

LILIAN WHITING

LOUISE CHANDLER
MOULTON, POET AND
FRIEND

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Louise Chandler Moulton, Poet and Friend:

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Lilian Whiting Louise Chandler Moulton, Poet and Friend

CHAPTER I 1835-1853

The poet in a golden clime was born
With golden stars above.—Tennyson.

The lingering charm of a dream that is fled.—L.C.M.

GENIUS, love, and friendship make up a triple dower which holds within itself the possibilities of high destiny. Their changing combinations comprise all intensities of human joy and human sorrow: the richness of sympathetic companionship; the enchantments of romance; the glow and passion of artistic achievement; and that power of initiating noble service which invests life with the

loveliness of perfect deeds

More strong than all poetic thought.

In few lives have these possibilities been more fully realized than in that of Louise Chandler Moulton, poet and friend, and lover of the beautiful. Poet born and poet made, she developed her natural lyric gift into a rare mastery of poetic art. She wore her singing-ropes with an unconscious grace, and found in her power of song the determining influence which colored and shaped her life. Her lyrics were the spontaneous expression, the natural out-pouring, of a lofty and beautiful spirit. Her poetic instinct radiated in her ardent and generous sympathies, her exquisite interpretations of sentiment and feeling; it informed all her creative work with a subtle charm pervasive as the fragrance of a rose. Her artistic impulse was, indeed, the very mainspring of her life; it expressed itself not only in the specific forms of lyrics and of prose romance, but in her varied range of friendships and in her intense and discriminating love of literature. Mrs. Moulton was not of the order of the poet who

puts what he hath of poetry in his verse
And leaves none for his life.

Her life as well as her art expressed her gift of song. She was a poet not only in singing, but no less in living. Her friendships were singularly wide and eclectic, determined always from the inner vision. They were the friendships of mutual recognition and of sympathetic ministry. Her tenderness of feeling responded to

every human need. Others might turn away from the unattractive; to her the simple fact that kindness was needed was a claim which she could not deny.

This was the more striking from the fact that from her early girlhood her gifts, her culture, and her personal charm won recognition in the most brilliant circles. To be as unconsciously gracious to peasant as to prince was in her very nature. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, alluding to Mrs. Moulton's social prestige in London, wrote:

"... It is pleasant to feel that she owes this result quite as much to her qualities of character as to her gifts of intellect. There never lived, perhaps, a more thoroughly open-hearted and generous woman; and the poorest and least gifted applicant might always seek her as successfully as the most famous and influential."

This symmetry of character, a certain fine balance of the gifts of mind and heart, was the natural outcome, it may be, of a worthy ancestry. So far as is known, the Chandlers lived originally in Hampshire, England, where, in the sixteenth century, arms were granted to them. Many of these Chandlers were men distinguished in their day. In 1887 was commemorated at Philadelphia the two hundredth anniversary of the arrival in this country of one of the first Chandlers known to have immigrated. This was a follower of Fox, who fled from persecution, and settled in Pennsylvania. A group of ten English Puritans settled long before the Revolution in what was afterward

the township of Pomfret, Connecticut: and from one of these was descended Lucius Chandler, the father of Louise. The Chandler family throughout gave evidence of decided intellectual ability, and this was strengthened by marriages with other sound Puritan stock. Through her paternal grandmother Mrs. Moulton was descended from the Rev. Aaron Cleveland, of literary reputation in the late eighteenth century, and of account in his day as a wit. This relationship linked her in remote cousinship with Edmund Clarence Stedman, a tie which both cherished. The two poets congratulated themselves on a common great-grandmother who was a classical scholar, famed for her familiarity with Greek.

Lucius L. Chandler married Louisa Rebecca Clark, also of good English ancestry. Mrs. Chandler has been described by Harriet Prescott Spofford as "a gentle, gracious woman, a noted beauty in her youth, but singularly free from the vanity and selfishness of most noted beauties." The only surviving child of this marriage was born at Pomfret on April 10, 1835, and was christened Ellen Louise. Mr. Chandler's farm lay on the edge of the quiet Connecticut town, the landscape pleasantly diversified by adjacent hills and forests, and the modest, comfortable home was surrounded by flowers and trees. In later years, recalling her childhood, Mrs. Moulton wrote:

My thoughts go home to that old brown house
With its low roof sloping down to the east,
And its garden fragrant with roses and thyme
That blossom no longer except in rhyme,

Where the honey-bees used to feast.

Afar in the west the great hills rose,
Silent and steadfast, and gloomy and gray.
I thought they were giants, and doomed to keep
Their watch while the world should wake or sleep,
Till the trumpet should sound on the judgment-day.

And I was as young as the hills were old,
And the world was warm with the breath of spring;
And the roses red and the lilies white
Budded and bloomed for my heart's delight,
And the birds in my heart began to sing.

A winsome little sprite seems Ellen Louise to have been, revealing, even in her earliest years, a quaint touch of her father's courtly dignity combined with her mother's refinement and unerring sense of the amenities of life. Mrs. Chandler's fastidious taste and a certain innate instinct for the fitness of things, invested her always with a personal elegance that surrounded her like an atmosphere. A picture lived in her daughter's memory of her arriving one day, in a bonnet with pink roses, to visit the school; and of her own childish thought that no other little girl had so pretty a mother as her own. In after years she pictured, in one of her sonnets, this beloved mother:

How shall I here her placid picture paint
With touch that shall be delicate, yet sure?

Soft hair above a brow so high and pure
Years have not soiled it with an earthly taint,
Needing no aureole to prove her saint;
Firm mind that no temptation could allure;
Soul strong to do, heart stronger to endure;
And calm, sweet lips that utter no complaint.
So have I seen her, in my darkest days,
And when her own most sacred ties were riven,
Walk tranquilly in self-denying ways,
Asking for strength, and sure it would be given;
Filling her life with lowly prayer, high praise,—
So shall I see her, if we meet in heaven.

The little maid's schooldays seem to have begun before she was out of the nursery, for a tiny relic has drifted down the years, in the form of a very brilliant rose painted on a slip of paper,—the paper faded and yellow with age, the rose as fresh as if colored yesterday,—bearing the legend: "Miss Ellen L. Chandler deserves my approbation for good behavior in school. Charlotte Taintor." And this documentary evidence of the good behavior of "Miss Ellen" is dated August, 1839, when she was but little past her fourth birthday. It is pleasant to know that the future poet began her earthly career in a fashion so exemplary; and a further testimonial exists in a page which has survived for nearly seventy years, on which a relative, a friendly old gentleman, had written, in 1840, lines "To Little Ellen," which run in part:

Ah, lovely child! the thought of thee

Still fills my heart with gladness;
Whene'er thy cherub face I see
Its smiles dispel my sadness.

This artless ditty continues through many stanzas, and contains one line at which the reader to-day can but smile sympathetically:

Thy seraph voice with music breathing;

for this rhapsodical phrase connects itself with the many tributes paid in later life to her "golden voice." Whittier, expressing his desire to meet "the benediction of thy face," alludes also to the music of her tones. That the voice is an index of the soul is a theory which may easily be accepted by those who have in memory the clear, soft speech of Mrs. Moulton. Often was she playfully entreated to

lend to the rhyme of the poet
The music of thy voice;

the lines seeming almost to have been written to describe her recital of poetry.

The fairies who came to the christening of this golden-haired and golden-voiced child seemed, indeed, to have given her all good gifts in full measure. She was endowed with beauty and with genius; she was born into surroundings of liberal comfort and of

refinement; into prosperity which made possible the gratification of all reasonable desires and aspirations of a gifted girl. It was her fortune through life to be sheltered from material anxieties. To a nature less sensitively perceptive of the needs and sorrows of others, to one less generous and tender, the indulgence which fell to her as an only and idolized child, might have fostered that indifference to the condition of those less favored which deprives its possessor of the richest experiences of life. With her to see need or misfortune was to feel the instant impulse to relieve or at least to alleviate the suffering. Colonel Higginson, in recalling her life in England said:

"I shall never forget, in particular, with what tears in his eyes the living representative of Philip Bourke Marston spoke to me in London of her generous self-devotion to his son, the blind poet, of whom she became the editor and biographer."

Emerson has declared that comforts and advantages are good if one does not use them as a cushion on which to go to sleep. With Mrs. Moulton her native gifts seemed to generate aspiration and effort for noble achievement.

