

MARGARET JUNKIN PRESTON

VIRGINIA'S POETESS OF THE OLD SOUTH

By-

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INTRODUCTION

The title of this dissertation is: "Margaret Junkin Preston, Virginia's Poetess of The Old South."

The term, "Virginia" is used to refer to the state, and to the people of the state. It is used in the sense of the state, because she adopted Virginia as her own state, living there forty one years. It is used in the sense of the Virginians because they adopted her as their own, and felt she was the spokesman for their ideas.

The term, "Old South", is used in a general sense of the culture and regime existing before the beginning of the industrialization of the Southern states, which began near the end of the last century. It would roughly include the years 1830 until 1880.

It is the purpose of this work to discuss her life as it throws light upon her works, and to evaluate her works by showing what she was attempting to do, and the value of that attempt, as we are able to judge it by a comparison with later writings in the South.

The dissertation will be divided into six parts;

Early Childhood:

Youth and Education:

Life in Lexington:

Her Published Works:

The attempt made by her to promote a literature among the people of the South:

An independent critical summary.

To this is appended a special bibliography of her writings which will include: her published volumes, the manuscript works, and certain fugitive works which were published in numerous periodicals.

⁹ We wish to express ~~our~~ ^{my} gratitude to the many friends of Southern Literature who have aided in collecting the material incorporated in this paper. Especially do ~~we~~ ⁹ thank the Library of Washington and Lee University; the Library of Duke University for the use of their collection of letters of Paul Hamilton Hayne; the Library of the University of Virginia; the Library of Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, and the Library of Union Seminary in New York. Also the relatives, friends, and admirers of Margaret Junkin Preston, living in Lexington, who have lent copies of her works, and given personal reminiscences; and to the English Department of Washington and Lee University for their valuable suggestion and criticism as to the manner of handling the materials. To Miss Helen Webster, who discovered some of the manuscript materials.

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J.H.G.

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Chapter I

CHILDHOOD

To illustrate the strictness with which she was reared, Margaret Junkin was fond of telling a story of her grandmother. Her father's mother, Eleanor Cochran, was of Scotch-Irish strain. Her family had fled from Inverness, Scotland, to escape the harrowing dragoons of the English who were seeking to make Established-Church people of the Covenanters. They later fled from County Antrim, Ireland, because they were too close to the Irish Catholics. Therefore when they came to America, they were determined to worship the Lord as they saw fit. The center of their worship was the kirk service on the first day of the week, which day they knew only by the name of Sabbath. The rightful observance of the Sabbath meant cold meals, prepared the day before, and an absolute rest for the horses and animals. They therefore had to walk to the kirk. The path they followed led them over a small ridge, which in the springtime was covered with tempting blue huckleberries. The tribe of little Cochranes marched single file through these temptations, not daring to pick a single berry, lest the parental anger break forth at such a ⁽¹⁾ violation of the fourth commandment.

1. Margaret Junkin Preston, Life and Letters, E.P.Allen, pg. 4

The blood of the Scottish Covenanters flowed strongly in the veins of Margaret's father, the Reverend George Junkin, D.D. His ancestors had struggled fiercely for religious liberty against an enemy which knew no compromise, but demanded the surrender of their religion or their lives. To save both religion and lives they had left home and country, stayed for a short time in northern Ireland, and then come to America, probably landing at New Castle, Delaware. (2) With such a background it is not surprising to find George Junkin having a clear sense of duty, a tenacious grip upon what he considered to be the truth, and a readiness to defend that truth at any cost.

This view of truth led George Junkin to take the leading part in a famous heresy trial. The First Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia had extended a call to the Reverend Albert Barnes to become their pastor. It was necessary for the church court, the presbytery, to give their consent to the invitation of the church. This consent was refused ^{for a while} because Mr. Barnes had recently published a sermon, "The Way of Salvation", in which the presbyters scented unsound doctrine. It was held that his views were erroneous as to original sin, the atonement, and the grace of justification. (3) The presbytery finally allowed Mr. Barnes to become the pastor of the church. Dr. Junkin took no part in this phase of the controversy which aroused a great deal of bitter feeling, and was not

2.. George Junkin, D. X. Junkin, pg. 12.

3.. Idem. pg. 145.

settled for many years. Five years after the original trouble Mr. Barnes, in 1835, published a commentary on the book of Romans. The book provoked a great deal of unfavorable comment, and the same objections to his unsoundness were brought up. Dr. Junkin read the book and decided that he must prefer charges against the author to the presbytery of which both ⁽⁴⁾ were members.

There seems to have been no desire for personal glory in the decision to prosecute the writer in a church trial. The purpose, as stated in a letter to the accused, is to bring about "Peace through union in the truth." ⁽⁵⁾ Dr. Junkin, ^{who} felt that the ^{only way to settle the} trouble, ^{which} had hung over the church for five years ~~and the only way to settle it~~ was by a fair trial, ~~and he~~ was willing to prosecute the trial for the sake of the truth. The fact that he was president of Lafayette College, and responsible to a board of trustees, who were divided on the question, did not deter him, although he saw clearly that his action would bring ⁽⁶⁾ trouble to him and to the college.

The charges were therefore entered in the Presbytery of Philadelphia, and were later sent by them to the larger court, the Synod of Pennsylvania. The trial finally was sent up to the highest court in the church, ⁽⁷⁾ the General Assembly. During all this time the popular

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- 4..Idem. pg. 277-8
 - 5..Idem. pg. 279
 - 6..Idem. pg. 147
 - 7..Idem. pg. 318

favor had rested with the accused rather than with the prosecutor, and when Dr. Junkin rose on the floor of the Assembly to present his charges he was not met with any great joy. Nothing daunted he waged his battle and took his defeat in good heart. (8) He had been true to his duty as he saw it. He had made the attempt to purge the church of dangerous doctrines. If the church would not be purged, but insisted on clinging to its idols, he could not prevent it.

George Junkin married, Julia Rush Miller, who, as the daughter of a cultured Philadelphia family, had been trained in all the arts of making life agreeable and comfortable. She possessed those social graces which were so largely lacking in her intense and austere husband. The friends of the Junkins were wont to comment upon the tactful manner in which she covered up the husband's absent mindedness. When Dr. Junkin was particularly interested in some problem he often became so absorbed in thought that he neglected to be hospitable to the friends who might be present. It was here that the wife displayed her charm, of manner and guided the conversation so that what she said seemed to come as an expression of her husband's. (9)

One of her virtues must have been adaptability, for we hear of no complaint when she left the luxury of her city home for the plainest of homes as the wife of the

8..Idem. pg. 319
9..Idem. pg. 118

village minister. Such a position must have been socially discouraging, for the congregation to which they went was small and unhealthily religious. The church belonged to a super-conservative Presbyterian group. Above all else they were orthodox, and affected with a zeal for the peculiarities of their denomination; especially for the (10) "Psalms of David in meter." There naturally existed a great gulf between them and the other churches of the community, a gulf dug by years of prejudice. The only bond uniting them with the other churches seems to have been funerals, at which they clung to the 'tradition of the fathers' and freely passed the bottle so that the (11) visitors, if not the family, might drown their sorrow. It was due to Julia Miller as much as to the husband that the gulf was bridged and he became the leading citizen of the community.

Dr. Junkin's foremost interest was religion, and he took advantage of every opportunity to enforce his message. One sultry Sunday afternoon he was preaching to a crowded church on the subject of the judgement to come. Soon the weather began to aid his message. A storm swept down upon the little church and burst upon the town with the force of a tornado. The voice of the speaker was soon lost in the uproar of the storm. He remained erect in the pulpit as if in silent prayer. A walnut tree crashed against the side of the building. The windows on the north side gave

10..Idem. pg. 88
11..Ibid.

way and the congregation was swept to the other side of the church. Still the minister retained his position in the pulpit. The passing of the storm left the bewildered congregation in deep silence, which was broken by an even, solemn voice, as the minister declared:

If such be the tones of his voice, and such the mere lifting of his finger- if we thus quail before the mere whisper of his wrath. Oh! what shall be its tones when the Archangel's trump shall peal ! What the exhibition of his power when his arm is bared for final vengeance ! Oh, fly for refuge to the Ark of Salvation. (12)

The other passion which dominated the life of George Junkin was education. It is difficult to determine whether religion or education held the first place in his interests. They were usually combined as in the incident which led to the founding of Lafayette College. He had been ill with fever for some time. Several times the illness appeared likely to be fatal. In spite of the illness he was careful that family prayers should be held in the room at the foot of the stairs. In this way he could hear the service from his upstairs room. Prayers were conducted by a carpenter who was at that time building a barn for the minister. One evening the carpenter laid the service on his young apprentice, Matthew Laird. The prayer of the young man went to the heart of the minister who determined that should he recover of his illness he would persuade the apprentice to prepare for the ministry. On his recovery he took the youth into his own home as an apprentice for the ministry, and fitted up a carpenters shop in the new barn

so that Matthew might help earn his keep while studying.

That prayer of Matthew Laird is, in a certain sense the start-point of Lafayette College, as it was the first link in the chain of divine providences that led me into the department of education. (13)

Such was the home in Milton, Pennsylvania, into which Margaret Junkin was born on May 19, 1820. One could wish there had been less of rigid self-discipline, and more of merriment, for the sake of the auburn-haired child.

The seriousness, and conscientiousness, and intense realization of solemn truths, which little Margaret necessarily inherited from her covenanting blood needed much sunlight, and play, and frolicsome idleness, and laissez faire to sweeten life and keep a wholesome balance in the young nature. (14)

The only incident recorded of the early years of her life is one which grows out of a tradition in later life as to the cause of her small size. There seems to have been a Scottish tradition that a child tossed on the horns of a cow would never develop as other children. While but a tiny toddler, two or three years old, Margaret wandered too near the cows, and the tradition became applicable to her. (15)

The Junkins never sent Margaret to school. Her mother began to teach her, but ere long the father's interest in her education asserted itself and the Margaret became a willing victim to the passion for education. She was to become a scholar. Therefore she must learn Greek. Whether she ever read the tragedies of Sophocles or not, she must be able to read the New Testament in the original.

13..Idem. pg. 114-5

14..Margaret Junkin Preston, E. P. Allen, pg. 8

15..Idem. pg. 14-15

The auburn curls must have been flung back many times as their six-year old owner tried to master, Alpha, (16) Beta, Gamma, Delta.

Margaret was ten years old when the family left Milton for Germantown, Pennsylvania. The move was caused by the feeling on the part of her father that he might be more useful as a teacher than as a preacher, so he accepted (17) the presidency of the Manual Labor Academy of Pennsylvania. This move to Germantown brought them into closer relation with Mrs. Junkin's people in Philadelphia. This was Margaret's first experience with the city, and it was to prove her last, for she never again lived in or near a large city.

It is natural to suppose that Margaret paid many visits to the home of her kinfolk, the Millers. On some of these visits she must have gone with some of the family to the city market. The city had a curious way of announcing to the people that market day was approaching. On Tuesday and Friday evenings the bells of Christ Church were rung, and on such occasions were known as "butter bells" because they indicated that the next day was a market day. (18) Margaret must have been quite interested in the methods for testing the quality of the butter before it was bought. It was the custom always to test the butter before buying. The farmers selling it urged the customer to use a spoon which he kept handy and take a

16..Idem pg. 8

17..Goerge Junkin, D.X.Junkin, pg. 140

18..Early Philadelphia, H.M.Lippincott, pg 88

bit from a lump made especially for tasting. The men were also fond of ~~sampling~~ the wares, and would often stop before a butter stall, take a coin from their pocket, scrape off a taste of butter and pass their judgement on
(19)
the quality.

George Junkin must have taken Margaret to see the State House, Liberty Bell, and the hall of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. As he was taking a
(20)
leading part in temperance reform, he may have used some of the taverns to give his daughter some object lessons in the evils of drink, as when they passed The Crooked Billet Inn, The Pewter Platter Inn, or Peg Mullen's Beefsteak House, the Indian King, the Black Bear, or the
(21)
Three Crowns.

In reading the account of these early years of Margaret's life, one is struck with the absence of references to her mother. The actions of the father are often told at length, but there is seldom any mention made of the mother. The difficulty is readily solved when we see the family gathered for prayers before breakfast. There is Margaret who has just passed her tenth birthday, then comes John, Joseph, Eleanor, George, Ebenezer Dickey, and William Finney whose birth the family celebrated soon
(22)
after their arrival in the city.

Margaret was twelve when her brother George recalled

19..Idem. pg 89.

20..George Junkin, D.X.Junkin, pg. 98

21..The Book of Philadelphia, R.Shackleton, pg 84

22..Margaret Junkin Preston, E.P.Allen, pg. 10

her as the guardian of the family during the birth of the youngest of the family, Julia Rush:

There were thus six children younger than Margaret at the time of our removal to Easton. To all of us "Maggie" as we all called her, was a little mother. She ever had the most watchful care of us all, doing what she could to relieve her parents, as to our physical wellbeing, and especially with regard to our education. My first recollection of Maggie is at the time of my youngest sister's birth, in Easton, when she had the care and entertainment of the little brood, mothering us with great success. (23)

The city influences did not lessen her father's demands that she maintain her studies. In fact, his ambition that she should be a scholar was almost equalled by her own desire to master her studies. In after life she could never recall a time when she did not want to learn more than she then knew.

The twelve year old Margaret was not ^{only} conscientious in her studies, but ^{also} seems to have applied that trait to everything she did. The younger children must have caused her many a pain as she tried to keep them in the straight and narrow path of obedience to parental commands. Although she was slight of stature- five feet ⁽²⁴⁾ one inch when grown- she exercised a commanding influence over each of them. When John teased George, it was Maggie who cheered the little fellow, wiped away his boyish tears, and diverted his attention to something else, and when he and Ebenezer wanted the same block of wood for a doll, it was Maggie who found another block. Maggie was the one who kept Eleanor working on the distasteful studies.

23..Idem. pg. 10-11

24..Notebook of Margaret Junkin, 1839, page 65

The Junkins left Germantown in April 1832 and located in Easton, Pennsylvania. Dr. Junkin had accepted the presidency of Lafayette College, which at that time existed only on paper. (25) The charter of the college had been granted by the legislature in 1826, and contained two clauses which Dr. Junkin soon amended. One was that it should be a college in which religion had no place, and in which no minister of the Gospel should hold office. The other was the inclusion of military discipline and instruction in addition to the regular curriculum. (26) Manual labor was substituted for military drill.

