaret Fuller's Life and Writings (New York: The Feminist Press, 1976), pp. 234-5.

[73]Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, October, 1824, p. 367.

[74]John Neal, Wandering Recollections of a Somewhat Busy Life: An Autobiography (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1869), pp. 409 and 411. See also Boyd Guest, "John Neal and 'Women's Rights and Women's Wrongs', The New England Quarterly, Vol. 18 (December, 1945), pp. 508-515.

[75]Irving T. Richards addressed himself to the problem of the familial relationship between Neal and Gove. He concluded from the information that he had on John Neal that they could not be first cousins through the Neal family. The other possibility might be through Mary's mother whose only name we know is Rebecca R. Neal. We do not know her maiden name, but if the R stood for Roberts, there could be a relationship through Neal's grandmother Elizabeth Roberts. See Richards, "Nichols and Neal," pp. 335-55.

Thomas Nichols implied the relationship came through the father and stated that John Neal was Mary's cousin. T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 28.

In a letter to John Ingram who was trying to gather material for a Edgar Allan Poe biography, Mary wrote on February 3, 1875, "have you corresponded with John Neal? He is of my blood, and I honor and esteem him much..." Ingram-Nichols letters in Poe Collection, Alderman Library, The University of Virginia.

Whatever their exact familial relationship, Mary felt close enough to John in this critical time in her life to confide in him.

[76]Letter from Mary Gove to John Neal, December 5, 1839. In Richards, "Nichols and Neal," p. 341. Underlined in the original.

[77]Brother Jonathan, May 6, 1843, p. 19.

[78]Letter from Mary Gove to John Neal, July 3, 1841. In Richards, "Nichols and Neal," p. 349, and Stanton et al., History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. I, p. 67.

[79]Ibid., and Ibid., p. 63.

[80]Letter from Mary Gove to John Neal, July 3, 1841. In Richards, "Nichols and Neal," p. 349.

[81]Letter from Mary Gove to John Neal, August 10, 1841. In Richards, "Nichols and Neal," pp. 351-2.

[82]Ibid., p. 351. Underlined in the original.

[83]Ibid., p. 352.

[84]Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, January 12, 1842, p. 374.

[85]Library of Health, April, 1842, p. 136.

[86]Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, March 16, 1842, pp. 97-8.

[87]Letter from Mary Gove to John Neal, February 1, 1842. In Richards, "Nichols and Neal," p. 353.

[88]Ibid., p. 354.

[89]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, pp. 150-1.

[90]Ibid., p. 154.

[91]Ibid., p. 156.

[92]Letter from Mary Gove to John Neal, February 1, 1842. In Richards, "Nichols and Neal," pp. 353-54.

[93]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 156.

[94]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, pp. 87-88.

CHAPTER IV

A BRIGHT GREEN SPOT

> ...six months of living love, which heaven may parallel, but not excel....Those months--that day of life--I see it all, a bright green spot, all gemmed with flowers, while backward through my earlier years stretch out the arid sands....And we must part; two hearts, all one, must beat, a globe between them.[1]

Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote Thomas Carlyle in late 1840, "We are all a little wild here with numberless projects of social reform. Not a reading man but has a draft of a new Community in his waistcoat pocket."[2] Mary Gove, unlike many of the utopians, did not approach social reform abstractly. She knew from her own experience just how much society and its institutions were in need of major reform because no matter how hard she fought back, frustration engulfed her.

Her husband had been unable to support her. When she had helped, the choices were limited, as a woman, to taking boarders, doing needlework, and teaching, and she had done all three.[3] But the work was time consuming, the compensation small, and Hiram controlled what little she made. She created a new career as a female health lecturer, but again her husband confiscated her money, and her church

censured her. But now she was aware that other women had no money of their own, not even the dollar necessary to buy a ticket to her lectures which could improve their health, much less the money to escape miserable marriages or support their children. Mary Gove found that she could make money as a lecturer, much more than she had at any of her earlier occupations; but she also discovered that the money could be used only to get a medical degree for Hiram, not for herself.

Marriage had become a trap from which there had been no acceptable exit. She, her daughter, and her earnings all belonged to her husband by law. Legally he also had sexual rights which could lead to more children that would make her more dependent on him. Mary Gove had to live with the horrible truth that she was fortunate that only one of her five pregnancies had resulted in a living child. If her father had been unable to intercede on her behalf, and he could only because Hiram owed him money, she would have been chained to Hiram forever.

Religion, traditionally offering solace to oppressed people, failed to alleviate her pain. Instead it offered her only censure and enforced conformity, not the support and consolation she needed. When Mary Gove examined the economic, educational, social, and religious institutions that directly touched her life, she found them all laden with injustice. Surely there was a better way!

Perhaps the answer lay in Associationism which she first heard about from Albert Brisbane in early 1841.[4] Initially she had seen "glimpses of glory, but only glimpses" in Brisbane's plan for reforming

society based on the format of Charles Fourier, the French social reformer.[5] In 1844 she wrote, "Then I looked upon the actualization of this great idea as something in the far distance, something if I must confess, like planning of journeys to the moon."[6] But Mary Gove was "instant in every benevolent work" and when one offered as much for women as this plan for society, she was certain to be one of its earliest investigators.[7]

Albert Brisbane, the son of a wealthy New York land speculator and merchant, spent four years in Europe travelling and studying under Cousin, Guizot, and Hegel before he read Charles Fourier's book, Traite de l'Association Domestique Agricole, sought out the sixty year old philosopher, and arranged for private instructions.[8] For the next two years Brisbane studied with him and his disciples until, according to Mary Gove, "he had no will but that of his master, no thought that was not born of that master's principles."[9]

Comparing himself to Newton, Charles Fourier believed that he had discovered the principle that regulated the moral world.[10] Starting with the concept that people were meant to be happy and live in harmony, he concluded that human behavior resulted from the law of passionate attractions. Twelve emotions or passions were the basis of all human activity, and each person possessed all of them, but in varying combinations of intensity.[11] People were naturally attracted to particular individuals or occupations because of their innate passional structure. Civilization, however, had repressed and thwarted these natural passions, and discord and misery had resulted.[12] In the past reformers had tried to change human nature; Fourier wanted to change the environment.

Conceiving eight stages of history, Fourier believed that he was living in the fifth period which he labelled, with negative connotations, "civilization." Future progress would not result from a spontaneous evolutionary process; it must be consciously sought through the acceptance of his plan for society. With a passion for order and symmetry, Fourier drew in exact detail his blueprint for the perfect society, classifying and labelling with elaborate descriptions every aspect of life. Here within the carefully planned environment, each community or phalanx of between 1800 and 2000 people capitalized at one half million dollars could establish the proper atmosphere in which the free reign of passions could create the harmonious society.[13]

Almost all utopian literature, from Plato's Republic on, proposes an equality of the sexes, though sometimes with certain qualifications.[14] Fourier believed "there could be no such thing as a little suppression or a bit of freedom" and demanded "total freedom and self-expression for all human beings", including women.[15] He used the status of women in society as the measure of its progressive development.[16]

Love was extremely important to his system, especially in his early writings, and he feared that it had little chance for survival in the marriage of the fifth stage. The unmarried philosopher lamented, "Civilised love, in marriage, is, at the end of a few months, or perhaps the second day, often nothing more than pure brutality, chance coupling, induced by the domestic tie, devoid of any illusion of the mind or of the heart." This often resulted because the

"husband and wife, surfeited, morose, quarrelling with each other during the day, become necessarily reconciled upon retiring, because they have not the means to purchase two beds, and contact, the brute spur of the senses, triumphs a moment over conjugal satiety." Fourier concluded, "If this be love, it is a love most material and trivial."[17]

At present, civilization deprived "love of all liberty," but Fourier developed a system of free and varied love for his ideal world. This concept so shocked possible converts that he was eventually forced to conclude that the first phalanxes might have to be established without the more enlightened relationship between men and women.[18] Though this aspect of Associationism was most appealing to Mary Gove and she would build on it, many American disciples gave it little attention.[19]

Fourier's concept of attractive industry was much more enthusiastically received. Civilized society had made labor repulsive, yet it was absolutely necessary to the economic life of society. Fourier explained, "Life is a long torment to one who pursues occupations without attraction."[20] To make labor attractive, society must realize that "in work, as in pleasure, variety is evidently the desire of nature."[21] In the phalanstery, labor would become meaningful because every worker would be a partner and all--men, women, and children--would be paid equally in proportion to three faculties--capital, labor, and talent.[22]

Fourier promised a new order in which people would "possess a guarantee of well-being, of a minimum sufficient for the present and

the future," and they would be freed "from all uneasiness concerning themselves and their families."[23] His innovative theories had not reached a very large European audience before his death, nor was his name found in print in the United States before 1837.[24] The next decade, however, would see the establishment of numerous phalanxes.

The time was right. It was the Age of Jackson, the Age of the Common Man. Most property qualifications had been discarded, and the laborer now had the vote. The concept that work could be attractive and passionately participated in, and that all could be guaranteed a comfortable, secure, and happy life appealed to thousands of Americans. The economic depression of 1837 and its painful fallout made many open to alternative, if utopian, solutions.[25]

The place was right. Sir Thomas More who had coined in 1516 the word "utopia" that literally meant "nowhere" had associated his Utopia with the newly discovered lands of Amerigo Vespucci's accounts.[26] From the beginning, Americans had tried to fashion theology, theories, and dreams into realities. A willingness to try new things, an optimistic climate, and ample space encouraged social experimentation. In the 1840s it seemed possible to reorder society so that all could live in harmony.[27]

Albert Brisbane presented Fourier's blueprint for redesigning society to the American public in the fall of 1840. His 480 page Social Destiny of Man; or, Association and Reorganization of Industry was not just a translation of his works, however, because Brisbane had so merged his own ideas with Fourier's that the two were indistinguish-

able.[28] Brisbane lectured to any who would listen, and the movement gained intellectual standing as many were converted. Even the aloof Emerson wrote, "As we listened to his exposition, it appeared to us the sublime of mechanical philosophy; for the system was perfection of arrangement and contrivance...Poverty shall be abolished; deformity, stupidity, and crime shall be no more. Genius, grace, art, shall abound."[29]

Mary Gove labelled the tall, graceful Albert Brisbane "one of the most remarkable men of our age, or of any age." His manner, however, was sometimes oppressive because "he did not converse, he talked," always in a monologue. As long as one would listen, "ten, twenty, or thirty hours, it was all the same to him," he would continue speaking. Gove believed him to be "proof of the doctrine of possession" because he was "entirely subjected by the spirit of Fourier."[30]

Besides his book, lectures, and monologues, Brisbane effectively used periodicals to propagandize for Associationism.[31] His paper, The Future, which Mary Gove mentioned to John Neal in April, 1841, lasted only until July of that year, but it was published by one of Brisbane's most influential converts, Horace Greeley, who talked about Fourierism "constantly in private, and occasionally in public print."[32] In a pioneering action, Brisbane purchased a front page column in Greeley's newspaper, the New York Daily Tribune, begining with the March 1, 1842, issue in which he effectively expounded the "Doctrine of Association."[33] The circulation of the paper guaranteed him a large audience, and within a few months newspapers as far

away as Indiana and Michigan were discussing the possibilities of establishing phalanxes.[34]

Mary Gove was drawn to Associationism because it offered a comprehensive plan for social, not political, reform. Her past experience had lead her to realize that a total restructuring of society was necessary, not just expanding the electorate, even if it included women. Her Quaker background also contributed to her aversion to a purely political solution. The experiences of the Quakers in colonial Pennsylvania had caused many of their leaders to conclude that "the burdens of political responsibility" were "incompatible with their religious principles."[35] As a result their focus shifted from politics to humanitarian concerns. Many were active in social reforms, yet some refused to pay taxes to a government that engaged in war, and frequently they did not vote.[36]

If political reform seemed remote to Mary Gove's needs, Brisbane's theories spoke directly to her. He revealed his sensitivity to the societal position of women as he wrote at the beginning of Social Destiny of Man that human labor was "miserably applied" and used women as a prime example. They were "absorbed in a monotonous repetition of the trivial and degrading occupation of the kitchen or needle;--degrading because they have to be so continually repeated and on so small a scale." The root of the problem was "our system of separate households" where there were "as many distinct houses as there are families." The isolate household, "the essence of complication and waste," absorbed the time "of one sex or one-half of the human race, in an unproductive function, which has to be gone through with as many times as there are families."[37]

Brisbane challenged, "Nature made her the equal of man, and equally capable of shining with him in industry and in the cultivation of the arts and sciences--not to be his inferior, to cook and sew for him, and live dependently at his board." Declaring that women had more "well founded complaints against the social mechanism" than any group "for they are truly its slaves," he promised that the Association would simplify "19/20s of the present household complication" and would open to women "the broad field of human activity, now occupied to their exclusion by man alone."[38]

Fourierism offered a social organization that was very appealing to the reformers in the 1840s seeking to perfect society. Yet some felt they needed "a new Heaven as well as a new world", and felt that Swedenborgianism was the most complementary religion for their new social order.[39] Mary Gove had investigated Swedenborgianism (or the New Church) when the Quakers had disowned her.

In the eighteenth century a Swedish universal man, Emanuel Swedenborg, promulgated the thesis that Jesus Christ had already come again as prophesied, and therefore a new era had been inaugurated in which fresh rules were operative.[40] His theories had enormous appeal to some intellectuals of the 1840s who thoroughly studied his writings, even if they did not join his New Church.[41] Swedenborg's numerous writings were esoteric and wide-ranging. Their influence, depending upon the point of emphasis, was found in Transcendentalism, the Fourierist communities (especially at Brook Farm), mesmerism, faith healing, spiritualism, and the free love movement.[42]

At this point in Mary Gove's life, Swedenborgianism appealed to her mainly because of the need to justify separation from Hiram. While still living with him, Mary had started reading Swedenborg because of his belief in the vegetarian diet.[43] What impressed her the most, however, was his concept of "Conjugial Love." Swedenborg, like Fourier a bachelor, was greatly concerned about the state of marriage. Wedding vows in his time and place were taken lightly; adultery and debauchery common. He envisioned a union between male and female which would be spiritual as well as physical and would not cease with death.[44] The "love of the sex remains" in heaven wrote the Seer, and he spent pages describing how idyllic the male-female physical-spiritual union would be.[45] This true eternal marriage, which he labelled "conjugial love", embodied all human happiness.[46]

Unfortunately, very few marriages fitted his definition of conjugial love. In fact, it was "so rare, that it is not known what is its quality, and scarcely that it exists."[47] But the unfulfilled people in "natural" relationships would be able to find new and true partners in heaven. Love generated spiritual heat in a marriage, but its absence created spiritual cold which caused "a disunion of souls and a disjunction of minds, whence come indifference, discord, contempt, disdain, and aversion; from which, in several cases, at length come separation as to bed, chamber, and house."[48]

Swedenborg listed numerous causes of "coldness, separation, and divorce in marriage" and placed them in three categories, internal, external, and accidental. As Mary Gove examined her marriage to Hiram against Swedenborg's checklist of causes for coldness and separation,

she found a diastrous similarity.[49] But his doctrines held out hope to Mary Gove because not only did they recognize the need for separation and divorce, but--in contrast to most of orthodox Christianity--they stated that those who had not made true marriages were free to remarry.[50]

Once again, however, Mary Gove found disillusionment when those who advocated religious teachings practised them selectively and imperfectly. Wretched in her marriage, she visited a New Church minister to seek counsel. She was immediately disappointed in him because he was overweight and unhealthy looking, and the generous luncheon before him included ham even though Swedenborg had "said that the eating of flesh was profane."[51] Hesitant now to share her burden, she asked if she could borrow a copy of Conjugial Love. He immediately chastised her and exclaimed, "Many are seeking to justify themselves in evils and lusts, by New Church truths" and refused to encourage her "willfulness."[52] She was "bound" to her husband--to "live with him and obey him" unless he was "guilty of adultery, or insane enough to endanger" her life. No other conditions would allow her to end her marriage vows, he declared. Quickly Gove left, coming "away with less reverence for the authority of a Christian minister, time honored and held sacred by the many" than she wished to feel.[53]

Since the disciples had not the same insight as their masters, Mary Gove had to work out her own solution. Without institutional support, she had fought for her own survival and had forced a separation from Hiram. The free love theories of Fourier and Swedenborg's concept of conjugial love, however, merged with her own needs to

formulate her philosophy and to help prepare her to defy convention again.

In her thrust against tradition this time, however, Mary Gove experienced pleasure as well as pain, for at last she knew love. In late 1842 she met the English reformer Henry Gardiner Wright, mystic, writer, and teacher, who had so impressed Bronson Alcott during his trip to England that he brought him back to the United States.[54] Alcott claimed that Wright, who advocated the educational theories of the Swiss reformer Pestalozzi, had "more genius for teaching than any person" he had ever met, and he wanted him to help establish the experimental community he envisioned.[55] Caught up by the creative possibilities, Henry Wright journeyed to the United States; it was never recorded why he left his bride of one year, Elizabeth, and their infant at home.[56]

Alcott and his party, which also included British reformer, Charles Lane, and his young son, arrived in Boston on October 20, 1842, and went to his Concord cottage to begin plans for Fruitlands, his experimental community.[57] Abba Alcott recorded their arrival in her diary, "Happy days these. Husband returned accompanied by the dear Englishmen, the good and true."[58] Excitement filled the air as they hammered out their ideas with Ralph Waldo Emerson, Theodore Parker, George Ripley, Orestes Brownson, and other interested colleagues.[59]

Dissension soon developed, however, in the Alcott cottage. Charles Lane, whose own unhappy marriage had led to a separation, dominated the household because he controlled the money for the new community. The close quarters, sparse experimental diets, and

argumentative speculations about the community caused tempers to flare. Abba Alcott pleaded, "Give me one day of practical philosophy. It is worth a century of speculation and discussion."[60] Henry Wright complained to "Alcott of Lane, and to Lane of Alcott" and declared that his host was "despotic."[61] On one occasion Charles Lane "almost violently assaulted" Wright because he put "some cream upon his mush."[62] Even the long suffering Abba wrote, "I am almost suffocated in this atmosphere of restrictions and form," but realized that "without money we can do nothing." She resented this invasion of her "rights as a woman and mother" and hoped that the experiment would "not bereave" her of her mind.[63]

The unbearable situation reached a climax in December 1842. Abba Alcott, fearing a mental breakdown, left for a Christmas visit to her father, and Henry Wright, physically ill, moved to a Graham Boarding House in Boston.[64] Then he met Mary Gove. They were immediately attracted to one another. Sensitive to a person's aura, she found "a radiance over his forehead and face" that she had "never seen, before or since." His fair, smooth complexion, his brilliant deep blue eyes, and "broad brow spoke of an ample intellect," yet "his under lip was full and loving." Unfashionably long, his golden hair curled, yet "his dress was neat and elegant in the extreme." She found that his "quiet and graceful dignity, a sort of unconsciousness in all his movements" that "stamped him a gentleman...from the highest rank of culture and refinement," made one forget that he was of medium height.[65]

It was not long before Henry Wright became a boarder at her parents' home, where Mary Gove had continued to live after her

separation from Hiram earlier in the year.[66] She was aware of the problems this arrangement presented, and "the danger of crucifixion of hate and scorn that outraged morality dooms the loving heart to endure"; yet they were drawn to each other "by an attraction as irresistible as the desire to breathe."[67] Intellectually Mary Gove believed in the "self-ownership of woman," but she could not break "the bonds to a false morality" that said she still belonged to Hiram Gove.[68] The situation was further complicated because she was living in her parents' home with her ten year old daughter. Forced to be realistic because she was a self-supporting woman, she mused, "it might be a precious life to me to sit by my friend, with my hand clasped in his, or his hand upon my head, but it would be death to my reviving usefulness if it was known." She feared that "the divinest truth would not be accepted from him, if he were suspected of varying from the popular standard of marriage morality."[69] This was the closest Mary Gove came in her autobiography that supposedly "told all" to mentioning the fact that Henry Wright was married (as she still legally was) and had left behind a wife and child in England.

Her separation from Hiram had already created much ugly gossip and closed some doors to her. She had to exercise utmost discretion, yet the hypocrisy of this existence pained her. Wright apparently was less worried about his reputation, being male and an ocean away from his spouse. "Here are you," he chided her, "striving to live the life of a mob that you despise, instead of having each act of your life informed and sanctified by the love that embosoms in itself all truth, all joy, and all life."[70] She finally put

curtains on the front windows and hoped that the gossip that even that act created would not curtail her "reviving usefulness."[71]

Mary Gove had at last found emotional sustenance, but she still needed financial support, so she started a new journal in early 1843. The Health Journal and Independent Magazine was a successor to the periodical that she had edited in 1840 for Joseph Wall who had died of tuberculosis in October 1842 at the age of twenty-five. Still smarting from her own Quaker censure, she was convinced that the "sore displeasure of the Society" concerning his reform interests had hastened his death.[72] Undaunted, she promised that the new journal would "discuss faithfully and fearlessly all questions and subjects that concern the great brotherhood of Man," including the "regenerating power of Love, the Pharisaism of the age, the Tyranny of Public Opinion, the right of every Human Being to freedom of Thought and Action, the Divine nature of Marriage" as well as "the laws of Health, the Reorganization of Society or the Doctrine of Association and the restoration of all things to the Divine order."[73] The first issue in February 1843 had a broad spectrum of articles and poems by various authors including John Neal and Horace Greeley.

Other reform journals welcomed the new magazine. One review commented, "Its pretensions are high and somewhat ostentatiously set forth; and the ground which it claims to cover is of the largest dimensions." But it wished it success "particularly on account of its free spirit."[74] Another paper reported, "The style of composition is perhaps a little too ambitious and the language too transcendental

to comport with the simplicity of reform; but the writers appear to possess earnest souls, accompanied with genius and talent."[75]

Henry Wright and Charles Lane had edited The Healthian in England and had contributed to most of the English reform journals.[76] Busy with plans for Fruitlands, Lane wrote to Junius Alcott, brother of Bronson, that he had merged The Healthian into Mary Gove's new periodical.[77] Wright was listed in the second issue as one of the editors along with D. H. Barlow and Mary Gove.[78] The editors declared, "the tendency of our age is decidedly toward Associationism" and decided to start their own community; a call was issued in April 1843. They rejoiced that the various societies had not only brought together men and women to work for specific reforms, but had worn away the "sharp corners of sectarianism." Now that the "hedges and barricades" that had separated people had been broken down, they sought "paradoxical as it may seem, to unite that they may secure isolation." Though they had "many objections to the Community doctrine," the "institutions...are mainly true." The Association would be "a Joint Stock Company, where communal and individual property are both secured--where attractive occupation shall be provided all," and men and women would be given "an adequate renumeration"--"no difference being made on account of sex"; thereby emancipating woman "from slavish dependence." Capital, labor, and skill would be "harmonized instead of being in the diabolical discord" that then existed. Shares were $25 each, and when enough capital was raised they would buy land and establish their community in "one of the Western States."[79]

There was not sufficient response to their call, however, and the new journal soon ceased publication.[80] This temporary setback was minor compared to the more immediate concern of Henry Wright's health. He had a "malignant and fatal disease" whose "present manifestation was a scrofolous tumor, gathering under the right scapula."[81] Seeking relief, Wright had earlier gone to the Continent where he had become a patient and pupil of Vincent Priessnitz who was amazing the world with his hydropathic cures. Mary Gove eagerly listened as Wright described his techniques. As a Grahamite she had advocated daily bathing and had used some of the hydropathic methods herself since 1832.[82] She had found it especially effective in her own "frightful hemorrhages," and Wright convinced her that its application should extend to all ailments.[83]

The water cure methods could not heal the tumor on Henry Wright's shoulder, however, and an operation was necessary. He agreed to surgery only if he would not be tied to the chair as was the usual procedure, but be allowed to have Mary hold him in her arms while he rested his head on her bosom. He fainted when the incision was made, but she continued to hold him during the twenty minute operation.[84] Unfortunately, the operation did not greatly improve his condition, and friends came from England with the gold to get Wright home. They wanted to see something of the country before they left, but Wright was too weak to go sightseeing and needed to return immediately. Mary Gove accompanied him to New York and "remained with him, dressing his dying side daily, and living a year of joy in a day, and earning abundant scandal and reproach during that week."[85] But she wrote

hopefully to James Russell Lowell on June 30, 1843, "Mr. Wright returns to England tomorrow...but I trust he will return ere long with many of his friends." Then they would "either form a strong group in the North American Phalanx, or associate by ourselves, probably the former."[86]

Henry Wright did not return to the United States or to Mary Gove. He never regained his health and died in March 1846.[87] Mary exclaimed, "I have his picture, his letters, a tress of his rich, golden hair, and I never blame Roman Catholics for their love of relics. It seems to me a most legitimate love, and if it amount to worship, let all be thankful when they have love enough to worship anything."[88] She had finally known love, "six months of living love, which heaven may parallel, but not excel; six months of teaching in the deepest wisdom earth has known."[89] Then Mary Gove boldly challenged, "Would any define my relationship to this beautiful spirit? Let them do so if it pleases them. I have nothing to settle about it."[90]

Without capital or "a strong group" of her own, Mary Gove did not join the North American Phalanx, but she remained interested in Associationism.[91] Brisbane had reached such a large audience through his New York Tribune columns that he decided to try again with a Fourierist periodical, and The Phalanx, or Journal of Social Science appeared October 5, 1843. The list of thirteen regular contributors included Mary Gove, one of only three women named.[92] An arrangement had been made to send a copy of the Phalanx to each of the subscribers of Mary Gove's Health Journal and Independent

Magazine, and it was promised that "the articles commenced in that Journal will be continued in the Phalanx."[93]

A convention for the "Friends of Social Reform in New England" was called for December 26-27, 1843, in Boston, and among the twenty signatures to the call was Mary Gove's, again one of only three women.[94] The report of the meeting, however, did not mention the participation of any women. Another meeting was called in New York City in April 1844 to celebrate "the Birthday of the immortal discoverer of the laws of social Unity and Harmony--Charles Fourier."[95] This convention was a turning point in American Fourierism. Soon after adjournment, Albert Brisbane left for an extended trip to Europe, and the movement's "center of gravity" shifted.[96] Brook Farm had been converted to the doctrine of Association and soon took over the publication of the Phalanx, which was merged, with the Dial and the Future, into the Harbinger and included literary and musical criticism as well as social reform.[97] The focus shifted from New York to Boston, and the movement "became a subtly different thing, more brilliant perhaps in its literary and intellectual achievement, but more remote from the farmers and mechanics and businessmen along the Erie Canal and in the states of the new West..." and less interested in improving the position of women.[98]

Mary Gove did not feel comfortable with some of the New England reformers after her separation from Hiram and her relationship with Henry Wright. To her "the leaders at Brook Farm were a company of pretentious, puritanical, despotic moralists."[99] She was not associated with the Harbinger--which listed no women as

regular contributors--, but her "accomplished pen" graced John Allen's new journal, The Social Reformer, and Herald of Universal Health, which appeared in May 1844 and was "devoted to the Principals of Fourier."[100] The Social Reformer promised that "its columns will be freely and fearlessly opened for the stern rebuke of wrong doing," including "the forced degradation of woman."[101] Unfortunately, this periodical, like most of the reform journals, had a short life and was soon merged into the Harbinger.[102]

Although Brook Farm did not appeal to Mary Gove, she still believed in Fourier's basic plan to re-organize society, and looked to the west for the possibility of a more congenial and enlightened group. Her quest took her on a 1500 mile trip by coach and steamboat. Travelling alone, she visited several Ohio communities which had Fourierite groups and "preached Association and Grahamism to them in earnest."[103] Concerned that they were evading the most important aspect of the Association, "the question of the relation of the sexes," she urged them to address this crucial issue even if it meant they would be misunderstood or "odium" would befall them.[104]

She placed her "reputation at the mercy of all legalists" and boldly asserted that "marriage without love is sin, is prostitution." As long as woman was "pecuniarly dependent" upon man, she would remain "a slave" because she had no choice but to "sell herself in so called marriage." But Fourier had envisioned a society based on the equality of the sexes that would allow women to be economically independent and, therefore, able to enter into love relationships, not economic arrangements. Although she admitted that there were

"plenty of practical difficulties" that had to be solved, Mary Gove exhorted the colonists to deal with this issue, not evade it, because the ultimate success of the perfection of society depended on it.[105]

She agonized over the fact that the leaders, the periodicals, and the communities had never explored or had strayed from the feminists concepts that had initially attracted her to Fourierism. Aware that her relationship with Henry Wright could only "have its next Spring time in the heavens," she had "but one thought, one hope, one prayer," and that was to do what she could to establish "the harmony, the holiness that is to come to our world through Association."[106] Yet the discord of the present imperfect world dramatically interrupted her quest for a future harmonic society.

Notes to Chapter IV

[1]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 225.

[2]Ralph L. Rush, ed. The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Volume 3 (New York, 1939), p. 353.

[3]Harriet Martineau in "Society in America" (1837) pointed out that in addition to the three traditional occupations for women, the factories were now another alternative. In Lynn, a shoe making capital, Mary Gove could have worked in a shoe factory. Yet there is no record that she considered that option. It also raises the question as to why Hiram Gove couldn't find work in Lynn. See Harriet Martineau, "Society in America," in Alice Rossi, ed., The Feminist Papers: From Adams to de Beauvior (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1978), p. 141.

[4]Letter from Mary Gove to John Neal, April 4, 1841. In Richards, "Nichols and Neal," p. 346.

[5]The Phalanx, or Journal of Social Science, February 5, 1844, p. 65.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Phalanx, May 18, 1844, p. 147.

[8]Charles A. Madison, Critics and Crusaders: A Century of Protest (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1947), p. 115. Brisbane credited his mother and early teacher with starting him on his pursuit of meaning. Of her, he wrote, "My mother was a woman of peculiar temperament; strong and intense in the sentiments, but impartial and general in her intellectual character. She was a student, interested in all the sciences within her reach, especially astronomy....It was thus at my mother's knee that I began my synthetic education. I began with a general view of human history and of the planetary system to which we belong; subjects that, by this happy mode of presentation, became of absorbing interest to me at so early an age." Redelia Brisbane, Albert Brisbane: A Mental Biography with a Character Study by His Wife (Boston, Massachusetts: Arena Publishing Company, 1893), pp. 51-52.

[9]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 343.

[10]There is no complete study of Fourier and his work. There have been a number of books published recently that present a selection of his writings, with an introduction by the editor. See Jonathan Beecher and Richard Bienvenu, eds., The Utopian Vision of Charles Fourier: Selected Texts on Work, Love, and Passionate Attraction (Boston:

Beacon Press, 1971); Charles Fourier, Design for Utopia: Selected Writings of Charles Fourier, Introduction by Charles Gide; new foreword by Frank E. Manuel (New York: Schocken Books, 1971); Mark Poster, ed., Harmonian Man: Selected Writings of Charles Fourier (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1971); and Nicholas Riasanovsky, The Teaching of Charles Fourier (Berkeley: University of California, 1969).

Fourier had a dreary and monotonous life as a cloth broker and clerk. Financially ruined by the French Revolution, he had little leisure time for study, yet he managed through a very ordered existence to squeeze an education from reading rooms. A bachelor, he precisely arranged his life so he could regularly write so many pages each day. Under these difficult circumstances, Fourier was able to publish four works (equivalent to about eight volumes) and wrote a vast quantity of other manuscript materials. All his works contain explorations of the same theories. Charles Gide suggested that if one has read Traite de l'Association Domestique Agricole, one has "read them all." Fourier, Design for Utopia, p. 13.

Fourier's total system is extremely complex. I am presenting only the two areas that appealed most to American reformers--attractive industry and passionate attractions.

[11]The twelve passions are divided into three classifications. The first group are taste, touch, sight, smell, and hearing. The second class are "the four simple appetites of the soul" which were "the group of amity or friendship; the group of love; that of paternity or family; and the group of ambition or corporation." The third category are the "distributive passions" that Fourier discovered. "They were the 'cabaliste' passion or the desire for intrigue, planning and contriving, the purpose of which was to excite emulation between groups; the 'papillone' or butterfly passion, which was the need in man of variety, change of scene, novelty, which stimulated the senses and also the soul; and finally the 'composit' passion or the desire for union which is also a state of exhilaration derived from interplay of several pleasures of the senses and the soul enjoyed simultaneously." Joyce Oramel Hertzler, The History of Utopian Thought (New York: Square Publishers, Inc.), pp. 199-200.

[12]Fourier was a pioneer sociologist and his ideas preceded Freud's concepts of sexual repression as well as Marx's and Engel's critique of the capitalist society.

[13]It is interesting that Fourier used a military word, phalanx, for his harmonious society. A phalanx is a solid body of troops as distinguished from troops in open order. Thebes broke the power of Sparta by the use of it in 371 B.C. Fourier loved to watch the soldiers march through the streets and drill and listen to the military music. He had no love of war, but had "a love of uniforms, plumes, evolutions conducted scientifically." Gide in Design for Utopia, p. 12. Gide in speaking of Fourier wrote, "I do not believe that any man of this

century has been gifted with greater imaginative power than this commercial clerk, save, perhaps Edgar Poe." Design for Utopia, p. 16. (See Chapter VI on Mary Gove's relationship to Poe.)

[14]See Hertzler, History of Utopian Thought, p. 289.

[15]Riasanovsky, Fourier, p. 56 and p. 208.

[16]Fourier, Design for Utopia, p. 76.

[17]Ibid., p. 80.

[18]Ibid., pp. 76-77.

[19]Fourier ideas about free love were also negated by his European disciples; they too stressed his ideas concerning attractive industry. Some of his manuscripts were not published until the 1960s, and those that were translated into English in the nineteenth century were not widely circulated. See Chapter VIII for the discussion of the free love controversy and the reaction of the American disciples when they became aware of his ideas.

[20]Fourier, Design for Utopia, p. 165.

[21]Ibid., p. 169.

[22]Ibid., p. 166.

[23]Declaring Fourier's system to be an original effort, Charles Gide concluded that the plan was "not essentially socialistic..." Although Fourier attacked "competition, commerce, domestic life" he also had respect for the "wealthy classes, for property, inheritance, capital." For a discussion on this see Design for Utopia, pp. 30-40.

[24]Ibid., p. 164.

[25]According to Gide the movement spread in Europe until 1848 when it had"as many as 3700 members, among them the future emperor, Prince Louis Napoleon." Ibid., p. 40. See also Arthur Eugene Bestor, Jr., "Albert Brisbane--Propagandist for Socialism in the 1840's." New York History (April, 1947), p. 129.

[26]Sir Thomas More, Utopia (New York: Square Press Inc., 1965).

[27]See Mark Holloway, Heavens on Earth: Utopian Communities in America, 1680-1880 (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1966); Charles A. Madison, Critics and Crusaders (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1947); Frank E. Manuel, ed., Utopias and Utopian Thought (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966); and Tyler, Freedom's Ferment.

[28]Albert Brisbane, Social Destiny of Man, or Association and Reorganization of Industry (New York: Greeley and McElrath, 1843).

[29]Quoted in Madison, Critics and Crusaders, p. 90.

[30]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 343.

[31]See Bestor, "Albert Brisbane," pp. 128-158.

[32]Letter from Mary Gove to John Neal, April 4, 1841. In Richards, "Nichols and Neal," p. 346; and James Parton, The Life of Horace Greeley, Editor of the New York Tribune (New York: Mason Brothers, 1855), p. 201.

[33]In the history of journalism this is considered to be "the first signed column to advance a set of opinions distinct from the policy of the paper printing it." Bestor, "Albert Brisbane," p. 146.

[34]Ibid., p. 148.

[35]Gary B. Nash, Quakers and Politics: Pennsylvania 1681-1726 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 342.

[36]A good example of this Quaker attitude is found in Daniel Anthony, father of feminist Susan B. Anthony. He was a sixth generation Quaker, who after numerous censures for his reform activities (and marrying out of Society) was disowned for allowing a dancing school to meet in his home. He did not vote until 1860, twelve years after his switch to the Unitarian Church (and, interestingly, after his daughter had begun to work for the vote for women). See Ida H. Harper, The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony, Volume I (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1969).

Lucretia Mott, one of the few feminists with a Quaker background who remained a Quaker all her life, also cautioned Elizabeth Cady Stanton against including votes for women in their "Declaration of Sentiments" read at the first Women's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls in 1848. The resolution concerning the vote was the only one that was not unanimously adopted and was carried by only a small margin. (Most of the organizers, speakers, and leaders at that convention were Quakers.) See Flexner, Century of Struggle, pp. 71-79; Stanton, et al., History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. I, pp. 67-73.

[37]Brisbane, Social Destiny, p. 5.

[38]Ibid.

[39]Quoted in Ralph Barton Perry, The Thought and Character of William James, Volume I: Inheritance and Vocation (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1935), p. 32.

[40]The most available biography is George Trobridge, Swedenborg: Life and Teaching (New York: Pillar Books, 1976). See also Sig Synnestvedt, ed., The Essential Swedenborg: Basic Teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg: Scientist, Philosopher, and Theologican (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1970).

[41]See Marguerite Beck Block, The New Church in the New World: A Study of Swedenborgianism in America (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1932), pp. 130-169. Emerson placed Swedenborg in his "Representative Men" along with Plato, Goethe, Shakespeare, and Napoleon.

[42]Sydney E. Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People, Volume I (Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1975), p. 584.

[43]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, pp. 151-2.

[44]Swedenborg departed from the usual interpretation of Matthew 22:30 to reach this conclusion. John Humphrey Noyes also ventured forth a new interpretation of this passage which resulted in his "complex marriage." See Robert Allerton Parker, A Yankee Saint: John Humphrey Noyes and the Oneida Community (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1935).

[45]Emanuel Swedenborg, The Delights of Wisdom Pertaining to Conjugial Love to Which is Added the Pleasures of Insanity Pertaining to Scortatory Love (New York: American Swedenborg Printing and Publishing Society, 1912), p. 39.

[46]"Conjugial love, being the central and fundamental love of man's life, is also the source of his fullest joy." Trobridge, Swedenborg, p. 188. Swedenborg's emphasis on love and its central role foreshadows the weight that Freud gives to sex. In another passage Swedenborg's comments preceded Freud's id, ego, and superego: "I knew that there are three regions of the human mind, one above the other, and that in the lowest region dwells natural love; in the superior, spiritual love; and in the supreme, celestial love." Conjugial Love, pp. 225-6.

[47]Swedenborg, Conjugial Love, p. 62.

[48]Ibid., p. 203.

[49]Ibid., pp. 201-214.

[50]Ibid., p. 265.

[51]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 152.

[52]Ibid., p. 153.

[53]Ibid., p. 154.

[54]Ibid., p. 179. Wright (1814-1846) was four years younger than Mary Gove.

[55]Alcott was so impressed with Wright that he wrote his cousin, William Alcott, "I...must take him to America...or else remain with him here." F. B. Sanborn, Bronson Alcott at Alcott House, England and Fruitlands, New England (1842-1844) (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: The Torch Press, 1908), pp. 16-17.

[56]Ibid., pp. 22-23; and Odell Shepard, Pedlar's Progress: The Life of Bronson Alcott (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1937), p. 323.

[57]Sanborn, Alcott at Alcott House, p. 48.

[58]Sandford Salyer, Marmee: The Mother of Little Women (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1949), p. 85.

[59]William H. Gilman and J. E. Parsons, eds., The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Vol. III: 1841-1843 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 254. Emerson recorded in November, 1842, "Then comes the suggestions of our old plan of the University--but these men (Wright, Lane, and Alcott) though excellent are none of them gifted for leaders. They are admirable instruments for a master's hand, if some Pythagoras, some marshalling Mirabeau, some royal Alfred were here; he could not have better professors than Alcott and Lane and Wright. But they are too desultory, ignorant, imperfect, and whimsical to be trusted for any progress. Excellent springs, worthless regulators." p. 300.

[60]Salyer, Marmee, p. 87.

[61]Sanborn, Alcott at Alcott House, p. 49.

[62]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 204.

[63]Salyer, Marmee, pp. 86-7.

[64]Ibid., p. 87, and Shepard, Pedlar's Progress, p. 351.

[65]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 179.

[66]Sanborn, Alcott at Alcott House, p. 48. On January 24, 1843, Thoreau wrote to Emerson, "Mr. Wright, according to the last accounts, is in Lynn, with uncertain aims and prospects--maturing slowly, perhaps, as indeed are all of us." In F. B. Sanborn and William T. Harris, A. Bronson Alcott: His Life and Philosophy (Boston: Robert Brothers, 1893), Vol. I, p. 349.

[67]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, pp. 215, 214.

[68]Ibid., p. 214.

[69]Ibid., p. 209.

[70]Ibid., p. 216.

[71]Ibid., p. 209.

[72]Health Journal and Independent Magazine, February, 1843, p. 27.

[73]Ibid., p. 11.

[74]Ibid., April, 1843, p. 64.

[75]Ibid.

[76]Sanborn, Alcott at Alcott House, p. 18.

[77]Ibid., p. 49. Apparently the break between Lane and Wright was not complete because an article by Charles Lane entitled "Temper and Diet" (even though the title could have stirred up unpleasant memories) appeared in the Physiological Department of the Health Journal and Independent Magazine, April, 1843, pp. 51-54.

[78]David Hatch (D.H.) Barlow, a handsome Harvard Divinity School honor graduate, had married the beautiful Almira, and had been given a good church appointment in Lynn. Suddenly, and without explanations, they separated in 1841. Almira Barlow and her three sons soon appeared at Brook Farm where she was quickly surrounded by numerous admirers. Although Nathaniel Hawthorne told the public that the characters in The Blithedale Romance were fictitious and not modeled on Brook Farm dwellers, many feel that Zenobia was a combination of "Almira Barlow's allure and warmth of heart with Margaret Fuller's intellect and arrogance." See Edith Roelker Curtis, A Season in Utopia (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1961), p. 65.

[79]Health Journal and Independent Magazine, April, 1843, pp. 58-60.

[80]The first two issues, February and April, 1843, are at the American Antiquarian Society. I have been unable to locate any additional issues.

