

A BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL STUDY
OF ROSE TERRY COOKE

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INTRODUCTION

The problem of this study is to establish Rose Terry Cooke (1827-1892) as New England's first short story writer to make the transition from romanticism to the beginnings of realism through local color.

There are about two dozen books of literary history and criticism which give brief accounts of Mrs. Cooke's contribution to the American short story, but there is no single extended work which presents an analysis of all her writings, nor which offers competent biographical information about this transitional figure who died less than sixty-five years ago.

The importance of this report, therefore, is in the fulfillment of these needs and in the discussion of Mrs. Cooke's contribution to the evolution of the American short story during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Neither the thesis nor the bibliography here given is complete. This present report omits an exhaustive textual criticism of Mrs. Cooke's poetry, confining the examination to style, type, and quality. This study also limits to a mere mention of names Mrs. Cooke's influence upon other local colorists. Also, because there are as many meanings of romanticism, local color, and realism as there are literary specialists for the subjects themselves, the

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definitions here are restricted to those in Webster's dictionary.

This report's first chapter is an account of Mrs. Cooke's life to young womanhood, and is also an investigation of the beginnings of her authorship as a poet.

Chapter II covers the decade before the Civil War, and is an analysis of Mrs. Cooke's short stories in the leading periodicals of the day, Putnam's, Harper's, and the Atlantic Monthly.

The third chapter tells of the major events in the personal and literary life of Mrs. Cooke from 1870 to 1887, and attempts an explanation of her shift from literary monthlies to religious weeklies.

Chapter IV continues the discussion of Mrs. Cooke's dependence on weekly and daily publications, and examines her writings for young people.

The last chapter contains a critical estimate of Rose Terry Cooke's novel Steadfast, and of two of her best known stories, as well as a discussion of her reappearance in the Atlantic, and some general comments about her contribution to American literature.

Except for the occasional reference to a secondary source, this thesis is based on original materials: public documents, unpublished correspondence, and the writings of Rose Terry Cooke.

CHAPTER ONE

THE BEGINNINGS OF AUTHORSHIP--POETRY

Two years before her death in 1892, Rose Terry Cooke was elected one of the "Twenty Immortelles," writers considered by readers of the Critic--a leading literary review of the day--the "truest representatives of what is best in cultivated American womanhood."¹ Forty years earlier her verse had been introduced to readers of the New York Daily Tribune by its managing editor, Charles A. Dana, who said of her poem, "Trailing Arbutus,"

An unknown correspondent sends us the following exquisite poem. It is shaped with as sweet, tender and delicate a beauty as the 'darling blossoms' it addresses. We shall always welcome the author to our columns.²

All her life as a writer of verse and fiction Rose Terry Cooke knew the praise of critics and editors. And all her life as an author she knew the poverty and uncertainty of writing for a living for she tells of it in letters and in stories. She began writing because she could not help it and went on with it because she had to work for

p. 206. ¹Critic, Vol. 17, No. 356, October 25, 1890,

col. 1. ²New York Daily Tribune, April 26, 1851, p. 6,

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a living and because she preferred it to anything else. At thirteen she was so moved by the death of a public figure that she wrote an elegiac poem and sent it to a local paper where it was printed immediately.³ Almost half a century later she was still writing--and successfully too--for it was in the June 1891 issue of the Atlantic that the frequently anthologized "A Town Mouse and A Country Mouse" appeared for the first time.

From the beginning, Rose Terry's life appeared favored. She was born in Hartford on February 17, 1827 of two old Connecticut families, the Terrys and the Hurlbuts. Her maternal grandfather, Captain John Hurlbut was first mate on the Neptune, said to be the first American vessel to circumnavigate the globe. Captain Hurlbut and his wife, Ann, had one child, Ann Wright Hurlbut, later to become Rose Terry's mother.

General Nathaniel Terry, Rose's paternal grandfather, was at different periods of his life a lawyer, judge, legislator and a member of Congress and the Connecticut Constitutional Convention. At the time of Rose's

³Rose Terry Cooke, "A Letter to Mary Ann," Sunday Afternoon, Vol. 3, January 1879, p. 81.

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birth, he was mayor of Hartford, president of the Hartford Fire Insurance Company, as well as president of the Hartford Bank. Of his eight children, three daughters and five sons, Henry Wadsworth Terry was the oldest. Semi-official records show that Henry was a landscape gardener, one of his brothers a lawyer, and the other three, doctors. Whatever Henry's contribution to the family's history, certainly it was eclipsed by the accomplishments of his more colorful father, General Terry, and by the historic deed of a collateral ancestor, Captain Joseph Wadsworth, who saved the charter.⁴

Actually, beyond being a "man of great information, a social favorite, sensitive, generous, and open-hearted," little is known of Rose's father, Henry Wadsworth Terry. Slight though the record of his achievements, great apparently was the skill with which he transmitted to Rose a deep love of nature. Although information about Rose's mother, Ann Wright Hurlbut Terry, is equally scant, her influence upon her daughter must have been much the greater for it was to her that Rose was indebted for "the power to

⁴When Sir Edmund Andros came to Hartford in 1687 to seize the Connecticut charter, tradition has it that Joseph Wadsworth, a colonist, hid the charter in an oak tree.

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write at all," and it was her initials, A.W.H. that Rose used to sign her early verse.

As a small child, Rose's education came chiefly through her mother, part of each day's drill being the learning by rote of a column of words in a dictionary and the recording in a copybook of the day's happenings. When she was six, Rose and her sister Alice, younger than Rose by four years, and their parents, all went to live in one of the biggest and finest houses in Hartford, a house built by Colonel Jeremiah Wadsworth for his daughter, Catherine, Rose's grandmother. Here in her grandparents' home, with cousins and uncles and aunts, Rose and her family had their happiest days.

Hartford at that time, the middle 1830's, had a population of a little over 9000. The city "rather irregularly laid out, and...divided at the south part by Mill or Little River," had in those days several banks, iron foundries, machine shops, lyceums, schools, including the first school in America for the deaf and dumb, several periodicals and newspapers, as well as twelve places of worship: five Congregationalist, one Episcopal, two Baptist, one Methodist, one Universalist, one Roman Catholic,

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and one African.⁵

With the rise of the railroad and the increase in industrialization of New England, Hartford sought its share of trade and wealth; it aimed sights for the expansion of transportation facilities, and the first railroad to enter Hartford was the line from New Haven, completed in 1839. Several steamboats were also in operation between Hartford and Springfield, and three boats formed a daily line between Hartford and New York. A scene typical of the happenings on a boat journey from Hartford to New York is recorded in a letter written by Rose Terry on August 9, 1841 and sent from Huntington, New York, to her granduncle, Daniel Wadsworth, in Hartford. This letter shows Rose's powers of observation and narration at the age of fourteen. It reads:

...I had a most delightful journey down the river and a singular medley of passengers rendered some scenes particularly ludicrous. When I woke at midnight and looked down on the grotesque figures that strewed the cabin floor, and the cross half waked faces between the curtains on the

⁵ John Warner Barber, Connecticut Historical Collections, Containing a General Collection of Interesting Facts, Traditions, Biographical Sketches, Anecdotes, Etc Relating to the History and Antiquities of Every Town in Connecticut, with Geographical Descriptions, New Haven, John Warner Barber, 1836, pp. 32-33.

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passengers just taken in scolding about everything they had not, all that restrained my laughter was the fear of bringing them on my head and waking those who slept. There were three or four children on board forming an agreeable addition to their mother's vociferation by screaming for their own amusement and these with several of the ladies trying to be sea-sick though there was very little swell harmonized delightfully but at last they left me to sleep...⁶

With the death, in 1841, of Mrs. Nathaniel Terry (Rose's grandmother and the Terry-Wadsworth matriarch) came an end to the cared-for and happy life of the younger family members. And, just as the city of Hartford sought its place in New England's fast growth, so also did the younger Terrys try for stature. Rose, upon graduation from the Hartford Female Seminary went to Burlington, New Jersey, and there in November 1843, in the home of William Van Renssalaer, clergyman, began her school of "only five scholars," with "however the promise of more among whom is one young lady very nearly my own age...She will study the higher branches and French so that every part of my own education will be called into immediate exercise...⁷

⁶Ms letter Connecticut Historical Society.

⁷Ms letter Connecticut Historical Society.

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After four years as a teacher-governess in this church-school, Rose returned to her family in Hartford. She continued to teach, and undoubtedly, following her earlier interest, was writing for publication. However, apparently little, if any, of her writing in the middle and late 1840's made its way into leading literary journals, and as for her being a regular contributor to Putnam's before she was twenty,⁸ mere calculation proves otherwise. Rose Terry's contributions to Putnam's, at least those which after careful study have been reasonably identified as hers, began with a poem, "The Desire of the Moth," published in that magazine's June 1855 issue. At that time Rose was twenty-eight years old and Putnam's was in the second year of its publication. It is more than likely, therefore, that after her first success as a poet at thirteen, Rose continued having her verse published only locally. Not until April 26, 1851, the day the New York Daily Tribune carried "Trailing Arbutus" in its columns did any of Miss Terry's work appear in a major publication.

From her literary beginnings, Rose Terry enjoyed writing poetry, and she was always glad to have comments

⁸Fred Lewis Pattee, The Development of the American Short Story, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1923, p. 174.

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about it. Criticisms and inquiries about her verse brought prompt replies. During negotiations for an enlarged edition of her 1860 Poems she wrote, wistfully, to the publisher Benjamin H. Ticknor:

...I enclose for you to read a letter which rather astonished me; I did not know anybody read poetry in these days, or knew I ever wrote any. Of course I leave the matter to you; if there is any possibility of your ever wishing to do this insane thing that Mr. Gottsberger asks leave to undertake I shall leave it to you, and say no to him. Will you please send me back his letter. I like to keep a proof in my hands that some one does still consider me a minor poet. I don't even resent the minority.⁹

A quarter of a century earlier, in a letter to the poet and critic, R. H. Stoddard, Miss Terry thanked him for his review of her first volume of Poems and closed plaintively with:

But a digger squaw wouldn't have me!
I wish they hadn't found me in the valley,--
It's twice dead not to see!¹⁰

These last are lines from one of her frontier ballads published in 1856:

⁹Ms letter Yale Library, dated Winsted, October 29, 1886.

¹⁰Ms letter New York Public Library, dated Hartford, January 24, 1861.

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Done For

A week ago to-day, when red-haired Sally
 Down to the sugar-camp came to see me,
 I saw her checked frock coming down the valley,
 Far as anybody's eyes could see.
 Now I sit before the camp-fire,
 And I can't see the pine-knots blaze,
 Nor Sally's pretty face a-shining,
 Though I hear the good words she says.

A week ago to-night I was tired and lonely,
 Sally was gone back to Mason's fort,
 And the boys by the sugar-kettles left me only;
 They were hunting coons for sport.
 By there snaked a painted Pawnee,
 I was asleep before the fire;
 He creased my two eyes with his hatchet,
 And scalped me to his heart's desire.

There they found me on the dry tussocks lying,
 Bloody and cold as a live man could be;
 A hoot-owl on the branches overhead was crying,
 Crying murder to the red Pawnee.
 They brought me to the camp-fire,
 They washed me in the sweet white spring;
 But my eyes were full of flashes,
 And all night my ears would sing.

I thought I was a hunter on the prairie,
 But they saved me for an old blind dog;
 When the hunting-grounds are cool and airy,
 I shall lie here like a helpless log.
 I can't ride the little wiry pony,
 That scrambles over hills high and low;
 I can't set my traps for the cony,
 Or bring down the black buffalo.

I'm no better than a rusty, bursted rifle,
 And I don't see signs of any other trail;
 Here by the camp-fire blaze I lie and stifle,
 And hear Jim fill the kettles with his pail.
 It's no use groaning. I like Sally,
 But a Digger squaw wouldn't have me!
 I wish they hadn't found me in the valley,--
 It's twice dead not to see!¹¹

¹¹Rose Terry, Poems, Boston, Ticknor and Fields, 1861, p. 208.

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Of all the pieces in the first volume of Miss Terry's Poems, James Russell Lowell thought the ballads best. "The 'Frontier Ballads' in particular," he said, "quiver with strength and spirit, and have the true game-flavor of the border."¹² Also pleased most by the ballads was a reviewer for the Southern Literary Messenger. But to his praise of them he tacked this wry comment, "Bad taste, no doubt."¹³

It is true that by the time Rose Terry's first volume of poems was printed in 1861, the frontier ballad had lost much of its initial literary standing; it was no longer held in esteem in some circles. Yet, just enough time had elapsed since the original publication of Miss Terry's frontier ballads--all of which were published singly before 1861--to allow crudities to appear in the writing of this verse form and to bring disdainful remarks by some reviewers. Regardless of the corruption which came to the frontier ballad by hack writers and parodists, its appeal continued for years to come; in fact ballads were the chief literary fare for many readers of that day.

¹²Atlantic Monthly, Vol. 7, March 1861, p. 382.

¹³Southern Literary Messenger, Vol. 32, April 1861, p. 327.

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It would be difficult to give the exact sources which influenced Rose Terry in her writing of the frontier ballad, and it would be just as unwise to say, as did one of her contemporaries, Harriet Prescott Spofford, in an article which she wrote about Rose, that

...Meantime, 'In the Hospital,'
'Done For,' and 'Lost on the Prairie,'
were pioneers of the Border ballad,
originated the idea and gave the motive
to all of that nature that have ever
followed.¹⁴

Despite a thorough search, no frontier ballads have been found to predate those written by Rose Terry. Reservedly, therefore, some concession is made regarding Mrs. Spofford's claim, "originated the idea"; as much concession at least as can go into any positive statement about the origin of frontier ballads. After all, to try to account for one or another of the various forms of the ballad is as foolish as it is formidable. Additionally, it is a task for the specialist.

For some of her other ballads, Rose Terry used the legends of other lands: "The Saffron Fly," Brittany; "The Brides of Fire," from the Syrian; "Penna's Daughter,"

¹⁴Elizabeth Stuart Phelps and others, Our Famous Women, Hartford, Conn., Worthington and Company, 1884, p. 192.

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Cornish; "The Honor of Guzman El Bueno," Spanish; and probably the best of all, "The Guerz of Genossa," after the Breton.

For her natural pictures, Miss Terry was also commended by reviewers and editors. "Trailing Arbutus," which marked her debut as a contributor to the columns of the New York Daily Tribune tells of the flower

Fairest and most lonely,
From the world apart,
Made for beauty only,
Veiled from Nature's heart,
With such unconscious grace as makes
the dream of Art!¹⁵

Her poems tell of quietness--"The River,"; the loved and lovely things of spring--"Coming" and "Latter Spring"; and the last blossoms of the blooming year--"Chrysanthemums."

One of the most successful of her nature poems was "Reve du Midi"

When o'er the mountain steeps
The hazy noontide creeps,
And the shrill cricket sleeps
Under the grass;
When soft the shadows lie,
And clouds sail o'er the sky,
And the idle winds go by,
With the heavy scent of blossoms as they pass;

¹⁵New York Daily Tribune, April 26, 1851,
p. 6, Col. 1.

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Then, when the silent stream
 Lapses as in a dream,
 And the water-lilies gleam
 Up to the sun;
 When the hot and burdened day
 Stops on its downward way,
 When the month forgets to play,
 And the plodding ant may dream her toil is done;

Then, from the noise of war,
 And the din of earth afar,
 Like some forgotten star
 Dropt from the sky;
 With the sounds of love and fear,
 All voices sad and dear
 Banish to silence drear,
 The willing thrall of trances sweet I lie.¹⁶

Of all the poems written by Rose Terry--and there were approximately three hundred scattered through more than twenty different periodicals and newspapers and bound in two volumes: Poems 1860, and Poems 1888--the most popular and often-reprinted was "The Two Villages." Its stanzas tell of "life in the villages on and under the hill."

In that village on the hill
 Never is sound of smithy or mill;
 The houses are thatched with grass and flowers;
 Never a clock to toll the hours;
 The marble doors are always shut,
 You cannot enter in hall or hut;
 All the villagers lie asleep;
 Never a grain to sow or reap;
 Never in dreams to moan or sigh;
 Silent and idle and low they lie.

Col. 1.

¹⁶New York Daily Tribune, May 5, 1855, p. 3,

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In that village under the hill,
 When the night is starry and still,
 Many a weary soul in prayer
 Looks to the other village there,
 And weeping and sighing, longs to go
 Up to that home from this below;
 Longs to sleep in the forest wild,
 Whither have vanished wife and child,
 And heareth, praying, this answer fall:
 "Patience! that village shall hold ye all!"¹⁷

Another poem which, like "The Two Villages," grew out of local inspiration was "My House." During the first years of her married life in Winsted, Connecticut, Rose Terry and her husband, Rollin H. Cooke, moved from one dwelling to another in their search for a proper place to live. Rose went looking "up and down through the town,/ for a little house to dwell in,/" and just when she thought her quest in vain a whisper tells of a home that waits:

Thy house is ready here,
 Ready this many a year:
 Seek no more,
 For the door
 Is opening to thy feet,
 And the wide and silent street
 Is ready for the tread
 In the city of the dead.
 Seek no longer! here is rest for heart and head,
 Come in here.¹⁸

¹⁷Supplement to the Courant, December 29, 1860,
 Vol. 35, p. 209.

¹⁸Rose Terry Cooke, "My House," Christian Union,
 Vol. 13, May 3, 1876, p. 353.

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In verse as in prose, Rose Terry wrote with a purpose, a distinct aim; always she levelled her shafts at something specific. One time it was a tribute, another an occasional poem, still another a piece about political or national matters. A decade after California soil was proclaimed United States territory there appeared in the New York Daily Tribune, "Fremont's Ride,"¹⁹ a ballad heralding the controversial campaigner, Fremont, and "his hundred's ride."

Like most New Englanders, Rose Terry favored the abolition of slavery. On the death of John Brown she wrote "Samson Agonistes" and in it she upbraided the "Philistia" for binding and making sport of Brown. "You think his eyes are closed and blind forever,/ Because you seared them to this mortal day;/ but, she censures:

Oh, fools! his arms are round
your temple-pillars;
Oh, blind! his strength divine
begins to wake;--
Hark! the great roof-tree trembles
from its centre,
Hark! how the rafters bend and
swerve and shake!²⁰

col. 1 ¹⁹New York Daily Tribune, July 14, 1856, p. 6,

²⁰Terry, op. cit., p. 180.

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To U. S. Grant, "The Netted Lion," she wrote:

Oh lion of our land! Men cast on thee
 A subtle net, a more relentless snare,
 As crowned with gifts and honors, thou
 didst fare
 Toward thy rest, in grave tranquility;
 And now thou liest, fall'n, for all to see
 Trapped, heart-broke, dying; yet still
 brave to dare
 The passage of the vast unsounded sea.
 Our netted lion, whom nor grief nor prayer,
 Nor the loud call of frightened liberty,
 Shall ever from those deadly meshes free.
 God help us all! Yea, God in His great
 might help thee!²¹

During their lifetime she paid tribute to James Russell Lowell, John Greenleaf Whittier, and Ralph W. Emerson "a tall grey cliff" before her eyes, and to Margaret Fuller Ossoli, and other writers and friends.

For her native state, Connecticut, she wrote a 328-line centennial poem, "Groton Massacre," and for that state's participation in the Civil War she wrote "All Forward," "a song written expressly for the 2d Regiment, Connecticut Volunteers."²² Other Civil War pieces include "Hurrah," and "A Hospital Soliloquy."

Those poems of Rose Terry dealing with love, death, and religion are all of a piece; typical fare of

²¹Rose Terry Cooke, Poems, New York, Gottsberger, 1888, p. 254.

²²New York Daily Tribune, June 3, 1861, p. 3, col. 1.

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the minor poets of the nineteenth century and all interlaced with sentimentality and sadness. Occasionally, however, shafts of light break through as in "He and She":

How does a woman love? Once no more:

• • •
Once is forever and once alone.

