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As Schoolmarm

John C. Hawley, S. J.

IN 1859 the *Saturday Review* was one of the first journals to associate Charles Kingsley with a “younger generation of writers of fiction” who fostered the sentiment that “power of character in all its shapes goes with goodness.” “Who does not know,” the reviewer asked, “all about the ‘short, crisp, black hair,’ the ‘pale but healthy complexion,’ the ‘iron muscles,’ ‘knotted sinews,’ ‘vast chests,’ ‘long and sinewy arms,’ ‘gigantic frames,’ and other stock phrases of the same kind which always announce, in contemporary fiction, the advent of a model Christian hero?”¹ After Kingsley’s death in 1875, however, Henry James and others spoke up in his defense and correctly identified the novelist George Lawrence, considered by many to be Kingsley’s literary disciple, as the real proponent of the brutes commonly called “Muscular Christians.”² Kingsley himself had something much more human in mind, and it was an ideal he preached not only to men but also to women.

Mark Girouard has argued that among the various “text-

books” for the renewed interest in chivalry in the nineteenth century were Kingsley’s sermons and novels. In a sermon at Windsor Castle in 1865, for example, Kingsley declared that “the age of chivalry is never past, so long as there is a wrong left unredressed on earth, or a man or a woman left to say ‘I will redress that wrong, or spend my life in the attempt.’”³ The chivalry that Kingsley and other Christian Socialists envisioned had little to do with moats, castles, or armor and was actually more dutiful than that of the medieval past; in fact, given their growing ethical concern, such men held popular “aesthetic” chivalry in contempt.

Despite this criticism of the nostalgic chivalry that fascinated many contemporary young men, Kingsley’s conception of woman’s role in the code he advocated had its own medieval overtones. He opens his 1857 novel, *Two Years Ago*, with a description of the new Lady of Shalott as a miller’s daughter who reads Charlotte Yonge’s novels and, instead of pining away amid castle ruins, is now “teaching poor children in Hemmelford National School.” Her modern “fairy knight” lectures at mechanics’ institutes, travels by rail, and fights in the Crimea. But later in the same novel, Kingsley’s rhetoric strikes more disturbing chords that were to reverberate throughout his century, and into our own:

To a true woman, the mere fact of a man’s being her husband . . . is utterly sacred, divine, all-powerful; in the might of which she can conquer self in a way which is an every-day miracle; and the man who does not feel about the mere fact of a woman’s having given herself utterly to him, just what she herself feels about it, ought to be despised by all his fellows; were it not that, in that case, it would be necessary to despise more human beings than is safe for the soul of any man.⁴

Saviors of men, transmitters of civilization, advocates of the heart working in conjunction with man’s mind: these were

the roles for woman in Kingsley's version of Muscular Christianity. "Ah, woman," he intones in the same novel, "if you only knew how you carry our hearts in your hands, and would but use your power for our benefit, what angels you might make us all" (chap. 11, 1:316).

Such views would lead Kingsley into the heart of the women's movement, especially in his enthusiastic advocacy of their right to a better education, but would also bring about his inevitable alienation from many of the movement's more forceful leaders. From our vantage point, his definition of the "true woman" was limited by his mid-Victorian fear of social instability. Nonetheless, an age that builds a "crystal palace" to house a lump of coal is clearly searching for a new mythology to explain its dreams, and this, too, is part of Kingsley's story: the story of competing images for the New Woman—Angel in the House, Angel out of the House, complete equal, Female Savior, and others.⁵ In the same way that George Lawrence and other contemporary novelists (many of them women) later adulterated Kingsley's masculine ideal, conservative aspects of his feminine ideal were also stretched beyond Kingsley's recognition by the psychologist Henry Maudsley, who was himself something of a George Lawrence character. This usurpation of Kingsley's ideal role for woman in the later form of Muscular Christianity had more ominous overtones, more unfortunate consequences, and more enduring power than the relatively humorous "model Christian hero" skewered by the *Saturday Review* in 1859.⁶

In his role as pastor, Charles Kingsley no doubt encountered many young middle-class women who were, as he described them, "often really less educated than the children of their parents' workmen" (*Two Years Ago*, chap. 5, 1:206). This was a problem he sought to address at a particularly

crucial period for the emancipation of schooling in England. The history of his involvement in women's education is interesting, therefore, not only in terms of the changes he may have hastened in some quarters, but also as a quite telling example of a reformer who shied away from revolution. What Kingsley wholeheartedly endorsed as a stabilizing development in education—the training of governesses—quickly got beyond his, or any man's, control. Like several other early enthusiasts, he found himself wondering whether he had unwittingly encouraged a restructuring not only of the goals of British education but of the ideals of Victorian womanhood as well.