There was no fund for the endowment of the college, and as everything had to be obtained immediately, the financial burden fell upon the new president. A large part of the money to establish the college came from the personal income of Mrs. Junkin, who inherited it at her father's death. (27)

Such a use of the family income may account for Margaret's words later in life when she referred to her youth:

We made everything we wore, from our hand embroidered collars and cuffs, and the worked edges on our underclothes, our corsets, and our hemstitched handkerchiefs, to our gaiter tops, which we stitched and then had soled at the shoemakers. Not to speak of stitching linen shirts by the dozen (with collars and cuffs attached) for our father and brothers. All this you remember was done by hand. (28)

One can well understand the meaning of "shirts by the dozen" for there were five brothers besides the father.

25..George Junkin, D.X.Junkin, pg 149

26..Ibid.

27..Idem. pg 150-151 and 164

28..Margaret Junkin Preston, E.P.Allen, pg. 15

Some of the young men in the college were preparing for the ministry. It was quite natural that some of these boys should not have perfectly sane ideas on the subject of religion. It was unfortunate that one of these cranks should have laid hold of Margaret one bright sunny afternoon and drawn her from play into the house to inquire as to her spiritual welfare. It must have been a trying ordeal for the child to come from the sunlight into the darkened room and have the inquisitor question her as to the nature of the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit; and as to whether or not she had experienced the illuminating power of the new birth. Even Margaret's training in theology was unequal to the task, and the young theolog made the fatal mistake of suggesting to her that because of her failure to receive the divine intervention she was among the number of the damned. This incident, combined with her sensitive nature, ~~xx~~ prevented her from ever becoming certain that her acceptance by the Lord was fully complete. (29)

There was another incident of about the same time which left its deep impress upon the life of the child. Sixty five years afterward Margaret describes the event:

I had no doubt been told of death many times by my lovely mother, as she talked to us children on Sunday evenings. I, as a child of six, had never seen anything that brought the actual fact of it before my vision, and my mind remained a perfect blank as to its reality. So far as my consciousness went, I had never heard of any friend who had died. My father was a clergyman, and, the carriage being

brought to the door one fine afternoon, he asked me if I would not like to go with him in his drive. Child like, I was delighted to go, and after a drive ~~xxxx~~ of a mile or two through a lovely pasture-land, the carriage stopped before the house of a neighbor. I was a very shy child, and was frightened to see the shady front yard filled with people; but my father took my hand and led me through the crowd. When we entered the house, I was still more alarmed to find it darkened, and hall and parlor filled with a crowd that made way for the minister. He led me up to what I afterward knew as a coffin; but at that time I did not know what it was, as I never had heard of a coffin. Standing there a moment beside him, he lifted me up in his arms, took my unwilling hand, little dreaming how he was terrifying me, and laid it upon the dead face that I saw therein. It was that of a young lad of fifteen, whom I had seen but a few days before bounding along the pathway of my own home, with his green satchel on his back on his way to school. Child-like I had taken no note, or had not heard of his illness and death. In one awful moment the fearful idea of death was borne into my soul; and, as I heard the creak of the coffin screws, I received my first idea of the King of Terrors.

I went home with my father in a sort of daze, but was too shy to tell him of the unspeakable fear that had taken hold of my mind. I remember distinctly how insupportable the house seemed to me, and that my only comfort during the rest of the day was standing on the portico looking up at the sky. The night that followed I shall never forget. I lay in my little bed wide awake, and could only get rid of the dead face by keeping my eye fixed upon the square of the window; and there I lay staring and trembling until the morning.

The impression of that day and night has never worn away though long years have passed over my head since then. I have parted, time and again, with the nearest and dearest, but without ever being able to look upon them after their features have been stamped with the seal of immortality. I could give them up to God, and live through the agony; but never have I attained to the physical nerve and courage that would enable me to stand face to face with the forsaken clay. (30)

30. "Giving Children Right Impressions of Death,"
Margaret J. Preston, The Sunday School Times
November 7, 1891, pg. 707-8

Chapter II

YOUTH AND EDUCATION

George Junkin soon recognized the fact that Margaret had little difficulty in mastering a language, so he started her into Hebrew at the age of ten, and followed this with Latin, French, and German in the teens. (1)

The notebooks of the youthful student contain many quotations from works in all these languages except from the Hebrew. The quotations which she makes from the Old Testament are taken from the King James version of the Bible, and would lead us to believe that Margaret found the task of reading the Old Testament in the original either too difficult, or else unprofitable. (2)

That Margaret was not ~~alone~~ a student of language alone is evident from the other quotations in her early notebooks. Mrs. Allen refers to one of them begun when Margaret was fifteen, and containing extracts from Goethe, Tacitus, Coleridge, Kant, Sheridan, Carlyle, Locke's Human Understanding, and from the condensed biographies of Petrarch. In addition to these difficult authors Margaret was expected to be well versed in the present-day writers of her own country. She was assigned the works of the New England School of poets as they appeared, and (3)

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- 1..Margaret Junkin Preston, E.P.Allen, pp. 354,
 - 2..Notebook of 1837 Pg 43, 48, 56, etc
 - 3..Margaret Junkin Preston, E.P.Allen, pg. 353

there are numerous references to Longfellow, Bryant, Whittier, Emerson in her notes of 1837, when she was seventeen. Poe seems to have been barred to her as not in keeping with the high moral standard of the others, for in all her notes there does not appear a quotation from him, or a reference to him. One is not surprised at her ignorance of Poe when it is remembered that the temper of her father was thoroughly in accord with the idea of Matthew Arnold that good poetry should have a high moral seriousness. Evidently George Junkin felt that the dissolute Poe was not good food for the eager mind of his young pupil.

That Margaret was just as ambitious as her father is plainly evident from the energy with which she devoured the works assigned to her. Daylight was filled with the many tasks of caring for the younger children, and aiding her mother with the work of the home. There were so many tasks that there seems not to have been much time for study during the day. So eager was she to become a scholar that she spent in study a great deal of the time which the rest of the family spent in sleep.

The only time that I had to prepare my Greek lessons was after the family bedtime. (4)

The day of oil lamps had not yet arrived so that Margaret was forced to pore over her Greek New Testament by the insufficient light of a primitive candle.

Many years later Margaret told her grandchildren, that:

Many a time when we would kiss our mother goodnight she would say to my sister Ellie, "Be sure you put out Maggie's candle when you go to bed." But when Ellie would offer to discharge her mission, I would raise my finger in a half serious threat, and say, "Touch it if you dare!" It was the only respect in which I disobeyed my mother's wishes, and as my father encouraged my undertaking more than I could possibly do in the daytime, I felt justified.(5)

Apparently there were many arguments over the candle burning so late. One night Eleanor ~~xxxxxxx~~ could stand it no longer and broke out in a tirade against the uselessness of wasting your time on dry dull books when you were too tired to grasp their meaning. Margaret was equal to the occasion and scribbled a bit of verse in her notebook. It was written in pencil, and scratched out with a pen, probably the next morning:

To bed, to bed I say,
Tis late, late night.
Come, throw your books away,
Put out the light.

Go, put your night-cap on,
You've read enough.
How can you bear to con
Such hard dry stuff.

I never thus desired
To fill my head.
I'm sure you must be tired,
So come to bed. (6)

Study under such a strain brought its price to be paid, and Margaret paid dearly by a temporary loss of her eyesight when she was twentyone. For some time she was forced to stay in a darkened room, and throughout the rest of her life she suffered from weak eyes. As she put it:

"The door of knowledge was slammed in my face." (7)

5..Idem. pg. 16.

6..Notebook of Margaret Junkin, for 1839. Date Aug. 14, 1840

7..Margaret Junkin Preston, E.P.Allen, pg. 8

for after she was twentyone she could do little studying. She herself attributes the breakdown of her eyes to the hardships of studying at night by candle light:

The only time I had to prepare my Greek lessons was after the family bedtime; the only time my busy father could hear me recite was before our early breakfast; so that study and recitation were both done by the insufficient light of our primitive candles. I am sure the close sight thus required by the Greek text put a strain upon my eyes which was the beginning of ~~the~~ my trouble. (8)

One is unwilling to place all the blame on the Greek text when we look over the books to be read when she was nineteen. The reading list is pasted in the back of her 1840 notebook, and is written in another handwriting than Margaret's, it is probably her fathers.

Course of reading in History and Philosophy
for M. J. 1839

History

Historical Church
Rutherford's Ancient History
Gillie's Greece
Ferguson's Roman Republic
Gibbon's Decline and Fall, extracts from
Hallem's Middle Ages
Robertson's Charles V
Watson's Philip II
Hume or Henry's England
Robertson's America
Irving's Columbus

Mental Philosophy

Payne's, Intellectual Philosophy
Wayland's Moral Science
Abercrombie, On the Intellectual Powers
Abercrombie, On the Moral Feelings

Geography, Astronomy, Natural Philosophy

M.M.Bran's Geography Vol. I
Biot's Astronomy
Biot's Physics
Arnot's Physics

With such an education it was natural that Margaret should have found her small talk centering about Greek and Roman History, or the Latin poets. Eleanor did not share in the joy of pure learning of classical lore, and the feeling brought on many conflicts between the frolicsome temperament of the younger sister and Margaret's ardent passion to learn more by matching her wisdom with that of the students in her father's college. One of Eleanor's attempt to change the subject of conversation is recorded by one of the students:

Seated one evening on the porch, our talk began to flow in the usual channel. After a while, her sister Eleanor, whose love for poetry was not so intense, put in a remonstrance, with a "toujours perdrix" and said in a vein of raillery that it was impossible for us two to be together ten minutes without discoursing about the riders of Pegasus. She pronounced a forfeit upon the ~~first~~ one who should first offend in this way again; a forfeit of fifty lines of verse on-glancing gayly over the garden fence- "on a head of cabbage !" It was the young collegian who lost the wager and wrote the poem to a head of cabbage. (9)

The earliest comment upon Margaret's ability to write verse comes from the same student, who made the acquaintance of the the Junkins when Margaret was sixteen:

Her remarkable poetical talent had even then won the admiration of her associates, and to have been admitted into the charmed circle of which she was the center, where literature and literary work were discussed, admired, and appreciated, I have ever counted a high privilege. (10)

After recounting the fact that he was two years younger than Margaret, and that mutual interests in literature drew them together into a warm friendship, he gives an

- 9..Idem. pg. 25, quotation from letter of Dr. T.C.Porter of Easton.
10..Idem. pg 24.

example of her ready ability to turn an incident into verse.

Miss Margaret, who had just been reading Stevenson's Travels in Greece, called our attention to this passage in the book: "A young Sciote who had returned to his native isle for the first time since the Turkish invasion, in 1822, entered his father's gateway, and found the dwelling of his childhood a desolate ruin. He wandered to the garden, and strayed through its orange and lemon groves in silence, until passing a large vase in which a beautiful plant was growing wildly, he muttered indistinctly, 'Le meme vase !' She then proposed that each of us should fashion independently a poem which would interpret the cause and meaning of that sad exclamation. The three poems were written and critically compared. (11)

11..Idem. pg. 25
Poem found in Notebook 1837, pg. 159

The family realized that Margaret would have a broader education if she studied music and painting. These studies must have been begun when she was well advanced in the teens, for there is no evidence that she ever learned to play well, or that her study gave her an appreciation of good music. It is more probable that her study of music was abandoned, as was her painting, because of the trouble with her eyesight. The only bit of painting known to have been done by her is a head of Beatrice Cenci, which was painted for a bazaar in Easton. The tediousness of the task is supposed to have been the final load which was too much for the weary eyes, and
(13)
caused the breakdown.

When Margaret was twentyone her father accepted the presidency of Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. The reason for this change was largely due to the fact that this stern covenanter had never learned to work peaceably with those associated in authority with him. The trustees of the college at Easton became divided over the punishment of one of the students. The student had gotten into a fight with another student and had been a bit free in wielding a knife. The faculty had some difficulty in agreeing on the punishment, as the president held out for a milder sentence than was finally imposed. The faculty felt that the important part of the sentence should be a public apology on the student's part, and suspended him until he should satisfy their demands. Members of the

board who lived in town took sides with the student and
and created such opposition to the college of which they
were trustees that many students were turned away, and
~~the~~ ⁽¹⁴⁾
and state withdrew certain funds. Dr. Junkin reluctantly
decided to leave the college for which he had labored so
diligently and on which he had spent a great deal of his
wife's money.

The day the Jankins were to leave Easton there had
been so much rain that travel by stage was impossible.
The Delaware and Lehigh Rivers were swollen much beyond
their banks. A fleet of boats ~~was~~ leaving early Monday
morning in hopes of making Philadelphia by daylight. One
of these boats fitted up accom^modations for the numerous
Jankins. What was their surprise on arriving at the boat
to find a large group of friends standing on the muddy
banks amid the darkness and dampness of the early morning.
The rugged old man might be unflinching in pursuing his
duty regardless of the opinions of others, but he and the
family also had the power of making warm friends. ⁽¹⁵⁾

None of the family appear to have enjoyed Ohio.
There was trouble in the school, and their three-year stay
was ^{partly} ~~(partially)~~ terminated because of the troubles into which
the father was inevitably drawn. ⁽¹⁶⁾

Margaret has written several letters in verse to her
friends back at Easton. They may have been quite interesting

- 14..George Junkin, D. X. Junkin, pg. 408
15..Idem. pp. 411-412
16..Idem. pp. 421ff

to her friends, but one is not able to gather much about the writer from them. One thing which appears in the earlier letters from Oxford is the fact that they did not enjoy their fellowship in the local church. In a letter of October 11, 1841, to the wife of their former pastor, Margaret says:

We mingle in the passing crowd
And when within the house of prayer
Our heads are reverently bowed
We feel that we are strangers there.
.....and so I prefer to sit
A silent worshiper. (17)

Apparently they ~~feel~~^{ONLY} that they are strangers not ~~alone~~^{also} in the church, but in the whole community. Mrs. Allen quotes from a letter of Margaret to her favorite cousin, Helen Dickey, of Oxford, Pennsylvania, which suggests that Eleanor was quite rebellious at living in the strange community, where she lacked friends and beaux:

Ellie- dear Ellie-'longs to go somewhere'
but since she cannot is going to be contented
at home. When she gets letters from her young
friends, and they tell of parties, fine dresses,
company, and 'loads of beaux' she cannot help but
wish herself where she might share such things.
But good humor prevails, and she soon grows
contented again. (18)

Margaret is plainly exaggerating the matter when she says that Eleanor grows contented again when there were no parties and boys. One is sure that Margaret is at fault here after reading the description given of Eleanor by Margaret when the younger sister was fourteen:

- 17.. Notebook, Margaret Junkin, 1839, letter to Mrs. John L. Gray.
18.. Margaret Junkin Preston, E.P.Allen, pg 29.