[81]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 217.

[82]Water Cure Journal, September, 1852, p. 67.

[83]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 197.

[84]Ibid., p. 221.

[85]Ibid., p. 225.

[86]Letter from Mary Gove to James Russell Lowell, June 30, 1843. Houghton Library, Harvard University.

[87]Sanborn, Alcott at Alcott House, p. 24. Wright's wife died a few months after him. p. 49.

[88]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 226.

[89]Ibid., p. 225.

[90]Ibid., p. 226.

[91]She wrote Lowell that her magazine was being merged with William H. Channing's Present which was being combined also with Godwin's Pathfinder, and she would contribute to it. Letter of Mary Gove to James Russell Lowell, June 30, 1843. Houghton Library, Harvard University. Channing also mentioned this arrangement in the Present, September, 1843, p. 36. In his last issue, however, Channing wrote that he had "never received funds from either of the editors of that work (Health Journal) or its subscribers." The Present, April 1, 1844, p. 432.

[92]Maria Child and Miss Sophie G. were the other women listed.

[93]The Phalanx, October 5, 1843, p. 1.

[94]The other women included were Sophia Ford and Caroline Negus. The call is found in The Phalanx, December 5, 1843, and in The Present, December 15, 1843, pp. 207-8.

[95]The Phalanx, April 20, 1844.

[96]Bestor, "Brisbane," p. 150.

[97]The Harbinger, Devoted to Social and Political Progress, June 14, 1845, Vol. I, No. 1.

[98]Bestor, "Brisbane," p. 150.

[99]Nichols' Monthly, June, 1855, p. 24.

[100]The Phalanx, May 18, 1844, p. 147, and August 24, 1844, p. 257. I have been unable to locate any issues of the Social Reformer.

[101]The Phalanx, May 18, 1844, p. 147.

[102]The Phalanx, May 3, 1845, p. 339.

[103]The Weekly Herald, March 14, 1845, p. 86.

[104]Ibid.

[105]Ibid.

[106]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 227, and The Weekly Herald, March 14, 1845, p. 86.

CHAPTER V

WOMAN THE PHYSICIAN

> I...come to you with my one idea, the idea of my life--Woman the Physician....The civilized world is full of sick women. This is the mighty evil that now overshadows the world. It must be removed, or mankind has no future.[1]

The real world crashed in on Mary Gove. She had exhorted others to search for the truth and not count the cost, but now she learned just how high the price could be. The week after her letter attacking loveless marriage appeared in the New York Weekly Herald, Hiram Gove decided to suffer no more public humiliation from his outspoken wife and to act.[2] He would not allow this depraved woman to raise his only child; he too had certain rights and responsibilities.

Hiram had stayed out of Mary's life since their separation because her father had given him little choice.[3] But in December 1844 William Neal had died, and Mary had suffered not only the loss of a friend and a father, but also her protector.[4] Now nothing stood between Hiram and his legal right to claim his daughter, Elma.

Mary's mother had been caring for her twelve year old granddaughter while her daughter visited the Ohio phalanxes.[5] Because of

the newspaper article, Hiram knew that Mary was not at home and decided to seize his chance to take custody of Elma. On March 20, 1845, he spirited his daughter away, refusing to disclose her whereabouts.[6] Distraught when she found out, Mary rushed back to Lynn, but it was weeks before she could find out where Hiram had taken Elma. The lawyer she consulted reminded her that she had no legal right to her child. Mary insisted that she, not Hiram, had supported Elma, and that, in fact, she had put Hiram through medical school. Did that not give her some say in the disposition of her child? The lawyer just shook his head and wondered at her poor judgment and misplaced generosity.[7]

Childless, Mary Gove was soon homeless too. Her widowed mother could no longer afford to keep her home in Lynn and became a matron at a public institution.[8] Mary stayed with friends while she desperately tried to discover where Hiram had taken her daughter. Her health deteriorated. Her vision blurred and her hair fell out in great bunches, leaving bald patches.[9] Finally, after three months of agony and separation, she found a lawyer who was willing to help her.[10] He suggested that she simply re-kidnap her daughter. Taking two strong men with him, he went to where Elma was secluded, showed her a note from her mother, and whisked her away. Reuniting the mother and daughter, he scurried them off to a hideaway out of reach of Hiram.[11]

Her troubles were far from over, however, because if Hiram found them he could legally reclaim Elma. Her only hope was to remain hidden, yet she had no money. To teach or lecture involved an amount of publicity that would make it possible for Hiram to locate

her.[12] In staid New England it was difficult for a separated woman to earn a living, yet she had no choice but to venture forth. Alternately scorned, ignored, and patronized, she was forced to live in various boarding houses. Some of the residents refused to speak to her, and at one place it was debated if she should be asked to leave.[13] Mary Gove cried out bitterly in her pain that woman "who had no right of property, and therefore no independent will, and no right to her children" had a life similar to a slave except that she could not be sold and "thus have the chance of a better master."[14]

Although Hiram told everybody who would listen about his poor daughter who was being raised by an infamous mother who did not believe in marriage, he did not try to regain custody of Elma.[15] Instead he brought charges against one of the men who helped kidnap Elma, and Mary felt obliged to pay this man's legal fees.[16] The lower court awarded Hiram heavy damages. Mary appealed; it took two years before the higher court reversed the decision, but she still had to pay all the legal costs.[17]

Because "parasites were sucking" away her labor and her earnings went for litigation instead of the basic necessities, she desperately needed to increase her income.[18] She had learned from Henry Wright about Vincent Priessnitz's modern hydropathy or water cure system that had spread from the Continent to England in the early 1840s and had quickly crossed the Atlantic.[19] When she heard that Dr. Robert Wesselhoeft, a former patient of Priessnitz, was opening a water cure establishment at Brattleboro, Vermont, she immediately went there.[20] Seeking to regain her health and support herself lecturing, she also

hoped that an apprenticeship with Wesselhoeft would make it possible for her to become a water cure physician.

Early practitioners of Priessnitz's system tried to locate in a setting similar to his at Graefenberg, Austria, and Brattleboro, a lovely Connecticut River Valley town with sloping hills and healing mineral waters, seemed an ideal place.[21] In the next three years a thousand patients (including many notable Americans) would flock to Dr. Wesselhoeft's, but the first summer when Mary Gove was there, he had only fifteen patients.[22] Unable to afford his price of $11 a week, however, she boarded nearby for only $3.50 a week. She visited with Wesselhoeft, observed his techniques, talked to the patients, and lectured on physiology and preventive medicine.[23]

Water cure patients were showered, douched and bathed--in head, eye, hip, arm, sitz, leg, and foot baths. They were packed in wet bandages, briskly rubbed and massaged, wrapped in sheets and blankets, and finally placed under quilts, comforters, and counterpanes. Then the process of bathing and sweating was begun again. Patients were to drink twelve to thirty glasses of water daily. Outdoor exercise was a key part of the program, and they walked barefoot in the grass, climbed nearby hills, and hiked in the woods. The treatment often began at 4 A.M. with a three minute cold bath and continued until 9:30 P.M. when the patients were packed once again in cold, wet bandages and put to bed. One critics wrote that to endure the water cure treatment "required the courage of the lion, the strength of the bull, and the stomach of the hog."[24] The system, however, did not hurt anyone and was especially helpful when applied to fevers.[25] The weeks or

months spent in a healthy climate with a simplified environment, away from family and/or business responsibilities and tensions with no alcohol, only pure water to drink, combined with exercise and proper diet, helped many to regain vigor and health.

After three months apprenticeship with Dr. Wesselhoeft, Mary Gove went to Lebanon Springs, New York, where David Campbell, former editor of the Graham Journal, had opened a water cure house.[26] She applied for the position of resident physician and through her previous connections with the popular health movement and Graham, got it. The newly established Water Cure Journal recommended her to its readers: "We shall be glad to be considered responsible for the good treatment of any lady who chooses to place herself under the care of Mrs. Gove."[27] But the job was very demanding, with long hours spent in supervising the bathing and wrapping of patients. Administrative duties and gossip about her marital status all worked to unnerve her. Her tuberculosis flared up and she hemorrhaged again.[28] The editor of the Water Cure Journal, Dr. Joel Shew, advised her to go at once to New York City where the climate was milder than in the Lebanon Hills.[29]

So Mary Gove and Elma moved from Lebanon Springs to Dr. Shew's water cure house in New York City in December 1845.[30] Mary hoped that in the "great world" of New York City's 370,000 people she "might forget and be forgotten"; maybe there she could "find peace from vile and scandalous rumors."[31] There would also be numerous patients who needed to be cured and large audiences to attend her lectures.

Once settled she learned more about the water cure method as practiced by Dr. Shew, who in taking advantage of the ever flowing

pure Croton water that was brought into the city via aqueduct had incorporated hydropathic therapies into a "general city practice, side by side with the old modes."[32] Mary made an instant, yet long lasting friend in Marie Louise Shew, Joel's young and charming wife, who was "like a fragrant breath of air from some sunny aromatic clime."[33] Among the boarders she also met Marx Edgeworth Lazarus, a wealthy medical student and mystic, twelve years her junior.[34] They shared many interests as they conversed at the dinner table, yet several other boarders complained of the esoteric language of that "young man with the dark, dreamy eyes."[35] In addition to their similar medical philosophy, Mary and Edgeworth (as he was called) were both Associationists. She explained her unorthodox, tumultous past to him, and he assured her that "propriety, social etiquette, and reputation were meaningless words to him."[36]

Mary Gove's hopes to begin lecturing immediately did not materialize. It was the Christmas season and people were preoccupied with social gatherings and celebrations and could not manage an afternoon out for a lecture. This put a pinch on her small capital and she looked about for a less expensive place to board. She found a "skyparlor", a tiny room on the fourth floor of another boarding house, where the weekly fee was $1.50 plus 75¢ for fuel and light. Together she and Elma moved their things and proceeded to live on a food budget of 25¢ a week which usually allowed for only Indian mush and molasses.[37]

The affluent Edgeworth Lazarus was generous with his friends. He loved flowers and gave Mary and Elma a room-warming gift of a

magnificient Luxemborg rose bush in full bloom which almost filled their tiny room. Mary did not know whether to laugh or cry when she realized she could have lived for four weeks on what that plant cost.[38] On another occasion Edgeworth handed her a hundred dollar bill which she felt she had to refuse because it was so much money; yet had he offered her a dollar she would have gladly accepted it because she had no food for the next day.[39]

To make money herself, Mary Gove had to have money. To rent a lecture hall, print and distribute advertising circulars, and get a decent dress cost fifty dollars, and it all had to be paid in advance. If not enough women came, she would still be in the red. Nevertheless, Mary scraped the money together and set the date for the first lecture.[40]

The day arrived and she excitedly finished preparations for her 3 o'clock class. She and Elma had eaten the last of their food, but she was full of hope for a large attendance at her lecture and financial independence at last. By noon the sky turned gray. Mary Gove went to the lecture hall to make sure all was in order. On her way it started raining. She hoped it would soon clear because no one would get out in the mud and cold to hear about good health. The rain poured down steadily, increasing to a torrent by 3 o'clock. Not one person appeared![41]

Because she had rented and heated the hall, she still had to pay for it. Mary Gove sat alone in the empty auditorium and listened to the rain fall. Overwhelmed, she later recalled, "I could not weep--I had no tears."[42] She had no money either, and had to walk back to

the boarding house through the mud, cold, and rain, thoroughly drenching her new dress.

Living on apples and bread that friends gave her, she marked time until the lecture scheduled for the following week. This time the weather cooperated, the women came, and she received fifty dollars in advance tickets for the series. Her despair turned to ecstasy. Her life was now a "psalm of praise" because she had "renumerative employment."[43]

Edgeworth Lazarus often visited Mary and Elma and usually had chocolates, cheese, and peppermints in his pockets.[44] Dissatisfied with his orthodox medical training, he appreciated Mary Gove's approach to health care, especially for women. As his parents were dead, he felt a special responsibility for his younger sisters and was concerned about the health of one of them. He decided to offer Mary Gove a proposition that would help them both.

Her lectures had been successful, she had sold a few stories, but to become a water cure physician Mary needed a place from which to work and board patients, and that was still beyond her means. Having just received his medical diploma, Lazarus suggested to Gove that he lease a house that would be large enough for boarders, and she would manage it as well as use it for her classes and patients, including his sister. When she met his lovely and intelligent sister, she accepted the offer. He paid the rent which "seemed most formidable" to Mary and found some boarders "who appreciated his genius without being frightened at his formulas," and she hung out her shingle.[45]

Six months after her arrival in New York City, Mary Gove had achieved her goal; she was a water cure physician, soon to be widely known as "the physician to her own sex."[46] The Water Cure Journal announced that she had established her headquarters at 261 Tenth Street where she held classes in anatomy and physiology and gave medical advice to women.[47] For the next two years, Mary Gove headquartered here and found the stability, health, and financial success that had so long eluded her. The arrangement with Lazarus, however well it worked for both of them, still bothered Gove because even the softest form of dependence was "ever a chain" upon her spirit and she "still felt the bond."[48] She hoped she would soon be successful enough to become completely independent.

There was a significant grafting of separate reforms in the 1840s. Mary Gove led the way in tying Grahamism to the water cure, thereby strengthening the popular health movement, but she also joined the water cure to women's emancipation.[49] She realized that not only was health reform the road to her own financial independence, but before any woman could challenge her position in society and increase her "usefulness" she had to be healthy. She boldly proclaimed, "What we want for woman is her freedom. We must come to have a conscience, with regard to preserving health and increasing her usefulness....The Women of America have been rather slow in making their Declaration of Independence. But it is made at last."[50]

Dedicating herself to freeing women through knowledge of their bodies, Mary Gove held classes in the large parlors of the Tenth Street house. She lectured four times a week and her

effectiveness improved when she allowed time for questions and added visual aids which included illustrations and wax models.[51] When her Arnoux's Female Model arrived from Paris, she used the manikin to show her classes the various parts of the body as well as the development of a fetus from conception to birth.[52] Such graphic methods showing women how their own bodies functioned was revolutionary, but the women came, eager to learn. In 1846 her new professionalism was reflected in the increase in tuition for twelve lectures to $5.[53]

In addition to the preventive medicine that she advocated through her classes, Mary Gove specialized in obstetrics. Since 1843 she had been working on some special lectures on "the sacred mystery of birth which the vulgar have profaned and which men of science have locked from woman."[54] But words alone had not been effective. Although she had tried to begin alleviating the ignorance that women had about the functions of their own bodies, these women went to doctors whose methods did not cure and often caused more suffering.

In the mid-nineteenth century puerperal or childbed fever (an infection of the uterus that can lead to blood poisoning and death) was rampant and made childbirth dangerous.[55] Any suggestion to Gove's medical peers that the doctors were themselves killing patients with unsanitary practices was vehemently attacked. Even when the respected Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes delivered a paper entitled "The Contagiousness of Puerperal Fever" which revealed that the physicians were responsible agents in spreading the disease,

the response from the medical community was indignation.[56] Doctors insisted that they were gentlemen and gentlemen's hands were clean.[57]

Not only was the medical profession ignorant of the cause of puerperal fever, the treatments they used to cure it often hastened death. Bloodletting was very popular during the nineteenth century for all illnesses: fever, wounds, burns, broken bones, and puerperal fever.[58] In 1851 a physician recorded that to treat a woman with puerperal convulsions he "opened a large orifice in each arm and cut both temporal arteries and had blood flowing freely from all at the same time, determined to bleed her until the convulsions ceased, or a long as the blood would flow." The seizures were so violent, however, the blood splashed all over the room, and he had difficulty measuring how much blood she lost. Unbelievably, the woman eventually recovered.[59] All were not as fortunate.

Some doctors applied leeches to specific parts of the body to remove additional blood. In the case of gynecological complications this often increased the pain and terror of treatment. If the abdomen remained distended after childbirth, twelve leeches were placed on it; if vaginal pain continued several leeches were applied.[60] One doctor cautioned to carefully count the number of leeches and remove all of them; some had been known to crawl into the uterus and the result was indescribable agony.[61]

Repeated doses of calomel (mercurious chloride) were sometimes used with the bloodletting to treat puerperal fever and to reduce swelling. It irritated the intestines and emptied them. If the purging was too violent, the doctor would give the woman opium.

Emetics were given to induce vomiting and were a common treatment for convulsions.[62]

Against this background, Mary Gove declared that each year thousands of women were "doctored into premature graves."[63] A typical case was a Mrs. C. who was brought to the Tenth Street house. Her cervix had torn during childbirth and the doctor had injected red pepper into the ulcerated vagina to cauterize the broken flesh. She had been bedridden for ten months and longed for death to escape the excruciating pain. After Mary Gove examined her, she washed out the peppers, potions, and poisons that had been injected into the woman. Within a month under her care, Mrs. C. recovered and returned to her family.[64] Mary Gove lashed out angrily at what some doctors were doing to women, "When we think of this most delicate and sensitive portion of woman's organism, subjected to actual cautery and lavements of nitrate of silver (lunar caustic) and capsium (red pepper) we see the need that someone speak so that the voice be heard."[65]

To these women who had been bled, purged, gagged, drugged, and almost killed in childbirth, Mary Gove offered "the indescribable blessings of water cure", as well as common sense and compassion, during pregnancy and childbirth.[66] She taught that there were four steps to emancipate women from the needless terrors of childbirth. The first step was preparation; a woman could not have healthy children unless she was herself healthy. She lamented that so many young women were "old in their youth...sick and languid" wanting only "to lounge upon a sofa because they have no strength for the duties

of life."[67] They must restore their own health and vigor before becoming pregnant.

The second step was getting women to take responsibility for their own bodies. Mary Gove taught women the natural laws of anatomy and physiology. She explained that violation of these laws brought disease; it was not just a result of being female as they had been told.[68] Self-confidence and freedom from fear through education would result from her program because she had found that "one of the pleasantest fruits of knowledge is that we become self-dependent."[69]

Next, women must establish the proper daily regimen for good health. A daily bath was essential not only for "comfort and decency," but because it was "indispensable to health."[70] Gove thought that every house should have a bath, but realized that many women did not yet have these "conveniences." Some complained that they did not have time for a daily bath. No excuses were acceptable, however, for "anybody with life above a snail can get a pail or bowl of water and two towels, or one towel and a sponge, and ten minutes are all sufficient for a thorough bathing."[71] Women were to pay special attention to their diet and the air they breathed as well as to seek outdoor exercise.[72]

Finally, women must each have the courage to stand up to others of their sex who would weight them down with myths and misgivings about their health regimen. Negative thoughts regarding childbirth had to be squashed. Too many had listened to those who said "women must have a thousand and one pains if they have children;

these things are to be expected; they are a matter of course; who ever heard of having babies without suffering?"[73] When a woman said she had a child with no pain, people sneered and said, "Just like the animals!" Mary Gove challenged them, "Is it vulgar and indelicate because she does not endure pangs worse than those of death?"[74] She boldly declared that pregnancy and childbirth were "as natural functions as those of digestion." Citing the fact that the Indian woman "bears her babe, washes herself and her infant in the next running stream," and continues with her travelling party, she blamed a "luxurious civilization" for increasing all diseases, but especially those of gestation and parturition.[75]

The four steps--good health prior to pregnancy, education about one's body, establishing the proper daily regimen, and a positive attitude toward childbirth in the midst of a supportive environment--made Mary Gove a very successful obstetrician. Her patients had an average labor of twenty minutes to four and a half hours. The day after giving birth they got out of bed and took a bath and in the first week were up and around the house.[76]

Mary Gove challenged not only the doctors' therapeutic methods with her theories of natural childbirth and early ambulation, but she waged a crusade against another enemy of feminine health--prudery. Unfortunately, the much touted virtue of innocence had been interpreted to mean ignorance.[77] Women's "natural modesty" coupled with an all male medical world literally created deadly results; many women "would die before they would submit to examinations needful to their cure, by a male physician."[78] As a result vaginal infections,

prolapsed uteri, and menstrual difficulties went unmentioned and untreated. Dr. Charles Meigs, a prominent physician well aware that research into physical disorders could lead to their cure, was a creature of his time when he praised women who preferred to "suffer the extremity of danger and pain rather than waive those scruples of delicacy which prevent their maladies from being full exposed."[79]

Male doctors were not supposed to look at a female patient's genital organs, even during childbirth. They were to use what in professional jargon was called "the touch." The doctor lubricated his hand with lard or oil and put his hand "under the bedclothes" and then made conclusions based on what his sense of touch revealed to him.[80] The doctor became effectually blind and was supposed to look directly at the woman's face or at the ceiling so that she would not think he had at any time seen her genitalia. In 1851 the newly formed American Medical Association declared that it was not necessary to expose a patient in childbirth, and if a physician could not conduct labor by touch alone "he was unfit to practice."[81] They were anxious to reassure patients and remind doctors that women need not sacrifice their modesty to receive treatment for gynecological problems.[82] They were caught in a web of their own weaving. If they were not proper then women physicians would take over, yet being proper meant that the vast majority of women suffered needlessly.

Mary Gove was also concerned about the frequent charges that male doctors sometimes abused their special relationships with female patients and made sexual advances.[83] She felt many of these problems could be solved if women became doctors. Turning the

restrictive concept of "woman's sphere" to her advantage, she declared that women were "peculiarly fitted to practice the art of healing" because "in sickness we want sympathy and kindness" and "woman's business" was "to love."[84] Mary Gove conceded that when medicine consisted of "bleeding and poisoning" the patient, certainly it was not within the woman's sphere, but now that the techniques had been improved (i.e. the water cure) women should be involved.[85] Claiming that she was not pleading for "equality of the sexes," she proclaimed that there were "many conditions in which woman" might "serve as a physician with more propriety than man," especially in obstetrics.[86] She used the prudery issue against her foes, insisting that there was "a propriety, a delicacy, a decency in a woman being the medical advisor of her own sex."[87]

There was, however, the immediate problem of getting medical education for women when most medical colleges were closed to them.[88] She thought it essential that women be educated as physicians and threatened that "if our medical colleges are not soon opened to woman, others will be founded where she will be educated. The spirit of the age will not any longer submit to bonds."[89] At present, however, there were no "long established institutions, no ancient and honorable societies" that accepted and educated women. An interim solution was self-education. Although men were "not yet corporately" ready to allow women to receive a medical education, Mary Gove felt that some "scientific men" were willing to help women in their quest for medical knowledge. Unfortunately, however, this private tutoring would still mean that women would be without diplomas.[90]

But women should not despair. She reminded women that "no alma mater nursed me." Women could compensate "by energy of will and perseverance in action for those advantages which are granted to men but denied to us." They would be pioneers, but Mary Gove reminded them of that unique role: "Fulton did not get a certificate to prove that he could build a steamboat. He built it. Priessnitz had no diploma--but he has won name and fame by his deed without it."[91]

Mary Gove had become one of the American water cure "giants" by 1846.[92] Many of her patients were from neighboring areas, but some came from as far away as Ohio, Kentucky, and the deep South.[93] To increase her audience she published Experience in Water Cure which reiterated much of what was in her Lectures to Ladies on Anatomy and Physiology, but added the basic water cure techniques.[94] She gave practical, home directions to women, discussed treatment of their special physical problems, claried confusing medical terminology, and wrote to her "sisters in all plainness of speech."[95] So many women, who were "ill and wretched, and feel life to be a burden instead of a blessing," were not free to go to a water cure house; but they were not without resources because they could use the facilities at home and with her instructions soon be healthy again. These women displayed "a heroism in the endurance of suffering equal to that of Washington or Bonaparte"; if they had the proper information "that same heroism will save them--will restore them to health and usefulness."[96]

In addition to managing the Tenth Street water cure house, Mary Gove established an extensive and successful practice by

correspondence.[97] She encouraged the readers of her book to write for individual consultation if she had not answered all their questions. Many women responded to this unique service in a world of separate spheres, modesty, and a male monopoly of medicine. Through an impersonal medium they could pour out their physical, emotional, and marital problems to a sympathetic woman. And she honestly and boldly answered their queries.[98]

She requested that women seeking advice should give her a complete medical history including their symptoms and all relevant facts. As she also had to earn a living, she told them to include five dollars with the first request, and a dollar for each subsequent one.[99] But she reminded her patients that the water cure was "the most economic system of medicine" because it supported "no druggists" and "few practitioners." Water was free and the best diet was "cheaper than the worse."[100]

Despite the obstacles that Mary Gove had confronted, she had found health and success in New York City. Optimistic about her future, she had high hopes for the advancement of women once their societally and self-imposed ignorance was thrust aside and replaced with individual responsibility and knowledge. Key to the progress of women was the removal of their physical burdens, exponentially increased because of current medical practices. She had dedicated herself to the medical education of women and had vowed that she would lay herself "on the altar and be burned with fire, if woman could be saved from the darkness of ignorance, and the untold horrors of

her diseases."[101] This was her mission now, her "great life-duty," her "one idea--Woman the Physician."[102]

Notes to Chapter V

[1]Water Cure Journal, October, 1851, pp. 73 and 75.

[2]The Weekly Herald, March 14, 1845, p. 86.

[3]See Chapter 3, Footnote 94.

[4]William Neal died at the age of seventy-six on December 1, 1844. The cause of death was recorded as "consumption." See Richards, "Nichols and Neal," p. 336. Mary wrote that she had felt "a fearful shuddering sorrow at the loss of my father." He had "shielded" her from Hiram. M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, pp. 237-8.

[5]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 227.

[6]Nichols' Journal, September, 1853, p. 45.

[7]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, pp. 252-3, and Letter from Mary Gove to John Neal dated February 1, 1842, in Richards, "Nichols and Neal," p. 352.

[8]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 254.

[9]Ibid., pp. 257 and 262.

[10]Ibid., p. 254.

[11]Ibid., pp. 260-1. Elma Gove was reunited with her mother on June 16, 1845. See Nichols' Journal, September, 1853, p. 45.

[12]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 263.

[13]Ibid., p. 269. The frostiness of her fellow boarders might have also resulted from her work as lecturer on anatomy and physiology. Elizabeth Blackwell received similar treatment while she was a student at Geneva Medical College. See Dorothy Clarke Wilson, Lone Woman: The Story of Elizabeth Blackwell, the First Woman Doctor (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1970), p. 160.

[14]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 269.

[15]Ibid., p. 271.

[16]Ibid., p. 264, and Nichols' Journal, September, 1853, p. 45.

[17]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 314.

[18]Ibid., p. 315.

[19]Ibid., p. 210, and M. G. Nichols, Experience in Water Cure, p. 29. The best recent work on the water cure is Harry B. Weiss and Howard R. Kemble, The Great American Water Cure Craze: A History of Hydropathy in the United States (Trenton, New Jersey: Past Time Press, 1967). For Priessnitz' biography, see letter of Andrew J. Colvin who had been at Grafenberg and interviewed Priessnitz, in American Phrenological Journal, Vol. 9, 1847, pp. 254-59.

[20]Perhaps Mary Gove knew Dr. Robert Wesselhoeft (1797-1852) who had been a Saxony lawyer before he came to the United States in 1840 as a political refugee. He studied medicine before moving to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he was a neighbor to Margaret Fuller and family physician to many, including the Peabody sisters. Perhaps he is the Dr. Robert Wessechaeft listed on the "Call to the Friends of Social Reform in New England" that also listed Mary Gove as signer. See The Phalanx, December 5, 1843, p. 44, and Weiss and Kemble, Water Cure Craze, pp. 209-218.

[21]Several of the students of Priessnitz felt it important to duplicate the surroundings at Graefenberg as closely as possible. See Weiss and Kemble, Water Cure Craze, pp. 214-8, and Brian S. Smith, A History of Malvern (Malvern: Alan Sutton and the Malvern Bookshop, 1978), pp. 195-212.

[22]Some of the more notable of his patients were Harriet Beecher Stowe and her husband, Calvin, and her sister, Catharine Beecher; the families of John C. Calhoun and Martin Van Buren; Francis Parkman; Fanny Fern and her husband James Parton; James Russell Lowell; Richard H. Dana; and William D. Howell. Weiss and Kemble, Water Cure Craze, pp. 214-218.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow suffered from "eyestrain" and had tried the water cure in Germany in 1842. When Dr. Wesselhoeft opened his water cure establishment in Brattleboro, Longfellow went there in August, 1845. His wife described his regimen in a letter dated August 7, 1845 to Anne Longfellow Pierce in Edward Wagenknecht, ed., Mrs. Longfellow: Selected Letters and Journals of Fanny Appleton Longfellow (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1956), p. 119. Longfellow wrote James Russell Lowell from Brattleboro, August 18, 1845, describing his therapy at "Wesselhoeft's 'Aquatic Institute'." He concluded, "I think very well of the Doctor....I think before the summer is out he will have effected some striking cures...altogether I am quite satisfied with the establishment." Andrew Hilen, ed., The Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Vol. III (1844-1856) (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. 83-85.

Kathryn Kish Sklar in Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1976), and in

"All Hail to Pure Cold Water" in American Heritage, December, 1974, pp. 64-69; 100-101, stresses the "female-oriented culture" of the water cure houses. This was more true in America than in Europe, but the presence of male patients and their acceptance of the water cure techniques should not be neglected. This was especially true of the early decades and in Europe where men had independent means that enabled them to take off several months to years to participate in the water cure treatment at Graefenberg and Malvern where the "Protestant work ethic" did not reach so deeply into society and a "leisure class of gentlemen" existed. (See Chapter XI for a discussion of the English water cure.)

Calvin Stowe was as enthusiastic as Catharine Beecher about the water cure and stayed at Brattleboro over a year, a month longer than his wife, Harriet, who was also an enthusiast, stayed there. See Weiss and Kemble, Water Cure Craze, pp. 214-216, and Johanna Johnston, Runaway to Heaven: The Story of Harriet Beecher Stowe and Her Era (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1963), pp. 167-178.

From my research into techniques and patients' responses (1845-1860), I would challenge Sklar's conclusions that the water cure houses "provided women with an opportunity to experience sensual pleasure...hydropathy centers were therefore unique in providing a socially approved sensual experience for women," (p. 207 in Beecher) and "...it nevertheless seems clear that women went to these centers to cure ailments connected with sexuality, and that Catharine Beecher's favorite spas differed from the disreputable ones mainly in their superior techniques for sublimation rather than their elimination of a sexually charged atmosphere" (p. 209 in Beecher).

It is certainly debatable, unless one accepts Freud's conclusion that all women were masochistic, whether having cold water injected into the vagina several times daily, or cold douches, wave-baths, or sitz baths, or dealing with a prolapsed uterus, excessive menstrual bleeding, menstrual cramps, ruined and torn insides because of excessive childbearing, or the symptoms of syphilis received from a diseased husband, was a "sensual experience."

A patient who had had her health restored would naturally have healthy sexual desires (if she could overcome contemporary society's conclusion that the normal woman did not have sexual needs), but I question Sklar's conclusion that the water cure process itself provided "a socially approved sensual experience for women."

Again it could be debated whether the water cure institutes were "socially approved" by contemporaries because "regular" doctors viewed hydropathic physicians as certainly "irregulars", if not quacks and frauds. Many upholders of morality viewed with alarm the fact that some of the water cure establishments dealt with both male and female patients and they might possibly be aware of or discuss their ailments with each other.

There was an openness to discuss physical problems that did not exist elsewhere in society, but this was largely the result of the presence of female physicians to deal with female patients.

[23]Weiss and Kemble, Water Cure Craze, p. 211 and M. G. Nichols, Experience in Water Cure, p. 30.

[24]Quoted in Weiss and Kemble, Water Cure Craze, p. 12.

[25]Today in hospitals the wet (or ice) pack treatment is still combined with "miracle" drugs to bring down high fevers, and the pediatrician, awakened in the middle of the night, tells the worried parent to place the child in the bathtub and fill it with warm water to help break high fever, after the proverbial aspirins are given. (Experience of the author with her own children.)

[26]Water Cure Journal, November 15, 1845, p. 15; and February 15, 1846, p. 95. See also M. G. Nichols, Experience in Water Cure, p. 30.

[27]Water Cure Journal, November 15, 1845, p. 15. It also commented on "the reasonableness of expense" as compared to Dr. Wesselhoeft's establishment.

[28]Ibid., January 1, 1846, p. 38.

[29]Ibid.

[30]M. G. Nichols, Experience in Water Cure, p. 30.

[31]Paula Blanchard, Margaret Fuller: From Transcendentalism to Revolution (New York: Delta/Seymour Lawrence, 1978), p. 230, and M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 271. Another reason she moved to New York was that she had been "told that in New York State my child will have the privilege of choosing the parent with whom to stay." Letter from Mary Gove to John Neal, February 1, 1842, in Richards, "Nichols and Neal," p. 353.

[32]On Dr. Joel Shew, see American Phrenological Journal, Vol. 11, 1849, pp. 297-300, and Weiss and Kemble, Water Cure Craze, pp. 69-71.

The Croton Aqueduct which was over forty miles long and brought an abundant and pure water supply to New York City was completed in 1842 "and was a major step in making New York a true metropolis." Jerry E. Patterson, The City of New York: A History Illustrated from the Collection of The Museum of the City of New York (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1978), p. 114. See also The New York Tribune, October 15, 1842, p. 1.

[33]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 281.

[34]Little has been written on Marx Edgeworth Lazarus, but there has been some work done on his family including his maternal Mordecai family. See Edgar E. MacDonald, The Education of the Heart: The Correspondence of Rachel Mordecai Lazarus and Maria Edgeworth (Chapel Hill; The University of North Carolina Press, 1977); Ruth

K. Nuermberger, "Some Notes on the Mordecai Family," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, October, 1941, pp. 364-73; and Malcolm H. Stern, Americans of Jewish Descent: A Compendium of Genealogy (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1960), p. 108. His mother named him for Maria Edgeworth with whom she had developed a close friendship through correspondence.

[35]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 284.

[36]Ibid., p. 295.

[37]Ibid., p. 288.

[38]Ibid., p. 289.

[39]Ibid., p. 296.

[40]Ibid.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Ibid., p. 299.

[44]Ibid., p. 295.

[45]Ibid., p. 309.

[46]Sarah Josepha Hale, Woman's Record, p. 757.

[47]Water Cure Journal, June 1, 1846, p. 16.

[48]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 311.

[49]John Blake, "Health Reform," p. 45. Walters, American Reformers, p. 154, wrote, "To put it cynically, the Graham regiment had offered fewer entrepreneurial opportunities. Other than writing and lecturing there was little one could do to make a career out of extending its principles....Hydropathy, however, required building and operating fairsized establishments, with facilities for patients and for students of the art....Mary Gove Nichols never entirely lost her early health reform principles; what is significant is the way she, and others like her, subordinated and reshaped them."

[50]Water Cure Journal, July, 1851, p. 36.

[51]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, pp. 311 and 319; and Water Cure Journal, October, 1849, p. 123; and July, 1852, p. 13.

[52]Water Cure Journal, February 15, 1846, p. 93.

[53]Ibid., and January 1, 1846, p. 38.

[54]Letter from Mary Gove to James Russell Lowell, June 30, 1843. Houghton Library, Harvard University.

[55]Richard W. Wertz and Dorothy C. Wertz, Lying-In: A History of Childbirth in America (New York: The Free Press, 1977), p. 128. The Wertzs' called puerperal fever "the classic example of iatrogenic disease--that is, disease caused by medical treatment itself."

[56]Miriam Rossiter Small, Oliver Wendell Holmes (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1962), p. 52.

[57]Dr. Charles Meigs, a distinguished Philadelphia physician and teacher, virulently attacked Holmes; "I prefer to attribute them (deaths from puerperal fever) to accident, or Providence, of which I can form a conception, rather than to contagion of which I cannot form any clear idea..." Quoted in Ibid., p. 53. Meigs was especially upset by Holmes' implication that a doctor's hands could be dirty. The germ theory was not widely accepted until the 1870s.

[58]See Leon S. Bryan, Jr., "Blood-Letting in American Medicine, 1830-1892," Bulletin of the History of Medicine, November-December, 1964, pp. 516-529. Bryan stated that it was not until the 1870s and '80s that the use of blood-letting was re-evaluated. It was still used in the 1890s by prominent doctors for a variety of diseases.

[59]Quoted in William G. Rothstein, American Physicians, p. 47. One who was not so fortunate was Kitty Chase, the first wife of Salmon P. Chase who was later Secretary of Treasury under Lincoln and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. In 1837 Kitty Chase had puerperal fever. A team of four doctors over several days took copious amounts of blood until she finally collapsed and died (p. 48).

[60]Wertz and Wertz, Lying-In, p. 68.

[61]Ann Douglas Wood, "'The Fashionable Diseases': Women's Complaints and Their Treatment in Nineteenth-Century America," in Clio's Consciousness Raised, ed. by Lois Banner and Mary Hartman (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1974), p. 4.

[62]Wertz and Wertz, Lying-In, p. 68.

[63]M. G. Nichols, Experience in Water Cure, p. 10.

[64]Ibid., p. 67.

[65]Ibid.

G.J. Barker-Benfield in The Horrors of the Half-Known Life: Male Attitudes Toward Women and Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century America (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1976) deals with "Sexual Surgery" but dates it from the 1860s. He stated that "Clitoridectomy was the first operation performed to check woman's mental disorder. Invented by an English gynecologist in 1858, it began in America in the late 1860s and was performed at least until 1904 and perhaps until 1925" (p. 120). "'Female castration', or 'oophorectomy' or 'normal ovariotomy' was a much more widespread and frequently performed operation than clitoridectomy. It was first performed in 1872, flourished between 1880 and 1900, and slackened pace only in the first decade of the twentieth century. Women were still being castrated for psychological disorders as late as 1946" (p. 121).

[66]Drs. Robert Wesselhoeft, Joel Shew, et al., The Water-Cure In America: Over Three Hundred Cases of Various Diseases Treated with Water (New York: Fowlers and Wells, Publishers, 1852), p. 309. This book presented cases from twenty-seven hydropaths. Mary Gove Nichols was the only woman physician included and she was entitled "Mrs. Dr. Nichols."

[67]M. G. Nichols, Experience in Water Cure, p. 50.

[68]Ibid., p. 81.

[69]Ibid., p. 55.

[70]Ibid., p. 86.

[71]Ibid., p. 87.

[72]Ibid., p. 74.

[73]Ibid., p. 51.

[74]Wesselhoeft, et al., The Water-Cure in America, p. 310.

[75]M. G. Nichols, Experience in Water Cure, p. 73. Wertz and Wertz in Lying-In wrote that in 1939 "Margaret Mead, using knowledge gained in her anthropological researches, demanded and gained the conditions for an unanesthetized delivery in a New York hospital. In her writings, she urged other women to overcome the 'male myth' of pain in birth, for, as she remarked in her autobiography...'I have never heard primitive women describe the pains of childbirth....'", p. 180.

[76]M. G. Nichols, Experience in Water Cure, p. 74.

John Blake, Chief of the History of Medicine at the National Library of Medicine, wrote in 1961 that Mary Gove Nichols' "advocacy of prepartum care for pregnant women, of proper mental and physical preparation, of 'natural childbirth', and early ambulation strike a modern and still controversial not." Blake, "Nichols," p. 234.

Chapter VI "Natural Childbirth" in Wertz and Wertz, Lying-In, traced the variety of frequently contradicting aims that lead after World War II to the increasing popularity of the Read and Lamaze method of natural or prepared childbirth, which reaffirm the basic concepted that Mary Gove promoted (pp. 178-200). See also Grantly Dick-Read, Childbirth Without Fear (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), and Fernand Lamaze, Painless Childbirth: Psychoprophylactic Method (New York: Pocket Books, 1965).

[77]M. G. Nichols, Experience in Water Cure, pp. 17-18. See Haller and Haller, The Physician and Sexuality, Chapter 3; and Milton Rugoff, Prudery and Passion: Sexuality in Victorian America (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1971), Part I.

[78]M. G. Nichols, Experience in Water Cure, p. 17.

[79]Quoted in Wertz and Wertz, Lying-In, p. 77.

[80]Ibid., p. 77. The doctor was told to "proceed with the examination as if it were a simple ordinary proceeding. By exhibiting no hurry, and appearing to think it nothing unusual or in any way strange, the female herself will cease to think it so and will not be flurried or shocked" (p. 83).

[81]Ibid., p. 86.

The AMA decision was a result of a controversy in Buffalo when in 1850 Dr. James White had introduced "demonstrative midwifery", a procedure that was widely used in European medical schools in which doctors actually saw the birth of the child. See Wertz and Wertz, Lying-In, pp. 85-87, and Jane B. Donegan, "Man-Midwifery and the Delicacy of the Sexes," in Carol V. R. George, "Remember the Ladies": New Perspectives on Women in American History--Essays in Honor of Nelson Manfred Blake (Syracuse University Press, 1975), pp. 103-109.

[82]Donegan, "Man-Midwifery," pp. 107-9. Donegan points out that "Curiously, there was a marked similarity between the arguments employed by advocates of female midwifery and those of the doctors determined to keep women out of the profession. Both groups spoke in terms of women's place in society; to the one group, morality and modesty were best served with women practicing obstetrics, while to the other, these same qualities were violated when women went against their feminine nature and 'unsexed' themselves by venturing beyond their sphere into a man's world."

[83]In 1848 Samuel Gregory, a physiology lecturer, tried to get support to establish a woman's medical college because of the abuse women had to suffer from male doctors. He told shocking stories of doctors "inflamed with thoughts of well shaped bodies of women they have delivered, handled, hung over for hours, secretly glorying in the privilege, have to their patients, as priests to their penitents,

pressed for accommodation, and driven to adultery and madness, where they were thought most innocently occupied." See Jane B. Donegan, Women and Men Midwives: Medicine, Morality, and Misogyny in Early America (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1978), p. 198, and Mary Roth Walsh, "Doctors Wanted: No Women Need Apply"--Sexual Barriers in the Medical Profession, 1835-1975 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 38. Gregory was quoting Thomas Ewell's evidence gathered in 1817 when he was trying to get the government to sponsor a midwifery school.

[84]Water Cure Journal, October, 1851, p. 74.

[85]M. G. Nichols, Experience in Water Cure, p. 17.

