JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL'S EDITORSHIP OF THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.

Jeanette Beveridge

1937

Lowell, James Russell
1819-1891

English

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THESIS

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CHAPTER I

LOWELL'S LIFE

James Russell Lowell was born at Elmwood in Cambridge, Massachusetts, February 22, 1918.

In a consideration of Lowell, his relation to his time is of greatest importance. Thorndike says: "It is impossible to consider him apart from his time or environment, or to judge his writing apart from its value for the United States. It has left something for posterity, but its best energy was expended in the manifold tasks which letters must perform as a builder of national civilization. It is this service which makes him an eminent and in some ways our most representative man of letters."[1]

Lowell was first sent to a dame school and then to Mr. Wells' school to be prepared for college. From early youth, Lowell had been a great reader and he continued to find pleasure in books.

Having finished college, Lowell was faced with the necessity of choosing a career. His father had expected him to study law, but Lowell so disliked the idea that he considered both the ministry and medicine before he finally began reading law in 1838. The necessity of earning a living forced his decision and then he changed his mind.

[1] Cambridge History of American Literature, II, 245-246.

"Suddenly a fortnight only after making (his decision to study law) he abandoned it, out of utter distaste. It was after a great struggle, he says, but the struggle was evidently one of those occasional self-communings of the young man who is not pre-destined to any profession and yet is unable to respond to the half articulate demands on his nature. We cannot read Lowell's mind at this time in the fragmentary confessions of his letters, and see that the controlling influence was to secure ultimately the right to devote himself to literature."[2]

Lowell tried both business and lecturing as a possible means of earning a living, but he found the first repellent and the second unrmunerative, so he finally completed his law course in 1839 and entered the office of Mr. Charles Greely Loring.

Lowell's first volume of poems, A Year's Life was published in 1841 and received good notices. Lowell warmed himself with the praise for he hoped to support himself by his writing. Instead he plunged himself into debt with the Pioneer magazine venture.

In 1843, Lowell and Robert Carter entered into a contract with Leland and Whiting of Boston, by which they were to furnish five hundred copies of the magazine on the twentieth of each month under penalty of $500 forfeit.

[2] Horace Elisha Scudder, James Russell Lowell, I, 65.

The prospectus states frankly the high ideals of the young editors, promises which were well performed:

"The contents of each number will be entirely original and will consist of articles chiefly from American authors of the highest reputation.

"The object of the Subscribers in establishing the Pioneer, is to furnish the intelligent and reflecting portion of the Reading Public with a rational substitute for the enormous quantity of thrice-diluted trash in the shape of namby-pamby love tales and sketches, which is monthly poured out to them by many of our popular magazines,--and to offer instead thereof, a healthy and manly Periodical Literature whose perusal will not necessarily involve a loss of time and a detioration of every moral and intellectual faculty.

"The Critical Department of the Pioneer will be conducted with great care and impartiality, and while satire and personality will be sedulously avoided, opinions of merit and demerit will be candidly and fearlessly expressed.

"The Pioneer will be issued punctually on the day of publication, in the principal cities of the Union. Each number will contain 48 pages, royal octavo, double columns, handsomely printed on fine paper, and will be illustrated with Engravings of highest character, both on wood and steel.

"Terms: Three Collars a year, payable, in all cases in advance. The usual discount made to agents..."[3]

[3]Scudder, op. cit., I, 99-100.

The first number appeared in January 1843 and bore on its cover a motto from Francis Bacon: "Reform, therfore, without bravery or scandal of former times and persons; but yet set it down to thyself as well to create good precedents as to follow them."

The Pioneer was greeted by many commendations. Brother Jonathan printed the following criticism by Willis, quoted on the cover of the February number of the Pioneer:

"J. R. Lowell, a man of original and decided genius, has started a monthly magazine in Boston. The first number lies before us and it justifies our expectations, viz.: — that a man of genius who is merely a man of genius, is a very unfit editor for a periodical. A man of taste and common sense is worth twenty men of genius for any such undertaking. In the first number are half a dozen articles which will fall still-born.... yet they are articles of a very refined and elevated character."[4]

Lowell was in New York having his eyes treated as the second and third number appeared. At the end of the number for March an announcement appeared explaining that the absence of any prose from the pen of Mr. Lowell and the apparent neglect of letters and contributions addressed to him personally was due to his absence in New York in attendance upon Dr. Elliot, a distinguished oculist. The

[4] Frank Luther Mott, A History of American Magazines, p. 737.

announcement also promised that Lowell would resume his essays on the poets and dramatists in the fourth number and that he would again take up general supervision of the magazine.[5]

There was, however, no fourth number. The third number had been late and publishers claimed the forfeit. They offered to waive this forfeit if the contract should be altered so as to require them to take only as many copies as they could sell. The editors were forced to stop printing for lack of credit. Lowell had promised his personal credit and the unfortunate venture left him in debt for several years.[6]

Lowell's enforced absence was, no doubt, in a large measure, responsible for the failure of the Pioneer. Willis was probably correct in thinking that America was not yet ready to receive and appreciate such a magazine. But certainly he was wrong in his emphatic statement "that a man of genius(J. R. Lowell).... is a very unfit editor for a periodical". Fourteen years later Lowell launched a magazine and conducted it in such a way that there remains in our minds no doubt regarding his fitness as an editor.

At about this time, Lowell began to be more than ever interested in the anti-slavery movement, and, with the zeal of a reformer, he sought an outlet for his sentiments.

5 Mott, op. cit., p. 737.
6 C. E. Norton, Letters of James Russell Lowell, I, 73, 82.

Scudder says that at this time Lowell found himself confronting a monstrous denial of the truth of freedom issuing in the human brotherhood when he contemplated slavery in America. But Lowell doubted whether poetry was the proper medium for the anti-slavery cause. "His mind circled about this problem; his convictions called upon him with a loud voice to make good his professions; his instinctive sense of congruity which is hardly more than an alternate form of the sense of humor, forbade him to make poetry the maid of all work for the anti-slavery cause, and he sought diligently to resolve this particular form of spiritual activity into the elemental properties of freedom, and so to find therein a true medium for the sustenance of poetry."[7]

Lowell married Maria White in 1844 and their married life marks a distinct period in Lowell's writing. During the winter of 1845, Lowell expended much energy in writing anti-slavery articles for the Broadway Journal and Graham's Magazine. His wife was an ardent supporter of the anti-slavery cause and his own natural indignation was heightened by her zeal. "Lowell had now become clearly identified with the anti-slavery cause and did not shrink from using the phrase 'we abolitionists'. His reputation as a poet had steadily risen.....The leaders of the anti-slavery cause welcomed him as an important coadjutor."[8]

[7] Scudder, op. cit., I, 138.
[8] Ibid., p. 191.

In 1848, Lowell made a definite arrangement with the Executive Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society to furnish a weekly contribution for the Anti-Slavery Standard. In addition to this writing, the years 1847 and 1848 were marked by the publication of The Fable for the Critics, The Vision of Sir Launfal, and The Biglow Papers.

The period 1851-1857 was marked by a series of important occurrences. The first was the death of Maria Lowell who had influenced Lowell's writing since their meeting. A period of uncertainty followed her death, but in 1855, Lowell's successful series of lectures on English poetry resulted in his appointment as Smith Professor of the French and Spanish Languages and Literature, and Professor of Belles Lettres in Harvard College. He held this position for twenty years, during which period he gave liberally to the college of his best and became more than ever a scholar.[9]

However, although Lowell's academic work provided an outlet, it could not satisfy his demand for expression. He had at this time, had some foreign travel, having been abroad in 1851. His domestic cares were in the hands of Miss Frances Dunlap, whom he had married early in 1857. "There can be little doubt", Scudder writes, "that at this period of his life Lowell was poised for flight as it were having reached a stage where all conditions were most

[9] Scudder, op. cit., I, 397.

favorable for the full expression of his powers. It is true that his academic work....did in a measure supplant a freer poetic movement. But it may not unfairly be affirmed that Lowell's attitude toward poetry was always that of expectation of some greater figt to come..."[10]

It was appropriate that a man of such talent should be chosen as the editor of the new magazine, the Atlantic Monthly, launched in November, 1857. The magazine was successful from the beginning and Lowell continued as editor until 1861, when he resigned.

Lowell contributed reviews and articles to the Atlantic until 1863, when he joined Charles Eliot Norton in editing the North American Review. The fortune of this magazine was at a low ebb when Lowell accepted the joint editorship with Norton. Scudder describes the state of the magazine thus:

"The North American Review which had been founded by a number of cultivated gentlemen in Boston in 1815, was modelled on the famous quarterlies of Great Britian, and had for fifty years been the leading representative in America of dignified scholarship and literature. At times it had been spirited and aggressive, but for the most part it had stood rather for elegant leisure and a somewhat

10 Scudder, op. cit., I, 406.

remote criticism." [11]

Lowell and Norton issued their first number in January, 1864 and Lowell wrote a political article in nearly every number during the remainder of the war and early stages of reconstruction.

When the war was over Lowell collected and published his miscellaneous verse of the preceding twenty years in Under the Willows (1868). His odes and longer poems, he published in a volume entitled The Cathedral (1870). Lowell had devoted much time to the criticism of the masters of English and a few masters of foreign literature, notably Dante. The result of these studies was a long succession of essays which make up the volumes Among My Books (1870), My Study Window (1871), Among My Books, Second Series (1876). These volumes comprise Lowell's main contributions to literary criticism.

Lowell was appointed minister to Spain in 1877. Thorndike says, "The mission was a recognition of his distinction not merely as a man of letters but as a representative of the best American culture, and this distinction Lowell maintained in a number of addresses on both literary and political themes, represented by the volume Democracy and Other Addresses(1886)." [12]

The educated men of America were delighted when, in

11 Scudder, op. cit., II, 45.
12 Cambridge History of American Literature, II, 247.

1880, Lowell was appointed as English minister. "They felt at once that they had a spokesman," Scudder writes. "And it may be fairly said that Americans generally were gratified; for a man of letters who has won high recognition, especially if his work has been in the field of poetry, history, or general literature, occupies a secure place in the regard of his countrymen, and is subject to less suspicion or jealousy than one in any other conspicuous position. ....It is doubtful if any other author, save Longfellow, would at once have been so accepted by Americans as their proper representative in London."[13]

Regarding Lowell's reception in England, Scudder says, "On the other side, though the English as a great reading body are not very familiar with American literature, the leaders of opinion, the class that stands nearest the government know it generously, and while it would be necessary to make the acquaintance of a representative of American law, business or politics, a representative of American letters and scholarship would already be a familiar name. Certain it is that Lowell in going to London went at once into the midst of friends." [14]

Lowell's mission in England lasted until 1885 when the election of Cleveland to the presidency made it clear that Lowell was to bring to a close his diplomatic life in England, although some of his friends there and in America clung

13 Scudder, op. cit., II, 260-261.
14 Ibid., p. 261.

to the illusion that the light way in which he wore the party dress might make it possible for a democratic president to retain in office a man who had made himself so acceptable.

Lowell's friends in England laid plans to keep him with them but he refused because of the claims of his family and the feeling that as an American, he had a certain duty to his own country, and should not, therefore, form any permanent connections in England.

Mrs. Lowell died in 1885, and Lowell went to live with his daughter at Deerfoot farm, Southborough, Massachusetts. He continued to spend his summers in England and upon his return from England in 1889, his daughter arranged to bring her children and make a home for Lowell in Elmwood. So he was able to spend his last years in comfort in his home.

Lowell had published Political Essays and Heartsease and Rue in 1888. Now in 1889-1890, he prepared a uniform edition of his works. With this he took great pains, going over the papers with care.

In the spring of 1891, Lowell looked forward to more writing. Shut in now by illness, he spent his time reading, and received his friends as he was able to see them. He died in the middle of the summer of 1891.

Lowell was a poet, critic, teacher, essayist, and lecturer, but it is his work as editor of the Atlantic that will continue to live for in beginning such a magazine he established an American institution at a time when he was most capable of giving his best and at a time when America

was ready to receive such a publication.

CHAPTER II

State of American Periodical Literature in 1857

In November, 1828, General Morris wrote in the New York Mirror:

"These United States are fertile in most things, but in periodicals they are extremely luxuriant. They spring up as fast as muchrooms in every corner, and like all rapid vegetation, bear seeds of early decay within them..... They put forth their young green leaves in the shape of promises and prospectuses--blossom through a few numbers and then comes 'a frost, a killing frost, in the form of bills due and debts unpaid.... The average age of periodicals in this country is found to be six months."[1]

In 1850, seven years before the first issue of the Atlantic Monthly, there were about six hundred publications other than newspapers.[2] The following list includes the chief magazines in existence in 1857, which had begun by 1850, and indicates the length of life.[3]

The American Baptist Magazine (Boston) 1803-1909
Recorder (Boston) 1816-1867
American Farmer (Baltimore) 1819-1897.

[1] Mott, op. cit., p. 341.
[2] Ibid., p. 342.
[3] Ibid., pp. 787-809.

Albion (Boston) 1822-1875
New York Mirror (New York) 1823-1857
Teacher's Offering, (Philadelphia) 1823-1864
Christian Examiner (Boston) 1824-1869
Bibical Repertory (Princeton) 1825-1884
African Repository (Washington) 1825-1892
National Preacher (Philadelphia) 1826-1866
Youth's Companion (Boston) 1827-1929
Bibical Repository (Andover) 1831-1850
Spirit of the Times (New York) 1831-1861
Baltimore Saturday Visitor (Baltimore) 1832-1850
Catholic Herald (Philadelphia) 1833-1860
Knickerbocker Magazine (New York) 1833-1865
Maine Farmer (Augusta) 1833-1924
Cultivator (Albany) 1834-1865
Southern Literary Messenger (Richmond, Va.) 1834-1864
Christian Review (Boston) 1836-1863
United States Magazine and Democratic Review (Washington) 1837-1859
Medical Examiner (Philadelphia) 1838-1856
Merchants' Magazine and Commercial Review (New York) 1839-1870
Massachusetts Ploughman (Boston) 1840-1906
New Genesse Farmer and Gardener's Journal (Rochester) 1840-1865
Graham's Magazine (Philadelphia) 1840-1858
Ladies' Repository (Cincinnati) 1841-1876
Robert Merry's Museum (Boston) 1841-1872
Peterson's Ladies' National Magazine (Philadelphia) 1842-1892
Philadelphia Home Weekly (Philadelphia) 1842-1872
New York Journal of Medicine (New York0 1843-1860
Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature, Science, and Art (New York) 1844-1907
Universalist Quarterly (Boston) 1844-1891
Liberal Christian (New York) 1845-1877
Indiana Farmer (Indianapolis) 1845-1917
Water-Cure Journal (New York) 1845-1910
Commercial Review of the South and West (New Orleans) 1846-1880
Flag of our Union (Boston) 1846-1865
Home Journal (New York) 1846-1901
National Era (Washington) 1847-1860
New England Machanic (Boston) 1847-1865
New York Picayune (New York)1847-1860
Friends' Review (Philadelphia) 1847-1894
Massachusetts Teacher (Boston) 1848-1874
Plough, the Loom and the Anvil (Philadelphia) 1848-1859
Valley Farmer (St. Louis) 1848-1916
Church Review (New York) 1848-1891
Theological and Literary Journal (New York) 1848 -1864

Ohio Medical and Surgical Journal (Columbus) 1848-1864
Independent (New York) 1848-1928
New England Farmer (Boston) 1848-1871
Mercersburg Review (Mercersburg, Pa.) 1849-1926
Ohio Cultivator (Columbus) 1849-1864

From this list it is evident that a large number of magazines of the period were of agricultural or religious nature. Of the literary group, there were three fairly important monthlies existing at the time of the beginning of the Atlantic: Graham's Magazine(Philadelphia) 1840-1858; Knickerbocker Magazine (New York) 1833-1865; United States Magazine and Democratic Review (Washington) 1837-1859.