Among the schoolmates of her childish years was the boy who was afterward the artist Whistler, who was one year her senior. As children they often walked home from school together, and one night the little girl was bewailing that she could not draw a map like the beautiful one he had displayed to an admiring group that day. It was a gorgeous creation in colored crayons,

an "arrangement" that captivated the village school with much the same ardor that the future artist was destined to inspire from the art connoisseurs of two continents. A sad object, indeed, was the discordant affair that Ellen Louise held up in self-abasement and hopelessness while she poured out her enthusiasm on his achievement. The lad received this praise with lofty scorn. "That's nothing," he exclaimed; "you think this is anything? Take it; I don't want it; you just see what I can do to-morrow! I'll bring you then something worth talking about." And with the precious trophy in her possession, the little girl made her way home. True to his word, the next morning "Jimmy" brought her a package whose very wrapping revealed the importance of its contents; and when she had breathlessly opened it, there was disclosed an exquisite little painting. Under a Gothic arch that breathed—no one knew what enchanted hints of "the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome," or some far-away dreams of Venice, or other dimly prefigured marvel in the child's fancy, was an old monk; through the picture were silver gleams, and a vague glint of purple, and altogether, it held some far prophecy of the brilliant future yet undisclosed. All her life Mrs. Moulton kept the gift. It had an unobtrusive place in her drawing-room, and even figured modestly at the great Whistler exhibition which was held in Boston by the Copley Society after the death of the artist.

In some ways Ellen Louise had a rather lonely childhood save that an imaginative and poetic nature peoples a world of its own. The little girl had, as it chanced, no playmates near at hand to

supply the place of brothers and sisters; and her companions were those that fancy created. In later years she wrote of this period:

"I never felt alone. Dream children companioned me, and were as real to my thoughts as if other eyes than my own could have seen them. Their sorrows saddened me, their mirth amused me, they shared my visions, my hopes; and the strange dread with which I—brought up in a Puritan household where election and predestination were familiar words—looked forward to the inevitable end.

"Yet haunted as I was by the phantom future, I was happy in the present. I am afraid I was what is called a spoiled child. I loved horses and I loved verses, and on my eighth birthday two presents were made me—a well-equipped saddle horse, and a book of poems. The horse ran away with me that same afternoon while my too sociable father, who was riding with me, stopped to talk town politics with a neighbor; but my steed raced homeward, and I reached my own door in safety. The book of verse I have yet. It was by Mrs. Hemans—now so cruelly forgotten."

Her imaginative nature showed itself in many ways. She says:

"I was not allowed to read fiction or to play any but the most serious games.... Hence I was thrown upon my own resources for amusement. I remember when I was only eight years old carrying in my head all the summer a sort of Spanish drama, as I called it, though I knew little of Spain except some high-sounding Spanish names which I gave to my characters. Each day, as soon as I could get away by myself, I summoned these characters as if my

will had been a sort of invisible call-boy, and then watched them performing. It did not seem to me that I created them, but rather that I summoned them, and their behavior often astonished me. For one of them, a young girl, who obstinately persisted in dying of consumption, I sincerely grieved."

She had written from the age of seven verses which would hardly have discredited her maturer years. A stanza written when she was nine runs:

Autumn is a pleasant time
Breathing beauty in our clime;
Even its flowerets breathe of love
Which is sent us from above.

The lines seem to have written themselves, but as Autumn had been assigned as a theme-subject at school she dealt with it also in prose. She began with the assertion: "Autumn to the contemplative mind is the loveliest season of the year"; and closed with the rather startling line: "All these are beautiful, but let us leave the contemplation of them until another winter dawns on the languid sea of human life." One almost wonders that under a training which permitted English so florid Mrs. Moulton was able to develop her admirable style. At ten she was writing "An Address to the Ocean" and a meditation on "Hope." Another effort was "The Bell of My Native City," and this she explained in a footnote as an imaginative composition, composed to express

the feelings of an exile who had been "unjustly banished from his country." She was taken a few months later on a little trip to "Tribes Hill" on the Mohawk, and in a "History of My Journey Home from Tribes Hill" records gravely:

"It was a beautiful September morning that ushered in the day of my departure. I rose with the first dawning of light to gaze once more upon those scenes whose loveliness I had so loved to trace. I rejoiced to pay a tribute of gratitude to some of the many friends whose society had contributed so much to my happiness when away from the home of my childhood.... At noon I started.... For many a mile, as we were drawn with dazzling rapidity by our wild steam horse (whose voice resounded like the rolling of distant thunder), I could catch glimpses of the dark blue waters of the Mohawk, which I had so loved to gaze upon, and to whose music I had so often listened in the hush of evening, from my open window, or when walking on its green banks with a friend, dearly loved and highly prized, but whom I shall, perhaps, meet no more forever.... As I rode along my thoughts reverted to her. The river gleaming in quiet beauty from beneath the green foliage of its fringing trees reminded me of the hours we had spent together in contemplating it. The excitement of travelling and the loved home to which I was hastening were alike forgotten in these reveries of the past."

A sentence of more than a hundred and fifty words that follows quite graphically depicts a walk taken with this friend, and the child continued:

"From such reveries of the past was I awakened by the stopping of the cars at Albany. That night we embarked on board a steamboat, and as we glided o'er the Hudson river, my heart bounded with delight. I stood alone before an open window, and my soul drank in the richness of the scene."

One can but smile at this rhapsody of the child of eleven, but it is after all suggestive of literary powers genuine if undeveloped. It shows, too, a nature sensitive to beauty and a heart full of quick responsiveness to friendship. The gifts of the woman are foreshadowed even in the extravagances of the girl.

The blank books in which Louise recorded her impressions and thoughts and copied out her verses in the years between eight and eighteen afford material for a curious study of unfolding tendencies. A religious meeting to which she is taken suggests a long dissertation on "The Missionary;" and this sketch assumes an imaginative form. The missionary and his bride are described as voyaging over the ocean to the field of his labors in these terms:

"... But when they had entirely lost sight of land Charles clasped his loved one to his heart and whispered, 'Be comforted, dearest; we go not alone, for is not He with us who said, "Lo, I am with thee always, even unto the end of the world!"'... The young bride burst into an agony of tears.... Her husband led her on deck, and showed her the sun's last, golden rays that lay upon the waves, sparkling like a thousand brilliants.... It seemed a sea of burning gold.... A high and holy resolve rose in the hearts of the

young missionaries.... They had left a circle of brilliant acquaintances for the untutored heathen.... They left the deck to sit down in a quiet nook and read the word of Him for whom they forsook all earthly pleasures."

Not only do the note-books give such hints of the future storyteller, but they abound in verse. It is noticeable that although much of this is crude and inevitably childish, it is yet remarkably free from false measures. The child had been gifted by heaven with an ear wonderfully true. The books contain also many quotations copied from the volumes she was from time to time reading. Moore, Mrs. Hemans, Tupper, Willis, Longfellow, Whittier, Campbell, are among the names found here most frequently. Curiously enough the record shows no trace of Scott, of Byron, of Wordsworth, or of Coleridge.

One of the felicitous orderings of her schooldays was that which placed her as a pupil of the Rev. Roswell Park, the Episcopal rector in Pomfret, and Principal of a school called Christ Church Hall. Here she easily carried off the honors when "compositions" were required.

"Will Miss Ellen Louise Chandler please remain a moment after the school is dismissed," was the disconcerting request of the teacher one day.

The purpose of the interview was a private inquiry where the girl had "found" the poem which she had read in the literary exercises of the afternoon.

"Why, I can't tell," she answered; "it all wrote itself from my

own mind."

The instructor looked at her earnestly for a moment,—this dainty young girl with the rose-flush deepening in her sweet face,—and replied: "Then I sincerely congratulate you." And she went on her way.

The commonplace books of her thirteenth year, kept while she was still a pupil at this school, show more clearly than ever the dawning power of the young poet. Her reading was not indiscriminate, but selective, inclining almost equally to poetry and to serious prose. Of the usual schoolgirl love of novels is little evidence; and this is the more curious as her fancy was active, and she was writing many stories. Literary form, also, was beginning to appeal to her, and she copies "A Remarkable Specimen of Alliteration."

She took life seriously in the fashion of her generation. It was a time when every girl loved a diminutive; she wrote her name "Nellie" and signed her verses "Nellie C." Those were the days of the annuals, "Friendship's Wreath," "The Literary Garland" and the like, and to these after once she began to see herself in print, "Nellie C." became quickly a favorite contributor.