As in other areas of concern to him—notably, his involvement with Christian Socialism—Kingsley's mind seemed pulled in two directions. He eventually became a notoriously enthusiastic proponent of marriage but was equally concerned that young Victorian women find a purpose in life beyond the attainment of a comfortable niche. In *Two Years Ago*, he inveighed against women who had become “sedentary, luxurious, full of petty vanity, gossip, and intrigue, without work, without purpose, except that of getting married to any one who will ask them.” Such women, he felt, had talents to offer England that too frequently atrophied if left undeveloped, and he warned that until the country found a better method of educating women, far too many would be “fated, when they marry, to bring up sons and daughters as sordid and unwholesome as their mothers” (chap. 5, 1:206). In subsequent writings he argued that imposed ignorance had left young middle-class women no less victimized by society than were the children of the poor. Much of his anger is thus directed against those males who continued to obstruct educational reform. But “sordid” and “unwholesome” seem more embittered than righteous descriptions

and suggest that by 1857 Charles Kingsley had cast himself as Lear, surrounded by daughters who would not be led.

His involvement in the education of women had begun ten years earlier. Frederick Denison Maurice, Kingsley's religious mentor, served on the Committee of the Governesses' Benevolent Institution; the Reverend David Laing was its honorary secretary. In 1848, with the help of some professors at King's College of London University, they established Queen's College, London, conceived as a training college for governesses. Maurice, who served as its principal from its founding until 1854, appointed Kingsley professor of English literature.

As Harriet Martineau kindly observed in 1861, "nothing short of heroism and every kind of magnanimity was requisite to make any man offer himself for a professorship in such colleges."⁷ The conservative *Quarterly Review*, for example, immediately criticized the college's goals, arguing that such a scheme would merely inflame the imaginations of future governesses rather than adequately develop their mundane skills and common sense.⁸ Maurice anticipated such objections, however, and in his "Introductory Lecture on the Objects and Methods of Queen's College" admitted that the word "college . . . has a novel and ambitious sound . . . [but] if any are offended by the largeness of the design they may be assured that . . . we found that any limitation would have made the education more artificial, more pretending, and less effectual for the class which we especially desire to serve."⁹ The intention, obvious in Maurice's words and clear in the *Quarterly Review's* aggressive response, was to broaden minds and open the eyes of young women to a larger world.

In any case, Kingsley's formal association with the college

was short-lived; having collapsed from nervous exhaustion while writing the novel, *Yeast*, he withdrew in December 1848 from teaching after offering only one course. But he continued to lecture on the subject of women's education and maintained an interest in Maurice's project. He advised his replacement, the Reverend Alfred Strettell: "We want to train—not cupboards full of 'information' (vile misnomer), but real informed women." One of the major areas of disagreement regarding women's colleges, of course, was the curriculum. Conservatives advocated traditional "feminine" subjects (music, foreign languages) that would make women more decorative. Progressives, on the other hand, proposed the same curriculum that young men had available to them. Kingsley's implied compromise endorses subjects that would turn out intelligent social workers rather than stereotypical bluestockings.

His letter to Strettell continues: "Don't be afraid of talking about marriage. We must be real and daring at Queen's College, or nowhere. The 'clear stage and no favour' which we have got there is so blessed and wonderful an opening, that we must make the most of it to utter things there which prudery and fanaticism have banished from pulpits and colleges."¹⁰ What Strettell is to say regarding marriage is left unstated, but Kingsley's other writings resolve any confusion his successor may have felt. Marriage was a sacred office for women, far more important than any intellectual endeavor (although an "informed" wife was, of course, a better wife). Reviewing Tennyson's *The Princess* in September 1850 Kingsley warns that

in every age women have been tempted . . . to deny their own womanhood, and attempt to stand alone as men. . . . Tenny-

son] shows us the woman, when she takes her stand on the false masculine ground of the intellect, working out her own moral punishment, by destroying in herself the tender heart of flesh . . . becomes all but a vengeful fury.¹¹

Founding a college for women, therefore, was a good work, but becoming a wife, mother, and “saviour” even better.