George P. Graham bought the Casket in 1839 and the Gentleman's Magazine the next year. He combined these two into a new magazine which he called Graham's, a magazine which not only became one of the most important in the United States, but displayed a brilliance in the five years 1841-1845 which has seldom been matched in American magazine history.[4] Among the contributors for the first year were Lowell, Edgar Allan Poe, Mrs. Sigourney, Alfred B. Street, and Thomas Buchanan Read. In the second year contributions were made by William Cullen Bryant, James Fenimore Cooper, Richard Henry Dana, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Mrs. Frances Osgood.[5]

Graham's was distinguished by its illustrations, poetry by famous contributors, and light essays. The literary

4 Mott, op. cit., p. 344.
5 Ibid., p.546.

criticism was uneven and not significant as a whole. Ater 1845 the magazine languished, forced by that time to meet the competition of Harpers'. In 1858, Graham's was transformed into the Ladies' Illustrated Magazine, later swallowed up by oblivion.[6]

"The contribution of Graham's Magazine to American literary development was of two kinds: it showed that adequate and even liberal payment for contributions might actually be profitable, and raised the level of such payments materially by its influence; and it published some important work by the best American writers of the time. Its contents were designed to be amusing rather than profound: in its lighter essays we have the beginnings of what came to be magazinish writing in contra-distinction from the dull and heavy review style all too prominent at that time."[7]

A magazine which was started slightly earlier and lasted longer than Graham's was the Knickerbocker Magazine. Irving, Cooper, Bryant, Longfellow, Hawthorne, Whittier, and Holmes were among the contributors. The feature of the magazine was the "Editor's Table", a column by the editor, Lewis Gaylord Clark, which included "some chat with correspondents, some talky book notices, and notes on the drama, music and the fine arts, many clippings from contemporary newspapers, some gossip and reminiscences, selected verse, and many well-told anecdotes".[8]

6 Mott, op. cit., p. 555.
7 Ibid., p.555.
8 Ibid., pp. 809-810.

The criticism on literature, art, and music is interesting but not important. The magazine tried to hold favor with both northern and southern readers and consequently received criticism from both sides. By 1850, the magazine had begun a downward pace and passed out of existence in 1865.[9]

A magazine which successfully mixed politics and literature was the United States Magazine and Democratic Review founded in 1837. The magazine was largely occupied with politics and adopted a "vigorous middle-of-the-road policy".[10] However, the the years 1840-1845, it was more literary than during other years and printed the contributions of Lowell, Whittier, Longfellow and Whitman.[11]

The combination of excellent literature and vigorous articles on political, social, and economic questions made the magazine and important periodical under O'Sullivan's editorship during the years 1836-1846, but later it detiriorated until it ceased to exist in 1859.

Closely related to the general monthly periodicals were those which were designed chiefly for women. Many of these were criticized and scoffed at for their printing of a great amount of sentimental trumpery. However, much that was of a high standard also appeared in them. The most important of these magazines was Godey's Lady's Book.

[9] Mott, op. cit., p.613.
[10] Ibid., p. 681.
[11] Ibid., p. 680.

Louis A. Godey bought Mrs. Sarah J. Hale's Ladies' Magazine and combined it with his own Lady's Book in 1837. He obtained along with the magazine, its former owner as editor. With Mrs. Hale as literary editor and Godey as publisher, the magazine flourished.

"All the popular writers of the time appeared in the Lady's Book between 1837 and 1850, the magazines best literary period. Among the 'authoresses' were Miss Leslie, at one time an assistant editor; Mrs. Sigourney, another editor,... 'Grace Greenwood' who edited Godey's Lady's Dollar Newspaper for a time; Miss Catherine M. Sedgwick, author of Hope Leslie, and much else; Mrs. Caroline M. S. Kirkland, notable for her western sketches and stories; and Harriet Beecher Stowe, not yet famous."[12]

Men who contributed to Godey's were George P. Morris, William Gilmore Simms, T. S. Arthur, Bayard Taylor, and Nathanial Parker Willis. Emerson, Longfellow, Holmes and Hawthorne were among the contributors also, and Poe's "The New York Literati" raised a great commotion. In spite of these contributors, Godey's never became a literary magazine of high standard. The poetry and prose was largely light and sentimental. The remainder of the magazine was taken up with fashions, recipes, facy work, biographical sketches of famous women, and short articles on music and

[12] Mott, op. cit., p. 585.

art. The colored fashion plates and art engravings formed an extremely important part of the magazine. There was no mention of politics or problems of the day and the war and the slavery question passed without mention.

In 1878, Godey died and Mrs.Hale surrendered her editorial responsibilities. The magazine had been best in the forties and had slipped into decline later. Now in spite of a reduction in price, its popularity waned until it was absorbed by the Puritan in 1898.

Godey's Lady's Book is important as a history of manners, taste, and costume. Although its literary standard was not high, the magazine was important for several other reasons: "because of the prominence of Godey's contributors, for to name them over would be to call the roll of the principal writers of America; because of its encouragement to writers, for it was not far behind Graham's in liberal payments to contributors; because of its popular success.... and because of its influence on its competitors, for it was the model for many similar attempts, as well as a molding force on more sober magazines."[13]

The most successful of the magazines modelled upon Godey's Lady's Book was Peterson's Ladies' National Magazine. This magazine forged ahead of Godey's after the Civil War, but died the same year, 1898.

Besides these five magazines, the North American Review, a quarterly, was important. The large number of religious

[13] Mott, op. cit., p. 585.

papers were important also, for, although they gave much attention to theology, they also gave space to other matters: literature, politics, science, philosophy, and social problems."[14]

Reveiwing the histories of the five periodicals, Graham's, Knickerbocker's, the Democratic Review, Godey's and Peterson's, and noting that these were the chief periodicals of the day, it is plain that there was an open field for the Atlantic. Graham's saw its best years in 1841-1845, began a rapid decline shortly after and ceased to exist in 1858. Knickerbocker's likewise began a decline in 1850, and although it lasted until 1865, certainly did not furnish competition for the Atlantic. The United States Magazine and Democratic Review had passed its best period in 1846 and had died in 1859. These magazines contained almost no really good criticism and there was a real need in this field. Some magazines had failed to take a stand against slavery lest they antagonize Southern subscribers and their middle-of-the-road policy did not give strength to political writings. The Pioneer and the Dial, magazines of high literary tone had passed out of existence.

In the year 1857, there was a need for criticism of a group of rising American authors; there was a need for intelligent discussion of pressing political and social problems; there was a need of a magazine to receive the

[14] Mott, op. cit., p.369.

work of the older group of authors and the new literary generation which was to follow the war.

Launching the Atlantic Monthly

By the year 1850, the greater New England writers of the nineteenth century were well started on their careers, but Boston had succeeded in maintaining no general literary magazine of first rank.[1]

In 1853, Mr. Francis Henry Underwood had persuaded J. P. Jewett and Company to stand behind him in establishing a new magazine. "These publishers had issued Uncle Tom's Cabin which Phillips, Sampson and Company had refused for fear of alienating their southern customers; and it was only natural that J. P. Jewett, the head of the house, should see eye to eye with Underwood in his vision of a periodical which should unite the strongest forces of expression in the joined cause of letters and reform. As early, therefore, as 1853—four years before the first issue of the Atlantic—Underwood is found in active correspondence with the chief writers of the country, especially the outstanding New England group, in the interest of a magazine to make its appearance at the beginning of 1854."[2]

Near the end of 1853, the Jewett firm met with failure and Underwood went to the offices of Phillips and Sampson where he became reader and literary adviser.[3] Mr. Phillips was the head of the firm and through Mr. Lee, Phillips'

1 Cambridge History of American Literature, II, 165.
2 M. A. DeWolfe Howe, The Atlantic Monthly and its Makers, p. 16.
3 Scudder, op. cit., I, 408.

Only partner, Underwood won Phillips to his scheme for beginning a magazine.

Underwood had been the active manager but now Mr. Phillips took the leading place. Underwood, who had done all the preliminary work, remained an obscure figure, content to nominate the first editor and serve as his office assistant.

Mr. Phillips called together Cabot, Motley, Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes, Emerson, and Underwood for the purpose of discussing the magazine project. Regarding this meeting Phillips wrote to his niece:

"They seemed so well pleased that they adjourned, and invited me to meet them again tomorrow (the 20th), when I shall again meet the same persons with one other (Whipple, the essayist) added to that brilliant constellation of philosophical, poetic, and historical talent. Each one is known alike on both sides of the Atlantic, and is read beyond the limits of the English language."[4]

Longfellow's journal gives an account of the second dinner held for the purpose of discussing the magazine project.[5]

"At a dinner given by Mr. Phillips, the publisher in the summer of 1857, there were present Longfellow, Emerson, Whittier, Lowell, Holmes, Motley, Edmund Quincy, and other critics of high reputation. The plans for the new magazine

[4] Scudder, op. cit., I, 411.
[5] M. A. DeWolfe Howe, The Atlantic Monthly and its Makers, p. 19.

were discussed and arranged at this dinner. Mr. Underwood nominated Lowell as editor-in-chief and his name was received with enthusiasm. Holmes suggested the name, the Atlantic Monthly. The success of the enterprise was assured from the start, and a new era in American literature was established."

Preliminary financial arrangements were made in May. Lowell's salary was to be $2500.[6] Poems were to be paid for at the rate of $50 each and prose at $6 per page. Apparently this was liberal, for Lowell wrote to a questioning contributor:

"You must be content. Six dollars a page is more than can be got elsewhere, and we only pay ten to folks whose names are worth the other four dollars. Capite? What we may be able to do hereafter, I know not. I shall always be for liberal pay."[7]

The first issue of the Atlantic was dated November, 1857, and appeared late in October.[8] Ten of the fourteen authors who made the principal contributions were Motley, Longfellow, Emerson, C. E. Norton, Holmes, Whittier, Mrs. Stowe, J. T. Trowbridge, Lowell, and Parke Godwin.

The Atlantic had for its sub-title "A Magazine of Literature, Art, and Politics." The magazine announced its own political aim on the back cover of the first issue:

6 Scudder, op. cit., I, 421.
7 Ibid.
8 Howe, The Atlantic Monthly and its Makers, p. 24.

"In politics the Atlantic will be the organ of no party or clique, but will honestly endeavor to be the exponent of what its conductors believe to be the American idea. It will deal frankly with persons and with parties, and which alone makes the true basis of a true and lasting national prosperity. It will not rank itself with any set of antics; but with that body of men which is in favor of Freedom, National Progress, and Honor whether public or private."[9]

The magazine also announced its intention of accepting contributions of foreign as well as native writers.

[9] Howe, The Atlantic Monthly and its Makers, p. 27.

CHAPTER III

LOWELL'S EDITORSHIP OF THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY

I. Attitudes and Editorial Policies

Lowell began his work as editor with enthusiasm and continued throughout his editorship to be a careful, conscientious director of the magazine. He often lamented the necessity of so much reading of manuscripts and proofs. In December, 1857, he wrote to Norton:

"For a lazy man I have a great deal to do. A magazine allows no vacations. What with manuscripts and proofs and what not, it either takes up or breaks up all one's time...."[1]

That Lowell was determined to make the best magazine possible even though it meant the sacrifice of his own comfort is illustrated in his letter to Norton in 1858:

....."My work for the last fortnight mi ha fatto magro in good earnest--the work and the worry of it. Phillips was so persuaded of the stand given to the Magazine by the Choate article that he has been at me ever since for another. So I have been writing a still longer one on Cushing. I think you will like it though on looking over the Choate article this morning I am inclined to think that on the whole the better of the two. Better as a whole, I mean,

[1] Norton, op. cit., I, 280-281.

for there are passages in this beyond any in that, I think. These personal things are not such as I should choose to do; but one must take what immediate texts the newspapers afford him, and I accepted the responsibility in accepting my post. I am resolved that no motives of my own comfort or advantage shall influence me, but I hate the turmoil of such affairs, despise the notoriety they give one, and long for the day when I can be vacant to the muses and to my books for their own sakes. I cannot stand the worry of it much longer without a lieutenant. To have questions of style, grammar, and punctuation in other people's articles to decide, while I want all my concentration for what I am writing myself--to have added to this personal appeals, from ill-mannered correspondents whose articles have been declined, to attend to--to sit at work sometimes fifteen hours a day, as I have done lately--makes me nervous, takes away my pluck, compels my neglecting my friends, and induces the old fits of the blues. However, the worst is that it leads me to bore my friends when I do get at them. To be an editor is almost as bad as being President..."[2]

Again Lowell wrote:

"This endless reading of manuscripts is hard work and takes a great deal of time; but I have resolved that

[2] Norton, op. cit., I, 285-286.

nothing shall go in which I have not first read. I wish to have nothing go in it that will merely do, but I fear I cannot keep up so high a standard. It is astonishing how much there is that leaps just short of the line of good and drops into the limbo of indifferent...." [3]

Lowell was not averse to work but methodical work was difficult for him and the magazine's demands for punctual reading and correspondence often irked him. To Mr. White in 1859, Lowell wrote:

"I used to be able to answer letters in the month during which I received them, but now they pile up and make a jam behind the boom of my occupations, till they carry everything before them, and after a little confused whirling float placidly down to the ocean of Oblivion. I do not know if it be so with everybody but with me the perpetual chance of interruption to which I am liable induces a kind of stolid despair. I am afraid that at this moment there are at least a hundred and fifty unanswered letters in and on and round my desk, whose blank looks seem to say 'how long?' Your letter came just in the midst of a bother in the Atlantic, which it took all my diplomacy to settle so that both sides should not bite their own noses off, to which mad meal they had violent appetites. It is all 'fixed' now, and things go smoothly again—but meanwhile the hiatus