She tasted the rapture of a poet born who first sees his verses in print, when she was fourteen. This is her account:

"I used to rhyme as long ago as I can remember anything, and I sent my first contribution to a newspaper when I was fourteen years old.... I remember how secretly, and almost as if it were a crime, I sent it in; and when I found

the paper one evening, upon calling at the post-office on my way home from school, and saw my lines—my very own lines—it seemed to me a much more wonderful and glorious event than has anything since that time.... Perhaps it was unfortunate for me that it was accepted at once, since it encouraged me in the habit of verse,—making a habit which future occupations confirmed. But one gain, at least, came to me,—the friendship and encouragement of authors whose work I loved. I was scarcely eighteen when my first book was published. I called it 'This, That, and the Other,' because it was made up of short stories, sketches (too brief and immature to call essays), and the rhymes into which, from the first, I put more of myself than into any other form of expression. Strangely enough, the book sold largely."

This early poem was printed in a daily of Norwich, Connecticut, and no recognition of after years could ever give quite the same thrill as this first sight of her name and her own verse in print.

Among her girl-friends was Virginia F. Townsend, later to be known also as a writer of stories and of verse, and the pair exchanged numerous rhymes, rather facile than poetic, but doubtless useful in the way of 'prentice work. A poem which Miss Chandler wrote in her sixteenth year and called "Lenore"—in those days every youthful rhymester rhymed to Lenore,—and designated as "for music," was much praised by the newspapers of the day. It is as admirably typical of the fashion of the day as the bonnets of the forties which one finds in a dusty attic.

Hush thy footfall, lightly tread;
Passing by a loved one's bed.
Dust hath gathered on her brow,
Silently she resteth now.

Sank she into dreamless rest
Clasping rosebuds to her breast;
With her forehead pale and fair
'Neath the midnight of her hair....

There we laid her down to sleep
Where the wild flowers o'er her weep.
Earth below and blue sky o'er,
Sweetly sleeps our own Lenore.

Another lyric, written about this time to Governor Cleveland on the death of his only daughter, contained these lines:

What time she braided up her hair
With summer buds and sprays of flowers,
It was as if some saint had shed
Heaven's light on this dim world of ours;
And kneeling where her feet have trod,
We watched to see the glory break
When angel fingers at the dawn
Heaven's portals opened for her sake.

Of these lines Edmund Clarence Stedman wrote with youthful

enthusiasm:

"This is almost equal to the picture of Madeline in 'The Eve of St. Agnes,' as she kneels before the oriel window of the casement, high and triple-arched, in all the holiness of prayer."

The stories which the young writer contributed to the gift-books bore the most startling titles: "Inez Caisco; or, The Flower of Catalonia"; "Beatrice; or, The Beautiful Tambourine Girl"; "Evilia; or, The Enchantress." Of Isabel Sydenham, the heroine of one of these tales, it is told that she "threw open her casement,"—no self-respecting story-teller of the mid-century called a window anything but a casement,—and sighed: "If he were only here, how we might enjoy the surpassing loveliness!" Of this sensitive creature, who naturally "yearns" for all sorts of impossible things, her creator remarks that "ideality was the predominating characteristic of her mind." According to gift-book standards no heroine could be more eminently satisfactory.

Not content with being a contributor to the annuals of others, Miss Chandler compiled a gift-book of her own: "The Book of the Boudoir; a Gift for All Seasons, Edited by Ellen Louise." By her publisher's insistence her own portrait formed the frontispiece, and the book contained also an engraving of Elmwood Cottage. The letter-press opened with an "Invocation to the Spirit of Poetry" by the youthful editor, and besides sketches and verses of her own the volume offered contributions by Mrs. Sigourney, Virginia F. Townsend, George S. Burleigh,

Amanda M. Douglas, and others.

With this publication Miss Chandler may be said to have come fully and formally into full-fledged authorship. She was deeply tinged with the sentimental fashions which reigned universally in America in the middle of the nineteenth century, and which had, indeed, by no means disappeared in England; but she had genuine feeling, a natural instinct for literary form, an ear unusually sensitive to metrical effect, and her real power had already shown itself unmistakably. From this time on her progress in her art was sure and constant.

One influence of her youthful environment may be mentioned here since it has been often commented upon. The strain of melancholy habitual in Mrs. Moulton's poetry has been ascribed to the shadow which was cast upon her childhood by the sternness of the Calvinistic faith. An English critic has written:

"She was brought up in abysmal Puritan Calvinism, and her slumber at night was disturbed by terrific visions of a future of endless torment. The doctrine of election pressed heavily on her youthful soul.... The whole upbringing of children in Puritan circles in those days was strict and stern to a degree impossible to be realized in a day when vulgar sentimentalism rules supreme, and when it is considered cruel and harsh to flog a rebellious boy. The way in which children were brought up by the Puritans of New England in Mrs. Moulton's day may have had its faults, but it turned out a class of person whom it is hopeless to expect the present day methods of education will ever be able to produce."

In this are both truth and exaggeration. The parents of Mrs. Moulton were, it is true, Calvinists, but they were neither bigots nor fanatics. The question was quite as much that of the sensitive, delicately responsive temperament of the child as of the doctrine in which she was reared. Being what she was, she realized to the full the possible horrors involved in the theology of the time, and imaginatively suffered intensely. She once said to a London interviewer:

"I remember that the Calvinistic doctrines I was taught filled my imagination with an awful foreboding of doom and despair. I can recall waking in the depth of the night, cold with horror, and saying to myself, 'Why, if I'm not among the elect, I *can't* be saved, no matter how hard I try,' and stealing along on my little bare feet to my mother's bed, praying to be taken in, with a vague sense that if I must be lost in the far future, at least now I must go where love could comfort me, and human arms shelter me from the shapeless terrors that mocked my solitude."

While, however, the lack of a more encouraging interpretation of Divine Goodness undoubtedly was to a degree responsible for the minor chords which became habitual in her verse, the natural longing which is part of the poetic nature, was in Mrs. Moulton unusually strong and was exaggerated by the literary modes of her day. On the whole the influences of her childhood were sweet and sound and wholesome. Her natural love of beauty was fed and developed, her inherent literary taste was nourished

by sympathy and by success, and her wonderful sensitiveness to literary form trained by early and constant practice. It is even possible that the very harshness of Calvinism, which was almost the only shadow, was a healthful influence which deepened and strengthened her art, that might without this have suffered from sunshine too uninterrupted.

CHAPTER II

1853-1860

A beautiful and happy girl
With step as light as summer air.—Whittier.

Her glorious fancies come from far
Beneath the silver evening-star,
And yet her heart is ever near.—Lowell.

At dawn of Love, at dawn of Life.—L.C.M.

IN a lyric written by Mrs. Moulton in after years, occurs the lovely line quoted above, which seems vividly to describe her as she stood, a girl of eighteen, on the threshold of a new phase of life.

Young as she was Miss Chandler had already, by her newspaper and magazine work, made for herself a reputation, and she now collected the papers which made up the volume spoken of in the previous chapter, "This, That, and the Other," with the encouraging result of a sale of twenty thousand copies. The *North American Review* was then almost the only magazine

in the country exclusively devoted to criticism and the intellectual life. Much of the best literary work of the time, in the way of fiction and poetry, appeared in such periodicals as *Godey's Lady's Book*, *Peterson's Magazine*, and the like; and to these Miss Chandler was a constant contributor. The weekly newspapers were rich in poems by Longfellow, Emerson, Whittier, the Cary sisters, N.P. Willis, Poe, and many others of permanent fame. Besides these, a host of the transient singers of the day, literary meteors, flitted across the firmament, not unfrequently with some song or story which individually was quite as worthy of recognition as were those of their contemporaries whose power to sustain themselves in longer flights and to make good the early promise has earned their title to permanent recognition. Mrs. Moulton's scrapbooks indicate how rich were the literary columns of the newspapers in those days. There being then no international copyright law, the American editor enriched his page with the latest poem of Browning, Tennyson, Swinburne, or Mrs. Browning. Longfellow, Whittier, Holmes, Dr. Parsons, Nora Perry, William Winter, the Stoddards (Richard Henry and Elizabeth), N.P. Willis, Saxe, Mrs. Stowe, Jean Ingelow, Miss Mulock, Aldrich, and Mary Clemmer, are largely represented in these old scrapbooks. Many fugitive poems, too, appear, as the "Bertha" of Anne Whitney, a poem well entitled to literary immortality; the "Three Kisses of Farewell," by Saxe Holm; the "Unseen Spirits," by Willis, a poem too little known; and Mr. Aldrich's "The Unforgiven," excluded from his later editions, but

which contains those beautiful lines:

In the East the rose of morning biddeth fair to blossom soon,
But it never, never blossoms in this picture; and the moon
Never ceases to be crescent, and the June is always June.