How does a man love? Once for all

• • •
Once and forever, he loves himself.²³

There is also subtle humor in "Once Before":

In the rain he stands imploring:

Tears and kisses storm the door,
Where she let him in before.

Will she never know repenting?

Will she ever, late relenting

Let him in, as once before?²⁴

Probably the best of the religious poems are

"Within," "A Funeral Psalm," and "Saint Symphorien." Concerning this last poem, Rose Terry wrote the following in a letter to Julia R. C. Dorr, poet and New England neighbor:

Thank you for your kind letter. I am glad you liked Saint Symphorien. It seems strange to you, no doubt, that being a childless woman I could write it; but there are two children in the world, (my only sister's, and she is dead) whom I loved

²³Cooke, op. cit., p. 232.

²⁴New York Daily Tribune, September 24, 1859, p. 4, col. 6.

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and do love better than many women love their own, and from them I have long been separated; though not by death. I know in kind if not in degree what that poor mother suffered, and out of that knowledge you see I could speak. It is the old story 'They learn in suffering what they teach in song.' and often I think I would have liked less suffering and less song had I chosen my own life. But after & over all God is good: and it is well to know that...²⁵

In an overall estimate of Rose Terry's poetry, a brief comment is necessary on her translations. While the translations, mostly from Beranger's work, "La Mouche," "La Sylphide," "Le Juif Errant," and one or two others, show good workmanship they are of no special interest. Yet, beyond mastery of expression there is little else to be expected from translations.

Essentially Miss Terry's poetry was lyrical and derivative, much in the mood of Longfellow and Mrs. Browning. The originality credited to some of her poems was therefore in subject rather than in form for Rose Terry was no experimenter of verse; no Walt Whitman or Emily Dickinson. She seldom veered from traditional rhythmic measures. If her pieces differed from the usual offerings of the time it was because she was resourceful and skillful enough to give

²⁵Ms letter Abernethy Library, Middlebury, dated Winsted, December 20, 1879.

new and delightful treatment to old material. Although vitality was sometimes a merit, lack of clarity was more often a fault and this is particularly evidenced in the mistiness of thought of the poems, "Nemesis," and "Psyche to Eros."

It is difficult to assess the work of a minor poet. Arbitrarily, therefore, time and appeal--out of a welter of variables--have been chosen as criteria for evaluating Miss Terry's poetry.

America's geographical and commercial expansion during the latter half of the nineteenth century was phenomenal; so was the growth of its literary magazines. For a competent writer of verse and prose there were many opportunities and challenges, and the challenges came in meeting the changing demands of readers and editors. This Rose Terry was able to do successfully; she satisfied both. Her verse was published in the leading periodicals of the day: Graham's, Putnam's, the Atlantic, Harper's, and others, and her appeal lasted all the writing years of her life and beyond for even today this singer of minor-keyed songs continues to be anthologized.

CHAPTER TWO
AN EARLY MAGAZINIST

When romance was on the land in America, the short story had its greatest rise. During that period, the second quarter of the nineteenth century, Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne were writing their tales of imagination and psychological effect. Others, less gifted, were writing wholly sentimental sketches. Between the two were those few writing stories of a romantic and local color mixture. This last was the narrow field Rose Terry chose; it was the art she perfected.

Rose Terry's real contribution to American literature was in her short stories of local color rather than in her poetry. But just when she began to write these stories, or just when the first was published is not easy to determine.

Scarcity of biographical material and the lack of a bibliography resulted in misinformation about the dates of some of her earlier works. Pattee, for instance, said:

Before she was eighteen, therefore, she had made her way into the magazines, among other early work with a long romantic story, 'The Mormon's Wife,' in Graham's. Before she was twenty she had won for herself a place on the contributing staff of Putnam's.²⁶

²⁶Pattee, op. cit., p. 174.

According to Pattee "The Mormon's Wife" was published in Graham's not later than 1845 (Rose was born in 1827). Actually, however, it appeared, unsigned, ten years later (June 1855) and not in Graham's but in Putnam's.²⁷

Perhaps Pattee got his information from Harriet Prescott Spofford who said:

We knew but little about her in those days, for personalities had not grown to rule us. We only knew that she lived in Connecticut, and had already published a story, in the palmy days of 'Putnam's Monthly,' called 'The Mormon's Wife,'...²⁸

Continuing, Mrs. Spofford said: "Her first story written for 'Graham's Magazine,' at the age of eighteen encouraged her; but her dream was that of developing her powers of poetry."²⁹ Then several pages following, Mrs. Spofford put a slightly different cast to the statement about the "first story" by saying:

Ten years after writing her first story, 'The Mormon's Wife,' of which we have already spoken, was published and after that time Rose became a constant contributor to 'Putnam's Monthly' till it ceased, to 'Harper's,' the 'Atlantic,' and other periodicals as they rose.³⁰

²⁷ Putnam's, Vol. 7, June 1855, pp. 641-649.

²⁸ Harriet Prescott Spofford, A Little Book of Friends, Boston, Little Brown & Co., 1916, p. 175.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 190.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 194.

It is understandable that the foregoing would lead to hasty calculations about the date of "The Mormon's Wife," but actually Mrs. Spofford never mentioned the title of the "first story" Rose had written for Graham's when she was eighteen.

As recently as 1953 a critic, Floyd Stovall, perpetuated this misinformation about Rose Terry's contributions to Graham's for he wrote:

Many well-known writers modified their style to suit the editorial policy of the Atlantic, notably Rose Terry Cooke and Harriet Beecher Stowe. The former modified her romantic manner earlier adapted to the needs of Graham's and Harper's...³¹

As a matter of fact, Rose Terry's contributions to Graham's were poems only; there are no stories in that magazine that can be identified as hers. Obviously, therefore, Stover, like Pattee, was misled. But whatever Pattee's source (perhaps he had never read Mrs. Spofford's essay) just one piece of internal evidence is enough to rule out a publication date in or before 1845 for "The Mormon's Wife." In the story, mention is made of the removal of the Mormons from Illinois to Utah. The first settlement of Mormons did

³¹Floyd Stovall, "The Decline of Romantic Idealism, 1855-1871," Transitions in American Literary History, ed. by Harry Hayden Clark, Durham, North Carolina, Duke University Press, 1953, VI, p. 348.

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not reach the valley of the Great Salt Lake until July 24, 1847, and Miss Terry, two or more years earlier, could not have anticipated such a move.

As to the authorship of "The Mormon's Wife," there can be no doubt. It was written by Rose Terry. The style is unmistakably hers, the characters bear her stock names, and there is little likelihood she would have given the nod to anything printed about her that was not fact.³² After all, Rose Terry was in her day an important writer; she did not have to reach for credits. Besides, other authors, remembering the enforced anonymity of the early days of magazine writing, would hardly have sanctioned misplaced laurels.

"The Mormon's Wife" tells of Adeline Frazer, adopted daughter of Parson Field of Plainfield, Connecticut. Brought up a Congregationalist, Adeline or Ada as she was called, married loving but stubborn John Henderson who could not see his way clear to joining any church. They went to live in western New York and soon after John avowed himself a Mormon. For Ada who "longed and prayed for his conversion to a religious life...any religion, even one full of errors, seemed...better than the hardened and listless state of his

³²The Spofford essay was printed (1884) during Rose Terry's lifetime.

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mind."³³ Then there followed the flight of the Mormons from New York to Ohio, Missouri, Illinois and finally settlement in the Great Salt Lake City where after a short while John "sealed unto himself" two additional wives. Ada's death followed and not from consumption as her husband wrote to Parson Field but from a broken heart. In a letter sent before her death, Ada exhorted the Reverend Field to pray:

...I should not have married him; it was an unequal yoke, and I have borne the burden; but I loved him so much! Uncle Field, I did not keep myself from idols. Pray!...³⁴

This story, Rose Terry's first contribution to a major publication, proved how fitted for her trade she really was; it showed her sense of timing, or more probably her ability to satisfy the requests of magazine editors for current topics. The crusade in the states against Mormonism was at its height in the 1850's and for months before and after the publication of "The Mormon's Wife" in Putnam's, that magazine ran articles protesting the admission of Utah into the Union. Polygamy was the basis for denying Utah membership in the United States and polygamy was the warp and weft of Rose Terry's first story.

³³Putnam's, Vol. 7, June 1855, p. 645.

³⁴Ibid., p. 649.

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In all, eight stories of Rose Terry's were published in Putnam's during the period 1855 to 1857³⁵ and two of these eight--"Love" and "Uncle Josh"--were later included in one of her collections of short stories. These stories in Putnam's were all of a piece: the scene Connecticut; the characters country people, but with an occasional rebel going off to New York, "Indianny," or "the sea,"; the dialect Yankee; and the tone religious. There was a strong element of the sentimental in these sketches and no matter how leavened with humor there was also a forceful strain of social comments. For example in "Uncle Josh" country doctors and home-made remedies came in for quite an upbraiding. When Miss Eunice after ten years of marriage to Josh Crane began to show signs of failing health,

Duly she was blistered, plastered, and fomented; dosed with Brandreth's pills, mullein root in cider, tansy, burdock, bitter-sweet, catnip, and bone-set teas; sowbugs tickled into a ball, and swallowed alive; dried rattlesnakes' flesh; and the powder of a red squirrel, shut into a red-hot oven living, baked till powderable, and then put through that process in a mortar, and administered fasting.³⁶

³⁵The first series of Putnam's was published from 1853 to 1857.

³⁶Putnam's, Vol. 10, September 1857, p. 351.

Here it is interesting to note that Van Wyck Brooks in discussing the traces "older than mediaeval superstition" that could be found on the New England scene as late as the eighties used almost word for word the prescription set down by Miss Terry in 1857. Brooks said:

As late as the eighties, in Vermont, the body of a woman was exhumed to prevent her from killing her family, and remedies were still used in lonely households that recalled the pharmacopoeia of the Pilgrim fathers, mullein-root in cider, tansy, burdock, sowbugs tickled into a ball and swallowed before they uncurled again, dried rattlesnake flesh, the powder of a red squirrel, baked alive, pounded in a mortar and consumed while fasting.³⁷

To add credibility to her "medicament" Miss Terry said:

Dearly beloved, I am not improvising. All these, and sundry other and filthier medicaments, which I refrain from mentioning, did once, perhaps do still, abound in the islands of this Yankeedom, and slay their thousands yearly, as with the jawbone of an ass.³⁸

That country doctors believed in the efficacy of home-made compounds was attested by the conversation between Dr. Sawyer and Josh Crane:

³⁷Van Wyck Brooks, New England: Indian Summer 1865-1915, New York, E. P. Dutton, 1940, p. 85.

³⁸Putnam's, op. cit., p. 351.

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Dr. Sawyer said 'I think a portion of some sudorific febrifuge would probably allay Mrs. Crane's hectic.'

'Well, I expect it would,' confidently asserted Josh; 'can I get it to the store, doctor?'

'No, sir! it should be compounded in the family, Mr. Crane.'

'Dew tell!' responded Josh, rather crestfallen, but brightening up as the doctor went on to describe with all the polysyllables he could muster, the desirable fluid; at the end Josh burst out joyfully with,--'I sw-wan! t'ain't nothin' but lemonade with gumarabic in't!'

Dr. Sawyer gave him a look of contempt, and took his leave...³⁹

About some New England customs, Rose Terry had no illusions. She was aware for instance that for some people to be married and happy "Yankee fashion" meant to be happy "without comment or demonstration"; and while she was aware that the lack of affection and the paucity of recreation often closed early the door of life of many a farmer's wife, she was not altogether sentimental and feminine about it. Obviously she had some understanding for the man unable to meet such a problem for she wrote:

³⁹Ibid.

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Josh was as fond of her as he could be, but he did not know how to demonstrate it; all sorts of comforts she had, as far as food, and fire, and clothing went, but no recreation...So she drudged on uncomplainingly, and after ten years of patience and labor took to her bed...⁴⁰

It was in these early stories that Rose Terry made many direct and lasting appeals to the distaff side. New England women especially must have been grateful for her repeated telling of the Yankee custom of wives being much older than their husbands. As for the old maids they were well drawn and not likely to be forgotten. Betsey Clark, not at all as memorable as some of Miss Terry's later spinners, was nonetheless one of the first of the "disappointed."

A bound-out New England girl, Betsey who was neither smart, learned, nor fine, promised to wait six years until Stephen Perkins finished his studies for the ministry. However when Stephen became interested in Lavina Hart, the educated daughter of a minister, Betsey without being asked, released him. Later, alone in New York, Stephen was stricken with small pox. As soon as Betsey learned of

⁴⁰Ibid.

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Stephen's plight she prepared to go to him and to avoid talk she dressed as his old aunt but she need not have "...for New York people a'nt as tonguey as Westfield people. I guess there's too many of them."⁴¹ All aid for Stephen was to no avail and he never knew that Betsey was at his side to nurse and comfort him. Her small but lasting reward came when in delirium he cried out for her. Immediately after Stephen's death, Betsey got the dread disease, but she recovered and in time returned home. No one of her townspeople knew about her mission to New York until shortly before her death when she wrote out her story for a girl who was surprised to learn that Betsey had not been an "old maid forlorn."

At this time in her own life, Rose Terry was undoubtedly considered an old maid. She was thirty years of age and still living at home in Hartford with her parents, her sister Alice having a year earlier (1856) married Howard S. Collins of Collinsville, Connecticut. But a somewhat independent old maid Rose must have been for some years earlier, in 1848, her granduncle Daniel Wadsworth's sizeable fortune was distributed among his nieces, nephews, and their

⁴¹Putnam's, Vol. 8, August 1856, p. 131.

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children. Small individual yearly incomes and a house were the inheritances of Rose's family. It was probably this legacy (which for Rose finally amounted to a little over \$25,000) that rescued her from teaching and permitted her increased writing time. Incidentally a writer in those times could hardly have earned a living from magazine writing for payments were small. Putnam's when it began paid \$3.00 a page, Harper's met the prevailing scale, and the Atlantic, upon first publishing, averaged \$5 to \$6 a page. Yet in the 1850's writing for a lady or a gentleman was still considered an avocation, not a trade. Thus, Rose's returns must have been meagre, particularly from Putnam's.

From January 1853 (first issue) until December 1854 Putnam's was published by George Palmer Putnam who also published Washington Irving's work. Charles F. Briggs its editor was assisted by George William Curtis and the fiery Republican Parke Godwin. The magazine which included among its contributors Thoreau, Longfellow, Lowell, Cooper, and Melville, was "resolutely American," and "its stand for original and American contributions was intended and received as a stinging rebuke to the disgracefully successful Harper's with its 'borrowed' English serials."⁴²

⁴²Frank Luther Mott, A History of American Magazines 1850-1865, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, II, pp. 420-421.

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When Putnam withdrew as publisher in December 1854, Dix and Edwards took over until January 1857, and in that last year of the magazine's existence (first series) it had been published by Miller and Company. While able to maintain its high literary standard throughout the succession of publishers, Putnam's could not however withstand the national panic of 1857 and after September of that year it disappeared from the scene.

Naturally enough the mortality rate for periodicals was quite high during that financial crisis, although Harper's, which began in 1850, went on uninterruptedly. Harper's then owed its success to the "combination of popular English novels, variety of miscellany, the emotionally stirring Napoleon serial [its author the American John S. C. Abbott] and the unusual amount of illustration."⁴³

Though weighted with British authors, Harper's at that time also carried the work of some minor American writers including Caroline Chesebrough, Fitz-James O'Brien, George William Curtis, and Rose Terry. Miss Terry's contributions to Harper's began in 1856, just a year after her start with Putnam's. The first five of her stories in

⁴³Ibid., p. 390.

Harper's published over a two-year period were not of a local color nature as were her contributions to Putnam's. In fact these first of hers in Harper's were wholly sentimental and patterned after the other Victorian pieces in the magazine. Also, following the literary techniques of contemporary and even earlier authors, Rose wrote two of these stories in the form of letters, another she laced with admonitions (dear reader) and still two others she peppered with obtrusions of her literary knowledge.

"Martha Wyatt's Life," the first of Miss Terry's stories in Harper's was told through three letters. These letters which related Martha's love for Adam Brooke also revealed that this love was unrequited, thereby causing her health to fail by "slow and marked degrees." After Adam had tired of his friendship with Martha he went West and she accepted a teaching position in Tennessee only to return a year later utterly worn out. To an old schoolmate friend Martha's doctor confided:

...I cannot tell how or where, but she has some great suffering, and she is like ashes after a fire; of course we can not cure her. Poor child! poor child! She must have suffered very much!⁴⁴

⁴⁴Harper's, Vol. 12, May 1856, p. 768.

After Martha's death, which was brought about by languor and exhaustion, a letter arrived for her from Adam. When the letter was returned to him with merely the word "Dead" written across it, Adam knew only sorrow and remorse, lasting punishments for a villain. In this story the reader is not told why Adam did not return Martha's love, nor in another of these early stories, "My Visitation," did the reader learn the reason for the shattering of a great friendship between two girls. The unidentified heroine in this latter story refused an offer of marriage because she loved her friend Eleanor "too well to love or to marry." When the nameless heroine returned from the scene of her proposal, she learned she had been deceived by her friend Eleanor but the nature of the deception was not disclosed for the "record refuses to define for alien eyes what the trouble was."⁴⁵

This literary device of keeping secrets from the reader was in those days not at all uncommon; in fact it was standard equipment in supplying the story with a moral. Eleanor, for instance, after her act of deception, married, moved West and later died "troubled." It was only after

⁴⁵ Harper's, Vol. 17, July 1858, p. 236.

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repeated "visitations" to the heroine that the wrongdoer was able to seek and receive forgiveness, thus she obtained "rest" and provided the story with an object lesson.

Incidentally each visitation was usually preceded by the heroine's reading of a romantic novel:

I was deep in Shirley; it excited, it affected me; it is always to me like a brief and voluntary brain-fever to read that book. Jane Eyre is insanity for the time. Vilette is like the scarlet fever; it possesses, it chokes, flushes, racks you; it leaves you weak and in vague pain, apprehensive of some bad result; but it was Shirley I read, so forgetting everything.⁴⁶

To admonish readers about affairs of the heart Miss Terry used the rhetorical question. Of George Fanning, the protagonist in "The Assassin of Society," the man who caused women to droop and suffer under his experiments, Miss Terry asked:

Did he mean to educate and marry her? Never! He was only a philosophic inquirer. ...Where were her parents? One was busy with her household, the other with his merchandise...⁴⁷

Not all was heaviness in this story however for Miss Terry's subtle humor and light touch came through when

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 232.

⁴⁷ Harper's, Vol. 14, May 1857, p. 762.

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she said of one of the characters:

Louis Etoile no more believed in Platonic friendship than does any common-sense man or woman of this nineteenth century; it took rank in her rational mind with chivalry, Count Cagliostro, Puritanism, and astrology.⁴⁸

In the third year (1859) of her contributions to Harper's, Miss Terry's "Aceldama Sparks" was published. This was the first of her local color stories to appear in that magazine and it was one of her best, for years later it was reprinted in a collection of her stories, The Sphinx's Children. The story, sparked throughout by humor, is a faithful delineation of New England villagers of another day. Deacons often came in for a drubbing by Miss Terry and in this story she said of Deacon Ebenezer Sparks:

...he was a good man, and somewhere, a great way down behind his ribs, he had a kind heart; but it was overlaid with so much work, and caution, and prejudice, and starch, that it beat very feebly, almost invisibly, even to the angel that is supposed to look after such institutions, in every man, specially deacons.⁴⁹

Also as a good observer Miss Terry seized upon the prejudices of some members of the different Protestant

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 765.

⁴⁹ Harper's, Vol. 19, July 1859, p. 190.