Several later founders of women’s colleges were inspired by this cautious hierarchy of female roles, while others emphatically rebelled against its double standard. In the late 1870s, after many battles that had improved educational opportunities for women, Lady Stanley of Alderley pointed to the establishment of Queen’s as the real inspiration for all that came after: Bedford College, the Misses Buss, Beale, and Davies, and eventual admission of women to medical colleges and universities.¹² Frances Buss (1827–94) founded the North London Collegiate School for Ladies in 1850. Dorothea Beale (1831–1906) became headmistress of a similar school at Cheltenham in 1858. Emily Davies (1830–1921) chaired a committee that convinced the Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate in 1865 to examine girls as well as boys. All three women were greatly influenced by Kingsley’s mentor Maurice. Although not on especially good terms with Maurice, Harriet Martineau also offered similar praise for Queen’s College and for Ladies’ College in Bedford Square for the “new order of superior female teachers—issuing from these colleges to sustain their high credit and open the way to a general elevation of female education.”¹³

Kingsley’s own contribution to these developments did not go unrecognized. In 1859, in the second year of its publication, Bessie R. Parkes’s *English Woman’s Journal* praised his work, even citing the advice he had offered in “Practical Lectures to Ladies” to the effect that women should shock men into assuming social responsibilities by demonstrating

their own willingness to sell their jewelry to help the poor. The journal argued that its readers needed to become more aware of social needs beyond their lintels and urged women to “free” their husbands to address these larger problems. To do otherwise, they scolded, would demonstrate three vices already far too evident in the nineteenth century: “selfishness which wishes to merge the man and the citizen into the mere breadwinner for his own household; ignorance that cannot read the signs of the times, or understand what God is calling men to do; timidity which fears that He who feeds the raven, and providently caters for the sparrow, will not provide for those who sacrifice personal advancement to carry on His own work.”¹⁴ Kingsley expected, as did the women associated with this periodical, that most Victorian matrons preferred the familiarity of their home and hearth to the responsibilities of politics and empire. If that were the case, broadening their vision even enough to allow them to “liberate” their husbands to deal with that greater world was a large task in itself—and a relatively safe one for men.

But some women whose consciousness had already been raised were not unanimous in their praise for Kingsley, Maurice, and their associates. The philosophy of women’s education that these men popularized persisted at Queen’s long after Kingsley’s formal connection with the school ended, if Harriet Martineau’s reaction in 1861 to William Cowper, then dean of the college, is any indication. Despite her admiration for many aspects of the women’s colleges, Martineau had already strongly condemned more than twenty years earlier the false notion of chivalry that she recognized as a justification for enfeebling women.¹⁵ Specifically with regard to Queen’s College, she now regretted that the majority of male friends of female education, like Cowper, still assumed that “the grand use of a good education to a woman is that it improves her usefulness to somebody else . . . as

'mothers of heroes,' 'companions to men,' and so on."¹⁶ In private, she offered even harsher criticism. Richard Holt Hutton was to be professor of mathematics at Ladies' College from 1858 to 1865, but following his 1858 speech advocating less taxing academic subjects for women, Martineau wrote Fanny Wedgwood: "It seems to us that [his] Address at the College was so bad in spirit, manners and views that it ought to cost him the post. . . . It seems to incapacitate him for teaching in a Ladies' college at all. That whole narrow, insolent, prudish, underbred set of Unitarian pedants,—shallow, conceited and cruel,—are too disagreeable to do much mischief, unless they get into professorships."¹⁷ There seem to be unmistakable rumblings here of the "vengeful fury" that Kingsley feared.

Even the *English Woman's Journal*, in a sign of things to come, published a letter from Emily Davies strongly advocating the training of women as physicians—just two years after the magazine had urged women to "free" their husbands for work in the world. Much later, in 1896, Davies wrote that efforts such as Queen's College were "only in a general sense pioneers in the movement for opening universities to women. They were self-contained, and there is no evidence that they were aimed at being attached to any university." She gave greater credit to individual women like Jessie Meriton White who in 1856 was the first to attempt (unsuccessfully) to obtain admission to a university.¹⁸ Barbara Leigh-Smith Bodichon was also cautious in her praise. Maurice had advised against Bodichon's attempts in the 1850s to found a school that would draw from all classes, creeds, and nationalities. Even if he personally found such experimentation acceptable, he apparently considered it an assault on too many fronts at once, and bad strategy. This caution, characterized by some as cowardice and by others

as obstruction, was typical of the approach to female education that both Kingsley and Maurice took.