And round her lips
Lurks mischief, when she can she snips
The nose, as often pulls the hair
Or draws away the expected chair,
Or when our lips just touch the brink
Tilts up the draft we meant to drink.
But she can be demure and prim
Whenever fancy takes the whim
And look as staid and grave no less
Than some well lectured Quakeress. (19)

The incident of Margaret's defense of Eleanor's happiness is the first instance we find of two characteristics that stand out clearly in the later life of our poetess. She was always determined to make the best of any situation, and to do so was willing to exaggerate quite a bit.

The weakness of Margaret's eyes forced her to live within herself a great deal, and to find a large part of her pleasure within the family circle. Her letters and notebooks contain many references to the family, their plans and the dissappointments that the plans can not be carried out. Her baby sister runs in from play to ask where "the smell of the rose lives," and Margaret uses it as the basis for a poem. (20) She writes poems to her mother, to Julia on her fifth birthday, several to and for Eleanor, and for other members of the family. It is of course the natural thing that she should mention many of these things, but there are more references than one would expect. Apparently she did not have the friendship of the young people of the community and sought instead her pleasure in the large family group.

19..Notebook, Margaret Junkin, 1837, pg. 67
20..Notebook, Margaret Junkin, 1829, Date. Sept. 7, 1840.

There was another reason for Margaret's lack of friends in Ohio, her early love affair. It happened when she was quite young, though it is impossible to learn just how old she was, or the name of the young man who captured her fancy. The whole record of the affair is most scant. It seems that some young man felt they should be more than mere friends, and was unwise enough to allow the news of the proposal to reach her parents. They immediately disapproved of the young man, and persuaded Margaret that she should not think of marriage. The youth persisted in his attempt to win the parents as well as the maiden, and finally the hospitality of the home was forbidden him. (21)

The romantic nature of Margaret was fired by the thought of her banished lover. There are many poems expressing ~~entirely different~~ grief at parting in the 1837 notebook, most of these are dated between July 1837 and December 1838. The notebooks after this date do not contain the same sentiments, or sentimentality over parting, so that it is probable that Margaret was about eighteen when her lover was banished. The important fact about the episode is not the date, but the effect on Margaret. Mrs. Allen attributes to the incident Margaret's lack of interest in young men, and therefore her single state when the family moved to the South. (22) Had Margaret married she would probably have settled in

21. Margaret Junkin Preston, E.P.Allen, pg. 91
22. Ibid.

Pennsylvania as did her brothers, George and John. Such an event would have robbed Virginia of her honor as the home of the acknowledged poetess of the old South.

Mrs. Allen calls our attention to the scantiness of the verse about Margaret's lover and suggests the reason for this as:

A time of intense feeling was not, for her,
prolific in verse making. (23)

There may be an additional ~~reading~~ reason for this reticence, which we may deduce from her long study of the Greeks. She may have caught something of their restraint of expression which prevented her giving vent to any great emotions in the verse mentioned.

Margaret has left for us no direct evidence as to her development in religious truths. The comments on religion contained in her notebooks of 1837-42 indicate no difference between her faith and that of the generally accepted theories of Calvinism. It would therefore appear that Margaret's idea of entering into full fellowship with the church was dependent upon a somewhat violent experience of sin and forgiveness. It was this idea in American Calvinism against which Horace Bushnell revolted (24) in his book Christian Nurture in 1846. His point of attack was the idea so many held that a child should come into the kingdom of heaven by violence rather than by a process of gradual development based on the training

23..Ibid.

24..Christian Nurture, Horace Bushnell, Boston, 1847.

received at home:

Our very theory of religion is that men are to grow up in evil and be dragged into the church of God by conquest. (25).

There can be little doubt that Margaret underwent this experience of feeling that she had grown up in the vilest of sin, and that there was the possibility that she might be one of those to experience the sufferings and torments of the lost. Her brother Joseph never made a profession of religion. The biographer of George Junkin comments on this fact when he mentions the son's death at the age of twenty six, and suggests that he was prevented from making a public acceptance of religion because of:

A self-distrust, superinduced by a very high standard which he had formed of the requisites to a Christian profession- though of lovely character. (26)

This high standard of a Christians profession left Margaret with a strongly developed sense of sin, which continued even into old age, leaving her with the fear that death would not bring the joy which it might to others.

One would expect many references to death in the early works of any young writer. There are perhaps more than usual in the early notebooks of Margaret. Two ideas seem to stand out in these references. The first of these is the fear of death itself, and the separation from the rest of the world:

But, oh our churchyard's lonely
And desolate and bare,
And bright with green grass only,
Oh, do not lay me there. (27)

25..Idem. pg. 25

26..George Junkin, D.X.Junkin, pg. 494

27..Notebook 1837, Margaret Junkin, pg. 154

The other idea associated with death was a fear that it would come to her during her youth and cut off the attempt to express the beauty within her soul:

Oh, it is hard to close my eyes
While I am still so young,
And feel and know that I must die,
And leave so much unsung. (28)

All of Margaret's verse during these youthful years is by no means sad and mournful. There is a strain of humor which is continually cropping out in her rebellion against the things which she was forced to do and hear. Her notebook when she was eighteen has the following note:

Written after hearing a Temperance Address delivered in a New church by a very young man. January 1st 1839.

Virgil praised the nectared cup,
Horace drank its contents up
Revel'd in its honey dew
Sang, "Evoke Bache" too.
In our later day
Moore has bent his witching lay
To the "Parting Bumper's" brim.
I will chant its praise with him,
I will tune a simple strain
To the glories of champaign. [sic]
What altho a New Airks near,
Yet I will have naught to fear,
Youthful warnings are in vain.
They should come from older men,
But we're off the hallowed ground
And beyond the warning sound.
Here's a brimming bumper then
To thy glories, Oh Champaign. (29)

Margaret seems casting about her for subjects about which to write verse. We have already cited an instance of her imagination leaping toward a new subject. The following note is prefixed to one of her poems written

28..Notebook, 1839, Margaret Junkin, dated Sept.13, 1841
29..Notebook 1837, Margaret Junkin, pg. 45.

when she was nineteen:

When I was last at Fairmount, near Philadelphia, I was struck with seeing the statue of an Indian placed upon a cliff adorned only by nature, and immediately overlooking the beautiful cultivated grounds below. Starting as it were from the thicket, with its hands raised as though in astonishment at the wondrous scene spread out before him. (30)

Then follows her idea of the Indian's astonishment at the change, and his lament that he may no longer hunt over his former haunts.

Another poem which attracts our interest is one written to defend herself:

To Miss R.... who had written a poetical epistle to me under the signature of "Thalia" to prove that I had offended the Muses, by having dedicated to them a rude, rustic bower. (31)

After such an introduction one would expect a defense of her hawthorn bower against the current tendencies of the day to find romantic themes in far away subjects. Instead there is a semi-apology with the insistence ~~that~~ she did not mean to outshine the glory of Parnassus with her rustic seat.

This tendency to take an American theme, and then fail to treat it as particularly fit for poetry is further shown in her poetical story, "The Lost Sister, a Tale of Wyoming." (32) One would have to change only the title to make it a tale of Italy, India, or any other place. The name Wyoming seems to have been chosen simply because she happened to see the incident of a sister being lost in the woods. The poem has nothing peculiar to the

30..Notebook, 1837 Margaret Junkin pg 141
31..Notebook, 1839 Margaret Junkin, pg. 79
32..Idem. pg. 8

locality, but rather of the feelings of the family when they fail to locate the daughter that has been lost in the woods. The sole reference to American subjects in this poem is the mention of a band of Indians, and the emotions aroused in the sister's mind would have been approximately the same had they been a band of Eskimoes or Asiatics. It would therefore appear that the selection of American subjects was largely a matter of accident rather than of choice.

In 1848 Dr. Junkin decided to leave Lafayette College and accepted the presidency of Washington College, in Lexington, Virginia. This move like all the others was in the interests of education, but like the others was prompted by difficulties with the people of the community~~es~~. Mrs. Allen describes the trouble:

This time the trouble began with animosity in the Easton Presbyterian Church, because of Dr. Junkin's connection with a plan for organizing a second, and in his opinion, a much needed church. It did not seem to lie in this vehement soul to live peaceably with those who opposed what he thought right. (33)

This removal to Lexington when she was twenty~~eight~~ sharply divides Margaret's life. Hereafter she identified herself with the people of the South, they claimed her as their poetess, and she claimed them as her people.

Because of this change one poem attracts our attention. It shows Margaret's position regarding the perplexing question of slavery, and her stand as neither an abolitionist or a ~~slave~~ supporter of slavery.

A Ballad in Reply to Tappers Ballad to Columbia

"Set free the slave" ah, brother
Could we at once obey
There should not walk a bondman
Upon our soil today.

We own our sore misfortune
We see the blot and mourn
We feel we have a burden
Most heavy to be borne.
Tho tender are your pleadings
Yet others chide and make
The chains we long to sunder
More difficult to break.

Let British hearts remember
The old colonial days
When oer her sea-girt islands
The maiden queen held sway.
Whose ships began the traffic
Who brought across the main
Unwelcomed to Virginia
A human freight of slaves. (34)

Then follows an indignant assertion that the mistreatment
of the slaves has been exaggerated:

Believe it not ! Traducers
And traitors stamped the brand
Of foul exaggeration
That fastened on our land (35)

34..Poem inserted on blue paper in Notebook of 1839
of Margaret Junkin, and dated Oxford, Nov. 5th, '48.
35..Ibid.

Chapter III

SOUTHERN BELLE

The Junkins had moved so many times, because the father found it impossible to live peaceable with all people, that they probably did not mind this latest move to Virginia. There may have been one matter which gave them some concern. Virginia was one of the slave-holding states, and George Junkin had become greatly interested in the move for¹ liberation. He was not one of the rabid abolitionist, but was in favor of the peaceful colonization of the slaves in Liberia.⁽¹⁾ This attitude would certainly have brought to him no qualms of conscience about moving to Virginia, for nothing would have better suited that turbid combattant for truth than a fight regarding slavery. The family may have been worried, but George Junkin did not worry. It may have made him all the more eager to come, feeling that he came as a prophet of God to correct the weaker bretheren and wean them from their sins.

The family boarded the train for Baltimore and there took a boat for Fredericksburg. From Fredericksburg they were able to take a train that brought them to Gordonsville, and here the real difficulties of travel began. The only

1..George Junkin, D.X. Junkin, pg. 491

means of reaching Lexington, one hundred miles away, was
(2)
a stage coach traveling over roads that were little more
than two muddy ruts between plowed fields. The managers
of the stage took great pride in advertising the speed of
their four-house carriage as thirty six miles in nine hours,
(3)
which was the distance from Lexington to Staunton. Julia
Junkin's account of the trip suggests that the managers
had caught something of the modern art of advertising which
does not include a passion for truth:

My first memory of Lexington is of arriving at
midnight, in a December snowstorm, after a twelve
hours' ride from Staunton, in an old stage coach.
This was before there was a turnpike or plankroad,
and the ups and downs we had that night made an
impression on our bodies as well as our minds. (4)

The town of Lexington was noted for two things,
education and religion; religion with a distinct Presby-
terian flavor. The first school in the community was
Liberty Hall, a boarding school for boys. Through the
agency of William Graham, George Washington became interested
in the school and donated one hundred shares of James
(5)
River and Kanawa Canal stock to the school in 1784.
The school then became Washington College and was moved
into the village proper in 1802. The central building
of the college was erected on the spacious lines of
colonial American architecture, and a statue of Washington
placed on its summit. In 1883 the college became

2..Ibid. pg. 493

3..Advertisement in The Valley Star of Lexington, May 30, 1861

4..Letter of Julia Junkin, quoted by E.P.Allen in
Margaret Junkin Preston, pg. 39.

5..History of Rockbridge County, Morton, pg. 192-3

Washington and Lee University

The next school to be established was the Ann Smith Academy, which opened its first session in 1807. Miss Smith had tendered her services for one year ~~xx~~ without charge in order to educate the daughters of the community. This education was not ~~alone~~ ^{only} to be in the rudiments of knowledge, but also in the qualities of character which are becoming to a young lady. One of these essentials seems to have been violated when one of the students, Nancy Miller, smashed the bonnet of another pupil, and was therefore expelled after a lengthy trial. In 1821 the trustees of the Academy applied to the state legislature for state aid in maintaining the school, pointing out that it was the only one of its kind in the state, and as far as their knowledge extended, the only one in the whole South.

Yet a third school was established in the village. It was the Virginia Military Institute, established in 1839. Its first principal was Francis H. Smith, and the only other professor was John Thomas L. Preston, who occupied the chair of modern languages.

Any state might have been satisfied with three good schools, but not the Presbyterian fathers of Lexington, for theirs was a real passion for education. There was a law school taught by Colonel Brokenborough, which later became the law school of Washington and Lee University.

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- 6..Ibid pg. 208
 - 7..Ibid. pg. 208
 - 8..Ibid. pg. 209
 - 9..Ibid. pg. 201
 - 10..Advertisement in The Valley Star,

The Lexington Gazette in 1855 carried advertisements of two other schools; The Lexington Classical School conducted by Jacob Fuller, Master of Arts, and the Lexington Mathematical and English Academy, to be presided over by G. A. Goodman.

The Presbyterian Church occupied the position of honor in the center of town, and about one third of the twelve hundred people in the village belonged to this church. One suspects that the church did not stand with hospitable arms to greet the chance visitor who might drop in upon a service of worship. The pews were furnished with doors; doors that had latches on them that opened from the inside. These pews were rented by the year for a sum not less than fifteen dollars, and in 1845 when the congregation entered their new building it was moved by the congregation that the salary of the pastor be raised by the rent of the pews- the highest bidder having his choice of seats. (11) There seems to have been some discontent expressed among the bretheren some years earlier when their church was organized as a congregation. They had belonged to Hall's Meeting House, some four miles out of town, and now that they had their own church the question was, what should be their attitude toward those from the country who should occasionally come to town for preaching. The matter seems to have been settled as follows:

For the sake of convenience.....it is agreed that the society of Lexington and Hall's Meeting House be considered one society, with two places of ^{workship}

and that the supporters of the town part of the society shall have the same privilege of sitting in the house now built as the supporters of the Hall's Meeting House part shall have in town, according to the sums they pay for the building of the house, and the sums they pay for the support of a minister in their own part of the society. (12)

One who attended the church in those days later recalled the fact that it was the custom of the minister, Rev. William S. White, to read out to his people the list of visits he intended to make. On Monday he would begin with a certain family and continue down that street, then he would go to another locality of Tuesday, and so on throughout the week. (13)

We do not know just which pew was allotted to the Junkins, but it is a fair inference that the president of the college would have a high seat in the synagogue. The family seemed to have enjoyed their stay in Lexington from the very first:

We were received with the greatest kindness by the Lexington people, and soon made many very pleasant friends. We soon began to feel at home, and to fall into the Lexington ways of living, and I think were all very happy. For those of us who made it our home, it was afterward the scene of our greatest happiness and greatest sorrow; and as nothing tests the love and kindness of friends like emergencies, we proved that of the Lexington people.