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sects (she herself was a Congregationalist) and noted their narrowness. When Deacon Sparks learned that the new master at the academy was a "new school man" (the Deacon was an "old school man"--a Calvinist) he threatened to withdraw his son Aceldama and the reason as expressed to his wife:

...Why, they don't believe in the Catechism,...and they don't believe in total depravity; nor in reprobation; nor in--well, a good many things.⁵⁰

Later when the Deacon's wife implored her husband for help for her mother and stepfather who were about to lose their home, Miss Terry sent one of her salvos against the tight-fistedness of many New Englanders and said:

Powerful arguments all these were to the Deacon, whose secret soul was eaten into, wide and deep, by that money-rust that curses the blessings of nine-tenths of our Northern population, and makes the very foundation of their lives rotten and tremulous.⁵¹

Continuing her comments on the poor and aged couple, Miss Terry said:

So, in process of time, Mrs. and Mrs. Case [the Deacon's in-laws] were put up to auction--as we do put up poor people in New England and black people at the South--to be sold off to the lowest bidder...⁵²

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 193.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 196.

⁵² Ibid.

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During the early years of Harper's the identity of its contributors was not revealed, except for big names like Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope and others. But this practice of anonymity was not peculiar to Harper's; other magazines observed the same custom. As soon as author identification began in Harper's in 1860, Rose Terry in "Miss Muffet and the Spider" opened the floodgates and let pour all the shamefacedness she had obviously been experiencing in supplying the magazines with sentimental pieces. Likewise this story was used by her to spoof and belittle some of the day's literary poseurs:

...Milton has been expounded by the daring few who have studied his 'works of labor and skill,' even to the end thereof; and there are those who avow that they understand Browning. I have seen a man who said he could explain Emerson; but as he has since been taken to 'a lunatic arsenal,' I have my doubts; and I sympathize with him so far that I shall not blame any dear reader for being skeptical of the fact, when I declare myself to be the sole and only decipherer of that great but misunderstood work--the Melodies of Mother Goose.⁵³

Good-naturedly, but firmly and skilfully, Miss Terry assailed the writers, formula, and readers of such

⁵³Harper's, Vol. 20, May 1860, p. 764.

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stories as "Miss Muffet and the Spider." Of one of the day's most prolific writers of such fare she said:

...And all this means I am going to write a story...a story illustrative of a...prophecy that indicates to the philosophic mind the reign of that sensation periodical, the New York Dodger and with keen satire travesties the style of the great Urbanus Bobb, Sen.⁵⁴; not on that wise by any means, but a tale that shall, or should have for its motto the simply-pathetic stanza that tells us how

Muffet and so forth.⁵⁵ Little Miss

Then poking fun at one aspect of the recipe for these tales,

The best thing we know, speaking in the author-itative plural, of the Reverend Charles Augustus Harding (isn't that a lovely name?) is that he is our hero; for far be it from us to do such disrespect to the 'female sect' as to dare a story without that head and front.⁵⁶

And finally in a double-edged thrust at the "dear reader,"

...he brought her books to read that nobody but a strong-minded female in full possession of all Woman's Rights could have fathomed; he read Shakespeare

⁵⁴Obviously this referred to Sylvanus Cobb, Jr. of the New York Daily Ledger.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 766.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 768.

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aloud to her, and heard her say, 'Why, how funny!' at the tragic scenes, and 'How perfectly sweet!' at the comic ones,...he cut out poetry for her scrapbook, and meekly beheld the last gem of Tennyson pasted under a poetical shoe-advertisement, and the newest lyric of Kingsley sparkling beside a rhymed recipe for an apple-pudding!⁵⁷

The foregoing is to show Miss Terry's awareness of her position in this kind of writing; it is also meant to make abundantly clear that she, like many of her fellow craftsmen, sometimes wrote to satisfy demands. Also it is a reminder of the capriciousness of style.

Later in that same year 1860 began the appearance of Miss Terry's local color stories in Harper's, the best of which (to 1863) was "Lost on a Railway," a comedy-of-errors story about a New England villager, Mrs. Dodd, who journeyed from Massachusetts to New Albany, "Indianny." While traveling in circles, Mrs. Dodd met all kinds of people: gentle folk, snobs, jokesters, and those who confounded her even more. The best of the byplays was Mrs. Dodd's encounter with an Irish girl who was "sweet one minute and sassy the next." This picture of the Irish intruder in New England was typical fare of the time--the delineation of them as unlettered, unwashed, and unwanted.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 768.

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In the sixties Harper's like other American magazines tried to veer from literature about the Civil War, and to an extent this policy was successful. Of course partisanship did creep in as in Miss Terry's story "My Thanksgiving." Yet the war flavor in this was confined to mere mention of the hero's enlistment in the Sixteenth Connecticut Volunteers and the "thanksgiving" upon his return from the Battle of Antietam.

Affected by war prices, and the loss of Southern subscribers, Harper's experienced bad times during the War between the States. In fact, for a long while Fletcher Harper, the magazine's real editor, thought seriously of suspending the publication. But this magazine which had started as a "tender" to the regular book publishing business of the Harper Brothers went on as it had in previous crises. And it was Fletcher Harper who saw to that. He sparked the magazine with two new English serials: Armadale by Wilkie Collins, and Our Mutual Friend by Charles Dickens. Moreover, it was his policy which "had in view 'the people,' 'the plain people,' and not philosophers and poets,"⁵⁸ that sustained the magazine against newcomers in the field. With such a policy therefore Harper's could hardly have been troubled when the Atlantic appeared on the scene.

⁵⁸Mott, op. cit., p. 391.

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The Atlantic Monthly intended for the literati had in its beginning years only writings from authors in Boston and its environs. The New England triumverate (Longfellow, Holmes and Lowell) and Ralph Waldo Emerson and other Brahmins contributed to the first and many of the following issues of the Atlantic. And contrary to Elizabeth K. Halbeisen's statement that for contributions by women to the Atlantic "Mrs. Stowe led the way for Julia Ward Howe, Gail Hamilton, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, Rose Terry Cooke,... and others,"⁵⁹ Rose Terry was a contributor to the first issue of the magazine. As a matter of fact while the Atlantic was still in the blue-print stage, Francis Underwood its original planner approached Miss Terry for material. Her reply, which follows, included a somewhat coy appraisal of some of her own work:

Hartford, August 29th, 1857

Mr. F. H. Underwood

Dear Sir,--I regret that my absence from home prevented my receiving your letter of the 25th until today. I have been idle all summer, because I am not strong, and was forbidden to write, so I have nothing to offer you that is very fresh, or that I

⁵⁹Elizabeth K. Halbeisen, Harriet Prescott Spofford, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1935, p. 51.

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should choose to make a 'first appearance' in. I have a little sketch of New England life called 'Turkey Tracks,' not copied: a romance Mr. Curtis had accepted for Putnam, 'Maya, the child of the Kingdom,' which I have sent for: and a story partly written--'Rachel's Refusal:' any one of these I could send you within a week from date if you let me know directly. I hope by and by to do something better for you, when I shall have time and strength to fulfill other and previous engagements. Be so good as to give me a definite address for the MSS., and let me know your decision as soon as is quite convenient. Letters will most securely reach me directed to the care of Mr. H.W. Terry. With the best wishes for your success I remain

Yours very truly

Rose Terry

I ought perhaps to say that the romance is considered by one of my critical friends the best thing I have ever written. I cannot judge of these things myself.⁶⁰

This reference to poor health made by Miss Terry in her thirtieth year was to be made again and again throughout her life in letters to editors, publishers, and friends. But at that time in 1857 she obviously regained enough strength to write something "fresh" for Mr. Underwood for when the Atlantic made its debut it carried "Sally Parsons's Duty," the first of twenty-one stories which Miss Terry contributed to that magazine.

⁶⁰Bliss Perry, "The Editor Who Was Never the Editor," Atlantic, Vol. 100, November 1907, p. 669.

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A local-color story, "Sally Parsons's Duty" is laid in Westbury, Massachusetts in 1775. Sally Parsons refused George Tucker's proposal of marriage only because he was a Tory and she was of "revolutionary stuff." Sally in conversation with Long Snapps, an old sailor, asked if the trouble at Boston meant that the end of the world was coming,

Bless your pooty little figger-head,
Sally! I don't know as 'tis, but suthin'
nigh about us bad is a-comin. Them
Britishers is sot out for to hev us under
hatches, or else walk the plank; and
they're darned mistook, ef they think
men is a-goin' to be steered blind, and
can't blow up the cap'en no rate. There
a'n't no man in Ameriky but what's got
suthin to fight for, afore he'll gin in
to sech tyrints; and it'll come to
fightin', yet, afore long!⁶¹

To learn both sides of the story, George went into Lexington and hearing "how them critters sot up for to thieve away our stores, he got kinder riled at the hull crew...an' jined the milishy..."⁶² Badly wounded, George was nursed back to health by Sally. One day after their wedding he asked Sally if she would have taken care of him if he had been shot "on the side of the reg'lars." Sally

⁶¹Atlantic, Vol. I, November 1857, p. 25.

⁶²Ibid., p. 31.

looked at him and then looked away. "I 'xpect she'd 'a'done her dooty," said Long Snapps dryly; and Sally laughed."⁶³

As for the other stories mentioned by Miss Terry in her letter to Mr. Underwood, "Rachel's Refusal" was published at the same time as "Sally Parsons's Duty" (November 1857) but in another magazine, Harper's. "Turkey Tracks" appeared in the second number of the Atlantic and "Maya, the Princess," in the third issue. As for the latter thought by one of Miss Terry's friends to be best thing she had ever written, it is nothing but tedium. Maya, a princess born to Queen Lura of Larrierepensee, a land full of fairies, misused her gift of the spark and forever had to walk the earth. The reader was adjured "to pity and protect, revere that fretted mark of the crown that still consecrates to the awful solitude of sorrow Maya, the Child of the Kingdom!"⁶⁴

Another of Miss Terry's stories to appear in the first volume of the Atlantic was "Eben Jackson," considered by Whittier an "admirable rendering of the...Yankee dialect and everyway a good story!"⁶⁵

⁶³Ibid., p. 33.

⁶⁴Atlantic, Vol. 1, January 1858, p. 270.

⁶⁵Ms letter dated March 1, 1858, Amesbury, in the collection of Phelps Soule, Philadelphia.

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The story which began in a hospital in Texas overlooking the Gulf of Mexico concerned two men from Connecticut: a doctor from Hartford and Eben Jackson a dying man from Simsbury. In relating his life's story to the doctor, Eben mentioned that as a young man he wanted to marry Hetty Buel, also of Simsbury, and then move to the West and settle on government land. Here Miss Terry had Eben explain the plight of many young New England farmers,

I couldn't take the home farm; for 'twas such poor land, father could only jest make a live out on 't for him and me. Most of it was pastur', gravelly land, full of mullins and stones; the rest was principally woodsy,--not hickory, nor oak neither, but hemlock and white birches, that a'n't of no account for timber nor firing, 'longside of the other trees.⁶⁶

But Hetty refused Eben because she had to stay home to care for an aged grandmother. Eben then joined a whaling ship and traveled far and wide. His dying wish twenty years later was that Hetty know of his steadfast love. The doctor who was entrusted with Eben's last message was obviously the relative referred to in a letter which Miss Terry wrote from Hartford on November 26, 1857 to an unidentified editor.⁶⁷

⁶⁶Atlantic, Vol. 1, March 1858, p. 527.

⁶⁷Obviously this letter was intended for James Russell Lowell for he was the Atlantic's first editor (1857-1861)

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I send you the story I promised... I wish to premise that the scenery &c of my history is strictly reliable, for I have a cousin superintending the Hospital at Galveston, who has a great gift at description, of which I have availed myself verbatim; so if you like the story it is his, not mine...⁶⁸

That the reception of the Atlantic as a new magazine was of as much interest to its contributors as it was to its readers is also shown in this letter for Rose Terry said:

How very much 'our' magazine has improved since the first number; that one essay of Emerson's is worth a whole year's reading if it were all stupid beside,--'which it isn't;' I congratulate you heartily;...⁶⁹

Oddly enough, Emerson a few months later voiced some of his hopes about the magazine's improvement and the removal of its insularity for in January 1858 in a letter to Furness at Philadelphia he wrote:

I am glad if you like the Atlantic. We hope that it shall be better... I believe that we have not yet had a single correspondent from Philadelphia. I hope that we shall yet supply these deficiencies.⁷⁰

⁶⁸Ms letter Yale University Library.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Mott, op. cit., p. 498.

Obviously then some of the Atlantic's first contributors were more realistic in their approach to the magazine's shortcomings than were some latter-day commentators. Even Rose Terry herself would probably have been somewhat at variance with Frank Luther Mott who said:

The Atlantic Monthly, however, went counter to the general honeyed stickiness with its very first numbers. It published many of Rose Terry's forthright stories of New England life;...⁷¹

Indeed, this was not so for the Atlantic had until the early 70's its own share of sentimental stories including some by Rose Terry. Just as an example of the kind of lackadaisical story still being offered two years after the Atlantic was launched, there is Rose Terry's "The Ring Fetter," which appeared in the August 1859 number. This story set against a New England background tells of the fate of Mehitable or Hitty Hyde, daughter of Judge Hyde. Several years after her father's death, Hitty married the son of a tavern keeper, Abner Dimock, simply because she didn't have anybody else to love. Abner was more interested in the legacy of \$50,000 than in Hitty whose "soul was as guileless and as ignorant as a child's." Soon after their marriage Dimock began to abuse his wife and their child and while in flight from the authorities (Dimock had turned to counterfeiting) he was so annoyed with the child's sobbing

⁷¹Mott, op. cit., p. 173.

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that he tore it from its mother's arms and dropped it into the street. Then the following melodramatic scene unfurled:

'Now drive, Ben,' said he, in the same hoarse whisper,--'drive like the Devil'--for, as her child fell, Hitty shrieked with such a cry as only the heart of a mother could send out over a newly-murdered infant. Shriek on shriek, fast and loud and long, broke the slumbers of the village; nothing Abner could do, neither threat nor force, short of absolute murder, would avail,--and there was too much real estate remaining of Hyde property for Abner Dimock to spare his wife yet. Ben drove fiend-fashion; but before they passed the last house in the village, lights were glancing and windows grating as they were opened. Years after, I heard the story of such a midnight cry borne past sleeping houses with the quick rattle of wheels; but no one who heard it could give the right clue to its explanation, and it dried into a legend.⁷²

When Hitty tried to run away from her husband he reminded her that so long as she had the "little shiny fetter" on her finger she would never get away. Finally, however, with wrists padlocked, Hitty fled her captors and went into the night and "with one spring she dropped into the river, and its black waters rolled down to the sea."⁷³

To John Townsend Trowbridge for his statement which blanketed Miss Terry's stories "equally free from

⁷²Atlantic, Vol. 4, August 1859, p. 167.

⁷³Ibid., p. 170.

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lapses into impossible and strained situations..."⁷⁴ some rebuke would also be in order. Hardly believable for instance were the actions of "Roger Pierce" the man with two shadows; the one shadow "that follows us all in the light... the other that was forever hanging about him ready to chill with vague terror, or harden as with a frost either his fellows or himself."⁷⁵ Likewise taxing was the following long forced sentence from "Did I," a romance:

What if that sweeping star-seraph
that men call a comet, speeding through
heaven in its lonely splendor, with nitent
head, and pinions trailing with the very
swiftness and strength of its onward flight,
should shudder from its orbit, fling into
star-strewn space its calm and awful glory,
and go crashing down into the fury and
blackness of chaos, carrying with it wrecks
of horror, and the yelling fragments of
spheres no longer choral, but smitten with
the lawless stroke of a creature regardless
of its creator, an orb that made its
solitary fate, and carried across the order
and the law of God ruin and wreck embodied?⁷⁶

Of course Miss Terry was not the only writer at the time contributing some saccharine numbers to the Atlantic. Katherine Freeman Williams' story "Juanita" also appeared that same year and the discourses of this "pale,

⁷⁴John Townsend Trowbridge, "An Early Contributor's Recollections," Atlantic, Vol. 100, November 1907, p. 587.

⁷⁵Atlantic, Vol. 1, May 1858, p. 777.

⁷⁶Ibid., Vol. 3, February 1859, p. 218.

serious girl" were typical sentimental fare:

There came a time when I trembled before him. I could no longer walk calmly arm-in-arm with him under the linden-trees, hearkening joyfully. I dared not lift my eyes to his face; I turned pale with suppressed feeling, if he but spoke my name--Juanita--or took my hand in his for friendly greeting. What a hand it was!--so white, and soft, and shapely, yet so powerful! It was the right hand for him--a fair and delicate seeming, a cruel, hidden strength. When he spoke of the future my heart cried out against it; it was intolerable to me. In its bright triumphs I could have no part; thereto I could follow him only with my love and tears. The present alone was mine, and to that I passionately clung. For I never dreamed, you see, that he could love me.⁷⁷

But all the sentimental stories which appeared in the Atlantic were not written by those "damned scribbling women." Charles Reade's "Griffith Gaunt or Jealousy" appeared in the December 1865 issue and so did the last chapter of Donald G. Mitchell's "Dr. Johns." A sampling of the latter illustrates the mawkishness which apparently still had an appeal--even for "cultured" Atlantic readers.

Adele felt a tender gratitude toward Reuben, which it seemed to her the boisterous affection of the spinster could never approach. She

⁷⁷ Ibid., January 1859, p. 18.

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apprehended his spiritual perplexities more keenly than the austere aunt, and saw with what strange ferment his whole nature was vexed. Had he been a brother by blood, she could not have felt for him more warmly. And if she ever allowed herself to guess at a nearer tie, it was not to Miss Eliza that she would have named the guess,--not even, thus far, to herself. As yet there was a soft fulness in her heart that felt no wound in which her hope rankled. Whether Reuben was present or away, her songs rose, with a sweeter, a serener, and a loftier cheer than of old under the roof of the parsonage; and, as of old, the Doctor laid down his book and listened, as if an angel sang.⁷⁸

The Civil War, family problems, and her own illness undoubtedly accounted for Miss Terry's reduced literary output in the period 1861-1869. During that time she contributed to Harper's only four pieces (one poem and three stories), to the Atlantic but five pieces (two poems and three stories), and to publications for young people two stories and three poems.

The stories in the Atlantic for that period were all local color--as indeed were all her stories in major publications from 1861 on--with the Civil War threaded through two of these, "A Woman," and "Dely's Cow." The

⁷⁸Ibid., Vol. 16, December 1865, p. 721.

third story for the time, "Miss Lucinda," is most frequently cited as Miss Terry's best and it may be considered so for it is rich in humor and local color. More, it was Miss Lucinda who rang the death-knell for further sentimental offerings for in it Miss Terry said:

But if I apologize for a story that is nowise tragic, nor fitted to the fashion of these times, possibly somebody will say at its end that I should also have apologized for its subject, since it is as easy for an author to treat his readers to high themes as vulgar ones, and velvet can be thrown into a portrait as cheaply as calico; but of this apology I wash my hands. I believe nothing in place or circumstances makes romance. I have the same quick sympathy for Bidy's sorrows with Patrick that I have for the Empress of France and her august, but rather grim lord and master. I think words are often no harder to bear than 'a blue batting,' and I have a reverence for poor old maids as great as for the nine muses. Commonplace people are only commonplace from character, and no position affects that. So forgive me once more, patient reader, if I offer to you no tragedy in high life, no sentimental history of fashion and wealth, but only a story about a woman who could not be a heroine.⁷⁹

Upon the death of her clergyman father, Lucinda Jane Ann Manners "betook herself to pets" and at thirty-five

⁷⁹Ibid., Vol. 8, August 1861, p. 141.

was "the centre of a little world of her own,--hens, chickens, squirrels, cats, dogs, lambs, and sundry transient guests of stranger kind..."⁸⁰ With her animals, the kindest and best of friends, plenty of dish towels, and five pairs of scissors without which she could have no peace of mind, Miss Lucinda wore on happily toward the farther side of middle age. At forty-seven, however, great changes came into her life through the gift of a pig. The pig, like other of her pets, soon became tyrannical and one day burst his bonds and became rampant. Peace and the pig were restored by Monsieur Jean Leclerc, the town's dancing master and former valet-de-chambre. But during rescue operations Leclerc broke his leg and could not be moved from Miss Lucinda's home. In return for nursing care, Miss Lucinda was given French lessons by Leclerc whose "Parisian ear was tortured by the barbarous accent of Vermont."⁸¹

Although honestly not in love with her, Leclerc proposed marriage to Miss Lucinda and it was her response "Oh dear...but how can you like me?" which wrought a change in him and planted yet another seed of realism in Rose Terry's characters for she wrote:

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 143.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 156.