Miss Chandler's book was one of over four hundred pages, illustrated by the famous Rouse (whose portrait of Emerson has always been so highly considered), and its fine engravings and its binding of crimson cloth combined to give it a sumptuous appearance. The *Springfield Republican* gave it pleasant recognition in these words:

"The writings of a young girl still on the threshold of life and still to be regarded as a bright, incarnate promise,—her writings are very graceful, very tender, and very beautiful, just what the flowers of life's spring should be."

The young author dedicated her book to her mother in tender phrase, and her artless "Preface" was one to disarm any adverse view.

In after years Mrs. Moulton smilingly replied to some questions regarding her initiation into authorship:

"I remember the huge posters with which they placarded the walls, headed, 'Read this book and see what a girl of eighteen can do.' I think I had the grace to be a little shocked at these posters, but the reviews were so kind, and said such lovely things that—Ah! shall I ever be so happy again as

when I read them!"

Edmund Clarence Stedman, who had just left Yale College and who, at the beginning of his literary career, was editing a country paper in Connecticut, greeted Miss Chandler's book with the ardent praise of youth and friendship; but these warm phrases of approval were also the almost unanimous expression of all the reviewers of the day. The twentieth century reader may smile at Mr. Stedman's youthful distrust of the "strong-minded woman," but his remarks are interesting. Of "This, That, and the Other," he wrote:

"'This, That, and the Other,' is a collection of prose sketches and verse from the pen of a young lady fast rising into a literary reputation; a reputation which, though it is achieved in no 'Uncle Tom' or 'Fanny Fern' mode, is no less sure than that of Mrs. Stowe, or Sara Payson Willis, and will be more substantial, in that the works on which it is founded are more classic and in better taste.... Miss Chandler is a native of Pomfret in this state, and every denizen of Connecticut should be proud of her talents. She is beautiful and interesting; her manners are in marked distinction from the forwardness of the strong-minded woman of the day...."

Epes Sargent, in the *Boston Transcript*, said:

"... The ladies have invaded the field of fiction and carried off its most substantial triumphs. Mrs. Stowe, Fanny Fern, and now another name, if the portents do not deceive us, is about to be added—that of Miss Chandler, who although the youngest of the band (she is not yet

nineteen), is overflowing with genius and promise. Such tales as those of 'Silence Adams,' 'A Husking Party at Ryefield,' 'Agnes Lee,' and 'Only an Old Maid,' reveal the pathos, the beauty, the power, the depth and earnestness of emotion that Ellen Louise has the art of transfusing into the humblest and most commonplace details.... But Ellen Louise must not be deceived by injudicious admiration. Her style, purified, chastened and subdued, would lose none of its attractiveness. She gives evidence of too noble a habit of thought to desire the success which comes of the hasty plaudits of the hour."

The book reviewing of 1853 was apparently not unlike the spelling of George Eliot's poor Mr. Tulliver,—"a matter of private judgment." For although the stories of Ellen Louise were singularly sweet and winsome in their tone, with an unusual grasp of sentiment and glow of fancy for so youthful and inexperienced a writer, they could yet hardly claim to rank with the work of Mrs. Stowe. The leading papers of that day united, however, in an absolute chorus of praise for the young author, who is pronounced "charming," and "overflowing with talent"; the "refinement and delicacy" of her work, her "rare maturity of thought and style," and a myriad other literary virtues were discerned and celebrated to the extent that the resources of the language of the country would allow. A sonnet was written to her, signed "B.P.S.," which signature is easily translated to us in these days as that of B.P. Shillaber, the author of "Mrs. Partington." The sonnet is entitled:

TO ELLEN LOUISE

Take this, and that, and t'other all together,
We like you better every day we're breathing;
And round our hearts this pleasant summer weather
Your fairy fingers deathless flowers are weaving:
We read delightedly your charming pages
Fraught in each line with truth and magic beauty;
Here starts a tear that some hid woe assuages,
And there is heard a voice that calls to duty.
And proudly may Connecticut, sweet Ellen,
Point to the genius bright that crowns her daughter,
And the rare graces that she doth excel in,
Confessed in floods of praise from every quarter.
The world forgives the wooden nutmeg suction
Because of you, the best Connecticut production.

The succeeding year Miss Chandler passed at Mrs. Willard's Seminary in Troy, N.Y., and a classmate, who in after years became the wife of General Gillespie, thus describes her:

"My acquaintance with Louise Chandler began when she entered Mrs. Willard's Seminary in Troy, where we were both pupils. She was at once very much admired and beloved. Her first book, called 'This, That, and the Other,' had been published just before she came, and we were all very proud of her authorship. She had a lovely face,

very fair, with beautiful, wavy, sunny hair, falling on either side the deep blue-gray eyes, with their dark, long lashes. Her voice was clear and sweet, with the most cultivated intonation."

For the school Commencement Miss Chandler was chosen class poet, and produced the regulation poem, neither better nor worse than is usual on such occasions. Six weeks later, August 27, 1855, she married William Upham Moulton, editor and publisher of *The True Flag*, a Boston literary journal to which his bride had been a frequent contributor.

The journalists of the day made many friendly comments upon the marriage of their brother editor. Some of them ran thus:

"The possession of a noble and true heart in the one, and of a gentle and winning nature in the other, are presages of future bliss."

"Mr. Moulton is a writer of much originality of style and great power; an independent thinker, shrewd in conclusions and fearless in expression. Miss Chandler overflows with kindness, geniality, appreciation of the lovely, and the power of description to a remarkable degree."

"... Of his choice the world can speak. Her literary attainments have made their public mark, and her kindness of heart has won for her an eminent place in the affections of thousands. Our associate may well be congratulated on his acquisition of a new contributor to his happiness, and pardoned, in view of the richness of his prize, for leaving the fair of our own locality for more distant Connecticut."

One of the girlish pictures of Miss Chandler bears the inscription, in her own writing, "Taken the day I first saw my husband," but unfortunately, the date is not given. In a little sketch Harriet Prescott Spofford remarks that "Louise must have combined studying, writing, and love-making to a rather remarkable degree during her last year at school"; and adds in regard to her marriage:

"She was barely twenty when she married William Upham Moulton, a man of culture and of much personal attraction. Lingered a moment on the church porch in the sunset light, she has been described by one who saw her as a radiant being, in her bridal veil, blooming, blushing, full of life and joy and love. An exquisite skin, the 'rose crushed on ivory,' hazel eyes, with dark lashes and brows, and a confiding, fearless glance, small white teeth, a delightful smile, cheek and chin having the antique line, all united to make a loveliness which no portrait has successfully rendered, and which tender consideration and grace of manner accented to wonderful charm."

Among her girlish treasures preserved for more than fifty years was a small blank book, on the fly-leaf of which she had written: "Ellen Louise Chandler Moulton, from my husband, Aug. 27, 1855, Elmwood Cottage, Pomfret, Conn.," and underneath in quotation, the lines:

"Who shall decide? The bridal day, oh, make it
A day of sacrament and present prayer;

Though every circumstance conspire to take it
Out of the common prophecy of care!
Let not vain merriment and giddy laughter
Be the last sound in the departing ear,
For God alone can tell what cometh after—
What store of sorrow, or what cause to fear."

Mr. Moulton brought his bride to Boston, where she was at once introduced into those literary circles made up of the chief men and women of letters. "Here," said one who remembers her entrance into Boston life, "the bright, quick, impassioned girl speedily blossomed into the brilliant woman." In some reminiscences of her own in recalling this delightful period she said:

"Every one was very good to me—Dr. Holmes, Longfellow, Whittier—all those on whose work I had been brought up. And then the broader religious thought of Boston began to conquer the Puritanism in which I had been educated. Whittier was a Quaker, but he believed most of all in the loving Fatherhood of God,—the Divine care which would somehow, somewhere, make creation a blessing to all on whom had been bestowed the unsought gift of life. He told me once how this conviction first came to him. It was a touching anecdote of his childhood when his mother's tenderness to the erring aroused in him the perception of the goodness of God. Whittier was a singularly modest man; if one praised his work he would say, 'Yes, but there should be a perfection of form, and what I do is full of faults.' Once,

at an evening party, he was vainly entreated to recite one of his poems. 'No,' he said, 'but I wish she would,' pointing to me. I then read 'The Swan Song of Parson Avery,' and when I had finished he came across the room and said, 'Why, thee has really made me think I've written a beautiful poem.'