[86]Ibid., p. 24, and Water Cure Journal, October, 1851, p. 73.

[87]M. G. Nichols, Experience in Water Cure, p. 17. Mary Gove was listed as a "physician" by November, 1845. Elizabeth Blackwell did not graduate from Geneva Medical College until 1849, and then the number increased annually. See Regina Markell Morantz in "The 'Connecting Link': The Case for the Woman Doctor in Nineteenth Century America" in Judith Walzer Leavitt and Ronald L. Numbers, Sickness and Health in America, p. 118, who wrote, "The arguments with which they chose to justify themselves reveal women physicians both as ideological innovators and as daughters of their century." Morantz based her arguments on those who graduated from some medical school and therefore are all "post-Mary Gove." Gove is only briefly mentioned and is labelled a "health reformer" not a physician.

[88]See Walsh,"Doctors Wanted": No Women Need Apply for a thorough study of the struggle of women to gain a medical education and acceptance in the profession.

Mary Gove was closely linked with the struggles of two early women doctors to get a medical education. She was aware that Harriot K. Hunt, with the support of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, had been rejected admission to Harvard Medical School in 1847 and in 1850. Anna Blackwell, Elizabeth's oldest sister, was a patient of Mary Gove in the spring of 1847 while Elizabeth was trying to find a medical school that would accept her. Letter of Sarah Helen Whitman to J.H. Ingram, March 2, 1877, Ingram-Poe Collection. Alderman Library, The University of Virginia.

[89]M. G. Nichols, Experience in Water Cure, p. 32.

[90]Ibid., p. 18.

[91]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 318, and M. G. Nichols, Experience in Water Cure, Preface, and pp. 18-9.

[92]Weiss and Kemble, Water Cure Craze, p. 69, lists Mary Gove as one of four "giants" in America.

[93]M. G. Nichols, Experience in Water Cure, p. 30.

[94]Experience in Water Cure was first published in 1849 after major portions of it had been published in The Water Cure Journal. Additional editions were published in 1850, 1851, 1852, and 1853.

[95]M. G. Nichols, Experience in Water Cure, p. 61.

[96]Ibid., p. 60.

[97]Ibid., p. 30.

[98]This aspect of her profession appears to be a "first." I have been unable to locate any other early woman physician who was involved in practice by mail. Unfortunately, her correspondence with patients has not survived. It would be a fascinating study of nineteenth century women's health and intimate concerns. She apparently was involved in what today would be called marital counselling as well as giving medical advice. She did quote from some of these letters in Experience in Water Cure and in Marriage (see Chapter VII).

[99]M. G. Nichols, Experience in Water Cure. Preface.

[100]Ibid., p. 12.

[101]Ibid., p. 29.

[102]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 320, and Water Cure Journal, October, 1851, p. 73.

CHAPTER VI

WRITING, MY TRUE PASSION

> Writing was my solace in sorrow, my relaxation from labor, my amusement, in short, my attraction....I wrote hastily, and without proper care, being more anxious 'to point a moral' than 'to adorn a tale.' ...I wrote...with interruptions almost at every line...."[1]

With amazing speed for a separated, slandered, and tubercular woman, Mary Gove had established herself in New York City in 1846. Within six months of her arrival she was not only a successful water cure physician, but also was included in the select New York "Literati."[2] From childhood, even before she could write her name, her "highest ambition" had been to write a book.[3] By the time she was eighteen, she had published stories and poems in local newspapers and magazines. Writing, in Fourierite terms, was her "true passion" and "attraction," the mission of her life.[4] It was also immensely satisfying to get paid for doing what she loved most to do, and the money became an important part of her plan for survival.[5]

But it became increasingly difficult for Mary Gove to find time to write. In addition to health problems, accumulating legal expenses, and Hiram's harassment and accusations that she was running a

brothel, she had responsibilities as housekeeper, hydropathic physician, and lecturer.[6] But she concluded that "people are strangely successful in getting what they want."[7] Always pressed for time and frequently interrupted, she wrote quickly and made few revisions. Yet even under these conditions, she published, stories, reviews, editorials, and poems in the leading magazines and journals.[8]

Mary Gove had already met with some success in writing before she came to New York City. In September 1844 her first short story appeared in the popular and influential Godey's Lady's Book whose circulation exceeded 150,000.[9] Sarah Josepha Hale, its editor, who eventually published five of her short stories, declared that "few, among living women, deserve more respect" that Mary Gove. This was high praise indeed for a much maligned woman from one whose career was a monument to respectability.[10]

Always interested in spreading her philosophy, all of the stories that Mary Gove published in Godey's (under the pseudonym of Mary Orme) dealt with specific pitfalls and problems of traditional marriage and were unique in their challenge to the ideology of the time.[11] The first one argued against a sex segregated world, but if the reader could not accept that radical concept, Gove pointed out in the other stories that even within the traditional division of spheres women were being cheated. If one believed that Providence and Nature had created men for rational thinking and intellect and women for emotional feelings and love, she questioned how this had practically worked out. The most important love relationship for a woman was her husband. Yet because of the economic dependence of women, they had to marry for financial security, not for love.

The Godey's stories did not make a ringing declaration of the need for economic independence for women so they could marry for love (as she proclaimed elsewhere), but came at the problem from another perspective, recording the misery that came to women who married for financial, not emotional, support. In "Marrying a Genius" she examined the "prejudice against talented women" and tried to refute the belief that they could not successfully combine marriage and career.[12] When a young woman rejected her beloved but poor poet in "The Artist" and married her wealthy suitor, the results of her "bargain" were an "idiot child", the bankruptcy and suicide of her husband, and her own early death in an obscure village with no friends to follow her to her grave.[13] In "Mary Pierson" Gove gave victims of unrequited love sound psychological advice when she told them to fight against depression with increased and useful activity because it was "a thousand times better to fight than yield."[14]

Mary Gove published articles and poems in John O'Sullivan's The United States Magazine and Democratic Review and in George Hooker Colton's The American Review: A Whig Journal of Political, Literary Art, and Science, a magazine "of the higher (that is to say, of the five dollar) class."[15] The American Review series, "Passages from the Life of a Medical Eclectic", were written in a style quite different from her Godey's Lady's Book stories. They were a mosaic of her reform concerns and contained witty asides on contemporary society.[16]

During her starving time in New York City, Mary Gove had taken a novel that she had written the previous year "on backs of letters, odd half sheets, and some pretty good brown paper" to Harper

and Brothers, one of the largest publishing houses in the world.[17] James Harper had gently teased her upon seeing the state of her manuscript and declared that it could only be the work "of genius." When she returned a week later Harper offered her $100 "for all that waste paper" she had "spoiled."[18]

Harper and Brothers published her first novel, Uncle John; or "It is Too Much Trouble" in the spring of 1846 under her pseudonym, Mary Orme. In the book Gove had called upon her repertoire of homilies, the use of two contrasting women--one lovely but frivolous and unhappy and the other plain but wise and happy--and a discussion of her favorite themes, especially "the origin of the popular prejudice against sensible women."[19] A woman could have the "pencil of Titian" or "the pen of De Staël", but men only wanted a cook or a nurse for a wife.[20] Then if a woman deviated from "the prescribed tract," she was "lashed back with the scorpion whip of public opinion."[21]

In addition to her usual themes, Gove introduced a new one into Uncle John, that of the "fallen" woman whom a double moral standard dealt with harshly. In the novel a kind, sweet Irish chambermaid had an illegitimate child. The father of the child was "an honorable man" who would continue to be welcomed everywhere, while the mother was called "that vile thing."[22] Yet Gove let no real disaster come to the chambermaid. Instead she made her defiant and pointed out that she had advantages over some married women because she had her health, her friends, her job, and her child. To Mary Gove who had had to kidnap her own child to obtain custody, this last point was significant.

The reviews of Uncle John were favorable. The American Review stated that it had a "purpose", indeed a "high one", and that was a compliment "at a time like this, when we are literally overwhelmed with a dishwater flood of aimless twattle." Gove had accompanied her vital truths with a "pleasant wit," but the reviewer felt "occasional ultraisms" did fault the book.[23] Sarah Hale's review was concise and declared Uncle John was "a very entertaining and well-written story."[24]

In the midst of her writing, reforming, lecturing, and healing, Mary Gove found her life in New York City stimulating and exciting, if hectic, because her Tenth Street home housed a mixture of fascinating individualists. She became the "centre of a little group of very clever people--vegetarians, hydropathists, socialists, Fourierists, quite in advance of their age, but not the less interesting," and she admitted that each member of her Tenth Street family was "a character."[25] Individualists and unorthodox boarders made her home "a general depot of ultraism in thought," yet there was seldom unanimity on any of the contemporary issues.[26] They agreed to disagree; the strong bond that held them together was an open-mindedness and personal fondness which "forgave heresies, when toleration failed for want of principle."[27] They had their own coterie of friends who gathered at Tenth Street on Saturday nights to relax, converse, dance, or listen to an informal recital. Edgar Allan Poe and Herman Melville were occasional callers, and the poets R. H. Stoddard and Frances Osgood were her patients as well as friends. Dr. Lazarus also had connections with the Associationists and Albert Brisbane and Horace Greeley frequently dropped

by.[28] Several of the group were music critics as well as gifted amateur musicians and Mary Gove, the former Quaker, learned to love music when some of the finest New York musicians visited her home. She sat in raptured silence at the feet of the gifted violinist Sivori, a student of Paganini, as he improvised simple and beautiful melodies for her.[29]

Mary Gove's was not the only gathering place in New York City in the 1840s where advanced thinkers, reformers, editors, artists, poets, musicians, and writers gathered. The most popular and best known of these soirees were those of Anne Charlotte Lynch, a schoolteacher and poet, who had moved with her widowed mother to the city in 1845. Without family connections or wealth, but genuinely interested in people and ideas, she held open house where "men and women of genius" could gather and exchange ideas.[30] An ideal person to establish a salon, she held liberal views, yet was the pinacle of respectability. Indeed, to receive an invitation to a Lynch reception "was an evidence of distinction" because "she was strict in drawing the moral as well as the intellectual line."[31] Her social exclusiveness increased the value of her invitations and she filled her drawing rooms each Saturday night with the brightest of the American cultural elite.

Lynch's soirees differed from the salons associated with superb food and excellent wines, for hers possessed only the simpliest of accouterments. She served no food, "not even those poor shadows of refreshments, cakes and lemonade."[32] Instead she simply offered two warmed parlors where the intellectual elite could gather in a

relaxed and pleasant setting. Her success was based on her guest list and their two or three hours of sparkling, animated conversation, recitation of their works, music, and games of Twenty Questions and Charades.[33] One guest concluded, "Everybody came away not only charmed, but encouraged; thinking better of himself, and by consequence, better of his fellow-creatures."[34]

In 1846, Mary Gove was a frequent guest of Anne Lynch, and she moved easily within four wide circles that frequently overlapped--the ultra reformers, the New York Literati, the health seekers and reformers, and a unique group of female intellectuals and successful career women. Throughout most of her life Gove moved in the circles of advanced male thinkers, frequently one of the few women included. Yet at this brief and key time in her development, she found in Anne Lynch's parlors a group of women who were also articulate about women's role in society. Here Mary Gove did not have to be defensive about her own life; here she could discuss, expand, and hone her ideas. Few reached the same final conclusions, but all were in the midst of exploring, through their personal lives as well as their professional work, a new concept of womanhood.

It was difficult to find a "typical" Victorian housewife and mother on the remembered guest list of Anne Lynch. Mary Gove visited and exchanged ideas with such women as Lydia Maria Child, Margaret Fuller, Catharine Sedgwick, Elizabeth Oakes Smith, and Elizabeth Ellet.[35] Most of the women were single, separated, or had husbands who could not support them. All had made, or would make in the next few years, a written statement challenging some aspect of the traditional

role of women.[36] Yet none felt comfortable in the organized women's movement which would soon emerge; some even harshly criticized it.[37] These women drew comfort and support from one another as well as from their combined knowledge of the European feminists--Wollstonecraft, de Staël, Roland, Edgeworth, Wright, Sand, and Martineau. Although their concerns sometimes reflected their own self interest, a plea for the "woman of genius" to be accepted as an equal among male thinkers, they provided the seed bed that later brought forth a harvest for the average American woman. They were seldom bold or radical enough to confront the total image of "True Womanhood," but they were all busily chipping away at its edges.

Edgar Allan Poe was also a guest of Anne Lynch in 1846 and found his life strangely entwined with Mary Gove. Each aided the other at the time, and each helped the reputation of the other for posterity. In October 1845 Poe had published Mary Gove's article, "The Gift of Prophecy" in The Broadway Journal. Perhaps the imagery of the second sentence as well as the mysterious psychic forces with which it dealt, a subject that he explored in several of his stories, attracted him.[38] It began: "Our life is hid. Shadows dark as the raven's wing shut us in, and shut us out from what is within--from the only substantial." Claiming to have had the "gift of prophecy" from youth, the author revealed that one of her most vivid experiences had occurred when she was recovering from a severe illness. She had a vision in which she saw "a scroll, written in light, with the deeds of years engraven on it. What no one had done, I saw with mid-day clearness that I should do." Her vision had since been fulfilled.

The author recorded many times when her prophetic sight had been opened through Mesmerism. Many contemporaries tried to account for clairvoyance "neurologically, or mesmerically, but their explanations needed explaining as much as my phenomena." She confidently wrote, "I know that I am, that my gift is."[39]

Since Gove had used the pseudonym Mary Orme, Poe had not identified her as the author until they met early in 1846. She had been publishing "Passages from the Life of a Medical Eclectic" in the same magazine in which the year before "The Raven" had first appeared.[40] With its editor, George Hooker Colton, and several others, Mary Gove made the sixteen mile trip from the city to the Fordham cottage where Poe and his wife, Virginia, had moved in May 1846. Virginia Poe, suffering from tuberculosis, "was almost a disrobed spirit," and her "pale face...brilliant eyes and raven hair gave her an unearthly look." When Poe's child bride "coughed it was made certain that she was rapidly passing away."[41]

The lovely spring weather enticed Poe to invite his guests away from the small cottage and the ill woman. As they walked through the woods, the men decided to play "a game of leaping." Poe outdistanced them all, but in his victory jump he "burst his gaiters, long worn and carefully kept." In his poverty he had no other shoes and no money with which to replace them. His mother-in-law, Marie Clemm, pleaded with Mary Gove to try to get Colton to buy one of Poe's poems, so he could get some new shoes.[42]

Because of his poverty and his wife's illness, Poe was very depressed at this time and had been unable to write. Gove's compassion

for his situation touched him and he gave her a volume of his poems, after writing her name in it.[43] He also paid her the high compliment of including her as the third of twelve women he presented in his famous series "The Literati of New York City" which he subtitled "Honest Opinions at Random respecting their Authorial Merits, with Occasional Words of Personality."[44] Poe wrote in Godey's Lady's Book that Mary Gove had "written many excellent papers for the magazines" usually upon subjects that were "tinctured with the mysticism of the transcendentalists," but were "truly imaginative." This short, "somewhat thin" woman with "dark hair and keen, intelligent black eyes" wrote in a style "quite remarkable for its luminousness and precision--two qualities very rare with her sex." He also noted that she was better known to some for her lectures to women on physiology, mesmerism, "and other similar themes." She conversed "well and with enthusiasm" and Poe concluded that Mary Gove was "in many respects a very interesting woman."[45]

On two subsequent visits Edgar Poe "grew very confidential" with Mary Gove as they discussed why literary critics sold their opinions. Poe replied that though it was "an unpardonable sin", sometimes it was necessary, and then "turned almost fiercely" upon her, his eyes piercing her and exclaimed, "Would you blame a man for not allowing his sick wife to starve?"[46] After he calmed down, they walked further along the hillside and talked of the motivation of writers. He confessed, "I love fame--I dote on it--I idolize it--I would drink to the very dregs the glorious intoxication." Fame and glory were "life-giving breath,

and living blood" and he felt no man truly lived unless he was famous.[47]

Mary Gove's visit to the Poes in early December 1846 greatly disturbed her. Poverty still enveloped them and Virginia was dying, the biting cold intensifying "the dreadful chills that accompany the hectic fever of consumption."[48] Gove described the scene that no one else bothered to record as Virginia "lay on the straw bed, wrapped in her husband's great-coat, with a large tortoise-shell cat on her bosom." The cat seemed aware of "her great usefulness" because "the coat and the cat were the sufferer's only means of warmth, except as her husband held her hands, and her mother her feet."[49]

Immediately upon her return to the city, Mary Gove tried to get assistance for the Poes.[50] She went to her friend Marie Louise Shew who had sustained her in her early days in New York City and "whose heart and hand were ever open to the poor and miserable."[51] Shew took the down comforter from her own bed, gathered other bed clothes, raised sixty dollars, and took them to the Poes. When she saw their suffering, she watched over them "as a mother watches over her babe." She nursed Virginia Poe until she died on January 30, 1847, and then "dressed her for the grave in beautiful linen."[52]

For Edgar Allan Poe, himself ill, Virginia's death had been an end to the special agony of watching a loved one died; it increased his despair and despondency because all the women he had deeply loved seemed "to vanish."[53] Female sympathy had always been essential to him, and now he turned to the compassionate Marie Louise Shew, even writing several poems to her.[54] He became so dependent upon her that

she finally had to end the relationship in June 1848. Accepting her decision because of her "unselfish care" of him "in the past," he prophesized, "Unless some true and tender, and pure womanly love saves me, I shall hardly last a year longer alive!"[55] Poe would die a year and three months later.[56]

In her "Passages from the Life of a Medical Eclectic," Mary Gove had written that doctors had a special vantage point from which to view life--they saw the extenuating circumstances that were often hidden from the casual observer.[57] She explained that it was hard to be judgmental when one knew the difficulties with which people had to deal. Just as disease had symptoms and a cause, physicians were aware that behind the outward behavior of people were many motivating factors. She knew intimately the desperation of poverty and illness. As she saw Poe watch his lovely young wife fade into the slow, agonizing, and bloody death from tuberculosis, as she saw what financial need did to make him prostitute his standards and force him to praise mediocre writers, she could only have compassion for the man whom others maligned because all they saw was the erratic behavior. While others silently stood by, she got assistance for the dying Virginia and the distraught Edgar. She stoutly defended Edgar Allan Poe even after his death, when he could be of no earthly help to her and when defending the drunken author could bring condemnation upon her. Yet her unselfish response, unbeknownst to her, would serve to keep her from an impersonal oblivion.[58]

Notes to Chapter VI

[1]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, pp. 321 and 312.

[2]See the famous articles by Edgar Allan Poe on "The Literati of New York City," Godey's Lady's Book, May, 1846, pp. 194-201; June, 1846, pp. 266-272; July, 1846, pp. 13-19; August, 1846, pp. 72-78; September, 1846, pp. 126-133; and October, 1846, pp. 157-162.

[3]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 44.

[4]Ibid., p. 321

[5]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 426.

[6]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 312.

[7]Ibid., p. 321.

[8]T. L. Nichols included a long bibliography of Mary's published materials from this time period in which she used various pen names. Although the pen names were not listed, the name of the article, the magazine or newspaper in which it was published, and the price she was paid were given for twenty-four articles and Thomas declared there were three more pages of bibliography in his possession. See T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, pp. 426-7.

[9]For the popularity of Godey's Lady's Book and its circulation, see Robert Lacour-Gayet, Everyday Life in the United States before the Civil War, 1830-1860 (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1969), p. 247.

[10]Sarah Josepha Hale, Woman's Record; or, Sketches of all Distinguished Women, from "The Beginning" till A.D. 1850, Arranged in Four Eras, with Selections from Female Writers of Every Age (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1853), p. 757, and Mary Alice Wyman, ed., Selections from the Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924), p. 98.

Sarah Hale, like many of this generation of women, was inconsistent in her approach to woman's role in society. She campaigned to remove the stigma that society placed on educated woman, the "bluestocking," yet she believed the true woman's place was the home. She believed that female modesty should be protected by women physicians and, therefore, endorsed Mary Gove's pioneering work in that cause. Yet it is questionable that she would have praised the post-1853 Gove. Since Hale thought Lucretia Mott's concept of an equal marriage was "a degrading idea" that "would disorganize society", it is most probable that she would have been appalled by Gove's concept of free love. For Hale on Mott, see Woman's Record, p. 753.

See Glenda Gates Riley, "The Subtle Subersion: Changes in the Traditionalist Image of the American Woman," The Historian, Vol. 32 (February, 1970), 210-227, for more insight on Sarah Hale.

[11]The five stories that Mary Gove published in Godey's Lady's Book were under the pseudonym of Mary Orme. The stories were:
"Marrying a Genius," September, 1844, pp. 104-7.
"The Artist," April, 1845, pp. 154-6.
"The Evil and the Good," July, 1845, pp. 36-8.
"Mary Pierson," January, 1846, pp. 39-41.
"Minna Harmon or the Ideal and the Practical," December, 1848, pp. 335-8.

[12]Orme, "Marrying a Genius," pp. 104-7. This is a theme that Mary Gove pursued in several of her 1840s works of fiction. It is an adaptation of the protest that Madame de Staël had made in her novel, Corinne, published in 1807, against the untenable position of the extraordinary woman matched against society and ordinary men. See J. Christopher Herold, Mistress to an Age: A Life of Madame de Staël (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1958).
Gove was familiar with Madame de Staël's works and specifically mentioned her in several of her fictional works. The most complete discussion is in her novel, Uncle John.

[13]Orme, "The Artist," April, 1845, pp. 154-6.

[14]Orme, "Mary Pierson," January, 1846, pp. 39-41.

[15]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 289. She published an article (which I have been unable to locate) and a poem, "Providence," in The United States Magazine and Democratic Review, February, 1846, p. 141. (She used the name Mary Orme on the poem.) The description of the American Review comes from Poe, "Literati," May, 1846, p. 195.

[16](Unsigned) "Passages from the Life of a Medical Eclectic," The American Review: A Whig Journal of Political, Literary, Art, and Science, April, 1846, pp. 374-383; May, 1846, pp. 469-479; July, 1846, pp. 53-64; September, 1846, pp. 264-275.

[17]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 297.

[18]Ibid., p. 298.

[19]Mary Orme, Uncle John; or, "It is Too Much Trouble" (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1846), p. 48.

[20]Ibid., pp. 51-2

[21]Ibid., p. 51.

[22]Ibid., pp. 20-22.

[23]"Review of Uncle John," The American Review, May, 1846, pp. 562-3.

[24]"Editor's Book Table," Godey's Lady's Book, Vol. 32, 1846, p. 287.

[25]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 89, and M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 323.

[26]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 324.

[27]Ibid., p. 323.

[28]See T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, pp. 89 and 426; M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 323; and Letter from Mary Gove Nichols to Alonzo Lewis, March 13th (no year given, but from this period in New York), Alderman Library, The University of Virginia.

[29]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 324.

[30]See Susan Edmiston and Linda D. Cirino, Literary New York: A History and Guide (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1976), pp. 38-39; Madeleine B. Stern, "The House of the Expanding Doors; Anne Lynch's Soirees, 1846," New York History, January, 1942, pp. 42-51; Poe, "Literati," September, 1846, pp. 133-4; and John S. Hart, The Female Prose Writers of America (Philadelphia: E. H. Butler and Company, 1864), p. 345.

[31]Mary Elizabeth Wilson Sherwood, An Epistle to Posterity: Being Rambling Recollections of Many Years of My Life (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1897), p. 128. Mary Sherwood was the grandmother of the playwright Robert E. Sherwood and had been a guest of Anne Lynch Botta. (Lynch had married Vincenzo Botta in 1865.)

Wyman, Elizabeth Oakes Smith, p. 88. See also Letter of Mary Gove Nichols to John Ingram, November 28, 1874: "Mrs Anne Lynch Botta...knows all literary people who are worth knowing." Alderman Library, The University of Virginia.

Richard Henry Stoddard wrote that to meet Lynch "was a distinction, since in meeting her one met her friends, the least of whom was worth knowing," Stoddard, "Mrs. Botta and Her Friends," The Independent, February 1, 1894, p. 145.

[32]Hart, Female Prose Writers, p. 347.

[33]Ralph Waldo Emerson called Anne Lynch's home "The House of Expanding Doors." A typical guest list in the late 1840s included such notables as Horace Greeley, Frances Osgood, Albert Brisbane, Mary Hewitt, Charles A. Dana, Ann Stephens, William Cullen Bryant, Grace Greenwood, Rufus Griswold, Dr. Thomas Dunn English, Richard Henry Stoddard, N. P. Willis, Dr. John W. Francis, Cassius Clay, and when in town Emerson, John Neal, and Bronson Alcott. See Stern, "Anne Lynch's Soirees," pp. 47-8.

[34]Sara Agnes Pryor, My Day: Reminiscences of a Long Life (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1909), p. 405.

[35]For the best discussion of all of the women intellectuals who gathered at Lynch's see Susan Phinney Conrad, Perish the Thought: Intellectual Women in Romantic America, 1830-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

[36]Lydia Maria Child had written biographies of Lady Russell and Madame Guion (1832), of Madame de Staël and Madame Roland (1832), and History of the Condition of Women in Various Ages and Nations (1835). Her popular Letters from New York (1845) included many comments on the "women's rights issue" which were interspersed throughout the book with her views on women's role in society. Margaret Fuller was getting ready to take her long dreamed of trip to Europe. (She left on August 1, 1846.) She had written Woman in the Nineteenth Century (1845). Catharine Sedgwick, a popular novelist, had strong women heroines in her fiction. Her last novel, Married or Single? (1857), had as its stated purpose to "lessen the stigma placed on the term, old maid," even though at the end the heroine married. Her own yearnings and talents, her husband's bankruptcy in 1837, and the birth of six sons motivated Elizabeth Oakes Smith to seek a literary career. She wrote articles for Greeley's New York Tribune which were published as Woman and Her Needs (1851), worked for marriage and dress reform, and published articles in Una, an early feminist journal. Elizabeth Ellet was an early historian of women. She was in New York City gathering material from private papers and the collections in the New York Historical Society for her two volume Women of the American Revolution which she published in 1848. She wrote four more volumes that covered women in American history.

[37]Elizabeth Oakes Smith was the only one of the group to associate with the antebellum women's rights group. When she attended her first woman's rights convention in September 1852, she was nominated for President. Described as being "a fashionable literary woman," she wore a short-sleeved, low-necked white dress with flowing sleeves, "which left both neck and arms exposed." Susan B. Anthony protested her nomination stating "that nobody who dressed as she did could represent the earnest, solid, hardworking women of the country for whom they were making the demand for equal rights." Smith was not elected. Ida Husted Harper, Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony, Vol. I (New York: Arno and the New York Times, 1969), p. 72. Also see Conrad, Perish the Thought, for the attitudes of the others toward the women's movement.

[38]Mary Orme, "The Gift of Prophecy," The Broadway Journal, October 4, 1845, pp. 187-8. The following Poe stories reflected his interest in mesmerism: "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains," "Mesmeric Revelation," and "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar." See Sidney E. Lind, "Poe and Mesmerism," Publications of the Modern Language Association, December, 1947, pp. 1077-1093; and Doris V. Falk,

"Poe and the Power of Animal Magnetism," Publications of the Modern Language Association, Vol. 84, 1969, pp. 536-46.

[39]Orme, "The Gift of Prophecy," p. 187.

[40]"The Raven" was originally committed to The American Whig Review. Poe used a saturation technique to promote some of his work, so it also appeared in five other newspapers and magazines within a few weeks. See Wolf Mankowitz, The Extraordinary Mr. Poe (New York: Summit Books, 1978), p. 181.

[41]Mary Gove Nichols, Reminiscences of Edgar Allan Poe (New York: The Union Square Book Shop, 1931), p. 8.

[42]Ibid., pp. 9-11. T. O. Mabbott concluded that "the poem published under such curious circumstances was 'Ulalume'." He also wrote that it was considered by many "the greatest of all Poe's poems." See T. O. Mabbott, ed., Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe, Vol. I: Poems (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 409.

[43]M. G. Nichols, Poe, p. 9.

[44]Poe, "Literati," Godey's Lady's Book, July, 1846, p. 16.

[45]Ibid.

[46]M. G. Nichols, Poe, p. 11.

[47]Ibid., p. 12.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Ibid., p. 13. See the Letter from Marie Louise Shew Houghton to John Ingram dated February 16, 1875, in John Carl Miller, Building Poe Biography (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), p. 108; and Letter of Mary Hewitt to Fanny Osgood dated December 20, 1846, in James A. Harrison, ed., Vol. XVII: Poe and His Friends, Letters Relating to Poe (New York: AMA Press, Inc., 1965), p. 272.

[51]M. G. Nichols, Poe, p. 13.

[52]Ibid., and Mankowitz, Poe, p. 206.

[53]Letter of Poe to Marie Shew, June, 1848 in Hervey Allen, Israfel: The Life and Times of Edgar Allan Poe (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., 1934), p. 598.

[54]On the Poe-Shew relationship see Allen, Israfel, pp. 577-599. Poe wrote three poems to her: "To MLS", "The Beloved Physician", and "Holy Eyes." See Mabbott, Vol. I: Poems, pp. 399-409.

[55]Joel Shew was in Europe in the spring of 1848 when Poe spent so much time at the home of Marie Louise Shew. See Water Cure Journal, April, 1848, p. 56. It was probably his reaction upon his return that led Marie Louise to write Edgar the letter ending their relationship. The letter is in Allen, Israfel, p. 598.

[56]Poe died October 7, 1849, at the age of forty. Allen, Israfel, p. 675.

[57]"Passages from the Life of a Medical Eclectic," American Review, September, 1846, p. 266.

[58]Until the revival of interest in women's history (especially the history of women in medicine) and the history of marriage reform, Mary Gove's name remained in print mainly in books dealing with Edgar Allan Poe and his life. Her Reminiscences have been frequently mined by playwrights and biographers because of her sympathetic approach and the details she recorded of Edgar's poverty and Virginia's illness. Allen wrote that hers "was the most living, contemporary description" of Poe at Forham cottage. Allen, Israfel, p. 569.

When John Ingram was trying to restore Poe's reputation in the 1870s, he wrote to Mary Gove Nichols. She put him in contact with many people who had been important in the last years of Poe's life and ended the mystery of who "MLS" was by identifying Marie Louise Shew.

When the University of Virginia (where Poe attended in 1826-27) bought the Ingram-Poe Collection,it contained the Nichols-Ingram letters and also led to the purchase of the Alonzo Lewis-Mary Gove Nichols letters. Thus the few unpublished materials concerning Mary Gove Nichols that have been preserved have been collected mainly by those interested in Poe's life and work.

CHAPTER VII

WE MUST BE OUR OWN

> How true it is that we must be our own before we can be another's....And now I love....Now my heavens have a new sun that lights the night and the day....In a marriage with you, I resign no right of my soul....I must keep my name--the name I have made for myself, through labor and suffering....I must have my room, into which none can come, but because I wish it.[1]

Mary Gove's patients reflected her extensive interests and her large circle of colleagues, friends, and acquaintances. They often turned to her with their health problems. In December 1847 Frances Osgood, one of the most talented of the poets, was her patient.[2] Recovering from the recent death of her infant daughter, Osgood herself had tuberculosis, yet she endured the "wasting disease" that would soon claim her life "with sweet patience, even playful cheerfulness."[3] Hoping to alleviate her sorrow by capturing the holiday spirit, she suggested to Mary Gove that they have a Christmas party "of an original kind."[4] Special care was given to their guest list of seventy people which included editors who were "not yet frozen into their dignity and dullness," poets who had "genius and reputation in embryo," artists who were "ordained such," a few "pretty girls for wall flowers," and any

talented literary woman who wore "clean gloves and whole hose."[5] The sixtieth on their list was the editor Thomas Nichols whom Mary Gove was most anxious to meet.

Thomas Low Nichols, born in 1815 in Orford, New Hampshire, had a rather typical small town New England childhood and began his schooling when he was four years old.[6] His democratic education stressed equal opportunities for all, and his history lessons were replete with examples of poor boys who rose to great heights. Yet sometimes this "constant stimulation of hope, emulation, and ambition" misfired, making some native sons unwilling to "cultivate the niggard soil of New Hampshire" and instead to seek opportunities on more fertile grounds.[7]

The main concerns of the mature Thomas Low Nichols were all present in the young man, his interest in women; an attraction to, yet disillusionment with, medicine; the desire to write; and a love of travel. Refreshingly, for a nineteenth century reformer, he revealed his early love life, explaining that "love was always a part of my being." His first "affaire de coeur" was with an older woman--he was ten years old and she was thirteen.[8] He credited Eugenia, the village belle, with teaching him "to kiss scientifically" when he was fourteen and admitted that before her, he had "been a bungler in the matter." He concluded "there is as much difference in people kissing as in dancing, drawing, or anything which requires both taste and skill."[9]

In 1835 he lived in Lowell, Massachusetts, the "city of Spindles," where mass production of cotton textiles began in the United

States.[10] To the twenty year old Nichols, the most fascinating fact about Lowell was that two-thirds of the population of around 10,000 were young women, the "lady operatives" of the machines, who varied in age from fifteen to twenty five. These self-reliant farmers' daughters showed their spunk in their congregational churches where they "exercised their right to vote", and fired preachers they did not like, "and as they paid their salaries, why not?" If the factory owners increased their work week or decreased their pay, "the girls would turn out in processions, hold public meetings, make speeches, and pass resolutions, and hold the whole manufacturing interest at their mercy."[11] Feisty as the young women were at church and work, Nichols noticed that "they submitted without a murmur to the social regulations which were made for their benefit and protection."[12]

Searching for a career to fulfill the ambitions his New England upbringing had fostered, Thomas Nichols entered Dartmouth College in 1834 with plans to become a doctor.[13] He soon became disappointed with regular medicine and its imprecise knowledge and therapies, however. When he heard Sylvester Graham lecture on proper diet and preventive medicine, his disillusionment with orthodox medical practices increased. Converting to Grahamism, he found his medical studies irrelevant and decided not to finish the second year of medical school.[14] With enthusiasm he sought a career as a journalist.

Thomas Nichols had begun his writing career at seventeen with a first effort entitled "Poem on Ambition", a very ambitious 150 verses, written in two hours. He confessed he used "a little prepared opium to help inspiration," a substance he claimed he never used again except for

toothaches.[15] In 1836 Nichols, "full of health, vigor, hope, and self-confidence", decided to try his fortune in New York City, and with beginner's luck landed a lucrative job at $20 a week, as an assistant editor of a new evening edition of James Gordon Bennett's New York Herald.[16] Since the paper went to press by one o'clock, he had the afternoons free to explore the novelities and pleasures of New York City.

Even though his newspaper job with its daily pressures and deadlines was challenging, the adventurous Nichols longed to see new places. His urge to see Niagara Falls finally won out over his new journalism career; in the autumn of 1837 he went to Buffalo, still a frontier city. He had no intention of staying long, but a local printer enticed him to stay and begin a new paper which they called the Buffalonian.[17] In the first issue, Nichols began an investigation of a case in which prominent local citizens were trying to deprive the rightful heir of a two-and-a-half million dollar estate. When he "did not hesitate to publish the facts," the conspirators hired a gang to rough him up and destroy his printing office.[18] Learning of the plot, he got out of town before they could harm him, but his office was demolished. When he returned, a grand jury indicted him for libel. The judge was in league with the conspirators, and the jury, at first unable to reach a decision, "agreed to a verdict to avoid sitting up all night."[19] Found guilty of libel, Nichols was sentenced to four months in the Erie County Jail and fined $150.[20]

To pass the time, he kept a journal covering his confinement. Published the following year, it contained a report of the incident

from his viewpoint, a clever account of how he spent his four months in jail, and numerous observations on society in general and women in particular.[21] On his release from prison and the payment of his fine, which his friends had raised at a theater benefit, he celebrated with a steamboat trip around the Great Lakes.[22] Returning to Buffalo he intended to continue editing the Buffalonian, but was coerced into dropping a civil case against those who had destroyed his printing office and accepted an out of court settlement for the damage. His adventurous nature pulled him toward Texas which was bursting with new and exciting opportunities, but instead he opted for "a life of literary ease and social pleasure" in New York.[23]

Thomas Nichols spent the next years pursuing his varied interests in every aspect of society. At election time he worked on political journals, heartily endorsing the Democratic Party and its candidates.[24] He wrote for several short-lived New York City newspapers, tried to launch an illustrated humor magazine, produced comic valentines, and after seven years of "apprenticeship to the scribbling trade" wrote three novels, all of which had female central characters as reflected in their titles.[25] Caught up in the ferment of social reform, he lectured on political and social subjects, and investigated several social experiments which led him to a brief stay at the North American Phalanx.[26] His wanderlust was satisfied when he accompanied a lawyer friend who was dying of consumption to a warmer climate. Leaving "at a day's notice," they travelled to Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, then over the Alleghanies to Cincinnati, down the Mississippi

River to Memphis and New Orleans, with side trips to Galveston and Mobile.[27]

In 1847 Nichols was back in New York City again immersed in journalism, this time as "part owner and chief writer of a weekly newspaper."[28] While they had many interests and friends in common, Thomas Nichols had not yet met Mary Gove, although he had published several of her articles. His work impressed her because of his subject matter, health reform and other social issues, and because "his words had the force of blows and yet he had a great beauty of expression, a ready wit, and he was also a most piquant paragraph writer."[29] Mary Gove was most anxious to meet Thomas Nichols.

Thus it was that he was included on the guest list for the Osgood-Gove Christmas party in 1847. For weeks New York City had been putting on "its holiday attire" and it looked bright and cheerful. The stores were filled with a huge assortment of enticing gifts, including "toys of every description" and an abundance of good things to eat. The shops, which usually closed at sundown, were crowded and remained open until nine or ten o'clock and millions of dollars were spent to make the day a merry one.[30]

Frances Osgood, however, had much more imagination than money for her party. She had been feted by the best society in London and New York, yet she knew that money alone did not produce a successful soiree. Relying on her talent for turning sixpence into "great wealth," she decided to allow the originality of her guests to offset the meagerness of her funds. Mary Gove would provide the parlors, a roaring fire, and festive lights. Albert Brisbane would pay for the food. Edgar

Allan Poe, "in poncho and falling collar", would recite "The Raven". And she, a talented musician, would play the piano and sing a song she had composed especially for the party. It would be a festive evening for those "worth entertaining in...this mighty city of Gotham."[31]

When Christmas Eve arrived, the popular Frances Osgood, a graceful hostess, made the evening delightful. Mary Gove enjoyed visiting with her old friends and played guest among the "perfect wilderness of new faces" who had been invited.[32] Late in the evening Frances brought Thomas Nichols over to introduce him to Mary. Anxious as she had been to meet him, she was now greatly disappointed--his manners were too polished; his attire too neat and fashionable. He seemed to belong to some other "species or genus"; she was a "blossom of some sort" and he was a diamond, "regular, clear-pointed, elegant."[33] She knew that she could never please him, so she decided that "he should not please" her.[34] It was difficult for her to reconcile his "earnest, democratic and philosophic spirit" with his stylish clothes, a "white waistcoat and white kid gloves", and "a manner so formally genteel, that one felt he had never committed a breach of etiquette in his life."[35] Mary Gove had been so long with Quakers, ultra reformers, writers, and artists that she concluded that the fashionable Nichols was just a "mere dandy."[36]

Thomas, however, was interested in Mary and complimented her profusely, but this just increased her "distrust" of him.[37] As he was leaving the party, he laid his hand upon her arm, an event that she labelled "a misfortune rather than a liberty" because "a strange fire

shot" through her "nerves and veins, too powerful to be pleasant."[38] Mary was "quite sure" that she did not like Thomas, and yet she admitted that she "thought little of anyone but him" during the next week.[39]

Drawing on its unique Dutch heritage, New Year's Eve in New York City was a special day of celebration as "gayety, song, story, glee rule the hours till New Year's comes in...and then the families retire to prepare for the callers the next day."[40] Few women went out on New Year's Day because it was "not genteel; sometimes, not safe."[41] Instead, all decked out in new finery for the occasion, they were at home all day to their male callers.

Mary Gove's Tenth Street home was the scene of much New Year's Day activity as many friends made calls, including Edgar Allan Poe, Albert Brisbane, and Thomas Nichols. She was still suspicious of Nichols' interest in her and doubted his sincerity, and she was still legally a married woman. Although she "had been forgiven rather widely for escaping" from her "owner" because of her "great usefulness", she asked, "who would dare forgive me if I should love another man until I was legally divorced?"[42] And the law provided no legal grounds by which Mary could obtain a divorce from Hiram. When Thomas Nichols went home at two o'clock in the morning, he left Mary Gove "dizzy with delight and wonder," but still convinced that "he was one of the last men in the world" whom she could love.[43]

When days went by and he did not call again, Mary felt that she must have offended him because of her "often expressed dislike."[44] To re-establish contact between them, she sent him a short novel she

had written, hoping he would serialize it in his journal. He rejected it. He did praise parts of it, however, and offering her some constructive criticism, told her to rewrite it. After intensionally waiting several days, she replied, "Dear Sir--Verily, you say no more elegantly, more bewitchingly, than any body I ever knew...I commend every body to you who is to be refused anything, henceforth."[45]

The novel had served a purpose, however, for Thomas came to call after receipt of her letter, but for Mary it was "a very unsatisfactory" visit.[46] The next day, however, she received a long and rather unusual letter from him which said in part: "I am a fool to write to you, for I don't love, I don't even like, you. I have not the least degree of warm, or kind, or tender feeling in regard to you. Not the least. There is no mother, nor sister, nor friend about it." He admitted he felt nothing for her "but a vague strong influence upon my brain, which in opposition to the habits of my whole life, compels me to see you--for no purpose; to write to you--for no reason; to think of you forever--for no object or conclusion."[47] Mary Gove replied with a noncommittal, teasing letter: "Take care, or you will like me before you know it. I hope you will write me again. You know my life is without condiments or candy, wine or malt liquours; so the spice of your letters is very acrid and delightful to me."[48]

This unusual friendship continued for several months through a series of visits and letters written while in the same city. When he could not see her because of the illness of a friend, they both realized how important their relationship had become. He wrote her, "It seems to me that we are to just fill the vacant places in each

others lives," told her of a project he was working on, "a little room, downtown, all to myself..," and boldly declared, "I think I know a lady who will be very glad, whenever she has an hour to spare, to look in, walk in, and make herself perfectly at home."[49]

This proposal caused Mary Gove much agony. She had struggled so long against huge obstacles to become independent and had not only survived, but had been unbelievably successful, even creating a new profession for women. She wrote Thomas that she had reached "a fine place" in her profession, "a business that I have created for myself, and my sisters after me, for women will come into this noble and ample field." But to continue her success, she was "dependent on the conservative world for business and for bread" and "already had hard things" said to her because of her friendship with him.[50] She cared little what other people said except "so far as it may affect my happiness with you and my business." Declaring that she could not let her "darling profession of water-cure...go into other hands" she rejected his offer because as she explained, "I cannot give up usefulness, even for life itself." She projected, "If I were simply a writer, and had a stipend that would support me, the world might edify itself after its own fashion," but her profession depended upon her reputation and the confidence of her respectable women patients.[51]

She was still Hiram Gove's wife and had no legal grounds for divorce in Massachusetts where she had separated from Hiram and "repudiated his ownership."[52] He could put her in prison if she entered a union with Thomas. Hiram had legal grounds for divorce because he could claim that she had abandoned his home; however, he

feared that the Quakers would disown him if he obtained the divorce. Thus Mary Gove justified her inability to act upon her true feelings and refused the relationship Thomas suggested.