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...And if he really began to feel a true affection for her from the moment he perceived her humble and entire devotion to him, who shall blame him? Not I. If we were all heroes, who would be valet-de-chambre?...⁸²

Just as in "Miss Lucinda" Rose Terry tried to keep her readers informed about changes in her style of writing, just as in "Miss Muffet" she tried to make known to them her disavowal of the sentimental, so also in "The Memorial of A. B., or Matilda Muffin" did she try to make them realize that not every poem or short story an author wrote was autobiographical. She said:

...Because I write the anguish and suffering of an elderly widow with a drunken husband, am I therefore meek and of middle age, the slave of a rum-jug? I have heard of myself successively as figuring in the character of a strong-minded, self-denying Yankee girl, --a broken-hearted Georgia beauty,--a fairy princess,--a consumptive school mistress,--a young woman dying of the perfidy of her lover,--a mysterious widow; and I daily expect to hear that a caterpillar which figured as hero in one of my tales was an allegory of myself and that a cat mentioned in 'The New Tobias' is a travesty of my heart-experience.⁸³

To some this adjuring may have seemed a labor of love on Miss Terry's part for it was not until 1862 (a year

⁸²Ibid., p. 158.

⁸³Ibid., Vol. 5, February 1860, p. 190.

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after the appearance of "The Memorial of A. B.") that Atlantic poems and short stories were signed by their authors. Nonetheless the then unidentified Miss Terry attempted the herculean task of dissuading readers from the age-old romantic proclivity of seeing the author's life revealed in every other line of his writing. It is well known that the fault of reading into things has often extended from readers to researchers and probably the latter are stayed from the temptation only by the existence of semi-official documents and letters. For instance letters written by Rose Terry during the sixties are the only evidence of her activities and whereabouts during that the most veiled period of her life. Obviously the ill health which beset her in 1857 intensified in the next few years and curtailed her writing for in a letter written January 27, 1862, Miss Terry said to the editors of the Atlantic:

My health has been so uncommonly miserable in the last year that I could not write and I cannot depend on it at any time so far as to promise the finishing of anything which interferes with work excessively...⁸⁴

A year and a half later in another letter to the editor of the Atlantic written from Hartford, Rose Terry

⁸⁴Ms letter Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery.

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mentioned that she had "been away from home on a journey, so that my letters could not be sent to me..."⁸⁵ Perhaps family business necessitated this trip away from home; more likely however illness was the cause. At any rate both matters are referred to in a letter to Mr. J. T. Fields which Rose Terry wrote from Chatham [Massachusetts] on October 28, 1864:

I was very sorry not to see you when you were in Hartford...but I have been ill, and out of town, and as soon as I was well enough to travel I was obliged to come away to this quiet little place, for the rest I have needed a long time...I have been hoping all summer to send you something, but my home cares have been so incessant and imperative, and I have been so continuously tired that I could not write,-- not even letters. I have left everything now because it became evident that if I did not rest and recover I could not expect to live through the winter, always a time of struggling and oppressed vitality for me, and I am so necessary at home that I must try to live. If I can write here, I will...The manual labor of writing I do not care for, it is the excitement that exhausts me...⁸⁶

That Miss Terry's illness was real to her cannot be denied; that the gravity of it was exaggerated however is attested in her continued complaints for the next twenty-

⁸⁵Ms letter Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery
⁸⁶Ibid.

eight years. But for this she should not be censured. After all, bad health was one of the ambiguities of the Victorian age.

As to why she was needed at home speculation leads to the possibility that for a long time her mother needed unusual care either away from or at home. This is suggested by the absence of any mention of Rose's mother in Higginson's visit to the Terry home in Hartford:

He called upon Rose Terry Cooke at Hartford, when she was still unknown, living in a sort of moated grange, a mile out of town, an old brick house with an air of decay, where she dwelt with an old grey father.⁸⁷

Again this supposition comes through Harriet Prescott Spofford who said:

She had been described to me as living with her stately old father in a stately old brick house in Hartford...⁸⁸

Just how or where Rose's mother spent the last decade of her life cannot be established, but that she was still living while Rose and her father were Hartford residents cannot be doubted for Mrs. Henry Wadsworth Terry

⁸⁷Brooks, op. cit., p. 133.

⁸⁸Spofford, op. cit., pp. 145-6.

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died January 15, 1872, which was several years after Rose had left Hartford and at least two years after the last known Hartford address for Rose's father.⁸⁹

It may be that when she left Hartford Mrs. Terry went to live in Collinsville, Connecticut with her other daughter Alice Collins. At any rate that is where Rose went to live after the Civil War for a letter which Miss Terry wrote to J. T. Fields March 4, 1866 requests that mail be sent to her in care of H. S. Collins in Collinsville. It was from that same address in Collinsville three years later that Rose wrote this unusually interesting letter to F. H. Underwood:

Your letter of October 24 only reached me yesterday, and I am afraid you have thought me uncivil.

I am very glad to have the opportunity of doing even so little a thing for you, to whom I owe so much kindness and consideration during our mutual engagements with the old Atlantic, which after all seems to me, far better than the new! I congratulate you on having drifted out of literature, it is weariness to the flesh and small satisfaction to the spirit...⁹⁰

⁸⁹Geer's Hartford City Directory for 1870 shows that Henry Terry was boarding with a relative in that city.

⁹⁰Ms letter Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery.

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This somewhat bitter comment about the Atlantic may have stemmed from the fact that it had been four years since Rose Terry had had her last piece published in that magazine.

Another problem at the time must have been finances. From 1865 to 1869 she had published only three pieces (two of them poems). Such returns even with her own small unearned income would hardly have supported her and the family that depended on her. Thus in many ways life must have been bleak for Rose Terry during those years, but whether known to her or not it was artistically her greatest period of steady and unusual growth. Earlier in the decade (1861) a volume of her collected poems was published and dedicated to Charles A. Dana. Also in that same year by forswearing heroines and heroes in the short story "Miss Lucinda" she established herself as a pioneer of realism. Through local color stories Rose Terry moved away from extravagance and the majority into the rivulet of the real and the true.

It is apparent, therefore, that in the years immediately preceding the Civil War, the American short story became less imitative of the European, and Rose Terry, through her local color stories in major literary magazines, helped in this significant change.

CHAPTER THREE
THE WINSTED YEARS

Expansion and productiveness were the keynotes of American life after the Civil War. The rise in magazine publishing was phenomenal, and the work of Rose Terry was abundant and mature.

From an examination of the middle years of Rose Terry's life, however, it is apparent that from time to time, unwittingly or not, she used her family and her illnesses as reasons for not writing more than she did. This is not to discount the importance of nor the emotion bound up in private matters, rather it is to show that the naturalness of using people and situations as excuses for personal failings was something Miss Terry could or would not admit to. Particularly is this manifest when considering some of the reasons she gave for not being able to write. For instance in a letter to Mr. William Hayes Ward, managing editor of the Independent she said:

West Winsted
April 20, 1872

My dear Mr. Ward

I will write you a summer story as soon as I can. I have promised two, and begun neither! but when they are done I will do as well as I can for you. I do not mean to promise anything positively

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for I am not well enough. Indeed I am now slowly getting over a severe illness, and I can't say definitely when I will send you what you want, or I would. I am glad you liked 'Katy' and her tribe.

Yours very truly

Rose Terry⁹¹

It seems hardly coincidental therefore that just five days after this letter there began an upsurge in Miss Terry's literary output for that year. Obviously Mr. Ward's prodding interest had quite a salutary effect for Rose's recovery from this "severe illness" (which incidentally may have resulted from her mother's death on January 15, 1872) was remarkably rapid, so rapid in fact that of the twenty-six pieces of hers which were published that year, the bulk of them (20) appeared after the writing of the letter to Mr. Ward.

In 1870 when Rose Terry first became a contributor to the Independent, this religious weekly which was published in New York had already been in existence about a quarter of a century. Although founded to foster Congregationalism, the Independent was not devoted to religious

⁹¹Ms letter Pierpont Morgan Library.

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intelligence only. Its pages carried national and political issues; it was strongly abolitionist, and it always favored the Republicans. Besides a good coverage of general events, the Independent's columns contained articles by well known persons. More than all this however it paid well, particularly for poetry. Among the English poets represented were Mrs. Browning, Tennyson, Kingsley, Swinburne, Dobson, and Stevenson. The Americans included Longfellow, Bryant, Holmes, the Cary Sisters and Rose Terry.

In addition to poetry, Rose Terry contributed short stories to the Independent and while the story element was good, nevertheless, with few exceptions, the sketches themselves were nothing more than exercises in didacticism. Of the many pieces Miss Terry contributed to the Independent "An Old Fashioned Thanksgiving" is one of the best. It is slow moving, but it is a good delineation of the customs, problems, and privations of a large and poor New England farm family in the days of the Civil War. When relating the severities of New England winters and the ensuing hardships of the people, Miss Terry veered from the moralistic and with some understanding said:

Hygienics were an unforeseen
mystery to the people of that day.
They did not know that nourishing
food is as good for the brain as for

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the muscles. They lived on potatoes, beets, beans, with now and then a bit of salt pork or beef boiled in the pot with the rest; and their hearts failed, as their flesh did, with this sodden and monotonous diet.⁹²

Nearer to the formula of Miss Terry's offerings in the Independent was "Katy's Wedding Gown," (the Katy liked by Mr. Ward). Usually the plots and characters of these stories had their counterparts in the life of the New England villagers of the time and frequently the problems that devolved upon the main characters--widows and old maids --were solved by personal sacrifice. The slight variation here was that Katy was a bit younger than the average self-less heroine.

When Katy was only a child her father "hoping that less labor and change of air might be better for his wife than any of the doctor's drugs..."⁹³ went to the enticing West in search of work. (This story, like "Uncle Josh," and "Ann Potter's Lesson" showed how the barrenness of land and the severity of climate drained off many of New England's rural men to other sections of the country). His

⁹²Rose Terry, "An Old Fashioned Thanksgiving," The Independent, Vol. 23, June 15, 1871, pp. 2-3.

⁹³Ibid.

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mission unsuccessful, Katy's father weakened and died. To help support the family, Katy's mother took in boarders and Katy herself went to work in a local mill where she met and was proposed to by Sam Tucker whom she accepted. When her young sister was felled by sickness and the family told that the child's recovery hinged upon her being wheeled outdoors in a "kerridge," the opportunity for heroism was presented. Using her savings of eight dollars, Katy bought the carriage and forfeited the purchase of material for her wedding gown.

From 1871 to the last year of her life in 1892, Rose Terry was a regular contributor to the Independent. At the same time she was a contributor to another religious weekly, The Christian Union, or The Outlook as it was later called. Like the Independent, the Christian Union was more literary than religious. A success from its start in 1870, the Christian Union had many notables supplying material. As a matter of fact, Helen Hunt Jackson's Ramona was first serialized in the Christian Union's columns, and Louisa M. Alcott, Thomas W. Higginson, and a long list of American and English writers contributed feature material.

The best of Miss Terry's stories in the Christian Union was her first offering, "Miss Plumy Moxon's Cat." Plumy was an old maid who,

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...unlike most of her kind, however did not live with anybody. She was not the over-worked cousin, or the unwelcome but endured poor relation, anywhere. She was just a solitary little woman, forty years old, with a little money and a little house...⁹⁴

Whenever Plumy was about to be taken in by an unscrupulous person, Beauty, her wise and wonderful cat saved the day. This story interspersed with homely details and humor was far and away the gayest of Miss Terry's pieces in the Christian Union. As for the others they were all stories with a moral; stories like "A Tramp," and "John Carter's Sin," whose lead characters found redemption through the commonplace.

While potboilers for religious weeklies made up the bulk of Miss Terry's writings in the early seventies, significant pieces were still being written by her for other publications. The Galaxy, for one, carried several of her stories which were later reprinted in a single volume. Published for the first time in May 1856 in New York, the Galaxy lasted twelve years, during which time Miss Terry contributed fiction and verse to it. Among other writers of poetry who contributed to this magazine were Whitman,

⁹⁴Terry, "Miss Plumy Moxon's Cat," The Christian Union, Vol. 5, June 5, 1872, p. 487.

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Lanier, Stedman, and Taylor. Distinctively New England poets did not appear in the columns of the Galaxy probably because this magazine was "born of a divine discontent with the Atlantic Monthly..."⁹⁵

With such writers as Henry James, W. C. Brownell, John Burroughs, and Brander Matthews, literary criticism and fiction were the magazine's outstanding features. And it was in the January 1875 issue that Miss Terry's much anthologized "Too Late" first appeared. This story like many of her others had its basis in actuality.⁹⁶ The incidents concern Hannah Blair, the strong and serene daughter of David and Thankful Blair. On the day she was to be married Hannah received a letter, the contents of which obviously decided her against marrying Charles Mayhew. All pleas by him for a hearing went unanswered and he left town that day never to return. Several years later Hannah, by that time married to Josiah Maxwell, saw an item in the newspaper which caused her to faint. Revived by her daughter Dolly, the aging woman told of her true love, Charley. Although she did not tell

⁹⁵The Nation, Vol. 2, April 26, 1866, p. 534.

⁹⁶The facts in this story parallel those in the life of Sarah McEwen (1775-1837) who married Solomon Rockwell (1764-1838), both of Winsted, Connecticut.

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the contents of the letter Hannah did admit that it told of "certain lapses from virtue on the part of Charles Mayhew," which were genuine; she could tell they were genuine from the handwriting and the detailed circumstances. When she upbraided herself and said she might have saved Charley from his death as a lonely drunken pauper, Dolly tried to comfort her by saying, "...Try to believe it was all for the best--do, dear."⁹⁷

That a weak ending was sometime the main reason for a story's not quite coming off is evidenced in "Too Late!" In its original form in the Galaxy, the story's last lines were:

"Dear, good mother, don't feel so--don't! You meant right. Try to forgive yourself. If you made a mistake then, try to forget it now. Try to believe it was all for the best--do, dear."⁹⁸

In the single volume The Sphinx's Children and Other Peoples in which this story later appeared, there was another line added which read:

"...but all she got for an answer was--'Dolly, it is too late!'"⁹⁹

⁹⁷Cooke, "Too Late," The Galaxy, Vol. 19, January 1875, p. 43.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Cooke, The Sphinx's Children and Other Peoples, Boston, Ticknor, 1886, p. 256.

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Although in this instance the addition of just one line made for a more forceful ending, there is no reason to believe that frequent editorial alterations could have wrought significant changes in other of Rose Terry's stories. Indeed, no amount of overhauling could save "A Hard Lesson" from the impossible, for certainly it was proof that Rose did not save all her potboilers for religious weeklies. Added to the incredulousness of this story's being published at all is the fact that it too was reprinted in the Sphinx's Children and Other Peoples.¹⁰⁰

Originally "A Hard Lesson" appeared in The Continent, a literary magazine that was short-lived.¹⁰¹ Intended as an object lesson in Negro-white relationships, the story was overdrawn and manufactured. Its scene shifted from Louisiana to northern United States then to Canada and finally back to New Orleans, and its plot involved Judge Louis Fontaine's search of a cure for his strange illness--black spots that were spreading to all areas of his body. As the judge fled from one state to another, the spots spread and intensified. Not until he was homeward bound did

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ The Continent was published from February 15, 1882 to August 13, 1884.

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he realize that a change was taking place in his color and even then the disclosure came through another person, the train conductor who ousted him from a first-class seat. When home again, the judge secluded himself from his children and from his wife who was "revolted." For himself Louis Fontaine knew only humiliation and rage:

Not even this personal convulsion of nature opened Louis Fontaine's heart to perceive the woes and wrongs of bondage and bondsmen; he could only feel his own.¹⁰²

While Judge Fontaine was in seclusion, Lincoln was elected and thereafter the Civil War began. The judge who enlisted as a body servant to his doctor was shot through the lungs, the bullet coming from his step-brother's rifle.

For Stephen [the judge's step-brother, a Negro] ...had risen at the call of his brethern, and Cain met Cain on the red field of war!

Yet it was Stephen who picked up Louis from the ground where he fell, and carried him to the surgeon's tent!

The doctor shook his head as he lifted it from the examination. 'No hope! but he deserved it for fighting against his race,' he said.

¹⁰²The Continent, Vol. 5, June 1884, p. 688.

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'He is a white man, Doctor,' answered Stephen, sadly; 'born white, blackened by what you doctors call disease, and I call God. He was put into our place to see what was the curse of the slave; but after all, you see that he did not learn it.'

'...do not be too harsh in your judgment' said the doctor. 'Who did sin, this man or his parents that he should be born blind?'¹⁰³

No amount of explanation can or should be offered for the quality of this story. It is simple, contrived and badly written. What is peculiar however is the overall foreignness of it when compared with other of Rose Terry's pieces. When this story was published in 1884, Miss Terry had been writing stories for over thirty years; stories that in the main covered the New England area and its people. To go so far afield--territory and subject wise--naturally leads to speculation about Miss Terry's reason for writing it at all.

Maybe the answer was in her dipping into a store of rejects and coming up with an old chestnut to fan the flames of a dying magazine. The records show that The Continent breathed its last in August 1884. More likely however it had to do with a plan by The Continent to increase its circulation. A prize of \$1,000 was offered to a

¹⁰³Ibid.

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reader who guessed the author of twenty or more stories published anonymously under the title "Too True for Fiction." The authors of some of the stories included Helen Jackson, Edward Everett Hale, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Sara Orne Jewett, Edgar Fawcett and Rose Terry Cooke.

At any rate "A Hard Lesson" was just another potboiler. One of the many written to stave off the economic paralysis slowly engulfing Rose Terry and her husband Rollin H. Cooke. From the time of their marriage in 1873, Rose was seldom without pen in hand. Cumulative evidence points to her being the chief support of her husband and his family. To some of her friends and relatives this role was not at all surprising; it was part and parcel of an "unwise" marriage.

On April 16, 1873 Rose Terry married Rollin H. Cooke a bank clerk of Winsted, Connecticut. At that time Mr. Cooke, a widower with two young daughters, was thirty years of age; Rose Terry was forty-six. To Miss Terry's family this marriage was a misalliance for Rollin Cooke was thought "not to be Rose's equal in any way."¹⁰⁴ Although the descendant of an old New England family, Rollin Cooke

¹⁰⁴Statement Miss Lucy Watkinson, West Hartford, Connecticut, personal interview, June 18, 1952.

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had neither prestige nor money. Both his father and his uncle failed in their small manufacturing business in Collinsville, Connecticut, and throughout his own life Rollin changed from one occupation to another: bank clerk, factory representative, realtor-banker, and genealogist.

As to how or when Rose Terry and Rollin Cooke came to know each other, one source mentions their original meeting in a boarding house and Mr. Cooke's circumstances so exciting Rose's pity "that pity which is akin to love, that finally she yielded to his persuasion and became his wife..."¹⁰⁵ Another version has it that as a great reader of short stories, Rollin Cooke made himself known to the author Miss Terry, a resident in the town of Winsted where he was employed as a bank cashier and thus their romance began.¹⁰⁶

Whatever the circumstances of their meeting, both Rose and Rollin Cooke were apparently happy in their marriage. At least there is no statement by either which mentions dislike for the other. For that matter though, neither is there a statement available which mentions love

¹⁰⁵Spofford, op. cit., p. 146.

¹⁰⁶Sunday Morning Call, Pittsfield, Mass., March 15, 1891, p. 1.