As I was only a child, I do not remember as much about society as an older person would; but I remember this- that almost always after coming home, Maggie would report to mother, who was deaf, and on that account went out very little, the delightful conversations she had with some of the many cultivated men connected with the literary institutions.

From the time we went to Lexington, we all used to take delightful long rambles, rather to the surprise (13) of the Lexington people, who were not quite so energetic.

12.. SKETCH OF NEW MONMOUTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, pg 13

13.. Letter of Julia Unkin, quoted above,

One who remembers Margaret at the time give us a description of her appearance and conversation:

Miss Maggie- as we always called her, was the object of my secret, enthusiastic worship. She was not exactly pretty, but her slight figure, fair complexion, and beautiful auburn curls furnished a piquant setting for her refined, intelligent countenance, which made up for the lack of mere beauty. I used to thrill with admiration as I watched her riding at a swift gallop, a little black velvet cap showing off her fairness, the long curls blowing about her face.

Her manner to us younger girls was delightful, never patronizing nor supercilious, but most sweet and engaging. We wondered that a person who could write poetry, which seemed to our limited experience a sort of miraculous gift, should condescend to talk to us about our studies and games as if she were one of us. She never talked about herself- we wished she would- she did not betray the slightest sense of superiority, except in the matter of wider privileges, such as acquaintance with libraries, pictures, etc., and these experiences she seemed eager to share, constantly lending us books and magazines, repeating poetry to us (other people's poetry), and talking in a way that charmed us about pictures, artists, and authors. (14)

Four years after their arrival in Lexington Margaret writes to a friend giving her impressions of the village:

You have been pitying me, dear J. this summer, haven't you? Tied down as you know I have been to my quiet country home, while you have had the pleasure of strolling it at Newport, and Sharon, and Saratoga, and how many more places of fashionable resort your next letter has to tell me. Well, if such has been the case, I have only to say that your commiseration has been very superfluous; for I question if your migratory life has had as many of the elements of happiness centering in it as my stationary one.

....Why did you not accept our invitation to come down and breathe the sweet pure air of our Virginia mountains, instead of whirling off to those "springs" where life seems to my fastidious taste the most artificial thing in the world?.....Uncle Felix should have had horses saddled for us, as he has for E. and myself all summer, at half past five o'clock; and what a gallop we should have enjoyed, over misty hills, down into little green shaded glens, over overhanging branches, all sparkling with silvery dew.

And then, asthe canter of four or five miles through the bracing atmosphere whetted our appetites, we would turn our horses heads and scamper away at the same brisk pace homewards. Then you should have changed your riding gear- not for any such elaborate toilette as the belle of the Springs is expected to appear in, but for the simplest of white morning dresses, and with glowing cheeks and brightened eyes, and a sense of invigoration which nothing short of such a gallop can impart, you should have sat down to an old Virginia breakfast.

As to occupation for the forenoon, why here is the "Knickerbocker" and "Harper" and the "Eclectic" and such free access as you might fancy to my last package of new books. Or while E. and I finished up the sketches taken in our last walk, you should read aloud to us "Uncle Tom's Cabin," till the blood flushed indignantly up to your cheek, and you felt disposed to spurn Virginia soil beneath your feet. I ~~in~~ the meantime, would grow half angry at the one-sided book, and we should be well nigh a quarrel about the mooted subject, when the sight of Homer's happy, care-free, black and sleek, well-conditioned person, set becomingly off in white pants and apron, as he comes to announce dinner, should clinch my argument, and bring you over to a more correct way of thinking before you had got through with your soup.

Dining the other day at the house of a friend I found that not less than four of the company had been abroad; and so we had racy descriptions of men and things in other lands, and spicy anecdotes of celebrities whom we all know upon paper. I was much interested in the relation of a conversation which a lady near me had had with Baron von Humbolt, when in Berlin..... While the servants were carrying around les entremets, a gentleman beside me described the kind of breakfasts he used to ~~have~~ take with the Count de Survillers, when he resided in this country, and I learned, what I did not know before, that la salade was as indispensable at a French dejeuner as coffee. (15)

To which account Mrs. Allen can not help adding a comment of her own, upon the every-day occurrence of such conversation

15..Letter of M.J.Preston, quoted by E.P.Allen,
Margaret Junkin Preston, pp. 41-44

among the society of Lexington:

It is perhaps necessary to say that our poet could never be trusted to tell an unvarnished tale. True she used only facts in her narration; but the poor bare facts would have found it hard to recognize themselves when she was done with them. Thirty years later than this letter to J---, Mrs. Preston spent a summer in Maryland, in the home of her step daughter; on one occasion she read aloud to the family a letter she had just written to the daughter of Canon Kingsley, giving a description of her surroundings. "What place is Grandma writing about?" asked a little listener, to the great amusement of the rest. ~~(16)~~

One whose memory goes back to a time only eight or ten years later than the date of the letter just quoted testifies that dinings, at which guests gave personal reminiscences of distinguished foreigners, were not of every-day occurrence in the village of Lexington. (16)

There were evidently some things about Lexington which Margaret disliked very much. In her first published work, Silverwood, a novel of reminiscences, she satirizes the emphasis upon ancestry, and the neglect of American culture because of an excessive interest in that of Europe. This is done by ~~making~~ placing the family about whom she writes in the village of Milbourne, Virginia. This is evidently another name for Lexington, for she mentions local scenery, and the two Negro servants of the Jenkins, and other items which suggest that it is Lexington about which she writes. The nearest neighbors of the family, she names the Grantleys, and it is Mrs. Grantley who becomes the victim of her dislikes.

Mrs. Grantley comes to call upon the Irvines, who have but recently moved to Milbourne (Margaret later in life admitted (17) that the Irvines were really the Jankins), and Margaret makes the visitor say:

I am really charmed that Silverwood is to be inhabited again, only that it will detract a little from the picturesqueness of our landscape to see signs of life about the old mansion. A deserted house, left to decay, and romantically hidden away among the shrubbery one must allow, is an unusual sight in this all-alive country of ours, though we have something of that kind to show in the ruins of the old Hall near you.

"And permit me to say, Madam", interposed Bryant, "by no means an agreeable one."

"Ah, think so?" said the lady, arching her eyebrows. "I confess I learned to look on it differently when in England. Time-stained walls, and moss-grown roofs, and ivy-covered turrets, vocal with rooks, and all that one sees there, about many of the grand old remnants of a former age, have so much of the delightful aroma of antiquity around them, that whatever in the slightest degree suggests them is positively refreshing in our fast times.

"But I am afraid your young people will sadly feel the want of society hereabouts, Mrs. Irvine, unless they mean to avail themselves of the resource my sister and I adopt, and like those rare caterers of domestic enjoyment, the English, spend the season away from their country home. (18)

The Irvines are invited over for dinner at the home of Mrs. Grantley, the invitation for dinner at five amuses them:

Rather late for a November country dinner; but I suppose ten o'clock breakfasts and five o'clock dinners are the remnants of the many English customs that have been perpetuated here ever since the cavalier days of the Old Dominion, and Mrs. Grantley sets too much store by her kinship with the old Sir William, to give in to a more plebeian hour. (19)

17..Ibid. pg. 85.

18..Silverwood, Margaret Junkin, pg. 57-8, 59.

19..Ibid. pg. 135

The same dislike for undue emphasis upon family traditions crops out again in her later writings. In one article on "The Literary Profession in the South" she argues that this very allegiance to family has hindered the development of Virginia. She does not think it a laughable matter that the pride of family traditions has been passed from father to son, but:

The absurdity is, for their descendants to satisfy themselves with the fact, and be content to sup on past recollections. (20)

The Junkins had been in Lexington a little over five years when they became accidentally involved in a famous murder trial. Cadet Blackburn of V.M.I. had taken Julia to the Presbyterian Church, for the evening service. It would seem that this was the accepted way to spend a pleasant evening with a young lady. (21) He escorted Julia as far as the church door, and after she had entered turned aside to chat with some of the cadets standing in the aisle. One of the students in Colonel Brokenborough's law school, Christian, tapped Blackburn on the arm and asked him to walk outside as he had a matter to talk over with him. There had been some trouble between the two, but the cadet evidently did not expect any trouble, for he did not ask any of his comrades to go with him. The trouble had originated

20..Scrapbook, M.J.Preston, W. and L. Library, pg. 2
21..The End of An Era, S. S. Wise, pg. 241-2

over a visit to a mutual friend. The two got into a fight in the street beside the church and late comers to church discovered them fighting violently in the gutter. Christian had stabbed Blackburn several times with a knife which he had hidden under his coat. Blackburn was carried to the rear of a nearby building, and died before they could find a doctor.
(22)

Margaret was probably not at church on this night as her mother was critically ill at the time. Julia was placed on the witness stand by the prosecution who tried to show that her escort did not expect to meet his assailant and therefore came to church unarmed. Julia did not contribute anything to the evidence for the case,
(23) but the case made a deep impression upon Julia. Perhaps it was her father who used the incident as a visitation from God because of her sins, for two weeks later we find Julia uniting with the church, being nineteen years old.
(24)

Margaret was thirty seven years old, and had lived in Lexington nine years before she was married. She often said she would not marry a widower, and yet when a widower sought her hand she forgot her vow and accepted the numerous brood of ~~Colonel~~ ^{Major} John Thomas Lewis Preston.
(25) Mr. Preston was

22..The Valley Star, January 19, 1854, pg. 2

23..Ibid. April 20, 1854. pg. 2

24..Sessional Record, Lexington Presbyterian Church
February 11, 1854.

several years older than Margaret. Eighteen years before their marriage he had been the co-founder of V.M.I., and now held extensive property around Lexington, and was a director in the one bank of the county, the Bank of Rockbridge.

Mr. Preston was quite fond of hunting, and is even today mentioned as one of the great hunters of the community, so that it must have taken a great deal of persuasion on his part to induce Margaret to mother his household, and allow his hounds to roam at will over the house. A visitor to the home some years later recalled one evening just about dusk when she was ushered into the living room, and asked to take a seat before the fire until some of the family could be notified of her presence. After sitting there in the semi darkness for a few minutes she was terrified by groans that came from one of the dark corners of the room, and was greatly relieved to discover it was only one of the ^{Major's} ~~Colonel's~~ hounds stretching himself.

The wedding took place in Lexington, August 3, 1857, with her father performing the ceremony. There followed no wedding journey to Bermuda or to Florida, but a visit to some relative of the groom's who lived on the James River in the old ancestral home of "Oakland". The Colonel must

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- 26..Ibid. pg. 94.
 - 27..Rockbridge County News, February 2, 1933, pg. 2
 - 28..Ibid. June 2, 1932. pg. 6
 - 29..Personal reminiscence of Mrs. Paul Penick.
 - 30..Margaret Junkin Preston, E.P.Allen, pg. 98

have passed the romantic age when he felt the thrill of going away with his bride, for the two were carefully chaperoned on the trip by his nephew. Also an old family servant was included in the party, and assigned to Margaret as her personal maid:

I never had a waiting maid in my life, and stood in secret awe and dread of Anakie. But Anakie was a small part of the ordeal; think what it was to be presented on the Oakland threshold, not only to my husband's entire family, and to his sister's family, but to his old cousin, William C. Preston of South Carolina, and to half a dozen other strangers summering there. (31)

Paul Hamilton Hayne later sent Margaret an anecdote about this South Carolina cousin. It seems that a fair young aspirant was trying her poetic gifts upon the old gentlemen:

The poem containing this line, "My soul leaped over the garden wall", was read aloud by the fair author in the presence of the illustrious William C. Preston, who, upon hearing it, involuntarily exclaimed, "Good God, Madam, what agility." (32)

One of Mr. Preston's children, Elizabeth, who was present at the arrival of her stepmother, describes the life of the household at Oakland for us:

Troops of slaves circled around every function of the day. You were expected (if you were a lady guest) to have your hair brushed, your shoes and stockings put on, every hook and eye fastened, every pin put in place, and your handkerchief and fan handed to you by a maid who held herself your especial chattel

31..Ibid. pg. 99

32..Letter of P.H.Hayne to M.J.Preston, March 25, 1873.

during your stay at Oakland. She met you at the carriage when you got back from your drive, took your hat and wrap, brushed and dusted you into a perfect state of nicety, and then hung around, hankering after something more to do for you. (33)

The ten o'clock breakfast at Oakland was an informal meal, as was the light luncheon at one, which was often served on a table formed of a single granite slab, built under the magnificent oaks. But from the time of the "dinner dressing bell", which was rung at four o'clock the household stiffened into a formality which was second nature in those to the manner born, but was calculated to embarrass a novice. (34)

The daughter is careful to comment here that her new mother experienced no embarrassment, but carried herself with becoming grace. (35)

Full dress was the inevitable rule. The dinner was lengthened into five or six courses; and everybody was expected to contribute to the general entertainment by joining in the table talk. This was oftenest on politics, though other topics were discussed. (36)

The ^{step-daughter} ~~daughter-in-law~~ furnishes a further tribute to Margaret in her description of the reaction of the cousin whom the entire family respected and feared:

The old statesman and orator from S.C. William C. Preston, made her acquaintance with all his prejudices on the alert. He shared the disapproval then felt throughout the South of women who appeared in print, and spoke with disfavor of the "little red-headed Yankee's want of style and presence." But the old gentlemen entirely lost his heart to his new kinswoman in a short time, and amused himself by drawing her out, making her talk on literary subjects with an entire unconsciousness on her part that she was showing much more knowledge than most women possessed of authors classic and modern. "She is an encyclopedia in small print", he declared enthusiastically, and in his old

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- 33..Margaret Junkin Preston, E.P.Allen, pg. 100
34..Ibid. pg. 99
35..Ibid. pg. 100
36..Ibid. pg. 99-100

fashioned gallantry found ways of showing sympathy, most grateful to the new wife, placed in such a trying situation. (37)

For the next ten years after her marriage we do not find Mrs. Preston writing as much as formerly. One reason was that she became absorbed in her new home; as the daughter puts it:

For several years after her marriage....Mrs. Preston considered it her duty....to do an immense amount of sewing; and her skill as a needlewoman was as great as if she had never written a sonnet. (38)

Yet this was not the main reason, as she herself admits:

I almost quit writing, after my marriage, because my husband did not in his heart of hearts approve of his wife's giving any part of herself to the public, even in verse.