"No words could overpraise the sweet graciousness of Longfellow and Dr. Holmes to me, a new-comer into their world. I knew Ralph Waldo Emerson, also. The very last time I saw him he had just returned from California, and he crossed the Athenæum Library, where we chanced to be, to ask me if I had ever been there myself and had seen the big trees. 'Why,' he said, 'it took thirteen horses to go round one tree, the head of one touching the tail of another—what do you think of that?'

"I remember once, when I was a guest in his house in Concord, his telling me that he had long wanted to make an anthology of the one-poem men. And he went on to speak of the poets who were remembered by only one poem. He never carried out his idea, but I wish some one else might."

It was a rich and stimulating atmosphere into which Mrs. Moulton entered in Boston. The first winter after her marriage Thackeray visited this country and gave in Boston, in January of that year (1856), his lectures on "The Four Georges." In recalling these, Mrs. Moulton afterward said:

"I sat close to the platform, thoroughly entranced, and longing to speak to him—this great man! longing with all a romantic schoolgirl's ardor and capacity for hero-worship. I never missed a lecture. The last day and the last lecture

came, and as Mr. Thackeray came from the platform he bent toward me and said: 'I shall miss the kind, encouraging face that has sat beneath me for so many hours'; and I was too surprised to be able to answer him a word. But it is a memory that has never left me."

Boston in the fifties had little to boast of in the artistic line. Henry James, writing of Hawthorne's time, noted with amusement the devotion to the "attenuated outlines" of Flaxman's drawings. The classic old Athenæum contained practically all that the city could offer in the way of art. Here were some casts from antique marbles, specimens of the work of Greenough and Thorwaldsen, a certain number of dull busts of interesting men, a supply of engravings, and a small collection of paintings. The paintings were largely copies, but included originals by Allston, Copley, and a few others.

In music the taste was pure, if the opportunities were but provincial. Grisi and Mario in brief visits delighted the town in opera; the Handel and Haydn Society provided oratorio; the Harvard Orchestra gave instrumental concerts. In the spring of 1856 was held a Beethoven Festival, and the bronze statue, so long familiar in the old Boston Music Hall, was inaugurated with a poem by the sculptor, William Wetmore Story.

In intellectual life Boston had long been distinguished among American cities. In these early years of Mrs. Moulton's life here Lowell gave his course of lectures on "Poetry" before the Lowell Institute, and Curtis his course on "Bulwer and Disraeli."

Longfellow at this time was writing "Hiawatha"; Richard Grant White was often coming over from New York to confer with the Cambridge group on nice points in his edition of Shakespeare. The interest in literature is illustrated by the fact that when "Maud" appeared in the summer of 1855 Longfellow and George William Curtis made a pilgrimage to Newport to read and discuss it with Mrs. Julia Ward Howe. The aristocratic ideal in the world into which Mrs. Moulton had come was distinctly intellectual rather than plutocratic.

The year of her marriage was also the year of the publication of her second book, a novel entitled "Juno Clifford," which was brought out anonymously by the Appletons. Again the praise of the reviewers was practically unanimous. A Boston critic wrote: "The authorship is a mystery which perhaps time will unravel, for rumor is ascribing it to lofty names in the world of literature"; and George D. Prentice, in the *Louisville Journal*, in less journalistic phrase, characterized the story as having "numerous points of strange beauty and a strange pathos."

Among the sympathetic friends who at this time enriched Mrs. Moulton's life none was of personality more striking than Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman, whose connection with Poe was at once so touching and so tragic. "No person ever made on me so purely spiritual an impression," wrote Mrs. Moulton in *The Athenæum* in after years, "as did Mrs. Whitman. One of her friends said of her: 'She is nothing but a soul with a sweet voice.'" Some of the poems signed "Ellen Louise" had attracted the attention of

Mrs. Whitman, and a correspondence followed. In a postscript to the first letter written to Mrs. Moulton after her marriage, Mrs. Whitman says:

"You ask my plans. I have none nor ever had. All my life I have been one of those who walk by faith and not by sight. I never can plan ahead. The first words I ever learned to speak were caught from hearing the watchman call out in the middle of the night, 'All's well.' This has always been my great article of faith. An angel seems ever to turn for me at the right time the mystic pages of the book of life, while I stand wondering and waiting,—that is all."

On the appearance of "Juno Clifford," Mrs. Whitman wrote:

Mrs. Whitman to Mrs. Moulton

November 15 [1855].

My Dear Louise: I have read "Juno Clifford," and my "honest opinion" is that it is a very fascinating story, eloquently related. I was surprised at its finished excellence; yet I expected much from you.

I have written a notice for the *Journal* which will appear in a few days. I will send you a copy of the paper. I wish I had leisure to tell you all I think of the book. You have all the qualities requisite for a successful novelist, and some very rare ones, as I think. The grief of the poor Irish girl brought tears to my eyes,—eyes long accustomed to look serenely

on human sorrows. The character of Juno is admirably portrayed and you have managed the "heavy tragedy" with admirable skill. I do not, however, like to have Juno tear out her beautiful hair by "handfuls," and I think there is a lavish expenditure of love scenes in the latter part of the book; but all young lovers will freely pardon you for this last offence, and I am not disposed to be hypercritical about the hair.

I can find nothing else to condemn, though I would fain show myself an impartial judge. I wish "Juno" all success, and am ever, with sincere regard,

Your friend,

S. Helen Whitman.

P.S.—I saw the death of Miss Locke in *The Times*! could it have been our Miss Locke? Do you know? I am very busy just now. I have no good pen, and my pencil turns round and round like an inspired Dervish, but utters no sound; so look on my chirography with Christian charity, and love me, nevertheless.

S.H.W.

In other letters from Mrs. Whitman, undated, but evidently written about this time, are these passages:

"I have to-day found time to thank you for your letter and beautiful poem. It is very fine, picturesque, and dramatic. These are, I think, your strong points, but you have touches of pathos.... You must not leave off writing stories, nor do I see any necessity of making any selection between the muse of poetry and the muse of romance. I should say, give

attendance to both, as the inspiration comes.... Dr. Holmes, whom I met at the lectures of Lola Montez, is charmed by her...."

"Mrs. Davis read me Mrs. [R.H.] Stoddard's book ['Two Men'], because you spoke of it so highly. It has, indeed, a strange power,—not one that fascinates me, but which impresses me profoundly and piques my curiosity to know more of the author. I marked some paragraphs which indicated a half-conscious power of imaginative description, which I wish she would exercise more freely. Tell me about her in her personal traits of character.... I hope you will not impugn my taste, dear Louise, when I tell you I like your 'two men' better than Mrs. Stoddard's. 'Margaret Holt' is a charming story. Why is it that Mrs. Stoddard so entirely ignores all sweet and noble emotions?"

Mrs. Moulton's next volume was a collection of the stories which she had contributed to various magazines. It was entitled "My Third Book," and was brought out by the Harpers in 1859. It was greeted as a work which "bears the seal of feminine grace," and which "reveals the beauty of Mrs. Moulton's genius." Of two of the tales a reviewer said, in terms which give with amusing fidelity the tone of the favorable book-notice of the mid-century:

"'No. 101' reminds us of some wondrous statue, her pen has so sculptured the whole story. 'Four Letters from Helen Hamilton' are enough to stir all hearts with their [*sic*] high purpose and the beautiful ideal of womanhood which consecrate [*sic*] them."

Continuing her old habit at school, Mrs. Moulton for many years kept notes of her abundant reading, and the comments and extracts set down in her exquisite handwriting throw a most interesting light on the growth of her thought. She mentions Miss Austen's "Sense and Sensibility" as "interesting, but deficient in earnestness." "Guy Livingston," that old-fashioned apotheosis of brute force, she, like most of the novel-readers of the time, found "fascinating." "The Scarlet Letter" impresses her profoundly, and she copies many passages; the first volume of "Modern Painters" she reads with the most serious earnestness, and comments at length upon Ruskin's view that public opinion has no claim to be taken as a standard in the judgment of works of art. Although the bride of a few months, and not yet twenty-one, she enters with the enthusiasm of a schoolgirl into the larger opportunities of life opened to her by her marriage. To English literature she gives herself in serious study. She writes copious analyses of the history of different periods, and critical studies of various writers. It was perhaps at this period that she began to respond to the work of the Elizabethan lyricists with a sympathy which marked the kinship which English critics found so evident in her poetic maturity.