But in fact, Kingsley seems to have recognized the justice in Davies's rather parsimonious praise for Queen's College. He eventually argued that the real advances in education began around 1865, when Local Examinations for Cambridge, Edinburgh, and Durham universities were opened to women. (Oxford did the same in 1870.) In an 1869 *Macmillan's* article, he suggests how schools for governesses were just the beginning: "A demand for employment has led naturally to a demand for improved education fitting women for employment, and that again has led naturally also to a demand on the part of many thoughtful women for a share in making those laws and those social regulations which have, while made exclusively by men, resulted in leaving women at a disadvantage at every turn."¹⁹ As "natural" as these increasing demands may have appeared to Kingsley in 1869, it was well recognized by John Stuart Mill and others that supporters of one set of demands, like education, might have great reservations about others, like suffrage. Kingsley's own increasing hesitation seems to have arisen, however, less from specific demands than from conflicting philosophies of the meaning of "true womanhood." His ambivalent response to women who fought against a wide variety of social regulations amounts to a rejection of them as women. This is what led to his eventual alienation from the movement for women's rights and prompted some of the most high-pitched attacks in his novels.

He did encourage women to become more fully educated and to become actively involved in helping "the other nation," and his position in society no doubt assuaged the fears of some men reluctant to see their wives engaged in such work. Beyond his progressive interest in the social re-

sponsibilities of women, however, he continued to insist upon essential differences between men and women. In *The Roman and the Teuton* (1864), he writes that women's "influence, whether in the state or in the family, is to be not physical and legal, but moral and spiritual. . . . It therefore rests on a ground really nobler and deeper than that of man." A woman's main duty, whether she becomes educated or enfranchised, is to "call out chivalry in the man." He even views the enfranchisement of women in terms of the effect it will have on men—an effect he fears.

The modern experiments for emancipating women, and placing them on a physical and legal equality with the man, may be right, and may be ultimately successful. We must not hastily prejudge them. But of this we may be almost certain; that if they succeed, they will cause a wide-spread revolution in society, of which the patent danger will be, the destruction of the feeling of chivalry, and the consequent brutalization of the male sex.²⁰

Two years later, Emily Davies concludes her 1866 book, *The Higher Education of Women*, by directly addressing Kingsley's argument. She grants that female subservience may have occasioned male chivalry but asks, "Is it good for a man to feel that his influence rests on a ground less noble and deep than that of woman, and to satisfy himself with a lower moral position?"

If the scheme of Divine Providence requires that there should be outlets for the protective energies, they are likely to be found for a long time yet, in the infirmities of age, of infancy, and of poverty, without encouraging morbid or affected weakness in human beings intended by nature to be healthy and strong. . . . The chivalrous spirit now shows itself in the abandonment of unjust privileges, in the enactment of equal laws, and in facing ridicule, opposition, and discouragement in behalf of unpopular ideas.

And she warns the preacher, "Let us take care lest, in clinging to forms from which the spirit has departed, in shutting our eyes to keep out the dawning day, we may be blindly fighting the battle of the Philistines, all unwittingly ranged among the enemies of the cause we desire to serve."²¹

An increasing number of women clearly were prepared to go farther than their lintels, and this made Kingsley skittish. It eventually dawned on him, for example, that there might be reasons other than religious celibacy or bad luck for some women's willingness to forgo marriage, and such apparent independence was not something he encouraged. Consequently, he readily caricatured women who would not allow men to lead the movement for their rights. The "true" emancipation of women, he claimed, was to be an emancipation "not from man (as some foolish persons fancy), but from the devil . . . who divides her from man, and makes her live a life-long tragedy."²² In *Two Years Ago*, he had pointedly condemned "that ghastly ring of prophetesses . . . [the] strong-minded and emancipated women, who prided themselves on having cast off conventionalities." Such exponents of the rights of women, he wrote, do more damage than good. They were

women who had missions to mend everything in heaven and earth, except themselves: who had quarreled with their husbands, and had therefore felt a mission to assert women's rights, and reform marriage in general; or who had never been able to get married at all . . . and every one of whom had, in obedience to Emerson, "followed her impulses," and despised fashion, and was accordingly clothed and bedizened as was right in the sight of her own eyes, and probably in those of no one else. . . . They did not wish to be women, but very bad imitations of men. (Chap. 11, 1: 298, 300)

By 1869 he had concluded that these less patient "imitations

of men” were in the ascendant; although he did support the campaign for women’s voting rights, he failed to bring his customary energy to the cause.²³