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for the other. Nevertheless, for Rose this union with Rollin alienated her from her family, mulcted her of sums she could ill-afford (unsound investments made by her father-in-law), and debilitated her by worry and overwork. Despite all these travails, Rose Terry Cooke was a loyal and devoted wife. She was also a New Englander who would not admit to a misstep.

To the observer, Rollin Cooke's greatest limitation seemed to be his inability to be a provider. His work was never suitable and his faculty for dissipating funds was unbounded. Even from the beginning of his marriage to Rose he failed in his role as head of the house. For instance, finding a permanent home for his family obviously was too big a task for him. "About Our House" by Rose Terry Cooke tells of the family's migration from one temporary dwelling to another. At first they lived in an opera house. There the disadvantage of three people (the third person was one of Mr. Cooke's daughters by his first marriage) living in two rooms and having to make daily sallies for food outweighed the musical privileges. Their home for the next three years was a country hotel and that becoming unbearable "...I exerted myself...to find a place where we might cease to board and begin to live."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷Cooke, "About Our House," The Independent, Vol. 37, February 12, 1885, p. 218.

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After enduring one other temporary arrangement, Rose, to the astonishment of her husband, bought an old house. It was she who cleared it of debris; it was she who replastered its walls; and it was she who decorated it.

I rummaged the stock in trade
of a kindly dealer for hours before
I was suited...You who have the al-
mighty dollar always at hand, and can
buy whatever suits your taste or
fancy, never can know the dear delight
of pleasing eye and purse both, after
a long struggle to make these ends
meet; the reward awaiting the diligence
of the woman who has both to count and
earn her pennies.¹⁰⁸

Rollin Cooke's laziness or disinterest in the role of homemaker does not of course prove his inability as a family provider. It does however show that he was overwhelmed by his wife's capabilities and actions. It may also indicate that he preferred her mature judgment to his own, that he enjoyed being submissive. After all, he was sixteen years her junior. In any case there is no evidence that Rollin Cooke ever initiated or fulfilled plans for his family's welfare. Obviously he was not allowed or able to. His changing from one type of employment to another (reference is made in "About Our House" to his interest in a

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 219.

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factory, a shift from his job as a bank cashier) manifests his unsettledness and attests his search for status. Certainly his being married to an older woman, a woman who had a genuine capacity for managing things and people must have made for many frustrations. And Rose Terry Cooke, despite her chronic complainings of poor health apparently had just the necessary stamina to run her home, her husband, and her work jointly and efficiently. The death of her mother in 1872 and her father in 1874 undoubtedly reduced some of Rose's own family problems, thus allowing for a concentration of energy for matters in her married life. So far as the last remaining member of her immediate family is concerned, there is nothing known about Rose's relations with her married sister Alice Terry Collins after 1871.

From 1866 through 1871 Rose Terry wrote letters from her sister's home in Collinsville, Connecticut. Then in 1872, just two months after her mother's death, Rose's letters were written from Winsted, Connecticut. At any rate Rose Terry Cooke did not, as Perry D. Westbrook suggests, go home to take care of her nieces after the death of their mother. Mr. Westbrook's statement is at once confusing and inaccurate. He writes:

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Later she returned home to take care for [sic] her dead sister's children.¹⁰⁹

Just what home Mr. Westbrook means is not clear for the records show that Rose's sister, Alice Terry Collins, died on October 22, 1877, or four years after Rose's marriage, and Rose with her husband (and one stepdaughter) lived in Winsted, Connecticut from the time of her marriage in 1873 to the date of her departure for Pittsfield, Massachusetts in 1887. Thus this evidence precludes any possibility that after leaving her sister's home in Collinsville in 1871, Rose ever returned there to resume residence of any kind. What is more, just two years after her sister's death, Rose in a letter dated December 20, 1879 written from Winsted to the poet Julia Dorr, revealed a long, enforced estrangement from her nieces,

...but there are two children
in the world, (my only sister's,
and she is dead) whom I loved and
do love better than many women love
their own, and from them I have long
been separated; though not by death.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹Perry D. Westbrook, Acres of Flint, Washington, D. C., Scarecrow Press, 1951, p. 91.

¹¹⁰Ms letter Abernethy Library of American Literature, Middlebury College, Vermont.

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Obviously Rose's separation from her nieces had been brought about by their father, for letters written by Rose several years later disclose a long-standing rupture between herself and her brother-in-law.

Thus with gradual loss of family and with attendant freedom from responsibilities, Rose Terry Cooke turned much of her attention and energy to writing. And at that time (the middle and late seventies) magazine writing was particularly favored for more and more periodicals were springing up. To some dozen or more publications Rose was a regular contributor and to at least another half dozen she submitted the occasional piece. In fact many of her offerings were to be found in an ever widening list of magazines including Lippincott's, Scribner's, and Sunday Afternoon, later called Good Company. Of the five stories published in this latter magazine three ("Doom and Dan," "Double Thanksgiving" and "Jericho Jim") were later reprinted in a collection of her short stories.

Incidentally the first of four volumes of Mrs. Cooke's short stories, Somebody's Neighbors, was published first in 1881 by the Boston firm of James R. Osgood and Company. This book dedicated to John Greenleaf Whittier contained twelve stories, of which six appeared originally

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in Harper's, four in the Atlantic, one in the Galaxy, and another in Putnam's. So popular was this collection that about a decade later it was printed again and at that time by Houghton Mifflin.

Five of this volume's selections have already been considered in Chapter Two of this study and of the remaining seven it is difficult to choose for discussion the more truly representative of Mrs. Cooke's best writing. From correspondence however comes an interesting sidelight on one of the stories "Freedom Wheeler's Controversy with Providence." This story which appeared in the July 1877 issue of the Atlantic Monthly had been offered first to Harper's, but they rejected it. For this refusal editor H. M. Alden assumed responsibility and lasting regret. In a letter to Mrs. Cooke dated May 22, 1882 he said:

...I once made a mistake in declining a story of yours, 'Deacon Strong's Fight with Providence,'...An editor's judgment is not infallible.¹¹¹

That Mr. Alden's regret was not idle is shown in a communication to another writer Miss Amelie Rives:

My dear Miss Rives,--In an editorial experience of more than twenty years there have been only two cases in which

¹¹¹Ms letter Library of Congress.

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I have regretted the non-acceptance of a contribution upon seeing it in print in another magazine. One of these was that of a strong New England story by Rose Terry Cooke, declined by me and afterward published in the Atlantic Monthly, 'Elder Strong's Controversy with Providence,' I believe, was the title. I read it carefully, but it seemed to me that the New England character sketch had been overdone, and I gave the preference therefore to sketches of a more novel character. But I made a mistake, the strength of the sketch in whatever field should have determined my decision in its favor...¹¹²

The story of Freedom Wheeler is the story of Freedom's "wrestle with Providence" for a second son. One of the customs in Freedom's family was to name the first son Shearjashub and the second, Freedom. Following the arrival of their first child, a boy, three daughters were born to Lowly and Freedom Wheeler. Eager to have a son named after him, angry because he had so many daughters--and daughters could never work hard enough--Freedom railed against Providence. On the day a second son was born, both the child and its mother died. Six months later Freedom remarried. His second wife's name was Melinda and she was every inch her husband's match. When their first child was born, Melinda

¹¹²J. Henry Harper, The House of Harper, New York, Harper & Bros., 1912, p. 561.

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ignored custom and had this the second of Freedom's sons named Tyagustus Bassett. After the birth and immediate death of yet another son, Freedom realized his wilfulness and he relented and softened toward everyone. Several years later another son was born and Freedom "...thanked God with shame and trembling for this undeserved mercy." That son was named Freedom.

Most of Mrs. Cooke's memorable male characters were, like Freedom Wheeler, New England farmers, masterful, strong-willed, and "dreadful near." And to the hasty examiner such accounts sometimes made for grim reading. Yet not one of these stories was without its light touch as in the Freedom Wheeler story when one of Freedom's daughters was named Chimera Una Velda, Mrs. Cooke obtruded to say:

Dear Reader, give me no credit for imagination here. These are actual names registered on church records and tombstones, with sundry others of the like soil, such as Secretia, Luella, Lorilla, Alloraila, Lue, Plumy, Antha, Loruhama, Lophelia, Bethursda, and a host more.¹¹³

Natural humor is likewise evoked in "Cal Culver and the Devil" in one of the conversations between Cal and his friend Jim. In discussing his possible marriage to

¹¹³Cooke, Somebody's Neighbors, Boston, J. R. Osgood & Co., 1881, p. 366.

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Pollythia Bangs, Cal said to his friend Jim:

'Ef she wants to hetchel me, she kin try it on; but she'd better let the old woman [Cal's mother] alone. 'Twon't be for long anyway.'

'Don't you reckon on that,' put in the experienced Jim. 'Old women last for ever'n'ever. They don't know how to die when they git started. Lordy! look at Granny. She's been prayed for more times in meetin'. She's been dangerous forty times since I kin remember; but she hops up every time like a pa'tridge trap; and she's ninety come July...

'Well, what do ye keep hevin' her prayed for?' coolly suggested Cal.¹¹⁴

Women too were used to carry off Mrs. Cooke's penetrating humor. It was Polly Mariner, for instance, a character in several of these New England tales, who was the exponent of much of Mrs. Cooke's homely wit. Polly's was the kind of self-styled drollery with which some readers could identify themselves. Once, having announced her intention to learn a trade, Polly had to reckon with a neighbor's opinion:

'The land's sake!' and up went Mrs. Perkins's eyes. 'Learn a trade! well, I never! 'n' here you've had a real good edication, 'n' might jest as well get a good deestrick school as not...

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 163.

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I ha'n't had no great schoolin',
Miss Perkins, though I s'pose I could
make shift to knock what little I had
into children's heads, but keep school
I never will...You don't never suit;
if you're strict, then folks sez you're
cruel and bad dispositioned; if you're
easy, an jest get along, then you're
slack and lazy. I'd jest as willin'ly
be a minister's wife as a schoolma'am,
an' I can't say no more'n that...¹¹⁵

Thus, while the stories in this first volume of collected stories published in 1881 are among Mrs. Cooke's best, they do not represent the peak in her writing for some especially good pieces were to appear in the next decade.

Root-Bound, the second volume of Mrs. Cooke's collected stories was published in Boston in 1885 by the Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society. The twenty-one sketches in this book had been previously published separately in the Congregationalist, the Christian Union, the Independent, and possibly some other religious periodicals. More interesting than the contents of the volume itself are the circumstances surrounding its publication. In a letter dated November 4, 1885 written from Winsted, Mrs. Cooke said to the publisher Benjamin Holt Ticknor:

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 231.

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...I regret to say that the Congregational Publishing Society (which my friend Miss Elizabeth Hawes calls the Cormorant P.S.!) are about to reprint most of the Congregationalist stories in a volume. I say I regret it, for my experience with them is not pleasant. Without so much as notifying me they reprinted the 'Deacon's Week' and have sold thirty thousand copies of it, but I have never profited by that one cent...¹¹⁶

Sometime between November 4 and December 23, 1885 Mrs. Cooke wrote another letter to Mr. Ticknor about the Congregational Publishing Society and enlarged upon their apparent general shabby treatment of her.

...The C P Society printed and issued the 'Deacon's Week' without even telling me what they were about to do. They asked leave of the Congregationalist and when I remonstrated reminded me that they had sent me fifty copies of the thing. The book (Root-Bound) they are getting out they are to pay for but tried to put me off with six per cent on the retail price. This was too much. I refused with some peremptoriness and then they promised me ten per cent. I suppose you will agree with Mr. Whittier, who listening to a certain other tale of woe I told him last Spring, said 'It serves thee right for writing for the Congregationalist. What does thee do it for?' 'Because they pay me better than anywhere else, except the Youth's Companion!' 'Dear! dear! that is like Hawthorne selling his stories for twenty-five dollars!' and to be bracketed with Hawthorne even in his misfortunes soothed my vanity!...¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶Ms letter Library of Congress.
¹¹⁷Ms letter Library of Congress.

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In a continued tirade, Mrs. Cooke disclosed to Mr. Ticknor what she considered another unfair practice by the Congregational Publishing Society:

...I have generally taken what was offered me, and had a certain editor say--'Mrs. Cooke will take whatever you offer her, but so and so won't.'! It was true, and it opened my eyes... but I found that where I was asking \$25 for a story 'Susan Coolidge' [Sarah Channing Woolsey] asked \$60 and got it. But then she has had her own way with Roberts so long she is used to large prices. And she's so big!¹¹⁸

If a reader in 1890 knew of this inequity in payment to Mrs. Cooke and Mrs. Coolidge he might be confounded by the result of the votes for the "Twenty Immortelles," writers whom the readers of the Critic deemed the "truest representatives of what is best in cultivated American womanhood."¹¹⁹ In that list of twenty Mrs. Cooke's name was in fourteenth place; Mrs. Coolidge's name did not appear.

But for all her displeasure with the Congregational Publishing Society and their terms for Root-Bound, Mrs. Cooke acknowledged some of their good points for in

¹¹⁸Ms letter dated December 23, 1885 Library of Congress. ¹¹⁹The Critic, Vol. 17, October 25, 1890, p. 206.

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this same letter of December 23, 1885 to Mr. Ticknor she said:

...As to the Cormorant Co. they have made a nice little book, and so far the notices have been more than I could hope for...¹²⁰

With the exception of "The Deacon's Week," the sketches in Root-Bound are didactic and dreary. Indeed it is only Deacon Emmon's recounting of a week of practice that makes for the book's one lively, entertaining story.

Advised by their minister, Mr. Parkes, to have a week of practice instead of prayer, the congregation of Sugar Hollow set about their suggested topics: temperance in speech and act on Monday, a visit to Sunday-school scholars on Tuesday, etc. The lot to tell of the week's experience fell upon Deacon Emmon who kept the village store. Of his many wholesomely amusing accounts the following is probably the best:

Come around Friday I got back to the store. I'd kind o' left it to the boys the early part of the week, and things was a little cuterin', but I did have sense not to tear around and use sharp words so much as common. I began to think 'twas gettin' easy to practice after five days, when in come Judge Herrick's wife after some curt'in calico. I had a han'some piece

¹²⁰Ms letter Library of Congress.

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all done off with roses an' things,
 but there was a fault in the weavin',
 --every now and then a thin streak.
 She didn't notice it...and said she'd
 take the whole piece. Well, jest as
 I was wrappin' of it up, what Mr.
 Parkes here said about tryin' to act
 jest as the Lord would in our place,
 come acrost me. Why I turned as red
 as a beet, I know I did. There was I,
 a door-keeper in the tents of my God,
 as David says, realy cheatin', and
 cheatin' a woman. I tell ye, brethern,
 I was all of a sweat. 'Mis' Herrick,'
 says I, 'I don't believe you've looked
 real close at this goods; 'tain't
 thorough wove,' says I. So she didn't
 take it; but what fetched me was to
 think how many times I'd done sech mean,
 onreliable little things to turn a
 penny. I'd ruther, as far as the hard
 work is concerned, lay a mile of four-
 foot stone wall than undertake to do a
 man's livin', Christian duty for twelve
 workin' hours; and the heft of that is,
 it's because I ain't used to it and I
 ought to be.¹²¹

"The Deacon's Week" was not only reprinted by
 two religious organizations (The Gospel Book and Tract
 Depository, and the Pilgrim Press) but also by Putnam's
 Sons. In addition, it was included in another volume of
 Mrs. Cooke's collected short stories, The Sphinx's Children.

Behind the flurry of all this reprinting how-
 ever were three significant occurrences in the life of Mrs.

¹²¹Cooke, Root-Bound, Boston, Congregational
 Sunday-School and Publishing Society, 1885, pp. 167-168.

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Cooke: the failure in business of her father-in-law (thereby causing a loss of one third of Mrs. Cooke's possessions and a loss of employment for her husband); the writing of a novel (a form not previously attempted by Mrs. Cooke); and a noticeable reduction in her contributions to magazines. Combined, these were the beginning and unmistakable signs of Rose Terry Cooke's declining literary power.

Not to be overlooked in this approaching waste of Rose Terry Cooke's talent were the leading literary periodicals of the time. While most of them were interested in the advancement of the short story not all could support it. Some were unable to pay their contributors, others were short-lived, and all were looking for material not wholly confined to Mrs. Cooke's special art.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE WINSTED YEARS CONTINUED

The history of American magazines and magazine editors is the history of the rise and fall of some of its short story writers. The almost simultaneous disappearance of the writings of Mrs. Cooke, for instance, from the Atlantic and from Harper's was caused by either or both of the following: Rose's discordant relations with the editors of these publications; and the slowness of printing and payment, particularly by the Atlantic. During the decade 1872 to 1882, Rose Terry Cooke contributed but fourteen pieces (10 poems and 4 stories) to the Atlantic. To Harper's for approximately the same period, 1872-1884, the total was slightly higher, twenty-three pieces (9 poems and 14 stories). Thus while to all outward appearances Mrs. Cooke's relations with Harper's were good there was nevertheless a behind-the-scenes disturbance, for Henry Mills Alden (the editor of Harper's from 1869 to 1919) wrote the following to Mrs. Cooke on May 22, 1882:

I have returned several contributions of yours, all but one of which, I believe, were poems. Yours of the 20th seems to throw the responsibility for the unavailability of these contributions upon me. You seem to infer that it is due to some change in my attitude toward you as a contributor. It does not occur to you that

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the character of your contributions may have something to do with their fate.

How I wish most earnestly to assure you (though sorry that it should be necessary) that I never receive a contribution from you without a strong desire to accept it, if possible. But it has so happened that those you have sent during the last two years have not been such that I could make a strong point with them in the magazine. I have not been able, therefore, to use them. I once made a great mistake in declining a story of yours, 'Deacon Strong's Fight with Providence.'¹²² It is possible that I may have made a mistake in returning some that you have sent more recently. An editor's judgment is not infallible. But my attitude toward you as a desirable contributor (and I know of no one whom I consider more desirable) has not changed.

Also, with unaltered personal regard, I remain...¹²³

Obviously Mr. Alden meant all that he said to Mrs. Cooke for a little over two years later another of her stories appeared in Harper's. This story, "Hopson's Choice,"¹²⁴ which appeared in that magazine's September 1884 issue and which was later reprinted in a volume of Mrs.

¹²²For discussion of this story titled "Freedom Wheeler's Controversy with Providence" see Chapter III of this study, pp. 78-80.

¹²³Ms letter Library of Congress.

¹²⁴Cooke, "Hopson's Choice," Harper's, Vol. 69, September 1884, pp. 607-616.

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Cooke's collected stories, Huckleberries Gathered from New England Hills, told of the reunion of the Hopsons of the United States and Canada. Most of the Hopsons were short in stature, usually not over five feet three inches, and when the exception, six-foot tall Hopson Bunnell saw petite Prudy Hopson, a romance followed. An overhead family conversation however decided Prudy against her marriage. For the bewildered Hopson, as well as for the sulking Prudy, the air was finally cleared when the family revealed that Prudy must have mistakenly heard herself referred to as "Hobson's Choice." Skillful employment of the "misunderstanding" technique, good delineation of New England customs, dress, and conversation, together with a generous sprinkling of humor made this, the last of Mrs. Cooke's contributions to Harper's, a delightful local-color sketch.

While relations at that time between Mrs. Cooke and Mr. Alden of Harper's were not altogether satisfactory, at least apparently not so for Mrs. Cooke, the best of feeling existed between her and the then editor of the Atlantic, William Dean Howells. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Cooke's dealing with Howells' predecessors, James T. Fields, and James Russell Lowell, were likewise good, even though the total number of her contributions to the Atlantic was finally less than to Harper's.

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But what, if anything, transpired between her and the man who succeeded Howells, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, cannot be determined for there seems not to exist any information or correspondence which would tell of transactions between the two. Nonetheless that Howells thought well of Aldrich is evidenced in his letter to Mrs. Cooke of February 27, 1881. It reads:

Thank you for your very kind letter. It has been a pang for me to sever the thousand invisible ties that bound me to my old work; but I had grown very tired of writing, and I hope to keep all the contributors for friends still. You will find Aldrich a sympathetic and appreciative editor, who will be glad of all the good writing he can get.