[3] C. E. Norton, "Launching of the Magazine," Atlantic Monthly, V, 579 (November, 1907)

in my correspondence grew daily wider."[4]

He wrote to another friend:

"I am at last even with my manuscripts. It is splendid. Such a heap as had gathered. It had snowed poems and tales and essays, and an eddy had drifted them into my study knee-deep. But I have shovelled myself out, and hope 't is the last great storm of the season."[5]

"If my letters are dry," Lowell wrote to White, "it is no fault of mine. I am overworked and overworried and everinterrupted. I can't write a genial letter, but I want you and like you all the same. If ever I get back to my old nest among the trees at Elmwood, and I am no longer professor or editor, with time enough to follow up a doubtful passage of Shakespeare or a bit of diletante philology,— then what pleasure I should have in corresponding with you and exchanging thoughts and suggestions. But now, if anything occurs to me, I feel too tired to communicate it to anybody, for my days are so broken that I am forced sometimes to sit up till the birds sing to get any time for my own studies."[6]

The first issue of the Atlantic had announced the high ideals of the magazine and it was Lowell's intention

4 Scudder, op. cit., I, 442.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., P. 444.

to keep the standard of the contents high. Lowell wrote to a friend:

"The magazine is going to be free without being fanatical and we hope to unite in it all available talent of all shades of opinion. The magazine is to have opinions of its own and not be afraid to speak them, but I think we shall be scholarly and gentlemanlike."[7]

In June, 1860, the Atlantic published a paper on the works of Roger Bacon by Charles Eliot Norton. To James T. Fields, Lowell wrote the following which illustrates the firmness of his editorial policy of making the magazine consistently good:

"Mr. Nichols tells me that you sighed a little over heavy articles and instanced that on Roger Bacon. All Ham connexion is at a discount in these secession days--but I think you are wrong--not merely about that article which seemed to me as interesting as it was thorough--but on the general question. I hope I need not say that I never let any personal feeling influence me consciously in editing the magazine--so do not think it is Norton I am defending. I stick to the principle. If we make our magazine merely entertaining how are we better than those Scribes and Pharisees the Harpers? We want to make it interesting to as many classes of people as we can, especially to such

[7] Scudder, op. cit., I, 424.

as give tone to public opinion in leterary matters, if there be any such in America."[8]

Again Lowell stated his policy clearly in writing to Richard Grant White who feared that his article on Shakespeare would be received with disfavor.

"I don't care whether the public are tired of the Divine Villiams or not--a part of the magazine as long as I shall have anything to do with it, shall be expressly not for the Mob (of well-dressed gentlemen who read with ease.)"[9]

And again, Lowell wrote:

"There is constant pressure upon me to 'popularize' the magazine, which I resist without clamor."[10]

Although Lowell took clear issue on some questions, he was careful not to involve the magazine in aimless controversies. When the Albany controversy came up, Lowell wrote:

"I am urged to take ground in the Albany controversy, but do not feel that there is any ought in the matter, and am sure the Trustees will beat in the end. I think it would be unwise to let the magazine take a losing side unless clear justice required it. Am I not right?" [11]

It is clear from Lowell's letter of resignation [12]

8 M. A. DeWolfe Howe, New Letters, p. 99.
9 Scudder, op. cit., I, 423.
10 Ibid., p. 424.
11 Ibid.
12 Norton, Letters, I, 310.

that he had become somewhat accustomed to the trials of editing and was less anxious over the performance of his duties. The salary which the Atlantic afforded him had given him greater ease in financial matter but he welcomed the release from the daily demands of editorial life. Yet his term as Atlantic editor had without a doubt served to enrich his life and to prepare him for the enterprises which lay ahead.

The year 1857 was an important one for Lowell. In September of that year he married Miss Frances Dunlap. The academic year 1856-1857 was his first as professor of Harvard College. In November the first issue of the Atlantic appeared with Lowell as editor.

The fifties saw a sudden springing up of "literary weeds". In fiction, a number of books by feminine writers, created and nourished by Godey's Lady's Book, became best sellers. The best sellers were Susan Warner's The Wide Wide World, 1850; Queerly, 1852, 104,000 copies in three years; Fern Leaves from Fanny's Portifolio, 1853, by "Fanny Fern"(Sarah Willis Parton), 80,000 copies the first year.[13]

[13] Fred Lewis Pattee, The First Century of American Literature, p. 569.

Into a literary world of such unhealthy sentimentalism, Lowell launched his magazine, a crusade against insincerity, and a movement toward realism. Demille points out that Lowell had himself once been a sentimentalist or a Utopian reformer. "Outgrowing this, like many converts he conceived a bitter dislike for his older faith and endeavored with all his powers to smash the idol of his earlier worship. Beginning with the essay on Wordsworth in 1854, he devoted a large part of his criticism through the years 1854-1870 to a smashing attack on sentimentalism. He considers the Wordsworthian view of nature as a consoler and a refuge an unhealthy and unnatural piece of sentimentalism. For the same reason he condemns Thoreau."[14]

In editing the Atlantic, Lowell was very frank in his criticism of his contributors. He dared to suggest changes in the poems submitted by Emerson and by Whittier and to revise the manuscript of Thoreau until that individual refused longer to contribute to the magazine.[15]

An essay of Emerson's, "Illusions", appeared in the first number of the Atlantic and there were four of his poems: "The Romany Girl", "The Chartiist's Complaint", "Days", and "Brahma". On September 14, 1857, Lowell wrote to Emerson:

14 George E. DeMille, Literary Criticism in America, p. 62.
15 Pattee, First Century of American Literature, p. 584.

"About these poems I ought to say that when I spoke of printing all four I was perhaps greedy, and Mr. Underwood says we can't afford it, reckoning each as a separate poem--which means giving $50 apiece for them. Forgive me for coming down into the kitchen thus, but as I got the magazine into the scrape, I must get it out. My notion was that all the poems would be published at once in a volume, and that therefore it would be alike to you. I ought to have thought that you sent them for selection,-- and I will never be so rapacious again till I have another so good a chance. If I am to have only one, give me 'Days'. That is as limpid and complete as a Greek epigram. I quarrel, though, with one word 'hypocritic', which I doubt does not give the very shade of meaning you intended. I think you did wish to imply intentional taking-in?"[16]

On November 19, 1857, after the first number of the Atlantic had appeared, Lowell wrote again to Emerson:

"Meanwhile they are advertising the Atlantic in the very best way and Mr. Underwood tells me that the orders for the second number are doubling on those for the first. I think you will find the second an improvement.... The 'Solitude and Society' has only one fault, that it is not longer, but had it been only one page there would have

[16] Scudder, op. cit., I, 414.

been enough in it. Did you use the word daysman[17] deliberately? It has a technical meaning and I suppose you used it in that sense."[18]

Scudder says, "It may not be unfairly said that Emerson was the only one of his contemporaries whom Lowell addressed as if he were profoundly conscious of his relation to him as a pupil to his master."[19]

Another writer of prominence whose work Lowell dared to criticize was John Greenleaf Whittier. Lowell printed Whittier's "The Gift of Tritemius" in the first number of the Atlantic and "Skipper Ireson's Ride" in the second number. On November 4, 1857, on receiving the latter poem, Lowell wrote to Whittier:

"I thank you heartily for the ballad which will go into the next number. I like it all the better for its provincialism,--in all fine pears, you know, we can taste the old puckers. I know the story well. I am familiar with Marblehead and its dialect, and as the burthen is intentionally provincial, I have taken the liberty to print it in such a way as to give the peculiar accent thus:

[17] "He envied every daysman and drover in the tavern their manly speech." Corrected and reprinted: "He envied every drover and lumberman."

[18] M. A. DeWolfe Howe, New Letters, pp. 94-95.
[19] Scudder, op. cit., I, 417.

'Cap'n Ireson for his herrd horrt
Was torred and feathered and corried in a corrt.'

That's the way I've always 'horrd it',-- only it began 'Old Flud Ireson.'

"You see that 'Tritemius'[20] is going the rounds. I meant to have sent you the proofs and to have asked you to make a change in it where these four rhymes come together (assonances, I mean),-- 'door', 'poor', 'store', 'more'. It annoyed me but I do not find that anyone else has been troubled by it and everybody likes the poem....."[21]

Lowell's policy of complete frankness is illustrated further in his correspondence with James T. Fields. Fields contributed five articles to the Atlantic during Lowell's editorship. In 1860, Lowell wrote to him:

"I forgot to speak to you about your article which I liked so much as to wish it had been longer. They spell Coliseum Colesseum nowadays."[22]

Lowell included praise as well as some criticism in his letter to T. W. Higginson, in 1858. Higginson had contributed four articles in 1857-1858. His article, "Ought Women to Learn the Alphabet", was to appear in the January number for 1859. Upon receiving this article, Lowell wrote:

"I like your article so much that it is already in

[20] Atlantic Monthly, I, 62.
[21] Scudder, op. cit., I, 417.
[22] Howe, New Letters, pp. 99-100.

press as leader of the next number. You misunderstood me. I want no change except the insertion of qualifying 'perhaps' where you speak of the natural equality of the sexes, and that as much on your own account as mine--because I think it not yet demonstrated.

"I only look upon my duty as a vicarious one for Phillips and Samson, that nothing may go in (before we are firm on our feet) that helps the 'religious' press in their warfare on us.... I never allow any personal notion of mine to interfere except in cases of obvious obscurity, bad taste, or bad grammar.

"As for your own contributions, I may say to you as I always have to Mr. Underwood, that they are just to my liking--scholarly, picturesque, and above all, earnest--I think the most telling essays we have printed."[23]

If Lowell was frank in his criticism of his contributors, so was he generous in his praise when he felt that the writer was worthy of it. In December 1860, he wrote to William Dean Howells:

"I am glad the papers have had taste enough to find out the goodness of 'The Pilot's Story'.[24] Goethe tells us to ask the boys and the blackbirds which are the ripest cherries, but the public seems seldom to have much either of

23 Norton, Letters, I, 287-288.
24 Atlantic Monthly, VI, 323.

boy or blackbird in it, and newspaper editors still seldomer; but I shan't think the worse of your poem because they like it, for I liked it myself. More than that, I thought it a really fine poem. Accordingly, I am glad to hear that you are to send us another..."[35]

Bayard Taylor contributed four articles to the Atlantic during Lowell's editorship. One of these, "The Confessions of a Medium", appeared in December, 1860. Shortly after receiving it, Lowell wrote to Taylor:

"I am very glad you did not forget to send the 'Spiritualist' article you spoke of when here. I like it, and Mr. Fields says that you shall have your $100 for it. You have dotted out with great nicety the waving boundary-line that divides self-deception from humbug--me-cheating from thee-cheating."[36]

35 Norton, Letters, I, 306.
36 Howe, New Letters, p. 100.

II. Criticism

Of the sixty five articles which Lowell wrote for the Atlantic while he was editor, forty were articles of review and criticism.

In the first issue of the Atlantic, Lowell began a department which he called the Round Table. He apparently decided that such a department would be unappreciated by Atlantic readers or that a department of Literary Notices would serve better. The first such article, which was also the last, contained the following statement of Lowell's intentions regarding the department:

"La Maga has her table, too, and at fitting times invites to it her various Eminent Hands. It is a round table,--that is, rounded by the principle of rotation,-- for how could she settle points of precedence with the august heads of her various Departments without danger of the dinner's growing cold? Substantial dinners are eaten thereat with Homeric appetite, nor, though impletus venter non vult studere libenter, are the visits of the Muse unknown. At these feasts no tyranny of speech-making is allowed, but the bonbons are all wrapped in original copies of verses by various contributors, which having served their festive turn, became the property of the guests. Reporters are not admitted for the eating is not done for inspection, like that of

the hapless inmates of a menagerie; but La Maga herself sometimes brings away in her pocket a stanza or so which she esteems worthy of a more general communication. Last month she thus sequestered the following Farewell addressed by Holmes to the Historian of William the Silent."[1]

And then follows the poem which it was Lowell's purpose to introduce.

The department of Literary Notices which took the place of the Round Table contained the best writing that Lowell could obtain for the matter of book reviews was of great consequence to him. In his letter to Richard Grant White, June 10, 1858, Lowell wrote:

"There is no one opprobrium of American scholarship and letters so great, as the general laxity and debasement of criticism."[2]

That Lowell considered White an expert is revealed in his letter of March 8, 1859:

"There is nothing I so especially desire as to have 'experts' make the Atlantic their pulpit. As long as I continue editor, I wish you to understand that your criticisms will always be welcome, on no ground of personal friendship, but because I know they will be of value. I particularly wish to have the department of 'Literary Notices' made more full. I find so few people whom I can trust to write a review!"[3]

1 James Russell Lowell, "The Round Table," Atlantic Monthly, I, 121.
2 Scudder, op. cit., I, 431.
3 Ibid., p. 431

White contributed six aricles to the Atlantic during Lowell's editorship. Three of them were Shakespeare articles. "Shakespeare's Art"[4] appeared as the leader of the June 1859 number. "William Shakespeare, Attorney and Scholar"[5] appeared in July, 1859. In September 1858, White published "The Collier-Folio Shakespeare."[6]

In January and February 1859, Lowell published two articles in the Atlantic in which he reviewed White's Shakespeare. In the first of these articles Lowell discussed White's high qualifications and his dexterity in dealing with his subject. He also pointed out what seemed to him White's shortcomings.