Some of his friends were troubled by this apparent break. Because Kingsley was presiding over the educational section of a Social Sciences Meeting at Bristol in that year, Maurice wrote asking him to reassert his conviction that women should be admitted to all the privileges of the other sex.²⁴ Mill was another correspondent on this issue. Although never fully in agreement on the Woman Question, he and Kingsley felt a mutual interest and Mill called him “one of the good influences of the age”; Kingsley, for his part, read *On Liberty* from cover to cover one day in a book shop and remarked as he left that it “affected me in making me a clearer-headed, braver-minded man on the spot.”²⁵ Thus in 1870 Mill wrote to ask the reasons for Kingsley’s alienation from the movement. Kingsley responded that he “deprecate[d] the interference in this movement of unmarried women,” and was particularly concerned lest the struggle for women’s rights be discredited by “hysteria, male and female.” He urged that “we must steer clear of the hysteric element, which I define as the fancy and emotions unduly excited by suppressed sexual excitement.” In light of his many bouts of mental exhaustion and his concern with mastering his own sexual appetite, Kingsley himself had probably known such “hysteria.” This would help explain his ultimate lack of trust in women, his fear that true equality would be “brutalizing”: what had begun as a dream for training governesses threatened to become an Amazonian nightmare. His response to Mill, therefore, is not surprising: the movement should be led by matrons and should keep the questions of women’s right to vote, work, and become physicians separate from “social, that is, sexual questions,” such as the

ongoing argument over the regulation of prostitution, as addressed in the Contagious Diseases Act. He suggests that women should avoid such “prurient” topics, which were fit only for men to consider.²⁶

Mill immediately responded that the presence in the movement of “vulgar self-seekers” was unavoidable and even encouraging, because it signaled the movement’s growing influence and popularity even among the lower classes who had access only to penny papers. Playing on Kingsley’s anti-medievalism, Mill argues that

too many of those whose influence will be of use . . . instead of joining in the work . . . are apt pusillanimously to withhold themselves altogether. Yet this is, in a manner, a monastic view of public affairs. If all the highminded shrink into the congenial privacy of their own homes (as in the middle ages into a convent) they leave none but the vulgar minded to occupy the public eye.

Regarding the “sexual questions” to which Kingsley refers, Mill argues that it is principally middle-aged women, “and most of them mothers of families,” who have involved themselves in this particular controversy, on the principle that “the connivance of virtuous women alone makes it possible for so-called decent men to call into existence the ‘profession’ which is in question.”²⁷

Apparently Kingsley did not find Mill convincing. It is telling, in fact, that in his advice to Mill he speaks of women as “our” advocates. Writing to Mrs. Peter Taylor during the same period regarding women’s suffrage, he advises her to control rather than “excite” her friends: “By quiet, modest, silent, private influence we shall win.”²⁸ But in Mill’s letter to Kingsley it was precisely Mrs. Taylor’s sort of upper-class aloofness that Mill criticized as unnecessarily exclusive. Finally, therefore, Kingsley’s advice to women seems to echo

his Christian Socialist advice to working-class men: they are to convert their “masters” by offering an example of heroic suffering—and even martyrdom.

Listening to some of his own advice—and no doubt recognizing how far he had wandered from his earlier advocacy of “real informed women”—Kingsley defended his many hesitations as simple pragmatism. Again addressing Mill, he writes:

I see how we must be tempted to include, nay, to welcome as our best advocates, women who are smarting under social wrongs, who can speak on behalf of freedom with an earnestness like that of the escaped slave. But I feel that we must resist that temptation; that our strength lies not in the abnormal, but in the normal type of womanhood. . . . Any sound reformation of the relations between woman and man must proceed from women who have fulfilled well their relations as they now exist, imperfect and unjust as they are. That only those who have worked well in harness, will be able to work well out of harness.²⁹

He is not the first “liberal” thus to rationalize a fall from grace. The question of reform—allowing middle-class young women to develop their minds and educate the nation—was one to which Charles Kingsley could happily devote his energies. The question of revolution—deciding just what this “normal type of womanhood” was to be—was one that sent him into retreat.

A year before his death, Kingsley returned to the topic of the education of women, publishing “Nausicaa in London” in an 1874 issue of *Good Words*. He reaffirms there many positions he had argued with Mill, Maurice, and others. But he introduces as well the same sort of caution that he had already offered to young boys: that a sound mind, whether male or female, nonetheless depends upon a sound body.