We came in town the other day to spend what the Canadians call the back-winter: the two months of mud and snow that precede the spring. Mrs. Howells joins me in cordial regards and thanks for your invitation to Winsted. We shall hail any chance that takes us there, you may be sure...What a handsome book!¹²⁵ Osgood has made of the book you made so good!¹²⁶

¹²⁵This obviously refers to Rose Terry Cooke's volume of short stories, Somebody's Neighbors, published by Osgood in 1881.

¹²⁶Ms letter Connecticut Historical Society.

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During Aldrich's editorship of the Atlantic (1881-1890), only one of Mrs. Cooke's stories appeared in that magazine, "Some Account of Thomas Tucker."¹²⁷ Whether other pieces of hers were submitted to him is not known, nor is it known whether she got from him the same "unvarying consideration and kindness" which she received from Mr. Howells. In all probability it was simply a question of each not knowing the other too well for Mrs. Cooke did say in her letter to Mrs. Howells of February 21, 1881:

...How sorry I am you are going to give up the helm of the Atlantic Monthly. I want to thank you for the unvarying consideration and kindness you have always shown me in your editorial position; it is the remembrance of this which saddens me for the future.

I do not know Mr. Aldrich at all, but I am sure you were a friend and I do not like to lose my friends. It is too late to remonstrate. I can only heartily regret...¹²⁸

Although Mrs. Cooke may not have known it at the time, Aldrich was a well-known writer and editor, and to an extent a fellow New Englander. He was born in New Hampshire

¹²⁷Cooke, "Some Account of Thomas Tucker," the Atlantic, Vol. 50, August 1882, pp. 177-193.

¹²⁸Ms letter Houghton Library, Harvard.

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in 1830 and though he lived away from that region for many years, he returned to New England after the Civil War, took up residence in Boston and thereafter referred to himself as "Boston-plated."

Whatever the different reasons advanced for the absence of Mrs. Cooke's material from the pages of the Atlantic during Aldrich's beginning editorship, the following evidence will preclude any speculation or exploration about the appearance of her writings in it during the remainder of his term. In a letter dated February 23, 1891 to H. E. Scudder (Aldrich's successor), Mrs. Cooke accounted for the dwindling of her contributions to the Atlantic and told of her feeling regarding that magazine's policy of printing and payment:

...One reason why I have not written for the Atlantic has been their long delay in printing. In writing as I have from daily necessity you will understand that I had to write for papers and magazines that paid on acceptance. But I have always wanted to go back to the Atlantic for I was one of the two women who wrote for its first number and all my early successes were achieved in its columns. It is an old friend.¹²⁹

¹²⁹Ms letter Houghton Library, Harvard.

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Indeed the Atlantic was an old friend, an old friend to whom Mrs. Cooke would never raise her voice. Even after William Dean Howells had rejected one of her stories, "Mrs. Flint's Married Experience,"¹³⁰ Mrs. Cooke carried the matter off lightly for she said to him in a letter dated November 26, 1880:

...Aren't you a little bit sorry to think you did not take 'Mrs Flint's Married Experience' when you see it turned out with Abbey's illustrations in such good shape? I hope you repent...¹³¹

Mrs. Cooke had strong likes and dislikes. She could be cooperative and forgiving--as shown in her dealings with publishers and editors--and she could be unreasonable, stubborn, and evasive. Relatives, friends, and business associates must have found her difficult at times. For instance while her letter of October 14, 1882 to J. F. Morris, a Hartford lawyer and acting trustee of her granduncle's estate may be informative and revealing to a biographer, it must have appeared somewhat rambling and indirect to Mr. Morris. In her letter Mrs. Cooke said:

¹³⁰This story was accepted by Harper's and it appeared in their issue of December 1880, pp. 79-101.

¹³¹Ms letter Houghton Library, Harvard.

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I am not able to give you any positive information about the amount of Colonel Wadsworth's estate, but from various circumstances I can recollect I should think 'tradition' greatly over-estimated it. If it had been so much--and \$500,000 meant four times more in those days than it does now-- I do not think Mr. Daniel Wadsworth would have thought it necessary, with his delicate health, to keep a dry-goods store as he did for some years ...I have asked no questions about the property myself, or I might have known more; but I have taken little interest in it for I have always supported myself since I was sixteen, and though I have known the worth and want of money, I have also learned to depend on myself, to love work, and not to be afraid of poverty; and I can give in my hearty testimony the Wise Man's words--'the sleep of a laboring man is sweet.'...It gives even me, who have had some bitter experience of the average man's honesty, a better opinion of human nature than that experience created to see how well--with one exception-- that property has been managed by a succession of trustees who had an irresponsible power over it.¹³²

While Mrs. Cooke may not have known or remembered the amount of her granduncle Daniel Wadsworth's estate, his will on file in the Connecticut State Library and Supreme Court Building¹³³ shows the total figure to be

¹³²Ms letter Connecticut Historical Society.

¹³³Probate Department, Connecticut State Library and Supreme Court, Hartford, Connecticut.

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\$786,042.20, of which \$25,356.20 was received by her over a period of years, (Daniel Wadsworth died in 1848; distribution of his estate covered a thirty-five year period). As a matter of fact, the records further show that the final sum (\$1,732.20) due Mrs. Cooke from this estate was paid to her August 13, 1883.

It is understandable why Rose Terry Cooke did not acknowledge more often this legacy from her granduncle. For one thing, such acknowledgment probably would have been a painful reminder of the dissipation of the funds through unwise investments and personal mismanagement, and for another, recognition of an unearned income would have detracted from the pride she had in being independent since she was sixteen. Even two months after receiving her final payment from the estate, Rose was still referring to her self-sufficiency. She said in a letter to Mr. Morris dated October 13, 1883:

I was too ill to reply to your note when it came, which must excuse my delay...The truth is I have thought and known very little about my ancestors being too busy 'fending for myself' as the Scotch say, all my life, and only referring to them as the authors of many physical and mental disturbances in my nature with which I have had to do battle...My father died July 16, 1875¹³⁴ I think, but I have

¹³⁴The date on Henry Wadsworth Terry's tombstone (in Collinsville, Connecticut) is July 16, 1874.

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not the least idea when any of the rest of his family died...We are rather an odd set as you may imagine from the fact that I never knew my aunt Mrs. Post was dead for many weeks after the event...¹³⁵

To decry altogether Rose's resourcefulness would be unfair and unwise, for unquestionably it was a quality she possessed and certainly often displayed. In 1885, for example, when her husband lost his employment she was more concerned about his ability to adjust and to seek new employment than she was about her own plight of illness and loss of fortune. That she could and would be the mainstay of the family seemed not to trouble her at all for she said in her letter of August 15, 1885 to the publisher Benjamin Holt Ticknor:

I ought to have answered you kind note of the 7th at once, but I have been for some weeks so busy and so full of anxiety and trouble that I delayed it. I cannot make any promise to write anything; if I could, I would; but I have always refused to do so, chiefly on account of my health, which is liable to give way at any time, and makes me a very uncertain person. And just now I have another reason: Mr. Cooke's father has failed within the last ten days, and thereby I have lost about a third of all I possess, indeed all my profitable property, for houses

¹³⁵Ms letter Connecticut Historical Society

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don't rent now! And also my husband is out of business. You will see that the support of the family must fall on me till Mr. Cooke finds work again, and in these days that may be a long time, therefore I must devote myself to 'boiling the pot' and cannot take time for a book...¹³⁶

Because she was writing from daily necessity practically all of Mrs. Cooke's contributions at that time were sent to newspapers and to weekly publications, particularly those that paid the most: The Christian Union, The Independent (both discussed in Chapter III), and Youth's Companion. And in connection with this last-named magazine, no study of Mrs. Cooke's work would be complete without some consideration of her writings for young people. Of the more than seventy-eight pieces she contributed to magazines for the young, twenty-eight were poems and the remainder (fifty) short stories.

American magazines for the young had their real rise at just about the close of the Civil War. Indeed it was in January 1865 that the first issue of Our Young Folks appeared. This magazine published by Ticknor and Fields (who also published the Atlantic Monthly) was edited by J. T. Trowbridge, Lucy Larcom and Gail Hamilton, and was patently a Boston enterprise. Even its list of contributors were all New Englanders: Harriet Beecher Stowe, James

¹³⁶Ms letter Library of Congress.

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Greenleaf Whittier, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, James Russell Lowell, Louisa M. Alcott, and Rose Terry Cooke, to name a few. Although Our Young Folks was a good literary offering, it was like its parent magazine, the Atlantic Monthly, not a "money-maker." For every year of its publication, however, Our Young Folks carried several pieces of Mrs. Cooke's writings, either poetry or short stories and when, in 1873, Ticknor and Fields suspended this undertaking and turned over the subscribers' list to Scribner's for the St. Nicholas Magazine, Rose Terry Cooke likewise made the shift to that new project.

Despite all her contributions to Our Young Folks, St. Nicholas, and other magazines equally important in the field of juvenile literature such as Harper's Young People, Wide Awake, and Youth's Companion, no mention of Rose Terry Cooke's success in this area has ever been made by American literary historians or critics. The reason may be that until now this phase of her writing has been simply overlooked. But just some limited attention to it discloses two noteworthy facts: one, the money received for these writings constituted the only steady income Mrs. Cooke has in her later years, and two, the quality of these pieces was unusually high.

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The best of Mrs. Cooke's stories for young people appeared in the popular Youth's Companion, a weekly Boston publication. Her contributions to this magazine began in 1876 and continued to the year of her death in 1892. During that period some of her fellow contributors to this periodical were Gladstone, Kipling, Reade, Verne, and Howells.

Several of Mrs. Cooke's stories which appeared in the columns of Youth's Companion were bound into a volume called Little Foxes. Of these reprinted pieces "Mis Smart" was the most compelling for it, like so many others of Mrs. Cooke's local color stories, captured much New England dialect and flavor. Also as was her wont, Mrs. Cooke used this story to carry off some of her own thoughts about eternally controversial matters. For instance she said:

To 'teach school' is, in certain parts of New England, a social distinction which compensates, in many minds, for the hard work and poor pay attached to that vocation. It would have been infinitely better for Miss Florence Amanda to have gone out to service in some respectable family, where good wages, proper food, and light, wholesome work, would have made life easy to her. But 'pride, naughty pride,' as the hymn-book for children says, forbade such a degradation. Whether it is degradation, remains still an open question. Of the two, I should

much prefer it to semi-starvation and teaching; and I should prefer it for my daughter; but Jehiel and Sary Jakeway did not...¹³⁷

No real estimate of Mrs. Cooke's writing for young people would be valid unless it included some comments about her novel for girls, Happy Dodd.¹³⁸ At the time of publication this story was well received by book reviewers, particularly those in the Boston area. They considered it one of the best books of religious fiction for young people. And indeed for what it was, a Sunday school book, it was thoroughly wholesome. But even then, in 1887, some readers must have found much of the book's platitudinizing unpalatable. Despite this failing, however, Happy Dodd has much to recommend it for it contains an appreciable amount of Mrs. Cooke's humor and much of her skillful accounting of New England country life and speech.

Happilona, or Happy Dodd, spent much of her time with an elderly family friend, Aunt Vinny, who had philosophic comments to spare about all aspects of life. In Aunt Vinny's early life she had been cheated of her money by a male cousin and thereafter all men were suspect. Whenever she could she lectured to Happy about the "cheatin'" ways of men. On one occasion she said:

¹³⁷Cooke, Little Foxes, Philadelphia, Henry Altemus Co., 1904, p. 62.
¹³⁸Cooke, Happy Dodd, Boston, Ticknor, 1887.

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...don't you never trust no money of your'n to a man; there ain't one on 'em but what'll take th' advantage of a woman, specially if she's poor, every time. They don't think women folks has any right to money anyhow; mabbe a man might look after his wife's means for his own sake; I don't say but what they would, but that ain't to do with the case; what's her'n is his'n and he knows it everlastin' well, but come to anybody else's wife, or any other woman single or married, an' they a'n't nowhere; left out in the cold every time.¹³⁹

At another time Aunt Vinny again counseled

Happy:

...I want you to be sure not to trust no man, not ef he's chief justice or president of a bank, with your money, onless you have a big hold on him. David said in his haste all men was liars, and I guess he was as near about right as though he had considered the matter. Anyway it's safer not to trust the hull on 'em than 'tis to try one an' lose all you've got.¹⁴⁰

To what extent Mrs. Cooke used Aunt Vinny as a vehicle for her own thoughts cannot be determined, but it is unquestionable that in her role as author she often expressed strong feelings about certain unsavory, lamentable

¹³⁹Cooke, op. cit., p. 318.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p. 352.

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social conditions. The following paragraph will illustrate the point:

...But the Gladdings [Nan and Jack, pupils in Happy's Sunday school class] belonged to a certain type of New England people little known to the world at large; poor, isolated on some lonely hill-farm, or bleak shanty by a solitary pond; supported by the intermittent labor of their indolent hands on the products of the acre or two they either rent or 'take'; getting a little money by the sale of berries, fish, herbs, and roots, or rough baskets; now and then joining a charcoal job; their luxuries being whiskey and maple sugar, and their food pork and potatoes with occasional 'cabbidges'. This class of people are more like the beasts of the field than many a savage tribe. Crimes of the most revolting character are common among them; they seem to know neither law nor gospel, but exist on the extreme outskirts of many a New England village uncared for, unconsidered: a deeper heathen than the idolator of the South Seas, for they have not even the pretence of a God.¹⁴¹

Once in commenting on Happy Dodd, Mrs. Cooke herself said: "It has at least one merit: it is utterly unsectarian, as becomes a Sunday School book."¹⁴²

¹⁴¹Ibid., p. 88.

¹⁴²Ms letter to Benjamin Holt Ticknor, dated Winsted, January 3, 1887, Yale University Library.

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No, a novel written by Mrs. Cooke for boys was also a Sunday school book and just before it was published Mrs. Cooke said in a letter to Mr. Ticknor:

...About 'No' which has lingered till I hate it, but is almost done, Dr. Vincent 'spoke first' as children say; but I have an idea it is not Methodist enough to suit him, and if he retreats of course I shall send it to you. A Sunday Schoolbook if not 'a thing of beauty,' is 'a joy forever,' for it keeps selling, gently, so many years...¹⁴³

Obviously Dr. Vincent was well pleased with No for it was published simultaneously in New York City by Phillips and Hunt and in Cincinnati by Cranston and Stowe, both printers of Methodist writings.

In all 234 pages of No there is nothing quotable. It is a dull, preachy story about a boy, Jack Boyd, and his ability to say "No" at the right time. The only thing to recommend the book at all is the preface; it is far better than the story itself. It is, in fact, so unusually winning that it is here quoted in its entirety:

The Italians say that a preface is the salt of a book; but in these days so few read a preface that it seems a matter of form rather than of need.

¹⁴³Ms letter dated Winsted, May 7, 1886, Library of Congress.

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There is nothing to say about this little book but that it is the growth of many years of observation, whereby the writer has come to the conviction that, next to a living Christian faith, the surest reliance in this world is strength of character, native or acquired.

Many years ago a group of cousins used to be amused on long winter evenings by a game that belonged to the childhood of their grandfather. It was called 'The Game of Human Life,' and around the margin of the great parchment sheet, in a procession of compartments, were the painted figures of various persons who were types of humanity; they wore the old-time garments of knee-breeches and square-tailed coats, wigs and cocked hats, and were 'some in rags, and some in tags, and some in velvet gowns.' For here were the lawyer, the doctor, the thief, the priest, the proud man, the meek man, the miser, the benevolent man, and so on, each one numbered; and as each little player spun the 'teetotum,' he or she was advanced according to the number that turned up, and whoever first reached the 'Temple of Immortality' was the victor.

To reach certain stations insured just so much advance: the 'Benevolent Man' was forwarded on his way; the 'miser' set back; but the unlucky wight who landed on the 'Complaisant Man' had to go back to the beginning.

I never understood this then, but I know now what it meant: the man who yields to every suggestion of a comrade; who has, as we say today, 'no backbone'; who cannot say 'No!' never succeeds, is never respected, is a failure in both worlds.

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And in this conviction I have written this book for my friends, the boys I do know; and I hope, for future friends, the boys I don't know. I beg them, one and all, to learn to say 'No!' when and where it should be said; and, in diviner words than man's, I say to them, 'Quit you like men, be strong!'¹⁴⁴

Although Benjamin H. Ticknor did not have the "opportunity" in 1886 to publish Mrs. Cooke's No, he did however print that year a collection of her short stories and titled it The Sphinx's Children and Other Peoples. This volume contained several of the best of Mrs. Cooke's short stories including "Lost On A Railway," "Too Late," and "The Deacon's Week," (discussed singly in Chapters II and III), as well as one of the most contrived of her pieces, "A Hard Lesson" (also discussed in Chapter III), and one of the most taxing and unreadable sketches she probably ever wrote, "The Sphinx's Children." In connection with the publishing of the volume itself an interesting sidelight is revealed in a letter Mrs. Cooke wrote on January 18, 1886 to Mr. Ticknor, publisher. Apparently he wanted Mrs. Cooke to send him a picture of herself as well as a dedication for the book. She said:

¹⁴⁴Cooke, No, New York, Phillips and Hunt, 1886, p. iii.

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I don't think we'll have any dedication; it is something like saying grace over hash.

I think the note is all that it should be;...If I had not a great deal of vanity I would send you my photograph but 'it is for your own good' as my mother used to tell me, that I refrain. I don't mind so very much about the homeliness, but the fact is none of them really give anybody an idea of me, because I am an effusive talker, and my face is never still. Once in my life Mr. Cooke insisted on my having a photograph taken for a dreadful book about women. I had two made, christened 'the senile grin' and 'acetate of lead'. They took the last and the book never sold except out in Polynesia...¹⁴⁵

This book about women mentioned by Mrs. Cooke was not so "dreadful" as it was dull. Titled Our Famous Women¹⁴⁶ the volume contained essays by and about contemporary women authors. In it were two pieces written by Mrs. Cooke--one about Harriet Prescott Spofford, and the other about Harriet Beecher Stowe--and an essay about Mrs. Cooke herself written by Harriet Prescott Spofford. Actually the book was nothing more than a mutual admiration project with its only value being in the bits of obscure biographical information it gave about authors of another day.

¹⁴⁵Ms letter Library of Congress.
¹⁴⁶Phelps, op. cit.

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Certainly Mrs. Cooke's contributions to the volume were the least interesting of her writings, especially when compared with some of the other entertaining essays she wrote for other publications. An examination of one of these will illustrate the point. In Sunday Afternoon, a short-lived publication (1878-1881), Mrs. Cooke told quite interestingly of her feelings toward the "literary profession." Her essay titled, "A Letter to Mary Ann," gave advice on the subject of authorship and in it she said:

...a distinct education is really needed for authorship; a thorough drilling in our own language, and a wide range of reading...even of desultory reading, not merely to obtain general information, though that is necessary of course, but to prevent the formation of a style so marked as to be obnoxious...Certain moral qualities are also needed, which can be cultivated; and the first of these is patience...Again and again I send and re-send a story, a poem, or a mere didactic article from one paper to another, and it generally finds a place at last; yet I have 'more than four' unaccepted manuscripts that nobody wants, lying now in my desk. When I die they will probably sell, and I keep them with that possibility in view...Then you must have courage, or you will be killed by critics and criticism daily...Moreover have the moral strength to say what you think honestly; it is a great temptation to a poor woman to write trash when she finds it sells better than true and finished work...Then there is another trouble

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in literary work; it is very poorly paid. I do not mean that the money is not paid in proportion to the work, for I think it is, especially to a popular writer; but the trouble is the long waiting for that which you have earned, and the uncertainty of a payment which depends on the time of printing the manuscript...To be at liberty to do the best work an author should have some regular income besides that which he earns; but how few have!...Then again, you need health and strength to write, for it is hard work...I generally write about nine thousand and have written as many as fifteen thousand words in five days, and attended to my house and the needs of an invalid beside; yet I have never made a thousand dollars in any year...¹⁴⁷

If in the years preceding this article--and some of these were peak years--Mrs. Cooke earned less than a thousand dollars for her writings, then her income in 1885 must have been pitifully low for in that year her writings were considerably reduced, her revenue from property lost, and her husband unemployed. Despite these conditions, Mrs. Cooke maintained a good spirit, struggled with illness and the writing of her first and only novel, and appeared more philosophical about her husband's idleness than he did. As a matter of fact her concern about him is mentioned in a letter she wrote to Benjamin Ticknor on August 22, 1885. In it she said:

¹⁴⁷Cooke, Sunday Afternoon, op. cit., pp. 79-82.