"Nonsense ! Nonsense !" cried the husband, "When did I ever fail to enjoy and praise your poetry?"

"Yes, you praised my work, but there was an expression in the lift of your eyebrows that expressed surprise." (39)

The biographer adds her own testimony by saying that there were others beside the poetess who knew that the accusation (40) was a true one.

Major Preston's ideal woman had not a pen in her fingers. And he certainly had to overcome a strong inborn reluctance to having his wife's name in print. (41)

Four years after their marriage there arose the great conflict over secession. It was a time of anguish for Margaret. The family was bitterly divided over the conflict.

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- 37..Ibid. pg. 101
38..Ibid. pg. 106
39..Ibid. pg. 107, quoting Conversation.
40..Ibid. pg. 107
41..Idem.

Her father and Julia left Lexington at the outbreak of the war, and her brothers John and George enlisted in the Union army. Her husband became a Colonel in the Confederate forces; her brothers Ebenezer and William joined the same army; ^{the fate of} her brother-in-law Stonewall Jackson's ~~fate~~ is well known; one of her step-sons, William, was killed, and another Frank, lost his arm, while fighting in the Virginia army.

Dr. George Junkin was opposed to secession as the
(42)
greatest of immoralities, and became so bitter ~~of~~ the matter that he was forced to leave Lexington. The manner of his leaving is a perfect index of the man who would have nothing to do with those who opposed his views. The minutes of the faculty meetings of Washington College give us one view of the trouble, and Dr. Junkin's own account in his book Political Fallacies gives one that is more flattering to him. In February 1861 he had begun, ^{to} ~~teaching~~ a class for the seniors in the college on the Constitution of the
(43)
United States. During these lectures some resentment on the part of the students was shown toward Dr. Junkin's ideas on the subject. The feelings of the people all over the state were growing more and more excited, and there was in the college a group rabidly in favor of Virginia seceding.

During the process of these discussions I observed a growing restiveness among the students; heard myself called a "Pennsylvania Abolitionist", and saw written on the column opposite my door, "Lincoln Junkin." (44)

42.. Political Fallacies, George Junkin, pg. 11

43.. Idem.

44.. Ibid. pg. 12

Some of the students climbed to the college roof and placed there a flag of South Carolina, the state which had had been the leader in the secession movement. Dr. Junkin ordered his servants to take the flag down, and keep it safe that he might burn it "after evening prayer." (45) While he was at dinner the students secured the flag, and two weeks later again erected it.

I immediately ordered the servants to take it down, and at an hour when all except the Freshmen were at their recitations; these stood about as spectators and asked what I was going to do with it. I answered, "I'll show you." When the flag came within reach, I stepped up and took some matches from my pocket, set it on fire, and when it blazed up, told the servants to throw the pole out from the building, and whilst it flamed up I said, "So perish all efforts to dissolve this glorious Union." (46)

This of course did not end the matter. Another flag was raised, and a petition presented to the faculty that it be allowed to remain. The President of the college took this as a personal insult, and issued the ultimatum that unless the flag were taken down he would resign:

The faculty met again, and after some consultation, unanimously adopted the following preamble and resolution. Preamble: Whereas the students in response to the tidings that the Virginia convention are about to adopt an ordinance of secession, have hoisted a Southern flag upon the college building, and have made a respectful request of the faculty that they would permit it to remain; and whereas the faculty have assurance given by the students themselves to a member of the faculty, and confirmed by the fact that they promptly took down, at the request of the faculty, a similar flag erected on a former occasion; and whereas Dr. Junkin regards this act as a wilful ~~act~~ violation of the law and a personal indignity

45.. Ibid. pg. 13

46.. Idem.

and requires the faculty to have the flag removed at once, on penalty of his resignation- an ultimatum which the faculty think Dr. Junkin has no right to impose, and which we can not allow to influence our action in the premises, although we are fully determined to support the President, or any individual member of our body, in the maintenance of discipline; and whereas the sole object of the faculty is to allay excitement, and insure good order and attention to study in college in this time of civil disturbance, believing as we do that these ends will be best promoted by not requiring the immediate removal of the flag- and therefore, Resolved, that the flag be permitted to remain at the discretion of the faculty. (47)

Pending the consideration of the foregoing preamble and resolution, the following was sent in by the students, signed numerously by members of the several classes; Viz-

"We, the members of Dr. Junkin's classes, and others, do wholly disclaim any intention whatever of offending him in erecting a Southern flag on college. We are exceedingly sorry to learn he is so decidedly of the opinion, in the face of our protestations that we mean no insult. What we do intend is simply this: an open declaration of our sentiments in the present unhappy condition of our national affairs, meaning unflinching hostility to the coercive policy of Mr. Lincoln and a firm admesion to the South, for 'weal or woe'". (47)

It made no matter to Dr. Junkin whether they intended the action as a personal insult, or not, he had said he was going if the flag remained, so go he did. Drove his own carriage three hundred fifty miles to Oxford County, Pennsylvania, and took a train for Philadelphia. He crossed the Potomac river, after having driven the last thirty five miles from Winchester without stopping to feed his horses. The northern bank of the Potomac was beyond Southern territory, and there is a tradition current in Lexington, that on reaching this point he made Julia dismount, and carefully wiped the Southern dust from her feet, and then ^{from} each hoof of the horses.

Chapter V

THE FEMALE POET OF THE OLD SOUTH

The first published work of Margaret's was a novel which she called, "Silverwood, A Book of Memories." Silverwood is the story of a family, the Irvines. Mrs. Irvine has recently been widowed, and battles against the world to raise her family of five. Through financial reverses and a fire they lose their home in a northern state, and are forced to move to an old ancestral estate in Virginia. This estate, "Silverwood", had been left to her husband at the death of his father. The fifty acres and the old home are kept up by two Negro servants.

The first part of the novel is devoted to the family efforts to aid the only son, Lawrence, to regain his health, which he had seriously impaired in his superhuman efforts to save their former home from the flames. He finally goes to Cuba in the hope^s that a warmer climate may help him.

Then follow more financial reverses through the dishonesty of a trusted friend, and a note for which Lawrence had stood security. Lawrence drags out a hopeless battle for life, and the feelings of the family on receiving the news of his death are displayed with vivid sentimentality. Another chapter is devoted to the death-bed scene of the mother. The dying words of the mother express a firm belief in the Lord who has been better to them than they deserved,

and she admonishes the children to put their trust in Him.

The heroine of the book turns out to be Edith, the second daughter. She makes a vain appeal to the honor of the friend who robbed them of their life savings. He tricks her with a promise to pay in full on a certain day- and sails for Europe the day before. Edith thinks that her older sister is in love with her own heart's choice, until the matter is cleared by Zilpah's marriage to the wealthy scion of a great family.

Fortune begins to smile upon the three unmarried daughters, for their Scottish uncle, "The Fighting Laird of Newton", leaves them a legacy. The novel closes with a declaration of love by the man Edith adores. A rather mild expression of love, couched in high flown terms, but enough to win the consent of Edith, and her wish that the dying words of her mother should be inscribed in their wedding ring.

One may feel no surprise that Margaret was unwilling for her name to be used in connection with the publication of the novel. This hesitancy seems to have been the fear that her name, rather than the merits of the book, would lead to its sale. She was at the time fairly well known as a writer of verse, so she turned down the offer of the publisher of two hundred dollars more for the manuscript (1) if she would allow it printed under her name.

Silverwood was hardly noticed by the public, and Margaret

said she was satisfied with the judgement of the unprejudiced public:

If it had deserved immortality it would not have died, she would say, adding half playfully, half mournfully, "it was a very gentle death. (2)

Her purpose in writing the book was:

To embalm the characters of dear Mother, Ellie, and brother Joe. (3)

Margaret makes several attempts to picture the Negroes about the place. In one of these the little colored boy, Homer, is sent with the older ducky to catch some chickens:

Homer was sent to help Uncle Felix catch a pair of ducks and a turkey to add to the roast that was to have sufficed for dinner; but after running himself out of breath, he came back unsuccessfully, with Fidele at his heels, declaring "dat dar dog wan't no 'count, nohow; he jes' skeert de things; dat's all; an' Uncle Felix, he so stiff, he say, since he have de rheumatis, he's done good for nothin' for runnin'."

"Why don't you scatter some corn," asked Edith, "and coax them to you in that way, and then make a dash at some of them? Run and get some in your hat."

"Ar'n't got no crown in it, Miss Edith."

Homer scampered off with Silvy and Fidele and Uncle Felix to help him, and in a little while returned with a duck under one arm and a chicken under the other.

"Sure nuff, Miss Edith, here dey be!"

"But they don't match, Homer."

"Dey's both got a blind eye-see." (4)

The second attempt at publishing was not made for some years. During the War Between the States Mrs. Preston wrote her only long epic poem, "Beechenbrook, a Rhyme of the War." This was published in Richmond during the conflict, but only fifty of the thousand copies escaped a fire which destroyed

2..Ibid.

3..Ibid pg 85, quoting letter of Margaret to Rebecca Glasgow.

4..Silverwood, pp. 319-20

(5)

the publishing house. In 1866 it was reprinted by Kelley and Piet of Baltimore, so that there was a lapse of ten years between the first and second published volumes of her works.

The setting of the poem is the cottage in the south, "Beechenbrook" from which the husband and sons have gone forth to war. The story deals largely with the emotions of the mother on receiving news of her husband's death in battle and the return of the sons, wounded, or like the heroes of old, borne on their shield. Mrs. Preston drew a great deal of the poem from her own experiences, and those of her friends in Lexington. There was hardly a family in the village which did not have the horror of the struggle brought home to them with pitiless terror as they waited for the news of each battle fearing that the victory would be bought with the life of a son or husband. Mrs. Preston's diary for May 10, 1862 carries the same burden that she expresses for Alice Dunbar the mother in the poem:

Oh, this heart crushing suspense. No news from the scene of the battle, except the report that Major Ross is among the killed...Oh, my husband, could I but know he was safe. I wonder at myself that I do not lose my senses. (6)

In the poem she imagines her own feelings if the fatal news came: The soldier delivers a letter to Alice Dunbar.

Her ashy lips move, but the words do not come,
And she stands in her whiteness, bewildered and dumb:
She turns to the letter with hopeless appeal,
But her fingers are helpless to loosen the seal:
She lifts her dim eyes with a look of despair,-
Her hands for a moment are folded in prayer;
The strength she has sought is vouchsafed in her need.

He lives and he breathes yet:- the surgeons declare
That the balance is trembling 'twixt hope and despair
In the blanket he lies, on the hospital floor,
And here as I write, on his face I can see
An expression whose radiance is startling to me.
His faith is sublime:- he relinquishes life,
And craves but one blessing,- to look on his wife.

The Chaplain's recital is ended: no word
From Alice's white, breathless lips has been heard;
Till, rousing herself from her passionless woe,
She simply and quietly says- "I will go." (7)

From the above one can easily understand the feeling
which led her to dedicate the poem to:

Every Southern Woman, who has been widowed by the war,
I dedicate this rhyme, published during the process
of the struggle and now re-produced- as a faint
memorial of sufferings, of which there can be no
forgetfulness. M.J.P. (8)

A reading of the poem brings to one the feeling that he is riding a horse at full gallop through constantly shifting scenes. Perhaps it was her desire thus to suggest the actual emotion of the women of the South who were borne from one experience to another without sufficient time to weep for their dead ~~in~~ or to realize that acts of heroism could not bring success to their cause. One is struck with the fact that the writer has found her materials for the work out of her own experience, and that the feelings which are portrayed have been taken out of the heart of the poetess. She no longer describes the despair of a girl lost in the Wyoming woods, or the defeat in the minds of young Sciote returning to his home on distant shores; she has discovered the people of the South as a source of literature. Yet one feels that while she has made a step in the right direction

she has not escaped her old moorings. In the midst of the poem she places a lyric, picturing the heroism of a private in the Confederate army, who expresses a thought which is equally as true of the youth in any daring cause.

"only a private:- and who will care
When I may pass away,-
Or how, or why I perish, or where
I mix with the common clay ?
They will fill my empty place again,
With another as bold and brave;
And they'll blot me out, ere the Autumn rain
Has freshened my nameless grave.

Only a private:- it matters not,
That I did my duty well;
That all through a score of battles I fought,
And then, like a soldier, fell;
The country I died for,- never will heed
My unrequited claim;
And history cannot record the deed,
For she never has asked my name.

Only a private;- and yet I know,
When I heard the rallying call,
I was one of the very first to go,
And.....I'm one of the many who fall;
But, as here I lie, tis sweet to feel,
That my honor's without a stain;-
That I only fought for my Country's weal,
And not for glory or gain.

Only a private;- yet He who reads
Through the guises of the heart,
Looks not on the splendor of the deeds,
But the way we do our part;
And when He shall take us by the hand,
And our small service own,
There'll a glorious band of privates stand
As victors round the throne." (9)

Farther in the book one finds the personal note again in a sonnet to Virginia, in which Margaret grasps the native element in a more distinctive manner:

Grandly thou fillest the world's eye today,
My proud Virginia ! When the gage was thrown-
The deadly gage of battle- thou alone,

Strong in thy self-control, didst stoop to lay
The olive branch thereon, and calmly pray
"e might have peace the rather. When the foe
Turned scornfully upon thee,- bade thee go,
And whistle up his war-hounds, then-the way
Of duty full before thee,- thou didst spring
Into the center of the martial ring-
Thy brave blood boiling, and thy glorious eye,
Shot with heroic fire, and swear to claim
Sublimest victory in God's own name,-
Or, wrapped in robes of martyrdom,- to die ! (10)

Four years later in 1870 Mrs. Preston published her
third volume, a collection of verse, which she called
Old Song and New. The book was not received with any
enthusiasm by the people of her own state, and was utterly
ignored by the press of the state though welcomed elsewhere.

I don't think three lines were ever printed in
Virginia in notice of Old Song and New, not
exclading our local paper in Lexington. (11)

The reason for this neglect is certainly not the quality of
the verse, for similar works from her pen had been welcomed
by magazine publishers, and her book five years later was
sold out in the first edition and a second published.

One reason was undoubtedly the poorness of the people who
were still feeling the effect of the war's destruction.