"We have spoken of Mr. White's remarkable qualifications," Lowell wrote. "We shall now state shortly what seem to be his faults. We think his very acumen sometimes leads him into fancying a meaning where none exists, or at least none answerable to the clarity and precision of Shakespeare's intellect; that he is too hasty in his conclusions as to the pronounciation of words and the accuracy of rhymes in Shakespeare's day, and that he has been seduced into them by what we cannot help thinking a mistaken theory as to certain words, as moth and nothing for example; that he shows, here and there, a glimpse of Americanism especially misplaced in an edition of a poet, whose works do more than anything else perhaps to maintain the sympathy of the English race;

4 Atlantic Monthly, III, 657.
5 Ibid., IV, 84.
6 Ibid., p. 512.

and that his prejudice against the famous corrected folio of 1632 leads him to speak slightingly of Mr. Collier, to whom all lovers of our early literature are indebted, and who alone, in the controversy excited in England by the publication of his anonymous corrector's emendations, showed, under the most shameful provocation, the temper of a gentleman and the self-respect of a scholar."[7]

It was this adverse criticism which Lowell referred to in his letter to White:

"I don't like reviewing," wrote Lowell, "especially where the author is an acquaintance. I find it so hard to be impartial, but in your case I think my commendation would lose half its force were it not qualified by some adverse criticism."[8]

The foregoing letters and quotations are intended to show that the matter of criticism and book reviews was important to Lowell. The nature of his contributions to the department of Literary Notices may be seen from the following complete list of such articles published in the Atlantic during his editorship:

7 Atlantic Monthly, III, 121.
8 Scudder, op. cit., I, 433.

Beatrice Cenci(Guerrazzi) 1:638
Library of Old Authors (Smith) 1:760, 883
Dramatic Works of John Webster 2:119
White's Shakespeare 3:111, 241
Courtship of Miles Standish 3:129
Bittersweet 3:651
Dictionary of Authors (Allibone) 3:775
Index to Catalogue of Boston City Library 3:777
To Cuba and Back (R. H. Dana, Jr.) 4:132
Memoir of Theophilus Parsons, by his Son 4:132
The New and the Old (Palmer) 4:383
Country Life (Copeland) 4:384
Dictionary of Americanisms 4:638
History and Description of New England (Coolidge and Mansfield) 4:645
Reply to the Statement of the Trustees of the Dudley Observatory (B. A. Gould, Jr.) 4:650
Forty-four Years of the Life of a Hunter 4:770
A First Lesson in Natural History (Actaea) 4:773
Sir Rohan's Ghost 5:252
Lectures on the English Language (Marsh) 5:508
The Marble Faun (Hawthorne) 5:509
Poems by Two Friends 5:510
Noes of Travel and Study in Italy (Norton) 5:629
American Dictionary of the English Language (Webster) 5:631
Dies Irae (Coles)5:752
A Voyage Down the Amoor (Collins) 5:757
Fresh Hearts that Failed Three Thousand Years Ago 5:759
The New Tariff Bill 6:124
Dictionary of English Etymology (Wedgwood) 6:248
Autobiographical Recollections (Leslie) 6:373
The Old Battle-Ground (Trowbridge) 6:376
Mr. Jarves's Collection 6:509
A Journey in the Back Country (Olmstead) 6:635
Home Ballads and Poems (Whittier) 6:637
A Forest Hymn (Bryant) 6:761
Loves and Heroines of the Poets (Stoddard) 6:761
Folk Songs (Palmer) 6:761
Ancient Danish Ballads (Prior) 7:124
Miss Gilbert's Career 7:125
Conduct of Life (Emerson) 7:254
Life of Andrew Jackson (Parton) 7:381
Poems (Rose Terry) 7:382
Elsie Venner (Holmes) 7:509

It was Lowell's bookish nature and conservative upbringing which give these early articles of criticism a tone

of uncertainty. Backed by tradition, Lowell felt safe and secure, but of his contemporaries, Lowell was not able to speak with authority. His uncertainties, doubts, hesitations, and qualifications appear constantly throughout his Atlantic reviews.

In reviewing Emerson's Conduct of Life, Lowell wrote:

"There is no man living to whom, as a writer, so many of us feel and thankfully acknowledge so great an indebtedness for enobling impulses,--none whom so many cannot abide. What does he mean? ask these last. Where is his system? What is the use of it all? What the deuse have we to do with Brahma?"[9]

And then Lowell excuses himself from the answers by stating that he does not propose to write an essay on Emerson at the end of a February Atlantic when the cause of Secession is immediate. He then calls Emerson a true genius.

"We meant only to welcome this book," wrote Lowell, "and not to review it. Doubtless we might pick our quarrel with it here and there; but all that our readers care to know is, that it contains essays on Fate, Power, Wealth, Culture, Behavior, Worship, Considerations by the Way, Beauty, and Illusions. They need no invitation to Emerson. 'Would you know', says Goethe, 'the ripest cherries? Ask the boys

9 Atlantic Monthly, VII, 254-255.

and the blackbirds.' He does not advise you to inquire of the crows."[10]

This failure to analyze minutely, and to express a personal opinion in convincing tones is marked again in Lowell's review of Holmes' Elsie Venner. Lowell seems merely to be doubling public opinion.

"There is no need for our analyzing Elsie Venner," he writes, "for all our readers know it as well as we do.... The variety, freshness, and strength which he (Holmes) has lent to our pages during the last three years seem to demand of us that we should add our expression of admiration to that which his countrymen have been so eager and unanimous in rendering."[11]

It is somewhat difficult to decide just what Lowell's opinion was of Whittier. In reviewing Home Ballads and Poems, Lowell wrote:

"Whatever Mr. Whittier may lack, he has the prime merit that he smacks of the soil."[12] Yet Lowell followed this criticism with one in which he deplored Whittier's use of the native idiom. The two criticisms are inconsistent. "He makes abroad rhyme with God, law with war, us with curse, scorner with honor, been with men, beard with shared. For the last two we have a certain sympathy as archaisms, but

10 Atlantic Monthly, VII, 255.
11 Ibid., 511.
12 Ibid., VI, 638.

with the rest we can make no terms whatever--"[13]

"'The Garrison of Cape Ann'," wrote Lowell, "would have been a fine poem, but it has too much of the author in it, and to put a moral at the end of a ballad is like sticking a cork on the point of a sword."[14] After pointing out as Whittier's prime merit that he smacked of the soil, Lowell has now condemned him for putting his "New England heart"[15] into his poem.

The criticism of Whittier's moralizing is the same which Lowell offered in reviewing Longfellow's Courtship of Miles Standish.

"We think his chief fault is too great a tendency to moralize," Lowell wrote, "or rather, a distrust of his readers, which leads him to point out the moral which he wishes to be drawn from any special poem."[16]

Lowell was generous in praise of Hawthorne who had, when Lowell wrote a review of The Marble Faun, been writing about twenty years.

Lowell's opinion of Poe[17] may be gleaned at least to a certain extent from this same review.

"The nineteenth century has produced no more purely

13 Atlantic Monthly, VI, 638.
14 Ibid., 639.
15 Ibid., 638.
16 Ibid., III, 129.
17 "He probably cannot conceive of anybody's writing for anything but a newspaper reputation, or for posthumous fame."--Letters, I, 100

original writer than Mr. Hawthorne. A shallow criticism has sometimes fancied a resemblance between him and Poe. But it seems to us that the difference between them is the immeasurable one between talent carried to its ultimate, and genius,--between a masterly adaptation of the world of sense and appearance to the purposes of Art, and a so thorough conception of the world of moral realities that Art becomes the interpreter of something profounder than herself."[18]

These criticisms of living men and articles published later by Lowell, are sufficient to prove that his judgment had no very firm basis. In the old authors, Lowell found and brought to light new aspects for appreciation and here lay his real talent.

DeMille says that some men are born reviewers and that Lowell had the ability but not the taste.[19] Certainly it was with personal relief and pleasure that Lowell turned from his study of the contemporary writers to the leisurely perusal of the old poets.

Considering Lowell's criticism generally, Thorndike writes:

"Lowell introduces no new principles or methods into literary criticism and he makes no search after novelties. In these respects and in the part that his essays have played in changing the direction of literary criticism, they may

18 Atlantic Monthly, V, 509.
19 DeMille, op. cit., p. 71.

be regarded as less important than those which Matthew Arnold was writing during the same decade. But this is mainly due to the fact that Arnold's criticism was a part of a definite propaganda. When he gave up poetry and turned to prose, it was with the pronounced intention of getting at the British public, of entering on controversy, of preaching a new gospel, that of culture which was to have its main ally in criticism. Lowell's increasing use of prose was made from no such incentive. The great cause to which he had been devoted had been won. It was in part as a relief from controversy and propaganda that he turned from political subjects to the leisurely appreciation of his favorite authors. The essays have no reforms to propose. They are the summing up of many hours spent in his library and his class-room."[20]

Reilly and Foerster afford an interesting contrast in their views of Lowell as a critic. Reilly find in Lowell an unusual capacity for enthusiasm coupled with conservatism. He says that Lowell's knowledge of human nature was limited and that otherwise, his knowledge was wide but not always accurate. Lowell was only slightly interested in the drama and novel, Reilly says, and he never attained true detachment which is necessary for a great critic.[21]

In contrast to this unsparing criticism of Reilly, is that of Foerster:

20 Cambridge History of American Literature, II, 253.
21 Joseph John Reilly, James Russell Lowell as a Critic.

"In no other American of the nineteenth century has the critical spirit manifested itself so comprehensively as in James Russell Lowell. Despite the fact that he leaves an impression of comparative superficiality and futility.... he must still be regarded as our most distinguished literary critic."[22]

It was Lowell's aim as an editor to encourage American writers and to further establish an American literature. There is no doubt that the department of Literary Notices was of some value at least in achieving this aim.

If Lowell's purpose in this early criticism was to evangelize America to the cause of literature, then he in a measure succeeded. Certainly his role as Atlantic editor is historic. As a critic he leaned much on the side of appreciation and enjoyment. He could talk and write with fine enthusiasm of his reading, but when it came to sound judgment of living writers, whose works were not yet supported by age and tradition, Lowell floundered.[23]

Next to Lowell, Charles Eliot Norton contributed the largest number of articles to the department of Literary Notices.

Norton was a painstaking, learned, and sympathetic scholar, "an autocrat in aesthetic matters."[24] Norton felt that it was his intellectual mission to spread

22 Norman Foerster, American Criticism, p. 110.
23 Van Wyck Brooks, The Flowering of New England, pp. 521-522.
24 Ibid., p. 458.

the gospel of art. Norton's consideration was only for the art of the past. "As Ticknor felt, in his heart of hearts, that all the great writers were of the past,--Ticknor, who lived out his days around the corner from Emerson, Hawthorne, Thoreau, scarcely aware of their existence,--so Norton, who made an exception of Ruskin's friends, Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites, felt that the Renaissance was the end of art."[25]

The nature of Norton's contributions to the section of reviews, may be seen from the following list which includes all except five of his total contributions to the Atlantic during Lowell's editorship:

The Life of Michael Angelo Buonarotte (Harford) 1:510
Galleries and Cabinets of Art in Great Britian (Waagen) 1:765
Memoir and Letters of the late Thomas Seddon 3:648
The Oxford Museum (Acland) 4:767
Plutarch's Lives (Clough, ed.) 5:110
Twelve Years of a Soldier's Life in India (Hodson) 5:124
Friends in Council, New Series 5:125
The Simplicity of Christ's Teachings set forth in Sermons (Brooks) 5:250
The West Indies and the Spanish Main (Trollope) 5:375
Public Life of Captain John Brown (Redpath) 5:378
Le Prime Quattro Edizioni della Devina Commedia 5:622
Mademoiselle Mori 5:754
Essays and Reviews 6:633
Rogeri Bacon Opera 6:746
Collection of Rare and Original Documents, and Relations Concerning the Discovery and Conquest of America (Squier) 7:122
The Laws of Race 7:252
Il Politecinco 7:508
Il Comento Latino di Benvenuto Rambaldi (Tamburini) 7:629

[25] Brooks, op. cit., p. 458.

E. P. Whipple contributed nine articles to the department of Literary Notices during Lowell's editorship. Whipple, who was the chief reader for the firm of Ticknor and Fields, had earned a reputation in America and England. "As a writer for the North American, he had formed a method of his own, discriminating, acute and often subtle, with none of the ponderousness of his early models; and he was discussing in his essays and lectures, such subjects as wit and humour, the ludicrous side of life, genius, intellectual health and disease, character, success and its conditions. His estimates of early American writers were undoubtedly over-friendly, but his papers on the English dramatists and the Scottish and English critics were the best of the kind in America, by far."[26]

26 Brooks, op. cit., p. 480.

III. The Campaign Against Slavery

The Atlantic Monthly had begun its life at a most critical period in the history of the United States. The summer of 1857 was marked by a financial panic, the result of the discovery of gold. Building of railroads and increase in manufacturing had caused banks to loan money too freely and finally the bubble could expand no further. With a few exceptions, the western banks failed completely. So far as the banks were concerned, the panic was of short duration and by the spring of 1858, they began business transactions again. But a few years of "hard times" followed and it was not until 1860 that industrial conditions were normal again.

Buchanan had been elected to the presidency in 1856. He had been the minister in England and thus was not connected with anything that had been done in America for three years. He was accaptable to the South, which he had never opposed, and he appealed to Northern conservatives of all parties who thought the republican position on slavery a kind of radicalism.

The chief issue of the campaign of 1856 was the Kansas situtation. The unorganized Nebraska country west of Missouri and Iowa became important as soon as the Oregon question came up; and the migration to California and the plans proposed for a railroad to the Pacific gave it added interest. Attempts to have it made a territory had been

defeated by the slavery men, because under the Missouri Compromise it would be free. A bill to create a Nebraska territory was introduced in 1853. The bill, when finally passed provided for two territories. Kansas, the more southern of the two, it was expected would be settled by slaveholders. Douglas, chairman of the committee on territories, called his doctrine "popular sovereignty, since it gave the people of the territories the right to settle the question for themselves.

Buchanan finally won the election, but by a small margin. The new republican party did exceedingly well for a party which had never before taken part in a campaign. An important part was played in this campaign by Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin, published in book form in 1852, as a protest against the execution of the fugitive slave law. It was an earnest protest and it was scarcely possible for anyone to read it without wishing to destroy the system. The Southerners resented its pictures of slavery and slaveholders. The situtation was not as bad as it was portrayed but it was bad enough to cry for reform.

It was in answer to this cry that Edmund Quincy opened the Atlantic attack upon slavery in the second issue, with his article "Where Will it End?" Quincy was calling to the attention of Atlantic readers, the strength and power of the United States. The South, said Quincy, embraced three hundred thousand more miles than the North, had

admirable opportunities for carrying on commerce, possessed all the raw materials for manufacturing. Yet the South depended on the North for transportation and almost entirely for commodities.

"With all the means and materials of wealth," wrote Quincy, "the South is poor. With every advantage for gathering strength and self-reliance, it is weak and dependent.--Why this difference between the two?

"The <u>why</u> is not far to seek. It is to be found in the reward which Labor bestows on those that pay it due reverence in the one case, and the punishment it inflicts on those offering it outrage and insult in the other....A man in fetters cannot do the task-work that one whose limbs are unshackled looks upon as a pastime. A man urged by the prospect of winning an improved condition for himself and his children by the skill of his brain and the industry of his hand must needs achieve results such as no fear of torture can extort from one denied the holy stimulus of hope...."