He appreciated her situation and the friendship continued on her terms, but he encouraged her to concentrate on her writing: "The least of your writings may accomplish more than all of your personal efforts....You must write. There is a directness and energy in all you write, a heartiness and a soul--fullness, that must produce its effect.[53] He assured her, "You will never love another better than you do me on earth, whatever you may do in some other sphere....You do love me so entirely, that I cannot imagine you loving another more." Then true to the principles of a love that enchained no one, he guaranteed, "Still, you are free. No little jealousy shall ever annoy you."[54]

Thomas continued his campaign in his confident letters: "How beautiful was our visit last night. I was as happy as an archangel. I loved you supremely...." He exclaimed, "I felt my power then, to encourage, to revive, to invigorate you. It seemed as if I could give you my strong, firm brain, my iron nerves, my muscles like strong cords, my tenacity of life, my power of endurance, and my will."[55] He promised Mary that he would not interfere with her career, but she would "be both better and happier" because of their relationship, and assured her: "I will increase the usefulness of your life, and make it more blessed to others and to you."[56] She had filled the void in his life and he rejoiced in "the love of appreciation, the intimate companionship to a kindred spirit; some one to love; and reverence, and adore, all at once."[57]

If Mary could rid herself of Hiram, she would be free to respond to this promised love, expanding, not limiting; yet Hiram remained and continued to plague her. In early 1848 Mary had received a letter from her old friend in Lynn, Alonzo Lewis, who warned her that someone had stolen her letters to him. She told him not to be troubled because she was "very willing they should read them or print them." She had no apology for her lifestyle and felt "no need to be careful." She had invited Hiram to come to New York City anytime to see how she and Elma lived.[58] Thinking the theft of her letters just another harassment from Hiram, she had not understood the significance of the incident; Hiram had been trying to gather evidence for a divorce because he was considering remarrying himself.[59]

Mary desperately wanted out of her marriage to Hiram and at this point she did not care who got the divorce as long as it was obtained. Though she was "fully convinced of the truth and holiness" of her "passion" for Thomas Nichols by this time, for the sake of her profession and her "great usefulness to woman," she "did not wish to incur the disgrace by living with him without a legal marriage." She decided to wait out the year for Hiram to act, and if he did not, then she would take her fate in her own hands, "and risk all" by living with Thomas as his wife, without legal sanction.[60] Fortunately for her work and reputation, Hiram got the divorce and she was finally free.[61]

As much as Mary loved Thomas, she was "very jealous" of her new freedom and had a "holy fear" of marriage bonds.[62] She wanted to be free from marriage chains and also economically independent; yet society would not allow that if she lived with Thomas without marrying

him. She decided to marry Thomas, but only if he agreed to her vision of a companionate, not traditional, relationship. First, she declared, "I resign no rights to my soul. I enter into no compact to be faithful to you. I only promise to be faithful to the deepest love of my heart. If that love is yours, it will bear fruit for you... If my love leads me from you, I must go."[63] Secondly, insisting on her own identity, she explained, "I must keep my name--the name I have made for myself, through labor and suffering."[64] And lastly, she insisted, "I must have my room, into which none can come, but because I wish it."[65] Thomas Nichols, sympathetic to the struggle she had gone through which prompted these conditions, agreed to all of them.

On July 29, 1848, surrounded by loving friends in a flower filled room, Mary Gove married Thomas Nichols in a New Church (Swedenborgian) ceremony which she described as "beautifully impressive." Wearing a "head dress of cape jessamine, and white roses and geranium leaves," and with Elma at her side as bridesmaid, Mary felt it was the happiest day of her life because she had married a "gifted, noble, and true...man who has few peers."[66]

Despite Mary Gove's happiness, she appended some bold questions to the description of her wedding that concluded her autobiography:

> When shall we become worthy of the boon by giving fully as we receive; by daring to live to the higher law of love, instead of being bondmen and bondwomen to laws, manners, morals, and our own selfishness?
>
> When will man recognize woman as her own, and accept her love as a free and vivifying gift, instead of claiming it as a property in an arbitrary fidelity, which may be false and full of death!

> When will woman cease to be an appendage, a parasite of man; a thing, a creature having no independent existence, but subject to the will of an owner-husband; her true life stultified or crucified; the miserable mother of miserable men and more wretched women!
>
> Ah, when will woman stand before the universe an individual being, faithful to her own life-law, fully sensible of her God-given dower of love, and her right to bestow it according to the divine law of her attraction?[67]

Marriage to Thomas Low Nichols did not curtail Mary Gove's career. She seemed to have all the freedom and emotional support that she needed, but she usually had to provide more than her share of the financial support. In 1849 she published two novels, The Two Loves; or, Eros and Anteros and Agnes Morris; or, The Heroine of Domestic Life.[68] For the 1840s and a female author The Two Loves was a bold book. The mishmash of characters had lovers and illegitimate children, committed adultery, flirted with incest, contemplated suicide, and sought vicious revenge. There were pirates, prostitutes, and a "slimy hag" who used her boarding house as a base from which she sold women for a commission. Malicious lies, violence, kidnappings, and druggings further confused the jumbled plot. Written in a different style from her other works, it had few of the autobiographical references, feminist pleas, and health reform techniques so prevalent in her other work. Because it was so unlike her usual fiction, her friend Alonza Lewis attributed the "paternity" of the book to Thomas Nichols. Mary corrected him, but confided to Alonzo that he would never know "how much that book cost" her.[69] She had read the book to Thomas as she wrote it, and she must have accepted his suggestions because he claimed "credit for bearing some part of its inspiration."[70]

Agnes Morris, however, was in her usual pattern and employed her typical themes, and she wrote Alonzo that it "was all pleasant writing."[71] Star crossed lovers are miserably trapped, married to the wrong people. Several strong women characters survive the heartbreak, but there are also weak women who are unable to cope with the vicissitudes of life and retreat to the couch becoming professional invalids. The author dealt again with the problems of society's treatment of women who bear illegitimate children, but in this case the father was a man of "principles" who did not believe in marriage because the heart, not laws, should govern love. Unaware of his beloved's pregnancy, he went to China in search of his fortune, leaving her to face ostracism and disgrace. In light of the author's recent decision of the necessity of marriage to legitimize her relationship with Nichols, she made an interesting comment: "Looking only at consequences, it seems horrible that the sacred name of principles should be applied to notions that, acted upon, entail disgrace upon helpless women, and innocent children."[72]

In addition to her fiction writing, Mary Gove Nichols continued with her medical practice in New York City and lectured and saw patients throughout the state. Her Experience in Water Cure, published in 1849, ran concurrently in the Water Cure Journal.[73] For the first time in years her health, happiness, and success made it possible for her to take a vacation, and she thoroughly enjoyed her trip to the Vermont mountains where she "drank in the fresh air," climbed hills, and picked berries. The forest clad mountains which had frightened her as a child were no longer threatening and the

beauty of the green hills, the large, clear lakes, and the ever-varying clouds enabled her to rest and be at peace for the moment, even though she knew she must return to the "dusty, noisy city."[74]

Although Thomas Nichols published only one book in 1849, its subject was significant as it revealed his shared concern with Mary for the improvement of the status of women. In Woman of All Ages and Nations, he declared that "the history of Woman is one of the most interesting subjects that can engage thought or pen" and concluded that men and women lived in very different spheres because their characters and constitutions differed, and their history was therefore segregated.[75] Men's history consisted of "war, legislation, science, philosophy, and the arts"; women's history related to "education, love, marriage, social relations, fashions and amusements." But the author insisted that they were of equal importance because "from the cradle to the grave, the influence of woman governs and controls us."[76] Although he believed that relative to other times and places American women had comparative freedom, he foresaw a future society in which labor saving machinery would relieve women "from the slavery and oppression of these distasteful and unnecessary toils" and allow them to give their "talents to higher pursuits."[77] In this new world, women would have economic independence and a free choice of occupations.[78]

Occupational choices were of special concern to Thomas Nichols at this point because he had decided in October 1849, after a fifteen year absence, to return to medical school. Since it was impossible for Mary to go to medical school, Thomas who "wished to aid her in every way" resumed his medical education because the degree

would add to their credentials and enlarge their opportunities.[79] So Mary Gove Nichols worked as a doctor and lecturer to put a second husband through a medical school that would have denied her admittance. It was a busy time for her as she wrote Alonzo Lewis, "From Sunday morning to Saturday evening last, I saw patients enough to earn $99....When I am so busy with patients I write very little and when the practice relaxes then I write again."[80]

Preparation necessary to become a doctor had changed during the second quarter of the nineteenth century.[81] Until then the vast majority of aspiring doctors went through an apprenticeship with a practicing physician, the preceptor, that usually lasted three years. The proliferation of medical schools during this period, however, had led to the additional requirements of attendance at two six-month terms. When the student passed his final examination, he received his M.D. degree. The deficient state of contemporary medical knowledge and the lack of laboratory instruction still limited educational preparation. The only teaching method used was the lecture.[82]

As Nichols received credit for his previous work at Dartmouth, he received the M.D. from the University of New York in March 1850, and began his medical career when he was called away from the commencement party for a medical emergency.[83] The Nicholses now were ready to expand their career possibilities and rented a much larger place on Twenty Second Street to establish a water cure house.[84] Thomas never like medical practice itself, but the degree gave them a broader base for success and while he wrote of medical reform and attended water cure, public health, and vegetarian conferences, Mary managed the water cure house and did most of the medical practice.[85]

Not only were the Nicholses busy in 1850 expanding their professional opportunities, but Mary became pregnant. They were aware of birth control methods, but there is no record of whether or not they used them.[86] Considering the struggle that Mary had gone through for economic survival and independence, it seems more than coincidental that after having been married for almost two years she did not become pregnant until the month of Thomas' graduation from medical school.

Mary Gove Nichols used the techniques of the water cure and prenatal care that she had advocated for countless other pregnant women. Apparently she saw nothing unusual about being pregnant at forty because she never commented on the age factor, but she did remark that for one "who had twice been given up to die of consumption, who had been weakened nigh unto death by miscarriage, abortion, uterine and pulmonic hemorrhage, the Water Cure could not be expected to bring any considerable immunity from suffering."[87] The only problem that she admitted to having was "indigestion," but it became so serious that her friends feared that she was starving because she ate so little.[88] Since she considered pregnancy a normal condition and not an illness, she continued with her profession. When she quit working the last two months of her pregnancy and rested, her digestion improved.

On November 5, 1850, Mary Gove Nichols gave birth to a "beautiful daughter, plump, of clear complexion and symmetrical head, weighing 8½ pounds" whom they name Mary Wilhelmina.[89] Her labor was accompanied with so "little suffering" that she was confined to her room for only one day and was back at work the fourth day after the

birth of her daughter.[90] She shared her experience in the Water Cure Journal allowing "no motives of false delicacy to hinder" her from "seeking the salvation" of her sex.[91] She exclaimed, "My milk is abundant, my digestion excellent, and my strength greater than a year ago." Mary credited her easy labor to the water cure techniques and the fact that her husband was "one with me in my work, as in thought and sentiment."[92]

As Mary Nichols had prepared in late 1850 for the birth of their child, Thomas had been concerned about the quality of existing medical education and the lack of any specialized training for water cure physicians. He had just graduated from one of the best medical schools in America, but he lashed out at its inferior system. He complained that long-winded professors who did not have anything to say stretched five minutes of information into an hour lecture. Frequently only one-fifth of the class attended the lectures, even though "the fleeced flock of students must pay." He concluded, "The professor gets his money, and the student his diploma, each under false pretences ....It is a lucrative farce."[93]

Thomas Nichols felt there was a need in the United States for at least one thousand well qualified water cure physicians, yet no water cure college existed. To embark on such a task, capital was needed, as well as qualified instructors and as most hydropathic institutions were flourishing they could not spare their physicians to teach.[94] The Nicholses, however, decided the need was so great that they would risk the venture. They announced they would open a medical school in New York City in September 1851 "for the instruction of

qualified persons of both sexes, in all branches of a thorough medical education, including the principles and practices of water cure, in acute and chronic disease, surgery, and obstetrics."[95] The curriculum of the three month term would include lectures, directed readings, and weekly examinations. Mary Gove Nichols would lecture "on special subjects in physiology, midwifery, and the diseases of women and children," and Thomas, a believer in the holistic approach, would give the other lectures, but "not in the usual mode of dividing them into separate courses, but combining them all, as they exist in nature, in one harmonious system." This medical education would cost less than one hundred dollars, about half the usual cost, yet would prepare the students for a profession as water cure physicians.[96]

To prepare for the fall opening of their American Hydropathic Institute, the first water cure college in America, they moved to an elegant and conveniently located house at No. 91 Clinton Place.[97] Their expanded quarters enabled them to handle many more patients than before. They had "spacious rooms, the best apparatus, a gymnasium with a competent teacher, and close at hand the finest park in New York for outdoor exercise."[98] Here they boarded patients for $10 a week, as well as attended drop-in patients and continued their medical advice via correspondence. Mary Gove Nichols, a firm believer in prenatal care, encouraged pregnant patients to come in for "an early consultation and thorough preparatory treatment," and "cheerfully" gave reduced rates to patients who came after 2 P.M. on Saturdays.[99]

Mary Gove Nichols received further recognition and additional credentials when she was made an honorary member of the American Hygenic and Hydropathic Association in June 1851.[100] The organization had been founded the previous year, but the second section of their constitution limited membership to those who had "a degree of Doctor of Medicine, or a license to practice the healing art...."[101] Thomas Nichols, who always gave credit to Mary Gove Nichols whose "thorough understanding of the principles and practice of the Water-Cure in its purest and highest sense" had led him to study it seriously, had been elected secretary to the convention and the new society.[102] He had earnestly protested "against the principle embodied in the second section" pointing out that the rule would "exclude from the society the Founder of Hydropathy (Priessnitz), and many of his most eminent disciples."[103] His protest was to no avail and was perhaps the reason he did not attend the Second Annual Meeting, although he had paid his dues. Without changing their constitution at the second convention, the group elected three men and three women who did not have a degree or a license, including Mary Gove Nichols, to honorary membership.

The American Hydropathic Institute opened as planned on September 15, 1851. In his inaugural address Thomas Nichols stated that their object was "revolutionary, reformatory, progressive, and to some extent destructive" of the regular, faulty medical practices. His program of preventive medicine and the water cure techniques would allow the body to be healthy. Premature mortality would decrease, he predicted and "you will see a change in the size of the coffins." With improved health "disease will be banished, and the world will be filled with a robust, beautiful, and long lived and happy race."[104]

Mary Gove Nichols' inaugural address revealed the even more revolutionary aspect of the college--women would be trained as physicians. It was her "one idea, the idea of my life--Woman the Physician." Not interested in debating "the equality of the sexes", she wanted to "demonstrate great needs; to show how much the world wants woman as physician, and what woman needs to qualify her for this responsible position." A medical education, the knowledge of the workings of the human body, was of utmost importance to women and "the first and most indispensable condition of salvation." She exhorted, "Give her knowledge, let her know the cause of disease, and the methods of cure." If this were done, then "the hour of her redemption has come. And woman will not be redeemed alone. She is the mother of man."[105]

When the school opened, Thomas and Mary Nichols had twenty-five students of both sexes, from nine different states varying in age from twenty-one to forty-one. One third of the students were married and some "had left their husbands and childrens and come hundreds of miles to get this instruction."[106] The medical school was successful beyond their "most sanguine hopes."[107] Thomas and Mary both lectured on the laws of health and the water cure techniques and supervised the practical part of the education, the "cliniques." Mary, aware of the inspirational value of role models, included in the curriculum lectures on the lives of women of genius.[108] Guest lecturers added information from their areas of expertise. Emphasizing physical exercise, the course of study included calisthenics, gymnastics, dancing, boat-rowing, and sea-bathing.[109] This innovative medical college, the first water cure medical college in the

United States concerned with a holistic and revolutionary approach to health, graduated twenty students in its first class of 1852.[110]

Mary Gove Nichols had introduced another unique and controversial practice into the American Hydropathic Institute, and found herself again in the vanguard of a movement to allow women more freedom--this time, literally the freedom of movement.[111] As a health reformer she had spoken out against tight lacing in the early 1840s; that lecture before a mixed audience had brought her the most censure from the newspapers and the Quakers. Tight lacing, however, had not been abolished, and by the 1850s women's fashions had reached such enormous proportions that the ornate dresses needed as much as twenty to twenty-five yards of material, numerous petticoats, and even more tightly laced corsets.[112]

Many of the experimental communities as well as individual professional women had experimented with a less restrictive dress, but the issue did not reach the front pages of the major newspapers until the newly organized Woman's Rights Movement decided to adopt a sensible outfit as the symbol of their cause.[113] Elizabeth Smith Miller, angry with herself for submitting to the bondage of "bedraggled skirts that clung in fettering folds" around her feet and ankles, adopted a shortened skirt over Turkish pants gathered at the ankle.[114] When she wore the outfit on a visit to Seneca Falls, New York, in early 1851, her cousin, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "promptly donned a similar costume" and eloquently defended it, as did Stanton's neighbor, Amelia Bloomer, who enthusiastically advocated it in her paper, The Lily.[115] The New York City newspapers, always eager to ridicule the women who were

leaping out of their sphere, quickly picked up the story, dubbed the new short dress "the Bloomer Costume", and the outcry began.[116]

The braver feminists donned the outfit, and some declared that the revolution had visibly begun as surely as homespun suits had symbolized the patriots of 1776. Mary Gove Nichols mounted the platform at Hope Chapel, New York, on June 26, 1851, to address her "highly respectable" mixed audience on "Woman's Dress."[117] Revealing the extent that the new costume had become equated with the woman's movement, she established her credentials as a pioneer feminist, not as a health reformer who had spoken out at great cost in 1841 against tight lacing. Reminding her audience that she had lectured on women's property rights over ten years ago, she felt compelled to speak out against the dangers of the present dress, of the "weight of quilts and skirts," the "fetters" that women carried around their ankles, the difficulty of going upstairs, and the injuries that Lowell women factory workers sustained when their long garments caught in the machinery.[118] Women had been made weak through their clothes because their "manifest destiny" had become "crushing corsets, horrible whalebones, the arms pinioned, padding and plaits," and "the penance of walking in a bag, wiping and gathering all the dirt of the side walk and crossings."[119] Yet the ridicule of the new outfit had been so intense and malicious, people were afraid to free woman from this heavy burden "lest she should become masculine, and lose what they called the 'delight of dependence, the holy charm of weakness' which means, translated, the exceeding prettiness of being good for nothing."[120]

Mary Gove Nichols wanted freedom for women and it must begin with having a "conscience with regard to preserving health and

increasing our usefulness" and the new outfit could advance their cause. Calling for a "true reform" in dress, she wanted to go further than the leaders of the women's movement. Now that attention had been focused on the need for dress reform, women should not just "servilely" copy the new outfit and "escape from one slavery to take up the bonds of another."[121] She envisioned a practical dress--an attire fitted to the occasion so that women could wear long or short clothes, dresses or trousers, depending upon the situation and the movement necessary.

In June 1851 the reformers' expectations were great that "all sensible women" would soon adopt the new dress because its advantages over the old seemed so obvious.[122] Here was a revolution that women could initiate themselves; one that did not take legislators to vote in--all it took was for women to cast off the fetters of fashion and wear an outfit that would allow their free movement in society. The Water Cure Journal noted that Elizabeth Miller and Elizabeth Stanton were "introducing to their aristocratic uptown friends a beautiful Bloomer costume for winter" and that Mary Gove Nichols, who saw no reason why the new outfit could not look pretty as well as be practical, had requested that the celebrated hatter, Mr. Genin, design a winter hat, a version of the Kossuth hat, for the new outfit.[123]

Mary Gove Nichols wrote on little else in the Water Cure Journal from January 1852 to January 1853 because "the gospel of a change in woman's dress" laid "heavy" on her heart.[124] At first when she wore the new dress, "rude women" and boys jeered and mobbed her on the street, and she had asked her husband to accompany her when she appeared in public in the Bloomer outfit, but he "did not like a dress

that had to be protected."[125] One woman threw a stone at her and hurt her "badly", all because she dared "in 'free America' to wear a dress comfortable and healthful."[126] Yet every week she wore her "improved dress" she found "new health and courage" and before long she had lost her fear of wearing it publicly and had "outlived insult to a great degree."[127]

Dress reform made so much sense to Mary Gove Nichols that she found it unbelieveable that women were NOT adopting the new costume in great numbers. In her letters in the Water Cure Journal she encouraged, coaxed, conjoled, and chided her "dear Sisters" to overcome "public prejudice" and choose freedom of movement over fashion. She warned them, "Be assured this fight against the Bloomer dress has a deeper significance than appears." If it failed "consciously or unconsciously", it meant that woman would remain "an appendage--a parasite--property."[128]

But if other women "hugged their chains" she would not; indeed, she would set the example.[129] At the American Hydropathic Institute, Mary Nichols wore and encouraged her students to wear "a healthy and proper dress."[130] By October 1853, after she had been further radicalized, she wore "for outdoor exercise a frock coat, vest and pants" which she found the "most suitable dress for locomotion, huckleberrying, horseback riding, etc."[131] Her desire was "not liberty to wear a particular form of clothing like the Quakers, or the Bloomers; but freedom in dress as fancy or use may dictate." She explained, "I loathe and abhor prescription and proscription. I do not wish any more to be confined to a useful dress than a beautiful one. I want no prison."[132] If women

could expand their options in dress, Mary believed they could have more choice in life also.

What saddened Mary Gove Nichols and then made her defiant was not just her personal experience of women not listening to her rational arguments in favor of a change of dress, but the fact that the women's movement leaders so quickly gave up the Bloomer outfit. By 1853 all but Miller and Bloomer had abandoned the costume, and they both gave it up a few years later.[133] Elizabeth Cady Stanton justified their actions as the result of "the tyranny of custom, that to escape constant observation, criticism, ridicule, persecution, mobs, one after another gladly went back to the old slavery and sacrificed freedom to repose."[134] Gerrit Smith, father of Elizabeth Miller and himself a reformer, also was disappointed with the leaders, and, agreeing with Mary Gove Nichols, was amazed that they did not see the relationship "between their dress and the oppressive evils which they are striving to throw off."[135]

Mary Gove Nichols, the Fourierite, could appreciate the need for preparation before people were ready to make the quantum leap for complete social reform, but she was frustrated and baffled when women did not follow her lead on the dress issue. It reinforced her belief that education, in all areas, was necessary before society could be improved. Thus Mary and Thomas Nichols developed a bold new plan for a "School of Life" to "hasten the day of human redemption." Yet, as true Fourierites, they believed someone would see the value of their plan and want to finance it.[136] Never timid when it came to reform, Mary Gove Nichols boldly announced, "We want ten thousand dollars

to-day", but was willing to accept "any portion of that sum."[137] The money was not forthcoming, however, and the Nicholses soon found themselves involved in more controversy, and scandal, than ever before.

Notes to Chapter VII

[1]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, pp. 358, 369, and 385.

[2]On Frances Osgood (1811-1850) see Fannie Hunewell, "The Life and Writings of Frances Sargent Osgood," M.A. Thesis, The University of Texas, August, 1924; Emily Stipes Watts, The Poetry of American Women from 1632 to 1945 (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1977), pp. 105-120; and Edgar Allan Poe, "The Literati of New York City," Godey's Lady's Book, September, 1846, pp. 126-129.

[3]Sarah Hale, Woman's Record, p. 459. Frances Osgood and her artist husband, Samuel, were separated when Edgar Allan Poe met Frances in 1845 and an affectionate friendship, encouraged by his wife, Virginia, resulted. Their relationship caused much gossip in New York literary circles and some questioned the paternity of Frances' third child, Fanny Fay, who was born about June 1846 and who died on October 28, 1847. See Thomas Olive Mabbott, ed., Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe, Vol. 1: Poems (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 556-7, and John Evangelist Walsh, Plumes in the Dust: The Love Affair of Edgar Allan Poe and Fanny Osgood (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1980).

[4]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 331.

[5]Ibid., pp. 332 and 334.

[6]Thomas Low Nichols, Forty Years of American Life, 1821-1861 (New York: Stackpole Sons, Publishers, 1937), p. 15.

[7]Ibid., p. 37.

[8]Thomas L. Nichols, Journal in Jail, Kept During a Four Months' Imprisonment for Libel, in the Jail of Erie County (Buffalo: A. Dinsmore, 1840), p. 155.

[9]Ibid., p. 157.

[10]T. L. Nichols, Forty Years, p. 89.

[11]Ibid., p. 90.

[12]Ibid., p. 91.

[13]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 89; Herald of Health, July, 1884, p. 79; and Bertha-Monica Stearns, "Two Forgotten New England Reformers," The New England Quarterly, VI (March, 1933), 67.

[14]Ibid.

[15]T. L. Nichols, Journal in Jail, p. 164.

[16]T. L. Nichols, Forty Years, p. 167.

[17]T. L. Nichols, Journal in Jail, p. 10.

[18]Ibid., p. 11.

[19]Ibid., p. 16.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid., p. 240 and T. L. Nichols, Forty Years, p. 109.

[23]T. L. Nichols, Journal in Jail, pp. 236-7.

[24]In 1840 Nichols was in Rochester working on a political journal. See T. L. Nichols, Forty Years, p. 118. In 1844 he edited The Young Hickory Banner from August to the election and wrote almost all the articles in which he praised James Polk and other local Democratic candidates and presented his views on other current issues such as the tariff and the poor working conditions in the factories. See The Young Hickory Banner, August 10, 1844 to September 28, 1844, in Fondren Library, Rice University.

[25]See Frank Luther Mott, A History of American Magazines, Vol. 1: 1741-1850 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 425. Mott stated that with Robert H. Elton a wood-engraver and an artist John H. Manning, Nichols had "brought out the Pictorial Wag, a quarto paper which they soon gave up for the more lucrative but similar business of manufacturing comic valentines." Nichols then edited the New York Arena which also had a brief existence and was merged in 1843 with the Daily Plebian. See Winifred Gregory, ed., American Newspapers, 1821-1936: A Union List of Files Available in the United States and Canada (New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1967), pp. 461 and 474. Mott in Vol. II of American Magazines, p. 186, stated under the heading "Cheap and Nasty": "One also finds reference to Thomas L. Nichols' Arena and George L. Woodridge's Libertine, which were suppressed and their editors punished." But he also stated that magazines that carried the novels of Sue, Sand, Hugo, and Balzac were frequently condemned. The New York Times, September 8, 1855, wrote in condemning the "Free-Love System" that "...T.L. Nichols, came to this City and published a flashy and disreputable paper called the Aurora in 1841, or thereabouts...."

The three novels that Nichols published were: Ellen Ramsay; or, The Adventures of a Greenhorn, in Town and Country (New York, 1843) no publisher given; The Lady in Black: A Story of New York Life, Morals

and Manners (New York, 1841) no publisher given; and Raffle for a Wife (New York: Burgess, Stringer, and Company, 1845).

[26]Nichols' lecture on the rights of immigrants was mentioned in Poe's Broadway Journal, March 15, 1845. For his stay at Brisbane's Association, North American Phalanx, see Donald Drew Egbert and Stow Persons, eds., Socialism and American Life, Vol. 2 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1952), p. 96.

[27]T. L. Nichols, Forty Years, pp. 119-165 describe his trip in detail.

[28]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 326.

[29]Ibid.

[30]James D. McCabe, Jr., Lights and Shadows of New York Life; or, The Sights and Sensations of the Great City (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania: National Publishing Company, 1872), p. 577.

[31]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, pp. 332-4.

[32]Ibid., p. 337.

[33]Ibid., p. 338.

[34]Ibid., p. 339.

[35]Ibid., p. 338.

[36]Ibid., p. 339.

[37]Ibid.

[38]Ibid., p. 340.

[39]Ibid., p. 341.

[40]Matthew Hale Smith, Sunshine and Shadow in New York (Hartford: J. B. Burr and Company, 1868), p. 350.

[41]Ibid., p. 353.

[42]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 344.

[43]Ibid.

[44]Ibid., p. 345.

[45]Ibid., p. 348. Mary Gove included in Mary Lyndon the letters that she and Thomas wrote to each other during their courtship. Thomas

in defending Mary Lyndon wrote that "it is an actual life, even to minute particulars, and to the very words of conversations, and in the literal copying of letters," Nichols' Monthly, August and September, 1855, p. 200.

[46]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 348.

[47]Ibid., p. 350.

[48]Ibid., p. 351.

[49]Ibid., p. 356.

[50]Ibid., p. 362.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Ibid., p. 383.

[53]Ibid., p. 363.

[54]Ibid., p. 367.

[55]Ibid., p. 369.

[56]Ibid., p. 372.

[57]Ibid., p. 373.

[58]Letter from Mary Gove to Alonzo Lewis, February, 1848. Alderman Library, The University of Virginia.

[59]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, pp. 383-4.

[60]Ibid., p. 384

[61]Hiram Gove married Mary Ann Thurber of Farmington, New Hampshire on September 3, 1848. He practiced medicine in New Hampshire and Massachusetts and "died very suddenly of paralysis, at East Boston, February 13, 1871, and was buried at Lynn, Massachusetts." Apparently he and his second wife had no children. See William H. Gove, The Gove Book, pp. 204-5.

[62]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 385.

[63]Ibid.

[64]Ibid. See also the Letter from Mary Gove Nichols to Alonzo Lewis, July 31, 1848, Alderman Library, The University of Virginia, in which Mary tells Alonzo about her wedding and adds, "P.S.: I keep my former name for advertising and professional

purposes." Mary continued to use her name until Thomas received his medical degree and they worked together as a medical team. This also coincided with the birth of their daughter.

[65]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 385. Virginia Woolf in 1933 would make the plea famous in her essay, "A Room of One's Own." See Rossi, The Feminist Papers, pp. 627-652.

[66]Letter from Mary Gove Nichols to Alonzo Lewis, July 31, 1848, Alderman Library, The University of Virginia.

[67]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, pp. 385-6. Robert Dale Owen had signed a contract when he married in 1832 in which he "adjured almost all of his newly acquired powers as a husband." Taylor Stoehr, Free Love in America: A Documentary History (New York: AMA Press, Inc., 1979), p. 4. Mary Gove Nichols wrote this before the more famous (in women's history today) marriage protest of Lucy Stone-Henry Blackwell in May 1855.

[68]Mary Gove Nichols, The Two Loves; or Eros and Anteros (New York: Stringer and Townsend, 1849); (Eros was love and Anteros was passion) and Agnes Morris; or The Heroine of Domestic Life (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1849). The latter was dedicated to John Neal, "the elder brother and fostering friend of young genius."

[69]Letter from Mary Gove Nichols to Alonzo Lewis, July 31, 1848, Alderman Library, The University of Virginia.

[70]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 432.

[71]Letter from Mary Gove Nichols to Alonzo Lewis, July 31, 1848, Alderman Library, The University of Virginia.

[72]M. G. Nichols, Agnes Morris, p. 133.

[73]"Mrs. Gove's Experience in Water Cure" ran in the Water Cure Journal from February 1849 through November 1849. Mary was still using Gove for professional purposes.

[74]Water Cure Journal, October, 1849, pp. 98-99.

[75]Thomas Low Nichols, Woman, In All Ages and Nations (New York: Fowlers and Wells, Publishers, 1852), Introduction. Thomas knew of Lydia Maria Child's A History of the Condition of Women in Various Ages and Nations (1835) and quoted from it in his book.

[76]Ibid.

[77]Ibid., p. 212.

[78]Ibid.

[79]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 90.

[80]Letter of Mary Gove Nichols to Alonzo Lewis, November 20, 1849, Alderman Library, The University of Virginia. Several of the early women doctors in the nineteenth century worked with their physician husbands. Another female lecturer on anatomy, Lydia Folger Fowler (1822-1879) did attend medical school at this time. Her husband was the famous phrenologist Lorenzo Fowler who lectured at the Nicholses' American Hydropathic Institute. She received her degree in June 1850 becoming the second woman to receive a medical degree in the United States; however she had to leave her husband's home and live in two other cities to get that education. She also did not have her first child until 1856. See Madeleine Stern, Heads and Headlines: The Phrenological Fowlers (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971).

[81]On medical education in the 1850s, see Charles Rosenberg, "The Practice of Medicine in New York A Century Ago," Bulletin of the History of Medicine, May-June, 1967, pp. 223-253, and William G. Rothstein, American Physicians in the Nineteenth Century: From Sects to Science (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972).

[82]Rothstein, American Physicians, pp. 85-93.

[83]Letter of Mary Gove Nichols to Alonzo Lewis, March 13, 1850, Alderman Library, The University of Virginia.

[84]Ibid. The Nicholses must have been hopeful because their rent was $550 at a time in which a beginning physicians income only averaged $400 a year. See Rosenberg, "The Practice of Medicine", p. 229. See ad of "Dr. Nichols and Wife" in the Water Cure Journal, May, 1850, p. 157.

[85]Mary never commented on the irony of putting two husbands through medical school. In this case with Thomas she seemed content to be able to use his credentials to assist her in her work. Although she had had many negative things to say about Hiram, I have been unable to locate any negative comments about her marriage to Thomas or their division of labor within the marriage which also placed a heavy burden on Mary.

[86]See Thomas Low Nichols, Esoteric Anthropology (Port Chester, New York: The Author, 1853), pp. 172-74.

[87]Water Cure Journal, March, 1851, pp. 57-8.

[88]It might be that she unconsciously kept her weight gain down because when a woman began "to show", her confinement began and her appearance in society was curtailed. In Nichols' case it might limit her professional activity as well.

[89]Water Cure Journal, March, 1851, pp. 57-8, Letter of Mary Gove Nichols to Alonzo Lewis, November 7, 1857, Alderman Library, The University of Virginia.

[90]Water Cure Journal, March, 1851, p. 58 and Letter of Mary Gove Nichols to Alonzo Lewis, January 2, 1851, Alderman Library, The University of Virginia.

[91]Water Cure Journal, March, 1851, p. 58.

[92]Ibid.

[93]Ibid., December, 1850, p. 235.

[94]Ibid., September, 1850, p. 120, and December, 1850, p. 235.

[95]Ibid., April, 1851, p. 91.

[96]Ibid., September, 1852, p. 80.

[97]They had moved in by May, 1851. See Water Cure Journal, May, 1851, pp. 124 and 129; June, 1851, p. 157; and November, 1851, p. 97.

[98]Water Cure Journal, May, 1851, p. 129.

[99]Ibid., June, 1851, p. 157 and New York Daily Tribune, November 13, 1851.

[100]Water Cure Journal, July, 1851, p. 138.

[101]The American Hygenic and Hydropathic Association was founded June 19, 1850. Water Cure Journal, July, 1850, p. 14. This was the way in which most of the newer medical groups kept women out of their societies since their chances at getting a medical degree or license were limited. See Mary Roth Walsh, "Doctors Wanted: No Women Need Apply": Sexual Barriers in the Medical Profession, 1835-1975 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977.

[102]Water Cure Journal, April, 1850, p. 102.

[103]Ibid., July, 1850, p. 15.

[104]Ibid., November, 1851, p. 100.

[105]Ibid., October, 1851, pp. 73-5.

[106]Ibid., November, 1851, p. 114, and January, 1852, p. 19.

[107]Ibid., September, 1852, p. 67.

[108]Ibid., January, 1852, p. 19, and September, 1852, p. 67.

[109]Ibid., September, 1852, p. 67.

[110]One of the women graduates was Harriet N. Austin, the adopted daughter of James Caleb Jackson, operator of a very successful water cure house. Austin returned to work with her father. One of his pamphlets on curing diptheria with water cure came to the attention of "Ellen G. White, prophetess of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and mother of two boys suffering from sore throats and high fevers....Several months later, during one of her frequent religious trances, God directed her to lead her Adventist followers into the hydropathic fold." This began their long term interest in establishing medical institutions. See Water Cure Journal, February, 1852, p. 41, and Ronald Numbers, "Do-It-Yourself the Sectarian Way" in Sickness and Health in America, edited by Judith W. Leavitt and Ronald L. Numbers (The University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), pp. 87-95, and Carson, Cornflake Crusade, pp. 62-77. Jackson also originated "Granula", "the first cold cereal breakfast food." Dr. Kellogg was the physician at the Adventist water cure in Battle Creek and granula was the "prototype for Grape Nuts." It was Harriet Austin who convinced Ellen White that the bloomer should be worn by her followers. The church finally abandoned it when White moved to California in the 1870s. See Carson, Cornflake Crusade, p. 76. Also see The Lily, March, 1852, p. 22.

[111]A feminist history of American fashions has yet to be written, but on the general background see Elizabeth Ewing, Dress and Undress: A History of Women's Underwear (New York: Drama Book Specialists Publishers, 1978); Charles Neilson Gattey, The Bloomer Girls (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1967); James Laver, Modesty in Dress: An Inquiry into the Fundamentals of Fashion (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1967); and Bernard Rudofsky, The Unfashionable Human Body (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1974).

See also Helene Roberts, "The Exquisite Slave: The Role of Clothes in the Making of the Victorian Woman," Signs, II (Spring, 1977), 554-69, and David Kunzle, "Dress Reform as Antifeminism: A Response to Helene Roberts' 'The Exquisite Slave'," Signs, II (Spring, 1977), 570-79.

[112]Robert Kunciov, ed., Mr. Godey's Ladies: Being a Mosaic of Fashions and Fancies (New York: Bonanza Books, 1971), p. 21.

[113]See Stanton, et. al., History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. I, pp. 127-8 and 844. The Quaker attitude toward clothes was blended with Sarah Grimke's feminist response in her Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Women (Boston, 1838), see Letter XI. On New Harmony and Oneida attempts to change women's fashions, see Raymond Lee Muncy, Sex and Marriage in Utopian Communities: 19th Century America (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973). On the physicians concerns about how tight lacing was deforming women see John S. Haller and Robin M. Haller, The Physician and Sexuality in Victorian

America (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1974), Ch. IV: Body Religion, pp. 141-187. George Sand, Rosa Bonheur, and Fanny Kemble were just the best known of the professional women who wore trousers or "male attire" on occasion. See Rene Winegarten, The Double Life of George Sand: Woman and Writer (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1978) and Paul Fatout, "Amelia Bloomer and Bloomerism," New York Historical Society Quarterly, October, 1952, pp. 361-372.

[114]"Elizabeth Smith Miller, On the Bloomer Costume," in Aileen S. Kraditor, ed., Up From the Pedestal: Selected Writings in the History of American Feminism (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968), p. 124.

[115]D. C. Bloomer, Life and Writings of Amelia Bloomer (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), pp. 65-71.

[116]Although Bloomer repeatedly protested that Elizabeth Miller was its innovator (although many had worn a similar outfit before), the papers were soon calling the outfit the "Bloomer Costume" because as one paper stated the name was "musical." Others found it much easier to satirize, make into puns, and put into limericks. A reason that Miller and Stanton were probably "saved" from having it named after them, much as they would have hated it, was because of their male relatives. Miller was the daughter of Gerrit Smith, wealthy New York reformer and Congressman; she was the wife of Charles Miller, a lawyer from a prominent New York family. Stanton was the daugher of the influential New York jurist and Congressman Daniel Cady, and her husband was a state legislator and respected reformer. To have taken the name Miller or Stanton "in vain" would have brought repercusions that the New York City newspapers were wise to avoid. Though Smith approved of the outfit and encouraged his daughter to continue wearing it, Cady was furious with Elizabeth for wearing it. Amelia Bloomer had no important male relatives that had the important combined state influence of Smith or Cady who were related through marriage. See Fatout, "Amelia Bloomer," and Bloomer, Life and Writings of Amelia Bloomer.

[117]Water Cure Journal, August, 1851, p. 34.

[118]Ibid., p. 35.

[119]Ibid., pp. 35-6. Mary frequently tried to tie women's concerns to other national issues. In this case she made use of "manifest destiny", a term which had ringing contemporary meaning.

[120]Ibid., p. 36.

[121]Ibid.

[122]Ibid., p. 34.

[123]Ibid., January, 1852, p. 18. Lajos Kossuth was a Hungarian patriot who visited the United States in 1850 after his revolution had been crushed and he received a warm reception as a champion of freedom.

[124]Ibid., p. 8.

[125]Ibid.

[126]Ibid., November, 1852, p. 112.

[127]Ibid., January, 1852, p. 8.

[128]Ibid., November, 1852, p. 112.

[129]The phrase "hugged their chains" seems to be one used frequently by the women reformers. See Harriot Hunt's use of it in Glances and Glimpses as quoted in Barbara Welter, Dimity Convictions, The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976), p. 61.

[130]Water Cure Journal, September, 1852, p. 67.