Colonel Preston himself will serve as a picture of this:

My husband, who has never known what it was to have
pecunairy difficulties, always having as much as he
wanted for his unambitious way of living, now shares
the general troubles. Through shrinkages, and
failures, and what not, miserable delinquencies of
the part of debtors, his income has quite failed for
a couple of years. The property that was always to
yield a comfortable income of \$4,000 a year, this
past year costs him \$700 out of pocket, and brings
in of course not a cent. He sold a piece of
property the other day to pay other peoples war debts,
every cent of the proceeds being dropped into that hole (12)

10..Idem. pg. 76

11..Letter of Margaret J. Preston to P.H.Hayne, Jan.19,1872

12..Idem. March 1, 1878

Mrs. Preston herself did not feel that the poverty of the state was the main reason for the neglect of her works. In a letter to Paul Hamilton Hayne she intimates that the indifference to literature produced in the South, and the feeling that no good thing could come out of the South, was the reason for the lack of a reading public.

I utterly despair of the Southern editors lending the aid of their little finger to the advancement of home literature. Even Mr. Hand Browne, does not, and will not do it. I have been trying recently to help into circulation Miss McGill's novels, and could not persuade one Richmond editor to lend me a column in which to do it. There is not one column in our State open to literature, or literary criticism, except my friend Gordon McCabe of Petersburg. (13)

Another letter of hers to Hayne further suggests that the neglect was not due to any dislike for her works:

In writing for Barron Hopes' paper, I did not attempt criticism in the proper sense- only wanted to let Virginians know how Mr. Hayne is regarded elsewhere. And to show them that in being ignorant of legends and lyrics, they are behind the age. (14)

Hayne was not so mild in his expression:

Let me frankly confess that what you have communicated to me in regard to the stolid apathy of the Virginia public, and the Virginia press has surprised me. What! but one or two notices of Old Song and New in all the vast compass of the Old Dominion! The fact is simply disgraceful and it disgusts a person to think of it. After all dear friend, is it not too mournfully true, that our thrice unfortunate section of people owe much of their present humiliation, misery, and slavish bondage, to their own short-sighted policy and wretched materialism in the past? They despised art, imagination, literature, discouraged every native aspirant after these things, and partly through literature (think of Uncle Tom's Cabin) the death blow to their national

13..Idem. January 19, 1872

14..Idem. April 3, 1872

li life and fame was given. And they are people who never learn, never take warning from past errors. So they seem to be to mee doomed. "Ephriam hath turned to his idols. Let him alone." (15)

Old Song and New is divided into five parts, according to the nature of the subject matter. It opens with stories from the Old Testament, then from the Greeks, a collection of ballads and verse, a group of sonnets, and closes with verses dealing with stories from the New Testament.

In the stories from the Old Testament she chose incidents ~~are~~ little known to any but a fair student of the Bible. One of the more familiar subjects is the story of Jephthah offering his daughter in sacrifice. The poem is called, "The Daughter of the Gileadite," and begins with the leaders of Israel deciding to call home Jephthah whom they have banished. It pictures the eagerness of the young warrior when he receives the summons home, and his eagerness to redeem his name by saving the nation which has mistreated him.

The army is assembled and greets its new general with wild enthusiasm. The battle of the morrow will free their land from the yoke of the invader who ravages their country. Before the battle the host is assembled to sacrifice to the Lord. The sacrifice is regarded partly as a petition for success in battle and partly as a lucky omen which will bring disaster if it is omitted. It makes a strong appeal to the imagination of the soldiers and increases their confidence in the new leader. Under the influence of the mounting enthusiasm, Jephthah takes the fatal vow:

15..Letter of P.H.Hayne to M.J.Preston, January 24, 1872.

If Thou deliver our enemies
Up to my sword till they be destroyed,
Even to the uttermost,- then shall it be
That whatsoever cometh from my doors
To meet me, when I do return in peace,
Shall be a whole burnt offering to the Lord. (16)

Success comes to the army, city after city is taken. The joy of the land is shown indirectly by its effect upon the old men within whose memory there has been no happy years:

And hearts that scarce had ever known a joy,
Lifted, as lifts the heavy-headed grain
At tidings of the coming of the wind.
The ancient men for whom all hope had ashened
Into the piteousness of gray despair
That nursed no ember of better days to be,-
Through gladness rent their garments. (17)

There are sixty three poems in the volume which are not listed as dealing with Greek or Bible history, and of these only two can be said to deal with subjects near at hand. One of these is, "The Color Bearer," which is evidently a story of the recent war. In the charge the color bearer is shot down; the colors are grasped by the youngest member of the company who lifts the head of the fallen comrade to see who it was. Discovering it is his brother he pauses amid the bursting shells long enough to dream of his bereaved mother whose heart will break with the news of her loss. The captain rouses him from his reverie, and there breaks from his lips the heroic forgetfulness of mother, brother, and self:

God help me sir, I'll bear this flag
To victory, or to death. (18)

He resumes the charge, leads the men in a desperate rally,

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- 16..Old Song and New, Margaret J. Preston, pg. 29
17..Idem. pg. 29-30
18..Idem. pg. 145

falls with a shattered arm, discovering it is merely his left he lifts the colors with his good right arm and continues the charge until he is shot down. After the battle they are unable to release the colors from his grasp.

The other poem which hints at a local setting is the "Complaint of Santa Claus" This describes the old man as feeling that he must be getting old because the children have become too sophisticated to believe in him any longer.

My frolicsome boys and girls

Have grown so knowing they dare to say-
These Protestants wise and small-
That all saints deceive, and they don't believe
In a Santa Claus at all.

Ah me! 'Tis a fateful sound to hear;
'Tis gall in my wassail cup;
The darlings I've spoiled, so wrought for and toiled
The children have given me up.

My heart is broken;- I'll break my pipe,
And my tinkling team may go,
And bury my sledge on the trackless edge
Of a Lapland waste of snow.

My useless pack I will fling away,
And in Germany's forests hoar,
From the icy steep I will plunge leagues deep,
And never be heard of more. (19)

If there had been any doubt in the minds of Mrs. Preston's readers as to ~~the~~ her ideal of beauty, it must have been dispelled by the appearance of her next volume, Cartoons, in 1875. The whole first half of the book is devoted to poems of the far distant past. These she entitles, "From the Lives of the Old Masters." In this section of the book she adopts the ruse of Robert Browning of making her

characters reveal themselves through their speech. Most of these are dramatic monologues, but the opening poem is a dialogue between Leonardo da Vinci and Francesco Giacomo. Leonardo is painting the portrait of his wife, Mona Liza; and the four years delay in completing it irks the husband who is eager to have it for a festival and judges that it is actually finished. Leonardo reveals his artistic aims:

Done? Nothing that my pencil ever touches i
Is wholly done. There's some evasive grace
Always beyond, which still I fail to reach,
As heretofore, I've failed to hold and fix
Your Mona Lisa's changeful loveliness.
Why think of it my lord. Here's Nature's self
Has patient wrought these two-and-twenty years,
With subtlest transmutations, making her
Your pride, the pride of Florence and- my despair. (20)

Ay, have it,- have it, an you will
In season for your guests, betwixt their cups,
To sum its lack. I marvel you should fail
To note its incompleteness! Why this flesh
Would pulsate else; this lash betray a dropp
Under full gaze- these pearls would ebb and flow
With every rippling lapse of tided breath,
Astrand on the white beaching of her throat !
But have the panel filled (if that's the point),
And barter, for one night's fresh novelty,
An immortality of loveliness
For Mona Lisa; since, once carried hence,
My brush shall never touch the canvas more. (21)

In a different vein is "The Legend of the Woodpecker"
a Norwegian tradition:

O'er the firewood trencher the housewife bent,
With bare arms kneading the barley bread:
And her eyes to the path oft wandering went,
That down to the Fiord led.

"He is late: no boat in the offing yet;
My loaf will be brown as a pine-tree cone,"
She muttered with peevish fume and fret,
As she heated the baking-stone.

Anon at the door a knock was heard;
And out in the gloaming clear and keen,
In well-worn mantle of lynx-skin furred,
Was a shivering traveler seen.

Outstretching his frost-pinched palm, he spake
"For the love of God, a bit of dough,
Now lay on the hearth for me and bake,"
And ashamed to say him No

A miserly morsel the kneader chose,
And as in her hand it moulded lay,
A-sudden it spread, and swelled, and rose,
Till it covered the kneading tray.

Nay- here is too much:" and she rolled a piece
Like a curlew's egg: but, as quick as thought,
It overran with its strange increase
The table on which she wrought.

"See ! This will suffice!" she cried, and then,
Choosing what lightly an acorn cup
Might carry, she shaped it: lo, again
It grew to an amful up.

"Beshrew thee!" she flashed, and her cheek waxed bright
As her crimson cap: "Nor great, nor small
Be any the loaf bestowed tonight,
My Oldsen and I keep all!"

Then sternly the wayfarer chode: "Even though
Thou hadst more than uttermost need sufficed,
No crumb hath thy greed to give: Now know
The beggar who pleads is- Christ

"To the doom decreed thee thenceforth hark:
Thy food, as a bird (from thy kind accurst),
Thou shalt painfully seek 'twixt wood and bark,
And save when it rains, shalt thirst." (22)

The second part of Cartoons is entitled "From the Life
of Today." If anyone imagined this to be a collection of
Southern poems redolent with the atmosphere of the pines,
magnolia, and rhododendron, ^{he} ~~they~~ ^{was} ~~were~~ speedily disillusioned.

Of these stories, five of the first six deal with events in Europe: "The Hero of the Commune," "In an Eastern Bazaar" "Alpenglow," "Rossel," "A Soliloquy in the Vatican," Only four in the section deal with themes gathered from the lives of the people among whom she lived. These four deal with the final words, or the memories of four men intimately connected with the life of Virginia.

The first of these, "Gone Foreward," was written to commemorate the final words of General Robert E. Lee, "Foreward! Let the tent be struck!" Mrs. Preston wrote to Paul Hamilton Hayne that the last act of the General was to call on Colonel Preston:

The last time he was out was to call and see Col. Preston who had been accidentally wounded slightly when hunting." (23)

Yes, "Let the tent be struck:" Victorious morning
Through every crevice flashes in a day
Magnificent beyond all earth's adorning:
The night is over; wherefore should he stay?
And wherefore should our voices choke to say,
"The General has gone foreward"?

Life's foughten field not once beheld surrender;
But with superb endurance, present, past,
Our pure Commander, lofty, simple, tender,
Through good, through ill, held his high purpose fast,
Wearing his armor spotless- till at last,
Death gave the final, "Foreward."

All hearts grew sudden palsied: Yet what said he
Thus summoned? "Let the tent be struck!" For when
Did call of duty fail to find him ready
Nobly to do his work in sight of men,
For God's and for his country's sake- and then,
To watch, wait, or go foreward? (24)

Another of the poems dealing with Southern themes commemorates the final words of her brother-in-law

23..Letter of M.J.Preston to P.H.Hayne, November 2, 1870
24..Cartoons, Margaret J. Preston, pg. 180-81

General Thomas J. (Stonewall) Jackson, "Let us pass over the river and rest under the shade of the trees." (25)

Another of these poems, "Through the Pass," has been much quoted, and embodies the final request of Commodore Matthew Fontaine Maury that after his death the body should be borne through Goshen Pass, near Lexington, while the rhododendron was in full bloom.

"Home- bear me home at last," he said,
"And lay me where my dead are lying,
But not while skies are overspread,
And mournful wintry winds are sighing.

"Wait till the royal march of Spring
Carpets your mountain fastness over,-
Till chattering birds are on the wing,
And buzzing bees are in the clover.

"Wait till the laurel bursts its buds,
And creeping ivy flings its graces
About the lichen'd rocks, and floods
Of sunshine fill the shady places.

"Then when the sky, the air, the grass,
Sweet nature all, is glad and tender,
Then bear me through 'The Goshen Pass'
Amid its flush of May-day splendor." (26)

After one has waded through poem after poem associated with far away names and places, one turns with eagerness to Mrs. Prestons next volume of verse, Colonial Ballads published in 1887. The eight years immediately preceding its publication have been termed "The Era of Southern Themes and Writers." (26A) During this time Irwin Russell of Mississippi had opened the new province to American Literature with his skillful delineation of the Negro. Joel Chandler Harris had made his Uncle Remus the only Negro character in literature.

25..Idem. pg. 182

26..Idem. pp. 189-90

26A - AMERICAN LITERATURE SINCE 1870, F.H. Potter, pg 294

Miss Murfree, better known as Charles Egbert Craddock had begun her sketches of the illiterate people in the mountains of Tennessee. It was the day in which writers turned to the Negro, the man of the mountains, the Creoles, the moonshiners, and the "Georgia Crackers," as the romantic element in the life of the South. One turns to the "Colonial Ballads" of Mrs. Preston with some eagerness to discover her contribution to Southern literature.

The opening poem is "The Mystery of Croatan", based on the incident which has fired the imagination of all lovers of history: the fate of Virginia Dare, the first English child born on American soil. The setting of the poem is the return of the ships to England with the promise they will return in the spring. The people rebel at being left, saying they will starve before May:

Sir Richard lossed his helm, and stretched
Impatient hands abroad:
"Have ye no trust in man?" he cried
"Have ye no faith in God?"

"Your Governor goes as needs he must,
To bear through royal grace,
Hither, such food-supply, that want
May never blench a face.

"Of freest choice ye willed to leave
What so ye had of ease;
For neither stress of ledge or law
Hath forced you over seas.

"Your governor }eaves fair hostages
As costliest pledge of care-
His daughter yonder, and her child,
The child Virginia Dare. (27)

One can quickly see that this is not going to be a poem solving the "Mystery of Croatan", nor is it to contribute

any new thing to the era of Southern themes. While it selects a subject near at hand, it imparts to that subject nothing which would distinguish it from her poem on the early life of Albrecht Durer:

Nay father, 'tis weary day by day
In stones and in metals to work away
At the goldsmith's tiresome trade"

A 'tiresome trade!' I'd have thee know
That silver and gold are precious things
And the gems we cut are gems for kings
To wear in their crowns-

"But Father, hear
Thou ever hast been so kind and dear
That now I am bold to ask what yet
I never ventured- that thou wouldst let
Me follow my bent; for I would paint
Pictures of many and many a saint
For the shrines where people kneel; and when
I come to be famous, father, then
Thy heart will flutter with inward joy
To think that the painter is thy boy. (28)

In neither of these does there appear a touch that is native to the two places so far removed. With the shift of titles, one might suppose that the poem might be the "Mystery of Croatan" and the crowns made for the Indians. Clearly the literature of the New South failed to make its impression upon the mind of Mrs. Preston.