Quincy believed the power of the slave party was far out of proportion to the number of its supporters. The North, he says, with many distractions has been at "the mercy of whatever barbarian chief in the capitol could throw his slave-whip into the trembling scale of party."[1] It is impossible to tell the exact time when this tyranny will end. But "we know that when the great body of any

[1] <u>Atlantic Monthly</u>, I, 244.

nation is thoroughly aroused, and fully in earnest to abate a mischief or right a wrong, nothing can resist its energy or defeat its purpose."[2]

Quincy wrote a list of six articles for the Atlantic, four of which were reviews. In one of these, the review of Charles Mackay's [3] Life and Liberty in America[4], Quincy wrote:

"The subject upon which the author has labored most earnestly is that of slavery. If the views he sets forth are the results of his own investigation, he is entitled to credit for unusual exactness. There is nothing new about them to be sure; but there is also nothing absurd, which is a great point. He maintains the argument against Slavery, that it is to be practically considered in its injurious influences on the white people of the Slave States, and through them, on the nation at large..."

The injurious effect of the system upon the white people of the South was one of the chief principles upon which Quincy rested his argument against Slavery. He had already marked this in his previous article.

"When we speak of the South as distinguished from the North by elements of inherent hostility, we speak only of the governing faction, and not of the millions of nominally

2 Atlantic Monthly, I, 248.
3 Charles Mackay was an Englishman travelling in America.
4 Atlantic Monthly, IV, 379.

free men who are scarcely less its thralls than the black slaves themselves. This unhappy class of our countrymen are the first to feel the blight which Slavery spreads around it because they are nearest to its noxious power. The subjects of no European despotism are under a closer espionage, or a more organized system of terrorism than are they."[5]

It was in January 1858 that the Atlantic attack really got under way. In this issue, Lowell printed Parke Godwin's article "The President's Message, a brief but sharp criticism of the administration's policy.

Of those Atlantic contributors who were making an effort to arouse public feeling for abolition, Lowell, Godwin, and Quincy were the outstanding figures. Whittier, who had done much for the cause, had withdrawn from the field. He was only at home in the cause during its prophetic phase and as it entered the violent phase that preceded the war, he grew quiet.[6]

In these earlier issues, then, Lowell, Godwin and Quincy were combining their efforts in making the attack. Parke Godwin, a native of New Jersey and a graduate of Princeton, assisted his father-in-law, William Cullen Bryant, on the Evening Post. He took an active interest in literature

5 Atlantic Monthly, I, 247.
6 Brooks, op. cit., p. 401.

and art and was a figure of some literary importance.

In his first article, Godwin wrote a scathing criticism of Buchanan. His party had favored popular sovereignty in Kansas and Buchanan induced Robert J. Walker to accept the governorship. Northerners were in the majority in the population and Walker gave up hope of saving Kansas for slavery. When elections to constitutional convention were announced, Walker urged free state people to vote, promising that the constitution prepared should be submitted to the people for approval. Of the small number of people who took part in the election, the majority were for slavery. When Southern politicians learned that pro-slavery men controlled the convention they sent agents to Kansas and arranged a scheme whereby a minority might control. The constitution as a whole was not to be submitted to the people, but only the clause in reference to slavery. The vote was to be on the constitution with slavery or the constitution without slavery. If the latter prevailed the slaves already in Kansas would not be liberated. The vote on the constitution was to be taken by officers appointed by the convention. Walker denounced these designs and protested to the president, but he found Buchanan already committed to the Southerners.

Godwin discussed, in the first part of the article, the President's policies in regard to the money question and foreign relations. Having disposed of these matters, Godwin reviewed the Kansas difficulty. "By a miserable

juggle, worthy of the frequenters of the gambling house or the race course, the people of Kansas have been nominally allowed to decide the question of Slavery, and that permission according to Mr. Buchanan, fulfills and completes all that he ever meant, or his associates ever meant, by the promise of popular sovereignty!

"Now this may be all that the President and his party ever meant by that phrase, but it is not all that their words expressed or the country expected. In the course of the last three or four years, and by a series of high handed measures, the established principles of the Federal Government, in regard to its management of the Territories,--principles sanctioned by every administration from Washington's down to Fillmore's,--have been overruled for the sake of a new doctrine, which goes by the name of Popular Sovereignty. The most sacred and binding compacts of former years were annulled to make way for it; and the judicial department of the government was violently hauled from its sacred retreat, into the political arena, to give a gratuitous coup-de-grace to the old opinions and the apparent sanction of law to the new dogma, so that Popular Sovereignty might reign triumphant in the Territories...."[7]

Godwin pointed to the fact that the main principle of the Democratic platform had been the doctrine of popular

7 Atlantic Monthly, I, 745.

sovreignty and that Buchanan had won the election through his promises to secure it for Kansas.

"Under these pledges and promises, what has been the performance? A Convention, for which, inasmuch as it was illegally called by an illegal body, a large proportion of the citizens of Kansas refused to vote, frames a Constitution in the interest and according to the convictions of the slenderest minority of the people; it incorporates in that Constitution a recognition of the old Territorial laws to the last degree offensive to the majority of the people; it incorporates in it a clause establishing slavery in perpetuity; it connects with it a Schedule perpetuating the existing slavery, whatever it may be, against all future remedy which has not the sanction of the slave-master; and then, by a miserable chicane, it submits the Constitution to a vote of the people, but it submits it under such terms, that the people, if they vote at all, must vote for it, whether they like it or not, while the only part in which they can exercise any choice is the clause which relates to future slavery. The other part, especially the Schedule, which recognizes the existing slavery, and almost irremediably, the people are not allowed to pronounce upon. They are not allowed to pronrounce upon the thousand-and-one details of the State organization; they are fobbed off with a transparent cheat of 'heads' win,--tails you lose';--and the whole game is nominated, Popular Sovereignty".

And what was worse, in Godwin's estimation, was the President's argument that this was a fair settlement of the question. In this new light, Popular Sovereignty was merely designed to cover the right of the people to vote on a single question, specially presented by an illegal body, under electoral arrangements made by its new officers,-- while all the rest was merely unimportant and trivial.

"An old authority tell us that 'it is hard to kick against the pricks'; and the President appears to have experienced the difficulty, in kicking against the pricks of his conscience. He had committed himself to a principle which he is now compelled by the policy of his Southern masters to evade, and is painfully embarrassed as to how he shall hid his tracks. He knows, as all the world knows, that this jugglery in Kansas has been performed for no other purpose than to secure a foothold for Slavery there, against the demonstrated opinion of nine-tenths of the people. He knows, as all the world knows, that if the Convention had had the least desire to arrive at a fair expression of the popular will, on the question of Slavery or any other question, it was easy to make a candid and honorable submission of it to an election to be held honestly under the recognized officers of the Territory; but he knows, also, that under such circumstances the case would have been carried overwhelmingly against the 'domestic institution,' and thus have rebuked, with all the emphasis that an outraged

community could give to the expression of its will, the nefarious conduct which 'the party' has pursued from the beginning,—and this was a consummation not to be wished. He therefore wriggles and shuffles, with an absurd and transparent inconsistency, to defeat the popular will, and yet mouth it bravely about 'the great principle of Popular Sovereignty.'"

A month later, in the February Atlantic, Godwin again discussed the Kansas situation in "A Brief Review of the Kansas Usurpation." Here again, Godwin pointed to the Lecompton constitution as a scheme "to force the evils of slavery upon an unwilling people", and pleaded for an end of it. He points again to the extreme weakness of the administration in dealing with the affair and he strengthened his case with a historical review of Kansas since its establishment as a territory.

There was no political article in the March number, but in April Godwin and Lowell combined their efforts in an article which was to be one of the strongest of its kind during Lowell's editorship.

Mr. Buchanan had been in office a year and Godwin was called upon to review this first year which he did in an article of about eight pages,[8] with the title, "Mr. Buchanan's Administration." Mr. Godwin was a trained journalist and he was both methodical and severe as he examined Mr. Buchanan's record on the Mormon question,

8 Atlantic Monthly, I, 745-754.

the financial question, the Filibuster question, and the Kansas question. He analyzed clearly and gave results. Then Lowell took up the argument.[9] Scudder says:

"In the absence of any correspondence on the subject it is reasonble to conjecture that, having received Mr. Godwin's article and assigned it to the number, he was constrained to think that forcible as it was in its indictment of Mr. Buchanan's administration for errors and blunders, it might well afford the starting point for a further arraignment, not of the administration in particular but of the nation itself so far as that was particeps criminis with the administration in its role of attorney for the slave power."[10]

"Looking at the administration of Mr. Buchanan," Lowell wrote, "from the point of view of enlightened statesmanship, we find nothing in it that is not contemptible; but when we regard it as the credited exponent of the moral sense of a majority of our people, it is saved from contempt, indeed, but saved only because contempt is merged in a deeper feeling of humiliation and apprehension. Unparralleled as the outrages in Kansas have been, we regard them as insignificant in comparison with the deadlier fact that the Chief Magistrate of the Republic should strive to defend them by the small wiles of a village attorney,— that, when

9 Lowell gave no explanation for adding to Godwin's article.
10 Scudder, op. cit., II, 5.

the honor of a nation and the principle of self-government are at stake, he should show himself unconscious of a higher judicature or a nobler style of pleading than those which would serve for a case of petty larceny,--and that he should be abetted by more than helf the national representatives, while he brings down a case of public conscience to the moral level of those who are content with the maculate safety which they owe to a flaw in an indictment, or with the dingy innocence which is certified to by the disagreement of a jury."[11]

Lowell regarded this weakness and failure of the administration as a natural consequence of the demoralization which followed the enactment of the Fugitive Slave Bill. He saw that the difficulty lay in a lack of organized public sentiment and a resulting weakness of a sense of responsibility. He laid the blame upon the individual voter and emphasized the need for an awakening of the individual conscience. The North, Lowell insisted, had wasted its strength in internal bickerings.

"The advantage of our opponents has been that they have always had some sharp practical measure, some definite and immediate object, to oppose to our voluminous propositions of abstract right. Again and again the whirlwind of oratorical enthusiasm has roused and heaped up the threatening masses

11 Atlantic Monthly, I, 754.

of the Free States, and again and again we have seen them collapse like a water-spout, into a crumbling heap of disintegrated bubbles before the compact bullet of political audacity. While our legislatures have been resolving and re-resolving the principles of the Declaration of Independence, our adversaries have pushed their trenches, parallel after parallel, against the very citadel of our political equality."[12]

Lowell ignored Southern threats of disunion. He rebuked his fellow countrymen for the political degeneracy and closed his article with a plea for awakening:

"It lies in the hands of the people of the Free States to rescue themselves and the country by peaceable reform, ere it be too late, and there be no remedy left but that dangerous one of revolution, toward which Mr. Buchanan and his advisors seem bent on driving them. But the reform just be wide and deep, and its political objects must be obtained by household means. Our sense of private honor and integrity must be quickened; our consciousness of responsibility to God and man for the success of this experiment in practical Democracy, in order to which the destiny of a hemisphere has been entrusted to us, must be aroused and exalted..... Prosperity has deadened and bewildered us....We believe there is virtue enough left in the North and West to infuse health into our body politic; we believe that America will reassume

12 Atlantic Monthly, I, 757.

that moral influence among the nations which she has allowed to fall into abeyance; and that our eagle, whose morning-flight the world watched with hope and expectation, shall no longer troop with unclean buzzards, but rouse himself and seek his eyrie to brood new eaglets that in time shall share with him the lordship of these Western heavens, and shall learn of him to shake the thunder from their invincible wings."[13]

In this article Lowell has placed the blame for the existing state of affairs, not upon political blunders, but upon the disintegration of public conscience.

In June, 1858, Godwin took up the attack in his article, "The President's Phrophecy of Peace." Godwin's tone is one of bitterness and sarcasm as he describes the jubilance of the President over the outcome of the Kansas difficulty, and the prospect of "peace" and "prosperity". In no uncertain terms, Godwin explains the real meaning of this "peace" and "prosperity".

"This gentle peace, thus joyfully presaged, is to be won by the submission of an inchoate State to a form of government subjecting its inhabitants to institutions abhorrent to their souls and fatal to their prosperity, forced upon them at the point of a bowie-knife and the muzzle of a revolver by hordes of sordid barbarians from a hostile

13 Atlantic Monthly, I, 759-760.

soil, their natural and necessary enemies..... And the 'prosperity' which is to wait upon this happy'peace' glows with a like golden promise. It is a prosperity that shall bless Kansas into a Virginia or a North Carolina by virtue of the same means which has browned the Slave-country with the wealth, the civilization, and the intelligence it has to brag of. It is such a prosperity as ever follows in the footsteps of Slavery,--a prosperity which is to blight the soil, degrade the minds, debauch the morals, impoverish the substance, and subvert the independence of a loathing population, if the joy of the President and his directors is to be made full. Such is the message of peace and good-will which filled with prophetic raptures the hearts which flowed together on that happy night, and such the blessed prospects which made the air of Washington vocal with the ecstasies of triumph."[14]

The people of Kansas had been offered a bait. They had no opportunity to express their consent to or dissent from the constitution which was being held over their heads. They were only to say whether they would accept five million acres of land which Congress had offered for the construction of railways. If they accepted, they would immediately become a slave state. If they refused, the doors of the Union would be closed to them forever. This plan had been set up by the Committee of Conference.

14 Atlantic Monthly, II, 112.

It was Godwin's belief that the people of Kansas were intelligent enough and earnest enough in their support of the cause of freedom to reject such a plan for obtaining statehood. The people of Kansas, having accepted the Lecompton Constitution could call a convention and substitute another in its place, but such a policy would only bring about an armed collusion with the general government.

Instead of this course, Godwin pleaded for caution and patience.

"Let the men of Kansas remember that a yet greater trust than that of providing for their own interests and rights is in their hands. The battle they are to fight in this quarrel is for the whole North, for the whole country, for the whole world. Let them address themselves unto it with calmness, with prudence, with watchfulness, with courage. They are beset on every side by crafty and desperate enemies.. Let them organize such scrutiny everywhere that fraud and violence cannot escape detection and exposure. Let them observe most rigidly all the technical rules imposed upon the electors, that no vote may be lost. Let them come to the polls by thousands, and trample under their feet the shabby bribe for which they are asked to trade away their independence and their virtue. Let them be faithful and never weary of maintaining the Agitation, which is proved, by the very dread their enemies have of it, to be the way

to their victory. Thus they will be sure to triumph, conquering their right to create their own government, and erect a free commonwealth on the ruins of the tyranny they have overthrown. And Kansas, at no distant period, will be welcomed by her Free Sisters to her place among them, with no stain of bribes in her hands, and with no soil of meanness upon her garments. And then the 'peace' and 'prosperity' which President Buchanan saw in vision on the eve of May-day, will indeed prevail and be established, while the blackness of infamy will brood forever over the memory of the magistrate who used the highest office of the Republic to perpetuate the wrongs of the Slave by the sacrifice of the citizen."[15]

This was the last of Parke Godwin's articles to appear in the Atlantic during Lowell's editorship. His attacks had, on the whole, been more direct than Lowell's The very breadth of Lowell's thinking weakened his plea. Lowell's talents were better employed when he was writing the article on the American Tract Society[16] and the two later ones, "A Pocket Celebration of the Fourth"[17] and "A Sample of Consistency."[18] In these articles where freedom and expediency were the issues, Lowell handled his case with considerable dexterity.