The list of books noted in these records during the next ten years is large and varied. Mrs. Gaskell, Bishop Butler, Dr. Martineau, Miss Mulock (Mrs. Craik), Anthony Trollope, and later George Eliot and George Meredith, are among the writers whom she mentions; and from the "Self-Help" of Samuel Smiles

in 1860 she makes copious extracts. Her taste was catholic, and her attitude toward literature always one of genuine seriousness.

Mrs. Moulton's memoranda for her own stories are both interesting and suggestive. To see as it were the mind of the creative writer at work is always fascinating, and here, as in the "American Notebooks" of Hawthorne, the reader seems to be assisting in the very laboratory of the imagination. Some of these notes are as follows:

"Have the story written by a man. Have him go all his life worshipping one woman, even from boyhood. He wins her, —she is cold but he is satisfied and believes she will grow to love him. After three years she leaves him. He gives his life to seeking her. At last finds her just as she is attempting to drown herself, and takes her home."

And again:

"Have a wealthy family travelling in Egypt, and a child born to them there who shall bear the name of the country. This child, Egypt Sunderland, seems to be strangely influenced by her name, and develops all the peculiar characteristics of the Egyptian women."

She conceives the outline plots for numerous stories,—among the titles for which are "The Sculptor's Model," "The Unforgiven Sin," "The River Running Fast," "The Embroidered Handkerchief," "A Wife's Confession," "The Widow's Candle and How It Went Out." For one projected story her outline runs:

"Show that there is punishment for our sins lying in

the consequence of them, which no repentance can avert, or forgiveness condone,—which must be suffered to the uttermost. Make it clear that passive goodness is not enough. We must do something for humanity. That a man who has no moral fibre or practical wisdom has a claim on us for help. For energy and good judgment are as much a gift as are eyes to see and ears to hear. The very lack of practical wisdom gives the one so lacking a special claim on our sympathies."

Perhaps no one ever lived more in accord with this little gospel of human duty than did Mrs. Moulton, and this fact invests the note with a peculiar interest.

The fiction of the day was little concerned with character-drawing or mental analysis, but was largely occupied with a certain didactic embodiment of ideals of conduct. In such fiction a writer of Mrs. Moulton's genuine sincerity of temperament could not but show clearly her true attitude toward the deeper problems of life. The opening of one of her stories, "Margaret Grant," will illustrate this fact.

"The love of life, the love of children, the love of kin—these constrain all of us; but it was another kind of love that constrained Margaret Grant. Curiously enough the first awakening came to her soul from a book written by an unbeliever, a book meant to bring Christianity to the final test of final obedience, and to prove its absurdity, thereby prove that to be a Christian as Christ taught, would overthrow the uses of the world, and uproot the whole

system of things. 'Let the uses of the world go, and the system of things take care of itself,' Margaret Grant said when she laid the book down. 'This same religion of Christ is the best thing I know, and I will go where it leads me.' And then she waited for the true Guide, that Holy Spirit which shall be given to every honest soul that seeks—waited for her special work, but not idly, since every day and all the days were the little offices of love that make life sweeter for whatever fellow-pilgrim comes in our way.

"Margaret read to her half-blind grandmother—taught the small boy that ran the family errands to read—helped her mother with the housekeeping, all on the lines of 'godly George Herbert,' who wrote:

Who sweeps a room as for God's laws,
Makes that and the action fine.

But all the time she felt that these were not the real work of her life, that work which was on its way."

With the earnestness of spirit which is shown in this and which so continually sounded in her poems, Mrs. Moulton lived her rich life in the congenial atmosphere which surrounded her. Mrs. Spofford, writing of Mrs. Moulton from personal memory, says of her in 1860:

"She was now in her twenty-fifth year, fully launched upon the literary high-seas, contributing to *Harper's*, the *Galaxy*, and *Scribner's* as they came into existence, and

to the *Young Folks*, the *Youth's Companion*, and other periodicals for children. Her life seemed a fortunate one. She had a charming home in Boston where she met and entertained the most pleasant people; her housekeeping duties were fulfilled to a nicety, and no domestic detail neglected for all her industrious literary undertakings. A daughter had been born to her, Florence, to whom 'Bed-time Stories' were dedicated in some most tender and touching verses, and, somewhat later, a son whose little life was only numbered by days."

Life was deepening and offering ever wider horizons. With Emily Dickinson she might have said of the complex interweaving of event, influence, and inspiration:

Ah! the bewildering thread!
The tapestries of Paradise
So notelessly are made.

CHAPTER III

1860-1876

But poets should
Exert a double vision; should have eyes
To see near things as comprehensively
As if afar they took their point of sight;
And distant things as intimately deep
As if they touched them....
I do distrust the poet who discerns
No character or glory in his time.
Mrs. Browning.—*Aurora Leigh*.

... there are divine things, well envelop'd;
I swear to you, there are divine things more beautiful than
words can tell.—Walt Whitman, *Song of the Open Road*.

The morning skies were all aflame.—L.C.M.

POETRY with Mrs. Moulton was a serious art and an object of earnest pursuit. It was not for mere pastime that she had steeped herself, so to speak, in

... The old melodious lays
Which softly melt the ages through;
The songs of Spenser's golden days,
Arcadian Sidney's silver phrase;

for in her poetic work she recorded her deepest convictions and her most intimate perceptions of the facts of life. To her life was love; its essence was made up of the charm of noble and sincere friendships, of happy social intercourse, of sympathetic devotion. To this joy of love and friendship, there was in her mind opposed one sorrow—death, and not all the assurances of faith or philosophy could eliminate this dread, this all-pervading fear, that haunted her thoughts. In some way the sadness of death, as a parting, had been stamped on her impressionable nature, and it inevitably colored her outlook and made itself a controlling factor in her character. It took the form, however, of deepening her tenderness for every human relation and widening her charity for all human imperfection. The vision of

Cold hands folded over a still heart,

touched her as it did Whittier, with the pity of humanity's common sorrow, and with him she could have said that such vision

Swept all my pride away, and trembling I forgave.

Writing in later years of Stephen Phillips she said:

"Is it not, after all, the comprehension of love that above all else makes a poet immortal? Who thinks of Petrarch without remembering Laura, of Dante without the vision of Beatrice?"

"I have said that Phillips is the poet of love and of pity. Many poets have uttered the passionate cries of love; but few, indeed, are those who have seen and expressed the piteous tragedy of life as he has done. He says in 'Marpessa,'

"The half of music, I have heard men say,
Is to have grieved.

And not only has Phillips grieved, but he has felt the grief of other men—listened to the wild, far wail which, one sometimes feels, must turn the very joy of heaven to sorrow."

These words reveal much of her own nature. One critic said aptly:

"She is penetrated with that terrible consciousness of the futility of the life which ends in the grave—that consciousness of personal transitoriness which has haunted and oppressed so many passionate and despairing hearts. She knows that 'there is no name, with whatever emphasis of passionate love repeated, of which the echo is not faint at last.' And against this inevitable doom of humanity she rebels with all the energy of her nature."

In her verse-loving girlhood she had delighted in the facile music and the obvious sentiment of Owen Meredith; his "Aux Italiens," "Madame la Marquise," and "Astarte" had delighted her fancy. As she developed, Browning's "Men and Women" held her captive; and she responded with eagerness to the new melodies of Swinburne. She was indeed wonderfully sensitive to the charm of any master who might arise; yet her own work seemed little influenced by others. She remained always strikingly individual.

In the decades between 1860 and 1880 Boston was singularly rich in rare individualities, and among them Mrs. Moulton easily and naturally made her own place. She found the city not so greatly altered from the Boston of the forties of which Dr. Hale remarked that "the town was so small that practically everybody knew everybody. Lowell could discuss with a partner in a dance the significance of the Fifth Symphony of Beethoven in comparison with the lessons of the Second or the Seventh, and another partner in the next quadrille would reconcile for him the conflict of freewill and foreknowledge." At this period James Freeman Clarke had founded his Church of the Disciples, of which he remained pastor until 1888; and in 1869 Phillips Brooks became rector of Trinity. Lowell, in these years, was living at Elmwood, and it was in 1869 that he recited at Harvard Commencement his great Commemoration Ode. The prayer on that occasion was made by Mr. Brooks, and of it President Eliot said that "the spontaneous and intimate expression of Brooks'

noble spirit convinced all Harvard men that a young prophet had risen up in Israel."