[131]Nichols' Journal, October, 1853, p. 56.

[132]Ibid.

[133]The outfit apparently looked best on women of the build of Bloomer and Miller. Child-bearing of the feminists during this period also might reflect on their decision. Miller, for example, did not have a child between 1850 and 1856; Bloomer was childless; yet Stanton had children in 1851, 1852, and 1856. Pregnancy could have complicated their approach to dress reform.

[134]Stanton, et al., The History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. I, p. 471.

[135]"Correspondence Between Gerrit Smith and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 1855," in Kraditor, ed., Up from the Pedestal, p. 127.

[136]Fourier used to return to his home each day at noon and wait hopefully for a capitalist to appear who would fund his vision. The capitalist never appeared for Fourier or for the Nicholses. See Fourier, Design for Utopia, p. 12.

[137]Water Cure Journal, September, 1852, p. 67.

CHAPTER VIII

A TEACHER OF PURITY

> When marriage becomes what it must be in a true freedom, union in love, it will be divinely beautiful. When it is a bargain, a sacrifice, made from other motives than affections, and besides, is indissoluble, it is shocking to all true moral sense.[1]
>
> The woman who is truly emancipate...this woman is pure, and a Teacher of Purity....Such a Woman has a Heaven-conferred right to choose the Father of her babe.[2]

Mary Gove Nichols was far from being the only individual concerned about the societal problems of traditional marriage in the 1845-55 decade. But she was unique in boldly and publicly stating her ideas, and again as a lone female voice, she looked at the issue from a feminist perspective. She was the connecting link between the early leaders of the inner circle of what became called the free love movement.

Many of the new religious and secular communities of the 1840s re-ordered the relationship of the sexes.[3] The Associationists had emphasized the industrial reorganization of society and had ignored what Charles Fourier had written about a free and varied love in the Phalanx. Indeed, little of what Fourier had written on

sexual relationships had been translated, so few Americans were aware of his concepts, but there were lurid rumors.[4] Henry James, Sr., greatly influenced by Fourier and Swedenborg, decided that it was time to provide "some correct information."[5] In 1849 he translated the pamphlet of the Frenchman Victor Hennequin, Love in the Phalanstery, a Fourierite statement of how bad marriage was as it presently existed in civilization, and how in the Phalanx wiser decisions in marriage partners would be made; yet if a mistake was made, divorce was allowed.[6]

This book, published anonymously, excited much debate and the Associationists defensively and repeatedly stated that any change in sexual relations was far in the future after important preparatory stages.[7] When Mary Gove Nichols' friend and benefactor, Dr. Marx Edgeworth Lazarus, published Love vs. Marriage in 1852, the discussion reached a shrill pitch.[8] He believed that marriage in its present form was the "tomb of love" and slavery for both partners.[9] It forced the man into a "routine of lying and cheating behind a counter, or monotonous toil at the plough or mechanics' bench," but the woman was even "more thoroughly and systematically victimized by education and custom from her childhood."[10] Even the highly touted joys of motherhood were a lie, and, as a doctor, he wondered at those who dared "to talk of the charms of maternity in civilization, in the face of statistics which prove that one half of all children die under the fifth year, while the rest are ailing?"[11]

Not only did these books create a controversy among the critics of Fourier, but also among his advocates.[12] The crux of their debate

was not the promised future stage of free love, but whether divorce should be more freely granted in the present. Horace Greeley, who admitted that there were many "unhappy marriages" but was "inflexibly opposed" to any change in the current divorce laws, was "not opposed to the discussion of the subject" and opened the columns of his New York Daily Tribune on November 13, 1852.[13]

At this point Stephen Pearl Andrews, a fascinating and important pioneer sociologist and close friend of the Nicholses,entered the debate.[14] He believed that in the past "the Church, the State, and the Family, each claimed to be of divine origin, and to exist by divine right," but the Protestant Reformation and the American Revolution had challenged the first two. Now the time had arrived to create "a corresponding change in the sphere of Domestic Relations" and he offered his leadership for the impending social revolution.[15] Quickly a three pronged debate emerged between James, Greeley, and Andrews--all admirers of Fourier's industrial reorganization of society, but disagreeing on their interpretation of his work on the relationship of the sexes.[16] Their discussion continued into early 1853; then, Greeley abruptly terminated it, declaring that Andrews was advocating doctrines "offensive to the public sense of decency" and the medical illustration of his "lady correspondent" that Andrews had included in his letter was "unfit for publication."[17] The "lady correspondent" was Mary Gove Nichols.

To bolster his arguments with James and Greeley, Andrews had called on "a noble and pure-minded American woman, one to whom the world owes more than to any other man or woman, living or dead,"

who had thoroughly investigated "the Causes of Diseases and the Laws of Health especially in all that concerns the Sexual Relations and the reproduction of the race"--Mary Gove Nichols.[18] He praised her as "a lady who couples the most wonderful intuitions--the spiritual 'sphere of woman'--with a truly masculine strength and comprehension of general principles, such as characterizes the highest order of scientific mind."[19] Andrews then included her letter on the subject.

Asserting that the accepted definition of purity needed to be redefined, Mary Gove Nichols startled her reader when she declared that the truly emancipated woman who had genuine health of body and spirit and reverently obeyed God's law "in herself" was the pure woman, "a Teacher of Purity", and had "a Heaven-conferred right to choose the Father of her babe."[20] After a tirade against "indissoluble marriage with a man she must abhor--a selfish, sensual tyrant--who makes her his victim," she cried out that "hundreds of women in such marriages murder their children rather than bear them."[21] The offending medical illustration that she used was from her observations at the Albany Medical College where "uterine tumors, weighing from half a pound to twenty-four pounds" but which under normal circumstances weighed only a "few ounces," were displayed.[22] Claiming that these were the results of "the disease caused by amative excess--in other words, licentiousness and impurity", she reminded her readers that "these monstrosities were produced in lawful and indissoluble wedlock." The poor wives who had perished from these evils "lived in obedience to the Law of Marriage--pious, virtuous,

reputable, ignorant Women" and she was determined that "their suffering be not in vain!"[23]

Then she preached revolution, warning, "In an age hardly past, 'Honor God and the King' was the great commandment. In this age, 'Honor God and a Husband' holds the same place." Men had learned that "the first contains a solecism; Women are learning the same lesson of the last."[24] Stephen Pearl Andrews could only add that this was "an eloquent and...unanswerable protest of one woman" and predicted that "in five years more, the voice of that woman will be the voice of thousands." Greeley was "quite right" to "sound the alarm."[25]

The New York Tribune was not the only paper closed to Mary Gove Nichols in 1853. When Thomas Nichols published Esoteric Anthropology in early 1853, Dr. Russell S. Trall, now the editor of the Water Cure Journal, refused to advertise it and completely closed to the Nicholses the journal that had prominently carried their previous work.[26] Esoteric Anthropology was a rarity in the 1850s because it not only presented the water cure techniques and the principles of preventive medicine, but was also a sex manual.[27] Thomas Nichols felt it should not be sold in bookstores, but sent privately through the mail because it was "of the nature of a strictly confidential professional consultation between physician and patient."[28] In graphic word pictures and anatomical illustrations, he told his readers about their bodies. He felt that since there was "so much scientific interest" in the "function of generation," he must "treat it with entire freedom" and "give more space to its consideration,

than to topics which may be found elsewhere satisfactorily elucidated."[29]

He discussed the changes at puberty when the young man "finds his penis growing to what seems to him an extraordinary size" and young women develop "bosoms of ravishing voluptuousness."[30] He described the clitoris as a "miniature imperfect penis" that was "capable of the most vivid excitement of pleasure" that came from "the friction of the parts" in sexual intercourse.[31] The pleasure could be "produced artificially" by the partners' "manipulation of the clitoris with their fingers," but he warned that that could lead to "a great loss of nervous power."[32] Then, launching into the ecstacies of sexual pleasure, a topic that other health reformers seldom discussed, he described the rapture of foreplay in which love gave "light, and a trembling suffusion to the eye, a soft, tremulous tenderness to the voice, a sweet sadness to the demeanor" as well as a "certain warmth and voluptousness" that governed "the movement of the body."[33] "Every touch" was a "deep pleasure", as the hands joined, "a thrill of delight" was experienced and the lips clung "together in dewy kisses of inexpressible rapture." Then as the "bolder hands of man" wandered over "the ravishing beauties of woman", each would find "the central point of attraction and of pleasure" of the other until it was "completed in the sexual orgasm--the most exquisite enjoyment of which the human senses" were capable.[34]

He concluded, "I have no doubt, that in a healthy condition the pleasure of the female is longer continued, more frequently

repeated, and more exquisite than that of the male" and explained that this was compensation "for her long periods of deprivation."[35] Some women experienced "six or seven orgasms in rapid succession, each seeming to be more violent and ecstatic than the last. These may be accompanied with screams, bitings, spasms, and end in a faint languour that will last for many hours."[36]

Thomas Nichols followed his description of the unfettered joys of intercourse with a limit for the experience; "no one, male or female, ought to average more than once a week." The four times a month could be distributed in any manner, but he personally thought it "nearer to a natural condition" to indulge "this amount... within a few days after the menstrual period" and then abstain for the rest of the month.[37] It was up to the woman "to accept or repulse, to grant or refuse"; she should reign as "passional queen; to say 'thus far shalt thou come, and no farther'."[38] Because woman bore the children, she had the right to control sexual intercourse. Thomas, echoing Mary, wrote, "if a woman has any right in this world, it is the right to herself," and "an equal right to decide whether she will have children, and to choose the time for having them."[39]

But how did one prevent pregnancy? Nichols knew of only one way that was "natural, simple, and effectual", abstinence.[40] Although it was "easily done by most women, and by many men," he concluded that it was "unnatural and unhealthy." He informed his readers of a safe period because there was a "fortnight each month" when the woman was "not liable to impregnation."[41] But any method which prevented the sperm from fertilizing the ovum was "an

effectual prevention."[42] He mentioned techniques that accomplished this such as the withdrawal of the penis before ejaculation, the immediate injection of cold water into the vagina, the use of a condom, or the insertion in the vagina of a moistened soft sponge to which a piece of ribbon was attached.[43] He thought only "a terrible necessity" should cause a woman to prevent conception, because "a healthy, happy child" was "the dearest treasure and the greatest blessing that can come to two loving hearts."[44] Yet he re-iterated that "the ovum belongs to the mother--she alone has a right to decide whether it shall be impregnated."[45]

Thomas Nichols also discussed abortion which had become "a custom of shocking frequency," yet stated that "no medical man would hesitate to sacrifice the fetus, to protect the life of the mother."[46] If the woman herself made the decision "to save what is more than life to her, and to avoid what is worse than death," he felt that was "no affair" of the doctor. He warned, however, that "in all cases," abortion was "a violent and unnatural process."[47] Spontaneous abortion resulted from "sexual intercourse during pregnancy..., violent exercise..., violent passions of the mind..., errors of diet," and "exhausting labors and cares." If it was actively sought, the methods used were "drug poisoning or a surgical operation", the latter was "the simplest method, and one accompanied with the minimum amount of danger."[48]

Celibacy, contraception, and abortion, however, were all "unnatural...a violation of nature," and Nichols could not "decide as to their relative badness." Each woman had "to judge for herself

the circumstances which may justify her in doing either."[49] Because women carry, bear, nurse, and educate the child, they should have this freedom. He wrote, "O woman! you must accept responsibility and you must demand and have these rights."[50] Although this attitude could be interpreted as "enlightened," it still placed the entire burden of childbearing and childrearing on the woman.[51]

As if the frank sexual information and liberal attitudes were not controversial enough, Nichols entered the ranks of "free lovers" when he answered his own question, "Is Love Enduring?" by stating that it endured only for the exceptional couple.[52] Although everyone believed that it would "last forever," it seldom did because "our bodies change, our opinions change, our feelings change." The love that was meaningful to "the youth of twenty" was "quite unworthy of the man of 30." Some people continued to grow and develop, while others stopped improving; therefore, when the love ended, so should the marriage.[53]

Although Esoteric Anthropology was Thomas Nichols' most influential and best selling book, it drove a wedge between the Nicholses and the water cure physicians who rejected their ideas on marriage and closed the Water Cure Journal to them. They had been contemplating starting their own journal so when Dr. Russell Trall censored them they initiated the Nichols' Journal of Health, Water-Cure, and Human Progress in April 1853 to advocate their reforms.[54]

The Nicholses had moved in May 1852 to Port Chester, New York, which was about an hour from New York City and easily reached by rail, and where in a "perfectly healthy climate, pure air, soft

water" and amidst lovely scenery they had enlarged their facilities. In addition to receiving boarding patients and lecturing at their American Hydropathic Institute, they offered a "Physiological and General Education for Young Ladies" and drew up detailed plans for their contemplated School of Life to be called Desarrollo or Unfoldment.[55] The Nicholses were busy and successful, as 10,000 copies of Esoteric Anthropology had been sold, their new journal had a monthly circulation of 20,000, and they had twenty-six patients and pupils at Port Chester. Thomas was pleased to report that they were making over two hundred dollars a week; never had they been more prosperous.[56] And then disaster struck.

In late July 1853, an anonymous letter, written by an allegedly concerned villager of Port Chester, appeared in the New York Daily Tribune.[57] It declared that "a regular stampede" had occurred among the young women students as evidenced "by the sudden accumulation of baggage" at the railroad station. He feared that Dr. Nichols had tried to practice on the students the ideas he espoused in Esoteric Anthropology and his friend, S. P. Andrews, presented in his pamphlet Love, Marriage, and Divorce because one of the young women had "suddenly fled, in a state of alarm." According to the letter, a chain reaction occurred and all but one of the students "decamped" and returned home "to tell their sad tale of their disappointment." The writer considered the American Hydropathic Institute "among the things that were"; it looked "almost as deserted as the Temple of Nauvoo, after the removal of the Mormons." The critic concluded, "What else was to be anticipated as the natural result of a

practical application of such filthy doctrines as those inculcated by Messrs. Nichols and Andrews? This is the philosophy of the brothel and no other institution can grow out of it."

Thomas Nichols responded immediately to the "calumny."[58] First, he attacked the cowardliness of an anonymous writer whom no one in Port Chester believed to be a local resident. He insisted that "whatever our opinions may be, we--Mrs. Nichols and myself--have never betrayed in any manner, nor in any case, the parental trust reposed in us." The incident was "the only event that ever marred the harmony" of their school, and "grew out of the revengeful malice of a passionate girl, whose imprudent conduct had called for censure, and to whose natural protectors" he had given "a friendly warning." She "poisoned the minds of five other students" and they all left the school while he was temporarily absent; they still had fifteen students at the school. Thomas Nichols challenged the writer to retract his statements or put them in "actionable form" so he could "bring it before a Court of Justice for legal investigation."

Thomas Nichols reprinted both letters in his Nichols' Journal and saw behind the "infamous conspiracy" the professional jealousy of Dr. Russell Trall.[59] Their journal was predicted to "soon have a larger circulation" than the Water Cure Journal, his Esoteric Anthropology was being acclaimed "as the best physiological work ever written," surpassing Dr. Trall's work, and Trall had just announced that he was going to open his own water cure medical college. Thus when the "poor girl" left Port Chester and went to Dr. Trall, her statements were accepted without giving the Nicholses a hearing

and "a conspiracy was formed to destroy" them. "Venomous falsehoods" and "slanderous stories" had been circulated against Nichols and his family and when he could trace them down, they all led back to "the establishment of Dr. Trall."[60]

Several papers came forth to defend the Nicholses. The Boston Commonwealth was convinced that the "Port Chester correspondent made false if not malicious statements."[61] But the damage had been done because the slanders "were spread over the city, and industriously circulated in the country, by malicious and merely gossipping persons." Their friends and supporters had "been alarmed, shocked, perhaps driven" from them, and their business had been "injured by the very anticipation that it must be destroyed." Thomas remained defiant if incensed, but he had to admit that the false rumors might "somewhat delay" their newest project. Their publishing business, however, was "beyond the reach of any contingency" and he assured their followers that their work would continue.[62]

Mary Gove Nichols also responded to the attacks since they affected her work as well and some were aimed directly at her. She placed herself in the tradition of the prophets whom "the world has misunderstood and persecuted...from time immemorial." Though it was a painful task, she had to offset "the black vomit of the slanderer."[63]

She had no difficulty in identifying one of her slanderers, he was Charles Wilkins Webber who had just published Spiritual Vampirism: The History of Etherial Softdown, and Her Friends of the "New Lights."[64] Marx Edgeworth Lazarus had introduced Webber to Gove in 1846, and Webber and his sister had moved into their Tenth Street

house.[65] Mary Gove had tried to reform and restore health to Webber who was an alcoholic and had bouts of mental illness. She had befriended him, encouraged him in his literary efforts, and appealed to him "with a mother's yearning" to give up "the vices of wine and tobacco."[66] Webber, according to his account, "rapidly changed" and soon fell in love with Elma Gove, now a teenager.[67] Charles seemed so greatly improved that Mary agreed to his engagement to Elma "under a pledge of entire reformation."[68] When Mary Gove realized that "he could not be saved, that there was madness in the blood," she broke up the relationship.[69] Webber started drinking again, lost his job, failed at starting a new magazine of his own, and had to scrounge to make a living to support his new wife, an artist friend of Elma's from Boston. He blamed Mary Gove for all his problems, she had been "an all-conquering spirit," and he threatened revenge.[70]

For a time she feared for her life; then Webber "conceived a darker scheme than even murder," he vilified her in Spiritual Vampirism in which the main character was Mary Gove, alias Marie Orne or Etherial Softdown, the spiritual vampire.[71] Lazarus, who had also befriended Webber, was Dr. E. Williamot Weasel; Elma Gove was Elna Orne; and Thomas Nichols was simply Mr. Narcissus. The attack on the other health reformers and feminists was vicious. His descriptions of Marie's lung hemorrhages were graphic and gross, and he accused her of being able to produce them spontaneously at will to get her way or get out of difficult situations.

Mary Gove Nichols was incensed about the novel's distortions of her work (though she claimed she had not read it on her husband's advice). But she was still compassionate for Webber who was "hopelessly insane, though still at liberty" and deplored his "present condition" because she had had a "tender friendship" with him when he was in "a sane state."[72] But she was too busy to linger long over Webber's slanderous attack; she had an infant daughter to care for and a grown daughter to save "from the sting--the venom of the fallen one."[73] Her writing for the Nichols' Journal and the two books on which she was working as well as the city medical practice she and a former student, Mary Ann Torbet, had established, crowded her days.[74] Thomas, in addition to writing and editing, opened a Reform Book Store which also specialized in stationery and prints.[75] Though their days were full, the Nicholses were eagerly finalizing their plans for an expanded version of their School of Life, Desarrollo.

Stephen Pearl Andrews had been a patient of the Nicholses at Port Chester, and now that his friends were under attack he offered them 100 acres at Modern Times on which to begin Desarrollo.[76] Modern Times was a community experiment based on the ideas of Josiah Warren, the father of American anarchism.[77] Believing that government, including democracy and Robert Owen's socialism, stood in opposition to liberty and interfered with the individual's rights, Warren developed a theory of society that allowed for the "sovereignty of the individual" in which there were no rules and regulations, but each person was a law unto oneself as long as one gave "due regard to the equal rights of others."[78] Eager to test his ideas in the East and near a major

city, Warren, with the enthusiastic help of Andrews, had established a community on Long Island in 1851 based on the sovereignty of the individual and on equitable commerce, "a system of just and equal exchanges of labour for labour."[79]

Modern Times took root and soon some of its founders were so encouraged by its beginnings that they decided to publicize what they had accomplished, and placed a "Card to the Public" in the New York Tribune.[80] The result was a rash of visitors, casual observers, sightseers, and critics who had read Andrews' debate on love, marriage, and divorce in the Tribune earlier in the year and knew him to advocate free love. Andrews, happily married and the father of three sons, could protest that he was a free lover only in theory, but Modern Times was soon labelled as a hotbed of sexual irregularity. As the inquisitive poked around in 1853, few reported on the positive developments. They focused on the fanatics and faddists who had been drawn to a community that had no rules. By Warren's own account and his beliefs, there was nothing that could be done about these "crotchets."[81]

The sensational publicity attracted undesirable colonists and scared off desirable ones; the notoriety was now creating reality from the distortions. Even John Humphrey Noyes, the father of free love which he called "complex marriage" and practiced at Oneida in isolation from Sunday sightseers, wrote in his History of American Socialism: "Owen begat New Harmony; New Harmony (by reaction) begat Individual Sovereignty; Individual Sovereignty begat Modern Times; Modern Times was the mother of Free Love...."[82]

Aware of the real purpose and appreciative of the positive results of the experiment, and perhaps because they had received no other offers, the Nicholses announced they would locate their new School of Life or Desarrollo at Modern Times.[83] They revealed their elaborate and detailed plans, to be built in three stages, which combined their ideas with those of Fourier and Priessnitz. The initial project would house one hundred people and was a four story building, 126 feet long by 43 feet deep, with a 60 foot tower for the reservoir, and rooms equipped with water cure apparatus. The second phase would be two side wings, which would contain a large dining room, gymnasium, picture gallery, and artists' studios, as well as room for one hundred more residents. The last section would enclose the square and house the printing office, book-bindery, model kitchen, bakery, and laundry, "with an engine house in the center, with steam to carry all the machinery, raise the water, cook, wash, and warm the whole range of buildings, and supply warmth to the winter garden in the central square."[84]

Beauty would not be neglected because rare birds and statuary would flank a fifty foot fountain, music would awaken the residents each morning, and a sunrise parade with songs and flags "flung to the breeze" would begin the day. After two hours of "cheerful labor" and an intimate breakfast with one's friends, one could choose from individual study, group discussions, hydropathic baths, midday dances, concerts, or pleasant games. Dinner would be "a feast of reason and a flow of soul...not a mere full exercise of eating, but wit, mirth, eloquence and song." At ten o'clock the band would play the evening

hymn and the lights were to be extinguished, although once a week there might be a surprise serenade before midnight.

Work at Desarrollo would be continuous, but it would be done "by relays of volunteers, working in short sessions and attractive groups." One worker, the steam engine, would never rest. For the residents, it would be "only one long festal holiday." The Nicholses had their own interpretation of the sovereignty of the individual, but promised that their rules were few.[85] The goal was "to gather here a School of Life, where men, women, and children, may not only prepare to live, but LIVE; not only prepare for usefulness, but be USEFUL; not merely look forward to happiness, but be ACTUALLY HAPPY."[86]

Mary Gove Nichols promised that here at last would be a social experiment that included the feminist concepts basic to Fourierism that the American experiments had neglected. The way things were a woman had few legal rights, had limited economic opportunities, and even her clothes were a "set of fetters."[87] She might be provided for by her male relatives or a husband, just as a slave could be, but "whoso feeds can control. Bread is a powerful and terrible argument." Under these conditions, how could women "leave uncongenial homes, and false, hateful marriages?" Reformers were concerned that slaveholders owned black children, but she asked where were the people protesting the fact that white children were "not the property of the mother who bore them."[88]

Then she shared her vision of how things could be, how they would be, at Desarrollo. Information would replace ignorance. Women

would be taught about their bodies and the laws of health; they would control their own childbearing. Self-reliance would replace dependence. Women would pursue whatever career they were attracted to and would receive equal pay. No longer would women have to sell themselves for a home. But courage must also replace cowardice. Women had to be brave, strong, honest, and "willing to be considered licentious by the world" because they would come "together for freedom." Love alone would sanction "the union of the sexes," but Mary Gove Nichols promised that "this faith" was "positive, not negative." When false unions had been dissolved, people could form true and lasting ones.[89]

Unfortunately, there was a shortage of men and women with money and mobility who wanted to live, to be useful, and actually happy, and the funds did not materialize. Thomas Nichols lamented that hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent each year on projects that did not have nearly as much "promise of good to the world" as Desarrollo. He cried out, "Is there no money, then, for such an enterprise? Will no benevolent capitalist loan us the money we need for five years...will no one GIVE some portion of the $20,000 required to complete this establishment?"[90] The Nichols' Journal had nearly 20,000 subscribers Nichols declared, and if each would give them one dollar for their dream for social betterment, then it could become a reality.[91] But the money did not come in and the only visible part of Desarrollo was a large hole in the ground; the foundation had been dug, but nothing ever rose out of it.[92]

In spite of this, Thomas and Mary Gove Nichols continued their writing hoping to convince others to dare to help shape the future. In 1854 they co-authored Marriage: Its History, Character and Results; Its Sanctities and its Profanities; Its Science and Its Facts, Demonstrating Its Influence, as an Civilized Institution, on the Happiness of the Individual and the Progress of the Race.[93] The book was divided into three sections. Thomas wrote Part I entitled "Historical and Critical" and Part III, "Theoretical and Scientific." Thomas quoted profusely from Fourier, Swedenborg, Shelley, Warren, Andrews, Lazarus, Davis, and other major works on marriage and elaborated on the concepts of free love presented earlier in Esoteric Anthropology.[94]

Impressed with the "declaration of wrongs of woman" presented at Seneca Falls in 1848, Thomas Nichols had included it in his Woman, in All Ages and Nations because of its interest "to future historians," and now he reprinted it again in Marriage.[95] After giving its text, he declared that "woman's one, single and supreme right, and the one which includes all others, is the right to herself."[96] He told the "ladies of the Woman's Rights Movement" that the key to their freedom was in slaying "the marriage institution, which is the center and soul of the whole system of wrongs of which she complains." The vote and married women's property rights were incomplete steps, although women's "pecuniary independence" would loosen "the bonds of marriage" and would be "a blow struck at the vitality of that institution."[97] The woman's movement was like the colonies "petitioning your monarch and avowing your loyalty" asking

for "a concession here, a privilege there, permission to be better educated, and to have a wider sphere of action." He challenged them, "You can have no right until you assert your right to yourself." They must declare themselves, like the colonists finally realized, independent.[98]

Thomas Nichols had borrowed the words and thoughts of others to build his theoretical arguments against marriage, but in her section of Marriage, Mary Gove Nichols called upon her own experiences and those of her patients who had poured out their problems to her because physicians were the "world's confessors."[99] She was aware that it would take time to "regenerate individuals and produce a harmonious society" especially since there was a "conservative principle in the human mind" which made "people cling to the institutions, even after all vitality and use have departed from them."[100] But in the overlap period she gave daring counsel to some of her patients and challenged them to redefine purity and adultery.[101] To her there was "no true union" except that which was made "in mutual love." Sexual intercourse, within or without marriage, that did not meet that criterion was "adulterous."[102]

Those who were ready for independence, who no longer needed masters, could follow her lead. She had left a husband that she loathed and abhored who was "like the frogs of Egypt, sharing my bedroom and spoiling my food."[103] "Faithful to herself" she had ended that false union.[104] When her "great love" came, she bound herself, as did Thomas, in fidelity to that love for its duration; but it was a love freely given, not in "bondage to one another."[105]

Thomas and Mary Nichols, "exposing the evils of marriage from the center of a holy and happy union," were "pleading for a principle, and not advocating a licentious life."[106] Essentially a romantic, not a hedonist, she was defending the right to end a loveless marriage, the right to find true love, not promoting promiscuity. Temporarily, marriage could be useful as "leagues of mutual protection" until society allowed true purity to exist.[107]

To bolster her argument of the way things should be, she called on the traditional sources of Church and State. If her opponents liked to quote the Bible, so could she. Had not Jesus said that in Heaven you neither marry nor are given in marriage? Had not Jesus taught his disciples to pray "Thy Kingdom come, on earth as it is in Heaven?" Had not Jesus said, "Call no man master?"[108] She boldly asserted, "The day that I was able to say, I owe no fealty to a husband, or any human being, I will be faithful to myself, was my first day of freedom."[109] Nations had been formed and "the earth had been baptized in blood, in the assertion" of "the thought of freedom for man" and now was the time to assert and achieve the freedom of women.[110]

She promised when woman became "faithful to herself" there would be many benefits for society. As things were at present, "women have not...the passion that asks for sexual indulgence" and "many did not want to bear children, or to be harlots" for love or support. Her unhealthy condition, the slavery of marriage, and unwanted pregnancies caused "the apathy of the sexual instinct in woman."[111] If woman was healthy, free, and independent, she would

be "impelled to material union as surely, often as strongly, as man." She asked, "Would it not be a great injustice in our Heavenly Father to so constitute woman as to suffer the pangs of childbirth with no enjoyment of the union that gives her a babe?" The truth was "that healthy nerves give pleasure in the ultimates of love with no respect to sex."[112]

When the new age dawned and woman was the "arbiter of her own fate," babies would "no longer be born in hate and murdered in deception and discord." When she ceased to be man's property and saw herself as an individual, as a truly responsible being, then she would obey "God in the laws of her own nature, instead of enthralling and deceiving, and being enslaved and deceived."[113] If a woman remained a parasite then "she must take a parasite's portion." But a new day of "true purity" was approaching. Soon "women's long night of suffering, lighted by the stars of faith, and an immortal and almost superhuman practice" would wane to its close. Then, and only then, "when she can stand self-supported and responsible to God and herself," would woman know freedom.[114]

The Nicholses expected Marriage to meet with "opposition and denunciation" because it was a "work, revolutionary in its character, and deliberately intended to subvert and destroy what the whole moral and religious world considers necessary to the good order of society."[115] But Mary Gove Nichols challenged "those who would represent us as sensualists seeking a mere material liberty" and accused them, "You read your own lives into our movement." She declared, "I expect to wait to be understood, but not long."[116]

While waiting, Mary Gove Nichols decided to pick up another gauntlet. Lucy Stone had challenged the audience of a woman's rights convention to find an author to make people aware of women's condition, as Harriet Beecher Stowe had for slaves with her best-selling novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin.[117] No one was better qualified for that task than Mary Gove Nichols; the year after Uncle Tom's Cabin was published in book form, she began her passionate statement against the slavery of the institution of marriage and for the freedom for women to have control over their own lives.[118] Her autobiography, Mary Lyndon; Or, Revelations of a Life, was published serially in the Nichols' Journal and then appeared in book form in July 1855.[119] It created a sensation. Hailed as the American Jane Eyre, it was also reviled as "the first example of a deliberate attempt to teach the art of adultery, and to justify that crime as the realization of a 'true life'."[120]

The critics, even the most vicious, praised the book at the same time that they condemned it. The Norton Literary Gazette was not in sympathy "with the social and theological views of the authoress of Mary Lyndon" or her "extreme loose positions...especially in reference to the sacredness of marriage," but it had to admit that "the volume is a powerful production that will create an excitement in literary circles."[121]

The New York Daily Tribune concluded that the author lacked discretion in her "frank and overflowing revelations" and that "the staunch defenders of things as they are" would be "scandalized at her ill-concealed hostility to most of the fixtures which they

consider essential to the preservation of the existing social fabric." But the critic lauded "the earnest feeling which animates almost every page, the frequent passages of powerful description, and the displays of a bold and even audacious spirit" and was certain the book would attract attention "even among readers who would naturally be repelled by its prominent theories and inculcations."[122]

But the most malicious review came from Henry J. Raymond, editor of the New York Daily Times and Lieutenant-Governor of New York. The Times literary editor had previewed Mary Lyndon and written that "its worth is so large, its original features and individuality of character are so striking that we expect to hear it laughed at and loved, admired and abused more than any work published in many seasons." He was sure that the book would not "be read today and forgotten tomorrow."[123] When this blurb, attributed to his paper, appeared on the advertisements for the book, Raymond was furious and took four full length columns to attack the book and its author.[124] He chastised Mary Gove Nichols for "indulging in the luxury of a public crying spell" and for trying to convince the world "of the advantages of hydropathy, the abominations of Christianity, and the reforming influence of fine art and fornication." The editor was really shocked because Mary Lyndon advocated remaining faithful only as long as the love lasted in a relationship and traced her disgusting and obstrusive doctrines to "the Fourierite dogma of Passional Attraction." He concluded that only "a coarse, sensual, and shamelessly immoral person could have ever consented to write" such a book.

Surprisingly, Raymond admitted that there were many men and women who were miserably married, that the divorce laws were not "what they should be," and that perhaps the heroine was justified in leaving her husband. Nonetheless, marriage must be kept sacred because the "adoption of her creed, or the imitation of her conduct, would degrade social life to the level with the life of the brutes." Her sensual creed eradicated duty and would "make society a vast sty for the full and free indulgence of animal appetite...regulated only by the instincts and impulses of personal lust." She had consented to her marriage and if it had not worked out, it was their fault and "they must bear the consequences of their own mistakes." Raymond stated that if Mary Lyndon had spent a tenth of the labor she expended "in hating, and maligning and deceiving her husband" in trying to mollify and soften his character, it "would have made a different being of him in her sight."

Even though it was "a bad book," Raymond was afraid it would "exert a decided and disastrous influence" upon the tens of thousands of miserably married women who were "weak-minded, or reckless, or despairing enough to surrender their judgements to Mary Lyndon's passionate and seductive appeals." His parting shot (in his unsigned article) was that the author of Mary Lyndon had not published the book under her own name. He felt that as an autobiography "of an individual whose position, career, and character are well known to the public, it would have done no harm." But to release it as "the romantic autobiography of Mary Lyndon," even though it did not have "sufficient literary merit to entitle it to a place by the side of

the sensuous romances of George Sand," it had "sufficient ability to work much greater harm than any of that eloquent author." He concluded his lengthy attack with a disclaimer, "If we did not believe it to be a book of very bad tendencies, we should not pay it the compliment of giving it this prominent and unusual notice."

One of the most revealing criticisms of Mary Lyndon came from Clarina Howard Nichols, who was not related to Mary Gove Nichols, yet whose life in outline closely paralleled hers.[125] Unhappily married, Clarina divorced her husband in 1843 and married a Brattleboro, Vermont, publisher and edited his paper. She had children by both her husbands. A Fourierite, she lectured on temperance and women's rights and was involved with the organized women's movement. When the Springfield Republican credited Clarina Nichols, who had recently moved to Kansas, with being the author of Mary Lyndon, she quickly wrote them correcting their mistake. She informed them that the book was the work of Mary Gove Nichols who had "attached her name to the work, in full." Clarina wrote that Mary advocated "sentiments revolting to every christian sense of morality and decency" and she sorely regretted that anyone had suspected her of "being the author of a work which outrages the sanctity" of "matrimony and christianity."[126]

Henry Blackwell wrote his wife Lucy Stone that Mary Lyndon revealed "a great deal of power and much shrewd observation--in fact Mrs. Nichols is no ordinary woman--she possesses a great deal of talent and a little genius."[127] Yet he feared that these "free lovers" would "thrust their immoralities before the public in the 'Woman's Rights' disguise which they are trying to assume." He hoped that

Lucy, Antoinette Brown and Lucretia Mott could "prevent such a degradation."[128]

When other reformers, who should have been their allies, fought their efforts, the Nicholses had the most difficulty understanding their rejection. Sometimes they even wondered if it was worth the struggle. Mary Gove Nichols only wanted to help women stand upright, to have control over their own lives and childbearing, and to be healthy, free, and independent. Yet the reformers, the conservatives, and the hypocrites called her coarse, sensual, immoral and indecent.

Sometimes the burden was just too heavy. In addition to reliving the trauma of her life as she wrote Marriage and Mary Lyndon, she became seriously ill. In May 1854 she "failed almost altogether," but "at the darkest time" a supporter donated money that was to be used only for her "rest and renovation." Five months later her health was restored although she still had to limit her activities, especially her "mental effort."[129] It was time to reflect, perhaps regroup. Her future seemed very vague and uncertain.[130] What would become of her professional life? Who would want to be attended by a physician, or allow their daughter to be educated by a teacher, who had been denounced on all sides as an immoral, sensuous woman?

Notes to Chapter VIII

[1]T. L. Nichols and M. G. Nichols, Marriage, p. 216.

[2]Stephen Pearl Andrews, ed., Love, Marriage and Divorce and The Sovereignty of the Individual: A Discussion (New York: Stringer and Townsend, Publishers, 1853), pp. 98-99, and reprinted in T. L. Nichols and M. G. Nichols, Marriage, p. 205.

[3]For a general discussion, see Raymond Lee Muncy, Sex and Marriage in Utopian Communities: 19th Century America (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973).

[4]See Chapter IV, Footnote 19.

[5]Victor Hennequin, Love in the Phalanstery (New York: Dewitt and Davenport, 1849), Preface, p. vi. On Henry James, Sr., the father of the philosopher William and the novelist Henry, Jr., see Ralph Barton Perry, The Thought and Character of William James, Vol. 1: Inheritance and Vocation (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1935), and F. O. Matthiessen, The James Family: Including Selections from the Writings of Henry James, Sr., William, Henry, and Alice James (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947).

[6]Hennequin, Love in the Phalanstery, and Taylor Stoehr, ed., Free Love in America: A Documentary History (New York: AMA Press, Inc., 1979), p. 17.

[7]Many Associationists who avowed Fourier's economic principles were shocked by the pamphlet and were afraid that it would provide deadly ammunition for their opponents. See Sidney Ditzion, Marriage, Morals, and Sex in America: A History of Ideas (New York: Octagon Books, 1975), pp. 148-151.

[8]Marx Edgeworth Lazarus, Love vs. Marriage (New York: Fowlers and Wells, Publishers, 1852), and Stoehr, Free Love, p. 78. Lazarus, like most of the 1850s "free lovers," carefully stated that he was discussing theory, not practice. He was not encouraging libertine, rebellious, or illegal activity, but wanted to enlighten public opinion so that the laws themselves could be changed.

[9]Lazarus, Love vs. Marriage, in Free Love, ed. by Stoehr, p. 80.

[10]Ibid., pp. 86-7.

[11]Ibid., p. 84.

[12]Andrews, Love, Marriage and Divorce, documents how the debate started among the advocates. But it was sparked by Henry James' review of Lazarus' book. The review brought all camps down on James--he was attacked as a defender of free love by the Presbyterian New York Observer and attacked for being superficial and hypocritical by free lovers.

[13]Ibid., pp. 53 and 38.

[14]On Stephen Pearl Andrews, see James J. Martin, Men Against the State: The Expositors of Individual Anarchism in America, 1827-1908 (Colorado Springs: Ralph Myles Publishers, Inc., 1970); Charles A. Shively, "The Thought of Stephen Pearl Andrews (1812-1886)," Master's Thesis, The University of Wisconsin, 1960; and Madeleine Stern, The Pantarch: A Biography of Stephen Pearl Andrews (Austin: The University of Texas, 1968).

Early sociologists such as Lester Ward and Charles Cooley often failed to credit the sources of their ideas. Andrews probably influenced both of them. See Luther and Jessie Bernard, Origins of American Sociology: The Social Science Movement in the United States (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1965), pp. 838-40.

[15]Andrews, Love, Marriage, and Divorce, pp. 12 and 23.

[16]Andrews, like James and Lazarus, carefully stated that he was not "affirming that any one of these suppositions is likely to come true," but he felt "that the righteousness and permanency of Marriage and the Family Institution" were "fair subjects, like any other, for thought, for questioning, for investigation." Ibid., p. 34.

[17]Ibid., pp. 9-11. The last published entry was a response by James dated January 29, 1853.

[18]Ibid., p. 97. There is a direct line between Mary Gove Nichols and Victoria Woodhull through Stephen Pearl Andrews. "Andrews developed his work upon the theories of the Nicholses and expounded them first by himself and in the 1870s developed them for the speeches and propaganda of the vigorous woman's rights fighter, Victoria Woodhull." Shively, "Thought of Stephen Pearl Andrews," p. 67. "...when Moses Harmon and his circle condemned marriage in the 1890s they used many of the arguments voiced forty years earlier by Thomas L. and Mary G. Nichols, Stephen Pearl Andrews, Henry C. Wright, and Andrew Jackson Davis. In fact, a line of direct, personal influence can be traced from Andrews to the Nicholses to postwar sex radicals such as Victoria Woodhull and Ezra Heywood." Hal Sears, The Sex Radicals: Free Love in High Victorian America (Lawrence: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1977), pp. 24-25.

[19]Andrews, Love, Marriage, and Divorce, p. 98.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid., pp. 98-99.

[22]Ibid., pp. 99-100. Mary Gove Nichols had included this illustration in her Experience in Water Cure, p. 29.

[23]Andrews, Love, Marriage, and Divorce, p. 100.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Thomas Low Nichols, Esoteric Anthropology: A comprehensive and confidential treatice on the structure, functions, passional attractions, and perversions, true and false physical and social conditions, and the most intimate relations of men and women (New York: The Author, 1853).

Because of the numerous editions of this book, the more available being the later editions after the Nicholses changed their ideas, it is important to study the earlier editions. Arno Press has reprinted the 1873 edition mislabelling it the 1853 edition, but it is not. There are significant differences in the two editions that are crucial to understanding the Nicholses in the 1850s and the 1870s. The 1853 edition is microfilmed in The American Culture Series, reel 392.

[27]See Carl N. Degler, "What Ought to Be and What Was: Women's Sexuality in the Nineteenth Century," American Historical Review, December, 1974, pp. 1467-1490. Degler deals mainly with late nineteenth century sources and does not discuss the work of either Mary or Thomas Nichols.

[28]Nichols, Esoteric Anthropology, p. 5. Nichols declared that he wrote the book not "to attract patients, but to keep them away" and revealed, "I wish, as far as possible, to retire from practice; to devote my remaining years to the more congenial pursuit of education, literature, and social science," pp. 6-7. This is a somewhat startling statement for a thirty-eight year old physician who had just received his medical degree three years before.

[29]Ibid., p. 54.

[30]Ibid., pp. 133-34.

[31]Ibid., p. 56.

[32]Ibid., pp. 198 and 56.

[33]Ibid., p. 152.

[34]Ibid., pp. 152-53.

[35]Her periods of deprivation included menstruation, pregnancy, and lactation.

[36]Ibid., p. 200.

[37]Ibid.

[38]Ibid., p. 151.

[39]Ibid.

[40]Ibid., p. 172.

[41]Ibid., p. 173.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Ibid., p. 174.

[44]Ibid.

[45]Ibid., p. 190.