Kingsley had once worried that sports might be too taxing for women's frail bodies. In 1841 he told his fiancée, Frances Grenfell, that as a woman she could not understand "the excitement of animal exercise from the mere act of cutting wood or playing cricket to the manias of hunting or shooting or fishing." He asked that she remember "the peculiar trial which this proves, to a young man whose superfluous excitement has to be broken in like that of a dog or a horse—for it is utterly animal."³⁰ Nonetheless, the point he attempts to make in "Nausicaa" thirty years later is the relatively important need for the "lower" education of women: "not merely to understand the Greek tongue, but to copy somewhat of the Greek physical training": in other words, the "full" Hellenism of the Muscular Christian. Here, however, as he had so often done before, what Kingsley concedes to the women's movement with one hand, he takes back with the other. The contemporary issue that led Kingsley to emphasize women's need to develop greater "muscularity" was the controversy over the relatively onerous physical demands that extended intellectual work imposed on women.

"Where is your vitality?" Kingsley asks young women. With overtones of Bram Stoker, he answers that it is draining into books they would do better to avoid, books inspiring emotions "which, it may be, you had better never feel." "And now," he worries, "they [who is this 'they'? No longer Kingsley, it seems clear] are going to 'develop' you; and let you have your share in 'the higher education of women,' by making you read more books, and do more sums, and pass examinations, and stoop over desks at night after stooping over employment all day; and to teach you Latin, and even Greek."³¹

In this account of Kingsley's increasingly fearful response to the women's movement, his earlier words of caution were political and strategic. The new element here, one that soon

dominated late-nineteenth-century theory, is physiological and psychological. Too much scholarship for women, Kingsley warns, can “develop” them into “so many Chinese—dwarfs—or idiots.” The women of London, Kingsley notes, are literally *shrinking*: there is “a general want of those large frames, which indicate usually a power of keeping strong and healthy not merely the muscles, but the brain itself.” If true patriots do not take the necessary precautions, he ominously prophesies, the next generation of Englishmen will be sickly—just like Parisians.³²

Such a near-hysterical view found other exponents throughout later Victorian society—and not only among men. In 1865, for example, English schoolmistress Elizabeth Missing Sewell had fretted over female fragility: “Any strain upon a girl’s intellect is to be dreaded, and any attempt to bring women into competition with men can scarcely escape failure.”³³ But Kingsley’s reassertion of the physical (and mental) demands of childbearing was echoed with a vengeance by Henry Maudsley (1835–1918), the dominant influence in British psychiatry during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Four months after “Nausicaa” appeared, Maudsley published a rather bizarre but influential article in the *Fortnightly Review*, entitled “Sex in Mind and in Education.” He ignores Kingsley’s nuances and his attempts to understand women as in some sense equal to Victorian men. Instead, he looks out into his society and sees “some women who are without the instinct or desire to nurse their offspring, some who have the desire but not the capacity, and others who have neither the instinct nor the capacity.” It is this New Woman, he announces, who will “allow the organs which minister to this function to waste and finally to become by disuse as rudimentary in her sex as they are in the male sex.”

This so-called woman (no doubt from the same group that Kingsley described as a “ghastly ring of prophetesses” and “very bad imitations of men”) appears to Maudsley to be “a monstrosity—something which having ceased to be woman is yet not man.”³⁴ These were strong words in the mouth of a novel-writing clergyman, but they take on an appalling and sinister finality coming from a respected physician of the mind.

Maudsley was goaded on by the example of three American physiologists, Edward Clarke (whose 1873 book, misleadingly titled *Sex in Education; or, A Fair Chance for the Girls*, created a sensation), Nathan Allen, and Weir Mitchell. These men, expanding on Augustus Gardner’s 1860 article “Physical Decline of American Women,” worry that “undue demands made upon the brain and nervous system to the detriment of the organs of nutrition” will make American women incapable of bearing children. American men, in consequence, “will have to re-act, on a magnificent scale, the old story of unwived Rome and the Sabines.”³⁵ It seems incredible that this undisguised threat of rape comes from physicians claiming to have women’s best interests at heart.

“After all,” Maudsley threatens, “there is a right in might—the right of the strong to be strong. Men have the right to make the most of their powers, to develop them to the utmost, and to strive for, and if possible gain and hold, the position in which they shall have the freest play. It would be a wrong to the stronger if it were required to limit its exertions to the capacities of the weaker.”³⁶ Georgina Weldon’s *How I Escaped the Mad Doctors* (1878), Rosina Bulwer-Lytton’s *A Blighted Life* (1880), and Louisa Lowe’s *The Bastilles of England; or, The Lunacy Laws at Work* (1883) chronicle the results of this perversion of male dominance. The wrongful confinement that they knew, the real straitjackets, bolted

doors, and painful rejection that threatened their contemporaries, found support in the images employed by their jailers—and “Muscular Christianity” was, unfortunately, one such image. In Charles Kingsley’s lifetime, his arguments for a more balanced philosophy were only partially successful in finding an audience; they were even less so after his death.