CHAPTER

A PROMOTER OF SOUTHERN LITERATURE

For anyone to rightly understand Southern Literature it is necessary to keep in mind a seemingly trivial fact. That fact is that in the year 1830, which brought to light the New England School of poets, there occurred in the Senate the famous debate between Daniel Webster and Robert Hayne of South Carolina. The substance of that debate may be expressed in the words of Webster:

I understand the honorable gentlemen from South Carolina to maintain, that it is the right of the State Legislatures to interfere, whenever, in their judgement, this government transcends its constitutional rights, and to arrest the operation of its laws. (1)

The figure of Robert Hayne supporting the doctrine of States Rights is symbolic of the whole South whose obsession with that doctrine was voiced on the portico of every plantation home, and absorbed the thought and energies of the Southern people until the question of slavery furnished the test case. Commenting on this period in the life of the Old South, Thomas Nelson Page says:

There was sufficient poetry and wisdom delivered on the porticos and in the halls of the Southern people

1..Webster's Reply to Hayne, January 26, 1830
Congressional Record,

to have enriched the age, had it been transmitted into permanent form; but wanting both the means and the inclination to put it into abiding form, they were wasted in discourse, or were spent in mere debate. (2)

This condition led another to declare:

The chief product of the South was character, and the South was really articulate only in oratory. (3)

That this oratory was not mere "country-store philosophy" may be inferred from the fact that the South was concerned that her young men should have a good education. We have already mentioned that in the little village of Lexington there were maintained at the same time seven schools, at least three of which would today merit the titles of institutions of higher learning. ~~Henry~~ C. Alphonso Smith in his Southern Literary Studies says:

Joseph LeConte, the great geologist, in his recent autobiography, relates that he learned from the lips of a South Carolina planter his first lessons in evolution long before Darwin had published his first work. (4)

From the above description of the oratorical South it is not a far jump to the sentiments of man quoted by Philip Pendleton Cooke in a letter:

What do you think of a friend of mine, a most valuable and worthy, and hard-riding one, saying gravely to me a short time ago- "I wouldn't waste my time on a d-----d thing like poetry. You might make yourself with all your sense and judgement, a useful man in settling neighborhood disputes and difficulties." (5)

- 2..The Old South, Thomas Nelson Page, pg. 64
- 3..Classic Americans, H. S. Canby, pg. 303
- 4..Southern Literary Studies, C. A. Smith, pg. 54
- 5..Idem. quoting letter of Cooke, pg. 50.

The Southern Literary Messenger in 1839 complained that the people of the South were utterly indifferent to literary works of any kind, and felt that works of value were ignored completely. ^{They assert} That this attitude has developed within the recent past, and is in direct contrast to the respect formerly paid to anyone who wrote:

Thirty years ago it was an easy task in our country to make a poetical reputation. A few metrical compositions thrown together into a thin misshapen volume were quite sufficient to form a halo, or weave a garland, for the brows of any infatuated young person, who like Gray's "moping owl", took solitary satisfaction in complaining to the moon. (6)

Much of the **S**outhern indifference to literature may be attributed to that symbolic figure of Hayne defending the theory of states rights. That momentous debate on the floor of the Senate was the opening cannon of a struggle that was to end only on the field of Appomattox. In the struggle the South was more and more thrown upon her own resources, and cut off from outside influences. In the defense of her industrial system, built on slavery, the most useful weapons were oratory and statesmanship, and perforce literature was driven into the background. There were other reasons for this neglect. They are perhaps best summed up as:

1..The people of the South were an agricultural people, widely diffused, and lacking the stimulus of immediate mental contact.

2..The absence of cities, which in the history of literary life have proved literary foci essential for its production, and the want of publishing houses in the South.

3..The absence of a reading public in the South for American authors, due in part to the conservatism of the Southern people. (7)

This absence of interest in things pertaining to literature does not mean that there were not many people in the South who sponsored the cause of writing. There were also several magazines specializing in the writings of Southern people. The earliest of these magazines was the Southern Literary Messenger, established in August 1834. The avowed purpose of the paper to stimulate the art of writing is expressed in the first issue.

In issuing the first number of the Southern Literary Messenger the publisher hopes to be excused for inserting a few passages from the letters of several eminent literary men, which he has had the pleasure to receive, approving in very flattering terms the proposed publication. Whilst the sentiments contained in these extracts illustrate the generous and enlightened spirit of their authors, they ought to stimulate the pride and genius of the South, and awaken from its long slumber the literary exertions of this part of the country. The publisher confidently believes that such will be the effect. (8)

It is understood that the first number of the Messenger will be sent forth by the publisher as a kind of pioneer, to spy out the land of promise and to report whether the same be fruitful or barren before he resolves upon future action. It would be a mortifying discovery if instead of kindness and goodwill he should be repulsed by the coldness and neglect of a Virginia public. Hundreds of such productions thrive and prosper north of the Potomac,shall not one be supported by the whole South? (9)

The patriotic example of the Messenger was followed by other groups. Several magazines were established in the South in the years immediately preceding the War Between

- 7..The Old South, Thos. N. Page, pg. 59
8..Southern Literary Messenger, Vol. I. Pg. 1
9..Idem. pg. 1-2

the States. One of these was Russell's Magazine, started in Charleston South Carolina, and edited by Paul Hamilton Hayne, from its first number in April 1857 until its ^{final issue} ~~death~~ in 1860. One is struck by the intensity of the Southern note in the first number of this magazine:

We offer the public with this our first number another depository for Southern genius, and a new incentive, as we hope for its existence. We ask your aid for the establishment of one more (magazine) for southern opinion and Southern feeling. They can find no expression abroad. They have few opportunities at home. A few years ago Sydney Smith sneered at American Literature. The North was indignant- But now the North has turned sneerer and sneers at Southern Literature. Our turn may come next, who knows? Every dog has his day. If the currish luck of the North flourishes now, the canine luck of the South may prosper at some future period. (10)

There were many other periodicals in the South devoted to the cause of Southern letters. Some of these survived the War. All of them eeked out a precarious existence because of the indifference of the people to literature in general. Russell's Magazine seems to speak for them all when, only after a years existence, they attack the attitude of the people whom they desire to serve:

It is mournful, desolating apathy that we deplore- that wretched listlessness, without discontent, as without will, that leaves the mind and genius of a people in complete abeyance:

Like that fat weed

That hugs itself at ease beside Lethe's wharf
That not only knows nothing, but seeks nothing from hope, adventure, art, or enterprise; that sluggishly droops beside the morass, and asks no higher privilege from fate than the frequent wallow at once in the sunshine and the bog. (11)

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- 10..Russell's Magazine, Vol. I, pg. 83
11..Idem. Vol III, No. 3, pg.

These magazines make no definite statement as to the nature of the literature which they wish to promote, other than it shall be Southern. By inference we gather that their definition of Southern would be articles by people living in the South, at least this would seem to be the attitude of Russell's, when they take exception to an article appearing in The Southern Citizen of Knoxville, Tennessee, which is edited by John Mitchell. They quote a section of the article with evident disgust at such sentiments:

All American Literature up to the present time, in tone, spirit, body, heart and soul is British. Bancroft and Prescott write our histories with English pens and in an English accent. Longfellow's poems may be on American subjects in original meter, but they are adorned with English sentiments, and modes of thought. It is all an echo- heresay. There is no American Literature. (12)

The efforts of the magazines to promote writing in the South ended with the War. Even the Southern Literary Messenger was forced out of issue a year before the end of the struggle.

Margaret Junkin Preston seems not to have been actively associated with this attempt to spur the Southern pen into activity. There are records of her writing poems for these magazines at the request of the publishers; but there does not appear any great ambition on her part to promote literature in the South until after the struggle had been over for several years. Perhaps the year 1868 may be pointed out as the origin of her desire to sponsor the

embryonic literature of the Southern states. In this year began her friendship with Paul Hamilton Hayne of Georgia, who, out of admiration for her verse, wrote to her commending her, "genius and lofty patriotism." (13) This was the beginning of a literary friendship which lasted for eighteen years, until Hayne's death. They never met, but felt themselves allies in a common cause- that of stirring the people of the South to an appreciation of literature.

Mrs. Preston felt that she was heavily handicapped by her weak eyes, and the multitudinous household burdens which she felt it her duty to perform.

From my earliest years I have had only a limited use of my eyes. Overstudy and an excessive devotion to drawing strained my optic nerve, or muscles, in my young days, and there were ten years of my life during which I never read a single volume. Within three or four years I have been able to use my eyes again pretty freely in the daytime. Beechenbrook I wrote in the dark, literally, at night without a candle, for then I was unable to even write a letter without suffering. (14)

A letter from Hayne to her gives a fair picture of the tasks developing upon her as the hostess of a hospitable Southern home:

I must express my surprise at the overwhelming tide of visitors from Richmond, and the lower counties of Virginia, that rush as you tell me, to the Valley, and remain there in the lap of plenty and friendship until the advance of the frost. Seven, eight, ten, and on one occasion I think you informed fifteen guests were staying in your house at the same period.(15)

Rhyme and raisins, poetry and puddings, aesthetics in the brain, and eatables on the board. Ye gods of Olympus, what a conjunction of heavenly planets, scintillating light, and earthly sirloins steaming with an odorous haze, I "figure you to myself", as

- 13..Letter of P.H.Hayne to Mrs. Preston, December 31, 1867.
- 14..Letter of Margaret J. Preston to Hayne, February 29, 1872
- 15..Letter of P.H.Hayne to Mrs. Preston January 16, 1873

the French say, flitting from the pantry to the drawing room, from the kitchen (for I am sure you disdain not the kitchen) to the entrance hall, or the dining room. I presume your powers of mental concentration, or rather abstraction, are very great. (16)

That Mrs. Preston did not consider her task one requiring all of her time and attention is plain from the letters she wrote to Hayne in the first years of their collaboration:

I smile to myself many a time on reading the letters of literary correspondents who seem to imagine that my days are devoted to literary pursuits, and that the stylus is my appropriate symbol.....But I am not going to run a tilt, with Susan Anthony as my compeer against the existing order of things. I scorn to see a woman, who confesses to even very positive literary proclivities, turn with contempt from, or neglect the proper performance of a simple woman's household duties. Let them come first, by all her love for husband and children; by all her self respect; and if a margin of time is left, then she may scribble that over, to her hearts relief. (17)

With such an ambitious program of household tasks to be performed, one wonders what one woman with over-strained eyesight may be able to do in aiding the cause of Southern letters. We may consider the task of writing several volumes of verse an accomplishment in itself for one who places first her duty as mother and wife- and hostess to the multitude of visitors from "Richmond and the lower counties of Virginia."

In addition to continuing her quota of verse for the struggling magazines of the South, she began to publish reviews of books which she felt would be helpful to the young literatti of the land. In this she seems to have had a double purpose, of stimulating young writers, and also of

16;;Letter of P.H.Hayne to M.J.Preston, July 25, 1870
17..Letter of M.J.Preston to P.H.Hayne, July 11, 1869

promoting a reading public which would furnish a market
the works of
for/those who wrote. It appears that she placed the
more emphasis upon this latter part of her task. It is
a generally accepted fact that the South had never been
a fertile field for the sale of books. We have already
mentioned in this chapter the heroic efforts of patriotic
publishers to maintain a distinctly Southern magazine, and
their dismal failures. Therefore it was no small task that
Mrs. Preston undertook.

Considering her blindness and the various tasks of the
home, it would have been surprising if she had read many
books. To assume the task of reviewing under such conditions
bespeaks an intense loyalty to her cause. Nor were these
reviews prepared for only one or two magazines. In a letter
to Hayne she mentions having sent a review of his poems to
several magazines, and is preparing reviews for others. (18)
In another letter to him she estimates her yearly output of
letters at four hundred. (19) In a scrapbook of hers we find
published reviews of two hundred twenty two books, clipped
from ten periodicals. (20) None of these were written before
1878, so that there must have been nearly as many more
in the ten years between this date ~~at~~ and her first intimation
of undertaking the task.

The New Eclectic Magazine for February 1870 carries a
review by her of, Henry Croft Robinson's Diary and Reminiscences

- 18..Letter of M.J.Preston to P.H.Hayne, January 20, 1873
- 19..Idem. April 10, 1877.
- 20..Scrapbook, Margaret. J. Preston, W. and L. Library

although the issue for November 1869 had carried another notice of the same book. She does not feel that the first review did justice to the worth of the book and therefore submitted the second which was published.

As we conceive the reading of this book to be provocative of literary culture in the broadest sense and as we believe it calculated to stimulate a desire for more intimate acquaintance with the hundreds of writers and books mentioned in its pages; therefore is it for the sake of the Southern people who may need just this species of stimulus, we propose such dippings into these volumes as will incite the multitude of intelligent and cultured readers of the New Eclectic, to add this book to the shelves of their libraries. (21)

In the attempt to whet the appetites of these readers she give excerpts from, and incidents about the writings of Wordsworth, Scott, Southey, Lamb, Coleridge, Blake, Arnold, Wieland, Schiller, Goethe, Herder, Paulos, and Schlegel. (22)

By May of the same year she has broadened her prospectus so that she reviews not ~~alone~~^{only} for the sake of the thoughtful reader, but also for the sake of the young ladies who may wish to write attractive letters. The review is of the Life of Mary Russell Mitford, and in speaking of her letters she says:

We recommend them as models of graceful style to our young American ladies; they will do them more good than volumes of Madam de Sevigne. (23)

In case she may have caught the attention of any of these American belles, she adds a great deal of information contained in this life about Robert and Elizabeth Browning,

21..The New Eclectic, February 1870, pg. 221 Vol. VII

22..Ibid.

23..Idem. May 1870, Vol. VII pg. 515

and Alfred Tennyson.

Her judgement in the matter of books seems to have been highly respected by the publishers of the magazines.

William Hand Browne, editor of the Southern Magazine, writes to P. H. Hayne, who had asked him to write a review of Hayne's Legends and Lyrics:

I received yesterday a very sympathetic, appreciative, and full review of the book from Mrs. Preston. It is probably even more strongly worded than I am able (with the same feelings) to write. Would you not be as well pleased with this as with anything from my pen? Mrs. Preston is amply qualified to judge; her remarks evince judgement as well as feeling; and probably her name would carry greater weight than my own. (24)

There were other difficulties, besides the intellectual inertia of the South, against which Mrs. Preston had to struggle in arousing a reading public. The people of the land felt that they were barely able to accumulate enough money to buy bread and meat, without spending money on literature:

It is a truth that I supply almost all Lexington with books and magazines. Nobody thinks of buying, and it is necessary to keep a list as in a circulating library. One is such on a small scale. (25)

In addition to the poverty of the people, there was the poverty of the magazines which could not pay for the book reviews, thus forcing her to continue her work solely as a labor of love. In a letter to Hayne she complains about the lack of appreciation of the work of the reviewer, and received the reply:

You say "By the way it seems remarkable that this thing of criticism should go so wholly unrewarded",

24..Letter of Wm. Hand Brown to P.H.Hayne, February 6, 1872.