[46]Ibid., p. 192. In the nineteenth century the term abortion was used interchangeably to mean an induced abortion as well as what we today label a spontaneous abortion or miscarriage.

[47]Ibid., p. 191.

[48]Ibid., p. 192.

[49]Ibid., p. 193

[50]Ibid., p. 235.

[51]In the Fourier Phalanx, the community reared the children once they were weaned.

[52]Ibid., p. 216.

[53]Ibid., p. 217.

[54]On August 21, 1852, Mary Gove Nichols wrote Elizabeth Cady Stanton after receiving her "call" to the National Woman's Rights Convention in September 1852, "I am very thankful to you for all you are doing. Every article you write hits the nail on the head. I like you vastly....I mean to have a paper, and I will pay you more to write for it than anyone I know." Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch,

eds., Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in Her Letters, Diary, and Reminiscences, Vol. II (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1922), p. 44.

The Nichols' Journal changed to a weekly in January 1854 and was then subtitled: "a Weekly Newspaper, Devoted to Health, Intelligence, Freedom: Individual Sovereignty and Social Harmony." For a bibliography of the journal, see John Blake, "Mary Gove Nichols, Prophetess of Health," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, Vol. 106, June, 1962, p. 229.

[55]Water Cure Journal, May 1852, p. 119.

[56]Nichols' Journal, September, 1853, p. 44.

[57]The New York Daily Tribune, July 21, 1853, p. 5.

[58]Ibid., July 22, 1853, p. 7.

[59]Nichols' Journal, September 1853, p. 44.

There has not been a detailed study of Dr. Russell Trall and the evolution of his beliefs. Using only his 1856 Home Treatment for Sexual Abuses; a Practice Treatise, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg included R. S. Trall in her "self-defined group of male sexual reformers" who created "Victorian purity." See Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "Sex as Symbol in Victorian Purity: An Ethnohistorical Analysis of Jacksonian America," in John Demos and Sarane Spence Soocock, eds., Turning Points: Historical and Sociological Essays on the Family (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 212-247.

Trall viciously attacked the Nicholses, although he did not use their names it was obvious who he was talking about, in the Water Cure Journal, February 1856, p. 37. Reacting to an article in the Buffalo Medical Journal that linked the free love movement to hydropathy, Trall stated that the Nicholses were not "leaders and exponents of the hydropathic system. Nothing can be further from the truth." He wrote that Mary Gove Nichols was "no doctor at all; has never had a medical education in any school, is not recognized at all by the hydropathic fraternity, and does not practice the system." This is a strange statement in the same journal that had previously highly recommended her to all women patients and published her articles and letters. I have also been unable to locate any evidence of formal medical training that Trall had. See Weiss and Kemble, The Great American Water Cure Craze, pp. 80-89. Trall wrote that Thomas may have graduated from an allopathic medical school, "'with honors', and received his diploma, certifying to his character and endorsing his qualifications from the hands of the learned professors of the 'New York University Medical College.' And this doctor, whatever he may do, say, profess, or possess, has never had a hydropathic education; nor does he practice Water Cure, except as thousands of 'picked-up' or self-constituted doctors may practice any system; nor is he recognized as a member of the hydropathic physicians in 'regular' standing; nor are his doctrines, book-writings, or teachings, admitted into the

hydropathic school, nor are they fellowshipped by the fraternity generally."

This attack by Trall is rather difficult to square with the position of both Mary Gove and Thomas Nichols in the water cure movement prior to 1853. Trall worked along side Thomas Nichols in many of the health reform movements, for example, both were officers in the newly formed American Vegetarian Society in 1850 and the American Hygenic and Hydropathic Association formed in 1850, which gave Mary honorary membership the next year.

The attack is also interesting in that Trall, although he never avowed free love, eventually championed many of the same tenets as the Nicholses--he believed in "woman's equality," the right for a woman to say 'no' to her husband concerning sexual relations, the right of woman to control sexual relations since she bore the children, that sexual intercourse "should be as pleasurable as possible to both partners" and that woman's "birthright" was the "control of her own person," including preventing pregnancy. See R. S. Trall, Sexual Physiology and Hygiene; or, the Mysteries of Man (New York: M. L. Holbrook and Co., 1885), pp. 278-79 and 312. This edition's preface said the book was originally published "nearly twenty years ago" which would be 1865 (by which time the Nicholses had departed to England) and Trall claimed "So far as the author is aware, this was the first attempt to popularize, in a scientific work, the subject of Sexual Physiology." (iii). This was, of course, published twelve years AFTER Esoteric Anthropology. He also borrowed for the 1885 edition the subtitle "Mysteries of Man" that Nichols had used on his 1877 edition of Esoteric Anthropology. These facts create "reasonable doubts" about Trall's accusations and tend to substantiate Nichols' accusations of professional jealousy, especially if Trall feared that the hydropathic movement would be ruined by being labelled with the free love beliefs of the Nicholses.

[60]Nichols' Journal, September 1853, p. 44.

[61]Reprinted in Nichols' Journal, September 1853, p. 44.

[62]Ibid., p. 45.

[63]Ibid., p. 46.

[64]C. W. Webber, Spiritual Vampirism: The History of Etherial Softdown, and Her Friends of the "New Light" (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo, and Company, 1853).

Charles Wilkins Webber (1819-1856), see Evert A. Duyckinck and George L. Duyckinck, Cyclopedia of American Literature; embracing personal and critical notices of authors, and selections from their writings, from the earliest period to the present day, with portraits, autographs, and other illustrations (Philadelphia: Rutter, 1877), Vol. II; pp. 629-630, and Taylor Stoehr, Hawthorne's Mad Scientists: Pseudoscience and Social Science in Nineteenth-Century Life and Letters (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1978), pp. 201-9 and

212-14. I disagree with Stoehr's interpretation of the Webber-Gove personal relationship which he admitted was based on incomplete information.

[65]The sister had to be committed to a mental institution. Nichols' Journal, September 1853, p. 45.

[66]Webber, Spiritual Vampirism, p. 97.

[67]Ibid., p. 171.

[68]Nichols' Journal, September 1853, p. 45.

[69]Ibid.

[70]Ibid., and M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 312.

[71]Mary Gove had used the pen name of Mary Orme, so the intent of Webber was to barely disguise the leading character.

[72]Nichols' Journal, September 1853, pp. 45-6.

[73]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 312.

[74]The New York Daily Tribune, November 5, 1853.

[75]Nichols' Journal, September 1853, p. 47.

[76]Ibid., p. 44. The best account of Modern Times is in Martin, Men Against the State, pp. 64-87. See also Warren's own account, "Practical applications of the Elementary Principles of 'True Civilization' to the Minute Details of Every Day Life" (1873) in Marshall Shatz, ed., The Essential Works of Anarchism (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1972), pp. 443-49, and Stern, The Pantarch, pp. 73-86. Too many of the accounts of Modern Times were and are taken from those who were definitely critical, inaccurate, or narrow in their approach. See especially John B. Ellis, Free Love and Its Votaries; or American Socialism Unmasked (New York: US Publishing Co., 1870) and Moncure Daniel Conway, Autobiography, Memoires and Experiences of Moncure Daniel Conway (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1904).

[77]On Josiah Warren see William Bailie, Josiah Warren: The First American Anarchist, A Sociological Study (Boston: Small, Maynard and Company, 1906); Martin, Men Against the State, and Shively, "The Thought of Stephen Pearl Andrews."

[78]Bailie, Warren, p. 99.

[79]T. L. Nichols, Forty Years of American Life, p. 240. See Josiah Warren, Equitable Commerce: A New Development of Principles for the Harmonious Adjustment and Regulation of the Pecuniary, Intellectual

and Moral Intercourse of Mankind, Proposed as Elements of New Society. (New Harmony, Indiana, 1846).

[80]Martin, Men Against the State, pp. 70-1, and The New York Daily Tribune, April 4, 1853, p. 5.

[81]Warren later dated the end of progress at Modern Times with the publicity resulting from the "card to the Public" which attracted the notorious and eccentric and permanently labelled Modern Times as a free love colony. Warren labelled the free love movement an "ogre" and felt that "no systematic or extensive changes can be suddenly made in the Marriage relations with safety." Warren's wife, however, remained in contact with the Nicholses when they moved to Cincinnati in 1855 and subscribed to the Nichols' Monthly. Martin, Men Against the State, pp. 75-6 and 85, and Warren, "Practical Applications" in Shatz, The Essential Works of Anarchism, pp. 443 and 448.

[82]Both the Mormons and the Oneida Perfectionists had by 1848 outdistanced the opposition by moving into wilderness areas, where they would be left without serious interference for several decades. The free love Berlin Heights community was not formed until 1857 and it was also located in an isolated area in Ohio. The religious communities with "sexual irregularities" have been carefully studied, whereas the secular free love communities have been largely neglected. Those wrapped in religion were also much more successful in gaining followers and in becoming prosperous. See Alice Felt Tyler, Freedom's Ferment: Phases of American Social History from the Colonial Period to the Outbreak of the Civil War (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), and Stoehr, Free Love.

John Humphrey Noyes, History of American Socialism (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1966), p. 94.

[83]The account of Desarrollo is based on Nichols' Journal, October 1, 1853, pp. 49-50 which was also reprinted in T.L. Nichols and M. G. Nichols, Marriage, pp. 427-437.

[84]Thomas Nichols was a great believer in the role of the Industrial Revolution in changing the lives of both men and women in the future; especially would it alleviate the menial tasks that women did.

[85]All would come to Desarrollo "from attraction," but the Nicholses declared, "We shall rigidly reject and exclude all who are not suited to such a life. No person will be allowed to make himself really disagreeable. The first offense will bring a reprimand; the second will produce a temporary suspension of amicable relations or withdrawal of sympathy; the third, expulsion." Nichols' Journal, October 1853, p. 50.

[86]Ibid., p. 49.

[87]Nichols' Journal, November 1853, reprinted in T. L. Nichols and M. G. Nichols, Marriage, pp. 437-442.

[88]T. L. Nichols and M. G. Nichols, Marriage, p. 440.

[89]Nichols' Journal, August 1853, p. 39.

[90]Ibid., October 1853, p. 53.

[91]Ibid.

[92]Verne Dyson, Anecdotes and Events in Long Island History (Post Washington, New York: Ira J. Friedman, Inc., 1969), p. 80, says the depression, "the grave of one of the most remarkable educational institutions ever imagined," is still visible "on a lawn a short distance east of the Third Avenue Public School in Brentwood."

[93]This is the only book that the Nicholses co-authored.

[94]T. L. Nichols and M.G. Nichols, Marriage, p. 178.

[95]T. L. Nichols, Woman, in All Ages and Nations, pp. 158-9 and T. L. Nichols and M. G. Nichols, Marriage, pp. 115-116.

[96]T. L. Nichols and M. G. Nichols, Marriage, p. 117.

[97]Ibid., p. 118-9.

[98]Ibid., p. 119.

[99]Ibid., p. 198. It is interesting to trace Elizabeth Cady Stanton's concern with the marriage issue, the similarity of language, and the chronology of her finally speaking out on the issue two decades after Mary Gove Nichols. In a series of letters over the years, Stanton wrote to Susan B. Anthony:

March 1, 1853: "I feel, as never before, that this whole question of woman's rights turns on the pivot of the marriage relation, and mark my word, sooner or later it will be the topic for discussion."

July 20, 1857: "A man in marrying gives up no right; but a woman, every right, even the most sacred of all--the right to her own person. There will be no response among women to our demands until we have first aroused in them a sense of personal dignity and independence; and so long as our present false marriage relation continues, which in most cases is nothing more nor less than legalized prostitution, woman can have no self-respect....Personal freedom is the first right to be proclaimed, and that does not and cannot now belong to the relation of wife, to the mistress of the isolated home, to the financial dependent."

July 14, 1860: "How this marriage question grows on me. It lies at the very foundation of all progress. I never read a thing on this subject until I had arrived at my present opinion. My own life, observation, thought, feeling, reason, brought me to the conclusion."

(This is an interesting disavowal since she knew of the work of both Fourier and Mary Gove Nichols.)

Stanton kept most of her ideas on marriage confined to letters to Anthony. She wrote in 1870, however, that she had finally delivered her lecture on "marriage and divorce....Women respond to this divorce speech as they never did to suffrage. In a word, I have had grand meetings. Oh, how the women flock to me with their sorrows. Such experiences as I listen to plantation never equaled."

Stanton and Blatch, eds., Elizabeth Cady Stanton, pp. 49, 70, 82, and 127.

[100]T. L. Nichols and M. G. Nichols, Marriage, pp. 240 and 195.

[101]Ibid., pp. 191-92, 209-213, 219-220, 234-35, and 238-263.

[102]Ibid., p. 265.

[103]Ibid.

[104]Ibid., p. 234.

[105]Ibid., p. 220.

[106]Ibid., p. 223.

[107]Ibid., p. 209.

[108]Ibid., p. 192.

[109]Ibid., p. 265.

[110]Ibid., p. 197.

[111]Ibid., p. 202.

[112]Ibid.

[113]Ibid., p. 214.

[114]Ibid., p. 265.

[115]Ibid., p. 463.

[116]Nichols' Journal, October 1, 1853, p. 51.

[117]Alma Lutz, Susan B. Anthony: Rebel, Crusader, Humanitarian (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), p. 70.

[118]In a letter from Mary Gove Nichols to a Mr. Carland from Weare, New Hampshire, April 12, 1853, she wrote that she was writing

a novel entitled "Revelations of a Life" which contained "more truth than poetry in it." Houghton Library, Harvard University, and Nichols' Monthly, November 1854, p. 67.

[119]Thomas Nichols explained that "Mrs. Stowe said of Uncle Tom's Cabin, 'it wrote itself'; Mary Lyndon lived itself; and its great merit is in its being perhaps the only actual copy of a real life, in incident, thought and feeling." Nichols' Monthly, August/September 1855, p. 199.

Mary Gove Nichols never explained why she choose the name in the title. Certainly the choice of Mary, her own name, the name given to her daughter by Thomas, used also in her pseudonym Mary Orme, a declared favorite name, and the name of many of her fictional characters, is obvious. I have found no evidence that Mary Gove Nichols had read or been influenced by William M. Thackeray's The Luck of Barry Lyndon which had been published serially in Fraser's, January through December, 1844, and certainly there is no similarity in the leading characters or plot.

One reading of the use of Lyndon could be "done at Lynn" because it was there that Mary Gove declared her right to herself, at Lynn she began her health career, separated from Hiram, and found "true love" with Henry Wright, who in the book is named Mr. Lynde (she used no first name for him). It is also interesting that it was the maiden name of her heroine. In her adult signature Mary used Mary S. Gove or Mary S. Gove Nichols--hanging onto her middle initial or name Sargeant, and dropping her maiden name, Neal.

[120]The New York Daily Tribune, July 30, 1855, p. 1, and The New York Times, August 17, 1855.

[121]Reprinted in T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, pp. 428-32.

[122]The New York Daily Tribune, August 4, 1855, p. 3.

[123]Ibid., July 25, 1855, p. 1. Ad for Mary Lyndon. Nichols did not identify the literary editor by name, but stated that he was "an unprejudice and accomplished Englishman." Nichols' Monthly, August/September 1855, p. 199.

[124]The New York Times, August 17, 1855. Thomas Nichols identified this article as being by Raymond in the Nichols' Monthly, August/September 1855, pp. 198-199.

[125]On Clarina Nichols (1810-1885), see Edward T. James, editor, Notable American Women: A Biographical Dictionary (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), Vol. II, pp. 625-27.

[126]Joseph G. Gambone, ed., "The Forgotten Feminist of Kansas: The Papers of Clarina I. H. Nichols, 1854-1885, Part II," Kansas Historical Quarterly (Summer, 1973), p. 232.

[127]Leslie Wheeler, ed., Loving Warriors: Selected Letters of Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell, 1853 to 1893 (New York: The Dial Press, 1981), p. 146. Letter of Blackwell to Stone dated September 17, 1855. Underlined in the original.

[128]Ibid., p. 147.

[129]Nichols' Monthly, November 1854, p. 67.

[130]Ibid., p. 65.

CHAPTER IX

VARIOUS EXPERIENCES, SMOOTH AND ROUGH

> ...They say this is a very different freedom from that advocated in the Anthropology. Suppose it is. What then? Are we bound never to grow wiser, because we have stated our best wisdom at a given time or times?[1]

At the same time that she was being accused of immorality, Mary Gove Nichols wrote that the great desire of her life "from early youth" had been "holiness." Feeling she had been divinely guided in designing the School of Life, her goal was to make it possible for people to have that true freedom which would enable them to create, here and now, "an Eden of beauty, and fragrance, and use." All of life, not just a few hours on a certain day, should be "a harmonic hymn forever ascending to heaven and to God."[2] But orthodox religion would have none of her; they had denounced her and she had renounced them. Without a spiritual home, yet aware of her deep strain of mysticism, she had turned within for strength. Yet she still marveled at the unexplained phenomena of the universe and felt that an untapped energy source was available, but as yet undiscovered and uncharted.

Many Protestant Americans in the 1850s were having difficulty making sense of their religion. Amidst a time of astounding scientific discoveries, a transportation and communication revolution, a growing urbanization, and an increased flow of immigrants, all of which led to social chaos and confusion as value systems conflicted, the strain on orthodox religion was tremendous.[3] The Calvinist emphasis on original sin, the depravity of the individual, and a judgment of hell and damnation did not fit the new mood of the country. Biblical Christianity with its agricultural parables of shepherds and fishermen, its "musty old Theology," its "long past miracles" and "its horrible dogmas" lost credibility and meaning for many in the new age.[4]

If the old explanations were anachronistic, the human mind still yearned for an answer to the mysteries of the universe. So many unexplained phenomena such as electricity, magnetism, and mesmerism existed. In 1844 the telegraph, the latest of the discoveries to harness invisible forces, had connected Washinton, D. C., and Baltimore. People were astounded that from one city a message was sent over a little thin wire and was tapped out without assistance on a little machine in another city. If this was within human capabilities, why could not the spirits, drawing on their supernatural powers, send messages to their loved ones that were tapped out on table tops?[5]

Thus the atmosphere was created for the 1848 spirit rappings of the Fox sisters of Hydesville, New York, which ushered in a new religion shaped to the times, modern Spiritualism.[6] Before it died out, Spiritualism attracted more than a million people in the United States, including Mary and Thomas Nichols. At this period the

movement did not become a separate church, nor did it establish a systematic theology. As a result it meant many things to many people, but the one thing that they all agreed upon, was that it was possible for the living to communicate with the spirits of the dead through human mediums who served as intermediaries. Democratic because "manifestations of supernatural power" did not come to just a "few priests, but to the great masses of people"; spiritualism also believed in the equality of the sexes, and mediums were (without design) evenly divided between the sexes.[7]

In November 1854, Mary Gove Nichols exclaimed that although only two years before she "would about as willingly have been called a sheep-thief as a Medium," she had indeed become a spiritualist medium and was ready to devote herself to spreading that faith.[8] Thomas Nichols was also converted and rejoiced that spiritualism had "abolished hell, and so taken from the pulpit its great engine of terror, and the means of governing men by their fears."[9] Spiritualist circles appeared in "every State and Territory from ocean to ocean" and numerous journals such as The Spiritual Telegraph proliferated to disseminate their beliefs.[10] For some the way had been prepared by historical Christian mysticism which drew upon revelation, trances, faith healing, miracles, and stigmata; for others the teachings, experiments, and experiences of Franz Anton Mesmer and Emanuel Swedenborg provided the connecting link.[11] Individualists, who rejected a blurred angelic heaven or being merged into a Transcendental Oversoul or cosmic oneness, were attracted to its insistence that the individual soul was unique before and after death; one's identity

was eternal.[12] And unlikely as it seems out of context, to contemporaries spiritualism was a positive way to reconcile religion and scientific interests because it applied scientific methods and claimed its empirical data proved the existence of an afterlife.[13]

But as with most religious movements in the United States, disagreements over beliefs became so heated that schisms developed. One of the most controversial debates, from within and without, was the claim that free love was a doctrine of Spiritualism.[14] Just as the mesmerists had been accused of sexual impropriety, the spiritualist circles which were frequently held in darkened rooms with the participants holding hands were called licentious.[15] Their attacks on the orthodox church and its institutions, redefinition of sin and evil, rejection of judgment and hell, belief in the equality of the sexes, and reverence for Mary Magdalene added to the controversy. The Fourierite and/or Swedenborgian background of many spiritualists increased the suspicions.[16] Many of the free love advocates became spiritualists, and as Mary and Thomas Nichols, never lukewarm and always articulate, were leaders in both movements, much of the debate centered on them.

When Thomas Nichols gave a lecture entitled "Free Love, a Doctrine of Spiritualism," he angered the proponents, as well as the opponents, of Spiritualism. Carefully stating that he spoke only for himself and not for any society or organization, he declared that it was "well known to those who knew anything" that free love, if "rightly understood," was "the GREAT CENTRAL DOCTRINE OF SPIRITUALISM."[17] But when asked if he was a free lover, he obscurely answered, "I AM a

lover, and I am FREE, thank God!"[18] In the spirit world, he continued, one would find a state of freedom and love, a pure paradise, not an orgy, because it was "starvation that makes men ravenous.... With liberty comes peace; with plenty, temperance; with freedom to all faculties comes the harmonious exercise and proper use of all, without the abuse of any." But he warned that "perverted imaginations" had misinterpreted free love to mean "free lust."[19] His free love principles were "those of a peculiar chastity; one almost unknown in the legal sexual relations." Then he invited those who were interested in learning more about his interpretation of free love and looking "for congenial associations" to join the Progressive Union: A Society for Mutual Protection in Right.[20]

The spirits had directed the Nicholses to abandon "the idea of any near proximity to Modern Times" and told them to form the Progressive Union which would gather together "kindred souls" and prepare them for the harmonic life.[21] The fact that various reformers had tried to establish model communities and had failed, did not mean the ideas themselves were wrong, only "the material and the personnel." Alone, reformers were crushed, but in union there was strength and power. The Nicholses felt that even under the most favorable conditions it would take at least two years to gather a sufficient cadre for their envisioned Harmonic Home.[22] In the meantime members should prepare themselves as they "would for a journey to the promised land." They should purify their lives; end bad habits, especially the use of tobacco; obey the laws of health; free themselves from "entangling liabilities"; pay off debts and convert assets to "a disposable" form;

and become skilled in either agricultural or mechanical pursuits. Until harmony could be completely established, it was best not to have any children.[23]

The Nicholses proclaimed that sometimes progress involved not only a change of form, but also a "change of place." On a trip to Ohio and Michigan in the summer of 1855, they found "a broad and fertile field of usefulness," and the western mind seemed "like its soil, more open to culture and more productive than the eastern."[24] In the fall they announced that they had moved to Ohio where friends and supporters had provided enough funds and credit to begin their work on a solid basis. Henceforth, the Central Bureau of the Progressive Union would operate out of Cincinnati, "the Queen City of the West."[25]

Prospective members, eager to begin the experiments, pressed them to name a location for the Harmonic Home, but they replied that the place was a minor concern compared to the immediate need of finding qualified personnel for harmonic organization.[26] But they soon found the perfect site and leased a water cure establishment at nearby Yellow Springs, Ohio, and announced that on April 1, 1856, the Memnonia Institute: A School of Health, Progress, and Harmony, would open.[27]

Yellow Springs, a community of 400 inhabitants, about seventy miles northeast of Cincinnati and easily reached by railroad and stage, seemed an ideal setting. The area had been known for many years as a health spa; the countryside was picturesque and the climate delightful. Located on a ravine in a primeval forest, the water cure house could

accommodate over one hundred persons.[28] Only a short walk away, the mineral springs (for which the village was named) spewed forth a hundred gallons a minute. The main fountain made a brook which was enlarged by other gushing springs that merged into a river "large enough to drive a mill."[29] Nichols wrote that it was "a sylvan retreat, surrounded by natural beauties," a perfect place to establish their School of Health, Progress, and Harmony where they would gather "in a carefully cultured nursery, the germs of a new society."[30] They chose the name Memnonia Institute in remembrance of the unique phenomenon of the enormous ancient Egyptian statue of Memnon which produced musical sounds when the first rays of the rising sun touched it. So they would "salute with our Social Harmony, the dawn of a New Era for Humanity."[31]

The establishment of Memnonia was beset with difficulties as various individuals, who had dreams of their own, denounced the Nicholses. The first obstacle was the opposition of the famed innovative educator, Horace Mann, President of the newly established co-educational Antioch College which was also located in Yellow Springs.[32] Believing that women made excellent teachers, Mann had insisted that they be on the faculty and admitted as students.[33] This was such a bold departure from tradition that utmost propriety must reign if his experiment in co-education was to be successful and his critics silenced. To maintain discipline he drew up thirty-one laws and regulations. Especially concerned that students would be drawn to the nearby beautiful secluded wooded area, he ruled that "the respective sexes" could visit the glen only on alternate days; the

men on the odd days of the month and the women on even days.[34] His observations of young men led him to conclude that there were "not any great majority who would not yield to the temptation of ruining a girl if he could." "Those events mildly called accidents" had been prevented at Antioch only because of his "constant, sleepless vigilance."[35]

The pressure of launching an innovative college literally produced sleepless nights for Mann.[36] The trustees had not kept their verbal agreements and the college faced a major financial crisis which would close it if they could not raise $120,000 in cash by April 1st.[37] In the midst of this impending doom, the circular announcing the opening on April 1st of Memnonia Institute crossed Mann's desk in February. He felt he had to act immediately to prevent the establishment of a free love colony on the other side of the enticing glen.

First, Mann formed a faculty committee and they examined the Nicholses' writings, which they labelled "of the highest immoral and fatal tendency." When a student advertised and sold the Nicholses' book, he was expelled.[39] Next, Mann called a citizens' meeting and tried to break the lease on the water cure house. Dr. Nichols was asked to "give up the enterprise, the result of which would be deplorable to the interests of both the town and college." When he refused, the Daily Springfield Nonpariel made disparaging remarks about Thomas and his "woman...partner...termed by him Mrs. Nichols (for they discard the marriage relation)."[40] The editorial statement declared that they had come west because they could more easily

find victims for "the pernicious doctrines he professed," and asked, "Did ever the cloven foot expose itself more openly or did ever the stench of the pit offend more grievously the nostrils of the people?"[41] Then when Dr. Ehrmann, the owner of the water cure establishment, tried to give possession to the Nicholses, a mob of forty men appeared, and he "threw down the keys and fled to Xenia on foot." He was later arrested and tried for breaking into his own house.[42]

Cut off from legal redress, the Nicholses responded to the attack in their Nichols' Monthly. Although Horace Mann had temporarily prevented them from taking over their leased property and "had made mob law, or border ruffianism, triumphant," they thanked him for publicizing their work and creating more discussion in one month than they could have in a year. Mann had threatened to resign if they were allowed to open Memnonia and said in their presence that rather than have "their principles promulgated there, he would prefer to see the whole place sunk; that he would remove to Sodom." He predicted that if they were allowed in Yellow Springs "before one year, every young man and young woman in Antioch College would rush into Licentiousness."[43] The Nicholses responded that the Antioch students were "not boys and girls, but men and women" who were "very capable of investigating and judging for themselves any questions of morals or society."[44]

Increasingly irritated with the continued interference of Mann, Thomas scathingly reported, "What of Memnonia? It might now have been in being, but for the lawless wickedness of one

individual, the Calvin of that modern Geneva, Yellow Springs." He concluded, "If any sick fail of cure for want of our care and treatment, it is Horace Mann who has hindered them. If any died, who might have come to us and lived, he is their murderer."[45]

Then suddenly "almost without...striking a blow" the Nicholses won their fight.[46] The catalyst for the change in attitude was the Spiritualist medium, J. B. Conklin, who visited Ohio in June 1856 as a result of the direction of his guardian spirits and because the Nicholses paid his expenses.[47] They had been colleagues in New York City, and Mary Gove Nichols believed that Conklin had accomplished "more spiritual good, than all the clergy of New York," and had edited his The Life of a Medium.[48] In Cincinnati, which would soon be a "great fortress of the cause," Conklin received hundreds of visitors, many "of the most intellectual and worthful class."[49] At Yellow Springs he converted or confounded many of the leading citizens and several faculty members.[50] One of the charges against the Nicholses was that they were Spiritualists; now most of their opponents had changed their opinions about Spiritualism and no longer had "any fanatical prejudices." Indeed, many had become believers.[51]

The Conklin visit had removed active opposition to the Nicholses, and he reported, "Mr. Mann almost alone, persists in considering their doctrines dangerous and in asserting that they are insane or corrupt."[52] The Nicholses took possession of the water cure establishment at Yellow Springs and were "treated with uniform respect and kindness." Horace Mann remained an exception, however, and

still "manifested violent feelings" toward them, but they hoped that he would soon learn tolerance.[53] He was not reconciled, however, and wrote his wife from Yellow Springs, "Nichols is here, boasts that he has overcome all opposition, and is fluttering his wings proudly. I still retain my opinion that if he is not induced to leave, Antioch will receive a greater wound than ever before."[54]

Mann was correct in believing he was not through with the Nicholses because they soon challenged him in the "spirit of kindness" about some "objectionable features" at Antioch.[55] They were concerned about what Mann feared they would be--the relationship of the sexes. The Nicholses asked about the "Laws and Regulations" that stated that no person of the opposite sex could enter the rooms of students; that students could not take walks or rides without special permission and could not go into the glen at the same time; that any student (not just female) had to leave the college if he or she married; that no student could live with villagers who had boarders of the other sex; and that the literary societies had to have single sex membership. They asked why a college should allow both sexes to attend and then segregate them. "It would be better to go back to the system of separate schools for the sexes"; they argued, "for bringing them together under these ignominious regulations, must have an unhappy, if not an immoral influence." The puritanic, anachronistic restrictions indicated "a want of faith in man, and a belief in the dogmas of original sin and total depravity," and "enlightened American students" should not submit to them.[56]

As Horace Mann wondered how Antioch would survive this latest diabolical challenge, he seemed unaware of the implications of several significant changes in the Nicholses' ideas. Their Memnonia Institute circular stated that their object was "to free men and women from the domination of sensual appetites and habits," and they announced a new law concerning sexual relations which they called the law of Progression in Harmony. Under this new dispensation, sexual intercourse was only to be permitted "when the wisdom of the Harmony demands a child"; coition was only for a limited procreation. They repudiated "the sensual license" within marriage which the civil law allowed and asked for "the far purer chastity of a higher law," which commanded them to "garner" their lives and "avoid the waste and all the evils of sensuality." Not only were they demanding this of themselves, but also of those who joined them at their Harmonic Home.[57]

The Nicholses believed that previous community experiments had failed because of a lack of preparation. Therefore, Memnonia Institute would not be a "community nor a house of refuge," but a school of health, progress, and life. The necessary preparation would require "provisionally and necessarily a despotism, as wise and benevolent as circumstances will admit."[58] If Horace Mann did not realize the implications of these changes, members of the Progressive Union did and complained.

An Iowan free lover, James W. Towner, challenged their conclusion that "material union" was "wasteful and destructive" and declared that it was "repression and inaction" that led to those conditions.[59] Frequent sexual embrace enhanced love, elevated the

individual, and improved the next generation. He doubted their assumption that "amativeness holds all the spiritual energy that feeds all the faculties" because there were many "energizing passions" besides sex.[60] The Nicholses printed his letter "cheerfully as a clear, calm protest," and Mary Gove Nichols responded to his arguments reminding him that the "New Society" was still in its infancy and a "vestalate" was required.[61] Basing her case on her area of expertise, she wrote, "My dear Sir, you do not know woman as I know her."[62] Diseased, oppressed, and exhausted, women must garner their energy. Neither civilization founded on laws and customs determined by "the lust of gain and the lust of women" nor women themselves were ready for the new world; a time of preparation was essential. "Woman must come to be her own" and go "through the sacred vestalate" before society could be improved. As things were "the sensual clutch and claim of even the truest love they can find now" held them back. Woman must "emancipate herself and man from the heavy bonds of the sensual life" because they prevented "progress in development and harmony, as absolutely as death." If all the existent love was "ultimately sensually" it would "destroy men and women as surely as lightning kills."[63] She acknowledged that their new pronouncements were different from what they had advocated in Esoteric Anthropology and Marriage, but she challenged, "Suppose it is. What then? Are we bound never to grow wiser, because we have stated our best wisdom at a given time or times?"[64]

The other controversial issue in the circular, that Memnonia would be a "despotism," was a surprising statement in light of their

previous association with Modern Times and advocacy of Individual Sovereignty. And yet it was that very experience that convinced the Nicholses that "one perverse, sensual, selfish, dishonest person can do great mischief."[65] Despotic power would only be used "to protect and benefit," but it was necessary "in the preparatory condition" to have "the power of preventing or removing sources of discord."[66]

Under this new dispensation the Nicholses took possession of the spacious water cure mansion at Yellow Springs in July 1856. By September they had a few patients; some students taking music, art, and language lessons; and a few seekers after truth.[67] The serenity, charm, and beauty of the peaceful countryside was reflected in their calm approach. On Sunday afternoons they invited their neighbors and interested inquirers to participate in their discussions of "all important questions affecting human progress and happiness." Early every morning and on Friday and Sunday evenings, they held Spiritualist circles for the members of their Harmonic Home. Otherwise there were few set routines and each person's needs were met individually; there was little to interest the pleasure seeker, the curious, or the eccentric.[68]

Far from being a free love colony, Memnonia required those who desired to inaugurate Harmonic Love in the Earth Life to accept the "Pledges and Canons of the Circle of Concentration" and vow to be chaste in thought, word, and deed; be pure in spirit and diet; bathe daily and wear clean attire; and refrain from criticizing one another. A novitiate of ninety-eight days included the promise of

celibacy and restricted fasting. After the trial period they were "at liberty" to decide whether or not to continue these disciplines, but sexual union was still limited.[69]

To help envision the harmonic future, Thomas Nichols published his serialized novel Esperanza: My Journey Thither, and What I Found There which described "the actual working and daily expression of a Harmonic Society."[70] In fictional form he presented a composite of their beliefs about the proper organization of society, focusing especially on the relationship of the sexes. The society was founded on their esoteric interpretation of free love, which was based not merely on "the excitement of the amative passion," but on "the sum total of our spiritual affinities for other beings." This unselfish, compassionate love could seek physical consummation and was not restricted to just one partner. Women had the final control over the ultimate expression of that love and gave consent only when "the wisdom of Harmony" desired procreation.[71]

By January 1857 the Daily Springfield Nonpariel had to admit that the Nicholses were "a great deal worse in theory than in practice." Organized opposition to Memnonia had "died out," and the editor declared that if they kept their "impractical and rather outrageous notions" to themselves, they would "succeed well enough."[72]

If all looked calm on the outside in early 1857, the trauma and turmoil of 1856 had deeply affected Mary Gove Nichols. Economic survival was still precarious. Her novel, Mary Lyndon, had not become the Uncle Tom's Cabin for women; she had been reviled to no avail. Not only had the conservative press attacked her, but liberals

and the radical free lovers soundly condemned her. During the height of Mann's attack, Mary Gove Nichols had "a severe pulmonary attack" which threatened her life. But by July her health had improved and continued to amidst the restful atmosphere and mineral waters at Yellow Springs. Still emotionally exhausted and physically weak she was concerned that her "struggle with civilization in the past" had "well nigh crushed" her.[73] In this mental state, her career took an unexpected twist. Difficult to explain, it just happened. Thomas Nichols presented the facts; however, he admitted that some might have difficulty accepting their experience.[74]

It began in late 1856 when at the Nicholses' Spiritualist circles, which were always small and private, a series of Jesuit spirits appeared and announced that the Society of Jesus had the same purpose of moral reform as they did.[75] The spirit of the founder, St. Ignatius Loyola, appeared to Mary Gove Nichols and revealed "divinely inspired...directions for an order of life."[76] Then St. Francis Xavier materialized to instruct them in Catholic doctrine about which they knew very little. They were told to "seek the grace and baptism and oral instruction in the church."[77]

The impact at Memnonia was swift and dramatic. Several "very intelligent and perfectly sincere" Memnonians joined the nearby Catholic Church in February 1857, but because of the circumstances of their conversion and their notoriety, the Nicholses wanted to present their case to the highest authority available.[78] They went to Archbishop John B. Purcell of Cincinnati, who was intrigued by their conversion and wrote several fellow prelates about it.[79] He labelled Mary Gove Nichols

"the Mother Abbess of the Free Lovers" and was fascinated with her belief that woman had the "sacred" right to choose the father of her child. Purcell allowed that God could make "his elect everywhere" and was "never more triumphant" than when he subdued "such souls."[80] One correspondent, Archbishop Peter Richard Kenrick of St. Louis, had some misgivings about the method of conversion through spiritualist circles and was concerned that the Nicholses denounce "all future communication with such suspicious guides," but saw their conversion as an indication of an impending favorable popular reaction to the Church.[81] His brother, Archbishop Francis Patrick Kenrick of Baltimore, to whom Purcell also wrote, saw no problem in taking into the Church "the chief of the Free Lovers and Spiritualists" if he got a "written renunciation" from the Nicholses.[82]

With Archbishop Purcell's approval, Father Oakley, Rector of St. Xavier's College in Cincinnati received Thomas and Mary Gove Nichols, their daughter, and Faustina Hopkins of Memnonia into the Catholic Church on March 29, 1857.[83] The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate did not usually publicize conversions, but because of the notoriety of the Nicholses it reprinted the letter of Thomas Nichols to Purcell. Writing also on behalf of Mary, he explained that their conversion was the result of "the direct and miraculous interposition of the Holy Spirit and by the blessed teaching of St. Ignatius Loyola and St. Francis Xavier." Submitting themselves to the "divine order" of the Church, they accepted her teachings and repudiated and denounced "what she condemns." They vowed, "Whatever in our writings

and teachings, and in our lives, has been contrary to the doctrines, morality, and discipline of the holy Catholic Church, we wish to retract and repudiate, and were it possible, to atone for."[84]

Several Catholic papers viewed the conversion of the Nicholses as additional evidence that "learned and distinguished" Americans were converting to Catholicism.[85] The New Orleans Catholic Standard rejoiced that Mary Gove Nichols had joined their fold because under her "gentle hands the indigenous flowers of literature have bloomed with such profusion and beauty."[86] Aware of the hostile New York press reaction to the Nicholses' earlier career, the Catholic New York Freeman's Journal rejoiced that they had been "stopped short in a most unbridled career of Fourierism, Free-Loveism, and devil-worship generally."[87]

The Spiritualist journals, many of which had previously protested the tying of free love to Spiritualism, commented on the Nicholses' conversion. The editor of the New England Spiritualist used the conversion of Thomas and Mary Gove Nichols who had "both been widely known as intelligent and vigorous advocates of Spiritualism" as an opportunity to exhort other Spiritualists. If they did not develop a systematic theology and design the "Church of the Future," he feared the Catholic Church would soon "absorb the truly spiritual among us."[88]

The Nicholses wanted their friends and former co-workers who had suffered with them "the most painful misunderstandings and the vilest reproach" to temporarily suspend judgment before concluding that they had "become fools." In a poignant and lengthy letter they

related the series of events that had brought them "through Protestantism and Infidelity and the pride of Science and Philosophy" to "the foot of the cross" where they had found rest, peace, consolation, and hope. No longer would they work to create a model community because they had found "a Great Harmony already established."[89]

Although their dramatic conversion had been startling, it was not completely out of context of Mary Gove Nichols' previous experience. Each of her previous religious associations had been with groups that had a strong strain of mysticism--Quakers, Swedenborgians, and Spiritualists. Catholic history was replete with miracles and the lives of saints were "filled with spiritual manifestations."[90] Like her conversion to Quakerism through reading a book about their history, living persons were not instrumental in her initial investigation of Catholicism. The Catholic liturgy with its icons, incense, and incantations had greater sensory appeal than Protestant churches, especially the groups she had been associated with who gathered in auditoriums or in plain meeting houses with no music or ritual.[91] Ignatius Loyola, himself a mystic, had built his Spiritual Exercises around the senses and the Jesuits were primarily a teaching order.[92] Hypocritical and self-righteous people had always alienated the Nicholses and they were delighted with the priests who swapped "stories, jokes, and laughter" and the nuns who overflowed "with a childlike merriment."[93]

The loneliness of their reform work was abated as they united with the largest single Christian denomination in the United

States.[94] They perceived it as a lasting institution that had survived all the schisms, while the Protestants had a "history of disorder, outrage, persecution, and demoralization."[95] Mary Gove Nichols pointed to the advantage of the centuries old religious orders which conserved and carried "forward the knowledge of laws and principles" and applied "them with unflagging devotion." A form of immortality seemed available to her because "a religious order may last a thousand years and the wisdom of one superior embodied in the rule and life and teachings of an order may be spread over continents and carried out by a long line of his successors." By instructing the leaders of the orders, she realized that she could be "teaching thousands, and doing a good work for future generations."[96]

In the early explanations of their conversion the Nicholses placed great emphasis on the role of the "Blessed Virgin Mary." Indeed they were "so impressed...with this beautiful realization of sacred love, free from sensuality and sin," that they felt "it would repay a life of suffering," if they "could give to the world the idea of a religious order of chaste birth, in honor of the Immaculate Conception."[97] Patriarchal Judaism and Christianity presented few positive or prominent historic female images, but now at a unique time in its history, Pope Pius IX and the Catholic Church were exhalting the mother of Jesus as the pinnacle of perfection.[98] The possibility of institutional support from the Catholic Church with its vast resources must have had enormous appeal as Mary Gove Nichols envisioned a religious order in which she could combine her long concerns with education, health, and childbirth.[99]

The "order of chaste birth" never materialized, however, and nothing more was said about it. Memnonia was disbanded. Somewhat in limbo, Thomas studied religion and Mary worked as a hydropathic doctor, earning a little over one hundred dollars a month, although it taxed her health and was "only enough to live on." But after almost ten years of marriage that had seen many trials, tribulations, and vicissitudes, she declared, "We are infinitely happy with each other and with our Faith."[100] Thomas published articles in the Catholic Telegraph and prepared a series of lectures on "Catholicity and Protestantism" which he delivered at the Cincinnati cathedral in November 1857 and later published.[101]

Mary Gove Nichols soon envisioned another mission, to visit all the English speaking convents in the world to teach the teachers "sanitary law" and to show that prayers were "not profitable" unless people obeyed the natural laws of health.[102] She began this work in Brown County, Ohio, at the Ursuline convent and female academy which had been founded by several "well-born and educated" French and English women.[103] Hearing of her work, the bishop of Cleveland asked her to help at their orphanage which had nearly a hundred poor orphans and had been struck by scarlet fever.[104] She applied the water cure techniques that had their best results in fever cases and prescribed a "dose of homeopathic belladona"; only one child died after she took control of the treatment for the orphanage. She taught the mother superior and her nuns the basic health laws so that they could "hold the good they had gained."[105] In gratitude for her teaching and healing, the bishop of Cleveland gave her letters of commendation

to the bishops of Detroit, Chicago, and Natchez, and the archbishops of St. Louis and New Orleans. The Nicholses then embarked on a tour from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico where they visited Catholic institutions teaching preventive medicine.[106]

American nuns were not as "strictly cloistered" as European orders, and Mary Gove Nichols "was admitted into the interior or home life of the sisters."[107] She gave health lectures to the nuns and on occasion gave a shorter version to priests and even to bishops. At the convent at Monroe, Michigan, she "spent some of the happiest weeks" of her life before moving on to the convent a mile from the University of Notre Dame where she healed the sprained ankle of the mother of the Mother Superior with her "'gift of healing' or magnetic, or mesmeric power."[108]

After "various experiences, smooth and rough" at several other convents in Chicago, St. Louis, and Memphis, the Nicholses arrived in New Orleans.[109] They were both enormously impressed with the self-sacrifice of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul who staffed the hospital.[110] New Orleans was regularly plagued with yellow fever epidemics and the doctors who prescribed the accepted bleeding, blistering, purging, and vomiting had little success in breaking the fever. In the 1853 epidemic, one-fourth of the 40,000 cases of yellow fever ended in death before they realized that the best results came from "good nursing and minimal medication."[111] This was, of course, what Mary Gove Nichols taught to the sisters and their charges. During her three month stay her admiration grew for the "sublime heroism" of the Sisters of Charity who knew that

a call to New Orleans was "a service of death," for none who went to the hospital ever left it; they died at their post usually within five to seven years.[112]

As Mary Gove Nichols visited the various religious orders in the Mississippi River Valley, she frequently noted how hard the members worked and recorded that "they had one sin that they never confessed--the sin of over-work."[113] She had over extended herself and was "worn down by incessant and exhausting labours." Facing the approaching summer heat, the Nicholses decided to return to the North and worked their way back up the Mississippi River to the Ohio River, recrossed the Alleghenies, and arrived back in New York City.[114] The travel and the work had taken its toll on her delicate health, and as she approached her fiftieth year, she wrote that the time had "probably passed" for her to complete her mission of visiting all the English speaking convents. She concluded that in "the future those I teach must come to me."[115] Little did she realize then that her longest and most difficult trip lay just ahead.