Henry Maudsley’s marriage and personal life were not without their problems,³⁷ and his apodictic pronouncements on women, lacking scientific objectivity, surely demand skeptical scrutiny. Unfortunately, quite the opposite happened in his lifetime. In fact, as Elaine Showalter has recently shown, Maudsley and his cohorts “set the model for the psychiatrists of his age. The psychiatrist’s role would no longer be to provide an example of kindness, but rather one of manliness, maturity, and responsibility.” In filling this role, “Maudsley and his cohorts were conspicuously and aggressively masculine in their interests, attitudes and goals. . . . They were athletic rather than literary; sportsmen and clubmen rather than stay-at-home fathers of a lunatic *famille nombreuse*.”³⁸ As insurance against morbid introspection (what Kingsley elsewhere called “overmentation”), Maudsley recommended manly sport and games. But not for women—they were, thank God, still too weak for that, too easily unhinged.

Despite Kingsley’s defense of the high ideals he saw in Muscular Christianity for men *and* for women, his own ultimate ambivalence on the Woman Question clouded the picture of “liberation” he painted for his readers. The year before his death in 1875, sounding like a calmer Maudsley, he wrote that “the woman’s more delicate organisation, her more vivid emotions, her more voluble fancy, as well as her mere physical weakness and weariness, have been to her, in all ages, a special source of temptation.”³⁹ This is the myth

that threatened men sought to perpetuate, and it is little wonder that they saw its embodiments wherever they looked. A Maudsley could degrade women while a George Lawrence bestialized men, and the simplicity of their imagery would find large, enthusiastic audiences. It did not matter that Kingsley would insist again and again that woman typically rose *above* her “mere physical weakness” to “call out chivalry in the man.” But in the world beyond Charles Kingsley’s novels, in the classrooms where more and more women were acquiring the knowledge and certification necessary to change Victorian structures of perception, empowering myths were gradually replacing those that had shaped the way women might imagine themselves. To the chagrin of a Maudsley or a Lawrence—to the surprise of a Kingsley—some women had apparently decided to dispense with the Lady of Shalott. Perhaps some of their number trusted that a plucky Nausicaa could still overcome the specter of the Madwoman in the Attic; if it took a Boadicea, however, a growing number of women seemed prepared to welcome the new myth.

Notes

1. “Physical Strength,” *Saturday Review*, 10 Dec. 1859, 701–02.
2. Henry James, review of *Charles Kingsley: His Letters and Memories of His Life*, ed. Francis Kingsley, *Nation* 24 (1877): 61. Reviewing the same book, G. A. Simcox wrote that Kingsley’s “brain, or his personality, as we may choose to phrase it, was steadily on the side of the robust and active element, but was never impervious to the other. . . . Looking only to his strength, he was fit for an athlete; looking only at his temperament, he was fitter for

a monk." According to Simcox, those who knew Kingsley were struck by "the union of the most exquisite tenderness with a manliness that often seemed aggressive" (*Fortnightly Review*, 1 Jan. 1877, 16). See also James's review of Kingsley's novel *Hereward the Wake*, *Nation* 2 (1866): 115–16; E. L. Burlingame, "Charles Kingsley," *Appleton's Journal* 13 (1875): 204; J. K. Laughton's review of *Letters and Memories*, *Edinburgh Review* 145 (1877): 438; and T. H. S. Escott, "Charles Kingsley," *Belgravia* 26 (1875): 83.

3. As recalled by Dean Arthur Penrhyn Stanley in his eulogy at Westminster Abbey, 31 Jan. 1875 (see Frances Kingsley, ed., *Charles Kingsley: His Letters and Memories of His Life*, 2 vols. [1877; rpt. New York: AMS, 1973], 2:466–68).

4. Charles Kingsley, *Two Years Ago*, collected in *The Novels and Poems of Charles Kingsley*, Chester ed., 12 vols. (New York: J. F. Taylor, 1899), chap. 13, 1:337–38. Chapter, volume, and page references to this edition hereafter will be provided in the text.

5. See Elizabeth K. Helsinger, Robin L. Sheets, and William Veeder, eds., *The Woman Question: Social Issues, 1837–1883* (New York: Garland, 1983), xiv–xvi.