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...I am afraid my father-in-law's failure is of the hopeless kind; but I have had so much deeper grief in my life than any money-loss can bring, that my own share in his losses does not trouble me as it might, and I hope that with my husband's business training and experience he may find something to do before very long, for his own sake far more than mine.¹⁴⁸

One year later Mrs. Cooke was still working on the novel and in accounting for her slow progress on it she said to the publisher:

I really want to write that novel and I think you want it, but the case stands this way. I have lost all the productive part of my small property in my father-in-law's failure; my houses stand empty on the same account; my husband thrown out of business then has not yet got anything to do. Therefore the support of the family falls on me, and is a matter of day-by-day work. I don't write the novel because I have to 'boil the pot'. Now if you want it enough, and have faith enough in it to do so, if you will advance me a hundred dollars I will fall to at the novel and unless I am dead or very ill you will have it by the end of September. There are five chapters done, but I cannot write it piece-meal...¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸Ms letter Library of Congress.

¹⁴⁹Ms letter dated July 28, 1886, Library of Congress.

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Obviously this day-by-day writing was for a newspaper, but even that must have been put aside when in October 1886 another attack of illness struck Mrs. Cooke. Progress on the novel was slow indeed and some of the delay was because she found it

...very difficult after so many years of short stories to put even a decent amount of padding into the thing. I don't think anybody but the author will like it!--and I wish with all my heart it was done!¹⁵⁰

But this wish for the completed novel was not to be fulfilled that year, nor the next. As a matter of fact life was to become increasingly tragic for Mrs. Cooke. At sixty years of age, tired, worried, ill, and almost penniless, she set out to follow her husband in his search for yet another place in life. Of this removal she wrote in a somewhat dauntless manner on September 23, 1887 to Benjamin Ticknor:

I have been very ill indeed since I last wrote you...I am much better now and sit up part of every day. If I am strong enough I expect to remove to Pittsfield next week, and become a Massachusetts woman. Mr. Cooke has gone into business there, and I have not been able to join

¹⁵⁰Ms letter dated November 23, 1886 from Rose Terry Cooke to Benjamin H. Ticknor, Yale University Library.

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him, much to my regret and discomfort. Now I am going to board through the winter, have no tyrant in the kitchen, and no care of a house. I have only to get strong and work at my writing. I feel like a freed slave in the prospect, and I expect you to congratulate me on it; as I hope and expect you will profit by it.¹⁵¹

Mrs. Cooke's moving from Connecticut to Massachusetts was more than a change in residence. It was an upheaval which lasted five years and eventually contributed to her decline and death. Meanwhile, ironically enough, the special art, local color, which Mrs. Cooke used to advance the American short story was indirectly becoming the cause of her literary defeat. In the late 70's and in the 80's she was outsold and outdistanced by Bret Harte who exploited this medium, and by Sarah Orne Jewett who developed it to its highest form.

¹⁵¹ Ms letter Library of Congress.

CHAPTER FIVE
THE LAND OF PROMISE.

By 1887, when Rose Terry Cooke moved to Pittsfield, many of her contemporaries--writers, editors, and publishers--had already died; others were inactive or no longer able to lend aid. Nevertheless, when she wrote to some of them about her removal from Connecticut to Massachusetts, she was apparently cheerful and hopeful about the change. To an extent she had reason to be for in the last few years of her life those friends who could, helped her, and she was occasionally to be as "pleased and surprised as was St. Elisabeth when her bread turned to roses!"¹⁵²

It is difficult of course to know what Rollin Cooke's feelings were about the change, or to know what decided him in 1887 to move to Massachusetts, for in the preceding years of depression (1882-1886), that state was one of those hard hit by business failures and by unemployment. However, no matter how dim the prospects for business were in Massachusetts, they were for Mr. Cooke preferable to those in Connecticut, because the Pittsfield Directory for 1887-8 indicates that Rollin H. Cooke was in business

¹⁵²Cooke ms letter dated June 8, 1888, Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield.

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with James Burns at 11 North Street. After a year or so this partnership apparently dissolved because the directory's 1890-91 listing shows only Rollin H. Cooke as banker and real estate broker at 15½ North Street. Meanwhile, the residence address for the Cooke's (from 1887 to Mrs. Cooke's death in 1892) changed four or more times; upon arrival in Pittsfield the Cookes lived in a "fashionable" hotel, thereafter in boarding houses.

That Rollin Cooke was no real business man and that he continued in his easy-going manner is evidenced in the following letter written by an acquaintance:

I left Pittsfield in 1890, when only 23. I knew Mr. Cooke and his daughter, but Rose Terry Cooke's poetry (nor any poetry, for that matter) had no special appeal.

However, I was boarding in a house where also lived several of Pfd's upper strata of the 'intelligentsia' (two teachers in an young woman's boarding school; another a friend of Herman Melville) so that I often heard Mrs. Cooke's poetry discussed.

Rollin H. Cooke ran a small, personal banking business, and I recall that he loaned me a small amount on my personal, unendorsed note...¹⁵³

¹⁵³Ms letter dated September 20, 1952, from Gridley Adams to this writer.

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While Rollin apparently did what he could to support his family, Rose continued with her writings which were by that time reduced to contributions to religious weeklies and to publications for young people.

The novel, Steadfast, which she had started in 1885 was finished in November 1888 and printed in 1889; thus Rose Terry Cooke finally fulfilled the contract with her friend and publisher, Benjamin H. Ticknor. At the same time she undoubtedly satisfied with this novel, another of her friends and well-wishers, James Greenleaf Whittier, who had said to her in his letter of March 10, 1881:

...Why don't thee undertake a longer story, not altogether confined to the uncultured farmhand dialect and character--but a story of New England life in its varied aspects?...¹⁵⁴

Steadfast a story of New England life in colonial days was well received by New York and Boston critics. Of it the Critic said:

...Attentive to the details of old-time speech and customs, the author has in no way let that attention detract from the human interest of her characters...There is no need to speak of the writing of the book; the texture of Mrs. Cooke's stories is always fine and stout, the revelation of character full of artistic insight...¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴Ms letter Connecticut Historical Society.
¹⁵⁵The Critic, Vol. 4, March 9, 1889, p. 117.

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While other reviews of that day were similarly laudatory, a reading now will of course show that the style of Steadfast is typical nineteenth century, filled with intrusions and didacticisms. In the light of modern appraisal, however, this novel has oddly enough retained two noteworthy aspects: an interesting local historical color, and a set of natural, believable country characters who provide the story with its only element of liveliness. Indeed, it is only the conversations of Deacon Ammi Hopkins, Miss Tempy Tucker, Delia Pratt, and Hiram Perkins that lift the story from torpor. An example of such relief is in the following humorous dialogue between a main and a second-string character:

'But, Delia! what are you going to do?'

'Now, don't ye smile, a mite! I'm a goin' to get married.'

'What! married!'

'Well, I guess so.' snapped Delia; 'do you think I'm too humly to try for't?'

'Oh, Delia, you know I don't! I was so sorry for poor Hiram.'

'I guess I shan't bile an' eat him,' retorted the angry woman.

'But he will be so hurt at your marriage.'

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'I dono about that; I guess he'll be resigned,' and Delia laughed; she began to appreciate the situation.

'But who is it?' asked the puzzled Esther.

'Well, now you're come to the p'int, I shouldn't think strange if 'twas reely,--well, I guess it is--Hiram!'

'Oh!' said Esther, with an accent of relief.

'You see,' promptly went on Delia, 'I stood out quite a spell because he wasn't a professor, and I meant to keep up my end of the matter till he was, but I don't see no signs on't; he's good, real good, as fur as bein' clever to put up with, and havin' faculty, but I mistrust his speritooal condition is sort of duberous. Howsoever, I ain't so young as I was, nor so 'sot in my idees; I've kind of mellered down, and this bein' what your Uncle Dyer used to call a 'mergency, why I thought 'twould come amazin' handy to have a man round for good and all, and he'll be clever to mother, so I kind of giv him a leetle hint ye know, and my! he took it up as sry as a robin takes a worm...'¹⁵⁶

In Deacon Ammi Hopkins, Mrs. Cooke perpetuated her stereotype of the parsimonious New England farmer. For instance, when Ammi proposed to Tempy, Mrs. Cooke said:

¹⁵⁶Cooke, *Steadfast*, Boston, Ticknor and Company, 1889, pp. 199-200.

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This proposal was a mere matter of business to Ammi Hopkins; he wanted a woman to keep his house in order, provide the savory meat his soul loved and prevent waste and unthriftiness in his household; a woman who would have no wages beside her needful food and clothing, and save him the money paid out now to an inefficient helper. He had his eye on two or three women if Tempy should fail him, but he had selected her first because she had a small pittance of her own, certainly enough to clothe her, and pay her contributions to the sparse church charities which it was respectable to recognize.¹⁵⁷

In writing Steadfast, Mrs. Cooke's purpose was to reveal some of "the bitter intolerance incident to the early spiritual development of the colonies," and it was from some historical records of Wallingford, Connecticut, that she wove the story of Philemon Hall or Steadfast. Philemon's only fault was in preaching to the Baptists and for this he was censured by the "Consociation of Congregational Churches of 'Newport' County."

Through 426 pages or 40 chapters (entitled Death, Love, Continuance, Cloudy, Clear, A Confidence, and the like) the life and loves of Philemon Hall are unfolded.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 231.

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The first quarter of the book concerns Philemon Hall and Rachel Mather, an orphan. While Philemon studied for the ministry, Rachel was farmed out to a relative. From overwork and exposure Rachel contracted rheumatic fever and was doomed to an invalid's life. Nonetheless, she and Philemon married and both their lives, until Rachel's death a few years later, were happy and worthwhile. In one of several other subplots was Esther Dennis in love with Philip Kent, a ne'er-do-well. Victimized and bewildered by Philip's continued deceit and treachery, Esther finally abandoned active interest in him and consented to marry Philemon, even though at that time she didn't love him. Philemon, before his marriage to Esther, had been strengthened in his calling by a trip to Northampton where he had had an opportunity to "partake in and investigate a state of things new to him, except in theory, now possessing the church of Jonathan Edwards."¹⁵⁸ This interest in the Great Awakening was the turning point in Philemon's marriage to the unhappy Esther, for it was only after he was dismissed from his post for preaching to neighboring Baptists, at their invitation, that Esther's love crystallized. So distraught did she become

¹⁵⁸Ibid., p. 206.

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over the consociation's treatment of her husband that she tried to persuade him not to do their bidding of offering three confessions of his guilt. But the patient, fervent Philemon confessed and after a long, heartbreaking wait he was permitted to resume his duties "but as long as he lived, his church showed their still-smouldering resentment by never sending a delegate with him to any of these meetings."¹⁵⁹

The amount of padding around the framework of this story is at once interesting and clear. No mention of the consociation's stringent prohibition against other churches in the colony is mentioned until page 323, three-quarters of the way through the book, and then within the the last one hundred pages the story jells and major and myriad subplots cascade to a contrived but happy ending.

Like some other writers of short stories, Rose Terry Cooke lacked the required skills for novel writing, lacked the techniques for handling such material and for sustaining interest beyond short story length. For that she should not be criticized too severely, however, because the novel in America in those days was far from a finished form. Although Rose Terry Cooke was unfamiliar with novel writing she had continuing skill in depicting local color characters.

¹⁵⁹Ibid., p. 425.

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Indeed for that accomplishment alone she could rest her case for Steadfast. More, like any other alert writer, Rose availed herself of material at hand, local and historical.

But such resourcefulness was not new to her. She had, in fact, applied it in her first story, "The Mormon's Wife," in "Too Late," and in others too numerous to mention. The following letter, for instance, will disclose that even as late as 1888 she was still looking for original material, still very much interested in her craft.

Pittsfield, Mass.
Jan. 19th 1888.

Miss Lydia F. Lincoln
Dear Madam,

I thank you very much for your kind letter. When one is ill and tired, and over-worked as well as old, it is pleasant beyond your thought to receive cheering words; to know that the weary brain and aching eyes can make any other person happy by their labor is the truest rest for them. I should like extremely to see your records of the old Wyllys house in Hartford. I am almost a stranger there now: 'another generation hath arisen that know not Joseph.' And when I was there, in my girlhood that old house or what is now 'Charter Oak Place' was occupied by a family whose record was so distressing and outrageous that I never associate it with the first owners. My sole reminiscence of the Wyllys family is seeing once in my childhood one of their descendants going about on his hands and knees always a wretched distorted fiendish

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looking creature, who frightened and appalled me. It was a collateral ancestor of mine who saved the Charter* and it would please me much to know more about the owners of the tree. Any old-time stories that you please to send me will help me very much. I am not at all 'flooded' by them; and I have continual orders for stories, so sometimes I have to look about me keenly to find subjects. I know many that will never do to write out; they are true but too sensational or dreadful; fact is so much stranger than fiction...¹⁶⁰

It has not been possible to trace in Mrs. Cooke's writings, after 1888, any of the references to story material mentioned in the foregoing letter. But in all probability she had no need of it being busy then with the completion of her novel (Steadfast), getting material ready for another volume of collected short stories (Huckleberries Gathered from New England Hills), and writing some thirty odd pieces for different publications. Whatever Mrs. Cooke's needs were at the time, they were probably not in the area of materials for stories. As a matter of fact, just a sampling of her correspondence shows that what she lacked then was good health, security, cheer, and companionship.

*See footnote 4.
¹⁶⁰Ms letter Houghton Library, Harvard.

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Life in Pittsfield may have been easier in some ways because she did not have the care of a house for instance, but that when compared with larger issues was a minor consideration indeed. So desperate in fact was Rose Terry Cooke just a year and a half after her letter to Miss Lincoln that she was forced to dispatch the following message, marked Private to Mr. Ticknor on July 30, 1889:

I write to ask you if you think I could get anything to do in Boston in literary matters, any sort of hack-work that would bring in daily bread. Writing stories and poems is so precarious and payment so delayed that I want some steadier business. The reason for this is that Mr. Cooke has not succeeded in his business here, and the small property I owned has all gone in his failure, so that now I shall be homeless and penniless unless I can get work. And I thought too if I could get work in Boston Mr. Cooke might find some occupation there, however small, that would help; for I am not very strong. Please consider this confidential as no one here is aware yet that he is to close his office. It is not his fault but his misfortune; he 'fell among thieves' and takes the consequences. Forgive me for troubling you; but you have been so kind to me in the past I naturally come to you again.¹⁶¹

Just a few months after writing this letter, Mrs. Cooke was to be in Boston but whether she was doing literary "hack-work" is not known. It is doubtful though

¹⁶¹Ms letter Library of Congress.

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that she spent more than a winter there or that Mr. Cooke joined her for records show that he continued after all in his small business in Pittsfield. Additionally, the following letter written by Mrs. Cooke tells of an intended stay in Boston:

You are very kind to welcome me to Boston. I have counted on seeing you as one of my consolations in the homeless conditions of a boarding-house.

Thank you for offering to help me, but all you can do now is to come and see me as soon as is convenient to you, for I am already localized at 4 Mt. Vernon St. where I hope to be the first of November.

I shall have my dearest niece to spend the winter with me, and Mr. Cooke will come as soon as he can close his business here.

I hope I shall see Miss Jewett with you. Give my love to her...¹⁶²

The foregoing letter has still another interest for it is only one of many pieces of evidence which contradict the following statement by Fred L. Pattee:

...Rose Terry was born in Connecticut in 1827 and her whole life was spent within the bounds of that state...¹⁶³

¹⁶²Ms letter to Mrs. Annie Fields, Henry E. Huntington Library.

¹⁶³Pattee, op. cit., p. 174.

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Fred L. Pattee contributed much to the continuing study of Rose Terry Cooke as an American short story writer; he also placed her at the top of pioneering portray-ers of New England country life. To amend therefore one of his statements is not to make ineffective his entire treat-ment of her, rather it is to bring to light noteworthy facts about some of Mrs. Cooke's journeys outside Connecticut. Scattered references for instance in Mrs. Spofford's book, A Little Book of Friends, tell of just a few of these trips:

...I met her [Rose Terry] first at Mary Booth's* in New York; afterwards she came to me and by and by wrote a little memoir of me...In the house where Rose boarded, Mr. Rollin Cooke was also a resident... finally she yielded to his persuasion and became his wife...His business brought him frequently to Amesbury [Massachusetts] and she usually came with him and stayed with us...After her marriage Rose lived in Winsted, Connecticut, going occasionally to her friends of whom Mrs. Annie Trumbull Slosson, who survives her, was one. From Glen Ellis, [New Hampshire] where she was visiting Mrs. Slosson, she wrote...¹⁶⁴

Actually the first of Rose's extended absences from Connecticut began in 1841, when at the age of fourteen,

*First editor of Harper's Bazar.
¹⁶⁴Spofford, op. cit., 143-156 passim.

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she went alone to Huntington, Long Island, New York. From that time until the last year of her life she told in various letters of these travels, not the least interesting of which is the following written on December 20, 1879 to the Vermont poet Julia Dorr:

...I was sorry to leave the breakfast so soon, but I had to catch a train to Waltham where I was staying. I did not enjoy the affair as I should have, for I went out with Mr. Emerson, and found him such a wreck mentally that I could have cried. I spent my time telling him over, and over, and over again who people were whom he had known for years. He could not even recall his own poems, or recollect who Dickens was; and at last said sadly 'I hope you will never be old and unable to remember anything two minutes.' He was the skeleton at the feast to me...If ever you come to Connecticut my dear Mrs. Dorr I should be very glad to see you in Winsted. We cannot compete here with the Vermont hills, which I love, having spent nearly a year at Tyson Furnace once, but still our scenery is pretty.¹⁶⁵

Once settled in Pittsfield, Mrs. Cooke's only absences from there were her winter visits to Boston to see literary and business friends, among whom was Horace E. Scudder of the publishing firm of Houghton and editor of the

¹⁶⁵Ms letter Abernethy Library, Middlebury.

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Atlantic from 1890 to 1898. Through him Mrs. Cooke had published in that magazine's June 1891 issue her story "A Town Mouse and A Country Mouse." Thus, after a nine-year absence from the pages of the Atlantic, and in the sixty-fourth year of her life, Mrs. Cooke's work was again to appear in the magazine responsible for some of her early fame. In connection with this return Mrs. Cooke, in a letter to Mr. Scudder on February 23, 1891, made some comments which indicate that after thirty-four years of existence, the Atlantic still had not stabilized its policy of payment to contributors. Mrs. Cooke said:

When I used to write for the Atlantic I had \$8 per printed page. Harper gave ten, but their page was of much finer print then...So if you think you can print my story by June I will not put a price on it, but wait and be paid per page...¹⁶⁶

But the uncertainty of payment was not new to Mrs. Cooke nor was the practice peculiar to the Atlantic. Another instance is contained in a letter which she wrote a few months earlier on December 8, 1890 to Mr. Bok, then editor of the Ladies' Home Journal,

I will write your article if nothing prevents. I am better fitted to do it because my step-daughter by reason of Mr. Cooke's business losses involving all our property has been obliged to earn

¹⁶⁶Ms letter Houghton Library, Harvard.