Lydia Maria Child, the intimate friend of Whittier, Sumner, Theodore Parker, and Governor Andrew, was then living, and in her book, "Looking Toward Sunset," quoting a poem of Mrs. Moulton's from some newspaper copy which had omitted the name of the author, Mrs. Child had altered one line better to suit her own cheerful fancy. On Mrs. Moulton's remonstrance Mrs. Child wrote her a characteristically lovely note, but ended by saying: "I hope you will let me keep the sunshine in it; the plates are now stereotyped, and an alteration would be very expensive." Mrs. Moulton cordially assented to the added "sunshine," and an affectionate intercourse continued between them until Mrs. Child's death in 1880.

These years of the third quarter of the Nineteenth Century were the great period of Webster, Choate, Everett, Channing, Sumner, and Winthrop. With the close of the Civil War national issues shaped themselves anew. It was a period of wonderful literary activity. Thomas Starr King, who came to Boston in 1845, was a lecturer as well as a preacher of power and genius. Henry James, the elder, was publishing from time to time his philosophic essays, and to Mrs. Moulton, who was much attracted by his gentle leadings, he gave in generous measure his interest and encouragement. The *Atlantic Monthly* was founded in 1857 by Phillips and Sampson, the enterprising young publishers who, according to Dr. Hale, inaugurated the

publishing business in Boston, and who were the publishers of Mrs. Moulton's first book. With Lowell, the first editor of the *Atlantic*, Mrs. Moulton came in contact in the easy intimacy of the literary atmosphere. She heard with eager attention the well known lecture of George William Curtis on "Modern Infidelity" in 1860; and in the same year read with enthusiastic appreciation Hawthorne's "Marble Faun," from which she made copious extracts in her note-books with sympathetic comments. The artistic and intellectual life of Boston in those days held much to call out her keenest interest. Mrs. Kemble gave her brilliant Shakespearian readings; Patti, a youthful prima donna, delighted lovers of opera; Charles Eliot Norton invited friends to see his new art treasure, a picture by Rossetti; Agassiz was marking an epoch in scientific progress by his lectures. Interested by Professor Agassiz's efforts to found a museum, Mrs. Moulton wrote for the *New York Tribune* a special article on the subject; and this was acknowledged by Mrs. Agassiz.

Mrs. Agassiz to Mrs. Moulton

Thanks for the pleasant and appreciative article about the Agassiz Museum in the *Tribune*. It is a good word spoken in season. It is very charming, and so valuable just now, when the institution is in peril of its life. No doubt it will be of real service in our present difficulties by awakening sympathy and affection in many people. Mr. Agassiz desires his best

regards to you.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Carey Agassiz.

The intellectual and the social were closely blended in the Boston of the sixties and the seventies, and Mrs. Moulton was in the very midst of the most characteristically Bostonian circles. Her journals record how she went to a "great party" given by Mrs. William Claflin, whose husband was afterward governor; to Cambridge to a function given by the Agassizs; to a reception at Dr. Alger's "to meet Rose Terry," later known as Rose Terry Cooke; to a dinner given in honor of Miss Emily Faithful; to one intellectual gayety after another. She was one of the attractive figures at the delightful Sunday evening reunions given by Mr. and Mrs. Edwin P. Whipple. She notes in the journal that at a brilliant reception given by Mrs. John T. Sargent, so well known as the hostess of the famous Chestnut Street Radical Club, she had "a few golden moments" with Emerson, and a talk with the elder Henry James, with whom she was a favorite.

In 1870 Mrs. Moulton became the Boston literary correspondent of the *New York Tribune*. This work developed under her care into one of much importance. Boston publishers sent to her all books of especial interest, and her comments upon them were of solid value. She recorded the brilliant meetings of the Chestnut Street Radical Club, and the intellectual news in general. These letters made a distinct success. Extracts from them were copied all over the United States, and they came to be

looked upon as a sort of authorized report of what was doing in the intellectual capital of the country. They were given up only when the desire for foreign travel drew Mrs. Moulton so much abroad that she could no longer keep as closely in touch with current events as is necessary for a press correspondent.

The Radical Club at that time was famed throughout the entire country, and it was regarded as the very inner temple wherein the gods forged their thunderbolts. Only those who bore the sacramental sign were supposed to pass its portals. Mrs. Moulton's accounts of these meetings were vivid and significant. As, for instance, the following:

"The brightest sun of the season shone, and the balmiest airs prevailed, on the 21st of December, in honor of the meeting of the Radical Club under the hospitable roof of Mr. and Mrs. John T. Sargent in Chestnut street. Mrs. Howe was the essayist, and there was a brilliant gathering to hear her. David Wasson was there, and John Weiss, and Colonel Higginson, and Alcott, hoary embodiment of cool, clear thought. Mr. Linton, the celebrated engraver, John Dwight of the *Musical Journal*, Mrs. Severance, the beloved president of the New England Woman's Club, bonny Kate Field of the honest eyes and the piquant pen, Mrs. Cheney, Miss Peabody, and many others, distinguished in letters or art.

"To this goodly company Mrs. Howe read a brilliant essay on the subject of Polarity. She commenced by speaking of polarity as applied to matter, in a manner not

too abstruse for the *savants* who surrounded her, though it was too philosophical and scholarly to receive the injustice of being reported. The progress of polarity she found to give us the division of sex; and Sex was the subject on which she intended to write when she commenced the essay; but she found it, like all fundamental facts in nature, to be an idea with a history. In the pursuit of this history she encountered the master agency of Polarity, and found herself obliged to make that the primary idea, and consider sex as derived from it."

Another letter, describing a meeting a few weeks later, gives a glimpse at some of the women who frequented the club:

"There was Mrs. Severance, reminding one so much of an Indian summer day, so calm and peaceful is the sweet face that looks out at you from its framing of fair waving hair. Not far away was Julia Ward Howe, who some way or other makes you think of the old fairy story of the girl who never opened her mouth but there fell down before her pearls and diamonds. That story isn't a fairy story, not a bit of it. It is real, genuine truth, and Mrs. Howe is the girl grown up, and pearls of poetic fancy and diamonds of sparkling wit are the precious stones which fall from her lips. Lucy Stone was there, an attentive listener, looking the very picture of retiring womanliness in her Quaker-like simplicity of dress, and her pleasant face lighted with interest and animation. Sitting by a table, busy with notebook and pencil, was Miss Peabody, the Secretary of the Club. She has a sparkling, animated face, brimming over

with kindness and good-will; she wins one strangely—you can't help being drawn to her. There's a world of fun in the black eyes, and you feel sure she would appreciate the ridiculous sides of living as keenly as any one ever could."

In still another letter are these thumb-nail sketches of persons well-known:

"As we drew near Chestnut street we saw a goodly number of pilgrims.... Nora Perry, with the golden hair, had journeyed up from Providence with a gull's feather in her hat and a glint of mischief in her glance; Celia Thaxter, whom the Atlantic naturally delights to honor, since from Atlantic surges she caught the rhythm of her life, sat intent; Mr. Alcott beamed approval; Professor Goodwin had come from Harvard; David A. Wasson had left his bonded warehouse a prey to smugglers; Rev. Dr. Bartol, who seems always to dwell on the Mount of Vision; and Mr. Sanborn, who had sheathed his glittering lance, sat near; Mrs. Howe, taking a little vacation from her labors for women, listened serenely; Miss Peabody had a good word to say for Aspasia; and Mrs. Cheney quoted Walter Savage Landor's opinion of her."

A racy letter tells of the meeting when the Club discovered Darwin; another deals with the day when Mrs. Howe discoursed of "Moral Trigonometry"; and yet another of an occasion when the Rev. Samuel Longfellow was essayist, and all the pretty women had new bonnets. This allusion reminds one of a bit of witty verse when "Sherwood Bonner" (Mrs. McDowell) served

up the Radical Club in a parody of Poe's "Raven," and described Mrs. Moulton as,

"A matron made for kisses, in the loveliest of dresses."