Lowell had, all his life, stood for Freedom. In these

15 Atlantic Monthly, II, 118.
16 Ibid., p. 246.
17 Ibid., p. 374.
18 Ibid., p. 750.

papers he was lashing the politicians and referring again and again to the eternal principles of Freedom.

"The anti-slavery question is not one which the Tract Society can exclude by triumphant majorities, nor put to shame by comparison of respectabilities. Mixed though it has been with politics, it is in no sense political and springing naturally from the principles of that religion which traces its human pedigree to a manger....it can dispense with numbers and earthly respect."[19]

"The ethical aspects of slavery," Lowell says, "are not and cannot be the subject of consideration with any party which proposes to act under the Constitution of the United States. Nor are they called upon to consider its ethnological aspect. Their concern with it is confined to the domain of politics, and they are not called to the discussion of abstract principles, but of practical measures. The question even in its political aspect is one which goes to the very foundation of our theories and our institutions. It is simply shall the course of the Republic be so directed as to subserve the interests of aristocracy or of democracy? Shall our territories be occupied by lord and serf or by intelligent freemen? by laborers who are owned, or by men who own themselves?"[20]

19 Atlantic Monthly, II, 251.
20 Ibid., p. 763.

In October, 1860, Lowell printed his article, "The Election in November." Douglas was the Democratic candidate. The seceders nominated J. C. Breckenridge as their candidate. John Bell was the candidate of the remainder of the Whig and Know-nothing parties and Lincoln was the Republican candidate. The supporters of the other three candidates declared that Lincoln's election meant disunion. This argument Lowell said was "the old Mumbo-Jumbo" [21] conjured up to frighten old women and stock speculators. Lowell denied that discussion of the slave question was dangerous.

"The real danger," he says, "will come when the encroachments of the Slave Power and the concessions of the Trade Power shall have made it a burden instead of a blessing."[22]

Lowell saw the real danger, not only in the mass of ignorant brute force, but in the gradually increasing consciousness of the non-slaveholding population as to the real cause of their material impoverishment and political inferiority. Each slave-holding community was made up of three classes: the slaves, their owners, and those who neither were slaves nor owned them. This third class were white men who labored for bread, yet they were none the richer for their labor. To multiply such communities is to multiply weakness.

"The election in November," says Lowell, "turns on the

21 Atlantic Monthly, VI, 500.
22 Ibid., p. 498.

sinple and single question, Whether we shall consent to the indefinite multipication of them; and the only party which stands plainly and unequivocally pledged against such a policy, nay, which is not either openly or impliedly in favor of it, is the Republican party."[23]

Lowell states clearly in this article his first disappointment at Seward's defeat as the party candidate. Lincoln was not so well known in the East but Lowell came to accept him and looked forward to the results of his hoped-for election with great trust.

"We believe that the election of Mr. Lincoln will do more than anything else to appease the excitement of the country. He has proved both his ability and his integrity, he has had experience enough in public affairs to make him a statesman, and not enough to make him a politician. He respresents a party who know that true policy is gradual in its advances, that it is conditional and not absolute, that it must deal with facts and not with sentiments, but who know also that it is wiser to stamp out evil in the spark than to wait till there is no help but in fighting fire with fire."[24]

Defining the party principles further, Lowell says:

"They believe that slavery is a wrong morally, a mistake

23 Atlantic Monthly, VI, 498.
24 Ibid., P. 502.

politically, and a misfortune practically wherever it exists; that it has nullified our influence abroad and forced us to compromise with our better instincts at home; that it has perverted our government from its legitimate objects, weakened the respect for laws by making them the tools of its purposes, and sapped the faith of men in any higher political morality than interest or any better statesmanship than chicane. They mean in every lawful way to hem it within its present limits."[25]

Lowell's article, "The Question of the Hour", appeared in the Atlantic for January, 1861, when South Carolina had alread taken steps to withdraw from the Union. The real question of the hour with Lowell, was whether the Free States, having taken their stand for freedom, would be able to maintain it. Lowell considered briefly the possibility of disunion and its result.

"Even if the secessionists could accomplish their schemes, who would be the losers? Not the Free States, certainly, with their variety of resources and industry. The laws of trade cannot be changed, and the same causes which have built up their agriculture, commerce, and manufactures will not cease to be operative. The real wealth and strength of the states, other things being equal,

25 Atlantic Monthly, VI, 502.

depends upon homogeneousness of population and variety of occupation, with a common interest and common habits of thought. The cotton-growing states, with their single staple, are at the mercy of chance."[26]

In his article a month later, "E Pluribus Unum", Lowell had become seriously concerned over the state of affairs.

"But the present question is one altogether transcending all limits of party and all theories of party-policy. It is a question of national existence; it is a question whether a disappointed clique shall nullify all government now, and render a stable government difficult hereafter; it is a question, not whether we shall have civil war under certain contingencies, but whether we shall prevent it under any....[27] Slavery is no longer the matter in debate, and we must beware of being led off upon that side-issue. The matter now in hand is the reestablishment of order, the reaffirmation of national unity, and the settling once for all whether there can be such a thing as a government without the right to use its power in self-defence."[28]

In the article "The Pickens-and-Stealin's Rebellion" which Lowell wrote just before he gave up the editorship of the Atlantic, he was impatient at the slow caution of the

26 Atlantic Monthly, VII, 121.
27 Ibid., p. 243.
28 Ibid., p. 245.

administration but he was sure of the outcome of the war.

"We cannot think that the war we are entering on can end without some radical change in the system of African slavery. Whether it be doomed to a sudden extinction, or to a gradual abolition through economical causes, this war will not leave it where it was before. As a power in the state its reign is already over. The fiery tongues of the batteries in Charleston harbor accomplished in one day a conversion which the constancy of Garrison and the eloquence of Phillips had failed to bring about in thirty years. And whatever other result this war is destined to produce, it has already won for us a blessing worth everything to us as a nation in emancipating the public opinion of the North."[29]

Lowell left his editor's chair just as the real war was beginning. With Godwin and Quincy, he had battered against the slavery evil for four years. Quincy, writing in the early days of the Atlantic, had led the argument along the line of slavery's effect upon the non-slaveholding population. Godwin had analyzed each situation and pointed out the inevitable results. He had analyzed the frauds and deceits of the administration with penetration and foresight. Lowell had furnished the largest number of articles and had preached the doctrine of man's inherent

29 Atlantic Monthly, VII, 763.

right to freedom. It is impossible to measure the influence of these articles. However, in view of the keen interest of the writers, the forcefulness of the presentation, and the many lines of attack, they were not circulated without exciting considerable thought in the minds of Atlantic readers.

Harriet Beecher Stowe entered the Atlantic campaign against slavery with her novel "The Minister's Wooing". The story concerns Mary Scudder and her mother, and Dr. Hopkins, a minister who lived with them. In addition to his theology, Dr. Hopkins preached the doctrine of freedom which in the beginning, startled his congregation, many of whom had accumulated fortunes through the slave trade. Harriet Beecher Stowe was voicing her own atni-slavery sentiments when Dr. Hopkins said to a member of his congregation:

"Did it ever occur to you, my friend, that the enslaving of the African race is a clear violation of the great law which commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves,-- and a dishonor upon the Christian religion, more particularly in us Americans, whom the Lord hath so marvelously protected in our recent struggle for our own liberty?" 30

And again:

"What a shame it is, what a scandal and disgrace to the Protestant religion, that Christians of America should

30 Harriet Beecher Stowe, The Minister's Wooing, p. 158.

openly practice and countenance this enslaving of the Africans! I have for a long time holden my peace,--may the Lord forgive me! but I believe the time is come when I must utter my voice."[31]

The attitude of these good, thrifty, pious New Englanders toward slavery, was described by Mrs. Stowe when she wrote:

"There was not in Newport a more thriving and reputable business at that time than the slave-trade. Large fortunes were constantly being turned out in it, and what better providential witness of its justice could most people require?"[32]

In a sermon from his pulpit on a fine Sunday morning, Dr. Hopkins lashed his slave-trading and slave-holding members thus:

"If these things be true," he said after a condensed statement of the facts of the case, "then the following terrible consequences which may well make all shudder and tremble who realize them, force themselves upon us, namely: that all who have had any hand in this iniquitous business, whether directly or indirectly, or have used their influence to promote it, or have consented to it, or have no opposed it by all proper exertions of which they are capable,-- all these are, in a greater or less degree, chargable with the injuries and miseries which millions have suffered and

31 Stowe, The Minister's Wooing, p. 144.
32 Ibid.

are suffering, and are guilty of the blood of millions who have lost their lives by this traffic in the human species. Not only the merchants who have been engaged in this trade, and the captains who have been tempted by the love of money to engage in this cruel work, and the slave-holders of every description, are guilty of shedding rivers of blood, but all the legislatures who have authorized, encouraged, or even neglected to suppress it to the utmost of their power, and all the individuals in private stations who have in any way aided in this business, consented to it or have not opposed it to the utmost of their ability, have a share in this guilt.

"This trade in the human species has been the first wheel of commerce in Newport, on which every other movement in business has chiefly depended; this town has been built up, and flourished in times past, at the expense of the blood, the liberty, and the happiness of the poor Africans; and the inhabitants have lived on this and by it have gotten most of their wealth and riches. If a bitter woe is pronounced on him 'that buildeth his house by unrighteousness and his chambers by wrong,' Jer. XXII, 13,—to 'that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity,' Hab.11;12,—to 'the boody city,' Ezek. XXIV. 6,—
what a heavy, dreadful woe hangs over the heads of all those whose hands are defiled by the blood of Africans, especially

the inhabitants of this State and this town, who have had a distinguished share in this unrighteous and bloody commerce!"[33]

Harriet Beecher Stowe's attack differed from the others in the Atlantic in that it was made entirely from a moral standpoint. There was no reference to politics, to the administration, or to the Kansas difficulty. Because it was part of a novel, where plot and character were dominant, it had not the force of the articles of Lowell, Godwin, and Quincy. Yet Mrs. Stowe's remarks gained strength from the fact that they were directed at a New England Puritan community, the members of which were profiting from the slave trade.

33 Stowe, op. cit., pp. 242-243.

IV. Fiction

The Atlantic had taken for its sub-title, "A Magazine of Literature, Art, and Politics." In regard to the influence it was to have in political and governmental questions the Atlantic could scarcely have appeared at a more opportune moment. In the field of criticism, likewise, the Atlantic was to have considerable influence. But in no field did the magazine and its editor have more influence than in the field of short fiction.

"New England literature during the mid-century had been uniformly serious. The short story, especially in the Boston atmosphere, was regarded as a magazine product, ephemeral stuff, 'light reading', or at best a miniature novel that might serve as good exercise for young writers who were pluming their wings for serious flight. Collections of short stories were seldom mentioned by the reviewers, even in the lists of 'books received'. One may read quite through the early volumes of the New York Nation, which aimed to furnish a complete record of the current literary product and be unaware that such a form existed."[1]

Lowell, however, was well aware that the short story form existed. He had never been a writer of fiction himself Even his criticism was concentrated chiefly upon other types of literature. But beginning with the first issue,

1 Fred Lewis Pattee, Development of the American Short Story, p. 166.

the Atlantic published short fiction, averaging about three stories each month.

Lowell had written to Briggs in 1853, "I do abhor sentimentality from the depth of my soul."[2] In his criticisms, Lowell admired that which was fresh and genuine, the characters which were true to life, and the incidents which were real. In reviewing "Miss Gilbert's Career,"[3] by J. G. Holland, he wrote:

"Our author has lost nothing of that genuine love of Nature, of that quick perception of the comic element in men and things, of that delightful freshness and liveliness which threw such a charm about the former writings of Timothy Titcomb. No story can be pronounced a failure which has vivacity and interest; and the volume before us adds to vivacity and interest vigorous sketches of character and scenery, droll conversation and incidents, a frequent and kindly humor,..."

The tales which Lowell selected for publication at a time when the feminized fiction which he so despised was at its full tide, were written by a group of writers "who threw overboard the old romanticism and introduced the vulgar world of Dickens at the opposite extreme."[4]

Rose Terry was the leading contributor of short stories to the Atlantic during Lowell's editorship. She was born in

2 Pattee, Development of the American Short Story, p. 168.
3 Atlantic Monthly, VII, 125.
4 Pattee, op. cit., p. 169.

Connecticut in 1827 and had, when she began writing for the Atlantic, already contributed to other magazines. In her Atlantic tales, Rose Terry turned to the delineation of actual life. "She dealt more and more with New England farm and village characters, with common laborers and non-descript types found in country towns--with tight fisted farmers and rural deacons and the women they ruled with patriarchal despotism. She was not the first to do this; Seba Smith and others had caught glimpses of the field, but she was the first fully to take possession."[5]

Rose Terry's first Atlantic story turned on the familiar New England theme of duty, touched with the humor which was evident in the majority of Miss Terry's stories. In form, Rose Terry's tales fell short, for she frequently covered the whole lives of her characters. "But despite their faulty architectonics, her tales mark a distinct advance in American short-story art; they used for the first time consitently and with distinction what later was widely proclaimed as 'local color', and they tempered the vulgarity of their material with humor."[6]

In the first issue of the Atlantic along with Rose Terry's "Sally Parson's Duty", appeared Harriet Beecher Stowe's "The Mourning Veil". In contrast to Rose Terry's tales, which threw the New England characters

5 Pattee, op. cit., p. 175.
6 Ibid., p. 176.

into cold relief, is this tale of Mrs. Stowe's which is really a sermon made into a story.

The importance of Harriet Beecher Stowe's Atlantic writings during Lowell's editorship rests chiefly upon her serial, "The Minister's Wooing", which began in the second volume. She had written into this story her anti-slavery sentiments, but it is more important for its deliniation of New England life.

The story turns on a religious theme and offered Mrs. Stowe and excellent opportunity for describing the religious doctrines of New England, a thing she was well qualified to do since her father was a minister. Mrs. Stowe not only discussed these religious doctrines of New England but through her characters, Mary and Katy Scudder and Dr. Hopkins, she described their effect upon New England people.