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her living, and has just been five weeks in New York /after a year's over-work in Utica/ trying to find a place as typewriter and stenographer. So you see I know something about it. But for 1500 words I shall want \$30. I have to fix a price and stand to it as I work 'for revenue only.'

But I do not want to be paid till you accept the mss. I can send the article to you on these terms within a month.¹⁶⁷

It has not been possible to learn the eventual disposition of this article, nor even to know whether it was ever written. But there can be no doubt of the success of "A Town Mouse and A Country Mouse" which was published in the Atlantic just six months later. As a matter of fact so instantly popular was this story that it was included in the volume of Mrs. Cooke's collected short stories, Huckleberries Gathered from New England Hills, published that same year (1891).

As for the story itself "A Town Mouse and A Country Mouse" is a warm and amusing account of the reunion of two sisters, Melinda and Amanda Hart. After years of planning and preparation, Amanda went to the country to visit her sister Melinda. A few days later she was back in town because, as she explained to her landlady,

¹⁶⁷Ms letter Manuscript Division, New York Public Library.

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I wouldn't no more live in the country than nothin'. Why, 't was as still as a ear-trumpet out there. I'd ha' give all my old shoes to ha' heard a street car or a coal wagon a-rumblin' by. And lonesome! There wasn't so much as a rooster a-predicatin' by in the road. I thought I should die for want of knowin' I was alive; and the nighttime shuts down onto ye like a pot-lid. You know you can't go marvelin' round in other folks' houses. I jest had to set and knit daytimes, and sense the lonesomeness. I know I should have shockanum palsy if I had to stay there. Melindy is comin' to see me for a spell early in July, about the Fourth, when it's kinder lively, and I guess 't'll wake her up some...

I'd jest as lives set down on a slab in the sempitery all my days as to stay out to Melindy's. I do'no but I'd ruther; for there'd be funerals, and mourners, and folks comin' to desecrate the graves with flowers, and sech, intervenin' 'most every day there. 'T would be real lively in caparison with M'lindy's house.¹⁶⁸

Conversely a short visit in town and Melinda was terror-stricken. She went back to her solitude because as she said,

I'm as homesick as a cat to get back. I'd rather have a hovel out in the lots than a big house here. There's too many other folks here for me...¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸Cooke, "A Town Mouse and A Country Mouse," Atlantic Monthly, Vol. 67, June 1891, p. 798.

¹⁶⁹Ibid., p. 800.

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Sometime later, after her marriage to Deacon Ammi Parker, Melinda fell sick and the following letter was received by Amanda:

Miss Amandy Hart,--This is to inform you that your sister is real sick with a fever; the doctor thinks shes dangerous. Shes kep a-askin for you for a week back, but I didnt pay no attention tot, thought she was kind of flighty and twould only be a bill of expense to send for ye. But now Doctor Fenn says shes got to hev a nuss any way, so I bethought me to send for you. I expect to pay your way so I put in a five dollar bill. If youll come a Wednesday I shall be pleased to see ye. Yours to command, Ammi Parker.¹⁷⁰

A letter which Mrs. Cooke wrote on February 16, 1891 to Atlantic editor Henry E. Scudder indicates that she was not at first altogether objective about Deacon Ammi Parker. Of him, the last of her skinflint New England farmers, she said:

You are quite right about that letter. I myself did not like it altogether but the temptation to exploit Deacon Parker was too much for my judgment. I have written it over in better accordance with the 'unities' and with no more bad spelling than belongs (experts crede!) to the average country woman.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 801.

¹⁷¹ Ms letter Houghton Library, Harvard.

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Huckleberries Gathered from New England Hills, the volume in which "A Town Mouse and A Country Mouse" was reprinted, contained also one of the best of Mrs. Cooke's stories about an old maid, "Odd Miss Todd." Hermione (Miny) Todd, orphaned at thirty by her father's death, was rich but lonely. For years and years she lived alone, not bothering very much with her townspeople. However, whenever she could, she put down gossip and she was always good to all who were in need. After his mother's death, Jonas Pringle was taken in by Miny who saw him through the ministry. Ungrateful, selfish and crafty, Jonas had just about decided to marry Miss Todd when Nora Spencer, an orphan and a hired girl, appeared on the scene. Then Jonas' "heart triumphed over his policy; in the madness of real passion he was ready to go all lengths of labor and renunciation if Nora were his..."¹⁷²

Meanwhile Miss Miny had grown to love Jonas and hoped he would marry her even though "It was an objection that she was twenty years older than he, but in New England country towns a woman is frequently some years older than her husband, and Miss Miny had no relatives to object, nor had he."¹⁷³

¹⁷²Cooke, Huckleberries Gathered from New England Hills, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1891, p. 114.

¹⁷³Ibid., p. 108.

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After Jonas' marriage to Nora, Miny "became pitiless and almost fierce" toward men and at her own expense she set up a private school for girls, later making a will leaving her money "to found a female college of the smallest size, eligible for only ten members and in its rigid rule resembling a nunnery."¹⁷⁴ At her death Miss Todd who made the odd wish to be buried in a nightgown and cap said:

I am going to sleep till the Lord comes, and I think it is a waste of good clothes to bury them... I don't expect gown nor coffin to rise no more'n this miserable old body, and I won't be answerable for foolish waste of what the Lord gave me.¹⁷⁵

Although Rose Terry Cooke used her odd old maids and her skinflint farmers to advantage, letting their eccentricities provide humor, their weaknesses evoke pity, she established for them and for all her characters an inflexible code of morals. No matter how contrived or melodramatic the means, separation of wife and husband came only through abandonment or death. And yet it could not have been otherwise. Counter action would not only have barred the sale of material, but more important it would have been alien to the personal beliefs held by Mrs. Cooke and many of her contemporaries. As a matter of fact this is confirmed by Mrs.

¹⁷⁴Ibid., p. 119.

¹⁷⁵Ibid., p. 120.

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Cooke herself in some of the statements she made in an article written in 1890. At that time she said:

...Christ laid down the law of divorce in words too simple and direct to be misconstrued or evaded; and the human reasons for this law are equally plain...My own feeling is strong against any remarriage after separation by death. I think to a pure, delicate, faithful woman there can be but one marriage in her life...¹⁷⁶

Two and a half years after this article appeared the Cooke's were separated by Rose's death on July 18, 1892.

It has not been possible to learn the exact cause of Mrs. Cooke's death for no official records are available and the newspapers and magazine articles of the time varied in their reports of it from grippe to pneumonia, and from a heart attack to chronic invalidism. Undoubtedly all four were contributing factors. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Cooke herself mentioned the nature of her last illness in two letters written seventeen months before her death. On February 16, 1891 she wrote to Atlantic editor Henry E. Scudder:

¹⁷⁶Mary A. Livermore, Amelia E. Barr, Rose Terry Cooke, et al., "Women's Views of Divorce," North American Review, January 1890, Vol. 150, p. 124.

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...I take this opportunity to say that I was very sorry not to see you and Mrs. Scudder in Boston. I saw but a few people and could only leave cards instead of returning their calls; a venturous journey to the hospital here which nobody ever expected me to leave, and a long stay there have turned me out a chronic invalid. The grippe in Boston and again in Pittsfield are too much for one old woman...¹⁷⁷

A week later she said to Mr. Scudder about her health:

...I am about to try a patent medicine to the disgust of my husband, and in great terror of my orthodox doctor, but 'drowning men catch at a straw,' you know!¹⁷⁸

Of course it is not possible to know just how lighthearted Mrs. Cooke really was about her health. Being an intelligent woman, she obviously knew that her time was short because of her chronic illnesses and that she would have to make some plans accordingly. It has been said,¹⁷⁹ although there is no proof, that Mrs. Cooke asked to be buried in Collinsville, Connecticut in the Terry family plot. Such a request, in the light of her devotion to her husband,

¹⁷⁷Ms letter Houghton Library, Harvard.

¹⁷⁸Ms letter Houghton Library, Harvard.

¹⁷⁹Statement made by Dr. E. M. Gallaudet, Hartford Daily Courant, Wednesday February 5, 1913, p. 17, Cols 1-7.

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appears puzzling. Unless, of course, she thought he would one day also be buried there. As it turned out, however, he was buried in Pittsfield Cemetery in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, having died in that city December 10, 1904 as the result of burns suffered in an accident.

Whatever life was like for Rollin Cooke after his wife's death is not known but the last five years of it must have been for him somewhat satisfying for he received much acclaim as a local genealogist. A statement that he "drank a lot,"... "Yes, his whole trouble was that he drank," ¹⁸⁰ may be the key to much of his earlier misplaced ambition. Yet on the other hand it may have had nothing at all to do with his previous misfortune, being merely a palliative against the loneliness which followed his wife's death.

To the Berkshire Athenaeum in Pittsfield, Rollin Cooke gave some of his wife's unpublished manuscripts. To America at large, Rose Terry Cooke herself gave stories of the plain people of her region. Of course just what effect these sketches have had upon other portrayals of New England local color would involve a separate study. Here it may be

¹⁸⁰Personal statement June 20, 1952, Miss F. G. Clark, Pittsfield.

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enough to say Van Wyck Brooks' opinion is "Rose Terry Cooke was the founder of the school that produced Miss Jewett, Miss Wilkins, and Alice Brown."¹⁸¹ Because this paper is limited, however, only a discussion of the possible influences on Mrs. Cooke's own writings will be attempted.

So far as can be determined from her correspondence and from her stories, Rose Terry Cooke read the writings of Austen, the Brownings, Burns, Defoe, Dickens, Richardson, Scott, Shakespeare and several other English writers. The American writers she read were Emerson, Thoreau, Longfellow, Lowell, Whittier, Stowe and many other New England contemporaries. It is doubtful that she read much of Poe, Melville, or Whitman once she knew of their reputation. Yet, her attitude toward them may have been much the same as it was toward Byron, of whom she said in a letter on December 26, 1885 to Benjamin H. Ticknor:

...And the book is doubly welcome
because I have never read Childe
Harold. Think of that. Should I
not be sent to Barnum as a specimen?
But in my day Byron was tabooed by
nice people like my best of mothers,
and I never broke over these restric-
tions after I might have done so.
Now, you see, I shall have a new
sensation!...¹⁸²

¹⁸¹Brooks, op. cit., p. 86.

¹⁸²Ms letter Library of Congress.

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From Dickens, Mrs. Cooke may have gotten some techniques for characterization, but beyond that possibility no direct English influence can be traced in her work. So far as American influences are concerned there is no basis in fact for the theory that Harriet Beecher Stowe led the way for Mrs. Cooke.* During the time Harriet Beecher Stowe lived in Hartford, Connecticut (approximately 1864 to 1896), Rose Terry Cooke undoubtedly visited her. As a matter of fact, there is a record of one such occasion in a letter which Mrs. Cooke wrote from Chatham, Massachusetts, on October 28, 1864 to James T. Fields. In that letter Mrs. Cooke said:

...Mrs. Stowe sent for me to come and see her that she might tell me you wanted me to do something and when I saw her she seemed to have forgotten. However she said you wanted me to write; but I could not find out what or how...¹⁸³

This letter is not intended to prove that there is any correlation between proximity and influence. It is merely to show that Mrs. Stowe and Mrs. Cooke were literary friends who passed along to each other information about their trade.

* See footnote 59.
¹⁸³Ms letter Henry E. Huntington Library.

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Harriet Beecher Stowe and Rose Terry Cooke were colleagues, nothing more. Each had a story in the first issue of the Atlantic in November 1857, and each had success before her appearance in the Atlantic. Of course Mrs. Stowe knew more than success before 1857. She had achieved international fame for Uncle Tom's Cabin published in book form in 1852. This certainly dwarfed Mrs. Cooke's accomplishment of having her first major story, "The Mormon's Wife," published anonymously in the June 1855 issue of Putnam's. Nevertheless, it is the combination of time and material (the country characters in "The Mormon's Wife" start out from Plainfield, Connecticut) which irrefutably establishes Mrs. Cooke's position as a forerunner of New England local color artists. Mrs. Stowe's New England characters did not appear in leading periodicals until after the publication of Uncle Tom's Cabin.

One likeness common to Harriet Beecher Stowe and to Rose Terry Cooke was Yankee ingenuity. Although the work of neither will be classed as great literature, both insured for themselves varying degrees of success through the simple formula of anticipating and meeting literary demands and changes. Of course the fame which has finally come to Uncle Tom's Cabin has not been through the cause it

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supported but through the characters it left behind. Two dimensional, these were sensational, much like those later created by Bret Harte. On the other hand some of the three dimensional characters of Mrs. Cooke were believable.

Though not flamboyant, these have lasted because they are as real now as they were then and because they did things that real people do. They went west to seek new lands and homes, they went to war, they killed off wives and children through ignorance, overwork, bad diet, and lack of recreation. They fought the prejudices of their ministers and doctors, and they went counter to the belief of one of their greatest neighbors, Thoreau, when they yearned for the railroad--for "a fresh breath of hopeful air that the mere passage of a railway train would bring."¹⁸⁴ Thus, many of Rose Terry Cooke's characters continue to live because they tell the history of the country people of New England.

The preface which Mrs. Cooke wrote for her final volume of collected short stories, Huckleberries Gathered from New England Hills may also be used as her own epitaph:

¹⁸⁴Cooke, "The West Shetucket Railroad," The Independent, Vol. 24; September 12, 1872, p. 24.

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...a wild berry...typical of the New England character. Hardy, sweet yet spicy, defying storms of heat or cold with calm persistence, clinging to poor soil, barren pastures, gray and rocky hillsides, yet drawing fruitful issues from scanty sources...¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵Cooke, op. cit., preface.

CONCLUSIONS

The problem of this study has been to present Rose Terry Cooke (1827-1892) as New England's first short story writer to make the transition from romanticism to realism. Conclusive proof has been drawn from critical analyses of specific local color stories which she wrote over a forty-year period, and from an investigation which has failed to disclose in several Eastern literary periodicals the existence of this New England genre before 1855, the year which saw Mrs. Cooke's first stories.

Although Rose Terry Cooke occasionally used a regional motif in her poems, this study's first chapter has shown that the bulk of her verse was derivative, much after the style of Longfellow and Mrs. Browning. From a moderate examination of her poems, therefore, this report concludes that Mrs. Cooke was no experimenter in verse, no Walt Whitman or Emily Dickinson. Those of her poems that are lyric have been relegated to the dustbins of literature; some that are regional and some that tell of the colorful history of the United States have continued to be anthologized.

That the history of the American short story is the history of the early magazinists has been evidenced in Chapter Two. Also, this section has not only stressed the local color elements--speech and custom--in the stories

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Rose Terry Cooke wrote anonymously in the later 1850's, it has proved that "The Mormon's Wife," Mrs. Cooke's first story in a major periodical, was published in Putnam's not Graham's when she was twenty-eight, not eighteen years of age as suggested by Fred Lewis Pattee.

In this chapter there is also proof of Mrs. Cooke's ability to write at different levels simultaneously. In the first few years of her magazine writing she contributed some wholly sentimental pieces to Harper's, while to Putnam's and to the Atlantic Monthly she furnished stories of a local color nature. This portion also concludes that not all of the early stories in the Atlantic, including Rose Terry Cooke's, were without the mawkishness mentioned by Frank Luther Mott and by John Townsend Trowbridge. Further, this chapter has established Rose Terry Cooke as a pioneer of realism through "Miss Lucinda" in the August 1861 issue of the Atlantic.

Combined, the third and fourth chapters have revealed Mrs. Cooke at the peak and at the nadir of her fortunes. Here too is presented for the first time a discussion of Rose Terry Cooke's writing for young people. Also these sections have accounted for her shift from monthly literary publications to weekly religious periodicals, and have proved that while most of her writings in

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these weeklies were potboilers she was still able, if given the chance, to produce good material. Thus the conclusion drawn in Chapter IV is that the art--local color--which Rose Terry Cooke used to advance the American short story was indirectly the cause of her literary defeat. It was through this genre in the late 1870's and in the 1880's that she was outsold and outdistanced by Bret Harte who exploited the medium, and by Sarah Orne Jewett who developed it to its highest form.

While the last chapter has demonstrated Mrs. Cooke's inability to sustain interest in a work of fiction beyond short story length--her novel Steadfast proved this-- it has also shown that the faculty for satisfying editors which she displayed from the start of her career lasted all the days of her life. The proof is in "A Town Mouse and A Country Mouse" in the August 1891 issue of the Atlantic.

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ABSTRACT

No substantial study has ever been made of the life and work of Rose Terry Cooke (1827-1892), who in leading magazines of the day advanced the American short story by her sketches of New England country and village life.

The problem of this thesis has been to fulfill the need for such a study, and to prove that Mrs. Cooke was New England's first short story writer to make the transition from romanticism to the beginnings of realism through local color. Conclusive proof of Mrs. Cooke's status as a transitional figure has been drawn from critical analyses of specific local color stories which she wrote over a forty-year period, and from an investigation which has failed to disclose in several Eastern literary periodicals the existence of this New England genre before 1855, the year which saw Mrs. Cooke's first stories.

This study, which is based on original materials--public documents, unpublished correspondence, and the author's writings--has shown that Mrs. Cooke's beginning authorship was in poetry. A moderate examination of these poems (Chapter I) has revealed her to be no experimenter in verse, no Walt Whitman or Emily Dickinson; the bulk of her poetry was derivative, much after the style of Longfellow and Mrs. Browning. Those of Mrs. Cooke's poems that are

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lyric have been relegated to the dustbins of literature; some that are regional and some that tell of the colorful history of the United States have continued to be anthologized.

Chapter II has evidenced that the history of the American short story is the history of its early magazinists. This section has also stressed the local color elements--speech and custom--in the stories Rose Terry Cooke wrote anonymously in the late 1850's; it has also proved that "The Mormon's Wife," Mrs. Cooke's first story in a major periodical, was published in Putnam's not Graham's when she was twenty-eight, not eighteen years of age as suggested by Fred Lewis Pattee.

This chapter has also proved Mrs. Cooke's ability to write at different levels simultaneously. In the first few years of her magazine writing she contributed some wholly sentimental pieces to Harper's, while to Putnam's and to the Atlantic Monthly she furnished stories of a local color nature. This portion also concludes that not all of the early stories in the Atlantic, including Rose Terry Cooke's, were without the mawkishness mentioned by Frank Luther Mott, and by John Townsend Trowbridge. Further, this chapter establishes Rose Terry Cooke as a pioneer of realism through "Miss Lucinda" in the August 1861 issue of the

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Atlantic.

Combined, the third and fourth chapters have revealed Mrs. Cooke at the peak and at the nadir of her fortunes. Here too is presented for the first time a discussion of her writing for young people. Also these sections have accounted for her shift from monthly literary publications to weekly religious periodicals, and have proved that while most of her writings in these weeklies were potboilers, she was still able, if given the chance, to produce good material. Chapter IV has concluded that the art (local color) which Rose Terry Cooke used to advance the American short story was indirectly the cause of her literary defeat, for it was through this genre in the late 1870's and in the 1880's that she was outsold and outdistanced by Bret Harte, who exploited the medium, and by Sarah Orne Jewett, who developed it to its highest form.

While the last chapter has demonstrated Mrs. Cooke's inability to sustain interest in a work of fiction beyond short story length, it has also shown that the faculty for satisfying editors which she displayed from the start of her career lasted all the days of her life. The proof is in "A Town Mouse and A Country Mouse" in the August 1891 issue of the Atlantic.

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In summarizing Mrs. Cooke's contribution to American literature, this final chapter has also shown that Rose Terry Cooke always kept her finger on the pulse of social, political, national and literary affairs, and that the application of these happenings to the people of her own region established her formula for literary development.

Rose Terry Cooke's accomplishment of literary transition was all the more singular because it was without any significant guidance from the two major American literary critics of her day, James Russell Lowell and Willian Dean Howells. It is doubtful that either could have helped her anyway because Lowell's interests were primarily in the past and Howell's tenets for realism came too late. Thus, like any alert writer, Rose Terry Cooke through her observation of people and events anticipated change.