Notes to Chapter IX

[1]Nichols' Monthly, May, 1856, p. 376.

[2]T. L. Nichols and M. G. Nichols, Marriage, p. 442.

[3]See George Rogers Taylor, The Transportation Revolution, 1815-1860 (New York: Harpers Torchbooks, 1951); R. Laurence Moore, In Search of White Crows: Spiritualism, Parapsychology, and American Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); and Howard Kerr, Mediums, and Spirit Rappers, and Roaring Radicals: Spiritualism in American Literature, 1850-1900 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972).

[4]Nichols' Monthly, November, 1854, p. 66.

[5]Hal Sears, The Sex Radicals: Free Love in High Victorian America (Lawrence: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1977), p. 13.

[6]See Earl W. Fornell, The Unhappy Medium: Spiritualism and the Life of Margaret Fox (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1964).

[7]Nichols' Monthly, November, 1854, p. 66.
One 1859 accounting listed 121 women and 110 men who were spirit mediums. Moore, White Crows, p. 105.
No other religious group, with perhaps the exception of the Quakers, could claim an equal distribution of ministers. The Quakers, however, had limited the spiritual equality of women to the meeting house, and it did not carry over into the world at large. As there were no limits of time and place on the spirits, female mediums also were not bound by place or time. Stanton, Anthony, and Gage who were very sensitive about sexism in the churches stated that the Spiritualists were "the only religious sect in the world...that has recognized the equality of woman." Spiritualists also favored woman suffrage, encouraged women's participation at conventions, allowed women to speak on their platforms, and elected them as officials of their societies. Stanton, et al., History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. III, p. 530.

[8]Nichols' Monthly, November, 1854, p. 67.

[9]Ibid., p. 66.

[10]Stanton, et al., History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. III, p. 530.

[11]Geoffrey K. Nelson, Spiritualism and Society (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), pp. 48-54.

[12]Moore, White Crows, pp. 53-4.

[13]Moore's thesis is that "over the past 175 years spiritualism and then psychical research have offered Americans a 'reasonable' solution to the problem of how to accommodate religious and scientific interests." Moore, White Crows, p. xii.

[14]See Moore, White Crows, pp. 42-43; The Spiritual Telegraph Vol. 6, 1854, pp. 239-245; Vol. 7, 1855, p. 28; September 29, 1855, p. 86; and October 13, 1855, p. 95.

[15]See Robert Darnton, Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France (New York: Schocken Books, 1976); Frank Podmore, Modern Spiritualism: A History and A Criticism (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1902), Vol. 1, pp. 292-3; and Moore, White Crows, pp. 57-8.

[16]Podmore, Modern Spiritualism, Vol. II, pp. 209-10.

[17]Thomas Low Nichols, "Free Love, A Doctrine of Spiritualism: A Discourse delivered in Foster Hall, Cincinnati, December 22, 1855" (Cincinnati: F. Bly, 1856), p. 3.

[18]Ibid., p. 11.

[19]Ibid., p. 20.

[20]Ibid., p. 14.

[21]Nichols' Monthly, June, 1855, pp. 54-6.

[22]Ibid., January, 1856, p. 76.

[23]Ibid., August/September, 1855, pp. 194-5.

[24]Ibid., June, 1855, p. 1 and August/September, 1855, p. 145.

[25]Ibid., October/November, 1855, p. 217.

[26]Ibid., January, 1856, p. 76.

[27]Ibid., February, 1856, p. 98; March, 1856; p. 170; and circular "Memnonia Institute" in Antiochiana Collection, Antioch College.

The inaugural ceremonies were planned for April 7, the birthday of Charles Fourier.

[28]"Memnonia Institute" circular.

[29]Louise Hall Tharp, Until Victory: Horace Mann and Mary Peabody (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953), p. 266; and T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 91.

[30]"Memnonia Institute" circular.

[31]Ibid., Memnon, a figure in Greek mythology, had been killed by Achilles. His mother, Eos, wept for him every morning and the dew drops were said to be her tears. They were so copious that they moved Zeus to declare Memnon immortal. Amenhotep III of Egypt built several enormous statues in the fourteenth century B.C. near Thebes which became known as the Colossi of Memnon. When an earthquake in 27 B.C. broke one of the statues in two, a curious phenomenon resulted. Each morning when the first rays of the rising sun touched the statue, it would set off musical sounds similar to the sound of the twang of a harp string. This was believed to be Memnon answering the greeting of his mother Eos. When the statue was restored in 170 A.D., the sounds ceased. Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 edition, Vol. 15, p. 138.

[32]On Horace Mann (1796-1859) see Tharp, Until Victory and Jonathan Messerili, Horace Mann: A Biography (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), pp. 543-4.

[33]Mary Tyler Mann, Life of Horace Mann By His Wife (Boston: Lee and Sheperd Publishers, 1891), p. 424. Mann "had never been pleased with any desire on woman's part to shine in public," but he believed "that woman's teaching, other things being equal, is more patient, persistent, and thorough than man's....Nor does it interfere in any degree with the peculiarly appointed sphere of woman. She is better fitted for duties of wife and mother" after having been a teacher.

[34]Tharp, Until Victory, p. 280.

[35]Ibid., p. 281. In the late 1860s, Charles Eliot of Harvard, also an innovative college president, rejected the idea of co-education because of the extensive police regulations he believed would be necessary when "hundreds of young men and women of immature character and marriage age" were "in a common residence." See Liva Baker, "The Seven Sisters," Smithsonian, February, 1974, p. 84.

[36]Tharp, Until Victory, p. 288.

[37]The Ladies' Repository, Vol. 16, January, 1856, p. 57.

[38]Letter of Horace Mann to Dr. W. H. Hambleton, March 1, 1856, Antoichiana Collection, Antioch College; Nichols' Monthly, May, 1856, p. 314; September, 1856, pp. 180-2.

[39]Nichols' Monthly, November, 1856, p. 251.

[40]Daily Springfield Nonpariel, March 7, 1856, and March 10, 1856, Clark County Historical Society, Springfield, Ohio. Also March 18, 1856.

[41]Ibid., March 18, 1856.

[42]Letter from Mary Mann to Horace Mann, March 20, 1856, copy in Antiochiana Collection, Antioch College. Original in Mann Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

[43]Nichols' Monthly, May, 1856, p. 313.

[44]Ibid., April, 1856, p. 242.

[45]Ibid., June, 1856, p. 385.

[46]Ibid., July, 1856, p. 6.

[47]Ibid., August, 1856, pp. 111-2.

[48]Ibid., June, 1855, p. 2. The book had been appearing in the Nichols' Monthly in serialized form since June, 1855.

[49]Ibid., August, 1856, p. 112.

[50]Ibid., p. 114.

[51]Ibid., July, 1856, p. 6.

[52]Ibid., August, 1856, p. 115.

[53]Ibid., p. 77. They had taken possession the first week in July, 1856.

[54]Letter from Horace Mann to Mary Mann, August 22, 1856. Copy in Antiochiana Collection, Antioch College, original in Mann Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

[55]Nichols' Monthly, August, 1856, pp. 118-20.

[56]Ibid., pp. 119-20. Mann responded by expelling a student who was boarding with the Nicholses because members of the opposite sex also boarded there. Ibid., November, 1856, p. 251.

The Antioch Adelphian Union Literary Society examined Esoteric Anthropology, Marriage, and Mary Lyndon which had been given to them by J. D. Gage. They refused to place them in the library because they opposed "the marriage system as now existing." The Literary Society was especially concerned about Mary Lyndon because it was "enticing." Minutes of the Adlephian Union Literary Society, November 7, 1856. Antiochiana Collection, Antioch College.

[57]"Memnonia Institute" circular. They had made this announcement in late 1855.

[58]Ibid.

[59]On James W. Towner, a former Universalist minister, who helped to found the free love colony at Berlin Heights and was later the leader of the anti-Noyes faction at the Oneida Community breakup in 1879, see Stoehr, Free Love in America. His letter to the Nicholses was reprinted in Nichols' Monthly, June, 1856, pp. 444-47.

[60]Nichols' Monthly, June, 1856, p. 446.

[61]Ibid., pp. 444 and 447.

[62]Ibid., p. 447.

[63]Ibid., p. 449.

[64]Ibid., May, 1856, p. 376.

[65]Ibid., March, 1856, p. 234.

[66]Ibid., August, 1856, p. 123.

Why did the Nicholses turn toward concepts that apparently conflicted with their earlier beliefs? A partial explanation was the attraction within the mystic tradition of absolute self-control as evidence through ascetic orders within most religions. This tendency toward celibacy is not only evidenced by historic Catholic religious orders (and indeed all their priests and nuns since the eleventh century) and in the Shakers, but within the Hindu religion. An interesting example was the acceptance by Mahatma Gandhi of the Hindu Brachmacharya when at the age of thirty-seven he became celibate as a necessary discipline if he were going to lead others. See Louis Fischer, The Life of Mahatma Gandhi (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1950), pp. 71-73.

Another answer was the need in the initial stages of a new order or community to have only productive members. Mary Gove Nichols wanted women to participate equally in the development of the new society. As a physician to women and the mother of a five year old child, she knew the inordinate demands of small children and the strain of childbearing and rearing. As contraceptive methods were far from completely reliable and the most effective means were controlled by males, the only acceptable solution was abstinence.

Their move toward despotism also came out of the historic needs of an innovative community. Reformers who are willing to break with the old order frequently are individualists who having paid a price to break with traditional society do not want another despotism to replace the one they just left. Yet the resulting anarchy can lead them far astray from the founder's concepts that helped them break free. Thus new orders often have a built in self-destruct system. The Nicholses' previous experience underscored this dilemma, so they insisted upon ultimate control in the beginning stages.

[67]Nichols' Monthly, September, 1856, p. 179.

[68]Ibid., pp. 199-202.

[69]Ibid., pp. 153-55.

[70]Thomas Low Nichols, Esperanza: My Journey Thither, and What I Found There (Cincinnati, 1860). The novel was serialized in the Nichols' Monthly beginning in January, 1856, and continued throughout the year. Esperanza was Spanish and Italian for hope, according to Nichols who used it here to mean "Land of Hope." Nichols' Monthly, March, 1856, p. 169.

[71]In the novel Vincent is based on Thomas Nichols, Harmonia on Mary Gove Nichols, and Melodia probably on Faustina Hopkins.

[72]Daily Springfield Nonpariel, January 16, 1857. Clark County Historical Society, Springfield, Ohio.

[73]Nichols' Monthly, September, 1856, p. 151.

[74]T.L. Nichols, Health Manual, pp. 98 and 93. See William James, The Variety of Religious Experience (New York: The Modern Library, 1929). James said that there was no way to explain conversion, but the real core of the religious problem was a cry for help. James himself went from spiritualism to psychic experiments and in the 1880s founded the American Society for Psychical Research, "a direct outgrowth of spiritualism." Moore, White Crows, p. 66.

There are also interesting parallels with Mary Gove Nichols' conversion and that of Orestes A. Brownson who converted to the Catholic Church in 1844. See Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Orestes A. Brownson: A Pilgrim's Progress (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1939.

[75]"Letter to Our Friends and Co-Workers," from T. L. Nichols and Mary S. Gove Nichols, dated April 20, 1857. It appeared first in the Boston Pilot and then was reprinted in the Catholic Telegraph and Advocate, May 23, 1857.

[76]Ibid.

[77]Ibid., and T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 97.

[78]Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner Waters and their son who had lived at Memnonia joined the Catholic Church on February 2, 1857. See Philip Gleason, "From Free-Love to Catholicism: Dr. and Mrs. Thomas L. Nichols at Yellow Springs," The Ohio Historical Quarterly, October, 1961, p. 300.

[79]Catholic Telegraph and Advocate, May 23, 1857.

[80]John B. Purcell to Archbishop Lefevre of Detroit, February 22, 1857, Archives of University of Notre Dame.

[81]Archbishop Peter Richard Kenrick of St. Louis to Archbishop John B. Purcell of Cincinnati, April 15, 1857, Archives of University of Notre Dame.

[82]Archbishop Francis Patrick Kenrick of Baltimore to Archbishop John B. Purcell of Cincinnati, February 28, 1857, Archives of University of Notre Dame.

[83]Catholic Telegraph, May 23, 1857, and T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 97. The daughter who joined the church was Mary Wilhelmina (daughter of Thomas and Mary and only six years old), not Elma Gove who was twenty-five and belonged to the Epsicopal Church in Cincinnati at this time. See Letter from Mary Gove Nichols to Alonzo Lewis, April 2, 1857, Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

[84]Letter of Thomas Nichols to Archbishop Purcell, partially reprinted in New York Daily Tribune, April 7, 1857, p. 6.

[85]Quoted in Gleason, "From Free-Love to Catholicism," p. 303.

[86]Ibid.

[87]Ibid.

[88]New England Spiritualist, April 27, 1857.

[89]"Letter to Our Friends and Co-Workers," Catholic Telegraph May 23, 1857.

[90]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 98.
The Nicholses wrote that "This life of St. Francis Xavier, while a missionary in India, was one continuous scene of miracles. We read in Catholic books of a Saint who made raps on his coffin, at every consecration of the Host; of the consecrated wafer flying of itself to the mouths of communicants; of Saints, in ecstacies of prayer being lifted up from the ground without visible support; of innumerable miracles of healing. The wonders of Spiritualism are all old stories of the Church, where the communion of the Saints, or the intercourse between the visible and invisible worlds, has existed from the beginning." Catholic Telegraph, May 23, 1857.

[91]Moore, White Crows, discusses "the complete absence of any devotional atmosphere" of the spiritualists meetings, p. 46.

[92]See John J. Delaney, ed., Saints for All Seasons (Garden City: New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1978), pp. 107-117.

[93]T. L. Nichols, Forty Years, p. 266.

[94]Ibid., p. 261.

[95]Thomas Low Nichols, Lectures on Catholicity and Protestantism (New York: The Author, 1859), p. 127.

[96]M. G. Nichols, Woman's Work in Water Cure, p. 147.

[97]Catholic Telegraph, May 23, 1857.

[98]Pope Pius IX, who also issued the historically important 1870 bull on papal infallibility, claimed that he had been cured of epilepsy through the intercession of the Virgin Mary and he wanted to honor her in a unique way. See John A. Hardon, The Catholic Catechism: A Contemporary Catechism of the Teachings of the Catholic Church (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1975), pp. 150-171, who stated, "It is no exaggeration that the hundred years from 1854 to the close of the Second Vatican Council were the most prolific in doctrinal development in Mariology. Nothing like it was seen in any comparable period of Catholic history." (p. 155)

[99]See Marina Warner, Alone of Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary (New York: Pocket Books, 1976), pp. 236-254.

The development of Mariology created all kinds of problems for Catholic theologians. Through the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception the Virgin Mary was "set apart from the human race" because she was "not stained by the Fall" (p. 254). Therefore, Catholic theologians had to decide whether she menstruated and lactated--i.e., were these penalties of the Fall or normal functions? They concluded "that it is the effect, not the phenomenon, that is the penalty and the sign of original sin; thus putrefaction, not death; labour pains, not childbirth; cramp and discomfort, not menstruation in itself; are the consequences of Adam's sin" (p. 253).

It is interesting to speculate about what problems Mary Gove Nichols could have presented for the Catholic theologians, if through her proposed religious order she had successfully taught painless childbirth and improved female health and removed the "effect, not the phenomenon."

See also "The New Catholic Goddess," The Una, March, 1855. pp. 41-42.

[100]Gleason, "From Free-Love to Catholicism," p. 303, and Letter from Mary Gove Nichols to Alonzo Lewis, November 7, 1857, Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

[101]Gleason had identified the following articles by Thomas Nichols in the Catholic Telegraph and Advocate: June 6, 13, 20, 1857; July 11, 1857; August 29, 1857; September 19, 1857; and November 21, 1857. T. L. Nichols' Lectures on Catholicity and Protestantism was published in 1859.

[102]M. G. Nichols, Woman's Work in Water Cure, p. 140.

[103]Ibid.

[104]Ibid., p. 141.

[105]Ibid., p. 142.

[106]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 100. Thomas gives an impersonal travelogue of their trip in his Forty Years.

[107]M. G. Nichols, Woman's Work in Water Cure, p. 143.

[108]Ibid., and T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 100. Thomas lectured to the St. Aloysius Literary Society at Notre Dame and was offered a professorship. Gleason, "From Free-Love to Catholicism," p. 305.

[109]M. G. Nichols, Woman's Work in Water Cure, p. 145. and T. L. Nichols, Forty Years, p. 268.

[110]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 101; T. L. Nichols, Forty Years, p. 278; and M. G. Nichols, Woman's Work in Water Cure, pp. 145-6.

[111]John Duffy, Sword of Pestilence: The New Orleans Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1853 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966), pp. 167-9.

[112]M. G. Nichols, Woman's Work in Water Cure, p. 146.

[113]Ibid., p. 140.

[114]Ibid., p. 147. Perhaps there had been some censure of her work because in a letter from Archbishop Purcell to Archbishop Blanc of New Orleans, he wrote with no other comment or explanation, "I am told Mrs. Nichols needs watching. Verbum Sat." March 23, 1859, University of Notre Dame Archives.

[115]M. G. Nichols, Woman's Work in Water Cure, p. 147.

CHAPTER X

THAT AWFUL TIME

> ...No one can know except by bitter experience, what it is to be cast out from warmth and comfort into cold and hunger. I had my great lesson when we were exiled from home and country by the American War of 1861.... Can I ever forget those days of cold, of faint sickness, of sinking of the whole soul and body from want of food, clothing, and money?[1]

Hoping to re-establish their position as health reformers, the Nichols returned to New York City in the late spring of 1860 and combined the talents that had previously brought them success. Under Mary's management, they opened a water cure house at the Emmett Mansion between Central Park and the East River.[2] The Water Cure Journal, ending its previous boycott, accepted their advertisement and announced: "Dr. and Mrs. Nichols will devote themselves to the cure of the sick, and the care of delicate children and young persons who have tendencies to disease. Such persons may acquire health and vigor and also, to a limited extent, pursue their studies under competent teachers."[3] Thomas made plans to publish a weekly newspaper that would carry their "teachings of sanitary and social science all over the world."[4] Optimistic as they began again, he

wrote, "We were full of work....Never, it seemed to us, was a fairer prospect of doing a great work for humanity. We were both widely known from north to south--from east to west."[5]

But success eluded them. The Water Cure Journal contained only the one advertisement of their Emmett Mansion water cure house. From the mansion they moved to a cottage on Staten Island that commanded "a noble prospect of New York Bay, and the cities of New York and Brooklyn."[6] Only one number of the weekly newspaper was published.[7] Perhaps they were too well known, and for the wrong things. As often happens to converts, old acquaintances distrusted them, and new ones were wary of associating with such infamous reformers.

If Mary Gove had picked the right time for success in coming to New York City in 1845, her timing was now faulty, for the Nicholses and the rest of the country were soon caught up in momentous events. The presidential election of 1860 shook the nation; the secession that followed forced Americans to take sides. The Nicholses had been active in varying degrees in most of the reforms of their times, but they had never participated in the anti-slavery movement. Mary Gove had attended some of William Lloyd Garrison's meetings in the early 1840s, but had declared that women had a greater burden to bear and were victims of more injustice than slaves.[8] Most of the women active in abolitionism allied themselves after 1840 with the moral suasion branch of the anti-slavery movement. And Mary Gove's divorce, flouting of convention, and definition of free love had severed her earlier relationships with them.[9]

Although Thomas Nichols had been "educated in the horrors of slavery...in New England," his travels, observations, religion, politics, and geographic location modified his earlier opinions.[10] What he had seen in the South led him to assert that the actual condition of the slaves "was superior in physical comfort, and freedom from anxiety and suffering, to that of any four millions of labouring population in the world." He reported that they "had sufficient food, clothing, and shelter--enough and even an abundance of the necessities of life," and were "on the average, better off in these respects than the agricultural laborers of Great Britain."[11] Slavery must have "either a strong fascination, or some redeeming features," Nichols noted, because when people from England, Ireland, and the northern states moved to the South, they usually became slaveowners.[12] Qualifying his remarks, he stated that the traveller was presented only the "softest and most amiable aspects" of slavery and admitted that "no doubt the power of the master was sometimes abused as all power is apt to be...."[13] But he claimed that northern racial prejudice led to better treatment not only of "the slaves but the free negroes... in the South than in the North."[14]

The influence of the Catholic Church's position on slavery on such independent thinkers and recent converts as Mary and Thomas Nichols was probably minimal, but they had visited many Southern Catholic institutions, religious orders, and priests who owned slaves.[15] The traditional teaching of the Catholic Church was that slavery as such was not morally wrong, if the theologians' regulations for a "just servitude" were followed.[16] The American church concluded

that slavery was a local concern, not a federal or Church matter for it did not involve "questions of faith or morals."[17]

For political and economic reasons, New York was divided in attitudes and opinions about secession. Thomas wrote that strong economic ties caused "a large majority" of the people of New York to be "friendly to the South."[18] Thomas Nichols had long been a vocal and enthusiastic supporter of the Democratic Party which favored states rights and controlled New York City and had strong support throughout the state.[19]

The caldron of emotions bubbled explosively in the spring of 1861 and then exploded. From the vantage point of his Staten Island cottage, Thomas Nichols was an eye witness to the action that triggered the Civil War. He saw the secret naval expedition that was going to reinforce Fort Sumter leave the Navy Yard at Brooklyn and steam down New York harbor and through the Narrows. His ominous report revealed that the "crowds looked on with a gloomy curiosity, foreboding evil. Not a cheer raised--not a gun was fired. The fleet steamed away in silence, and no voice said, 'God speed.'"[20]

The Civil War had indeed begun that April 1861 and had torn the nation apart, but not just at the Mason-Dixon line. After the "inglorious fiasco of Bull Run," Thomas claimed that the war was increasingly unpopular in the North. Whereas people had been willing to defend the nation's capital, they were unwilling to "subjugate sovereign and independent states...."[21] When it was obvious that the war would not be easily or quickly won, conflicting emotions, interests, and loyalties tormented many people in the Union. The line between

treasonable activity and acceptable criticism of administration policies was often thin. Republicans, in a precarious position as a new party, tried to label all Democrats traitors, and mobs forcibly broke up northern Democratic rallies.[22]

William Henry Seward, Lincoln's Secretary of State, vigorously pursued the arrest and detention of anyone who seemed disloyal.[23] By July 1861 he had established a vast network of operatives tied together via telegraphic communications, and he wrote with pride, "I can touch a bell...and order the arrest of a citizen of Ohio... and the imprisonment of a citizen of New York, and no power on earth, except that of the President of the United States can release them."[24] Lincoln suspended the writ of habeas corpus and ordered the arrests of people who were deemed "dangerous to the public safety."[25] Newspaper editors were especially vulnerable to the mob spirit as well as to Seward's pursuit. The New York Herald reported that by August 29, 1861, mobs had destroyed seven northern papers and military authority had suspended nine.[26]

A northern Democrat, Thomas Nichols was opposed to this war resulting from a controversy that he felt "wise statesmanship" could have settled. As a journalist, he found "it was useless...to write about anything but the war, and somewhat dangerous for a Northern man to write what did not suit the Government." The freedom of the press was circumscribed, he said, and papers were excluded from the mails if they "doubted that the South could be conquered in ninety days." The police seized those who "questioned the right or the policy of invading the South and restoring amnity and unity by ravage and

plunder." Thomas reported that "if the editor persisted in his delusion that the press was free, he was sent down to Fort Lafayette, on an island in New York Bay, lodged in a casement and fed on the rations of a common soldier, until the Government forgot who he was and for what he had been imprisoned."[27]

Thomas Nichols, who had been imprisoned for political libel in 1839, when Seward (associated with his accusers' political clique) had been governor of New York, feared that he was suspect because he believed in states rights and that made him a "traitor."[28] He felt he had three choices--"go South, risk martyrdom in the North, or find refuge abroad."[29] He briefly considered joining the Confederate Army, but concluded that it was one thing to repudiate the Union and quite another "to take up arms against it." Imprisonment in the North was a real possibility if he published "more truths than was consistent with the views of the Government."[30]

Throughout their years of outspoken and courageous nonconformity, the Nicholses had been labelled many things by their detractors and had suffered greatly for their unpopular beliefs; but they could see no reason to add "traitor" to the list of epithets. Exile seemed the only acceptable alternative. When Seward ordered that no American citizen could leave the country without a passport, they decided to go to England because "America was a prison, with Mr. Seward for a jailor."[31]

A stringent loyalty oath was necessary to get a passport, and Thomas Nichols felt he could not take it in clear conscience. If he refused he could be arrested for "suspicion of treasonable

purposes."[32] He therefore walked moodily along the docks until he found a small packet bound for England which the police were not watching.

Thus in the autumn of 1861, the Nicholses--Thomas, Mary, and their daughter, Willie--silently boarded a small vessel and sailed off to England, extremely uncertain of what lay ahead. The ship slipped quietly down the bay, past the "Federal Bastille," Fort Lafayette, and past the "watch-dog steam" in the Narrows. The "spires of New York, the beautiful hills of Staten Island, and the blue Highlands of Neversink" slowly disappeared behind them forever. When the "curious little company of refugees" reached the open waters and saw "only the bright heavens above and the blue waters" around them, they all breathed easier.[33]

The crossing took a month, plenty of time for the Nicholses to struggle fitfully with the conflicting apprehension and excitement they felt concerning the adventure ahead of them. At last two little steam tugboats towed their ship up the Thames River to the docks. They were in London.[34]

"Utter strangers," they were faced with the intimidating prospect of starting over once again.[35] All bridges burned behind them, they had to succeed; their funds had only been sufficient for a one way ticket. Living very frugally, they found an unfurnished place in St. Johns' Wood for ten shillings a week rent, and on a modified Graham diet they ate "luxuriously" on a shilling a day.[36] Creatively approaching their lack of funds, Thomas carefully noted the cost of rent, food, and travel and later wrote several books on how to live and/or eat well on a limited budget.[37]

The first order of business was to establish themselves professionally. The Nicholses thought it was impossible for them to use their previous medical experience. Thomas never enjoyed the practice of medicine, and as a result of the Medical Act of 1858, his American medical degree was not recognized in England.[38] Mary was also without credentials and the "state of public opinion" in Victorian England, which confined women to a subordinate, separate, and distinct sphere in society, was against women in medicine.[39] Thus they had to turn to their "two pens" to earn a living.[40]

Striving for literary distinction in Victorian London was an awesome assignment, but the Nicholses bravely ventured forth. They had brought three letters of introduction with them, but the only helpful one was to Cardinal Nicholas Wiseman, Archbishop of Westminster.[41] A "man of letters" himself, he introduced them to editors and publishers. He also recommended that Thomas make a short lecture tour of Ireland, an idea that proved to be "more kind than wise."[42]

As Thomas toured Ireland, Mary Gove Nichols was left alone with her young daughter in a new city in a foreign country with only three farthings to her name. Almost twenty years before, she had experienced this same struggle when she and Elma had moved to New York City. But this time there was no Marie Louise Shew or Marx Edgeworth Lazarus to befriend her and no opportunity to give health lectures. This woman, who had once cheerfully lived on a weekly food budget of twenty-five cents for herself and Elma, wrote differently about her starving time in London. She would never forget "the days of cold, of faint sickness, and sinking of the whole soul

and body from want of food, clothing and money." Only a gift from a stranger saved her "in that awful time."[43]

When Thomas returned from his unsuccessful lecture tour, both of the Nicholses turned full time to writing. As a result of the increased English interest in the United States because of the Civil War, they quickly found that they had the most publishing success when their stories had an American setting. Thomas wrote a series of articles for London periodicals that were published in book form as Forty Years of American Life.[44] Bringing him "more praise than money," it was favorably reviewed.[45] One critic in the Athenaeum, however, was hostile not only to the book, but to the flood of American refugees who had recently come to London. Telling Americans to go home, the reviewer launched into a critique of Forty Years which he said contained "here and there...a lively scrap of personal gossip," but had as a whole "little merit." Thomas had alienated the reviewer with his statements about women who studied at the British Museum. Trying to defend them against accusations that they went there to flirt, Nichols had rather ungallantly reported, "...look at them, that is all. They are not at all the style of women, so far as my observation and experience go, who are given to flirtation. I have never seen--not even at a Woman's Rights Convention--ladies less open to the suspicion of any such weak-minded proceedings."[46] The reviewer was incensed at that lame defense.

The Chambers's Journal review also exhibited an advanced case of xenophobia. Stating that the book began with a sober spirit, too soon "the bitterness of the Exile" was apparent; "the gall mingles

with the ink, and the great historical pictures" were exchanged for "caricatures of the living." The reviewer concluded that this was only to be expected, however, because, unfortunately, most Americans were vulgar.[47]

Other editors were sympathetic to their refugee status, and Mary Gove Nichols also had some early success with stories involving Americans or American settings.[48] In February 1863 in the Sixpenny Magazine she published her reminiscences of Edgar Allan Poe who fascinated many English readers.[49] In Charles Dickens' magazine, All the Year Round, her story appeared entitled "On the Mississippi: From Cairo to Memphis" whose theme, the tragedy that befalls the helpless woman when she makes a bad marriage, was entwined with a steamboat trip down the Mississippi River.[50]

In late 1864 Mary Gove Nichols published a novel, Uncle Angus, which was favorably reviewed.[51] The critique in the Athenaeum, which had been so hostile to Thomas' Forty Years of American Life, found Mary's book "noticeable for the brightness and cleverness" which enlivened her previous works, even if it could not "be extolled as a completely successful novel." Ironically, in comparison to the reception her last novel, Mary Lyndon, had received, the reviewer concluded that Uncle Angus was a "pleasant, womanly, wholesome book" and could be "recommended to those many patrons of circulating libraries who wish their daughters to read works of fiction, but regard with aversion the tales of violence and vice which now-a-days are too frequently found on drawing-room tables."[52]

The main plot of Uncle Angus centered on the adventures and love lives of three young adults, Victoria, Jessie, and Charlie. Her theme was again the importance of marriage in determining a woman's future. Mrs. Maclane, Victoria's mother, had rejected a marriage that would have brought her wealth and position and had chosen a beloved "man of genius" with limited income. Adapting as best she could, she was able to "make a small amount of gold gild a large surface of appearances." Like the goldbeater, she had learned how "large a space a sovereign can be made to cover."[53] But this was at a cost: "Mrs. Maclane began to weary of the uphill way which an early error, hard fortune, and a high ambition had condemned her to tread." Though she was "very much attached to her husband," she felt that she had always had a "very hard life" and hid her "economies, her management, her sacrifices, and her sufferings, as she concealed her age." The price exacted had been high. Now she wanted her daughter to marry for wealth and position, and if the daughter "possessed a tithe of her mother's ability," then soon the mother would be allowed "to rest, to grow old gracefully, and give her daughter the benefit of a varied experience."[54] Victoria rejected her mother's plans, protested against "this world's marriage-market" and declared, "I will NEVER BE SOLD."[55] Yet her own first choice was disastrous and her friends saved her only at the last moment. There was a happy ending, however, for ultimately Victoria, a little worse for experience, married a successful sculptor, a man of genius and money, whom she deeply loved.

Even though the Nicholses had limited literary success, it was not sufficient to support them. The network of relationships that they developed through their continued involvement in mesmerism and spiritualism broadened their contacts and kept them from complete economic disaster. A common interest in mesmermism led to their literary acquaintance with Charles Dickens who was fascinated with the unique phenomenon and drew upon certain of its aspects in his novels.[56] The Nicholses were very appreciative of the sympathetic and generous help he had given them, and Mary compared the sheets of "magnetised paper" which Dickens sent her "not irreverently to the handkerchiefs and aprons on which had been laid Apostolic hands."[57]

The spiritualist circles, however, formed the most important support system for the Nicholses in their early years in England. Already acquainted with mesmerism, the British were aware of American spiritualism, but they did not expect the reaction that resulted when Mrs. W. R. Hayden, an American medium, introduced spirit rappings in England in 1852.[58] Prominent scientific and literary figures seriously investigated the phenomena and there was an impressive list of converts.[59] In 1855 the most remarkable of all the American mediums, the young Douglas D. Home, came to England and made spiritualism fashionable, especially with the aristocracy. He refused to charge fees for his "very touching and beautiful" trance messages, but he accepted the hospitality of his hosts who often paid his debts and gave him valuable jewelry and mementos.[60]

In 1864 two more Americans, second in fame only to Home, crossed the Atlantic and increased the sensational impact of

spiritualism on England. The Davenport Brothers, Ira Erastus and William Henry, had been carefully investigated by a Harvard University committee in 1857, and they successfully produced raps and levitations. The Brothers made spiritualism accessible to much larger audiences and "did more than all other men to familiarise England" with it.[61] In 1864 Thomas Nichols published a biography of the Brothers in which he positively presented their work; he gave "the facts" and told his readers to draw their own conclusions.[62] The next year he edited the Supramundane Facts of the Life of Rev. J. B. Ferguson, the Nashville chaplain of the Davenport Brothers.[63]

As he did his research for these books, Thomas became acquainted with William Howitt, a pioneer in British spiritualism, who had investigated the manifestations of both Home and the Davenport Brothers and had been "satisfied of their genuineness."[64] The popular and talented William and Mary Howitt had backgrounds and interests similar to those of the Nicholses.[65] The Howitts's daughter, Anna Mary Watts, an accomplished artist and writer, introduced the Nicholses to her friend, Thomas Letchworth, who later married Elma Gove, thus cemeting the tie between them.[66] The Howitts also introduced them to Robert Chambers, an important English evolutionist, writer, editor, and spiritualist.[67] Thomas worked for Chambers for four years writing articles for the Chambers's Encyclopedia.[68] The spiritualist circle also brought the Nicholses into contact with Dr. Garth Wilkinson, translator of Swedenborg who had introduced

his friend, Henry James, Sr., to the seer's writings; and his brother, William Wilkinson, a spiritualist co-worker of Howitt.[69]

These connections with the British spiritualists offered opportunity for the Nicholses, but they were also sadly portentous. With their struggle for literary careers still precarious, they had to face "the only real calamity" of their lives when their daughter, Mary Wilhelmina, died at age fourteen. Reflecting accepted nineteenth century medical theory, Thomas explained that she had been "born when both her parents were engaged in very earnest, active mental work" and sometimes "the brain robs the body" because "health requires an equitable distribution of the forces of life." Intellectual activity often led to "dyspepsia or consumption."[70] Willie, as they called her, had been a precocious, yet frail, child. She never went to school, but her parents personally directed her education. Placing toy alphabet blocks together, Willie had begun to read at the age of two, and by six she was reading Plutarch's Lives and the Koran, and comparing the Douay and Protestant Bibles. Her exceptional retention convinced Thomas that she had a photographic memory.[71]

Fearing that the cold fogs of London or "the miasma of an unsanitary district" were making their daughter's bronchitis worse, the Nicholses changed residences hoping to find "purer air." They left the Bloomsbury house where they had moved to be closer to the British Museum Library and tried several different sections, but all to "no avail." On January 2, 1864, Mary Wilhelmina Nichols died.[72]

The Nicholses were desolate. Willie had been more than just a beloved child because she had represented the soul of Mary's

teachings, that a woman had the right to choose the father of her child. As Mary had extolled the improved new race that would be born when healthy mothers gave birth to children conceived in love, Willie had embodied her hopes and dreams. So much had happened to Mary Gove Nichols since she had boldly fought for this concept, and now she had lost her "love child." Perhaps there was some guilt too because she taught that "every mother was the natural guardian of the health of her children."[73] She also knew the special agony of the doctor who can heal others, but can not save her own loved ones.

Her daughter's death was almost more than Mary could bear. As in her earlier traumas, her health was affected. Thomas wrote, "She wept almost continually, and this may have caused the cataract, which inspite of all efforts to cure it, finally extinguished her sight, so that she was blind for five years." Thomas' only comfort was "in work." This tragedy deepened their spiritualist ties, and he claimed that they "saw, heard, and felt" Willie several times after her death.[74]

Mary Gove Nichols' hopes had frequently been dashed and her dreams unrealized, but nothing had ever hurt her like this. Before, she had always bounced back, but now the death of Willie brought her to her knees and kept her there. Exiled in a strange country, thousands of miles from family and friends, her tiny circle of loved ones had been cut in half. It was a dark time. In her mid-fifties, did she have the energy to pick herself up and begin another career? How many times would she--could she--start anew?

Notes to Chapter X

[1]Herald of Health, January 1, 1879, p. 149

[2]"Circular" dated April, 1860. Sent to Archbishop Blanc from T. L. Nichols and Mrs. Mary S. Gove Nichols, University of Notre Dame Archives.

[3]Water Cure Journal, June, 1860, p. 92.

[4]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 102.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid.

[8]M. G. Nichols, Mary Lyndon, p. 269.

[9]See Aileen S. Kraditor, Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and His Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850 (New York: Vintage Books, 1969).

[10]Thomas Low Nichols, Forty Years of American Life (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1968), Vol. II, p. 242. (Reprint of the 1864 edition.)

[11]Thomas Low Nichols, Forty Years of American Life, 1821-1861 (New York: Stackpole Sons Publishers, 1937), pp. 351-2. (Reprint of the 1874 edition which somewhat toned down his opposition to the Civil War and his opinions on slavery.)

[12]Ibid., pp. 164-5.

[13]Ibid., p. 355.

[14]Ibid., pp. 335 and 338.

[15]Although the Catholic Church condemned the "excesses" of slavery, the general attitude was that "the institution itself was permissible." When the Civil War broke out, the Catholic bishops generally supported the section of the country to which they were assigned. Thomas T. McAvoy, A History of the Catholic Church in the United States (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), p. 186.

[16]Madeleine Hooke Rice, American Catholic Opinion in the Slavery Controversy (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1964),

p. 152, and Thomas J. Pressly, Americans Interpret Their Civil War (New York: The Free Press, 1962), p. 132.

[17]Rice, Catholic Opinion, pp. 46-53 and 158. Thomas Nichols wrote that "nine-tenths of the Roman Catholic bishops and clergy have been opposed to the war upon the South from its outbreak." T. L. Nichols, Forty Years, (L864 edition), Vol. II, pp. 76-7.

Archbishop of Cincinnati, John B. Purcell, was a "staunch supporter of the Union cause," whereas Archbishop Peter Richard Kenrick of St. Louis was censured by Secretary of State Seward for his refusal to fly the Union flag from his church. Rice, Catholic Opinion, pp. 127 and 146.

A large percentage of Catholics affiliated with the Democratic Party and many reflected its approach to states rights.

[18]T. L. Nichols, Forty Years, (1874 edition), p. 370.

[19]Ibid. Many prominent New York Democrats, like Horace Greeley, defended the South's right to secede until the hostilities broke out. See New York Tribune, December 17, 1860, and George M. Fredrickson, The Inner Civil War: Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of the Union (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1965).

[20]T. L. Nichols, Forty Years, (1874 edition), p. 370, and T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 102. On April 8, 1861, the Revenue Cutter Harriet Lane departed from New York for Fort Sumter "carrying relief supplies." E. B. Long and Barbara Long, An Almanac 1861-1865: The Civil War Day by Day (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1971), p. 55.