"The rigid theological discipline of New England," she says, "is fitted to produce rather strength and purity than enjoyment. It was not fitted to make a sensitive and thoughtful nature happy, however it might enoble and exalt."[7]

Mrs. Stowe claimed her right to disagree with the religious beliefs of her countrymen when she wrote:

"It is not our line to imply the truth or the falsehood of those systems of philosophic theology which seem

7 Stowe, The Minister's Wooing, p. 23.

for many years to have been the principal outlet for the proclivities of the New England mind, but as psychological developments they have an intense interest. He who does not see a grand side to these strivings of soul cannot understand one of the noblest capabilities of humanity."[8]

Mrs. Stowe constantly referred to her region in relation to its religion.

"It is impossible to write a story of New England life and manners for a thoughtless, shallow-minded person. If we represent things as they are, their intensity, their depth, their unworldly gravity and earnestness must inevitably repel lighter spirits, as the reverse pole of the magnet drives off sticks and straws.

"In no other country were the soul and the spiritual life ever such intense realities, and everything contemplated so much... in reference to eternity!"[9]

She comments again on the somber tones of New England life when she writes:

"The tone of life in New England, so habitually earnest and solemn, breathed itself in the grave and plaintive melodies of the tunes then sung in churches..."[10]

"New England presents probably the only example of a successful commonwealth founded on a theory, as a distinct experiment in the problem of society. It was for this

8 Stowe, op. cit., p. 24.
9 Ibid., p. 83.
10 Ibid., p. 125.

reason that the minds of its great thinkers dwelt so much on the final solution of that problem in this world. The fact of a future milennium was a favorite doctrine of the great leading theologians of New England..."[11]

Besides these frequent discussions of the religious life in New England, Mrs. Stowe has given much space to another phase of New England life: the habits and customs of its people and their simple manner of living.

"Being asked to tea in our New England in the year 17-- meant something very different than the same invitation in our more sophisticated days. In those times people held to the singular opinion that the night was made to sleep in; they inferred it from the general confidence they had in the wisdom of Mother Nature, supposing that she did not put out her lights and draw her bed-curtains and hush all noise in her great world-house without strongly intending that her children should go to sleep; and the consequence was, that very soon after sunset the whole community very generally set their faces bedward, and the tolling of the nine-o'clock evening bell had an awful solemnity in it, announcing the end of all respectable proceedings in life for that day. Good society in New England in those days very generally took its breakfast at six, its dinner at twelve, and its tea at six. 'Company tea' however, among thrifty industrious

11 Stowe, op. cit., p. 136.

folks, was often taken an hour earlier, because each of the invitees had children to put to bed or other domestic cares at home; and as in those simple times people were invited because you wanted to see them, a tea-party assembled themselves at three and held session till sun-down, when each matron rolled up her knitting-work and wended soberly home."[12]

Throughout the story are scattered such descriptions of the simple dignified order of the true New England home, the spinning and weaving, the early morning baking, the simple nourishing meals of smoking brown bread and steaming baked beans.

Mrs. Stowe approached her material from a high literary level. Her characters represented the best in New England and she touched them with reverence, but she knew her region and there was truth in her representation.

As an editor, Lowell wrote to Mrs. Stowe a paragraph which represented his desire for all his contributors:

"My advice is to follow your own instincts, stick to nature and avoid what people commonly call the ideal; for that, and beauty, and pathos and success all lie in the simply natural: There are ten thousand people who can write ideal things for one who can see and feel and reproduce character."[13]

12 Stowe, op. cit., p. 15
13 Pattee, The First Century of American Literature, p. 591.

Lowell declared his satisfaction with Mrs. Stowe's story when he wrote:

"We do not believe that there is anyone, who, by birth, breeding and natural capacity, has had the opportunity to know New England so well as she, or who has had the peculiar genius so to profit by the knowledge. Already there have been scenes in "The Minister's Wooing that, in their lowness of tone and quiet truth contrast as charmingly with the timid vagueness of the modern school of novel writers as The Vicar of Wakefield."[14]

Another New England realist, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, contributed once during Lowell's editorship. The story was "'Tenty Scran", a somber tale of New England life in which everything is dull and colorless:

"There is but little incident in a New England village of the Deerfield style and size—full of commonplace people, who live commonplace lives, in the same white and brown and red houses they were born in, and die respectably in their beds, and are quietly buried among the mulleins and dewberry vines in the hillside graveyard. Mary Scarton's life and death, though they possessed the elements of a tragedy, were divested of their tragic interest by this calm and pensive New England atmosphere."[15]

14 Pattee, op. cit., p. 176.
15 Atlantic Monthly, VI, 590.

Elizabeth Stuart Phelps was one of the first of American story writers to localize her fiction with specially collected material.[16]

One of the most depressing of realistic stories which appeared in the Atlantic during Lowell's editorship was Rebecca Harding's "Life in the Iron Mills", her only contribution. In grim tones she describes the fire, the flame, and the smoke. The characters are a part of the background, struggling with forces too powerful for them. The heroine is limp and wretched, the hero haggard and desperate.

After Lowell gave up the editorship, Rebecca Harding published other tales in the magazine. A passage in her second contribution[17] indicates the direction of American fiction:

"My story is very crude and homely,--only a rough sketch of one or two of those people whom you see every day, and call 'dregs' sometimes--a dull bit of prose; such as you might pick for yourself out of any of these warehouses or back streets. I expect you to call it stale or plebian, for I know the glimpses of life it pleases you best to find here: New England idyls delightfully tinted; passion-veined hearts, cut bare for curious eyes; prophetic utterances, concrete and clear; or some word of pathos or fun from the

16 Pattee, op. cit., p. 170.
17 Atlantic Monthly, VII, 471.

old friends who have indenizened themselves in everybody's home. You want something, in fact, to lift you out of this crowded, tobacco-stained commonplace, to kindle and chafe and glow in you. I want you to dig into this commonplace, this vulgar American life, and see what is in it. Sometimes I think it has a new and awful significance we do not see."[18]

This was what Lowell had in mind as he selected his Atlantic tales. He wanted a true picture of American life. He printed Mrs. Stowe's and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps' portrayals of New England. He chose Rebecca Harding's picture of Pittsburgh roller mills.

Charles Nordoff's "Elkanah Brewster's Temptation" carries the reader to Cape Cod.

"They are not rich on the Cape--, in the Wall-Street sense of the word, that is to say. I doubt if Uncle Lew Baker, who was a high line out of Dennis last year, and who, by the same token, had to work himself right smartly to achieve that honor,—I doubt if this smart and thoroughly wide-awake fellow took home more than three hundred dollars to his wife and children when old Obed settled the voyage. But then the good wife saves while he earns, and, what with a cow, and a house and a garden spot of his own, and a

18 Pattee, op. cit., pp. 172-173.

healthy lot of boys and girls, who, if too young to help, are not suffered to hinder, this man is more forehanded and independent, gives more to the poor about him and to the heathen at the other end of the world, than many a city man who makes and spend, his tens of thousands."[19]

Harriet Prescott's "Knitting Sale-Socks" is another story of simple people written partly in dialect. Harriet Prescott contributed seven tales to the Atlantic during Lowell's editorship. One of these, "The Amber Gods" was to exert some influence upon Elizabeth Stuart Phelps[21] because of its very amazing and interesting last sentence: "I must have died at ten minutes past one."

Two men who were to win considerable reputation later as short story writers, John T. Trowbridge and Robert S. T. Lowell, made contributions of poetry to the Atlantic in these early issues.

"My Double and How He Undid Me", one of the two tales upon which the fame of Edward Everett Hale rests, appeared in the fourth volume of the Atlantic. Hale made use of a different kind of realism. His was a long rambling style touched with realistic detail. Yet his rambling style left a singleness of impression and he added humor and vivacity.[22]

Caroline Chesebro' contributed three tales, each in two parts: "The Pure Pearl of Diver's Bay," "Her Grace

19 Atlantic Monthly, IV, 711.
20 Ibid., V, 7, 170.
21 Pattee, op. cit., p. 181.
22 Ibid., p. 186.

the Drummer's Daughter", and "Victor and Jacqueline". These tales, with Fitz-James O'Brien's "The Diamond Lens" and J. D. Whelpley's "The Denslow Palace", complete the list of the important Atlantic fiction during Lowell's editorship.

With the form of the short story, Lowell had been very little concerned. He was concerned with the content and not the form. He wished the tales to deal with human life.

After the Civil War, readers became more critical and the crude work of the mid-century was no longer tolerated. Lowell himself realized the shortcomings of much of the material which he admitted into the Atlantic and wrote to Howell's in 1865:

"The danger of our literature seems to me to be carelessness and want of scholarly refinement."[23]

Yet the fiction was without doubt better than that which had preceded it and represented the beginning of a distinctly finer body of fiction which was to come.

23 Pattee, op. cit., p. 193.

V. Chief Contributors

Holmes

In the first issue of the Atlantic there appeared an article which began: "I was just going to say when I was interrupted--." Probably only a very few readers recalled that the old New England Magazine [1] for 1831-1832 had published two papers of an"autocrat of the breakfast table," written by a young student of medicine.[2] This whimsical continuation after an interruption of twenty five years puzzled most of the readers.

Lowell had accepted the editorship of the magazine on the condition that the others who had met together to discuss the project were to furnish the materials. He had especially emphasized his desire to have Holmes as a contributor. Why Lowell had singled out this oldish physician was not at first apparent, but Lowell knew his man and was not disappointed. Holmes' first series ran through the first and second volumes of the Atlantic and after miscellaneous connected articles and some contributions to the department of Literary Notices, he published his second series, "The Professor at the Breakfast Table", in the third and fourth volumes. The third long series, "The Professor's Story" appeared in the fifth, sixth, and

1 Boston, 1831-1835
2 Howe, The Atlantic Monthly and its Makers, p. 25.

seventh volumes.

Holmes pithy advice, his compact sensible style, his comments on language and literature, and his homely observations which removed him definitely from the feministic, made him an indespensable contributor. That Lowell valued Holmes highly is revealed in his letter to Fields in March 1861, after "Asylum for Decayed Punsters" had appeared in the January Atlantic.

"Do see Dr. Holmes at once and assure him how essential he is to the Atlantic. He is worth all the rest of us together and has been nettled a little by not being paid so much as he thought right for his "Asylum for Decayed Punsters". Nettled, perhaps, is not the right word— but he has conceived a notion that he could carry his wares to a better market. I assured him that he was altogether mistaken—that there was probably some mistake, and that I knew he was valued as he should be by Ticknor and Fields.

"Now you know what ought to be done and I am sure will do it. An essay from him is a good as a chapter. He needs only a word said to him by you to set all right."[3]

In the "autocrat", Holmes had created a character to reveal himself and the life about him. He took up his abode in a Boston boarding house. There was a nervous

3 Howe, New Letters, p. 101.

landlady who was anxious to please, an opinionated old gentleman, a poet, a philosopher, a divinity student, an individual called John, an angular woman in bombazine and a timid school mistress. In conversing with these characters and describing their reactions to his conversation, Holmes revealed his own ideas and the ideas, customs, and habits of those about him. He constantly reminded his audience, "Please remember this is talk; just as easy and just as formal as I choose to make it."[4]

In the fourth installment, the autocrat wrote:

"I am so well pleased with my boarding house that I intend to remain there, perhaps for years. Of course, I shall have a great many conversations to report, and they will necessarily be of different tone and on different subjects. The talks are like the breakfasts,— sometimes dipped toast and sometimes dry. You must take them as they come. How can I do all these letters ask me to? No. 1 wants serious and earnest thought. No. 2 (letter smells of bad cigars) must have more jokes; wants me to tell a good 'storey' that he has copied out for me. No. 3 (in a female hand)--more poetry. No. 4 wants something that would be of use to a practical man. (Prahctical mahn he probably pronounces it.) No. 5 (gilt-edged, sweet-scented)— 'more sentiment,'—'heart's outpourings.'—

"My dear friends, one and all, I can do nothing but

4 Atlantic Monthly, I, 312.

report such remarks as I have made at our breakfast-table--"[5]

Holmes kept his promise to report on many subjects. He had adopted a conversational style and conversation as an art was of great importance to him. In his first article he discussed it thus:

"What are the great faults of conversation? Want of ideas, want of words, want of manners, are the principal ones I suppose you think. I don't doubt it, but I will tell you what I have found spoil more good talks than anything else:--long arguments on special points between people who differ on the fundamental principles upon which these points depend. No men can have satisfactory relations with each other until they have agreed on certain ultimata of belief not to be disturbed in ordinary conversation, and unless they have sense enough to trace the secondary questions depending upon these ultimate beliefs to their source."

"In short, just as a written constitution is essential to the best social order, so a code of finalities is a necessary condition of profitable talk between two persons. Talking is like playing on the harp; there is as much in laying the hand on the strings to stop their vibrations as in twanging them to bring out their music---Do you mean to say the pun-question is not clearly settled in your mind? Let me lay down the law upon the subject. Life and language are

5 Atlantic Monthly, I, 457.

alike sacred. Homicide and verbicide--that is, violent treatment of a word with fatal results to its legitimate meaning, which is its life--are alike forbidden. Manslaughter, which is the meaning of the one, is the same as man's laughter which is the end of the other. A pun is a prima facie an insult to the person you are talking with. It implies utter indifference to or sublime contempt for his remarks, no matter how serious."[6]

Again in a later article, Holmes discussed the importance of speech.

"You see, my friends," he wrote,"what immense conclusions touching our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor, may be reached by means of very insignificant premises. This is eminently true of manners and forms of speech; a movement or a phrase often tells you all you want to know about a person. Thus, 'How's your health?' (commonly pronounced haalth)--instead of, 'How do you do?' or, 'How are you?' Or calling your little dark entry a 'hall'; and your old rickety one-horse wagon a 'kerridge'. Or telling a person who has been trying to please you that he has given you pretty good 'sahtisfahction'. Or saying that you 'remember of' such a thing, or that you have been 'stoppin' at Deacon Somebody's,--and other such expressions."[7]

Holmes was likely to offer advice to his readers in this

6 Atlantic Monthly, I, 52.
7 Ibid., 618.

manner:

"Don't flatter yourself that friendship authorizes you to say disagreeable things to your intimates. On the contrary the nearer you come into relation with a person, the more necessary do tact and courtesy become. Except in cases of necessity which are rare, leave your friend to learn unpleasant truths from his enemies. Good breeding never forgets that amour-propre is universal."[8]

Some of Holmes' remarks called forth attacks from individuals and papers, for his ideas made him a suspect in matters of orthodoxy in religion.[9] In his series, "The Professor at the Breakfast Table" he attacked religious intolerance.

"The great end of being is to harmonize man with the order of things: and the church has been a good pitch-pipe and may be so still. But who shall tune the pitch-pipe?....