6. Florence Nightingale was among Muscular Christianity's female critics; she complained to Benjamin Jowett, regarding two students in her charge: "What a bad thing the love of sport really is for the Upper Classes. These two youths are very much above the average in ability, but their souls as well as their bodies are absolutely given up to shooting and fishing, and more than half their conversation is on these subjects. It is quite weakening to them, this muscular Christianity of which Mr. Kingsley is the prophet." See E. V. Quinn and J. M. Prest, eds., *Dear Miss Nightingale: A Selection of Benjamin Jowett's Letters, 1860–1893* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 99.

7. Harriet Martineau, *Once a Week*, 10 Aug. 1861, 177.

8. E. H., "Queen's College—London," *Quarterly Review* 86 (1850): 364–83.

9. Frederick Denison Maurice, quoted in Rosalie Glynn Grylls, *Queen's College 1848–1948* (London: Routledge, 1948), 2–3.

10. Kingsley to Alfred Strettell, [Spring] 1849, *Charles Kingsley: His Letters and Memories*, 1:201.
11. Charles Kingsley, "Tennyson," *Fraser's* 42 (September 1850): 250.
12. Lady Stanley of Alderley, "Personal Recollections of Women's Education," *Nineteenth Century* 11 (1879): 311.
13. Harriet Martineau, *Daily News*, 23 Nov. 1859, 4.
14. S. R. P., "The Details of Woman's Work in Sanitary Reform," *English Woman's Journal* 3 (1859): 323.
15. Harriet Martineau, *Society in America*, 3 vols. (London: Saunders and Otley, 1837), 3:116.
16. Harriet Martineau, *Once a Week*, 10 Aug. 1861, 175.
17. Harriet Martineau to Fanny Wedgwood, October 1858, in *Harriet Martineau's Letters to Fanny Wedgwood*, ed. Elisabeth Sanders Arbuckle (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), 170.
18. Emily Davies, *Thoughts on Some Questions Relating to Women* (Cambridge: Bowes and Bowes, 1910), 160.
19. Charles Kingsley, "Women and Politics," *Macmillan's*, October 1869, 555.
20. Charles Kingsley, *The Roman and the Teuton*, 3d ed. (1864; London: Macmillan, 1901), lec. 10, 255.
21. Emily Davies, *The Higher Education of Women* (London: Alexander Strahan, 1866), 181–91 passim.
22. *Charles Kingsley: His Letters and Memories*, 1:453.
23. In an 1860 letter to John Stuart Mill, Florence Nightingale uses surprisingly parallel language to express her strong reservations over training women as physicians, because the ones she had seen in America had "only tried to be 'men' and they [had] only succeeded in being third-rate men." While making a living for themselves, they had not succeeded in improving the sorry state of medical education and "therapeutics" (see J. M. Robson et al., eds., *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965—in progress], 15:710; this edition hereafter will be cited as *Mill*).
24. Frederick Maurice to Charles Kingsley, 22 Sept. 1869,

The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice, Chiefly Told in His Own Letters, ed. Frederick Maurice, 2 vols. (New York: Scribner's, 1884), 2:591–92.

25. Charles Kingsley to John Stuart Mill, 6 Aug. 1859, *Mill*, 15:633.

26. Charles Kingsley to John Stuart Mill, [Spring] 1870, *Charles Kingsley: His Letters and Memories*, 2:327.

27. John Stuart Mill to Charles Kingsley, 9 July 1870, *Mill*, 17:1742–44.

28. Charles Kingsley to Mrs. Peter Taylor, 27 May 1870, *Charles Kingsley: His Letters and Memories*, 2:326.

29. Charles Kingsley to John Stuart Mill, [Spring] 1870, *ibid.*, 2:328–30.

30. Charles Kingsley to Frances Grenfell, February 1841, *ibid.*, 1:51–52.

31. Charles Kingsley, "Nausicaa in London," *Good Words*, January 1874, 87.

32. *Ibid.*, 88, 78, 80.

33. Elizabeth Missing Sewell, *Principles of Education* (1865; New York: Appleton, 1871), 451.

34. Henry Maudsley, "Sex in Mind and in Education," *Fortnightly Review*, April 1874, 477.

35. As cited in Maudsley, 474.

36. *Ibid.*, 480.

37. On Maudsley's career, see Sir Aubrey Lewis, "Henry Maudsley: His Work and Influence," *The State of Psychiatry* (New York: Science House, 1967), 29–48.

38. Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830–1980* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), 117, 120.

39. Charles Kingsley, *Sanitary and Social Lectures and Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1880), lec. 9, 171.