[21]T. L. Nichols, Forty Years, (1874 edition), pp. 371 and 377.

[22]Wood Gray, The Hidden Civil War: The Story of the Copperheads (New York: The Viking Press, 1942), p. 68.

[23]See Glyndon G. Van Deusen, William Henry Seward (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), and Harold M. Hyman, To Try Men's Souls: Loyalty Tests in American History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), pp. 139-153.

[24]A. Sanborn, ed., Reminiscences of Richard Lathers (New York, 1907), p. 229.

[25]See Jacob Mogelever, Death to Traitors: The Story of General Lafayette C. Baker, Lincoln's Forgotten Secret Service Chief (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1960), pp. 62-66; James Ford Rhodes, History of the Civil War, 1861-1865 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927), pp. 48, 348-355; and Carl Sandburg, Abraham Lincoln: The War Years, Vol. I (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1939), p. 281.

[26]New York Herald, August 29, 1861. Reprinted in Allan Nevins, The War for the Union: The Improvished War, 1861-62, Vol. I (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1959), Appendix III, pp. 429-30.

[27]T. L. Nichols, Forty Years (1874 edition), p. 7. One of the most poignant arrests was the imprisonment of Frank Key Howard, editor of the Baltimore Daily Exchange, along with several Maryland state legislators. Howard was imprisoned, without trial or charges, from September 12, 1861, to November 26, 1862, because he had disagreed with Lincoln's policies. When dawn broke on the first day of his imprisonment at Fort McHenry it was the 47th anniversary of the day his grandfather, Francis Scott Key, had as a prisoner in the War of 1812 on a British ship witnessed the bombing of Fort McHenry and written "The Star-Spangled Banner." Howard was later moved to other prisons including Fort Lafayette. See John H. Marshall, American Bastille: A History of the Illegal Arrests of American Citizens During the Late Civil War (Philadelphia: Thomas W. Hartley, 1874), pp. 642-711.

[28]T. L. Nichols, Forty Years (1864 edition), Vol. I, p. 3.

[29]Ibid., Vol. I, p. 6.

[30]Ibid., p. 7.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Ibid.

[33]T. L. Nichols, Forty Years (1874 edition), p. 8. Thomas Nichols' eventual decision to leave the United States disturbed him, and he wrote, "It was not heroic to run away. I admit it and feel it, sometimes more deeply than I care to express. 'I ought to have stayed and done what I could to put down that miserable usurpation at Washington,' I say sometimes. 'What good would it have done had you stayed a year in Fort Lafayette?' she [presumably Mary] asks, who has some right. 'I might have gone to Richmond, where I could have done some good.' 'And what would have become of us?' cried the little one [presumably Willie], her blue eyes filling with tears." T. L. Nichols, Forty Years (1864 edition), Vol. I, p. 10.

[34]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 103

[35]T. L. Nichols, Forty Years, (1874 edition), p. 8.

[36]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 103.

[37]Thomas Nichols published the following books and pamphlets: How to Live on Sixpence a Day (1871); How to Cook: The Principles and Practices of Scientific, Economic, Hygienic, and Aesthetic Gastronomy (1872); Count Rumford: How He Banished Beggary from

Bavaria (1873); Eating to Live: The Diet Cure: An Essay on the Relations of Food and Drink to Health, Disease and Cure (1877); and Dr. Nichols' Penny Vegetarian Cookery (1884). All of these are in the British Museum Library.

[38]Geoffrey Marks and William K. Beatty, Women in White, (New York: Charles Scribners, 1972), p. 93, and Herald of Health, February, 1883, p. 15. The Medical Act of 1858 stated that unless a physician with a foreign medical degree was in active practice in Great Britain before October, 1858, they could not register and practice without taking an examination.

[39]An example of this attitude is found in "Woman," Chambers's Journal, December 31, 1864, pp. 844-45.

[40]T. L. Nichols, Forty Years, (1874 edition), p. 8.

[41]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, pp. 103 and 444.

[42]Ibid., p. 103. In addition to books on religious subjects, Wiseman had written the novel Fabiola in 1854. See E. E. Reynolds, Three Cardinals: Newman, Wiseman, Manning (New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1958).

[43]Herald of Health, January 1, 1879, p. 149, and March, 1883, p. 28.

[44]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, pp. 105 and 428. T. L. Nichols reissued the book in 1874. The 1874 edition was reprinted in 1937 and the 1864 edition was reprinted in 1968 (interestingly) by the Negro Universities Press.

[45]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 105. It was reviewed in the Quarterly, the Saturday Review, and the Dublin Review.

[46]Review of Forty Years of American Life by Thomas Nichols in Athenaeum, February 27, 1864, pp. 294-6.

[47]Review of Forty Years of American Life by Thomas Nichols in Chambers's Journal, April 2, 1864, p. 212.

[48]Thomas listed some of the titles that Mary published in T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, pp. 104 and 428. I was only able to locate "On the Mississippi" , a short story in All the Year Round.

[49]Sixpenny Magazine, February, 1863.

[50]"On the Mississippi: From Cairo to Memphis," All the Year Round, August 27, 1864, pp. 58-62.

[51]Mary Gove Nichols, Uncle Angus (London: Saunders, Otley, and Co., 1864), Two Volumes.

[52]Review of Uncle Angus by Mary Gove Nichols, Athenaeum, November 5, 1864, pp. 599-600.

[53]M. G. Nichols, Uncle Angus, Vol. I, p. 7.

[54]Ibid., p. 175.

[55]Ibid., p. 9.

[56]On the influence on Dickens of mesmerism, see Fred Kaplan, Dickens and Mesmerism: The Hidden Springs of Fiction (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975). They also had in common helping Edgar Allan Poe. Dickens had met him in 1842 and had tried to get him an English publisher. In 1868 Dickens gave the needy Mrs. Clemm, Poe's mother-in-law, $1,000. See Edgar Johnson, Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1952), Two Volumes, pp. 397 and 1085. Dickens also had separated from his wife Catherine in 1858 after twenty-two years of marriage and nine children. He publicly justified his actions, publishing all the details, including his financial arrangements for his family in his journal, Household Words, and publicly charged his wife with being a poor mother and suggested that she was mentally ill. The Victorian world was shocked by his lack of discretion, if not the deed itself, especially as he soon established an intimate relationship with a young actress, Ellen Ternan, whom he had met shortly before he left Catherine. Household Words, June 12, 1858, and Johnson, Dickens, pp. 917-26 and 1005-6.

[57]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, pp. 104, 110, and 428.

[58]Katherine H. Porter, Through a Glass Darkly: Spiritualism in the Browning Circle (Lawrence: The University of Kansas Press, 1958).

[59]See Porter, and Ronald Pearsall, The Table-Rappers (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972).

Mary Howitt wrote on May 4, 1853, "The great talk now is Mrs. Stowe and spirit-rapping, both of which have arrived in England." On June 28, 1853, Mary Howitt dined at Lord Shaftesbury's with Sir David Brewster, and Dr. Braid of Manchester, and she wrote, "The effect which all this table-turning, hat-moving, and spiritual intercourse is producing on all kinds of people is marvellous." Brewster was a prize winning physicist, best known for his work in optics and polarized light, principal of Edinburgh University, and a prolific writer on scientific subjects. It was Dr. Braid who made mesmerism "acceptable" when he changed the name to hypnotism and undertook scientific investigations of the phenomena. See Margaret Howitt, editor, Mary Howitt: An Autobiography (London: William Isbister Limited, 1889), Two Volumes, Vol. II, pp. 99-102.

[60]See D. D. Home, Incidents in My Life (Secaucus, New Jersey: University Books, Inc., 1973). (Reprint of second edition, 1863), and Frank Podmore, Modern Spiritualism: A History and A Criticism (London: Methuen & Co., 1902), Vol. II, p. 229.

[61]Pearsall, Table-Rappers, p. 76.

[62]Thomas Low Nichols, A Biography of the Brothers Davenport (New York: Arno Press, 1976), p. 356.

[63]Thomas Low Nichols, ed., Supramundane Facts in the Life of Rev. J. B. Ferguson (1865).

[64]T. L. Nichols, Brothers Davenport, p. 347, and Anna Mary Howitt Watts, The Pioneers of the Spiritual Reformation, Life and Works of Dr. Justinus Kerner (Adapted from the German): William Howitt and his Work for Spiritualism: Biographical Sketches (London: The Psychological Press Association, 1883), p. 282.

[65]Both of the Howitts grew up in Quaker homes, and Mary Howitt converted to Catholicism late in life. Considered the more original and imaginative of the two, Mary was a writer as well as translator of the books of the Swedish novelist and feminist, Frederika Bremer, and the tales of Hans Christian Andersen. She was also active in the movement to petition Parliament in 1856 for a married women's property act. William, as adventurous as Thomas, had begun his career as a chemist and druggist, but moved to literary work. The Howitts found the orthodox Quaker beliefs too limited and explored other explanations of the universe including mesmerism and spiritualism. See Stanley J. Kunitz, ed., British Authors of the Nineteenth Century (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1936), pp. 311-13, Howitt, Mary Howitt, and Watts, Pioneers.

[66]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, pp. 103 and 445. Elma Mary Gove returned to England in 1869 from her art studies on the Continent. While visiting her family at Malvern, she met Thomas Letchworth, Esq. of Aspley Guise, Woburn, Bedfordshire, whom she soon married. They had two children, a daughter named Mabel and a son. See Letter from Mary Gove Nichols to Paulina Wright Davis, June 29, 1875, in Alma Lutz Collection, Helen D. Lockwood Library, Vassar College.

[67]Robert Chambers (1802-1871) wrote some thirty books, including Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation (1844), which predated Darwin's Origin of the Species by fifteen years and "was the first thorough-going presentation of evolutionary theory in England" and "was one of the most roundly hated books of its time" because of its implications for accepted thought. Chambers, a long-time friend of the Howitts, had been a believer in spiritualism since 1853. D. D. Home so impressed Chambers that he wrote the introductory remarks for the second edition of Home's Incidents in

My Life. See Milton Millhauser, Just Before Darwin: Robert Chambers and Vestiges (Middletown, Connecticiut: Wesleyan University Press, 1959), p. 5. Also see Loren Eiseley, Darwin's Century: Evolution and the Men Who Discovered It (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1961), pp. 135-140. Millhauser points out what has happened in the historical treatment of many prominent Victorian figures who believed in spiritualism. William Chambers, when editing his brother's Memoirs, left out "as something not quite honorable to a good man's memory" his work on and belief in spiritualism (p. 175).

[68]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, pp. 104 and 428.

[69]Ibid., pp. 104 and 444. See also Ralph Barton Perry, The Thought and Character of William James, p. 8, and Watts, Spiritual Reformation, dedication.

[70]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, pp. 105-6.

[71]Ibid., pp. 106-7.

[72]Ibid., p. 105. The Nicholses moved to Cecil Street, Stand, then to Chelsea, and finally to Brompton Square, South Kensington.

[73]Ibid., p. 112.

[74]Ibid., p. 108.

CHAPTER XI

THE CIRCLE COMPLETED

> I have made a long continued fight for my life, and if I die now, I have not disgraced the principles we teach, for I am past the alloted three scores and ten years. I mean to make a book that shall tell what I know....I want to teach the true science of obstetrics, and principles that, brought into the life of parents, will secure painless births, and healthy children.[1]

In 1867 the Nicholses visited Malvern when some friends wrote that "it was Paradise." The "pure air, pure water, grand hills, and beautiful far-spreading prospect" caused them to lease a large house on the hillside called "Aldwyn Tower" which was located above the prominent Old Priory and beneath the famed St. Ann's Well. Their view overlooking the beautiful fertile valleys of the Severn and the Avon was breathtaking and in season a thousand pear trees bloomed.[2]

It is surprising that the Nicholses had not gone to Malvern before because it had been consciously chosen and developed in the 1840s as the English equivalent of Priessnitz's Grafenburg by the English water cure pioneers, Dr. James Wilson and Dr. James Gully.[3] The setting was ideal and they had established the same regimen and a similar diet and strictly enforced them. They imported German bands

to serenade the patients and keep up their morale.[4] Like Priessnitz, the doctors galloped on horseback on the hillside and cheered on their patients whose treatment included outdoor exercise. The patients climbed the hills, took long walks between the wells, and drank great quantities of the pure Malvern water that was famous for "containing just nothing at all."[5]

The impressive Wilson and the charismatic Gully built a large and lucrative practice in Malvern.[6] Soon other doctors arrived and the village was transformed into a prosperous town and important Victorian spa. A direct train line soon connected Malvern to London, and commodious hotels with ware cure facilities were built.[7] Well known patients such as Charles Darwin, Florence Nightingale, Thomas Carlyle, William Gladstone, and Jenny Lind came to seek relief from numerous and various ailments.[8]

Two social aspects of the water cure establishments caused much comment in Victorian England. One was the democratic atmosphere it encouraged. The common ills of humanity were a great equalizer, especially the sitz bath because "plebian and aristocratic blood were alike subject" to its indignity.[9] The other unusual aspect was that men and women were housed in the same building and ate together in Dr. Wilson's and Dr. Grindrod's water cure establishments. Dr. Gully built two separate buildings, but a bridge, called the Bridge of Sighs, joined them.[10]

The Nicholses had long been aware of the water cure history of Malvern and had read the books of Drs. Wilson and Gully.[11] Wilson died in 1867 and perhaps the Nicholses hoped to fill the void created

with his death. Although Thomas could not legally practice medicine, he returned to journalistic health reform.[12] Mary, whose vision was becoming increasingly dim and who had always practiced without credentials, resumed her career as a water cure physician. The decision to move to Malvern revealed that they had been unable to support themselves through their literary efforts and were now returning to their careers as health reformers. To establish her credentials, Mary Gove Nichols reissued her Experience in Water Cure in 1868, 1869, and 1874 editions as A Woman's Work in Water Cure and Sanitary Education.[13]

Health problems plagued her, but she refused to yield completely and fought back vigorously on her own terms. In 1868 she had a liver tumor "so large that it had to be supported in the daytime by an elastic band, and in the night by a pillow."[14] Setting up her own treatment, she fasted, eating one small meal a day and drinking only lemonade or orangeade. After a week she began to sleep better and her "spirits rose to cheerfulness." But the ensuing weakness limited her ability to work. After seven months of this regimen the tumor which "had been so large as to be felt by anyone from the outside...entirely dissipated," and she had no more liver problems.[15]

Her vision became increasingly clouded by cataracts until she became completely blind. Thomas invented a simple writing guide for the blind that enabled her to continue to write.[16] At one point she had two secretaries who helped with her correspondence and consultations with friends and patients in the United States, India, South Africa, France, Germany, Russia, and Canada.[17] Her blindness, which

she always associated with the death of her daughter, Willie (Mary said she wept herself blind), was the hardest of her health problems for her to accept and the one she was least successful in conquering by herself. Most depressing was her loss of freedom of movement and the inability to continue outdoor exercise.[18]

Economically she could not afford to become an invalid, even if she had so desired, and she continued with her teaching, boarding patients, medical correspondence, and treating the ill. As a water cure pioneer, one of the giants of New York, she felt confident enough to criticize the other doctors in Malvern, condemning them for "too much use of the pleasant and easy warm bath."[19] But her "greatest success had been in teaching persons to cure themselves so that they will neither require to come to me nor to go to any other physician."[20]

Her female students varied in age from fifteen to thirty years and often had health problems for which they were seeking a cure. The curriculum, aimed at teaching "the very simple secrets of health and happines" included attending lectures and "conversations" twice a day, as well as learning domestic skills.[21] Mary Gove Nichols did not want women to be "drudges or kitchen fiends," but she thought that every woman ought to know how "to prepare healthy food, to make comfortable clothing, and to direct, at least, all the operations of house-keeping."[22] With a lifetime of experience, she believed that "true independence consists not in having plenty of money, but in being ready to meet the emergencies of life."[23]

Mary Gove Nichols hoped to expand her school and include "orphans and outcasts" under the provisions of the new Education Act

of 1870.[24] The "religious difficulty" met her at the outset as the officials were concerned with what kind of religious training the Catholic Mary Nichols would give her charges. She replied that in her numerous travels and investigations, she had found "holy souls in every sect and in every nation." This had not made her a "sectarian," but had made her "believe that the Church of Christ is one, that vital religion is the same wherever it is found." She had discovered "members of the Church universal...in all sects, and in those who belonged to none."[25] Her ecumenical religious beliefs must have been unacceptable because her plans did not materialize.[26]

Busy with teaching and health reform, Mary Gove Nichols published little new material or major revision of her ideas after 1864, although she republished some of her earlier works and reworked her persistent themes. Two small pamphlets entitled "Vital Law" and "Despotism," published in 1869, re-iterated her concern with improving the health of children and changing the status of women.[27] Her unhealed wound of Willie's death made the subject painful, but in "Vital Law" and an unpublished manuscript "Infancy" dated March 5, 1872, she discussed social reform which had to begin with a "holy infancy."[28]

Abreast of contemporary thought, the Nicholses agreed that "human progress and perfection...come inevitably by the struggles of life and the survival of the fittest," but they thought that "effort, education, and the knowledge of, and obedience to, the Laws of Life" could significantly quicken the process.[29] The starting point was to reduce the rate of infant mortality, especially tragic because Mary Gove Nichols claimed that so much of it was unnecessary. In England,

children died "at the rate of 240 per 1000 during their first year of earthly life."[30] She exhorted, "as a physiologist, as a pathologist, as a physician, as a Christian, I cry in the ear of the nations--INFANT MORTALITY IS THE CULMINATION OF CRIME, OF SIN AGAINST GOD IN THE TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW OF LIFE. Woe, woe to the world! for its unborn babes are martyrs by millions."[31]

If women would follow the laws of life, she taught, they could reduce this terrible, needless situation. First, she wrote, "all parents should love each other--that is, none but those who do love each other should become parents."[32] Secondly, preparation was necessary. People were not automatically good parents just because they could reproduce biologically. She suggested that "fatherhood and motherhood surely need as much preparation as the learned professions."[33] Third, the parents should be in good health before conceiving a child. Proper diet and preventive medicine could help to counteract inherited tendency to disease and improve the health of the parents as well as the infant. Lastly, she prescribed that "from the moment of conception to the end of nursing, the mother and child should be wisely and lovingly protected by a sacred and chivalric self denial."[34] Believing this to be the "greatest of the rights of woman" she predicted that until these ideas were accepted women would continue to be unhealthy and to bear sickly children. She re-emphasized, "All rights contained in this one right of a woman to preserve her own life, and the lives and health of her children by a wise and necessary marriage chastity."[35]

Producing healthy children would improve the lot and happiness of women and society, but additional reform was necessary. In "Despotism" Mary Gove Nichols challenged the role of woman in society.[36] Lumping all women together and segregating them from the larger world had created a situation in which "woman, as a rule, needs protection."[37] When a woman merged "her individuality in that of her husband, in belonging to him as his hand does...laws giving her the right of property, the right to vote, or to hold office, seem very miserable impertinences, and intrusions into the legitimate sphere of woman."[38] But there were many women who were not protected by "an able and worthy husband" or who sought "a new independent and entirely exceptional sphere of duties and uses." This "exceptional woman" wanted "to be an individual as man is, responsible only to her own conscience," but she was faced with the despotism of "law and custom." Her opportunities were curtailed because "as an artist, she will find no 'life school' open to her; as a student of medicine, the lectures and dissecting rooms and cliniques are not yet provided." She might become an artist but she would be limited to "landscape, cattle-pieces, genre, or portraiture." She might be an author or an actress; but "law, physic, and divinity" were off limits.[39]

With her old fire, she boldly challenged the double sexual standard and proclaimed that woman should be "responsible to God," not man, for her character and conduct. She protested the loss of a woman's individual existence and legal rights when she married. Woman had limited options if she refused to "swell the bills of mortality" or "multiply little graves." If she left her husband,

he was the legal guardian of the children and could claim the right to her earnings.[40]

In spite of her strong words, Mary Gove Nichols felt it was "a great mistake to consider man and woman as antagonists, as having irreconcilable interests--like buyers and sellers, each trying to gain an advantage over the other." She felt their interests were "as indissoluble as if they formed one soul and one body." They must work together for "the world's redemption."[41]

Bold and prophetic as her words were for a larger world for women, Mary Gove Nichols tragically found her sphere shrinking. Her blindness limited her activity, curtailed her independence, and became an increasing burden.[42] Despite all attempts to establish a "proper regimen," an operation was the only way to improve her eyesight; yet her long opposition to "allopathy" had delayed any action. She also feared the use of any anesthetic because of the "condition of her lungs and heart." But her growing frustration finally led her in 1875 to have two operations that restored her vision. She exclaimed, "The joy of vision, when one has been deprived for a time of sight, is inexpressible." She dedicated a poem she wrote entitled "Thanksgiving" to Dr. Charles Bell Taylor of Nottingham, her ophthalmic surgeon.[43] The operations and her two new pairs of glasses enabled her to "read fine print... to thread a cambric needle" and "see many miles away with a clear distinctiveness."[44]

Mary Gove Nichols could now walk up the wooded hills to St. Ann's Well and plainly see the lovely countryside of Malvern. The Nicholses had gone to Malvern to stay a month, but as health reform

had been more profitable than their literary careers, they had stayed over eight years.[45] The heyday of Malvern as a Victorian water spa was ebbing, however. Dr. Gully left in 1872 and improved transportation eased the journey to the Continental spas where legal gaming tables added excitement to the Spartan cure.[46]

Thomas Nichols, therefore, decided to expand their work and opened a store in London at 429 Oxford Street where he sold health food and water cure appliances as well as their books.[47] Here one could buy "Dr. Nichols' Sanitary and Philanthropic Inventions" which included his wheaten groats, self-rising whole wheat meal, Count Rumford's soup, Dr. Nichols' portable fountain bath, rising douche, portable Turco-Russian Hot Air or Vapor Bath, and Sanitary Soap.[48] In 1875 he began publishing a small monthly Herald of Health which he knew in itself would not be profitable, but would increase orders for books and sanitary inventions. Mary also contributed to the Herald of Health usually under the heading of "Letters to My Friends" or "A Heart to Heart Talk with Friends."[49]

It had been necessary for Thomas to commute to London weekly while Mary remained at Malvern and continued her work, but this schedule soon grew tiresome for both. He lost a full day each week in traveling and Mary, "though full of good work, felt the loneliness."[50] They decided to move back to London, though they kept Aldwyn Tower for a while "as a Hydropathic Sanitarium" under their management.[51] Back in London they settled in a house near Earl's Court Station, and Mary continued to see patients and board those who needed more intensive care.[52]

But again disease was Mary Gove Nichols' personal foe, this time a slowly advancing breast cancer. Thomas wrote, "It seemed to me that as her body was now worn and exhausted with labor and disease--the hereditary cancer which was still growing upon her--her mental and spiritual power increased."[53] She became convinced that she possessed a curative "magnetism" and used the ancient phrase "the gift of healing" for this power, but Thomas thought the word "sympathy" described her powers best.[54] The dilemma that plagued the medical profession was that healing occurred under a variety of medical theories. Thomas wrote, "We give a medicine, and the patient recovers. These are the two facts; but how do we know that they are related to each other as cause and effect?" How could it be determined what "would have been had another medicine or none at all been given?" Patients were cured "under all systems" and recent hospital experiments had discovered that "where allopathy, homeopathy, and 'la methode expectante' (amusing the patient while nature cures the disease) were tried," the "most and quickest recoveries" resulted from bread pills and colored water.[55] He believed that ultimately it was nature that healed when the patients were "placed in good conditions."[56]

Mary Gove Nichols seldom spoke about animal magnetism or mesmerism, but declared that she was "no better than a book of good rules, or a sheet of printed directions to any patient" unless she could "magnetise him or her." It was not always necessary "to make passes" or lay her hand upon a patient, but if "sympathy" existed "mere presence, or magnetised remedies or articles does the work."[57] She prepared her "sympathetic remedies" and Thomas marketed them,

though he did "not prescribe them" or "even recommend their use." But if a person had "faith in their efficacy" then that faith would "do its own work of cure."[58]

He enthusiastically endorsed two of her remedies, Alma Tonic and Sapolina, that had "natural efficacy; a power to strengthen and to heal." Alma Tonic was concentrated grape juice, and Thomas declared that the "highly nutritive and salubrious" syrup contained "the sympathetic life-force which appertains to the gift of healing" and worked "inconceivable wonders."[59] The "magnetic or mesmeric-sympathetic ointment," Sapolina, was "an instant cure for scalds or burns" and had been "very efficious in all skin-disease, even to lepra, falling hair, deafness and affections of the throat."[60]

While Thomas was busy with the marketing end of their work, Mary Gove Nichols found time to return to her "favourite subject" and discuss several aspects of preparation that would lead to women's independence. Of primary importance was the education of women because they held "the future of the human race."[61] If woman was "developed as an individual human soul, not as a mere inane appendage," she would be "not only a treasure to her husband, a true mother to her children, or the children of others," but she would be "the nation's wealth--the mother of true souls yet to be."[62] She had no desire "to shut out men," but her main work was to be the "sister-servant of woman." Man could help himself, but she felt called "to help woman...the crown and glory of man" because she was "also his victim, a mere appendage often, having no legal existence or rights."[63] Yet the "child with

her doll" possessed "the maternal instinct which guards the future of the race."[64] Women must be educated to become healthy mothers bearing healthy children. Vaccination had been made compulsory, she argued, but there were no laws requiring the teachings of the laws of health or their practice. She questioned the inconsistency and regretfully concluded that the probable reason was that "doctors and chemists draw at least three-quarters of their revenues from female patients."[65]

Not only should the shackles of ignorance be removed and the women taught preventive medicine, but they must cast off their inhibiting and dangerous fashions. In 1878, Mary Gove Nichols returned to her earlier interest in dress reform. She used a play upon the contemporary issue, the "Eastern Question," the fate of the Ottoman Empire, when she entitled her pamphlet "The Clothes Question."[66] The Eastern Question was "of small account" compared to the effects on the human race of the unhealthy and restricting nature of women's fashions that prevented their full usefulness to society.[67] It was a "sign of bondage" that women could not "adapt their dress to their occupation or their leisure."[68] Women were also damaging their health by using the fashionable "hair washes" which contained "sugar of lead, nitrate of silver, and other mineral poisons" which produced "nervous disease, not unfrequently attended with loss of hearing, loss of sight, neuralgia, general weakness, and many diseases arising from loss of nervous power."[69] She exhorted women to prefer "honest grey hair."[70] Their shoe fashions were also dangerous and deformed the

feet. High heels, "no longer a heel, but a peg under the middle of the foot," should be discarded without delay.[71]

Mary Gove Nichols was well aware of the difficulty in instituting dress reform, yet she believed it was "imperative" because restrictive, unhealthy clothing forced women to become "delicate, fragile...hot-house flowers in bloom for a iittle time."[72] Men could not see the justice of women's rights when women were in such a dependent condition. Women should not "leave all the thought to the clergymen, to physicians, and above all, to Mrs. Grundy," but should develop an attractive, "wise and healthy fashion of female attire."[73] Man's assistance was needed, however, because it was "eminently untrue" to say that at present woman had control over her own fate.[74] Economically she was still "fatally dependent on man" and must do what he desired. If men wanted their wives to dress fashionably and "foolishly, they will so dress." Men, therefore, were vital to the development and acceptance of a rational attire.[75] She closed her pamphlet again referring to the contemporary situation and concluded, "If a congress of statesmen at Berlin can settle the Eastern Question after all its atrocities and horrors, surely a congress at Paris might settle the Clothes Question which, as we have seen, has also its horrors and atrocities."[76]

Mary Gove Nichols had been advocating these reforms for over forty years and in 1880, at the age of seventy, she wrote, "My life is nearly lived, and I want to make what remains of the greatest possible use."[77] She estimated that for years she had written over one thousand professional letters each year, giving individual

instructions and medical advice. Now with her strength ebbing she wanted to write a practical and helpful medical book teaching "the true science of obstetrics, and the principles that...will secure painless birth, and healthy children."[78] Realizing that she could see such a limited number of people, but that a book could reach thousands, she promised, "I never liked to smother my hands with gloves, and surely I shall not do this last culminating work of my life with gloves on."[79] The reformer was still aglow in her, but so were the financial realities and she asked, "Now who wants this book of mine? I want no money sent for it; but I should like a list of subscribers that would enable me to print a good edition...no money must be sent, except as a free gift."[80]

The book was never finished because of her failing health, but she wrote, "I have made a long continued fight for my life, and if I die now, I have not disgraced the principles we teach, for I am past the alloted three score and ten years."[81] She continued her self-treatment and advised patients to do likewise. Her treatment of her breast cancer included magnetising "the diseased gland twenty minutes daily" and living on a simple diet which consisted mainly of vegetables, fruit, grape juice, and water from Malvern Springs.[82] She wrote, "If all persons with cancerous diasthesis should live as I, even they might find life worth living as I do."[83]

Mary Gove Nichols remained active until she fell on the front steps of her home in October 1881 and broke her left thigh bone.[84] It was improperly set, and a "callus formed, involving the great sciatic nerve, and causing intense neuralgia," but she refused

to take the acceptable painkillers of the time, opium and morphine.[85]

Even at seventy-one she would not, or could not, retire. She had to ask for help and made a brief explanation of the Nicholses "pecuniary" situation.[86] She wrote, "we have no personal interest in, or control of, or pecuniary benefit from the business of Nichols and Company, and the Sanitary Depot, and Vegetarian Restaurant, at 429 Oxford Street" because Thomas had "handed it over" to a business manager who had assumed its liabilities and was paying off the debts. The Nicholses sole income was "derived from copyrights and royalties, which during the hard times of a few years past, have not been very productive." In other words, it was the income that Mary had received as physician and medical correspondent that had kept them afloat and now she was incapacitated.

It was several months before Mary Gove Nichols could get out of bed and walk unassisted.[87] The pain was intense, but she hoped soon to be earning her living again. At times her general health was "still excellent" and she was free from pain." But in August 1882 she reinjured her leg and was bedridden the rest of her life.[88] She continued with her "postal work," her medical consultations by mail. Although friends gave her some financial assistance, she did not have "enough to bury" herself. Though she greatly appreciated their charity, she said it would be better if they bought the Nicholses' books and distributed them, thereby improving both her life and others.[89]

"Weary from this last contest," Mary Gove Nichols still gave medical advice and ran her home as a nursing home for patients.[90]

A woman who became her patient in February 1883 wrote a detailed description of how she found the seventy-three year old woman on her first visit. In a bright and airy first floor room "a fire blazed cheerily, and the wintry sun shone redly in upon some gay plumaged little birds, singly loudly."[91] She lay "before a large bay window upon a red couch, covered with warm quilts, and propped up against pillows." Her face was "very thin and pale, but her brow was unwrinkled." It was "the eyes to which the face owed its beauty." After the medical advice was given, she "blew a small gold whistle, which hung by a chain about her neck" and a servant came and showed the patient out. The patient later stayed with her for six weeks of intensive treatment, and frequently saw the hall table filled with the numerous letters written in violet ink that she had answered during the day and that were ready to be mailed.[92]

The last few months of Mary Gove Nichols' life were very painful because the least movement of the fractured leg caused intense agony and sleep was often impossible. Earlier "galvanic current" had been passed through her leg to relieve the pain, but it was no longer effective.[93] The breast cancer added immeasurably to her suffering. Yet a patient wrote that she was "invariably bright and cheerful" and talked optimistically about her social reforms.[94]

Death, Thomas wrote, is usually painless; but Mary Gove Nichols "suffered much in her last illuness."[95] She continued to work answering letters "with a union of Spartan heroism and Christian resignation until twelve days before she died." Then without warning, "she broke down utterly. Her stomach rejected food--her brain

failed. She sank into a state of unconsciousness--a kind of trance--and was unable to take any food; in twelve days she simply ceased to breathe."[96] Mary Gove Nichols died on May 30, 1884.

She was buried in a public plot at St. Mary's Cemetery on Harrow Road in the Kensal Green section of London.[97] A small group of her friends and patients "gathered around her humble grave...and laid upon it a wreath of white and fragrant flowers." Her daughter, Elma, and her husband had been in Europe when Mary died and when they returned they provided a small tombstone which her friend, the Rev. Canon Warmoll of Bedford, designed.[99]

Thomas Nichols wrote, "Knowing as I do--not simply hoping or believing, but knowing--that what we call death is but an incident of continuous life--a change, a transition," he was assured that she had "joined the choir invisible of the spiritworld to which we are all hastening." He continued, "The worn out garment that we put in the earth...she held of small account. I think more of every scrap of her writing, every revelation of her active and vigorous mind, than of all the relics of her decaying body."[100] To Thomas Nichols, her companion and colleague for thirty-six years, "her work" was "her proper memorial--her work for the complete, integral health of women chiefly, and, through them the race of men."[101]

Notes to Chapter XI

[1]Herald of Health, October, 1880, pp. 401-2.

[2]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 108, and Herald of Health, June, 1881, p. 66, and May, 1883, pp. 49-50.

[3]Brian Stanley Smith, A History of Malvern (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1964), p. 195.

[4]W. H. McMenemey, "The Water Doctors of Malvern, with Special Reference to the Years 1842 to 1872," Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine, Vol. 46 (January, 1953), p. 10.

[5]Ibid., p. 5.

[6]Gully eventually earned over 10,000 pounds a year, a sizeable income for the period.

[7]Smith, Malvern, pp. 206-7.

[8]Ibid., p. 211, and McMenemey, "Water Doctors," pp. 8-9. Jenny Lind liked Malvern so much she moved there and was buried there.

[9]McMenemey, "Water Doctors," p. 8.

[10]Ibid., pp. 7 and 10.

[11]Thomas Low Nichols, "A Position Defined," Water Cure Journal, April, 1850, p. 102.

[12]Thomas was miffed when an English medical journal informed him that he had "no right to use the M.D. in England even upon the title page of a literary work." Herald of Health, February, 1883, p. 15. He used it anyway.

[13]Mary Gove Nichols, A Woman's Work in Water Cure and Sanitary Education (London: Nichols & Co., 1874) is the edition I have quoted from in this work.

[14]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 189.

[15]Ibid., pp. 188-90.

[16]Ibid., p. 109, and Advertisement in Mary Gove Nichols, The Clothes Question (Published by the Author, 1878).

[17]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 433 and Letter to J. H. Ingram from Mary Gove Nichols, dated February 3, 1875, Ingram Collection, Alderman Library, The University of Virginia.

[18]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 196

[19]M. G. Nichols, Woman's Work, p. 5.

[20]Ibid.

[21]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, pp. 316-8 and 127.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Ibid., pp. 174-5.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Even though she could not educate "orphans and outcasts," she helped the "worthy" needy by collecting clothes and money for them. See Herald of Health, January 1, 1879, p. 149; June, 1879, p. 216; December, 1881, p. 133; March, 1882, p. 31; March, 1883, p. 28; and February, 1884, p. 21.

[27]Excerpts are quoted in T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, pp. 321-23 and 281-89. I was unable to locate complete copies of these pamphlets.

[28]Ibid., p. 319.

[29]Ibid., p. 324.

[30]Ibid., p. 322.

[31]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, pp. 322-3.

[32]Ibid., p. 320

[33]Ibid.

[34]Ibid.

[35]Ibid., p. 321.

[36]Ibid., p. 281. "Despotism" was dedicated to John Henry Newman and Thomas Carlyle.

[37]Ibid., p. 283.

[38]Ibid., p. 284.

[39]Ibid.

[40]Ibid., p. 288.

[41]Ibid., p. 289.

[42]It also kept alive her memories of her loss of Mary Wilhelmina and made earning a living more difficult.

[43]Ibid., pp. 195-97. The poem is printed on p. 440.

[44]Ibid., p. 197.

[45]Herald of Health, July, 1884, p. 79.

[46]McMenemey, "Water Doctors," p. 11.

[47]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 172.

[48]M. G. Nichols, Clothes Question, Advertisement in back.

[49]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 172.

[50]Ibid., p. 109.

[51]M. G. Nichols, Clothes Question, Advertisement in back.

[52]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 109.

[53]Ibid., p. 110.

[54]Herald of Health, October 1, 1880, p. 408.

[55]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 215.

[56]Ibid., p. 214, and Herald of Health, October 1, 1880, p. 408.

[57]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, pp. 208-9.

[58]Ibid., p. 215.

[59]Ibid., p. 214. Another woman from Lynn, Massachusetts, Lydia Pinkham, issued a formula to eliminate "female complaints" in 1875 at the same time Mary Gove Nichols was selling her concentrated grape joice as Alma Tonic. Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound that contained 18 per cent alcohol as a "solvent and preservative" was sold through the imaginative advertising ideas of her sons. They were so successful that Lydia Pinkham's face which was used as a

trademark became one of the best known American female faces at the turn of the century and the family continued to operate the lucrative business for three generations. There were many parallels between Lydia (who was ten years younger) and Mary. Lydia's parents were Quakers, but her mother, Rebecca, turned to the writings of Swedenborg that heavily influenced Lydia. Alonzo Lewis, Mary's long time friend taught Lydia in Lynn. Lydia was involved in the Lynn Anti-Slavery movement and knew many of the women reformers. She rejected orthodox medical practice and helped her neighbors with their "female problems" by sharing her remedy made from the unicorn and pleurisy roots. When the Pinkham family faced actual destitution as a result of the Panic of 1873, the sons decided to try to sell their mother's remedy. Late in life, after the death of her sons, Lydia turned to Spiritualism. Interestingly, her only daughter married William Gove who was related to Hiram Gove, Mary's first husband. Although I have found no direct evidence, there are so many crossing paths, it is likely that Lydia Pinkham knew of Mary Gove Nichols and her work. See Sarah Stage, Female Complaints: Lydia Pinkham and the Business of Women's Medicine (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1979), and Jean Burton, Lydia Pinkham is Her Name (New York: Farrar, Straus and Company, 1949).

[60]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 361.

[61]Ibid., p. 191.

[62]Ibid., p. 192.

[63]Ibid., p. 194.

[64]Ibid., p. 307.

[65]Ibid., p. 308.

[66]Turkish atrocities against the rebellious Balkans had been widely published in Gladstone's famous pamphlet, "The Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East." When the Russians intervened and defeated the Turks, their increased influence in the Balkans alarmed the other European powers. The British feared a challenge to their supremacy in the Mediterrean Sea. Bismarck, who wanted peace to consolidate his previous war gains, suggested an international conference to negotiate the conflicting interests. The Congress of Berlin (1878) resulted, which redistributed the Ottoman Empire among the various European powers. See Robert C. K. Ensor, England, 1870-1914 (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1968), pp. 40-54.

[67]M. G. Nichols, Clothes Question, p. 13.

[68]Ibid., p. 40.

[69]Ibid., p. 17.

[70]Ibid., p. 19.

[71]Ibid., p. 72.

[72]Ibid., pp. 29 and 26.

[73]Ibid., p. 42.

[74]Ibid., p. 40.

[75]Ibid., p. 41.

[76]Ibid., p. 88.

[77]Herald of Health, October, 1880, pp. 401-2; and reprinted in T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, pp. 218-20.

[78]Ibid., p. 219.

[79]Ibid., p. 220.

[80]Ibid.

[81]Herald of Health, August, 1882, p. 85.

[82]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 219. Today doctors realize "that the attitudes of their patients are just as significant as the symptoms of their disease. In Fort Worth, Texas, for example, Dr. Carl Simonton, in addition to treating cancern patients with conventional radiation, chemotherapy, and surgery--also uses relaxation and visualization techniques. The patient is asked to meditate regularly three times a day for 15 minutes in the morning upon arising, around noon, and at night before going to bed." See Jeffrey Mishlove, The Roots of Consciousness: Psychic Liberation through History, Science, and Experience (New York: Random House, Inc., 1975), p. 141.

[83]Herald of Health, August, 1882, p. 85, and T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, pp. 219-20.

[84]Herald of Health, November, 1881, p. 121.

[85]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 110, and Herald of Health, October, 1883, p. 114.

[86]Herald of Health, December, 1881, p. 133.

[87]Ibid., February, 1882, p. 15.

[88]Ibid., July, 1882, p. 73; August, 1882, p. 85; and October, 1882, p. 109.

[89]Ibid., October, 1882, p. 109.

[90]Ibid., November, 1882, p. 121.

[91]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 442.

[92]Ibid., p. 443. The details of the description are hauntingly reminiscent of Mary's detailed description of Edgar Allan Poe's Virginia at Fordham cottage.

[93]Ibid., p. 110.

[94]Ibid., p. 443.

[95]Ibid., p. 107.

[96]Herald of Health, July, 1884, pp. 78-80.

[97]As public plots are not owned by the family, eventually they are plowed under and the tombstones removed and more people added to the cemetery. When this occurs, the cemetery publishes notices and the family can come and claim the headstones or the remains. If no one appears the body remains unmarked and the cemetery breaks up the headstone. Records are not kept of what happens to individuals so buried when the public plots are reopened. Most likely the remains of Mary Gove Nichols still lie in Grave 2509, but the headstone is no longer there. It costs about one pound to be buried in a public plot and today costs about 148 pounds to get a private plot. Interview with Superintendent of St. Mary's Cemetery, Kensal Green, London, May 21, 1979.

[98]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 441.

[99]Ibid., p. 446, and Herald of Health, August, 1885, p. 91. Since Mary was buried in the Catholic cemetery and a priest designed her tombstone, it is to be presumed that she was still a Catholic in good standing at her death.

[100]T. L. Nichols, Health Manual, p. 111.

[101]Ibid., p. 191. Little is known of the last years of Thomas Low Nichols. The July, 1902, Herald of Health stated, "From a reliable source we learn that in the summer of last year Thomas Low Nichols, the pioneer of food reform, passed away at the age of eighty-five at Chaumont-en-Vezin, France." As quoted in Bertha-Monica Sterns, "Two Forgotten New England Reformers," The New England Quarterly, Vol. 6, March, 1933, pp. 83-4.

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