The "Twelve Apostles of Heresy," as the transcendental thinkers were irreverently termed by the wits of the press, were about this time contributing to the enlightenment of the public by a series of Sunday afternoon lectures. These lectures were held to represent the most advanced thought of the day, and were delivered by such speakers as the Rev. O.B. Frothingham, Mary Grew (Whittier's friend and a woman of equally cultivated mind and lovely character), the Rev. John Weiss, Mrs. Julia Ward Howe, T.W. Higginson, and Mrs. Ednah D. Cheney. In one letter Mrs. Moulton writes thus:

"As the coffin of Mahomet was suspended between heaven and earth, so is Mr. Wasson, who spoke last Sunday at Horticultural Hall, popularly supposed to be suspended between the heaven of Mr. Channing's serene faith and the depths of Mr. Abbot's audacious heresy. But if any one should infer from this statement that Mr. Wasson is a gentle medium, a man without boldness of speculation, or originality of thought, he would find he had never in his life made so signal a mistake. Few men in America think so deeply as David A. Wasson, and fewer still have so many of the materials for thought at their command. He has a presence of power, and is a handsome man,

though prematurely gray, with an expansive forehead, where strong thoughts and calm judgment sit enthroned, and with eyes beneath it which see very far indeed. His features are clearly cut, and he looks as if he felt, and felt passionately, every word he utters, as he stands before an audience, his subject well in hand, and with always twice as much to say as his hour will give space for, forced, therefore, against his will, to choose and condense from his thronging thoughts. He spoke, in the Sunday afternoon course, on 'Jesus, Christianity, and Modern Radicalism.'

John Weiss, the biographer of Theodore Parker, discoursed on one occasion on "The Heaven of Homer," and Mrs. Moulton commented:

"Not the author of 'Gates Ajar,' listening in her pleasant dreams to heavenly pianos, ever drew half so near to the celestial regions, or looked into them with half so disillusionized gaze as the Grecian thought of the time of Homer."

Of Mary Grew Mrs. Moulton gave this pen-picture:

"We saw a woman not young, save with the youth of the immortals; not beautiful, save with the beauty of the spirit; but sweet and gentle, with a placid, earnest face. Her own faith is so assured that she appeals fearlessly to the faith of others; her nature so religious that her religion seems a fact and not a question."

Another Boston institution of which Mrs. Moulton wrote in her *Tribune* letters was the New England Woman's Club. "Here,"

she declared, "Mrs. Howe reads essays and poems in advance of their publication; Abby May's wit flashes keen; Mrs. Cheney gives lovely talks on art; and Kate Field, with the voice which is music, reads her first lecture." She records how Emerson sends to the club-tea a poem; how Whittier is sometimes a guest; how Miss Alcott tells an inimitable story; and how on May 23, 1870, was celebrated the birthday of Margaret Fuller, who for a quarter of a century had been beyond the count of space and time. On this occasion the Rev. James Freeman Clarke presided, and among the papers was a poem by Mrs. Howe of which Mrs. Moulton quotes the closing stanza:

Fate dropt our Margaret
Within the bitter sea,
A pearl in golden splendor set
For spirit majesty.

It was in connection with a meeting of the Woman's Club that a guest invited from New York wrote for a journal of that city an account of the gathering in which is this description:

"There too was Mrs. Louise Chandler Moulton, looking for all the world like one of her own stories, tender and yet strong, the child-like curving of the mouth and chin in such contrast with the tender, almost sad eyes and well-developed brow covered with its masses of waving light hair."

Bret Harte, then in the height of his fame, wrote to Mrs. Moulton in regard to her *Tribune* letters, and told her that "it

is woman's privilege to assert her capacity as a critic without sacrificing her charm as a woman." Many of her criticisms were richly worth preservation, did space allow. Of Walt Whitman she said:

"With his theories I do not always agree; they seem to me fitter for a larger, more sincere, less complex time than ours; but there is no sham and no affectation, either in the man or in his verse. I could not tell how strong was the impression of sincerity and large-heartedness which he made on me."

A new volume of poems by Lowell appeared, and in her comment she wrote:

"Wordsworth was notably great in only a few poems, and Coleridge, and Keats, and Shelley come under the same limitations. Mr. Lowell is thus not alone in being at times forsaken by his good genius.... If he does not furnish us with a great amount of poetry of the highest order, it is the simple truth to say that in his best he has no rival, excepting Emerson, among American poets. When he is inspired, the key to nature and to man is in his hand, and he becomes the interpreter of both, commanding the secrets of one as truly as he interprets the interior life of the other."

All this newspaper work did not interfere with the steady production of work less ephemeral. Poems and stories succeeded one another in almost unbroken succession. The fecundity of Mrs. Moulton's mind was by no means the least surprising of the good gifts with which nature had endowed her. In all the

leading American magazines her name held a place recognized and familiar. What was apparently her first contribution to the *Atlantic Monthly*, a poem called "May-Flowers," caught the popular fancy and became a general favorite. The exquisite closing stanza was especially praised by those whose approbation was best worth winning:

Tinted by mystical moonlight,
Freshened by frosty dew,
Till the fair, transparent blossoms
To their pure perfection grew.

Longfellow commended her perfection of form and the lyric spontaneity of her verse and Whittier urged her to collect and publish her poems in a volume.

Various letters of interest during these years from and to Mrs. Moulton are as follows:

Mr. Whittier to Mrs. Moulton

Amesbury, 3d, 8th month, 1870.

Dear Mrs. Moulton: I am greatly disappointed in not meeting the benediction of thy face when I called last month; but I shall seek it again sometime. It just occurs to me that I may yet have the pleasure of seeing thee under my roof at Amesbury. We have so many friends in common

that I feel as if I knew thee through them.

How much I thank thee for thy kind note. It reaches me at a time when its generous appreciation is very welcome and grateful.

Believe me very truly thy friend,

John G. Whittier.

William Winter to Mrs. Moulton

Staten Island, N.Y.

November 8, 1875.

Dear Mrs. Moulton: I accept with pleasure and gratitude your very kind and sympathetic letter,—seeing beneath its delicate and cordial words the sincere heart of a comrade in literature, and the regard of a nature kindred with my own. I wish I could think that your praise is deserved. It has often seemed to me of late that there is no cheer in my newspaper work.... I am aware, however, that the sympathy of a bright mind and a tender heart and the approval of a delicate taste are not won without some sort of merit, and so I venture to find in your most genial and spontaneous letter a ray of encouragement. You will scarcely know how grateful this is to me at this time. I thank you and I shall not forget that you were thoughtful and delicately kind.

To-day I have received a copy of Stedman's poems, which I want to read again with great care. A man who has missed poetic fame himself may find great satisfaction in

the success of his friend, and I do feel exceedingly glad in the recognition that has come to Stedman. Your article on the book in the *Tribune* was excellent.

Faithfully yours,

William Winter.

Mrs. Moulton to Mr. Stedman

"When you say it depends on me whether I will be looked upon as a real judicial authority by people of culture throughout the land, you fire me with ambition, but my springing flame is quenched by the realization that I am not cultured enough to rely on my judgment as a certainty, a finality, and that while I may feel that my intuitions are keen, they are apt to be warped by my strong emotions. I'll try. A very few persons are really my public, and I think how my letters will strike them, rather than how the world will receive them. I wonder how you will like my review of...? Much of the book is 'splendidly null,'—perfect enough in execution, but without that subtle something that sets the heart-strings quivering, and fills the eyes with tender dew; that subtle minor chord of being, to which we are all kin, by virtue of our own pain...."

Mrs. Moulton to Mr. Stedman

"... I am impatient to see your article on Browning. I am so struck by your calling him the greatest of love poets. I, too, have often thought something like that of him. If 'The Statue and the Bust' means anything, it means that Browning thought the Duke and the Lady were fools to let 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would.' But, *au contraire*, I think 'Pippa Passes' gives one the impression that he considers illegal love a great sin and the natural temptation to still greater sins. Don't you think so? I wish I could have a talk on social questions with you, for I think your ideas are more fixed, more developed in thought and less chaotic than mine...."

Mr. Whittier to Mrs. Moulton

Amesbury, 11th month, 9th, 1874.

My dear friend Louise Chandler Moulton: I thank thee from my heart for thy letter. I think some good angel must have prompted it, for it reached me when I needed it; needed to know that my words had not been quite in vain. And to know that they have been comfort or strength to thee is a cause for deep thankfulness. I do not put a very high estimate upon my writings, in a merely literary point of view, but it has been my earnest wish that they might at least

help the world a little. I read thy notice of my book in the
Tribune

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