"The religious currency of mankind, in thought, in speech, and in print, consists entirely of polarized words. Borrow one of these from another language and religion, and you will find it leaves all its magnetism behind it. Take that famous word, O'm, of the Hindoo mythology. Even a priest cannot pronounce it without sin; and a holy Pundit would shut his ears and run away from you in horror, if you should say it aloud. What do you care for O'm? If you wanted

8 Atlantic Monthly, I, 312.
9 Howe, op. cit., p. 29.

to get the Pundit to look at his religion fairly you must first depolarize this and all similar words for him. The argument for and aginst new translations of the Bible really turns on this. Skepticism is afraid to trust its truths in depolarized words, and so cries out against a new translation. I think, myself, if every idea our Book contains could be shelled out of its old symbol and put into a new, clean, unmagnetic word, we should have some chance of reading it as philosophers, or wisdom-lovers ought to read it,--which we do not and cannot now, any more than a Hindoo can read the 'Gayatri' as a fair man and a lover of truth should do..."

As he had attacked religious intolerance and those who opposed a liberal translation of the Bible, so now Holmes attacked the clergy.

"The clergy have played the part of a fly-wheel in our modern civilization... But the aminspring of the world's onward religious movement is not in them, nor in any one body of men let me tell you. It is the people that makes the clergy, and not the clergy that makes the people. Of course, the profession reacts on its source with variable energy.--But there never was a guild of dealers or a company of craftsmen that did not need sharp looking after."[10]

Commenting upon these attacks, Holmes wrote to Motley

10 Atlantic Monthly, III, 87-88.

in 1861:

"But oh! such a belaboring as I have had from the so-called 'Evangelical' press for the last two or three years, almost without intermission! There must be a great deal of weakness and rottenness when such extreme bitterness is called out by such a good-natured person as I can claim to be in print."[11]

The New York Independent said of "The Professor at the Breakfast Table" when it appeared as a book:

"We presume that we do but speak the general conviction, as it certainly is our own, when we say that that which was to have been apprehended has not been avoided by the 'Professor', but has been painfully realized in his new series of utterances. He has dashed at many things which he does not understand, has succeeded in irritating and repelling from the magazine many who had formerly read it with pleasure, and has neither equaled the spirit and vigorous vivacity, nor maintained the reputation, shown and acquired by the preceding papers. It would have been better for all concerned if the pen of the 'Autocrat' had never been resumed by a hand wearied with its previous work, and a mind made almost comically self-sufficient and dogmatical by an unexpected measure of literary success."[12]

Speaking of these attacks, nearly twenty five years later, Dr. Holmes said, "Opinions which do not excite the

11 Howe, op. cit., p. 30.
12 Ibid., p. 31.

faintest show of temper in this time from those who do not accept them were treated as if they were the utterances of a Nihilist incendiary."[13]

There were those who were searching the pages of the Atlantic at this time for something objectionable. When they attacked Holmes, Lowell was loyal to his contributor and gave his support as revealed in his letters.[14] There was adequate reason for Lowell's support. Lowell was constantly making selections for the Atlantic upon the basis of truth. He looked for the natural, the real in character and incident, and Holmes supplied it, for he was turning over the top layer of life and looking beneath. He was bringing to light some topics which had lain untouched. The very things for which he was being criticized made him Lowell's most valuable contributor.

13 Howe, op. cit., p. 31.
14 Norton, Letters, I, 288.

Longfellow and Emerson

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was forty years old in 1857, and had already published Evangeline and Hiawatha, two of the poems upon which his fame rests.

The ten poems which he contributed to the Atlantic while Lowell was the editor were, with one exception, printed later in a volume entitled Birds of Passage.

"The Golden Mile-Stone(1:174),"Catawba Wine"(1:270), "Daylight and Moonlight"(1:401), and"Daybreak"(1:445), are short poems of no great significance. "Enceladus"(4:220) is a lyric on Italy, a lament for the woes of the country. There are two short legends,"Sandalphon"(1:744) and"The Discoverer of the North Cape"(2:357);"Santa Filomena," published in the first number of the Atlantic, begins with the frequently quoted lines:

> When e'er a noble deed is wrought,
> When e'er is spoken a noble thought,
> Our hearts in glad surprise,
> To higher levels rise.

The poem has reference to Miss Florence Nightingale, who rendered great service in the hospitals during the Crimean War.

Probably the best known of Longfellow's Atlantic contributions are"The Children's Hour," and"Paul Revere's Ride."

Ralph Waldo Emerson, the oldest of the greater New Wngland men of letters, was born in Boston in 1903. As

an observer of men and of nature, he was quick and accurate. His contributions to the Atlantic during Lowell's editorship include ten poems, three essays, and one article on Persian poetry.

Four of the poems appeared in the first number of the Atlantic: "The Romany Girl," "The Chartist's Complaint", "Days", and "Brahma." These poems with four others, "Two Rivers", "Waldeinsamkeit", "Song of Nature", and "The Test", were later published in the collection May Day and Other Pieces. The remaining two poems, "Illusions" and "Culture", were reprinted in Elements and Mottoes.

By 1857, Emerson was well along in his literary career. These Atlantic poems are too few in number to indicate any particular trend in his writing. Like his other poems they are studied and careful in style. His subjects were similar to those of his essays. Emerson longed to write good verses and toiled endlessly over them. "In fact, he had developed a style of his own, as marked in his poems as in his essays, a lean, spare, quick, intellectual style that could only have emerged, one felt, from Concord."[15]

Emerson's essay "Solitude and Society" appeared in the second issue of the Atlantic.

"Solitude," says Emerson in this essay, "is impracticable, and society fatal. We must keep our head in the one and

15 Brooks, op. cit., p. 265.

our hands in the other. The conditions are met, if we keep our independence, yet do not lose our sympathy. These wonderful horses need to be driven by fine hands. We require such a solitude as shall hold us to its revelations when we are in the street and in palaces; for most men are cowed in society, and say good things to you in private, but will not stand to them in public. But let us not be the victims of words. Society and solitude are deceptive names. It is not the circumstance of seeing more or fewer people, but the readiness of sympathy that imports; and a sound mind will derive its principles from insight, with ever a purer accent to the sufficient and absolute right, and will accept society as the natural element in which they are to be applied."[16]

"Books", the second of Emerson's Atlantic essays, is a lengthy discussion of books which he considered worth the time required for their reading. The article on Persian poetry in April, 1858, represents a scholarly study of the subject. "Eloquence" is one of the best of his Atlantic contributions. Here he discusses all the phases of the subject. One of the best paragraphs in the essay is that in which he describes the manner of speaking in different regions.[17]

16 Atlantic Monthly, I, 229.
17 Ibid., II, 387.

Whittier

John Greenleaf Whittier, the chief poet of the anti-slavery movement, was born in Haverhill, Massachusetts, in 1807. He was a representative of the uncultured rural class and his ancestors were Quaker farmers. Whittier's favorite themes aside from those connected with slavery, were events in the early history of New England, especially the persecution of Quakers and Witches; Indian legends; the simple life of rural New England; religious doubt and belief. These latter, rather than the subject of slavery, were the themes of Whittier's Atlantic contributions. "Skipper Ireson's Ride", "The Swan Song of Parson Avery", "The Double-Headed Snake of Newbury", and "Cobbler Keezar's Vision", are vigorous ballads of sea coast life. In "Telling the Bees" and "The Playmate" he describes New England rural life. "The Truce of Piscataqua" has an Indian theme.

Howells

An Atlantic contributor of a later period and a different region was William Dean Howells. He was born in 1837 in Ohio and numbered among his ancestors English, Welsh, Irish, and Germans. His early education was obtained laregly by hard self-directed study and he devoted himself intensely to several authors. A few of his early poems won a place in the Atlantic beginning in the fifth volume: "Andenken", "The Poet's Friends", "Pleasure-Pain", "Lost Beliefs", "The Pilot's Story", "The Old Homestead", and "Bubbles". Howells was in his twenties when he wrote these poems. He later made a great many contributions to the Atlantic, about three hundred in the first thirty eight volumes.

Lowell indicated his interest in the young contributor in a letter to Howells:

"Here is a note to Mr. Hawthorne, which you can use if you have occasion.

"Don't print too much and too soon; don't get married in a hurry; read what will make you think, not dream; hold yourself dear, and more power to your elbow."[18]

Apparently Howells wished to meet Hawthorne and had asked Lowell to introduce him. In Lowell's letter to

18 Norton, Letters, I, 305.

Hawthorne, he expressed the belief that Howells showed promise.

"I have no masonic claim upon you except community of tobacco, and the young man who brings this does not smoke.

"But he wants to look at you, which will do you no harm, and him a great deal of good.

"His name is Howells, and he is a fine young fellow, and has written several poems in the Atlantic, which of course you have never read.... .If my judgment is good for anything this youth has more in him than any of our younger fellows in the way of rhyme."[19]

19 Norton, Letters, I, 305.

Hawthorne, Whitman, Thoreau

The contributions of Hawthorne, Whitman, and Thoreau are of interest for their scarcity more than for any other reason.

Hawthorne's only contribution, "Some of the Haunts of Burns", appeared as the leader in the issue of October, 1860. Hawthorne had just returned from England in 1860 and his career as an author was almost finished. He had spent the years from 1857 to 1860 in Italy and England and most of his time there had been spent in writing The Marble Faun. His occupation and residence abroad together with his age and failing health probably account for the scarcity of his writings in the Atlantic.

Thoreau had refused to contribute to the magazine after Lowell suggested changes in his manuscripts, and there is but one of his contributions, "Chesuncook".[20]

Whitman contributed "Bardic Symbols" to the Atlantic in 1860. Old age or ill health certainly cannot be reasons for his failure to make further contributions for he was in his prime, and from 1855 to 1891, he issued ten successively enlarged volumes under the title Leaves of Grass, each containing his complete poems to the date of publication.

Lowell's opinion of Whitman, which may possibly have accounted for failure to include much of his writing in

20 Atlantic Monthly, II, 1, 224, 305.

the Atlantic, is reavealed in his letter to Rev. W. L. Gage in December, 1863:

"When I was editing the Atlantic Monthly, I was in the habit of sending all the new books which came to me as editor, to the College Library, and I suppose Leaves of Grass must have been one of them. It is a book I never looked into farther than to satisfy myself that it was solemn humbug."[21]

21 Howe, New Letters, p. 115.

Higginson

Thomas Wentworth Higginson contributed sixteen articles to the Atlantic during Lowell's editorship. Higginson was a graduate of Harvard and preached for a time, but he gave up his pulpit because of his transcendental and anti-slavery views. His Atlantic articles of controversial nature were: "Ought Women to Learn the Alphabet" and "The Murder of the Innocents". He voiced his anti-slavery sentiments in "Denmark Vesey".

Lowell indicated his regard for Higginson as a contributor in a letter after he had received the article,"Ought Women to Learn the Alphabet?":

"I like your article so much that it is already in press as leader of next number. You misunderstood me. I want no change except the insertion of a qualifying 'perhaps' where you speak of the natural equality of the sexes, and that as much on your own account as mine--because I think it not yet demonstrated. Even in this, if you prefer it, have your own way.....

"As for your own contributions, I may say to you as I always have to Mr. Underwood, that they are just to my liking--scholarly, picturesque, and, above all, earnest-- I think the most telling essays we have printed."[22]

The following is a list of Higginson's contributions:

Saints and their Bodies 1:582
Mademoiselle's Campaigns 2:193

22 Norton, Letters, I, 287-288.

Water-Lilies 2:465
Physical Courage 2:728
Ought Women to Learn the Alphabet 3:137
A Letter to a Dyspeptic 3:464
A Charge with Prince Rupert 3:725
The Murder of the Innocents 4:345
The Maroons of Jamaica 5:213
The Maroons of Surinam 5:549
Theodore Parker 6:449
Fayal and the Portugeuse 6:526
Barbarism and Civilization 7:51
Gymnastics 7:283
April Days 7:385
Denmark Vesey 7:728

These chapters have not covered completely the list of contributors; however, an attempt has been made to discuss those writers and those writings which were of greatest importance in making the Atlantic and influence during Lowell's editorship.

In the foregoing chapters, names of authors were attached to contributions by consulting the index published in 1877, by H. O. Houghton Company, New York. It was not possible, however, to get a complete list of the authors, for the articles were not signed nor were the names of the authors included in the table of contents. Lowell himself was opposed to the publication of the authors' names, and the contributors were often glad of the greater privacy. Slips revealing the authorship of articles were at the service of newspapers and friends, but the anonymous character of the early volumes has served to bury the authorship in some cases past resurrection.[23] There are about thirty articles, mainly in the first four volumes, the authorship of which is still unknown.

23 Scudder, op. cit., I, 422.

VI. Conclusion

As editor of the Atlantic, Lowell exerted force in two directions.

He was unquestionably an uplifting force at a critical period in the history of American literature. He stood on the border between two periods: the period of sentimentalism and old prejudices, and the new period which was to follow the Civil War.

Lowell's own contributions were mainly to the department of Literary Notices, and so important did he consider this department that he trusted only a few critics to write for it. He believed that criticism was of great importance in encouraging the growth and development of a national literature. However, it is chiefly in his selections for the Atlantic, rather than in his own writing, that Lowell shows standards slightly in advance of his times, a leaning toward the new which was to come with force after the Civil War.

In the field of fiction even more than in the field of criticism, Lowell's influence was felt. There were practically no magazines which maintained high standards and from the beginning the Atlantic was able to select the best that American writers could produce. Lowell had very positive standards in regard to fiction and he made his selections accordingly. Though he loved the old poets and was heavily weighted with the conventionalism of his

early education, he was able to print a story in the Atlantic by Rose Terry Cooke beginning:

"Mrs Griswold was paring apples and Lizzy straining squash."

The launching of the Atlantic definitely marked a turn toward the new realism and Lowell was the leader. "Distinctly he was a transition figure between two epochs: he was the youngest of the Emerson group and he was the oldest of the Harte-Twain-Howells group that followed."[1]

There is no doubt that the magazine had some influence in politics. Joined with Lowell in the campaign against slavery were some of the ablest writers of the time. They were well informed and their interest in the cause made their writings powerful. These political articles have some literary value as well, and they, along with almost everything else which the Atlantic printed, had some measure of permanent interest.

The Atlantic was a breath of freshness in the feminine fifties. It combined the depth of Emerson, the originality and truth of Holmes, the realism of Rose Terry Cooke and others in the field of fiction, the charm of Whittier's poetry, Longfellow's poetical talents, the scholarship of Charles Eliot Norton, the fiery anti-slavery writings of Lowell, Quincy and Godwin, and the talents of a whole group of writers, both famous and obscure.

1 Pattee, op. cit., p. 167.

Lowell desired greatly to be the means of bringing together a body of first-rate literature. His editorship powerfully affected the later issues of the magazine, for he had put his own stamp upon it.

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