25..Letter of M.J.Preston to P.H.Hayne, July 29, 1878

and you ask my own experience in the matter, and my plan of reviewing books. Like yourself I have very seldom received any remuneration in money for book notices, and also like yourself I give away ~~many~~ a great many volumes after reviewing. Reviewing does not pay simply because the public is not interested in it. I review only ~~in~~ in order to procure books I could not purchase. (26)

Mrs. Preston did not confine her efforts to reviewing books and writing verse, for we find in her ^cscrapbook clippings from articles she had written on literature as a profession. One of these dated only by a reference to the fifteen-year effort of the South to recover from the War, discusses at some length the unwillingness of the Southerner to adopt letters as an honorable profession. Some of her remarks about the people of the land are caustic, but she backs them up with the citation of facts which force one to agree with her position. After citing history to prove that Virginia and South Carolina had the greatest cause to be proud of their ancestry, she continues:

There it is not a matter for ridicule, as it has come to be the fashion in some quarters to make it, that the early Virginia colonists who prided themselves on their good blood should have transmitted the feeling to their children: the absurdity is, for their descendants to satisfy themselves with the fact, and be content to "sup on past recollections."These settlers brought habits, traditions, and prejudices with them that rule their descendants in both these dominant states down to the present hour. They were largely drawn from classes to whom manual labor had never been a necessity, nor the making of their own daily bread a pressure and necessity. They found themselves in a land where light exertion secured independence. The climate was genial and imposed no heavy burdens on them, as on the inhabitants of the New England and Middle States.....A spirit of distaste for work was the natural result of this condition of things, and it too soon became an inheritance which descended as surely to the children of the colonists as did their estates won from the wilderness. We do not deny that a certain physical and mental

indolence thus induced has had a hurtful effect on the Southern character. When the goad of necessity is removed, when the incentive that leads men to aspire to the attainment of higher position is lacking, from the very fact that they are as high as they care to be, communities are not apt to trouble themselves with any sort of discipline that calls for exertion, restraint, and self-denial.

The predominant tastes of the South were, from the beginning English, and an Englishman is a rural animal to the very marrow of his bones. He endures cities, but his greed is to live on his own land; and if by good luck the possession of his fields can date back to the Norman thieves who landed at Hastings-whom as Emerson says, "it took a good many generations to trim, comb, and perfume into gentlemen"- so much greater the pride. What Englishman of means chooses to live in Liverpool, or Birmingham, or Manchester, or Sheffield? With this engrained tradition and prejudice, the first settlers of Virginia and Carolina, paid little attention to the building of towns and cities; and to this day all out-and-out Southerners have a smothered contempt for what they are pleased to call the vulgarity of towns. We know multitudes of planters who would feel stifled in a city, and who, as a mere matter of preference, would rather have their old wooden mansions, with their too often rickety verandas, than a four-story brown-stone front. To own plantations so large that the daily morning ride over them was a hearty's days exercise, was enough for the masters of the old regime: to have scores, or hundreds, of black ~~retainers~~ retainers, like feudal dependents around him, was sufficiently flattering to his self importance. To such men the narrow limits of town and city were nothing but dwarfing.

This mode of life, so free, so independent, so allied to nature, has disadvantages, from which the whole South suffers at this moment. It separated influential families; it imposed sparse population; it engendered a spirit of over-weening self content; it tended to a sentiment of hurtful exclusiveness; it interfered with public organizations for the general good; it kept large schools from being established; it discouraged the founding of colleges and universities and hospitals and asylums; it made against the creation of literary centers; it segregated the educated and literary men, and so rendered ineffective an influence which, if massed might have been powerful. "Why", the planter of forty years ago would ask, "why take upon ourselves the trouble and expense of founding universities when the North has Harvard and Yale and Nassau Hall to which we can send our sons, who are all the better for all this experience abroad?" For until the

slavery agitation took hold of the public mind, there was not the slightest objection to sending boys north for their education. Look over the old catalogues of Northern colleges, and the surprise will be to find how largely their students were from the Southern states. The same argument applied to literature. Even had the disposition and ability not been wanting, why should the easy-going South Carolinian, Georgian, or Virginian vex his ease with writing books, or printing magazines, or editing on any large scale dailt newspapers? The North had all the appliances at hand, and could do it better, and would do it anyway; and the idea of competition was a bother. He could not disturb his Epicurean calm by compiling even a spelling book; Noah Webster had done it. That would suffice. William and Mary could not be manned like Harvard, so why not be content with the former? Hampden Sidney could not compete with Princeton, so where's the use of worry? Cui bono? And so they sauntered on. (26)

It may seem a damaging admission, and one that smacks of rude old times, to say that it has been a widespread feeling among Southern people that the following of literature as a profession has been considered a trifle effeminate.

Mingling with affairs, or looking after his own cotton, rice, or tobacco fields, would leave him far wider margins for the cultivation of his strong social instincts, and add infinitely more to his pecuniary importance. And then, was it not in the eye of all around him, voted more manly?

"Measure goods behind a counter" the parents of some would certainly have said, "if you must, but leave the spinning of verses to girls, and the painting of pictures and the carrying of marbles to those effeminate people who have not thew and sinew for man's work."

It has been undeniable that to be a poet only, to be an artist and no more, to be a sculptor, a novelist or essayist, a mere producer of pleasure for other people, as a trade, has not seemed the highest aim of manhood to the contracted vision of the Southerner. (27)

After spending much time in this article in rebuking the South for their indolence, and their loyalty to the past, she suggests that the signs of an intellectual awakening are asserting themselves in a manner which promises much

for the future. She does not make any attempt to say when the revival of literature will come to the South, or what will be its nature. She is positive only on the matter of the sureness of its arrival:

A bright and attractive future then, we believe is about to open before those of us who may hereafter give themselves to letters. With the possession of genius, which nature has not made a matter of geography; with the full equipment which a thorough culture demands; with the priceless inheritance of the richest historic associations; with a marvelously picturesque past, whose local coloring is the fairest which this transatlantic land affords; with the material prosperity which in time must come; with our noble rivers, our unopened mines, our varied and delicate climates, our great world staples- cotton, tobacco, rice, and sugar; with the influx of new populations; with the stir and march and thunder of the times filling our ears; with the wealth and prosperity that must give our Southland its proper place among the great brotherhood of states,- what is there to hinder this wide vast South from taking its position as a leader in the world of letters, as the equal and peer of the North? That in the nature of things this time will speedily come, we surely do believe. (28)

Although Mrs. Preston does not state her own ideas as to the kind of writing that should be done to produce the much desired Southern literature, we are able to deduce its nature from her friendship with Paul Hamilton Hayne. Though these two friends never met, they carried on a frequent correspondence for eighteen years. Both of them realized in the other a kindred spirit longing for the South to assume her rightful place in the literary sunlight. From their letters which we have already quoted it is evident that the first requisite for this literature was that the writer should be from, and of, the Old South. Therefore

we hear so much about the culture of the land, the intellect of its people, and the traditions which hinder its young people from choosing literature as a profession.

The second requisite would appear to be, that they wrote in the customary manner to which the people had been accustomed. One might even say, that the aspirant was to devote himself to "polite literature for the gentle reader". No better illustration of this could be given than Mrs. Preston's own estimate of the position that Hayne himself should occupy in the estimation of the Southern people:

The place you deserve to have as the representative poet of the South- no, not the representative poet, for you represent an amount of culture for which the South is not prepared. I have always conceived your thought and its treatment to be above Southern comprehension- and that therefore the blatant crowd talked about Ryan and others as their poet; their poet because such and such an one wrote down to their popular comprehension. (29)

Your last letter gave me unfeigned pleasure from its length, the subjects of which it treated, and the glimpse of the inner domestic life of The Southern Poet- for I hold to it that you, above any other of our Southern litterateurs, deserve the name of Poet.(30)

In 1886 she writes to Mrs. Hayne:

I think no poet in America has ever received a greater number of ovations than your husband; the recognition of him as the Laureate of the South, and as the best nature poet in America, has been grudgingly delayed, but surely it has fully come at last. (31)

The verdict of history had sided against Mrs. Preston in her estimation of Paul Hamilton Hayne as the pure singer

29..Letter of M.J.Preston to P.H.Hayne, February 29, 1872.

30..Ibid. written before 1870, and quoted by E.P.Allen in Margaret Junkin Preston, pg. 252

31..Letter of M.J.Preston to Mrs. P.H.Hayne, June 24, 1886

of the New South. It has denied that Hayne has carved for himself as deep a niche in the halls of honor as Mrs. Preston allotted him, and instead has placed him with the old traditions of the South- with the things which were passing away. Pattee in his American Literature Since 1870 sums up the work of Hayne and those associated with him in these words:

The little group of Southern poets that had gathered itself about Paul Hamilton Hayne, the chief of whom were Margaret J. Preston, Francis Orrey Tichnor, and William Henry Timrod, belongs rather with the period before the war, than with the new national period that follows after it. They were the poets of beauty like Stoddard, singing the music of Keats and Tennyson and the old Cavalier poets- dreamers, makers of dainty conceits and pretty similies, full of grace, and often of real melody, but with little original either of manner or message. (32)

The palm instead has been awarded to the group of writers whose works began to appear after 1870:

Southern writers like Cable, Lanier, Russell began their distinctive work not long after the opening of the Bret Harte period, yet it was not until after Old Creole Days in 1879, the death of Russell in the same year and of Lanier in '81, and the publication of Miss Woolson's Rodman the Keeper and the first Uncle Remus book in 1880, Johnson's Dukesborough Tales in 1883, and Craddock's In the Tennessee Mountains 1884, that what we may call the era of Southern Themes and Southern Writers may be said fully to have taken possession of American letters. (33)

By 1888 Albion W. Targee could write in the Forum,

It can not be denied that American fiction of today, whatever may be its origin, is predominately Southern in type and character. A foreigner studying our current literature, without knowledge of our history, and judging our civilization by our fiction, would undoubtedly declare that the South was the seat of intellectual empire in America, and the African the chief romantic element of our population. (34)

32..American Literature Since 1870, F.L.Pattee, pg. 271-2

33..Ibid. pg. 294

34..Forum

Summary.

Over against this revival of Southern themes stand the two tragic figures of Paul Hamilton Hayne and Margaret Junkin Preston. In the very midst of the era neither of them recognized its advent, but continued to lament the lethargy of their native people, and look to the far distant future for the signs of an awakening. It was in 1880 that Hayne wrote to her:

Oh my friend, not in our day and generation will the South of ours awaken from her literary blindness and fatuity! We at least have done our work and must leave the results to a higher power. (34)

The day for which they had longed and struggled and worn themselves out had arrived- and they did not know it. They had not seen its coming, for their eyes were toward the east which gave birth to European genius, and the revival had come from the west, with its new note of nationalism born of the frontier in American life. There is no record in the letters of the two that they even knew there had been a revival. They do not refer to any of the writers we have mentioned above. There are only two references to any of the new national group. One of these is the remark of Hayne to her:

Did you ever read such stuff as the enclosed verses by Bret Harte? Now do tell me, am I mistaken? or are these verses really poetry? (35)

The other is that of Mrs. Preston to him:

Have you read Steadman's "Poets of America"? I do not fall in at all with much of his criticism; think of his devoting forty or fifty pages to Walt Whitman. (36)

34..Letter of P.H.Hayne to M.J.Preston, June 9, 1880

35..Ibid. January 18, 1873.

36..Letter of M.J.Preston to P.H.Hayne, May 15, 1886

Margaret Junkin Preston was a victim of the middle nineteenth century. Powerful forces wound themselves around her early life with a hypnotic effect so that she did not even struggle against their domination.

She was first of all the victim of a system of education which was widely prevalent in the early part of the century. The theory that the pupil should be adapted to the education, rather than beginning with the pupil as the object for which education existed. George Junkin inspired Margaret with his own passion for knowledge, but at the same time he made her a willing sacrifice to the theory that she existed for the sake of his view of education. This theory which he held readily explains his desire to have her the equal of any student in his school, his emphasis upon the original languages, and his insistence that she do more studying than her physical strength could endure. The result of this theory was the loss of her eyesight, and her firm belief that the age of beauty lay not in the present world around her, but in the ages of the past.

Margaret was also the victim of a system of theology. More correctly, the perversion of a system of theology, more commonly known as the New England Theology. It had its beginning with Jonathan Edwards, who changed the original ideas of John Calvin just enough to make them terrible. The view of conversion held by this school of theologians accounts for some of the blighting effect upon Margaret.

In the third place, Margaret was the victim of an era in American literature. The writings of most Americans during the middle of the last century were permeated with conventionality, and the imitation of other writers. This imitation is plainly apparent in the works of Mrs. Preston. The most evident is the imitation of the subject matter and style of Robert Browning. There is the same use of the dramatic monologue; the same admiration for the Italian artists connected with the renaissance of art. The elimination of her own sentiments in her writings does not appear to have been in imitation of Browning, but a natural reticence on her part. It would have been possible to point out other works of hers in which she imitates Elizabeth Barrett, Lowell, Longfellow, and Whittier, but the imitation of Browning seemed sufficient.

One point of difference may be pointed out in Mrs. Preston's writings about the war, and the commonly accepted writings of others in the South at that time. There is not the bitter sectionalism, and hatred of the enemy, which appeared in so many others. This is probably due to the division of her sympathies because her closest of kin were fighting on both sides. She sided with the army of the South, but she did not burst forth in vituperative abuse of the army which invaded her state, and even her own home.

It has been impossible to discover any evidence that she was even in part responsible for the outburst of writing in the South toward the latter part of her life. This seems

to have been the result of the writings of such ^{WESTERNERS} ~~men~~ as Harte, Miller, and Clemens. The evidence rather supports the view that she did not know there had been this era of Southern themes and writers.

The judgement of the present day would be that the value in her works, ^{was in} ~~were~~ the encouragement and cheer they brought to those who read them in the years immediately following their publication. They were what the people wanted, they enjoyed them, and were inspired to go and do likewise. Therein lay the fault, they did likewise, when they should have done otherwise.

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Certain additional data ^{are} ~~is~~ in the possession of:
 Miss Margaret Junkin Preston, Baltimore, Md.
 Mr. Herbert Preston, Catonsville, Md.

-
- 1..Contains clippings of 220 book reviews, and 53 poems taken from various periodicals. The names of the periodicals have not been retained with the articles.
 - 2..Contains clippings of 43 poems, and 4 serial stories. Names of publications not retained with the articles.
 - 3..Contains 25 poems, 12 of which not found elsewhere. Most of these taken from a religious paper, The Presbyterian